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WHITE LIES TELLING IN LEBANESE DISCOURSE:  
A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

By

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A thesis

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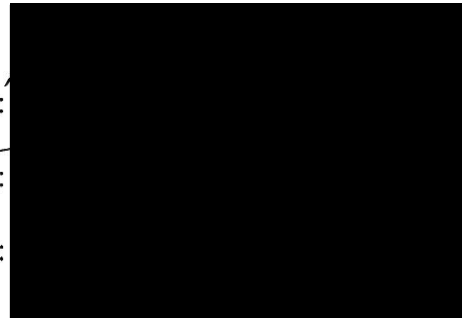
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Dedication  
I dedicate this humble work

To my loving father

## WHITE LIES TELLING IN LEBANESE DISCOURSE: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

Rania El Nakkouzi

### Abstract

Western research on white lies-telling had mainly focused on the conceptualization of the notion of white lies by children and teenagers. Research dedicated to the analysis of white lies-telling in adult discourse is relatively limited in number and scope. Therefore, this study aims at filling this existing gap by investigating white lies-telling behavior in Lebanese every day discourse. The study adopted Camden et al. (1984) motivational category system to unravel the different motivations and communicative intentions that govern the use of white lies-telling in Lebanon in different social settings. To this end, DCT and questionnaires were administered to 50 female and 50 male undergraduate college students, which replicated the reward category system proposed by Camden et al. To increase the reliability of the findings, 10 service encounters (5 females and 5 males) were recorded and analyzed to examine the extent to which adult Lebanese use white lies as a form of facework. Results of the DCT and questionnaire showed that female participants were more inclined to use white lies in their every day discourse than male participants in addition to marginal differences in the social and psychological motivations that compelled females to use white lies. These differences were also documented and analyzed accordingly. On the other hand, the conversation analysis of the service encounters showed supremacy of male participants in displaying politeness strategies and in using white lies as social lubricants, especially, as a part of facework. It is recommended that this research be supported with other research devoted to the study of politeness in the Arab region and to Lebanese social settings in particular.

Keywords: Politeness, White Lies, Identity, Ethnolinguistics, Cultural Schema, Conversation Analysis, Conversational Implicatures

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1.1- General Overview**

Adults have at their disposal an extensive repertoire of both verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies, which enable them to socialize and maintain interpersonal relationships. The rich verbal inventory permits speakers to select the appropriate linguistic behavior based on the situational context of the interaction. Many would prefer to choose linguistic expressions that are characterized by directness and truthfulness (veracity of the propositional content of the utterance) regardless of the effect that this strategy may have on the recipient. Others would consciously opt for a more polite and refined linguistic articulation to protect recipient's feelings as well as his/her social status.

Broomfield, Robinson, and Robinson (2002) believed that adults during social interaction "routinely" (p.47) resort to white lies-which are forms of deception- as an interactional strategy to protect the feelings of the hearer and to avoid conflict and tension. Consequently, white lies are intentionally used by adults to maintain social relationships and are socially and morally accepted (Bussey, 1999; Peterson, 1995) because the main motive governing their use is to establish and manage rapport, solidarity and empathy among interlocutors (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Developmental psychologists like Camden, Motley, and Wilson (1984) classified the different motivations (intentions) that govern the use of white lies in social interactions by adults. Their findings revealed that adults intentionally use white lies to protect basic needs and rewards, maintain affiliation and protect one's self-esteem (saving face).

The above studies among others focused on the social motivations and adults' evaluations of white lies-telling and its frequency in everyday Western discourse. Conventionally, Lebanese are distinctively successful in managing their social relationships in a country characterized by ethnic diversity and political plurality. However, any observer interested in studying this phenomenon would undoubtedly be notified by the recurring use of white lies that permeates Lebanese adult everyday discourse. The examples cited below are a few instances of white lies-telling that subsume everyday interactions in various Lebanese social settings.

Social events provide Lebanese adult participants with plentiful opportunities to use white lies either to save or enhance the face of interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Such examples of social interactions would be upon receiving a disappointing gift in a birthday party, an unexpected visit or telephone call from a near or far relative, and on the occasion of wearing a new outfit or haircut. Other social events, which may provoke the use of white lies, would be on accepting or refusing invitations, tasting food when invited by relatives specially if prepared by mothers-in-law, and on avoiding direct apologies and/or commands. Yet, more face threatening incidents, which exemplify direct imposition would be on the account of denying responsibility to avoid transgression, asking about personal income and/or intimate relations, and on stating reasons for divorce. In academic settings, justifying absence from classes and/or late submission of assignments, justifying low academic achievement, and arriving late for a scheduled meeting would be favorable instances for using white lies.

### **1.2- Evidence from Lebanese Discourse**

The above examples are the result of personal observation from Lebanese daily interactions, which often went off-the-record. However, the following examples offer a

rare opportunity to document the extent to which white lies-telling is an acceptable interactional strategy in Lebanese social, political and media discourse. In the past three months, two television programs ostensibly epitomize the prevailing intentions of participants to deceive, veil secrets and maintain privacy. The first program is aired on national Lebanese channel (LBCI) called 'Shoo Serak' which means 'What's Your Secret', and the other is the Arabic version of a Western program called 'Moment of Truth' (Lahzat al Haqiqa) is presented on an international Arabic channel (MBC4). The main assumption of these two programs is that people (celebrities or ordinary) deliberately deceive others by extravagant use of lies when they are asked publicly to reveal their true emotions, feelings or attitudes. Moreover, participants are presumed to deceive or tell lies to keep shameful acts of misconduct, misbehavior and degrading activities (verbal and non verbal) away from the public eye because they distort the self/public image of participants. It is undoubtedly a high threatening act to ask a public female figure, like May Hariri, if she betrayed her husband, and another participant was asked if he hired someone to spy on his wife because of her suspected infidelity. Therefore, to prove that participants lie and intentionally disguise truth, participants are asked the same questions before hand and their answers were recorded and monitored by the famous lie detecting machine. Then, participants are asked the same questions publicly with a monitor at the background to reveal whether the participant is telling the truth or forced to modify the previous answers to protect his/her face and save themselves humiliation, hence lying.

Yet, the most outstanding and striking exemplification of the frequency and intensity of telling lies in Lebanon is related to a new phenomena which made shocking public and political scandals, namely, Wikileaks. The importance of this event is in

being the first written political archive that unmistakably divulge the deceptive and the hypocritical nature of Lebanese political figures and Lebanese politics in general.

Representatives and highly respected political leaders and figures from all Lebanese parties-those who show steadfast alliance to the resistant movement and those who are totally against it-are depicted as insincere, hypocritical and deceptive through their mastery in hiding their true attitudes and political beliefs from other Lebanese parties, but they overtly speak with remarkable liberty, honesty and sincerity-and at times conspire-with American Embassy envoys.

The last example is taken from a Lebanese television commercial, which is designed to promote and encourage car loans. The scene starts with an adult Lebanese male and female standing on the sidewalk, with the restaurant, in which they have just finished dining, acting as the background. The adult female stood restlessly waiting for the male to offer her a lift (by his supposedly owned car). As the male failed to respond to her non-verbal request, she then uttered her desire bluntly by saying: "Won't you drive me home!" The male actor responded quickly by ordering a taxi to which she was reprehensibly surprised (through facial expressions). To cover up his action, he fabricated a medical appointment. A dental appointment as he went on to explain. The actress looked at her watch and exclaimed "At this time of the night!" "My dentist works to this late hour," he replied. They finally bid each other farewell with a promise for a future rendezvous, and the sketch ends with the female taking the taxi and the male driving his motorcycle. The scenario ends with a commentator saying: "Spare yourself embarrassment, own your car; take a car loan with maximum facilities from BankMed."

In this sample of media discourse three consecutive white lies are stated by the actor to save his face-public self-image as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) in a

single interaction. Once the actor felt that his social image as an adult Lebanese male-who is supposed to own a car-is threatened, he resorted to white lies. These lies are voiced not in order to establish solidarity and empathy between interlocutors; instead they are intended to protect and enhance the actor's public self-image by sparing him embarrassment and social shame. What is worth mentioning is that this commercial along with Wikileaks scandals and 'Shoo Serak' program are presented on national and international Lebanese broadcasting channels which signal to international viewers that these examples of social/white lies are an accepted mode of interaction which in turn plays a significant role in defining and determining Lebanese national/social identity as perceived by outsiders.

Moreover, a thorough analysis of the BankMed commercial shows that it is in direct contrast with research dedicated to examine gender differences regarding the enactment of politeness strategies-positive and negative. For instance, Mills (2004) and Yu-Jing (2007) have revealed that women are more likely to use positive politeness (white lies being one out of many positive politeness strategies) to establish solidarity and agreement. In contrast men use negative politeness (bald and direct strategies) to maintain their social power and independence. In the commercial example cited above, it is the Lebanese male who used positive politeness strategy "white lies" to save his face and not the female. However, gender is not the only social variable that plays a role in the employment of politeness strategies. Other researchers focused on the influence of the cultural norms specific to each culture on the enactment of politeness strategies. This means that the choice of the appropriate politeness strategy and the degree to which one is preferred, is dictated by the norms, social roles and values specific to each culture (cultural identity) or what Stewart (2008) coined as "lingua-culture" (p.32).



According to Mills (2004) Arabic culture stresses social distance, which is exemplified in the use of indirect request strategies rather than directness that characterize English request forms. Al- Zumor (2003) reported that Jordanian Arabs have tendency to protect their social identity rather than their individual identity to the extent of "admitting one's deficiency in order to set the things right is not as embarrassing as in the Anglo-Saxon culture" (p.29). In another research, Al-Eryani (2004) showed that Yemeni participants tend to use less direct refusal strategies that are preceded by reasons and justifications, while Americans expressed direct refusals preceded by a statement or feelings of regret. Sadly enough, cross-cultural research concerning the use of white lies as a politeness strategy in the Arab everyday talk is non-existent. Moreover, Western studies have focused mainly on the conceptualization and evaluation of white lies by children and young adults, which adds to the limited number of research on adult's use of white lies across cultures.

### **1.3- Purpose of the Study**

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the phenomena of white lies-telling by adult Lebanese in their daily discourse. The study will adopt a discursive approach to politeness as formulated by Geyer (2008) to analyze the negotiation and the co-construction of facework; and therefore, the discursive identity of Lebanese informants. Moreover, the aim is to shed light on the social motivational element that underlies the use of white lies by adult Lebanese using Camden et al. (1984) classification and motivational category system for lying behavior. Finally, the study aims to investigate whether Lebanese females are more adept at using white lies than Lebanese males as research on gender differences in Western cultures suggests.

#### **1.4- Research Questions**

Stated more specifically, the study is an attempt to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the psychological motivations (intentions) and social factors that compel Lebanese to adjust their norms of honesty (use white lies instead of telling the truth)?
- 2) Are there gender differences in the enactment of white lies-telling behavior among adult Lebanese?
- 3) How do adult Lebanese co-construct and negotiate their discursive identity (individual/social) while engaging in different discursive practices?

#### **1.5- Summary of Thesis Chapters**

To answer the stated questions, this research is organized into six chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to give a general overview of the problem under investigation supported with a series of evidence from Lebanese every day talk, media and television. This is crucial since the research presupposes that the notion of white lies-telling is pervasive in Lebanese talk; and therefore, it is worthy of studying. The discussion is then supported with research conducted on white lies-telling in Western settings and the different social factors (identity, gender, cultural and other social variables), which control and affect the use of white lies. Finally a statement of purpose for the research is clearly articulated with a set of interrelated questions to be addressed in the subsequent chapters to highlight the different psychological, social and cultural dimensions that play a significant role in shaping the Lebanese conceptualization of white lies-telling behavior.

The second chapter acts as a platform for both the analysis of the collected data and the interpretation process. The chapter gives an overarching detailed review of pertinent literature, which covers the theoretical and the analytical tools followed in the study. First of all, since this study aims at studying white lies-telling as a Lebanese phenomenon, a review of the cultural views to discourse is outlined. Moreover, the review of the theoretical framework of this research covers the dominant and the contradictory views of politeness studies-traditional and recent conceptualizations. Identity (individual and collective) as one of the major linguistic manifestations of the enactment of politeness as well as its relevance to white lies-telling behavior is also discussed. Then a review of the analytical tools adopted in this study such as conversational analysis, discursive approach to politeness with the strengths and limitations of each is provided.

The third chapter sketches the research design and methodology. A brief outlook of the ethnographic nature of this research paves the way for a detailed discussion of the multidimensional methodology followed. For the sake of triangulation and to increase the reliability and validity of the interpretations, three methods for data collection were deployed. The study, therefore, provides a qualitative and a quantitative account of the phenomena of white lies-telling in Lebanon. The first part analyzes data gathered from two qualitative instruments: discourse completion text (DCT) and audio taped service encounters. The quantitative part analyzes data obtained from questionnaires distributed to participants to debug the various psychological and social factors that govern the use of white lies-telling in Lebanon.

The fourth chapter presents a detailed examination and analysis of the collected data. The analysis of the data collected from the DCT will be classified and analyzed

based on recurring themes such as lies told to protect the public self-image/face of participants, avoid transgression or to save others. Further, the differences among male and females participants concerning the use of white lies in the different situations presented in the DCT will be highlighted. The data collected from the taped service encounters is transcribed and analyzed following conversational analysis analytical tools such as hedges, terms of address and greetings, speech acts, conversational maxims, and conversational implicatures. In addition, a discursive approach to politeness is adopted to show how Lebanese multiple identity (individual and collective) are negotiated and constructed in talk. The data gathered from questionnaires are analyzed and interpreted using SPSS statistical software. The analysis of the elicited information is used to document the different motives and social factors that provoke the use of white lies by Lebanese participants. The significance of the data obtained from the questionnaires will provide a clear cut quantitative measure of gender differences in telling white lies.

The fifth chapter opens with a summary of the data collected from each instrument. Then the findings are compared and contrasted based on the different themes with emphasis on issues of gender and identity to reach a consortium. The objective is to find reliable evidence to arrive at interpretations that shed light on the use of white lies by Lebanese adults as a part of their relational work/facework.

Finally, the last chapter is a wrap up of the different discussions presented in the previous chapters and an attempt to propose definite answers to the research questions and to venture into an often neglected area of research in the Arab world. A discussion of the limitations in theory and practice that can influence the reliability of the interpretations is sketched out. It is hoped that this research forms a point of intersection

between scholars interested in Arab/Lebanese sociolinguists and Western sociolinguistics, who for the sake of boundaries or otherwise often undermined or neglected this part of the world.

To sum it up, this research is neither a promotion for white lies telling-bearing in mind their positive social influence, nor a call for encouraging Lebanese to use white lies as a catalyst for maintaining interpersonal relationships. Religiously speaking, white lies are accepted and sometimes favored under three and only three conditions: saving human lives and property, maintaining close and intimate relations among married couples, and in inspiring a reconciliation spirit among those who are at variance. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate whether adult Lebanese use social and cultural mechanisms as non-negotiable excuses for the use of white lies. Finally, it is expected that this research will yield much needed data to the literature on adult use of white lies across different cultures.

### **1.6- Definition of Key Terms**

- White lies are "untruthful statements told without malignant or malicious intent"

(Talwar & Lee, 2002, p.161), and they are socially accepted when "politeness conditions override the truthfulness constraints" (Bloomquist, 2009, p. 7).

- Relational work is described as "the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (Locher & Watts 2005: 10). The theoretical construct underlying this view of relational work is the concept of face which is seen as an "image discursively negotiated and attributed anew in every social interaction and depends crucially on the uptake of the addressees" (Locher, 2006, p. 251).

- Multiple identity is regarded as "a wide spectrum of sources of identification from which he or she selects more or less voluntarily, depending on the context and situation" (Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl & Liebhart, 2009, p. 16-17).

### **1.7 - Conclusion**

The obtained data in this research will be analyzed based on a wide variety of conversation analytical tools. For example, the analysis of the discourse completion test (DCT) and questionnaire will be based on Camden et al. motivational category system. The analysis of the service encounters will adopt a discursive approach to politeness in addition to conversational analysis tools such as speech act theory, cooperative principle, conversational implicatures and others. Therefore, the following chapter will offer a comprehensive review of the different theoretical and analytical frameworks essential to this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.1- Introduction**

The researcher conceptualizes the primary goal of the study as the examination of a linguistically mediated phenomena in Lebanese talk, more specifically, white lies. As explained in the introduction, the study aims at understanding and unraveling the psychological and social motivations that encourage adult Lebanese to use white lies rather repetitively in their everyday discourse. Since the study aims at understanding this cultural phenomenon, a cultural approach to the study of discourse deems necessary to enable the researcher to schematize the cultural boundaries of Lebanese politeness as embedded in talk.

#### **2.2- Cultural Approach to Discourse**

Contrary to the traditional approaches to the study of discourse which focused on the study of meaning and its relation with form/structure-as the only dimensions of discourse, recent approaches have proposed a cultural contrastive framework (Agar, 2007; Quinn, 2005; Moerman, 2007; Shi-Xu, 2005; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Strauss, 2005). This cultural approach regards discourse as a form of social practice that acts upon and transforms cultural and social realities. Shi-Xu (2005) perceives discourse to be "culturally saturated forms of verbal communication" (p.1). The kind of cultural perspective that Shi-Xu attributes to discourse corresponds to the different ways of thinking and speaking that characterize and distinguish the discourse of one cultural group from the other. To Shi-Xu, these ways of thinking and speaking are inherently cultural and cumulatively agreed upon; which speakers of a given cultural group draw

upon and manipulate during interaction. Shi-Xu illustrates his cultural view by giving examples of the different ways of thinking and speaking specific to each cultural group which contradicts the way of thinking and speaking of other cultural groups. For example, the way Western discourse represents and speaks about the Third World, the discourse of Whites and their cultural views of non-Whites, Men discourse regarding Women, Muslim discourse against other religious discourse-those who are considered martyrs by some Muslim groups are suicide bombers by others of the same in-group and other religious groups.

The differences among these categories is purely ideological and the product of culture. This cultural mold according to Shi-Xu marks the distinction between who is seen as a martyr by a certain cultural group, while a suicidal by others. In the same manner, the way of thinking and speaking among western businessmen concerning the Third World is restricted to "cheap labor" (p.20). Consequently, this cultural-specific way of thinking and speaking can't be changed unless a counter cultural non-western discourse is promoted to counter balance the marginalized, oppressed and racist discourse of the West. This is because Shi-Xu envisioned culture as "diversity of competing practices of meaning construction (p. 2)" and that these practices are not in harmony but in continuous opposition and struggle. To Shi-Xu this cultural struggle within groups and against other groups as well, is the result of power struggle, which creates "intercultural tension" (p. 2). This tension is evident at the level of gender, ethnicity, social class, race and so on; and it is mediated through Western discourse, which is dominated by imperialism, universal ideologies that praise individuality, reason and self-identity.



Therefore, the goal of a cultural approach to discourse-from Shi-Xu's perspective is to facilitate cultural cohesion and solidarity through the deconstruction of "culturally repressive discourses" and to "help rearticulate discourses in favour of cultural coexistence and progress" (2005, p.7). Through this process of deconstruction and reconstruction of cultural reality, new ways of thinking and speaking are to be promoted and put to the foreground to create and construct new Self and Other. His call is to override the preoccupation of western discourse with individuality to relation building and cohesion, which are the main features of non-western discourse.

It is clear from the outset that Shi-Xu has a political orientation to the cultural study of discourse which he prophesizes to be one of the solutions to the current disorder and tension in international affairs especially between the West and the East. What is of significance to the present study is the cultural aspect of discourse related to building and maintaining relations among varied in-groups and out-groups whose diverse aspirations are diffused into a common citizenship (the Lebanese community hasn't researched this state yet) which permeates Eastern discourse.

Spencer-Oatey (2008) carries a more humble version to the cultural dimension of discourse and the focus remains at the level of interpersonal relations among ordinary people belonging to diverse cultural groups. Therefore, issues of power and cultural politics are excluded from her discussion. Spencer-Oatey's major interest is on the different ways people use language to influence interpersonal communication or what she calls "rapport management" (p.3). Spencer's orientation to intercultural communication is a psychological account of the intricate overlap between individual (cognitive) and cultural factors that force participants to consciously regulate their linguistic choices to maintain rapport and reduce tension/disagreement in

communication. This overlap is due to the fact that Spencer conceptualizes culture to be both an individual and a social construct. Moreover, she asserts that the mental representations of these social constructs are arranged in schema/frames. She also believes that schema is an important element in the analysis of intercultural communications because these frames may not be shared or universal to all cultures for they are "culture-specific schemata" (p.67). Consequently, cultural schemata affect the quality of the communicative behavior and influence rapport management.

Quinn (2005) holds a similar opinion. He asserts the important role that cultural schemata play in intercultural communications because these cultural schemata are transparent to those who belong to the same cultural group, but they are opaque or unclear to others. Therefore, misunderstanding or miscommunication is the result of the unshared cultural schemata among cultural groups on the one hand, and the result of inconsistency or contradictory individual and social schemata-if the person belongs to several social subgroups (Strauss, 2005). Quinn and Strauss both affirm the difficulty of analyzing culture in talk because cultural assumptions are not explicit in people's talk, nor are there discrete linguistic formulas that are set to deconstruct and reveal the cultural aspect in discourse. Despite the difficulty of cultural analysis, which aims "to underpin the cultural meanings embedded in discourse" (Quinn, 2005, p. 4), Strauss (2005) offers a framework to uncover cultural meanings that infiltrate talk.

The first of these is keyword analysis of words such as a verb, noun, adjective, etc. that have an "expressive importance"(Strauss, 2005, p. 205), and are "invested with strong values" (p.206). The second step is to analyze cultural models. Strauss acknowledges that not all cultural assumptions can be linked to lexical categories; therefore, she proposes ways to investigate cultural models. For example, providing

evidence or a justification for held opinions, choice of a topic for discussion, associations and omitting details in telling stories can provide clues to the cultural assumptions held by speakers. The third step is to analyze how speakers organize their contradicting or competing sub-cultural schemas. Strauss provides three cognitive models: Compartmentalization, ambivalence and integration of schemata. The first model means that speakers cognitively create distinct schemas for conflicting ideas but they are unaware of the contradiction. Ambivalence occurs when speakers are aware of the conflict and their discourse reveals signs of this conflict such as the recurrent use of 'I don't know' and lot of sighs in conversation. Finally, if speakers were able to blend these conflicting schemas and arrive at a resolution that fits their beliefs, they are then in the process of integration.

To relate Strauss's cultural model to the present research, the last two items in the questionnaire (number 12 and 13) are dedicated to reveal whether Lebanese participants hold separate schemas related to the moral and social aspects of telling white lies. The two items presents contradictory schemas; one is related to whether participants believe that white lies are socially accepted and the other if white lies are morally accepted. The results from piloting the questionnaire showed that three participants (out of 14) are at the state of compartmentalizing because they believe that white lies are socially acceptable but not morally or vice versa, while the rest (10 participants) showed signs of integration. Six participants agreed that white lies are socially and morally accepted and the rest refused both categories.

Having elaborated on the cultural approach to the study of discourse, the next step is to outline the analytical tools that will guide the analysis of talk from a cultural perspective. It goes without mentioning that conversation analysis is a reliable and

widely accepted means for the analysis of every day talk. Though critical discourse analysis is the most ambitious formula for the study of discourse in the last decade; its emphasis on the relations of power, ideology and social inequalities and discrimination stretch far beyond the scope of this research. Assuredly, analyzing the historical, ideological and hegemonic elements of discourse will undoubtedly present a more comprehensive and multidimensional picture of Lebanese every day discourse and compensate for the limitations of conversation analysis. Despite this fact, conversation analysis is the chosen framework of analysis in this study because of its ability to capture the intricate details of naturally occurring conversation. Since the study focuses only on the socio-psychological motivations for telling white lies as it pertains to gender and the negotiation of multiple identities in Lebanese talk, a conversational analysis framework supported by elements of interactional sociolinguistics will be adopted to underpin the socio-cultural elements that embody Lebanese talk as sketched above by Quinn (2005) and Strauss (2005).

### **2.3- Conversation Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics**

Robin Wooffitt (2005) has dedicated an illuminating publication to the various arguments laid by a number of critics regarding the strength and limitations of the analytical tools of both conversation and discourse analysis. Robin ascertains that conversation analysis is criticized by many scholars because of its failure to account for troubled talk, argumentativity and disagreement, which characterize everyday discourse. The principle behind this line of thought is that speakers don't only communicate to establish rapport (Spencer-Oatey-2008) and harmony, but they also may have other objectives behind this communicative behavior such as to threaten, criticize, intimidate and even insult others. This same limitation is regarded as strength by Wooffitt (2005)

because she believes that conversation analysis is a powerful tool in focusing on the "management of interpersonal harmony and accord" (p. 158). More specifically, conversation analysis centers on the study of the enactment of politeness in talk -as the sheer objective of participants is to establish solidarity through interaction. This justifies the recent calls for conversation analysts to include the analysis of impoliteness in everyday interaction, where the objective behind interaction is to initiate conflict and offense (Culpeper, 2005; Haugh, 2010). Another strength attributed by Wooffitt to conversation analysis is its ability to offer a "close description of participants' activities" (p.158) during their social interaction, which other analytical frameworks fail to capture.

Similarly, Joan Cutting (2002) asserts this very strength of conversation analysis and its ability to view talk as a process and not a product, thus the text is treated as the context of interaction and the basis for the analysis. Though Cutting admits the power of conversation analysis in the study of casual talk, she cautions that it is alone inadequate for studying speech communities from a sociolinguistic perspective. Therefore, she proposed to incorporate interactional sociolinguistic approach to reveal the linguistic features that characterize different social groups as defined in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, and class and so on. In other words, each social group employs linguistic features and communicative behaviors that are characteristic to this particular group identity and which distinguishes it from other cultural groups. A good example would be the forms of verbal and nonverbal greetings that are characteristic to each group/nation and which in turn distinguish it from other groups- Japanese bow, Lebanese kiss cheeks three times, Saudis (and nearly all the Gulf region) touch nose.

However, in an earlier publication Cutting (2000) used conversational analytical tools (hedges, turn-taking, adjacency pairs, interruptions, pauses, speech acts theory, etc.) to examine how the language of six native English students, who were strangers, evolved from the day they first met till the end of their academic course work. The purpose behind this analysis is to reveal the various positive politeness strategies that these students deploy (claim common ground, use in-group markers, etc.) to establish solidarity and attain social cohesion.

To sum up, conversation analysis is the analytical framework that guides the analysis of service encounters in the study. However, due to the stated limitations of conversation analysis, an interactional sociolinguistic approach will be also used to highlight the linguistic and communicative elements specific to Lebanese talk as it pertains to national identity and gender. Interactional sociolinguistics perceived meaning as interactionally constructed and negotiated. Through shared expectations and accumulated experiences affected by different cultural backgrounds, it aims to show how these cultural differences influence interpretation (Cutting, 2002; Geyer, 2008). This is also linked to the earlier discussion of cultural frames/schemata based approach where each culture has specific moods for constructing schemata and therefore influences interpretation- the interpretation of a speech act as polite or impolite is cultural specific. Thus, the next section will be dedicated to revealing the different categories of identity (collective and individual) that infuse talk and affect linguistic choices.

## **2.4- Individual and Collective Identity**

The discussion in this section will not cover the historical development of the concept of identity and its different attributes nor will it cover the different theoretical and philosophical constructs. The attention will concentrate on the manifestation or the representation of the different categories of identity in talk because language is "the site of identity work" (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 34). Most identity researchers agree that identity has two main categories, individual, which is related to one's self-image and collective formed from group membership and national identity. However, the controversy lies in the social, psychological and cognitive perspectives attributed to the different formulations of identity. Early approaches to identity perceived identity as the projection of the inner self. This self is pre-determined, fixed and unified shared by all group members of a given culture because it is a manifestation of the unified system of shared beliefs guided by political, religious and moral doctrines that go beyond negotiation or questioning (De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg, 2006). Therefore, a sense of homogeneity and conformity overshadowed the social system. In modern times, due to the belief that the individual is the product of conflicting and competing social forces that contribute in the formation of identity, identity then, became fluid, fragmented and socially constructed (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Therefore, the distinction between what is private and public/social dimensions of the individual starts to unravel.

Benwell and Stokoe (2006) assert that identity has an individual aspect related to the personal aspirations that he/she attributes to him/herself and a social or collective identity, which the individual has to claim for himself/herself forced by his/her eagerness to belong to a social group/s. This drive for group membership compels the individual to select from the different sets of cultural schemas (which are in one part

predetermined and pre-discursive and others which are discursive and negotiable) the appropriate one that matches the immediate contextual situation; in other words, ethnolinguistics. However, ethnolinguistics, according to Benwell and Strokoe (2006), are the sources of social labeling, stereotyping and prejudice, yet they are reconciled because their understanding of ethnolinguistics is not geographical, ethnic or political. Instead, it is the result of differences among community of practice where no such prejudices are called for. The proposed community of practice permits different members of the community to ascribe to different cultural groups even if these groups advocate conflicting or contradictory agendas.

Therefore, Benwell and Strokoe's (2006) conception of collective identity is primarily discursive and context dependent because identity is the "unfinished product of discourse" (p.30). To illustrate their perception of identity work they analyzed discourse in different settings: everyday conversation, institutional settings, and narratives, spatial and virtual settings. Moreover, they have adopted a set of methodological tools to underpin the workings of identity in discourse. Thus, they intertwine the micro and the macro structures of discourse. These analytical tools are conversation analysis, positioning theory, membership categorization, ethnomethodology, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology. The discursive mode of identity construction termed by Benwell and Strokoe (2006) as identity work is identity discourse in Shi-Xu's terminology (2005). Keeping in mind the political orientation of Shi-Xu, the purpose of analyzing the discursive construction of national identity in media discourse is to weigh the level of animosity or cohesion between two conflicting national groups; namely, Northern Ireland and Britain through the discursive construction of national identity over the past thirty years.



Wodak, Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart, (2009) carry a similar political orientation to Shi-Xu (2005) and advocate a discursive approach to the construction of national identity. However, the main difference rests on the choice of the analytical tool. Wodak et al. (2009) propose critical discourse analysis to reveal how power relations are constructed and how Australia's national identity "homo Austriacus" (p.30) has transformed over time. Wodak et al. (2009) perceive national identity as "a complex of similar conceptions and perceptual schemata, of similar emotional dispositions and attitudes, and of similar behavioral conventions" (p.4). Moreover, these social and cognitive conventions and norms of behavior are shared among members of a given group to form a collective national identity, which distinguishes it from other national groups. The idea of inclusion and exclusion is a manifestation of the hegemonic social forces at work. Wodak et al. configure identity to be a system of relations and identifications with multiple groups, which lead to the formation of multiple identities. These multiple identities are cognitively structured through schemas, which participants during interaction draw on and select from an inventory the best schema that fits the contextual frame of the discursive event. Wodak et al. (2009) direct the attention to the linguistic representation of Australia's national identity, which can be signaled through the use of personal, spatial and temporal references.

Following the discursive tradition to the construction of identity (individual or collective) De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg (2006) highlight the importance of how identity is discursively negotiated in narratives. De Fina and her colleagues assert that "narrators build shared representations about who they are by creating story-worlds in which identities are characterized" (p.351). Through narrative analysis, the authors show that narrators whether consciously or unconsciously "convey implicit stances

towards social definitions of who they are through the use of performance devices" (p.356). In contrast to the discursive approach to identity, Spencer-Oatey (2007) argues that aspects of identity specifically individual identity are mostly pre-discursive and that these aspects are exemplified in the linguistic choices that interactants deploy even before the discursive process starts. This is typically related to her psychological and cognitive conception of identity through cultural schemata explained above. However, the approach taken in this project weaves the pre-discursive element of identity through the analysis of the ethnolinguistic choices characteristic of the Lebanese culture (cultural and cognitive schemata) with the discursive approach to the construction of identity through the analysis of service encounters. The discussion of identity in all its different aspects will be further attended to in the section related to face and politeness due to their close relationship specially gender and collective identity and as they manifest in choice of the appropriate linguistic polite behavior. However, before proceeding into the discussion of politeness theory and research, an overview of Lebanese national identity is provided to further enrich the discussion of national identity as dictated by Lebanese culture.

### **2.5- Lebanese National Identity**

Arabs and Lebanese sociolinguists interested in the study of Lebanese national identity confirm the uniqueness and the multifaceted dimension of the Lebanese national identity. Scholars acknowledge the uniqueness of Lebanese community due to the complex ethnic, religious and social formations (Al Batal, 2002; Suleiman, 2003). It has become an accepted convention that one of the manifestations of the Lebanese civil war-besides the political-is the hidden struggle over identity. Suleiman (2003) contends that the Lebanese language with its different dialects and varying second language

acquisition and use stem from varying and yet contrasting national identities. Al Batal (2002) as well, confirms Suleiman's (2003) view by stating that the Lebanese Muslims identify themselves with the pan-Arabic sphere. Therefore, they favor the use of standard/ colloquial Arabic and that before and during the war they were hesitant in learning any other foreign language to retain and maintain their identification with the wider Arabic nationality. In contrast, the Christian community, especially Maronites, express their affiliation with the francophone/ Western identity through the use of French in their everyday interactions-the language of the elite. Therefore, they call for Lebanese identity/"Lebanonism" (Al Batal, 2002, p.95) which derives its uniqueness from their Phoenician ancestors in contrast to the Arabism. Al Batal (2002) considers that this struggle over identity is evident on the formation of a new language register in LBCI news which compromises the use of standard Arabic (anchor language) and Lebanese colloquial Arabic (reporters' language). This is perceived by Al Batal (2002) as a form of reconciliation at the level of identity to satisfy both national groups. This uniqueness is also reiterated by Suleiman (2003) who contends that "Lebanon is in the Middle East but is not exclusively of it" (p.205).

## **2.6- Politeness Theory and Research**

It is an accepted convention among linguists, sociolinguists, pragmatists, politeness researchers and discursive psychologists that Brown and Levinson's (1987) work on a universal theory to politeness is the cornerstone of an extensive body of research either to confirm or question the theoretical basis of their universal theory. In addition to Brown and Levinson (1987), Robin Lakoff (1973) and Geoffrey Leech (1983) are considered by most politeness researchers as remarkable figures in the field of pragmatics and politeness studies and their collective contributions to the notion of

politeness form the traditional approach to politeness. This traditional approach to politeness rests on varying conceptualizations to the nature of communication; among them are Speech Acts Theory, Indirect Speech Acts, Cooperative Principle and Relevance Theory. Therefore, before indulging into the fleeting concept of politeness and its different tenets, a quick look at the different theories of the nature of communication from which politeness theory derives its principles deems necessary.

### **2.6.1- Nature of Communication**

Austin (1962) in his Speech Acts Theory asserts that each utterance performs a certain action and that each utterance carries a certain function determined by the speaker and is understood by the hearer if all the felicity conditions are met. These conditions require speakers to abide by the conventions of language use and the role of participants at the moment of uttering the proposition. Moreover, the felicity conditions necessitate that the speaker must have the right intentions and that the action proposed by the utterance can be completed and performed by the hearer. Austin illustrated his felicity conditions proposition by giving the example of the sentence uttered by a priest- I now pronounce you husband and wife. In this utterance, the participants (priest, man, women) abide by the conventions set by the church. The priest has the power to perform the action completely of making them husband and wife and his role is acknowledged by the participants as well as the context of the utterance (being is a church ceremony for the declaration of the married couple). Moreover, the priest has the intention to announce the participants as husband and wife. Therefore, all the felicity conditions are met, and the speech act was successfully performed by the speaker.

However, Searle (1969) criticized Austin's focus on the speaker's intentions and shifted the attention to the hearer's ability to perform the desired action or what he called the perlocutionary effect of the utterance. Searle argues that each proposition (utterance) has a locution, illocution and a perlocutionary force. He therefore, classified speech acts into declaratives, representatives, commissives, directives and expressives, which are carried through linguistic devices called performative verbs. In his later publication (1975), he argues that interactants favor the use of performatives when the explicit or the literal meaning of the proposition is desired (talking to close friends, at home, etc.). However, in other communicative events (when talking to strangers, in intimate relations, with elders etc.), Searle observed that communicators tend to use indirect speech acts and depend on the hearer's interpretive ability to arrive at the intended implied meaning. Therefore, "it's hot in here" is an indirect request to open the door, to show annoyance, discomfort or simply a white lie to justify departure.

Cutting (2002) believes that the use of direct or indirect speech acts is cultural bond and most of all is related to the social distance among interlocutors. In other words, the determination of whether to use direct or indirect speech acts is purely a matter of politeness being practiced. Spencer-Oatey (2008) goes one step further by providing a general rule for the use of directness in communication. She claims that "the more the expression of a communicative act is conventionalized, the more the act is directly performed" (p.64). This presupposes that speech acts are inherently polite or impolite a view which was held by Brown and Levinson and Lakoff. The other theoretical foundation which pertains to linguistic politeness, is the Cooperative Principle formulated by Grice (1975). According to Grice, verbal communication is a social activity guided by social conventions and proceeds based on conversational rules.

The main motive behind interaction is the desire to be cooperative; therefore, interlocutors indulge in a communicative behavior to establish cooperation and harmony. To achieve this goal, Grice formulates four maxims that guide the process of the exchange of talk. Participants have to be informative (maxim of quantity), their contribution has to be truthful (maxim of quality), relevant (maxim of relation) and finally, the information has to be delivered clearly, briefly and orderly (maxim of manner). When speakers abide by these maxims they are conveying literal/explicit meanings.

However, in some social contexts participants tend to flout one or two of these maxims to communicate implicit meanings. Here we enter into the realm of conversational implicatures. Grice (1975) believes that once a speaker violates a maxim, he/she forces the hearer to go beyond the semantic content of the utterance and rely on the invited inferences generated by the presumptions of use. This violation is known as generalized conversational implicatures, which Levinson (2000) believes they act as a cognitive default system for reasoning inferences and act beyond the features of context. This system aids the hearer to reach the correct interpretation of the suggested inference or implicature. According to Grice, this system cooperates with another cognitive process called cancellation. Either the social context of interaction provides the hearer with a clue, or the hearer support the inference by another proposition. In both cases a conversational implicature would not be recovered by the hearer unless the speaker is certain that the hearer (Bezuidenhout, & Cutting, 2002; Lumsden, 2008) has at his/her disposal the proper means to recover the intended inference.

In contrast to Grice's cooperative principle which focuses on the cognitive effort and intention paid by speakers to either conform or violate the conversational maxims to

reach their communicative goals (explicitly/implicitly), Sperber and Wilson (1995) shift the attention to the cognitive processes and interpretative abilities of the hearer through their proposal of the theory of relevance. Sperber and Wilson proposed relevance theory which considers the interpretability of an utterance depends on hearers' "expectation that the utterance is of relevance, and that this expectation, coupled with the evidence provided by the linguistic meaning of the utterance, is sufficient to guide them to the correct speaker meaning" (Scott-Phillips, 2010, p. 586). This also implies that "misinformation is not relevant because it does not make a positive contribution to our existing beliefs" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008, p.58). To put it differently, the relevance of the utterance depends on the ability of the hearer to understand the utterance. If the hearer made less cognitive effort in the comprehension process then the utterance is of great relevance and conversely. Therefore, the greater the relevance the more explicate or literal mood is used in communication, the more/ambiguous/confusing an utterance is the more inference mechanisms are needed and the less relevance the utterance.

The above discussion on the different principles of communicative behavior and their associated maxims is not exhaustive. However, the discussion is intended to act as a platform against which theories of politeness have depended on. It is mentioned earlier that the decision of whether to use a direct or an indirect speech act is determined by psychological and social considerations related to politeness. Likewise, to formulate verbal messages in which the semantic content matches the form and function (literal/explicate meaning) by observing Grice's conversational maxims or opting for a violation of these maxims is also a matter of politeness. Again, the degree of the relevance of the utterance and the choice of disclosure or ambiguity is also an exercise

of politeness. Therefore, the next section will be devoted to the discussion of politeness research to cover the ramified parts of its theory and practice as they evolved over time.

### **2.6.2- Traditional Approaches to Politeness**

Though Lakoff (1973) is the one who pioneered the field of gender and politeness, her urge for a pragmatic approach to the study of politeness is never less important than her proceeding publications on gender talk. Lakoff was the first sociolinguist to apply Grice's conversational maxims to politeness. She devised a pragmatic competent formula made of two major rules (and three sub-rules for the second rule) to reduce friction and promote interpersonal harmony: be clear and be polite. Being polite in Lakoff's perspective means not to impose, give options and make a friend feels good. In this respect, being polite is a deviation from Grice's maxim of manner (clarity) when the social context or constraints force a speaker to override clarity for the sake of being friendly or polite. Another scholar who followed the Gricean tradition is Geoffrey Leech (1983). According to Leech, politeness principle forms one dimension of interpersonal communication in addition to two other principles: cooperation and irony.

Moreover, Leech perceives politeness as a pragmatic strategy used by the speaker to "minimize the expression of impolite belief" (1983, p. 81). His politeness principle consists of the following maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy. The choice of a politeness maxim is determined by a set of scales such as the cost-benefit scale, optionality, indirectness, authority and social distance scale. In other words, the tact maxim is deployed by the speaker to minimize the cost of offense or imposition and maximize the benefit to the addressee. The tact maxim appears to incorporate Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative and positive



politeness in a single maxim. The same is also true to the maxim of generosity but with a significant shift from the addressee to the speaker-maximize benefit and minimize cost of offense to the self. Similar categorizations can be made to the other sets: approbation (other), modesty (self), agreement and sympathy (other and self). It is quite evident from the different maxims and scales that Leech distinguishes between cultural variables and contextual factors that affect the choice of a politeness maxim/scale. Therefore, he named the type of politeness which is subject to cultural variability as relative politeness, whereas the one, which is tied to speakers actions or intended goals through the use of speech acts and their illocutionary force as absolute politeness.

Lakoff and Leech work on politeness represents the first set of researchers who were influenced by Grice's conversational maxims and speech act theory. And it is this very fact which gave rise to a series of criticism. Watts et al. (2005) comments on the conversational view to politeness as "too theoretical to apply to actual language usage and too abstract to account for either commonsense notion of politeness nor some notions that fits into the general theory of social interaction" (p.7). Another criticism is offered by Arundale (1999), who rejects the unilateral view to politeness as speaker oriented which limited politeness to be only "part of speaker meaning, a particularized implicature intended by the speaker" ( p. 144). However, a more comprehensive view to the notion of politeness known as face-saving is unquestionably led by Brown and Levinson (1987).

The face saving view to politeness is guided by two main frameworks: speech acts theory and face. The notion of face is a central concept in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory where face is "the public self image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 61), which should be respected and protected during interaction. Brown

and Levinson (1987) ascribed a Goffmanian definition to their notion of face. Goffman (1967) defined face as "public self-image"(p. 4) which Brown and Levinson expanded to form positive and negative face. Moreover, the second source for the notion of face stems from the English expression "to lose face" which researchers believe is borrowed from Chinese through diplomats and missionaries (Geyer, 2008; Haugh & Hinze, 2003). This is an important note related to the universality claim of Brown and Levinson which has been criticized by Asian researchers as being Westerner in orientation (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1989). In contrast, an illuminating metalinguistic study carried by Haugh and Hinze (2003) assert the common dimensions of the concept of face and politeness among English, Chinese and Japanese.

Let me here go a bit off record to spell out what is in mind. Without any prejudice or claim of superiority to the Arabic Language (Lebanese prejudice at least) over the Chinese or English, Standard Arabic language offers a parallel expression to Brown's positive face 'hofez maa elwajeh'. A literal translation will be 'to save one's face water' and 'face water ' means to keep one's face saved from shame or humiliation and preserve dignity. This expression recurs in most political and social debates or interviews on media and in everyday Lebanese parlance. Probably, this very fact may render the present study more reliable and legitimate bases not only for the presence of an Arabic expression which provides an equivalent to positive face, but it also reveals an Arabic disposition to be polite, to save public and private self image. Thankfully, the researcher's 'face water ' is saved and the criticism of adopting and projecting a foreign concept to the Lebanese culture without a legitimate base is unlikely. An additional point needs to be mentioned, Nureddeen (2008) in her attempt to prove the universality of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) through the analysis of the different

apology strategies used by Sudanese, she draws attention to a classical Arabic expression 'Iragat maa alwajh' which she believes is analogous to face. What is significant in her study is the presence of the term face which was used by informants when they apologized by taking responsibility of wrong actions by saying: "I don't know where to hide my face from you", and "my face on the ground" (p. 302). In Lebanese Arabic if we send/trusted someone to do a favor (or to be trained under the supervision of practitioner) for a friend or relative and he/she disappointed us we tend to use the expression 'saowadleh wejeh' which means my 'face is blackened' to denote our shame and sorrow which literally means losing face. And if it was a successful mission we say 'beiadleh wejeh' meaning 'my face is whitened' which means my face is saved.

Brown and Levinson (1987) in their politeness theory differentiated between two types of face: negative and positive. According to these researchers, speakers intentionally select the appropriate linguistic politeness technique to attend to hearer's positive and/or negative face. Positive face is the desire of everyone to be appreciated, respected and approved off (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, positive politeness is a "redress directed to the addressee's positive face" (p. 101) to "imply common grounds or sharing of wants" (p.103) during interaction. On the other hand, negative face is the desire of everyone to have his/her "freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded" (p.129). Negative politeness then, is a "redressive action addressed to addressee's negative face" (p.129) to ascertain individual autonomy and freedom of action during conversation. This means that during interaction the speaker intentionally selects the appropriate linguistic strategy (from a hierarchy of negative and positive techniques developed by Brown and Levinson) to establish and manage collaboration in conversation. Accordingly, the speaker may claim common ground with the addressee,

express sympathy, attend to hearer's interests, assume agreement, use hedges or avoid disagreement when he/she desires to save and protect speaker's positive and/or negative face (based on Brown and Levinson's hierarchy).

What is significant in Brown and Levinson's work (1987) is the close relation between face and speech acts. Brown and Levinson (1987) envisioned that some speech acts (requests, apologies, confessions, disagreement, etc.) are inherently threatening to the hearer's face (face threatening acts/FTAs). Consequently, the job of the speaker is to mitigate the imposition through a set of linguistic strategies to minimize the effect of the threatening act and to save interlocutors' face. For Brown and Levinson, linguistic politeness strategies are rational behaviors adopted by speakers to save face. However, the choice of the appropriate strategy according to Brown and Levinson is related to the social norms and values that are specific to a given culture. For example, Brown and Levinson believed that the United States is a positive politeness culture, which is evident in the close and intimate human relations, while Japan is a negative politeness culture due to its emphasis on social indifference.

The difference is attributed to the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that affect the choice of negative/positive strategy. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed a formula that links linguistic items with socio-cultural variables: " $W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$ " (p. 76-77). The weight of the FTA (W) is determined by adding the value of the social distance (D) between the hearer and the speaker and the value of the power (P) between them as well as the value of the ranking of the imposition as determined by a specific culture. In this respect, the enactment of politeness strategies has to be in accordance with the accepted socio-cultural norms and values, which Brown and Levinson believed to be unanimous to all cultures.

This universal view of politeness has been subject to criticism. Leech (2007) argued that Brown and Levinson's theory is characterized by an "Anglo-Western view of the supremacy of an individual's desires and right to freedom" (p. 168), which doesn't fit the group oriented cultures of the East (Koutlaki, 2002; Matsumoto 1989; Terkourafi, 2004). Kasper (2006) argued that Brown and Levinson's theory suffers from "Western cultural bias" (p. 244). Moreover, Spencer-Oatey (2008), Stewart (2008) and Watts et al. (2005) criticized Brown and Levinson for their emphasis on the enactment of politeness strategies by the speaker only, and therefore, restricting the analysis of linguistic politeness to the sentence-level (speaker's utterance). Consequently, situational and contextual variables that are embedded in situated discourse (Geyer, 2008) are ignored, since the main attention of Brown and Levinson's theory and their proponents is on the socio-psychological factors (intentions and motivations) cognitively activated to protect and save the individual public self-image.

### **2.6.3- Current Approaches to Politeness**

Recent research on politeness has moved away from the positive/negative dichotomy of Brown and Levinson (1987) to propose a relational and more dynamic paradigm to the study of politeness in talk encompassing both reception and production mechanisms (Geyer, 2008; Locher, 2006; Stewart, 2008). The previous emphasis on the speaker and act-by-act treatment of linguistic politeness (Geyer, 2008) is now placed on large stretches of discourse to show how interlocutors manage and control details of talk in multimodal discursive events (Mills 2003). Moreover, the unilateral psychological dimension to the evaluation of linguistic politeness is supplemented by a discursive view which regards politeness as a social practice created through human interaction (Locher & Watts, 2005; Terkourafi, 2004).

Terkourafi in a later publication (2005) sums up the premises that the social approach to politeness endorses. She asserts that is this social perspective speaker's intentions are supplemented by the hearer's evaluative judgment in a certain context which she called-"situated evaluation" (2005, p. 241). Terkourafi considers hearer's situated evaluation an important criterion for the analysis of politeness in talk for this discursive evaluation assumes no prior predictions of polite utterances unless the participants are aware of the situated context in which politeness is enacted. The situated evaluative process of the hearer, which is context dependent, is given a more pragmatic terminology known as particularized implicatures (Lumsden, 2008; Terkourafi, 2005) as opposed to the generalized implicatures of the traditional model. The second premise related to theories of power relations and struggle that arise among communities and across cultures. Therefore, the universality claim which rests on a harmonious view of social order is replaced by one of tension, struggle and antagonism.

The leading figures of the discursive approach to politeness are Mills (2003), Watts (2003) and Watts et al. (2005), Locher (2006) and Locher and Watts (2005). The discursive approach emphasizes the assessment and evaluation of instances of politeness as they emerge in talk, without prior predictions. Thus they introduce the notion of "variability of perceptions" to politeness" (Haugh, 2007a & b) rather than assumed intentions. Watts (2003) and Watts et al. (2005) is regarded as the one who has challenged the old assumptions of politeness and the one who gave politeness research a twist in perception. Watts (2003; 2005) proposed a framework of politeness that covers the terms: Politic, Polite and Impolite. It is indeed the first model that acknowledges a wide variety of human interactions ranging from those that are polite to those that are rude or aggressive in nature. According to Watts, politic behavior is the accepted social

norm, the appropriate behavior (Mills, 2003) or the unmarked behavior in Locher's (2006) terminology.

The above mentioned researchers believe that this politic behavior is a broader dimension of interpersonal interactions against which a verbal act is characterized as polite or impolite. Therefore, politeness is defined as "linguistic behavior that carries a value in an emergent network in excess of what is required by the politic behaviour of the overall interaction" (Watts, 2003, p. 162). The phrase-in excess of what is required- literally means that what is above the norm or the extra effort paid by participants during interaction is considered polite/marked behavior. Another important dimension in Watts's conceptualization of politic behavior is the recognition of polite behavior as tied and linked to specific social networks or community of practice, which Mills clarifies its importance to the study of politeness as:

Set of practices or strategies which communities of practice develop, affirm and contest and which individuals within these communities of practice engage with in order to come to an assessment of their own and others' behaviour and position in the group (Mills, 2003, p. 9).

Another point of departure from the traditional approach is the social orientation to the notion of face as opposed to the egocentric or individualistic notion that characterized Brown and Levinson's (1987) conceptualization of face. A discursive approach to politeness entails the analysis of discourse to reveal how "face is constructed and negotiated during interaction and how it is related to interlocutors' emergent discursive identities" (Geyer, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, the focus surpassed the appropriate linguistic choice to save face, to "details of talk that construct various

discursive faces"(Geyer, 2008, P. 2). The different, yet interrelated phases of social face constitute relational work; in Geyer's (2008) terminology facework and Spencer-Oatey (2008) refer to it as rapport management. The significance of this construct lies in its ability to capture the full spectrum of work (faces) that interlocutors invest in interpersonal relationships (Locher & Watts, 2005). Geyer (2008), Stewart (2008) and Watts et al. (2005) ascertain that such an interactional social image to the notion of face is pivotal in a discursive approach to politeness because this image is closely related to interactants' multiple discursive and social identities. This multiple identity according to Wodak et al. (2009) comprises of multiple resources of identification frames from which interlocutors intentionally select the appropriate frame based on the situational context of interaction. It is in this multifaceted perception to linguistic politeness that discrepancies among interlocutors' identities are more visible to be detected and analyzed from a conversational and discursive point of view.

#### **2.6.4- Identity and Politeness**

Gender is one of the many multiple aspects of identity, which manifests itself in linguistic behaviors adopted by among males and females across cultures (Watts et al., 2005). Robin Lakoff (1975) published her pioneering work "Language and Woman's Place", in which she highlighted the linguistic discrimination set by men against women in many cultures. Robin believed that women experience linguistic discrimination in two ways: "in the way they are taught to use language, and in the way general language use treats them" (Lakoff, 1975, p. 203). Therefore, she initiated the idea of dominance and difference, which assumes that women speak differently because they are taught to do so. She also added that men's social dominance is quite evident in the way women present themselves.



She espoused that women identify themselves in terms of the men they are related to. Consequently, a woman is Mrs. X and the daughter of Mr. X, etc. Through her introspection of different female talk she was able to conclude that women's social discrimination and marginalization are reflected in their every day talk. Therefore, women's language reflects their insecurity and powerlessness through the use of specific linguistic structures that dominate their rhetoric. Lakoff explained that female talk is characterized by the excess use of hedges, adjectives, and qualifiers. Moreover, women tend to be more polite by resorting to indirect requests and apologies. Women also avoid coarse language and use prestige grammar and clear articulation in their daily conversations.

Lakoff's conceptualization of women's language was criticized by many linguists for many reasons. Mills (2005) claims that Lakoff relied on anecdotal evidence for her generalization of women talk across cultures, yet her research on gendered discourse lead similar results. Mills (2005) ascertains that feminine Western culture views women as nice, supportive and cooperative in contrast to the aggressive and competitive males. Similarly, McConnell-Ginet (2003) asserts that what Lakoff claimed as women language could be considered as a range of linguistic repertoires available to women and that the selection of the appropriate mechanism by different women has to be attributed to the cultural, social, economic, political and the educational status of women as distinct social groups (differentiation within the female group) instead of the genetic makeup differences between males and females.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Hobbes (2003) parallels McConnell-Ginet's view. Hobbs in her study of the positive politeness strategies deployed by males and females in voice messaging related to legal settings reveals that males used politeness

markers (compliments, apologizing, thanking, etc.) in the same frequency as females, and that males used positive politeness strategies more frequently than females. Hobbes attributes these results to the legal institution, which may have compelled males to soften their talk with their clients. Another researcher Mullany (2006) rejects the stigmatization and the labeling of women's talk as trivial; therefore, she proves in her study that female managers successfully use small talk in business meetings as a powerful politeness strategy to decrease social distance and create solidarity with subordinates more efficiently than their male counterparts.

Research on the differences between the enactment of politeness strategies among males and females asserts that males adopt linguistic behaviors/patterns different from those selected by females. De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg (2006), Yu-Jing (2007) and Mills (2003, 2004) examined gender differences based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive and negative politeness strategies. The findings of the above mentioned studies reveal that females tend to use positive politeness strategies to establish and maintain solidarity and agreement. On the other hand, males tend to deploy negative politeness strategies to maintain their social superiority, power and independence.

In addition to gender, social identity (national/collective), values and norms specific to each culture "lingua-culture" (Stewart, 2008, p. 32) play a significant role in the enactment of politeness strategies. A comparative study (Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu, 2007) was conducted to show the difference in the enactment of apology as a redressive politeness strategy in English and Tswana society (African tribal community). Results shows that Setswana criticizes have a tendency to threaten their individual face in favor of saving and maintaining their community or group identity because of their collectivist identity which depend on hierarchical, tight in-group relations which they

are compelled to save. The findings of this study are in direct contrast with the favored individual identity of the West.

In the same manner, a series of cross-cultural studies were conducted to examine the socio-cultural influence on the selection of the appropriate linguistic behavior among Arabic and Western cultures. Mills (2004) research reveals that Arabic informants don't favor indirect request techniques because they emphasize social distance, which contradicts the close social ties that characterize Arabic communities. Mills findings align with Al-Eryani (2005) research conducted in Yemen which shows that Yemeni informants employ indirect refusal strategies followed by justifications for refusing a command, while Americans tend to use direct refusal techniques preceded by feelings of regret. In the same token, Al Zumor (2003) research shows that Jordanians tend to use face threatening acts like confessions with liberty for the sake of protecting their social identity which is in direct contrast to the individual identities favored by the Anglo- Saxon culture.

### **2.7- White Lie-Telling Behavior**

Developmental psychologists, politeness researchers and sociolinguistics are becoming more and more interested in examining the concept of lying as a defining characteristic of interpersonal communication. Xie, He and Lin (2005) assert that lying is a pervasive characteristic of everyday interactions; thus, they call for more research to investigate the relation between lying behavior and politeness. Scholars interested in investigating this phenomenon unanimously agree that lying is a form of deception because it stems from an untruthful proposition asserted by the speaker. Yet, the controversy among those scientists lies in three interrelated areas: the different

classifications and then the attribution of different colors for types of lies based on the severity of the intended harm, the degree of acceptability of certain types of lies by people and society, and finally the intended or more recently the pragmatic intention behind lying. The first of these arguments follows a classificatory mood based on the semantic value of the proposition for distinguishing between black, white, gray and even blue lies (Bryant, 2008; Klockars, 1984). The other socio-cultural mood studied the degree of acceptability of lying behavior by certain social groups and thus classified lies into real (black) lies which are not acceptable, social/white lies which under certain circumstances are accepted and even favored by a community of practice (Cole, 1996; Hardin, 2010). The third attempt is a means for understanding the social-psychological motivations and intentions for telling lies-especially white lies as a pragmatic or a polite move to ease communication and achieve rapport.

To get a full grip of the concept of lying, a brief review of the different approaches as proposed by developmental psychologists is fundamental. The first of these approaches is the propositional approach, which classifies a statement based on the truthfulness of the propositional content of the utterance. This approach parallels Grice's (1975) maxims of the cooperative principle where the violation of the maxim of quality of the utterance (truthfulness) is employed for a pragmatic or communicative effect. The propositional approach proposed three conditions for a statement to be considered a lie. The speaker asserts a false proposition, the speaker knows it is falsehood but makes the hearer assume that it is truthful. If a statement meets the following conditions then it is a lie, if one of the conditions is not meet then it is truthful (Xu, Luo, Fu & Lee 2009).

Objections to this view were raised especially by Coleman and Kay (1981) who proposed a prototypical approach known as lie continuum with prototypical truth-telling at one end and prototypical lie-telling at the other. A statement is classified as prototypical lie if it is actually false; the speaker believes that the statement is false; and the speaker intends to deceive the listener. If one of these conditions is violated then it is still considered a lie but with a less degree. This is was the first attempt to distinguish the different types of lies instead of the truth/falsehood dichotomy. In a recent study Hardin (2010), adapted Coleman and Kay's prototype semantic analysis on Spanish university students. The aim of this replication is to examine whether Spanish students concept of lie matches Coleman and Kay's semantic prototype. Results show that there are specific social and cultural factors related to Spanish community that affect their conception of lie. Spanish speakers are noted to have a tendency to help and give information even if the semantic content is false. Moreover, Spanish participants didn't consider speakers intended deception an overriding element to justify telling a white lie whereas social factors were.

In opposition to Coleman and Kay's semantic prototype, Sweetser (1987) argues for a more comprehensive approach to telling lies. Sweetser integrated social and cultural factors into the judgment of the veracity of a statement known as the "folkloristic model" (Xu, Luo, Fu & Lee, 2009 p. 308). This model accounts for both the semantic content of a prototypical lie and the communicative intent of the speaker to help or harm. It also differentiates between two types of settings: informational and politeness settings. The informational setting aligns with Grice's maxim of being truthful when the purpose of communication is to offer information as accurately as possible; and therefore, judged accordingly as a lie or not. In the politeness setting, the

communicative intent (establish solidarity and empathy) "overrides the truthfulness constraints" (Bloomquist, 2009, p.7). Consequently these lies are considered social or white lies because they are "untruthful statements told without malignant or malicious intent" (Talwer & Lee, 2002, p. 161).

In an attempt to verify Sweetser's social and cultural proposal to white lies-telling, two researches have been conducted in differing cultural settings. The first of these studies was carried by Lee and Ross (1997). Their findings align with Sweetser's framework: intended falsehoods in polite settings were considered white lies, while the same lies were considered real lies when told in informational settings. Moreover, participants judged lies told with intent to help were less likely assessed as lies than those intended to harm. Recently, Xu, Luo, Fu and Lee (2009) examined Chinese young and adult judgments for truthful and untruthful statements based on Sweetser's proposal. Results shows that the communicative intent had a significant influence on Chinese children and adults' moral judgment where as the social setting didn't have a bearing on their moral judgment.

In the same manner, Perkins and Turiel (2007) contend that a false statement made with an intention to help is not judged as a lie compared to a false statement told with intent to harm. Again, a false statement made in politeness setting is less likely to be judged as a lie compared to the same statements made in informational setting. It remains to be said that the most comprehensive approach to the study of white lies that covers the communicative intent of speakers and the effect of politeness settings on the evaluation and judgment of white lies is presented by Camden, Motley, and Wilson (1984). In their research on adults' motivations and evaluations of white lies, they offered taxonomy of the various motivations and classified them into two major

categories and seven subcategories. The first category is called the reward system, which is directly linked with the benefits that the speaker gains from telling white lies. It is thus subdivided into white lies told to protect or save basic needs, for affiliation, to promote self-esteem, to reduce dissonance and for personal satisfaction. The second major category is called target system, which encompasses lies told to protect or save the liar, the non lying participant in interaction or a third party not participating in interaction. Results showed that participants tend to use white lies to protect self-needs and assist others. The second major finding was in the differences of using white lies among participants based on gender. The findings revealed that females significantly tend to use white lies to satisfy affiliation needs more than men. Participating women used white lies more than men to avoid self-disclosure and to hide their true feelings. Another significant finding was related to women who were observed to use white lies to protect the self-esteem of others; however, men used white lies to protect their own self-esteem. Yet the most revealing finding was the fact that participants used white lies as a tact-politeness strategy.

Due to the positive (social and psychological) influence of telling white lies on interpersonal relationships, and their widespread use and acceptability across cultures made developmental psychologist like Saxe (1991) to regard them as "social lubricants" (p. 414). White lies are even considered as an indicator of communicative competence (Bryant, 2008). Bryant conducted his study to find how college students define, conceptualize and distinguish white lies from other forms of deception. The results highlight that fact that informants classified lies based on five social factors: intention, consequence, beneficiary of the lie, truthfulness and acceptability. Therefore, participants assert that white lies are acceptable because they are slight modifications of

truth (not totally untrue), benign in intention, altruistic in purpose and have little or trivial consequences. In Bryant (2008) revealing research on the different types of lies (real, white and gray) he acknowledges the fact that white lies-telling is a communicative strategy, a part of relational work or facework that interlocutors negotiate during interaction. This recent finding pays tribute to the pioneering work of Brown and Levinson who declared thirty years ago that white lies-telling is a positive politeness strategy used deliberately by communicating participants to protect face and to maintain social relations and avoid disagreement.

## **2.8- Conclusion**

The elaboration in the above discussion of the social and psychological motivations of telling white lies is intended because the present research adopts Camden et al. classification system for the motivations of telling white lies. One of the aims of this study is to find cross-cultural differences in white lies telling behavior in Lebanon compared to Western research.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### **3.1- Research Design**

The main objective of this study is to obtain specific responses regarding the social and the individual factors that provoke adult Lebanese to adjust their norms of honesty and to delineate the situational contexts in which white lies are considered socially accepted and positively evaluated. Due to its ethnographic nature, the study focuses on the analysis of a linguistically mediated phenomenon (white-lies telling) as it occurs in natural settings. Therefore, ethnographic information concerning the description of the social settings and participants' identity categories (gender, age group, and social status) are provided in the following sections. The description will also cover certain linguistic phrases (terms of address and greetings, thanking, etc.), social behaviors and actions taken by adult Lebanese in their daily interactions-conversational routines. Non-verbal behaviors like body language (facial expressions and gestures) are equally important in conversation analysis; however, they remain outside the scope of this research.

#### **3.1.1- Quantitative Methods**

Moreover, this study is divided into two separate, yet interrelated parts. The first part is a quantitative description of the extent to which Lebanese positively value white lies telling and the intensity of the social and psychological factors or intentions that drive adult Lebanese to use white lies. To reach this end, a questionnaire was designed following Camden et al. (1984) motivational category system for telling white lies. The purpose is to investigate whether adult Lebanese motivations, intentions and evaluations

of white lies telling fit into Camden et al. (1984) classification category system. Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire will be used to determine whether the findings of this research are compatible with Camden et al. (1984) research findings and other studies as well.

### **3.1.2- Qualitative Methods**

The second part is a qualitative description of the linguistic strategies or politeness moves used by Lebanese participants in different naturally occurring settings. This part is also subdivided into two parts: analysis of responses from Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) and conversational analysis of recorded service encounters. The DCT is composed of ten social events formulated to emulate real social settings that most Lebanese citizens had already encountered or are expected to face in their daily interactions. These situations are designed in a manner to elicit responses that are most likely infused with white lies. The objective behind DCT is to document the extent to which white lies became a form of social lubricants or an indicator of Lebanese communicative competence (Saxe, 1991) in interpersonal interactions.

Moreover, the second subdivision of the qualitative part is dedicated to show how adult Lebanese discursively manage and negotiate their multiple identities in face threatening situations in every day talk. This part will adopt a discursive approach to politeness as formulated by Geyer (2008) to "take full account of the hearer's position and evaluative participation in discourse" (p. 42). This part perceives white lies to be a form of relational work/facework (a politeness strategy), which speakers attend to and manipulate during interaction. Therefore, aspects of politeness strategies used in greetings and address terms, in the opening of the service encounters, in request forms,

in negotiating price, and in leave taking will be analyzed, in addition to conversational analytical tools such as: conversational implicatures, speech acts and cooperative maxims. The purpose is to examine through conversational analysis and discursive politeness approach the mechanisms carried by Lebanese interlocutors in the process of constructing and negotiating face and identity.

### **3.2- Research Context**

The DCT and the questionnaire were administered to undergraduate students (50 males and 50 females) enrolled in 101 and 102 English classes in a private Lebanese University following the American style of teaching in Beirut. This university offers its educational services to Lebanese and international students coming from medium to high social status (middle and upper class). Therefore, all participants come from well-to-do families who are expected to use white lies more frequently-due to their social upbringing-than low or working class as research done by Mills (2004) and Yu-Jing (2007) indicates.

The second part, related to service encounters was conducted in two vendor shops in Saida. Both shops sell adult casual ware for both males and females (a shop for each gender). The objective is to investigate how adult Lebanese negotiate their multiple discursive identities in naturally occurring settings-service encounters-conducive for telling white lies. The reason behind this choice is related to the sales persons (two shop owners) who are expected to tell white lies to save their basic needs (financial status as a motivation for lying) and the customers who are expected to use white lies in the leave taking move (justify departure, or hide attitudes towards sold items). A third party is more likely to participate (friends or relatives accompanying

informants or other buyers who are present in the shop) in the discursive encounters by giving opinion or comments regarding the appropriateness of the bought items. The medium of exchange in the service encounters is Lebanese colloquial Arabic, which is the spoken language of every day interactions.

### **3.2.1- Participants**

One hundred undergraduates (50 male and 50 females) taking English 101 and 102 courses in the second semester of the academic 2010-2011 participated in the section related to the DCT and questionnaire. Participants come from different faculties in the university and were randomly selected. Because of the diverse cultural, social and educational background of participating students- Arabic is to some a second/foreign language and even an unfavorable mood of expression to others, English was the chosen medium of exchange. Therefore, the items in the DCT and the questionnaire were written in English and participants also responded in English. The DCT was administered first to students, who were asked to write specific responses to the ten situations presented. Afterwards, they were asked to respond to questionnaire items in which they have to rate the motivations, which most likely drove them to use white lies in the DCT.

Moreover, ten audio-taped service encounters (discursive events) are recorded from 5 adult males and 5 adult females engaged in purchasing clothing items in Lebanese spoken language. Participants of this group are more likely to belong to middle class; since the items sold in both shops (males and females) are considered to be of high quality which low working class can't afford. The service encounters were recorded in two shops in Saida, which increases the heterogeneity of the sample. Saida

is the financial center of south Lebanon and it offers its services to Lebanese coming from the southern coastline, suburbs and surrounding villages. This means that customers come from various social, cultural, financial and religious backgrounds; however, only the financial variable was most likely controlled due to the quality of the materials sold in both shops.

### **3.2.2- Data Instruments**

Triangulation is the method used for collecting data in this study. Three types of data instruments are used: questionnaires (quantitative), DCT (quantitative), and recorded service encounters/ real-life conversations (qualitative). This is done in order to enhance the reliability and validity of the collected data and the validity of the researcher's interpretations. Another reason is related to the ethnographic nature of this study, which focuses mainly on the enactment of politeness strategies-telling white lies- by adult Lebanese from social and cultural perspectives.

### **3.3- Procedure**

The data collected from the first group of participants was gathered from informants' responses to the various social situations presented in the DCT. The social situations covered birthday parties, dinner invitations, gatherings, family issues, intimate relations and a range of social scenarios related to academic settings. The scenarios are formulated in a manner that presents face-threatening acts with varying degrees of intensity ranging from none threatening, moderately threatening to highly threatening which would coerce participants to use white lies as a strategy to save or protect their public self-image (face). The purpose is to elicit responses that contain instances of white lies telling that parallel the responses that participants had already

stated in the past (if they faced with some of these situations) or are expected to use had they been faced with similar circumstances. Moreover, special attention in the analysis process will be given to gender differences regarding the type, structure and intensity of white lies used between males and females participants.

Immediately after the administration of the DCT, the questionnaire was distributed to the same participants to rate the favored motivations/intentions, which most likely compelled them to use white lies in the DCT. According to Camden et al. (1984), adults use white lies to protect their basic needs (such as personal belongings of goods or materials, financial resources, etc.). The second motivation for telling white lies is either to increase or decrease affiliation (such as to initiate/continue interaction, avoid conflict, redirect conversation or avoid self-disclosure). The third motivation behind telling white lies is the intention to affect the self-esteem of interlocutors (such as lies to enhance self-image, competence and social expectations). It is quite clear that the enhancement process that Camden et al. are calling for is analogous to Brown and Levinson (1987) positive politeness strategies to protect and save face. The last motivation for telling white lies is for personal satisfaction (such as jokes and exaggerations told on purpose).

Accordingly, 11 items in the questionnaire were devised to parallel the motivational factors described by Camden et al. (1984) and participants were required to choose whether they strongly agree, agree, don't agree or strongly disagree with these motivational factors. The last two items in the questionnaire were designed to reveal if Lebanese adult participants hold contradictory schemas related to the moral and the social acceptability of telling white lies. The answers gained from questionnaire will be analyzed using SPSS software to show the frequency of the favored motivational factors

and the variations in participants' judgments of white lies and degree of acceptability. Moreover, the variations in the rated frequencies for each motivational factor and intention by males and females participants will contribute to the discussion related to gender differences in telling white lies.

However, critics of the DCT (Yuan, 2001) method of collecting data believe that "DCT responses are found to be shorter, simpler, less face-attentive and less emotional" (P.272). Therefore, to compensate for this limitation 10 service encounters (5 males and 5 females) are recorded. In this process, the attention will be on the details of talk with a specific focus on how adult Lebanese are able to "present many different faces, or masks in the course of interaction" (Locher, 2006, p. 251). The collected data were transcribed, translated and analyzed following conversational analysis framework. However, traditional methods of conversation analysis such as hedges, pauses, fillers, turn taking, overlaps, interruptions do not suit the objectives of this research. Other elements of conversational analysis such as direct and indirect speech acts, conversational implicatures, cooperative principle as well as service encounter routines are the guiding frameworks. The service encounter routines consist of four phases/sequences: opening of the service encounter (through greetings and terms of address), request sequence (elicitation, request of item, acceptance or refusal), payment or price negotiation exchange and finally leave taking or closing sequence (Orecchioni, 2006; Veronique, 2006).

### **3.4- Lebanese Ethnolinguistics**

A cross-cultural overview of Lebanese colloquial terms and conversational routines used during service encounters are briefly presented because the analysis of the

recorded conversations in the proceeding chapters will be judged based on these observations. The opening of the service encounters in Lebanon can be expressed in different linguistic terms. The formulaic greetings in Lebanon are various and include items of English and French greeting expressions: marhabah, yateek el afieh, slamou alaykom, bonjour, hi, hello. Similarly, the shopkeeper has within his disposal a wide set of linguistic choices to respond: Ahlan, tafeddal, ahlawsallah, marhebtien, ya ahlan, meet marhabah, bonjour, etc. Then, one of the participants signals the beginning of a request sequence that either starts with the shopkeeper saying (keef fee sadak, shoo betreed, etc.) or request from the customer (fee endak, please feeh shouf, blaei endak, badi azbak, etc). Afterwards, the customer can accept the product, demand alternatives or simply refuse the offer (meneeha, tamam, kteer aall, ok, bien, mesh helweh, fee loon taneh, fee shi ahla men hay, etc). If the customer accepts the offer participants indulge into negotiating price (adash betkhaleya, shoo betreed, shoo hakka, laa kteer hiek, nazil shwee, ma bieder, etc). Finally, the closing sequence is initiated by the shopkeeper, mabruk, ahla wesalah, mahaleek, tikram eanek, and the customer responds by saying shokran, yeslamoo, azabtak, yateek ellaffeh.

### **3.5- Conclusion**

The above discussion attempted to give a general overview of the way Lebanese conduct and manage service encounters. It is by no means inclusive for other forms of address, greetings and request forms are possible; however, the discussion is meant to guide the analysis in the proceeding chapters.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### **4.1- Analysis of Discourse Completion Text (DCT)**

The DCT represents the first instrument for collecting the data needed for the qualitative analysis of telling white lies. As explained in chapter three, the DCT includes ten social situations, which were designed to drive participants to use white lies in their expected responses. These social situations cover a variety of social events/acts stated in an elaborated fashion to cover the description of the setting, participants involved, relationship among participants, social distance, and a clearly stated goal-oriented question to elicit the desired responses. Moreover, participants were asked to read the situational prompts and then reflect for few seconds before they deliver their responses. The aforementioned process is used to increase the reliability of the DCT instrument as suggested by Varghese and Kristine (1996)-as is explained more thoroughly in chapter six.

Furthermore, the situations were structured to present a variety of either face saving or face enhancing self and others' image as well as varying degrees of imposition on personal life. However, one situation (no. 5, Appendix-A) was intentionally designed not to imply any implicit or explicit threat or imposition; and therefore, there is no need to display any means of politeness strategies because the purpose behind this situation was purely informational. This situation (no. 5) is used for two reasons. The first one is to confirm the results of previous research on white lies telling which ascertain that white lies are tactfully used in politeness settings. Therefore, in informational settings where the main purpose of interaction is merely to supply factual information,

interlocutors offer truthful statements (Talwar & Lee, 2002). The second reason is to check the validity of the responses supplied by participants. Therefore, it is used as an internal regulator-a testing device (Bussey, 1999) - to insure that informants were engaged, thoughtful and conscious during the administration of the DCT. The placement of the fifth situation is also suggestive; it is displayed after four highly threatening situations, which might signal to participants that they are required to respond with a white lie in each situation. Results reveal that informants were not misled and they conscientiously responded truthful statements. The situation is as follows (no. 5, Appendix-A):

*S-5: You arrived home to find a close friend of your mom paying her a visit. Your mom insisted that you be introduced to her friend and chat with her. The visitor immediately started by asking you questions about your age, major and the name of your university. What would you tell her?*

Results showed that all male participants (50) responded with truthful statements declaring that they would answer their mother friend's questions and supply her with the answers. Some male participants declared that they will answer her '*politely, honestly*' and many said '*I'll tell her the truth*'. One male participant said '*I would tell her everything, I will not lie*'.

In the female section, most females (47) offered similar responses but they added adjectives and qualifiers such as '*sure, I'll answer here delightfully; with pleasure; with a smile; and I'll be nice to her*'. Unexpectedly, three females replied: '*I lie to her, none of your damn business, and sorry I'm very busy and I should be in the university*'. At the first glance, it is surprising because females are famous to welcome

any opportunity for small talk/gossip (Coupland, 2000). However, from a psychological perspective regarding the motivations of telling white lies as outlined by Camden et al. (1984), researchers indicated that a white lie can be instigated to avoid social interaction (undesired social consequences) when the participant refuses to comply with a direct or an indirect request which might have been signaled in the situational prompt by the phrase *'Your mom insisted that you be introduced to her friend'*. Consequently, two females refused the request and thus chose to tell white lies. The first one offered her sorrow and justified her inability to answer because she is busy and has to be in the university-white lie, while the other one simply uttered *'I will lie to her'*. However, the daring response was from the female who said *'none of your damn business'* which is impolite, rude and contradicts research on women's polite use of language (Lakoff, 1975).

After the analysis of the internal regulator of the DCT, a thorough analysis of the motivational factors that drove informants to use white lies will proceed in the order presented to participants (Appendix-A) in the DCT. The first situation presents a rather common social event; however, it introduces a socio-psychological dimension by stating that the party was boring and this would most likely form an excuse for leave taking. The situation prompt states the following:

*S-1: You have been invited to your friend's birthday party, but after half an hour you find it very boring. You decided not to waste your time any longer since you have a lot of important things to attend to. What excuse would you give the host before leaving?*

The results of both males and females regarding this situation were as expected. Most males (49) and females (48) responded to the social act by giving the host an excuse, which is tantamount to a white lie. The excuses given ranged from personal

issues such as sickness, an urgent call from a friend, exams, unfinished homework, another party, meeting, or dinner; to other excuses related to family issues, baby sitting a sibling, an urgent call from parents, a parent coming at the same time from abroad, accident/emergencies at home, and other unspecified family needs.

Based on Camden et al. (1984) classification category system, the motivations behind telling white lies in this situation is related to saving self-image and the image of a second party. The desire to save self-image is consistent with Camden et al. system in which they proposed that finding an excuse to end an unfavorable social interaction, which they termed as leave taking, is a motivational factor that drives adults to use white lies. Participants in this situation were also motivated to avoid self-disclosure and opted to hide their true feelings about this boring social event. Thus, most participants were moved by the desire to hide their true feelings away from the host. An exception was the responses of one female and one male participant who announced that they will not leave even if they were bored because the host is a friend. Hence, social roles and obligations controlled their true emotions and forced them to continue the boring party. Another female participant mentioned that she would bluntly tell the host that *'she is not happy and it is better for her to leave'*.

Moreover, another motivational element, which Camden et al. (1984) believed is the primarily motive for telling lies is related to saving one's basic needs. In saving and enhancing basic needs category, researchers considered saving or protecting one's time is a motivational factor that compels interactants to use white lies. These two motivations (avoid self-disclosure and saving basic needs) are related to the reward category system, which identifies the different rewards or social intentions that drive interlocutors to use white lies. Moreover, Camden and his colleagues noted that white

lies are not only intended to benefit the liar but according to them, white lies are also used in interpersonal relations to save or protect a second party and even a third one. Therefore, in this situation, the white lies uttered by participants are intended to save participant's self-image and a second party, which is the host's public-self image (face according to Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The results of situations one and five don't indicate any significant difference in the number of females who used white lies/truth statements compared to their males counterparts; however, the following situation presents a striking paradox:

*S-2: Your boy/girl friend surprised you with a new haircut/outfit, which he/she believes trendy and fits his/her style perfectly, but you terribly dislike and resent the new look.*

*What would you say to him/her?*

The results of this situation explicitly contradict Camden et al. (1984) research findings related to gender differences in telling white lies. Only five females (out of 50) used white lies to avoid-self disclosure (show their true feelings and emotions) and to protect a second party's self-esteem by concealing their true attitudes towards a change in the boy/girl friend's taste (new outfit/haircut). The other female participants seemed to be outspoken and expressed their judgments of dislike and resentment of the new change without any consideration of the second party's self esteem and emotions. Their responses were clear indication of the intimate relations that they share with their boyfriends and they made a point that this is for the best interest of their beloved ones. Sentences like, *'I would tell him honestly that I don't like it and the old one is better; I think the new look doesn't fit you, so don't be upset, but I'm telling you this because I love you'; it really doesn't fit you sweet heart; baby, I'm sorry but you look terrible,*

*please go change your hair cut'*, clearly demonstrate that female participants didn't display politeness strategies in passing their comments and they didn't seem to consider their remarks as a direct imposition on the other party's personal affairs which need mitigation or redress moves (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

An important point needs to be clarified here. Both male and female participants for one reason or another restricted the image of a boy/girl friend to the close intimate relations between sexes and they abruptly dismiss any ordinary relations that exist between females or males of the same sex. This fact shouldn't be ignored because it may have affected the sincerity of the responses had the situation been considered differently from both. Compared to the female responses, 22 males used white lies to avoid self-disclosure and to enhance the self-esteem of the second party. The significant increase in the use of white lies in the male responses is clearly suggestive. Male participants were more concerned with the psychological damage that true statements would have arisen in their girlfriends' self-esteem and the consequences that these utterances may have in the whole affair.

Therefore, 22 males (out of 50) chose a polite strategy (white lies) by saying *'you look nice, though I prefer the old one; you look lovely; I'd compliment her and show that I like it; you look perfectly, since you always look perfect, but the one you had before was better; accept the new look and thank her for the surprise; I would lie at first, but I'll just face it later on with her; it doesn't fit you but I'll be considerate; I'll tell her gently but give no orders'*. Yet, the most sticking male response was: *'I would tell her that I like her new haircut and tell a close friend to tell her that I disliked it'*. Now what does this clearly reveal? Males were concerned about the consequences of their utterances on the whole relationship contrary to females-who were supposed to use the

politeness strategy as research on gender politeness suggests (Lakoff, 1975; Mills, 2003). Male informants used white lies in this situation as a tactful strategy to reduce conflict and disagreement and to avoid undesirable social consequences on the relation.

The third situation offers a distinctively different social situation, which is related to using white lies to avoid transgression, punishment and conflict. The situational prompt is as follows:

*S-3: You were having an extremely wonderful and enjoyable time with your friends, when all of a sudden you recognized it is 4 o'clock in the morning. What excuse would you give your mom/dad to avoid conflict and punishment?*

The results of telling white lies in this situation was related to the social roles and norms dictated by society which give social liberty and freedom of action for males and deny it for females. Therefore, thirty five females (out of 50) used white lies as a justification to coming home late at night. Because social conventions and norms limit females' freedom and in some Lebanese social groups (like Muslims) forbid females from staying out late till four in the morning, more females used white lies to justify their late arrival. In contrast, twelve males (out of 50) resorted to white lies as an excuse. The motivation that compelled both males and females to use white lies is related to the motivational category of Camden et al. (1984), which considered one of the communicative intentions of telling white lies is to avoid relational conflict. Therefore, white lies were used by participants to decrease the likelihood of a confrontation/argument with their parents. In both cases the given excuses varied for example, *'my friend got suddenly sick; I had a flat tire; we went into a fight; no taxi*

*available; I lost my phone; my friend had a car accident; I took my friend to the hospital'.*

The next situation (no.4) is also related to pre-determined social roles and expectations, which dictate and shape individual social behaviors and interpersonal communications in particular. Research devoted to examine the enactment of politeness in Eastern cultures emphasized the collectivist spirit that dominates these societies- Arabic in particular (Al-Eryani 2005; Al zumor, 2003) to the extent of denying the self in favor of the tribe or the nation. The results of this situation assert the above mentioned view.

*S-4: You have been invited to your best friend's house to have dinner with his/her family. You know that his/her mom made every effort possible to prepare the food you like most, but you find it tasteless and soggy. Your friend's mom is anxious to know your opinion. What would you say to her?*

All males and females participants used white lies in their responses. This was a clear attempt to avoid self-disclosure, to eliminate harm, and to save the other party's self-esteem. It is social obligations and roles that forced participants to reply with exaggerated politeness to save the face of their friend's mother. It is a social expectation to act politely in the presence of those who are older and this situation is no exception. However, a close examination of the female responses showed that their responses ranged from good, very good, delicious to awesome (three instances). However, male responses were characterized by the use of qualifiers such as: '*you are the best cook ever; the best dinner ever; it is so delicious, you are an excellent cook; the food is amazing; wow delicious*'. This apparently contradicts Lakoff's view (1975); because she



contended that it is the females who use a lot of adjectives and qualifiers in their language.

Moreover, in the situation that follows (no. 6 Appendix-A) gender differences were also observed. The sixth situation was formulated as follows:

*S-6: You have been called by your professor (major course) for a meeting in his/her office for late submission of course assignments and low grades. What would you say to justify your behavior?*

In this social act, a series of motivational factors intertwined to coerce participants to use white lies. Thirty males and thirty-eight females used white lies to defend, protect and enhance their public-self image (face). The motives that provoked the use of white lies are linked to enhancing self-esteem through lies told to promote "image related to personal competence" such as academic or social skills (Camden et al., 1984, p. 313). Moreover, participants' ability to use white lies in a meeting with a professor to defend their low academic achievement shows willingness from the part of participating students to redirect conversation and manipulate second party's (professor) compassion to their best interest. White lies such as-family problems, parent (uncle, mom, grandmother) death, being abroad, busy academic schedule and course load, hospital admissions, part time job- recur in most excuses given by male and female participants. However, in the truthful responses by both parties, there was a tendency to offer apology and feelings of regret coupled with a promise for future improvement. For example, *'I know I wasn't the perfect student, I really regret it and I promise you to change; I admit that I should work harder, get better grades if you gave me a chance to take extra assignments; I promise you that my performance will improve'*, these truthful

statements are used by both males and females as a sign of regret and to indirect polite request for another chance.

The results of this situation show a slight difference in telling white lies among males and females with an advantage to females. However, the next situation highlights the difference even further. The situation was as follows:

*S-7: One of your closest friends had just enrolled in one of the core courses that you have received an A on in the previous semester. Fearing from taking a C, he/she asked you to give him/her a copy of your course assignments, term papers and projects that are related to the course. What would you say to your friend?*

The analysis of this situation obviously parallels the stated tradition regarding Arab social behaviors and moods of interaction and more specifically in this case Lebanese (discussed in situations 3 and 4). Results of this situation also indicate that adult Lebanese social behaviors are characterized by a collectivist notion for backing, supporting and being available for serving or doing free favors to others. Only two males and thirteen females considered giving a friend the whole course work an intimidating process which required the use of white lies to protect their basic needs. It seems that university students have acquired a notion of sharing course work and projects to the extent of neglecting one's personal effort for the sake of a friend. Consequently, those students who showed support for their friends' request have actually performed in consistency with the expected social roles of university students that friends are there for each other.

Moreover, even those who were glad to offer their help were cautious of replicating material. Thus, they advised their friends to be aware of plagiarism by

saying *'buddy be careful change thing; don't forget to add changes or you will be caught; please don't copy and paste for your safety*. This implies that even with fear of plagiarism, social roles and expectations controlled their social behavior especially male participants who showed preference to help others.

Similar results were also noted in the proceeding situation (no. 8, Appendix-A) where sixteen male participant and thirteen females used white lies as a justification for refusing a request. The situation was formulated as follows:

*S-8: You are a C student in math/English. Your neighbor has high expectations and believes that you are an A student. He asked you a favor to help his low achieving son in math/English. What would you tell your neighbor?*

What is significant in this situation is that it yielded three types of responses. The majority of the participants (26 male and 31 female) directly refused the request to help the child's neighbor. Those participants were more concerned with the consequences of accepting the offer more than saving their public self-image. Participants clearly stated to the neighbor that they are not A students, thus they are not competent for teaching his/her son and some advised the neighbor to find an alternative tutor. Sentences like, *I'm sorry but I'm not good at math; sorry, I can't I have my own problems with math; I'm not a good math teacher'*, clearly reveal participants' preoccupation with the consequences of the action. These responses transcend the desire to offer a polite refusal strategy to avoid social embarrassment (not an A student), for the sake of saving a third party which is the neighbor's son. They refused by clearly stating that they are not good in math/English; and therefore, they can't offer help.

On the other hand, the second type of responses-though are not lies- indicate an intended desire to save face and protect self-esteem through the acceptance of the assumed competence (A student). Six females and eight males accepted the request for teaching the son's neighbor. This shows their inability to supersede social role expectations and the falsely attributed competencies even at the expense of jeopardizing the academic future of the son's neighbor.

Finally, the third type of responses is related to telling white lies as an excuse to refuse the request. This kind of lies are, according to Camden et al. (1984), told to protect and enhance the social image and role expectations which the researches classified them under the category known as "social desirability" (1984, p. 313). Thirteen females and sixteen males articulated excuses such as *'sorry, I don't have time; I have a lot of exams; I'm so busy; I have many things to do besides studying'*. These responses come at the middle of a continuum: accepting false social attributions and denying them. The motivations that compelled those participants to use white lies are intended to preserve their self-esteem as determined by others and to avoid accepting a request-avoid social interaction (explained in situation 5 above), which may have negative social consequences.

The above situations were formulated to clarify the relation between social norms, roles and expectations and the influence that society exerts on individual linguistic choices and behaviors; however, the following situations redirect the discussion to saving self-image. The situation before the last was articulated in the following manner:

*S-9: Your parents had recently divorced. Your friends have heard a lot of rumors and few of them came to you to clarify the issue. What would you tell them?*

Responses to this situation were also divided, either total denial of the parents' divorce or an impolite utterance such as, *'it's none of your business; stay out of it, this is personal'*. It is true that this situation is highly threatening and represents a direct imposition on personal affairs; however, participants reacted in an unexpected manner. The objective behind this situation was to check the ability of university students to use white lies as social lubricants (discussed in chapter two) a strategy, which aims to show the communicative competence of students to redirect conversation and manipulate the interaction to their own interests. Only one male participant showed that he uses white lies strategically. He said; *'there is nothing to worry about, I'm okay'*. He successfully directed the attention from the topic of divorce to the influence that this may have on his feelings and well-being. Instead of avoiding self-disclosure, or save self-public image, he used white lies to "reduce dissonance" about a given problem which Camden et al. classified as "dissonance reduction" (1984, p. 313).

Finally, the results of the final situation shows that all male and female participants tend to protect their basic needs by stating the truth that they have an appointment and they didn't show any inclination to save the second party's face. The situation was described as follows:

*S-10: You are preparing yourself to an important meeting. Unexpectedly, the doorbell rang and your cousin stopped by to check on you for not hearing from you for a long time. What would you tell him/her?*

The unanimous agreement among male and female participants reveals that the motivation to protect basic needs because it is 'an important meeting' overrides the desire to save others face. However, participants used polite linguistic forms to express their sorrow and show willingness to schedule another meeting before the departure of the visitor.

#### **4.1.1- Discussion**

As stated in chapter three, the DCT was designed to elicit responses that are infused with white lies telling which most likely would parallel the responses that participants might give in naturally occurring social interactions. The main aim is to analyze the different motivational factors (social and psychological) that provoke Lebanese university students to use white lies. As the above analysis shows, Lebanese polite behaviors-especially white lies- are determined by the social roles and norms specific to the Lebanese culture (situations 3,4 and 7) and the psychological motivations which tend to control the linguistic choices and the politeness moves deployed by Lebanese participants. The analysis also reveals that Lebanese university students have tendency to save others face at the expense of their personal public image when the social consequences of the request is unfavorable (situations 1, 2-male participants- 7 and 8). However, when the social influence was minimal Lebanese adult participants used white lies to protect their basic needs (situations 1 and 6) and some were even driven by this motive to the extent of being impolite in their reactions (situation 9). Another significant finding is related to the difference in the frequency of using white lies among male and female participants. Two-hundred four instances of white lies telling were supplied by female participants. In contrast, one-hundred eighty two male

responses were considered instances of telling white lies. This finding is in conformity with research on gender differences on politeness and telling white lies.

Politeness researchers Mills (2005, 2004) and Lakoff (1975) ascertain that females tend to use politeness strategies in their every day interactions more than men. Though Mills and Lakoff's studies were conducted on settings shaped by western culture and values, the result of this DCT on Lebanese participants confirms the general disposition of females across cultures to be polite more than males. Regarding white lies telling behavior, also western research (though rare) asserts that fact that women use white lies more than men as a strategy to increase affiliation and to avoid relational conflict (Camden et al., 1984). This study parallels Camden et al. (1984) findings. In situations (3, 6) more females used white lies as an excuse to avoid conflict with parents and to manipulate a conversation to their best interest. However, the findings of the DCT can't be taken alone as evidence against which findings of other research can be judged. Therefore, the results that will be supplied by the questionnaire will be an added value to further the discussion on the gender differences of telling white lies.

#### **4.2- Analysis of Questionnaire**

The administration of the questionnaire (Appendix-B) was carried in the same session and immediately after participants filled their responses on the DCT. This is done on purpose. The main objective of the questionnaire is to obtain quantitative data concerning the rating of the different motivation that drove participants to use white lies in the DCT. However, the different items of the questionnaire don't only reiterate the motivational categories for telling white lies mentioned in the discussion of the DCT above, but it also presents participants with other motivational categories for white lies-

telling as described by Camden as his colleagues and which were not targeted in the DCT. The purpose is to cover as much as possible the different categories for white lies-telling in order to arrive at a more comprehensible view for telling white lies in Lebanon. The questionnaire includes 13 items, eleven of which are dedicated to weigh the socio-psychological motivations for telling white lies. The last two items are formulated to add cultural dimension to the discussion as will be explained below.

The first item was dedicated to examine the extent to which participants believe that white lies are used to protect basic needs (situations 1, 6, and 7 in DCT). Results showed that 70% of participating students agree that white lies are used to save basic needs out of which 23% strongly agree with a mean value of 2.13 and a standard deviation of 0.83. These results are consistent with the findings discussed in the DCT where the most number of white lies used by participants were dedicated to saving basic needs in situations (1, 6, and 7). However the table below illustrates the difference among males and females.

TABLE 4.2.1

Gender Differences for Protecting Basic Needs

		<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Don't Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	13	25	9	3
	<b>Female</b>	10	22	15	3
<b>Total</b>		23	47	24	6

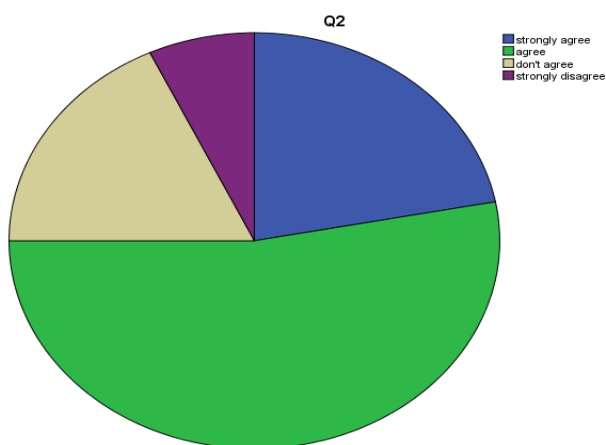
The table clearly shows that males used white lies to protect their basic needs by an increase of 3% more than females.

In the second item of the questionnaire was dedicated to measure the extent to which white lies are used to dishonor a command or an undesirable request (DCT



situations 7, 8, 9). Results show that 53% of participants agree that white lies are used to refuse commands and request and an additional 22% strongly agree. Therefore, 75% of participants generally agree that white lies are a polite strategy used to find refuge from undesirable requests. The following pie chart schematizes the results:

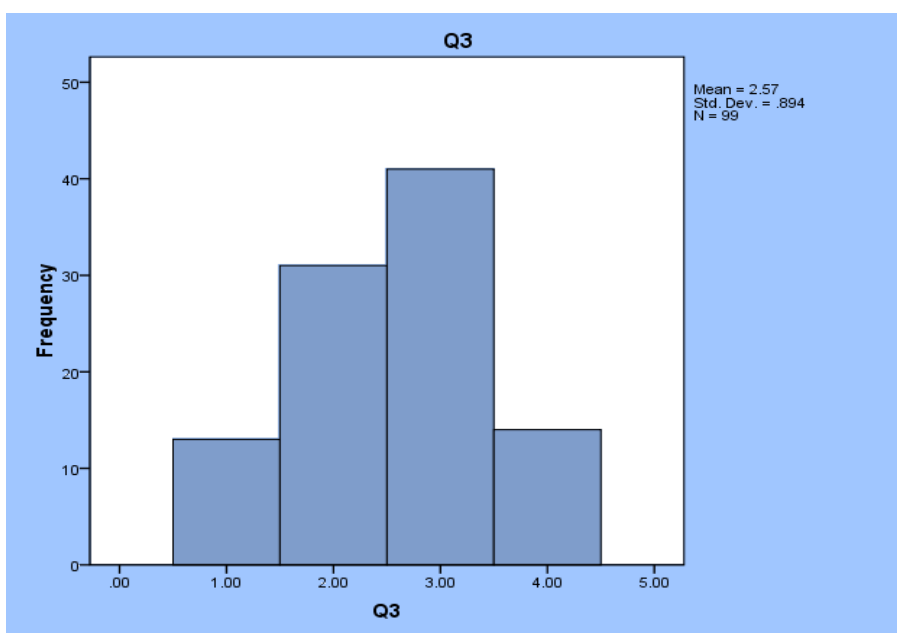
CHART 4.2.2  
Responses for Refusing Requests



According to gender differences, 42 % of the females agreed compared to 33% for males with a mean value of 2.10 and a standard deviation of 0.822.

The third item in the questionnaire highlights the tactful move of using white lies to manipulate a conversation to one's interest (DCT situations 6, 9 and 10). The findings of this item of the questionnaire parallel the results of the situations in DCT where the least amount of responses which included white lies. In these situations, participants showed low tendency to use white lies as a strategy to redirect conversations to their best interests. The results are shown in the following graph.

CHART 4.2.3  
Frequencies for Manipulating Conversation



Contrary to the preceding items, 55% of participants disagree out of which 14% strongly disagree with a mean value of 2.57 and a standard deviation of 0.89. This is a clear indication that white lies are not used by Lebanese participants as a tactful strategy. The number of females who didn't agree or strongly disagreed increased by 7% compared to male participants.

In the following item, 57% of participants agreed that white lies are told to avoid self-disclosure with a mean value of 2.35 and standard deviation of 0.86. These results are in conformity with the results of the DCT (situations 1, 2, and 4). There is an agreement among 57% of the sample (29% for females compared to 28% for females) that white lies are used to avoid self-disclosure and protect face. The results of the DCT also confirm this fact. Participants in the DCT used white lies as a means not to show their true feelings regarding the dinner and birthday party, yet with a lesser degree in the second situation

The fifth item was formulated to be analogous to the third situation in the DCT. 74% of participants agreed that they use white lies to avoid transgression. However, the results were contradictory-though the majority of participants in both cases showed tendency to use white lies to avoid punishment-gender differences were not similar. In the DCT, the number of females who used white lies outweighs males by 23 responses in favor of telling lies. In contrast, in the questionnaire items males used white lies to avoid punishment by an increase of 4%. The difference is justifiable based on the social norms (explained above) that played a significant role in shaping female behavior.

In the sixth item 62% of participants didn't agree to use white lies to enhance self-image with a mean value of 2.59 and a standard deviation of 0.95. This parallels the results obtained in situation number eight in the DCT where 19 instances of white lies telling were observed. According to gender differences, 35 % of female participants don't prefer to use white lies to enhance face compared to 27% for males.

The seventh item in the questionnaire reveals that 55% of participants don't prefer to use white lies to either eliminate or initiate relations. The mean value is 2.74 and standard deviation of 0.88. 25% of male participants didn't favor telling white lies to initiate/eliminate interaction compared to 40% for females. This means that females in particular don't follow the strategy of telling white lies to end or start an interaction.

In relation to saving other's lives and possessions, results of item number eight reveal that 90% of participants use lies to save others. This is in conformity with the conclusion stated above in the DCT.

The ninth item directs participant attention to malicious intention for lying. 70% of participants didn't agree to use white lies (mean value of 2.96 and standard deviation

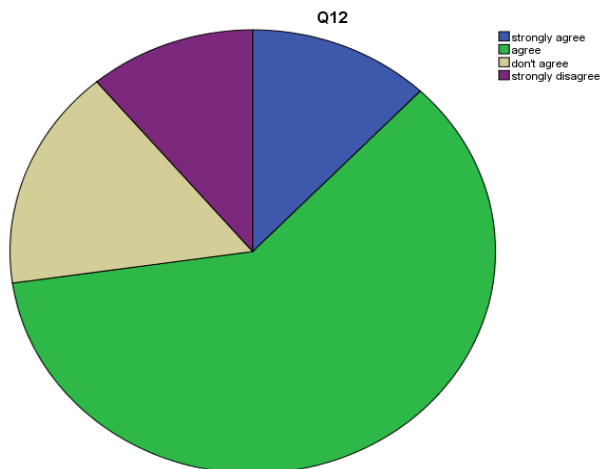
of 0.94) to justify cheating and deceiving others. Among the 70% of participants who didn't prefer using white lies to deceive others 39% were females. These results are consistent with research on telling white lies, which is justified only for under non-harmful intentions and they are unaccepted when the intention is to deceive or harm (Talwar & Lee, 2002).

The opposite scenario is offered in the tenth item which is related to the good intentions behind telling lies. 88% of participants (with approximately equal ratings by both males and females) with a mean value of 2.0 and standard deviation of 0.75 agreed to use white lies to help a dear friend to avoid punishment. This result also emphasizes the good intentions which drove adult Lebanese students to use white lies.

The last item, which was designed to highlight the motivational factors for telling white lies, is item number eleven. This item is also related to the good/bad intentions dichotomy of telling white lies. As expected, 65% of participants didn't agree to use white lies to manipulate other's attitudes and compassion. Similar to the previous item no significant differences were found among males and females with the mean value of 2.74 and standard deviation of 0.846.

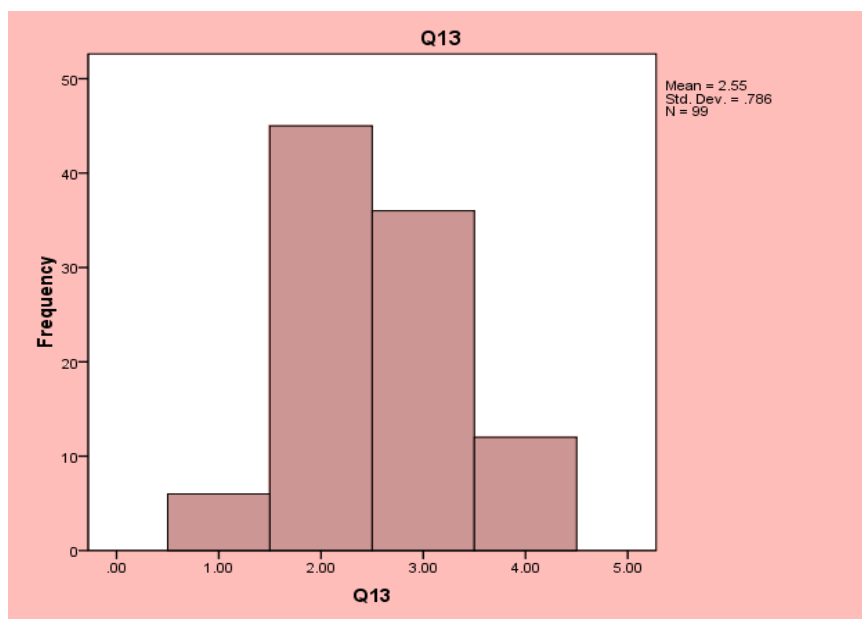
As stated in the introductory paragraph of this section and in chapter three, the last two items (12 and 13) are not related to the different motivations and intentions of telling white lies, rather they are intended to target the cultural embodiment of telling white lies in Lebanon. The following chart illustrates the results:

CHART 4.2.4  
Social Acceptability of White Lies



The majority of Lebanese participants believe that white lies are socially accepted because of their positive role in social interactions. 72% of the participants (out of which 40% are males) seem to be convinced with this line of thought as the following graph illustrates.

CHART 4.2.5  
Moral Acceptability of white Lies



However, this percentage drops to 51% (out of which 21% are males) when the same participants were asked to judge the moral value of telling lies. This clearly shows the conflict at the level of cultural and moral schemas. The Lebanese cultural schema seems to stretch the social boundaries for telling white lies, which the moral schema (religion, ideology, convictions) seem to confine.

#### **4.2.1- Discussion**

The results of the different items of the questionnaire along with those of the DCT are most likely to confirm with the results of the cultural schema questionnaire item. In the majority of the items the frequencies of the responses for telling white lies ranged from 55% to 90% depending on the social situations presented. This means that the cultural schema permits Lebanese to use white lies more than their individual beliefs or morals can embrace. This is according to Strauss' (2005) compartmentalization at the cognitive level of organizing schemas (explained in details in chapter two). Had Lebanese adult participants reached the level of integration or are still ambivalent towards telling white lies; the analysis of the recorded service encounters will hopefully add insights to the cultural dimension of telling white lies in Lebanon.

#### **4.3- Analysis of Service Encounters**

The conceptualization that governs the use of service encounters as an instrument to document aspects of politeness as facework rests on the perception that these types of social transactions are infiltrated with aspects of politeness the fact that makes from them "an ideal locus for a study of politeness at work" (Orecchioni, 2006, p. 80). This is because of the predetermined conversational routines and rituals followed in these service interactions which are mostly conventionalized use of greetings,

welcoming, thanking, well wishing and re-thanking. As explained in chapter three, the general scheme that service encounters follow are divided into four sequences; opening (greetings), request (elicitation, request, acknowledgement), negotiating price and finally leave taking or closing sequence. As research indicates that the opening, request and leave taking are the parts in which politeness work is mostly exploited in the transaction (Orecchioni, 2006; Veronique, 2006). Therefore, traditional methods of conversational analysis (such as hedges, turn taking, overlap, pauses) will not be useful tool to arrive at the desired objectives. Recent methods for conversational analysis such as speech act theory, cooperative principle and conversational implicatures will be the guiding framework for the analysis of the above mentioned sequences of the transaction. The analysis will start by examining the male-recorded services, then the female part. The male service encounters were recorded in a shop specialized in male's wear for those who are above 18 years of age.

*Male Customer-1:*

*C: God give you strength (yateek el afieh)*

*Sk: Welcome (ahlan) (..) please come in (tfaddal)*

*C: This shirt (...) how much is it*

*Sk: oh brother (...) (walla khaieh) this shirt (..) is 78,000L.L*

*C: too much (ouf)*

*SK: dear (ya aenieh) this shirt is made in Italy (.) 100% cotton (.) its boss (.)*

*I will consider it (....) I won't say 75,000 (..) 70,000 fine (.) this prize for you (.) at your service (tekram aenak)*

*C: too much for me (...) show something cheap (.) but good quality*

*SK: Emm (..) oh brother (.) I don't advise you cheap quality (.)*

*This one is excellent (.) no wrinkles after washing (..) wash and wear (.) and colors will not fade out*

*C: fine (taeb) (..) how could you fix the price for me (la eili)*

*SK: try it first then (.) discuss the price (..) don't worry (ma teakol ham)*

*C: it's good (.) I guess (..) yes (..) fine (..) I like it (ajabnieh) but (.) the price (.)*

*Don't tell me you can't afford (.) making it cheap (ma teli ma betwafi maei)*

*SK: 60,000 last price (...) good for you and me (.) this is only for you (la elak) (.)*

*At your service (tekram aenak)*

*C: ok (meneeh), Thanks for you (shokran la elak)*

*SK: you are welcome (ahla owsahla feek)*

The transaction opens with a rather unconventional greeting formula of well-wishing (*yateek el afieh*) by the customer and followed by a conventional welcoming move from the shopkeeper accompanied by an indirect request (indirect speech act) elicitation turn (*tfaddal*) which the customer directly respond to by uttering his direct request (rather impolite) related to the price of his favored item. In contrast, the shopkeeper replied with a very polite turn to establish friendly relationship by using (*walla khaieh*) followed by the price, which the costumer found very expensive and demanded another cheaper item. The shopkeeper tried to convince the customer through giving advice (conventionally threatening strategy), but he made it clear it is for the customer's best interest. Then both interactants enter the sequence of negotiating price with an extremely impolite utterance from the customer (command form: *don't tell me*). The importance of this utterance (*ma teli ma betwafi maei*) is in its implication (don't lie at me that you can't profit from reducing the price more)-which is a conversational implicature derived from a direct command form. It seems that the shopkeeper complied with the customer's impolite move and offered a last price, which he can't negotiate afterwards, followed by sweet talk to minimize tension. The costumer signals the closing move by acknowledging the price and enters into the closing sequence by using



the conventional thanking Lebanese form to which the shopkeeper responded by welcoming him again (minimization technique).

What is worth mentioning is this interaction is the delicate display of (im)politeness as face. In the above encounter it is clear that the customer used rather impolite forms in contrast to the overwhelming politeness and softening devices of the shopkeeper until he realized that he is going to be manipulated by the customer, so he brought the negotiating sequence to an end. A close look on the process of the negotiating price reveals that the second price given by the shopkeeper was as the customer expected to the shopkeeper's advantage. This means that the shopkeeper was lying in his proposition in which he said that this is a special deduction for the customer service (*la elak*). This in particular provoked the impolite response from the customer in which he indirectly accused him of lying and the final deduction proposed after this turn affirms this conclusion.

*Male Customer-2:*

*C: Hello (marhaba)*

*Sk: welcome (ahla wesahla)*

*C: how are you (keef essahaa)*

*SK: Things are going fine*

*C: can I see these trousers*

*Sk: Sure (.) pick the one (.) that you like from here(...) what color you want*

*C: black*

*SK: black (.) on this cut (...) I don't have*

*I give you (bateek) (.) another color (..) like this one*

*C: Let me see (farjieneh)*

*SK: this is dark blue (..) please take (tfaddal)*

*Did you like this style (ajabak)*

*This is Italian not Lebanese (.) try it and see (jarboh)*

*C: emm looks fine needs trimming otherwise fine*

*How much*

*SK: 95,000 I will consider it (.) for you without asking (..) 90,000*

*C: why (leash) (..) too expensive (.) reduce it a little for me*

*SK: I will consider you the first customer (..) in the morning (....) (estefta heiyeh)*

*85 fine (mneeh)*

*C: you are not being generous (ma am bet karemneh) you don't want me to come to your shop again don't you want me to be your costumer (mabadak ejeh laendak marah teineh, koon zbounak)*

*SK: at your service (tekram aenak)last thing 80,000 below I can't*

*C: ok (.) good (.) thank you*

*SK: May you spoil it with good health (tehreeh be afieh)*

This is also another encounter in which the customer takes the initiative and opens the transaction with a conventional Lebanese greeting (*marhaba*) and the shopkeeper responded by welcoming him in. The customer initiated a friendly atmosphere by asking the shopkeeper about his well being. Then the actual transaction started with the customer using a polite elicitation request form (indirect speech act) for a specific color item. Apparently, due to shortage of the desired item the shopkeeper proposed another color of the same style and he tried to convince the customer with advices related to the quality of the proposed item. The customer acknowledged the offer and they moved into the bargaining sequence. The shopkeeper made it clear in the first price that this price is tailored specially for the customer interest (*for you without asking*). Then another price is offered because as the shopkeeper declared he is the first customer in that day (white lie). Unwilling to the price, the customer intentionally

threatened the shopkeeper by not buying from him again (*mabadak ejeh laendak marah teineh, koon zbounak*). Though it is a highly threatening attack on the shopkeeper's basic needs (money), he succumbed to the customer's wishes and reduced the prize using softening devices (*tekram aenak*). The transaction ends with the customer expressing his thanks and a closing wish-welling from the shopkeeper.

There are two instances of telling white lies, in this encounter. The shopkeeper's utterance (*you are the first customer*) is untruthful because all male service encounters were recorded in the same day and in the same order presented in this analysis. So he is literally the second one, but it was used by the shopkeeper as a polite move to persuade the customer to accept the shopkeeper's favored price to protect (actually profit more) his basic needs (money). This also shows that the preceding price proposals were untruthful proposals and the phrase (*this price specially for you*) is also a white lie.

Male Customer-3:

C: hello (marhaba)

SK: Welcome (ahlan)

C: I need(.) one very nice shirt for me (.) I have an event

SK: see these (..) please chose what you need (.) as you like

C: this light purple one (...) how much

SK: 88,000L.L if you liked it (.) try it (.)

C: this is too wide (..) can you give me smaller size

SK: I think (.) emm (.) this is ok (.) ok fine (.) it is good

C: how much does it cost

SK: oh brother (..) I' m not going to say (.) 85,000 (...) but 80,000 for you

C: no (la) too high

SK; 80,000 (..) for this quality (.) you can't find anywhere(..) this quality this price (..) outside (...) believe me

C: try to reduce the price (...) it is too much for me

SK: ok (.) for you specially (..) (tekram anak) last thing 70,000 take it or leave it for such quality

C: fine

SK: congratulations (mabrouk)

C: Thank you (yeslamouh)

SK: welcome (tekram anak)

Similar to the previous encounter, this one also opens with a conventional form of greetings and welcoming. Then, the actual transaction starts by a polite request from the customer to which a series of proposed items were offered by the shopkeeper until the customer selects the one that he prefers. Afterwards, they enter into a sequence of negotiating price, which includes two instances of white lies telling. The shopkeeper offered a series of justifications for his proposed price among them the phrase (*this price for you*), which is an instance of white lies telling because in the last offer the same phrase was also repeated and the price was reduced considerably. However, the second instance of telling white lies falls into the category "exaggeration for effect" (Camden et al., 1984, p.313). The phrase (*you can't find anywhere this quality, this price outside, believe me*) is an intended exaggeration of half truth. Sure, nearby shops will not sell same items especially of good quality, but any other shop outside the district may have it. What asserts this assumption is the phrase "believe me" which implies that shopkeeper fears that the customer may doubt that what he is saying is not truthful. The phrase also violates Grice's conversational maxim, because utterances are to be taken for their truthful quality and no other assertions should be given to enhance their truthful quality. The encounter ends with the shopkeeper congratulating the

customer and the conventional thanking and minimization technique followed by the customer and shopkeeper respectively brings the encounter to an end.

*Male Customer-4:*

*C: hello (marhaba)*

*SK: hello (marhabtein)*

*C: how much (.) is this T-shirt*

*SK: 55,000L.L*

*C: I need something not that much (..) if you have*

*SK: oh brother (..) this is Turkish cotton (..) the best nowadays*

*Its summer(..) you won't regret (..) you will come and ask me for another (...) listen to my advice (...) don't think this (.) because I want to sell you (badi biiak) (..) it is one of a kind (..) (ma fee metlah) try it and see*

*C: I don't like this color (..) I want bright colors*

*SK: please (.) take this one*

*C: its ok (.) I have(...) something at home (.) that goes perfectly with this color*

*How much*

*SK: 45,000 L.L for you*

*C: No(..) I will pay 40 only (..) that's it (..) I can't more (.) ok with you*

*SK: what can I do but (..) I haven't done it before (..) ok (tekram aenak)*

*C: thanks a lot*

*SK: you welcome*

The conventional polite forms of greetings and welcoming in the opening sequence are also evident in this encounter. Similar to the first service encounter, the same strategy of giving advice and exaggerating the quality of the high costly items are followed by the shopkeeper when customers ask for something cheaper. However, one justification is worthy of noting. The phrase (*don't think this because I want to sell you-badi biia*) is clearly a white lie because all what the shopkeeper is doing is to convince

the customer to buy the product by any means possible. In other words, if the shopkeeper is not interesting in selling this particular item to this particular customer, why would he embark in series of persuading and advising strategies? The following justification (*it is one of a kind-ma fee metla*) is also a white lie of the same type of the previous encounter; namely, exaggeration for effect. But it seems that this type of white lies is paying off. The shopkeeper in both cases succeeded in convincing customers to buy. Finally, the closing sequence is typical to the closing sequences of the previous encounters-highly ritualized.

*Male Customer-5:*

*C: hello*

*SK: welcome*

*C: I need (.) light blue Levis*

*SK: at your service (..) (tekram aenak) this is (..) the new collection (.) over there*

*C: I think (....) this is nice (..) this one also (..) but (...) different cut*

*SK: try both (..) and as much as you like*

*C: let me see (..) I think the second one fits me better (..) what do you think*

*SK: I liked the first one on you (..) but(.) if you think(.) this is fine (.) it is ok (.) it is up to you*

*C: what is the price of both*

*SK: the first 135,000 and the second 120,000*

*C: the last price (.) for the second before I decide (.) to buy it or not*

*SK: 100,000L.L for you only (...) you are my costumer no less (leank zbouni)*

*C: sorry can't afford (..) thank you (..) sorry for bothering you (azabtak)*

*SK: it not a big deal (wala yehmak).*

This is relatively a short encounter compared to the previous ones. It displays similar features of the conventional routines of shop transitions followed in the above

discussed encounters in the opening sequence. Moreover, the negotiating sequences are also short and more condensed, just one price suggestion, which was refused by the customer because he can't afford it. Moreover, the same convincing strategy is used (*for you*); however, in this particular interaction, it doesn't carry an instance of telling white lies. This belief is supported by the utterance in the following turn in which the shopkeeper states the price which unlike the other encounters carries a significant reduction from the first shot and the shopkeeper justified this reduction because he is a regular customer. Therefore, this interaction is characterized by being truthful and polite especially the closing sequence in which the customer expressed his sorrow and regret for bothering the shopkeeper and the shopkeeper replied with a softening device.

The analysis of the male service encounters reveal that male interactants abide by the conversational routines and rituals especially in the opening and closing rituals of service encounters. However, the negotiating sequence constitutes the largest part of the interaction probably because of struggle over price. What is significant in these interactions is that most customers (4 out of 5) argue about the price even before they try the wanted item. This signals that price is the primarily motive behind the interaction and not the product itself. Rarely was there a complaint, hesitation or a resentment expressed towards the offered objects. Moreover, the analysis highlights a fact that white lies as a manifestation of face work in male Lebanese encounters. Four encounters contained instances of telling white lies-though only from the part of the shopkeeper which confirms with the DCT and questionnaire (less frequency in both) results that Lebanese use white lies to protect their basic needs.

Moreover, the analysis brought into light a motivational factor which was ignored in the DCT and questionnaire or which items of these instruments fail to target,

more precisely, exaggeration for effect. One last remark, the four encounters in which white lies were told ended successfully with the customer buying the item at a fair price; however, the last encounter which was characterized by truthfulness failed at least from an economic point of view (customer didn't buy), does this signal that white lies are used by this shopkeeper as a tactful strategy. The analysis of the female service encounters will hopefully provide additional evidence.

*Female Customer-1:*

*C: hello(marhaba)*

*ASK (female assistant shopkeeper): welcome (.) madam*

*C: I want to see (.) a blouse that match my legging (.) if you please (iza betreedeh)*

*ASK: please come in (..) what color you want*

*C: something bright (..) I don't want dark colors*

*ASK: here is one white (..) body rose*

*C: ok (.) I will try this one*

*ASK: yes (.) please (tfaddaleh)*

*C: could you please (..) tell me if (..) it is tight (..) tight (.) yeh tight*

*ASK: no (..) it is not (.) it is fine (.) it is like (.) the one that you wore before*

*C: can I know how much*

*ASK: 65,000L.L original price, 60,000 (.) at your service (tekram aenek)*

*C: too expensive for a blouse*

*ASK: ok (.) let me see because you are a regular customer (...) 55,000 (tekram aenek)*

*C: no (.) because I'm a regular customer you have to make more discounts*

*ASK: I really can't, ma betwafi madam*

*C: yes you can (.) I like it divide the price between me and you 5,000 nothing*

*ASK: you embarrassed me (..) ok (.) fine (..) congratulations (mabrouk)*

*C: thank you*

*Ask: at you service (tekram aenek madam)*



The first female service encounters also follows the conventional Lebanese form of greetings, but there is an additional politeness marker used: terms of address. The absence of address terms in the male section is due to the fact that the shopkeeper is the one who was actively engaged in the interaction. In contrast, in the female part, a female shop assistant performed the transaction and she used a polite address form (madam). Similar to the male transactions, the customer used an indirect request form (indirect speech act) and the ASK responded with a polite invitation to come in and check the different items. The discussion then moves to whether the blouse is tight or not. The ASK made a clear reference to the clothes that the customer was just wearing before trying the blouse as a means to convince. Afterwards, both participants enter into the negotiating sequence initiated by the customer. Once again the same phrase is manipulated (for you) and used accordingly as a white lie. Near the end of the negotiating sequence, the ASK said "you *embarrassed me*", if the customer is a regular customer and the second deduction is done because of this reason, why then did she feel embarrassed? The most reasonable answer is that ASK is used to this phrase (*you are a regular customer*) - as a white lie to stop the negotiation process. However, it turned to the benefit of the customer; she grabbed this new reality (which is not true) and demanded more deduction. This is a clear manifestation of politeness as facework. The transaction ends with a set of thanking, re-thanking and softening device.

*Female Customer-2:*

*C: hello(marhaba)*

*ASK (female assistant shopkeeper): welcome madam*

*C: do you have (.) long sleeves like this*

*ASK: like this (..) I have (..) long chemise(.) but(.) not long sleeves (.) you can wear body underneath it*

*C: you don't (.) have long sleeves (..) cause of lots (..)of heat weaves last year (...) we who wear veil (nehna lemhajabeat) (...)we escape from long sleeves (.) and long body underneath (...) it is difficult(.) in hot weather (..)specially me cause(..) I'm a social worker*

*ASK: there are many designs and colors which one do you want to try on*

*C: look (..) you are the first shop(.) I enter (.) I'll check around (..) if not (..)I'll come back to you (..) but (..)how much it is*

*ASK: 70,000L.L (.) and we can fix it for you*

*C: ok bye*

*ASK: welcome*

As expected, the opening and the closing sequences follow the Lebanese polite conversational routines and rituals. However, unexpectedly there is no negotiation sequence; and therefore; the bargain over price didn't take place. But a close analysis reveals that the third turn of the customer is relatively long and full of information. Why does an ASK need the information that the customer is a social worker. If for the sake of her long sleeve request, she should have stopped at the correlation between hot weather and wearing a veil. According to Grice's maxim, this is a violation of the maxim of relevance and it is an intended conversational implicature. She literally said: "specially me cause I'm a social worker", this implies that her insistence on the long sleeves is because of her work as a social worker which also insinuate that ASK has to offer her admiration in return or it could be an invitation for small talk about her carrier which the ASK failed to attend to. When the ASK redirected the conversation to the choice of a particular item, the customer resorted to a white lie as a leave taking strategy (*you are the first shop I enter*) and that she needs to check other shops which is rather impolite.

*Female Customer-3:*

*C: hello(marhaba)*

*ASK (female assistant shopkeeper): welcome madam*

*C: can I see (.) black legging*

*ASK: black color (.) I don't have (.) I have brown (.) dark blue*

*C: do you have (..) another style*

*ASK: yeh (.) here please (..) come and check (.) the variety over here*

*C: how much is this one*

*ASK: 55,000L.L*

*C: last price*

*ASK: madam (..) try it on (.) and if it is ok (.) then we will see don't worry (ma teakle ham)*

*C: I want to know the price first*

*ASK: for you (.) 47,000 (..) I can't more*

*C: ok (.) I'll see (.) thank you*

*ASK: at you service (tekramie madam)*

This is a rather simple interaction that constitutes the four conventionalized phases of service encounters. What is important to note is the use of indirect politeness markers (indirect speech acts) and terms of address in every turn by the ASK and as it becomes the exploitation of the phrase (this price for you). The frequent use of this phrase asserts the assumption that it is used as a white lie in order to encourage customers to buy by misleading them that they are regular customers. In contrast, the customer used direct request and direct refusal strategies, yet she ended the transaction by a polite marker-thank you.

*Female Customer-4:*

*C: hello (marhaba)*

*ASK (female assistant shopkeeper): welcome madam*

*C: can I find (blaei andek) (.) long white skirt size 42*

*ASK: yes (.) please (.) come with me to the second floor (..) I'll show*

*C: you don't have anything else*

*ASK: this is the last item (.) in the series the customers liked it very much (..)*

*It is made in Turkey (.) excellent quality you don't have to iron (.) wash and dress (.) try it*

*C: fine (.) it's good it fits me well (.) not tight not baggy (.) how much is this*

*ASK: because (.) it is the last item (.) final price 58,000L.L*

*C: too much (.) think it over (.) and reduce the price (.)*

*ASK: I can't anymore (.) I don't have permission*

*C: not even 55,000L.L*

*ASK: sorry (.) madam (.) I can't, 58,000L.L*

*C: it's becoming hot in here (.) I can't tolerate it*

In this transaction, aspects of politeness and impoliteness are noticed. The polite strategies of requesting eliciting requests from both parties were respected. However, when the negotiating process came to a dead end, the customer was intimidated and reacted in an unusual manner. Instead of using indirect refusal strategies or at least direct, she used a white lie as a leave taking strategy (*it's becoming hot in here*). The weather was not hot; it was April, 25 and above all the air conditioner was turned on. This clearly reveals her irritation. Moreover, she ended the transaction contrary to conversational conventions without any polite closing marker, which is rather impolite. The ambivalence between politeness and impoliteness in a single interaction is what constitutes (im)politeness as face work.

*Female Customer-4:*

*C: god give you strength (yateek el afieh)*

*ASK (female assistant shopkeeper): welcome madam (.) please come in (tfaddaleh)*

*C: Can I see a red blouse*

*ASK: red (.) emm (.) sure madam (.) please here (..) I have two red colors (.) each one of different style*

*C: I don't need something expensive (..) I need every day wear*

*ASK: this one then (.) should do*

*C: you don't have another one*

*ASK: let me check upstairs*

*C: I found one*

*ASK: how much this*

*ASK: 55,000 L.L*

*C: too much for casual wear what can you do*

*C: 45,000L.L (..) at your service ( tekram aenek) madam*

*ASK: I tell you what (...) I will pass again on Saturday (...) for my daughters will be with me (.) they will give me their opinion*

*ASK: your are welcome any time madam*

This interaction opens with an unconventional yet very polite well-wishing greeting (yateek el afieh) to which the ASK responded with a polite greeting marker and a polite address term. The negotiation process was direct and not lengthy; however, the closing of the interaction was signaled by a polite display of a white lie (*I tell you what, I will pass again on Saturday, for my daughters will be with me, they will give me their opinion*) as a leave taking excuse. The customer could have ended the transaction in an indirect refusal strategy which is a polite move, the choice of a white lie signals that the customer was motivated by saving and protecting her public-self image. The final turn

is a softening device uttered by the ASK in response to the customer's previous polite move.

#### **4.3.1- Discussion**

The analysis of the female service encounters reveal that female interactants abide by the conversational routines only at the opening sequences. There was a variety in the techniques followed at the leave taking (closing sequence) with ranged from polite, impolite to using white lies. This is in direct contrast with the findings of the male section. Another clear difference is the relatively short length of the female interactions compared to the males, more specifically, the negotiating sequence. The majority of the instances of telling white lies were detected at the negotiating sequence most probably to its length and mostly to the well-established conventions that males are competent in dealing with bargains and money in general. The females, in contrast, seem to show tendency to save and protect their public image, which motivated them to use white lies as a saver from social embarrassment. In conclusion, the male service encounters were more rich and male participants displayed a wide variety of politeness strategies (persuading, advice giving, compliments) which were absent in the female encounters.

#### **4.5- Conclusion**

As a concluding remark, the results of the data obtained from the three instruments reaffirm the hypothesis raised at the beginning of the study. There exists a significant difference between the female participants on one hand and the male participants on the other. These differences are not only at the motivational level and

intensity, but also in the manner, style and polite strategies manipulated by each group.

This will form the bases of the discussion in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### **5.1- Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to document the extent to which Lebanese adults use white lies in their daily interactions. A further aim was to identify the different motivational (social and psychological) factors that compel adult Lebanese to adjust their individual moral code to comply with the shared social norms and values specific to Lebanese culture. The study was conducted to offer valid evidence to the three questions raised in chapter one. The first question was dedicated to unravel these motivations and the second one was related to depicting gender differences in the use of white lies among participants. In an attempt to arrive at specific answers to the stated questions, DCT and questionnaires were administered to equal number of female and male participants. Unexpectedly, the analysis of the service encounters, which were designed to target the third question, enriched the discussion by providing a motivational factor (exaggeration for effect-Camden et al., 1984) which was not included in both instruments. The discussion will focus on the first and the second questions because of their obvious connection and then the third question will be attended to later on in this chapter.

#### **5.2- Significance of DCT and Questionnaire Findings**

The most interesting observation during the analysis of the various data collected in this study, is that these instruments yielded results that are on the one hand in consistency with existing research, and on the other hand those that are in juxtaposition. To start with, there seems to be a cross-cultural agreement among



existing research that white lies are accepted when the motive is to help and support others rather than when they are used with an intent to deceive. The findings of this research further support this universal apprehension. Lee and Ross (1997) research on adult Canadian college students, indicates that participants positively evaluated white lies when the intention behind their use was to help and support others. Another research conducted by Xu, Luo, Fu and Lee (2009) on children and adult Chinese participants, asserts the above claim. Even when the participants were mainly youngsters (4-11 years of age) as in the studies conducted by (Bussey, 1999; Talwar & Lee, 2002) findings revealed that even children at the age of four can justify white lies based on the intent not to harm and offer help. The findings of this research derived mainly from the DCT and questionnaire confirm this shared perception. The results of the DCT show that when the social situations (1,4 and 7) were related to helping others, saving others face and self-esteem (good intentions) the percentage of telling lies increased considerably compared to situations (6, 8 and 9) where saving public self-image was the target. The findings of the questionnaire are in harmony with the DCT. The higher percentage of agreement among participating students for telling white lies were related to items that are linked to help others and saving their face.

Another important evidence is provided by the results of questionnaire items (9, 8 and 10). 90% of participants in item number eight agreed that they tell lies for the purpose of saving others even if this entailed them to offer one's basic possessions and privacy for the sake of others (DCT, 7, 8). This is a significant finding related to the collectivist identity which Lebanese participants seem to defend and even protect. It is also in conformity with research devoted to examine politeness in Eastern cultures that pay tribute to the collectivist spirit-Arabic in particular (Al-Eryani 2005; Al Zumor,

2003) to the extent of denying the self in favor of the tribe or the nation. A third important perception that this finding seems to support is the positive evaluation of telling white lies propped up by good intentions. In questionnaire item eleven, 70% of participating students didn't agree to use white lies when the intent was to manipulate others and another 70% refused to use white lies to deceive others in item number nine. However, 88% of participants agree out of which 40% strongly agree that they use lies for good intentions. The above results are in conformity with Bryant's (2008) research in which he indicated that university students positively evaluated white lies because of their altruistic nature, their trivial consequences and because they lack malicious motives. More specifically, the above findings of this research are in concordance with the definition for white lies offered by Talwar and Lee (2002) as "untruthful statements told without malignant or malicious intent" (p. 161).

A fourth finding that is in conformity with existing research is related to the social and pragmatic forces at work. Research ascertains that white lies are more favorable to use in politeness settings where the pragmatic rules coerce interlocutors to violate their ethical code and cope with the social demands of the settings. This research also confirms this line of thought. 97% of participating students offered truthful statements in informational setting (DCT, 5), while the majority of white lies were told in politeness settings (DCT, 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9). This is in line with Camden et al. (1984), Bryant (2008) and with Bloomquist's assertion that "politeness conditions override the truthfulness constraints"(2009, p. 7). This directly leads us to the discussion to the moral and social factors that seem to work in conflicting directions. The results of item questionnaire number twelve where results show that 72% of participating students agree that white lies are socially accepted, in contrast, this percentage drops to 51 when

participants rated the moral evaluation of telling lies. This is also in conformity with research conducted by Camden et al. (1984), Hardin (2010) and Bryant (2008). This means that Lebanese social roles, expectations and norms of behavior extend the boundaries for telling lies, which the ethical code delimits.

Moreover, this research supports the traditional view that females use white lies more than males as the findings of the DCT and questionnaire reveal. This is at the general level; however, a closer look reveals slight differences. Camden et al. (1984) asserted that females significantly tend to use white lies to satisfy affiliation needs more than men. This research is consistent with this finding because participating females in this study used white lies to reduce relational conflict and avoid conflict more than men. Moreover, this research is in line with Camden et al. research, which indicated that women used white lies more than men to avoid self-disclosure and to hide their true feelings. However, participating females in this research tend to use white lies to save their own basic needs and self-esteem more than participating males. This was evident from the results of the DCT situations (6, 7, and 8) and questionnaire item number one, which showed an increase by 3% compared to males. Though the difference is not significant, yet it contradicts Camden et al. (1984) findings in which they stated that females use white lies to protect the self-esteem of others rather than their own self-esteem.

A second revealing finding is related to the results obtained from DCT situation number two and questionnaire item seven. In this social situation men significantly (22 male out of 50) used white lies more than females (5 out of fifty) to protect intimate relations. The results of the questionnaire item support this view. The males in this item showed tendency to use white lies in intimate relations by an increase of 4% compared

to females. Although this difference is not significant yet it shows a male disposition to use white lies in intimate relations more than females which contradicts the view that was asserted by Peterson (1995) that females favor the use of white lies in intimate relations because "politeness rule takes precedence over the honesty rule in intimate relations' (p. 286). The findings of the DCT and questionnaire reveal female dominance in the use of white lies compared to men with slight exceptions. However, the analysis of the recorded service encounters offers a real life picture to the use of white lies by both genders.

### **5.3- Significance of Service Encounters Findings**

The analysis of the service encounters aims to offer answers to the third question raised in chapter one and which is related to the different strategies used by adult Lebanese to co-construct and negotiate their discursive identity (individual and collective) while engaged in a discursive event. The analysis of male and female service encounters reveals that both parities abide by the conversational routines and rituals predetermined by the Lebanese social norms with an obvious superiority of males over the females when it comes to politeness moves and telling white lies. In the male section, the encounters were relatively long compared to females. This is due to the fact that the majority of the male encounters centers around price negotiation process, persuading the customer with the product, giving advice and it is in this part where the majority of male white lies were detected.

In contrast, the female service encounters were relatively short even the bargaining process was relatively short and the majority of the lies used by females were found in the leave taking sequence. This fact could be attributed to the natural

disposition of males and females. Females enjoy shopping; they spend hours moving from one shop to the other without even buying anything. To them, it is a social activity that women are well-known to enjoy. This could explain their tendency to find excuses as a leave taking strategy provided that they might have entered the shop with no intentions to buy, but to be fully aware of the new fashion. Males in contrast don't share this disposition with females. They go to the market with an intention to buy and if possible from the first shop they enter. This may explain males' tendency in the service encounters to try to negotiate the price and make it a profitable process to save them the burden of moving from one shop to the other.

Yet, the most important revelation in this section is not only related to the topic of white lies telling. Male service encounters show males supremacy and competence in using white lies as a social lubricant Saxe (1991), a form of a communicative competence (Bryant, 2008) which females failed to display. In addition, the ability of male participants to choose a wide variety of politeness strategies (establish common grounds, polite moves of approaching the customer like 'oh brother, tekram anak', etc.) showed males ability to display politeness at work. Moreover, the male participants in the service encounters discursively managed their emergent identities. The male shopkeeper alternates between being a professional salesman and an expert in the material he is selling. The male buyers alternate between being customers and novices concerning the quality of the sold products. This was not the case in the female part. Only once we witnessed an argument on the quality of the product as a strategy of giving advice.

This is not to undermine the female participation in this section. However, there is an important factor, which can't be ignored. In the female section a female shop

assistant conducted the encounters contrary to the male section where the shopkeeper himself performed the transaction, which paved the way to see politeness at work. The female shop assistance didn't show the determination to sell customers (like it or not her salary is guaranteed at the end); and therefore, she was not compelled to utilize advice giving strategy or to bargain in length with the female customers. This fact was clearly uttered by the shop assistant in the forth female exchange when she said "*I don't have permission*". This fact most probably affected the quality of the female service encounters.

#### **5.4- Conclusion**

Though the male section to a limited degree shows aspects of the discursive construction of identity, it was contrary to expectations that other forms of identity construction (collective identity) were not within the boundaries of these service encounters. This limitation along with many others will be the subject of the following chapter.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **6.1- Introduction**

The aim of this research was to fill the gap in existing literature on politeness research dedicated to Eastern cultures and more specifically white lies as a form of facework in Lebanon. The results of the study affirmed the hypothesis that white lies-telling is a prevalent phenomena in Lebanese every day talk.

#### **6.2- Conclusions**

Evidence from the academic setting as well as the service encounters attest to this fact. Another shared conviction among existing research is related to politeness and pragmatic rules that were most likely respected by Lebanese participants. This fact might explain the tendency of Lebanese participants to use white lies in politeness settings where the need to offer truthful statements may have negative consequences. With respect to male/female discrepancies, Lebanese females (in the DCT and questionnaire) were observed to use white lies more than Lebanese males though the increase is not significant (3-4%). Moreover, females used white lies-contrary to existing research, as explained in chapter five, to protect their basic needs and self-esteem. Males in contrast were more likely to use white lies to protect other's self-esteem and emotional needs especially at the level of intimate relations. Both males and females showed tendency to use white lies to save and serve others, which confirms the collectivist spirit of Lebanese society.

However, as a final outcome, females in this research were observed to use white lies more likely than men, which is also consistent with existing research findings. However, when the social setting was close to naturally occurring data through service encounters, males took the lead. Their obvious supremacy in negotiating their discursive identity during and after the process of negotiating price shows their competence in displaying politeness in action.

Moreover, this research tried to identify different motivational factors that underlie the use of white lies in Lebanon. It was found that Lebanese social norms expected social roles and behaviors permit Lebanese participants in this study to use white lies as a form of social lubricants irrespective of the moral constraints. It is hoped that the findings of this study will offer information that will enrich the field of politeness research in general and research on telling white lies behavior in particular as it pertains to Lebanese social milieu.

### **6.3- Limitations to the Research**

The methodology adopted in this study permitted the researcher to arrive at the desired objectives. However, this doesn't mean that it is faultless. Though the sample in this research is considerably heterogeneous, the findings rested upon the verbal manifestation of politeness and white lies telling and it ignored equally important non verbal means of communication (facial expressions, intonation and body language) which if taken into consideration would further the research context. Another limitation is related to the reliability of the DCT. The DCT offers only ten social situations and they are by no means exclusive. Other equally important social situations such as



medical settings, business settings (firms and organization), political debates and arguments and media which are also infiltrated by telling white lies are not mentioned.

The DCT and the questionnaire were conducted in English in which elements of pragmatic transfer from Arabic into English were not touched upon in this research. Moreover, the analysis of the service encounters rests upon the analytical tools of conversational analysis which ignored the discussion of power, discrimination and marginalization which could have enriched the findings; and therefore, it could have assisted in giving a more comprehensive view of Lebanese social behavior. Finally, the research confines its discussion to politeness as one manifestation of facework. The responses given in the DCT (situation 9) and in four service interviews showed considerable instances of impoliteness hand in hand with politeness at work. Therefore impoliteness is also a form of facework and the obtained data in this research attest that it cannot be studied in isolation.

#### **6.4- Recommended Future Research**

Therefore, to have a full analysis of Lebanese facework incorporating impoliteness as a strategy to defend and save face can't be ignored. Further research is thus required at the wider regional level and especially in Lebanon to enrich the field of (im)politeness research which is only seen and understood by western eyes.

Finally, this research tried to examine a linguistically mediated phenomenon - white lies telling behavior-in Lebanon, which has for long gone off the record. This is the first research not only in Lebanon but in the Arab world to document the extent to which white lies is a form of facework, and it is hoped that it has succeeded in its endeavor.

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## Appendix-A

Participant: Male  Female 

Please read carefully the following situations. Before writing your answers, reflect for few seconds on how you would react had you been faced with similar circumstances.

- 1- You have been invited to your friend's birthday party, but after half an hour you find it very boring. You decided not to waste your time any longer since you have a lot of important things to attend to. What excuse would you give the host before leaving?

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- 2- Your boy/girl friend surprised you with a new haircut/outfit which he/she believes trendy and fits his/her style perfectly, but you terribly dislike and resent the new look. What would you say to him/her?

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- 3- You were having an extremely wonderful and enjoyable time with your friends, when all of a sudden you recognized it is 4 o'clock in the morning. What excuse would you give your mom/dad to avoid conflict and punishment?

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- 4- You have been invited to your best friend's house to have dinner with his/her family. You know that his/her mom made every effort possible to prepare the food you like most, but you find it tasteless and soggy. Your friend's mom is anxious to know your opinion. What would you say to her?

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- 5- You arrived home to find a close friend of your mom paying her a visit. Your mom insisted that you be introduced to her friend and chat with her. The visitor immediately started by asking you questions about your age, major and the name of your university. What would you tell her?



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- 6- You have been called by your professor (major course) for a meeting in his/her office for late submission of course assignments and low grades. What would you say to justify your behavior?

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- 7- One of your closest friends had just enrolled in one of the core courses that you have received an A on in the previous semester. Fearing from taking a C, he/she asked you to give him/her a copy of your course assignments, term papers and projects that are related to the course. What would you say to your friend?

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- 8- You are a C student in math/English. Your neighbor has high expectations and believes that you are an A student. He asked you a favor to help his low achieving son in math/English. What would you tell your neighbor?

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- 9- Your parents had recently divorced. Your friends have heard a lot of rumors and few of them came to you to clarify the issue. What would you tell them?

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- 10- You are preparing yourself to an important meeting. Unexpectedly, the doorbell rang and your cousin stopped by to check on you for not hearing from you for a long time. What would you tell him/her?
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## Appendix-B

Participant: Male  Female 

Please read the statements carefully before you select the item that best reveals your attitude towards telling white lies. Circle the most appropriate letter.

a- Strongly Agree      b-Agree      c-Don't Agree      d-Strongly Disagree

**You would most likely use white lies**

1.	To protect your basic needs such as money and possessions (lending money, car, clothes, etc.)	a) b) c) d)
2.	To refuse to comply with undesirable commands or requests	a) b) c) d)
3.	To manipulate a conversation or a relation to your best interest	a) b) c) d)
4.	To avoid self disclosure during conversation (e.g. show your true feelings and attitudes towards someone)	a) b) c) d)
5.	To avoid embarrassment (mistakes, punishment) and /or imposition on your personal life	a) b) c) d)
6.	To improve self image (mental or physical abilities, skills, favored celebrities etc.)	a) b) c) d)
7.	To either eliminate or initiate intimate relations	a) b) c) d)
8.	To save other's lives and possessions	a) b) c) d)
9.	To justify cheating, betraying and deceiving others	a) b) c) d)
10.	To help a dear friend avoid embarrassment and/or punishment	a) b) c) d)
11.	To manipulate others' attitudes and compassion to your best interest	a) b) c) d)
12.	White lies are socially accepted for their positive role in maintaining social relations	a) b) c) d)
13.	White lies are morally accepted	a) b) c) d)