Discourse modalities that reflect different interactants’ status in Arabic teacher/student and student/student task-oriented dialogues in Libya

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This paper investigates the interactional functions of discourse modality and their marking of the social status of teachers and students interactants in Libya. It is worth noting that teachers in Libyan society are socially and culturally perceived as honorable and guiding people: "Whoever taught me a letter, I should become a slave to him." "Stand to the teacher and pay him glorification, for that the teacher nearly becomes a prophet.” The data is as part of Mister O corpus collections (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Japanese Academy for the Promotion of Science). The analyses of teacher/student interactions reveal that the teachers produce direct unmitigated negative responses to the students’ proposals of the cards order. They also control the motional action of moving the cards. The students, in contrast, produce negative response in an indirect form when a response is invited from teacher. Furthermore, the exchange of turns is well organized where conversational invitations for collaboration (e.g. using ”sah?” at the end of the turn) can be identified. In contrast, the student/student interactions show equal producing of overlap. They also perform significant amount of unmitigated negative responses to each other. Moreover, the motional control of card distribution seems to be alike. The students crossing the platform of each other while distributing the cards. They also expedite in moving the cards without waiting for their colleague’s response. The findings show that the students’ social and cultural perception of teachers has significant influence on the way they interact and communicate with them. Such influence can also be seen in the student/student interaction where they perceive each other as socially equal. In both cases, the institutional protocol and facing of the camera have showed less influence on the interactants in comparison with the interactants’ social and cultural status and perception of each other.

Keywords: Libya, social status, teacher/student.