

CLAIMS TO AUTHORITY AND VERBAL PRESSURE IN KINSHIP RELATIONS

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Abstract. The paper examines how kinship status, seniority, and familiarity with a particular task are used to justify requests in family conversations. The distinction between deontic authority and epistemic advantage is illustrated through three dialogues written for this study. The analysis considers whether the grounds for a request are relevant, supported by evidence, and open to verification, as well as how objections are answered. Accepting advice, making a decision on another person's behalf, and attaching conditions to assistance are treated as distinct actions. The proposed criteria assess verbal pressure not by the form of an isolated command, but by how decision-making rights are distributed as a conversation unfolds. Since the dialogues are constructed rather than drawn from recordings of natural interaction, the conclusions remain theoretical and analytical.

Keywords: kinship relations, verbal pressure, deontic authority, epistemic advantage, family discourse, refusal, manipulative influence.

INTRODUCTION

Family relationships are shaped by age, kinship position, experience, and the unequal distribution of everyday responsibilities. Yet being an older family member, relaying another relative's views, or knowing how to perform a particular task does not give someone the right to make decisions for others in every situation. How this boundary is understood in conversation helps distinguish verbal pressure from ordinary advice and agreement.

M. Stevanovic and A. Peräkylä associate deontic authority with a participant's right to determine future courses of action; the other participant may recognize or reject that right [1]. J. Heritage shows that differences in what participants know affect how an utterance is understood as a speech act [2]. Thus, saying "I know how this works" may provide grounds for giving information, but it does not, by itself, confer authority over another person's choices.

Studies of family conversations also show that kinship status itself can be affirmed or challenged during an exchange. R.-Y. Liu notes that parents' rights to act on behalf of others become evident in how fellow participants respond [3]. U.-A. Küttner, A. Vatanen, and J. Zinken examine different uses of appeals to family rules, while J. Declercq discusses the relationship between giving instructions and resisting them among siblings [4; 5]. These observations raise the following question: when does a demand based on kinship position or knowledge turn into verbal pressure that limits another person's right to decide?

MATERIALS AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

Three short dialogues in Uzbek were written for this study: a mother and son discussing a journey, two adult brothers discussing a shared expense, and a son offering to help his mother use a payment app. These are constructed examples designed to illustrate theoretical distinctions, not transcripts of naturally occurring family conversations. They therefore provide no basis for conclusions about how often verbal pressure occurs in families or what consequences it has in real life.

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Each example was examined in relation to four points: whether the grounds given for a request are relevant to the matter at hand; whether the claim to authority can be checked; how the response of the other participant is treated; and who makes the final decision. The grammatical form of a command or request was not treated as a separate sign of pressure. A. Craven and J. Potter study directives in family talk in relation to participants' understandings of rights and obligations and to subsequent responses [6]. S. Blum-Kulka also observes that direct instructions within families may occur in a setting of closeness and care [7]. These findings caution against interpreting every forceful utterance as pressure or manipulation.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In the first example, a mother expresses concern about her son's long journey:

Mother: "It's a long journey. Settle your return date in advance."
Son: "I'll be back on Sunday."
Mother: "All right. Let me know when you arrive."

By saying "settle your return date," the mother prompts her son to take a particular action, but she does not choose the date herself. With "I'll be back," the son presents his travel plans as his own decision. The mother's "All right" signals acceptance of that choice. Her further request, "Let me know," concerns a separate action; the excerpt does not show whether the son agrees to it. The imperative-like wording of the initial request therefore does not establish that the mother has taken control of her son's choice. Here, her senior position is combined with concern, while the main decision remains with her son. To identify this distinction, the response in the conversation matters more than the outward form of the utterance [6; 7].

In the second example, two adult brothers discuss a shared expense:

Older brother: "Dad has agreed. We'll send your share today as well."
Younger brother: "Can I check with Dad directly?"
Older brother: "If you can't trust me after all these years, don't upset the family."

The older brother bases his demand on their father's consent. However, "Dad has agreed" does not establish exactly what their father agreed to, or whether the younger brother consented to paying his own share. The first-person plural in "We'll send your share today as well" makes the matter sound as though it has already been settled jointly. The younger brother's question is not a refusal to contribute; he wants to verify the claim with its source.

In his next turn, the older brother changes the subject. He offers no further evidence of their father's consent. Instead, he equates the wish to check with a lack of trust in him and with upsetting the family. "After all these years" invokes their past relationship and makes verification seem morally unacceptable. The issue of justifying a financial decision thus turns into a demand to prove family loyalty. This shift can be interpreted as a sign of pressure: an emotional objection is used to obstruct the checking of evidence. Still, the dialogue does not tell us whether the father actually consented or whether the younger brother sent the money. What is being examined is the response to the objection, not the speaker's intention or the eventual outcome [5; 8].

In the third example, the younger person knows more about a particular task:

Son: "I can find the option you need in the payment app."
Mother: "Thank you. I'll press the confirmation button myself."
Son: "Then don't count on my help."

The son initially offers technical assistance. The mother does not refuse it; she only keeps the right to authorize the payment. The disagreement, then, is not about whether help is needed, but about how far

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that help should extend. With "Then," the son makes his offer of assistance incompatible with his mother's wish to make the final decision herself. Help becomes conditional.

Here, epistemic advantage—knowing how to use the payment app—is being treated as deontic authority, namely the right to authorize the payment. Yet showing someone how to use an app does not entitle the helper to make independent decisions about that person's money. J. Heritage and G. Raymond have examined how differences in knowledge affect agreement and evaluation during interaction [8]. In the present example, the claim to expertise comes with a threat to withdraw assistance. Nevertheless, the mother's eventual response is unknown, so the conclusion is limited to the speech act shown in the dialogue.

Table 1. How claims to authority are expressed and limited in conversation

Dialogue	Basis for the request	Response to objection	Decision-making rights
Mother – son	Concern for safety	Son states his return date; mother accepts it.	Travel plans remain the son's choice.
Older – younger brother	Consent attributed to their father	Request for verification is treated as distrust.	Younger brother's consent to pay his share is unconfirmed.
Son – mother	Knowledge of the app	Mother wants to confirm the payment herself; help is made conditional.	The right to authorize the payment is contested.

The comparison shows that kinship status, speaking on someone else's behalf, and possessing a particular skill do not automatically amount to verbal pressure. In the first example, the person making the decision retains his independence. In the second, the right to check a claim is set against family trust. In the third, access to help is made conditional on giving up decision-making rights. The difference lies less in how firmly the words are spoken than in how much room remains for the other person to choose.

Care is also needed when identifying manipulative influence. T. van Dijk distinguishes manipulation from persuasion between equals by emphasizing the abuse of power and attempts to steer the recipient against their interests [9]. Sh. Sh. Tulanbayeva studies manipulative verbal influence from semantic-pragmatic and functional perspectives [10]. From these theoretical positions, the second and third examples contain speech practices that may exert pressure, but they provide insufficient evidence of the speakers' inner intentions, any actual harm, or a final change in the other person's choice. For this reason, "sign of pressure," "claim to authority," and "confirmed manipulation" are not used as interchangeable terms.

Three related criteria are proposed for this analysis. The first is the scope of authority: whose knowledge or position is relevant to the matter being discussed? The second is verifiability: when the grounds for a demand are questioned, does the speaker offer evidence or an explanation? The third is room for choice: after disagreement is expressed, can other solutions still be discussed, or does the other person face accusations of distrust, feelings of guilt, or the prospect of losing help? These distinctions show that verbal pressure is not located in a single sentence, but in the relationship between successive speech acts.

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CONCLUSION

In kinship relations, the force of a demand often rests on the speaker's age, position in the family, or knowledge of a particular task. Yet these grounds do not carry the same authority in every situation. Firm advice motivated by care can preserve another person's freedom to choose. By contrast, invoking someone else's consent without evidence, or making needed assistance conditional on surrendering the right to decide, may constitute an attempt to restrict equality in the exchange. To identify such differences, it is necessary to examine not just the initial demand, but also the response and the subsequent turn in the conversation.

The proposed criteria were illustrated using three specially constructed dialogues. These examples do not justify generalizations about the actual extent of verbal pressure in family interactions. Future research based on audio or video recordings of naturally occurring conversations could identify recurring ways of resisting demands, asking for explanations, and renegotiating decision-making rights. Such evidence would make it possible to distinguish the outward signs of verbal pressure from how the participants themselves understand it.

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