

**GENDERLECT AND THANKING****Wurud Ammar Hassan**

**ABSTRACT:** *There must be some harmony and social rapport among society members to overcome life difficulties. This harmony can be maintained through several ways. Thanking is one of the effective ways to maintain this rapport as it is the feeling of gratefulness directed towards others. Such a feeling appears during social exchanges between benefactors and beneficiaries when the latter benefits from gifts, assistance, kindness, help, favours, and support presented by others (Grant and Gino, 2010: 946). As an expressive speech act, thanking expresses harmony among interlocutors. That is to say, it expresses gratefulness or appreciation towards the addressee as a result of (not) saying or (not) doing something. However, thanking can be used to convey opposite emotions like: sarcasm, irony, and blame as well. It is also used to open, change, and close conversations. Moreover; the speech act of thanking may overlap with praise since speakers sometimes issue indirect thanking. This is another reason to why is the speech act of thanking chosen in this study in addition to what has been previously mentioned. A more reason is that even though it is important, Iraqi EFL learners might not use all the strategies of thanking evenly, as there are many. The following questions need to be answered in this study:*

1. What are the strategies that Iraqi EFL learners use for thanking?
2. Who thanks more: male learners or females?

*This study aims at finding out:*

1. The strategies Iraqi EFL learners use concerning the speech act of thanking.
2. Whether female learners thank more than the males overall.

*In this study, it is hypothesized that:*

1. Iraqi EFL learners use the explicit strategies to thank more than the implicit ones.
2. Female learners use more thanking strategies than the male ones as a whole.

*The procedure can be summed up by the following steps:*

1. Surveying the literature of the speech act of thanking.
2. Conducting a test to a random sample of 20 (10 of each gender) fourth year students at the Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ University of Babylon (for the academic year 2016-2017).
3. Analyzing the results of the test to arrive at the conclusions.

*This study is limited to the speech act of thanking. It is also limited to Iraqi EFL fourth year students at the Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ University of Babylon (2016-2017). It is hoped that this study will be of pedagogical value to learners, researchers, and textbook writers, especially those who are interested in socio-pragmatic issues.*

**KEYWORDS:** Genderlect, thanking, harmony, speech acts

**THE SPEECH ACTS**

The leader of this theory is Austin (1962) in "How to do Things with Words" and it has developed ever since. According to this theory, actions performed via utterances are generally called "speech

acts". In English, they are commonly given more specific labels; such as: apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, request, and thanking (Yule, 1995:47).

These descriptive terms for different kinds of speech act apply on the speaker's communicative intention in producing an utterance. Normally, the speaker expects that his communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer. Both the speaker and hearer are usually helped in this process by the circumstances surrounding the utterance. These circumstances, including other utterances, are called "the speech event" (ibid).

### **The Classification of Speech Acts**

Sadock (2005:2), following Austin, argues that the issuance of any performative utterance is in fact the production of three simultaneous acts:

- a. "Locutionary act" which is defined as the act of speaking.
- b. "Illocutionary act" which refers to how what is said is meant.
- c. "perlocutionary act" which represents the resultant of the speech on the listener's as well as the speaker's feelings, emotions or actions.

Austin (1962:150-1) presents a five-way taxonomy of illocutionary acts:

*Verdicatives, Exertitives, Commisives, Behabitives, and Expositives.*

Thanking is a type of behabitives as the latter are concerned with attitudes and social behavior.

As for Austin's student, Searle (1976:12), he gives a different taxonomy later on:

*Commisives, Declaratives, Directives, Expressives, and Representatives.*

According to this taxonomy, thanking is part of expressives as the illocutionary point of which is to "express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content". After that point, many linguists proposed their own taxonomies like Bach and Harnish (1979:51) and many others.

The speech act of thanking belongs to Austin's (1962:150-1) behabitives, Searle's (1976:12), Jucker and Tavvitsainen's (2008:7), Tsohatzidis's (1994:229) expressives, and Bach and Harnish's (1979:51) acknowledgments (which express perfunctorily if not genuinely certain feelings towards the hearer).

Whenever there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function, we have a direct speech act and vice versa (i.e. whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, we have an indirect speech act (Yule, 1996:55).

Indirect speech acts are generally associated with greater politeness in English than direct speech acts. To understand why, we have to look at a bigger than just a single utterance performing a single speech act (ibid:56).

### **The Speech Act of Thanking**

The speech act of thanking is an illocutionary act performed by a speaker as it is based on a past act performed by the hearer. This past act benefits the speaker and so he feels grateful. Therefore, he makes a statement which counts as an expression of gratitude (Eisenstien and Bodman, 1986:67).

Yule (1996:47) defines thanking as "the feeling of gratefulness directed towards others". From this, it becomes obvious that thanking is one of the effective ways to maintain social rapport.

Thanking can express emotions, other than gratitude, sarcasm, irony, and blame as well. It is also used to open, change, and close conversations (ibid).

Pragmatically speaking, thanking is considered as a minimally face threatening act. Matti (1999:27) justifies this fact by saying that the speech act of thanking offends the thanker's negative face since he has to accept the debt; therefore, his freedom will be sacrificed and his face will be humbled. Nevertheless, in time thanking is a face threatening act for the thanker, it is a face saving act for the thankee's positive face. However, this threat can be minimized by responding to the thanker.

### **Strategies of Thanking**

According to Johansen (2008:35), the term "strategy" has two distinct senses. The first one denotes a "realization of a speech act", while the second is the measurement that enables the interlocutor to keep harmonious relationships.

#### **Farina and Suleiman's Thanking Strategies**

Farina and Suleiman (2009:121-3) classify expressing thanking into six strategies and the beneficiary has to choose one or more of them to convey the sense of indebtedness:

#### **1. Thanking**

**a.** By using the word "thank":

17. *Thanks a lot.*

18. *Thank you very much.*

**b.** Thanking and stating the favour:

19. *Thank you for your help.*

**c.** Thanking and mentioning the imposition caused by the favour:

20. *Thank you for helping me to collect the papers.*

#### **2.Appreciation**

**a.** Using the word appreciate:

21. *I appreciate it.*

**b.** Using the word appreciate and mentioning the imposition caused by the favour:

22. *I appreciate the time you spent for me.*

#### **3. Positive feelings**

**a.** Expressing a positive reaction to the favour giver (hearer):

23. *You are a life saver.*

**b.** expressing a positive reaction to the object of the favour:

24. *This book was really helpful.*

#### **4. Apology**

**a.** Using apologizing words:

25. *I am sorry for the problem I made.*

**b.** Criticizing or blaming or blaming one's self:

26. *I'm such a fool.*

**c.** Expressing embarrassment:

27. *It is so embarrassing.*

#### **5. Recognition of the problem**

**a.** Acknowledging the imposition:

28. *I know that you are not allowed to give me extra time.*

**b.** Stating the need for the favour:

29. *I try not to give extra time but this time I need it.*

**c.** Diminishing the need for the favour:

30. *You did not have to do that.*

#### **6. Repayment**

**a.** Offering or promising service, money, food, or goods:

31. *Next time, it's my turn to pay.*

**b.** Indicating indebtedness

32. *I owe you one.*

**c.** Promising future self-restrained of self-improvement:

33. *It will not happen again.*

#### **4.2. Aijmer's Thanking Strategies**

Aijmer (1996:37) classifies thanking strategies as follows:

##### **1. Explicit thanking:**

###### **A. Emotional**

**a.** Thanking somebody explicitly:

7. *Thanks/ thank you.*

**b.** Expressing gratitude:

8. *I am grateful.*

###### **B. Non-emotional**

**a.** Acknowledging a debt of gratitude:

9. *I owe a debt of gratitude to you.*

##### **2. Implicit thanking:**

###### **A. Emotional**

**a.** Expressing appreciation of the addressee:

10. *That is kind of you.*

11. *That is nice of you.*

**b.** Expressing appreciation of the act:

12. *That is lovely.*

13. *It is appreciated.*

**c.** Stressing one's gratitude:

14. *I must thank you.*

**d.** Expressing emotion:

15. *Oh, thank you.*

###### **B. Non-emotional**

**a.** Commenting on one's own role by suppressing one's own importance (self-denigration):

16. *I am an ingrates, I'm so careless.*

Surprisingly, Aijmer considers (14 and 15) as implicit forms of thanking. Anyhow, Johansen (2008:39) connects Aijmer's classification with Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness in which they present the way the speaker can satisfy the hearer's positive face. Therefore, it is a positive politeness.

This researcher will adopt Aijmer as the model for analysis.

#### **Felicity Conditions and Thanking**

Felicity conditions are certain circumstances that must be satisfied if the purpose of the speech act is to be achieved (Crystal, 2008:181) or to be recognized as intended (Yule, 1996:50).

Each speech act has its own felicity conditions to succeed. For thanking, Coulmas (1981 cited in Matti, 1999:62) categorizes the object of gratitude as mentioned below:

- 1.a. Thanks *ex ante*(for a promise, offer, invitation, etc) ( beforehand)
- b. Thanks *ex post*( for a favour, invitation, etc.) (afterwards)
- 2.a. Thanks for materialistic items (such as gifts, meals, goods, etc).
- b. Thanks for immaterialistic items such as(wishes, compliments, congratulations, help, etc.).
- 3.a. Thanks for some action initiated (unpromoted by the benefactor).
- b. Thanks for some action resulting from a request, wish, or order of the benefiter.
- 4.a Thanks that imply indebtedness.
- b. Thanks that do not imply indebtedness.

### **Gender**

“the commonest characteristic to be reflected by specific linguistic items” as far as the speakers are concerned is sex (Hudson, 1996:121).

Women use forms closer to the standard variety or the prestige accent than those used by men, i.e., female English speakers use linguistic forms “which are considered to be ‘better’ than male forms” (Trudgill, 1974:91-2). Not only better but also “more correct” the women’s linguistic forms are considered to be (ibid: 93) and men’s speech would be less ‘correct’ than those of women’s (ibid:94).

Holmes (1995) cited in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:136), shares the same opinion saying that women are more linguistically polite than men. This mirrors the fact that, generally speaking, more ‘correct social behaviour is expected of women. Sometimes, they even pretend that they use the more prestigious forms while in their real-life speech (i.e. without knowing they are monitored), they do less so and the opposite is true for men (Trudgill, 1974:95-7).

## **DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Data Collection**

The test of this study has been constructed to find out: the strategies Iraqi EFL learners use concerning the speech act of thanking, and whether female learners thank more than the males overall.

The test of this study consists of two questions each is of six items to check the students’ performance. The first question gives six items, each of which has an A role and B’s reply (i.e. thanking) is needed. In the second question, a situation is provided and the students should answer with any thanking expression. Gender of the students (i.e. thankers) is going to be taken into consideration when analyzing the results of the test. The total number of students is twenty: ten of males and ten of females.

To achieve this first aim, Aijmer's (1996:37) model (see 7-8) concerning thanking strategies has been followed in this study. The students' use of the direct and indirect strategies needs to be measured separately.

As for the second aim, the students are divided equally into two groups as each student will write down his gender.

### **Data Analysis**

In order to achieve the first aim of this study, the following two tables will be presented to show how the learners performed in responding to both questions. The first table is about the direct (or explicit) strategies used by Iraqi EFL learners, while the second is about the indirect (or implicit) strategies the learners use:

**Table 1: Results of the Learner's Response to Explicit Strategies**

Strategy	Major	Minor	Males	%	Females	%	Total	%
Explicit	Emotional	a	112	46.66	116	48.33	228	95%
		b	8	3.33	-	0%	8	3.33
	Non-emotional	a	-	0%	-	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			120	50%	116	48.33	236	98.33

The results of this table show that the first minor strategy, which is “thanking somebody explicitly”, of the emotional strategies is mainly use. The second emotional strategy “expressing gratitude” is very little used (3.33%). The Non-emotional strategy is never used. So we can surely say that the explicit strategies are used in a very high percentage while the others are never used by the students. They answered using explicit strategies 236 times that is 98.33 of the total answers. Which clearly leave the indirect strategies with less than 2% (see Table 2). This gives the conclusion that the first hypothesis (Iraqi EFL learners use the direct strategy to thank more than the indirect ones) to be validated.

Table 2 below reveals the students' answer concerning the implicit strategies:

**Table 2: Results of the Learner's Response to Implicit Strategies**

Strategy	Major	Minor	Males	%	Females	%	Total	%
Implicit	Emotional	a	-	0%	3	1.25%	3	1.25%
		b	-	0%	-	0%	0	0%
		c	-	0%	-	0%	0	0%
		d	1	0.41	-	0%	1	0.41%
	Non-emotional	a	-	0%	-	0%	0	0%
<b>Total</b>			1	0.41	3	1.25	4	1.66%

As for the second aim, the total of both tables (1 and 2) will be extracted with separate genders in the following table:

**Table 3: The Students' Answers According to Gender**

Gender	Strategy	Number of use	Percentage
Males		121	50.416%
Females		119	49.583%
Total		240	100%

Here, in this table the percentage of the females' use of the thanking strategies is 49.58% (i.e. 119 times), while of the males' use is "50.41% (i.e. 121 times)". These results reject the second hypothesis where the males of the sample used thanking strategies even more than females.

## CONCLUSIONS

After applying the test to the sample, we arrived at the following conclusions:

The students used the direct strategies to thank almost all the time and they even left some of the strategies (especially the indirect one) unused. This emphasized the first hypothesis of this study. As for gender; females used thanking strategies a bit less than the males and this conclusion rejects the second hypothesis of the study.

## REFERENCES

- Aijmer, Carin. (1996). Conversational Routines in English: Convention and Creativity. New York: Longman Group Limited.
- Austin, John L. (1962). How to Do Things with Words. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bach, Kent and Harnish, Robert M. (1979). Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Crystal, David. (2008). A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Edmondson, William. (1981). Spoken Discourse: A Model for Analysis. New York: Longman Group Limited.
- Farina, M and Suleiman, R. (2009). An Interlanguage Pragmatic Study of Expressions of Gratitude by Iranian EFL Learners- A Pilot Study. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*: Vol. 5. P.108- 140. Available at: <http://usm.academia.edu>
- Grant, A. M and Gino, F. (2010). "A Little Thanks Goes a Long Way: Explaining Why Gratitude Expressions Motivate Prosocial Behavior". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*: Vol. 98, No.6. P: 946-955. Available at: [http://www.management.wharton.upenn.edu/grant/GrantGino\\_JPSP2010.pdf](http://www.management.wharton.upenn.edu/grant/GrantGino_JPSP2010.pdf)
- Holmes, Janet. (1989). "Sex Differences and Apologies: One Aspect of Communicative Competence". *Applied Linguistics*. 10 (2). 194-214.

- Hudson, Richard A. (1996). Sociolinguistics. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Johansen, S. (2008). "A Comparative Study of Gratitude Expressions in Norwegian and English from an Interlanguage Pragmatic and Second Language Acquisition Research Perspective". Unpublished M.A Thesis, Oslo. Available at: <http://www.duo.uio.no/sok/work.html?WORKID=74714>
- Jucker, A. H. and Taavitsainen, I. (2008). "Speech Acts Now and Then: Towards a Pragmatic History of English". In Jucker, A and Tavitsainen, I. (eds). Speech Acts in the History of English Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Leech, Geoffrey. (1983). Principles of Pragmatics. Essex: Longman Group Limited.
- Levinson, Stephen. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics.
- Matti, Ala' A. (1999). "Thanks and Apologies in Iraqi Arabic with Special Reference to English". Unpublished M. A. Thesis, University of Mosul.
- McGinty, Sarah M. (2001). Power Talk: Using Language to Build Authority and Influence. New York: Time Warner Company.
- Searle, John R. (1969). Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Trudgill, Peter. (1974). Sociolinguistics: An Introduction. New York: Penguin Books Ltd.
- Tsohatzidis, S. (1994). "The Gab between Speech Acts and Mental States". In Tsohatzidis, S. (ed.). Foundation of Speech Act Theory. London: Routledge.
- Yule, George. (1996). Pragmatics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yu-jing, HE. (2007). "Gender Language Difference: A New Interpretation of Face-saving Theory". In Bony, Chen (ed.). Us-China Foreign Language. Chicago: David Publishing Company (ed.) 5 (1). 5-8.

## Appendix

### Q1/ Answer on the behalf of B:

1. B: Do you cook the meat?  
A: Of course, we always cook meat, Have some of these vegetables.  
B:
2. A: Let me pick you up to the cinema.  
B:
3. Would you like some more coffee?  
B:
4. A: I'll carry your bag if you like.  
B:
5. B: Can I borrow your pen John.  
A: Of course, take it.
6. B: Do you have a cigarette?  
A: Of course, Here you are:

**Q2/ Give the appropriate thanking to the following situations:**

Situation 1: A man could save the life of a child who was about to be crashed by a car.

Situation 2: Tom and Jim Share a room. Tom cleaned up their room alone while Jim was not there.  
Jim Comes back:

Situation 3: Joe shows Mary a car that he has bought for her:

Situation 4: A professor advised a student who had faced a serious problem:

Situation 5: A student opened the door for the teacher:

Situation6: At a Christmas party, guests arrive bearing gifts for their hosts: