

Condolence Expressions Used by EFL Learners In Written Tests

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المستخلص

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليلاً للطرق التي يتم من خلالها التعبير عن موضوع العزاء من قبل متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) في العراق. تهدف الدراسة إلى معرفة تصور الطلاب العراقيين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية والاعتراف باستخدام تعبيرات التعزية في اللغة الإنجليزية والاختلافات الثقافية. تفترض الدراسة أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على دراية بالتعبير المستخدمة في سياق اللغة الإنجليزية للحديث عن الموت وكيفية تقديم العزاء في هذه السياقات. من أجل اختبار فرضيتها ، طورت الدراسة اختباراً يتم توزيعه على طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين في جامعة بابل بغرض اختبار وعي الطلاب وكذلك التعرف على كيفية التعبير عن التعازي باللغة الإنجليزية. وخلصت نتائج الاختبار إلى أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على دراية بكيفية التعبير عن التعازي باللغة الإنجليزية ويمكنهم فهمها جيداً.

Abstract

This study presents an analysis to the ways in which the topic of condolence is expressed by Iraqi learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study aims at finding out the Iraqi EFL students' conception and recognition of the use of condolence expressions in English language and the cultural differences. The study hypothesizes that the Iraqi EFL students are aware of the expressions used in the English context to talk about death and how to present condolence in these contexts. In order to test its hypothesis, the study develops a test which is distributed to Iraqi EFL students at the University of Babylon for the purpose of testing the students' awareness as well recognition of how to express condolence in English. The findings of the test concludes that the Iraqi EFL students are aware of how to express condolence in English and can comprehend it significantly well.

Key Words: Condolence, Death Expressions, EFL Students

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1. Introduction

Condolence generally refers to sympathetic sorrow, and particularly sorrow with regard to the loss of life. It is used when speaking indirectly of that shared sorrow (Meriam Webster).

The plural *condolences*, on the other hand, is often used specifically for an expression of sympathy, and most often appears in the construction *my condolences*, which is used to communicate sympathy. While *condolences* is often used to share sorrow over a death. An example of showing condolence is as the following:

After the 1985 Bradford stadium fire, during the Prime Minister's visit of condolence to the city (William Leith, *The Independent* (London), 25 Nov. 1990) and often in a modifying position: Still, although I felt for him, I barely knew the guy. Would it be inappropriate to pay a condolence call? Did they want their privacy? (Alan Gelb, 1990: 9)

Another example is from (Caplan, 2004: 3) Last week, people around the world showed their support for Russia. They held candlelight vigils, sent condolence letters and signed memory books.

Also, the prime minister of the day attended Hardy's funeral. . . . King George V and the Prince of Wales telegraphed their condolences (Eagleton, 2007:)

Interesting offers of condolences in the fame work of linguistic politeness provides an opportunity to explore how participants make their interpersonal relationships through their choice of linguistics strategies.

Speaking about loss is a natural part of life, yet in American society it is a difficult topic to manage due to issues such as device for a bright side sequence, fear of saying or doing the wrong thing and lack of normative support. For scientist in sociology and interpersonal communication, research on conversation surrounding loss and death are worthy of study because these interactions are not institutionally prescribed , death is almost always unscheduled and the interactions of the various participant ,are only partially regulated .Thus , providing an opportunity to explore what social and personal dynamics may be at play when speaking about death.

Finally the appropriate way to express condolences is a difficult matter, laden with concern about respecting the others privacy while showing empathy .When asked about the act of giving condolences ,many speakers say they straggle to find the right words ,and many hearse indicate they feel people are not always sensitive .Being sensitive can vary from one situation to another and from one participant to another .In some cases , it means showing involvement and asking questions ,and in some cases it means not respecting the others privacy .In this research on delivering death news , you find it difficult to assess how much expressions of emotions are appropriate. Non wanted to appear extremely objective about death, but they did not want to loss control.

Thus, in delivering or talking about bad news there is a tension between showing support and involvement by speaking about it at length, and showing respect for privacy by closing the topic quickly. It appears that talk about troubles and death varies between a discussion of commiseration leading to a positive closing, and a brief acknowledgment of the trouble before quickly closing the topic.

Offering condolences can because of showing politeness and thus the comments people offer can be analyzed in tem of how they mitigate such face threats. The research will examine if the relationships between interlocutors influence the degree to which the comment supports positive face or negative face.

Dying are natural part of life, but they make many people feel uncomfortable or anxious. Other language may be more sensitive than us or less direct to be discussed without linguistic safeguards. One of them is undoubtedly death , a timeless taboo in which psychological , religious and social interdictions coexist . In fact, human beings have traditionally felt reluctant to deal with subject of death using straight forward terms, whether owing to superstitions or fear social respect, the fact remains that when facing death language users try to soften the effect of what they really wish to communicate. In accordance, this paper explores the various expressions in Iraqi users.

3. The Test

In order to use indirect words about death, the speaker has to deal with his or her on feeling of grief and less explain to fortune else thus a loved one did not make, it is sometimes easier than saying that, she died. Death final and saying it load can be difficult when we're struggling to cope with the rotation. Similarly, using the word "death " make it difficult to deny the reality. And psychologically, at a bit of denial is not as bad as a short, term copying mechanism. In

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direct language can sometimes be helpful way to mentally and emotionally handle feeling gradually.

3.1 Definition

The test is defined by Al –Juboury (1999 : 1) as means of checking what students can do with the language.

It is also defined by Al-Hamash and Younis (1985: 195) as an instrumenter a tool of evaluating student's performance to judge their progress in particular aspects.

Coombe et al. (2007: 15) state that a test is a formal systematic (usually paper, and pencil) procedure used to gather information about student's behavior concerning the language.

3.2 Features of a good test

A good test must have the following features:

1. Validity: It is the extent to which a test measures what is supposed to measure (Al-Jobory , 1992 : 24). Two important types of validity are to be realized:

A. Content validity: It means that the test should completely cover the syllabus that is to be assessed (ibid : 25) .

B. Face validity: It simply means how the test seems to the supervisors (ibid: 26).

2. Reliability: When a group of students are given the same test twice, under the same conditions, achieving the same or nearly the same result, then the test is called reliable (ibid.).

3. Practicality: A test is practical if it is economic and easy to given to the students. (ibid).

3.3 Test Material

Most of these items of the test are taken from. In addition to the references that are maintained at the end of the paper . The item included in the test are supposed to represent adequately each portion of the study.

3.4 The Design

This test is designed in a way that it consists of two question. Question one measures the student's performance at recognition level and it contains ten items. Question Two which is used to measure student's production which contains ten items.

3.5 The subject

The test is applied to a sample of fifty fourth –year students of Department of English. Collage of Education for Human sciences. University of Babylon during the academic year (2017 -2018) the number of the students is.

3.6 The findings of the test

The finding of question one, item A: choose between the brackets are show in the following table.

Table 1: Frequency of Direct and Indirect Answers on Question 1.

Items	No. of Direct answer	Percentages	No. Indirect answer	of Percentages
1	35	70%	15	30%
2	36	72%	14	28%
3	30	60%	20	40%
4	41	82%	7	18%
5	43	86%	9	14%
Total	185	37%	65	13%

According to the result shows in the table above, it is noticed that the numbers and the percentages of the correct number of Q(a) are higher than those of the incorrect ones. They are (37%) of the correct answer, and (13 %) of the incorrect answer. They are going to be explained below:

Item 1: "I'm sorry" is said for the person that (higher) -----died.

a- mother b- husband c- friend

In this item the numbers and the percentages of the direct responses (70 %) and they are more than the indirect ones that are (30 %). It seems that the most of the students do not face difficulty in recognizing using an expression which is highly used for near family relationships and that which is for friendships .

Item 2: "What do you think" is the good expression to be said in death occasions.

a- with deepest sympathy b- I'm sorry to hear about your loss.

In this item, the numbers and percentages of the correct answer to their recognition are (50%). Apparently . they are more than the incorrect answers whose numbers and percentages (40 %). So. It seems that the students have no difficulty in recognizing the expression which is

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good or more suitable than others. And it seems that those who answer this item with not the onset appropriate one is influenced by their recently mother tongue in choosing the answer.

Item 3: We say “please accept my...” to the person that lost his friend .

In this item, the numbers and the percentages the correct answers according to their recognition are (30 %) and the percentages for the incorrect answer are (40%) . So, it seems that most of the students recognize those words or expressions which are used to express condolences especially.

Item 4: " I'm sorry to hear that news "

a- you are happy b- you are.... c- you are sad

In this item the numbers and percentages of the correct answers are (40 %) and the incorrect responses and percentages are (20 %) .So, it seems that students have highly recognition in answering this question. They are conscious with the using of this expression to express condolences.

Item 5: " What do say if your friend lost her father "

a-I'm so sorry to hear about your loss.

b-Please accept our most headful sympathy for tour loss.

c-Please accept my condolences.

Student's responses for this item are highly to the first option which is the most appropriate one of them because that person had lost his father. And few students choose the two other students because they are not answer of that close relationships of the friend and his father.

The findings of question one (b), underline the word or phrase which carry the meaning of " condolences " to have expressions for death occasion are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Frequency of Direct and Indirect Answers on Question 2.

Items	No. of correct answers	Percentages	No. of incorrect answers	Percentages
1	35	70%	15	30%
2	38	76%	12	24%
3	46	92%	14	8%

4	30	60%	20	40%
5	42	82%	18	18%
6	38	76%	12	24%
7	38	76%	12	24%
8	41	82%	9	18%
9	45	90%	5	10%
10	48	96%	2	4%
Total	401	80%	119	20%

In this question there are ten items. The numbers and percentages of the correct responses are also more than those of the incorrect ones. It is analyzed below:

Item 1 and 2: The numbers and percentages the correct answers are (70%) , (76%) respectably . It seems that the students do not face difficulty in recognizing the expression which is used to show condolence. From these dialogues they recognize the expressions which are used for such occasions.

Item 3 and 4: Students recognition on these items are highly. The numbers and percentages of these items are (92%) and (60%) respectably. They face no difficulty in distinguishes condolence expressions from such dialogues.

Item 5: Is an email written by someone to his friend who has lost his cousin in an accident. Students' performance in this question is not highly. They could not underline the exact expression which are used to show condolence. The numbers and percentages of the correct answers are (82%) . This item just like a paragraph written as on email message.

Item 6 and 7: Students correct responses and the percentages are (76%) and (76%) which are the highest degree. Both items have the expression " I'm sorry ". It seems that this expression is highly used and they can recognize it easily.

Students' recognition on item 8 and 9 are also high. The numbers and percentages of the correct answers are (62%) and (90%) respectably. And the numbers of the incorrect answers and percentages are (18%) and (10%) respectably. The correct answers in these dialogues are " I'm so

sorry " and "Oh, no". Students are answer of such expression and they can recognize it very well.

Item 10: The situation in this item and dialogue is difficult. But the key expression for condolence is also "I'm so sorry ". It has the most highly degree of percentages for the correct answers. The numbers and percentages of the correct answers are (96%) and the numbers and percentages of the incorrect answers are (4%).

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The finding of question 2: Answers to this question were given with different expressions to show condolence. This question is to examine the students' production in using condolences expressions. The number and percentage of the correct answers are also more than those of the incorrect ones. But it is does not lie on their recognition on these expressions. It seems that they have quite limited expression to show condolence. It is analyzing below:

Table 3: Frequency of Direct and Indirect Answers on Questions

Items	No. of correct answers	Percentages	No. of incorrect answers	Percentages
1	46	92%	14	8 %
2	47	92%	13	7 %
3	46	92 %	14	8 %
4	30	60 %	20	40 %
5	28	56 %	22	44 %
6	36	56 %	22	30 %
7	35	70 %	15	43 %
8	26	55 %	24	44 %
9	29	56 %	21	24 %
10	38	76 %	12	24 %
11	34	69 %	16	31 %
12	35	70 %	15	30 %
13	37	71 %	13	29 %
14	40	80 %	10	20 %
15	36	72 %	14	28 %
Total	543	71.1 %	245	28 %

In answering items 1,2, and 3, most of the students produce the expression " I'm sorry " to show condolence and sympathy. The numbers and percentages of the correct answers are (20 %) ,(49 %)and (30 %) respectably. It seems that the most usable expression by this is this one. It indicates their sympathy and showing on indirectness to serve face needs.

For items 4 and 5: The students' responses in answering them is somewhat different from the first three items. Some students used the expression " Oh, no" other used " I'm sorry " and some used "A please accept my condolence "these items are somewhat different from the first three items " I" both items this person (the teacher) has lost either his mother or other

member of his family ,the numbers and percentages of the correct answers are (20 %) and(%) also respectably for each items.

In the following three items 6,7and 8 and expressions are used by the students such as "10%" "God bless him", " do not weep this is the of life". It seems that students production on expressing condolence can be variant and different most of the students answer these items correctly . Each those who did not answer it correctly try to be sympathy in showing condolence.

For the rest of the items, students produced limit themselves to the same expressions except few students produced expression such as " It is very sad occasion " or "It is terrible news " from these answering it is clear that most and the majority of the students uses the expression "I'm sorry" to express their sympathy for the loss of someone relative or not.

Out of the incorrect responses, some are left without answer which means that the students do not know their correct answers.

From this it is very clear that students' recognition on showing condolence are more highly than their production.

Conclusion

In the research, in delivering or talking about bad news or death occasions there is a tension between showing support and involvement by speaking about it at length and showing respect for privacy by closing the topic quickly.

To conclude this research, it is clear that death expressing or showing condolences are used by Iraqi EFL and they can be indirect in dealing with expressions or death occasions. But they are un ware of the expressions which are used for close relationships which are used for close relationships such as father or mother and other member of the family relationships, and that which are used for a friend or an ordinary people. Finding the appropriate way to express condolence are difficult matter, laden with concerns about respecting the other's privacy while showing sympathy.

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