

The Pragmatics of Diminutives in Iraqi Arabic

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Abstract

This study examines the pragmatic functions of diminutives in Iraqi Arabic (henceforth IA). The data of this study has been processed according to the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1978). Analysis of data that occurs naturally from the use of diminutives shows that, as an extension of their main use with children, diminutives in IA have taken on pragmatic functions to express contempt, demonstrate passion and love, intensify speaker's feelings, reduce imposition, avoid boasting, and enhance social relationships in ironic situations. The eccentric use of diminutives in IA is to moderate insult caused through marking diminutive on names in hostile situations. It is realized that the formulae are primarily supportive of the listener, and enhance the power of speech in positive politeness situations while reducing the power of speech in negative politeness situations. Thus, the diminutive is utilised as a positive politeness strategy, inclined towards demonstrating emotion and compassion, and creating a cordial atmosphere for communication, and as a negative politeness strategy in order to reduce the imposition and mitigate negative utterances. These pragmatic functions reflect the role of diminutive formulae in IA as a tool used to distinguish, create, or confirm social interactions.

Keywords: Diminutives; Iraqi Arabic; politeness strategies, social relationships; positive/negative politeness.

1. Introduction

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) establish their politeness theory on the basis of the Gricean (1975) maxims and Goffman's (1967) concept of 'face' which they connect with self-esteem or self public image that is attacked or maintained in interaction. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) subdivided face into two wants, labelled 'negative face' and 'positive'. 'Positive face' refers to the wants to be approved of by others and 'negative face' refers to the wants to be free from any imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61-62).

Brown and Levinson contend that certain acts inherently threaten the 'face' needs of one or both participants. Negative face is the desire to maintain one's own autonomy. Members of any culture wish to be shown proper deference and respect and to not have their privacy and space invaded, their resources spent or their actions restricted without just cause. (Wilson et al., 1991: 219). Examples of negative face proposed by the authors are: relate to etiquette, avoidance of disturbing others, indirectness in making requests or in imposing obligations, acknowledgement of one's debt to others, showing deference (Marques-Reiter, 2000:15). Positive face encompasses the desire to be accepted and to have what one wants approved by others.

The essence of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is that acts threatening interactants' face may be rendered less face threatening when speakers employ communicative strategies in order to soften the effect. Strategies employed to minimise face threat when performing Face Threatening Acts (henceforth FTAs), are known as face work (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 10). Should a speaker wish to perform an FTA despite the possible face loss to hearer, to speaker or to both, linguistic means for minimising face damage are available. For example, the speaker may signal linguistically that they recognise the threat to the hearer's negative or positive face, thereby satisfying some of the hearer's wants.

Regarding the issue of universality of politeness, Brown and Levinson (1987: 260) claim that the concept of face, being the motivation for politeness, will most probably be universal, but its exact content will be culturally specific. They, furthermore, argue that even the strategies of face redress are universal. They contend that there are universal principles of politeness, but the different languages select the strategies and forms most appropriate to their needs. However, this view has been challenged. House and Kasper (1981: 157) query the assumption that politeness is a universal phenomenon. Matsumoto (1988) and Gu (1990) observe that the two components attributed to 'face' by the theory cannot be universal because neither the positive nor negative aspects of it can account satisfactorily for politeness phenomenon in both Japanese and Chinese cultures. Gu (1990: 241–242) emphasises the normative nature of politeness in Chinese culture, noting that Brown & Levinson's failure to go beyond the instrumental function and to recognise the normative function of politeness in interaction is probably due to the construction of their theory around the notion of two rational and face-caring model persons.

Despite these criticisms, however, Brown and Levinson's theory remains a very useful analytical framework for understanding politeness phenomena cross-culturally. In fact, the majority of cross-cultural studies conducted over the past 20 years have used this theory as a framework for understanding how speech acts, for instance, are differentially realised in different cultures. Furthermore, research on pragmatics in the past decade demonstrates substantial reliance on Brown and Levinson's (1987) model (Bella et. al., 2015: 23). This framework is "common and has inspired a wealth of research, in particular in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989" (Ogiermann, 2015:1). Despite its limitations, this theory remains the most powerful framework available today in this field. Thus, Diminutives in the present study will be discussed in forms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies of politeness.

Brown and Levinson (1987: 108) do not discuss the function of diminutives in English. They only identify diminutivized terms of address and endearments as in-group identity markers through which the speaker can implicitly claim in-group solidarity with the addressee. Such forms are seen as softening face-threatening acts with imperatives. Although Brown and Levinson acknowledge that in some languages diminutives do not necessarily function only as address terms (1987: 109), they seem to ignore that this is also true of English, illustrating their point instead with examples of the Tzeltal particle *ala* 'a little', which, they claim, interspersed throughout a positive politeness interaction, emphasizes the emotional bond between interactants. Further on (1987: 177) they see the same item as a negative politeness marker used to minimize impositions.

The present study searches the diminutive as an internationally interesting feature of language. The diminutive essentially transfers the idea of 'micro', although it is capable of delivering a variety of pragmatic meanings that stand behind the concept of 'micro'. As Mendoza (2005: 169) argues, diminutive leads to a physical meaning, which is 'small', but "provides considerations of social relations and social interaction where the intentions and positions of the speaker are most important." The attractiveness of the diminutive in social communication appears to derive from the encoding of apparently contradictory functions, such as the use of a positive affective attitude and the interacting degrading meaning, having both attenuating and intensifying force (Jurafsky, 1996). This multidimensional structure serves to render the diminutive a multipurpose and beneficial social interactional device. Therefore, the diminutive act is a prime example of a linguistic tool that is charged with socially motivated connotations that reflect "how social considerations affect Language "(Mendoza, 2005: 171).

Literature Review

The diminutive has been an object of study for quite a long time, dating back to the nineteenth century (cf. Coleridge [1857], Lewis [1832] *inter alia*), and this tradition of research on diminutive has continued well up until now¹.

The theoretical backgrounds of the diminutive have concentrated fundamentally on what forms the central advantage that stimulates and is responsible for the use of diminutives as a pragmatic device. In this regard, Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994, 2001) argue that the pragmatic function of diminutive phenomena overcomes semantic significance. In other words, pragmatics is a miraculous semantic signifier in diminutives. Furthermore, they (*ibid*) contend that the semantic feature of small diminutives has a more realistic component with common pragmatic characteristics, identified as non-serious, which is assumed to be the attribute responsible for the majority of the pragmatic uses of diminutives. As Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi claim, these diminutives tend to "reduce the proposed content" (1994: 132), i.e. at the semantic level, but they fail on a pragmatic level, for instance, when diminutives are utilised as flattering in interactions. Jurafsky (1996: 537) maintains an opposite view of diminutives. According to him, "the origins of the diminutive cross-linguistically lie in words that are semantically and pragmatically related to children" (*ibid*). This is due to the fact that the child, which is the main focus of the diminutive, "is historically prior, metaphorically and inferentially stimulates other senses" (1996: 543)

¹ See, for example, Triantafyllides 1963: 146-49; Babiniotis 1969:2-3; Mackridge 1985: 158; Daltas 1985: 63; Joseph & Philippaki-Warbuton 1987:217; Sifianou 1992. See also Schneider [2003] and Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi [1994] for fuller bibliographical reports.

Wierzbicka (1984) also supports this view. She (ibid) likewise claims that the child is the essential feature in charge of the pragmatic functions of the diminutive. As regards to pragmatics, Jurafsky (1996:535) suggests various uses for diminutives: emotion, disdain, fun, situations involving children or pets, and metalinguistic hedges. In the current paper, it would appear that the pragmatic influences of the diminutive in IA are stimulated by the characteristic child and that the functions of the diminutive in this diversity in Arabic language are an extension of this feature.

Based on this standard Arabic view, Padrenh (1996) investigated a discrepancy in English and Arabic translation to identify differences and rapprochement between those two languages with regard to the use of diminutives. Baharna's investigation was based on the diminutive that occurs in different modern and classical Arabic contexts. The diminutive in these contexts, in addition to implying smallness, is utilised to convey a variety of meanings: scorn, graininess, temporal convergence, spatial proximity, scarcity, and glorification. He also found that the diminutive in these texts has an aesthetic function. With the exception of smallness, covetousness, and disdain, the English language functions which have been compared to Arabic, Arabic and English diverge regarding other functions of the diminutive, which become apparent in translation. Compared to English, Arabic is much more flexible and productive in conveying compassion or attitudes through the diminutive.

In addition, most studies investigating the developmental trajectory of diminutives have targeted speakers of European languages, which tend to make frequent use of evaluative morphology. Many of these studies observe that despite their semantic, structural, and pragmatic complexity (Dressler & Barbaresi, 1994), diminutives are one of the earliest, if not the earliest morphosyntactic form to be acquired, with both simplex and diminutized forms appearing in the speech of very young children (e.g. Ferguson, 1977; Ceccherini, Bonifacio & Zocconi, 1997). Systematic investigations of the

frequency of use of diminutives among young children and their mothers likewise suggest that children attain adult-like usage patterns at relatively early ages. Stephany (1997), for instance, in her naturalistic study of diminutives in the speech of two monolingual Greek children, found that at 1;9 both children used the three most common diminutive suffixes with the same relative frequency as their mothers. Similarly, Gillis (1997), in his longitudinal study of the acquisition of Dutch diminutives in the natural speech of one child between the ages of 1-5 and 2-5, reports that by early in the second year of life, the patterns of diminutive use, as measured by the percentage of diminutive word forms, were comparable to that of the mother. Likewise, in her longitudinal diary study of the development of words for 'mama' and 'papa' among two Latvian speakers, Ruke-Dravin, a (1976) reports that the ability to use diminutives productively appears around two years of age. The apparent early acquisition of evaluative morphology has led researchers to speculate about the facilitative role that diminutives might play in language acquisition (Ferguson, 1977). For instance, Olmsted has argued that because Russian diminutives are characterized by completely predictable declensional endings, no third declension, and limited stem alterations, they provide a simpler subset of morphemes which children can master with relative ease prior to 'venturing into the wilder fuller nominal system of Russian at large' (Olmsted, 1994: 166).

This paper presents an overview of IA pragmatics within the coding scheme of politeness theory suggested by Brown and Levinson (1978). It is believed that diminutives in IA are pragmatically used in both negative and positive politeness, and as acts that threaten the recipient's positive face. By examining the pragmatic value and functions of diminutives in IA, one image of interactive devices will be drawn into this dialect. In addition, the object of this study is to fill in gaps in IA pragmatics in particular, and contribute to an understanding of the pragmatic functions of diminutives in general.

Methodology

This section describes the research design and methodological steps and procedures adopted to conduct this study.

The study involving Iraqi subjects (native speakers of Iraqi Arabic) was administered in Misan province, Iraq in April 2017. Misan is a province with a population of approximately 0.9 million people, located in south east of Iraq. Families were recruited through institutional and personal contacts of the author.

The participants in the present study were made up of 10 females and 10 males with an age range of 8 to 30. The interlocutors had lived in Misan all their lives.

The present study relies on multi-turn interactional data that comes from naturally occurring situations of diminutives performed spontaneously in public interactions. Data were obtained and recorded from interlocutors over more than two years. Collecting the original data that occurs naturally in interactions in order to study the pragmatics, gives a better opportunity for understanding the functions of diminutives in social interaction by allowing the multi-turn data to be analysed at the level of discourse. In Arabic, diminutives lie in natural interactions that involve more communication than is verbalized. Free and word-for-word translation followed the IA tokens. The production of IA is the basis of communication in daily life. It is used in local, informal and intimate settings at home, in the workplace, between friends and acquaintances. Accurate translation of Arabic words containing diminutives is difficult, if not impossible, in most utterances. Thus, the translations in this study will be viewed only as approximate estimates.

This study utilises ethnographical data sources. There are many arguments for and against the different methodologies used although the main consensus

among researchers is that the preferred method is to collect natural data or real life conversations (Blum–Kulka et al., 1989; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Cohen & Olshtain, 1994; Beebe & Cummings, 1995). The ethnographical method is better than placing the participants in hypothetical situations, as in Role plays and questionnaires, that may impose upon them some excessive imaginative challenges, thus possibly undermining their performance (Kasper and Rose, 2002).

However, it would be necessary to obtain permission from individuals to record long stretches of conversation to collect appropriate data in sufficient quantities. Firstly, consent forms were prepared and were signed by the participants prior to their involvement in the research. The consent form described the project and its procedures, and explained that participation in the study was voluntary and that the participants had the right to withdraw. It was important to reassure them that all the data would be confidential and that no personal information was required. Having agreed on participation, the informants were handed the consent form to fill out. The instructions were also explained orally to make sure that everyone, especially the children, understood them. Consequently, 60 tokens of diminutives were recorded from the groups of informants.

A smartphone recorder, Samsung Galaxy S6, was used for the recordings, and the resultant quality was very good. On listening to the recordings in detail, they were deemed to be appropriate to the purpose of the experiment. Therefore, the results of the recorded data were collated in written form to render the data easier to transcribe. Then the researcher, with the assistance of a Linguistics/PHD lecturer, prepared the English transcriptions.

The transcription symbols used in this study are adopted from Nofsinger's system (1991: 167–169) which is based on the original scheme devised by Jefferson (2004) and explained in more detail in Atkinson and Heritage (1984). All conversations were transcribed using simplified conversation analysis transcription conventions (Nofsinger, 1991). ‘Simplified transcription’

indicates that detailed reproduction of prosody or intonation was not taken into consideration.

Data from the speech of the interlocutors also consist of (a) recordings of spontaneous speech in informal settings, and (b) examples taken down in a notebook.

The setting of the conversation took place at home and at informal social gatherings, in shops and restaurants, at the doctor's surgery, in taxis, on the radio and television, and during brief exchange of information between strangers in the street.

It was assumed that diminutivization could not be independent of manifestations of politeness. Thus, the purpose of the collection of the data was to investigate the functions of diminutives in politeness rather than their frequency. The interpretations offered here are inevitably subjective, as is the case with most interpretations, but they are based on a large amount of data and on discussions with Iraqi informants, and they appear to reflect Iraqi interactional reality to a great extent.

As for data analysis, I will adopt a model proposed by Jurafsky (1996), aiming at providing a unified account of the various semantic and pragmatics senses which diminutives exhibit cross-linguistically. Based on a corpus of over sixty languages, Jurafsky draws the conclusion that the core sense of the category of diminutives is 'child' rather than 'small'. He then goes on to suggest that the remaining senses are motivated by this core sense and structured around it in the fashion of a radial category (cf. Lakoff 1987). Links from the core sense (the prototype of the category) to peripherals senses are provided by means of the following mechanisms of semantic change: inference(I), metaphor(M), generalisation(G) and lambda-abstraction(L).

2.1 Indicating Children

Using diminutives in IA regarding children is not different from the common function of diminutives. Hence, the diminutive can be utilized either to refer to or to address children. Consider the following examples:

1. [A father joking with his seven month old son]

tiṭl'elha 'snaynāt²

got-MS-SC-he teeth-DIM

'My son is getting new teeth-DIM!'

2.

fidiāt ḡol-'waynāt

sacrifice those-eyes-DIM

'I sacrifice for these eyes-DIM!'³

(You may live longer than me)

These expressions obviously demonstrate how the father communicates his emotion and affection to his child by diminutivising his eyes and teeth. By the use of small body parts, the father recognizes the small world of his son. Further to referring to the implied meaning of smallness, micro-use in these child-centred situations adds to the affection for the son. Hence, the diminutives 'snaynāt (teeth-Dim) and 'waynāt (eyes-Dim) can be construed as a positive trend, meaning that it shows the father's love for his son. Moreover, these tiny forms demonstrate to other people, who might be in this scenario, the father's passion, identification and care for his baby. Consequently, further to showing love towards his son, the father tries to "represent the world as a friendly place" (Sifianou, 1992: 158) and establish an

² . See appendix (1) for transcription and glossing of Arabic characters.

atmosphere of affection and feeling that positively influences not only the son, but possibly those around him. Utilising diminutives in IA corresponds to their employment in other cultures to create "attachment and intimacy" and to establish "emotional bonding" in father-son communication (King and Melzi, 2004: 257).

Along with using diminutives to indicate children, they can be utilised in situations that refer to them.

Employing diminutives promotes the idea that people communicate in a way that emphasizes the affection and solidarity among them. Consider the following example:

3. (A fifty years old interacting with a woman who got married only recently)
inshalla 'l-weli'ad 'l-ṣaliḥ

God willing baby-DIM def-well

‘May Allah bless you with a good boy!’

Iraqi society, with a male majority, has a traditional male preference. This begins when a married woman declares herself to be pregnant; the wish is that a married woman will beget a boy instead of a girl. Thus, diminutives go beyond the concept of smallness to the wider social objective of creating a friendly atmosphere for the communication between the old man and the newly married woman. In this interaction, the elderly man wants to express his desire that the listener, the newly married woman, becomes pregnant and gives birth to a boy instead of a girl.

By employing this type of diminutive, the expression of the man is positively polite, due to expressing a cordial wish with the young woman that her upcoming child will be a boy and not a girl. There is an obvious connection of empathy to the newly married young woman in this regard, caused by social

tendencies, and here the utterance of smallness is performed to express this empathy. Thus, the use of the diminutive emphasizes the passionate relationship between the speaker and hearer rather than precisely characterizing the 'smallness' of the hoped-for boy. To put it another way, the diminutive influences the illocutionary force of the statement.

The elderly man might easily employ the basic term (welad) "boy", which can be perceived by pregnant wives as a "baby boy", but in that context, the additional pragmatic realization of the friendly relationship among interlocutors would vanish. The incompatibility of the real size becomes apparent if we consider the IA term for the baby, i.e., the borrowed English baby word, purely utilised to indicate the actual size.

The use of small forms to refer to a child or to express warmth might not stop even when the child grows up and becomes an adult. In such contexts, it is evidently the emotion rather than the physical connotation that is pragmatically targeted. Hence, the emotions constantly extend towards that little baby. This continuous affection from the baby to the adult world of the child is clear in the communication below:

4. A Woman talking to a male university colleague)

‘indek ‘arūs? ‘indi waliəd ‘irīd ‘zawjah

have you–MAS bride? I with me boy–Dim want marry–MAS

(Do you know any bride? I have got a boy–Dim to marry off)

In the above interaction, a woman talks about her adult son for whom she is seeking a woman for marriage. Thus, the meaning of the diminutive as a small size is disrupted. The woman talks about a man not a boy. She, however, selects the small term 'waliəd' boy–Dim to express her pampering attitude to her son, who will always remain a baby in her eyes. Employing the term ('waliəd) to address an adult male on the verge of marriage may be stimulated

by the mother's humbleness: she does not like to be understood as bragging about her son, who has become old enough to marry. In Iraqi society, marrying somebody's son is socially regarded as a considerable achievement. Thus, the diminutive permits the speaker to create proximity with the listener to allow the communication of such a socially and personally sensitive subject as seeking a woman to marry. In her expression of humility, the diminutive allows the question to be asked in an emotional tone that minimizes the sensitivity of the question, which is difficult to reach by using the basic form of the term.

As shown above, the scripts of the diminutive pragmatically refer to children in both (3) and (4), whether in the authentic or in the imagined sense as in (4), and so both show love towards the referent and thereby demonstrate positive politeness. Diminutives, however, are sometimes employed to refer to children in negative situations. In this case, diminutives help to mitigate the face threatening act (henceforth FTA):

5. (A man referring to a girl of his neighbour)

haiya albinya smiayrah bas ḥilwah

the girl dark-Dim but good appearance

'This girl is dark-Dim but she is beautiful'

6. (A boy referring to some girls drawing on the wall)

haḍōl 'bnaydāt az'ajōna kili š

those-girls-DIM annoy-us much

'Those girls-DIM annoy us so much'

The reference to a female as having dark skin is considered a face threatening act (henceforth FTA) in Iraqi society. The admired skin colour for a women is a sign of beauty, and thus to refer to a female as 'dark' is regarded as an offence. Thus, the man's remark on the girl's appearance (5) poses a risk to

her positive face. Therefore, the use of the diminutive instrument is an effort to minimize this risk by inserting a tone of admiration to a negative description of the addressee's look. The man's realization of the FTA to the girl's positive face makes him reduce what is most culturally and socially understood as criticism by employing the opposite word (bas ḥilwah) 'but beautiful'. Likewise, in (6), the addresser does not like to give the impression that he does not like the girls, so he mitigates his statement with the use of the diminutive (ʿbnaydāt) girls-DIM. Utilising diminutives makes him concentrate on the noise issued by the girls rather than on the girls themselves.

2.2. A Function which express contempt

Utilising the diminutive in the world of the child to indicate affection and love expands metaphorically to the adult world where the diminutive serves a somewhat different pragmatic function, i.e., addressing a person in order to demonstrate an offence or scorn. This humiliating use of the terms of smallness in IA is achieved by addressing an adult by a diminutivized form of their name in a hostile situation. The diminutive in such situations is obtained from their use with children, thus it indicates, in a somewhat humiliating manner, that the adults' world is like the world of children, recognized by lack of seriousness, childishness and irresponsibility. Consider the examples below:

7. [A woman referring to her sixteen years old son]

ʿlaywi qūm idris

ʿlaywi –Dim stand to study

ʿAli-Dim go to study for the examinations.

The instance above, is extracted from a conversation between a woman and her son where the diminutive reflects the woman's outrage and resentment. Particularly, the form) (ʿlaywi) Ali-DIM is utilised in situations where the mother is annoyed because the 16 years old son is not studying seriously

enough for his next tests, which will determine whether or not he goes to the university. As a sign of anger, she talks about her son through the diminutive form rather than the basic form of his name, namely (Ali)(‘li) . By choosing this option, the woman intends to offend her son by informing him that he is careless about his future. Despite the fact that this form is perceived as an insult, utilising it as an alternative to derogatory expressions makes the tone of the mother's utterances less offensive and less direct.

2.3. Emphasising function

The use of a diminutive for an affectionate positive behaviour towards the listener is an obvious extension of its employment for children. As Gosh puts it (1970: 1, in Travis, 2004: 250)), the diminutive permits the addresser to "transfer those things that belong to the warmth of the heart more than the coldness of the head."

Within a caring framework, the diminutive increases the positive feelings of the speaker towards the listener, and acts in this regard as a kind of compliment that supports the positive face of the recipient. The diminutive, thus, has the function of "emotional intensification rather than deintensification" (Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi, 1994:202). This sentimental and intensive value of the diminutive in IA is reflected in the two domains of popular romantic songs and fictional terms.

While the use of a diminutive with the mature name indicates a negative politeness attitude towards the recipient, its use with relatives in IA means the opposite, that is, the expression of positive feelings of love and emotion. Look at the examples below:

8. (A forty five years old woman welcoming her sister)

’ahlan bīč ḥayti

welcome with-you sister-Dim

(You welcome my sister-Dim)

9. (A girl offering her younger brother a cup of coffee)

'tfaḍal 'ḥayii

(please drink my brother-Dim)

(please have a drink my brother-Dim)

While the basic form of the relative terms in the interactions above is capable of transferring sentimental feelings towards the listener, employing relative terms in a diminutive form boosts the affectionate tone of the expression and transmits a sense of "in-group membership" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 107). Thus, the diminutive in the above examples emphasizes the emotional relationship between the interlocutors. The woman in (8) utilises the diminutive formula instead of the basic model to demonstrate that she is very glad that her sister is visiting, and a similar sentiment is presented in (9). In both interactions, the diminutive is utilised in the situation of hospitality and welcoming of guests, which is a significant element in Iraqi social life. Utilising diminutives reduces the social distance between the woman and her sister and the girl and her brother, and indicates that there are no untoward family issues.

Likewise, The diminutive could be employed with semi-fictional terms to refer to the addresser's cordial inclination towards the addressee. Consider the following example:

10. (An old man speaking to a young girl he has accidentally met and is interacting with)

Allah ywafqič yā 'bnayti

God bless you daughter-Poss-Dim

(May God bless you my daughter-Dim)

Pragmatically, employing fictitious terms conveys "the informal nature and intimacy of a relationship without being rude" (Bonvillain, 2003: 66), and thus serves as a positive sign of politeness. Utilizing the diminutive with the 'imaginary relative' terms increases the informal and intimate relationship, as is the situation in example 10 where the diminutive renders the expression as a positive polite interaction with the young girl recently met. Since the addresser is an old man, employing the term (bnayti) my daughter-DIM increases the parental feelings of kindness towards the girl and hence paves the way for a good relationship with the listener in the future.

Furthermore, the diminutive with adjectives such as ('ḥlayw) pretty-DIM" and names such as (sʿabb) 'young-DIM', are utilised to address a male adult. In this case, the diminutive refers to the addresser's positive emotions towards the addressee and functions as a kind of flattery:

11. (A woman talking about a young man who came to propose to a young girl)

wallah hiwa sʿabb ḥalyw

swear to God he young man pretty-Dim

‘He is very pretty-Dim young man’

12. (A woman speaking about a girl she met at the door)

ṭilʿat ʿalaya al- binya wallah kiliš muḥtarama

opened the door young girl-Dim by God very respectable

(And a girl-DIM opened the door. She was very respectable)

13. (A man talking about another man)

wallah hiwa ḥnayin kiliš

By God he emotional-DIM very

‘He is very emotional-DIM’

The purpose of the diminutive here is to demonstrate the addresser's positive assessment of the addressee. Thus, the diminutive is inclined towards the positive face of the listener by referring to him as pretty in 11, and thus having a socially and physically admirable feature which deserves to be mentioned as in 12, and by referring to the addressee in a nice or pleasant manner.

As for 13, the addresser does not indicate that the addressee is not as emotional as expected, or that he demonstrates little emotion, which is not consistent with the intensifier 'kiliš' (كلش) (really). Instead, the diminutive reinforces the quality of empathy, adding a sense of admiration towards the addressee for being very emotional. In the instances above, therefore, the diminutive strengthens rather than weakens the power of expression.

2.4. Hedge function

As in many languages, IA can be minimized as an interactive pragmatic tool to reduce the imposition on the addressee. Thus, the diminutive is utilised as a negative politeness indicator that shows the speaker's perception of the addressee's negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987: 70) argue that "it is mainly directed towards partially satisfying the hearer's negative face, his [sic] basic desire to maintain claims of territory and self-determination". Thus, the diminutive works as a compensatory strategy that expresses restraint by the addresser towards the addressee. Consider the following examples:

15. (A woman talking to another woman she has just seen)

’šlonač ’zwayna

how are you good-DIM

‘How are you? good?’

The diminutive in (15) is mainly utilised to preserve the referent's negative face desires and not to show that the addressee is a little annoyed. Thus, the addresser feels that, by asking the recipient about a particular issue that they may not want to talk about, she may impose on or intrude upon the referent's business. Hence, Brown and Levinson (1987: 70) states that using the diminutive in this situation shows that "the speaker understands and respects the addressee's negative face and will not interfere with the addressee's freedom of action".

The diminutive usually employed in IA with a hedging function is (ṣwaya) meaning (little-DIM). This term is often utilised in negative politeness situations to demonstrate a realization of the negative face of others.

For instance, it could be used in a social context that includes an offer of food, as in:

16. (A woman offering her guest some more food)

baʿad ṣwaya

more you eat little-DIM

'Eat some more'

In such an expression, it is illogical to perceive the diminutive as precisely asking the guest to eat some more food. Instead, the host's use of the diminutive generally functions as a speech act of 'offer'. The diminutive is utilised in this situation to manifest that while the offerer admires the guest and enjoys being with her, at the same time the host does not want to impose on the guest via food, forcing her to eat more than she actually needs. It should be noted here that the employment of this kind of diminutive in IA is similar to the use of such formulae for the same purpose in the Polish language (Goddard and Wierzbicka, 1997: 243).

The diminutive could also be utilised in speech acts such as requests. Requests are considered to be FTA's as they include a certain degree of imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Thus, they require a mitigation by the addresser. In collectivistic societies like the Iraqi society, they are regarded as impositions, regardless of the degree of the imposition they imply (see Brown and Levinson, 1987: 176; Sifiano, 1992: 170). Realization of this is shown in the use of many mitigating phrases used prior to or after the submission of the request, such as ('lla 'iḥalīk)(God protect you)/(bala 'amar 'layk) (this is not a command for you), and (ma 'rīd 'te'bak) (I do not want to bother you). Diminutives listed under softening utterances in requests (s'waya) little-Dim exist in the following instances:

17.

mumkin 'āḥiq s'waya min waqtak?

can take little-Dim of time-Poss

‘Can I take a little of your time?’

18.

mumkin tsā'idni s'waya?

can assist me little-DIM

‘Can you give some little help?’

Using the diminutive in these demanding situations indicates that the request expressed by the addresser does not require a remarkable effort on the part of the listener. Thus, the effects of the basic meaning of "little" is preserved. In the expressions above, the diminutive minimizes the power of the requests and makes them more acceptable to the listener, and thus maximizes the chances of approval. Hence, the use of such utterances is stimulated by aspects of face saving and politeness for the listener. Moreover, as Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994) explain, from a politeness point of view, the use

of the diminutive in requests "maximizes the social distance between the addresser and the addressee, and enhances solidarity and intimacy with the recipient, which eventually may benefit both interlocutors". Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994: 251) argue that "this ability to reduce the social distance between the speaker and the addressee is due to the diminutive adding of a ludic element to the request".

The diminutive could be utilised as a hedge that expands its use to diminish our good acts when speaking about these deeds to other interlocutors as a way of showing humility and avoiding boasting:

19. (A newly married wife talking about a popular Iraqi meal she cooked)
sawayt dawaala 'l-yom/waddayt ljārti şahin hiwa mu şahin şhayn [smile]
made-me dolma today sent-me to-neighbour-Fem dish not dish dish-Dim
(I made dolmas today. I sent a dish to my neighbour. It was not really a plate, it was a plate-Dim).

In Iraqi society, it is common among neighbours to exchange dishes of food, but they do not usually mention these acts publically. By recognizing this, the woman instantly mitigates her expression by having recourse to the diminutive, which means that what she did is not significant and that she did not intend to boast about it (which is enhanced by using of extralinguistic element of smiling). The advantage of smiling at the end of speech and using the diminutive is that a threat to the neighbour's negative face might be avoided, because that would hurt her independence, dignity, and self-sufficiency

Lessening the worth or significance of one's physical property is another aspect of the hedging power of the diminutive in IA. Despite the fact that the diminutive here may have influential connotations, its basic function is to demonstrate to the listener that the addresser is not showing superiority and that her expression should not be construed as such (Sifiano, 1992). This is

obvious in the tokens below where the diminutive provides the conversation with a positive politeness tendency, meaning that it is utilised to pave "common ground with the listener" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 103):

20. (A boss asks his employee)

A: wiən rāyih

where go-you

‘Where are you going?’

B:

rāyih lil-bang ‘indi ’flīəsāt ’hnaḵ

going-me to the bank have -me money-Dim

(I am going to the bank. I have there some money-Dim)

(21) (A wife talking to her mother in law)

riḥit il-yom lil-sūq s’tarayt ’grayḍāt

went-me today to the market purchased-me items-Dim

(I went to do shopping today. I purchased some items-Dim)

The interlocutors in the above examples employ the diminutive to refer to their physical property. In (20), instead of indicating the little amount of money in the bank, the diminutive is utilised to denote the addresser's modesty. Likewise, in (21) the diminutive refers to the humility of the speaker regarding what she purchased and not to the real size of the items. In both situations, the diminutive limits any possible show of boasting of one's property.

In other situations, the diminutive can be a beneficial tool for demonstrating realization of a person's social status. In the interaction below, the speaker realizes that he is not entirely qualified as a merchant (tājir) because he does not have sufficient funds and merchandise to be described as such. Thus, he

employs the diminutive (twayjir) "trader-Dim" to indicate his realization of his humble financial status:

22. A:

’š tištugul?

what work-you?

(Ehat do you do for living?)

B:

tājir – mu tājir twayjir

trader---not a trader, a trader-Dim

(A trader, in fact not a trader, but a trader-Dim)

Additionally, the diminutive may function as a hedging tool with adjectives to soften possible negative signals and show them in a somewhat positive manner. Since the signal refers to some unlikable attribute, the diminutive shows that the addressers have good intentions in saying what they are saying. Consequently, the diminutive at the same time encodes the addresser's positive position towards the addressee:

23. (The addresser attempts to describe someone to the addressee)

zilmah gṣayir

man short-Dim

(He is a short-Dim man).

In this expression, the use of the diminutive does not alter the reality that the person referred to is short, but it functions to mitigate the signal to the person's height. In this situation, employing diminutivising adjectives is directed towards maintaining the positive polite face of others by attempting to refer to their negative or unlovable traits in a gentler manner.

Furthermore, the diminutive form of adjectives could be utilised as hedges to refer to the relativity of the speaker's utterance. To be more specific, adjectives can be employed to indicate relative value, as in the use (ʾrḥays) cheap-Dim to show that the price is comparatively cheap, and (ʾgraybe) nearby-Dim to refer to the place as relatively close.

3. Conclusion

The object of the current research is to describe and identify the pragmatic functions that have been achieved through the use of diminutives in various natural spoken settings occurring in IA. 60 tokens have been accumulated naturally and recorded from 20 people in different situations. The diminutive formulae were discussed according to the (im)politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) and with reference to the social norms of Iraqi culture. The coding scheme adopted in this study is that of Jurafsky's (1996) framework of diminutives. The study helps to reveal and perceive the use of the diminutive as a communicative device utilised to create and preserve social relations between interlocutors.

In the course of analysis, diminutives in IA show different pragmatic purposes that are an extension of the typical use of the diminutive to communicate with or refer to children. Consequently, the collected data demonstrates that diminutives in IA are used to express contempt, to demonstrate emotion and love, to intensify the speaker's feelings, to reduce imposition, to show humility, to avoid boasting, and to confirm intimacy in ironic situations. Thus, diminutives are utilised in IA for creating friendly communications, hence presenting positive etiquette, and for emphasizing non-imposition, which is the core of negative politeness. In situations where the diminutive is utilised to convey a negative impression, it helps to mitigate this impression by adding a

tone of playfulness to the speaker's expression. Thus, in both contexts, the use of the diminutive is primarily addressee supportive.

Perhaps typical of the pragmatics of the diminutive in IA is the signing of the diminutive on names in hostile situations to indicate the addressee's negative attitude toward an adult addressee. In such contexts, the act itself becomes an FTA, and in particular threatens the hearer's positive face, because the use of a trivialised name indicates the speaker's contempt for the listener. The reason for this act appears to occur in the fundamental use of the diminutive regarding children, where it seems that the diminutive is intended to degrade adults to the small, irresponsible and immature world of children, which is regarded as culturally and socially insulting. This use does not coincide with diminutivising names to express compassion and love in English and other languages.

It seems that the politeness that is associated with the diminutive in IA reflects certain cultural values of Iraqi society. The use of the diminutive as a negative and positive politeness tool is a reflection of the emphasis on preserving good relations with others, and avoiding imposition on others as much as possible, since the imposition would contradict the two cultural concepts (خفة الدم) (hifat al-dam) (having) a mild blood and (خفة الظل) (hifat all dill) (having) a light "shadow", which collectively affirm non-imposition and avoidance of intrusion into the privacy of others. It appears that the diminutive is an appropriate linguistic device capable of fulfilling both strategies. In other words, it enhances the illocutionary force of expressions in positive politeness contexts and weakens the illocutionary force in situations that require negative politeness. This dual function is most evident in the use of a diminutive formula in IA to express emotion, i.e., as a positive indicator of politeness, and in its use to reduce the imposition in requests, i.e. as a negative politeness indicator.

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Appendix (1): Transcription and glossing of Arabic characters as cited from Versteegh (2014:xiv)

Name	Arabic script	Transcription	IPA
'alf	ا	'	ʔ
bā'	ب	b	b
tā'	ت	t	t
ṭā'	ث	ṭ	θ
jīm	ج	j	dʒ
ḥā'	ح	ḥ	ħ
ḫā'	خ	ḫ	x
dāl	د	d	d
ḍāl	ذ	ḍ	[ð]
rā'	ر	r	r
zāy	ز		z z
sīn	س	s	s
šīn	ش	š	ʃ

ṣād	ص	ṣ	s ^ʕ
ḍād	ض	ḍ	d ^ʕ
ṭā'	ط	ṭ	t ^ʕ
ḍā'	ظ	ḍ	ð
‘ayn	ع	‘	ʕ
ḡayn	غ	ḡ	ɣ
fā'	ف	f	f
qāf	ق	q	q
kāf	ك	k	k
lām	ل	l	l
mīm	م	m	m
nūn	ن	n	n
hā'	هـ	h	h
wāw	و	w	w
yā'	ي	y	j

Additional signs used in trascription

Transcription sign

IPA sign

g

g

ž

ʒ

ǧ

ɟʒ

č

tʃ

Vowels

Symbol

Description

i

High front

short

ī

High front

long

e

Mid central

short

ē

Mid-front

long

a	Low front
short	
ā	Low back
long	
u	High back
short	
ū	High back
long	
ɑ:	Low back
long	
ay	Diphthong
aw	Diphthong
iə	Diphthong
īə	Diphthong