

Iraqi EFL teachers' production of disagreements: A gender perspective

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Keywords: disagreement, EFL teachers, gender variant, direct, implicit.

Summary:

In native and EFL contexts, speech act of disagreement is one acts that is commonly employed. Although speech act studies are many, however, the ones conducted on disagreements in terms of gender are still scant. To fill in this gap, the study sampled EFL teachers from both genders. The study adapted cross-sectional quantitative method in which descriptive and statistical calculations were utilized to test the hypotheses under study. The results yielded that, in terms of explicitness, male teachers significantly use more explicit performative verbs while female teachers resort to implicit performative expressions. In terms of directness, it was found that male teachers give larger use to the negative explicit performative verb 'agree' while female teachers opt to more indirect strategies for disagreement.

.1Introduction

One of the functions of language that Roman Jakobson mentions is the communicative function. According to Waugh (1980), language is an effective act of verbal communication. So, not words in isolation that give meaning to the communicative message but the speech act when it is contextually determined.

When listening to a piece of speech by a speaker, the listener either agrees or disagrees with him or here. If disagreed with, the listener may state his or her reply either verbally by saying 'I disagree' or non-verbally by negatively nodding the head sidewise which means 'I disagree with you'. In such a case, the recipient understands the intended meaning based on the context in which the act in question is uttered.

One of the problems that Iraqi EFL learners (including EFL teachers) may face is that the native speakers may use certain strategies for disagreement which are unknown by these EFL learners nor are they able to recognize them in interactional situations and here come the necessity to equip the EFL teachers with sufficient pragmatic knowledge to meet the learners needs. This study is set to address the issues underlying the production of the speech act of disagreement as a way to enrich the speech act literature in general and the speech act of disagreement in specific .

The overall objective of the study is to explore Iraqi EFL teachers' production of the speech act of disagreement. To this end, the study is guided by these two non-directional hypotheses .

H1. H0. There is no gender difference in the production of direct disagreement strategies between male and female teachers .

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.2Definitions

Many scholars have attempted to define the communicative act of disagreement as we search in books and websites. Merriam-Webster Dictionary mentions two definitions for the disagreement. (1) The state of being different or unlike and (2) an argument expressed by people with dissimilar ideas about something. From a pure linguistic perspective, Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) define disagreement as a 'conflict talk'. They define the verbal conflict as 'adversative episode' assuming that there are generally three phases in each episode. These three are (1) 'an antecedent event', (2) an 'opposition' and (3) a 'reaction to opposition'. Pomerantz (1978) thinks that disagreement functions like a verbal act that is meant to show a state of contradictions which can be expressed directly or indirectly. She adds that there are other known non-verbal behaviours of expressing disagreement by means of facial expressions, postures and other paralinguistic features (Pomerantz, 1978). According to Edstrom (2004), disagreement is regarded as an expression of opinion in which a person communicates his or her viewpoint in contrary to the one expressed by the other participant .

3. Speech act of disagreement

Scholars state the forms of disagreement into the sight. Priesemann (1971) and Sornig (1977) mention that disagreements depend on whether they are aimed at factual information, interpersonal relationships, or ways of linguistic expression. According to Muntigl and Turnbull (1998), disagreements fall into four types: challenge, irrelevancy claim, counterclaim, and contradiction. 'Irrelevancy claims' means when the claim is irrelevant to the discussion. Some expressions are used here like 'What you said is something else' and 'It is nothing to do with'. 'Challenges' are often marked by 'when, what, who, why, where, and how'. In 'contradictions', the speaker utters a contradicted proposition marked by

negatives such as 'no' or 'not'. The 'counterclaims' are usually headed by pauses and mitigating particles as to propose an alternative claim. A fifth type of disagreement outcomes from contradictions plus counterclaims .

Speech act theory is a subfield of pragmatics concerned with the ways in which words can be used not only to present information but also to carry out actions. As introduced by Oxford philosopher J.L. Austin 'How to Do Things with Words. 1975' and further developed by American philosopher J.R. Searle. speech act theory considers the levels of action (components) at which utterances are said to perform: Locutionary act. Illocutionary act. and Perlocutionary act. Let us consider the following example taken from (Pomerantz 1978) on disagreement :

G: That's fantastic.

B: Isn't that good?

The speech act in above is locutionary. while. for example. "Aha mokofa" according to Yule and Widdowson (1996) is not. simply because it is not meaningful utterance. The locutionary act is defined as the way of performing a well-linguistic utterance. The illocutionary act is the function of the utterance that the speaker has in mind. i.e. the communicative purpose that is intended or achieved by the utterance performed. A perlocutionary act (or perlocutionary effect). on the other hand. is perceived at the level of psychological consequence like enlightening. persuading. scaring. inspiring. convincing. otherwise having someone realize or to do something. Disagreement is the communicative illocutionary force of SAs and thus. its inference and perlocutionary effects are unpredictable and dependent on the context of the utterance performed.

3.1 Direct and indirect speech acts

Besides their general functions, speech acts in general can be recognized based on their structures. In this respect, Austin (1975) says that the locutionary act (or what is said) does not govern what is being performed (or the illocutionary act). Therefore, a speech act can be performed directly or indirectly through performing an additional speech act. For instance, a request or permission can be expressed through a statement as in:

'I feel hungry. The fridge might have something' (request (

'No. I don't mind.' (permission(

With a yes-no question, an order or request can be made as in :

'Can you stop annoying?' (order)

'Anyone get me that pen, please?

Whenever the illocutionary acts are expressed indirectly, they are performed by means of the use of another act that is a direct act .

3.1.1 Direct speech act

There are two ways for expressing direct speech acts. The first is through the association between the form of sentence and the speech act as the table below depicts.

Table 1: Relation between the form and speech acts

Speech act	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative
Assertion act	He finished the research.		
Question act		Who finished the research?	
Order / Request act			Do finish the research please)!

Table 2: Relation between performative verbs and speech acts

Speech act	Verb that names the speech act	Example
Assertion	assert	'I assert she finished her research.'
Question	Ask	'I ask who is going to collect the data.'
Advice	advise	'I advise you to use SPSS.'
Request	request	'I request you to encourage the participants.'
Order	order	'I order her to use gendered sample.'
Promise	promise	'I promise I will help you analyse the data.'
Disagreement	disagree	I disagree with your way of analysis.

So, when there is a direct relation between structure and the function of a speech act, the speech act is deemed direct.

3.1.2 Indirect speech act

If no direct relation between the structure and the form of a sentence, the speech act is considered indirect.

Table 3: Formation of indirect speech acts

Types	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative
Assertion		Is research useful?	
Question	I need to know who has done her research. I do not know who has done her research.		Why don't finish this research?
Request	The research has not finished yet. I would like you to finish the research.	Can you finish the research in time? Would you mind finishing the research in time?	
Disagreement	I am tired of this research.	Do you think I can accept this type of research?	Do not try to get me to drop this research.

3.2.1 Direct disagreement strategies

For the direct disagreement there are two strategies:

3.2.1.1 Explicit performatives strategy

This strategy is expressed by the use of certain verbs called performatives. These verbs spell out the illocutionary force of the sentence 'I disagree with you.'

In the above example the speaker intends to spell out the disagreement overtly with the verb 'disagree'. In here, the context is not needed to interpret the intended meaning since the verb 'disagree' is very overt. Hanfling (2013) claims that the performatives can be stressed by inserting the word 'hereby' provided that it is used with the same utterance 'I hereby disagree with you.'

3.2.1.2 Implicit performatives strategy

When the explicit performatives are absent, the implicit performatives can convey the intended meaning of the speaker and here disagreement is interpreted pragmatically (Leech, 2016). The expressions used here are: negative, elliptical expressions and counter-statements.

I do not think so. (negative performatives verbs No. (an elliptical phrase)

A: Well, this is insignificant.

B: Well, it is significant. (a counter statement)

3.2.2 Indirect disagreement strategies

To maintain a successful communication is crucial to understand the motives behind the utterance in question. But in fact, the relationship between the form of a certain utterance and its underlying intention is not straightforward in all cases. (Searle, 1975). Here an example:

'Can you pass the salt?'

Sentence (34) is an interrogative and so expresses a question. Usually, the speaker's goal in asking a question is to get an answer. But this sentence plausibly has a different purpose: it's a request, where the speaker's goal is for the interpreter to pass the salt. This is an indirect speech act, which Searle (1975) defines to be an utterance in which one speech act is performed indirectly by performing another .

Speakers can employ three forms of sentences to convey their intention indirectly by means of statements, imperatives and questions.

A: Tiffany is getting older than she was.

B: How old is older? (meaning 'Tiffany is not older than she was')

Speaker B employs a question to express the act of disagreement .

The act of disagreement can be stated indirectly when it occurs in an imperative sentence (Blundell, Higgins and Middlemiss, 1996).

A: You scientists do not believe in God.

B: Oh, come on! (meaning 'we believe in God')

The third way to state disagreement indirectly is performed by the use of the declarative form in which neither the overt performatives nor the overt negation is employed. Consider the example from Pomerantz (1978).

H: Gee. Hon, you look nice in that dress.

W: It's just a rag which my sister gave me.

.4 -Gender as a social variant

Digging deeply to the grounds of gender variations in language, it is important to start with the psychological and social roots. The psychological distinctions between males and females were given great considerations by many gender-interested scholars. Researchers like

Edstrom (2004) believes that in childhood males usually learn to think in an abstract way and they enjoy a large sense of direction and freedom while females learn to think in a concrete way. Unlike males, they possess better language abilities and they outperform males in the differentiation of color and the perception of emotions. These inborn gender differences unavoidably bring about variations in the use of language between males and females. Thus, females possess better intellect of language, so they enjoy a distinct superiority in language acquisition as compared to males (Edstrom, 2004).

From a social perspective, due to the degree of social differences in the level of distribution of social authority in the society, females are regarded and treated as unequal to males. This disparity and the norms in the society had literally been established and rooted. Consequently, the distribution of roles between males and females has grown wider to include a variety of language practices reflected on powerful males and the other reflected on females. In this respect, according to Tannen (1994), gender variations have been identified firmly as parts of a social construction underlying unequal influence and access. On the whole, females are in a powerless situation, especially in eastern society, when compared to males. Many females, therefore, stereotypically employ powerless language forms (Edstrom, 2004)

As a result, this powerless gender has been obliged to act politely, therefore, in societies in which females are powerless they are treated as subordinate and they are expected to reveal more linguistic politeness than males who are controlling. In this respect, females are meant to pursue a style of communication rely on forms of support and solidarity whereas males are meant to pursue a style grounded on social power (Liu, 2006).

Since their childhood, males and females are taught to learn gender appropriate language choice. Starting from the family level, almost all parents encourage males to be strong, brave and independent, while females are encouraged to be tender, obedient and considerate (Coates, 2015).

Moreover, males are put in interaction with different kinds of people whether from their own class or from another different class or even from different speech communities. This gives them a chance to be good speakers in the public. On the other hand, the interaction assigned to women with different classes or speech communities is less than that of men (Lakoff, 1937).

.5 -Methodology

This part of the study is assigned to what happened to the collected data obtained from the participants as they responded (with disagreement) to different interactional situations. The researcher analysed the data in order to investigate how gender factor determines the use explicit and implicit strategies for expressing disagreement as well as the use of indirect strategies. The sample, the settings, the tools and instruments are discussed in details herein.

5.1 -The participants

The researcher has randomly sampled thirty EFL teachers in total. They were fifteen male teachers and fifteen female teachers. All of whom are currently employed by Education Department of Qadisiya, living in the city of Diwaniya. The male teachers were drawn from eight secondary schools and the female teachers were drawn from seven schools. All the teachers were informed about the real purpose of the study and they were asked to sign a written consent form .

5.2-The instrument

The instrument consists of twenty different situations. As much as possible, these situations were set in such a way to simulate the real interactions that many males or females possibly expose to. These situations were especially composed for the purpose of the task with the help of some related sources. The task was carried out in April 2023. The participants were requested to attend the test in one classroom at their and were given the same time: 30 minutes. Neither grammatical mistakes nor spelling mistakes are counted as faulty answers. Each participant was given a booklet of three sheets. The situations were verbally translated into Arabic for more clarification .

5.3 -Scoring scheme

The researcher collected and scored the task sheets as follows: Each item (or a situation) is given five marks. So, the passing full mark is 100, and the minimum passing score is 50. Each item is either given five marks or zero in order to avoid half answers and ensure accuracy in percentages. Participants' mistakes regarding grammar and spelling are not considered.

.6 -Results

The researcher analyzed the collected data and came up with these results: The participants attended the test are 30. Each one got a sheet of 20 situations. So, $(30 \times 20 = 600)$ situations in total. The number of the invalid responses is 48. So, $(600 - 48 = 552)$ valid responses. The number of the participants who failed is 4. So, $(30 - 4 = 26)$ passed participants. Other details are tabulated below.

Table 4: Participants' overall performance

P	Participants responses	Freq.	Perc.
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1	Passed participants	26	87%
2	Failed participants	4	13%
3	Valid responses	552	92%
4	Direct strategies	391	71%
5	Indirect strategies	112	20%
6	Males' valid responses	228	41%
7	Females' valid responses	275	50%

As seen above, 87% of the participants yielded valid answers which is a good indication to the success of the test. These 26 passed participants have yielded 552 valid answers which is a good number to analyze. In terms of gender, the percentages of the males and females' valid responses are not equal. So, there is a possibility that there is a statistical difference between them and this is what the T-test will determine. It is also obvious that both males and females' use of direct disagreement is more than that of indirect ones. Regarding the types of the direct strategies, the table below reveals the details.

As seen below in Table 5, the males' use of explicit performative verbs reaches 150 times out of 228 as a whole. The males' use of implicit strategies is less than that of the explicit ones. Regarding females' use of the explicit performative verbs are less than the implicit performative expressions

Table 5: Gender direct disagreements

Direct strategy		Males		Females	
		Freq	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
	I do not agree ...	89	59%	36	53%

Explicit Performative Verbs	I disagree ...	59	39%	27	40%
	I never agree with you.	2	1.33%	5	8%
Totals		150	66%	68	25%
Implicit Performative Expressions	I do not think ...	14	32%	34	26%
	do not believe...	4	9.09%	10	8%
	I think the opposite.	2	4.54%	5	4%
	No...	11	25%	20	16%
	I have another opinion (view)....	1	2.27%	6	5%
	This is not my view.			2	1%
	That (This) is wrong	4	9.09%	16	12%
	My view point is different	1	2.27%		
	Islam is not	1	2.27%	3	2%
	Reading and writing are not enough.			9	7%
	That is not true.	3	6.81%	9	7%
	Love is the only truth on earth.			1	0.7%
	The opposite is right.	2	4.54%	13	10%
	Students should be given a third chance		2.27%		
	We are not in America.			1	0.7%
totals		44	19%	129	47%

To verify whether these variations exhibit any statistical differences, a T-test was performed to this end and yielded the following.

Table 6: T-test of gender direct disagreements

Variance		Levene's Test of Variances		T-test of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Equal variance assumed	0.848	0.234	1.580	61	0.025
	Equal variance not assumed			1.421	12.493	0.025

SPSS usually generates two tests: Levene's test (which is needed for the first time only) and T-test. Levene's test measures the homogeneity of variances between the two samples (males' group and females' group). Its 'Sig.' value 0.234 is higher than the alpha level 0.05 so there is no significant difference between the distribution of the two groups which means that males and females groups have normal distribution. Regarding the T-test, the P-value 'Sig.(2-tailed)' 0.025 is less than the alpha level 0.05. So, there is a significant difference between males and males in the production of direct disagreement. But there is a need to know if there is a gender statistical difference between the explicit and implicit disagreement. To this purpose, another T-test was performed as follows.

Table 7: T-test of gender explicit and implicit disagreements

Variance		T-test of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Equal variance assumed	1.980	32	0.012
	Equal variance not assumed	1.821	32.493	0.012

The P-value 0.012 is less than the alpha level 0.05. So, there is a significance gender difference in the production of explicit and implicit disagreement. This means that the differences stated in Table 5 are statistically significant in that the males use more explicit disagreements while the females used more implicit disagreements.

As for the indirect disagreement strategies, the descriptive statistics in Table 8 below shows that females have a tendency towards questions more than the males. Regarding the use of imperative, both genders almost share the same amount of such type of disagreement. The details are depicted in the table below.

Table 8: Gender indirect disagreements

Indirect strategy		Males		Females	
		Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
Questions	Are you serious?	8	24%	19	24%
	Are you joking?	2	6%	12	15%
	Do you believe so?	3	9%		
	What election are you talking about?			1	1.2%
	Why?			11	14%
	How comes?	2	6%		
	What.....?	5	15%	14	18%
	Is Chinese easier?			1	1.2%
	Are you sure?	6	18%	13	17%
	Totals	26	78%	71	90.4%
	Be (Get) serious.	1	3%	3	4%
	Stop imagining.			1	1.2%

Imperatives	Come on!...	6	16%	1	1.2%
	Do not believe that thing!			1	1.2%
	Do not tell jokes, please.	1	3%		
	Oh please, get real.			1	1.2%
	Totals	8	22%	7	8.8%

Broadly, the table shows that the females employ double the number of the indirect disagreements produced by the males. This initially indicate that the females outperform the males in the production of the indirect disagreements in general. To know whether this difference is significant or not, we need to perform a T-test.

Table 9: T-test of gender indirect disagreements

Variance		T-test of Means		
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Equal variance assumed	1.84	24	0.000
	Equal variance not assumed	1.76	24.32	0.000

Since the P-value 0.000 is less than the alpha level 0.05, then there is a significant difference in terms of gender in the production of indirect disagreement. So, the differences in Table 8 are thus significant. Hence, the females used more questions than the males who used more imperatives .

.6 - Conclusions

Based on the statistical analyses, the research has come up with the conclusion that there are gender variations in the production of disagreements. These variations are summed up as follows: (1) the male teachers use more explicit performative verbs while the female teachers use

more implicit performative expressions. (2) The male teachers use more direct disagreement strategies while the female teachers use more indirect strategies. (3) In terms of explicitness, it was found that the male teachers give larger use to the negative explicit performative verb 'agree' while the female teachers give larger use to the negative implicit performative expressions.

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- Appendix – The test.

استخدام مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية لافعال كلام عدم الموافقة:

دراسة من منظور متغير الجنس

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الكلمات المفتاحية: عدم الموافقة، مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية، متغير جنس، مباشر.

الملخص:

ان احد اكثر افعال الكلام استخداما هو فعل كلام عدم الموافقة في سياق اللغة الانكليزية الام وعلى صعيد اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية. على الرغم من ان الدراسات التي تتناول افعال الكلام كثيرة الا ان تلك التي تتناول افعال كلام عدم الموافقة من منظور متغير الجنس لاتزال قليلة. وملئ هذه الثغرة تم اختيار عينة من مدرسي اللغة الانكليزية من كلا الجنسين. الدراسة اعتمدت المنهج الكمي الصفي الاحادي الطور حيث تم الاستعانة بالإحصاءات الوصفية والاستدلالية لاختبار الفرضيات المعنية. فيما يخص استراتيجيات الصراحة، اظهرت النتائج ان الذكور (اي المدرسين) استخدموا استراتيجيات عدم موافقة اكثر صراحة بينما استخدمت الاناث (المدرسات) معايير عدم موافقة اكثر ضمنية. وفيما يخص الاستراتيجيات المباشرة لعد الموافقة، اظهرت الدراسة ان الذكور أفاضوا استخدام فعل الكلام المباشر "موافق" بينما لجأت الاناث الى استراتيجيات غير مباشرة للتعبير عن عدم الموافقة.