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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Arabic Invitation Strategies by Iraqis: Social Distance as a Variable

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| ABSTRACT

The present study investigates invitation speech act strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs in the Iraqi Arabic dialect. A modified version of an open-ended Written Discourse Completion Task was used to collect data from three situations in which the participants were to invite lower-status interlocutors with close, familiar, and distant social distance. Based on Garca's (2008) classification of invitation strategies as head acts and supportive moves, the obtained data were analyzed descriptively. The study reveals that Iraqi Arabs employed 25 types of invitation strategies, which is 12 more than those used in García's (2008) categorization. Head acts were the most preferred strategies used by Iraqi Arabs compared to supportive moves. Iraqi Arabs preferred directness rather than indirectness in making their invitations, showing that they viewed invitations as face-enhancing acts rather than face-threatening acts. Direct strategies were the most dominant among head acts, whereas aggravators from supportive moves were the most utilized ones. It has also been shown that mood derivable (imperative) as a direct strategy, which ranked first on the directness scale, was the most preferred strategy in making invitations across the three levels of social distance, i.e., close, familiar, and distant. Additionally, complimenting as a supportive move was the most frequently employed strategy across the three situations. Some new strategies, which were neither included in García's (2008) classification nor in the results of other studies, were employed by Iraqi Arabs, such as showing solidarity, addressing terms, indebted by the inviter, requesting a promise, rejecting excuses, warning, insisting, and invoking the name of God. This study will provide non-Iraqi Arabic speakers, who belong to different ethnicities and cultures and speak different languages, with pragmatic knowledge when making invitations in any possible communication with Iraqi Arabs, and consequently, pragmatic failures and misunderstandings will be avoided. Previous studies focused on social status, while social distance has not been given its due importance. The present study focuses on the three levels of social distance.

| KEYWORDS

Arabic Invitation Strategies, Iraqis, Social distance.

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### 1. Introduction

Language is a tool for performing various functions, which are also referred to as "speech acts." According to speech act theory, the type of speech we use, the structure of the utterance, and the context in which we use it all influence the meaning of what we say. Larina (2008) shows that numerous problems in communication occur because people do not only speak different languages but use them in different ways according to specific social and linguistic norms, values, and social-cultural conventions. The speech acts of any language provide its speakers with culture-specific categories of verbal interaction. Speech acts can shed a great deal of light on broader cultural themes, but equally, the significance of any particular speech act category can only be fully understood in a broader cultural context (Goddard, 2004). Further, cultures may differ in the rules for when certain speech acts can be appropriately performed (Benthalia & Davies, 1989, 102). Allamia and Naeimi (2011, p. 386) emphasized this fact, stating that "the same speech act may be realised differently across cultures, following norms of usage particular to the speech community."

As a result, differences in how people of different languages and cultures perform a specific speech act "may result in communication difficulties ranging from the humorous to the serious" (Gass & Neu, 1996, p. 1). Specific linguistic conventions must be followed in order to perform speech acts like making a promise, asking for something, apologizing, or inviting someone. These conventions, however, differ between languages and cultures. The study of speech acts has helped us better understand interactional styles and cultural differences in speech act behavior. However, cross-cultural studies have shown that interaction among members of different cultures can lead to breakdowns and communication problems because different cultures have different expectations and communication styles (Gumperz, 1978). We might reasonably expect inviting to be universal and thus common as a social practice in all cultures. Even though not all cultures use invitations in the same way to serve the same speech functions, they cannot be interpreted and decoded as such in all cultures. As is the case with many speech acts, invitations have been reported to vary across cultures and to be the source of many breakdowns in communication. For example, "Dinner is ready; come on over" is used by some Chinese in some villages as a greeting, though it seems to a non-native speaker as an invitation. Therefore, greeting someone on the street by saying, "Dinner is ready," counts as a greeting. " This is a custom that is used within some Chinese communities. Similarly, in South Asia, an utterance such as "Have you eaten yet?" is used as another way of stating "How are you?". Consequently, such utterances may be interpreted as invitations by people from other communities. In the same line, what can be polite in one culture may be impolite in another. For example, Iraqi speakers use imperatives to express inviting strategies, and this is regarded as a politeness strategy to invite others (Sattar & Farnia, 2014).

However, using imperative to perform the speech act of invitation may be regarded as impolite in some cultures. Therefore, the following study sheds light on how invitations are performed by Iraqi Arabs. Furthermore, the current study is required to broaden and enrich the pragmatic knowledge of how invitation strategies are used by Iraqi Arabs in the target language, i.e., the Iraqi Arabic dialect, in everyday communication. The fact that Iraqi Arabs and people from other cultures and ethnicities may use different strategies when delivering the speech act of invitation in any potential interaction between them implies that the "lack of knowledge of speech act realisation patterns and strategies across cultures can lead to breakdowns in intercultural and interethnic communication" (Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2010, p. 82). It is hoped that the results of this study will provide a better understanding of the patterns and, consequently, create awareness among Iraqi Arabs and people who have different cultural and social norms, which would reduce any possible misunderstandings in any interaction. Thus, the aim of this study is to provide an answer to the following research question: what are the strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs when they make an invitation as a higher-status interlocutor who has a close, familiar, and distant social relationship with the invitee?

## **2. Invitation as a speech act**

Searle (1976) defines invitation as a directive speech act whose illocutionary point is that the hearer performs a future action. For Hancher (1979, p. 6), the invitation is a "hybrid speech act that combines directive with commissive illocutionary force." As a result, he claims, "When I invite you to do something, I am indeed trying to direct your behaviour." But more than that is involved...it [an invitation] commits the speaker to a certain course of action itself". Relationally, an invitation is defined as the act of asking someone to come to a party or special event (Sattar & Farnia, 2014). Socially, an invitation is a speech act that commonly occurs in everyday life situations, specifically in maintaining good relationships among people, and it usually aims to address the face of the invitee. Invitation is important in social communication and the accomplishment of social commitments (Wolfson et al., 1983), and it can be a reflection of the communicative patterns and sociocultural norms of any linguistic community, particularly in relation to matters of politeness (Bella, 2009).

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, an invitation can be considered a face-threatening act. In other words, issuing and accepting an invitation puts both the inviter's and the invitee's faces at risk. However, Sifiano (1995) ascertains that the invitation speech act within some sociocultural groups can be regarded as a face-enhancing act or face-boosting (Bayraktarolu, 1991). That is, an invitation is regarded as a polite speech act, as it expresses the speaker's invitation to carry out an action for the interlocutor's benefit (Haverkate, 1994, as cited in Lashley, 2016, p. 176). This fact is ascertained by Sattar and Farnia (2014), who say that an invitation can be regarded socially in all speech communities as a proper act of humanity. However, invitations are divided into two categories by Wolfson (1989): unambiguous (or genuine) and ambiguous. Unambiguous invitations, he ascertains, include a mention of a place or activity, a time reference, and, most importantly, a request for a response. The following example shows how an unambiguous invitation can be realised: Do you want to have lunch tomorrow? (request for response) (activity) (time)

In contrast to Wolfson's classification, Isaacs and Clark (1990) refer to ambiguous invitations as "ostensible invitations". Ostensible invitations are "invitations issued but not intended to be taken seriously" (Isaacs & Clark 1990, p. 494). According to Isaacs and Clark (1990, p. 496), insincere invitations, i.e., ambiguous invitations, violate some of the felicity conditions proposed by Searle (1969), "bearing the same relation to sincere invitations as lies bear to assertions, insincere invitations would simply deceive" (Isaacs & Clark 1990, p. 496). Importantly, the current study focuses on how genuine invitations are issued by Iraqi Arabs in the Iraqi Arabic dialect.

Invitations are particularly related to hospitality situations, and speakers employ different strategies in order to be hospitable (Schreurs, 2017). Hospitality is inherent in Arab heritage, and it has been reinforced as a result of its special status in Islam (Bouchara & Qorchi, 2016). Arabs are known for their hospitality, which is a "deeply rooted value and an important cultural norm in Arab societies" (Harb, 2016, p. 12). In many cultures, an invitation is regarded as a sign of hospitality and is highly valued. Arab hospitality is a traditional virtue that they are proud of (Shryock, 2004, p. 37) because it reflects politeness toward others, and this trait is reflected through the inherent semantic meanings of the word "polite.". The tradition of hospitality is deeply ingrained not only in the Arab mind and culture but also in the Arabic language.

Kadhim and Al-Hindawi (2017) argue that one way by which Iraqi Arabs "express their feelings towards each other is by inviting one for a particular event, as in all Arab countries" (p. 136). Then, the invitee has the desire and expectations to be appreciated, respected, and accepted by others. That is, when Iraqi Arabic people invite a person, they wish that their invitation is appreciated and accepted. Therefore, the act of inviting is a very common social activity in Iraqi Arabic society. For an Iraqi Arabic family, everyone is welcome at any time, so the issue of a general invitation is common. However, for some other cultures, this may not be the case (Sattar & Farnia, 2014). Social norms vary between cultures, as shown by earlier studies on politeness formulae by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Tanck (2003). Therefore, what is considered polite in one culture may not be in another. The present study makes an attempt to investigate the speech act of invitation among Iraqi Arabs in the Iraqi Arabic dialect.

### 3. Literature Review

Inviting is one of the speech acts that is frequently used in everyday conversation across all cultures and languages. However, performing invitations differs from one culture to another and from one society to another, depending on social and cultural norms. Therefore, numerous studies have been conducted to investigate the culturally specific strategies used as well as to highlight the differences and similarities between various societies and cultures. Al-Khatib (2006) and Naim (2011) study invitations from a pragmatic perspective. Szatrowski (1987), Mao (1992), and Tseng (1996) dealt with the discourse structure of invitations, while Garcia (1999) and Bella (2009) concentrated on the politeness strategies used when extending and responding to invitations. Furthermore, the clarity and sincerity of invitations have been examined in various cultures by Beeman (1986), Wolfson (1989), Isaacs and Clark (1990), Walton (1998), Izadi, Atasheneh, and Zilaie (2012), Rakowicz (2009), and Dastpak and Mollaei (2011). Accordingly, invitations are classified into three types: genuine, ostensible, and ambiguous. Nevertheless, the present study investigates genuine invitation speech among Iraqi Arabs in the Iraqi Arabic dialect.

Six previous studies have been reviewed that fall into three categories: intercultural studies, which focus on invitation in a cross-cultural context among people of different cultures or languages; intralingual studies, which focus on invitation in a single language or culture; and EFL learner-centered studies, which aim to investigate invitation realisation by non-native English speakers.

The first three studies that investigated the realisation of the invitation speech act were Iraqi EFL learner-centered studies. Hussein, Hussein, and Kareem (2022) examine Iraqi EFL University Students' ability to use the illocutionary act of invitation. The participants in this study were 50 Iraqi fourth-year EFL students. The instrument used to collect data was a production test consisting of 12 situations to produce the speech act of invitation. The main findings showed that the majority of Iraqi EFL 4<sup>th</sup> grade students lack the ability to produce appropriate utterances concerning the speech act of invitation, and even when they do, they face a variety of difficulties. Additionally, they use a variety of pragmalinguistic strategies when making invitations. They prefer modality, imperatives, and interrogatives over other strategies in most situations. Furthermore, rather than utterances of the target language, most of the utterances produced when making invitations are translations of Iraqi utterances used in everyday Iraqi spoken situations.

The second study by Mohammed (2020) examined how pragmatically Iraqi non-departmental EFL students recognized and produced the speech act of invitation. The participants in this study were 20 third-year undergraduate students who speak Arabic as their native language. The instruments used to collect data were Discourse Completion Tasks and Multiple Choice. The main findings showed evidence of pragmatic transfer as Iraqi EFL students use more direct strategies in performing invitations, which call for conventional indirectness, which may cause misunderstandings in any possible communication with native speakers of English. That is, since direct strategies are frequently employed and regarded as appropriate in Iraqi society, they preferred using imperative and yes/no questions more than the other strategies. The results also show that the Iraqi EFL learners were unable to differentiate invitations from other speech acts, such as offer and request, in their performance on the recognition part. Participants attempted to translate utterances from their native language into the target language without taking differences in word order or sentence structure into account.

The third study was conducted by Al-Hamzi, Sartini, Hapsari, Gougui, and Al-Nozili (2020) to investigate invitation strategies produced by Yemeni and Indonesian EFL Language learners. The tool used in collecting the data was the Discourse Completion Task. The participants of this study were 30 Yemeni EFL learners and 30 Indonesian undergraduate students. The data was analyzed

based on the classification of invitation strategies by Suzuki (2009), Al-Khatib (2006), and Bruder and Tillitt (1999). The findings of the study indicated some similarities and differences among both groups in performing the speech act of invitation. Regarding differences, Indonesian EFL learners preferred to use indirect speech acts when making invitations, with a strong preference for Yes/No questions, asking for willingness, and Wh. question strategies. While Yemeni EFL students preferred to be direct when performing the speech act of invitation, the imperative strategy was the most frequently used, followed by the Yes/No question strategy. In terms of similarities, both groups' participants made pragmatic transfers as they translated utterances in their native language into the target language.

The next two studies were intercultural studies focusing on invitations in a cross-cultural setting between individuals of various cultures or languages. Choraih (2022) conducted a contrastive study of invitation speech acts in American English and Moroccan Arabic. The data for this study was collected via two online questionnaires in both languages using Google Forms. 30 Americans and 30 Moroccans participated in this study. The findings showed that American and Moroccan speakers both use indirect strategies to invite their business partners. However, they differ in the types of strategies used. Americans preferred strategies such as conditional, expressing want or wish, suggestion, and modality, while Moroccans favoured time consideration, passive form, and opinion. Another difference was that Moroccan speakers tended to use direct invitation through the verb invite, whereas American speakers did not. In inviting one's boss, Moroccans' most commonly used strategies were imperative form, time consideration, welcoming expressions, desire, possibility, and using conditional; however, want or wish, permission, suggestion, modality, request for time, and conditional were mostly preferred by Americans. American speakers used want or wish, asking about interest, requests for time, suggestions, conditionals, and modalities to invite their employees to use them. While Moroccans used imperative form, yes-no questions, expressions of desire, consideration, possibility, and direct invitation. Moroccans expressed their invitations to invite their friends outside for a drink via numerous strategies: time consideration, conditional, imperative form, suggestion, desire, yes-no question, and asking opinions. On the other hand, Americans issued their invitations via strategies such as yes-no questions, modality, time expressions, suggestions, and wants.

Another study was conducted by Al-daraji et al. (2013) as a contrastive study in which they compared the cultural context of invitation issuing in Iraqi Arabic and English. They discussed and analyzed the differences between the two languages, concentrating mainly on politeness, directness, and the use of linguistic strategies. The findings revealed that, whereas in English, the speech act of inviting is commonly realised through questions, it is considered weak in Arabic, and strategies such as imperatives combined with blessings are preferred in issuing invitations. Also, there were significant differences between Arabic and English invitations in terms of directness; Arabic invitations were characterized by directness, while English invitations were characterized by indirectness. The researchers suggest that directness in English implies imposition, while affiliation and solidarity in Arabic imply affiliation and solidarity. Recognizing and understanding these differences would help facilitate communication between different cultures.

The sixth final study was an intralingual study, which focuses on invitation in a single language or culture. With reference to the age variable, Bella (2009) investigates Greek invitations and their relationships with politeness using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework. This study included sixty native Greek speakers divided into two groups: the first (G1) included thirty subjects ranging in age from 35 to 45 years. The second group (G2) consisted of thirty (30) subjects ranging in age from 18 to 22. Role play was used to collect data by having participants interact in pairs (15 pairs for each group) and engage in an ordinary conversation, which was tape-recorded. This study revealed the different preferences for pragmatic strategies in Greek society among two age groups when it comes to issuing an invitation. It has been demonstrated that the younger age group views invitations as face-enhancing acts for the addressee, and as a result, they insist more and prefer positive politeness strategies. In contrast, the older age group perceives invitations as face-threatening acts from the addressee, so they rarely insist and appear to favour negative politeness strategies. Also, the context of a speech event and variables such as age, lifestyle, and gender play a key role in determining whether linguistic strategies are positively or negatively polite.

According to the reviewed studies, the invitation speech act was perceived differently by participants from different social, cultural, and linguistic groups. The findings showed that while some cultures preferred to use more indirect invitations, others tended to favour more direct ones. The age variable also shows a significant effect when using politeness strategies among people in the same society. Additionally, the reviewed studies place a strong emphasis on the interlocutors' social status while ignoring the role that social distance can play in designing situations. The current study focuses on the invitation strategies used by Iraqi Arabs when inviting a person of lower status with whom they have a close, familiar, or distant social distance.

#### **4. Methodology**

In this study, the collected data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. An open-ended Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) was used to collect written responses from participants in three situations. Contextual variations related to the social status and distance of the interlocutors are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Description of WDCT Situations

Situation of invitation	Refusal status relative to interlocutors	Status of Hearer	Distance
1. Having lunch at home	professor-student	lower	Close
2. Having lunch at the college cafeteria	professor-student	lower	Familiar
3. Having lunch at restaurant	professor-student	lower	Distant

The data collection procedures were carried out in classroom sections of Kerbala University during the second academic semester of 2023. This study includes 30 male participants aged between 22 and 23. They were fourth-year undergraduate university students in the English department who spoke Arabic as their native language. Before beginning to fill out the WDCT, the participants were given a brief description of the situations, including the specified setting as well as the levels of social status and social distance between the interlocutors. 10 minutes were given to the participants to provide their responses by filling in the three WDCTs as if they were in real-life situations when they invited someone of lower status who had close, familiar, and distant social distance from them. The elicited data were coded and classified according to Garca's (2008) classification in terms of the types, content, and frequency of the semantic formulas. According to Fraser (1981), a semantic formula might be a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a certain criterion or technique. Garca's (2008) classified semantic formulas into *head acts* and *supportive moves*. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p. 275) define head acts as "the minimal unit[s] that can realise a request; [they are] the core of the request sequence." According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), an invitation is a form of request that possesses both directional and commissive illocutionary forces. In order to make an invitation, speakers may utilize one or more *head acts*.

On the other hand, *supportive moves*, according to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p. 276), are "units external to the request which modify its impact by either aggravating ... or mitigating ... its force" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, p. 276). *Head acts* are further categorized as direct and indirect along a directness-indirectness continuum (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). While *supporting moves* are characterized as either mitigators or aggravators based on whether they reduce or increase the force of invitations, consequently, as shown in Table 2, the following utterances may be coded as follows:

والله اليوم متروح اني عازمك على الغده بيتي انت تشرفنه ، غدانه جاهز وبيتنه مو بعيد منا واي عذر مرفوض

I swear by God that I will not let you leave today. I invite you to lunch at my house. You will honor us. Our lunch is ready, and my house is nearby, so no excuses

**Table 2:** Coding of Semantic Formulas

Phrase	Strategy
1. والله اليوم متروح I swear by God that I will not let you leave today	Swearing
2. اني عازمك على الغده بيتي I invite you to lunch at my house	Explicit performative
3. انت تشرفنه You will honor us	Complimenting
4. غدانه جاهز وبيتنه مو بعيد منا Our lunch is ready, and my house is nearby	Imposition minimizer
5. واي عذر مرفوض so no excuses	Rejecting excuses

First, "I swear by God that I will not let you leave today," as an aggravator-supportive move, is coded as *swearing*. As a direct strategy, the second expression, "I invite you to lunch at my house," is coded as *explicit and performative*. As a mitigator-supportive move, the third expression, "You will honor us," is coded as *complimenting*. "Our lunch is ready, and my house is nearby," as a mitigator-supportive move, is coded as an *imposition minimizer*. Finally, "so no excuses," as an aggravator-supportive move, is coded as *rejecting excuses*. Modifications were made to García's (2008) categorization of semantic formulas based on the findings of the open-ended WDCT (See Appendix 1).

**5. Results and Discussion**

The findings are displayed in four subsections. An overview of Iraqi Arabs' strategies is provided in the first section, and the three following subsections focus on how Iraqi Arabs invite people of lower status in relation to the three levels of social distance: close, familiar, and distant. According to García's (2008) classification of the strategies as *head acts* and *supportive moves*, the strategies are divided into their component strategies.

**5.1 Overall Distribution of Iraqi Arabs' Invitation Strategies**

Table 3 reveals that the total strategies used by Iraqi Arabs when inviting lower status interlocutors with whom they have close, familiar, and distant social distance were 185. The distribution of the main strategies of *head acts* and *sportive moves* revealed that Iraqi Arabs used *head acts* (58.38%) more than *sportive moves* (41.62%), indicating that they focused on issuing the invitation rather than mitigating or enhancing the invitation and its threat to the interlocutor's face. To put it another way, they see invitations as a face-enhancing rather than a face-threatening act. In terms of the distribution of *head acts*, the data showed that Iraqi Arabs tended to utilize more direct strategies, accounting for 52.43%, as opposed to indirect ones, which accounted for 5.95%. In other words, they regard an invitation as a polite speech act that conveys respect and gratitude for the hearer, and they expect the invitation to be accepted by the hearer without any imposition. Therefore, they prefer direct strategies when giving invitations as courteous behaviour towards the invitee. This fact is ascertained by Bratt, Kiesling, and Rangel (2012), who argue that Arabs are more likely to employ direct strategies than indirect ones when providing certain speech acts, such as invitations.

**Table 3:** Overall Strategies of Iraqi Arabs when Inviting Lower Status Interlocutors

Strategy	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head Act</b>	108	58.38
Direct	97	52.43
Indirect	11	5.95
<b>Supportive moves</b>	<b>77</b>	41.62
Mitigators	33	17.83
Aggravators	44	23.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>100</b>

**5.2 Iraqi Arabs' Strategies: Inviting lower Status Interlocutor with Close Social Distance**

Table 4 presents invitation speech act strategies adopted by Iraqi Arabs as higher status participants (professors) when inviting a familiar lower-status interlocutor (student) to have lunch at their home.

**Table 4:** Overall Strategies Used in inviting Lower Status Interlocutor with close social distance

Strategy	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head Act</b>	38	54.29
Direct	33	47.15
Indirect	5	7.14
<b>Supportive moves</b>	<b>32</b>	45.71
Mitigators	14	20
Aggravators	18	25.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 showed that Iraqi Arabs employed a total of 70 strategies when inviting their lower status interlocutor to have lunch at home. However, they utilized more *head acts* than *supportive moves*. *Head acts* are the smallest units capable of carrying out an invitation, and they form the basis of the invitation sequence. The high use of *head acts* indicates that when issuing an invitation, Iraqi Arabs may utilize one or more *head acts*. More importantly, the findings in Table 4 reveal that Iraqi Arabs are inclined to use direct invitation strategies more frequently than indirect ones, accounting for 47.15% and 7.14%, respectively. This is consistent with Nguyen's (1998) assertion that people with close social relationships express themselves more directly. Regarding the *supportive moves*, Iraqi Arabs favoured aggravators more than mitigators, using aggravators at a rate of 25.71% compared to 20% for mitigators. That is, rather than minimizing the threat to the interlocutor's face, they opted to use substantial aggravators to increase the force of the invitation.

**Table 5:** Specific Strategies Used in Inviting Lower Status Interlocutor with Close Social Distance

Invitation Strategies	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head acts</b>		
<b>Direct</b>		
Mood derivable	16	22.85
Explicit performative	15	21.42
Want statement	1	1.24
hoping	1	1.24
<b>Indirect</b>		
Suggestory formula (suggestion )	4	5.71
Query preparatory (asking about H's plan or ability)	1	1.24
Strong hint	-	-
<b>Supportive moves</b>		
<b>Mitigators</b>		
Preparator (Availability)	1	1.24
Grounders (reasons/explanations/justifications )	2	2.85
Providing information	1	1.24
Imposition minimizer	1	1.24
Complimenting	3	4.29
Invoking the name of God	2	2.85
Showing solidarity	2	2.85
Address term	2	2.85
<b>Aggravators</b>		
Emotional appeal	3	4.28
Swearing	3	4.28
Emphasising the interlocutor's attendance (insisting)	4	5.71
Requesting a promise	3	4.28
Rejecting excuses	3	4.28
Warning	2	2.85
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 summarizes the specific strategies employed by the Iraqi Arabs as higher status interlocutors (professors) invited a lower-status interlocutor (student) with whom they had close social relations to have lunch at their homes. Iraqi Arabs employed 20 strategies, divided into 6 *head acts* and 14 *supportive moves*. *Mood derivable* (imperative) was the most frequently used strategy by Iraqi Arabs at a percentage of 22.85%, which ranks as being the most direct on the directness scale. This is in agreement with Leech's (1983) argument that Arabs commonly believe that when an invitation speech act is not accompanied by a command or an oath, it ceases to be performative. *Explicit performative*, which ranks as the second direct strategy on the directness scale, was the second most common strategy utilized by Iraqi Arabs, accounting for 21.42%. *Suggestory formula* and *insisting* were the third favorite strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs, accounting for 5.71% each, followed by *complimenting*, *emotional appeal*, and *rejecting excuses* at a percentage of 4.28%. More importantly, the results indicate that some new strategies used by Iraqi Arabs were not included in García's (2008) classification of semantic formulas, namely *hoping*, *invoking the name of God*, *showing solidarity*, *address term*, *indebting by inviter*, *swearing*, *insisting*, *requesting a promise*, *rejecting excuses*, and *warning* at a percentage of 2.85% and less.

### 5.3 Iraqi Arabs' Strategies: Inviting lower Status Interlocutor with Familiar Social Distance

Table 6 shows an overview of invitation strategies employed by the Iraqi Arabs in the second situation in which they, as professors, had to invite a lower status interlocutor to have lunch at the college cafeteria who they were familiar with.

**Table 6:** Overall Strategies Used in inviting Lower Status Interlocutor with Familiar social distance

Strategy	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head Act</b>	30	63.82
Direct	29	61.70

Indirect	1	2.12
<b>Supportive moves</b>	<b>17</b>	36.18
Mitigators	7	14.90
Aggravators	10	21.28
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100%</b>

As in the first situation, i.e., inviting a close lower-status interlocutor, Iraqi Arabs still continued to use the same pattern of strategies in the second situation when they invited a lower-status interlocutor with familiar social distance. To put it simply, they preferred to use more head acts, accounting for 63.82%, compared to supportive moves, which were used less frequently at 36.18%. In line with the first situation, the data analysis also revealed that Iraqi Arabs favour direct strategies over indirect ones, with percentages of 61.70% and 2.12%, respectively. In other words, they retained their tendency to employ directness instead of indirectness when they make invitations. This finding is in contrast with Brown and Levinson's (1987), who assume that the more indirect an utterance, the more polite it becomes, as well as Searle's (1975) assertion that the chief motivation of indirect strategies is politeness. While using indirect strategies could be possible in some cultures or societies, it might also be considered impolite because performing speech acts has been shown to be culturally specific. That is to say, what is regarded as polite behavior in one culture may be considered impolite in another. Regarding the *supportive moves*, as in the first situation, Iraqi Arabs tended to employ more *aggravators* at a percentage of 21.28 compared to *mitigators*, which were used less frequently at 14.90%. This suggests that the participants tried to make their invitations expressed through *head acts* more appealing by utilizing *aggravators* either before or after making the invitations, *or both*.

**Table 7:** Specific Strategies Used in Inviting Lower Status Interlocutor with Familiar Social Distance

Invitation Strategies	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head acts</b>		
<b>Direct</b>		
Mood derivable	11	23.40
Explicit performative	6	12.76
Obligation statement	3	6.38
Locution derivable	7	<b>14.89</b>
Want statement	1	2.12
Conditional	1	2.12
<b>Indirect</b>		
Query preparatory (asking about H's plan) (ability)	1	2.12
Strong hint	-	-
<b>Supportive moves</b>		
<b>Mitigators</b>		
Preparator (Availability)	1	2.12
Grounder (reasons/explanations/justifications )	1	2.12
Complimenting	3	6.38
Invoking the name of God	1	2.12
Showing solidarity	1	2.12
<b>Aggravators</b>		
Indebting by the inviter	3	6.38
Swearing	1	2.12
Rejecting excuses	3	6.38
Insisting on accepting invitation	3	6.38
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>47</b>	100%

The results in Table 7 show that Iraqi Arabs used fewer types of strategies (16) when inviting a lower-status interlocutor who had a familiar relation with the inviter to have lunch at the college cafeteria, compared to the first situation (20). These types included 7 *head acts* and 9 *supportive moves*. Similar to the first situation, Iraqi Arabs opted to employ *mood derivable* as the most common preferred strategy to issue their invitation at 23.40%. At 14.89%, *locution derivable* was the second preferred strategy employed by participants, followed by *explicit performative* at 12.76%, *obligation statement*, *complimenting*, *indebting by the inviter*, *rejecting*



*excuse, and insisting* at 6.38% each. The results also showed that some new strategies, as in the first situation, were employed by Iraqi Arabs that were not included in García's (2008) categorization of politeness strategies, such as *conditional, invoking the name of God, showing solidarity, indebted by the inviter, swearing, rejecting excuses, and insisting*, at a percentage of 2.12% for each.

#### 5.4 Iraqi Arabs' Strategies: Inviting lower Status Interlocutor with Distant Social Distance

Table 8 presents an overview of invitation strategies employed by Iraqi Arabs when inviting a lower status interlocutor by a professor with whom he had a distant social relation to have lunch at a restaurant.

**Table 8:** Overall Strategies Used in inviting Lower Status Interlocutor with distant social distance

Strategy	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head Act</b>	40	58.82
Direct	35	51.47
Indirect	5	7.35
<b>Supportive moves</b>	28	41.17
Mitigators	12	17.65
Aggravators	16	23.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 demonstrates that the number of strategies used in inviting a person of lower status with a distant social relation is similar, with a slight difference, to the number of strategies used in inviting a person of lower status with a close social relation. This suggests that Iraqi Arabs make as much effort to employ politeness strategies as possible, regardless of social distance. This may be according to the relationship between invitation and hospitality, as Iraqi Arabs regarded inviting speech acts as a way of expressing hospitality towards others and, consequently, as polite behavior that reflects respect and appreciation for the hearer. According to Sattar and Farnia (2014), generosity is highly valued by Arabs, and they are themselves generous; thus, hospitality towards invitees is required to maintain a good reputation. Regarding the overall distribution of strategies, Iraqi Arabs tended to use *head acts* rather than more *supportive moves*, with percentages of 58.82% and 41.17%, respectively. Direct strategies of *head acts* were the most prominent strategies at 51.47%, whereas indirect ones were less dominant in use at 7.35%. While among the *supportive moves*, aggravators were substantially preferred to mitigators by Iraqi Arabs.

**Table 9:** Specific Strategies Used in Inviting Lower Status Interlocutor with Distant Social Distance

Invitation Strategies	Iraqi Arabs	
	No	%
<b>Head acts</b>		
<b>Direct</b>		
Mood derivable	16	23.52
Explicit performative	3	4.41
Obligation statement	3	4.41
Locution derivable	8	11.76
Want statement	1	1.47
Conditional	2	2.94
hoping	2	2.94
<b>Indirect</b>		
Suggestory formula (suggestion )	3	4.41
Query preparatory (asking about H's plan or ability)	2	2.94
Strong hint	-	-
<b>Supportive moves</b>		
<b>Mitigators</b>		
Grounder (reasons/explanations/justifications )	1	1.47
Imposition minimizer	1	1.47
Promising reward	2	2.94
Complimenting	5	7.35
Invoking the name of God	2	2.94
Adress term	1	1.47
<b>Aggravators</b>		

Indebting by the inviter	5	7.35
Swearing	4	5.88
Rejecting excuses	3	4.41
Insisting	4	4.41
<b>Overall Total</b>	68	100%

Table 9 shows that Iraqi Arabs utilized 19 types of strategies when inviting a distant lower-status interlocutor to have lunch at a restaurant, distributed as 9 *head acts* and 10 *supportive moves*. Importantly, Iraqi Arabs retained their preference for *mood derivable* as the most prominent strategy across the three situations in which they invited lower status interlocutors with close, familiar, and distant social distance. Therefore, it would seem that Iraqi Arabs regard the use of *mood derivable*, i.e., imperative when extending invitations, as a polite act and a way to show their interest in the invitee. In other words, it is seen as an attempt by the inviter to encourage the invitee to accept an invitation. According to Allan (1986), using imperatives to issue invitations can be viewed as an attempt to persuade the hearer to perform an action, i.e., acceptance of the invitation that is assumed to be beneficial to him or her.

*Mood derivable* was employed at a percentage of 23.52%, followed by *locution derivable* at 11.76% and complimenting at 7.35%. Strategies such as *explicit performative*, *obligation statement*, *want statement*, *suggestory formula*, *query preparatory*, *grounder*, *imposition minimizer*, and *promising reward* were less dominant at a percentage of 4.41% and less. Some new strategies, which were also used in the first two situations, were used in the third situation, such as *conditional*, *hoping*, *complimenting*, *invoking the name of God*, *address term*, *swearing*, *rejecting excuses*, and *insisting* at 7.35% and lower.

It is important to indicate that across the three situations, a *strong hint*, as an indirect strategy which was included in García's (2008), was not used in this study at all, which may be due to the fact that Iraqi Arabs try to be clear in extending their invitations. That is to say, they want their invitations to be taken seriously as genuine invitations and consequently accepted by the hearer.

**6. Conclusion**

The overall results revealed that Iraqi Arabs employed 25 types of strategies when inviting a lower status interlocutor with close, familiar, and distant social distance. It is also shown that *head acts* were substantially used by Iraqi Arabs compared to *supportive moves*. This suggests that the focus was on issuing invitations rather than enhancing or mitigating their force. Moreover, Iraqi Arabs had a tendency toward directness rather than indirectness when making their invitations. That is, adopting direct strategies when making invitations is regarded as a polite act. This is in contrast with Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim that indirectness is always related to politeness and directness to impoliteness. In other words, the present study showed that it is not a matter of directness or indirectness but how people perceive these pragmatic terms based on their social and cultural norms. However, this finding is similar to the findings of the studies conducted by Hussein, Hussein, and Kareem (2022), who examined Iraqi EFL University Students' ability to use the illocutionary act of invitation, and Mohammed (2020), who examined how pragmatically Iraqi non-departmental EFL students recognized and produced the speech act of invitation.

With reference to the distribution of *head acts*, direct strategies were the most dominant ones, whereas *aggravators* from supportive moves were the most prominent strategies, which are used to enhance invitations instead of mitigating their force. Using substantial *aggravators* across the three levels of social distance, i.e., close, familiar, and distant, demonstrates that Iraqi Arabs viewed invitations as face-enhancing acts rather than face-threatening acts.

A close look at the specific strategies has shown that *mood derivable* as a direct strategy, which ranked first on the directness scale, was the most preferred strategy in making invitations across the three situations. However, there was a slight difference in employing the other preferred strategies, as *explicit performative* was the second favoured direct strategy for inviting close lower status interlocutors, whereas *locution durable* (declarative) was the second preferred direct strategy for inviting familiar and distant lower status interlocutors.

Additionally, *complimenting* as a supportive move was the most prominent strategy across the three situations. This indicates that Iraqi Arabs used *complimenting* as a way of reinforcing the links of solidarity between the interlocutors. That is, it is employed to make the invitees feel respected and appreciated, and consequently, they accept invitations. However, Iraqi Arabs showed different styles in their preference of other strategies, as they preferred *emotional appeal*, *swearing*, and *rejecting excuses* in a similar percentage in the first situation, while *insisting*, *rejecting excuses*, and *indebting the speaker* in the second situation in a similar

percentage. In the third situation, they preferred *indebting the speaker and swearing*, followed by *rejecting excuses* and *insisting on equal use*.

Furthermore, some strategies that were not in García's (2008) classification but were used in the studies by Al-Khatib (2006) and Alifah (2022) were utilized by Iraqi Arabs, including *swearing, hoping, and conditional*. However, some new strategies, which were neither included in Garca's classification nor in the results of other studies, were employed by Iraqi Arabs, such as *showing solidarity, using the address term, indebting the inviter, requesting a promise, rejecting excuses, warning, insisting, and invoking the name of God*. Importantly, five of these new studies were aggravators, while one strategy belongs to the mitigators category. This is another indication that emphasizes the view that Iraqi Arabs see invitations as a face-enhancing act that reinforces and maintains good social relations among people regardless of their social distance levels.

Finally, while *strong hint* was included in Garca's (2008) categorization, it was not employed in this study at all, and this may be due to the fact that they are seen as an ambiguous strategy that could not be taken seriously as genuine invitations by the invitee; consequently, they were avoided by Iraqi Arabs in making invitations.

## 7. Limitations and Suggestions

This study has limitations in some aspects. First, it is limited to the realisation of the speech act of invitation among Iraqi Arabs. However, the invitation speech act is realised differently among people of different cultures. Second, it is limited to one degree of social status, namely higher status. However, social factors like gender, age, formality, region, the weight of the invitation, and the other two social status levels, i.e., equal and lower, had a significant impact on how people decided to extend invitations, particularly when those people come from different cultures, and speak different languages. Consequently, future studies should focus on such effective social variables. Third, WDCT was used in the current study as a research tool to collect the data. Therefore, using other instruments of naturally occurring data or role play in future studies may help us better understand how invitations are realised in real-world settings.

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