



Invitation Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigated the types of invitation strategies as produced by Yemeni EFL learners. The study participants were 171 undergraduate students from Sana'a University. All of the participants were relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural background. The data were collected by using Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The analysis of the data was based on Suzuki (2009), Al-Khatib (2006), and Tillitt and Bruder (1999) classifications of invitation strategies. The results of the study showed that Yemeni EFL learners preferred to be direct in the use of the speech act of invitation making, with highest frequency of imperative strategy followed by Yes/No questions strategy. This might reveal a part of the influence of their mother tongue on their responses. They were also aware that direct invitations were generally acceptable in their culture. Moreover, the results of the study showed Yemeni EFL learners translated the utterances in their mother tongue into the target language without pondering the differences between the two languages in sentence patterns and word order. Implications of the study are provided as well.

Keywords: invitation; strategies; politeness; direct invitation; indirect invitation.

1. Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language has moved out from learning a language as a structure to the use of language to serve certain functions in the course of communication. These functions include inviting, requesting, arguing, ordering, and so on. Their related strategies have become a big issue in the EFL environments. Successfully communicating in a foreign language requires understanding what the speaker is saying and knowing how to respond. It incorporates not only traditional learning of vocabulary and grammar but also discourse strategies and their combinations (i.e. semantic formula) and related linguistic politeness strategies. It is desirable that EFL learners have to learn such pragmatic strategies, so that learners can express themselves in natural and appropriate ways in certain contexts after or while they master the use of vocabulary and sentence structure.

Speech act is a technical term used by Crystal (1992) which refers to “a communicative activity defined with reference to the intentions of a speaker while speaking and the effects achieved on a listener” (p. 85). This term is also used in linguistics and the philosophy of language to refer to Pragmatics. This type of pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or a writer and interpreted by a listener or a reader (Yule, 1996). It deals with how speakers use language in a way which cannot be produced using linguistic knowledge alone. In brief, it is the study of how to recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written. In other words, Yule (1996) states, “It is the study of the speaker meaning” (p. 3).

Speech acts have been a major problematic area for foreign language learners. Blum-Kulka (1982) describes speech acts as “one of the most compelling notions in the study of language use” (“Cultural Pragmatics” 1). Billmyer (1990) argues that “a major difficulty faced by non-native speakers in acquiring pragmatic competence is that speech acts are highly complex and variable and require that non-native speakers understand the multiple functions each serves” (p. 35). In addition, language instructors and learners must remain aware that speech acts vary in both conceptualization and realization across languages and cultures due to deep-seated differences in cultural conventions and assumptions.

Many studies have been carried out in Western countries (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Novick, 2000; Reiter, 2000; Rintel, 2000), and all of them prove that politeness strategies are different from culture to culture and what can be seen as a polite behavior in one culture may not be seen so in another.

Recently, a number of studies have been carried out in Eastern countries, especially Japanese and Chinese with only a handful of them were done on Arabic EFL learners (such as Al-Zumor, 2003; Al-khatani, 2005; Emery, 2000; Umar, 2006). According to the findings of these studies, many Arabic EFL learners of English use different strategies compared to native speakers of English language when performing speech acts of request, apology, complain and refusing in English. Therefore, some researchers (see Al-Zumor, 2003; Al-Kahtani, 2005; Umar, 2006) recommend and encourage Arab researchers to conduct different studies on speech acts.

Hence, it is hoped that this study would be able to investigate strategies of invitation to make Yemeni EFL learners effective speakers of English language. The present study, therefore, aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What types of invitation strategies do Yemeni EFL learners employ?
2. To what extent are invitation strategies different / similar in the case of undergraduate students in both colleges (Arts and Education)?

The present study was limited to invitation strategies as produced by Yemeni EFL learners at the university level ranging in age from 21-25. It focused on Level Four students of English language at Sana'a University.

Literature Review

2.1 Speech Act of Invitation

Speech act of invitation as defined by researchers (Austin, 1962; Paltridge, 2000; Yule 1996) is an illocutionary act which appears when an inviter is showing his/her intention to request a hearer's participation in attendance at a certain occasion in an immediate or future activity at a specific time and a certain place.

1. ‘I would like to invite you to a party next Friday.’ (Tillitt & Bruder, 1999: p.22)

An invitation according to Searle's (1979) classification of speech acts is a directive speech act in that a speaker directs a hearer to do something. In this sense, invitations are similar to orders, requests, and commands in that, they all direct a hearer to do some action. However, in an invitation, a hearer is directed to do something not for a speaker's benefit as in commands, requests, or orders;

rather the hearer is directed to do that action for his/her own benefit.

Therefore, Hancher (1979) states that an invitation is both commissive and directive in that a speaker, not only directs the hearer to do some actions, but also commits him/herself to a future action. For instance, when inviting someone to dinner; the inviter does not only direct the invitee to attend this social event, but also commits him/herself to providing what s/he has promised the invitee to do.

Wolfson (1989) argues that “an invitation contains three requisites: a reference to time, a place and a request for response” (p. 67). According to him, there is another type of invitations in which the leads are left open. Simply put, time is always indefinite, a response is not required and a modal auxiliary like “must”, “should” or “have” is always used. This type of invitation is called “ambiguous invitations” (p. 122).

Clark and Isaac (1990) introduce yet another reflection to speech act of invitation: ostensible invitations, claiming that it is different from that of Wolfson’s (1989) ambiguous invitations, though they are similar in principle. Therefore, ostensible speech act of invitation can be defined as “those invitations that the speaker extends not to be taken seriously, but to accomplish some other unstated purposes, as indicated above” (p. 2).

In performing an ostensible invitation, a speaker is likely to use certain strategies to indicate that the invitation is ostensible. The aim of performing ostensible invitation is not to establish the invitation, but to fulfill social, ritual and interacting functions to achieve a harmonious human relationship. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the above-mentioned strategies might represent a particular social group. There could be more or less than these strategies, depending on the society in which ostensible invitations are extended.

2.2 Types of Inviting

Invitation can be divided into two types which called direct and indirect invitation. Based on the mode of sentences, direct invitation is divided into several types of speech acts, such as performative, declarative, imperative, conditional and hoping, and indirect invitation is divided into types of interrogative invitation (Wh, Yes/No questions and tag questions) and asking willingness. Amelia (2015) states “Sentence formally divided into news sentences which is also called declarative, interrogative sentence or interrogative and imperative sentences or orders” (p. 17). Speech act However, when an utterance does not use the phrase type, mode or the original function of the sentence, then it is called ‘indirect speech acts’ and it makes it more polite.

2.3 Politeness and Polite Invitation

Green (1996) indicates that politeness, in general terms “shows regard for another person by trying to make that person feel comfortable or by making an obvious effort to avoid making that person feel uncomfortable” (p. 148). In other words, Politeness is defined as the features of language that serve to mediate norms of social behavior, in terms of notions, such as courtesy, rapport, deference, and distance. The politeness principle may be formulated as a series of maxims which people assume are being followed in the utterances of others (cited in Lakeoff, 1973, p.199). He also proposes two universal rules of pragmatic competence: 1) be clear; and 2) be polite. The second rule is comprised of three strategies: (i) do not impose; (ii) give options, and (iii) be friendly. According to Lakoff (1973) if one wants to succeed in communication, the message must be conveyed in a clear manner, “so that there’s no mistaking one’s intention” (p. 296)

Politeness in language study could be “(a) how languages express the social distance between speakers and their different role relationships; (b) how face-work, that is, the attempt to establish, maintain and save face during conversation is carried out in a speech community” (Richards & Schmidts, 2010, p. 442). Politeness in English is personified by “someone who is polite, has good manners and behaves in a way that is socially correct and not rude to other people”. Many strategies of politeness have been studied by theorists and researchers (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lakoff, 1973; Leech 1983) which are employed by a speaker to promote and maintain harmonious relations by

displaying consideration for one's interlocutor's feelings.

The most known theory on politeness is the Politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987). This theory is identified by many researchers as the most extensive model of politeness and they argue that it is useful to analyze types of discourse. Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness is centred on the concept of 'face' in order to illustrate politeness in the broad sense. The concept "face" was introduced by Goffman (1967) as "an image located in the flow of events in the encounter" (p. 7). They distinguish between two types of 'face': positive face and negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987) define 'positive face' as "the positive and consistent image people have of themselves, and their desire for approval. On the other hand, 'negative face' is "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction" (p. 61). According to Brown and Levinson's type of politeness, face is taken to be "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (p. 61).

Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1987) recognize that the content of face is culture specific and subject to cultural elaboration but they maintain that the two basic face-wants that constitute it are universal. To them, cultural variability influences how polite behavior is evaluated, i.e. whether a culture is negative-politeness oriented or positive-politeness oriented, but it does not affect the content of positive and negative face (p. 13). It can be concluded that politeness is concerned with respecting the interlocutor's feelings, wants and desires and making them feel good.

2.4 Previous Studies on Speech Act of Invitation

Sukesti (2014) in his study aims to explore inviting strategies used by Indonesian students as non-native speakers of English. The findings show that there are many inviting strategies incorporated by the students. The findings indicate the longer the situations, the longer the invitation students make as they translate all sentences into English. Different gender was found to utilize different strategies as well as different social status and familiarity. Lack of English proficiency made more pragmatic errors than those with high proficiency. Data show politeness markers used by the participants reflected the situation in the DCT that the female participants tend to use more polite markers than the male participants. In politeness strategies, this research finds that, based on super strategies of Brown and Levinson's politeness, Brown's strategy was found in all invitation used by the participants.

Amelia (2015) examined the competence of native speaker of English when utter a speech act of invitation orally in English. This study presented several results. First, according to the length of the speech act, speech acts of invitation in English can be realized with about one to six speech acts. Second, according to the kinds of speech acts, speech acts of invitation in English consists of direct speech acts, indirect speech acts, and literal speech acts. Third, the social distance scale, status scale, and formality scale affect the realization of speech acts of invitation in English based on politeness principle used by each speaker appropriate with the context of the speech situation. The last, based on the level of politeness, there are about four strategies in speech acts of invitation in English. Strategy 1, used to intimate friends, realized with Come to my party!; strategy 2, used to intimate friends with higher level of politeness than strategy 1, realized with utterances Do you guys want to come to my party? or I would love for you all to come; strategy 3, used to someone who are not too familiar, realized with We would like to invite you attend to our event; and strategy 4, for the higher social status, realized by the utterance I was wondering if you would be willing to come to our event.

Rakowicz (2009) also discusses the strategies of invitation in his study. His study explores the interlanguage behavior of adult Polish learners of American English, concentrating on the way in which they respond to "ambiguous invitations" in a second language (L2). The results of this study indicate that some Polish participants perceived the ambiguous invitations as genuine invitations, and there is evidence that the participants tended to transfer their native patterns and strategies into situations. The findings also show that the Polish verbal behavior was more direct and straightforward than that of the native speaking participants. The results of this study indicate that, while knowledge of target culture conventions that govern politeness behavior are central to

the acquisition of pragmatics in L2, they may not be acquired by second language acquisition (SLA) learners without metalinguistic intervention.

Abbood (2016) also explains the ability of Iraqi EFL learners to recognize and produce utterances related to the two speech acts of “invitation” and “offer”. The researcher of this study notes that Iraqi EFL students experience noticeable challenges and difficulties in producing and recognizing the two speech acts. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the students tend to use imperative and interrogative types of strategies while the students do not favor the exclamatory strategy. Finally, the findings showed significant positive relationship between the demographic factor of the year of study and the students’ ability to recognize and produce the two speech acts.

Another study in the area of Speech Act is the production of invitation by Egyptian EFL learners by Ibrahim (2012) who conducts one of these studies. The aim of his study is to investigate invitations and invitation responses (both acceptances and refusing) in Egyptian Arabic and American English.. The finding of this study reveals similarities and differences in the responses of the two language groups. In making invitations, Americans employed more indirect and less direct formula than Egyptians. Americans used more preparatories, suggestories, and mitigated preparatories than Egyptians. Egyptians, however, used more explicit performative, obligations, mood derivable, and want statements than Americans. Unlike Americans, Egyptians were found to depend on alerters and supportive moves to mitigate their directness. They used a higher number of alerters and supportive moves than Americans. In declining invitations, Americans and Egyptians both were inclined to avoid saying ‘No’ directly. They used nearly the same percentage of direct formulas. However, Egyptians used a higher percentage of indirect formulas than Americans. In accepting invitations, Americans employed a higher percentage of formulas than Egyptians. However, Americans and Egyptians both preferred to accept directly.

Moreover, Nodoushan (1995) conducts a study with the aim of examining Farsi ostensible invitations in terms of the universals of pragmatics. The findings of the study show that the Farsi ostensible invitations are similar to those of the English language. It is also revealed that Iranian inviters take advantage of the same strategies in making the pretense of their invitations vivid as their English counterparts do. In brief, the results of this study reveal that the Farsi ostensible invitations go by the universal norms that influence language use.

Al-Khatib (2006) in his study, he aims to explore the nature of invitation making and acceptance in Jordanian society from a pragmatic point of view. The results of his study, therefore, stand in strong support that people who share a common language and culture have an easier time ‘making sense’ of each other’s utterances and actions. He also explores miscellaneous strategies that are utilized by Jordanians for making an invitation, accepting or declining it. In brief, in making an invitation, Jordanians were reported to use explicit strategies more frequently than implicit ones. They were also found to swear and to offer a variety of good wishes when inviting each other. In accepting invitations, Jordanians were found to prefer thanking and/or appreciating, expressing good wishes, stressing intimacy, and complimenting.

According to Wolfson (1989) the knowledge of how to give, interpret, and respond to invitations is an aspect of communicative competence which is critical to those who wish to interact socially. This knowledge is particularly significant to non-native EFL learners in the host speech community (invitation and n. speakers 13). Hatch (1992) argues that “the language learner is most likely to do best when s/he is provided with frequent opportunities to interact with the native speakers of the target language” (p. 401). In their study of invitations, Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones (1989) observe that, since speech communities around the world vary greatly with regard to the rules that constraint speech behavior, the non-native speakers cannot hope to interact effectively in the target speech community, unless they learn its rules. In this case, the rules for the appropriate management of invitations are well below the conscious awareness of speakers. Based on these points, they conclude that the only way that the rules for giving and responding to invitations among speakers of American English can be analyzed and made available to language learners is through the empirically-based descriptive analysis.

In his dissertation, Trong (2012) points out that “Invitations are polite utterances, requesting

others to do something together, which satisfy both the speaker and hearer's benefits" (p. 56). He classifies categories of invitations as speech etiquette in Vietnamese, in terms of speech act theory. The thesis introduced and analyzed two main categories of invitations in Vietnamese, including invitations with explicit performative verbs and invitations with implicit performative verbs.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 171 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sana University, Yemen. All of the participants were students of the English language, aged 20-23. All of the participants were relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural background.

3.2 Procedures

All participants were asked to fill out a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) used in this investigation involved ten written situations. The participants then were asked to complete each dialogue by writing a suitable invitation in English language across ten situations. The participants were asked to put themselves in real situation and to assume that in each situation they would, in fact, say something they were asked to write down what they would say.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was based on some earlier studies that discussed invitation strategies (such as Al-Khatib, 2006; Suzuki, 2009; Tillitt & Bruder, 1999). Data were analyzed statistically using the quantitative method. The focus of analysis was on the average number of strategies used per response, and the total frequency of the different types of strategies employed by the participants. The current study analyzed invitation strategies according to a categorization of the following strategies:

Direct invitation:

- a) Performative: e.g., *"I would like to invite you to dinner next week at my home."*
- b) Declarative: e.g., *"We just thought it would be nice to have you over dinner."*
- c) Imperative (suggestion): e.g., *"Let's go to our home for lunch."*
- d) Conditional: e.g., *"I'm having a party if you want to come."*
- e) Hoping: e.g., *"I hope you can come to my party."*

Indirect invitation:

- a) Invitation in the form of Interrogative WH-questions: e.g., *"Why do not you come round for a dinner one evening next week?"*
- b) In the form of Interrogative Yes/ No questions: e.g., *"Can you come over and join us?"*
- c) Asking willingness: e.g., *"Would you like to come to my birthday party in my house?"*

4. Results and Discussion

The data analysis involves presenting the distribution of invitation strategies across ten situations. The results generally show the preference of Yemeni learners for making invitation strategies according to the relative power (equal, higher and lower). The participants' answers show the types of strategies chosen to realize the invitation strategies.

A number of 1,710 Yemeni EFL learners' invitations were collected through 10 situations. These situations were analyzed and discussed one by one according to the earlier studies (such as Al-Khatib, 2006; Suzuki, 2009; Tillitt & Bruder, 1999). In order to identify the invitation strategies used, the researchers used tables to clarify the results to show the overt expression of invitation and to show the other invitation strategies employed in each situation and their frequencies and percentages.

Situation 1

You are sitting and eating some cakes in the bus. A man/woman sitting next to you seems so hungry. You want to invite him/her for a cake. What would you say?

Table 1. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 1

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Declarative	4	3.9%	0	0.0%	4	2%
Imperative	52	50.5%	29	42.6%	81	48%
Conditional	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Yes/No questions	28	27.2%	18	26.5%	46	27%
Willingness	19	18.4%	21	30.9%	40	23%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

From the data shown in Table 1, it can be observed that (48%) of participants invited unknown person in the form of Imperative. Some of the typical examples are:

- 1) Take a piece of cake.
- 2) Eat with me.
- 3) Please, try this cake.

In the same situation, (27%) of participants used the form of interrogative Yes/No questions. Some of the answers used by the participants as follow:

- 1) Can you eat with me?
- 2) Do you want to eat with me?
- 3) Do you want to eat a cake?

Moreover, (23%) of the participants preferred to invite by using the form of asking willingness. The following sentences illustrate their chosen strategies:

- 1) Would you like to share me a cake?
- 2) Would you like to have some cakes?

Furthermore, only four participants chose their way to invite in the form of declarative (2%), for example:

- 1) Hi. I have a lot of cake. You can take one.

In general, from situation 1, it can be noted that the inviter and invitee do not know each other and they are not familiar with each other, they are also in the same power. The speaker wants him/her to share a cake while they are sitting in the bus. The relationship between the interlocutors is social, in the form of social members of the community. From the data obtained, Yemeni learners chose four types of strategies with majority of (imperatives 48%, Yes/No questions

27% and asking willingness 23%). From this, it is notable that Yemeni learners gave the highest percent in the form of imperative, while American English in a similar study (Trong, 2012, p. 38) in such situation preferred the form of Yes/No questions with a percentage of (83%). It appears that only (25%) of participants employed expressions of politeness, such as (please, excuse me) when inviting unfamiliar people. This result is in agreement with Sukesti (2014) as he stated that the Indonesian students tend to use polite markers when they make invitation. It seems that Yemeni learners may depend upon their native language strategies which are different from those of the foreign language. In Yemeni community, they use the form of imperative to invite others because these types of strategies are considered polite invitation and they show closeness between the inviter and the invitee. Therefore, Yemeni EFL learners transferred their mother tongue of invitation strategies to the English language.

Situation 2

You are eating lunch in a college cafeteria. Some of your classmates are coming. What would you say to invite your friends to eat together

Table 2. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 2

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Declarative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Imperative	85	82.5%	45	66.2%	130	77%
Conditional	4	3.9%	0	0.0%	4	2%
Hoping	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Yes/No questions	11	10.7%	17	25.0%	28	16%
Willingness	3	2.9%	6	8.8%	9	5%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

As seen in Table 2, most of participants employed the form of imperative (77%) when inviting equal status people. The following are examples of imperatives:

- 1) Come to eat together.
- 2) Hi, girls. Come to eat with me.
- 3) Come here, please.

While the form of Yes/No questions was the second most frequent (16%) employed by the participants. For example:

- 1) Can you eat with me?
- 2) Do you mind to eat with me?
- 3) Do you want to join me here?

In this situation also, nine participants (equal to 5%) chose the strategy of willingness to invite and four participants (equal to 2%) preferred to invite in a conditional form. These are some typical answers:

- 1) Hi. Come if you want to eat. (Conditional)
- 2) Would you like to have lunch with me? (Asking willingness)

In this situation, the speaker and the hearer are in equal power and they are familiar with each other (a friend invites his classmates to eat lunch together) in order to show their friendliness. In Yemeni communities, since eating or drinking in front of other people is considered an imposition, the speaker should behave according to his social norm to save his positive face and feelings toward his friend.

Based on Table (2), Yemeni learners preferred to be direct when inviting equal people to show a strong relationship. Likewise, Americans, in a similar study (Trong, 2012) who preferred to invite in the way of directness. In addition, this result is also consistent with Rakowicz's (2009) findings which revealed that the Polish verbal behavior was more direct and straightforward than that of the native speakers of English. However, in most cases, the native speakers of English language added the word "please" in order to mitigate their imperative and to make it more polite. Therefore, Yemeni participants were assisted to be much more direct to reflect their closed relationship when inviting closed people. In this situation, it appears that the participants employed low expressions of politeness like "please" which revealed their ignorance of politeness rules. It can be seen also in this situation that the participants mostly translate the utterances in Arabic language into the target ones without pondering in sentence pattern and word order between those two languages. For example, they invited their classmates, such as "please", as they say in Yemeni language (*Tafadal*) and "come girls", which means, "Girls, come to eat with me". This might be because of their lack of knowledge and weakness in English as a foreign language and the effect of their mother tongue rules.

Situation 3

Suppose you are mother/father. You want to ask your children to sit down and have breakfast. What would you say?

Table 3. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 3

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Declarative	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	1	1%
Imperative	96	93.2%	59	86.8%	155	90%
Conditional	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	1	1%
Hoping	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Yes/No Questions	5	4.9%	9	13.2%	14	8%
Willingness	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

According to Table 3, it appears that the highest number of participants (90%) preferred to invite in the form of imperative. For example:

- 1) Please babies, sit down and eat your breakfast.
- 2) Sit down and eat your breakfast.
- 3) Come to eat.

Moreover, only 14 participants (equal to 8%) used the form of Yes/No questions when they invite their children and these are typical sentences:

- 1) Do you want to eat?
- 2) Children, are you hungry?
- 3) Kids, are you ready for breakfast?

In this situation only one participant (equal to 1%) preferred to invite in the form of declarative and also one participant (equal to 1%) used conditional strategy.

- 1) Hi, babies. Today we have a good breakfast. (declarative)
- 2) Children, if you are hungry come to eat your breakfast. (conditional)

In this situation, the speaker has more power than the hearer; but they are familiar with each other, so they tend to use direct invitation in the form of imperative. The reason behind this is

that the speaker and the hearer are in a close relationship and the speaker (a mother or a father) is in a higher power or position (relative power) than the hearer (children). Moreover, it seems that also the Yemeni EFL learners were greatly affected by mother tongue rules. They transferred many of the invitation strategies they have in Arabic, to make invitations in the target language. In other words, the Arabic language is transferred by Yemeni EFL learners from their mother tongue to make invitation strategies in English language, for example:

- 1) Babies, wash your hands and sit down.
- 2) Children, the breakfast is ready.

It can be seen from the above examples that, in addition to the illocutionary forces in the form of invitations, the structure of the sentences can be seen as in the form of orders, not invitations. In addition to the previous data in this situation, it is a clear case of pragmatic transfer in which the Yemeni EFL learners are transferring the Yemeni Arabs' tendency to attribute invitation behaviors to invite with their native language. Once again, expressions of politeness in this situation are used with low percentage. This result is also consistent with Ibrahim's (2012) findings which revealed that Egyptians used supportive moves or expressions of politeness to mitigate their directness more than Americans. This result may reflect the thinking of Yemeni learners as there is a strong relation between parents and their children, so they used the direct invitations without polite expressing in order to show solidarity and closeness between the members of the family.

Once again, negative pragmatic transfer does not exist, not only in the frequency of this response type, but also in its content.

Situation 4

You are a boss or manager. An applicant comes to your company for an interview. S/he looks very thirsty. You want to invite him/her for cup of drink. What would you say?

Table 4. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 4

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	6	5.8%	0	0.0%	6	4%
Declarative	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Imperative	35	34.0%	12	17.6%	47	28%
Conditional	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	19	18.5%	11	16.6%	30	17%
Yes/No questions	18	17.5%	25	36.8%	43	25%
Willingness	25	24.3%	20	29.0%	45	26%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

According to frequencies and percentage in Table 4, it appears that most of the participants failed to use an exact form of invitation as the native speakers of English. Therefore, 47 of the respondents (equal to 28%) of Yemeni learners preferred to invite in the form of imperative. They used sentences as the following:

- 1) Let's drink a cup of coffee.
- 2) Drink the water.

The second frequency is asking willingness strategy with 45 participants (equal to 26%) and this type of invitation can be considered as polite invitation, for example:

- 1) Would you like to drink something?
- 2) Would you like to drink coffee or water?

Moreover, (25%) of the participants chose the form of Yes/No questions when inviting other persons and these are some examples:

- 1) Do you want water?
- 2) Do you want to drink something?

Only (17%) of learners employed the form of Wh. questions when they invite.

- 1) What do you want to drink?

The rest of the participants which is equal to (4%) used the form of performative.

- 1) I want to invite you for a cup of coffee.
- 2) You look thirsty, would it be ok if you drink a cup of water.

It appears in situation 4 that the speaker has more power than the hearer; and they are not familiar with each other (a boss or a manager invites a new applicant to drink something). Most participants favored to be indirect (68%) when inviting unfamiliar low status people. Besides, it should be noted that the expressions used in this situation do not fit with a formal situation. Terms like "Would you like, could you please" should be increased greatly but unexpectedly the participants employed different strategies not related to formal situations.

In a similar study (Trong, 2012), the native speakers of English language employed more frequent polite expressing, such as "**please**". Whereas Yemeni EFL learners were found to be less frequent users of polite expressing. To be more specific, Yemenis accumulated 17 times of "please" representing 9% of their data. The possible explanations would be that the Yemeni EFL learners were greatly affected by the mother tongue. They transferred many terms they have in Arabic to make invitations in English. In other words, the Arabic language mode is transferred by the Yemeni EFL learners, from their mother tongue to invitations they make in English language.

Situation 5

You and your colleagues are sitting in front of the English Department. You are sharing a speech. One of your colleague's students is coming. You want to invite him to share you. What would you say?

Table 5. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 5

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Declarative	3	2.9%	0	0%	3	2%
Imperative	56	54%	34	50%	90	53%
Conditional	5	4.9%	0	0%	5	3%
Hoping	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	9	8.7%	2	2.9%	11	6%
Yes/No questions	19	18.4%	27	39.7%	46	27%
Willingness	11	10.7%	5	7.4%	16	9%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

Based on the data in Table 5, more than half of the participants 90 (equal to 53%) preferred to invite in the form of imperative. Some examples of their answers are as follows:

- 1) Hi. Come and share us.
- 2) Share us, please.
- 3) Please join us.

The second average is (27%) refers to the participants who chose the form of Yes/No questions to make invitation to others. For example:

- 1) Can you sit with us?
- 2) Do you like to talk with us?

3) Please, are you free?

Only (9%) of the participants used the form of asking willingness to make invitations. For example:

1) Would you like to sit with us?

In addition, (6%) of the participants preferred to invite in the form of Wh. questions. Only (3%) of the learners employed conditional form and (2%) used declarative form. For example:

1) Hi. Share us if you are free. (conditional)

2) Hi. We are taking about our graduation party. (declarative)

In this situation, the speaker and the hearer are in equal power and they are familiar with each other (a friend invites his classmate to share speech with) in order to show their friendliness.

According to the answers given to this situation, it can be observed that Yemeni learners preferred to use direct invitation strategies when they are familiar with each other and are equal in their status. The participants preferred to be direct (58%) when they invite their classmates. Their invitations were followed by some explanations according to the given situation. It is worth mentioning that the majority of these direct invitations did not mitigate or precede by mitigator words, such as: *"sorry, excuse me, please"* or calling the student by his/her own name as a marker of politeness, to soften the directness of these invitations, and to claim rapport.

Moreover, it can be seen that the participants failed to avoid the directness of their invitations. So, the more indirect a speech act is the more polite it becomes (Huang 115).

Situation 6

You and your male neighbor have a short conversation about the game you watched last night on TV. You want to invite him to come over sometime and watch a game with you. What would you say?

Table 6. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 6

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	%	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	6	5.8%	1	1.5%	7	4%
Declarative	7	6.8%	3	4.4%	10	6%
Imperative	44	35.9%	25	36.8%	69	40%
Conditional	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	7	6.8%	7	10.3%	14	8%
Yes/No questions	30	29.2%	25	36.8%	55	32%
Willingness	9	15.5%	7	10.3%	16	10%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

Table 6 shows that Yemeni learners used the highest percent in the form of imperative (40%) and Yes/No questions (32%) and they used the following sentences as in the following examples:

1) Come to my home to watch TV. (Imperative)

2) Let's watch the game together. (Imperative).

3) Do you like to watch TV at my home? (Yes/No questions)

Moreover, (10%) of the participants chose the form of asking willingness to invite their neighbors and they used the following sentences:

1) Would you like to watch the match at my home?

2) Would you like to come with me and watch the match together?

In addition, (8%) of the participants preferred to invite in the form of Wh. questions. For example:

- 1) Why do not we watch the game together?
- 2) How about watching the match at my home?

In situation 6, only (6%) of the participants used the form of declarative to invite their neighbors. The following sentences are an example:

- 1) I will enjoy if you come with me to watch the game.
- 2) This evening will be an interesting match.

The rest of the participants (4%) chose the form performative, as follows:

- 1) I want you to watch the match together at my home.
- 2) I would like to invite you to watch the game together.

According to this situation, the speaker and the hearer are in equal power and they are familiar with each other. Therefore, most of the participant's invitations are made referent to their friends and family members with whom they do not feel the necessity of mitigating their invitations as much as when they communicate with strangers or interlocutors in the position of power. This result is also consistent with Amelia's (2015) findings which revealed that the social distance scale, status scale, and formality scale affect the realization of speech acts of invitation. It can be concluded that, the learners made their invitation strategies based on their mother tongue style using mitigators to soften their invitation strategies because, in their mother tongue, direct strategies can be considered as polite and it shows solidarity and closeness.

Situation 7

You are preparing to go on a trip to Aden. You want to invite your friend to join you. What would you say?

Table 7. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 7

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	6	5.8%	4	5.9%	10	6%
Declarative	14	13.6%	2	2.9%	16	9%
Imperative	24	23.3%	16	23.5%	40	23%
Conditional	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	7	6.8%	9	13.3%	16	9%
Yes/No questions	32	31.1%	25	36.8%	57	34%
Willingness	20	19.4%	12	17.6%	32	19%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

As shown in Table 7, (34%) of the participants invited their classmates in the form of Yes/No questions. These are typical examples:

- 1) Do you want to join me to Aden?
- 2) I have a trip to Aden. Can you come with me?
- 3) Are you ready to join me to Aden?

Furthermore, (23%) of the Yemeni learners chose the form of imperative to invite their friends.

- 1) Let's go to Aden.
- 2) Join me to Aden, please.
- 3) Please come with me to Aden.

In addition, (19%) of participants used the form of asking willingness to invite. For example:

- 1) Would you like to join me in a trip to Aden?
- 2) Would you like to visit Aden with me?

In this situation also, the same percent of the participants chose the form of declarative (9%) and Wh questions (9%). The following are some examples:

- 1) I am going to Aden and it will be a nice trip if you come with me. (declarative)
- 2) What do you think if we go to Aden? (Wh. questions)

Only (6%) of the participants used the form of performative when they invite their friends. For example:

- 1) I have a trip to Aden and I want to invite you to come with me. Please
- 2) I want you to come with me to Aden.

In this situation, the speaker and the hearer are in equal power and they are familiar with each other (a person invites his/her friend to go on a trip to Aden) in order to show their friendliness and familiarity.

The result of this situation revealed that Yemeni EFL learners tend to use various strategies with a majority of indirect strategies, unlike native English speakers who employed direct invitations when inviting closed and familiar people as in (Amelia,2015 22). The participants made (62%) of their responses by indirectness. Although of the interlocutors in this situation are in an equal power, participants employed the highest number of indirect strategies, unlike the previous situations. This means that Yemeni EFL learners do not concentrate on relative power and they do not have a specific strategy to invite others. They used strategies that they feel it is suitable for this situation.

Situation 8

You have a birthday party with a specific time. You want to invite your close friend to join it. What would you say?

Table 8. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 8

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	10	9.7%	12	17.6%	22	13%
Declarative	19	18.4%	5	7.4%	24	14%
Imperative	47	45.7%	22	32.3%	69	40%
Conditional	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Yes/No questions	19	18.4%	18	26.5%	37	22%
Willingness	8	7.8%	11	16.2%	19	11%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

As shown in Table 8, (40%) of the participants preferred to make invitation in the form of imperative. They used the following types of invitations:

- 1) Please, come to my birthday party.
- 2) You have to come to my party, please.

In addition, it can be seen from the table above that (22%) of the participants used the form of Yes/No questions to invite their friends. For example:

- 1) Can you come to my birthday party? Please
- 2) Do you want to attend my birthday party?

It appears also that 24 of the participants (equal to 14%) favored the declarative strategy to invite

their classmates. For example:

- 1) I will be happy to see you in my party.
- 2) We have a birthday party. It would be better if you're coming.

The result also revealed that the Yemeni EFL learners tend to use the strategy of performative with (13%) of their responses. For example:

- 1) My friend, I want to invite you to my birthday party.
- 2) We have a good party and I would like to invite you to join us.

In addition, 19 participants (equal to 11%) decided to choose the form of asking willingness. Some of the sentences used are the following:

- 1) Would you like to come to my birthday party?
- 2) Would you please come to my party?

In this situation (a learner invites his classmate to attend a birthday party). The speaker and the hearer are in equal power and they are familiar with each other. Once again, the participants preferred to be direct when inviting their classmates. Cutting (2008) states that social distance can provide speakers power and authority and make it less dominant to use indirect speech acts (p. 18). In this situation the participants tended to be direct when they make invitation because they are familiar with each other; they are in the same status; and there is no power or authority. However, if the social distance between speaker and hearer is not too close, then the speaker will tend to use indirect speech acts of inviting. In this situation, the learners used invitation in the form of imperative. Leech (1983) argued that it is possible in the same propositional content "to increase the degree of politeness by using a more and more indirect kind of illocution" (p. 108). This happened because the speakers feel that they should not apply the politeness principle with hearers who are close.

Situation 9

You are the boss of a big company. You want to invite the staff to get a lunch at a restaurant. What would you say?

Table 9. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 9

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	33	32.0%	20	29.4%	53	31%
Declarative	4	3.9%	1	1.5%	5	3%
Imperative	44	41.8%	19	28%	63	37%
Conditional	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Yes/No questions	16	16.5%	18	26.4%	34	20%
Willingness	6	5.8%	10	14.7%	16	9%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

As seen in Table 9 above, Yemeni learners used different invitation strategies. It appears that 63 of the participants (37%) preferred to invite in the form of imperative and (31%) in the form of performative. These are some typical sentences:

- 1) Let's go to the restaurant to get lunch. (suggestion in the form of imperative)
- 2) I would like to invite you for lunch in the restaurant. (performative)

In this situation, only (20%) of the participants chose the form of Yes/No questions to invite their staff. The following are some examples:

- 1) Can you come to get lunch with me?
- 2) Can you go with me to get a lunch at a restaurant?
- 3) Do you want to have lunch at a restaurant?

Only (9%) of the participants used the form of asking willingness to invite, as follows:

- 1) Would you like to have lunch in a restaurant?
- 2) Would you like to have lunch with me?

The rest of the participants chose the form of declarative (3%), for example:

- 1) I will be glad if we get lunch together.

It appears in situation 9 where the speaker has more power than the hearer, and they are familiar (a boss or a manager invites his staff to get lunch at a restaurant together) that most of the participants prefer to use direct invitations (71%) rather than indirect ones. In this situation, it is found that the Yemeni EFL learners continued to be influenced by the cultural norms of their mother tongue. Once again, the preference of direct strategies by the Yemeni participants cannot be taken as a reason that they are less polite than the English speakers. Blum-Kulka (1989) argued that the two notions are not necessarily in parallel dimensions, rather they are perceived to be different from each other. Blum-Kulka (1989) also stated that most indirect strategies can't be perceived as the most polite ones (p. 31). Another important point which is related to this discussion can be that, indirectness is considered as polite but its social meaning may be different, depending on cultures.

Situation 10

At the end of the course, your class holds a party. You would like to invite your teacher to join your party. What would you say?

Table 10. Distribution of Frequencies and Percentage of Invitation Strategies in Situation 10

Strategy	Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Education		Total	
	F	%	F	%	Frequencies	Percentage
Performative	13	12.5%	6	8.8%	19	11%
Declarative	31	30.8%	6	8.8%	37	22%
Imperative	22	21.1%	10	14.7%	32	20%
Conditional	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Hoping	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Wh. Questions	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Yes/No questions	24	23.1%	34	50.0%	58	34%
Willingness	13	12.5%	12	17.6%	25	13%
Total	103	100%	68	100%	171	100%

Table 10 shows that (34%) of the participants preferred to invite their teacher in the form of Yes/No questions, as follows:

- 1) Do you mind joining our party?
- 2) Can you attend our party Please?

Furthermore, (22%) of the Yemeni learners chose the form of declarative when they invite their teacher, and the following are some typical examples:

- 3) Our party will be nice if you come.
- 4) Dr. the party will be nice if you come.

In addition, (20%) of the participants favored the form of imperative using some politeness markers, such as "please" to invite their teacher. For example:

- 5) Please Dr. come to our party.
- 6) Come to our party. Please.
- 7) Dr. please share us in the party.

In this situation also, (13%) of the Yemeni learners used the form of asking willingness to invite their teacher. For example:

- 1) Would you like to share us our party, please?
- 2) Would you like to join us in our party?

It also appears in this situation that (11%) of the participants chose the form of performative and they used the following forms of invitations:

- 1) It is my pleasure to invite you to join us in our party.
- 2) Teacher, I would like to invite you to join us in our graduation party.

In this situation where the speaker has lower power than the hearer; they are familiar with each other. The participants employed five forms of strategies with nearly equal for both direct and indirect strategies. Interrogative (Yes/No questions) form was mostly used by participants, which were considered as impolite to the higher closed invitee; but in the Yemeni context, it can be considered as polite and it shows solidarity between speaker and hearer. According to Pateda (1990), "The language user social status position associated with the level of education and kind of the job" (p. 58). Therefore, in order to show respect to the person invited; the form of declarative or performative would be better if used by participants. It seems that the participants only incorporated linguistics forms by translating their native language into the target language, without considering the socio-pragmatic context to maintain successful communication. To communicate with higher status people means to employ politeness involving certain pragma-linguistic than just having grammar knowledge. In other words, it is expected that the inviter attempts to use a high degree of politeness to soften the face threatening act, but in the data, the use of polite expressions is still in less frequent in this situation.

Yemeni EFL learners believe that the use of interrogative invitations without polite expression is enough to save face threatening act. The respondents can also be influenced by their mother tongue role and perhaps the weakness in their knowledge.

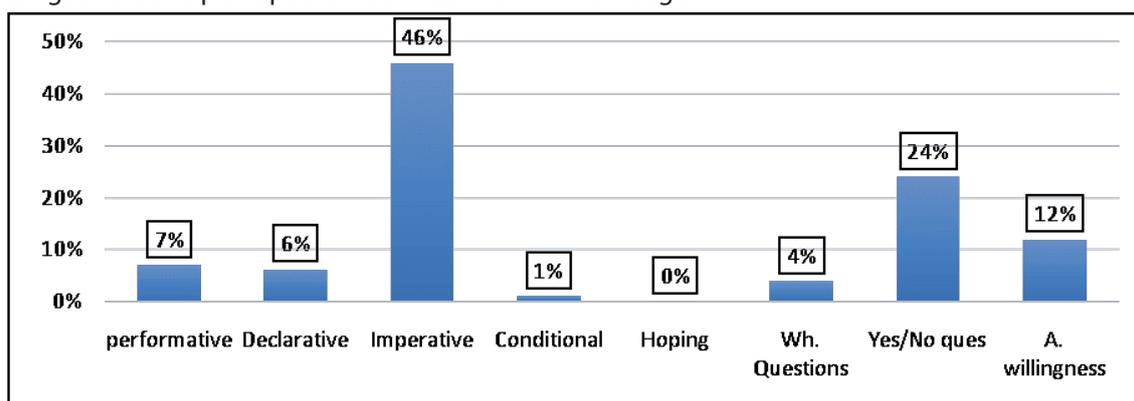


Figure 1: Distribution of Percentage of Invitation Making in All Situations

It appears from Figure 1, and according to the previous discussion, the two most favored strategies Yemeni EFL learners employed when making invitation in all situations were imperatives followed by Yes/ No questions. However, they used imperatives (46%) and Yes/No questions (24%). It also appears that no one of the Yemeni EFL learners used the form of hoping.

5. Conclusion

Invitation is a type of speech act which reflects the actualization of an illocutionary intention of a speaker through utterances, either spoken or written. The speech act of invitation emerges when someone asks somebody else to attend a kind of occasion, usually the one that is hosted by the inviter. The focus of this study was to investigate invitation strategies as produced by Yemeni EFL learners, in addition to the use of politeness expressions.

In terms of invitation strategies, Yemeni EFL learners preferred to be direct in the use of the speech act of invitation making, with highest frequency of imperative strategy followed by Yes/No questions strategy. This might reveal a part of the influence of their mother tongue on their responses. They are aware as well as that direct invitations are generally acceptable in their culture.

According to the results of this study, it can be noticed that the learners translate the utterances in their mother tongue into the target language without pondering the differences between the two languages in sentence patterns and word order. Although these results are somehow unexpected from the perspective of politeness if the researcher considers the common beliefs about Yemeni EFL learners, which views Yemeni EFL learners as being more pleasant and emotional. Therefore, it is not only a matter of acquiring the grammar of the language in terms of competence but also the actual use of the language in terms of performance.

Thus, it can be concluded that miscommunication often occurs due to the incident that EFL learners make use of the rules of their mother tongue to express intention in the other culture without realizing the differences between these two cultures. Therefore, learners should acquire the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic rules of the foreign or second language to avoid them to use the rules of their mother tongue, to express intention in the other culture, and their knowledge will enable them to communicate effectively with native speakers of the English language.

The current study investigates invitation strategies as produced by Yemeni EFL learners. The study provides a starting point for further research in the area of speech acts in Yemeni situation. Therefore, the researchers introduce the following suggestions for further research:

1. Future studies should compare invitation strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners and native speakers of English language, to discover similarities and/or differences between the strategies used by the two groups.
2. Future studies should be carried by Yemeni researchers to discover and identify politeness markers that can be used to mitigate and soften invitation strategies in English language and Yemeni Arabic.
3. Exploring the types of speech acts in Yemeni Arabic that might cause misunderstanding, such as, apology, refusals, offer and complain..

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