

# A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC STUDY OF OFFER STRATEGIES MANIPULATED BY IRAQI DIALECT SPEAKERS

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## ABSTRACT

*The current study presents a socio-pragmatic analysis to the strategies manipulated by Iraqi dialect speakers for expressing the speech act of offer in interactional situations. The present study hypothesizes that (1) The manipulation of Iraqi dialect speakers to the direct offer strategies is better than the indirect ones,(2)Most of Iraqi dialect speakers tend to perform direct offer imperatively, and (3) Most of Iraqi dialect speakers utilize questions for showing indirect offer in interactional situations .The study basically aims at (1) analyzing the speech act of offer theoretically within the theories of Speech Act and Politeness, and (2) investigating the most common strategies performed by Iraqi dialect speakers in discursal activities. To achieve the aims of the study and verify or refute its hypotheses, a sample of 20 Iraqi dialect speakers, chosen randomly from Diwaniya province, is involved to issue acts of offer (using their Iraqi colloquial dialects) to five interactional situations written in Arabic.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Humans use language to convey information, attitudes, and establish and maintain social relationships through communication. In interaction, the communicators' expectations about people, events, places, etc., play an important role in the production and perception of linguistic utterances. The choice of linguistic expressions to convey certain communicative goals is governed by social norms and the participant's assessment of situations.

Speakers usually utilize a variety of speech acts to achieve their communicative goals in interaction. Such acts are warning, invitation, greeting, and offer. A speech act is an utterance which delivers a function in communication (e.g., apology, threatening, and offer). In this study, the performance of offer by Iraqi dialect speakers is investigated.

Unlike speech acts of refusal, threatening, and warning which are viewed as face threatening, the speech act of offer is beneficial to the addressee, and

reflects the speaker's compliance with the addressee's wants and desires and maintain his/her face wants that s/he is accepted in the society.

The speech act of offer takes the form various pragmatic strategies in interaction. Some of them are direct, whereas some others are indirect. For the direct ones, the speaker defines his/her intention explicitly. This sort of strategies is typified by either employing overt performative verb of offer declaratively or using other implicit performative imperatively. In both cases, the speaker captures the speaker's intention directly without any implication. As far as indirect offer, speakers may utilize interrogatives, elliptical expressions, and 'if conditionals' strategies for defining their intentions. In this respect, the context in which the utterances performed plays a crucial role in eliciting the speaker's intended meaning. Moreover, the recipient resorts to apply inferences to decode the speaker's intended message.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF OFFER

People who interact with one another tend to collaborate and help each other as a token of their social interaction. In communication, an offer is the first point of making contact with the other person. This offer may come in form of polite gestures or greetings. The person to whom the offer is intended may either accept it or reject it. The person may accept the offer or reject it depending on a number of issues among them being the understanding of both parties and how each of them carry themselves around. Offers should be given in a conducive environment so as to encourage the other party to reply in a positive manner. After the offer, the parties may expect certain roles to be fulfilled depending on the nature of rapport between the parties.

## 3. OFFER AS SOCIAL ACT

Any form of communication is considered a social act because language is considered a social institution. According to Searle, language is the basic social institution because it forms the foundation for all other social institutions. For communication to take place, there has to be willingness by one of the parties to initiate the conversation at the very initial level. As such, one of the parties makes an offer of communication to the other, if this offer is accepted, the parties then get into correspondence. Essentially, there has to be an offer from one party to another in order to facilitate the commencement of communication. The concept of offer, therefore, plays a major role in the continuity of social engagements as it forms the basis on what other social acts take place. Making an offer enables the party to be able to engage the other in social activities.

## 4. THE SPEECH ACT OF OFFER

Scholars and pragmaticians have dedicated considerable endeavours in defining speech acts. Some of them, like Austin, showed the interest of dealing with speech acts in term of the verbs (performative verbs) employed in the sentence used that they could be either explicit or implicit. In other words, it is the verb performed which spells out the speaker's intended meaning. According to Austin's theory of speech act, the speaker can either use explicit performative verb, like

"offer", to issue explicit offering or other performative verb (implicit performative verb) for issuing implicit offering. Consequently, the recipient can elicit the speaker's intended intention via the verbs utilized in his/her proffered sentence. For instance, one can say "I offer you a cup of tea" (explicit offer), or "I can get you some juice or water if you want to" (implicit offer). Austin's theory of speech act is strongly criticized by Searle who refuses the ideas of the verbs in labeling the speaker's intended meaning. Furthermore; Searle bases his speech act theory on utterances rather than verbs (Lyon, 1981, 173).

According to Yule (1996: 47), a speech act is defined as action performed via utterances encompassing *three dimensions*: 'locutionary act' (the act of producing meaningful utterances), 'illocutionary act' (the communicative intention of the participant by producing the utterances), and 'illocutionary force' (the actual communicative value of the illocutionary act). The illocutionary force could be apology, agreement, praise, offer...etc. Furthermore, when the interactant performs illocutionary act, s/he places upon the recipient. Consequently, the recipient could be happy, annoyed, surprised ...etc. after receiving the illocutionary force. This communicative effect is termed as *perlocutionary act* (Yule, 1996, 49).

### 4.1. Classifications of Offer

#### 4.1.1. Offer as a Commissive Act

Austin (1962) was the first to give the formulation of what is called Speech Act Theory. He classifies illocutionary acts into five categories on the basis of the illocutionary forces of performative verbs 'i.e., verbs that denote the types of speech acts' (Austin, 1962:150- 63). These five categories are:

1. *Verdictives*: They are typified by giving a verdict by a jury (i.e., estimate, evaluate, judge, convict, rule, etc).
2. *Exercitives*: They are typified by exercising powers, rights or influence i.e., (instruct, resign, warn, etc.).
3. *Commissives*: They are typified by committing the speaker to some future course of an action (i.e., threat, promise, **offer**, etc.).

4. *Behabitives*: They are typified by adopting of an attitude and some social behaviour (e.g., apologize, welcome, criticize, thank, wish, etc).
5. *Expositives*: They are typified by clarifying of reasons or arguments. This function of SAs can be identified through the occurrence of some performative verbs like (view, conclude, state, argue, revise, tell, etc.).

Following Austin’s taxonomy of performative verbs, the speech act of offer belongs to the *Commissives*, because when a speaker initiates an offer, s/he undertakes the responsibility for doing future act which benefits the offeree. This classification is also valid in other languages like Arabic .In Arabic, for example, the commissive verbs are known as “افعال العهود” (acts of covenants).They are similar to the English commissive verbs in sense these verbs denote the

illocutionary force of the utterance performed. Such Arabic verbs include: "يقسم" (swear), "يعاهد" (convent), and "يعرض" (offer) (Hasan and Al Sulaiman 1998:19-28).These verbs are also used in Arabic to commit the speaker to doing something to some future act. This leads us to a point that the speech act of offer is related to the class of commissives in both languages: English and Arabic. Not being completely happy with Austin's original classification of illocutionary acts into five basic categories on the basis of performative verbs, Searle (1977: 10-16) proposes an alternative taxonomy of illocutionary acts consisting of five categories of general functions performed by speech acts:

1. *Declarations*: e. g. excommunicating, christening.
2. *Representatives*: e.g. asserting, agreeing.
3. *Expressives*: e.g. thanking, apologizing.
4. *Directives*: e.g. ordering, requesting.
5. *Commissives*: e. g. promising, offering.

Yule (1996: 55) summarizes the five general functions of speech acts with their key features as shown in table no. (1). Following to Searle’s taxonomy, the speech act of offer belongs to the *commissives*, as in Austin’s classification of speech acts.The direction of fit is world-to-words i.e., the speaker wants the world to be changed to fit his words.

SA Type	Direct of fit	S = speaker , x = situation
<b>Table (1): The Five General Functions of Speech Acts (Yule, 1996: 55)</b>		
<i>Expressive</i>	Make words fit the world	S utters X
<i>Directives</i>	Make the world fit words	S wants X
<i>Commissives</i>	Make the world fit words	S intends X

#### 4.1.2. Offer as a Commissive-Directive Act

In a response to Searle’s and Austin’s classification, Hancher (1979:7) assumes that Searle’s taxonomy is tighter and more consistent than Austin’s. Nevertheless, Hancher stresses that both *commissives* and *directives* involve cooperation and could be combined in one group named as *conditionals*. According to this view, the speech act of offer is treated as a commissive direct act which conditionally requires two parties to act, the speaker and the hearer looks towards the completion of this act in some response by the hearer. The effect of all this is the cooperative illocutionary act. The idea of merging the two categories (commissives and directives) into one group by Hancher

is somehow similar to Searle’s proposal (1979: 14) to combine these two categories and relate them under a unified category (through directives are hearer-centered and commissives are speaker-centered).

#### 4.2. Pragmatic Strategies for Showing Offer

##### 4.2.1. Direct Offer

This category includes two main strategies given hereunder.

##### 1. Explicit Offering

This strategy can be formed when a speaker attempts to define his/her illocutionary force as

belonging to a specific category (Leech,1983,181).Sometimes , interactants assign the explicitness to their offerings by employing the use of the performative verb of ‘offer’ declaratively. For example:

(1)

a. *Sir, I am offering you assistance.*

b. *My manager offers me a day off*

## 2. Implicit Offering

Implicit offering is achieved through utterances that have no overt performative expressions, and the illocutionary force of the utterance is interpreted pragmatically (Leech, 1983, 184).According to this strategy; offering can be achieved basically by means of imperatives. Consider the following demonstrated examples:

(2)

a. *Have another cup of coffee.*

b. *Have a drink.*

c. *Sir, let me help you.*

Clearly, none of these offering utterances represented above includes explicit performative expressions. They are all instances of implicit performative offerings, i.e., they perform an action. The syntactic form of the utterances above is *imperative*. Normally, imperatives are used for showing *command* or *order*. Pragmatically speaking, the act of direct offer (implicit performative) can be utilized imperatively.

To sum up the direct offering strategies, the act offer can be expressed directly either by using explicit performative verb (offer) declaratively or implicit performative imperatively.

### 4.2.2. Indirect Offer

Indirect offer can be expressed via various pragmatic strategies using different syntactic formats. Some of these strategies are:

## 1. Questioning Hearer’s Intention:

In this strategy, the recipient is supposed to be the performer of the action, i.e., s/he either accepts or rejects the offer proposed. Consider the following suggested utterances below:

(3)

a. *Will you have a drink?*

b. *Do not you like another cup of tea?*

c. *Won’t you have another piece of cake?*

In these examples, the speaker can produce offerings interrogatively to get the recipient accept or reject the offers. Hence, the execution of the offer is determined by the recipient’s decision on whether s/he accepts or rejects the offer.

## 2. Elliptical Expressions

In this strategy, interactants commonly use incomplete sentence for expressing offers. This is strategy is frequently used informally among friends or family members. According to Quirk et al (1985:851) elliptical expressions have messages furnished by the context. In this respect, the context plays a significant role in interpreting the initiator’s intention. Consider the following expression:

(4)

*Two friends are having coffee together. One of them offers his mate another cup of coffee saying:*

- *Another cup. (It contextually means: I am offering you another cup of coffee).*

## 3. If – Conditional Strategy

According to this strategy, the speech act of offer is conditionally dependent upon the recipient’s acceptance. In other words, the offer cannot be achieved unless the offeree accepts what is offered. This strategy is marked by the use of ‘if conditional clause’. Consider the following examples:

(5)

- *There are biscuits on the sideboard if you want them.*  
(Austin,1961,210-212)

- *If it amuses you, I will tell you another joke.*  
(Offering telling joke)

### 4.3. Offer and Politeness

#### 4.3.1 Offer as a Convivial Act

Leech (1983: 104-105) typifies illocutionary functions according to the notion of politeness. He attempts to explain how illocutionary functions are related to the social goal of maintaining comity. Leech (1983: 104-107) distinguishes the following four types the competitive, the convivial, the conflictive, and the collaborative functions. The present study focuses on convivial class since it encompasses the act of offer. The convivals involve acts in which the illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal. In addition to offering, convivals include praising, inviting, thanking and congratulating. All these acts are intrinsically polite and take the form of positive politeness asking for opportunities for comity. As with thanking or greeting, offering somebody something means or involves that the speaker adheres to the listener's positive face.

#### 4.3.2 Offer as a Face Saving Act

Politeness, as a commonsense notion, has a considerable history which goes back to the sixteenth century (Eelen, 2001,i).In this respect, it refers to 'good manners' and 'being nice to people' , i.e. having the quality of proper behavioural conduct which can be both verbal and/or nonverbal. For Yule (1996:60), politeness is a means utilized to show the awareness of the individual's face. The notion of 'face' is developed by Brown and Levinson's (1978:19) and (1987:103) theory of linguistic behaviour to refer to the public self-image of a person. It is the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987: 66), there are certain acts which are intrinsically risky (face-threatening acts) because they run in contrary to the recipient's 'wants' or expectations and, thus, they might cause impoliteness. Such acts are (threatening, disagreeing, refusal).Whereas, some other acts are

intrinsically favoured (face-saving acts) and are preferred to be used in interaction because they strengthen the sociability and achieve politeness. Such acts are (praise, complement, and offer).Since issuing the speech act of offer meets the recipient's want and runs in accordance with his/her expectation, it is face saving act. In other words, the act of offer is normally undertaken for the benefit of the recipient, and hence it enhances the sociability between the participants and leads to politeness (ibid).

## 5. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1. Method of data collection

The data of the work have been collected by means of a questionnaire submitted to twenty Iraqi dialect speakers chosen randomly from various places in Diwaniya province. They almost share the same regional dialect.

#### 5.1.1. The questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of twenty interactional situations designed to elicit the speech act of offer .These situations are set to be familiar to the Iraqi life and culture. Since the study aims at collecting responses which are as close to naturally occurring in daily interaction as possible, it seems more realistic and valid to ask respondents to issue offerings using their colloquial Arabic. Thus, most of the participants responded to the situations, which are themselves written in Arabic, with their Diwani dialect (Iraqi Arabic).

#### 5.1.2. Participants

The total number of the participants involved in the practical part of the present study is twenty Iraqi dialect speakers chosen randomly from various places in Diwaniya province. They almost share the same regional dialect. Their ages ranged from 25 to 40 years.

### 5.2. Analysis

After collecting the data, the participants' responses to the five interactional situations are analyzed carefully. It appears that the actual responses to the test items are (100) distributed between direct and indirect offer strategies. The researcher has found that a

percentage of (71%), out of the overall responses, goes to the direct strategies. Whereas, a percentage of only (29%) of the participants' responses goes to the indirect ones. This means that Iraqi dialect speakers have greater

tendency in utilizing direct offer compared to the indirect ones in interactions. Table (2) illustrates the Iraqi dialect speakers' performance of offer with percentages:

**Table (2): Participants' Overall Performance in the Test**

No. of Participants	No. of Test Items	Participants' Responses	Total	Direct Strategies	Indirect Strategies
20	5	100		71	29
				%71	%29

Offer strategies have been previously discussed in (3.2) in terms of direct and indirect ones. As a reminder and for analytical purposes, these strategies are recalled below:

**1. DIRECT OFFER :**

- *Explicit Offering*
- *Implicit Offering* (it's marked by a syntactic form of imperative with no overt performative verb of 'offer')

**2. INDIRECT OFFER :**

- *Questioning Hearer's Intention*
- *Elliptical Expressions*
- *If Conditionals*

Concerning the direct strategies used by the participants for showing offers, the researcher has found that most of the participants make use of implicit performatives with a syntactic realization of imperatives; whereas some others make use of explicit performatives declaratively. This actually gives the impression that the participants are aware of the direct strategies for showing agreement. Below are some examples of the participants' responses to the test items:

- *išreb bešed kuub niskaafe exuuya, tere iifuutek* (Have another cup of Nescafe that you should not miss, brother).
- *bes xeliini asa šdek.* (Just let me help you).
- *istariiH išreb čaai* (Have a seat for tea!)  
*ešriđ šeliyk Hel lhaai ilmuškilā belki yifiidek.* (I 'm offering you solution to your problem. It might be beneficial.)

Table no. (3) below shows the participants' overall performance to the direct offer strategies with percentages:

**Table (3): The Participants' Performance of Direct Offer Strategies**

Direct Strategy Types	Strategy Construction	Frequencies	Percentage
<i>Implicit Performatives</i>	<i>Imperatives</i>	53	74%
<i>Explicit Performatives</i>	<i>Declaratives</i>	18	26%

As for the indirect strategies for showing offer, the researcher has found that the participants vary in term of using sub-strategies and constructions for showing offer. For example, percentages of (55%) out of the participants' indirect offerings take a syntactic form of question, (28%) goes to the 'elliptical expressions', and (17%) goes to the 'if conditionals' construction respectfully. Below are some selected responses manipulated by the Iraqi dialect speakers to the test items with indirect offers:

- *egder asaʔdek btʃliiH itaayer?* (Can I help you fixing the tire?)
- *teHtaaj ?ey musaʔfedə?* (Do you need any help?)
- *ekiid ʃijebek ilʃeʃiir, beʃed glaʃ Hebiibi?* ( You certainly liked the juice. Another glass, darling?)
- *beʃed?* (again?)
- *aaxʔilkum ʃuurə suwiya ʃebaab?*(shall I take a picture of you together,guys?)
- *iʔaa teHtaaj?ey musaʔfedə bes guli wʔaani bxdimtek.*(Should you need any help,just let me know)
- *iʔaa tHib asaʔdek bHel muʃkiltek bes guli.*(If you like solution to your problem, just tell me.)
- *iʔaa ʃijebek ilʃeʃiir xeliini ejiiblek beʃed.*(If you liked the juice,let me get you some more).

Table no. (4) illustrates the participants' overall performance to the direct offer strategies with percentages:

**Table (4): The Participants' Performance of Indirect Offer Strategies**

Indirect Strategies Total Usages	Strategy Construction	Frequencies	Percentage
29	<i>Questions</i>	16	55%
	<i>Elliptical Expressions</i>	8	28%
	<i>If conditionals</i>	5	17%

Evidently, the statistical analyses reveal that the participants' use of direct offer strategies is higher than theirs with in direct ones. The participants' total direct strategies percentage is reached to (71%), whereas their overall performance with indirect strategies for expressing offer is reached to (29%). Thus, the first hypothesis which reads: *The manipulation of Iraqi dialect speakers to the direct offer strategies is better than the indirect ones* is validated. Within the direct strategies, the statistical analyses also reveal that the participants' manipulations of imperatives (implicit performative strategies) are higher than the declarative ones (explicit performative strategies) for showing offer. A percentage of (74%) goes to the imperative strategies, whereas only (26 %) goes to the declarative ones for showing the speech act of offer. Hence, this also validates the second hypothesis of the study which reads: *Most of Iraqi dialect speakers tend to perform direct*

*offer imperatively.* As for the indirect strategies, it is revealed that most of the participants' resort to questions for showing offers in interactions. They might consider questions as polite strategy for showing offer in interactions. So, a percentage of (55%) goes to indirect strategies of *questions* for showing offer, whereas only 28% goes to the *elliptical expressions* ,and (17%) goes to the *if conditionals* ones. This also verifies the third hypotheses of the study which reads: *Most of Iraqi dialect speakers utilize questions for showing indirect offers in interactional situations.*

### 5.3. Conclusion

The conclusions arrived at in this study can be summarized as follows:

- 1- Iraqi dialect speakers are tactful in using the speech act of 'offer' in communication .They

are aware of the most possible strategies the act may take in interaction.

- 2- Most of Iraqi dialect speakers use direct offers considering them as polite acts and proffered to be expressed ostensibly in interactions. Their manipulation to the direct offer strategies is better than the indirect ones. Culturally speaking, directness in Arabic is seen as more polite than indirectness in commissives.
- 3- It can be concluded that Iraqi dialect speakers show a great preference for utilizing *imperatives* as the most effective strategies for expressing offers in interaction.
- 4- Most of Iraqi dialect speakers resort to use syntactic form of *questions* for showing indirect offers in interactional situations.

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