

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning and Threatening in situational Dialogues

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لإنشاء كلامي التحذير والتهديد**

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Abstract

This paper is concerned with investigating the use of warning and threatening by Iraqi EFL learners. It concentrates on the pragmatic strategies and linguistic forms by which these two acts are realized. It proves that these learners are inclined to use certain strategies in preference to others. It is composed of three sections, the first of which is concerned with the distinction between these two acts. The second one deals with the pragmatic strategies and linguistic forms of these acts. The third section is concerned with the empirical study of these acts.

.1.1 Warning vs. Threatening

Warning and threatening are such interrelated SAs that it is not easy for EFL learners to recognize and, in consequence, problems will arise once manipulated by these learners. Evaluated as well- intentioned acts, warning utterances, e.g. Be careful, are invitational behavioural patterns that are basically devised for the interest of the H. Roughly defined, warning is a statement or an event telling somebody that something bad or unpleasant will take place in the future so that they can avoid it (Hornby, 2010:1735).

Kreckle (cited in Taylor and Cameron, 1987:57) describes warning as an action that is only created in terms of interaction by claiming that, "warnings in general don't exist .What counts as warning depends on rules evolved and sustained in concrete interaction within social

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(12)

groups”(Taylor and Cameron,1987:57), a proposal which runs counter to Searle’s constitutive rules. In fact, this definition is more appealing and comprehensive because it foregrounds the dynamic nature of this SA at the expense of its static and solid properties that take the back seat in shaping it in social interactions.

By contrast, threatening is intended to cause harm and inconvenience on the behalf ofthe hearerif s/he does not comply with the speaker’s wishes. Clashing with polite norms and conventions consistent in any given language, threats are not expressed publically and explicitly and, therefore, are not formed explicitly. However, there exist very limited situations, as in upbringing children, in which the SA of threatening is issued explicitly. Explicit threats are also realized in response to threat acts. For illustration, consider the following exchange :

(1) A: *I’ll don’t punch you on the nose.*
B: *Don’t threaten me* (Stubbs, 1983:156).

Though hostile, undesirable actions, threats aremostlyemployed positively bymanagers, officers, bosses, teachers and the like to carry out their aims because they are effective acts that ultimately come up with useful outcomes. Unfortunately, this act is sometimes utilized negatively by thieves and criminals to implementtheir wicked, malicious and destructive intentions. In consequence, the sentence “Your money or your life” uttered bya criminal, who is armed with a loaded pistol, to a poor man represents a threat so that the former takes the latter’s money and leaves him bankrupt. Moreover, threats are used for other purposes--to vent anger, to attract attention, to save face, to cause a desired effect, to challenge authority, to provide humour, etc.(Quirk,et al.,1985:933;Allan ,1986:196;Fraser ,1998: 160).

According to Leech(1983), warning is ambiguous between directives and assertives because it either aims at eliciting some action on the behalf of the H or it tells him that something unpleasant will happen to him. Nonetheless, most linguists consider it a directive SA because it is ultimately seen as a message of “not doing” essence. On the other hand, threatening is described as a hybrid SA;Searle (1969)accommodates it within directives whereas Leech (1983) includes it with commissives because it is speakeroriented act. Regarded as promises that are not preferred by the addressee, threats don’t compel the speakers to carry them out and, in consequence, the threateners’ intentions are liable to change, and that is why threats can be performedby nonhuman beings,

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(13)

e.g. Clouds can threaten heavy rains (Searle and Vanderveken (1985:139).

1.2. Aims of the Study:

This study aims at:

1. Detecting the learners' abilities to distinguish between warning and threatening, particularly when they take on similar structures in conversational interactions.
2. Investigating Iraqi EFL learners' ability to use strategies of expressing the SAs of warning and threatening in dialogues. This aim implies investigating the ability of the learners to vary their options of the kind of strategies in conformity with the socio-cultural considerations of situations.
3. Identifying the most common linguistic expressions of warning and threatening these learners use in dialogues.

1.3 Felicity Conditions of Warning

According to Searle (1969: 59-69), felicity conditions are a set of rules responsible for creating the illocutionary force of a given utterance, a proposal markedly different from Austin's which focuses on the existing rules. When uttering the sentence (T), the speaker (S) intends to warn the hearer (H) against the proposition (p) provided that the following conditions are satisfied.

1. Both the S and the H are normal and conscious human beings, i.e. they have no physical problem.
2. The S thinks the H should perform a future action that is in his interest.
3. The S intends the H to believe to do the action that is in the H's interest .
4. The S believes the H has the ability to do what the S tells him so as for the H to avoid a cost.
5. The S believes that the H prefers the S to do the action rather than not doing it.
6. Both the S and H understand (T).
7. The S places himself under obligation to do an action by uttering it.
8. Both the S and H seriously behave in normal circumstances in accordance with conversational procedures, i.e. they are not kidding or acting in a play.
9. (T), when uttered, contains some illocutionary force indicating device (IFID).
10. The S thinks he would not do the action

1.5 pragmatic Strategies of Warning

1.5.1 Direct Warning (Explicit and Implicit)

Yule (1996:54) claims an utterance is referred to as a direct SA whenever there exists a close connection between its form and function. According to Palmer (1981:162), explicit warnings are formulated when the speaker makes an utterance containing an expression naming the act. Let's take the following exchange between the zoo-keeper (A) and a visitor(B):

A: I warn you that the bull is dangerous.

B: Er...I'll keep away

Explicit performatives, in general, are syntactically marked by the first person as their subjects with the verbs in the present simple tense, and it is possible to insert the adverb hereby before their performative verb (Yule, 1996:51). As such, A's opening move can be paraphrased as "I hereby warn you that the bull is dangerous."

Implicit warning is mainly accomplished in terms of imperatives. Mey (2009:1002) argues that implicit speech acts are characterized by lacking the performative verb naming them. Nonetheless, there exists correspondence between the structure of an utterance and its function. Consider the following exchange between someone (A) and his friend (B) who has been suffering from high blood pressure:

(2) A: You look pale. What's the matter?

B: I have a terrible headache. I had salty soup in the morning.

A: Oops! Avoid excessive amounts of salt and fat.They'reharmful for you.

What is more, Quirk et al. (1985) assert that implicit warnings can be achieved by brief announcements (e.g. Fire!) which are linguistically realized by elliptical constructions. This is motivated by the fact that producing elliptical expressions in conversations is badly needed because it saves both time and effort. As a result, the H's task is to decode the speakers' message, depending on the contextual factors that help him to recover the deleted elements and, subsequently, understands the S's communicative intent.

1.5.2 Indirect Warning

Motivated by face-saving that is consistent in conversational interactions, indirect SAs, including warning, allow for the H not to do the action postulated by the speaker. Leech (1983) states that "the degree of indirectness correlates to the degree to which the addressee is allowed the choice of not performing the proposed action".

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(15)

If- conditional strategy is one of the leading strategies that speakers resort to so as to perform indirect warning. Quirk et al. (1985) affirm that the situation in the main clause depends on that in the subordinate conditional clause. Declaratives co-ordinated with conditional clauses may accomplish warning described as hypothetical following the sentence pattern: If you do not or do X, Y will occur (Searle, 1969: 69). This formula is usually used when the speaker presents a course of action which the hearer should carry out if the latter wants to prevent a negative state of affairs from taking place. The negative state of affairs is implied in the matrix clause, while the subordinate if -clause functions as a mitigating device highlighting the optionality variable of warning (Hernandez, 2001:198). Consider the following dialogue between a foreign student (A), tired of looking for a lodging to temporarily live in, and the owner of (B) of a flat to be rented:

(3) A: A friend told me I might find some accommodation here.

B: Yes, I have got a vacancy.

A: How much is it?

B: IQD.150,000 a month, including lightning.

A: Could I have look at the room?

B: Yes. But, **if you don't pay the rent in advance, you won't get the room.**

(Ockenden, 1980: 32)

In the foregoing dialogue, the owner warns his partner not to delay paying the rent. The warning utterance in bold type has the condition included in if clause. In particular contexts, warning is expressed in terms of question. This strategy is usually performed by the inferior people when they warn the superior ones to keep constant the asymmetrical relationship that holds between them. As such, an employee, who knows about the formalities of most companies, can use the following question to warn his boss who is about to sign a contract with a well-known Japanese company:

(4) Is it not time to offer our Japanese colleagues a copy of contract?
(Hernandez, 2001:205)

Seen as "initial step for ulterior purpose", warning hints utilizes the relevance maxim of co- operative principle postulated by Grice and developed by advocates of relevance theory in conversational interaction (Leech, 1983:97). In this strategy, the H should understand both the S's preliminary and implied goals to cooperatively communicate. For illustration, consider the dialogue below between a well-behaved experienced young man and a teenager who has recently fallen in love,

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(16)

where the former indirectly warns the latter against engaging in such behaviour:

(5) A: You look out of sorts, my dear. What is the matter?

B: Err I... I'm in love. Could you tell me what it is like?

A: Easy to start, difficult to end and impossible to forget.

1.6 Linguistic Realization of warning in dialogues

Warning is linguistically realized by diversity of syntactic structures. Imperatives are the most common forms by means of which warning is issued.

It is generally recognized that the SA of warning is frequently made as imperatives without 2nd person pronoun as subject to elicit action on the part of the H. (Leech and Svartrik, 1994: 170). According to Searle (1971:10), imperatives exhibits that the H should intend to do something, rather than he should do it. All the positive and negative imperatives are not overt performatives, yet they, once used appropriately in certain contexts, are intended as warnings. As such, a bus driver can warn a passenger next to the windows not to lean out of the window in the following exchange:

(6) Driver: **Don't lean out of the window.** Well, **don't lean out of the window**, you gentle man. You may get hurt.

Passenger: Really! I'll never do so again, sir (Redman, 2003:196).

In the above- mentioned exchange, the opening move includes warning indicated by an imperative which is repeated to give the impression that the cost to be avoided is more important.

Declaratives are intended to exhibit various illocutionary acts; they may express assertions, orders, questions, warnings and so forth. In other words, the use of declaratives as implicit SAs is favoured by the speakers so as to save both time and effort spent on their corresponding explicit performatives(Leech,1974:347).Let's consider the exchange between Zeki, who decides to hold his open-air wedding party tomorrow, and Hazim, a friend of his who has a great deal of knowledge on weather broadcast:

(7)Zeki: Would you be free to come to my wedding party tomorrow?

Hazim: With pleasure. But where will it be held?

Zeki : In open air. It would be fun.

Hazim: Oh, my dear! **Tomorrow will be rainy.**

Zeki: So I have to postpone the party (ibid).

Warning can be also achieved in terms of of interrogatives. Consider a situation where there are two people in a car, the person who is not

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(17)

driver, watches a light functioning an oil lamp flashing on the control panel of the car. He warns the driver by means of the question below instead of the imperati (Hernandez, 2001: 196). e.g.

(8) Does smoking cause cancer?

It is argued that brief announcement warnings don't correspond to the sentence structure and they are formally realized as verbal nouns, adjective phrases, adverb phrases and the like, an assumption which is in conformity with the economy principle characteristic of language use. Stated differently, the addressee, once faced with such non-sentence utterances as Nosmoking, can grasp the S's message and complete the missing elements so that the utterance could be rendered as No smoking is allowed here. This is so thanks to the contextual factors available (Halliday and Hassan, 1976: 294; Cook, 2003: 4).

2. 1 Felicity Conditions of Threatening

To constitute the SA of threatening, there are certain conditions required for defining it. Given that the S utters a sentence (T) directed to the H, then in the literal utterance of (T), the S sincerely and seriously threatens the H to the proposition (P) of the (T) if the following conditions are satisfied:

1. The S tells the H to perform a future action.
2. The S wants the H to do the action in question although the H may not.
3. The S believes the H can do that action, and doing the action is in the interest of the S.
4. The S thinks he would utter T in the normal course of action.
5. The S believes that the H doesn't want to do the action.
6. The S utters T.
7. Both the S and H understand T.
8. Both the S and H are normal, conscious beings.
9. The S and H are interacting in normal circumstances, not joking or acting in a film or play.
10. T, when uttered, can be conceived as having some illocutionary force indicating device (IFID). T is not uttered unless the appropriate conditions occur (Searle, 1969: 60; Levinson, 1983, 238-9)

2.2 Pragmatic strategies of Threatening in dialogues

2.2.1 Direct Threatening

According to Pollyanna principle proposed by Leech (1983:147), participants in a conversation usually prefer pleasant topics to unpleasant ones. This is why the interlocutors resort to euphemism to disguise offensive acts, such as threats, beneath desirable utterances. Stated

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(18)

differently, threats, like insults, are not used performatively in terms of the verbs that name them (Austin,1962:31).

Threatening is not indicated by utterances having the verb that names it. However, there occurs a close connection between the form and function of these utterances (Yule, 1996:52). It is generally accepted that implicit threats are couched in terms of either imperatives only or imperatives combined with declaratives. The following exchange between Joe and Kenneth exemplifies this type of threats clearly:

(9)Kenneth: No you don't have anything. You're just a hypochondriac,

sorry. Or looking on the bright side, congratulation.

Joe: (feeling upset and taking step for Kenneth)

Kenneth (taking out a gun and pointing it shakily at Joe)

Joe: You know I am gonna get you up!

Kenneth: **Holdit! Don't make me kill you when there is nothing wrong with you!** (Hernandez, 2001:238)

The imperative (Hold it) expresses the action that the S wishes the H to do, whereas the imperative (Don'tmakeme) represents the state of affairs that the S will bring about if the H doesn't comply with his wishes. The threat utterance in question is covertly derived from the negative condition, i.e. it corresponds to " Ifyou don't hold it, I will kill you".

2.2.2. Indirect Threats

According to Seperber and Wilson (1995: 15-16), context is a set of inferences and reasoning assumptions that the H uses to expectedly interpret an utterance. As such, the threatened people are likely to calculate the illocutionary act of threatening utterances on the basis of contextual factors including the threatener's mentality and his intentions as well as the concrete features of the world in a certain context, a procedure consistent in issuing and interpreting all indirect SAs.

Consequently, oneregards as threatening SA the sentencementioned in the example below as uttered by a teacher to one of his student. In other words, it is not viewed as an alternative in the sense that the pupil is free to choose what he prefers.

(10) Either you shut up or you have to leave the classroom.
(spoken by a teacher to one of his pupils) (Mey, 1993: 159).

Supposedly speaking, threat is characterized as an alternative unavoidable cost that the H is obliged to experience. Quirk et al. (1973:365) asserted that "a real condition leaves unresolved the question

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(19)

of the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the condition and also the truth of the proposition expressed by the main clause". This strategy, which is mainly accomplished in terms of if-clause, can be performed by means of comparable imperatives. This correspondence is implied because the imperative mood stems from the conditional meaning of an if-construction(Davies,1986: 116). As a way of illustration, consider the following exchange between (A) and (B) who talk about animals, with the former has an institutional power over the latter that enables him to issue threatening:

(11)A: They are living creatures.

B:I'll make some good money out of them.

A: **If you hurt them, I'll sue you.** (Hernandez, 2001: 287).

Threats can be issued in terms of promises, a claim which is motivated by the fact that some performative verbs, including 'promise', are not used performatively. Stated otherwise, some performative verbs cannot name the illocutionary force of the utterance to which they are attached (Levinson, 1983:231). In consequence, the sentence I promise I'll punish you, when uttered by a teacher to one of his student, represents a threat rather than a promise simply because the S makes commitment to bring about a negative state of affairs for the addressee and intimidate him. Referred to as assuring threat, this strategy holds that it is disadvantageous for threats to remain unknown and vague in terms of their consequences so that the H could feel frightened with an image of penalty in his mind if he insists on his behaviour. (Pecher and Zwaan,2005: 108).

Negative oriented questions, on the other hand, are intended to express the speaker's disappointment or annoyance (Quirk et al., 1972:389) . In consequence, this sense of questions can be utilized in issuing the SA of threats in conversations by someone superior in authority talking to his inferior. Consider the following dialogue between Bender, Allison's classmate, and Vernon, the teacher. It so happens that Alison squeaks and slams her head onto the table because Bender hits her with a screw, and this took place while the teacher is busy, delivering his lecture. Later on, the instructor detects the boy's misbehavior and threatens him to hand him the screw and abandon such nuisance.

(12) Bender: She doesn't talk, sir

Vernon (to Bender): Give me that screw.

Bender: I don't have it.

Vernon : **You want me to yank you outta that seat and shake it out of**

you? (Hernandez, 2001:269).

ThreatHints can be used in conversational interaction, where the S tries his best to establish an ulterior illocutionary goal beyond the illocutionary one contained in the sentence meaning and invites the H to detect what the illocutionary goal is. To accomplish this feat, the participants depend on the conversational principle operating on the information of the H and S in conjunction with background knowledge (Searle,1979:47). Accordingly, the utterances I'll be there which is of ambivalent illocutionary forces as a promise, a warning, a piece of advice, statement and the like, exhibits only threat interpretation when the S's presence in the place referred to creates some fear in the H (Hernandez,2001:274-5;Leech,1983:176).

For further illustration, consider the following exchange between an armed group of thieves (A) and some unarmed businessmen (B), where the former plan to take the latter's money and possessions by force.

(13) A (pointing their guns at B): Hands up!

B (frightened): Er.. What's up?

A: Keep quiet. The guns are loaded (Mey,2009:1003).

A's utterance The guns are loaded, which is pronounced with falling intonation by which threats are characterized, is regarded as threat though it is preliminarily understood as a statement.

2.3. Linguistic Forms of Threatening in dialogues

It has been observed that threats are mostly accounted for in terms of declarative sentences. This tendency is firmly stressed by most pragmaticians and theorists. Fraser (1998:165) states, "a threat typically takes the form of declaration with the speaker as the agent". Consider the illustrative exchange below between a mother and her baby:

(14) Kid (laughing and making noise): A banana!

Mother: I sh I shall put you to bed.

Kid: Oh no.

Kid: I will if you don't calm down (Hernandez,2001:265).

According to Thornbury (1997:154-55), imperatives can realize, among other SAs, threat function. We are often presented with threat expressions realized in imperatives coordinated with declaratives by the conjunctives 'and' and 'or'. It is generally recognized that positive imperatives are different from their corresponding negative ones in that the former carry a strong expectation of the H's readiness to do what the S wants. Furthermore, the imperative sentence beginning with the expression "Just you wait....." Certainly displays a threatening

Iraqi EFL learners' Use of the Speech Acts of Warning.....(21)

force, e.g. Just wait till your father comes.(Manser, 1983:174). Derived from if construction by means of ellipsis, the imperative sentence is so analysed to express threatening illocutionary act in face to face conversations.

In few cases, threats are couched by interrogative forms, a procedure some scholars and practitioners referred to as implied threatening.. For illustration, let's consider the following exchange between a teacher (A) and some naughty students sitting at the back of the classroom (B), who make some noise:

(15)A: Keep quiet, you gentlemen .

B: Yes, sir. We won't make any noise.

A (turning upset on seeing them continue making noise) : **When are you going to stop making that noise?**(Larson,1984:243).

Threats can be accomplished by means of noun phrases linked by the coordinator or. Quirk et al. (1985: 933-4) argue that or can implicitly express negative condition as is the case in the following utterance:

(16) Your money or your life.

3.Empirical Study

To discover the learners' performance in warning and threatening SAs, a two- part test is established in the form of situational dialogues, taking into account all the social variables that govern the perception and issuance of the acts in question. A representative sample of 100 undergraduate EFL 2nd year university students are asked to respond to the items of the test. At the recognition level, the subjects' success is significantly obtained in realizing the direct SAs of warning and threatening when they scored around 89% and 70% of the correct responses respectively. That is why these learners then are described as very good and good users in this regard according to Al-Hindawi's (1999) modified version of Carroll's (1980) Scale. It has been pointed out that 15 % of the learners assign the two SAs simultaneously to the same utterance and that means they use them interchangeably as is shown in table(1) below

Table (1) Strategies Assigned to Warning (W.) and Threatening (TH.) simultaneously By NNSs

Dia. No.	Strategy	SAs Assigned	No. of Subjects
2	W. Hints	W. & TH.	1
3	TH. Question	W.& TH.	3
4	TH. Question	W.& TH.	1
5	Implicit TH. expressed by brief announcement.	W.& TH.	1
6	Implicit W. expressed by If Conditional Strategy.	W.& TH.	2
6	Implicit TH. expressed by If Conditional.	W.& TH.	2
7	Implicit TH. expressed by imperatives combined with declaratives.	W.& TH.	2
10	W. Hints	W.&TH.	2
10	TH. Hints	W& TH.	1
Total No. of Subjects			15

Indirect warning and threatening are not responded to as successfully as is the case with the direct ones, where the learners gain only 43%of correct responses in indirect if conditional strategies as is illustrated by the table (2) below. Brief announcements as an indirect strategy for both acts are responded to at the recognition level better than at the production level. This is traceable to the fact that these learners are unable to recover the missing elements of the speaker's message because they cannot utilize the context skillfully.

Table (2) Subjects' Recognition of Warning and Threatening Expressed Conditionally

Dia. No.	Strategy	Correct Responses	Percentage of Correct Responses
2	Indirect TH. expressed by If condition.	49	49%
6	Indirect TH. expressed by If condition .	35	35%
6	Indirect W. expressed by If condition.	40	40%
4	Indirect TH. expressed by If condition	62	62%
7	Direct implicit TH. expressed conditionally by imperatives combined with declaratives by and.	30	30%

At the production level, the learners' achievement is poorer because they largely opt for direct strategies in expressing warning and threatening. Direct strategies of these acts, like if condition and hints, are seldom resorted to, an indication of their pragmatic incompetency. Linguistically, it has been noted the vast majority of the revealing group (around 68%) show tendency to employ imperatives that begin with Don't in issuing these acts. Be careful and avoidare found in the informants' contribution. Declaratives are less frequently used by these learners. It is noticed that the subjects' performance is free of elliptical constructions when they make the acts at issue

Table (3) types of threatening forms as used by Iraqi Learners.

Form	No. of realizations	%
Declaratives	68	68
Imperatives	30	30
Interrogatives	2	2
Elliptical forms	0	0
Total	100	100

ملخص البحث

هذا لبحث متعلق بتقصي استخدام الطلبة العراقيين متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية لغة اجنبية لانشاء كلامي التحذير والتهديد. وتركز هذه الدراسة على الاستراتيجيات التداولية والصيغ اللغوية التي بواسطتها تدرك هذان المفهومان. تثبت هذه الدراسة ان المتعلمين يميلون الى استخدام بعض الاستراتيجيات على حساب الاخرى. يتكون هذا البحث من ثلاثة فصول. اولها متعلق بالتمييز بين هذين المفهومين. الثاني يتعامل مع الاستراتيجيات التداولية والصيغ اللغوية لهذين المفهومين. الفصل الاخير متعلق بالدراسة العملية لهذا البحث

4.Conclusions

The main conclusions introduced in this section are related to Iraqi EFL undergraduate informants' performance at Part 1 and Part 2 of the test. They are as follows:

1. Iraqi EFL learners don't master all pragmatic strategies and forms realizing the SAs of warning and threatening. The learners perform better at the recognition level than the production one.
2. The subjects stick to certain kinds of strategies, i.e. direct ones, in producing the two acts. On the contrary, the NSs vary their options of strategies in this regard.
3. Iraqi EFL learners have displayed insufficient awareness of using all strategies to perform the SAs of warning and threatening in dialogues.
4. The revealing group is fascinated by the linguistic realizations of the SAs in question, irrespective of the context governing the issuance and interpretations of these acts.
5. The success of the subjects in identifying the intended SA in Part 1 of the test depends, to a very considerable extent, on the degree of explicitness. The more explicit the utterance is, the more successful the learners are.
6. The learners' performance with respect to warning SA is more successful than that of threatening.

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