

ANALYZING THE SPEECH ACT OF DISAGREEMENT PRODUCED BY IRAQI EFL LEARNERS: A GENDER STUDY

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Abstract

Purpose of study: This is a pragmatic study dealing with the speech act of disagreement at the production level. The aim of the study is to investigate whether gender (the independent variable) affects the production of disagreement strategies (dependent variables) used by Iraqi EFL learners. The study is meant to help educators through diagnosing the learners' pragmatic abilities which were reported by Iraqi scholars as weak and underdeveloped. The study also intends to enrich the speech act literature which lacks gender consideration in the Iraqi context.

Methodology: The study is limited to the analysis of the pragmatic strategies of disagreement within the theory of speech act in relation to gender. The study adopts a descriptive quantitative approach using a Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) as a tool for collecting data. The tool consists of 10 open-ended situations to elicit data from 80 fourth-year Iraqi English as a foreign language (EFL) learners who equally were split into 40 males and 40 females. The study utilized MS Excel 2016 for statistical analyses of directness strategies with their dependent explicitness strategies.

Results: It was revealed that both males and females employed similar amounts of explicit disagreement strategies but as far as the indirect strategies are concerned, females significantly used more indirect disagreement strategies than their male counterparts.

Novelty/Originality: The current study is gender-based dealing with the speech act of disagreement at the directness and explicitness levels at the Iraqi EFL learners context. It revealed the learners' current state of affair in terms of their pragmatic ability in the production of disagreements. It acted as a call for educators and syllabus designers to consider the teachability of the indirect aspect inherent in the act under study.

Keywords: *pragmatics; speech act; disagreement; gender; Iraqi EFL learners; direct strategies; explicit*

INTRODUCTION

In his explanation of the six functions of language, Roman Jakobson signified the communicative function as having a substantial effect on verbal communication (Arista, 2014; Beechy, 2016). Thus, it is the speech that contributes to the meaning of the communicative message, not these words uttered in isolation without context (Ballmer & Brennstuhl, 2013). This means that speech turns into a meaningful message only when it is attained by a context whether physical or linguistic (Leech, 2014).

The speech act of disagreement is inescapable as when listening to a view by someone. We either agree or disagree with him/her. If disagree with, we may state our opinions either verbally as saying 'I disagree.' or non-verbally like nodding head to mean 'I disagree with you'. In this point, the recipient captures the intended meaning according to the context in which the act is performed. Pragmatics is the science that links speech with contexts to shape meaning. (Sifianou, 2012). From a pragmatic perspective, the speech act of disagreement can be expressed using certain ways. Like most of the speech acts, according to Leech (2016) and Levinson (2017), the ways the speech act of disagreement is produced varies in terms of *directness* into a *direct* and *indirect disagreement*. The *direct* is sub-divided in terms of *explicitness* into an *explicit* and *implicit disagreement*. Indirect disagreement includes the *declarative*, *question*, and *imperative*. These ways of expressing the act of disagreement are referred to as strategies of disagreement and this is what the current study is examining with respect to the effect of gender.

The problem that calls for this study stands up in the EFL context. Due to lack of pragmatic knowledge, the EFL learners in general and the Iraqi ones in specific need to pay heed to how they disagree in a native-like manner because according to Leech (2016), they may express disagreements in ways (strategies) which are not familiar to the native speakers. Besides, the native speakers may express disagreements that are not recognized by Iraqi EFL learners (Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2010; Uгла & Abidin, 2016). It is the task of the Iraqi scholars to highlight such a problem to help build the learners' pragmatic knowledge fail to which will definitely lead to either no or miscommunication. In addition, according to Parvaresh, Rasekh, & Simin, (2015), many scholars and English language teachers have become aware of the necessity to develop the EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge and therefore have shifted their heed from the mere correct spoken structure of language into highlighting the ways (strategies) are uttered.

Iraqi scholars like Al-Shafie, & Al-Jubbory (2015) and Darweesh & Al-Aadili (2017) pointed that Iraqi EFL learners, when speaking, lean towards more direct strategies which may be considered offensive especially when trying to express strong disagreements, refusals, obligations, and suggestions. They do because their pragmatic knowledge is weak and therefore are unable to produce indirect strategies. Doing so, according to Hameed (2010) may also lead to misunderstanding if not

miscommunication especially when the EFL learners attempt to produce indirect strategies. Pishghadam & Sharafadini (2011) concludes that EFL learners' knowledge of speech acts characteristics is one of the issues which have to be studied in a non-western context as they are still scant in the recent literature.

The purpose of the current study is to contact and consider the problem mentioned in the above discussions and hence based on the literature review section and the researchers' knowledge, null hypotheses (H_0) and their opposite research hypotheses (H_1) are employed. The rationale for including the H_0 is because according to the statistical rules, no H_1 can be accepted unless its opposite H_0 can be rejected. If cannot be rejected, then the H_1 can be accepted. So the first focus is on either rejecting or not rejecting the H_0 and then move to verify the H_1 .

1. As for the explicitness of disagreement strategies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_0 . *There is no significant difference between male and female EFL learners in the use of explicit disagreement strategies.*

H_1 . *Males use more explicit disagreement strategies than females.*

2. As for the directness of disagreement strategies, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_0 . *There is no significant difference between male and female EFL learners in the use of indirect disagreement strategies.*

H_1 . *Females use more indirect disagreement strategies than males.*

Regarding significance, this study is projected to be an informing source for scholars, educators, and the Iraqi EFL learners since it ultimately offers knowledge to the EFL learners about the topic of disagreement. It aims at contributing to the speech act literature in general, to the act of disagreement in specific, and to the gender literature as well. It also intends to assist teachers and textbook designers to improve the English language teaching curricula.

Speaking of the content of this paper, it starts with an **introduction** to the topic of disagreement, *the problem* that calls for this work, *the purpose*, *the hypotheses* and finally *the significance*. The subsequent section is the **literature review** that locates the *literature gap* in **previous studies on disagreement** and accounts to **disagreement** as a term by introducing some **definitions of disagreement** by some scholars and then as a **speech act of disagreement** from a pragmatic perspective and ends up with the targeted directness and explicitness **disagreement strategies** in details. To test the hypotheses, a **methodology** with a quantitative **design** was set to be applied to **participants** whose responses were collected via **WDCT** following certain **procedures and ethics** and then develop a **scoring scheme** to rate the responses. The subsequent section is **results and discussions** which leads to the conclusion and recommendations as the last section. The body of the paper ends up with **references**. Finally, an **appendix** is presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Studies on Disagreement

Aiming at showing the gap in the recent literature, this section goes through the scholarly articles published in the peer-reviewed journals indexed under Scopus and or ISI. The web search included the articles issued between the years 2009 to 2019. The search scope included the articles dealing with the topic of disagreement as a speech act studied only at the pragmatic level. The search was further refined to be limited to the studies applied to participants only. For instance, the studies which are applied on texts such as these by Liew (2016) and Farrokhi & Arghami (2017) were excluded. Doing an in-depth search as possible, the results so far, revealed 15 articles dealing with the topic in question. The articles were arranged, grouped, and then tabulated chronologically categorizing the features of each study in terms of the type of strategies, of participants, gender, control group, method, context, and the concluded points of weakness. The specifics of the previous studies and the current one are all given in the following table.

Table 1. The previous literature on the speech act of disagreement

	Author(s)	Type of Dis. strategies	Participants	Gender Value	Method	Context	Weakness
1	Parvaresh & Rasekh (2009)	Politeness strategies	Persian Natives	-	Quanti.	Iran	The objectives, research questions, and purpose are not explicitly stated. Using only 4 DCT situations to investigate politeness which is inadequate.
2	Behnam & Niroomand (2011)	Politeness strategies	EFL learners	-	Quanti.	Iran	Using an inadequate number of DCT situations; only 5 to elicit data with an old model limited to 5 politeness scenarios.
3	Sofwan & Suwignyo (2011)	Semantic formulae	EFL learners	-	Mixed	Indonesia	The objectives and research questions are not stated clearly. It is not clear whether the study targets the semantic formulae, used for

							disagreement, as an end or as a means to identify politeness.
4	Kocogh (2012)	Politeness strategies	Hungarian natives	+	Mixed	Hungary	The social distance between the interlocutors is not stated well to the reader.
5	Shabaka (2013)	Not clear	EFL learners	-	Mixed	Egypt	The aim of the study is not stated explicitly. The types of targeted strategies investigated are not clear enough as to whether semantic, politeness, or structural strategies.
6	Khomejani-Fazrahani & Molkizadeh (2013)	Politeness strategies	EFL learners	+	Mixed	Iran	The DCT situations do not give consideration to the social distances; familiarity between the interlocutors. The study is referred to as having 'mixed method' but no clues for being such. In fact, as the analysis shows, it is quantitative only.
7	Shum & Lee (2013)	Politeness strategies	Chinese Natives	-	Quali.	China	"As the study has examined only two Hong Kong Internet forums and just a few episodes, it deserves further investigation on a larger scale." Shum & Lee (2013:71)
8	Heidari, Rasekh & Simin (2014)	Politeness strategies	EFL learners	-	Quanti.	Iran	Using an inadequate number of DCT situations; only 6 to elicit data.
9	Choyimah & Latief (2014)	Structural strategies	EFL learners	-	Quali.	Indonesia	The study aims at investigating the link between linguistic competence and pragmatic competence rather than investigating the act of disagreement as an end.
10	Christoffersen (2015)	Semantic formulae	ESL learners	-	Quali.	Different contexts	Generalization of the findings is made based on an investigation relied on analysing the ESL written corpus that is expected to be formal and thus the disagreements are softer.
11	Parvaresh, Rasekh and Simin (2015)	Politeness strategies	EFL learners	-	Mixed	Iran	The DCT situations do not give full consideration to the social distances between the interlocutors.
12	Sadrameli & Haghverdi (2016)	Politeness strategies	English teachers	-	Quanti.	Iran	The methodology part along with the DCT situations is replicated from Behnam & Niroomand (2011) which is believed as weak herein.
13	Taqim (2016)	Politeness strategies	EFL learners	+	Mixed	Indonesia	Neither the number of participants that is only 22, nor the data collection tool that consists of only six scenarios is sufficient for a gender study.
14	Yan (2016)	Politeness strategies	EFL learners	-	Quanti.	China	Using an inadequate number of DCT situations; only 5 to elicit data. The DCT situations were written in Chinese, not in English.
15	Ali (2016)	Politeness strategies	ESL learners	-	Quanti.	Pakistan	An insufficient number of participants that is 22 and an insufficient number of DCT situations that is only 4 due to the fact that the minimum number of politeness scenarios is 6.
	<i>The current study</i>	<i>Directness strategies</i>	<i>EFL learners</i>	+	<i>Quanti.</i>	<i>Iraq</i>	<i>Limited to the production level and limited to the directness level.</i>

Where Dis. = disagreement, Quanti. = quantitative, Quali. = Qualitative

As the table illustrates, none of the current articles deals with disagreement strategies from the directness perspective as ends in themselves. Although some articles do investigate directness at some levels, however, these investigations are only a medium to determine the politeness of disagreement rather than the directness principle by itself. Details of the types of recurrent strategies are shown in Figure 1.

It seems that the directness strategies have no place in the recent studies and thus as a characteristic feature of the current study will target the speech act of disagreement at the illocutionary point of their directness principle. As for the variable of gender, it is clear that few studies considered its significant effect on varying the strategies in question. Figure 2 gives the percentages of gender studies.

Based on the paucity of gender in recent literature, this study attempts, as the title suggests, to analyze the effect of gender on producing disagreement strategies. This paucity is reported by Coates (2015) and Moradi (2017) claiming that speech act studies on the variable of gender have not been saturated yet. Finally, speaking of the context of studies and what they lack, the current study attempts to quantitatively investigate the production of disagreement by Iraqi EFL learners' context. To be

familiar with the types and the pragmatic nature of the disagreement strategies, the following theoretical section is informative of its features.

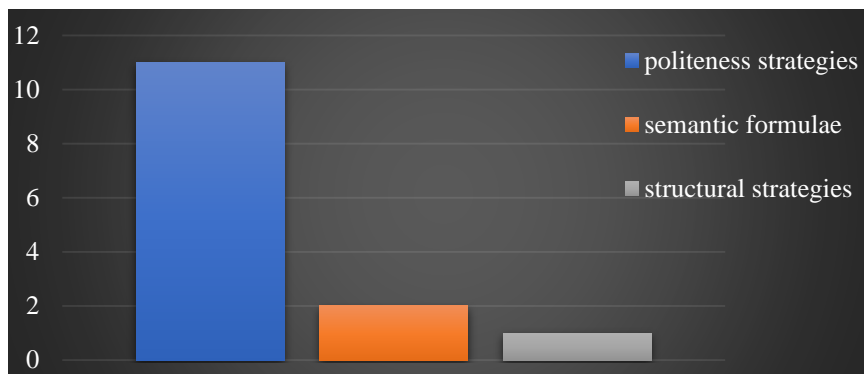


Figure 1. Types of disagreement strategies

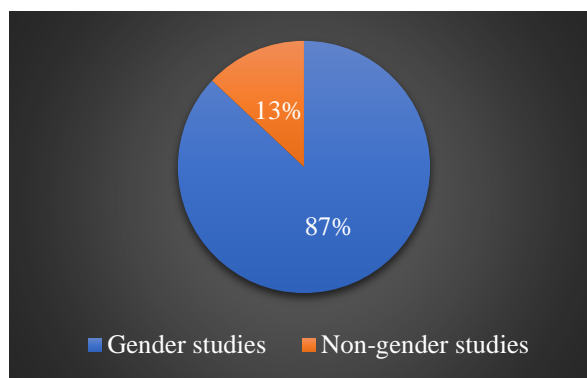


Figure 2. Percentages of gender studies in the recent literature.

Disagreement

Definitions of Disagreement

The Online Merriam-Webster Dictionary mentions that the disagreement is an argument posed by people having contrasting opinions about something. It also refers to the failure to come to an agreement. Scholars presented various definitions of disagreement into the sight. From a pure linguistic perspective, Malamed (2010: 200) defines it as “a conflicting view offered as a response to an expressed view of a previous speaker.” Sifianou (2012) views disagreement as a verbal act of showing contradictions performed directly or indirectly. He also points out that there are some other non-verbal ways of expressing disagreements such as postures, facial expressions, and other paralinguistic features. Disagreement is viewed as the expression of view in which the participant communicates his/her opinion or belief opposing to the view expressed by the previous participant (Edstrom, 2004).

Types of Disagreement Strategies

As mentioned in the introduction section, the pragmatic distinction between direct and indirect disagreement strategies relies on the presence of the performative expressions and the matching between the syntactic structure and its semantic function as Leech (2016) states. The current study develops a model of analysis of disagreement strategies based on Leech’s (2016) taxonomies of directness.

Direct disagreement strategies

This strategy can be expressed in two ways which are (a) explicit performative strategy and (b) implicit performative strategy. The explicit strategy is expressed using performative verbs which spell out the illocutionary force of the performative sentence. For instance, ‘I disagree...’

In this example, the speaker's intention is expressed overtly with the verb 'disagree' and thus context is not an important clue. Austin (2000) states that the performative verbs can be emphasized by inserting 'hereby' provided that it is used to emphasize the meaning of the performative as in ‘I hereby disagree ...’. Other explicit strategies are expressed with the verb ‘agree’ in negative expressions as in ‘I do not agree...’ and ‘I never agree...’.

The implicit performatives strategy, on the other hand, can be recognized when the explicit performative verb is absent. The implicit performative verb conveys the intention of the speaker and thus disagreement is interpreted pragmatically (Goddard

& Wierzbicka, 2019). The expressions used here are (1) negative performatives as in ‘*I do not think ...*’, ‘*I do not believe...*’, etc. (2) elliptical expressions as in ‘*No.*’ or non-elliptical as in ‘*No, ...*’ and (3) counter-statements (when an opposite view is given) as in the following example:

A: Well, it is not important.

B: *Well, it is important.* (counter-statement)

Indirect disagreement strategies

According to Searle (1975), to understand the motives behind any utterance is often crucial to effective communication. Regarding the meaning of an utterance, Thomas (2014) says that the relationship between its structure and its underlying meaning isn’t always overt and straightforward. For instance, ‘Can I use your phone?’ this sentence has an interrogative structure and so expresses a question. Generally, when asking a question, the speaker’s goal is to get an answer but this utterance, believably, has a purpose that is a request; where the speaker’s goal is to use the listener’s phone. So, the indirect speech act according to Levinson (2017), is an utterance in which one speech act is performed indirectly by performing another. This means that speakers can utilize different ways to express their intentions indirectly by means of *statements*, *questions* or *imperatives*. Here is another example.

A: He is getting too old.

B: *How old is too old?* (to mean ‘he is not old’)

In this example, the disagreement is expressed by means of a *question*. Blundell, Higgens & Middlemiss (1996) point out that disagreement can also be expressed indirectly when it occurs in an *imperative* form.

A: You do not believe in magic.

B: *Oh, come on!* (to mean ‘I believe in magic’)

Disagreement can be indirectly achieved by means of *declarative* where there are neither overt performative verbs nor overt negation. Consider the example adopted from Pomerantz (1978):

A: Oh Sweetie, you look gorgeous in this dress.

B: *It’s just a piece of rag my sister gave.*

The researchers expect that these aforementioned disagreement strategies; direct, indirect, explicit, implicit are likely to vary in terms of gender and therefore intends to test how males and females manipulate disagreement when responding to the interactional scenarios in the WDCT.

METHODOLOGY

This section is assigned to the conduction of the practical part of the study in which the randomly selected participants responded (using disagreements) to different interactional situations in the WDCT sheet. This section includes these subsections: design, participants and sampling, WDCT, procedure and finally scoring scheme.

Design

Since the variable of gender is an independent, i.e., cannot be manipulated, it is described as a categorical variable in relation to which the linguistic forms (dependent variables) may vary, thus the study is regarded, according to Cottrell & McKenzie (2011), as descriptive. The study deals with a fixed number of directness-based disagreement strategies that any EFL learners may ever produce so the scope of analysis can be quantitatively approached using an inferential statistical test. Independent samples student t-Test (commonly known as t-Test) was used as the male group and the female group are independent of each other. To perform the t-Test, Microsoft Excell 2016 software was used to test the hypotheses in question.

Participants and Sampling

The participants were the Iraqi EFL learners at the English Language Department at the College of Education, Qadisiyah University. They were the fourth-year students enrolled in the academic year 2018-2019. The total number of the participants was 80, all of whom were from different places within the division of the province of Qadisiyah. Since the current study is gender-based, so the participants were divided equally into 40 males and 40 females. To select a representative sample of the participants, the study as Creswell (2005) advised, has utilized a table of two digits with random numbers having 8 columns and 12 rows to help select the sample with high randomization to eliminate personal biases.

WDCT

The WDCT is an open-ended questionnaire set to elicit a specific speech act from the participants (Ebadi & Pursiah, 2015). Of this study, the DCT consisted of ten (10) varied situations which were set in such a way to simulate the real circumstances

that males and females may engage in. These situations were taken, with some modifications, from Behnam & Niroomand (2011), Shabaka (2013) and Parvaresh, Rasekh, & Simin (2015).

Procedure and Ethics

The study put into consideration the gender involvement in the task which was carried out in November 2018. All the participants were asked to attend the task in one day and were given the same time that is 20 minutes. The place was the English Language Department at the College of Education, Qadisiyah University. All the participants were requested to sign and return the consent forms stating their voluntary participation, a declaration to do the task, and their right to withdraw from the task for a reason or not. In line with the ethics by Wellington (2015) and Best & Kahn (2016), the participants were assured that their names would remain anonymous to others and that their participation would neither affect their relationship with the department nor would it even have any relation to how well they respond to the WDCT situations.

Scoring

The WDCT completed, the sheets were collected and scored as follows: Every situation was given 1 mark. The participants' mistakes in grammar, punctuation and spelling were not considered since the study is after the pragmatic performance. Since there were 10 situations then the maximum passing score was 10 and the minimum passing score was 5. The sheet with less than 5 scores was discarded. Either 1 mark or a zero was given to each item (situation) to avoid half-answers which if any would affect the accuracy in percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After scoring the WDCT situations, the researchers organized the results into passed and failed participants according to their valid responses. The opening analysis of the collected data came up with these opening outcomes.

Table 2. The participants' overall performance in the task

	Participants	Number	Percentage
1	Male participants	40	50%
2	Female participants	40	50%
3	Total of the participants	80	100%
4	Passed males	32	80%
5	Passed females	39	97.5%
6	Total of the passed participants	71	88.7%
7	Failed males	8	20%
8	Failed females	1	2.5%
9	Total of the failed participants	9	11.2%

The scoring yielded that only 9 sheets were discarded. As far as the valid and invalid responses of the WDCT sheets, since there are 10 situations in the WDCT and the total number of the passed participants is 71, so $10 \times 71 = 710$ valid and invalid responses. Out of the 710 responses, there are 698 valid responses. More about the responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Valid and invalid responses

	Responses	Number	Percentage
1	Total of responses	710	100%
2	male responses	320	45%
3	female responses	390	54.9%
4	male valid responses	306	44.7%
5	female valid responses	378	55.2%
6	Total of valid responses	684	96.3%
7	Difference between male and female valid responses	72	10.5%
8	male invalid responses	14	4.3%
9	female invalid responses	12	3%
10	Total of invalid responses	26	3.7%

Out of these 26 invalid responses, 18 were blank and the rest 8 were wrong answers (not disagreement speech acts). A visual representation of the above responses related to males and females are given in Figure 3.

The invalid responses will be excluded because they should not be accounted for in the analysis of the participants' responses. The analysis should be dedicated to the valid responses only since the study deals with correctly written strategies.

To verify the two hypotheses, the learners' strategies in terms of the directness and explicitness are analysed respectively. Below is a detailed table of the direct strategies including their sub-types, i.e., explicit and implicit strategies. Colours are used in the table for particularities.

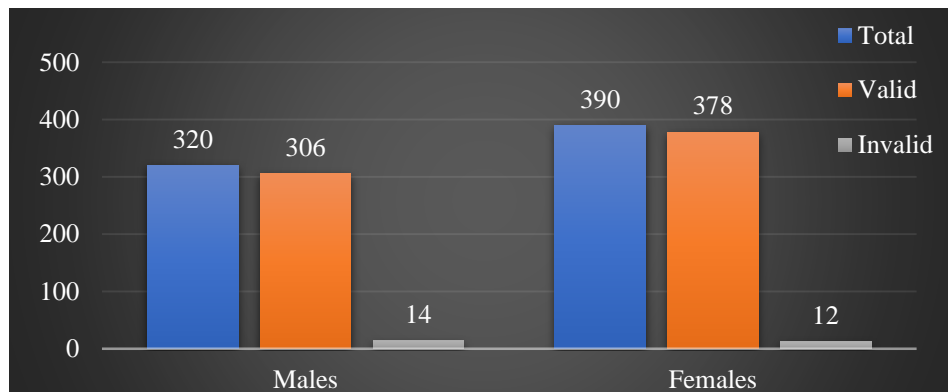


Figure 3. Gender Responses

Table 4. Gender direct strategies

	Type	Production	Frq. by Males	Perc.	Used by	Frq. by Females	Perc.	Used by
1	Explicit	I do not agree ...	22	4.98%	8	34	7.70%	10
2		I disagree ...	33	7.48%	29	26	5.89%	13
3		I never agree with you.	26	5.89%	13	17	3.85%	8
4	Implicit	I do not think (so) that ...	29	6.57%	23	17	3.85%	13
5		I do not believe (so) that ...	21	4.76%	20	19	4.30%	11
6		I think the opposite is true.	6	1.36%	5	7	1.58%	7
7		Not the real reason....	1	0.22%	1	0	0.00%	0
8		No.	18	4.08%	9	6	1.36%	6
9		The yellow colour is common..	0	0.00%	0	1	0.22%	1
10		I have another opinion (view)....	7	1.58%	6	11	2.49%	8
11		This is not my view....	0	0.00%	0	2	0.45%	2
12		Chicken (gives) (is before) egg....	3	0.68%	3	5	1.13%	5
13		Chicken is first	0	0.00%	0	4	0.90%	4
14		There are no eggs without chickens	0	0.00%	0	1	0.22%	1
15		That (This) is wrong	16	3.62%	10	18	4.08%	7
16		My viewpoint is different....	8	1.81%	5	11	2.49%	5
17		people (are ...) not Islam	0	0.00%	0	1	0.22%	1
18		Islam is not	1	0.22%	1	1	0.22%	1
19		Reading and writing are not enough.	3	0.68%	3	9	2.04%	9
20		No one says	1	0.22%	1	0	0.00%	0
21		That (This) is not true.	17	3.85%	10	15	3.40%	13
22		Love is the only truth	0	0.00%	0	1	0.22%	1
23		The opposite is right....	6	1.36%	4	3	0.68%	3
24		They (these) are not enough....	1	0.22%	1	2	0.45%	2
25		It causes many troubles if	2	0.45%	2	0	0.00%	0

26	Chinese is difficult to	2	0.45%	2	0	0.00%	0
27	This will not be good	1	0.22%	1	0	0.00%	0
28	This is a rumour.	0	0.00%	0	2	0.45%	2
29	It (this) is not the best movie...	0	0.00%	0	1	0.22%	1
30	It will not happen	2	0.45%	2	0	0.00%	0
31	Not possible	0	0.00%	0	1	0.22%	1
Total		226			215		

Where Frq. = frequency, Perc.= percentage, Used by = the number of participants used this strategy.

Counting the male and female direct strategies, it is revealed that males have employed an almost close number of direct strategies. Males exceed female in only 4 explicit and 7 explicit strategies forming a total of 11 strategies as a difference. Since the first hypothesis is about the explicit strategies, the implicit strategies are thus no longer considered in the analysis. For preliminary gender variations in terms of the mean percentages, the following figure is presented.

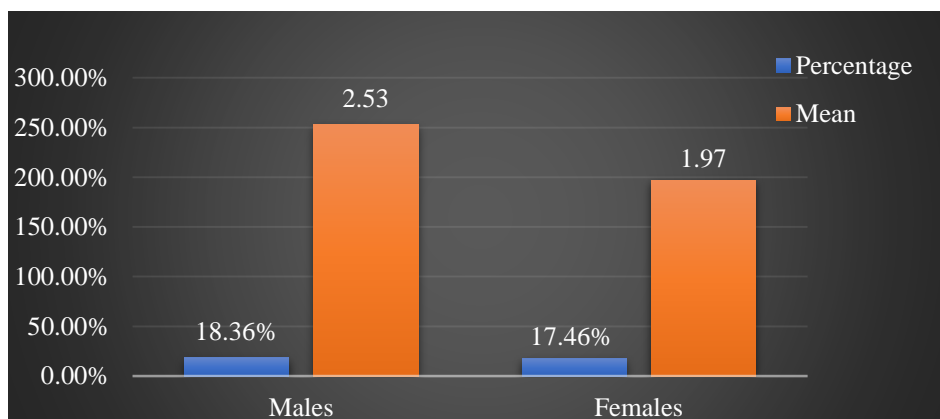


Figure 4. Gender percentages and means of explicit strategies.

Although the means and percentages in Figure 4 are close in terms of gender variations, however, this does not mean that there are no significant statistical differences. In order to reveal the real differences, a t-Test is run to this end using MS Excel 2016. Because males and females are independent samples whose performance does not correspond to one another, the test is then *unpaired*. The test is *one-tailed* because the study investigates the difference in the part of males. Plugging in all the necessary values in the Excel sheet, the following outcomes are obtained.

Table 5. t-Test outcomes in terms of explicit strategies

Male mean	Female mean	Mean Difference	P-value
2.53125	1.974359	0.556891	0.05561678

Statistically, since the P-value is almost equal to the critical value 0.05, then no statistical difference was found. So, the H_0 that 'there is no significant difference between male and female EFL learners in the use of explicit disagreement strategies' cannot be rejected. Therefore, accordingly, the H_1 that 'males use more explicit disagreement strategies than females' cannot be accepted. Finished with the first H_1 , it is the turn of the second H_1 .

As far as the indirect disagreement strategies, Table 6 is indicative of their three sub-types with percentages in details.

Table 6. Gender indirect strategies

	Strategy	Production	Freq. by Males	Perc.	Used by	Freq. by Females	Perc.	Used by
1	Declarative	This is a (new) joke.	5	2.05%	5	8	3.29%	8
2		When the world ends.	0	0.00%	0	1	0.41%	1
3		Yes, very very much transparent election	1	0.41%	1	0	0.00%	0
4		We will not get close to the Super Powers	1	0.41%	1	0	0.00%	0
5		We are not in America (Europe).	0	0.00%	0	1	0.41%	1

6	Questions	Are you serious?	11	4.52%	3	11	4.52%	11
7		Are you joking?	10	4.11%	3	18	7.40%	11
8		Do you believe (so)...?	14	5.76%	3	39	16.04%	20
9		What election are you talking about?	1	0.41%	1	0	0%	0
10		Why?	3	1.23%	2	17	6.99%	13
11		How comes?	8	3.29%	5	16	6.58%	12
12		What? (?)	2	0.82%	1	8	3.29%	8
13		Is Chinese easier?	1	0.41%	1	0	0.00%	0
14		Are you sure?	15	6.17%	15	18	7.40%	17
15		Imperatives	Be serious (please).	0	0.00%	0	7	2.88%
16	Don't laugh at me!		2	0.82%	1	3	1.23%	3
17	Don't say that! ...		0	0.00%	0	1	0.41%	1
18	Stop imagining!		0	0.00%	0	2	0.82%	2
19	Come on...!		5	2.05%	2	7	2.88%	7
20	Don't believe that (this) thing!		0	0.00%	0	5	2.05%	5
21	Don't tell jokes!		1	0.41%	1	0	0.00%	0
22	Please, say something else.		0	0.00%	0	1	0.41%	1
Totals			80			163		

The distinction of the three types of the indirect strategies coloured in the above table is not important to the proving or disproving the second H_1 , however, the researchers identified them in order to show and count the number of the indirect strategies used by gender. As a first step, regarding how gender differs in the use of indirect strategies, the following figure speaks of the percentages and means.

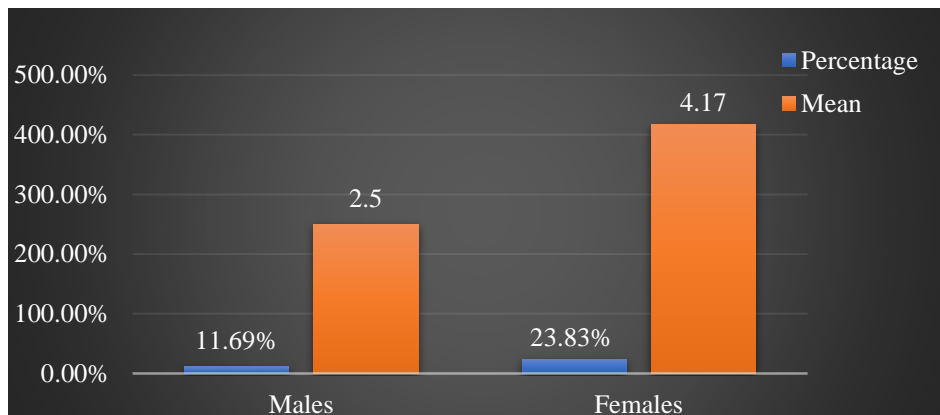


Figure 5. Gender percentages and means of indirect strategies.

It is clear that the differences in percentages and means are more distinct than those of the explicit strategies. The difference between the percentages is $23.83\% - 11.69\% = 12.14\%$ and between means is $4.17 - 2.5 = 1.67$. Both differences seem to be considerable and so the indirect strategies appear to be overused by females but the final decision is left to the t-Test to tell whether these differences are significant or not. The t-Test is one-tailed and unpaired. Inputting all the necessary values in the Excel sheet, the test gives the following:

Table 7. t-Test outcomes in terms of indirect strategies

Male mean	Female mean	Mean Difference	P-value
2.5	4.179487	1.679487	0.000443496

Because the P-value is less than 0.05 (the critical value), then the second H_0 that 'there is no significant difference between male and female EFL learners in the use of indirect disagreement strategies' can be rejected. With this rejection and based

on the difference in percentages in Figure 5 (showing female overuse of the indirect strategies), the second H₁ that ‘females use more indirect disagreement strategies than males’ can be accepted.

CONCLUSION

Based on the descriptive and inferential statistics, several conclusions were met:

1. The analysis revealed, in terms of gender effect, that the Iraqi EFL learners have responded somewhat variously to the 10 WDCT situations.
2. The study analysed the data quantitatively using statistical analysis and yielded that gender variant had a significant and insignificant effect on the production of disagreement strategies from directness and explicitness perspectives.
3. Of the direct disagreement strategies, it was found that males are almost equal to females in the use of explicit strategies.
4. In terms of indirect strategies, females significantly use more indirect strategies than males. The high number of the direct strategies (explicit and implicit) employed by males and females can be attributed to the learners’ limited vocabulary of and may be due to their poor pragmatic knowledge of the indirect ones.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Contacting the limits of the study, discussions, and conclusions, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Because the current study is limited to how the EFL learners produce disagreement, the that next studies consider the directness strategies of disagreement at the perception level in order to identify how they understand disagreement and for the researchers to obtain all-encompassing knowledge about how the learners speak and understand the act in question.
2. Because there are about 18 situations left blank, it is believed that the WDCT is somewhat a tiresome task for the participants where they have to write sentences (disagreement) and therefore it is recommended that future relevant studies use a less tiring multiple-choice discourse completion task (MDCT) in which the participants have only to tick their choices.
3. Using direct disagreements can be considered as an offence by the native speakers, so educators are advised to instruct the learners of the politeness issues potential in that act in order to achieve polite communications.

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APPENDIX

Test Sheet

Analyzing the Speech Act of Disagreement Produced by Iraqi EFL Learners: A Gender Study

Dear Participant,

This Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) is intended to gather information on gender effect on the production of the speech act of disagreement used by Iraqi EFL learners. The participants of this task are the fourth-year students of the English Language Department, College of Education, Qadisiyah University.

The task consists of two parts:

Part (I) Demographic Information

Part (II) WDCT

We assure you to use the collected data for the research purposes only. You are further assured to feel safe about the secrecy of your personal data. In case of any inquiry, please feel free to contact me via e-mail: mushtaq112008@gmail.com or phone: 009647816234291.

Researchers: ¹Mushtaq A. Sharqawi & ²Elizabeth M. Anthony

Date: October 2018

Part I: Demographic Information.

Please tick your option.

Gender: Male Female

Nationality: Iraqi Others Please specify:

Native Language: Arabic Others Please specify:



Part II. WDCT

Please, express your disagreement to the following situations:

1.
Waiting in a bus stop, the passenger next to you started talking to you saying: *'I think that taxi cars need be to painted with green instead of yellow.'*

You:
.....

2.
Your Chinese friend says to you: *'Do you know that Chinese is easier to learn than English?'*

You
.....

3.
Your recently divorced sister is talking to you desperately saying: *'Love is the biggest lie on earth!'*

You:
.....

4.
You meet a political consultant you know in the City Hall. He is telling you: *'In the near future, Iraq will rise again and will definitely compete with the Super Powers.'*

You:
.....

5.
Your younger brother says to you: *'I think the egg came first into being before the chicken. That is my belief.'*

You:
.....

6.
In the airport, a person is arguing with you saying: *'Islam has imposed terrible restrictions on women's freedom.'*

You:
.....



7.

In a discussion about horror movies, a classmate is telling you: ‘*SAW III is the best horror movie that Hollywood has ever produced.*’

You:

.....

8.

Your Grandfather is telling you: ‘*A transparent election is the only and only way out to save our country.*’

You:

.....

9.

While conversing with your colleagues, one of them says: ‘*In all Arab countries, if a boy hugs a girl on the street will not cause any trouble.*’

You:

.....

10.

One of the new students in the English Department says: ‘*Reading and writing are enough to improve your second language skills.*’

You:

.....