

# Investigating the Speech Act of Correction in Iraqi EFL Context

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## Abstract

The present paper investigates the performance of the Iraqi students for the speech act of correction and how is it realized with status unequal. It attempts to achieve the following aims: (1) Setting out the felicity conditions for the speech act of correction in terms of Searle's conditions. (2) Identifying the semantic formulas that realize the speech act of correction in the performance of the Iraqi learners of English as a foreign language. (3) Finding out if those students are aware of the role of status inequality in issuing speech acts. To achieve the aims of this study, it is hypothesized that: (1) Different formulas are utilized by students to accomplish the speech act of correction. (2) Iraqi EFL students are aware of the power-status perspective in their interactions. The following procedures have been followed: (1) Reviewing the literature about speech act theory along with the notion of politeness. (2) Developing a discourse completion test to elicit the speech act of correction that is to be distributed to college students in an Iraqi University. The findings of the analysis verify the above mentioned hypotheses.

**Keywords:** Speech Act Theory, Speech Act of Correction, EFL, Politeness, Intercultural communication

## 1. Introduction

If one wishes to master a language, he needs to become communicatively competent in that language. It is a fact that linguistic accuracy is important; alone, it is never sufficient. Learners are required to acquire the language they are to learn with its sociocultural rules along with structural rules (i.e. form and function levels). Both rules will help and guide in the choices of appropriate forms in communication and maintain smooth relations.

This paper studies the Iraqi EFL college students' performance for the speech act of correction and how is it realized with status unequal. It sets for itself the following question: how is the speech act of correction realized in the Iraqi EFL context? It tries to elicit this speech act in terms of semantic formulas. Six situations are introduced to students from the College of Languages, University of Baghdad for the academic year 2015-2016 to respond to. These situations are of three different levels of status: the case of equal status, from higher status to a lower one and vice versa. Piles of studies are found on the various speech acts used in daily life communication like requests, apologies, complains, compliments, etc. Rare studies, however, are found concerning the speech act of correction in verbal interactions. This research has a didactically oriented goal, i.e., how to teach speech acts to foreign learners. It is hoped to have applications not only in ESL/EFL pedagogy but also in the study of intercultural communication.

## 2. Speech Act Theory (SAT)

The basic concept of SAT is "saying is part of doing" (Austin, 1962). The theory, developed by Austin in the 1930s, distinguishes between performatives and constatives. The first perform an act while the latter is to be verified as true or false. Then constatives were rendered as one form of performatives (Lyons, 1995: 283). Producing an utterance means engaging in three related simultaneous acts. The locutionary act is the basic act of utterance, illocutionary act is a kind of function in mind. The third is the perlocutionary act which is the effect of the illocutionary force of the utterance (Yule, 1996: 48).

Searle (1969, 1971, and 1979) systemized Austin's work with modifications. His speech acts are in fact Austin's illocutionary acts (Searle, 1969: 37). He presents four conditions for an act to be felicitous or happy: propositional, preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions (Verschueren, 1999: 23). Searle (1979: 21ff) explains that SAT suggests that all speech acts in any language fall into five categories:

- a. Assertives: expressing a belief and committing the speaker to the truth of what is asserted (e.g. statements).
- b. Directives: expressing a wish and counting as an attempt to get hearer to do something (e.g. requests).
- c. Commissives: expressing an intention and counting as a commitment for the speaker to engage in a future course of action (e.g. promises).
- d. Expressives: expressing a psychological state (e.g. apologies).
- e. Declaratives: not expressing a psychological state and bringing about a change in institutional reality (e.g. declaring a war).

The criteria which have to be satisfied for a speech act to be happy or successful are known as felicity conditions (Crystal, 2003: 427). Illocutionary acts might be expressed via a particular sentence-type which is usually associated with it (Searle, 1979: 30). There is an easily realized relationship between the structural forms of declaratives, interrogatives and imperatives and the three communicative functions of statements, questions and commands or requests respectively (Yule, 1996: 55). Thus, the direct relationship between a structure and a function will result in a direct speech act. There is a match between the interrogative sentence type in English and the act of questioning (Saeed, 1997: 214). "Pass me the salt" is an imperative that is used to express a request. When the relation is indirect, we have indirect speech acts. "Could you call me a taxi?" is a question that functions as a request not to ask about one's ability to call a taxi (Verschuere, 1999: 25; Geis, 1995: 123).

Searle (1979: 32) expounds that in indirect speech acts, speakers communicate more than they actually say. They rely on mutual shared knowledge, background information and the general powers of rationality and inference of their interlocutors (Mey, 1993: 142). It is assumed that most usages are indirect. The speech act of requesting is rarely performed by an imperative in English. It is carried out indirectly (Hung, 2007: 111). According to Blum-Kulka (1987: 131), direct strategies can be perceived as impolite because they indicate a lack of concern with face, and nonconventional indirect strategies (hints) can be perceived as impolite because they indicate a lack of concern for pragmatic clarity.

### 3. Politeness

One reason why people resort to use indirect speech acts is associated with politeness (Leech, 1983: 79). They are commonly regarded to be more polite than their direct counterparts. Moreover, the more indirect a speech act, the more polite (Hung, 2007: 115). There is an extensive literature on politeness and its different theoretical models as Lakoff's rules (1973), Leech's conversational maxims (1983), Fraser's conversational contract (1990), among others, as Eelen (2001: 2) clarifies. The model that is most influential and of direct concern to this study is that of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). As such, it is discussed below.

#### 3.1 Brown and Levinson's (1987) Model

Brown and Levinson see politeness in terms of conflict avoidance. Their main conception, however, is the concept of face which is the public image every member wants to claim. It has two opposing "wants": negative face (the desire to be unimpeded by others) and positive face (the want to be desirable to others) (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 66). The model claims that positive and negative face exist universally in human culture.

Politeness can be defined as "the means employed to show awareness of another person's face" (Yule, 1996: 60). If a speaker utters something that is considered as a threat to another person's expectations regarding self-image, it is counted as Face Threatening Acts (FTA) (ibid.: 61). FTAs are usually acts that inherently damages the face of the addressee or the speaker. Given the fact that some actions might be interpreted as a threat of another's face, the speaker can minimize or lessen this possible threat. These are called Face Saving Acts (ibid.).

Eelen (2001: 4) contemplates "The amount and kind of politeness that is applied to a certain speech act is determined by the 'weightiness' of the latter". This is calculated by speakers from three social variables: power (the perceived power difference between hearer and speaker), distance (the social distance between them) and rank (the cultural ranking of the speech act or how threatening it is perceived to be within a specific culture).

Brown and Levinson (1987: 60) suggest a set of five possibilities which are available to the speaker. These strategies range from doing the FTA to avoiding doing it. They are numbered according to the increasing weightiness of the FTA resulting in the selection of strategies with decreasing perceived threat to face. In cases where the speech act has little weightiness, it can be produced baldly on record, with no redressive action. Figure (1) below shows these strategies. The scale on the left represents the degree to which these strategies are face-threatening to the addressee.

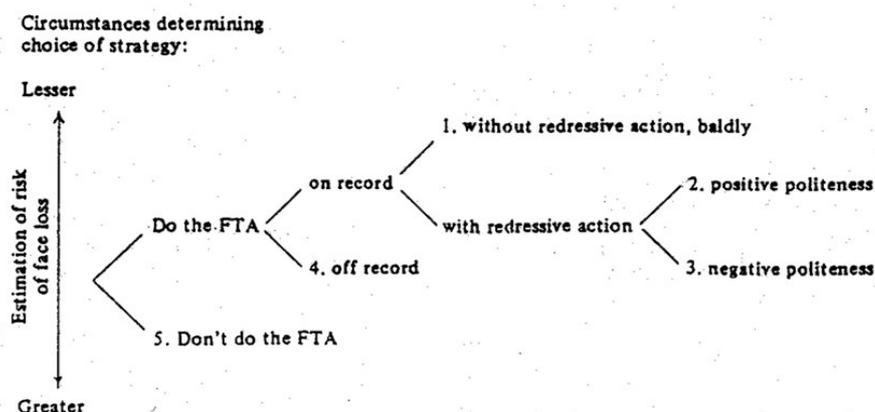


Figure (1) Politeness Strategies Following Brown and Levinson

Politeness is best expressed as the practical application of good manners. It is a culturally defined phenomenon and what is considered polite in one culture might be impolite or rude in another.

#### 4. The Speech Act of Correction

According to Merriam Webster Learner's Dictionary, correction is "the act of making something (such as an error or a bad condition) accurate or better : the act of correcting something". Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines correction as "an act used to say that what you have just said is wrong and you want to change it". We agreed previously that a speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication (e.g., apology, request or greeting, etc.). The speech act of correction notifies the speaker that he has said something wrong or incorrect. This expressive speech act is obviously a FTA in that it effects the speaker's negative face by telling him that what he has just said or mentioned is erroneous and that correction is needed to change his information. It is assumed basically that the speaker has no idea about what is correct; otherwise, he would not have uttered it. At the same time, this act represents a threat to the hearer as he needs enough courage and motives to initiate the corrective act towards his interlocutor. However, the speaker may opt to remain silent and let the error goes uncorrected.

Every speech act has its own felicity conditions, if it is to be performed successfully. To set the felicity conditions of the speech act of correction, Searle's (1979) conditions are applied as follows:

1. Preparatory conditions: hearer realizes that speaker's utterance is erroneous. Hearer is sure of that and he knows the correct information.
2. Sincerity conditions: hearer feels he has the ability to correct the error of speaker and it is part of his desire, responsibility, duty or obligation to do so.
3. Essential conditions: hearer wants to change speaker's erroneous utterance.

To know how to deal with a speaker's error is of paramount importance. The kind of the relationship holding between speaker and hearer has a crucial role: whether the two interlocutors has the same status or higher to lower and vice versa. Lots of studies are available on the kind of correction or corrective feedback that is found in classroom interaction, for instance. One important role of teacher inside the classroom is giving corrections to students' erroneous responses. Different kinds of corrective feedback are distinguished as Panova and Lyster (2002), Lyster and Ranta (1997) amongst many others. Although they seem as a must and completely rightly justified, these corrective feedbacks should be delivered cautiously. Teachers need to think deeply when they correct learners in order not to make them feel "absolutely stupid" and to maintain rapport (Pishghadam and Kermanshahi, 2011: 343). Some studies find that teachers prefer indirect correction (Ellis et al., 2001). In fact, this is only one legitimate case of giving corrections to others. It is within the institutionalized context of teacher- student interaction. However, different other situations might entail some corrections, as this study assumes.

In other daily life communication, corrections should be given carefully to pursue the rules of politeness and maintain rapport. One does not want to find himself mistaken or saying something erroneous. This threatens his face's needs. Therefore, the speech act of correction is a FTA for hearer and speaker alike. The first needs enough courage to talk and the latter needs to accept and admit his incorrectness. As such, what are the strategies employed by interlocutors to perform such an act?

Takahashi and Beebe (1993) examine American and Japanese performance of the speech act of correction with unequal power status. Their research gives a model for the study of this speech act. They distinguish the use of positive remarks, softeners, and other similar formulas as means to lessen the FTA and to make communication smoother, reduce friction and keep rapport (Takahashi and Beebe, 1993: 139). They analyse each "speech act as consisting of a sequence of semantic formulas" (ibid.: 138). They state that positive

remarks include praise, compliments and positive evolution. A positive remark is “a preceding adjunct which is phrasal and separate from the main body” (e.g. it was a good presentation, but...). Softeners, on the other hand, are “down toning devices integrated in the main body of speech acts. They are subcategorized into three groups:

1. Softeners (e.g. I think, I believe, you may have...)
2. Questions (e.g. Did you say...? , Do you mean ....?)
3. Expressions to lighten the gravity of the mistake or to defend the interlocutor (e.g. you made one small error...)

By specifying these semantic formulas, one can find the different realizations of the speech act under study. Accordingly, positive remarks and softeners are important politeness strategies manipulated by error correctors. They are necessary prefixes to FTA in English ( *ibid.*: 141). It is worth mention that Takahashi and Beebe’s study selected only two different power of relations, higher to lower and lower to higher and it compared American and Japanese in these situations. They came up with conclusions that the two societies are different in performance of this speech act.

## 5. Teaching Pragmatic Competence

To communicate appropriately in a target language, pragmatic competence in that language must be reasonably well developed. However, L2 learners often show an imbalance in grammatical and pragmatic competence as the latter often lags behind the first. Pragmatic consciousness in L2 should be given importance to help learners distinguish between what is and is not appropriate in given contexts (Eslami and Rasekh, 2008: 178).

Accordingly, there is a need for L2 instruction to focus on pragmatics of the language being learned. Researchers point out the positive impact of instruction aimed at raising learners’ pragmatic awareness in order to avoid cases of pragmatic failure and in order not to hinder communication (Olshtain and Cohen, 1991: 154). Textbooks, teachers and training programs are required to pay more attention to pragmatic aspects in L2 language. While most studies have focused on the production of the target pragmatic features or their use in interaction, instruction aimed at improving learners’ pragmatic comprehension has received far less attention (Eslami and Rasekh, 2008: 179).

One important issue that should be dealt with in L2 classroom is how to use speech acts, especially those that represent a threat to the interlocutors. FTAs have received much attention because when used improperly cross- culturally, they might cause and lead to a pragmatic failure and a sort of misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Practical Application

### 1. Methodology

Six different situations adapted (and modified) from previous studies (Takahashi and Beebe, 1993 and Hanh, 2011) with real life instances from our daily communication represent the data of this research. To know how Iraqi EFL students perform this speech act, forty students from the College of Language/ University of Baghdad (for the academic year 2015-2016) are chosen to fill a discourse completion test for the purpose of eliciting the possible set realizing the act of correction. The number of the students who participated in the test are forty due to the fact that this is the traditional usual number of students in the Iraqi colleges classrooms.

Two situations are cases of equal-power status, two are from lower to higher and the last two are from higher to lower. The rationale behind choosing two situations for each status is to have a full picture and a complete comprehensive view of the whole possible usages.

### 2. Model of Analysis

Following Takahashi and Beebe’s (1993) study, the data is analyzed on the following levels. The first one is that of being direct and indirect. Within the direct level there is a partially direct level. This one is added to modify the original model. The second level of being indirect refers to the use of positive remarks, softeners (with their three kinds of softeners, questions and other similar expressions to lighten the gravity of the mistake or to defend the interlocutor). Using any of the latter will render the speech act as indirect; otherwise it is a direct one. If a student chooses to remain silent, he prefers not to do the FTA. To sum up, the model of analysis is adopted from Takahashi and Beebe (1993) but modified to suit our data. Thus, the model of analysis reads as follows:

Model of Analysis

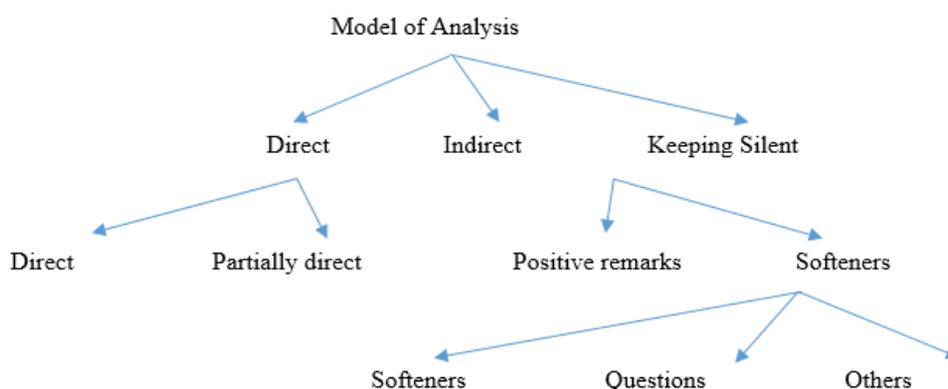


Figure (2) The Adapted Modified Model of Analysis

According to our data, the model of analysis is explained below:

The student may perform the act of correction directly or indirectly. If it is direct, a straightforward statement of correction is used (e.g. you are wrong, this is incorrect, you are mistaken, etc.). within this direct act, partially direct responses might be manipulated and this includes adding a special polite form to the direct act of correction to make it partially direct and reduce the possible threat to hearer's face (e.g. No, my dear, you are wrong, Sorry darling, this is incorrect, Excuse me this is wrong, etc.). This is the item of analysis that has been added to the model to fit the data. On the other hand, the speech act might be indirect. Positive remarks can be used. According to Takahashi and Beebe (1993), this includes praise, compliment and positive evaluation. Grammatically speaking, a positive remark is a "preceding adjunct which is phrasal and separate from the main body" (e.g. it was a good presentation, but...). Softeners are down toners integrated in the main body of speech act. These in turn are categorized into three groups:

- a. Softeners ( e.g. I believe, I think, you may have....)
- b. Questions ( e.g. Did you say....?, Do you mean...?)
- c. Other expressions to lighten the gravity of the mistake or to defend the interlocutor ( e.g. you made a small error; In fact, you are somehow incorrect).

Sometimes students opt to remain silent and in this case the choice is not to do the FTA strategy. This item has also been added within the modification in the model to account for such instances. One last point is that the unit of analysis used in this research is the sentence.

### 3. Data Analysis and Discussion

#### *Correction Situation 1 (Two equal status)*

*You and your sister are discussing about the famous singer- Celine Dion- you sister, says that Celine Dion is American (In fact, she is Canadian).*

In this situation, we have an utterance occurring between two persons in the same status position (two sisters). All subjects opt to correct their interlocutors in this situation. Thus, there is no one case of remaining silent in the data. On the level of being direct, the following responses are seen as direct:

1. No, she is not American. She is Canadian.
2. You are wrong. She is not American.
3. No, no, she is Canadian.
4. No, she is Canadian, not American.

However, some of these direct response include words like (baby, sis, sister, or my dear) to minimize the FTA exercised and thus they are classified as partially direct speech act. For instance:

1. I am sure she is Canadian, baby.
2. My dear, Celine is not American
3. Oh, no, sister, she is Canadian.

The direct responses comprise a percentage of 55% whereas the partially direct acts are 10%.

Being indirect, other responses include softeners as in the examples below:

1. But I think she is Canadian.
2. I guess she is Canadian.
3. I believe she is Canadian.

This comprises a percentage of 12.5 %. Using questions to be indirect is part of the data as in the following instances:

1. American? She is Canadian.
2. Are you serious?

3. Is she American?
4. Are you sure she is American?

The percentage of the questions used in the data is 15%. The use of other expressions to lighten the gravity of the mistake are found in our data, for instance:

1. I know she is Canadian, but we will check the internet.
2. She is Canadian. Let's check the net.
3. Are you sure? Let's check to get the right answer.

These answers comprise a percentage of 7.5%. There is no one positive remark used in this case of correction. The chart below shows the complete percentages.

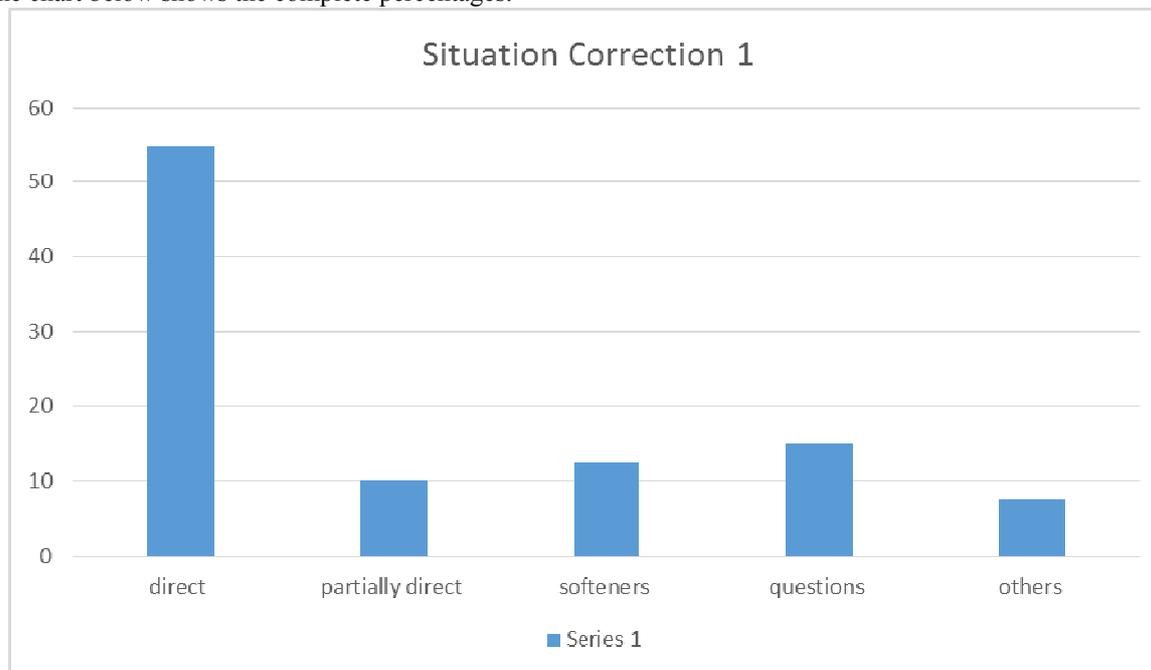


Figure (3) Situation Correction (1) Percentages

### ***Correction Situation 2 (Two Equal Status)***

***During the literature class, you teacher gives a topic for group discussion. One of your group mate equates a poem attributing it to the wrong poet.***

This is a situation where an equal status correctional role is required, but this time between two classroom mates. If a student in the classroom utters an incorrect sentence, he may receive a correction from anyone of his peers. The student is attributing a poem to the wrong poet. On the level of being direct, the following instances are obtained:

1. This poem was not written by X.
2. This poem is not for X.
3. This is not the correct/right poet.
4. You are wrong. This poem belongs to X, not Y.
5. This is the wrong name of the poet.
6. No, you are wrong.
7. No, no, this is the wrong name.
8. Correct your mistake.
9. Wait a minute. This is the wrong poet.

It is worth mentioning that some of these direct responses are followed or preceded by words like: baby, sorry, excuse me, please or calling the student by his own name as a marker of politeness and to soften the directness of these answers and to claim rapport. This constitutes the partially direct acts. The percentage of the direct ones is 42.5% while the partially direct ones has the percentage of 30%.

Some students, however, use indirect acts by exploiting some softeners like those mentioned in the below examples:

1. I think you are talking about another poet.
2. I think this poem is for another poet. It belongs to X.
3. I believe this is not the right name.

The use of questions as an indirect speech act are found in the data. The following examples show how:

1. Are you sure about that?
2. Don't you think he is X not Y?
3. You mean X?
4. Can I add something? The name of the poet is X.

Nevertheless, one student only opts to correct the colleague by using other expressions ( In fact, this is another poet) one student chooses to remain silent. No use for other positive remarks are available in this data. The percentages of the using softeners, questions, other expressions and being silent is 12.5%, 10%. 2.5 % and 2.5% respectively. The following chart shows the overall responses.

1. I think you are talking about another poet.
2. I think this poem is for another poet. It belongs to X.
3. I believe this is not the right name.

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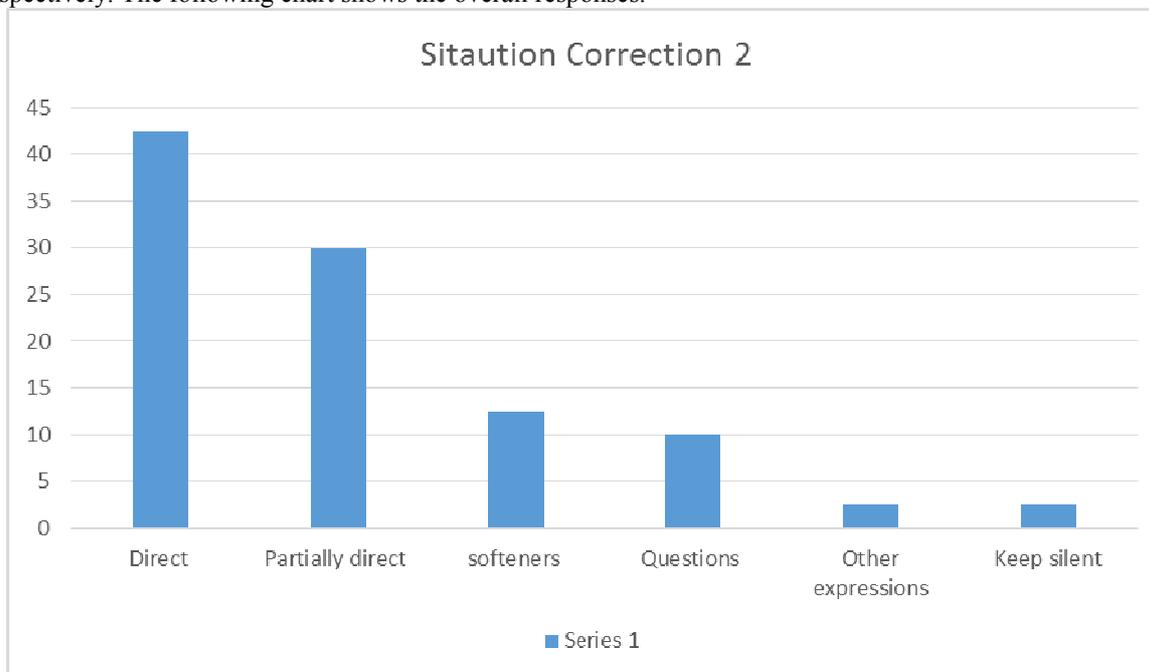


Figure (4) Situation Correction (2) Percentages

Let us at this point discuss the first two situations characterized by being of two equal status. Direct speech act of correction is used in both cases. In the first the percentage is 55% while in the second it is 42.5%. This can be explained in terms of the fact that the relationship between the two interlocutors is informal and they are somehow of the same age. They are sisters in the first case and classmates in the second. Being colleagues in the second situation led to the fact that the partially direct acts are higher (10% in the first and 30% in the second). All other indirect speech acts performed are somehow the same in the two situations. The case of keeping silence in the second situation can be ascribed to the context of performing this act (i.e. the classroom setting among other colleagues).

### ***Situation Correction 3 (From Lower to Upper Status)***

***Your head of department gives you a file that should be delivered to the Dean's Office. He says you should deliver it to the Inbox Section.***

This is a case where a clerk is given a file to deliver. The head of the department says it should be delivered to the Inbox Section while it is for the Dean's Office.

The direct responses to this situation are only three and they are as follows:

1. No, it should be delivered to the Dean's Office.

2. This file should be delivered to the Dean's Office.
3. You should deliver it to the Dean's Office not the Inbox Section.

The percentage of this act is 7.5%. As being partially direct with the head of the department, the clerk's responses include polite forms such as the following:

1. Pardon me, Doctor, I think it should be delivered to the Dean's Office.
2. But it should be delivered to the Dean's Office, Sir.
3. Sir, that file should go to the Dean's Office.
4. Excuse me, but it should not be delivered to the Inbox Section.
5. You mean the Dean's Office.
6. Sorry sir, it is not for the Inbox Section, but for the Dean's.

The percentage of these acts is 25%. Questions are included in the data as indirect responses uttered by the corrector and they comprises the highest of usages:

1. You mean to the Dean's Office?
2. Don't you think it should be delivered to the Dean's Office?
3. How about delivering it to the Dean's Office?
4. Sorry, did you mean the Dean's Office?
5. Shall I give it to the Dean's Office?
6. Are you sure you want this file delivered to the Inbox Section?
7. Should it be delivered to the Dean's Office or Inbox Section?

The percentage of questions in this third case of correction is 30% while softeners comprise 20% as in:

1. I think this is for the Dean's Office.
2. As I believe, it is for the Dean's Office.

The last case includes the use of other expressions as an indirect way of correcting the head of the department's erroneous sentence. Examples are:

1. But it is written here "to the Dean's Office".
2. I will deliver it to the Dean's Office.
3. I know I should deliver it to the Dean's Office as I did with another file yesterday.
4. It has been written here "to be sent to the Dean's Office".

The percentage of other expressions strategy is 17.5%. No response chooses to remain silent. This is the chart representing this case of correction.

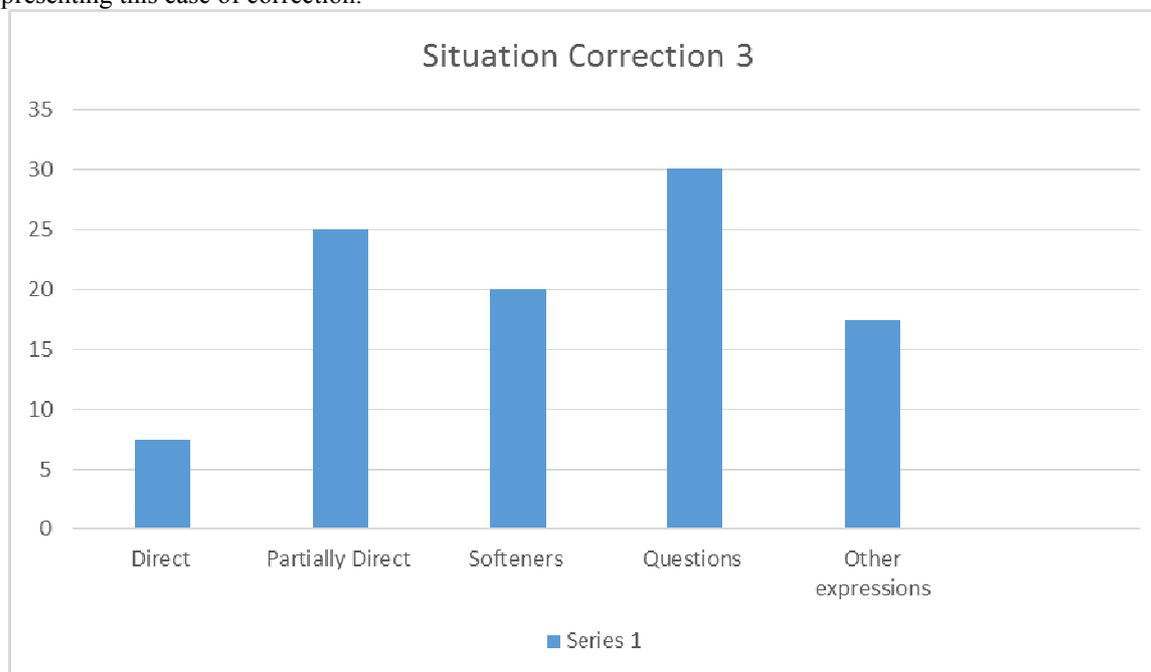


Figure (5) Situation Correction (3) Percentages

**Situation 4 (From Lower to Higher)**

*You are a student in a linguistics class. During the lecture the teacher mentions Chomsky saying he died two years ago. (In fact, he is still alive).*

In this situation, the student is to correct his teacher inside the classroom. Usually, the teacher holds the role of correcting students' errors inside classroom. It is very rare that a teacher makes an error, unless he is absent

minded, tired, confused or so.

On the level of directness, students produced the following sentences:

1. He is still alive.
2. No, no, he is alive.
3. No, Chomsky is not dead. He is alive.
4. He is not dead.

Most of the responses are partially direct because some expressions are used to minimize the gravity of directness with the teacher. Such expressions include: (sir, my teacher, excuse me, I am sorry). For example:

1. Pardon me Sir, but he is still alive.
2. Sorry Mr. X, but he is not dead.
3. Excuse me Doctor, but he is alive

Thus, they yield partially direct acts which has a percentage of 45% whereas the former's percentage is 10%.

The use of softeners is available in the data as follows:

1. Sorry sir, but I think he is alive.
2. Sorry, but I do believe he is still alive.
3. I don't think so.
4. I think he is still alive.
5. I guess he is still not dead.

Using questions include instances like:

1. Sorry Sir, is he dead?
2. Really? Chomsky died? How was that?
3. Chomsky died? When?
4. Excuse me Sir, a politician now?
5. Sorry my teacher, is he dead?
6. Excuse me, are you sure about Chomsky's death?
7. Excuse me, but I know he is still alive?
8. He died?

Other expressions are also present as in the following sentences:

1. With your permission, Sir, Chomsky is still alive and you have just mentioned he died.
2. Excuse me, I heard that he is alive.
3. Sorry, in fact he is still alive.
4. But as I know he is still alive.

One student opts silence. He, however, suggests that he would go to the teacher after the lecture to his own room to discuss it with him and tell him that Chomsky is alive. The final percentages of softeners, questions, other expressions and opting silence is 15%, 17.5%, 10% and 2.5% respectively. The chart below presents that.

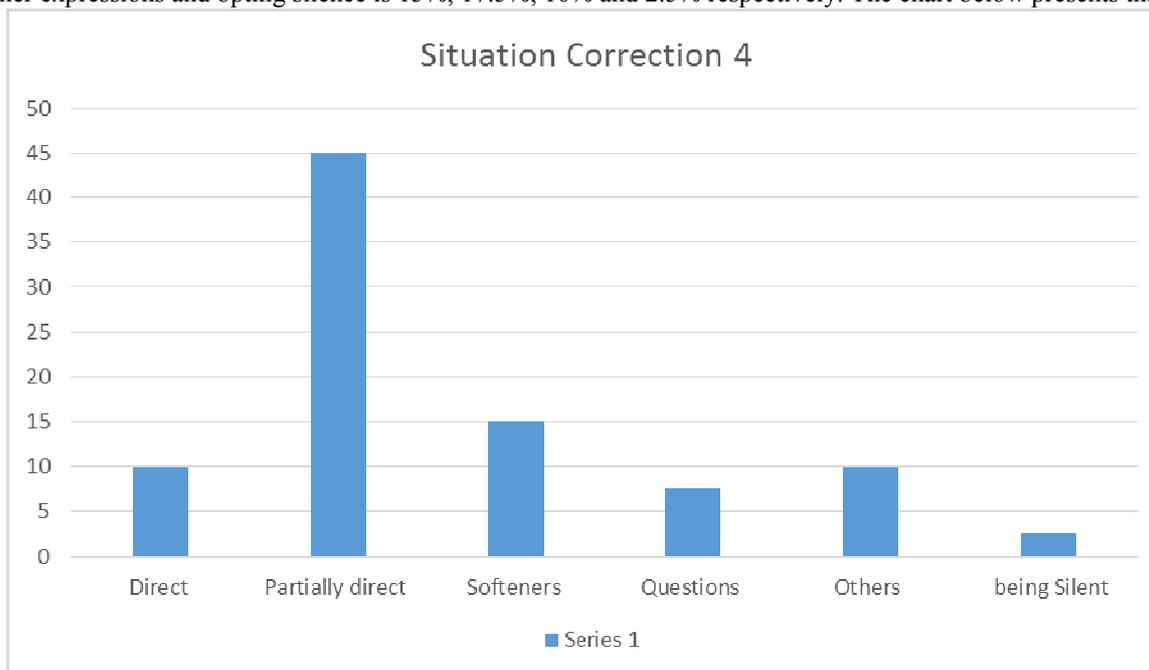


Figure (6) Situation Correction (4) Percentages

The two situations of being from lower to higher is discussed now. The directness is different here. It

is low in both cases. In the first case, its percentage is 7.5% while in the second, it is 10%. These are adjacent percentages. What characterizes the situation of the head of the department ( situation 3) is that questions has the higher percentage ( 30%) . The lower rank clerk opts to do the act by a question to correct the manager's erroneous utterance. This results from the kind of the relationship between the two. It is a formal one. In the next case ( situation 4 ), however, the partially direct questions receives the higher percentage ( 45%). The student in class wants to be sure that he gets the correct information. When the teacher was explaining the lesson on Chomsky saying he died while he is not, students are curious to know the right case and they used the partially direct way of giving this speech act. As being sure of the piece of the information they have about Chomsky's life, they used this strategy not the questioning, for instance, to hint to the teacher that he is saying something wrong. Using questions may be part of the conventions of classroom interaction. The case is not so here.

#### ***Situation Correction 5 (From Higher to Lower)***

***You are a professor in a history course. During class discussion, one of your students gives an account of a famous historical event with the wrong date.***

This situation represents the normal justified case of correcting others. One main important role of teachers in the classroom is to correct the mistakes of the students. However, it is elicited here from the students' point of view. It can express how they want to be corrected by their teachers.

Being direct, the students' responses are given in the following sentences:

1. The correct date is X not Y.
2. Oh, no, it/that/this is wrong.
3. No, it is not the date you mentioned.
4. No, you are wrong.
5. The date you gave is wrong.
6. No, try to be sure of your information.

However, partially direct cases are present aided with words like: sorry, excuse me, etc. The percentages of direct and partially direct acts are 42.5% and 7.5%.

Students prefer the use of softeners as in this sentence:

1. Sorry, but you must be sure from the date, I think.

Using questions are shown in the following samples:

1. Are you sure? If you don't know the date, you should search it.
2. Where did you get the date from?
3. Why don't you check the date?

Other expressions are used as follows:

1. Actually, the date is wrong. So, I should correct it for you.
2. Sorry son, but the date is wrong. You have to check it again.
3. In fact, this is not the right/ correct date.
4. I've read the book and the date you mentioned is wrong. Check it.
5. Please check the date again

The case of positive remark is available in this situation. For example:

1. Good explanation, but try to make sure of the date.
2. What you said is correct except the date.

The percentages of using softeners, questions, other expressions and remaining silent are: 2.5%, 10%, 7.5% 2.5 % respectively. They are represented in the chart below.

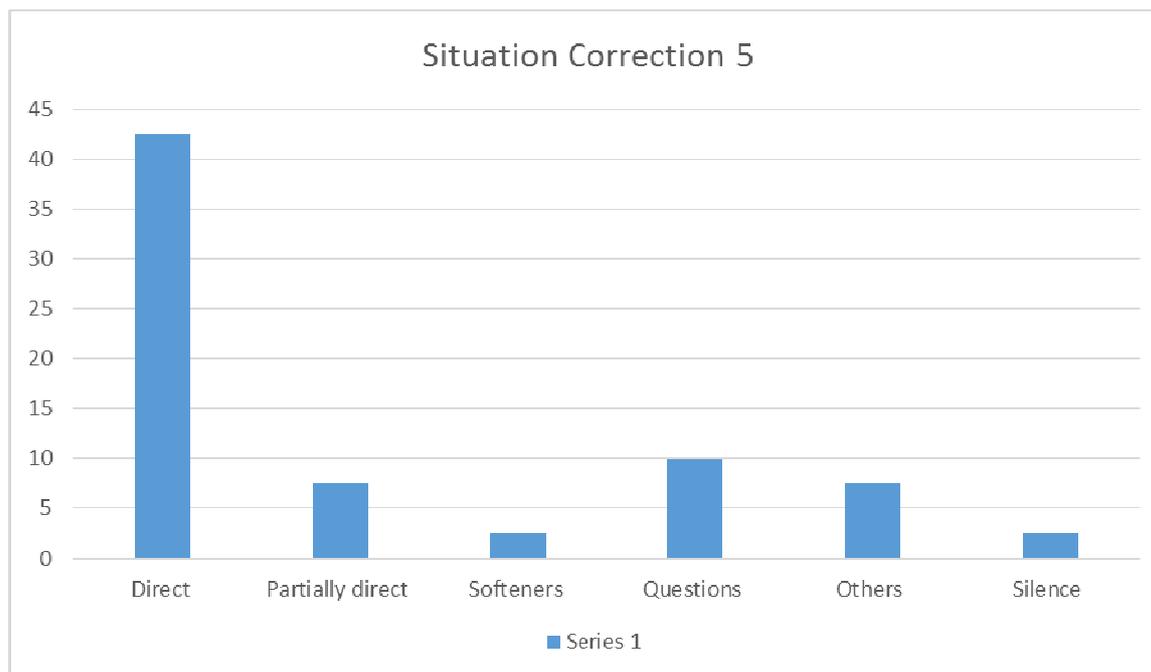


Figure (7) Situation Correction (5) Percentages

**Situation Correction 6 (Higher to Lower)**

**Your neighbour's little son talks to you, but he calls you by your brother's name.**

The little son of your neighbour calls an elder man by his brother's name. How would a man correct a younger person? Directness is exemplified in the following:

1. This is my brother's name. I am X.
2. Y is my brother. I am X.
3. My name is X, not Y. Y is my brother.
4. No, my name is X. try to remember that.
5. No I'm X.
6. I'm X not Y.

The use of partially direct acts is shown as in these examples:

1. Yes, but I am not X, son
2. Sorry, but my name is X
3. Pleas, my name is X
4. Sorry, but this is my brother's name
5. Pleas, I'm X
6. Pleas, it is not my name. It's my brother's name.

Accordingly, the percentages of the direct and partially direct responses are 40% and 32.5%. The data includes one example of the use of softeners (I think you do not know my name), one use of questions (Do you know my name?) and one use of other expressions ( let me tell you that this is my brother's name). These percentages are: 2.5% Eight students opt silence as it seems that this is not important to them to correct and it does not affect them that much. This comprises a percentage of 20%.

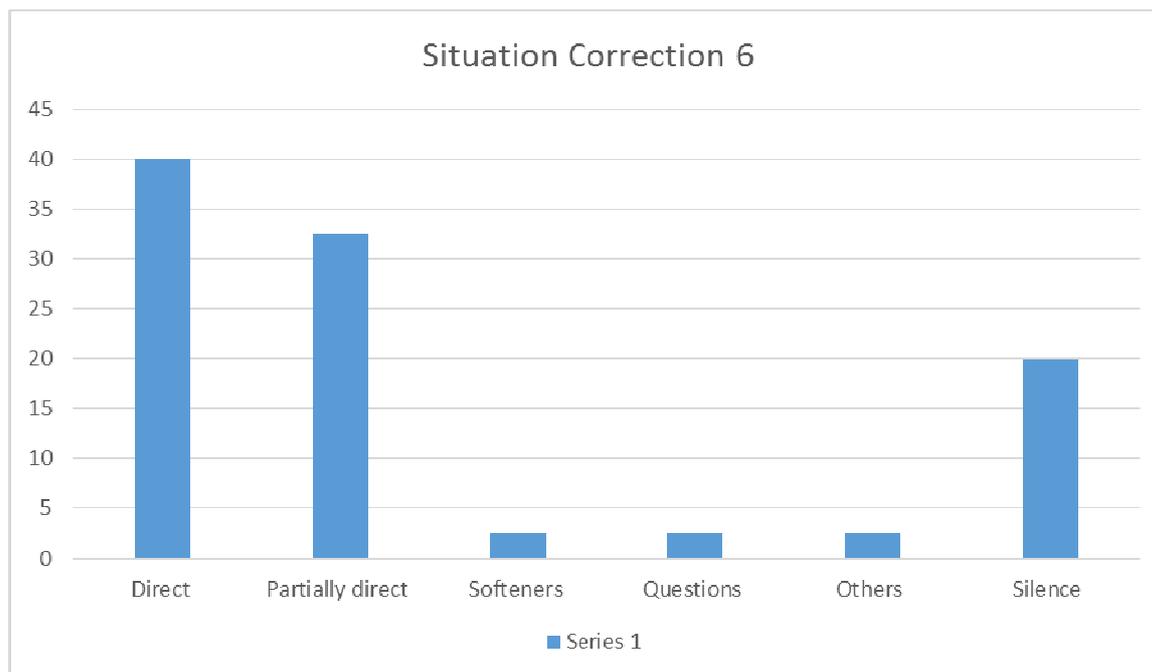


Figure (8) Situation Correction (6) Percentages

Discussing the last two situations of the higher to lower rank reveals clear direct use of this speech act. In the case of the teacher correcting students in class, data shows 42.5% acts are direct. All other items of analyzed are low compared with it. The situation of the neighbor shows that directness is preferable in higher to lower status (40% are direct acts). Interestingly, 20% of the responses opt to keep silence as calling name is of no importance to those subjects.

#### 4. Conclusions and Implications

From the data analysed, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The model developed by Takahashi and Beebe to study the speech act of correction in the American and Japanese societies can fit our data, yet with some modifications. This sheds light on the universality of this speech act and its similar representations in different cultures.
2. In terms of strategy used, Iraqi students prefer being direct in the use of the speech act studied. This might reveal part of their personal characteristics. They are aware as well that direct corrections are generally acceptable in their culture, otherwise they would not have performed any such act whether directly or indirectly.
3. Students are able to manipulate some polite forms and softeners to lessen the threat of the speech act. This means that they are aware of the inherent FTA of speech act in their daily interaction.
4. Students are aware of the rank-power notion in their interactions. This is shown by the fact that directness has different percentages in accordance with power-rank issue.
5. Positive remarks which can serve as introductory compliments or praise are not part of learners' cultural usage and awareness, although they minimize the FTA and keep communication smoother.
6. Students prefer to correct their conversational partners and only few instances of the whole data opt keeping quiet and silent. This means that they have the spirit of accomplishing the act and they are not shy to remain silent.

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#### Web Resources

- Incourse Pragmatics <http://www.indiana.edu/~discprag/index.html> Accessed at December, 17th, 2015
- Online Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English. Retrieved from: <http://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary>
- Online Merriam Webster Learner's Dictionary. Retrieved from: <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search>

#### Appendix (1) The Six Situations Used in the Test

How would you verbally correct someone in the following situation?

- 1- You and your sister are discussing about the famous singer- Celine Dion- you sister, says that Celine Dion is American (In fact, she is Canadian).
- 2- During the literature class, you teacher gives a topic for group discussion. One of your group mate equates a poem attributing it to the wrong poet.
- 3- Your head of department gives you a file that should be delivered to the Dean's office. He says you should deliver it to the Inbox section.
- 4- You are a student in a linguistics class. During the lecture the teacher mentions Chomsky saying he died two years ago. (In fact, he is still alive).
- 5- You are a professor in a history course. During class discussion, one of your students gives an account of a famous historical event with the wrong date.
- 6- Your neighbour's little son talks to you, but he calls you by your brother's name.