

Received: December 2023 Accepted: January 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58262/ks.v12i2.367>

## Pragma-Linguistic Invitation-Acceptance Strategies Employed by Iraqi EFL University Students in Face-to-Face Interactions

Salah Al-Maliki<sup>1</sup>, Azizollah Dabaghi<sup>2</sup>, Zahra Amirian<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

*The current study was an attempt to investigate the pragma-linguistic strategies that Iraqi EFL university students employ for accepting an invitation during face-to-face interactions. It also investigated the mediating roles of social status, relationship between the two interlocutors, and gender in choosing the invitation strategies. In order to answer the research questions, a number of (80) intermediate-level, fourth-year students of English studying at Basra University were chosen through an OPT. The students's interactions were divided into four cases (male-male; female-female; male-female; and female-male) and were given 12 Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) in the form of daily-life situations in which they had to accept an invitation directed to them by a partner in three different levels (High-Low, Low-High, and Equal Level). Al-Khatib's model of accepting an invitation (2006) was used to examine the types of strategies employed by the participants. The results revealed that most Iraqi EFL University students preferred starting their responses with a kind, polite phrase such as thanking and appreciating, complimenting, or offering good wishes before showing their acceptance. Others favored expressing their acceptance in a direct manner. The most prevalent strategies were Thanking and Appreciation as well as Direct strategies. Moreover, gender and social status played significant roles in determining the type of strategies employed by the participants. Males tended to utilize direct strategies mainly when responding to a female's invitation. Females, on the other hand, showed more femininity and kindness when responding to a male interlocutor's invitation. They tended to start with offering good wishes or thanking and appreciation before showing their acceptance. This study had some implications for*

**Keywords:** *pragma-linguistic strategies, invitation, accepting an invitation, face-to-face interaction*

### 1. Introduction

Invitation as a sample of social interactions is a crucial part of humans' daily communication. It is a tool for strengthening and developing social relationship and solidarity between the inviter and the invitee. In 2006, Al-Khatib stated that invitations represent an essential part of daily life since they are considered to be crucial parts of everyday customs. Moreover, they contribute to the establishment of some kind of social harmony among people. In some situations, people may accept these invitations, whereas in some other ones, they might decline them employing various pragmatic and linguistic strategies. For Leech (2014), invitation is an example of speech event that reflects the Generosity Maxim.

<sup>1</sup> Department of English Language and Literature, University of Isfahan, Iran, Email: [ssenglish89@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq](mailto:ssenglish89@uomustansiriyah.edu.iq)

<sup>2</sup> Department of English Language and Literature, University of Isfahan, Iran, (Corresponding author) Email: [advarnosfadrani@gmail.com](mailto:advarnosfadrani@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Department of English Language and Literature, University of Isfahan, Iran, Email: [z.amirian@fhn.ui.ac.ir](mailto:z.amirian@fhn.ui.ac.ir)

According to Searle's classification, invitations belong to "Directives". The speaker attempts to direct the hearer (the interlocutor) to do or not to do some future action. (ibid.). For some other specialists like Hancher (1979), invitation belongs to Commissive Directives which means that the speaker is committed to a certain course of behavior. Downing and Locke (2006), and later Aarts et al. (2020), state that declaratives are used for making invitations since they represent the most common and essential act used to express an action.

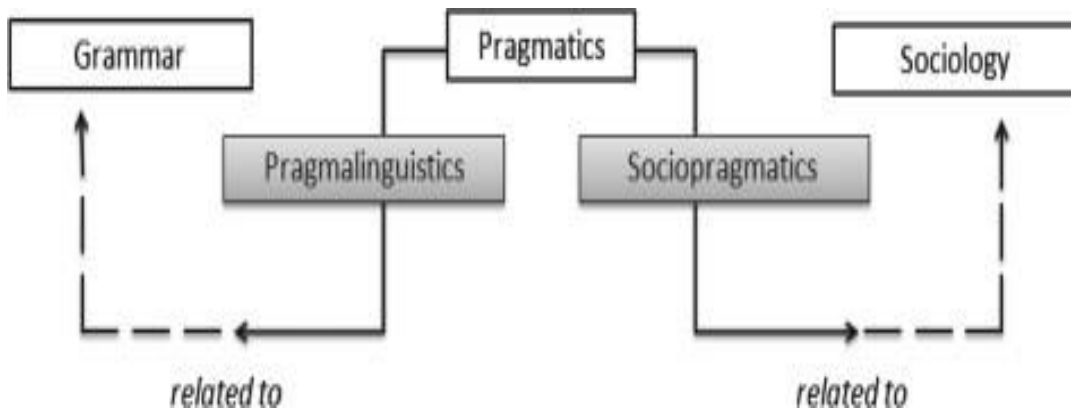
As different from other Speech Acts such as requests, invitations should not carry obligation, urgency or need; rather, they should reveal a voluntary decision and as such, invitations imply the tools for preserving social solidarity and interpersonal relationships and creating social cohesion (Drew and Couper-Kuhlen, 2014). In other words, making an invitation means that the recipients are willing to share their time with others.

For Hornby (2005), invitation is a form of request, whether spoken or written, for someone to do something or to go somewhere. Suzuki (2009, p.28) also declares that the occurrence of the speech act of invitation is "...when the participation or attendance of the addressee at a certain occasion or event is requested by a speaker, basically, one is hosted by the other". It is believed that the way of saying "Yes" or "No" to an invitation is much more important than the answer itself. Therefore, saying "Yes" or "No" requires a great practical skill (Abdul Sattar et al., 2010, p.81). The invitee "interlocutor" must know when to use the most appropriate form depending on the community cultural and pragma-linguistic values, level of the inviter to avoid any misunderstanding that might occur (Al- Kahtani, 2005).

Therefore, problems mainly occur when uttering (Yes or No), i.e. when accepting or refusing an invitation since people use different strategies in doing so in addition to directly saying (Yes or No) with a certain tone of voice. It seems that these strategies employed by Iraqi EFL learners are affected by some factors such as gender, age, social status and the relationship between the speaker and hearer (the addresser and addressee respectively) as well as the context in which the invitation occurs. Those learners, for instance, may not use (No), a matter that makes it difficult to understand and comprehend refusals. This can clearly be noticed when inviting a foreigner. In other words, it is an essential cross-cultural problem. Refusals require an intelligent level of pragmatic competence (Beebe et al., 1990). Moeschler (2004) believes that refusal is a difficult speech act to perform due to its complication in form. So to avoid offending one's interlocutor, various pragma-linguistic strategies are involved.

### **Socio-Pragmatics and Pragma-Linguistics**

According to Leech (2014), pragma-linguistics is related to the linguistic aspects or resources that a language provides in order to reflect a pragmatic meaning. As such, it is more related to the linguistic part of pragmatics rather than to any other part (Barron, 2003). Socio-pragmatics, on the other hand, shows the relationship between pragmatic meaning and some factors such as age, gender, social status, and accepted behavior. Jasim (2017) states that socio-pragmatics "is the sociological interface of pragmatics which studies the ways in which pragmatic performance and principles are subject to specific social conditions" (p. 22). In a nutshell, a look at the following diagram may help understand the distinction between socio-pragmatics and Pragma-linguistics.



**Figure 1:** The Distinction Between Socio-Pragmatics And Pragma-Linguistics (Diagram adopted from <https://www.researchgate.net/figure/>).

According to this diagram, it might be clear that pragmatics is related to grammar and sociology, a matter that creates pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics respectively. As far as the present study is concerned, strategies employed by Iraqi university intermediate level students when accepting an invitation would be tackled with reference to these two analyses, pragma-linguistics, and socio-pragmatics. The effect of social status and gender on choosing one strategy over another was the main focus of study.

Abdul Sattar (2010) proposed that the type of responses directed to an invitation may highly depend on many factors such as the social relationship between the inviter and invitee, i.e. whether the two participants have the same social status, lower or higher, social conditions, the gender of both participants, i.e. when an invitation is uttered by a female to a male, the male's response and wording might be completely different in case the inviter is a male. All these factors might play a central role in determining which strategies ought to be used. It is not a matter of what to say in accepting or declining an invitation, but how to say it. According to Abdul Sattar (2010, p.81), saying "Yes" or "No" needs great practicality and skill. The way of saying "Yes" or "No" is much more influential than the answer itself. The invitee has to know when and how to employ the most suitable form depending on the society cultural and pragma-linguistic values, level of the inviter. This is done in order to avoid any misunderstanding that might take place (Al-Kahtani, 2005). To sum up, the types of strategies employed in accepting an invitation were tackled in this study in accordance with the two essential variables that are the social relationship between the two participants and the gender.

### Acceptance of an Invitation

Arab societies are distinguished by their generosity. They almost pay close attention not to what to say but to how to say it in order not to threaten the face of the people to whom they are talking. Invitation, as a simple example of this hospitality, is considered as a very important social behavior (Al-Khatib, 2006, p. 286).

The way we make, accept, or decline an invitation might highly depend on various factors such as the communicative competence of the invitee, social status or relationship with the inviter, age, and gender. People might tend to accept an invitation since declining it is considered as a face-threatening act, a matter that might cause some problems. As such, the way of directing an invitation has a great influence on the invitee's response. In this respect, Trong (2012, p.56) emphasizes that inviting someone means directing a polite utterance by which the inviter

politely asks the invitee to do something. Accepting an invitation might be performed using various strategies in addition to the direct ones of saying (Yes) for instance. However, as stated before, it does not matter what to say, but how to say it. The way of responding is governed by many factors stated before such as social status and gender whose effects were examined in this study.

## **Empirical Background**

So far a number of studies have been carried out to investigate invitation strategies used by EFL learners. In this section, some of them are reviewed. Majeed Hussein, et al., (2022) investigated Iraqi University students' ability to use the speech act of invitation. Fifty fourth-year EFL students from Iraq at the University of Misan took part in the study where a production text was used as the data collection instrument. It was demonstrated that those students lack the ability to produce invitational utterances and have difficulty doing so. In most circumstances, they also exhibit a strong preference for modality, imperatives, and interrogatives. The majority of their statements about invitations are translations of common Iraqi phrases used in conversation (Majeed Hussein, et al., 2022).

Al-Hamzi, et al. (2020) compared how Indonesian and Yemeni EFL learners used speech acts of invitation. The participants included 30 students from Indonesia and 30 students from Yemen. Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used to gather the data. In addition, Bruder and Tillitt (1999), Al-Khatib (2006), and Suzuki's (2009) models of invitation strategies were used. The findings showed similarities and differences in using invitation strategies. It was shown that some invitation strategies were culturally specific and others are common across the two cultures. In this respect, Indonesian EFL learners preferred to use indirect invitation strategies. In contrast, the imperative strategy and yes/no questions were the two most popular direct invitation strategies used by Yemeni EFL students. Additionally, the study's findings showed that Yemeni and Indonesian EFL students did not take into account differences in sentence structure and word order between the two languages when they translated utterances from their mother tongues into the target language.

In another related study, Suraih (2019) investigated the invitation strategies which were produced by Yemeni EFL learners. According to the study's findings, Yemeni EFL students preferred inviting people directly. They frequently apply what they already know in their native tongue as they learn English.

Another study conducted by Abbood (2016) investigated the Iraqi EFL learners' competence in speech acts of offer and invitation. Iraqi EFL learners preferred imperative and interrogative strategies for offering or inviting.

In addition, Sukesti (2014) investigated invitation strategies as provided by Indonesian EFL learners. The results indicated that Indonesian EFL learners employed different invitation strategies. It was also revealed that Indonesian EFL learners usually translate invitation strategies which they employ in their mother tongue. Moreover, it was shown that social rank and intimacy affected the types of strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners.

Additionally, Salmani-Nodoushan's (2006) discussion of Farsi ostensible invitations—another category of invitations created by Iranian inviters—aims to discuss invitations as expressions of pragmatics in general. The findings of this study showed that English-language invitations

and ostensible Iranian invitations have many similarities. It has also been demonstrated that Iranian invitation senders use the same techniques as their English counterparts to make their invitations appear lively. The results of this study show that the ostensible Iranian invitations adhere to the general standards that influence language usage, to put it briefly.

Additionally, Al-Khatib (2006) looked into the effectiveness of invitation tactics in Jordan. The results showed the approaches Jordanians took when inviting, accepting, or declining. The study came to the conclusion that Jordanians preferred to invite others while needing to swear to demonstrate their willingness and show their desire to invite others. Jordanians prefer to express gratitude, appreciation, good willingness, goodwill expression, and compliments when accepting an invitation. As the review of the existing literature reveals, not much research has been carried out to investigate the invitation and acceptance strategies by Iraqi EFL learners; accordingly, the following research questions were posed:

### **Research Questions**

- 1-What are the dominant strategies employed by Iraqi EFL University students when accepting an invitation in face-to-face interaction?
- 2-Do the variables of gender and social status have any influence on the choice of strategies employed?

## **Methodology**

### **3.1. Design of the Study**

This study employed a quantitative design. As stated earlier, the (80) participants were placed in four groups to find out the effects of gender and social status on selecting the strategies. For each case, three different situations were given (See Appendix A). Having been recorded, all the participants' responses were transcribed (See Appendix B) in order to be later analyzed via the use of particular statistical methods and tools, such as number of occurrence, frequencies and percentages, aiming at identifying the type of strategies the participants might use in face-to-face interaction and whether or not the variables of gender and social status have any influence of the type of strategies employed. These responses were pragma-linguistically analyzed and discussed.

### **Participants**

Having been studying English for more than three years, fourth-year students at Department of English-College of Arts, Basra University were chosen as the sample of the present study. They were selected since they had studied speech acts within their academic years whether at the secondary school or the university.

Morning study participants were chosen because they are all of the same age in order to avoid any age-related effects. Since these topics are included in the Iraqi EFL curricula and syllabuses, the researcher believes that fourth-year students should be expected to know a little bit about the speech act of invitation and many other acts. In their Secondary school and universities, the most official textbooks used are those of Headway by (Soars & Soars, 1996) for British curricula and Interchange (Richards et al., 1997) for American curricula, respectively. Due to their great number that exceeds (153) students, an Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was conducted to identify those students with an intermediate level. The levels of the students were determined based on the test results, as shown in Table 1, where the results were reported as

(CEFR) level and standardized score for the test as a whole.

**Table 1:** Oxford Placement Test Results.

CEFR Level	Score Range	Respondents
A1	0-20	1
A2	21-40	10
B1	41-60	7
B2	61-80	89
C1	81-100	23
Total		130

([https://www.hdmstuttgart.de/en/students/departments/language\\_center/placement\\_tests/oopt](https://www.hdmstuttgart.de/en/students/departments/language_center/placement_tests/oopt))

Students who got 61-80 marks were located within the upper Intermediate level. They are also called independent users. A number of (89) students were within this level. They were placed under another filtration process in which they were asked some questions to avoid individual differences. The questions included:

- Have you ever lived in a country that speaks English?
- Do you make chats with native speakers of English?
- Is one of your parents a native speaker of English?

The answers to these questions led the researcher to exclude (6) of the students, then (3) students refused to take part in the face-to-face interaction test; therefore, (80) students were chosen to be the sample of the study. At University level, students are expected to take part in many discussions, debates that involve various speech acts such as inviting each other. As a result, the researcher believes that those students would be a suitable sample for his study.

### 3.3. Instruments

To fulfill the aims of the study and test its hypotheses, 12 Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) in the form of different situations were accurately constructed to be given to (80) University intermediate-level students- Department of English-College of Arts-Basra University in a face-to-face interactional context. The test situation's validity and reliability were ensured by exposing them to jury members (5 members) who are experts in the field of linguistics and language teaching. All the jury members' comments and notes were taken into high consideration, a matter that led to the final version of the test situations copy to be given to the participants.

#### Procedure

After identifying the (80) intermediate-level students (with equal gender), via the application of the (OPT), the students were divided into four cases as follows: (male-male), (female-female), (male-female), and (female-male) and were given (12) daily-life situations in which they have to accept an invitation directed to them by a partner in three different levels, i.e. (High-Low, Low-High, and Equal Level). The aim behind the division into four cases was to test the effect of gender on the type of strategies used, while the aim behind the three-level division was to show the effect of social status or relationships. To clarify this, let's take the following example:

1-Salah: your boss, Ali, has a birthday party next week and he invites you. How would you accept it?

-You:

This situation shows an invitation directed from a higher male-level to a lower male one. The aim behind such situations was to know whether Iraqi University intermediate level students use the same strategies when accepting an invitation in accordance with gender and social status.

Test validity was ensured by asking five experts in the field of linguistics and language teaching to check the test procedure and situations.

#### 4. Results

Each case was given three different situations which addressed the effect of the two previously mentioned variables. Having been recorded, the whole responses were transcribed and then classified according to the coding process; (open-coding, axial-coding, and selective-coding). To put it another way, responses such as (thank you, I highly appreciate this) were classified under the code of (Thanking and appreciation), and expressions like (I'm so happy to hear this, it is my pleasure to come) were given the code of (Expressing gladness). Accordingly, the responses were undergone coding-classification according to Al-Khatib's (2006) model of accepting an invitation which was used to find out the types of strategies employed by the participants. In his model, Al-Khatib (2006) suggests that in accepting an invitation, the invitee may resort to one of the following strategies:

- 1- Thanking and appreciating (S1)
- 2- Stressing common membership (S2)
- 3- Expressing gladness (S3)
- 4- Complimenting (S4)
- 5- Offering good wishes (S5)

Using the coding method, the participants' transcribed responses were classified to find out which of these strategies were widely used by the participants and whether or not there might be some other new strategies that were not located in Al-Khatib's (2006) model, (Other Ss.) or direct acceptance-strategies.

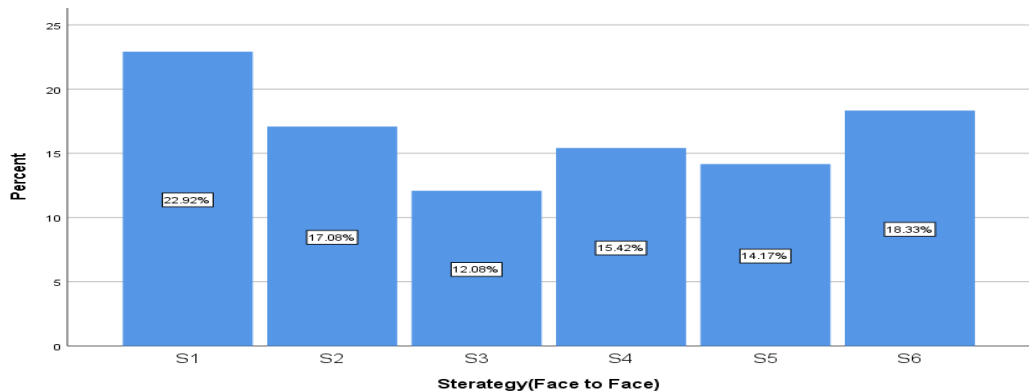
Having been transcribed and analyzed, the data revealed that participants have employed various types of acceptance strategies when responding to an invitation. In most responses, the first strategy (S1) of Thanking and Appreciation was widely employed by most participants, a matter that showed a highly respectful and polite style since fronting the thanking and appreciation phrases would easily reflect this. 89.58% of the participants made use of this strategy when accepting an invitation regardless of gender or social status. On a parallel side, some other strategies were also used.

**Table 2:** Frequency and Percentages of all Strategies Employed.

		Strategy (Face to Face)			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	S1: Thanking and appreciation	55	22.9	22.9	22.9
	S2: Stressing common membership	41	17.1	17.1	40.0
	S3: Expressing gladness	29	12.1	12.1	52.1
	S4: Complimenting	37	15.4	15.4	67.5
	S5: Offering good wishes	34	14.2	14.2	81.7
	S6: Other Direct Acceptance Strategies	44	18.3	18.3	100.0
Total		240	100.0	100.0	

A look at Table 2 reveals that most participants preferred being polite in their responses regardless of the gender and social status of the one to whom they are responding. As far as

the first research question is concerned, (S1 and Other Ss. - direct strategies) were the most dominant strategies employed when accepting an invitation as indicated in Figure 1:



**Figure 1:** Frequency and Percentages of all Strategies Employed.

However, despite the high percentage of the first two strategies, some significant differences were found in some responses that indicate the importance of the social status or relationship between the two participants, particularly when responding to a participant with lower or equal level, which provides the answer to the second research question. This can clearly be noticed through a look at the responses of each situation. (See Appendix B). Here are some examples:

Case 1-“You are at a party, a teacher of yours invites you to a glass of orange juice.

Case 2- Fatemah : Your younger sister, Saja, invites you to go to the cinema movie (or to the market) next Sunday.

Case 3- Fatemah: Your boss, Falah, invites you to have a cup of tea with him.

A look at these situations that reflect an invitation from a higher to lower level in case 1 revealed that (10) out of (20) participants used (S1) in their responses, a matter that shows their respect to the inviter and their being more polite than the case in which they respond to a participant with a lower or an equal level. In situations (2) and (5), cases 1 and 2 respectively, for instance, only one or two respondents started their response with an appreciation or thanking since their partner belongs to the same level. Most of them used direct acceptance strategies other than the five ones listed in the model. As a result, the first hypothesis was proved correct, i.e. participants employed various strategies when accepting an invitation.

Let us consider the following situation derived from case 1:

- Situation Two: Your friend (a staff member) invites you to go to the cinema movie.

Here an invitation was directed from a participant with an equal level, as a result, the invitee utilized direct strategies that were not listed before such as:

-Yeah, let's go

-Yes, sure

-Okay, let's go, man

They do not fall under any of the categories of the listed strategies, even though they completely reflect acceptance of the invitation. The respondent might believe that there is no need to express gratitude or good wishes because power and distance are absent at this level. This was



observed when both participants' genders were the same, as shown in the example below:

**Case 2-Situation 5-** Hadeel: Your girlfriend, Sarah, invites you to have a meal (Or orange juice) with her, or to her birthday party.

In this situation, a female invited her girlfriend to have something. Only (2) out of (12) employed thanking and appreciation in their responses, but females have some other strategies to show their femininity and softness via the employment of other strategies such as (S4) and (S5) of complimenting and offering good wishes respectively.

A striking point was noticed when an invitation was directed from lower to higher level where most respondents started their acceptance with thanking and appreciation to the invitee. This might clearly be noticed in the following situations:

- Case 1- Situation 3: One of the workers in your company wants to pay your way.
- Case2- Situation 6: Fatemah : Your younger sister, Saja, invites you to go to the cinema movie (or to the market) next Sunday.

In both situations, (12) out of (20) at about (60%) participants started with thanking and appreciation. As compared with (Female-male) and (Male-female), a great shift was noticed where (S1) was rarely used. In these situations:

- Case 3- Situation 8: Hadeel: An undergraduate male student who gets along with you invites you to have lunch with him.
- Case 4- Situation 11: Hasan: Your younger sister, Wejdan, invites you to have a cup of tea with her.

Females were less strict in their responses to males than in any cases. This can be noticed in situation 8 above where only 25% of males employed the S1 and 25% employed S4 and S5 in their responses. Males, on the other hand, in situation 11 used direct strategies that were not among the five listed in the model. Some of their responses were:

- Yes, sure
- OK, but don't be late
- Yeah, I need a cup of tea
- Yeah, let's go. I'm free to go.

Though they show full agreement and acceptance, still such responses lack some aspects especially those of showing high respect, thankfulness, good wishes and compliments. Such strategies were noticed with participants of lower to higher level and with equal levels as well. Participants thought that providing a direct response might indicate respect as well as total agreement and acceptance. Let us take the following situations:

- Case3- Situation 7: Zainab your classmate, Ahmed, invites you to his party.
- Case 4- Situation 10: Ahmed: Your colleague, Hadeel, invites you to her birthday party.

Females showed their respect to males' invitation through the employment of strategies such as S4 (offering good wishes) and S2 (stressing common relationship). Most males, on the other hand, used direct strategies other than those listed before in responding to females' invitation, and some others showed respectful opinion via the use of S1 and S3 as can be noticed below respectively:

- Why not
- Yeah, I will come
- I will definitely attend

- Yes yes I will come of course
- Thank you for being kind.
- Happy birthday dear. May I bring something?
- Many thanks for inviting dear. Sure I will

It might be seen here that females preferred fronting thanking and appreciating and offering good wishes before showing their acceptance of the invitation directed to them. Males, on the other hand, were less thankful than females in the majority of their responses, instead, they preferred using direct acceptance strategies other than the other strategies previously stated in the model. When inquired, most of them stated that it seems shameful to use soft words with females and that our manhood does not include such words. Males' dependence was heavily made upon other strategies whereas females' upon offering good wishes and thanking and appreciation. When interviewed, most of the female participants said that females are distinguished by their femininity and softness in the use of language; therefore, we should be more polite and express our sincere gratitude first before showing our acceptance of an invitation especially by a male inviter. Accordingly, gender plays a crucial role in determining which type of strategies to use when accepting an invitation.

Considering the other cases in which both participants were male or female, it might be noticed that there was no dominant strategy when the two participants were males or females except the use of S1 and other Ss. This also reinforced the role gender plays in determining the type of strategies employed when accepting an invitation. The majority of participants when interviewed stated that with similar gender it would not matter how to respond or how we should start our responses since we are equals, whether males or females, especially with equal level.

Concerning the effect of the second variable, i.e. social status, it is a part of our hospitality to show respect and use polite structures when responding to an invitation. This is performed either to show respect when responding to an invitation directed by a higher-level partner, or to show sympathy and kindness to weak or lower-level people. This can clearly be noticed in the following situations:

- Case 1- Situation 1: "You are at a party, and a teacher of yours invites you to a glass of orange juice.
- Case 1- Situation 3: One of the workers in your company wants to pay your way.

Situation 1 shows an invitation from a higher to a lower level. About 50% of the participants started their responses by thanking and appreciating and complimenting as well before uttering their acceptance. In situation 3, on the other hand, about 58% employed S1 in their responses that were directed to a lower-level partner. The same can be noticed with other situations such as (6, 7), a matter that gives a valid indication of the influence which this variable, social status, has on determining which strategy is to be used.

**Table 2:** Strategies Used in Male to Male Interactions.

Case(Male-Male) * Strategy( Face to Face) Cross-tabulation								
		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
High-Low	Count	6	4	0	4	6	0	20
	% within Strategy	42.9%	36.4%	0.0%	44.4%	75.0%	0.0%	33.3%
Male-Male	Low-High	5	5	4	2	0	4	20
	% within Strategy	35.7%	45.5%	44.4%	22.2%	0.0%	44.4%	33.3%
Equal Level	Count	3	2	5	3	2	5	20
	% within Strategy	21.4%	18.2%	55.6%	33.3%	25.0%	55.6%	33.3%

Total	Count	14	11	9	9	8	9	60
	% within Strategy	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

As Table 3 indicates, Cramer V coefficient is 0.567 and the approximate significance is 0.037. This shows that in male to male interactions, the type of strategies have significant relations with the three conditions of High-low, low-high and equal level.

**Table 3:** Cramer V Coefficient for Male to Male Interactions.

Symmetric Measures		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.567	.037
	Cramer's V	.401	.037
N of Valid Cases		60	

For male to female interactions, the results indicates that the second strategy had been favored more while the second strategy was absent.

**Table 4:** Strategies Used in Male to Female Interactions.

Case(Male-Female) * Strategy (Face to Face) Cross-tabulation									
		Sterategy2						Total	
		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6		
Male-Female	High-Low	Count	6	5	0	3	4	2	20
		% within Strategy	42.9%	45.5%	0.0%	30.0%	40.0%	18.2%	33.3%
	Low-High	Count	5	4	0	4	3	4	20
		% within Strategy	35.7%	36.4%	0.0%	40.0%	30.0%	36.4%	33.3%
	Equal Level	Count	3	2	4	3	3	5	20
		% within Strategy	21.4%	18.2%	100.0%	30.0%	30.0%	45.5%	33.3%
Total	Count	14	11	4	10	10	11	60	
	% within Strategy	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

However, Cramer V coefficient is 0.446 and the approximate significance is 0.289. This shows that in male to female interactions, the type of strategies have no significant relations with the three conditions of High-low, low-high and equal level.

**Table 5:** Cramer V Coefficient for Male to Female Interactions.

Symmetric Measures		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.446	.289
	Cramer's V	.316	.289
N of Valid Cases		60	

The next case is related to female interactions as indicated in Table 6. Females seem to be more thankful than males in their responses, though in the case of (Female-female) this politeness is less noticed. Most of high-level participants when responding tend to be more polite and try to show their prestigious nature to their partner.

**Table 6:** Strategies Used in Female to Female Interactions.

Case(Female-Female) * Strategy (Face to Face) Cross-tabulation								
		Sterategy2						Total
		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	

	High-Low	Count	6	4	0	4	2	4	20
		% within Strategy	46.2%	44.4%	0.0%	50.0%	28.6%	25.0%	33.3%
Female-Female	Low-High	Count	4	3	1	3	3	6	20
		% within Strategy	30.8%	33.3%	14.3%	37.5%	42.9%	37.5%	33.3%
	Equal Level	Count	3	2	6	1	2	6	20
		% within Strategy	23.1%	22.2%	85.7%	12.5%	28.6%	37.5%	33.3%
Total		Count	13	9	7	8	7	16	60
		% within Strategy	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%

However, Crammer V coefficient is 0.468 and the approximate significance is 0.216. This shows that in male to female interactions, the type of strategies have no significant relations with the three conditions of High-low, low-high and equal level.

**Table 7:** Crammer V Coefficient for Male to Female Interactions

Symmetric Measures			
		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.468	.216
	Cramer's V	.331	.216
N of Valid Cases		60	

Finally, the last case was related to female to male interactions. As indicated in Table 8, the first and the fifth strategies equally enjoyed the highest frequency.

**Table 8:** Strategies Used in Female to Male Interactions

Case(Female-male) * Strategy (Face to Face) Cross-tabulation									
		Sterategy2						Total	
		S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6		
	High-Low	Count	5	4	1	5	3	2	20
		% within Strategy	35.7%	40.0%	11.1%	50.0%	33.3%	25.0%	33.3%
Female-Male	Low-High	Count	4	3	4	2	3	4	20
		% within Strategy	28.6%	30.0%	44.4%	20.0%	33.3%	50.0%	33.3%
	Equal Level	Count	5	3	4	3	3	2	20
		% within Strategy	35.7%	30.0%	44.4%	30.0%	33.3%	25.0%	33.3%
Total		Count	14	10	9	10	9	8	60
		% within Strategy	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

However, Crammer V coefficient is 0.281 and the approximate significance is 0.908. This shows that in female to male interactions, the type of strategies have no significant relations with the three conditions of High-low, low-high and equal level.

**Table 9:** Crammer V Coefficient for Female to Male Interactions

Symmetric Measures			
--------------------	--	--	--

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.281	.908
	Cramer's V	.199	.908
N of Valid Cases		60	

In the next section of the analysis, the four conditions were considered together as indicated in

**Table 10:** All Conditions of Interactions.

		Case * Strategy(Face to Face) Cross-tabulation						Total
		1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	
Male-male	Count	14	11	9	9	8	9	60
	% within Strategy	25.5%	26.8%	31.0%	24.3%	23.5%	20.5%	25.0%
Male-female	Count	14	11	4	10	10	11	60
	% within Strategy	25.5%	26.8%	13.8%	27.0%	29.4%	25.0%	25.0%
Female-female	Count	13	9	7	8	7	16	60
	% within Strategy	23.6%	22.0%	24.1%	21.6%	20.6%	36.4%	25.0%
Female-male	Count	14	10	9	10	9	8	60
	% within Strategy	25.5%	24.4%	31.0%	27.0%	26.5%	18.2%	25.0%
Total	Count	55	41	29	37	34	44	240
	% within Strategy	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

And as the results of chi-square indicates, there are no statistically significant differences among the strategies and the interaction cases. In other words, the type of strategy is independent from the interaction case (male to male, male to female, female to male and female to male).

**Table 11:** Chi-Square Results for Strategies and Interaction Types.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.973 <sup>a</sup>	15	.958
Likelihood Ratio	7.039	15	.957
Linear-by-Linear Association	.049	1	.825
N of Valid Cases	240		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 7.25.

However, the results of chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between strategy type and social status as indicated in Table 12. This shows that the change in social status leads to changing the strategy:

**Table 12:** Chi-Square Results for Strategies and Social Status.

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	29.627 <sup>a</sup>	10	.001
Likelihood Ratio	33.191	10	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.991	1	.084
N of Valid Cases	240		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.67.

Regarding gender, however, the results of chi-square test indicated no significant relationship between strategy type and gender in all cases as indicated in Table 13:

**Table 13:** Chi-Square Results for Strategies and Gender.

<b>Chi-Square Tests</b>			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.032 <sup>a</sup>	5	.545
Likelihood Ratio	4.069	5	.540
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.276	1	.259
N of Valid Cases	240		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 14.50.

## Discussion & Conclusions

Most Arabs used to accept invitations on a daily basis because it is a necessary behavior that improves interpersonal relationships. However, there are a variety of ways that humans can express their acceptance of an invitation. The selection of a particular strategy is largely influenced by a variety of different elements or variables, including gender, social standing, and relationships with the invitee and other partners.

In general, most Iraqi EFL University intermediate-level students prefer starting their responses with a kind polite phrase such as thanking and appreciating, complimenting, or offering good wishes before showing their acceptance. Some others prefer using direct way to show their acceptance. S1 and Direct strategies were the most dominant strategies employed by them since both got about 89.58% in all cases. However, gender and social status play a central role in determining which type of strategies to employ. Males tend to utilize direct strategies more than the rest mainly when responding to a female's invitation. Females, on the other hand, showed more femininity and kindness when responding to a male's invitation. They tend to start with offering good wishes (S5) or thanking and appreciating (S1) before showing their acceptance with a percentage of 30.5% and 27.77%, respectively.

What was striking in the result analysis was that males were very kind, and showed noticeable respect and hospitality when responding to another male's invitation, being associated with more bold expressions than females. Males are more frequently clear than females. This was noticeable in the responses stated before when both interacted with each other. S1 obtained 38.88% of the total responses, while the direct strategies got 25% of them. Females, on the other hand, employed S1 in a parallel way with the direct strategies since both

obtained about 33.33% of the total number.

A lower-level male preferred starting with S1 and S4 before expressing his acceptance of an invitation stated by a higher-level male. 50% of lower-level males employed S1 in responding to a higher-level male's invitation. This represents a crucial aspect of our Arab society, i.e. that of showing respect and appreciation to older people or higher status ones. Turning to females, the case seems to be completely different. About 50% of females' responses depended on the use of direct strategies when responding to a higher-level female's invitation.

A lower-level female preferred employing different strategies when responding to a higher-level male's invitation. Most females used S1, S4, S5, and direct strategies when doing so. All these strategies were equally employed here with a percentage of 25% for each. But a lower-level male's response to a higher-level female's invitation was almost direct. Direct strategies used were at about 67% of the total responses.

The findings in terms of making use of invitation strategies are in line with the study by Majeed Hussein, et al., (2022) which investigated Iraqi University students' ability to employ the invitation speech act. It was shown that the participants showed a high preference to use modality, imperatives, and interrogatives in most contexts. Their utterances concerning invitations were mostly translations of Iraqi phrases used in commonplace spoken Iraqi contexts.

Moreover, regarding the effects of social status in accepting invitation strategies, the findings of the present research lend support to the study by Sukesti (2014) in which invitation strategies as provided by Indonesian EFL learners were investigated. The results indicated that Indonesian EFL learners employed different invitation strategies. It was also that social rank and intimacy affected the types of strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners.

Finally, the findings are comparable with those of a study by Al-Khatib (2006) that looked into the effectiveness of invitation strategies in Jordan and found that Jordanians preferred to invite others while also feeling the need to demonstrate their willingness and show their wishes by including some swear words. Jordanians preferred to express gratitude, appreciation, good willingness, goodwill expression, and compliments when accepting an invitation.

In a nutshell, since the acceptance of an invitation might not be a face-threatening act, as refusals do, it seems convenient to employ any type of strategy with respect to the partner. Gender and social status or relationship between the two participants play a very important role in determining which type of strategies ought to be used. The use of direct strategies does not indicate a less respectful response than the other ones since it is a characteristic of some people of being direct in their lifestyle.

## **References**

- Aarts, B., Bowie, J. & Popova, G. (2020). *The Oxford Handbook of English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Abdul Sattar, H. Q., Lah, S. C., & Raja Suleiman, R. R. (2010). A study on Strategies used in Iraqi Arabic to refuse suggestions. *University Sains Malaysia. The International Journal of Language Society and Culture*, 81-95.
- Abbood, H. (2016). *Investigating the use of the two speech acts of invitation and offer Among Iraqi EFL University Learners*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University Science Malaysia. USM. Malaysia.

- Al-Falig, H. (2016). Invitation in Saudi Arabic: A Sociopragmatic Analysis. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of King Abdulaziz –Rabigh.
- Al-Hamzi, A. M. S., Sartini, N. W., Hapsari, N. F., Gougui, A., & Al-Nozili, R. M. A. (2020). A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Study of Invitation Strategies As Produced by Indonesian and Yemeni EFL Language Learners. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 9(6), 42-53.
- Al Kahtani, S. A. (2005). Refusals Realizations in Three Different Cultures: A Speech Act Theoretically-based Cross-cultural Study. *Lang. & Transl*, 18, 35-57.
- Al-Khatib, M. A. (2006). The pragmatics of invitation making and acceptance in Jordanian society. *Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 5(2), 272-294.
- Al-Marrani, Y. M. A., & Suraih, N. S. (2018). Invitation strategies as produced by Yemeni EFLlearners. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 3(2),15-24.
- Austin, J. (1962). *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Barron, A. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics: Learning How to Do Things with Words in a Study Abroad Context*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness Phenomena. In: Goody, E. (ed.), *Questions and politeness: strategies in social interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 56-310.
- Bruder, M. N., & Tillitt, B. (1999). *Speaking naturally* (Twelfth pr). Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J. & Haugh. M. (2014). *Pragmatics and the English Language*. London. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Downing, A. & Locke, P. (2006). *English Grammar: A University Course* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London:Routledge.
- Drew, P. (2005). Conversation Analysis in Kristine L. Fitch, Robert E. Sanders, (Eds.) *Handbook of Language and Social Interaction*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp.71-102.
- Drew, P., & Couper-Kuhlen E. (2014). (Eds.), *Requesting in Social Interaction*. Amsterdam:Benjamins.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, Context, and Text: Aspects of Language in a Social-Semiotic Perspective* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University.
- Hancher, M. (1979). The classification of cooperative illocutionary acts. *Language and Society*, 8 (1), 1-14.
- Jasim. M. & Taher. B. (2017). Refusals of Requests and Offers in Iraqi Arabic and British English, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Manchester
- LoCastro, V. (2012). *Pragmatics for language educators: A sociolinguistic perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge
- Leech. G. N. (2014). *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Majeed Hussein, N., Lutfi Hussein, A. & Qasim Kareem, N. (2022). Iraqi EFL University Students' Strategies of Producing Invitation. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*. 11-18. 10.32996/ijllt.2022.5.3.2.
- Marrani, Y.M. (2019). Invitation Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners.
- Richards J. C., Hull, J., & Proctor, S. (1997). *Interchange Students' Book*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salmani-Nodoushan, M. A. (2006). A Socio-Pragmatic Comparative Study of Ostensible Invitations in English and Farsi. *Speech Communication*. 48. 903-912. 10.1016/j.specom.2005.12.001.
- Sukesti, L. A. (2014). Interlanguage pragmatics of invitation By Indonesian EFL learners. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.



- Suzuki, T. (2009). How do American University Students “Invite” others?: A Corpus-based Study of Linguistic Strategies for the Speech Act of “Invitations”. Matsuyama University: Japan, 85-106.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts: an Essay in the philosophy of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, J. R. (ed.) (1979). *Expression and meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Soars, L., & Soars, J. (1996). *New headway English course intermediate students' book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Suzuki, T. (2009). How do American University Students “Invite” others? : A Corpus-based Study of Linguistic Strategies for the Speech Act of “Invitations. 11th Annual Conference of Pragmatics Society in Japan.
- Touchie, H. Y. (1986). Second language learning errors: Their types, causes, and treatment. *JALT Journal*, 8(1), 75-80.
- Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. (5th ed.), Oxford: Blackwell.
- Suraih, N. (2019). Invitation Strategies as Produced by Yemeni EFL Learners. *Applied Linguistics Research Journal*, 3(2), 15–34.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## **Appendix A**

### Test Situations

How would you accept the following invitations?

#### Case 1- Male-male

- 1- “You are at a party, a teacher of yours invites you to a glass of orange juice”.
- 2- Your friend (a staff member) invites you to go to the cinema movie.
- 3- One of the workers in your company wants to pay your way.

#### Case 2- Female-female

- 1- Zaineb: You are a teacher, and you are invited by your student Zahra’ a to drink something, or to her birthday party.
- 2- Hadeel: Your girlfriend, Sarah, invites you to have a meal (Or orange juice) with her, or to her birthday party.
- 3- Fatemah : Your younger sister, Saja, invites you to go to the cinema movie (or to the market) next Sunday.

#### Case 3- Male-female

- 1- Zainab your classmate, Ahmed, invites you to his party.
- 2- Hadeel: An undergraduate male student who gets along with you invites you to have lunch with him.
- 3- Fatemah: Your boss, Falah, invites you to have a cup of tea with him.

#### Case 4- Female-male

- 1- Ahmed: Your colleague, Hadeel, invites you to her birthday party.
- 2- Hasan: Your younger sister, Wejdan, invites you to have a cup of tea with her.
- 3- Ziad: your manager, Tabarrek, invites you to have a drink with her.

## **Appendix B**

Some of the Participants' transcribed responses

-Case 1- Situation 1

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Thank you that's so kind of you (low tone)	7	Oh thanks a lot
2	Thanks Sir. I will be honored, Of course I will.	8	I would say thank you
3	I really appreciate this Sir. That's so kind of you.	9	i will be sure to arrive there early
4	That's so kind of you dear Sir	10	That is very kind of you
5	Happy birthday dear teacher. I will be so happy to come	11	Oh, teacher, this is very nice of you
6	I hope you happy birthday. Sure I will	12	Oh thank you I will be glad! Yes, with pleasure

Case 1- Situation 2

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Thank you. That's so kind of you	7	I can't wait!
2	Yeah, let's go	8	I would like to
3	Yes sure.	9	It is my pleasure to come with you
4	Yes, I will	10	Okay, let's go man!
5	Not need be invited	11	Yes, I would like to go with you
6	It would be a fantastic idea dear	12	Sure

Case 1- Situation 3

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Thank you	7	thank you i appreciate the invitation
2	Appreciate it	8	Okay, no problem.
3	Oh! That's very kind of you	9	Thank you for your sharing
4	Yes, why not	10	Thank you so much for your being kind
5	That's so kind of you	11	thank you for that
6	OK. Just this time	12	That's so kind of you

Case 2- Situation1

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Oh! Thank you for your invitation. Sure, I will be there	7	I will be sure to arrive there early
2	Thank you for your invitation, I will make sure to be on time.	8	Thank you for this tea
3	OK. That sounds good.	9	Well, I'll come. Thank you for the invitation
4	Oh! Thank you so much I appreciate that. I will come.	10	Thank you for inviting me
5	A lot of things, I will come	11	That's so kind of you I will try
6	Yes. Happy birthday I will try to come.	12	Thank you. Yes, sure

Case 2-Situation2

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	It is a good idea. Let's go	7	Thank you
2	Yes, let's hurry.	8	Oh, Sarah, how can I thank you? I don't need an invitation
3	Oh! Thank Oh! Yes, I want Yes, Thank you. That's so kind of you	9	Okay let's go
4	Yes, I will come	10	With pleasure

5	That's a good idea	11	I'd love to join you and share this refreshing drink
6	You are so kind dear. Sure I will	12	Oh! Dear. How kind you are!

Case 2-Situation 3

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	If you pay, let's go	7	I would love to
2	Sure, why not.	8	Thank you Saja, but you have to choose a good place to sit, because if the place is not good, I will leave
3	I love this. I will come.	9	Okay no problem we will go
4	Sure, don't think about it	10	I'd be happy to, thanks.
5	Yes, why not	11	I would love to go to the cinema
6	Yeah	12	I appreciate the invitation

Case 3- Situation1

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Morning, I wish you a happy birthday. I will come.	7	Of course! I would like to!
2	OK, why not. That's a good idea.	8	Thanks. There is no need to invite me
3	Yes, I like it.	9	Okay thanks Ahmed
4	Oh! That's so kind of you.	10	Sure, I'd be happy to.
5	May I bring something?	11	I'm really excited to join the celebration and have a great time with you and our classmates
6	Happy birthday darling. Sure I will	12	Oh! I hope you will have a good time. I will be there in time. Thanks dear

Case 3-Situation 2

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	If I have extra time, I will definitely come.	7	How a gentleman you are! Many thanks
2	That's so kind of you. Thank you	8	Okay thanks
3	Sure	9	Sure, good idea
4	That's so kind of you	10	Thanks. That's so kind of you
5	Thank you dear. I will try to come	11	Okay that will be great
6	Yeah, L. would love to	12	My pleasure to have lunch

Case 3-Situation 3

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Thanks I will come, of course	7	yes i would like to
2	Many thanks Sir. Sure I will	8	Oh of course thanks
3	Thanks a lot dear Sir	9	With pleasure
4	That's so kind of you Sir. Sure I'm really in need of a cup of tea.	10	Sure, I'd love to
5	I'm really happy to be invited.	11	Thank you so much for inviting me to your birthday party.
6	Thanks a lot Sir. Yes, sure I will come	12	Ok sir

Case 4-Situation 1

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Good morning. Yeah, I would like to.	7	Why not
2	Why not.	8	yeah , I'll come
3	Thank you for being kind.	9	Yes yes I will come of course

4	Happy birthday dear. May I bring something?	10	Sure, good idea
5	Many thanks for inviting dear. Sure I will	11	Yes, i will come
6	Thanks a lot and happy birthday.	12	I will definitely attend

Case 4-Situation 2

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	Yeah, let's go. I'm free to go.	7	In my way.
2	Yes, sure.	8	yeah! Why not
3	I don't need an invitation	9	Okay Wejdan
4	OK, but don't be late	10	I really need it
5	Yeah, I need a cup of tea	11	I do not mind
6	Yeah, darling please.	12	Thanks a lot

Case 4-Situation 3

No	Transcribed responses	No.	Transcribed responses
1	I think twelve o'clock is OK for me.	7	I appreciate it.
2	May I bring something?	8	yes I would like to
3	Sure, I will	9	Okay I will be happy to come
4	That's so kind of you. Sure I will	10	Okay, thanks Sir. let's go
5	That's so kind of you Sir	11	That's very kind of you
6	I'm really thankful to you Sir	12	In time, I am very hungry