

A Socio-pragmatic Study of Thanking in Selected British and American Plays

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of some social variables on the choice of thanking strategies in British and American plays. It particularly investigates the influence of social power, gender, and ethnicity on British and American's choice of the appropriate strategy of thanking. The main objectives of this Study are described as follows: (1) investigating the influence of social power on the choice of thanking strategies; (2) finding out how ethnic groups have an impact on the choice of thanking and finding why these choices are made; (3) showing whether there are significant differences in the way male and female characters utilize thanking and its strategies; (4) finding the type of strategies adopted when performing the speech act of thanking; (5) identifying the most frequent politeness maxims in both of the plays; (6) Examining whether American English or British English is more influenced by the social variables. For data collection, the study involves two British and American plays. As for data analysis, the study adopts Searle's (1969) model. Furthermore, the speech act of thanking will be conducted according to the politeness maxims which are suggested by Leech (1983). The results of data analysis have shown that (1) the variable of social power influences the level of directness; (2) the variable of ethnicity also influences the choice of the speech act of thanking strategies; (3) males tend to utilize the speech act of thanking more frequently than females; (4) explicit thanking strategies are more frequent than implicit thanking; and (5) As far as the targeted plays are concerned, the British characters are more polite than the Americans.

Keywords: Socio-pragmatics, Pragmatics, Expressive Speech Acts

Introduction

Language is a form of behavior governed by certain rules and this is the idea upon which speech act theory is based. Speech acts are considered to be as acts of communication. Communicating is the act of expressing one's attitude, and the sort of speech act used depends on the attitude being communicated. Hence, expressive speech acts are communicative acts because they are intended to express certain attitudes. As such, expressive speech act such as thanking can be influenced by the social variables. For instance, ethnicity can influence the way with which people express thanking. Moreover, expressives can carry certain politeness maxims which can also be influenced by the social variables (Bach, 1998).

Accordingly, the impact of the social factors on the choice of thanking strategies and politeness is the main area of the field of sociopragmatics. Crystal (2008: p. 441) defines

sociopragmatics as “a term sometimes used within the study of pragmatics to refer to the way conditions on language use derive from the social situation.” Consequently, sociopragmatics emphasizes social circumstances. To put it more simply, it is the field that is concerned with the interaction between pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

To the researcher's best knowledge, expressive speech acts, particularly thanking, have not been thoroughly investigated sociopragmatically. Therefore, the present study tries to abide this gap in linguistic research as it aims at finding out the influence of the social variables on the expressive speech act of thanking and the politeness maxims. As such, this study is carried out to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent can the social variable of social power influence the choice of the expressive speech act of thanking in the selected British and American plays?
2. What is the extent to which the social variable of ethnicity can influence the choice of thanking strategies?
3. What are the significant differences in the way male and female characters use thanking and its strategies in the selected plays (SPs)?
4. What type of strategy do the characters in the SPs utilize to perform the speech act of thanking?
5. What are the most frequent politeness maxims associated with the targeted speech act of thanking?
6. Which language variety is more influenced by the social variables in the SPs, the British or the American?

Theoretical Background

Sociopragmatics

Leech (1983) introduced his point of view concerning one aspect of human language which he names general pragmatics. He divides it into two categories: (1) sociopragmatics and (2) pragmalinguistics, a distinction which he adopts from Thomas' (1981) M.A. thesis. The distinction between them is indeed to focus on methodological approaches to pragmatic analysis. For Leech (1983: 10), the term "pragmalinguistics" refers to the knowledge of the strategies for realizing speech intentions and the linguistic items used to express these intentions, whereas the term "sociopragmatics" refers to the knowledge of the social conditions governing language use. A great amount of the work which has taken place in conversational analysis has been limited in this sense, and has been bound to local conversational data. The term pragmalinguistics, on the other hand, can be applied to the study of more the linguistic end of pragmatics. Sociopragmatics is described by Leech (1983, 10) as "the sociological interface of pragmatics," referring to the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action Brown and Levinson (1987: 96), on their part, point out that sociopragmatics is the social part of communication between language users as it refers to the social conditions governing language use such as perception of relative power, status, social distance and degree of imposition as well as mutual rights and obligations, taboos and conventional procedures that indicate the speaker's knowledge of what is socially or culturally appropriate and accepted in a certain speech community. It also involves appreciation of politeness, social conventions, taboo topics, and non-verbal factors Trosborg (1995: 37-38), on his part, states that sociopragmatics is concerned with the analysis of significant patterns of

interaction in certain social situations and/ or certain social systems. For instance, speech acts can be realized differently in different social contexts and situations as well as in different social groups within a speech community. Thus, she asserts that sociolinguistic competence is the sociocultural rules of use, i.e. the system of rules which determines the appropriateness of a given utterance in a given social context. This area of competence was divided into two aspects: pragmalinguistic competence (appropriateness of form) and sociopragmatic competence (appropriateness of meaning in social context) Holmes (2018) defines pragmatics as the field concerned with identifying and analyzing evidence for such societal norms in interaction, and scrutinizing whether they are subscribed to or contested. Like sociolinguistics, sociopragmatics is hospitable to the diverse range of theoretical approaches and frameworks utilized by a number of researchers, including the social constructionist we hold along with critical realism

Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory is one of the main aspects of interlanguage pragmatics that has been studied in philosophy, anthropology, and linguistics. The study of SAs is originated in the philosophy of language where the British philosopher Austin (1962) and his student Searle (1969) formulated the theory of SAs and showed its significance. Kasper (2004: 105) explains that although a satisfactory definition of the nature and scope of pragmatics may be a challenging matter, it is unquestionable that SAs have a central and important place in the field. Drawing attention to its importance in communication studies, Searle (1969: 39) asserts that the basic unit of communication is SA Accordingly, Austin (1962) suggests that in uttering any sentence, a speaker is actually performing two kinds of acts: the first is a locutionary act, which is the act of stating something, and the second is an illocutionary act that contains the force of the utterance. In addition to the two kinds of acts, in uttering a sentence, a speaker performs a perlocutionary act which designates the influence of the illocutionary act on the hearer. Thus, these three elements of speech acts can be defined briefly as follows

- (1) The locutionary act is the act of stating the words (i. e. the literal meaning encoded in the uttered words).
- (2) The illocutionary act is the act performed in stating the words (i. e. the intention or force behind the words).
- (3) The perlocutionary act is the act achieved by stating the words (i. e. the effect the utterance has on the hearer).

This three-categories distinction of an utterance has given the theory of speech act its "formal" shape which works as the solid foundation of speech act theory, as originally presented by Austin and afterwards developed by Searle as well as many other scholars As a consequence to the new threefold distinction, Searle (1969) proposes that a speech act can be either direct or indirect. This last proposal has contributed a lot to how linguists should analyze and interpret speech and give a real enhancement to the theory of speech acts.

Felicity Conditions

Austin (1962: 14-15) states that for the performance of a SA to be recognized as intended, there are certain expected conditions or circumstances, technically known as felicity conditions. These conditions were first proposed by Austin.Searle (1969) classifies the felicity conditions as follows:

- 1 The propositional content conditions: they are specification of a future state of affairs.
- 2 The preparatory conditions: they are conditions in which the speaker/ writer has adequate information to form a 'valid' opinion about the future state of affairs.
- 3 The sincerity conditions: they are conditions in which the writer/ speaker believes that the future state of affairs will indeed be as described
- 4 The essential conditions: they are conditions in which the utterance considered as an act of committing the speaker/ writer to the likelihood of the future state of affairs to be as described.

Methodology

The Speech Act of Thanking

According to Leech (1983: p. 104), the SA of thanking falls under the "convivial" type of illocutionary function. The illocutionary goal of this type essentially coincides with the social goal – which is, in this case, thanking. The expressions such as "thanks" and "thanking" are the most common ways of expressing feelings, gratitude, and politeness in English. Lakoff (1973: p. 298) insists that the SA of thanking is similar to other polite formulas, it aims to affirm and enhance the bonds between the interlocutors. The choice of thanking expressions depends on how the speaker appreciates what the interlocutor does for them and how the expressions function.

Searle (1979 [1975a]), on his part, puts thanking under the classification of expressive. They have the function of expressing, or making known, the speaker's psychological attitude towards a state of affairs which the illocution presupposes; e.g. thanking. They tend to be "convivial," and thus intrinsically polite.

The act of thanking is concerned with how we convey our gratitude in speech. The speaker conveys their appreciation for an earlier deed the listener committed. The speaker makes a statement to show his or her appreciation because they feel they gained something from the action and are grateful to or owe the hearer (Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986). Gratitude can be shown in a number of contexts, such as after receiving a gift, favor, reward, service, or when assisting others.

Strategies of Thanking SA

Explicit Thanking

They refer to expressions of gratitude that include verbs like "thanks" or "appreciate." In other words, the words "thank" and "appreciate" explicitly reflect the pragmatic purpose of expressing gratitude.

Implicit Thanking

They relate to the verbs that do not overtly imply appreciation, but rather the language expressions that speakers employ to convey their thankfulness. One popular implicit thanking strategy in English is to applaud the work or efforts of others as a way for speakers to convey their gratitude.

The Felicity Conditions of Thanking

The SA of thanking requires the fulfillment of some conditions to be done successfully. Searle (1969: pp. 66-67) believes that for the SA of thanking to be felicitous, it should abide by the following rules or conditions:

- A Propositional content: Past act A is done by H.
- B Preparatory condition: A benefits S and S believes A benefits S.
- C Sincerity condition: S feels grateful or appreciative for A.
- D Essential condition: A counts as an expression of gratitude or appreciation.

Geoffrey Leech's (1983) Politeness Theory

Leech (1983), in contrast to Lakoff (1960), does not attempt to account for pragmatic competence. In an effort to establish a model of what he refers to as general pragmatics, or an account of how language is employed in actual conversation, he has taken a particular approach to the phenomenon of linguistic politeness. He suggests two additional pragmatic systems in addition to general pragmatics: (1) pragmalinguistics and (2) sociopragmatics. The approach Leech utilizes to investigate general pragmatics is known as rhetorical, and it refers to the efficient application of language in its broadest sense, with emphasis on casual conversation and minimal consideration of more formal and public contexts. Leech distinguishes between (1) textual and (2) interpersonal rhetorical systems. The processibility principle, the clarity principle, the economy principle, and the expressivity principle are the four sets of principles that make up textual rhetoric. While the cooperation principle, the politeness principle, and the irony principle are among the three sets of principles that make up interpersonal rhetoric. As a result, he believes that the CP and PP of Grice simply make up the interpersonal rhetorical principle (Leech, 2014). With the help of Leech's theory of politeness, interpersonal rhetoric has been used to frame politeness. According to Leech, the major goal of the politeness principle (PP) is to create and preserve a sense of camaraderie among social group members. We can presume that our words are being cooperative because the PP controls the social equilibrium and amicable relations. Similar to Lakoff, Leech provides further justifications for establishing a PP in addition to a CP, namely, to provide an interpretation of conversational data when the CP alone seems to fail. The cost-benefit scale of politeness, which is related to both the speaker and hearer, is the core component of Leech's PP model. Minimizing expenses and boosting benefits to the speaker or listener are both components of being polite. Leech lists seven maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, sympathy, and consideration. All of these are tied to the idea of cost and benefit. Minimizing expense while maximizing value to the hearer are key considerations in tact. Being generous is educating others so that they can maximize the benefit of what they hear while minimizing their own. Approbation involves reducing criticism and increasing the listener's praise. Modesty includes reducing self-praise and increasing self-dispraise. Agreement includes reducing differences of opinion between oneself and another. The goal of sympathy is to increase sympathy between oneself and another while decreasing hostility. The final factor to take into account is how to maximize the hearer's comfort and minimize their discomfort. According to Leech, the seven maxims share the same status as Grice's CP and are crucial in explaining how sense and force interact in human communication.

The Social Variables

Fasold (1990: pp. 223-4) states that the social variables are defined as a set of alternative ways of saying the same thing, although the variants have social significance. To put it in another way, a sociolinguistic variable is a linguistic element that co-varies not only with other linguistic elements, but also with a number of extralinguistic independent variables such as social power, age, sex, ethnic group or contextual style. Labovian methodology

attempts to isolate variables at the levels of core features and to derive rules for their distribution, making correlations with social variables.

The significance of the social variables is that for speakers to successfully articulate illocutionary acts, they have to consider their positions in relation to their interlocutors. This is possible by taking into consideration their (1) positions, such as their statuses and the roles they play; (2) properties, such as their age and sex; (3) relations, such as authority and dominance; and (4) functions, for instance a teacher, a friend, a colleague, etc. (Van Dijk, 1977: p. 221).

Meyer (2009: p. 17), on his part, states that the significance of the social variables is manifested in the different kinds of efforts speakers exert when they request something from an addressee which is highly decided by the different sorts of social roles addressees play: their social power, sex, age, ethnicity, level of education, the social distance between speakers and addressees, etc.

Bluma-Kulka, et. al (1989) mentions that the social variables are categorized into two groups: the first one results in individual variation, while the second one produces a situational variation. The first group, the individual variation, includes variables such as sex, level of education, age, and occupation. This group is not context-sensitive. It has fixed values that do not change when the context changes. The second group, the situational variation, involves variables such as social power, social distance, degree of imposition, and offense. This group is context-sensitive. The value of each variable an addressee has in a certain context most probably changes when the context changes.

The Procedure of Using the Model

The model that is adopted in the present study is an eclectic model. It involves Searle's (1969) model for classifying SAs and Leech's (1983) for politeness. This eclectic model is the one upon which we depend in classifying and the analyzing the data to fulfill the aims of the study. According to Searle's (1969) model, SAs are classified into five categories which are representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The present study deals with the category of expressive speech acts. It is limited to expressive speech acts of thanking, and greeting. The data is analyzed depending on the felicity conditions of each SA introduced by Searle (1969) For politeness, each of the selected speech acts is analyzed according to Leech's politeness principle (1983). The maxims that are involved in expressive speech acts are the Approbation Maxim and the Modesty Maxim. For this reason, these are the selected maxims for the model.

For sociolinguistics, the selected social variables are gender, social power, and ethnicity. These variables are going to be investigated in order to examine their influence on the kind of the selected speech acts. The data to be analyzed are two American and British plays. The extracts of the plays are analyzed depending on some factors such as the context of the utterances, the situation in which those utterances are taking place, the intention of the speakers, the listener, the social variables involved, and the way with which those utterances are expressed. Figure (3.1) represents the eclectic model of the study.

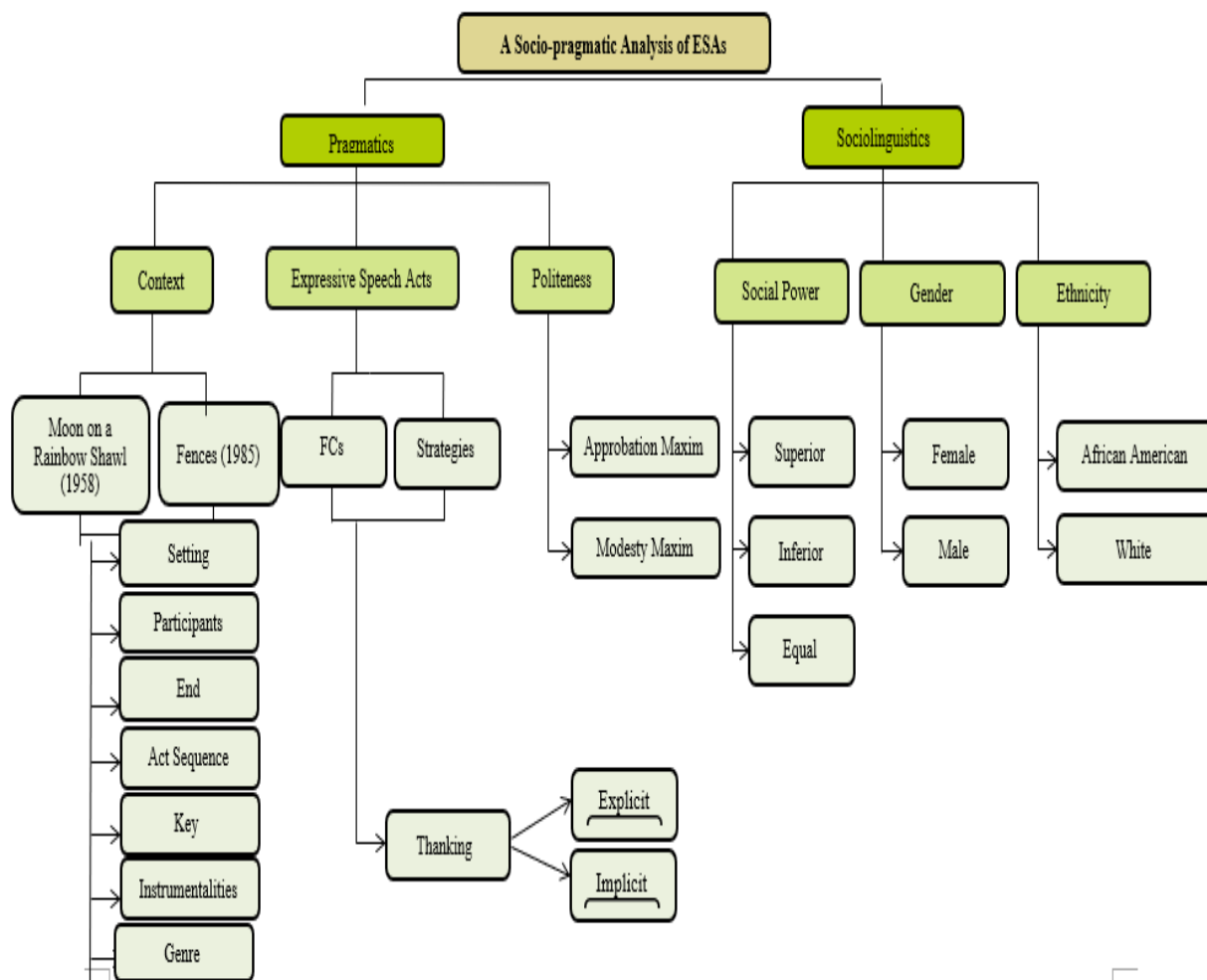


Figure 3.2 The Model of Analysis

Data Analysis

The British Play (*Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*)

The SA of Thanking

This section is intended to present the ESA of thanking in *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl*. To analyze the extracts which involve the ESA of thanking, Searle's (1969) felicity conditions are adopted. The ESA of thanking can be done explicitly and implicitly.

Extract (1):

Ketch: "Yer like it?"

Epf: "Fer so!"

Ketch: "Is a new one I jest workin' on."

Epf: "Carriso, fer so!"

Ketch: "Thanks, pal."

(John, 1958: p. 16)

Pragmatic Dimension

Epf lowers his voice when Adam's baby cries out suddenly. Dogs bark in the close by alley. Epf has a conversation with Ketch at the very beginning of the first scene of act I.

SA

Extract (1) includes a SA of thanking which is portrayed by the use of the expression "Thanks, pal."

The FCs

The PCC

Ketch is, after opening the play with his song, thanking Epf for he has stated that he likes the song.

The PC

As the song is liked by Epf, Ketch believes that being a singer benefits Epf.

The SC

Ketch feels appreciative for Epf for he likes the song.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation and gratitude.

SASs

Explicit thanking strategy is used because the situation includes the verb "thanks" and explicitly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing gratitude.

Politeness

The approbation maxim is used. Ketch is minimizing dispraise of Epf and maximizing praise of Epf.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

Both Ketch and Epf are of equal rank. Therefore, nobody is higher in position than the other.

(B) Gender

Ketch and Epf are both male characters.

(C) Ethnicity

Ketch and Epf are both African-Americans.

Discussion

Ketch's thanking to Epf suggests that they are close friends. They are of the same gender and ethnic group. In addition to that, they are equal in position.

Extract (2):

Mavis: "Yer could of at least say good night!"

Sailor: "Go to hell!"

Mavis: [running to the gate] "Thanks. I will see and don't take you fer company again tho'. Not till yer get a little more experience."

(John, 1958: p. 22)

Pragmatic Dimension

Mavis' light is on, and her door is open. The sailor hurries out towards the street. Mavis appears at the door dressed in kimono and calls after him.

SA

Extract (2) involves a SA of thanking which is represented explicitly by the use of the expression "Thanks".

The FCs

The PCC

Mavis expresses her thanks to Sailor after he refuses to say good night to her.

The PC

Mavis benefits the sailor and the sailor believes Mavis benefits him for letting him go.

The SC

Mavis feels thankful to the sailor for leaving and that she will not take him with her for company again though.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation even in this context. Mavis has appreciated the sailor's leaving and rejection of not saying good night.

SASs

Explicit thanking strategy is adopted because the utterance includes the verb "thanks" and explicitly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing appreciation.

(B) Politeness

The modesty maxim is used because Mavis is minimizing praise of self and maximizing dispraise of self.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

The sailor is higher in position than Mavis.

(B) Gender

Mavis, who is a female character, expresses her thanks to the sailor, a male character.

(C) Ethnicity

Mavis is African-American whereas the sailor is white American.

Discussion

Mavis' thanking is highly influenced by the social variable of power. The sailor has more social power than Mavis. In addition to that, belonging to an African-American ethnic group leads her to choose this strategy of thanking towards the sailor. Moreover, Mavis is, by adopting the modesty maxim, being more polite than the sailor.

Extract (3):

Sophia: "I don't know. I was only pulling yer leg just now. I don't think you would steal. Least not from Ole Mack."

Epf: "Thank you."

(John, 1958: p. 34)

Pragmatic Dimension

Sophia's door bursts open as Esther follows Epf, and Sophia meets Epf there.

SA

Extract (3) comprises a SA of thanking which is explicitly represented by the use of the expression "Thank you".

The FCs

The PCC

Epf expresses his thanks to Sophia. She states that she does not think Epf would steal.

The PC

Being with Sophia, Epf believes being not a stealer benefits Sophia.

The SC

Epf feels appreciative for Sophia for stating that he would not steal and especially from Old Mack.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation and gratitude. Epf has appreciated what is stated by Sophia.

SASs

Explicit thanking strategy is utilized because the utterance includes the verb "thank you" and explicitly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing appreciation.

(B) Politeness

The modesty maxim is used. Epf is minimizing praise of self and maximizing dispraise of self.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

Both characters Epf and Sophia are of equal rank.

(B) Gender

Epf is a male character whereas Sophia is a female character. The male character directs his thanks to the female character.

(C) Ethnicity

Epf and Sophia are both African-American characters.

Discussion

Epf's explicit thanking suggests that their relationship is quite formal to some extent. Epf is a male character while Sophia is a female character, and is reflected by the use of greeting.

Extract (4)

Rosa: "Yer is a damn worthless nigger! Yer mother walk out on you! You kill yer own grandmother!"

Ephraim lifts her off the ground and literally throws the girl out of his room, hurling her dress, shoes and the shawl after her. Do you think!—Do you think I want a man like you to marry me or to father my child ? You go! —You go wherever the hell yer want to go! And

when the time come so for yer to dead—I hope yer dead like the bastard you are—Yer two foot stick up high in the air!

Epf: "Thanks ! An' if that is all yer have to say fer good-byes Good-bye!"
(John, 1958: p. 55)

Pragmatic Dimension

Epf throws the dress at Rosa, and pushes her to the door. Epf likes Rosa and wants to be close to her.

SA

Extract (4) involves a SA of thanking represented explicitly by the use of the expression "Thanks!".

The FCs

The PCC

Epf is expressing his thanks to Rosa after she states that Epf is a damn worthless nigger and hopes he dies.

The PC

Thanking Rosa benefits Epf and Epf believes that being a man of ethics benefits Rosa.

The SC

Epf feels appreciative for Rosa for what she has stated about him.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation. Epf has appreciated what has been stated by Rosa about him.

SASs

Explicit thanking strategy is adopted because the utterance includes the verb "thanks" and thus explicitly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing appreciation.

(B) Politeness

The modesty maxim is used because Epf is minimizing praise of self and maximizing dispraise of self.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

Epf and Rosa's characters are both of equal rank.

(B) Gender

Epf is a male character whereas Rosa is a female character. As such, the male character directs his thanks to the female character.

(C) Ethnicity

Epf and Rosa are both African-American characters.

Discussion

Epf's thanks to Rosa indicates that he is more polite than her and this is vivid when he adopts the modesty maxim of politeness. They are of the same social position and of the same ethnic group. Being a male might push him to use such a strategy with her.

4.2 The American play (*Fences*)

4.2.1 The SA of Thanking

As for thanking, this section presents the ESA of thanking in *Fences*. To analyze the extracts which involve the ESA of thanking, Searle's (1969) felicity conditions are adopted. The ESA of thanking can be stated explicitly and implicitly.

Extract (1)

Rose: "What I care what you all talking about? Bono, you gonna stay for supper?"

Bono: "No, I thank you, Rose. But Lucille say she cooking up a pot of pigfeet."

(Wilson, 1986: p. 7)

Pragmatic Dimension

Rose enters from the house when Bono and Troy were talking. Bono, with his thanking SA, addresses Rose when she invites him for supper.

SA

Extract (1) involves a SA of thanking which is represented by the use of the expression "No, I thank you, Rose".

The FCs

The PCC

Bono is expressing his thanks and appreciation to Rose for she asks him if he is going to stay for supper.

The PC

Thanking Rose for inviting him to supper benefits Bono, and Bono believes that inviting him for supper benefits Rose.

The SC

Bono feels appreciative to Rose for inviting him for supper.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation and gratitude. Thus, Bono feels thankful to Rose for inviting him for supper.

SASs

Explicit thanking strategy is used because the utterance includes the verb "thank" and directly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing thankfulness and appreciation.

(B) Politeness

The approbation maxim is utilized. Bono is minimizing dispraise of Rose and maximizing praise of Rose.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

Bono and Rose are of equal rank or position.

(B) Gender

Bono is a male character whereas Rose is a female character.

(C) Ethnicity

Bono is white American character whereas Rose is an African-American character.

Discussion:

Bono's strategy of thanking indicates that he is more polite. It is gender that might have influenced his choice of the thanking strategy. Belonging to the same ethnic group and gender have no influence on Bono's choice of thanking strategy.

Extract (2):

Rose: "You gonna stay for supper, Lyons? I got some chicken cooking in the oven."

Lyons: "No, Rose thanks. I was just in the neighborhood and thought I'd stop by for a minute."

(Wilson, 1986: p. 16)

Pragmatic Dimension

Lyons enters the yard from the street to converse with Troy and Rose. Lyons is Troy's son by a previous marriage, he sports a neatly trimmed goatee, sport coat, white shirt, tieless and buttoned at the collar.

SA

Extract (2) comprises a SA of thanking which is denoted by the use of the expression "No, I thank you, Rose".

The FCs

The PCC

Lyons is expressing his thanks and appreciation to his mother-in-law, Rose, for she asks him to stay for supper and that she got some chicken cooking in the oven.

The PC

Thanking Rose for asking him to stay for supper benefits Lyons, and Lyons believes that asking him to stay for supper benefits Rose.

The SC

Lyons feels appreciative to Rose for inviting him for supper.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of thankfulness, appreciation, and gratitude. As such, Lyons feels thankful to Rose for inviting him for supper.

SASs

Explicit thanking strategy is used because the utterance includes the verb "thanks" and explicitly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing gratitude and appreciation.

(B) Politeness

The approbation maxim is utilized. Lyons is minimizing dispraise of Rose and maximizing praise of Rose.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

Lyons is lower in rank than Rose.

(B) Gender

Lyons is a male character whereas Rose is a female character.

(C) Ethnicity

Both Lyons and Rose are African-American characters.

Discussion

Lyons's thanking to Rose shows clearly that they are close to each other. He is her son-in-law. He is being more polite to his mother-in-law, Rose. It is gender and position that has influenced his choice of strategy – for they belong to the same ethnic group.

Extract (3)

Troy: "(Handing Rose the money.) There it is. Seventy-six dollars and forty-two cents. You see this, Bono? Now, I ain't gonna get but six of that back."

Rose: "You ought to stop telling that lie. Here, Lyons. (She hands him the money.)"

Lyons: "Thanks, Rose. Look ... I got to run ... I'll see you later."

(Wilson, 1986: p. 21)

Pragmatic Dimension

Lyons meets Rose and Troy in the yard of their house. He gets ten dollars from Rose which she takes from Troy.

SA

Extract (3) involves a SA of thanking which is demonstrated by the use of the expression "Thanks, Rose".

The FCs

The PCC

Lyons is expressing his appreciation to his mother-in-law, Rose, for giving him some money.

The PC

Thanking Rose for giving him some money benefits Lyons, and Lyons believes that giving him some money benefits Rose.

The SC

Lyons feels thankful to Rose for giving him some money.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation and gratitude. Thus, Lyons feels thankful to Rose giving him some money.

SASs

The strategy of the ESA of thanking is explicit. It is used because the utterance includes the verb "thanks" and directly reflects the pragmatic purpose of expressing gratitude and appreciation.

(B) Politeness

The approbation maxim is used. Lyons is minimizing dispraise of Rose and maximizing praise of Rose.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension

(A) Social Power

Lyons is lower in rank than Rose.

(B) Gender

Lyons is a male character whereas Rose is a female character.

(C) Ethnicity

Both Lyons and Rose are African-American characters.

Discussion

Lyons' thanking strategy demonstrates that they are close to each other. He is being more polite to his mother-in-law, Rose. Gender plays a vital role in deciding on the strategy of thanking.

Extract (4)

Troy: "Go on in the house there. Rose going to fix you something to eat."

Gabriel: "Oh, I ain't hungry. I done had breakfast with Aunt Jemimah. She come by and cooked me up a whole mess of flapjacks. Remember how we used to eat them flapjacks?"

(Wilson, 1986: p. 29)

Pragmatic Dimension

As Rose exits into the house, Gabriel and Troy converse with each other in the yard. Troy invites Gabriel to go in the house so that Rose is going to fix him something to eat.

SA

Extract (4) contains a SA of thanking which is signified by the use of the expression "Oh, I ain't hungry. I done had breakfast with Aunt Jemimah".

The FCs

The PCC

Gabriel is expressing his appreciation to his brother, Troy, for telling him to go to their house and eat something.

The PC

Thanking Troy for asking Gabriel to stay and eat something benefits Gabriel, and Gabriel believes that going to their house and eating something benefits Troy.

The SC

Gabriel feels appreciative and thankful to Troy for asking him to go to their house so Rose fixes him something to eat.

The EC

Thanking counts as an expression of appreciation, thankfulness, and gratitude. As such, Gabriel feels thankful to Troy for asking him to stay in their house and so that Rose fixes him something to eat.

SASs

The strategy of the ESA of thanking is implicit. The implicit strategy of thanking is used because the addresser is using subjective emotions and that the utterance does not include the verb "thank" explicitly.

(B) Politeness

The approbation maxim is used. Gabriel is minimizing dispraise of Troy and maximizing praise of Troy.

(2) Sociolinguistic Dimension**(A) Social Power**

Gabriel and Troy are both of equal rank or position.

(B) Gender

Gabriel and Troy are male characters.

(C) Ethnicity

Both Gabriel and Troy are African-American characters.

Discussion

Gabriel's thanking to his brother, Troys, indicates that they are close to each other. They are of the same position and gender. In addition, they belong to the same ethnic group. Gabriel has not shown politeness explicitly to his brother.

Discussions

As far as politeness is concerned, it is found out that in the British play the approbation maxim is used more often than the modesty maxim. The same thing is in the American play. The modesty maxim is used more frequently in the British play than in the American one. This indicates that the British are more polite than Americans.

Concerning the social variable of social power, it is shown that the social variable of power has influenced the choice of thanking strategies. It is proven that the British characters are more persecuted than the Americans due to the use of a superior to inferior variable. Most of the British and Americans are of equal rank.

Regarding the variable gender, Male characters tend to express their thanking more frequently than females.

For the variable of ethnicity, it is shown clearly that the choice of the strategy of thanking is highly influenced by this variable.

Conclusions

The present study sums up the following main conclusions arrived at:

1. With respect to the variable of social power, it has proven that social power influences the level of directness of the speech act of thanking. Americans always use explicit thanking when having an inferior rank and explicit or implicit when having an equal rank. People who are having a higher rank have not expressed their thanks – at least implicitly. On the other hand, British people tend to always be explicit when expressing their thanks. People of all ranks, whether having equal rank or superior to inferior rank, show a preference for using explicit speech act.
2. The social variable of ethnicity also has an influence on the choices people make when using the speech act of thanking. For British people, only African-Americans express thanking to either white Americans or other African-Americans. For

- Americans, African-Americans use explicit and implicit thanking and white Americans use only explicit thanking.
3. For the variable gender, it has been proven that Males tend to use the speech act of thanking more frequently than Females in both plays *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* and *Fences*. This clearly indicates how female British people suffered from staying home while male British have moved to other parts of Britain. As for Americans, female Americans are persecuted more than male Americans.
 4. With respect to the most frequent strategies of the speech of thanking, explicit and implicit strategies are employed. However, explicit thanking strategies are employed more frequently than implicit strategies.
 5. Regarding Leech's politeness maxims, the study has shown that the approbation maxim is the most frequently used maxim. Thus, the modesty maxim comes next as it shows that it is more frequent in *Moon on a Rainbow Shawl* than in *Fences*. This proves that British people are more polite than Americans.
 6. American English is more influenced by the social variables than British English because Americans were more persecuted than British people.

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