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INVESTIGATING THE INDIRECT SPEECH ACT OF THREATENING AND MISUNDERSTANDING IN THE LIBYAN CONTEXT

A Dissertation Proposal Submitted to the Department of English in
Fulfillment of the Requirements of the BA in Applied Linguistics Studies

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Dedication

To the one who seeded a seeding, but was deprived by fate to see its fruit. To the soul of my late-beloved father, Ali Mohamed, I hope you are proud of your little girl.

To the one who always believed in me, and who was and still my closest friend, for her endless love, support and encouragement. My mother, Halima Mohammed, you are the only true reason for who I am today.

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Abstract

The present study aims at investigating and describing the indirect speech act of threatening and the issue of misunderstanding these acts in the Libyan context. It attempts to find whether interactants in the Libyan society fail in delivering and interpreting this kind of speech acts. It also attempts at collocating the kind of strategies are being used to express or perform their acts of threatening. In addition, what factors are involved that have an effect on their performance and interpretation. Over and above, this study aims to figure out what makes a speaker threatens his interactant indirectly rather than directly. The current study targeted 6 subjects chosen randomly from the society that represent different genders and different ages. For the purpose of this study, data is collected through analytic and descriptive method known as DCT (discourse completion test). The study revealed that people in the Libyan society fail in delivering and interpreting indirect speech acts of threatening. This study also revealed that the social distance, relationship, power, and disposition of the interactants involved in the interaction are the most factors that affect the performance and interpretation of indirect speech act of threatening. Furthermore, it revealed that interactant consider using at least one politeness strategy when performing indirect threats. The amount of the politeness strategies used when performing indirect threats is the most occurring and important reason that leads to misunderstanding these acts.

Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Speech Act Theory is a theory of language cognition that mainly expresses what we want to say or do. In other words, speech acts are actions in using language. For example, how to apologize, how to complain, or even how to swear, etc. Such things are not being done physically as eating, reading, or whatever, they are done verbally.

One of those speech acts is what we call “threatening”. In the first instance, threats are classified as commissive acts within the framework of Speech Act Theory. Commissives are speech acts such as promises and statements of commitment, in which a speaker expresses an intension to undertake a commitment associated with the action specified in the proposition (Fraser 1983: 36).

Speech acts of threatening are written, spoken, or symbolic expressions mainly used to warn or to inform others of future consequences of causing them harm in any form. Threats are typically given as warnings or as reactions (Brenes Pena, 2009: 43-44). Additionally, Grant (1949: 362) views threats as “an unwelcome promise”. In such sense, “threats are used to express that a certain unpleasant consequence will happen under certain condition made by the listener” (Searle, 1969; S. Blanco, 2010).

There are two types of threats, direct and indirect. Firstly, direct threats are mainly delivered in a straightforward manner by using clear utterances to express the will of doing harm to others. E.g. I am going to kill you. such statement is clear and unambiguous that someone is threatening another for killing. While indirect threats, the second type, and which this research paper focuses on, are assumed to be veiled (masked or covered) statements that tend to be vague and make threats unclear. They are used so the speaker will not appear as a threatening. People may also use indirect threats just to have something accomplished or frightening others. For example, a teacher may threaten his/her students indirectly in order to encourage them to work hard by saying: the exams are very close and you didn't study anything so far. Accordingly, it does not necessarily deal with violence.

The time of using direct threats, the place, the context, and the reasons why it is used are different from indirect threats. People usually take into their considerations something called “face” when interacting with others. This face is related to “politeness” theory. Brown and Levinson (1978) define face as “the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects.” That is, this face can be maintained, lost, or saved in terms of the nature of the relationship between interactants. In addition to the situation “context” and the type of speech acts used. This is done by following certain politeness strategies. These strategies are classified into two types: positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies.

More details about this are addressed in the literature.

Furthermore, the use of indirect threats can lead sometimes to a misunderstanding between the speaker and the listener, in this case the listener might have a difficulty to understand that he/she is being threatened. E.g. A tells B “if I can't have you, nobody else is going to have you”. B in this case might misunderstand that A is threaten of killing him/her, because the statement used is coded to be normal for B. In such cases, misunderstanding the context, or having any other factors that influence the speech act of threatening may cause a failure in delivering threats, especially, if these threats are done indirectly. People may fail in delivering indirect threats due to some factors or reasons that cause an error during performing these acts.

This phenomenon may really take a place in the Libyan society as in any other society, where people there might use the indirect speech act of threatening to threaten each other. Their use of indirect threats is then would generally be guided by some reasons that make them, in the first instance, use this type of threats. However, since an indirect speech act is used, it then could result to having a failure either in delivering the intended message or understanding what was said. Accordingly, this research paper investigates this phenomena within the Libya context in terms of how, why, when, and where it does occur. That is, it mainly searches for reasons and explanations for this phenomenon.

1.2 Problem of the Study

Due to various reasons, many people fail in delivering or understanding indirect threats. This paper mainly investigates this failure “misunderstanding”. How it does occur, when, where, and why. It also investigates whether people consider positive and negative face in their acts of indirect threatening or not.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This paper aims at investigating the failure people may have when delivering indirect threats in addition to misunderstanding the intended meaning of this act. This topic was chosen to be studied for two main reasons. Firstly, it will be the first research that looking at the speech act of threatening within the Libyan context, since most of the previous research are on apologizing, requesting, et cetera. Accordingly, it will add, hopefully, a good source of information. Secondly, it will give a much more closer look to the act of threatening, how it is usually done, in addition to the factors that affect this act. Accordingly, it will help people to know these things in order to avoid any risk of having a failure in the process of delivering an indirect threat or understanding them.

1.4 Aims of the Study

This study mainly aims to Find why people do fail in delivering and interpreting indirect threats or not. Secondly, to find whether they consider using positive and negative face in their acts of threatening. It also aims to shed light on the factors that

influence their act of threatening. In addition, to find the reasons that motivate them to used indirect threats rather than direct.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This research concentrates on investigating the indirect speech act of threatening and misunderstanding in the Libyan context. Its scope is related to our Libyan society as it is intended to participate in investigating and exploring the performance and interpretation of these acts, as well as how they are affected by different factors in the society. This research mainly focuses on misunderstanding issues people have while interpreting indirect acts of threatening. The scope of this research, then, is to investigate and introduce the failure of delivering such act, and misunderstanding caused via it.

1.6 Research Question

the main question this paper asks is “do people in the Libyan society misunderstand the indirect speech act of threatening?” Accordingly, to answer this question and to achieve the purpose of the study, sub question are raised. These questions are: (a) To which extent people consider positive and negative politeness strategies? (b) What are the factors that influence their indirect speech act of threatening? (c) What are the stimuli that motivate them to deliver threats indirectly rather than directly?

1.7 Assumption

It is assumed that people in Libya do fail in delivering and understanding indirect threats. Through this study, it is expected that the relationship extent or social distance between the interactants is mostly the main frequent factor that influences the indirect speech act of threatening. Moreover, it is assumed to be one of the reasons that motivates someone to use indirect threats rather than direct. This study, in addition, assumes that the failure interactants have in delivering indirect threats is concerned mainly with the inappropriate use of politeness strategies.

1.8 Structure of the Study

This research consists of six chapters:

The first chapter introduces the general idea of the research topic, which is the indirect speech act of threatening. It consists of the research problems, the aims to be achieved, the research questions to be answered, the hypothesis, and the organization of the research. The second chapter is devoted to theoretical background of the study and what other scholar have said about this topic. It consists of five sessions that represents different but correlated aspects of the study. The third chapter discusses the methodology used for collecting the data from the indirect speech act of threatening, the instruments are going to be used in conducting the study, participants and procedures. The forth and the fifth chapters are devoted to the practical part of the study whereby I describe and analyze the findings and discuss them. These two chapters include summary sections where I answer the research questions and check the hypotheses of the study. Moreover, it discusses the implications of the study and make recommendations for further studies.

Chapter II: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study aims at investigating the failure Libyans have when making or interpreting indirect threats. It also aims to clarify the reasons why people use indirect threats whether than direct and whether they consider the use of politeness strategies or not. In addition, it aims to shed light on the factors that influence their indirect act of threatening.

This chapter is comprised of the theoretical background of the study. The first and second sections of this chapter includes definitions, explanations with examples and the types of speech in order to explain and clarify the main focus of this paper “the indirect speech act of threatening”. The third section represents the correlation

between speech acts and politeness. The fourth section discusses the relationship between the use of indirect speech acts and misunderstanding. Finally, the fifth session represents the impoliteness theory and its place in the use of threats.

2.2 The Speech Act Theory

In order to discuss indirect speech acts of threatening and how it is performed and interpreted, I need to refer to speech act theory and how an act of threatening is analyzed. The concept of speech act theory is first defined and explained by the philosopher J. L. Austin (1962) in his book "how to do things with words". He calls it performative sentences because it is concerned mainly with performing actions using verbal language. He (1962) indicates that "the issuing of an utterance is the performing of an action". Speech acts are in general, acts of expressing behaviours in order to communicate with others or deliver a certain message. The term itself was first used by Searle (1969:22) stating that "talking is performing acts according to rules". That is governed by rules.

This is also discussed by Schmidt and Richards (1980). They explain that context always plays part in producing and interpreting our speech.

They state that "speech acts are all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we do when we speak and the interpretation of speech acts are dependent on the context." (1980:129)

John Austin (1962) was the first to draw the attention that many functions can be performed by utterances as part of interpersonal communication. He addresses the argument that uttering a sentence consists of doing an action and not only saying something. This argues the same idea that is the context plays a role (doing something) by what is uttered rather than just uttering it.

Searle (1969) also points out that "the speech act or acts performed in an utterance of a sentence are in general function of the meaning of a sentence."

Austin (1962) was also one of the first scholars who discussed explicit and implicit performatives. He points out that "utterances do not need to contain an explicitly performative verb to be performative".

He (1962) also draws a distinction between our knowledge of the meaning that utterances have, whether they are valid or invalid, and the meaning that utterances have as a result of our understanding.

He demonstrates that “people do not use language just to make statements about the world; they also use language to perform actions, actions which affect or change the world in some ways.” This also argues that what is uttered is highly concerned with making something done through language.

Furthermore, Searle (1969) proposes that speech acts are the basic unit of communication. He argues that “whatever meant can be uttered”. Consequently, he introduces the principle of expressibility to clarify the relationship between what is meant and what is uttered.

Petrey (1990) also points out that “speech act theory brings illocution to the fore by situating language within the relationships lived by its users.” Again, it is the same idea expressed by Searle which accounts that a speech act is generally made to contribute to the hearer understanding of what is uttered and comply according to it.

2.3 Searle’s View of Speech Acts

Searle (1979) submits his own classification of speech acts basing on Austin’s theory. He proposes a detailed classification of the major categories of speech act that are somehow similar to Austin’s divisions. It consists of five different categories of speech acts that provide explanation to what people can do using their verbal interactions. They are classified as follow:

Assertive: describe the way things are, their nature. Such as asserting, •
claiming ..et cetera. For example: you will never call her back.

Directive: to direct someone to do something. Such as asking, commanding, •
requesting, ..et cetera. For example: don't pick up the phone.

Commissive: to commit someone to a future plan. Such as threatening, •
promising, guarantee claiming, ..et cetera. For example: if you picked the
phone up, you will never see me again.

Expressive: to express attitudes or feelings about something. Such as •
apologizing, congratulating, thanking, ..et cetera. For example: thank you for
answering my call./ I appreciate what you have done.

Declaration: to alter the external status on condition of something by making an utterance. Such as reigning, baptizing, ..et cetera. For example: you would better put the phone down first. •

This classification ,as I noticed, is more accurate and precise than Austin's classification in terms of its representation and demonstration of what people can do to others using speech acts in details.

Furthermore, according to pragmatics, every speech act must consist of three separate acts: an act of saying something "locutionary act", an act of doing something "illocutionary act", and an act of affecting something "perlocutionary act". Leech (1983) used these three types based on Austin's acts (1962, 1975).

in conclusion, the speech act of threatening is considered to be a commissive act that people perform in order to inform others of a future action "which is doing them harm". And this act is done either directly in a straightforward way i.e. I am going to break your house windows, or indirectly in a covert (ambiguous) way. i.e. it is better for you not to stand next to the windows these days.

2.4 Speech Acts and Politeness

People as interactants need to avoid any risk of having misunderstanding in their interactions simply by following some sociolinguistic rules (appropriate use of vocabulary, grammar, expressions ...etc) which of course vary from one culture to another. One of those interactions that they perform is called "politeness". The more that they perform the appropriate level of politeness the better understanding is achieved.

According to Watts (1989) Politeness is a linguistic behavior which is perceived to be beyond what is acceptable. P. Lakoff (1973) also defines politeness as "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange". Illustrating this with an example, threatening someone in a straightforward way without considering in mind being polite and showing respect to the listener when making the act, might cause a conflict between the speaker and the listener. He (1973) proposes three main rules of being polite: don't impose, give options, and make the receiver feel

good. Following these rules may help the speaker to appear as a polite person during his speech in which it will make the hearer feel comfortable and save his face.

Holmes (1995) also states that "Politeness involves showing concern for two different kinds of face needs: first, negative face needs or the need not to be imposed upon: and secondly, positive face needs, the need to be liked and admired".

He states that "being polite means expressing respect towards the person you are talking to and avoiding offending them". For example: if a teacher wants to threaten his students, he should do it politely without offending them in order to save his face.

The politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) is the most approach found in every culture. It deals extensively with face threatening acts, which they define them as "those acts that by their very nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or speaker." The acts that are used to impose on others or to redress their negative face and shows the speaker as an impolite person. (1987:65)

Their theory of politeness (1987) consists mainly of two parts, the nature of politeness "its function" and politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1978) states that "all competent adult members of a society have (and know each other to have) face". For example, the teacher knows that his students face wants is not to be imposed on. According to them (1987) face has two aspects, negative face and positive face. They define face as "the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects.

Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between positive and negative politeness. Both types of politeness involve maintaining or redressing threats to positive and negative face. They (1987) define positive face as "the want of every member that his/her wants be desirable to at least some others". While negative face is defined as the basic personal rights of an individual, including his/her personal freedom as well as freedom of action.

They (1987) present 15 strategies of positive politeness confined to exaggerating, seeking agreement, avoiding disagreement, raising common ground, joking, promising, being optimistic, giving gifts, ... cetera. They are mainly used to avoid giving offense to the hearer by making actions in order to save-face and reduce face damage. In other words, showing positive face in a speech act such as threatening to reduce the risk of causing an offense. In addition to a number of negative politeness strategies such as being conventionally indirect, questioning, giving differences, being pessimistic, apologizing, impersonalizing, ...et cetera. They are commonly used to indicate that S cares and respect H's negative face wants and wish not interfere

with them. That is, if S intend to do a face threatening act (FTA), he will minimize the threat using different negative politeness strategies as the ones are mentioned.

When it comes to performing indirect threats, the speakers intention is usually saving the listeners positive face and this is done by applying certain strategies as mentioned above. For example, a teacher may threaten his students by giving difference “it will be very stupid if you came next time without bringing your handouts”.

Moreover, Holmes (1995) discusses what do interactants usually use negative and positive strategies for. Again, it depends on the relation distance.

He proposes that “people express negative politeness more often to those it is appropriate to keep at a distance, and positive politeness more often to friends or potential friends”. She also states that “ negative politeness strategies will occur more often in formal settings and interactions, while positive politeness strategies tend to characterize more intimate and less formal situations.

2.5 Indirect Speech Acts and Misunderstanding

Applying politeness strategies is indeed helpful in achieving successful communication between interlocutors. However, sometimes these strategies may not ease maintaining this purpose very well, in which misunderstanding may occur in their communication. For example, students might consider the teacher indirect threat of switching their phones off as a report, in such case the students misunderstood the teachers threat.

Linguistic politeness and misunderstanding are related because linguistic politeness is a form of speech acts which attempt to account for what people do when they speak (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), and misunderstanding is existed when such goal is not achieved by meaning different things or more than what is said (Grice 1967). This may cause failure in delivering the intended speech act in return.

Misunderstanding is defined broadly by many scholars. Edda (1999) looks at it as a form of understanding which is partially or totally deviant from what the speaker intended to communicate. He discusses that misunderstanding refers to the reverse side of meaning or to the reverse side of the utterance, and represents a cognitive phenomenon belonging to interlocutors.

He also argues that “indirectness allows different possibilities of interpretation to remain open, and indirect speech acts, however, are based on ambiguity of the directly and the indirectly expressed action function”. That is, misunderstanding or miscommunication happens when the speaker fails in delivering his intended message in a correct or clear form; or when the hearer fails in interpreting what the speaker means by that message. i.e. a father tells his daughter “you should stay with your mother tonight” without giving any other details why he said this. The father in this context intended to threaten his daughter indirectly that she is not allowed to go out and if she did, she will be punished.

This case of misunderstanding has been discussed by scholars and linguists using different theories. One of these theories is Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle. It states that in order to achieve an affective understanding and the intended purpose of utterances, and in order to avoid having failure during communicating, interlocutors should follow certain principles (Gricean maxims) of conversation. Applying these principles increases the efficiency between what is uttered and the way it is understood. These maxims are:

Maxim of quality: •

to say only things you believe they are true and illustrate them with evidence.

Maxim of quantity: •

To not say more or less than it is required when interacting.

Maxim of relevance: •

To say only what is relevant to the topic.

Maxim of manner: •

To be direct, clear, not obscure, and to say everything orderly in brief.

For example, if the teacher threatened the students indirectly by saying “it is better to bring your handouts every lecture” and the students interpreted it as a suggestion rather than a threat (didn’t bring their handouts as the teacher asked), then there is no relevance between what the teacher intended to mean and what the students

understood. This shows that the students really did not understand the teacher intentions.

Edda (1999) suggests that misunderstanding plays a key role in the framework of Grice's (1975) model. He thinks that all Gricean examples can be reduced to the same type "understanding utterances on the level of literal meaning is communicatively not satisfactory". This clarifies that what is uttered must not be interpreted literally, but to look beyond its literal meaning. That is, to look at its deep meaning (the action performed via it). When it comes to "indirect speech acts", we can say that they are generally used to be polite or to save face. Yet, they might make one confused and misunderstand the real intended meaning of the utterance "indirect act".

Fraser (1980) also suggests that "sometimes we need to produce indirect utterances to mitigate or ease the situation to the hearer." This has been seen earlier in Grice's cooperation principle of maxims.

Sperber and Wilson (1995) also discuss various cases where misunderstanding takes place. One of these cases is concerned with context. They argue that mismatching between the context interpreted by the speaker and the one used by the hearer may lead to misunderstanding.

From what is mentioned in this section, it is very clear that there is a strong correlation between politeness, indirect speech acts, and misunderstanding.

Chapter III: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research is to investigate the misunderstanding that Libyans have when interpreting indirect acts of threatening. It also intends to clarify the interactants' considerations of politeness strategies, their reasons for using indirect threats, and the factors that affect the production and understanding of these acts.

This chapter is meant to discuss the tool used for collecting data related to the indirect speech act of threatening, and for achieving the purpose of the study. Furthermore, it sheds light on other methodological points (population, instrument and collection procedures). Finally, it describes the research design.

3.2 Participants

The population of this study includes random people due to the nature of the study. The total number of sample is 6. It is comprising both males and females with different ages ranged from 17 to 25, and from different social status.

The participants in this study are selected randomly using simple random sampling technique, in which it insures that each element in the population will have an equal chance to be included in the sample. This technique is sometimes known as a method of chance because the selection of items is completely depending on chance. Furthermore, the main advantage of this technique is that every sample has the same probabilities of being selected. On the other hand, the main disadvantage of this technique is that it deals with large size of sample where it could be difficult to manage the large population. Moreover, the purpose of choosing this type of sampling methods is that the study sheds light on people in the Libyan society in general without focusing on a particular group so all members should have equal chances of being selected.

3.3 Method of the Research

The methodology I used in conducting this research and to collect the data is descriptive and analytic which called DCT. DCT stands for Discourse Completion Test/task. According to Billmyer and Varghese (2000) DCT was adopted in 1982 by Blum-Kulka (1982) for the purpose of investigating speech acts. It is a questionnaire containing a set of briefly described situations designed to elicit a particular speech act. Subjects read the situations and respond in writing to a prompt (2000:517). Some researchers argue that DCT is an instrument to investigate speech acts, but it may not provide researchers with examples of authentic interaction. However, the goal of this research is to investigate how language is performed and interpreted and what influences these processes in relation to the indirect speech acts of threatening. As Golato (2003) points out that responses from data elicitation procedures such as DCTs indirectly reflect the sum of prior experience with language

(2003:90). This tool DCT is mainly used for qualitative linguistic and pragmatic studies to elicit a particular speech act.

The usefulness of this method lies on the fact that it is time saving and allows gathering large amount of data (Beebe and Cumming, 1996). It also allows the researcher to focus on a specific speech act (Cohen 1998). In addition, Kasper (2000) shows that DCTs are useful if the objectives entail knowing about people's beliefs or values with respect to culture. On the other hand, the main weakness point about this tool is authenticity and reliability of data. That is, they cannot capture the real face to face interaction since participants respond in writing. On the whole, DCTs provide data that reflect 'what people think they would say' them 'what people actually do say' in a given speech setting (Golato 2006: 14).

The main aim of the study is to investigate how cultural and contextual factors influence interaction and their roles in the delivery and interpretation of speech act of threatening. This is based on the researcher argument that misunderstanding may happen and indirectness may lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, the researcher concentrates on the interactants' meanings in relation to the context to see what has influenced their utterances. The researcher also examines how interactants infer each other's intended meaning of threatening and whether interactants consider polite when producing or interpreting.

3.3.1 Instrument of the Study

in order to accomplish the objectives of this study, I designed and prepared a questionnaire of DCTs that involves various contexts and delivered it online to the subjects of the study who were chosen randomly from the society.

3.3.1.1 The questionnaire

6 DCTs questionnaires are used. They represent 5 different contexts where speech acts of threatening are performed indirectly because of different social and contextual reasons. Participants are given a one-sided role play containing a situational prompts. And then, they are asked to read them and give their own responses. The prompts include situations followed by questions where they are asked to give how would they analyze and interpret what is said and give reasons for their answer.

3.4 Procedures of the Study

After I chose the topic of the study, I read a number of relevant literature that cover the speech acts, politeness strategies, directness, indirectness and misunderstanding. I identified the sample of the study using random sampling technique. Then I put the questions to answer and aims to achieve for conducting this study. After that I collected everything related to my topic and research problem in the literature. Thus, I designed a questionnaire which involves DCTs to grasp the information needed. The questionnaire was distributed and collected from the participants. Then I started recording the questionnaire data, analyzing it and interpreting it. The results were analyzed using simple analytical procedure which is DCA and presented in paragraph forms.

The findings of each situation were gathered and clarified. Then I presented the overall findings of each question of this study. Finally, I presented the main conclusions that could be drawn from the findings briefly and simply. Last but not least, I wrote down the reference list in alphabetical order using the APA.

Chapter IV: Discussion and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

As it is mentioned in the previous chapters, the aim of this study is to investigate the indirect speech act of threatening, how it is performed and interpreted, and how it results to misunderstanding. The data are collected through a discourse completion test by using questionnaires involve 5 different contexts where indirect speech acts of threatening take place. These questionnaires were given to subjects selected randomly.

In the following sections, the DTC questionnaire will be analyzed in order to discover how SATH is performed and understood between the interactants. The context will be investigated in terms of how it plays an important role in understanding and producing the speech act of threatening.

4.2 Data Analysis

I analyze the DCTs data from the questionnaire in order to decide whether the indirect speech act of threatening is comprehended by the interactants or not. Also to understand the motivation behind making threats indirectly and whether there is a use of politeness strategies in these acts.

I investigate how context plays an important role in understanding and producing the speech act of threatening. I argue that whatever influences the context of the interaction should be considered in the analysis, because context influences understanding and consequently whether an utterance is considered to be an indirect threat. I also argue that the variables that influence interaction are sometimes differently interpreted and this may consequently lead to different understanding. Finally, I conclude that all these factors influence the process of understanding, whereas factors like social distance, relationship, power, age, et cetera are all factors influence the process of performing and interpreting an act of threatening. Thus, in order to analyse what is meant and understood in producing an utterance, and why they are performed in a particular way, we need to analyse all the factors to understand how the implicit meaning is generated and what influences it, and whether the hearer understands his/her addressee's intended meaning. In addition to the factors that make the speaker use indirect threats rather than direct.

Before analyzing the data, I must highlight the fact that I gathered the most similar responses of the participants and used them in analyzing each situation. The analysis of the situations used in conducting this study is presented in paragraph forms as follows:

Scenario 1:

Your Mum is highly caring about your study. While you are watching TV in your room at 9 pm, your Mum shouts from the kitchen:

Mum: Ali, what are you doing •

Ali : I am watching TV.	•
Mum: Don't you have school tomorrow morning?	•
Ali : I am going to study	•

Utterance (1) in this situation would usually be interpreted as introductory utterance to ask your interactant to do something. Here, it has an implicit meaning and explicit. In spite of the fact that utterance (1) is a clear question of what Ali is doing and Ali's answer to the explicit meaning of the question, both interactants understand that there is an implicit meaning which refers to speech act of blaming and request but is done indirectly to avoid any potential FTA. Utterances (3) again is a question, but with a clear blaming and threatening. The Mum moves to performing an act of ordering and threatening. This utterance (3) usually constitutes a FTA if performed directly. Thus, Mum knows that it is embarrassing to her son to ask him, directly, to stop watching TV and go to study.

In such a context, utterance (3) is likely to give rise to a number of implicatures. One of the implicatures is that "there must be a problem with his Mum that there is no school or she might have a different plan with him that she would suggest. For example, if you are not going to school then I would suggest that

Then there is utterance (4) 'I am going to study', which emphasises that there is an understanding of speech act of threatening "if does not go to study, then...". Any other meaning would be a weak implicature in such a context because of the context of interaction. Thus, although, the explicature of utterances (1) and (3) would generate an implicature that could be a normal question and answer; it includes threaten the face of the hearer, there is no sign that the speaker understands that she might have threatened the face of her interactant or caused any discomfort.

Moreover, it is clear, from the follow up questions that the speech act of threatening is understood and performed upon. Thus, the illocutionary force is understood and the perlocutionary force is performed. However, the participants answers for the question asked whether they understood any act of threatening show that most of them misunderstood the implicature meaning (a threat) because the mother didn't use any aggressive words, and she is more likely blaming her son rather than threatening because of their close relationship. While other participants interpret the implicature as an indirect order to go to bed. One participant, on the other hand, understood the implicature as an indirect threat for two reasons as he stated. Firstly, it is because of the setting, that it was late and there is school in the next morning. Secondly, the mum was trying not to show offense "to be imperative" to her son that's why she started by

asking him the question (what are you doing?), and then tried to make him notice the situation they are in.

Scenario 2:

You noticed that your father went home from work a bit stressed. While you are going outside to play football with your friends, he stops you at the door and says:

Dad : it would be better if you stayed home with your mother. •

Ali: if that is what you want father. •

Utterance (1) would be interpreted as an indirect order to ask your interactant to stay home. The father in this context used a politeness strategy to avoid FTA which is suggestion where he suggest for his son that it is better for him to stay at home. In utterance (1) the father would be seen as if he is giving his son the freedom/choice to do what he wants, that is, he can either stay at home with his mum or ignore his father's order and go outside to play. But the fact is that, the son has no choice but to obey to his father because he was ordering him indirectly and threatening him that if he doesn't stay at home with his mum something unpleasant will happen.

Utterance (2) shows that the son understood what his father is asking him to do, which is staying home. Thus, both interactants understood the implicit meaning which represents the speech act of ordering that is done indirectly to avoid any offense. The first utterance, though, give rise to some implicatures such as "there is something wrong with the mother that the son has to stay with her at home, or there might be something else happened outside which lead the father to go home stressed and worried, and made him trying to prevent his son not to know; any other implicatures have a weak chance to take place in such context.

Thus, although, utterances (1) and (2) represent a cooperation between interactants where they generate a suggestion and accepting of what has been suggested, it involves an indirect threat performed by the speaker (father) to avoid offending his interactant (son) especially because he is preventing him from going outside and play. On the other hand, the son seemed to understand his father's order as a threat and immediately responded to him with accepting.

Furthermore, most of the participants answered the follow up questions with positive. That is, they understood the illocutionary force of the indirect speech act of ordering which consists of an indirect threat. In addition, to their performing of the perlocutionary force needed. They stated that what helped them in understanding the

act of threatening is the factor of power in which the father has power on his son. That is, even if the son had the choice to go and play, he wouldn't do it. In addition to the despositioning of the father where he went home in a bad mood.

Scenario 3:

Your mother have guests in the living room and you were in need to go and ask her for some money. After you did, she answered you by saying:
Mum: honey! As you can see, I am a little bit busy now. Let us talk about this later.
You: ummm! ok.

In this scenario, the mother is doing two things, saving her face in front of her guests and trying not to offend her son/daughter. In utterance (1) we can see that the mother started by using the marker (honey) to limit the chance of offending her interactant. Then she tried to make her interactant notice something, that is she is busy now for such thing. These two are some of the positive politeness strategies used to avoid giving an offense to the hearer. And then again, she used another positive politeness strategy which is the "including activity" where she said (let us talk about it) to include her interactant in the activity.

Thus, using this much of politeness strategies to avoid any FTA in one utterance could be for the reason she wanted to save her face in front of her friends. However, although, utterance (2) applies some of the maxims presented by Grice (1975) such as the quantity and manner maxims, which shows that what is meant is understood; there is still a risk of misunderstanding the act of threatening "implicature meaning" because of the large use of politeness strategies in one utterance. This implicature meaning could be "it is not the right time to ask for such thing" or "you must leave now because you are embarrassing me" or something like this that cannot be expressed directly.

Half of the participants answered for the follow up question with positive, that is, they understood what is performed as an indirect threat due to some reasons such as: avoiding to be embarrassed in front of the other listeners and the mother did not respond to her daughter request of giving her money, instead, she told her they will talk about it later.

While the other half answered with negative, that is, they didn't understand what is performed as a threat due to some reasons such as: the absence of signs that show the

mother is angry or upset such as strong eye contact or a change in the voice tone or the use of an aggressive language.

Scenario 4:

When you are about to finish your very first lecture, your teacher gives you an assignment and says:

Teacher: it is better to bring me the assignment at the beginning of next •
lecture if you want to give me a good impression on you.

Student: we hope that too teacher. •

Although this context seems to be a very traditional and ordinary interaction between a teacher and his students where he is asking them to do well in their studying and participation, however, utterance (1) carries an act of threatening. The teacher performed it indirectly perhaps to avoid being imperative to his students and avoid any risk of having FTA in his interaction.

Utterance (1) involves the use of two politeness strategies. The first one is: giving suggestions, that is, it is better for the students to do something. The second strategy is known as assuming or asserting reciprocity, where the teacher asked the students to do something for him so that he do something for them in return. All of these are strategies used to avoid FTA while interacting with others. Then there is utterance (2) “we hope that too teacher”, which emphasizes that there is an understanding of what is being performed “an indirect threat” that the students must bring their assignment or bad impression will be taken on them; or they might lose marks for it. While any other implicature has a weak chance of taking place in such context.

Utterance (1) generates a speech act of ordering which includes a FTA. Thus, the illocutionary and perlocutionary force performed show that interactants understood the implicature meaning, however, participants gave equal answers for the follow up question where half of them understood what was communicated by the teacher as an indirect threat performed as an ordinary order given by teachers. Their reasons for their positive interpretation was because of his use of asserting strategy, that is (only those who bring it will). They also added that the teacher strict attitude in their first lecture is what made them think of what is communicated as a threat. On the other hand, some of the participants misinterpret what has been communicated as an indirect threat for some reasons such as the regularity of this utterance. That is, most teachers say this and don't really mean it. another reason is that they think of what is said more likely as an advice instead of a threat because of the word (better) used.

Scenario 5:

While you are talking with your boy/girlfriend on the phone, he/she tells you in
a sudden:
He/she: you know, I love you so much that if I can't have you, nobody else •
is going to have you.
You: of course no one will but you. •

Hearing such thing from the one you love means the world to some, while it gives others a reason why to flee away from that person “if they understood its implicature” which is a threat of killing. Thus, although, utterance (1) of this interaction shows an expressive speech act “to express feeling toward something”; it also includes a commissive act “to commit someone to a future plan” that something will happen, which is in this situation (nobody else is going to have you). The speaker used an expressive act at the beginning to lower the risk of making FTAs to the hearer.

From utterance (2) which represents showing agreement (of course), we can clearly see that both interactants understood the implicature meaning regarding that it was performed as a promise or expressing feeling. Utterance (1), thus, shows that the boy/girlfriend knows that it is embarrassing and risking to say, directly, if I can't have you, I will kill you so no one else will have you. Furthermore, utterances (1) and (2) show a great cooperation between the interactants. That is the hearer respond to what is uttered shows that he understood what is meant where maxims such as the quantity, quality, and manner take place. In other words, the hearer replied with what is needed only in such situation.

Finally, we can say that it is clear from the follow up question that most of the participants answered with positive, that is, they understood the implicature meaning as a threat of committing harm to someone. They believe that saying such thing suddenly without any openings is something suspicious for them especially because the speaker is promising that something anonymous with consequences will happen. Whereas two of the participants answered with negative, that is, they didn't understand it as a threat. The reasons they raised for their interpretation is that as long as it is about love, it could never be a threat, unless it was uttered directly. They added that even if a threat was performed directly in such context, it will still be interpreted as a joke or just being ironic until it is committed due to the very close relationship and equality the interactants involved have.

4.3 Findings

After analysing each situation I can state my findings for this study as follows:

The implicature meaning of situation (1) is mostly misunderstood as a threat by most participants for two main reasons. The first reason is because of the very close relationship between the interactants involved in the context “mother and son” where most of the answers state “my mother wouldn’t do such thing, threaten me”. The second reason most of the participants raise is the absence of any aggressive words. That is, if it really was a threat, then there must be a use of an aggressive language that shows the nature of the interaction which is threatening. On the other hand, understanding the explicit meaning of the interaction was achieved by some of the participants where they claim that the settings where the situation takes place, that is, the time was late and not suitable for watching TV.

Moreover, situation (2) was understood by most of the participants as a threat even after it was performed indirectly. They state that what made them interpret it as a threat is the power factor “the father has power on his son”, that is, even after he gave his son the choice to go and play, it does not really mean that he has the choice, and he has to do what his father asked him which is staying home. Thus, the main reason the father performed his threat in this way is to avoid embarrassing his son and not to be imperative.

Situation (3) represents an interaction between a mother and her daughter in a context where other listeners are involved. Half of the participants understood the implicature meaning as a threat even after it was performed indirectly. They state that it is because the mother did not want to embarrass herself or her daughter in front of her friends. Also because the mother did not answer her daughter with what she wants. Whereas half of the participants misunderstood the implicature meaning because the mother didn’t use strong eye contact, change her voice tone, or use coded words that show what she uttered as a threat.

Furthermore, situation (4) represents a different type of interaction in different settings which is a teacher and his student inside the classroom. Misunderstanding the teacher threat was because that what he uttered is also uttered by other teachers where their intentions are mostly giving the students the choice to do something. Thus, the students wouldn’t consider it as a threat that has negative effect on them. On the other hand, understanding the implicature meaning of what is performed is because of the teacher’s strict attitude from the very beginning which gives them an impact that they must do well in order to get well.

Finally, situation (5) which shows an interaction between very close people “couples”. The threat performed was misunderstood because of the very close distance between the interactants as well as their strong relationship with each other. Also their condition which represents love is the main reason made the participants ignores the fact that what was uttered is a threat of doing harm. On the other hand, some participants understand the act of threatening because it was performed in a sudden in which they find something suspicious to do. Thus, it must lead to unpleasant consequences.

This chapter has presented the findings and results for the situations and the follow up questions of the questionnaire. The results show how each situation is interpreted and why. They also represent the similarities and differences in the use of politeness strategies in each situation and how they affect the performance and interpretation of each situation.

Chapter V: Conclusion

This chapter shows that there is a big risk of misunderstanding the indirect speech act performed by interactants in the Libyan society due to different factors that include the settings (time and place), the relationship between interlocutors, power, the politeness strategies used to save face and reduce FTA, dispositioning of the speaker, in addition to the situation where the act is performed.

It is found that the relationship between the interactants involved in the interactions is the most occurring factor that affects the performance and interpretation of indirect threats in which people use politeness strategies when threatening someone close to them in order to reduce any risk of making FTA. This use of politeness strategies may prevent the other interactants of understanding the nature of the act performed. Thus, the interactants who are threatened by another wont interpret the act as a threat due to their close relationship with that person.

Moreover, power is the second most affective factor that help interactants in understanding indirect threats such as the power of the teacher on his student or the power of the father on his children. However, in the case of the teacher and his students, it is shown that the frequency of such threats without bringing about them

is what makes interactants misunderstand this indirect threat, in which they believe that they are performed just to encourage students to do better.

It is also found that the despositioning of the interactants while performing an indirect act of threatening is one factor that increases the chance of understanding these acts. Most of people say that saying something while you are angry must means something else, even if what is said is just a request or apology.

Furthermore, It is found that what makes people perform indirect threats rather than direct is the other interactants involved in the interaction (other listeners) where the speaker who makes the threat doesn't want the surroundings understand his threat but that person he is speaking to. Also to avoid having any FTA to reduce any risk of embarrassing himself or the other speaker in the interaction. Thus, whenever such factors are involved, people are more likely to perform indirect threats, and their interactants are more likely to misunderstand them.

In conclusion and basing on the data, the study comes with the conclusion that people in the Libyan society fail in delivering indirect speech acts of threatening in which their interactants misunderstand these threats due to many factors. The power and relationship between the interactants play a great role in the performance and interpretation of such acts, that is, the power raise the chance of understanding indirect threats and the close relationship and social distance increases the risk of misunderstanding these acts. On the other hand, the amount and type of politeness strategies used in performing indirect speech acts of threatening also affect the interpretation of these acts. In addition to the setting of the interaction.

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Appendix (1)

discourse Completion Test (DCT) for indirect threatening.

Dear participant, you are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire which contains situations in which you might find yourself. Thank you for your help and co-operation. First, please fill in the following form:

Gender: male/female

Age:.....

Second, please read the following situations/scenarios carefully and imagine yourself in them. After each situation/scenario write how would you interpret the act was made, or what would you say to make an indirect act of threatening.

Scenario 1:

Your Mum is highly caring about your study. While you are watching TV in your room at 9 pm, your Mum shouts from the kitchen:

Mum: Ali, what are you doing •

Ali : I am watching TV. •

Mum: Don't you have school tomorrow morning? •

Ali : I am going to study •

Do you think that your Mum asked you to do anything? •

..... •

Do you understand any act of threatening? •

.....

Scenario 2:

You noticed that your father went home from work a bit stressed. While you are going outside to play football with your friends, he stops you at the door and says:

Dad : it would be better if you stayed home with your mother. •

Ali: if that is what you want father. •

Do you think that your Mum asked you to do anything? •

..... •

Do you understand any act of threatening? •

.....

Scenario 3:

Your mother have guests in the living room and you were in need to go and ask her for some money. After you did, she answered you by saying:

Mum: honey! As you can see, I am a little bit busy now. Let us talk about this later. •

You: ummm! ok. •

Do you think that your Mum asked you to do anything? •

..... •

Do you understand any act of threatening? •

.....

Scenario 4:

When you are about to finish your very first lecture, your teacher gives you an assignment and says:

Teacher: it is better to bring me the assignment at the beginning of next lecture if you want to give me a good impression on you. •
Student: we hope that too teacher. •

Do you think that your Mum asked you to do anything? •
..... •
•

Do you understand any act of threatening? •
.....

Scenario 5:

While you are talking with your boy/girlfriend on the phone, he/she tells you in a sudden:

He/she: you know, I love you so much that if I can't have you, nobody else is going to have you. •
You: of course no one will but you. •

Do you think that your Mum asked you to do anything? •
..... •
•

Do you understand any act of threatening? •
.....

The following are situations were answered by the participants but were not included in the analysis.

Scenario 1 •

At the beginning of your first lecture, your teacher strictly tells you:
Teacher: it is better to pay your full attention to me during the class. •
You: •

Do you think that your teacher is asking you to do anything? •
..... •
Do you understand any act of threatening? •
..... •

Scenario 2 •

You and your older brother usually sleep at the same room. One night, while you were playing video games, your brother came to you and said:
Brother: I should be in bed at 9:30 pm. •
You: •

Do you think that your teacher is asking you to do anything? •
..... •
Do you understand any act of threatening? •
.....

Scenario 3 •

You skipped your work for four days in a row without taking the permission.
When you got back your boss came to you and said:
Boss: one more day and you shall not bother yourself and come again. •

You: •

Do you think that your teacher is asking you to do anything? •

..... •

Do you understand any act of threatening? •

.....