

Investigating the Difficulties Faced by EFL Learners in Using Speech Act of Permission

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Abstract

This study is concerned with revealing some aspects of Iraqi EFL learners' use of the speech act of permission. The study aims at (1) investigating the ability of Iraqi EFL learners to distinguish between the speech act of permission and other related speech acts, particularly speech acts of (requesting, offering and suggestion) when these are expressed by similar linguistic devices in a number of situations, (2) investigating the most common strategies adopted by Iraqi EFL learners for issuing the speech act of permission in certain situation. These two objectives can be carried out through the following hypotheses:

1. Iraqi EFL learners recognize explicit permissive utterances better than implicit one.
2. Iraqi EFL learners misinterpret permission with relevant speech acts such as: requesting, offering and suggestion at both levels of recognition and production.

To achieve the objectives of the study and verify the hypotheses, the researcher conducted a test in which 45 Iraqi EFL college students at the fourth year stage, Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Karbala 2013/2014. The analysis of the data confirms the hypotheses of the study and yields the following:

1. The learners' success in identifying the intended speech act depends to large extent on the degree of the explicitness of the performative expression used.
2. Iraqi EFL learners misinterpret the speech act of permission and have a difficulty to recognize it from other speech acts as requesting, offering and suggestion at the recognition level.
3. The learners tend to use explicit utterances that grant permission better than implicit ones

The contextual factors have no significant influence on the learners' choice of strategies at the production level.

1. Introduction

A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication; we perform speech acts when we offer an apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment or refusal. Speech act may contain one word such as “sorry” or many words as “I am sorry that I forgot your birthday.”

Speech acts include real life interactions and require not only language knowledge but also relevant use of language within particular culture. We cannot deny the fact that cultural values have a strong influence on the use of language, especially speech acts. Many researchers have conducted the studies of the contrastive analysis of speech acts between learner’s native language and the target language for the purpose of helping learners improve their communicative competence.

Van Dijk (1977: 195) affirms that the term speech act refers more specifically to the illocutionary act when accomplishing some specific social act, e.g., making a promise, giving permission, etc. We can say that mastering the use of speech acts is essential and practical. More importantly, the cross- culture study of speech acts needs to be invested because “the cross-culture study of speech acts is vital to understanding of international communication” (Eisenstein, 1989:199). For these reasons permission which is one of the commonly used speech acts should be considered in all respects.

This study will focus on the speech act of permission because the speech act of permission is widely used in everyday interactions and plays a major role in communication.

The study aims to identify the most common strategies adopted by Iraqi EFL learners for issuing the speech act of permission in certain situations and to identify the ability of Iraqi EFL learners to distinguish between the Speech Act of Permission and other related speech acts, particularly speech acts of (requesting, offering and suggestion) when these are expressed by similar linguistic devices in a number of situations.

However, it is hypothesized that Iraqi EFL learners recognize explicit permissive utterances better than implicit one and they misinterpret permission with relevant speech acts such as: requesting, offering and suggestion at both levels of recognition and production. To get the results a test has been designed and applied to a sample of Iraqi EFL learners.

To sum up, the study will abide to the following limitations:

1. The study focuses only on the speech act of permission.
2. For the purpose of this study a test has designed and applied to a sample of 45 Iraqi EFL college students at fourth year, Department of English, College of Education for Human science, University of Kerbela during the academic year 2013_2014.

It is hoped that this study will be of value to those who are interested in studying the pragmatic performance of EFL learners. The study is also hoped to reveal some aspects of language which are relevant to and useful for the studies of second language learning.

2. Speech Act of Permission

2.1 Speech Act

Speech Act Theory was originally laid down by Wittgenstein and Austin and developed by Searle. Austin in (1962) was the first who drew the attention to utterances by which the speaker does not only say something, but also perform something. Also he drew a distinction between constative and performative utterances. Constative utterances are statements; their function is to describe some events, processes or state of affairs, they are verified according to whether they are true or false, for example 'Snow is white' , while performative utterances are used to do something or perform an action, they are either happy (felicitous) or unhappy (infelicitous), for instance 'I apologize for my behavior'.

Later, the term Speech Act has become to be basically connected with its components, Finch (2005: 171) illustrates that the action performed by producing an utterance consists of three related acts: a locutionary act, an illocutionary act, and a perlocutionary act. A locutionary act refers to the act of saying something that makes sense in the language. An illocutionary act is one that is performed through the medium of language: warning, stating, promising, and so on, it is the central component act of a speech act which can be explicit if the utterance contain a verb denoting the act, or implicit with no specific expression for the act itself. And finally, a perlocutionary act is the effect the illocutionary act has on the listener: such as surprising, misleading, and so forth. Coulthard (1985: 18) states that in speaking, one has no option of performing one or other of these acts; one usually performs all the three acts simultaneously, but useful for analytic purposes to distinguish between them.

Bach and Harnish (1979: 44) distinguish six general classes of speech acts depending on the basis of the psychological state of the speaker: effectives and verdictives which are conventional speech acts belonging to Searle's declarations, constatives, directives, commissives, and acknowledgments which are communicative speech acts. They correspond to Austin's expositives, exercitives, commissives, and expressives. These four acts are called interpersonal authoritative acts since they are typically directed at individuals.

Allan (1986: 200) notices that there are two kinds of interpersonal authoritatives. These are permissives and advisories. Furthermore, Bach and Harnish (1979: 47) think that directives including permission express the speaker's attitude towards some prospective action by the hearer. They classify directive speech acts into six divisions: requestives,

questions, requirements, prohibitives, permissives, and advisories. There will be a considerable concentration on the speech act of permission since it is the theme of this study.

For Bach and Harnish (1979: 49), permissives presume the addressee's authority in permitting the addresser to do an action. They express the addressee's belief and his/ her intention that the addresser believes that the addressee's utterance constitutes a sufficient reason for the addresser to feel free to do a certain act. Thus, the obvious reason for issuing a permissive utterance is either to issue a request for permission or to remove some antecedent restrictions against the action in question. As such, permission can be asked or given taking into consideration that it cannot be given unless it is sought or asked. Permissive verbs include: authorize, permit, allow, grant, license, agree to, sanction, release, and consent to.

Allan (1986: 199) mentions that in asking for permission, the authority is related to the hearer (H), who may accept granting the speaker the permission he asked for or he may refuse it. Thus, in uttering an utterance, the speaker (S) seeks the hearer's permission to do or have an act (A) if the speaker expresses:

- His/ her desire to do A.
- The intention that H accepts S's performing A.

2.2 Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

One of the contributions of Searle (1975: 60) is his distinction between direct and indirect speech acts, depending on the recognition of the intended perlocutionary effect of an utterance on a particular occasion. Direct speech acts exhibit a direct relation between the linguistic structure of the speech act and its function, while indirect speech acts are "cases in which one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another". The interesting issue in indirect speech acts is how one can mean more than what one says. The indirect speech acts are utterances in which the speaker's intended meaning is different from the literal meaning.

Searle (1975: 61) states that the problem posed by indirect speech acts is the problem of how it is possible for the speaker to say something and mean something else, a large part of that problem is related to the possibility of the hearer to understand the indirect speech act when the sentence, he/she hears and understands, means something else for example:

1. I permit you to go to the party. (Direct Speech Act of Permission)
2. Sit down. (Indirect Speech Act of Permission)

Yule (1996: 54) points out that a different approach to distinguish types of speech acts can be made on the basis of sentence structure. Whenever there is a direct relationship between a structure and a function, there is a direct speech act but whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, there is an indirect speech act. Thus, a declarative used to make a statement is a direct speech act, but a declarative used to make other speech acts is an indirect speech act.

2.3 The Concept of Permission

According to the Oxford Dictionary (2010: 580), the word “Permission” has two meanings. It is defined as the act of allowing somebody to do something, especially when this is done by somebody in a position of authority. Another meaning of permission is an official written statement allowing somebody to do something.

This study just focuses on the first meaning to discuss permission speech act which makes up a high proportion in every interaction. So, asking for permission is the act of wanting to know whether a person can do something or use something or not. Lyons (1977: 837) asserts that whether we are, as human beings or as members of a particular society, implicitly permitted to do whatever we are not expressly prohibited from doing is hardly a question for the semanticist.

Lyons (1977: 837) argues that a course of action is permissible in the weak sense if, and only if, it is not explicitly prohibited. Under this interpretation of permission, every possible course of action is either permissible or prohibited as in the following:

3. a. You may open the door.
- b. Don't open the door.

Radden and Dirven (2007: 257) affirm that “Permissions” express the speaker's directive attitude towards the hearer's potential action, which he “enables” to occur by relinquishing his power to prevent it. An act of permission is thus typically based on the speaker's authority.

Allan (1986:199-200) displays the felicity conditions of the Speech Act of Permission. The following table illustrates these felicity conditions:

Table (1) Allan's Felicity Conditions for Giving Permission

Type of Condition	The Formulation of the Conditions in the Case of Giving Permission
The Propositional Condition	The speaker (S) permits the hearer (H) to do a certain act (A).
The Preparatory Condition	S is sanctioned to permit H to do A.
The Sincerity Condition	S believes that H may do A on his/her authority.

Illocutionary Intention	S reflexively intends utterance (U) to be recognized as an entailment for H to do A.
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Table (2) Allan's Felicity Conditions for Asking Permission

Type of Condition	The Formulation of the Conditions in the Case of Asking Permission
The Propositional Condition	The speaker (S) seeks the hearer's acceptance (H) to do a certain act (A).
The Preparatory Condition	H is sanctioned to permit S to do A.
The Sincerity Condition	H believes that S may do A depending on his/her authority.
Illocutionary Intention	S reflexively intends utterance (U) to be recognized as a request for H to accept his A.

2.4 Strategies of Expressing Permission

Permission can be expressed by a number of strategies according to whether it is asked, given, refused, or talking about it. There will be a considerable concentration on the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels.

2.4.1 Permissive Performative Sentence

Permission can be issued through the use of explicit and implicit performative utterances. So, it is interesting to distinguish these two types of permissive performative utterances.

2.4.1.1 Str. 1: Explicit Permissive Performative Sentence

The major significant constituent of an explicitly performative utterance is the performative verb. In this regard, Perkins (1983: 945) affirms that there are many verbs which could be included under the heading of “performative verbs”, for example verbs that can be used to perform an act rather than merely describe or state an act. This means that the performative verb, whose meaning is the essence of the illocution, is a crucial constituent of an explicitly performative clause. In the case of permission, the verbs “authorize, grant, permit, etc.” can be used to issue explicit permissive performatives.

4. I permit you to ride my car.
5. I authorize you to start teaching English.

Radden and Dirven (2007: 236) confirm that in directive speech acts the speaker "directs" the hearer to perform, or refrain from performing, a certain action, as in requests, prohibitions, permissions, etc. In the case of permission, the speaker invokes his/her authority or a general rule to have another person who may carry out an act. They illustrate that the directive speech act is expressed by the imperative mood and by a sentence with performative verb, for example the verb "allow" which names the speech act of permission as in the following:

6. a. Sit down! [imperative mood]
- b. I allow you to sit down. [Performative speech act]

Additionally, Allan (1998: 5) sees that in English a performative verb must be in the present tense because the illocutionary act is defined at the moment of utterance.

7. I permit you to go out.

At this point, a performative may occur in either the simple or progressive aspects. To Allan (*ibid*), a performative verb normally occurs in the simple present. However, there are certain occasions where a performative may occur in the progressive aspect.

8. I am permitting you to go out.

2.4.1.2 Str. 2: Implicit permissive performative sentence

Implicit performatives, in contrast to explicit ones, do not contain an expression naming the act. They are described by using the three basic sentence types in English. In this respect, Levinson (1983: 244) states that "it is possible to say that sentence in the imperative, interrogative or declarative, and perhaps other kinds of sentence format are used to construct implicit performatives".

One way of denoting implicit permissive performatives is through the use of imperatives, Quirk et al (1985: 803) confirm that imperative sentences can express various illocutionary forces such as advising, warning, suggestion, threatening, as well as giving permission.

9. Come in. (Permission: as a reply to a knocker at the door) (*ibid*).

Another way to denote implicit permissive performatives, as mentioned by Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128-30) is through the use of modal verbs "may, might, can, and could" preceded by second or third person subjects, whether singular or plural, in declarative sentences denoting giving permission, and followed by first person, singular or plural, in interrogatives indicating requests for permission.

10. You may park here. (giving permission) (*ibid*).

11. Can I park here?

Quirk et al. (1985: 220) points out that the use of the modal verbs is one of the more problematic areas of English grammar, and one of the areas where many studies have been made, because that the models themselves tend to have overlapping meanings such that in some

circumstances, they can be more or less interchangeable. “Can and may”, for example, overlap to a small extent in the areas of permission and possibility. This means that modals do not directly represent the meaning they refer to.

2.4.2 Str. 3: Declaratives

Quirk et al (1985:802) state that declarative sentences can be used to denote giving permission, in this case they may contain one of the performative verbs that express permission in English such as “permit, allow, let, authorize, as well as the noun permission”, for example:

12. I give him my permission to leave early.

13. They let him do what he wants. (Leech and Svartivik, 1994: 126)

Additionally, speakers grant permission using declarative sentences with modals. For example:

14. You can stay in the spare room.

The other way of expressing permission-granting, is by the use of “be allowed to”. Eastwood (2002: 120) asserts that we sometimes talk about permission when we are not giving it or asking for it. To do this, we can use “can” referring to the present or the future and “could” referring to the past.

15. I can stay up as late as I like. My parents don't mind. (ibid)

16. At one time anyone could go and live in the USA. (ibid)

Eastwood (ibid) continues that “be allowed to” in the perfect and infinitive, can be used when someone talk about permission.

17. I didn't expect to be allowed to look round the factory.(ibid)

2.4.3 Str. 4: Imperative

Quirk et al. (1985: 827) state that “directives typically take the form of an imperative sentence.” They say that imperative sentences can express various illocutionary forces such as (advising, warning, suggestion, threatening, as well as giving permission).

18. Get some rest. (Suggestion to a friend who looked tired) (ibid).

19. Come in. (Permission: as a reply to a knocker at the door) (ibid).

Davies (1986: 41) argues that imperative sentences which express giving permission are mainly used by persons of authority when speaking to subordinates, such as a father to his son, or an employer to his employee.

20. Go wherever you want [A father to his son] (ibid).

Similarly, Lyons (1977: 838) discusses the idea of how imperatives are not only used to express a command or a request, but also to grant permission to the person who seeks it. For example, saying "come in" to someone is regarded as being giving permission since a knock at the door is taken to be equivalent to a request for permission to enter:

21. May I come in? [Permission] (ibid)

Moreover, the instructions “Go or Cross now”, associated with a green light, unlike “Stop or don't cross the road now”, associated with a red light, do not impose on the motorist or pedestrian the obligation to behave or not behave in a particular way. However, they create a permissible course of action by removing a prohibition or determinacy (ibid).

Davies (1986: 230) thinks that when “let” means “allow” has to be differentiated from let-construction with another meaning. So that, when an imperative with “let” means “allow” may have a second person tag.

22. Let us have a look, will you? (Permission: a reply to asking for a look at pictures).(ibid)

2.4.4 Str. 5: Interrogatives

The most basic use of a question is to ask for information as in the following example:

23. Where are you from?

But questions can be used in other ways such as getting people to do things through requesting, making suggestions, offering, and asking for permission via the use of modal verbs such as “shall, may, can, etc.”

Eastwood (2002: 119) asserts that we can use “can, could or may” to ask permission. He argues that “could” means a more distant possibility than “can” and so is less direct, more tentative. “May” is rather formal, for example:

24. Can I take your umbrella? (ibid)

25. Could I borrow this calculator, please? (ibid)

26. May we come in? (ibid)

DeCapua (2008: 215) asserts that when “could” is used in asking for permission or in making a request, it is a polite form and not considered a past form. Thomson and Martinet (1986: 130) affirm that we can use “can, could, may, and might” to asking for permission, but “could” is the most generally useful of the four, as it can express both formal and informal request. They argue that “might” is more diffident than “may” and indicates greater uncertainty about the answer. Additionally, they confirm that questions about permission are expressed by “can or am/is/are allowed to” in the present and by “could or was/were allowed to” in the past, for instance:

27. Is Tom allowed to use the car whenever he likes? (ibid)

28. Could students choose what they wanted to study? (ibid)

29. Were students allowed to choose what they wanted to study? (ibid)

Quirk et al (1985: 815) assert that the formation of yes-no questions with modal auxiliaries generally involve the speaker's authority in statements and the hearer's authority in questions. This means that the question form anticipates the form appropriate for the answer:

30. a. May I leave now?

b. Yes you may.

Moreover, there are other constructions for asking permission. Leech and Svartivik (1994: 126) argue that asking or giving permission can be expressed by the use of the verb “mind”:

31.a. Would you mind if I opened a window?

b. No, I don't mind at all. (Leech and Svartivik, 1994: 126)

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 130) remark that the negative interrogative forms “can't and couldn't” can be used in asking permission, which used to show that the speaker hopes for an affirmative answer.

32. Can't I stay up till the end of the program?(ibid)

33. Couldn't I pay by cheque?(ibid)

2.4.5 Str. 6: To+ Infinitive or Gerund After a Verb

A number of grammarians such as Eastwood (2002: 149), Leech and Svartivik (1994: 281) and Thomson and Martinet (1986: 234) agreed upon the view that permission can be carried out through another common construction which is verb plus gerund or “to+ infinitive”.

34. The teacher allowed her students to drink in class.

35. The teacher allowed drinking in class.

DeCapua (2008: 399) asserts that some verbs in English such as “advise, direct, allow, permit, etc.” require an indirect object between the main verb and the infinitive or the infinitive phrase. The indirect object may be either a noun or pronoun. She argues that there is an exception in this rule. When these verbs are in the passive, the original indirect object becomes the subject of the passive sentence. Thus, there is no indirect object between the verb and the infinitive. So the sentence (33) becomes:

36. Her students were allowed to drink in class.

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 234-35) point out that some verbs such as “advise, recommend, allow, and permit” take either infinitive or gerund. It takes infinitive if the person concerned is mentioned as in:

37. They don't allow us to park here. (Thomson and Martinet,1986: 234-35)

while it take gerund if this person is not mentioned as in:

38. They don't allow parking. (ibid)

Leech and Svartivik (1994: 281) argue that some verbs such as “tell, order, allow, and permit” have the construction “verb + object + to-infinitive.”

39. He allowed the neighbors to use his car. (ibid)

Eastwood (2002: 149) affirms that the verbs “advise, allow, encourage, and recommend” have two forms: (-ing) form as in:

40. They allow fishing here.

and (object + to-infinitive) form as in:

41.They allow people to fish here.

2.4.6 Str. 7: Indirect Speech to Convey Permission

The indirect speech can be used to discover the function of an utterance. Thomson and Martinet (1986: 269) define indirect speech by saying “in indirect speech we give the exact meaning of a remark or a speech, without necessarily using the speaker's exact words”, for example:

42. He said, "I could do it tomorrow". (ibid)

can be reported as:

43. He said he could do it the next day. (ibid)

Murphy (2004: 94) confirms that when the speaker uses reported speech, he is usually talking about the past. So verbs usually change to the past in reported speech.

Quirk et al (1985: 231) explain that the past tense modals “could and might” are used as past tense equivalents of “can and may” in indirect speech conveying permission, for instance:

44. You can/may do as you wish.

"Can" could be reported indirectly as:

45. She said we could/might do as we wish.

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 273) argue that the modal verb “could” in the past can remain unchanged or be reported by “was/were allowed to” or “has been allowed to”:

46. He said, “When I was a child I could watch TV whenever I wanted to.”

can be paraphrased as:

47. He said that when he was a child he could/was allowed to watch TV whenever he wanted to.

48. He said that as child he had been allowed to watch TV whenever he wanted to.

while in conditional sentences “could” can remain unchanged or be reported by “would be allowed to”:

49. He said “if I paid my fine I could walk out of prison today.”

can be reported as:

50. He said that if he paid his fine he could/would be allowed to walk out of prison that day.

Hewings (2002: 50) affirms that the speaker can use either “could allow or was/were allowed to” for reporting that he had general permission to do something, that is, to do it at any time. However, he use “was/were allowed to”, but not “could” to report permission for one particular past action.

51. Last century, women were not allowed to vote.

52. Although he didn't have a ticket, Ken was allowed to come in.

In addition, he (ibid) adds that in negative sentences the speaker can use either “couldn't allow or wasn't/weren't allowed to” for reporting that permission was not given in general or particular situations:

53. We arrived late and couldn't allow/weren't allowed to get in till the interval.

2.4.7 Modality to Express Permission

From a semantic point of view, modality conveys a great variety of meanings and attitudes as it is one of the important features of English. Thus, it makes the semantic truth value of a given sentence more flexible. As such, Radden and Dirven (2007: 233) state that “modality is concerned with the speaker's assessment of, or attitude towards, the potentiality of a state of affairs. Modality therefore relates to different worlds.” They give two major types of modality, which are:

1. Epistemic modality which is concerned with the speaker's assessment of the potentiality of a state of affairs.
2. Deontic modality which relates to social interaction.

Permission is belonging to the second type which is concerned with the speaker's directive attitude towards an action to be carried out, for instance:

54. You can go out.

Palmer (1987: 98) argues that there are three main types of modality according to their functions, which are (Epistemic, Deontic, and Dynamic). He agrees with Radden and Dirven (2007: 233) that the modals of permission are deontic when the speaker influences or directs the behavior of his addressee.

Moreover, Quirk et al (1985: 219) defined modality as “the manner in which the meaning of a clause is qualified so as to reflect the speaker's judgment of the likelihood of the proposition it expresses being true”. They distinguished two kinds of meanings for modal auxiliaries:

1. Intrinsic modality which involves some kind of intrinsic human control over events such as “permission” and “obligation.”
2. Extrinsic modality which involves human judgment of what is or is not likely to happen such as “possibility” and “necessity.”

2.4.7.1 Str. 8: "May"

Downing and Locke (2006: 385) affirm that modal meanings such as (obligation, permission, necessity, etc.) are used to establish and maintain social relations and interaction. Through them, speakers influence and control others, and commit themselves to certain courses of action.

Radden and Dirven (2007: 257) point that permission-granting is expressed by using the subjective modal “may”, when an act of permission is thus typically based on the speaker's authority, and it is

expressed by the modal “can”, when permission based on external circumstances. For example, when the teacher says:

55. a. You may go now.

b. You can go now.

The permission in (a) relies on the teacher's authority, while in (b) the permission relies on external circumstances: the ringing of the bell (ibid).

Additionally, DeCapua (2008: 215) says that ““may” is the most formal and, among traditional prescriptive grammarians, is considered it as the correct form to use when asking for permission”. Nevertheless, “can” has increasingly become the preferred form over “may”.

We use “may” in giving, asking, and refusing permission, but it is formal and used mainly in writing. It is less common than “can”. Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128) illustrate that it is possible to use “may” with the first person in giving permission, but it is not a common and it would be much more usual to use “can”, for example:

56. a. I may leave the office as soon as I have finished. (ibid)

b. I can leave the office as soon as I have finished. (ibid)

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128) argue that “may” is chiefly used with second and third persons, and also in impersonal statements concerning authority and permission, for instance:

57. You may take my car. (second person)

58. They may phone the office and reverse the charges. (third person)(ibid)

59. In certain circumstances a police officer may ask a driver to take a breath test. (impersonal statement) (Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128)

In asking for permission, we use “may” which is also more formal than “can”, as in:

60. May I come in?

while, in refusing permission, we use the negative forms “can't and mayn't”, for example:

61. Customers may not bring their own food into this cafe. (Murphy, 1998: 60)

Quirk et al (1985: 794) state that there is a difference in meaning between auxiliary negation and main verb negation. Thus, the negation here refers to the refuse of permission in the case of auxiliary negation as in:

62. You may not smoke in here. (you are not allowed to smoke in here) (ibid)

while, it refers to the possibility in the case of main verb negation as in:

63. They may not like the party. (it is possible that they do not like the party) (ibid)

2.4.7.2 Str. 9: "Might"

Quirk et al (1985: 231) mention that the past modal “might” is used quite regularly as past tense equivalent of “may” in many constructions:

A. In indirect speech, for instance:

64. She said we might do as we wished. (ibid)

B. Outside indirect speech contexts in the sense (was/were permitted to), but it is a rare use, for example:

65. We might leave the school only at weekends. (ibid)

C. Tentativeness or politeness, such as:

66. I wonder if I might borrow some coffee. (ibid)

Quirk et al (1985: 815) illustrate that the hypothetical uses of the auxiliary “might” require special treatment, since in yes-no questions, the present form is generally substituted for “might” in response.

67.a. Might I call you by your first name?

b. Yes, you may. (ibid)

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128) argue that the modal “might” is used in the conditional and after verbs in a past tense. Also, they affirm that in requests for permission the use of “might” is more diffident than “may” and indicates greater uncertainty about the answer.

68. If you were a student, you might travel at half-price.

69. Might I leave now?

2.4.7.3 Str. 10: "Can"

Radden and Dirven (2007: 257) affirm that permissions belong to the enabling modalities, and the only two pairs which denoting this kind of modality, are “may/might and can/could.” They argue that the authoritative force invoked by permissions can be softened by use of the modal “can”. They say that “the social forces of democratization and colloquialisation have, especially in American English, led to a dramatic increase of 'can' in expressing permissions. Thus, “typical” personal permissions such as allowing a person to use my car are now normally expressed by the colloquial can.”

DeCapua (2008: 215) confirms that “can” is more commonly used in spoken English, especially between people who know each other. She states that “It is frequently difficult for ESL/EFL learners to make the distinctions in use among the different modals. A common problem among learners of English is the over use of “can” in making requests. In many situations, native speakers find “could or would” to be less abrupt and more appropriate than can.”

“Can” is similar to “may” in that it is also used in giving, refusing, and asking for permission. Moreover it is used for talking about permission.

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128) affirm that “can” is the most usual form used for the first person in giving permission, for example:

70. I can take a day off whenever I want. (ibid)

also, it can be used to express the idea of having permission for second person as in:

71. You can take two books home with you. (I allow it/the library allow it) (ibid)

Additionally, it used in informal English for the third person as in:

72. They can phone the office. (ibid)

“Can and can't” are the most informal forms used in asking or refusing permission, for example:

73. Can I use your pen?

74. You can't smoke in here. (ibid)

Moreover, we use “can” when we talk about rules made by someone else, for instance:

75. Each passenger can take one bag onto the plane. (Eastwood, 2002: 113)

2.4.7.4 Str. 11: "Could"

Eastwood (2002: 120) confirms that “could” means a more distant possibility than “can”, so is less direct and more tentative. Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128) argue that “could” is used when there is an idea of condition and general permission in the past.

76. Why don't you ring him? You could use my phone.

77. On Sundays we could stay up late.

Thomson and Martinet (1986: 128) affirm that we would use “could” in colloquial speech:

78. He said we could leave.

In the term of request permission, they point out that “could” is the most generally useful of the modals, as it can express both formal and informal requests.

79. Could I use your telephone?

Quirk et al (1985: 231) confirm that “could” is similar to “might”, it is also used in many constructions:

A. In indirect speech, such as:

80. He said I could use his phone.

B. Outside indirect speech contexts, it act as the past time equivalents of “can”, for example:

81. There were no rules: we could do just what we wanted.

C. Tentativeness and politeness, for instance:

82. Could I see your driving license?

In the term of yes-no question, they argue that in responses, “could” is also substitute by the present form.

83. a. Could I see you for a moment?

b. Yes, you can. (ibid)

2.5 Permission and Other Related Speech Acts

The basic aim behind this section is to draw a clear distinction between permission and some other related speech acts, namely requesting and offering.

2.5.1 Requesting

Trosborg (1995: 187) states that “a request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker conveys to a hearer that he wants him/ her to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker”. Al-Hindawi (1999:67) mentions that the requesters expect the requestees to grant the request, but they do not insist on it and the latter have the freedom to refuse the request. Consequently, the main components of requesting are the need of the speaker and voluntary action on the part of the hearer.

Two points of similarity between requesting and asking for permission can be set out. Firstly, in both requesting and asking for permission, the speaker has no authority or power over the hearer, instead, the latter is the one in authority. Secondly, in both requesting and asking for permission, the action performed by the hearer will be of benefit to the speaker (requester, seeker of permission) (Bach and Harnish, 1979: 48).

84. Can you help me tidy up this room? (Requesting)

85. May I leave? (Asking for permission) (ibid).

One point of difference between the two speech acts is that requesting involves some sort of imposition; the requester politely imposes on the requestee to perform the action desired. By contrast, asking for permission does not involve any kind of imposition (Trosborg, 1995: 186).

In terms of modal verbs, “can, could and might” are used to make requests and to ask for permission, but in requesting the subject is second or third person, whereas in asking for permission, the subject is first or third person, singular or plural (ibid: 187). Besides, the expression “would you mind” is used in both requesting and asking for permission with the difference that in requesting the verb after “would you mind” takes an (-ing) form, while in seeking permission would you mind is followed either by a pronoun in the possessive plus verb with (-ing), or is followed by (if+ noun/ pronoun+ verb in the past) (Leech and Svartivik, 1994: 126-30).

86. Would you mind typing this letter? (Requesting) (ibid)

87. Would you mind my opening a window? (Asking for permission) (ibid)

88. Would you mind if I opened a window? (Asking for permission) (ibid)

2.5.2 Offering

According to Trosborg (1995: 188), “Offering” is an illocutionary act in which the speaker volunteers to help the hearer in what he/she

personally considers him/her in need of. It is thus voluntarily and involves help on the part of the speaker.

Moreover, offering is not binding on the hearer since he/she is free to accept or refuse what is offered to him/her. Besides, what is offered should be for the advantage of the hearer. As such, voluntarily help on the part of the speaker, the need of the hearer and advantages of the hearer are the main features of the speech act of offering (Palmer, 1986: 81).

Palmer (ibid) argues that when a speaker offers to do something, he/she needs the hearer's permission to make an offer and he/she believes that he/she is able to do the offer and the hearer, at the same time, is willing to permit him/her to do it. Here lies the difference between permission and offering. In permission, the speaker requires the hearer's acceptance to do something which is of benefit to the speaker, whereas in offering, the speaker needs permission of the hearer to do something beneficial for the hearer.

Bach and Harnish (1979:50) illustrate that in terms of modal verbs "can, could, may and shall" are used to make an offer:

89.Can I help you? (Offering)

90.Can I see your camera? (Asking for permission)

The point of difference between the two examples is that in offering, there is a kind of help on the part of the speaker, while in asking for permission, there is no help (Bach and Harnish, 1979: 50).

3. Background of the Test

The test is carried out on the fourth stage (45) students, (22) were females and (23) were males, at the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Kerbela 2013/2014. The aim of the test is to investigate the Iraqi EFL undergraduate learners' responses in using Speech Act of Permission. It consists of two parts. The first part takes the form of recognition test to reveal the learners' abilities in distinguishing the Speech Act of Permission in (15) items from other related ones, namely, Request, Offer and Suggestion, where choices are given. The second part of the test is intended to elicit information about the learners' use of the strategies to express the Speech Act of Permission in (10) sentences at the production level. This is done deliberately to identify the most common strategy used by them to express the Speech Act of Permission.

In order to measure the central tendency of the subjects, the mean score has been adopted as a statistical device. In this respect, Butler (1985: 30) mentions that the mean score is the average subject response to an item. It is formed by adding up the number of the points earned by all subjects for the item, and dividing that total by the number of the subjects.

Moreover, Mousavi (1999: 213) states that the mean is the most commonly used and most widely applicable measure of the central tendency of a distribution. He illustrates that in a following formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{X_1 + X_2 + X_3 + \dots + X_n}{N} \quad \text{which is usually written as} \quad \bar{X} = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

where

\bar{X} = the mean

X = raw score

Σ = the sum of

N = the number of cases.

3.1 Recognition level

3.1.1 The Result of the First Part of the Test

The results of the first part of the test are identified in the following table:

Table (3): The Result of the First Part

Item	Correct answers	%	Incorrect answers	%
1	39	86,6	6	13,3
2	34	75,5	11	24,4
3	30	66,6	15	33,3
4	36	80	9	20
5	35	77,7	10	22,2
6	18	40	27	60
7	22	49	23	51
8	31	69	14	31
9	31	69	14	31
10	42	93	3	7
11	26	57,7	19	42,2
12	18	40	27	60
13	18	40	27	60
14	29	64,4	16	35,5
15	8	17,7	32	82,2

3.1.2 The Analysis of the Results

This analysis will concentrate mainly on the items that are related to the Speech Act of Permission. Additionally, it will illustrate the other related speech acts briefly. In the case of the Speech Act of Request, the following items No. (1), (11) and (14) reveal that the learners associate certain polite expressions such as (please) with this speech act and they find difficulties in recognizing different speech acts in the imperative

construction. This is apparent from the percentages of their correct responses to the utterances.

While in the case of the speech act of suggestion, the items No. (3), (5) and (7) reveal that the learners recognize this speech act in imperative construction better than other constructions with modals. In the case of the Speech Act of Offer the item No. (13) reveals that the learners face difficulties in recognizing this speech act from the speech act of permission in the use of the modal verb "Can".

The analysis of other items is as following:

1. Item No. (2): in this item the Speech Act of Permission is expressed by gerund after verb strategy. However, (34) students constituting 75% recognized the speech act of permission from the verb (allow).
2. Item No. (4): in this item the Speech Act of Permission is expressed by the modal verb "May" strategy. The percentage of the correct responses to this item illustrates that (80%) of the students recognize this act from this modal, because this modal is mostly used for expressing permission and rarely used with other speech acts.
3. Item No. (6): in this item the permission is expressed by the modal verb "Could" strategy. The percentage of the incorrect responses to this item illustrates that (60%) of the students can't recognize the Speech Act of Permission and this is because that this modal verb is often used with the most of the speech acts.
4. Item No. (8): in this item the permission is expressed by the modal verb "Can" strategy. The percentage of the correct responses to this item is (69%). This means that the students recognize the Speech Act of Permission through one modal better than the others.
5. Items No. (9) and (10): in the first item the permission is expressed by the imperative construction strategy. The percentage of the correct responses to this item is (69%). While in the second item it is expressed by the performative verb "permit". The percentage of the correct responses to this item is (93%). The percentage reveals that the students have the ability to recognize those speech acts which are formed by the direct permissive constructions, i.e., explicit performative expressions more than the indirect one, i.e., an imperative.
6. Item No. (12): in this item the permission is expressed by the modal verb "Might" strategy. The percentage of the incorrect responses to this item illustrates that (60%) of the students can't recognize the Speech Act of Permission and this is due to reason that one modal might express several meanings and this

would make some sort of ambiguity in relation to the meaning sought.

7. Item No. (15): in this item the permission is expressed in a conditional sentence. The percentage of the incorrect responses to this item illustrates that (82%) of the students face difficulties in recognizing the Speech Act of Permission in indirect construction.

3.3 Production level

Expressing the Speech Act of Permission depends on the contextual factors which are solidarity, status and distance. This indicates that each strategy is going to be used with certain situations such as (a mother to her daughter, employer to his employee and etc.). The students must not ignore these factors when they produce their utterances.

3.3.1 The Result of the second Part of the Test

Table (4): Percentages of Student's Use of the Speech Act of Permission's Strategies in the Second Part of the Test

Item	Strategies									
	Explicit performative expression	Imperative construction	Interrogative construction	Declarative construction	To+ Infinitive or gerund construction	Indirect construction	Can	Could	May	might
1	27	2	–	–	–	–	38	13	18	–
2	2	–	13	–	–	–	40	13	31	–
3	24	–	2	4	–	–	18	22	29	–
4	–	–	9	–	–	–	47	9	33	2
5	–	4	9	–	–	–	40	13	24	9
6	22	13	–	–	–	–	35	11	18	–
7	–	6	4	–	–	–	33	13	40	–
8	–	4	–	31	11	–	31	11	9	2
9	–	–	9	–	–	–	31	22	29	9

10	-	-	11	-	-	-	18	31	38	2
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3.3.2 The Analysis of the Results

Table (2) shows the following:

1. In this item the situation is between a mother and her daughter. So in the term of the modals, "May" strategy will be the most appropriate one. The percentage reveals that the students used "Can" more than the others. Also it reveals that they prefer to employ explicit performative expression strategy.
2. In this item the situation is between two friends. The percentage reveals that the students prefer to use either interrogative construction or modals, especially "Can" strategy, more than the other strategies.
3. In this item the situation is between a teacher and his headmaster. So the asking of permission must be more polite. The best strategy for the asking for permission is "Could" or "Might". The percentage illustrates that the students used "May" more than "Could" and they don't use "Might" strategy.
4. In this item the situation is between a father and his son. The percentage reveals that a few number of students use the interrogative strategy while a large number of them use "Can" strategy while "May" is more suitable.
5. In this item the situation is about a girl who is asking for permission from her neighbor. The students can use either interrogative strategy or "May" strategy because it is the more formal one. The percentages illustrate that a few students used the interrogative strategy, and they used "Can" strategy more than "May".
6. In this item the situation is about a professor who is giving permission to his students. So the students can use explicit performative construction, declarative construction, the modals strategies or even the imperative construction. The percentage reveals that the students prefer to use explicit performative construction more than the imperative one. Also they prefer to use the modals strategies especially "Can" strategy.
7. In this item the situation is about someone who is asking his brother's permission. The students can use either the interrogative construction or "Can" strategy. The percentage illustrates that a few students used the interrogative strategy, and most of the others used "May" strategy instead of "Can" strategy.
8. In this item the situation is about a policeman who refused to permit someone to park in front of a supermarket. The parking is refused in general, so the students can use indirect construction or

(to+ infinitive) construction strategies as well as the other strategies. The percentage illustrates that a few students used (to+ infinitive) strategy and no one used the indirect construction. While the other students prefer to use the declarative and modals strategies.

9. In this item the situation is between two persons who don't know each other. The asking of permission can be expressed either by interrogative construction or "May" strategy. The percentage reveals that a few students used the interrogative construction and most of them used the modals strategies especially "Can".
10. In this item the situation is between a boss and his employee, so the employee must be polite. The students can use either "Could" or "Might" strategies. The percentage illustrates that a very few students use "Might" strategy. And the students who used "May" strategy are more than the students who used "Could" strategy.

3.4 Conclusions

The main conclusions introduced here are related to the students' performance at Part 1 and Part two of the test. These conclusions associated with the students' behavior at Part 2 belong to the employment of speech act of permission strategies.

3.4.1 The Learners' Performance at Part 1 of the Test

In order to illustrate the Iraqi EFL undergraduate informants' behavior at this level, several conclusions can be introduced here:

1. Iraqi EFL learners are more successful in identifying the Speech Act of Permission issued by explicit performative expressions than the imperative construction.
2. The learners' success in identifying the intended speech act depends on, to a large extent, to the degree of the explicitness of the performative expressions used.
3. The learners' ability to identify speech act of permission expressed by an indirect construction with the absence of any performative expression is not good and the learners can be described, according to the mean score of their responses 17,7 %, as "extremely limited users" in this regard.
4. The learners' ability to identify the Speech Act of Permission expressed by the modal "May" is considered very well since the mean score of their responses 80%.
4. The learners' ability to identify Speech Act of Permission expressed by the modal "Can" is appropriate and by using the mean score as an indicator, the learner's success amounts to 69%.
5. The learners' performance concerned with their identification of the Speech Act of Permission expressed by the modals "Could" and

"Might" is unsuccessful according to the mean scores of their responses 40%.

3.4.2 The Learners' Performance at Part 2 of the Test

In order to illustrate the Iraqi EFL undergraduate informants' behavior at this level, several conclusions can be introduced here:

1. Mostly, the contextual factors have no significant influence on the learners' choice of the strategies.
2. Learners prefer using explicit performative expression strategy. Especially, in giving permission.
3. The learners show greater preference for using the modals strategies than the other types of strategies in most of the situations.
4. The learners rarely used some strategies which are the indirect construction, (To+ infinitive) construction, imperative construction and the modal "Might".
5. The learners have the ability to use declarative construction and (To+ infinitive) strategy to express the idea of general permission.
6. The students commonly over use the modal "Can" in many different situations during the test.

3.5. Suggestions and Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. English textbooks should provide students with enough description of the main characteristics that outline the Speech Act of Permission. Such a description would help students to choose the appropriate strategies that indicate permission.
2. It is important to help the learners develop awareness for using all types of strategies to express Speech Act of Permission and put more appropriate choices at their disposal.
3. Students should be given enough opportunity to practice the various constructions of sentences that express the Speech Acts in general and Speech Act of Permission in particular especially in conversation.
4. Another study can be conducted to show the comparison between the speech act of permission and other related speech acts such as requesting, suggestion and offering.

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Index // the Test

Q1// Read the following situations carefully and then choose what you believe to be the intended speech act conveyed by the given utterance:

1. It is cold in the restaurant. John asks the waiter to shut the window. So he says: "Could you shut the window, please?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

2. Mark wants to drink a glass of water in the class. So during his talking with his friend his friend tells him: "The teacher allowed drinking water in the class"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

3. Marry wants to send a letter to her friend, she doesn't know what to say in it. So she asks her mother to help her, she says: "What can I say in my letter?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

4. Jill has gone to a café. By chance he met three of his colleagues who were sitting in front of his table. He went to them and said: "You may join us?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

5. Sami and Ali are friends. During their walking in a park, Sami looks so tired. So Ali says: "Let us get some rest."

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

6. Jane had to go to a lecture but she was ill. Her friend went to the lecture and took notes. However, next day Jane is being well

again and after seeing her friend she says: " Could I look at your notes?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

7. Michel is in his friend's house. He wants to leave early, but his friend says: "We could watch this comedy on TV tonight".

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

8. Robert went to the room of his professor. He wants to talk with him for a minute. So he says: "Excuse me, Mr. Buckingham, but can I talk to you for a minute?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

9. A professor was giving his lecture, when someone knocked at the door. So he said: "Come in".

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

10. Noor had invited to a party, she talked with her mother about it. So her mother said: "I permit you to go to the party."

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

11. John came to the class very late. He found his colleague sat on his seat. So the professor said: "Bring another chair."

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

12. Sameer was working in a new job. He met his new introduced themselves for each other. coworker, and they both Then Sameer said: "Might I call you by your first name?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

13. Lucy and Luna are walking in the town. Luna says that she is afraid of walking home alone. So Lucy asks her: "Can I walk with u to reach home?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

14. Tom is buying a coat. He asks the assistant for a receipt. So he says: "Can I have a receipt, please?"

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.

Suggestion

15. Rachel visited his friend in the prison, and asked him whether he could walk out of prison. His friend said: "If I paid my fine I could walk out of prison today."

- a. Request b. Permission c. Offer d.
Suggestion

Q2// Use the appropriate utterance to issue the Speech Act of Permission according to the following situations:

1. Jane wants to take permission from her mother to go to a party at midnight.

2. John wants to leave his books with his friend Mark.

3. A teacher takes permission from his headmaster in order to take his students to a picnic.

4. Harry wants to go out with his friends, and he wants to use his father's car.

5. Luis wants to pick off some of the apples from the garden of her neighbor.

6. Robert came to the college very late; he wants to attend the lecture. So he asked his professor's permission.

7. It is raining. Martin wants to go out because he has a meeting with his boss, but he doesn't have an umbrella. His brother has one. So he asks his permission to use it.

8. Helen wants to park in front of a supermarket. So the policeman tells her that it is not permitted.

9. Mark is waiting in the airport. He feels boring. The person who sits near him has a magazine. So he wants to borrow it.

10. Jill wants to take permission from his boss to leave his job for three days.

الخلاصة

تُعنى هذه الدراسة باستخدام الطلبة العراقيين الذين يتعلمون اللغة الانجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية فعل الكلام "الاستئذان".

وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى (١) تفصي مقدرة طلبة الدراسات الأولية من متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية العراقيين على التمييز بين فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" وأفعال الكلام الأخرى المتعلقة به وخاصة الالتماس والعرض والاقتراح والتي يتم التعبير عنها بصيغ لغوية متشابهة في عدد من المواقف ، (٢) تحديد الاستراتيجيات الأكثر استعمالا من قبل أولئك المتعلمين لإصدار فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" في مواقف معينة.

ويمكن تحقيق أهداف البحث بتبني الفرضيات الآتية:

١. يدرك طلبة الكلية العراقيين دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية جمل الاستئذان بشكلها الصريح أفضل من الجمل بشكلها الضمني.
٢. يخلط هؤلاء الطلبة بين فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" وباقي أفعال الكلام المتعلقة به وخاصة الالتماس والعرض والاقتراح.

لتحقيق أهداف الدراسة وبرهنة أو دحض فرضياتها ، أعد الباحث استبياناً وطبقه على (٤٥) عينة من طلبة الكلية العراقيين من دارسي اللغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية من الصف الرابع / قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية / جامعة كربلاء للعام الدراسي ٢٠١٣-٢٠١٤ م لقياس أدائهم على المستويين: الإدراكي والإنتاجي ، فقد طلب منهم أن يستجيبوا لاستبيان مؤلف من جزئين أولهما يتكون من ١٥ موقفا مصمما لقياس مقدرة الطلبة لتمييز فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" والتفريق بينه وبين أفعال الكلام المتعلقة به وخاصة (الالتماس والعرض والاقتراح)، في حين يحتوي الجزء الثاني على ١٠ مواقف تطلب أن يصدر المتعلمون فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" لاستكشاف الاستراتيجيات الأكثر شيوعاً و الخاصة بالاستئذان في مواقف معينة.

إذ يؤكد تحليل البيانات تحقق فرضيات الدراسة كما أنها تقضي ما يأتي:

١. يميز الطلبة جمل الاستئذان بشكلها الصريح أفضل بكثير من الجمل بشكلها الضمني.
٢. لا يميز بعض الطلبة بين فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" وباقي أفعال الكلام المتعلقة به وخاصة الالتماس والعرض والاقتراح على المستوى الإدراكي.
٣. يستعمل هؤلاء الطلبة الجمل المنطوقة التي تمنح فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" صراحة أفضل من التي تمنح فعل الكلام "المنع" ضمناً .
٤. لا يوجد تأثير للظروف المحيطة بالموقف على اختيار الطالب لتمييز فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" ويخلط المتعلمين بين فعل الكلام "الاستئذان" وباقي أفعال الكلام المتعلقة به كالالتماس والعرض والاقتراح وكانت لديهم صعوبة في تمييزه عن باقي أفعال الكلام الاخر على مستوى الادراكي والانتاجي.