ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION TITLE: Invitation in Saudi Arabic: A Socio-Pragmatic Analysis

STUDENT: Hanady Abdulaziz Alfalig

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy in English – Applied Linguistics

COLLEGE: Sciences and Humanities

DATE: July 2016

PAGES: 182

This study investigates the speech acts of issuing, accepting, and refusing invitations in Saudi Arabic, within the concept of speech act theory, formulaicity, and politeness theory, through syntactic, semantic, and socio-pragmatic analysis, taking into consideration gender, the social relationship of the interlocutors, and the type of occasion for which the invitation is issued. The subsequent relevant turns in the entire invitation discourse were also examined.

Invitation exchanges were collected using two natural data-collection methods: observing and recording via note-taking invitation situations in naturally occurring interactions in Saudi Arabia, and collecting screenshots of WhatsApp text messaging conversations containing invitations. The collected data, constituting 170 invitation exchanges, were first qualitatively coded following grounded theory to uncover the underlying patterns or themes, and then were divided into different strategies using a classification scheme similar to Blum-Kulka's (1987) for invitation issuing, Alkhatib's (2001) for acceptance, and Beebe et al.'s (1990) for refusal. My own classification scheme was used for neutral responses and reactions. A quantitative analysis

using SPSS Crosstabs was then conducted to count the frequencies of each strategy and compare them against the social variables.

The results of the study showed that Saudi Arabic invitation typically appears as an exchange with three distinct stages, issuing, response, and reaction, which may be extended in certain situations. Moreover, Saudi Arabic invitations are not purely direct or indirect, but instead situation-specific, although with a preference for indirect strategies in refusals. Regarding the influence of the social factors, gender did not influence the employment of specific strategies, while type of event and social relationship did. The data also showed that there are certain common features that characterize invitation in Saudi Arabic, including specific religious expressions and honorific markers, echoing, and the use of particular address terms. Frequent use of certain expressions also showed that Saudi invitation was extensively formulaic, as with most speech acts.