

Ways of Expressing Volition in English

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 The Problem

Expressing volition is an important aspect of language. Volition is a desire. It is to want something or to long for doing something.

This study is an attempt to discuss a particular problem of English structure which has to be overcome by students and the difficulty they find in using types of volition.

Iraqi EFL learners face difficulties in distinguishing volition, for example

:

1. Will you lend me those scissors for a moment? (Willingness Volition) .
2. The manger wishes (me) to thank you for your cooperation. (Wish Volition).
3. He intends to arrest them as they leave the building. (Intention Volition)
4. He insists on doing everything himself. (Insistence Volition)

Volition is widely used in English grammar. Also it a difficult topic but the research will try to clarify the difficulties that students may face during their study.

1.2 Aims Of The Study

The study aims at :

1. presenting theoretical background about volition in English and types of volition which are : willingness wish, intention and insistence expressions.
2. Identifying the Iraqi EFL university student's performer in recognizing and producing volition in English.
3. Finding out the causes behind committing errors in recognizing and producing such expressions. (2)

1.3 Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that :

1. Iraqi EFL university students are expected to face difficulties in recognizing and producing willingness, wish, intention and insistence expressions mostly.
2. Such learners tend to use wish expressions mostly.

1.4 Procedures

To achieve the aims of the study the following procedures are followed :

1. Presenting a theoretical part about volition expressions depending on different productions available in the field.

2. Administering the test to find out the difficulties they may face in using the various expressions of volition.
3. Analyzing the results of test in order to reveal the difficulties they face and the sources of their errors.

1.5 Limitation of the study

This study deals with volition expressions in English and the test will be applied to university learners at their fourth year in the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon. The fourth year students have been chosen to apply the test, as they are supposedly the most qualified learners at the university level.

1.6 Value of the study

This study could be a benefit to learners in drawing their attention to different expressions of volition in English in order to have a wider scope of view of what the writer or speaker means by such expressions.

Chapter Two Theoretical Background

2.1 Speech Act Theory

Searle (1969 : 16) mentions that the speech act is the production of a sentence taken under certain conditions, speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication.

Grice (1992 : 208) shows that it is not difficult to understand what is meant if one knows the meaning of a word or phrase and the rules of how words are put together to form sentences. In particular, there are a number of verbs which are used to perform certain public acts and which leave no doubt about the intended meaning. Examples are :

- I hereby pronounce you husband and wife.
- I name this ship "Cutty Sark" .
- I sentence you to five years in jail.

These verbs show that language can be used not just to talk about but to do things. Such acts performed by language have been called speech acts, and the verbs used are known as speech act verbs or performative verbs.

Yule (1996 : 132) defines it as a term used to cover "actions" such as "requesting" , "commanding" , "questioning" and "informing". It is typically the case that we use the following linguistic forms with the following "functions". (The forms would be described in the syntactic analysis of a language , and the functions as what people use language, and the functions as what people use language for).

Forms

Functions

- Did you eat the food?	Interrogative	Question
- Eat the food (please).	Imperative	Command (request)
- You ate the food	Declarative	Statement

(3)

(4)

Crystal (2004 : 468) mentions that speech act in an utterance defined in terms of the intentions of the speaker and the effect it has on the listener, e.g. a directive. So we can say that, the speech act which is an approach that linguistic structure and social structure are working together in communication which has been reflected most superficially in the concept of the speech act.

2.1.1 locutionary Acts

Coulthard (1985 : 17) states that the British philosopher J.L Austin (1962), in his book "How To DO Things With Words" define a locutionary act that is referred to as the act of producing sounds and words with their referential meaning. For example :

- Open the door (as said by a teacher to one of his students) is represented by producing the words "
- Open, the, door.... With their referential meaning.

Verschueren (1999 : 22) states that Austin's conclusion that all utterances contain both constative and performative elements ; they are all saying and doing at the same time. He replaced the constative performative terminology by a three fold distinction :

"locution" , "illocution" and "perlocution" to capture the implication of this intuition. So, he defined a locutionary act of saying something. For example :

- I promise to go Como.

This sentence is containing a proposition, or the constative aspect of the speech act.

Crystal (2003 : 427) mentions that a locutionary act is not an "act of speech" but a communicative activity.

2.1.2 Illocutionary Acts

Falk (1978 : 264) defines an "illocutionary act" as the term refers to the speaker's communicative intention in producing an utterance. It is a concept useful in describing speech acts. Since illocutionary act is defined in terms of the speaker's intent, and not the strictly linguistic meaning of a sentence structure, so it is an aspect of "pragmatics". (5)

Whenever we speak, we have some intention in speaking sometimes, the intention is implicit ; it is not conveyed directly by the utterance produced. For example :

- Can you take out the garbage?

At other times, however, the utterance itself directly signals our intention to a listener. For example :

- I promise to arrive on time.

Crystal (1991 : 323) defines illocutionary act with reference to the intentions of speakers while speaking. So it is similar to Leech's definition (1983 : 199) which is performing an act in saying something. For example :

- In saying X, S asserts that P.

According to the conception Verschueren adopt in "Understanding Pragmatics" (1999 : 22) , illocutionary acts are , What is done in saying something. For example , in saying something. For example ,

- I promise to go to Como I make make a promise.

It is also emphasized that Austin introduced the illocutionary act by means of contrast with other types of acts : he says , the illocutionary act is an act performed in saying somethings as contrasted with a locutionary act, the act of saying something , and also contrasted with a pelocutionary act, an act performed by saying something.

2.1.3 Perlocutionary Acts

Crystal (1991 : 323) defines the perlocutionary act as the effects they achieve on listeners. It means whether the listener is accepted or not. For example :

- Open the door. (As said by the teacher to one of his students).

In this case , the listener may accept the request or not. So it is a perlocutionary act. (6)

According to the conception of Leech (1983 : 199) and Verschueren (1999 : 23) they define a perlocutionary act as an act performing an action by saying something. For example :

- By saying, I promise to go to Como I make you count on my going to Como.
- By saying X, S convinces h that P.

Austin calls a perlocutionary act an act performed by saying something. He noticed that if one successfully performs a perlocutionary, one also succeeds in performing both an illocution and a locution.

It the theory of speech acts, attention has especially focused on the illocutionary acts, much less on the locutionary and perlocutionary acts (<http://wikipedia.org>) .

2.2. Speech Act of Volition (definition)

Crystal (2003 : 496) defines volition as a term used in the semantic analysis of grammatical categories, referring to a kind of relationship between an agent and a verb.

"Volition" or "Will" is the cognitive process by which an individual decides on and commits to a particular course of action. It is defined as purposive striving, and is one of the primary human psychological functions (the others being affection , motivation and cognition) (<http://wikipedia.org>).

2.2.1 Type of Volition

Leech and Svartvik (1994 : 161) distinguish four types of volition: Willingness, wish, intention insistence. (7)

2.2.1.1. Willingness

Willingness can be expressed by the auxiliary will (or'll<informal>) :

A – Will you lend me those scissors for a moment?

B – Ok, I will if you promise to return them.

C – The porter will help if you ask him.

Here the future meaning of "will" is mixed with that of volition.

Would is used for the past or hypothetical willingness :

- Past time : We tried to warn them about the dangers, but no one would listen.
- Hypothetical : My boss is so greedy, he would do anything for money.
- We use "won't" and "wouldn't" to express the negative of willingness, i.e. refusal :
- She won't take my notice. (= "She refused /declines to take any notice").
- They wouldn't listen to me. (= "They refused...").

(Leech and Svartvik,1994:161)

Quirk (1973 : 54) Mention that willingness can be expressed by the auxiliary "shall" of the part of the speaker in 2nd and 3rd person.

Restricted use. For example :

- He shall get his money.
- You shall do exactly as you wish.

2.2.1.2 Wish

For neutral volition "want" is a less <formal? Verb than "wish" :

- I want (you) to read this newspaper report.
- Do you want me to sign this letter?
- The manager wishes (me) to thank you for your cooperation. <rather formal> .

For a hypothetical circumstance, use only "wish" :

- I wish (that) you would listen to me! (...but you won't)

(8)

The exclamatory construction "if only"...can also be used for hypothetical meaning :

- if only I could remember his name! ~ I do wish I could remember his name!

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When expressing your own wishes, or inviting the wishes of others, you can make the wish more <tentative> and <tactful> by using "would like" , "would prefer" or "would rather" :

- Would you like me to open these letters?
- I would like to stay in an inexpensive hotel.

(should can replace "would" in the 1st person.) Another way to consult someone's wishes is to use a question with shall, or more <tentatively> , with "should" :

- Shall I make you a cup of coffee? (would you like me to....?)
- What shall we do this evening?
- Shall we cancel the other if it's not needed?
- Should we tell him that he's not wanted?

1st and 3rd person commands with let also express a kind of wish, for example :

- Let's listen to some music (,shall we?)
- Let everyone do what they can.

2.2.1.3. Intention

The verbs "intend , mean , plan and aim + infinitive clause" express intention :

- He intends /plan/ aims to arrest them as they leave the building.
- That remark was meant /intended to hurt her.

Intention can also be expressed by "going to" or in the 1st person, by "will /shall" or the contraction "ll" :

- Are you going to catch the last train?
- We won't stay longer than two hours.

(9)

2.2.1.4. Insistence

For example :

- He insists on doing everything himself.
- We are determined to overcome the problem.

Insistence is occasionally expressed by "will/shall" with strong stress :

- He "will try to mend it himself". ("He insists on trying....").
- I won't give in !
- You shall do as I say.

(Quirk, 1973 : 54)

Chapter Three The Test

3.1 Testing

Testing includes any means of checking what students can do with the language. It also includes what they cannot do (al-Juboury , 1999:1).

3.2 Characteristics of a Good Test

A good test should have three qualities Validity, Reliability and Practicality.

3.2.1 Validity

Is the degree to which a test measure what it is supposed to measure or can be used successfully for the purpose for which is intended.

There are, in fact, two kinds of validity : content and face validity.

3.2.1.1 Content Validity

A test is designed to measure mastery of a specific skill or the content of a particular course of study.

3.2.1.2 Face Validity

This simply means the way the test looks to the examinees, supervisors or in general to the people concerned with the education of the student.⁽¹⁾ (Harrison 1969 : 12-25). (11)

3.2.2 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of test scores, which simply means that a test would offer similar results if it were given at another time. For example, if the same test is given twice to the same group of students ,under the same conditions, it would give the same results.

3.2.3 Practicality

A third characteristic of assessment is it's practicality, or usability. A test which is valid and reliable but difficult to administer or score or which is expensive may fail to gain acceptance (Coombe , 2007 : 12-13) .

3.3 The Material

The test consists of two questions : The first question is formed to measure the subject's responses at the recognition level, while the second question is designed to measure the subject's responses at the production level. Each question has 12 items. In the first question, the testees are asked to identify the types of volition. In the second question, the testees are asked to exemplify the types of volition. I take these items from the same sources that is used in chapter two.

3.4 The Sample

The random sample of the test consists of 30 students taken from the 4th year level at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon during the academic year (2009-2010).

¹⁰ In this regard, the test has been approved by the following supervisors:

1-Asst. Prof. Dr. Riyadh Tariq Kahdim AL-Ameedi .

2-Lecturer . Firas Abdul - Mun'm .

3-Lecturer . Salih. M. Adai .

4- Asst. Lecturer .Muneer Ali .

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The fourth year students are chosen to apply the test because they are the most advanced and qualified learners at the university levels. (12)

3.5 The Result Of The Test

The performance of the subjects responses at the recognition level in question (1) is as follows :

Table (1)

Item	No. Of Correct Responses	Percentage %	No. Of Incorrect Responses	Percentage %
1	9	45	11	55
2	13	65	7	35
3	9	45	11	55
4	6	30	14	70
5	8	40	12	50
6	6	30	14	70
7	15	75	5	25
8	6	30	14	70
9	12	60	8	40
10	9	45	11	55
11	5	25	15	75
12	8	40	12	50
Total	106	45%	134	55%

Table (1) Shows the following results :

1. The total number and the percentage of correct responses are (106) , (45%), respectively.
2. The total number and the percentage of incorrect responses are (134) , (55%) , respectively.

According to the result of question one the number of correct responses in items (2,7 and 9) are higher than incorrect responses because the students are familiar with them. While in items (4,6,8 and 11) the incorrect responses are more than the correct one because the items are difficult and the students could not understand them clearly, therefore ; most of the students responded them incorrectly .

(13)

The performance of the subjects responses at the production level in question (2) is as follows :

Table (2)

Item	No. Of Correct Responses	Percentage %	No. Of Incorrect Responses	Percentage %
1	8	40	12	60
2	9	45	11	55
3	11	55	9	45
4	11	55	9	45
5	10	50	10	50
6	8	40	12	60
7	8	40	12	60
8	2	10	18	90
9	15	75	5	25
10	2	10	18	90
11	4	20	16	80
12	11	55	9	45
Total	99	41%	141	59%

Table (1) Shows the following results :

1. The total number and the percentage of correct responses are (99) , (41%), respectively.
2. The total number and the percentage of incorrect responses are (141) , (59%) , respectively.

According to the result of question two the number of correct responses in items (3,4,9 and 12) are higher than incorrect responses because the students are familiar with them. While in items (6,7,8,10 and 11) the incorrect responses are more than the correct one because the items are difficult, therefore ; most of the students responded them incorrectly .

Students' performance in the whole test can be seen in the following table :

Table (3)

Question	No. Of Correct Responses	Percentage %	No. Of Incorrect Responses	Percentage %
1	106	45	134	55
2	99	41	141	59
Total	205	43%	275	57%

The highest rate of the subjects' incorrect responses (including avoided items) is (275) , (57%) which is more than that of correct responses (205) , (43%) , as shown in table (3) above. This means that Iraqi EFL university learners face difficulty in mastering volition from at both recognition and production levels. But they face more difficulty at the production level since the

total number of their correct responses (99) , (41%) is lower than their incorrect responses at the recognition (106) , (45%) .

4. Conclusion

Expressing volition is an important aspect of language. Volition is a desire. It is a term used in the semantic analysis of grammatical categories, referring to a kind of relationship between an agent and a verb.

Volition in English can be divided into : Willingness, Wish, Intention and Insistence.

A diagnostic test was applied to random sample of students (30 subjects) at the Department of English, College of Education, University of Babylon to investigate the student's performance in using volition in English.

According to the findings (results) of the test, the total number of the correct responses in question (1) is (106), where the total number of incorrect responses is (134). In question (2), the total number of the correct responses is (99), where as the total number of the incorrect responses is (141) .

It's obvious that Iraqi EFL university learners face difficulty in using types of volition in English since most of their responses are incorrect (275) , (57%) as compared with their correct responses (205) , (43%) , as shown in table number (3). These results verify the hypotheses proposed in (1.3).

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Appendix I The Test

Q 1 :- Identify whether the following sentences express (A-Willingness , B-Wish , C- Intention , D-Insistence) by putting the letter of the choice in the suitable blank

..... ! If only I could remember his name -1

..... . He insists on doing everything himself -2

..... ? Will you lend me those scissors for a moment -3

..... .He intends to arrest them as they leave the building -4

..... . You shall do as I say -5

..... . She won't take my notice -6

..... ! I wish that you would listen to me -7

..... . I would like to stay in an expensive hotel -8

..... ? Are you going to catch the last train -9

. We tried to warn them about the dangers ,but no one would listen -10

.....

- ! I won't give in -11
- That remark was meant to hurt her -12

(19)

-: Q 2 :- Exemplify the following

.Note (18) using sentences mentioned in question one

- . Use "would like" to express your own wishes -1
- . Future willingness -2
- . Use the verb "plan" to express intention -3
- . Use "will" with strong stress -4
- . Intension by using "going to" -5
- . Use "let" to command a person -6
- . Refusal of willingness -7
- . A question by using "shall" to express insistence -8
- . Use "if only" to express wishes -9
- . Past willingness -10
- . Use the verb "aim" to express intention -11
- . Use "shall" to express insistence -12

Appendix II

The Answer of the Test

-: Q1

- B-1
- D-2
- A-3
- C-4
- D-5
- A-6
- B-7
- B-8
- C-9
- A-10
- D-11
- C-12

-: Q2

- . I would like to stay in an expensive hotel-1
- . The porter will help me if I ask him-2
- . He plan to arrest them as they leave the building-3
- . He will try to mend it himself-4
- ? Are you going to catch the last train-5
- . Let everyone do what they can-6
- . They would not listen to me-7
- ? Shall you exam tomorrow-8
- ! If only I could remember his name-9
- . We tried to warn them about the dangers, but no one would listen-10
- . I aim to play football-11
- . You shall do as I say-12

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