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Giving Condolences by Iraqi EFL Teachers: A Gender Perspective(*)

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Abstract:

The dreadful increase in death rates caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, deadly diseases and accidents are all issues that make people give condolences more than ever, and here comes the need to master the speech act of giving condolences to the EFL teachers. However, English teachers have not been called upon to give condolences, particularly in terms of gender. The objective of this study is twofold: (1) To identify the most common strategy by Iraqi EFL teachers and (2) to examine gender variations among these teachers. To this end, a production task was adapted from two related studies. The data were elicited from 39 male and 39 female English language teachers enrolled in the academic year 2020-2021. MS Excel and SPSS were utilized for descriptive and statistical analyses. The study yielded that the females significantly gave more sympathetic, empathetic, suggestive and advising, and combined condolences while the males significantly gave more *offering assistance condolences* probably based on expressions from their first language.

Keywords: condolences, EFL teachers, sympathetic, gender, production task.



تقديم التعازي من قبل مدرسي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية: وفق النوع الاجتماعي

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الملخص

أصبح التسارع الحالي المخيف في معدلات الوفيات الناتج عن وباء كورونا والأمراض والحوادث المميتة من الأمور التي أجبرت الناس على تقديم التعازي أكثر من أي وقت سابق ومن هنا تظهر الحاجة لاحتتراف استخدام افعال كلام التعازي باللغة الإنكليزية من قبل مدرسي ومدرسات اللغة الإنكليزية أكثر من أي وقت سابق. على الرغم من هذه الحاجة فانه من الندر أن نجد دراسة تخص افعال كلام التعازي لدى مدرسي ومدرسات اللغة الإنكليزية وخصوصاً في سياق التنوع اللغوي بين الجنسين. إن للدراسة هدفين هما (1) تحديد الاستراتيجيات الأكثر استخداماً لدى المدرسين و(2) التحري عن التنوع اللغوي بين مدرسي ومدرسات اللغة الإنكليزية. ولتحقيق ذلك تم الاستعانة بأداة بعد تعديلها لجمع البيانات على مستوى الإنتاج اللغوي من دراستين سابقتين. تم جمع البيانات من عينة تتكون من 39 مدرس و39 مدرسة لغة إنكليزية في العام الدراسي 2020-2021. جرى استخدام برنامج الأكسل وبرنامج SPSS للحصول على احصاء وصفي ودلالي. اظهرت الدراسة ان المدرسات استخدمت تعازي تعاطفيه وعاطفية واقتراحية وأخرى متنوعة أكثر من المدرسين الذين بدورهم استخدموا تعازي تشتمل على عرض المساعدة وربما تعزى إلى تلك المستخدمة في اللغة العربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعازي، مدرسي ومدرسات اللغة الإنكليزية، تعاطفي، دراسة متغير الجنس، أداة إنتاج الكلام.



INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In EFL contexts, to speak English does not only mean to be linguistically competent in its grammar since in any conversation a speaker is careful to express his or her intended message to the listener clearly no matter if it is ungrammatical. However, EFL teachers need to be grammatical in their speech. The new trends in EFL contexts are now highlighting the communicative message rather than the mere well-formed structures (Kortmann, 2020) which are unfortunately being focused on at many EFL state institutions such as universities. According to Ajabshir (2019), sometimes, an ungrammatical piece of speech can do better in communication than a linguistically well-formed sentence. This claim is confirmed by Johnston (2008:7) who says:

“knowing a language means not just knowing its grammar and vocabulary but also knowing how to structure paragraphs and arguments and participate in conversations the way speakers of the language do, and it means understanding which sentence types can accomplish which purposes in social interaction: what might work as an apology, for example, or how to decline an invitation”

This means that an EFL teacher has to be pragmatically competent in the use of speech acts rather than being grammatically competent. In other words, EFL speakers need to master the use of speech acts since they perform a wide range of functional units like suggestions, disagreements, apologies, requests, and giving condolences (Leech, 2016).

1.2 The problem

With the dreadful increase in the rate of fatalities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people start to make condolences more than ever and here comes the need to express condolences by the EFL speakers including EFL teachers in a native-like manner.



The problem that calls upon this research is spotted in the Iraqi EFL knowledge level. Owing to the lack of speech act knowledge in general at the Iraqi EFL learners' level, these learners must pay attention to how the condolences are expressed in a native-like manner. This is necessary because the learners may express condolences in ways that are not common to native speakers. In addition to that, the native speakers may express condolences that are not familiar to Iraqi EFL speakers in general which eventually leads to pragmatic failure.

Bavarsad, Eslami-Rasekh & Simin, (2015) claim that many researchers and EFL teachers became aware of the need to develop the learners' pragmatic knowledge of speech acts and thus, they have moved their attention from the correct spoken forms into highlighting the ways (strategies) the forms are communicated.

Despite the high emphasis on the necessity of developing pragmatic knowledge (speech act knowledge) in the Iraqi EFL context (Ahmed, 2017), however, speech act studies involving Iraqi EFL speakers are still scant when compared to other language studies. Based on the researcher's teaching career, it is worthy to know that the speech act of giving condolence is not taught in the schools' syllabi, not even at the university level. Above and beyond, the speech act of giving condolence has not been given proper attention. From a broad EFL context, Yahia (2010) confirms this lack as he claims that the expressions of giving condolences have not been fully investigated.

Furthermore, based on the results of reviewing the related literature in section 2.3, this scantiness is confirmed in the Iraqi EFL settings, and here comes the need to highlight this act to the higher educators in order to meet the needs.

Regarding gender studies, Coates (2015) thinks that researchers need to lay weight on the fact that speech act strategies vary and are determined by gender. However, "language gender studies are insufficiently considered in comparison to non-gender studies" (Moradi, 2017 as cited in Sharqawi, 2021:13). To this end, Iraqi scholars need to help develop the EFL teachers' pragmatic knowledge.



1.3 The purpose

The purpose of the current study is to compare the EFL teachers' condolences in terms of gender by investigating their production of the above semantic strategies. To serve this purpose, three research questions shall guide the research.

- 1- What is the most frequent condolence strategy employed by Iraqi EFL teachers?
- 2- Is there a significant difference between male and female EFL teachers in giving condolences?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Speech act of giving condolence

The speech act of giving condolence is categorized by Searle (1969) as an expressive act. Eslami-Rasekh & Lotfollahi (2011) state that the act of giving condolences reveals the speaker's sorrow for someone's loss or someone's death. From a social perspective, since the act of condolence has a social meaning which is meant to establish or maintain a social relation (Han 2019), giving a condolence is not only a speech act but a speech behaviour aiming to share concerns and sorrows with someone. In times of need, condolences are given to someone who is involved in a negative state of affairs. The speech act of giving condolence is inevitable as each of us has a friend or a relative suffering the loss of a relative or loved one.

2.2 Forms and meanings

Syntactically, there are no specific syntactic formulae for expressing condolences and thus the realization of this act depends on its illocutionary force. Yazdani, Allami & Samimi (2014) confirm that scholars viewed giving condolence as an expressive communicative illocutionary act. Although Samavarchi & Allami (2012) confirmed that no detailed taxonomies are available for the speech act of giving condolence, however, del Campo Martínez (2012) attempts to provide a broad structural account of condolences. His account includes the following.

- 1- Declarative constructions such as 'I express my condolences/sympathy', 'I offer my condolences/sympathy...' 'my thoughts and prayers...' and 'I am sorry...'



- 2- Imperative constructions such as ‘(please) let me extend my sympathy/condolences ...’, ‘(please) permit me to give my sympathy/condolences ...’ and ‘(please) accept my sympathy/condolences ...’
- 3- Interrogative constructions (less frequent but more polite) such as ‘May I offer my sympathy/condolences ...?’ and ‘Will you accept my sympathy/condolences ...?’

Semantically, researchers like (Samavarchi & Allami 2012; Murad 2013; Yazdani, Allami & Samimi 2014) identify a number of strategies for giving condolences. Although the researchers’ strategies vary to some extent, however, these variations share the same meaning in general. To provide a comprehensive account, the current study lists all these strategies which are common among native and non-native speakers. The expression ‘I am sorry’ is very common and it usually precedes any of the expressions below.

- 1- Expressing sympathy like ‘*I really know how you feel.*’
- 2- Expressing empathy like ‘*He is resting in peace now.*’
- 3- Acknowledging the loss like ‘*Such a great loss.*’
- 4- Retelling a good thing of the deceased like ‘*She was a good mother.*’
- 5- Offering assistance to the bereaved. like ‘*Please, let me know if you need anything.*’
- 6- Making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved like ‘*You should care for yourself.*’, ‘*Try to overcome this depression*’
- 7- Statement of lacking proper words like ‘*I am unable to find words of condolence.*’
- 8- Expressing a state of shock ‘*I cannot believe she died.*’
- 9- Combination of the expressions above like ‘*We lost him but he is resting in heaven peacefully.*’

2.3 Previous studies on SA of giving condolence

In order to highlight the research gap in the related literature, this section reviews critically and systematically the recent scholarly articles which are published in SCOPUS, ISI and international peer-reviewed journals. Google search collected the recent articles published in the last eleven years dated from 2010 to 2021. The search was refined in order to find the articles studying the speech act of giving condolences investigated at the pragmatic



level only. After a thorough search, the results yielded six (6) articles about the topic under study. The articles were grouped and arranged chronologically, and then tabulated under these categories.

Table 1: Related literature

	Scholar(s)	Title	Population / text	Gender	Method	Regional & language context	Limitation(s)
1	Eslami-Rasekh & Lotfollahi (2011)	Speech Act of Condolence in Persian and English: A Cross-Cultural Study	Learners	-	Quantitative	Iran/EFL	"The size of the sample was too small to make safe conclusions" (Eslami-Rasekh & Lotfollahi, 2011: 134)
2	Morady Moghaddam (2012)	Discourse Structures of Condolence Speech Act	Persian & English Movies' dialogues	-	Quantitative	Iran/EFL	the study focused on the intensifiers used with the condolences as ends rather than the condolences themselves.
3	Pishghadam & Morady Moghaddam (2013)	Investigating condolence responses in English and Persian	Persian & English Movies' dialogues	-	Quantitative	Iran/EFL	The study categorised the condolence strategies into uncommon generic types.



Table 1: Related literature

	Scholar(s)	Title	Population/ text	Gender	Method	Regional & language context	Limitation(s)
4	Behnam, Hamed & Asli (2013)	An investigation of giving condolences in English and Persian	Learners	-	Quantitative	Iran/EFL	The test was conducted via Email.
5	Yazdani, Allami & Samimi (2014)	Rapport management approach to condolence: EFL learners vs. native Persians	Learners	-	Mixed	Iran/EFL	Multilevel analyses were used but no clear model was stated in the study.
6	Jawad (2021)	Condolence in Classroom Teaching: Iraqi EFL University Students' Pragmatic Deviation	Learners	-	Qualitative	Iraq/EFL	The study is about deviation but no standard base was stated in order to identify how deviation happens.
8	The current study	Giving Condolences by Iraqi EFL teachers: A Gender Perspective	EFL teachers	+	Quantitative	Iraq/EFL	Limited to the production level.

The two Iranian studies by Behnam, Hamed & Asli (2013) and Eslami-Rasekh & Lotfollahi (2011) both try to compare the performance of their learners in relation to control groups of native speakers. The two almost-similar studies are cross-cultural aiming to measure how competent the EFL learners are at giving condolences when exposed to the same situations. Although both studies are quantitative, however, they employed an insufficient number of participants which makes it difficult to generalize the results over the larger population.

Other two similar studies in the Iranian context are those by Pishghadam & Morady Moghadda (2013) and Moghaddam (2012). They look like each other in that they both employed movie scripts to identify SA of condolence in a discursal manner. Both studies look alike in method and design. And both have issues in that Pishghadam & Morady Moghadda (2013) focus on the use of intensifiers rather than the type of condolences. Moghaddam



(2012) analyses the data using generic and uncommon types of condolences. Although the two studies look as if they are pulled out from one larger study; a thesis or dissertation, however, their results seem distinct and significant.

Two Middle Eastern studies employ EFL learners as participants, Jawad (2021) and Yazdani, Allami & Samimi (2014). Yazdani, Allami & Samimi (2014) use mixed method to analyse the gleaned data in a multilevel manner but the quantitative part of the study does not clearly state the base of analysis to the reader. However, the study is meant to be comprehensive and the authors use homogenous sample of participants of males and females EFL. Having both genders participating in the study does not make it a gender one because the authors do not target the variations in the end but as a means to reveal the overall performance of the EFL learners. Regarding the second study by Jawad's (2021), the study claims to be qualitative but the number of participants is fifty which commonly fits a design of a quantitative study. However, a reader can view this abundance as a way of saturating the data. Moreover, the study is dealing the deviation from the native-like condolences but there are no clear standard condolences to which the obtained condolences can be related.

Based on the review above, a number of arguments can be posed in terms of highlighting the research gaps. The first is that the search process resulted in only six (6) scholarly articles related to the topic of condolences which is few according to the researcher as compared with the rich literature of SAs. The second argument to highlight is that single study has ever targeted gender variation. The third argument is that all the above studies analyse data gleaned from either movies' scripts or EFL learners. Thus, none of the above studies has targeted teachers' condolences. The fourth argument is that the SA of giving condolences in the Iraqi context need to be investigated as there is only one study by Jawad (2021).

In short and based on the above review, the researcher concludes that the SA of giving condolences has not yet been the subject of gender variations produced by the Iraqi EFL teachers. Thus, the researcher sets forth the current study to bridge the above gaps through designing his study accordingly.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants and setting

The researcher sampled 78 EFL secondary school teachers. They were split into 39 males and 39 females. Having equal numbers of males and females was to ensure as homogeneous as possible the sample is. The teachers are employed by the Education Department of Qadisiya located in the governorate of Qadisiya in Diwaniya city. The selection included 18 secondary schools. Seven schools for boys and the rest eleven schools for girls.

3.2 Data collection

The data were collected by the researcher in written form. The teachers were asked to respond to a Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT). The WDCT consisted of eight situations varied in the social scenario so as to motivate the participants to respond accordingly. All the situations were set to elicit the teachers' production of SA of giving condolences. The WDCT situations were adapted from Samavarchi & Allami (2012) in order to fit the Iraqi social contexts. For reliability and suitability, the situations were reviewed and verified by two linguists from the Education Department.

3.3 Research conduction

Coping with the common research ethics, the researcher obtained the necessary research-conduction approval of the Education Department officials. The researcher visited the teachers at their schools during office hours. All the teachers were told about the purpose of the study. They were assured about the anonymity of their personal information. The collection of data lasted for eight working days during May 2022.

3.4 Scoring the responses

When the data were collected, the DCTs sheets were scored following one standard as follows. Every response was scored based on its existence and correctness. If no response then 'zero' was given. If there was any, it was checked for correctness. If a response was correct (i.e., a real warning), one mark was given. If the response was not correct (i.e., not warning), a 'zero' was given. In other words, only valid warnings have been assigned marks. The researcher adopted Sharqawi (2021:74) who states that a



situation must be “given either one mark or zero in order to avoid half answers and ensure accuracy in percentages.” The maximum mark for every participant is 8 and the failed mark is less than 4 since there are eight WDCT situations. This means that a participant has to get at least 4 of 8 marks to pass. Less than 4 he or she fails and thus his or her sheets were ignored. The researcher thinks that having less than 4 marks may mean that a participant did not take the tasks seriously.

3.5 Tools of analysis

Being a quantitative and gender study, the researcher quantified the data using descriptive statistics to compare the tendencies of male and female warnings and then inferential statistics to answer the research question. All the descriptive and inferential statistics were achieved by utilizing SPSS software version 24.0. First of all, the data were loaded into MS Excel and then moved into SPSS. To compare gender performance, the basic statistical test needed for this study was a T-test as the study employed two groups of participants; a male group and a female group.

4. RESULTS

The researcher and three lecturers from the Department of English language helped in the conduction of the WDCT. After collecting the WDCT sheets, the answers were examined and sorted by the researcher into correct and incorrect responses. These correct responses were taken into account while the incorrect ones were ignored.

Since the purpose of the analysis is to help answer the research questions under study, so the analysis was organized according to the order of the research questions in section 1.3.

Table 2: Participants' responses

	Responses	Freq.	Perc.
1	Correct	481	77.1%
2	Incorrect	143	22.9%
3	Totals	624	100%

As seen above, the percentage of the correct responses constitutes one-third of the total responses (624). So, the percentage 77.1% is good evidence for the success of the conduction of WDCT. The number of incorrect



responses was ignored and therefore excluded from the analysis since they are not actual condolences adhering to the ones mentioned in the model.

Since the first research question is after the most frequent condolence strategy employed by both genders, so there is a need to identify all the types of condolences and then spot the most frequent one. To this end, the following table reveals the details.

Table 3: Participants' strategies

	Type of strategy	Freq.	Perc.
1	Expressing sympathy.	43	9%
2	Expressing empathy.	106	22%
3	Acknowledging the loss.	0	0%
4	Retelling a good thing of the deceased.	14	3%
5	Offering assistance to the bereaved.	149	31%
6	Making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved.	77	16%
7	Statement of lacking proper words.	53	11%
8	Expressing a state of shock.	10	2%
9	Combination of the expressions above.	29	6%
	Total of strategies	481	100%

With respect to the low strategies, the above tabulation shows that no participants have employed 'acknowledging the loss' strategy. The least employed strategy was 'expressing a state of shock'. Less than that was 'retelling a good thing of the deceased'. On the other hand, the top two employed strategies were 'offering assistance to the bereaved' and 'expressing empathy' respectively. Thus, since the percentage of 'offering assistance to the bereaved' strategy constitutes the highest among the rest which is 31%, it is the most employed type of condolence by the participants.

To reveal gender variations in giving condolences, there is a need to break down the above-tabulated strategies in terms of gender into males' and females' strategies. For this purpose, the WDCT sheets were checked again for gender involvement. The following table is presented for this purpose.



Table 4: Production of the condolences in terms of gender

Type of strategy		Male		Female		Total	
		Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	Expressing sympathy.	11	26 %	32	75%	43	9%
2	Expressing empathy.	31	29%	75	71%	106	22%
3	Acknowledging the loss.	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
4	Retelling a good thing of the deceased.	2	14%	12	86%	14	3%
5	Offering assistance to the bereaved.	103	69%	46	31%	149	31%
6	Making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved.	28	36%	49	64%	77	16%
7	Statement of lacking proper words.	26	49%	27	51%	53	11%
8	Expressing a state of shock.	3	30%	7	70%	10	2%
9	Combination of the expressions above.	5	17%	24	83%	29	6%
Totals		209	43%	272	57%	481	100%

The above table is inclusive of the percentages of all the condolence strategies employed by the male and female groups. To know whether these differences in percentages exhibit any significant variations or not, SPSS was utilized to generate inferential statistics. As mentioned earlier in section 3.5, the type of inferential statistics needed to reveal gender variations is the T-test. Bearing in mind that according to De Winter (2013), T-test is essential for samples with at least 30 participants in each. Therefore, the T-test is necessary to compare the outputs of the two groups; the male group and the female group.

Thus, after inputting the necessary data (given in the appendix) into the SPSS interface, the following descriptive statistics were generated.



Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the condolence strategies.

	Condolence Strategy	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Expressing sympathy.	Males	0.28	0.247
		Females	1.02	0.156
2	Expressing empathy.	Males	1.09	0.732
		Females	2.02	1.365
3	Acknowledging the loss.	Males	0.00	0.000
		Females	0.00	0.000
4	Retelling a good thing of the deceased.	Males	0.05	0.123
		Females	0.31	0.343
5	Offering assistance to the bereaved.	Males	2.64	1.614
		Females	1.18	0.970
6	Making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved.	Males	1.02	0.211
		Females	1.26	0.332
7	Statement of lacking proper words.	Males	0.67	0.478
		Females	0.69	0.563
8	Expressing a state of shock.	Males	0.08	0.354
		Females	0.18	0.451
9	Combination of the expressions above.	Males	0.13	0.139
		Females	0.62	0.573

As seen above, all the standard deviation values are below their means. This indicates a good performance by the two genders. This means that the results are consistent since the measure of dispersion remains lower than their respective means.

Regarding gender difference and by looking at the difference of means, it is possible to say there might be variations between the males and females in four condolence strategies: 'expressing sympathy', 'expressing empathy', 'offering assistance to the bereaved', 'combination of the expressions' and 'statement of lacking proper words'. The strategies 'acknowledging the loss', 'retelling a good thing of the deceased', 'making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved', and 'expressing a state of shock' are unlikely to exhibit variations due to their low means difference.

However, this variation or non-variation cannot be taken into consideration unless statistical tests confirm them. For this purpose, the following T-tests were extracted from SPSS.



Table 6: Testing gender differences.

	Variances		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
1	Expressing sympathy	Equal variances assumed	-3.379	76	0.001	-0.538
		Equal variances not assumed	-3.379	74.210	0.001	
2	Expressing empathy	Equal variances assumed	-4.550	76	0.000	-1.128
		Equal variances not assumed	-4.550	58.193	0.000	
3	Acknowledging the loss	Equal variances assumed	-	-	-	-
		Equal variances not assumed	-	-	-	-
4	Retelling a good thing of the deceased	Equal variances assumed	-2.619	76	0.011	-0.256
		Equal variances not assumed	-2.619	49.445	0.012	
5	Offering assistance to the bereaved	Equal variances assumed	4.848	76	0.000	1.462
		Equal variances not assumed	4.848	62.280	0.000	
6	Making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved.	Equal variances assumed	-2.691	76	0.009	-0.538
		Equal variances not assumed	-2.691	73.231	0.009	
7	Statement of lacking proper words.	Equal variances assumed	-.162	76	0.871	-0.026
		Equal variances not assumed	-.162	59.274	0.872	
8	Expressing a state of shock.	Equal variances assumed	-1.116	76	0.268	-0.103
		Equal variances not assumed	-1.116	71.935	0.268	
9	Combination of the expressions above.	Equal variances assumed	-4.036	76	0.000	-0.487
		Equal variances not assumed	-4.036	56.070	0.000	

Regarding the first strategy 'expressing sympathy', since the p-value '0.001' is less than the alpha level (which is 0.01), there is a significant difference between males and females in the production of this strategy. Because the 'mean difference' value -0.538 is marked with a negative sign, this means that the direction of the significance level is to the left which proves that the females significantly produced more 'expressing sympathy' strategy than the males.



In terms of the second strategy 'expressing empathy', the p-value 0.000 is less than the alpha level 0.01. So, there is a significant difference between males and females in the production of this strategy. The difference of means -1.128 is negative, therefore, the females produced more strategies of this type than males.

With respect to the third strategy 'acknowledging the loss', SPSS did not generate any results to this strategy because no participants have ever employed it. See Table 2 for numbers.

Concerning the fourth strategy 'retelling a good thing of the deceased' the table shows that the p-value 0.011 is equal to the alpha level 0.01. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the two genders in the production of this strategy. Thus, the difference of means -0.256 with the negative sign which indicates females' precedence was due to mere chance.

Regarding the fifth strategy 'offering assistance to the bereaved', the table reveals that the p-value 0.000 is less than the alpha level 0.01. Based on this result, there is a significant difference between males and females in this strategy. The mean difference 1.462 is positive by default. So, the significance level is located on the right side of the data which means that males significantly produced more strategies of this type than females.

The sixth strategy is 'making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved'. The above table shows that the respective p-value 0.009 is less than the alpha level 0.01. Therefore, there is a significant difference between the two genders in the production of this strategy. The negative sign in the mean difference -0.538 indicates that females outperformed males in the production of this strategy.

Regarding the seventh strategy 'statement of lacking proper words', the respective p-value 0.871 is higher than the alpha level 0.01 which means that there is no significant difference between the two genders. Therefore, the low mean difference -0.026 was due to mere chance.

Regarding the eighth strategy 'expressing a state of shock', the p-value 0.268 is higher than the alpha level 0.01. Then, no significant gender difference is found and therefore the production of this strategy was due to chance.



'Combination of the expressions' is last tested strategy. Its respective p-value 0.000 is less than the alpha level 0.01 and thus there is a significant difference between males and females in the production of this strategy. The negative sign in the mean difference -0.487 indicates that females outperformed males in the production of this strategy.

5. DISCUSSIONS

Having females employed 'expressing sympathy' and 'expressing empathy' strategies more than males indicates that females are more sympathetic and empathetic than males. Maybe this is due to their feminine nature which is known for being highly compassionate. These results agree with the results by Alvarado (2022) who found that "women are more likely than men to report feeling empathy for those suffering".

On other hand, the zero strategy 'acknowledging the loss' gives the clue that the participants either did not opt to employ such a strategy or the WDCT situations were not set to elicit such a type which is more likely.

The result that males produced more 'offering assistance to the bereaved' strategy than females may reflect their attempts to be more helpful to the bereaved which is common in Iraqi Arabic. In Iraqi culture, it is typical for males to ask the bereaved if he (or sometimes she) needs any financial or non-financial help.

The result that females outperformed males in 'making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved' indicate that females care much for the sad situation of the bereaved. Most of their suggestions were expressed to the benefit of the bereaved such as 'take care of yourself', 'please don't hurt yourself in much grieving', 'you should not let this loss break you', and 'be patient'. Remarkably, to compare the female strategy (that is making a suggestion or giving advice) with the above male strategy (that is offering assistance), it can be assumed that males tried to offer help physically by offering financial or non-financial help while females tried to help orally by making a suggestions or giving advice.

The precedence of females in the production of the latter strategy which is 'combination of the expressions may reflect females attempt to produce complex type of condolences. This might be due to their wish to be more compassionate with the bereaved. It might look like overstated condolences since they are lengthier than ordinary condolences.



6. CONCLUSION

The results of the study yielded that the most frequent condolence strategy employed by Iraqi EFL teachers is 'offering assistance to the bereaved' which is very common in Iraqi culture, especially by men. The second outcome is gender-based. It was found that female EFL teachers opted to the four following strategies: 'expressing sympathy', 'expressing empathy', 'making a suggestion or giving advice to the bereaved', 'combination of the former expressions' while the male EFL teachers opted to the strategy 'offering assistance to the bereaved' in their condolences. It is worthy to mention that female condolences are more varied and lengthier than male ones due to their feminine compassionate nature.

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Appendix Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) Dear respondents
Please read carefully and then respond with English condolence(s) to the following situations.



1. You visit a workmate who has been absent for a week. When you ask about the reason of absence, he/she says that his/her father has passed away.

You say:

2. Your neighbour who is right next door has lost his/her mother after dramatic struggle with Covid-19.

You say:

3. Ali/Layla is a student of yours. He/she did not attend the class today. His/her best friend told that Ali's/Layla's younger brother had a terrible accident. The next morning, you meet the student by the school gate.

You say:

4. Your headmaster's / headmistress' brother died of Covid-19. You attend the funeral procession of and you intend to give condolence to your him / her.

You say:

5. Your brother's younger daughter has died of brain cancer. You see him and he starts to wail out loud.

You say:

6. Your dearest friend has lost all his/her money in a robbery. He/she is in a bad condition. You visit him/her at home.

You say:

7. In the morning on arriving at the school, a teacher tells that the janitor's newly born baby has died. You call him / her to give condolence.

You say:

8. You return home and you know that your wife / husband has crashed her/his new car.

You say: