

Function and strategies of making speech act of invitation in multicultural setting.

Majidova Gulrukh Kamaridinovna

Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute

gulruxmajidova199@gmail.com

Abstract: The article gives a sight into the function of invitation namely, why people make the speech act of invitation and its categories. To make an acceptable invitation in international setting there are sequences that should be followed which are explained with examples. The examples give clear instructions for the language user about the sentence structures and common phrases that can be employed while making the speech act of invitation. Responding to invitation is another stage which should be acquired to provide suitable response to the inviter.

Key words: invitation, ostensible, genuine, tag-positioned components, Sound stretch, prolonged speech.

Function of Invitation

Through the act of inviting, the speaker commits to a proposed future action while also directing the hearer to participate in that course of action. Thus, an invitation can be viewed as both a commissive and a directive speech act. Typically the inviter's action (for example, an invitation to a dinner) is considered beneficial to the invitee. A successful invitation relies on the hearer's acceptance of the offer as well as the speaker's fulfillment of the commitment that was made, which may involve some level of face work on the part of both the inviter and the invitee.

When an invitation is clear and unambiguous, it tends to contain concrete information such as an indication of time and location as well as a mention of the proposed activity. In addition, it is often followed by a request for a response (e.g., Do you want to go to lunch with us tomorrow?*). Such an invitation is likely to be genuine.

An ambiguous invitation often functions as an ostensible invitation (or ritual invitation) that appears to be sincere but in reality is not. Since the aim of an ostensible invitation is phatic, both the inviter and the invitee recognize the pretense even though the invitation seems fairly sincere on the surface. However, ostensible invitations can be issued when the interlocutors are aware that the invitee is unable to accept the invitation or after the invitation is solicited by the hearer. The inviter is likely to avoid specific arrangements for the event or fail to insist on the invitation.

Ostensible speech acts are not limited to invitations. They also include ostensible apologies, offers, questions, assertions, compliments, congratulations, and so on. They differ in their characteristic purposes, but share the five properties distinctive to ostensible illocutionary acts: pretense, mutual recognition, collusion, ambivalence, and off-record purpose (see "Invitations in English" page for more information).

Classifications of Invitation

Two categories for invitations:

1. Genuine

The speaker wishes the hearer to participate in the invited event.

2. Ostensible

Also called an ambiguous or insincere invitation. The speaker issues an invitation but doesn't necessarily wish the hearer to attend the event. The five properties of ostensible invitations include:

- The inviter pretends to make a genuine invitation.
- The inviter and the invitee both understand the inviter's pretense.
- The hearer demonstrates collusion by responding appropriately to the inviter's pretense.
- The inviter shows ambivalence if and when the invitation confirmation is requested.
- The inviter's main purpose for an ostensible invitation is implied but kept off-record.

Invitation can be divided into two types which called direct and indirect invitation. Based on the mode of sentences, direct invitation is divided into several types of speech acts, such as performative, declarative, imperative, conditional and hoping, and indirect invitation is divided into types of interrogative invitation (Wh, Yes/No questions and tag questions) and asking willingness.

Invitation Sequences

As in the examples provided in the American English and Persian invitations, whether ostensible or genuine, it is expected for the sequence of invitation to be extended several times in order to attend to both the inviter and the invitee's face. There is cultural variation to expected sequences depending on the language.

Invitations in American English

Pre-invitations

Conversational partners usually attempt to maximize acceptance (a *preferred* response) and minimize rejection (a *dispreferred* response). To achieve this goal, invitations are often foreshadowed before being uttered directly. For example, pre-invitations, such as “Do you have any plans next Friday?” or “Are you busy tonight?” are often used to establish preparatory conditions prior to invitations.

Laura: Hey!

Stanley: Hi.

Laura: What are you up to tonight?

Stanley: Not too much.

Laura: Do you wanna get some food later?

Stanley: Sure.

Laura: Great!

Eric: So what are your plans for the weekend?

Natalie: Oh I'm not sure. I was thinking of seeing a movie with some friends, but I don't really have anything planned yet.

Eric: Cool, so what if I asked you to get lunch or coffee some time?

Natalie: Sure! That'd be fun!

(See Drew, 1984, p. 133; Wong and Waring, 2010, pp. 80-81 for additional examples.*)

The notion of invitations overlaps with that of offers, in which the speaker presents a choice that is potentially beneficial to the listener. Below is an example of such cases (labeled “pre-offer”).

Kelly: I'm gonna go get some more water because I think Jim's thirsty.

Karen: We have a few water bottles in the cooler.

Kelly: Oh, really?

Karen: Yep, wanna take one?

Kelly: Sure!

(See Schegloff, 2007, p. 35; Wong and Waring, 2010, p. 81 for additional examples.*)

Responding to Pre-invitations

Three types of responses can be expected from the invitee (B) when a pre-invitation is issued: 1) go-ahead, 2) blocking, and 3) hedging.

1. When B is interested, B can suggest availability so that A can give more information about it.

A: *What are you doing tonight?*

B: ***Nothing.***

2. If B is not interested in joining A, B could block the forthcoming invitation.

A: *What are you doing tonight?*

B: ***I'm having dinner with Craig.***

3. If B wants to keep his/her options open, B could use a hedging response, such as asking 'why?,' giving a weak rejection, or a pause.

A: *What are you doing tonight?*

B: ***Why?***

A: *What are you doing tonight?*

B: ***We're going out. Why?***

A: *What are you doing?*

B: ***What am I doing? Um, I'm reading.***

(adapted from Drew, 1984, p. 132; Schegloff, 2007, pp. 30-31)

Thus, pre-invitations provide A the opportunity to measure B's intention; if B hints at an interest in accepting it, A can move to the actual invitation, but if B hints at unavailability or shows a lack of interest, then A may opt out of the invitation. As a result, the chance of an actual rejection can be reduced.

Responding to Rejection

When the invitee (B) expresses unavailability, the inviter (A) may accept the rejection or continue to encourage acceptance of the offer:

1. Go along with the rejection: A usually replies with a minimal response, such as "rejection finalizers" like 'oh,' 'I see,' or 'okay.'

A: *You want me to help you with anything?*

B: *No, no, nothing.*

A: ***Okay.***

2. Encourage acceptance: In order to make the invitation more attractive and increase the chance for acceptance, A may modify or revise the initial invitation.

A: *You could come to my place to watch the game.*
B: *Nah, that's okay. I'll probably just watch it at home with my roommate.*
A: ***I ordered a pizza and got some drinks.***

(See Davison, 1984, p. 108; Wong and Waring, 2010, p. 84 for additional examples.*)

It is important to note that silence or a weak response can sometimes be a subtle sign of possible rejection:

A: *So the graduation party is on Saturday afternoon and most of the family will be there.*
B: ***Hmm***
A: *So if you've got some time, you should stop by.*

(See Davison, 1984, p. 113; Wong and Waring, 2010, p. 84 for additional examples.*)

Revising Invitations

There are at least three ways to use “monitor space,” where potential acceptance or rejection can be identified before A makes the modified invitation:

1. Tag-positioned components

*So do you wanna grab a bite to eat **or something** after class?*

2. Sound stretch

A: *So if you've got some **ti:me** you should stop by.*
B: *I have a few errands to run but I'll probably be able to make it.*

: prolonged sound

(See Davison, 1984, p. 121; Wong and Waring, 2010, p. 85 for additional examples.*)

3. Sound stretch followed by a pause or filled pause (such as inbreathing, laughter)

A: *So I was just calling to see if you wanted to come over to watch a movie and maybe have some **wi:ne = hh**.*
B: *That's so weird! I was just going to stop by your place to see if you wanted to do something tonight.*

word	stress
hh	(series of “h”s) aspiration or laughter
:	prolonged sound
=	latch or continuing speech with no break in between

(See Davison, 1984, pp. 122-123; Wong and Waring, 2010, p. 85 for additional examples.*)

Invitation sequences allow the inviter and invitee to gauge the other party’s intention, which consequently minimizes the possibility of rejection and maximizes its chance of acceptance.

Thus, it can be concluded that miscommunication often occurs due to the incident that EFL learners make use of the rules of their mother tongue to express intention in the other culture without realizing the differences between these two cultures. Therefore, learners should acquire the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic rules of the foreign or second language to avoid them to use the rules of their mother tongue, to express intention in the other culture, and their knowledge will enable them to communicate effectively with native speakers of the English language.

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