

A PRAGMATIC STUDY OF INDIRECT GRATITUDE IN DENZEL WASHINGTON'S MOVIE "THE FENCES"

HADEEL MEZHER KADHIM¹, PROF. DR. HUSSAIN HAMEED MAYUUF²

¹M. A. student at Babylon University, Iraq
009647725237366

²SUPERVISED BY, PH.D, University of Babylon, Iraq
009647711410717

hum527.hadeel.muzhar@student.uobabylon.edu.iq¹
hum.hussain.hameed@uobabylon.edu.iq²

ABSTRACT

This study looks at how Denzel Washington's 2016 film "Fences" explores the expression of gratitude through social bonding, appreciation, and lowering imposition. This study accomplishes several aims: Identifying the forms of gratitude (direct or indirect). Identifying the most dominant politeness Strategies employed in the movie.(3)Highlighting which strategy used frequently according to cheng 2005 classification of gratitude . Showing the most dominant Maxim in the Film and Identifying the most dominant speech act in "The Fences". Several hypothesis developed to match the aims: The study assumes that most expressions of gratitude in Fences are indirect. Positive politeness is expected to be the most used strategy.The most common strategy of gratitude is thanking . The Relevance Maxim is used mostly in"Fences". The study assumes that gratitude is realized as an expressive speech act.In order to investigate the studies objectives and its hypothesis the following procedures are modified: reviewing the literature review on gratitude and the pragmatic theories that study it . The data is analyzed based on eclectic model consists of searle categories of speech acts , conversational maximum (1975)and the Brown and Levinson Politeness (1987).Primary findings of the research are: most gratitude expressions of "Fences" are indirect . Positive politeness is used the most among other strategies . The most common strategy of gratitude is positive feeling. Grice maxims are largely observed especially Relevance Maxim. It has been shown that expressive speech act is used more than other types of speech Acts.

Key words : Gratitude, Politeness Strategies,Speech Acts ,Grice Maxims.

1-Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the most important aspects of social interaction and human communication . It is described as "the willingness to recognize the unearned increments of value in one's experience" Bertocci and Millard(1963).Since it enables the speaker to express feelings of appreciation for a benefit received from the hearer, gratitude is best understood within speech theory as a form of expressive act (Searle, 1969). According to Soloman(1977) Gratitude is "an estimate of gain coupled with the Judgment that someone else is responsible for that gain"According to Coulmas (1981, p. 75), the situation's nature and the participants' social relationships both affect how much gratitude is expressed. . Gratitude is "a crucial ingredient of every society and culture" (Komter,2004 , p.208. For example, "thank you" is used more directly as an act of gratitude in American English, but it frequently serves as a formal expression in British English (Hymes, 1972). Gratitude, or thanking, is a form of illocutionary act in which the speaker reacts to something the hearer has done in the past.(Eisenstein and Bodman ,1986, p.167). Mey(2001)states that expressing gratitude is an expressive act since it conveys the speaker's inner state. Speakers can convey gratitude, acknowledgment, appreciation, and praise in every life (Fishgadam and Zari, 2011).

2-Expressing Gratitude

The complex and multifaceted emotion of gratitude has been extensively studied in the field of psychology. The complexity of this emotion is the main focus of Wierzbicka's (1999) explanation of the mechanisms of appreciation. Understanding the spirit of appreciation requires an

understanding of the three basic elements she identifies: the sponsor's gratitude, the recognition of the advantage created, and the expressive response to the sponsor. According to McCullough, Tsang, and Emmons (2004), there are two primary sources of gratitude. Top-down factors, or personality traits that people carry with them every day, are the first. For instance, someone who is inherently kind or optimistic will find it easier to be grateful in life. The second category of factors is bottom-up, meaning that ordinary events, like receiving a gift or assistance in times of need, can elicit

feelings of gratitude. People who have a strong habit of being thankful are less affected by mood and are able to remain thankful more frequently. According to Algoe, Kurtz, and Hilaire (2016), there are two ways to express gratitude: Retrospectively, when it refers to a favor or assistance that has already been provided, and prospectively, when it alludes to assistance or kindness that is anticipated or desired in the future. Gratitude can be differentiated by how it is expressed: unintended gratitude is expressed indirectly or in a less overt manner, whereas direct gratitude is clearly stated and directed at the sponsor. (Naar, 2019)

3-Functions of Gratitude

Being grateful is a dynamic process that varies depending on relationships and context rather than being a straightforward or fixed act. It functions as a force, with the recipient feeling compelled to react when someone offers a benefit (Kövecses, 2014). Different people have different levels of gratitude; while great sacrifices elicit deep appreciation, small favors may elicit lighter thanks. Who is involved also affects how it is expressed; for example, gratitude may be more formal with strangers or superiors but informal with family. Expressions of gratitude can take the form of words, actions, or compensation, and their intensity frequently varies depending on cultural norms and societal expectations. Both a social and an ethical role are played by gratitude. As stated by Dwyer (2015), appreciation benefits society by enhancing communication. In addition to saying "thank you," people who are grateful also show kindness, compassion, and respect. This can serve as a moral compass for behavior (Dwyer, 2015). Encouraging people to behave in a good manner, because it fosters the development of new friendships, strengthens those that already exist, and strengthens the fundamental basis of human society, Allen (2018) refers to gratitude as "social glue." In this sense, gratitude unites communities rather than just expressing gratitude.

4- Linguistic Realization of Gratitude

Linguistic realization of gratitude is the process by which people translate their inner sense of thankfulness into words, either written or spoken. Because it displays the speaker's feelings, pragmatics typically views this as an expressive speech act (Searle, 1969). Short expressions like "thank you" or longer ones that incorporate acknowledgment, appreciation, or even pledges to repay the favor can both be used to express gratitude. The closeness of the relationship, the size of the favor, and the cultural norms of politeness that influence communication all influence the words that speakers use (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Eight techniques for expressing gratitude were presented by Cheng (2005). A theoretical Framework Cheng's (2005) taxonomy for eight strategies Of expressing Gratitude:

1-Thanking : Speakers use thanking in three ways:

A-Simple talking by using "thank you."

B- stating the favor "thank you for your help" .

C-Thanking and mentioning the imposition caused by the favor "thank you For helping me cleaning the room ."

2-Appreciation

A-Using the word appreciate "I appreciate it."

B-using the word appreciate and mentioning the Favor. "I appreciate the time you spent for me".

3-Positive Feeling

A-By expressing a positive reaction to the favor giver "You are a life saver"

B- a positive reaction to the object of the favor. "This book Was really helpful"

4-Repayment.

A-Offering service, food or money "next time it is my turn".

B-Feeling indebted. "I owe you".

C-Promising Future self improvement .e.g. "It won't happen again"

5-Apology

A-Using only apologizing words "e.g. I am sorry" .

B-Using apologizing words and stating the favor or the fact . "I am sorry for The problem I made. "

C- Criticizing or blaming oneself . "I am such a fool "!

6-Recognition of Imposition

A-Acknowledging the imposition . "I know that you were not allowed to Give Extra time".

B-Stating the need for a favor "I try not to ask for extra time but this Time I need it".

C-Diminishing the need for a favor . "you didn't have to do that".

7-Alerters .In the thanking situation, alerters and address term are likely to occur in the Same utterance:

A-Attention getter "Hi, Well, Hey"

B-Title "Dr, Sir Professor"

C-Name "John, Mary "

8-Other expressions that don't belong to the above strategies :

A-Here statement "Here you are ! "

B-Small talk " My name is John .What is your name? "

C-Leave and Taking "Have a nice day "

D-Joking "don't forget to pay again next time . "

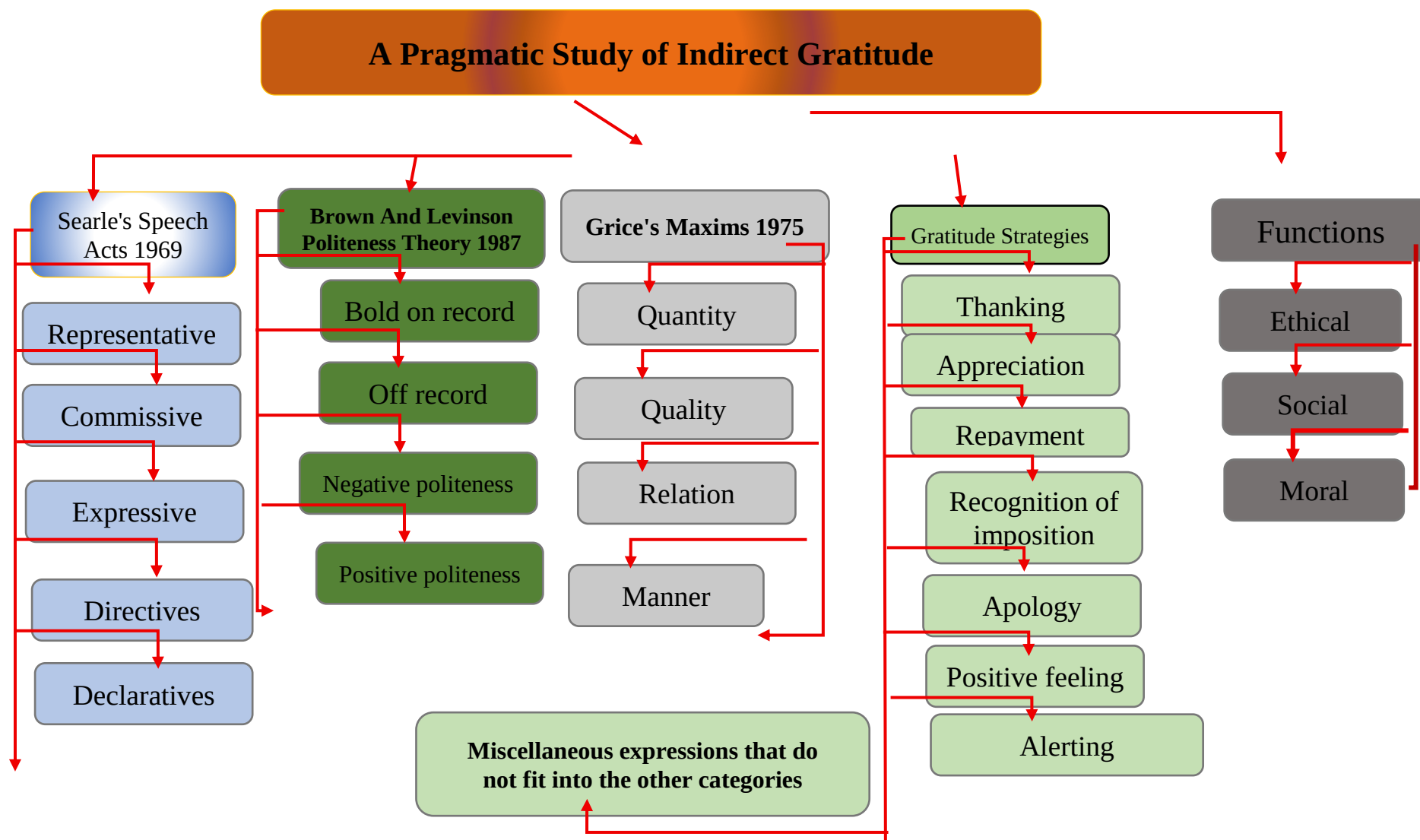
Negative social repercussions can arise from not expressing gratitude (or not expressing it well enough), which can occasionally lead to the speaker-listener relationship being severed. Additionally, learners should become proficient in the rules for expressing gratitude in the target language because it serves a societal purpose. Speech acts of gratitude and the contexts in which they are used in another language should be taught to speakers of that language and culture (Fishgadam & Zarei, 2011).

5-Methodology

5.1 data Analysis

Selected dialogue from Denzel Washington's 2016 film Fences serves as the study's main source of data. This study uses an eclectic pragmatic model that incorporates Grice's Cooperative Principle Politeness Theory, and Speech Act Theory to guarantee a comprehensive analysis.

Figure 1



The Eclectic Model of Analyzing Gratitude in Denzel Washington's Movie based on Searle's Speech Acts (1969), Grice Conversational Maxims (1975) and Brown and Levinson Politeness Strategies (1987).

5.2. The Analysis

Extract 1

Troy "she gives me a different idea a different understanding about myself I can't step out of this house and get away from the pressures and problems.

Troy expresses an indirect form of gratitude as he thinks about the emotional support he gets from the women he is involved with. beyond his union. He shows a great deal of appreciation for how she allows him to get away from his everyday hardships. The objective of the This line of gratitude is best categorized as moral since it highlights an internal shift regarding Troy's personal gain from this relationship.

Speech Acts : Troy expresses his emotional response to the woman in an act of assertiveness. He is attempting to express his own reality. He claims a believe by stating, "She helps me understand things differently." Troy also engages in an expressive speech act when he reveals how she gives him a sense of freedom and expresses gratitude and emotional relief.

Grice Maxims: Troy speaks openly about his emotions and generally abides by all the maxims, particularly the quality maxim. Additionally, he adheres to the maxim of relationship because his remarks are pertinent to the emotional dispute he had with his wife. Troy abides by the rule of etiquette by maintaining his clear speech. In response to a serious situation involving his relationship with another woman, Troy provides just enough information to make his feelings and motivations clear. Making Rose understand why he turned to this woman is his aim.

Politeness: Troy's admission that he found freedom and peace with another woman is a face-threatening act (FTA), especially to Rose's positive face, which is centered on her need for emotional security, love, and respect. However, by using negative politeness instead of harsh or direct statements, he lessens the threat. Troy employs off-record tactics, expressing himself subtly through emotionally charged statements like "she gives me a different understanding about myself," rather than outright confessing infidelity (e.g., "I cheated"). By using these techniques, he is able to lessen the impact, lessen Rose's emotional suffering, and deliver his confession in a less combative way.

Extract 2

Troy: " See that roof you got over your head at night? Let me tell you something about that roof. It's been over ten years since that roof was last tarred... The snow come this winter... andit's gonna seep inside... Then the wood gonna rot from all that water... Now,how much you think it cost to get that roof tarred?"

Troy does not express gratitude directly, instead emphasizing how Cory benefits from others' sacrifices to have a roof. This serves as a moral function, alerting is used to remind Cory of his responsibilities and the worth of his possessions.

Speech Acts : Troy's speech blends direct instructions that call on Cory to acknowledge the roof's worth and accept responsibility with assertive statements that present the facts about its state.

Grice Maxims: Troy's speech adheres to Grice's Maxims by being straightforward, relevant truthful, and providing just enough details about the roof.

Politeness: With its direct delivery and lack of either positive or negative politeness, Troy's speech threatens Cory's positive demeanor. By employing a bald-on-record approach, he prioritizes urgency and discipline over being courteous.

Extract 3

Rose: But I wanted a house that I could sing in, and that's what your daddy gave me. By acknowledging Troy's effort without saying "thank you," Rose demonstrates indirect gratitude,

which is consistent with Cheng's (2005) appreciation strategy. This fulfills a societal purpose by reaffirming Troy's contribution to family stability and strengthening their relationship.

Speech Acts : Rose expresses gratitude with an expressive act when she says she wanted a house to sing in and Troy gave it to her. By recognizing his work and realizing her dream, her words serve as an indirect thank you to him.

Grice Maxims: Rose's statement complies with Grice's maxims since it is truthful, pertinent, clear, and sufficiently instructive. Without going into unnecessary detail or exaggeration, she expresses her gratitude to Troy for giving her the house.

Politeness: Troy's positive face is reinforced by Rose's line, which encourages positive politeness. By attributing to him the house she desired, She maintains emotional harmony and closeness by demonstrating gratitude and respect. rather than making demands or offering criticism.

Extract 4

Troy" I owe a Responsibility to you! You understand what I'm saying, boy?" Instead of using the phrase "thank you," Troy expresses duty by saying, "I owe a responsibility to you." This represents the repayment strategy in Cheng's (2005) taxonomy, indicating his method of returning the favor to his son.

Speech Acts :Troy uses his words to assertively state that his sacrifices are real and to express his pride and values as a father. When taken as a whole, they demonstrate his thoughts and beliefs regarding fatherhood.

Grice Maxims: Troy's speech adheres to Grice's maxims by being truthful, pertinent, and sufficiently instructive to guarantee message clarity.

Politeness: The concept of politeness encompasses the techniques that speakers employ to safeguard the listener's "face." Troy doesn't use any emotional support or softening expressions in this scene; instead, he speaks in a straightforward and direct manner. He does not try to keep his son's face intact, either positively or negatively, as he expresses himself without using these face-saving techniques.

Extract 5

Troy:" latched on to her and told her—I'm gonna tell you the truth—I told her, "Baby, I don't wanna marry, I just wanna be your man."Instead of saying "thank you," Troy shows indirect gratitude by sharing a personal story and offering an emotional reflection. This moral statement demonstrates his gratitude and the strong emotional connection he has with Rose.

Speech Acts : Troy expresses his gratitude and admiration for Rose through his words, which constitute an expressive act. As he candidly describes their initial encounter, they also have an assertive component.

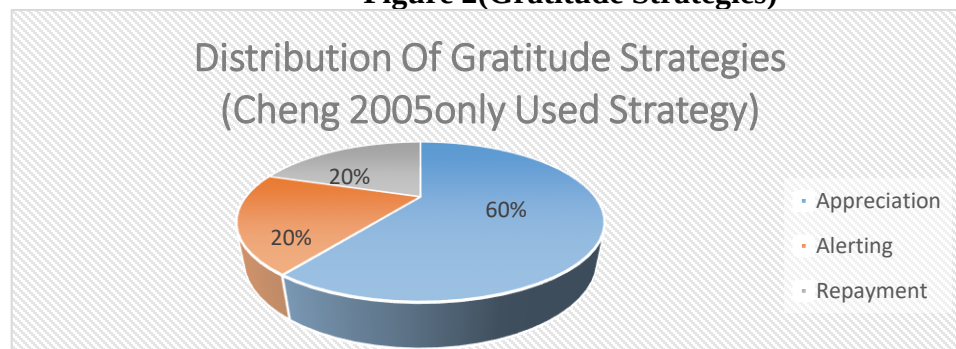
Grice Maxims: Troy shares his feelings and intentions with Rose in a speech that adheres to Grice's maxims by being straightforward, pertinent, and truthful. Without including extra details, he gives just enough information about their meeting.

Politeness: By recognizing Rose's significance and expressing admiration, Troy demonstrates positive politeness and reinforced their emotional connection. He focuses on reaffirming her worth in his life

Frequencies and percentages of Gratitude Strategies based on Cheng 2005

No.	Gratitude Strategy	Fr.	Pr.
1	Appreciation	3	60 %
2	Alerting	1	20%
3	Repayment	1	20%
4	Total	5	100%

Figure 2(Gratitude Strategies)



Frequencies and Percentages of SAs and politeness Strategies

No.	Speech Acts	Fr.	Pr.	Politeness	Fr.	Pr.
1	assertive	4	57.1 %	Bald on record	2	33.3%
2	expressive	3	42.9%	Positive politeness	2	33.3%
3	commissive	0	0%	Negative politeness	1	16.7%
4	directive	0	0%	Off record	1	16.7%
5	declaration	0	0%			
6	Total	7	100%	Total	6	100%

Figure 3

(Speech Acts)

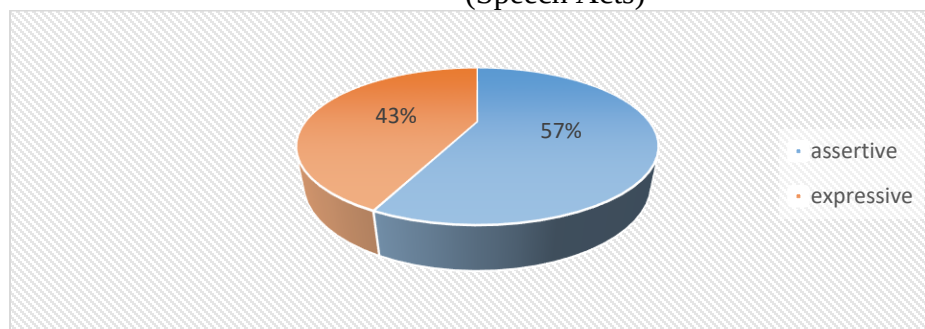
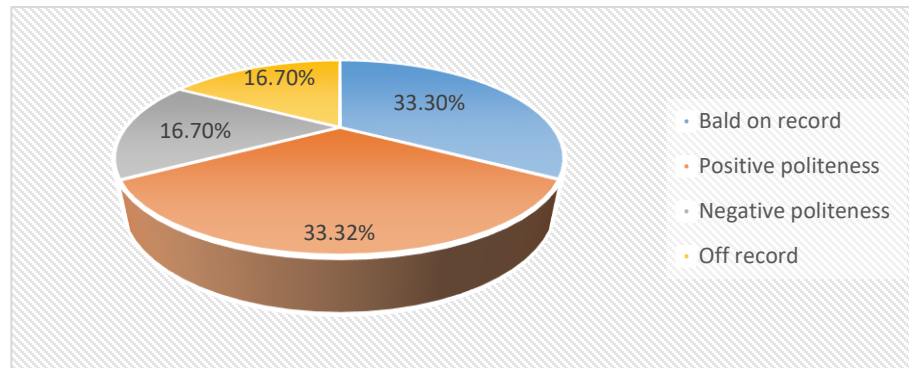


Figure 4 (Politeness Strategies)



6- Conclusion

1-While alerting and repayment were equally less common (20% each), appreciation dominated (60%) of the responses.

2-The majority (57.1%) were assertive acts, while the remaining 42.9% were expressive acts.

3-Bold on-record and positive politeness were equally prevalent (33.3% each), but negative and off-record politeness were less common (16.7% each).

4-There was no flouting and all five scenes adhered completely (100%).

References

1. Algoe, S. B., Kurtz, L. E., & Hilaire, N. M. (2016). Putting the 'you' in 'thank you': Examining other-praising behavior as the active relational ingredient in expressed gratitude. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*,
2. Allen, S. (2018). *The science of gratitude*. Greater Good Science Center, University of California, Berkeley. Prepared for the John Templeton Foundation <https://ggsc.berkeley.edu>
3. Bertocci, P. A., & Millard, R. M. (1963). *Personality and the good: Psychological and ethical perspectives*. New York McKay
4. Brown, P & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
5. Cheng, N. (2005). *Interlanguage pragmatics: A study of Chinese EFL learners' expression of gratitude*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press
6. Coulmas, F. (1981). "Poison to your soul": Thanks and apologies contrastively viewed. In F. Coulmas (Ed.)
7. *Conversational routine: Explorations in standardized communication situations and prepatterned speech* (pp. 69–91). The Hague: Mouton <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110809145.69>
8. Dwyer, P. C. (2015). *Gratitude as persuasion: Understanding when and why gratitude expressions facilitate and inhibit compliance [Doctoral dissertation]*. University of Minnesota. Google Scholar
9. Eisenstein, M. R., & Bodman, J. W. (1986). "I want to thank you for...: A study of the expression of gratitude by native and non-native speakers of American English. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 3(1), 167–189
10. Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J. W. (1986). "I very appreciate": Expressions of gratitude

by native and non-native speakers of American English. *Applied Linguistics*, 7(2), 167–185

<https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/7.2.167>

11. Eisenstein, M., & Bodman, J. W. (1993). Expressing gratitude in American English. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 64–81). Oxford University Press
12. Fishghadam, R. & Zarei, S. (2011). “Expressions of gratitude: A case of EFL learners”. *Review of European Studies*, 3,2
13. Hymes, D. H. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
14. Komter, A. E. (2004). Gratitude and gift exchange. In R. A. Emmons & M. E. McCullough (Eds.), *The psychology of gratitude* (pp. 195–212). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press
15. Kövecses, Z. (2014). Conceptualizing emotions: A revised cognitive linguistic perspective. *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics*, 50(1), 15–28.
16. McCullough, M. E., & Tsang, J. A. (2004). Gratitude in intermediate affective terrain. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(6), 885–904.
17. Naar, H. (2019). *Gratitude and well-being: The benefits of appreciation*. Routledge
18. Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press. Senft, G. (2014). *Understanding pragmatics*. Routledge.
19. Solomon, R. C. (1977). *The passions*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books
20. Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press
21. Wierzbicka, A. (1999). *Emotions across languages and cultures: Diversity and universals*. Cambridge University Press.
22. Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics*, Vol. 3: *Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press