PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS: GRATITUDE SPEECH ACT AMONG AZERBAIJANI TURKISH (AZERI) SPEAKERS BASED ON GENDER

Masoumeh Rezaei[i]
Department of English Language Teaching,
Islamic Azad University,
Tehran Central Branch,
Tehran, Iran

Abstract:

This study aimed to fulfill the common gratitude strategies in Tabriz, Iran, Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri) language. Although numerous scholars have delved into pragmatic realm namely speech acts considering diverse cultures and languages, the investigation on thanking strategies in Turkish (Azeri) language has not been done yet. To achieve this aim, a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which introduced true life situations was applied. The participants of this study were 78 students, enrolling in differing programs and levels in a university in Tabriz City. The students were both male and female, aging from 19 to 41 years old. The results of the study indicated that 'Thanking' and 'Positive Feeling' were the most frequently used strategies among all respondents. However, there were significant differences between the overall male and female groups' use of strategies. In this regard, male Azeri speakers used 'Apology', 'Recognition of Imposition', and 'Others' more than female speakers. On the other hand, female speakers employed 'Positive feeling', 'Repayment', and 'Thanking' more than their counterparts.

Keywords: pragmatic; gratitude; speech act; Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri)

1. Introduction

When we converse, we do actions, from "*aspirating a consonant, to constructing a relative clause, to insulting a guest, to starting a war. These are all, pre-theoretically, speech acts – acts done in the process of speaking*" (Sadock, 2004; Schmidt & Richards, 1980). Bac & Harnish (1979) contend that by uttering a sentence someone has a 'certain intention' and the communication act becomes successful if the intention to be distinguished by the listener. Speech acts actualization may be indicated by diverse methods, indirect and/or direct (Searle, 1975). A speech act as ubiquitous as expressing thanks is one example (Hinkel, 1992, p.3). Sadock (2004) illustrates this with a salient example; when we thank a guest by saying, "Oh I love chocolates" the speaker's intention in making the utterance and a

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[i] Correspondence: email masoumeh.rezaei1985@yahoo.com

recognition by the addressee of that intention under the conditions of utterance clearly plays an important role. Speaker means more than he/she actually utters (Leech, 1990). Or saying, "Thank you for bringing it" which both utterances could be realized as expression of gratitude. In the latter, however, "*there is a direct relationship between form and function*" (Cutting, 2008, p.17). According to McCullough et.al. (2001) approximately in all cultures and through larger part of human memoir, gratitude "*has been treated as both a normal and normative aspect of personality and social life. Gratitude is a highly prized human disposition in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu thought*" (p.249). Searle (1975) classified the thanking paradigm in the group of expressive illocutionary acts. Emmons (2004) defines gratitude as "*a sense of thankfulness and joy in response to receiving a gift, whether the gift be a tangible benefit from a specific other or a moment of peaceful bliss evoked by natural beauty''*(p. 554). "*In various context gratitude can refer to an emotional state, an emotional expression, a character trait, or even a virtue (p.13), gratitude clearly promotes prosocial action tendencies*" (Watkins, 2014, p.32). Kumar (2001) highlights the significance of expressions of gratitude in the following words: "*Expressions of gratitude in the normal day-to-day interactions between the members of a society seem obviously to fall in the category of the "social" use of language. Expressions of gratitude and politeness are a major instrument the use of which keeps the bonds between the members of a society well cemented and strong*" (p.6).

Coulmas (1981) similarly indicated that gratitude, could be remarked as a pragmatic universal, since all languages representing a wide range of prevalent semantic formulas to perform such an act. Thanking is a strategic device whose most important function is to balance politeness relations between interlocutors. It has been convincingly argued by Lakoff (1973) among others that politeness is a universal linguistic variable. As regards (apologies) and thanks, it seems to be a reasonable assumption that they exist as generic speech acts in every speech community. I would even go so far as to venture the hypothesis that every language provides a stock of conventionalized means for fulfilling these functions (Coulmas 1981, p.81). Nevertheless, the expression of 'thank you', based on researches, has been referred to other language functions rather than gratitude such as rejecting an offer (i.e., No, thank you or Thanks, I'm fine) (Rubin, 1983) or irritation (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993) in the exchange:

A. That haircut doesn't do a thing for you,
B. Thanks a lot! You really know how to make me feel good!

Substantially, the expression of gratitude as a holistic concept may function cross culturally. 'Thank you' used in American English is more common as an expression of gratitude, as Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) submit that "*expressing gratitude has important social value in American English*" (p.64). Greif and Gleason (1980) accentuate it as 'everyday politeness routine' and learning such 'routines' is part of the child's earliest training in communicative competence' (p.160). Conversely, Apte (1974) reports that in many south Asian languages saying 'thank you' often entails obligation not only for the speaker, but also for members of the speaker's kin. Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) assert that "*this*

function, when appropriately expressed, can end gender feelings of warmth and solidarity among interlocutors" (p. 64). Coulmas (1981) puts it: "*The social relation of the participants and the inherent properties of the object of gratitude work together to determine the degree of gratefulness that should be expressed in a given situation. Differences in this respect are obviously subject to cultural variation*" (p.75). Thus, Jiang's (2000) metaphor effectively captures the nature of language and culture as a whole: "*communication is like transportation: language is the vehicle and culture is the traffic light*" (p. 329).

Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) state that "*expressions of gratitude can range from simple, phatic utterances to lengthy communicative events mutually developed by both the giver and the recipient of a gift, favor, reward, or service. Most native speakers of English on a conscious level associate the expression of gratitude with the words "thank you"; however, they are unaware of the underlying complex rules and the mutuality needed for expressing gratitude in a manner satisfying to both the giver and recipient*" (p. 64).

Harder (1980) found that second language learners appear to have great difficulty expressing their emotional or psychological state (i.e., expressive speech acts), which results in the appearance of a "*reduced personality*" (p. 268). Similarly, Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) pointed out that even advanced learners of English have considerable difficulty adequately expressing gratitude. They need information on the nature of what to say, the language used to express it, and the context in which it is needed (p.75). Accordingly, speech acts paradigm which Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989, p.1) coined "*one of the most compelling notions in the study of language use*" can carry social implications (Ervin-Tripp, 1976) while still being discrete points of contrast and contact between cultures and languages (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, cited in Tsutagawa, 2013).

So far numerous researches in English language learning/pedagogy have focused on differing speech acts in the light of the importance of cross-cultural and inter-cultural variations, however the paucity of cross cultural investigation in gratitude speech act strategies has persuaded the researcher to do some on. Accordingly, among diverse languages and cultures Azerbaijani (Turkish) language in particular, (25.4%) (Aliakbari and Darabi, 2012 cited in Aliakbari & Khosravian, 2014) which is the second most spoken language of Iran, has been concentrated and worked on to realize and analyze the production of speech act sets based on various situations and settings. Along with providing English teachers with some appropriate data regarding one of the pragmatic speech acts (gratitude speech act) in a relatively large community, this study contributes to the literature on the socio-cultural and cross-cultural researches which universally play paramount role in English language studies solely pragmatic scope.

2. Literature Review

Several scholars have investigated speech act of gratitude in a number of such cross-cultural studies as Johansen (2008) who did a research on gratitude expressions in Norwegian and English. The results indicated that the Norwegian students, when expressing gratitude, consider similar factors as the British and American participants.

They consider the size of imposition, the relationship with the hearer, the social distance, the social setting of the conversation and the rights and obligations of the hearer and the speaker. However, the results also indicated that Norwegians value some of these factors differently from the British and American participants. He also concluded that the length of Norwegian responses was similar to that of American ones. However, the responses given by Norwegians in English were generally longer than both the Norwegian responses and the native-English responses.

Rezvani and Özdemir (2010) carried out non-native speakers' production of speech acts of gratitude in an EFL context, specifically how Turkish and Iranian advanced speakers of English expressed gratitude in terms of strategy use and length of speech. The finding revealed that the native and non-native speakers of English preferred to employ most frequently 2 similar strategies, thanking and attention getter, with only the Turkish and Iranian speakers sharing their least preference for others strategy comprising here statement, small talk, leave-taking and joking. Further, the native speakers of English operated gratitude strategies more frequently than the Turkish and Iranian speakers of English, whereas the Iranian respondents employed the gratitude strategies more frequently than the Turkish speakers. Furthermore, in terms of length of speech the native English respondents were the least verbose speakers, whereas the Turkish and the Iranian respondents seemed to elaborate more to enhance the gratitude across various situations.

In the other study by Ahar and Eslami-Rasekh (2011), Native English and Persian speakers were asked to express gratitude in different situations. The participants of this study were 75 advanced students from the English department of Isfahan University. The participants were both male and female, aging from 20 to 31 years old. 24 American college aged, native speakers also participated in this study. Social status and size of imposition of the favor were social variables which were investigated in detail for three groups. The NAs did not change their strategy selections according to these variables frequently since they used simple thanking almost exclusively. Moreover, it was found that the PN speakers reacted more sensitively both to social status differences and to the size of imposition. While they changed their responses according to the size of imposition.

Pishghadam and Zarei (2012) did a study. The paper aimed at comparing the use of speech act of gratitude in Persian and Chinese EFL learners and English native speakers' performances to identify the existing pattern among them. The results revealed that Thanking strategy was the most preferred strategy in different situations among Persian EFL learners. The second frequently used strategy was positive feeling since it might save the positive face of the speaker in communication while expressing gratitude. Repayment and alerter strategies were used; because they help the interlocutors show their gratitude towards each other showing respect. For the Chinese EFL learners, thanking, alerter, repayment and positive feeling were used more often. They tend to consider social status as the most important factor in using various strategies in expressing gratitude. As the social status becomes higher, their expressions of gratitude

are more and lengthier. The reason why they have chosen thanking strategies as the more salient ones may be the fact that these strategies are the basic strategies which share the universal characteristics. Finally, it was figured out that English native speakers use thanking frequently in their interactions as their preferred approach in expressing gratitude. Repayment and alerter were equally common among English native speakers. The reason may be that they are grown up in a community that see people equal, and that's why they use thanking strategy more frequently in their daily interactions even for small favor, such as in bus and cashier situations (Cheng, 2005).

3. Method

3.1. Research Questions and Hypothesis

1) What are the common gratitude strategies used by male and female Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri) speakers?
2) How do male and female Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri) speakers differ in the expression of gratitude?

3.2. Related Hypothesis

- There is no meaningful difference between male and female Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri) speakers in using gratitude strategies.

3.3. Participants and Procedures

In the present study 78 university students enrolling in differing programs and levels in a university in Tabriz City (Iran), 35 males and 43 females, participated. All the respondents were native speakers of Azerbaijani Turkish (Azeri). The researcher in the study implemented a Discourse Completion Task, which was the adapted version of DCT based on Cheng (2005) and some other articles, consisted of 21 open-ended scenarios according to social status, familiarity and Imposition. It was designed in Persian and administered to the participants who responded to 21 differing true life situations. Furthermore, the collected data were coded in accordance with a coding system devised by Cheng (2005). Thus, to check the reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was measured which turned out to be 0.79 which was admitted.

4. Results and Discussion

Data analysis in the present study revealed interesting findings as represented in the following tables. According to table 4.1, male Azeri speakers used recognition of imposition (60.9%) apology (57.9%), and others (53.1%) more than female speakers.

In the current study considering the DCT which includes 21 scenarios, the researcher represented and analyzed a number of participants' responses in some scenarios based on gender. For instance, the common strategy used by male participants

in different situations was recognition of imposition and apologizing words or combination of two or three strategies at the same time for a scenario.

1) Emrooz ba'ese darde-sar shod-am, ma'zerat mikh-am. Today cause pain-head became-1st singular, excuse want-1st singular.
   Today I got you in trouble, I am sorry.

2) Vagha'n be zahmate-toon razi na-bood-am. Really to trouble-your 2nd plural satisfied Neg-marker-was.
   I didn't really want you take the trouble.

3) Baba kheili be zahmat oftad-i. INTERJ very to-trouble fell-2nd singular.
   You took the trouble, buddy.

4) Sharmande kard-i dadash. Ashamed did-2nd singular, buddy.
   You made me ashamed, buddy.

5) Ostad kheili zahmat shod, ensha-allah betoon-am jobran konam. Professor very trouble became, if-wants-God, can-1st singular compensation do-1st singular.
   Professor you took the trouble so much, if God is willing, I compensate.

In a number of responses, the male speakers applied the strategy of thanking (mamnoon) with intensifiers and qualifiers to show how big the favor was, accompanying expressions of embarrassment, or promising compensation;

6) Ye donya mamnoon. Sharmande kard-id. One world obliged. Ashamed did-2nd plural. Thanks a million. You made me ashamed.

7) Mamnun, Daste shoma dard nakone. Obliged, your-plural-hand pain not-do.
   Thanks, May your hand never ache.

8) Ostad, ye-donya mamnun. Professor, one world obliged.
   Professor thanks a million.

9) Menate bozorgi be gardan-am gozasht-in, omidvar-am lotf-etoono jobran konam. Indebtedness-a great to neck-my put-2nd plural, hope-me favor-your-obj marker compensation do-1st singular.
   This is my great indebtedness to you. I hope I compensate.

10) Mersi, sharmande kard-id. Thanks, ashamed did-2nd plural.
    Thanks, you made me ashamed.

11) Mamnunam, jobran khaham kard. Obliged-am, compensation will-me do-1st singular.
Thanks, I will compensate.

12) Tashakore vije, vagha'n sharmande agar vaght-etoono gereftam. Thank-special, really ashamed if time-your-obj marker got-1st singular.
I am really ashamed to take your time.

In Iran, in a diverse culture like Azerbaijani, male speakers often utilize expressions of happiness and often ask God for rewarding the favorer or wish something good, here are some statements:

13) Lotfe bozorgi kard-i, kheili mamnun Omr-et toolani dadash. Favor-great-a did-2nd singular, very obliged, life-2nd singular long buddy.
You did a great favor, May God bless you a long-life, buddy.

14) Omr-et toolani baradar, dast-et dard nakone. Life-your long brother, your-singular hand pain not-do.
May God bless you a long-life brother, May your hand never ache.

15) Khoda barekat bede. God blessing give-3rd singular.
God bless you.

Or they may also just utter promising compensation speech act sets such as:

16) Ensha-allah jobran mikon-am. If-wants-God compensation do-1st singular.
If God is willing, I compensate.

17) Ye-joor jobran mikon-am. A-kind compensation do-1st singular.
I compensate somewhat.

18) Ensha-allah dar ava'lin forsat miaram. If-wants-God in first-chance bring-1st singular.
If God is willing, I payback soon.

'Others' was another common strategy produced by Azerbaijani male speakers, here are some utterances:

19) Mamnoon, khaste nabashid. Obliged, tired Neg-marker-be 2nd plural.
Thanks. Well done.

20) Be omide-didar. To hope-meeting.
Hope to see you.

21) Agha bebakhsh-id inja piyade mish-an (plural). Man subj-forgive-2nd plural, here afoot become.
Excuse me man, I get off here.

22) Baba in che khati-ye (laughter). Buddy, this what line-a.
What hand-writing it is, buddy.

On the other hand, Azerbaijani female speakers employed thanking (63.5 %), positive feeling (62.1 %), and repayment (61.4%). In using the gratitude strategies female speakers often utilized thanking expressions; mamnun, mersi (thanks), adding intensifiers and more formal utterances like Tashakor, Moteshakeram beside another gratitude strategy like expressing a positive feeling in relation to the object of the favor or favor giver. For instance:

1) Kheili-mamnun. Kheili mofid bud. Very obliged. Very useful was-3rd singular.
Thank you very much. It was very useful.

2) Tashakor. kheili komakam kard-i. Thank, very help-me did-2nd singular.
Thank you. You helped me a lot.

3) Mersi komakam kard-i. Thank help-me did-2nd singular.
Thank you for your help.

4) Mamnun babate mehmooni aali va ghazahaye khoshmaz-at. Obliged for party-great and foods-delicious-2nd singular.
Thanks for your great party and delicious food.

5) Mamnun. Shabe khoobi bood. Obliged. Night-a nice was.
Thanks, it was a nice night.

6) Mamnun kheili azash khosham oumade. Obliged, very from-it like-1st singular come.
Thank you very much, I have really liked it.

7) Ostade azizam, Kheili kheili-moteshakeram. Professor dear-my, very very-thankful-I-am.
Dear professor, thank you so much.

8) Mamnunam ke vaght gozasht-id, daste-tan dard-nakone. Obliged-am for time put-did-2nd plural, your-plural-hand pain not-do.
Thank you for devoting your time. May your hand never ache.

In addition to thanking strategy, the speakers used apology strategy:

9) Kheili-mamnun. Zahmat shod. Very-obliged, trouble became- 3rd singular.
   Thank you very much. You took the trouble.

10) Kheili ozr mikham ke majboor shod-id negahdar-id. Dast-etoon dard nakone. Very excuse want-1st singular that obliged-became-2ndplural keep-2nd plural, your-plural-hand pain not-do.
   I am really sorry to oblige you to stop. May your hand never ache.

11) Mersi az hame-chiz, kheili zahmat keshid-id. Thanks for everything, very trouble pulled-2nd plural.
   Thanks for everything, you took too much trouble.

12) Ostade aziz, kheili sharmand-am kard-id, moteshakeram. Professor dear, very ashamed-me did-2nd plural, thankful-I-am.
   Dear professor, you made me ashamed, thank you so much.

   Female speakers also employed promising compensation which played as supportive acts accompanied the head acts (thanking):

13) Kheili-mamnun, ostad, ensha-allah, ke lotfe-tuno, jobran kon-am. Very-obliged, professor, if-wants-God, that favor-your-obj marker compensation do-1st singular.
   Thank you, professor. If God is willing, I compensate.

14) Tashakor, jobran mikonam in kar-eto. Thanks, compensation do-1st singular this work-2nd singular.
   Thanks, I compensate.

15) Ostad ne-midoonam chetori azat-oon tashakor konam. Professor don't-know1st singular how from-you 2nd plural thank-do1st singular.
   I do not know how to thank you professor.

16) Mamnun, ensha-allah be-zudi pas-midaham. Obliged, if-wants-God to-soon pay-give-1st singular.
   Thanks. If God is willing, I payback your money soon.

17) Jobran mikon-am azizam, lotfe bozorgi kard-i. Compensation do-1st singular dear-my, favor-great did-2nd singular.
   I compensate, you did a great favor.

   In the culture like Azerbaijani, wishing good things for each other is one of the salient features of people:

18) Kheili vaght-eto gereftam, tuye shadi-hat jobran mikonam. Very time-your-obj marker got-me, in happy-your compensation do-1st singular.
I really took your time. I compensate in your happiness.

19) Ensha-allah movafagh bashi, kheili zahmat shod. If-wants-God successful to be-2nd singular, very trouble became.
If God is willing, good luck you took too much trouble.

20) Kheili zahmat keshid-in, ensha-allah aroosi-t. Very trouble pulled-2nd plural, if-wants-God, wedding-your 2nd singular.
You took too much trouble. If God is willing, I compensate in your wedding.

21) Khodahafez, khoda barekat bedahad be kasb-o-kar-etan. God-keeper, God blessing give-3rd singular to trade-and-work-your-obj marker.
Goodbye, May God bless your business.

They even offer or promise their interlocutors the kind of services besides thanking strategy:

22) Ensha-allah dafeye ba'ad man hameye-karharo mikonam, mersi. If-wants-God time-next I all-works do-1st singular, thanks.
If God is willing, I will do all homework next time. Thanks.

23) Dast-et dard nakone, shaam mehmoone-man. Your-singular-hand pain not-do, dinner guest-me.
May your hand never ache. I will treat you to dinner.

Table 4.1: Frequencies, Percentages and
Standardized Residuals of Gratitude Strategies by Gender

		Strategy								Total
		Thanking	Appreciation	Positive feelings	Apology	Recognition of imposition	Repayment	Others	Attention getters	
Male	N	342	21	159	73	28	61	86	64	834
	%	36.5%	41.2%	37.9%	57.9%	60.9%	38.6%	53.1%	47.8%	41.0%
	Std. Res	-2.2	.0	-1.0	3.0	2.1	-.5	2.4	1.2	
Female	N	595	30	261	53	18	97	76	70	1200
	%	63.5%	58.8%	62.1%	42.1%	39.1%	61.4%	46.9%	52.2%	59.0%
	Std. Res	1.8	.0	.8	-2.5	-1.8	.4	-2.0	-1.0	
Total	N	937	51	420	126	46	158	162	134	2034
	%	46.07%	2.51%	20.65%	6.19%	2.26%	7.77%	7.96%	6.59%	100.0%

The overall results indicated that thanking (46.07 %) was the most frequent gratitude strategy used. This was followed by positive feeling (20.65 %) and other strategies (7.96

%). The least frequently employed strategies were recognition of imposition (2.26 %) and appreciation (2.51 %). Figure 4.1 displays the overall percentages of the gratitude strategies.
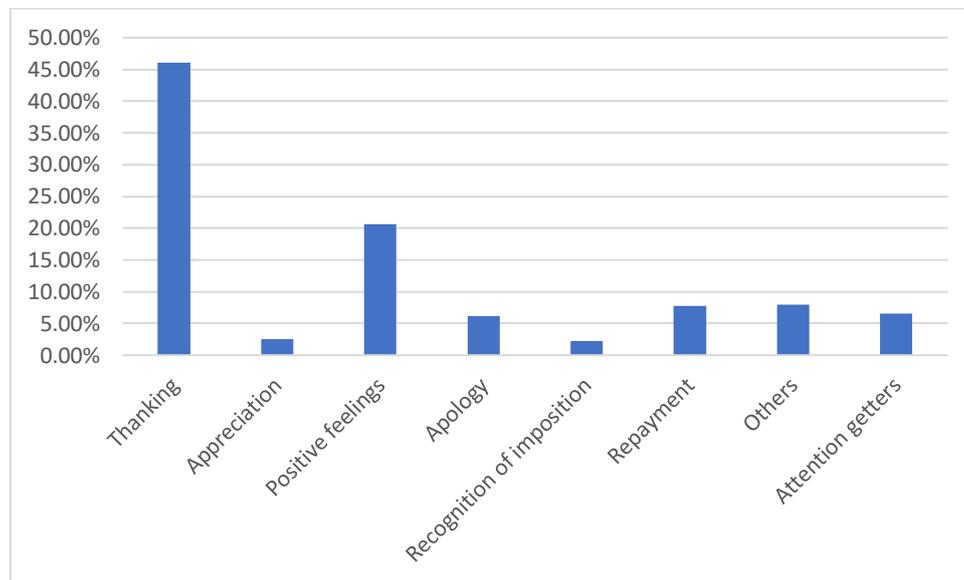

Figure 4.1: Percentages of gratitude strategies

An inspection of the std. residuals indicated that male Azeri speakers employed apology (57.9 %, std. residual = 3> 1.96), recognition of imposition (60.9 %, std. residual = 2.1 > 1.96) and other strategies (53.1 %, std. residual = 2.4 > 1.96) significantly more than female speakers. On the other hand, Azeri females did not use any strategy (Std. Residual < 1.96) significantly higher than the male speakers. The results also indicated that there were not any significant differences between the two groups' use of appreciation, apology, re-payment and attention getters. Std. residuals for the above-mentioned strategies were lower than +/- 1.96; that is to say; the differences could have occurred by chance.

According to the results of analysis of chi-square ($\chi2$ (7) = 44.69, p < .05) in table 4.2, the frequencies observed in table 4.1 indicated significant differences between the two groups' uses of gratitude strategies. Thus, the null-hypothesis as "there were no significant differences between male and female Azeri speakers' use of gratitude strategies" was rejected.

Table 4.2: Chi-Square Tests; Gratitude Strategies by Gender

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	44.698[a]	7	.000
Likelihood Ratio	44.108	7	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	20.089	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	2034		

Note: a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.86.

Table 4.3 displays the results of the Cramer's V and phi effect sizes. The significant results of Cramer's V (V = .148, p < .05) indicated that the results of the Chi-square test enjoyed a large effect size. Moreover, figure 4.2 displays the percentages of gratitude strategies by gender.

Table 4.3: Cramer's V and Phi Effect Sizes; Gratitude Strategies by Gender

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.148	.000
	Cramer's V	.148	.000
N of Valid Cases		2034	
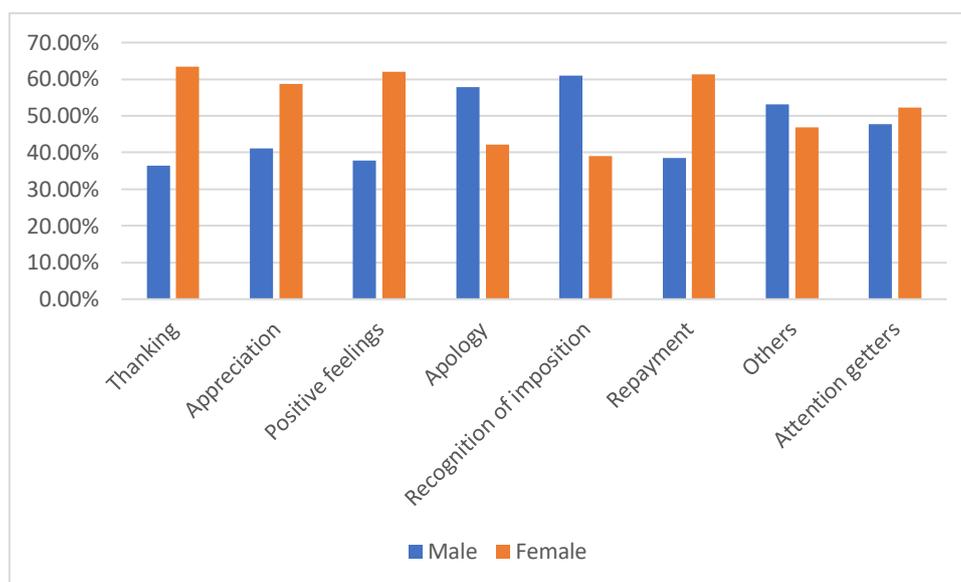
Figure 4.2: Percentages of gratitude strategies by gender

5. Conclusion

The present study attempted to interrogate gratitude strategies among Azeri university students in Tabriz city. Considering the first research question the results revealed that 'thanking' and 'positive feeling' were the most frequently popular used strategies in diverse situations among Azeri informants respectively. It seems that they may be inclined to show their gratefulness by employing the former strategy. And also employed the latter one to save the positive face in communication while expressing gratitude. Regarding the second research question related to gender though, there had been significant differences in the use of gratitude strategies between Azeri male and female informants. It is worth mentioning that gender as an independent variable has a significant impact on using gratitude strategies in Turkish (Azeri) community. Surprisingly, the findings indicated that male informants were inclined to express their gratitude using 'apology', 'recognition of imposition', 'others' and 'attention getters' strategies. On the other hand, female informants used 'thanking', 'appreciation', 'positive feeling', and 'repayment' strategies. According to Levant and Kopecky, (1995) men by

expressing their sentiments, their masculinity may be threatened. The finding of the current study is not in line with research by Yusefi et.al (2015), indicated that gender was not an effective factor in the use of gratitude strategies in Kurdish society in Iran.

About the Author

Masoumeh Rezaei is an M.A. in Applied Linguistics. She has been teaching English and supervising for about ten years at different levels. She has published and presented in international journals and conference. Her primary research interests are Pragmatics, Technology-Based Investigations, Multilingualism, English Language Learning and Teaching, and Personality Traits.

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