A Study of Lexicogrammatical Strategies of Thanking in the London Area[1] and Its Implications for ELT

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Abstract

This study endeavours to sketch out the lexicogrammatical strategies for thanking and thanking replies, employed by the informants of this research, living in or near London and speaking English as their first language. The researcher also attempts to suggest what can be incorporated in ELT (English Language Teaching), for the purpose of cultivating pragmatic competence for better communication in English. This study is part of his linguistic research project, The Creation and Expansion of English Speech Acts Corpora (SAC) and the Application of the Research Results to ELT. In this study, 32 informants participated in the DCQ (Discourse Completion Questionnaire) research and 24 for video role-play data collection (i.e. 12 pairs). The informants who worked on the DCQ provided linguistic data for the following eight categories: (a) Setting / Situation, (b) Remark, (c) Notable language features, (d) Positive reply, (e) Notable language features, (f) Negative reply, (g) Notable language features. Those who participated in the role-plays supplied audio-visual data of Formal/Polite thanking and replies. The data collected for this study were transcribed digitally and then processed with WordSmith 8.0. The wordlists created by this concordance software allowed the researcher to reveal lexical strategies employed by the infor-

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(1) I use the term 'the London area' as this research was carried out in London and the informants for this study at the time of the research lived in London or the areas where they have an easy access to London.

mants for thanking and thanking replies. The researcher at the same time investigated grammatical features of the utterances provided, based on collocation of the lexical items spotted by WordSmith 8.0. These research results enabled the researcher to make suggestions about what can be incorporated into ELT for better communication skills in English.

Key words: *thanking, speech act, politeness, ELT, pragmatic competence*

1. Introduction

This study is part of the researcher's linguistic research project, The Creation and Expansion of English Speech Acts Corpora (SAC) and the Application of the Research Results to ELT. In this paper I am going to delineate the research results concerning thanking and thanking replies.

　　The speech act of thanking appears in daily life very often and can therefore be regarded as one of the basic speech acts in English. It has been categorised into Searle's EXPRESSIVES (Searle, 1979) and Leech's CONVIVIAL. Leech explained Searle's speech act classification EXPRESSIVES[2] in his publication as follows:

> EXPRESSIVES have the function of expressing, or making known, the speaker's psychological affairs which the illocution presupposes; *eg* **thanking**, …
>
> （Leech, 1983: 106, emphasis mine）

　　Leech (1983: 105), in his own framework, classified thanking into his CONVIVIAL category as in the following:

> CONVIVIAL: The illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal; *eg*

⑵　Searle offered his definition of EXPRESSIVES in his work as follows: *expressives*, whose "illocutionary point is to express the psychological state [of the speaker]" (Searle, 1979: 115)

offering, inviting, greeting, **thanking**, congratulating.

(Leech, 1983: 106, emphasis mine)

In my view, thanking is an FEA (face-enhancing act) (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1997; Suzuki, 2007) as it is a speech act that is performed for enhancing the face of the addressee, expressing gratitude for his or her deed that benefited the speaker. It is therefore assumed that the interaction including thanking is generally harmonious and convivial. Politeness of an FEA is mainly enhanced by 'directness', 'clarity' and 'intensification' (Suzuki, 2007; 2011). As for thanking and 'intensification' in thanking, Leech says in his renewed framework as follows:

Thanking, like apologizing, is an intrinsically courteous speech act, an act of pos-politeness, so that to increase politeness we add intensifiers like *a lot* and *very much*. Also repetition of the IFID *thank you* or *thanks*, like repetition of the IFID *sorry*, is a common intensifying feature.

(Leech, 2014: 196-197)

In this study, I am going to examine lexicogrammatical strategies employed by the informants to perform thanking and thanking replies with the aid of WordSmith 8.0[3]. Corpus linguistics utilising a concordancer enables researchers to investigate how lexical items are used in particular speech events and to understand patterns of word usage. Corpus linguistics has been increasingly incorporated in the study of Pragmatics in recent publications (cf. Aijmer, 1996, Adolphs, 2005, Aijmer & Rühlemann, 2015). Besides the study of lexical items, the researcher investigated grammatical features which can be observed in the utterances provided by the informants. It is thought to be beneficial for linguistic researchers to acquire a knowledge on lexical and

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(3) Wikipedia (n.d.) explains what WordSmith is as follows: **WordSmith Tools** is a software package primarily for linguists, in particular for work in the field of corpus linguistics. It is a collection of modules for searching patterns in a language.

grammatical strategies employed in different politeness levels of thanking and thanking replies.

Another main purpose of this research project is to make contributions to ELT regarding cultivation of 'pragmatic competence' (cf. Bachman, 1990). The knowledge about the lexicogrammatical strategies observed in this study will enable English learners to understand what lexical items and grammatical structures are used in thanking and thanking replies in the London area and how they can produce thanking and thanking replies themselves in natural and appropriate ways. They can also learn how to control their language considering the levels of politeness required in the settings. Indeed, cultivation of pragmatic competence is a trendy topic in the field of applied linguistics and a considerable number of research results in this area have been published in recent years (cf. Rose & Kasper, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Cohen, 2018). The research results of this study are expected to make some contributions to cultivation of pragmatic competence in ELT for better communication in English in the area of thanking and thanking replies.

2. Research design and methodology

The data of this study were collected in London from 2017 to 2019 in the researcher's research project described earlier. The informants were those who lived in or near London at the time of the research, who speak English as their first language. 32 informants participated in the DCQ (Discourse Completion Questionnaire) research and 24 for video role-play data collection (i.e. 12 pairs) for thanking and thanking replies.

The DCQ requested the informants to provide utterances and explanations in the following seven categories: (a) Setting / Situation, (b) Remark, (c) Notable language features, (d) Positive reply, (e) Notable language features, (f) Negative reply, (g) Notable language features.

After the completion of the DCQ research, many of the informants engaged in role-plays, which were video recorded and then transcribed digitally. They were requested to perform thanking and thanking replies in

formal or polite ways. I asked the role-play pairs to supply Formal/Polite thanking because it is thought to be what basic-level English learners need to know when they start to learn how to thank and reply to thanking in English for successful communication.

The researcher as a result succeeded in collecting eight different data sets concerning thanking: (1) Thanking (Formal/Polite), (2) Thanking (Casual/Friendly), (3) Positive Replies to Thanking (Formal/Polite), (4) Positive Replies to Thanking (Casual/Friendly), (5) Negative Replies to Thanking (Formal/Polite), (6) Negative Replies to Thanking (Casual/Friendly), (7) Thanking in Role-plays, (8) Replies to Thanking in Role-plays.

The data were transcribed digitally and processed with WordSmith 8.0, a concordancer, for the study of lexical and grammatical tendencies of thanking and thanking replies in the London area.

So that this study can reveal notable tendencies in the word use in thanking and thanking replies in London, the researcher is going to focus on the words which appeared 3 times or more in the wordlists created by Word-Smith 8.0.

3. Data analysis

This section examines in detail the lexicogrammatical strategies of thanking and thanking replies, making suggestions about what can be incorporated into ELT.

3.1 Thanking (Formal/Polite)

In this first category, I would like to specify how formal or polite thanking was performed regarding lexicogrammatical strategies, through examination of the lexical items in the wordlist created by WordSmith 8.0.

Table 3.1.1 *The Wordlist of Thanking (Formal/Polite)*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	YOU	38	15	WAS	5

2	THANK	31	16	TODAY	5
3	FOR	24	17	THANKS	5
4	MUCH	20	18	IN	5
5	VERY	13	19	THAT	4
6	TO	13	20	IT	4
7	YOUR	10	21	APPRECIATE	4
8	ME	10	22	AND	4
9	I	10	23	WITH	3
10	THIS	9	24	US	3
11	TIME	8	25	OPPORTUNITY	3
12	THE	8	26	HAVE	3
13	SO	8	27	GIVING	3
14	A	7			

I have selected THANK and APPRECIATE as the target lexical items after exploring the ways in which they were employed. Along with THANK, I will mention how FOR, MUCH and VERY were used in set phrases.

THANK, the IFID (illocutionary force identifying device), appeared 31 times in this data and was the second most frequently used word, while the less formal word THANKS was used only 5 times. I scrutinised the concordance pattern of this word and the result is shown in Table 3.1.2.

Table 3.1.2 *The Concordance Pattern List of THANK in Thanking (Formal/Polite)*

L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3
			THANK		VERY	MUCH

As can be seen from Table 3.1.2, 'Thank you very much' is a commonly used formulaic expression in Formal/Polite thanking. I also present five examples where this expression was used together with 'for', the word having appeared 24 times, which expresses a reason for thanking. As a result, this section discusses the use of the 4 lexical items in the wordlist: THANK

(31 times), FOR (24 times), MUCH (20 times) and VERY (13 times).

1) _Thank you very much for_ a lovely meal, that was tasty.
2) _Thank you very much for_ giving me the opportunity to apply for this position.
3) _Thank you very much for_ your time today and we will get back to you in due time
4) _Thank you very much for_ sharing your ideas with us today, I look forward to putting these in place
5) _Thank you very much for_ holding the door open for me and allowing me through first. That was very polite of you

As can be seen, 'Thank you' is the core part of this speech act. It is followed by 'very much', which is an intensifier whose function is to reinforce the meaning of the expression modified. As thanking is an FEA, in many cases it is expressed with 'directness', 'clarity' and 'intensification' as mentioned earlier. Then it is followed by 'for', a preposition used to specify a reason why the speaker is thanking the addressee. We can confirm in all five examples 'for' is followed by a noun phrase (including a gerund (= -ing)) expressing a subject or an action which the speaker is thanking for. The combination of these lexical items, 'Thank you very much for', can be treated as an expression which can be taught in ELT classrooms as one of the most commonly used expressions for Formal/Polite thanking in the London area.

Next, I would like to explain how APPRECIATE, which appeared 4 times, was used by the informants in this category using the following examples.

1) Thank you very much, I _appreciate_ it very much
2) Thank you for booking onto your personal training course with us. I _appreciate_ your time today
3) Thanks mate I really _appreciate_ that

4) *Thank you for giving me more time on my essay, I really <u>appreciate</u> it*

 In these examples, APPRECIATE is used to strengthen the force of thanking, besides an utterance employing an IFID, with the use of such intensifiers as 'really' and 'very much'. As APPRECIATE is a transitive verb that should be followed by a noun, a noun phrase or a pronoun, we can observe 'it', 'that' and 'your time'. I recommend that the phrase 'I really appreciate it', be taught as another expression that can increase the formal and polite meaning for Forma/Polite thanking.

3.2 Thanking (Casual/Friendly)

In this second category, I would like to explicate how casual or friendly thanking was performed regarding lexicogrammatical strategies, through inspection of the lexical items in the wordlist created by WordSmith 8.0.

Table 3.2 *The Wordlist of Thanking (Casual/Friendly)*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	YOU	14	11	THE	5
2	FOR	13	12	ME	5
3	THANKS	12	13	HAVE	5
4	CHEERS	12	14	BUDDY	5
5	I	8	15	A	5
6	THAT	6	16	SO	4
7	THANK	6	17	LOVE	4
8	MUCH	6	18	YOU'RE	3
9	MATE	6	19	OF	3
10	TO	5			

 I have chosen THANKS and CHEERS as the target lexical items after inspecting the ways in which they were used. Along with CHEERS, I will describe how MATE, BUDDY and LOVE were used in set phrases for Casual/Friendly thanking.

I would like to focus on THANKS as the first lexical item in this category. It is a noteworthy word, as it was used twice as many times as THANK in this Casual/Friendly thanking category. I made a concordance pattern of this word, but did not find any particular expressions used with THANKS. I nonetheless found that it frequently co-ocurred with 'for', which appeared 13 times in this group, revealing one collocation pattern in this variety. The collocation *thanks for* appeared 5 times out of 12 cases as in the following.

1) *Thanks for* joining me today.
2) *Thanks for* the compliment buddy! I appreciate the kind words.
3) *Thanks for* dinner!
4) *Thanks for* inviting me over, I have had a great time
5) *Thanks for* my drink!

As can be seen from these examples, it can safely be said that this collocation, *thanks for*, is a formulaic expression to thank someone with a reason. 'Thanks for + a noun / a noun phrase' can be taught in ELT classrooms when students are learning Casual/Friendly thanking. One plausible reason for the less use of intensifiers with THANKS is that the level of politeness in this category is lower and therefore intensification beside the use of an IFID is not mandatory. Still, I would like to point out the fact that the phrase 'thanks so much' was found in two cases and 'thanks a bunch' appeared once.

Next, I talk about CHEERS, which did not appear in the Formal/Polite thanking wordlist at all. This is indeed a noticeable lexical item in the wordlist of Casual/Friendly thanking. Therefore, it can safely be said that CHEERS is a notable British colloquial expression used in Casual/Friendly thanking. Although the concordance pattern list created by WordSmith 8.0 did not provide any other word used with CHEERS, I obtained an important finding about the collocation concerning CHEERS as the following examples show.

1) *Cheers mate!*
2) *Cheers buddy*
3) *Cheers mate*
4) *Cheers love*
5) *Cheers buddy*
6) *Cheers mate, have a good one*
7) *Cheers mate.*
8) *Cheers, bro. That's so thoughtful of you, Love you, man!*
9) *Cheers buddy, I won't damage it too much*

As can be seen in these examples, CHEERS was used with informal vocatives (i.e. address terms) such as 'mate', 'buddy', 'love' and 'bro' in 9 cases out of 12. This may well indicate that the collocation 'cheers + an informal vocative' is a formulaic expression commonly used in Casual/Friendly thanking in London. The fact that these vocatives are frequently used in the data of this study (MATE: 6 times, BUDDY: 5 times, LOVE: 4 times) suggests that the use of these vocatives are one of the characteristics of informal language in the area. While EFL (English as a foreign language) students at the basic level may not need to learn this kind of expression, it can be a good learning material for advanced-level learners who would like to understand and use English expressions appropriately in informal settings.

3.3 Positive replies to thanking (Formal/Polite)

In this third category, I would like to go over how formal or polite positive replies to thanking were performed regarding lexicogrammatical strategies, through examination of the lexical items in the wordlist created by WordSmith 8.0.

Table 3.3.1 *The Wordlist of Positive Replies to Thanking (Formal/Polite)*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	YOU	28	13	WAS	6

2	THANK	11	14	PROBLEM	6
3	WELCOME	10	15	PLEASURE	5
4	TO	9	16	TOO	4
5	FOR	9	17	TIME	4
6	YOU'RE	8	18	THAT	4
7	I	8	19	IN	4
8	VERY	7	20	YOUR	3
9	NO	7	21	THE	3
10	IT	7	22	MY	3
11	ARE	7	23	ME	3
12	A	7	24	IS	3

I have selected WELCOME, PROBLEM and PLEASURE for detailed analysis after scrutinizing their uses in the database. I will also talk about VERY as a word used together with WELCOME.

First of all, I would like to focus on WELCOME, which appeared 11 times, as it can be regarded as one of the core expressions in this category in terms of frequency. The Table 3.3.2 is showing that WELCOME is strongly linked with VERY in the phrase 'very welcome'.

Table 3.3.2 *The Concordance Pattern List of WELCOME in Replies to Thanking (Formal/Polite)*

L3	L2	L1	Centre	R1	R2	R3
		VERY	WELCOME			

The following are the 6 examples where the phrase 'very welcome' was used.

1) You're <u>very welcome</u>.
2) You're <u>very welcome</u>. I hope this has helped you to find a solution. Best wishes Jude.
3) You're <u>very welcome</u>, I'm glad you like it.

4) *You're <u>very welcome</u>, thank you for your time. We will be in touch*

5) *You are <u>very welcome</u>*

6) *You are <u>very welcome</u>. Please let me know if you need some more extra time.*

Besides the phrase 'very welcome', we can see that 'You're / You are very welcome' is a formulaic expression employed for replies to Formal/Polite thanking. It is assumed that the use of the intensifier 'very' is in accordance with the direction of politeness of an FEA. This expression can indeed be taught in ELT as a commonly used phrase which sounds appropriate and face-enhancing as a reply to Formal/Polite thanking.

Next, I will talk about PROBLEM, which appeared 6 times in the data. One may well wonder why this word with the negative meaning was so frequently used in reply to Formal/Polite thanking. The following are the utterances where we can find PROBLEM.

1) *No <u>problem</u> at all, any time*

2) *No <u>problem</u>*

3) *No <u>problem</u>, you're welcomed, my pleasure*

4) *No <u>problem</u>, do you need anything else?*

5) *Not a <u>problem</u>, let's get to work*

6) *It was no <u>problem</u> at all. You are my firend[4], friends are there for each other.*

The examples above show that PROBLEM was used with 'no' (in 5 cases) and 'not' (in 1 case). Therefore, the negative meaning of this word is negated by these negative words and consequently expresses a sense of total acceptance of thanking from the speaker. It can safely be said that the expressions 'No problem' and 'Not a problem' are widely used responses to

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[4] This is thought to be misspelling of *friend*.

Formal/Polite thanking. While they sound informal, these phrases can be taught in ELT as good formal or polite replies to thanking. I assume that this rather informal expression is used in replies to Formal/Polite thanking because of its directness, clarity and strength. This is the point which can be taught to EFL learners regarding what constitute politeness in the case of thanking replies.

Finally, I focus on PLEASURE to find out how it was used in the data. The following are the five examples where this word can be spotted.

1) It was a _pleasure_ to meet you too
2) It was great to have you! You are always such fun, it was a _pleasure_ to spend the evening together. Speak soon!
3) That is O.K., it was a _pleasure_. I will be in touch.
4) No problem, you're welcomed, my _pleasure_
5) It's my _pleasure_, thank you

A notable expression is 'it was a pleasure', which appeared 3 times in the above examples. In the other 2 examples 'my pleasure' was used. These phrases, 'it was a pleasure', 'my pleasure' and 'it's my pleasure, can be taught in ELT classrooms as common formulaic expressions which can be employed in reply to Formal/Polite thanking.

3.4 Positive replies to thanking (Casual/Friendly)

In this fourth category, I would like to go over how casual or friendly positive replies to thanking were performed regarding lexicogrammatical strategies, through examination of the lexical items in the wordlist created by Word-Smith 8.0.

Table 3.4 _The Wordlist of Positive Replies to Thanking (Casual/Friendly)_

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	YOU	12	11	IT	4

2	NO	11	12	FOR	4
3	WORRIES	7	13	TOO	3
4	THAT'S	6	14	THANKS	3
5	MATE	6	15	SO	3
6	MY	5	16	PROBLEM	3
7	I	5	17	OKAY	3
8	YOU'RE	4	18	GOOD	3
9	WELCOME	4	19	A	3
10	TO	4			

I have selected WORRIES and THAT'S for detailed analysis after inspecting their uses in the database. I also focus on NO as a word used together with WORRIES, and OKAY (and also O.K.) as the one used with THAT'S.

I will start with WORRIES, which appeared 7 times in this category and did not appear in the Formal/Polite group.

1) *No worries.*
2) *No worries*
3) *No worries!*
4) *No worries*
5) *No worries*
6) *No worries my love*
7) *No worries!*

As can be confirmed in the above examples, WORRIES was used with NO in the set phrase 'no worries', which has been heard in English speaking countries in fairly recent years. We can see the widespread of this expression, which is said to have originated in Australian English[5]. It can be taught in ELT that this expression is now used commonly as a casual or friendly reply to thanking. One lexicogrammatical lecture related to politeness which

can be given to EFL learners is that the word NO expresses 'total negation'. Hence, it is a word which represents directness, clarity and intensification.

Next I would like to show how THAT'S was used. It was used fairly frequently (6 times) in this category and investigation of its use revealed the following results.

1) *That's okay mate!*
2) *That's okay, my pleasure I'm glad you like it*
3) *That's okay!*
4) *That's O.K., it's good to meet up*
5) *That's alright mate, you will just have to owe me a drink*
6) *That's cool, dude. Anything for you!*

As can be confirmed above, THAT'S is followed by 'okay / O.K', 'alright' and 'cool', all of which express the meaning of 'agreement or acceptance' (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2005). This formulaic expression is thought to be used to mean somewhat the same thing as 'no problem' in the casual or friendly situations. The informal vocatives, 'mate' and 'dude', which follow this expression, are supposed to be showing a sense of friendliness. OKAY, which was observed 3 times in the data, was used with THAT'S in all cases. The expression, 'That's okay, mate', could possibly become an insightful material in ELT, with which EFL learners can learn how to reply to thanking in a casual or friendly manner in the London area.

3.5 Negative replies to thanking (Formal/Polite)
In this fifth category, I would like to go over how formal or polite negative

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(5) The history of this expression is described in Wikipedia (n.d.) as follows: **No worries** is an expression seen in English meaning "do not worry about that", "that's all right", "forget about it" or "sure thing". It is similar to the American English "no problem". The phrase is widely used in Australian speech and represents a feeling of friendliness, good humour, optimism and "mateship" in Australian culture. The phrase has been referred to as the national motto of Australia.

replies to thanking were performed regarding lexicogrammatical strategies, through examination of the lexical items in the wordlist created by Word-Smith 8.0.

Table 3.5 *The Wordlist of Negative Replies to Thanking (Formal/Polite)*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	YOU	21	17	BEEN	4
2	I	13	18	YOU'RE	3
3	NOT	12	19	YOUR	3
4	THE	10	20	WOULD	3
5	TO	8	21	WISH	3
6	IT	8	22	THAT'S	3
7	BUT	8	23	THAT	3
8	TIME	7	24	TAKE	3
9	THIS	7	25	PROBLEM	3
10	NO	5	26	OKAY	3
11	HAVE	5	27	MORE	3
12	THANK	4	28	LIKE	3
13	SUCCESSFUL	4	29	FUTURE	3
14	OK	4	30	FOR	3
15	IN	4	31	A	3
16	DO	4			

I have selected NOT, BUT, TAKE, MORE and FUTURE for detailed analysis after examining their uses in the database.

The first lexical item I would like to refer to is NOT, which appeared 12 times in this category while it appeared only twice in the Casual/Friendly negative replies to thanking. Here are the 11 utterances in which this word was used.

1) *You're <u>not</u> welcome back.*
2) *You're welcome, although we're <u>not</u> sure you're right for the position.*

3) *No problem, thank you for applying, but on this occasion I'm afraid you have <u>not</u> been successful.*

4) *Thanks but no thanks, I do <u>not</u> like it*

5) *Thank you, unfortunately you have <u>not</u> been successful this time*

6) *I do <u>not</u> mind today but do <u>not</u> make a habit of it*

7) *Okay but I wish it did <u>not</u> take this long to complete the process*

8) *Thank you, but I feel that is just a generic reply you give to people who have <u>not</u> been successful*

9) *I did <u>not</u> wish to give you this time but I understand the urgency*

10) *The assistance given to oyu*[6] *has <u>not</u> come with ease or without cost*

11) *I will <u>not</u> allow this extension again. You were lucky this time to be given more time.*

NOT is a negative word and its function is to negate a sentence, and therefore it connotes 'rejection'. In this case the speaker intended to reject thanking from the addressee and that seems the reason why s/he used NOT in his or her utterance consciously or subconsciously. A sentence that contains this negative word can give a 'negative impression' to the addressee and make him or her understand that his or her thanking was rejected or accepted rather negatively. In ELT, this use of NOT can be mentioned as one of the key words which express the sense of 'rejection' in thanking replies.

Next, BUT appeared 8 times in this group and can be regarded as another key expression in Formal/Polite replies to thanking. The following are the 8 utterances where BUT was used.

1) *Ok, <u>but</u> next time you do it.*

2) *No problem, thank you for applying, <u>but</u> on this occasion I'm afraid you have not been successful.*

3) *Thanks <u>but</u> no thanks, I do not like it*

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(6) This is thought to be misspelling of *you.*

4) *I do not mind today <u>but</u> do not make a habit of it*

5) *Okay <u>but</u> I wish it did not take this long to complete the process*

6) *Thank you, <u>but</u> I feel that is just a generic reply you give to people who have not been successful*

7) *That's OK, <u>but</u> you should plan your time better in the future*

8) *I did not wish to give you this time <u>but</u> I understand the urgency*

Oxford Dictionary of English (2005) explains that BUT is 'used to introduce a phrase or clause contrasting with what has already been mentioned'. Therefore, as can be observed in most of the examples above, except for the eighth example, the speaker first accepted the addressee's thanking and then said something contradictory to his or her acceptance. This word is conveying the meaning of 'rejection' of thanking like NO, which was mentioned earlier. In ELT, this use of BUT can also be mentioned as one of the key words which express the sense of 'rejection' in thanking replies.

As for TAKE, which appeared 3 times, I would like to present the following two examples.

1) *Okay but I wish it did not <u>take</u> this long to complete the process*

2) *If I'd known it would <u>take</u> this long I would have never agreed.*

Both of these are followed by the same phrase 'this long' and the speakers are complaining about the time spent for the tasks they had to take on. So, 'take this long' is a set phrase used in a complaint part in Formal/Polite replies to thanking. It is assumed that English learners can learn that the phrase 'take this long' can have a negative meaning in context and can be used to complain about the time spent for the sake of the addressee.

The word MORE, having appeared 3 times, was used twice by one informant to make a complaint as in the following example.

1) *No problem Anthony, although in the future we would ask that you plan*

more carefully and take more precaution.

This example shows that the speaker had frustration about what 'Anthony' did, and therefore it indicates that Anthony's thanking was partially rejected. This usage can be shown in ELT to teach students how to make a complaint about the addressee's past deed by talking about the necessity of future improvement with the word MORE.

Finally, I introduce how FUTURE was used by presenting the following two examples out of three.

1) *No problem Anthony, although in the future we would ask that you plan more carefully and take more precaution.*
2) *That's OK, but you should plan your time better in the future*

Note that the first example is the same as the one for MORE and I found another example where FUTURE was used in a similar way. They are similar in that it was accompanied by the words in the comparative form (i.e. MORE and BETTER). As can be seen, this word indicates that the speaker is not satisfied with the present situation and is demanding improvements in the future. This usage can also be taken up in ELT to teach learners how to make a 'mitigated complaint' by mentioning future action.

3.6 Negative replies to thanking (Casual/Friendly)

In this sixth category, I would like to explain how casual or friendly negative replies to thanking were performed regarding lexicogrammatical strategies, through inspection of the lexical items in the wordlist created by WordSmith 8.0.

Table 3.6 *The Wordlist of Negative Replies to Thanking (Casual/Friendly)*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	YOU	15	15	YOUR	3

2	IT	14	16	YEAH	3
3	I	11	17	WAS	3
4	ME	8	18	PROBLEM	3
5	DON'T	6	19	ONE	3
6	TO	5	20	OKAY	3
7	TIME	5	21	NOW	3
8	NEXT	5	22	NO	3
9	MY	5	23	IN	3
10	A	5	24	I'LL	3
11	THE	4	25	FOR	3
12	IT'S	4	26	BACK	3
13	IS	4	27	AND	3
14	BUT	4			

I have selected DON'T, NEXT, BUT, I'LL and BACK for detailed analysis after examining their uses in the database. I will also mention TIME as a word used with NEXT, and the following three words, OKAY (O.K.), PROBLEM and FINE as the ones used with BUT.

First, I would like to talk about how DON'T was used, analysing the following 6 examples.

1) *Don't thank me, my missus made me buy it for you*
2) *O.K., but don't expect us to buy all the drinks tonight like last time*
3) *I spent my whole paycheck on this! Don't go refunding it or breaking it. It cost a fortune!*
4) *Don't let me down. I'll need that back soon*
5) *Oh, it's nothing. Don't embarrass me*
6) *Don't mess about or I'll have it back dude*

An auxiliary DON'T, when used as the first word, is usually found in an imperative sentence prohibiting an action. Thus, it is a powerful word and

has strong impact on the addressee. It is noteworthy that this word was used in an outstanding way in casual or friendly negative replies to thanking, while the wordlist of formal or polite negative replies to thanking does not contain this word presumably because of its strong impact and less polite impression. In ELT, teachers can use these examples and explain to their students that they should take the formality of the situation into account carefully when using DON'T because of its strong force.

I now examine NEXT, which appeared 5 times, with the examples below.

1) It's your round _next_!
2) You owe me _next_ time
3) No problem but _next_ time I suggest we plan to go somewhere outside as my house is now a mess
4) Well maybe _next_ time you shouldn't leave it so late, to sort stuff out
5) It is fine but _next_ time you are buying

While this word appeared just once in the wordlist of Formal/Polite replies to thanking, it occurred five times in this category, which in my view is a rather striking difference. As I explained in the earlier section about the formal or polite negative replies to thanking, FUTURE was used to indicate the speaker's desire for future improvements and to complaint about what s/he worked on for the sake of the addressee. On the other hand, NEXT and NEXT TIME, which are thought to be more specific about the future time, are employed to present the speaker's request for future improvements or compensation in more direct ways. In ELT, students can learn that they can be more direct and persuasive in informal settings by using 'next time' than they can by using FUTURE.

BUT, which appeared 4 times in this category, behaved in a similar way to BUT in formal or polite replies to thanking as the following four examples show.

1) *I was being ironic sorry, it's okay <u>but</u> I suggest you keep working at it.*
2) *O.K., <u>but</u> don't expect us to buy all the drinks tonight like last time*
3) *No problem <u>but</u> next time I suggest we plan to go somewhere outside as my house is now a mess*
4) *It is fine <u>but</u> next time you are buying*

As can be seen, BUT is preceded by OKAY, O.K., NO PROBLEM and FINE, which all express 'acceptance'. As it is considered a polite way to reject the speaker's utterance with partial agreement, I think the speakers' 'friendly' intention was revealed with this partial agreement strategy. This partial agreement strategy can be mentioned in ELT classrooms to let students learn how to show politeness or friendliness in conversations when they need to show their disagreement or dissatisfaction in a moderate way.

Next, I will present how I'LL was used in this category with the three examples below.

1) *Don't let me down. <u>I'll</u> need that back soon*
2) *I actually think <u>I'll</u> take it back it cost a lot and I need the money for things. Sorry*
3) *Don't mess about or <u>I'll</u> have it back dude*

One can see that I'LL is an informal expression as it is a contract form of 'I will', which is showing colloquialism and therefore informality. It is important to notice that this expression indicates the speaker's intention to do something in the future. The phrase using this lexical item is thought to be persuasive as the speaker is clearly telling the addressee what s/he will do in the future. The expression I'LL can be included in an ELT material to explain how the speaker's intention can be expressed with the use of a modal auxiliary WILL. It should also be noted that I'LL in these cases is used to say something negative for the addressee.

Finally, I will talk about BACK, which appeared three times in this

group. All instances of this word were with I'LL above. The word BACK indicates that the addressee has borrowed something belonging to the speaker and s/he will get it back regardless of the addressee's thanking. Such phrases as 'need that back', 'take it back' and 'have it back' can be taught in ELT classrooms as the expressions that can be used when the speaker lends something to the addressee.

3.7 Thanking in role-plays

In this seventh category, I am going to discuss the lexicogrammatical strategies employed for thanking in role-plays. As I explained in the research design section, I requested the informants to act out thanking and thanking replies formally and/or politely in pairs. I will examine the strategies concerning the words and grammatical structures employed by the performers of thanking in role-plays in this section with the wordlist created by WordSmith 8.0.

Table 3.7 *The Wordlist of Thanking in Role-plays*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	FOR	22	13	TODAY	4
2	YOU	20	14	THIS	4
3	THANK	16	15	HAVE	4
4	ME	9	16	WAS	3
5	I	8	17	VERY	3
6	YOUR	7	18	THE	3
7	TO	7	19	THAT	3
8	MY	6	20	SO	3
9	MUCH	6	21	COMING	3
10	A	6	22	BIRTHDAY	3
11	THANKS	5	23	APPRECIATE	3
12	REALLY	5			

I have selected THANK, REALLY, HAVE, and APPRECIATE for

detailed analysis after examining their uses in the database. I will also mention YOU, VERY, SO, MUCH and FOR as the words used with THANK.

I first investigated how THANK was used and confirmed that it was used in a similar way to THANK in Formal/Polite thanking. This observation can be understood by the fact that the informants were instructed to engage in Formal/Polite thanking in their role-plays. THANK was linked with YOU, VERY, SO, MUCH and FOR in my analysis in quite similar ways to THANK in Formal/Polite thanking. It is recommended that the following expressions be taught as Formal/Polite thanking formulas in ELT classrooms.

- *Thank you for …*
- *Thank you very much for …*
- *Thank you so much for …*

Next, I would like to focus on REALLY, which appeared 5 times in this wordlist. This word was used in this category more frequently than in the Formal/Polite thanking wordlist, where it appeared only twice.

1) *Thanks for having us over for dinner the other night. We had a <u>really</u> great time.*
2) *Thank you for showing me the way, that was <u>really</u> helpful.*
3) *I <u>really</u> appreciated what you did for me yesterday, thank you so much!*
4) *Thank you sir, I <u>really</u> appreciate that.*
5) *Thank you for helping me move house, I <u>really</u> appreciate your help!*

This frequent use of REALLY is understandable because it is used to strengthen the meaning of a word, phrase, clause or sentence. Thanking is an FEA and therefore its politeness direction heads towards 'directness', 'clarity' and 'intensification' as mentioned earlier. In ELT, the use of such intensifiers can be taught to reinforce the force of FEAs such as thanking and apologising.

I also noticed that in two cases HAVE was used in a similar way in the following two examples.

1) *Thank you very much for all your hard work today. I couldn't <u>have</u> done this without you.*
2) *Thank you for dropping me to work today! I would <u>have</u> been late otherwise.*

In these cases HAVE was used as a primary auxiliary, followed by a past participle, and constituted the past-perfect subjunctive mood. The past-perfect subjunctive mood is used to state what could have happened in the past. With this expression the speaker is telling the addressee what trouble s/he could have had without the addressee's action for him or her. This use of the past-perfect subjunctive mood can be a good ELT material to teach students how to utilise this rather complex grammatical structure in everyday communication.

I examined how APPRECIATE was used in this category and confirmed that it was used in the same way as APPRECIATE in Formal/Polite thanking. Therefore, we can emphasize once again the effectiveness of the phrase 'I really appreciate it', an FEA with an intensifier, in formal or polite thanking in ELT.

3.8 Replies to thanking in role-plays

In this eighth category, I am going to specify the lexicogrammatical strategies employed for replies to thanking in role-plays. As I explained earlier, the informants in this research project were requested to act out thanking and thanking replies formally and/or politely in pairs. I will examine the strategies of words and grammar employed by the performers of thanking replies with the wordlist created by WordSmith 8.0.

Table 3.8 *The Wordlist of Replies to Thanking in Role-plays*

N	Word	Freq.	N	Word	Freq.
1	I	10	14	I'M	5
2	YOU	9	15	PROBLEM	4
3	TO	9	16	ME	4
4	WAS	8	17	IT'S	4
5	IT	8	18	HELP	4
6	WELCOME	7	19	GLAD	4
7	PLEASURE	7	20	THE	3
8	YOU'RE	6	21	MUCH	3
9	VERY	6	22	GOOD	3
10	A	6	23	FOR	3
11	THANK	5	24	COULD	3
12	NO	5	25	AGAIN	3
13	MY	5			

This wordlist is fairly similar to that of Formal/Polite positive replies to thanking. This is mainly due to the fact that the informants were requested to perform Formal/Polite replies to thanking in their role-plays.

I have selected HELP and GLAD for detailed analysis after examining their uses in the database.

First, I discuss how HELP, which appeared 4 times, was used in the following examples.

1) *You're welcome, any time I can <u>help</u>.*
2) *Oh thank you, I'm happy to <u>help</u>. Good luck at the interview, I'm sure you'll be great!*
3) *No problem at all, I was happy to <u>help</u>.*
4) *You're welcome. I'm glad I could <u>help</u>!*

These utterances are showing that the speaker is glad that his or her 'help' was of use to the addressee. We can see that anyone's help is rewarded

with thanking from the one who was helped. In ELT we can show that in many cases people thank someone for his or her help, and therefore the word HELP can be treated as one of the key words.

GLAD was also used 4 times in this category as in the following examples.

1) *We were so <u>glad</u> you could make it.*
2) *You're welcome very much, I'm <u>glad</u> I could be of assistance.*
3) *You're welcome. I'm <u>glad</u> I could help!*
4) *I thought she might! You're very welcome! I'm <u>glad</u>!*

As can be seen from these examples, GLAD was used to show the speaker's delight or satisfaction after learning that his or her action successfully assisted the addressee for his or her benefit. As I have claimed so far, thanking is an FEA and I have observed that it is in many cases accepted with the expressions of delight or satisfaction. Indeed, in ELT we can show that 'benefit' is exchanged between the speaker and the addressee in such face-enhancing acts as thanking and the positive replies to it.

It should be noted that none of the informants replied negatively in this category, and this fact is suggesting that people usually react to thanking with positive replies in formal or polite settings.

4. A summary of findings and a tentative conclusion

In this study, I have sketched out the lexicogrammatical strategies for thanking and thanking replies employed by the informants living in or near London and what we could incorporate in ELT for better communication management. The uniqueness of this study is that the informants provided eight different utterances concerning thanking and thanking replies, namely, (1) Formal/Polite Thanking, (2) Casual/Friendly Thanking, (3) Formal/Polite Positive Replies to Thanking, (4) Casual/Friendly Positive Replies to Thanking, (5) Formal/Polite Negative Replies to Thanking, (6) Casual/Friendly Negative

Replies to Thanking, (7) Formal/Polite Thanking in Video Role-plays and (8) Formal/Polite Replies to Thanking in Video Role-plays. From the research results, I would like to summarise in the Tables 4.1 and 4.2 what expressions could be incorporated in ELT for the purpose of teaching how to manage thanking and thanking replies in the London area in natural and appropriate ways, controlling the levels of politeness. Note that (7) and (8) are omitted as they can be subsumed into (1), (3) and (5).

Table 4.1 *Selected expressions for Formal/Polite thanking and replies to it*

1-1. Formal/Polite Thanking
- *Thank you very much for ...*
- *I really appreciate it.*
1-2. Formal/Polite Positive Replies to Thanking
- *You're very welcome.*
- *No problem.*
- *It was a pleasure.*
1-3. Formal/Polite Negative Replies to Thanking
- *That's okay, but ... more ... in the future.*
- *Do not make a habit of it.*
- *I wish it did not take this long to ...*

Table 4.2 *Selected expressions for Casual/Friendly thanking and replies to it*

2-1. Casual/Friendly Thanking
- *Thanks for ...*
- *Cheers, mate.*
2-2. Casual/Friendly Positive Replies to Thanking
- *No worries.*
- *That's okay.*
2-3. Casual/Friendly Negative Replies to Thanking
- *O.K., but don't expect me/us to ...*
- *It is fine, but ... next time.*
- *I'll need that back soon.*

Learning these expressions could enable English learners to speak appropriately regarding thanking and thanking replies in the London area. It is necessary for those engaged in ELT to teach these commonly used expressions for thanking and thanking replies in order to cultivate learners' pragmatic competence for better communication management in English.

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