

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF 'FACE'
ACHIEVING AND EVALUATING DURING
VIVAS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN UNIVERSITIES**

SALAM MOHAMMED KARIM

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2021

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF 'FACE'
ACHIEVING AND EVALUATING DURING
VIVAS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN UNIVERSITIES**

by

SALAM MOHAMMED KARIM

**Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2021

DEDICATION

To my late father and my mother

To my family

With love and respect

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to highly praise Almighty Allah for bestowing His grace on me. He gave me health, patience, ambition and strength to accomplish this work.

I am also profoundly indebted to my supervisor, Dr Raja Rozina for her guidance and advice throughout my work on this thesis. Without her invaluable supervision and her abundantly constructive suggestions, this study would not have taken its final shape.

My warmest thanks are also due to my colleagues at English departments in Iraqi Kurdistan universities for granting me their viva videotapes and providing me with their invaluable views about viva sessions. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my close colleague, Dr Hamza Othman Muho for pursuing my career, collecting data for my research, and providing continuous encouragement.

I am also enormously grateful to my family in particular my dear wife for their continuous encouragement and prayers throughout my study and life. I cannot find any words that can express my thanks to them. I would like also to thank my beloved brothers for their support and help. My sincere thanks are also extended to my devoted father-in-law for his support and prayers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF APPENDICES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xii
ABSTRAK	x
ABSTACT	xii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 Background to the study.....	1
1.1 Viva sessions.....	3
1.1.1 Viva sessions in the world.....	4
1.1.2 Viva sessions in Iraqi Kurdistan universities.....	5
1.1.3 Power relations in vivas.....	7
1.1.4 Kurdish and Arabic communities.....	8
1.1.4(a) Kurdish community.....	8
1.1.4(b) Arabic community.....	10
1.2 Statement of the problem.	11
1.3 Research objectives.....	14
1.4 Research questions.....	15
1.5 Significance of the study.....	15
1.6 The scope of this study.....	16
1.7 Definition of terms.....	17
1.8 Thesis organization.....	19
CHAPTER 2	20
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	20
2.0 Introduction.....	20
2.1 Concepts of face.....	20
2.1 Kurdish and Arabic culture-specific construals of relational connection and separation.....	33
2.3 Speech act theory	36

2.4	Conversational analysis	38
2.5	Review of related literature	42
2.5.1	Previous studies about face in vivas	42
2.5.2	Previous studies about face elsewhere than in vivas	46
2.5.3	Previous studies about politeness in vivas and elsewhere	49
2.5.4	Previous studies about modalities in vivas	50
2.5.5	The current study.....	51
2.6	Theoretical framework.....	52
	CHAPTER 3.....	55
	METHODOLOGY.....	55
3.0	Introduction.....	54
3.1	Research design.....	54
3.2	Data collection.....	54
3.2.1	Email preliminary interviews.....	54
3.2.2	Video-recorded viva sessions.....	54
3.3	Participants.....	61
3.4	Research procedure.....	62
3.4.1	Selecting episodes.....	63
3.4.2	Identifying speech acts, linguistic and paralinguistic features, power relations	65
3.4.3	Identifying the degree of relational connection and separation....	66
3.4.4	Using the Kurdish and Arabic culture-specific construals of face.	66
3.4.5	Identifying face interpretations: projected/interpreted face, evolving face and contextual face.....	67
3.5	Procedure of analysis.....	68
3.6	Conclusion.....	71
	CHAPTER 4.....	72
	RESULTS AND FINDINGS.....	72
4.0	Introduction.....	73
4.1	Instances of relational connection and separation and their understanding within the Kurdish and Arabic conceptualisations of Face in interactions.....	73
4.1.1	Instances of relational connection and separation and their	

understanding within the Kurdish and Arabic	
conceptualisations of face in examiner-candidate interactions.....	73
4.1.2 Instances of relational connection and separation and their	
understanding within the Kurdish and Arabic	
conceptualisations of face in examiner-supervisor interactions.....	156
4.1.3 Instances of relational connection and separation and their	
understanding within the Kurdish and Arabic	
conceptualisations of face in examiner-examiner interactions.....	174
4.2 Evaluating of face (relational connection and separation) in the	
interactions analysed.....	180
4.2.1 Evaluating of Face in Episode 1 (Documentation).....	180
4.2.2 Evaluating of Face in Episode 2 (The Arabic Genitive Case)	182
4.2.3 Evaluating of Face in Episode 3 (No literature in the Thesis)....	183
4.2.4 Evaluating of Face in Episode 4 (Ash).....	184
4.2.5 Evaluating of Face in Episode 5 (Male and Female Definitions).	186
4.2.6 Evaluating of Face in Episode 6 (Pragmatics and Translation)....	188
4.2.7 Evaluating of Face in Episode 7 (Paraphrase).....	189
4.2.8 Evaluating of Face in Episode 8 (Assimilation).....	191
4.2.9 Evaluating of Face in Episode 9 (Documentation Argument).....	193
4.2.10 Evaluating of Face in Episode 10 (The Genitive Case Argument)	194
4.2.11 Evaluating of Face in Episode 11 (Et al).....	196
4.2.12 Evaluating of Face in Episode 12 (The Ash Argument).....	197
4.3 Conclusion.....	198
CHAPTER 5.....	200
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	200
5.0 Introduction.....	200
5.1 Discussion and conclusion in relation to research question one.....	201
5.2 Discussion and conclusion in relation to research question two.....	207
5.3 Discussion and conclusion in relation to research question three.....	210
5.4 Contributions of the present study.....	217
5.5 Suggestions for future research.....	219
5.6 Conclusion	220
REFERENCES.....	223

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 3.1	The number of PhD candidates enrolled from 2004-2014 in Salahaddin, Slemani, Koya, and Garmian universities and the number of videotapes the researcher collected.	59
Table 3.2	The transcription conventions developed by Jefferson.	60
Table 3.3	Procedures followed to analyse face in vivas held in Iraqi Kurdistan universities from 2004 to 2014.	62
Table 3.4	The identification of the face interpretations.	68
Table 4.1	Findings of the analysis of Episode 1.	88
Table 4.2	Findings of the analysis of Episode 2.	100
Table 4.3	Findings of the analysis of Episode 3.	111
Table 4.4	Findings of the analysis of Episode 4.	122
Table 4.5	Findings of the analysis of Episode 5.	136
Table 4.6	Findings of the analysis of Episode 6.	142
Table 4.7	Findings of the analysis of Episode 7.	149
Table 4.8	Findings of the analysis of Episode 8.	155
Table 4.9	Findings of the analysis of Episode 9.	160
Table 4.10	Findings of the analysis of Episode 10.	166
Table 4.11	Findings of the analysis of Episode 11.	174
Table 4.12	Findings of the analysis of Episode 12.	179
Table 5.1	Speech acts and linguistic features.	203
Table 5.2	Evolving face in the process of face evaluating.	214
Table 5.3	Contextual face in the process of face evaluating.	215
Table 5.4	Proffered shift in the process of face evaluating.	216
Table 5.5	Situated shift in the process of face evaluating.	216

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 2.1	The theoretical framework of the research.	53
Figure 3.1	The analysis procedure of this research.	71
Figure 4.1	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	181
Figure 4.2	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	183
Figure 4.3	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	184
Figure 4.4	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	186
Figure 4.5	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	188
Figure 4.6	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	189
Figure 4.7	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	191
Figure 4.8	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	192
Figure 4.9	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	194
Figure 4.10	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	195
Figure 4.11	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	197
Figure 4.12	The evaluating of the constituted relational connection and separation as threatening to participants' relationship.	198

LIST OF APPENDICES

	Page
Appendix 1 Email Preliminary consent form.	231
Appendix 2 Email Preliminary protocol form.	234
Appendix 3 Consent form for Granting a Viva Video-tape.	236

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Conversational analysis
FC	Female candidate CSO
FCT	Face constituting theory
FMEX	Female examiner
MC	Male candidate
MEX	Male examiner
MS	Male supervisor

**ANALISIS PRAGMATIK MENGENAI PENCAPAIAN DAN PENILAIAN
'AIR MUKA' SEMASA VIVA DI UNIVERSITI KURDISTAN IRAQ**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis interaksi bercanggah dalam kalangan peserta semasa sesi viva di universiti-universiti di Kurdistan Iraq untuk mengkaji konsep air muka sebagai penyambungan dan pemisahan hubungan, dapat dicapai, dan difahami dalam skop pemahaman air muka mengikut budaya Kurd dan Arab serta dinilai sebagai ancaman terhadap hubungan peserta. Kajian ini penting kerana terdapat penggunaan melampau kritikan negatif, perselisihan, dan soalan-soalan yang mencabar semasa sesi viva di universiti-universiti di Kurdistan Iraq yang boleh memberikan kesan negatif terhadap hubungan calon dan menyebabkan ancaman terhadap mereka. Untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai masalah ini, analisis pragmatik digunakan untuk menganalisa data. Kajian ini juga penting kerana terdapat keperluan untuk mengenal pasti cara komuniti Kurd dan Arab mentafsir air muka dengan menggunakan kajian etnografi sedia ada yang mengambil kira corak (iaitu kerjasama, persaingan dll) dalam interaksi hubungan sosial seharian. Analisis pragmatik menggunakan kaedah kualitatif untuk mengenalpasti maksud dan tindakan yang terlaksana secara berkaitan dan berinteraksi serta pelaksanaan air muka (hubungan dan pemisahan) dan juga meneliti ciri-ciri paralinguistik dan perkaitan kuasa. Analisis pragmatik dilaksanakan dengan menggunakan Teori Pembentukan Air Muka Arundale (2010) dan Model Gabungan Komunikasi Insan berdasarkan Analisis Perbualan. Dalam kajian ini, penyelidik mengenal pasti lakuan bahasa yang digunakan oleh peserta viva dalam giliran masing-masing untuk pendengar mereka, ciri-ciri linguistik dalam menyampaikan lakuan bahasa serta ciri- ciri paralinguistik. Penyelidik kemudiannya menganalisis bagaimana penyambungan dan pemisahan

hubungan yang terbentuk difahami dalam skop pemahaman air muka mengikut budaya Kurd dan Arab. Penyelidik akhirnya meneliti bagaimana penyambungan dan pemisahan hubungan yang terbentuk dinilai. Dapatan kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa air muka yang terlaksana melibatkan pemisahan yang tinggi dan sedikit penyambungan serta kebanyakan peserta kebiasaannya menggunakan kritikan, perselisihan, dan soalan-soalan yang mencabar. Dapatan kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa penyambungan dan pemisahan hubungan yang terbentuk yang difahami dalam skop pemahaman air muka mengikut budaya Kurd dan Arab masing-masing ialah perbezaan dan kesepakatan serta perbezaan dan keharmonian. Dapatan kajian ini juga menunjukkan bagaimana air muka yang terbentuk dinilai sebagai ancaman terhadap hubungan peserta. Kajian ini penting kerana ia akan membantu peserta viva untuk menjaga hubungan antara individu bagi memastikan proses sesi viva berjalan dengan lebih licin. Ia akan membantu mereka untuk berkomunikasi dengan lebih pragmatik secara sosial dalam interaksi akademik dan membina hubungan yang tidak begitu tegang sesama mereka.

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF ‘FACE’ ACHIEVING AND EVALUATING DURING VIVAS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN UNIVERSITIES

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyse interactions between participants during vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities in order to find out how face, conceptualised as relational connection and separation, is achieved, understood within the Kurdish and Arabic culture- specific construals of face, and evaluated as a threat to the participants’ relationships. This study is important as there is an excessive use of negative acts of criticisms, disagreements, and challenging questions during vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities that may negatively affect the participants’ relationships and cause a threat to them. In order to have a better understanding of this problem, a pragmatic analysis is used to examine the data. The present work is also important to be conducted as there is a need to identify the way people in Kurdish and Arabic cultural communities interpret face by employing existing ethnographic research in identifying patterns (i.e. cooperation, competition etc.) in social relationships in everyday interaction. The pragmatic analysis employed a qualitative method to examine meanings and actions that are relationally and interactionally achieved along with the achieving of face (connection and separation) in addition to an examination of (para) linguistic features and power relations. The pragmatic analysis is done by employing Arundale’s Face Constituting Theory (2010) and the Conjoint Model of Human Communication grounded in Conversation Analysis. In this study, the researcher first identifies the speech acts that viva participants use in designing turns for their recipients, the linguistic features that encode these acts, and the paralinguistic features. The researcher then analyses how the constituted relational connection and separation is understood within the Kurdish and Arabic culture-specific construals of face. The

researcher finally examines how the constituted relational connection and separation is evaluated. The findings of this study revealed that the achieved face involves high separation and low connection and the participants most frequently used acts of criticising, disagreeing, and challenging questions. The findings of the study also demonstrate that the constituted relational connection and separation understood within the Kurdish and Arabic culture-specific construals of face are differentiation and unity and distinction and harmony respectively. The findings also show how the constituted face is evaluated as a threat to the participants' relationships. The present work is significant as it will help viva participants to better maintain interpersonal relationships in order for the process of viva sessions to take place more smoothly. It will help them to be more socio-pragmatically communicative in academic interactions and build less tense relationships between them.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Face has become an important concept in many fields like pragmatics, sociolinguistics, psychology, etc. and it was first introduced into academic discourse by Goffman (1955) who defined it as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p. 213). Goffman required participants in social interactions to consider both the needs of their own face and the needs of the faces of others.

Brown and Levinson (1987) applied Goffman’s concept of face into the context of politeness theory which was based on individual wants. Face is assumed to be universal and of two types: negative face, or the desire to have autonomy of action, and positive face, or the desire for closeness with others. This theory attracted the attention of many researchers because of the cross-cultural validity of its politeness strategies and the claim that linguistic strategies for conveying politeness are universal (Stranzy, 2005). However, it came under numerous criticisms. The criticisms centred on its inapplicability in non-western cultures since there are basic differences between Asian and European cultures. In other words, in the east the desire for harmony and the good of the group outweighs the individualism which characterises Western societies.

As a result, Bargiela-Chiapini (2003) revisited Goffman’s notion of face in the study of social interaction. She argued that Goffman explored ways in which individuals relate to and present themselves in social interaction. Nevertheless, Goffman’s conceptualisation of face was criticised for being intended to examine interaction in North American contexts and developed from a view of independent social actors

(Bargiela-Chiapini, 2003, p.1463). This led to a call for a closer examination of interactional aspects of face. That is, how face arises through interaction as a joint understanding of participants (Arundale, 2006). One attempt to account for face understood interactionally is Arundale's Face Constituting Theory which conceptualises face as "in terms of the relationship two or more persons create with one another in interaction" (Arundale, 2010, p.2086). In this interactional approach, face is separated from politeness (Arundale, 2009, 2010) and it is suggested to be studied distinctly from im/politeness in its own right (Haugh, 2013).

Arundale (2010) defines face as relational connection and separation from a culture-general viewpoint. However, he (2010, p. 2089) states that "each cultural group or community of practice 'voices' or displays this fundamental relational dialectic in ways that are specific to that community, and identifying that construal is one important step in understanding its first order, culture-specific, emic conceptualization of face".

Among the activities and work done at universities and colleges is the viva. In vivas, participants' face is threatened and their relationships are negatively influenced by the negative evaluation of the thesis expressed by negative conversational acts of criticisms and disagreements and may lead to conflict (Izadi, 2012). This problem is found in vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. Therefore, the current study aims to explore how face is achieved and evaluated in PhD vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. The study draws on Face Constituting Theory (2010) which conceptualises face as a relationship two or more people create in interaction.

1.1 Viva sessions

This section explores the definition of a viva, its characteristics, and its forms in different countries of the world. It also sheds light on the structure of vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities which are the research site of the current study.

According to Baldacchino (1995), (as cited in Murray, 2009, p.17), the term viva is an abbreviation which stands for ‘viva voce’ which means an oral examination. Murray (2009) considers the viva to be “the defining element of doctorate research where the research, the thesis, and the student are finally assessed” (p.16). However, according to Universities’ and Colleges’ Staff Development Agency [UCoSDA] (1993), (as cited in Murray, 2009, p.17), the most important objective of evaluating the thesis is to decide on the competence of the candidate “as an independent researcher in the discipline”. Baldacchino (1995) (as cited in Murray, 2009, p.17) adds that the viva also involves a defence of a thesis.

As far as the distinct characteristics of vivas are concerned, Cook-Gumpers and Gumpers (1994) (as cited in Don and Izadi, 2011), refer to the pre-allocation of turns, pre-imbalance of power relations between the candidate and examiner(s), and the shifting of power between the examiner (s) and supervisor (as cited in Don and Izadi, 2011). Participants in a viva have preassigned roles, rights, and obligations. The examiner plays the role of evaluating the thesis, the candidate the role of defending, and the supervisor the role of supporting the candidate (Don and Izadi, 2011). According to Grimshaw ((1989), (as cited in Don and Izadi, 2011: p. 3784), vivas involve levels of formalities and informalities. They are formal due to “institutional constraints, being goal-oriented and the seriousness of business at hand” and informal due to “the nature of interpersonal relationships among participants”. As a viva has an evaluative nature, it involves a large number of face sensitive speech acts. These

negative acts include criticisms and their responses and disagreements and their responses that can negatively affect the relationship between the participants.

1.1.1 Viva sessions in the world

A viva can take different forms (Swales, 2004) and differs from culture to culture (Swift, 1997). For example, in Great Britain, and in countries where the British academic traditions are followed, the viva takes place in a closed room and is organized by an external examiner and an internal examiner. A senior academic from the host university is also present in order to play the chair's role and make certain that no long and complicated arguments are ensued and unfriendly behaviour is provoked. The supervisors may attend the viva, but they are not allowed to say anything. The external examiner has a good deal of power like deciding on resubmission or qualifying for a lesser degree. In British vivas, no audience attends (Swales, 2004). Nevertheless, the viva takes a different form in Scandinavia. It takes place in a large room with the presence of an audience of as many as fifty people, a senior official from the university to preside the viva, the chair, the examiners, and the candidate. Everybody must be dressed up in traditional clothes. The seats are arranged in the same way as in a court (Swales, 2004).

In America, a viva takes yet a different form. It usually lasts two hours. Outsiders like other interested faculty, friends, and family of the candidate attend the viva. The committee members usually comprise a candidate, the candidate's chair or advisor, extra faculty members from the candidate's department in addition to one or more faculty members from other departments (Swales, 2004).

As far as the viva in Iran is concerned, it is quite similar to that in America. It is an open oral examination and often lasts for two hours. The viva is attended by an

audience comprising the candidate's supervisory committee, dean/head of the department, a representative from graduate studies institute of the university, internal and external examiners, other interested students and even the candidate's friends and family members (Izadi,2012).

1.1.2 Viva sessions in Iraqi Kurdistan Universities

A viva in Iraqi Kurdistan universities is quite similar to that in America and Iran in terms of the audience attending, though there are some differences with respect to the committee members and the time of the event. A viva in Iraqi Kurdistan universities is also an open ceremony held in a large hall and attended by an audience including dean/head of the department, other interested staff members, students and even the candidate's friends and family members. The viva takes about three hours and a half. The committee members comprise the chair (who is also one of the examiners), the examiners (external and internal) of which the number is five, and the supervisor.

Like in other universities in other parts of Iraq and in Iran, vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities consist of six stages:

1. Introduction
2. Candidate's presentation
3. Question and Answer
4. Evaluation
5. Result Announcement
6. Celebration

1. Introduction

At this stage, the session chair (who is also one of the examiners) opens the session. He/she gives an introduction about the viva. He/she refers to the title of the thesis, the

candidate, and the supervisor. The session chair also reads out the names of the committee members including the examiners (including themselves), and the supervisor, and their scientific titles. Then he/she asks the supervisor to introduce the candidate by reading out his/her CV. This stage takes up to 10 minutes.

2. Candidate's Presentation

At this stage, the chair asks the candidate to introduce his/her thesis (by reading out the abstract of his/her thesis) to the audience and the committee. The candidate sits at a table located in the front corner of the hall and on which a microphone and a laptop are set down. There also exists a screen for the presentation. In some of the vivas which the current study employs as data, these facilities are not available and so the candidates just read out the abstract from the thesis. This stage takes up to 10 minutes.

3. Question and Answer

After the candidate has completed his/her presentation, the chair invites each committee member who sits at a long table in the front of the hall and faces the audience to examine the candidate in successive rounds of question and answer. The chair mentions to each committee member excluding the supervisor the time given to them which is 45 minutes. Afterwards, the chair asks the supervisor to make a response to the comments addressed. The supervisor's response takes from 5 to 15 minutes.

4. Evaluation

At this stage, the chair asks the candidate and the audience to leave the hall in order to allow the committee, which includes the chair and the internal and external examiners to evaluate the thesis. This stage takes about 5 to 10 minutes. The committee members communicate in Arabic as most of them are usually Arabs who come from universities in other parts of Iraq or who work in Iraqi Kurdistan universities.

5. Result Announcement

After the committee makes a decision on the final result of the thesis, the chair invites the candidate and audience to return to the hall. The chair announces the result in Kurdish if they are Kurdish. However, if the chair is an Arab, then a Kurdish committee member is asked to make the announcement on behalf of them. When the result is announced, all including committee members must stand up. Afterwards, the chair concludes the session. When the result is heard, the audience (and sometimes the committee members) applaud.

6. Celebration

At this stage, the committee and audience congratulate the candidate. Then the candidate advances towards the committee members. He/she shakes hands and takes memorial pictures with them. Afterwards, sweet and drinks are served.

1.1.3 Power relations in vivas

In discourse, Thornborrow (2002) defines power in discourse as “a contextually sensitive phenomenon, as a set of resources and actions which are available to speakers and which can be used more or less successfully depending on who the speakers are and what kind of speech situation they are in” (p.8). Thornborrow (2002) adds that “power can be accomplished in discourse both on a structural level, through the turn and type of space speakers are given and can get access to, and, on an interactional level, through what they can accomplish in that space” (p.8).

Power relationship between the participants in vivas is a very instrumental parameter in affording separation and connection (Izadi, 2012, p.275). For example, some examiners may employ their pre-established power in disruptively extending serious aggravated criticisms and accusations. This exercise of power has a considerable

impact on the examiners' projecting extreme separation with candidates who in turn will interpret the same degree of separation (Izadi, 2012, p.275).

Participants in vivas also consider the power relationship when designing turns for their recipients. Examiners, for example, frame their turns for the candidates and project that they represent the institution and are in a higher position than the candidates. However, candidates design their turns for the examiners and project that they are in a lower position compared to the examiners (Izadi, 2012, p.275). Examiners here use 'the structural level' of power they are pre-given. They can "question, criticize, call into mistakes, take up long turns and initiate the sequences of talk, choose and change the topic among many other conversational activities" (Izadi, 2012, p.276).

The 'interactional level' of power plays an important role in developing interactions between supervisors and examiners. For example, supervisors can defend candidates and their work by "high expertise knowledge, international reputation, good communication skills" such as their "ability to persuade and influence others, and mastery of English language" (Izadi, 2012, p.278).

1.1.4 Kurdish and Arabic Communities

Participants in vivas held in Iraqi Kurdistan universities are Kurds and Arabs. Kurds and Arabs constitute the two main communities in Iraq. There are similarities and differences between them. In the subsections to follow more details are given about these two communities.

1.1.4(a) Kurdish Community

The Kurdish people are an ethnic group whose origins are in the Middle East. Most of them live in a contiguous area spanning adjacent parts of eastern and south-

eastern Turkey (Northern Kurdistan), western Iran (Eastern or Iranian Kurdistan), northern Iraq (Southern or Iraqi Kurdistan), and northern Syria (Western Kurdistan). The Kurdish language belongs to the Iranian language group and is rooted in the Indo-European family of languages (Aziz, 2011). There are four main dialects of the Kurdish language: Kurmanci, Sorani, Hawrami, and Kirmashani (Hassanpor, 1992). The vast majority of Kurds are bilingual, speaking both Kurdish and the language of their states' administrative language.

Kurdish culture is a legacy from the various ancient peoples who have shaped modern Kurds and their society. A high degree of mutual influences between the Kurds and their neighbouring peoples are apparent. Therefore, in Kurdish culture elements of various other cultures can be seen. "Kurdish culture is a communal culture, in which the interest of a community is more important than that of an individual. Disagreements between people may lead to excluding an individual from the community" (Saarinen, n.d., p.3).

The number of Kurds around the world amounts to 30 million. Kurds constitute approximately 17% of Iraq's population. They are the majority in at least three provinces in northern Iraq which together are known as Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurds also inhabit in Kirkuk, Mosul, Khanaqin, and Baghdad. Iraqi Kurdistan is an autonomous region in northern Iraq, covering 40,643 square kilometres (15,692 Sq. m).

Regarding religion, most of the Kurds follow Islam. The rest of the Kurds are either Izidis whose number amounts to tens of thousands of adherents, Christians of different churches, such as Syrian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Assyrian Church of the East, Armenian and Catholic Chaldean, or Kakais who are Shia Kurds and practise their religion freely and promote inter-faith tolerance.

After political changes in Iraq in 1990, Kurdish people formed a semi-independent region and established the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Government. The legality of laws and regulations of this government was recognized in the new Iraqi constitution in 2005.

1.1.4(b) Arabic Community

Arabs primarily inhabit Western Asia, North Africa, and parts of the Horn of Africa and East Africa. Today, Arabic is spoken in a wide area stretching across Western Asia, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa (“Arabs,” 2014). The Arabic language belongs to the Semitic branch of the Afro-asiatic family. The literary language, called Modern Standard Arabic or Literary Arabic, is the only official form of Arabic. It is used in most written documents as well as in formal spoken occasions, such as lectures and news broadcasts. However, it is not used in daily speech by the large majority of Arabs. While various varieties of Arabic are spoken as vernaculars by each distinct Arab group, they are often regarded as dialects rather than independent languages.

In Iraq, Arabs constitute around 79 percent of the population, and Kurds around 17 percent in addition to some minorities. Iraqis are a people making up the Arabs, the Kurds, and some other ethnic groups. They are natives of Iraq. With an ancient civic culture and tradition of multilingualism, those natives of Iraq have historically engaged in healthy inter-communal relations, and favoured a common identity (Marr, 2012).

The majority of Arabs have adopted a traditional collectivistic way of life. The family is the primary social unit and the identity of the individual is derived from the family and family interests take priority over individual (Dwairy, 1998).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The intent of this study is to examine how face conceptualized as “the relationship two or more persons create with one another in interaction” (Arundale, 2010, p.2078) is achieved from the culture-general and culture-specific viewpoints between participants in viva discussions in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. The intent of this study is also to examine how face is evaluated between participants in viva discussions in Iraqi Kurdistan universities.

Vivas are regarded as institutional talk (Drew and Heritage, 1992) since they function as an oral examination where the strong and weak points of a thesis are reviewed. Vivas are also places where interactants maintain and consolidate their interpersonal and professional roles and relationships (Swales, 2004). However, the relational phenomenon of face in vivas sometimes contradicts the institutional goals of the speakers. Therefore, a good deal of negative evaluation, disagreement, criticism, and questions that characterise a viva may negatively influence the interpersonal relationship between the participants and so this relationship might be negatively impacted and may lead to conflict (Izadi, 2012).

In vivas held in English departments in Iraqi Kurdistan universities, relationships between the participants, particularly between examiners and candidates, sometimes grow worse owing to the excessive use of criticisms, disagreements, questions and non-compliant responses that cause face threat. Preliminary interviews with twelve stakeholders from the four Iraqi Kurdistan universities: Salahaddin, Koya, Slemani, and Garmian were conducted by email. By following a code of ethics, the interviewees were sent a consent form (see Appendix 1) to display their consent to participate in the interview and a protocol form (see Appendix 2) which contained a few questions about viva sessions in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. The aim of the interviews was to find out

to what extent the problem of face threat and tense relationships between viva participants existed in Iraqi Kurdistan universities.

The stakeholders who worked at university for a period between eight to forty years and participated in many vivas either as examiners, supervisors, or candidates revealed that some examiners were provocative by the tone of their voice or the questions they raised. The stakeholders also revealed that the examiners sometimes used sharp criticisms levelled against the candidates for the existence of a problem in their theses and challenging questions that questioned the knowledge competence of the candidates and led to face threat and tense relationships between the participants. The stakeholders interviewed indicated that the tense relationships created by some participants, in particular examiners, had negative consequences on the process of viva discussions and the participants, in particular candidates. The discussions became unacademic. Regarding candidates, the tense relationships may affect their psychology. They may get confused and unable to answer questions properly and explain things clearly. Candidates may become more defensive and provoke disagreements. Consequently, examiners may level aggressive criticisms against them and become less objective. The tense relationships may also affect the final results of the thesis. The candidates may be judged unjustly and get lower marks.

In response to the problem of face threat and tense relationships, participants need to orient to soften their negatively-loaded conversational actions to reduce the face threat made against other participants and as such maintain their interpersonal relationships. The research problem in this study is a practical research problem because it comes from an issue or concern found in university vivas as university (Creswell, 2012) stakeholders have not yet identified good and workable solutions for such a problem. Therefore, there is a need to better understand how face understood as relationships

between the participants is achieved and evaluated as a threat during vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. The aim of this study will be to address this practical problem.

This problem is important to be studied as face has been addressed by several studies which have focused on four main settings. Some studies examined some of the oral aspects of academic discourse like classroom lectures or university seminars (Weissberg, 1993; Flowerdue, 1994; Bamford, 2000) and teacher-student counselling interactions (He, 1993; Limberg, 2007). Other studies explored dissertation defence settings (Swales, 2004; Recski, 2005; Izadi, 2013a; Izadi, 2013b). Another group of studies examined face in settings other than vivas (Haugh & Watanabe, 2009; Haugh, 2010; Chang & Haugh, 2011; Chang, 2013). In these studies, face achieving and evaluating are dealt with in terms of Face Constitution Theory. However, only few studies (Don and Izadi, 2011; Izadi, 2012; Don and Izadi, 2013) investigated face achieving and evaluating in vivas in terms of Face Constitution Theory. In these studies, face is examined during vivas held in Iranian universities.

Izadi (2012) suggested that further research should be conducted on face in vivas in different languages and cultures. To the best knowledge of the researcher, no research has ever examined face between participants in vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. Creswell (2012) states that “deficiencies in past literature may exist because topics may not have been explored with a particular group, sample, or population” (p.106). Therefore, the need arises to overcome this deficiency.

Another reason that justifies conducting the current study is to contribute to Face Constituting Theory. Arundale (2009) defines the concept of face as the dialectic of relational connection and separation which involves two phenomena that each negates the other, but that are “unified because they function independently in an on-going, dynamic, and interactive manner” (Arundale, 2010, p.2085). Connection can be

interpreted as “unity, interdependence, solidarity, association, congruence, and more” whereas separation as “differentiation, independence, autonomy, dissociation, divergence and so on”. The dialectic of connection and separation is relatively general from a culture viewpoint and it is interpreted differently in different cultures. However, it can be filled out with culture specific interpreting (Arundale, 2006, p.204). Therefore, Arundale (2006, p.205) makes it necessary for researchers who examine face in any particular language, cultural, or social group, to conduct or use ethnographic studies to identify how persons in that group interpret the dialectic of connection and separation.

The current study aims to study face in vivas in Iraqi Kurdistan universities and draws on Face Constituting Theory. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, the Kurdish and Arabic dialectics of connection and separation have not been identified. Therefore, the researcher will use ethnographic studies in order to identify how persons in that group interpret the dialectic of connection and separation.

1.3 Research objectives

The objectives that this study aims to attain are as follows:

- 1- To examine how the dialectic of relational connection and separation is constituted in viva interactions in English departments in selected Iraqi Kurdistan universities.
- 2- To investigate how the constituted dialectic of relational connection and separation is understood within the Kurdish and Arabic conceptualizations of face in viva interactions in English departments in selected Iraqi Kurdistan universities.

- 3- To identify how the constituted dialectic of relational connection and separation is evaluated in viva interactions in English departments in selected Iraqi Kurdistan universities.

1.4 Research questions

The questions that this study addresses are as follows:

- 1- How is the dialectic of relational connection and separation constituted in viva interactions in English departments in selected Iraqi Kurdistan universities?
- 2- How is the constituted the dialectic of relational connection and separation understood within the Kurdish and Arabic conceptualizations of face in viva interactions in English departments in selected Iraqi Kurdistan universities?
- 3- How is the constituted the dialectic of relational connection and separation evaluated in viva interactions in English departments in selected Iraqi Kurdistan universities?

1.5 Significance of the study

The findings of the present study will benefit teachers and practitioners in the field of English language teaching and learning since it deals with language in English in the educational setting of vivas at the university. The findings will raise their awareness of how face is achieved and evaluated in academic interactions.

The results of this study will also help participants in vivas to better maintain interpersonal relationships in order for the process of viva discussions to take place more smoothly. Chairpersons can more skillfully manage the viva and examiners can evaluate the candidate's work with less negativity or mitigate their acts. PhD candidates can better balance between defending their work and examiners' evaluation

by interpreting examiners' criticisms for the improvement of their thesis and for learning from the weak points of their thesis.

By examining interactions in vivas held at English departments in Iraqi Kurdistan universities, a better understanding of the participants' relationships in vivas will be gained. With this understanding, researchers and education policymakers can better develop more practical guidelines for a more proper conduct of vivas.

1.6 The scope of this study

The current study accounts for examining interactions made between participants in the Q-A section of viva discussions. It does not explore any other interactions before or after because the real defence occurs in the Q-A section.

Another limitation of this study is that it will deal with meanings and actions that lead to producing face threat. As the context of vivas involves the use of many negative acts of criticisms and disagreements, the achieved face is more evaluated as threatening than supporting the relationship or being face in stasis (neither threatening nor supporting the relationship).

Another limitation of this study is that the phenomenon of face is explored in vivas held in four universities of Iraqi Kurdistan: Salahaddin, Koya, Slemani, and Garmian which not only represent a geographically vast area, but also represent the quality of higher education in Iraqi Kurdistan. These universities are among the top well-known Iraqi Kurdistan universities as they are anchor institutions in their regions – they are essential for vibrant local economies and are drivers of innovation and business development. Many students from wide areas get access to education in these universities as they are regarded as centers of educational integrity and excellence by ensuring a high quality of education at the local, regional and global levels. Another

reason why these universities were selected is the availability of videotapes of PhD vivas only in those universities.

1.7 Definition of terms

The following are the definitions of the key terms.

Pragmatic analysis: It is defined as a set of linguistic and logical tools with which analysts develop accounts of interactions systematically. “They endeavour to identify the full range of inferences that a reader or a hearer would make when encountering the locutions of an author or a speaker, considered in context. (Duffy, 2008, p. 168).

In other words, it is the analysis of language in terms of the situational context where utterances are made (Abao, 2018). In this study, FCT and CA are employed to pragmatically analyse the phenomenon of face understood as relational connection and separation in interactions between participants in viva sessions in English departments in Iraqi Kurdistan universities. Relational connection and separation is interactionally achieved as participants perform and respond to speech acts in a dyadic activity in which both the addressor’s production and the addressee’s response are taken into consideration. Furthermore, meaning is treated as understandings participants show to each other in the sequential organisation of speech.

Iraqi Kurdistan: Iraqi Kurdistan is an autonomous region in Iraq bordering the Kurdish regions of Iran to the east, Turkey to the north, and Syria to the west, along with the rest of Iraq to the south. Erbil (known as Hewlêr in Kurdish) is the capital. The region is officially governed by the Kurdistan Regional Government. According to the new Iraqi constitution, Iraqi Kurdistan is defined as a federal entity of Iraq, and Kurdish and Arabic are established as Iraq's joint official languages. Iraqi Kurdistan consists of four governorates: Hawler, Silemani, Duhok, and Halabja

covering an area of nearly 41,710 square kilometres and having a population of 8.35 million (2013 estimate) (Iraq, 2015). In this study, face achieving and evaluating in viva interactions in English departments in four universities located in Iraqi Kurdistan is explored.

Face: Face is a phenomenon understood in terms of the relationship two or more persons create with one another in interaction (Arundale, 2010, p. 2078). In other words, Arundale (2010) defines face as “participants’ understandings of relational connection and separation conjointly co-constituted in talk/ conduct-in-interaction” (p. 2078). However, this “on-going, conjoint co-constituting of connection with and separation from others in relationships is “coordinate with the conjoint co-constituting of meaning and action in talk/conduct-in-interaction” (Arundale, 2010, p.2079).

Face achieving: Face achieving is the process in which “participants interactionally achieve and conjointly co-constitute both connection with and separation from others as they interactionally achieve and conjointly co-constitute meanings and actions in talk-in-interaction” (Arundale ,2010, p. 2088). In this study, face is achieved by examining the speech acts that orient to relational connection and separation.

Face evaluating: It is the process where participants make evaluations of the projectings or interpretations of face that arise as they design or interpret utterances. The projected/interpreted face can be evaluated as threatening, supporting, or in stasis (neither threatening nor supporting) (Arundale, 2010, p.2092). Arundale (2010, p. 2092) states that the process of evaluating interpretations of face is based on and takes place along with the processes of utterance interpreting. However, it is separate from them as “the evaluating process operates on the outcomes of interpreting”.

Connection: It is a dialectic aspect of face. It negates the other dialectic of face, i.e. separation. However, connection is unified with separation because they function

interdependently in an on-going, dynamic, and interactive manner. (Arundale, 2010, p.2085). It refers to meanings and actions understood as “unity, interdependence solidarity, association, congruence and more, between the relational partners” (Arundale, 2006, p.204).

Separation: It is a dialectic aspect of face. It negates the other dialectic of face, i.e. connection. However, separation is unified with connection because they function interdependently in an on-going, dynamic, and interactive manner. (Arundale, 2010, p.2085). It refers to meanings and actions understood as “differentiation, independence, autonomy, dissociation, divergence, and so on” (Arundale, 2006, p.204).

1.8 Thesis organisation

The current study comprises five chapters. Chapter one presents an overview of the study, the statement of problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of terms. Chapter two reviews concepts of face, Kurdish and Arabic culture-specific construals of relational connection, speech act theory, conversational analysis, studies carried out on face, and the theoretical framework of this research. Chapter three describes the study’s research design, data collection, and method of analysis. Chapter Four presents the analysis of data. Chapter five discusses the research questions and draws conclusions based on the findings. The implications from the study will be demonstrated in addition to highlighting the study’s contributions and offering recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines concepts of face in particular Face Constituting Theory which this research employs and conversational analysis which FCT draws upon. A review of Kurdish and Arabic culture-specific construals of relational connection and separation, speech act theory, conversation analysis, and related literature that is directly or indirectly pertinent to this research is also presented. Moreover, the theoretical framework of this research is illustrated and discussed.

2.1 Concepts of face

The concept of 'face' is regarded to have come from Chinese (Ho, 1976; Mao, 1994; Oetzel et al, 2001; Watts, 2003; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003). The Chinese concept of 'face' is made up of two ranges of criteria distinguished by the words: *mien-tzu* and *lien* which both mean 'face' on the physical level. *Mien-tzu* represents a reputation earned 'through getting on in life, through success and ostentation' and 'accumulated by means of personal effort or clever manoeuvring', whereas *lien* represents "the respect of the group for a man with a good moral reputation" (Hu, 1944, p. 45). Oetzel et al (2001) clarify Hu's definition as *mien-tzu* referring to "the social status achieved through success in life" while *lien* to "the individual's moral character" (p.236).

Goffman (1967) who first introduced the concept of 'face' into academic discourse (Haugh, 2009) himself admits Chinese sources (Bargiela-Ciappini, 2003). Influenced by the Chinese concept of face, Goffman (1967) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a participant contact" in which 'line' is more defined as "a pattern of verbal and

non-verbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (p.5). Goffman observed that in social interactions individuals are required to consider “the needs of their own face” and “the needs of the faces of others” (Chapman, 2011, p.136).

Drawing on Goffman’s abovementioned observation, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) applied face into the context of politeness theory. They defined face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (1987, p.61). This concept is similar to Goffman’s explanation of face conceived both as a self-image any individual claims and as being emotionally invested as it can be maintained, lost, or enhanced (Chang, 2008, p.7). However, Brown and Levinson’s notion of face is achieved as one’s own desired self-image that one suggests in goal-oriented interactions rather than Goffman’s notion of face, which is made through others’ evaluations (O’Driscoll, 1996, p.9). Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) categorised face into two distinct aspects: positive and negative. Positive face is concerned with an individual’s desire to be appreciated and approved of, while the negative face is concerned with an individual’s desire to be unimpeded (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61). Thus, face in the individuals’ claimed self-image is congruent with “the North American folk view of self” (Arundale, 2009).

Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed that every individual has the two face wants. Thus, they argue that the positive and negative dichotomy is claimed to be universal and can be applied universally to all language use (pp. 66-67).

Brown and Levinson’s theory drew the attention of various researchers working on communication and social interaction, but it came under a number of criticisms. The first criticism centred on face as based on a Western viewpoint and so it is ethnocentric.

It is stated that the approach is too individualistic and unnecessarily concentrated on imposition avoidance (Haugh, 2009). This ethnocentric and individualistic orientation is inconsistent with social interactions in 'non-Western societies' (Haugh and Watanabe, 2009). For example, Chinese face focuses on public image rather than individual wants when compared with Brown and Levinson's face (Chang, 2013, p.22). In order to accommodate the criticisms of ethnocentrism, some researchers reconceptualised face concentrating on widening the distinction between positive and negative face in order to account for cross-cultural variation (Haugh, 2009; Marquez, 2009).

Lim and Bowers (1991), for example, provide alternative labels for the face types and argue that face reflects three wants: "(a) the want to be included, or fellowship face; b) the want that their abilities be respected, or competence face; and (c) the want not to be imposed on, or autonomy face" (p.420).

Lim and Bowers (1991) consider fellowship and competence faces to be types of positive face since they reflect a desire to be seen by others in a positive way and autonomy face to be a type of negative face. However, they state that autonomy face is narrower than negative face and leaves out the idea that there is also a want for things to remain unchanged -to maintain our status quo.

To address these different types of face, Lim and Bowers (1991) suggest different types of facework. Fellowship face is addressed by "solidarity" which "expresses to some degree that one accepts the other as a member of an in-group through the use of in-group identity markers, expressions of empathic understanding, demonstrations of personal knowledge, and emphasis on commonalities and cooperation". Competence face is addressed by "approbation" which is realised by "the effort to minimize blame and maximize praise of the other by voicing compliments on abilities or particular

accomplishments and understatement of inabilities or unsuccessful performances”. The third type, autonomy face, is realised by “the effort to minimize the loss and maximize the gain of freedom of action by “giving options” or being indirect and tentative” (p.421).

O’Driscoll (2007) criticises Lim and Bowers (1991) for subdividing the positive face into ‘fellowship face,’ related to the desire to belong, and ‘competence face’, related to the desire for approval. According to O’Driscoll (2007), Lim and Bowers (1991) abandon completely the intuition that positive and negative are related. To solve this problem, O’Driscoll (2007) suggests that the positive face should be constrained and regarded as exclusively and specifically the opposite of negative. The negative face should be concerned with separation and individuation and positive face should be concerned only to connection and belonging.

On the other hand, Mao (1994) develops a different interactional construct. He calls this construct the Relative Face Orientation in order to account for these two different orientations of face: the Chinese and Japanese concepts of face, and Brown and Levinson’s characterization of face. The first orientation gravitates “toward social recognition and hierarchical interdependence” while the second one, “Anglo-American face”, spirals “outward from individual desires or wants, and sees the self as the initiating agent” (Mao,1994, p.472).

According to the Relative Face Orientation, the content of face in a given speech community is determined by one of two interactional ideals: the ideal social identity, or the ideal individual autonomy. The ideal social identity “motivates members of the community to associate themselves with others and to cultivate a sense of homogeneity” while the ideal individual autonomy “marks off a separate and an almost

inviolable space, within which the individual can preserve and celebrate his or her freedom of action without fear of becoming an outsider” (Mao,1994, p.472).

In concluding his construct, Mao (1994) states that Chinese and Japanese faces are oriented toward an ideal social identity which gives rise to a public image while Brown and Levinson’s characterisation of face is oriented toward an ideal individual autonomy which gives rise to a public self-image. Mao (1994) claims that by identifying these two different potential interactional ideals the relative face orientation construct “allows for cultural differences without ‘burying’ the concept of face as those two ideals “vie for saliency in the actual composition of face-in the image that we wish to claim for ourselves in dyadic interaction; in the end, they afford us new insights into our own behavior and into various versions of our own cooperativeness” (p.473). In order to accommodate the criticisms of ethnocentrism, some researchers reconceptualised face concentrating on widening the distinction between positive and negative face in order to account for cross-cultural variation

Other researchers who reconceptualized face were Scollon and Scollon (2001) who suggested another explanation of face. They conceptualised it as consisting of two aspects. The first aspect is involvement which is concerned with “the person’s right and need to be considered a normal, contributing, or supporting member of society” (p. 46) while the second aspect is independence which is concerned with the individuality of the participants. That is to say, their “right not to be completely dominated by group or social values, and to be free from the impositions of others” (p.47).

Scollon and Scollon (2001) state that involvement is realised “by such discourse strategies as paying attention to others, showing a strong interest in their affairs, pointing out common ingroup membership or points of view with them, or using first