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## USING SPEECH ACTS, IMPLICATURE AND PRESUPPOSITION BY IRAQI EFL UNIVERSITY LEARNERS

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### ABSTRACT

*The current study is an attempt to measure the Iraqi EFL university learners' abilities in pragmatics. The study aims to test whether the Iraqi EFL learners are able to comprehend speech acts, implicature and presupposition. The study hypothesizes that the Iraqi EFL postgraduates are more able than undergraduates to utilize the previously-mentioned topics in pragmatics. The participants of the study are EFL Iraqi undergraduates and postgraduates, Departments of English from different Colleges and universities. The data elicitation tool is a recognition test according to the nature and aims of the study. The study reaches the conclusion that postgraduates are better than undergraduates in their comprehension of speech acts, implicature and presupposition.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Pragmatics, Abilities, EFL learners, Speech Acts, Implicature, Presupposition.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language serves as the primary medium of communication. According to pragmatic perspective, language use and language users are the main focus in interaction. Accordingly, pragmatics is the study of meaning in interactions in which listeners and speakers create meaning that is highly influenced by situational and contextual factors.

**Pragmatics plays an effective role in communication and helps to understand the meaning beyond the literal one. This study seeks to answer the questions below:**

1. To what extent are the Iraqi EFL undergraduates and postgraduates able to:

a. Recognize appropriate speech acts during communication?

b. Understand implicature in conversation?

c. Comprehend presupposition?

This study aims at:

1. Showing undergraduates and postgraduates' abilities to discriminate appropriate speech acts during communication.

2. Exploring EFL undergraduates and postgraduates' ability to understand implicature during conversation.

3. Showing undergraduates' and postgraduates' understanding of presupposition.

According to the aims of the study, it is hypothesized that:

**The Iraqi EFL postgraduates are more able than undergraduates to:**

a. Utilize appropriate speech acts during communication.

b. Understand implicature.

c. Understand presupposition.

The sample of study is selected randomly from one hundred sixteen answers of EFL learners distributed to 74 undergraduates and 42 postgraduates, Department of English selected from different universities and colleges. Evaluating the Iraqi EFL learners' abilities is limited to the recognition side.

**This study follows the steps below:**

1. Conducting an objective test of 15 items in the form of questions with four options, one option is correct and the other ones are incorrect. The items are equally divided to three areas in pragmatics: Speech acts, implicature, presupposition.

2. Selecting randomly 74 undergraduates and 42 postgraduates of Iraqi EFL university learners taken from different universities and colleges to participate in the test.

3. The categories of the respondents are EFL

undergraduates who are currently at the fourth year, Departments of English; and postgraduates who consist of MA and PhD students in some Iraqi Universities and colleges of Education and Arts.

4. Applying the test on the selected samples.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Cutting (2002: 1), pragmatics investigates language's relationship to contextual background elements. This means that pragmatics focuses on the language in relation to context rather than words in isolation. Furthermore, Pragmatics is defined as dealing with those characteristics of meaning that are determined by the actual use of language Börjesson, 2014: 2). Pragmatics, recently, gained prominence as a central topic in cognitive science, artificial intelligence, information science, neuroscience, language disorders, anthropology, and sociology (Huang, 2007: 1). Levinson (1983: 3), pointed out that pragmatics examines how utterances communicate contextually influenced information, encompassing the speaker's intent and the listener's viewpoint. Therefore, it attracted the interest of many scholars, and thus it can be defined as the study of language and context.

### 2.1. Speech Acts

#### 2.1.1. Definitions

Speech Act Theory is a fundamental component of pragmatics, as proposed by John Austin in 1962 and John Searle in 1969 (Chen & Wu, 2023: 9). The term refers to the manner in which utterances do more than just convey meaning; they really conduct actions (Levinson, 2017: 199). Speaking or writing something down is the same as doing action. Speaking itself is an act. This is the main idea of speech act theory, and while it may appear to be quite simple, it creates significant issues regarding how the addressee might identify the type of act the speaker wanted to execute. Since the theory of speech acts entails both the listener's inference and the speaker's purpose, it is by definition a pragmatic theory. (Birner, 2013: 107). In this regard, Yule (2010: 133) defines speech acts as the action performed by the speaker with an utterance.

J.L. Austin, whose book "How to Do Things with Words," published in 1962, helped established the theory of speech acts (Austin, 1962). Austin believes that we use language to accomplish things (perform acts) as well as to express things (make statements) (Thomas, 1995: 31).

Searle (1969: 23) states that, when the speaker says any sentence, he means something, not just

uttering the words. Suppose a speaker and a listener say one of the following sentences under the appropriate circumstances:

1. Sam is a regular smoker. (a confirmation)
2. Is Sam a regular smoker? (asking a question)
3. Don't smoke, Sam? (giving an order) (ibid: 22)

Additionally, speakers usually intend more than just the linguistic meaning of the words they used. Austin's work on speech acts originated the term "difference in illocutionary force" to describe the distinction between, for example, a declaration, an order, and a promise.

### 2.1.2. Types of Speech Acts

#### Performatives vs. Constitutives

Austin divided all statements into two categories: *constatives*, or statements that support propositions, and *performatives*, or statements that no longer "say" but "do" things and are therefore exempt from truth-value considerations (Kizelbach, 2023: 73). He differentiates between *Performatives* and *Constitutives*. *Performatives* are utterances that are used to do things or perform acts as in (4). *Constitutives* are utterances that are used to make assertion as in (5) (Huang, 2014: 120).

- (4) I apologize for being late.
- (5) My daughter is called Elizabeth.

**Austin differentiates among three distinct levels or sub-acts inside each speech act:**

1. **The locution:** which is approximately synonymous with articulating a specific statement with a particular meaning.
2. **The illocution or illocutionary force:** statements that possess a specific conventional power, such as informing, commanding, warning, or undertaking.
3. The **Perlocution** refers to the attainment of certain results by verbal expression (Austin, 1962, pp. 108-120). For example, the phrase "sharp scratch" said by a nurse before a blood test serves as a warning, but a potential perlocution may involve the patient turning away. The differentiation among locution, illocution, and perlocution has remained prevalent in the literature since Austin's contributions (Cummins, 2019: 192).

### 2.2. Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

It is important to distinguish between a sentence's literal meaning and the speaker's intended meaning when s/he uses it to execute an act of speech. This is because the speaker's meaning may differ from the sentence's exact meaning in a number of ways. In the case of metaphor, for instance, an interlocutor may

mean something different from what the sentence actually means when s/he utters it; in the case of irony, s/he may even mean the exact opposite of what the sentence implies (Searle, 1979: 118).

Clark (2022: 123), differentiates between direct speech acts and indirect ones, which is crucial in speech act theory as in the following:

- (6) (A) Do you want to go for a coffee?
- (B) I've got to prepare for a seminar.

In the above example, B's direct speech act is the statement that s/he needs to prepare for a seminar, and (A) can conclude that (B) is declining his offer. This is indirect speech act (ibid).

Yule (1996: 55) states that a direct speech act is created whenever structure and function are directly related to one another and the indirect speech one occurs whenever there is no relationship between structure and function. A direct speech act is thus a declarative employed to make a statement, an interrogative to make a question and an imperative to make commands.

The utterance in the following example is a declarative functioning as a direct speech act:

- (7) Its cold outside (ibid).

A Direct speech act happens when an utterance's illocutionary power (e.g., "shut the door") is directly correlated with its grammatical form (Black, 2006: 19). It is used to convey the literal meaning so that the utterance mentioned earlier was in the form of a request.

One significant category of these situations is when the speaker says a statement and intends to convey more than just what he says. For instance, a speaker might ask the hearer to do something by saying, "I want you to do it."

Certain indirect speech acts appear to be traditionally linked to specific forms. For example as found in Searle (1975):

- (8) Can you pass the salt?

It appears that this is an inquiry regarding the hearer's ability to pass the salt. This would be a direct speech act, asking for information, according to Searle. Naturally, this would be interpreted as a request to pass the salt in most situations. Although it is a call for action rather than information, this is still a command. (Clark, 2022: 124).

Furthermore, one motivation for performing a speech act indirectly is that it can make a communicative act more polite (ibid: 123).

#### 2.2.1. Taxonomy of Speech Acts

Austin (1962) offers a basic and intuitive five-fold taxonomy of illocutionary actions, which he acknowledged was neither especially well-founded

nor consistently clear in its application to specific instances (Sadock, 2006: 64). Austin identifies five primary categories of speech acts:

#### 1. Verdictives

Verdictives are actions that render a judgment, as the term suggests. Verdictives include the giving of a determination, whether official or unofficial, based on evidence or rationale on value or reality, to the extent that these are distinguished (Austin, 1962, pp. 150-152). Typical examples include: acquit, appraise, convict, estimate, find, rank, rule, value, among others (Xiang et al., 2024: 80).

#### 2. Exercitives

Exercitives refer to the exercise of powers, rights, or influence. Examples include appointing, voting, ordering, encouraging, advising, warning, permitting, authorizing, deputing, offering, conceding, giving, and consenting (Austin, 1962, pp. 150-155).

#### 3. Commissives

Commissives are acts that commit the speaker to a specific path of conduct (Austin, 1962: 159). Verbs that fall in this category include: promise, covenant, contract, undertake, bind myself, give my word, am determined to, intend, declare my intention, mean to, plan, purpose, propose to, shall, envisage, engage, contemplate, guarantee, pledge myself, swear, bet, vow, agree, consent, dedicate myself to, declare for, adopt, champion, side with, espouse, oppose, embrace, and favor (Austin, 1962, pp.156-175).

#### 4. Behabitives

Behabitives encompass the concept of responding to the behaviors and circumstances of others, as well as the attitudes and reactions regarding another's past or forthcoming actions.(Austin, 1962: 159). Verbs representing this kind of speech act include: apologize, thank, regret, commiserate, complement, condole, congratulate, felicitate, sympathize, bless, wish, approve, blame, applaud, overlook, critique, and deprecate, among others (ibid).

All of these are speech actions wherein the speaker conveys an emotion or attitude, frequently directed at the hearer. Austin asserts that while executing a behabitive speech act, the speaker is 'responding to the actions and circumstances of others' (Allot, 2010: 24).

#### 5. Expositives

Expositives are employed in expository activities that involve articulating viewpoints, conducting arguments, and elucidating usages and references (Austin, 1962: 160). As stated by Flowerdew (2013: 83), expositives refer to the clarification of reasoning, arguments, and messages. Examples that might be regarded as expositives include: state, affirm, deny,

emphasize, demonstrate, respond, inquire, accept, define, testify, swear, debate, etc. (Austin, 1962, pp. 160-161).

Searle (1979) was not the initial proponent of categorizing speech activities into broader classifications. He significantly contributed to the advancement of Austin's work, particularly on the concept of illocutionary act (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014, pp. 162-164). Searle (1979) established his taxonomy on several pragmatic aspects due to the absence of a definitive categorization basis and significant overlap within categories (Searle, 1979: 10). These aspects include the illocutionary point of an act, which refers to its purpose (e.g., for a promise, it is to establish an obligation that the speaker assumes); the conveyed psychological state (e.g., for an apology, it signifies the expression of regret); its intensity (e.g., a suggestion is less forceful than an insistence); and crucially, the correlation between the words and reality. Culpeper and Haugh (2014: 164).

Searle categorizes speech acts into five distinct classifications:

1- Assertives (Representatives) denote a category of speech in which speakers express their conviction on the validity of a statement, exemplified by phrases such as "I state" or "I hypothesize." Crystal (2008, p. 413). The objective of the assertive class members is to obligate the speaker, to varied extents, to affirm the validity of the stated claim (Searle, 1979: 12). In executing this speech act, the speaker depicts the world according to their beliefs, so aligning the words with their perception of reality (Huang, 2014: 133).

(9) The soldiers are persevering through the snow.

2- Directives are speech acts employed to instruct the listener to perform an act. The verbs that characterize this category include ask, order, demand, request, beg, plead, beseech, entreat, as well as invite, permit, and advise (Searle, 1979, pp. 13-14).

(10) reduce the volume of the television (Request) (Huang, 2014: 133).

3 Commissives: Commissives are illocutionary acts that obligate the speaker to undertake a certain future action (Searle, 1979: 14). Example incidents encompass offers, promises, refusals, and threats.

(11) I will return in five minutes. Huang (2014: 134).

4. Expressives are speaking acts that convey the psychological attitudes or states of the speaker, such as joy, grief, and preferences (Huang, 2004: 134).The verbs of this class include thank, congratulate, apologize, condole, bemoan, and welcome (Searle, 1979: 15). In delivering an expressive, the speaker does not attempt to align the reality with the words

or the words with the world; instead, the validity of the stated proposition is assumed (Searle, 1979: 15).

(12) I congratulate you on your victory in the race (ibid).

5. Declarations are acts that bring about sudden alterations in the existing condition of affairs. By executing this sort of speech act, the speaker induces alterations in the world, therefore establishing a correlation between the propositional content and reality (Huang, 2014: 134). This category includes verbs like nominate, appoint, and declare (Searle, 1979:17).

(13) I pronounce you husband and wife (Mey, 1993: 122).

### 2.2.2. *Felicity Conditions*

Felicity conditions are the logical prerequisites or anticipated circumstances required for the successful execution of a certain speaking act (Flowerdew, 2013: 83). Austin observed that for a performative to be considered 'felicitous' or successful, it must satisfy a specific set of requirements. One criterion for the naming act is that the speaker must be acknowledged by their society as possessing the requisite authority (Huang, 2014: 124).

Austin (1962, pp. 14–15) distinguished three different types of felicity conditions

A. (i) there must be a conventional procedure having a conventional effect.

(ii) The circumstances and persons must be appropriate, as specified in the procedure.

B. The procedure must be executed (i) correctly and (ii) completely.

C. Often

i. the persons must have the requisite thoughts, feelings, and intentions, as specified in the procedure, and

ii. if consequent conduct is specified, then the relevant parties must so do (Huang, 2014: 124).

Searle formalized and refined Austin's concept of felicity criteria in 1969. Searle attempted to formulate constitutive rules for speech actions, which are rules that establish the activity itself, analogous to the laws of football or chess, in contrast to regulative rules that govern behaviors, such as traffic regulations. This contrasts with Austin's approach, which saw felicity conditions as essential for the successful execution of a speech act, rather than as its constitutive elements (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014: 162).

Searle provides a set of criteria for executing a certain illocutionary act (Searle, 1969: 56). The conditions are listed below:

i. The propositional content pertains to the speaker's future action (Searle, 1969: 57). These

criteria delineate limitations on the speaker's material (Levinson, 1983: 244).

ii. The preparatory condition: precondition in the actual world relevant to each illocutionary conduct (Levinson, 1983: 244). The criteria require that the speaker must possess control over the hearer (Searle, 1969: 64).

iii. The sincerity condition: This condition indicates the necessary beliefs, emotions, and intentions of the speaker, pertinent to each specific type of action (Levinson, 1983: 244). The speaker seeks to fulfil the promised deed (Seale, 1969: 60).

II. (iv)The essential condition: The claim must be articulated as reflecting an authentic state of circumstances to satisfy the requisite criteria (Searle, 1969, 64). The fundamental characteristic of a promise is the commitment to fulfil a certain duty (ibid: 60).

### 2.3. *Implicature*

An 'implicature' refers to any meaning a speaker communicates that extends beyond the clear content of their statement. This significance may exceed or differ from the traditional semantic interpretation of the spoken words (Blackwell, 2021: 15). Grice, the originator of the word implicature, formulated his theory of conversational implicature (1975, 1989) to elucidate how interlocutors might convey meanings beyond their explicit statements (ibid). Implicature is an element of meaning that represents a facet of what is conveyed in a speaker's utterance, apart from the literal content expressed. The speaker's intended communication is typically more complex than her explicit expression; linguistic meaning significantly underdetermines the delivered and comprehended message (Horn, 2006: 3). Implicature offers a clear explanation of how it is feasible to convey, in a broad sense, more than what is explicitly 'said' (i.e., more than what is literally articulated by the customary meaning of the spoken language terms) (Levinson, 1983: 97 :)

(14) A: Are you interested in a haircut?

B: I possessed one yesterday.

In example (14), the second speaker responds to the first speaker's inquiry. However, an examination of the language employed reveals that B's statement does not, in and of themselves, offer any resolution. B asserts that s/he received a haircut yesterday; nevertheless, this does not imply that he or she desires another one, nor that s/he does not. Conversely, B evidently aims for his statement to provide a response to A's inquiry. According to the language used by Grice , pragmatists assert that B (or

B's speech) implies that B would prefer not to get a haircut (Allot, 2010: 2). The communication context and its participants predominantly influence the distinction between what is articulated and what is intended, which is a fundamental principle of Pragmatics (Grice 1975).

### 2.3.1. *Types of Implicature*

Implicature consists of two types: conversational implicature and conventional implicature (Grice, 1975, pp. 25-26).

#### *Conversational Implicature*

Conversational implicature is defined as a meaning or proposition expressed or inferred by a speaker in the utterance of a sentence. This means not part of what is spoken in the strict sense. It is formed from the saying of what is said using Grice's cooperative principle and its conversational maxims (Huang, 2014: 31). Conversational implicature is the process by which we interpret a conversational statement in light of our preconceptions (Mey, 1993:46). For example, when someone enquires, "What time is it?" the response should be as follows since that makes perfect sense: "The bus was just passing through in a particular conversational context". There is only one bus every day, and it goes by our house at 7:45 a.m. every morning. This context should also contain the fact that my interlocutor is aware of this and interprets my response as it was provided, which is to say that it is hopefully relevant (ibid: 47).

There are generalized and particularized. Conversational implicature, whether generalized or particularized, stems from the shared assumption that speaker and hearer are working together logically and collaboratively to accomplish a shared objective(Horn, 2006: 6)(A generalized conversational implicature is one that is typically associated with the form and does not require recalculation for every pertinent phrase( Birner, 2013: 45):

(15) Most of John's friends believe in marriage.

Not all of John's friends believe in marriage. +>

The implicature in the example above is extremely general. The conversational implicature for any statement that goes like, "Most x are Y," is "Not all x are Y." There is no need for a specific context for this conversational implicature to occur (Huang, 2014: 38).

In contrast to the generalized implicature, particularized conversational implicature is unique to the particular context in which they occur (Birner, 2013: 46):

(16) John: Where's Peter?

Mary: The light in his office is on.

Peter is in his office +>

The linguistic context of the example above has a significant impact on the conversational implicature. Mary's response raises the possibility that Peter's location and the light in his office are related; specifically, if the light is on, he might be in his office. The conversational implicature in question will not exist without such a particular setting (Huang, 2014: 38).

#### *Conventional Implicature*

Unlike conversational implicature, conventional implicature is not founded on the cooperative principle or maxims. It does not have to occur in speech, and its meaning is not dependent on specific settings. Similar to lexical presuppositions, it is associated with specific words and results in additional transmitted meanings when such words are used (Yule, 1996: 45). It is consistently linked to a certain verbal phrase, independent of context, and does not necessitate a computation based on the maxims and the context. It is conventional in this sense that is, it is typically connected to a linguistic form. It is not truth-conditional (Birner, 2013: 47).

Both types of implicature are similar in that they both express a deeper degree of meaning than just the words' semantic meaning. Conventional implicature conveys the same implicature regardless of context, whereas the conversational one varies depending on the utterance context (Thomas, 1995: 67).

### 2.3.2. *Grice's Maxims of Conversation*

The relationship between what is said and what is implied, while taking context into consideration, cannot be random. It must be heavily constrained by rules; otherwise, the intended meaning cannot be expected to be consistently understood by the hearer (Kroeger, 2019: 141). At each situation, certain potential conversational approaches would be ruled out as conversationally inappropriate. A basic general concept may be developed that participants will be expected to follow. **The cooperative principle is stated by Grice as follows:**

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". (Grice, 1975: 26).

The maxims are basic guidelines that are believed to support effective language use and collectively establish a general cooperative principle (Crystal, 2008: 298). Grice 1975 put out four maxims in "Logic and Conversation": These maxims are stated as follows: (Grice, 1975, pp. 26-27).

**Quantity:**

Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).

Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

**Quality**

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Relation: Be relevant

Manner

Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity.

Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).

Be orderly.

In Grice's opinion, these four conversational maxims form the foundation for determining the nonliteral meaning of statements such as the following:

(17) A: Will you attend Mark's PhD celebration?

B: I need to get my first lecture ready.

Speaker A will be aware that Speaker B's response suggests that he or she will not be able to attend this celebration (Senft, 2014, pp. 33-35).

Although the maxims are articulated as imperatives, Grice believed they reflect the typical functioning of talks rather than a set of rules that speakers must acquire. The implementation of the maxims, or in certain instances their blatant contravention or disregard, is closely associated with the phenomenon of indirect or figurative communication (Zufferey, 2015: 8).

### 2.3.3. Observing and Non-observing the Maxims

Maxims observing and non-observing rely on the speaker and whether s/he follows the Gricean maxims or not (Betti and Yaseen, 2020: 48). According to Levinson (1983: 104), when the talker is directly observing the maxims, s/he might expect the listener to make his conclusions based on the assumption that the speaker is adhering to the conversational maxims.

18) A- Where are the car keys?

B- They're on the table in the hall.

B's answer follows the maxim of Manner by providing clear answer, the maxim of quality by being truthful, the maxim of quantity by providing the right amount of information, and finally the maxim of relation by addressing A's goal in asking a question (Thomas, 1995: 64). Conversely, although most people share the Cooperative Principle in their daily communications, they do not always follow these maxims in all situations (Li, 2015: 94). People may fail to follow a maxim because they are unable

to talk effectively or because they intentionally deceive (Thomas, 1995: 65).

To violate a maxim is to fail to observe it inconspicuously, with the expectation that your hearer will be unaware that the maxim is being violated. A lie is an obvious example of this: the speaker makes an utterance knowing it to be incorrect (a breach of Quality) and expects the hearer will not notice the difference. Maxim violations are typically designed to deceive (Birner, 2013: 34). For example:

(19) A: Can you tell me where the post office is?

B: I'm a stranger here myself.

B's answer appears to violate the maxim of relevance (Kroeger, 2019:140

A speaker who unintentionally does not follow a maxim, without the aim of creating an implicature or deceiving, is said to 'infringe' the maxim. In other words, non-observance is caused by imperfect linguistic performance rather than a goal on the part of the speakers to generate conversational implicature (Thomas, 1995: 74).

Flouting the maxims refers to instances where speakers appear to disregard the maxims while anticipating that the listener will infer the underlying implications, rather than interpreting the statements literally Yuvike & Winiharti, 2009: 118). For example:

20) A: Well, how do I look)

B: Your shoes are nice.

In the above example, B flouts the maxim of quantity which is happened when the speaker gives less or more information than is needed (cutting, 2002: 37).

Finally, when a speaker expresses a refusal to comply with a maxim, he is choosing not to follow it. In public life, opting out is common when a speaker is unable to respond in the expected manner, maybe due to ethical or legal constraints (Thomas, 1995: 4). For example:

(21) Police: Who is your informant?

Suspect: I'm sorry I can't give you the name.

The suspect refuses to reveal the informant's name, most likely for ethical reasons. As a result, he refuses to follow the maxims (Yuvike& Winiharti, 2009: 120).

### 2.4. Presupposition

Presupposition is a fact that is connected to certain lexical items or syntactic structures (Geurts, 2017: 180). It refers to an additional degree of meaning beyond the proposition that an utterance and its implicature represent (Allott, 2010: 148). In order to explain the pre-theoretical sense that some phrases or utterances take something for granted, the concept of

presupposition is used. Here's an illustration:

(22) The king of France is bald. In presuppositional terminology, this is argued to presume that there is a king of France, and then declares that he is bald. In general, specific descriptions (such as 'the king of France') are said to imply the presence of the entity mentioned (Allott, 2010: 148). Presupposition is what the speaker believes to be true before speaking. Presuppositions are present in speakers rather than in sentences. Furthermore, presupposition is defined as knowledge that is linguistically inscribed as being a part of the shared understanding at the moment of expression. The phrase "common ground" describes everything that the hearer and the speaker are aware of, share, or believe. This would include information about the world, like that there is only one sun and one moon in our world; information that can be seen during the speech, like what the speaker is wearing or carrying; or information that has already been brought up in that same conversation (or discourse) (Kroeger, 2019: 40).

#### 2.4.1. Types of Presupposition

Presupposition is connected with the use of a significant number of words, phrases, and structures. There are six types of presupposition: Existential, factive, non-factive, lexical, structural and counterfactual (Yule, 1996: 30).

The first type is existential presupposition, which is presumed that the speaker is dedicated to the existence of the entities mentioned. Presupposition is also assumed to be present in possessive construction:

(23) The (present) king of France is bald.  
(>>There is a (present) king of France( Huang, 2014 :86

A factive presupposition is the presupposed knowledge that comes after a verb like "know" and can be regarded as a fact. Other verbs with factive presuppositions include "realise," "regret," and phrases that use "be" with "aware," "odd," and "glad. According to Saeed (2003: 106), factive verbs presuppose the truth of their complement clause.

(24) We regret telling him. (<< we told him  
An assumption that is presumed to be not true is known as a non-factive presupposition. Verbs such as "dream," "imagine," and "pretend" are classified as non-factive presuppositions because they cannot be regarded as factive.

(25) In my dream, I was wealthy. (>> I wasn't wealthy

In lexical presupposition the use of one form with an asserted meaning is typically construed with the

assumption that another (non-asserted) meaning is known. Verbs like 'manage', 'stop', and start and again, are some verbs that are used in this type.

(26) He stopped smoking.

>> He used to smoke) Yule (1996: 28). He confirmed in this sentence that he succeeded in quitting smoking

#### 2.4.2. Presupposition Triggers

Presupposition is typically formed by the employment of specific lexical elements and/or language structures. Presupposition triggers are linguistic objects or constructs that cause presuppositions (Allott, 2010: 148). There are lexical words or language structures that cause presuppositions (Huang, 2014: 86). The symbol '>>' stands for 'presuppose'

1- Definite descriptions: (27) John saw/didn't see the man with two heads.

>> There exists a man with two heads (Levinson, 1983: 181).

2- Factive verbs: (28) John realized/didn't realize that he was in debt.

>> John was in debt.

3- Implicative verbs: (29) John managed/didn't manage to open the door.

>> John tried to open the door.

4- Change of state verbs: (30) Jill has stopped writing poetry.

>> Jill has been writing poetry (Geurts, 2017: 180).

5- Iteratives: (31) Bill broke his leg again.

(>> Bill broke his leg before (Cummings, 2023: 60

6- Quantifiers: (32) The committee interviewed all the short listed candidates for the post.

. (>> There were candidates (Huang, 2014: 87

- Temporal clauses: 7

(33) After she shot to stardom in a romance film, didn't marry a millionaire entrepreneur.

>> Jane shot to stardom in a romance film.

8- Cleft sentences: (34) it wasn't Baird who invented television.

>> Someone invented television (Huang, 2014: 87).

9- Counterfactual conditional: (35) If I were the US president, I would end world poverty

<< I am not the US president. (Huang, 2014: 87).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. The Participants

The total number of the participants is one hundred sixteen Iraqi EFL learners who are distributed to seventy four undergraduate EFL learners and forty two postgraduates. The test is

implemented on these participants.

### 3.2. Description of Data Elicitation Tool

The tool that is used for the data elicitation in this study is a recognition test (See Appendix). It is designed according to the nature and the aims of the study. The form of the test is a multiple-choice test. The test comprises of fifteen items and each item is supplied with four alternatives. One of the alternatives is correct and the other ones are incorrect. The situations are adopted from various books of pragmatics which include: Huang (2007), Fraser (2008), Caffi (2007), Chapman (2011), Cutting (2002), Allot (2010), Clark (2022), Culpeper (2011) and Levinson (1983). Every five situations are related to one of the three topics of pragmatics, namely speech acts, implicature and presupposition. The test is presented to a jury, which consists of a number of specialists in EFL teaching methods to ensure its validity and reliability. The situations from one to five are designed to test the Iraqi EFL learner's recognition of speech acts. In item (1), option a. "I apologize for being late" is the most appropriate answer because it refers to speaker's regret for being late. In such situations, an apology is the most polite answer. The use of the word "apologize" indicates that the speaker performed a specific action. The other options are not suitable because they do not represent any emotional recognition of the lateness. The situations from six to ten are designed to test the Iraqi EFL university learners' abilities in implicature, which refers to meaning that goes beyond the literal interpretation of the statement. In each situation, one of the alternatives represents the correct option, while the others are incorrect. For item (9), the option c, "You look a bit different today", is the correct option because it is an indirect answer. By saying "a bit different", the speaker indicates that, there is a change in a person's appearance, but without clarifying whether the change is positive or negative. The other options are unsuitable because they provide direct answers.

**The situations from eleven to fifteen test the EFL learner's abilities in presupposition. Item (15) is taken from the test, to explain the nature of the test:**

**15. 'Your father's question, did you manage to open the door?' presupposes that:**

- a. I tried to open the door
- b. The door is very big.
- c. Opening the door is very easy.
- d. I want to check if the door is locked first.

For this item, option (a) is the most suitable answer. By saying "I tried", the speaker presupposes that, there was a previous attempt to open the door,

whether it was successful or not. The other options are unsuitable because they do not represent any previous attempt to open the door.

### 3.3. Test Objectives, Validity and Reliability

**The test is designed to achieve the following objectives:**

1. Testing the Iraqi EFL learner's abilities to recognize speech acts.
2. Assessing the Iraqi EFL learners' comprehension of implicature.
3. Testing the Iraqi EFL learners' understanding of presupposition.

The test includes three areas of pragmatics; namely, speech acts, implicature and presupposition. The test is an objective one and it is definitely a reliable one. The jury members stress the test's validity and reliability.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section presents the practical side of the study. The data, which is gathered from the test, is analysed and a discussion of results is done as related to speech acts, implicature and presupposition respectively. Results are shown by using tables and percentages.

### 4.1. Data Analysis and discussion of Speech Acts

Table (1) below contains the frequency and percentages of the correct and incorrect responses that are given by the EFL learners (undergraduates and postgraduates).

**Table 1: The Distribution of Undergraduates' and Postgraduates' Responses Regarding the Comprehension of Speech Acts.**

Item No.	Undergraduates				Postgraduates			
	Correct answers	%	Incorrect answers	%	Correct answers	%	Incorrect answers	%
1.	60	16.2	14	3.78	33	15.7	9	4.28
2.	9	2.4	65	17.6	12	5.71	30	14.2
3.	63	17.0	11	2.97	34	16.1	8	3.80
4.	31	8.37	43	11.6	32	15.2	10	4.76
5.	55	14.8	19	5.13	32	15.2	10	4.76
Total		58.8		30.4		68.0		31.8
		6				7		8

Regarding the EFL learners' abilities in speech acts, nearly a half of the EFL undergraduates are able to comprehend of speech acts (58.86 %). The highest frequency of the correct responses in

undergraduates' responses is available in item (3.b). It is formulated as follows:

3. If your mother finds that her children's room is not tidy, what do you expect her to say to them?

- You have to go school early tomorrow because you have an exam.
- Please, tidy your room before you go out.
- Give me my keys.
- Go to your appointment with the doctor.

For this item, (b) is the appropriate response 63 occurrences, making 17.02 % by undergraduates. It refers to the directives speech act which is used by the speaker to provide the listener with instructions to do something. This means that two thirds of the participants understood the speech act of directives. In the mother's situation as mentioned in item (3), it requires her to direct her children to tidy their room. They are capable of interpreting directives, because they have a satisfactory knowledge of how language can be used to give instructions. Only 11 informants (2.97 %) are unable to comprehend directives.

Regarding postgraduates' correct responses (68.7%), a high number of postgraduates have the ability to utilize speech acts. In this regard, the highest frequency of the correct answers in postgraduates' responses is 34 occurrences, making 16.19 %. For postgraduates, the occurrences of the correct responses reflect their understanding of speech acts. Thus, a high number of postgraduates have a good ability to recognize appropriate speech acts; therefore, the least frequency of the incorrect responses is 8 occurrences, making 3.80 %.

Item (2.c), represents the lowest frequency of the correct answers in undergraduates' responses:

2. When your friend asks you, do you want to go for a coffee?

- No
- What kind of coffee do they have?
- I've got to prepare for a seminar.
- No, I'd rather not.

Option (c) is the correct answer. It has the least frequency of the undergraduates' correct responses 9 occurrences, making 2.4 %. It expresses an indirect speech act, which means that the speaker's meaning extends beyond what the speaker exactly said. The highest frequency of undergraduates' incorrect responses is in item 2 (65 occurrences, making 17.65%). Therefore, the undergraduates have a limited knowledge to recognize indirect speech acts. Likewise, item (2), represents the lowest frequency of the postgraduates' correct answers, 12 occurrences, making 5.71 %. Although they have a satisfactory knowledge about indirect speech acts, they tend to

use direct answers when someone asks them about their preferences. The learners often rely on explicit responses in daily interaction, therefore the highest frequency of the postgraduates' incorrect responses is 30 occurrences, making 14.28%.

In conclusion, the total percentage of the correct answers for postgraduates in speech acts, (68.07 %) is higher than that of undergraduates (58.86 %). Accordingly, a high number of postgraduates have the ability to utilize speech acts, compared with undergraduates, which show a less number of postgraduates who have the ability to utilize speech acts, but percentages give the implication that undergraduates and postgraduates do not have high abilities in completely understanding speech acts. Understanding implied meaning requires a high level of pragmatic competence.

#### 4.2. Data Analysis and discussion of Implicature

Table (2) contains the numbers and percentages of the correct and incorrect responses that are given by the EFL learners (undergraduates and postgraduates).

**Table (2): The Distribution of Undergraduates' and Postgraduates' Responses Regarding the Comprehension of Implicature.**

Item No.	Undergraduates				Postgraduates			
	Correct answers	%	Incorrect	%	Correct answers	%	Incorrect	Incorrect
6	61	16.48	13	3.51	37	17.61	5	2.38
7	57	15.40	17	4.59	37	17.61	5	2.38
8	33	8.91	41	11.08	28	13.33	14	6.66
9	55	14.86	19	5.13	30	14.28	12	5.71
10	66	17.83	8	2.16	35	16.66	7	3.33
Total	734	8	264	7	794	9		20.46

Regarding the EFL learners' abilities in implicature, a high number of EFL undergraduates are able to comprehend implicature (73.48%). **Item (10. b) of the test represents the highest frequency of the undergraduates' correct responses, 66 occurrences making (17.83%):**

Someone asks you, can you tell me the time?

- My brother studies in London.
- Well, the lecture is finished (It is 2:30 pm).
- My father has gone to Basra.
- There is a celebration at our university.

10. You are at the university, what do you say when

In option (b) by saying "the lecture is finished", the speaker implicates that the time is 2:30 pm, even though he does not explicitly say it. The speaker supposes that the hearer will understand the time, because the lecture is finished at a specific time. The reason behind choosing this option is due to the shared experience between speaker and hearer. They may have more exposure to indirect communication in daily interaction. The least frequency of the undergraduates' incorrect answers is 8 occurrences, making 2.16 %.

EFL postgraduates' correct responses represent 79.49% in that they, whether they are MA, PhD or staff members, have the ability to understand the literal meaning and the meaning that goes beyond what is said. It is clear that, the EFL postgraduates proved a high ability in comprehending implicature. The study materials enhance their understanding as well as their knowledge of how context affects sentence comprehension. Therefore, they have the capacity to deal with such situations. The frequency of the incorrect answers is 7 occurrences, making 3.33 %.

The highest frequency of the correct answers for postgraduates' responses is represented by items (6.d) and (7.b) (37 occurrences, making 17.61 %):

6. When you are in a restaurant eating a burger with your friend and he asks you, what is your impression about the restaurant?

My watch is new.

I have visited several places in this town.

I have a date with my friend next week.

It is not what I expected, but it is better than other restaurants.

By saying, "**it is not what I expected**", the speaker states that, the restaurant does not meet his expectation. His expectation is not a part of what is said, which means that the speaker may expect something different. This answer does not directly express the speaker's opinion. The other part of the answer, "**but it is better than other restaurant**", **explains** the positive opinion about the restaurant. The speaker expresses his positive experience. According to the percentage of the correct answers, there are a large number of postgraduates who have the ability to understand implicature. Likewise, item (7.b) also represents the highest frequency of the correct answers for postgraduates' responses, 37 occurrences, making 17.61 %:

7. If your mum asks you, where is your father? What is your answer?

a. Have you heard about the new updates for iPhone?

b. The light in his office is on (He never leaves the

light on).

- c. What did you cook for us today?
- d. I feel tired.

Implicature results from the context and the shared assumption between speaker and hearer rather than explicitly stated. Option (b), "**The light in his office is on (He never leaves the light on)**", does not provide a direct answer to the question, but instead relies on the interlocutors' schemata. This statement indirectly suggests that the father is in his office, because he does not leave the light on if he is not in the office. By using an indirect answer, the listener infers the location of his father, following Grice's principles of conversational implicature. Postgraduates' understanding is reflected by their correct responses. They, whether they are MA, PhD or staff members, have the ability to understand the literal meaning and the meaning that goes beyond what is said. Through their studies and the high level of linguistic abilities, they are able to recognize speech during interactions. So, this is their linguistic abilities are evident. As for the postgraduates', the percentage of the incorrect responses is 5 occurrences, making 2.38%. The least frequency of the correct answers for undergraduates' responses is represented by item (8).

8. If you went to the barber's with your friend and he asked you if you wanted a haircut too, what would you say to him?

I had one yesterday, all I need is Wi-Fi.

My brother is a barber.

The salary is next week.

My mother is a teacher.

For this item, option (a) is the appropriate answer, 33 occurrences, making 8.91 % by undergraduates. This option implicates that, the speaker does not want another haircut. The speaker expresses his disinterest indirectly. Most of the learners lack pragmatic competence in such situations, so, they concentrate on keywords instead of implied meaning. The lowest frequency of the incorrect responses is 41 occurrences, making 11.08 %.

For postgraduates, the least frequency of the correct answers is item (8.a), 28 occurrences, and making 13.33 %. In similar situations as mentioned in item (8) and when they are asked about their preferences, the learners tend to use direct answers. The frequency of the incorrect answers is 14 occurrences, making 6.66 %.

In conclusion, the total percentage of the correct responses for postgraduates (79.49%), is higher than that of undergraduates (73.48%). Undergraduates need to develop their language skills (listening or speaking to have the complete ability to understand

the language in pragmatically different contexts. Alternatively, postgraduates are more exposed to language, therefore they have a satisfactory knowledge in understanding pragmatic meaning.

#### 4.3 Data Analysis and Discussion of Presupposition

Table (3) below contains the numbers and percentages of the correct and incorrect responses that are given by EFL learners (undergraduates and postgraduates).

**Table (3): The Distribution of Undergraduates' and Postgraduates' Responses Regarding the Comprehension of Presupposition.**

Item No.	Undergraduates				Postgraduates			
	Correct answers	%	Incorrect answers	%	Correct answers	%	Incorrect answers	%
11.	49	13.24	25	6.75	29	13.80	13	6.19
12.	19	5.13	55	14.86	14	6.66	28	13.33
13.	43	11.62	31	8.37	34	16.19	8	3.80
14.	45	12.16	29	7.83	28	13.33	14	6.66
15.	24	6.48	50	13.51	23	10.95	19	9.04
Total		48.63		51.32		60.93		39.02

More than a half of EFL postgraduates comprehend presupposition (60.93%). The highest frequency of the correct answers is available in item (13.b), 34 occurrences, making 16.19%:

##### 13. Your friend's question, did you break your leg again? Presupposes that:

a. I am sick. b. I broke my leg before. c. I'm not sure.

d. This is the first time I broke my leg.

The question contains an iterative adverbs (again), which presupposes that something happened before. Therefore, "I broke my leg before", is the suitable presupposition.

Item (12), represents the least frequency of the correct responses, 14 occurrences, making 6.66%:

12. When Noor graduated from school, her family celebrated her graduation, presupposes that:

- a. Noor had no family.
- b. Noor's family was happy with her success.
- c. Noor is still in the same place.
- d. Noor was a student before she graduated.

The learners might have focused on external details rather than implied background assumptions.

Most participants may not have an adequate pragmatic level to recognize such situations. The highest frequency of the incorrect answers is 28 occurrences, making 13.33%. The least frequency of the incorrect answers is represented by item 13, 8 occurrences, making 3.80%.

Regarding the EFL undergraduates are below the average in their comprehension of presupposition (48.63%). Item (11.a) of the test represents the highest frequency of the correct answers for undergraduates (49 occurrences, making 13.24%):

11. Your mother's question, did John return to London? Presupposes that:

- a. John was in London before.
- b. John is currently living in Italy.
- c. John did not visit London.
- d. John is planning to travel to New York.

It is the appropriate proposition for the question. When the speaker asks: "did John return to London or not", this means that John was in London before. The verb (return) refers to John's previous visit to London. Two thirds of the undergraduates choose this answer because they are familiar with such propositions and this means that they have the ability to comprehend presupposition. When someone hears the verb 'return', it means that there was a previous visit or a previous action. Additionally, item (11), represents the least frequency of the incorrect answers, 25 occurrences making 6.75%. Moreover, item (12.d), represents the least frequency of the correct answers for undergraduates; 19 occurrences, making 5.13%. The word "graduation", indicates that Noor was a student, without being a student, she cannot graduate. Undergraduates concentrate on the surface and emotional information, instead of the background assumption; so, most of them choose the incorrect answers. The highest frequency of the incorrect responses is 55 occurrences, making 14.86%.

The total percentage of the correct answers for postgraduates (60.93%) is higher than that of undergraduates (48.63%). Regarding the postgraduates' correct responses, a higher number of EFL postgraduates are able to recognize presupposition and its triggers. Postgraduates have a deeper understanding of pragmatic skills, on the other hand, undergraduates have a limited experience within pragmatic concepts. Also, postgraduates practice the language continuously, therefore, they have advanced experience.

The results of the analysis of the correct and incorrect responses, regarding the comprehension of speech acts, implicature and presupposition, show

that the percentages of postgraduates are higher than those of undergraduates. Regarding the comprehension of speech acts, the results state that, the total percentage of the correct answers for postgraduates 68.07%, is higher than that of undergraduates 58.86%. According to these percentages, a high number of Iraqi EFL postgraduates perform well at the recognition test. Their pragmatic awareness contributes to their comprehension of pragmatic understanding. Postgraduates' responses indicate the importance of their curricula. When curricula are appropriate and well prepared, they contribute and cultivate to EFL learner's academic level, and thus they are able to apply what they have learned even in their daily lives.

Furthermore, the results show that, postgraduates' correct responses regarding the comprehension of implicature, 79.49% is higher than that of undergraduates 73.48%. Similarly, the postgraduates' percentage of the correct answers regarding the comprehension of presupposition 60.93% is higher than those of undergraduates 48.63%. The reasons behind undergraduates' limited comprehension is due to University' materials. They are not adequately prepared to develop learner's pragmatic skills. At the university level, most of the materials concentrate on the grammatical rules more than the pragmatic ones. Their focus of the study is on the theoretical form more than on the practical one. So, some of the EFL learners find it difficult to deal with situations that require thinking and linking speech with context. Another reason for undergraduate's limited ability is time. Lectures are limited to a specific time and may not be sufficient to implant the educational materials in the students' mind. In addition, some laboratories lack educational tools such as computers and headphones, which help train English language students in listening and speaking. Most of the lessons taken by undergraduates and postgraduates focus on linguistic knowledge rather than on language skills which develop pragmatic abilities. Pragmatic skills develop through the real use of language in daily life interaction. Without consistent use of language, the learner's pragmatic abilities will remain limited.

According to what has been arrived at, the questions of the study are answered because the undergraduates' and postgraduates' abilities in comprehending speech acts, implicature and presupposition are measured.

The results show that, postgraduates are better than undergraduates in understanding speech acts, implicature and presupposition. Although

Postgraduates indicate better understanding for pragmatic concepts, but both of them need more training in language skills.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

According to the obtained results of data analysis and discussion, this study arrives at a number of conclusion.

1. The Iraqi EFL postgraduates differ slightly from undergraduates in recognizing speech acts.
2. The Iraqi EFL undergraduates show a limited ability in utilizing indirect speech acts.
3. The Iraqi EFL learners tend to use direct speech acts when they are asked about their preferences.
4. The Iraqi EFL postgraduates are able to understand implicature more than undergraduates.
5. The Iraqi EFL postgraduates are more able than undergraduates to use pragmatic awareness to understand presupposition.
6. The Iraqi EFL postgraduates have advanced experience in understanding complex contexts.
7. The Iraqi EFL undergraduates lack the ability to comprehend and link what is said to appropriate contexts.
8. The Iraqi EFL undergraduates need to focus on the practical side more than the theoretical in their studies.
9. The Iraqi EFL learners need spoken curricula to develop their communicative abilities.
10. The Iraqi EFL postgraduate learners have the ability to comprehend that context affects the implied meaning.
11. The Iraqi EFL postgraduates have a high ability in recognizing pragmatic competence.
12. Some of the materials (whether in speaking or listening) taught to undergraduates in their BA studies are not selected properly to include the suitable activities to promote their pragmatic abilities.
13. EFL postgraduates are better than undergraduates in understanding speech acts, implicature and presupposition. So, all the hypotheses of the study are accepted.

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## APPENDIX

**1. If your colleague came late to the lecture, what could he say to the teacher?**

- a. I apologize for being late.
- b. I'm here now.
- c. What time did the lecture start?
- d. Please don't make me absent.

**2. When your friend asks you, do you want to go for a coffee?**

- a. No.
- b. what kind of coffee do they have?
- c. I've got to prepare for a seminar.
- d. No, I'd rather not.

**3. If your mother finds that her children's room is not tidy, what do you expect her to say to them?**

- a. You have to go to school early tomorrow because you have an exam.
- b. Please, tidy your room before you go out.
- c. Give me my keys.
- d. Go to your appointment with the doctor.

**4. If your friend's father died, what would you tell him?**

- a. Are you Ok?
- b. Death is inevitable.
- c. your father was a friend of our family.
- d. I'm sorry for missing your father.

**5. If your friend told you that he got a driver's license, what would you tell him?**

- a. Congratulations my friend.
- b. Is it easy to get?
- c. How many courses have you taken?
- d. I also have a license.

**6. When you are in a restaurant eating a burger with your friend and he asks you, what is your impression about the restaurant?**

- a. My watch is new.
- b. I have visited several places in this town.
- c. I have a date with my friend next week.
- d. It is not what I expected, but it is better than other restaurants.

**7. If your mum asks you, where is your father? What is your answer?**

- a. Have you heard about the new updates for iPhone?
- b. The light in his office is on (He never leaves the light on).
- c. What did you cook for us today?
- d. I feel tired.

**8. If you went to the barber's with your friend and he asked you if you wanted a haircut too, what would you say to him?**

- a. I had one yesterday, all I need is Wi-Fi.
- b. My brother is a barber.
- c. The salary is next week.
- d. My mother is a teacher.

**9. When your friend asks you, how do I look?**

- a. It is very hot today.
- b. I have an exam.
- c. You look a bit different today.
- d. I like your outfit (untruthful).

**10. You were at the university, what do you say when someone asks you, can you tell me the time?**

- a. My brother studies in London.
- b. Well, the lecture is finished (It is 2:30 pm).
- c. My father has gone to Basra.
- d. There is a celebration at our university.

**11. Your mother's question, did John return to London? Presupposes that:**

- a. John was in London before.
- b. John is currently living in Italy.
- c. John did not visit London.
- d. John is planning to travel to New York.

**12. When Noor graduated from school, her family celebrated her graduation, presupposes that:**

- a. Noor had no family.
- b. Noor's family was happy with her success.
- c. Noor is still in the same place.
- d. Noor was a student before she graduated.

**13. Your friend's question, did you break your leg again? Presupposes that:**

- a. I am sick.
- b. I broke my leg before.
- c. I'm not sure.
- d. This is the first time I broke my leg.

**14. Ali's statement that he regretted not reading for the exam presupposes that:**

- a. Ali passed the exam.
- b. Ali doesn't have an exam.
- c. Ali didn't read for the exam.
- d. Ali took the exam.

**15. Your father's question, did you manage to open the door? Presupposes that:**

- a. I tried to open the door.
- b. The door is very big.
- c. opening the door is very easy.
- d. I want to check if the door is locked first.