

Pragmatic Awareness of Speech Acts, Politeness, and Grice Maxims of Iraqi EFL Postgraduate Students

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Abstract

This study examines postgraduate students' awareness of pragmatic aspects, including Grice Maxims, Politeness, and Direct and Indirect forms of speech. According to Paul Grice's theory of implicature, which is considered one of the most important contributions to pragmatics, this paper discusses how postgraduate students can meet the cooperative principle when communicating effectively. It also outlines how does politeness principles influence obeying or violating the maxims and how is the use of direct or indirect forms of utterances prompted by politeness. Sixteen master's students of Linguistics and Literature were asked to take a multiple-choice test. The test will be represented along with the interpretation of each option given in each item. The initial point that the study investigates if belonging to two different groups (Linguistics and Literature) will result in various performances; this will be supplied with a clear-cut answer in the practical part. The theoretical part summarizes a literature review of the discorsal aspects understudy. In addition to clarifying maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner, the theoretical part discusses direct and indirect speech and how indirect speech is used to communicate perlocutionary effects. The conclusion will summarize the whole study by drawing upon the theoretical and practical parts simultaneously and providing further reasons for the variability and choice of one option over another.

Keywords: direct speech, Grice maxims, indirect speech, politeness, pragmatics awareness, Iraqi EFL postgraduate students

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Introduction

Pragmatics forms the basis of this study. A pragmatic approach focuses on language structure and principles. It examines the relationship between language and context, which is encoded in a language's structure (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatists can analyze discourse using implicature or conversational principles, such as Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) and Leech's Politeness Principle (PP). According to Leech (1983), pragmatics relates the sense and force of an utterance. Depending on the situation, this force may be direct or indirect. In pragmatics, information exchange is the main purpose of communication. Most people cooperate to convey their intentions and implicit meanings through their words. Thus, conversations are cooperative attempts based on shared goals and common ground.

According to Austin's early pragmatic theory, a distinction should be drawn between what is said and what is meant. Later on Grice, who is mainly Austin's student, attempted to go further. That is, to systematize how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from expressed to implied meaning. Grice formulates what is now called the cooperative principle, "Make your conversation on contribution 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" (1975, p. 45).

Politeness is also considered to be one of the essential principles of the discursial aspects of effective communication. Modern studies on politeness is influenced by Paul Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (CP). Due to the CP, meaning-making interactants tend to collaborate by following four maxims: Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner. If one or more of these Maxims is flouted to trigger polite inferences, politeness is triggered. For example, a speech partner might perceive one's sympathy by being more verbose than usual when delivering bad news. Therefore, one may break the Maxim of Quantity by saying more than necessary, but the other may perceive it as polite. Brown and Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983) are two fundamental theories that use a means-to-end approach to explaining politeness.

To this day, Brown and Levinson's framework continues to have a significant impact on this field, providing a universalistic model to capture politeness across languages and cultures. Politeness behavior, according to Brown and Levinson, is a highly logical phenomenon that occurs when the speaker threatens the hearer's public image or face. Politeness emerges with the other's face needs in mind: a speech act might threaten the other's "negative face," their need to be left alone, or "positive face," their wish to be recognized; the speaker picks politeness "strategies" based on the other's perceived face requirements.

The objective of this study is to raise postgraduate students' awareness of discursive aspects, which can be accomplished through pragmatic competence.. It also aims to highlight the importance of pragmatic competence, which has an essential role in communicating effectively. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do post-graduate students observe the cooperative principle when communicating effectively?

2. For what purposes does the speaker use the CP and PP maxims in their conversations regarding illocutionary acts?

The theoretical part of this work consists of three parts: the first one presents a summary of Grice's maxims theory as well as a brief explanation of the cooperative principles, which describe how people interact with one another. The second part describes the concepts of politeness and its strategies and how these strategies can be used by people to maintain a balance in protecting the positive and the negative faces of each other and acting appropriately in social interactions. The third section presents a summary of speech act theory and an explanation of the speech acts related to this study illustrating direct and indirect speech and how perlocutionary effect is communicated using indirect forms of speech. The practical side explicates how the test will be formulated to suit the purposes and aims of the current study. The test will be illustrated along with the interpretation of each option given in each item. Then, the section on data analysis, discussion, and results will be as the following. It will present the choices which the postgraduate students have made and why. The results will show that other elements may lead to mastering discourse means instead of being restricted only to theoretical (textbooks) aspects. They will provide justifications for these variations among students concerning discursal awareness. Finally, the conclusion will sum up the whole study by drawing upon the theoretical part and the practical part, simultaneously providing further reasons that underlie the variability and the choice of one option rather than the other.

Literature Review

Grice Maxims

The purpose of language is to convey and inform something through communication. Language is primarily used to transmit information, explain feelings, and maintain social relationships, so maintaining life is vital. Besides that, language is a way to communicate with others, which is done through speaking. For a conversation to occur, both speakers and listeners must be present. Grice's four conversational maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner (Grice, 1989) are general rules that speakers adhere to, in that it is conspicuous if a speaker infringes upon such a maxim. In that situation, if the literal meaning of a speech is unsuitable or makes no sense to the hearer, the hearer will infer that there is a nonliteral meaning "behind" the utterance, which fulfills all of the conversational maxims once again. This process operates because of Grice's cooperation principle, which is the most crucial colloquial concept over all others. (Bublitz, 2011) According to Grice (1975), participants are expected to make a "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 they are engaged" (p.45).

Cooperative Principle

Cooperation requires that what people say in a conversation furthers the conversation's purpose. There is a reciprocal relationship between cooperative principles: speakers observe them,

and listeners assume that speakers are watching them. This allows for the possibility of implicatures, which are meanings not explicitly conveyed in what is said, but that can nonetheless be inferred. Grice proposed the notion of conversation according to the mutual code of cooperation. (Grice, 1975) In other words, the cooperative principle tries to work fundamental principles significantly by Humans when they speak (Davies, 2008).

Also, Grice offered a general rule that members in discussion ought to take after. In this way, he used the term "implicature." Conversational implicature causes us with the goal that our conditions succeed more than if they were actually "told," because our verbal trades are, at any rate to some degree, a cooperative effort; "each member in their perceiving of a typical reason commonly got heading and so on. "Thought maxims (and sub-adages), spoken to in the execution, add to comes about as to helpful general rule." (Klemencic & Vogrincic, 2014, p. 2)

Davies (2008) says that when the superficial meaning of a speech does not come with Grice's maxim. Still, the situation offers that the speaker is interrogated with the cooperative principle, we must go away from the superficial to discover the implicit meaning of speaking (cited in Hadi, 2013). Few authors have hesitated to use Grice's conversational maxims. Like; Horn (1984) specified just three maxims, and Sperber and Wilson (1986) neglected the texture of maxims and condensed on the concept of relevance. Maxims indicate what members need to do with a specific end goal to chat in a maximally effective, balanced, and cooperative way (Levinson, 2007). Speakers can be said to cooperate in a conversation or create a pleasant conversation if they follow the whole maxims. Consequently, if they do not follow one of the maxims, they might be called uncooperative or violate the maxim in the discussion, or create an unharmonious conversation directly. But if they beak the maxims, they might be able to create unified communication because everyone will not tell someone what they need to know. Someone may have to break the maxims to maintain social harmony. The principle describes how effective communication in conversation is achieved in social everyday situations, especially in daily interaction. Grice has proposed four maxims:

Maxim of Quantity

In the Maxim of Quantity, speakers should give as much information as is necessary and should not provide too little or too much information. According to Grice, this maxim explains a certain kind of regularity in conversational behavior about the amount of information provided at each turn. The maxim of quantity refers to how much information is shared in conversations. During a conversation, the maxim of quantity requires you to:

- i. Contribute as much information as you can (for exchanges).
- ii. Do not add more information than is necessary to your contribution. An example of violating the rule is shown in the following:

A: Do you have school tomorrow?

B: I have classes all day, but I must go to the doctor when I'm finished .

In the example, B violates the maxim of quantity because B provides too much information rather than yes or no answers (Davies, 2008).

Maxim of Quality

The speaker is supposed to be sincere, to be saying something that they believe corresponds to reality. It is assumed that they will not make any false statements or claims for which they lack evidence. According to Grice, this maxim explains certain kinds of regularity in conversational behavior regarding the authenticity of the information provided at each turn. The maxim of quality requires the speakers' contribution. This maxim states:

- i. Make sure your contribution is actual:
- ii. Never say something you believe to be false.
- iii. Never say something that you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relevant

Maxim of relevance states that the speaker is supposed to be saying something relevant to what has been said before. Grice proposes this maxim as an explanation for a certain kind of regularity in conversational behavior concerning the relevance of the information provided at each conversation turn. When engaged in conversation, the maxim of relation needs you to be relevant. Maxim of relevance requests the speaker to provide pertinent information to the discussion, avoiding things that are not relevant to the discussion. Consider the following example:

A: How is the weather today?

B: It is rainy and cloudy .

In the example, B gives accurate information relevant to A's question (Davies,2008).

Maxim of Manner

The speaker should be brief, orderly, and avoid ambiguity and obscurity. Grice presents this maxim as an explanation for a certain kind of regularity in conversational behavior according to the way information is given at each conversation turn. The maxim of manner is associated with how something is said in the conversation. When engaged in conversation, the maxim of manner requests you to be perspicuous. Example of violating the rule :

A: How is Kate today?

B: She's the usual .

In the example, B violates the maxim by responding with an ambiguous statement; the perceptions of Kate could be different (Davies, 2008). Bach and Harnish (1984) observe: "The speaker compromises the presumption (maxim) of manner (tacit) to avoid the offense to the hearer or the embarrassment to himself that explicit language would engender." (p. 99)

Politeness

Politeness describes a social norm or a set of prescriptive social rules. Many linguists have aimed to research politeness, including Brown and Levinson (1987), who developed their "face theory" based on

the principles of our desire to be liked and not to be imposed. *Politeness* is using communicative strategies to create and maintain social harmony. This can be done in various ways:

- 1- Being contextually appropriate
- 2- Following social and cultural norms
- 3- Being socially positive by addressing face needs (Online Reference1).

The concept of politeness is essential in interpreting why people choose to say things in a certain way in written or spoken discourse and why they choose to:

A- Flout a maxim.

B- Convey an illocutionary act indirectly rather than directly.

Brown and Levinson (1978) talked widely about politeness. Their essential argument can be summarized as follows:

"When we enter into social relationships, we have to acknowledge and show an awareness of face. This is very much reflected in the way we interact with one another." (p. 122) The face is the public self-image.

Politeness Strategies

The purpose of politeness strategies is to spare the hearer's face, i.e., to avoid embarrassment or discomfort. Generally, we respect each other's self-image expectations; we consider others' feelings and do not commit Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Face Threatening Acts are acts that violate the hearer's need to preserve their self-esteem and to be respected. For example, when you ask a classmate to lend you his class notes, you would be infringing on his right to his notes. i.e., you would be imposing on him to give you something that is his. Thus, Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) are often inevitable. Speakers can approve FTA with negative politeness that respects the hearer's negative face. Or they can ratify the FTA with positive politeness, which respects the hearers' positive face. Negative politeness is manifested in this study in the final fourteenth item, where the second speaker gives his account indirectly to not impose on the first speaker's privacy. The social distance is instantiated in the current study using positive face, which is reflected using mitigating devices and expression, e.g., "would you," "please," ... etc. Face Threatening Act is shown in one of the options of the item where the invitation may be refuted resulting in Negative Politeness. Such acts will influence and be influenced by factors like age, social distance, degree of formality, role, and status (Paltridge, 2012).

In social interactions, people use four politeness strategies to maintain a balance between protecting the positive and negative faces of one another.

1. Off-record (Least direct- Most polite)
2. Negative politeness
3. Positive politeness
4. On record baldly (Most direct- Least polite)

These strategies would look like this if viewed continuously:

□			□
Off-record	Negative Politeness	Positive politeness	On-record baldly
Least direct	Less direct	More direct	Most direct
Most Polite	Very polite	Less polite	Least polite

Therefore, the less direct you are, the more polite you seem. In contrast, the blunter you express your needs, the less polite you appear. If you want to borrow your neighbor's vacuum cleaner, ask like this:

Our vacuum cleaner Could I, please, borrow your Susu, dear, I need to borrow Get the vacuum cleaner !

□-----□

Off-Record Negative politeness Positive politeness On-Record baldly
(Online Reference 2).

Off-Record Strategy

An example about the off-record strategy :

“Our vacuum cleaner just broke down! The floors are very dusty ”!

When is this strategy appropriate? When one knows his neighbor very well, or when he knows his neighbor is the type who does not like lending their instruments and devices. In this context, there is no mention of an act to be asked. One does not say that you want to borrow the vacuum cleaner directly. The need is only hinted at, not mentioned: By hinting at it, you are very respectful of your neighbor's autonomy. i.e., you are giving their the option of not taking the hint, and pretending that they do not understand you! This strategy respects the hearer's possession and right to be autonomous and not violated by others.

Positive Politeness

This strategy is used when the social distance is less between the speaker and the hearer; they are close to each other (friends). Linguistic features which show closeness are:

1. Use a nickname addressing the hearer: “Susu”
2. Use an endearment term: “dear”
3. Use the definite article “the” instead of “your”
4. The time expression “right away”
5. Considering the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, how would the hearer feel if negative politeness was used instead?
6. The hearer would feel like a stranger because the speaker infringes on her positive face, i.e., her right to be liked and part of a group (a friend).

On-Record Baldly

This strategy seems to sound very impolite (e.g., give me your pen), but there are contexts in which it is the only suitable strategy such as a very close sister. In this context, the act is mentioned clearly and bluntly:”

- 1- Use the imperative syntactic structure (direct directive): “bring me”
- 2- Use the definite article “the” instead of “your”
- 3- No time specified (Paltridge, 2012, pp. 38- 57).

Leech also suggested a relationship between politeness and indirectness; the more indirect/off-record a suggestion or request (for example, the *'I'm really thirsty'*), the more polite the utterance is perceived to be. Therefore this 'saves face' is more than a direct request (Online Reference 3).

Direct Speech Act

An utterance is considered a direct speech act when there is a direct relationship between the structure and the communicative function of the word. The following examples display that the form corresponds with the function:

A declarative is used to make a statement: "You wear a seat belt."

An interrogative is used to ask a question: "Do you wear a seat belt?"

An imperative is used to make a command: "Wear a seat belt!"

Direct speech acts therefore explicitly illustrate the intended meaning the speaker has behind making that utterance (Yule, 1996).

Indirect Speech Act

Searle stated that an indirect speech is "performed by means of another" (Searle, 1995, p. 93). That means that there is an indirect relationship between the form and the function of the utterance. The following examples show that the form does not correspond with the function:

An interrogative is used to make a request: "Could you pass the salt?"

A declarative is used to make a request: "You're standing in front of the TV" (Yule, 1996, p. 56). People tend to use indirect speech acts mainly in connection with politeness since they thus diminish the unpleasant message contained in requests and orders for instance. However, politeness is not the only motivation for indirectness (Leech, 1983). People also use indirect strategies when they want to make their speech more interesting, when they want to reach goals different from their partners', or when they want to increase the force of the message communicated (Thomas, 1995). The speaker does not explicitly state the intended meaning behind the utterance. It is the hearer's task to analyze the utterance to understand its meaning (Online Reference 4). The hearer uses an indirect strategy, relying on the speaker's ability to read between the lines (Harnish, 1984).

As Searle refers, to understand what is really meant, not only the context but also other illocutionary force indicators, including mainly stress and intonation are essential (Searle, 1976). In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he says by relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer" (Searle, 1976, p. 31). It is the speaker who can influence the meaning. "What is added in the indirect cases is not any additional or different sentence meaning, but additional speaker meaning" (Searle, 1976, p. 42).

Methods

This study follows a qualitative design. The characteristic of the descriptive qualitative research design is shown in the purpose of the study in the enhancement of the Cooperative principles and politeness principles, the violation of the Cooperative principles and politeness principles, and the reasons for applying them. The study aims at uncovering and compare the similarities and differences between these two groups. The study aims at disclosing whether there are significant, balanced, or minor differences since these MA students belong to two different groups (Linguistics and Literature). The awareness of MA EFL students will be elicited by giving them a test that involves a set of situations. The test has been designed by drawing upon everyday life situations whether formal or informal. For each situation, three options are given. Each choice manifests a degree of discourse awareness. So, their selections will instantiate the degree of discourse awareness they have whether consciously or unconsciously. The aspects of discourse awareness included in this study are *Grice Maxims, Politeness, Direct, and Indirect speech acts*. The answers of Master students concerning discourse awareness will not only be a reflection of their academic study, but also a reflection of the accumulated social and cultural knowledge.

Participants

This study aims at investigating the discursal awareness of postgraduate students. The number of participants in this study was 16 MA students. They have been selected from The College of Arts/ Department of English/ university of Baghdad, eight from Literature and eight from Linguistics. The pragmatic awareness of MA EFL students will be elicited by giving them a test that involves a set of situations. Most of the students selected in the current study are capable of understanding direct forms of speech.

Research Instruments

Test

Sixteen master's students of linguistics and literature were asked to take a multiple-choice test. The test will be represented along with the interpretation of each option given in each item. The first item of the test indicates three options:

- a- a rough answer (impolite) that may lead the customer to leave the whole place
- b- a polite answer within mitigating devices
- c- a complete answer that shows the use of politeness strategies, mitigating devices, and giving an additional offer to help the customer.

The second item examines the maxim of quality:

- a- shows politeness but it is not punctuated
- b- combines politeness with punctuality
- c- also lacks specification but is less generic than the first one.

The third item scrutinizes the maxim of quantity:

- a- violates the maxims of quality which leaves no place to examine the maxim of quantity in this situation specifically
- b- validates the maxim of quality but violates the maxim of quantity
- c- is the optimal answer obeying both the maxim of quality and the maxim of quantity.

The fifth item tests the awareness of direct and indirect uses of linguistic forms:

- a- shows direct use of language supplemented with a polite strategy (would you)
- b- shows a direct use of language (bald on record strategy) and the speaker of this point is risking losing face in public
- c- shows an off-record strategy whose perlocutionary effect may either be understood by the listener or not.

The sixth item shows the awareness of:

- a- discourse markers
- b- directness
- c- mitigating devices to lessen the fierce of the opposed opinion.

The seventh item reflects the knowledge of the social class:

- a- low
- b- middle
- c- high.

The eighth item shows again the comprehension of direct and indirect forms of speech with

- a- shows null comprehension
- b- showing the perfect knowledge of direct forms of speech which is superficial in this situation specifically
- c- shows an optimal knowledge of the indirect use of language and supports it with the reasons which underlie the current state.

The ninth item indicates the awareness of degrees of solidarity:

- a- distant subordinate
- b- close subordinate,
- c- close superordinate.

The tenth item examines the maxim of relation using three options:

- a- general,
- b- very optimal perspicuous answer which disambiguates and uncovers everything
- c- an irrelevant answer.

The eleventh item manifests:

- a- a direct strategy of politeness depending on which the speaker may lose face by refusal;
- b- a brief answer so as not to float the manner maxim resulting consequently in insufficient communicative information
- c- giving a blurred addition to serve a phatic function and to maintain the natural state of communication.

The twelfth item displays:

- a- a relevant answer but lacks the utilization of polite and mitigating devices like please, if you may,... etc.
- b- an optimal relevant polite answer subsuming the mitigating device "if you don't mind"
- c- a relevant but surplus answer providing additional irrelevant information.

The thirteenth item shows the following:

- a- a relevant and polite strategy but it violates the maxim of quantity
- b- a relevant, optimal, and polite strategy which follows the maxim of quantity
- c- Impolite answer is given using an imperative form.

The final fourteenth item indicates various interpretations which result from the use of indirect strategies:

- a- an indirect response whose perlocutionary effect aims at preventing the first speaker from smoking. The second speaker supports his position using scientific evidence.
- b- a direct clear accurate answer, here, the unhealthy nature of smoking is uncontroversial for the second speaker, it is taken for granted.
- c- an indirect answer implies that the second speaker has given up smoking followed by an obvious statement to warn the first speaker about the bad effects of smoking. All this is made using indirect speech act techniques for the sake of politeness strategies so as not to threaten the first speaker's face, not to enforce the first speaker's privacy,... etc.

Results

The multiple-choice test has been distributed to 16 Master's students from the College of Arts/ Department of the English/ University of Baghdad, eight students of linguistics and eight students of literature whose answers show that they are aware of discursal means, but they vary in the use. Their answers reflect their everyday life experience rather than being restricted only to academic textbooks only, because students of literature do not study these aspects at all, yet, their performance on the test is very similar to that of students of linguistics. In some situations, students of literature master the use of discourse mean better than those of linguistics. So, their answers reflect social, cultural, and everyday experiences and not necessarily academic or theoretical experiences. This observation is similar to what Grice (1975) remarks that the cooperative principle describes how effective communication in conversation is achieved in social everyday situations, especially in daily interaction. The following table represents the frequencies of the postgraduate students' awareness of quality, quantity, relation, and manner maxims as well as politeness, and direct and indirect speech.

Table 1. *The frequencies of the postgraduate students' awareness*

	Frequencies
Quality	62.5
Quantity	25

Relation	93.75
Manner	75
Politeness	81.25
Direct Speech	87.5
Indirect Speech	50

The table captures the times in which these discursal aspects have been recognized by the students. The frequency of the maxim of quality is 62.5 % which means that 10 students out of the selected data have recognized this maxim. Concerning maxim of quantity, only four students are aware of this maxim which is why it gains a frequency of 25%. Turning to the relation maxim, the frequency of differentiating it reaches 93.75% because 15 students out of 16 (from literature and linguistics) discriminate it. Manner and politeness maxims are interrelated and their degrees of awareness from the students' perspective are similar to a certain extent, the former is distinguished by 12 students and the latter by 13 students respectively resulting in the frequencies 75% and 81.25% successively. The students are capable of distinguishing the underlying meaning of utterance when it conforms to the linguistics form. Depending on the data of the current study, the direct forms have been selected by almost all students (14) which result in a frequency of 87.5 %. Only two students have not recognized it. When matters get complex, the ability to understand indirect forms of utterance where the linguistic form does not correspond to inner meaning may be lessened and may be maintained by only a few individuals. Concerning the data of the current study, the indirect forms have been figured out only by half of the subjects eight which results in a frequency of 50%. The range of the awareness of these discursal aspects is captured in the following figure.

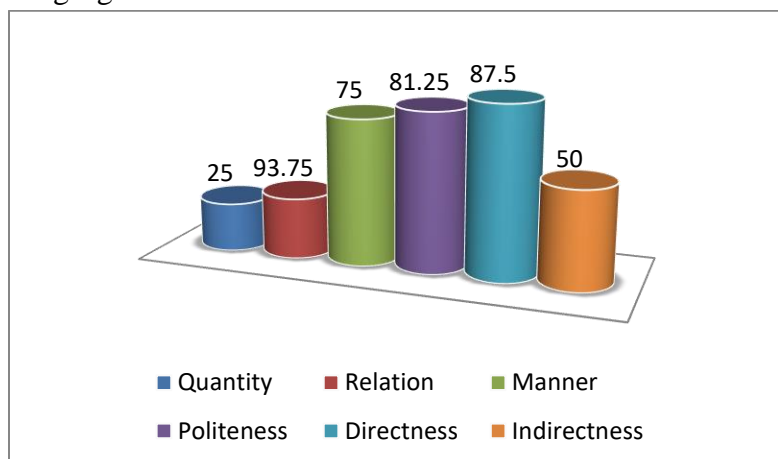


Figure 1. The range of awareness of the discursal aspects

After providing a quantitative account of the data as is shown above supported by the table and the figure, we now come to the qualitative aspect of the analysis, which is the core of the current study. In the first item, both groups of students mostly show complete awareness of

politeness strategies and mitigating devices, and they give an additional offer to help the customer. Few students have chosen a rough (impolite) answer or a polite insufficient answer. In the second item, most students show politeness and punctuality via choosing (b) and politeness without punctuality (a) is rarely chosen. Regarding the third item, all students verify and follow the maxims of quality and quantity by choosing (c) with little variation. In item four, (b) is selected to obey the manner maxim (to be brief and accurate).

Concerning the fifth item, all students except one who chooses the rough expression show a direct use of language supplemented with a polite strategy (would you). In the sixth item, the answer of students can be distributed equally among the awareness of directness (b), mitigating devices (c), and discourse markers (a). The seventh item shows that the students have middle-class awareness mostly (c), low-class awareness frequently (a), and high-class awareness rarely (b). While answering the eighth item, the students form three camps: those with indirect awareness (c), those who comprehend the superficial (direct) forms of speech (b), and those with null comprehension (a), here, the students even do not approach a degree of the required message. In the ninth item, the lexical choice of the students shows their awareness of the linguistic use when dealing with close superordinate (a), close subordinate (c), and distant subordinate (b). In the tenth item, most students obey the maxim of relation, and the general and the irrelevant answers (a) and (c) are rarely given.

In the eleventh item, the students' answers arranged along a hierarchy with those on the top, which correspond to the use of a polite direct strategy accompanied with an invitation (a) but in this case, the speaker may lose face in public. The answer that is in the middle of the hierarchy is (b); it is presented to avoid the violation of the manner maxim which results in incomplete communicative information. The bottom of the hierarchy is represented by giving additional blurred information for the sake of phatic communion and to maintain the natural state of communication. In the twelfth item, all students show optimal relevance by selecting a brief polite, and relevant answer which subsumes mitigating devices "if you don't mind." Only one student has chosen the suitable third option, but it is surplus with additional irrelevant information. In the thirteenth item, all students show optimal, relevant, and polite awareness concerning restaurant situations and they obey the maxim of quantity as well. Concerning the final fourteenth item, students tremendously choose the indirect answer, which is used for the sake of politeness strategy so as not to threaten the first speaker's face, not to impose on his privacy,.... etc. Only one student has chosen the direct clear answer (b) where the unhealthy nature of smoking is uncontroversial to the second speaker, it is taken for granted.

Conclusion

This study aims to raise students' awareness of discursive aspects, which can be accomplished through pragmatic competence. According to the analysis of the students' answers, these answers have reflected the degree of awareness of discursive aspects and show that the students' awareness is analogue (more or less) rather than digital (present or absent). The variability of their answers

can be attributed to regional and social factors. The students show essential comprehension of quality, manner, and relation maxims, but sometimes they do not characterize the maxim of quantity. They present surplus answers believing that through such a strategy they will preserve the natural state of communication. Other times, they give shrunken insufficient answers so as not to infringe on other maxims. They rarely distinguish between the polite (show me the way if you don't mind) and impolite (show me the way) forms of utterance. Both groups of students rarely recognize mitigation devices and discourse markers. When matters get complicated, the students may lose the awareness of one or more of these discursal dimensions, if not all, and consequently may choose irrelevant answers. This study shows that despite the differences (educational, social, regional, biological, economic, etc.) people have, their awareness of discourse may be similar to a certain degree. The discursal aspects are acquired depending on a general or personal experience and are not subjected to formal situations (schools or colleges). Discursal knowledge can be adapted depending on the situation, participants, and the surrounding environment. Therefore, the students' answers have shown similar discourse knowledge to a certain extent. I think that this is the result of interaction with each other and adaptation to each other or the identical academic institution (Department of English/ College of the Arts/ University of Baghdad).

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Appendices

Appendix A

Test

In each situation you have three utterances. Choose the most appropriate one and put (✓) next to it.

- 1- Hala asks the shop assistant if he has another size, so she says:
"Do you have only this size?"
The shop assistant answers:
A- Only this size is available.
B- I'm afraid I don't.
C- I don't, but I have another model that may fit you.
- 2- Ahmed wants to borrow Hamlet for Shakespeare from the library, so he says:
A- I would like to borrow a book.
B- I would like to borrow Hamlet for Shakespeare.
C- I would like to borrow Shakespeare.
- 3- Suha and Mona at the graduation party held by the dean.
Suha: Hello, you must be Mona from the geography department, Right?
Mona replies:
A- No, I'm Mona but I'm from the department of English.
B- Yes, I'm Mona from the department of Geography from section A.
C- Yes, I'm Mona from the department of Geography.
- 4- In a college interview, the interviewer asks Ahmed: May I ask you why you are interested to join our department.
Ahmed answers:
A- Your department has an impressive reputation; I think is one of your students may release my potential.
B- Joining your department may grant me a range of chances after graduation.

- C- Because I don't have another choice.
- 5- Sherif asks Redwa to show him the way to the library.
A- I don't know how to get to the library. Radwa would you mind showing me the way.
B- Radwa show me the way.
C- Sherif is looking forward and talking to himself "how can I get to the library" while Radwa is nearby.
- 6- Ahmed asks his friend Ali: Are you interested in Phonology or Syntax?
Ali:
A- Oh, I'm interested in um... Phonology, butI don't have problems with syntax.
B- In phonology, what about you?
C- Unfortunately, I'm interested in neither.
- 7- Baher: Hello, I'd like to book a flight.
Travel agent: Ok, well, there is a flight on the morning of August 18. It is 6000 pounds.
Baher:
A- Ouch, can you find a cheaper flight?
B- Ok, I'll take it.
C- What about another one with 3000 pounds.
- 8- Mona: The class today is very hot.
Zeki:
A- No, not really.
B- Yeah, a little bit, turn on the air conditioner if you like.
C- Yeah, because they do not turn on the air conditioner, I'll turn it on.
- 9- Maher: Hello Nabil, what have you done yesterday in the job interview?
Nabil: bad news.
Maher:
A- Don't worry Mr. Nabil. I'm sure you will find one because you are well-qualified person.
B- Don't worry Mr. Nabil. I'm sure you will find one.
C- Don't worry Nabil. Finding a job is a long and complicated process.
- 10- Waleed calls the customer service to complain.
Waleed: I bought a smartphone from your store, and it needs to be repaired.
Customer service:
A- Can you tell me what the problem is?
B- Can you give the qualities of your smartphone and the problem that needs to be fixed?
C- Are you sure that you bought this smartphone from our company.
- 11- Sally: Are you reading the same poem, Suha?
Suha:
A- Yes, it is interesting, why don't you join me?
B- Yes.
C- Not totally, I'm skimming other new poems as well.
- 12- Bella asks Sam if he wants 'a cup of tea'.
Sam:
A- I want a cup of tea.
B- Yes, if you don't mind.
C- A cup of tea. You know the tea is made from the leaves of a bush called *Camellia Sinesis*.
- 13- The Waitress asks Mr. Smith if he has ordered something.
Mr. Smith:
A- Yes, Haddock and chips, please. It is an hot Italian meal.
B- Yes, Haddock and chips, please.

C- Haddock and chips.

14- John offers a cigarette to his friend, Nuha: "Have a cigarette".

Nuha:

A- Have you ever heard the report that cigarette can cause severe health issues to all organs of the body.

B- I'm trying to give up, because it is unhealthy.

C- No, thanks. And I think you should not as well.

Appendix B

Samples of the Subjects' Answers

S1

1. Hala asks the shop assistant if he has another size, so she says:

"Do you have only this size"?

The shop assistant answers:

A- Only this size is available✓.

B- I'm afraid I don't.

C- I don't, but I have another model that may fit you.

2. Ahmed wants to borrow Hamlet for Shakespeare from the library, so he says:

A- I would like to borrow a book.

B- I would like to borrow Hamlet for Shakespeare✓.

C- I would like to borrow Shakespeare .

3. Suha and Mona at the graduation party held by the dean.

Suha: Hello, you must be Mona from the geography department, Right?

Mona replies:

A- No, I'm Mona but I'm from the department of English.

B- Yes, I'm Mona from the department of Geography from section A.

C- Yes, I'm Mona from the department of Geography✓.

4. In a college interview, the interviewer asks Ahmed: May I ask you why you are interested to join our department.

Ahmed answers:

A- Your department has an impressive reputation; I think being one of your students may release my potential✓.

B- Joining your department may grant me a range of chances after graduation.

C- Because I don't have another choice.

5. Sherif asks Redwa to show him the way to the library.

A- I don't know how to get to the library. Radwa would you mind showing me the way✓.

B- Radwa show me the way.

C- Sherif is looking forward and talking to himself, "how can I get to the library" while Radwa is nearby.

6. Ahmed is asking his friend Ali: Are you interested in Phonology or Syntax?

Ali:

A- Oh, I'm interested in um.... Phonology, butI don't have problems with syntax.

B- In phonology, what about you?✓

C- Unfortunately, I'm interested in neither.

7. Baher: Hello, I'd like to book a flight.

Travel agent: Ok, well, there is a flight on the morning of August 18. It is 6000 pounds.

Baher:

A- Ouch, can you find a cheaper flight?

B- Ok, I'll take it✓.

C- What about another one with 3000 pounds?

8. Mona: The class today is very hot.

Zeki:

A- No, not really.

B- Yeah, a little bit turn on the air conditioner if you like .

C- Yeah, because they do not turn on the air conditioner, I'll turn it on√ .

9. Maher: Hello Nabil, what have you done yesterday in the job interview?

Nabil: bad news.

Maher:

A- Don't worry Mr. Nabil. I'm sure you will find one because you are well-qualified person.

B- Don't worry Mr. Nabil. I'm sure you will find one.

C- Don't worry Nabil. Finding a job is a long and complicated process√ .

10. Waleed calls the customer service to complain .

Waleed: I bought a smartphone from your store, and it needs to be repaired.

Customer service:

A- Can you tell me what the problem is√ ?

B- Can you give the qualities of your smartphone and the problem that needs to be fixed?

C- Are you sure that you bought this smartphone from our company?

11. Sally: Are you reading the same poem, Suha?

Suha:

A- Yes, it is interesting, why don't you join me?

B- Yes.

C- Not totally, I'm skimming other new poems as well√ .

12. Bella asks Sam if he wants 'a cup of tea.'

Sam:

A- I want a cup of tea.

B- Yes, if you don't mind√ .

C- A cup of tea. You know the tea is made from the leaves of a bush called Camellia Sinesis.

13. The Waitress asks Mr. Smith if he has ordered something.

Mr. Smith:

A- Yes, Haddock and chips, please. It is a hot Italian meal.

B- Yes, Haddock and chips, please√ .

C- Haddock and chips.

14. John offers a cigarette to his friend, Nuha: "Have a cigarette."

Nuha:

A- Have you ever heard the report that cigarettes can cause severe health issues to all organs of the body .

B- I'm trying to give up, because it is unhealthy.

C- No, thanks. And I think you should not as well. √

S2:

1. Hala asks the shop assistant if he has another size, so she says:

"Do you have only this size"?

The shop assistant answers:

A- Only this size is available(√) .

B- I'm afraid I don't.

C- I don't, but I have another model that may fit you.

2. Ahmed wants to borrow Hamlet for Shakespeare from the library, so he says:

A- I would like to borrow a book(√) .

B- I would like to borrow Hamlet for Shakespeare.

C- I would like to borrow Shakespeare.

3. Suha and Mona at the graduation party held by the dean.

Suha: Hello, you must be Mona from the geography department, Right?

Mona replies:

A- No, I'm Mona but I'm from the department of English.

B- Yes, I'm Mona from the department of Geography from section A.

C- Yes, I'm Mona from the department of Geography(√) .

4. In a college interview, the interviewer asks Ahmed: May I ask you why you are interested to join our department.

Ahmed answers:

A- Your department has an impressive reputation; I think being one of your students may release my potentials.

B- Joining your department may grant me a range of chances after graduation(√) .

C- Because I don't have another choice.

5. Sherif asks Redwa to show him the way to the library.

A- I don't know how to get to the library. Radwa would you mind showing me the way(√) .

B- Radwa show me the way.

C- Sherif is looking forward and talking to himself "how can I get to the library" while Radwa is nearby.

6. Ahmed is asking his friend Ali: Are you interested in Phonology or Syntax .

Ali:

A- Oh, I'm interested in um.... Phonology, butI don't have problems with syntax.

B- In phonology, what about you(√) .

C- Unfortunately, I'm interested in neither .

7. Baher: Hello, I'd like to book a flight.

Travel agent: Ok, well, there is a flight on the morning of August 18. It is 6000 pounds.

Baher:

A- Ouch, can you find a cheaper flight.

B- Ok, I'll take it.

C- What about another one with 3000 pounds(√) .

8. Mona: The class today is very hot.

Zeki:

A- No, not really.

B- Yeah, little bit turn on the air conditioner if you like(√) .

C- Yeah, because they do not turn on the air conditioner, I'll turn it on.

9. Maher: Hello Nabil, what have you done yesterday in the job interview?

Nabil: bad news.

Maher:

A- Don't worry Mr. Nabil. I'm sure you will find one because you are well qualified person(√) .

B- Don't worry Mr. Nabil. I'm sure you will find one.

C- Don't worry Nabil. Finding a job is a long and complicated process.

10. Waleed calls the customer service to complain .

Waleed: I bought a smartphone from your store, and it needs to be repaired.

Customer service:

A- Can you tell me what the problem is?

B- Can you give the qualities of your smartphone and the problem that needs to be fixed(√) ?

C- Are you sure that you bought this smartphone from our company.

11. Sally: Are you reading the same poem, Suha?

Suha:

A- Yes, it is interesting, why don't you join me?

B- Yes.

C- Not totally, I'm skimming other new poems as well(√) .

12. Bella asks Sam if he wants 'a cup of tea.'

Sam:

A- I want a cup of tea.

B- Yes, if you don't mind(√) .

C- A cup of tea. You know the tea is made from the leaves of a bush called Camellia Sinesis.

13. The Waitress asks Mr. Smith if he has ordered something.

Mr. Smith:

A- Yes, Haddock and chips, please. It is an Italian hot meal.

B- Yes, Haddock and chips, please(√) .

C- Haddock and chips.

14. John offers cigarette to his friend, Nuha: "Have a cigarette."

Nuha:

A- Have you ever heard the report that cigarette can cause severe healthy issues to all organs of the body .

B- I'm trying to give up, because it is unhealthy.

C- No, thanks. And I think you should not as well. (√)