

## **EFL Students 'Level of Pragmatic Competence With Regard to Pragmatic Comprehension : an Explorotay Study**

مستوى الكفاءة التداولية لدى الطلبة العراقيين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية فيما يتعلق بالفهم التداولي:  
دراسة استقصائية

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study investigated the significance of teaching pragmatic competence in EFL Iraqi context to contribute to the literature review of this area. The study measured EFL Iraqi student's level of pragmatic competence by exploring one central aspects of receptive pragmatic competence, namely, Pragmatic Comprehension. Then, to achieve its aims. the study utilised a quantitative approach, where two hundred- forty EFL Iraqi students, from Kerbala, Babylon, and Al-Qadysiah universities, participated . Then, using SPSS, the quantitative data is examined. Its results showed that there is an apparent lack of pragmatic competence among EFL student. The study, finally, sets a section on recommendations, providing pedagogical ones for the Iraqi educational systems. For instance, one recommendation is to prioritise teaching pragmatics by investigating how much pragmatic information is covered in their courses and whether pragmatic competence is addressed in the Iraqi curriculum.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language(EFL).Pragmatic Competence, Pragmatic Comprehension, Exploratory Study

### **المستخلص**

تبحث هذه الدراسة في أهمية تدريس الكفاءة التداولية في السياق العراقي. حيث تقيس الدراسة مستوى الكفاءة التداولية للطلبة العراقيين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية بالكشف عن احدى الجوانب المستقبلية الاساسيه من الكفاءة التداولية (الفهم التداولي). ومن ثم، لتحقيق أهدافها، استخدمت الدراسة نهجاً كمياً، حيث شارك بها مئتين واربعين طالب من جامعات كربلاء وبابل والقادسية. بعد ذلك، باستخدام SPSS، تم فحص البيانات الكمية. أظهرت نتائجها ان هناك نقص واضح في الكفاءة العملية بين الطلاب العراقيين الناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية، الذي يعود الى اسباب عديدة منها . أخيراً، تحدد الدراسة قسماً للتوصيات، حيث توفر قسماً تربوياً للنظم التعليمية العراقية . فعلى سبيل المثال، تتمثل إحدى التوصيات في إعطاء الأولوية لتدريس البراغماطية من خلال بحث مقدار المعلومات العملية التي تغطيها دوراتهم وما إذا كانت الكفاءة العملية قد عولجت في المناهج الدراسية العراقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية، الكفاءة التداولية، الفهم التداولي، دراسة استقصائية

## **1.INTRODUCTION**

In EFL environments, particularly in the Iraqi environment where teaching pragmatic is a neglected aspect within the process of teaching language, it was discovered that EFL Iraqi students are unable to comprehend and produce English, which is their foreign language, appropriately in its social context when they try to speak .Furthermore, English language majors and graduates in Iraq struggle with communicating in the language, both in academic statements and even in situational translations of street (Hussein et al., 2020). This is ,of course, results from a lack of

pragmatic competence(PC). More importantly, despite the growing interest in teaching pragmatic in many academic procedures, little research has been done on how teaching pragmatic affects Iraqi EFL learners because most Iraqi EFL instructors lack the necessary pedagogical knowledge to teach pragmatic (i.e., they do not use the primary strategies to promote student communication) (Hussein et al., 2020). As a result, when utilising English language in social and academic contexts, Iraqi learners appear to communicate less. Hence, this study aims to investigating Iraqi EFL college students '(of Kerbala, Babylon, Al-Qadysiah) level of pragmatic comprehension as being one central component of receptive pragmatic competence. It hypothesize that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of Iraqi EFL student's 'level of pragmatic competenc among Kerbala, Babylon, and Al-Qadysiah universities. To the achieve stusy's aims, several procedures are followed such as: 1. Presenting a theoretical background on pragmatic competence from the cognitive perspectives; 2. Choosing and selecting the population and the context for the present study; 3. Constructing the instruments of the study, namely of pragmatic reading test; 4. Conducting a pilot study to ensure the validity and the reliability of the test; 5. Presenting the analysed data and discussing its quantitative results using SPSS, and; 6. Drawing the conclusions, and set the recommendations and some suggested areas for further investigation.

However, this study is limited to measure the third stage students'(of kerbala, Babylon and Al-Qadysiah universities ) level of pragmatic competence .Furthermore, the measurement of students 'pragmatic competence is limited to its one central receptive aspects that is of pragmatic comprehension. Additionally, there are some restrictions in the research tools that the researcher cannot change. For instance, the pragmatic reading task questionnaire has some limits because it does not allow for the student's use of hesitations, repetitions, inversions, and longer supportive movements during oral performances (Aufa, 2012). Finally, the study will be a significant endeavour to fill the gap of research on teaching and learning English by providing valuable data regarding the Iraqi EFL learners level of pragmatics competence with regard to its central receptive aspect of pragmatic comprehension. Also, it hopes to help curriculum developers, education and EFL instructors to better meet the needs of EFL students to use the target language appropriately in the socio-cultural settings. Moreover the research will provide Iraqi EFL educational system, and Iraqi EFL instructors with the implications and the recommendations on how pragmatics can be developed effectively in an EFL environment, aiming at filling the gap between what research in pragmatics has found and how language is generally taught today. In addition, the study will also set a recommendative points, for students to consider, for developing Iraqi EFL students 'level of pragmatic competence. Thus, this study may be considered as a well background knowledge for learners to devise the essential methods and strategies that can help them overcome the difficulties that may face them in the concerned area

## **2. PRAGMATIC COMPREHENSION(PCr)**

The capacity to effectively adapt one's linguistic skills to a particular communication setting; being linguistically proficient is known as pragmatics, the

fundamental component in the teaching/learning process( Canale, 1983). Although pragmatics is an essential component of language competence, little research has been done on how it influences the development of cross-cultural communication (Kasper & Rose, 1999). However, PCr is essential for comprehending interpersonal communication systems (Taguchi and Yam-aguchi, 2019). PCr refers to the ability to grasp the implicit meaning of the target language (Taguchi, 2008). It involves figuring out what a speaker wants to convey through their words via the inferential process (Thomas, 1995). Hence, in this context, ILP researchers and educationalists agree that there is a clear need for pragmatics instruction. Foreign language learners frequently display differences from native speakers in their language use, their ability to execute and comprehend specific speech acts, their ability to greet people, their ability to decline an offer or an invitation, and their ability to manage conversations through the use of back channelling and concise responses. Regardless of a learner's level of English, however, research has shown that without instruction, pragmatic variations in foreign learners' English become obvious. To put it another way, learners with high levels of grammatical or linguistic skill may not necessarily improve pragmatically at the same rate. This is because most students are unaware of the different social, cultural, and conversational conventions that must be adhered to (Bardovi-harlig, 1999).

In this regard, it seems important to mention, as Rost (2002) explained, that the process of linguistic meaning and the process of pragmatic meaning are two distinct concepts . As Van Dijk(1977) mentioned, in addition to linguistic knowledge ( vocabulary and syntax), context knowledge ( the interlocutor's role and status), the physical setting, and the communication types that occur in that context are also necessary to understand the pragmatic meaning (1977). According to Garcia (2004), to communicate effectively in English, students must learn to recognise sarcasm, humour, and other forms of irony as well as the speaker's intentions, feelings, attitudes, and speech acts ( separating a directive from a commissive one), and the speaker's intensity of meaning. In this line, Kasper (1997)viewed the discrepancy between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic performance as proof that teaching pragmatics is necessary. As a result, many aspects of Pragmatic competence cannot develop independently. Hence, Teaching pragmatic competency is also one of the areas of teaching English as a foreign language that should not be neglected. As he maintained, not only should the grammar, sounds, and vocabulary of the target language (TL) be taught to students learning English as a foreign language, but also how to effectively use the TL by being familiar with the pragmatic rules that determine the appropriate combination of utterances and communicative functions. Furthermore, it has long been thought that particular classroom instruction aids in the growth of vocabulary and grammar.

In this respect, however, Van Dijk (1977) developed a PCr theory consisting mainly of context and content analysis. Context analysis is the method by which individuals ascertain the meaning of a statement by examining the surrounding information and contrasting it with what they already know, what they have done, and how their culture functions, where they figure out the speaker's meaning and the

language that would be appropriate in that circumstance. Then, they choose which elements to focus on, such as the conversation's subject rather than, for instance, the person's hair colour (referred to as salience by Verschueren (1999)). However, Context analysis can only provide a portion of a picture because the study of the speech serves as the ultimate foundation for pragmatism. So, a person's meaning cannot be inferred only from words. Additionally, they examine their vocabulary, phonology (including intonation and stress), sentence structure, word order, and paralinguistics (including body language and facial expressions). Thus, According to Van Dijk (1977), contextual analysis distinguishes linguistic comprehension from PCr. As he asserted, Language comprehension is a component of PCr, sociolinguistic awareness and context analysis. In other words, while both kinds of understanding require language components, PCr also requires a component known as context analysis.

With this regard, Cook and Liddicoat (2002) explained that higher-level L2 learners could comprehend speech actions because their language processing has become more automatic. This implies that individuals can interpret spoken gestures using their language skills and contextual information. On the other hand, because they hadn't yet mastered doing this automatically, the less talented students had to start by looking at linguistic data. They were unable to understand what was being said as a result. Because they might not have the language abilities to comprehend a sentence entirely at the surface level, those learning a foreign language may find it challenging to appreciate pragmatic meaning (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). Hence, an EFL who relies too much on linguistic cues or fails to make the proper connections between what is being said and what they already know may have difficulty understanding. However, the most common questions, on this aspect, about how well L2 students will eventually understand pragmatics includes: Do people see pragmatic meaning differently depending on their developmental stage? Does linguistic comprehension differ from PCr? Is there a distinction between comprehending conversational implicatures and speech acts?

However, to understand how to interpret a phrase in a way that fits the context and reflects the speaker's goals and attitude, a variety of language sources must be consulted by learners (phonetic, syntactic, and semantic). The meaning of a speech act can be deciphered by the listener, who understands the speaker's intended message. That is to say, the force that cannot be expressed in words must be recognised and acted upon by the listener. Concerning interpreting conversational implicature, the listener can infer what the speaker is thinking and feeling from the manner that person speaks. Grice's four maxims of the Cooperative Principle state that interpretations are predicated on the notion that the speaker is attempting to foster cooperation through their words (Grice, 1975). All of these concepts were combined by Sperber and Wilson (1995), and they gave their new theory of "Relevance Theory." According to Relevance Theory, to comprehend a speech, listeners must first make educated guesses, which they then confirm. As they state, whenever a speaker says something, the listener infers that it has some connection to

what was previously said. The listener then seeks out the most appropriate and understandable manner to ascertain what was intended.

Finally, it's crucial to pinpoint that, as Garcia (2004) noted, most research on L2 learners' PCr has concentrated on how people interpret speech acts and what they signify in conversation. According to a study, as people learn a second language, their understanding of speech acts undergoes significant development (e.g., Cook & Liddicoat, 2002; Hoffman-Hicks, 1992 etc.). There is evidence of how linguistic and pragmatic perspectives on speech acts differ. However, there has been less focus on how well second-language (L2) learners comprehend what is being spoken (e.g., Bouton, 1988, 1992; Taguchi, 2003). Consequently, this must be considered while developing lesson plans, creating resources, and evaluating students' linguistic abilities (Roever, 2001). Hence, in this regard, research on Communicative competence (CC) and communicative language education has shown that learning goes beyond the memory of vocabulary words and grammar rules (Canale, 1983). Increasing learners' PA, giving them options for their interactions in the target language, and assisting in their familiarisation with the diversity of pragmatic devices and practises that are particular to that language are the goals of pragmatics training. Moreover, as Kasper (1997) mentioned, Pragmatic competence is a natural extension of CC and should not be added to learners' comprehension of grammar. Therefore, the topic of whether Pragmatic competence can be taught has served as the driving force behind a variety of research projects examining the role of teaching pragmatics in students' pragmatic development.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

To answer the study's research question, the researcher utilised a quantitative design. Adopting Creswell's (2012) interpretation of quantitative design, this study concentrates on "Pragmatic competence" as a trend that has to be explained, identifying a pattern in the participants' responses and examining how that trend varies among them. Following him (Creswell), this study is set up as a descriptive analysis to give a wider range of information on such outcomes where the variables were compared. Thus, the reason for adopting such a design is that this study intends to measure and analyse variables to reach specific outcomes. It involves utilising and analysing numeral data by using particular statistical procedures to reach certain answers to the given hypothesis.

#### **3. 2. 1 Population the Study**

As a quantitative examination demands a large number of participants, the study was conducted in three universities ,in Iraq to recruit participants with convenience sampling,namely: Kerbala, Babylon, and Al-Qadisiya universities (as the table(1) below indicates). Two hundred forty (240) Iraqi EFL students in the third stage are the total participants in the study who are subjected to the test for the academic year (2021–2022/morning studies). The individuals who participated were all the same; they have the same first language experience, and they have the same knowledge of English as a FL. The main reason they chose the third stage is that they consider to be the best source for research data, since they are neither beginner nor advanced.

### Population of the Study

Universities	Value Label	N
1	Kerbala	80
2	Alqadysiah	80
3	Babylon	80

### 3.3 Research Instruments

Reading is the act of exchanging information from one person to another via the use of language and related expertise. However, as the reader gets a message from the writer, Reading is a receptive skill (Chastain, 1988). In this regard, Cassany et al. (1994) mentioned that it is one of the key components in the learning of L2 since it contributes to the development of linguistic competence, comprehension, and interpretation of texts. Reading means comprehending," it is said to be the process in which the readers, from their previous knowledge, build in their mind a new meaning with the information taken from the text. Its process is not just about decoding and recovering implicit elements of a text. It is also given from a sociocultural process; this means that every community has its own words and expressions that distinguish them from other cultural contexts, where these meanings change as society and culture evolve; therefore, the way of reading changes (Cassany, 2006). On the other hand, comprehension is a strategy for creating meaningful learning through which the reader connects with the text through their engagement with it as a result of prior knowledge experience (Pardo, 2010).

The current study employed a pragmatic reading test in which participants were required to choose or write the pragmatically inferred meaning from the dialogue. The dialogue of this pragmatic reading test was taken (with its recognition tests) from <https://www.elllo.org/english/1301/T1320-Abidemi-Differences.htm>). The test was designed in a way that meets the objective and nature of the study. It comprised two questions, each intended to measure a particular aspect of the test. The test aimed to measure one central aspect of receptive pragmatic competence (PCr). PCr was assessed by measuring students' levels of knowledge at both an actual situational co-created knowledge and an individual prior knowledge. Furthermore, the test measured students' level of this aspect of pragmatics (PCr) at both levels of recognition and production. As far as the first level (of recognition) is concerned, students' level of PCr, is figured out by measuring their actual situational co-created knowledge about Abidemi's turn in the conversation (Q2). For the production level, students' level was coined via investigating students' knowledge (of the target norms of conversation) at the second question, where participants are asked to write their responses in two turns, as if they were Abidemi, and to extend one turn ending the conversation as if they were JJeremy.

Finally, as it is important to mention, the reasons for utilising such an instrument are as follows:

1- Reading comprehension is today an important topic among universities in Iraq, as most students read without comprehending a text, making it difficult to answer questions about it. That is why, nowadays, universities are focusing on improving the reading comprehension skill to enable students to comprehend and follow instructions and questions when they are being asked in different classroom activities, tests, assessments, exams, and even in their interaction with their world

2-Few investigations of L2 PCr using the Reading Comprehension Questionnaire have been conducted in the literature on second language (L2) pragmatic development (Kasper and Rose, 2002).

3- To conduct a more thorough analysis of L2 learners' PC that focuses on their cognitive processes and pragmatic knowledge (Chen, 2015).

4-The most common speech-act identification/production surveys, role-play, and interviews do not provide insights into participants' MPA and metacognitive abilities (Kasper&Rose, 2012).

5-The study aims to highlight participants' capacity for pragmatic meaning retrieval, which is best achieved through reading and manifested in writing rather than through aural comprehension or production (Ifantidou, 2013).

6-In addition to gradually developing a cognitive skill, PC is also a sociolinguistic ability that may show up as increasing levels of sophistication. A graded ability needs to be refined so that different levels can become evident and be distinguished using criteria that learners meet to differing degrees. Therefore, defining PC as the capacity to recognise, address, and carry out making requests, compliments, or apologies by eliciting focus-on-form discourse completion tasks offers fundamental but incomplete insights into PC as a whole, as well as occasionally fabricated ones (Ifantidou, 2011)

7- As Cummings (2009) claimed, viewing nonverbal behaviours as pragmatic conditions is a mistake. Lack of linguistic proficiency may cause nonverbal behaviours like lack of fluency and pauses when taking turns (false starts, repairs) rather than a lack of PC. So, as he said, it is preferable to test pragmatic ability, which reveals itself in verbal behaviour. Due to this, the objectives of the L2 pragmatic ability test administered in this study were to trigger a clear, salient interpretation of the students' level of PC using written stimuli data.

8- Instead of using inference procedures to determine the intended meaning, pragmatic ability testing should focus on determining the speaker's intended or inferred meaning (Cummings, 2009). And this can be best achieved with reading comprehension tasks.

9-As mentioned by Cummings (2009), testing pragmatics should involve a global, dynamic context rather than a local and constrained linguistic context. It is also achieved with the proposed instrument, where the researcher used authentic trigger texts interpreted in a global, evolving context.

10-Exams, exams, and other comparable events are simulated to measure knowledge, competence, or performance, which could be valuable in dispersing life

opportunities. Assessing a learner's capacity to use a foreign language is not a simple undertaking. The essential notions of language testing and the validity of the test should be taken into account (Kasper& Rose, 2007).

### 3.4 Scoring of The Test.

In the test, each aspect of pragmatic comprehension is measured via two tasks, each of which is measured out of 5 points. At the recognition level, The amount of responses students give for each stimulus determines the students' scores. Then, irrelevant responses are eliminated, and each accepted response receives five points. Whereas at the production level, a rubric is constructed as follows:

Q2	Score				
	1	2	3	4	5
Student's prior knowledge	Produce Incorrect linguistic utterance with regard to its intended social context	Understand what the turns is about, but fail to produce the appropriate utterance of the his turn	Understand what the turns is about, but produce a few successful utterances in its social context	Understand what the turns is about, and produce some appropriate utterances	Understand what the turns is about, and produce The most suitable utterances in its social context

### 3.4 Validity and Reliability

#### 3.4.1 Validity

A well-made test is featured two qualities; validity and reliability. Validity is one of the criteria used in constructing a test. Accordingly, validity is "the amount to which the test assesses what is designed to measure and nothing else," according to Heaton (1988, p. 159). In Tavakoli's words (2012, p. 699), validity is "the degree to which a study and its results correctly lead to or support what is claimed". In the present study, the test had internal validity , as it was expert-peer-reviewed.

After establishing the test, it is sent to several specialists at Iraqi Universities. Each specialist receives a copy of the test with an attached letter to explain the nature of the test (See Appendix B). For a particular item to be changed, there should be an agreement made by (75%) of the jury members. Accordingly, the test has internal validity, which is guaranteed by jury members who approve all the two questionnaires' items. Further, it also has external validation, on the other hand. Firstly, Excel was used to organise the results in frequencies that helped us to distribute every question and its percentages among the participants. Then the researcher validated these gathering data through SPSS, an important statistical tool for hypothesis testing, in this case, because it helps to organise the gathering data and analyse the results provided.

### 34.2 Reliability of the test.

Another quality of a good test is reliability. Mehrens and Leman (1991) agreed on the assumption that the reliable test produces the same results on different occasions if the conditions remain the same. In this regard, Marczyk, DeMatteo, and Festinger (2005) stated that if the measurement is reliable at that point, then there is less opportunity for the attained score due to haphazard factors and measurement error.

Following KR-21, which is used for dichotomously scored items that are all about the same difficulty, as follows :

$$KR21 = [n/(n - 1)] \times [1 - (M \times (n - M) / (n \times Var))]$$

KR21 = estimated reliability of the full-length test

n = number of items

Var = variance of the whole test (standard deviation squared)

M = mean score on the test. (<https://www.researchgate.net/post/Should-I-use-KR-21-or-KR21-to-calculate-the-reliability-coefficient-of-a-test>)

The result showed that the test reliability was of extremely type at 9.2, as the table(2) below indicates

PR	Q1	Q2	Total Score
1	3	3	6
2	0	0	0
3	3	0	3
4	3	3	6
5	3	0	3
6	3	0	3
7	5	0	5
8	4	0	4
9	2	0	2
10	1	0	1
11	2	0	2
12	4	2	6
13	5	2	7
14	5	2	7
15	5	0	5
16	5	0	5

17	2	0	2
18	1	1	2
19	5	2	7
20	4	0	4
21	3	0	3
22	3	0	3
23	2	0	2
24	2	0	2
25	2	0	2
26	3	0	3
27	2	0	2
28	3	0	3
29	4	1	5
30	5	0	5
31	4	0	4
32	3	1	4
33	4	3	7
AVR			3.78787879
VAR			3.50045914
KR-21			3.93467996

### 3.5 Items Analysis

According to Linden and Glas (2010), item analysis refers to the way of collecting, summarising, and utilising the results obtained through the performance of students to make an objective and comprehensive assessment of the quality of the items. The main information to be obtained about individual items is item discrimination.

#### 3.5.1 Difficulty Coefficient (DFC)

As mentioned by Kamalzadeh et al (2021), difficulty coefficient is, by definition, the proportion of test-takers who get a question right. Hence, following Jandaghi & Shaterian (2008) formula for calculating difficulty coefficient for non-MCQ questions ( $DFC = MS(i) * MW(i) / N(B) * m$ ), the coefficient difficulty of the question is moderate, as its range between 0.20 to 0.80, as the table (3) below shows

PAR.	Pragmatic Comprehension	
	Q2	Q4
1	5	2
2	3	3
3	5	0
4	5	2
5	3	0
6	4	0
7	2	0
8	4	2
9	5	0
10	4	0
11	3	0
12	2	0
13	2	0
14		0
15	3	0
16	3	0
17	3	0
18	4	1
19	5	0
20	4	3
21	3	3
22	3	0
23	1	0
24	2	0

25	5	0
26	2	0
27	1	1
28	5	2
29	3	0
30	2	0
31	2	0
32	4	0
33	3	1
MS	39	18
MW	12	0
DSC	0.67	0.45

### 3.5.2 Discrimination Coefficient (DSC)

The discrimination coefficient shows how much the question makes a difference between the best and worst groups (Kamalzadeh et al., 2021). However, following Jandaghi & Shaterian (2008) formula for calculating discrimination coefficient for non-MCQ questions ( $DFC = \frac{MS(i) - MW(i)}{N * m}$ ), the coefficient difficulty of the question is excellent, as its range between 0.45 and above, as the table (4) below shows

PAR.	Pragmatic Comprehension	
	Q1	Q2
1	5	2
2	3	3
3	5	0
4	5	2
5	3	0
6	4	0
7	2	0

8	4	2
9	5	0
10	4	0
11	3	0
12	2	0
13	2	0
14		0
15	3	0
16	3	0
17	3	0
18	4	1
19	5	0
20	4	3
21	3	3
22	3	0
23	1	0
24	2	0
25	5	0
26	2	0
27	1	1
28	5	2
29	3	0
30	2	0
31	2	0
32	4	0
33	3	1

MS	39	18
MW	12	0
DSC	0.67	0.45

### 3.4 Test Implementation

This section explores two test implementation-related topics, the pilot study and the original test administration, to give insights about the required time and modifications whenever necessary.

#### 3.4.1 The Pilot Study

The pilot study can be glossed as "a small-scale trial of the proposed procedures, materials, methods, and sometimes includes coding sheets and analytic choices" (Mackey & Gass, 2016). The pilot study is carried out to discover any problems or difficulties with the test and to solve them before the original test is carried out. Moreover, the pilot study is required to set the time testees need to apply the test and show the usefulness of the techniques and items used. Additionally, pilot testing must make some necessary modifications and explanations before administering the main test (Fulcher, 2010).

Accordingly, to carry out the pilot study, thirty-two third-year students are selected randomly to perform the test on Tuesday, 5 April 2022. Participants are from the University of Kerbala, College of Education for Humanities, English Department. They are asked to pose any inquiry, clarification, or difficult items to simplify unclear issues. In addition, instructions are directed to them to ease their process of implementing the test.

After the completion of the pilot study, several factors are emphasised, including:

1. One hour is needed to complete the test.
2. No problems are apparent with the students.
3. No adjustments are made to the test's initial administration.

#### 3.4.2 Test Administration

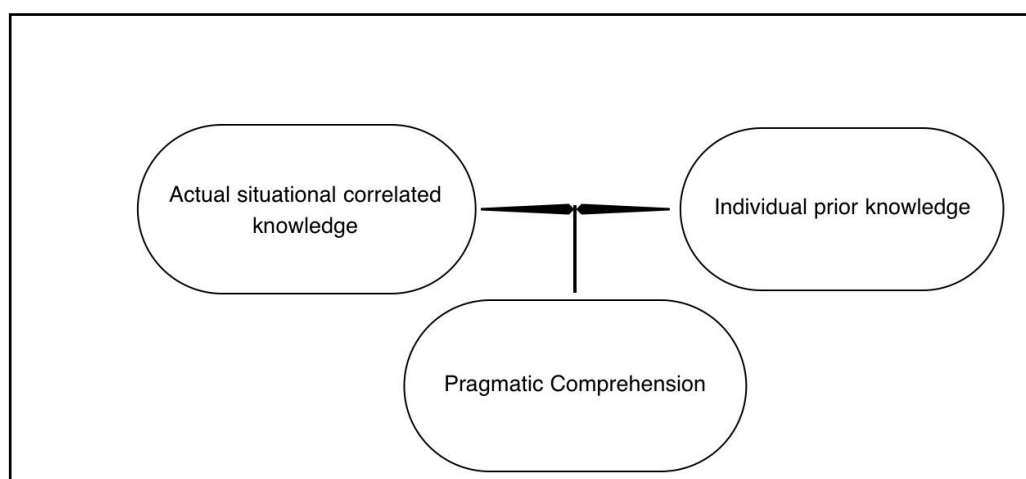
The participants are asked to respond to the test on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday (11th, 12th, and 13th of April 2022) at the universities of Al-Qadysiah, Babylon, and Kerbala, respectively. Two-hundred forty participants in the third year of English Department, College of Education for Humanities, Universities of Al-Qadysiah, Babylon, and Kerbala for the academic year (2021-2022/ morning studies), participated in the study implementation. On the test sheet, the participants are required to answer. To prevent potential test-related embarrassment, they are informed that the piece of paper is name-free. Moreover, they are motivated to pose any question that perhaps prevents them from performing their answers.

#### 3.2.2.1 Kecskes' (2016) framework for testing students' level of Pragmatic Comprehension.

In line with Kecskes (2014), People's communication is shaped by various societal and individual factors, including their former experiences and perceptions of the real situational context, which dynamically affect their goals and individual

degrees of salience. These factors illustrate how three categories of knowledge, collective prior knowledge, individual prior knowledge and actual situationally co-created knowledge, are intertwined in SCA, meaning construction and comprehension. Social cognition emphasises the "privatisation" of meaning, which occurs when the speaker "blends his earlier experiences with the situational (present) experiences and develops an individual understanding of the communal experience." (Kecskes, 2016).

As the figure (1) below shows, prior social and Individual material experiences, along with situationally constructed knowledge, are part of what is co-created in practice. It's all about balance. Cultural and mental models are necessary for the practice; without them, people can't watch or produce practice. It's important to remember that even when we teach others how to do something as easy as shaving or making coffee, we're drawing on vast amounts of prior knowledge. Conventionalised routines may become expectations and norms due to these social behaviours. Transactions in a store, phone calls and orders in restaurants are all examples of social things that are done in the same way in conversation (Kecskes, 2014),



#### 4. Data Collection and Analysis

##### 4.1 An analysis of students' scores of actual situation co-created knowledge (Q1)

actual situational co-created knowledge	Frequency	Percent
0	7	2.9
1	25	10.4
2	37	15.4
3	40	16.6
4	73	30.3

5	59	24.5
Total	241	100.0

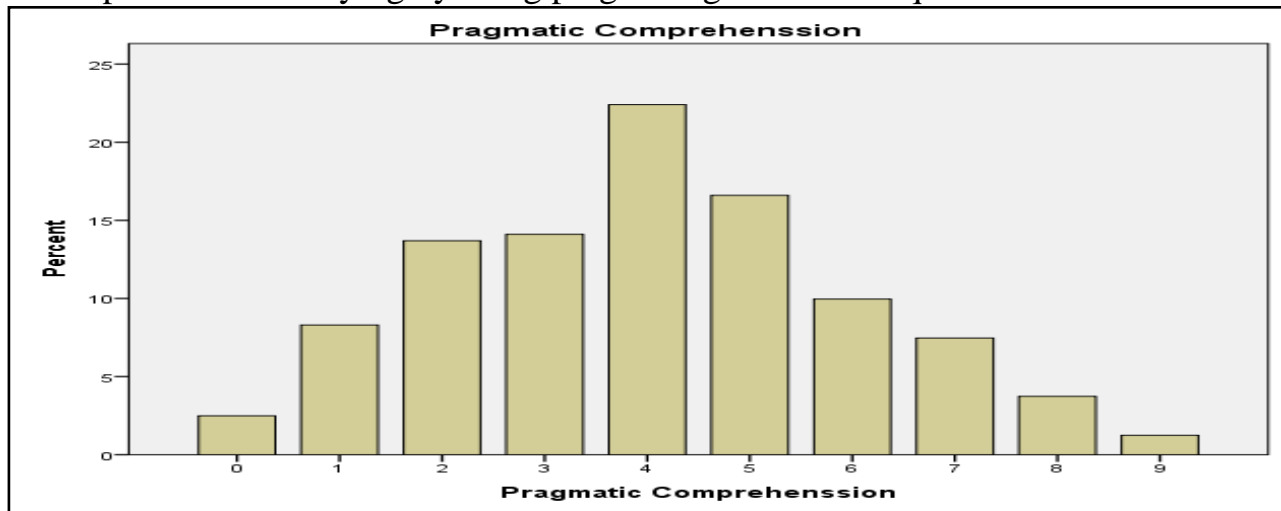
The data presented above shows that, with regard to the third question, the majority of students (30.3% and 24.5%) answered correctly, indicating that they were able to match the utterance to the context. This suggests that the participants assessed the information, whether explicit or implicit, in a communicative setting. The participants identified in the text which says the expressions in a discussion by evaluating an explicit term from the text defining the speaker regarding the remark. And this shows that Iraqi EFL students have a high level of situational co-created knowledge. Additionally, students could use the cognitive technique of memorising pertinent L2 linguistic information. They had a variety of linguistic options for the interactions and were able to use L2 language knowledge, such as suitable vocabulary and syntax. When undertaking pragmatic activities, they could also concentrate on pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatics rather than just linguistic knowledge. In other words, they could apply pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatics, two crucial aspects of pragmatics. They were able to approach pragmatic meaning using the first dimension and understand what speakers were saying by using pragmalinguistic techniques.

#### 4.2 An analysis of students 'prior knowledge (Q2)

student knowledge	prior	Frequency	Percent
	0	146	60.6
	1	49	20.3
	2	26	10.8
	3	13	5
	4	6	2.5
	Total	240	100

The data presented above in table 3, in this regard, shows that the majority of students (30.3% and 24.5%) correctly answered the second question, indicating that they were able to match the utterance to the context. This suggests that the participants assessed the information, whether explicit or implicit, in a communicative setting. The participants identified in the text which says the expressions in a discussion by evaluating an explicit term from the text defining the speaker regarding the remark. And this shows that Iraqi EFL students have a high level of situational co-created knowledge. Additionally, students could use the

cognitive technique of memorising pertinent L2 linguistic information. They had a variety of linguistic options for the interactions and were able to use L2 language knowledge, such as suitable vocabulary and syntax. When undertaking pragmatic activities, they could also concentrate on pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatics rather than just linguistic knowledge. In other words, they could apply pragmalinguistics and socio-pragmatics, two crucial aspects of pragmatics. They were able to approach pragmatic meaning using the first dimension and understand what speakers were saying by using pragmalinguistic techniques.



As a result, as the chart above illustrates, PCr is very low among Iraqi EFL students. They fail to use cognitive techniques that would aid in comprehension. According to the data, they were unable to: analyse different linguistic choices for the interactions; employ the cognitive strategy of Linking the situations to their Prior knowledge or experiences; or employ the mental technique of recalling relevant L2 language knowledge, which tries to summon relevant L2 linguistic knowledge, such as suitable vocabulary and grammar. That is to say, they were unable to cognitively put themselves in the task environment and to engage in task-related metacognition, both of which are crucial coping mechanisms for dealing with pragmatic tasks. These techniques are generally employed in various L2 language-use contexts when learners are required to translate, anticipate, and draw inferences from the language used by others.

Consequently, as the chart above shows, and as mentioned earlier, Iraqi EFL students' level of PCr is not sufficient. However, This low level of students' PCr is due to the traditional approach of teacher-centred methods that negatively affect EFL students. The effects of their native language on foreign language may be also one of the reasons. Furthermore, language-related difficulties ( grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure), cognitive difficulties ( fear of exams, the anxiety of failing in front of others, fear of falling in communication, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-esteem), lack of well-trained teachers, materials, lack of word knowledge, lack of cultural knowledge, poor motivation, and language-related difficulties are all reasons of their insufficient level of PCr.

As a result, Iraqi EFL teachers play a significant part in helping their students become pragmatically competent. Hence, they should utilise a learner-centred

approach to improve student performance since it puts the learners at the centre of the learning process. Additionally, they must possess both practical and pedagogical competence; greater learning results are frequently connected with instructors who have advanced degrees in the area they teach. That is to say, there is a positive correlation between teachers' advanced degrees and students' academic achievement, as well as a favourable association between teachers' subject-matter expertise and students performance. To put it another way, pedagogical competency is essential to the teaching process. It alludes to the specialised body of knowledge that focuses on creating effective teaching and learning environments for each and every student. However, this kind of knowledge also includes: comprehending the structure of learning objectives, lesson planning, and lesson evaluation; comprehending the effective use of allotted time; comprehending strategies for differentiated instruction; comprehending the development of formative assessment tasks; and comprehending how to support learning given specific student characteristics, such as their prior knowledge, motivation, and aptitude levels.

However, the majority of these degrees in Iraq are in teaching rather than in the actual subject field. As a result, the educational system in Iraqi universities must prioritise teaching pragmatics by introducing courses on issues like citizenship education, community involvement, and social and moral responsibility. These courses can either be taught independently or integrated into the university curriculum. In many systems, they are also increasingly expected to use the information obtained from testing, self-evaluation, and outside evaluations to direct their growth processes. Additionally, this calls for developing new methods for data collection, analysis, and parent communication. Additionally, for the development of universities, project management and monitoring skills are required. Universities must now often collaborate on collaborative projects and forge partnerships with colleges abroad. Furthermore, to acquire additional funding and offer more varied educational opportunities, Iraqi universities must establish connections with regional businesses and organisations, including libraries, museums, and companies. EFL teachers must therefore have the skills necessary to establish and maintain these partnerships.

## 4.2 Discussion of the results

### 4.2.4 Results Related to the First Hypothesis

*Hypothesis One: There is no statistically significant difference between the mean score of Iraqi EFL students' level of Pragmatic Comprehension among Kerbala, Babylon, and Al-Qadysiah universities.*

In this respect, and to find out whether there is a statistically significant difference the mean score of Iraqi EFL student's level of PC among Kerbala, Babylon, and Al-Qadysiah universities, a univariate analysis of test is utilised using SPSS, the result of which is presented in Table () below. However, Given that the p-value for universities is .953, which is more than the level of significance (0.05), the test's results demonstrate, at this level, that the null hypothesis is accepted.

## Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: Pragmatic Comprehension

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1.364 <sup>a</sup>	3	.455	.113	.953
Intercept	281.841	1	281.841	69.776	.000
Universities	1.364	3	.455	.113	.953
Error	957.300	237	4.039		
Total	4887.000	241			
Corrected Total	958.664	240			

a. R Squared = .001 (Adjusted R Squared = -.011-)

### 4.2.2 Results related to the second hypothesis

*Hypothesis Two: There is no statistically significant correlation of Iraqi EFL students' levels of actual situation co-created knowledge and individuals' prior knowledge among Kerbala, Babylon, and Al-Qadysiah universities*

With this regard, and to find whether there is a statistically significant correlation between students' actual situational co-created knowledge and student's prior knowledge, a correlation analysis conducting using SPSS, the result of which is presented below. However, the test results showed a significant relationship between these two factors.

## Correlations

		actual situational co- created knowledge	student prior knowledge
actual situational co- created knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.310**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	241	241
student prior knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.310**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	241	241

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## 5. CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

### 5.1 Conclusion

Pragmatic competency is one of the challenging language skills for EFL students. Learners of a second language must develop their pragmatism in order to use the language responsibly in accordance with the sociocultural values of the L2 users. This may be accomplished through the unique treatment they receive from their language instructors. However, It is evident that there is no single set of teacher traits and behaviours that are universally successful for all types of students and learning situations, particularly when schooling differs widely between countries. However, as far as Iraqi EFL students are concerned, the data shows that their level of pragmatic competence is not sufficient. They have a low level of pragmatic comprehension. Furthermore, they are at one of the first stages of developing pragmatism in a second language. They have learned a limited number of words and phrases in the target language. Thus, most students used the same wording regardless what the task is about. Also, as it seems to be, they have used their L1 when answering the task items. Hence, it implies that pragmatics is not taught in EFL classes. Moreover, as the findings of this investigation indicates, the universities, in question, do not employ much of effective task of teaching pragmatics.

Hence, EFL instructors should be innovative and committed to their work to be effective motivators for students' success in learning English as a foreign language. English language instructors should possess the skills required to instruct their

students in the language and have knowledge of the language themselves. Further, according to the circumstances in their respective classroom settings, they should be able to use various English language teaching techniques. They should also be knowledgeable about the individual and collective features of their classes. Their teaching materials also affect students' outcomes. If teaching goals, student proficiency, and students' practical demands for the language in the target society are considered, the learning process for English as a foreign language will be more successful. For this reason, It is essential to restructure the English curriculum and develop a curriculum that is sensitive to cultural diversity to foster social inclusion, the improvement of critical cultural consciousness among instructors and learners, as well as to support the preservation of regional cultures.

Iraqi universities also need to prioritise teaching pragmatics by adding courses that can be taught separately or as a part of the university curriculum and address topics like community involvement, social responsibility, and morality. They are also increasingly expected in many systems to guide their growth processes with the knowledge gained through testing, self-evaluation, and outside evaluations. Hence, they need to develop new methods for data collection, analysis, and parent communication. Besides the development of universities, project management and monitoring skills are required. Universities must now often collaborate on collaborative projects and forge partnerships with colleges abroad. Furthermore, to acquire additional funding and offer more varied educational opportunities, Iraqi universities must establish connections with regional businesses and organisations, including libraries, museums, and companies. EFL teachers must therefore have the skills necessary to establish and maintain these partnerships.

## 5.2 Recommendations

In accordance with the study's results, this section provides several recommendation for Iraqi educational system as follows:

### 5.2.1 Recommendations for the educational system

1. It is crucial that reading, writing, speaking, and listening are well-balanced in English language education.
2. English education must be seen as a single, cohesive system that runs from elementary school through junior high, senior high, and university. More training and certificates are required for teachers.
3. The need for greater education and credentials for teachers employed in elementary schools is a particularly pressing issue.
4. In terms of the teaching methodology used in the educational system, the classroom should be a place where students actively listen to one another and feel free to express and discuss various viewpoints in the spirit of open and collaborative learning.
5. Iraqi English teachers are, without a doubt, the group that contributes the most to the student's overall English proficiency. Hence, teachers must be proficient in teaching English if they want their students to understand how to present and argue in English. They should be encouraged to participate in seminars in Iraq and travel

to summer schools at colleges designed for professional development to acquire these skills.

6. For students to experience a multicultural environment, the educational system should provide more opportunities to interact with people from various cultural backgrounds. Inviting foreign nationals who do well in the area or are exchange students from multiple programmes is one approach to accomplish this.
7. The educational system should encourage university students to participate in summer study abroad programmes that last at least one to two months. Students will learn more about various cultures and have the chance to understand the value of being able to actively express ideas and information if they have the opportunity to travel to an English-speaking nation and try to communicate in English. Once students return to Iraq, the effects of such experiences will undoubtedly improve their motivation to study.
8. It is critical to conduct a source input inspection for Iraqi students in the educational system. The educational system has to investigate how much pragmatic information is covered in the coursebook and whether pragmatic competency is addressed in the Iraqi curriculum.
9. For professional development to be effective in the educational system, it needs to be ongoing, including practising feedback and training and providing enough time and support.
10. It is also highly advised that teacher training programmes and workshops for language teachers include a session discussing teachers' ideas about providing feedback and error correction to student writing. These workshops are essential for educating prospective language teachers about learner preferences, giving them the means to alter any irrational beliefs that might stand in the way of successful language learning.
11. In the educational systems, to facilitate the improvement of critical cultural consciousness among teachers and learners, as well as to promote social integration and the preservation of regional cultures, it is crucial to redesign the English curriculum and create a sensitive curriculum to cultural differences.
12. Universities must gradually use data acquired from self-evaluation, testing, and external assessments to influence the growth processes in educational systems.

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