Pragmatic Failure as an Area in Cross-cultural Communication

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Breakdown:

An Applied Study with Reference to Advanced Iraqi Learners of English

1-Abstract

The present study attempts to describe the way Iraqi learners of English produce culture-specific expressions which result in potential miscommunication across cultures. To achieve this aim, the present study gives a theoretical background about different variations of meanings and the reasons of understanding different kinds of meanings which lead to pragmatic failure in addition to exploring the phenomenon of pragmatic failure by giving some definitions, categories, causes as well as showing elaborative examples. Moreover, it sheds the light on applying our knowledge of pragmatic failure on classroom instruction in order to help students to develop their pragmatic competence. The practical part of this study is accomplished by a test given to 40 Iraqi learners of English in the Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Basra to elicit their responses when they are put in the situations mentioned in the test.

The findings of the study show that the hypothesized responses, which are of Iraqi culture –specific communicative patterns, received high number of frequency

compared to the other responses. Such communicative patterns are likely to cause miscommunication in situations like the ones described in the study. The study conclude that Iraqi learners of English should be made aware of the misuse of such communicative patterns in order to minimize miscommunication in their communicative interaction across cultures.

Keywords: culture, pragmatic failure, pragmatic competence, communication.

2- Introduction

Pragmatic failure is a problematic issue since it tends to result in misunderstanding and even hatred between native speakers and foreign language learners. Undeniably, identifying and minimizing pragmatic failure is one of the prerequisites for successful communication on the part of language learners. Therefore, it is urgent and absolutely significant for learners to carry out a comprehensive investigation on the nature of pragmatic failure so as to gain a deeper insight of the cross-cultural pragmatic differences and benefit the cultivation of learners' cross-cultural communicative competence.

The main purpose of learning a second language is communication. Nevertheless, many students are surprised when they realize that, in spite of having a perfect dominion of the L2 grammar rules, they have difficulties at interpersonal level when establishing a conversation with native speakers. For many years, the learning of a second or foreign language (FL) was equated with linguistic or grammatical accuracy. However, since the adoption of the communicative approach, this focus has passed to second place, giving primary importance to the achievement of functional abilities in the target language (TL) with the final purpose of understanding and producing language that is appropriate to communicative situations in accordance with specific sociocultural parameters. Failure to do so may cause misunderstandings and sometimes communication breakdowns as well as the stereotyping of the TL learners as insensitive, rude, or inept.

Learners' ability in carrying out communicative activities is highly demanded in the spoken English classroom. This study discusses some aspects that should be taken into account when conducting a spoken English class in relation to raising pragmatic awareness through the inclusion of pragmatic instruction in the classroom. Some theoretical reviews for the inclusion of pragmatic instruction are also

discussed. Through the inclusion of instruction in pragmatics in the spoken English classroom, learners are expected to develop their pragmatic competence and, therefore, are able to communicate naturally despite the fact that the full range of interactions with native speakers is limited.

The present study deals with the problems that arise in cross-cultural communication which outnumber those happen in communication between people of the same cultural background. Each participant may interpret the other's speech according to his own cultural conventions and expectations. If the cultural conventions of the speakers are widely different, misinterpretations and misunderstandings can easily arise, even resulting in a total breakdown of communication. As such, the present study intends to show how Iraqi learners of English produce culture-specific patterns that create potential miscommunication with native speakers of English. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that Iraqi learners of English are likely to produce certain culture - specific patterns in their communication in English. These patterns would make miscommunications across cultures.

Following Al-Zubeiry (2013, p.70), the present study is limited to six communicative patterns that are frequently observed in use among Iraqi learners of English. These patterns are as follows:
1- Any service to you: taking leave
2- Thank you: declining someone's invitation in sharing meal
3- Yes: responding to someone's negative - structured question
4- Ok: giving an indirect refusal to a friend's request
5- Ok, you have your own excuse: accepting someone's excuse
6- Insha Allah: assuring one's acceptance of doing something

3. Defining pragmatics

The term *pragmatics* itself goes back to the philosopher, Peirce (1995), and his work on pragmatism .Pragmatics is a relatively young linguistic discipline – compared to, for example, phonetics and syntax – which began to establish itself as an independent area of linguistic research only about 40 years ago. The first definition of pragmatics that is generally quoted was developed by Morris (1938, p. 6), who defined pragmatics as 'the study of the relation of signs to interpreters'. Three

definitions that are commonly used to describe pragmatics, relevant to the present investigation, are included. They are as follows:

(A) Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication (Crystal, 1985, p.240).

(B) Linguistic pragmatics (from Greek pragma, activity/deed) is the study of communication principles to which people adhere when they interact rationally and efficiently in social contexts. Speakers/writers follow these principles to imply additional meaning to a sentence, and hearer/readers follow these principles to infer the possible meaning of an utterance out of all available options in a given context. Pragmatics describes the linguistic forms, action patterns and strategies that are used to imply and interpret, which enable interlocutors to comprehend the intended, but not uttered meaning (Bublitz, 2001, p.27).

(c) Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society (Mey, 2001, p. 6).

In the above definitions, Crystal (1985, p. 405) emphasizes that actual language use that is important in pragmatic research and that pragmaticians are interested in both the coding and decoding of utterances by speakers and hearers. Bublitz's (2001) definition is very similar, but also includes the underlying notion that there are principles speakers adhere to when communicating effectively and rationally. Finally, Mey's (2001) definition explicitly mentions the significant role society plays in pragmatics.

4. Pragmatic meaning and communication

Conversations involving culturally different speakers are more likely to go wrong than those involving people who share the same cultural background. Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz (1982, p.14) explain this as follows:

Many of the meanings and understandings, at the level of ongoing process interpretation of speaker's intent, depend upon culturally specific conventions, so

that much of the meaning in any encounter is indirect and implicit. The ability to expose enough of the implicit meaning to make for a satisfactory encounter between strangers or culturally different speakers requires communicative flexibility.

5. The concept of Pragmatic competence

Canale and Swain cited in Rose and Kasper (2001, p. 64) put forward three sub-competencies, which are later extended by Canale into four sub-competencies. The sub-competencies are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

In this model, pragmatic competence is represented as sociolinguistic competence, which is described as encompassing both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form. This meaning appropriateness is in parallel with Leech's (1990) sociopragmatic component, which includes an interlocutor's knowledge of pragmatic conventions and the ability to assess situational context and speech intentions.

In addition, Canale &Swain (cited in Kasper, 1997) included pragmatic competence as one important component in communicative competence. Pragmatic competence was identified as sociolinguistic competence and was defined as the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use. Canale in Kasper (1997) stated that pragmatic competence includes "illocutionary competence or the knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context." Pragmatic competence refers to the communication activities in the language people use. Communication activities require the mastery—or the knowledge of the language itself—and social function of language.

From what Leech (1990) has proposed, pragmatic competence includes the following basic features: 1) the language level of compliance with the pragmatic language rules; 2) the level of focus on pragmatic social and cultural differences; 3) the level of attachment mechanism of cognitive constraints; 4) time and space situational context of the level of stress constraints. A pragmatic capacity to act is the learners' ability to perform speech acts. Having this capability, learners can—under specific circumstances—use language for different purposes, and fully fulfill the function of language in a communicative activity.

6. Understanding Different Kinds of Meanings

As people use language around the world, mistakes are inevitable. Such mistakes often occur due to understanding different kinds of meanings. The answer to what pragmatic failure is, or what kinds of errors are going to be taken as pragmatic failures in the present study, greatly relies on two distinctions: how we understand different kinds of "meaning", and how we distinguish "sense" and "force" in Leech's terminology (Leech, 1983, p. 30).

Leech's "sense" and "force"
It is well-known that semantics and pragmatics describe the meaning of an utterance in different ways. Semantics generally focuses upon designative (or denotative) meanings and associative (connotative) meanings. "The task of pragmatics is to explain the relationship between these two types of meanings: the sense (which has often been described as the literal or face-value meaning) and the (illocutionary) force" (Leech, 1983, p. 30). Pragmatics concerns about the meaning in speech situations.

Both semantics and pragmatics deal with meaning, but the difference lies in two different uses of the verb MEAN (Leech 1996, pp.5-6). The answer to the question "What does X mean?" gives semantic meaning while the answer to the question "What did you mean by X?" takes us to pragmatic meaning.

The first "mean" is the literal meaning of an utterance, which is entirely determined by the words (or morphemes) and the syntactical rules according to which these elements are combined. Meaning in this sense is considered "dyadic" relation. It is directly predictable from the grammatical and lexical features of a sentence regardless of the speaker of the sentence as well as the context and the situation in which the utterance occurs. Such a meaning is called sense (grammatical meaning). The second "mean" may be taken as a "triadic" relation, or it involves a third element, that is to say, the user of the language and the situation in which utterance is made.

Koc and Bamber (1977, pp. 7-11) proposed another classification of meanings: (1) The conceptual meaning: the meaning that the sentence/utterance has in isolation;

(2)The contextual meaning: the meaning that a sentence/utterance takes on in a particular context;

(3)The pragmatic meaning: the meaning that the sentence/utterance takes on only due to the interaction between the speaker and listener.

Therefore, when an utterance or a message is sent by a certain person in a certain speech situation, it bears "force". The "force" of an utterance is largely dependent on the situation and the context. Obviously, the study of meaning in this sense is beyond the consideration of semantics. It falls into the realm of pragmatics, that is, the study of language in use.

Sometimes, we might misinterpret learners' interlocutor's utterance even in learners' own language if we fail to get the indirect meaning. For instance:

A: Have you got a match?

B1: Yes, I have.

B2: Yes, here you are. (The expected answer)

In the above dialogue, speaker B1 cannot understand speaker A's remark or intended meaning, which has a function of request. If we cannot go beyond the conceptual meaning of utterances, serious misunderstandings may come into being at the pragmatic level and this is called "pragmatic failure". It may imply both a criticism when it is uttered with a rising tone and a gentle invitation when uttered with a falling tone.

7. Pragmatic Universals

Obviously, language users must share certain rules and conventions which enable them to understand one another in the many instances where the meaning and the intent, i.e. the *illocutionary force* (Yule, 1996, p. 48), of utterances are not explicitly stated. In his text "Logic and conversation" Grice (1975, cited in Thomas 1995, pp. 61-63) suggests four conversational maxims and the **Cooperative Principle** (CP) to explain the mechanisms through which people interpret implicature. *Grice's Cooperative Principle* states: Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. Grice's formulated the **conversational maxims** of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner as follows:

Quantity: make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. **Quality:** Do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. **Relation:** Be relevant. **Manner:** Avoid obscurity of expression. Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly.

Grice (1975, cited in Thomas 1995, p. 65) proposed that speakers frequently and blatantly fail to observe any of above conversational maxims to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning.. However, a second language learner, even if s/he is quite fluent in English, may not necessarily arrive at the same conclusion.

Like Grice, other writers have attempted to formulate *universals in language use*. Brown and Levinson (1987, cited in Spencer-Oatey 2000, pp. 12-13) propose **the concept of face** as a universal human need and the key motivating force for *politeness and rapport management*. They maintain that face consists of two related aspects: negative face representing the desire for autonomy, and *positive face* representing the desire for approval.

8. Pragmatic Failure as a Cause of Poor Intelligibility

a. Definitions of Pragmatic Failure

Throughout the literature of interlanguage pragmatics, we frequently find examples of communicative breakdowns or deviations in the target language on the part of learners of that language. Eisenstein and Bodman (1993, pp 64-81), for instance, in looking into nonnative speakers' (NNSs') expressing gratitude in American English note that though the NNSs are successful on the whole in responding in a native-like manner to situations requiring simple, phatic, ritualized expressions of gratitude, they are not able to approximate acceptable native speech act in a significant number of cases (items requiring complex speech act sets). "In fact, their difficulties in adequately expressing gratitude in native-like manner were extensive and severe." (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993, p.68) The language learners are found to make mistakes/errors at discourse level as well as at syntactic level. For instance, in expressing gratitude for dinner, they will say "Thank you very much for dinner. You will come to our house next week?", at which the native may feel that they were obligated. They may also lack the words and syntax to work their way through culturally familiar and unfamiliar situations.

The term *pragmatic failure* was, in fact, coined by Thomas (1983) to denominate those misunderstandings that are due to the second language learners' lack of awareness of the target language pragmatic aspects". Thomas (1983, p.91) defines pragmatic failure as "...the inability to understand ´what is meant by what is said". The author prefers the term 'pragmatic failure' to 'pragmatic error' because she thinks that a grammar error can be explained by means of prescriptive rules, while the nature of the pragmatic ambivalence is so, that we cannot say that the pragmatic force of a sentence is incorrect, but that has not been able to reach the speaker's communicative intention.

In addition to the definitions that has been given so far by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) and Thomas (1983) , many other linguists gave so many other definitions regarding Pragmatic Failure. For instance, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986, p.166) define the concept of pragmatic failure as a communication problem that "occurs whenever two speakers fail to understand each other's intentions". They pinpoint that such miscommunication can occur between conversational partners with the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds but that it is obviously more likely to happen between speakers from different origins and languages.

b. Different categorization of Pragmatic Failure

Thomas (1983, pp.91-112) has distinguished two kinds of pragmatic failure: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. She referred to pragmalinguistics as the study of the relation between pragmatics and different branches in linguistics, especially the relation between pragmatics and grammatical forms. She argues that "the pragmatic force associated with a given linguistic structure in one language may be different from the force associated with the corresponding linguistic structure in another." Accordingly, cross-cultural pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the pragmatic force mapped by the NNSs onto a given linguistic structure is systematically different from that normally assigned to it by an NS of the language, or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2. Sociopragmatics, according to Thomas, studies social and cultural components in language *use*, especially the use of language appropriate to

different social context, and pragmatic failures committed by NNSs due to the fact that the cultural differences are referred to as sociopragmatic failures.

There are four categories of pragmatic failure, they are as follows:

(1) Interpretative pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the NNS fails to infer the contextually appropriate meaning of a linguistic form in the target language, or misinfers the illocutionary force of the utterance in the target language. An example is about what Americans would regard as a compliment: "You look sexy." When an American young lady hears this, she would gladly accept it and express appreciation of the compliment. However, a Chinese young lady will wrongly take it as impolite and even villainous, for she does not know the pragmatic force of the word "sexy" which in English implies beauty of women.

(2) Interpretative sociopragmatic failures are due to socio-cultural differences between L1 and L2. So if the NNS assesses the social parameters such as power, distance, rights and obligations against those in his/her own culture while processing an utterance in the target language, sociopragmatic failures are likely to occur. Take, for instance, the invitations by the American people. The NNSs of English often report that they have difficulties in apprehending the Americans and sometimes they complain about the Americans' insincerity, for when the Americans give invitations such as "We really must get together sometime" or "Let's have lunch together soon", they sometimes do not mean that. In that case, invitations function more as an indication of inter-personal relations than as a real social commitment.

(3) Productive pragmalinguistic failures are caused when the NNS maps into a linguistic form an inappropriate force in producing an utterance, that is, they mainly stem from the mismatch between a certain linguistic form and a certain illocutionary force. It is most typically shown in the phrase "of course", for example, *A: Is it open on Sunday?*
B: Of course.

In general, "of course" means "yes, indeed", but it does not always equal that. In the above example, A is likely to infer from B's "of course" a meaning like "Only an idiot foreigner would ask!" and thus feel offended.

(4) Productive sociopragmatic failures, like interpretative sociopragmatic failures, arise from the differences of social parameters between different cultures, but related to the NNS's ability of performing linguistic actions. For instance, Chinese students are often found to respond to compliments by saying "I'm flattered (ashamed)." or "No, no, not at all." or other self-deprecating forms, where an appreciation of the compliment is more appropriate, for instance, "Thank you. It's very kind of you to say so." It should be remembered that the distinctions between the categories are not clear-cut and a failure at the process of interpretation may easily lead to a failure in production, which also gives rise to cross-cultural difficulties.

c. Causes of Pragmatic Failure

YAN Li-ming and ZHUANG Yan (2010,p. 3) stress two main causes of Pragmatic Failure:

1. Failure to express or interpret speaker-meaning
As discussed above, when one makes an utterance, he or she is expressing two kinds of meanings: level 1, speaker-meaning (sense and reference) and level 2, speaker-meaning (force or value). When an utterance is made, the listener is expected to interpret the "force" of the utterance. Communication will break down if either level of meanings is not successfully produced or interpreted. On the one hand, the speaker may fail to convey his communicative intent if the words or expressions he uses do not convey the senses and references intended, and the sentence he utters does not conveniently express the illocutionary force he suggests. On the other hand, the addressee may misinterpret the sense and reference.

2. Failure to observe cultural values
Here, for practical purpose, we tend to define culture as a shared set of beliefs, values and patterns of behavior common to a group of people. We know that since every country has its own culture, cultural differences are inevitable. Each culture has its own perceptions regarding what kind of linguistic behavior is appropriate.
Pragmatic failure occurs when social conditions (cultural norms, values, religious beliefs, etc.) on language in use are different and utterer or the interpreter fails to observe the cultural values. In other words, it stems from cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior.

This is as far as the study of Yan Li-ming and Zhuang Yan is concerned. Other researchers have suggested different points to be the causes of Pragmatic Failure. Among those researchers is N. Wolfson. He mentions two causes for the phenomenon of Pragmatic Failure. They are shown as follows:

1. Pragmatic transfer

It has been noted that pragmatic transfer, or first language interference affects NNSs' interlanguage proficiency, and some researchers (including Wolfson, 1989) even carried out studies to find evidence for pragmatic transfer. Transfer has been found to exist and cultural norms regarding proper behavior are found to have a direct bearing on the extent to which a particular group shows a tendency to transfer rules from their mother language. The above studies adequately testified that pragmatic transfer indeed exist, exerting some negative influences on L2 learners' pragmatic performance in the target language.

2. Linguistic proficiency

Learners failure in performing a native-like language production can also be considered to be a result of low linguistic proficiency. Obviously linguistic proficiency plays an unignorable role in affecting language learners' competence and their written and oral communication with native readers/hearers.

It is clear that different factors may cause Pragmatic Failure. The speaker needs not only the knowledge in the form of language (or the linguistic competence), but also he/she needs to have a knowledge in the function of language (or the communicative competence). Knowledge in culture is also important to avoid pragmatic transfer which is one of the major causes of Pragmatic Failure.

d. Examples of Pragmatic Failure

A hearer may simply misunderstand what is said by the speaker. The following cases will illustrate. Many examples of pragmatic failure can be found in our daily-life communications. Thomas (1983, pp. 91-94), for instance, notes that cross-cultural pragmatic failure has occurred on any occasion "on which H (the hearer) perceives the force of S's (the speaker's) utterance as other than S intended she or he should perceive it", and offers the following examples to illustrate this point:

A: Do you know who set the fire last night?
B: No, it's not me.

A: Oh, I don't mean that.

Actually, A only wanted to know who had set the fire. But B perceived the force of A's utterance as stronger than A had intended, so B responded very severely.

Example (2)

Boss: Are you free this evening? Will you come to my house to have a chat?

Mike: I will come, anyway.

In fact, Mike was not free, but he perceived the utterance of his boss as an order.

Example (3)

A: There's a football match tonight. Would you please go with me?

B: OK.

A: (later) Are you sure you want to go?

B: OK, let's not go. I've something to read.

In the conversation, B perceived A's utterance as being ambivalent, so he changed his decision.

Example (4)

A: Do you like rugby?

B: I am a New Zealander, you know.

A: (confused)

A was confused because A and B did not share the same system of knowledge or beliefs. A had no idea that the New Zealanders love rugby.

* The above-mentioned examples are summarized by the following conclusions:

(1) H perceives the force of S's utterance as stronger as or weaker than S intended she/he should perceive it;

(2) H perceives as an order an utterance which S intended she/he should perceive as a request;

(3) H perceives S's utterance as ambivalent where S intended no ambivalence;

(4) S expects H to be able to infer the force of his/her utterance, but is relying on the system of knowledge or beliefs which S and H do not share.

9. Applications of Pragmatics to English -Teaching Classroom

a. Classroom implications

One needs to take the issue of cross-cultural pragmatics into the classroom if as Jung (2001, p.6) indicates, pragmatics is a subject that is an indispensable part of language learning and which has received insufficient attention in acquisition. But the question is how to go from recognizing the importance of the issue to moving into classroom language learning and mitigating cross-cultural communication failure. There may be no easy solutions it would appear. Thomas (1983, p.109) may be alluding to such difficulties when she refers to the "potentially explosive area" of making judgments on what is pragmatically acceptable to the foreign learner. Openness to different pragmatic interpretations consistent to sensitivities of various cultures and social groups would be something to keep in mind as well as an approach free of stereotypical judgments.

It is clear that pragmatics is a crucial part of language learning. It is often claimed that knowledge without justification is not real knowledge, and pragmatic knowledge is no exception (Zegarac & Pennington, 2000, p. 180). It is not enough for people to be aware that cross-cultural pragmatic differences exist, e.g. that it is quite appropriate to adopt an argumentative style in informal conversation with German speakers. Learners also need to understand *why* such conventions are accepted, i.e. that to many Germans, it makes conversation more interesting and lively, it indicates that interlocutors take each other's views seriously, and so on.

Striving for intercultural competence does not mean assimilation into the target culture. Rather, intercultural language learning involves the development of a "third place" between the learner's native culture and the target culture, i.e. between self and other (Liddicoat, Crozet & Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 181). Language learners need to understand what native speakers mean when they use the language, even if they do not choose to replicate native speakers' behaviour (Liddicoat, 2000, p. 51).

Finally, Kasper's (2001, p. 522) observation on what is required of teachers themselves is worth noting: Teachers must be sufficiently socialized to L2 pragmatic practices, so that they can comfortably draw on those practices as part of their communicative and cultural repertoire, and so that their metapragmatic awareness enables them to support students' learning of L2 pragmatics effectively. This is a challenging requirement to fulfill, given that much of our pragmatic knowledge is implicit and only becomes available to us through careful observation and conscious practice at distinguishing between expressed and implied meanings.

b . Assisting students to develop Pragmatic Competence

We first need to know about the various classifications of competences that determine the ability to use language. Canale and Swain in Rose and Kasper (2001, p. 64) put forward three sub-competencies, which are extended by Canale into four sub-competencies. The sub-competencies are grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Grammatical competence refers to☐ the knowledge of linguistic code features such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics .

Sociolinguistic competence refers☐ to the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use.

Discourse competence is the☐ knowledge of achieving coherence and cohesion in spoken or written communication.

Strategic competence☐ refers to the knowledge of how to use communication strategies to handle breakdowns in communication and make communication effective.

As we aim at helping students to develop their pragmatic competence, then we need to consider the factors that are necessary to do so. In general, there are five factors and they are shown as follows:

1- **Grammatical Competence**
One of the most consistent findings in L2 pragmatic studies is that high levels of grammatical competence do not ensure equally high levels of pragmatic competence (Bardovi- Harlig, 1999; Hoffman-Hicks, 1992). Nevertheless, as the titles of Bisshop's (1996) study *"I am apologize"* and Eisenstein and Bodman's (1993) study *" I very appreciate"* illustrate, a minimal level of grammatical competence seems to be necessary. In short, the literature presents two generally accepted claims about the relationship between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence: (1) grammar is not a *sufficient* condition for pragmatic competence; however, (2) grammar is a *necessary* condition for pragmatic competence.

The first claim is based on the observation that a learner already knows about linguistic structures but has not yet learnt that he/she can use them as some pragmatic strategies. For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study showed that a learner identified as problematic the sentence *If tomorrow is good for*

you, I could come any time you say, explaining that the past-tense verb *could* was used with *tomorrow* which made the sentence future tense.

Apparently, the learner had not yet acquired the pragmatic function of the modal verb as an epistemic marker, although he had acquired the present vs. past inflections. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) suggest that pragmatic extension of tense-mood-aspect forms to politeness markers is not acquired until core deictic (temporal) meanings have been acquired.

The second claim is based on the observation that a learner knows the appropriate pragmatic strategy for a given context, but does not know how to realize it due to limited linguistic knowledge. An example of the above claim is found In Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig's (2000) study as a Korean learner used a rather direct expression *I know what you mean, but don't think so* in disagreeing with her advisor. In spite of her apparent attempt to mitigate the force, her limited modal resources prevented her from making the disagreement polite.

2- Instruction

There is an encouraging evidence for the teachability of pragmatics. A number of studies have reported that L2 pragmatic development profits from instruction in various areas: speech acts (Billmyer, 1990; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), conversational implicatures (Bouton, 1994), conversational management (Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001), and pragmatic fluency (House, 1996). Overall, the studies that address pedagogical interventions for teaching pragmatics can be categorized into two general teaching approaches: explicit vs. implicit teaching. Motivated by Schmidt's (1993) notions of the role of consciousness and noticing-of-the-gap, implicit teaching involves consciousness-raising activities, i.e., presenting prototypical uses of the item in meaningful contexts with or without input enhancement (to help learners notice relevant input) (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Bouton, 1994). The underlying assumption is that if learners are "encouraged to think for themselves about culturally appropriate ways" to perform speech acts, then these learners will become aware of "their own lay abilities for pragmatic analysis" (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1996, p. 325). Therefore, in the implicit teaching of pragmatics, the success of instruction may depend on how well it raises the learners' awareness of the rules for appropriate L2 use (Tanaka, 1988). Explicit teaching, on the other hand, generally involves providing explicit metapragmatic information about L2 rules through

explanations (Billmyer, 1990; House, 1996), metacognitive discussions (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), and corrective feedback (Bouton, 1994).

3 - Input Factors

If there is no input, learning will never occur. When it comes to the learning of pragmatics, it becomes even more critical. As Kasper and Schmidt (1996) suggest, by definition pragmatic knowledge is particularly sensitive to the sociocultural features of a context. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of L2 pragmatic studies contend that second language learning contexts provide richer input than foreign language learning contexts and thus are more conducive to developing pragmatic ability.

For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1996) observed that in private academic advising sessions, advanced ESL learners failed to acquire effective mitigation of their suggestions due to a lack of relevant input and explicit feedback. Even when positive input was provided by the advisor, the learners did not always utilize the available input. According to the researchers, this was probably because the learners' own developing competence had not reached a point where the positive evidence was perceived as relevant input, thus preventing them from noticing the form.

4- Biological Factors

Unfortunately, as interesting as the inquiry into biological factors is, few studies touch on this issue and, thus, little is known. In their comprehensive review of inter-language pragmatic studies, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) introduce a couple of studies that address gender as a factor in L2 learners' perception. In one, Kerekes (cited in Kasper & Schmidt, 1996) found that female learners showed a much closer approximation towards the L2 norm than did male learners in their perception of sympathy and support. In another study, however, Rintell (1984) found no gender difference in learners' perception of expressions of emotion. Although there is no absolute consensus, it is generally contended in L1 research that women are more polite (Holmes, 1993) and prefer personal concern and emotional content . If the same applies to L2 learners, then Kerekes's findings would be more plausible than Rintell's, given that both studies deal with perception and the emotional dimensions of pragmatics.

Age, another biological factor, has received considerable attention from mainstream SLA research. One of the general proposals is that learners who begin learning an

L2 after puberty are unlikely to acquire an NS level of proficiency and that, irrespective of whether NS proficiency is achieved, younger learners are more likely to reach higher levels of attainment than adults (Ellis, 1994). A number of reasons for this have been suggested, e.g., neurological, motivational, cognitive, and input factors. However, what seems to be particularly relevant to pragmatic acquisition is that younger learners appear to lend themselves more readily to dealing with the threat imposed on their identities by the adoption of L2 cultural norms because they have not yet established a fixed idea of their own social identities . Another possible explanation is that younger learners benefit more from explicit input (e.g., explicit instruction and explicit socialization) than older learners. However, adult learners' pragmatic errors are more likely to be conceived of as idiosyncratic personal traits. Therefore, they rarely receive corrective feedback.

5- Individual Factors

Of the various types of individual learner variables, SLA research has identified socio-affective factors such as motivation, attitude, and identity as key factors that influence learning outcomes (Ellis, 1994). Among these, *integrative motivation* – the learner's desire to learn the L2 to actively participate in interaction with members of the target community – seems to be particularly relevant to pragmatic development.

However, a learner's positive attitude towards learning an L2 does not necessarily mean a positive attitude towards adopting L2 pragmatic norms, especially when these L2 norms conflict with the learner's value system about how he/she should behave. Yet, despite the fact that sociolinguists long ago provided compelling evidence that a learner identifies and presents himself/herself as a member of a particular speech community through language use (Beebe, 1977; Beebe, 1981; Beebe & Zuengler, 1983), many SLA theories draw an unnatural distinction between the *learner* and the *learning context* (Pierce, 1995).

c. Teaching Pragmatic competence

Teaching pragmatics

Thomas (1983) points out that, making students understand the difference between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures, the teacher allows them to make pragmatic decisions to break the rules if they wish. Davies supports this idea when

indicating: "Rather than being taught to be polite, learners should be given the possibility of choosing to be either polite or impolite". (Davies, 1986, p.121). This author considers that the task of the teachers is to make sure that their students know what they are saying. In addition, the teacher has to take into account that pragmalinguistic failures can be corrected, while sociolinguistic failures are indicated and discussed, since these last ones show the learner's value systems and vision of the world.

But, what must the students learn to be competent from a pragmatic point of view? According to Jung (2002), the student must develop the following abilities:
1. Ability to carry out speech acts. It is necessary for the students not only to know how to choose the speech act needed in every situation, but also they should be able to choose the suitable linguistic codification to carry out this speech act. For example, in the Egyptian culture it is not appropriate to compliment pregnant women or children.
2. Ability to produce and interpret non-literal meanings.
3. Ability to use politeness strategies. As we have seen, these strategies may vary from one culture to another and it is necessary to recognize them
4. Ability to carry out discursive functions. For example, taking turns, pauses or silences, discourse markers, phatic utterances, etc …
5. Ability to use cultural knowledge.

It is evident that these aspects of pragmatic competence overlap, that is to say, they do not operate independently.

10. Methodology

a. Conducting a Test – Description

The practical section examines the phenomenon of Pragmatic Failure in the University of Basra/ the College of Education for Human Sciences/ the Department of English. It shows how the researcher applies the hypothesis by making a test of two major questions made of six items for each. The first question is open-ended as the subjects may mention what they would say in given situations. The second question is slightly different. Here, however, the multiple-choice-item technique is followed. For each of the six items, three possible choices are given in addition to a

fourth choice which is "other", in which it is up to the subjects to add what they think to be the most suitable "compliment".

b. The subjects

As the main purpose of the study is to show how Iraqi learners of English produce certain culture-specific communicative patterns that create potential miscommunication with native speakers of English, a number of 40 male and female Iraqi university learners was selected as subjects for the present study. These subjects are enrolled in the Department of English-College of Education fo Human Sciences-University of Basrah.

c. The procedures

On the one hand, the first question is open-ended as the subjects are free to express their own responses in the given six situations. On the other hand, the instrument used in Q2 for the purpose of the present study is a Multiple - Choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT, i.e., a tool used for collecting data through responding to real-like situations). The MDCT consists of six items in which the subject is expected to choose a response from the options provided. Each item is composed of a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, the social distance between the participants and their status relative to each other.

The test is conducted with two phases. In the first one, the test sheets were given to professors in the Dept. of English. The subjects were asked to comment on each item within the two questions of the test. They were expected to suggest modifications or change the weak spots. This stage of the study helped the researcher revise the test so as to make it reliable and valid. This phase involved about 10 professors of different age, gender, academic degree, and specialty (literary or linguistic).

After ending up with this phase and making the required revise, it is time to conduct the study on BA students. The sample is 40 third-stage students of both genders. Kindly, the students filled the papers with their answers.

d. Data Analysis: Results and Discussion

In the results section, the hypotheses of the study, i.e. Iraqi learners of English are likely to produce certain culture - specific patterns in their communication in English is attempted to be examined. As it is stated herein, two tests were conducted. The results concluded are shown as follows :

i. Analysis of Test 1

* The First test consists of open-ended questions in which the students are free to express themselves and give what they think to be the most suitable compliments (C) or compliment responses (CR). It may simply imply what structure or style is mostly used. This test included 6 situations as follows:

> 1-Imagine you see your friend for the first time today. He / she says that you look cute in this shirt. What do you say as a response ?

On the question of Cs of appearance, in a mostly female and friendly workplace it was found that clothes, accessories and anything new was commented on. The natural and common response for a native speaker would be " *Thank you*" or " *That's very kind of you*" for instance. These forms are expected and they show no artificiality. Some responses may indicate exaggeration; for example structures like "*You look nice as well*". In Iraqi contexts, things are a bit different. " *That's from your kindness*" is never used in English conversations among native speakers. "*From your taste*" is the same as well. As the most striking response is " *You have beautiful eyes so you see me cute* ". This last answer is not only Arabic; rather it is purely Iraqi. Such artificial responses are likely to cause misunderstanding in cross-cultural communications.

> 2- Imagine that your supervisor has told you to do some task for your research paper. However, you didn't do it in time. What would you say when he asks you about it ?

It may be acceptable to have some responses like "*Sorry*", " *I couldn't do it* " , "*I'll finish it soon*" … etc. However, Iraqi speakers usually tend to provide an excuse even before declaring that they couldn't do the task in time. " *I had a specific problem*" and " *Something bad happened to me yesterday*" are common examples.

In a case like that, a misunderstanding is inevitable in cross-cultural communications. "*I'll do it now*" , " *I'll do it in a hurry*" are common responses in the test papers which are majorly noticed in real-life Iraqi situations when one has forgotten to do a certain task or order.

3- You wrote an essay. Your teacher likes it but there are some weak points in it.
 The teacher says :
- Next time you might want to give a little more attention to grammar.
What would you answer?

As the teacher asks to give more attention to Grammar, it is clear that the structure is a request. A usual response would be "*Ok! I will, sir*". "*Right*", "*Sure*", and "*Of course*" are also natural and they do not make any confusion. Some artificial answers include " I'll take your note into my consideration", " Thank you sir, you made me correct my mistake", " *Thank you for advice*", " *God's willing, sir*" are also examples of Arabic style. After all, they may still be understood, but surely they are likely to cause Pragmatic Failure.

4- Your friend says a certain sentence.
- you say : You shouldn't use prepositions this way.
-He says : Oh yes, I forgot you were an English Grammar expert !!
-You answer : …………

As it is a case of sarcasm, such utterances in English native-speaking context are meant as sarcastic and jocular in tone and lead to extended jokes and speculations. The researcher notices that Iraqi's responses to such a case is completely different. Some tend to soften it or to "make it up" just as saying " *we all commit mistakes*", "*It's Ok*", " *We learn from our experiences*", *'' I don't want to upset you*"….etc. others may stress the need for correcting (or in our case focusing Grammar) as the sample example by saying " *It's not like that, we all are learners*", " *We are in the Eng. Dept.*" Also, some students regard it as an insult to receive such a comment, so their responses tend to be more stressed or harsh just like " *Forget it*!", " *It's up to you, take it or leave it*", " *As you like to consider it*". As we notice here, Arabic style affects the intended overall meaning and consequently, several cases of misunderstanding are to be expected.

5- You: My God, look at that! You got 18/20 ?
Your friend : So what ? that girl got 20 ?
You :…………

This situation needs a CR that soothes the speaker (your friend). " *18 is really good*", " *It's not that bad*", " *Never mind it*" are possible examples. However, in Iraqi cases, some other modes or styles were noted. For example, "*There is another chance for you*", " *Girls are always better than boys*", and " *You should be happy*" are dominant. Sometimes, "*If I were you" structure* is used also to convince the speaker that he should be happy. Some other choices differ and they are graded from normal cases such as *" Do your best next time*" to the extreme Arabic styles such as " *You are better than her, but you didn't study well*" which is a very common statement in such a case of showing solidarity. This solidarity may include stressing the speaker's abilities. Moreover, it sometimes involves speculating the girls capability to gain such a mark as some CRs include "*Woooow*", " *I can't believe it* " , " *Really?* " , and " *How is that*? ". It can in other cases be shown as stating more severe cases to be acceptable; for instance some CRs include " *Are you serious? I got 15 and It's great* " .

6-You were invited to your uncle's house and your cousin cooked a delicious food. Everybody ate without praising. Suddenly, your cousin herself says :Nice dinner !
You say : …………

As a case of unacknowledged compliments, it can be seen as a request for an acknowledgment. Native speakers would stress the food's being very delicious or they simply agree with the speaker, hence giving the acknowledgment requested. Some Iraqi unique structures are also spotted. Among them is " *The delicious food made us forget to comment on it*". A further praising may be offered sometimes just as " *I'm really full*" in our case. To make it softer, a response like " *I was just about saying so, but you said it before me*" is often used. An artificial response would be so weird for native speakers just like "*Lived your hands*" which is a poorly-translated Iraqi phrase.

ii. Analysis of Test 2

The results from test2 were collected and tabulated in terms of frequency and percentage. They are as follows:

Situation 1: Any Service to You – Taking Leave

"You come across one of your classmates on campus. He greets you and inquires about something you had in class. You answer him and he thanks you. You want to leave." You would say:

Table 1. Frequency and percentage of subjects' responses to situation 1

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
See you soon	13	32.5
Any service to you	21	52.5
I have to go now	3	7.5
Other	3	7.5

Table 1 shows the results of how Iraqi learners respond to situation of leave-taking. It can be seen that the hypothesized communicative pattern (i.e., *any service to you*) receives the highest frequency of responses i.e. , 21 (52.5%). *'See you soon'* response comes next with 13 (32.5%). Both of the *"I have to go now"* response and the *'other'* response forms 3 (7.5%).

In taking leave after having conversation, Arabs are usually used to saying *'ay Khedmah lek'* (literally means *'any service to you'*). Such a communicative pattern, however, may function as an offer of help from the perspective of native speakers of English. The production of the communicative pattern, *'any service to you',* in such a situation is likely to bring about miscommunication between interlocutors across cultures.

Situation 2: Thank you – declining someone's invitation in sharing food

"It happens that you sit at the same table where a native English friend of yours is having his food. He invites you to share food with him. He says 'please share with me'.

Table 2. Frequency and percentage of subjects' responses to situation 2

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Thank you	14	35
No, Thank you.	11	27.5
Oh! I'm full	10	25
Other	6	15

Considering the results of the learners' responses to the situation of declining an invitation of sharing food in table 2, we observe that the hypothesized communicative pattern, i.e., *'Thank you'*, is the highest among the other responses with 14 (35.00 %). *'No thank you'* response comes in the next place with 11 (27.5%) and it is followed by '*Oh, I'm full*' response which receives 10 (25%). The *'other'* response is 6 (15%) (disprefered response). Following the conventions of the native speakers of English, the *'Thank you'* response represents an acceptance of invitation. This pattern of response, nevertheless, does not act as an acceptance of invitation according to the Iraqi cultural norms. In fact, it can be seen as a polite rejection of the invitation. Such a communicative pattern could lead to miscommunication between native speakers of English and Iraqi learners of English in the course of interaction.

Situation 3: Yes-Responding to Someone's Negative Structured Question

"A group of your classmates are planning to go for a picnic next week. You are not interested in going with them. A native English friend of yours approaches you asking: Aren't you coming along with us?" You would say**:**

Table 3. Frequency and percentage of subjects' responses to situation 3

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Thank you	5	12.5
No	11	27.5
Yes	15	37.5
Other	9	22.5

The above table reveals that the hypothesized response *'Yes'* receives the highest number of frequency with 15 (37.50%). The response *'No'* comes next with 11 (27.50%). The other responses vary from 5 (12.50%) in the response of '*Thank you'* to 9 (22.50%) in the response of *'Other'*.

The minor difference between the "yes" and the "No" responses shows the tendency towards using *'Yes'* instead of '*No'* when answering a negative-structured question. Unlike English people, Iraqi learners are likely to answer a negative-structured question with '*Yes*' in their communication; it implies a dispreferred answer from the perspective of the speaker. This pattern of spoken response causes miscommunication between Iraqi EFL learners and native speakers of English.

Situation 4: Ok – Giving an Indirect Refusal to a Friend's Request

"One of your friends requests you to lend him your class notebook tomorrow. You try to apologize, but he insists asking for it. You want to indirectly refuse his request. Your friend says: 'please give it to me'." You say:

Table 4. Frequency and percentage of subjects' responses to situation 4

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Let me see	20	50
Ok	9	22.5
Of course	6	15
Other	6	15

Table 4 indicates that the response, *'Let me see',* represent the highest number of frequency with 20 (50%). The hypothesized response *'Ok'* comes next with 9 (22. 50). Both *'Of course'* and *'Other'* responses receive 6 (15.00%) .

Although the results above show that the percentage of the response *'Let me see'* receives the highest number of frequency as compared to the hypothesized one (i.e., Ok), the hypothesized response still demonstrates significance as it comes next in order. In fact, Iraqi learners often are likely to avoid direct rejection of a friend's request. They usually use the utterance *'Ok'* to avoid giving a positive preferred

response to his request. However, such a response could be regarded as a preferred answer according to the native speakers' norms of communication as such it may create miscommunication across cultures.

Situation 5: Ok, You Have Your Own Excuse-Accepting Someone's Excuse

"You are in the class. Your native English teacher tells that he won't be able to come for the next class on the grounds that he has a meeting somewhere. You respond to his notice." You would say:

Table 5. Frequency and percentage of subjects' responses to situation 5

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
Ok sir.	13	32.5
Ok, You have your own excuse	17	42.5
It's Ok.	8	20
Other	2	5

A cursory look at table 5 indicates that the hypothesized response, *'Ok, you have your own excuse'*, is the highest among the other responses with 17 (42.50%). *'Ok sir'* response comes in the second place with 13 (32.50%). *'It'sok'* response receives 8 (20%) and *'Other'* response is 2 (5%).

Miscommunication across cultures sometimes causes a serious consequence to the participants. The response *'Ok, you have your own excuse'*, to the spoken notice of a native English teacher in the situation described above could be misunderstood as an offensive indication of misbehaviour from the student. Iraqi people sometimes show intimacy towards their interlocutors when they give excuses for their disability to fulfill a task. They usually say *'odhrak ma'ak'* (literally means *'you have your own excuse*).

Situation 6: Insha Allah – Assuring One's Acceptance of Doing Something

"You are in the class of English grammar. Your native English teacher instructs you to do an exercise on the book and bring it in the next class. Teacher says: 'do the exercise on page 72 and bring it in the next class'."

You would say:

Table 6. Frequency and percentage of subjects' responses to situation 6

Response	Frequency	Percentage %
God's willing	20	50
Ok sir	12	30
Alright	8	20
Other	0	0

Table 6 shows that the hypothesized response 'Insha'Allah' receives the highest number of frequency compared to the other responses, i.e., 20 (50 %). *'Ok sir'* response comes next with 12 (20 %). The responses *'all right'* and '*Other*' constitute 8 (20 %) and 0 (0%) respectively.

It is clear that the phrase, "*Insha'allah*" (God willing), is often included in Iraqi conversation. A native English teacher might be confused by the student's use of such a statement, because, in English, it carries the connotation of '*maybe*' or '*someday*'. Accordingly, when an Iraqi EFL student is instructed to write an assignment, and says '*insha'alla*' to his teacher in response to the instruction, the latter might be annoyed because he expects his instructions to be followed as a matter of discipline, not as a matter of '*insha'allah*' (I will do that, if God wills)".

11. Conclusions

The study aims at showing how Iraqi EFL learners produce Iraqi culture-specific communicative patterns that might create potential miscommunication with native speakers of English. The study findings have proved that these communicative patterns received comparatively high frequency of responses in the hypothesized situations. The high frequency of responses can be considered as an indicator of potential miscommunication across cultures. According to the analysis of the targeted types of communicative patterns that occur in intercultural interaction, based on the data of the MDCT, the cultural differences, religious rooted – norms, social conventions and pragmatic transfer are regarded as the major sources of pragmatic failures that may cause breakdown of communication across cultures. The

study has also concluded that Iraqi EFL learners should be made aware of the fact that communication is not limited to linguistic competenc; more than that, they should have knowledge about pragmatic competence for communication. To achieve this, they should be involved in a culturally - oriented English communication practice to minimize miscommunication in their communicative interactions across cultures.In this respect Role – play and discourse completion tasks are considered good examples of language communication practice that may improve the Iraqi EFL learners' communicative competence and get them aware of the culture-specific patterns of communications.

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Appendices

Appendix (i)

Dear professors,

I hope you would help me in my test for Pragmatic Failure. I employed two questions.

Q1.

The First one includes some items in which the students are to write down what they prefer to use in the mentioned situations. In this paper, there are some kinds of Compliments (C) and Compliment-responses (CR).

The examples here are what is expected from native speakers of English. By comparing the CRs of native speakers and those Iraqi speakers of English, I will check the degree to which Pragmatic Failure occurs in cross-cultural communications.

Greeting

On the question of Cs of appearance, in a mostly female and friendly workplace it was found that clothes, accessories and anything new was commented on. In this exchange the C is part of a greeting that took place in a corridor. It was the first time these two female work colleagues had seen each other that day. They routinely commented on each other's clothes.

    S1: Hi, I love your boots.
    S2: Oh, they're a bit old.
    S1: A bit of boot polish and away you go!

Softening a misdemeanour

Another type of C occurred when the speaker, an 11-year-old boy, was seeking to apologise or 'make up' for a misdemeanour (not getting off the computer when told to do so) and therefore using the compliment during dinner to 'make it up' to the listener (his mother). The following somewhat exaggerated compliment was certainly interpreted as such by the receiver.

    Mother: How's the crumble, darling?
    Son: Mum, with your crumble there's only one possible answer to that question!
    Mother: O h, aren't you a darling!

Softening a criticism

This type of C is exemplified in an exchange between a supervisor and a colleague who had just given a presentation. The overall feedback was positive and the feedback was not taken to be a criticism.

    S1: T hat was great. Just one thing: I would've got everyone to introduce themselves first.
    S2: O k, well, maybe next time.

Idiomatic expression within a compliment

The use of idiomatic expression can also be part of a compliment. The first example was interpreted by the receiver as quite 'strong'.

    S1: T hanks for getting back to me about it and I hope I haven't caused any problems.
    S2: N ot at all, you've taken the bull by the horns!
    S1: W ell, I'm glad you see it that way!
    S1: Aren't you the hostess with the mostest! What a great dress!
    S2: O h, I just felt like dressing up today.

Compliments incorporating sarcasm

The following two utterances were heard in an exercise class and were remarks made by the instructors to a woman who had an unusually large bruise on her leg. Both utterances were meant as sarcastic and jocular in tone and led to extended jokes and speculations about how this person had acquired such a large bruise. Interestingly, however, the real story was not told, so the extended responses to the comments seemed to be a way of avoiding an explanation.

Instructor 1 (female): N ice bruise! How did you get it!

Instructor 2 (male): Your bruise is coming along nicely!

Rejected compliments

In this example between a mother and her seven-year-old son, the C was rejected. Such a C is more likely to be used in very familiar or intimate contexts.

Mother: My god, look at that! You got 13/15 today!

Son: S o what? Lucy got 15!

Mother: W ell, I think 13 is really good, so there!

Compliments about ability

An example of genuine admiration was made to a child who was performing exceptionally well at her weekly basketball game. The child was pleased, as was her mother.

Woman: T here seems to be two of you on the court!

Child: (*Beams with pride*)

The following exchange between two female friends was also a C about ability, in this case that so much food had been prepared in one morning after working all week. The C is downplayed by S2.

S1: You didn't do all this *today*, did you?

S2: O h, no, I did some yesterday.

The following interaction took place between two women at work. S1 was showing S2 how to use a recording tool. S2 had experienced a few false starts recording her own voice and remarked that the results sounded terrible.

S1: I think you've got a *good* voice!

S2: I don't know about that. I think we need Mary to be here! (laughs)

Repeated compliments

In this type of C, it was expected that responses would vary not only according to the addressees but also how often a C has been paid over a period of time. An interesting example arose when the following C and CR were exchanged. S1 did not realise that S2 had been complimented on her hair all day and by late afternoon was just accepting Cs without adding extra information.

S1: Have you had your hair cut? It looks really good.

S2: O h, yeah.

S1: D on't you like it?

S2: O h, yeah, I do.

S1: O h, you don't seem to.

Unacknowledged compliments

Another type of C was an exchange where the speakers were a couple. The male partner had cooked the evening meal and clearly expected praise. His comment was therefore a hint that he should be acknowledged. This request for praise was repeated for some time, as was the desired reply.

   Partner (male): N ice dinner!
   Partner (female): Yeah, great! (*ignores the real intention of the question*)

Q2

The instrument used for the purpose here is a Multiple - choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT, i.e., a tool used for collecting data through responding to real-like situations). The MDCT consists of six items in which the subject is expected to choose a response from the options provided. Each item is composed of a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, the social distance between the participants and their status relative to each other.

4.1 Situation 1: Any Service to You – Taking Leave

"You come across one of your classmates on campus. He greets you and inquires about something you had in

 class. You answer him and he thanks you. You want to leave." You would say:

a. see you soon.	*b. any service to you.*
c. I have to go now.	*d. other ; ………………………*

In taking leave after having conversation, Arabs are usually used to saying *'ay Khedmah lek'* (literally means *'any service to you'*). Such a communicative pattern, however, may function as an offer of help from the perspective of native speakers of English. The production of the communicative pattern, *'any service to you',* in such a situation is likely to bring about miscommunication between interlocutors across cultures.

4.2 Situation 2: Thank you – declining someone's invitation in sharing food

"It happens that you sit at the same table where a native English friend of yours is having his food. He invites you to share food with him. He says 'please share with me'." Declining, you say:

a. Thank you.	b. No, thank you.
c. Oh! I'm full .	d. other ; ………………………..

Based on the conventions of the native speakers of English, the response *'Thank you'* acts as an acceptance of invitation. This pattern of response, however, does not act as an acceptance of invitation from the perspective of the Arab cultural norms. In fact, it acts as a polite rejection of the invitation. Such a communicative pattern could lead to miscommunication between native speakers of English and Arab learners of English in the course of interaction.

4.3 Situation 3: Yes-Responding to Someone's Negative Structured Question

"A group of your classmates are planning to go for a picnic next week. You are not interested in going with them. A native English friend of yours approaches you asking: Aren't you coming along with us?" You would say**:**

a. Thank you .   b. No

c. Yes   *d. other ; ……………………….*

Unlike English people, Arabs tend to answer a negative-structured question with '*Yes*' in their communication; it implies a dispreferred answer from the perspective of the speaker. Such a pattern of spoken response, therefore, is likely to cause miscommunication between Arab EFL learners and native speakers of English.

4.4 Situation 4: Ok – Giving an Indirect Refusal to a Friend's Request

"One of your friends requests you to lend him your class notebook tomorrow. You try to apologize, but he insists asking for it. You want to indirectly refuse his request. Your friend says: 'please give it to me'." You say:

a. Let me see.   b. OK.

c. Of course.   *d. other ; ……………………….*

In fact, Arabs often tend to avoid direct rejection of a friend's request. They usually use the utterance *'Ok'* to evade giving a positive preferred response to his request. However, such a response could be considered as a preferred answer from the perspective of the native speakers' norms of communication as such it may create miscommunication across cultures.

4.5 Situation 5: Ok, You Have Your Own Excuse-Accepting Someone's Excuse

"You are in the class. Your native English teacher tells that he won't be able to come for the next class on the grounds that he has a meeting somewhere. You respond to his notice." You would say:

a. Ok sir.   b. Ok, you have your own excuse.

c. It's OK.   *d. other ; ……………………….*

Miscommunication across cultures sometimes brings about a serious consequence to the participants. The response *'ok, you have your own excuse'*, to the native English teacher's spoken notice in the situation described above could be misunderstood as an offensive indication of misbehaviour from the student. Arab people sometimes show intimacy towards their interlocutors when they give excuses for not being able to fulfil a task. They usually say *'odhrak ma'ak'* (literally means *'you have your own excuse*).

4.6 Situation 6: Insha Allah – Assuring One's Acceptance of Doing Something

"You are in the class of English grammar. Your native English teacher instructs you to do an exercise on the book and bring it in the next class. Teacher says: 'do the exercise on page 72 and bring it in the next class'."

You would say:

a. God's willing (*Insha Allah)*   b. Ok sir.

c. Alright.   *d. other ; ………………………..*

According to Kharrat (2002), "The phrase, "*Insha'allah*" (God willing), abundantly permeates Arabic conversation. A native English teacher might be confused by the student's intention when using such a statement, because, in English, it carries the connotation of '*maybe*' or '*some day*'. Accordingly, when an Arabic EFL student is instructed to write an assignment, and says '*insha'alla*' to his teacher in response to the instruction, the latter might be exasperated because he expects his instructions to be followed as a matter of discipline, not as a matter of '*insha'allah*' (I will do that, if God wills)".

Appendix (ii)

Dear mates,

I would be grateful if you help me in my test.

Note: there is not any one good answer….feel free to express yourself …

Q1 : what would you say in such situations ?

-Imagine you see your friend for the first time today. He / she says that you look cute in this shirt. What do you say as a response ?

……………………………………………………………………………

- Imagine that your supervisor has told you to do some task for your research paper. However, you didn't do it in time. What would you say when he asks you about it ?

……………………………………………………………………………

- You wrote an essay. Your teacher likes it but there are some weak points in it.

 The teacher says :

- Next time you might want to give a little more attention to grammar.

What would you answer?

………………………………………………………………………………..

- Your friend says a certain sentence.

- you says : You shouldn't use prepositions this way.

-He says : Oh yes, I forgot you were an English Grammar expert !!

-You answer : ………………………………………………………………………

You: My God, look at that! You got 18/20 ?

Your friend : So what ? that girl got 20 ?

You :……………………………………………………………… …………

You were invited to your uncle's house and your cousin cooked a delicious food. Everybody ate without praising. Suddenly, your cousin herself says :   Nice dinner !

-You say : …………………………………………………………………..

Q2 : Choose the response you prefer to use in the following situations .

1. *"You come across one of your classmates on campus. He greets you and inquires about something you had in class. You answer him and he thanks you. You want to leave."* You would say:
a. *see you soon.*   b. *any service to you.*
c. *I have to go now.*   d. *other ; ……………………….*

2. *"It happens that you sit at the same table where a native English friend of yours is having his food. He invites you to share food with him. He says 'please share with me'."* Declining, you say:
 a. Thank you.   b. No, thank you.

 c. Oh! I'm full .   *d. other ; ……………………….*

3. *"A group of your classmates are planning to go for a picnic next week. You are not interested in going with them. A native English friend of yours approaches you asking: Aren't you coming along with us?"* You would say**:**
 a. Thank you .   b. No

 c. Yes   *d. other ; ……………………….*

4. *"One of your friends requests you to lend him your class notebook tomorrow. You try to apologize, but he insists asking for it. You want to indirectly refuse his request. Your friend says: 'please give it to me'."*
You say:
 a. Let me see.   b. OK.

 c. Of course.   *d. other ; ……………………….*

5. *"You are in the class. Your native English teacher tells that he won't be able to come for the next class on the grounds that he has a meeting somewhere. You respond to his notice."* You would say:

  a. Ok sir.   b. Ok, you have your own excuse.

  c. It's OK.   *d. other ; …………………………*

6. *"You are in the class of English grammar. Your native English teacher instructs you to do an exercise on the book and bring it in the next class. Teacher says: 'do the exercise on page 72 and bring it in the next class'."*

  You would say:

  a. God's willing   b. Ok sir.

  c. Alright.   *d. other ; …………………………*

الإخفاق التداولي في حالة التواصل بين الثقافات المختلفة :

دراسة تطبيقية بالإشارة إلى المتعلمين العراقيين للا نكليزية من ذوي المستوى المتقدم

الخلاصة :

إن الدراسة الحالية هي بمثابة محاولة لإيضاح كيفية قيام المتعلمين العرب للغة الإنجليزية بإستخدام تعبيرات خاصة بثقافتهم تؤدي إلى خلق سوء تواصل محتمل عبر الثقافات المختلفة. و قد تطلب هذا الهدف المرور عبر مقدمة عامة حول المعنى. و بعد تكريس الجزء الأول لبيان مقدمات الدراسة، فإن الجزء الثاني هو جزءا نظرياً يتضمن ثلاثة أقسام؛والأول منها يناقش التباينات المختلفة للمعاني والأسباب المحتملة لفهم أنواع مختلفة منها ؛ الأمر الذي يؤدي في النهاية إلى الإخفاقات التداولية.

وبشكل أكثر تحديدا، فإن القسم الثاني"الفشل التداولي"كمصدر لضعف الإدراك المتبادل "يذهب عميقا في استكشاف هذه الظاهرة من خلال تقديم الخلفية النظرية بما يشتمل على بعض التعاريف والفئات و الأسباب وكذلك يظهر أمثلة مسهبة.

أما القسم الأخير من الجزء النظري فإنه يحاول تسليط الضوء على كيفية تطبيق معرفتنا بخصوص الفشل التداولي على التدريس في الفصول الدراسية من أجل مساعدة الطلاب على تطوير قدراتهم التداولية.

و بخصوص الجزء الثالث فإنه قسما عمليا يقوم الباحث من خلاله بتطبيق نظريته من خلال إختبار معين. تتكون عينة الدراسة من 40 من العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية. و من أجل استخلاص البيانات لهذه الدراسة، فقد خضعت عينات الدراسة إلى الإختبار حيث تم تقديم إستبيان يتكون من عدة مواقف حيث إنها تحاكي مواقف حقيقية يمر بها الخاضعون للإختبار و يتوجب عليهم اختيار استجابة من تلك الإستجابات المقدمة أو التعبير بطريقتهم الخاصة في التعامل مع الحالات المذكورة.

و قد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة بأن الاستجابات المفترضة ، و هي الأنماط التواصلية الثقافية العربية الخاصة ، قد تلقت تواتراً عالياً مقارنةً باستجابات أخرى. و من المحتمل أن تتسبب تلك الأنماط التواصلية بسوء التواصل في حالات مشابهة للحالات التي ورد ذكرها في هذه الدراسة.و في النهاية فقد خلصت الدراسة إلى ضرورة جعل متحدثي اللغة الإنجليزية العرب على دراية و وعي بهذه الأنماط التواصلية من أجل تقليل حالات سوء التواصل الحاصل في تفاعلهما التواصلي مع الثقافات المختلفة.