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Investigating Pragmatic Failure of Iraqi EFL University Students in Academic Writing
A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate the pragmatic failure of Iraqi EFL university students in academic writing by addressing three central objectives: to evaluate the overall level of students' pragmatic competence, to identify the specific types and frequency of pragmatic failure in their academic texts—particularly in the areas of speech acts, politeness strategies, hedging, and implicature—and to determine whether gender plays a significant role in pragmatic performance. The study sample consists of 75 fourth-year undergraduate students from Colleges of Education for Humanities and for Women at Tikrit University, representing a diverse yet academically similar cohort of Iraqi EFL students. To achieve the study's objectives, a carefully designed diagnostic test is administered, targeting the students' ability to apply pragmatic principles within academic discourse. The test items are based on real-world academic communication contexts and assessed the appropriateness of pragmatic strategies use by the participants. Statistical analysis of the results, including a one-sample t-test and one-way ANOVA, revealed that the students generally exhibited low levels of pragmatic competence, with the mean scores falling significantly below the expected benchmark. Among the four pragmatic components examined, hedging emerged as the most successfully applied strategy, indicating some awareness of academic tone and tentativeness in claims. In contrast, politeness strategies are the most problematic, suggesting a lack of sensitivity to formality and audience expectations in academic writing. Furthermore, the analysis shows no statistically significant difference between male and female students in terms of their overall pragmatic performance. These findings highlight the pressing need for explicit instruction in academic pragmatics within Iraqi EFL curricula and support the integration of communicative strategies to enhance students' ability to produce effective, culturally and contextually appropriate academic texts.

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تقصّي الاخفاق التداولي لدى طلاب الجامعات العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في الكتابة الأكاديمية

نصير طارق صالح / جامعة تكريت/ كليه التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

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الخلاصة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقصّي الفشل التداولي لطلبة الجامعة العراقيين من دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغةً أجنبية في مجال الكتابة الأكاديمية، من خلال التركيز على ثلاثة أهداف رئيسة، وهي؛ تقييم المستوى العام لكفاءتهم في استخدام اللغة بما يتناسب مع السياقات المختلفة، وتحديد أنواع الإخفاقات التداولية في نصوصهم الأكاديمية وتكرارها، لاسيما في مجالات الأفعال اللغوية، واستراتيجيات التهذيب، والتعبير الحذر، والإيحاء، فضلًا على التحقق مما إذا كان للجنس (ذكورًا وإناثًا) تأثير يُذكر في هذا الأداء، وقد شملت عينة الدراسة خمسة وسبعين طالبًا وطالبة في السنة الدراسية الرابعة من كليتي التربية للعلوم الإنسانية وكلية التربية للبنات في جامعة تكريت، ممن يمثلون شريحة متنوعة ولكن متقاربة من حيث المستوى الأكاديمي في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية، ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم إعداد اختبار تشخيصي دقيق يقيس قدرة الطلبة على توظيف مبادئ الاستخدام اللغوي السليم ضمن سياقات أكاديمية واقعية؛ حيث تم بناء مفردات الاختبار على مواقف من البيئة الجامعية تهدف إلى تقييم مدى ملاءمة الأساليب التي يعتمدها الطلبة في التعبير، وقد أظهرت النتائج المستخرجة من التحليل الإحصائي، باستخدام اختبار الفرضية وتحليل التباين، أن مستوى الكفاءة التداولية لدى الطلبة كان منخفضًا؛ حيث جاءت درجاتهم أقل بكثير من المستوى المتوقع، وبيّنت الدراسة أن أسلوب التعبير الحذر كان الأكثر نجاحًا في التطبيق، مما يدل على وعي جزئي بالنبرة الأكاديمية والتحفظ في عرض الأفكار، بينما كانت استراتيجيات التهذيب الأضعف من حيث الأداء، وهو ما يشير إلى قصور في إدراك مستوى الرسمية ومتطلبات المخاطبين في النصوص الأكاديمية، كما كشفت النتائج عن عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الذكور والإناث في أدائهم التداولي العام، وتؤكد هذه النتائج على ضرورة إدراج تعليم واضح ومباشر لمهارات الاستخدام السليم للغة في السياقات الأكاديمية ضمن مناهج تعليم اللغة الأجنبية في العراق، مع الدعوة إلى اعتماد استراتيجيات لغوية تعزز قدرة الطلبة على إنتاج نصوص أكاديمية فعّالة ومناسبة من حيث الثقافة والسياق.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية، الفشل التداولي، الكفاءة التداولية، الكتابة الاكاديمية، متعلمو اللغة الانكليزية بوصفها لغة اجنبية، الكفاءة الخطابية.

1. Introduction

English has been recognized as the dominant global language, serving as a bridge for communication across cultures, disciplines, and professional fields. As the primary medium of international discourse, English is indispensable in academic, economic, and diplomatic spheres, making proficiency in the language

crucial for professional and scholarly success (Crystal, 2003). However, mastering English involves more than just acquiring grammatical accuracy and a wide vocabulary. It requires pragmatic competence—the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various contexts (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). In academic writing, pragmatic competence extends beyond sentence-level correctness to include structuring arguments logically, adhering to discourse conventions, maintaining an appropriate tone, and engaging effectively with an academic audience (Hyland, 2018).

The problem of the present study seeks to investigate the pragmatic failure of Iraqi EFL university students in academic writing by identifying specific challenges they face in structuring arguments, maintaining logical flow, and employing an appropriate academic tone. By analyzing the nature and causes of their pragmatic failures, this research aims to provide valuable insights into pedagogical interventions that can enhance pragmatic competence. The findings will contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies, curriculum reforms, and instructional materials that specifically address the pragmatic challenges faced by Iraqi EFL learners. These improvements will ultimately enhance their academic writing skills and overall communicative effectiveness.

The present study aims at:

1- Investigating the level of Iraqi EFL university students in academic writing.
2- Investigating pragmatic failure (speech act, Politeness, hedging and implicature (Grice's Conversational Maxims) (Quantity, quality, relation and manner) of Iraqi EFL university students in academic writing.
3- Investigating if there is a significant difference between male and female Iraqi EFL University students in their performance in academic writing concerning pragmatic failure.

This study is limited to the use of pragmatic failure in English language, Iraqi Fourth year undergraduate students at the university of Tikrit/ College of Education for Humanities and College of Education for Woman and during the academic year 2023- 2024

These aims are supposed to be achieved through answering the following questions:

1- What is the level of proficiency in academic writing among Iraqi EFL university students?

2- Is there any difference between pragmatic failures (speech act, Politeness, hedging and implicature meaning (Grice's Conversational Maxims) (Quantity, quality, relation and manner) of Iraq EFL University Students in Academic Writing.

3- Is there a significant difference between male and female Iraqi EFL university students in their performance in academic writing concerning pragmatic failure.

1.1 Value of the study

The findings of the present study are hoped to be of great value for both theoretical side and the practical one.

Theoretically, this study diagnoses the pragmatic failure that the learner encounter in academic writing which plays great role in learning and teaching EFL.

Practically, this study is expected to be valuable to English teachers, educators, specialists and textbook writers. It is hoped to provide them with scientific information about the difficulties that students face in academic writing.

1.2 Limits of the study

The study is limited to:

1. The use of pragmatic failure in English language.
2. Iraqi Fourth year undergraduate students at the university of Tikrit/ College of Education for Humanities and College of Education for Woman.
3. During the academic year 2023- 2024

2. The Pragmatic Failure

Pragmatic failure refers to the inability to understand or appropriately respond to the social and cultural nuances of communication. It occurs when

speakers fail to use language in a way that fits the social context, leading to misunderstandings or communication breakdowns. Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that studies how context influences the interpretation of meaning in language use. While grammar and vocabulary are essential for communication, pragmatics focuses on how people use language in practice, including their understanding of social norms, expectations, and the implicit meanings of words and phrases (Thomas, 1983).

Pragmatic failure has significant implications in cross-cultural communication, second language acquisition, and intercultural interactions (Kasper, 1992).

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of pragmatic Failure

The study of Pragmatic failure is rooted in several theories, each offering different explanations and frameworks:

• **Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969):** This theory posits that language functions not only to convey information but also to perform actions, such as making requests, giving orders, and making promises. Pragmatic failure can occur when a speaker misinterprets the intended illocutionary force (the speaker's intended action) or the hearer fails to recognize it.

• **Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975):** Grice proposed that effective communication relies on four maxims: Quantity (providing the right amount of information), Quality (being truthful), Relation (being relevant), and Manner (being clear). Pragmatic failure occurs when speakers violate these maxims, leading to misunderstandings.

• **Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987):** According to this theory, speakers use politeness strategies to maintain face and avoid threatening the social roles of participants in a conversation. PF can arise if speakers use inappropriate politeness strategies or fail to recognize the politeness norms of the target culture.

• **Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1986):** This theory emphasizes the importance of relevance in communication, suggesting that speakers aim to make their contributions as relevant as possible. PF can occur when a speaker's

contribution is irrelevant or fails to meet the expectations of relevance in the context.

2.2 Types of Pragmatic Failure

Pragmatic failure is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. It can manifest in several distinct ways, depending on the situation and the cultural context. The main types of pragmatic failure include:

A. Pragmatic Incompetence

Pragmatic incompetence refers to the lack of knowledge or understanding of the social and cultural norms that govern communication. This type of failure is common among second language learners who may be grammatically proficient but unaware of cultural conventions. For instance, a learner might use direct speech acts such as "Give me the salt, which may be perceived as impolite in many cultures where indirectness or polite requests are expected, such as "Could you pass me the salt, please? (Kasper, 1993).

A speaker from a culture that values directness may fail to understand that an indirect request (e.g., "I wonder if you could...") is expected in a different cultural context

B. Pragmatic Transfer

Pragmatic transfer occurs when speakers apply the rules or norms of their native language to a second language, leading to inappropriate or inaccurate communication. This transfer can occur when the speaker applies the politeness norms or turn-taking strategies from their first language to the target language, which may cause misunderstandings or discomfort (Odlin, 1989).

- **Example:** A Japanese speaker might overuse honorifics in English, or a French speaker may be too direct in English requests, leading to pragmatic failure in intercultural communication.

C. Pragmatic Misunderstanding

Pragmatic misunderstanding refers to situations where the meaning intended by the speaker is different from the meaning interpreted by the listener. This type of failure often arises due to differences in cultural norms, idiomatic expressions,

or figurative language. Such misunderstandings can lead to awkward or even offensive communication (Gumperz, 1982).

- **Example:** In some cultures, the phrase "Let's be in touch" is used as a casual farewell. However, in another culture, this might be interpreted as a promise or commitment to follow up, leading to confusion.

D. Pragmatic Anomaly

A pragmatic anomaly occurs when the speaker's utterance violates expected social norms or conventions, even if the words themselves are grammatically correct. This often happens when the speaker misjudges the social distance, status of the interlocutor, or the formality level required in a situation (Leech, 1983).

- **Example:** In a formal business setting, using slang expressions or overly casual language can result in a pragmatic anomaly, leading the listener to perceive the speaker as unprofessional

E. Cultural Clash in Pragmatics

Pragmatic failure can occur when speakers from different cultural backgrounds engage in communication without recognizing the distinct social and linguistic conventions of each other's cultures. In such cases, differing views on politeness, formality, or humor can lead to significant misunderstandings.

2.3 Strategies to Overcome Pragmatic Failure

To minimize pragmatic failure, several strategies can be employed by language learners, educators, and communicators in intercultural settings:

1. **Cultural Awareness Training:** Educating learners and speakers about the cultural norms of the target language is essential. Understanding cultural differences in politeness, humor, and speech acts can help avoid misunderstandings (Byram, 1997).

2. **Pragmatic Awareness Activities:** Language learners should practice real-life scenarios where they must use pragmatics appropriately. This includes role-plays, simulations, and feedback from native speakers (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

3. **Use of Interpreters or Mediators:** In situations involving complex cultural differences, it may be helpful to use a mediator who understands both cultures to facilitate communication (House, 2000).

Pragmatic failure is a multifaceted issue that affects communication across cultures and languages. Whether it's due to a lack of pragmatic competence, cultural differences, or misinterpretations of meaning, the consequences of pragmatic failure can be significant. Understanding the types of pragmatic failure and developing strategies to overcome it is essential for enhancing effective communication, especially in multicultural and multilingual settings (Cohen, 2008).

3. PROCEDURES

3.0 Introductory Note

This chapter includes the population and sampling, construction of the diagnostic test, pilot administration of the test, validity, reliability items analysis, final administration of the test, its scoring scheme and the statistical tools used for interpreting the collected data.

3.1 Population and Sampling of the Study

Population is a group of individuals with at least one common characteristic which distinguishes that group from other individuals (Best & Kahn, 2006). Population refers to the entire set of individuals, objects, or events that share specific characteristics relevant to a study. It represents the larger group from which researchers aim to draw conclusions. However, examining an entire population is often challenging due to limitations such as time, financial constraints, and accessibility. As a result, researchers employ sampling, a process of selecting a subset of individuals from the population to serve as a representative group. A carefully selected sample enhances the generalizability of findings while ensuring precision and reliability. As highlighted by Fraenkel and Wallen (2019), the validity of research outcomes largely depends on the appropriateness of the sampling technique used.

The target population of the present study comprises 140 EFL undergraduate students from the fourth stage at the College of Education for Humanities, and 60 EFL undergraduate students from the fourth stage at the College of Education for Woman University of Tikrit, during the academic year 2024–2025. A random sample of 75 students is selected for the main study, while 20 students are chosen

for the pilot study. The selection process ensured fair representation by excluding repeaters students, as illustrated in Table (1).

Table (1)

The Population and Sampling of the Study

The College	Stage	Population	Sample		Pilot Study
			Male	Female	
University of Tikrit / College of Education for Humanities	4th stage	140	36	10	20
University of Tikrit /College Education for woman	4th stage	60	/	29	
Total		200	75		

3.2 Construction of the Diagnostic Test

Diagnostic tests are developed to measure general knowledge that is applicable both inside and outside the classroom (Koretz, 2008). Constructing a diagnostic test involves careful planning, selecting appropriate items that align with the test objectives, and producing the final version. Accordingly, the diagnostic test in this study is designed to assess the pragmatic competence of EFL undergraduate students at the College of Education for Humanities and to gather data on their use of discourse markers in academic writing.

The test consists of four questions. These questions are adapted from well-established books*[1] and references on PF.

The four types of questions in this test are designed to assess students' PF in academic writing and professional communication. The first question requires students to produce real-life pragmatic responses. This aim of this question is to demonstrate students' ability to use appropriate speech acts such as apology,

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[1] Kasper, G. (1997). Pragmatics and Language Learning. University of Hawai'i Press.

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. (2001). Pragmatics in Language Teaching. Cambridge University Press.

Ali, A. H. (2022). *Iraqi EFL Learners' Production of Felicitous Speech Acts*. Journal of Surra Man Raa, 18(74).

justification, mitigated criticism, and polite disagreement in various academic scenarios. The second question involves writing a short essay (200–250 words) on the role of politeness in academic communication. The aim of this question is to encourage students to reflect on how politeness strategies affect interactions with professors, peers, and colleagues. The third question assesses students' ability to use hedging expressions to make academic statements more cautious and indirect, ensuring their responses align with academic conventions. Finally, the fourth question requires students to revise academic abstracts based on Grice's Conversational Maxims. The aim of this question is to help students in enhancing clarity, relevance, and precision in academic writing. In general, these tasks collectively evaluate students' ability to apply pragmatic principles in written discourse.

3.3 Validity

According to Johnson and Johnson (1999), validity is the extent to which a test measures what it is designed to measure. This definition emphasizes the importance of aligning the test content with the construct it aims to assess. Three types of validity are considered: Face validity, content validity, and construct validity.

3.3.1 Face Validity

Face validity refers to the degree to which a test looks right and appears to measure the ability or knowledge that it claims to measure (Brown, 2004).

Face validity refers to the extent to which the test meets the expectations of those involved in its use like teachers, administrators... etc. (Mcnamara, 2000).

To ensure the face validity of the constructed diagnostic test, it has been submitted to a jury member of specialists in the field of methodology and linguistics (see appendix B) to give their opinion about the suitability of the test items and suggest any modifications they find necessary. They all agree that the test items are suitable to the level of the involved students.

3.3.2 Content Validity

Weir (2005) points out that content validity is one aspect of validity which is based on the degree to which a test effectively and sufficiently quantifies the accurate skill or behaviour that it sets out to assess.

Content Validity usually indicates the notion between test content and detail curriculum aims (Brown, 2005)

To ascertain the content validity of the test, a table of specification has been constructed. This table specifies the content of the diagnostic test, as well as, its scores.

3.3.3 Construct Validity

Construct Validity is a matter of the posteriori statistical validation of whether a test had measured a construct in individuals (Weir, 2005).

The Construct validity is achieved by obtaining both the DL (in short Difficulty Level) and DP (in short Discrimination Power) of the diagnostic test items.

3. 4 Reliability of the Test

Reliability is an important feature of good test. A test is said to be variable if it's degree of accuracy stays stable and consistent in each time is conducted with the same condition for the same sample of the students (Harrison, 1983).

One of the necessary features of a good test is reliability. Crocker and Algina (1986) stat that reliability is the extent to which test scores are consistent. Reliability refers to the extent of the stability of the test, whatever, it measures; it should be stable (Manion & Morrison, 2007).

To achieve this aim, the test- retest method is used. Thus, the same diagnostic test has been administered to the same pilot sample of twenty students. The two administrations have been performed Whitin a period of twelve days, taking into consideration the time, place, and quietness of the test administration during the two occasions. After using person correlation formula, the obtained results show that the correlation coefficient of reliability is 0.72 which is considered acceptable, as show in table (2).

Table 2

The Reliability of the Test

Reliability Statistics			
Test	**No. of Items**	Cronbach's Alpha	Internal Consistency
Diagnostic Test	**16**	**0.72**	Reliable

3.5 Pilot Study

A pilot test was done to check if the test was clear, practical, and took the right amount of time. A group of 20 fourth-year students, both male and female, from both the College of Education for Humanities and College for Education for Women at Tikrit University participated. The students from each class of 4th stage were subjected to the test on the 14th April, 2025.The goal was to make sure the instructions were easy to understand. The results showed that students found the instructions clear and familiar, meaning no major changes were needed in wording or structure. It is also found that students took about two hours to finish the test, which matched the expected time. After reviewing the results, small improvements were made to create the final version of the test.

3.6 Item Analysis

3.6.1. Difficulty Level

The difficulty level is specified as the ratio of the students who replied correctly to each item (Rosas, 2000).

Item difficulty refers to the extent to which an item appears to be complicated or facilitated for a given number of tests. It just reflects the percentage of learners who respond correctly to the object. The most suitable test item will have item difficulty varying between 0.15 and 0.85 (Brown, 2010). It was found that the current test items' DL ranges from (0.32) to (0.68).

3.6.2 Discrimination Power

Discrimination power means " calculating the degree to which a particular item's results correspond with the results of the entire test' (Alderson, 1995).

This means that an object is deemed to have weak power of discrimination if it is correctly scored by high-skilled students as well as low-skilled students. Item discrimination refers to the degree to which an object makes a difference between good and poor testers. An object has good power of discrimination if it collects the right answers from the good students and the wrong answers from the bad students. It is worth noting that the high power of discrimination will be close to 1.0, and no power of discrimination will be nil at all (Brown, 2010).

The results obtained indicate that the test item DP ranges from (0.32) - (0.84). The table below shows the test items in DP and DL:

3.7 Final administration

On Monday 14 April, 2025 the test has been administered upon the selected sample of the examinees in order to record and analyze their answers in the diagnostic test.

The test sheets are distributed among the examinees to write down their answers on them. Instructions are gives with explanting some examples to make the examinees understand the task carefully. In order to obtain serious and valid results, the examinees are asked to write their names on their sheets so that they would not neglect writing their responses on the test items. Moreover, they were informed that the time for conducting the test is limited.

4. Analysis of Data and Discussion of the Results
4.1 Results Related to the First Question

Identifying the Difference Between Theoretical Mean and the Mean Scores of Iraqi EFL University Students at Academic Writing.

The statistical results show that the mean scores of the students' performance in academic writing is (40.853) lower than the theoretical mean (50) with standard deviation of (17.209) degrees. Comparing with the tabulated

t-value which is (1.67), the calculated t-value (4.603) is higher than the tabulated t-value with, a degree of freedom (74) at a level of significance (0.05) in table 3.

This means that there is a significant difference between students' mean scores and the theoretical mean in academic writing. This reflects that Iraqi University students have weak and low level in academic writing.

Table 3 *Mean Score, Standard Deviation, Theoretical Mean Scores, and t-Values of the Iraqi EFL University Students in Academic Writing*

N.	Mean Score	SD.	Theoretical Mean Scores	T-Value		DF	Level of Sig.
				Calculate	Tabulated		
75	40.853	17.209	50	4.603	1.67	74	0.05

4.2 Results Related to the Second Question

Comparison among Iraq EFL University Students Mean Scores in Pragmatic Failures (Speech Act, Politeness, Hedging and Implicature).

In order to answer this question, a one- way ANOVA is used to see whether there is any significant difference in the mean scores of PF (speech act, politeness, hedging and implicature) of Iraq EFL University Students in Academic Writing see table 4.

Table 4

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Among the Fifth Variables

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F-value		Sig.
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Between Groups	1679.557	3	559.852	12.974	2.63	0.05
Within Groups	12772.613	296	43.151			
Total	14452.170	299				

The statistical level points out that the computed F-value is 12.974 higher than the tabulated F-value 2.63 at the 0.05 level of significance and DF = 3-296. This indicates that there is statistically significant difference between the mean scores of PF (speech act, politeness, hedging and implicature) of Iraq EFL University students in academic writing, as seen in table (5).

Table 5

Comparisons of Means Among the Pragmatic Failures (Scheffe'a)

Groups	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
		1	2	3
Politeness	75	6.600		
Implicature (Grice's Conversational Maxims)	75		9.7467	
Speech Act	75		11.4400	11.4400
Hedging	75			12.973
Sig.		1.000	.478	.564
Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.				
a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 75				

According to the table above, the comparisons of means shows that the mean scores of the *of Iraq EFL University Students in pragmatic failures, at* Politeness 6.600, Grice's Conversational Maxims 9.7467, Speech Act, 11.4400, and Hedging 12.9733 with harmonic mean sample size = 75. These results indicate that *Iraq EFL University* students' performance in Hedging has the highest mean score.

4.3 Results Related to the Third Question

Comparison Between the Male and Female Scores of the Iraqi University at Academic Writing Concerning Pragmatic Failure

To find out whether there is a significant difference between male and female Iraqi EFL university students in their performance in academic writing concerning pragmatic failure, the results show that females mean scores are found

to be (41.692) and male mean scores is found to be (39.416). The t-test formula for two independent samples is used to show that the calculated t-value is (0.567) and the tabulated t- value is (1.67) at the degree of freedom (73) and level of significance (0.05), as shown in table 6. It can be inferred that there is no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the males and females in the academic writing concerning pragmatic failure at Tikrit university.

Table 6

Mean Scores, Standard Deviation, and T-Value of Male and Female in Academic Writing Concerning Pragmatic Failure at Tikrit University

| | N. | Mean | S.D. | T-Value | | DF | Level of Sig. |
				Calculated	Tabulated		
Female	39	41.692	17.317	0.567	1.67	73	0.05
Male	36	39.416	17.409				

4.4 Discussion of The Results

The results of the study from first question reveal crucial insights into the academic writing proficiency of Iraqi EFL university students. The mean score of the students' performance in academic writing is found to be (41.85) which is significantly lower than the theoretical mean of 50 as show in figure 1. This discrepancy indicates a pressing concern regarding the students' ability to effectively engage in academic writing tasks. A mean score of (41.85) suggests that students are struggling to meet the expected standards in academic writing. The theoretical mean serves as a benchmark for proficiency, and the students' performance falling below this threshold indicates weaknesses in their writing skills. This underperformance may stem from various factors, including inadequate training, insufficient exposure to academic writing conventions, or a lack of practice in writing performance. The calculated t-value of (4.60) significantly exceeds the tabulated t-value of (1.67). This statistical result emphasizes that the difference between the students' mean scores and the theoretical mean is not due to random chance but is indeed significant. Consequently, this finding reinforces the conclusion that Iraqi EFL university students exhibit a lower level of proficiency in academic writing.

Figure 1 *Mean Scores and Theoretical Mean Score in Academic Writing Among Iraqi EFL University Students*

The analysis of pragmatic failures in academic writing among Iraqi EFL
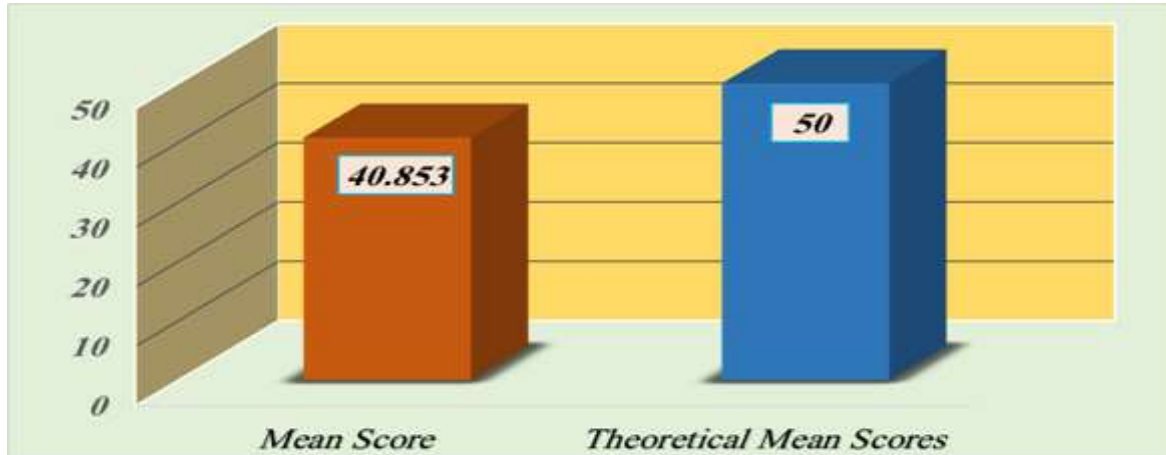
university students reveals significant differences across various categories, namely speech act, politeness, Hedging and implicature. Utilizing one-way ANOVA, the results indicate that there are notable disparities in students' performance related to these pragmatic aspects. The computed F-value of (12.97) surpasses the tabulated F-value of (2.63). This substantial difference indicates that at least one of the mean scores for the types of pragmatic failures is significantly different from the others. The results underscore the variation in proficiency among different pragmatic categories, highlighting the need for targeted instructional strategies. The mean scores for the categories of pragmatic failures are as follows, Politeness: (6.60) Grice's Conversational Maxims principles (implicature): (9.74), Speech Act: (11.44) and Hedging: (12.97). From these scores, it is evident that students performed best in Hedging with a mean score of (12.97). This suggests that Iraqi EFL students may have a better grasp of employing hedging strategies effectively in their writing. Hedging often involves using cautious language to express uncertainty, which might be more familiar to students due to its prevalence in conversational English.

Figure 2 *The Mean Scores of Pragmatic Failures Iraqi EFL University*
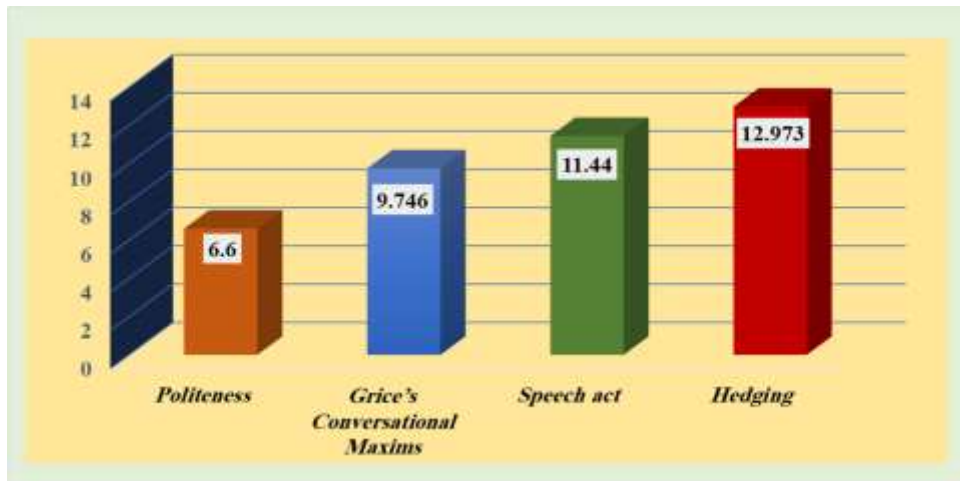
The analysis of the academic writing performance of male and female Iraqi EFL university students at Tikrit University concerning pragmatic failure offers important insights into gender related differences in language proficiency. The mean scores reveal that female students scored an average of (41.69), while male students had a mean score of (39.41) as show in figure 3. Although females outperformed males, the statistical analysis indicates that this difference is not significant. The mean scores suggest that female students perform slightly better than their male counterparts in academic writing related to pragmatic failure. However, the difference of approximately (2.27) points is not substantial enough to conclude that one gender is inherently more proficient than the other in this context. This finding may reflect broader societal and educational influences, such as differences in motivation, learning strategies, or exposure to writing tasks, but does not imply a definitive superiority of one gender over the other. The t-test results show a calculated t-value of (0.567), which is lower than the tabulated t-value of (1.67). This outcome indicates that the observed difference in mean scores is not statistically significant, leading to the conclusion that there is no substantial disparity between male and female students in their performance in academic writing concerning pragmatic failure.

Figure 3 *The Mean Score of The Males and Female at Tikrit University in Academic Writing Concerning Pragmatic Failure*
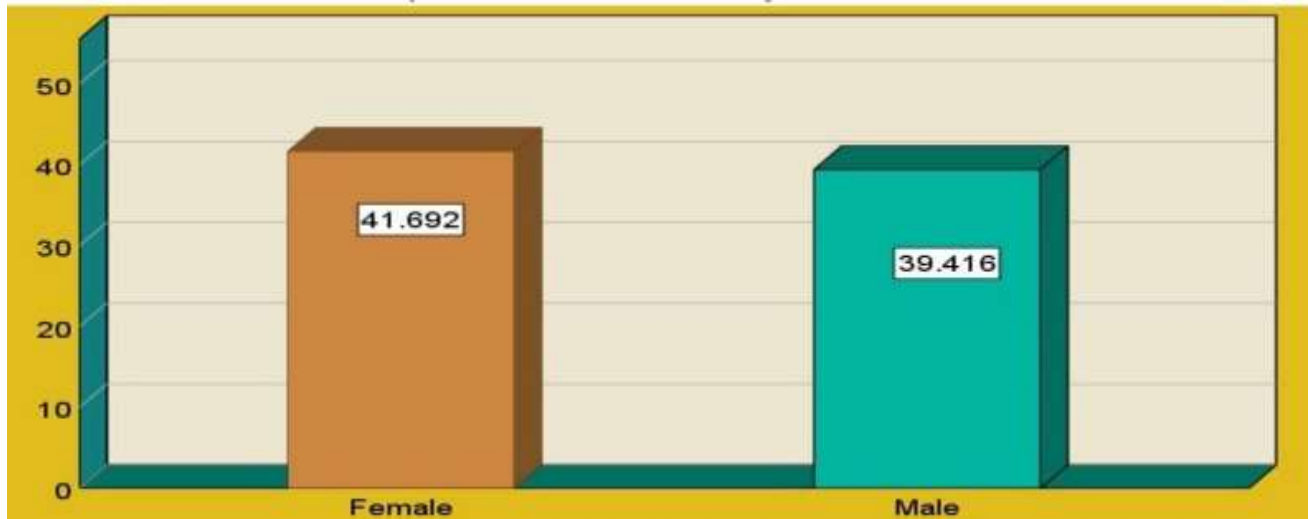
5. Conclusions

In the light of the obtained results, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1- The study reveals that many Iraqi EFL university students struggle with pragmatic competence in academic writing, particularly in using language appropriately through speech acts, hedging, politeness strategies, and adhering to Grice's Conversational Maxims.

2- Many students face problems and difficulties to respond properly in academic situations, which suggests that they lack understanding of speech acts, indirect language, and polite communication strategies.

3- The results also highlight that while students have a basic understanding of academic writing conventions, their responses frequently lacked the necessary pragmatic awareness needed for effective communication.

4- The production-based test confirmed that pragmatic failure occurs due to linguistic limitations, cultural differences, and insufficient exposure to authentic academic discourse.

5- These findings underscore the need for a more explicit focus on pragmatic competence in EFL curricula to enhance students' ability to communicate effectively in academic settings.

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