*Original Paper*

# The Iraqi EFL Learners' Use of Conversational Maxims at the University Level

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*Abstract*

*The current study is an attempt to measure the Iraqi EFL learners' use of conversational maxims at the recognition level. The study aims at testing whether the Iraqi EFL learners observe or flout the Gricean maxims, assessing the Iraqi EFL learners' mastery of the conversational maxims, and identifying which maxim(s) is/are frequently flouted by the learners of EFL. The study hypothesizes that the Iraqi EFL learners flout all the maxims of conversation, the maxim of relation is the least flouted one, the Iraqi EFL learners find the maxims difficult to adhere to, and the maxim of quantity is mostly flouted. The subjects of the study are one hundred Iraqi EFL learners at the fourth-year, Dept. of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Al-Muthanna. The data elicitation tool a recognition test designed in accordance with nature of the study. The study brings forth the conclusions that the subjects have a difficulty in utilizing the maxims altogether, they flout all the conversational maxims in relatively different degrees, and the learners are mostly abided by the maxim of relation more than the other three ones.*

*Keywords*

*cooperative principle, conversational maxims, flouting, EFL learners*

## 1. Introduction

Language is a powerful means of human communication. Via using language, the sender can deliver his/her intended meaning to the receiver. According to Grice, the communicative activity should go smoothly and straightforwardly. Thus, Grice postulates the cooperative principle. The cooperative principle (CP: for short) says that people should be cooperative in their communication. As a result,

Grice supports the cooperative principle by four maxims, which speakers should follow. The quantity maxim says that the sender should be informative as is required, the quality maxim states that the speaker should be truthful, the maxim of relation means that the speaker has to produce the relevant information only, and finally the manner maxim says that people should deliver clear and abridged information (Grice, 1975, pp. 45-46). In a similar vein, pragmatics is a chief field in language assessment. For more than two decades, developments are made in conceptualizing the pragmatic field, improving assessment tools and applying current methods of data treatment to the manipulation of test performance (Kasper & Ross, 2013, p. 1). The current study, thus, is located in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. Schauer (2009, p. 2) states that interlanguage pragmatics is "the acquisition, comprehension, and production of contextually appropriate language by foreign/second language learners". He (ibid: p. 15) declares that interlanguage pragmatics uses pragmatic notions, principles, and models to test how foreign/second language learners encode and decode meaning in their foreign language. Accordingly, the present study seeks answers for the following questions:

1). Do the Iraqi EFL learners have the necessary pragmatic competence about the maxims of conversation?

2). Do those learners master the conversational maxims?

3). Which conversational maxims are mostly flouted by those learners of EFL?

The study aims at:

1). Assessing the Iraqi EFL learners' mastery of the conversational maxims.

2). Measuring whether the Iraqi EFL learners observe or flout these maxims.

3). Identifying which maxim is frequently flouted.

In accordance with aims of the study, the researchers put the following hypotheses:

1). The Iraqi EFL learners flout all the conversational maxims.

2). The Iraqi EFL learners find the maxims difficult to adhere to.

3). The maxim of quantity is mostly flouted.

4). The maxim of relation is the least flouted maxim.

The scope of the study includes one hundred Iraqi EFL learners at the fourth-year, Dept. of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Al-Muthanna for the academic year (2019-2020) who are selected to be the subjects of the study. The test is restricted to the recognition level, and to examine the Iraqi EFL learners' use of conversational maxims in terms of observing or non-observing the maxims. In the case of non-observing the maxims, violating and opting out are not taken into consideration because they require the speaker's intention whether the speaker intends to mislead or refuse to communicate. Therefore, flouting, as a form of non-observing the maxims, is utilized in the practical aspect of the study because it does not require the testees' intention.

The study adopts the following procedure:

1). Constructing a recognition test to be the data elicitation tool.

2). Selecting Iraqi EFL learners at the fourth-year as the subjects of the study.

3). Applying the test to the selected subjects of the study.

The study is hoped to be valuable to teachers, researchers, and interlanguage pragmatists. It could also be beneficial to methods of teaching and FL specialists, namely, course designers and test-makers.

## 2. Literature Review

Due to the big shift towards dealing with language from a functional perspective, pragmatics becomes a much-flourished linguistic study. The principal task of pragmatics is how to infer the intended meaning by virtue of context. Hence, pragmatics takes into account a number of issues that are neglected in the formal description of language, such as the notion of context (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 27). One of the most important inferential approach to the interpretation of meaning is that of Grice.

This section discusses the key ideas in Grice's pragmatic framework, namely, the CP and the conversational maxims, and it is necessary to state why such a principle is required. Previous works on the theory of speech acts by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) had largely been concerned with the relationship between direct and indirect speech acts. Leech (2014, pp. 311-312) and Bousfield (2014, p. 125) state that Grice's notion of the CP comes to bridge the gap that illustrates indirectness between what is said and what is meant where a speaker can use one utterance to convey the meaning of another. Such a semantics-pragmatics gap is handled by proposing the CP as a mechanism of linking the semantic and pragmatic meanings. The CP can be defined as "A basic assumption in conversation that each participant will attempt to contribute appropriately, at the required time, to the current exchange of talk" (Yule, 1996, p. 128). The following classical example elucidates the function of the CP:

(1) **A: I am out of petrol.**

**B: There is a garage round the corner.**

As Grice points out, the concealed relation between the questioner and the responder is clear. However, B's remark means that A can get petrol from the nearby garage, but what B means is not actually retrievable from the words she uses. To reach the right interpretation, the CP must enter the scene. That is to say, the remark is meaningful to the range that A identifies that B is fulfilling the expectations A has about the CP. The competent speakers might have no difficulty in inferring the intended meaning that the garage is open and it has petrol to sell (Christie, 133, p. 2000). Accordingly, Grice proposes that in an interactive talk, there is an underlying principle, which harmonizes the way in which language is used maximally, effectively, and efficiently to fulfill logical interaction. Grice calls this organizing dictum the CP (Huang, 1994, p. 4). Hence, the CP stats:

"**Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged**" (Grice, 1975, p. 45).

*2.1 The Maxims of Conversation*

The maxims are general principles which motivate the efficient use of language, and which together identify the CP (Crystal, 2008, p. 298). These maxims are set to aid a pragmatic explanation of the divergence between semantic and pragmaticmeanings (Segerdahl, 1996, p. 61). Leech (1983, p. 8) and

45

Cruse (2000, p. 357) point out that these maxims or principles are different from grammatical rules. They isolate four ways to show the dissimilarity: (i) they can be applied to different contexts; (ii) maxims can be applied in different gradations; (iii) they can overlap with each other, and (iv) maxims can be breached up without any rejection to the kind of activity, which they regulate, while breaching up a grammatical rule leads to an ill-formed utterance.

2.1.1 The Maxim of Quantity

This maxim deals with the amount of information delivered. It consists of two sub-maxims (Grice, 1975, p. 45):

**(a) Make your contribution as informative as require.**

**(b) Don't make your contribution more informative than is required.**

Locastro (2012, p. 49) comments on this maxim. She says that the maxim of quantity involves what is internally in the text. Thus, the speaker has to deliver the required amount of information no more no less. If the speaker provides more or less amount of information, s/he will breach up this maxim, such as:

**(2) A: Why did you leave the meeting early?**

**B: I wanted to.**

The maxim of quantity comes into play: B's remark is less informative than is needed, and the reason beyond that is that B does not like to declare the reason because it would be embarrassing, impolite, etc. (Leech, 2014, p. 312).

This maxim, like the other maxims of conversation, can be hedged, such as: as you probably already know …/I cannot say any more. For example:

**(3) *I would not bore you with the details*, but it was an exciting trip.** Here, the maxim of quantity is violated because the speaker contributes more than is required. The speaker can easily say *it was an exciting trip*. However, the use of the hedge (*I would not bore you with the details*, but…) is more than is required (Yule, 1996, pp. 38-39).

2.1.2 The Maxim of Quality

This maxim is set to deal with truth-telling. The speaker should provide only the truth. Under this maxim fall two sub-maxims (Grice, 1975, p. 46):

(**a) Don't say what you believe to be false.**

**(b) Don't say that for which you lack adequate evidence.**

Locastro (2012, p. 49) states that the maxim of quality, that is, the truth or falsity of the sender utterance, is concerned with aspects that are external to the text. In an interactive talk, the speaker should convey the information, which is true; the information that s/he can prove, otherwise, the maxim is going to be violated. On many occasions, this maxim seems not to be followed. An example is given below to clarify this point (Khosravizadeh & Sadehvandi, 2011, p. 122):

**(4) Mother: Did you study all day long?**

(Son who has been playing all day long) **Yes, I have been studying untilnow**!

The son's answer is not true. He lies to avoid the undesirable consequences, therefore, he violates the maxim of quality which says (Be truthful). There are quality hedges: as far as I know, …/I am not sure if this is true, but…

For example:

**(5) A: I will ring you tomorrow then.**

**B: Em, I shall be there *as far as I know*, and in the meantime have a word with Mum and Dad if they are free. Right, good-bye then sweetheart.**

**A: Good-bye, bye.**

In the above mini-conversation, B breaches up two maxims, on the one hand, the maxim of quality by using a hedging expression (as far as I know) which means "I cannot be totally sure if this is true", and on the other one, B breaches up the maxim of quantity by saying more than is required (Cutting, 2002, p. 35).

2.1.3 The Maxim of Relation

This maxim is simple and straightforward. Under this maxim, falls only one principle, which is, be relevant. Locasro (2012, p. 49) says the maxim of relevance is of a dissimilar order, and the maxim most frequently breached up. Birner (2013, p. 54) states that what is meant by the maxim of relation is that the current utterance must have something to do with the context; it must be related to what has come before it in the conversation and/or what is going on in the situation. Hymes (cited in Brown and Yule, 1983, p. 37) maintains that the context has two crucial functions. On the one hand, context delimits the range of possible interpretations and, on the other one, supports the intended interpretation. Context is of two types: (i) the linguistic context or co-text; it can be defined as the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence and (ii) the context of situation is defined as the time and place in which we encounter linguistic expressions (Yule, 2010, pp. 129-130):

**(6) A: I say, did you hear about Mary's…**

**B: Yes, well, it rained nearly the whole time we were there.**

Here, B's remark is irrelevant to A's question. Thus, B violates the relation maxim because Mary gets closer to them, noticed by B but not by A (Cruse, 2000, p. 361).The relation maxim can be hedged like: I am not sure if this is relevant, but…/I do not want to change the subject, but…

For instance:

**(7) *I do not know if this is important*, but some of the files are missing.**

The speaker, here, does not know whether his remark is relevant or irrelevant; therefore, he violates the maxim of relation (Yule, 1996, pp. 38-39).

2.1.4 The Maxim of Manner

This maxim says, "Be perspicuous". The speaker's contribution to the conversation should not be nebulous and indistinct; rather it should be shortened, obvious, and organized. This maxim is sub-divided into four sub-maxims:

**(a) Avoid obscurity of expression.**

**(b) Avoid ambiguity.**

**(c) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).**

**(d) Be orderly** (Grice, 1975, p. 46).

Locastro (2012, p. 49) states that the manner maxim involves the text itself; the semantic form and the manner in which a certain piece of information is observed in the text itself. The speaker should be clear in his participation; otherwise, s/he is going to violate the manner maxim, such as the following instance (Leech, 2014, p. 312):

**(8) A: How did you get here?**

**B: I walked here on my own two feet.**

In the above utterance, B does not abide by the manner maxim. B can say by uttering one or two words (I walked). Hence, B says unnecessary prolixity. Besides, the maxim of manner can be hedged such as, I am not sure if this is clear, but…/I do not know if this makes sense, but…, etc. For instance:

*(9) This may be a bit confused***, but I remember being in a car.**

In the example above, the speaker violates the maxim of manner because the speaker's statement is vague, whether the speaker is being in a car or not (Yule, 1996, pp. 38-39).

*2.2 Observing and Non-Observing the Maxims*

Maxims observing and non-observing depend on the speakers whether they observe or do not observe the Gricean maxims. In observing the maxims, the speaker does not breach up any conversational maxim. S/he can straightforwardly succeed in observing all the maxims. For example:

**(10) A: Where are the car keys?**

**B: they are on the table in the hall.**

Consequently, B observes the maxim of quantity by saying the required amount of information, the maxim of quality by being truthful, the maxim of relation by providing relevant answer, and finally, the maxim of manner by conveying distinct answer (See Thomas, 1995, p. 64). On the other extreme, there are many occasions when speakers fail to observe these maxims; see (Grice, 1975, p. 49; Thomas, 1995, p. 64 and Birner, 2013, p. 43). The failure to do so can take various forms:

1). Violating: the unostentatious non-observance of a maxim with the aim of misleading the hearer. For example:

**(11) Teacher: Why did not you do your homework?**

**Student: May I go and get some water? I am so thirsty.**

In the above example, the student violates the maxim of relation; the student conveys an irrelevant answer to mislead the teacher to avoid the undesirable consequence because the student does not do his homework (Khosravizadeh & Sadehvandi, 2011, p. 122).

2). Flouting: is the deliberate and intentional non-observance of a maxim that the hearer is expected to be aware of the non-fulfillment with no intention of deceiving the other person. For example:

**(12) A: Smith does not seem to have a girlfriend these days.**

**B: He has been paying many visits to New York lately.**

In the above example, B flout*s* the maxim of relation by which B means a deliberate and a clear violation. B's remark contains none of the information that would be expected that Smith has a girlfriend in New York; therefore, Smith pays lots of visits to New York (Kroeger, 2019, p. 144). The difference between examples (11) and (12) is that in (11), the speaker intends to deceive the partner while in (12), the speaker has no aim of misleading.

3). Opting out: opting out the maxims altogether, in a sense, means that one refuses to cooperate in a conversation for some reason. For example, one may be legally bound not to provide information one has. An example is given below to clarify this form of non-observance:

**(13) A: … um I lived in uh a country where people sometimes need to flee that country.**

**B: Uh, where was that?**

**A: *It is a country in Asia and I do not want to say any more.***

In the above conversation, A opts out two maxims the maxim of quantity because A delivers uninformative piece of information, and the maxim of manner because A's remark is not clear and not abridged. Opting out occurs frequently in public life to avoid being uncooperative, or for ethical reasons, and sometimes the requested answer might hurt a third person; therefore, the speaker opts out the maxims (Thomas, 1995, p. 75).

4) A clash between maxims: on some occasion, there is an overlap between maxims. An utterance may be both unclear and prolix, breaching the maxims of quality and quantity (Platridge, 2012, p. 47). An example is provided below to state the above point:

**(14) A: Where does C live?**

**B: Somewhere in the south of France.**

In the above instance, B violates two maxims; one is of quality by being untruthful (somewhere in ……) and the other is of quantity since the piece of the information is uninformative as is required. B, then, violates the maxim of quantity (less informative) and the maxim of quality to avoid being a liar (Senft, 2014, p. 35).

## 3. Research Methodology

This section maps out some of the practical facets of the study. The study aims at evaluating the Iraqi EFL learners' ability to use the conversational maxims.

### 3.1 Test Description

A test is the data elicitation tool used in the present study. It is designed in accordance with the nature and aims of the study. It is a recognition test. The technique used in structuring the test of the current study is a multiple-choice test. It is used to examine the students' ability to recognize the maxims of conversation at the recognition level. It comprises of fifteen items. The items of the test are all of a similar nature. Thus, each item of the test is provided with five alternatives. One of the alternatives represents the true response whereby all the Gricean maxims are observed. The other four ones represent flouting the four maxims quality, quantity, relation, and manner. In each situation, the contextual factors are taken into

consideration and bracketed in two cases: (i) True responses; when all the conversational maxims are observed, for example:

A: How old are you?

B: (*Here is my ID*) I am twenty.

(ii) When the maxim of quality is flouted and no hedges are used, such as:

A: How old are you?

B: 1) I am twenty. (*There is no proof*).

2) *I am not sure*, but it is said I am twenty-two.

In B-2, no contextual factors are given since a hedgeisa clear violation of the maxim of quality.

After establishing the test, it is sent to a jury, which consists of a number of specialists in approaches and methods of teaching EFL to guarantee its validity.

*3.2 The Subjects of the Study*

The total number of the subjects, on whom the test of the study is applied, is one hundred EFL learners at the fourth-year for the academic year (2019-2020) who are selected randomly from the Dept. of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Al-Muthanna. The subjects are homogeneous. That is to say, the factors, which are isolated by the researchers include: the level of education, age, both genders are engaged, they share the same first language experience, and they share the same knowledge of English as a FL.

*3.3 Test Objectives, Validity and Reliability*

The test is constructed to achieve the following objectives:

1). Testing the Iraqi EFL learners' mastery of the Gricean conversational maxims at the recognition level.

2). Examining students' ability in terms of observing and non-observing the maxims.

3). Stating which maxim is mostly flouted.

A well-made test is featured by having two qualities; validity and reliability. The test validity is guaranteed by the jury members. All the items of the test are validated and approved. Taking into account some suggested modifications and notices on the test's draft version.

As far as the reliability is concerned, the test is reliable because a reliable test must have a consistent scoring scheme. Since the testing technique used, in this study, is a multiple-choice one, in which there is only one predetermined correct response, this test is objective one (See Heaton, 1988; and Tavakoli, 2012, p. 417).

*3.4 Administration of the Test*

Two issues are discussed in relation to the test administration, which are the pilot study and the original test administration. The pilot study is conducted and applied to ten fourth-year students on Tuesday 11 February 2020.After carrying out the pilot study, a number of considerations are highlighted include:

1). The required time to perform the test is one hour.

2). The subjects show no difficulties.

3). No modifications are made for the final administration of the test.

In this regard, the test administration is conducted on Sunday 16$^{th}$ of February 2020. The subjects are asked to perform the test. One hundred EFL learners from the Dept. of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Al-Muthanna, participate in the test implementation. The subjects are told to answer on the sheet. They are informed that the sheet of the test is name-free to reduce test embarrassment.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section includes data analysis and discussion of observing and flouting the maxims of conversation. Results are shown via using tables and percentages.

### 4.1 Observing the Maxims

Observing the maxims, henceforth, represents the subjects' correct responses, which are so because the subjects observe all the conversational maxims. Thus, the responses observing the maxims are analyzed and discussed. In all the fifteen items of the test, there is an alternative, which is correct. The letter of the correct alternative is inserted next to the number of the item (See Table 1).

**Table 1. The Frequency and Percentages of Observing the Maxims**

| Item No. | Observing the Maxims | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1.  e | 46 | 3.06 |
| 2.  b | 54 | 3.6 |
| 3.  d | 39 | 2.6 |
| 4.  b | 59 | 3.93 |
| 5.  c | 50 | 3.33 |
| 6.  d | 54 | 3.6 |
| 7.  a | 62 | 4.13 |
| 8.  e | 33 | 2.2 |
| 9.  b | 48 | 3.2 |
| 10. d | 43 | 2.86 |
| 11. c | 64 | 4.26 |
| 12. a | 58 | 3.86 |
| 13. c | 45 | 3 |
| 14. d | 53 | 3.53 |
| 15. e | 40 | 2.66 |
| **Total** | **748/1500** | **49.87** |

The test items share the same mechanism in which an alternative is true and the four other ones represent flouting each one of the Gricean maxims per option. The results demonstrate that the

frequency of the correct responses is 748 responses out of 1500 ones; making 49.87% and this indicates that the participants' performance in using the maxims altogether is less than average, and this is so because the participants lack practicing the FL in their daily communication. Other reasons could be the lack of the necessary pragmatic competence of the FL maxims of conversation which results in misusing the appropriate language in certain context; moreover, the impact of the participants' first language on the pragmatic performance of the FL. Another reason is that Arabs are not always abided by the maxims altogether particularly in an ordinary conversation (See Issa & Ahmed, 2019, pp. 3-13)

*4.2 Flouting the Maxims*

Flouting the maxims stands for the erroneous responses, which are so because the subjects flout one of the maxims per option. Unlike violating and opting out which require the speaker's intention to cheat or refuse to converse, flouting is used in this study to refer to non-observing the maxims because it does not require the testees' intention to mislead. Flouting, thus, is divided into four sub-sections in accordance with the type of the maxim being flouted.

4.2.1 Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

The principle of quantity deals with the amount of information conveyed. It says that the producer should deliver the required amount of information, no more no less than is needed. Hence, the results of flouting this maxim are illustrated below:

**Table 2. The Frequency and Percentages of Flouting the Quantity Maxim**

| Item No. | Flouting the Quantity Maxim | % |
|---|---|---|
| a  .1 | 5 | 0.33 |
| d  .2 | 7 | 0.46 |
| a  .3 | 21 | 1.4 |
| e  .4 | 6 | 0.4 |
| a  .5 | 4 | 0.26 |
| c  .6 | 8 | 0.53 |
| b  .7 | 12 | 0.8 |
| b  .8 | 13 | 0.86 |
| c  .9 | 17 | 1.13 |
| c  .10 | 33 | 2.2 |
| e  .11 | 14 | 0.93 |
| c  .12 | 10 | 0.66 |
| e  .13 | 10 | 0.66 |
| c  .14 | 10 | 0.66 |
| c  .15 | 13 | 0.86 |
| **Total** | **183/1500** | **12.2** |

Only 183 occurrences flout the maxim of quantity compared to the maximal number of cases in which the high majority of the subjects observe this maxim. This illustrates that the participants flout the maxim of quantity in relatively few cases. The reasons behind the cases in which there is a flouting of the quantity maxim could be the subjects' low ability in English. In other words, the subjects do not keep drilling English as FL in their daily conversations. As a result, the subjects are limited to English lessons; this causes a limitation in the subjects' performance in using the FL in general. However, the total percentage of flouting the maxim of quantity in all of the test items is 12.2%. This means that the subjects are good at utilizing the maxim of quantity at the recognition level.

4.2.2 Flouting the Maxim of Quality

The maxim of quality says that the speaker should not say anything that s/he does not have an adequate evidence for. In all the fifteen items of the test, there are some occurrences, which represent flouting the maxim of quality, which are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. The Frequency and Percentages of Flouting the Quality Maxim**

| Item No. | Flouting the Quality Maxim | % |
|---|---|---|
| b  .1 | 37 | 2.46 |
| e  .2 | 20 | 1.33 |
| b  .3 | 35 | 2.33 |
| c  .4 | 6 | 0.4 |
| b  .5 | 15 | 1 |
| b  .6 | 30 | 2 |
| c  .7 | 6 | 0.4 |
| c  .8 | 36 | 2.4 |
| d  .9 | 16 | 1.06 |
| e  .10 | 6 | 0.4 |
| d  .11 | 13 | 0.86 |
| b  .12 | 15 | 1 |
| d  .13 | 13 | 0.86 |
| b  .14 | 19 | 1.26 |
| a  .15 | 6 | 0.4 |
| **Total** | **273/1500** | **18.2** |

Table 3 above illustrates that 273 occurrences 18.2% flout the maxim of quality in comparison to 1227 occurrences. However, the total percentage of flouting the quality maxim is 18.2% out of 100% and this denotes that the subjects are good at using this maxim at the recognition level. Thus, the majority of the subjects observe this maxim. The reason behind the few occurrences flouting this maxim is that

when the participants are not sure about the item, which contains a hedging maxim, they select the hedging maxim. Though using a hedging maxim is a clear violation of that maxim, still using such a hedge is an attempt to follow the cooperative principle and its set of interactive maxims. The interactive activity in English may be best measured by the number of hedging expressions we use to indicate that what we are saying may not be totally accurate (See Yule, 1996, p. 38). The subjects' erroneous responses of flouting the maxim of quality may be because the subjects do not intend to say anything that they have no an adequate evidence for and this is the nature of the maxim in question. Another reason may be attributed to the FL norms and cross-culture dissimilarities between English and Arabic in some situations. Besides, the B. A. program in Iraq is not supported by interlanguage studies and contrastive analysis between English and Arabic maxims of conversation.

4.2.3 Flouting the Maxim of Relation

This principle deals with the amount of information that is relevant to the conversation. The utterance under this principle must have something to do with the context. That is to say, the irrelevant utterance participates in inferring the intended meaning within a particular conversation. Therefore, the irrelevant options are given in all the situations presented to the subjects who perform the test of the study. Thus, Table 4 below shows the results of flouting the relation maxim.

**Table 4. The Frequency and Percentages of Flouting the Relation Maxim**

| Item No. | | Flouting the Relation Maxim | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | c | 2 | 0.13 |
| 2. | a | 0 | 0 |
| 3. | c | 2 | 0.13 |
| 4. | d | 16 | 1.06 |
| 5. | e | 2 | 0.13 |
| 6. | a | 4 | 0.26 |
| 7. | e | 3 | 0.2 |
| 8. | d | 10 | 0.66 |
| 9. | a | 1 | 0.06 |
| 10. | b | 2 | 0.13 |
| 11. | b | 3 | 0.2 |
| 12. | e | 6 | 0.4 |
| 13. | a | 1 | 0.06 |
| 14. | a | 2 | 0.13 |
| 15. | b | 21 | 1.4 |
| **Total** | | **75/1500** | **5** |

The occurrences 75; it makes 5% flout the maxim of relation out of 1500. This means that the subjects are good at adhering to the maxim in question and they know how to use it at the recognition level. The reason behind the very few cases of flouting the relation maxim is the obvious shift in the topic.

4.2.4 Flouting the Maxim of Manner

This maxim says that the speaker should be clear and abridged in his/her contribution to the conversation, and does not say anything that is vague; the speaker should participate to the conversation in a clear, shortened, and organized manner. Table 5, thus, shows the results of flouting the maxim under examination.

**Table 5. The Frequency and Percentages of Flouting the Manner Maxim**

| Item No. | Flouting the Manner Maxim | % |
|----------|---------------------------|------|
| d  .1    | 10                        | 0.66 |
| c  .2    | 19                        | 1.26 |
| e  .3    | 3                         | 0.2  |
| e  .4    | 13                        | 0.86 |
| d  .5    | 29                        | 1.93 |
| e  .6    | 4                         | 0.26 |
| d  .7    | 17                        | 1.13 |
| a  .8    | 8                         | 0.53 |
| c  .9    | 18                        | 1.2  |
| a  .10   | 16                        | 1.06 |
| e  .11   | 6                         | 0.04 |
| d  .12   | 11                        | 0.73 |
| b  .13   | 31                        | 2.06 |
| e  .14   | 16                        | 1.06 |
| d  .15   | 20                        | 1.33 |
| **Total** | **221/1500**             | **14. 73** |

Table 5 above shows that only 221 occurrences 14.73% flout the maxim of manner which means that the majority of the subjects observe this maxim. The reasons behind the very low occurrences could be due to the subjects' little practice of using the FL pragmatic rules and could be the impact of the first language or the subjects do not pay attention to the items very well.

4.2.5 The Flouted Maxims

This sub-section discusses and compares the highest and lowest maxims being flouted. Thus, the maxims flouted are stated below in Table 6:

**Table 6. Flouting the Four Maxims**

| The Maxims Flouted | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| Flouting the quantity maxim | 183 | 12.2 |
| Flouting the quality maxim | 273 | 18.2 |
| Flouting the relation maxim | 75 | 5 |
| Flouting the manner maxim | 221 | 14.73 |
| **Total** | **752/1500** | **50.13** |

The above table shows that the highest maxim being flouted is the quality maxim 18.2% and the lowest one is the relation maxim 5%. Since the maxim of quality is flouted, the other maxims must also be flouted. In this regard, Grice (1975, p. 46) says, "the other maxims come into operation only on the assumption that the maxim of quality is satisfied".

The manner maxim comes second 14.73%. The percentage of flouting the quantity maxim comes third and this is clear by means of percentage 12.2%. Accordingly, the subjects are good at using each maxim in isolation, but they are not very good at using these maxims altogether which is the natural case of ordinary communication. The analysis and discussion show that the maxim of relation comes fourth in the grade of flouted maxims. This means that the participants are very good at adhering to the maxim of relation more than the maxim of quality.

The analysis and discussion bring forth the conclusions that the participants flout the four maxims 752 responses out of 1500 ones. Thus, this validates the first hypothesis of the study, which states that the Iraqi EFL learners flout all the conversational maxims. Additionally, the results show that the participants find the maxims of conversation difficult to observe at the recognition level. Thus, this proves the second hypothesis, which states that the Iraqi EFL learners find the maxims difficult to follow.

Furthermore, the results show that the frequency of the subjects' correct responses are 748 and the incorrect ones are put successively: the maxim of quality 273 responses, the maxim of manner 221, the maxim of quantity 183 responses, and the maxim of relation 75 out of 1500 responses. Accordingly,

the maxim of quality is the most flouted one, and hence, the third hypothesis, which says that the maxim of quantity is mostly flouted, is refuted and the alternative hypothesis, which says that the maxim of quality is the most flouted one, is accepted. The results also state that the relation maxim is the least flouted maxim 75 times and this verifies the fourth hypothesis, which says that the maxim of relation is the least flouted maxim. Thus, as a result of the practical facet of the study, and the results of the analysis and discussion, the findings achieve the research questions, aims, and hypotheses of the present study.

Generally, the data analysis and discussion arrive at the conclusions that the participants perform incompetently at the recognition level when they use the maxims altogether. That is to say, in some cases, a problem might occur when the subjects are required to observe all maxims. The reasons behind that might be the subjects lack the necessary pragmatic competence of the FL conversational maxims, they may lack practice the FL in their daily communication, and the conversational maxims are not taught and emphasized in a comprehensive way at the university level. Another reason might be that language atmosphere does not encourage the participants to use English. A third reason is the interference of the Participants' mother tongue and that the subjects need learning about contrastive analysis between English and Arabic in terms of the maxims of conversation. Iraqi Arabs are not always abided by the four maxims altogether especially in the ordinary communication.

Furthermore, materials at the University level are not equipped enough to empower learners' pragmatic rules to use the language in an appropriate manner. Another justification of the participants' performance is the improper methods of teaching to develop speaking and listening skills because such methods place heavy emphasis on the formal aspects of the language, such as grammar, phonetics, and morphology at the stage of learning the FL. At the University level, most of materials focus on teaching grammatical rules rather than the sociolinguistic and pragmatic rules, and this limits the communicative competence of the learners of the FL. It must be taken into consideration that English and Arabic are not cognate, hence there are many cross-culture differences and the norms of the FL are different from those of the learners' native norms, which cause some pragmatic errors in some circumstances.

## 5. Conclusions

In the light of the obtained results of data analysis and discussion, the current study arrives at the following conclusions:

1). The Iraqi EFL learners have difficulty in utilizing the conversational maxims when they are required to observe all the maxims.

2). The Iraqi EFL learners flout all the maxims of conversation when they are exposed to situations from real life in relatively different degrees.

3). The maxim of quality is the most flouted maxim amongst the other three ones.

4). The maxim of relation is the least flouted one because an irrelevant utterance entirely deviates from the topic, and hence participants have no sufficient knowledge concerning the related meaning conveyed by flouting the relevance principle.

5). The Iraqi EFL learners are good at using each maxim in isolation, but they are not very good at using these maxims altogether.

6). The maxim of manner comes second in the participants' incorrect responses after the maxim of quality.

7). The Iraqi EFL learners have a tendency to utilize hedging maxims to avoid being definite in their responses.

8). The Iraqi EFL learners lack some of the necessary pragmatic competence of the FL conversational maxims in some cases.

9). The Iraqi EFL learners do not take into account the notion of context, which is an important element in inferring the intended meaning.

## 6. Implications for Pedagogical Practice and Research

As result of the theoretical and practical facets of the study, the following pedagogical matters are recommended:

1). Teachers and/or course designers ought to pay much attention to the maxims of conversation, highlighting the significance of such maxims in having a successful conversation, and providing explanations with ample examples for each maxim.

2). The curriculum of Educational Colleges ought to be well equipped and supported by conversational activities to improve the learners' FL skills in speaking and listening.

3). Teachers ought to focus on the sociolinguistic and pragmatic rules rather than the rules of structures.

4). Teachers ought to explain and pay much attention to cross-culture dissimilarities between English and Arabic.

5). A contrastive analysis of the conversational maxim should be given to the learners to make them fully understand the FL maxims of conversation.

6). Conversations should be emphasized because they represent language in use, and maxims ought to be applied in real situations or in the classroom activity.

7). The B.A. program in the Colleges of Education for Humanities in Iraq ought to be provided with studies in interlanguage pragmatics to enhance and deepen the learners' knowledge of the FL pragmatic notions and models.

8). All the textbooks in pre-university teaching ought to be communicative and include authentic materials so that the learners can use the FL appropriately.

As regarding to further studies, the following areas need investigation:

1). A study can be conducted to analyze the violation of conversational maxims in selected political interviews.

2). A contrastive study in English and Arabic can be conducted to analyze maxims violation in selected literary works.

3). A study can be projected to analyze explicature in media discourse.

4). An area can be investigated is the violation of maxims in doctor-patient conversation.

5). A study can be conducted to assess the Iraqi EFL learners' use of conversational implicature.

6). A study can be conducted to test the Iraqi EFL learners' use of hedging expressions.

7). A study can be conducted to examine the Iraqi EFL learners' use of explicature.

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