

## *Original Paper*

# The Iraqi EFL Learners' Ability to Use Speech Acts in MA and Ph.D. Theses Defense

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### **Abstract**

*The present study investigates the Iraqi EFL (IEFL) learners' ability to use Speech Acts (SAs) in MA and Ph.D. theses defense. It aims at analyzing utterances (Us) made by the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners in terms of SAs, the class to which those SAs belong, the type of tone the learners use, and the errors committed by the learners and their types. It is hypothesized that the learners use the SA of stating more than the other types of SAs in their MA and Ph.D. defence, the learners use directives more than other SA categories, the EFL learners use the falling tone more than the other types of tones. The researchers record the defense of six IEFL learners: four MA and two Ph.D. during the Academic year 2019-2020. They put the recorded data into an orthographic form showing the tone type for each tone unit, and check each recorded utterance (U) for the SA used, the SA category to which the SA belongs, the type of tone used and if any, the types of errors the participants commit. The study concludes that the MA IEFL learners use more SAs than the Ph.D. ones, the most frequently used SA is the SA of asserting, the most frequently used category of SAs is the representative one, and the learners use the falling tone more than the other types of tones.*

### **Keywords**

*Speech Acts, EFL learner, MA, Ph.D. Debate*

## **1. Introduction**

Speakers use language to express their feelings, emotions intentions, etc. In order to use language to achieve a specific end, language users need not only knowledge of grammar, but also how to use language appropriately in real life situations (Cheng, 2005, p. 9). However, Iraqi EFL learners often

encounter difficulties in the production of SAs because of their lack of pragmatic competence; that is, they are not well-informed of where and when to use SAs appropriately. Presently, some previous studies tackle the Iraqi EFL learners' use of SAs, but their investigation is limited to the learners' recognition and production of a single SA by the means of artificial tests to elicit the learners' responses to items of the test they design. More importantly, because there is no investigation of the overall production of the Iraqi EFL learners' use of SAs in face-to-face interaction, the present study actually fills this gap in the literature as it is the first to examine the learners' use of SAs in MA and Ph.D. discussions in Iraqi EFL context in terms of the real use of SAs and the types of tones that the learners use in the performance of SAs. Indeed, intonation is another factor which has never been investigated in relation to SAs in the Iraqi EFL context. Accordingly, the study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1). What is the most frequent type of SAs that the Iraqi EFL learners use in their MA and Ph.D. defense?
- 2). Is Ph.D. learners' performance of SAs better than MA in defense?
- 3). What are the types of SA classes used by MA and Ph.D. EFL learners when they defend their MA and Ph.D. theses or dissertations?
- 4). Are the Iraqi EFL learners successful in using SAs for the purpose they intend to perform?
- 5). Do the types of tones Iraqi EFL learners use coincide with the types of SAs they perform?
- 6). What is the common type of tone used by the Iraqi EFL learners in their MA and Ph.D. defense?
- 7). What are the common errors committed by the Iraqi EFL learners in their MA and Ph.D. defense?

The study aims at analyzing utterances made by MA and Ph.D. candidates in terms of SAs and the class to which those SAs belong, finding out whether the Ph.D. learners are better than the MA ones in defence, and finding out the errors committed by MA and Ph.D. learners and their types.

Likewise, It is hypothesized that:

- 1). The Ph.D. IEFL learners use more SAs than the MA ones.
- 2). The IEFL learners use the SA of stating more than the other types of SAs in their MA and Ph.D. defence.
- 3). Both MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners use directives more than the other SA categories.
- 4). The MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners use the falling tone more than the other types of tones.
- 5). The errors MA IEFL learners commit in the use of SAs are more than those errors which are committed by the Ph.D. ones.

This study is limited to investigate the most used types of SAs in the defence of some Iraqi EFL learners' MA and Ph.D. defence and the types of tone they use when they perform these acts. The researchers analyze only the material of the recordings that is relevant for the purpose of the study. They identify the SAs according to the taxonomy of SAs of Searle (1976) and Searle and Vanderveken (1985).

By **Iraqi EFL Learners**, it is meant those learners of English in non-English-speaking countries (Dingfang, 1994; as cited in Peng, 2019, p. 2). Similarly, Betti and Al-Jubouri (2015, p. 16) define foreign language as “one which has no internal function in the learner’s country”. Thus, the EFL learners learn the FL “in order to communicate with native speakers or interlanguage users of the foreign language” (Betti & Al-Jubouri, *Ibid*).

More specifically, Iraqi EFL learners are those nonnative learners of English whose mother tongue is Iraqi Arabic. “The language is learnt like other subjects in the school curriculum for operational purposes” (Betti & Al-Jubouri, *Ibid*). Hence, the abbreviation EFL is a shortened form of “English as a Foreign Language”, for example, an Iraqi learner of English in Iraq.

By **the MA and Ph.D. Theses Defense**, it is meant a speech event in which the candidate who is a post-graduate student is examined for the validation of his thesis or dissertation. It takes the form of discussion or argument where the learner answers questions of the committee, and is asked to justify why he writes something or proves his points of view. Viva or “viva voce” is “an oral examination” of candidate’s thesis (Smith, 2015, p. 130). The primary aim of Ph.D. assessment “is to determine whether the candidate is competent as an independent researcher in the discipline” (UCoSDA, 1993, p. 3). Tinkler and Jackson (2004, p. 17) add that viva serves as “a site for authenticating the thesis”.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 *Speech Acts Defined*

The theory of **speech acts** (SAs) is, no doubt, one of the main theories in pragmatics. It is originated in the ideas of J. L. Austin expressed in the series of his lectures “How to Do Things with Words” and then developed by Searle’s (1975) and others. Austin’s basic idea behind his theory of SAs is that utterances (Us) do not only bear meaning, but rather they do things, i.e., perform actions (Levinson, 2017, p. 199). In Austin’s words, “to say something is to do something” (1962).

To perform a SA is “an attempt at doing something purely by speaking” (Trask, 1999, p. 189). Yule (1996, p. 47) defines SAs as “actions performed via utterances”; that is, through the use of language, speakers (Ss) can issue many social functions (actions) such as requesting, offering, asking questions, thanking, welcoming and so on. In the same way, Aitchison (2010, p. 127) states that SAs are sequences of words that behave like actions. By the means of them, Ss try to create some effect on hearers (Hs). For example, when a judge utters [1]:

[1] I sentence you to five years imprisonment.

He is not only pronouncing a string of words, but has an effect on the H similar to marching a man in accusation along to a prison (*ibid*).

The theory of SAs belongs to pragmatics because it requires a **S implying** (encoding) a message and a hearer (H) **inferring** (decoding) that message. However, the context or situation plays an important role in the process of inferring the S’s intended meaning. Furthermore, without such information, it is impossible to know the S’s **intended** meaning. The U in [2], for example, can serve, according to the

context, as an observation about the weather, a request for the H to bring a blanket or be close to a window, a question about the thermostat setting, or an invitation to snuggle up closer—or indeed several of these things at once (Birner, 2013, p.175).

[2] I'm a little cold.

### 2.2 *Performatives vs. Constatives*

These two terms are first initiated by Austin (1962) when he tries to make a distinction between two types of Us: **constatives** (constative utterances) and **Performatives** (performative utterances). By constatives, he means those Us that describe states of affairs, process or some event in the world like in [3], whereas performatives do not; they change the world instead of describing it. In fact, the uttering of them, or part of them, is considered as “the doing of an action”, as in [4-5] (Austin, 1962, p. 6):

[3] The boy went to school.

[4] I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*.

[5] I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow.

In spite of being declarative in form, it is evident that the Us in [4-5] do not state facts or describe actions only, but rather they perform actions; namely that of naming a ship or betting that it will rain (ibid). As a result, Austin states that constatives can be verified (i.e., being either true or false), whereas performatives have felicity conditions (i.e., being either happy or unhappy).

Performatives are defined according to Bach (2006, p. 148) as “utterances whereby we make explicit what we are doing”. Hence, they need to have special properties like having the first-person pronoun I subject, present tense, indicative mood and active voice as well as including a PV (Birner, 2013, p. 178). Example [6] illustrates this clearly:

[6] I *thank* you for your attention (ibid).

### 2.3 *The Components of a Speech Act*

One of the shifts in Austin's theory is that the initial performative/constative distinction is rejected by Austin in favor of the general theory of SAs (Levinson, 1983, p. 235). The theory of SAs indicates that the performance of a SA, in addition to meaning, means the performance of three kinds of acts at once:

- 1). the **locutionary** act (LA) “the act of saying something with full sense of ‘say’”,
- 2). the **illocutionary** act (IA) “the act performed in saying something”, and
- 3). the **perlocutionary** act (PA) “the act performed by or as a result of saying” (Coulthard, 1985, p. 18).

### 2.4 *Speech Act Classifications*

There are, in fact, many attempts which are made to classify SAs. The first one is made by Austin (1962) who bases his classification on performative verbs (PVs). Austin's classification of IFs is modified, systematized and developed and thus many models emerge like Bach and Harnish (1979); Allan (2001); and Bach (2004). Of all these models, Searle's (1975) taxonomy proves to be the most influential (Huang, 2010, p. 709). Searle's model connects the theory of SAs to “sociology and jurisprudence on the one hand and to linguistics on the other hand” (Huang, 2016, p. 201).

#### 2.4.1 Austin's Classification of Speech Acts

The first attempt to classify SAs is made by J. L. Austin (1962). Austin's taxonomy of IAs is, as he says, "neither particularly well motivated nor always unambiguous in its application to particular examples" (Sadock, 2006, p. 64). Since he fails to prepare a list of PVs, he catalogues all the kinds of IFs and assigns to each group of verbs a label of five-fold distinctions that represents it. He classifies SAs as into: **verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives and expositives.**

##### 2.4.1.1 Verdictives

Verdictives are acts of giving a decision or pronouncing a verdict. Verdictives are the closest to Austin's original idea of performatives: Us that change the world rather than describe it, as in example [7] (Allot, 2010, p. 194).

[7] "We find him guilty as charged, m'lud". (my lord)

This class include verbs like acquit, convict, find, hold, read it as, rule, calculate, recon, estimate, locate, place, date, measure, put it at, make it, take it, grade, rank, rate, assess, value, describe, characterize, diagnose, analyse (Austin, 1962, p. 152).

##### 2.4.1.2 Exercitives

Exercitives are acts of "giving a decision in favour of or against a certain course of action, or advocacy of it", as in [8] (Austin, 1962, p. 154).

[8] We ride to Gondor! (Allot, 2010, pp. 71-72).

This category includes verbs, such as appoint, degrade, demote dismiss, excommunicate, name, order, command, direct, sentence, fine, grant, levy, vote for, nominate, choose, give, claim, bequeath, pardon, resign advise, warn, plead, entreat, pray, beg, urge, press, recommend, proclaim, announce, quash, countermand, annul, repeal, enact, reprieve, veto, dedicate, declare closed, declare open (Austin, 1962, p. 155).

##### 2.4.1.3 Commissives

Commissives are verbs which "commit the speakers to a particular course of action", as in example [9] (Austin, 1962, p. 155).

[9] I promise to be there at 9.

This category include promise, undertake, am determined to, mean to, covenant, bind himself, intend, plan, contract, give my word, declare my intention, purpose, propose to, envisage, vow, guarantee, dedicate myself to, espouse, shall, engage, pledge myself, agree, declare, champion, appose, contemplate, swear, bet, consent, side with, embrace, favour (Austin, 1962, pp. 155-156):

##### 2.4.1.4 Behabitives

Behabitives are acts in which a "speaker expresses an emotion or attitude, often towards the hearer" or he reacts to other S's behaviours, as in example [10] (Allot, 2010, p. 24).

[10] I thank you for accepting my offer.

This class include apologize, thank, deplore, commiserate, compliment, condole, congratulate, felicitate, sympathize, resent, don't mind, pay tribute, criticize, grumble about, complain of, applaud, overlook,

commend, deprecate, blame, approve, favour, welcome, bid you fare-well, bless, curse, toast, drink to, wish, dare, defy, protest, challenge (Austin, 1962, p. 159).

#### 2.4.1.5 Expositives

Expositives are acts of giving information or clarifying points of view. Allot (2010, p. 74) states that these acts are considered as constatives according to Austin's original dichotomy of constatives and performative and classified as representatives in Searle's classification of SAs, as in example [11].

[11] I state that my name is Ahmed.

This class include affirm, deny, state, describe, class, identify, remark, mention, interpose, inform, apprise, tell, answer, rejoin, ask, testify, report, swear, conjecture, doubt, know, believe, accept, concede, withdraw, agree, demur to, object to, adhere to, recognize, repudiate, correct, revise (Austin, 1962, p. 161).

#### 2.4.2 Searle's Classification of Speech Acts

Searle's taxonomy of SAs (1969) comes up as a modification or development to Austin's earlier work. Unlike Austin, Searle builds his taxonomy of SAs on twelve different dimensions of variation in which each SA differs from other acts. The most important of these dimensions are the **illocutionary point**, **direction of fit**, and **expressed psychological state** which constitute the basis of this classification of illocutionary acts (IAs) classes (Searle, 1976, p. 5). Searle proposes five basic categories of IAs:

##### 2.4.2.1 Representatives

Representatives or assertives are "utterance[s] where speakers convey their beliefs about the truth of a proposition" (Crystal, 2008, p. 413). These acts have a word-to-world direction of fit (i.e., the S tries to make his mind or words map into the world) and belief psychological state (Searle, 1976, p. 10), as in [12].

[12] I guess that man's weight is 76 kilo grams.

This category include assert, claim, affirm, state, deny, disclaim, assure, argue, rebut, inform, notify, remind, object, predict, report, retrodict, suggest, insist, conjecture, hypothesize, guess, swear, testify, admit, confess, accuse, blame, criticize, praise, complain, boast, and lament (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p. 182).

##### 2.4.2.2 Directives

Directives are "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something". These attempts can be "modest", as when the S performs the SAs of invitation or suggestion in examples [13] and [14] or they can be very "fierce", as when the speaker performs the SA of insistence in example [15] ( Searle, 1976, p. 11).

[13] I invite you to do it.

[14] I suggest that you do it.

[15] I insist that you do it.

Directives have world-to-words direction of fit, want sincerity condition and in them, the H does some future action A propositional content (ibid). This category include direct, request, ask, urge, tell, require,

demand, command, order, forbid, prohibit, enjoin, permit, suggest, insist, warn, advise, recommend, beg, supplicate, plead, pray, beseech, entreat and implore (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p. 198).

#### 2.4.2.3 Commissives

Commissives are “those illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action” (Searle, 1976, p. 11). This class of SAs has world-to-words direction of fit, intention, sincerity condition and the S does some future action propositional content A (ibid). Though both commissives and directives share the same direction of fit, they differ in what Mey, (1993, p. 121) calls “the locus of obligation”. However, for commissives, the speaker is obliged to carry out the specified action, whereas for directives, the hearer is forced to do so. This category includes commit, promise, threaten, vow, pledge, swear, accept, consent, refuse, offer, bid, assure, guarantee, warrant, contract, covenant and bet (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p.192).

#### 2.4.2.4 Expressives

Expressives “expresses an inner state of the speaker; the expression is essentially subjective and tells us nothing about the world” (Mey, 1993, p. 121). Allot (2010, p. 74) states that these Us “do not express a proposition,” but rather they “have expressive (rather than descriptive) content”. Searle (1976, p. 12) states that expressives have no direction of fit. When a S carries out an expressive act, he is not attempting to make the world fit his words nor the words fit the world. He also adds that truth of the propositional content is presupposed. This category includes apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, lament, protest, deplore, boast, compliment, praise, greet and welcome (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p. 211).

#### 2.4.2.5 Declarations

Declarations are acts which “bring about immediate changes in how things are”. This class of SAs resembles Austin’s initial notion of performatives (Allot, 2010, p. 54). Searle (1976, p. 13) states that the essential feature of declarations is that an act is effectively executed, if it exhibits an agreement between the propositional content and reality. For example, when a judge pronounces someone guilty, he is from now guilty because the S in such Us has a special institutional role or authority. Because of this special character, declarations have both words-to-world and world-to-words direction of fit and no sincerity condition (ibid: 15). This category includes declare, resign, adjourn, appoint, nominate, approve, confirm, disapprove, endorse, renounce, disclaim, denounce, repudiate, bless, curse, excommunicate, consecrate, christen, abbreviate, name and call (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985, p. 204).

### 2.5 *Felicity Conditions*

Felicity Conditions (FCs) are conditions which must be present so that a SA comes off successfully. Austin is the first to lay down the FCs on performatives. He says that a SA can only be successfully performed if it follows a pre-determined conventional procedure; otherwise, the “action that the utterance attempts to perform is simply null and void” (Levinson, 1983, p. 229). Then, Austin’s FCs are developed and systemized by Searle in that we no longer judge utterances to be felicitous or infelicitous depending on conditions, but rather they altogether constitute the different IFs.

### 2.5.1 Austin's Felicity Conditions

The first set of FCs were firstly developed by Austin (1962). Austin says that just like constatives or statements can be true or false, performatives, in the same way, can be felicitous or infelicitous. Thus, Austin prepared a list of six felicities to be obeyed so that an U comes off happily or successfully. They are (Austin, 1962, pp. 14-15).

A: (i) There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,

(ii) the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.

B: (i) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and

(ii) completely.

C: (i) the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts, feelings, or intentions and

(ii) must actually so conduct themselves subsequently.

### 2.5.2 Searle's Felicity Conditions

Searle (1969) develops Austin's FCs into a list of conditions in reference to which IAs must be performed. According to Searle, Austin's FCs are not only means to investigate whether a SA is felicitous or infelicitous, rather they together form the IF (Huang, 2007, p. 104). Searle's proposed FCs are:

(i) The **propositional content** conditions "is concerned with what the speech act is about" or it deals with the U content or its core. In the case of a **promise**, it is to expect some future act of the S, but for a request, it is to expect some future act of the receiver (Huang, 2007, p. 113).

(ii) The **preparatory** Conditions represent the requirements for performing a speech act like the performer of the SA must possess the ability or authority to carry out a specified action or that the circumstances must be appropriate to the IA to be accomplished (Lyons, 1977, p. 733). The preparatory conditions for a request, for example, are that the S is sure that the H is able to do the action requested, and that if the H is not asked, he will not do the action.

(iii) The **sincerity** conditions are the real intention or a belief of the performer to do an act. So, if he does not do it, the action will be performed insincerely (i.e., abuse, as Austin calls it). An example of this is when someone gives a promise which s/he is sure s/he lacks the ability to perform. In some social occasions, to show politeness, one needs to abate his adherence to sincerity conditions since in compliments one does not have always to tell other people the truth (Lyons, 1977, p. 734).

(iv) The **essential** conditions are identification to the act the S is performing in such a way that the S intends to carry out a specific act and that the H is aware of his intention. For example, in a promise, the S obliges himself to do an act, but for a request, the S tries to get the H to do some act.

## 2.6 Indirect Speech Acts

Indirect Speech Acts (ISAs) is one of Searle's contributions to SA theory. An ISA is an utterance that has the form of a certain illocutionary act but it has the meaning of another type (Searle, 1979, p. 30). For example, the U in [16] may be interpreted literally to ask the H about his ability to carry out action or non-literally to request him to do an action for the benefit of the S.

[16] Can you open the window?

Searle (1975, pp. 33-34) states that ISAs pose real problems in communication because it is hard for the hearer to work out the S's intended meaning because it is possible through saying a particular U that the S means the same proposition expressed in the literal meaning of the U which he calls **direct** or **secondary IA**, and he can also mean another U not inferred from the literal meaning of the sentence and thus it is the **indirect** or **primary IA**. In the following example, Y's U is a rejection of X's proposal, but this rejection is not by the means of Y's statement (secondary IA), rather X infers that having an exam means to study that night and thus precludes the idea of going for watching a movie (primary IA).

[17] Student X: Let's go to the movies tonight.

Student Y: I have to study for an exam.

## 2.7 Speech Acts and Intonation

Intonation is variation in the **pitch** of our voice to add meaning to Us. It is the music of our speech. It is the study of how Ss vary the pitch of their voice to carry out linguistic and pragmatic meaning (Wells, 2006, p. 1). Similarly, O'Grady et al. (1997, p. 39) define intonation as "pitch movement in spoken utterances that is not related to differences in word meaning". In order to have linguistic significance, variation in pitch should be controlled by the S, be perceptible and be related to a particular meaning or function (Gu, 2009, p. 116; and Roach, 2009, p. 120). For example, if the U in [18] is spoken with a falling tone, it indicates finality or completion of the thought which is called **terminal** intonation. However, if the same U is spoken with a rising tone, it indicates incompleteness which is called **nonterminal** intonation (O'Grady et al., 1997, p. 40).

[18a] Fred parked the \car

[18b] Fred parked the /car

### 2.7.1 Forms of Intonation

The forms of intonation are shown in brief in the following list (Roach, 2009, pp. 147-148; Gut, 2009, pp. 122-124).

1). **Fall** tone (∩) indicates finality, completeness and definiteness, as in [19].

[19] They burst out \laughing

2). **Rise** tone (/) indicates non-finality or that there is more to follow, encouraging, listing, as in [20].

[20] I was cycling home from /work | when I saw this big \bird

3). **Fall-rise** tone (∨) expresses that something is unpleasant, or uncertainty, doubt, requests, as in [21].

[21] You ∨may be right

4). **Rise-fall** tone (Λ) indicates Surprise or being impressed, as in [22].

[22] You were Λfirst

5). Level tone (-) conveys the feeling of saying something routine, uninteresting or boring, as in [22].

[22] Do you suffer from a -serious illness

-Yes

### 2.7.2 Stress and Intonation

In English, “phonologists are in disagreement about whether to tackle stress from an articulatory point of view (what the speaker does in producing stressed syllables) or from an auditory one (what the characteristics of sounds that make a syllable seems to a listener to be stressed)” (Betti & Ulaiwi, 2018, p. 83).

Stress is “the most familiar prosodic feature which is problematic in that it is difficult to describe its actual nature” (Betti & Ulaiwi, 2018, p. 83). Jones (1972, p. 41) defines stress as “the degree of force that is given to specific syllables when they are pronounced by the addresser”. Stress is a property of words and utterances. Scholars refer to the placement of stress within single words as **word** stress, while the placement of stress in whole utterances as **tonic** or **sentence** stress.

In addition, Roach (1991, p. 172) argues that the placement of word stress is independent and prior to the choice of intonation, while the placement of tonic stress is determined by intonation. In addition, the placement of tonic stress on the nucleus of the tone unit has a meaning-distinguishing function; this is, by the means of tonic stress placement in the tone unit, intonation **emphasizes** the meaning of a certain word in the tone unit (Roach, 1991, p. 173).

### 2.7.3 Functions of Intonation

Intonation is used in English to convey the following functions.

- 1). The **attitudinal** function is to express “the speaker’s attitude, at the moment of speaking, to the situation in which he is placed”; that is, to show whether the S is happy, angry, judicial, sad, bored, etc. (O’Connor and Arnold (1973, p. 4).
- 2). The **grammatical** function is that it can be used to identify the grammatical structure of Us (Roach, 1991, p. 175).
- 3). The **discourse** function of intonation is related to discourse in two ways. First, the use of intonation is to draw the H’s attention to the important aspects of the message that Ss convey. The other function is the regulation of the interlocutor’s behaviour during the conversation. Ss utilize intonation to organize turn-taking.
- 4). The **accentual** function means the placement of tonic stress within the tone unit is determined by intonation (Roach, 1991, pp. 172-173):
- 5). The **psychological** function of intonation is helpful for language users to organize their speech into smaller units that “are easy to perceive, memorize and perform” (Wells, 2006, p. 12).

6). **The indexical** function “act[s] as a marker of personal or social identity”. Indeed, by the means of intonation, Ss can add special effects to their voice to make them look like tale-tellers, matches commentators, clergymen, newsreaders and the like (ibid).

#### 2.7.4 The Tonic Unit

Authors use different names for these tone units such as intonation phrases, tone group or intonation group. Though there is a general tendency to use a separate intonation pattern for each clause, many instances prove the possibility for different chunking (Wells, 2006, pp. 6-7). Gut (2009, p. 106) states that Ss use intonational phrasing or tone units so as to divide their speech into word groups. Doing so, they enable listeners identify which words in an utterance go together (form an intonation phrase).

The essence of a tonic unit is the tonic syllable, which is the syllable which carries the tone. For example, in [23] **you** is the most prominent syllable in the tone unit. It does not only carry the tone, it also carries a special kind of stress, known as tonic stress.

[23] Is it /you

In addition to the tonic syllable which is an obligatory element in the tonic unit, there are other optional elements which are dependent on the length of the tone unit: the **pre-head**, **head** and the **tail**. The pre-head includes all the unstressed syllables preceding the first stressed syllable. The head is the part of a tone-unit that extends from the first stressed syllable up to the tonic syllable. The tail includes the syllables stressed or unstressed that follow the tonic syllable till the end of the tone unit (Roach, 2009, p. 130).

#### 2.7.5 The Relation between Speech Acts and Intonation

Crystal (2007, p. 252) states that pragmatics deals with intonation in a wider range than that of isolated words or phrases, rather it deals with the structuring of utterances sequentially to be a conversation, known as intonational phrasing. Similarly, Taglicht (1998, p. 181) states that intonational analysts distribute speech into portions of information chunks, known as intonational phrases so as to facilitate information processing by interlocutors. Thomas (1995, p. 21) mentions that in order for a S to deliver the force of a specific locution, he sometimes needs to make use of paralinguistic features like intonation or non-linguistic features like gestures. In addition, in spite of the importance of context in the demarcation between types of SAs, some communicative intents cannot be accounted for without resorting to intonation. Moreover, intonation is an essential element of **pragmatic** meaning. This view is supported by Searle (1969, p. 30) who states that stress (implying intonation) is one of the illocutionary force indicating devices in English. Cresti, (1995, pp. 1-2) concludes that the function of intonation is to signalize the existence of SAs and also their types in the course of speech.

### 3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology of the study. It deals with the participants, data collection and instrument and data collection procedure, research design and model of analysis.

The present study is a descriptive qualitative one. The researchers aim at investigating the theses defense of six of Iraqi EFL post-graduate learners in their MA and Ph.D. discussions, in terms of their use of SAs, the tones they use when they perform these SAs as well as the errors they commit. The participants are informed in advance of their being recorded in order for the researchers to take their permission and privacy is granted for all the participants, but the researchers do not reveal the objectives of the study to the informants. The learners put the recording device on the desk in front of them so as to record their speech.

The six participants are all non-native Iraqi EFL post-graduate learners of different gender defending their MA or Ph.D. theses or dissertations. The learners involved in the study range in age from 26 to 58 years. The MA participants, on the one hand, have no experience in university language teaching nor they have scientific titles, while the Ph.D. ones, on the other, have an experience of university teaching. They are both university professors of different scientific degrees.

The total number of hours of the recorded data of analysis, which is taken from the defence of four MA and two Ph.D. discussions, is 20 hours 42 minutes twenty one seconds. The researchers listen patiently and carefully to the recordings to completely put these recordings in orthographic form and they show precisely the type of speech act and tone used by the learner. Sometimes, it is very important to listen for a number of times before completely transferring the U form into text. However, it should be noted that though the tone appears on the tonic syllable in the examples, it could be distributed to all the syllables starting from the head up to the tail. In addition, all the speech of the committee of examiners, fragments of sentences, continuers, examinee's reading of part of his\her thesis for a request to illustrate a specific point are neglected because these are irrelevant for the purpose of the study: the study is limited to show how the Iraqi EFL learners use SAs for the purpose of defence. Consequently, the researchers communicate with the learners to get these theses and they read them in order to find out the correct spelling for some concepts which are new to the researchers. The researchers use a tape-recorder as a research instrument to record MA and Ph.D. discussions. The recorder device is of "Sony UX560F Digital Voice Recorder UX Series" type. It is workable for scientific research purposes because it records voice clearly in distance exceeds ten meters.

In order to find the type of SA most used by Iraqi EFL learners, the researchers analyze the recorded data according to the taxonomy of speech act proposed by Searle (1976) and categorize each single SA according to the definitions of SAs given by Searle and Vanderveken (1985) and they identify the type of tone according to the division given by Roach (2009) and Gut (2009).

The researchers follow the following procedure in carrying out the present study:

- 1) The researchers select the subjects of the study and use a sensitive voice recorder to record their speech clearly.

- 2) The researchers put all these discussions in orthographic form, showing boundaries of Us, tone unit boundaries and type of tone for each single tone unit.
- 3) They analyze the participants' Us in terms of SAs showing the class to which each SA belongs, and investigate whether the tone the subjects use coincides with the SAs they perform.
- 4) The researchers use a statistical means to find out what common type of SA the IEFL learners often perform and the common type of tone they use.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion of the MA and Ph.D. Candidates Use of SAs

In this section, the researchers analyze, justify and make a comparison between the MA IEFL learners' defense and the Ph.D. one in terms of use of SAs, categories of SAs, use of tones and errors committed by them.

##### 4.1 A Comparison between the MA and Ph.D. Candidates' Use of SAs

In comparing the use of SAs by the MA IEFL learners' debate with those of the Ph.D. ones, it is found that the total number of SAs performed by the MA participants are 981 and the SAs performed by the Ph.D. participants are 858. This indicates that the MA candidates utter more SAs than the Ph.D. ones. This is in contrary to hypothesis (1) which states that (the Ph.D. IEFL learners use more SAs than the MA ones). That is why, hypothesis (1) is refuted and the alternative one is accepted: (the MA IEFL learners use more SAs than the Ph.D. ones). Table 1 compares the frequencies and percentages of SAs used by both the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners:

**Table 1. Comparison between the MA and Ph.D. Candidates' Use of SAs**

| No. | SA          | MA Participants |      | Ph.D. Participants |      |
|-----|-------------|-----------------|------|--------------------|------|
|     |             | Frequency       | %    | Frequency          | %    |
| 1   | Asserting   | 365             | 37.2 | 176                | 20.5 |
| 2   | Stating     | 79              | 8.05 | 58                 | 6.76 |
| 3   | Justifying  | 117             | 11.9 | 150                | 17.4 |
| 4   | Reporting   | 116             | 11.8 | 40                 | 4.66 |
| 5   | Clarifying  | 10              | 1.01 | 58                 | 6.76 |
| 6   | Agreeing    | 29              | 2.95 | 36                 | 4.1  |
| 7   | Disagreeing | 18              | 1.83 | 21                 | 2.44 |
| 8   | Concluding  | 59              | 6.01 | 29                 | 3.37 |
| 9   | Denying     | 36              | 3.66 | 29                 | 3.37 |
| 10  | Probing     | 3               | 0.3  | 5                  | 0.58 |
| 11  | Arguing     | 24              | 2.44 | 21                 | 2.44 |

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|    |                       |    |      |    |      |
|----|-----------------------|----|------|----|------|
| 12 | Affirming             | 8  | 0.8  | 18 | 2.09 |
| 13 | Guessing              | 2  | 0.2  | 1  | 0.1  |
| 14 | Telling               | 6  | 0.6  | 20 | 2.3  |
| 15 | Claiming              | 15 | 1.52 | 16 | 1.86 |
| 16 | Supposing             | 1  | 0.1  | 4  | 0.46 |
| 17 | Assuming              | 11 | 1.12 | 4  | 0.46 |
| 18 | Reminding             | 1  | 0.1  | 1  | 0.1  |
| 19 | Objecting             | 1  | 0.1  | 4  | 0.46 |
| 20 | Believing             | 1  | 0.1  | 0  | 0    |
| 21 | Giving example        | 1  | 0.1  | 0  | 0    |
| 22 | Asking for permission | 10 | 1.01 | 11 | 1.28 |
| 23 | Asking                | 39 | 3.97 | 66 | 7.7  |
| 24 | Obligating            | 1  | 0.1  | 5  | 0.58 |
| 25 | Prohibiting           | 1  | 0.1  | 0  | 0    |
| 26 | Suggesting            | 1  | 0.1  | 0  | 0    |
| 27 | Thanking              | 8  | 0.8  | 18 | 2.09 |
| 28 | Giving opinion        | 14 | 1.42 | 18 | 2.09 |
| 29 | Apologizing           | 2  | 0.2  | 14 | 1.63 |
| 30 | Complimenting         | 2  | 0.2  | 0  | 0    |
| 31 | Proving               | 0  | 0    | 2  | 0.23 |
| 32 | Insisting             | 0  | 0    | 8  | 0.93 |
| 33 | Confessing            | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |
| 34 | Boasting              | 0  | 0    | 3  | 0.35 |
| 35 | Intending             | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |
| 36 | Predicting            | 0  | 0    | 3  | 0.35 |
| 37 | Criticizing           | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |
| 38 | Disclaiming           | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |
| 39 | Correcting            | 0  | 0    | 2  | 0.23 |
| 40 | Refusing              | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |
| 41 | Encouraging           | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |
| 42 | Wishing               | 0  | 0    | 2  | 0.23 |
| 43 | Requesting            | 0  | 0    | 1  | 0.1  |

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|              |             |            |            |            |            |
|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 44           | Promising   | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0.1        |
| 45           | Greeting    | 0          | 0          | 4          | 0.46       |
| 46           | Joking      | 0          | 0          | 2          | 0.23       |
| 47           | Challenging | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0.1        |
| <b>Total</b> |             | <b>981</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>858</b> | <b>100</b> |

The most frequent SA that the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners produce is the SA of asserting: 365: 176 occurrences. Statistically, hypothesis (2) which states that (the Iraqi EFL learners use the SA of stating more than the other types of SAs in their MA and Ph.D. defence) is rejected and the alternative one is accepted: (the Iraqi EFL learners use the SA of asserting more than the other types of SAs in their MA and Ph.D. defence) because the SA of stating is much less performed than the SA of asserting. The SA of stating is used 79 times by the MA IEFL learners and in 58 instances by the Ph.D. IEFL learners. This indicates that the MA IEFL learners concentrate more in their defence on convincing the examiners about the ideas expressed in their theses and also they are also less versatile in the use of SAs. This fact can be confirmed through the number of different SAs both the MA and Ph.D. use. The MA candidates perform 30 different SAs, while the Ph.D. ones utter 42 different SAs. It is thought that the variable of profession works here. Due to their experience in university language teaching, the Ph.D. candidates perform, though have little frequency, a variety of SAs as the situation requires. The following are examples of the SA of asserting:

Of /course | in previous studies. (MA1,2)

[My specialization] is socio-pho\netics. (Ph.D.1, 1)

In addition, the SA of justifying occupies the second place; 117 vs. 150 occurrences, 11.9% vs. 17.4. It is an expected frequency because in many instances the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners are asked to justify what they are saying. The following are examples of the SA of justifying:

Because it is listed according to the organizational \concepts | like number \one | hie\arical models | number \two | \newly inspired model. (MA1, 23)

Because there is \standard Arabic | and co\lloquial Arabic. (Ph.D.1, 4)

Next, another SA which also has a high frequency is that of reporting; 116 vs. 40 instances, 11.8% vs. 4.66% of the total Us because among the data, there are two theses in literature specialization. That is why, the MA candidates report what is there in the novel. The following are examples of the SA of reporting:

He said why not you include the \author's life within the work | because nothing \comes from nowhere. (MA3, 126)

Some participants say I was \born and raised in Basra | but I noticed their \dialect is different. (Ph.D.1, 126)

The least frequent SAs that the MA candidates produce are supposing, reminding, objecting, believing,

obligating, prohibiting and suggesting, whereas the least frequent SAs that the Ph.D. candidates produce are guessing, reminding, confessing, intending, criticizing, disclaiming, refusing, encouraging, requesting and challenging. Each of these SAs is mentioned once by the candidates standing for 0.1%. It is clear that the mutual least frequent SA is reminding, while the rest are different. However, such frequencies show that the candidates tend to perform SAs which ensure the examiners of the truthfulness of their points of view via performing assertive SAs.

#### 4.2 The MA and Ph.D. Candidates' Use of Categories of SAs

It is found out that there are noticeable differences in the performance of MA and Ph.D. participants in terms of SA categories, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Comparison between the Categories of SAs Used by MA and Ph.D. Candidates**

| No.         | SA Category     | MA         |            | Ph.D.     |            |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
|             |                 | Frequency  | %          | Frequency | %          |
| 1           | Representatives | 903        | 92.04      | 713       | 83.1       |
| 2           | Directives      | 52         | 5.3        | 86        | 10.02      |
| 3           | Commissives     | 0          | 0          | 3         | 0.34       |
| 4           | Expressives     | 26         | 2.65       | 56        | 6.52       |
| 5           | Declarations    | 0          | 0          | 0         | 0          |
| <b>Tota</b> |                 | <b>981</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>8</b>  | <b>100</b> |

First, the MA candidates use SAs which belong to the SA categories: representatives, directives and expressives (three categories only), whereas the Ph.D. candidates, in comparison, make use of SAs which belong to: representatives, directives, commissives and expressives (four categories only) though the Ph.D. candidates issue three commissive SAs. This is an indication that both of the MA and Ph.D., on the one hand, have much more concentration on the present aim of convincing the committee than on future commitment and, on the other hand, they are not in position to issue declarations.

Second, the SA category which is used by 92.4% of the MA IEFL learners and by 83.1% of the Ph.D. IEFL learners is representatives. Accordingly, we reject hypothesis (3) which states that (both MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners use directives more than the other SA categories) because the dominant category of SA used by the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners is the representative category not the directive one. So, we accept the alternative hypothesis which states that: (both MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners use representatives more than the other SA categories). Definitely, both of the MA and Ph.D. IEFL candidates intend to persuade the committee of examiners of their points of views, but they differ in terms of SA diversity of SAs performance.

Third, the MA candidates perform less directive SAs than the Ph.D. ones: they have 5.3% of their utterances which have the features of directives compared to the Ph.D. ones who have 10.02% due to their wide experience, the Ph.D. candidates pose more questions for the sake of clarification or repetition of the questions in order to fully understand the questions of the examiners and, as a result, they justify the questions they are asked appropriately.

Finally, there is also a difference between the MA and the Ph.D. candidates in terms of the number of expressive SAs they perform. The MA candidates have only 2.6% of their total performance of SAs which are expressive, while the Ph.D. ones have the percentages of 6.5%. This definitely can be related to the degree of interaction between the examiners and the examinees. The Ph.D. candidates are more cooperative and they are given more chances to give their opinions, and in return they thank the examiners more when they are given clarifications and apologize more when they receive correction.

#### 4.3 The MA and Ph.D. Candidates' Use of Tones

It is found out that there are not quite huge differences between the MA and Ph.D. debate performance in terms of the IFEL Learners' use of tones. See Table 3:

**Table 3. A Comparison in the Use of Tones Between the MA and Ph.D. Candidates**

| No.          | Type of tone | MA          |            | Ph.D.       |            |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|              |              | Frequency   | %          | Frequency   | %          |
| 1            | Fall         | 1801        | 97.03      | 1724        | 97.29      |
| 2            | Rise         | 52          | 2.8        | 48          | 2.7        |
| 3            | Fall-rise    | 0           | 0          | 0           | 0          |
| 4            | Rise-fall    | 3           | 0.16       | 0           | 0          |
| 5            | Level        | 0           | 0          | 0           | 0          |
| <b>Total</b> |              | <b>1856</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>1772</b> | <b>100</b> |

The table above clearly shows that both the MA and Ph.D. IEFEL learners use the falling tones more than the other tone types: 97.03% versus 97.29%. This supports hypothesis (4) which states that (the MA and Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners use the falling tone more than the other types of tones) since it is clear that the most frequent type of tone is the falling tone in both cases. In fact, this indicates that they are sure of what they are saying. The MA candidates use 52 rising tones and the Ph.D. candidates use 48 ones for the sake of posing questions. A less used type of tone is the rise-fall one which is used 3 times only, 0.16% for the sake of signaling incompleteness, but it does have much statistical significance. Moreover, the candidates never use the fall-rise tone because they are certain of their points of view.

#### 4.4 The Errors Committed by the MA and Ph.D. Iraqi EFL Learners

It is found that there are differences between the MA and Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners in the type and number of errors they commit (Table 4 below):

**Table 4. A Comparison between the Errors Committed by the MA and Ph.D. IEFL Learners**

| No.          | Error                                | Type of error    | MA        |             | Ph.D.     |             |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
|              |                                      |                  | Frequency | %           | Frequency | %           |
| 1            | Misrepresentation of ideas           | Pragmatic errors | 17        | 10.2        | 7         | 16.2        |
| 2            | Redundancy                           |                  | 6         | 3.6         | 2         | 4.6         |
| 3            | Repetition                           |                  | 11        | 6.62        | 16        | 37.2        |
| 4            | Misrepresentation of words           |                  | 4         | 2.4         | 1         | 2.3         |
| 5            | Repair                               |                  | 1         | 0.6         | 2         | 4.6         |
| <b>Total</b> |                                      |                  | <b>39</b> | <b>15.6</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>38.2</b> |
| 6            | Omission of verb                     | Syntactic errors | 8         | 4.81        | 2         | 4.6         |
| 7            | Omission of relative pronoun         |                  | 1         | 0.6         | 0         | 0           |
| 8            | Insertion of if conditional          |                  | 1         | 0.6         | 0         | 0           |
| 9            | Insertion of preposition             |                  | 66        | 39.7        | 0         | 0           |
| 10           | Determiner problem                   |                  | 2         | 1.2         | 0         | 0           |
| 11           | Agreement error                      |                  | 12        | 7.22        | 0         | 0           |
| 12           | Omission of preposition              |                  | 9         | 5.24        | 1         | 2.3         |
| 13           | Insertion of noun phrases or clauses |                  | 2         | 1.2         | 0         | 0           |
| 14           | Insertion of verb                    |                  | 1         | 0.6         | 2         | 4.6         |
| 15           | Misuse of tense                      |                  | 11        | 6.62        | 4         | 9.3         |
| 16           | Omission of article                  | 3                | 1.8       | 1           | 2.3       |             |
| 17           | Omission of pronoun or subject       | 4                | 2.4       | 0           | 0         |             |
| 18           | Misuse of relative clause            | 2                | 1.2       | 0           | 0         |             |
| 19           | Subject-verb inversion               | 2                | 1.2       | 0           | 0         |             |
| 20           | Incomplete utterance                 | 1                | 0.6       | 0           | 0         |             |

|              |                               |            |             |           |              |
|--------------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| 21           | Misuse of relative pronoun    | 1          | 0.6         | 0         | 0            |
| 22           | Insertion of article          | 1          | 0.6         | 0         | 0            |
| 23           | Misuse of verb                | 0          | 0           | 3         | 6.97         |
| 24           | Omission of auxiliary verb    | 0          | 0           | 2         | 4.6          |
| <b>Total</b> |                               | <b>127</b> | <b>50.8</b> | <b>16</b> | <b>22.53</b> |
| 25           | Incorrect tone unit boundary  | 39         | 15.6        | 21        | 29.5         |
| 26           | Incorrect type of tone        | 13         | 5.2         | 2         | 2.8          |
| 27           | Incorrect placement of stress | 30         | 12          | 5         | 7            |
| 28           | No stress                     | 2          | 0.8         | 0         | 0            |
| <b>Total</b> |                               | <b>84</b>  | <b>33.6</b> | <b>28</b> | <b>39.43</b> |
| <b>Total</b> |                               | <b>250</b> | <b>100</b>  | <b>71</b> | <b>100</b>   |

The errors the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit are more in type and frequency than the Ph.D. ones, something which supports hypothesis (5) which states that (The errors MA Iraqi EFL learners commit in the use of SAs are more than those errors which are committed by the Ph.D. ones) since the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit 26 types of errors with a total number of 250 errors, whereas the Ph.D. learners commit 15 types of errors with a total number of 71 errors. These frequencies indicate that the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners are well-informed and more competent in English than the MA ones; that is why, they commit less errors.

The MA IEFL learners commit more syntactic errors than the Ph.D. ones: 127 instances, representing 50.8%; 16 occurrences, representing 22.85%. This indicates that the MA IEFL learners are still linguistically incompetent and that the Ph.D. learners are more competent than the MA ones.

In terms of syntactic errors, the most frequent syntactic error the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit is insertion of preposition. Though it occurs in 66 instances standing for 26.4%, the Ph.D. ones never commit this mistake because the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners have the BBC dialect.

Interpolation is **like** the main concept. (MA Errors)

In addition, the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit the error misuse of tense 11 times standing for 4.4%, whereas the Ph.D. ones misuse the tenses 4 times, 5.6%. Again, it is found out that the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners have more command on the tenses than the MA ones.

then he [is] chang[ed]. (MA Errors)

Furthermore, the least frequent syntactic errors the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit are insertion of article, omission of relative pronoun, insertion of conditional if, insertion of verb and misuse of relative pronoun:

To expose not **the** Hopkinson. (MA Errors)

The one [who] made the act. (MA Errors)

But **if** we call that person a spinster. (MA Errors)

Who **are** criticized the theory of Brown and Levinson. (MA Errors)

I put like one sentence explaining how [what] am I going to discuss. (MA Errors)

The least frequent errors the Ph.D. ones commit are wrong use of words, omission of preposition and omission of article. Here are examples of these errors respectively:

Wrong use of words: I asked for the participants that are **suit**. (Ph.D. Errors)

Omission of preposition: Sometimes [for] some utterances I can't get the acoustic picture. (Ph.D. Errors)

Omission of article: I have a sea or [an] ocean. (Ph.D. Errors)

However, each of these errors is committed only once representing 0.4% for the MA candidates and 1.4% for the Ph.D. ones. This variety of errors which the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit is another evidence that they are less competent in the rules of syntax than the Ph.D. ones.

It is clear that the IEFL learners commit errors of the pragmatic type: "The Iraqi EFL learners lack some of the necessary pragmatic competence of the FL ..." (Betti & Yaseen, 2020, p. 58). Likewise, this goes in harmony with Betti, Igaab and Al-Ghizzi (2018, p. 264): "The informants have weaknesses in the pragmatic level of the ...speech acts". So, in terms of pragmatic errors, the most frequent pragmatic error the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners commit is the error of "repetition". While it appears in 16 instances representing 22.53%, the MA Iraqi EFL learners commit this mistake 11 times standing for 4.4%. In fact, the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners' repetition of linguistic structures and items more than the MA ones indicates a previous observation that the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners' supply more clarifications and justifications to the examiners than the MA ones; that is why they repeat in order to gain time to arrange their thoughts and ideas. The candidates' irrelevant repetition indicates their violation of the Grecian maxim of quantity. This is in total agreement with Betti and Yaseen (2020, p. 57): "The Iraqi EFL learners have difficulty in utilizing the conversational maxims when they are required to observe all the maxims".

The care-givers must ought to be careful. (MA Errors)

If they put it in their mind **if they put it in their mind if they put it in their mind** they like literature. (Ph.D. Errors)

In addition, another pragmatic error which both the MA and Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners commit is misrepresentation of ideas. The MA Iraqi EFL learners use it in 17 instances, 6.8%, whereas the Ph.D. ones use it in 7 instances, 9.85%. This indicates that the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners are better in expressing the ideas and thoughts they have in their mind than the MA ones.

**Because I use in the term reference...**Both terms **are actually** may be similar and can be used interchangeably. (MA Errors)

So **when in the poem** the title of the poem is identification. (MA Errors)

Finally, the MA IEFL learners commit more errors in the use of tones than the Ph.D. ones. The MA candidates commit 84 tone error, 33.6% which a much more frequency but less percentage than the Ph.D. ones who commit 28 tone error, 39.4%. This is because the Ph.D. Iraqi EFL learners have more command on tones and patterns of intonation than the MA ones.

The most frequent tone error both the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners commit is the use of incorrect tone unit boundary. The MA IEFL learners commit this 39, 15.6% which is a more frequency than that of the Ph.D. candidates: 21, 29.5%. This indicates that the MA and Ph.D. learners have problems in deciding tone unit boundaries which is often a result to syntactic or pragmatic problem.

We may include like | patients in the mild phase. (MA Errors)

I said this may be due because you know | reading | or analyzing three poems | at the same time | for them | they have no experience | of analyzing | and seeing poems | because they didn't see in their life | or lives

In addition, the MA IEFL learners also commit the error of incorrect placement of stress more than Ph.D. ones: 30, 12% vs. 5, 7.04. This indicates that the MA IEFL learners have problems in deciding which syllables or words that have to receive stress and which do not. It is a phonological problem. In this regard, Betti and Ulaiwi (2018, p. 87) clarify that “the placement of stress in sentences depends [on] the relative importance of words in ... [the] sentence. The most important word carries the stronger stress”.

not in specific pages. (MA Errors)

This is partial educated. (MA Errors)

Moreover, the MA IEFL learners commit more errors of using the incorrect type of tone than the Ph.D. ones: 13, 5.2% vs. 2, 2.81. This is because when the MA and, to a lesser degree, Ph.D. IEFL learners list items, they usually use falling tone for all items, not only for the last item.

Whether they are educated | uneducated | or partly educated. (Ph.D. Errors)

## 5. Conclusions

This section displays the conclusion that the researchers arrive at as a result of the theoretical and practical aspects of the study, and giving some recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

Based on the results the researchers obtain from data analysis and discussion, the study draws the following conclusions:

- 1). The MA IEFL learners use more SAs than the Ph.D. ones do.
- 2). The most frequent SA that the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners perform in their defence of their theses and dissertations is the SA of asserting.
- 3). The most frequently used category of SAs by the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners in their defence is the representative, directive, expressives, commissive and then the declarative one.

- 4). The MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners never utilize declarative SAs in their defence because the performance of declaratives requires that speakers possess an institutional role which the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners explicitly lack.
- 5). The Ph.D. IEFL learners utilize more SA categories in their defence than the MA ones do. This is because the Ph.D. IEFL learners utilize SAs which belong to four SA categories, whereas the MA ones use SAs which belong to only three SA categories.
- 6). There is a positive relationship between the type of tone that the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners use and the type of SAs they perform; that is, the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners tend to use the falling tone in order to show to the examiners that they are sure of what they say.
- 7). The most widely used type of tone by the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners is the falling tone. This goes in harmony with the idea that the MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners, in their defence, tend to use the falling tone in order to convey to the examiners that they believe in what they say.
- 8). The MA IEFL learners commit more errors in frequency and type than the Ph.D. ones do.
- 9). The Ph.D. IEFL learners perform better in their defence than the MA ones in terms of the less errors they commit.

Based on the study theoretical and practical aspects, it is recommended that:

- 1). Teachers or course designers ought to enrich the curriculum with a sufficient number of SAs through classroom activities in which the students is engaged such as conversations, role-playing, interviews, etc. that motivate the students to perform SAs., and these SAs ought to be given in appropriate contexts. Likewise, students ought to be given ample opportunities to practice SAs.
- 2). Teachers ought to explain to the students that SAs are language functions and teach them using pragmatic and sociolinguistic exercises. They ought not to be taught in the same way as grammatical structures.
- 3). University teachers need to pay much attention to teaching intonation, explaining to the students the production and usage of each one of the tones.
- 4). University students ought to be given enough time to practice the various types of tones.
- 5). Teachers need to diagnose the weakness points that the learners undergo in performing SAs or pronouncing the types of tone and find solutions for these weaknesses.
- 6). The MA and Ph.D. IEFL learners ought to juxtapose between SAs and type of tone they use to perform these SAs.
- 7). Designers of the curriculum of Colleges of Education for Humanities for MA and Ph.D. students ought to pay more attention to interlanguage pragmatics so that the students obtain the necessary competence to effectively perform everyday social functions in the FL.
- 8). University teachers are recommended at the level of BA, MA, and Ph.D. during the classroom communication to enhance the learners' awareness to the socio-pragmatic rules of English.

The following topics are suggested for further studies:

- 1). A similar study can be conducted to deal with the SAs used by the committee of examiners, SA categories, types of tones used by them and, if any, the errors committed by them.
- 2). A similar study can also be conducted dealing with the SAs, SA categories, types of tones and the errors committed by a teacher or teachers while they are teaching English in classroom.
- 3). A comparative study can be conducted about the differences in the use of SAs between the male IEFL learners and female ones.
- 4). A study can be conducted about the use of SAs by IEFL speakers based on recorded materials and comparing their performance to that of English native speakers.
- 5). A study can be conducted about the IEFL learners' awareness of SAs from spoken discourse and if they recognize SAs, are they able to respond to these SAs?
- 6). A study can be conducted about the IEFL learners' use of directives and the type of tone they use when perform each different directive SA.
- 7). A comparative study can be conducted in categorization of SAs between the IEFL learners and teachers or politicians.

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