

EFL Iraqi Learners' Pragmatic Failure in English Animal Idiomatic Expressions

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Abstract

This research concerns the pragmatic failure of the Iraqi EFL learners in interpreting the meanings of some sorts of idiomatic expression; namely, animal idiomatic expressions. Regardless of their grammatical formation, idiomatic expressions use tends to be largely dependent upon context. Pragmatic failure is a term which was first coined by Jenny Thomas in (1983) which is defined as the inability to understand what is said by what is intended. Pragmatic failure is of two types: pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic failure. As known, the meaning of animal idiomatic expressions vary from culture to culture, because of the difference of norms and principles the culture imposes on the residents of certain place. Pragmatically, the use of idiomatic expressions in English carry a diversity of meanings which learners of other languages will surely fall short in determining the exact intentions of speakers using these expressions as well as having a relation to the culture that the speech community has. The culture pragmatically place a major role too. However, this is due to the fact that idiomatic expressions have indirect speech acts and implicatures bond by the culture of the language that ought to be figured out by the learners. The study hypothesizes that most of EFL Iraqi learners will fail to interpret these expressions and also after putting these idiomatic expressions into their contexts.

Keywords: pragmatic failure, pragma-linguistic failure, socio-pragmatic failure, pragmatic competence, sociolinguistic competence, communicative competence, and idiomatic expressions

1. Introduction

Pragmatic failure is the inability to understand the utterances when used. It can occur between any two interlocutors whether they belong to the same culture or between native and non-native speakers which is very normal to happen. It may not occur because of lack of ability to parse the interlocutors' sentences, nor, it is due to the misunderstanding of their speeches; but rather, it is due to the miscommunication with the speakers' intentions. As first coined by Thomas (1983), she defines the term as the communicators' inability to understand what is intended by what is said. She divides the term into two main types: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures. The former refers to the grammatical elements intended by the speakers and the hearers misunderstand them in certain contexts. It can also take the hearer's failure to catch the intended illocutionary force or the intended speech act. The latter on the other hand, refers to the difference of the speakers' beliefs. It shows how cultural beliefs difference affect comprehension. However, not only can pragmatic failure be found in the native to nonnative conversations, but rather, it can also be found in the dialogues of those who share a common cultural background. Idiomatic expressions have certain implied meanings. They have certain speech acts they can express. With them along is the animal idiomatic expression. Animal idioms and animal idiomatic expressions have certain implicatures and speech acts to express whose meanings are only discoverable and recoverable through context and shared-knowledge of speakers and hearers who belong to the same culture. Animal idiomatic expressions also have cultural meanings and specifications. When two language are on the line, there appears to have some differences. So, animal idiomatic expressions found in English culture will surely be different from those found in Arabic

culture. Thus, when Arab learners who are learning English get accosted to such expressions in English, pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic failure will, of course, occur (Cruz, 2013).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pragmatic Failure

The main reason of the foreign language users or students that they do the pragmatic failure is that they fail to understand the illocutionary force intended by the speakers. This may be due to the lack of communicative and pragmatic competence viz., pragmalinguistic failure. Standing against Chomsky's view of linguistic competence, many scholars have agreed upon the need of pragmatic, communicative, and sociolinguistic competences. In part, linguistic competence is not enough to make communication possible, there are learners who really master the grammatical issues in their second language, yet they are not able to cope with an ongoing conversation. So, speakers and learners of any language must have these competences to make conversations work successfully (Xu, 2016). See: Shen (2013); Sheng (2016); Riley (1984); and Lihui and Jianbin (2010).

One further matter which concerns the pragmalinguistic failure is that when hearers are directed to a conversation, they surely need to resort to the semantic units made by the words raised by the speakers, in addition to their need is to get the pragmatic principles noticed which are very urgent to make judgements at certain levels of analysis. For example, to make reference and sense one may have to sketch the pragmatic principles to point these references and senses out and this could be (level: 1). Moreover, (level: 2) which is to point out the exact message the speaker intends by assigning the illocutionary force and the speech act of the utterance. So, if the hearer or learner fails to get any of the levels, then pragmalinguistic failure will be the result (Podhovník, (2010).

It is also worth mentioning that the context: physical or linguistic is very important, since there are lots of indirect speech acts that the hearers or learners are not aware of. As already known, indirect speech acts and many conversational implicatures are widely used by the English language speakers, they require context to be figured out. For example:

1. You left the door open.

In (1) above, the context- physical and linguistic- plays a major role. When sentence (1) is said in a wintery weather, then it very likely to be a request that the addressee is to shut to door. Likewise, conversational implicature carries more difficulty in that it needs further the shared-knowledge between the interlocutors. For example:

2. A: I forgot to put on my hand watch, what time is it? B: Well,
the milkman has just passed.

In (2b), the interpretation is largely dependent on the shared-knowledge between the interlocutors. Here, (2b)'s utterance is considered an answer of time when both know that the milkman accurately comes every day at 10:00 a.m. Thus, the learner who is not acquainted to such expressions would surely fall in the trap of pragmalinguistic failure. What goes on with the learners when they do pragmatic failure can be summed up by the following:

- a. When the hearer gets the force the speaker's utterance stronger or weaker than what the speaker intends.
- b. The hearer mixes between the intended speech acts, understanding an order as a request.
- c. When the hearer understands the utterance of the speaker as having controversy where the speaker sees that there is no such a thing in his utterance.
- d. The speaker thinks that the hearer would be able to figure out the force of the his/her utterance, depending on the hearer's knowledge and system of beliefs which the hearer in fact does not really have about his second language (Schauer, 2009).

The second kind of failure which is the sociopragmatic failure is totally related to culture and societal facts and norms. Learners of English who are from countries and whose mother tongue is not English will face many problems of knowing the norms and conventions of the English people i.e., whose mother tongue is English. Difference of norms and cultures as used and reflected in the language cause difficulties to the learners of English, and this might be the main reason why learners are not supposed to acquire and learn the target language just like those who are native of it. Sociopragmatic failure concerns the way of knowing the norms as said above, it drives learners to fall short in knowing 'the size of imposition', the taboo words in the culture where what is taboo in the learners' culture may appear to be very normal in the target language, 'cost and benefit', 'social distance', and 'relative rights and obligations'. All of these areas of social interests are to be judgements that the learner must do to make communication successful. Taboo words, for example, require that the learner be aware of the fact that what appears to be impolite in his mother tongue, can politely be practiced normally in the second language he learns. Taguchi (2010) explains why such a failure occurs. It is acknowledged that despite of the universality of some pragmatic functions and principles, but there remains some sort of difficulty in building up the learners' pragmatic competence. As known, pragmatic competence is formed by extremely sociocultural complexion, because of the manipulations of the pragmatic and cultural structures, the pragmatic functions, and the diversity of the context all diverse and differ between two different cultures. Therefore, the sociolinguistic functions and norms are quite difficult to be made by the learners who have never had any acquaintance to cultural norms of their second language.

2.2 Animal Idiomatic Expressions

Idiomatic expressions exist in any language in the world. Since English is one of the most learned and studied languages and since it contains a large number of idiomatic expressions then it is required to shed lights on them in the process of learning. The idiomatic expressions belong to the figurative language. In turn, this would make knowing and learning them viz., as a language learner, difficult. Idiomatic expressions demand that the learner increase his knowledge in the second language. Crystal (2008) defines idioms in two perspectives: semantic and syntactic. Idioms are seen to be semantic component in language since their meaning must not be tackled individually and they are considered as chunks of related words which appear in sequences. Syntactically, those idioms are treated diversely since when they appear in a sentence they might mean something other than what they literally mean. This is the reason behind their calling for being pragmatic elements.

It is raining cats and dogs.

In (3), the things mentioned (cats/dogs) mean in this context (it is raining heavily); whereas, when these words were used in other contexts, they would refer to their meaning literally. These idiomatic expressions, after putting them in such contexts, become utterances other than mere sentences.

Pragmatically speaking, idiomatic expressions, according to the above, have meanings which are recoverable from the context in which they are used. But this can easily be executed by the native speakers, learners will certainly find it a difficult task to recover these idiomatic expressions from their context because learners do not have any awareness of the actual use and they also do not have awareness of the appropriateness of these idiomatic expressions use in their context. This is due to the fact that learners from other nationalities, let it be English as a second language, do not know about the conventions and suitability of the use of these constructions. Because idiomatic expressions require given contexts to determine the meaning they bear, learners of a language will find it difficult to figure out the meaning these expressions imply. Idiomatic expressions have a specific behavior which is that they behave 'idiosyncratically'. For example, (3) above cannot be:

3. *It is raining dogs and cats.

and this is one of the difficulties which learners may encounter. For this reason, learners must improve their pragmatic and cultural competences.

Idioms and idiomatic expressions are one of a kind that are dealt with differently. For phrasal verbs have their syntactic specification of use, arrangement, and agreement Quirk et al (1972) and they form idioms together with the particles they coincide. Idioms are those words that have special meanings that cannot be

interpreted alone in the dictionary. Idiomatic expressions are those expressions that carry metaphorical and ironical meanings. Compared with collocation, Bruening (2019) asserts that the idioms or idiomatic expressions have different issues making them different from collocations and other meaning structures. First, they have peculiar meaning in combinations to other structure like phrasal verbs and animal idiomatic expressions of particular lexical items that have special treatment. Secondly, these idiomatic expressions do not have direct interpretations. In other words, they do not have literal meaning when it comes to their interpretation. Thirdly, their lexical constructions are not changeable.

Animal idiomatic expression may have several origins that belong to culture and traditions. Gy (2003) specifies the formations of animal idiomatic expressions as traditional idioms, idioms that having actions that convey certain meaning, pairs of words, sayings and aphoristic, and similes. The use of these animal expressions is promoted and have been entered into languages because of the images of these animals and the characteristics they have in the minds of the speakers of the languages to use though a long time ago, using then become a language habit.

2.3 Idiomatic expressions, Pragmatics and Context

Since the characteristics of idioms or idiomatic expressions are ones whose meanings cannot be rendered or interpreted only through the use of context and since they appear not to depend on their meanings separately, their meanings must be tackled pragmatically. Idiomatic expressions have pragmatic meaning (Sporleder et al (2010).

Grice (1989: 30) finds that there are expressions whose meanings tend to be worked out from the contexts depending on the shared-knowledge and the socio-cultural understanding of the interlocutors. His idea is that speakers and hearers fight to be cooperative. He calls this principle 'the cooperative principle'. Grice believes that speakers sometimes resort to adhere their hearers conventionally, so the meaning they convey belongs to what is said as he calls it "Conventional Implicature". Other times, speakers, who intend to speak with the hearers who belong to the same speech communion, tend to imply the meaning. This happens when the meaning can be figured out from the context depending on the shared-knowledge, culture, and context and then he calls this kind "Conversational Implicature". Conversational Implicature splits into four major maxims: Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner. They are of two kinds: Generalized Conversational Implicature and Particularized Conversational Implicature. Grice stresses the fact that speakers and hearers in normal conversations follow these maxims (Grice, 1989). But, he also admits that these maxims can be flouted. Flouting any of the maxims needs specific context. For example:

4. A: Let's get the kids something

B: Okay, but I veto 1-C-E C-R-E-A-M-S

In (5) above, (A) apparently breeches the maxim of manner for (B). Here, the meaning conveyed be the flouting of the submaxim (be perspicuous). The exploitation of the speaker (A) for this infringement is that, surely with the appropriate context, s/he does not want to mention the word in full while there are kids around (Levinson, 1983). Searle (1979) explains that idioms alone are not speech acts, but speech acts are allidiomatic, because of the metaphorical and ironical uses they convey. They can perform indirect speech acts of directives and commissive. However, since pragmatics depends greatly on context, and since these idiomatic expressions are also pragmatic, then, their meaning interpretations depend largely on the context, linguistic or non-linguistic one. The idiomatic expressions have a unique meaning that may contain indirect speech acts and implicatures only recoverable from context, because of they literally these idiomatic expressions mean something, and when they are used through their conventions of use, mean quite something more than they appear to carry literally. (Langlotz, 2006). They can also carry irony so the meaning of them multiplies. Consider the following example:

5. Context: A working on a very difficult job in his hands by the moment, his friends adds more files to be estimated over the work of A. B in turn say: come on they are easy, you can do it. A answers: piece of cake (ironically) (See, Brown and Levinson (1987); Schauer (2009))

So, these idiomatic expressions may extend in their meanings through their metaphorical and ironical use and their meaning can only be figured out through context (Al Areqi, 2022).

2.4 Idioms and Culture

Idioms are culture-specific. Some idiomatic expressions can be accepted in certain culture positively. What appears to be positive in one language, may not be positive in another. Idioms in English uses several animal idiomatic expressions that are culturally and positively acceptable, but at the same time they are not suitable or acceptable in Arabic, for example. A *craw* is a kind of verb which has bad connotation in Arabic culture, and when used calling somebody by it, it will lead to social disharmony. However, these words and others like *pig* and *ostrich* are not metaphorically preferable when used in Arabic in speaker-hearer conversations because of the bad meaning they might be intended to be used for. See: Ping (2005) ; Dobrovlskij and Pirainen (2006); Yagis and Izadpanah (2013); and Soehn (2006)

Yang (2010) explains that idioms are formed in cultures through a long period of time. They belong to their cultures and their certain race. These idioms are used normally in the community whose speakers belong to the same local area and share the same norms and principles of that culture (Bruening, 2018). So, when they use these idiomatic expressions, they use them for their communication and they are all understood. By this, communication succeeds. Therefore, when speakers use (6):

6. A: Can you tell me where is the next station is? B:
Two miles as the *craw* flies.

A in (7) would understand that the way to the station is direct without being meandered and no left-right turns but on the road the station may be more than that (Alqahtani, 2014; Hussein (2018); and Harrini and Shanthichitra (2022).

Ishihara (2018) has his special terminology. He says that pragma-linguistic failure is 'intercultural' because it deals with language in terms of its linguistic units as found in the studies language. The 'sociocultural' or the socio-pragmatic failure is that which concerns the cultural differences that exist between the mother tongue the target language. Ishihara attributes the intercultural pragmatic failure or the pragma-linguistic failure to the 'negative pragmatic transfer' that takes place when learning the target language, in which the learner uses inferences and interpretations relying on his native language knowledge or the learner fails to approach the intended meaning and rather resorting to the literal meaning of the utterances given. For example, the learner interprets (8):

7. Can you pass the salt?

literally. So when the learner interprets such sentence literally he would react to such a sentence as asking not requiring to do an action of request in context and would give an answer like (yes, I can) misunderstanding the utterance. This is the difference of intercultural perspective that is not found in the learner's language. This is also due to the learner's lack of knowledge of the polite expressions, the speech act of request that can be found in this intercultural case as found in (8). (See: Langlotz, (2006); Szerszunowicz, (2007); and Casas and Campoy (1995).

2.5 Linguistic, Communicative, and Pragmatic Competence

The term 'competence' is defined as the abstract knowledge that the language user has in mind containing all what he knows about the rules the he intentionally acquired or learned about his language. As an attempt to formulate the new revolution in linguistics, Chomsky's terminology of his dichotomy viz. competence and performance met a huge interest in the study of the field. Trying not to cope de Saussure, Chomsky justifies and differentiates between the two. While de Saussure's 'Parole' is the realization of 'langue', Chomsky's 'performance' is the realization of 'parole' (Lyons, 1995).

Communicative competence, (Crystal, 2008) defines it as, the native speaker's ability to understand and communicate the language in its context, paying attention to the social status between him and the native hearer making the communication process go successfully. As a matter of fact, this type of competence is found as a result of a series of criticism as opposed to the Generative Grammar or Chomsky's notion of competence. Competence is seen to have so many implications, it could mean the linguistic knowledge of the native speaker, thence, it is linguistic competence. Matters that have connection to social matters like those

held between the social distance and the class-levels like being a teacher and a student, and the like are all fall into the social competence (Brinton and Akimoto, 1999). See: Dzanic (2007):

On the other hand, pragmatic competence has a huge connection to all of the competences proposed. Because of the its connection to all of the fore-mentioned competences, pragmatic competence becomes major in the study of linguistics in general, and to applied linguistics in particular. It is possible for pragmatic competence to be enhanced and developed to the learners of different languages. There are some pragmatic issues like those found in conventional implicatures and polite replies. Kasper (1992) sees that pragmatic competence can be developed for learners when teacher give their students lists of implicatures and polite expressions to be tested and figured out by themselves. Idiomatic expressions and, of course, animal idiomatic expressions have a wide range of uses in differently given contexts. These expressions can be extracted and given, in their contexts, to learners to improve their pragmatic competence (Murar, 2009).

3. Research Questions

The following questions form the essence of the research. They are:

1. Are EFL Iraqi learners able to master Animal Idiomatic Expressions?

2. Does Pragmatic competence play a role in the EFL Iraqi learners' progress in mastering these expressions?
3. Do they have preferences of the use of animal idiomatic expressions?
4. Will EFL Iraqi students develop in the second test?

4. Research Objectives

The main objectives of the research are the following:

1. discovering Iraqi EFL learner's inability of mastering the use of Animal Idiomatic Expressions.
2. Improving the students' awareness of such expressions and teach them how to use them in their specific contexts.

5. Methodology

This study is devoted to show the pragma-linguistic failure that EFL Iraqi students, fourth class (seniors) do at Tikrit University when using animal expression. In this research, two tests are done. The first test is context-free that is, 10 random animal expressions are put in an MCQ test to be answered by 50 students without their contexts. The first test coincides the first level in Thomas' model of analysis i.e., the understanding of the senses and references of the animal idiomatic expressions. All they do is pick the correct choice of these animal idiomatic expressions. The second test is also a 10 MCQ items but of two phases 5 items are put to test their failure in knowing the speech acts and 5 others are put to show their failure in knowing the forms of politeness these animal expressions are used to convey relying on the context, there are contexts and scenarios drawn and the students are let to pick the correct speech act conveyed by the animal idiomatic expression.

5.1 Description of the Research

This research focuses on Pragmatic failure that can be defined as the failure to understand what is said by what is intended. The meaning of animal idiomatic expressions varies from culture to culture, because of the difference of norms and values the culture enforces on the people of certain place. Idioms in English uses several animal idiomatic expressions that are culturally and positively acceptable, but at the same time they are not suitable or acceptable in Arabic. These expressions can be extracted and given, in their contexts, to learners to improve their pragmatic competence. Two tests are done to show the pragma-linguistic failure of EFL Iraqi students, fourth class (seniors) at Tikrit University.

5.2 Design and Procedures

The researchers collected a number of animal idiomatic expressions. They studied these expressions. These expressions are collected from different resources. The students are given the materials containing animal idiomatic expressions to be examined and tested themselves and the context in which these idiomatic

expressions are used is given to them through scenarios and specific settings that provokes their minds. The test was put as an open book exam through Google Classroom and the student are let free to decide the meaning of the animal idiomatic expressions as far as they know as well as the speech acts and the polite expressions implicated by these animal idiomatic expressions. The number of the students that have done these second test is (126) students. The second test shows the students' comprehension of Thomas' level two of analysis which approaches to the students' understanding of the pragmatic forces (pragmalinguistic) and their understanding of the conventions and societal matters of the uses of these animal idiomatic expressions with their appropriateness in the target language culture (sociopragmatic).

Note that all the incorrect variables that are put into the test will be considered wrong choices, when students pick them. The research will rely on these wrong variables making them the scale of their pragmatic failure in animal idiomatic expressions.

The first test is done at Google classroom in 7 March 2022, after that, the second test is made to the students after making them aware of the animal idiomatic expressions and after explaining the context for the students in which these idiomatic expressions are used in 17 April 2022.

6. Analysis of Results

6.1 First Test Analysis

The results the students come up with in the first test are shown respectively in the following:

1. The first chart in the first test shows that the students' failure in determining the meaning of the animal idiomatic expression is huge revealed in the ratio of in chart (1) below:

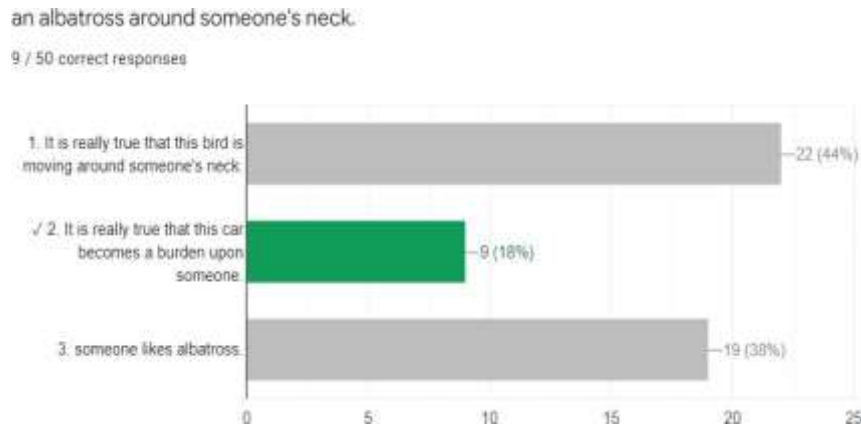


Chart 1. First Item Ratio

Only (9) out of (50) students succeeded in performing this item and the ratio is (18%), and (82%) failed in this item of test.

- 2. Chart (2) shows that there is a similarity in both Arabic and English culture revealed by the test. In the test of the example of the crow in (as the crow flies) both culture have a view that all crows fly in a direction without turns i.e. directly. So the students' ratio in this item of the test is (44% or 22 students) of success. And,

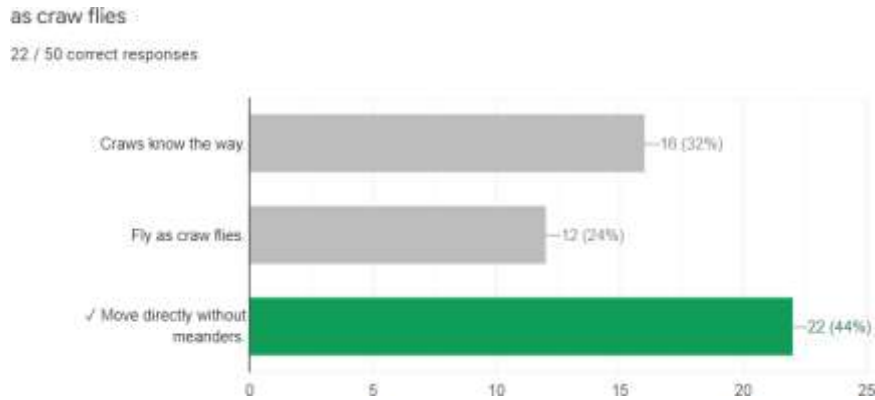


Chart (2). Second Item Ratio

only (56%) failed; (32% or 16 students) chooses alternative number (2) and (24% or 12 students) chooses the second alternative. The amount of failure is then (56%) in this third item of the test.

- 3. Chart (3) shows a great failure of understanding the intended message of the meaning used and conveyed by the use of this animal idiomatic expression. Only (14) correct answers out of (50) students. This is due to the fact that the students do not understand the metonymic use of the belfry. The meaning of this word is the top of the watch tower building. The metonymic use of (belfry) has not come into their minds, the image drawn in this animal idiomatic expression is beyond their limited pragmatic ability to unsolved it. The students are required to know that the head of the body is seen as the top of the building (Belfry) where the bats are in the bell of that empty towers. The ratio of failure in the third item of the test is (72%) as shown in chart (3) below:

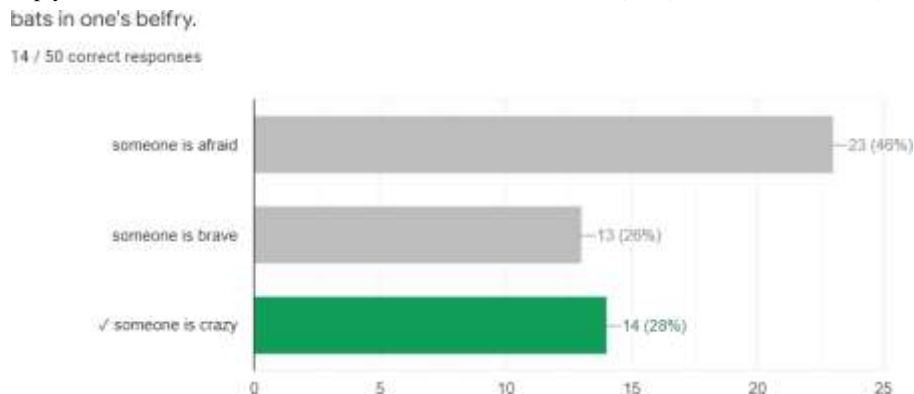


Chart (3). Third Item Ratio

- 4. The item here shows that there is a sort of similarity of the thinking between English and the student's mother tongue as well as the culture. Students reflections to item (4)'s correct variable is prior to other due to this similarity of culture. (56%) of the students pick the correct answer, and the pragmatic failure is (46%) as is manipulated and reflected in chart (4) below:

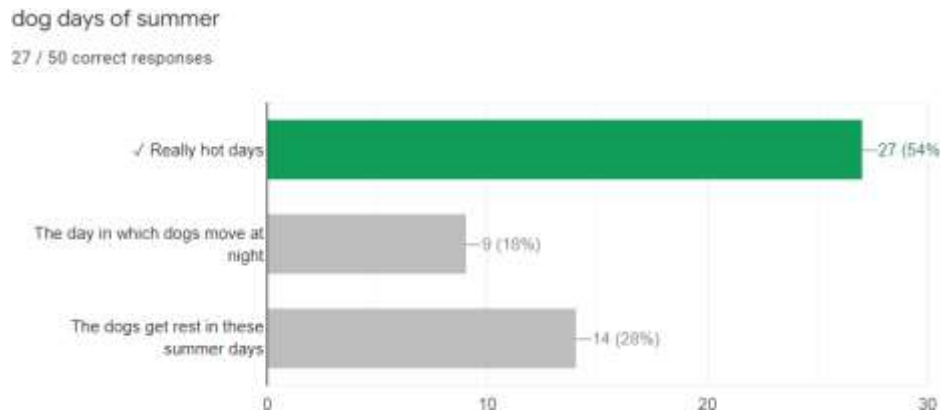


Chart (4). Fourth Item Ratio

- 5. Again, the students fail to understand what is exactly meant by this animal idiomatic expression. The majority of the students go picking the wrong variables and the wrong implication. (20%) of the students think literally. (58%) of the students draw false implications. Only (22%) of them succeed in this item. See chart (5) below:

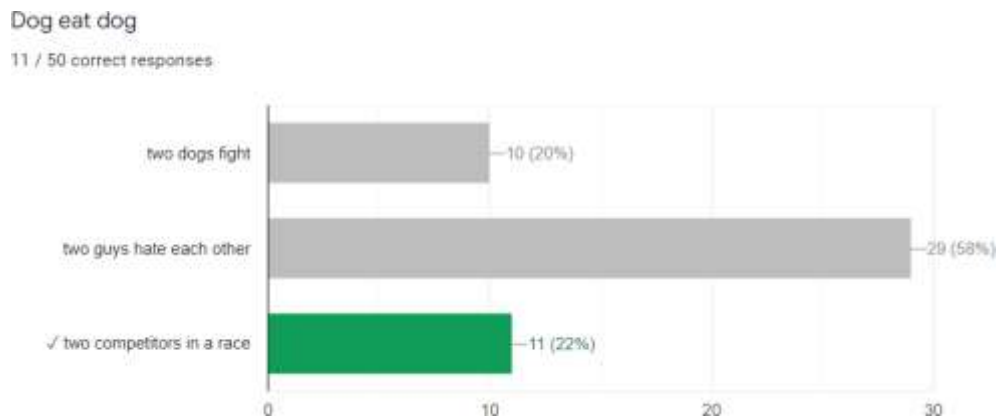


Chart (5). Fifth Item Ratio

- 6. (24%) of the students give literal answers and (14%) of them pick the wrong alternative. (62%) of the students correctly pick the answer. This is due to the fact the meaning of the animal idiomatic expression in this example or test comes to the expected implication, that is, being a fat cat refers to richness. The ratio is seen in chart (6) below:

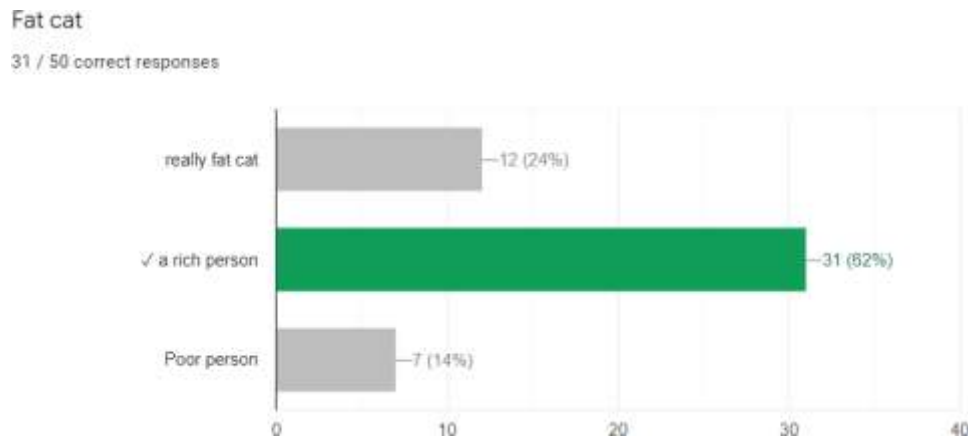


Chart (6). Sixth Item Ratio

- 7. The meaning of the animal idiomatic expression come to meet (40%) of students' awareness of the use of such an expression. (60%)

of the students believe that fish movement is tidy. See the percentages in chart (7) below:

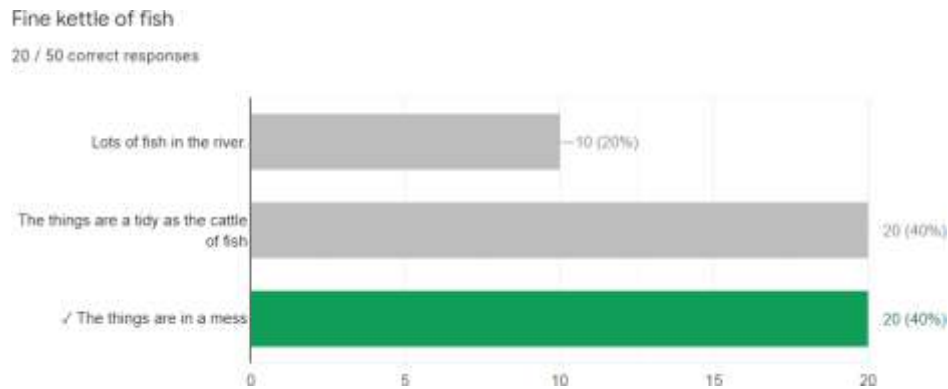


Chart (7). Seventh Item Ratio

8. Chart (8) shows that the students fail to get the correct answer at the percentage of (60%) that is to say more than half of the students in the first test fail to extract the correct choice. Look at chart (8) below:



Chart (8). Eighth Item Ratio

9. In item (9), the majority of the students get the correct choice. (68%) of the students choose the correct alternative. (32%) of the students fail to understand the meaning of this idiomatic expression as is noticed and seen in chart (9):

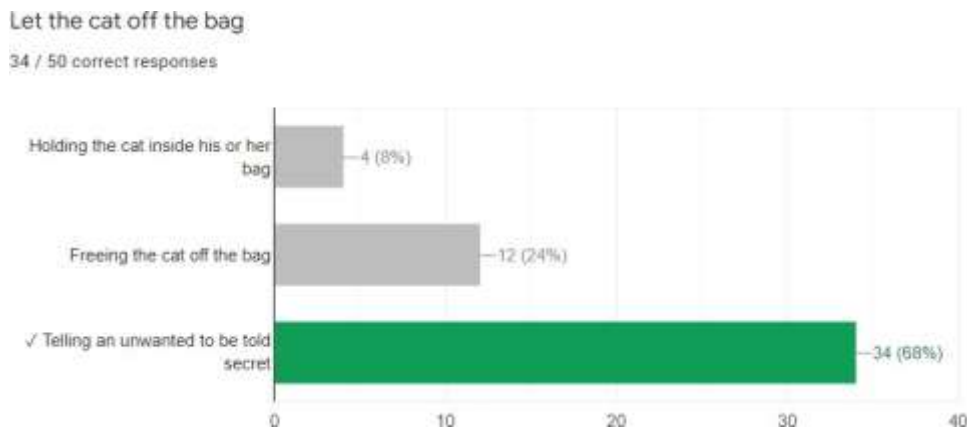


Chart (9). Ninth Item Ratio

10. Item (10) shows that more than half of the students have chosen the correct answer. See chart (10):

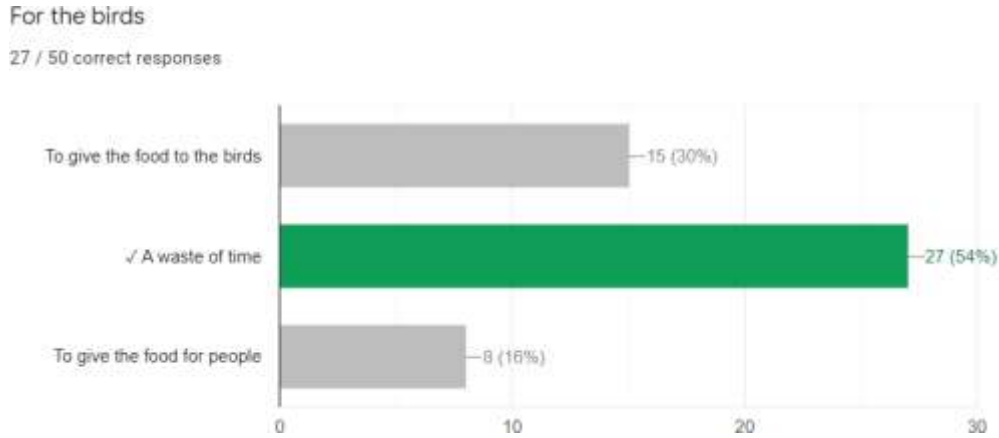


Chart (10). Tenth Item Ratio

By this, the students then are said to be weak to give good answers and pragmatically and semantically weak to understand the meaning of idiomatic expressions in general and animal idiomatic expressions in particular. So, the total average of the first becomes as chart (11) an table (1) below:

The total range and average of the pragmatic failure of these idiomatic expressions are: Table (1) The Total Ratio of the First Test

No. items	Animal Idiomatic Expression	Ratio of Success		Ratio of Failure	
		Ratio	Students	Ratio	Students
1	An albatross around the neck	18%	9	82%	41
2	As crow flies	44%	22	56 %	28
3	Bats in one's belfry	28%	14	72%	36
4	Dog days of summer	54%	27	46%	23
5	Dog eat dog	22%	11	78%	39
6	Fat cat	62%	31	38%	19
7	Kettle of fish	40%	20	60%	30
8	Something fishy	40%	20	60%	30
9	Let the cat out of the bag	68%	34	32%	16
10	For the birds	54%	27	46%	23
		43%	21.5%	57%	28.5%



Chart (11). Total Average of Answers of the First Test

6.2 Second Test Analysis

The second test analysis includes ten animal idiomatic expression (the same items examined in the first test). Five of these items are systematized to examine the students' pragma-linguistic understanding of speech act verbs. The other five items are equipped and made up to the test to measure the students' awareness of the socio-cultural and socio-pragmatic development. The first item show the following:

- a. Directive speech acts: most of the students fail to distinguish the accurate speech acts, where directive is really meant in the context

of the items in the test. The ratio of the failure of this category shows that the failure made by the students whose total number is (126) students in deciding the directives in the (second test- first item) is 68.3%, where the correct speech acts that they should be giving is directive. Only (31.7%) of the (126) students are fortunately correct in their answers. Their accomplishments whether right or wrong the directives are showed in table (2) below:

Table 2. Directive Speech Acts Failure in the Second Test

N.	Animal Idiomatic Expressions	Directives	
		Success	Failure
1	An albatross around the neck	31.7%	68.3%
2	As crow flies	38.1%	61.9%
3	Bats in one's belfry	-	6.3%
4	Dog days of summer	-	14.3%
5	Dog eat dog	14.3%	85.7%
	Total	28%	47.3%

As seen in table (2) above, students' success ratio is present where the directive made in the test is the intended to mean. (-) in the table is put due to the fact that the item (for example item (3) in table (2) above is really not a directive speech act).

- b. Expressive speech acts: again the students pragmatically fail to notice the pragmatic force of the speech acts given on the expressives. To sum up, the table below shows the result.

Table 3. Expressive Speech Acts Failure in the Second Test

N.	Animal Idiomatic Expressions	Expressives	
		Success	Failure
1	An albatross around the neck	-	19.8%
2	As crow flies	-	27.8%
3	Bats in one's belfry	38.1%	61.1%
4	Dog days of summer	23%	76.2%
5	Dog eat dog	-	25.4%
	Total	30.5%	42.6%

- c. Representative speech acts: the majority of students show that they are not aware of representative speech acts. (20.3%) of the total number which is (126) of students fail, picking this speech acts which is not meant to be intended in the test. See table (4) below:

Table 4. Representative Speech Acts Failure in the Second Test

N.	Animal Idiomatic Expressions	Representative	
		Success	Failure
1	An albatross around the neck	-	24.6%
2	As crow flies	-	13.5%
3	Bats in one's belfry	-	19.8%
4	Dog days of summer	-	19%
5	Dog eat dog	-	24.6%
	Total	0%	20.3%

- d. Declarations speech acts: Again, the same as with representative speech acts, students pragmatically fail to appeal to the appropriate pragmatic forces used and meant in the items, see table (5):

Table 5. Declarations Speech Acts Failure in the Second Test

N.	Animal Idiomatic Expressions	Declarations	
		Success	Failure
1	An albatross around the neck	-	10.3%
2	As crow flies	-	11.9%
3	Bats in one's belfry	-	16.7%
4	Dog days of summer	-	16.7%
5	Dog eat dog	-	23%
	Total	0%	15.7%

- e. Commissives speech acts: the problem with the students is that they do not distinguish between this and that speech act. They are told and taught, but they keep mixing between the kinds of speech acts. So, they surely fail to pick the exact pragmatic force of the speech acts given and intended by these animal idiomatic expressions because these idiomatic expressions have sort of indirectness. They look something and in their specific contexts they mean something totally different. Table (6) shows that (16%) out of the (126) students pick the commissive speech acts where they were not meant to carry or convey commissives in the test.

Table 6. Commissives Speech Acts Failure in the Second Test

N.	Animal Idiomatic Expressions	Commissives	
		Success	Failure
1	An albatross around the neck	-	13.5%
2	As crow flies	-	8.7%
3	Bats in one's belfry	-	19%
4	Dog days of summer	-	26.2%
5	Dog eat dog	-	12.7
	Total	0%	16 %

The other part of test two appeals to the students awareness of culture and politeness. The students' failure in the second part of second test becomes promising. Table (7) below shows that there is a slight improvement in their understanding of these animal idiomatic expressions, it is believed that the society of Arabic Iraqi learners resort to be polite and this issue stems from the fact that Arabic culture is polite in the language whose members use.

Table 7. (Im)politeness Failure in the Second Test

N.	Animal Idiomatic Expressions	(Im)politeness	
		Success	Failure
1	Fat cat	61.1%	38.9%
2	Kettle of fish	60.3%	39.7%
3	Something fishy	41.3%	58.7%
4	Let the cat out of the bag	31%	69%
5	For the birds	69%	31%
	Total	53.6%	47.4%

The ratio of the average of the second test is showed in chart (12) below:



Chart (12). Total Average of Answers of the First Test

Idiomatic expressions are difficult to handle since their meaning relies on the context as well as some cultural variations. Animal idiomatic expressions, too, they are required to be studied and noticed. Foreign learners are really required to be taught such constructions and must know the speech acts that these animal idiomatic expressions may convey. They also need to use them appropriately in their suitable contexts.

7. Discussion

This study was conducted to investigate pragmatic failure strategies among Iraqi undergraduate EFL learners in online asynchronous test with reference to animal idiomatic expressions. The present study supports the most general conclusions reached in prior studies of animal idioms in different situational contexts, namely that animal idiomatic expressions which show the weakness of Iraqi students in making and understanding animal idiomatic expressions. Therefore, it can be stated that such conclusions could be extended to themore plausible solutions to the problems of students' development with reference to their pragmatic competence. However, the study finds that Iraqi undergraduate students mostly cannot construe the implied indirect speech acts and implicatures. Moreover, they too, as shown in the results, are not quite aware of the uses of the ironical idiomatic expressions. The first test sketches EFL learners' ability in idiomatic expression, and shows that they are not aware of the linguistic uses of these idioms. So, the first test reflects their pragmalinguistic failure. The second test is an attempt to provoke the learners' sociopragmatic failure. The results show that the learners' unawareness in mastering the sociocultural perspective of animal idiomatic expression. Only a small number as the result reveals, could execute some of the items of the test pragmatically correct.

8. Conclusions

Built on the analysis of the above, the study arrives at the following conclusions:

1. Animal idiomatic expressions cause a huge amount of failure in the first test, this is due to the fact that the learners do not know and are not aware of the context that these expressions are used in.
2. In the first test (21.5 %) of students fail to give the pragmatic meaning of the idiomatic expression and to fail to choose the correct choice among the alternatives, this is due to the fact that they thing semantically, only very little number of students has been successful because they think of the idiomatic expressions pragmatically.
3. The metonymic animal idiomatic expression namely (bats in one's belfry) causes (72%) of the pragmatic failure of the students in the item that contains this metonymic expression.
4. It is advisable that teachers of English language at university level give students charts of idiomatic expressions and inform them about the possible uses of how to use these idiomatic expressions, in general, and animal idiomatic expressions, in particular in their appropriate contexts.
5. Lack of communicative and pragmatic competence is a major factor to pragmatic failure of EFL Iraqi learners in performing, the speech-acts, implicatures, metaphorical and ironical meanings that these animal idiomatic expressions hold. More than (57%) of students pragmatically fail to respond about the meanings of these animal idiomatic expressions.
6. Using particularly the animal idiomatic expressions ironically, without letting the learners know that these expressions are made so (ironical) cause a huge gap between the pragmatic meaning they have and the intended meaning it has while used ironically.
7. The indirectness of animal idiomatic expressions causes again pragmatic failure in the responses of the EFL Iraqi learners in that they are not sure and are not able to decide which speech act is intended. Aboutthis, nearly (68.3%) out of 50 examining students pragmatically fail to answer the tests that examinetheir awareness of the speech acts carried by these animal idiomatic expressions as far as directives are concerned. So, indirectness contained in animal idiomatic expressions makes major pragmatic failure of most of learners. See table (2) above.
8. The ratio of failure will slightly decrease after explicating and clarifying the context especially about cultural and pragmatic issues. After explaining the context, students improve in giving the correct answers as is shown in the second test part two. That is, the context is one important factor for reducing the amount of pragmatic failure in foreign learners' language.
9. Students, when they do not know the meaning of these animal idiomatic expressions, tend to resort to semantic descriptions to figure out the meaning of these expressions.
10. Only a little number of the EFL Iraqi learners could develop their competence, noticeably in the second test after they got acquainted to the context in which the idioms are used.

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