

**Indirect Speech Acts in Graduation Research Discussions among
Fourth-Year University Students
A Revised Pragmatic Analysis Integrating Mitigation Theory**

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الأفعال الكلامية غير المباشرة في مناقشات بحوث التخرج لدى طلبة المرحلة الرابعة
(بحث مستل) تحليل تداولي يدمج نظرية التخفيف

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Abstract

This revised study analyses indirect speech acts in the graduation-research talks of the fourth-year students and improves the analysis by adding insights from the master's thesis of Aya Sarmad Fathi Al-Sheikh on mitigation in Iraqi postgraduate student-student interaction. Drawing on speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975, 1976), Fraser's (1980, 2010) account of mitigation and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, the paper argues that indirectness in undergraduate research discussions is not simply a stylistic choice but a functional strategy to manage evaluation, save face and maintain collaboration in a high-stakes academic environment. The new study indicates the centrality of indirect requests, clarification moves, provisional evaluations and suggestion forms in the structure of graduation research conversation. These acts are often realised through modal verbs, interrogative forms, introduction phrases and conditional structures that attenuate the illocutionary impact of commands and judgements. Comparative insights by Al-Sheikh (2022) contribute to the explanation of why, in Iraqi academic discourse, indirect speech acts are best understood as part of a larger repertory of mitigation, particularly when speakers are expected to negotiate epistemic caution, solidarity with peers, and respect for the responsibilities of academic actors. The study suggests that pragmatic training in Iraqi higher education should emphasise the explicit treatment of indirectness, mitigation, and audience awareness in the research supervision and presentation courses.

Keywords: indirect speech acts, mitigation, politeness, Iraqi EFL, graduation research discussions, academic discourse

المستخلص

تناول هذا البحث تحليل الأفعال الكلامية غير المباشرة في مناقشات بحوث التخرج لدى طلبة المرحلة الرابعة، ويطور هذا التحليل بالإفادة من أطروحة الماجستير لأية سرمد فتحي الشيخ حول استراتيجيات التخفيف في التفاعل بين طلبة الدراسات العليا العراقيين. ويستند البحث إلى نظرية أفعال الكلام عند أوستن (١٩٦٢) وسيرل (١٩٧٥، ١٩٧٦)، وإلى مفهوم التخفيف عند فريزر (١٩٨٠، ٢٠١٠)، وإلى نظرية التأدب عند براون وليفنسون (١٩٨٧). وينطلق من أن عدم المباشرة في مناقشات البحوث الجامعية لا يُعد مجرد خيار أسلوب، بل يمثل استراتيجية تداولية وظيفية تُسهم في إدارة التقييم، وحفظ الوجه، والحفاظ على التعاون داخل سياق أكاديمي يتسم بحساسية عالية.

وتكشف نتائج الدراسة عن مركزية الطلبات غير المباشرة، وطلبات الاستيضاح، والتقييمات المتحفظ، وصيغ الاقتراح في بنية الحوار الخاص بمناقشات بحوث التخرج. كما تبين أن هذه الأفعال تتحقق لغوياً عبر الأفعال المساعدة، والصيغ الاستفهامية، والعبارات التمهيدية، والتراكيب الشرطية، بما يخفف من القوة الإنجازية للتوجيهات والأحكام التقييمية. كذلك تسهم الإفادات المقارنة المستمدة من دراسة الشيخ (٢٠٢٢) في توضيح أن الأفعال الكلامية غير المباشرة في الخطاب الأكاديمي العراقي يمكن فهمها على نحو أدق بوصفها جزءاً من منظومة أوسع من التخفيف، ولا سيما حين يسعى المتحدثون إلى تحقيق التوازن بين الحذر المعرفي، والتضامن مع الآخرين، واحترام الأدوار الأكاديمية.

وتلخص الدراسة إلى أن تعليم التداولية في مؤسسات التعليم العالي العراقية ينبغي أن يولي اهتماماً صريحاً لتعليم عدم المباشرة، والتخفيف، والوعي بالمخاطب في مقررات الإشراف والبحوث العلمي والعرض الأكاديمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الأفعال الكلامية غير المباشرة، التخفيف، التأدب، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق، مناقشات بحوث التخرج، الخطاب الأكاديمي.

1. Introduction

Indirect speech acts are a central topic of pragmatic research because they show how speakers accomplish more than the literal structure of an utterance seems to convey. In Speech Act Theory, the meaning of a speech cannot be reduced to propositional content alone, but must be interpreted in terms of speaker intention, hearer interpretation and social consequences of stating something in a specific way (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975, 1976). This is especially crucial in academic institutions, as speakers are constantly called upon to question, advise, criticise, clarify, and evaluate, all while retaining collegiality and deference. The interactional strain is considerably larger for fourth-year students discussing their graduation study, who must demonstrate subject knowledge, respond to criticism and negotiate feedback in front of their peers and teachers, often in English as a foreign language.

The original work on which this revised version is based filled an important gap in focusing on indirect speech acts in the graduation research talks of fourth-year students. That concentration is still very much there. However, in conjunction with Al-Sheikh's (2022) study of mitigation in Iraqi postgraduate student-student interaction, the paper has a firmer theoretical and analytical grounding. However, Al-Sheikh investigated another demographic and setting, but her research is significant because it reveals that indirectness in Iraqi academic conversation is one of the elements of a bigger mitigation system through which speakers limit imposition, protect face, show uncertainty, and keep solidarity. This insight permits the present research to transcend beyond a simple cataloguing of indirect acts, and to offer a richer account of how indirectness functions in spoken academic conversation.

This revised paper suggests that indirect speech acts in undergraduate graduation-research conversations should be viewed as interactional resources for students to negotiate the conflicting pressures of academic seriousness and interpersonal sensitivity. The paper therefore raises three related questions: What sorts of indirect speech acts are salient in fourth-year students' graduation research discussions? What kind of language forms does this act assume? What intellectual and interpersonal tasks do these forms perform, and how, in the interactional context of the graduation research talk?

1.1 Research Problem

The problem of research is attributed to the neglect of spontaneous graduation research talks in studies of Iraqi university speech. Fourth-year students are expected to debate, defend and adapt their findings to classmates and professors, but little is known about their use of indirect speech actions for managing disagreement, asking for explanation, providing ideas and maintaining interpersonal ties. This gap calls for exploring the phenomenon of indirectness as a structural property of language and a pragmatic resource in undergraduate academic interaction.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is its contribution to pragmatic research on Iraqi academic discourse, particularly within an underexplored area at the undergraduate level.. The study associates indirectness with mitigation and civility, therefore providing a stronger theoretical explanation of how students deal with requests, evaluations, clarifications and suggestions in graduation research talks. It is also useful pedagogically, as it

might contribute to teaching academic communication, debate skills and pragmatic competence in Iraqi institutions.

1.3 Aims of the Study

The study is intended to:

1. Analyse the use of indirect speech acts in the debates of graduation research among fourth-year university students.
2. Identify their main linguistic realisations.
3. Explain their interactional and pragmatic functions in academic discourse.

1.4 Limits of the Study

The present study is limited to indirect speech acts in oral graduation research talks of fourth year university students in the English department in the College of Arts/Al-Iraqia University for 2025/2026 in Iraqi academic environments. It is concerned with verbal contact in English and accounts for the data using speech act theory, the theory of mitigation, and the idea of politeness. Written language, non-verbal communication, and all possible institutional contexts are not included in the study; thus, the conclusions are limited to the extent of the particular academic encounter investigated.

1.5 Definition of Terms

- **Indirect speech acts** are statements where the intended illocutionary force is delivered indirectly and not by a direct grammatical form.
- **Mitigation** is the use of pragmatic methods and strategies to minimise the force, risk, or interpersonal impact of a speech.

- **Graduation research discussions** are oral academic dialogues in which fourth-year students discuss, present, clarify, evaluate or revise aspects of their graduation research projects.
- **Politeness** is the set of linguistic and interactional methods employed by the speakers to protect face, minimise imposition, and maintain rapport among the participants.
- **Pragmatic competence** is a capacity to utilise language in a context appropriate way in regard to purpose and interpersonal relations.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Speech Act Theory and Indirectness

On the other hand utterances are both an action and a statement. According to Austin (1962), he distinguished between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary characteristics. Searle (1976) classified five main categories of illocutionary acts: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This is a useful idea in academic conversation as it allows us to discern what speakers do when they ask for explanations, evaluate, hedge statements or provide suggestions. Searle (1975) demonstrated that a speaker can do one act by means of another; for example, a question can be a request, or a statement can be advise. This is the stuff at the heart of indirect speaking acts.

Academic speech is often indirect, both in terms of content and on an interpersonal level. For example, when a student asks, “Can you explain this again?” the question is not just a request for clarification but also a sign of respect, prudence and receptivity. Similarly the comment ‘this part could do with more support’ softens what could be seen as a harsh comment. Thus indirectness

is a resource for managing the engagement of the academy, especially where participants are unequal in skill, lack confidence in their language or are very concerned about public appraisal.

Recent pragmatic work has considered indirect speech acts as inferential phenomena that are context-dependent rather than as simple mismatches between sentential form and communicative function. Boux et al. (2023) demonstrate that indirect answers tend to be less certain, less predictable and less semantically related to the preceding question than direct answers. This is important for the present study as it confirms that indirectness in academic talk is dependent on shared context, pragmatic inference and the ability of the speaker to guide interpretation without excessive directness. Similarly, Ruytenbeek (2021) emphasises the importance of analysing indirect speech acts at the interface between semantics, pragmatics, discourse and interaction, especially in cases where speakers negotiate the tension between clarity and politeness/social appropriateness.

2.2 Mitigation, Politeness, and Academic Interaction

Mitigation, Fraser (1980) says, is a pragmatic device for softening the unwanted effect or strength of a statement. Fraser (2010) then provided a detailed account of hedging and mitigation, especially relevant for spoken academic discourse. Instead of treating indirectness as a single event, an approach to mitigation shows speakers using a range of lexical and syntactic methods to make their talk less certain, less authoritative and more negotiable. Holmes (1984) also shows how speakers hedge the illocutionary force using different forms that soften the demands, requests and judgements. Caffi (1999, 2007) develops this concept further by showing that mitigation enables speakers

to manage risk, uncertainty, responsibility and interpersonal exposure.

Brown and Levinson (1987) politeness theory provides another point of view on the role of indirectness in academic conversation. Speakers are constantly negotiating between opposite wants: the desire to avoid imposition and the demand for respect and acceptance. Academic talk is full with possible face threatening moves such as dissent, correction, calls for justification and evaluative comments. Indirect speaking acts soften the severity of these acts and hence work as techniques of politeness. The speaker is not only being vague, but also negotiating the interpersonal effects of speaking in a public and judgemental setting.

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) are relevant since they showed that usually indirect forms like interrogative questions and other standardised patterns are basic to courteous conversation. These methods are particularly useful in graduation research discussions as they enable students to pose questions, raise challenges or provide comments without appearing confrontational. Indirect speech acts should not be viewed as capricious deviations from directness but as deliberate and socially meaningful judgements.

These frameworks are particularly relevant in spoken academic discourse where speakers are under institutional pressure to evaluate ideas, ask for clarification and negotiate disagreement. Modal verbs, hedges, interrogative formulations, introductory phrases and conditional structures are not only used to mitigate the force of assertions but also to perform epistemic and interpersonal functions, signalling caution, respect and willingness to revise. Thus, indirectness in the talk on graduation

research must be viewed as a dual linguistic and interactional resource through which students succeed to maintain scholarly seriousness while safeguarding rapport with peers, instructors and evaluators.

Despite the importance of these studies, there is a lack of discussions about undergraduate graduation research as a separate type of discourse in Iraqi universities. Most of the previous work has been on general speech act theory, postgraduate interaction or institutional communication in other settings. Therefore, this study adds to the literature by investigating the use of indirect speech acts in the talk of fourth-year students' about graduation research in a local academic setting characterised by evaluation, collaboration and face management.

Research in Arab and Iraqi EFL contexts also indicates the importance of pragmatic competence in academic interaction. Abdulateef and Abd Ali (2023) found that the awareness of speech acts, politeness, and Gricean maxims among Iraqi EFL postgraduate students is of great significance in interpreting and producing contextually appropriate utterances. Elasfar and Mustafa (2023) examined apology and request strategies used by Arab postgraduates supervised by Malaysians and found that academic communication is founded on polite, face-sensitive and pragmatically well-chosen speech acts. Collectively, these studies suggest that successful interaction in academic settings requires more than grammatical accuracy and includes learners' control of indirectness, politeness, and contextual appropriateness.

Previous studies of indirect speech acts have shifted from classical theoretical description to contextual and cognitive

explanation. Indirect replies are less certain, less predictable and semantically less similar to the immediately preceding question than direct replies (Boux et al., 2023)

. Their findings confirm that indirectness is a context-sensitive pragmatic phenomenon that depends on inferential processing rather than literal decoding alone. This perspective is highly relevant to the present study because graduation research discussions require students to formulate responses that are interpretable, tactful, and interactionally appropriate in evaluative settings.

2.3 Previous Studies

2.4 Al-Sheikh's (2022) Study and Its Relevance to the Present Study

Al-Sheikh's (2022) master's thesis is a significant comparison basis for the current work since it studies naturally occurring spoken interaction of Iraqi students in an academic environment. Al-Sheikh collaborates with Iraqi postgraduate students in Malaysia and use Fraser's (2010) taxonomy and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model to demonstrate mitigation at the lexical and syntactic levels. The results show that there are 582 mitigation, 72% of which are lexical devices and 28% are syntactic devices. Most notably for the current study, indirect speech acts are the most common syntactic mitigator, including 37% of all syntactic instances (Al-Sheikh, 2022).

This is significant in that it shows that indirect speech acts are not marginal in Iraqi academic interaction, but rather are a favoured structural form of attenuation when speakers need to manage collaboration, give opinions or make a request of others. Al-

Sheikh (2022) goes on to observe that epistemic care, avoiding imposition, removing what she terms the expert impact and maintaining rapport are achieved by using modal verbs, modal adverbs, metalinguistic comments, conditional clauses and introduction phrases. Indirectness is, in other words, part and parcel of the greater process of mitigation. That perspective helps to explain why undergraduate speakers so often use hesitant, modalized, interrogative expressions in clarifying, evaluating, and recommending in fourth-year graduation-research conversations.

The present investigation does not reduce the two contexts to one at the same time. Undergraduate graduation-research talks are different from postgraduate peer contact with respect to institutional pressure, expertise and relationship to formal assessment. Al-Sheikh's (2022) argument, however, builds a convincing interpretative bridge: mitigation and indirectness seem to be crucial resources for maintaining cooperation in Iraqi academic environments while not losing sight of the academic aim.

3. Methodology

The results of this study were reinterpreted using a comprehensive pragmatic approach, with the original study targeting graduation-research talks among fourth-year students. The information is treated as normal academic conversations around undergraduate graduation study. These conversations typically involve presenting a project, defending methodological or interpretive decisions, responding to questions, and working through comments from instructors and coworkers. These

encounters are particularly ideal for the study of indirectness since they are evaluative and public.

The study takes an analytical approach to three views. Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975, 1976) is used to evaluate the illocutionary force of the utterances analysed, namely requests, questions, recommendations, clarifications and evaluative acts. Fraser's (1980, 2010) model of mitigation describes the linguistic devices used to attenuate these activities, including modal verbs, interrogatives, introductory phrases, and conditional constructions. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is used to analyse the interpersonal work of such remarks, notably in terms of face protection, deference, solidarity, and avoidance of unwanted imposition.

The redesigned study adds comparative interpretation as an extra methodology. In this study, indirect speech acts are discussed not in isolation but as a part of the wider mitigating framework of Iraqi academic discourse, and are analysed based on Al-Sheikh (2022). The purpose of this comparative approach is not to displace the undergraduate focus of the study but to help understand the causes of indirectness, the forms of indirectness and the function of indirectness in helping speakers manage the academic and social pressures of graduation research discourse.

3.1 Participants and Sample Design

The sample consists of (40) fourth-year undergraduate students (20 males and 20 females) in the Department of English / College of Arts / Al-Iraqia University for the academic year 2025/2026. The participants were randomly picked among the graduation research discussion participants. The interactional environment was given by 10 academics (instructors and professors) who acted as evaluators or supervisors in the conversations.

3.2 Data Collection and Corpus Description

The present study re-examines the findings using a holistic pragmatic paradigm, whereas the original research concentrated on graduation research discussions among fourth-year students. The content is deemed as naturally existing academic discourse on undergraduate graduation research. These discussions usually involve presenting a project, justifying methodological or interpretative choices, answering questions and managing feedback from teachers and colleagues. These encounters are particularly ideal for the study of indirectness since they are evaluative and public.

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4. Data Analysis

4.1 Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. First, the 300 instances of indirect speech acts were classified according to pragmatic category, linguistic realization, and interactional function. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for each category, and chi-square tests were used to determine whether the observed distributions were statistically significant. The qualitative stage then interpreted these patterns through Speech Act Theory, Mitigation Theory, and Politeness Theory in order to explain how indirectness operates in spoken graduation research discussions.

4.2 Findings

Reanalysis revealed that indirect speech acts are a salient and functional feature of the graduation research presentations of the 4th-year students. They become especially apparent when people seek clarification, request elaboration, offer advice, moderate

criticism, or judge a topic with a certain degree of indirectness. Here, indirectness has a pragmatic function, engaging the student while taking account of the complexities of academic assessment, peer review and institutional hierarchy.

The analysis presented here indicates the most significant indirect speech acts, in particular those related to requests and clarifications. Students often use syntactically interrogative but pragmatically urgent formulations to compensate for gaps of knowledge, methodological uncertainties or textual changes. These techniques allow students to find out, ask for clarification or put forward corrections without directly criticising the competence of the presenter. A similar pattern is found with evaluative comments and recommendations, which are usually expressed in such a way that the recipient can accept, negotiate or reject them.

4.2.1 Utilization of Indirect Speech Acts (Aim 1)

The main purpose is to investigate the employment of indirect speech acts in the research arguments for graduation. The data were categorised into four major pragmatic functions: indirect requests, clarification moves, provisional evaluations and recommendation forms.

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Indirect Requests	105	35.0%
Clarification Moves	85	28.3%
Tentative Evaluations	65	21.7%
Suggestion Forms	45	15.0%
Total	300	100%

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Indirect Speech Acts by Pragmatic Category

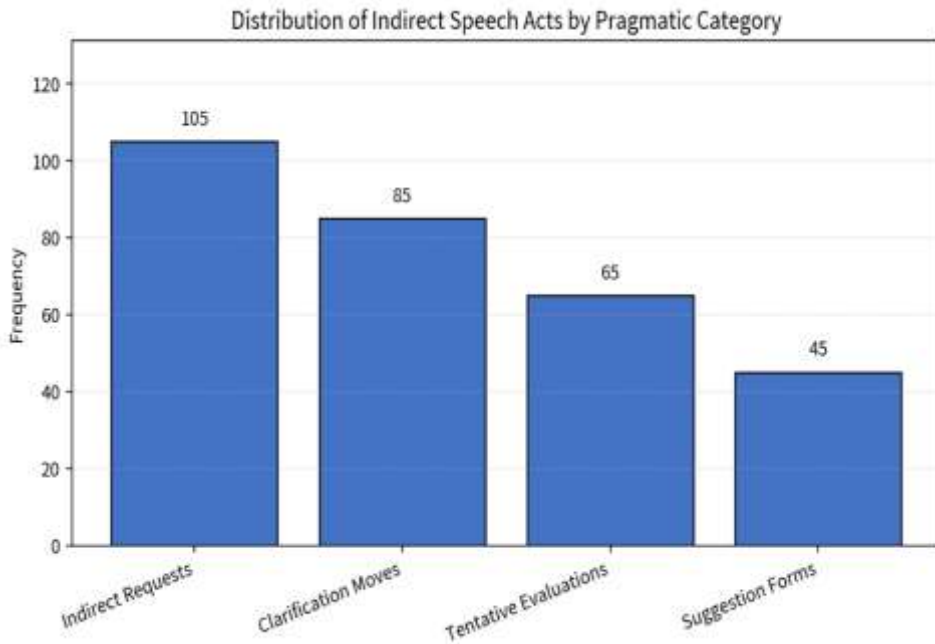


Figure 1. Visual representation of the frequency of indirect speech acts by pragmatic category.

A Chi-square goodness-of-fit test revealed a significant difference in utilization frequencies among the four categories ($\chi^2 = 30.67$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.001$). The results indicate that students predominantly rely on indirect requests and clarification moves to navigate discussions.

4.2.2 Linguistic Realizations of Indirectness (Aim 2)

The analysis presented here shows that there are several linguistic strategies used to express indirect speech acts. Modal verbs, interrogative structures, introductory phrases, and conditional constructions often support these acts. Modal expressions such as “could”, “would”, “might”, “I think”, “I believe”, “if we consider” lower the speaker’s stake, and tone down the force of commands or judgements. These patterns are very similar to the

mitigation strategies found by Al-Sheikh (2022) in his postgraduate corpus where modal verbs were the most important lexical mitigators and indirect speech aThe difference can be analytically significant. Modal verbs are the main lexical means of mitigation, and the main syntactic means are indirect speech acts. Consequently, many undergraduate conversational strategies can be seen as layered structures rather than isolated acts. For example, the question “Could this section be clarified?” acts as a request and a politeness strategy, but also as an epistemic hedge. Saying something like, 'I think' or 'I believe', makes the statement an opinion rather than a factual correction. Conditional clauses turn assertions from absolute claims to hypothetical reasoning, and thus diminish the culpability of the speaker, and increase the interpretative freedom of the hearer. the hearer’s freedom of interpretation.

Findings on Key Linguistic Realizations

The syntactic structures of the 300 indirect speech acts were analysed in order to identify the key linguistic realisations. The main linguistic forms identified were modal verbs, interrogative forms, introductory phrases (e.g. “I was wondering if...”) and conditional structures.

Linguistic Form	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Modal Verbs (e.g., could, would, might)	120	40.0%
Interrogative Forms	90	30.0%
Introductory Phrases	50	16.7%
Conditional Structures (e.g., if you look at...)	40	13.3%
Total	300	100%

Table 2: Linguistic Realizations of Indirect Speech Acts

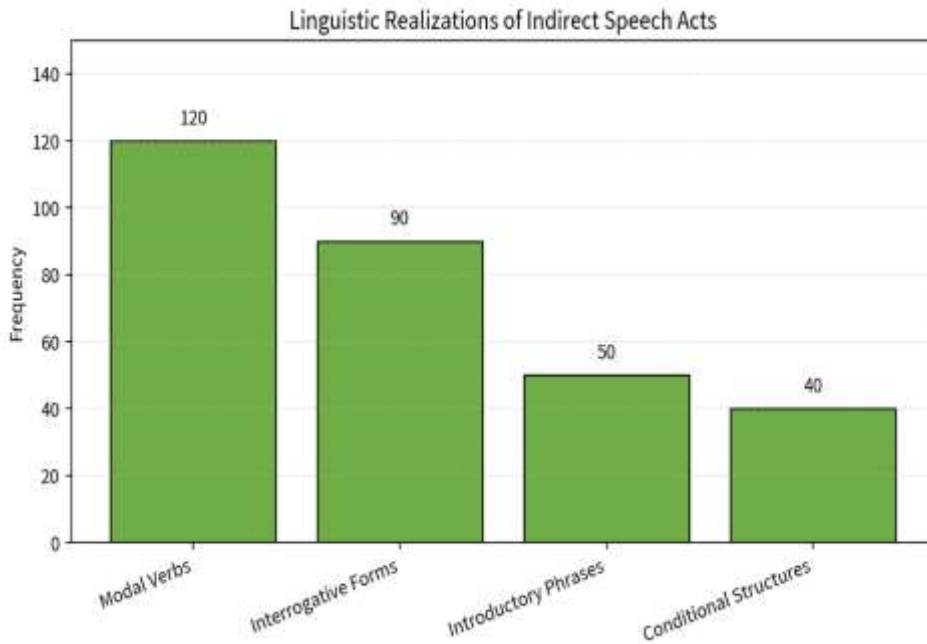


Figure 2. Visual representation of the linguistic realizations of indirect speech acts.

The most prevalent linguistic approach (40% of the occurrences) was the use of modal verbs as an important element in modulating the illocutionary force of assertions and commands. The best technique to determine the linguistic trait of indirectness in graduate student talk is to limit the academic discourse.. Students not only avoid making direct criticisms, but they build carefully calculated statements that make it possible to participate in intellectual discourse without being aggressive. This is exactly where the explanatory power of the original paper is strengthened by the inclusion of mitigation theory.

4.2.3 Interactional Functions of Indirect Speech Acts (Aim 3)

In the current setting, indirect speech acts are employed to accomplish at least four basic interactional functions. First they relieve them of the burden. Questions that seek explanation,

change, or elaboration can often sound intrusive in public conversation, particularly when directed at a colleague whose work is under review. Indirectness reduces the stress of the request and makes the request appear more collaborative than combative. This function is congruent with Fraser's (1980) notion of mitigation and with Brown and Levinson's (1987) account of negative politeness.

Second, indirect speaking acts are face-saving. Conversations over graduation research typically involve bouts of embarrassment, disagreement and public correction. Through the use of modalization, inquiry and tentativeness, speakers can express concerns without threatening the positive face of the presenter, or their own public face. In her postgraduate research, Al-Sheikh (2022) states that mitigated forms are helpful for speakers to avoid conflict, protect themselves from over-commitment and promote constructive conversation.

Thirdly, indirectness fosters cohesion and friendship. Academic discourses are not just about information transmission but also about maintaining a fruitful interaction between the participants. As Caffi (1999, 2007) points out, mitigation is often used to manage the risk to relationships, as is the case in the discourse surrounding undergraduate graduation studies. When students moderate ideas or criticism, they teach collaboration, not dominance. This is particularly important in academic environments that are peer-oriented, because speakers are expected to maintain collegial relationships that persist beyond the present exchange.

Fourth, indirect speech acts convey epistemic caution. Students engaged in research conversations may be faced with information that is unclear or evidence that is insufficient or interpretations

that are developed. The indirect and qualified approach allows the speaker to give an opinion and to recognise that it might be revised. This function is crucial to academic discourse, since research is fundamentally about provisionality, openness to feedback and rational discussion. The indirectness in this situation does not impair academic thinking but often adds to its scholarly importance.

Findings on Interactional and Pragmatic Functions

The third aim explored the functions of these acts within the academic discourse. The functions were mapped to politeness and mitigation strategies: managing evaluation (softening criticism), preserving face (avoiding confrontation), and sustaining collaboration (encouraging peer input).

Pragmatic Function	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Preserving Face	135	45.0%
Managing Evaluation	100	33.3%
Sustaining Collaboration	65	21.7%
Total	300	100%

Table 3: Interactional and Pragmatic Functions of Indirect Speech Acts

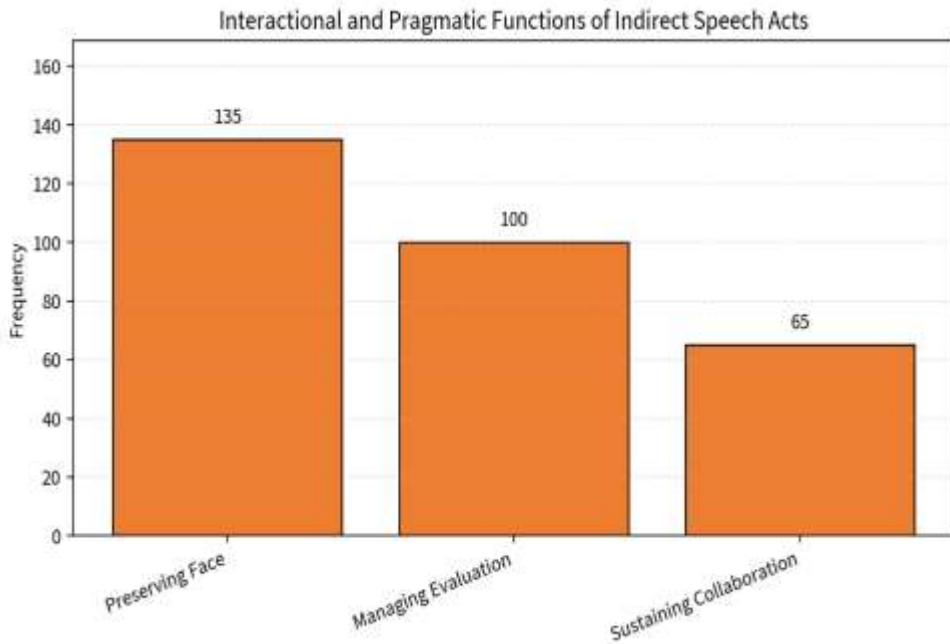


Figure 3. Visual representation of the interactional and pragmatic functions of indirect speech acts.

We performed a chi-square test of independence to investigate the relationship between linguistic realisations and pragmatic functions. The results demonstrated a significant correlation ($\chi^2 = 42.15$, $df=6$, $p < 0.001$). For example, modal verbs were disproportionately employed for face saving , interrogative forms were substantially connected with sustaining collaboration .

4.3 Comparative Discussion of Findings

The present paper, in adopting Al-Sheikh's (2022) theory, helps to alleviate a deficiency interpretation of indirectness. Sometimes, in some EFL contexts, tentative or indirect language might be regarded as a sign of a lack of pragmatic control. Comparative research from Iraqi postgraduate encounters suggests the possibility that indirectness may be indicative of strategic aptitude. Graduation research talks by undergraduates

seem to follow a steady, overall reasoning. These indirect speech acts are not merely markers of avoidance or language deficiency but rather purposeful answers to the communicative demands of academic assessment.

The comparison shows the recurrence of certain categories. Al-Sheikh (2022) shows that modalization, metalinguistic commentary and structurally indirect statements are the main linguistic resources Iraqi academic speakers employ in the construction of a negotiable interactional space. Undergraduate speakers are involved in graduation research projects under identical conditions irrespective of institutional variances. They need to show expertise and be open to being corrected, interact and show respect to colleagues and assessors, evaluate without seeming too authoritarian. Indirect speech acts are useful in tackling these problems because they combine intellectual involvement with interpersonal sensitivity.

Thus, the new study confirms a claim of continuity that indirectness is best understood as a symptom of mitigation in Iraqi academic contexts. This does not eliminate contextual variance, such as possible differences by discipline, task or participant role. It provides a more persuasive explanation of the persistence of indirectness in spoken academic discourse.

5. Discussion

The modified study makes a basic contribution, descriptive and conceptual. It emphasises the importance of indirect speech acts in the discourse of fourth year students in the setting of graduate research sessions. The understanding of these tasks is increased when they are embedded in a framework that minimises the effect of the situation. The aim of this exercise is to relate the choice of

local speech acts to wider interactional matters of politeness, epistemic stance and relationship management.

According to the statistics, the academic discourse of undergraduate students is governed by the need to negotiate knowledge and vulnerability from the point of view of the pragmatics. The debate of the graduation research is the forum where the students are required to display their degree of competency and at the same time to ask for review. If you are honest you can do more. But it also could increase the chances that you'll offend, embarrass or appear to look down on someone. So, directness can be dangerous." The use of indirect speech acts minimises these hazards, rendering the requests, comments and assessments more palatable to the recipient. This increases the chances that the conversation continues.

The results of the statistical study indicate that indirect speech acts are not due to arbitrary stylistic choices, but to systematic pragmatic processes. By contrast, the prevalence of modal and interrogative verbs reflects the need to mitigate the number of face-threatening acts in high-stakes evaluative contexts. The statistics show that indirectness is a basic part of the mitigating repertoire in Iraqi academic discourse (Al-Sheikh, 2022).

Al-Sheikh's (2022) thesis suggests that the indirectness in the Iraqi academic speech should be considered a kind of social intelligence and not just formal indirectness. That would be a more satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon. Her work on post-graduate interaction explains why speakers select forms that attribute responsibility, reduce clarity and allow negotiation of ideas. Similar trends are seen in the data we have gathered from students in this study. Indirectness is not just a matter of

circumlocution. It is a type of academic language which can be analysed.

This viewpoint further highlights the educational value of this study. Indirectness as a strategic academic resource must be taught explicitly in research communication. Students have to learn the language and structure of presentation so that they are able to ask for clarifications, critical questions, suggestions and comments of assessment in a way that is academically sound and pragmatically acceptable. This instruction is particularly important for students of English as foreign language, they may have the right intuitions in Arabic but they need help to translate them correctly to the academic discourse in English.

6. Pedagogical Implications

The updated results have significant ramifications for Iraqi higher education especially for those departments that are involved in graduate researches in English.

Initial sessions on research methodology and presentation must include clear directions on indirect communication techniques, mitigation methods, and correct academic behaviour. Students' awareness of the real use of modalized questions, introduction statements and conditional suggestions is useful.

Secondly, supervisors and research faculty need to view pragmatic competence as a core feature of research training, not as an additional interpersonal skill. Rehearsal sessions for the graduation research presentations can be: asking for clarity, challenging assumptions constructively, reacting to criticism and diplomatically making ideas. These activities assist students to develop a more confident and contextually acceptable academic voice.

Third, educational materials should shift from isolated sentence patterns to chunks of speech which are either completely realistic or partially based on real interaction. The importance of Al-Sheikh's (2022) thesis is mostly based on the fact that it is based on natural communicative exchanges, a methodological approach that is compatible with the present study. Students are more prone to develop a robust pragmatic competence if they are exposed to indirectness in full interactional situations, not in decontextualised formulas.

7. Conclusion

The study of indirect speech acts in graduation research arguments of fourth year students has been reanalysed in this updated work. This was done by applying theoretical and analytical perspectives of Al-Sheikh (2022) thesis on mitigation in Iraqi postgraduate connections. This has resulted in a more solid understanding of indirectness as an interactional strategy and not only a formal classification. Indirect speech activities have a very important role in graduate studies because they give students with the opportunity to make requests, ask, propose, evaluate and negotiate at the same time they reduce the appearance of imposition, protect their face and maintain rapport.

The study revealed that in this situation indirectness is usually represented by modalization, interrogative framing, introductory phrases and general conditional constructions . The observation that indirect speech acts represent a considerable part of a wider pragmatic framework in Iraqi academic discourse is supported by the fact that these forms are strongly related to the rich mitigation repertoire identified by Al-Sheikh (2022). Future research could

extend this investigation to consider talks between undergraduates and postgraduates exclusively, to examine differences within disciplines in greater detail and to investigate the interaction of Arabic and English materials in bilingual academic institutions. But studies show that indirectness is an important factor in how pupils demonstrate academic competence in spoken engagement.

8. Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

First, we need to include direct instruction of indirect speech acts, mitigation and politeness strategies in the research methods, seminar and thesis courses so that students may learn how to ask questions, evaluate, make suggestions and disagree in academically proper ways.

Moreover, supervisors and course instructors are advised to provide guided practice using real discussion tasks, rehearsal sessions, peer evaluation activities, and sample dialogues that reflect true graduate research encounters in Iraqi institutions.

Third, future research could expand on this study by exploring differences among fields, gender demographics, universities, and types of interaction, including student-supervisor, student-examiner, and multilingual academic dialogues. It may be that future research may combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies to generate more holistic generalisations about indirectness in Iraqi academic discourse.

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