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**Title**

**Hedging as a Means to Develop Pragmatic Competence:**  
the case of first year master Linguistics students of English at KMUO

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## **Dedication**

*This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to*

*My beloved parents; who have been a source of moral, spiritual and emotional support,  
thank you to the moon and back,*

*All my brothers and sisters; particularly my dearest sister, Warda, who leads me with hope  
and support,*

*All my dearest family and relatives; namely Nacereddine, Imane and Fatima who stand by my  
side when things look bleak,*

*My sweet nephews; Mohammed, Maroua, Abdelghafour, Assil, Rimas and Lina,*

*To my friends; Houda and Bouchra,*

*Badria Belahya*

## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate this work to*

*The memory of my grandfather*

*My dear parents for their great support and encouragement wishing for them a long  
healthy life*

*My sister Hana and my brother Nacereddine*

*My cousin Fatima who always been there for me*

*All my family and relatives*

*My friends; Badria, Ikram, Djihane, Radia, Iman and Amel*

*Nour El Houda Mohammedi*

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## **Abstract**

Pragmatic competence is considered as an essential component of communicative competence. Teaching pragmatic aspects in EFL context seems to have been marginalized in recent years in comparison with other aspects of the TL (here English) such as grammar and phonetics. The aim of the present work is to investigate the effects of incorporating pragmatics in the EFL, namely hedging as an area of pragmatic competence, in the curricula of teaching English at the tertiary level. To justify our hypotheses we opted for a quasi-experimental and quantitative method. First, we conducted a pre-test, a lecture and a post-test with 35 first-year Master Linguistics students at the Department of English at KMUO. Then, we administered a questionnaire to six teachers at the same university. The findings sit well with our hypotheses. Thus integrating pragmatics in EFL curricula is justified.

**Keywords:** EFL, TL, pragmatics, pragmatic competence, hedging.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**FL:** Foreign Language

**KMUO:** KasdiMerbah University –Ouargla

**L2:** Second Language

**Q:** Question

**S:** Student

**SLA:** Second Language Acquisition

**TC:** Target Culture

**TEFL:** Teaching English as Foreign Language

**TFL:** Teaching Foreign Language

**TL:** Target Language

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## **General Introduction**

- I. Background of the Study
- II. Research Problem
- III. Purpose of the Study
- IV. Research Questions
- V. Research Hypotheses
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- VII. Significance of the Study
- VIII. Structure of the Dissertation
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### I. Background of the Study

Nowadays, people all around the world and from different backgrounds seek to learn English language since it becomes an international language and a lingua-franca. The multiple and intensive use of English in different fields has led people to consider it as a pressing need. In this respect, research into language teaching has repeatedly highlighted teaching linguistic aspects for the sake of mastering the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing); and focusing more on the communicative aspects of language. Yet, formal language studies failed to find adequate answers to cases of communication breakdowns which due mainly to the lack of pragmatic awareness (Thomas, 1983).

Communicative competence refers to the knowledge required for the appropriate use of language in different social situations and contexts. It includes four components: grammatical (linguistic), sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic and pragmatic competence. In the present inquiry, the focus will be more on the pragmatic competence since it is a condition to communicate successfully in the target language (Kasper, 1997). For Leech (1983), pragmatics is considered as the 'rag-bag' or what is called the wastebasket in which difficult and non-understood data are put or 'thrown'. In other words, pragmatics is defined as language in use. For this reason, the importance of pragmatic competence cannot be neglected because it promotes the four previous mentioned macro-skills i.e. promoting the mastery of the target language (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006).

Furthermore, research into language pedagogy attempts to raise the learners' pragmatic competence and communicative competence in general by defining the main causes of their lack of pragmatic proficiency so as to suggest solutions to raise their pragmatic awareness. In this respect, different methods have been suggested to teach pragmatics such as explicit/implicit, deductive/inductive methods and so on (Kasper, 1997). Recently, some pragmatic themes such as speech acts, conversational implicatures, hedging and others have been addressed within language teaching curricula (ibid.)

One of the language major issues that are dealt with the theme of pragmatics is *hedging*. *Hedging* is an important pragmatic strategy used in academic discourse to avoid certainty, directness and commitment through the use of tentative language. It is a vital strategy in academic settings.

EFL learners face difficulties in expressing hedging, in academic discourse. This accounts for the fact that teaching linguistic and grammatical aspects in EFL classes are not sufficient to help learners to be more proficient in communication using language. Here appears the crucial role of integrating pragmatics in the EFL classroom which is promoting both learners' pragmatic awareness and communicative performance.

### **II. Research Problem**

Many studies in TEFL yielded results which prove that linguistic competence is not sufficient to promote learners' ability to communicate (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahnan-Taylor, 2003). In this vein, Olshtain & Cohen (1991) point out that in the majority of cases communication failure is caused by a lack of pragmatic awareness. The latter is defined by Hedge (2000) as the fact of being aware of how to use language in accordance with its socio-cultural context. One area in which the lack of pragmatic competence can cause serious problems for a FL speaker is that of hedging (Fraser, 2010). Many EFL learners at the tertiary level are thought to encounter difficulties in using hedges. First-year Master Linguistics students of English at KMUO are no exception. When it comes to use hedging in order to communicate the intended meaning indirectly and politely, students fall too often short of communicating appropriately. In this regard, this study examines the effectiveness of teaching pragmatics to enhance EFL learners' use of hedging strategy.

### **III. Purpose of the Study**

The overall aim of the present research is to justify the importance of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes by highlighting the impact of teaching pragmatics, specifically hedging, on first-year Master Linguistics students at the Department of English, KMUO.

### **IV. Research Questions**

For the overall research aim to be achieved, the following questions are asked:

1. Are first-year Master Linguistics students of English at the Department of English, KMUO able to use hedging strategy?
2. Does teaching hedging enhance first-year Master Linguistics students of English at the Department of English (KMUO) performance?

## **V. Research Hypotheses**

Based on the aforementioned research questions, the general hypotheses run as follows:

1. It is assumed that first-year Master Linguistics students of English at the Department of English, KMUO are not aware of using hedging strategy.
2. If hedging is instructed to first-year Master Linguistics students of English, at the Department of English KMUO, their performance will improve.

## **VI. Methodology**

In this research, we adopted a true experimental and a quantitative method. On the one hand, the former is used for the purpose of investigating the effect of integrating pragmatics in EFL classrooms. On the other hand, the later is used for the sake of gathering and analyzing data from the questionnaires and the experiment.

## **VII. Significance of the Study**

The current inquiry is of a considerable significance for both teachers and students. This study may be considered as a contribution in the research of developing pragmatics knowledge and may open other areas of research within this field. The importance of this study is to investigate learners' unawareness of using hedging strategy. Also, it attempts to show the effectiveness of instructing hedging to develop of learners' performance and pragmatic knowledge.

## **VIII. Structure of the Dissertation**

The present inquiry is divided into two major parts: a theoretical part and a practical one. The former falls into two chapters. The first chapter concerned with an overview of pragmatics, more particularly, it highlights teaching pragmatics in EFL classes. The second chapter tackles hedging as a pragmatic theme. Also, it sheds light on the overlap or the interface between hedging and other discourse effects which are modality and politeness. The practical part is devoted the methodology, the steps of conducting the experiment including the data collection and the analysis of the findings. It ends with a general conclusion, limitations of the study, some suggestions and recommendations for further researches.

## **IX. Definition of Key Concepts**

### **1. Pragmatics**

It is concerned with the study of those contextual considerations which affect the use of linguistic items (Leech, 1983).

### **2. Pragmatic Competence**

It means recognizing that utterances convey a specific meaning which is appropriate to the context where communication occurs and the knowledge of how to link words and utterances to their meanings taking into consideration the context (Bachman, 1990).

### **3. Hedging**

It is a means of expressing information professionally, cautiously, precisely and honestly (Swales, 1990).

### **4. Modality**

It is concerned with the speaker's attitudes and opinions towards a particular situation (Carter et al, 2001; Vazquez and Giner, 2008; Thornbury & Slade, 2000; Parrott, 2000; Halliday, 1994).

### **5. Politeness**

Yule (1996, p.60) defines politeness as 'polite social behavior or etiquette, inside a culture'

### **6. Academic Discourse**

It refers to all kinds of language used and produced in academic settings by professionals and students in either written or spoken forms.

# **Chapter One: An Overview of Pragmatics in EFL Context**

## **Introduction**

- 1.1. Definition of Pragmatics
- 1.2. Pragmatic Competence
- 1.3. Teaching Pragmatics
- 1.4. Pragmatic Issues in the FL Classroom
  - 1.4.1. Pragmatic Failure
- 1.5. Pragmatics and the Teaching of Culture

## **Conclusion**



## Introduction

Nowadays, English is widely spread since it is considered as an international *lingua franca* (Jenkin, 2006; Pakir, 2000). As a means of communication, English is mostly used and needed across communities. The ultimate goal of language teaching to EFL learners is to develop their communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, pragmatic and strategic competence) and to appropriately communicate in various situations (Clenell, 1999). Pragmatic competence as a component of the whole communicative competence is an important sign of learners appropriate use language. It is for this reason that teaching pragmatics in the EFL classroom becomes a pressing need. The present chapter attempts to provide insights to the concept of pragmatics and the main issues that are dealt under pragmatic competence and teaching pragmatics in the EFL context.

### 1.1 Definition of Pragmatics

Many studies have been carried out to define the concept of *pragmatics* (Levinson, 1983). Generally, the notion of pragmatics refers to the study of language in use (Chaouki, 2007). This involves being able to relate utterances with their contexts and situations (ibid.). Crystal (1997) defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication”. Crystal (ibid), also, sees that pragmatics refers to those linguistic choices made by language users and the effects of such choices in social situations (2008). Researchers also pay much attention to social acts and interactions that occur in communication. Pragmatics began to get autonomy by the late 1970s, starting with the rise of studying language in its social context (Liu, S., 2010). Further, Liu argues that pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that is concerned with the way speakers use language in communication (ibid.).

According to Hinkel (1999), the interaction of language users goes more than mastering the linguistic forms and extends to the appropriate use of those linguistic forms in different social contexts and situations. Following Thomas (1983) and Leech (1983), pragmatics is divided into two sub-sections: *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics*. More clearly, *pragmalinguistics* is linked to grammar rules and linguistic forms; whereas *sociopragmatics* is linked to social behaviors (Thomas, 1983). In this case, language users need to be conscious of

how to link the two previously mentioned aspects so as to appropriately and effectively communicate in context.

As it was mentioned earlier, the theme of pragmatics accounts for the knowledge of when to speak or not, what topic to talk about, with whom, when and where (Hymes, 1972, p. 277). Because the cultural and the sociological aspects are vital in the field of pragmatics, the conventional meaning must not be excluded. Cohen (1996) sees that language users express acts differently depending on their social and cultural background that is conventionally agreed upon specific situations. Conventional meaning, unlike semantic meaning, refers to the meaning that is agreed upon in the society or in a group of people for a given situation and a context (to interpret it regarding the context) (Yule, 1996). To illustrate the point, here are some examples:

E.g. the word *owl* in Arabian and Western culture has completely different interpretations.

In the Arabian culture the term *owl* has conventionally a connotation of pessimism, whereas in Western culture it is a sign of wisdom. Also, in the Arabian culture it is conventionally agreed on to offer tea or coffee to one's guests without asking them if they want or not. If you ask your guests whether they want to drink or not, this would seem rude and inappropriate.

## 1.2. Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence in FL should be rationally developed for the purpose of communicating successfully and appropriately (Kasper, 1997). Though, to be pragmatically competent sounds difficult for FL learners because pragmatic competence is related to both culture and society. Further, Kasper (1997) divides pragmatic competence into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The former refers to the prior knowledge of communicative actions and how to perform this knowledge appropriately in given situations, while the latter lies in being able to use that knowledge appropriately regarding the context (ibid.).

According to Bachman (1990), pragmatic competence entails recognizing that utterances convey a specific meaning which is appropriate to the context where communication occurs. It is about the knowledge of how to link words and utterances to their meanings taking into consideration the context (ibid.). An important component of communicative competence is pragmatic competence which indicates knowing language rules and how these rules are used

to comprehend and to produce appropriate language in various sociocultural settings (pragmatic awareness).

Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor (2003) state that research in L2 learning and language teaching reveal the fact that to develop learners' communicative competence, including pragmatic competence, more than acquiring purely linguistic competence is required. In order to avoid communicative breakdowns and failure as a result of being pragmatically incompetent, the current inquiry aims at raising FL learners' pragmatic awareness through developing their use of hedging strategy.

### **1.3. Teaching Pragmatics**

Since both pragmatics and pragmatic competence are mainly considered to be vital aspects in using language appropriately, more discussion must be devoted to the area of teaching and developing pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms. A repeatedly asked question is: can pragmatic competence be taught? (Kasper, 1997)

As any other subject matter, pragmatics can be taught via numerous methods and approaches. In the same vein, FL teachers should teach learners linguistic items and communicative acts by exposing them to such contexts where the acts are used (greeting, requesting, rejecting and apologizing etc). Many studies in the field of pragmatics agree that formal instructions are more likely to raise EFL learners' pragmatic awareness (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

Further, Cohen (1996) points out that teaching pragmatics is mostly related to teaching L2 learners frequently used speech acts in the form of explicit or direct instruction. This formal instruction is presented in the classroom as classroom talk focusing on exposing learners to a series of real life situations, such as, buying stamps or postcards at a post office, buying clothes in a department store, telling the doctor about one's illness and the like (Cohen, 1997). These can be done in the oral comprehension class for the purpose of improving learners' pragmatic competence (ibid.).

In the discussion about the goals of teaching pragmatics, Bardovi-Harlig (2003, p.38) claims that:

The chief goal of instruction in pragmatics is to raise learners' pragmatic awareness and give them choices about their interactions in the target language. The goal of instruction in pragmatics is not to insist on conformity to a particular target-language norm, but rather to help learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language. With such instruction, learners can maintain their own cultural identities, participate more fully in target language communication, and gain control of the force and outcome of their contribution.

Since pragmatics is cultural based aspect of language, instructing it is not about providing the learners with flexible norms of the TL. This means that the overall aim of teaching pragmatics is to develop learners' background knowledge of the TL in order to be good communicators and to succeed in transmitting their ideas.

#### **1.4. Pragmatic Issues in the FL Classroom**

Within the EFL sphere, many issues have been highlighted. The following remain the most important once. For FL learners, the classroom is the only instructional setting where pragmatic competence is developed (LoCastro, 2012). In other word, EFL learners have a fewer opportunities, if any, to exposure the TL pragmatic aspects outside the classroom. In addition, in such context teachers are the primary sources who provide learners with language input. That is, classroom interaction is characterized by formality and politeness, then, it does not reflect real world language use. Further, teaching materials are immensely important to teach pragmatics in EFL classes. Corpus studies have shown that text books addressed to teach pragmatics for EFL lack authenticity (O'keeffe et al., 2011). In addition, there is a dearth of studies which attempt to investigate the effect of corrective feedback at the pragmatic level in comparison to those which look on the instructional values of corrective feedback on different aspect of language (LoCastro, 2012). Bardovi-Harlig&Dornyei (1998) state "Even the world's most communicative tests lack a systematic pragmatic component" (p.254). That is, valid methods to assess pragmatic knowledge are plainly absent. Consequently, these limitations and challenges may impose pragmatic failure.

### 1.4.1. Pragmatic Failure

In the discussion of teaching pragmatics, the issue of pragmatic failure takes a big part of this discussion since it is considered as the main issue in teaching pragmatics in the EFL classroom. Pragmatic failure refers to the misunderstanding and the misinterpretation of the intended message via focusing on the literal meaning of the utterance rather than focusing on the meaning of the utterance in its context (Thomas, 1983). This gap lies in the inappropriate use of language (*ibid.*) which, mainly, cause barriers in communication that leads to another issue which is communication breakdowns. In addition, Thomas (*ibid.*) proposed a definition of this failure that is “the inability to understand what is meant by what is said” (p. 93) which is the incapability to transmit the communication intention. Moreover, Kasper (1997) points out that this lack or failure occurs when learners succeed in the construction and the treatment of the utterances literally and grammatically but they fail in making sense of illocutionary intention. In other words, learners fail in interpreting the desired communicative effect on the addressees.

Furthermore, a division of pragmatic failure into two types is proposed by Thomas (1983). This division is made accordingly to the nature of the pragmatic failure, these types are: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. First, pragmalinguistic failure occurs when adopting an illocutionary force of the TL using the same utterances of the L1 that does not function as the same. For Thomas, this kind of failure is fairly easy to overcome (*ibid.*). Second, the sociopragmatic failure is more difficult to overcome than the pragmalinguistic one because it involves “the student's system of beliefs as much as his/her knowledge of the language” (p. 91). In other words, this difficulty is in the fact that cultures are different and unique in beliefs and thoughts which requires more effort in understanding the target culture.

## 1. 5. Pragmatics and the Teaching of Culture

Language and culture remain two sides of the same coin. Before investigating the relationship between the two aforementioned concepts let us define them; first is a system of spoken and written symbols that is used to transmit ideas, beliefs and so on. On other hand, entails peoples’ values, believes and everyday lifestyle. It is generally agreed that, culture is embedded in language. In other words, culture shapes the way we think and the other way round. Therefore, the teaching of culture, in foreign language context, remains a significant

theme. In this regard Politzer (1959) claims that “culture teaching is an obligation and a duty that all language teachers must fulfill. (p. 100-101).

The ultimate goal of the foreign language teaching is to make FL learners able to communicate the target language appropriately. This involves not merely the grammar competence also the cross-cultural pragmatic competence is needed. Cross-cultural pragmatics refers to the study of language differences based on cultural backgrounds(Crystal, 1997). Learning pragmatics means learning language from the point of its users (ibid.). In addition, teaching pragmatics is important to develop pragmatic principles which govern the interpersonal interaction in cross-cultural communication. Hence, the challenge of instruction in cross-cultural pragmatics is to make FL learners able to understand the norms and cultural value of the target language. In order to avoid cross-cultural pragmatic failure, should have the ability to observe and identify the differences of the FL language culture and their mother language culture because pragmatic principles vary cross-culturally. Therefore, a sufficient attention should be paid to the enhancement of the target language pragmatic and cultural aspects in EFL classrooms.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter we have discussed pragmatics in EFL classroom. In addition, we have spotlighted the main points that are related to pragmatics in such context. We started by defining pragmatics also we have tackled pragmatic competence. Then, we have dealt with teaching pragmatics as the main focus of the current research. We have attempted to account for the main issues in EFL classroom namely pragmatic failure. At the end, we have shed lighted on pragmatics and the teaching of culture.

## **Chapter Two: Hedging in Academic Discourse**

### **Introduction**

#### 2.1. Hedging

##### 2.1.1. Means of Expressing Hedging

##### 2.1.2. Types of Hedging

#### 2.2. Modality and Hedging

##### 2.2.1. Modality

##### 2.2.2. Means of Expressing Modality

##### 2.2.3. Types of Modality

##### 2.2.4. Interface between Modality and Hedging

#### 2.3. Hedging and Politeness

##### 2.3.1. Politeness

##### 2.3.2. Politeness and Face

##### 2.3.3. Hedging as Politeness Strategy

### **Conclusion**

**Introduction**

Hedging is one of the cardinal pragmatic strategies used in academic discourse to avoid directness and commitment about a specific proposition. It entails using tentative language to create fuzzy statements and present information as an opinion rather than presenting it as a fact. Also, it is used to soften the statement and lessen its impact on the addressee. Recently, much focus in research has been devoted to hedging because of its crucial role in academic discourse where it presents unproven propositions with more caution and precision (Hyland, 1996). In the same vein, Lakoff (1975) claims that limiting truth conditions for natural language sentences to true, false and nonsense may distort it, pointing out that this is an important area which deserves study. This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework for hedging as a crucial theme in pragmatics. Also, it accounts for the interface between modality and hedging. It spotlights, then, hedging as politeness strategy.

**2.1. Hedging**

Although Weinreich (1966) was the first who touched upon the notion of hedging, he did not delve into. Lakoff (1972) had the greatest initial role in launching the concept of hedging. He claims that the limitation of the truth conditions for natural language propositions to true, false and non sense may distort the natural language terms by representing them as having sharp rather than vaguely defined boundaries (ibid.). Hedging has been viewed differently by many researchers. Hyland (1998) argues that hedging can be used as a strategy to present knowledge. This indicates that hedges are means of expressing information professionally, cautiously, precisely and honestly (Swales, 1990). In the same way, (Myers, 1989; Hyland, 1996, 1998) consider hedges as a tool to represent a weakening of a claim via the explicit qualification of the writers' commitment for the sake of showing doubt and referring to the information presented as an opinion. In other words, we may use hedges to convey the possibilities and even respect for colleagues and researchers views. On the one hand, hedges tend to soften interpersonal imposition, while, on the other hand, they are seen as a tool to anticipate the expected negative consequences of overstatement and even the eventual overthrow of a view or claim (Hyland, 1996; Salagar-Meyer, 1994).

Further, Ädel argues that "hedges are used by writers to show their lack of commitment to the truth value of the proposition. Modal verbs like 'may' are commonly employed as hedges." (2006, p. 174). Ädel focused on the use of modal verbs as means of expressing hedging, but there are many other means to express it in academic discourse.



Within a linguistic perspective, hedges are defined in relation to a large class of lexical and syntactic features of texts that aim at modifying and mitigating a proposition (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). Also, hedges are considered as linguistic tools used either to refer to the writers' lack of commitment to the honesty of a particular statement or a desire to avoid expressing the commitment categorically (Hyland, 2006). According to Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) there are various linguistic forms that can be used to express hedging in order to distance language users from statements and claims that have been mentioned in writings.

### 2.1.1. Means of Expressing Hedging

As far as hedging system form an open functional class, even vocalizations such as *aww*, *uhhh* and *weeellll*, and gestural devices such as waving the hand, shrugging the head can be used as hedges too (Fraser, 1975). In this vein, there is no grammatical class of hedges. So any syntactic category can be used as a hedging device. In this regard, Clemen (1997) claims that:

There is no limit to the linguistic expressions that can be considered as hedges...The difficulty with these functional definitions is that almost any linguistic item or expression can be interpreted as a hedge... no linguistic items are inherently hedges but can acquire this quality depending on the communicative context or the co-text. This also means that no clear-cut lists of hedging expressions are possible. (Clemen, 1997; 6)

It is noticeable that the language used in expressing hedging, particularly in written discourse, is very special since it uses particular linguistic forms. The most common syntactic categories in expressing hedging are: modal auxiliary verbs, modal lexical verbs, probability adjectives, nouns, adverbs (and their comparative forms), Compound hedges and approximators (of degree, quantity, frequency and time introductory phrases). Although it is difficult to limit the scope of hedging expressions, Hyland (2005) suggested a list of items that can be used as hedges. These are listed in the table below:

Hyland's hedging items.
About, almost, apparent, apparently, appear, appeared, appears, approximately, argue, argued, argues, around, assume, assumed, broadly, certain amount, certain extent, certain level, claim, claimed, claims, could, couldn't, doubt, doubtful, essentially, estimate, estimated, fairly, feels, felt, frequently, from my perspective, from our perspective, from this perspective, generally, guess, indicate, indicated, indicates, in general, in most cases, in most instances, in my opinion, in my view in this view, in our view, largely, likely, mainly, may, maybe, might, mostly, often, on the whole, ought, perhaps, plausibly, possible, possibly, postulate, postulated, postulates, presumably, probable, probably, quite, rather x, relatively, roughly, seems, should, sometimes, somewhat, suggest, suggested, suggests, suppose, supposed, supposes, suspect, suspects, tend to, tended to, tends to, to my knowledge, typical, typically, uncertain, uncertainly, unclear, unclearly, unlikely, usually, would, wouldn't.

**Table 01:** Hyland's hedging items

It is clear that the use of hedges (linguistic items) helps language users to exclude themselves in an explicit manner in academic discourse. For example

Another feature characteristic of the learner essays has been described as a 'rhetoric of modesty', meaning that the learner writers were more tentative and hedged in their use of metadiscourse than the native speakers. For example, hedging verb groups like try and would like to were very common in the learners' metadiscourse units, in particular when the writer personas announced their discourse actions. This contributed to the learner essays displaying a less assertive writer persona. (Annelie Adel, 2006, p. 193)

### 2.1.2. Types of Hedges

Many researchers and linguists, (Jordan, 1997; Meyer, 1994; Hinkel, 2004), attempted to categorizing hedges into various different types. Jordan (1997) classified the taxonomy of hedges in formal written prose into three categories, which are shields, approximators and compound hedges. He also mentioned that these types can be taught to second language learners regardless of their level (p.240-241). In fact, types of hedges are to be used differently on the basis of the type of the study being conducted or the discipline they are used in. Additionally, another important classification of hedges was carried out on a pragmatic basis since hedging has a strong relation with the field of pragmatics and it is considered as a rhetorical strategy which signals a lack of commitment to either the full semantic membership of an expression (propositional hedging) or the full commitment to the force of the speech act being conveyed through the use of linguistic devices.

Pragmatically speaking, researchers focused more on the semantic study of hedges and argued that pragmatic hedges are not fuzzy, though; they just reflect the writers' uncertainty and doubt about a particular statement. More precisely, it is a sign of pragmatic and communicative competence to be able to use hedges in language. This is a one way to show

the importance of the hedging strategy in academic discourse (Prince, Frader&Bosk, 1982). Primarily, hedges are divided into two main categories:approximators and shields.Approximators are divided into two subcategories: adaptors and rounders. Shields are divided into two subcategories: those which express plausibility and those which express attribution.

Another categorization is that by Meyer (1994). According to him, hedges can be divided into five categories which are: shields, approximators, expressions, emotionally-charged intensifiers (boosters) and compound hedges. Shields and compound hedges are the most frequent ones used in expressing hedging (ibid.). Though many divisions have been provided for hedging, Meyers' categorization remains the most influential one in the literature and the most appropriate to fulfill the objectives of the present study. The table below illustrates the classifications of hedges according to Meyer (1994).

<b><i>Shields (modal verbs lexical verbs, adverbs, nouns)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All modal verbs expressing possibility.</li> <li>• Lexical verbs like “to suggest”, “to argue”.</li> <li>• Probability adverbs like “probably”.</li> <li>• Nouns like “certainty” and ‘possibility-’.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Approximators(degree, frequency, quantity)</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Like “some”, “few”, “approximately”, “often”, “always”, “occasionally”, “roughly”, “generally”.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Expressions</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E.g. “I believe”, “to our knowledge”, “we see that”</li> </ul>
<b><i>Emotionally-charged intensifiers/ Boosting</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E.g. “extremely”, “interesting”, “unexpectedly”, “particularly” “encouraging”.</li> <li>• Nouns like “certainty” or “possibility”.</li> <li>• Adjectives like “essential” and “clearly”.</li> </ul>
<b><i>Compound hedges</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The juxtaposition of several hedges like “we may suggest that ...” and “it seems reasonable to assume ...”</li> </ul>

**Table 02:** Classifications of hedges according to Meyer (1997)

Other examples:

**1) Shields**

E.g. There is a range of programs on the market which *may* be described as design aids.

E.g. All evidence *suggests* that they stole the market.

E.g. There is no *certainty* that the president's removal would end the civil war.

**2) Approximators**

E.g. Very *few* numbers of students learn Latin now.

E.g. It is *oftendifficult* to get such great opportunity.

E.g. The company's sales are up by *roughly* 13%

**3) Expressions**

E.g. Mohammed *believes that* he is qualified for the new job.

E.g. We *see that* the results may change later.

**4) Emotionally-charged intensifiers/ boosters**

E.g. The crowd was *encouragingly* high.

E.g. It is *highly agreed* that global warming affects the environment.

**5) Compound hedges**

E.g. *It seems reasonable to assume that* the earth is not flat.

E.g. The teacher *may suggest* for his students any topics to search for.

## **2.2. Modality and Hedging**

It obvious to say that language is a phenomenon which cannot exist in a vacuum. To investigate language in isolation is useless. A prominent concept that is floating around the field of hedging is that of modality. Perkins (1983, p.4) states that "in spite of the vastness of the available literature, it is by no means easy to find out what modality actually is". To carry

out a study on modality “is very similar to trying to move in an overcrowded room without treading on anyone else’s feet” (ibid.).

### 2.2.1. Modality

Although modality has been studied since Aristotle time, its formal revolution was in the 1960s (Kaufmann et al., 2006). Since then the majority of studies which attempted to investigate modality yielded results that proved how varied and sophisticated the modality system is. As well, a wealthy publication referring to both the pragmatic and the semantic-grammatical features of this area has been presented. Halliday (1970, p. 331) states that “there is no single place in the clause where modality is located”. Its diversity and broad sense make it relatively hard to delineate modality in appropriate and relevant terms that can cover all its dimensions (Nuyts, 2006).

Since the present study aims to approach modality from a pragmatic angle the following definitions seem the most appropriate ones in the literature.

Bybee (1985) claimed that modality is what the speaker is doing with the whole proposition.

The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Linguistics (2005, p.228) defines modality as a “category covering either of a kind of speech act or the degree of certainty with which something is said”.

Steel et al (1980) stated that the meaning of modality is associated with the following notions: possibility, necessity, permission, probability and obligation.

Halliday (1970, p.349) “Modality ... is the speaker’s assessment of probability and predictability. It is external to the content, being part of the attitude taken up by the speaker”

For (Carter et al, 2001; Vazquez and Giner, 2008; Thornbury & Slade, 2008; Parrott, 2000; Halliday, 1994) modality is concerned with the speaker’s attitudes and opinions towards a particular situation.

Therefore, it can be claimed that modality is concerned with the speaker’s involvement in the content of the proposition.

### 2.2.2. Means of Expressing Modality

As mentioned earlier modality is one of the richest and sophisticated systems in English. The aforementioned concept, then, is more than modal verbs. In other words, modality can be presented through a range of modal expressions. In this regard, Perkins (1983) suggested a set of markers to express modality. These include:

1. **Nouns:** Allegation, hypothesis, proposal, command, exhortation, request, assumption, certainty, doubt, expectation, invitation, etc.
2. **Adjectives:** sure, certain, possible, necessary, probable, compulsory, imperative, lawful, legal, permissible, etc.
3. **Adverbs:** allegedly, apparently, certainly, conceivably, evidently, hopefully, likely, necessarily, obviously, perhaps, possibly, presumably, probably, seemingly, supposedly, surely, etc.
4. **Verbs:** assume, believe, fancy, fear, feel, guess, hope imagine, presume, reckon, surmise, suspect, think, trust, etc.
5. **Modal Verbs:** can, may, must, will, shall, could, might, ought to, should, and would.

Downing & Locke (1992) suggested other means to express modality such as:

**a) The use of if-clause in certain cases**

If you don't mind my saying so

**b) The use of the remote past**

I thought I would go along with you.

**c) The use of non-assertive item**

Rima will eat any kind of fruits.

**d) The use of certain type of intonation (the fall-rise)**

Would you like another coffee?

### 2.2.3. Types of Modality

In English discourse, modality is divided into many categories (Auwera and Plunging, 1998; Biber et al, 1999; Bybee, 1985; Coates, 1983; Palmer, 1986; Von Wright, 1951 Huddleston, 1984; Lyons, 1977; Thornbury & Slade, 2008) among many others. However, the common view among scholars is the taxonomy of this field. In other words, the major interest those prior studies focused on when investigating modality is the multi-faceted relationships between the speaker's attitude and the proposition, between the proposition and

the objective reality, and between the speaker and the receiver. The table below presents a theoretical framework for modality categories.

Other alternative divisions of modality	The basic categories of modality			Authors
	Epistemic	Deontic	Dynamic	
Discourse-oriented		Obligation, permission		Palmer (1986)
Subject-oriented			Ability, volition desirability	Palmer (1974)
Intrinsic		Obligation, permission, volition, desire, ability, intention, willingness		Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech (1985)
Extrinsic	Certainty, possibility, probability, likelihood, prediction		Ability	
Theoretical	Certainty, possibility, probability, likelihood, prediction			James (1986)
Practical		Wish, regret, obligation, permission, ability, desire, intention, willingness		
Agent-oriented		Obligation, root possibility ability, desire		Bybee and Fleischman (1995)
Speaker-oriented		Imperatives, permissives, Optatives		

**Table 03:** A theoretical framework of modality categories

As seen from the theoretical framework, the aforementioned distinction of modality is not clear cut because there is an overlap between the deferent types. Therefore, there is no consensus as to how modality should be divided or how each category is defined separately with specific meaning. They all overlap to form an overall picture to delineate modality meanings.

It can be seen on Table 3 that there are a variety of categories proposed for modality, though, epistemic, deontic and dynamic modality remain the basic ones.

**1/ Epistemic modality:** entails that the speaker “assesses the probability that the proposition is true in terms of the meaning of the modal expressing certainty, probability or possibility” (Downing & Locke, 1992, p.332).

E.g. It may rain tomorrow.

**2/ Deontic modality:** means that the speaker “intervenes in the speech event by laying obligations or giving permission” (Downing & Locke, 1992, p.332).

E.g. You must sign this paper.

**3/ Dynamic modality:** refers to the individual’s capacity to do a particular action when the circumstances arise (Huddleston, 1984).

E.g. Assil can speak German.

#### 2.2.4. Interface Between Modality and Hedging

Modality and hedging overlap to a lesser or a greater extent depending on their definitions. In order to eliminate such a kind of fuzziness and to explain the relationship between the two aforementioned terms Markkanen & Schroder (1997, p.4) claimed that:

It seems possible to see the relationship between modality and hedges in two ways: either modality is the wider concept and includes hedges or the other way round; hedging is the umbrella term and modality a part of it.

A work worth being mentioned which spotlights the interface between modality and hedging is Fraser’s (1975) analysis of modal verbs hedges from a pragmatic perspective. In the same vein, Vazquez & Giner (2008) stated that modal verbs may function as hedges in academic circumstances. The connection between the two is very clear in the case of modal verbs with epistemic meaning. The latter entails using modal verbs to express the speaker’s



opinion about a statement. For instance, when hedges are used to be modifications of the commitment to the truth-value of propositions; the modal auxiliary *may* is a typical example. Sometimes, deontic modals might be interpreted as hedges. The hypothetical *would*, for example, could be seen as a hedge since it makes a proposition non-categorical.

Besides modal auxiliaries, other modality expressions could be used as hedging devices. These include:

**1. Hedges with Modal Lexical Verbs:** believe, think, etc.

E.g. Together, I believe we can keep making progress and give hope to those in need.

**2. Hedges with Modal Lexical Adjectives:** clear, confident, hopeful, certain, etc.

E.g. I am confident that Algerian people will continue to make domestic change to ensure future prosperity and happiness.

**3. Hedges with Modal Lexical Adverbs:** obviously, certainly, definitely, clearly, indeed, perhaps, probably, possibly, maybe, etc.

E.g. It is clearly that, the challenge is huge and we need to do more.

### 2.3. Hedging as a Politeness Strategy

When discussing hedging, another crucial pragmatic theme should be spotlighted this is called politeness. In this vein, it is worthy to mention that hedges are considered as strategies which cut across the area of politeness in the field of pragmatics (Brown & Levinson 1987).

#### 2.3.1. Politeness

Since the 1970s, politeness has become a core issue in pragmatics (Kasper, 1990). Many researchers and scholars have attempted to spotlight this theme, thus, various definitions for the notion of politeness have been suggested.

Palteringe (2006) pointed out that the area of politeness deals with perception, expectation and conventional realizations of communicative strategies which enhance social harmony. People acquire politeness principles in the process of acquiring their first language as part of building their sociocultural and pragmatic competence. Thus, in the process of SLA learners need to learn the target culture as well (ibid.).

Following Paltridge's view, Leech (2014) defines *politeness* as a social phenomenon based on language use. Yule (1996, p.60) indicates that politeness is considered as a "polite social behavior or etiquette, inside a culture".

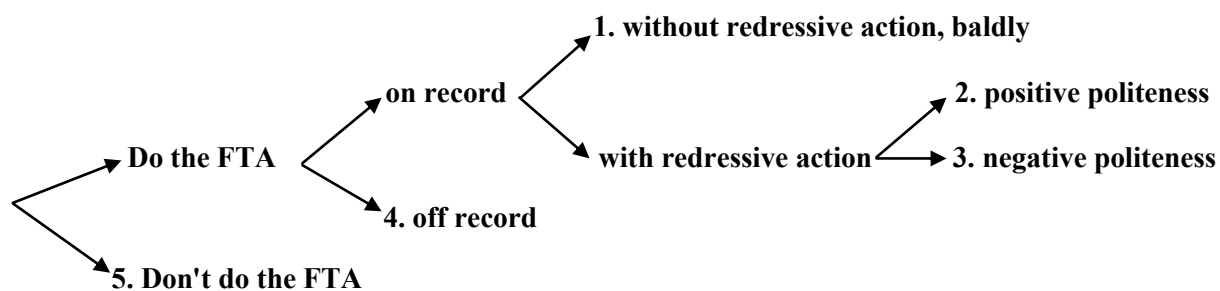
The importance of politeness lies in determining the way in which people structure and interpret an utterance in a particular discourse (Peccei, 1999). For this reason, many politeness models have been proposed, Leech's (1983) and Brown & Levinson (1987) ones remain the most influential ones in the literature, however.

### **2.3.1. Politeness and Face**

A further notion to be highlighted in the domain of politeness is that of face. This was first pioneered by Goffman (1967). Face refers to a person's public self-image which is expected to be respected by others Brown & Levinson (1987). In this regard, Lakoff (1973) endows three principles for politeness. These entail: avoiding imposition, providing options and making the receiver feel comfortable. It is important to make the distinction between negative and positive face. The former refers to one's desire to be independent, to act in freedom and to be not forced by other people. This strategy leads to realize positive politeness. On the other hand, positive face refers to a person's desire to maintain social relationship, to keep communication smooth, to be liked and accepted by others. It is also called positive politeness (Yule, 1996).

Widdowson (2007) stated that stepping into each other ground in an interaction might be considered as face threatening for one another. That is to say, when one of the interlocutors produces an utterance which threatens the other's face is referred as Face threatening Act (FTA).

In order to mitigate the threat of the receiver's positive face, Brown & Levinson's (1987) model suggests five politeness strategies. These are briefly explained in the following figure.



**Figure 01:** Face Saving Acts Strategies (Brown& Levinson, 1987).

### 2.3.2. Hedging as a Politeness Strategy

Some researchers argue that hedging, by which the writer/speaker attempts to sound modest rather than lofty or all-knowing, is used to embrace both positive and negative politeness strategies. Brown& Levinson (1987, p.145) define a hedge as “a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; it says that membership that is partial, or true only in certain respect”. Thus, the boundaries of hedging are widened to explore politeness area, and more precisely they are restricted to express negative politeness (ibid.).

The next figure (**Figure 02**, Chart of Strategies: Negative Politeness (Brown& Levinson, 1987), shows in details the strategies, including hedging, used in negative politeness.

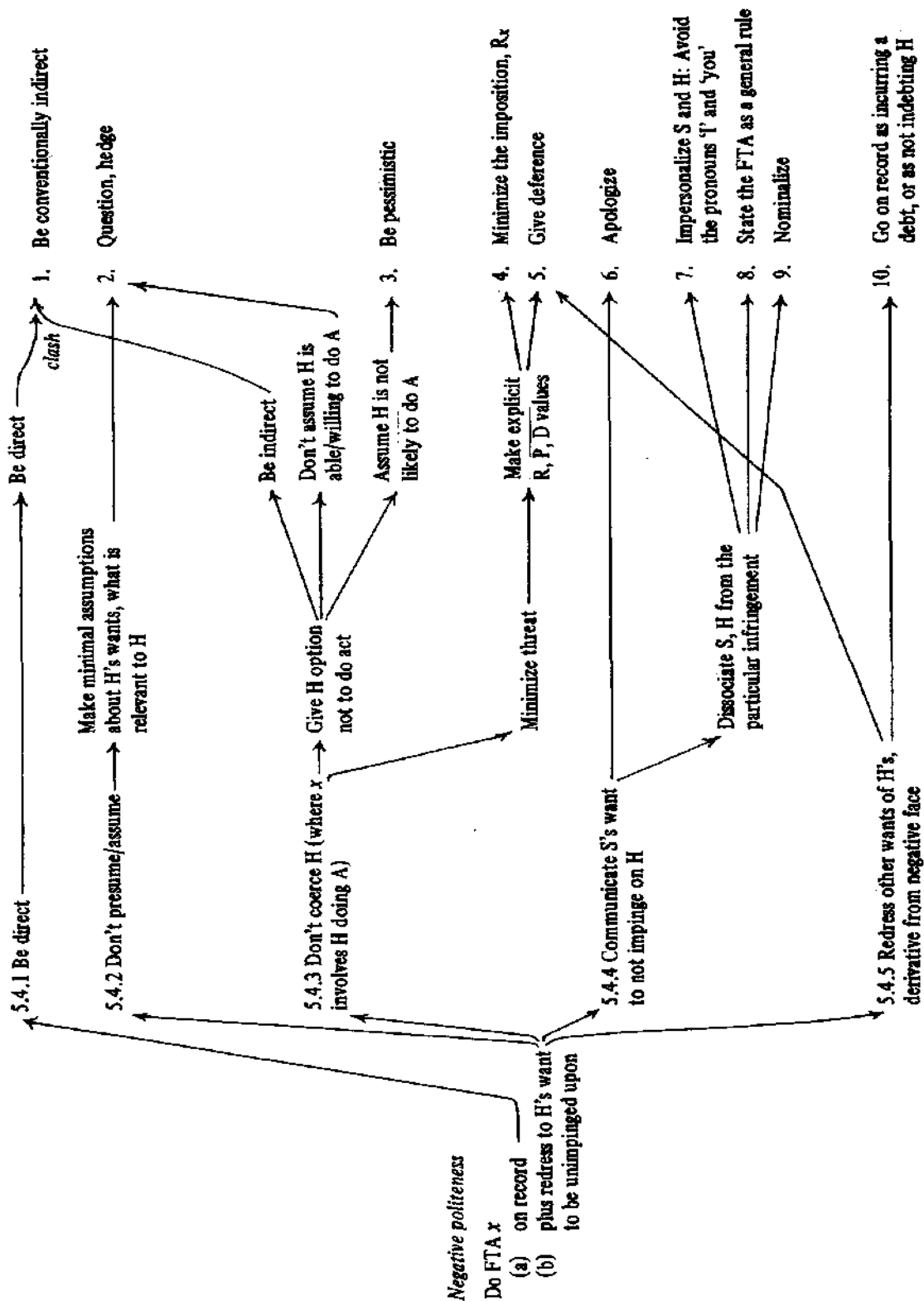


Figure 02: Chart of Strategies: Negative Politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

As motioned earlier, hedges are fuzzy in nature and without some implication language may seem dull/politeness. Therefore, hedging becomes a prominent concept that overlaps with that of politeness. The following part will investigate the pragmatic function of hedging in politeness.

### **a. Approximators and their Functions to Maintain Politeness**

Using hedges items such as kind of, to some extent, almost, really, somewhat, quite, entirely, a little bit, more, less and the like are effective to maintain politeness.

E.g. your room is a little bit dirty.

The speaker uses “a little bit” to avoid criticizing the receiver, which may lead to conflicts and face threatening.

### **b. Rounders and their Functions to Maintain Politeness**

Rounders such as approximately, essentially, about, over, in most respects, roughly, about, and so on are usually used to measure things

**A:** What is your annual income?

**B:** Em...well...it's about the expenditure of a new car.

Since it is something private, B is not willing to answer. Thus, B answers the question in a fuzzy way by using “about” in order not to embarrass and to seem impolite in case he/she does not answer at all.

### **c. Plausibility Shields and their Functions to Maintain Politeness**

When a speaker is not confident enough about a truth and makes a subjective judgment, he/she attempts to use plausibility shields in order to show respect to the receiver and to make he/she feel pleased. Such hedges include: I think, it is hard to say, I believe, I am afraid, seem, as far as I can tell and, etc.

**A:** what do you think of my poem?

**B:** It is hard to say, I am not good in literature.

Though, B's judgment on the poem is sincere, it is not a good one. He/she avoids making a direct assessment and makes an ambiguous answer by using "it is hard to say". B tends to protect A's face.

#### **d. Attribution Shields and their Functions to Maintain Politeness**

To show speculation and reservation, speakers tend to use attribute shields. This entails quoting from a third person in order to demonstrate their attitudes indirectly.

E.g. According to John, all gentlemen are requested to wear suits on the cocktail party.

Obviously, the speaker is addressing the hearer in an indirect manner to wear a suit in the party. So, "according to John" helps to maintain politeness and to avoid embarrassing the hearer.

It is important to point out that inappropriate use of hedges might cause impoliteness and lead to communication failure in many situations. This means that the role of hedging is not always positive.

**A:** Would you please tell me what time the flight is? I want to travel to Algiers tomorrow.

**B:** Maybe it is about ten o'clock!

By using "Maybe" and "about", B makes the information fuzzy. A is definitely willing to get the exact time, however.

#### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have discussed the theme of hedging from a pragmatic perspective including its definition(s), types and means. Further, we have highlighted the overlap or the interface between hedging and other discourse aspect which are: modality and politeness. In the next chapter, we will present the practical base of the current study.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology and Results**

### Introduction

#### 3.1. Research Design

#### 3.2. Population and Sampling

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## **Conclusion**

### **Introduction**

Chapter three is devoted to the methodology and the discussion of findings. It includes the research design and the sample of the study. Also, it describes the data collection instruments, sheds light on the validity and reliability of the research, and it ends with findings and discussion of the results.

### **3.1. Research Design**

To achieve the purpose of this study, we have used both a quasi-experimental method and a quantitative method since they seem to be the most appropriate for such a kind of research. Concerning the quasi-experimental design, it aims to establish internal validity. It concerns the identification of cause-effect relationships between variables. For instance, in our case one can notice the change of the dependent variable (learners' pragmatic competence development) after introducing the independent variable (teaching hedging). The qualitative method, on the other hand, deals with quantifiable data and measurements in a systematic and a statistical way (Biggam, 2008). Following these methods we collected data from the pre-test, the session, the post-test and teachers' questionnaires.

### **3.2. Population and Sampling**

To accomplish the current research, we selected a sample of students and teachers at the Department of Letters and English Language, Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. Our aim is to gather information from students as the case-study to investigate the importance of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes, and from teachers as experts to confirm it.

#### **3.2.1. Students' Sample**

Thirty five (35) first-year Master Linguistics students registered for the academic year 2018/2019 at the Department of English, Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla have been randomly selected for the true experimental study. Factors such as age and gender were not taken in consideration in the selection of the sample.

#### **3.2.1. Teachers' Sample**

Six (6) teachers at the Department of English, Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla were selected to answer the questionnaire. We have chosen a subjective sampling as the most appropriate sampling for such a kind of research. The sample selected is representative of the



## Chapter Three Methodology and Results

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whole population of teachers in charge of the modules of pragmatics and oral comprehension. Their experience varies from novice to more experienced teachers.

### **3.3. Data Collection instruments**

To achieve the objectives of the present inquiry, we opted for a quasi-experimental study that consists of a pre-test, a training session and a post-test. This also includes data gathered from the teachers' questionnaire.

#### **3.3.1. The Pre-test**

We started the quasi-experiment study by conducting the pre-test in order to diagnose the students' awareness as to using hedging appropriately. This pre-test is meant to spotlight students' mistakes to discover their difficulties in expressing hedging. Students are asked to do the two exercises in the pre-test in thirteen minutes (30) time (Appendix 01). The first exercise consists of identifying hedging statements in the five sentences, whereas the second one is about rewriting and changing the five sentences by adding hedging statement in each sentence.

#### **3.3.2. The Training Session**

After the pre-test, we collected the students' results and calculated their scores. Then, we planned for the lesson that consisted of three main stages (Appendix 03). Furthermore, the lesson plan sheet contains all the details about the lesson such as the researchers' full names, students' level, time allocated, materials, objectives and the content of the lesson summarized on a table.

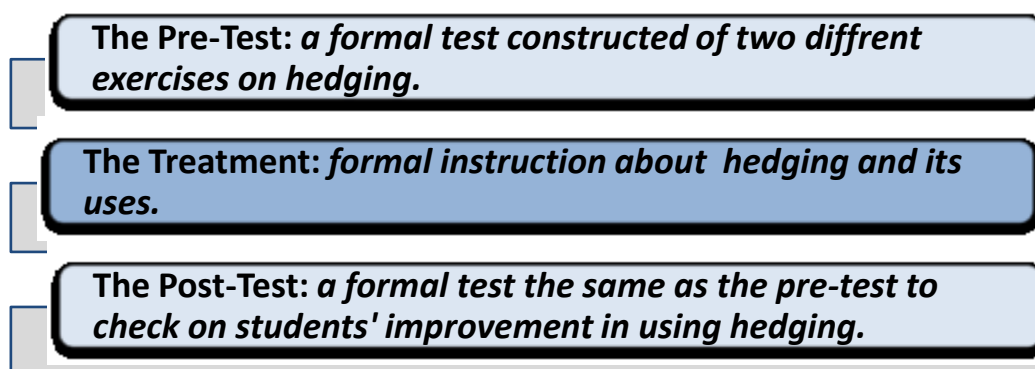
#### **3.3.3. Lesson Plan**

The training session aims to make learners able to use hedging appropriately. Also, it provides insights on the importance of hedging in academic discourse (Appendix 03). Moreover, this lesson consisted of three stages: the warming up stage, the presentation stage and the closing stage. In the first stage, the teacher introduces a situation which where hedging is used. Afterwards, the teacher asks students to give their opinions sincerely and politely about their friends' poem that they did not like. After giving the floor to the students, we move to the next stage where hedging is presented. In this stage, the teacher introduces hedging to students by providing its definition, its importance and its appropriate use in academic discourse. A list of hedging items is submitted to students for consolidation. In the

closing stage, the teacher devises a task (a post-test), consisting of two questions. At the end, the teacher randomly asks the students to read their answers in order to check the answers and correct them if necessary.

### 3.3.4. The Post-test

The last step in the experiment of this study is the post-test. It is designed with reference to what has been done in the training session. The objective of the post-test is to show the students' improvement in using hedging after being instructed. Items in the post-test were the same as those in the pre-test and were addressed to the same group to point out the progress in their results (Appendix 05).



**Figure 03:** Stages of the experiment

### 3.3.5. Teachers' Questionnaire

In this study, we adopted a questionnaire as another instrument to obtain data that may help to achieve the research validity. The questionnaire consisted of nine open questions which aim to spotlight teachers' perceptions of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes and hedging in particular, to know the methods they follow and the materials they use in teaching pragmatics, to see the way they assess their students' pragmatic knowledge and the way they treat pragmatic errors. (Appendix 07)

### 3.4. Data Analysis

In the process of data analysis, we relied on using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) system of measurement. This entails presenting the results in the form of pie-charts and tables. We also opted for using the SD (Standard Deviation) in the statistical analysis in order to compare the results of the pre-test and the post-test.

### 3.5. Validity and Reliability

For Biggam (2008), on the one hand, valid research refers to ‘the appropriateness of the choices you make in terms of your research strategy and data collection/analysis techniques’ (2008, p. 100). This means that validity refers to the extent to which the strategies and techniques adopted to gather and analyze empirical data appropriate in one’s research and to serve to achieve its objectives. For this study, we opted for a questionnaire technique and an experiment in the form of a pre-test and a post-test where samples were selected randomly to confirm the validity in this research. Further, reliability is a crucial aspect in conducting research since it seeks to examine the consistency of measures used in research. For the sake of the present study, a pre-test and a post-test were used to compare variability of the findings in the two tests.

### 3.6. Analysis of the Pre-test

Students	Pre-test Score	Percentage (%)
S1	3	30
S2	2	20
S3	3	30
S4	7	70
S5	4	40
S6	3	30
S7	6	60
S8	2	20
S9	4	40
S10	7	70
S11	1	10
S12	2	20
S13	5	50
S14	3	30
S15	5	50
S16	5	50
S17	3	30
S18	6	60

S19	4	40
S20	8	80
S21	2	20
S22	6	60
S23	3	30
S24	7	70
S25	4	40
S26	5	50
S27	2	20
S28	1	10
S29	4	40
S30	3	30
S31	4	40
S32	6	60
S33	3	30
S34	7	70
S35	4	40
<b>Mean</b>	4.1	41

**Table 04:** Students' Scores in the Pre-test

Table four (4) above shows students' results in the pre-test. This helps to highlight students' mistakes to diagnose their weaknesses in using hedges. Students' scores are followed by percentages. As it is shown on the same, the mean of the pre-test is **4.1**.

### **3.6.1. Interpretation**

It appears clearly from results on the table above that learners' performance in expressing hedges is low in the pre-test. This is due to the students' lack of knowledge about using hedging appropriately.

### 3.7. The Analysis of the Post-test

<b>Students</b>	<b>Post -test score</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
S1	6	60
S2	5	50
S3	9	90
S4	8	80
S5	6	60
S6	7	70
S7	9	90
S8	8	80
S9	7	70
S10	10	100
S11	9	90
S12	6	60
S13	8	80
S14	10	100
S15	10	100
S16	9	90
S17	10	100
S18	10	100
S19	8	80
S20	10	100
S21	6	60
S22	9	90
S23	9	90
S24	10	100
S25	10	100
S26	8	80
S27	7	70
S28	5	50
S29	10	100
S30	6	60

S31	9	90
S32	8	80
S33	6	60
S34	10	100
S35	10	100
<b>Mean</b>	8.2	82

**Table 05:** Students’ Scores in the Post-test

Table five (5) presents students’ results in the post-test to highlight students’ improvement in using hedges. The table presents the mean and each student’s score, followed by a percentage. We can notice that the mean reached is **8.2**.

**3.7.1. Interpretation**

It appears from Table five (5) that students’ performance has highly increased in the post-test. It is apparent from this table that the majority of students have got acceptable marks. This indicates that students’ awareness as to using hedges has developed after formal instruction.

**3.8. Comparison of the Pre-test and the Post-test results**

The figure and the table below present a comparison between the results of the pre-test and the post-test. They show that students’ scores have remarkably improved in the post-test in comparison with those in the pre-test. That is, after teaching students hedging as a pragmatic theme, their pragmatic competence has been enhanced. The standard deviation (SD) of statistical analysis is used to compare the results of the two tests. The following equation is used to calculate the SD:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{(X-M)^2}{N}}$$

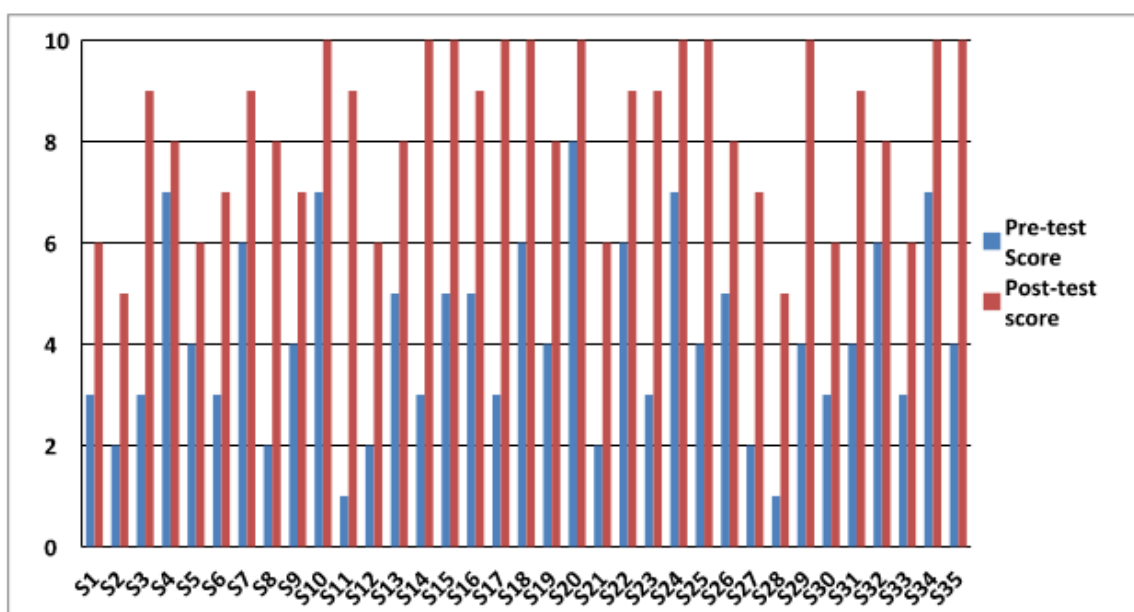
**X: Each Student Score**

**M: Mean**

**N: Number of Students**

	Mean	N	StandardDeviation(SD)
Pre-test	4,1143	35	1,85934
Post-test	8,2286	35	1,66426

**Table 06:** Scores of the experiment and SD of the statistical analysis



**Figure 04:** Students scores' in the pre-test and the post-test

### 3.9.The Analysis of the Questionnaire

#### Q1: Do you think it is important to teach pragmatics to EFL students at the university?

This question is meant elicit teachers' opinions about the integration of pragmatics in the EFL curricula. All participants answered the question by 'Yes'. For them, it is important to teach pragmatics to EFL students at the university. This indicates also teachers' awareness as to developing students' pragmatic competence.

**Q2: Which method(s) do you find appropriate to teach pragmatics in the EFL class at the university?**

This question aims to see teachers' attitudes towards teaching pragmatics. As we expected, responses obtained clearly indicate that the majority of teachers prefer explicit formal pragmatic instruction. Two participants are in favor of implicit instruction. One teacher calls for the use of both methods. This shows that both types of instruction are accepted.

**Q3: Do you agree that if more pragmatic input is included in the EFLT curricula at this level, learners' proficiency will improve?**

In response to this question all teachers shared the same answer i.e. 'Yes'. That is to say, teachers are aware about the importance of pragmatic competence to the success of communication.

**Q4: What pragmatic aspects need to be taught?**

The aim of this question is to spotlight which area of pragmatics should be stressed in the curricula. Teachers have different points of view. Two participants' choose speech acts. Two prefer teaching speech acts politeness and hedging. One is in favor of all pragmatic aspects.. Another teacher advocates the teaching of maxims of cooperation.

**Q5: What difficulties might be encountered when teaching pragmatics?**

All participants claimed that there are many difficulties that hinder teaching English language from a pragmatic perspective. One teacher tied it to students' non-conformity with pragmatic matters. The others thought it is related to cultural differences.

**Q6: Do you see the use of authentic materials in your classroom necessary to develop pragmatic competence?**

One teacher sees that the type of materials depends on the module to be taught. According to her, for instance, a variation between authentic and non-authentic materials should be used in teaching pragmatics. Another one argues that using authentic materials is necessary to some extent because even authentic materials may create some problems to FL learners such as their non-ability to understand cultural clashes. The other participants see that it is necessary to use authentic materials.



### **Q7: How would you assess your learners' pragmatic competence?**

The results obtained from this question show that half of the participants see that assessing students' level is in terms of acceptability i.e. either acceptable or non-acceptable. The others tend towards non-acceptability i.e. students' pragmatic level remains non-acceptable as long as they do not conform with TL practices. Nevertheless, assessing learners' level of pragmatic competence helps teachers to choose the appropriate teaching methods and materials.

### **Q8: To what extent do you think pragmatic errors are serious?**

All teachers agreed upon the seriousness of pragmatic errors since they affect learners' performance. In this regard, a teacher comments *"As long as these errors may lead to communication breakdown, they remain extremely serious"*.

### **Q9: What do you suggest to minimize students' pragmatic errors?**

The answers to this question were kind of recommendations and suggestions. Three participants suggested providing the maximum pragmatic input into the FL class. Two teachers suggested exposing learners to authentic materials. One teacher called for maximizing classrooms and extracurricular activities.

#### **3.9.1. Interpretation**

The main purpose of choosing a questionnaire as a research instrument is to elicit teachers' opinions about integrating pragmatics in EFL class. The results obtained from the questionnaire show that all teachers in the study are in favor of teaching pragmatics. Moreover, the majority of them prefer explicit pragmatic instruction. Findings show that participants in the study are aware of the vital role of pragmatic awareness to develop learners' proficiency. Also, they believe that a variety of pragmatic aspects should be taught to EFL learners. Concerning the difficulties that teachers may encounter in teaching pragmatics, they all relate it to cultural challenges. Teachers have different opinions as to whether using authentic materials is necessary or not. Results obtained show that students' level differs from acceptable to non-acceptable. Finally, teachers agree upon the seriousness of pragmatic errors. Therefore, some ways are suggested to minimize these errors.

### **Conclusion**

The practical part aims at finding answers to the research questions and to confirm the research hypothesis in order to achieve the objectives of the study. In this chapter, we have dealt with the main steps in conducting the research. It is divided into two major parts. The first part deals with the research methodology, the research design and the instruments used in this study. The first instrument used in the experiment was a formal test administered to students. It was followed by a lecture and a post-test. In the second part, we discussed the second instrument i.e. the teachers' questionnaire. Finally, according to the results analysis and discussion we confirm the hypothesis that when teaching hedging in EFL class the students' performance will improve. Therefore, integrating pragmatics in the EFL class yields positive results in enhancing students' pragmatic awareness of the TL.

General Conclusion

Limitations of the Study

Pedagogical Implications

Bibliography

Appendices

ملخص الدراسة

Résumé

### General Conclusion

The current piece of research sought to account for the importance of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes, in particular, hedging. To this end, the following questions were asked: “Are first-year master linguistics students of English at the Department of English, KMUO able to use hedging strategy?” and “Does teaching hedging strategy enhance first-year master linguistics students of English at the Department of English, KMUO, performance?”. A review of relevant literature was carried out, then, to pave the ground to the practical part. In the later, we have adopted two research instruments. First, a pre pre-test and a post-test were done to investigate students’ pragmatic awareness about using hedging strategy and to justify the crucial role of formal instruction of hedging to enhance students’ performance. Second, teachers’ questionnaires were used to spotlight teachers’ attitudes towards teaching pragmatics. The findings of the present study revealed significant insights. The results obtained from the two tests yielded that the sampled students have a flagrant lack of pragmatic knowledge, in general, and they are unable to use hedging strategy in particular. Also, it proves the effectiveness of formal instruction to enhance EFL students’ pragmatic awareness. Teachers’ questionnaires as well provided results which sit well with our hypotheses. Finding indicated clearly that teachers are in favor of incorporating pragmatic aspects in the EFL curricula. To conclude, this study highlighted the importance of teaching hedging strategy, and by implication, the significant role of teaching pragmatics to EFL learners.

### **Limitations of the study**

When conducting our research, some difficulties were encountered. First, in the present experiment we were restricted by time, however, extracting reliable data from EFL classes needs to be done at long-running experiments. This study was held on 35 first year master linguistics students thus the sample cannot be a representative of a broader population and its results cannot be generalized. In addition, we have shed light only on hedging strategy to justify the incorporation of pragmatics in EFL classes though other pragmatic aspects can be a subject for study. Although the aforementioned limitations, we assume that we brought our humble contribution to the literature review on pragmatics especially in EFL context.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The present research was primarily designed to investigate the effectiveness of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes. It was limited to Teaching hedging strategy to first year master linguistics of English at KMUO as a case study. In this light, some suggestions and recommendation for further researches are outlined below:

For the institute:

- 1- There should be more inputs and more substantial quantity of pragmatic features in EFL curriculum.
- 2- Investigate the challenges and difficulties that encounter teachers in instructing pragmatic aspects.

For English teachers:

- 1- They should maximize the amount of activities that meant to develop learners' pragmatic knowledge.
- 2- They should bring the TL culture into the EFL classroom through using authentic materials.

For the students:

- 1- EFL students should exposure themselves to more pragmatic input, because the field of pragmatics is very vast and the input provided in the classroom maybe not sufficient.
- 2- They should pay more attention to the different pragmatic aspects of TL.

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## **Appendices**

Appendix 01: Pre-Test

Appendix 02: Sample of Students' Pre-Test

Appendix 03: Lesson Plan

Appendix 04: List of Hedging Language

Appendix 05: Pre-Test

Appendix 06: Sample of Students' Pre-Test

Appendix 07: The Teachers' Questionnaire

Appendix 08: The Teachers' Questionnaire Sample

## Appendix 01: Pre-Test

Full name:.....

### Practising Hedging

#### Exercise: 01

Circle the hedging statements in the sentences below

1. Students who took these classes were more likely to do better at the university.
2. Scientific studies suggest that climate change could have very serious consequences for the earth.
3. The news report indicates that green tea can potentially prevent cancer.
4. Most people in the United States are in favor of democracy.
5. Many people do not enjoy exercise, but it is perhaps the best thing you can do for your health.

#### Exercise: 02

Change the sentences below by adding some hedging statements. You can change the order of the sentence if necessary.

1. Nobody enjoys doing household chores.

---

---

2. Every American loves eating pizza.

---

---

3. Strong leadership is the most important thing for companies.

---

---

4. A person who is 5'3" (1.6m) cannot play basketball in the NBA.

---

---

5. If you learn computer skills, you will get a good job.

---

From kriswingo.com

## Appendix 02: Sample of Students' Pre-Test

The pre-test

Full name: .....

### Practising Hedging

#### Exercise 01:

Circle the hedging statements in the sentences below.

1. Students who took these classes were more likely to do better at the university. 01  
01
2. Scientific studies suggest that climate change could have very serious consequences for the earth.
3. The news report indicates that green tea can potentially prevent cancer.
4. Most people in the United States are in favor of democracy.
5. Many people do not enjoy exercise, but it is perhaps the best thing you can do for your health.

#### Exercise 02:

Change the sentences below by adding some hedging statements. You can change the order of the sentence if necessary.

1. Nobody enjoys doing household chores. 04  
01

Most people don't enjoy doing household chores.

2. Every American loves eating pizza.

All Americans love eating pizza.

3. Strong leadership is the most important thing for companies.

Strong leadership may be the most important thing for companies.

4. A person who is 5'3" (1.6m) cannot play basketball in the NBA.

A person who is 5,3 (1.6m) may not play basketball in the NBA.

5. If you learn computer skills, you will get a good job.

If you learn computer skills, you may get a good job.

From kriawingo.com





<p>55 min</p>	<p><b>Stage three: Closing</b></p> <p>T distributes a task comprise two activities then starts reading them:</p> <p><b>Activity 1:</b> Circle the hedging statements in the sentences below.</p> <p><b>Activity 2:</b> Change the sentences below by adding some hedging statements. You can change the order of the sentence if necessary.</p> <p>T randomly, asks some learners to read their answers.</p>	<p><b>T</b></p> <p><b>L</b></p> <p><b>L</b></p> <p><b>T/L</b></p>	<p>Written test</p>
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## Appendix 04: List of Hedging Language

### Language used in hedging

1	<b>Introductory verbs</b>	e.g. seem, tend, look like, appear to be, think, believe, doubt, be sure, indicate, suggest.
2	<b>Certain lexical verbs</b>	e.g. believe, assume, suggest.
3	<b>Certain modal verbs</b>	e.g. will, must, would, may, might, could.
4	<b>Adverbs of frequency</b>	e.g. often, sometimes, usually.
5	<b>Modal adverbs</b>	e.g. certainly, definitely, clearly, probably, possibly, perhaps, conceivably.
6	<b>Modal adjectives</b>	e.g. certain, definite, clear, probable, possible.
7	<b>Modal nouns</b>	e.g. assumption, possibility, probability.
8	<b>That clauses</b>	e.g. It could be the case that. e.g. It might be suggested that. e.g. There is every hope that.
9	<b>To-clause + adjective</b>	e.g. It may be possible to obtain. e.g. It is important to develop. e.g. It is useful to study.

Source: <http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/hedge.htm>

**Appendix 05: Post-Test**

**Full name:**.....

**Practising Hedging**

**Exercise: 01**

**Circle the hedging statements in the sentences below**

- 1. Students who took these classes were more likely to do better at the university.
- 2. Scientific studies suggest that climate change could have very serious consequences for the earth.
- 3. The news report indicates that green tea can potentially prevent cancer.
- 4. Most people in the United States are in favor of democracy.
- 5. Many people do not enjoy exercise, but it is perhaps the best thing you can do for your health.

**Exercise: 02**

**Change the sentences below by adding some hedging statements. You can change the order of the sentence if necessary.**

- 1. Nobody enjoys doing household chores.

\_\_\_\_\_

—

- 2. Every American loves eating pizza.

\_\_\_\_\_

—

- 3. Strong leadership is the most important thing for companies.

\_\_\_\_\_

—

- 4. A person who is 5’3” (1.6m) cannot play basketball in the NBA.

\_\_\_\_\_

—

- 5. If you learn computer skills, you will get a good job.

---

From kriswingo.com

## Appendix 06: Sample of Students' Post-Test

The post-test

Full name: .....

10/10

### Practising Hedging

#### Exercise 01:

Circle the hedging statements in the sentences below.

1. Students who took these classes were more likely to do better at the university.
2. Scientific studies suggest that climate change could have very serious consequences for the earth.
3. The news report indicates that green tea can potentially prevent cancer.
4. Most people in the United States are in favor of democracy.
5. Many people do not enjoy exercise, but it is perhaps the best thing you can do for your health.

0.5/1

#### Exercise 02:

Change the sentences below by adding some hedging statements. You can change the order of the sentence if necessary.

1. Nobody enjoys doing household chores.

It is claimed that nobody enjoys doing household chores.

2. Every American loves eating pizza.

Most Americans love eating pizza.

3. Strong leadership is the most important thing for companies.

Strong leadership can be the most important thing for companies.

4. A person who is 5'3" (1.6m) cannot play basketball in the NBA.

It is assumed that who is 5'3" (1.6m) cannot play basketball in the NBA.

5. If you learn computer skills, you will get a good job.

If you learn computer skills, you may get a good job.

0.5/1

From kriswingo.com

**Appendix 07: The Teachers' Questionnaire**

*Dear teacher,*

*Thank you for taking part in our research project. Our thesis aims to spotlight the importance of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes. We would like to know your view on this issue. Please be kind to complete this questionnaire. Your answers will be of great value to accomplishment of this work. Your name will not be mentioned in dissertation.*

- 1. Do you think it is important to teach pragmatics to EFL students at the university level?

.....  
.....

- 2. Which method(s) do you find appropriate to teach pragmatics in the EFL class at the university level?

.....  
.....

- 3. Do you agree that if more pragmatic input is included in the EFLT curricula at this level, learners' proficiency will improve?

.....  
.....

- 4. What pragmatic aspects need to be taught?

.....  
.....

- 5. What difficulties might be encountered when teaching pragmatics?

.....  
.....

6. Do you see the use of authentic materials in your classroom necessary?

.....  
.....

7. Through your teaching experience, how would you assess your learners' pragmatic competence?

.....  
.....

8. To what extent do you think pragmatic errors are serious?

.....  
.....

9. What do you suggest to minimize students' pragmatic errors?

.....  
.....

## Appendix 08 : Sample of the Teachers' Questionnaire

Full name:

Dear teacher,

Thank you for taking part in our research project. Our thesis aims to spotlight the importance of integrating pragmatics in EFL classes. We would like to know your view on this issue. Please be kind to complete this questionnaire. Your answers will be of great value to accomplishment of this work. Your name will not be mentioned in our dissertation.

1. Do you think it is important to teach pragmatics to EFL students at the university level?

It is very important to teach pragmatics for students

2. Which method(s) do you find appropriate to teach pragmatics in the EFL class at the university level?

For the university level and since students are conscious enough, I prefer the direct method to teach pragmatics.

3. Do you agree that if more pragmatic input is included in the EFLT curricula at this level, learners' proficiency will improve?

Surely it will be improved. As a case in point, a student who knows hedging tools or tools for politeness will be more appropriate and accepted in their communication at least with their teachers.

4. What pragmatic aspects need to be taught?

Pragmatic aspects that should be taught: speech acts, hedging, Maxims of cooperation at least.

5. What difficulties might be encountered when teaching pragmatics?

The most known difficulty is the background, which situation you will focus on is it the target culture or the students' culture or culture.



6. Do you see the use of authentic materials in your classroom necessary?

It depends on the module to be taught. For grammar study it is necessary. In terms of pragmatics, there should be a distinction between authentic and non authentic materials.

7. Through your teaching experience, how would you assess your learners' pragmatic competence?

They have a degree of pragmatic awareness but they are unconcerned about it and need to be more sensitive to it.

8. To what extent do you think pragmatic errors are serious?

They are very serious to the extent that they can make a speaker seem odd or strange.

9. What do you suggest to minimize students' pragmatic errors?

Teaching pragmatics with direct method to raise the students' pragmatic not only awareness but also sensitivity.

## المخلص

تعد الكفاءة التداولية عنصر أساسي من عناصر الكفاءة التواصلية برغم من ذلك يبدو أن تدريس جوانب التداولية في سياق اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية قد تم تهميشه في السنوات الأخيرة مقارنة بالجوانب الأخرى كالقواعد اللغوية والصوتية للغة الهدف (هنا نقصد الإنجليزية). يهدف هذا العمل إلى تحري أثر دمج التداولية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية, وبالتحدي تقنية المراوغة كجانب من الكفاءة التداولية في منهاج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية على مستوى التعليم العالي. ولغرض تبرير فرضياتنا اعتمدنا دراسة شبه تجريبية وكمية . أجرينا أولاً اختباراً قبلي, درس , واختباراً بعدي لخمسـة وثلاثون طالباً من طلبة السنة الأولى ماستر تخصص لسانيات في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة قاصدي مرباح ورقلة. ثم قمنا بتوزيع استبيانات لستة أساتذة في نفس الجامعة أثبتت النتائج صحة الفرضيات . وبالتالي تم تحليل دمج التداولية في منهاج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية , اللغة الهدف , التداولية , الكفاءة التداولية , المراوغة .

## Résumé

La compétence pragmatique est considérée comme un élément essentiel de la compétence en communication. L'enseignement des aspects pragmatiques dans le contexte d'EFL semble avoir été marginalisé ces dernières années par rapport à d'autres aspects du TL (ici anglais) tels que la grammaire et la phonétique. Le présent travail a pour objectif d'examiner les effets de l'incorporation de la pragmatique dans l'EFL, notamment la couverture en tant que domaine de compétence pragmatique, dans les programmes d'enseignement de l'anglais au niveau tertiaire. Pour justifier nos hypothèses, nous avons opté pour la méthode à quasi-expérimentale et quantitative. Premièrement, nous avons organisé un pré-test, une conférence et un post-test avec 35 étudiants en première année de master en linguistique du département d'anglais de KMUO. Ensuite, nous avons administré un questionnaire à six enseignants de la même université. Les résultats s'accordent bien avec nos hypothèses. L'intégration de la pragmatique dans les programmes d'anglais langue étrangère est donc justifiée.

Mots-clés: EFL, TL, pragmatique, compétence pragmatique, couverture.