

اللغة الصيغية بوصفها موردًا تفاعليًا في تحقيق الطلاقة التداولية: تحليل محادثي لمتعلمي
اللغة الإنجليزية لغةً أجنبية من الأكراد

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الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الصيغية؛ الطلاقة التداولية؛ تحليل المحادثة؛ مبدأ التعاون؛ متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية
لغةً أجنبية من الأكراد؛ تداول الأدوار في المحادثة

كيفية اقتباس البحث

عمر ، أسو محمد، نيجيرفان حسن جوزل، ثاري غازي حسين، اللغة الصيغية بوصفها موردًا
تفاعليًا في تحقيق الطلاقة التداولية: تحليل محادثي لمتعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية لغةً أجنبية من
الأكراد، مجلة مركز بابل للدراسات الانسانية، آب 2026، المجلد: 16، العدد: 8.

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Formulaic Language as an Interactional Resource for Pragmatic Fluency: A Conversational Analysis of Kurdish EFL Learners

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Keywords : formulaic language; pragmatic fluency; Conversation
Analysis; Cooperative Principle; Kurdish EFL learners; turn-taking.

How To Cite This Article

Omar, Aso Mohammed , Nechirvan Hassan Jawzal , Aree Ghazi Hussain
, Formulaic Language as an Interactional Resource for Pragmatic
Fluency: A Conversational Analysis of Kurdish EFL Learners, Journal Of
Babylon Center For Humanities Studies, Auguts 2026, Volume:16,
Issue8.



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المخلص

يهدف هذا البحث إلى استقصاء دور اللغة الصيغية بوصفها أداة تفاعلية يوظفها متعلمو اللغة
الإنجليزية لغةً أجنبية من الطلبة الأكراد ذوي المستوى المتوسط لتعزيز الطلاقة التداولية لديهم.
وعلى الرغم من أن الدراسات السابقة أثبتت إسهام المتتاليات الصيغية في تخفيف العبء
المعرفي أثناء إنتاج اللغة، فإن دورها في إدارة تداول الأدوار في المحادثة والالتزام بمبدأ التعاون



لم يحظَ بالاهتمام الكافي في السياق الكردي، إذ انصبَّ اهتمام معظم الدراسات السابقة على المألّات غير المعجمية.

واعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً نوعياً قائماً على التحليل الدقيق (Micro-analysis)، مستندةً إلى التكامل بين تحليل المحادثة (Conversation Analysis) ومبدأ التعاون (Cooperative Principle) الذي وضعه غرايس. وتألّفت بيانات الدراسة من عشر محادثات قائمة على المهام، سُجلت في جامعة صلاح الدين – أربيل، بإجمالي زمن بلغ (41.5) دقيقة، وشارك فيها عشرون طالباً جامعياً.

وقد جرى ترميز (187) مثالاً من اللغة الصيغية وتصنيفها في خمس فئات وظيفية. وأظهرت نتائج التحليل أن العبارات الصيغية تؤدي دوراً فاعلاً في تمكين المتحدث من الاستحواذ الفوري على الدور الكلامي، وتيسير الانتقال السلس بين المتحدثين، في حين يؤدي غيابها إلى ظهور وقفات طويلة وتردد في الكلام واضطراب في سير التفاعل. كما كشفت النتائج أن التعبيرات الصيغية تؤدي وظيفة المخففات التداولية (Pragmatic Hedges)، وتسهم في خرق بعض مبادئ غرايس أو التخفيف من حدتها، وذلك بالاستعانة بعناصر التحويل اللغوي إلى اللغة الأم، مثل: «والله» و«شكراً».

وتسهم نتائج الدراسة في إثراء الأدبيات النفسلغوية، كما تشير إلى أهمية تضمين تعليم القوالب اللغوية والمخففات التداولية ضمن برامج تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية، بوصفها موارد تواصلية تسهم في تنمية الكفاءة التداولية، بدلاً من النظر إليها على أنها مظاهر قصور لغوي ينبغي تجنبها.

Abstract

The focus of this research is formulaic language as an interactive tool utilized by intermediate EFL Kurdish students to enhance their pragmatic fluency. Although formulaic sequences are known to alleviate cognitive loads, their role in managing turn-taking and conversation maxims does not receive much attention within Kurdish contexts, as previous studies have mainly concentrated on non-lexical fillers. By combining Conversation Analysis with Grice's Cooperative Principle, this qualitative micro-analytic research focuses on the ten task-based conversations that were recorded at Salahaddin University, Erbil (41.5 minutes and 20 undergraduate participants). After coding 187 instances of formulaic language into five functional categories, the analysis indicates that formulaic chunks help to achieve the immediate ownership of the floor and prevent delays in transitioning from one speaker to another, while their absence causes problems such as prolonged pauses and



faltering speech. Furthermore, using formulaic expressions helps to act as pragmatic hedges and to violate or soften some of Grice's maxims with the help of code-switched L1 markers such as, for example, Wallah and Shukur. In general, the outlined findings contribute to the theories of psycholinguistics, making it possible to argue that teaching students how to use frames and hedges in conversation instead of treating them as unattainable deficits might prove useful.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

The notion of communicative competence has been long existing in the realm of second language acquisition (SLA). According to it, language learning is based not only on grammatical accuracy (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980). Communicative competence refers to the ability to use the language in a socially appropriate manner reflecting the principle of pragmatic competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2012). However, there is an issue faced by the learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and it is about the pragmatic usage of English language even when it is grammatically accurate (Pawley & Syder, 1983). Research conducted in psycholinguistics and corpus linguistics has shown that native speakers alleviate cognitive burden and keep the flow of conversation due to the use of formulaic language, or bundles of words, or chunks of speech (Wray, 2002; Schmitt, 2004).

However, in general EFL methods of teaching, the analytical approach to vocabulary and grammar has been prioritized (Lewis, 1993), which leads to serious cognitive strain of learners marked by the presence of long silent pauses, frequent hesitations, and symbolic turn taking.

In the research literature, the studies have mainly focused on the definite linguistic characteristics such as pronunciation accents and grammatical errors. However, the analysis of spoken discourse is limited to minor forms of fillers and does not consider the use of word chunks in the talk (Abdullah & Mohammed, 2023).

It remains to be noted that there is no empirical evidence of how students of Kurdish universities make use of formulaic language in their communication practices, which makes this research relevant and important.

1.2 Analytical Framework and Hypotheses

This research employs a dual-lens approach to examine the interrelation between formulaic sequences and interactional management.

a. Conversation Analysis (CA) is based on the pioneering groundwork of Sacks et al. (1974) and the application of its principles to language

classrooms (Seedhouse, 2004; Wong & Waring, 2010). CA is applied for the analysis of various turn-taking, repair, and sequencing processes of real-time student conversations.

b. The second lens includes the Cooperative Principle to study the utterances of participants involving Grice's (1975) theory of conversation maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, Manner), as well as Blakemore's (2002) and Schiffrin's (1987) theories of discourse and pragmatic markers.

The combination of CA and Grice's theory allows us to explore how multiword phrases are not only cognitive shortcuts, but also instruments for interaction management. In accordance with the qualitative framework, the following working hypotheses are tested:

Hypothesis 1: The successful application of multiword phrases has a positive effect on deliveries; the use of these combinations leads to the significant lowering of interruptions in speaking and dysfluency features of repairs.

Hypothesis 2: Formulaic phrases play the role of effective hedging mechanisms which help EFL learners not only respect Grice's Maxims of Manner and Quantity, but also break them deliberately when collaborating with each other.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The main goal of this research is to explore the practical usage of formulaic phrases in the development of pragmatic fluency among students of Kurdish language at a higher education institution. The study aims to illustrate the mechanisms of operation of these formerly mentioned phrases in the context of cognitive mechanisms and social influence. The research questions to be answered in this paper are as follows.

1. What are the forms and style of formulaic expressions used by beginner Kurdish students of EFL in the process of spontaneous informal communication with their peers?
2. What effect does the presence of formulaic phrases have on turn-taking and the structure of conversation?
3. How does formulaic language play a role in the maintenance of adherence to the maxims of conversation?

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The present investigation is confined to a synchronic analysis of communicative exchanges and turn-taking among intermediate EFL students from Salahuddin University in Erbil, as shown by 10 task-based chat transcripts. Since the methodology used in this study follows the principles of Conversation Analysis (Wong & Waring, 2010), the results





cannot be applied to other regions of Kurdistan or Iraq. In addition, as the participants in the study fall under the intermediate level only, the data do not include any exchanges concerning beginners or advanced students. Finally, this investigation is a synchronic observation of classroom exchanges, meaning that the study does not cover language acquisition issues or retention of information over a longer period of time.

1.5 Significance and Value of the Study

The study presents both a theoretical and a pedagogical contribution to second language acquisition (SLA) and curriculum reform at the regional level. From the theoretical point of view, it presupposes linking psycholinguistic researches concerning chunk processing (Wray, 2002), and socio-interactional studies of Conversation Analysis (Sacks et al., 1974), which reflects the necessity of treating formulaic language as a means of composing meaning, rather than as lexical units (Bardovi-Harlig, 2006). From the pedagogical standpoint, this research reveals practical, localized knowledge for syllabus designers and the trainers of teachers, who work in the context of ongoing higher education curriculum reforming processes in the Kurdistan Region-Iraq (especially at SUE). The findings demonstrate the potential of the interaction-based Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993) in reducing disfluency and avoiding pragmatic failures by switching from isolated vocabulary to analysis of spoken turns.

2. Theoretical Background and Previous Studies

Formulaic language is now a key concept in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), discourse studies, and pragmatics because of its important links to fluency, interactional competence, and effective communication. In fact, instead of forming sentences on the basis of grammatical rules, speakers often use ready-made utterances that are composed of several words, such as greetings, discourse markers, conversational routines, lexical bundles and pragmatic formulas. This contributes greatly to their ability to use language, providing them with the opportunity to structure their discourse and ensure smooth interaction. In recent years, researchers have come to acknowledge the importance of formulaic language in second language communication for pragmatic competence and conversational fluency.

2.1 Formulaic Language

Formulas are phrases that include three or more words and are recognized instantly, at one time, instead of being repeated again and again (Wray, 2002). Formulaic language includes, for instance, lexical phrases, collocations, idioms, routines, discourse markers, etc. According to Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), people exchange information via various

kinds of lexical phrases, which serve the means of successful communication.

Furthermore, in the view of Pawley and Syder (1983), fluency is the ability to apply a multitude of phrases that are employed in natural communication, and thus it is necessary to distinguish between the notion of fluency and the notion of usage of phrases, since fluency exists only if speakers use previously acquired phrases, and thus do not construct sentence after sentence using grammatical rules. Witnessing the idea of Lewis (1993), one can say that real communication implies that individuals communicate mostly using ready-made phrases.

The above-mentioned findings are also confirmed by other scholars such as Bybee (2006) who posits that repetition of the same phrases forms patterns in human brain and facilitates the process of communication which becomes easier when people use phrases each time. Ellis (2003) suggests that learning languages means using language where language is used repeatedly and thus the notions and patterns presented become absolutely internalized.

The necessity of using ready-made phrases was observed by Conklin and Schmitt (2008) who state that phrases are understood much faster than combinations of words that have been formed and therefore become possible to process as ready-made phrases. Boers et al. (2006) emphasize that students who use more ready phrases speak better and faster.

2.2 Formulaic Language and Pragmatic Fluency

Pragmatic fluency is not limited to linguistic proficiency; it also concerns the ability of speakers to employ the language correctly and effectively in a social setting. The speaker must additionally choose contextually appropriate utterances and manage the conversation with minimal hesitation.

The concept of communicative competence has received various adaptations throughout the history of linguistics. Hymes (1972) was the first to introduce it as the ability to use the language appropriately in real life contexts. Hymes' key point was that knowledge of grammar is not enough for successful communication, and therefore he broadened the term by including also those aspects of communicative competence that involve grammar, social communication, discourse and strategic usage of the language (Canale & Swain, 1980).

Pragmatic competence is developed through the acquisition of skills that enable the learners to understand and create language that is acceptable in social settings (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Taguchi (2012) emphasizes that the development of pragmatic competence relies on several factors, such as the learner's ability to context, cognitive speed and variability among





learners. Bardovi-Harlig (2006), on the other hand, postulates that formulaic speech in interlanguage pragmatics plays a significant role, since the use of phrases helps the learners to fulfill speech acts successfully.

In addition, Segalowitz (2010) distinguishes cognitive fluency, utterance fluency, and perceived fluency. It was proved that the use of formulaic expressions contributes to these types of fluency. It also makes communication much less complicated and allows speakers to switch attention from searching for words to other goals. This is confirmed by research of DeKeyser (20018), who argues that practicing the use of formulaic expressions leads to automatization of their retrieval with high speed.

2.3 Formulaic Language as an Interactional Resource

In conversation, formulaic expressions not only serve as linguistic units but also operate as interactional resources that help manage turn-taking, maintain coherence, and perform social actions. The methodology of Conversation Analysis (CA) is suitable for the study of the workings of these expressions in natural conversation. Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) work laid a foundation for understanding conversational interaction as governed by consistent rules of turn-taking. In conversation, speakers negotiate turns with the help of timing, transition relevance places, and other interactional means. Formulaic expressions play the role of the means of facilitating these transitions by signaling agreement, hesitation, continuation of the topic, or the completion of the turn.

Seedhouse (2004) suggests that classroom interaction has its own interactional structure whereby learners employ formulaic expressions to fulfill communicative as well as pedagogical aims. Wong and Waring (2010) also show that studies based on CA can be used in the second language classroom. They illustrate that CA can show learners how to use formulaic resources for the purposes of interaction.

Discourse markers make up another important group of formulaic expressions. Schiffrrin (1987) sees discourse markers as linguistic tools that help organize discourse, link utterances, and help in interpretation by a listener. Blakemore (2002) considers discourse markers from a recognition-theoretical perspective. According to the researcher, discourse markers contribute procedural meaning attention in the further discussion of the event. Fillers fulfill several interactional functions that are important in discussion. Fillers can be viewed as a means of planning but not simply as a sign of disfluency. According to the researchers Abdullah and Mohammed (2023), learners use a lot of fillers while

speaking even if it means that their use raises questions about fluency and vocabulary.

Speech act theory can also contribute to our understanding of formulaic expressions. Austin (1962) introduced the idea that language does not only give information through the utterance it produces but that it performs particular actions. Clearle (1969) characterized speech acts and suggested several categories of speech acts based on their function. Grice's (1975) principle of cooperation can assist in explaining the idea of how speakers in conversation interpret meaning through mutual assumptions concerning quantity, quality, relevance, and manner in conversation.

2.4 Previous Studies

Considerable evidence supports the applicability of formulaic expressions and language in conversation. Wray (2002) illustrates that the efficiency of communication is improved thanks to the memory retrieval of worked-out expressions of language. According to Boers et al. (2006), the knowledge of formulaic sequences of language by learners shows a strong correlation with oral fluency. Moreover, the research into psycholinguistics by Conklin and Schmitt demonstrates that people with a competent language experience employ formulaic expressions with less efforts than novel combinations of language.

On the other hand, Bardovi-Harlig (2006) confirms that knowledge of various expressions helps learners acquire pragmatic techniques to make speech acts correctly used in practice. Kasper and Rose (2002) emphasize that successful developments of pragmatics for learners depend on direct exposure to language in action and their participation in interactions.

Conversation analysis researchers have also supported the significance of formulaic expressions in conversation. Seedhouse (2004), Wong, and Waring (2010) show how the use of prepared speech patterns or structures, discourse markers, and repair markers facilitate personal participation in the conversation process and classroom settings where language is used. Thus, those researchers emphasize the relevance of naturalistic setting analysis of conversation as opposed to mere collection and analysis of speech samples.

However, no special studies have thus far looked at the situation of the implementational practice of Kurdish EFL learners in conversation due to the scarcity of analytical studies into this issue. Abdullah and Mohammed (2023) conducted a study on the use of fillers by Kurdish university EFL learners which demonstrated that the students resorted to efficient use of fillers in their speech, but this study was focused purely on the use of





fillers in performance rather than on the analysis of the entire range of expressions in conversation.

In spite of the great amount of research devoted to formulaic language analysis, very few researchers have investigated the nature and essence of the phenomena of formulaic expressions in the process of communicating. In other words, previous studies investigate the advantages regarding cognition or vocabulary, but limited attention has been paid to using this type of language in talking. The present research gap concerns the atmosphere and opportunities for the application of formulaic language by Kurdish EFL learners in conversation establishing this gap as something in need of thorough investigation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The article uses a qualitative and descriptive micro-analysis method that is derived from the Conversation Analysis (CA) theory (Sacks et al., 1974; Wong & Waring, 2010). Instead of using experimental interventions or structural testing methods, this research method investigates naturally occurring speech events and analyzes the formal and systematic mechanisms language learners use in communicating in real-time.

The main structural features that have been analyzed include turn-taking processes, transition-relevant places (TRPs), structural pauses, silent pauses, and conversation repairs (Sacks et. al., 1974). To evaluate the pragmatic outcome of these speech events, the CA method is combined with the Gricean Cooperative Principles of (1975), emphasizing the role of multiword sequences with regard to the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

3.2 Participants and Setting

The study took place at the College of Languages, Salahaddin University-Erbil (SUE) involving the researcher's selection of 20 undergraduate EFL students from the Department of English.

a. Proficiency Level: All participants were rated at the intermediate proficiency band according to institutional placement system of SUE and academic progress tracking system. This proficiency level is characterized by the capability of speakers to take part in conversations while having difficulty with cognitive overload and retrieving appropriate words.

b. Participating coding system: To ensure institutional anonymity of all participants, they were coded from K.EFL 1 to K.EFL 20 in ten different dialogue pairs.

3.3 Data Collection and Corpus Description

The research project's primary instrument for collecting original data was the use of audio recordings of spontaneous speaking situations. Participants were grouped into pairs (dyads) and given verbally facilitated speaking tasks that were meant to bring out real-life discourse. The different tasks were based on key issues in everyday life in Erbil, regional culture in Kurdistan and university life in general.

In total, about ten recorded sessions resulted in about ten long conversations, each lasting between 3.5 and 5.0 minutes, with a total of 41.5 minutes of conversations in the corpus.

Table 1: Corpus Overview and Conversational Durations

Conversation Code	Participant Dyad Codes	Duration
Conv. 1	K.EFL 1 & K.EFL 2	3 min 45 sec
Conv. 2	K.EFL 3 & K.EFL 4	4 min 10 sec
Conv. 3	K.EFL 5 & K.EFL 6	3 min 50 sec
Conv. 4	K.EFL 7 & K.EFL 8	4 min 05 sec
Conv. 5	K.EFL 9 & K.EFL 10	4 min 20 sec
Conv. 6	K.EFL 11 & K.EFL 12	3 min 35 sec
Conv. 7	K.EFL 13 & K.EFL 14	4 min 15 sec
Conv. 8	K.EFL 15 & K.EFL 16	3 min 55 sec
Conv. 9	K.EFL 17 & K.EFL 18	4 min 45 sec
Conv. 10	K.EFL 19 & K.EFL 20	4 min 20 sec
Total Length	20 Participants	41 min 20 sec

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The step-by-step pipeline for processing and analyzing the conversational corpus followed a rigorous four-tiered sequence:

[Audio Recording Collection]



[Verbatim Orthographic Transcription (with CA Conventions)]



[Targeted Identification & Coding of Formulaic Language Strings]





[Micro-Analytic Turn-by-Turn Sequential Analysis (CA + Grice)]

1.Transcription: The transcripts of the variables were verbatim. The technique of transcription made use of simplified CA notations that had been derived from Wong & Waring (2010), allowing the recording of aspects of interaction that are important for spoken fluency instruction and are expressed through the use of various symbols, e.g. short pauses indicated by (.), long pauses indicated by (..), overlaps, and non-verbal cues such as [laughs].

2.Finding formulaic expressions: The obtained transcripts were checked for the presence of multiword units. For our purposes, we applied Wray's (2002) definition of formulaic language: the string is treated as a set phrase because it is memorized as a whole and retrieved as such. The identified units were organized functionally, e.g. greetings, hedging devices, epistemological phrases, discourse markers, and conversational routines (Schiffrin, 1987; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992).

3.Sequential analysis: According to the microanalytic frameworks developed by Sacks et. al. (1974) and Seedhouse (2004), all the elements of the interaction were organized according to their structural positions. It was crucial to trace whether the element occurred at the beginning, middle, or end of the turn and whether such a position had any influence on the delivery speed and hesitation management.

4.Pragmatic analysis: Finally, the interactions were analyzed against Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle that allows to assess how the elements served as a tool that facilitated interpersonal communication for the Kurdish EFL learners.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

To follow regulations concerning scientific ethics on a national and global scale, uncertainty of purpose and regulatory studies was fully compensated for by information about the research in question. Furthermore, the study participants were provided with informed consent before being recorded. It should also be noted that participation was entirely voluntary and could be withdrawn at any moment without the risk of losing respect in an academic environment. One way of protecting the privacy of participants was the removal of all names, places, and other identifiable information from the transcripts. The study participants were referred to using the numbers between K.EFL 1 and K.EFL 20.

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Introduction

A thorough investigative examination of the spoken corpus of 41.5 minutes in length is performed using 20 intermediate Kurdish EFL learners (K.EFL 1 to K.EFL 20) through 10 dyadic conversations. With the combination of the structural tracking analysis apparatuses of Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks et al., 1974) and the pragmatic parameters of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, the present analysis scrutinizes how prefabricated multiword strings serve as vital interactional tools. The data is analyzed to uncover how these chunks control turn-taking, minimize cognitive pressure, and enable social cohesion in the conversation scenarios imitating campus life in Erbil.

4.2. Typology and Frequency Distribution of Formulaic Language

The thorough structural analysis of 41.5 minutes of recorded spoken discourse of ten dialogues has yielded 187 examples of routine expressions. These expressions function as interactional means for 20 Kurdish EFL learners. In this respect, terminologically conventionalized expressions have been divided according to conventional typologies based on their usefulness in conversations

Table 2: Typology and Frequency Distribution of Formulaic Language

Functional Category	Core Examples from Kurdish EFL Corpus	Raw Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Discourse Markers and Fillers	<i>To be honest, What I mean is, Basically, By the way</i>	58	31.0%
Pragmatic Hedges and Mitigators	<i>I'm not sure if, It depends on, Don't worry about it</i>	42	22.5%
Epistemic Frames for Stance	<i>As far as I know, As far as I'm concerned, I think that if</i>	34	18.2%
Social Openers and Routines	<i>Hi, how are you doing?, Sounds good to me, It's a deal then</i>	31	16.6%
Localized Pragmatic Markers L1	<i>Wallah, Kak, Shukur</i>	22	11.7%
Total	Across 10 Conversational Transcripts	187	100.0%

Considering Table 2 and Figure 1, careful analysis of the dissemination of idioms used in speech shows that students choose to employ ready-made phrases with maximum effectiveness. The most significant group in terms



of the number of elements is that of discourse elements and pauses that constitute 31.0% of the total number of chunks. These expressions function like signals in conversation, allowing students to make smooth transitions and creating a clear pathway for others while changing the corner of thought. For example, people frequently use expressions like *To tell you the truth* or *What I mean* is when they need to clarify their message, reshape their point of view, etc. Phrases such as *Basically* and *By the way* are regularly utilized at the very beginning of speech turn to grant students sufficient time to think about the organization of their ideas without long pauses that could lead to undesired floor loss. The next frequent category of idioms includes pragmatic hedges and mitigators. These phrases take up 22.5% of the analyzed corpus. These units can be considered as essential factors for making interpersonal ties stronger when students face specific challenges when communicating. For example, expressions like *Don't worry about it* serve as a strong glue between people since this phrase is commonly repeated by students who want to support their peers in their worries. Additionally, idioms describing conditional situations such as *I am not sure if* and *It depends on* provide a level of protection for students in case they lack vocabulary and relevant background during their conversations.

Moving on with the analysis, idioms can be described in detail from the perspective of their communicative intent and cultural implications. The total number of conversations that feature idioms of this type is 16.6%. While common phrases such as *Hi, how are you doing* can serve as a predictable opening of the conversation at the beginning, idioms of the same type can be used to end the conversation as well, such as *Sounds good to me. It's a deal*, etc.

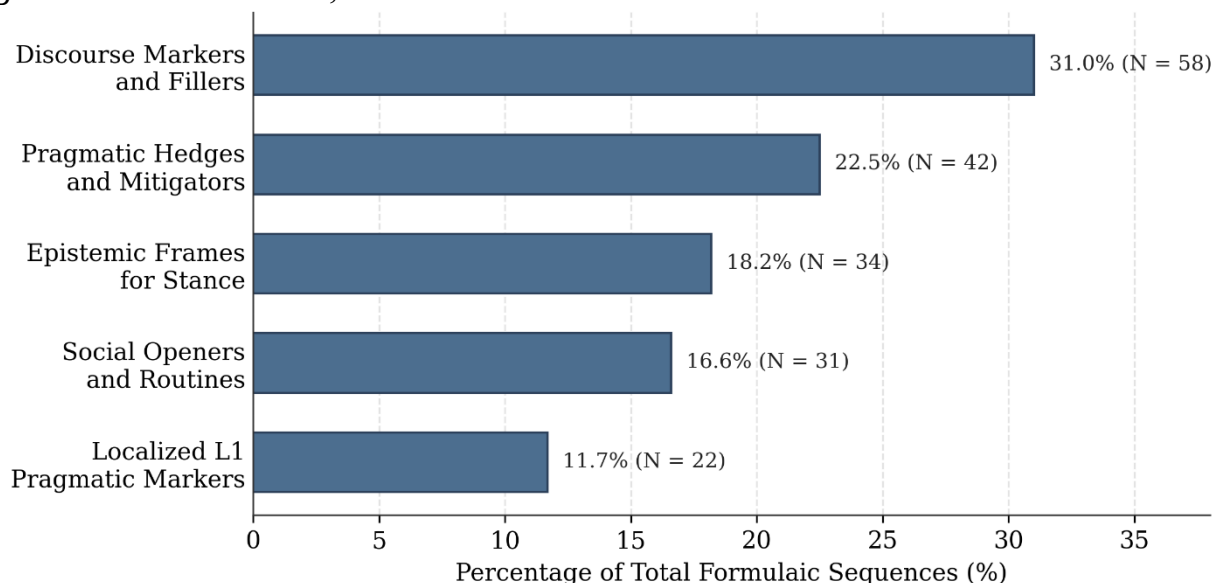


Figure 1: Typology and Frequency Distribution of Formulaic Language (N = 187).

In conclusion, findings show that the students make use of a genuinely human and culturally sensitive approach by incorporating L1 pragmatic markers within their discourse, as they constitute 11.7% of the corpus. Terms like *Wallah*, *Kak*, and *Shukur* are used without a hitch in English language conversations. These spelling out L1 words should therefore be seen as a tool people comfortably rely on, which allows them to function safely in communication by making their discourse without errors.

4.3. Sequential Turn-Taking and Disfluency Management

Examining these interactions turn by turn, it becomes clear that the strategic deployment of formulaic sequences is essential to the students' command of the mechanics of spoken communication. Upon reaching Transition Relevance Places, the relevant structural points at which a turn finishes and another speaker takes over, speakers always initiate their replies based on the use of automated turn-initial sequences. For instance, in Conversation 1, K.EFL 2 enters the conversation with the latching phrase *Exactly!* The problem is that K.EFL 2 succeeds in keeping the momentum of the conversation without even a moment's lull in the dialogue. This same conversational practice is observed in Conversation 4, where K.EFL 8 takes control of the turn with the phrase *Oh, tell me about it!* I know exactly what you mean. By applying these pre-formed phrases at the end of a turn, the speakers manage to avoid the disadvantages of the usual grammar problems. The chunk acts as a psychological key to the floor, allowing the speaker to acquire the floor almost immediately and giving him additional time for creating the more complex parts of the following utterances.

To illustrate this relationship systematically, Table 3 presents the instances of automated language production in the speech acts of the speakers in comparison with spoken/syntax utterances across all conversations.

Table 3: Micro-Sequential Comparison of Turn Transitions and Pauses

Transcript Context	Speaker Code	Conversational Trigger / Task	Interactional Strategy	Measured Pause / Disfluency Feature	Turn Outcome
Conversation 1	K.EFL 2	Agreeing on academic attendance pressure	Turn-Initial Automated Chunk: <i>Exactly! And the problem is that</i>	0.0 seconds (Latching Turn)	Immediate Floor Ownership



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Conversation 1	K.EFL 1	Retrieving specific Moodle assignment deadline	Novel Grammatical Assembly: <i>Absent formulaic sequence</i>	(..) (~2.0s Extended Silent Pause)	Processing Breakdown / Floor Vulnerability
Conversation 4	K.EFL 8	Validating peer complaints about dorm electricity	Turn-Initial Automated Chunk: <i>Oh, tell me about it! I know what you mean completely</i>	0.0 seconds (Latching Turn)	Immediate Floor Ownership
Conversation 4	K.EFL 8	Tracking personal grocery buying schedule	Novel Grammatical Assembly: <i>Absent formulaic sequence</i>	(.) (~1.0s Brief Silent Pause)	Cognitive Processing Strain
Conversation 10	K.EFL 20	Navigating a highly technical linguistics chart explanation	Mid-Turn Holding Frame: <i>Anyway, let's focus on this chart first. Um, let me think... (.)</i>	(.) (~0.5s Micro-Pause + Filler)	Turn Preserved / Successful Shift

The structural significance of these expressions is further accentuated by the contrast with instant that requires cognitive effort from a speaker without an automated utterance that takes the burden off. The disfluency features and breakdowns are especially high when illiciting information as the modal shift from general social complaints takes place. For instance, in Conversation 1 where K.EFL 1 is queried about the deadline of the upcoming assignment, the previous smooth flow of the speaker's answers collapses to the use of complexity markers: *Um, let me think....* The speech contains a significant two-second silent delay while the speaker is transferring from the state of mind where delivery is automatic to the state where he has to make conscious efforts to retrieve precise information. A similar disruption takes place during Conversation 4 where K.EFL 8 encounters a question about grocery-time and employs the same strategy: *Um, let me think....* Frequent speech breakdowns signal the existence of cognitive rubicon for everyone practicing communication skills. When a person is pushed to the necessity of switching from total

reliance on chunk retrieval to active formulation of original utterances under stress, communication becomes abundant in disfluency features. Contrary to what may happen should the speech block lead to breakdown of communication, the students employ phraseological units that work as internal bridges during their speech and allow them holding their speaking turn. In Conversation 10, when K.EFL 20 gives a complicated explanation of how to read one of the examples in linguistics, they smoothly move from the realization of mental process of planning to *Um, let me think*. In this case the initial formula keeps the interlocutor attentive while pauses and fillers provide the speaker with an opportunity to draw and formulate definitions of the terms broadening and narrowing in their mind easily and without going silent. A similar formula is observed in Conversation 7 where K.EFL 13 utilizes *Um, let me think...* in order to keep the floor and process information imbedded in the complicated explanation of the essence of corporate shift work and employment prospects.

4.4 Pragmatic Management of the Cooperative Principle

Not only do formulaic language constructions help organize turn taking but they can also be helpful in fulfilling the needs of Paul Grice's maxims. Intermediate level second language learners are regularly in danger of breaching the maxims since their vocabulary is limited and the capacity to process language is lower than that of native speakers. The collected data clearly shows that these university students do not give up their aim to communicate, instead, they make extensive use of multiword phrases that help them to comply with the Cooperative Principle. The information in Table 4 and Figure 2 demonstrates the statistics on the use of different types of multiword constructions that have been identified in the study.

Table 4: Quantitative Interaction of Speech Chunks with Gricean Maxims

Gricean Maxim	Pragmatic Interaction Type	Interactional Function of the Chunk	Raw Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Diagnostic Examples from the Corpus
Maxim of Manner (Clarity & Continuity)	Adherence & Repair	Maintaining speech flow, organizing turns, and self-repairing ambiguous text.	54	28.9%	<i>What I mean is, Basically, Anyway.</i>
	Cognitive Breakdown	Structural pausing and	18	9.6%	<i>Um, let me think... (.).</i>



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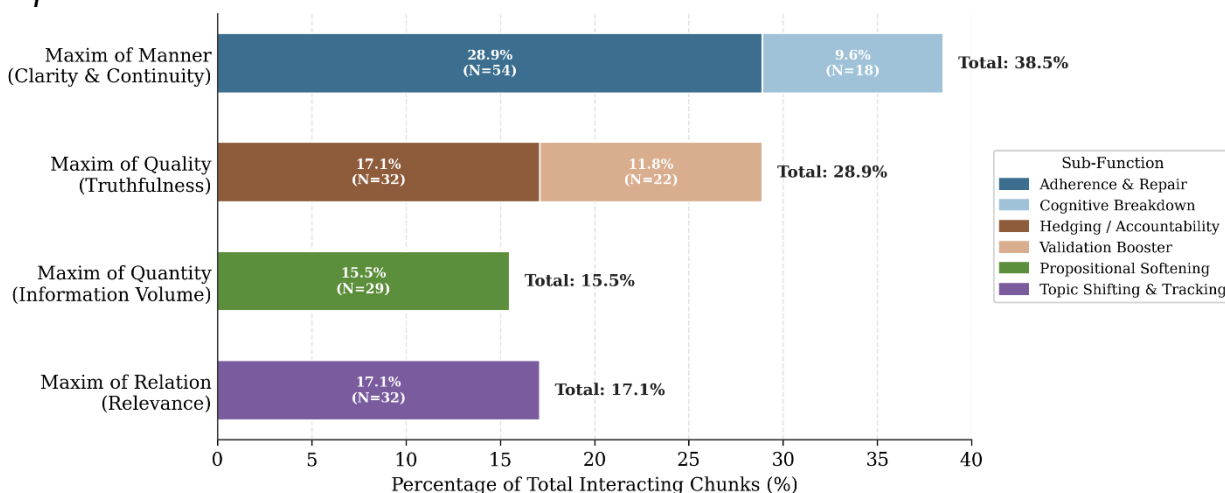


		floor-holding during lexical blockages.			
Maxim of Quality (Truthfulness)	Hedging/ Accountability	Restricting personal liability for unverified academic data.	32	17.1%	<i>As far as I know, I'm not sure if.</i>
	Validation Booster	Code-switched markers used to reinforce honesty or relief under stress.	22	11.8%	<i>Wallah, I didn't even start, Shukur.</i>
Maxim of Quantity (Information Volume)	Propositional Softening	Minimizing face-threatening assertions or scaling down instructions.	29	15.5%	<i>It depends on, Don't worry about it.</i>
Maxim of Relation (Relevance)	Topic Shifting & Tracking	Inserting regional updates or transitioning cleanly between tasks.	32	17.1%	<i>By the way, On the other hand.</i>
Total Interacting Chunks	All Categories	Socio-Interactional Maxim Management	187	100.0%	Data aggregated across all 10 dyads.

According to a detailed analysis of the data presented, the usage of a considerable number of blocks that demonstrate the Maxim of Manner (38.5%) implies that the learners care about the continuity of the conversation and the simplicity of the messages more than anything else. Learners of the intermediate level normally have communication pauses due to cognitive constraints but seem to work effectively employing holding strategies. For example, K.EFL 20 illustrates this idea in Conversation 10 when the expression Anyway, let's focus on this chart first. *Um, let me think...* represents a way of stopping while considering the responses in the foreign language and conveys to the interlocutor that



the speaker is still maintaining the floor. It should be noted that examples of self-repairs such as *What I mean* is act as an essential contribution for realizing clarity and effectiveness in the message delivery. For instance, K.EFL 12 expresses in Conversation 6 that *What I mean is*, I have to paraphrase almost everything when there is a need to clarify a vague message. This very phrase is used similarly by K.EFL 20 in Conversation 10 which states that *What I mean is*, just reading the main paragraphs won't help us now. Moreover, the information presented demonstrates that the Maxim of Quality is realized through the realization of epistemic framing and the application of pragmatic hedging devices (28.9%). This means that students use lexical clusters to express negative opinions or communicate their viewpoint without violating cooperation principles. For instance, while making a face-threatening statement regarding his failure concerning plagiarism, K.EFL 12 states that *To tell you the truth, I am feeling really bad*. This chunk lets the interlocutor know that there is some unpleasant information to be disclosed so the requirements of the Maxim of Quality can be met. This is achieved for uncertain ideas due to the usage of epistemic limitation helping to avoid possible consequences. K.EFL 20 achieves this in the course of Conversation 10 with the help of the phrase *As far as I know, her exams are based on the details mentioned in footnotes*.



Another i **Figure 2: Quantitative Interaction of Speech Chunks with Gricean Maxims (N =**
use of code-switches L1 pragmatic markers (*Wallah*, *Shukur*, *Kak*) in the situations where the Gricean Maxims are realized. It should be mentioned that instead of indicating the inability to find the right vocabulary, these markers are aimed at receiving immediate interaction protection. K.EFL 1 states in Conversation 1 that *Wallah, I didn't even start* which ensures the success of the Communication Maxim. The same idea can be found in



Conversation 2 when K.EFL 4 refers to the internship issue saying *Shukur, at least the university is trying to do something for us* and the same technique is used by K.EFL 16 in Conversation 8 stating *Shukur, I thought he would reject it because of the upcoming final exams*.

5. Discussion of the Results

The study provides empirical data on the connections between the use of formulaic language, turn-taking and pragmatics among students learning English as a foreign language in Kurdistan. The transcripts of the conversations analyzed through the framework of Conversation Analysis and Gricean pragmatics confirm that the formulaic sequences perform the role of speaking devices, giving opportunities to second language users to handle the difficulty of thinking quickly and limitations imposed by interlocutors in specific moments of conversation. Out of the total number of 187 formulaic sequences identified in the transcripts, it is possible to see a heavy reliance on discourse markers, fillers and pragmatic hedges, which constitute more than half of the analyzed speech. This structural combination aligns closely with the positions expressed by Wray (2002) and Schmitt (2004), who speak of the processes of retrieving the formulaic language formulas from memory absolutely formed. For intermediate learners, who often experience difficulties with lexical access and assembling syntactic constructions, these clusters are of great importance from the perspective of psycholinguistics, especially because the data show fast processing of chunks similar to the findings of Conklin and Schmitt (2008), who proved that processing of formulas is significantly faster than processing of new expressions. In contrast to earlier local Kurdish studies, such as the work of Abdullah and Mohammed (2023), which focused primarily on the structure of non-lexical fillers as manifestations of disfluent speech, the current research emphasizes that formulaic expressions can usefully serve as tools for enhancing interactional efficiency of speech. Based on this, we suggest that instead of arguing that people hesitate due to their failure in language it is necessary to see how multiword phrases may facilitate conversations. Thus, it is confirmed that the extended use of multi-word expressions increases fluency of the overall conversation. In the end, this methodology allows to answer the first research question of this paper.

Micro-analytic tracking of turn-taking provides insights into the physical performance of student interactions. According to early works in Conversation Analysis by Sacks et al. (1974), taking a turn means to be precise and fast in producing speech. The transcripts suggest that the use of formulaic expressions enables EFL Kurdish learners achieve

immediate taking of the floor without any turn-stealing. For instance, at the beginning of Conversation 1, K.EFL 2 engages in the conversation for the first time without any gap, saying, *Exactly! But the problem is that*, thus maintaining the continuity of conversation without any delay. The same behavior can be found in Conversation 4, where K.EFL 8 starts sharing their thoughts at the moment of taking the turn, saying, *Oh, tell it! I know what you mean*. As it can be seen, the speakers manage to entirely bypass the obstacles that would have prevented them from engaging in conversation without the use of automatic language. Thus, the automation serves as a psychological key, allowing them to quickly own the floor in a minimal lapse of time before they start adding some unknown information into their speech. The study shows that the strategic use of chunks leads to a larger performance of turn-initial utterances and reduced turn gaps.

The importance of the use of formulaic expressions brings changes to how we consider the situations when the speaker has to bear serious mental load and doesn't have a chunk to rely on. The moment the subject changes from shared social problems to challenges that require precise information or tracking of data, we can observe a serious distress in fluency indicators, which was shown, for instance, in Conversation 1. When asked about the deadline for an assignment, K.EFL 1 changes from smooth delivery to a hesitating *Um, let me think...*, after which a pause occurs. The pause is two seconds long and the participant shows the effort he has to make in order to access the required conceptual content. Almost the same breakdown takes place in Conversation 4, when K.EFL 8 is put on the spot by discussing grocery shopping. DeKeyser (2007) and Segalowitz (2010) make claims regarding the cut-off point between automatic processing and effortful grammatical assembly. However, as Seedhouse (2004) and Wong & Waring (2010) note, classroom conversations have their adaptive interactional design. Instead of being forced to lose the floor, students take advantage of mid-turn holding mechanisms. For example, during the 10th conversation, K.EFL 20 is involved in a complex academic struggle. The speaker moves from the planning stage with the help of the phrases, *Anyway, let's focus on this chart first...* to discussions. The same approach can be seen in the videos of the conversations when K.EFL 13 uses *um, let me think...* to keep the turn while processing the explanation.

6. Conclusions & Suggestions

6.1. Conclusions

The conclusions that were made as part of this research can be summarized as follows:



1. Language chunks are essential for intermediate learners of Kurdish English as they perform a significant role in interaction.
2. In the process of communication, speakers utilize different discourse markers and hedging expressions.
3. The phrases that are learnt in advance can effectively remove any delays while switching between speakers.
4. Switching from standard phrases to new constructions causes significant pauses, speaking interruptions, and long hesitations.
5. Multiword units serve as pragmatic switches that help the learners adhere to the rules of conversation and avoid violations of the maxims of conversation.
6. The classroom theory and practice should include items constituting the speaking strategies rather than take these items as signs of poor language usage.

6.2. Suggestions for Further Studies

The results provide evidence both of the way students deal with spoken English as well as of some potential routes for further research:

1. Increase the range of participants to investigate the use of formulaic language among people at different proficiency levels (beginners vs. advanced speakers) and use additional sociolinguistic factors (e.g., gender).
2. Adopt a new methodology that involves continuous observation of various contexts of spoken language (both formal and informal) and using corpus software to obtain precise measurements of pauses in speech.

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