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ORIGINAL

A Pragmatic Analysis of Wish Strategies Used by Iraqi EFL Learners

Un análisis pragmático de las estrategias de deseos utilizadas por Los estudiantes iraquíes de inglés como lengua extranjera

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to examine the challenges encountered by Iraqi EFL university learners when using 'wish expressions' at both the recognitive and productive levels. This study aimed to offer a theoretical overview of the syntactic constructions of explicit and implicit wish expressions, along with their semantic and pragmatic functions. The study identified a lack of awareness among Iraqi EFL University learners regarding strategies for expressing 'wish'. Many learners in Iraqi EFL universities tend to use explicit expressions rather than implicit ones when communicating. In order to fulfil the objectives of the study and validate its hypotheses, the researcher devised a diagnostic test consisting of two sections: productive and precognitive. The researcher asked the study sample to express their 'wish' in various situations. The recognitive part of the study involved situations where respondents were required to identify illocutionary forces associated with the expression of 'wish'. The study's findings clearly showed that the majority of participants in the sample expressed their wishes explicitly rather than implicitly. The study drew several conclusions. Firstly, the results of the study revealed that wishes can convey both positive and negative desires, like the intention to bless or curse someone. Secondly, the study conclusively validated its hypotheses by demonstrating that the subjects performed better at the production level than at the precognitive level.

Keywords: Formulaic Subjunctive; Fossilized Idioms; Unfulfilled Wish.

RESUMEN

El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar los desafíos que enfrenta la universidad iraquí de inglés como lengua extranjera al utilizar "expresiones de deseos" tanto en el nivel cognitivo como en el productivo. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo ofrecer una visión teórica de las construcciones sintácticas de expresiones de deseo explícitas e implícitas, junto con sus funciones semánticas y pragmáticas. El estudio identificó una falta de conciencia entre los estudiantes iraquíes de la Universidad EFL con respecto a las estrategias para expresar "deseos". Muchos estudiantes de las universidades iraquíes de inglés como lengua extranjera tienden a utilizar expresiones explícitas en lugar de implícitas cuando se comunican. Para cumplir con los objetivos del estudio y validar sus hipótesis, el investigador ideó una prueba diagnóstica que consta de dos apartados: productivo y precognitivo. El investigador pidió a la muestra del estudio que expresara su 'deseo' en diversas situaciones. La parte cognitiva del estudio involucró situaciones en las que se pidió a los encuestados que identificaran fuerzas ilocucionarias asociadas con la expresión del "deseo". Los resultados del estudio mostraron claramente que la mayoría de los participantes de la muestra expresaron sus deseos de forma explícita y no implícita. El estudio sacó varias conclusiones. En primer lugar, los resultados del

estudio revelaron que los deseos pueden transmitir deseos tanto positivos como negativos, como la intención de bendecir o maldecir a alguien. En segundo lugar, el estudio validó de manera concluyente sus hipótesis al demostrar que los sujetos se desempeñaron mejor en el nivel de producción que en el nivel precognitivo.

Palabras clave: Subjuntivo Formulario; Modismos Fossilizados; Deseo Incumplido.

INTRODUCTION

'Wishes' are expressed through language, whether they are both fulfilled and unfulfilled. In English, fulfilled wishes are conveyed through a variety of linguistic techniques, including main verbs, auxiliary verbs, invocation, imprecation, passive, imperative, stereotyped phrases, fossilized wishes, and miscellaneous types. Wishes are not associated with reality; rather, they are a desire or yearning for something. They can be expressed explicitly or implicitly, with the primary verb 'wish' being the most explicit. For instance,

1. "They *wish* they didn't have to repeat the course."⁽¹⁾
2. "*Wish* me good luck."⁽²⁾
3. "I *wish* you to leave now."⁽³⁾

'Wishes' are expressed through language, whether they are both fulfilled and unfulfilled. In English, fulfilled wishes are conveyed through a variety of linguistic techniques, including main verbs, auxiliary verbs, invocation, imprecation, passive, imperative, stereotyped phrases, fossilized wishes, and miscellaneous types. Wishes are not associated with reality; rather, they are a desire or yearning for something. They can be expressed explicitly or implicitly, with the primary verb 'wish' being the most explicit. For instance,

4. "I hope it doesn't rain tomorrow."⁽⁴⁾
5. "I'd prefer you not to do it."⁽⁵⁾
6. "I want to tell you how much we enjoyed last night."⁽⁶⁾
7. "I'd love to be able to travel round the world."⁽⁷⁾
8. "It's time you went."⁽⁸⁾
9. "So help *me God!*"⁽⁹⁾

Research Problem

The core issue lies in the failure of the majority of Iraqi EFL learners to recognize implicit wish expressions, resulting in their direct use of the verb wish to express wishes. Likewise, most Iraqi EFL students lack linguistic knowledge about wish expressions, which leads them to use incorrect verb tense when expressing wishes—the past tense should come after. Finally, most Iraqi EFL students are unaware of other strategies for indicating "wish."

Aims of the Study

1. Providing theoretical background on the syntactic constructions of explicit and implicit wish expressions, as well as the semantic and pragmatic functions of such expressions.
2. Identifying through a diagnostic test how well Iraqi EFL university students recognize and produce wish expressions.
3. Determine the causes of errors in recognizing and producing such expressions.

Hypotheses of the Study

The present study is based on the following four hypotheses:

1. Most Iraqi EFL learners face more difficulty in recognizing implicit wishes.
2. Most of EFL learners tend to use explicit wish expressions more than the implicit ones.
3. Most of EFL learners tend to use the present tense after the verb wish instead of using the past form of the verb.
4. It is hypothesized that most Iraqi EFL Learners perform better at the recognition level than in production.

Aims of the Study

The study aims at:

1. Presenting theoretical background on the syntactic construction of wish expressions explicitly and implicitly
2. Identifying Iraqi EFL university students' performance in recognizing and producing these expressions.

3. Identifying the Iraqi EFL university students' performance in recognizing and producing wish expressions by conducting a diagnostic test.

Limits of the Study

The study is limited to fourth-year students at the Department of English, College of Arts, University of Al Qadisiyah, from 2023-2024, chosen due to their familiarity with the subject and their ability to understand and produce expressions in English.

Significance of the Study

This study provides valuable insights into wish expressions, offering theoretical and practical insights for researchers. It can help teachers identify areas of weakness in students' use of wish expressions, benefit scholars by providing a wider perspective on different expressions of wish, and assist syllabus designers in taking remedial actions. The practical material can also be beneficial for teachers, as it helps them identify areas of weakness in students' performance.

The Concept of Wish

According to The New Webster Dictionary of the English Language (1984: s.v. wish), wishing refers to the act of desiring or longing for something. One may desire to possess or embody a certain quality or attribute, or to express a desire for something to happen to someone, to curse, or to call upon (to wish harm upon) someone. A wish is a manifestation of longing, a plea, a petition.⁽¹⁰⁾

1. "I wish I owned a yacht."⁽¹¹⁾
2. I wish I were as handsome as he is.⁽¹²⁾
3. "They wish her success in her new career."⁽¹³⁾
4. "God bless you!"⁽¹⁴⁾
5. "Heaven destroys him!"⁽¹⁵⁾
6. "I'd like you to hold the door open for me."⁽¹⁶⁾

Leech (1989) points out that "To wish is to want what is not happening, or what did not happen". Long (1962) assumes that "wishing may involve rejection of possibility".

7. I wish I were a good mechanic.

According to Filipovic (1984), a wish is defined as anything that is not a reality or fact, but rather a desire or something that is hoped for. Praninskas (1975) also notes that a "wish" frequently pertains to anything that is not true or goes against the facts. We desire things that are currently beyond our possession, and we long for events that are impossible to occur.⁽¹⁷⁾

8. Jason wishes he had a car.
9. Miss Liu wishes that she had studied English in high school.

According to Azar (2003), wishes are expressed when one desires a change in reality. Swan (2005) sees wish as "wanting something that is impossible or that does not seem probable, or being sorry that things are not different".⁽¹⁸⁾

10. I wish I could fly.
11. I wish I had more money.
12. If only I knew more people.

Types of Wish Strategies

Explicit Wish

Wishes are expressed explicitly by the verb wish. According to Quirk et al. (1985), wish is a volitional verb.⁽¹⁹⁾ The New Webster Dictionary of the English Language (1984) defines volition as "having the power to will; originating in the will; used in expressing a wish."⁽²⁰⁾ The transitive verb wish is used. It may function as a monotransitive or ditransitive verb. According to Biber et al. (1999), the verb wish is a cognition verb; thus, it may function as a complex-transitive verb.⁽²¹⁾

1. Wish as a Monotransitive Verb

Wish is a monotransitive verb that can be followed by a variety of constructions, each of which carries a specific meaning with a specific time reference. First, the construction (that past subjunctive) may be used

to follow the verb wish. The subjunctive is employed in the nominal clause that follows the verb “wish” to denote the distance from reality.⁽²²⁾ The past subjunctive, according to Onions (1978), does not refer to the past; rather, it denotes the unreality of a current situation.⁽²³⁾ According to House and Harman (1950), the past subjunctive form’s significance is typically not past, but rather present or future.⁽²⁴⁾ Graver (1971) observes that the past tense is employed to convey an unreal situation that is currently occurring.⁽²⁵⁾ According to Leech (1989), the nominal clause that reflects a situation that does not exist in the present is characterized by the use of the past form of the verb.⁽²⁶⁾ The subjunctive “were” is employed with both singular and plural subjects, which violates the concord rule, as per Quirk et al. (1985).⁽²⁷⁾ Conversely, the indicative was may also be implemented in these types of constructions. Consider the following examples:

1. “I wish I were a millionaire.”⁽²⁸⁾
2. Mike wishes he had a job.
3. “I wish she was not married.”⁽²⁹⁾

Cook et al. (1977) illustrate that the past continuous can be employed in that clause to convey future meaning; however, it also signifies the non-fulfillment of the wish⁽³⁰⁾:

4. I wish you were coming tomorrow.

The initiator believes that the recipient is not coming tomorrow which makes the wish unfulfilled.

According to Leech (1989), the past perfect tense used in a that-clause expresses remorse or sorrow over a former circumstance or conduct.⁽³¹⁾

5. I wish I had gone to that party last night.
6. Do you ever wish you’d remained single instead of marrying?

Secondly, the construction (that)+would may be utilized to follow the verb wish. This construction implies that the wisher may wish for a change in a person’s behavior, an event to occur, or to express dissatisfaction with the current situation or a polite request.⁽³²⁾

7. I wish people wouldn’t leave this door open.
8. I wish Simon would reply to my letter.
9. I wish he wouldn’t smoke.

According to Hornby (1982), the speaker’s use of “wish” indicates that they do not anticipate obedience⁽³³⁾. Thomson and Martinet (1986) provide an example in which the phrase “I wish you would” is utilized as a response to an offer without any indication of dissatisfaction. According to Jespersen (1962), “would is further employed in wishes not only when the fulfillment is contingent upon the subject’s will.”⁽³⁴⁾ The use of “would” is indicated by Leech (1989) when the verb in the “that” clause is an action verb and the time reference is future.⁽³⁵⁾

10. A: Shall I help you check the accounts?
B: I wish you would.

Jespersen (1962) states that: “would is further used in wishes not only when the fulfillment depends on the will of the subject”.⁽³⁶⁾ Leech (1989) points out that ‘would’ is used when the verb of *that-clause* is an action verb and the time reference is future.⁽³⁷⁾

11. I wish the weather would get warmer.

Werner et al. (1985) state that wishes regarding events that have already occurred may be expressed through the use of “would” or “could” with “have” and the past participle.⁽³⁸⁾ For example:

12. She wishes she could have come.
13. I wish you would have told me about this.

Gordon and Krylova (1974) demonstrate that the term “might” can be employed in a that-clause as a substitute for “would” or “could”.⁽³⁹⁾

14. I wish I might go round the world.

2. *Wish as a Ditransitive Verb*

'Wish' may be used as a ditransitive verb, which means that it can accept both an indirect and direct object. This construction expresses the wisher's desire for something to happen. This construction is typically employed to convey well intentions.⁽⁴⁰⁾

15. We wish you a happy New Year.

3. *Wish as a Complex Transitive Verb*

Because wish is considered a cognition verb, it may appear as a complex transitive verb. According to Quirk et al. (1985), the verb wish accepts an adjective phrase as its object complement. In addition, the complement could be an adjunct.⁽⁴¹⁾

16. He wished them at the bottom of the sea.
17. He'll wish himself dead.

In formal writing, wish can be followed by an infinitive to convey the meaning of want. This construction has the force of order.⁽⁴²⁾

18. I wish him to visit me again.

Implicit Wish

Wishes can be implicitly expressed using a variety of devices, including *main verbs, auxiliary verbs, imperatives, non-sentences, and other constructions*. This respect, understanding the illocutionary force of 'wish' is dependent upon the context of the act initiated.

1. *Main Verbs*

Some lexical verbs indicate the sense of wishing and can be utilized for conveying desire. These verbs are hope, would like, prefer, want, love, and desire. According to Leech and Svartvik (1994), all of these verbs allude to a state of mind or emotion.⁽⁴³⁾ Biber et al. (1999) describe these verbs as cognitive verbs that "represent mental states or attitudes, often indicating the epistemological status of the information".⁽⁴⁴⁾ Each topic is briefly discussed below.

Hope

The verb *hope* expresses the notion of want while implying the fact that the wisher expects the wish to be fulfilled. According to Leech and Svartvik (1994), the *will+bare infinitive* may be employed in that phrase, with the desire to have future reference:⁽⁴⁵⁾

19. I (very much) *hope (that)* he *will arrive* on time.

When the main sentence and that-clause have the same subject, the verb *hope* may be followed by an infinitive or a clause; otherwise, hope is followed by a clause. Crowell (1964) demonstrated that *may* or *could* may be used in a formal manner, while *will* or *would* may be used in a less formal way.⁽⁴⁶⁾

20. I *hope to see* him again.
21. I *hope I will see* him again.
22. I *hope that he will visit* me again.
23. I *hope he may succeed*.

When hope is expressed in the past perfect, the structure shows the wish's failure to be fulfilled. Dart (1982) defines the usage of *would+ the basic form of the verb* in that-clause as an unmet desire.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Furthermore, Hornby (1982) assumes that *hope* might be followed by the preposition 'for'.⁽⁴⁸⁾

24. I *had hoped* that Jennifer *would become* a doctor but she wasn't good enough in science.
25. Ferdinand Magellan *hoped* that he *would go* around the world.
26. I'm *hoping for* news of his safe arrival.

Would like

The word "would like" is followed by the infinitive. Furthermore, it is employed primarily for conversation (Crowell, 1964).⁽⁴⁹⁾ Close (1979) and Leech (1989) agree that "would like" is employed to indicate wishes for the future.⁽⁵⁰⁾

27. We'd like the meeting to take place as soon as possible.

“Would-like” is a polite way to express the meaning of a wish. A query with would-like suggests an invitation, whereas a statement with would-like implies a polite request.⁽⁵¹⁾

28. The doctor said “Would you like to come in now?”⁽⁵²⁾
 29. “I'd like two kilos of tomatoes, please.”⁽⁵³⁾

According to Leech and Svartvik (1994), *would like* is used express one's wishes and the wishes of others⁽⁵⁴⁾:

30. I *would like* to stay in an inexpensive hotel.
 31. *Would you like* me to open these letters?

On the other hand, Close (1979) says that the construction “would+ have+ liked+ to infinitive” has past reference⁽⁵⁵⁾:

32. I *would have liked* (then) to have seen it.

Would Prefer

“Would prefer” is used to express one's own wishes or to invite wishes of others⁽⁵⁶⁾:

33. “We'd prefer there to be an adult in charge.”⁽⁵⁷⁾
 34. “Would you prefer to start early?”⁽⁵⁸⁾

According to Hornby (1982), ‘should’ may be used instead of would and both of them are contracted as “'d”.⁽⁵⁹⁾ ‘Would prefer’ may occur as a *monotransitive, ditransitive, or complex transitive verb*:

35. I *should prefer* you to start early.
 36. *Would you prefer* to stay at home this evening?
 37. *Would you prefer* me not to come tomorrow?

Want

Want The most common definition of want in modern use is “to desire or wish for”.⁽⁶⁰⁾ Utilizing the present tense signifies a fulfilled want, while the past tense conveys an unfulfilled wish). ‘Want’ is a cognitive verb; hence, it may appear as a complicated transitive verb.⁽⁶¹⁾

38. “Your landlady *wants* you to post these letters.”⁽⁶²⁾
 39. “We *wanted* to establish peace.”⁽⁶³⁾

Love

According to Close (1979) and Leech (1989), the phrase “would love+ to infinitive” is used to express future reference. In a comparable way, Gramley and Patzold (1992) assert that the construction of the word “love” with the infinitive form of a verb signifies an intended action in the future. The preposition “for” may be used after the word “love” with the same meaning.⁽⁶⁴⁾

40. “Would love her to come.”⁽⁶⁵⁾
 41. I *love to sit* there.
 42. I *love him to sit* there.
 43. “I *love for him to sit* there.”⁽⁶⁶⁾

Desire

The word “desire,” as defined in the Oxford Student's Dictionary of English (2001: s. v. desire), signifies the act of wanting or wishing for something. According to The New Webster Dictionary of the English Language, the word desire is used to convey desires.⁽⁶⁷⁾ Desire is classified as a cognitive verb and may function as a complex transitive verb.⁽⁶⁸⁾ The word “desire” may be used with either a that-clause or a to-infinitive to express the wisher's desire, which implies a request. Consider the following examples from⁽⁶⁹⁾:

44. He *desires* that you should see him.
 45. She *desired* me *to write* a poem.

According to Willis (1984), the indicative mood may be used with the word “*desire*” to express circumstances

that are not based on facts.⁽⁷⁰⁾

46. We *desire* that this application form **be** filled out in triplicate.

2. Auxiliary Verbs

Some auxiliary verbs can be used to express wishes. The auxiliaries will, shall and should are used to express implicit wishes. Swan (2005) says “Will is used mostly in ‘interpersonal’ ways, to express wishes that affect other people through orders, requests, offers, promises”. For example:

47. Will you open the window? (request)

Thomson and Martinet (1986) suggest that “would like” might be substituted with “will”.⁽⁷¹⁾

48. “A. *Would* you like coffee?
B. *Will* you have coffee?”⁽⁷²⁾

Hornby (1982) states that “Shall with a noun or a third person pronoun asks about the wishes of the person to whom the question is put”.⁽⁷³⁾ To consult someone’s wishes shall I/we may be used. It expresses an offer for help. Shall I/we may give the same meaning of ‘would you like’. For instance:

49. *Shall* the postman wait?
50. *Shall* he carry your bags upstairs?
51. *Shall I* fix the laptop for you?
52. “Shall they carry the box into the house for her?”⁽⁷⁴⁾

Quirk et al. (1985) described imperatives as “sentences with no overt grammatical subject and a verb in the imperative.”⁽⁷⁵⁾ According to Leech (1989), specific commands may be used to express good wishes. Such desires have a current or future significance; hence, they are fulfilled.⁽⁷⁶⁾

53. “Have a good time!”⁽⁷⁷⁾

Baily (1996) highlights that desires may be expressed by using the base form of the verb “be” followed by a continuous verb form. Furthermore, Bolinger (1977) observes that the perfect tense may be used in commands to express a desire or aspiration.⁽⁷⁸⁾ According to Finny (2002), some commands that express wishes have a clear and explicit subject.⁽⁷⁹⁾

54. “Please, *be thinking* about me.”⁽⁸⁰⁾
55. “Please, *don’t have come* now.”⁽⁸¹⁾

As for Wallman (1993), imperatives with **let** may express wishes.⁽⁸²⁾ First person or third person may be used with ‘let’. Hornby (1982) points out that *wishes* can be conveyed by using the passive form with ‘let’⁽⁸³⁾:

56. *Let* us proceed!
57. *Let* anyone know that.
58. “Let justice be done.”⁽⁸⁴⁾

3. Non-sentences

Non-sentences are categorized as “fragmentary” since they lack the typical required structure. Quirk et al. (1985) classifies these types as irregular sentences due to their deviation from the typical patterns of clause arrangement.⁽⁸⁵⁾ According to Crystal (1988), “minor sentences” are sentences that contain irregular patterns which cannot be easily understood as a succession of clause components.⁽⁸⁶⁾ Everyday language employs several forms of succinct expressions. Subsequent repetitions of these sentences might be used to articulate one’s desires.

Subordinate Clauses

In non-sentences, the subordinate clauses involve the omission of the matrix clause. Wishes may be expressed either by, to infinitive, if only, or that-clause (Quirk et al. 1985).⁽⁸⁷⁾ A common type of to-infinitive subordinate clauses is to think that such expressions are usually end with exclamation mark for they have the illocutionary force of exclamation. Thus, they are called “exclamatory wishes”. Usually, these constructions are introduced

by the interjection form ‘oh’.

59. *To think that* I was once a millionaire!

60. *Oh*, to be free!

Palmer (1976); Hornby (1982), and Eastwood (2000) agree that exclamatory wishes can be expressed by if only with the form of the verb that is suitable to be used in conditional clauses.^(88,89,90) Such an expression conveys the same meaning of the verb *wish* but it is more emphatic. Moreover, the same tenses that are used with the verb *wish* can be used with if only with the same time reference. The expression ‘if only’ is used to express regret.

61. *“If only I understood* what you are saying!”⁽⁹¹⁾

62. *“If only Simon would (could) replay* to my letter!”⁽⁹²⁾

Yule (1998) refers to ‘if only’ as “exceptional conditions”⁽⁹³⁾. This form of condition mostly serves “to draw attention to the very exceptional circumstances required for the situation in the main clause to take place”. Alexander (1997) and Eastwood (2000) note that the present tense might be employed with if just to indicate a hope regarding the future.⁽⁹⁴⁾

63. If only he gets this job, it will make a great deal of difference.

Another kind of subordinate clauses is “*that clause*”. Long (1962) and Onions (1978) agree that “*that clause*” expresses exclamatory unfulfilled wishes with present reference. Such expressions often begin with the interjection *oh* and end with the exclamation mark. these expressions, involve subject-verb inversion when *oh* stands alone as introducing word.⁽⁹⁵⁾

64. *Oh that* I were there!

65. *Oh that* it were not so!

Optative Subjunctive

The optative subjunctive, also called ‘formulaic subjunctive’, consists of the base form of the verb. It occurs in fixed types of expressions that convey wishes. Such expressions are termed by Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) and Alexander (1997) as “fossilised idioms.” Huddleston (1988) terms them “jussive constructions.” Baily (1996) states that the subjunctive formulae may be used as “damatory phrases.” Quirk et al. (1985) demonstrate that such expressions have the force of will. Let or may are other ways to convey them.⁽⁹⁶⁾

66. *“God bless you!”*⁽⁹⁷⁾

67. *“Heaven forbid!”*⁽⁹⁸⁾

Some non-sentences introduced by the auxiliary “may” involve “subject-verb inversion.” These constructions are used to express blessings or curses, as stated by Miller (1952) and Quirk et al. (1985). House and Harman (1950) term such constructions as “modal subjunctive” or “potential subjunctive”.⁽⁹⁹⁾

68. *“May he never know sorrow!”*⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

69. *“May you break your neck!”*⁽¹⁰¹⁾

Ehrlich and Murphy (1976); and Quirk et al. (1985) agree that would (to God) is another kind of formula that expresses wishes by the optative subjunctive. This construction is followed by a *that*-clause with the past form of the verb⁽¹⁰²⁾:

70. *“Would (to God) that I’d never heard of him!”*⁽¹⁰³⁾

71. *“Would that you made decisions more carefully.”*⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

Verbless Clauses

“Verbless clauses” may be utilized to express “exclamatory wishes”. According to Quirk et al. 1985), these kinds of expressions may be introduced by “now” or the interjection “oh”:

72. *Oh* for another glimpse of her!

73. *Now* for a good hot bath!

Onions (1978) terms “wish” that may involve the omission of the verb as “elliptical wishes”.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Wallman

(1993) mentions that such wishes have future reference therefore they are fulfilled wishes:

74. “More power to your elbow!”⁽¹⁰⁶⁾

According to Leech and Svartvik (1994), some wishes can be conveyed by the construction “adjective+noun” which is used to denote *good wishes, seasonal greetings, and congratulations*:⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

75. Good luck!

76. Happy birthday (to you).

METHOD

It is worth mentioning that the type of study is empirical. The researcher used “diagnostic test” due to its suitability for the type and nature of the current research subject matter. The test consisted of two questions. The first one was designed to measure the subjects’ responses at the recognition level. It included twenty-five items, which may or may not express wishes. The subjects were required to tick the items that conveyed ‘wishes’. The second question measures the subjects’ production of wish expressions. It consisted of twenty-five situations. The subjects were requested to respond to each other by using different wish expressions. All the test item scores were equally distributed. Ethically, the subjects were requested to leave their papers anonymized to avoid any embarrassment in the event of failure. The researchers used the SPSS statistical programme to analyse the results of the test due to its statistical accuracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part is dedicated to analysing the results of the test in terms of both recognition and production.

Subjects’ Performance at the Recognition Level

The first question measures the subjects’ performance at the recognition level. The results obtained on each item are shown in the following table:

Item	No. of Correct Responses	Percentage	No. of Incorrect Responses	Percentage
1	36	36 %	64	64 %
2	90	90 %	10	10 %
3	23	23 %	77	77 %
4	21	21 %	79	79 %
5	53	53 %	47	47 %
6	94	94 %	6	6 %
7	73	73 %	27	27 %
8	32	32 %	68	68 %
9	49	49 %	61	61 %
10	52	52 %	48	48 %
11	28	28 %	72	72 %
12	23	23 %	77	77 %
13	51	51 %	49	49 %
14	29	29 %	71	71 %
15	31	31 %	69	69 %
16	74	74 %	26	26 %
17	95	95 %	5	5 %
18	51	51 %	49	49 %
19	46	44 %	56	546 %
20	32	32 %	68	68 %
21	32	32 %	68	68 %
22	35	35 %	65	65 %
23	37	37 %	63	63 %
24	53	53 %	47	47 %
25	25	50 %	50	50 %
Total	1184	47,36	1316	52,64 %

The table above illustrates that the total number of correct responses at the recognition level is (1184, 47,36 %), whereas the total number of incorrect responses is (1316, 52,64 %).

Surprisingly, some subjects did not recognise the explicit wish expressions in items (6) and (18). The numbers of incorrect responses for items (6) and (18) are (6) and (5), respectively. Accordingly, there are 11 incorrect responses, which denote that 0,83 % of the incorrect responses indicate that there are some subjects who have failed to recognise explicit wish expressions. It is hypothesised that “most Iraqi EFL learners face more difficulty in recognising implicit wishes.” The high rate of incorrect responses validates this hypothesis since the first question consists of twenty-five items. Two items are explicit wishes, while the others are implicit.

Table 2. Frequency and Rate of Subjects' Performance in Question (2): The Production Level

Item	No. of Correct Responses	Percentage	No. of Incorrect Responses	Percentage
1	27	27 %	73	73 %
2	55	55 %	45	45 %
3	29	29 %	71	71 %
4	26	26 %	74	74 %
5	34	34 %	66	66 %
6	29	29 %	71	71 %
9	27	27 %	73	73 %
10	25	25 %	75	75 %
11	43	43 %	57	57 %
12	43	43 %	57	57 %
13	29	29 %	71	71 %
14	21	21 %	79	79 %
15	20	20 %	80	80 %
16	28	28 %	72	72 %
17	36	36 %	64	64 %
18	17	17 %	83	83 %
19	11	11 %	89	89 %
20	36	36 %	64	64 %
21	20	20 %	80	80 %
22	55	55 %	45	45 %
23	32	32 %	68	68 %
24	59	59 %	41	41 %
25	43	43 %	57	57 %
Total	800	32 %	1700	68 %

The results presented in table 2 show that most of the subjects face serious difficulties in producing wish expressions since the total number of correct responses is 800, or 32 %, whereas the total number of incorrect responses is 1700, or 68 %. The subjects' responses also reveal that most of them tend to use the verb wish to express wishes more than the implicit constructions. This is illustrated in table 3, which presents the number and percentage of each construction used correctly by the subjects (the percentage is calculated out of the total number of correct responses for the production level, which is 800).

Table 3. The Subjects' Usages of Wish Constructions with Percentage

Construction	No. of Correct Responses	Percentage
Wish+ Past Subjunctive	27	3,375 %
Wish+ Would (Could)	235	29,375 %
Wish (Ditransitive)	10	1,25 %
Wish+ to Infinitive	223	27,875 %
Wish+ Object+ Complement	0	0 %
Want	57	7,125 %
Hope	97	12,125 %
Would like	100	12,5 %
Would Prefer	6	0,75 %
Love	22	2,75 %
Desire	10	12,25 %
Will	2	0,25 %
Shall	3	0,375 %
Command	5	0,625 %
Let	0	0 %

Would rather	0	0 %
It's time	0	0 %
If only	0	0 %
Verbless clause	3	0,375 %
Passive subjunctive	0	0 %
Total	800	100 %

The table above illustrates that the total number of explicit wish expressions used correctly by the subjects is 495, which represents 61,875 % of the total number of correct responses at the production level, whereas all the other constructions represent 305,38,125 % of the correct responses. In the second hypothesis, it is hypothesised that “most EFL learners tend to use explicit wish expressions more than the implicit ones.” The results obtained from table 3 validate this hypothesis. Most of the subjects’ responses indicate that they prefer to use the present tense after the verb “wish” rather than the past form of the verb. At the production level, the total number of incorrect responses is 1700, and the total number of such responses is 1022, which accounts for 60,117 % of the total. As for the third hypothesis of the study, which reads, “Most EFL learners tend to use the present tense after the verb wish instead of using the past form of the verb,” The test results clearly confirm the validity of this hypothesis.

Subjects’ Overall Performance in the Whole Test

The performance of the subjects of the study in the whole test at the recognitive and performative levels is shown in table 4 below:

Level	No. of Correct Responses	Percentage	Number of Correct Responses	Percentage
Recognitive	1118	47,36 %	1316	52,64 %
Productive	800	32 %	1700	68 %
Total	1984	39,68 %	3016	60,32 %

The number and the percentages of incorrect responses (3016, 60,32 %) show that Iraqi EFL university students face difficulty using “wish expressions” at the precognitive and productive levels. The subjects face more difficulty at the production level since the total number of correct responses (800, 32 %) is lower than their correct responses at the recognition level, (1184, 47,36 %). In this respect, the fourth hypothesis, which reads “most Iraqi EFL learners are better at the recognition level than in production,” has been validated and verified.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reached some important theoretical and practical conclusions:

A. Theoretical conclusions:

1. Wishes are expressions of desires and could be good or evil.
2. Wishes can be expressed explicitly or implicitly using various linguistic devices.
3. Implicit wishes can be expressed through main verbs, auxiliary verbs, commands, and other constructions.
4. Subordinate clauses and the optative subjunctive could also be used to express implicit wishes.

B. Practical conclusions:

1. Iraqi EFL University students faced difficulty recognising implicit wish expressions.
2. Iraqi EFL University students faced difficulties in producing wish expressions.
3. Most EFL learners’ use of explicit wish expressions was greater than their use of the implicit ones.
4. Iraqi EFL University fourth-year students faced difficulties in recognising and producing different wish expressions.
5. Performance at the recognition level was better than at the production level.

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