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**Examining Iraqi EFL Learners' Use of the Speech Act of  
Advice at the University Level**

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**Abstract**

This study is concerned with “Assessing Iraqi EFL Learners’ Ability in Performing the Speech Act of Advice”. The study seeks to find answers to the following questions; To what extent Iraqi EFL learners able to recognize the speech act of advice? To what extent Iraqi EFL learners able to produce the speech act of advice? What type(s) of strategies do those learners use when performing the speech act of advice? The study aims at: determining the extent to which Iraqi EFL learners are able to recognize the speech act of advice, determining the extent to which Iraqi EFL learners are able to produce the speech act of advice and examining the type(s) of strategies Iraqi EFL learners use when performing the speech act of advice. The sample of this study is seventy Iraqi EFL learners at Thi-Qar University, College of Education for Human sciences, Department of English Language. The data collection tool that is used to collect data is a test that has been designed to test students’ recognition and production level.

Results of the study reveal that the frequency of the wrong alternatives and the unanswered items are the most frequently used by the students in all situations, those learners have an average level of ability to recognize and produce the speech act of advice, they associate their performance of advice with *Direct* strategy in general and *Declarative* in particular more than they do with other strategies, They are not sufficiently aware of the equal importance of utilizing all types of strategies in performing advice in English language. They have serious problems in their attempts to produce certain strategies like '*Hints*' or strategies like '*Interrogatives*', '*Probability*', '*Declarative*' or '*Conditional*'.

## 1. Introduction

People communicate with each other through various ways based on their needs. They may make compliments, give commands, make requests and give advices. These actions are linguistically called *Speech Acts*. Among different types of speech acts, The present study deals with only one particular speech act, which is *Advice*.

Searle (1969) defines the speech act of advice as a weak directive act whose illocutionary force suggests a future action that the speaker believes it carries benefit to the hearer. When advising, the adviser does not convince the hearer about the action's benefits but he presents the reasons, benefits and advantages of the action. As a result, the hearer is the operator of the action. He adds that advising includes two pieces; the piece of advice which has been asked for and the piece of advice that has been given spontaneously by the speaker (Pérez Hernadez, 2021, p.153). Iraqi EFL Learners have a good Linguistic competence but it is noticed that many of them lack pragmatic competence, they face problems in producing and recognizing the speech act of advice when communicating in English which is their foreign Language. The reason behind this is the lack of exposure to real life situations and communication with native speakers. Those learners need to be equipped with an appropriate communicative ability to communicate successfully among students. They need to learn pragmatic aspects e.g., speech acts. They should learn advice strategies to be able to make a suitable advice as well as be more culturally and pragmatically aware of their own expressions .

## 2. Speech Act Theory

The British philosopher John Langshaw Austin develops the Theory of Speech Acts (For short: SAT) in the 1930<sup>s</sup>. Austin's theory is considered as a progress in linguistics because it indicates that sentences of everyday communication are not planned to make true or false statements, but they do things i.e., to perform certain linguistic actions such as requesting, criticizing, warning ,...etc.(Nguyen, 2005,p.21; Finch, 2005,p.171).

In his theory, Austin distinguishes between two types of sentences termed 'constative' and 'performative' which describe states of affairs

and perform action respectively (Robinson,2003,p.2). For example, *I name this ship Liberate; I advise you to stop smoking*. In these sentences, the speaker does not only utter Something but he performs particular kinds of acts by his utterance (Lyons, 1977,p.726).

Many attempts have been presented to categorize speech acts by different linguists and philosophers. The main classifications by Austin (1962), followed by Searle (1969), Vendler ( 1972), Bach and Harnish (1979) and Allan (1994).

## 2.1 Categorization of Speech Act Theory

### 2.1.1 Austin's Categorization of Speech Acts (1962)

Austin in 1962(p.150-63) abandons his taxonomy of constative / performative and classifies speech acts into five general categories which are:

**1- Verdicatives:** They are the type of verbs their function is to give a decision or pronouncing a verdicts ,as their name Suggests, by a jury , arbitrator or umpire .Examples are ; rank, grade, define, analyze. e.g. (5) *The jury acquitted her of murder*.

**2- Exercitives:** They are act of “giving of a decision in favor of /or against a certain course of action or advocacy of it.” e.g.; appoint, advise, grant, authorize, ...etc. e.g.; (6) *I choose you my supervisor*.

**3- Commissives:** These are SAs that commit the speaker to a course future actions but they also include announcement of intention. Examples are: promise, guarantee, bet, oppose, as in; *I promise to invite you*.

**4- Behabitives:** They are speech acts which are concerned with “the notion of reaction to other people's behavior and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct”.

Examples are: apologize, welcome, criticize, thank, wish, challenge,...etc. as in; *I thank you for accepting my offer* (Allot,2010,p.24).

**5- Expositives:** They are acts have the function of “illustrating points of views, the organization of arguments and the clarifying of usages and of references.” They include: argue, affirm, ask, deny, insist, guess, describe, etc. (Austin, 1962,p.161) as in;

(11) *I state that my name is Ahmed* (Allot, 2010,p.74).

### 2.1.2 Searle's Categorization of Speech Acts (1969)

in 1969(p.21) Searle, Austin's student, criticizes Austin's categorization of speech acts in his book *Speech Acts* and comes up with an influential version of speech act theory which is considered as a modification and systematization to Austin's theory. Searle's taxonomy of

speech acts remains as the generally authorized taxonomy (Mey,1993,p.154-162). His taxonomy of speech acts reads as follows:

**1- Assertives:** are speech acts, that have truth value. They commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition .e.g., assert, claim, affirm. For example: '*I am old enough to vote*' ( Searle, 1965,p.179 – 190; Yule ,1996,p.53).

**2- Directives:** They are one of the types of illocutionary acts which are intended to get the hearer to do something, they show world-to-words fit, and express speaker's desire that hearer do action (Searle,1975,p.357). Such as; direct, request, ask For example: '*Stop shouting*' ( Searle,1965, p.179 – 190; Yule ,1996,p.54).

**3- Commissives.** They are types of illocutionary acts, they direct the S to do some future actions. The speaker makes the world fit his words (Levinson,1983,p.240). Such as; commit, promise, threaten, vow, ...etc. For example: '*I promise to call you later*' (Levinson,1983,p.240; Meyer, 2009.p.233).

**4- Expressives:** They are speech acts, they reflects the psychological state of the speaker and tell the speaker's feelings in statements of pleasure, pain, dislike, joy or sorrow,...etc. E.g., apologize, thank, condole, congratulate,...etc. As in; '*I'm sorry for being so late*' (Searle,1969,p.65 ; Yule,1996,p.53).

**5- Declaratives:** They are speech act their performance rely upon the rank of the speaker, and the circumstances that surrounding the situation. The speaker must have a special social or institutional act in a specific content. Such as; declare, resign, adjourn, appoint, ...etc. For example; '*I now pronounce you husband and wife*' (Yule,1996,p.53 ;Searle, 1969, p.65 ).

### 2.1.3 Vendler's Categorization of Speech Acts (1972)

Vendler (1972,p.16-25) extends Austin's five classes of illocutionary verbs of speech acts into seven classes. He makes structural descriptions as;

**1- Expositives :** ( N1 Vep that NV + ) e.g., state, declare, assert, as in; *I warn you of his dishonesty.*

**2- Verdicatives:** ( N1 Vvd Nj (as) Nk / A ) e.g. rank, call, define.

**3- Commissives :** ( N1 Vcm to V + ) e.g. promise, undertake, covenant, as in; *I promise (you) to pay on time.*

**4- Exercitives :** ( N1 Vee Nj toV ) e.g. order, command, demand, tell, as in; *I advise you to remain silent.*

**5- Behabitives:** ( N1 Vbh Nj P nom (past (v+))) e.g., congratulate, thank, praise as in; *I apologize for having hurt you.*

**6- Operatives:** ( N1 Vop Nj to be (come) Nk ), e.g. recommend, nominate, appoint,...

**7- Interrogatives:** (N1 Vir wh-nom (N V )) , e.g. ask, question, and inquire, as in; *I question whether he has succeeded.*

#### 2.1.4 Bach and Harnish's Categorization of Speech Acts (1979)

Bach and Harnish (1979,p.42-51) who classify speech acts into six classes, by this categorization they employ Searle's criteria to serve as the basis for their classification of speech acts, Shown in the following:

**1- Constatives:** (assertives ,predictives , retrodectives).

**2-Directives:** (requestives, question, requirements).

**3- Commussives:** promises and offers .

**4- Acknowledgements:** how to apologize, condole, congratulate, greet, thank, bid, accept and reject).

#### 2.1.5 Allan's Categorization of Speech Acts (1994)

In 1994, Allan identifies four types of speech acts. They are: **1- Statements:** include : denials, reports, promises, predictions, and offers. These types depend on the expressions of the speaker's belief about the way the world was, is, or will be.

**2- Invitationals:** which resemble Searle's directives and they include: requests, suggestions, exhortations, and warnings, etc. These types invite hearer's participation.

**3- Expressives:** which include : greetings, thanks, apologies and congratulations, etc. They express social interaction with the hearer.

**4- Authoritatives:** include Searle's „directives“ and „declarations“ e.g., commands, permissions, legal judgments, baptisms, etc. They depend on the authority of the speaker to utter this in this context (Allan,1998,p.10-11).

## 2.2 Direct and Indirect Speech Act

Human beings perform speech acts directly and indirectly. Direct speech act is that direct relationship between the structure and the utterance's communicative function (Yule,1996, p. 129). He(ibid,p.45-55) illustrates that the relationship between the three 'structural forms' which are (declaratives, interrogative and imperative) and the three "communicative functions" which are (statement, question and command) are easy and recognizable relationships. For

example, declaratives are used to make statements, interrogatives are used to make questions and imperatives are

used to make commands or offers, e.g.

1. *You wear seatbelt.* (declarative)
2. *Do you wear your seatbelt?*( interrogatives)
3. *Wear your seatbelt!* (Imperative).

Indirect speech act is an act achieved by “means of others” (Searle, 1978, p.60). For instance, making a request can be made by uttering a statement like; *‘I’m getting thirsty’*.

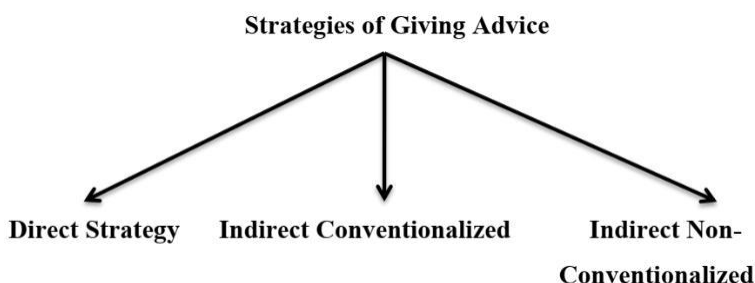
The choice of (in)directness depends on the communicative message of the addresser. Understanding the communicative message between the addresser and the addressee relies on the background information that they share, the linguistic and non-linguistic background information (Allan, 2001,p.23).

### 2.3 The Concept of Advice

The speech act of advice is classified as a directive act by Searle (1969,p.67) who notices that “contrary to what one might assume, advice is not a species of requesting. It is interesting to compare ‘advise’ with ‘urge’, ‘advocate’ and ‘recommend’. Advising you is not trying to make you to do something in the sense that requesting is. Advising is more like telling you what is best for you”. Directives are defined by Matthews (2007,p.106) saying that directives are speech acts used by speakers to direct others to do actions. Advising can be considered as a hearer-based for the reason that it carries a benefit to the hearer. So that, a sentence like *‘I advise you to be careless with your studying duties’* is not considered as an advice because it does not bring interest to the hearer.

### 2.4 Strategies of Giving Advice

Martinez-Flor (2003,p.144) presents three types of pragmatic strategies to indicate the speech act of advice which are; direct, conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect strategies, as;



The direct strategy is classified into four different realizations, which are; imperative, negative imperative, declarative and performative ,as shown below:



Direct advice is pragmatically obvious and could be performed through four different sub-strategies, which are;

Imperatives as in; '*Study!*' ,

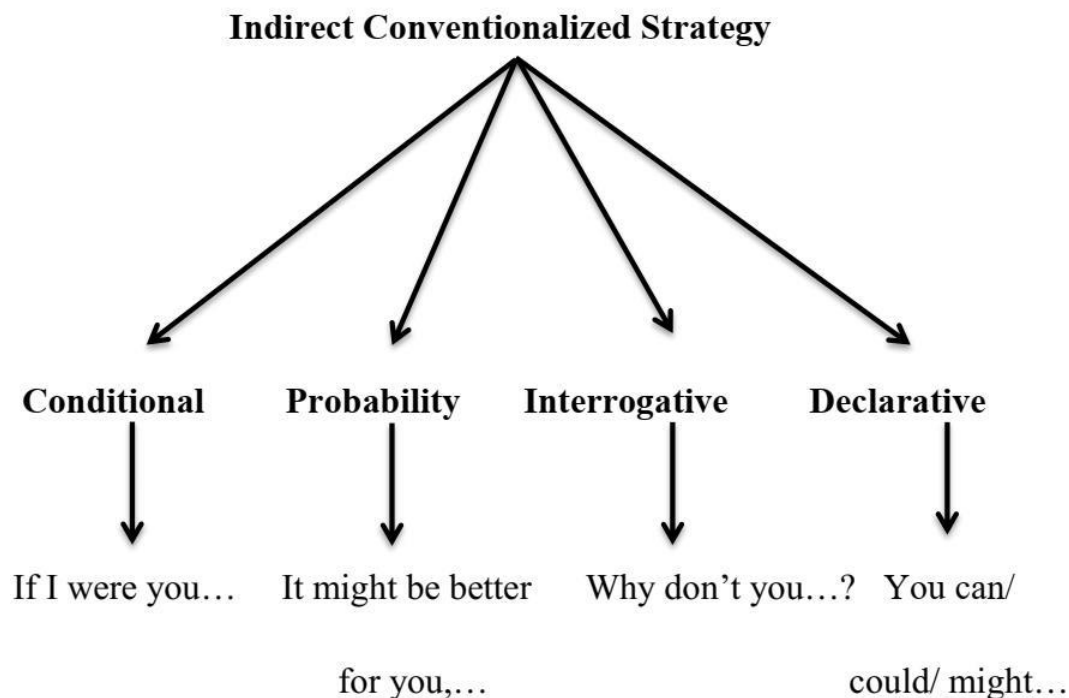
Negative imperative as in; '*Don't go out until late!*'

Declarative is performed through using modal verbs like *should, ought to, must, and had better*. As in; *You must read this book. It's marvelous !*

Performatives include using performative verb to indicate advice like;

*I(would) advise you to apply at once.*

The conventionalized indirect advice is performed through using four realizations namely, conditional, probability, and specific formulae in the form of interrogative and declarative sentences. , as shown below:



Conditionals, as in; *“If I were you, I would study more”* .

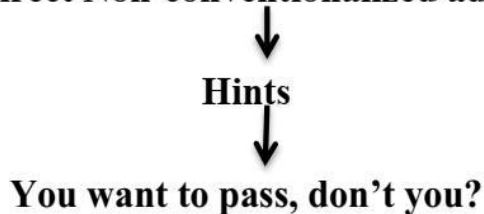
Probability, by using modals to express the meaning of probability, for instance, „*might*“ in *“it might be better for you to study a little more.”*

Specific formulae in the form of interrogative sentence or declarative, for example, *Why don't you study a little bit more?*

Or in the form of a declarative sentence by using modals like, *can, could and might*: *“You can /could”, “you might want to” and “it may/ would be a good idea to...”* (Matsumura, 2001, p.677).

The indirect non-conventionalized strategy implies using hints to express the speaker's aim which are not made explicitly, for instance ; *You want to pass, don't you?* (Martinez-Flor, 2003, p. 144), as shown below:

**Indirect Non-conventionalized advice**





If there is not sufficient evidence provided for the indirect speech acts ISAs, then those acts are hints which require extended negotiations and interpretation on the part of H. Thus, they require more inferential competence, for example;

(56) *This blouse is better than Ann's* (Kasper and Blumkulka, 1993, p.124). In this example, there is no clues for the interpretation of the proposed SA. The interpretation of the S's purpose, as Reiter (2000, p.87) refers to, depends on its context.

## 2.5 Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatic competence plays an essential function in teaching and learning a foreign language. The concept of pragmatic competence was early marked by Chomsky (1980, p.224) as the knowledge of language's conditions and manner of appropriate use which corresponds with various purposes. Language learners are not required to obtain knowledge of lexicon and grammar, which are "important...but not sufficient" (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991, p. 154), but also to obtain knowledge of "the social and contextual factors underlying the English language" (Uso-Juan & Martinez-Flor, 2008, p.349).

## 3. Methodology

The total number of the sample of the study is seventy Iraqi EFL learners at the Department of English language, College of Education for Human Sciences, Thi-Qar University. All of them are fourth-year students who are enrolled in the academic year (2020- 2021). The age, social rank and gender are excluded from the test.

This study applies the descriptive-quantitative approach and adopts Hinkle's (1997) and Martinez-Flor's (2003) model to construct a test. The test is used as the data collection tool that has been designed to test students' recognition and production level to test students' ability to recognize the speech act of advice among other speech acts and students' ability to produce the speech act of advice.

## 4. Results

1. Results related to the first aim indicates that the sample members have an average level in their answers to the extent to which Iraqi EFL learners are able to recognize the speech act of advice. Table (4.1) below shows that the computed value of the T-test of (-1.770) is smaller than the value of the table of T-test of (2.000) at the level of significance (0.05) and the degree of freedom (69), and this indicates that there is no difference between the mean scores of the sample and the theoretical mean of the test.

**Table (4.1)**

**The mean and standard deviation of the sample compared to the theoretical mean using the t-test for one sample**

Test	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean	T .test		Degree of freedom	Sig.
					Computed	Tabulated		
Recognition	70	4.571	2.026	5.000	-1.770	2.000	69	0.05

2. Results related to the second aim indicates that the sample members have an average level in their answers to the extent to which Iraqi EFL learners are able to produce the speech act of advice. Table (4.2) below shows that the computed value of the T-test of (0.260) is smaller than the value of the table of T-test of (2.000) at the level of significance (0.05) and the degree of freedom (69), and this indicates that there is no difference between the mean scores of the sample and the theoretical mean of the test.

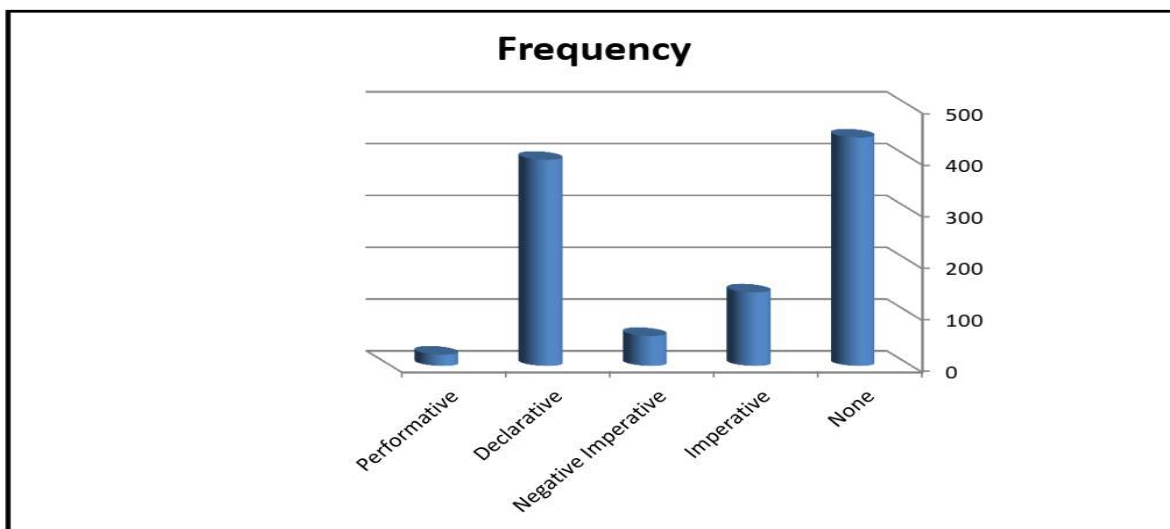
**Table (4.2)**

**The mean and standard deviation of the sample compared to the theoretical mean using the t-test for one sample**

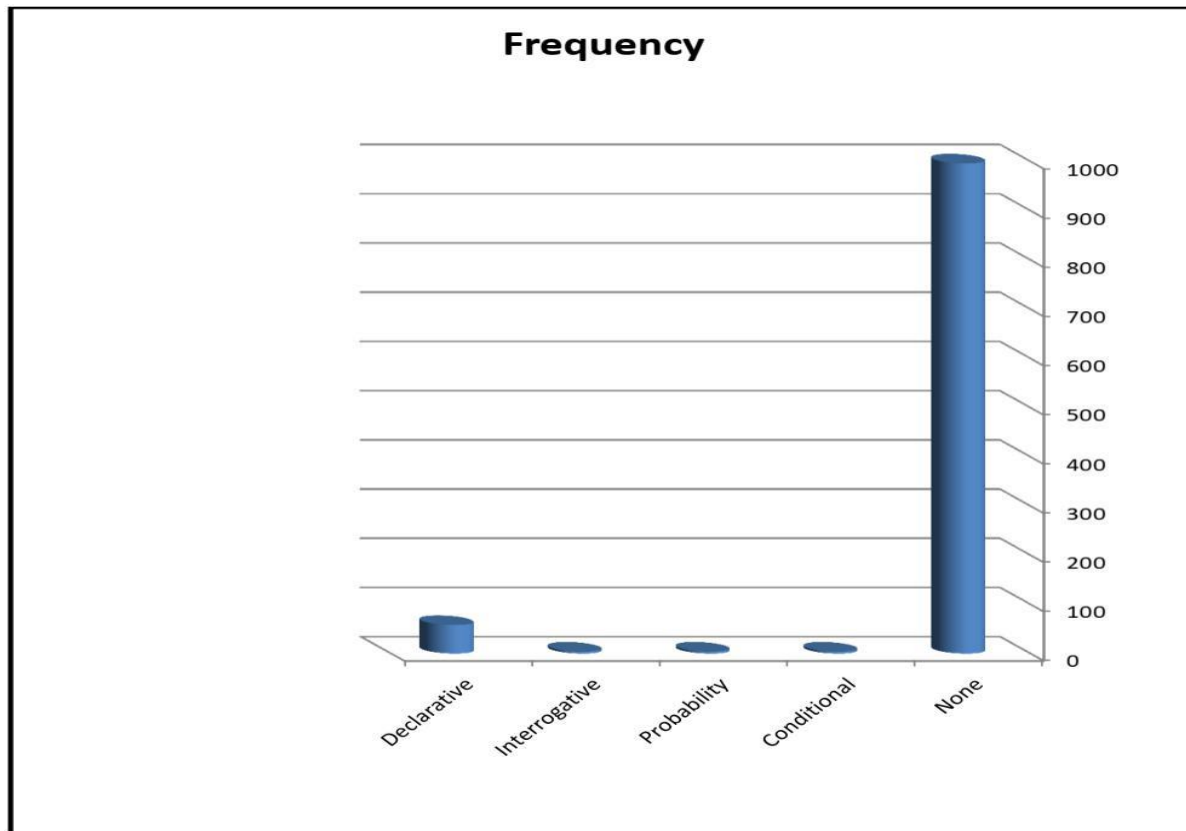
Test	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Theoretical mean	T.test		Degree of freedom	Sig.
					Computed	tabulated		
Production	70	15.271	8.719	15.000	0.260	2.000	69	0.05

3. Results related to the third aims indicates the following:

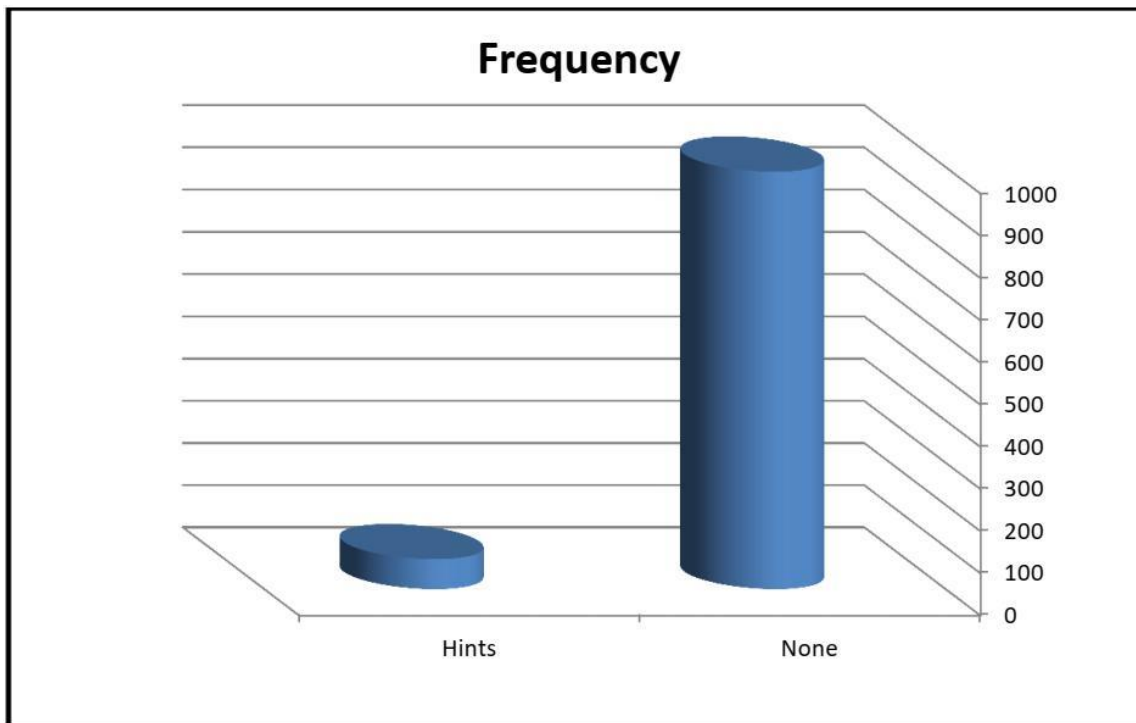
a. The frequencies of the (**Direct**) strategies of speech act of advice are calculated and for each item of the questionnaire, and then the weighted means and percentage weights are calculated and arranged according to their values from the most used to the least used as shown below;



b. The frequencies of each type of (**Indirect Conventionalized**) strategies of speech act of advice are calculated for each item of the questionnaire, then the weighted means and percentage weights are calculated and arranged according to their values from the most used to the least used, as shown below;



c. The frequencies of each type of **(Indirect non-conventionalized)** strategies of speech act of **advice** are calculated for each item of the questionnaire, then the weighted means and percentage weights are calculated and arranged according to their values from the most used to the least used, as shown below;



## 5. Conclusions

Based on the results obtained from this study, the researcher arrives to the following conclusions;

- 1.The students' performance at the recognition level shows that their mastering of advice act is an average level. The frequency of the wrong alternatives and the unanswered items are the most frequently used by the students in all situations.
- 2.Iraqi EFL learners at Thi-Qar University have an average level of ability to recognize the speech act of advice.
- 3.Iraqi EFL learners at Thi-Qar University have an average level of ability to produce the speech act of advice.
- 3.Iraqi EFL learners at Thi-Qar University associate their performance of advice with *Direct* strategy in general and *Declarative* in particular more than they do with other strategies.
- 4.These learners of EFL are not sufficiently aware of the equal importance of utilizing all types of strategies in performing advice in English language.

5. Serious problems in their attempts to produce certain strategies like 'Hints' or strategies like 'Interrogatives', 'Probability', 'Declaratives' or 'Conditionals'.

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