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The Assessment of Pragmatic Knowledge in the Online General IELTS-Practice Resources: A Corpus Analysis of Writing Tasks

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Abstract

Motivated by the concept of Communicative Language Ability and the eminence of the IELTS exam, this study intended to scrutinize the representation of functional knowledge (FK) and socio-linguistic knowledge (SK) as sub-components of pragmatic knowledge in the writing performances of both tasks of the online General IELTS-practice resources across three band scores. This quantitative inter-scores/intra-tasks and inter-tasks investigation aimed to reveal firstly whether the writers of three band scores 7, 8, and 9 differed from each other in their FK and SK level, and secondly whether the tasks differed in activating them. This study adopted a taxonomy of five illocutionary acts and 20 register features to investigate representation of FK and SK in a well-established corpus of 180 writing performances through both manual analysis and Multidimensional Analysis Tagger software. While the results of statistical analyses revealed no FK differences between the bands in task one (T1), T2's higher bands involved more functional features because of the expression of a diverse range of psychological states, no speaker's involvement, and less commitment to a future course of actions. Furthermore, socio-linguistically, band 9 scripts encompassed more logical relations, but conversational and spoken style in T1 and more integration, less simplified structures and ego-involvement in T2. The inter-task analyses uncovered T1's greater activation of FK through self-mentions, others involvement, emotion, and intention expression. Nevertheless, when it came to SK register features, T2 overdid in both spoken and written genre elements except in persuasion, writers' involvement, mental acts expression, and interactive discourse creation.

Keywords: Band score; Functional knowledge; General IELTS; Pragmatic knowledge; Register; Sociolinguistic knowledge; Task one; Task two; Writing

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1. Introduction

The topics of functional knowledge (FK) and socio-linguistic knowledge (SK) are rooted in one of the Communicative Language Ability (CLA) components, pragmatic knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge has recently experienced a dramatic increase in investigations on issues ranging from L2 pragmatic instruction and development to its assessment (Kasper & Rose, 2002). It has been assumed to entail different sub-components about which a deeper understanding is provided in numerous scholars' frameworks over the past decades (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 2010; Canale & Swain, 1980). In general, feeding into discourse competence, and particularly including knowledge of language functions (FK) and knowledge of relationship between sentences and language use settings (SK), pragmatic knowledge dominates the linguistic choices the language users make, their effect on the interlocutors, and the intervening influence of the sociocultural context (Laughlin, Wain, & Schmidgall, 2015). Although researchers have concurred with each other on the significance of in-depth understanding of pragmatic knowledge and its sub-components as a means towards clarifying the nature of CLA, a comprehensive study of FK and SK has been somehow ignored in the international exams.

Motivated by speech act theory, this study was in agreement with van Dijk (1977), considering language use as an ordinary structure, directed by language functions and progressing gradually over time in a given speech community. It took this trend to follow the 'theory of action' of pragmatic knowledge to develop a rigorous understanding of the writing tasks of the online General IELTS-practice resources from a functional-discourse perspective. It was assumed that the online General IELTS-practice writers were doing something special, completing speech acts by their writing, and utilizing them based on the particular conventions that directed the given topic context of English language. The writing tasks of the online General IELTS-practice resources were viewed from that point of pragmatics dealing with the relationship between utterances and the acts they performed (the illocutionary force).

Moreover, this paper intended to give a numerical and quantitative account of the construct of SK, "the ability to use language appropriately in different sociocultural and contextual situations" (Laughlin, Wain, & Schmidgall, 2015, p. 8), through its register component considering the differences between modes of discourse-spoken and written (Bachman, 1990).

In summary, this study was conducted to examine FK and SK in two writing tasks of the online General IELTS-practice resources across three band scores and two tasks to reveal the illocutionary and register differences among bands and between tasks. Thus, this research examined the concepts of FK and SK observed in a corpus of writing performances in order to trace critically the variances of these aspects of pragmatic knowledge in the scripts assigned to different band scores. Furthermore, it explored the differences between the two tasks in the evaluation of these two types of knowledge.

2. Review of the literature

What Bachman (1990) termed illocutionary competence or FK (Bachman & Palmer, 2010) was concerned with the use of language for various purposes and formed an essential part of CLA because it referred to what people accomplish with language in different contexts. Each area of language use consists of specific functions and the learners acquire a diverse range of them based on their educational and professional careers. This type of knowledge was defined by Bachman and Palmer (2010) as "ability to interpret relationships between utterances or sentences and texts and the intentions of language users" (p. 69) and focused on the significance of context determination. Based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) four macro-language functions, they determined knowledge of ideational, manipulative, heuristic, and imaginative functions as features of FK (Bachman & Palmer, 2010), one of the capabilities that the language users need to display to qualify as communicatively competent ones, and also focusing on processing and negotiating intended meaning, predicting probable misunderstanding and comprehending context (Bachman, 1990). The features of this knowledge allude to the reasons for which language is employed to convey. It is applied for an assortment of formal and casual purposes and particular linguistic structures and vocabulary are regularly utilized for each language function (Bachman, 1990). Speech acts are communicative acts that pass on these proposed language functions and incorporate capacities, for example, demands, conciliatory sentiments, recommendations, summons, offers, and suitable reactions to those performances (Searle, 1976). Accordingly, one way to scrutinize the degree of FK observed in oral or written performances is to survey the features of speech acts used to perform language functions. Searle (1976) suggested five basic types of illocutionary acts having been recognized as foundations of FK operationalization in this study.

According to Bachman (1990), sensitivity to naturalness, differences in dialects and registers, and the ability to understand cultural references and figures of speech are within the scope of SK which enables the language users to accomplish language functions in ways that are suitable for a specific context. Register, particularly the use of written (or formal) and spoken (or informal) features, has already been investigated in L2 writing context (Biber, 1988; Chang & Swales, 1999; Grant & Ginther, 2000; Hinkel, 2003; Shaw & Ting-Kun Liu, 1998). Although some other investigations (Chang & Swales, 1999; Hinkel, 2003) focused on the informal speech style features, such as personal pronouns, direct questions, exclamations, simple syntax, contractions, and broad reference, the others (Grant & Ginther, 2000; Shaw & Ting-Kun Liu, 1998) examined formal features that indicated an academic style, such as passive voice, formal vocabulary, nominalization, complex syntax, hedging, and rich modification.

Some attempts have been made to examine the components of CLA, such as discourse competence in IELTS speaking part 2 (Iwashita & Vasquez, 2015). This study indicated that the higher-level test-takers' performance involved more accurate use of conjunctions and referential expressions as features of discourse.

However, some other discourse features, such as ellipsis, substitution, and use of reference were not clearly distinguished across the levels.

An investigation of the three most well-known tests of English language, IELTS, TOEFL, and TOLIMO, was made in their reading part in pragmatic competence representation by Karbalaei and Rahmanzade (2015). Utilizing Jung's (2001) taxonomy of components of pragmatic knowledge, they indicated that although the tests were capable of evaluating test takers' pragmatic knowledge, more cases of this type of knowledge components were included in TOEFL and TOLIMO.

Operating various computer programs and building on a well-established framework of Connor and Mbaye's (2002) which itself originated from Canale and Swain's (1980; Canale, 1983) model CLA, Barkaoui (2016) made a detailed analysis of writings of 78 tri-taking Academic IELTS candidates at three band scores based on their first writing abilities to investigate changes in grammatical, discourse, socio-linguistic, and strategic choices every time that they repeated the exam. This comparative study indicated a greater length, linguistic accuracy, coherence, and the existence of more formal features, such as passive constructions and nominalization and fewer interactional metadiscourse markers in the writings of the third occasion. It also unraveled that the features of the higher writing scripts were more lexically diverse, sophisticated, syntactically more complex and included more self-mentions and fewer contractions.

Riazi and Knox (2013) analyzed the scripts of the Academic IELTS writings (Task 2) to probe the relationship between first language (L1), band score, and text language features such as length, readability, word frequency, lexical diversity, grammatical complexity, incidence of all connectives, and two measures of coreferentiality (argument and stem overlap). They found L1 to be one of the factors related with band score. However, independent from L1, text length, reading ease, word frequency, genre and use of attitude were reported to be good indicators of band scores.

Banerjee, Florencia and Smith (2007) used automatic or semi-automated tools to investigate the writings of both tasks of the Academic IELTS to find the differences in cohesive devices, vocabulary richness, syntactic complexity, and grammatical accuracy in band scores ranging between 3-8 in regard with L1 effects, Spanish and Chinese. They found all of these factors to be indicators of increasing proficiency level, except the syntactic complexity. They mentioned vocabulary and grammatical accuracy as counterpart measures and illuminated the critical L1 and tasks effects on some of these features.

Mayor et al. (2007) traced quantitative measures, such as spelling errors, punctuation, grammar, lexis, and prepositions, independent and dependent clauses using t-unit and qualitative measures, sentence structure argument using theme and rhyme, and tenor and interpersonal reference in the task two of writing of the Academic IELTS. While they highlighted text length, low formal error rate, sentence complexity, and occasional use of the impersonal pronoun 'one' as the most evident signs of high scored writing performances, they revealed a range of features that made distinctions between high and low-scoring scripts, holistic rather than analytic trend of IELTS raters towards writings, positive correlation between some functional features and task scores, "heavily interpersonal and relatively polemical" (p. 250) style that task two prompts required, and different types of errors based on different L1s.

Although speech act theory has been extensively approached from different perspectives (Holtgraves, 2012; Levin, 2014; Su, 2017; Witek, 2015), the literature is still thin or scanty on the role of FK and SK in assessment of candidates' performance in IELTS. Some studies have also shown that teachers less focused on these features in comparison with other competences, such as the grammatical competence and its subcomponents (Hellermann & Vergun, 2007).

An investigation of the writing tasks of IELTS exam can be considered not only as an analysis of band descriptors and the reaction and understanding of raters, but also an examination of writing performances assigned at different band scores and discovering their specific characteristics (Riazi & Knox, 2013). The present study took on the latter one and built on the previous works by Mayor et al. (2007) and Iwashita and Vasquez (2015). Despite all aforementioned investigations**,** this study mainly intended to focus on the online General IELTS-practice resources, as important as the Academic Module for prospective immigrants, workers and students. It concentrated on both manual and computational analysis of pragmatic knowledge components in the intended corpus, which has remained untouched in the current literature to the researchers' best knowledge.

3. Methodology

The present study assessed the components of pragmatic knowledge quantitatively in three band scores (intra-task/ inter-band analysis) across two tasks (inter-task analysis) in order to answer the following research questions.

1. Are the writers of higher band scores pragmatically more competent than those of lower bands?
2. Do the two tasks really differ in pragmatic knowledge representation?

Therefore, it made an exhaustive review of a writing corpus of 180 online General IELTS-practice resources (Table 1) in a diverse range of topics and an approximate balance of formal and informal letters in T1. The corpus was already rated and categorized based on task achievement, grammar, lexical resources, cohesion, and coherence in the websites, www.ielts-blog.com and www.ielts-practice.org. Nevertheless, to take care of the samples correct rating, the researchers employed three IELTS teachers who scored a corpus of 230 writings based on the public version of the band descriptors of General IELTS writing tasks. The intra-class correlation coefficient reliability estimation was an asset to determine the extent of inter-rater reliability of the writing performances and ultimately to choose those on which the teachers had the highest agreement.

Table 1
The investigated corpus

Band Score	Writing T1	Writing T2	Total	Sum
7	30 written letters	30 written essays	60	180
8	30 written letters	30 written essays	60	
9	30 written letters	30 written essays	60	

3.1. Adopted taxonomy

This study visualized pragmatic knowledge, which was hypothesized to include FK and SK, based on the conceptualization of Bachman and Palmer (2010) model of communicative competence. Operationalizing FK (Table 2), this paper utilized a unification of language functions (ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative) of Bachman and Palmer (2010), Yule’s (2000) illocutionary acts (representatives, directives, expressives, commisives and declarations) and Seale’s (1976) speech acts.

Representatives (REP), as a component of illocutionary acts, were assumed to mention a state of affairs which could be characterized as true or false. They might include some speech acts, such as making assertion, claim, statement, description, suggestion, and hypothesis. The second illocutionary act, directives (DIR), was intended to get the addressee to carry out an action and included the speech acts of commanding, challenging, inviting, requesting, daring, asking, ordering, begging, permitting, advising, pleading, and defying. Expressives (EXP), as the third one, indicated the speaker’s psychological state of attitude. They involved speech acts of greeting, condoling, apologizing, congratulating, deploring, welcoming, and thanking. Commisives (COM), the fourth illocutionary act, committed the speaker to a course of action and included speech acts, such as promising, threatening, vowing, and pledging. Last but not least, declarations (DEC), containing blessing, arresting, marrying, and firing, brought about the state of affairs they named. The corpus analysis, a discursive one, for FK was done manually.

Focusing on the differences between modes of discourse, particularly the use of written or formal features and spoken or informal speech style, this paper operationalized SK in its register component taking 20 features into account (Table 2). They were measured through a computer program called Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (Nini, 2015), which was a duplication of Biber's (1988) tagger for the multidimensional functional analysis of English texts. The definitions, exemplifications and methods of quantification of each of these features were too long and boring to be presented here, however, they were comprehensively provided in Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (v. 1.1)- Manual by Nini (2015).

Table 2
Taxonomy of Pragmatic Knowledge

Pragmatic knowledge	Components	Measuring Features	Computer Program
Functional	Illocutionary acts	Representatives (REP), Directives (DIR), Expressives (EXP), Commisives (COM), Declarations (DEC)	No computer programs
Sociolinguistic	Register	Be-copula (BEMA), By-passives (BAPY), Conjunction (CONJ), Demonstrative pronouns (DEMP), Existential there (EX), First person pronoun (FPP1), Gerund (GER), Attributive adjective (JJ), Nominalization (NOMZ), Agentless passive (PASS), Predicative adjective (PRED), Private verb (PRIV), Pro-verb do (PROD), Public verb (PUBV), Second person pronoun (SPP2), Suasive verb (SUAV), Synthetic negation (SYNE), Third person pronoun (TPP3), Past tense verb (VBD), Analytic negation (XXO)	Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT)

3.2. Data analysis

Data for this investigation encompassed a corpus of two writing tasks of the online General IELTS-practice resources (Table 1) at three band scores and the measuring features of FK and SK itemized in Table 2. Several analyses were conducted to address each research question of the study.

Firstly, descriptive statistics, involving mean (M), standard deviation (SD), skewness (Sk) and kurtosis (Ku), was computed for all of the writings in three bands and two tasks (Table 3).

Secondly, to address the first research question concerning the differences among the band scores in FK and SK, tests of normality, including Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS) and Shapiro-Wilk (SW), were conducted to show the dispersion of 25 features of pragmatic knowledge. The features that were distributed non-normally across three bands were compared through the non-parametric tests of Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis (Table 4). The features distributed normally and homogeneously were compared through univariate analysis of variance (One-way ANOVA) and the post hoc of Tukey-b that exactly showed where the differences occurred (Table 5). Table 6 showed the comparison among band scores in elements that were distributed normally, but not homogeneously through the post hoc of Dunnett’s T3.

Thirdly, answering the second research question concerning the comparison between two tasks in activation of FK and SK, another test of normality was required. It was then necessary to utilize the non-parametric test of Mann-Whitney U (Table 7) for the features distributed non-normally across two tasks and apply Independent-Sample T-Test (Table 8) for those having normal and homogeneous distributions.

4. Results

It should be pointed out that the declarations of FK were deleted from data analysis because no instances of this illocutionary act were found in the corpus under study.

Table 3 represented a general schema or descriptive statistics M, SD, Sk, and Ku of five features of FK and 20 of SK in the intended corpus in three bands and two tasks.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics of FK and SK

		Band 7				Band 8				Band 9			
Task	**Features**	**M**	**SD**	**Sk**	**Ku**	**M**	**SD**	**Sk**	**Ku**	**M**	**SD**	**Sk**	**Ku**
1	REP	8.07	2.39	-.230	-.96	7.90	3.76	.545	-.684	8.17	4.75	1.49	4.10
2		13.80	3.02	1.000	.373	14.9	4.05	.811	-.167	18.2	2.80	.723	.948
1	DIR	2.70	1.78	-.098	-1.2	3.70	2.13	.671	.37	3.80	3.14	1.81	4.40
2		1.97	2.09	2.152	6.58	2.07	2.43	1.33	1.20	1.73	2.08	1.55	2.01
1	EXP	3.40	1.19	3.19	-.93	3.50	1.16	.279	-.367	3.83	1.46	1.015	1.22
2		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1	COM	2.13	2.28	1.793	3.89	2.63	1.92	1.221	1.362	1.92	1.59	1.043	.39
2		1.80	1.40	.382	-.73	1.10	1.23	1.135	.404	.63	.890	1.140	.16
1	BEMA	2	.95	.288	-.65	2.14	.857	-.358	.155	2.34	1.01	1.011	1.0
2		2.50	.93	.95	-.42	1.68	1.03	.40	-.83	1.38	.73	.15	.84
1	BAPY	.070	.18	2.38	4.14	.053	.16	2.82	6.45	.023	.11	5.42	29.59
2		.20	.25	.90	-.31	.15	.24	1.81	3.47	.11	.24	2.61	7.52
1	CONJ	.637	.42	.71	1.07	1.47	.20	-.233	.053	1.46	.12	-.175	-.453
2		1.30	.62	.10	-.85	1.66	.64	.082	-.80	1.75	.83	-.59	-.11
1	DEMP	.170	.31	1.92	3.76	.40	.50	1.59	3.02	.54	.52	.94	.73
2		.80	.63	.19	-1.1	.69	.58	.80	-.30	.51	.67	1.77	2.84
1	EX	.16	.32	1.75	1.89	.14	.29	2.06	4.16	.20	.28	.90	-.65
2		1.07	1.35	2.19	3.43	.38	.43	1.69	2.92	.43	.38	.71	-.22
1	FPP1	8.01	2.25	.40	2.30	8.5	2.24	.063	-.60	7.64	2.64	.12	-.05
2		1.33	.63	.62	.87	1.11	.75	.78	.17	.52	.28	.36	-.71
1	GER	.6447	.68	.88	.07	.88	.75	.40	-.93	.41	.37	.66	.61
2		.31	.43	1.18	.25	.48	.55	1.21	.62	.57	.56	1.39	2.83
1	JJ	5.04	2.01	-.009	.089	4.9	1.8	-.47	-.16	4.3	1.2	-.28	-.22
2		7.64	1.50	-.028	-.09	9.09	1.77	.35	.38	8.69	3.30	-.32	.73
1	NOMZ	2.28	1.06	.16	-.95	2.30	1.4	.34	-.96	2.22	.86	.41	-.91
2		3.73	1.72	.76	1.68	4.49	1.40	.40	-.85	4.39	2.12	.077	.00
1	PASS	.64	.60	1.08	1.27	.72	.64	1.13	1.69	.62	.84	1.7	3.20
2		.79	.78	1.28	1.30	1.12	.85	1.35	2.93	1.01	.85	.63	-.59
1	PRED	1.20	.53	.015	.58	1.34	.79	.57	-.25	1.44	.81	.28	.109
2		1.82	.71	.30	-.54	1.08	.79	.35	-.48	.79	.64	.65	.098
1	PRIV	2.30	1.25	.77	-.16	1.65	.95	.51	-.11	1.33	.73	-.096	-.48
2		1.35	.83	.92	.79	1.37	.78	.89	2.1	1.24	.87	.11	-1.25
1	PROD	.189	.42	2.76	8.28	.054	.16	2.83	6.56	.10	.24	2.22	3.93
2		.105	.20	1.81	2.27	.078	.19	2.51	5.60	.022	.085	3.66	12.22
1	PUBV	.81	.53	-.095	-.69	.70	.48	.78	.60	.96	.77	.87	.43
2		1.42	1.15	1.82	3.45	.59	.80	3.52	15.8	.42	.49	2.22	.6.79
1	SPP2	2.45	1.18	-.67	-.39	2.49	1.90	1.03	.27	3.07	1.75	1.14	2.74
2		.033	.13	4.24	18.3	.071	.19	2.67	6.21	.00	.045	5.47	30
1	SUAV	.55	.48	.31	-1	.87	.87	.84	-.44	.71	.77	1.33	1.16
2		.41	.29	.11	-.92	.22	.24	.84	.15	.29	.37	1.56	3
1	SYNE	.14	.32	2.49	5.96	.020	.10	5.47	30	.19	.39	2.88	10.2
2		.070	.17	2.74	7.91	.034	.10	2.83	6.5	.11	.20	1.80	2.55
1	TPP3	.49	.60	1.04	.21	.63	.84	1.28	.83	.76	1.25	1.93	3.27
2		1.80	1.38	.72	-.42	1.20	1.16	2.83	8.53	1.23	1.03	1.78	3.47
1	VBD	0.61	0.76	2.06	5.49	0.74	0.78	2.06	5.33	0.52	0.65	1.73	2.64
2		2.40	2.50	1.01	-.07	2.22	2.46	1.66	2.49	2.74	2.52	0.95	-.20
1	XXO	.45	.62	1.17	.25	.71	.78	.85	-.37	.39	.53	1.18	.60
2		.50	.42	.52	-.76	.36	.45	1.41	2.21	.47	.45	.40	-1.15

Taking advantage of the statistics (St) and significance level (Sig) of the two tests of normality (KS) and (SW), Table C1 revealed that the elements of FK, representatives, directives, expressives, and commisives, as the illocutionary acts, were distributed non-normally in bands in both tasks. As a result, a non-parametric test of Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis in Table 4 was used to compare these elements across the bands and see whether the scripts of 7, 8, and 9 really differed in their FK.

Table 4

Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test for FK and SK

		Task 1					Task 2			
Feature	Band	N	Mean Rank	Chi-square	df	Asymp.sig*	N	Mean Rank	Chi-square	df	Asymp.sig*
REP	7	30	47.62	.302	2	.860	30	32.02	25.041	2	.000
	8	30	44.23				30	39.07			
	9	30	44.65				30	63.72			
DIR	7	30	39.85	2.405	2	.300	30	47.53	.621	2	0.733
	8	30	50.00				30	45.05			
	9	30	46.65				30	42.42			
EXP	7	30	42.58	1.077	2	.584	30	45.00	.000	2	1.000
	8	30	44.70				30	45.00			
	9	30	49.22				30	45.00			
COM	7	30	41.43	3.616	2	.164	30	56.75	12.546	2	.002
	8	30	52.70				30	43.93			
	9	30	42.37				30	34.28			
BAPY	7	30	47.00	.730	2	.694	30	50.83	3.147	2	.207
	8	30	45.50				30	45.15			
	9	30	44.00				30	40.52			
DEMP	7	30	34.65	10.536	2	.005	30	51.10	4.690	2	.096
	8	30	46.98				30	48.07			
	9	30	54.87				30	37.33			
EX	7	30	44.38	1.116	2	.572	30	58.55	12.429	2	.002
	8	30	43.42				30	35.45			
	9	30	48.70				30	42.50			
GER	7	30	45.33	5.772	2	.056	30	38.13	4.410	2	.110
	8	30	53.52				30	46.68			
	9	30	37.65				30	51.68			
PASS	7	30	47.12	1.503	2	.472	30	39.12	3.157	2	.206
	8	30	48.50				30	50.97			
	9	30	40.88				30	46.42			
PROD	7	30	48.62	2.027	2	.363	30	49.28	3.550	2	.169
	8	30	42.38				30	45.92			
	9	30	45.50				30	41.30			
PUBV	7	30	48.68	3.224	2	.200	30	65.15	26.227	2	.000
	8	30	38.53				30	38.18			
	9	30	49.28				30	33.17			
SPP2	7	30	44.43	2.948	2	.229	30	45.02	2.307	2	.316
	8	30	40.32				30	48.08			
	9	30	51.75				30	43.40			
SUAV	7	30	43.20	1.029	2	.598	30	55.13	6.802	2	.033
	8	30	49.37				30	38.80			
	9	30	43.93				30	42.57			
SYNE	7	30	46.92	6.011	2	.050	30	45.08	2.847	2	.241
	8	30	39.57				30	41.93			
	9	30	50.02				30	49.48			
TPP3	7	30	45.17	.043	2	.979	30	52.90	3.649	2	.161
	8	30	46.25				30	41.15			
	9	30	45.08				30	42.45			
VBD	7	30	44.88	2.448	2	.294	30	44.47	1.427	2	.490
	8	30	51.00				30	42.10			
	9	30	40.62				30	49.93			
XXO	7	30	42.83	3.010	2	.222	30	49.05	2.157	2	.340
	8	30	51.77				30	40.02			
	9	30	41.90				30	47.43			

*$p<0.05$

The results depicted in Table 4 confirmed the corresponding null hypothesis implying no differences between the writers of three band scores in their FK. As a result, functionally, writers with band 9 were not more competent than those with 8 and those with band 8 were not better than those with band 7 in T1. It approved the same null hypothesis for T2 except for representatives, more predominant in band 9 than the others, and commisives, applied in band 7 larger than 8 and in 8 more than 9.

Table C1 also indicated that twelve features of SK, by-passive, demonstrative pronoun, existential-there, gerund, agentless passive, pro-do, public and suasive verb, synthetic negation, third person pronoun, past tense verb, and analytic negation, were distributed non-normally in three band scores in both tasks.

The results of Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test for these elements (Table 4) demonstrated that the bands of T1 did not differ from each other in making use of these register elements of SK except for demonstrative pronouns, employed more by 9, 8, and 7, respectively. This table also confirmed the same null hypothesis for the differences among bands in T2 for all those elements of register except existential-there, public and suasive verb, three of which were used mainly by two lower bands.

According to Table C1, the other seven features of SK, be-copula, conjunction, first person pronoun, attributive adjective, nominalization, predicative adjective, and private verb, were distributed normally. One-way ANOVA and its post hoc, Tukey test, for homogeneous features (Table 5) showed that there were significant differences among bands in be-copula, first person pronoun, and conjunctions in T2. Band 9 was significantly different from 8 and 7 in be-copula utilization.

First person pronouns were significantly used in bands 9 and 8 in comparison with band 7. Major differences were found between bands 9 and 7 in terms of conjunctions. Table 5 indicated no variances in be-copula, first person pronoun, and attributive adjectives use in T1 and nominalization and private verb in T2.

Table 5

Test of Homogeneity, One-Way ANOVA and Tukey Test for FK and SK

	Test of Homogeneity							**One-way ANOVA**					**Tukey test**	
Feature	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.[a]		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.*	Band Score	N	Subset for alpha =0.05: 1	2
BEMA	.259	2	87	.772	BG	1.788	2	.894	1.001	.372				
Task 1					WG	77.677	87							
					T	79.465	89							
FPP1	.582	2	87	.561	BG	11.964	2	5.982	1.048	.355				
Task 1					WG	496.785	87	5.710						
					T	508.749	89							
JJ					BG	8.438	2	4.219	1.405	.251				
Task 1	2.368	2	87	.100	WG	261.304	87	3.003						
					T	269.742	89							
BEMA	2.986	2	87	.056	BG	19.889	2	9.945	11.986	.000	7	30	1.3863	
Task 2					WG	72.180	87	.830			8	30	1.6897	
					T	92.069	89				9	30		2.5000
FPP	2.368	2	87	.100	BG	10.459	2	5.230	14.912	.000	7	30	.5270	
Task 2					WG	30.512	87	.351			8	30		1.1163
					T	40.972	89				9	30		1.3340
CONJ	1.293	2	87	.280	BG	3.382	2	1.691	3.390	.038	7	30	1.3067	
Task 2					WG	43.395	87	.499			8	30	1.6663	1.6663
					T	46.777	89				9	30		1.7550
NOMZ	1.586	2	87	.211	BG	10.302	2	5.151	1.629	.202				
Task 2					WG	275.040	87	3.161						
					T	285.342	89							
PRIV	1.466	2	87	.236	BG	.284	2	.142	.206	.815				
Task 2					WG	60.177	87	.692						
					T	60.461	89							
PRED	.629	2	87	.536	BG	16.906	2	8.453	16.319	.000	9	30	.7993	
Task 2					WG	45.065	87	.518			8	30	1.0863	
					T	61.970	89				7	30		1.8280

$^{*}p<.05$ $^{a}p>.05$

Dunnett T3 post hoc in Table 6 showed that the band scores register features, normal but non-homogeneous, significantly differed in conjunction and private verb in T1 and attributive adjectives in T2. In other words, while band 7 had significantly lower numbers of conjunction than 8 and 9, 8 and 9 were similar to each other in this feature. Regarding private verbs, significant differences were found just between the lowest and highest band. Attributive adjectives use in T2 displayed only a major difference between bands 7 and 8 and no band differences in nominalization in T1.

Table 7 presented the results of Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U, revealing the task-specific differences in activating FK and SK. It showed that the two tasks differed significantly from each other in representing all features of FK. T1 overrode T2 in directives, expressives, and commisives but not representatives. From among the features of SK, tasks significantly differed from each other in all elements, but not in predicative adjective, gerund, pro-do verb, public verb, synthetic and analytic negations. Nevertheless, greater evidences of conjunction, nominalization, by-passive, demonstrative pronoun, existential-there, agentless-passive, second and third person pronoun were visible in T2. This table attested T1 to be a front-runner in necessitating first person pronouns, suasive and past tense verbs. T2's leadership was also evident in the application of be-copula and attributive adjectives, normally and homogeneously distributed (Table 8).

Table 6

Dunnett T3 Test Results for SK

Dependent Variable	(I) Band Score	(J) Band Score	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig [a].	95% Confidence Interval		Test of homogeneity			
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig[b].
CONJ Task 1	7	8	-.84033	.08653	.000	-1.0552	-.6255	10.980	2	87	.000
		9	-.83200	.08113	.000	-1.0354	-.6286				
	8	7	.84033	.08653	.000	.6255	1.0552				
		9	.00833	.04369	.996	-.0997	.1163				
	9	7	.83200	.08113	.000	.6286	1.0354				
		8	-.00833	.04369	.996	-.1163	.0997				
NOMZ Task 1	7	8	-.01500	.32372	1.000	-.8117	.7817	4.281	2	87	.017
		9	.05733	.25078	.994	-.5593	.6740				
	8	7	.01500	.32372	1.000	-.7817	.8117				
		9	.07233	.30301	.993	-.6762	.8209				
	9	7	-.05733	.25078	.994	-.6740	.5593				
		8	-.07233	.30301	.993	-.8209	.6762				
PRIV Task 1	7	8	.64800	.28859	.083	-.0622	1.3582	4.351	2	87	.016
		9	.97400[a]	.26661	.002	.3148	1.6332				
	8	7	-.64800	.28859	.083	-1.3582	.0622				
		9	.32600	.22032	.371	-.2161	.8681				
	9	7	-.97400[a]	.26661	.002	-1.6332	-.3148				
		8	-.32600	.22032	.371	-.8681	.2161				
JJ Task 2	7	8	-1.45467	.42530	.003	-2.5000	-.4094	6.828	2	87	.002
		9	-1.04633	.66286	.319	-2.6943	.6017				
	8	7	1.45467	.42530	.003	.4094	2.5000				
		9	.40833	.68493	.909	-1.2884	2.1051				
	9	7	1.04633	.66286	.319	-.6017	2.6943				
		8	-.40833	.68493	.909	-2.1051	1.2884				
PRED Task 1	7	8	-.13667	.17594	.822	-.5705	.2971	3.451	2	87	.036
		9	-.23567	.17824	.468	-.6753	.2040				
	8	7	.13667	.17594	.822	-.2971	.5705				
		9	-.09900	.20808	.951	-.6100	.4120				
	9	7	.23567	.17824	.468	-.2040	.6753				
		8	.09900	.20808	.951	-.4120	.6100				

[a]. $p < .05$ [b]. $p > .05$

5. Discussion

The current study investigated the five features representing FK in a corpus of 180 writing performances of the online General IELTS-practice resources manually in order to probe possible differences in band scores as well as inter-tasks differences. One of the most visible facts, not yet being investigated and indicated by previous studies, was the complete absence of declarations in both tasks across three band scores in the above numerically examined corpora. This speech act performance required a match between the propositional content and reality. That is, its success depended upon the correspondence of expressed meaning to the world. Its nonexistence indicated that the writers were just constructing compositions and assuming an unreal condition without supposing any change in the condition of real world or alteration in the position of objects and people they were referring to. It means that they never used the particular category of performatives which executed an illocutionary act and made a distinction between illocutionary force and propositional content. Both writing tasks did not make the writers participate in a type of activity which necessitated performance of sayings, such as nominating, appointing or excommunicating. However, they were required to advocate something such as promising, ordering, commanding, warning or making decisions for and against something. It illustrated that the topics did not cause the writers to imagine the existence of extra-linguistic institutions and occupation of special positions. They did not provide a type of activity in which the writer, for instance, *possesses the authority of a president that declares the Executive Order 13769, the priest that announces a couple married, the judge that declares the defendant innocent, the boss that terminates an employee's position, and the teacher that pronounces assignments' deadline in extra-linguistic institutions, such as the White house, a church, a court, an office, and a school.* The absence of declarations as a very special category of speech acts demonstrated no need for the writers to get the language to match the world.

Contradicting the findings of Cumming et al. (2005) who believed that writing performances of higher scores were longer, grammatically more accurate, lexically wider, etc. than those of lower scores in TEOFL, this investigation (see the first part of Table 4) indicated that-except in two features of T2- there were functionally no differences across the bands in both tasks.

Table 7

Independent–Samples Mann–Whitney U Test for *FK and SK*

Task	Feature	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U	Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed)*
1	REP	90	51.61	4645.00	550	.000
2		90	129.39	11645.00		
1	DIR	90	109.52	9856.50	2338	.000
2		90	71.48	6433.50		
1	EXP	90	135.50	12195.00	0.000	.000
2		90	45.50	4095.00		
1	COM	90	106.18	9556.00	2639	.000
2		90	74.82	6734.00		
1	CONJ	90	75.52	6796.50	2701.500	.000
2		90	103.80	9134.50		
1	FPP1	90	132.40	11916.00	9.000	.000
2		90	44.10	3837.00		
1	NOMZ	90	60.46	5441.50	1346.500	.000
2		90	119.87	10668.50		
1	PRED	90	94.22	8480.00	3715.000	.338
2		90	86.78	7810.00		
1	PRIV	90	100.84	9075.50	3119.500	.008
2		90	80.16	7214.50		
1	BAPY	90	79.09	7118.50	3023.500	.000
2		90	101.91	9171.50		
1	DEMP	90	78.13	7031.50	2936.500	.001
2		90	102.87	9258.50		
1	EX	90	68.79	6191.00	2096.000	.000
2		90	112.21	10099.00		
1	GER	90	97.37	8763.50	3431.500	.069
2		90	83.63	7526.50		
1	PASS	90	79.74	7176.50	3081.500	.005
2		90	101.26	9113.50		
1	PROD	90	91.68	8251.00	3944.000	.636
2		90	89.32	8039.00		
1	SPP	90	133.61	12024.50	170.500	.000
2		90	47.39	4265.50		
1	PUBV	90	96.61	8694.50	3500.500	.115
2		90	84.39	7595.50		
1	SUAV	90	105.02	9451.50	2743.500	.000
2		90	75.98	6838.50		
1	SYNE	90	90.94	8185.00	4010.000	.862
2		90	90.06	8105.00		
1	TPP3	90	67.83	6104.50	2009.500	.000
2		90	113.17	10185.50		
1	VBD	90	67.81	6103.00	2008.000	.000
2		90	113.19	10187.00		
1	XXO	90	89.38	8044.50	3949.500	.763
2		90	91.62	8245.50		

*p<.05

As the first row of Table 4 depicted, the writers of varying band were not only competent, but also equivalent in committing themselves to the truth of expressed propositions, stating their belief and making commitments in T1; for example*, "To begin with, I have been accepted for the master's degree program in computer science at Albany State University"* (band 7, T1). However, these states of affairs (e.g. making assertions, claiming, describing, and putting forward suggestions and hypotheses), made possible through the illocutionary act of representatives, appeared in band 9 twice more frequently than 7 and 8 and differentiated among the bands in T2 due to the response that should be provided to a point of view, argument or problem. The results indicated different psychological states expression to be the most important criteria of getting higher bands in T2. That is, the writers providing a diverse range of assumptions and hypotheses, claiming ideas, asserting facts, stating and describing a situation, and making suggestion about the topic gained better band in T2.

The band scores comparisons in both tasks indicated the equal mastery of the writers over language to get the readers to do something (second row of Table 4). It was due to the fact that there were no differences in directives use. That is, their writers were competent to express their wishes or desires and have the readers do some future action or employ what was called behabitives or exercitives. Examples include: *"parents must take the lead in teaching their own children while the school must also play its supporting role"* (band 7, T1) or *"the scientists should search for the sources of clean energy such as solar power and nuclear power to replace the fossil fuel"* (band 8, T2).

The analysis indicated equality of the illocutionary act of expressives or the speech acts of thanking, congratulating, or apologizing across three bands (Table 4, the third row), not in line with Mayor et al. (2007) who investigated T2 writing performances of high and low band scores in measures of complexity, errors, and discourse. However, these states of affairs were conveyed through expressive verbs, for example, "*unfortunately, I am not able to ...", "I am anxious about the expenses..."* (band 9, T1) and *"we will be glad and honored to have our MP participate in the committee meeting"* (band 8, T1), not in their more complex structures of performative occurrence with nominal or gerundive nominalization transformation.

Finally, the analysis of the corpora demonstrated the equivalence of three bands in intention expression or commitment to some future action (Table 4, the fourth row) in T1. It means if the topic necessitates making promise, vow, threat, or pledge, the writers are functionally competent to express these state of affairs, such *as "I am strongly inclined to believe that higher petrol prices will have serious drawbacks on our society"* (band 8, T2). However, this sense of future commitment was less visualized as the band increased in T2. This finding was consistent with that of Banerjee et al. (2007) in terms of vocabulary gains, more salient in lower band. In other words, compared with the higher bands, the writers committed themselves more to some future courses of action in lower bands due to the repetition of first person singular pronoun 'I' as one of the self-mentions or person markers which more directly announces the writer and his/her personal voice. It was actually used in the first paragraph, where the writer promised to provide reasons for, discuss, advocate, or shed light on a point of view. In two lower bands, the writers organized their essay introduction through directly signaling intent and expressed illocutionary force straightly such as *"I will discuss both sides of the view and present my opinion accordingly"* (band 7). They also classified their points of views and mentioned ordinal adverb plus an 'It is' structure such as *"Secondly, it is also possible to say that consumer-driven society has contributed…."* (band 7) as an appropriate grammatical form to compel the writer to say something. In band 9, the writers used less direct expression of illocutionary acts in their introduction and conveyed their view point through explaining a fact, then a cause, next the effect or result, finally, the point that they considered discussion worthy. Therefore, there was no need for 'I' for example;

"All over the world, cities are choked by the numbers of people that they attract. The industrialization of agriculture has led to more and more people fleeing the countryside and looking for work cities. As a result, the population of urban areas is growing, but the respective infrastructure is not always up to the challenge. One of the main problems arising from this trend, in my opinion, is the level of pollution, especially air pollution from motorized traffic" (band 9, T2).

Table 8

Independent-Samples T-Test for SK

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.* 2-tailed	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
BEMA Task 1 and 2	Equal variances assumed	.608	.437	2.094	178	.038	.30644	.14634	.01766	.59523
	Equal variances not assumed			2.094	177.044	.038	.30644	.14634	.01765	.59524
JJ Task 1 and 2	Equal variances assumed	3.117	.079	-11.841	178	.000	-3.68878	.31154	-4.30356	-3.07400
	Equal variances not assumed			-11.841	162.756	.000	-3.68878	.31154	-4.30395	-3.07361

* $p<.05$

According to Table 7, which indicated a previously neglected inter-task analysis, the tasks differed extensively from each other in making the writers use speech acts and exhibit illocutionary ones. It was found that the writers used greater amounts of representatives in T2. It means that the topics of T2 generally asked the writers to give opinions, explain the general belief of society, exemplify, discuss advantages or disadvantages, agree or disagree with an idea, argue or represent some facts. They also necessitated reporting, reasoning, and concluding all of which were not possible except through an essay full of representatives. The deep structure of the sentences was most subject+ verb (that)+S which made the writers themselves responsible for the truth of what was expressed. Except representatives, there were also some instances of directives in T2's last paragraph, where the writers decided to finish or conclude, to say what might be done to solve the problem proposed in the topic. The results confirmed that T2, despite its higher length (at least 250 words), had only surpassed T1 (at least 150 words) in representatives. That is, the illocutionary act of directives, commisives and expressives were much more frequently used in T1 for these reasons. Firstly, because T1 topics required the writer to get other people of the society or addressee to do something in varying degrees, the writers may do very fierce or modest attempts in use of the directives in sentences such as *"If you could look up for part-*

time jobs in local job sites it will be very helpful" and *"Last but not least, don't neglect your studies"*. The findings indicated that T1 approximately called upon a limited and repetitive range of directives manifestation, such as want, wish, desire, permission, advice, and request expressions rather than its other forms, dare, defy, or challenge. Secondly, T1 required greeting and regards expression for the topic about which a letter should be written. It got the writers to express their condolence, thankfulness, congratulation, excitement, happiness, pleasure and even apology. Therefore, expressives, as a class of illocutionary acts, implying all of these concepts prevailed over in T1 in clauses and phrases, such as *"I am very excited to let you know that…", "Dear Amy", "Regards"* and "*I am really glad to hear that ….". * Thirdly, intention expression and the propositional content in which the writer promises, vows, threatens, or even pledges some future action were more prevalent in T1 writings than T2. Commisives which make the expression of these concepts possible outweighed in T1 and occurred in sentences such as, "*I am leaving next week", "I would like to ask for one more favor", "I will share her contact details with you",* and *"I am writing to inform you that I am experiencing…"* to express intention in the performance of speech act.

The analysis of twenty register features of SK revealed band differences in T1 in utilizing just two features of spoken language, demonstratives and private verbs, and only one feature of written language, conjunction. It also demonstrated T2's band dissimilarities in existential-there, public verbs, be copular, and first person pronouns as features of spoken discourse and in only two features of the written one, which were attributive adjectives and conjunctions. Moreover, it was found that T2 exceled T1 not only in features of written text and academic genre, but also in those appropriate for spoken, conversational and narrative genre.

Although Grant and Ginther (2000) believed in a positive relationship between proficiency level increases and use of passive construction which was suggested as a feature of academic writing genre, band score comparisons in both tasks highlighted no differences in decontextualization and detachment style creation through passives, both by-passives and agentless ones (Table 4). In contrast, when it came to inter-task comparisons, T2 significantly required more passives to maintain the stereotypical characteristics of writing discourse (Table 7).

The findings provided evidence that the higher the band score was, the more interpersonally-involved the writing performance was in T1 with demonstratives use (Table 4). Despite of demonstratives inter-relationship with informal and unplanned discourse (Biber et al., 1999), task comparisons revealed their greater use in T2, which resulted in texts fragments and vague informational content (Table 7).

The result indicated that band 7 of T2 employed syntactically and lexically simple constructions more appropriate for spoken rather than written texts with more existential-there (Table 4). Moreover, T2 exceeded T1 in this conversational genre element, introducing a new entity while it adds a minimum of other information (Biber et al., 1999).

The study suggested that neither bands (Table 4) nor tasks (Table 7) differed from each other in showing conceptual abstractness and imprecise referential identification with the non-significant use of gerunds and pro-do verbs respectively.

Private verbs, more frequent in spoken register than academic one (Biber et al., 1999), were used larger in T2's band 7, containing clichés through the use of these verbs and having more narrative texts with the statements of indirect reported speech and verbs of actions that can be observed publically (Table 4), in line with Hinkel (2003) who found private verbs higher frequency in the essay of non-native speakers. Besides, the two tasks did not considerably vary in this element which makes discourse interpersonal and interactive (Biber et al., 1999) (Table 7).

Although writing performances of all band scores could equally do the job of persuasion through suasive verbs (Table 4), T1 writings significantly provided more features of promise for a specific upcoming event and persuasion of hearers of certain desirable change occurrence in the future (Biber et al., 1999) (Table 7).

Despite neither bands nor task differences in literary and colloquial surface markers of denial and rejection (synthetic and analytic negations respectively), T2 surpassed T1 in occurrence of narrative discourse markers, third person pronoun, the indicator of reference to animate human individuals not present in the immediate interaction, and past tense, the sign of temporal sequence (Biber et al., 1999) (Table 7).

In spite of the fact that the writing performances of all bands were equal in T1 in providing non-complex constructions and reduced informational content (be-copular), interpersonal style (first person pronouns), and integrated texts with packed information (attributive adjectives) (Table 5), the bands greatly differed from each other in these features in T2: band 9 overrode the other two in using ‘be’ as a main verb, introducing simple structures (Biber, 1988), a feature of spoken discourse (Leech, Rayson & Wilson, 2001) and more common in non-native speakers’ writings (Hinkel, 2003); band 7 outdid others in interpersonal focus and involved style with greater use of first person pronouns (Table 5); and band 8 provided a more integrated text with greater use of attributive adjectives (Table 6). As inter-task analysis revealed that T2 transcended T1 in one of the other features of academic texts, nominal information elaboration and exact nature of nominal referents specifications (attributive adjectives, Table 8). In addition, it outdid be-copular use (Table 8) which resulted in a final text with the features of spoken discourse in presenting non-complex constructions. However, T1 exceeded in expression of speaker’s thoughts and feelings and discussion of mental processes associated with high ego-involvement through greater first person pronoun’s use (Table 7).

Band 7 of both tasks (Table 6 and 5) involved considerably less elements of complex logical relations between clauses, therefore, it had less informational focus because of fewer conjunctions use. In addition, it was found that T2 significantly necessitated greater use of conjunctions because of the more formal and planned type of discourse (Biber, 1988) that it required (Table 7).

Furthermore, neither did bands in T1 nor T2 significantly differ from each other in nominalization, representing abstract or informational focus, a feature of academic genre (Table 6 and 5). This finding disagreed with Grant and Ginther (2000) who assumed more use of nominalization by higher proficiency candidates.

However, task comparisons (Table 7) indicated greater nominalization and its co-occurrence with passives in T2, inspiring a sense of detachment, decontextualization and conceptual abstractness, and no interactions between reader and writer, particularly common in scientific texts but not in conversation (Biber, 1988).

As the results showed, significant differences were found between the lowest band and the two highest ones in T1 in intellectuality and mentality reflections and expressions of acts of privacy such as emotive, mental, and cognitive ones through private verbs (Table 6). T1 also included higher use of this element (Table 7), six times more frequent in conversations than in academic genre (Biber et al., 1999).

Predicative adjectives, a feature with equal distribution across academic and conversational genre (Biber et al., 1999) and a frequency of more than twice in non-native speakers' writings than those of native ones (Hinkel, 2003), were more considerably used in the band 7 of T2 than bands 8 and 9. Therefore, a lower band was assigned to the writing performances using them frequently because of the simplified clause structure and a descriptive type of text that they inspire (Biber et al., 1999). Conversely, the tasks did not differ in referring to states or particular referential properties.

Finally, this study found no band differences in second person pronoun use, another feature of conversations and in direct relationship with first person pronouns, in neither tasks. However, more interactive discourse, colloquial flavor, and higher degree of involvement with the addressee were evident with the its greater use in T1.

6. Conclusion

The present study was designed to determine the extent to which the writing performances of the online General IELTS-practice resources of varying band scores, 7, 8 and 9, differed from each other in FK and SK. It also aimed to evaluate the differences between two tasks of writing in representing those two types of pragmatic knowledge.

Although the FK equal competency was found across bands of T1, the writers not committing themselves to doing something were scored higher in T2. Therefore, a change of the following deep structure (a) into (b), which is a commisive into a representative, results into band score improvement.

a) I verb (you) + I Future Vol verb (Noun phrase) (Adverb) (I will discuss the reasons in greater detail in my essay.) (Band 7)
b) This essay will discuss the reasons and try to come to a conclusion (Band 9).

The tasks generally required no need of declarations use. That is, a particular illocutionary act requiring the assumption of a particular position in an extra-linguistic institution was completely deleted from the topics of writing performances which resulted in eradicating specific deep syntactic structures as follows.
c) I verb Noun Phrase+ Noun Phrase+ be Predicate (I find you guilty as charged.)
d) I declare+ Sentence (I declare a state of war exists.)
e) I verb Noun Phrase (I fire you.)

Therefore, the inclusion of speech acts, such as resigning, firing, appointing, christening, and bequeathing possessions should be taken into consideration. That is, situation and settings establishment such as an institution, a restaurant or an office which require illocutionary acts to be issued by authorities of various positions seemed necessary.

The same level of knowledge was also found in making claims (f) and having the others do something (g). It means that the following deep syntactic structures were equally well-used in the writings of varying band scores in both tasks.

f) I Verb (that) + Sentence (I predict she will enter Harvard Medical School.)

g) I Verb you + you Future Vol Verb (Noun Phrase) (Adverb) (I command you do your homework.)

Essays and letter writing differed considerably in the use of FK. While representatives recurred more frequently in essays, self-mention markers, engagement markers, and expressions of emotion were found to be more frequently used in letters. The findings suggest that L2 writing teachers use as many varied writing activities as essays, letters, diaries, job reports, and news summaries in their language classes to help students perform speech acts. In terms of SK, the raters assigned higher bands to letters because of the presence of linguistic features such as verbs, but they awarded lower bands to essays because the essays included spoken elements, a large number of first person pronouns, a few attributive adjectives, and frequent use of predicative adjectives. Although essays contained more frequent uses of spoken characteristics than did letters, very few features of written language occurred in essays. Using these findings, we conclude that essays, which test takers produce when they sit the IELTS exam, do not necessarily provide researchers with opportunities to search for features of formal academic writing.

Given the limitations of the present study, the following areas for further exploration are sketched out. Researchers may consider analyzing other functional and socio-linguistic devices in tasks of general and academic IELTS modules to shed light on the characteristics of pragmatic knowledge test takers use. Researchers may also use qualitative research methods such as think-aloud protocols, interviews, and open-ended questionnaires to better understand the underlying thought patterns test takers employ to construct texts. Finally, analysis of wider score bands may help explain the wide range of pragmatic resources in IELTS tasks.

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