THE EFFECTS OF PRAGMATIC INSTRUCTION ON IRAQI UNDERGRADUATE ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS' USAGE OF THE SPEECH ACT OF REQUEST

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SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate whether pragmatic instruction has an effect on Iraqi students' usage of request and whether male and female students differ in their usage of overall strategy and strategy patterns. This study also explored Iraqi EFL learners' perceptions of learning speech act of request and investigate whether Iraqi students were able to present the appropriate linguistic and pragmatic forms in performing speech act of request. Experimental design was adopted in this study. A discourse completion test (DCT) and a questionnaire were used for data collection. 80 undergraduate students participated in the study and they were divided into two groups; the control group consisted of 40 learners who did not receive any pragmatic instruction, and the experimental group that composed of 40 learners who were taught request strategies via pragmatic instruction. The results revealed that the experimental group showed a significant improvement in the scores of four components; speech act, information, expression, and politeness compared to the control group. The experiemntal group also achieved better results in the post-test than the control group. The results showed that the female students scored better in three conventional indirect request strategies forms; willingness, ability, and permission, than the male students. Moreover, the students in the experimental group reported a positive perception towards learning the speech act of request. Finally, the results proved the experimental group was able to present the appropriate linguistic (sociopragmatics) and pragmatic (pragmalinguistics) forms in performing the speech act of request. The findings indicate that the pragmatic instruction was effective in helping learners obtain different forms of request and strategies that enabled them to formulate appropriate requests. The study implicates that teaching pragmatics in the Iraqi EFL context should be implemented by EFL teachers to develop EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge and enhance their communicative ability in social contexts.

KESAN PENGAJARAN PRAGMATK TERHADAP PELAJAR IRAQ IJAZAH SARJANA MUDA BAHASA INGGERIS SEBAGAI BAHASA ASING DALAM UCAPAN PERMINTAAN

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk meneliti sama ada pengajaran pragmatik mempunyai kesan terhadap penggunaan ucapan permintaan di kalangan pelajar Iraq, dan melihat perbezaan antara pelajar lelaki dan perempuan dalam keseluruhan strategi dan corak strategi mereka. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mendapatkan persepsi pelajar terhadap pembelajaran lakuan pertuturan dalam ucapan permintaan melalui pengajaran pragmatik dan melihat sama ada pelajar Iraq dapat menyampaikan ucapan permintaan menggunakan bentuk struktur linguistik dan pragmatik yang sesuai. Reka bentuk eksperimen telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan Ujian Wacana Penyelesaian (DCT) dan soal selidik. 80 pelajar universiti terlibat dalam kajian ini dan dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan; kumpulan kawalan terdiri daripada 40 orang pelajar yang tidak menerima pengajaran pragmatik, dan kumpulan eksperimen yang terdiri daripada 40 orang pelajar yang diajar strategi lakuan pertuturan ucapan permintaan. Data menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan eksperimen mencapai peningkatan skor yang signifikan dalam empat komponen; lakuan pertuturan, maklumat, ungkapan, dan kesopanan berbanding skor kumpulan kawalan. Peserta dalam kumpulan eksperimen mendapat keputusan yang lebih baik pada ujian pasca berbanding peserta dalam kumpulan kawalan. Dapatan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar perempuan memperolehi skor lebih baik dalam tiga aspek strategi lakuan ucapan permintaan tidak langsung konvensional iaitu kesediaan, kemampuan, dan kebenaran berbanding pelajar lelaki. Data juga menunjukkan para peserta memberikan persepsi positif terhadap pembelajaran lakuan pertuturan ucapan permintaan melalui pengajaran pragmatik. Kajian ini juga membuktikan para peserta dalam kumpulan eksperimen dapat mengemukakan lakuan pertuturan permintaan yang sesuai dari aspek linguistik (sosiopragmatik) dan pragmatik (pragmalinguistik). Data kajian ini menunjukkan pengajaran pragmatik berkesan dalam membantu pelajar mendapat ilmu berkaitan bentuk lakuan pertuturan ucapan permintaan serta strategi bagi mereka menghasilkan lakuan pertuturan ucapan permintaan. Kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa pengajaran pragmatik dalam kontek pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar Iraq perlu dilaksanakan oleh guru bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing untuk mengembangkan ilmu pelajar tentang pragmatik dan kebolehan berkomunikasi.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CG   Control Group

DCT   Discourse Completing Test

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

ESL   English as a Second Language

EG   Experimental Group

FTA   Face-Threatening Act

L1   First Language

L2   Second Language

M   Mean

SAT   Speech Act Theory

SD   Standard Deviation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In learning English, or target language as a foreign or a second language (EFL/ESL), pragmatics learning is considered an important factor (Castillo, 2009). In order to speak any target language fluently and appropriately, learners of that target language should be competent in its pragmatic aspects (Nahrkhalaji, 2013). These pragmatic aspects can be learned in many ways, that is, Iraqi EFL students can acquire them through formal education or interaction with native speakers. Additionally, the supportive environment and availability of resources play a vital role in the improvement of Iraqi EFL students' pragmatics knowledge. Thus, in the education field, various researches have focused on looking at the implementation of pragmatic aspects in a foreign language classroom. One of the areas that gained considerable attention is researches on speech act of request

(Jalilifar, 2009; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Rajabia et al., 2015; Nahrkhalaji, 2013; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018).

Pragmatic instruction has proven necessary for language students to deal not only with linguistically but also culturally complex conversations. The necessity for pragmatic instruction arose with the stress on cultural aspects, and components of pragmatics in English language teaching (Grace, 2010; Salehi, 2013; Abdul Sattar et al., 2014; Arghashi1 & Gorjian, 2018). A study by Cohen (2019) stressed the need to look at different terms of language containing socio-cultural, pragmatic, and address in English teaching.

The teaching of pragmatics is essential and significant in our globalized world (Grace, 2010). The reason is that English is used by people in the world to communicate with each other in order to conduct international trade or participate in academic conferences (McKay, 2002). To avoid miscommunication due to cultural differences, familiarity with different cultures and having the knowledge of pragmatics is essential. In addition, many researchers of pragmatics underline the suitability in inter cultural addresses. Through teaching pragmatics, the English speakers' intercultural communicative competence could be raised (Lin, 2007). Their pragmatic competence would equip them with the knowledge of cultural dissimilarities and create awareness of the importance in using proper languages (Grace, 2010).

1.2   Background of the Study

Pragmatics is one of the most important components of English communicative competence (Rajabia et al., 2015). Crystal (1997, p. 6) stated that "Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication". Kasper and Rose (2001) declared that pragmatics is the use of language in different actions, how to carry it out and the ability to use language suitably according to contextual features in any educational setting.

According to Rajabia (2015), pragmatics comprises traditional rules of language which are exhibited in the explanation and production of utterances. Specifically, it helps learners analyze the conditions that make the utterances suitable in different situations. According to Thomas (2006), a failure in considering these parameters results in misunderstanding. Thus, pragmatic competence is the knowledge that speaker-hearer uses to engage in communication, including how various speech acts are successfully performed in different situations.

Pragmatics also plays a significant role in the field of communication, and in the teaching of a language (Alinezhad, 2015). In pragmatics, speakers' meaning in communication is essential and it can be classified into two classes which are verbal and nonverbal. Pragmatics depends on different contexts, the relationship between utterers, and social factors. Moreover, Alinezhad (2015) stated that language had an essential role not only in enabling effective communication between people, but also

getting a high-quality education, and making and keeping social relations between individuals of different cultures and languages. Achieving such functions of language requires mastery of the English language and its appropriate usage for various purposes and contexts. This is mandatory since learning any language requires learners to be competent in its pragmatics, being one of the important components of language competence that enables learners to use the language in its appropriate context and culture (Thomas, 2006). Being pragmatically competent, learners can perform their speech acts, notably requests, which are the focus of this study.

Pragmatics has an important role in the teaching and learning of language. It helps students develop their knowledge of a language, awareness, and communication skill in the English language (Nivis, 2013). Through teaching of pragmatics, the learners will have the competence of a particular language or a particular resource which enables learners of the language to convey their messages and intentions accurately in a successful communication (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2). Teaching pragmatics has an important role in developing Iraqi students' communication (Mohammed, 2012). Harlow (1990, as cited in Nevis,2013, p.69) stated that "most importantly, both teachers and textbooks alike need to emphasize to the learner that language is composed of not just linguistic and lexical elements; rather, language reflects also the social context, taking into account situational and social factors in the act of communication". Hence, pragmatic competence is a combination of these factors and the development of the pragmatic knowledge should be accepted as one of the primary teaching goals. Consequently, when language learners are able to act in different communicative patterns, they find themselves active and involved in concrete acts in the classroom.

Teaching pragmatics has an essential role inside the classroom. It can be effective in developing students' knowledge of the use of speech acts, namely requesting appropriately (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Kasper and Rose (2001) claimed that teaching pragmatics includes different components such as speech act, expression, information, and politeness. These components develop language learners' knowledge of language use inside the classroom environment. The pragmatic exercise is one of the resources that can be used by the teacher to convey the main aspects of English language. More significantly, in teaching pragmatics, the teacher showing the pragmatic material before learners look at exercises is more effective than learners looking at exercises and trying to acquire the pragmatic material without prior description (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Additionally, pragmatics is an essential component of achieving communicative competence in EFL classroom (Shokouhi, 2016). Communicative competence refers to learners' ability to utilize the language in cultural and social interactions, which is more essential than the rule or structure of the language (Krashen, 1982). Communicative competence involves understanding linguistic rules and an acquaintance with the implementation of these rules in obtaining communicative competence. According to Tua (2017), communicative competence is a language ability that involves understanding of language rules and the knowledge of how to use the language in a social environment to achieve interaction in actual circumstances that necessitate communication.

In previous eras, scholars have worked on formulating communicative language and recognizing the elements of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980;

Cohen, 2019). Scholars such as Canale and Swain (1980) suggested that communicative competence is comprised of three primary components; the first one is grammatical competence, the second is sociolinguistic competence, and third is strategic competence. As for grammatical competence, it indicates the knowledge that guides mastery of the language itself.

Sociolinguistic competence delivers the extent to which expression is created and seen as suitable in various sociolinguistic settings (Chia-Ning, 2007). In addition, it might be actualized to avoid the occurrence of failures in communication resulting from restrictive conditions in real communication or inadequate ability in areas of communication. Essentially, communicative competence can be classified into organizational competence and pragmatic competence (Tajeddin, & Alemi, 2020). While the first concerns the learning of linguistic elements and the standards for formulating well-formed clauses and the knowledge of utilizing discourse in situations, the second involves illocutionary competence, which includes understanding of discourse items and discourse purposes, or its capability to utilize language suitably.

So far, different viewpoints have been presented to define pragmatic competence. In this respect, Crystal (1997, p.3) stated that "pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language have on other participants in the act of communication." In the same vein, Kasper and Rose (2001) claimed that pragmatic competence is not a part of knowledge added to the students' existing syntactic knowledge, but it is a piece of the students' communicative competence in the classroom. This means that pragmatics

does not focus mainly on syntactic information, but rather on the use of language in the acts of communication.

According to Kasper (1997, p.5), pragmatics "is the study of people's understanding and creation of linguistic action in context". Based on this, two crucial kinds of speech acts are involved to accomplish the meaning of utterance: the action words and the context in which these words are used. Kasper also utilized the linguistic action which concerns learners' ability to produce an utterance in a context of situation. He also puts emphasis on understanding and knowing action words that are particularly relevant to second language students' daily lives.

Studies were also conducted by several researchers (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003; Tua, 2017; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018) on the usage of speech act which is regarded as one of the pragmatic aspects. One of the important aspects within interlanguage pragmatic is the application of the speech acts by using essential strategies in the classroom. Bardovi-Harlig (2001), Iraji and Enayat (2018) proposed including teaching pragmatics in the language learning syllabus in order to decrease difficulties between language students and that of native speakers. Kecskes and Kecsklaes (2014) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001) noticed the significance of conducting study on the incorporation of teaching pragmatics with language instruction and that the supporting of teaching strategies in the English language classroom strengthens usage of speech acts, namely request. In this regard, teaching pragmatics play an essential role in achieving the usage of request in the context of Iraq. Shokouhi (2016) stated that teaching pragmatics has an essential role in developing Iraqi learners' usage of requests, and it facilitates the act of communication among Iraqi learners.

Speech act is one of the most essential aspects of pragmatics. One of the speech acts that attract many people in the pragmatic researches is the act of requesting (Fukushima, 2003). In fact, the request speech act is necessary for interpersonal and intercultural communication. Everyone presents requests for different causes in communications, in order to get directions, to ask support, and obtain assistance from others. In this sense, Searle (1975) indicated that speech acts are the essential units of linguistic connection. The language we utilize, specifically the speech acts we utter, are completely dependent on the context in which the acts are performed. Thus, speech acts are verbal actions whose function is to satisfy the interlocutors' needs and wishes in an act of communication.

Austin (1962) stated that the performance of any language act includes three different aspects: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary aspects. First aspect is the articulation of a sentence with determinate sense and reference. The second, illocutionary, refers to the production of a speech. In articulating a sentence, by virtue of the traditional force. The third aspect is perlocutionary and it is the effect of the speaker's utterance on the audience by means of articulating the sentence, such impacts being unique to the situations of utterance (Uso-Juan, 2010 p. 236).

Teaching pragmatics is considered the most comprehensive area that subsumes all the aforementioned aspects and brings different languages, cultures, social aspects, and areas on one ground. It has been the focus of many studies in applied linguistics, TESL, and TEFL (Barron, 2003;Uso-Juan, 2010; Al-Gahtani, & Al- Shatter, 2012; Zarepour, 2016). Thus, in light of the above discussion, it is necessary to conduct a study, particularly in the EFL academic context which focuses on the role of teaching

pragmatics and social aspects of English in the use of request strategies. With this in mind, the present study focuses on the effects of pragmatic instruction on Iraqi learners' usage of the request in an EFL academic setting.

1.3   Problem Statement

In learning any second or foreign language, the relation between the linguistic forms of that language and their functions in any act of communication is crucial to explore how speech acts can convey different messages depending on the context of the situation. To convey and understand such messages well, it is necessary for second or foreign language learners to be pragmatically competent (DuFon, 2008). In other words, they should be aware of the pragmatic aspects of the language they are producing. If a speaker has limited knowledge about the pragmatic aspects, this may lead to a miscommunication between native and non-native speakers of a language (Kazdin, 2003; Al-Momani, 2009; Beltran, 2004; Niezgoda and Rover, 2011). Lack of pragmatics knowledge refers to the outcome of the incorrect of the linguistic forms of a target language, which results from the lack of awareness of any social factors of the target language (Newby, 2006; Mulacc, 2010).

Recent studies have shown that students' language ability in pragmatics does not improve as other aspects such as writing, listening, and reading improve (Yuka, 2012; Wen et al., 2015; Choraih & Loutfi, 2016; Kim, 2017; Tajeddin, & Alemi, 2020). This is because most EFL teachers concentrate on skills such as the writing, listening, and reading, but they do not pay adequate attention to   teaching pragmatics or

sociolinguistic dimension of language (Yuka, 2012; Choraih, & Loutfi, 2016; Kim, 2017). Rafieyan (2016) stated that most EFL students have limited knowledge of pragmatics and this affects their mastery of conversational norms. This is because language teachers in English as a foreign language focus primarily on the linguistic rules of the target language and do not pay much attention to the pragmatic aspects of the target language (Salehi, 2013).

Various researches have demonstrated that even those language students who are competent in using a target language grammar and word meanings still often fail to convey their intended messages because of the lack of pragmatic knowledge (Koike & Pearson , 2005; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Rose, 2005; Kim, 2017). This means that even learners with advanced grammatical development may not necessarily have corresponding levels of pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Nivis, 2013; Abdul Sattar & Farnia, 2014). In addition, scholars have found that even advanced language learners may not necessarily possess comparable pragmatic knowledge that would enable them to interact effectively and accurately in various social contexts (Kasper and Rose, 2003; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Safont-Jorda, 2008; Cohen, 2019). Additionally, studies have indicated that language learners who master lexical and grammatical issues encounter difficulty in conveying their intended meaning appropriately in various communicative contexts (Koike & Pearson, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Yu, 2008; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018).

Researches on pragmatics have emphasized the role of pragmatic instruction in promoting pragmatic competence that leads to effective communication (Bacelar da Silva, 2003; Rose, 2005; Dastjerdi, 2010; Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018). Studies

by Silva (2003), Alcoʹn (2005), Koike and Pearson (2005), Alcoʹn and Pitarch (2010), Ishihara and Cohen (2010), Mirzaei and Esmaeili (2013), Sajjad (2016), Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018), and Tajeddin and Alemi, (2020) have shown that pragmatic instruction is effective across age groups, language background and proficiency level as it helps to develop learners' pragmatic knowledge.

Many studies (Tateyama, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Martínez-Flor and Alcon, 2007; Zareour, 2016) stressed the necessity of instruction of pragmatics in the foreign and second language classrooms. They indicated that teaching pragmatics in these academic setting facilitates second language pragmatic acquisition.

In Iraq, pragmatic instruction is one of the neglected methods in English language instruction (Mohammed, 2012; Shokouhi, 2016; Koran, 2017). This is because pragmatic aspects are not included in the syllabus of the Iraqi English Language teaching. Hence, teachers do not emphasize pragmatic instruction. Many Iraqi EFL teachers and specialists of English focused on grammar and vocabulary while they neglected the teaching of pragmatics in the EFL classroom setting (Mohammed, 2012; Shokouhi, 2016).

Learners of English as a foreign language, namely Iraqi EFL learners, often indicate an imbalance in the relation between the linguistic forms and their pragmatic functions in the academic discourse as they often focus on the grammatical rules isolated from their functions (Mohammed, 2012; Shokouhi, 2016). Thus, it is important to pay attention to pragmatics as it guides learners to choose the linguistic forms

appropriate to the academic context (Eslami & Rasekh, 2008; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Accordingly, the instruction of English as a foreign language needs to give more importance to pragmatics of that language in the classroom. In this regard, teaching pragmatics enables learners to develop learners' knowledge in using speech acts (Al-Momani, 2009; Kim, 2017). In addition, it is necessary for teachers and textbook writers to focus on how pragmatic aspects function in the target language being learned. Accordingly, pragmatics can be taught inside the classroom and find its way in developing learners' usage of speech act of request.

Many EFL teachers frequently focus on the grammar and vocabulary (structural forms) and they do not concentrate or give adequate attention to the teaching of pragmatic knowledge or sociolinguistic dimension of language (Shokouhi, 2016; Abbood, 2016). As a result, most Iraqi EFL students spend time and effort in obtaining the language rules while ignoring the social and pragmatic knowledge in the EFL classroom setting (Aldhulaee, 2011; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017). Nevertheless, many Iraqi EFL students face difficulties in communicating with people of different cultures (Abrams, 2014; Shokouhi, 2016). EFL Iraqi students were not able to produce suitable requests when they communicate in their EFL classroom (Mohammed, 2012). Hence, the Iraqi EFL students may perform utterances that are quite syntactic, but they may violate the social norms of the target language because they lack pragmatic knowledge (Shokouhi, 2016; Abdelhafez, 2016). Therefore, for Iraqi learners to be pragmatically competent, they must learn how to use their speech act of request appropriately. They must learn how, where, and when to use their levels of directness so as to be polite.

However, despite the emphasis on learning English, many Iraqi EFL learners are still unable to formulate speech act of request in English language (Alemi and Khanlarzadeh,2016; Abbood, 2016). This is because of the limited exposure to pragmatics and use of speech acts in the classroom and its rare use outside the classroom, which seem to affect the learners' speech in English, particularly, in terms of their vocabulary and the ability to perform certain speech acts (Jandt, 2015; Darweesh & Mehdi, 2016).

In addressing the issue whereby students were not able to produce speech act of request appropriately due to their lack of pragmatic knowledge, this study intends to explore whether the implementation of teaching pragmatics would have a significant effect on the learners' ability to produce speech act of request accordingly in a particular cultural environment. The speech act of request is chosen as the focus of this research as it is one of the most highlighted aspects of pragmatic instruction across the second and foreign language context. Hence, a study on the teaching of speech act of request was conducted to see whether it will be able to develop the students' ability to use it in selected contexts.

1.4   Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate whether the pragmatic instruction has an effect on Iraqi EFL students' usage of request.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the control and the experimental group in the pre-test.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group.

Ho3: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the pre-test and the post-test of the control group.

Ho4: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the control and experimental group in the post-test.

2. To discover whether there is any significant difference between male and female students in their overall strategy and strategy patterns.

Ho5: There is no significant difference between male and female students in their overall strategy and strategy patterns.

3. To find out Iraqi EFL learners' responses of learning speech act of request through pragmatic instruction.

4. To find out whether Iraqi students were able to present the appropriate linguistic and pragmatic forms in performing speech act of request.

1.5 Research Questions

In line with the objectives, four research questions are presented:

1. What is the effect of pragmatic instruction on Iraqi EFL students' usage of speech act of request?

1a) Is there any significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the control and the experimental group in the pre-test?

1b) Is there any significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group?

1c) Is there any significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the pre-test and the post-test of the control group?

1d) Is there any significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the control and experimental group in the post-test?

2. How do the male and female students differ in their overall strategy and strategy patterns?

2a) Is there any significant difference between male and female students in their overall strategy and strategy patterns?

3. What are the Iraqi students' perceptions of the learning speech act of request through pragmatic instruction?

4. To what extent were the Iraqi students able to present the appropriate linguistic and pragmatic forms in performing speech act of request?

4a) Is the students' response pragmatically (sociopragmatically) appropriate?

4b) Is the students' response grammatically or structurally (pragmalinguistically) correct?

1.6   Research Hypothesis

The research hypotheses below are tested:

The null hypotheses for this research are as follows. Ho$_1$, Ho2, Ho3, and Ho4 are generated from research question 1.

> Ho1: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the control and the experimental group in the pre-test.
>
> Ho2: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the pre-test and the post-test of the experimental group.
>
> Ho3: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the pre-test and the post-test of the control group.
>
> Ho4: There is no significant difference in the scores of the usage of the speech act of request between the control and experimental group in the post-test.
>
> Ho5 is generated from research question 2.

> Ho5: There is no significant difference between male and female students in their overall strategy and strategy patterns.

1.7   Significance of the Study

This study may add new knowledge to pragmatics studies. The study may be valuable for Iraqi EFL teachers, students, curricula designers, and stakeholders. The findings of the study may help English teachers understand how they would be able to conduct pragmatic instruction on Iraqi EFL students' usage of request. Also, the results may

help English teachers understand how Iraqi students perceive the request strategies employed, and to what extent pragmatic instruction is applicable to Iraqi EFL students. Additionally, the results may help to increase English teachers' awareness of the importance of pragmatic information and competence leading to their incorporation of this area into their classroom practice.

The findings of the study may help Iraqi EFL learners develop pragmatic competence in a target language and it also helps the Iraqi learners to formulate requests appropriately. Additionally, the results may help to raise the Iraqi learners' awareness about different ways of expressing request strategies. Furthermore, the results of the research may be helpful for curricula designers. Pragmatic learning materials can be designed to be integrated within EFL curricula. This can be accomplished by improving how the Iraqi EFL curricula represented pragmatic knowledge of the target culture, which is presently insufficient, particularly by providing a better understanding of concepts of the request. Finally, the results of the study may be helpful for the stakeholders such as the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq, who may benefit from the implementation as it may help to improve their English language proficiency level. Proficient English language users among the workforce will probably generate high- quality learners who will be able to compete internationally and in turn will help to optimize the productivity of the country. This is crucial in order to realize the mission of a developed country by the year 2020 (Vision 2020) and contribute towards the initial plan for the future of Iraq in the period 2020 to 2050.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

One of the limitations of the study is that its results and conclusions cannot be generalized to other population because of the relatively small sample.

Additionally, the study was conducted in the university setting; it lacked random collection and random assignment of individuals. The number of students was also limited, consisted of only (80) Iraqi college students majoring in EFL.

With regard to academic level, the learners received limited exposure to the English language although they have been introduced to English in the mainstream education. Also, they have minimal exposure and limited experience in pragmatic aspects and target English.

Also, the time allocated for this research is fairly short. The material included in the training of pragmatic competence might require a longer time. Furthermore, the study is restricted to show one kind of directive speech act, which is the speech act of request.

1.9 Operational Definition

It is essential to understand the operational definition of the study topic in order to know the focus of this research. The definitions are as below

i) Speech Act of Request

According to Achiba (2003), speech act of request is used very often in everyday communication to give actions, orders, instructions, do favors, etc. This act of request is performed in different formulas (elliptical phrases, imperatives, conventional strategies etc.) and makes different levels of directness actions that display diverse personal and social relations (Achiba, 2003). Moreover, Brown and Levinson (1987) state that a request is a face-threatening act. Speech act is susceptible to definite parameters, such as status, distance, and degree of imposition. Thus parameters affect the select of formula and the level of directness actions in different languages. In the context of this research, a speech act of request is a directive act in which the illocutionary purpose is to get the learner to do something in a particular situation. Speech act of request can be measured in terms of preferred linguistic strategies that make requests appropriate to the social and cultural contexts. Request in this study contain three strategies (direct strategy, conventionally indirect strategy, and non-conventionally indirect strategy)

ii) Pragmatic Instruction

According to Mirzaei and Esmaeili (2013), pragmatic instruction is implemented when the instructor concentrates on diverse procedures. This means that providing learners with comprehensible input, and strategies leading students into collaborative activities or tasks, presenting different explanations of pragmatics or information, and increasing learners' awareness towards social and cultural aspects help them make significant increases in pragmatic ability in FL classroom. Also, it is often characterized by

teacher-led introduction of the pragmatic aspects and social aspects of the target language.

In this research, the pragmatic instruction focuses on the teacher's three strategies; direct request strategies, conventionally indirect request strategies, and non-conventional indirect request strategies are employed throughout the ten-week lesson plans to help Iraqi students acquire the speech act of request. Through the pragmatic instruction students empowers students to experience, engage in collaborative activities, and experiment presenting different explanations of pragmatics with the language in context, and thereby participate in purposeful language use, rather than just using particular words.

iii)   EFL

Learners who are not pursuing their education in a second language medium institution or cultural milieu are categorized as EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). Also, it is an abbreviation for "English as a Foreign Language". This is mostly utilized to refer to learners (whose first language is not English) learning English while living in their own homeland, as well as English being studied by non-native speakers as a foreign language in an environment where English is not spoken as the first language. In the context of this study, the term EFL is an abbreviation referring to the status of English among the Iraqi participants, and their field of study English as a foreign language.

v)   **Request Strategies**

According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), request strategies are classified into three major categories, namely direct request strategies, conventionally indirect request strategies, and non-conventional indirect request strategies. Direct request strategies are defined as utterances in which the meaning of the utterance is consistent with the speakers' intention (Holtgraves, 1986) [15]. For instance, when the speaker intends to make a request, he/she makes it in an explicit way. Direct strategies are usually used when the speaker is dominant or in a position of authority, and they communicate only one propositional meaning. Conventionally indirect request strategies refer to the act of requesting something indirectly. In these strategies, the requesters' meaning and the propositional content are not the same, and they imply more than one meaning. In this respect, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) [2] define conventionally indirect strategies as "strategies that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language" (p.47). Conventionally indirect request strategies are associated with vagueness at the utterances' level and characterized by pragmatic duality. Non-conventionally indirect request strategies refer to the requestive acts that can take any linguistic form or hints (Blum-Kulka et al. (1987, p.280) [2]. There are two benefits behind using such strategies. First, the requester can avoid the responsibility or the intention for making a request. The use of hints has more than one interpretation, and the hearer is obliged to make an inference so as to recover what the requester actually means. Second, the requester can satisfy the negative face to a degree greater than that afforded by the negative politeness strategy. Hints are considered as off-record strategies and more polite than on-record strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp.70-73).   In this study, these three categories of request strategies

were employed in teaching pragmatics throughout the ten-week lessons. These three strategies were used on the basis of the pragmatic instruction to teach the speech act of request among participants, these strategies helped participants to formulate the request politely and enabled them to communicate effectively.

1.10 Summary

In summary, the researcher presented a relevant introduction with regard to the teaching pragmatics and the growth of pragmatics ability in learning a foreign language. Pragmatics enables EFL students to use speech act of request appropriately. In this chapter, the researcher introduced the problem statement and limitation of the research. The researcher also presented the significance of the study, research questions, research objectives, and hypotheses. The researcher presented a list of definitions of words related to the research. The next chapter discusses the theories and illustrates the previous related studies.