

Usage of Speech Act of Request among Iraqi Male and Female Undergraduate EFL Students

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Abstract— The study explained English learners' pragmatics development, learners' pragmatic competence in selected speech act, and usage of request as a one of speech acts that it used in gaining pragmatic ability. The study was offered by a public curriculum lead that prioritizes the necessity for English students to develop their ability to use request effectively in cultural communication. The study aimed to explain differences in the usage of request among Iraqi male and female undergraduate EFL students. Furthermore, most English students fail to present pragmatic ability on how to use request by relating utterances to their meanings, knowing the intention of language users, and how requests are employed in specific locations. There is growing material of researches on pragmatic ability and differences in the usage of request among male and female students for EFL schoolroom teaching. However, researchers have pointed to focus on the traditional methods rather than how English students require or use request to develop the students' production in the EFL classroom. Therefore, depending on the successful results of preceding studies, the study focused on the differences in usage of request among Iraqi male and female undergraduate EFL students. The differences in the usage of request to these learners have been discussed in details of the present research.

Keywords— Pragmatics development, Differences in usage of request, and EFL students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the understanding of a foreign language is a great challenge not only for an English students but also for an English lecturer in EFL settings. In fact, students need to be equipped with the fitting communicative ability to achieve successful communication among the male and female students to master a foreign language. As well as, for it is comprehending and being understood communication among the people. Adopting a teaching speech act of request to achieve this undertaking has placed more stress on accomplishing the practical component of the L2 along with its linguistic component (.Hussein & Albakri, 2019). As one of the components of a language is to provide appropriate meaning in process of teaching, it is needed for language students to know how to use lexical units or grammatical structures for accomplishing effective communication in the classroom (Kurdghelashvili, 2015). Earlier studies (Canale, 1983; Krasner, 1999; Kurdghelashvili, 2015, Hussein & Albakri, 2019) confirmed that understanding only vocabulary or grammar is insufficient to be a competent language student in the schoolroom. English student considered as an

excellent language student may not be able to communicate with learners of the target language. Therefore, English students need to understand and have communicative competence which comprises both language competence and pragmatic competence for accomplishing communication among students in different environments. Language competence includes pronunciation, words, spelling, and sentence rules while pragmatic competence concerns students' use of language and picking the appropriate utterance in the given position (Leung, 2005).

Furthermore, a study by Hymes (1972) stated that pragmatic competence is regarded as one of the major components in the teaching of communicative language in the classroom, and it plays a vital role in acquiring diverse cultures of the foreign language (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Moreover, Bataineh and Hussein (2015) indicated pragmatic doesn't focus on grammatical knowledge, but it focuses on the meaning of students' language use in the act of communication, as well as it focuses on helping the student to create meaning rather than improve perfectly grammatical structure. A study by Hussein and Elttayef (2018) indicated

that EFL students' pragmatic which is an aspect of communicative competence. Such pragmatic should be successfully and purposefully chosen in such a way that they should be more testable, teachable, interesting, motivating in FL schoolroom language (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Hence, it plays a vital role in obtaining different cultures of foreign language. Through teaching pragmatic, English students can obtain different cultures of language. Sometimes, EFL learners show pragmatic competence when the written or spoken language produced is polite and socially suitable. Also, pragmatic competence is defined as the students' use of language and uses suitable rules and politeness dictated by the way it is understood by the student and express speech acts such as request (Koike, 1989). In order to achieve the objectives of learners' communication, and develop learners' pragmatic ability in the EFL classroom (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Therefore, learners should recognize speech acts, namely usage of request, that learners employ in their utterances and discover strategies employed by the learners to achieve their communication objectives in different countries (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). This may help foreign students become more pragmatically and culturally aware of their own utterances, and provide insight into language instructors in order to develop EFL learners' pragmatic competence in EFL situations (Hussein & Albakri, 2019).

II. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

It was found that the major problem in the EFL setting, specific in Iraq setting. EFL male and female students in a college, whose first language is Arabic, seem to sometimes lack pragmatic competence when trying to speak in English, which is their foreign language. As well as, our experience in teaching English as a foreign language in university, and other educational institutions in Iraq has led me to believe that English language majors/graduates in Iraq have problems in using English for communication, not only in academic expressions but also even in situational conversions of street (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). In the same vein, although the increasing interest in teaching pragmatic in many forms of researches, a little in-depth study has been conducted on the effect of teaching pragmatic on Iraqi EFL students, where most of the foreign language teaching lacks adequate teaching pragmatic (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). As a result, Iraqi learners seem less request polite when communicating in the English language; more specifically when performing face-threatening acts (FTA) such as requesting (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). As well as, Cohen (1996) and Hussein & Albakri, (2019) stated that language

learners can have all of the syntactic context and lexical items and still not be able to communicate their message because they lack the necessary pragmatic aspects namely speech act of request to communicate their intent. Although some Iraqi learners seem pragmatically competent when speaking in the Arabic language, this competence is not necessarily reflected in their foreign language (Hussein & Albakri 2019). Accordingly, Iraqi male and female students need to learn pragmatic aspects such as politeness, speech acts namely usage of request strategies to permit them to make the request suitably, and they also become more pragmatically and culturally aware of their own expressions (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). With respect to differences in usage of request among female and male students, the researcher saw through his experience in university, there is a tendency for female students to use request politely and treated socially compared to male students, perhaps the reason is because females are more aware of and interest in the study of request strategies, also females are more attentive to their future.

III. THE AIM OF RESEARCH

Recently, there has been a little empirical study into explanation the importance of teaching pragmatic on female and male learners' EFL usage of the request in academic settings within the Iraqi context, also explain the difference in usage of request among Iraqi female and male students through using teaching pragmatic. A part of a Ph.D. dissertation, the present study aims to explain differences in usage of request among Iraqi female and male students in four components (speech act, information, expression, and politeness) through the effects of pragmatic instruction. The request is one of the main speech acts that are popular in the area of pragmatics as it is more usually found in everyday students' utterances in diverse situations (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). It is the most produced utterance in the foreign language classroom setting. Therefore, identifying the main role of teaching pragmatic made in the class may help Iraqi EFL male and female students to be aware of their politeness level and appropriate request in the EFL textbook. Furthermore, request strategies with assist pragmatic instruction put forward by Iraqi EFL male and female learners are also essential to EFL teachers as it can help them comprehend utterances produced by students and respond appropriately. Therefore, results of different studies (Ellis, 1992; Hill, 1997; Jalilifar, 2009; Hussein & Albakri, 2019) that focused on the importance of pragmatic instruction on developing English students' ability to use request in diverse

cultures and difference in usage of request among male and female EFL students in different situations.

IV. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

4.1 Previous Studies on Pragmatics in EFL Learning and Teaching

Prior to anything, the researcher tries to clarify the definitions of pragmatics. Then, the literature review of pragmatics and its role in EFL learning and teaching. Pragmatics is defined as “a general cognitive, cultural, and social viewpoint on language phenomena in relation to their usage in formulas of behavior in various contexts” (Verschueren 1999: p.7). In other words, He described pragmatics as a part of linguistics, presents a diverse perspective, which includes a radical departure from the identified component view that tries to assign to pragmatics its own set of linguistic characteristics in contradiction with morphology and semantics.

In recent researches (Vellenga, 2004; Alcón-Soler, 2005; Rueda, 2006; Hussein & Albakri, 2019) on pragmatics in EFL learning and teaching has stated that it is essential to help language learners to increase both usages of the speech act of request, and ability to communicate effectively in different situations. Moreover, research by Hussein and Elttayef (2018) and Hussein and Albakri (2019) stated that EFL students’ pragmatic which is an aspect of communicative competence in the classroom. Such pragmatic should be successfully selected in such a way that they should be more testable, teachable, interesting, appealing in the FL classroom. More importantly, an empirical study by Bataineh and Hussein (2015) and Hussein & Albakri (2019) specified that pragmatic doesn’t focus on grammatical knowledge, but it emphasizes on the meaning of students’ language use in the acts of communication in EFL schoolroom. Findings of those researches provided rich proof to support the necessity for EFL learners’ pragmatic aspects to develop speech act of request and increase the act of communication in the FL schoolroom, yet further explores need to be conducted in different contexts, with many models to increase a deeper understanding of how learners can develop such competency effectively in their schoolroom.

Furthermore, various researches have shown the role of pragmatic instruction on developing English learners’ usage of the request in the EFL schoolroom (Bachman, 1990; Schmidt 1993; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997; Bataineh and Hussein, 2015; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). According to Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei (1997) and Hussein & Albakri (2019) stated that syntactic development does not confirm an

equivalent level of pragmatic development, and even excellent learners may not be able to comprehend or convey their intended goals and contents (Eslami- Rasekh, 2005). For instance, a language learner may pass any test, but they are not able to convey the same language appropriately in real-life positions because of the lack of pragmatic competence. Kasper (1989) stated that excellent learners’ communicative acts frequently had pragmatic failures and proposed that there was a need for teaching pragmatic to include the application of pragmatic aspects, namely, usage of request (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997; Bataineh and Hussein, 2015; Hussein & Albakri 2019). As well as, pragmatic instruction has been identified as one of the important instructions that help language students become successfully competent in the application of request in different environment (Hussein & Albakri, 2019).

Interestingly, concerning pragmatic developing in the teaching of language, a number of activities are valuable for pragmatic growth and can be categorized into two main types: activities to develop students’ pragmatic awareness, and activities providing opportunities for communicative drills (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997). Concerning awareness-raising activities are those that have been intended to grow recognition of how learners’ language forms are used suitably in context (Eslami- Rasekh, 2005). For instance, Schmidt’ work (1993) states a consciousness-raising way that comprises paying aware attention to related forms, their pragma linguistic purposes and the sociopragmatic constraints these particular forms include. On the other hand, other activities that offer opportunities for communicative exercise may contain group work, in-class consultations and cultural communications outside the lesson. Consequently, results revealed those two activities help to improve EFL learners’ pragmatic aspects such as speech act of request.

4.2 Previous Studies on Different Usage of Request among Male and Female Learners

Teaching pragmatic played an important role in increasing students’ knowledge of the requests in diverse contexts. Requests are described as actions and procedures utilized in teaching English language (Oxford, 1993; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Oxford & Nyikos (1989) stated that request strategies are often referred to as actions or practices that learners utilize to remember what they have learned in the classroom, and they also help learners promote their own achievement in language production (Bremner, 1998; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). As a result, learning strategies put forward by English students are also crucial to English

teachers as it can help them comprehend request produced by male and female students and respond suitably.

More importantly, previous studies have been conducted to discover the importance of teaching pragmatic with assist strategies on increasing learners' usage of request especially female learners, the findings of researches revealed that significant difference in mean scores, the findings revealed that females surpassed males in post-test (Alcón-Soler, 2005; Rueda, 2006; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Also, Green and Oxford (1995: p.285) maintained that "more proficient language students use more learning strategies and more types of strategies than less proficient language learners". Thus, teaching of pragmatic by using strategies not only help learners become competent in learning and utilizing a language, but they also develop students' usage of the request particularly female students, the results of studies discovered that female scored better results in post-test than males (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Therefore, the results of previous studies revealed the role of teaching pragmatic on developing students' usage of the request in different situations particular female students in four components of request.

In the same vein, several studies had provided that the female students were aware that learning request strategies were a portion of their language learning and pragmatic competence, the results indicated that the females showed more usage of request than the males in performing and realizing the speech acts of request, there was a significant difference in mean scores in post-test, female scored better results in usage of request than male students (Yang, 1999; Hong-Nam and Leavell, 2006; Tuncer, 2009; Li, 2010; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Teaching pragmatic by using request strategies were the most prioritized actions that helped on improving learners' pragmatic aspects in the EFL classes especially female learners. Female learners applied more request strategies than male students regarding instructor interference in the learning procedure. In the same vein, many studies explained the main role of teaching pragmatic by using request strategies on developing learners' production of the request in EFL contexts, results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (males and females) in the production of speech act of request, females used more request strategies than the males (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997; Bremner, 1998; Tuncer, 2009; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017). A study by Hussein & Albakri (2019) also stated that request strategies played an essential role in

developing learners' knowledge of the requests particularly female students in different contexts. Therefore, the findings discovered that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (males and females) in the usage of the speech act of request.

Additionally, it was noted that teaching pragmatic by using request strategies helped language students develop their communicative actions and pragmatic aspects namely speech act of request (Shridhar & Shridhar, 1986, 1994; Sheorey, 1999; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017). In the same vein, it was noticed that request strategies helped EFL students become more effective in their communicative contexts particularly in-class discussions. Furthermore, the students' social and cultural backgrounds influenced some of the request strategies they utilized especially female learners. Yang (1999) stated quantitative proof to explore English students' learning request strategy in the context of an indigenized form of English. The results revealed there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups (males and females) in the usage of request strategies, female was more effective in the usage of request strategies than male students. Also, various researches focused on teaching pragmatic by using request strategies in language learning have shown that language learning strategies are essential to learners in developing their language production, especially female learners (Griffiths, 2003; Ersözülü, 2010; Li, 2010; Purdie & Oliver 1999; Yılmaz, 2010). As well as, a study by Hussein & Albakri (2019) discovered the essential role of request strategies for developing English learners' communicative language in the classroom. Therefore, the results of data analysis discovered the female has used request strategies more than male students in the classroom.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has addressed the differences in usage of request among Iraqi male and female learners in EFL, as well as its explanations and characteristics of strategies on developing request among two groups (males and females). It has revealed researches on learners' usage of request strategies in EFL learning. The studies display a consensus that pragmatic knowledge can be taught request by using strategies in EFL learning and teaching helps language students in their progress of pragmatic aspects. Furthermore, it has been mentioned that students' different request strategies among two groups (males and females), the results of data analysis discovered that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females in the usage of speech act of

request, female scored better results than male students in post-test. However, this summary also reveals that more investigation needs to be conducted in different studies to identify elements that may affect the way students go about pragmatic development as well as the request strategies they utilize to obtain pragmatic competence. Lastly, depending on the successful findings, the researcher tries to recognize the differences in the usage of the request among male and female. Then, he tries to put a suitable remedy for increasing usage of request in the EFL classroom.

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