PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF IRAQI KURDISH EFL LEARNERS: AN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATIC STUDY OF APOLOGY SPEECH ACTS

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by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to

the soul of my late father,

my beloved mother,

my sisters and brothers

with love.

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family especially, sister and brothers whose patience and understanding encouraged me to continue my study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA   Analysis of Variance

CCSARP   Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Pattern

DCT   Discourse Completion Task

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

EFL learner   Learner in a country where English is a foreign language

          (e.g. Iraq, China, France, Spain, German)

ESL   English as a Second Language

ESL learner   Learner in a country where English is an official language

          (e.g. United State of America, Great Britain, Australia)

IFID   Illocutionary Force Indicating Device

ILP   Interlanguage Pragmatics

NSE   Native Speakers of English

NSK   Native Speakers of Kurdish

L1   First Language (native language)

L2   Second Language/ Foreign language

LIST OF SYMBOLS

Kurdish Alphabet

1	**A**	C**a**r	**Aza**, **A**w**a**z	[a:]
2	**B**	**B**rother	**B**ira, **B**a**b**a	[b]
3	**C**	**Ch**ur**ch**	**C**em**c**emall	[tʃ]
4	**D**	**D**oor	**D**a**d**ar	[d]
5	**E**	Act**o**r	**E**man**e**	[æ]
6	**É**	H**ai**r	**É**r**e**, Hewl**é**r	[ɛ]
7	**F**	**F**amily	**F**irya, de**f**	[f]
8	**G**	**G**allery	**G**urr**g**urr	[g]
9	**H**	**H**ouse	**H**ozan, **H**ero	[h]
10	**I**	S**i**t, B**i**t	B**i**n, K**i**rin	[I]
11	**Í**	S**ee**	**Í**ro, D**í**d**í**	[i:]
12	**J**	**J**oy	**J**a**j**ig	[ʤ]
13	**Zh**	Plea**s**ure	**Jh**új**h**ú	[ʒ]
14	**K**	**K**ind	**K**ake, **K**i**c**ke	[k]
15	**L**	**L**ife	**L**ekí, **L**a**l**e	[l]
16	**L**	Velar **"L"**	Di**ll**, Ma**ll**	[ɫ]
17	**M**	**M**other	**M**a**m**e, **M**íne	[m]
18	**N**	**N**ation	**N**an, **N**arín	[n]
19	**O**	**O**ld	**O**yar, K**o**ll	[o]
20	**P**	**P**olicy	**P**epúle, **P**eyv	[p]
21	**Q**	-	**Q**az, **Q**ú	[q]
22	**R**	**R**ain (Flapped R)	Za**r**, Be**r**zan	[ɾ]
23	**R**	Trill **"R"** as Spanish *perro*	Pi**rr**, Bi**rr**ín	[r]
24	**S**	**C**inema	**S**asún, **S**is	[s]
25	**Sh**	**Sh**eep	**Sh**em**sh**all	[ʃ]
26	**T**	**T**ea	**T**ema**t**e	[t]
27	**U**	K**u**rd	K**u**rd, G**u**lan	[u]
28	**ú**	Ch**oo**se	D**ú**r, K**ú**p	[u:]
29	**ù**	**"U"** in Swedish	**Ù**shim, Mir**ù**je	[ʉ:]
30	**v**	**V**ote	Miro**v**, **V**íyan	[v]
31	**w**	**W**ind	**W**éjhe, De**w**	[w]
32	**x**	**Ch** in German	**X**ak, Da**x**	[x]
33	**y**	**Y**ear	**Y**aristan, Dí**y**ar	[j]
34	**z**	**Z**oo	**Z**er**z**a, **Z**o**z**an	[z]

(Cited in Kurdish Academy of Language)

KECEKAPAN PRAGMATIK PELAJAR EFL KURDISH IRAQ: KAJIAN PRAGMATIK ANTARABAHASA DARIPADA TINDAK TUTUR MAAF

ABSTRAK

Kajian kecekapan pragmatik pelajar EFL dijalankan dalam pelbagai bahasa. Kebanyakan kajian ini memberi tekanan terhadap pragmatik antarabahasa dalam penghasilan dan persepsi tindak tutur maaf. Namun demikian, perkara ini diberikan tekanan dalam konteks EFL Kurdish Iraq. Penyelidik tidak menemui kajian emperik yang menekankan pragmatik antarabahasa bagi tindak tutur maaf yang diguna terutamanya oleh pelajar EFL Kurdish Iraq. Oleh itu, objektif kajian ini adalah: (a) tmengkaji penghasilan tindak tutur maaf dalam kalangan pelajar EFL berdasarkan faktor kontekstual yang berbeza daripada status sosial, jarak sosial dan keseriusan kesalahan (b) menentukan sama ada terdapat bukti tentang perkembangan pragmatik dalam penghasilan tindak tutur maaf dalam kalangan pelajar EFL Kurdish tahun kedua, ketiga dan keempat; dan (c) menentukan sama ada terdapat bukti tentang pemindahan pragmatik daripada L1 Kurdish dalam ekspresi bahasa Inggeris bagi maaf dalam kalangan pelajar bahasa Inggeris Kurdish. Data dikumpul daripada 150 orang pelajar EFL Kurdish, iaitu 50 orang pelajar ijazah pertama dari setiap tahun pengajian (tahun kedua, tahun ketiga dan tahun keempat) dan dua kumpulan penutur asli (iaitu .50 orang penutur asli Kurdish dan 50 orang penutur asli bahasa Inggeris Amerika). Data yang diperoleh daripada dua kumpulan penutur asli digunakan senagas data asas. Data dikumpul daripada soal selidik DCT (Discourse Completion Task) yang mencakupi 15 situasi. Model Olshtain dan Cohen (1983) digunakan untuk menganalisis strategi maaf yang digunakan oleh peserta. Analsis deskriptif dan

statistik melalui ujian t dan ujian ANOVA satu hala digunakan untuk menentukan perbezaan pragmatik tingkah laku kumpulan pelajar EFL dalam strategi maaf bagi kedua-dua kumpulan penutur asli. Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa kumpulan pelajar EFL dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris menggunakan strategi maaf yang sama. Namun demikian, terdapat perbezaan dari segi kekerapan dan keutamaan strategi maaf dalam kalangan pelajar EFL dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris. Dapatan juga mnunjukkan bahawa kumpulan pelajar EFL menggunakan lebih banyak strategi maaf yang tidak digunakan oleh penutur asli bahasa Inggeris. Keputusan juga mendapati bahawa pemboleh ubah atau varibel kontekstual daripada status sosial, jarak sosial dan keseriusan kesalahan, mempunyai pengaruh yang signifkan terhadap panjang ucapan dan penggunaan strategi bagi semua kumpulan subjek. Perbezaan di antara kumpulan pelajar EFL dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris adalah tinggi dalam situasi status sosial. Di samping itu, perkembangan pengetahuan linguistik pelajar memberi kesan yang amat sedikit pada kumpulan pelajar EFL terhadap perkembangan penggunaan strategi maaf yang sesuai. Terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan dalam majoriti situasi di antara kumpulan pelajar EFL dan penutur asli bahasa Inggeris. Sebagai kesimpulan, ditemui bahawa kumpulan pelajar EFL bergantung pada bahasa ibunda dan budaya mereka untuk meminta maaf, mereka sama ada dalam majoriti situasi kerana terdapat bukti pemindahan didapati dalam penggunaan strategi daripada bahasa ibunda ke dalam bahasa sasaran.

PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE OF IRAQI KURDISH EFL LEARNERS: AN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATIC STUDY OF APOLOGY SPEECH ACTS

ABSTRACT

Studies on EFL learners' pragmatic competence have been conducted in many languages and cultures. Many of these studies have focused on interlanguage pragmatics in the production and perception of apology speech acts. However, little attention has been given to Iraqi Kurdish EFL context, and hence there are no empirical studies that have looked at interlanguage pragmatics of apology speech acts used by Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners. Therefore, this study investigated Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners' production of apology speech acts at Salahaddin University-Erbil in Kurdistan region of Iraq. It examined their use of different strategies to apologize and how the contextual variables of social status, social distance and severity of offense determined the selection of these strategies. It also examined the pragmatic development of EFL learners and the evidence of pragmatic transfer from the EFL learners' First Language (L1) in their production of apology speech acts in the target language. Data was collected from a group of EFL learners and two groups of native speakers, i.e. native speakers of Kurdish and native speakers of American English. Data from native speaker groups were used as baseline data. Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire consisting of fifteen situations was used to collect data from 50 native speakers of American English, 50 native speakers of Iraqi Kurdish, and 150 Kurdish EFL learners comprising 50 students each from Second Year, Third Year and Fourth Year doing their undergraduate studies so as to examine

their pragmatic performance. The data was analyzed both qualitatively based on the coding scheme adopted from Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and quantitatively using descriptive and statistical analysis (using t-test analysis and one-way ANOVA test) to identify pragmatic differences that distinguished the behavior of the EFL learner groups in their production of apology strategies from that of Kurdish and English native speakers. The findings indicated that EFL learners used similar strategies to apologize; however, there were differences in the frequency of strategies across different grade levels of language learners. The results showed that contextual variables of social status, familiarity, and severity of the offense have a significant influence on the length of speech and the use of strategies for all subject groups. In addition, the development of students' linguistic knowledge had very few effects on EFL learner groups in the appropriate use of strategies when apologizing. The results also showed evidence of negative pragmatic transfer among EFL learner groups in their production of apology speech acts.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the main components which guide the development of the thesis through subsequent chapters. The major sections included in this chapter are background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definitions of the key terms used in this study.

1.1 Background to the Study

Language competence according to Chomsky (1965) is the ability to perform grammatically correct forms and words. This view of language competence is incomplete, as it does not take into consideration other aspects such as language use and functions. Hymes (1972), in contrast to Chomsky's concept, introduced the notion of communicative competence, which refers to language learners' ability to communicate appropriately in social interaction. This included sociolinguistic competence which refers to language learners' knowledge of the appropriate use of language in different situations. However, Bachman (1990) is considered the first scholar who introduced the term pragmatic competence to refer to the practical aspects of language.

Bachman's model of pragmatic competence has two facets that are illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence involves the use of form and structure of a language while sociopragmatic competence is concerned with the way language is interpreted within a given context.

Bachman's model of pragmatic competence is similar to Thomas (1983) and Leech's (1983) models who divided pragmatics into two sub-concepts: pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics is defined as the way speakers use utterances to perform a variety of language functions while sociopragmatics is defined as the way speakers use language appropriately according to contexts (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983).

One of the focuses of pragmatics research is studies on speech acts. Austin was first who introduced the speech act theory in 1962 which argues that all communication involves the production of a series of speech acts to perform certain actions. In other words, the theory postulates that saying something means doing something. For example, when someone says, "I'm sorry" the speaker is not only uttering a sentence but also performing an act of apologizing. In relation to the theory, Austin proposed three types of acts which are known as the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. According to him, the three kinds of acts constitute what people "do with words". Searle (1969), based on Austin's theory, stated that the main unit of linguistic communication is an illocutionary act as they are rule-governed forms of behavior. He further stated, "the minimal unit of communication is not a sentence or other expressions but rather the performance of certain kinds of acts, such as making statements, asking questions, and giving orders".

Pragmatics has become an area of interest in a second language acquisition research only recently (Liu, 2007). One way to examine pragmatic competence of Second Language (L2) or English as a Foreign Language learner (EFL) is to investigate Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). The primary focus of ILP is to study "how non-native speakers understand and carry out the linguistic action in a target language, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge" (Kasper, 1992, p.203).

Studies on ILP have revealed that L2 learners' even if they use perfect grammatical rules to communicate, they still violate social norms while communicating in the target language. They utilize norms that are not appropriate in the target language due to their lack of pragmatic competence (Thomas, 1983; Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei, 1998). Variations occur in the use of language due to the different rules of communication between the native and target languages. Such variation often lead to pragmatic failure or the failure to understand what is meant by what is said (Thomas, 1983). In other words, the difference in language rules causes language learners to "fail to convey or comprehend illocutionary force or politeness value" (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, p.10).

Therefore, it is essential for language learners to attain both pragmatic and grammatical competence so that they "know when to speak, when not, and what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner" (Hymes, 1979, p. 15). These are important aspects for language learners to become fluent second or foreign language users.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Language learners usually face difficulty in communicating appropriately in the target language because each language has its own social rules and norms for communication (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995, 2010). Differences in social rules and norms among languages may cause problems in cross-cultural communication which can be mitigated by identifying and increasing awareness of the pragmatic rules of each language (Meier, 2010).

Previous studies have emphasized that learners of English as a foreign language may be linguistically qualified as language learners, but may pragmatically lack knowledge and awareness of the appropriate use of language (Kasper, 1997; Y.Liu, 2007). For example, they may encounter difficulties in the use of speech acts, i.e. how to apologize, request, compliment, and complain in the target language which may lead to misunderstanding and communication breakdown (Cohen, 1996). Therefore, speaking a language appropriately requires not only the knowledge of linguistic rules (i.e., phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics) but also knowledge of sociolinguistic rules (Wolfson, 1989). Hence, it is essential to attain a useful understanding of how language functions in the social and cultural contexts (Kasper & Rover, 2005). Therefore, learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) who have sufficient grammatical competence may still have communication problems with native speakers due to their use of inappropriate sociolinguistic rules (Cohen, 1996a) which in turn can lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Although all learners are subject to being misunderstood, advanced learners seem to be at risk more than lower proficiency learners because they have a higher level of linguistic proficiency and hence they are expected to be more polite (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Thomas, 1983). In other words, learners with grammatical competence are more likely to be regarded as unfriendly, impolite or rude if they do not use language in a socially and culturally appropriate manner (Harlow, 1990; Cheng, 2005). For example, Enomoto and Marriott (1994) cited in Cheng (2005) conducted a study on six Japanese native speakers who were asked to evaluate the pragmatic competence of two Australians in Japanese. The study

reported that native speakers of Japanese who were asked to evaluate the level of politeness of Australians criticized advanced speakers more than lower proficiency speakers. This is because native speakers tend to assign the weaknesses in pragmatic usage to personality issue rather than weakness in the language use. Therefore, it is essential for students to be aware of cross-cultural pragmatics in order to be competent users of the target language.

In essence, the reason for EFL learners not communicating appropriately in the target language is that they often rely on the native cultural notions of appropriate behavior to interact with the others in any social situation (Cheng, 2005). This condition causes the frequent occurrence of misunderstanding among interlocutors (Bardovi–Harlig, et.al, 1991; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Cheng, 2005). For this reason, researchers often focus on studies related to interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) which "have attempted to identify conditions for transfer to occur, and the factors which mediate its operation" (Myshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, 1996, p. 157).

The aim of ILP studies is to investigate speech acts realization in cross-cultural studies (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Trosborg, 1995). Thus, the theoretical framework of ILP studies is based on the analysis of speech acts to examine how non-native speakers acquire pragmatic knowledge of the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005). The literature on ILP have widely-discussed studies on differences between native speakers and non-native speakers' production of speech acts, such as, Apologies (Trosborg, 1995; Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), Complaints (Marrrow, 1995; Murphy and New, 1996; Al-Tayib Umar, 2006), Thanking (Bodmen and Eisenstein, 1986; Chang,2008; Cheng, 2005), Complement response (Golato 2002; Yuan 1996),

Request (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Barron, 2003; Bayonn, 2004), and Refusal (Barron, 2003; Yang, 2008; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008).

Threrfore, another field of enquiry in ILP research is pragmatic transfer. Pragmatic transfer occurs as a result of the learners' use of an inappropriate semantic formula which is against the norms and rules of the target culture while communicating in the target language (Kasper, 1992; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Trosborg, 1995). The reason for this is that people in different societies do not only speak different languages, but also the way they employ them is totally different. The way they employ language in different social contexts may vary from one society to another. Each society has its own norms for evaluating the relationship among interlocutors regarding their social status, social distance, offense type, gender, and politeness. Individuals who do not belong to that particular culture are not always aware of these principles which may cause trouble in cross-cultural communication. Thus, by examining the fundamental differences between the two cultures, one can predict the difficulties that non-native speakers may face when attempting to convey their communicative intent.

Interlanguage pragmatic studies have mainly focused on examining language learners' production and perception of various speech acts in the target language (Kasper, 1989; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Kasper& Schmid, 1996; Rose, 2000; Kasper & Rose, 2002). However, these studies have looked at the use of language rather than the development of language until Kasper and Schmidt (1996) called for more studies on pragmatic development to be conducted. Thus, there have been suggestions that more studies focusing on the development of pragmatic competence of second or foreign language learners to be conducted (e.g., Barron, 2003; Schauer,

2009; Chang, 2010). This can fill the gap in studies that investigate the connection between second language acquisition and interlanguage pragmatics.

In addition, this researcher's surveys on past studies revealed that majority of the studies on pragmatic development were conducted on students who were studying abroad as L2 learners (Barron, 2003; Schauer, 2009). However, language learners' pragmatic performance and development at different stages have not been investigated in detail (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). There are very few studies investigated L2 learners' pragmatic development (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Kasper & Rose, 1996; Takahashi & Bebee, 1987; Trosborg, 1997). Consequently, the present study aims to fill the gap and is intended to contribute to the body of research in interlanguage pragmatic development.

Despite the growing interest in studies on ESL/EFL learners' pragmatic competence in the use of speech acts (e.g. Kasper, 1997b; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Koike, 1989; Rose, 1999, 2005; Taguchi, 2011), very few studies have investigated Kurdish EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. At present, there are three studies (Ahmed, 2008; Sadiq, 2010; Abdulrahman, 2012) focused on pragmatic competence of Kurdish EFL learners compared with English. Ahmed (2008) investigated Kurdish EFL learners' production of illocutionary speech acts. Sadiq (2010) in his study on communicative competence of senior university students which focused on speech act production in general. Abdulrahman (2012) studied the effect of pragmatic competence for enhancing EFL learners' written performance. These studies have shown that Kurdish EFL learners find difficulty in performing an appropriate speech act in the target language. They lack pragmatic competence because they focus mainly on the development of grammatical competence only (Abdulrahman, 2012). However, none of these studies have investigated Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners'

interlanguage pragmatics in detail. Therefore, what motivated this study is the absence of research on interlanguage pragmatics in Kurdish EFL context. This study hopes to fill the existing gap in the literature on interlanguage pragmatics.

The speech act that has been widely investigated in many languages and cultures is an apology speech act. Some of these studies include Hebrew (Olshtain & Blum–Kulka, 1985; Olshtain, 1989), Spanish (Garcia, 1989), Danish (Trosborg, 1995), Japanese (Kondo, 1997; Sugimoto, 1997), Hungarian and Italian (Bardovi Harlig & Dornyei,1998), Korean (Lee, 2000, Kim, 2008), Egyptian Arabic (Soliman, 2003), Persian (Eslami–Rasekh, 2004, 2007), Thai (Thijittang, 2007) and Jordanian Arabic (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008). Hence, there is a lack of research on how Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners apologize in English language as the researcher found no study investigated apology speech acts of Kurdish compared with English in detail.

In this regard, this study focused on the performance of apology speech act, an 'expressive act', as a unit of analysis to investigate ILP competence of Kurdish EFL learners. The function of apology is to maintain harmony between the speaker and the hearer, and thus, people expect to apologize when social norms are violated (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). An apology speech act is integral and inseparable in human interaction. Thus, its mastery is crucial for language learners. Therefore, when apology strategies are not used appropriately, communication breakdown can easily occur, as it is a face-threatening act. Similar to other speech acts such as refusal and request and hence, its usage requires a better understanding to maintain social harmony among interlocutors (Brown & Levinson, 1987). An apology is a very culture-sensitive speech act which varies greatly from one culture to another (Trosborg, 1995). Thus, the order, frequency and the kind of strategies used in one

culture may not be appropriate in another culture. For this reason, apologizing in a second language may not be an easy task (Borkin & Reinhart, 1978).

Moreover, Trosborg (1995) argued that the realization of speech acts might vary in different social contexts and situations as well as in different social groups within a speech community. Therefore, not being able to use an appropriate strategy to apologize usually leads to miscommunication and misunderstanding among interlocutors, especially when two distant cultures are involved as in the eastern culture and western culture. Considering Kurdish as belonging to the eastern culture, Sadiq (2010) asserted that when apologizing in Kurdish language, there are some situations considered not to be severe or offensive; however, the same situations are considered severe in English culture. For example, if an officer is late for a meeting, a slight apology can solve the problem in Kurdish culture. On the other hand, most Americans will feel offended if someone is late for a meeting, an appointment or a social engagement. If someone is late due to certain circumstances, he or she should always try to give a prior notice.

Despite the dearth of studies that conducted in eastern and western culture on ILP of ESL/EFL focusing on the problem of pragmatic competence among language learners to be successful communicators not only linguistically, but also pragmatically. It is also necessary to include subjects from diverse cultural backgrounds which provide researchers with information on the most difficult parts of L2 pragmatics to learn. It will also assist the researchers to find out the extent to which the culture of the native language is different from or similar to the culture of the target language and the extent to which language learners transfer communication rules from their first language to the target language. The implication of this study

will provide insights into the process by which language learners become successful social communicators in the target language.

This study is an investigation of the pragmatic competence and pragmatic development of Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners with the focus on apology speech acts. The researcher hopes to enhance the pragmatic knowledge and raise awareness among Kurdish EFL learners of the different strategies used to apologize in different social contexts while communicating in the English language to avoid potential misunderstanding and/or miscommunication. Thus, this study aims to fulfill the objectives outlined in section 1.3 below.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study intends to investigate the pragmatic competence of Iraqi Kurdish-speaking EFL learners by examining their interlanguage pragmatic development while performing the speech act of apology in the English language. The study's objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the strategies used to apologize by Kurdish EFL learners

2. To examine the effect of contextual factors of social status, social distance and severity of offense on Kurdish EFL learners' performance of apology speech acts

3. To examine language learners pragmatic development with the increase of their linguistic knowledge in each stage of study

4. To examine the extent to which Kurdish EFL learners' transfer the strategies used to apologize from their native language into the target language

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the objectives, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What strategies do Kurdish EFL learners use to apologize?

2. To what extent do contextual factors of social status, social distance, and severity of offense have an influence on EFL learners' choice of apology strategies?

3.   Does the pragmatic competence of language learners develop with the increase of their linguistic knowledge in each stage of their study?

4. To what extent do EFL learners transfer the strategies used to apologize from their native language to the target language?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, English is taught as a foreign language. Students start learning English from elementary school from grade one continuously up to grade twelve that is up to the age of eighteen. English language is taught extensively only in English Department, within four years of academic study in college. The students graduate in this field to work as English teachers in governmental or private schools and in language institutions. They work as translators in different governmental and non-governmental organizations or work in public relation offices in foreign countries. For this reason, learning the English language, especially after the liberation of Iraq, has gained much attention. At present, many people in Kurdistan region in Iraq are learning English, as this would help them to land a good job or to study abroad especially after the Ministry of Higher Education of Kurdistan regional government offers scholarships for thousands of students to pursue their graduate studies in English-speaking countries.

Therefore, studies on pragmatic competence are essential for EFL learners to gain pragmatic awareness in addition to the teaching of grammar rules, vocabulary and pronunciation. Therefore, this study is significant for the following reasons:

1. It examines an area of ILP that has not been investigated in the context of Kurdish-speaking EFL learners, especially in the use of apology speech acts, as discussed in Section (1.2). Therefore, this work bridges an existing research gap and lays the foundation for other researchers to conduct more studies that focus on Kurdish EFL learners' speech act production, comprehension and developmental compared with English. Thus, the findings of this study are anticipated to contribute to the existing interlanguage pragmatic literature.

2. This study has the potential to be of benefit to language teachers and EFL textbook and curriculum designers. For instance, the findings can assist language teachers to design effective instruction to promote Kurdish EFL learners' pragmatic competence by focusing on areas where pragmatic failure might occur in their production of speech acts. As a result, this can enhance students' development of pragmatic competence in English language. Similarly, the findings can also be beneficial to textbook and curriculum designers, as they can use the information to design materials that have authentic use of language. Scholars have often lamented that learning materials such as textbooks generally provide very little information about how the target language is actually used by its native speakers in natural context (Pauwels, 2000).

3. Finally, it helps Kurdish EFL learners to realize appropriate strategies used in the English language while communicating with native speakers of English, as the use of English is only confined to the classroom, students lack the opportunity to practice the language outside the classroom (Sofi-Karim, 2015). As a result, students are unaware of cross-cultural differences and fail to use English language appropriately, especially speech acts of apology which will assist EFL learners to develop communicative competence in the target language**.**

1.6 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations in the present study that will be discussed in this section. This study focuses only on Kurdish EFL students at Salahaddin University/ Erbil in the Kurdistan region of Iraq/Erbil. It places its critical lens on a small group of undergraduate college students who are majoring in English language. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to all Kurdish EFL learners. In addition, the speech act of apology examined in this study is based on three main social variables of social status, the social distance between interlocutors and severity of the offense.

Only open-ended questionnaire in the form of DCT is used as an instrument to collect data. Although DCT has some limitations, studies on ILP indicated that DCT is frequently used in researches on speech acts Aufa (2013). It is considered as one of the most reliable instrument to collect data on EFL learners' appropriate use of speech acts. In fact, most interlanguage and cross-cultural studies that were surveyed have used DCT questionnaire as a data collection method. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), a carefully designed written discourse completion task

provides a researcher with knowledge on the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistics of L2.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

a. Pragmatic competence

Pragmatic competence is the component of communicative language ability which focuses on the knowledge of appropriate use of language in different contexts Trosborg (1987). In Kasper & Rover's view (2005, p.317) it is "the ability to act and interact by means of language". Accordingly, pragmatic competence is "the knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of particular languages' linguistic resource" (Barron, 2003, p.10).

b. Interlanguage Pragmatics

Kasper and Dahl (1991, p. 215) define ILP as "the investigation of non-native speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and the acquisition of L2-related speech act knowledge". Hence, ILP involves the study of the ways in which non-native speakers acquire, comprehend, and use speech acts in a second language.

d. Pragmatic transfer

This study will utilize Kasper's definition of pragmatic transfer (1992) who describes it as "the influence exerted by learners' knowledge of language and culture other than the second language on their comprehension, production and learning of

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L2 pragmatic information" (p.5). Thus, pragmatic transfer occurs between two or more distant languages where the cultural norm of L1 is different from that of L2 (Holmes, 1989).

e. Sociopragmatics

Sociopragmatic is the ability to "vary speech act strategies according to the situational or social variables in the act of communication" (Harlow, 1990, p.1). It is "the sociological interface of pragmatics", which is linked to the social perceptions underlying the interpretation and performance of participants' communicative action (Leech, 1983, p.10). In this context, it ought to be noted that speech communities differ in their assessment of speaker's and hearer's social power and social distance, and the degree of imposition involved in certain communicative acts (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Olshtain, 1989; Kasper, 1992; Takahashi & Beebe, 1993).

f. Pragmalinguistics

Pragmalinguistics refers to the resources available at the disposal of language users to participate in communicative acts, including the knowledge of conventions of means (strategies for realizing speech intentions) (Thomas, 1983) and knowledge of conventions of the form (linguistic resources available to perform language function) (Kasper, 1992). In short, as stated by Cenzo (2007), the term pragmalinguistics is used to encapsulate the linguistic ability of language users to use linguistic elements to perform speech acts.

g. Speech acts

A speech act is a theoretical concept introduced by scholars such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1979) who described it as an utterance produced by a speaker who performs a particular action. According to Bonvillian (2008) speech act refers "to the person's accomplishment of certain goals through speaking whereby the speakers can choose different ways to express themselves based on their intentions on what they want the hearers to believe, accept or do" (p.94).

h. Apology speech act

An apology is the speech act through which the wrongdoer acknowledges guilt and seeks forgiveness for what he/she has done. As postulated by Holmes (1989) it refers to "a speech act addressed to the hearer's face needs and is intended to remedy an offense for which the apologizer takes responsibility, … to restore equilibrium between the apologizer and the hearer" (p.196).

i. Speech Act Set

A speech act set is a combination of several individual speech acts that are uttered together to convey particular meanings (Murphy & Neu, 1996). According to Cohen and Olshtain (1981), it is a combination of the semantic formula used together to express particular functions such as an apology. This set may be single or a combination of strategies. Often, more than one strategy is necessary for a speaker to develop the illocutionary force that is desired. In sum, speech act sets as defined by Olshtain & Cohen (1983) is "a set of potentially universal realization patterns" or "set of strategies" which can be "recognized as the speech act in question" (e.g. requesting, thanking, apologizing) when uttered appropriately in different contexts.

j. Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners

      Iraqi Kurdish EFL learners in the context of this study are native speakers of the Kurdish language in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (Northern part of Iraq) who are learning English as a foreign language. The Kurdish language is an official language in the Kurdistan region and the second official language alongside Arabic language in Iraq (Sofi-Karim, 2015).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the significance of pragmatics in language learning. Thus, a review of theoretical and empirical studies will be presented with regard to the connection between pragmatics and language learning. The review is presented in the following sequence: pragmatics, pragmatic competence, pragmatic development, ILP, interlanguage pragmatic transfer, speech acts, and speech act of apology that comprises apology strategies and a review of previous studies on the speech act of apology are also presented.

2.1 Pragmatics

Developed in the late 1970s, pragmatics as a subfield of linguistics has been defined differently. One of the earliest definitions of pragmatics was proposed by Leech's (1983), according to him pragmatics is interpersonal and involves the speakers and writers' attainment of their aspirations in the social acts that are determined not only by the manifestation of the speech act but their interpersonal relations with the other participants. Yule (1996, p.4) defined it as "the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the uses of these forms". Pragmatics has also been defined as "the study of language usage" (Levinson, 1983, p.5).

To distinguish how speakers utilize language, pragmatic theory has to explicate what the speaker intends to say (i.e. to communicate directly), what he aims to imply (i.e. to communicate indirectly), and what the intended context is (Zergarac & Pennington, 2000). Thus, pragmatics is also concerned with the way language is

used in communication (Richards & Schmidt, 2014) and "the study of how meanings are extracted from context" (Trask, 1999, p.37), and "how we infer additional meaning" from an utterance (Ariel, 2008, p. 1). Therefore, the scope of pragmatics is not easy to define, different research interests and developments in the field agreed upon one basic concern: the need to account for the rules that govern the use of language in context (Levinson, 1983) and the ability to understand and create an act of communication (Kasper, 1997).

Hence, the study of pragmatics entails more than looking at meaning at the sentence or word levels but at the meaning the speaker intends to communicate and the interpretation that the listener makes (Roberts, Davies, and Jupp, 1992). According to Kasper and Rose (2001), pragmatics is the study of communicative acts within a socio-cultural context while Thomas (1995, p. 22) described pragmatics as "meaning in interaction" to include "the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the potential meaning of an utterance". On the other hand, Crystal (1985) provided a more elaborated definition of pragmatics. According to him, 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" (p. 240). This study adopts Crystal's definition, as it is the most frequently used definition of pragmatics.

According to Crystal, pragmatics is the study of communicative acts which concerned not only with the speaker's use of speech acts (e.g. requesting, apologizing, thanking, complaining, etc.) but also with their participation in conversation, their engagement of different types of discourse as well as their

attempts to sustain interaction in complex speech events (Kasper, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 2001).

Basically, pragmatics allowed this researcher to distinguish between two intentions or meanings in the communicative act of verbal communication. The first is the informative intent behind the meaning of the sentence, and the second is the communicative intent or speaker meaning (Leech, 1983; Sperber & Wilson, 1986) because pragmatics has to do with how language is used in a certain context. Furthermore, pragmatics intends to distinguish between the concept of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The following section is the detailed discussion of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics notion.

2.1.1 Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics

Some scholars such as Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) have further divided the broad field of pragmatics into two sub-fields that are known as pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics concerns itself to the linguistic features of pragmatics or "the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying a particular illocution" (Leech, 1983, p.11). In other words, pragmalinguistics is directly related to the linguistic aspect of pragmatics that comprises the acts of communication and the relational and interpersonal meanings related to how speakers perform a variety of language functions through utterances, which requires "mappings of form, meaning, force and context" (Kasper, 2010a, p.51).

The second sub-field of pragmatics known as sociopragmatics refers to the way speakers use language appropriately according to the context (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Thus, a learner who is sociopragmatically capable is one who