An investigation of the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence among Iraqi EFL undergraduate students

A B S T R A C T

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This research aims to find out the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence among Iraqi EFL undergraduate students whether the pragmatic competence would be achieved completely by students with different proficiency levels in a pragmatic test. This study also aims to find out the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence to achieve communicative competence perfectly. It also examins whether there is any significant difference between the performance of females and males according to language proficiency and pragmatic competence. The sample was selected randomly which consists of 120 university students including 30 females and 30 males in English translation department at Mosul University, moreover, 30 females and 30 males in English translation department at Tikrit University .The sample vary according to gender and age (freshmen or fresh women and seniors). The researcher uses three levels; beginning, intermediate and advanced which the participants are placed in. These levels are based on the results of the proficiency (TOFEL) test. In addition, the researcher uses pragmatic competence test(MDCT) to examine the extent of participants' pragmatic competence.The data are analyzed statistically by using the SPSS program in order to provide a descriptive analysis. Finally, the results of the study obtained through statistical analyses show that there is no significant relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence. This means, the students with different proficiency levels do not perform differently in the pragmatic tests. The male participants performance is not good in pragmatic and proficiency test.

تحقيق في العلاقة بين إتقان اللغة والكفاءة البراغماتية بين طلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية

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الخلاصة:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى معرفة العلاقة بين إتقان اللغة والكفاءة البراغماتية بين طلبة الجامعة العراقيين الدراسين اللغة الإنجليزية ، فيما إذا كان سيتم تحقيق الكفاءة البراغماتية بالكامل من قبل الطلاب ذوي مستويات الكفاءة المختلفة في اختبار عملي. تهدف هذه الدراسة أيضًا إلى معرفة العلاقة بين إتقان اللغة والكفاءة البراغماتية لتحقيق الكفاءة التواصلية بشكل مثالي. كما يفحص ما إذا كان هناك أي فرق كبير بين أداء الإناث والذكور حسب الكفاءة اللغوية والكفاءة العملية. تم اختيار العينة بشكل عشوائي والتي تتكون من ١٢٠ طالب جامعي منهم ٣٠ طالبة و ٣٠ ذكر في قسم الترجمة الإنجليزية في جامعة الموصل و ٣٠ طالبة و ٣٠ ذكر في قسم الترجمة الإنجليزية في جامعة تكريت. العينة متنوعة طبقا الى الجنس والعمر (الشباب من الذكو والاناث وكبار السن). يستخدم الباحث ثلاثة مستويات ؛ المبتدئ والمتوسط والمتقدم الذي يتم وضع المشاركين فيه. وتعتمد هذه المستويات على نتائج اختبار الكفاءة (TOFEL). بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، يستخدم الباحث اختبار الكفاءة البراغماتية (MDCT) لفحص مدى الكفاءة البراغماتية للمشاركين ، حيث يتم تحليل البيانات إحصائياً باستخدام برنامج SPSS لتقديم تحليل وصفي. أخيرًا ، تظهر نتائج الدراسة التي تم الحصول عليها من خلال التحليلات الإحصائية أنه لا توجد علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الاتقان اللغوي والكفاءة البراغماتية. هذا يعني أن الطلاب ذوي مستويات الكفاءة المختلفة لا يؤدون بشكل مختلف في الاختبارات الواقعية (البراغماتية). استنتج الباحث ان أداء المشاركين الذكور ليس جيدًا في اختبار الواقعية (البراغماتية) والكفاءة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الكفاءة اللغوية، الطلبة الدراسين للغة الانكليزية ، الكفاءة البراغماتية، الاداء الكلامي

Introduction

English is considered a popular language. many people, both native and non-native speakers of English use English as a tool for communication and exchange of ideas (Pakir, 2001: 31). So, interacting with speakers of other languages and cultures needs the linguistic competence (grammatical competence) as well as pragmatic knowledge, which is considered as one of the intricacies of language competence. Trask (2007;22) defines pragmatics as" the branch of linguistics which studies how utterance communicate meaning in context". Pragmatics is concerned with the systematic way of explaining language use in context. It deals with implicit meaning, it seeks to explain aspects of meaning which are deeper in context or cannot be found in the plain sense of words or structure as explained by semantics. Huang (2007:2) defines pragmatics as " meaning study in systematic way dependent on the use of language."

Birner (2013; 379) states pragmatics is " the study of language use in context". Since pragmatic competence and grammatical competence are two distinct aspects of communicative competence (Bachman,1990:84), a high level of grammatical competence may not lead to a high level of pragmatic

competence; rather, it can be best developed through immersion in the target language. Pragmatic competence, defined as the ability to convey one's intention appropriately and to interpret another's intention, explicitly or implicitly stated, in a communicative situation and plays an important role in successful cross-cultural communication (Rafieyan, 2016;68; Rafieyan, 2016;41).

In fact, pragmatic competence should be paid equal attention in language classes as grammatical competence. Koike (1989,279) defines pragmatic competence as " the speaker's knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts". Therefore, triggering pragmatic competence, unlike grammatical competence, does not occur automatically and to communicate pragmatically in a competent manner, there is a need for instruction of pragmatics to non-native language learners from the beginning stages of learning the target language. In order to make learners pragmatically competent, it is necessary for them to be familiar with socio-cultural rules of target language because miscommunication and problems occur particularly when nonnative speakers speak to native speakers.They make mistakes in conversational norms involved in communication, these norms can be very important for native speakers so the mistakes of nonnative speakers may not be acceptable to native speakers and can also lead to a breakdown in communication. Hymes (1996: 47) emphasizes that learning culture should be an integral part of language learning and education, because culture refers to socio-cultural norms, world views, beliefs, assumptions, and value systems that find their way into practically all facets of language use. As Byram and Morgan (1994; 43) point out " learners cannot simply shake off their own culture and step into another, their culture is a part of themselves and created them as social beings." Learners' awareness of socio-cultural frameworks and the concepts they acquire as part of their socialization into beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors remain predominantly first-culture bound even for advanced and proficient learners" (Hinkel 1999:1). If no formal pragmatics instruction is provided, Ishihara and Cohen (2010:377) claim that it would take at least ten years in a second language context to be able to use the language in a pragmatically native-like manner,therefore, language instruction must integrate cultural and cross-cultural instruction. Research has extensively demonstrated that learners appreciate the pragmatic behavior of native speakers to a greater degree once they are aware of their system of cultural beliefs, values, and norms. Students need to be trained to reflect on the world and on themselves through the lens of another language and culture, comprehend speakers of the target language as members of foreign societies, and understand that they can also be perceived as members of a society that is foreign to others.

Learning pragmatics also requires L2 learners to construct and negotiate their identities as members of a community where they have to interact with native speakers. However, learners decide whether they want to be pragmatically appropriate or simply learn to accommodate to L2 norms. If they choose to avoid cross-cultural misunderstanding, they need to understand the

social factors in the target language and the cultural reasoning. In other words, the acquisition of communicative competence involves the ability to manage a complex system that is comprised of language proficiency by language users, and the context of pragmatic knowledge through interaction.

Actually, pragmatic competence consists of pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics (Thomas, 1983:91). Pragmatic failure can be broken down into two types: pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic failure. Pragma-linguistic failure is fundamentally a linguistic problem, "caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force" (Thomas, 1983: 99), whereas socio-pragmatic failure results from "different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behavior" (Thomas, 1983; 99). The distinction between these two types of failure parallels the dichotomy between pragma-linguistics (functional aspect of pragmatic competence) and socio-pragmatics (social aspect of pragmatic competence), which can be found in the definition of pragmatic knowledge of Bachman and Palmer's (2010:87) model of communicative competence. According to Bachman and Palmer (2010:86), pragmatic knowledge includes functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. Functional knowledge represents the knowledge of using linguistic forms to realize pragmatic functions, such as using *would you* to make a request, while sociolinguistic knowledge is the knowledge of using linguistic forms appropriately according to different situational variables (e.g., social status, familiarity, power relationship, and degree of imposition), such as choosing polite forms when speaking to people of higher social status. Bachman and Palmer's (2010:86) definition of pragmatic knowledge, which includes functional (pragma-linguistics) and sociolinguistic knowledge (socio-pragmatics), is reflected in the knowledge of different target pragmatic features such as speech acts, routines, implicatures, address forms and discourse markers. Pragmatics as an area of query within foreign language acquisition is usually named as Interlanguage Pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics is convinced as the "nonnative speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2 (second language)-related speech act knowledge is acquired" (Kasper and Dahl 1991:215). In other words, interlanguage pragmatics is the study of the use and acquisition of various speech acts in the target language by second or foreign language learners. In this study, non-nativeness is conceptualized as the EFL. In general, Inter-language refers to the second or foreign language learners' developing understanding and knowledge of the target language.

How interlocutors produce and perceive the language in different situations is a significant issue that has been investigated so far by different researchers since creating inappropriate utterances would lead to misunderstanding or even breakdowns in communication. Accordingly, knowing this matter is very essential especially for foreign language learners because they do not have enough knowledge of the target language and they are not exposed to rich input and as a result, they would be influenced by their first language and transfer their pragmatic knowledge of their native language to the

target language. Lack of pragmatic awareness is most evident among EFL learners while communicating with people from other cultures. Teachers in EFL classrooms are partly responsible for the lack of pragmatic knowledge among learners. EFL teachers mostly concentrate on the grammar and vocabulary (linguistic competence) and they do not pay sufficient attention to the pragmatic or sociolinguistic dimension of language. Therefore, EFL learners may produce utterances that are perfectly grammatical, but they may violate social norms of the target language because they lack pragmatic competence (appropriateness of meaning) to support grammatical competence (appropriateness of form) (Thomas 1983:102)

Language proficiency refers to the ability to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participant effectively in most conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Second language proficiency is defined as overall L2 competence, which includes organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge. The former refers to the knowledge of organizing utterances or sentences and texts such as lexical and grammatical knowledge, while the latter refers to the knowledge of using sentences and texts appropriately in situations (Bachman & Palmer, 2010: 86). Actually, the underlying pragmatic problems of Iraqi EFL students are rooted in this fact that the speech act sets as the dominant aspect of pragmatics are considered problematic experience for Iraqi students. They are often unable to recognize or produce appropriate strategies or patterns in the target language and they mostly transfer from their first language for the recognition, comprehension and production of different pragmatically proper sentences. Moreover, they often fail to identify the proper function of speech acts in EFL educational settings (Eslami-rasekh and Mardani 2010:96).

Major issues which are studied in the domain of pragmatics are context, deixis, presupposition, indirectness, politeness, conversational implicature, cooperative principles and speech acts. The focus of this study is on speech acts only because in relation to foreign language learning, pragmatics has mostly been conceptualized as pertinent to speech acts, language functions and linguistic politeness (Vásquezand & Fioramonte ,2011:13). A key of pragmatic competence is to understand the speech acts and their appropriateness in a specific context (Cheng 2005:9). Trask (1997:204) defines a speech act as " speech act concerns locutions and the illocutionary force behind locutions " that means, a speech act is illocutionary as an intentional meaningful act performed by language users. In addition , Dijk and Kintsch(1983:84) claim that speech act is " the social action that is performed by a speaker when producing an utterance in specific context. Different types of speech acts, only requests and apologies are the concern of this study. The rationale behind choosing these two speech acts is that firstly, they are considered as two face-threatening speech acts and call for redressive action. Requests affect the face of the hearer while apologies counteract the speaker's face wants (Blum-Kulka et al 1989) and secondly, due to the fact that everyday and in every situation, people perform the acts of

request and apology frequently. An apology is a speech act that is used to restore relationships between a speaker (S) and a hearer (H) after S has offended H intentionally or unintentionally. Concerning apology, Olshtain (1983:235) states that "the act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to ' set things right".

In addition, Goffman (1971: 73) defins apology as a kind of remedial work which involves the splitting of the speaker's self into two parts, the one guilty of having offended the addressee, the other aligning himself or herself with the addressee and with the violated norm. Excuses according to him, have a remedial function too, but belong to another kind of remedial work, namely, accounts, which consist in redefining a potentially offensive act, so as to make it acceptable. In the following steps, we will review some of the studies of pragmatics and language proficiency previously conducted.

2. Purposes of the study

The main purposes of the current study are as follows:
1. To examine the relationship between EFL proficiency and pragmatic competence in two speech acts.
2. To determine the pragmatic competence of students with different EFL language proficiency levels.
3.To investigate the relationship between gender, pragmatic competence and language proficiency.

3. Research Hypotheses

1. It hypotheses that senior and freshmen Iraqi EFL students have significant difference on the pragmatic performance. (senior students have more pragmatic competence than freshmen).
2. It hypotheses that there are different English Foreign Language proficiency levels perform differently in a pragmatic competence test.
3- It hypotheses that there is a significant difference between gender (males and females) performance, according to their pragmatic knowledge and grammatical knowledge (language proficiency).
4-It hypotheses that there is a relationship between EFL proficiency and pragmatic competence in two speech act.

4- Previous Studies in this field

Studies have investigated the effect of language proficiency levels on different dimensions of pragmatic competence; as follow.

Al-Tayib Umar (2004) demonstrated that Arab students of English, even at advanced levels, may retreat on their cultural background while making their requests strategies. It is suggestive of a matter that Arab learners of English do

not have the awareness of the pragmatic differences between Arabic and English and an appropriate Arabic request system in a given situation might not be proper in English in the same situation.

Al-Gahtani & Roever (2011) do a research of learners at four proficiency levels by using the role-play data concentrating on the sequential organization of the interactions and the effect of participants' proficiency level. Findings showed that lower level learners are less likely to develop the upcoming request and lay the groundwork for it through ascertaining interlocutor availability and providing accounts. They make use of fewer first-pair parts and utter the request early, relying on the interlocutor to elicit further information. The interlocutor also adjusts to learners' proficiency level in keeping complications to a minimum. The effects of the social context variable power are very limited, but discernible at high-proficiency levels.

In another study, Rattanaprasert & Aksornjarung (2011) conduct a study on the relationship between the learners' grammatical knowledge (grammar and vocabulary) and the pragmatic competence of the Medical first year students at a University in the South of Thailand. The study aims at investigating the relationship between the subjects' knowledge about vocabulary and grammar and pragmatic competence in four speech acts – apology, requests, acceptation, and decline. Sixty-two 1st year medical students are the participants of this quasi-experimental study. Data are accumulated using a questionnaire, a multiple-choice test of grammar and vocabulary, and a contextualized pragmatic judgment test. Results show that participants who have high score in the grammar and vocabulary test do not have good performance in the test of pragmatic knowledge, and vice versa.

Matsumura (2003) examines the effect of both target language proficiency and exposure to target language on the development of language learners' pragmatic competence. Participants in the study consists of a group of Japanese learners of English on an eight-month academic exchange program at a university in Canada. Pragmatic competence is measured by a multiple-choice questionnaire focusing on offering advice. Language proficiency is also measured by language learners' scores on TOEFL. Finally, level of exposure to target language is obtained by a self-report questionnaire. The findings of the study reveal that both language proficiency and amount of target language exposure have potential to account for the development of pragmatic competence.

Taguchi (2013) also conduct a study to investigate the effect of language proficiency and exposure to target language on appropriate and fluent production of a particular aspect of pragmatic competence referred to as conventional expressions. Participants in the study include three groups of Japanese learners of English at a university in Japan: a low language proficiency without study abroad experience group, a high language proficiency without study abroad experience group, and a high language proficiency with study abroad experience group. Pragmatic competence is assessed through a computerized oral discourse completion test. The findings of the study suggest

that while all learner groups fail to reach a native level, studying abroad experience presents an advantage in the appropriate production of conventional expressions whereas language proficiency presents an advantage in speech rates. The findings show that both language proficiency and target language exposure can contribute to the development of pragmatic competence.

Most recently, Rafieyan (2018) examins the association of a particular aspect of pragmatic competence referred to as knowledge of formulaic sequences with language proficiency. Participants of his study are a group of Japanese learners of English as a foreign language at three levels of the intensive English program of a university in Japan: low intermediate, intermediate, and high intermediate. Knowledge of formulaic sequences was assessed through an oral-production discourse completion task developed by Bardovi-Harlig et al. (2015). The analysis of Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient show a strong positive relationship between language learners' knowledge of formulaic sequences and their level of language proficiency.

5. Review of Studies related to the speech act of request and apology and gender differences

Holmes (1995) did a study on the gender differences and similarities in two speech acts of apology and request. The participants are 60 Mexican students. The data collection method is Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The results reveal that females use significantly more apologies compared to their male counterparts.In addition, female participants apologize for the hearers with equal power while males use the apology strategy for the females with various statuses (low, equal, high). He find that women apologize to female friends but men do it for socially distant females.

Thijittang & Lê (2008) examine some aspects of gender differences in relation to pragmatic strategies and sociolinguistic variation from the perspective of Thai learners of English in relation to the apology speech act using a DCT. The findings of this study illustrate that sociolinguistic factors, such as social status, social distance and severity of offence are closely related to the participants' apology realization patterns. In addition, according to sociolinguistic factors, men and women sometimes evaluate the need for apologies differently. Secondly, there are some similarities in apology strategies across genders, although there are also several differences among them. Overall, both men and women use the same apology strategies. However, some findings indicate differences between them. Women seem to offer more apologies than men do.

In 2012, Abarghoui scrutinized the differences between Iranian EFL learners and the Australian native speakers in refusal to request. A DCT is used to elicit the data from the participants. The results show that Iranian EFL learners are likely to utilize limited and different strategies for refusing their interlocutors'

requests than their native counterparts. Furthermore, the researcher find that the interlocutors' social status, social distance and gender have a great effect on the choice of refusal strategies used by Iranian and Australian native speakers.

The current study investigates the effect of pragmatic competence for successful cross-cultural communication on one hand and the actual effect of language proficiency, gender and target language exposure on the development of pragmatic competence of Iraqi non-native speakers of English on the other hand with the present research.

6.Research Methodology

This study employed a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) and a TOFEL test in data collection. This part is divided into four sections: participants, research instrument, pilot study, data collection, and data analysis.

6.1. Participant

In the current study, the participants consist of 120 Iraqi students. The sample is selected from two Iraqi universities (Mosul University and Tikrit University) among freshmen and seniors majoring in the English Translation Department. The researcher divides the sample into four groups according to the gender and age, but their ages are not controlled. However, each group consists of 30 learners who are : a) 30 male seniors b) 30 female seniors c) 30 male freshmen d) 30 female freshmen. In the current study, gender of participants as one variable is taken into account.

6.2. Instruments

In the current study, the researcher uses two tools for data collection. Language Proficiency Test is the first tool and Pragmatic Competence Test is the second. Frahady Test (2006) is designed to test of EFL to measure the participants' language proficiency and the Multiple Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) is used to measure the participants' pragmatic competence. TOFEL proficiency test is one Frahadi's complete standard test in 2006 which is employed language proficiency test. It consists of 20 items on vocabulary, 20 items on reading comprehension and 20 items on structure that means the whole items test are 60 items. It is necessary in this study to calculate the reliability of the proficiency test. The researcher uses the Internal Consistency Method (KR-21) which found out the reliability index (0.83) that is a high positive reliability. The test uses (TOFEL) in the current study which is a valid

test developed and validated by some experts who are professor of applied linguistic in the Translation Department and English Department at Tikrit University.

The employed Pragmatic Competence test in the current study is Multiple Discourse Completion test (MDCT) which is computed by using correlation coefficient and Pearson correlation formula. This test is developed and validated by Liu (2004) in multiple –choice items. Two speech acts (request and an apology) are investigated in this study. The test consists of two items: the first item includes 13 situations for the request and the other includes 12 situations for an apology. The test is applied to 30 English seniors of Translation Department from Tikrit University and 30 English seniors of Translation Department from Mosul University. The researcher explains to the testers the test procedures to read each item and select the most appropriate response based on the situations. The correlation coefficient is found out to be (0,81) for (MDCT) which is an acceptable percentage. Because the Pearson correlation formula measure one side of the test, so, modifying the computed coefficient of reliability has to be made by using Spearman equation. The degree of reliability coefficient is (89) which is a high reliability. In addition, to ensure the content validity of the test, it is given to six experts who are specialists in the pragmatic domain to confirm the validity of the contents.

Table (1). Reliability Coefficient of Spilt- Half Method and Its Correlation by Spearman Brown Formula

Test components	Spilt-half correlation coefficient	Spearman-Brown coefficient
MDCT	81	89

6.3.Pilot study

A pilot test is administrated to a random sample of 120 students of different stages of the Translation Department at two universities; Tikrit University and Mosul University. The pilote study is carried out from the second to the fifth of December 2019 at Tikrit University and the same test is carried out from the ninth to the twelfth of December 2019 at Mosul University. A sample consists of 15 female freshmen, 15 male freshmen, 15 female seniors and 15 male seniors in Translation Department of Mosul University, moreover, 15 female

freshmen, 15 male freshmen, 15 female seniors and 15 male seniors in Translation Department from Tikrit University. The aims of the pilot the current study are; **a)** to check the clarity of the test **b)** to ensure the test reliability **c)** to evaluate the time required for answering the test by the testees **d)** to analyze the test items to determine their effectiveness in terms of item difficulty level, moreover, the discrimination power according to test responses.

The results got from the pilot study show that all the test items are clear and familiar to test- takers, then the test – takers have put down their responses on the test papers in order to save time and effort.

Table (2). Sample of Pilot Study of the Tests

The university	Collage	The department	Female freshmen	Male freshmen	Female seniors	Male seniors	Total
Tikrit	Collage of Art	Translation department	15	15	15	15	60
Mosul	Collage of Art	Translation department	15	15	15	15	60
			Total				120

6.4. Data collection and analysis

The research is carries out the data collection of random sample which consist of 60 freshmen and 60 senior students from two universities; Tikrit University and Mosul University. The researcher explaines test items in each part and for each group for the students. In addition, the researcher explaines the instructions orally in their native language to avoid any misunderstanding. The researcher is demonstrated the exams by dividing it into two sessions for each group (male and female senior students of translation and male and female freshmen students of translation) separately.

The proficiency test is the first session for each group. The test time is limited in proficiency test (20 minutes) for each part (structure, vocabulary ad reading comprehension), so the total time for this test is one hour. However, the researcher informs the students that this proficiency test is supposed to benefit from their overall English knowledge and this test does not have any negative points. The students get the explanation orally about the test in their native

language. The papers and answer sheets are collected after the students finish the exam.

The mean and the standard deviation are calculated after the scoring the Language Proficiency Test. The researcher divides the participants into three levels of high, mid, and low. So the scores lie on standard deviation above the mean as the high group. The scores which lie on standard deviation below the mean as low group and the ones lining in between as the mid. So, there are scores higher than 34 (out of sample 60). These scores are considered as high language proficiency and other scores below 26 represent low language proficiency. The scores which are between 26 and 34 are standing for intermediate language proficiency. However, the obtained results show that out of 120 participants, 36 belong to the high language proficiency group, 34 belong to middle group and 41 belong to the low language proficiency group.

After we explain the first session procedures. Three proficiency groups achieve the pragmatic test in the second session with time limit (60 minutes). The researcher explains the test procedures orally and in their native language when the participants do not understand the instructions and informs them to read the test items carefully and put items in different real life situations in the target language and select the best response. Consequently, the test questions of the current study are answered. After collecting date, the researcher has applied a number of statistical tools for analyzing the data. The statistical analyses consist of three Independent Samples T-test and a One-Way ANOVA.

7. Results and Discussion

The researcher considers the appropriate discussing and analyzing the obtained results to be able to answer the current study hypotheses into consideration.

The first question of the current study is:

Do the years of study between senior and freshmen Iraqi EFL students have any significant difference on the pragmatic performance? (Do senior students have more pragmatic competence than freshmen?)

An Independent – Samples T-test is used to compare the mean scores of seniors and freshmen regarding the pragmatic competence. The table (3) shows the results as follow.

Table(3). An Independent –Samples T-test for the Pragmatic test among Seniors and Freshmen

Pragmatic Competence	Seniors Mean	Freshmen Mean	F	Sig.	T	DF	Sig.(2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	13.0170	12.5340	0.097	0.759	-0.940	118	0.350
Equal variance not assumed					-0.940	117.9100	0.350

The results show in the table(3) show that the T-value is less than (0.05) level of significance. The significance value (0.350) is higher than (0.05) level of significance. This means that, there is no statistically significance difference between seniors and freshmen on their pragmatic performance test. Therefore, the first group performance (seniors) does not show higher pragmatic competence test, although their language proficiency is higher than that of freshmen. This indicates that the mere language proficiency is not a sufficient factor to support or improve the pragmatic competence of EFL students.

The second question of the current study is;

 Do students of different English Foreign Language proficiency levels perform differently in a pragmatic competence test?

One –Way ANOVA statistical instrument is informed to answer this question and to understand whether there is statistically significant difference between the mean of three proficiency groups on their pragmatic competence test. Table (3) explains the obtained results of ANOVA. It shows that the obtained results through the figures that F ratio is highly significant, this means that the means of the participants, which belong to each of these three proficiency groups are significantly different from each other regarding their language proficiency. The obtained results show that there is no statistically significant difference between these three groups.This indicates that there is no statistically significant difference between the three groups in terms of their pragmatic competence according to the three levels (high, mid, low).

Table (3). One –Way ANOVA Results for the Differences among Means of the Three Proficiency Groups on Their Pragmatic Test.

Test components		Sum of				Sig. Value
Language proficiency	Between Groups within	4879.127 1547.791 6543.961	2 116 118	3046.691 13.140	108.330	.000

	Groups total					
Pragmatic knowledge	Between Groups within Groups total	16.566 930.368 940.920	2 116 118	7.792 6.826	1.107	.329

Based on the results from a table (3), it is clear that the significant value (.000) is less than (0.05) level of significance. This means that, there is a statistically significant difference between the mean scores for these three groups regarding proficiency in their language. In addition , the results show that there is no a significant difference between the mean scores of three proficiency groups on the pragmatic competence test because the significance value (. 329) is larger than (0.05) level of significance. In fact, the language proficiency test appears to clearly reflect among the subjects who are at different levels rather than pragmatic test.

The third question of the current study is:

3- Is there any significant difference between gender (males and females) performance, according to their pragmatic knowledge and grammatical knowledge (language proficiency).

Two Independent- samples T-test are used to answer this question and to determine the difference between male and female participants in concepts of their pragmatic knowledge and grammatical knowledge (language proficiency).

Table (4). An Independent Sample T-test between gender and Language Proficiency Test.

Language proficiency	Female Mean	Male Mean	F	Sig.	T-test	DF	Sig.(2-tailed)
Equal variances Assumed	27.5799	23.462	1.535	0.214	2.928	118	0.004
Equal variances not assumed					2.940	114.705	0.004

As in the table (4), the results show that the significance value (0.004) is less than (0.05) level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of two groups of males and females. The

female participants perform better than male ones on language proficiency test according to the obtained results.

Table (5). An Independent Sample T-test between gender & The Pragmatic Competence test.

Pragmatic Knowledge	Female Mean	Male Mean	F	Sig.	T	DF	Sig.(2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	13.3012	12.2510	1.044	0.310	2.070	118	0.041
Equal variance not assumed					2.070	115.189	0.042

As in the table (5), the results show that the significance value (0.041) is less than (0.05) level of significance. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of two groups of males and females. So, the female participants performed better than the male ones on the pragmatic test according to the obtained results.

Eventually, it is assumed that senior students have a much higher pragmatic knowledge than freshmen students because they have more sufficient features to pass courses on four skills, but T-test shows the results are not proportional to the expected results. The obtained results show that there is no statistically significant difference between seniors and freshmen according to their pragmatic competence. This means that, level of education or years of study are not be sufficient factors and have no significant effect on the pragmatic competence of students. Thus, participants of higher level of grammatical knowledge (language proficiency) do not have the higher pragmatic ability. According to that, we can conclude that the language proficiency alone is not enough to evaluate the pragmatic competence of students in real life situations and other factors like having more information about the target culture. Society is essential for direct access to native speakers. Delen (2010) supports this finding in line. He shows that even a learner has a high level of grammatical competence, this case does not mean that a learner is pragmatically competent too. So, the obtained results show that there is a negative relationship between the language proficiency and the pragmatic competence of the samples.

Either of the results of One-Way ANOVA show that there is no significant difference between the three proficiency group's performance regarding pragmatic competence. This means that the level of EFL students' language

proficiency is not sufficient affected by their pragmatic competence. We think this may be due to low obtained scores through the test, it supposes that the students are weak in the pragmatic competence. The test scores have also approved although proficiency test may very among between all levels of proficiency at 0.05 level of significance, but the pragmatic test cannot discriminate between items at different levels of proficiency at 0.05 level of significance. What the EFL students learn or expose to in the classroom; e.g. lack of the authentic materials, can be considered the main reason which attributes to this fact.

In the current study, gender is another variable which is investigated. This study shows that gender differences have a significant effect on the performance of students with regard to grammatical knowledge (language proficiency) and pragmatic competence. The obtained results show that females perform better than males in both language proficiency and pragmatic competence test. It states that females pay more attention to the social factors in a given situation. This may be a main reason they have performed better in a pragmatic competence test. Holmes (1995) shows that gender differences in the use of two speech acts of apologies and requests and explore that female participants perform significantly more apologies and requests than males. In addition , females pay attention towards socio-cultural norms of the language. Females are more polite and try more keep to the interpersonal relationship than males, (Ide:1992).

Conclusion

After analyzing and discussing the data by using T-test formula and One – Way ANOVA, the following conclusions are arrived of. This research has found that there is no positive and sufficient or significant relationship between grammatical knowledge (language proficiency) and pragmatic competence. It also shows that there is no significant difference between the three groups of language proficiency (high, mid and low) in terms of pragmatic competence. It has revealed that gender affects the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence. Therefore, it shows that female participants perform better both in language proficiency and pragmatic competence tests.

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