Developing undergraduate EFL Students' Communicative Competence through Using Pragmatic Instruction

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Abstract— *The study attempted to explain the communicative competence, pragmatic instruction , and the role of pragmatic instruction through using activities-based teaching EFL context. The study was presented by a public curriculum lead that prioritizes the necessity for English teachers/ instructors focused on activities when they teach pragmatics in an academic and social context. The research aimed to explain the vital role of activity-based teaching pragmatics on increasing students' communicative competence among EFL students. Moreover, most English students fail to present communicative competence in their communication on how to use pragmatic aspects, speech acts, social expressions, and cultural treatments by relating expressions to their meanings, knowing the intention of language users. There is a growing of researches on the value of activities-based teaching language on increasing learners' communicative competence in EFL teaching. The pragmatic instruction and activities-based of teaching English to these students have been reflected in details of the present paper.*

Keywords— *communicative competence, Activity-based teaching language, and EFL learners.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is an indispensable part of any community life in which learners feel the need to interact with each other for certain aims. It is through the concept of language that learners can communicate with a number of speakers in a variety of contexts(Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). However, while interacting, students need to follow things beyond words, the function of utterances, and the communicative function of language. They need to know how to say something as well as when, where and to whom to say it. Therefore, communication is much more than putting some words in a linear order to form a set of items in various situations. Language students are supposed to follow some conventions according to which their dialogue will be not only meaningful but also suitable. This analysis of how to say things in appropriate habits and places is essentially called pragmatics (Takkaç 2016).

Additionally, pragmatics generally deals with what is beyond the dictionary meanings of statements; in other arguments, it is about what is truly meant with an utterance based on the norms and conventions of a particular society, or context, in which conversation takes place(Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). Therefore, having a good command of the conventions enables the learner to establish and maintain effective and appropriate communication as well as understanding each other clearly (Yule, 1996) and this ability is usually referred to as pragmatic competence.

Consequent, the shift in which the emphasis in language pedagogy changed from the linguistic-based to communicative-based purposes, the impact and status of pragmatic competence have regularly increased in educational circles(Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). In other words, research was conducted by Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, (2019) stated that pragmatic competence is considered as a vital component of teaching communicative competence in the EFL context, this study is intended to be a review on the value and place of pragmatic competence in general language competence and activity-based language teaching as a communicative-based purpose for developing students' communicative competence. For the purposes of this review, some core definitions proposed by prominent scholars about the term are presented followed by some studies, particularly

the latest ones, investigating diverse factors affecting pragmatic competence and the implication of teaching pragmatics in language education (Takkaç 2016).

Moreover, it is the comprehending of communication among persons. Adopting teaching pragmatics to achieve this undertaking has placed more stress on accomplishing the practical component of the L2 along with its linguistic component (.Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Moreover, a study conducted by Hussein & Albakri (2019) and Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, (2019) stated that understanding only vocabulary or grammar is insufficient to be a competent language student in social or academic communication. English learner considered as an excellent language students may not be able to communicate with learners of the target language. Hence, English learners need to understand and have communicative competence which comprises both language competence and pragmatic competence for accomplishing communication among different nationalities in different environments.

Besides, a study conducted by Hussein & Albakri (2019) stated that pragmatic competence plays a vital role in acquiring different cultures of the foreign language, then it enables students to understand the communicative function of language in their communications. Essentially, a research adopted by Bataineh and Hussein (2015) point out pragmatic doesn't focus on grammatical knowledge, but it concentrates on the meaning of learners' language use in the acts of communication, as well as it focuses on helping the learners to create meaning rather than improve perfectly grammatical structure or syntactic forms. A study conducted by Hussein and Elttayef (2018) and Hussein, Albakri, & Seng (2019) indicated that EFL learners' pragmatic which is an aspect of communicative competence. Such pragmatic should be efficiently and purposefully chosen in such a way that they should be more testable, teachable, interesting, motivating in FL classroom language (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Hence, pragmatic instruction plays a vital role in obtaining diverse cultures or different traditions of foreign language. Through teaching pragmatics, English learners can obtain different socio-cultural languages, new traditions, different treatments, and communicative competence by using activity-based teaching language. Sometimes, EFL students show pragmatic competence when the written or spoken language produced is polite and socially suitable. Furthermore, pragmatic competence is defined as the learners' use of language and uses suitable rules and politeness dictated by the way it is understood by the student and express social or cultural requests (Koike, 1989). In order to achieve the objectives of

learners' communication, and develop students' pragmatic ability in the EFL classroom (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Therefore, learners should recognize pragmatic instruction, and communicative function of language by using activity-based teaching language that learners employ in their utterances and discover strategies employed by the learners to achieve their communication objectives in different countries (Hussein & Albakri, 2019;Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). This may help foreign learners become more pragmatically and culturally aware of their own utterances, and provide insight into language instructors in order to develop EFL learners' communicative competence in EFL environments (Hussein & Albakri, 2019).

II. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the EFL contexts, specific in the Iraq context, it was found the main problem where learners study the English language. EFL learners in a college, whose first language is Arabic, seem to sometimes lack communicative competence when trying to speak and communicate in the English language or when teaching English courses. As well as, our experience in teaching English as a foreign language in universities, 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 dialogues of street (Hussein & Albakri, 2019;Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). In the same view, although the increasing interest in teaching pragmatics in many forms of studies, a little in-depth study has been conducted on the impacts of teaching pragmatics on Iraqi EFL learners' communicative competence, where most of the foreign language teaching lacks adequate teaching pragmatic (Hussein & Albakri, 2019;Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). As a result, Iraqi students seem less communicative competence when communicating in the English language; more specifically when performing speech acts such as requesting and apologizing (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Additionally, research adopted by Cohen (1996) and Hussein & Albakri, (2019) indicated that language students can have all of the grammatical context and lexical items and still not be able to communicate their message because they lack the necessary communicative competence to communicate their language. 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).

Hence, Iraqi students need to understand communicative competence and how to obtain socio-cultural expressions to permit them to make socio-cultural communication among different nationalities, and they also become more pragmatically and culturally aware of their own expressions (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). With respect to use of pragmatic instruction among EFL students, the researcher stated the study through his experience in university, there is a tendency for learners to understand communicative competence and activity-based language teaching that is because the importance of teaching activity enables students to understand the communicative function of language in the EFL context.

III. THE AIM OF RESEARCH

There has been a little empirical study into explanation the communicative competence and activity-based language teaching in the Iraqi context also explains the difference of functions of teaching pragmatic by using activity-based language(Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). A part of a Ph.D. dissertation, the present research aims to explain the main role of teaching pragmatics on developing learners' communicative competence at EFL University. Teaching pragmatics is one of the new methods that are popular in the area of interlanguage (Hussein & Albakri, 2019). Consequently, identifying the teaching pragmatics and activity-based language teaching made in the class may help Iraqi EFL undergraduates to be aware of activities that enable them to communicate successfully in EFL environments. Furthermore, findings of diverse studies (Ellis, 1992; Hill, 1997; Jalilifar, 2009; Hussein & Albakri, 2019) that concentrated on the impacts of teaching pragmatics and activity-based language teaching on increasing English students' communicative competence.

IV. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is significant as it deals with communicative competence and activity-based language teaching in university. Identifying the use of pragmatic instruction on developing learners' communicative competence through using activity-based English language teaching in college is a pre-step towards setting a corrective action plan that contains some suggestions and important strategies for better English teaching that may help learners in achieving the objectives of their language learning. The conclusions of this study and former findings will be of significant value to English teachers and researchers.

V. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

5.1 Prior Researches on Pragmatics in EFL Learning and Teaching

Contemporary researches (Alcón-Soler, 2005; Rueda, 2006; Hussein & Albakri, 2019; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019) on pragmatics in EFL learning and teaching has stated that it is significant to help language students to develop communicative competence, and use correct language to communicate successfullyby using pragmatic instruction through activities-based teaching language in varioussituations. Additionally, a study conducted by Hussein and Elttayef (2018) and Hussein and Albakri (2019) indicated that EFL learners' pragmatic which is an aspect of communicative ability in the EFL classroom. Such pragmatic should be effectively selected in such a way that they should be more testable, teachable, interesting, appealing in the FL classroom. An empirical study adopted 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 learners' language use in the acts of communication in EFL schoolroom. Hence, numerousresults of those studies provided rich evidence to support the necessity for EFL students' pragmatic instruction and activity-based teaching language to develop communicative competence in the FL schoolroom (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997; Bataineh and Hussein, 2015; Hussein& Albakri 2019).

Similarly, some researches have revealed the role of pragmatic instruction and activity-based teaching language on developing English learners' communicative competence in the EFL classroom (Bachman, 1990; Schmidt 1993; Bardovi-Harlig &Hartford, 1997; Bataineh and Hussein, 2015; Hussein & Albakri, 2019; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). A research was conducted by Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei (1997) and Hussein & Albakri (2019) and Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, (2019) displayed that syntactic development does not confirm an equivalent level of pragmatic ability, and even excellent learners may not be able to understand their intended objectives and contents in context or grammatical sentences (Eslami- Rasekh, 2005). For example, language students may pass any test or answer paper in their English course, but they are not able to convey the same language appropriately in real-life situations because of the lack of communicative competence and don' understand pragmatic competence where it occurs.

Likewise, a study was adopted by Kasper (1989)and Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, (2019) who stated that excellent learners' communicative acts regularly had pragmatic failures and

proposed that there was a need for teaching pragmatics to obtain the application of activity-based teaching communicative competence. Moreover, pragmatic instruction has been recognized as one of the important instructions that help language learners become completely competent in the application of communicative competence based on activity through teaching function of language in diverse situations (Hussein & Albakri, 2019).

Essentially, regarding pragmatic rising in the teaching of language, a number of activities are appreciated for pragmatic growth and can be classified into two main classes: activities to increase learners' socio-cultural language by using different drills, and activities providing opportunities for communicative competence through using functions of language (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1997; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). Regarding socio-cultural language by using different activities are those that have been suggested to grow recognition of how students' language forms are used appropriately in contexts (Eslami- Rasekh, 2005). For example, research was implemented by Schmidt (1993) stated socio-cultural language by using different activities that contain paying aware attention to linked certain practices, their pragmalinguistic purposes and the sociopragmatic constraints these particular procedures contain. Also, other activities that offer opportunities for communicative competence through using the function of language may contain group work, in-class consultations and cultural communications outside the lesson. Accordingly, findings of studies discovered those two activities help to increase learners' socio-cultural language and develop their communicative competence in different contexts (Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019).

5.2 Previous Researches on Effect of Teaching Pragmatics on Increasing Students' Communicative Competence.

Pragmatic instruction played a vital role in rising students' communicative competence in diverse contexts. For example, activities-based teaching language are described as actions utilized in teaching the English language especially, communicative competence and pragmatic aspects (Oxford, 1993; Hussein & Albakri, 2019; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). A research was implemented by Oxford & Nyikos (1989) showed that role of activities of teaching pragmatics is often referred to as actions or applies that learners utilize to remember what they have learned in the classroom, and they also help students promote their own achievement in communicative competence (Bremner, 1998; Hussein &

Albakri, 2019). As a result, learning put activities of teaching pragmatics forward by English learners are crucial to English teachers or instructors as it can help them understand the cultural expression and communicative competence produced by students and reply appropriately.

Furthermore, former studies have been conducted to find out the implication of activity-based teaching pragmatic on developing students' communicative competence and usage of speech acts in social and academic communication, the findings of researches revealed that significant difference in mean scores, the findings discovered that students use appropriate function of language in the post-test (Alcón-Soler, 2005; Rueda, 2006; Hussein & Albakri, 2019).Similarly, research was implemented by Green and Oxford (1995: p.285) stated that "more proficient language students use more learning social activities-based teaching pragmatics and more kinds of activities than less proficient language learners". Thus, teaching of pragmatics by using activities not only help learners become competent and communicative function of language, but they also develop students' pragmatic aspects, the results of studies revealed that students who were taught activities-based teaching pragmatic scored better findings of communicative competence in the post-test (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Hussein & Albakri, 2019; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). Accordingly, the results of earlier studies revealed the main role of pragmatics and activity-based teaching language on developing students' communicative competence in different situations.

Besides, many types of research had provided that the students were aware that learning activities were a portion of their language learning communicative competence, the findings displayed that the students revealed more usage of communicative competence and speech acts in performing of social or academic discussions, there was a significant difference in mean scores in post-test, students scored better outcomes in usage of communicative competence (Yang, 1999; Hong-Nam and Leavell, 2006; Tuncer, 2009; Li, 2010; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Hussein & Albakri, 2019). The research was adopted by Hussein & Albakri (2019) and Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, (2019) also showed that strategies played a vital role in increasing students' communicative competence mainly in different contexts. Teaching pragmatics by using activities s were the most arranged actions that helped on increasing students' communicative competence in the EFL classes. Therefore, the outcomes discovered that there was a statistically significant difference

between the two groups (males and females) in the usage of communicative competence.

Additionally, it was adopted that pragmatic instruction by using activities-based teaching helped language students develop their communicative competence particularly pragmatic competence (Shridhar & Shridhar, 1986, 1994; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). As well as, it was observed that activities-based teaching helped EFL learners become more effective in their communicative positions mostly in-class discussions. Similarly, communicative competence influenced some of the activities-based teachings they used. The research was implemented by Yang (1999) identified quantitative proof to explore English learners' communicative competence by using pragmatic instruction in the context of an indigenized form of English. In the same view, various studies focused on teaching pragmatics by using activities-based teaching in language learning have discovered that language learning activities are important to learners on cultivating their communicative competence when they communicate their dialogues (Griffiths, 2003; Ersözlü, 2010; Li, 2010; Yılmaz, 2010; Hussein, Albakri, & Seng, 2019). Moreover, a study was conducted by Hussein &Albakri (2019) discovered the important role of request strategies for developing English learners' communicative language in the classroom. Therefore, the results of different studies demonstrated that strategies played an essential role in increasing students' communicative competence.

VI. CONCLUSION

This present research has addressed the pragmatic instruction and activity-based teaching language and its effects in the EFL classroom, in addition, its explanations and characteristics of activity-based teaching language on developing learners' communicative competence. It has revealed researches on learners' communicative competence in EFL learning. The studies show a consensus that pragmatic knowledge can be taught effectively by using activities-based teaching language in EFL learning and teaching helps to develop language learners' communicative competence. Furthermore, it has been declared that students' different activities among students, the findings of data analysis discovered that there was a statistically significant difference among learners in the usage of communicative competence. However, this summary also reveals that more investigation needs to be shown in different studies to identify elements that may affect the way learners go about

pragmatic development as well as the activities they utilize to obtain communicative competence. Lastly, depending on the numerous results, the researcher tries to identify the role of teaching pragmatics and activity-based teaching on developing learners' communicative competence. Then, he tries to put an appropriate remedy for increasing the communicative function of language in the EFL schoolroom.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

The following recommendations could be adopted in the area of using activity-based language teaching in helping students to develop their communicative competence in the EFL context.

a) Recommendations Directed to the Ministry of Higher Education and scientific research.

1. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is advised to use pragmatic instruction in the curricula plans of the English language subject.

2. The pragmatic instruction can be employed for other English language courses at different scholastic levels and stages.

3. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research may be called to hold training programs to help EFL lecturers/ teachers in attaining the ability to tackle teaching pragmatic while teaching language and pragmatic contexts.

b) Recommendations Directed to the Teachers

1. Attention should be paid to the plans of activity-based pragmatic teaching into learning and teaching environments for increasing communicative competence.

c) Recommendation Directed to the Researchers

1. More research is needed in the area of pragmatic instruction through using activity-based language teaching for developing communicative competence.

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