

Enhancing Pragmatic Competence in Kurdish EFL Learners: The Impact of a Learner-Centered Approach

Zhikal Qader Salih¹ ; Prof. Dr. Mustafa Kurt²

¹PhD student

²English Language Education, Near East University/ North Cyprus

Abstract

An essential part of second language acquisition is pragmatic competence, the ability to use language in a social context. It is often neglected from English as Foreign Language (EFL) curricula, most especially, in areas without plenty of experience of the language, including Kurdish-speaking communities. This study investigated how a learner-centered approach influenced the development of pragmatic competence of Kurdish EFL learners with regard to speech acts, politeness strategies, and conversational implicatures. A quasi-experimental design using 98 Kurdish EFL students from two universities in northern Iraq. The experimental group was subjected to a six-week treatment focused on pragmatic instruction. The ability of the learners to identify and produce speech acts like requests, rejections and apologies were assessed. There was meaningful improvement in the groups' use of appropriate language and context sensitive scenario in the experimental group. Through Learner centered approach, Motivation, autonomy and confidence in real life scenario were significantly fostered. The findings from this research showed the essence of incorporating pragmatic instruction into EFL curricula, most especially scenarios that has to do with politeness, to facilitate intercultural communication skills and language proficiency.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence, learner-centered methodology, Kurdish EFL learners, speech act theory, politeness strategies, conversational implicatures, second language acquisition, intercultural pragmatics, communicative competence, EFL pedagogy

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

English is a foreign language which has gained a lot of notoriety at the expense of Iraqi English in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. The School curricula include it as a compulsory subject and an entry

to global awareness, and it has become a wonderful means of international communication. There are some peculiar problems for the region, such as lack of educational resources, conventional teaching methods and negligible exposure to the real English environment. Systemic problems prevent students from being capable of reaching fluency and communicative competence in English (Swan & Smith, 2001). In addition, factors of socio-economics in which school quality varies from countryside to city exacerbate the learning of English as a second language in Kurdish regions (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The skills that go under the common label of communicative competence are divided into two domains: pragmatic competence refers to the ability to use language according to established conventions in particular social and cultural settings, and semantic competence refers to knowledge of the pragmatic vocabulary (such as politeness expressions and reporting devices) that a community uses to accomplish these purposes. This aspect of such learner talk is vital to document in order for learners to create and understand language appropriate to cultural and situational expectations of native and international interlocutors. This implies the vital role of pragmatic competence in EFL learning. Since English is used in international business, diplomacy, and higher education (Canale & Swain, 1980 Kasper & Rose, 2002), it is necessary for the Kurdish EFL learners to develop pragmatic competence in order to be successful. Pragmatic skills are required too. For example, learners can “speak,” but still may not apply the language at the real-world level.

Obstacles to developing pragmatic competence in Kurdish EFL learners are discussed. One of the largest problems is the deficit of authentic English usage, as opportunities for interaction with native or proficient English do not exist. Grammar oriented instruction dominates in Kurdish schools at the expense of pragmatic features, including strategic turn taking, politeness strategies and speech acts. Culture is another barrier of large interest. Because of this, learners can find themselves overwhelmed during their study of English-speaking cultures as a social phenomenon, as this is unfamiliar in Kurdish culture. In Kurdish Regions, however, teachers are not taught how to teach skills in pragmatic instruction in their lessons, and thus students do not learn these skills (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Rose, 2005).

1.2 Research Gap

Limited Research on Pragmatic Competence in Kurdish EFL Learners

Although pragmatic competence in EFL learning has been recognized as important in second language acquisition (SLA), the research related to Kurdish EFL learners is marginal. Pragmatic competence has been studied from an Asian or European context most times, and it takes into consideration the peculiar sociolinguistic and cultural circumstances of Kurdish regions. More importantly, existing research concerning Kurdish educational challenges overlooks a major aspect of communicative competence that is critical for effective communication: pragmatic competence. This leaves out the question of early Kurdish learners' pragmatic development and the use of pragmatic skills and how cultural and contextual issues shape them (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 2001). This gap is crucial to filling the gap so they can tailor the pedagogy for Kurdish EFL learners, in a way that suits their needs.

The Need to Explore Learner-Centered Approaches in This Context

Another important research gap in learner-centered approach to teaching pragmatic competence is the under explored realm of the Kurdish EFL context. Kurdish schools are English teacher centered, with rote learning and grammar based instructional techniques. However, they cannot teach students the skills they need to employ their language in authentic, real-world contexts. Similar to other EFL contexts, using learner centered approaches; approaches that emphasize active participation in learning, interaction in learning and contextualized learning have been effective in developing pragmatic competence. Very few studies have examined how such approaches were implemented and their effect in Kurdish classrooms. Research is needed to find out how learner-centered methodologies can accommodate Kurdish context, paying attention to cultural sensitivities and resource constraints (Nunan, 1988; Taguchi, 2011).

1.3 Objectives

1. To assess the impact of a learner-centered approach on pragmatic competence development.
2. To help incorporate the pragmatics- concerned teaching in Kurdish EFL classes.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does a learner-centered approach benefit pragmatic competence of Kurdish EFL learners?

2. What are the challenges of implementing such an approach in this context?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Pragmatic Competence in EFL Learning

Pragmatic competence in learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the capacity to handle language in the contexts of social interactions. However, it is about language not in terms of sounds and words but how language is used in appropriately to convey meaning in ways within various social settings. Pragmatic competence is described by several factors that learners have to develop, which includes: speech acts, politeness strategy and contextual use.

Pragmatic competence depends on speech acts. They talk about how language is used to do things, make requests, make offers, say sorry, make promises. The speech acts become meaningful when learners can understand and produce those speech acts, and when they engage in meaningful exchanges with others whose intentions are communicated (Searle, 1969). The other crucial supporting part of pragmatic competence is the concept of politeness strategies. Such strategies facilitate speakers to keep social harmony while being direct and respecting other social roles. As Brown and Levinson (1987) point out, politeness is not universal and is contingent, a topic that is a very important area of EFL research. Pragmatic competence also includes the ability to use language in context. Adapting language involves tailoring it to the role of the speaker, the relationship between the participants, and the formality of the occasion. Contextual language use includes nonverbal communication, such tone of voice, gesture, and facial expressions, which contribute to the depth and meaning of an interaction (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Pragmatic competence without communication seems useless. Secondly, pragmatic competence enables EFL learners to express and communicate in real world situations. Furthermore, even when learners have excellent grammar and vocabulary, they may struggle to engage in social interactions if their pragmatic knowledge is lacking. A learner may produce an accurate sentence, but be unaware that in a specific cultural context, the same sentence would require a more subtle or indirect application. Better understanding of the pragmatic norms can avoid misunderstandings or bad situations (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). Thus, developing pragmatic competence plays an important function in establishing relationships among people or even relationships between employer and employee. It serves as an aid to learners to communicate effectively and effortlessly,

avoiding potential offenses and taboos in any social scenario. In academia and the professional world, it is very important to learn to adapt your way of speaking to different audiences. The importance of being able to communicate with people from all cultures, all over the world, is greater than ever. Learners with a good grasp of pragmatic competence can take part in social communication, negotiate, and socialize in various contexts. This is not only an issue to prevent miscommunication but also to create mutual understanding and respect in a globalized world (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Searle, 1969).

2.2 Challenges in Developing Pragmatic Competence

Sociocultural Differences Between English and Kurdish

There are significant challenges to developing pragmatic competence among Kurdish learners of English, this is because of sociocultural differences between English and Kurdish. Linguistically, these differences had to be deep, not in the differences between the two languages, but also in the difference between how communication is structured and understood in the two languages. For example, in English-speaking cultures, directness and clarity are prized in your communication, especially in a formal or professional setting. English speakers expect explicit expressions, and direct requests or statements, for their efficiency (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This puts Kurdish cultural norms at a sharp contrast to the contrary, which are indirectness, politeness, for the sake of social harmony and not to seem rude. However, to be respectful, and to avoid causing offense, speakers often employ indirect speech acts, such as hedging or mitigation (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). Therefore, Kurdish learners of English are at risk of not being able to understand when it is apt to be direct or indirect which may lead to miscommunication due to their conversational style not aligning with accepted norms in English-speaking cultures. The divergence spans both directness and indirectness as well as politeness methods. In Kurdish communication, language usually includes formal phrases and honorable titles to demonstrate respect for the speaker's status. Political expression does not function on a simple binary scale and possesses complex nuances unlike the English language.

The subtle elements of politeness that require modal verbs like “would” or “could” in English do not translate directly into Kurdish because Kurdish speakers maintain formality in their speech while English speakers would choose informal language in similar situations. If the difference in formal language levels between both parties is not accounted for during communication it may

result in confusion or discomfort between the English-speaking person and the learner. Learners should study the FTA (Face-Threatening Act) alongside politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Social relationship management through language may produce errors in these concepts because their expressions differ between Kurdish and English communication systems. Kurdish learners should learn to identify cultural differences and adjust their language use according to English cultural norms.

Traditional Teacher-Centered EFL Teaching Methods

Beyond sociocultural barriers, this systemic challenge of pragmatic competence also applies to Kurdish EFL learners because the traditional, teacher-centered teaching methods dominate. In many education contexts, we continue focusing on language grammar, vocabulary and syntactical accuracy and think about the real-life applications. Such teacher-centered approach focuses on rote learning, where learners are required to memorize grammatical rules and vocabulary lists, rather than move students towards communicative practice (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Rather, this method produces competent beginners, but cannot promote the skills needed to understand and take part in social interactions. Such a framework does not permit the full development of pragmatic competence, which depends on understanding and responding to contextual cues, social dynamics and their combinations.

Teacher centered approaches are ill suited to teaching pragmatic competence. Traditional classrooms give students enough chances to apply pragmatic language skills, speech acts, politeness strategies, or adjusting language in context. Insufficient interaction and communicative tasks may leave learners unprepared for real-world situations, requiring responsive action to social cues and understanding of implicit meaning communicated (Searle, 1969). Continuing from our previous example, a Kurdish speaker might have learnt the grammar of a request and know how to phrase it but cannot fathom how to plan the request based on the relationship between interlocutors, the situation, or considerations of politeness. These conventional approaches are at odds with the emphasis on valuing learning and interaction in immersion-based scenarios and fail to prepare learners to apply English in real-world social contexts.

Additionally, most of the Kurdish EFL classrooms have not paid attention enough to the implementation of interactive, student-centered methodologies, which are restraining the growth of pragmatic competence. Lectures and written exercises are still the focus of instruction, and

students are led to meaningful conversation or role-play exercises designed to imitate real world interaction (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Students are cut off from the opportunity to figure out how to negotiate meaning in conversation, adapt to the dynamic context with their speech, and deal with the nuances of indirectness and politeness that underlie successful communication. The learner-centered approach (which gives importance to collaboration, communication and problem solving) is more appropriate to develop pragmatic competence. These methods permit learning through simulated interaction regarding real- life context and allow learners to develop these skills, so that they perform language in various social environments (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). These approaches also foster development of critical thinking and adaptability, sensitizing learners to the cultural aspects of language use and providing them with the means to use English in a world where English is taught as a global language.

2.3 Learner-Centered Approach in EFL

Recent focus in second language acquisition (SLA) on the learner's active role in knowledge construction has brought learner centered pedagogical theories to the forefront. Two of the most influential theories in this field are constructivism and experiential learning. These theories both advocate a breaching from traditional teacher-centered approaches to creating a setting in which language can be actively engaged with the learners through interaction, reflection and contextualized learning.

The leading theorists' constructivism, as presented by Piaget (1973) and Vygotsky (1978), argues that knowledge is created through social interaction, while the prior learner experience influences the knowledge. Within the context of EFL, this is taken as defining learners not as passive receivers of knowledge but as active agencies in creating their understanding of language. From this perspective, activities held in the classroom aimed at promoting negotiation and peer interaction during the learning of language structure and pragmatic skills is very important as such, activities help students to internalize language structures and the pragmatic skills needed for proper communicative actions in the real world (Lantolf, 2000). Vygotsky introduced the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which shows that children learn better, when adults guide them beyond their current skill levels using the expertise of peers or teachers (Vygotsky 1978). Learners require support to understand and adjust to communication's social and cultural dimensions, which

makes the development of pragmatic competence particularly beneficial according to (Vygotsky's 1978).

These theories, along with experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), come as a compliment, since they emphasize the experiential component of learning. Kolb argues that rather than being passive receivers of knowledge, learners create their knowledge from experiencing their world, reflecting on the experience to extract knowledge and integrate that knowledge into new contexts of action. EFL Incorporating experiential learning in EFL entails exposing learners to experiential learning via means of simulations, role playing or task-based activities. This approach is relevant with the second goal, attaining pragmatic competence; this means that learners will be required to use language in established environment and diverse contexts in order to realize how this meaning is constructed through social interaction (Kolb, 1984).

Strategies in Learner-Centered Approaches

Engagement and participation are at the core of learner centered approaches through interactive strategies such as task based learning along with role-play and peer collaboration. The educational methods utilize active learning principles to teach language dynamically within context that enables students to build their linguistic and pragmatic skills.

Learner-centered EFL teaching has built role-plays into its core. Language practice among learners can be done by engaging in role-playing activities, simulating real-world situations in a controlled environment that allows them to be safe. For example, a purchase market role-play where students negotiate a purchase can help teach students to request, offer, and refuse in acceptable way to social norms and cultural expectations. Because of its experiential nature, learners understand how language is used, not only in theory but also in context. This is important because learners need to think critically and be prepared for the changing context of their engagement with language (Bachman, 1990). Role-plays allow learners to try out different strategies of pragmatics, such as politeness markers, turn taking and indirect speech that form part of pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2018).

Another meaning of a learner-centered environment is task-based learning (TBL). TBL focuses on tasks that reflects real world activities, such as interviewing subjects, creating a presentation, or writing a report. This approach also helps in practicing language and focuses on the eventual purpose of language use or communicative situation. The learning of language from task-based

learning (TBL) activities engages both language abilities and cognitive skills which enable students to adapt their communication strategies under different conditions. According to Nunan (2004), task-based learning perfectly matches the requirements of pragmatic competence because learners need to apply their skills in social contexts with a communicative goal.

Peer collaboration is also a feature of learner centered EFL approach. When learners work in pairs or small groups, they can practice language in ‘real world’ settings where they can discuss, negotiate and solve problem together. It enables the sharing of ideas and strategies that inspire ideas and strategies and offering valuable lessons from both peers’ successes and mistakes. Language learners are given an opportunity to observe similarities and differences in communication across cultures, which is necessary to develop pragmatic competence. Spratt, M. et al. (2002) has also suggested research that peer collaboration may also help learners develop confidence with language use, increase fluency and gain a more nuanced understanding that might be possible through conventional forms of instruction. The collaborative model gives learners opportunities to develop their critical thinking and metacognitive abilities by comparing their language usage to that of their peers for the intended task purpose. This approach requires embedding the identified strategies into EFL instruction that supports pedagogical objectives like learner independence development alongside critical thinking and language-pragmatic competence enhancement. EFL instructors who use a learner-centered methodology supply students with essential resources to successfully use language meaningfully across various real-world situations.

2.4 Research on Learner-Centered Approaches and Pragmatics

Evidence from Global EFL Contexts

Research on learner-centered approaches in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy has been well documented across many other contexts and there is ample reason to believe that this approach has a positive influence on developing pragmatic competence. Another key finding from studies in Europe and Asia is that task based learning, cooperative learning and other learner-centered methods have sharpened students’ skill in using language to communicate (Ellis, 2003; Van Lier, 2004). Studies, in particular, highlights the effectiveness of role-plays and simulations, where students carry out real-world activities that involve using both language and cultural

understanding (Taguchi, 2018). These methods provide learners with the chance to speech acts, politeness strategies, and the like, in realistic settings.

For instance, in Taguchi's (2018) study of EFL learners in Japan, learners who exercised communicative tasks that resembled real life situations were discovered by learned to display a greater sense of pragmatic aspects, for example, indirect speech act, politeness, and cultural distinction in communicating. Much like DeKeyser's (2007) research, task based learning also creates an opportunity for interaction and negotiation of meaning, hallmarks of pragmatic competence. Focusing on real communication instead of isolated grammar drills ensures you learn to use language for any social context. They incorporate learner-centered approaches to linguistic skills, and help learners understand how to navigate sociocultural differences both of which are good for language learning, if not learning. According to House (2022), it is essential that some communication occurs, and therefore, pragmatic competence is important in multilingual and multicultural contexts. For example, the context must be considered in language switching, which assist learners develop the capability to change their language according to the situation.

Gaps in Research Specific to Kurdish Learners

There is a lot of research on the use of learner-centered approaches in EFL teaching worldwide, but research regarding Kurdish learners is limited. Much research has been done regarding general EFL proficiency in the Kurdish regions of Iraq and Turkey, but not on pragmatic competence development. Within the limited literature on the pragmatic aspects of English Language studies concerning Kurdish learners, modicum studies have been conducted on how Kurdish Learners approach speech acts, politeness strategies, and discourse markers in English. Only a handful of studies have investigated how the sociocultural needs of Kurdish learners can influence applying learner centered pedagogies.

One major gap found is that there are no studies addressing integrating learner-centered approaches in Kurdish EFL classrooms. Improved English language instruction requires understanding how cultural variation influences pragmatic learning and how learner centered methods can be adapted for Kurdish cultural contexts. As Kasper and Rose (2002) pointed out, learners' pragmatic competence is articulated in a cultural context, and teaching methods may not yield the expected results without considering learners' cultural backgrounds. Future research into applying task

based learning, role-plays, and peer collaboration for the knowledge of pragmatic awareness in Kurdish EFL settings is available in this gap.

In addition, teacher centered approaches have also been used in many Kurdish classrooms, inhibiting students from achieving genuine communication and pragmatic learning. As a result, teaching English needs a new comprehensive approach, which combines linguistic and pragmatic aspects regarding the Kurdish learners' cultural backgrounds and learning needs (Basturkmen, 2015). The possibility of bridging this gap tool improves EFL learning experience and ready Kurdish students for obvious communication in English.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to show the effect of the learner-centered approach on pragmatic competence of Kurdish EFL learners. A research approach that performs pre and post-test of learners' competence, performance change analyses, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers to understand learners' perception as well as teachers to establish perception about learner centered approach. Activities of pragmatic competence are illustrated in classroom observations of real time learned engagement. The design enables a holistic understanding of the effectiveness and practicality of learner centered methodologies in the particular context, in this case, Kurdish EFL context.

3.2 Participants

This research involved 98 Kurdish EFL students from two different universities in Northern Iraq. All participants involved in this study were at intermediate level and only the experimental group underwent a six-week intervention that was focused on pragmatic instruction.

3.3 Intervention

An intervention adopting a learner centered stance with the emphasis on active student engagement, autonomy and context-based learning was used. It incorporates these theoretical bases and uses them to create constructive and experiential learning theories, which invite students to build knowledge to achieve interaction, reflection, and practical application. An approach is also involved from active participation, task based learning, scaffolded learning, cultural sensitivity and feedback driven learning. In this, activities directed toward developing learners' ability to use

English in social and professional settings include role playing of common speech acts, analysis of authentic dialogues, peer teaching and collaboration, simulation of actual events, interactive workshops on politeness and the like, reflective learning through journals, and task-based projects. This set of activities is so comprehensive that it covers theoretical knowledge and practical competence in how to employ English in different contexts.

3.4 Data Collection

This paper employs quantitative data collection strategy to assess the impact of a learner-centered approach on learners' pragmatic competence. Pre- and post-tests to measure pragmatic competence, classroom observations of learners' engagement, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers are part of this process. They are scenario based and measure how well they can recognize and produce language in several circumstances. Class observation is looking at some specific behaviors like participation in role-plays, group discussions and peer teaching activities. Through semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, and researchers, in-depth insight is got into students and teachers' perceptions of the learner centered approach and its effect on the pragmatic competence they have achieved. Discussed are students' experiences with learner-centered activities, the challenges encountered during the intervention, changes in perceived pragmatic competence, and teachers' observations of changes in student behavior and communication.

3.5 Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of pre and post-test scores for Kurdish EFL learners was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of learner-centered method in pragmatic competence. They studied 98 participants stratified by gender (male and female) and by grade level (first and fourth). To examine critical improvement in pragmatic competence, paired samples t-test and independent samples t- test were used.

3.5.1 Quantitative analysis: Statistical comparison of pre- and post-test scores.

Descriptive Statistics

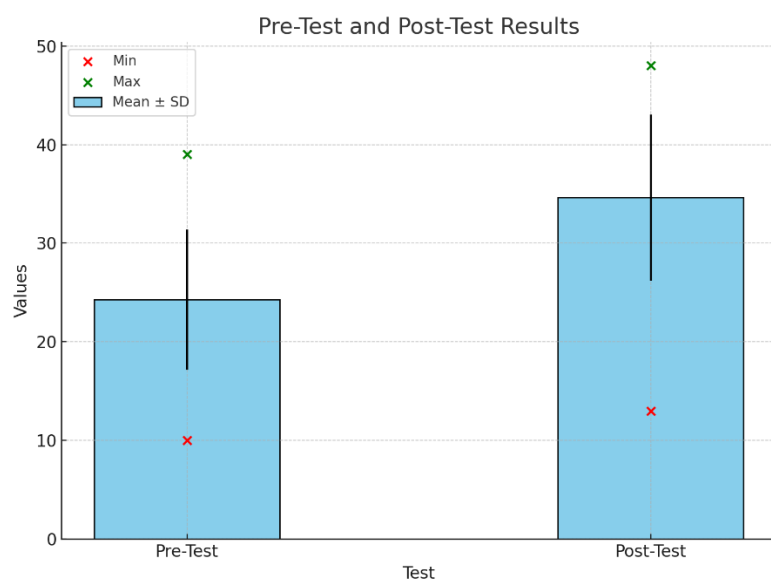
Descriptive analysis showed: The initial descriptive analysis results indicated pre-test mean scores to be 24.27 (SD = 7.11) and post-test mean scores at 34.63 (SD = 8.41). The 10.36-point mean improvement demonstrates how learner-centered teaching methods enhance pragmatic

competence. The range of pre-test scores from 10 to 39 and post-test scores from 13 to 48 showed participant diversity together with learning improvements.

Table 1: Statistical comparison of pre- and post-test scores

The initial descriptive analysis demonstrated that the mean pre-test score was 24.27(SD=7.11), while there was a significant increase in the mean post test score 34.63(SD =8.41). This showed an improvement of 10.36 points, showing how effective Learner centered approach in enhancing pragmatic competence can be.

Test	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum (Min)	Maximum (Max)
Pre-Test	24.27	7.11	10	39
Post-Test	34.63	8.41	13	48



Graph 1: pre- and post-test scores

Table 2: Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores by Grade

When results were analyzed by grade level, there were significant improvement in 4th year students than 1st year students. T test confirmed a significant difference ($p < 0.001$), this showed that advanced learners benefited from this intervention.

Test	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Sample Size (n)
Pre-Test	25.53	7.05	58
	22.26	6.82	40
Post-Test	37.15	7.86	58
	30.66	7.76	40

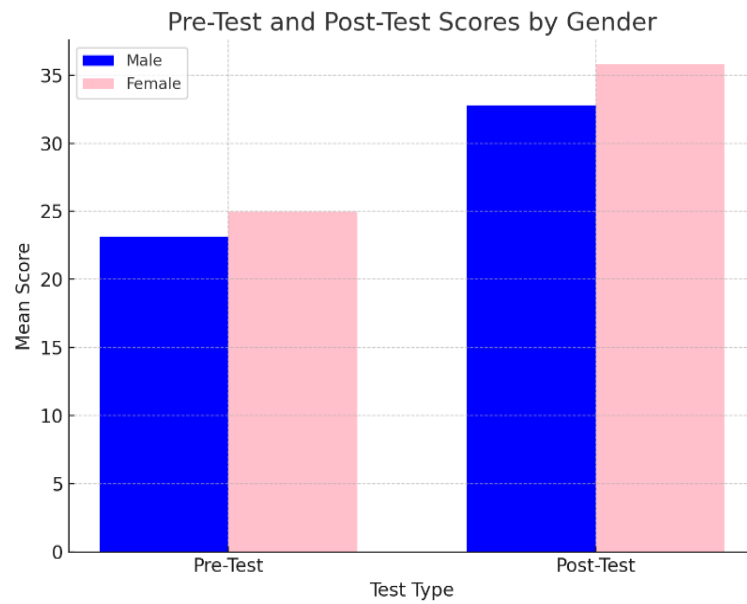


Graph 2: Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores by Grade

Table 3: Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores by Gender

After the analysis by gender was done, there was no observed difference between both genders. Here $p = 0.084$, which showed that both gender benefited equally from the Learner-centered approach.

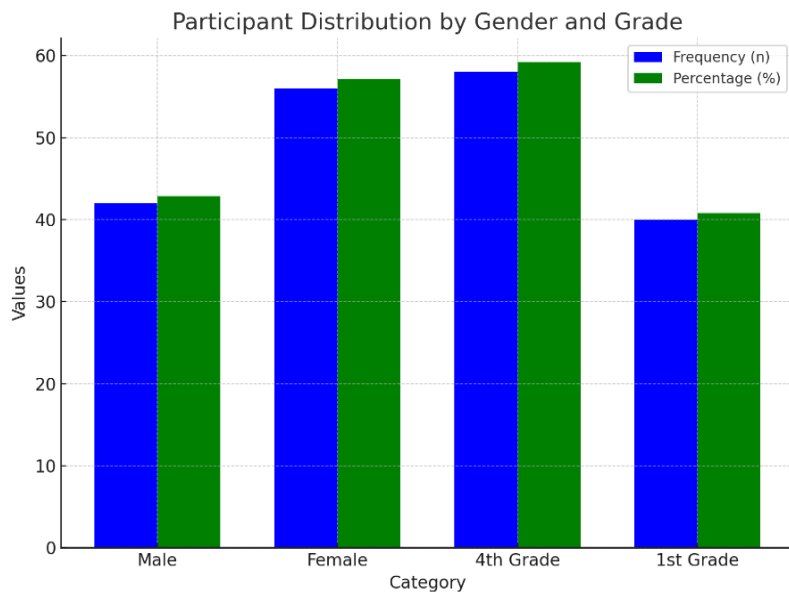
Test	Gender	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Sample Size (n)
Pre-Test	Male	23.16	6.84	42
	Female	24.97	7.25	56
Post-Test	Male	32.79	8.27	42
	Female	35.80	8.35	56



Graph 3: Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores by Gender

Table 4: Participant Distribution by Gender and Grade

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	42.86
	Female	56	57.14
Grade	4 th	58	59.18
	1 st	40	40.82



Graph 4: Participant Distribution by Gender and Grade

4. Results

4.1 Findings

Pre-test and post-test scores: There was noticeable improvements in learners' pragmatic competence after the analysis. The mean pre-test score was 24.27 (SD = 7.11), while the mean post-test score increased to 34.63 (SD = 8.41), which reflected a mean improvement of 10.36 points.

Table 5: Pre- test and test score

Test	Mean(M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum (Min)	Maximum (Max)
Pre – Test	24.27	7.11	10	39
Post – Test	34.63	8.41	13	48

Comparison by grade level:

Table 6: Pre-test and post-test scores by Grade

Grade Level	Pre – test mean (M)	Pre –test SD	Post Test Mean(M)	Post Test SD
4 th	25.53	7.05	37.15	7.86
1 st	22.26	6.82	30.66	7.76

The statistical analysis (t- test) confirmed that there was a significance difference ($p < 0.001$), which indicated more advanced learners benefited from this intervention.

Comparison by gender:

Table 7: Pre- test and Post- test scores by Gender

Gender	Pre- Test mean (M)	Pre-Test SD	Post-test mean(M)	Post – Test SD
Male	23.16	6.84	32.79	8.27
Female	24.97	7.25	35.80	8.35

Here, there was no significant difference observed between male and female learners in post- test performance ($p = 0.084$)

4.2 Summary of Results

It turned out that improving students' pragmatic competence correlated most with learner-centered activities. Through active and team learning, students gained basic language skills, such as the contextual communication, the use of politeness strategy, and applying speech acts on certain occasions.

Contribution of Learner-Centered Activities

Through its interactive and task-based framework, the learner-centered approach was successful in developing pragmatic competence because it brought several benefits together. That approach had one of the main features of simulating real-life scenarios. Roleplaying activities provided students an opportunity to practice pragmatic skills in real-world contexts, bridging the gap between our classroom learning and every day-spoken communication. The above activities involved peer collaboration in which learners engage and take part, brought together negating meaning, solving puzzles and putting them into action in a variety of social contexts.

In addition, the learning centered approach assisted the learner to be autonomous and confident. This method infused students in the middle of the learning process, allowing them to control their

learning progress. Students then felt more comfortable using English pragmatically, as a result, which brings forward the influence of the approach to language development. The findings show learner centered activities are critical in developing students' pragmatic competence. Specializing in interactive, real world oriented learning experiences, students not only get better at the language they are learning; but build the confidence and autonomy required to communicate.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Results

The study showed that a Learner-centered approach has significant benefits to Kurdish EFL Learners' pragmatic competence with emphasizes on active participation, real-life scenarios and self-directed learning. Integrating these techniques (role plays, peer collaboration and task based learning) Learners developed vital skills in speech acts, politeness strategies and contextual language use, which lead to greater autonomy and confidence in English communication.

This research has showed that comparing Learner-centered approach to traditional methods, indicated that students exposed to interactive, student driven teaching, demonstrated a 10.36 mean point improvement in pragmatic competence, where as those following conventional, grammar based instruction showed minimal progress. However, there were noticeable gains from 4th Year students, suggesting that learners with foundational language proficiency integrate skills more effectively. Furthermore, while both gender showed comparable improvements, the overall results suggested that traditional teacher centered methods fail to cultivate vital pragmatic skills, thereby reinforcing the necessity of a communicative and contextualized learning environment for Kurdish EFL students

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this study agree with the trends in learner centered EFL methods as reported in the global research. Previous studies, such as Taguchi (2018), for instance, on Japanese EFL learners have shown that role plays and real world simulations are powerful means of developing pragmatic competence. Likewise, DeKeyser (2007) pointed out that task based learning makes communication meaningful. With the Kurdish context, this research expands these insights into cultural and systemic challenges that merge the Kurdish learning experience. House (2022), study emphasizes how approaches focused on the learner are also indispensable for navigating diverse

social landscapes, as it does. Yet, it also contributes to the information within the discourse by discussing how Kurdish learners experiencing different sociolinguistic barriers.

However, most studies seem to bring linguistic competence only into consideration, hence, this research marries culture, pedagogy, and developing pragmatic skills. It addresses real-world challenges to implementation, such as large class sizes and resource constraints, and offers practical advice for adapting learner-centered solutions to resource-constrained contexts. This is a valuable contribution to the accumulating research to support a learner-centered EFL pedagogy from a nuanced perspective. These findings strengthen the broader relevance of learner-centered techniques and persuade tailored approaches to underrepresented contexts like Kurdish EFL classrooms. This study represents a practical advance in language pedagogical practices by offering meaningful data on more inclusive and effective language pedagogical practices.

5.2 Implications for EFL Teaching in Kurdish Contexts

The article helps to suggest the use of pragmatic focused, learner centered activities in Kurdish EFL classrooms. It refers to the use of role-plays and simulations using authentic materials, peer collaboration, explicit instruction on pragmatic points, reflective feedback and task based learning. Content is also customized for basic, guided activities for beginners within the app, and advanced activities for experts using the app. Including cultural sensitivity, for instance, should come along with comparisons of politeness strategy in English and Kurdish. Use materials and mobile technology to address resource limitations. They can scaffold, though, in mixed ability classes. Therefore, with all these steps in mind, implementing learner-centered, pragmatic focused approaches in foreign language teaching in Kurdish classrooms could support students to communicate in 'real-world situations with confidence and with cultural sensitivity.

5.3 Challenges of Implementation

Kurdish EFL learners face unique challenges because of the differing communication styles of Kurdish and English cultures. These differences should be the focus of lessons to help address and raise awareness of them. With apps that learn your language and virtual exchanges with native speakers, your line on the dotted line a limited exposure to the real-life spoken English. A smoother process can be created by using low to no cost, most creative engagements (role-plays scripts, peer led activities) to work around resource limitations. Teachers require new instructional skills and a mindset change in order to adopt learner-centered pedagogy. Professional development

programs focusing on learner-centered strategies enable teachers to gain new skills. Gradual implementation can ease resistance to change. Differentiated instructional methods with collaborative learning strategies address the needs of students with varying abilities in diverse classrooms. Adopting learner-centered pedagogy in Kurdish classrooms faces challenges, which are being addressed by supplying essential training, and resources that allow teachers to implement this approach, leading to better pragmatic competence and dynamic learning environments.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings

The findings of this study examines how learner centered approaches in Kurdish EFL classrooms scaffold pragmatic competence. The study showed that learners improved in their ability to produce speech acts and use politeness strategies and language.

6.2 Contributions to EFL Research

Pragmatic competence research in Kurdish contexts has had a gap, and this study attempts to fill this gap by investigating such pragmatic skills as speech acts, politeness strategies and contextual language use. It examines the sociocultural and systemic difficulties that Kurdish learners encounter teacher centered pedagogy and limited experience with authentic English interaction. In addition, the research contributes to understand learners' participation, autonomy, and application to real-world situations, as part of the EFL learner centered pedagogy. The study shows how pedagogy for different proficiency levels and cultural backgrounds could be adapted for learner centeredness, with practical implications for these adaptations to various EFL contexts.

6.3 Future Research Directions

Based on the research there is a need for continued research to analyze the effect of learner centered designed environments on the pragmatic competence in the long term. Analyzing this will reveal what determines persisting pragmatic abilities and their impact on wider results, such as self-assurance and intercultural competence. Meeting the outcomes of this research can offer a comparative analysis of the learner-centered teaching methods across various sociocultural contexts, for example rural African societies, Southeast Asia classrooms and indigenous language learners. Moreover, while the study would uncover general principles of learner-centered teaching, it would find that specific adaptations enhance educational effectiveness in different settings. It

would facilitate the development of inclusive, contextual suitable strategies for communicative competence development in EFL education in different parts of the world.

REFERENCES

1. Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamentals of language testing*. Prentice Hall.
2. Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: A research agenda for acquisitional pragmatics. *Language Learning*, 49(Supplement 1), 677–713.
3. Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2001). Evaluating the empirical evidence: Grounds for instruction in pragmatics? *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*, 13(1), 13–32.
4. Basturkmen, H. (2015). *Developing courses in English for specific purposes*. Palgrave Macmillan.
5. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1–47.
7. DeKeyser, R. (2007). *Practice in a second language: Perspectives from applied linguistics and cognitive psychology*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford University Press.
9. House, J. (2022). *The pragmatics of English as a lingua franca*. Cambridge University Press.
10. Kasper, G. (2001). Four perspectives on L2 pragmatic development. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(4), 502–530.
11. Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Blackwell.
12. Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes: Implications for international communication and English language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
13. Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.

14. Lantolf, J. P. (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford University Press.
15. Nunan, D. (1988). *The learner-centered curriculum: A study in second language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
16. Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
17. Rose, K. R. (2005). On the effects of instruction in second language pragmatics. *System*, 33(3), 385–399.
18. Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
19. Spratt, M., Humphreys, G., & Chan, V. (2002). Autonomy and motivation: Which comes first? *Language Teaching Research*, 6(3), 245–266.
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1362168802lr106oa>
20. Swan, M., & Smith, B. (2001). *Learner English: A teacher's guide to interference and other problems*. Cambridge University Press.
21. Taguchi, N. (2011). Teaching pragmatics: Trends and issues. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 289–310.
22. Taguchi, N. (2011). *Pragmatic competence: The case of Japanese learners of English*. Springer.
23. Taguchi, N. (2018). Contexts and pragmatics learning: Problems and opportunities of the study abroad research. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 124–137.
24. Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.