

Production of Advice Speech Act by Non-Native Speakers of English: The Case of Kurdish EFL Learners

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Abstract

Speech act studies are commonly used in Second Language Acquisition research to assess second language learners' pragmatic skills. Contrary to other speech acts, the speech act of offering advice has not been sufficiently studied and has not been a topic of cross-cultural or cross-linguistic research either, particularly among Kurdish EFL learners. The study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of the advice speech act as expressed by Kurdish EFL learners and native English speakers. Thus, the study looked at the proficiency of Kurdish EFL users in selecting appropriate pragmatic expressions during the act of providing advice and discernible differences between male and female learners regarding the degree of (in)directness while advice is offered. Hence, the study included 82 undergraduate students from various universities in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, particularly in Erbil. This group consisted of 42 females and 40 males, all majoring in English Language Teaching. Additionally, 30 native English speakers also took part in the research. Data collection was conducted through a 12-item discourse completion test, and the collected data were subsequently subjected to analysis using SPSS. The results unveiled a significant difference between Kurdish EFL learners and native speakers. It figured out that Kurdish EFL learners are not quite aware of the social power and social distance of interlocutors while giving advice. Additionally, it was indicated that female learners are more indirect in offering advice than their male counterparts. Moreover, the findings also unearthed a visible indication of first language pragmatic transfer, though it was not a variable of the study.

Keywords: cross-cultural communication, offering advice, pragmatic competence, speech acts, Kurdish EFL learners

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Introduction

The subject of pragmatic competence, particularly over the past two decades, has emerged as a prominent area of focus within the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) research. Pragmatics involves examining language through the lens of its practitioners, specifically focusing on the choices they exercise, the obstacles they encounter in social communication, and the repercussions their linguistic choices exert on the individuals engaged in the exchange of information (Crystal, 1997). Furthermore, Barron (2003) delineated it as an understanding of the linguistic tools employed within a language to convey specific meanings within a particular context. This comprehension extends to the intricacies of speech acts and encompasses a familiarity with how the linguistic resources of a given language are applied in various contextual scenarios. Taking this into account, mastering the pragmatic rules is of utmost importance for successful and appropriate communication (speaking & comprehension) in each situation for the learners. Yet previously, the aim of teaching a second language was only proficiency in linguistic rules. Back in 1971, when the concept of “communicative competence” proposed by Hymes, i.e., the practice of teaching second languages underwent a significant shift in emphasis from grammatical competence to communicative competence because of the learners’ knowledge and awareness of linguistic and sociocultural rules in a spoken language. Hymes’ theory suggests that the aim of teaching a second language should not only enable learners to use the language accurately, but it should also teach them how to use the language appropriately.

Undoubtedly, for individuals aspiring to achieve communicative competence in a second language, it becomes apparent that they must go beyond mere vocabulary and grammar proficiency, which, as pointed out by Olshtain and Cohen (1991), are crucial but not comprehensive. Equally vital is their acquisition of an understanding of the social and contextual dimensions that underpin the English language, as emphasized by Uso-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2008). This knowledge holds considerable importance not only in effective intercultural communication but also in bridging cultural divides, as noted by White (1993). In this regard, in the process of second/foreign language teaching it is imperative to give adequate importance to pragmatic competence and the underlying factors in pragmatics. An absence of pragmatic competence may lead to problems for second language learners trying to accomplish certain speech acts, which refer to a combination of individual speech acts that are performed together (Murphy & Neu, 1996). Pragmatic competence is understood as “the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes in the speaker’s utterance” (Fraser, 1983, p. 29).

However, as of now, here in the Iraqi Kurdistan region, pragmatic competence has been taken for granted., the process of teaching a second/foreign language in Kurdish contexts is the mastery of lexicon and linguistic rules. Very little or sometimes no attention is given to pragmatic competence. Hence, due to the above discussions, it becomes clear that such pragmatic factors are essential for successful communication. In this line, the principal objective of this investigation was to undertake a comprehensive comparative analysis, elucidating the nuances and variations in the execution of the speech act of offering advice between Kurdish EFL learners and individuals who are native speakers of English. This study holds significance in contributing to a deeper understanding of cross-cultural pragmatics and language acquisition, shedding light on how learners from distinct linguistic backgrounds adapt to the nuanced conventions of advice-giving in English. Furthermore, the findings may have practical implications for language instruction and intercultural communication, potentially enhancing the pedagogical strategies employed in

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Hence, this current research endeavors to explore and tackle the subsequent inquiries:

1. How proficient are Kurdish EFL learners in selecting suitable pragmatic expressions when engaging in the act of providing advice?
2. To what degree does the execution of the speech act of offering advice differ between Kurdish EFL learners and individuals who are native English speakers?
3. What are the discernible differences in the degree of directness or indirectness employed by male and female EFL learners when engaging in the speech act of offering advice?

Literature Review

Speech Acts – The Study of Speaker Meaning

Among the pragmatic aspects, speech acts, as it is related to sociocultural and sociolinguistic knowledge, play the most important role in successful and appropriate communication. As stated by Levinson (1983), speech acts received the most attention among all other issues related to the theory of language use. This aspect of language use has not only been investigated in linguistics and sociolinguistics, but it has also been studied in many other fields, like psychology, philosophy, and anthropology; each of which from their own point of view. Philosopher Austin (1962) initially introduced the theory of speech acts, which was subsequently advanced by Searle (1969).

According to Austin (1962), speech acts encompass statements made by speakers that convey meaning and induce specific actions from the listeners. He also suggests that speech acts primarily serve as a means to implement various functions through language. Austin (1962) indicates that people perform three different kinds of acts when speaking:

- (a) Locutionary acts, which are the literal meanings of the utterances that we use. Therefore, it is the basic act of utterance or producing a meaningful linguistic expression.
- (b) Illocutionary acts, which is the intention that we have as speakers or the effect that our utterances have on hearers. The illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of an utterance, like the act of making a bet, a promise, an offer, etc. by applying the force carried within the performatives, either directly or indirectly.
- (c) Perlocutionary acts, which are the results that are created through our illocution acts.

For example:

When someone says “*It is very hot here*” the speaker is uttering certain words (locutionary act), and he wants to convey a certain meaning (intended meaning) (illocutionary act) For example, this could entail expressing a desire for someone to open a window or perhaps indicating a preference for activating the air conditioner. Finally, (perlocutionary act) is the effect or realization of the intended meaning of the utterance on the addressee (listener) that may result in the “opening or turning on the air conditioner” (Austin 1975, p. 10).

Speech acts have been categorized and classified by different researchers and theories, yet the most notable one is Searle’s classification (1979):

Representatives: Involve the speaker’s varying levels of commitment to the truth of a statement, which can be exemplified by terms such as *affirm, believe, conclude, and report*.

Directives: Encompass instances where the speaker endeavors to accomplish an action, such as *asking, challenging, commanding, and making requests*.

Commissive: Pertain to situations where the speaker is, to varying extents, dedicated to a particular course of action. This commitment can be exemplified through actions like *betting*, *guaranteeing*, *pledging*, *promising*, and *swearing*.

Expressive: Involve the speaker in conveying their attitude or feelings regarding a certain situation. This is evident in actions such as *apologizing*, *deploring*, *expressing gratitude*, and *extending a welcome*.

Declarations: Involve the speaker in changing the existing situation through their statement, such as when they say *I resign*, *you're offside*, *I announce*, *I declare*, or *I name*.

Moreover, according to Briner (2013) the notion of speech acts theory is “To utter something—either orally or in writing—is to do something; the act of speaking is, first and foremost, an act” (p. 175). As a result, speech acts are kind of what makes language function; without speech acts, language only describes truth and falsehood, but with them, language enables us to control and alter our reality using words. Speech act theory allows one to look at language not only as a device for communication but also as an instrument of action.

Speech acts can be found in all languages, but the contexts and understanding of such acts vary between diverse cultures. For instance, some of them are used more widely than others; several of them are only used by certain groups of people and in different domains.

The use of speech acts is mainly based on social conventions (Kasper & Rose, 2002); therefore, EF learners should have enough awareness and possess a good knowledge of speech act theory to communicate appropriately in the target language.

The Speech Act of Advice

In Searle’s taxonomy of speech acts offering advice is a directive act in which it requires the addressee to perform an action that is to his benefit. That is, despite being a directive act, to direct someone to do something, but is for the good of the hearer and not an obligation or an imperative. For instance, utterances like “I advise you to read every day” or “You should read every day” both carry an interest to the hearer since reading every day would lead to success. However, the second utterance is in the form of an imperative still it indicates some advice in a certain context. Contrary to common perception, Searle (1969) posits that advice should not be regarded as a form of request. Consequently, it is worthwhile to examine *advise* in relation to *urge*, *advocate*, and *recommend*, discerning their distinctions. In contradistinction to *persuasion*, which aims to convince one to take a specific action, giving advice does not have this objective. Instead, offering advice is more akin to guiding someone toward what is most beneficial for them. It is important to note that, unlike some other types of speech acts, the act of giving advice has not received thorough investigation. Though, it has been studied, not sufficiently, from a cross-cultural perspective (e.g., Altman 1990; Flor, 2003; Wierzbicka, 1991; Hu & Grove 1991; Hinkel, 1994, 1997; Kasper & Zhang, 1995), yet, within the field of interlanguage pragmatics it has not been examined even to that extent. Recent studies have started to delve deeper into these aspects. For instance, Smith (2021) conducted a cross-cultural analysis of advice-giving in English and Mandarin Chinese, revealing notable distinctions in terms of directness and indirectness in which English speakers tend to use more direct forms, such as imperatives and explicit recommendations, while Mandarin Chinese speakers employed indirect strategies, such as suggestions and hedging, to convey advice. Additionally, Lee and Kim (2020) explored the influence of social power dynamics on advice-seeking behavior in Korean culture, shedding light on how hierarchical relationships affect receptiveness to advice. In other words, the results

indicated that social power dynamics, such as hierarchical relationships and status differences, significantly impact advice-seeking behavior in Korean culture. Individuals tended to seek advice more readily from those perceived as higher in social status or authority figures.

As per Kasper (1992), Interlanguage pragmatics pertains to a domain within the realm of second-language inquiry. It is concerned with elucidating how individuals, who are not native speakers of a language, come to understand and interpret linguistic interactions within the target language. Additionally, it explores the way these individuals acquire knowledge of the pragmatic aspects of a second language. However, within the realm of interlanguage pragmatics, the examination of advice-giving remains relatively underexplored. Thus, this study intends to bridge this gap. Nevertheless, there have been recent efforts to bridge this gap. Liu and Wang (2022) conducted a study investigating how non-native English speakers navigate the intricacies of offering advice in English, shedding light on the acquisition of pragmatic competence in a second language. The study reveals that cultural norms and values from the speakers' native languages may persist in their advice-giving behavior. This highlights the importance of intercultural awareness and adaptation.

Moreover, what is of paramount importance and continues to be a matter of critical concern is the way advice is offered. The speech act of offering advice, like many other speech act types, is culturally sensitive, with each culture possessing its distinct understanding and form of delivering advice. The degree of directness or indirectness in giving advice is influenced by cultural norms, social distance, power dynamics, and the specific situational context. Recent studies by Kim et al. (2019) and Garcia and Hernandez (2020) have examined the cultural variations in advice-giving strategies, particularly focusing on the use of hedging and indirect speech in English and Spanish contexts. These studies underscore the significance of considering cultural and contextual factors in the act of offering advice. Furthermore, contemporary research by Wang and Chen (2021) has delved into the complexities of advice-giving in virtual communication environments, exploring how digital platforms influence the dynamics of advice exchange. Brown and Levinson (1987) state that advice offered even in a normal tone might be face-threatening act. Therefore, hedging and indirect speech are frequently used in conjunction with this speech act in English. In this sense, culture, social distance, power, and imposition of the specific situation influence the degree of imposition. In this line, Hinkel (1997) underlines the intricacies of dispensing advice as a multifaceted speech act, emphasizing the need for a cautious approach. When offering advice, it is vital to consider the listener's receptiveness, employ implicit communication to avoid causing discomfort and leverage the perceived authority of the speaker.

Method

For this study, a quantitative research design was used. The idea of utilizing this design came naturally as it was best to address the research objectives and answer the research questions.

Participants

The objectives of the study required the inclusion of two groups of participants. Initially, given the cross-cultural nature of this research, the study involved 82 undergraduate students majoring in English Language Teaching (ELT) from various universities in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region-Erbil, in the academic years 2022-2023, consisting of 42 females and 40 males. Additionally, 30 native English speakers residing in different English-speaking nations were

included in the study. The selection of participants employed a random sampling method, meaning that individuals who voluntarily chose to participate were included.

Research Instruments

In this study, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) served as the primary instrument for data collection. The DCT, specifically designed to simulate real-life scenarios, necessitated respondents to offer advice in response to these contextual situations. DCTs have their own advantages, especially in interlanguage pragmatic studies. The administration of DCT is easy; it enables the researcher to collect a large amount of data in a short period of time. In this line, Olshtain (1993) stated that DCTs provide researchers with a means of controlling for various variables and forming the variances statistically which are significant in tralinguistically as well as cross-culturally. Additionally, according to Kasper (2000), a DCT is a useful tool for gathering data when the goal of the study is to learn about speakers' pragmalinguistic knowledge of the tactics and linguistic forms they can use to carry out communicative acts as well as their socio-pragmatic knowledge of the contextual factors that influence which tactics and linguistic choices are appropriate.

The DCT was designed and developed by the researcher, and it consisted of 16 situations. The concept of crafting a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) arose from the aim of enhancing cultural relevance within the scenarios, thus facilitating the acquisition of more dependable and sincere responses. Furthermore, in a pursuit to validate and align the questionnaire appropriately, the researcher sought input from several EFL professors and native speakers. Then, before the final distribution of the tool a pilot study was carried out and based on the results of the pilot study some amendments were made to the wording of the items. The final draft was administered to the first group of ELT students, and it was sent to the second group (native speakers) via email.

Data Analysis

To classify and organize the data gathered, the researcher employed the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). This framework, known for its reliability and validity, has been widely adopted by numerous researchers (e.g., Lwanga-Lumu, 2002; Wouk, 2006). Within the CCSARP framework for advising strategies, there exist nine distinct expressions, grouped into three primary categories: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect. To evaluate the pragmatic appropriateness of the generated advice speech acts, a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 to 4) was employed. Then, after coding the collected data according to the taxonomy, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized. A comprehensive delineation of advice-offering strategies, categorized by varying degrees of directness, can be explicated as follows:

Direct Offering Advice

This strategy encompasses the following sub-strategies:

Mood Derivable: In this approach, the verb's mood assumes a commanding tone, exemplified by phrases such as: *Cease smoking due to its adverse health effects.*

Performative: This tactic explicitly conveys the illocutionary intent, as in the statement, *"I am formally requesting that you discontinue smoking due to..."*

Hedging expressions: For instance, *"I would like to ask you to stop smoking because..."*

Obligation Statement: Utterances that specify the responsibility of the listener to carry out the desired task, for instance, *"You must cease smoking due to..."*

Want Statement: These expressions convey the speaker's aspiration for the listener to adhere to the request, as exemplified by the phrase, "I sincerely desire that you discontinue smoking, considering its adverse effects on well-being."

Conventionally Indirect Offering

This degree of expression is typically conveyed using the following tactics:

Suggestory Formula: Expressions carrying suggestions, such as "How about stopping smoking? I heart that smoking is really bad for health".

Preparatory Condition: Utterances that incorporate references to preparatory conditions. For instance, "Could you stop smoking?".

Non-Conventionally Indirect Offering Advice

This level contains the below strategies:

Strong Hint: These utterances provide partial references to elements essential for action implementation, as seen in the phrase, "Each instance of smoking seriously damages your lungs and consequently shortens your lifespan."

Mild Hint: Statements that do not overtly reference advice but are discernible as such within the appropriate context, as exemplified by the phrase, "Emulate the Pope" (implying the Pope's abstention from smoking).

Results

To address the first research question, (*To what extent are KEFLUS able to choose the appropriate pragmatic forms in performing the speech acts of advice?*) the pragmatic appropriacy and acceptability in the NL standards of the produced speech acts of both groups based on a rubric grading from 1-4 were assessed. Then the mean of both groups was compared to depict the difference. As depicted in Table and Figure One, the data reveals a notable disparity in the proficiency of Kurdish EFL learners when it comes to the production of speech acts related to giving advice. In particular, the average score tallies up to 26.65 out of a possible 48, accompanied by a standard deviation of 9.167. The range spans from a minimum score of 16 to a maximum of 41. On the other side, native English speakers, as expected, display a significantly higher degree of proficiency when it comes to delivering advice. They achieved an average score of 41.90 out of 48, with a standard deviation of 4.581. Their scores fluctuate between a minimum of 39 and a flawless 48. These outcomes unmistakably underscore a profound disparity between the two groups.

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics for DCT*

Learner Types	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Std. Error Difference	Df.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Native S.	30	41.90	4.581	.836	1.752	111	8.3715	99.771
Kurdish S.	82	26.65	9.167	1.006				

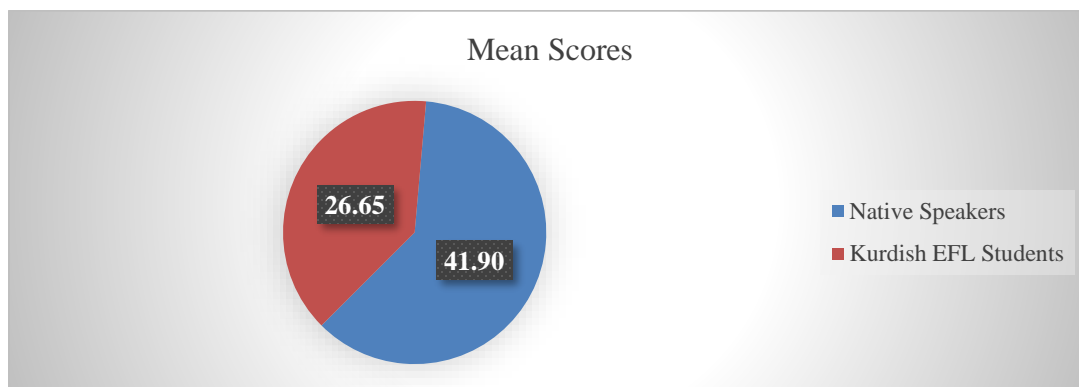


Figure 1. Appropriacy of the mean scores of the Kurdish and native speakers

Concerning the second research inquiry (namely, *the extent of differentiation in the execution of speech acts involving offering advice between Kurdish EFL learners and native English speakers*), the amassed dataset underwent scrutiny via the CCSARP classification. This meticulous examination of the data led to the emergence of the subsequent frequency patterns and categorizations. As can be seen from Table and Figure Two Kurdish EFL learners used direct strategies the most (67.17%). Subsequently, conventionally indirect tactics come next in frequency (25.3%), with non-conventionally indirect approaches being employed to a lesser extent (7.52%). In contrast, native English speakers exhibited a lower utilization of direct methods (23.88%), a predominant reliance on conventionally indirect strategies (49.16%), and a comparatively minor utilization of non-conventionally indirect techniques (26.94%).

Table 2. Advice speech act offering frequency by native speakers of English and Kurdish EFL learners

Levels of directness	Strategy	Native Speakers		Kurdish-EFL	
		No.	%	No.	%
Direct	Mood	30	8.33%	317	32.21%
	Performative	21	5.83%	60	6.09%
	Hedge	18	5%	51	5.18%
	Obligation	7	1.94%	220	22.35%
	Want	10	2.77%	13	1.32%
Conventionally indirect	Suggestion	88	24.44%	60	6.09%
	Preparatory	89	24.72%	189	19.20%
Non-Conventionally indirect	Strong hint	63	17.5%	61	6.19%
	Mild hint	34	9.44%	13	1.32%
Total		360	100%	984	100%

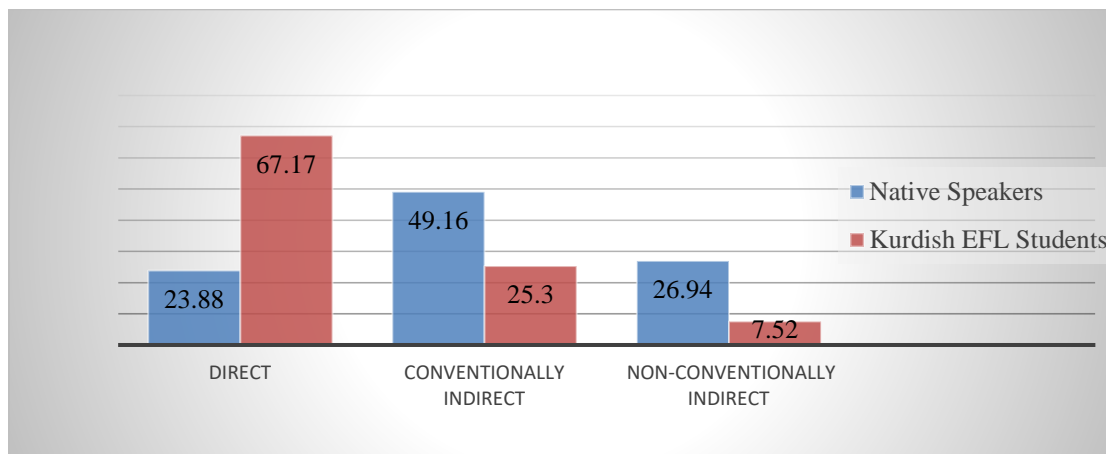


Figure 2. Frequency of offering speech acts of advice by native speakers and Kurdish EFL learners.

Concerning the third research question, (*Is there a significant difference between male and female EFL learners concerning the degree of (in)directness of offering advice speech act?*) the results indicated a significant discrepancy between the two groups. As depicted in Table and Figure Three, it becomes evident that female students exhibited a preference for employing less direct speech acts, accounting for 48.21% of their communication, in contrast to their male peers who leaned more towards direct speech acts, representing 87.8% of their expressions. When it comes to conventionally indirect approaches, Kurdish female learners surpassed their male counterparts, with 40.7% utilizing such strategies, whereas the male learners adopted these conventional indirect approaches less frequently at 9.79%. Similarly, female learners displayed a greater inclination toward non-conventional indirect strategies, accounting for 11.7%, while male learners employed these strategies less frequently, at 3.12%.

Table 3. Male and female learners' discrepancies in offering advice speech acts

Levels of directness	Strategy	Female		Male	
		No.	%	No.	%
Direct	Mood	109	21.62%	208	43.33%
	Performative	23	4.56%	37	7.70%
	Hedge	9	1.78%	42	8.75%
	Obligation	95	18.84%	125	26.04%
	Want	7	1.38%	6	1.25%
Conventionally indirect	Suggestion	51	10.11%	9	1.87%
	Preparatory	151	29.96%	38	7.91%
Non-Conventionally indirect	Strong hint	48	9.52%	13	2.70%
	Mild hint	11	2.18%	2	0.41%
Total		504	100%	480	100%

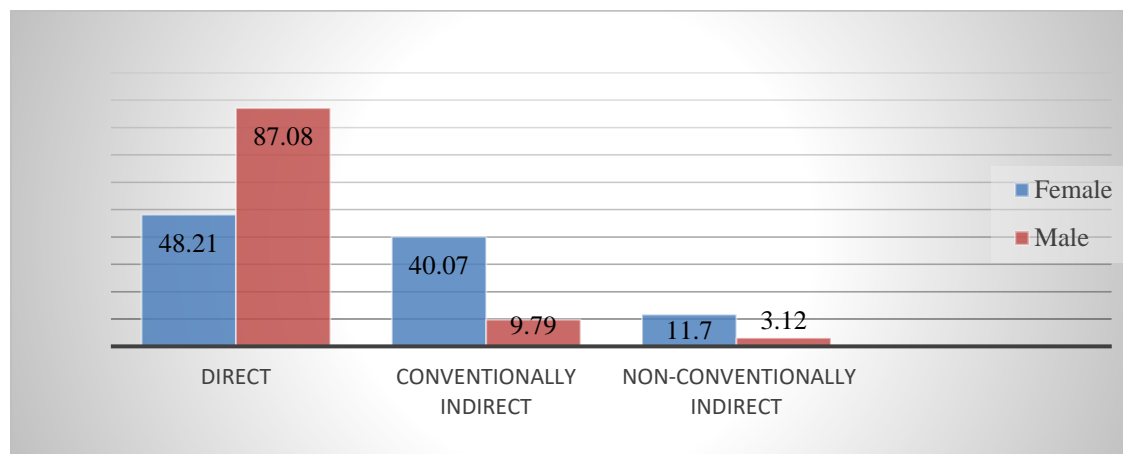


Figure 3. Kurdish male and female learners (in)directness frequency

Discussion

The research on advice speech acts among Kurdish EFL learners has yielded several noteworthy findings. Primarily, the study demonstrated that the Kurdish participants exhibited variations in their use of advice-giving strategies compared to native speakers of English, particularly in terms of directness and indirectness. English speakers tended to employ indirect strategies more frequently, whereas Kurdish speakers favored direct approaches. This finding resonates with research by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) in which they found that language learners often transfer speech act strategies from their native language to the target language. These distinctions in pragmatic usage likely stem from fundamental differences in the cultural and societal foundations of the English and Kurdish languages. This suggests that language learners need explicit instruction in the pragmatic conventions of their target language to achieve effective and culturally appropriate communication.

Furthermore, the study unveiled gender-related differences in advice-giving behavior among Kurdish learners. Female participants displayed a preference for indirect strategies, aligning with broader cultural norms prevalent in Middle Eastern societies. These norms often emphasize politeness, modesty, and subtlety in communication. In contrast, male participants exhibited a higher inclination toward direct strategies. These gender-based variations underline the importance of considering sociocultural factors when exploring pragmatic competence in language learners. This result is in line with that of Holmes (2000) exploring gender and politeness strategies across different cultures and languages, highlighting how gender roles and societal expectations influence communication styles.

Additionally, the study highlighted the impact of learners' native languages on their advice-giving patterns. This underscores the need for language instructors to be aware of the potential influence of learners' mother tongues on their pragmatic performance in a second language. This claim could be supported by the finding of Kasper and Rose (2002) emphasizing the importance of considering the role of learners' first languages in shaping learners' interlanguage pragmatic development. Similarly, Rose (1994) explored pragmatic transfer in interlanguage development, emphasizing learners' first language in shaping their pragmatic competence in a second language.

In light of these findings, it is evident that greater attention should be devoted to pragmatic competence in English language teaching, alongside traditional emphasis on grammatical

competence. ELT and EFL programs should incorporate explicit instruction on pragmatics, considering cultural variations, gender-related preferences, and the influence of native languages. Effective pragmatic competence is essential for learners to engage in cross-cultural communication successfully, ensuring their interactions are respectful, appropriate, and culturally sensitive. In this line, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) delved into the speech act of giving advice and identified that language learners often encounter challenges in appropriating advice-giving strategies from their native language to the target language. Ultimately, the present findings contribute to our understanding of the complex interplay between language, culture, and pragmatic competence in second language acquisition.

Conclusion

The speech act of advice serves as a vital means for individuals to offer recommendations, guidance, or solutions to others, aiding them in decision-making and problem-solving processes. Dispensing advice necessitates careful consideration of numerous factors, including the recipient's needs, perspectives, situational context, and the interpersonal rapport between the speaker and the listener. Equally important is the avoidance of undue imposition on the recipient, particularly in cross-cultural communication scenarios. Respectful and considerate advice delivery is essential, as advice given thoughtlessly or inappropriately can be perceived as intrusive or unwanted. Research in cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage studies has consistently shown that second-language learners' pragmatic competence significantly influences their ability to comprehend and produce pragmatic expressions in a second language (Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996).

This study aimed to explore the production of advice speech acts among Kurdish EFL university learners and compare them with the norms of native speakers of English, specifically in terms of (in)directness. The research was framed as a cross-cultural investigation. Among various strategies, participants most frequently employed query preparatory strategies for offering advice. However, English speakers tended to use indirect strategies more frequently, while Kurdish speakers favored direct strategies. Overall, the findings indicated that Kurdish EFL learners demonstrated a lower level of pragmatic appropriacy in their use of advice speech acts. This observation does not suggest a lack of politeness in Kurdish communication but rather reflects inherent sociocultural differences between the English and Kurdish languages.

Additionally, the study revealed gender-based variations in advice-giving strategies among Kurdish learners. Female learners displayed a preference for predominantly indirect means of offering advice compared to their male counterparts. This preference may be linked to cultural tendencies within Middle Eastern societies, where females often exhibit shyness, introversion, and a heightened sensitivity to politeness nuances. Moreover, an analysis of the data highlighted the influence of the learners' native languages on their advice-giving behavior. Consequently, these findings underscore the need for greater emphasis on the teaching and development of pragmatic skills, particularly within the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs. While grammatical competence often receives priority, pragmatic competence is equally crucial. These findings emphasize that a prominent level of grammatical competence does not guarantee parallel high levels of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996).

Pedagogical Implications

The outcomes have potential implications for L2 educators, curriculum developers, textbook authors, and educational policymakers, as well as EFL/ESL learners. The methodical and strategic pedagogical approach can facilitate the acquisition of the communicative and practical proficiencies essential for pragmatic competence (Barzani et al., 2021). It is noteworthy that linguistic proficiency no longer holds exclusive sway in ESL/EFL classrooms. Instead, emphasis must be placed on instilling pragmatic competence, an appreciation for cultural values inherent in the target language, an understanding that communication is not always overt, recognition of the significance of contextual cues, and awareness of suprasegmental elements. Furthermore, learners should receive guidance regarding both linguistic and non-linguistic disparities between their native language and the target language to mitigate undesirable mother tongue interference. Lastly, in conjunction with explicit instruction, it is imperative to expose EFL learners to authentic materials.

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