

# Efficacy of Teaching Pragmatic Aspects on Improving Undergraduate English Major Students' Conversational Skills and Expressive Abilities in Authentic Situations

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## Abstract

This study aimed to highlight the effectiveness of teaching pragmatic aspects on the undergraduate students' conversational skills and expressive abilities in authentic situations at Al-a-lBayt University in Jordan. The participants consisted of 61 undergraduate English major students randomly chosen from two sections (182 students) registered for Speaking Skills Course during the second semester in 2015/2016. They were divided into two groups; the experimental (31) was taught pragmatic speech acts and dialogues that allowed them to speak pragmatically in an authentic and educational context, while the control (30) was taught using the speaking skills textbook. A pre-post test was administered for both groups. Scores were tabulated for statistical analysis. A quantitative approach was applied to determine if teaching pragmatic aspects has any effect on the participants' communicative competence. The study also attempted to find out which pragmatic aspects of language functions (apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal) the participants developed the most. Besides, it tried to observe which expressive ability the participants improved the most (introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing or arguing) due to the effect of teaching pragmatic aspects. The findings revealed that there were significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group in favor of the experimental group due to doing activities on pragmatic aspects. The results also indicated that teaching dialogues offered opportunities in the acquisition of pragmatic competence in different situations which has positive effect on the participants' expressive abilities. Accordingly, a set of recommendations were provided for those who are interested in helping students develop their intercultural communicative competence at all levels.

**Keywords:** pragmatic aspects, conversational skills, expressive abilities, authentic situations, intercultural communicative competence.

## 1. Background of the study

Pragmatic competence seems to be as the insightful eye that scrutinizes the speaker's abilities of using the appropriate expressions in authentic situations meaningfully. This competence could not be developed through teaching grammar, vocabulary and linguistics; neither could learners contextually interact in English in academic situations. Currently, learners are used to learning the bare academic language far away from the culture and the intercultural pragmatic context. They sometimes feel embarrassed when they could not respond or react to a cultural situation, especially in cases of being misunderstood where certain expressions should be used. Afterwards, the learners realize that what they have learnt is not what is required in such authentic situations.

Actually, undergraduate English major students are eager to master at least the minimum level of communicating in English appropriately in authentic situations. Furthermore, their instructors, parents and the community around have a promising image of them as they were ranked as superior in communicating in English. Unfortunately, the status of the undergraduates does not approach such expectation due to a number of factors. Of which the most prominent is the absence of practicing pragmatic communicative competence in real life situations.

Learning how to speak the language means relative indulgence in the culture and implicit understanding of the situation so as to produce the language somehow as native speakers. Consequently, EFL methodologists decided to adopt the communicative approach in teaching as a solution to help learners engage in using the language. However, the communicative approach could not come out with better results, either. This does not mean that learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) are reluctant to communicate in English; on the contrary, they are all ears to learn and to accurately respond. Therefore, interested researchers reckoned that developing pragmatic competences could inevitably help learners use the language authentically. ( For example, see: Rueda, 2006; Nguyen, 2005; Rose, 2000; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Kasper, 1996).

Efforts to develop learners' pragmatic competence might not help without enough exposure to interactional speech act events. This is due to the differences between the cultures of the source language and the target language. Some studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996) suggested developing inter-language pragmatics competence through activities. Nevertheless, artificial atmosphere could be applicable if learners acquire the target language at an early age; besides, consistent and continuous exposure to similar activities is essential.

Pragmatic competence involves using social and intercultural communication rather than academic interaction. Although the English major undergraduates at Al-al Bayt University are required to register for 15 credit hours of 5 oral skills courses, 3 credit hours per course ( Study Skills in English Language/ Listening & Speaking/ Pronunciation Practice/ Listening Comprehension/ Speaking Skills), they could not relatively achieve an acceptable level of using pragmatic speech acts in authentic conversational situations. A look at the contents of these courses assures that almost all the instructional materials focus on academic and artificial communication events. The objectives of the Speaking Skills course are to train students to fluently and accurately discuss academic topics, exchange opinions and views of current issues and to orally summarize reading passages. It is obvious that the components and the goals of this course may not develop the learners' pragmatic competence. To tell the truth, the students do not spare any effort in working hard on the other courses so as to pass their exams. These courses are concerned with reading, writing, grammar, literature, criticism, poetry, syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology and translation which focus on gaining knowledge about language and literature. Rarely do these courses give teaching pragmatic aspects weight.

Presumably, this study emerged to trace the effects of teaching pragmatic aspects using pragmatic activities in different context as a quantum leap from an academic theoretical status into an authentic practical context. It may prove a possible progress in this era of addiction on hot proliferation of social media applications.

### *1.1 Statement of the Problem*

It is apparently noticed that teaching speaking skills and functional English in an academic atmosphere has a temporary effect on learners' absorption of expressions and speech acts responses that lasts for a short time. Besides, learners are not aware of the cultural and intercultural aspects of language when they speak, as they try to literary translate from the source language into the target language. In reality, the output of teaching speaking skills in artificial situations is stagnant and useless. Moreover, learners feel embarrassed when they are to respond in an authentic speaking situation. They start to translate word by word to produce any suitable words, where they should easily, simultaneously and smoothly respond. As language does not only communicate meaning, but it also transmits the culture of the civilization. This interprets why EFL learners have difficulty in the usage of language contextually.

Furthermore, a good number of researchers (For example, Kasper and Rose, 2002; Kecskes, 2014; Soboleva and Obdalova, 2014; Ionel, 2011) urged teachers and instructors to develop learners' pragmatic competences through using communicative activities. The classroom teaching environment should be activated through intercultural activities. Through observation of lectures, it is shown that students hate to participate in oral activities. Besides, an atmosphere of shyness, boredom and timidity is overhanging. Moreover, methods of teaching lack updating and authenticity. Hence, there is an urgent need to bring life to the lectures and to try to extend the effect of interactions outside the lectures, too. Learners need change, refreshment, attraction and fun. So, the problem is in the overhanging of the usual routine of monotonous and repetition.

To conclude, the problem of this study emerged from students' bad need to interact in authentic English; and to develop their pragmatic competences and expressive abilities.

### *1.2 Purpose of the study*

The main goal of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of using authentic conversational situations and teaching pragmatic aspects on improving undergraduate English major students' conversational skills and expressive abilities.

### *1.3 Significance of the Study*

Teaching pragmatic aspects in authentic situations and in an active environment may benefit EFL learners to overcome the shyness and timidity on the one hand; and it may improve their expressive conversational skills to chat, interact and engage in speaking situations outside the classroom, on the other hand. The method of using pragmatic interactional aspects may encourage learners to take part in seminars and discussions in a relaxed atmosphere in their daily life, too. At the present time, technology and innovations could have a primary role in enhancing learners to watch you tube videos and access application programs that may develop their expressive competences to engage in speech acts in a natural status.

Instructors and teachers could develop their students' expressive skills through teaching pragmatic activities in authentic conversational situations. They could help their students more if they apply co curricula activities in natural situations.

### *1.4 Questions of the Study*

This study attempted to probe into the following four questions and tried to approach convenient answers

1.Are there any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group at  $\alpha=0.05$  level due to practicing pragmatic aspects (apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting,

thanking or refusal) in authentic situations in the post-test?

2. Which pragmatic aspect of language functions (apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal) do the participants develop most in the post-test due to teaching pragmatic aspects?

3. Are there any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group due to teaching pragmatic aspects to develop students' expressive abilities skills (Introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing and arguing) in the post-test at  $\alpha = 0.05$  level?

4. Which expressive ability skill do the experimental group improve the most (introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing or arguing) due to the effect of teaching pragmatic aspects?

### 1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The following four hypotheses will be verified:

-There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group due to practicing pragmatic aspects (apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal) in authentic situations in the post-test.

-The participants did not develop any pragmatic aspect of the following language functions: Apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal in the post-test due to teaching pragmatic aspects.

-There are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group due to teaching pragmatic aspects to develop students' expressive abilities skills (Introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing and arguing) in the post-test.

-The experimental group students did not improve any of the expressive ability skills (introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing or arguing) due to the effect of teaching pragmatic aspects.

### 1.6 Operational definitions

**Pragmatic aspects:** In this study, this term focuses on pragmatically developing the following language functions: Apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal.

**Pragmatic competence:** refers to EFL undergraduate students' abilities to relatively use English language contextually and authentically.

**Conversational Skills:** refers to the processes of practicing the flowing of language naturally and effortlessly with the other person far away from anxiety and tension.

**Expressive Abilities:** This term is concerned with the undergraduate students' abilities to express their intentions and use authentic expressions in speaking about events and issues where they can express their opinions. Particularly, they should be able to express their opinions in the following situations: Introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing or arguing. Mainly, Expressive abilities include being able to put words together in sentences, use grammar correctly.

**Authentic Situations:** refers to creating realistic communicative circumstances and environments for the students in their educational and extracurricular environmental situations.

**Intercultural communicative competence:** refers to improving students' ability to communicate contextually and pragmatically in English so as to make sense during practicing the conversational activities which focus on acquiring cultural understanding of a combination of speech acts and speech functions.

### 1.7 Limitations of the Study

The size of the sample, the duration of conducting the experiment, the classroom environment, the limited speech acts and functions of the chosen pragmatic aspects and the unavailability of real authentic situations are all limitations of this study. These limitations restrict the possibility of generalizing the results of this paper. Besides, the effect of cross-cultural differences in English and Arabic in situational English could be considered a hindrance of this study due to the students' tendency to make analogy between the source language and the target language.

## 2. Literature Review

In an attempt to trace the processes of the development of pragmatic competences and find links between pragmatic applications and language acquisition, Jung (2002) reviewed a bulk of the literature in English language pragmatic competence acquisition. She classified four categories of pragmatic competence. The review also focused on the role of culture and the effects of the learner's cultural beliefs, values and needs on acquiring a language. In addition to these perspectives, the review recommended a holistic approach that may develop the pragmatic competence in teaching. The review pointed out that teaching pragmatics in an unrealistic situation may put the learner in a conflict trying to come to a compromise between the source culture and the target culture.

Similarly, Kasper (1997) reviewed 10 studies from 1981 to 1997 in which he classified on instructional data-based research the pragmatic aspects which can be taught and which instructional approaches may be most

effective to be used in teaching. The researcher stated the teaching goals and the instructional materials were implemented via conversational activities so as to allow the foreign language learners to pragmatically use the appropriate language. In addition, the researcher included four pragmatic aspects (compliments, apologies, complaints, and refusals) to be practiced by the learners. He also pointed out that there is a research literature on all of these speech acts, that documents how they are performed by native speakers of English in different social contexts. Based on this literature, students were taught the strategies and linguistic forms by which the speech acts are realized according to different contexts of these linguistic forms.

Opposing Kasper's (1997) claims, Ionel (2011) showed her dissatisfaction about the status of non-native speakers of English in learning pragmatic aspects; as she sought for ways and methodologies that might help students to be pragmatically competent in business context. The researcher concluded that pragmatic activities and conversations taught in classes lasted for a short period of time and in reality are completely forgotten after the final tests, since learning for exam purposes are only retained in short term memory.

Additionally, other researchers showed the extent of poorness of the non-native speakers' performance in using pragmatic expressions and speech acts contextually compared with native speakers; for example, Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury (2004), in their analysis of the amount of talk of agreement and disagreement situations, found that learners first started with disagreement then gradually tried to move to the position of agreement in a natural way of speech. Both researchers assured that the overuse of textbooks is not helpful in teaching pragmatics due to the non-authentic speech acts performance. The results of their study confirmed the importance of using natural conversational situations which helped in developing interactional competence and in improving incidental learning. Furthermore, Grossi (2009) exposed her adult students from different backgrounds to ways of using complimenting in Australian English. She collected examples of compliments and responses on greetings, softening a criticism, idiomatic expression within a compliment, rejected compliments, compliments about ability and compliments incorporating sarcasm. The learners' responses indicated poor performance and no reply to some compliments due to cultural differences concerning the settings of speech acts.

To enhance college students' pragmatic competence, Huang (2010) suggested a new interdisciplinary branch of study based on the pragmatic theory and second language acquisition theories. The researcher first introduced the two theories in a persuasive way that indicates the dimensions of the theoretical models and the implications of the pragmatics theory in foreign language teaching. In his paper, he stated five sub-headings that are considered as the core stones of developing teaching pragmatics aspects. They are:"

- A. Enhancing Contrast Eastern and Western Cultures to Enhance Cultural Sensitivity.
- B. Imparting Pragmatic Knowledge to Develop Pragmatic Competence.
- C. Add Selective Courses and Bilingual Courses.
- D. To "Student-centered" to Enhance Student-teacher Interaction.

E. Create a Good Environment for Extra-curricular Language." ( p. 683). The researcher showed that there is an urgent need to enhance and develop learners' communicative skills.

More specifically, Farahian, Rezaee, & Gholami, (2012) attempted to study the efficacy of explicit instruction of refusal at pragmatic level to four types of acts: Invitations, suggestions, offers and requests. The participants were 64 Iranian intermediate university students who were divided into two groups: Experimental and control. The study used the quasi-experimental design as it adopted a pre-posttest design. Data collected by means of written Discourse Completion Test , as well as written self report. The findings were expected to contribute to the interlanguage pragmatic pedagogy that may develop learners' communicative competence.

Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, & Vellenga, (2015) carried out a study on the effect of teaching pragmatic routines used in academic discussion on learners language acquisition, specifically expressions of agreement, disagreement, and clarification. The participants were 26 students assigned as the experimental group and a control group of 11 students. The instructional material consisted of authentic language sample activities. Results of the pretest/ posttest assured that the production of both speech acts and targeted expressions increased significantly in the experimental group, compared with the control group. The results also revealed that teaching pragmatics has positive effect on the use of oral expressions.

Other studies were conducted on comparing the use of various speech acts that involved non-native speakers versus native speakers, such as; **congratulating, thanking and apologizing** (Bataneh, 2013); **requests** (Li, 2012; Romina & Marazita, 2009); **refusals** (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2015; Duan, 2011); **compliments and compliment responses** (Grossi, 2009); **closing a conversation** (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001c); **negative politeness in request** (Romina & Marazita, 2009). The researchers concluded that non-native speakers do not possess sufficient pragmatic competence and that even high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee having high levels of pragmatic competence. Additionally, Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) suggested a variety of ways to promote pragmatic awareness that may enhance classroom discussions.

Another fold of this review of studies, is mainly concerned with the obstacles and difficulties learners face in using their linguistic knowledge. Blum-Kulka (1991) and (Bialystok, 1993) for example, pointed out that learners need to develop their pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic knowledge which are not existing in their

language. This could be tackled by instruction, including exposure to pragmatic realizations and communicative activities where learners can practice using the linguistic knowledge they have acquired. Furthermore, Lin (2008) in his exploratory study discussed and analyzed the causes of pragmatic failure committed by Chinese students in their daily conversations in intercultural communication. Afterwards a set of recommendations were assigned so as to increase and develop the Chinese learners communicative abilities and their pragmatic competence.

To conclude, this review highlighted the importance of teaching pragmatic aspects and classified which speech acts can be taught. It also compared various speech acts that involved non-native speakers vs. native speakers; in addition to studying the causes of difficulties that learners suffer from during the process of acquiring pragmatic speech acts. However, what distinguishes this study from other studies is that it deals with the effect of teaching pragmatic aspects on improving both undergraduate students' conversational skills and their expressive abilities in authentic situations.

### 3. Methods and Procedures

#### 3.1 Population and Sample of the Study:

*The population of this study comprises of all the undergraduate English major students (182 students in two sections) who registered for Speaking Skills Course during the second semester in 2015/2016. The sample of the study consisted of 61 undergraduate English major students randomly chosen from the two sections. They were divided into two groups; the experimental (31) was taught pragmatic speech acts and dialogues that allowed them to speak pragmatically in an authentic and educational context, while the control (30) was taught using the speaking skills textbook. It should be mentioned here that the participants of both groups have registered the 15 credit hours of the oral skills courses which are prerequisites of the Speaking Skills Course.*

#### 3.2 Variables of the Study:

The independent variable of this study is the teaching method which includes teaching the pragmatic aspects through conversations, dialogues and speech acts activities. The dependent variable is the students' scores of both groups in the post test in the pragmatic aspects and their scores in the expressive ability skills.

#### 3.3 Design and Instrument of the Study:

The current study is a quasi- experimental type where a pretest and a posttest of the productive skills (writing and speaking skills) in English for both groups were used. The test is of two sections: A writing skills section asks the students to complete mini-dialogues that require adding expressions of apology, request, inquiry, invitation, thanks and refusal. The speaking skills section includes questions that require oral responses on how to introduce oneself, describe, imagine, comment, criticize and argue on given situations.

#### 3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument:

The test was validated by a team of experts of linguistics and TEFL. To establish its reliability, a test-retest technique was applied on a pilot study was conducted on a pilot group of students. By using Pearson's formula, the correlation coefficient of the students' scores in the test-retest was calculated (89%) which could be considered reliable.

#### 3.5 Teaching Material:

The textbook, *Penguin Functional English Book by Peter Watcyn-Jones*, was in use as the instructional material for used for teaching the control group; whereas the experimental group in addition to using *Watcyn-Jones'* textbook, they practiced via the links listed below, the following pragmatic and social activities to develop their expressive abilities and conversational skills:

- **Jill Kuzma's Pragmatic and Social Language Page**: *This includes many student and teacher activities and ideas for pragmatic and conversational language skills.*

- **Social Stories**: *Several social stories that help individuals understand expectations in social and daily living situations.*

- **Training Social Stories**: *Many completed social stories put in a Power Points and some in PDF form were watched in the computer lab.*

- **Social Skills**: *Various online social activities were practiced to aid in developing a student's social communicative skills.*

- **Comic Strip Conversation**: *Comic strip website in which one can develop skills in taking the perspective of someone else and decide what the people would be saying or thinking.*

- **Face Games**: *A downloadable game for Windows or Mac to practice understanding facial expressions.*

**YouTube**: *Kids react / Kids try and other YouTube links were repeated to grasp conversational expressions and develop learners expressive abilities to perform communicative situations.*

Lessons in conversational activities:

*Lesson One: The secret of conversation flow*

*Lesson Two: Invitation, The art of good questions*

*Lesson Three: Inspiration, The heartbeat of good conversation*

*Lesson Four: Inspiration in practice*

*Lesson Five: Invitation and inspiration in harmony.*

The instructional material was accompanied with and implemented via using internet sites in an enjoyable teaching learning environment.

### *3.6 Study Procedures:*

The following procedures were implemented:

- The experimental group students (31) were taught pragmatic speech acts and dialogues that allowed them to speak pragmatically in an authentic and educational context during 10 weeks, while the control (30) was taught using the speaking skills textbook.
- Participants in the experimental group practiced a number of oral activities that cover authentic speech acts and dialogues. They also watched various YouTube series and were given time to react and imitate some situations through doing role play, pair work and group work.
- More specifically, the participants watched, listened to, traced and repeated the functional expressions of the pragmatic aspects of: Apology, request, inquiry, invitation, thanking and refusal. They tried to grasp the accents and the wordings used in each aspect in a comfortable atmosphere.
- The participants showed interest in developing the most convenient expressions that they enjoyed. Besides, they tried to express the most appropriate expressions of introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing and arguing in role play, pair work and group work.
- The course instructor was encouraging the students to participate and was trying to make the conversation in class more joyful, authentic and full of fun.
- A post test was administered for both groups after implementing the experiment.
- The participants scores were statistically analyzed, and accordingly, the results were interpreted.

### *3.7 Statistical Treatment:*

To analyze the collected data, SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) software was used. Mean scores and standard deviations were estimated. T test along with One-Way ANOVA were used to observe if any differences arise as a result of the effect of the treatment of teaching pragmatic aspects in authentic situations.

## **4. Results of the Study**

To find out the equality between the two groups, means, standard deviations and T test for the pretest were calculated. Table 1 below shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the control and the experimental group students' scores on the pretest in speaking and in responding to the oral and written dialogues that included speech acts of apology, request, inquiry, invitation, thanking and refusing. It is noticed that there is a slight variance in the means of the pre-test among the six speech acts. The mean scores of the control group and the experimental group in the first aspect (apologizing) were 3.06 and 3.3 respectively. Similarly, the mean scores of both groups in the pre-test in requesting were the same 2.7. The mean scores were very similar in the aspect of inquiring, too. The mean scores of both groups in the aspects of inviting and thanking were almost very similar. Additionally, there is a slight difference in the mean scores between the control group in refusal ( 1.3) and that of the experimental group (1.6). These readings of the mean scores is an evidence that both groups are of the same level of responding to each of the speech acts understudying. It was also noticed that the students used one response to more than one question. This could be attributed to their unawareness of learning authentic English, as they are restricted to learning academic and literal language. To sum up, the results in Table 1 revealed that there is no statistically significant difference at  $\alpha = 0.05$  in the pre-test due to speech acts variable. Therefore, it could be concluded that the two groups were relatively equivalent before conducting the experiment.

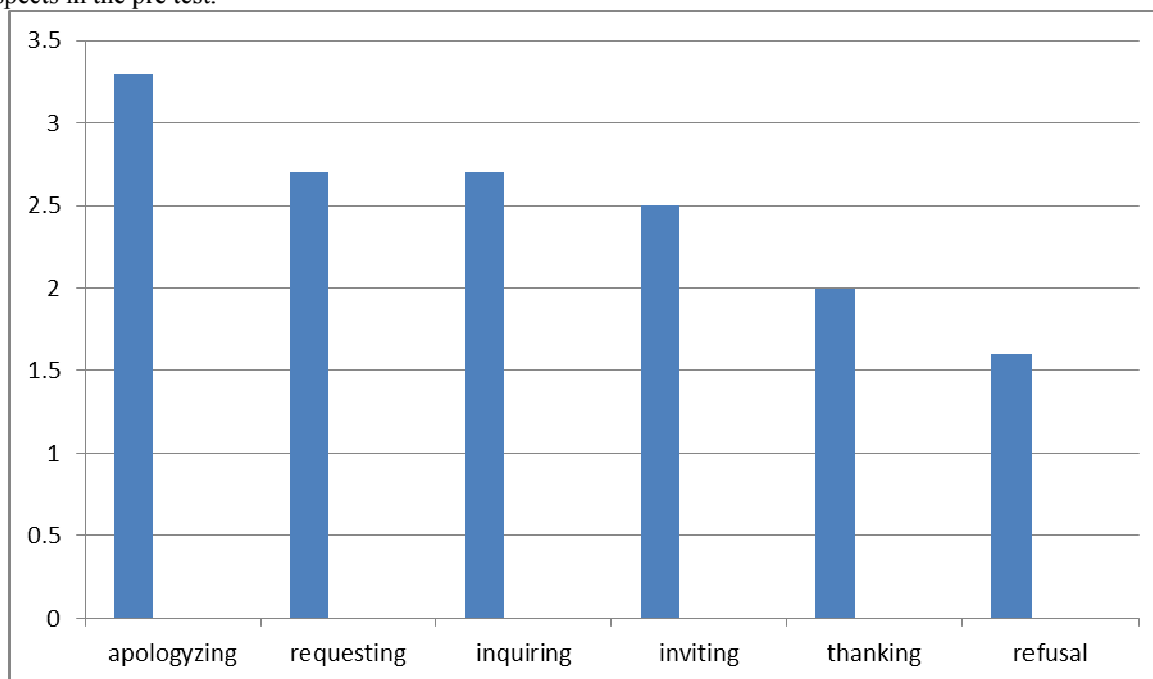
To find out whether there are statistical significant differences in the mean scores of both groups in the post test, T test was calculated to see whether the differences between the students' test results in both groups in the post-test were statistically significant, or not. The results revealed that there were statistically differences between the two groups' scores in all the pragmatic aspects investigated in this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that the subjects in the experimental group scored statistically higher scores on the post-test in comparison with the students in the control group.

**Table 1: Means and standard deviations and T-test of students' scores in pragmatic aspects in the pre test**

Pragmatic aspects (speech acts)	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Apologizing	Control	30	3.0625	1.64467	-.841	.402
	Experimental	31	3.3871	1.40658		
Requesting	Control	30	2.7063	1.63351	.175	.842
	Experimental	31	2.7387	1.41647		
Inquiring	Control	30	2.6563	1.45046	-.408	.665
	Experimental	31	2.7065	1.47013		
Inviting	Control	30	2.3313	1.25856	-.316	.741
	Experimental	31	2.5452	1.36753		
Thanking	Control	30	1.9250	1.33122	-1.225	.221
	Experimental	31	2.0223	1.15732		
Refusal	Control	30	1.3532	1.05464	-.204	.837
	Experimental	31	1.6086	1.01632		

Differences could be easily observed by a look to the figures included in this part of interpreting the results of the study.

Figure 1: Means, standard deviations and T-test of the experimental group students' scores in the pragmatic aspects in the pre test.



This figure (1) indicates that the means of the students' scores in the experimental group in the pragmatic aspects were ranging between 3.8 (apology) and 1.6 (refusal).

Table 2 below shows the total means and standard deviations in the pre-test of both the experimental and control group students' scores. This table (2) concludes the results of the students in all the six speech acts of the pragmatic aspects before using the pragmatic conversational aspects.

**Table 2: Total means and standard deviations of students' total scores in pragmatic aspects in the pre test**

Test	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Total scores	Experimental	31	15.0084	-.536	1.24846	.595
	Control	30	14.0346	-.535		

Table 2 indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group on the pretest for each speech act, in which the significance value was larger than 0.05. Therefore, it could be concluded that the two groups were equivalent. This could be confirmed by looking at figure 1 below that shows the means of the experimental group only in the pre test. This figure indicates that before practicing the pragmatic aspects in activities the highest means was of apologizing (3.383) whereas the lowest was of refusal (1.60).

What follows is a discussion of the results of the first and second questions of the study:

4.1 Results related to the first and the second questions:

The first question reads: **Are there any significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group due to practicing pragmatic aspects in authentic situations of EFL learners' conversational skills in the post-test?**

To answer this question, means, standard deviations and T test were calculated. Table 3 below clarified the results. By using appropriate statistical means, the researcher found out that there is a significant difference in performing the six speech acts of both groups in the post-test in favor of the experimental group, therefore the hypothesis of the study which proposes that there are no statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group due to practicing pragmatic aspects (apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal) in authentic situations in the post-test is rejected.

**Table 3: Means, standard deviations and t-test of students' scores (both groups) in the pragmatic aspects in the post test.**

Pragmatic aspects (speech acts)	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Apologizing	Control	30	6.0313	1.17732	-4.373	.000
Apologizing	Experimental	31	9.3871	1.28264	-4.367	.000
Requesting	Control	30	5.1563	.84660	-6.845	.000
Requesting	Experimental	31	9.1613	1.41649	-6.793	.000
Inquiring	Control	30	4.7813	.94132	-6.575	.000
Inquiring	Experimental	31	8.7419	1.38967	-6.536	.000
Inviting	Control	30	6.5313	.98323	-5.936	.000
Inviting	Experimental	31	10.2903	1.34644	-5.907	.000
Thanking	Control	30	4.5938	1.52102	-7.172	.000
Thanking	Experimental	31	7.5161	1.71018	-7.159	.000
Refusal	Control	30	4.6875	1.42416	-8.075	.000
Refusal	Experimental	31	7.5484	1.38657	-8.079	.000

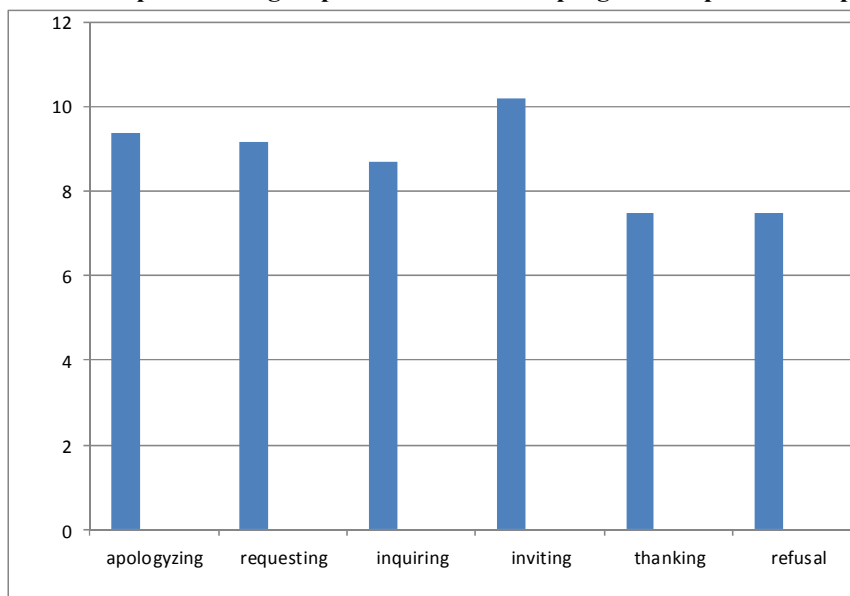
Similarly, noticeable differences were observed between the two groups of students' means of scores in every speech act aspect in the post test. Table 3 also indicated that the participants developed their abilities in all the six pragmatic aspects in varying proportions of language functions due to practicing pragmatic activities in authentic situations. These findings are in response to the second question that reads: "**Which Pragmatic aspects (Apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking, and refusal) developed most in the post-test at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level?**"

A scrutinizing look at table 3 above tells us that all the pragmatic aspect under studying were developed and the means were relatively close. The **inviting aspect (10.2)** was the first followed by **apologizing (9.3)**, **requesting (9.1)**, **inquiring (8.7)**, **refusal ( 7.54)**, and finally **thanking (7.51)**. This confirms that pragmatic aspects could be taught and was able to develop the participants' conversational skills. Consequently, the null hypothesis that assumed "**none of the Pragmatic aspects (Apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking, and refusal) developed in the post-test at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level** is rejected.

For further explanation and clarification, figure 2 below shows the results of the experimental group students' scores of the pragmatic aspects under studying, after practicing activities, dialogues, watching YouTube and videos and repeating expressions used by native speakers, especially, words used by the cute kids in the YouTube show of Kids try and Kids react. Actually the oral effect was crystal evident as it is shown in the figure below.



**Figure 2 : Results of the experimental group students' scores in pragmatic aspects in the post test.**



The figure above indicates that students have developed their conversational skills during the ten weeks of practicing the pragmatic aspects in an authentic environment. At the beginning of the semester, students sat for a pre-test on the speech acts and conversational skills that included 6 pragmatic aspects and 6 expressive abilities skills. At the end of the experiment (10 weeks later), they sat for the same test (post-test) and they statistically scored higher than their results on the pre-test. This could be attributed to practicing oral and written pragmatic aspects in authentic situations.

A comparison between figure 1 and figure 2 above shows the difference in the chart bars among the pragmatic aspects scores where the inviting aspect bar is the highest (10.29) and the thanking aspect is the lowest (7.51). However, the results of the speech acts aspects in the pre-test showed that the mean score of apologizing was the highest (3.38) whereas, the mean score of inviting was 2.54 in the pre test. The lowest was the thanking aspect (1.60) in post tests. To sum up the results, table 4 below concludes the total results of both groups in the post test which indicates a significant difference in performing the six speech acts of both groups in the post-test in favor of the experimental group.

**Table 4: Means standard deviations and t-test of students' scores (both groups) in pragmatic aspects in the post test**

Pragmatic aspects (speech acts)	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Total score	Control	30	31.3815	3.94891	7.191	.008
	Experimental	31	52.4451	7.11686		

Statistical calculation of the means, standard deviations and t-test for every pragmatic aspect in the post test were measured. It was found out that there is a significant difference in the conversational skills of the experimental group in the post-test in favor of the experimental group for every pragmatic aspect Therefore, the null hypothesis that claimed *"There were no significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group due to practicing pragmatic aspects in authentic situations of undergraduate students' conversational skills in the post-test"* is rejected.

**4.2 Results related to questions three and four:**

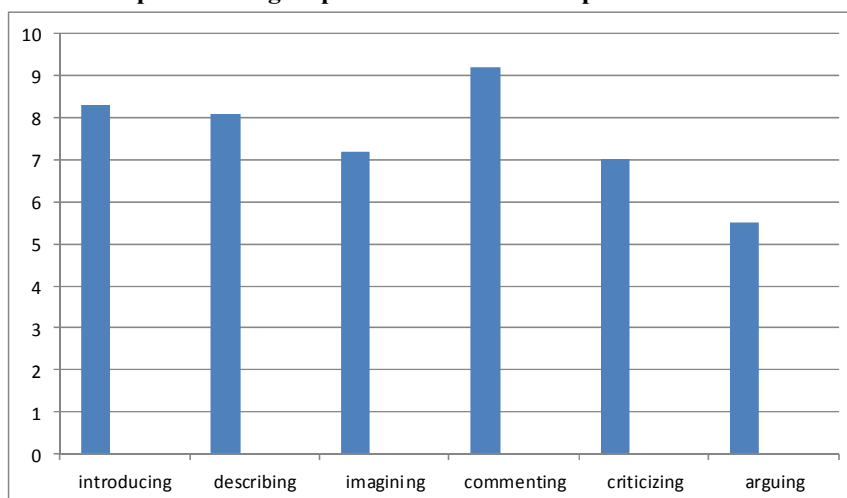
The third question is: *Are there any significant differences for teaching pragmatic aspects on the undergraduate students' expressive abilities skills (Introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing and arguing) on the writing post-test comparing with t-test at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level?* This question sought to check whether there are any statistical differences between the mean scores of both groups, or not. It is evident that the experimental group performed much better on the post-test than on the pre-test as shown in the previous table for each response in the writing skills test. This difference in the mean scores on the pre-test and post-test was statistically measured by using T-test, as shown in the following table:

**Table (5) Means and Standard Deviations of the experimental group students' scores in the Pre and Post-Tests of the expressive abilities skills.**

Expressive abilities skills	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Introducing	Pre test	31	3.3871	1.40659	-17.549	.000
	Post test	31	8.3871	1.28264		
Describing	Pre test	31	2.8387	1.41649	-17.573	.000
	Post test	31	8.1613	1.41649		
Imagining	Pre test	31	2.8065	1.47013	-16.336	.000
	Post test	31	7.2419	1.38967		
Commenting	Pre test	31	2.6452	1.37957	-16.305	.000
	Post test	31	9.2903	1.34644		
Criticizing	Pre test	31	2.0323	1.16859	-14.741	.000
	Post test	31	7.0161	1.71018		
Arguing	Pre test	31	1.7097	1.00643	-18.974	.000
	Post test	31	7.5484	1.38657		
total score	Pre test	31	15.4193	7.83780	-19.157	.000
	Post test	31	47.6451	8.52199		

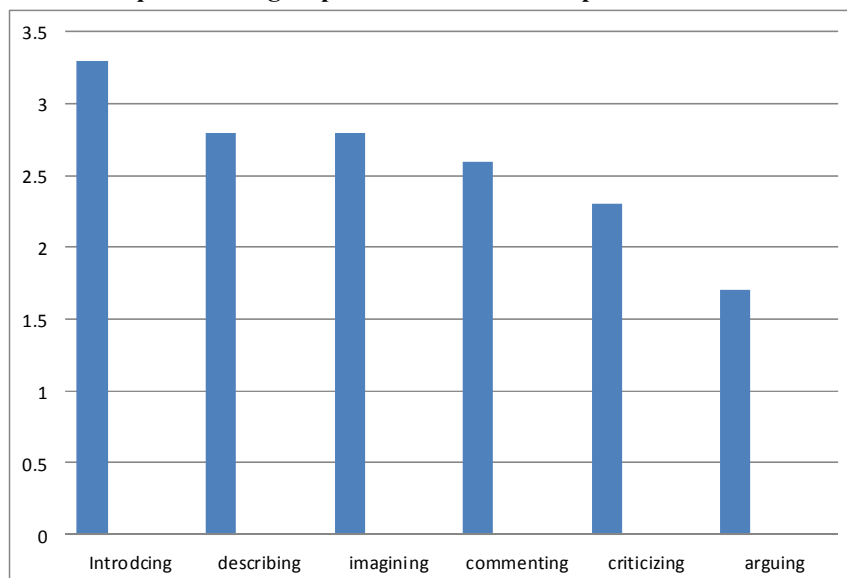
The previous table indicates a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group on the pre-test and post-test as a result of the effect of teaching pragmatic aspects on students' expressive abilities' skills. To find out the amount of progress that each group had achieved during the period of the study, mean scores and standard deviations of the two groups were calculated and the results indicated that there is a statistical impact of teaching the pragmatic aspects in a conversational authentic situations on every communicative skills. This could be concluded from observing the results of the experimental group scores gained in the post test as shown in figure 3 below.

**Figure 3 : Results of the experimental group students' scores in expressive abilities skills in the post test.**



The bar of commenting followed by that of introducing attracted the attention of the researcher as well as the teacher who taught the course. The students were excited to express their comments and enjoyed the act of introducing themselves to the others. They felt that they were given the opportunity to practice real acts as they imitate the scenarios of the dialogues and the mini conversations.

**Figure 4 : Results of the experimental group students' scores in expressive abilities skills in the pre-test.**



To compare between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre and post test, the results revealed that students' expressive abilities in the pre-test were moving from the highest bar (introducing:3.8) down to the lowest (arguing: 1.7) in a gradual linear regression shape. Whereas the mean scores of the students in the post test revealed that commenting expressive ability was the highest, followed by the ability of introducing. But the ability of arguing was the lowest in both the pre and post tests.

Meanwhile, the research questions sought to find out the effectiveness of teaching pragmatic aspects on the undergraduate students' conversational skills and expressive abilities in authentic situations. Based on the results, it could be concluded that teaching pragmatic aspects is authentic situations and via using all available means of electronic communications in and outside the classroom, apparently has significantly affected the learners' in the experimental group responses to the six speech acts ((apologizing, requesting, inquiring, inviting, thanking or refusal). Besides, the findings revealed that participants' expressive abilities and conversational skills in the aspects of introducing, describing, imagining, commenting, criticizing and arguing were developed in both productive skills (oral and written) due to the effect of teaching pragmatic aspects, as well.

In this sense, these results are in harmony with the findings and suggestions included in the studies carried out by Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, & Vellenga, (2015); Bardovi-Harlig and Salsbury' (2004); Li's (2012); Romina & Marazita' (2009); Al-Shboul & Huwari's (2015); Lingli Dua' (2010); Farahian, Rezaee, & Gholami, (2012) and Grossi's study (2009).

To conclude, these results showed that the implementation of teaching pragmatic aspects has improved the students communicative competences in the oral and written productive skills. The results of this current study revealed that university students have consistently continued imitating the speech acts outside the classroom where they are not shy; and due to the continues exposure to the pragmatic activities via the electronic tools. Additionally, they relatively tried to master the correct pronunciation and the accent of each pragmatic aspect.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

This study traced the efficacy of teaching pragmatic aspects on the undergraduate students' conversational skills and expressive abilities in authentic situations. One could not deny that teaching pragmatic aspects to non-native speakers of English is hectic in the classroom; however, due to the progressive utilization of electronic social media means, teaching communicative competence aspects and continuous practice confirmed positive results of teaching pragmatic aspects in authentic situations. Teaching pragmatic aspects helped learners acquire various expressions that they could appropriately and successfully use in socio-cultural situations. Practicing pragmatic aspects created a change in the teaching environment where learners are motivated to smoothly participate and automatically engage in conversations and dialogues. Hence, based on the results of this study, parents, teachers in schools, administrators, curricula designers and instructors are all responsible to orient and enhance the use of pragmatic aspects via using any media that develop the learners' expressive abilities and communicative skills rather than gaining knowledge for academic purposes.

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