

The effect of Speech Act on the Language proficiency of EFL Kurdish Speakers in Iraq

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Abstract

The present mixed-methods study was set to explore the frequent speech act strategies used by EFL learners in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the relationship between speech act and language proficiency of EFL learners in KRI, and the difference between the speech acts of face-to-face and online classes of EFL learners in KRI. To this end, 150 EFL learners from KRI, in different universities in some cities including Erbil and Soran, including both female (n=92) and male (n=58) students were selected based on their availability and convenience. Then, based on the results of a placement, they were divided into low proficiency group (n=86), and high proficiency group (n=64). The participants were studying English in face-to-face and online classes of EFL learners in KRI. To gather the required data, a demographic information questionnaire, a placement test, an observation checklist and semi-structured interviews were utilized. For the quantitative phase, the data were analyzed based on frequency, percentage of the speech acts, Pearson correlation and a chi-square test were administered. For the qualitative phase of the study, content and thematic analysis was used. It should be noted here that for the purpose of the current study, Yule's (1996) classification of the speech acts was used. The findings revealed that the most frequent speech act strategies used by EFL learners in Kurdistan were Expressive, Directive, Representative, Assertive, and Commissive, respectively. In addition, the results indicated that there was a positively significant correlation between Kurdish EFL learners' language proficiency and their representations of speech acts. It was also found that there was no significant difference between the realizations of speech acts in face-to-face and online classes of EFL learners in KRI.

Key words: EFL learners, Language Proficiency, Speech acts