MEASUREMENT OF SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE OF EFL POST GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Sociolinguistic competence (henceforth SC)refers to the understanding ,or organization of the principles of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context ; it enables us to present language functions in ways that are appropriate to that context. The ability to adjust one's speech to fit the situation in which it is said is called sociolinguistic competence, and without this ability, even the most perfectly grammatical utterances can convey a meaning entirely different from that which the speaker intended. Post-graduate students (henceforth PGSs) find it difficult to communicate freely in the target language. The 'de-emphasized' status of this competence in educational practice has to do with the fact that it is closely related to the sociocultural part of acquiring a foreign language sociolinguistic confusion can make learners seem so inappropriate as to cause misunderstanding .

For nonnative speakers, the misunderstandings they are often faced within the cross-cultural realization of communicative acts usually arise from their failure in appropriate use of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. Without attempting to identify and discuss the features of the language use circumstances that determine the principles of language use. Cross cultural differences , results in misunderstandings between the speech participants, and can cause serious breakdowns in communication. These rules of speaking can be slowly acquired by the language learner as he/she is immersed in the target language culture; however, learning these rules through immersion is a time consuming process, with many rules going unnoticed for years, or even worse, never being acquired at all. important area of difficulty that PGSs face is communication.

This study will focus on SC because it seems to be the most neglected aspect among the four categories of communicative competence in foreign language curriculum. When engaged in authentic communicative situations, they often lack some of the vocabulary or language items they need to get their meaning across. The study also aims at measuring SC of EFL Post

Graduate Students and finding out whether there is significant differences between male and female students′ performance which leads to the level of sociolinguistics competence .

A test has been constructed and its validity and reliability have been ascertained to measure SC among PGSs. Bachman and Palmer (1990:328) scale used to measure SC. The sample of this study applied 60 PGSs in Tikrit, Babel , Baghdad and Salahaddin Universities. The results of this study indicate that it is due in the methods of language teaching and the learning environment, which are unsuitable for learning a foreign language. Find difficulties in using English for communication.

Introduction

The ability to speak a language that is not one's own has become a very important skill, and the world's politics and economy ride on the ability of individuals to effectively communicate across cultural boundaries. The key to communication lies in successful expression of one's intended meaning, which is not always as easy as one would hope. All too often, students who have studied a foreign language for years will go to the country where that language is spoken only to find that despite years of study, they are still unable to express their meaning to native speakers. To make matters worse, the language learner may say a perfectly grammatical utterance that the native listener can understand, but the speaker might not know the normal social meaning communicated by such an utterance in the circumstance at hand in the target language culture.

An important contributing factor for incompetence in the foreign language is that the speaker does not know which utterances are appropriate in the social situation in which he or she is speaking. This ability to adjust one's speech to fit the situation in which it is said is called sociolinguistic competence, and without this ability, even the most perfectly grammatical utterances can convey a meaning entirely different from that which the speaker intended.

This study aims at :

1.Measuring Sociolinguistic Competence of EFL Post Graduate Students.

2.Finding out whether there is significant differences between male and female students′ performance which leads to the level of sociolinguistics competence .

The Value of the Study

It is valuable for post graduate students and researchers to show that sociolinguistics competence requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used , the role of the participants , the information they share , and the function of the interaction . It is also valuable for teachers , textbooks designer and educators .

It is hypothesized that :

1 .EFL Post - Graduate Students do not acquire high level of the sociolinguistic competence .

2 .There is no significant difference between male and female students in this domain.

Limits of the Study

1 .Post - Graduate EFL Students during the academic year 2016-2017 in Tikrit , Baghdad ,Babel and Salahaddin Universities .

2 .Measuring sociolinguistic domains : variety which includes vocabulary and pronunciation , Register and Formality .

3 .One domain of speech acts : compliment Which includes ; Expressing compliment and responding to compliment .

Definitions

1 .Measurement : is the process of quantifying the characteristics of persons according to explicit procedures and rules . The fundamental concepts measurement , an understanding which is essential to the development and use of language tests . Measurement is frequently based on the naturalistic observation of behavior over a period of time .(Bachman ,1990 :18-19) To measure post graduate students' competence of sociocultural rules of using register , varieties and formality at the English Department at Tikrit , Baghdad , Babel and Salahaddin Universities .

2 . Sociolinguistic competence : Sociolinguistic competence is one of the components of communicative competence alongside linguistic, discourse and strategic competences. Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of sociocultural rules of use, i.e. knowing how to use and respond to language appropriately. It also refers to the knowledge and skills involved in using the language in an appropriate way in terms of social norms and customs. Therefore, it deals with issues such as differences in register, dialects and accents, rules of address, politeness, and expressions of folk-wisdom among others. The appropriateness depends on the setting of the communication, the topic, and the relationships among the people communicating. Moreover, being appropriate depends on knowing what the taboos of the other culture are, what politeness indices are used in each case, what the politically

correct term would be for some notion, how specific attitude (authority , friendliness , courtesy , irony , etc.) is expressed (Koran , 2016 : 3)

2. Review of related Literature

Yule(1999:254) indicates that sociolinguistics has strong connections with anthropology through the study of language and culture, and with sociology through the investigation of the role language plays in the organization of social groups and institutions. It is also tied to social psychology, particularly with regard to how attitudes and perceptions are expressed and how in-group and out-group behaviors are identified

In today's increasingly globalized world, the capacity to convey what oneself needs in a moment or in a foreign language has turned into a fundamental aptitude (Mizne,2007). Also, learning a second/foreign language requires not just the mastery of structural, discoursal and strategic rules , learners also have to internalize sociolinguistic rules to assist them in the choice of appropriate forms . A L2 speaker is viewed as fluent if he or she can use the language in a variety of situational settings, for example, talking in a formal meeting, or making phone calls. However , regardless to what extent the L2 learner is presented to the target language, he or she still have difficulty in experience issues in communicating at various social settings .We can state in simple words that the learner may create a perfect syntactic expression that the audience can understand , yet he or she may not know how to suggest the social meaning conveyed in the target context . The irregularity between the language teaching approaches and the particular requirements for language use in the reality has turned out to be more distinctive than any time .

2.1 Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence is one of the segments of communicative competence as linguistic , discourse and strategic competences . Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of sociocultural standards of use , i.e. knowing how to use and react to language correctly. Bell (1978:64) explains that it includes knowledge of rules and conventions which underlie the appropriate comprehension and language use in different sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. The appropriateness depends upon the setting of the communication, the subject, and the relationships among the people communicating. In addition, being appropriate depends upon realizing what the acceptability of the other culture is, what politeness lists are used as a

part of each case, what the politically correct term would be for some ideas, how a particular attitude (authority, friendliness, courtesy, irony , etc) is expressed .

Canale & Swain (1980:98-99) defines this competence in terms of sociocultural rules of use. Therefore , regarding sociocultural rules of use, this competence is linked to the notion of the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction ,.

2.2 Sociocultural competence

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995:11) refer to this competence as the speaker's knowledge of how to express appropriate messages within the social and cultural context of communication in which they are produced. Socio-cultural Competence is also the knowledge of context that decides what is said, and how it is said. The contextual factors include the participants and the situational variables. Stylistic appropriateness relates to politeness conventions and stylistic variation of register and formality. It also includes the knowledge of social conventions and awareness of values, beliefs and living conditions of the target language community . Zarifian (2005) indicate that sociocultural competence could be implemented by four components that link an individual to environment:

(i) **Initiative** , it is defined as a person's obligation and determination to start something new and use the freedom of action. Being initiative means being able to mobilize and use various individual and collective resources in solution of various activity situations, Initiative is a very significant prerequisite for formation and application of sociocultural competences as an individual initiative that implies the necessity to combine it with other individuals' initiatives

(ii)**Responsibility**, it also has two significant social dimensions: responsibility for compliance with various moral norms (responsibility for the moral consequences of an action) and caring for other people, and their interests.

(iii)**Participation** , in an activity as an event is a person's commitment to be part of social and cultural activity in order to combine practical activity guidelines with information flows.

(iv)**Individuality** , manifests itself from the perspective of sociocultural competence through a person's ability to develop his values, seek education, and participate in experience-based activities.

Sociocultural competence is a complex phenomenon. It is viewed as a possibility to apply multicultural knowledge, skills and values in the process of intercultural communication in certain specific life situation with the aim to ensure acceptance towards other people. (Safina, 2014)

2.1.1 Pragmalinguistics

Kasper & Rose (2001), define pragmalinguistics as the linguistic resources available for conveying communicative acts and performing pragmatic functions. The resources "include pragmatic strategies such as directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts" , it also focuses on the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms and consist of the knowledge and ability for the use of conventions of meanings (e.g. the strategies for realizing speech acts) and conventions of forms (e.g. linguistic forms implementing speech act strategies).

According to Kramsch (1993:49) the appropriateness of form is referred to as pragmalinguistics, which means "the particular resources that a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" ; the appropriateness of meaning refers to socio-pragmatics, which is defined as "the ways in which pragmatic performance is subject to specific socio-cultural conventions and values .

Pragmalinguistics refers to the linguistic side of pragmatics. It refers to the range of resources from which speakers of a language have to choose when they are using that language. Such resources include pragmatic strategies for instance directness and indirectness, pragmatic routines and modification devices (Pielclova, 2010: 57).

2.1.2 Sociopragmatic

Leech (1983:11) *describes sociolinguistic competence as the competence that indicate the functional variations and choices within one language: style, register, domain, and code.* Moreover ,we can say that the key to this competence is understanding the context of any social situation and responding appropriately within the context , using the most acceptable language forms (grammar) because this is essential to language communication as it has importance to foreign language –teaching .

Carroll (1984:333) states that sociolinguistic competence refers to the extent to which utterance are produced and understood appropriately in

different sociolinguistic contexts, depending on contextual factors such as topic, circumstances of participants, and purposes of the interaction. Appropriateness of utterances refers to both appropriateness of meaning and appropriateness of form.

Both the speaker and the listener enter the communication with certain rights and with particular expectations. Their rights are determined by the competence of the roles they have within the persuasive discourse. The expectations, on the other hand, are determined by the environmental context of a communication. As far as the persuasive intention is taken into consideration, both participants are fully aware of it. The persuader, however, strives to make the speaker forget about being more convinced (Jucker 1997: 122).

Sociopragmatics includes the knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, imposition, and the social conditions and consequences of what you do, when, and to whom It refers to the interface of sociology and pragmatics and it also defined as "the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action" (Kasper & Rose, 2001:2) . The relationship between sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence is a complex and interwoven one. Thus, it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between them. Therefore , any exploration of pragmatic variability should address the pragmalinguistic forms and strategies in relation to the sociopragmatic values and norms of language speakers (Chang ,2011).

2.3 Social Dimensions

There are four dimensions that have an impact on our speech behaviour. These dimensions balance the social factors that deal with aspects; where an interaction takes place, who is speaking to whom, what is being discussed, and why as well as which communicative codes are applied (Wardhaugh,2006:94).

(i) The Solidarity-Social Distance Scale

(ii) **The Status Scale**

(iii) **The Formality Scale**

(iv) **The Referential and Affective Functional Scale**

2.4 Social Factors

There are several social factors that correlate with language variation. The major ones are given below:-

i. Ethnicity

Romero etal (2014:240) define ethnicity "A shared heritage classified by common characteristics such as language, religion, cultural practices and nationality that differentiate one group from other groups". It can result in significant linguistic variation. The adoption of L2 phases and grammatical constructs into L1 typify the language of many ethnic minorities. Studies of language variation due to the theory that where two languages blend to form pidgin, the language of the dominant group is in greatest evidence in the vocabulary and the language of the subordinated group is most obvious in the grammar.

ii. Age

Cook (1993:149) suggests "At particular ages students prefer particular methods. Teenagers may dislike any technique that exposes them in public; role play and simulation are in conflict with their concerns. Adults can feel they are not learning properly in play-like situations and prefer a conventional , formal style of teaching."

As knowledge has changed, the young people have rushed to receive it and make a whole dialect information to refer to it. Most clients of the web know about the use of "google" as a verb intending to look for something using a web internet searcher ; the word appears in the 7th edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary .

iii. Gender

There are many differences in the ways men and women use language. These differences are observable across a whole range of linguistic variables. Freeman & McElhinney (1996:218) point out that whatever linguistic skills are highly prized in society, society tends to perceive men as having them and women lacking them as: men use dominant expressions and they feel more confident than woman, the real issue is perhaps that society has different linguistic expectations of the sexes. These differences are not confined to lexical and grammatical differences but are also clearly evident in prosodic features.

iv. Geography

According to Wardhough (2002 :30) regional differences can be strong or subtle factor which affect the use of language. it is important to distinguish between regional variation known as "dialect" which refers to lexical and grammatical variations to standard language and "accent" which refers to the pronunciation pattern. In practice these two factors often combine to form what most people consider a recognizable regional variation. Crystal (2003)states that people generally react less favorably to

people whose accents differ from their own. Because of geographic location pronunciation varies. Just as higher social groups use language to distinguish themselves, some groups purposely employ substandard forms in order to disassociate themselves from normal society. This has been labeled as Received Pronunciation (RP) .

2.5 Speech Act Theory

Austin (1962:7) was the first one who refers to speech acts as utterances which convey information , as giving orders and making promises. We may distinguish through speech acts a conventional semantic theory by studying the effects of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutory acts.

Firstly, performative utterances on speakers and hearers that result through or as a result of speech, secondly, acts that occur in speech, and thirdly, responses which hearers called perlocutionary acts. Searle (1969:36) has added a set of utterance conditions which as follow:

1: **Propositional content condition**. A performative should only be uttered in the context of a sentence which predicates some future act of the speaker/hearer.

2: **Preparatory condition**. The utterance is to be uttered only;

a) if it is the case that normally the act proposed would not be done and

b) if the speaker believes it is the case that the hearer would prefer the speaker doing what is proposed , and

c) if the hearer prefers the speaker doing what is proposed.

3: **Sincerity condition**. Any performative utterance should only be uttered if the speaker intends to do what is proposed or if the speaker believes in his words.

4: **Essential condition**. For any utterance to be a performative , it is essential for the utterance to count as an obligation to do what is proposed. Speech act realizations may deviate on three levels: social acceptability of the utterance, linguistic acceptability of the utterance, or pragmatic acceptability reflected in shifts of illocutionary force" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Speech acts includes many domains . For this study , compliment speech act is concentrated on .

2. 6 Compliment and Compliment Responses

The speech act of compliment is chosen because of the important role it plays in human communication. Compliments strengthen solidarity between the speakers and they are explicit reflection of cultural values. Pomerantz (1978:79) explained that, when engaging in compliment response, complimentees often seek a solution to, or resolution of this

conflict by striking a balance between complete avoidance of self-praise and complete acceptance or agreement.

Wolfson (1983:82-95) categorize the top adjectives which are most frequently used in compliments ; *nice*, *good*, *beautiful*, and *great*. He indicated that English compliments are formulaic both in terms of syntax and semantics ; therefore, easily identifiable and distinguishable from other statements of speech . While American compliments are more often delivered to the addressee by an interlocutor of the same sex, similar age, and equal status . It refers mostly to someone's appearance/attire and performance (i.e., abilities and skills), and that rarely of compliments that refers to personality and possessions. American compliments tended to be stated as follow:

A. Directly : e.g. (5. "*I think you do really nice work*").

B. Generally : e.g. (6. "*You look nice*").

C. Indirectly : e.g. (7. "*Professor Keller said you do really nice work*").

D. Specifically : e.g. (8. "*You look nice in that tie*").

E. Without comparing the hearer to others : e.g.

9. "*You look young*" as opposed to "*You look years younger than your little brother*".

Leech's (1983:85-88) Maxims of Politeness provide another construct for analyzing compliment response. He proposed the following maxims :

(i) **Tact Maxim** :

(ii) **Generosity Maxim** :

(iii) **Approbation Maxim** :

(iv) **Modesty Maxim** :

(v) **Agreement Maxim** :

(vi) **Sympathy Maxim** :

These principles include primary maxims. The Agreement and Modesty Maxims come into conflict in the act of compliment response because the complimentee may seek to minimize self-praise by rejecting the compliment, but in the process can create disagreement with the complimenter, violating the Agreement Maxim. Or, the complimentee may seek to minimize disagreement with the complimenter by accepting the compliment but in the process engage in self-praise, which violates the Modesty Maxim.

Fukushima (1993) explaines that complimentees are not using formal compliments more than informal compliments , and "internal stable

uncontrollable" (ability, appearance) compliments are not used more than "external unstable controllable" (work, belongings) compliments.

2.7 Learning and Teaching Sociolinguistic Competence

The most basic subject is students' need to understand that form does not always have equal function (Ervin-Tripp,1976). For example, without understanding this, students cannot use expressions for function appropriately. It is useful ; therefore, to introduce the students to the idea that form and function are not always the same. For this reason , there are many complications involved in the teaching of sociolinguistics because of the sociolinguistic rules of speaking in a given language are so ingrained within a person that a native speaker is often unaware of them (Spada,1978).So in order to have successful performance, students have to become aware of the huge possibilities in which communication is taking place. Learners need to be sensitive to the contexts to which their linguistic knowledge has prepared ; they have to be conscious of the potential contribution they can make by simple use of language effectively and most importantly, they must be sensitive to the ways in which one interaction will take them to a level where different interactions will occur (Wolfson, 1989).

Beebe (1988:45) decided to include five approaches while admitting that some near-native or native speakers may possess full sociolinguistic competence ,yet consciously wish to avoid informal variants, thereby creating a false impression of incomplete competence it is "simplistic to lump sociolinguistics into five (and only five) traditions" she argues that it is "equally misleading to treat every researcher as a totally independent voice" . Her five approaches include the 'Labovian tradition', the 'dynamic paradigm' (Bickerton), 'communicative competence' (Hymes), 'speech accommodation theory' (Giles), attitudes and motivation (Gardner and Lambert).

While Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993:112) refer that an important component of sociolinguistic competence is knowledge of the target language culture and an awareness of cross-cultural differences. An obvious method of helping students attain this knowledge is to teach culture in the foreign language classroom. However, "culture" is a very ambiguous term, and a society's culture is so all encompassing that it is hard to define and reduce to teachable components, especially for students with a limited target language proficiency. Sociolinguistic competence will serve as the base for learners to be able to change as language develops. Mizne (1997) states that while it is not easy to visualize how a language's grammar has such a strong

impact on the learning of new information, one can simply see how tenses affect the information and data we acquire, which explains how real, true information can be erroneously conveyed, here hindering one's quality of knowledge . Broersma (2001) states that the process of learning sociolinguistic competence is challenging even in one's first language. He claims if we all had perfect sociolinguistic competence, we wouldn't need advice about the proper way to send wedding invitations or give a dinner party. Having good sociolinguistic competence means knowing how to "give every person his or her due." It means knowing when to be quiet, and when to talk, when to give compliments to others, and when to apologize. It also means being able to read situations and know what is the right thing to say or do. There are an infinite number of combinations of roles, tasks, contexts, and feelings that govern what is appropriate in any given encounter .

The Council of Europe (2001) indicates that a successfully completed foreign language program should mean that the learner has acquired more than just a competence in grammar but can compromise language form with ability to handle social situations and within that context be able to make socially and contextually meaningful utterances. This ability should also extend to written texts as well as nonverbal communication such as appropriate gestures and facial expressions that are also part of the target language and the key to sociolinguistic competence which is understanding the context of any social situation and responding appropriately within that context, using the correct language forms i.e. grammar. Because this is intrinsic to language communication it has a direct relevance in foreign language-teaching .Butler-Pascoe & Wiburg (2003:188) put emphasis on "the importance of culture and community for second language learning". Then they point out current theories of learning, such as : social constructivism, recognize that learning is influenced by the social and cultural context in which it occurs .

Kramsch (2014) highlights foreign language-teaching as :

> *"…there has never been a greater tension between what is taught in the classroom and what the students will need in the real world once they have left the classroom. In the last decades, that world has changed to such an extent that language teachers are no longer sure of what they are supposed to teach nor what real world situations they are supposed to prepare their students for."*

Mede & Dikilitaş (2015) state that in teaching sociolinguistic competence there are two basic ways; one of them is resorting to cultural

models where students are explicitly or implicitly taught cultural elements fixed in language use and/or combining speech acts as situations where learners are forced to use language in reflection of sociopragmatic factors such as social statues of the hearer, the degree of obligation or the content of the request . Teaching skills in sociolinguistic competence in the foreign language classroom as a supplement to the concentration process may be a good way to help students learn these skills more efficiently and in less time, e.g.:

-audio-recorded data are great exemplars for listening comprehension.

-historical printed documents (or newspapers) are outstanding reading. comprehension .

-scientific and technological developments recorded in multimedia are great scenarios for oral and written debates. These examples are clear illustrations of the way language is used to study, document, question and write about the nature of our evolving society.

2.8 Measurement of Sociolinguistic Competence

The measurement of sociolinguistic competence should involve a variety of methods; combining self reports, rating scales completed by others, observational data , social network analysis and sociometric approaches; as well as computer simulations to obtain reliable and valid measures. Shohamy (1984:161) explains the urgency of developing sociolinguistic proficiency which has rarely been tested. Most language tests still focus on linguistic aspects as the major criteria for test construction. Overlooking the state of the art in knowing what a language means today, implies the construction of tests which fail to tap the construct of language proficiency in its full and complete definition.The construction of such tests will involve imposing rigorous measurement criteria to convert this sociolinguistic information into tests of sociolinguistic proficiency.

Bachman(1990:143) indicates that in testing English as a foreign language, the variety of English used in the test may be determined by the test developer's perception of the target variety that is most appropriate to test takers' needs so that the Test of English as a Foreign Language includes American English in its input, while the Certificate of Proficiency in English includes British English.

According to Paltridge (1992:246) the aim of communicative language testing should be to measure how well (or how little) a learner can perform "real life" language tasks and activities. Consequently, the tests should be

criterion-referenced and have a high level of 1) content validity, 2) construct validity and 3) predictive validity in terms of these criteria . During the process of teaching/learning the sociolinguistic competence and after the process has been completed, the level of the progress that students had made should have been tested and assessed. These are found as most effective assessment mechanisms:

- The Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCT).
- Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tasks (MDCT).
- Oral Discourse Completion Tasks (ODCT).
- Discourse Role Play Talks (DRPT).
- Discourse Self-Assessment Talks (DSAT).
- Role-Play self-assessments (RPSA) .
- SOLOM (Students Oral Language Observation Matrix)

Sociolinguistic competence is essentially relational, describing how individuals behave within the context of interpersonal and group relationships. Characteristics of the relationships engaged in the context encountered provide opportunities to acquire and express social competencies (Schoon ,2009:6-8) **.**

Methodology

3.1 Population and Sample of the Study

Best & Kahn (2006 :13-16) states that population is any group of individuals that has one or more characteristics in common whereas the sample is a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis .

The population of this study includes (80) male and female EFL post graduate students in the English department / College of Education / Tikrit , Baghdad and Babel universities ,also with the English department / College of Languages / Salahaddin university during the academic year(2016-2017). They are selected randomly as a sample for this study , as shown on Table (1).

Table (1)The Population and Sample of the Study

Stage	Total population	No. of the whole sample	No. of the pilot study	No. of selected sample
MA	89	68	17	51

PHD	20	12	3	9
Total	102	80	20	60

The percentage obtained concerning the gender as shown in Table (2).

Table (2)The Universities of EFL Post Graduate Students & Gender Factors of the sample

The Universities	Colleges	Gender		Post Graduate	Percentage
		Male	Female		
Baghdad	Ibn – Rushid	2	11	13	16.25%
Babel	Education for Human science	7	9	16	20%
Tikit	Education for Humanities	12	20	32	40%
	Education for Women	1	1	2	2.5%
Salahaddin	Languages	4	13	17	21.25%
Total		26	54	80	100%

3.2 Test Construction and Description

A test has been constructed to measure the EFL post graduate students sociolinguistics competence in varieties of vocabulary , pronunciation and register and speech act (compliment) .

The first step in the construction of the test is determining the behavioral objectives. The test examines how much they mastered (post graduate students) both knowledge level (recognition) which includes forty situations designed to find the correct choice of compliment , style and varieties of pronunciation and socio-cultural level (productive) intends to test sociolinguistic competence through thirty situations designed to find the suitable answers through knowing the intended meaning .

3.3 Scoring Scheme of the Test

Henning(2001:31) states that if the test is the tool of the measurement, scale is the measurement's magnitude that can be expressed in terms of scores or numbers. He also defines the test scoring as the summing of the

correct responses. The total mark of the test is one hundred , the highest mark is one hundred while the lowest is zero and the average of success fifty marks.

The test consists of two levels: level I "The Recognition Level" and level II "The Production Level" . The recognition level has four questions ,the first and the fourth consist of ten items whereas the second has sixteen items and the third consists of four items and each item takes one mark , and in the production level ,it has three questions and each question consist of ten items and each items takes two marks as shown on Table (3) .

Table(3)Scoring Scheme of the Test

Recognition Level		
Question No.	**No. of items**	**Scores**
Q1	10	10
Q2	16	16
Q3	4	4
Q4	10	10
Total	40	40
Production Level		
Q1	10	20
Q2	10	20
Q3	10	20
Total	30	60
Total level I + level II	70	100

4.1Analysis of Data concerning the Level of PGSs' Sociolinguistic Competence

In order to findout the level of performance of the PGSs 't' test for one sample formula is used to find out whether there is significant difference between the calculated mean score of PGSs and the theoretical mean .The calculated 't' value is 2.22 as compared with the 't' tabulated value at degree of freedom (59)and Level of significance 0.05 ; it indicates that the level of performance of the whole sample is low which refers that PGSs do not acquire SC . See Table (4)

Table (4)Level of Post Graduate Students Sociolinguistic Competence

Sample	mean	Standard Deviation	Df	't' calculated	Significant

60	45.97	14.07	59	2.22	Sig.

4.1.2 Comparison Between Male PGSs' Level of Performance and Female PGSs'

In order to find out whether there is statistical significant difference between the level of performance concerning the SC between male and female students . The formula of 't' test for two independent samples has been applied . It has been found that the calculated 't' value 0.38 which indicates at degree of freedom 58 and 0.05 level of significance. The comparison indicates that there is a significant difference as the male mean performance is on the behalf of male students .The difference in 2.30.The analysis of 't' test for two independent samples indicates that there is no significant difference between the mean score of male and female students in compliment , register , formality. But there is significant difference between male and female means in pronunciation on the behalf of males . But concerning vocabulary , the significant difference is on the behalf of female students. The total result is that there is no significant difference between male and female PGSs.As shown in Table (5)

Table (5)Comparison Between Male PGSs' Level of Performance and Female PGSs'

Items	Gender	mean	Standard Deviation	't' calculated	Significance level
Compliment	Male	11.13	4.75	0.20	No Sig.
	Female	11.41	4.93		
Register	Male	6.50	3.01	1.99	No Sig.
	Female	4.82	2.85		
Formality	Male	11.56	3.83	0.11	No Sig.
	Female	11.66	2.69		
Pronunciation	Male	10.13	4.03	2.57	Sig. for male
	Female	7.14	3.97		
Vocabulary	Male	7.13	4.05	2.75	Sig. for female
	Female	10.27	3.88		
Total	Male	47.13	15.73	0.38	No Sig.
	female	45.55	13.58		

4.1.3 Comparison of the PGSs mean score Among the four Iraqi Universities

In order to find the difference among the mean scores of the PGSs performance in SC , the analysis of variance ANOVA is used.

It is found that Babel University has the highest mean score 50.91 then Tikrit University 48.64 after that Salahadden 40.69 and the lowest mean is Baghdad PGSs which is 40.20 . See Table (6)

Table (6)Comparison of the mean scores of the four Iraqi Universities

Items	universities	N. of students	mean	Std. deviation
Compliment	Tikrit	25	12.4000	4.6457
	Baghdad	10	9.2000	5.5337
	Salahadden	13	9.3077	4.2305
	Babel	12	13.083	4.3788
Register	Tikrit	25	6.3200	2.9399
	Baghdad	10	3.6000	2.2211
	Salahadden	13	3.7692	2.3506
	Babel	12	6.0833	3.1176
Formality	Tikrit	25	11.920	3.6505
	Baghdad	10	11.100	1.5951
	Salahadden	13	10.9231	3.0946
	Babel	12	12.250	2.2207
Pronunciation	Tikrit	25	8.720	4.0673
	Baghdad	10	6.500	3.8658
	Salahadden	13	6.9231	4.0303
	Babel	12	8.5833	4.7186
Vocabulary	Tikrit	25	9.240	4.3520
	Baghdad	10	6.600	3.8930
	Salahadden	13	9.9231	3.3030
	Babel	12	11.666	3.6013

The difference between variance of the four universities is not significant . Table (6) shows that there is no significant difference between the variance of PGSs of the four Iraqi Universities concerning the domains of SC compliment ,formality , register ,variety(pronunciation , and vocabulary) . In register there is significant difference between these universities on the behalf of Babel and Tikrit Universities. In compliment there is no significant difference among the PGSs in the four universities .As shown in Table (7)

Table (7)ANOVA Analysis among the Iraqi Universities

Items	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F.	Sig.
Compliment	164.047	54.682	2.511	No sig.
Register	92.669	30.892	4.070	Sig.
Formality	16.020	5.340	0.584	No Sig.
Pronunciation	54.354	18.118	1.044	No Sig.
Vocabulary	144.184	48.061	3.113	Sig.
Total	1166.887	388.962	2.073	No Sig.

4.2 Percentage of Post Graduate Students' Correct and Incorrect Answers on the whole Test

The percentage of correct PGSs' answers in register is 26.33% while the percentage of the incorrect answers in register is 38.33% which means that they have a low level in register .The percentage of correct PGSs' answers in formality is 58.16% and the percentage of incorrect answers is 10.00% that means they have pass level in recognizing the style of speech , the percentage of correct answers in pronunciation is 39.66% while the percentage of the incorrect answers is 13.33% because the difference in dialect accent in pronunciation is not familiar to students in phonetics and phonology syllabi do not present such topic . PGSs correct answers in vocabulary is 50.91% and the percentage of incorrect answers is 25.00% which means that they have a pass level in variety of vocabulary. While in compliments PGSs the percentage of correct answers is 65% and the percentage of incorrect answers is 15.00% that means PGSs are moderate in expressing their thoughts or feeling by using expression of compliments as shown in Table (8)

Table (8)Percentage of Post Graduate Students' Correct and Incorrect Answers on the whole Test

No. of items	Content	Percentage of correct Answers	Percentage of incorrect Answers
1	Register	26.33%	38.33%
2	Style(formality)	58.16%	10.00%
3	Variety(pronunciation)	39.66%	13.33%
4	Variety(vocabulary)	50.91%	25.00%
5	Compliment	65%	15.00%

4.3 Analysis of Results According to Bachman and Palmer's Scale of Sociolinguistic Competence

Bachman and Palmer Scale (1990) is adopted in this study to measure the PGSs' SC domains as variety which includes vocabulary and pronunciation , register and formality .

Table (9)Sociolinguistic Competence Bachman and Palmer's Scale 1990

R	Distinguishing of registers	R	Nativeness	R	Use of cultural references
0	Evidence of only one register	1	Frequent non-native but grammatical structures or Impossible to judge because of interference from other factors	0.5	No evidence of ability to use cultural references
1	Evidence of two registers				
2	Evidence of two register and control of either formal and informal register	3	Rare non-native but grammatical structures	2.5	Some evidence of ability to use cultural references appropriately
3.5	Control of both formal and informal registers	4	No non-native but grammatical structures	4	Full control of appropriate cultural references

As shown in Table(7)this scale measures sociolinguistic competence within aspects : distinguishing of registers, nativeness and use of cultural references.

Conclusion

Sociolinguistic competence in language acquisition is a vital part of acquiring L2 language competence as a whole and is considered to be linked to the cultural aspect of any language group and what makes SC so hard to acquire is the large amount of variance in cultural rules of speaking; in other words, what is appropriate to say in one culture may be completely inappropriate in another culture, even though the situation in which it is said is the same .The weakness of English language post graduate students , has been attributed to lack of knowledge on the part of school graduates when

they join the university, school and English language department curricula, with teaching methodology, and Lack of the target language environment and the learners' motivation.

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The Test

Part One (Recognition level)

I. Explain whether these sentences are meant as good or backhanded compliments in the following :

1. You're one of a kind!

2. You got a promotion ! That's adorable .
3. You're always learning new things and trying to better yourself, which is awesome.
4. I didn't expect you to get the job - congratulations!
5. You're like sunshine on a rainy day.
6. That thing you don't like about yourself is what makes you so interesting.
7. You have such a pretty face !
8. You're a gift to those around you.
9. Usually , people say " I wish I didn't have any responsibilities like you " to their friends who live with their parents, or to those who don't have kids .
10. "Wow! Your car is amazing ! I wish I could have a car like that . I am so jealous"

II. A. State whether these sentences are formal or informal :

1. A: Don't throw your cigarette butts in there . It's dangerous
B: Why not ? The label says 'empty '.
2. I know some of you went 'trick-or-treating' last night and so I thought we might talk a little today about how you got on . Did you go out last night Jimmy ?
3. Where were you last night ? I rang to see if you wanted to come to the movies .
4. "You should come and get me at three o'clocck with your car ".

B. Identify the type of the following statements between people that have close or distant relationship?

1. I'd like to invite you to join the team meeting next week .
2. I'm afraid I'm not entirely satisfied with the service .
3. You've got that wrong .
4. I think you may be mistaken on that point .

C. Which of the following sentences is most formal in style?

1. A. I have a ton of experience in this area.
B. I have a considerable amount of experience in this area.
C. I have a lot of experience in this area.
2. A. I can't come to your party tomorrow.
B. I won't be able to come to your party tomorrow.
C. I will be unable to attend your party tomorrow.
3. A. Thanks a lot for telling me about this.
B. Thanks for bringing this to my attention.

C. I appreciate you bringing this matter to my attention.
4.A. How's life?
B. How are you?
C. How's it going?

D. Choose the best answer to complete the statements in an informal manner :

1. Hey, fancy a _____ tonight?
A) programme of entertainment B) night out
2. Come and _____ with this shopping will you?
A) lend me your assistance B) give me a hand
3. I don't mind. Do _____ .
A) whatever you like B) the activity of your choice.
4. Who's that? _____ .
A) I am not familiar with this person. B) Never heard of him.

III. Classify the following utterances from an English soccer match commentary according to syntactic reduction or inversion :

a. Dickens a marvellous through –ball .
b. Pitch very slippery .
c. Looking for a hat – trick remember Rush .
d. On deck is big Dave Winfield .

IV. A. Choose the correct standard answers for the following colloquial English sentences :

1. Who dat brah ?
   a. Who's that man?
   b. Who's that brother?
   c. Who's that boy?
2. Dis is da London accent , innit ?
   a. This is the London accent ,is not it ?
   b. This is the London accent , isn't it ?
   c. This is the London accent , is it ?
3. Did you say somefink ?
   a. Did you say something ?
   b. Did you say some thing ?
   c. Did you say someone is thinking ?
4. I ain't doin' nuttin' .
   a. I'm not doing nothing .

b. I'm not doing anything .
c. I'm not doing everything .

5. Wot is dat ?
a. What is that ?
b. What is this ?
c. What is there?

B. State whether these sentences are American or British :

a. I am going to a party on the weekend .
b. What are you doing at Christmas ?
c. I always run when I'm on my way to school .
d. The government is doing everything it can during this crisis.
e. I've eaten too much .

Part Two (Production level **)**

I. What do you call……?

1.a person who is qualified to teach at university .
2.a person who is spiritual and kind –hearted , who spread positive vibes .
3.a person who has the same first name of his father .
4.a person who falls and tries to stand up again .
5.a person who is capable of speaking easily and clearly .
6.a doctor who is indiscriminate about prescribing drugs .
7.the shoes people wear for tennis or running .
8.the vehicle people push babies round in .
9.a small round sweet cake with a hole in the middle .
10.an item of clothing worn to protect clothing especially while cooking .

II. A. What does each of the following metaphorical phrases mean :

1.clear the air . 2.time is money . 3.spill the beans . 4.piece of cake . 5. hard cheese .

B. What does each of the following medical phrases mean :

1 .Turtle's Head . 2 . September club . 3. Family Care Plan . 4. Icing on the cake . 5. Give it some vitamin D .

III. What would you say in the following situations :

1. make a compliment to a female clerk who helps you find the notebook you want .
2. when someone says to you "You really did a great job , I doubt anyone else can handle it that way .
3. At Wittenborg University the graduation ceremony was glamorous and joyful affair-distinguished this year by the fact that all graduates were female

. Pretend you have to check the camera position and compliment their faces for their graduation picture ?
You :_____
4. Lily , is one of your best friends , and for your birthday's gift , she sends you a wonderful expensive watch . Lily has a part-time job and the watch costs her one month's pay .What would you say to compliment her attitude towards you ?
You :_____
5.Ann , a student at the university , borrowed her professor's book last week . She promised to return it today in class but is not finished using it . She would like to borrow the book a few more days . Imagine you are Ann what would you say to your professor to get an extension on the book loan ?
You :_____
6. when post office delivery man says to elderly upper-class British woman ,"Can I have your signature , my love ?". Act as you are the elderly woman and respond to him ?
You :_____
7. King George VI wrote to Churchill ' It would be wrong for either you or I to be there ',but I am sure that chatting over the port at Sandringham , he would have said ' for you or me ' – like the most rough-hewn of us .
What does it suggest the speaker considers the formal or informal form in the phrase for you or I/me ?
8. A British visitor to New Zealand decided that while he was in Auckland he would look up an old friend from his war days . He found the address , walked up the path and knocked on the door.
'Giddy,'said the young man who opened the door.'What can I do for you?'
'I've called to see me old mate Don Stone,' said the visitor .
'Oh he 's dead now mate ,' said the young man .
The visitor was about to express condolences when he was thumped on the back by Don Stone himself . What did the young man had really said?
9. June works in a travel agency in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales . She sees a wide range of people in the course of her job . Last Tuesday she saw an accountant , an old friend from school , a woman who works for the council as a cleaner , and a local schoolteacher .
As she spoke to each person she pronounced the word 'matter 'differently , depending on the way her customer pronounced it .
How do you pronounce matter ? How many different pronunciations of this word you may know ?

10. Ray : Good afternoon, sir.
Principal : What are you doing here at this time?
Ray : Mr Sutton kept us in, sir.
Ray greeted the principal with the words *Good afternoon*, *sir*.
How do or did you greet your school principal? Would you use the same words to your father or mother? Would you use the same greeting to your best friend? Why (not)?