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An Investigation of Teachers' Attitude towards developing Kurdish EFL University Students' Sociopragmatic Competence

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Abstract

This research aims at finding out the attitude of teachers toward developing Kurdish EFL university students' verbal and non-verbal sociopragmatic competence, and the problems of developing this sort of competence that are mainly cultural problems. The sample of the study consists of fifty EFL instructors, who have experienced in teaching speaking, conversation, communication, and cross-cultural communication at the colleges of education and basic education at six universities: Sulaimani, Salahaddin -Erbil, Duhok, Halabja, Charmo and Garmian Universities A quantitative method has been adopted for

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this study and the data have been collected through using a survey questionnaire. The findings of the research reveal that teachers regarded sociopragmatic competence as an essential part of teaching in EFL classes. The findings also show that teachers agree that the problems of developing sociopragmatic elements relate to the fact that students lack cultural knowledge and they are unable to identify cultural similarities and differences between Kurdish and English.

Key words: Attitude, sociopragmatic competence, verbal and non-verbal elements.

دراسة في اتجاهات التدريسيين إزاء تطوير الكفاءة الاجتماعية-التداولية للطلبة الكرد الجامعيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية

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المستخلص

يهدف البحث الى معرفة اتجاه تدريسيي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية ازاء تطوير الكفاءة الاجتماعية-التداولية للطلبة الكرد الجامعيين دارسي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية من حيث عناصرها اللغوية وغير اللغوية وكذلك المشاكل اللغوية التي تواجه تطوير هذا النوع من الكفاءة. وتتألف عينة الدراسة من خمسون فردا من تدريسيي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية ممن لديهم خبرة في مجال تدريس مواد المحادثة والتواصل والتحاور عبر الثقافات في كليات التربية والتربية الاساس في ست جامعات هي جامعة السليمانية وصلاح الدين-اربيل ودهوك وجرمو وجامعة كرميان. وتبنت الدراسة منهجا كميا وتم جمع بيانات الدراسة باستخدام استبانة اعدت لهذا الغرض. وظهرت نتائج الدراسة بان التدريسيين يعتبرون الكفاءة الاجتماعية-التداولية عنصرا مهما في صفوف اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية. كما اظهرت النتائج بان من اهم مشاكل تطوير الكفاءة الاجتماعية-التداولية هو افتقار الطلبة الى المعرفة الثقافية وعدم قدرتهم على تحديد اوجه الشبه والاختلاف بين الانكليزية والكردية.

الكلمات الدالة: اتجاه، الكفاءة الاجتماعية-التداولية، العناصر اللغوية وغير اللغوية.

1. Introduction

To enable learners to communicate fluently and avoid miscommunication in the target language, teachers often are advised to encourage students to master not only grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, but also pragmatics and sociopragmatic competence as well as cultural information. For this respect (Dunkling, 1993) states that sociopragmatics is a branch of pragmatics. Its function in ELT is concerned with culture-specific issues. It reveals the cultural context of language learning by taking into account social or sociolinguistic factors, such as the use of the rules of speaking. Sociopragmatic abilities in any language demonstrate linguistic and communicative proficiency. On the other hand, (Rose and Kasper, 2001, as cited in Watman and Hirmiz, 2019) affirm that teachers should provide learners with a variety of simulated real-life experiences, such as role-plays and showing videos to integrate sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge and increase the effectiveness of the instruction.

Attitudes and feelings play a crucial role in teaching foreign languages including the area of sociopragmatic competence. Attitude means understanding of beliefs and behavior of those concerned with the phenomenon under study. To develop students' sociopragmatic competence, and identify the problems of developing it, teachers' attitude can be regarded as an essential aspect.

The current study is an attempt to find out the instructors' attitude toward teaching sociopragmatic competence at six universities in Kurdistan, namely Sulaimani, Salahaddin, Duhok, Halabja, Charmo and Garmian universities during the academic year 2022-2023. The problem addressed in this study is represented by the sort of uncertainty that may exist over the following research questions which the study tries to answer:

1. What is the attitude of teachers toward developing Kurdish EFL university students' verbal and non-verbal elements of sociopragmatics?
2. What is the attitude of teachers toward the problems of developing verbal and non-verbal elements of sociopragmatics?

The study hypothesizes that:

1. Teachers have a positive attitude towards developing Kurdish EFL university students' verbal and non-verbal sociopragmatic competence.
2. The main problems of developing Kurdish EFL university students' sociopragmatic competence are the cultural differences and similarities between English and Kurdish and the students' lack of knowledge about English culture.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 On Sociopragmatics Competence

The term 'sociopragmatics' has been defined by different authors. It was first coined by (Leech, 1983, p. 10) who defines it as "the sociological interface of pragmatics." This refers to the social discernment that regulates the intention and interpretation of participants' communicative use of language. For him, sociopragmatics is one of the components of general pragmatics which is concerned with the use of language for communicative purposes in general (Leech, 1983, pp. 10-11). On the other hand, sociopragmatics is

concerned with the culture-specific use of language. It relates to sociology, but it is more “specific “and “local.

Harlow (1990) views sociopragmatic competence as the skill, the awareness or the ability to use language appropriately to express the hidden and intended meaning that is controlled by a particular social norm and condition. It is the ability to employ speech strategies that suit the social variables in the target situation. For Chang (2011), sociopragmatic competence includes the knowledge of how to (1) use various contents, and linguistic devices, (2) choose interpersonal meaning to convey politeness, and (3) take the type of action suitable to the social context in action. Delahaie (2015) on the other hand, views sociopragmatic competence as the ability to use linguistic forms (e.g. speech acts: compliments, refusals and requests, etc.) that are appropriate to context and mode.

As a branch of communicative competence, sociopragmatics accounts not only for the observable aspects of language event, but also the unobservable ones: the choices the users make, the constraints they encounter in using the language for social interaction and the effect their use of language has on other participants. Finally, Levinson defines it as the ability of the language user to pair sentences with the context in which it will be appropriately used (Ekwelibe, 2015).

2. 2 Elements of Sociopragmatics

Communication is usually done through two ways: either verbal or nonverbal. The first conveys messages via spoken or written language. On the other hand, nonverbal communication employs body movement, tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, eye contact, and so to convey messages and thoughts. This is also true for university education. Teacher-student communication is always carried out via both verbal (including EFL) and nonverbal means. Teachers present materials, explanations using both sorts of means. In return, students present their assignments or talk in the class with teachers and other students using both verbal and nonverbal communication (Idayanti, et al, 2021). Using verbal and non-verbal communication varies from one language to another and consequently from one culture to another including its sociopragmatic aspect. In this concern, Gunduz (2016) says that sociopragmatic is cultural specific. It examines the cultural differences between different languages. It also concerns the cultural elements of diverse speech communities and the intercultural factors which affect language ability of learners. She also adds that those elements which are covertly expressed via linguistic knowledge and communication can be divided into two parts (1) linguistic components embedded in lexical and syntactic components (verbal components), and (2) extra linguistic components, such as proxemics and kinesics (non-verbal elements) (Gunduz, 2016).

2.3 Problems of developing sociopragmatic competence

Cakir (2006) reports that pragmatic conventions which result from the differences between forms and functions are sometimes difficult to be learnt. Some forms of language generally serve specific functions such as questions, statements etc. For example, the expression “I am hungry,” produced by a child would mean to have something to eat, not to express his hunger (p. 137). On the on the other hand, an expression like “What are you doing?” is a form functioning as a question when someone wants to know what someone is doing. However, it would not be a question when a mother shouts at his son while he is drawing on the wall or pouring the milk on the floor (Cakir, 2006, p. 137). There are some other expressions such as idioms, proverbs and metaphors which belonging to

sociopragmatics, their forms and functions are either partly or totally different (Dascal, 1987). Other aspects of sociopragmatics are non-verbal means of communication, in this respect, there would be cultural misunderstanding. For example, eye-contact has different indications. Looking straight into the other person's eyes for a longer time is considered among westerners as an indication of respect, trustworthiness, and honesty, especially in such interpersonal encounters as between teacher/student, father/son, or employer/employee (Benattabou, 2020). In the USA, it means you are interested in the person you are looking at and what that person is saying, while in the Middle Eastern culture, eye contact is considered less appropriate.

2.4. On Attitude

Attitude means understanding human behavior. It is characterized as a sophisticated mental state involving beliefs and emotions. One definition which was proposed by Allport (1967), he views attitude as a mentally neutral state of readiness organized by experience. It directs or influences how a person reacts to all things and circumstances that are related to it. People's attitudes towards their profession have an effect on their performance. For Harpin (1979) "Attitudes can be defined as learned predispositions to respond to objects or situations in particular ways. They are resistant to change, but they are not immutable, and not amenable to direct observation" (p. 38). The term "attitude" refers to a person's ideas and attitudes about things or phenomena, typically those in their own social environment. It typically results in varying degrees of favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward the relevant things or situations (Ahmed, 1989). Eagly and Chaiken (2007) define the term 'attitude' as a psychological tendency expressed through the evaluation of a certain entity with a certain degree of pro and against bias.

2.4.1 Attitudes in EFL Teaching

Teaching is a career that can benefit from attitude. At all educational levels, attitudes can be said to have a discernible impact on the learning process. Hills (1982) states that in education [attitudes] are considered very important since they affect the learning process. As educators consider the language they employ in the classroom, their attitudes become more apparent. Their views have a significant impact on the "growth or decay, restoration or destruction" of language, whether they are aware of it or not (Baker, 1988, as cited in Latchanna, 2014, p. 1)

There has been widespread consensus that the success of teaching is strongly connected with instructors' attitudes regarding their profession. In general, it can be said that there are signs that teachers' attitudes are positively correlated with their success in the classroom. Student-teacher interactions may be impacted by teachers' attitudes. A teacher forms a particular attitude toward an individual student. To put it another way, a teacher is likely to start treating a student differently once he has a certain attitude toward them. As a result, attitudes have the power to influence students and act as self-fulfilling prophecies (Latchanna, 2014). Faerch et al. (1984) report that it is evident that there is a reasonably strong relationship between success or achievement in learning a foreign language and the learner's attitude, whether that attitude is toward the academic subject, a specific foreign country, or any other important feature of the language.

Reflective teaching is based on the idea that teachers can enhance the quality of their instruction by critically reflecting on their teaching experiences. A reflective teaching strategy tries to raise students' level of pragmatic abilities by implementing classroom procedures including audio and video recording of the teacher's session for later evaluation

and reflection. A group discussion with peers or a supervisor to discuss pedagogy-related topics can also have a positive effect (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, as cited in Watman and Hirmiz, 2019).

The success of learners has been largely attributed to their attitudes toward learning a foreign language. Likewise, teachers' attitude is important and the teaching and learning process can be guided to attain its goals in large by the attitudes of the teachers. Teachers form a crucial sector within the educational community. Their positive or negative attitudes can remarkably influence teaching and learning processes (Morrison and McIntyre 1984, as cited in Ahmed, 1989). Teachers' attitudes, either positive or negative, are mostly derived from the experience they have with teaching foreign language (Alfred Smith, 1971). Teachers are supposed to be aware of gauging students' personal and organizational efficiency and effectiveness, providing a framework for diagnosing organization problems and needs, and designing programmers of organizational improvement and staff development in schools (Ahmed, 1989).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

To achieve the study aims, and answer its research questions, a quantitative research design is adopted in this study. Fifty EFL teachers at six universities in Kurdistan are used as the source of the data employed for this study.

3.2 Instrument and procedure

The instrument used for data collection in this study is a Likert scale questionnaire constructed in the light of the theoretical background of the study. The questionnaire is divided into two main parts. The first is related to the verbal elements of sociopragmatic competence (idioms, proverbs, and metaphor), while the second part is related to the non-verbal elements.

To ensure its validity, the questionnaire was exposed to a jury of specialists whose opinions have been considered in the final version of the questionnaire. To ensure its practicality and suitability for the study purposes, a pilot study was carried out on 12 instructors 1/10 to 3/10 2022. The final administration of the questionnaire was carried out on 6, 10, 13/11/2022.

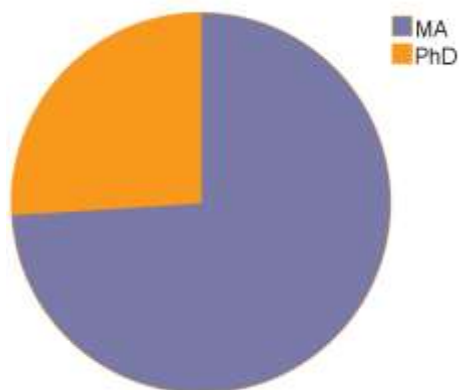
3.3. Setting and Participants

The questionnaire has been given to 50 teachers of English departments whose specialization are ELT, TESOL, applied linguistics and linguistics. They have been teaching communication, conversation, cross-cultural communication and speaking. Their degrees are MA and PhD. They are staff members at the universities of Sulaimani, Salahaddin, Halabja, Charmo, Garmian and Duhok University. Table (1) below shows the participants' qualifications:

Table (1): Participants' qualifications

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid MA	37	74.0	74.0	74.0
PhD	13	26.0	26.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Figure (1): Participants' qualifications



3.4 Analysis of Data

3.4.1. Analysis of Data Related to Verbal Elements

3.4.1.1. Analysis of Items Related to Idioms

1. It is important to use role play and videos in teaching English idioms in class and encourage EFL learners to learn idioms for effective communication and developing their speaking skills.

The descriptive statistics test of this item (as shown in Table 2) reveals a mean score of (4.18) which indicates that the majority of the respondents agree that it is important to teach English idioms in class and encourage EFL learners to learn idioms for effective communication and developing their speaking skills. The SD is 0.720, which means that respondents' answers concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. The frequency of the item (58 %) shows that the majority of the respondents agree and (32%) strongly agree with this item. This wide agreement can be due to the teachers' belief that learning English idioms can enable EFL students to better communicate, and so it is necessary to be taught by teachers.

2. Knowing English idioms is important for learners to comprehend written and spoken texts.

As Table (2) shows, 64 % of the respondents agree, and 26% strongly agree with this item. The mean of answers to this item is 4.14, which means it is positively acknowledged. The SD is 0.639, so the teachers' positive answers concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. Accordingly, teachers feel affirm that learning idioms can help students to better comprehend written and spoken texts.

3. Idioms are difficult to understand because students lack cultural knowledge about English idioms.

The mean of answers to this item is 4.20, and the standard deviation is 0.782. Accordingly, teachers affirm that students face a serious problem in comprehending English idioms due to their lack of enough knowledge about English culture. Consequently, students should be

taught the origin of English idioms and their cultural aspects* to improve their comprehension.

4. It is difficult for students to identify the cultural similarities and differences between English and Kurdish in terms of idioms

With this item, 76% of the respondents show agreement. The mean of responses to this item is 4.02, with a standard deviation 0.654. This means that most teachers agree with the content of this item affirming that the lack of knowledge about culture makes students face problems in recognizing the similarities and the differences between Kurdish and English.

3.4.1.2. Analysis of Items Related to Proverbs

1. Learning English proverbs through role play and watching videos can help students to develop their communicative competence and speaking abilities.

1. Based on Table (2), 72% of the respondents agree with this statement, which. The weighted mean of this item is (4.02) with a standard deviation (.589). This shows that a high number of respondents believe that learning English proverbs enables students to speak and communicate well in English. Interestingly, no respondents show strong disagreement. Only 1 out of 50 teachers show his disagreement with this statement.

2. Knowing English proverbs is important for students to better comprehend the spoken and written texts.

The results show that 40 % and 7 % respectively agree and strongly agree with this item. The mean of agreement is 3.88, with standard deviation 0.824. This means that teachers agree with the content of this question with positive direction. Like idioms, teachers believe that English proverbs are important in English language and especially in spoken and written texts, for this reason students should be taught proverbs to develop their spoken and written comprehension.

3. Learning English proverbs can enable students to better understand English culture and perceive the cultural similarities and differences between English and Kurdish.

The results show that 80% of the participants agree with this statement. The mean of this item is (4.00) with a standard deviation (0.571). This shows that a high number of responders believe that learning English proverbs enables students to understand English culture and identify the cultural differences and similarities between Kurdish and English. Interestingly, no responders show strong disagreement. Only 2 out of 50 teachers show their disagreement with this statement.

4. Proverbs are difficult to understand because students lack cultural knowledge about English proverbs.

The results show that 80 % and 14% of the respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with this item. Only 2 respondents disagree with this item. The mean is 4.04, so, the item is positively acknowledged. The SD is 0.570, so the responses concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. Accordingly, teachers affirm that students have difficulties in comprehending English proverbs because they don't have enough knowledge about English culture. Hence, students should be taught English culture and proverbial to improve their comprehension.

3.4.1.3. Analysis of Items Related to Metaphors

1. It is important to teach metaphors in EFL class because this can help students to communicate efficiently.

The descriptive statistics test of this item reveals 56 % and 20% of the respondents agree strongly agree with this item. Only 10% of the participants disagree with this item. The mean score of this item (3.86) which indicates that the majority of the teachers believe that it is important to teach English metaphors in class and that teaching metaphors can develop students' communicative skills.

2. Knowing English metaphors is important for students to better comprehend spoken and written texts.

The results show that 64 % and 20% of the respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with this item. The mean is 3.98, so, it is positively acknowledged. The SD is 0.742, so the responses concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. This indicates that the teachers indicate the necessity of using written and spoken texts to teach metaphors, and the necessity of teaching metaphors to students for this purpose.

3. Metaphors should be taught in subjects that improve students' communication abilities like 'conversation', not only in literary texts.

The mean of responses to this question is 3.44, with a standard deviation 0.951. This means that teachers positively agree with the content of this question. They think that, like other verbal elements of sociopragmatic competence, more attention should be paid to English metaphors. Metaphors should be taught in other subjects like conversation, not only in poetry and drama, because life is full of metaphors and we use them in our daily communication.

4. Metaphors are difficult to understand because students lack knowledge about English culture.

The mean of answers to this question is 3.74, with standard deviation 0.777. This means that the majority of teachers agree with the content of this question. They think that, like idioms and proverbs, lack of knowledge about English culture poses difficulties for students and makes them avoid miscommunication. For this reason, students should be familiarized with English culture.

5. It is difficult for students to identify the cultural differences and similarities of English and Kurdish metaphors.

The results show that 64% of the respondents agree with this statement. The mean of responses to this item is (3.76) with a standard deviation (0.744). This indicates that believe that students can't identify the cultural differences and similarities between metaphors of Kurdish and English. Interestingly, no respondents show strong disagreement; only 4 out of 50 teachers show their disagreement with this statement.

3.4.2. Analysis of Items Related to Nonverbal Elements

1. Teaching body language (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, head nodding, eye contact, smiling, hand movement, raising eye brow) to EFL students is important for developing their communicative, and sociopragmatic competence.

The results of analyzing this item reveals that 60 % and 24% of the respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with this item. The mean is (4.02). The SD is 0.769, so the responses concentrate around the mean. This result indicates that many respondents agree that it is important to teach body language in class. They believe that teaching body language enables students to effectively communicate and develop their sociopragmatic

competence. Only 6% of the participants disagree about this item. No strong disagreement is recognized.

2. The meanings and uses of non-verbal elements should be taught directly and consciously.

The frequency results of this item show that 50 % shows of the respondents agree, and 22% strongly agree with this item. The mean is 3.86, and the SD is 0.857, so the responses concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. Accordingly, half of the teachers are interested in teaching the nonverbal elements directly and consciously. For them, it is important to do this because students may not know how to use nonverbal elements in English, in addition to the differences between English and Kurdish in terms of using these non-verbal elements.

3. Teachers should use teaching aids such as pictures, photos, videos and audios to teach non-verbal elements of communication.

The results show that 70% of the respondents agree with this statement the mean of this item is (4.06) with a SD (0.652). This indicates that teachers agree that using teaching aids like photos, and videos can help students to better understand the uses of nonverbal elements of sociopragmatics competence.

4. Teachers should use role plays to teach non-verbal elements.

The results show that 58 % and 22% of the respondents respectively agree and strongly agree with this item. The mean is 4.00, with a SD 0.700, which means that the responses concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. These results indicate that teachers believe that using role play to teach nonverbal elements is an important technique. It can provide students with a real-like opportunity to practice nonverbal elements.

5. Pair and group work activities are efficient to develop students' competence in the area of non-verbal elements.

The results show that 74 % of the respondents agree with this item. Only 2% of the respondents disagree with this item, while there is no strongly disagreement at all. The mean is 4.00, with a SD 0.571, which means that the responses concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. This indicates that teachers encourage the use of pair and group work activities to teach nonverbal elements of sociopragmatic competence. For them, these are important techniques in that they provide students with a chance to practice the nonverbal elements of sociopragmatics.

6. EFL students should be familiarized with the cultural differences between English and Kurdish in terms of non-verbal elements, and cultural differences between both languages since it is one of the main problems of teaching non-verbal elements of sociopragmatic competence.

Analysis of the results shows that 70 % of the respondents agree, and 18% strongly agree with this item. Interestingly no strong disagreement response is found. Only 1 teacher out of 50 shows disagreement. The mean is 4.04, with a SD 0.605, which means that the responses concentrate around the mean and the attitudes are close enough. This shows that teachers agree that teaching cultural differences between English and Kurdish in terms of nonverbal is necessary and cultural differences make problem of teaching non-verbal, as each culture has its own use and interpretation of nonverbal elements.

7. EFL students should be given information about English superstitions and traditions as a part of non-verbal communication.

The mean of teachers' responses to this mean is 3.78, standard deviation 0.582. This means that teachers positively agree with the content of this item. Teachers feel it is necessary to pay more attention to superstitions and traditions and familiarize students with them.

Figure (2) and Table (2) below summarize the frequency, percentage, and SD of the respondents' attitude towards teaching the verbal and nonverbal of sociopragmatic competence.

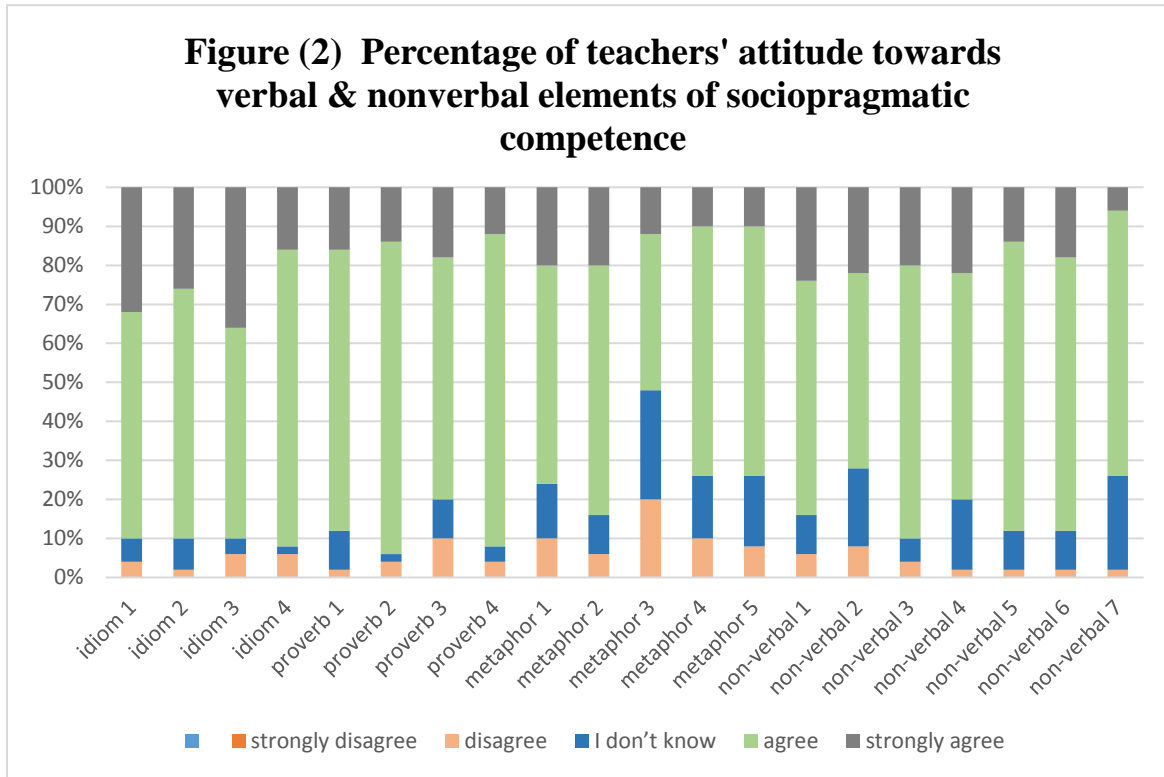


Table (2) Frequency, percentage, and SD of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire items

Responses Items	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Don't know		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	Mode	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%			
Verbal	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Idiom 1	0	0	2	4	3	6	29	58	16	32	4.18	4	0.72
Idiom 2	0	0	1	2	4	8	32	64	13	26	4.14	4	0.639
Idiom 3	0	0	3	6	2	4	27	54	18	36	4.2	4	0.782
Idiom 4	0	0	3	6	1	2	38	76	8	16	4.04	4	0.654
Prov. 1	0	0	1	2	5	10	36	72	8	16	4.02	4	0.589
Prov. 2	0	0	2	4	1	2	40	80	7	14	4.04	4	0.57
Prov. 3	0	0	5	10	5	10	31	62	9	18	3.88	4	0.824
Prov. 4	0	0	2	4	2	4	40	80	6	12	4	4	0.571
Meta. 1	0	0	5	10	7	14	28	56	10	20	3.86	4	0.857
Meta.2	0	0	3	6	5	10	32	64	10	20	3.98	4	0.742

Meta.3	0	0	10	20	14	28	20	40	6	12	3.44	4	0.951
Meta.4	0	0	5	10	8	16	32	64	5	10	3.74	4	0.777
Meta.5	0	0	4	8	9	18	32	64	5	10	3.76	4	0.744
Non-v. 1	0	0	3	6	5	10	30	60	12	24	4.02	4	0.769
Non- v. 2	0	0	4	8	10	20	25	50	11	22	3.86	4	0.857
Non- v. 3	0	0	2	4	3	6	35	70	10	20	4.06	4	0.652
Non- v. 4	0	0	1	2	9	18	29	58	11	22	4	4	0.7
Non- v. 5	0	0	1	2	5	10	37	74	7	14	4	4	0.571
Non- v. 6	0	0	1	2	5	10	35	70	9	18	4.04	4	0.605
Non- v.7	0	0	1	2	12	24	34	68	3	6	3.78	4	0.582

4. Discussion of Results

The results arrived at are discussed here in the form of answers to the research questions raised in the study:

1. What is the attitude of teachers toward developing the verbal and (2) non-verbal elements of Kurdish EFL university students' sociopragmatic competence (sociopragmatic elements)?

Generally, the overall mean of the data shows that teachers are interested in developing Kurdish EFL university students' sociopragmatic competence (the elements). The second and fourth items relevant to the element of proverb in the questionnaire got the highest level of agreement. According to the obtained data, what is quite clear is that teachers have a positive attitude towards all statements, they show their agreement and the mode for each statement is 4, which values 'I agree' option. Their responses support the questions that teaching verbal elements (idioms, proverbs and metaphors) and non-verbal elements has a crucial role in developing students' communicative skills.

2. What is the attitude of teachers toward the problems of developing these elements of students' sociopragmatic competence?

The analysis of the data shows that the majority of teachers believe that the main problems of developing students' sociopragmatic competence include (1) students' unfamiliarity with the English culture (2) lack of knowledge about the similarities and differences between English and Kurdish cultures. These represent the main barriers for teaching and developing EFL students' sociopragmatic competence.

To solve the first problems based on Kasper's believe (2001) teachers can provide learners with a different types of simulated real-life activities, such as role-plays and showing videos. These help students to find themselves in the target culture and they learn to use each of these elements in the right social situation. to solve the problems that relate to the cultural differences and similarities between English and Kurdish. Teachers themselves should first be knowledgeable about both culture in terms of difference and similarities of these elements in their meaning and their use and then raising students' awareness in this concern by comparing those (idioms, proverbs and metaphor) that exist in both languages. Using authentic materials such as newspapers, magazine, journal, stories...etc. can facilitate this. Even for the non-verbal elements role-plays, audio, video and photos can be used in addition to these authentic materials.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The majority of Kurdish EFL university teachers have a positive attitude towards developing students' sociopragmatic competence (verbal and non-verbal elements).

2. Kurdish EFL university teachers believe that raising students' awareness in this area would improve their communicative skill in EFL. This verifies the first hypothesis adopted in the study.
3. Students' unfamiliarity with English culture and their lack of knowledge about the similarities and differences between English and Kurdish are among the main barriers of developing the students' sociopragmatic competence. This verifies the second hypothesis adopted in the study.
4. The teachers recommend that more attention should be paid to developing students' sociopragmatic competence by using authentic materials such as: role-play and video and employing techniques and strategies that give students more real opportunities to participate and communicate in pair and group work activities.
5. Teachers are also recommended to pay more attention to diagnosing those problems that face the process of learning and teaching sociopragmatic competence and have proper solutions for them.

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