The Impact of Implicit vs. Explicit Pragmatic Instruction on Iraqi EFL Students' Production of Apologies, Requests, and Refusals and their Attitudes towards the Type of Instruction

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Abstract

The present research investigated the potential effects of implicit vs. explicit pragmatic instruction on Iraqi EFL students' speech act production, examining the possible intervening role of speech act type in this regard. Additionally, the learners' attitudes towards the interventions were examined. 120 Iraqi English majors at Al-Kufa University, Iraq comprised the study sample. The learners were at pre-intermediate proficiency level, being randomly placed into the implicit (N= 40), explicit (N= 43), and control (N= 37) groups. A standardized Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) assessed their pragmatic performance before and after the treatments. Within six online classes, the explicit group's (EG's) attention was directly drawn to the speech acts via consciousness-raising activities and metapragmatic explanation. Meanwhile, the implicit group (IG) was exposed to the target speech acts through reading comprehension texts, while the control group (CG) received no pragmatic instruction. Data analyses indicated that, regardless of the speech act type, both interventions significantly improved the participants' production, and explicit instruction yielded superior results. Additionally, both experimental groups had highly positive attitudes towards the conducted interventions. The EG's feelings were more positive, although not to a significant extent. The findings have implications for L2 instructors, materials developers, as well as curriculum developers.

تأثير التعليم الضمني مقابل التعليم العملي الصريح على إنتاج الطلاب العراقيين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للاعتذارات والطلبات وحالات الرفض ومواقفهم تجاه نوع التعليمات

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الملخص:

بحث هذا البحث في التأثيرات المحتملة للتعليمات الواقعية الضمنية مقابل التعليمات البراغماتية الصريحة على إنتاج فعل الكلام لطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين ، ودراسة الدور التدخلي المحتمل لنوع الفعل الكلامي في هذا الصدد. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، تم فحص مواقف المتعلمين تجاه التدخلات. وشكلت عينة الدراسة ١٢٠ تخصصاً عراقياً للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة الكوفة بالعراق. كان المتعلمون في مستوى إتقان ما قبل المتوسط ، حيث تم وضعهم عشوائيًا في المجموعات الضمنية (N = 40) والصريحة (N = 43) والمجموعة الضابطة (N = 37). قام اختبار إنجاز الخطاب الكتابي الموحد (WDCT) بتقييم أدائهم العملي قبل وبعد العلاج. خلال ستة فصول عبر الإنترنت ، تم لفت انتباه المجموعة الصريحة (EG) مباشرة إلى أفعال الكلام من خلال أنشطة زيادة الوعي والتفسير الميتابراغماتي. وفي الوقت نفسه ، تعرضت المجموعة الضمنية (IG) لأفعال الكلام المستهدفة من خلال قراءة نصوص الفهم ، بينما لم تتلق المجموعة الضابطة (CG) أي تعليمات عملية. أشارت تحليلات البيانات إلى أنه ، بغض النظر عن نوع فعل الكلام ، أدى كلا التدخلين إلى تحسن كبير في إنتاج المشاركين ، كما أسفرت التعليمات الصريحة عن نتائج متفوقة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، كان لكل من المجموعتين التجريبيتين مواقف إيجابية للغاية تجاه التدخلات التي أجريت. كانت مشاعر EG أكثر إيجابية ، وإن لم يكن إلى حد كبير. النتائج لها آثار على مدربي اللغة الثانية ومطوري المواد وكذلك مطوري المناهج الدراسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (تعليم عملي ضمني، تعليم عملي صريح ، إنتاج قانون الكلام ، مواقف، اعتذار ، طلب، رفض)

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence, that includes what is beyond the knowledge at the grammatical level, plays a major role in successfully communicating in social contexts (Thomas, 1983). Indeed, deficient L2 pragmatic knowledge inhibits L2 learners from conveying their intentions and maintaining meaningful relations. According to Celce-Murcia's (2007) definition of

pragmatic capability, proper speech act realization could reflect L2 learners' pragmatic development. Richards and Schmidt (2002) also define this concept as the way language speakers employ and comprehend speech acts. Kasper and Roever (2005) refer to pragmatic competence as speakers' successful comprehension and realization of pragmaliguistically and sociopragmatically appropriate speech acts. However, cross-cultural differences make speech act production a complex undertaking. Therefore, awareness of pragmatic properties of speech acts is of paramount importance, particularly when the realized illocutionary acts impose threat to the interlocutors' face, as in requesting, refusing, and apologizing, that are examined in the present endeavor.

Presence in L2 settings and exposure to L2 input does not lead to native-like pragmatic acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Taguchi, 2018). Research has shown that teaching pragmatics is not only effective (Golato, 2003) but also necessary (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). As Kasper and Schmidt (1996) ascertain, one main obstacle to L2 learners' pragmatic advancement is "the incomplete or misleading input provided by pedagogical materials" (p. 18). Consequently, effective instructional interventions, that expose learners to plenty of authentic input, could enormously aid them to overcome their learning difficulties. Earlier studies suggest that consciousness-raising input-based methods could be greatly beneficial for EFL learners to promote their speech act production (Taguchi, 2015a). Two well-researched input-based interventions, which have been found effective in pragmatic studies, are implicit and metapragmatic explicit teaching methods (Taguchi, 2015b).

Attitudes, as the determinant of people's future actions, are comprised of individuals' affect, cognition, and behavior (Zimbardo, Ebbesen, & Maslach, 1977). EFL learners' attitudes towards receiving culture-related instruction closely and positively associate with pragmatic recognition and production (Rafieyan, 2016). This highlights the significance of evaluating learners' attitudes towards the type of pragmatic instruction that teachers intend to employ. In what follows, a number of research efforts examining the impact of the implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction methods on the three in-focus speech acts and EFL learners' attitudes towards pragmatic instruction are presented.

Implicit/Explicit Instruction of Requests

From among the three speech acts under study, requesting has attracted much more attention in the literature. It is a commonly used directive illocutionary act (Searle, 1979) by which the speaker requests the addressee to take an undertaking for which she/he might not be eager (McGuthrie, 2015). Consequently, it could turn into an FTA, threatening the face of both sides, particularly the negative face of the addressee, as it could deprive her/him of freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1978).

The studies by Safont-Jorda` (2004), Halenko and Jones (2011), Ifantidou (2013), as well as Rajabi, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) revealed that instructing pragmatic features by providing students with metapragmatic information greatly enhances their request realizations. Omar and Razi (2022) conducted a study on 42 EFL university students at the intermediate proficiency level in Iraq. They directly instructed the speech acts of suggesting and requesting by utilizing videos and TV series to the experimental group. On the other hand, the control group was exposed to the intended pragmatic features in their textbook and did not receive the researchers' direct instruction. Their experiment had a significant impact on the students' speech act production. There also exist a number of studies in which the effects of implicit and explicit pragmatic interventions are compared. Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018) probed into 69 Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of apologies, requests, and refusals and found metapragmatic awareness-raising highly beneficial. Additionally, Derakhshan and Shakki's (2021) meta-analysis point to the supremacy of the explicit method in teaching requests.

Implicit/Explicit Instruction of Apologies

As an expressive speech act, apologizing refers to speakers' attempts to show their regret after violating the existing social conventions (Cohen, 1983). Accepting the blame for the caused annoyance, the apology maker tries to amend the situation and bring back the social concord (Jebahi, 2011). This could turn out 'costly' for the apology maker's face (Ogiermann, 2009, p. 48). Although an apology maker might threaten her/his face if the apology is not accepted, she/he could save the addressee's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Derakhshan and Eslami-Rasekh (2015) probed into the role of awareness-raising in promoting Iranian EFL students' realization of requests and apologies. They instructed the

learners by the medium of videos and their consciousness of the target pragmatic aspects was arisen through the use of class discussions, role-plays, and interactive translation. They found that awareness-raising significantly increased the EFL learners' pragmatic development. In fact, their study proved the efficacy of input-based instruction.

Baqerzadeh Hosseini and Safari's (2018) research on Iranian EFL university students' recognition and production of requests, refusals, and apologies revealed that both implicit and explicit instruction positively and significantly affected the learners' pragmatic performance, while explicit method had a superior impact on the students' production. Shark (2019) carried out a study on forty advanced Kurdish Iraqi EFL learners. She compared the Iraqi learners' apologies to those made by ten English natives. Implicit as well as explicit pragmatic instruction was found significantly effective, while explicit instruction yielded superior results in the short- and long-run. Additionally, in a study on EFL learners' recognition of refusals and apologies, Derakhshan and Shakki (2020) found both pragmatic interventions were beneficial. Nonetheless, explicit instruction yielded more desirable results.

Implicit/Explicit Instruction of Refusals

Refusals are commissive face-threatening speech acts that reject already commenced requests, offers, suggestions, and invitations (Usó-Juan, 2013). Refusal making could be a complex task, as it threatens the positive face of the request maker, the eagerness to be approved and respected as a society member.

Mohammed's (2012) study on Iraqi university freshmen indicated that explicit pragmatic instruction brings about significantly positive effects on Iraqi EFL students' production of requests and refusals. Khatib and Baqerzadeh Hosseini (2015) instructed 80 Iranian EFL university students via literary vs. non-literary materials presented by explicit instruction vs. implicit teaching method (input-enhancement). The researchers examined the speech acts of apologizing, requesting, refusing, inviting, and suggesting. Their study showed no significant differences between the learners instructed by literary and those by non-literary genre. However, the instructional methods had a significant impact in favor of the explicit groups.

Ahmadian's (2020) research on seventy-eight Iranian English learners at upper-intermediate proficiency level revealed that both implicit and explicit instruction provided significant short-term as well as long-term benefits when teaching refusal strategies. In other words, both instruction types helped the learners promote their recognition and production of appropriate refusals; however, the explicit group gained more. The same results were obtained in the studies conducted by Farrokhi and Atashian (2012) on Iranian EFL learners and Zhan (2017) on Japanese language learners.

Learners' Attitudes towards Implicit/Explicit Instruction

Taking an attitude is referred to as having a personal evaluation of a person/thing (Gardner, 1985), which in turn contributes to a personal decision. In other words, according to the Reasoned Action Theory (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), people's attitudes predict their future actions and behaviors. Therefore, examining EFL learners' attitudes towards implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction could be a determinant of how learners could be affected by the interventions and which method is preferable to be utilized in EFL classes. However, scarce attention has been dedicated to this research area.

Most of the conducted studies have probed into EFL learners' attitudes towards learning the TL culture in language classes (e.g., Albirini, 2009; Güven, 2015; Dweik & Al-sayyed, 2015). In a closely related study, Shahi and Gharagozloo (2020) addressed EFL instructors' and students' perceptions of and feelings on the implicit and explicit pragmatic interventions by surveying how implicit and explicit methods affect students' interest in speech act learning, their motivation, their perceptions of the value and significance of speech acts, and their problems in acquiring speech acts. They found that both implicit and explicit pragmatic methods were interesting, useful, motivating, and necessary to the EFL learners, although utilizing the explicit metapragmatic method in teaching pragmatics was perceived as being more favored and effective. The learners also had significantly different perceptions of the degree of learning difficulty they had experienced with implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction. They believed that learning invitations and requests (not apologies) by explicit method could be much easier than learning them implicitly. On the other hand, most of the teachers agreed that pragmatic features ought to be instructed when learners gain a particular

level of proficiency, learners need to get conscious of the L2 pragmatic properties, and their available instructional materials are not pragmatically informative enough.

2. Objectives of the Study

Abundant research has been conducted on implicit/explicit pragmatic instruction, and speech acts have been a focus of interest for SLA researchers. Nevertheless, few studies have investigated the efficacy of the two aforementioned pragmatic instruction types and EFL learners' attitudes towards them in the Iraqi culture. Accordingly, the present research examined the potential effectiveness of implicit vs. explicit pragmatic instruction in Iraqi EFL learners' use of apologies, requests, and refusals, probing into the role of speech act type in this regard. The aforementioned speech acts were selected since they not only are widely used but also could be face-threatening and thus cause communication failures. To investigate whether the instruction methods were favored by EFL students, the Iraqi learners' attitudes towards the utilized instruction types were also examined. In line with the aims of this endeavor, three research questions were posed.

1. Does the type of pragmatic instruction (implicit vs. explicit) have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' production of apologies, requests, and refusals?

2. Does the type of speech act play any significant role in error corrections made by Iraqi EFL learners after receiving instruction on producing apologies, requests, and refusals?

3. What are the Iraqi EFL learners' attitudes towards receiving implicit vs. explicit instruction on apologies, requests, and refusals?

Accordingly, the following null hypotheses were formulated.

$H_0$1. The type of pragmatic instruction (implicit vs. explicit) does not have any significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' production of apologies, requests, and refusals.

$H_0$2. The type of speech act does not play any significant role in error corrections made by Iraqi EFL learners after receiving instruction on producing apologies, requests, and refusals.

3. Method

Participants

Fifty-four male and sixty-six female Iraqi EFL students majoring in English at Al Kufa University, Iraq, aged between 19 and 26, comprised the study sample. The participants were B.A. students selected through convenience sampling and homogenized by the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The learners were at pre-intermediate proficiency level and were randomly assigned into the implicit (N= 40; 19 male and 21 female learners), explicit (N=43; 17 male and 26 female learners), and control (N=37; 18 male and 19 female learners) groups.

Instruments

Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)

OQPT was used to avoid the students' heterogeneity in terms of language proficiency. It contained sixty questions with three to four alternatives, assessing the test takers' general knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. The participants were scored on a scale of 60. According to the test guideline, those who scored between 18 and 29 were at CEFR A2 or pre-intermediate level. The mean score of the pre-intermediate learners was calculated, and the students -/+ 2SD the mean were invited to take part in the research.

Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

As the researchers could not find a single reliable test to tap into the participants' production of the three speech acts in focus in formal and informal situations, they employed a WDCT adapted from the studies by Farahian, Rezaee, and Gholami's (2012), Valipour and Jadidi's (2014), and Tajeddin and Tayebipour's (2015). Nine situations were presented in the WDCT, and the respondents were required to write three apologies, three requests, and three refusals for the provided situations, that were different with regard to social variables (i.e., relative social power/distance). Its validity was confirmed by three EFL instructors. In addition, the test enjoyed an inter-rater reliability ratio of 0.96. The WDCT is provided Appendix A.

Attitude Questionnaire

Two questionnaires (one for each of the IG and EG) were employed to assess the learners' feelings on the instructional methods, materials, and classes as well as their perceptions of the efficacy of the utilized pedagogical interventions (Appendix B). Each questionnaire included fifteen items, partly inspired by Jahansouz Shahi and Gharagozloo's

(2020) study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the questionnaires employed in the IG and EG equaled 0.802 and 0.876, respectively.

Materials

The instructional materials used in the IG's classes contained a set of texts embracing samples of the target speech acts in formal and informal situations. The texts were in the form of conversations, followed by comprehension questions. The EG's teaching materials included a researcher-made PowerPoint file and a series of YouTube videos through which the instructor could explicitly teach the speech acts and their pragmatic features.

Procedure

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the whole data collection procedure was conducted online. As the first step, all the participants took the OQPT and were randomly assigned into three groups. The groups took the pre-WDCT. The IG was exposed to the target speech acts through a number of reading comprehension texts in which the speech act strategies were embedded. The instructor (one of the researchers) asked the participants to answer the questions and share their responses via Telegram. In the meanwhile, the EG was instructed through YouTube videos and a researcher-made PowerPoint file within six online sessions on Free Conference Call. The strategies as well as the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of each speech act were explicitly taught, elaborated on, exemplified, and practiced. The CG received no pragmatic instruction. Next, all the groups took the WDCT for the second time, and the experimental groups completed the attitude questionnaires. In order to rate the participants' performance in the WDCT, the instructor and another EFL teacher utilized the taxonomies of apology strategies by (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983), request strategies by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) as well as Trosborg (1995), and refusal strategies by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990). They consulted two British and three Australian native speakers via WhatsApp and email in case of problems. The obtained data from 120 students were analyzed via the ANCOVA procedure. Morerover, the learners' responses to the questionnaires were rated from 1 to 5 and then analyzed via the Mann-Whitney U test in SPSS.

4. Results

Analysis of the Results Related to the First Research Question

The mean scores of the CG, IG, and EG obtained in the WDCT prior to and after conducting the study were calculated and are reported in Table 1. The total score equaled 9.

Table 1. The Mean Scores of the CG, IG, and EG before and after the Treatments

Group	Test	N	Mean	SD
CG	Pre-test	37	4.97	1.443
	Post-test	37	4.38	1.255
IG	Pre-test	40	4.68	1.421
	Post-test	40	5.53	1.633
EG	Pre-test	43	4.58	1.735
	Post-test	43	6.23	1.151

As reported in Table 1, while the mean score in the CG decreased (from 4.97 to 4.38), it increased in the IG from 4.68 to 5.53 and in the EG from 4.58 to 6.23. To examine the statistical significance of the existing discrepancies among the groups, an ANCOVA was carried out, analyzing the participants' production in the post-WDCT. Table 2 depicts the ANCOVA's outcomes.

Table 2. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (WDCT)

Dependent Variable: Post- WDCT

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power[b]
Corrected Model	83.313[a]	3	27.771	15.947	.000	.292	1.000
Intercept	209.121	1	209.121	120.082	.000	.509	1.000
Pre- WDCT	14.340	1	14.340	8.234	.005	.066	.812
Group	74.980	2	37.490	21.528	.000	.271	1.000
Error	202.012	116	1.741				
Total	3817.000	120					
Corrected Total	285.325	119					

As Table 2 demonstrates, while the pre-test influence was adjusted for, the three groups had significantly different performance in the post-WDCT (p=.000). In fact, 27.1% of the variance in the post-WDCT scores was caused by the treatments, suggesting that the interventions significantly improved the participants' speech act production. Table 3 shows the estimated means of the post-WDCT scores.

Table 3. The Estimated Means of the Groups' Post-WDCT Scores

Dependent Variable: Post- WDCT

	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CG	4.324[a]	.218	3.893	4.755
IG	5.538[a]	.209	5.125	5.952
EG	6.267[a]	.202	5.868	6.666

As could be observed in Table 3, compared to the CG, the two experimental groups obtained higher estimated mean scores in the post-WDCT (CG= 4.32, IG=5.54, EG=6.27). The post-hoc analyses are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Pairwise Comparisons (WDCT)

Dependent Variable: Post- WDCT

(I) Group 1=CG; 2=IG; 3=EG	(J) Group 1=CG; 2=IG; 3=EG	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.[b]
1	2	-1.214[*]	.302	.000
	3	-1.943[*]	.298	.000
2	1	1.214[*]	.302	.000
	3	-.729[*]	.290	.013
3	1	1.943[*]	.298	.000
	2	.729[*]	.290	.013

As indicated in Table 4, both the IG and EG outperformed the CG in the post-WDCT (p values= .000 and .000). Still, the EG's scores were significantly better than the IG's and CG's (p values= .013 and .000). In other words, although both implicit and explicit instruction helped the participants significantly improve their production of apologies, requests, and

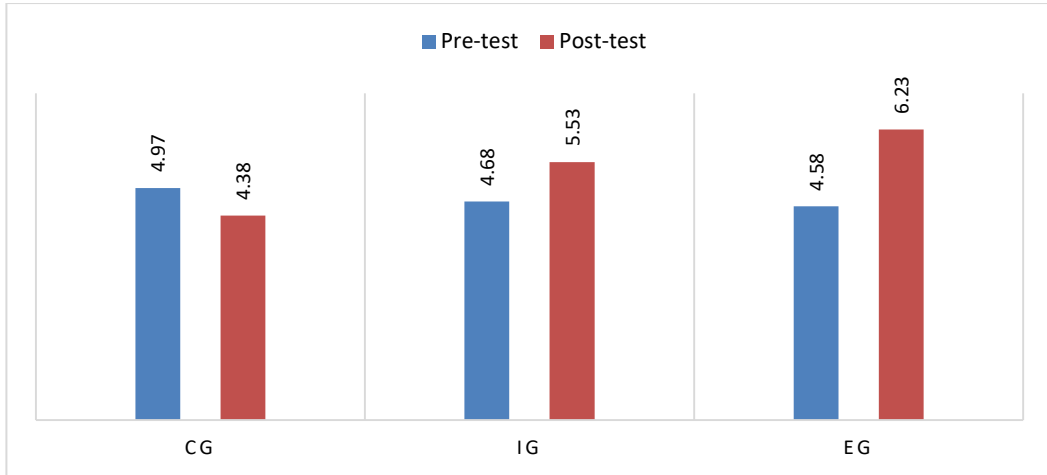refusals, the explicit intervention had superior results. Figures 1 and 2 show the results more vividly.

Figure 1. The Groups' Performance in the WDCT

As suggested by Figure 1, both the IG's and EG's speech act production improved; however, the EG had a greater improvement. Figure 2 visually represents the groups' estimated means in the post-WDCT.
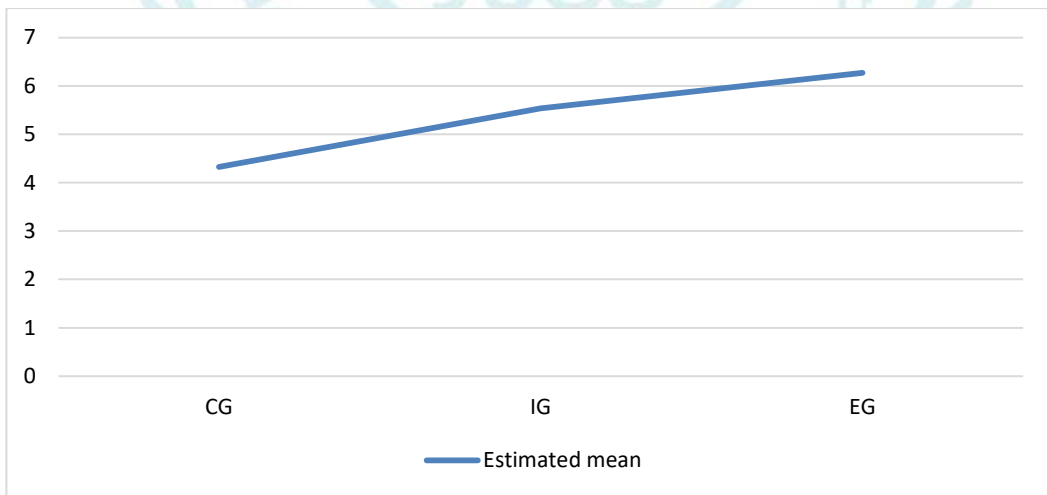
Figure 2. The Groups' Estimated Means in the Post-WDCT (the Participants' Production)

Figure 2 indicates that the best performance in the post-WDCT belonged to the EG and the weakest to the CG. Based on the earlier analyses, the first null hypothesis was refuted, implying that the type of instruction (implicit vs. explicit) significantly affected the Iraqi EFL students' use of apologies, requests, and refusals.

Analysis of the Results Related to the Second Research Question

The participants' production scores of the three speech acts, obtained before and after the treatments, are presented in Table 5. The total production score in each speech act equaled 3.

Table 5. The Groups' Production of the Speech Acts of Apology, Request, and Refusal

Group		Pre-test apology	Post-test apology	Pre-test request	Post-test request	Pre-test refusal	Post-test Refusal
CG	Mean	2.32	2.00	1.11	.97	1.54	1.41
	N	37	37	37	37	37	37
	SD	.709	.882	.737	.600	.836	.865
IG	Mean	2.20	2.70	1.38	1.35	1.10	1.48
	N	40	40	40	40	40	40
	SD	.823	.564	.705	.770	.778	.987
EG	Mean	2.30	2.70	1.19	1.40	1.09	2.00
	N	43	43	43	43	43	43
	SD	.741	.558	.732	.695	1.019	.926
Total	Mean	2.28	2.48	1.23	1.25	1.23	1.64
	N	120	120	120	120	120	120
	SD	.756	.745	.727	.713	.905	.960

As Table 5 illustrates, the CG's scores deteriorated in all the three speech acts under study. Additionally, the IG's production of apologies and refusals improved by 0.5 and 0.38, while their request making did not enhance. Finally, the EG's scores had an average 0.4, 0.21, and 0.91 increase in producing apologies, requests, and refusals. Figure 3 gives a clear illustration of the participants' production prior to and after the treatments.
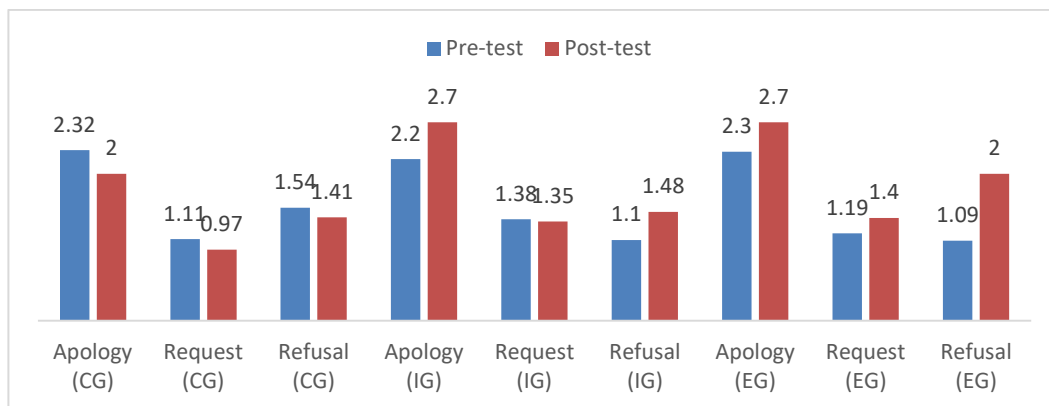
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Figure 3. The Groups' Production of the Speech Acts of Apology, Request, and Refusal

To investigate if the speech act type could have influenced the efficacy of the treatments on the participants' speech act production, a two-way ANCOVA was run. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (the Role of Speech Act Type in the Impact of the Implicit vs. Explicit Instruction on the Participants' Production)

Dependent Variable: Post-WDCT

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power[b]
Corrected Model	127.534[a]	9	14.170	24.331	.000	.385	1.000
Intercept	159.592	1	159.592	274.023	.000	.439	1.000
Pre-WDCT	6.875	1	6.875	11.804	.001	.033	.929
Group	21.499	2	10.750	18.457	.000	.095	1.000
Speech act	49.903	2	24.952	42.842	.000	.197	1.000
Group * Speech act	5.250	4	1.313	2.254	.063	.025	.658
Error	203.841	350	.582				
Total	1487.000	360					
Corrected Total	331.375	359					

As suggested by Table 6, while the pre-test influence was controlled for, the interaction effect of speech act and type of instruction was not statistically significant (p=.063),

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suggesting that speech act type did not have an intervening role. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis was accepted. In other words, regardless of the type of speech act in focus, the treatments had significant effects on the participants' post-test performance.

Analysis of the Results Related to the Third Research Question

To examine the groups' attitudes, the frequencies/percentages of the respondents' selections were computed. Next, in order to compute the mean scores in items 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, and 15, the selected items were scored from 1 to 5. As items 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 13 in both questionnaires attributed negative points to the treatments, the responses were scored in reverse. Finally, the mean scores were determined. Table 7 illustrates the frequencies, percentages, and means of the IG's responses to the attitude questionnaires.

Table 7. The IG's Responses to the Attitude Questionnaire

Item	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree	Mean	N	SD
1	1 (2.5%)	1 (2.5%)	4 (10%)	17 (42.5%)	17 (42.5%)	4.2000	40	.911
2	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	5 (12.5%)	22 (55%)	10 (25%)	3.9250	40	.971
3	16 (40%)	9 (22.5%)	9 (22.5%)	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	3.7750	40	1.310
4	15 (37.5%)	13 (32.5%)	6 (15%)	5 (12.5%)	1 (2.5%)	3.9000	40	1.127
5	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	5 (12.5%)	24 (60%)	8 (20%)	3.8750	40	.938
6	6 (15%)	12 (30%)	12 (30%)	6 (15%)	4 (10%)	3.2500	40	1.192
7	3 (7.5%)	3 (7.5%)	12 (30%)	19 (47.5%)	3 (7.5%)	3.4000	40	1.007
8	1 (2.5%)	3 (7.5%)	17 (42.5%)	9 (22.5%)	10 (25%)	3.6000	40	1.032
9	14 (35%)	11 (27.5%)	10 (25%)	5 (12.5%)	0	3.8500	40	1.051
10	7 (17.5%)	7 (17.5%)	8 (20%)	12 (30%)	6 (15%)	2.9250	40	1.347
11	15 (37.5%)	12 (30%)	7 (17.5%)	4 (10%)	2 (5%)	3.8500	40	1.188
12	3 (7.5%)	2 (5%)	8 (20%)	18 (45%)	9 (22.5%)	3.7000	40	1.114
13	7 (17.5%)	19 (47.5%)	8 (20%)	6 (15%)	0	3.6750	40	.944
14	1 (2.5%)	2 (5%)	7 (17.5%)	17 (42.5%)	13 (32.5%)	3.9750	40	.973
15	2 (5%)	1 (2.5%)	4 (10%)	13 (32.5%)	20 (50%)	4.2000	40	1.066

As the mean scores in Table 7 suggest, the IG had positive attitudes towards implicit pragmatic instruction. The highest mean scores belonged to items 1 (*The exercises helped me use the speech acts appropriately*. Mean=4.2) and 15 (*It is necessary for an English course to*

improve learners' pragmatic competence in addition to their listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Mean=4.2), while the lowest score pertained to item 10 (M=2.92) implying that the participants had less agreement on learning the speech acts in context as being a time-saving method. Figure 4 visually represents the mean scores of the IG's responses to each item of the attitude questionnaire.
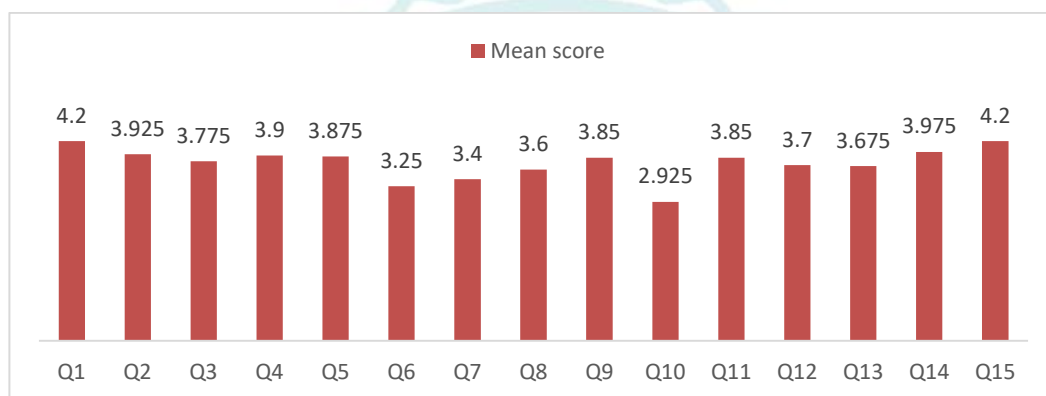

Figure 4. The Means of the IG's Responses to the Attitude Questionnaire

The statistics of what the EG opted for in the attitude questionnaire are tabulated in the following.

Table 8. The EG's Responses to the Attitude Questionnaire

Item	Completely disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely agree	Mean	N	SD
1	4 (9.3%)	5 (11.6%)	8 (18.6%)	14 (32.6%)	12 (27.9%)	3.5814	43	1.276
2	1 (2.3%)	2 (4.7%)	4 (9.3%)	19 (44.2%)	17 (39.5%)	4.1395	43	.940
3	12 (27.9%)	21 (48.8%)	4 (9.3%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	3.8372	43	1.132
4	15 (34.9%)	16 (37.2%)	6 (14%)	6 (14%)	0	3.9302	43	1.032
5	4 (9.3%)	5 (11.6%)	2 (4.7%)	21 (48.8%)	11 (25.6%)	3.6977	43	1.244
6	6 (14%)	12 (27.9%)	12 (27.9%)	6 (14%)	7 (16.3%)	3.0930	43	1.287
7	1 (2.3%)	5 (11.6%)	5 (11.6%)	14 (32.6%)	18 (41.9%)	4.0000	43	1.112
8	2 (4.7%)	2 (4.7%)	4 (9.3%)	25 (58.1%)	10 (23.3%)	3.9070	43	.971
9	17 (39.5%)	11 (25.6%)	10 (23.3%)	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.3%)	3.8372	43	1.252

10	18 (41.9%)	14 (32.6%)	6 (14%)	1 (2.3%)	4 (9.3%)	3.9535	43	1.233
11	11 (25.6%)	18 (41.9%)	4 (9.3%)	5 (11.6%)	5 (11.6%)	3.5814	43	1.313
12	1 (2.3%)	2 (4.7%)	9 (20.9%)	16 (37.2%)	15 (34.9%)	3.9767	43	.987
13	12 (27.9%)	15 (34.9%)	9 (20.9%)	5 (11.6%)	2 (4.7%)	3.6977	43	1.145
14	2 (4.7%)	2 (4.7%)	7 (16.3%)	13 (30.2%)	19 (44.2%)	4.0465	43	1.111
15	3 (7%)	2 (4.7%)	2 (4.7%)	8 (18.6%)	28 (65.1%)	4.3023	43	1.205

Table 8 shows that the participants in the EG had highly positive feelings on explicit pragmatic instruction. The highest mean scores belonged to items 15 (*It is necessary for an English course to improve learners' pragmatic competence in addition to their listening, speaking, reading, and writing*. Mean=4.3), 2 (*The provided exercises could help me succeed in learning the speech acts*. Mean= 4.14), 14 (*The teaching sessions were totally interesting*. Mean=4.05), and 7 (*I was satisfied with the teaching method*. Mean= 4), while the lowest was related to item 6 (Mean=3.09), implying that they found the extent of instruction less than enough. Figure 5 provides an illustration of the EG's responses to the attitude questionnaire.
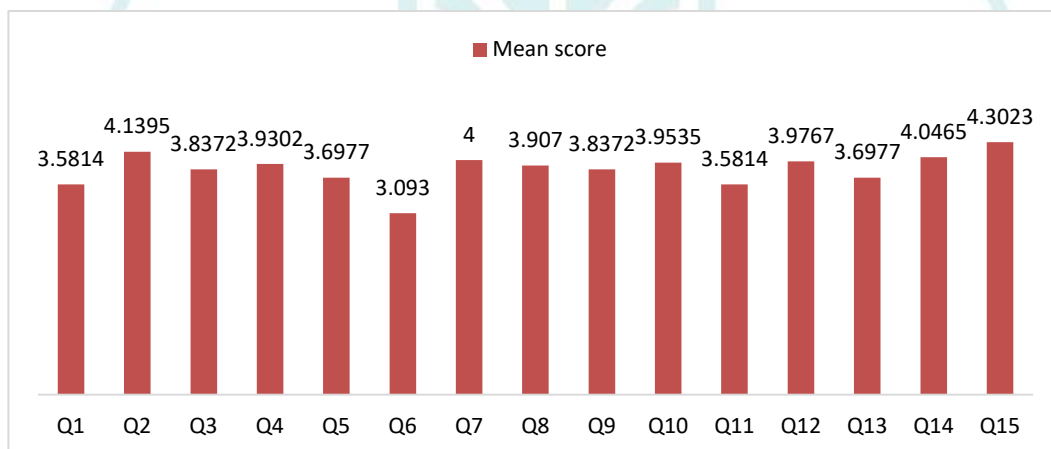

Figure 5. The Means of the EG's Responses to the Attitude Questionnaire

To examine the significance level of the observed differences, the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 10) was utilized, as the data sets were not normally distributed. Table 9 shows the mean rank and sum of ranks for the IG and EG.

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Table 9. Ranks (The IG's and EG's Attitudes)

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Score	Implicit	40	39.73	1589.00
	Explicit	43	44.12	1897.00
	Total	83		

As reported in Table 9, the EG had a higher mean rank and thus more positive attitudes towards the type of instruction they had received. To show the results more clearly, Figure 6 was drawn, indicating the mean ranks of the groups' attitudes.
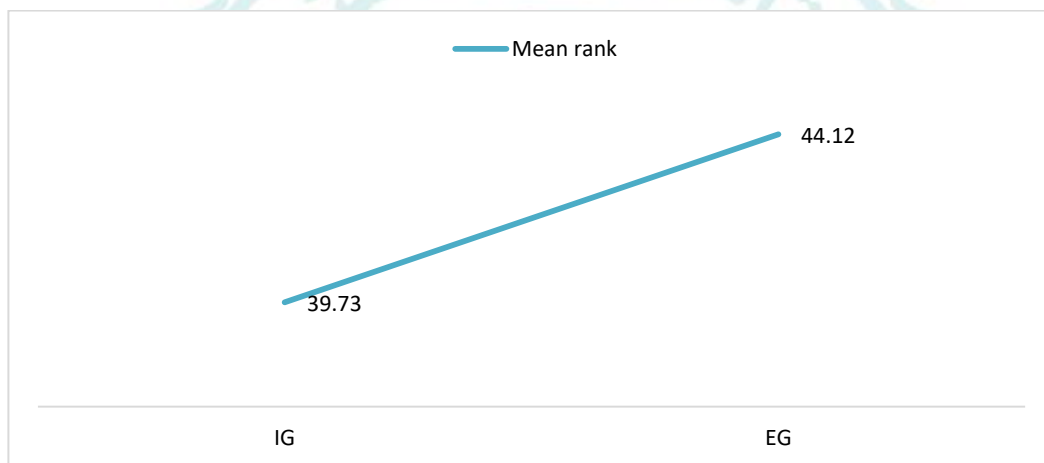

Figure 6. The Mean Ranks of the IG's and EG's Attitudes

The results of the Mann-Whitney U test, examining the significance level of the identified difference, are illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10. The Mann-Whitney U test (Comparing the IG's and EG's Attitudes)

Mann-Whitney U	769.000
Wilcoxon W	1589.000
Z	-.830
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.406

a. Grouping Variable: Type of Instruction

The *p*-value of .406 in Table 10 suggests that, although the EG had more positive attitudes, the two groups' attitudes towards the types of pragmatic instruction they had received were not significantly different.

5. Discussion

Primarily, the present research intended to investigate the potential effects of implicit vs. explicit pragmatic instruction on Iraqi EFL students' use of apologies, requests, and refusals. Both pragmatic interventions were found significantly beneficial; however, explicit instruction had a significantly superior impact on the students' speech act production. This adds more weight to earlier studies in which explicit metapragmatic instruction was found influential (e.g., Mohammed, 2012; Omar & Razi, 2022), both implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction benefitted EFL learners (e.g., Soler, 2007), and superior results were obtained through explicit pragmatic instruction (e.g., Ahmadian, 2020; Baqerzadeh Hosseini & Safari, 2018; Derakhshan & Shakki, 2020; Derakhshan & Shakki, 2021; Farrokhi & Atashian, 2012; Khatib & Baqerzadeh Hosseini, 2015; Shark, 2019; Taguchi, 2015b; Zhan, 2017).

The results of this study point to the significance of pragmatic instruction in directing language learners' attention to the to-be-instructed pragmatic aspects, as, according to Ahmadian (2020), L2 learners have limited ability to attend or notice them by themselves. From Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis view, the superiority of explicit instruction could have resulted from the higher awareness level raised in the participants. In fact, explicit instruction gave the learners the opportunity to notice the target strategies and features easier and thus learn them more successfully. Moreover, as Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari (2016) assert, due to the differences between the cultures of Arab and English speaking countries and the possibility of L1 influence, Arab EFL learners demand to be directly instructed in speech acts. In addition, explicit metapragmatic instruction could make learners more conscious of the value and saliency of L2 pragmatic properties in a context (i.e., an EFL setting), where learners put more effort into learning L2 lexicon and grammatical structures, not L2 pragmatic properties (Ahmadian, 2020). Accordingly, appreciating the value of learning pragmatics could persuade EFL learners to show more concern regarding L2 pragmatic aspects.

The second finding of the research was that speech act type did not have a significant intervening impact on the efficacy of the treatments. This implies that drawing on a proper method could assist EFL teachers in instructing varying types of speech acts. This lends support to the studies in which implicit/explicit pragmatic instruction was found effective in learning more than one single speech act (e.g., Baqerzadeh Hosseini & Safari, 2018; Khatib & Baqerzadeh Hosseini, 2015), although, it seems the earlier endeavors did not examine the speech act type as a separate variable.

The last upshot of the study was that both the IG and EG had highly positive attitudes towards the conducted pragmatic interventions. The EG's feelings were more positive; however, the two groups' attitudes were not significantly divergent. This partially supports the study conducted by Shahi and Gharagozloo (2020) in which both implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction were found interesting, useful, motivating, and necessary by the EFL learners, while explicit instruction was more advocated. Nevertheless, as opposed to the EFL students in the current endeavor, the participants in their study had significantly different perceptions of the degree of learning difficulty they had experienced with implicit and explicit pragmatic instruction. They believed that learning invitations and requests (not apologies) by explicit method could be much easier than learning them implicitly.

6. Conclusion

In alignment with previously conducted studies, the results of the present research suggest that input-based consciousness-raising instructional methods are effective in promoting EFL learners' pragmatic competence, when instructing various types of speech acts. In the Iraqi context, pragmatic instruction is a necessity, as Iraqi EFL learners do not find ample opportunity to interact with English natives, thus they do not have enough exposure to L2 pragmatic properties. On the other hand, they do not typically prioritize learning them, as, generally speaking, the initial goal of EFL learners is to expand their lexical and grammatical knowledge. In other words, not only is pragmatics amenable to instruction, but also teaching pragmatic features is essential since there existed numerous utterances in the participants' responses that were grammatically and semantically correct but had major pragmatic deficiencies.

Explicit pragmatic intervention seems to be a more efficient method to be adopted in the Iraqi context, as it was found more influential and favored. It could give EFL learners a higher level of consciousness, helping them appreciate the value of learning pragmatics. Moreover, the learners in this study found it a more time-saving method. Accordingly, language instructors, materials developers, and curriculum developers are demanded to devote more attention to developing pragmatic competence via instructional interventions, particularly more explicit methods. In other words, language learners should be given the chance to not only get exposure to plenty of input enriched with the L2 pragmatic properties but also receive metapragmatic information on them.

The results of this study expand our knowledge in the pragmatics area. However, the researchers were unable to examine the learners' performance in more lifelike situations. Therefore, future studies could add the generalizability of the results by employing a variety of data collection methods and instruments. Additionally, further experimental investigations are required to examine the long-term influence of the employed methods and the impact of learners' demographics (e.g., age, gender).

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Appendix A: Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

Dear respondent, read the following situations and write what you would say in each provided situation.

Apology

Situation 1: Suppose you are in Australia. You promised to return your intimate friend's book within a week or two, after copying a unit of the book. Instead, you have kept it for almost two months.

Your intimate friend: "I'm really upset about the book because I terribly needed it for last month's class".

You will apologize by saying: --------------------------

Situation 2: You are in a café in Australia. The waitress takes your order. A few minutes later, you change your mind about the drink and call the waitress for a new order.

Waitress: "Yes, sir, how can I assist you?"

You will apologize for changing the drink by saying: ------------------

Situation 3: Assume that your English teacher is lecturing, and you are chatting with your classmate. The teacher loses his cool. The instructor: "Is it right to chat with your classmate while I'm teaching?"

You will apologize by saying: ------------------

Request

Situation 1: You are watching a volleyball game in your close Australian friend's flat. His child comes and stands just in front of you. What would you say to make her not block your view?

You: ------------------------------

Situation 2: You need to have an appointment with your Australian instructor to ask some questions about your final exam. What would you say?

You: ---

Situation 3: You are taking an English writing course at an English college. You are supposed to get prepared for the next month's test. You realize that the student (who is close to you) sitting next to you is competent in English writing. How would you request her to let you join her in studying for the upcoming test?

You: --

Refusal

Situation 1: You are a student inan Australian college. You take notes in every class while your close friend rarely attends the classes and usually borrows your notes.

Classmate (your close friend): "I didn't attend the classes last week, and I can't study for the exam tomorrow. Would you give me your notes, please?"

You will refuse by saying: ----------------------------

Situation 2: Your Australian boss (whom you are used to seeing) is going to throw a house party for the promotion he has received recently. He invites you to attend there.

You will refuse his invitation by saying: ---------------------------

Situation 3: You are at a close friend's house in Britain. After having lunch, he offers you a piece of cake.

You will refuse by saying: ---------------------------------

Appendix B: Attitude Questionnaires

Implicit Group

Please check if you completely disagree, agree, are neural, completely agree, or agree with the following statements.

1- The exercises helped me use the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) appropriately.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

2- The provided exercises could help me succeed in learning the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals).

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

3- The exercises were really boring to me.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

4- The exercises did not help me produce the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) appropriately at all.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

5- Learning the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) within context was motivating for me.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

6- The exercises were not enough for me to learn how to use the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals).

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

7- I was satisfied with the way I could learn the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals).

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

8- Learning the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) within context was easy for me.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

9- The exercises were not communicative at all.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

10- Learning the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) in context was totally time consuming.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

11- The exercises did not have any effect on my speech act (apologies, requests, and refusals) production.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

12- Learning speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) in context is an efficient way to learn pragmatic features.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

13- Instructing speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) within context is a not a good teaching method.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

14- The exercises were totally interesting.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

15- It is necessary for an English course to improve learners' pragmatic competence in addition to their listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

Explicit Group

Please check if you completely disagree, agree, are neural, completely agree, or agree with the following statements.

1- The treatment helped me use the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) appropriately.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

2- The teacher could successfully teach me the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals).

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

3- The teaching sessions were really boring to me.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

4- The treatment did not help me produce the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) appropriately at all.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

5- Receiving direct instruction on how to perform the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) was motivating for me.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

6- The extent of instruction was not enough for me to learn how to use the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals).

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

7- I was satisfied with the teaching method.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

8- Learning the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) via direct instruction was easy for me.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

9- The teaching materials were not communicative at all.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

10- Teaching the speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) was totally time consuming.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

11- The teaching sessions did not have any effect on my speech act (apologies, requests, and refusals) production.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

12- Learning speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) via direct instruction is an efficient way to learn pragmatic features.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

13- Direct instruction of speech acts (apologies, requests, and refusals) is not a good teaching method.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

14- The teaching sessions were totally interesting.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree

15- It is necessary for an English course to improve learners' pragmatic competence in addition to their listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

a. Completely disagree   b. Disagree   c. Neutral   d. Agree   e. Completely agree