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Pragmatic Tasks for EFL Instruction: Explicitness, Time and Proficiency Effects in the Iranian Context

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Abstract

Despite the substantial significance of communicative goals in EFL, pragmatic aspects of instruction that are geared towards the learners' appropriacy still remain less than adequately addressed. Such a niche offers potentials for and stimulates a proliferating body of research. This study aims at examining the effectiveness of explicit vs. implicit pragmatic instruction regarding language performance as output. For the purpose of the study, 120 (60 male and 60 female) EFL learners took part in this project. Error Recognition Tests (ERTs), Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs), role-play, and writing assessments were used for gauging pragmatic output. Two separate 3×2 mixed between-within-subjects factorial ANOVAs were conducted to examine the effects of instruction type, proficiency level, and time (treatment) on pragmatic acquisition. Findings significantly support (a) the overall benefit of pragmatic instruction, (b) the effect of both implicit and explicit instructions with explicit type being more highly influential, (c) the effect of proficiency, and (d) the interaction effect of proficiency and pragmatic instruction on pragmatic language L2 use. Findings bear implications for enriching teaching and learning contexts, deepening theoretical concerns, improving pedagogical practice, and implementing communicative syllabus design.

Keywords: explicit pragmatic instruction, language proficiency, implicit pragmatic instruction

1. Introduction

A growing concern in literature has lately been with classroom language not as a neutral code, but rather a discourse in its own right and for its own sake. As Grifenhagen and Barnes (2022) put it,

> classroom discourse is how members of the discipline talk, write, and participate in knowledge construction, using the structures of written and oral language. Oral discussion, a primary means for discourse, builds knowledge, supports linguistically diverse students, and provides the social context for learning. (p. 739)

The term classroom discourse denotes exploring the ways of language use on the teachers' and learners' part to communicate with one another in the classroom (Maghfur, 2021; Tsui, Edwards, Lopez-Real, Kwan, et al., 2008; Walsh, 2011). As with any other social context, a second or foreign language class is a socially constructed discursive space with its context and possesses a socially transformative agenda (Derakhshan, Kruk, Mehdizadeh, & Pawlak, 2021; Walsh, 2011).

Classroom discourse analysis has hugely intrigued researchers who are interested in dimensions of within-class interaction. For instance, issues such as the application of humor as a teaching, interaction, or management technique in the class, emotional support and classroom organization, turn-taking patterns, self-selection practices etc. are appealing (Baleghizadeh, 2010; Böheim, Knogler, Kosel, & Seidle, 2020; Chalak & Karimi, 2017; Curby, Grimm, & Pianta, 2010; Lovorn & Holaway, 2015; Shao, Yu, & Ji, 2013; Tajeddin & Ghanbar, 2016; Walsh, 2011). Like many other learning environments, the discursive nature of English is generally believed to have its own idiosyncrasies and particularities (Derwing, Munro, & Thomson, 2022; Young, 2009) that can be stimulating enough for scholars from various fields such as linguistics, pedagogy, psychology, and sociology (Xin, Luzheng, & Biru, 2011).

As classroom talk is the sole channel through which the majority of pedagogical activities are actualized, the efficacy of instruction is, to a large extent, dependent upon teacher-learner as well as learner-learner interactions in the authentic classroom teaching practice (Ong, 2019; Xin et al., 2011). In fact, ongoing interaction processes have an outstanding status in L2 classroom discourse, and students' achievement heavily relies on the quality of student-teacher interactions (Jing & Jing, 2018). Following Jocuns (2012), classroom discourse encompasses all types of talk that could occur within a classroom or other educational settings. Meticulous analysis of the classroom discourse starts with focus on teacher-student interaction but has also expanded into much wider arenas such as discursive identity construction, for instance (Böheim, Urdan, Knogler, & Seidel, 2020; Weizheng, 2019; Yuan & Mak, 2018).

Classroom interaction is hence the organizational milieu within which the teaching and learning of different languages and academic subjects are co-constructed, managed, and achieved by teachers and students (Mercer, 2010; Walsh, 2011). All these are particularly conceivable as well as relevant once the intended meaning is focused on and which is negotiated by making the right (i.e. pragmatic) choices from among the stock of language.

1.1. Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study

Despite an extensive acknowledgement of the role of discourse and interaction in the EFL classroom, there are still quite big gaps regarding how language appropriacy and intention are taught and learned. Whereas the overall benefit is quite unanimously endorsed in literature, there are some issues that need to be addressed. Most findings on explicit vs. implicit pragmatic instruction have been reported in Western or ESL settings, leaving the applicability of these methods in EFL contexts like Iran underexplored. Secondly, higher proficiency learners show better pragmatic competence; nevertheless, it is unclear how beginner and intermediate EFL learners respond to pragmatic instruction. Additionally, many Iranian EFL classrooms prioritize grammatical accuracy over pragmatic appropriateness, and teachers often lack training in pragmatics-focused pedagogy (Afrouz et al., 2023). Fourth, current assessment tools (e.g., Discourse Completion Tests, role-plays) may not fully capture pragmatic development, especially in low-exposure environments. Finally, L1 users may employ distinct politeness strategies and speech-act realizations (e.g., indirectness in requests). This highlights the question whether pragmatic instruction can lead to positive transfer, or do learners struggle with sociopragmatic mismatches (Thomas, 1983). It is hoped that the results of this study would shed some light on these issues.

2. Review of the Literature

2.1 Pragmatics and Meaning

Instances of linguistic behaviors or acts constitute the basic ingredients of humans' communicative behavior set against the big picture of human life as an inherently social phenomenon (Austin, 1962). Such acts did not, however, become the subject of inquiry, at least in the English-speaking world, until the mid-twentieth century. Since then, attempts to theoretically accommodate language use have gained impetus in a vast array of disciplines such as artificial intelligence, feminist thought, legal theory, linguistics, literary theory, philosophy, psychology, and so forth (Searle, 1969).

Regarding pragmatic knowledge of language users, Leech (1983) distinguished between socio-pragmatic knowledge and pragmatic-linguistic knowledge. More recent research, on the one hand, examines the roles of both teachers and language learners more closely regarding socio-pragmatic knowledge and performance both inside and outside the classroom. On the other hand, the body of literature addresses the ways in which the development of learners' sociolinguistic and pragmatic competencies takes place in foreign language context (Chen, Ye, He, & Yao, 2022; Malmir & Taji 2021; Nematilloevna, 2023; Serova, Perlova, Pipchenko, & Chervenko, 2020).

Socio-pragmatic knowledge embodies knowledge of unwritten social conventions that govern language use. This includes nuances such as knowledge of relevance, the importance of situational factors and interlocutors, social conventions, and taboos. Pragma-linguistic knowledge, on the other hand, comprises the linguistic devices and structures required to express linguistic intentions and critically depends on a comprehensive understanding of the target language. For a successful communication process, it is paramount that both aspects of pragmatic knowledge be adequately nurtured and mapped onto each other. If language users possess the socio-pragmatic knowledge to appreciate the necessity of a polite request under particular circumstances, but otherwise lack the linguistic-pragmatic knowledge of manners, question words, and conventional formulas for pronouncing them, communication would likely break down (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Thomas, 1983).

In order to communicate effectively in a second or foreign language, it is crucial to have a good grasp of the social and cultural aspects of communication, as well as the rules of discourse. Canale and Swain's (1980) original model includes 'sociocultural rules of usage' and 'rules of discourse' as components of sociolinguistic competence. While the former is engaged with appropriateness, the latter is associated with coherence and cohesion in discourse as noted by Deda (2013). Yet it appears that the acquisition of socio-pragmatic rules is more challenging outside the L2 environment. This is presumably understandable since students living in target language context have many more opportunities to observe role models and are exposed to a much wider range of social roles and situations merely through presence in foreign language learning context. All these open the door to the concept of classroom discourse as a rich and promising field of interest particularly in ESL/EFL literature (Mickan, 1997; Rumenapp, 2016; Rymes, 2015; Thomas, 2013; Walsh, 2011).

2.2 Pragmatic Classroom-based Instruction in L2

Decades of research, such as that by Alcón (2005), Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), and Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005), indicate that neglecting pragmatics in foreign language instruction can enhance students' understanding of language mechanics but may hinder their ability to use language appropriately. Given the prevalence of English in cross-cultural communication, the cultivation of multilingual pragmatic competence continues to be an essential field of inquiry in second language studies, particularly within the context of globalization.

There is little doubt about the pedagogical merit of pragmatics as a wealth of studies have shown beneficial effects in different ways. However, there is still uncertainty as to whether explicit or implicit instruction would lead to learning pragmatic appropriacy. Taguchi and Roever (2017) indicated that as far as pragmatic instruction is concerned, explicit teaching proved to be more effective than implicit. Fa (2011) implementing explicit pragmatic instruction reported that many English teachers lacked adequate knowledge and training in teaching pragmatic aspect, and emphasized the importance of providing explicit pragmatic instruction to help foreign language learners develop appropriate language use in diverse social and cultural contexts (Fa, 2011).

Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2018) found that explicit instruction in pragmatics more effectively enhanced learners' understanding and using indirect request strategies in English. Learners receiving explicit pragmatic instruction were better able to transfer their knowledge to new contexts. Nguyen (2019) supporting explicit instruction showed that EFL learners may benefit from explicit instruction in pragmatics, particularly when expressing gratitude and making requests. Al-Shehri (2019) introduced the significance of learners' cultural background in pragmatic language understanding and using while also suggesting an awareness of cultural difference as a helpful pedagogic skill.

Kim (2019) investigated the effectiveness of explicit instruction and feedback in developing pragmatic competence in EFL learners and showed that explicit instruction and feedback were effective in improving learners' pragmatic competence, particularly in the areas of speech acts and politeness. Kang, Sok, and Han (2019) stated that explicit instruction in pragmatics was effective in improving learners' pragmatic competence showing that learners who received instruction explicitly in pragmatics outperformed their implicitly instructed counterparts. Kang, Sok, and Han (2019) supported explicit pragmatic instruction, particularly in the areas of expressing opinions and making suggestions.

The study by Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2021) indicated that explicit instruction effectively enhanced learners' use of pragmatic markers and learners who received explicit instruction performed significantly better than those who received implicit instruction. Kim and Lee (2021) stated that both explicit and implicit pragmatic awareness influenced performance, but explicit instruction worked better.

A more recent study by Afrouz, Alkawaz, Nejadansari, and Dabaghi (2023) examined the impact of explicit pragmatic instruction on EFL students' production of speech acts. Specifically, the researchers were interested in evaluating the instruction's effectiveness in reducing both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic errors. To do this, they randomly assigned 60 Iranian EFL students to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental group received 8 sessions of explicit pragmatic instruction focused on speech acts, while the control group experienced traditional grammar-based instruction.

Aydin (2023) investigated the impact of implicit and explicit form-focused instruction in fostering second language (L2) pragmatic competence revealing that both implicit and explicit instruction positively affected learners' pragmatic competence, but explicit instruction had a more significant effect. Overall, the findings suggest that explicit instruction plays a critical role in helping learners acquire the necessary pragmatic skills and knowledge. These insights are valuable for language teachers and curriculum designers, as they provide evidence-based guidance on effective instructional strategies to enhance learners' pragmatic competence in the L2 context. By incorporating explicit instruction, educators can support learners in developing their pragmatic abilities more effectively.

More recently, Yang and Maarof (2024) investigated the influence of exposure to second language instruction and language proficiency on the development of pragmatic competence among Chinese students of English studying abroad in Malaysia. Overall, the study emphasized the significance of exposure to second language pragmatic instruction and highlighted the complex relation between language proficiency and the development of pragmatic competence.

With this background in mind, the following research questions were posed:

RQ. 1: Do pragmatic tasks significantly improve learners' pragmatic EFL language use?

RQ. 2: Does task type (explicit and implicit) have a significant differential influence on EFL learners' pragmatic EFL language use?

RQ. 3: Does proficiency level (advanced, intermediate, and beginner) have a significant differential influence in learners' pragmatic EFL language use?

RQ. 4: Does interaction between pragmatic instruction and proficiency level (advanced, intermediate, and beginner) have any significant effect on EFL learners' pragmatic language use?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

A total of 120 EFL learners, comprising equal number of male and female students were selected purposively using the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) of non-native (Iranian) English learners. The entire testing apparatus was divided into 3 levels A2, B2, and C2 According to the CEFR respectively. All the participants were, in fact, three equal sized groups (A, B, and C) each having 40 participants. Group A received explicit pragmatic instruction. Group B received indirect pragmatic instruction through different methods, as well as the pragmatic content provided to them in their textbooks. Group C did not receive any pragmatic instruction whether explicit or implicit whatsoever.

3.2 Materials & Instruments

For the abovementioned reasons, provided in the study will be the charts related to the pre-test and post-test elements of the research including:

(i) A lesson plan was devised about each speech act containing their meta-linguistic as well as lexical resources alongside the expected output and the eventual output of the class.

(ii) A checklist was used following and centered on each speech act to be used for formative assessment at the end of the class for all three instances of testing namely, ERT (Error Recognition Test) (Dastgoshadeh, Birjandi, & Jalilzadeh, 2011) , DCT (Discourse Completion Test) (Landone, 2022), role-play, and letter writing in all three contexts.

(iii) A checklist was used which centered on each speech act to be used for summative assessment for the pre-test and post-test sections of the research.

(iv) A sample cue card (see Appendix) for the role-play section of the test was devised. The cue cards include formal, semi-formal, and informal settings distributed evenly among students to be assessed.

(v) A sample DCT (Landone, 2022) as well as ERT test (Dastgoshadeh, Birjandi, & Jalilzadeh, 2011) including the written letter section which was set to be taken in one sitting alongside the role-play test. For each class meeting in which a pragmatic skill was taught, a context-based test similar to that of the summative test was provided. The tests contained instances of formal, semi-formal, and informal language and pragmatics to be used correctly which were distributed evenly among the questions.

The participants were divided into three groups based on their proficiency level according to the result of the aforementioned Oxford Placement Test (OPT): A2, B2, and C2. The A2 group was composed of learners with a beginner level of proficiency, the B2 group was composed of learners with an intermediate level of proficiency, and the C2 group was composed of learners with an advanced level of proficiency. The participants were then randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions: Explicit, implicit, and no pragmatic instruction (NPI). For explicit treatment, the participants were given direct instruction on the pragmatic components of the target language. For the implicit treatment, the participants were exposed to the pragmatic elements of L2 through reading, listening, and watching. The NPI treatment group was not given any instruction or exposure to the pragmatic elements of the target language. The participants were then given a pre-test and a post-test to measure their pragmatic acquisition. The pre-test was administered ahead of treatment, and the post-test was administered after the treatment ended.

3.3 Data Collection Procedures

Hypothesis testing involved a conversation role-play based on the context of the lesson and students were asked to perform a sample conversation after having studied or listened to or watched a sample conversation. For explicit pragmatic instruction, additional learning procedures were taken into consideration. The participants were also tested on paper with DCT (discourse completion tasks) and ERT (error recognition test). Both tests included multiple choice questions, complete the blanks with correct expression from the box and provide the correct answer according to memory. Needless to say, in a checklist identical to the one above, if the items were chosen correctly, they were checked and their instances were noted down. Naturally, the performance of each group of students was expected to be rather drastically different. Inter-rater reliability for the latter assessment was kappa coefficient value of 0.89

The participants in all three groups (implicit pragmatic instruction (IPI), explicit pragmatic instruction (EPI), and no pragmatic instruction (NPI) were also asked to write a kind of letter, i.e. formal, semi-formal, or informal randomly

among students of each group. Again, if the elements considered were observed in the output of the text, they were indeed confirmed in the checklist, the quantity of repetition was assessed and additional comment was provided to later be analyzed in comparison to other forms of testing and elements within in the results and discussion sections accordingly. The inter-rater reliability turned out to be 0.91.

All elements provided in the checklists for formative and summative assessments were tested in each class meeting and at the beginning and the end of the term respectively. A semester was defined not based on the standards of an institute but by the completion of the selected elements to be taught and tested formatively and summative in class. After completing each lesson, based on the assessment of audio or video recordings of the class, the anticipated results were put alongside the achieved results of each lesson, provided for further elaboration as the groups went through formative assessment of learning of the elements and what was collected as data (pre-test-posttest) was the result of the summative assessment provided at the end of term. Formative assessment is done at the end of each lesson through a checklist of achieved goals in class compared to what was aimed to be achieved. Numeric data of instances will also be provided for further comparison and assessment.

The summative assessment included an evenly distributed paper-based exam comprising the elements which were taught explicitly or implicitly in class or not taught at all involving the ERT, DCT as well as the final letter. Each type of letter (semi-formal, formal, informal) was divided evenly among students of each group according to their respective levels. In addition to the written exam, cue cards were provided to individuals of each group divided to be tested before and after the written exam to even out the effects of examination fatigue. Results were recorded and compared with other items of the formative and summative tests for discussion and elaboration.

4. Design and Data Analysis

This study was an experimental research with a pretest posttest design. It investigated the impacts of the three independent variables of time (treatment), pragmatic instruction type, and proficiency level on the dependent variable of pragmatic L2 use. The first independent variable was the within-groups factor and the second and third independent variables were the between-groups factors. A three-way mixed between-within-subjects factorial ANOVA (split-plot ANOVA or SPANOVA) was administered to test the influence of pragmatic instruction type, proficiency level, and time (treatment) on students' performance on a test of pragmatic acquisition. The five general assumptions for ANOVA were observed. However, Levene's test of equality of error variances and Box's test of equality of covariance matrices could not be computed because of the small sample size. Therefore, two separate 3×2 mixed between-within subjects' factorial two-way ANOVAs (split-plot ANOVA or SPANOVA) were conducted. The five general assumptions for ANOVA were observed. Levene's test and Box's test were also observed for both split stages of pragmatic instruction Type and Time (Treatment) as well as Proficiency Level and Time (Treatment).

4.1 Data Analysis: SPANOVA

Initially, a 3×3×2 mixed between-within-subjects factorial three-way ANOVA (Split-Plot ANOVA or SPANOVA) was conducted on the variables of Pragmatic Instruction Type, Proficiency Level, and Time (Treatment). It is important to mention that all five general assumptions for ANOVA were taken into due consideration. A brief summary of the aforementioned assumptions is as follows:

(i) The dependent variable is continuous.
(ii) The sample is randomly selected from the population.
(iii) The observations are independent.
(iv) The dependent variable is normally distributed within each level of the independent variable.
(v) The variances of the dependent variables are equal across the levels of the independent variable.

The first three general assumptions were observed in the research. The fourth one of five general assumptions was tested according to conventional normality tests as provided below:

Table 1. Tests of normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Mean Pretest Score	.214	9	.200*	.915	9	.352
Mean Posttest Score	.154	9	.200*	.928	9	.460

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the information provided, two tests of normality, Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk, were conducted on two sets of data (pretest and posttest scores). Table 1 shows the results of both tests including the test statistics, degrees of freedom (df), and significance levels (Sig.). The asterisk (*) indicates that the significance level is a lower bound of the true significance, and a correction for multiple testing has been applied using the Lilliefors method.

Since all significance values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the distributions of scores in both pretest and posttest are normal. However, it is worth noting that the tests have limitations and may not always accurately detect non-normality, especially with small sample sizes. Therefore, it is important to interpret the results cautiously and consider other factors such as the shape of the distribution.

For the fifth one of five general assumptions, the homogeneity of variances across groups, all absolute deviations are constant within each cell, so it is not possible to compute Levene's F statistics. For the main specific assumption of SPANOVA, Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices cannot be calculated due to the fact that there are fewer than two nonsingular cell covariance matrices. This assumption is related to the equality of covariance matrices across groups. The Box's test is applied to check the null hypothesis that the covariance matrices are equal across groups.

4.2 The First 3×2 SPANOVA

As a result, two separate 3×2 SPANOVAs would have to be done. The first one is a 3×2 mixed between-within-subjects factorial two-way ANOVA (Split-Plot ANOVA or SPANOVA) for the two independent variables of pragmatic instruction type and time (treatment). The five general assumptions for ANOVA, as mentioned above, were again taken into consideration. Just as previously, the first three general assumptions were observed and the fourth one of five general assumptions for normality was addressed above (Table 1). However, the fifth one of five general assumptions is explained in the following way.

Table 2. Levene's test of equality of error variances[a]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Mean Pretest Score	Based on Mean	.596	2	6	.580
	Based on Median	.053	2	6	.949
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.053	2	3.827	.949
	Based on trimmed mean	.524	2	6	.617
Mean Posttest Score	Based on Mean	1.525	2	6	.291
	Based on Median	.363	2	6	.710
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.363	2	4.371	.715

	Based on trimmed mean	1.389	2	6	.319

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Pragmatic Instruction Type

Within Subjects Design: Time

For Levene's Test, as it is evident in Table 2, all significance values are greater than 0.05, which indicates that variances of scores in both pretest and posttest are homogeneous.

Table 3. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices[a]

Box's M	5.053
F	.431
df1	6
df2	897.231
Sig.	.858

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Pragmatic Instruction Type

Within Subjects Design: Time

According to Table 3, the Sig. value is greater than 0.001, so the intercorrelations among the two levels of the Time variable are homogeneous. This is proof of the fact that the main SPANOVA assumption is supported.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics of SPANOVA 1

Table 4 below shows the descriptive statistics for the first 3×2 SPANOVA. It shows the mean, standard deviation, and sample size for each level of the Pragmatic Instruction Type variable for both pretest and posttest scores.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics

	Pragmatic Instruction Type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mean Pretest Score	1 EPI[a]	233.9500	24.84245	3

	2 IPI[b]	232.6333	20.16843	3
	3 NPI[c]	219.9167	15.96273	3
	Total	228.8333	19.09786	9
Mean Posttest Score	1 EPI	465.5733	83.22665	3
	2 IPI	333.3267	45.34790	3
	3 NPI	246.6633	40.75802	3
	Total	348.5211	108.51840	9

1. : Explicit Pragmatic Instruction; b: Implicit Pragmatic Instruction; c: No Pragmatic Instruction

4.4 Inferential Statistics of SPANOVA 1

The inferential statistics show the results of the first SPANOVA, including the multivariate tests for the main effects of time and pragmatic instruction type. Table 5 below gives the results of Wilks' Lambda to answer the first research question.

Table 5. Multivariate tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Pillai's Trace	.908	59.171[b]	1.000	6.000	.000	.908
	Wilks' Lambda	.092	59.171[b]	1.000	6.000	.000	.908
	Hotelling's Trace	9.862	59.171[b]	1.000	6.000	.000	.908
	Roy's Largest Root	9.862	59.171[b]	1.000	6.000	.000	.908
Time × Pragmatic Instruction Type	Pillai's Trace	.832	14.821[b]	2.000	6.000	.005	.832
	Wilks' Lambda	.168	14.821[b]	2.000	6.000	.005	.832
	Hotelling's Trace	4.940	14.821[b]	2.000	6.000	.005	.832
	Roy's Largest Root	4.940	14.821[b]	2.000	6.000	.005	.832

a. Design: Intercept + Pragmatic Instruction Type

Within Subjects Design: Time

b. Exact statistic

The results show that the p-value (Sig.) for Wilks' Lambda for Time is less than 0.05, so there is a significant effect of Time on the dependent variable. The partial eta squared value for Time is 0.908, which is a large effect size. This suggests that Time explains a considerable amount of variance in the dependent variable. Additionally, Table 6 below details the results of tests of between-subjects effects to answer the first research question. The results below show

that the p-value (Sig.) for Pragmatic Instruction Type is less than 0.05, so there is a significant effect of Pragmatic Instruction Type on the dependent variable. The partial eta squared value for the Pragmatic Instruction Type is .703, which is a large effect size.

Table 6. Tests of between-subjects effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	1500021.695	1	1500021.695	519.954	.000	.989
Pragmatic Instruction Type	40989.072	2	20494.536	7.104	.026	.703
Error	17309.479	6	2884.913			

Table 7 below demonstrates the results of multiple comparisons using Scheffe's test to locate the exact place of differences among the three different Pragmatic Instruction Type groups. The results indicate that the mean difference between the EPI and NPI groups is significant at the 0.05 level (Sig. = .027), with a mean difference of 116.4717. This suggests that there is a significant difference in the dependent variable between these two groups. In contrast, as an answer to the second research question, there is no significant difference in the dependent variable between the Explicit and Implicit groups, as evidenced by the non-significant p-value (Sig. = 0.179) and the wide confidence interval (-32.6763 to 166.2397) that includes zero.

Table 7. Multiple comparisons

(I) Pragmatic Instruction Type	(J) Pragmatic Instruction Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1 EPI[a]	2 IPI	66.7817	31.01028	.179	-32.6763	166.2397
	3 NPIU	116.4717*	31.01028	.027	17.0137	215.9297
2 IPI[b]	1 EPI	-66.7817	31.01028	.179	-166.2397	32.6763
	3 NPI	49.6900	31.01028	.343	-49.7680	149.1480
3 NPI[c]	1 EPI	-116.4717*	31.01028	.027	-215.9297	-17.0137
	2 IPI	-49.6900	31.01028	.343	-149.1480	49.7680

2. a: Explicit Pragmatic Instruction; b: Implicit Pragmatic Instruction; c: No Pragmatic Instruction

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square(Error) = 1442.457.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Overall, the results suggest that both Time and Pragmatic Instruction Type have significant effects on the dependent variable, with Time explaining a large amount of variance (90.8 %) and Pragmatic Instruction Type explaining a moderate amount of variance (70.3). The results provide insights into the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and can inform further analysis and interpretation of the study results. Finally, Figure 1 is a line graph illustrating the mean performances of EPI, IPI, and NPI groups on the pre-test and post-test.

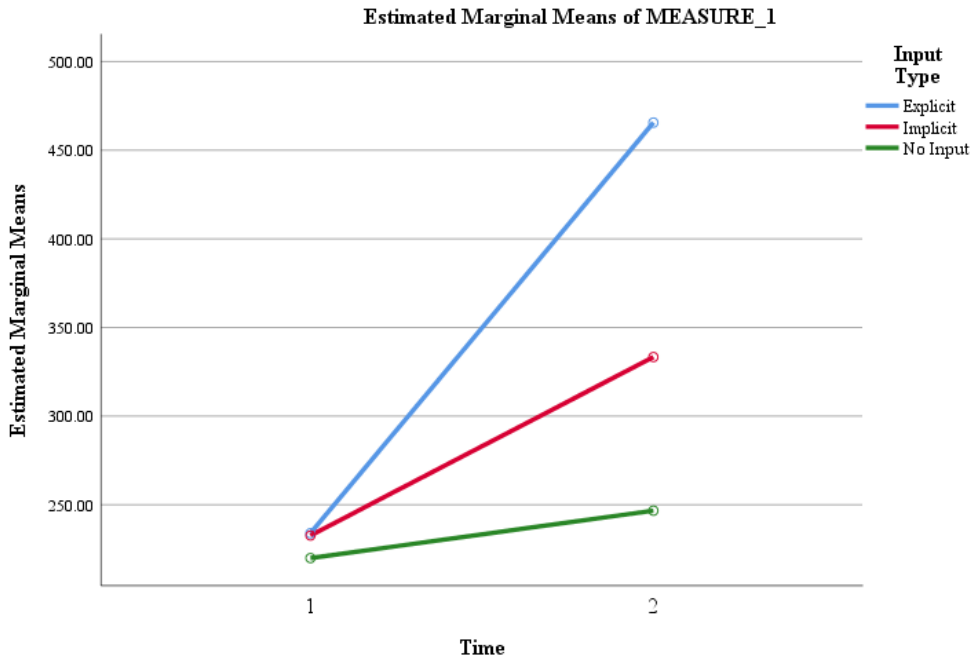

Figure 1. Mean performances of EPI, IPI, and NPI groups on pre-test and post-test

Figure 1 clearly indicates that there is a substantial change in overall performance improvement in pragmatic acquisition between the pre-test and post-test stages of the study, now irrespective of the level of language proficiency among individuals. This is evident from the fact that the mean scores for the post-test are significantly higher than the mean scores for the pre-test. This suggests that the study participants made significant gains in their pragmatic acquisition skills over the course of the study, regardless of their starting point. Moreover, the illustration shows that there has been a considerable amount of similarity between explicit and implicit language learners' initial pragmatic knowledge, with both instruction groups standing higher than those who were bound to receive no pragmatic instruction.

4.5 The Second 3×2 SPANOVA

A second 3×2 mixed between-within-subjects factorial two-way ANOVA (Split-Plot ANOVA or SPANOVA) was conducted for the variables of proficiency level and time (treatment). The five general assumptions for ANOVA as

mentioned above were just as previously taken into consideration and the first three general assumptions were observed. The fourth one of five general assumptions for normality is supported as reported above (Table 1). However, the fifth one of five general assumptions was assessed according to the findings below (Table 8).

Table 8. Levene's test of equality of error variances[a]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Mean Pretest Score	Based on Mean	2.451	2	6	.167
	Based on Median	1.042	2	6	.409
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.042	2	4.197	.429
	Based on trimmed mean	2.334	2	6	.178
Mean Posttest Score	Based on Mean	.536	2	6	.611
	Based on Median	.222	2	6	.807
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.222	2	5.012	.809
	Based on trimmed mean	.512	2	6	.623

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Proficiency

Within Subjects Design: Time

All significance values are greater than 0.05, Therefore, the variances of scores in both pretest and posttest are homogeneous. The results of Box's test in Table 9 are aimed to indicate that the intercorrelations among the two levels of the Treatment are homogeneous.

Table 9. Box's test of equality of covariance matrices[a]

Box's M	7.985
F	.681
df1	6
df2	897.231
Sig.	.665

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Proficiency
Within Subjects Design: Time

The Sig. value is greater than 0.001, so the intercorrelations among the two levels of the Time variable are homogeneous.

4.6 Descriptive Statistics of SPANOVA 2

Table 10, below, summarizes the descriptive statistics for the pretest and posttest scores for each of the three proficiency levels.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics for the pretest and post-test scores for each level of the proficiency level

	Proficiency Level	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Mean Pretest Score	1 A2	218.6367	12.45369	3
	2 B2	251.1833	13.11062	3
	3 C2	216.6800	2.26550	3
	Total	228.8333	19.09786	9
Mean Posttest Score	1 A2	295.4167	76.99543	3
	2 B2	403.2867	121.02668	3
	3 C2	346.8600	133.40187	3
	Total	348.5211	108.51840	9

4.7 Inferential Statistics of SPANOVA 2

Inferential statistics were conducted using SPANOVA to test the main effects of time, proficiency level, and the interaction between time and proficiency level. Tables 11 and 12 below offer the results to answer the third, and fourth research questions.

Table 11. Multivariate tests[a]

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Time	Pillai's Trace	.653	11.268[b]	1.000	6.000	.015	.653
	Wilks' Lambda	.347	11.268[b]	1.000	6.000	.015	.653
	Hotelling's Trace	1.878	11.268[b]	1.000	6.000	.015	.653
	Roy's Largest Root	1.878	11.268[b]	1.000	6.000	.015	.653
Time × Proficiency	Pillai's Trace	.116	.394[b]	2.000	6.000	.691	.116
	Wilks' Lambda	.884	.394[b]	2.000	6.000	.691	.116
	Hotelling's Trace	.131	.394[b]	2.000	6.000	.691	.116

	Roy's Largest Root	.131	.394[b]	2.000	6.000	.691	.116

a. Design: Intercept + Proficiency

Within Subjects Design: Time

b. Exact statistic

The results of the multivariate Wilks' Lambda test (Table 11) prove that there is a significant main effect of time, with small p-values (Sig. = .015) and relatively large partial eta squared values (.653). This suggests that time explains a large amount of variance (65.3%) in the dependent variables. However, there is no significant interaction between time and proficiency level, as shown by the non-significant p-values (Sig. > 0.05) and low partial eta squared values (0.116). It is an answer to the fourth research question. This means that there is no significant interaction effect between time and proficiency level on the dependent variable. In other words, this suggests that the effect of time on the dependent variable does not differ significantly across different levels of proficiency.

Table 12. Results of the between-subjects effects test for proficiency level

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	1500021.695	1	1500021.695	208.909	.000	.972
Proficiency	15217.018	2	7608.509	1.060	.404	.261
Error	43081.534	6	7180.256			

According to the above table, the p-value (Sig.) for proficiency level is greater than 0.05, giving an answer to the third research question. This means that there is no significant effect of proficiency level on the dependent variable. For a final pictorial illustration of the findings, Figure 2 below shows the mean performances of advanced, intermediate, and beginner students on the pre-test and post-test.

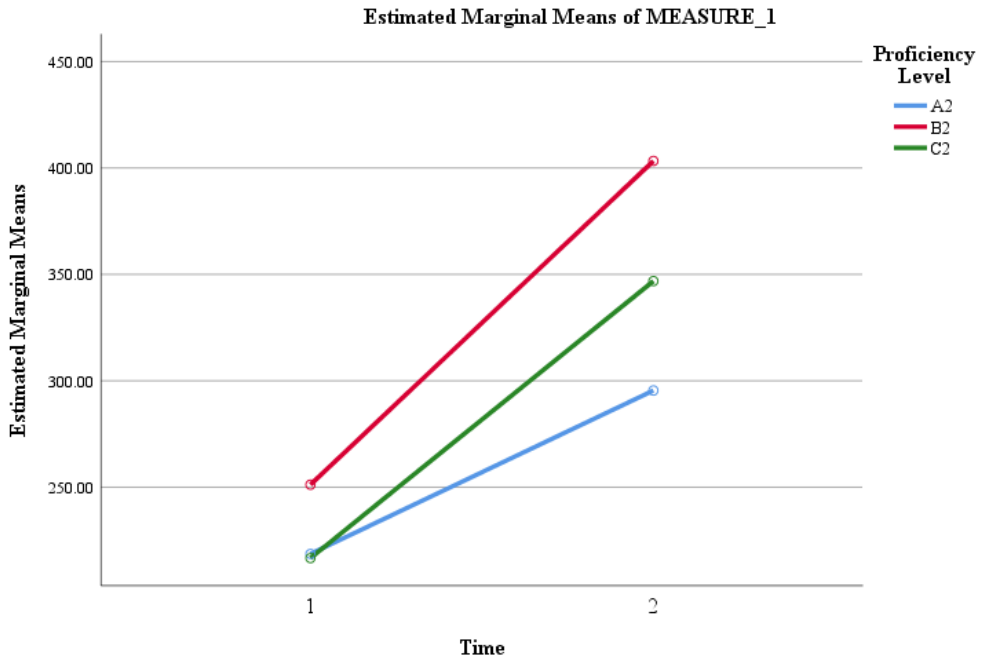

Figure 2. Mean performances of advanced, intermediate, and beginner students on the pre-test and post-test

Figure 2 clearly illustrates that there is a significant change in overall performance improvement in pragmatic acquisition between the pre-test and post-test stages of the study, regardless of the level of language proficiency among individuals. It can be seen that the mean scores for the post-test are significantly higher than the mean scores for the pre-test. This suggests that the study participants made significant gains in their pragmatic acquisition skills over the course of the study. Furthermore, the figure shows that there is a considerable amount of similarity between beginner and advanced language learners' initial pragmatic knowledge, both are slightly lower than the intermediate group.

5. Discussion

This study has aimed to identify whether it is possible to transfer pragmatic knowledge to English language learners across different levels of English language proficiency. Moreover, it was aimed to discover which method of teaching, explicit or implicit, at different levels of proficiency is more effective and practical to be employed and utilized to better prepare individuals for pseudo-realistic situations wherein a particular language was to be used. One group received no pragmatic instruction across all three levels of proficiency tested as a control group which would go on to indicate that no considerable improvement in pragmatic performance would be visible if individuals were to not receive any of the aforementioned pragmatic instruction. These results imply a considerable difference when comparing the final result in all three categories accordingly.

Responding to research question 1, i.e. *'Do pragmatic tasks significantly improve learners' pragmatic EFL language use?'* the participants were shown to obtain pragmatic knowledge in either an explicit or implicit format. Younger participants, in general, obtained most of their pragmatic knowledge through socio-cultural devices such as films and series, and books, alongside communicating more freely with native or near-native speakers of the language and those who reside in the target culture predominantly in an implicit format. Besides this, a considerable amount of pragmatic instruction is provided through their textbooks which mostly tends to have been neglected as it has not been practical enough or is non-existential in most course books in general as cited in Taguchi and Roever (2017), Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2018), Nguyen (2019), Kim (2019), Fa (2011), and Kim and Lee (2021).

As for research question 2: '*Does task type (explicit and implicit) have a significant differential influence on EFL learners' pragmatic EFL language use?*', a significant improvement between the pre-test and post-test stages in both

the EPI and IPI groups. Again, this finding is in line with Fa (2011), Taguchi and Roever (2017), Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2018), Nguyen (2019), Kim (2019), and Flor and Usó-Juan (2021).

Regarding research question 3, i.e., *'Does proficiency level (advanced, intermediate, and beginner) have a significant differential influence in learners' pragmatic EFL language use?'* results indicated that there is a positive correlation between proficiency level and pragmatic intake and socio-cultural performance. Students of higher proficiency levels were generally more capable of reconstructing sentences and using alternative vocabulary in order to adapt to the socio-cultural situations they were put into using given prompts and were better able to think on their feet more confidently. This is supported by Chen and Tsai (2018). Overall, this study suggest that proficiency level can play an important role in EFL learners' pragmatic acquisition, with advanced learners generally showing greater proficiency than intermediate and beginner learners.

Regarding research question 4., that is *'Does interaction between pragmatic instruction and proficiency level (advanced, intermediate, and beginner) have any significant effect on EFL learners' pragmatic language use?'*, the findings show a sizable improvement in performance among language learners being taught pragmatic situations explicitly compared to those who received implicit instruction which could at times have occurred outside the classroom. At lower levels, this improvement between the IPI group and EPI was evident. Such a claim is for the most part compatible with Chen and Tsai (2018).

6. Conclusions

It is important to note that no articles were found to contradict the findings and conclusions of this research. Findings dominantly emphasize that, despite variations, explicit pragmatic instruction appears to be more effective compared to other methods for pragmatic acquisition and classroom pragmatic discourse. Firstly, examining the influence of learners' native socio-pragmatic structures in their understanding and acquisition of target language pragmatic features could reveal instances of cultural appropriation (Kasper, 1992). Secondly, exploring the role of individual differences, such as age, gender, occupation, priorities, and learning style preferences, on the acquisition of socio-pragmatic knowledge (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Taguchi, 2008) could uncover how these factors impact the preferred modes of pragmatic instruction and learning.

Additionally, investigating the effects of different types of pragmatic instruction, such as explicit, implicit, and input-based (Alcón Soler, 2005; Soler, 2005), on learners' pragmatic development, recognition, and production of speech acts is needed to understand the relative effectiveness of these instructional approaches. Studying the transferability of pragmatic competence across languages and cultures (Kasper & Rose, 2002) is also important, as learners may need to develop distinct pragmatic repertoires for different linguistic and cultural contexts.

The study despite limitations including limited age range, a particular proficiency level, and homogeneous L1 background boasts a remarkable degree of generalizability (i.e. external validity) thanks to the robust statistical analysis. The findings of this study bear strong implications for EFL practitioners, particularly in raising awareness of the learners about discursive aspects of in-class instruction and interaction. Through incorporating explicit pragmatic instructional tasks, teachers can probably facilitate learners' engagement in authentic L2 interaction. In multilingual and multicultural classroom contexts, systematic pragmatic instruction meets a two-fold objective: enhancing intercultural awareness as well as providing learners with the capacities to navigate cross-cultural communication effectively.

Pedagogically, the incorporation of pragmatic components can promise benefits, including though not restricted to: a) strengthening interactional competence, b) facilitating negotiation of meaning, c) raising metapragmatic awareness of intercultural communication, and d) developing politeness strategies in contextually appropriate ways. For syllabus designers, these insights underscore the importance of embedding pragmatic dimensions of L2 use while maintaining a principled balance between implicit and explicit instructional sequences. Careful consideration should be given to the gradation and scaffolding of pragmatic tasks to ensure alignment with learners' developmental readiness. Furthermore, language assessment can account for the explicitness-implicitness continuum in defining the target language construct and rubrics. Assessments that incorporate pragmatic competence such as role-plays, or metapragmatic judgments can provide a more holistic evaluation of learners' communicative proficiency. Language

teacher education can also be informed by the depth and breadth of explicit and implicit instructional practices to prepare novice teachers for interactionally rich teaching experience.

Future studies can shed light on the complex and dynamic processes of pragmatic development over time as well as examining the relationship between pragmatic competence and other aspects of language learning, such as vocabulary and grammar, for instance. Research findings can elucidate the interplay between pragmatic awareness and writing literacy specially in EAP and ESP.

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Appendix

Sample cue cards for pre-test and post-test role play activities in formal, semi-formal and informal situations.

Including apologizing, complaining, complimenting, requesting, thanking, inviting, and comforting.

Cue cards of Apology are provided here.

Roles in dialogue are defined by A and B.

Apology/Pre-test/Informal:

A: You were invited to the birthday party of one of your closest friends but you couldn't go and missed the event.

You will see your friend and apologize for not going at the last moment. You should say/ask:

Why you couldn't go to the party.

Why you couldn't call and say sorry.

Why you didn't get him a gift.

How are you going to make everything okay.

B: You invited your friend to your birthday party a few days ago. He/she said they would come but they didn't at the last moment. They didn't call to tell you this. You should say/ask:

What you did at the birthday party without him/her.

What everybody else said about him or her not coming to the party.

What was more important than your birthday party?

Why he/she didn't give you your gift.

Apology/Pre-test/Formal:

A: You were invited to a very important meeting by your boss but you could not go and missed the meeting. Now you are seeing your boss at the workplace an have to tell him why you missed the meeting. You should say/ask:

Why you couldn't come to the meeting on time.

What you did to fix the problem.

What you will do to fix things between you and your boss.

Ask your boss not to fire you.

B: You are the boss of your company and one of your best workers missed a very important meeting a few days ago. Now you asked them to come to your office and talk about this problem. You should say/ask:

Why he/she did not attend the meeting.

What you talked about at the meeting.

How you want them to fix the problem.

She/he will be fired if he/she misses another meeting.