The Impact of Explicit Instruction on the Production of Refusals in English: The Case of Pre-Service English-as-a-foreign-language Teachers[*]

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Abstract. Appropriate speech act realisation promotes foreign language (FL) learners' pragmatic competence, and linked with that, their communicative competence. This quasi-experimental study explored the influence of a treatment based on a six-hour explicit instruction on how to appropriately refuse the requests of the interlocutors having higher, equal and lower status on sophomore pre-service English-as-a-foreign-language teachers' (PSEFLTs) ability to properly perform the speech act of refusals. To scrutinize the effect of the treatment provided to the experimental group, pre- and post-discourse completion tests (DCTs) administered in the experimental and control group were used. The findings obtained through the analysis of the data from the post-DCT indicated that the control group participants receiving no treatment yet covering the information in the textbook concerning the speech act of refusals performed it better as against their performance on the pre-DCT. However, the findings demonstrated that the treatment led the experimental group to produce their refusals more appropriately seeing the status of interlocutors than the control group.

Keywords: DCT, explicit instruction, PSEFLTs, pragmatic competence, refusals.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics, defined by Crystal (1997) as the investigation into language use from the viewpoint of users, could form the basis of the affordances provided to FL/second language (L2) learners to develop their pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence in an L2, which denotes language use appropriate for the context (Bachman, 1990; Kecskes, 2015), could be maintained to be a parameter influencing the success of FL/L2 learners in carrying out any conversational exchange and has been the topic under investigation in a number of studies (e.g., Moghadam & Adeh, 2020; Perkins, 2004; Trebits, 2019). A pragmatically competent user of an L2 can be construed to be a user that comprehends the intended meaning of the speaker by taking into consideration the context in which the utterance is produced (Papafragou, 2018). However, it should be pointed out that becoming a pragmatically competent user of an L2 is a continuous process (Blanche, 1987).

As is pointed out by Rose (1997), it is crucial to foster the awareness of foreign language teacher candidates through adopting a consciousness-raising approach of the fact that language use is context-dependent because they need to develop their own pragmatic competence, which they will address as helping their future students develop their communicative ability. Review of the related literature uncovers investigations into the speech act of refusals (e.g., Brasdefer, 2006) and on developing students' pragmatic competence via employing explicit instruction (e.g., Hosseini, Pourghasemian & Lu, 2019) have been undertaken. Nonetheless, the impact of explicit instruction on PSEFLTs' competence in refusing appropriately taking account of the status of interlocutors has not been examined to date. For this reason, this study could fill the related gap in the literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Teaching of Pragmatic Competence in an L2

Aside from the emphasis placed upon the substantial contribution made by the teaching of pragmatics to language teaching, the role to be performed by cross-cultural pragmatics in language teaching and curriculum development is also highlighted in the literature (Intachakra, 2004). Congruent with this accentuation, achieving success in intercultural communication is bound to gaining and broadening pragmatic knowledge (McConachy, 2013), which signifies the value of the teaching of pragmatics as well as developing linguistic competence in L2/FL teaching. That is, it is vitally important to develop L2 learners' pragmatic competence, rather than disregarding its merit, by a set of ways such as offering feedback on their pragmatic production (Nguyen, Do, Nguyen & Pham, 2015). The materials used in foreign language teaching are conceived to exert a strong impact on the development of pragmatic competence of L2 learners (LoCastro, 1997). To exemplify, English textbooks occupy a central role in providing pragmatic information to learners of English (Nguyen, 2011). In addition, the use of authentic materials is beneficial for heightening students' pragmatic awareness (Cheng, 2016). Furthermore, in the study

conducted by Yılmaz and Koban Koç (2020) with freshman students of English language teaching department, it was reported that corpus-based teaching was effective in developing the participants' pragmatic competence. Moreover, the amount of exposure to the target language out of school, notably with respect to performing speech acts, could impact on the level of achievement in their realization, which in turn might impinge upon English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learners' pragmatic competence. For instance, the research by Şanal and Ortaçtepe (2019) reported that due to the limited opportunity for real social interaction in EFL contexts, the EFL learner participants at advanced level could not meet the anticipated levels of formality, appropriateness and politeness in performing the speech of requests as opposed to the performance of the native English speakers on the mentioned criteria.

Parallel to the suggestion concerning the use of authentic materials with an eye to developing L2 learners' pragmatic competence, conversational analysis is regarded to impinge on the ability of students to understand and produce appropriate language use in an L2 (Huth & Nikazm, 2006). Investigating the effect of pragmatics-based instruction on the teaching of the speech act of requests to the ninth-grade Turkish learners of English, the study by Gazioğlu and Çiftçi (2017) yielded that the instruction resulted in the use of more request strategies and in lower levels of directness in the students' productions. Carrying out explicit awareness raising tasks was exhibited as a means of assisting L2 learners in increasing their pragmatic awareness in the study conducted by Ishihara (2007). Input-rich and meaningful tasks are also indicated to be effective at developing EFL learners' pragmatic ability (Limberg, 2015). Input-enhancement and recasts were shown to be useful for developing second language pragmatic competence in the research by Nguyen, Pham and Pham (2017). Additionally, input-enhanced instruction was revealed to be influential in developing EFL learners' pragmatic competence in Ghavamnia, Rasekh and Dastjerdi's (2018) study.

Pragmatic transfer in the development of pragmatic ability is construed to be inevitable (Kasper, 1992). For instance, negative pragmatic transfer of L1 Turkish to L2 English in fourth-year Turkish PSEFLTs' compliments and compliment responses was demonstrated in Karagöz Dilek's (2020) study. The related literature also encompasses research on exploring the correlation between pragmatic transfer and L2 proficiency. To illustrate, the results of the study carried out by Allami and Naeimi (2011) revealed the interrelationship between proficiency level and pragmatic transfer. The study participants with higher level of proficiency were more disposed to transfer L1 sociocultural norms to L2 as refusing requests, causing more pragmatic errors. In contrast to the research by Allami and Naeimi (ibid), there exist studies exhibiting the prevalence of negative pragmatic transfer amidst foreign language learners with lower level of proficiency than those who are proficient (e.g., Morkus, 2018).

The Speech Act of Refusals and Explicit Instruction on the Teaching of Speech Acts

The connection between proficiency level and development in the ability to refuse in Greek as a FL was explored in Bella's (2014) research, the results of which demonstrated

that more proficient FL learners' competence in refusing was closer to that of native speakers when compared to less proficient ones. How refusals are realised in an L2 is contingent on people's pragmatic knowledge of their mother tongue (Morkus, 2014). Brasdefer's (2008) research showed that most participants transferred their social perceptions from their first language (L1), causing misunderstandings, and as a result, pragmatic failure. The impact of proficiency level and power relation between interlocutors on the production of Korean EFL learners' oral refusals was examined in Lee's (2013) study. The findings illustrated the participants with higher level of proficiency were better at producing refusals than the ones with lower level of proficiency and at refusing the requests of people of lower status.

First language cultural schemas were demonstrated to be factors affecting the refusal strategies employed by English language learners in Shishavan and Sharifian's (2016) study. Another study examining the place of cultural differences in the realisation of the speech act of refusals is the one conducted by Siebold and Busch (2014). The results indicated that the Spanish study participants employed more indirect refusal strategies while the German applied more direct ones. Nevertheless, there is also research demonstrating no difference between the use of direct and indirect refusal strategies by L2 learners from different L1 backgrounds (Stavans & Shafran, 2018). In the study by Živković (2020), no difference was found between the employment of direct and indirect refusal strategies of English and Serbian speakers.

The influence of different kinds of instruction on pragmatic accuracy and speed of student EFL teachers' production of refusals was explored in the research by Shirinbakhsh, Rasekh and Tavakoli (2018), the findings of which indicated that input-based practice brought about improvement in pragmatic speed while metapragmatic instruction enhanced pragmatic accuracy. Integration of technology in enhancing EFL learners' learning of refusals has been also scrutinized. To exemplify, the study by Haghighi, Jafarigohar, Khoshsima and Vahdany (2019) yielded that flipped classroom produced more development in EFL university students' performance on appropriate production of refusals as against that of the participants instructed conventionally.

The extant literature on examining explicit and implicit instruction on developing student EFL teachers' pragmatic competence in general and the teaching of the speech act of refusals is remarkably limited. Ülbeği (2009) conmpared the effect of implicit and explicit instruction on the teaching of polite refusals to eight-grade Turkish learners of English. The findings indicated that both types of instruction supported the participants in learning polite refusals, but implicit instruction led to a much bigger improvement in that. Another study carried out in Turkey with an eye to exploring the effect of explicit instruction on developing young learners' pragmatic competence was conducted by Canbolat, Atasoy and Naiboğlu (2021). The findings obtained from the pre- and post tests revealed that explicit instruction did not lead to a statistically significant difference between the experiemental and control group participants' pragmatic awareness of L2 requesting. Nonetheless, the findings gathered from the qualitative data indicated the participants' awareness of pragmatic factors and requests. The study carried out by Qi

and Lai (2017) investigated the effect of deductive and inductive teaching on university students' learning of the speech act of requests, the findings of which demonstrated that inductive teaching resulted in better student performance on the immediate and delayed post-test. Another research done by Fuentes and McDonough (2018) reported that procedural repetition was more efficacious than explicit instruction at developing EFL learners' competence in the use of politeness strategies when disagreeing. The absence of research dedicated to examining the influence of the kind of instruction on developing PSEFLTs' competence in appropriately performing the speech act of refusals unpacks the significance of this study. Since PSEFLTs will be teaching not only grammar and mechanics to their students in their professional lives but also to communicate successfully in English, raising their awareness of the influence of developing their pragmatic competence on their communicative abilities will mediate how they will teach their prospective students. The research questions to which answers are sought are as follows:

• Does explicit instruction on the appropriate realisation of the speech act of refusals lead to a change between the experimental and control group's performance on refusing the requests of people of higher status in the post-DCT?

• Does explicit instruction on the appropriate realisation of the speech act of refusals lead to a change between the experimental and control group's performance on refusing the requests of people of equal status in the post-DCT?

• Does explicit instruction on the appropriate realisation of the speech act of refusals lead to a change between the experimental and control group's performance on refusing the requests of people of lower status in the post-DCT?

2. METHOD

The Research Design and the Procedure

This quasi-experimental study was conducted to explore whether the PSEFLTs receiving explicit instruction on how to perform the speech act of refusals perform it more competently than those undergoing no treatment. With an eye to scrutinizing the likely impact of explicit instruction, one of the two existing groups enrolled in Pragmatics course was randomly assigned as the experimental group while the other one was specified as the control group. A pre-DCT was carried out in an effort to reveal whether there existed a difference between the competence of the experimental and control group participants in performing the speech act of refusals successfully in light of the factor of the status of interlocutors. The experimental group was subjected to a six-hour treatment (each lasted 50 minutes) grounded upon explicit teaching of how to refuse the requests made by interlocutors of higher, equal and lower status. Explicit instruction is explicated as an instructional method targeting student learning through encouraging student participation and providing scaffolds till the mastery of the target skill/s takes place (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Rosenshine, 1987). Teaching of the speech act of refusals was based upon the six teaching functions proposed by Rosenshine (1997). The steps followed as carrying out explicit instruction every two hours are given below:

a) Review

Apart from the first hour of the explicit instruction, previous learning was reviewed.

b) Presentation

The goal of the lesson was stated precisely by the lecturer.

Concise and clear information was presented before the experimental group participants watched the selected video-recording in which native English-speaking interlocutors had different status.

They figured out the language used by the interlocutors in pairs.

The lecturer prompted them through posing questions as to the social distance and power relation between speakers and the language used by them.

The lecturer used a clear language when prompting the participants.

c) Guided practice

They worked in pairs to act out the conversation in the video.

The lecturer provided timely feedback and clues to them as needed.

d) Corrections and feedback

The lecturer retaught the points on which they needed further explanations.

e) Independent practice

The experimental group produced their own conversation in pairs keeping in mind the highlighted points in the selected video-recording.

The lecturer offered feedback on how they performed the speech act of refusals.

f) Review

The lecturer reviewed and accentuated the key points once again.

While the PSEFLTs in the experimental group were subjected to the explicit instruction structured upon the above-stated steps, the PSEFLTs in the control group merely covered the explanations in the chosen textbook as to how to perform the speech act of refusals in English. At the end of the six-hour explicit instruction lasting three weeks, a post-DCT was administered both in the experimental and control group. Thereafter, experimental and control groups' performance on the DCTs was analysed to reveal if or not the explicit instruction induced a difference between the competence of the two groups in refusing the requests of people of higher, equal and lower status in English appropriately.

Participants

A total of 67 sophomore PSEFLTs in the selection of whom convenience sampling was employed participated in the study. 36 participants were in the experimental group while there were 31 participants in the control group. Female participants outnumbered male

participants both in the experimental (female: 30; male: 6) and control group (female: 27; male: 4). The mean age of the experimental group participants was 20.8 and that of the control group participants was 20.4. The study participants were enrolled in Pragmatics course in which this study was conducted and which was taught by the researcher in both groups. Ethical approval was granted from the ethics committee board before the commencement of this study and the participants who were notified of their right to withdraw from the study at any time they wished gave informed consent. Hatay Mustafa Kemal University Social and Human Sciences Research and Publication Ethics Board stated ethical standards are followed in this research in its document numbered 902-01-FR-006 and dated March 5, 2020.

Data Collection Tool and Analysis

The data were collected from the DCT developed by the researcher and administered both before the start (pre-DCT) and after the completion of the treatment (Post-DCT). The DCT involves 6 situations (see Appendix A) requiring the production of refusals of requests. The PSEFLTs were required to refuse the requests of two people of higher status, two of equal status and two of lower one. The DCT was checked by two EFL teacher educators to make sure it served for finding answers to this study's research questions. The DCT was used to reveal PSEFLTs' pragmatic ability to produce refusals appropriately in that, as was stated by Kasper (2000), DCTs provide information regarding interlocutors' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge engendering appropriate use of language. The post-DCT functioned as an agent disclosing the impact of the explicit instruction on performing the speech act of refusals appropriately.

The data obtained from the pre- and post DCT was coded according to the taxonomy of refusals advanced by Beebe, Takahashi and Weltz (1990) consisting of direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals. To calculate the frequency of the direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals, qualitative assessment (Beebe et al., ibid) was used. Direct refusals involve performative and non-performative refusals while indirect refusals involve more semantic formulas of refusals comprising statement of regret, wish, excuse, regret and explanation, statement of alternative, set condition for future and past acceptance, statement of principle, statement of philosophy, acceptance that functions as a refusal, and avoidance. Adjuncts to refusals include statement of positive feeling/opinion or agreement, statement of empathy, pause fillers and gratitude and appreciation. The analysis of the data was carried out in light of the one done by Beebe et al. (ibid). In addition to direct refusals and adjuncts to refusals, semantic formulas were coded in each refusal and their frequency was provided separately for the refusals to the requests of a higher status person, an equal status person and a lower status one, and for the pre- and post DCT.

3. FINDINGS

Refusals of the Requests of Higher Status People in the Pre- and Post-DCT

Table 1 below illustrates the frequency of direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals to the requests of people with a higher status, calculated through qualitative assessment.

Table 1

Frequency of the Direct and Indirect Refusals, and Adjuncts to Refusals of the Requests of Higher Status People Produced in the Pre- and Post-DCT

Group	DCT	Direct refusals (*f*)		Indirect refusals (*f*)			Adjuncts to refusals (*f*)
		Only direct refusals	Combined with indirect refusals	Excuse	Reason	Statement of alternative	
Experimental	Pre	8	24	17	27	18	7
	Post	0	3	23	35	11	4
Control	Pre	6	19	11	25	8	5
	Post	2	9	12	30	6	3

Table 1 shows that experimental group participants used merely direct refusals such as "I can't stay on campus after 4 p.m." (*n* = 8), and they also supplemented direct refusals with indirect ones (*n* = 24) as refusing the requests made by the interlocutors of higher status in the pre-DCT. Similar to the case of using only direct refusals, the Table displays that the experimental group used fewer direct refusals accompanied by indirect ones in the post-DCT (*n* = 3). The frequencies of indirect refusals used by the experimental group participants in the pre- and post-DCT indicate that they gave more excuses (*n* = 23) and reasons (*n* = 35) in the post-DCT as against the frequencies of the given excuses (*n* = 17) and reasons (*n* = 27) in the pre-DCT. Nevertheless, the number of statements of alternative offered by the experimental group participants in the post-DCT (*n* = 11) is less than the one they provided in the pre-DCT (*n* = 18) when refusing the requests of people having a higher status. As compared to indirect refusals, they used fewer adjuncts to refusals in the pre- and post DCT (*n* = 7; *n* = 4, respectively).

Considering the frequency of the use of merely direct refusals by the experimental group participants in the pre-DCT, the control group used fewer direct refusals (*n* = 6). The analysis of the refusals produced in the post-DCT revealed the existence of the use of two direct refusals. A decrease in the use of direct refusals accompanied by indirect refusals is seen in the post-DCT (*n* = 9) in view of the value belonging to the pre-DCT (*n* = 18). The number of excuses made by the control group participants in the pre- (*n* = 11) and post-

DCT (n = 12) is almost equal to each other. Table 1 also depicts that the control group gave more reasons in the post-DCT (n = 30) than they stated in the pre-DCT (n = 25) as refusing to the requests of higher status people. The number of the statements of alternative provided by the control group participants in the pre-DCT (n = 8) and the post one (n = 6) is close to each other. Additionally, the Table shows that they used more adjuncts to refusals in the pre-DCT (n = 5) than those they used in the post-DCT (n = 3).

The frequency of the use of solely direct refusals and that of the use of direct refusals merged with indirect ones indicate that the control group, as against the experimental group, used more direct refusals either solely or united with indirect refusals in the post-DCT. This difference could be explicated by the treatment the experimental group received as they were explicitly instructed about the fact that directly refusing the requests of people with higher status was inappropriate. The experimental group, as a result of the treatment they underwent, gave more reasons and excuses and provided fewer statements of alternative as refusing the requests of higher status people than the control group in the post-DCT. Additionally, the frequency of adjuncts to refusals used by the experimental group (n = 4) and the control group (n = 3) in the post-DCT was relatively equal to each other. All in all, taking the course of Pragmatics helped the control group perform the speech act of refusals more appropriately in the post-DCT; nonetheless, owing to the treatment, the experimental group performed more properly in their refusals of the requests of higher status people in the post-DCT.

Refusals of the Requests of Equal Status People in the Pre- and Post-DCT

Table 2 below demonstrates the frequency of direct and indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals used by the experimental and control group when refusing the requests of interlocutors of equal status.

Table 2

Frequency of the Direct and Indirect Refusals, and Adjuncts to Refusals of the Requests of Equal Status People Produced in the Pre- and Post-DCT

Group	DCT	Direct refusals (*f*)		Indirect refusals (*f*)			Adjuncts to refusals (*f*)
		Only direct refusals	Combined with indirect refusals	Excuse	Reason	Statement of alternative	
Experimental	Pre	1	21	11	35	3	15
	Post	1	20	15	37	10	25
Control	Pre	5	16	12	23	2	12
	Post	2	12	7	26	7	15

Table 1 displays that there is virtually no difference between the frequency of the use of solely direct refusals and direct refusals combined with indirect refusals by the experimental group in the pre- ($n = 1$, $n = 1$, respectively) and post-DCT ($n = 21$, $n = 20$, respectively). The values in the Table show that the number of excuses provided by the experimental group participants in the pre- ($n = 11$) and post-DCT ($n = 15$) and that of the reasons given by them in the pre- ($n = 35$) and post-DCT ($n = 37$) is close to each other. Regarding the statements of alternative the experimental group participants provided as refusing the requests of equal status interlocutors, the Table depicts that they offered more statements of alternative in the post-DCT ($n = 10$) than the ones in the pre-DCT ($n = 3$). They also used more adjuncts to refusals in the post-DCT ($n = 25$) as opposed to the pre-DCT ($n = 15$).

The control group participants used fewer either solely direct refusals or direct refusals combined with indirect refusals in the post-DCT ($n = 2$; $n = 12$, respectively) as against the frequencies of the ones in the pre-DCT ($n = 5$; $n = 16$, respectively). The control group participants gave more reasons ($n = 26$) and offered more statements of alternative ($n = 7$) in the post-DCT whereas they made fewer excuses in the post-DCT ($n = 7$) as opposed to the ones in the pre-DCT ($n = 12$). Production of the adjuncts to refusals in the post-DCT slightly increased ($n = 15$) keeping in sight that in the pre-DCT ($n = 11$).

The frequency belonging to the production of direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals as performing the speech act of refusals indicate that the experimental group participants provided more statements of alternative following the treatment and they used as much merely direct refusals and a combination of direct and indirect refusals in the post-DCT as the ones they did in the pre-DCT. As a consequence of the explicit instruction on appropriate use of refusals, the experimental group participants used more adjuncts to refusals in the post-DCT. Improvement in control group's performance on refusing the requests of the interlocutors of equal status is also observed in the post-DCT though it is smaller.

Refusals of the Requests of Lower Status People in the Pre- and Post-DCT

The findings obtained from the analysis of the refusals the PSEFLTs produced to the requests of the interlocutors of lower status are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Frequency of Direct and Indirect Refusals, and Adjuncts to Refusals of the Requests of Lower Status People Produced in the Pre- and Post-DCT

Group	DCT	Direct refusals (*f*)		Indirect refusals (*f*)			Adjuncts to refusals (*f*)
		Only direct refusals	Combined with indirect refusals	Excuse	Reason	Statement of alternative	
Experimental	Pre	3	12	15	31	18	-
	Post	5	22	8	24	29	8
Control	Pre	1	16	10	28	17	-
	Post	2	18	6	29	20	3

Table 3 shows that the experimental group participants used more direct refusals (*n* = 5) and a combination of direct and indirect refusals (*n* = 22) in the post-DCT as opposed to the frequency of the use of direct refusals (*n* = 3) and direct refusals combined with indirect ones (*n* = 12). There is an increase in the number of the statements of alternative provided by the experimental group in the post-DCT (*n* = 29) as opposed to that in the pre-DCT (*n* = 18). The experimental group participants gave fewer excuses and reasons in the post-DCT *(n* = 8; *n* = 24) in comparison to the related values of the pre-DCT (n=15; n= 31, respectively). While the experimental group used no adjuncts to refusals in the pre-DCT, they used eight adjuncts to refusals in the post-DCT.

The frequency of the use of direct refusals and a combination of direct and indirect refusals is almost the same in the post-DCT (*n* = 1; *n* = 16, respectively) as the ones in the pre-DCT (*n* = 1; *n* = 18, respectively) as refusing the requests of lower status interlocutors. They made fewer excuses in the post-DCT (*n* =6) as compared to the frequency of those in the pre-DCT (*n* = 10). Small changes in the number of the given reasons and offered statements of alternative in the post-DCT (*n* = 29; *n* = 20, respectively) are presented in the Table when compared to those in the pre-DCT (*n* =28; *n* = 17, respectively). Whilst no adjuncts to refusals were used in the pre-DCT, three were used in the post-DCT.

The findings as to the number of direct and indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals of the requests of lower status people produced in the pre- and post-DCT reflect the impact of the treatment on the way the experimental group performed the speech act of refusals in the post-DCT. Since they were refusing the requests of lower status interlocutors, they used more direct refusals, gave fewer excuses and reasons, and offered fewer statements of alternative in contrast to the relevant values of the control group.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This quasi-experimental study investigated the effect exerted by the treatment based on providing explicit instruction to the experimental group participants on how to perform the speech act of refusals to the requests of higher, equal and lower status interlocutors in light of how native-speakers perform it. The explicit instruction aided the experimental group participants in raising their awareness of the factor of interlocutors' status and, associated with that, factors of social distance and power relations between them, impinging on how the speech act of refusals is performed. For instance, the results indicated that the experimental group nearly did not use direct refusals and provided more excuses and reasons as refusing the requests of their supervisor and the head of their department for they hold more power and the social distance between them and students is larger. In the post-DCT, the experimental group used more direct refusals, made fewer excuses and provided fewer reasons while refusing the requests of the interlocutors of equal and lower status, meaning that they have either equal or less power as against the experimental group participants. Even though variations in control group participants' use of direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals are observed in the same direction, the frequency presented in the Tables in the findings section indicated that the treatment led the experimental group participants to perform the speech act of refusals more appropriately. Similarly, the findings by Shirinbakhsh, Rasekh and Tavakoli (2018) demonstrated the positive effect of metapragmatic instruction on pragmatic accuracy and the study undertaken by Gazioğlu and Çiftçi (2017) revealed the positive influence of pragmatics-based instruction on the ninth graders' production of the speech act of requests. Therefore, it could be alleged that provision of instruction is likely to facilitate the appropriate realization of speech on the part of FL/L2 learners.

In contrast to the findings of this research, the study by Qi and Lai (2017) yielded that implicit instruction was more effective at teaching the speech act of requests than explicit instruction, and Ülbeği's (2009) research was another study reporting that implicit instruction in comparison to explicit one resulted in more development in the students' use of polite refusals. In line with the studies demonstrating contrasting results compared to the ones in the present study, Canbolat, Atasoy and Naiboğlu (2021) reported that explicit instruction provided to the experimental group did not result in a statistically significant difference in young learners' pragmatic awareness of L2 requesting. In addition, the results in Fuentes and McDonough's (2018) study showed that procedural repetition led to more successful implementation of politeness strategies when disagreeing as opposed to explicit instruction alone. Since the present study compared the outcomes of providing PSEFLTs with either explicit instruction or no specific instruction on learning to perform the speech act of refusals properly, it is not possible to reach the conclusion that explicit instruction is more effective than implicit instruction in the teaching of refusals. Furthermore, the contradictory findings show that the results with regard to the effect of either explicit or implicit insruction on developing language learners' pragmatic competence through supporting them in learning to perform speech

acts properly are inconclusive. That is, more research to be conducted in different contexts is needed to obtain deeper insights into the influence of implicit anf explicit instruction on improving pragmatic competence in FL/L2.

In line with the assertion that the use of input-rich materials is effective in teaching the speech act of refusals (Limberg, 2015), the experimental group watched three video recordings, in which the conversational exchanges take place between native speakers of English, and worked on unravelling the influence of the change in the variable of the status held by interlocutors on making decisions about the use of direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals. The results in the present study are encouraging inasmuch as the PSEFLTs developed their pragmatic knowledge of how to refuse appropriately through the help of the explicit instruction they were provided, implying that PSEFLTs' knowledge of and competence in how to perform other speech acts could be also enhanced by the implementation of explicit instruction and the use of input-rich materials, as was reported in Yılmaz and Koban Koç' (2020) research. Considering the findings, it could be attested that the use of videos illustrating how native speakers of the target language perform speech acts might be regarded as invaluable resources for the teaching of speech acts. PSEFLTs with improved knowledge of pragmatics can help their prospective students develop their communicative competence, for acquiring and developing pragmatic ability contributes to an FL/L2 learner's communicative competence. Because today's PSEFLTs are tomorrow's practicing teachers, the interventions aiming to develop their pragmatic competence could be envisaged to be an investment in developing their future students' pragmatic competence, which brings the significance of Pragmatics course in initial EFL teacher training programs to the forefront. In view of the findings, this paper could prompt teacher trainers to undertake initiatives for the teaching of speech acts to PSEFLTs.

The present research reported providing explicit instruction on how to perform the speech act of refusals appropriately is effective at enhancing PSEFLTs' pragmatic awareness of how the factor of status impacts on the way the speech act of refusals is realised. Seeing the lack of research on exploring the impact of explicit instruction on developing PSEFLTs' ability to refuse the requests of people of higher, equal and lower status, the current study can fill the gap in the literature, indicating its significance. Nonetheless, this study has a number of limitations. No qualitative data on PSEFLTs' views as to the explicit instruction given to them was collected. Therefore, further research can be carried out to uncover their perceptions concerning the explicit instruction they will be exposed to. In addition, more studies need to be conducted with an eye to examining the effect of different materials and/or type of instruction on teaching PSEFLTs how to perform the speech act of refusals. In doing so, it could be possible to compare and contrast the effect of explicit instruction to that of other kinds of instruction.

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