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DEVELOPING EFL LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC INSIGHT INTO APOLOGY STRATEGIES THROUGH META-PRAGMATIC INSTRUCTION¹


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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate students' current pragmatic competence regarding apology strategies from a speech-act theory perspective and to examine whether their pragmatic competence can be improved through meta-pragmatic instruction. Additionally, the study aimed to identify the effective factors influencing students' apology strategy preferences. A mixed methods design was employed as the research method, and data were collected through the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and semi-structured interviews. The participants consisted of 134 EFL students from the Political Science and Public Administration, International Trade and Logistics, Business, Banking and Finance, and Economics and Finance departments. Furthermore, 24 students from the same sample group participated in semi-structured interviews. When the quantitative data were examined, it was found that the most frequently used strategy by students was direct apology, followed by explanation and responsibility strategies, and then modified strategies. It was also revealed that students' DCT responses improved through meta-pragmatic instruction, with an increase in the number of core strategies they employed and the number of modified strategies, which is an indicator of authentic language use. The study also investigated the effective factors influencing students' strategy preferences and indicated that the students were mostly influenced by social status, age, and the nature of offense when applying apology strategies. In conclusion, this study aimed to investigate the current pragmatic competence of EFL students and to investigate whether pragmatic competence can be improved through meta-pragmatic instruction. Additionally, the study examined the effective factors influencing students' strategy preferences.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Pragmatic competence, Meta-pragmatic instruction, Speech act theory, Apology strategies

¹ This study is based on the first author's doctoral dissertation entitled "Developing a Pragmatic Insight into the Use of Apology Strategies for EFL Learners" completed at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University (2022), supervised by Prof. Dr. Dinçay Köksal.

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META-PRAGMATİK ÖĞRETİM YOLUYLA YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEN ÖĞRENCİLERDE ÖZÜR STRATEJİLERİNE YÖNELİK PRAGMATİK FARKINDALIĞIN GELİŞTİRİLMESİ¹

Burcu BÜR YİĞİT², Dinçay KÖKSAL³

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin özür dileme stratejilerine ilişkin mevcut pragmatik yeterliliklerini konuşma eylemi teorisi perspektifinden değerlendirmeyi ve pragmatik yeterliliklerinin meta-pragmatik öğretim yoluyla geliştirilip geliştirilemeyeceğini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Ek olarak, çalışma öğrencilerin özür dileme stratejisi tercihlerini etkileyen faktörleri belirlemeyi hedeflemiştir. Araştırma yöntemi olarak karma yöntem tasarımı kullanılmış ve veriler Söylem Tamamlama Testi (DCT) ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Katılımcılar, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi, Uluslararası Ticaret ve Lojistik, İşletme, Bankacılık ve Finans ile Ekonomi ve Finans bölümlerinden 134 İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciden oluşmuştur. Ayrıca, aynı örneklem grubundan 24 öğrenci yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelere katılmıştır. Nicel bulgular, öğrenciler tarafından en sık kullanılan stratejinin doğrudan özür dileme olduğunu, bunu açıklama ve sorumluluk stratejilerinin ve ardından değiştirilmiş stratejilerin izlediğini göstermiştir. Nicel veriler incelendiğinde, öğrencilerin DCT yanıtlarının meta-pragmatik öğretim yoluyla gelişme gösterdiği, kullandıkları temel strateji sayısında ve otantik dil kullanımının bir göstergesi olan değiştirilmiş strateji sayısında artış olduğu bulunmuştur. Çalışma ayrıca öğrencilerin strateji seçimlerini etkileyen faktörleri de araştırmıştır ve öğrencilerin özür stratejilerini uygularken çoğunlukla sosyal statü, yaş ve hatanın niteliğinden etkilendiklerini ortaya koydu. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin mevcut pragmatik yeterliliklerini araştırmayı ve pragmatik yeterliliğin meta-pragmatik öğretim yoluyla geliştirilip geliştirilemeyeceğini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Ek olarak, çalışma öğrencilerin strateji tercihlerini etkileyen faktörleri de incelemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edim bilim, Pragmatik yeterlilik, Meta-pragmatik öğretim, Konuşma Eylem Teorisi, Özür Dileme Stratejileri

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INTRODUCTION

In the past few decades, the increasing use of English worldwide cannot be overlooked. English, with extensive use throughout the world, has developed as a *Lingua Franca*. It has become the language of preference for international institutions, businesses, and academia. Along with this, English dominates areas such as internet, international media, and entertainment and this leads its widespread use. Therefore, it is now considered as the language of science, technology, social media, popular culture and, most importantly, communication. So, it can be argued that speaking English is a need rather than a mere preference in today's globalized world.

However, speaking a language is not simply about knowing its grammatical structure but also being pragmatically competent in using it appropriately across diverse contexts. Establishing a good communication depends on selecting the appropriate grammatical structure for the related context and being aware of socio-cultural norms. It is often the case that learners who possess linguistic competence struggle to use the language appropriately in natural communicative settings. For instance, while students may be competent in formal activities like giving speeches or writing research papers, they may not be able to carry out informal social interactions efficiently, such as offering an apology for not attending a social engagement. This shows the need for holistic language teaching that extends beyond grammatical knowledge to pragmatic ability.

Until fairly recently, language philosophers and scholars generally considered language primarily as a system of words and grammatical structures and as a matter of the interaction of semantics and syntax. The argument was that communication would proceed well as long as suitable vocabulary was provided in the correct grammatical forms. It was only a few decades ago, through the impetus provided by Hymes's 1972 formulation of communicative competence and the works of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), that researchers began to realize there is another critical aspect to language learning: pragmatic competence.

Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning in context (Demirezen, 1991). It considers not only the word meanings and syntax of the sentences, but also focuses on what the speaker implies with the utterance. For Crystal, pragmatics is "the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (1997, p. 301). Mey (1993) also asserts that pragmatics is related to the standpoints of users. What speakers want to say rather than what they say and how it influences the addressee are the main considerations of pragmatics.

Pragmatic competence, on the other hand, is a relatively new area of interest in language teaching. In simple terms, it refers to the ability to use language appropriately and effectively within social contexts. For contemporary language philosophers, language is essentially a communicational medium; for this reason, the context within which social interaction happens has become crucial to the interest of such philosophers. Investigating context provides valuable insights into what a speaker intends to communicate and how the listener interprets and is affected by what is being exchanged. As part of communicative competence, pragmatic competence combines both linguistic form and social context, affording successful interaction. According to many language scholars, such as Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), linguistic competence is composed of two main dimensions: grammatical competence and pragmatic competence. While grammatical competence addresses intonation, phonology, syntax, and semantics, pragmatic competence concentrates on the ability of language users to use language meaningfully in social interactions. In that sense, pragmatic competence also includes interlanguage pragmatics.

Interlanguage is primarily the learner's internal linguistic system, which borrows elements from both the native language and the target language but remains distinct from each. As Ellis (1997, p. 33) states, "a learner's interlanguage is, therefore, a unique linguistic system". This system, within the learner's mind, is based on learner's perception of the target language, comprising not only grammatical forms and structures but also a pragmatic dimension, commonly referred as interlanguage pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics investigates how non-native speakers perceive the target language, how they carry out communicative acts within it, and how their pragmatic competence develops (Ellis, 1997; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Kasper & Rose, 2003; Zingir-Gülten, 2008). Thus, this area highlights the socio-cultural and contextual dimensions of language use emphasizing how learners activate not only their linguistic knowledge of the target language but also their pragmatic competence to produce contextually appropriate and socially meaningful utterances. However, this production will often reflect influences from their first language, thereby leading to what is called as pragmatic transfer.

Learners often tend to perform linguistic actions in ways influenced by their native language, a phenomenon known as pragmatic transfer. Kasper (1992) defines the term as "pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics shall refer to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (p. 207). Olshtain and Cohen (1989) defines pragmatic transfer as the process by which learners apply aspects of their native languages to the production of the target language. The pragmatic transfer of native language, particularly the transfer of sociocultural elements, can

lead to breakdowns in cross-cultural communication, according to language scholars (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). Failures in the target language may arise from the transfer of pragmatic elements from the native language. These are referred as pragmatic failures. Thomas (1983, p. 91) identifies the term pragmatic failure as “inability to understand what is meant by what is said”. In addition to knowing syntax and vocabulary, students should also realize pragmatic dimensions. Otherwise, they will struggle in social situations.

Since communicative competence has been acknowledged, academics and educators have recognized that meaningful communication in the target language requires pragmatic competence and cultural awareness, in addition to proficiency in grammar and lexis (Özdemir & Rezvani, 2010). As Cheng mentioned, “understanding and production of speech acts and their appropriateness in a given situation is an important aspect of pragmatic competence” (2005, p. 9). “The importance of pragmatic competence can be explained within a language situation. For example, in Japan, saying, ‘I am sorry’ might be enough of an apology in many situations, whereas in other cultures, such as that of Jordan, an explanation for the offense might be required” (Bataneh & Bataneh, 2008, as cited in Aydin, 2013, p. 2). In this sense, pragmatic competence is related to Speech Act Theory, as defined by Austin (1962). Speech Act Theory seeks to explain language exchanges in terms of their influences on both the speaker and the listener. Within this theory, speech acts are classified into five main categories based on how communication is perceived by both speakers and listeners (Celce-Murcia, 2007): assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Since the expression of apology is one of the frequently used speech acts, which falls under the category of expressives, it is crucial to understand the importance of apology and how it facilitates meaningful communication. Cohen and Olshtain (1983, p. 21) define apologies as “a speech act occurring between two participants in which one of the participants expects or perceives oneself deserving compensation or explanation because of an offense committed by the other”. Marquez-Reiter defines apology as “compensatory action for an offense committed by the speaker which has affected the hearer” (2000, p. 44). Cohen and Olshtain's (1983) taxonomy categorizes apologies into two types based on their expression: direct and indirect. Performative verbs, such as “be sorry” “apologize” or “excuse” are examples of direct apologies. While direct expressions of regret and apology are included in this category, indirect apologies can take many different forms. “Offering an explanation, acknowledgement of responsibility, offer to repair, and promise of forbearance” is how Cohen and Olshtain (1983) classified indirect apologies (p. 21). Claiming an explanation for being late to a meeting can be a strategy to apologize indirectly. Asking for assistance for a passenger whom was struck by another person may also be interpreted as an indirect apology. It is also possible to combine multiple apology strategies.

Literature Review

Since pragmatics is a relatively recent field of inquiry within Turkish EFL and ELT research, empirical studies investigating learners' pragmatic abilities and interventions aimed to enhance their pragmatic competence remain limited. Therefore, the body of research focusing solely on apology strategies within speech act theory is also relatively limited.

In 2012, Asmalı conducted a study on apology and refusal strategies as part of his Master's degree requirements. His study included prospective English language teachers from Latvia, Poland, and Turkey. Asmalı developed his own DCT, which consisted of ten items, three of which were borrowed from another study and seven of which were created by the researcher. He analyzed the apologies using an apology strategies coding schema developed by Hudson, Detmer, and Brown in 1995 and the refusals using a refusal strategies coding schema developed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weeltz in 1990. He found that all the students used IFID and EXP strategies dominantly. As the groups of participants were compared, he revealed that Turkish students used IFIDs the most, however, overall results were similar across groups.

In her study, Özmen (2016) separated the students into two groups and collected data. She used a video-enhanced discourse completion task (VEDCT) in the first group and a discourse completion task (DCT) with the same content in the second group. She then used the taxonomy of apology strategies developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1983) to analyze the data. Additionally, she recalculated the results based on social status, social distance, and the severeness of the offense. She discovered that in both groups, the students used the explicit (direct) expression of apology. Özmen also found that students used inappropriate (less polite and more direct) apology utterances in high-status situations. She argued that the findings of the study clearly demonstrate EFL students' lack of pragmatic competence.

Rajawi, Azizifar and Gowhary (2015) conducted a study on apology strategies with Iranian EFL students and investigated the role of explicit instruction. They included 73 students in the study and separated them into two groups as experimental and control groups. At the beginning of the study, students were assigned a DCT to measure their current level of pragmatic competence. Later, along with regular institutional instruction, the experimental group received additional explicit treatment on the use of apology strategies for one academic term. At the end of the term, both the experimental and control groups were administered the post-test to assess the changes in their

responses. The responses were coded and analyzed in SPSS Software. They found significant differences between the two groups and observed that explicit instruction was effective in enhancing students' pragmatic competences.

Refualu et al. (2021) investigated the frequency and function of speech acts in a 9th grade coursebook in Indonesian context. They found that the frequency of the speech acts was dominated by assertives, directives and expressives with the same percentage. They are followed by commissives and declarations with less than 3% in frequency. They also revealed that the functions were not provided clearly for all the speech acts. These findings indicated the unbalanced speech act frequency and the missing functions of speech acts in the coursebooks.

Alfgehe and Mohammadzadeh (2021) conducted another study with Libyan undergraduate EFL learners to investigate the three speech act strategies of request, suggestion and apology and to examine their linguistic and pragmatic competence in these strategies. 87 students participated in the study and responded to a DCT including various situations considering these speech acts. For apology, they found that the form of IFID+EXP was the dominant form used by the participants.

Canbolat (2022) employed a methodology that included pre-test and post-test procedures in his study. He divided 55 EFL students in his study into two groups: experimental group and control group. While the control group was given comprehension-based exercises, the experimental group was exposed to teacher-led explanations, oral discussions, and authentic language materials. As pre-test and post-test, he used an MDCT (multiple-choice discourse completion test). He analyzed the gathered data using the framework of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) and the apology speech act taxonomy of Cohen and Olshtain (1983). At the end of the treatment, he found that the learners' range of apology strategies varied, but no significant differences were observed.

Alindra, Fithriani and Pardi (2025) also investigated how the speech acts of apology, request and refusal are realized by the speakers of English and Mandarin languages. They followed a qualitative methodology and employed conversation analysis and thematic analysis in their study. They found that English speakers utilized explicit forms of speech acts, while Mandarin speakers tended to employ greater indirectness with the influence of cultural orientations. They also revealed that the speech act patterns varied by some elements including setting, social distance, power relations, and communicative medium, showing that pragmatic behavior is shaped by cultural elements and situational restrictions.

As the literature indicates, the majority of studies on apology strategies were designed to measure the current pragmatic competence of EFL learners. A limited number of studies propose interventions to enhance students' pragmatic competence. Due to the limited number of studies investigating it, the question of whether students' pragmatic competence can be enhanced through various interventional processes remains unresolved. Therefore, this study is grounded in interlanguage pragmatics theory which views pragmatic competence as a developmental aspect of second language learning process and proposes the argument that pragmatic competence can be enhanced using relevant instructional processes. In this context, the study draws on the speech act theory, seeing apology acts as a communicative act which require both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge. In this study, the taxonomy of apology strategies developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1986) was taken as an analytical model to operate and assess the students' pragmatic performance. Consequently, the researcher aims to identify the students' current levels of pragmatic competence, reveal whether the pragmatic competence can be enhanced through meta-pragmatic instruction and the variables that influence their preference of apology strategies in their responses.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study is to reveal the students' current levels of pragmatic competence, to investigate whether the students' pragmatic competence can be enhanced through meta-pragmatic instruction and to find out the effective factors which shape students' preferences of apology strategies in their verbal interactions. Therefore, the study was guided to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the frequently used apology strategies among EFL learners?
- 2- Can pragmatic competence be enhanced through meta-pragmatic instruction?
- 3- What factors influence the way EFL learners express apologies?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A research design is a "strategic framework" that guides the research process, bridging philosophical foundations and practical action and ensuring systematic observation for enhanced validity of findings (Durrheim, 2006; Kivilu, 2003). Creswell (2014) identifies three broad research approaches—qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. In this study, a mixed-methods research design was applied to gain a deeper understanding of complex human experiences, in line with the nature of social and educational sciences. Mixed methods research combines the two traditions to capitalize on their respective strengths and reduce their respective limitations (Newman &

Benz, 1998; Niaz, 2008). In line with this understanding, the present study utilizes Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design. In this design, the quantitative and qualitative data are collected separately, analyzed and interpreted together to identify agreements, differences and contradictions between the two data sets (Katz-Buonincontro, 2024). In this way, the method allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the data by revealing the overlapping or differing points. Therefore, more sound interpretation of the data can be provided.

Population and Sample of the Study

The participants, in this study, were selected using criterion-based purposive sampling method which sets a specific criterion that should be followed by the participants to be included in the study. In line with this sampling method, the participants of the study is 1st and 2nd year students from the Political Science and Public Administration, International Trade and Logistics, Business, Banking and Finance, and Economics and Finance departments of a state university. These programs were intentionally selected because students experience much greater exposure to English due to the nature of their coursework, take English-medium courses such as Business English-I and Business English II, and have a higher engagement with English compared to other programs. Additionally, graduates from these programs need authentic English for professional purposes such as communication, documentation, and international engagement. Accordingly, these students are more likely to use English in academic studies and future careers. Due to this relevance, it was ensured that students had the motivation and need to participate in the meta-pragmatic instructional process. Therefore, a total of 134 students from the aforementioned departments participated in this study. The distribution of the participants according to their respective departments is listed in Table 1 below:

Table 1.

Departments of the Participants

Department	Frequency (the Number of Students)	Percent
Political Science and Public Administration	51	38,1
Finance	33	24,6
Banking and Finance	22	16,4
Economy	14	10,4
International Trades and Logistics	7	5,2
Business	7	5,2
Total	134	100%

Another demographic variable addressed in the study pertained to the participants' national backgrounds. The vast majority of participants (n = 131) were of Turkish origin, while the remaining participants included two Azerbaijani and one Afghan students.

The participants were also asked to provide details of any prior overseas experience, including its duration. From the findings, it was clear that most participants (94%) had no overseas experience. Since three of the students on the list are overseas-experienced, it does not undermine the quality of the research, as they are non-native speakers and are classified as EFL learners. Although gender is not considered a variable in this study, it is worth noting that the 69 females and 65 males, who collectively comprised the 134 participants, constituted the study sample.

Following a criterion-based purposive sampling strategy, was utilized for the qualitative part of the study. Students with higher proficiency in English were intentionally to ensure collecting in-depth and relevant data for the study. Participation for both phases of the study was entirely voluntary. All participants were informed that they were under no obligation to participate in the research and could withdraw at any time without consequence.

Data Collection and Instruments

Following the tradition of pragmatic research paradigm, the data for the present study were collected through a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and semi-structured interviews with the participants. The DCT aimed to search for answers for first and second research questions, and the semi-structured interviews aimed to address the third research question.

First, students were asked to answer the DCT without being given any information about the intervention process. These responses were recorded as pre-test data for the study, and then a three-week meta-pragmatic instruction process was initiated. During this process, in line with meta-pragmatic instruction, students received detailed and explicit information about the appropriate use of apology strategies and were provided socio-pragmatic and contextual cues. Activities such as discussions where students could discuss their answers and opinions, and role-playing where they could put the information into practice, were also provided. Below is a brief in-class sample of meta-pragmatic instruction given to the students.

Meta-Pragmatic Instruction Sample:

The instructor writes on the board:

- a) Sorry.
- b) I'm really sorry, it was my fault.
- c) I apologize. It won't happen again.
- d) I'm so sorry, I'm late. I missed the bus.

The instructor asks these questions to the students: 1) Which one is a formal apology? 2) Which one is a stronger apology? 3) In which one is the responsibility accepted? 4) Which one gives an explanation?

The students give various answers and they are asked to discuss in small groups. Later, the instructor gives an explanation "In English, apologizing isn't just about saying 'sorry'. The speaker can choose strategies such as taking responsibility, explaining or promising."

The instructor then draws a table on the board showing apology strategies and their functions:

<u>Apology Strategy</u>		<u>Function</u>
Direct apology (IFID)	→	expressing direct apologies
Explanation (EXP)	→	making explanation for the offense
Responsibility (RES)	→	taking the responsibility of the offense
Repair (REP)	→	offering repair for the offense
Promise of Forbearance (FORB)	→	promising not to repeat the offense again

Here the instructor puts an explanation, "As the severity of the situation increases, the strategies used may change, and multiple strategies may be employed. The strategies employed are influenced by factors such as our closeness to the person we are speaking with and how formal our relationship is. While simply saying "sorry" might suffice when apologizing to a friend, an explanation might be expected when apologizing to our boss. If we don't give appropriate answers depending on the person we are speaking to, our responses may be perceived as rude".

After the explanation, the instructor gives some situations and asks students to produce apologies for them:

- 1) You lost your friend's book.
- 2) You're late for the class.
- 3) You came to work late.

The students discuss the situations and produce answers for each situation. They explain which strategy they preferred and why to the class. Other students may provide their opinions or further clarifications. The instructor asks to create dialogues using these situations and role-play their dialogues. Following this activity, a discussion is initiated by the instructor, in which students evaluate the strategies used in the role-playing. The discussion is further facilitated by asking students questions such as "Why do we need different apology strategies?" and "Why is simply saying 'sorry' not enough?" At the end of the discussion session, the class ends.

At the end of the three-week meta-pragmatic instruction process, the same DCT was administered to the students as a post-test, and the responses were collected for analysis.

Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

The Discourse Completion Test (DCT), developed by RıdvanTunçel (1999), was implemented in the study as the primary quantitative data-gathering instrument. The DCT, "Discourse Completion Test: An Investigation of Native and Non-Native Speech Act Realizations" was initially adapted from the work of Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The initial version of the instrument had 14 scenarios of expressions of thanking and 14 scenarios of apologizing. The reliability of the original DCT was then validated through repeated testing at regular intervals, achieving a level of consistency of 75%, which is generally accepted as a measure of instrument reliability. This finding supported the finding that the instrument was reliable enough to be used in speech act research. The researcher further checked the validity and reliability of the DCT for the specific population in the study. To assess internal consistency, Cronbach's alpha was calculated using the responses of 134 participants. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.714$) obtained was sufficient to indicate that the DCT possessed a high level of internal consistency and was thus reliable for the current research.

To validate the research instrument, ANOVA (Tukey's HSD Test) and Hotelling's T-squared test were employed. The post-hoc test results, as determined by Tukey's test, showed a statistically significant difference between the

implementation phases, i.e., between scores prior to and following the test ($p = .000$), which confirmed a measurable influence of the treatment on participants' performance. To verify the construct validity of the tool, a multivariate test was also employed in the form of Hotelling's T-squared test, and the result proved statistical significance at the $p = .000$ level. Such results provide strong evidence for the validity of the DCT used in the current study.

The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) developed by Tunçel includes 14 items that represent differing levels of social distance between interlocutors, such as scenarios involving professor-to-student, parent-to-child, employer-to-employee, as well as their reverse counterparts (e.g., student-to-professor, child-to-parent). These items were designed to reveal authentic use of language in hierarchical and relational contexts, enabling the probing of the impact of social distance on the use of apology strategies. The DCT is, thus, a useful instrument for exploring participants' pragmatic competence in terms of the appropriateness and authenticity of speech act preferences.

Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)

To gain a deeper understanding of the participants' use of apology strategies, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subgroup of participants. A total of 24 of the 134 participants volunteered for the interviews. Out of 24 interview participants, 13 were from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (54.2%), 6 from the Department of Management (25%), 2 from the Department of Finance (8.3%), 2 from the Department of Economics (8.3%), and 1 from the Department of International Trade and Logistics (4.2%). Since participation in the interviews was voluntary, the number of people interviewed was not evenly distributed across the various departments.

Every interview was scheduled for 30 minutes, and both participants and the researcher adhered to the time limits. During the interviews, the participants were asked a primary question, followed by four related sub-questions. The main question and the sub-questions were as follows:

Main Question:

- 1- What are the initial factors you have taken into consideration while responding to the questions?

Sub-questions:

1. Have you been affected by the 'age' of the person you interact with while responding to the questions?
2. Have you been affected by the 'gender' of the person you interact with while responding to the questions?
3. Have you been affected by the 'social status' of the person you interact with while responding to the questions?
4. Have you been affected by the 'nature of relationship' you hold with the person you interact with while responding to the questions, such as formality/informality?

Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed due to the work of Andrew Cohen et al. in 1986, in which they developed the taxonomy of apology speech acts, which is given below:

Table 2.

Taxonomy of Apology Speech Acts (Adapted From Cohen Et Al. 1986)

Five Apology Strategies	Combination or Absence of Strategies	Modification of Strategies
<p>Direct Apology (IFID): "Sorry", "Excuse", "Forgive", "Apologize", "Pardon" +combinations and repetition</p> <p>Explanation: non-specific (e.g., "There have been a lot of things distracting me at work lately"); specific (e.g., My boss called me to an urgent meeting)</p> <p>Responsibility: implicit (e.g., I was sure I gave you the directions correctly), lack of intent (I didn't mean to...); self-deficiency (How could I be so clumsy?); self-blame (It's my fault)</p> <p>Repair: -unspecified- (e.g., Can I help you?); specified-"Let me pick up these books for you)</p> <p>Promise of Forbearance: (e.g., I promise it won't happen again)</p>	<p>Combination of Strategies</p> <p>No apology Strategies (Absence of Strategies)</p>	<p>Intensity of Apology: Really, very, so, terribly, awfully, truly +combinations and repetitions</p> <p>Minimizing Responsibility: (e.g., "Didn't I tell you I don't know the bus stops so well?")</p> <p>Denial of Responsibility: Denial of fault (It's not my fault), Blaming hearer (It's your fault!)</p> <p>Emotionals: Interjection (Oh!, Oops!), invocation (god!, Jesus!), or curse (Shit!), +combinations</p> <p>Minimizing Offense (e.g., "It's OK. No harm done.")</p> <p>Comments: -about self (How could I?); about others (Are you O.K. ?); about situation (I don't see any damage, thank goodness!) +combinations</p>

This taxonomy of apology strategies, developed by Cohen and his colleagues (1986, p. 6), defines five main strategies and six types of modification strategies. The taxonomy also includes the combination or absence of strategies. These together comprise the taxonomy of apology strategies.

The quantitative data collected through the Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs), which were categorized according to the taxonomy developed by Cohen et al. (1986), were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis was conducted employing the Chi-Square test to determine whether there were noteworthy differences between the pre-test and post-test results. The reason for why Chi-Square is preferred by the researcher is that the analysis of the findings was carried out at the item and frequency level, not at participant level. It means that the study examined the coded response categories to identify the shifts and changes between pre-test and post-test sections. Since the data gathered in the study included categorical frequency distributions, Pearson Chi-Square test was employed to highlight the significant differences between these two stages. So, Pearson Chi-Square test, in line with the frequency-based nature of the coded DCT data, allowed the comparison of the categorized data gathered from participant responses.

For the qualitative data generated from the semi-structured interviews content analysis was employed to examine whether these results supported the findings from the DCT analysis. Although the data were qualitative in nature, in order to interpret this data, it was necessary to identify, classify, and compare it. Therefore, the content analysis approach enabled a consistent examination of participant discourses by allowing responses to be coded into meaningful categories. The coding process was carried out by two independent coders with expertise. To ensure trustworthiness, the process was conducted separately by the coders, and the generated codes were compared at the end of the process. Any discrepancies were discussed by the parties, and a consensus was reached. The Po value of the two coders in the study was determined to be 0.86, which is generally considered a strong indicator of inter-coder reliability in content analysis studies. In this way, consistency was ensured in the categorization process, contributing to the overall reliability of the study.

FINDINGS

Frequently Used Apology Strategies

The first research question aims to identify the strategies most frequently employed by EFL learners when expressing apologies to various interlocutors across different contexts. First research question aims to identify the most frequently employed strategies by EFL learners when apologizing to various interlocutors across different contexts. To answer this question, an examination of the pre-test data collected from the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) administered to the subjects is required first.

Table 3.
Overall Frequencies in Pre-Test

Strategy	Frequency	Percent
Direct Apology (IFID)	1298	36.8
Explanation (EXP)	622	17.6
Responsibility (RES)	305	8.6
Repair (REP)	668	18.9
Promise of Forbearance (FORB)	140	3.9
Minimizing Responsibility (MRES)	10	0.2
Denial of Responsibility (DRES)	77	2.1
Minimizing Offense (MINOFF)	21	0.5
Comments (COMT)	39	1.1
Intensity of Apology (INTS)	258	7.1
Emotionals (EMOTS)	8	0.2
RUDE	75	2.1
TOTAL	3.521	100

The findings from the pre-test indicate that the most frequently utilized apology strategy by the participants was IFID (Direct Apology), accounting for 36.8% of the responses. As previously explained, IFIDs involve direct expressions of apology directed toward the hearer, such as “I am sorry!”, “Sorry!”, “Pardon me!”, “Excuse me!” or “I apologize.” These expressions contain explicit apology markers and are considered to be the most straightforward and least cognitively demanding means of expressing an apology.

The second frequent strategy was REP (Repair), employed in 18.9% of the responses. REP is a direct apology strategy that indicates the speaker's willingness to repair the offense. This might be achieved by offering compensation, such as covering damages in the event of an accident, proposing an appeasement gesture like a meal, or providing aid.

The third frequent strategy was EXP (Explanation), involved in 17.6% of the responses—a strategy providing explanations or justification for the offense committed. Although not a form of direct apology, explaining can be socially interpreted as an apologetic action, especially when a direct apology is not used.

The fourth frequent strategy was RES (Responsibility), which appeared in 8.6% of the responses. RES is a direct acknowledgement of responsibility by the speaker, typically expressed through sentences like “My mistake!” RES is less frequently used, perhaps because it entails personal responsibility, which was difficult for many participants to assume.

The least frequently used main strategy was FORB (Forbearance), accounting for only 3.9% of the responses. FORB involves making a promise about not repeating the offense in the future. The low frequency of this strategy reflects that very few participants were willing to promise not to repeat their offenses.

In brief, the participants used IFID most frequently and then applied REP, EXP, RES, and FORB, respectively. Before addressing the second research question, it is also important to observe the usage of the modified apology strategies.

Modified strategies, categorized by Cohen et al. (1986), refer to apology strategies that have been altered in their structure and content. For Cohen et al. (1986), learners' use of such modified strategies is one of the criteria used to distinguish between native and non-native speakers. Therefore, in apology, the authentic use of language by learners directly relates to their ability to use modification strategies effectively.

Considering this study, the overall analysis indicates that a very small percentage of participants were found to be skillful in employing modified strategies, as indicated by their relatively low rates of usage.

Among the modification of strategies, INTS (Intensity), addressing to the use of intensifiers like “really,” “very,” or “deeply,” was the most frequently used modification strategy among the participants, occurring in 7.1% of the responses. Use of INTS can convey a greater intensity of shame or regret from the speaker.

The second most frequently used modification strategy was DRES (Denial of Responsibility), which was employed in 2.1% of the responses. DRES is characterized by the attempt to exculpate or blame with statements such as “It is not my fault!” or “You misunderstood!” Such a reaction in this study was annotated as DRES; however, it is worth noting that cross-cultural differences, as seen in the Turkish case, may influence the

interpretation of these statements. For instance, "You misunderstood me!" may be a polite clarification rather than a denial.

COMT (Comment), which involves personal remarks or self-reflective statements indicating guilt or acknowledgment of the offense, accounted for 1.1% of the responses. An example might be "I am pensive these days." While indirect, such expressions still function as forms of apology. MINOFF (Minimization of Offense) was the fourth most frequent modification strategy, used in only 0.5% of the answers. In MINOFF, the offender acknowledges the offense but attempts to downplay its seriousness, as seen in statements such as "It is just a small scratch" after a car accident.

There were few responses including MRES (Minimizing Responsibility) and EMOTS (Emotional Expressions), each accounting for 0.2% of the total responses. In MRES, the speaker deflects or avoids responsibility by attributing the cause of the offense to others—for instance, "I said I did not know how to use it!" following an accident. EMOTS, on the other hand, are emotional expressions such as "Oh my God!", "Ah!" and "Oh!" are considered essential elements in achieving authentic language use.

In total, the pre-test part of this research elicited 3,521 responses. As mentioned, IFID or indirect strategies were characterized by most of these responses, reflecting a general preference for less complex forms of apology. By contrast, the relatively low use of modified strategies might be interpreted as indicating low levels of proficiency and authenticity in English.

Can Pragmatic Competence Be Enhanced?

To address this research question and determine whether the findings are significant, the researcher performed a chi-square test on the pre- and post-tests. According to the calculation results, the chi-square test for the related research question reports a statistically significant difference ($\chi^2(16, N = 134) = 80,282, p < .001$). The table below shows the frequencies obtained from the post-test results.

Table 4.
Overall Frequencies in Post-Test

Strategy	Frequency	Percent
IFID	1480	32.3
EXP	711	15.5
RES	475	10.3
REP	989	21.6
FORB	151	3.3
MRES	10	0.2
DRES	64	1.3
MINOFF	29	0.6
COMT	55	1.2
INTS	510	11.1
EMOTS	100	2.1
RUDE	53	1.1
TOTAL	4,574	100

Firstly, it is worth noting that the frequency of apology strategies used by respondents was significantly higher in the post-test than in the pre-test. There were 3,521 responses with an apology strategy in the pre-test phase, but this number increased to 4,574 in the post-test phase. Furthermore, all categories of strategies increased in frequency. Correspondingly, the number of responses evaluated as impolite by the researcher decreased in the post-test. Although the overview is brief, it can be argued that meta-pragmatic instruction successfully enhanced the pragmatic competence of the participants and expanded their ability to accommodate apology strategies.

A detailed examination of the post-test data confirms the findings presented in the previous paragraph. The comparison between pre- and post-test distribution rates of the strategies substantiates significant differences. While the overall number of strategies increased, the distribution rates are the focus of particular interest. To be precise, although the number of IFIDs registered a numerical increase in the post-test, their percentage decreased slightly from 36.8% to 32.3%. This decrease shows a quality improvement, as IFIDs are generally the most basic form of apology. The decrease in relative frequency implies that participants added more complex strategies to their apologies, such as making excuses, repairing promises, or using intensifiers, and therefore created richer and contextually more appropriate apologies.

Similarly, when the overall frequency of EXPs increased, their relative frequency of use declined from 17.6% to 15.5%, which must be interpreted as a positive improvement in light of the overall increase in apology quality during the post-test. That decline, small though it may be, indicates a transition toward more sophisticated and diversified apology constructions.

Considering RES, its frequency and percentage (from 8.6% to 10.3%) both increased, indicating that participants were more willing to take responsibility for their actions in the post-test. The same increase, therefore, was observed in the frequency and percentage of REPs (from 18.9% to 21.6%). This suggests that the participants transitioned from merely stating regret to more nuanced responses as a result of classroom interventions and explicit meta-pragmatic instruction. It can be assumed that the answers became more appropriate and authentic.

For FORB, there was a decrease both in number (from 140 to 150) and percentage (from 3.9% to 3.3%). Although the decrease is minor, it may be representative of a shift towards more dynamic responses, such as offering repairs. Notably, although the percentage of FORB responses decreased, the absolute number increased marginally (from 140 to 150), suggesting that the decline in proportion might be misleading to some extent and should not be viewed negatively.

For modified strategies, there was a slight increase in the percentage of MINOFFs (from 0.5% to 0.6%), but a decrease in the percentage of DRES strategies (from 2.1% to 1.3%). The frequency and percentage of MRES strategies remained stable at 0.2%. Whereas Cohen et al. (1986) assert that modified strategies are indicative of authentic language use, it can be noted that MINOFF, DRES, and MRES tend to have a negative emotional impact on the hearer. The minimization of these strategies can therefore, to a certain extent, be regarded as an improvement.

More significantly, the increasing use of intensifiers (INTS), emotional expressions (EMOTS), and combinations (COMT) shows a significant improvement in pragmatic competence. In the post-test, the use of EMOTS increased dramatically from 8 to 100 (from 0.2% to 2.1%), while the use of INTS apparently doubled, from 258 to 510 (representing 11.1%). Although the increase for COMT was less pronounced (from 39 to 55, representing a 1.2% increase), it is still worth noting.

According to Cohen et al. (1986), the use of such modified strategies reflects authentic language use among language learners. Thus, the substantial growth in these strategies following the instructional intervention suggests that the applied teaching methods- which is meta-pragmatic instruction- effectively fostered the enhancement of pragmatic competence and contributed to the learners' authentic use of English language. In conclusion, the findings indicate that meta-pragmatic instruction significantly enhanced both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of students' strategy use in their responses.

Effective Factors for EFL Learners' Apology Strategy Preferences

In order to find answers to the third research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 participants, and the collected data were analyzed through content analysis ($Po = 0.86$). Participation in the interviews was on a voluntary basis, and the participants volunteered to be interviewed. Below is a Table indicating the departments of the interviewees:

Table 5.

Departments of the Interviewees

Department	Frequency	Percent
Political Science and Public Administration	13	54.2
Management	6	25
Finance	2	8.3
Economy	2	8.3
International Trade and Logistics	1	4.2
Total	24	100%

As the table indicates, a total of 24 of the 134 participants volunteered for the interviews. Out of these, 13 were from the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (54.2%), 6 from the Department of Management (25%), 2 from the Department of Finance (8.3%), 2 from the Department of Economics (8.3%), and 1 from the Department of International Trade and Logistics (4.2%). Additionally, the gender distribution of the interview participants indicated that 20 individuals (83.3%) identified as female, while 4 participants (16.7%) identified as male.

In these interviews, participants are kindly asked to answer the following main question and the related questions:

1. What are the initial factors you have taken into consideration while responding to the questions?
2. Have you been affected by the 'age' of the person you interact with while responding to the questions?

3. Have you been affected by the 'gender' of the person you interact with while responding to the questions?
4. Have you been affected by the 'social status' of the person you interact with while responding to the questions?
5. Have you been affected by the 'nature of relationship' you hold with the person you interact with while responding to the questions, such as formality/informality?

Participants indicated that a total of six factors affected their responses to the first question. These factors include age, social status, nature of the offense, gravity of the offense, context, and the nature of the relationship. The researcher found that while some of these factors were predictable, others were not. The variables mentioned by the participants are listed below, in order:

- 1- Social Status (11 interviewees)
- 2- Age and Nature of Offense (equal in number; 9 interviewees)
- 3- The Nature of Relationship (7 interviewees)
- 4- Context (5 interviewees)
- 5- The Gravity of the Offense (4 interviewees)

When asked about specific influencing factors, 15 interviewees (62.5%) expressed that "age" affected their preference of apology strategies. Of all the interviewees, 16 stated that the "social status" of the other person in the conversation affected their preferences (66.6%). For 15 interviewees, "the nature of relationship" (formality/informality-close/distant) with the hearer was an influencing factor on how they expressed apologies (62.5%). 'Gender' is the least favorable factor mentioned by 5 interviewees (20.3%), indicating that gender did not affect their preferences of apology strategies when responding to the DCT's scenarios.

As the results are analyzed, it can be concluded that the participants tended to apologize to their spouses and friends in similar ways. However, they preferred to repair their offenses towards their friends more and make more explanations to their spouses. They are willing to take more responsibility in their friendships, whereas they promise never to repeat the mistake with their spouses.

However, participants were less willing to apologize to their spouses than to their bosses, friends, or strangers when the total number of responses was taken into account. Some of the strategies appear to be less frequent when the social distance between interlocutors decreases. For instance, the results showed that the participants offered more explanations or excuses to their professors or bosses than to their friends, family, or spouses. In formal relationships, the participants acknowledged their offenses more frequently and promised not to repeat them; in other words, they made a greater effort to persuade the hearer. However, in informal settings, they often downplay their responsibilities and deny or minimize their offenses. They use more intense words in formal situations.

The findings highlight how age, social status, and the relationship between interlocutors significantly influence the pragmatic realization of apology strategies. The speakers differed in their linguistic preferences, strategic employments, and discourse structuring according to the hearer's identity, echoing the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of pragmatic competence in apologizing situations.

In this way, the research highlights the fundamental contribution of social and contextual factors to the development of learners' pragmatic conduct in English, with important implications for both pragmatics research and the practice of language teaching.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate the apology strategies frequently employed by EFL learners, examine whether meta-pragmatic instruction can enhance EFL learners' pragmatic competence, and identify the factors that influence EFL learners' apologies. The literature reveals a gap where studies primarily focus on measuring learners' current pragmatic competencies, but lack research aimed at enhancing them. Therefore, this study is primarily structured to address this gap. For this study, meta-pragmatic instruction on apology speech acts was implemented at higher education level to see whether it is effective to enhance learners' pragmatic competences. For this aim, the study sought for answers for the following questions:

Accordingly, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- 1- What are the frequently used apology strategies among EFL learners?
- 2- Can pragmatic competence be enhanced through meta-pragmatic instruction?
- 3- What factors influence the way EFL learners express apologies?

For the first research question, the findings indicated that students most frequently used the direct expressions of apologies. The predominance of expressions like "I'm sorry" and "I apologize" among students indicated a preference for formulaic and safe language patterns rather than authentic language use. This suggests that students have a limited pragmatic language repertoire and struggle to develop contextually sensitive strategic variety. Furthermore, students applied this same limited variety of strategies in all situations, regardless of contextual differences such as formal/informal, further supporting the finding that students have an inadequate pragmatic language repertoire.

The low usage rates of responsibility-taking (RES) and promising for not to repeat (FORB) strategies indicate that students' apologies remain more superficial and that they fail to add authentic depth to their expressions of apology. The low rate of modified strategies, a strong indicator of authentic language use, suggests that students have not developed pragmatic competence in producing more natural and contextually appropriate expressions in the target language. These findings overlap with the similar studies in the literature (Özmen, 2016; Alfghe & Mohammadzadeh, 2021), and show that students generally tend to use basic and direct strategies in their apology behavior.

One of the most important findings of the study is the statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test ($X^2(16, N = 134) = 80.282, p < .001$). This result shows that meta-pragmatic instruction is remarkably effective in improving students' pragmatic competencies. According to the post-test results, the use of IFIDs decreased among the students, there was an increase in RES (taking responsibility) and REP (repair) strategies, an increase in INTS (intensifiers) and deeper and more authentic expressions, and a decrease in responses described as rude.

This change in learner responses indicates not only quantitative but also qualitative improvement. Post-test results show that learners shifted from simple apology statements containing a single strategy to the use of multiple strategies and a more contextually appropriate responses and authentic language use. This indicates that while learners considered only linguistic forms in the pre-test, they also took contextual appropriateness into account in the post-test. Based on these results, and consistent with other studies involving explicit instruction on apology strategies (Rajawi et al., 2015), it can be concluded that pragmatic competence can be taught and enhanced through meta-pragmatic instructional processes.

For the third research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants of the study. These semi-structured interviews revealed that students most frequently considered social status, age, and the nature of the relationship as effective factors when formulating apology behaviors. The fact that social status was the most prominent variable is particularly noteworthy. Students tended to employ more responsibility-taking (RES) and compensation-making (REP) strategies towards higher-status individuals, produced more complex responses in formal relationships, and simpler responses containing more IFID and explanations (EXP) in close relationships. For example, the use of DRES (denial of responsibility) was almost never observed in situations involving participants interacting with someone of high social status, but was used in a significant number of situations involving interactions with friends. At the same time, responses defined as rude also increased in close relationships and decreased in formal relationships, supporting the idea that students' apology behaviors are influenced by social status.

These findings demonstrate that pragmatic competence is a multifaceted, context-sensitive, and dynamic construct. Students' strategy preferences vary depending on the age and identity of the interlocutor and the nature of their relationship with the interlocutor. Furthermore, it was found, in semi-structured interviews that, students were significantly influenced by the nature of offense factor. When students perceived their offenses as more severe, they tended to use a greater number and variety of strategies and gave more complicated responses; however, when their offenses were less severe, they used fewer strategies and gave simpler apology responses. The least influential factor in students' development of apology behavior was gender. Participants stated that they were not affected by the gender of the person whom they were expressing apologies.

In this study, it was found that students were mostly influenced by factors such as social status, age, nature of offense, and context, while another study similarly revealed that students were influenced by setting, social distance, power relations, and communicative medium (Alindra et al., 2025). Age was not considered an effective variable in either study. Considering all these findings, it is possible to say that despite the complex and layered nature of apology behavior, students are generally influenced by the similar contextual factors and face with similar restrictions (Asmali, 2015).

In this study, qualitative and quantitative findings complement each other, demonstrating the value of mixed methods analysis and enhancing the methodological strength of the research. For example, modification strategies such as MRES, DRES, and MINOFF, which showed a decrease in frequency in the post-test, might have been perceived negatively if they hadn't been analyzed using a mixed-methods approach. However, thanks to the depth added by the mixed-methods approach, the decrease in these strategies was interpreted positively rather than

negatively, adding a valuable dimension to the study. It is clear that the qualitative data contribute to the study by supporting and explaining the quantitative data.

Conclusion and Implications

This study aimed to measure the current pragmatic competence of EFL students and to determine whether pragmatic competence can be enhanced through meta-pragmatic instruction. The study also aimed to reveal the factors shaping students' apology behaviors while expressing apologies.

The study revealed that students' pragmatic competencies were initially limited and that their responses were more direct and simple. As a result of the meta-pragmatic instruction process, the variety of strategies used by students increased, and student responses became more authentic and natural. These results demonstrate that meta-pragmatic instruction, implemented to enhance pragmatic competencies in EFL classrooms, is effective and meaningful. Therefore, it can be concluded that students' pragmatic behaviors can be shaped through various instructional interventions such as meta-pragmatic instruction.

The study also investigated the factors influencing students' preference of apology strategies. Data collected from semi-structured interviews indicated that students' use of apology strategies was influenced, in order, by social status, age, nature of offense, and nature of relationship. These factors were followed by context and gravity of offense. These findings are similar to those of other studies in the literature. In this case, it can be concluded that students' pragmatic behaviors are shaped by various similar contextual and cultural factors.

The research findings showed that students' use of apology strategies was limited and based on formulaic expressions at the beginning of the study, but as a result of meta-pragmatic instruction, students' use of more natural, authentic, and diverse strategies expanded their pragmatic repertoire. This finding demonstrates that pragmatic knowledge is teachable and therefore students need to be exposed to more systematic pragmatic knowledge during instructional processes. In this context, pragmatic competence should be addressed systematically in EFL and ELT programs. While pragmatic content is often implicitly included in current programs, topics such as speech acts and contextual appropriateness are not treated as separate teaching objectives. However, this study demonstrates that after receiving pragmatic instruction, students develop pragmatic behaviors such as choosing the appropriate strategy and developing contextually appropriate expressions. Therefore, elective or mandatory courses, practical modules, and workshops aimed at enhancing pragmatic competence can be added to EFL/ELT programs.

In terms of teacher training, the readiness of teachers to provide pragmatic instruction should be assessed first, and teachers should be equipped with pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic thinking and analytical skills in in-service and pre-service training programs. Teachers should be enabled to acquire the necessary skills to evaluate students' work not only in terms of grammatical accuracy but also from a contextual and pragmatic perspective. In this context, in-service modules for teachers should focus on skills such as speech act analysis and the ability to integrate pragmatic awareness activities into lesson plans.

In conclusion, pragmatic competence in language teaching is not a skill acquired through the environment or by chance, but rather a central component of communicative competence, gained through systematic instruction in the classroom. In this line, EFL and ELT programs need to be restructured or revised with the integration of necessary skills, especially in today's world where communication has become the primary goal in English learning.

The study also has some limitations. First, the study was conducted with 134 students studying at a single state university. Limiting the study population to a single university and specific departments may restrict the generalizability of the findings to the entire EFL field. Comparing the findings with similar studies conducted at different universities and departments could lead to more generalizable conclusions.

Secondly, in this study, the meta-pragmatic instruction period was limited to 3 weeks. While this 3-week period was sufficient to obtain statistically significant results, the effect and persistence of longer-term implementations were not measured within the scope of this study. In future studies, extending the duration of meta-pragmatic instruction may lead to more meaningful results in terms of the sustainability of pragmatic development.

Finally, the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used to collect data in this study. Although the DCT is a widely used and valid measurement tool for assessing pragmatic competence, it may be insufficient in reflecting students' real-time performance. Therefore, in future studies, including data obtained through observation from activities such as role-playing and group discussions will support the results.

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ÇALIŞMANIN ETİK İZİNİ

Yapılan bu çalışmada “Yükseköğretim Kurumları Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Yönergesi” kapsamında uyulması belirtilen tüm kurallara uyulmuştur. Yönergenin ikinci bölümü olan “Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine Aykırı Eylemler” başlığı altında belirtilen eylemlerden hiçbiri gerçekleştirilmemiştir.

Etik kurul izin bilgileri

Etik değerlendirmeyi yapan kurul adı: Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü

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ARAŞTIRMACILARIN KATKI ORANI

1.yazarın araştırmaya katkı oranı %60, 2. yazarın araştırmaya katkı oranı %40'dır.

Yazar 1: Doktora tez öğrencisi olarak araştırmayı yapmak, sayısal ve sözel veriyi elde etmekten sorumludur.

Yazar 2: Doktora tez danışmanı olarak yönlendirme yapmak ve araştırmacıyı asiste etmekten sorumludur.

ÇATIŞMA BEYANI

Araştırmada herhangi bir kişi ya da kurum ile finansal ya da kişisel yönden bağlantı bulunmamaktadır. Araştırmada herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.