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Assessing Tertiary Turkish EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence Regarding Speech Acts and Conversational Implicatures

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Abstract: Pragmatic competence is an indispensable component of communicative competence, which plays an essential role in human communication. When an individual is communicatively competent, he/she can carry out an effective conversation in social situations. Therefore, pragmatic competence establishes a compelling factor in English language learning as it permits second/foreign language learners to carry out successful conversations in real-life interactions outside the classroom atmosphere. The improvement of foreign language learners' pragmatic competence will strengthen their communicative competence. The purpose of this paper is to assess foreign language learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures by using a multiple-choice discourse test (MCDT) and their performance in a discourse completion test (DCT). Through the use of a quantitative analysis, 54 adult learners of English at C1 and B2 levels of proficiency defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in a university in Cyprus were tested on their use of implicatures and speech acts. EFL learners were more successful in the MCDT regarding the comprehension of formulaic and idiosyncratic features but received lower results in the DCT. As well as testing the proficiency level, this study was also designed to investigate the difference between the gender performances of the DCT and MCDT. The results revealed that there is no statistical significance between the male and female respondents in terms of pragmatic competence. Based on these results, the role of teaching pragmatics in EFL classrooms portrays a major aspect for a sustainable learning environment. Thus, the paper also illustrates suggestions for future research.

Keywords: pragmatic competence; production; comprehension; implicature; EFL learners



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1. Introduction

A successful conversational act in the target language (TL) mostly depends on the effective use of language which requires linguistic, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. The sustainability of the positive human relations partly depends on the effective use of language which requires the linguistic, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. Although these three components are defined separately, the ability to use the language efficiently relies on communicative competence. Thus, the fundamental element to consider in communicative competence is pragmatic competence, which helps interlocutors to communicate accurately and appropriately in a social situation. Moreover, learners face difficulties in the conversational act in the TL as they come to the realization that certain grammatical rules do not function in real-life situations. Commonly, the difficulties faced in the TL can occasionally contribute to numerous societal issues and misinterpretations in English.

It is with this assumption that most second language learners and educators share the belief that learning a list of grammatical rules or basic vocabulary phrases is what is needed to interact with another person. Nevertheless, when communicating in a language,

speakers should consider social, cultural and pragmatic aspects of a language and not only grammatical structures and meanings of words. When EFL learners lack sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge of a language, they are bound to fail to communicate appropriately. In order to create a sustainable educational setting, the awareness of conversational implicatures and the production of speech acts are believed to be one of the crucial attributes in language learning which permit learners to interact more efficiently. Therefore, a high degree of pragmatic knowledge helps second language learners achieve their goal, which is to communicate effectively. Accordingly, the importance of pragmatic competence is essential in effective communication as it is the major objective in communicative competence. Both pragmatic and communicative competence involve various levels of ability that consist of grammatical, psycholinguistic and social competence [1]. Moreover, pragmatic competence is considered one of the components of communicative competence that learners need to develop for successful communication in the TL.

Pragmatic competence is the ability that enables interlocutors to communicate correctly, appropriately and effectively in a social context. One of the essential abilities of pragmatic competence is to understand whether an utterance is appropriate in a given context and to select an attainable form over another form that depends on understanding [2]. It could be said that each person has some sort of pragmatic competence that permits them to apply the language in different situations, varying in contexts. Learners perform a certain speech act due to their deficiencies in pragmalinguistic competence. In some cases, although learners produce utterances in line with linguistic and pragmalinguistic norms, they fail to use them appropriately in a given context as they are uninformed of the uses of speech acts. Pragmatic competence depends on how to perform such speech acts in specific circumstances. It can be said that L2 learners commonly display more pragmalinguistic competence than the sociopragmatic one [3]. Pragmalinguistics refers to how a speech act is realized, for instance, what to say to apologize, make a complaint, request and compliment an individual in a particular language [4]. In order to have the skill to produce and comprehend pragmalinguistically and sociopragmatically, second language learners need to have the ability to use appropriate speech acts in L2 [5]. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, is associated with the skills of encoding and decoding language in social conditions [1,6]. In order to produce an utterance, one must first comprehend and bear in mind that the language must also be relevant to the social context of a conversation. Hence, speech acts can be used for practical instruction of pragmatics in foreign language frameworks as well as for the study of the results of guidance in the interlanguage pragmatics field [7]. In line with the framework of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), L2 learners fail to communicate appropriately as semantic and cultural aspects of the language are required. Furthermore, when comparing explicit or implicit instruction on pragmatic development, it has been shown that explicit instruction boosts learners' interaction skills [8,9]. The fact that the effectiveness of teaching pragmatics helps foreign language learners develop a better understanding of the meaning of what is *spoken* and provides them with the chance to comprehend the target language with its *culture* sets this investigation aside as an alternative to how pragmatic competence can be taught in EFL classrooms. In order to achieve sustainable learning, language learners should be able to formulate linguistic elements and recognize the speaker's intentions. Unfortunately, in most cases, one of the issues is that the communicative competence of EFL learners does not reach an adequate level, leaving learners to start the first year of their department in a disoriented state. The awareness of pragmatic knowledge is beneficial for EFL learners as they can recognize the use of language in sociocultural contexts. In the effort to establish the importance of pragmatic competence in EFL/ESL classrooms, it is with this that the significance of the current study was brought together, i.e., to examine whether EFL learners have pragmatic knowledge. Even though there have been studies exploring the use of speech acts and conversational implicatures, only a few have assessed conversational implicatures dealing with comprehension and production of speech acts collectively [10]. This current study attempts to assess both pragmatic comprehension and production skills of speech acts on

EFL learners at a university in Cyprus utilizing quantitative research. In this regard, the four research questions were formed to explore the elements of this study:

1. Is there a difference between the test results of the EFL learners' production of speech acts and comprehension of implicature?
2. Does the comprehension of implicature differ in terms of the participants' proficiency levels?
3. Does the performance of speech acts vary according to students' levels of English proficiency?
4. Is there a difference between the female and male participants' pragmatic competence?

2. Background of the Study

2.1. *The Importance of Instruments to Test Pragmatic Competence*

Throughout literature, research has shown that scholars have tested the area of L2 pragmatics [11–16]. One of the earliest research studies conducted on pragmatic proficiency tests was established by Oller [17]. He gave priority to the attention of constructing the natural circumstances of language in examinations. Nevertheless, the naturalness contradicted the artificiality of these tests and it was believed to be intricate. Accordingly, pragmatic tests were characterized as exercises or activities that instructed learners in the process of a series of language items of real-life situations [17]. In addition, the assessment of pragmatic competence was implemented by Hudson et al. [18]. These scholars created a framework to assess the importance and effectiveness of pragmatic competence, which contained various aspects in their model. Even though the focal point of the framework was assessing speech acts, the attention to the importance of the identification of the causes of pragmatic failure when measuring pragmatic skills should be considered. It was Ellis [19] that established the matter that most pragmatic instruments utilize explicit knowledge. It was only recently that Roever and Ellis [20] illustrated the key issues concerning the use of tests in testing L2 pragmatics. The debate on the effectiveness of the pragmatic tests underlined the uncertainty of whether these tests required implicit knowledge as native speakers of English hinge on implicit knowledge in their production and comprehension [20]. Furthermore, it is important to note that there is a distinction between implicit and explicit learning to implicit and explicit knowledge. The awareness of the difference between the former and the latter is necessary as it provides an idea of what pragmatic instruments measure [21,22]. Moreover, implicit and explicit learning relies on the processes of engagement in learning a language, whereas implicit and explicit knowledge relies on the product of language learning [23].

The assessment of the use of appropriate instruments has been questioned as to whether these instruments tap implicit knowledge as it is difficult to alter implicit pragmatic knowledge due to learners being under time pressure through oral DCTs [15]. Therefore, when assessing L2 pragmatic approaches (such as speech acts, routines and implicature) of L2 learners, the testing of implicit knowledge in pragmatic tests would be more beneficial, but that is not to declare that explicit knowledge should not be assessed. All in all, the enhancement of pragmatic measures on L2 learners' pragmatic competence and implicit and explicit knowledge should be considered in the measurements of pragmatic tests as they are both essential for particular real-world situations [20]. Taguchi [24] extended Biaystok's two-dimensional model of language proficiency, which she named pragmatic knowledge. Although she did not mention the concepts of implicit and explicit knowledge, the model, in fact, serves to assess the difference between the two, but may not be adequate in the sense of learners identifying social meanings, conveying them by way of pragmalinguistic decisions and expressing the choices they made [20]. Notwithstanding, the issue with reliable and valid measures of implicit and explicit knowledge when developing a criterion to test pragmatic competence should be assessed carefully and care must be taken when interpreting the results. Additionally, researchers should develop their assessment tools

thoroughly, as their tools could focus on the testing of grammatical measures rather than pragmatic competence.

2.2. Language Proficiency and Pragmatic Competence

In pragmatics research, the proficiency level of L2 pragmatic competence has had a positive impact on learners [25,26]. Additionally, it is important to highlight earlier research studies conducted on language and proficiency as only limited studies have been presented recently [26,27]. These scholars received contrasting results in the measurements they used to test learners' proficiency and pragmatic competence. Li [26] measured L2 Chinese intermediate and advanced learners' production in a computerized oral DCT. Over a period of one semester abroad, the findings revealed that both groups achieved appropriateness over time. However, the advanced level outperformed the intermediate group. All in all, the advanced group benefited from the fluency of speech acts production (assessed by the speech rate), but both groups could not benefit from speed planning. Therefore, the findings illustrated that proficiency affects the development of pragmatic knowledge (appropriateness) and processing (speech rate). Matsumura [27] used the measurement of proficiency using TOEFL and L2 English learners' skills to elect the appropriate advice-giving expressions through a time period of a year abroad. Even though the findings indicated the indirect effect of proficiency through exposure to English, the selection of learners' expressions had no direct effect on their proficiency. Other investigations have discovered that pragmatic competence is positively linked with language proficiency and target language exposure [28–30]. On the contrary, Takahashi [31] investigated language learners' pragmalinguistic competence with variables of motivation and language proficiency. The results demonstrate that learners with higher proficiency levels do not necessarily mean they have a higher level of pragmatic competence. Xiao [32] researched the effects of proficiency on L2 pragmatic competence. Overall, the study reveals that the higher proficiency learners had higher pragmatic competence. Furthermore, the relationship between L2 learners' proficiency level is partly a threshold to their pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, that is not to declare that increased-proficiency learners have a native-like pragmatic performance of the nature of target pragmatic features such as speech acts, i.e., directness and conventionality. The pragmatic performance can vary according to each individual [32]. Moreover, limited studies have focused on language and proficiency in pragmatic competence and the comparison of L2 learners among each other, but scholars have examined L2 learners' proficiency levels in comparison with native speakers (NSs) [33–37]. Thus, it is appropriate to note that learners with a high degree of linguistic competence could be communicatively incompetent as their language proficiency and pragmatic competence are two different variables when using language. Crandall and Basturkmen [38] illustrate that "a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily show concomitant pragmatic competence—a real concern given that people are forgiving; it seems, of grammatical mistakes than of pragmatic failure" (p. 41). Furthermore, Ellis [19] underlines the dichotomy of explicit and implicit knowledge, and initial studies have presented substantial proof for the effects of explicit and implicit instructional strategies on learners' pragmatic knowledge. The teaching of L2 pragmatic knowledge includes the teaching techniques that rely on implicit and explicit instruction [39]. Kasper and Rose [25] illustrated that explicit instruction generates better results than implicit teaching as it raises L2 learners' consciousness; however, explicit teaching could not allow learners to develop other aspects of skills. On the contrary, [40] discovered that both explicit and implicit instruction generated a positive effect on learners' production and awareness but favored explicit instruction in the use of production. In consideration of this, although there have been studies indicating the positive aspects of either explicit or implicit instruction (vice versa or both), whether the instruction is explicit or implicit, both impact learner's pragmatic competence positively. Rafieyan [41] conducted an experimental study on 52 English language learners. Both experimental groups received explicit and implicit instruction through the assessment of completion tasks and a multiple-choice

comprehension test. Even though the findings revealed that both explicit and implicit instruction led to pragmatic development, the group that was exposed to metapragmatic explanations and form-focused instructional strategies performed better than the group which received form-focused teaching techniques.

Pragmatic competence does not only rely on speech acts, but implied meanings are also pragmatic elements to communicate in the target language and it is an evenly essential area of pragmatics. Testing conversational implicatures in relation to learners' proficiency levels has also drawn attention in the field of pragmatics [42–45]. Jaliel and Kadim [46] conducted a study investigating 140 Iraqi EFL learners' realization of conversational implicature at the university level, and the results indicated that they were unable to recognize the flouting of the maxims. The scholars illustrated that the learners' language proficiency only allowed them to comprehend the linguistic form more than interpreting the implied meanings. Samaie and Arianmanesh [47] developed a multiple-choice test that investigated 385 EFL university learners' comprehension of implicatures among different proficiency levels. The test results revealed that high-proficiency learners scored highest in indirect refusals, negative opinion, disclosure and topic change, pointing out that learners with different proficiency levels achieved similar results. In addition, there is not only one preferred approach to how pragmatics could be taught, and the effects of approached such as scenarios and scripts influence English learning astonishingly. The universal principles of instruction in pragmatics differ from language targets to student characteristics, and institutional and sociocultural contexts [48]. A few other practices used to develop pragmatic competence in ESL/EFL contexts are performing mini-scenarios using appropriate structures, role plays, discussion of inappropriate authentic dialogues and identification activities [49–51]. Furthermore, it is believed that one of the important roles of pragmatic instruction is the knowledge of speech acts and how they function in order to communicate in a second language. The speech acts function alongside conversational implicatures such as polite questions, indirect criticism, verbal irony, indirect refusals, etc., and also play an essential role in cultural elements [52]. There have been studies mostly aimed at investigating L2 learners' pragmatic comprehension and how they decipher speech acts and conversational implicatures (e.g., [53–56]). These elements of exchanging information have specified a framework where an individual can contemplate information. Hence, speech acts can be used for practical instruction of pragmatics in foreign language frameworks as well as for the study of the results of guidance in the interlanguage pragmatics field [7]. In addition, results have confirmed the important role of pragmatics instruction, particularly in the field of foreign language teaching, where the classroom setting is the only opportunity where, in fact, learners could practice the target language.

2.3. Gender and Pragmatic Competence

When interpreting meaning in general, it is well-known that men and women interpret situations differently as their brains function in diverse ways. When interpreting pragmatic meanings such as speech acts or conversational implicatures, the mind is active in its simultaneous and complex aspects of the context of the situation. The dynamic mechanisms that are caused at that moment in time are complicated to perceive, visualize and formulate in the second language. Therefore, one of the objectives of the current study is to investigate the production and comprehension between the genders. Alrashoodi [57] examined a total of 80 Saudi Arabian participants' refusal strategies, 40 males and 40 females, in order to discover the effect of gender and social status on speech act behavior. The findings revealed that the males were more direct in all situations but mostly the female group used indirect refusals repeatedly, which raised the question, "does culture influence how women and men use the target language?" Accordingly, the role of gender portrays a major aspect in the use of speech acts alongside the level of proficiency and ethnicity [58]. Even though scholars have considered gender and proficiency as a significant variable in the selection of words and utterances, limited research studies related to gender have been presented through the literature [59–61].

Furthermore, scholars have brought to light gender differences on conversational implicatures [62–65]. Barzani and Mohammadzadeh [66] held an investigation that also examined 90 Iraqi Kurdish learners' pragmatic competence through comprehension of speech acts, implicatures and situational routines using an MCDT and DCT. The respondents in the study demonstrated a considerably low level of pragmatic competence; however, Iraqi Kurdish EFL female learners demonstrated better performances of pragmatic competence than the male participants. It was seen as convenient to add one particular study that came to light and was one of the foremost reasons this investigation was carried out. Ref. [4] conducted a study that aimed to investigate the techniques of linguistic and pragmatic competence. Using a DCT, the purpose of the study was to test the request and apology strategies of 83 EFL Kurdish undergraduate students compared with 14 native speakers of English as well as comparing male and female participants of the chosen groups. The results showed that the participants were able to use indirect request strategies, but the Kurdish undergraduate students were better at demonstrating direct and explicit request strategies compared to the native speakers of English. Ref. [67] conducted a study on pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer among 70 Iraqi female EFL learners in refusing marriage proposals. They compared the Iraqi female EFL learners with American native speakers of English. In general, the female participants that took part in the study were found to have used refusals indirectly. The EFL female learners preferred to employ reasons, excuses, explanations, statements of regret and non-performative statements in the DCT of refusals. At the same time, the American native speakers of English used similar techniques, which made their refusals sound persuasive.

2.4. Implicature

Pragmatic competence requires speakers to have a selection of different options in order to function in communication alongside providing them with the appropriate choice in a particular context [68]. Bialystok [69] defends the idea that one needs to take into account the diverse features of pragmatics; these include the familiarity with numerous speech acts such as pragmatic competence; (1) the capability to use language for different intentions, (2) the awareness of the implicatures, which is to understand the speaker's real intentions, and (3) the ability to comprehend conversation structures, which are the rules that put together utterances to develop discourse. Bialystok considers pragmatic competence as three stages: firstly, the utterer's capacity to use language for different situations; secondly, the hearer's ability to get through the language and understand the utterer's real objectives, for example, indirect speech acts, irony and sarcasm; and lastly, the basic principles that combine to generate discourse. With the focus on Bialystok's three stages, the term "implicature" expresses something that has a more profound meaning than what has been said. Grice [70] pigeonholed the notion of implicatures into "conventional" and "conversational", which later appeared in his popular theory of the Cooperation Principle as well as the maxims of conversation (quality, quantity, relevance, manner). If a speaker fails to use one or more of these maxims, then it could reach the extent where the intention of what is expressed could have a different meaning from what he or she actually means. It is with this that these maxims play an important role in pragmatics as well as the understanding of conversation [71]. Implied meanings are considered as an instrument in the language used to communicate. It goes beyond the literal meaning of a spoken statement as it focuses on how meaning is established. Accordingly, the speaker and the hearer both depend on what is implied to attain productive and sufficient interaction. In the concept of linguistics, interaction is fulfilled when the planned perlocutionary force or the illocutionary effect is carried out by the hearer [70,72]. Grice [70] introduced the eight implicatures to measure pragmatic competence. In pragmatics, the term "implicature" was highly questionable when it came to interpreting them. Later on, different researchers confirmed the meanings of implicatures in pragmatics [10,73,74]. There have been research studies that have supported the assumption that the study of pragmatics focuses on speech acts [75–77].

The first researcher to investigate the implicatures and relate them with a pragmatic assessment of comprehension was Bouton [53]. Bouton's leading conclusion was on the formulaic implicatures. He indicated that these implicatures confirm that non-native speakers (NNSs) find them difficult. Furthermore, these formulaic implicatures are teachable and determine the direct encouragement for the implied meanings to be conducted in Cetinavci and Öztürk's [78] research. Cetinavci and Öztürk put together the implied meanings of various scholars that they found appropriate for their study and developed the multiple-choice discourse test (MCDT). The MCDT consists of implicatures such as pope questions, indirect criticism, (verbal) irony, indirect refusals, topic change disclosures, indirect requests (requestive hints), indirect advice and fillers. Furthermore, the aim of Cetinavci and Öztürk's (2017) study was to develop a test that examined a pre-test, post-test and/or delayed post-test to investigate these teachable implicatures in pragmatic competence. As a result, they discovered numerous dissimilarities between the subgroups of consequential achievement. It was seen as relevant to highlight Taguchi's investigations of implicatures. Moreover, in one of Taguchi's investigations, she examined ninety-two Japanese learners of English. The purpose of the study was to examine learners' comprehension skills and whether there was a development over time. She assessed the participants' comprehension by providing them with a computerized listening task with the implied meanings of conventional and nonconventional expressions. The findings revealed that language learners' comprehension was more definite and faster for conventional expressions [45].

Regardless of pragmatics being the highlight of many investigations, various research studies have either focused on implicatures of comprehension or production of speech acts separately. It is for this reason that this study focuses on the comprehension of implicatures and the production of speech acts used to test EFL learners' pragmatic competence. With relevance to the literature, the researchers believe these could be accomplished in two ways: the first could be to develop their pragmatic ability via comprehension and the second via production. It is assumed that this study will contribute to the field of teaching pragmatics in English language teaching.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The population of a study refers to an accumulation or an entirety of all the subjects, objects or members that accommodate a collection of requirements [79]. A convenience sampling method was used to examine the participants due to the fact that both levels of respondents were selected based on their availability. The respondents of the study were at two levels: C1 and B2 levels of proficiency defined by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). As can be seen in Table 1, the groups of participants were undergraduates studying English as a foreign language: 19 male participants and 35 female participants out of 54 students between the ages of 18–21. In total, 54 Turkish students from an English preparatory school took part in the research that was conducted at a university in Cyprus.

Table 1. University Students' Demographic Information.

Level	Male	Female	Number
Intermediate Plus (C1)	6	14	20
Intermediate (B2)	13	21	34
Total			54

Pilot Study

Murray [80] indicates that "a pilot study provides an opportunity for researchers to test and refine their methods and procedures for data collection and analysis and to save a lot of time and energy by altering us to the potential problems that can be worked out before we being the actual study" (pp. 49–50). The objective of the pilot study was to exam-

ine the convenient ability of the test as well as to ensure that the characteristics of the DCT were feasible and to observe the duration period of the data tool. The researchers piloted five English Language students, four females and one male, from different universities in Cyprus, all of whom have different academic degrees in English Language Teaching (Bachelor's and Master's). These participants answered the questions from the discourse completion tasks (DCT) before conducting the research. The data collected from the pilot group of participants were taken into consideration by the researchers to revise for the final adaptation of the survey. The definite adaptation of the test was built up related to the feedback and outcome of the pilot study obtained from the five participants. It is important to note that the researchers asked the respondents whether they answered the items without any hesitation or difficulty in the practice. To conclude, they all answered that some of the items in the DCT (see Appendix A) made them reconsider their answers. Finally, they stated that the DCT did not cause difficulty but made them observe language from a different perspective. Incidentally, it is important to highlight that the DCT used in the current study was examined by five experts in the field of linguistics. The pilot study was aimed to accomplish or achieve the following objectives:

- A. To provide the feasibility of the DCT.
- B. To observe how long it took the participants to complete the DCT and to see if the test is convenient.
- C. To establish whether the provided instructions and content of the circumstances in the DCT were coherent, comprehensible and not vague to bewilder EFL undergraduate participants.
- D. To detect whether the situations of the discourse completion task, such as pope questions, indirect criticism, (verbal) irony, indirect refusals, topic change disclosures, indirect requests (requestive hints), indirect advice and fillers, were recognizable to the participants [78].

3.2. Instruments

The first and main instrument employed to elicit the desired data was the multiple-choice discourse test (MCDT) adapted and experimentally investigated by Çetinavci and Öztürk [78]. The MCDT consists of 33 items, followed up with four options, one of which participants have to select. The MCDT measures the participants' comprehension and interpretation of the implied meanings, such as pope questions (5 items), indirect criticism (4 items), (verbal) irony (3 items), indirect refusals (3 items), topic change (4 items), disclosures (3 items), indirect requests (2 items), indirect advice (4 items) and fillers (5 items). Due to the limitations of space, the multiple-choice discourse test (MCDT) developed by Çetinavci and Öztürk (2017) can be found at <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED594321> accessed on 11 December 2017. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the EFL teacher trainees in Çetinavci and Öztürk's study was considered to be high as it resulted as "0.777".

The second data-gathering instrument prepared by the researchers was a questionnaire in the form of a DCT. The discourse completion test (DCT) that investigated participants' production skills consisted of 10 items of situations (scenarios) which were open to interpretation that tested the speech acts such as indirect refusal, promising, indirect advice, opinion, questioning, apology, directives and also each implied meaning type (pope questions, indirect criticism, verbal irony, indirect refusals, topic change, disclosures, indirect requests, indirect advice and fillers). In order to make the investigation reliable, the participants were also required to fill in a DCT to examine their production after the MCDT. The DCT paralleled with the MCDT in the sense of implicatures to construct an accurate inquiry. A criterion was created by the researchers to assess the participants' production in the DCT and three experts in the field assessed the performances of the DCT results. The reliability of the DCT checked by the researchers resulted in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of "0.711".

3.3. Data Analysis

In order to measure the appropriateness of the participants' answers to the MCDT and DCT tests from the perspective of linguistic and pragmatic features, the collected data were arranged and converted into numbers. With the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version of Windows 22, the researchers examined the frequency of participants' comprehension and production. As previously mentioned, a rubric was created by the researchers to assess the performance of the discourse completion test which worked in correspondence with the comprehension test. Furthermore, in order to analyze data, an independent t-test and Pearson's correlation coefficient were employed. The four main strategies that were focused on when analyzing the DCT were the following: (1) Language (vocabulary accuracy): the participant is familiar with how to express themselves with the vocabulary they use in each situation; (2) Language (Grammatical Accuracy): the participant uses correct semantic features. The participant uses structures, grammar, and lexical items accordingly in produced items; (3) Pragmalinguistic Appropriacy (Directness: participant uses an appropriate structure that matches the speech act. Indirectness: participant uses an interrogative structure when expressing a non-speech act statement): the participant uses correct semantic features. The participant uses structures, grammar and lexical items accordingly in produced items and the participant uses appropriate speech acts for each item; (4) Sociopragmatics Appropriacy: (a) Situationally appropriate, (b) culturally appropriate use and (c) socially appropriate language use: The participant is able to provide naturalness and cultural appropriateness in each situation. The participant can identify preparatory expressions, i.e., "Would you . . . ?", "Could you . . . ?", etc., or any use of requests such as "please", "thank you", etc., in each situation based on the title of the person. The researchers interpreted the DCTs to classify the significant explanations the learners gave by demonstrating strategy use based on the criterion that was constructed. It is important to mention that various strategies were considered as separate items when learners completed each situation.

4. Results

4.1. The Assessment of the Realization of Speech Acts and the Comprehension of Implicatures

The first research question, "Is there a difference between the EFL learners' production of speech acts and comprehension of implicature?", was held out to assess participants' pragmatic competence through the use of an MCDT and a DCT. The normality of data was assessed by means of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov (KS) test and the Shapiro–Wilk (SW) test, and according to the results of the tests performed, the skewness of the MCDT is 0.059 and the kurtosis is 0.231, whereas the skewness of the DCT is -0.619 and the kurtosis is 0.167.

Table 2 shows 54 EFL preparatory undergraduate participants' performances in the discourse completion (DCT) and the multiple-choice discourse (MCDT) tests. In the table, the mean of the DCT results can be found as 61.54 ($M = 61.54$) with a standard deviation of 8.89, whereas that of the MCDT results is 66.46 ($M = 66.46$) with a standard deviation of 12.49 ($SD = 12.49$), which means that there is a significant difference between the two results at the $p < 0.05$ alpha level regarding the p -value as 0.0123 ($p = 0.0123$). In other words, the participants' implicature comprehension results were much better than their performance in the realization of speech acts.

Table 2. The difference between the participants' production and comprehension results.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p	Std. Error Mean	Sig
DCT	54	61.54	8.89	0.0123	1.21	$p < 0.05$
MCDT	54	66.46	12.49		1.70	

In order to strengthen and make this investigation useful for English language educators, the researchers wanted to examine whether there was a relationship between the

performances of the production and comprehension tests. This led the investigation to analyze the received data of 54 EFL undergraduates further by means of a Pearson correlation coefficient test. Figure 1 represents the results of a Pearson correlation coefficient analysis to determine the relationship between the participants' performances in the discourse completion test (DCT) and those in the multiple-choice discourse test (MCDT). Even though there is a positive correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.3472$, $n = 54$, $p = 0.010104$), this relationship between the variables is weak. A scatterplot summarizes the results between the two variables in Figure 1. The results indicate that, technically, there is a positive relationship between the two variables, but the relationship between the performances of the production and comprehension results is weak as the value is nearer to zero.

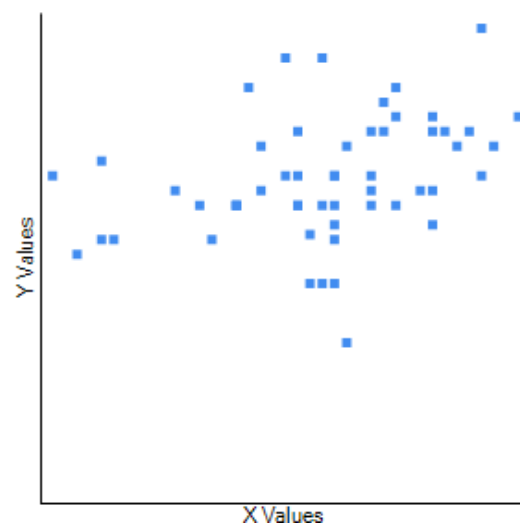


Figure 1. The scatterplot of the results correlating the production and comprehension of implicatures.

4.2. Assessing EFL Participants' Performances in the Comprehension of Implicature According to Their Level

The second research question, "Does the comprehension of implicatures differ in terms of the participants' proficiency levels?", involves EFL students' performances on the comprehension of pragmatic competence regarding the MCDT.

In Table 3, the mean of the C1-level participants' results is 70.20 ($M = 70.20$) and the standard deviation is 12.08 ($SD = 12.08$), when, in fact, the mean of the B2-level participants' results is 64.26 ($M = 64.26$) with a standard deviation of 12.37 ($SD = 12.37$). This demonstrates that there is not a significant difference between the results of the two levels at the $p > 0.05$ alpha level regarding the p -level as 0.0920 ($p = 0.0920$). To put this in another way, even though the participants in the C1 level achieved higher performances in the comprehension of implicatures than the participants in the B2 level, there is no statistically significant difference.

Table 3. EFL participants' performances in the comprehension of implicature.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p	Std. Error Mean	Sig
C1	20	70.20	12.08	0.0920	2.70	$p > 0.05$
B2	34	64.26	12.37		2.12	

4.3. Assessing Participants' Production of Speech Acts According to Their Level of Proficiency

The third research question, "Does the performance of speech acts vary according to students' levels of English proficiency?", comprises the 10 items on the DCT that were originally designed by the researchers.

Table 4 illustrates the results of the production of implicatures from the C1 and B2 participants. The mean result of the C1 level reveals 61.65 ($M = 61.65$) with a standard deviation of 9.26 ($SD = 9.26$), whereas the mean in the B2 level is 60.21 ($M = 60.21$) with a standard deviation of 8.59 ($SD = 8.59$). This displays that there is not a significant difference between the two levels at the $p > 0.05$ alpha level regarding the p -level as 0.5647 ($p = 0.5647$). In line with the rubric the researchers generated, the EFL participants were unable to display implicatures in the discourse completion test.

Table 4. Participants' production of implicatures performances.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p	Std. Error Mean	Sig
C1	20	61.65	9.26	0.5647	2.07	$p > 0.05$
B2	34	60.21	8.56		1.47	

The discourse completion test (DCT) was given to a total of 54 undergraduate students. In order to examine the subjects' production of pragmatic competence, the test contained 10 situational items. The DCT includes 10 situational items and 54 participants were asked to provide answers in line with implicatures. As a result, this determines that in total there are 540 items of implied meanings that 54 participants competed. The 540 items of 54 participants were then categorized into two elements of pragmatic competence, (1) direct speech acts and (2) implicature. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the participants were not directly asked to produce implicatures, the reason being that the researchers wanted to investigate whether the students would use implicatures. The use of implicatures was 46 out of 540 items (8.51%), which is below 10%; this indicates that the use of implicatures is very low in comparison with their MCDT scores. In Figure 2, the use of direct speech (91.5%) was demonstrated at a high degree in comparison with the implicatures (8.51%) used.

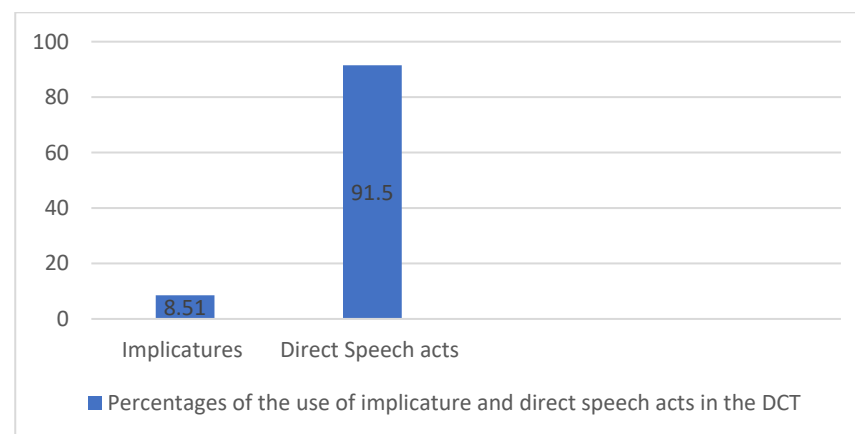


Figure 2. Participants' use of implicatures compared to their use of direct speech acts.

4.4. Assessing Gender Performances through the MCDT and DCT

The fourth research question, "Is there a difference between the female and male participants' pragmatic competence?", identified whether male and female participants had awareness of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features with the use of the DCT as well as identifying the participants' comprehension performances of the MCDT. The focus of the MCDT and DCT was to discover (1) learners' pragmatic competence, (2) whether they were aware of the implied meanings, such as pope questions, indirect criticism, (verbal) irony, indirect refusals, topic change, disclosures, indirect requests (requestive hints) and indirect advice, and (3) whether they were able to use certain speech acts in order to see if the results varied according to the genders.

Table 5 is a demonstration of the number of participants that took part in the production of speech acts and the comprehension of implicatures. As can be seen in the table, the

number of female participants that took part in the pragmatic test is illustrated. The mean of the male participants' performances was found to be 64.07 ($M = 64.07$) with a standard deviation of 10.15 ($SD = 10.15$). On the other hand, the mean for the female participants' results was 63.74 ($M = 63.74$) with a standard deviation of 8.30 ($SD = 8.30$). Although there is a difference between the male and female participants in favor of male students, this difference is not considered to be statistically significant at the $p > 0.05$ alpha level with regard to the p -level of 0.8979 ($p = 0.8979$). In other words, the male participants were slightly more successful in the pragmatic test compared with their female counterparts in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features, even though the difference between the two performances is not statistically significant. All in all, the pragmatic test results from the DCT and MCDT demonstrate that there is no statistical significance between the male students and female students concerning their pragmatic performance.

Table 5. Gender differences in the performances of the pragmatic test.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	p	Std. Error Mean	Sig
Male	19	64.07	10.15	0.8979	2.33	$p > 0.05$
Female	35	63.74	8.30		1.40	

5. Discussion

Contrary to various investigations solely illuminating a particular pragmatic feature, the current study has exemplified the production of speech acts and also the comprehension of implicatures in the field of pragmatics. Correspondingly, one of the objectives of the present study was to investigate the comprehension and production of speech acts of implied meanings at the learners' proficiency levels for the development of English language teaching. Overall, the results indicate that the respondents were more proficient in the comprehension of implied meanings rather than the production of components of speech acts; however, the results show that there was a difference to a low degree.

The data from Pearson's correlation coefficient declared that there was not a striking difference between the two variables. The results in the MCDT varied in terms of level and proficiency and, while learners with a higher proficiency were assumed to achieve better results, the majority in the C1-level group produced similar utterances to the B2-level participants. However, the learners with a higher-level proficiency received somewhat inadequate results compared with those with a lower level in the DCT, which contrasted Xiao's research on L2 pragmatic competence. Xiao [32] investigated L2 pragmatic competence and the effect it has on L2 proficiency level. The results revealed that higher proficiency learners had better pragmatic competence. Overall, particular categories throughout the pragmatic elements of implicatures demonstrated identical levels of encounters learners had despite their levels of proficiency. The results of the MCDT and DCT indicate that there is a distinction between the production of speech acts and comprehension of implicatures. In realization of speech acts, EFL learners are not familiar with the elements of sociopragmatic appropriacy to a certain degree. In the categories of the Discourse Completion Criterion, they struggled to produce (a) situationally appropriate uses of language, i.e., naturalness, and (c) socially appropriate language use when producing utterances in the DCT. Therefore, the EFL learners are not communicatively competent in the sense of using the correct "preparatory expressions", e.g., "Would you...?", or any use of requests in a social context. Even though learners were higher-proficiency-level learners, they achieved similar results to the low-proficiency learners in the use of certain implicatures and the performances varied between each individual.

Both high- and low-proficiency learners exploited different interpretations in the implicatures of production. Alternatively, if one were to consider the given results from the perspective of receptive skills and productive skills, learners had more difficulty functioning in their writing skills than in their reading skills. Hence, the learners were able to process the situations provided in the MCDT but indicated linguistic errors when it came

to filling in the DCT. By these means, learners were able to decode the message perceived in each situation, yet they were unable to demonstrate the appropriate use of the spoken language and lacked sociopragmatic elements of the language. In the sense of the use of speech acts, low-proficiency learners used strategies consisting of the hearer's feedback and their knowledge of the language in each question. Contrary to this, higher-proficiency learners were capable of understanding and using the correct grammatical features of the language, but unfortunately failed to identify the context and the linguistic expressions that could be employed. Even though the C1-level group was higher than the B2-level group, the learners' pragmatic competence was somewhat similar in results [31]. A similar investigation was conducted by Taguchi [45], whose intentions were to investigate the act of language proficiency based on individual differences and how language learners understood conventional and nonconventional expressions [81]. The results revealed that the learners' comprehension tasks were recorded faster in the conventional expressions, which is the same as the results in this study. The majority of the EFL learners performed better at the comprehension of implicatures and were faster at selecting items from the MCDDT. It is convenient to note that during the two-week deadline that was given to the participants, it was noticed that they handed in the MCDDT on time yet the majority of the EFL learners requested more time for the DCT.

Comparing gender pragmatic competence has also been researched for decades even though the evidence for this is diverse. Research studies have brought to light that female and male participants have differences in the sense of language taboo, phonetic, vocabulary and communication patterns and rely on each individual's practical and linguistic competencies [82]. As discussed, scholars have brought to light differences between genders [63–65]. An investigation on EFL learners' refusals as a face-threatening act between female and male learners was conducted [83]. It was observed that female participants preferred gentle politeness as a way of refusing and they also gave reasons when refusing, whereas, in general, male performances indicated that they were more open to expressing feelings and they were more direct in refusals. In our research, similar results were demonstrated in the DCT as female learners hardly ever used the word "no", but the male learners used it more than it was expected. Barzani and Mohammad [66] conducted research that tested Iraqi Kurdish participants' pragmatic competence using an MCDDT and DCT. The participants in their study illustrated low levels of pragmatic competence but female learners displayed higher performances in the comprehension of speech acts and situational routines than the male participants. In our research, one of the goals was to investigate and compare male and female participants' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic performances in the production of speech acts and comprehension of implicatures. The female respondents used features of sociopragmatic competency more but misused semantic features such as lexical and syntactic items according to each context. Although the female participants achieved better results in the comprehension of implicatures (MCDDT), they received slightly lower marks in the production of speech acts (DCT). Due to this, the researchers gave two reasons for the lower performances in the DCT on part of the female respondents. The first was due to their insufficient use of pragmalinguistic features even though they were able to utter the correct use of grammatical features, which they lacked in the other categories in the discourse completion criterion. A study conducted on Japanese learners of English as an L2 discovered that male students were more dominant in interactions compared with female students [84,85]. The male participants had more affirmative responses relative to the context and used appropriate structures that matched each item of speech acts in the DCT. The second is believed to be that the female participants had a higher degree of the politeness principle even though they received slightly lower results. Furthermore, the reason why the female participants were not able to provide the correct pragmalinguistic features, even though they used the correct speech acts of directness, was because they had difficulty performing implicatures of indirect refusal, verb irony, indirect request and indirect advice due to their culture. The norm of culture influences the pragmatic competence of students among gender. The DCT results displayed

that the male participants comprehended the situational items better and were able to identify idiosyncratic and formulaic features of the implicature tasks compared to the female students. Therefore, male students are able to communicate in English appropriately in a social context. As mentioned, Alzebaree and Yavuz [4] assessed 83 Kurdish undergraduate students' pragmatic performances by using a DCT and then compared the results with those of 14 native speakers of English. The results indicated that the participants' responses were, in fact, pragmatically appropriate and structurally accurate. With this assumption, if we were to compare the results of our investigation, it demonstrates that the performances of the participants had a low level of pragmatic competence in terms of the results of the DCT. The EFL participants were asked to complete the 10 situational items without providing them with explanations of implied meanings. The performances from the DCT illustrated that the majority of the respondents used direct speech acts rather than implicatures.

6. Conclusive Remarks

Evidently, learners failed to recognize and identify patterns of the formulaic implicatures, this could be due to the learners relying on their semantic comprehension skills rather than recognizing contextual situations, i.e., sociopragmatic features. It is necessary to note that the EFL learners in the study are not competent enough in the production of speech acts and they need further training in the use of the target language. In the attempts of the production test, respondents misused certain pragmalinguistic features (form and function) and sociopragmatic features (function and context). They had difficulties understanding the mappings for forming conventional expressions according to the context. Generally, the participants lacked cross-cultural pragmatic awareness when it came to producing their own utterances in a social context. In other words, the majority of the respondents in the DCT misinterpreted language items in certain situations, which can be attributed to the lack of necessary cross-cultural and communicative competence. Loban [86] declared that there was a relationship between reading and writing. Although learners can be competent in reading, they could also struggle in writing.

Overall, particular categories throughout the pragmatic elements of implicatures demonstrated identical levels of encounters learners had despite their levels of proficiency. In the comprehension task, learners needed to comprehend the situational items of implied meanings as well as to select the accurate response to the implied meanings that suited each scenario (situational item) in the MCDT. During the time period the researchers set for the participants to complete the test, it was observed that the respondents finished earlier in the MCDT than in the DCT. This may be for two reasons: The first is that there was more than one item to select which made circumstances easier for the learners as it provided them with the opportunity to make the best choice. The second is that the learners were more proficient in reading than they were in writing and speaking. From the obtained data, the results indicated that learners were able to select the correct answer for indirect refusal in the MCDT, yet they were not able to produce them accordingly in the DCT. Conversely, most lacked answering items that included indirect criticism, topic change, indirect refusals and indirect requests (requestive hints). This may be due to the fact that these components of implicatures are complicated in terms of particular structures and aspects of language as it relies more on syntactic features, indirect request strategies, specific contextual elements and pragmatic competence, i.e., the meaning behind the meaning of what is being expressed. The implicatures in the comprehension of implicature tasks (MCDT) were separated into two groups: (1) idiosyncratic and (2) formulaic [87]. Furthermore, the comprehension of the idiosyncratic depends primarily on the understanding of context, whereas the formulaic establishes the formula that is structural, semantic or pragmatic and essential to an individual's interpretation. It is with this that the findings of the comprehension test (MCDT) have demonstrated that, although respondents were able to understand one of the formulaic features (semantic feature, such as the meaning

of words) in the situational items, the inadequacy of certain formulaic and idiosyncratic features was noticeable.

6.1. Summary

When comparing the DCT results of the undergraduate participants, both the C1- and B2-level participants individually had a low degree of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features and misinterpreted the items. Based on the performances of the comprehension of implicatures of pragmatics, it was observed that there were hardly any differences between the two groups. From the results, it was noticed that some participants had difficulty giving suggestions and were unable to understand "indirect criticism", "topic change" and "indirect 'requests'". This indicated to the researchers that although learners were able to have the appropriate vocabulary and grammar accuracy, they misinterpreted cultural and naturalness appropriateness in certain situations of the scenarios.

In the analysis of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic performances based on gender for the MCDT and DCT, results displayed that there were no differences between the two groups. However, when observing the data individually, the researchers discovered that the females in both groups used words that were more pleasant and polite. On the other hand, the males that completed the DCT used words and terms that were more upfront and straightforward. It was detected that the terms used by the participants of females were friendlier, e.g., they used "please", "can" and "could" when filling out the DCT, but the males used better vocabulary and were exceptional because they matched their words according to each scenario, but, unfortunately, the males lacked pragmalinguistic appropriacy. The reason that the researchers thought the fact that the male participants achieved better results could be attributed to the fact that the female participants took more of their time and concentrated on their words, whereas the male participants concentrated more on the scenarios rather than what would be thought of them. The performance results of the production and comprehension of the 54 participants illustrated that they received higher marks in comprehension rather than production. Throughout the study, it has been noticed that the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatics features of the language are poor, this may be due to the fact that participants lacked cultural and social knowledge of the target language.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

It is essential to consider that every teaching consists of some sort of 'area' of teaching, and this includes language teaching as well. The question now lies with, "how could teachers teach pragmatics?" Pragmatics also has its "fields" and it focuses on meaning where, if taught, it could promote a more communicative way of learning English. Although teaching English consists of areas such as reading, writing, listening and speaking through the use of vocabulary and grammar, it could be said that a communicative language environment could not be set, as even though the textbooks and activities aim to teach communicatively, learners still find it difficult to communicate in the target language. As aforementioned, pragmatics covers areas of the meaning of the language in different contexts; therefore, a good approach to learning English is to enroll pragmatic competence in English language classrooms by supplying appropriate materials.

One of the major issues observed in the present study was the weakness of production skills of the EFL learners. Generally speaking, learners may be aware of the form of grammatical features to some degree but are unable to use the language effectively. A few suggestions could be that educators can provide explicit feedback in communicative activities depending on the learners' proficiency levels, as it raises learners' consciousness and is beneficial for their communicative competence. The use of explicit and implicit instruction not only encourages concurrent processing of meaning, use and forms, it can also raise long-term awareness to certain pragmatic features which will contribute to a sustainable learning environment. With this, the authors recommend that teachers use well-planned authentic materials as well as using different teaching approaches that raise awareness of

pragmatic features by means of indirect and direct tasks. In addition to comprehension activities, it is advisable to conduct production activities related to pragmatic competence. In most foreign language contexts, there is a lack of naturally existing input; as a result, teaching approaches need to be implemented taking into account different learning styles and educational contexts.

In order to teach pragmatics, there needs to be some sort of model of communicative language ability. One of the ways to teach pragmatics in English language classrooms could be to teach “implied meanings” of pragmatic competence. These so-called “implicatures” of pragmatic competence could be taught by a PPP (presentation, practice, production) lesson plan to raise the consciousness of learners about pragmatic competence. With some research, it was discovered that it is important to consider the consciousness-raising activities in English language teaching. It is believed that these consciousness-raising activities could be developed to teach pragmatic competence. To conclude, certain learner-centered communicative activities that raise awareness of pragmatic competence could be applied in the classroom such as presentations, role play, debate, pair work or group discussion, reading practices and communication scenarios. The use of these activities is appropriate in the sense that not only will English language learners be supplied with input and grammar in context, but it will also oblige them to create their own beliefs of how English works.

For future research, researchers could conduct an experimental study examining the effects of explicit and implicit instructional strategies using a discourse completion task or a multiple-choice discourse test in speech acts and/or implicatures. They could contrast the results of how learners were before and after the procedure. Additionally, it is thought that this will not only raise learners’ communicative competence, but it will also contribute to the field of interlanguage pragmatics, and may interest many scholars. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that, as mentioned earlier on, researchers should consider the measurements of appropriate instruments to examine pragmatic knowledge as not all DCT and MCDT measure pragmatic competence.

6.3. Limitations

Despite the fact that this study has classified various findings and implications, it is important to note that the investigation was also constrained by numerous limitations. One of the major limitations that affected the research was the fact that the researchers first aimed to conduct an experimental study; nevertheless, due to the participation of the participants and their absences in taking part in the questionnaires, the researchers were not able to conduct an experimental study. Due to COVID-19, the number of participants decreased towards the end of the investigation; therefore, an experimental study could not be completed. Even though this research has a broad variety of data indicating the usefulness of speech acts and implicatures in the field of pragmatics, the findings would have been more unique and superior with the participation of more participants taking part in the experimental study.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data demonstrated in the research study are available on request by authors.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

PRODUCTION TEST

We kindly ask you to read this form carefully and ask any questions before agreeing to be in the study. You do not need to provide your name and we can ensure you that the given information will be kept confidential. Please know that your participation is completely voluntary so you can withdraw from the study whenever you wish.

This is a research study that aims to recognize the intercultural influence of pragmatic competence among EFL learners.

Thank you for participating in our short survey. We can ensure you that there are no right or wrong answers in SECTION II and the answers you give relate to your feelings/thoughts towards each situation. This study measures language production of EFL students in the development of pragmatic competence. If you do have any questions related with this survey, please feel free to email the researcher in the provided email below. It is estimated that this survey will take at least thirty minutes to complete. Please take your time and try to answer each question in English.

Yours sincerely,
Hazel Kentmen
English Language Teaching
Cyprus International University
Email: hazelkentmen@outlook.com

SECTION I: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please complete by ticking or crossing the boxes.

1. **SEX:**

Male: **Female:**

2. **AGE:**

18–21: **22–30:** **31–40:** **41–50:** **51 and over:**

3. **NATIONALTY:** _____

4. **Stage:**

Preparatory school: **First year:** **Second year:** **Third year:** **Fourth year:**

5. **LEVEL OF ENGLISH:** _____

6. **How long have you been studying English for?** _____

7. *I like learning English.*

- (a) **Strongly agree**
- (b) **Agree**
- (c) **Neutral**
- (d) **Disagree**
- (e) **Strongly disagree**

SECTION II: PRODUCTION

Please read carefully and answer the situations according to what you will do in each situation.

1. Imagine you have a meeting to attend to and your colleague keeps asking you what day and time the meeting is. This is the fourth time he has asked you.

Friend: Hmm, are you sure the meeting is on Monday at 4 p.m.?

You: _____.

What do you say to your friend to say that it is clear/obvious that his answer is correct? Write it in the blank. Answer with a question.

2. Imagine your friend is going away for the weekend. She's asked you to look after her cat. You love animals and you have no plans for the weekend, so it won't be a problem for you.

Friend: Thank you so much once again! It won't cause you any trouble, will it?

You: _____.

What do you say to your friend to show her that it won't be a problem for you? Write it in the blank. Answer with a question.

3. Imagine that your sister is getting married. You are at a shop looking at wedding dresses. She tries on the dress and walks out. You can see that the dress doesn't suit her at all. It is too short to be a wedding dress and it looks old-fashioned. She asks you for your opinion.

Sister: So, what do you think? Do you like it?

You: _____.

What do you say to your sister to show that you don't like the wedding dress she has tried on? Write it in the blank.

4. Imagine you that you have gone to another country to study. You don't like the place as it is so boring and nothing to do. Your cousin calls you from Turkey.

Cousin: I heard it is paradise over there, is that right? How are you finding it there? Do you like it? Do you think I should come and study there too?

You: _____.

How do you respond to your cousin? What do you say to show him/her that he/she shouldn't come and that you don't like living there? Write it in the blank.

5. Mark and Tom are colleagues. Mark always has problems writing emails to his boss and he always asks Tom what to write them. Tom doesn't want to help. *Imagine you are Mark and Tom hasn't helped you. What do you say to Tom? Write it in the blank.*

Mark: Hey man! Could you help me with this email around lunchtime?

Tom: Well, not this time, man. I'm sorry, bro. I have something to do.

Mark: _____.

6. Susan is a very difficult person to get on with. She argues with nearly everyone she meets and doesn't have many friends. You don't like Susan either. A friend is interested in taking her out for a date and he asks you how she is.

Friend: I'm planning to ask Susan out this Saturday.

You: Susan? In Class 104, Susan?

Friend: Yeah. The girl that always wears nice dresses. What do you think of her? Do you think she'll say yes?

You: _____.

What do you say to your friend to show him that you don't like Susan? How would you respond to him? Write it in the blank.

7. Imagine there is a party at your school. Charlie is your close friend and he asks you to go with him to the party. You have an important assignment to give in and you haven't even started yet, it looks like you won't be able to go. *What do you say to Charlie? Write it in the blank.*

Charlie: Dude? We're still going to the party on Friday, right?

You: _____.

8. You have just graduated from university and Mary has invited you to her house. You don't want to go as it's too far away. *What do you say to Mary? How do you reject her invitation? Write it in the blank.*

Mary: You still haven't told me whether you're coming on Sunday or not? Are you?

You: _____.

9. Claire is a university student. She is sitting in a café with her Professor talking. Imagine you are the professor. Claire asks you a very personal question. *What do you say to her? How do you avoid her question? Write it in the blank.*

Claire: Professor, I was meaning to ask you. I've realized that you haven't been wearing your wedding ring lately. Weren't you married?

You: _____.

10. Imagine that you are at a family party. You have just started your new job. Everyone has congratulated but your conversation with your uncle goes like this:

Uncle: Congrats my dear nephew! You've always been the clever one.

You: Thanks uncle!

Uncle: Look at you, the new CEO of a company! Well done, my man! So, how much will you be getting now? You must earn a fortune!

You: _____.

What do you say to your uncle? You don't want to tell him how much money you earn so how do you avoid his question? Write it in the blank.

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