

An analysis on EAP learners' pragmatic production: a focus on request forms

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Abstract

The present study focuses on the effect of instruction in the use of request linguistic realisations by 160 female learners of English as a foreign language. All participants were engaged in an English for Academic Purposes course. Data were collected by means of a pre-test and post-test distributed before and after a training period that lasted one semester. Learners' performance denoted the positive effects of explicit instruction in the use of request strategies, thus coinciding with findings from previous studies (Tateyama et al., 1997). Results from the present study also lead to further research in settings where English is learnt as a foreign language and where learners lack the chances to be exposed to authentic pragmatic input.

Key words: interlanguage pragmatics, development of pragmatic competence, request strategies, English as a foreign language

Resumen

El presente estudio considera el efecto de la instrucción en el uso de estrategias lingüísticas de petición por parte de 160 aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera. Todos los participantes asistían a un curso de inglés para fines académicos. Los datos del estudio fueron recogidos mediante un *pre-test* y un *post-test* distribuidos antes y después de un periodo de instrucción que duró un semestre. El análisis de los datos obtenidos reveló los efectos positivos de la instrucción explícita en la producción de estrategias de petición, coincidiendo con resultados de estudios previos sobre la materia (Tateyama et al., 1997). Los resultados de este estudio también conllevan ideas para futuras investigaciones en contextos en los que el inglés se aprende como lengua extranjera y donde los aprendices tienen mínimas oportunidades de estar expuestos a *input* pragmático auténtico.

Palabras clave: pragmática de la interlengua, el desarrollo de la competencia pragmática, estrategias de petición, inglés como lengua extranjera

Introduction

The role of instruction and the teachability of specific pragmatic aspects (e.g. comprehension of implicature, complimenting, apologising, and requests) have been investigated by scholars like Billmyer (1990), Bouton (1994), Olshtain and Cohen (1993) and Tateyama (2001). Findings from these studies have highlighted the positive effect of instruction on the learners' use of particular pragmatic items. Besides, recent state-of-the-art papers dealing with pragmatic instruction (Rose & Kasper, 2001) point to the need for more studies that focus on foreign language learning settings. On that account and in an attempt to broaden the scope of interlanguage pragmatics, we have examined the effect of instruction in EFL learners' use of requests acts linguistic realisations. Data were collected by means of a pre-test and a post-test distributed before and after a training period that lasted one semester.

Unlike second language learners, subjects learning a foreign language do not have many opportunities to be exposed to natural and authentic language use. If we do not provide them with sufficient sociocultural and sociolinguistic information, we are increasing their difficulty to understand and produce the target language appropriately and efficiently. An example of the need to implement the teaching of speech acts in the foreign language classroom is given by Cohen's (1996) study. This author focuses on himself as a foreign language learner of Japanese. He collected data by means of a learning diary during one semester in which a first-year Japanese course took place. Cohen learnt some formulas to produce requests, thanking expressions and apologies, but his results by the end of the course did not fully meet his expectations in terms of pragmatic development. The author believes that a teacher-centred methodology, the opportunities for practice outside the classroom and a structural syllabus might have influenced his final outcome.

Other scholars have further analysed the role of instruction in performing particular speech acts, as well as the effect of explicit and implicit instruction (House, 1996; Tateyama et al., 1997; Rose & Ng, 2001; Tateyama, 2001). Explicit instruction has focused on description, explanation, discussion of pragmatic features as well as practice of those features. Results from these studies point to a positive improvement of the learners' pragmatic competence after the instructional process. In fact, according to Kasper (1997), there is little evidence for aspects of pragmatic

competence that resist development through teaching. A recent study by Norris and Ortega (2000) synthesising the role of instruction in interlanguage pragmatics denotes a clear advantage of explicit over implicit instruction. Teaching pragmatic items explicitly has been performed by means of two different task types, namely those of awareness raising tasks and activities providing communicative practice. The former ones involve learners in observing pragmatic aspects of the target language from both oral and written discourse, while the latter ones entail group interaction within which learners take part in roleplay and simulation activities. Olshtain and Cohen (1990), in their study on the effect of instruction in developing pragmatic competence of Hebrew learners of English as a foreign language found that certain aspects of speech act behaviour could be taught in the foreign language learning context, namely those of downgrading, situational features and realisations differences. As reported by Cohen (1996), further work on speech acts instruction should also consider available pragmatic information to learners in foreign language contexts and ways of exploiting it in the classroom. The author particularly points to multimedia software as a useful tool for displaying information on those sociocultural and sociolinguistic contexts in which the use of speech acts may be observed. Kasper (2001) also mentions the need for acknowledging to what extent attention to pragmatic forms enhances acquisition development, even beyond instruction. The author particularly points to Yoshimi's (2001) results on the effect of focusing on interactional task demands in developing pragmatic competence since, as reported by Yoshimi, the learners' knowledge of the interactional functions of certain pragmatic features (i.e. Japanese discourse markers *n desu*, *n desu kedo*, *n desu ne*) was fostered by means of classroom interaction.

Despite the positive results obtained by studies in the field (House, 1996; Tateyama et al., 1997), the extent to which explicit formal instruction affects pragmatic development deserves further research, as raised by Kasper (1997). Two more issues have been signalled out in the IL pragmatics literature (Kasper & Rose, 1999; Kasper, 2001) that need to be tackled by future studies. They refer (i) to expanding populations to include beginner learners and (ii) to employing a wider range of elicitation techniques that should better combine written and oral methods.

The study described in this paper attempts to meet some of the existing needs by including beginner level learners and by making use of both oral and written elicitation techniques. In light of the results obtained by previous studies on the

effect of explicit instruction in the use of speech acts, we have formulated the hypothesis of our study as follows: “Pragmatic instruction will affect the learners’ degree of pragmatic competence” (Kasper, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 1999). Related to this hypothesis and in an attempt to broaden the scope of research on instructional effects in L2 pragmatic production, the following research questions have also been considered:

- (1) Will explicit request instruction result in a wider variety of linguistic formulations?
- (2) Will the predicted positive effect of instruction affect oral and written practice in the same way?

Method

Participants

Participants for the present study consisted in 160 female students of Jaume I University at Castelló who were engaged in an English for Academic Purposes course that lasted one semester. The EAP course that all of them were attending was part of their degree syllabus and it was a compulsory subject. All of our subjects were first-year students and none of them had ever been to an English-speaking country before. They were all Spanish and born in the Castelló area.

Their age ranged between 19 and 22 years old, the average age being 20.5 years. All of our subjects had studied English as a foreign language both at primary school and at secondary school. However, they did not have the same proficiency level. Hence, they were administered a proficiency level test that was corrected on the basis of the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1986). As we were mainly concerned with learners’ production as part of their communicative competence, we also considered the *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines* (1999) revision related to speaking. The teacher and researcher selected an equal number of learners that could be considered as beginners and of the ones that were considered as intermediate learners. Subjects who showed higher or lower levels were not taken into account in this study. To avoid the effect of extraneous variables, all the participants were female students.

Data Collection

In order to examine our subjects' knowledge of those linguistic formulations involved in the use of request acts, we first distributed a pre-test which contained a first section aimed at eliciting request strategies (i.e. linguistic formulations involved in making requests) and a second section where learners evaluated the use of request formulas in different situations. In this second part, participants suggested alternative request formulations in those cases they found it suitable. Situations differed according to degrees of familiarity, dominance, social distance and obligation in conducting the action requested.

Results from this task were compared to those of a post-test that was administered after learners had been exposed to pragmatic input and had participated in two oral and two written pragmatic production tasks. This allowed us to ascertain the effect of instruction on the subjects' use of request linguistic realisations. The structure of the post-test was the same as that of the pre-test described above. For the purposes of this study, we will particularly consider data taken from the pragmatic production part of both pre-test and post-test, and we will also compare learners' performance in pragmatic production tasks distributed at the beginning and end of the explicit instructional process. Hence, we will account for data collected in four moments: before being exposed to pragmatic input (pre-test), at the beginning of the instructional period (one oral and one written pragmatic production tasks), at the end of the instructional period (a second oral and a second written pragmatic production tasks), and after being engaged in the study (post-test).

As mentioned above, learners took part in an oral and a written pragmatic production task before the explicit training sessions, that is, at the beginning of the instructional period. The oral task consisted in a role-play which included ten prompts or brief descriptions for situations that identified the status of the speaker and hearer in the exchange to be produced, but no further guidelines were offered. It was carried out in pairs, for it required oral interaction. These are some examples of prompts used:

Example 1

Prompt E: You both work in a tiles factory. One of you is a secretary who needs two days off because his/her mother is ill.

Prompt D: You are two friends; one of you wants the other to ask the teacher a question about vocabulary, because there is a word s/he does not understand, but s/he is not very good at English.

Once learners had taken part in the oral production task, they were engaged in a Discourse Completion Test (henceforth DCT) also aimed at fostering the production of request formulations. As in the pre-test and post-test tasks described above, situations included in the oral and written production tasks varied in terms of familiarity, dominance or degree of imposition in making the request.

The instructional process was based on Kasper's (1996) suggested stages for teaching pragmatic items explicitly in the classroom. Thus, it consisted of raising awareness tasks and practice. Learners were first faced with a gradation of request linguistic formulation on the basis of politeness criteria which included indirect, conventionally indirect and direct forms, as shown in Trosborg's (1995: 204) typology. This gradation may be illustrated as follows:

Less polite	Direct
<i>Lend me your pencil.</i> <i>I want you to lend me your pencil.</i> <i>I am asking you to lend me your pencil.</i>	
More polite	Conventionally Indirect
<i>Can you lend me your pencil?</i> <i>Would you lend me your pencil?</i> <i>Would you be so kind as to lend me your pencil?</i>	
	Indirect
<i>I'm afraid I can't write this down. I don't have a pencil.</i>	

Figure 1. Degree of politeness.

Participants compared the similarities and dissimilarities of these expressions with the ones in their mother tongue, and they were asked to identify these strategies in transcripts that contained excerpts from authentic language use. Transcripts were based on Barraja-Rohan and Pritchard's (1997) book. We decided to make use of this research-based pedagogical material as it dealt with pragmatic aspects of English use, and thus served our purposes. Some instances of the extracts employed are as follows:

Extract 1

- N: Hi John!
 T: Hi N! How are you?
 N: Oh not bad, thanks! Mm
 T: What's the matter?
 N: I'm in class ... and *I hate leaving my students by themselves...*

I was wondering if you were busy..
 T: Well not now ... What can I do for you?
 N: *Would you be able to help me? I needed to photocopy...*
 T: Sure!
 N: *so could you photocopy this page and this page?*
 T: not a problem ... how many ...?
 N: twenty ...
 T: OK, done!
 N: Thanks!

Extract 2

M: Oh! B!
 B: What's the matter?
 M: *please, please, please...*
 B: What's going on?
 M: *do me a favour; you do Business English, don't you?*
 B: Yeah! That's right!
 M: *Can you cover me tonight?*
 B: (silence) ... mm I'm sorry I'm ... I'm teaching tonight ...
 M: Yeah ...
 B: I'm very sorry I can't do it.
 M: ... *they don't need anything they just need looking in on....*
 B: ... I'm very sorry ... Maybe another time.

After identifying request acts formulas, participants were required to say aloud those linguistic formulations they would use in specific situations, like the ones shown below:

Example 2

Situation 1: You have forgotten your wallet, and you need to buy some photocopies for next class. Ask your classmate to lend you some money.

Situation 2: You have been waiting for the bus for almost half an hour. A person arrives at the bus stop. Ask him/her for information.

Situation 3: There is plenty of work at your office this weekend, but it is also your sister's wedding. Ask your boss for a morning off.

Their responses were discussed in class. The training was implemented within their established schedule for EAP classes. After that, learners took part in a second role-

play and DCT. We should point out the fact that both beginner and intermediate participants were provided with paraphrases and explanations of the situations included in all tasks when it was necessary, as we found that a full understanding of the situations was of paramount importance in order to complete the tasks. Learners at a beginner proficiency level asked for these explanations more often than their intermediate counterparts.

Data from pre-test, post-test and pragmatic production tasks were analysed and codified afterwards. In order to codify our data related to pragmatic production, we considered the amount and type of request linguistic realisations. In so doing, we took into account Trosborg's (1995) suggested typology of request acts formulations quoted before, which includes direct, conventionally indirect and indirect request forms.

As it has been previously stated, our main aim was to ascertain the role of instruction in producing request strategies. Criteria to identify appropriate request acts use were discussed with a senior researcher from the second/foreign language acquisition field. Since our data were normally distributed (Kolgomorov - Smirnov = .701) and consisted of a wide sample (cases $n = 160$), we decided to make use of statistical parametric tests. We particularly resorted to a Matched T-test, as we were interested in the performance of one group on two different measures, that is, before and after being engaged in the study, on the one hand, and at the beginning and end of the instructional process, on the other. This test would allow us to identify whether differences in learners' performance could be considered as statistically significant.

Results and Discussion

The hypothesis of the present study concerned the effect of pragmatic instruction on learners' performance. As mentioned above, this hypothesis assumed that pragmatic instruction would affect the learners' degree of pragmatic competence. For the purposes of the present study, we have focused on one aspect of our participants' pragmatic competence, namely that of the production of request formulations. In order to account for instructional effects, we first contrasted the use of request formulas in the pre-test and in the post-test. Our analysis at this stage was quantitative on the one hand, (that is, accounting for the amount of strategies employed), and qualitative on the other hand (as we also considered whether there were any differences regarding the strategy types used in these two moments).

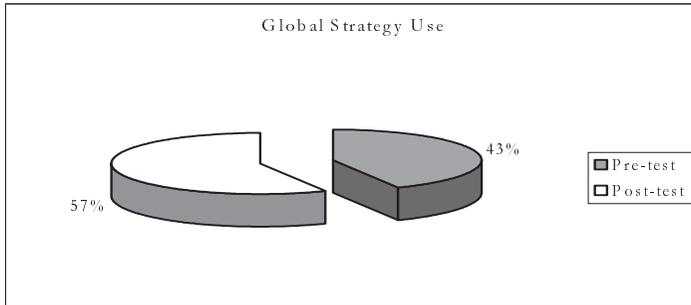


Figure 2. Global strategy use before and after the study took place.

Figure 2 above shows differences in strategy use related to pre-test and post-test data, which lead to an increase in the amount of strategies employed after the study was conducted. Some examples illustrating the use of request realisations in the pre-test and post-test are presented as follows.

Example 3

Pre-test

Situation 5: You cannot stand smoke or people smoking next to you. After an experiment in the company you work for, your boss (an important engineer) lights up a cigarette while standing in a non-smoking area. He is talking to you about the experiment because you are the lab assistant. What would you say to your boss?

S10: Can you stop that cigarette?

S11: Can you not smoke?

S5: Could you smoke not?

Post-test

Situation 4: You are having dinner at a restaurant and you want the waiter to bring you the bill. You say:

S: 10 Excuse me, could you bring me the bill, please?

S11: Excuse me, would you bring me the bill?

S5: Can you bring the bill, please?

[S10: intermediate]

[S11: intermediate]

[S5: beginner]

In order to examine the significance level of the above stated differences in the pre-test and post-test regarding strategy use, we applied a Matched T-Test statistical

analysis as it allowed us to calculate differences in two moments, that is, before and after the study had taken place. Table 1 shows significant differences in the use of request formulations in the pre-test and the post-test. These differences are displayed in terms of means, t value and statistical significance.

	Mean	t	Sig.
Pre-test strategy use	3.23	- 6.223	.000*
Post-test strategy use	4.31		

**p < 0.001*

Table 1. Differences in pre-test and post-test amount of strategy use.

According to the results obtained from the Matched T-Test, our subjects resorted more frequently to request realisations in the post-test than in the pre-test. This fact is also displayed by the t value ($t = - 6.223$), and the difference in strategy use in these two moments seems to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In fact, our results point to a 99% probability level. This means that the amount of request strategies increased considerably after the study took place, thus pointing to instructional effects. Regarding the strategy type employed in these two tests, we focused on our subjects' use of conventionally indirect, direct and indirect linguistic realisations to see whether differences not only applied to quantity but also to quality, as shown by table 2 below.

	Mean	T	Sig.
Pre-test Conventionally indirect	2.86	-5.028	.039**
Post-test Conventionally indirect	3.78		
Pre-test direct Strategy use	.34	-2.086	.000*
Post-test direct strategy use	.52		
Pre-test indirect strategy use	3.13E-02	1.642	.203
Post-test indirect strategy use	6.25E-03		

**p < 0.001 **p < 0.05*

Table 2. Differences in pre-test and post-test strategy type use.

As shown in table 2, the Matched T-Test did not report statistically significant differences in our subjects' use of indirect request strategies. However, there were differences in their use of conventionally indirect and direct request forms. We found that subjects resorted more often to conventionally indirect strategies in the post-test

than in the pre-test. The *t* value ($t = -5.028$) for such distinction denotes statistically significant differences that point to a 95% probability level. Subjects also employed more direct request strategies after taking part in the study, and the difference regarding direct strategy use before and after conducting the study is also significant ($p = .000$).

At this stage, we may state that the results related to our subjects' performance before and after taking part in the study support our first hypothesis and thus point to instructional effects. Nevertheless, in order to further examine the effect of instruction in the requestive behaviour of EAP learners, we also contrasted linguistic realisations employed in the first tasks, before the instructional process began and immediately after the instructional process finished. The former tasks were Role-play 1 and DCT 1, whereas after having received instruction in requests' use our subjects performed a second role-play activity (or Role-play 2) and a second DCT (or DCT2).

Results obtained from comparing learners' performance in the above quoted tasks did not seem to illustrate a high degree of variation, since request formulations in Role-play 1 and DCT 1 amounted to a 49%, and in Role-play task 2 and DCT 2 they accounted for 50%. Although little contrast was reported regarding global strategy use at the beginning and end of the training period, we still attempted to confirm this apparent lack of divergence. In accounting for significance concerning the distance in strategy use, we also resorted to the Matched T-Test. Means, *t* value and levels of significance are best displayed in Table 3 below.

	Mean	T	Sig.
Beginning of instruction	7.26	.675	.501
End of instruction	7.04		

Table 3. Differences in global strategy use at the beginning and end of the instructional process.

According to the results displayed above, the difference in the total amount of strategies employed at the beginning and end of the instructional process is not statistically significant. Hence, we can say that no increase in terms of quantity in using request linguistic realisations can be reported. The amount of strategies employed did not seem to vary a great deal during the instructional process; however, we were also interested in discovering whether the type of strategies employed was

also similar at the beginning and end of the training period. Bearing this aim in mind, we focused on our subjects' use of conventionally indirect, direct and indirect request forms, as illustrated in figure 3 below.

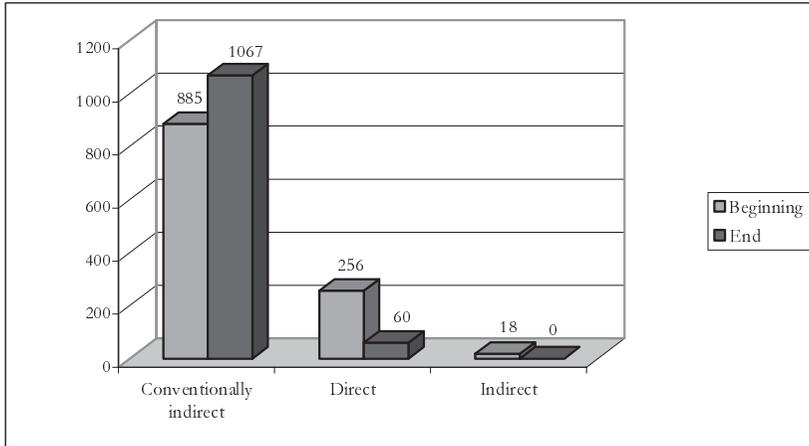


Figure 3. Strategy type used at the beginning and end of the instructional process.

After examining the type of linguistic formulations employed by our subjects before and after receiving formal instruction in the use of request formulas, a Matched T-Test was also applied to our data in order to account for statistically significant differences.

	Mean	t	Sig.
Before instruction Conventionally indirect	5.53	-3.588	.000*
After instruction Conventionally indirect	6.67		
Before instruction Direct strategy use	1.60	9.212	.000*
After instruction Direct strategy use	.38		
Before instruction Indirect strategy use	.11	4.015	.000*
After instruction Indirect strategy use	.00		

* $p < 0.001$

Table 4. Differences in strategy type use at the beginning and end of instruction.

Contrary to our findings related to the lack of differences in the total amount of strategies employed, we found that there were significant differences in our subjects' use of specific request forms, which leads to our first research question. Therefore, our findings point to differences in terms of quality, though not quantity. As presented in figure 3 and table 4, conventionally indirect strategies were more often employed after the instructional process. In fact, differences in the use of these strategies in these two moments revealed statistical significance ($p = .000$). On the contrary, direct strategies were more often employed at the beginning than at the end of the instructional process. This difference in direct strategy use may also be interpreted as statistically significant on account of the T-test results ($p = 0.000$). As shown in table 4 above, some indirect request formulas were employed at the beginning of the instructional process, but no instances of these forms were found in those pragmatic production tasks performed after the training period.

Considering the results presented above, we may state that our hypothesis is supported, as instructional effects have been reported both by contrasting pre-test and post-test results, on the one hand, and tasks performed at the beginning and end of the instructional period on the other. We should also point out the fact that subjects' use of request linguistic realisations varied both in terms of quantity and quality, according to our pre-test and post-test findings. Besides, only differences in terms of quality or strategy variation were found in contrasting tasks carried out at the beginning and end of the training period. Nevertheless, the amount of strategy subgroups, namely those of direct, indirect and conventionally indirect types, also varied as instruction progressed. In fact, we may point to a tendency to use more conventionally indirect strategy types and less direct request realisations. This finding is in line with Ellis' (1992) study, where subjects' performance showed more variation in the use of request formulations as instruction progressed. Our results also seem to confirm Cohen and Olshtain's (1990) results, which pointed to a broader use of request formulas on the part of foreign language learners of English after a tutoring process.

As it has been previously stated, our second research question concerned the extent to which instructional effects would affect oral and written tasks. In order to answer this question, we analysed our data on the basis of a Matched T-Test, including role-play and discourse completion test results at the beginning (Role-play 1 and Discourse Completion Test 1) and end (Role-play 2 and Discourse Completion Test 2) of the instructional process. Results are displayed in the following two tables, where table 5

represents request strategy use in the oral task in two moments, and table 6 illustrates strategy use in the written task before and after the instructional process.

	Mean	t	Sig.
Role-play 1 Conventionally indirect	2.22	- 1.677	.096#
Role-play 2 Conventionally indirect	2.49		
Role-play 1 Direct strategy use	.48	4.613	.000*
Role-play 2 Direct strategy use	.18		
Role-play 1 Indirect strategy use	6.25E-03	1.000	.319
Role-play 2 Indirect strategy use	.00		

**p < 0.001 # p < 0.1*

Table 5. Differences in Role-play 1 and 2 strategy type used

	Mean	t	Sig.
DCT 1 Conventionally indirect	3.31	-3.065	.003**
DCT 2 Conventionally indirect	4.18		
DCT 1 Direct strategy use	1.13	8.419	.000*
DCT 2 Direct strategy use	.20		
DCT 1 Indirect strategy use	.11	4.087	.000*
DCT 2 Indirect strategy use	.00		

**p < 0.001 ** p < 0.05*

According to results displayed in tables 5 and 6, we may state that differences in strategy use in oral and written tasks also correspond to our previous findings specified above in contrasting learners' production before and after the instructional process took place. Thus, we have provided an answer to our second research question, which referred to the relationship between the task type and instructional effects. We may also say that instruction significantly influenced our subjects' oral and written performance. There is only one exception that refers to the use of indirect

strategies in the role-play task in these two moments. As illustrated by table 5, the difference cannot be considered as statistically significant. The diminished use of indirect formulations seems to confirm Trosborg's (1995) results, which showed that learners of English as a foreign language did not frequently resort to hints in the role-play task. Following Trosborg (1995), we also believe that this finding may be attributed to the nature of the task and the difficulty implied in making indirect requests, since we were dealing with beginner and intermediate learners and these formulations are culture-bounded rather than routinised.

In light of the results related to our hypothesis, we may state that our learners' pragmatic competence was influenced by the instructional period they were engaged in. Instruction effects pointed to positive outcomes as a trend to polite behaviour; in request linguistic realisations, use was illustrated by means of an increase in the use of conventionally indirect strategies and a decrease in the use of direct formulations. In line with House (1996), Tateyama et al. (1997), Norris and Ortega (2000) and Tateyama (2001), we may argue for the positive improvement of learners' pragmatic competence after the instructional process. Despite the fact that learners in the above quoted studies did not share their linguistic background with our subjects, we found a correspondence regarding the beneficial effect of explicitly teaching the use of particular speech acts.

Conclusion

Results from the present study have confirmed our hypothesis and provided answers to the research question concerning the effect of explicit instruction in learners' production of request acts formulations. We have examined participants' performance in four different moments: (i) before being engaged in the study, (ii) at the beginning of the instructional period, (iii) at the end of that same period, and (iv) after taking part in the study. On the one hand, a tendency to polite behaviour has been illustrated by our findings, as a global increase in the use of conventionally indirect formulas is reported. On the other hand, some development has been found which relates to a qualitative change, followed by a quantitative increase of request formulations. Although no differences in terms of quantity were found during instruction, more variation was denoted at this stage, whereas learners' performance displayed an increase in the quantity and type of request forms employed after taking part in the study (i.e. post-test).

Despite the limitations that may be attributed to the present study, because we have only considered the request head act, production aspects, female learners of a similar age range and belonging to the same learning context, results may be considered to the extent that they support our hypothesis and confirm findings from previous studies (Ellis, 1992; Trosborg, 1995). Moreover, the fact that learners' performance improved after being engaged in awareness-raising, explanation and production activities leads to pedagogical implications for the study of these pragmatic aspects in the foreign language learning setting, particularly in the EAP classroom. In fact, we believe that pragmatic competence should be implemented in the foreign language curriculum, taking into account the fact that it is one of the main components of the global construct of communicative competence, and also considering positive effects of instruction, as pointed out in this paper.

Nevertheless, further research is needed to draw a contrast between explicit and implicit instruction in EFL settings and to discover the type of intervention that may best suit our learners' progress. We also believe that the same stages employed in our study may or may not apply to other pragmatic aspects (i.e. implicatures, entailment, presupposition and the like); however, more studies should be conducted to test this assumption. We have focused on pragmatic production, but we feel that there is a need to teach sociopragmatic aspects of the target language in a foreign setting with a focus on comprehension, awareness and production. This will be made possible if more research addresses these aspects of language use and focuses on foreign language learning contexts, which is the case of most EAP learners in Europe.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Eva Alcón and Dr. Rosa Manchón for their most valuable comments in an earlier version of this paper. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of this journal for their most valuable suggestions. Finally, thanks a lot to the Journal Editor Dr. Jordi Piqué-Angordans for his patience and support. This paper is part of a research project funded by a grant from *Fundació Universitat Jaume I* and *Caixa Castelló-Bancaixa* (P1·1B2002-05).

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