

# A Research on the Relationship between Explicit/ Implicit Instruction and the English learners' Sociopragmatic Competence in China

Yingying Gu<sup>1\*</sup>, Jianbin Zhu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Foreign Language Studies, Guilin University of Technology, Guilin, China

## Email Address

1924616470@qq.com (Yingying Gu)

\*Correspondence: 1924616470@qq.com

**Received:** 21 August 2022; **Accepted:** 22 September 2022; **Published:** 7 October 2022

## Abstract:

The recent years have seen the increasing development of interlanguage pragmatic competence which is the call in the modern world. The present researches, however, still leave us an incomplete picture for the instruction of English as foreign language (EFL) learners' pragmatic competence. The paper aims to explore pragmatic competence condition among learners who generally take English as a foreign language in China and provide practicable suggestions for its instruction. A review of the past studies demonstrated that pragmatic competence includes pragmalinguistic competence (PC) and sociopragmatic competence (SC), since Chinese students pay much attention to the grammatical knowledge of a language, the article intends to focus on discussing SC situation of Chinese second language learners and explore the effects of explicit/implicit instruction on the development of pragmatic competence through the exploration of speech acts. Pragmatic competence questionnaire is adopted which are frequently seen in our daily oral discourse completion (ODC). The finding reveals that although our participants (N=36) have learned English for more than 8 years, their foreign language pragmatic competence still needs to be significantly enhance in speech appropriateness and connotation meaning comprehension. Besides, students in English majors show higher competence than those in non-English majors, female students present better ability of speech acts than male, but more specifically, female students major in non-English demonstrate poor pragmatic ability than male in the same group. Furthermore, English-majored learners whose pragmatic competence level is better appear more preference to implicit instruction than explicit instruction. And female students whose overall competence score is higher regardless of English and non-English majors also present intense interests in implicit instruction than males. In addition, our participants prefer to learn through practice (sociopragmatics) rather than to learn grammar and linguistic features (pragmalinguistics). In the end, EFL learners who have strong intention to pragmatic learning demonstrate great preference to implicit instruction. The present study attempts to shed light on foreign language pragmatic competence education methods and put forward that context-focused, clouded multiple practices, and segmented-time-utilizing integrated teaching and learning methods should be adopted in language learning classrooms.

## Keywords:

Sociopragmatic Competence, Interlanguage Communication, Speech Acts, Explicit Instruction and Implicit Instruction

---

## 1. Introduction

For many years, the learning of a second or foreign language (FL) was equated with linguistic or grammatical accuracy. However, since the adoption of the communicative approach, this focus has passed to second place, giving primary importance to the achievement of functional abilities in the target language (TL) with the final purpose of understanding and producing language that is appropriate to communicative situations in accordance with specific sociocultural parameters [45]. Therefore, linguistic pragmatics occurring in accordance with communication-oriented language teaching and learning. “Pragmatics” refers to the study of language in context. As such, its focus is to explore the meaning an utterance acquires on the basis of the social and situational context in which it is embedded [42]. And pragmatic competence in correct term just entails the pragmatics embedded into daily practice. Pragmatic competence entails both the ability to produce an utterance that is meaningful and appropriate to the social and contextual setting in which it is produced and the ability to correctly interpret someone else’s message by inferring the intended meaning. Also, pragmatic competence is knowledge of linguistic forms and their social functions in a communicative situation [44]. Learning pragmatics, therefore, involves learning how to use language appropriately for social interaction. This involves an understanding of how social rules (cultural norms, politeness and taboos) govern choices of language forms in particular contexts of communication, and putting that knowledge into use in real life interaction [27]. According to Chomsky (1965), competence includes mental representations of linguistic rules that constitute the speaker-hearer’s internal grammar which is rather implicit instead of explicit. Performance consists of the use of this grammar in the comprehension and production of language. Ellis and Ellis [18] p13 proposed that the main goal of second language acquisition (SLA) is to characterize underlying knowledge of L2 learners, i.e. to describe and explain their competence. However, as we said before, the learners’ mental knowledge is implicit which is not open to inspection, it can only be inferred from by examining examples of their performance. Pragmatic competence, in real terms, includes pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence [33,35]. PC refers to the ability to use linguistic elements to perform speech acts [7]. SC, according to Harlow [22], is the ability to “vary speech-act strategies according to the situational or social variables in the act of communication”(p. 1). The relation between PC and SC in the development of L2 learners’ pragmatic competence has been argued by many scholars. Rose (2000) added evidence that SC precedes PC. Scarcella and Brunak [38], on the contrary, proved that PC stands firmly before SC shaped since L2 learners were limited in their ability to vary politeness strategies according to social contexts, which is line with China’s pedagogical philosophy as Chinese people take previous linguistic basis as foundation for futuristic step. However, contrary to traditional thoughts of China, the paper links to the former view as cognitive linguistics puts emphasis on embodiment in which our language and rules stem from our embodied experience [31] (p77-87). Referring to instruction forms, Cunningham [9] concluded that children who reflected on and discussed the value, application, and utility of phonemic awareness performed remarkably better than the skill and drill group. Kok et al. [30]

explored how instruction methods should be tailored to learners' different working memory and they proposed suggestions that Physical education teachers may need to align their instructions with verbal working memory capacity, by providing implicit instructions and feedback methods in students with low verbal working memory capacity and explicit instruction and feedback methods in students with high verbal working memory capacity. Whereas our research by no means makes flight against which instruction forms are correct and should be put in the first terms, but calls for an emergent integrated instruction way [17]. Saville-Troike [37], who point out that FL and L2 curricula should provide students with information on the socio-cultural rules of the TL, letting learners decide to what extent he or she wants to conform to the native speaker (NS) norms. Amid the force of globalization, intercultural competence is a necessity for every researcher, while most of our Chinese students still lag behind in the real L2 pragmatic competence. Henceforth, our study will peel back the layers of the present acquirement condition of pragmatic competence among Chinese ESL learners through discussing its explicit form performance. A number of researches in pragmatics and explicit/implicit instruction, however, the relationship between explicit/implicit instruction and the specific SC still in the shadow. The paper adopting performance-termed ODC questionnaire, based on previous explorations, attempts to prove whether the explicit instruction is effective for the growth of SC, and further discuss the importance of SC and PC which together constitute general pragmatic competence. Our researching questions are following:

- a. What's the present condition of SC among EFL learners in China?
- b. What kind of instruction ways do EFL learners in China prefer?
- c. How do we tailor instruction to the growth of pragmatic competence?

## 2. Research Background

### 2.1. Researches on Pragmatic Competence

As defined by Chomsky (1980) grammar characterizes the properties of sentences, but the production and interpretation of sentences by a speaker makes use of much else including, in particular, 'pragmatic competence' (p. 206). Fraser [21] describes pragmatic competence as the knowledge of determining what to say and how to say in order to make intended illocutionary force conveyed and understood (p.30). Pragmatic competence has progressively entered the limelight of research interest since it premiered in Bachman's [3] model of communicative competence, underscoring the indispensable role of the relationship between "language users and the context of communication" (p. 89). Pragmatic competence mainly refers to the ability to make networking through comprehending and using language under some specific contexts [32; Thomas, 1983). The notion of pragmatic competence was early on delineated by Chomsky (1980) as the "knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of the language), in conformity with various purposes" (p.224). This concept was seen in contrast with grammatical competence that in Chomskyan terms is "the knowledge of form and meaning." In a more contextualized fashion, Canale and Swain [6] defined pragmatic competence as one important element of their communicative competence model. In this model, pragmatic competence was identified as sociolinguistic competence and defined as the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use. Later on, Canale [5] expanded this definition, and stated that pragmatic competence includes "illocutionary competence, or the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions

for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context". Rose (1999) proposed a definition of pragmatic competence, which has been generally accepted by researchers in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. He pointed out that the concept is the ability to use available linguistic resources (pragmalinguistics) in a contextually appropriate fashion (sociopragmatics), that is, how to do things appropriately with words. In Kasper [25] words, pragmalinguistics "includes strategies like directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts." (p.1) Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, refers to the social perception of communicative action. Kasper and Rose [26] state that through universal pragmatic competence, speakers are able to notice sociopragmatic variability and make linguistic choices accordingly, recognizing the role of discourse in the construction of social identities and relations. Up to now, the strongest influences on those developing a pragmatic paradigm have been the formulation of a view of meaning in terms of illocutionary force by Austin and Searle, and of a view of meaning in terms of conversational implicature by Grice [32]. But leech focuses on hearers' feelings in pragmatic linguistics. Beltrán-Planques and Querol-Julián [4] showed how a multimodal approach can shed some light in the study of interlanguage pragmatics. Results revealed that spoken language is just one production of pragmatics and other modes of language production are also demonstrations of pragmatic competence. Alsuhaibani [1] investigated the effect of consciousness-raising instruction and corpus-based instruction on the pragmatic competence development through compliment responses. He found that both instruction methods are effective for the elevation of pragmatic competence. Zhang [49] demonstrated that computer-mediated communication with data-driven instruction is beneficial to pragmatic competence for EFL learners in China. Derakhshan et al. [11] pointed out that interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies is a predictive factor for EFL learners speech act knowledge.

## ***2.2. Researches on Explicit and Implicit Instruction***

Explicit knowledge is knowledge that a learner has about a language and that he or she is conscious of and able to report in some way [16]. For example, many learners know and can explain that in English you need an "s" on verbs when you use them with a subject such as he, she, or John to talk about something in the present (Erlam, 2012). The theoretical support derives from (Schmidt, 1995) noticing hypothesis. Schmidt takes a view that learning will be more effective when learners pay attention to what they are learning. The role of explicit pragmatic instruction becomes even more important in FL classrooms where opportunities for the full range of human interactions are limited, and in consequence learners have more difficulties in acquiring appropriate language use patterns. These ideas constitute a rationale for pedagogical intervention, with the two-fold goal of first, making learners aware of their previous knowledge and the ways to take advantage of it by using their existing pragmatic foundations in appropriate sociopragmatic contexts, and second, helping learners to attend to both the linguistic forms of utterances and the relevant social and contextual features with which they are associated (Schmidt, 2001). As Kasper [27] noted, "the great potential of L2 teaching for developing learners' pragmatic ability lies in its capacity to alert and orient learners to pragmatic features encountered outside the classroom, encourage them to try out new pragmatic strategies, reflect on their observations and their own language use, and obtain feedback" (p.56). On the

other hand, foreign language learning (FLL) contexts constitute less favorable learning environments, generally characterized by no interaction with native speakers of the TL. This limitation imposes huge demands on instruction that most likely cannot be reached through the classical format of the language classroom. These limitations are especially attributed to FLL classrooms, since it has been established [26] that they do not provide enough conversational practice, regardless of how communicative and learner-centered they are. In consequence, pragmatic instruction in the FL classroom needs to fulfill three functions: 1) exposing learners to appropriate TL input, 2) raising learners' pragmatic and metapragmatic awareness about the instructed aspect, and 3) arranging authentic opportunities to practice pragmatic knowledge [45]. A way to compensate for the restricted opportunities for learning TL pragmatics in FL settings is to provide instruction for longer periods of time, supplying sustained focused input in pragmatic knowledge. The aim of instruction in pragmatic competence is not to force learners to adopt native speaker pragmatic choices, but to expose learners to positive evidence, making them aware of various linguistic resources that are used in combination with specific contextual factors. This knowledge progressively enables learners to make more sound decisions when choosing linguistic as they interact in the TL [45].

Implicit instruction is directed at enabling learners to infer rules without awareness. That is, it seeks to provide learners with experience of specific exemplars of a rule or pattern while they are not attempting to learn it (e.g. they are focused instead on meaning). As a result, they internalize the underlying rule/ pattern without their attention being explicitly focused on it [16] (p.6). Dickinson et al. [13] examined instruction methods affect the breadth and depth of vocabulary learning. Their research includes intentional/explicit instruction is effective for connecting existing L1 knowledge with new ones, also unintentional/implicit instruction such as multiple uses and review is also efficient for enhancing vocabulary learning, in the end, the context learning such as commenting on storybooks is a practicable instruction method. Umeda et al. [48] suggested that explicit instruction is significant for English articles semantics learning and comprehension but the fruits can be lasted only such ongoing instruction is achieved. De Smedt et al. [10] investigated the relationship among explicit, peer assistance, and writing motivation. The results demonstrated that students receiving explicit instruction were more controlled motivated than students who were offered ample writing opportunities while practicing individually. Explicit instruction plays an important role in eliciting explicit and implicit knowledge while repetition just initiates temporary attention to the target structure [28]. Besides, self-regulated learning (SRL) can be activated by appropriate teaching strategy, instructing SRL strategies explicitly so that students develop metacognitive knowledge and skills to integrate the application of these strategies successfully into their learning process, and complementing teaching with implicit ones to support SRL development [14].

### ***2.3. Researches on the Relationship between Explicit/implicit instruction and Pragmatic Competence***

As we reviewed before, a number of literature have been focused on pragmatic competence development and explicit/implicit instruction, a small number of studies have been made on the relationship between them. Our research therefore attempts to cast light on their inner connections through oral pragmatic discourse completion test and instruction preference questionnaire. Koike and Pearson [29] examined the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on the growth of pragmatic competence, they

demonstrated that the explicit instruction and feedback led to an effect in helping learners to read, interpret, and select the most appropriate pragmatic choices in the multiple choice sections of the tests. By contrast, implicit feedback and possibly implicit instruction led to an effect in these learners' open-ended responses in a dialogic context. Salemi et al. [36] concluded the development of pragmatic competence in terms of suggestion speech act is a complex process which proceeds in a non-linear fashion, and explicit instruction is more conducive to the enhancement of pragmatic competence than implicit instruction. Eslami et al. [20] employed asynchronous computer mediated communication (ACMC) as instruction mediation to expand research. They indicated that explicitly instructed group performed better than the implicit one, but both explicitly and implicitly instructed groups are more significantly enhanced in pragmatic competence through discourse completion test than the control group. Most of the studies in the relevant literature revealed that pragmatic instruction is much more contributory in nature than no instruction as it provides learners with the necessary input they can utilize in the process of developing their language abilities [47]. Solak and Bayar [41] suggest that language lessons should be organized according to a practice-based orientation instead of a traditional theory-based orientation. Integrating pragmatic features in language instruction is especially vital in EFL contexts as learners in these educational settings do not have much chance of learning and practicing the target language outside the classroom environment [47]. Scholarships have corroborated that pragmatic features are amenable to instruction; however, more research is still needed to find out which interventional approaches and what type of instructional input and materials are more conducive to learning [12]. Their results indicate that sole exposure to contextualized input, video vignettes, may not necessarily result in students' gain in pragmatics. Consequently, learning is augmented if the linguistic, analytic, and cultural features along with sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features are brought to learners' attention. Moreover, when instructing various speech acts, sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features in the movies should be taught directly and explicitly which per se contributes to more pragmatic awareness and comprehension. In order to develop EFL students' pragmatic competence, it is important to master the ability to perform speech acts, to convey and interpret non-literal meaning, to perform politeness and discourse functions, to use cultural knowledge and so on [8]. She also suggested that however, most EFL students lack strategies for performing speech acts and thus turn out to be a main cause of pragmatic failure. Taguchi [43] presented a series of research questions in the pragmatic field among which she mentioned technology-mediated learning and teaching need to be probed extensively in the new era.

The paper still focuses attention on the traditional instruction method since although the wave of information technology society has completely transformed the form of learning and teaching, conventional education definitely plays an irreplaceable part in the fostering of talents. Furthermore, our research can be a suggestive example for education whatever in terms of the traditional or technology-based teaching and learning. In spite of a welter of studies have been expanded in the fields of pragmatic competence and explicit/implicit instruction, limited researches in the combination of both have been conducted. Besides, our study makes an attempts to investigate specific SC as our emphasis and incorporates the instructed pragmatics in form of explicit and implicit ways to probe their explicit connection.

### **3. Research Procedure**

### **3.1. Participants**

Our participants' ages are limited among 20-28, and all of them are students majored in English are 16 and non-English are 20. The male and female presentation is 45.95 and 54.05 respectively. All our participants' academic degree is bachelor degree or in undergraduate degree. And they all have learned English for more than 8 years.

### **3.2. Procedure**

#### **3.2.1. The multiple choices of speech acts occurred in the oral discourse completion**

Our questionnaire is adopted from Jiang [24] and we made little modifications afterwards. The questionnaire includes three parts: individual information mainly exploring major and gender, speech act multiple choices to conclude acquisition condition of pragmatic competence, and the last part is instructional preference likert scale which generally take five scale. The multiple choices questionnaire mainly surveys the participants' comprehension of language literal meaning (Locutionary act), connotation meaning (Illocutionary act), and also words-related action (Perlocutionary act).

#### **3.2.2. The instructional preference likert scale**

Our likert scale is in five terms, 1 represents completely disagree, 2 disagree, 3 a little agree, 4 agree, 5 complete agree. The Cronbach's alpha of our likert scale in our questionnaire is  $0.826 > 0.7$ , it reveals that our questionnaire is of great reliability. Besides, the KMO value is 0.743 and the significance value is  $.000 < 0.05$ , it suggests that our questionnaire is of significant validity and is suitable for factor analysis.

#### **3.2.3. Data collection procedure**

40 copies of questionnaires are received in the end, but several choices are vacant in four copies, henceforth, 36 copies can be kept as our validate data for further analysis. The author set up time limit including the shortest time and the longest time to submit our questionnaire in order to control the data quality. What's more, our questionnaire intends to give awards after submit the questionnaire to attract more attention from our participants. At last, the effective data are exported into the SPSS.26 to make a detailed analysis.

### **3.3. Data**

Through classified and cross-over analysis of our final data, the digits left after rounding up/down is two, we found that the overall multiple choices correction rate is 37.93%. It indicates that the overall pragmatic competence level still lag behind other linguistic competence. The accuracy proportion of students major in English is 44.61%. On the other hand, the accuracy proportion of students major in non-English is 31.29%. The accuracy rate of male students is 35.78%, female students is 39.85%. Male students major in English are able to answer our questions correctly 40.28%, female student major in English is 48.48%. Male student major in non-English have been only 33.33 percent accurate, female students have been only 29.05 percent accurate.

**Table 1.** The accuracy percentage in different classification groups.

| Classifications of participants(N=36) | Accuracy percentage(%) |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| All participants                      | 37.93                  |
| Participants major in English         | 44.61                  |
| Participants major in non-English     | 31.29                  |
| All male participants                 | 35.78                  |
| All female students                   | 39.85                  |
| Male students major in English        | 40.28                  |
| Female students major in English      | 48.48                  |
| Male students major in non-English    | 33.33                  |
| Female students major in English      | 29.05                  |

**Table 2.** the correlation analysis among the PLI (pragmatic learning intention), EI (explicit instruction), and II (implicit instruction).

|     |          | GL    | II     | EI    |
|-----|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| PLI | Person R | .345* | .412*  | .344* |
|     | Sig.     | 0.04  | 0.012  | 0.04  |
| GL  | Person R | 1     | .607** | .371* |
|     | Sig.     |       | 0      | 0.026 |

It reveals that PLI has significant effects on the instruction preference. EI and II both show positive connection with PLI. The  $P < 0,05$ , it means remarkable correlation among different variables. In addition, the R of Person correlation also connotes the level of correlation, it can be speculated that PLI has closer connection with EI since the R is 0.412 above 0.344.

**Table 3.** The M and SD value comparison of EI and II in different major groups and gender groups.

|             |    | EI   | II   |
|-------------|----|------|------|
| English     | M  | 3.53 | 3.78 |
|             | N  | 16   | 16   |
|             | SD | 0.56 | 0.77 |
| Non-English | M  | 3.63 | 3.7  |
|             | N  | 20   | 20   |
|             | SD | 1.04 | 1.04 |
| Male        | M  | 3.47 | 3.7  |
|             | N  | 17   | 17   |
|             | SD | 0.99 | 1.05 |
| Female      | M  | 3.68 | 3.76 |
|             | N  | 19   | 19   |
|             | SD | 0.71 | 0.82 |
| Total       | M  | 3.58 | 3.74 |
|             | N  | 36   | 36   |
|             | SD | 0.85 | 0.92 |

The mean score of II is more than EI in general terms, such a results is in contrast with previous studies [8,14]. We further make a more specific analysis based on table 3, our results give connotation that students major in English prefer to II compared to non-English ones, but the mean score of the former in EI intention is less than the latter, in parallel, if we divide our group in term of gender differences, our male

students intend to adopt II instead of EI whereas female participants have higher level inspiration for II and EI standing at 3.68 and 3.76 respectively.

**Table 4.** ANOVA analysis of regression model.

| Model                            | SS    | df | MS   | F    | Sig.              |
|----------------------------------|-------|----|------|------|-------------------|
| regression                       | 3.58  | 2  | 1.79 | 2.73 | .080 <sup>b</sup> |
| residual                         | 21.67 | 33 | .66  |      |                   |
| total                            | 25.25 | 35 |      |      |                   |
| a. dependent variable: EI        |       |    |      |      |                   |
| b. independent variable: PLI, PC |       |    |      |      |                   |

**Table 5.** Coefficient analysis of regression model.

| Model                     | Non-standard |       | Standard | t      | Sig.  |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------|----------|--------|-------|
|                           | B            | SE    | Beta     |        |       |
| Constant                  | 2.289        | 0.729 |          | 3.139  | 0.004 |
| PC                        |              |       |          |        |       |
|                           | -0.06        | 0.063 | -0.155   | -0.954 | 0.347 |
| PLI                       | 0.391        | 0.175 | 0.363    | 2.234  | 0.032 |
| a. dependent variable: EI |              |       |          |        |       |

We also make hypothesis that EI may leads to higher pragmatic competence, and vice versa, high pragmatic competence may also has interconnected relationship with EI [2,15]. However, our regression model shows that such hypothesis is overturned. From ANOVA description in table4, our regression model is of vacant significance as the  $P=.08 > .05$  although pragmatic learning intention (PLI) manifests ( $P=.032$ ) great correlation with EI.

**Table 6.** Regression model abstract.

| Model  | R                 | R <sup>2</sup> | adjusted R <sup>2</sup> | SE      |
|--|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------|---------|
|  | .424 <sup>a</sup> | 0.179          | 0.13                    | 0.85998 |
| a. independent variable: (constant), PLI, PC |                   |                |                         |         |

**Table 7.** ANOVA analysis of regression model.

| Model                                       | SS     | df | MS    | F     | Sig.              |
|---|--------|----|-------|-------|-------------------|
| regression                                  | 5.337  | 2  | 2.669 | 3.608 | .038 <sup>b</sup> |
| residual                                    |        |    |       |       |                   |
| Total                                       | 24.406 | 33 | 0.74  |       |                   |
|   | 29.743 | 35 |       |       |                   |
| a. dependent variable: II                   |        |    |       |       |                   |
| b. independent variable: constant), PLI, PC |        |    |       |       |                   |

**Table 8.** Coefficient analysis of regression model.

| Model                     | Non-standard |       | Standard | t     | Sig.  |
|---------------------------|--------------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
|                           | B            | SE    | Beta     |       |       |
| (constant)                | 1.694        | 0.774 |          | 2.188 | 0.036 |
| PC                        |              |       |          |       |       |
| PLI                       |              |       |          |       |       |
|                           | 0.041        | 0.067 | 0.098    | 0.616 | 0.542 |
|                           | 0.468        | 0.186 | 0.4      | 2.516 | 0.017 |
| a. dependent variable: II |              |       |          |       |       |

We can conclude that our regression model of II, PLI, and PC can be established and the model is of statistic significance ( $P=.038<0.05$ ). Our model' degree of fitting is .179 which means that our model is not stable. But from ANOVA analysis, the model can express some intricate relations among variables in which one of our established two independent variables has an inner tie with dependent variable II (implicit instruction). More specifically, our attention is shifted to the table 8, the data tells us that PLI (pragmatic learning intention) has positive effects on the II method ( $P=.017<0.05$ ). Nevertheless, table 8 demonstrates that PC shows little effect on the choice of instruction.

**Table 9.** *the mean score analysis of PLI (pragmatic learning intention) and GLI (grammar learning intention).*

|    | PLI     | GLI     |
|----|---------|---------|
| M  | 3.9815  | 3.1806  |
| N  | 36      | 36      |
| SD | 0.78859 | 0.99393 |

In order to explore EFL learners' intention on the PL (sociopragmatic competence SC) and GL (pragmalinguistic competence PC), we resort to mean score from our questionnaire data to aid us further consolidate our experiment. From above data, the table indicates that EFL learners are more prone to learn sociopragmatic knowledge than pragmalinguistic knowledge.

#### 4. Results

We make clear that the present sociopragmatic competence acquisition condition is still terrible despite our participant regardless of in English or non-English major has learned English for more than 8 years. However, English as foreign language in China and as the langue franca in the world for students whose mother tongue is other than English especially for those whose mother language is entirely in different language family. For example, our Chinese belongs to Sino-Tibetan languages and yet English is part of Indo-European languages. On the side, in spite students have learned a heft of knowledge of target language, the long-term exposure is still in short [47]. Therefore, the method to enhance PC especially SC is of remarkable emergence to foster high talents in the new era. Moreover, our research obviates from a large number of previous literature which regard EI as a more intended way to directly instruct language-related knowledge, our article aims to call for II (implicit instruction) as a main way to teach and learn. In addition, when refer to the fitting instruction with the development of society and individual differences, teachers are in emergent need to stand in others' shoes which means roles switch when practicing instruction. In the 21st century, we all cry for the student-centered teaching methods whereas whether teachers are really fulfilling such seething effective method. Furthermore, it is meaningful to integrate the technology with the teaching and learning seamlessly under the aftermath of COVID-19. In the end, in contrast with traditional grammar learning, the present EFL learners are inclined to learn from practice which is suggestive for our nation's education curriculum and teaching focuses.

#### 5. Discussions

For the first question in the paper, our data have shown that EFL learners in China although having a long period of English learning still acquire a poor sociopragmatic competence. For the second, the article demonstrates a distinct result regarding the

instruction preference. The result reveals that modern EFL learners in China are more likely to adopt implicit instruction. For the last question, technology-included [20,23] and the real aspiration and practice for student-oriented instruction should be adopted in real terms. On the other hand, the reasons for the poor condition of pragmatic competence of EFL learners in China would be various. One of the reasonable factors may be attributed to the transfer of our first language, which exert powerful force when we gain another language in our cognition [34]. The effects of L1 transfer on the L2 comprehension and production can be positive and negative in various contexts. Furthermore, language exposure of students in China has mostly been limited in classrooms, they will be deprived of English speech acts' climate to utilize their language repertoire into speech utterance. Therefore, blending our daily life and learning with English is an efficient and feasible means to fulfill our language control center in our mind. In specific terms, incorporating computer and other internet-connected digital products into the learning plan, making full use of segmented time to master production-oriented target language. Zhang and Wen (2021) [49] put forward cloud connect mechanism which includes two circles outer and inner. The outer circle describes the process of activities—preparatory, formal, and subsequent activities. The inner circle shows cognition, social, and affective connection, and the inner circle's connections run through the outer every process. In our article, implicit instruction is preferred and promoted since the author takes such method could raise learners unexpected interests and affective wave in the course of knowledge acquisition. Our focus is put on the gain of sociopragmatic competence rather than pragmatic competence for which SC is neglected in China's English learning classrooms. Students are able to motivate the social connection in have command of SC. Accordingly, implicit instruction first activates affective connection in preparatory activities, and next, it will wake our learners' cognition connection in stepping into knowledge sea in the formal activities, and at last, EFL learners should have opportunities to practice knowledge existing in mind in real production-oriented speeches in subsequent activities.

## 6. Conclusions

Pragmatic competence especially the sociopragmatic competence should be considered as an inseparable component of language competence. Therefore, pragmatic features of the target language should be incorporated in language instruction as well as linguistic features. Our research has employed a welter of data to prove our research questions. Firstly, our results indicate that the general SC acquisition condition still become a worrying item which should be given much attention. In addition, as our constant recognition that students in English major possess higher pragmatic competence than those in non-English majors. In more specific terms, female students major in English also gain better pragmatic competence than male students. However, the situation is not the same in non-English part, female students in non-English majors shows lower ability of pragmatic competence. Therefore, language teaching should focus more attention on female students in non-English majors to find out more practicable instruction to raise their SC. But the overall acquisition ability of female students is superior than male ones. Furthermore, learners in English majors unfold strong intention for instructed pragmatics in contrast with non-English majored ones, and female students show much preference to pragmatic instruction, and as our data suggest, learners express intense interests in II (implicit instruction). Hence, we hope language teachers may transfer teaching method to focus on II to motivate different connections put forward

by Zhang & Wen [49] whereas the paper calls for more attention transfer from EI to II, it definitely negates the role of EI by no means. The paper also aims to support integrated instruction, student-oriented, and individual-fitted teaching and learning. As last, from our regression analysis, the data demonstrate that there are no cause and effect connection among PC and instruction preference, but PLI (pragmatic learning intention) expresses positive effects on II, and further, our participants demonstrate fierce affection for instructed pragmatics and they show higher intention of learning language through practice in sociopragmatic contexts rather than just stand still in the learning of linguistic and grammatical features.

Our paper has bridged the gap in the research of present condition of SC among students in China, and makes contributions to the connection among explicit and implicit instruction, pragmatic competence, pragmatic learning intention, and grammar rules learning intention. The paper also points out feasible suggestions for language education. Nevertheless, the article also has some limitations. Our research participants are of small number and our data results also need to be proved by a heft of studies. In order to equip learners with the essential pragmatic knowledge, it can be suggested that, first of all, the importance of pragmatic competence should be internalized. Then the perspectives should be re-shaped with the purpose of providing learners with the best opportunities to expose to the pragmatic features and practice them in a variety of contexts. In addition, language teachers should have a good knowledge of the target language including a satisfactory level of pragmatic knowledge so that they can pass what they know to their learners. In order to teach their learners pragmatic aspects, teachers should also have the necessary teaching strategies enabling them to adopt different teaching ways during their instruction. To summarize, pragmatic competence is one of the building blocks of language instruction. If the aim of language education is to teach learners how a language should be appropriately and effectively used in different interactional settings, it is important to raise learners' pragmatic awareness as well as furnishing them with some beneficial strategies they can utilize to sustain successful communication in diverse settings with different interlocutors. Therefore, pragmatic competence should be an integral part of language curriculum [47]. More studies should be made on the ways to acquire pragmatic competence more effectively. For example, sociopragmatic competence can be delineated by speech acts, so the measurement of speech act should be expanded in subsequent researches. Under the circumstance of the virus, technology-mediated teaching and learning receive intense attention, so we should incorporate technology into education to raise abilities of pragmatic development. On the side, the cloud-connection launch should also be in limelight which combine the individual inner cognition with outer practice so that learning through doing and usage can be realized.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

## **Funding**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

## References

- [1] Alsuhaibani, Z. Developing EFL students' pragmatic competence: The case of compliment responses. *Lang Teach Research*, 2022, 26(5), 847-866, DOI: 10.1177/1362168820913539. Available online: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1362168820913539> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [2] Ariani, Musli, et al. The role of pragmatic socialization in building learners' pragmatic competence from English teachers' perspectives. *Pegem J Educ Instru*, 2021,11(4), 197-208, DOI: 10.47750/pegegog.11.04.19. Available online: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1320290> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [3] Bachman, Lyle F. Fundamental considerations in language testing, 1st ed.; Oxford university press: NewYork, USA,1990; ISBN 9780194370035.
- [4] Beltrán-Planques, V.; Querol-Julián, M. English language learners' spoken interaction: What a multimodal perspective reveals about pragmatic competence. *System*. 2018,77, 80-90, DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2018.01.008. Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0346251X17306772> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [5] Canale, M. The measurement of communicative competence. *Annu Rev Appl Linguist*. 1987,8, 67-84, DOI: 10.1017/S0267190500001033.
- [6] Canale, M.; Swain, M. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Appl Linguist*. 1980, 1(1), 1-47.
- [7] Cenoz, J. The acquisition of pragmatic competence and multilingualism in foreign language contexts. In *Intercultural language use and language learning*, Springer. 2008, 123-140, DOI: 10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0\_7. Available online: [https://link.springer.53yu.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0\\_7](https://link.springer.53yu.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4020-5639-0_7) (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [8] Zhao, C.Y. Explicit Speech Act Instruction for Developing EFL Students' Pragmatic Competence. *Int J Eng Lang Teach*. 2021, 9(4), 26-35.
- [9] Cunningham, A.E. Explicit versus implicit instruction in phonemic awareness. *J Exp Child Psychol*. 1990, 50(3), 429-444, DOI: 10.1016/0022-0965(90)90079-N. Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/002209659090079N> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [10] De, S.; Fien, et al. The bright and dark side of writing motivation: Effects of explicit instruction and peer assistance. *J Educ Res*. 2019, 112(2), 152-167, DOI: 10.1080/00220671.2018.1461598. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.53yu.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00220671.2018.1461598>
- [11] Derakhshan, Ali, et al. Interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) as predictors of L2 speech act knowledge: A case of Iranian EFL learners. *J Asia TEFL*. 2021,18(1), 235-243. DOI: 10.18823/asiatefl.2021.18.1.14.235. Available online: <http://journal.asiatefl.org/>
- [12] Derakhshan, A.; Shakki, F. The effect of implicit vs. explicit metapragmatic instruction on the Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic comprehension of apology and refusal. *J ZABAN*. 2020, 12(35), 151-175. Available online:

- <https://www.sid.ir/en/Journal/ViewPaper.aspx?ID=787417> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [13] Dickinson, David K, et al. Teaching for breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge: Learning from explicit and implicit instruction and the storybook texts. *Early Child Res Q.* 2019,47, 341-356, DOI: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2018.07.012. Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S088520061830142X> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [14] Dignath, C.; Veenman, Marcel, V.J. The role of direct strategy instruction and indirect activation of self-regulated learning—Evidence from classroom observation studies. *Educ Psycho Rev.* 2021, 33(2), 489-533, DOI: 10.1007/s10648-020-09534-0. Available online: <https://link.springer.53yu.com/article/10.1007/s10648-020-09534-0> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [15] El-Dakhs, Dina Abdel Salam, & Amroun, Fouzia Phyllis. The Relative Contributions of Explicit and Implicit Instruction in the Learning of EFL Apologies. *Human Soc Sci Let.* 2021, 9(2), 122-151, DOI: 10.18488/journal.73.2021.92.122.151. Available online: <https://archive.conscientiabeam.com/index.php/73/article/view/887> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [16] Ellis, R. Implicit and Explicit Learning, Knowledge and Instruction. In *Implicit and explicit knowledge in second language learning, testing and teaching.* *Multil Mat.* 2009, 3-26. DOI: 10.21832/9781847691767-003. Available online: <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.21832/9781847691767-003/html?lang=en> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [17] Ellis, R. *Language teaching research and language pedagogy*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. John Wiley & Sons: New York, USA, 2012; ISBN: 9781444336115.
- [18] Ellis, R.; Ellis, R.R. *The study of second language acquisition*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Oxford University: New York, USA, 1994; ISBN: 9780194371896.
- [19] Erlam, R. Explicit knowledge and grammar explanation in second language instruction. *Encyc appl linguist.* 2012, 1-6.
- [20] Eslami, Zohreh R, et al. The role of asynchronous computer mediated communication in the instruction and development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence. *System.* 2015, 48, 99-111. DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2014.09.008. Available online: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0346251X14001419>
- [21] Fraser, B. *The domain of pragmatics. Language and communication.* Routledge: London, Britain. 1983,29-59; ISBN 9781315836027.
- [22] Harlow, L.L. Do they mean what they say? Sociopragmatic competence and second language learners. *Mod Lang J.* 1990, 74(3), 328-351, DOI: 10.2307/327628. Available online: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/327628> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [23] Heng, K.; Sol, K. Online learning during COVID-19: Key challenges and suggestions to enhance effectiveness. *Camb J Educ Res.* 2021, 1(1), 3-16.

- [24]Jiang, Z.H. A probe into the assessment of Chinese college students' pragmatic competence: an interlanguage pragmatic approach. (D), Shanghai International Studies University: Shanghai, China, 2009.
- [25]Kasper, G. Can pragmatic competence be taught? *Lang Teach Curri Cent.* 1997.
- [26]Kasper, G.; Rose, K.R. Pragmatic development in a second language. *Lang lear.* 2002, 52(1), 1-352. Available online: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2003-00643-001> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [27]Kasper, G. Classroom research on interlanguage pragmatics. InK. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching.* Cambridge University Press. 2001, 33-60.
- [28]Khezrlou, S. Explicit instruction through task repetition: effects on explicit and implicit knowledge development. *Lang Awar.* 2021, 30(1), 62-83, DOI: 10.1080/09658416.2020.1866590. Available online: <https://www.tandfonline.53yu.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09658416.2020.1866590> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [29]Koike, D.A.; Pearson, L. The effect of instruction and feedback in the development of pragmatic competence. *System.* 2005, 33(3), 481-501, DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2005.06.008. Available online: <http://spis.hnl.at.com/scholar/detail/b5826b004d98bc9ad217fc6a47d38742> (accessed on 1 August 2022).
- [30]Kok, Marjan, et al. Tailoring explicit and implicit instruction methods to the verbal working memory capacity of students with special needs can benefit motor learning outcomes in physical education. *Lear Indiv Diff.* 2021, 89, 102019, DOI: 10.1016/j.lindif.2021.102019.
- [31]Lakoff, G.; Johnson, M. *Metaphors we live by*, 2ed ed. University of Chicago press: Chicago, USA, 2003; ISBN 9780226468013.
- [32]Leech, G. *Principles of pragmatics*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Routledge: London, Britain, 1983; ISBN 9780582551107.
- [33]Marmaridou, S. 3. Pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. *Found Prag.* 2011,77-106, DOI: 10.1515/9783110214260.
- [34]Ringbom, H. On L1 transfer in L2 comprehension and L2 production. *Lang lear.* 1992, 42(1), 85-112, DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-1770.1992.tb00701.x.
- [35]Rose, K.R. An exploratory cross-sectional study of interlanguage pragmatic development. *Stud Second Lang Acquis.* 2000, 22(1), 27-67, DOI: 10.1017/S0272263100001029.
- [36]Salemi, A, et al. The effects of explicit/implicit instruction and feedback on the development of Persian EFL learners' pragmatic competence in suggestion structures. *J Lang Teach Res.* 2012, 3(1), 188, DOI: 10.4304/jltr.3.1.188-199.
- [37]Saville-Troike, Muriel. Cultural maintenance and vanishing Englishes. *Text and context: cross-disciplinary perspectives on language study*, 1992, 148-155.
- [38]Scarcella, R.; Brunak, J. On speaking politely in a second language. 1981,59-76, DOI: 10.1515/ijsl.1981.27.59.

- [39] Schmidt, Richard. Consciousness and foreign language learning: A tutorial on the role of attention and awareness in learning. *Atten awar fore lang lear*. 1995, 9, 1-63.
- [40] Schmidt, Richard. "Attention." In P. Robinson (Ed.), *Cognition and second language instruction*. Cambridge University Press. 2001, 3-32.
- [41] Solak, Ekrem, & Bayar, Adem. Current challenges in English language learning in Turkish EFL context. *Participatory Educational Research*. 2015, 2(1), 106-115. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.15.09.2.1>
- [42] Stadler, Stefanie. Cross-cultural pragmatics. *The Encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. 2012, 1-8. DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0289.pub2
- [43] Taguchi, Naoko. Learning and Teaching Pragmatics in the Globalized World: Introduction to the Special Issue. *The Modern Language Journal*, 2021, 105(3), 615-622. DOI: 10.1111/modl.12716
- [44] Taguchi, N, et al. Effects of intercultural competence and social contact on speech act production in a Chinese study abroad context. *The Modern Language Journal*. 2016, 100(4), 775-796, DOI: 10.1111/modl.12349.
- [45] Tello, R.Y. Developing pragmatic competence in a foreign language. *Colomb. Appl. Linguist. J.* 2006, 8, 169-182.
- [46] Thomas, J. Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Appl linguist*. 1983, 4(2), 91-112. DOI: 10.1093/applin/4.2.91.
- [47] Tulgar, A.T. The role of pragmatic competence in foreign language education. *Turkish Online Journal of English Language Teaching*. 2016, 1(1), 10-19, DOI: 10.32959/tojelt.229304.
- [48] Umeda, M. et al. The long-term effect of explicit instruction on learners' knowledge on English articles. *Lang Teach Res*. 2019, 23(2), 179-199, DOI: 10.1177/1362168817739648.
- [49] Zhang, H.; Wen, Q.F. The task based pull-push mechanism in a professional learning community of university teachers instructing different foreign languages: the teachers' perceptions. *Fore Lang Lear The Prac*. 2021, 4, 90-98.
- [50] Zhang, Y. Combining computer-mediated communication with data-driven instruction: EFL learners' pragmatic development of compliment responses. *System*. 2021, 103, 102624, DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2021.102624.



© 2022 by the author(s); licensee International Technology and Science Publications (ITS), this work for open access publication is under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0). (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)