The Effect of Explicit and Implicit Instruction of English Thanking and Complimenting Formulas on Developing Pragmatic Competence of Iranian EFL Upper-Intermediate Level learners

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ABSTRACT

The current study set out to explore the effect of two instructional strategies; i.e. explicit and implicit teaching on developing Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) upper-intermediate level learners' pragmatic knowledge of the two speech acts of thanking and compliment. To fulfill this objective, 46 freshmen undergraduate students of Sharif University of Technology (SUT) who had taken General English classes were asked to participate in this study. After going through five steps, a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) consisting of 12 items on the speech act of compliment and 11 items on the thanking speech act was developed. Participants in the study consisted of two groups of explicit and implicit. After the eight-session instruction, they were given the newly developed MDCT to explore any probable improvements on their pragmatic knowledge. The results proved superiority of the explicit teaching over the implicit teaching regarding the two speech acts. Also in order to explore the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence of both groups, the correlation between the two scores was calculated and the results suggested that the correlation is not affected by applying explicit or implicit teaching of thanking and compliment formulas. However in a linear regression which was run to predict learners' grammatical competence by their ability to perform speech act formulas, thanking proved itself as a better predictor of grammatical competence.

KEY TERMS: Explicit teaching, Implicit teaching, Pragmatic competence, MDCT.

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the emergence of communicative competence in language teaching, the area of pragmatics captured scholars' imagination as a potential field of research. Scholars such as Cohen, Bardovi-Harlig, Jianda, and Roever have great body of work in the area of pragmatics. As Bardovi-Harlig& Mahan-Taylor (2003) maintain, pragmatic rules are often subconscious and even native speakers are often unaware of them until they are broken. Interestingly, even a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily show equivalent pragmatic development. Unfortunately, "the consequences of pragmatic differences, unlike the case of grammatical errors, are often interpreted on a social or personal level rather than as a result of the language learning process" (Bardovi-Harlig& Taylor, 2003, p. 38); this claim provides a strong justification for the inclusion of pragmatic instruction in language learning classes.

A noticeable number of research studies have been conducted on the effect of pragmatics teaching such as Bardovi-Harlig& Mahan-Taylor (2003), Alcon (2005), Rose (2005), and Alcon & Martinez (2008). According to Bardovi-Harlig& Taylor (2003), there is a demonstrated need for teaching of pragmatic rules, so called "secret rules of English". Also Rose (2005) posits that without exception learners receiving instruction in pragmatics outperform those who do not.

In the area of language testing, there were also simultaneous developments as of the language teaching. Farhady (1980) raised the awareness for functional testing which is in harmony with pragmatic aspects of language. In the same vein, Hudson, Detmer, and Brown (1995), Roever (2005), and Jianda (2006) attempted to develop tests of pragmatics.

Despite numerous studies in the area of pragmatics, there exists a void regarding Persian learners of English.

Iran as a typical foreign language context provides students with little or no contact with English language and culture outside the classroom. Concerning communication as a fundamental reason for learning a language, English learners are required to use English speech acts in order to fulfill some basic needs such as complimenting a colleague or client to start a successful close conversation, complimenting a movie they have watched to suggest it to a friend, expressing gratitude to their friends for answering their questions or having done a favor for them.In

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addition, Iranian learners' cultural background and conversational codes impede them from being open to use specific speech acts such as compliment which is one of the two factors being considered in this study. What has been overtly observed in most Iranian English classrooms is the shyness of students, which leaves the students with problems in acquiring and applying these speech acts.

Considering all these deficiencies, the present study is designed to investigate the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction of English speech acts of thanking and compliment on Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level learners' pragmatic competence. Moreover, it is aimed at exploring the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence of the learners. The rationale behind choosing these speech acts is the fact that they are both widely-used in everyday conversations, educational context, and also social context. Furthermore, other speech acts have already been studied in Iran's context.

Casting a glance at literature shows a few attempts to develop pragmatics tests by Farhady (1980), Shimazo (1989), Yamashita (1996), Roever (2006), and Jianda (2007) in different EFL (English as a Foreign Language)/ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts. Bardovi- Harlig (1996) provides a justification for developing localized tests of pragmatics by differing non-native speakers from native speakers in the choice of speech acts, semantic formulas, content, and form.

Although Birjandi&Rezaei (2010) and Salehi (2011) have developed Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Tests (MDCT) on two speech acts of request and apology in Iran's context, a few, if any, research studies have been done on the two speech acts of thanking and compliment. The main reason might have sprung from reserved, conservative attitude of Iranians which do not easily allow them to express their gratitude to someone they are indebted to or compliment people on their strong points. Owing to these facts, in addition to the main focus of the study which is the effect of instruction of pragmatics, the current study is also an attempt to develop a localized pragmatics test to tap Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level learners' knowledge of thanking and compliment speech acts. Having this purpose in mind, the researchers formulated the following research questions:

Q₁. Does explicit/implicit teaching of English thanking and compliment formulas have any significant effect on developing pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level learners?

Q₂. Is correlation between grammatical and pragmatic competence of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level learners affected by applying explicit/implicit teaching of English thanking and compliment formulas?

2.   REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

In the following different key concepts of this study are going to be investigated.

2.1.   Grammatical Competence vs. Pragmatic Competence

In a model presented by Bachman (1990), these two are the sub-components of language competence. Bachman (1990, revised by Bachman and Palmer, 1996) subdivides language competence into organizational and pragmatic competence. As Neizgoda and Rover (2001, P. 64) posit, "Organizational competence concerns a speaker's control of the formal aspects of language and is further subdivided in grammatical competence and textual competence." These two sub-categories parallel Canale and Swain's grammatical (vocabulary, syntax, phonology/graphology) and discourse competence (cohesion, rhetorical organization). Bachman considers pragmatic competence as dealing with the relationship between utterances and the acts performed through these utterances, as well as with the features of the context that promote suitable language use (Bachman, 1990).

Several studies (Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Bouton, 1996; Kasper 1997, Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; as cited in Eslami-Rasekh, 2005) have shown that learners of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily possess comparable pragmatic competence. Even grammatically advanced learners may use language inappropriately and show differences from target-language pragmatic norms. According to Bardovi-Harlig and Taylor (2003) the imbalance between grammatical and pragmatic development may be ameliorated by early attention to pragmatics in instruction. They advocate early integration of pragmatics into English language curriculum. Moreover, regarding the fact that there is no single best approach to teach pragmatics, they presume activities should share two important pedagogical practices regardless of the method: 1. authentic language samples and 2. input precedes interpretation or production by learners.

Bardovi-Harlig& Taylor (2003) enumerate three reasons for whichpragmatics should be taught in language classes. Interpretation of pragmatic failure on a social or personal level rather than as a result of language learning process, insufficiency of specific input and insufficiency of interpretation of language use outside of the classroom setting, and finally implausibility of noticing subtle salient features of language and language use and also comprehending and interpreting them in other social settings provide the rationale for instruction of pragmatics in classroom setting, as they state.

2.2.   Explicit Teaching vs. Implicit Teaching

of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics defines the term "Explicit Teaching" as an approach in which Longman Dictionary information about a language is given to the learners directly by the teacher or textbook. In other words the students are taught rules and given specific information about a language involving conscious operations as hypothesis formation and testing (Richards and Schmidt, 2002, P. 193). The term "Implicit Teaching" is defined in contrast with *implicitlearning,* as non-conscious learning in which the students are not aware of what is being taught and learned at the same time (Richards and schmidt, 2002, P. 250).

With respect to different teaching approaches to pragmatic learning, advantage of explicit teaching over implicit teaching was reported in various studies by House and Kasper (1981), House (1996), Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, and Thananart(1997), and Takahashi (2001). According to Kasper (1997, P. 8), "Explicit teaching involved description, explanation, and discussion of the pragmatic feature in addition to input and practice, whereas implicit teaching included input and practice without the metapragmatic component."

2.3.   Speech Acts

Speech act theory as one the major concepts in pragmatics was initiated by Austin and improved by Searle (1969). Searle classified speech acts into five distinct categories, namely, representatives, directives, commissives, declarations and expressives. Levinson (1983) gives a definition on each of these types as follows:

1. Representatives: These speech acts commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, e.g. asserting and concluding.

2. Directives: These are the speech acts which get the listener to do something, e.g. requesting and questioning.

3. Commissives: these speech acts commit the speaker to some future course of action, e.g. promising and threatening.

4. Expressives: these speech acts express a psychological state, such as thanking, apologizing, and welcoming.

5. Declarations: these are speech acts which make immediate changes in the state of affairs and tend to rely on elaborate extra-linguistic institutions, such as declaring war or marriage.

Searle also classifies speech acts into two categories of direct and indirect speech acts. 'Close the door' and 'Could you close the door' are examples of direct and indirect speech acts respectively.

As defined by Yule, speech acts are actions performed via utterances. In English, they arecommonly given more specific labels, such as apology, complaint, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. These terms for different kinds of speech acts apply to the speaker's communicative intention in producing an utterance. The speaker normally expects that his or her communicative intention will be recognized by the hearer (Yule, 2000). Cohen (2010) maintains that, "Speech acts have a basic meaning as conceived by the speaker ('Do you have a watch?' = do you own a watch?), and an intended or illocutionary meaning (e.g., 'Can you tell me what time is it'), as well as the actual illocutionary force on the listener, also referred to as the uptake (i.e., a request to know the time, and hence, a reply like 'It's 10:30 AM right now.')".

According to Searle (1969), through comprehension of speech acts the hearer realizes what the speaker does with an utterance (cited in Garcia, 2004). In the comprehension of speech acts, hearer has a significant role as they must be able to understand utterances and respond to them (Garcia, 2004). It is worth mentioning that Social norms, which can include traditions, customs, patterns of thought, values and beliefs, decide what could be said in different situations. The choices of speech acts that can be considered appropriate are only suggestions; they do not draw a line between what is right and what is wrong (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Regarding the choice of speech acts, Cohen (1999) elaborated upon factors affecting the choice of speech act strategies. These factors are as follow:

1. Relative social status of reader/writer or listener/speaker.

2. Level of social and psychological distance.

3. The seriousness or severity of the act.

2.3.1.   Thanking

Gratitude is defined as "An illocutionary act performed by a speaker which is based on a past act performed by the hearer. This past act benefits the speaker and the speaker believes it to have benefited him or her. The speaker feels grateful or appreciative, and makes a statement which counts as an expression of gratitude"(Eisenstein &Bodman, 1986, P. 167).

This speech act has been classified as an aspect of polite language. Following Brown and Levinson's politeness model (1987), thanking is face-damaging to the self as it involves acknowledging one's state of

indebtedness to the other; however, Koutlaki (2002, P. 2) reports that this view is not universally valid. As she puts it, offers and expressions of gratitude (employed as rejection of offers) function as face-enhancing acts in Iranian context, since Iranian speakers show their adherence to socially sanctioned rules by doing so.

According to Kumar (2001, P. 6), "Expressions of gratitude in the normalday-to-day interactions between the members of a society seem obviously to fall in the category of the "social" use of language. Expressions of gratitude and politeness are a major instrument the use of which keeps the bonds between the members of a society well cemented and strong."

2.3.2. Compliment

Brown and Levinson (1987) have suggested compliments can serve a lot of functions such as starting or re-establishing a social relationship, provoking a desired action and/or even soothing the speaker's discourse before uttering a face threatening act.

According to Al-Kahtani (2005), there is a wide variety of compliments within one culture in terms of the roles and the usage. Studies also found out that compliments reflect norms and values of each culture. Based on these assumptions, it is assumed that each culture has more varieties of compliments other than prototypical compliments, and complimenting acts vary from one culture to another. Moreover, compliments often have additional implicit meanings that make their interpretation more difficult.

Ishihara (2003) provides a strong rationale for giving and receiving compliments by introducing complimenting as a tool for establishing friendship, creating ties of solidarity and as an important social strategy. She also strengthens her claim by stating adverse effects of neglecting to give compliments or inappropriate use of compliments. As stated in Ishihara (2003) the speech act set of compliments has highly structured formulas with rather simple linguistic structures. Chen (2010, P. 93) refers to this formulaic nature as a strong rationale for compliments and compliment responses being ubiquitous and playing indispensable functions in society "For only an indispensable need leads to repeated occurrence of the relevant language, and only repeated occurrence leads to formulaicness." Nonetheless, as Bruti (2006) maintains, "the use of non-formulaic language and of a varied style also makes it easier for the addressee to trust the speaker's intention, to judge it as genuine and, consequently, to accept the compliment."

In American English three main topics of compliments have been identified: appearance or possessions, abilities or accomplishments, and personality traits of the interlocutor (Knapp, Hopper & Bell, 1984; Nelson, El Bakary, & Al Batal, 1993, as cited in Ishihara, 2011). Topics involved in the act of complimenting are limited in each language and this is in harmony with the formulaic nature of compliment utterances (Chen, 2010, P. 93). Also worth mentioning is that compliments topics are mere representatives of culturally admirable notions in a society.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

Participants in this study included 46 freshmen undergraduate students of SUT enrolled in General English classes located in the Languages and Linguistics Center. However, in the final phase of the study which was the administration of the post-test, a total of 38 students took part; the reason was that administrating the post-test coincided with students' final exams at SUT. The students were majoring various fields of study such as electrical, mechanical, aerospace , and computer engineering and they shared basic demographic characteristics, such as L1, age and gender-male.

As for finding the key to the MDCT, one American native speaker, aged 50, was asked to answer the Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) which was developed by the researchers. Finally, in an attempt to ensure the appropriateness of the responses chosen by the native speaker, the final MDCT was administered to a group of six Native American speakers, five male and one female, aged 24-33.

3.2. Instrumentation

Two types of instruments were employed in this study: a DCT and a proficiency test. The 23-item MDCT which entails 11 situations of gratitude and 12 situations of compliment speech acts was developed by the researchers in four steps, namely *exemplar generation*, *situation pilot study*, *development of multiple-choice options*, and *pilot testing the MDCT* (See appendix A).

As for the proficiency test, the mid-term and final exams of General English class at SUT were employed. The tests have been developed by the "Languages and Linguistic Faculty" members and, therefore, enjoy the construct validity crucial to any developed test via the expert judgments. Worth mentioning is that, the reliability of mid-term and final exam was obtained through the K-R21 reliability formula.

In addition to the assessment devices, videos containing interviews with celebrities were employed for the instruction in both explicit and implicit groups. Videos were selected from three famous American talk shows hosted by Oprah Winfrey, Ellen Degeneres, and David Letterman. Regarding the explicit group, additional metapragmatic materials were also used.

3.3.   Procedure

Regarding development of the MDCT on the speech acts of thanking and compliment, this study followed similar previous studies on two different speech acts of apology and request in Chinese (Jianda, 2007) and also in Persian (Birjandi&Rezaei, 2010, Salehi, 2011). In the first step of data collection, called *exemplar generation*, forty six EFL learners at SUT were asked to write, in either English or Persian, a maximum of five situations in which one is required to use thanking or compliment expressions. It is noteworthy that participants in both groups were briefed about the concept of thanking and compliment prior to the exemplar generation process.

After analyzing all the papers, 54 situations, including 28 thanking and 26 compliment situations, were elicited. Due to lack of time, the researchers had to neglect the *likelihood investigation* step which, as Jianda (2007) puts it, "is to further ensure authenticity of the responses". The researchers reviewed the 54 selected situations in the previous step and selected a total of 25 most likely situations, regarding their frequency in participants' responses. The 25-item questionnaire consisted of 13 gratitude and 12 compliment situations.

In the third step, a *situation pilot study* was conducted in order to test whether each of the situations elicited the intended speech acts and to get data needed for constructing the options for each MDCT item (Jianda, 2007). A 25-item open-ended questionnaire or WDCT was constructed and the participants were asked to write what they would say in each situation.

In the fourth step, namely *development of multiple choice items*, the EFL learners' responses were reviewed and compared to those of the native speaker. It is worthy of note that the researchers ignored grammatical errors if the responses given by the students were comprehensible (Jianda, 2007). Two of the inappropriate responses given by the students were coded as 'distractors' and the response given by the native speaker was coded as the 'key' (Jianda, 2007). Grammatical errors found in the EFL learners' responses were corrected and finally EFL learners' selected responses, together with native speaker's responses formed the alternatives of the final MDCT items.

In the last phase of test development process, *final MDCT piloting*, the final MDCT was administered to six American native speakers to ensure that the native speakers of English would choose the key previously selected as the best answer in the fourth step, i.e. *development of multiple-choice items*. The other usage of this stage is to investigate functionality of the distractors. The results in this section showed some deviation from the key previously chosen in the fourth step. In order to guarantee only one alternative as the best and the most appropriate response, the researchers had to revise some of the alternatives and delete two of the items. The finalized MDCT comprised 12 items on the speech act of compliment and 11 items on the speech act of thanking.

After finalizing the MDCT, the researchers embarked on the treatment. As it was mentioned before, one General English class at SUT was considered the experimental group which enjoyed the explicit instruction of pragmatics and the other class was regarded as the control group and was taught implicitly. The instruction for both groups took eight sessions of about 15 minutes.

Videos selected from famous talk shows in America were employed for the instruction. Those parts including two speech acts of thanking and compliment were cut and played in both classes and the researchers noticed any speech acts used in the dialogues to students. The only difference between the two groups was that there was no direct instruction on the type and usage of the speech act in the control group. Furthermore, in the first two sessions of instruction in the experimental group, a power point and various videos containing metapragmatics of thanking and compliment were shown and explicated.

After the eight-session instruction, students were given the newly developed pragmatic test as a post-test in order to perceive whether there have been any improvements on their pragmatic knowledge. Since students' classes at SUT were finished right after the instruction and the researchers had no access to the participants, the MDCT was emailed to them. Regarding the fact that emailing the MDCT was simultaneous with SUT students' exams, only 38 students emailed back the MDCT in time. The rationale behind acceptability of "taking questionnaire home" was that pragmatic tests, unlike tests which tap vocabulary or grammatical knowledge, are so complicated for second/foreign language learners and there is no clear-cut answer to the items. As Jianda (2007, P. 393) maintains, choices on the MDCTs are rated on the degree of appropriateness in the specified situation.

It is worthy of note that there was no pretest administered in this study and the design was post-test only, as the researchers presumed that taking a pragmatic test prior to the process of test development may raise students' awareness about thanking and compliment formulas.

4. RESULTS

Speaking of data analysis to explore research question one, descriptive statistics for the pragmatic test and an independent *t*-test was performed. Afterwards, to answer the second research question, descriptive statistics for the mid-term and final exams were calculated. Also, an independent *t*-test and the Pearson Correlation were employed. And finally, to predict EFL learners' grammatical competence by using their performance on thanking and compliment aspects of pragmatic knowledge, a linear regression and an ANOVA were performed.

4.1. Testing Assumptions

When running parametric tests to analyze sets of data, four assumptions of interval data, independence of subjects, normality and homogeneity of variances should be met. The present data are measured on an interval scale and the subjects perform independently on the tests. The assumption of normality is also met. As displayed in Table 1 the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors are within the ranges of +/- 1.96 (Field 2009).

Table 1 Normality Tests

Group		N	Skewness				Kurtosis		
		Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Explicit	Complimenting	21	-.307	.501	-0.613	-.111	.972	-0.114
	Thanking	21	-.417	.501	-0.832	-1.003	.972	-1.032
	DCT	21	-.757	.501	-1.511	.092	.972	0.095
	Midterm	21	.475	.501	0.948	1.014	.972	1.043
	Final	21	-.520	.501	-1.038	-.527	.972	-0.542
Implicit	Complimenting	17	.273	.550	0.496	.401	1.063	0.377
	Thanking	17	.213	.550	0.387	.122	1.063	0.115
	DCT	17	.018	.550	0.033	-.240	1.063	-0.226
	Midterm	17	-.368	.550	-0.669	-.107	1.063	-0.101
	Final	17	-.537	.550	-0.976	-.487	1.063	-0.458

4.2. Homogeneity of Variances

Regarding homogeneity of the variances, an independent t-test is run to compare the explicit and implicit groups' mean scores on Grammar Midterm Exam in order to prove that the two groups enjoyed the same level of grammatical knowledge prior to the main study. As displayed in Table 2 the mean scores for explicit and implicit groups on grammar test are 23.48 and 21.94 respectively.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics for the Mid-term Scores by Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Explicit	21	23.48	2.542	.555
Implicit	17	21.94	4.069	.987

The results of the independent t-test (t (36) = 1.42, P = .164 > .05, r = .23 it represents a weak to moderate effect size) (Table 3) indicate that there was not any significant difference between explicit and implicit groups on grammar test. Thus it can be concluded that the two groups enjoyed the same level of grammatical knowledge prior to the main study.

Table 3 Independent t-test Midterm Exam by Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	3.367	.075	1.422	36	.164	1.535	1.080	-.654	3.724
Equal variances not assumed			1.356	25.657	.187	1.535	1.132	-.794	3.864

It should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met (Levene's F = 3.36, P = .075 > .05). That is why the first row of Table 3, i.e. "Equal variances assumed" is reported.

4.3. Testing Construct Validity and Reliability

A factor analysis is run to probe the under lying constructs of the grammar and pragmatic tests. The SPSS has extracted only one factor which accounts for 65.26 percent of the total variance.

Table 4: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.610	65.261	65.261	2.610	65.261	65.261
2	.617	15.434	80.695			
3	.537	13.428	94.123			
4	.235	5.877	100.000			
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.						

As displayed in Table 5 all of the four tests load under a single factor, i.e. they are tapping on the same underlying construct.

Table 5: Factor Loadings

	Component
	1
Final	.900
Midterm	.808
Thanking	.783
Complementing	.731

The K-R21 reliability indices of the tests employed in this study are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: K-R21 Reliability Indices

	N of Items	Mean	Variance	K-R21
Pragmatic	23	14.18	9.992	.48
Midterm Grammar	30	22.79	11.252	.53
Final Grammar	40	33.53	17.229	.70

4.4. Testing the Hypotheses

With regard to research question 1, an independent t-test is run to compare the explicit and implicit groups' mean scores on pragmatic test in order to probe the effect of explicit/implicit teaching of English thanking and compliment formulas on pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level students. As displayed in Table 7 the mean scores for explicit and implicit groups on grammar test are 15.57 and 12.47 respectively.

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics Pragmatic Test by Groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Explicit	21	15.57	2.399	.524
Implicit	17	12.47	3.204	.777

The results of the independent t-test (t (36) = 3.41, P = .002 < .05, r = .49 it represents an almost large effect size) (Table 8) indicate that there is significant difference between explicit and implicit groups on pragmatic test. Thus the first null-hypothesis as explicit/implicit teaching of English thanking and compliment formulas does not have any significant effect on developing pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level students **is rejected**. The explicit group outperformed the implicit group on pragmatic test.

Table 8 Independent t-test Pragmatic Test by Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.020	.319	3.412	36	.002	3.101	.909	1.258	4.944
Equal variances not assumed			3.309	29.039	.003	3.101	.937	1.185	5.017

It should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met (Levene's F = 1.02, P = .319 > .05). That is why the first row of Table 8, i.e. "Equal variances assumed" is reported.

The Pearson correlation coefficients between the grammatical and pragmatic competences of the explicit and implicit groups are calculated in order to probe the second research question. As displayed in Table 9 the Pearson correlation between grammatical and pragmatic competences for the implicit group (r = .72, P = .001 < .05) is higher than the correlation coefficient for the explicit group (r = .43, P = .049 < .05). In order to compare the two Pearson R-values the Fisher z-transformation formula is run. The z-value of .90 has P-value of .18 which is higher than .05 levels of significance. Thus it can be concluded that there is not any significant difference between the two R-values. Thus the second null-hypothesis as correlation between grammatical and pragmatic competence of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level students is not affected by applying explicit/implicit teaching of English thanking and compliment formulas **is supported**.

Table 9 Pearson Correlation Grammatical and Pragmatic Competences with groups

Group			Pragmatic
Explicit	Grammatical Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.435[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.049
		N	21
Implicit	Grammatical Knowledge	Pearson Correlation	.727[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.001
		N	17
Fisher's Z-Transformation		Z = .90	P = .18 > .05
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).			
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

In order to cast some light on the results obtained in this part, further statistical analysis is run. Initially, a linear regression is run to predict EFL learners' grammatical competence by using their performance on thanking and compliment aspects of pragmatic knowledge. As displayed in Table 10, thanking aspect of pragmatic knowledge entered the regression model as the best predictor of grammatical competence (R = .62, R^2 = .39). That is to say thanking aspect of pragmatic knowledge can predict almost 40 percent of the EFL learners' grammatical competence. Subsequently, the compliment aspect of pragmatic knowledge entered the regression model on the second step. It increased the R-value to .67 and also increased the percent of prediction from 39 to 45%.

Table 10 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.628[a]	.395	.378	3.274
2	.677[b]	.459	.428	3.140
a. Predictors: (Constant), Thanking				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Thanking, Complementing				
c. Dependent Variable: Final				

The significant results of the ANOVA table suggest that the extracted regression model enjoys statistical significance (F (2, 35) = 14.82, P = .000 < .05, ω^2 = .42, it represents a large effect size).

Table 11 ANOVA Test of Significance of Regression Model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	**Regression**	251.629	1	251.629	23.477	.000[b]
	Residual	385.845	36	10.718		
	Total	637.474	37			
2	**Regression**	292.311	2	146.156	14.820	.000[c]
	Residual	345.162	35	9.862		
	Total	637.474	37			
a. Dependent Variable: Final						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Thanking						
c. Predictors: (Constant), Thanking, Complementing						

Unfortunately, the regression model does not enjoy normality and linearity. As displayed in Normal P-P Plot 1 the dots show marked deviations from the diagonal which indicate the non-normality of the regression model.

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual
Dependent Variable: Final
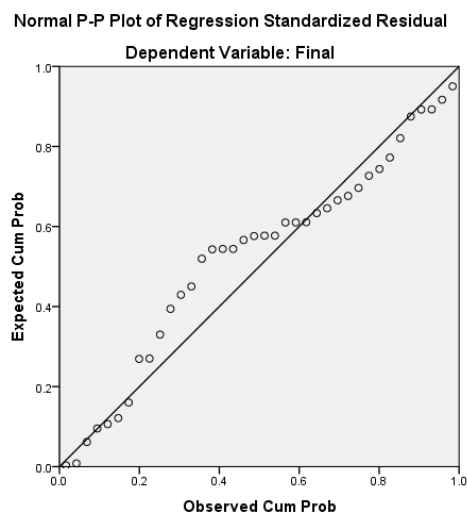
Normal P-P Plot 1: Normality of Regression Model

And rise-and-fall pattern of dots in the Scatter Plot 2 indicate that the regression model is not linear.

Scatterplot
Dependent Variable: Final
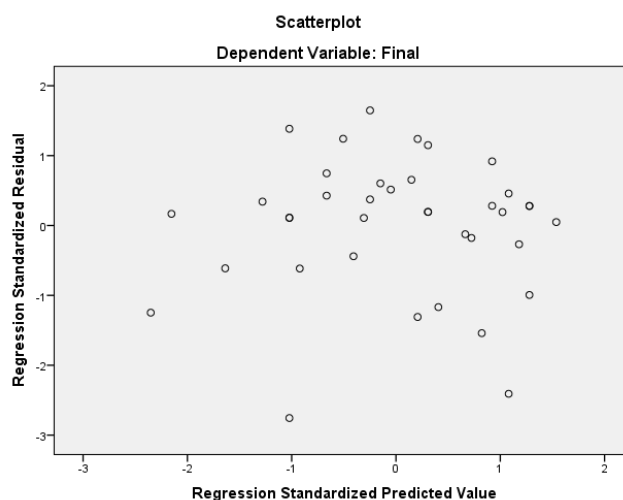
Scatter Plot 2: Testing Linearity of Regression Model

Although the assumptions of normality and linearity are violated, one can draw conclusions for the immediate group from which the sample is selected. As noted by Field (2009, P. 251), "If they [assumptions of regression] have been violated then you cannot generalize your findings beyond your sample".

5. DISCUSSION

With respect to the first research question, in accord with the studies of Olshtain and Cohen (1990) on apology, Jannani (1996),Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, and Tananart (1997), Tateyama (2001) on thanking, Rose and Kwai-fun (2001) on compliments and compliment responses, and Ghobadi and Fahim (2009) on thanking, a large effect size was seen on the explicit group's mean score; this suggests that gains in terms of the pragmatic routines of thanking and compliment for the explicit group were higher than that of the implicit group. This suggests that consciousness-raising in explicit teaching makes a significant difference in students' learning of pragmatic rules or formulas.

Another justification for this result could be presence of more motivated students in the explicit group. That is, the explicit group may have shown greater interest in learning these pragmatic formulas. Moreover, according to Rose and Kwai-fun (2001), the formulaic nature of American English compliments might make them an easy subject for any type of instruction. This claim posits that the results may differ in case of other speech acts such as apology or request. The last but not least, it should be stated that the effect of students' prior exposure to the movies

and other authentic materials concluding speech acts was neglected in the current study and this could be another probable reason for the superiority of the explicit group.

With regard to grammatical proficiency, the students in the current study were homogeneously on upper-intermediate level which is not a common level of language proficiency among Iranian undergraduate university students. This is owing to the fact that SUT is a highly demanding university and the students had to develop a high command of grammatical knowledge in order to pass the competitive entrance exam. The second research question in the current study set out to investigate whether the correlation between these students' grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge is affected by instruction of the speech act formulas and resulted in the fact that there is no significant difference between the R-values of the two variables. This claims that grammatical competence and pragmatic competence are not necessarily related, since they measure distinct components of language and this is in conformity with the research done by Salehi (2011).

It is worthy of note that thanking proved itself as a better predictor of grammatical competence and this might have sprung from higher frequency of use of thanking formulas in Iranian culture comparing to the compliment formulas. Asit was observed in treatment sessions, it was weird and also difficult for the students to compliment their friends and therefore, they were at more ease in employing thanks compared to making compliments and their thanking expressions were closer to the native norms. This suggests a cultural difference between the two nations, say Persian and English. However, due to interwoven nature of language and culture, and in order to be able to communicate appropriately in a language, it is necessary to learn these pragmatic routines.

6. CONCLUSION

The present research lends itself to the following conclusions:

1. Explicit teaching is superior to implicit teaching with regard to speech acts of thanking and complimenting formulas.

2. The correlation between grammatical and pragmatic competence of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate learners is not affected by applying explicit/implicit teaching of English thanking and compliment formulas, as there was no significant difference between the two R-values.

3. It was evident that students' language proficiency did not play a role in their performance of native-like thanking and compliment formulas and their responses were mostly literal translations of the Persian expressions into English. However, it is important to know that thanking test scores emerged as better predictors of grammatical competence.

4. All in all, it can be concluded that instruction is effective in terms of improving the pragmatic knowledge of Iranian learners; therefore, it is necessary to be included in language learning curriculum.

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Appendix A: The Pragmatics Test on Thanking and Compliment

Directions: Please read each of the following situations. Consider all the three responses and circle the most appropriate one.

Situation 1: You run into one of your friends at a party. She/he is wearing a nice, new outfit. How would you compliment her/him?

      a. What's happening? Your outfit is very beautiful.

      b. You are looking very nice today. Did you get some new clothes?

      c. This model is built for you. It goes on very well with you.

Situation2: You are in English class at University. You face a new vocabulary. You ask your neighbor classmate for the meaning and he responds to you. What would you say to thank him?

      a. what if I didn't have you?!

      b. I really appreciate your knowledge.

      c. Thank you.

Situation 3: You are on your way from the airport to the dormitory with one of your roommates and you have a class at University right after. You don't have enough time to take your luggage to dormitory and then come back to the University. Thus, you request your roommate to take your luggage back to dormitory and he does so. How would you express your gratitude to him?

      a. I just wanted you to know that you are a life saver; you really helped me out by taking my stuff to the dorm!! If you ever need anything, just let me know and it is done.

      b. Excuse me. I know it was so heavy. How can I thank you?

c. Thanks for your kindness. You helped me a lot. I would do anything you want, at any time. You just ask me!

Situation 4: While you are studying in the dormitory, your friend is listening to loud music. The music distracts you. You request your friend to turn it down and he does so immediately. How would you thank him?

a. Thanks for understanding, I really appreciate it.
b. Thank you. You did me a favor.
c. Oh, cheers. That was intolerable.

Situation 5: As you are walking through the city, you approach a person in the street and ask him/her for directions. The passerby guides you well. How would you show your appreciation?

a. Thank you for being so helpful.
b. Oh, I was about to get lost.
c. I'm greatly indebted to you.

Situation 6: You take a taxi to University. Before you arrive at your destination, you signal the driver to stop. The taxi stops. How would you thank the driver?

a. No pain to your hands, sir.
b. Don't be tired sir.
c. Thank you.

Situation 7: You are in a rush to get to University. Suddenly you fall down and hurt your leg. A passerby helps you get up. How would you thank him/her?

a. Thanks a lot. I hope you won't get hurt. God bless you.
b. It was really nice of you to stop and help me, I really appreciate it. Thank you so much.
c. I'm so sorry. Thanks a lot. I'm so indebted to you.

Situation 8: Your professor announces your midterm scores. Your friend has got an A grade on it. How would you compliment him on his score?

a. Great job, but I knew that you would do great.
b. Wow, good for you! I wish I were you!
c. You've got the best grade?! You should have crammed a lot.

Situation 9: You are crossing the street while thinking about your errands. You don't notice a car which is about to hit you. Fortunately, a passerby helps you survive the likely horrible accident. How would you express your thanks to him?

a. Oh my God! I was about to die. Thank you very much.
b. Oh my goodness! God must have sent you for me. I'm really indebted to you.
c. I don't know how to thank you. You saved my life with your quick thinking. Thank you. Thank you!

Situation 10: You come across your friend on campus. This is the first time you see him in his new glasses. How would you compliment him?

a. Nice glasses, they look really good on you.
b. Your new glasses are perfect. I like them. How much did you pay for them?
c. Oh boy! I hadn't seen you with such cute face. You appear to be Einstein's brother.

Situation 11: Your friend plays on University football team. You went to watch one of his matches at University. It was astonishing. How would you compliment him on his play?

a. I hope that you will succeed as Christian Ronaldo.
b. That was fantastic; you really are good at this. It was a joy to watch.
c. Boy, you are the god of Football.

Situation 12: Your professor delivers a lecture. The class time is finished and you want to leave. How would you thank him/her?

a. That was a great lecture.
b. Power yours! Thanks master.
c. Good job, master. Have a good time!

Situation 13: You are at a party with your classmates. You run into a friend. You notice his new haircut. How would you compliment him?

a. This new hair style really comes to you.
b. The hair is looking good! That style looks really nice on you.
c. Your hair is in shape with you. You look much younger.

Situation 14: You are in the subway carrying a heavy bag. A man sitting in front of you offers to take your bag. How would you thank his favor?

a. you did me a great favor.

b. That's so nice of you, Thank you.

c. Sorry, it's very heavy. It'll bother you.

Situation 15: You have decided to buy a brand new cellphone. You are in need of money; thus, you request your father for some and he gives it to you. How would you show your thanks?

a. *Thanks, Dad, I knew that I could count on you.*

b. *Thanks daddy, I love you.*

c. *what if I didn't have such a generous father?*

Situation 16: You come to your friend at university. He is wearing a new, fashionable hat. How would you compliment him on his new hat?

a. Your new hat has made you very good-looking.

b. I see you have a new hat. Isn't it just like mine?

c. That's a nice hat, is it new?

Situation 17: Your friend is a painter. He shows a portfolio of his paintings to you. They are so beautiful. How would you compliment him/her?

a. You have very powerful hands in drawing.

b. What a painting! I cannot believe you just painted them.

c. You are so talented, these are wonderful. How long have you been painting?

Situation 18: You are a at a high school reunion party. You come to one of your former high school friends. While you are greeting each other, your friend receives a call. Then you notice his brand new Apple cellphone. How would you react?

a. That's a really nice phone. I was thinking about getting one, are you happy with it?

b. Wow, you've got an Apple 4. Let me have a look!

c. Buddy you are so rich. An apple 4 you got?! Look at its color. It's so alive.

Situation 19: You are wandering the streets. To your surprise, you come across your former childhood friend. He is along with his 2-year-old daughter. How would you react?

a. What a surprise to run across you here! I can see that a lot has happened in your life, is that your daughter? Hey, you didn't even invite me to your wedding!

b. I cannot believe you are here. I'm so happy to see you. Don't tell me that this little cute girl is yours! You didn't change at all.

c. Hey dude! What's up! Is it your daughter?! How cute she is! And she's got your eyes.

Situation 20: You are working on your computer when it breaks down. Amazingly, your 12-year-old cousin fixes it. How would you compliment him?

a. Such a genius lad you are!

b. How did you do that? That was a miracle!

c. Wow, you are a computer genius. You saved me, thanks so much!!

Situation 21: You are in English class at University. One of your friends lectures about a topic in English. He speaks fluently and you are astonished by his English proficiency. How would you compliment him?

a. You did a really great job. Your accent is wonderful and I really enjoyed your presentation.

b. I'm surprised you speak English like Persian.

c. Where did you learn English? You were like Newscasters.

Situation 22: It is your birthday. Your friend surprises you with a fancy gift. How would you express your thanks to him/her?

a. wow, I like your surprising generous gifts. I'm always indebted to you. How can I make it up to you?

b. Wow, this is really nice, but it is too much, you shouldn't have! Thank you so much.

c. Oh, that's for me?! Thanks a lot my dear. How kind you are!

Situation 23: One of your classmates gains admission to a prestigious US University. How would you compliment him on his success?

a. Congratulations, I prayed a lot for you.

b. Congratulation, you deserve it you worked really hard for this.

c. That's so nice. I didn't expect you to make it.