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# Developing Pragmatic Competence in an Instructed Setting: The Effectiveness of Pedagogical Intervention in Greek EFL Learners' Request Production

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Using a short pedagogical intervention, a pretest-posttest design and baseline data (L1 English), the present study examined the effects of explicit instruction on the use of internal and external modification in requests among Greek Cypriot EFL learners. The findings revealed a complex picture with mixed results. Even though external modification showed some positive effects after the intervention, the study revealed no gains in relation to the overall use of internal modification as the learners' overall use of lexical/phrasal mitigators deviated even more from NS usage after the pedagogical treatment. We argue that, in relation to the learners' pragmalinguistic performance, the results seem to confirm the fact that surrounding factors such as the duration, quantity and quality of the pedagogical intervention play a complex role in accounting for such mixed findings. Results further showed that the way learners perceived social reality was not affected by the instructional treatment. Our findings suggest that learners' sociopragmatic development may not be as easily amenable to teaching as pragmalinguistic development. The development of L2 sociopragmatic awareness seems to need both longer explicit pedagogical instruction and rich exposure to the target language environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the fields of interlanguage pragmatics and L2 acquisition, the necessity of instruction in pragmatics has been widely argued by a number of scholars (e.g., Alcón, 2005; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Holmes & Riddiford, 2011; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Kondo, 2008; Uso-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006; van Compernelle, 2014), and pragmatics in language teaching has been the focus of investigation in a number of edited volumes (Alcón-Soler, 2008; Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Martínez-Flor, Uso-Juan & Fernandez Guerra, 2003; Rose & Kasper, 2001). There is now solid evidence to suggest that explicit pragmatic teaching can have positive effects on L2 learners' pragmatic awareness and competence. Such

explicit teaching has supported Schmidt's (1993, 2001) influential noticing hypothesis, which argues that simple exposure to the target language is insufficient for learners and that pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not salient enough to be noticed even after prolonged exposure.

Among the studies analysing the effectiveness of different teaching approaches, the two types of pedagogical intervention typically employed are those of implicit and explicit instruction. While implicit teaching avoids any type of metalinguistic explanation, explicit teaching involves directing learners' attention to the target item by providing metapragmatic information designed to make the target features more salient. Explicit teaching, according to DeKeyser (1995), can be done either deductively (i.e., through the explicit explanation of rules) or inductively (i.e., where learners are asked to work out the rules themselves after being exposed to the target feature).

A number of research studies from the field of interlanguage pragmatics (e.g., Alcón, 2005; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008a, 2008b; Sáfont-Jordà, 2003; Salazar, 2003; Takahashi, 2001; Takimoto, 2006) and within the methodological framework of conversation analysis (e.g., Huth, 2006; Wang & Rendle-Short, 2013) have found that explicit pragmatic instruction can have positive effects on adult learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic choices and on teaching culture-specific information. Some of these studies have documented the ways in which the pragmatic performance of L2 learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics—or receive implicit pedagogical intervention—differs significantly from native speakers' production or from those learners who receive explicit pragmatic instruction. This, therefore, gives strong support to the fact that *explicit* instruction in the classroom is more effective than implicit instruction (i.e., mere exposure to pragmatic input).<sup>1</sup>

Although the effects of instruction in L2 pragmatics have been investigated in relation to learners of various L1 backgrounds such as English (e.g., Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001), Japanese (e.g., Billmyer, 1990; LoCastro, 1997; Takahashi, 2001), Cantonese (e.g., Rose & Ng, 2001), German (e.g., House, 1996; Wildner-Bassett, 1986), Hebrew (e.g., Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), and Spanish (e.g., Alcón, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008a; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Sáfont-Jordà, 2003; Salazar, 2003), no pedagogical intervention study has, to the best of our knowledge, examined Greek learners of English so far. Moreover, while most research has been carried out on a variety of aspects of L2 pragmatic instruction, few studies have focused specifically on whether request mitigation can be learnt as a result of pedagogical intervention (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008a, 2008b; Sáfont-Jordà, 2003; Salazar, 2003; Martínez-Flor, 2008, 2012; Sáfont-Jordà & Alcón-Soler, 2012). The present study aims to make a contribution to this understudied area by examining the effects of pragmatic instruction on Greek Cypriot EFL learners' (henceforth GCLs) pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic performance in relation to the modification of their requests. This is done by comparing learners' production prior to and following the intervention, and with L1 English data (as baseline data).

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<sup>1</sup> This argument has also been supported in a number of additional studies within the field of conversation analysis (Betz & Huth, 2014; Huth, 2007, 2010; Hall, Hellerman, & Pekarek-Doehler, 2011; Hellerman, 2008; Shively, 2008; Taleghani-Nikazm & Huth, 2010; Wang & Rendle-Short, 2013, to mention but a few). These studies have also argued in favor of the inclusion of culture and pragmatics in the second language classroom and have offered pedagogical suggestions on how to develop learners' interactional competence through conversation and naturally occurring interaction. Due to space limitations, however, these studies are not discussed further in this paper.

## BACKGROUND

### Interlanguage Request Modification

Along with the choice of request strategy and directness level, the dimensions of internal and external modification constitute the means available for indexing the politeness of speech acts, and mitigation is seen as an independent dimension indexing politeness regardless of levels of directness (Blum-Kulka, 1992, p. 266). It is therefore commonly accepted that the pragmatic force of a speech act also depends on the kind of modification chosen. Native language speakers, as well as L2 learners, have been found to modify their requests internally, through the addition of mitigating or aggravating modality markers, or externally by means of supportive moves which are introductory or subsequent to the head act.

A number of studies have examined in detail how learners use modification in order to mitigate or aggravate their speech acts. These studies have found that non-native speech act behavior can deviate from native-speaker norms and exhibits greater variability in the degree of internal and external request modification. Related to the present study is the general finding of a number of investigations that L2 learners tend to use fewer internal modifiers in their requests and in other speech acts as compared to native speakers (e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; Goy, Zeyrek & Otcu, 2012; Hassall, 2001; House & Kasper, 1987; Kasper, 1981; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Trosborg, 1995; Woodfield, 2012). More specifically, some studies found that L2 learners of English tend to underuse lexical/phrasal markers such as downtoners (e.g., “possibly,” “perhaps”) and consultative devices/openers (e.g., “would you mind,” “do you think,” etc.) (e.g., Barron, 2003; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2009; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House, 1989; Kasper, 1981; Shively, 2011), and in some cases overuse the politeness marker “please” (e.g., Barron, 2003; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House & Kasper, 1987; Pinto, 2005).

Equally importantly, a number of empirical studies gave support to the argument that L2 learners tend to provide more external modification than native speakers (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Hassall 2001; Kasper, 1981; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Weizman, 1993). In many of these studies, the *grounder* stood out as the single most frequent supportive move. It was explained that the *grounder* “giv[es] reasons, justifications and explanations for an action... opens up an empathetic attitude on the part of the interlocutor in giving his or her insight into the actor’s underlying motive(s), and is thus an efficient mitigating strategy with a wide range of applications” (Faerch & Kasper, 1989, p. 239). However, it has also been found that learners tend to overuse this marker by providing unnecessary or excessive information. Hassall (2001, p. 567), for example, found that many of the *grounders* used by his Australian learners of Indonesian created a non-native effect through the inclusion of information that was overly explicit or repetitive. Weizman (1993, p. 133) explains that in the realisation of their requests, Hebrew learners of English exhibited a clear tendency towards verbosity through the use of supportive moves (explanations and justifications).

In explaining the restricted number of lexical/phrasal downgraders by learners and their reliance on external modifiers, appeals have been made to the grammatical competence required to mitigate requests effectively. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) makes the point that, for a number of devices such as hedges and understaters, a speaker must have enough syntax to properly position them in the sentence and learners need knowledge of the complements that particular formulas take. She states that “even minus committers put a strain on a learner’s

suprasegmentals, and embedding as a means of marking politeness has obvious syntactic requirements” (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p. 691). Unlike internal modification, external modification tends to be syntactically less demanding and pragmalinguistically less complex as it usually involves the construction of a new, often syntactically simple, clause.

## **The Effects of Instruction in Second Language Pragmatics**

Empirical studies on the effect of instruction in L2 pragmatics sought to provide an answer to the basic question of whether particular areas of pragmatics are at all amenable to instruction. Such studies have typically adopted a pretest–pedagogical intervention–posttest design using one group of participants/learners, while “treatment lengths varied from a minimum of two (Salazar, 2003) or three (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990) 20-minute sessions to a maximum of instruction spread out over a 9-week period (LoCastro, 1997)” (Rose, 2005, p. 390). Studies also varied in the assessment measures they adopted. Some used discourse completion tasks (DCTs) (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Sáfont-Jordà, 2003; Salazar, 2003; Martínez-Flor, 2012), others employed role-plays (Martínez-Flor, 2008; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001) or a combination of DCTs and role-plays (Sáfont-Jordà & Alcón-Soler, 2012), while others employed observations of small group interaction (LoCastro, 1997).

Overall, the majority of studies investigating adult pragmatic performance in foreign language environments (e.g., Alcón, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008a, 2008b; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Kondo, 2008; Martínez-Flor, 2006; Sáfont-Jordà, 2003; Salazar, 2003; Takahashi, 2001) found positive effects on learners’ pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic choices after an instructional period, indicating that instruction – even of short duration – is both beneficial and necessary in raising learners’ pragmatic awareness. Positive effects were also received in the majority of studies that focused on learners’ use of mitigation. Using pedagogical intervention and a pretest–posttest, along with a delayed posttest design, Félix-Brasdefer’s study (2008b) used open-ended role-plays to examine the effects of explicit instruction on the use of lexical and syntactic mitigators in refusals among intermediate learners of Spanish as a foreign language. Results from the posttest (a week after treatment) showed that the pragmatic ability of learners that received explicit instruction (metapragmatic information) changed significantly. These learners “moved from the lexical stage (pre-treatment) to a productive use of both lexical and syntactic mitigation one week after instruction” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b, p. 490), and retention of most mitigators was evident one month after instruction.

Sáfont-Jordà (2003) and Salazar (2003) both dealt with the effects of instruction on requests with Spanish-speaking university students in Spain. In Sáfont-Jordà’s (2003) study where the focus was on request modification, learners showed a marked increase in their use of internal and external modification on a written discourse-completion task (DCT) posttest. Salazar’s (2003) study, which also used DCTs, examined the use of internal and external modification (treatment length of two 20-min sessions) in the requests of Spanish EFL learners. Her study involved an immediate posttest after instruction and a delayed posttest distributed three weeks after instruction. Findings from the immediate posttest revealed that learners increased their repertoire of mitigation devices. However, unlike Félix-Brasdefer’s (2008b) participants, Salazar’s (2003) participants showed very short-lived effects as results from the delayed posttest showed that these effects had disappeared.

Also using a pretest–posttest design, an inductive–deductive approach, and oral role-plays, Martínez-Flor’s (2008) study examined learners’ use of request modifiers in the EFL classroom. Results from the study indicated that, after instruction, learners used a greater

number of internal and external modifiers and used a wider variety of mitigating devices in their requests. Similar results were obtained in her 2012 study (Martínez-Flor, 2012). Using DCTs and a pretest–posttest–delayed posttest design, this study found that immediately after receiving instruction and four months later, learners employed a greater number of request modifiers and made use of all different request subtypes of internal and external modifiers. Similarly, Wishnoff's (2000) study which examined L2 learners' acquisition of pragmatic devices in computer-mediated discourse using a pretest–posttest design, also found an increased frequency and a wider range of lexical and syntactic mitigators as a result of explicit instruction on the posttest.

Importantly however, some other teachability studies (e.g., Liddicoat & Crozet 2001; LoCastro, 1997; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990) reported mixed results and indicated partial or no success in relation to the merits of pragmatic instruction. LoCastro's (1997) pedagogical intervention, which dealt with politeness strategies in group discussions, showed no change after nine weeks of pedagogical intervention. Likewise, Olshtain and Cohen's (1990) participants did not benefit from instruction in terms of overall frequency of semantic formulas. Finally, even though Liddicoat and Crozet's (2001) study on the "Did you have a good weekend?" question in French showed that interactional norms can be acquired even with a short-term programme, not all "elements of discourse were equally 'learned' as the outcome of instruction" (p. 143).

Rose (2005) explains that a number of issues may account for these mixed findings. Contributing factors might be the study's pretest–posttest measures being inappropriate for measuring the target forms (as in the case of LoCastro, 1997), or the quantity of instruction and the related difficulty of the subject matter. Salazar's (2003) 40 minutes of instruction, for example, could be insufficient for mastering a range of request strategies. For Olshtain and Cohen (1990) and Liddicoat and Crozet (2001), as Rose (2005) explains, "the problem appears to have been that instruction was not effective in equipping learners to deal with tasks for which some knowledge of sociopragmatics was required" (p. 391). Olshtain and Cohen (1990) maintain that lengthy periods of residence in the target language context are necessary for sociopragmatic development, and Bardovi-Harlig (2001) argues that, even after lengthy periods of residence in the target language context, pragmatic infelicities can remain.

Although some studies have produced impressive results even with short periods of instruction, the above studies point to the complex role of various surrounding factors that influence the effectiveness of the instructional intervention, as well as differential effects of the measurements utilized in studies (Ishihara, 2010; Rose, 2005).

The present study employs explicit instruction and an inductive–deductive teaching approach to examine whether the GCLs' request performance exhibits significantly less divergence from NS usage after instructional treatment. It therefore uses L1 English baseline data and adopts a pretest–pedagogical intervention–posttest design using one group of Greek Cypriot learners. More specifically, the following research questions are investigated:

1. Regarding the use of internal and external request modification (lexical/phrasal mitigators and supportive moves), what deviations (if any) are exhibited by the requests of GCLs as compared to those of English native speakers' (ENSs)?
2. What are the effects of a short, explicit pedagogical intervention on the use of internal and external request modification produced by GCLs?
3. Does the GCLs' request performance exhibit significantly less divergence from NS behavior after the intervention?
4. Does the pedagogical intervention have an effect on how the GCLs assess the

social/situational variables of power, familiarity, and imposition?

In light of previous research findings, it is presently hypothesized that the GCLs are in need of pragmatic instruction when it comes to their use of lexical/phrasal mitigators and supportive moves in requests. It is also hypothesized that the pedagogical intervention will have positive effects on the amount and type of mitigators the learners employ. It is further hypothesized that the intervention will consequently result in the learners' performance becoming less divergent from NS usage. Finally, it is hypothesized that the social/situational variables examined will not be assessed differently before and after the intervention, given the treatment's limited duration and the learners' EFL status.

The section below presents the methods and procedures of the study and describes the participants, the data elicitation instrument, the instructional treatment, and the scoring and analysis used.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Participants

The present study used two groups of participants: a group of British ENSs, which provided the English NS baseline data, and a group of Greek-Cypriot EFL learners (GCLs) that received pedagogical intervention.

The L1 English data, which came from Economidou-Kogetsidis' previous studies (2008, 2009, 2010), were analyzed in order to assess the extent to which the learners' request modification approximated or diverted from NS usage (RQ1). The participants were 86 native speakers of British English (45 male, 47 female) who were full-time university students at a British university in the UK. They were 17-30 years old and their mean age was 21.7 years.

The GCLs were 20 Greek Cypriot university graduates (17 female, 3 male), between the ages 18-25, with a mean age of 22.15 years. They all had Greek as their first language and they were living in Cyprus at the time of the study. They had all completed an undergraduate or a postgraduate degree programme in a variety of academic disciplines at a British University 2-4 years prior to the study, and they had therefore spent 3-4 years in the UK as university students. They had been taught English as a foreign language and although no test of language proficiency was administered prior to the study, given their British higher education, participants' level of proficiency in English could be characterized as the equivalent of B2/C1 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.<sup>2</sup> None of the participants had lived in a foreign country (other than the UK) for longer than 3 months.

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<sup>2</sup> The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a framework introduced by the Council of Europe that was "designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency" (Council of Europe, 2018). It is now extensively used as an international standard for describing language ability in Europe but also in other continents. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages divides language learners into six levels. B level (B1-B2) is assigned to those language learners who have a lower/upper intermediate proficiency of the foreign language (these are characterized as "independent users"). C level (C1-C2) refers to "proficient users" of the language and therefore concerns learners who have an advanced/native-like competence of the foreign language.

## Data Collection Procedures

### *The Data Elicitation Instrument*

In order to ascertain the immediate instructional effects, the study employed a pretest, a teaching intervention phase, and a posttest. For the pretest and the posttest, a written discourse completion task (DCT) was administered in order to establish and compare the participants' pragmatic and sociopragmatic ability prior to and after the pedagogical intervention. This was the same DCT that was used to collect the English NS data. Using the same instrument ensured that the NS and NNS data were comparable.

The DCT task was designed following Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) format for DCT scenarios (without a rejoinder) in which participants are asked to write what they would say in a hypothetical situation. The test comprised ten social situations, which varied by design along the social dimensions of familiarity, social power, and degree of imposition. The prompt for each scenario was approximately 4–5 lines long and offered as much contextual information as possible. Table 1 below shows a short description of the situations used in the study.

Table 1  
*DCT – Summary of Situations and Social Dimensions*

REQUEST SITUATION	SOCIAL POWER (SP) Speaker (x) / Hearer (y)	FAMILIARITY (F)
SIT.1 (TUITION FEES) Speaker gives private language tuition to the hearer and reminds him/her to pay.	$x > y$	Average - High
SIT.2 (JOB LEAVE) Speaker asks the boss for a few days' leave due to an emergency.	$x < y$	Low
SIT.3 (BABY-SITTING) Speaker asks his/her parents to baby-sit for the evening.	$x = y$	High
SIT.4 (RESTAURANT) Speaker gives his/her order to the waiter.	$x = y$	Low
SIT.5 (DEADLINE) Speaker requests an extension from his/her lecturer.	$x < y$	High
SIT.6 (TICKET) Speaker rings an airline reservation centre to book a flight.	$x = y$	Low
SIT.7 (BANK LOAN) Speaker asks the bank manager for a loan.	$x < y$	Low
SIT.8 (DINNER) Speaker asks his/her best friend to pass him/her the salad during dinner.	$x = y$	High
SIT.9 (STREET DIR.) Speaker asks a pedestrian for some directions.	$x = y$	Low



SIT.10 (POLICE) Speaker is a traffic warden and asks a driver to move his/her car immediately.	$x > y$	Low
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The second part of the completion test was a situational assessment questionnaire that aimed to examine the learners' sociopragmatic performance before and after the pedagogical intervention and to investigate how learners' perception of social reality might have changed after the intervention (RQ4). Participants were asked to rate each of the above social dimensions on a Likert scale of 1–3, where 1 was the lowest and 3 the highest. Four social dimensions for each situation were examined: speaker's social power, hearer's social power, familiarity between speaker and hearer, and degree of imposition of the requested act.

Given its widespread use in the pragmatics field, the DCT instrument has been the subject of numerous criticisms. These criticisms mainly concerned the DCT not reflecting naturally occurring speech (Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992), not adequately corresponding to how speakers are known to behave in real conversations (Golato, 2003), its one-turn responses and its inability to elicit spoken interactional discourse (Kasper, 2000). While acknowledging these limitations, this instrument was used to collect data for the present study in order to ensure that the examined parameters and the tested social situations were constant in the NS data, the pretest and posttest phases. It has been argued that, when designed carefully, DCTs can be quite successful in identifying what respondents *know* about the sociopragmatic norms of the target culture (Beebe & Cummings, 1996) and can “indicate what strategies and linguistic options are constant with pragmatic norms and what contextual factors influence their choices” (Kasper, 2000, pp. 329–330). They can therefore be useful as a source of information about speakers' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 2000, p. 329) and about what “speakers tend to view as being pragmatically appropriate linguistic behaviour” (Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010, p. 89). With this in mind, the present DCT was used in order to elicit learners' explicit knowledge of L2 request modification and their views on the social variables involved.

### ***Instructional Treatment***

The analysis of the baseline NS data and their comparison with the pretest learners' results confirmed that the learners' pragmatic performance varied significantly from NSS' performance, both in terms of internal and external modification. Learners were found to significantly overuse both internal and external mitigators in their request performance (see Results section). This finding confirmed that pedagogical intervention was indeed warranted and confirmed our initial hypothesis.

In order to eliminate any possible pretest effects on the instructional treatment, the pretest was administered one month prior to the treatment. The L2 participants/learners of the study received three, 2-hour sessions of instructional treatment (total of six hours) in the period of one week, in a private, English language institute in Cyprus. The instructor was one of the authors of the present study.

In the first 2-hour session (Session 1), the treatment adopted an implicit teaching approach, which aimed to stimulate learners' interest in the speech act “without concurrent awareness of what is being learned” (DeKeyser, 1995, p. 380). A warm-up activity, classroom discussion, role-playing, and games were used (see Table 1). The remaining 4-hour treatment adopted an explicit teaching approach that involved directing learners' attention to the use of internal and

external mitigators. Explicit teaching was done both deductively (i.e., through the explicit explanation of rules) and inductively (i.e., where learners were asked to work out the rules themselves after being exposed to the target features). An inductive-deductive teaching approach (Martínez-Flor, 2008; Rose & Ng, 2001) was therefore employed which provided metapragmatic information before and after various activities were used. More specifically, Sessions 2 and 3 aimed to raise learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness in relation to pragmatic failure, cross-cultural politeness, communication breakdown, the role of the social/contextual variables of power, familiarity, and imposition in the performance of requests, and the use of internal and external modification devices in requests. This was done through a number of tasks: explicit instruction and presentation of request strategies and request modification taxonomies, analysis of authentic native-speaker dialogues/data which made use of internal or external request mitigators, short film viewings followed by discussion and request analysis, role-playing, class discussion on the distinctive elements between the target L2 and mother tongue. In order to avoid backwash effects such as 'teaching to the test,' the role-plays practised in class involved different scenarios to those included in the DCT. Detailed summaries of the activities involved in the three instructional sessions are presented in Tables 1-3 in Appendix II.

### ***Data Coding***

The classification adopted here for coding the modification of the collected requests was based on Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2010) classification schemes. The data classification schemes were used to analyze learners' data in terms of internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders) and external modification (external mitigating supportive moves added to the head act—i.e., downgraders). While internal modifiers are elements within the request that can act as downgraders ("please," "possibly," "a little," etc.) or as upgraders (meant to intensify the coerciveness of a request—e.g., "truly," "really," etc.), external modification involves markers that modify the request externally through the use of either supportive moves (e.g., an apology) or external intensifiers. The present study did not analyze data for syntactic modification or external/internal upgraders/intensifiers but only focused on lexical/phrasal downgraders and on external, supportive moves. The classification schemes are presented schematically in Appendix II.

### ***Scoring and Analysis***

Each of the elicited requests was analyzed and coded with regard to internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders) and external modification (supportive moves). Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequency of internal and external mitigators on the L1 baseline, the pretest and posttest measures of each group. Statistical testing was then conducted in order to establish whether the percentage differences which emerged were statistically significant. More specifically, Chi-square tests of Independence, being suitable for nominal data, were used for the statistical analyses.

The analysis involved: (a) comparisons between the NSs' performance and the GCLs' performance prior to the pedagogical intervention (RQ1); (b) comparisons between the GCLs' performance before and after the intervention (RQ2); (c) comparisons between the NSs' performance and the GCLs' performance after the intervention (RQ3); and (d) comparisons of the evaluations of the social variables by the learners before and after the intervention

(RQ4).

## RESULTS

### NSs' Performance vs. GCLs' Pretest Performance

The internal and external modification devices employed in all ten DCT situations were calculated in the baseline English NS data and in the learners' pretest data, and then compared with each other. Contrary to our expectations, the general results showed that the GCLs were significantly overusing internal (lexical) and external mitigation across all ten situations in the pretest, compared to the NS group (NSs 9.2% vs. GCLs 12.9% - internal modification; NSs 7.4% vs. GCLs 9.1% - external, supportive moves). These frequency differences were statistically significant at a 0.01% and 0.05% level accordingly (see Table 2).

Table 2

*General Results (in all ten situations) (Pretest n=20, ENS n=86)*

	Internal Modification	External Modification
ENS	9.2%	7.4%
GCLs pretest	12.9%	9.1%
	X <sup>2</sup> =17,34 df=1 **p<0.01	X <sup>2</sup> =5.01 df=1 *p<0.05

The results in relation to the specific lexical/phrasal mitigators employed showed that the NSs employed significantly fewer understaters/hedges (“a bit,” “a little,” “sort of”) (ENSs 4.1% vs. GCLs pretest 17.5%) and fewer cajolers (“you know...,” “you see...”) (ENSs 0.5% vs. GCLs pretest 7%). They also used the marker ‘please’ significantly less than the learners (ENS 39.7%, GCLs pretest 49.5%). However, the learners’ use of consultative devices, downtoners, subjectivizers and appealers showed approximation to the NSs’ use as there were no significant differences (see Table 4). The results in relation to the specific *external* modifiers used revealed that there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups, although the percentage frequencies indicated that NSs used the grounder, the disarmer, the preparator, the apology and the imposition minimizer less (see Table 6).

### Effects of Pedagogical Intervention on Internal Modification

After the pedagogical intervention, the GCLs’ posttest results were compared with their pretest results. Posttest results showed that, after the intervention, the learners increased their overall use of internal modification even more (12.9% pretest vs. 16.2% posttest, significant at a 0.05% level) (see Table 3). The learners’ posttest results were then again compared with the NS results. Results across all ten situations showed that, after the intervention, the learners’ employed significantly more lexical mitigators than the ENSs (9.2% ENS vs. 16.2% GCLs posttest, significant at a 0.01% level) (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Internal Modification - General Results (all ten situations) (Pretest n=20, Posttest n=20, ENS n=86)*

GCLs Pretest GCLs Posttest	12.9% 16.2%	X <sup>2</sup> =5,34 df=1 *p<0.05
ENS GCLs Posttest	9.2% 16.2%	X <sup>2</sup> =58.38 df=1 **p<0.01

### *Type of Internal Mitigator*

Comparisons between the learners' pretest and posttest were made in relation to the specific internal modifiers used. As it can be seen in Table 6, there were significant differences in the use of the marker 'please' and the use of the consultative device before and after the pedagogical intervention. Both markers were used significantly more after the instructional treatment. While 49.5% of the pretest requests included the marker 'please', 61.5% of the requests included this marker after the intervention (difference significant at a 0.05% level). Similarly, while the consultative devices were present in 12.5% of the learners' pretest requests, the same device was used in 29.5% of their posttest requests (difference significant at a 0.01% level).

The learners' posttest results were then again compared with the NS results. The comparisons showed that after the intervention, the learners' performance approximated the NSs' behavior even less with a wider range of internal mitigators exhibiting significant differences. More specifically, some changes observed were the higher frequency of the marker 'please' (ENSs 39.7% vs. GCLs posttest 61.5%), the consultative device (ENSs 12.1% vs. GCLs posttest 29.5%), the understater (ENSs 4.1% vs. GCLs posttest 14.5%) and the cajolers (ENSs 0.5% vs. GCLs posttest 5.5%) (Table 4) on the part of the learners. While the use of the consultative device in particular had initially no divergence from the NS usage, after the intervention it differed significantly in that it increased significantly. Similarly, while the use of subjectivizer had initially no divergence from the NS usage, after the intervention it differed significantly in that it decreased significantly.

Table 4

*Internal Modification by Individual Marker (Pretest n=20, Posttest n=20, NS n=86)*

	'Please'	Consultative devices	Downtoners	Understaters/ Hedges	Subjectivizers	Cajolers	Appealers
ENS Pretest	<b>39.7%</b> <b>49.5%</b>	12.1% 12.5%	12.6% 0.5%	<b>4.1%</b> <b>17.5%</b>	5.0% 3.0%	<b>0.5%</b> <b>7.0%</b>	0.5% 0.5%
	<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 6,42</b> <b>df=1</b> <b>**p=0.01</b>	NS	NS	<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 32,205</b> <b>df=1</b> <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	NS	<b>X<sup>2</sup> =39,98</b> <b>df=1</b> <b>p&lt;0.01</b>	NS
Pretest Posttest	<b>49.5%</b> <b>61.5%</b>	<b>12.5%</b> <b>29.5%</b>	0.5% 1.5%	17.5% 14.5%	3.0% 1.0%	7.0% 5.5%	0.5% 0%
	<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 5.83</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup> = 17.4</b>	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

	<b>df=1 *p&lt;0.05</b>	<b>df=1 *p&lt;0.01</b>					
ENS Posttest	<b>39.7%</b> <b>61.5%</b>	<b>12.1%</b> <b>29.5%</b>	2.6% 1.5%	<b>4.1%</b> <b>14.5%</b>	<b>5%</b> <b>1%</b>	<b>0.5%</b> <b>5.5%</b>	0.5% 0%
	<b>X<sup>2</sup> =31.2 df=1 **p&lt;0.01</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup> =37.1 df=1 **p&lt;0.01</b>	NS	<b>X<sup>2</sup> =30.5 df=1 **p&lt;0.01</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup> =6.47 df=1 **p=0.01</b>	<b>X<sup>2</sup> =6.47 df=1 **p=0.01</b>	NS

### *Internal Mitigators by Social Situation*

Figure 1 and Appendix III show the pragmatic variation among the three groups with respect to the preference for lexical/phrasal mitigation in each social situation. As it can be observed from Figure 1, internal mitigation in the posttest requests increased in all situations except for the 'babysitting' and the 'restaurant' situation. A particularly high increase can be observed in the 'bank loan', the 'police' and the 'fees' situations. A closer look at the findings of each situation (Appendix III) showed that, while some markers deviated even more after the instruction, others approximated the NS usage more. For example, in the situations where there was high power difference between the interlocutors (e.g., 'fees', 'job leave', 'deadline', 'bank loan', 'police') the learners showed a noticeable increase in the frequency of their consultative devices and/or the marker 'please'. This increase approximated the NSs' performance more in the 'deadline' situation as far as the consultative device was concerned but it deviated even more in the other situations. An increase in the frequencies of the marker 'please' can also be noticed in the 'bank loan' situation (ENSs 20.9%, pretest 25%, posttest 40%), which again caused the posttest requests to deviate more from NS usage. A noticeable positive change concerned the use of the marker 'please' in the 'airline' situation (ENSs 50%, pretest 35%, posttest 65%) which approximated the NS performance after the intervention.

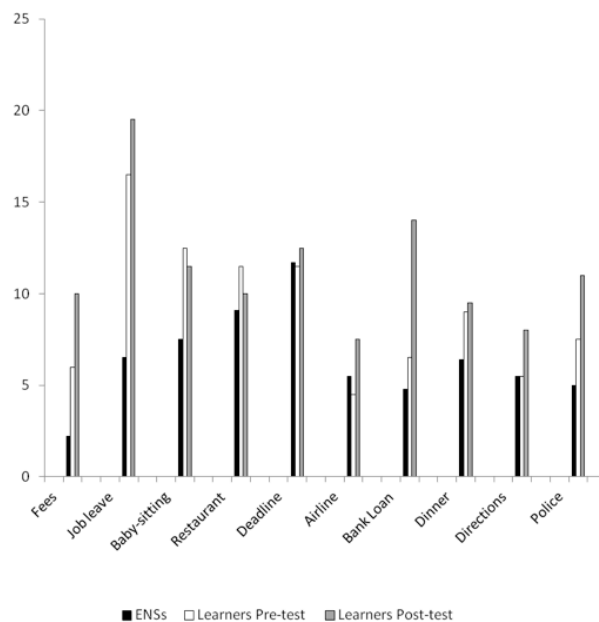


Figure 1. Internal Modification: Situations 1-10 (ENSs=832, Pretest n=200, Posttest n=200)

## Effects of Pedagogical Intervention on External Modification

Unlike internal modification, external modification overall results showed that, after the intervention, the learners significantly decreased their use of external modification (9.1% pretest vs. 5% posttest, significant at a 0.01% level) (see Table 4). The learners' posttest results were again compared with the NS results in order to establish whether the divergence decreased. Results showed that, even though the learners decreased their use of external modification, there was still a significant difference in the frequency of external mitigators used by the NS and the learners (7.4% ENSs vs. 5% Learners' posttest, significant at a 0.01% level) (see Table 5).

Table 5

*External Modification - General Results (all ten situations) (Pretest n=20, Posttest n=20, NS n=86)*

Learners - pretest	9.1%	X <sup>2</sup> =18.28 df=1 **p<0.01
Learners - posttest	5%	
ENS	7.4%	X <sup>2</sup> =9.826 df=1 **p<0.01
Learners - posttest	5.0%	

### *Type of External Mitigator*

Comparisons between the learners' pretest and posttest were made in relation to the specific supportive moves preferred. As it can be seen in Table 6, there were significant differences in the frequencies of grounders and apologies before and after the pedagogical intervention. Overall, learners used a significantly lower number of grounders and apologies after the intervention. While 40% of the pretest requests included a grounder, only 20.5% of their posttest requests utilized this marker (difference statistically significant at a 0.05% level). Similarly, while 11.5% of the pretest requests included an apology, this frequency decreased to 5% after the intervention (difference statistically significant at a 0.01% level). The learners' posttest results were then again compared with the NS results. The comparisons showed that, after the intervention, the learners' performance deviated significantly from the NSs' performance only as far as the use of the grounder was concerned (33.1% ENSs vs. 20.5% Learners' posttest) (Table 6). The learners therefore underused the grounder after the intervention.

Table 6

*External Modification by Individual Marker (Pretest n=20, Posttest n=20, NS n=86)*

	Grounders	Disarmers/ External Openers	Preparators	Getting a Precommit- ment	Promises	Apologies	Imp. Minimizers
ENS	33.1%	4.2%	1.9%	1.3%	1.4%	8.1%	1.6%
Pretest	40%	6%	3.0%	1.0%	0.5%	11.5%	2.0%
NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

Pretest	40%	6.0%	3.0%	1.0%	0.5%	11.5%	2.0%
Posttest	20.5%	6.0%	2.0%	0%	0.5%	5.0%	1.0%
	$X^2 = 18.1$ $df=1$ $**p<0.01$	NS	NS	NS	NS	$X^2 = 5.58$ $df=1$ $**p<0.01$	NS
ENS	33.1%	4.2%	1.9%	1.3%	1.4%	8.1%	1.6%
Posttest	20.5%	6.0%	2.0%	0%	0.5%	5.0%	1.0%
	$X^2 = 11.96$ $df=1$ $**p<0.01$	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS

### *External Mitigators by Social Situation*

Figure 2 and Appendix IV show the pragmatic variation among the three groups with respect to the preference for external mitigation in each social situation. As it can be observed in Figure 1, even though external mitigation in the posttest requests *decreased* in all situations, it showed approximation to the NSs' performance in a number of social situations. More specifically, noticeable approximation can be observed in the 'fees', 'bank loan', 'directions' and 'police' situations. A closer look at the findings (Appendix IV) showed that, in the 'fees' situation, for example, the learners decreased their use of the grounder significantly (ENSs 2.3%, pretest 35%, posttest 9.5%)—thus more closely approximating NSs' performance. However, in the 'bank loan' and 'directions' situations a different distribution of external mitigation could be observed. While the ENSs in the 'bank loan' situation primarily relied on grounders, the learners' posttest requests included no grounders but a large number of disarmers instead.

Typical examples from the data are presented below.

#### ENSs

[1] Hello, I'm just enquiring about a loan as *I'm facing some financial difficulties at the moment* [grounder]

[2] *I'm afraid I had some unexpected costs to pay for this year* [grounder]. Would it be possible to have a loan of £2000 to pay off installments?

#### GCLs Posttest

[1] I would like to ask you for a loan *even though I know that's difficult for you*.

[2] *I hate having to ask this*, but I need a loan of 2000 pounds.

Similarly, in the 'directions' situation, the learners in the pretest and posttest relied heavily on the use of apology unlike the NSs (Appendix IV) (e.g., 'Excuse me, *sorry to bother you* [apology], but could you tell me the way to (place)?' – GCL posttest).

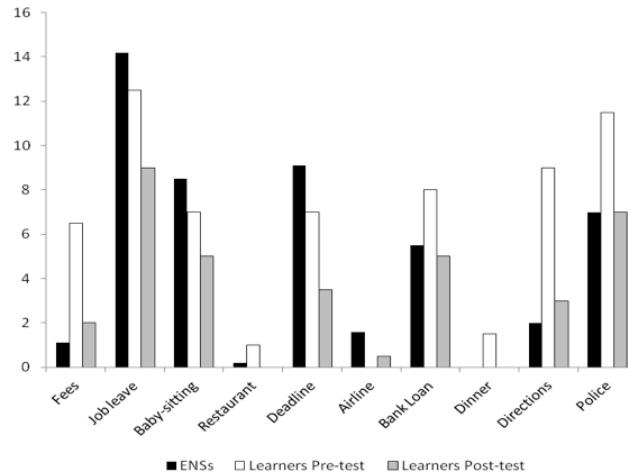


Figure 2. External Modification: Situations 1-10 (ENSs=832, Pretest n=200, Posttest n=200)

### Social/Situational Assessment Factors

The present study further aimed to examine how pedagogical intervention helped learners raise their sociopragmatic awareness by examining how the social/situational variables of power, familiarity, and imposition were assessed before and after the intervention.

In order to investigate how the variables were assessed before and after the intervention, mean scores were calculated in relation to the four social variables, and to each DCT situation. The ratings for the four variables were further compared across test blocks using a repeated measures ANOVA in order to test whether the intervention affected the way learners viewed these variables in the ten DCT situations. The statistical analysis showed no main effect of test phase ( $F(1,18) = 1.70, p = 0.21$ ), and no interaction between the two ( $F(3,16) = 1.71, p = 0.21$ ). In other words, there was no significant difference in how these social/situational variables were assessed in the pretest phase and in the posttest phase.

### DISCUSSION

The present study examined the effects of pragmatic instruction on GCLs' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic performance in relation to the modification of their requests. Comparisons of the learners' pretest requests with ENS data confirmed that, despite the GCLs' high proficiency, their use of lexical mitigators and supportive moves deviated from NS performance. This finding confirmed our initial hypothesis and justified the need for pedagogical intervention (RQ1). It also agreed with previous studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001) that showed that "pragmatic performance does not improve in lockstep with linguistic proficiency" (Roever & Al-Gahtani, 2015, p. 394), and that even advanced learners' pragmatic performance often deviates from NS norms. Despite the GCLs' linguistic ability to produce and manipulate constructions that were overly mitigated (with 'please', consultative devices, hedges, cajolers and grounders), the overuse of mitigation in their requests prior to instructional treatment could have had a distorting effect on their requesting performance. Requests that include too much mitigation might sound uncertain, subservient, and/or insincere (for example, "I'm ever so sorry to bother you but I was wondering if you could, by



any chance, possibly provide me with some feedback?”) and can result in pragmatic failure. Therefore, being pragmatically successful is a matter of pitching it right (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2015, p. 8). The findings suggest that the GCLs of the present study seem unable to pitch the amount and type of request mitigation correctly in each social situation.

The pedagogical treatment that was implemented gave mixed results and revealed a complex picture. To our surprise, and contrary to the findings of previous studies, no overall positive effects on the use of internal and external request modification (RQ2) could be observed. The GCLs' request performance did not exhibit less overall divergence from NS usage after the instructional treatment (RQ3). On the contrary, after the intervention, the GCLs increased their overall use of internal mitigators even more, thus leading them to deviate even further from NS usage. Their use of the consultative device and the marker 'please' increased significantly after the treatment, and a wider range of internal mitigators (e.g., understaters, cajolers) started to exhibit significant differences. Unlike internal modification, however, external modification showed some positive effects after the intervention. Although there was still significant divergence from NS usage, the learners significantly decreased their overall use of supportive moves. These results point towards Rose (2005) and Ishihara's (2010) arguments that various surrounding factors seem to influence the effectiveness of the instructional intervention and can play a complex role in accounting for such mixed findings.

One likely explanation for the result concerning the GCLs' overuse of lexical/phrasal mitigators seems to be the learners' "overgeneralization of perceived L2 norms" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 81)—often seen as a common cause of learners' divergence from pragmatic norms. According to Ishihara and Cohen (2010), when "learners have only a rudimentary understanding of the target culture and the nature of its pragmatic norms, they may depend on their preconceived notions about L2 norms and wrongly apply them to different contexts" (p. 81). It seems possible that the learners of the present study, who only spent a limited amount of time in the target culture, operated with the misconception that, in order to be polite, English speakers mitigate extensively their requests, and use markers such as 'please', 'possibly', 'by any chance' all the time or in every request. House (1989) refers to a similar explanation when discussing her German learners' overuse of the marker 'please' when she explains that the German learners of English seem to believe that English speakers use the marker 'please' a great deal. van Compernelle (2014) refers to this "overgeneralization of a politeness rule" as "the result of learning unsystematic rules of thumb for displaying politeness" (p. 7), and as seeing pragmatic norms in interaction as inherently rigid and simplistic (McConachy, 2018). Following this, it could be argued that the short pedagogical intervention reinforced this overgeneralized view of pragmatic norms and caused the GCLs to employ an even larger number of mitigators.

These results point toward the role of the quantity and quality of instruction received as influential factors in the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction (Rose, 2005). It may be the case that the six-hour treatment provided in the present study, and the amount and type of input received by the learner group, were not sufficient to teach the pragmatic functions of these mitigators or to dissolve any misconceptions learners might have had.

At the same time, it is also likely that the pedagogical intervention did not have the desired effect due to its nature and/or lack of sufficient focus. Even though the treatment employed explicit instruction with a number of awareness-raising tasks (e.g., explicit instruction and presentation of request strategies and request modification taxonomies, analysis of authentic native-speaker dialogues/data that made use of internal or external request mitigators, short film viewings, role-playing, class discussion), it could be that it did not focus sufficiently on the specific pragmalinguistic deviations that needed to be remedied and failed to make the

target features of request modification salient enough. The specific pedagogical intervention employed seemed to have been unsuccessful in directing learners' attention to notice sufficiently (Schmidt, 1993, p. 2001) the pragmatic differences between NS usage and the learners' performance. Thus, these results suggest that, in order for pedagogical intervention to have positive effects on the learners' performance, a more focused and targeted approach is needed whereby the specific areas of pragmatic deviations receive greater focus so as to become more salient to the learners. Pragmatic treatment that does not have the appropriate length and/or the appropriate focus might not only result in an absence of gains but it might actually have a negative impact by reinforcing misconceptions and overgeneralizations of perceived L2 norms. Of course, some qualitative data from the learners themselves would have allowed us to examine their views and to draw more definite conclusions. Further research is therefore needed.

Within the field of foreign language learning, van Compernelle (2014), McConachy (2018), Ifantidou (2014) and other scholars highlight the value of raising L2 learners' meta-pragmatic awareness. Metapragmatic awareness is seen as a higher-order awareness in which "the basis of linguistic judgements can be reflected on, and articulated," and that offers learners "a growing ability to describe, evaluate and explore one's own and others' interpretations of features of language in use" (McConachy, 2018, p. 24). van Compernelle (2014) stresses the importance of metapragmatic activities that involve verbalized reflection tasks. In being prompted to externalize their thinking in speech, learners' pragmatic knowledge is made open to conscious inspection and revision. Perhaps the inclusion of such reflection tasks and other metapragmatic awareness activities in the pedagogical intervention of the present study would have prevented the learners from forming stronger overgeneralizations.

Nevertheless, the pedagogical intervention of the present study did result in some positive effects. Although there was still overall divergence from NS usage, external modification decreased after the intervention. The learners used a lower number of apologies that made them come across as too apologetic and/or subservient, and decreased their overall reliance on the grounder, which they sometimes used to provide unnecessary or excessive information. As this tendency of over-explicitness, repetition and over-informativeness has been related to what Levenston (1971) referred to as "verbosity," the phenomenon where learners provide more information than necessary by saying too much—thus violating Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity—one could argue that the decrease in learners' use of grounders is a positive outcome of the intervention.

Even though no total convergence is achieved between the GCLs and the NSs in the use of external modification, such partial convergence can be seen as a positive step. In her list of the goals that pragmatic instruction should aim for, Kasper (1997) explains that successful communication is a matter of *optimal* rather than *total* convergence. Some optimal convergence could be observed in the GCLs' use of mitigation in certain social situations. More specifically, learners' use of external mitigation showed a noticeable approximation in the 'fees', 'bank loan', 'directions' and 'police' situations. There was also a noticeable positive change in the use of the marker 'please' in the 'airline' situation. These results indicate that the learners showed some increase in their sociopragmatic awareness after the pedagogical intervention and, in certain situations, they were able to adjust their pragmalinguistic choices in accordance with the social variables at play. For example, while the learners' overuse of grounders in the 'fees' situation initially made them sound needy and lacking assertiveness, they were later able to significantly reduce the amount of grounders they used in this scenario and to highlight their right to be paid for the tutoring service. This, however, was not the case in the 'bank loan' situation where, instead of providing reasons/justifications for the loan (as did the NSs), the

GCLs used no grounders after the intervention and relied exclusively on disarmers. This made their requests appear tentative and caused them to appear uncertain and less confident.

In order to examine the pedagogical effects on learners' sociopragmatic awareness in greater depth, the study further analyzed how the learners' perception of social reality changed after the intervention. As expected, the general results showed that learners' overall assessment of social reality did not change after receiving instructional treatment. An explanation for this result might again be the short duration of the intervention. Additionally, the learners' lack of sufficient exposure to the target language culture may have also contributed to these results. Participants/learners had only lived in the target language environment for a short period of time and, at the time of the study, were residing in a non-English speaking country. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) points out that even after lengthy periods of residence in the target language context, pragmatic infelicities can still remain. Olshtain and Cohen (1990) maintain that lengthy periods of residence in the target language context are necessary for sociopragmatic development. It could therefore be argued that, in the case of sociopragmatic ability, both explicit instruction and exposure to the target language environment (with opportunities for engaging in appropriate social interaction) are necessary for learners to develop adequate sociocultural awareness and sociopragmatic competence in a second language (Holmes & Riddiford, 2011, p. 376). As Thomas (1983) further argues, sociopragmatic decisions are *social* before they are linguistic and involve the students' system of beliefs (p. 91)—unlike pragmalinguistic decisions, which concern the linguistic resources available for conveying particular illocutions. As such, from a pedagogical perspective, learners' sociopragmatic knowledge is much more difficult to deal with as it involves both the student's system of beliefs as much as his/her knowledge of the language (Thomas, 1983, p. 91). "While foreign learners are fairly amenable to corrections which they regard as linguistic, they are justifiably sensitive about having their social (or even political, religious, or moral) judgement called into question" (Thomas, 1983, p. 104). The findings of the present study seem to support the argument that sociopragmatic development is not as easily amenable to teaching as pragmalinguistic development. For sociopragmatic development to take place, both a lengthy pedagogical intervention and a lengthy period of residence in the target language country may be necessary.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was designed to examine the effects of explicit instruction on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic request performance of Greek Cypriot, advanced learners of English. Even though this study was limited in scope and involved only a six-hour pragmatic instruction, the findings painted a complex picture with mixed results. The study revealed no gains in relation to the overall use of internal request modification as the learners' overall use of lexical/phrasal mitigators deviated even more from NS usage after the pedagogical treatment. Unlike internal modification, however, external modification showed some positive effects after the intervention as the learners significantly decreased their use of supportive moves despite the fact that there was still significant divergence from NS usage. The present study further revealed that learners' assessment of social reality did not change after receiving instructional treatment, supporting the claim that sociopragmatic development is not as easily amenable to teaching.

It was argued that surrounding factors seem to play a complex role in accounting for the

mixed findings. These mixed findings gave support to Rose's (2005) argument that factors such as the duration, quantity, and quality of the pedagogical intervention play an important role since learners need both explicit pedagogical instruction and rich exposure to the target language environment (with opportunities for engaging in appropriate social interaction) in order to develop their L2 sociopragmatic awareness. The mixed findings of the present study clearly have pedagogical implications as they suggest that, in order for pragmatic intervention to have more positive effects, a longer and a more targeted pedagogical approach might be necessary. This is necessary in order to avoid the unwelcome effect of reinforcing already existing misconceptions and overgeneralizations of perceived L2 norms. It was suggested that reflection and metapragmatic awareness activities (McConachy, 2018; von Compennolle, 2014), by allowing learners to reflect on and make judgments about their pragmatic choices, might be a necessary component of successful pedagogical intervention.

Nevertheless, it is important that the results of the present study are treated with caution and as tentative because of the short duration of the intervention, the small number of participants and the DCT used as the elicitation instrument. In addition, the study cannot make any claims about long-term learning as the posttest was administered shortly after treatment. Further research is needed to investigate long-term treatment effects and to test whether different approaches to instruction yield different results. More specifically, research that investigates the effects of the *duration* of the intervention on request modification and/or the effects of metapragmatic awareness activities on the learners' performance would help demystify the mixed results of the present study.

Finally, further investigation with a different methodological tool is warranted. Kasper and Rose (2001, p.116) argue in favor of employing a multiplicity of research methods in interlanguage pragmatics. Within the methodological framework of CA, it has been argued that using a social-interactionist approach to L2 learner data (Golato, 2003; Huth, 2006, 2010; Taleghani-Nikazm & Huth, 2010) may yield different results about the same pragmatic phenomenon. It may indeed be "insufficient to rely solely on an analysis of lexis and morpho-syntax as deployed by speakers within one turn to describe the sociopragmatic abilities of L2 learners" (Taleghani-Nikazm & Huth, 2010, p. 185). Therefore, further research employing methodological instruments other than DCT is needed.

In conclusion, enhancing learners' pragmatic ability—especially in EFL contexts—is a challenging undertaking. As Kondo (2008) argues, "it seems that an awareness-raising approach using research data can sensitize learners to cultural differences and variables involved in language use" (p. 173). This might allow learners to ultimately become independent learners of the pragmatics of the L2 by paying more attention to the cross-cultural differences that exist between their L1 and the L2.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Internal and External Modification - Classification Schemes

#### A: Internal modification (lexical/phrasal downgraders)

Name	Devices
Marker 'please'	"please"
Consultative devices/openers	"would you mind," "do you think," "would it be all right if," "is it/would it be possible," "do you think I could," "is it all right?"
Downtoners	"possibly," "perhaps," "just," "rather," "maybe"
Understaters/ Hedges	"a bit," "a little," "sort of," "a kind of"
Subjectivizers	"I'm afraid," "I wonder," "I think/suppose"
Cajolers	"You know," "You see..."
Appealers	"Clean the table dear, <i>will you?.....ok/ right?</i> "

#### B: External modification (supportive moves/softeners)

Name	Example
Grounder	"I would like an assignment extension <i>because I could not deal with the typing time.</i> "
Disarmer	" <i>I know that this assignment is important</i> but could you.....?"
Preparator	"I really need a favor ...."
Getting a precommitment	"Could you do me a favor?"
Promise	"Could you give me an extension? <i>I promise I'll have it ready by tomorrow.</i> "
Imposition minimizer	"I would like to ask for an extension. <i>Just for a few days.</i> "
Apology	" <i>I'm very sorry</i> but I need an extension on this project."
Discourse orientation move	"You know the seminar paper I'm supposed to be giving on the 29 <sup>th</sup> ...."

## Appendix II: Summary of Instruction

### Summary of Instruction – Session 1

*Session 1 aimed to stimulate learners' interest in the speech act of requesting.*

*Step 1: Warm-up activity.* The students brainstorm requests using a game - The teacher writes on the board all requesting constructions produced.

*Step 2: Classroom introductory discussion.* Request constructions discussed in relation to the level of formality and context of appropriateness in use.

*Step 3: Role-play.* Students are grouped into pairs and given a leaflet which details a hotel and its facilities. They role-play a dialogue where student A is the caller and student B is the receptionist. The pairs present their dialogues in front of the class.

*Step 4: Dialogue construction.* Students comment on the most successful dialogue and discuss in class.



*Step 5: Interactional activity in groups of five.* Each group is assigned a card (out of 20 different cards) which includes a description of a social situation. Students practise how to formulate an appropriate request according to the specific context.

*Step 6: Role-playing in pairs.* Students role-play the given situation. The rest of the group is asked to observe the dialogue and comment if inappropriateness is identified. The groups are instructed to consider the level of formality, relationship of interlocutors and degree of imposition in each card situation.

### **Summary of Instruction – Session 2**

*Session 2 aimed to raise learners' awareness in relation to the use of internal and external request mitigators, communication breakdown and pragmatic failure, cross-cultural politeness, and the role of social/contextual variables.*

*Step 1: Explicit teaching instruction.* In relation to: a. the classification of various types of requests and request modification devices; b. awareness raising on possible misunderstandings in requesting performances between learners' native language and L2; and c. the role of social/contextual factors of power, familiarity and degree of imposition in the performance of requests.

*Step 2: Consciousness-raising activity 1.* Video-clips modelling short dialogues with polite and impolite requests are played. Students are asked to note down the phrases they identify in the requesting situations. Group discussion follows where students share their observations.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWBwCoecvM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avkuy0bPOPQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEjQmiVEsec>

*Step 3: Consciousness-raising activity 2.* Students work with authentic native-speaker dialogues/data, identify and discuss the use of requests and request mitigation.

*Step 4: Consolidation fill-in the gap and multiple-choice activities.*

*Step 5: Feedback on previous activity.* Students are asked to write their answers on board and provide justifications for their choices. Class-discussion follows.

*Step 6: Homework activity.* Learners think and write down how requests are expressed in Greek by providing specific scenarios.

### **Table 3: Summary of Instruction – Session 3**

*Session 3 aimed at engaging learners in dialogues and in producing polite requests.*

*Step 1: Review of homework activity* (from previous session). Learners share their answers and discuss the Greek requesting examples in relation to the level of formality, social power, degree of familiarity and imposition involved in the specific scenarios.

*Step 2: Class discussion.* Students discuss in groups how service-encounter requests are expressed in English and Greek. A classroom discussion follows.

*Step 3: Listening comprehension task.* Learners listen to two different dialogues and are provided with a worksheet to fill out. During dialogue 1, learners are requested to listen for the gist. During dialogue 2 they listen for specific information. Learners listen and write down the requesting expressions they hear. Class discussion follows.

*Step 4: Sensitising students to issues of pragmatic failure, cross-cultural differences in the linguistic realization of politeness, and the role of sociolinguistic variables.* Class discussion.

*Step 5: Direct instruction.* Students are presented again with taxonomies of various request constructions (direct, conventionally indirect, hints) and of external and internal modification devices that could be used

when performing their requests.

*Step 6: Pair-work and role-playing.* Students discuss with a partner different possible requesting constructions suitable for various service-encounter scenarios. They then role-play the scenarios.

### Appendix III

Internal Modification by Situation (ENSs= 832, Pretest n=200, Posttest n=200)

Fees		ENSs	Pretest	Posttest
	Marker 'please'	34.9%	45%	40%
	Consultative devices	44.2%	20%	55%
	Downtoners	7.0%	5%	5%
	Understaters/Hedges	14.0%	20%	10%
	Subjectivizers	8.14%	10%	5%
	Cajolers	4.7%	15%	10%
	Appealers	0	0	0
Job Leave		ENSs	Pretest	Posttest
	Marker 'please'	10.5%	30%	25%
	Consultative devices	36.1%	20%	55%
	Downtoners	2.33%	0	0
	Understaters/Hedges	5.81%	95%	90%
	Subjectivizers	3.5%	0	5%
	Cajolers	0%	20%	20%
	Appealers	4.65%	0	0
Baby-sitting		ENSs	Pretest	Posttest
	Marker 'please'	36%	65%	70%
	Consultative devices	10.5%	20%	20%
	Downtoners	7.0%	0	0
	Understaters/Hedges	16.3%	40%	25%
	Subjectivizers	2.3%	0	0
	Cajolers	0	0	0
	Appealers	0	0	0
Restaurant		ENSs	Pretest	Posttest
	Marker 'please'	95%	90%	90%
	Consultative devices	0	0	0
	Downtoners	0	0	0
	Understaters/Hedges	0	15%	10%
	Subjectivizers	0	0	0
	Cajolers	0	0	0
	Appealers	0	0	0
Deadline		ENSs	Pretest	Posttest
	Marker 'please'	34.9%	45%	40%
	Consultative devices	44.2%	20%	55%
	Downtoners	7.0%	5%	5%
	Understaters/Hedges	14.0%	20%	10%
	Subjectivizers	8.14%	10%	5%
	Cajolers	4.7%	15%	10%
	Appealers	0	0	0
Airline		ENSs	Pretest	Posttest
	Marker 'please'	50%	35%	65%
	Consultative devices	0	0	5%
	Downtoners	0	0	0
	Understaters/Hedges	0	0	0
	Subjectivizers	3.5%	0	0

	Cajolers	0	10%	5%
	Appealers	0	0	0
Bank Loan		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Marker 'please'	20.93%	25%	40%
	Consultative devices	15.12%	20%	60%
	Downtoners	2.33%	0	0
	Understaters/Hedges	2.3%	0	5%
	Subjectivizers	5.81%	5%	0
	Cajolers	0	15%	15%
	Appealers	0	0	0
Dinner		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Marker 'please'	65%	85%	95%
	Consultative devices	1.25%	5%	0
	Downtoners	0	0	0
	Understaters/Hedges	0	0	0
	Subjectivizers	0	0	0
	Cajolers	0	0	0
	Appealers	0	0	0
Directions		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Marker 'please'	35.7%	40%	55%
	Consultative devices	1.2%	15%	15%
	Downtoners	3.6%	0	5%
	Understaters/Hedges	1.2%	0	5%
	Subjectivizers	13.1%	0	0
	Cajolers	0	0	0
	Appealers	0	0	0
Police		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Marker 'please'	40.3%	55%	85%
	Consultative devices	8.3%	5%	15%
	Downtoners	0	0	5%
	Understaters/Hedges	0	0	0
	Subjectivizers	9.7%	10%	0
	Cajolers	0	5%	5%
	Appealers	0	0	0

## Appendix IV

External Modification by Situation (ENSs= 832, Pretest n=200, Posttest n=200)

Fees		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	2.3%	35%	9.5%
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	1.2%	10%	5%
	Preparator	1.2%	0	5%
	Getting a recommit.	0	0	0
	Promise	0	0	0
	Apology	5.8%	20%	0
	Imposition minimizer	23.3%	0	0
Job Leave		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	90.1%	85%	80%
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	22.1%	20%	0
	Preparator	2.3%	0	5%
	Getting a recommit.	0	5%	0
	Promise	5.8%	5%	0
	Apology	2.3%	0	5%
	Imposition minimizer	12.8%	10%	0

Baby-sitting		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	46.5%	60%	40%
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	5.8%	5%	5%
	Preparator	9.3%	0	0
	Getting a recommit.	5.8%	5%	0
	Promise	2.3%	0	5%
	Apology	8.1%	0	0
	Imposition minimizer	4.7%	0	0
Restaurant		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	2.5%	0	0
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	0	5%	0
	Preparator	0	0	0
	Getting a recommit.	0	0	0
	Promise	0	0	0
	Apology	0	5%	0
	Imposition minimizer	0	0	0
Deadline		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	65.1%	45%	25%
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	8.1%	10%	5%
	Preparator	1.2%	0	5%
	Getting a recommit	0	0	0
	Promise	0	0	0
	Apology	13.9%	15%	0
	Imposition minimizer	0	0	0
Airline		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	2.3%	0	0
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	0	0	0
	Preparator	3.5%	0	0
	Getting a recommit.	5.8%	0	0
	Promise	1.2%	0	0
	Apology	0	0	0
	Imposition minimizer	2.3%	0	5%
Bank Loan		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	43%	60%	0
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	3.5%	0	45%
	Preparator	1.2%	20%	5%
	Getting a recommit.	1.2%	0	0
	Promise	4.7%	0	0
	Apology	0	0	0
	Imposition minimizer	0	0	0
Dinner		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	0	15%	0
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	0	0	0
	Preparator	0	0	0
	Getting a recommit.	0	0	0
	Promise	0	0	0
	Apology	0	0	0
	Imposition minimizer	0	0	0
Directions		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	13.1%	25%	0
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	0	0	0
	Preparator	0	10%	0
	Getting a recommitment	0	0	0
	Promise	0	0	0
	Apology	7.1%	55%	30%

	Imposition minimizer	0	0	0
Police		<b>ENSs</b>	<b>Pretest</b>	<b>Posttest</b>
	Grounder	65.3%	75%	50%
	Disarmer/Ext. Openers	0	10%	0
	Preparator	0	0	0
	Getting a recommit.	0	0	0
	Promise	0	0	0
	Apology	15.3%	30%	20%
	Imposition minimizer	0	0	0