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To improve communicative competence by expressive and directive speech acts in EFL classroom

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Abstract. The Speech acts have been extensively studied as a component of essential communication competence skills. The purpose of this study was to examine speech acts as interlanguage pragmatics with an emphasis on EFL settings.Along with grammatical knowledge, it also includes awareness of cultural standards, social regulations, and the capacity to modify language use according to various contexts. In essence, it's about knowing something rather than merely how to describe it.The Open-ended Discourse Completion Test (DCT) Evaluation Questionnaire and IELTS scores were used in a mixed-methods approach to evaluate learners' pragmatic skills both before and after the intervention. According to the results, students in technologically enhanced settings demonstrated noticeably better speech act performance than those in conventional settings. It was discovered that explicit pragmatics training was beneficial, and the results were influenced by demographic variables such age, gender, and language ability.

Keywords: Speech Acts, EFL, communicative competence.

1. Introduction

In order to explain the knowledge that speakers and listeners need to communicate appropriately and effectively across a variety of social contexts,

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Dell Hymes developed the idea of communicative competence in the late 1960s (Hymes, 1962/1968, 1971).

Since then, the idea of communicative competence has grown to be central to sociolinguistics and socially conscious methods of studying languages (Hymes, 1971). Clarifying Hymes's original definition of communicative competence, investigating its connections to related sociolinguistic constructs, and tracking its extensions into interdisciplinary fields are the objectives of the current study. A critical and poststructuralist re-examination of the construct is presented in the article's conclusion (Hymes, 1971).It has been demonstrated that using both directive and expressive speech acts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction improves students' communicative proficiency (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2019).

While expressive speech acts, like expressing emotions or attitudes, promote empathy, rapport, and a positive classroom environment, directive speech acts, like requests and instructions, help with classroom management and learner engagement (González-Lloret, 2019). Teachers can foster a more engaging and meaningful communicative environment that reflects real-world language use by strategically combining the two types (Hymes, 1971; Gonzalez-Lloret, 2019).

Nevertheless, there is still little research on teaching pragmatics using technology, even though it is acknowledged that pragmatic competence is an essential part of communicative competence (González-Lloret, 2019). Recent theoretical advances in Digital Pragmatics have started to investigate how pragmatic norms and speech acts are realized in online and technology-mediated contexts in response to the growing digitization of communication (Herring, 2013; Locher & Bolander, 2021; González-Lloret et al., 2019). This burgeoning field focuses on how pragmatic behavior, politeness tactics, and speech act performance are altered by digital tools, multimodal platforms, and online interactions (Herring, 2013; Locher & Bolander, 2021). Yet, not enough research has been done on its pedagogical applications, particularly in EFL contexts (González-Lloret et al., 2019).

1.1. Research question

1. How do intermediate EFL students in Iraq feel about being taught expressive and acts of directive speech?
2. Do directive and expressive speech acts differ significantly from one another?

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Intermediate Iraqi EFL students in in-person classes receiving practical teaching and those who don't receive practical training?

2. Method

One hundred intermediate Iraqi EFL students were assigned to two separate cohorts, Face-to-Face (FF) and Technology-Enhanced (TE), each of which had fifty participants. There were 25 participants in each subgroup, which comprised adults and teenagers.

3. The International English Language Testing System

(IELTS) was used to evaluate the participants' English proficiency before they were chosen. Participants were divided into three proficiency levels based on the results (Gonzalez-Lloret et al., 2019; Herring, 2013).

Comparability across groups in terms of gender, age, and proficiency was guaranteed by this distribution.

4. Instruments

Structured interviews were used in the study's phase, while standardized tests and customized tools were used in the quantitative phase. To assess participants' The International English Language Testing System (IELTS), which measures proficiency, was chosen as the standard. An open-ended (DCT) was given with regard to speech activities, the learners' performance was assessed using the initial and final assessments. This DCT included a number of textual scenarios created especially to elicit speech act-related responses.

5. Data Analysis and Discussions

The following graphs display descriptive statistics of Open-ended Discourse Completion Test (DCT) scores for two groups of adult and adolescent language in (FF) and Technology-Enhanced (TE) formats.

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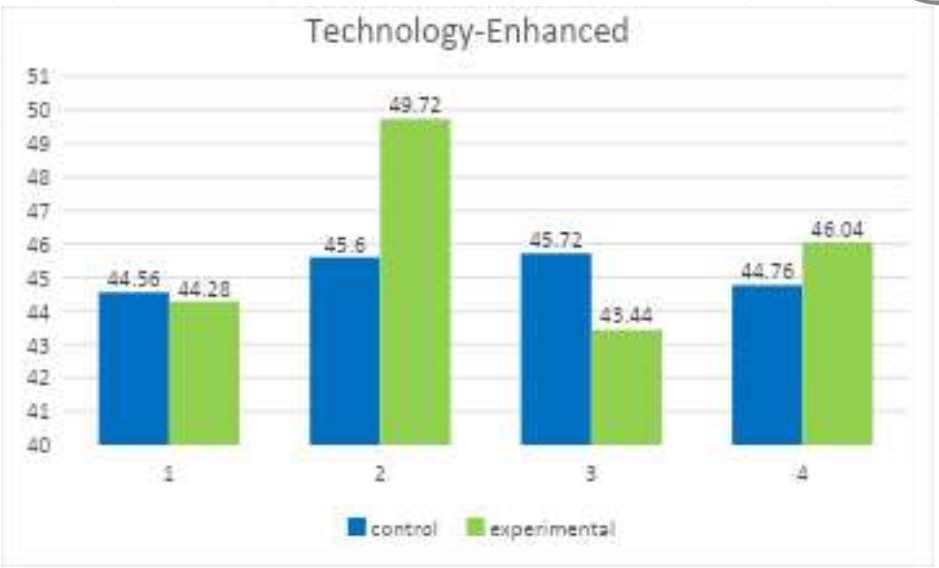
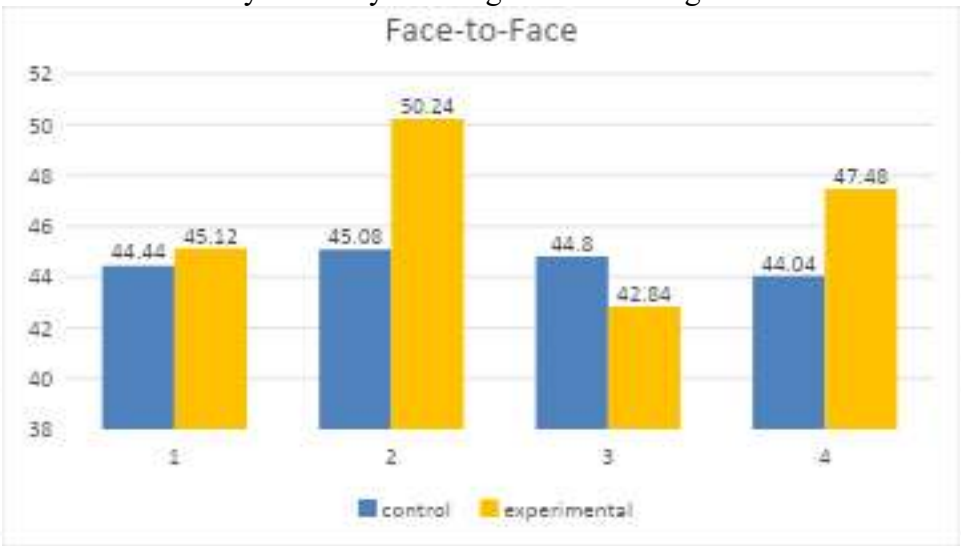


Performance among adult learners improved from roughly 44-45 to almost 50, demonstrating the unmistakable benefits of the technology-enhanced approach. Adolescent students, on the other hand, displayed a minor drop from about 48 to 46, whereas their peers who did not receive the intervention either stayed mostly unchanged or saw a slight decline.



While their peers stayed around 44-45, adult learners exposed to the new instructional approach improved from roughly 45 to 50. Teenagers who received the intervention increased from about 43 to 47, while the others saw

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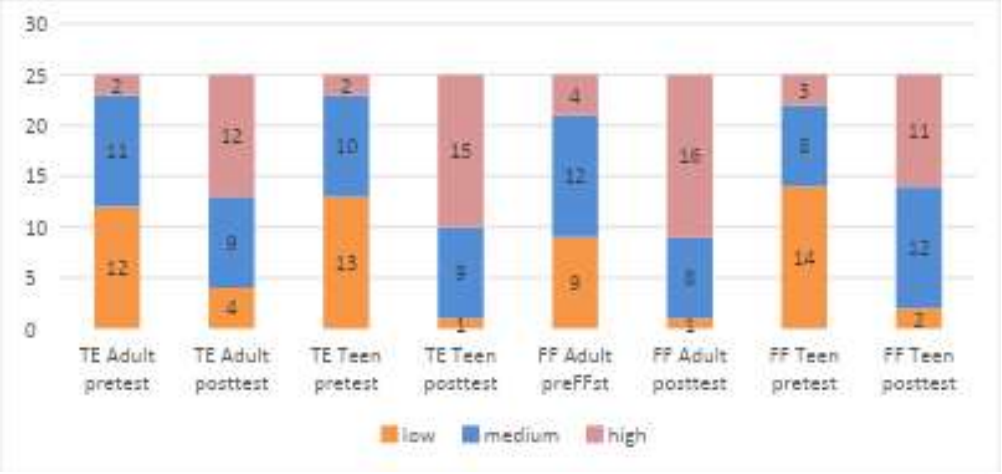
a slight decrease from 45 to 44. This implies that the method worked better for adults while producing varying outcomes for younger students.

One-third of the scores were high, indicating high proficiency; one-third were low, indicating low proficiency; and one-third were medium, indicating medium proficiency. The scores were computed out of 40. The following graph displays a summary of the findings. The graph indicates that the majority of students (15 individuals) are at the high proficiency level, which is associated with the TE group of teenagers who took the post-test. Additionally, the majority of students (14 individuals) are in the low-proficiency level, which is associated with the pre-test FF group of teenagers.



The descriptive statistics of the evaluation questionnaire, which was distributed among the learners of the experimental group, have been shown in the following diagram. The questionnaire has 10 questions that were scored from 1 to 5. The mean score of the questionnaire related to the adult and teen learners in the TE class is equal to 3.28 and 2.97, respectively, whereas in the FF class, it is equal to 3.04 and 3.1, respectively.

Table 1: Learners' TE FF Group Statistics

Collective Data					
	type	N	Mean	Deviation	Mean
TE FF A	TE	25	49.7200	5.73382	1.14676
	FF	25	50.2400	4.68402	.93680
TE FF T	TE	25	46.0400	6.34744	1.26949
	FF	25	47.4800	5.70906	1.14181

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According to Open-ended Discourse Completion Test (DCT) related to two groups of adult and teen learners are shown in the classes of Technology-Enhanced (TE) and Face-to-Face (FF). In the adult group, the scores in TE and FF classes are equal to 49.72 and 50.24 (FF), respectively, and in the teen group, the scores in TE and FF classes are equal to 46.04 and 47.48, correspondingly.

Table 2: Male and female learners' TE FF independently T-tested

		Levine's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig ok. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
TEFFA	Equal variances assumed	1.157	.287	-.351	48	.727	-.52000	1.48077	-3.49728	2.45728
	Equal variances not assumed			-.351	46.162	.727	-.52000	1.48077	-3.50034	2.46034
TEFFT	Equal variances assumed	.750	.391	-.843	48	.403	-1.44000	1.70743	-4.87303	1.99303
	Equal variances not assumed			-.843	47.471	.403	-1.44000	1.70743	-4.87402	1.99402

A- Statistical analysis for the adult learners indicates that the differences in performance across instructional approaches are not significant, suggesting that outcomes were similar between the conditions.

B- According to the statistical analysis of the adolescent cohort, no significant performance differences were found. The learners' results were essentially the same across the approaches, as indicated by the sufficiently small variability between the instructional conditions.

Comparative Discussion

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The results of this study support earlier research that found that EFL learners' use of directive and expressive speech acts is improved by technology-enhanced pragmatics instruction (Gonzalez-Lloret et al., 2019; Herring, 2013). On the other hand, there was little transfer of pragmatic skills to real-world communication in traditional classroom instruction without digital mediation (Taguchi, 2015). These findings demonstrate that richer, context-dependent learning experiences that promote the growth of communicative competence are offered by digital, interactive environments (Locher & Bolander, 2021; Gonzalez-Lloret et al., 2019).

Theoretical implication

According to the results, technology-enhanced instruction utilizing expressive and directive speech acts can successfully foster communicative competence in EFL classrooms. By demonstrating that pragmatic knowledge is dynamic, context-dependent, and applicable in multimodal digital environments, this reinforces and expands upon Hymes's (1972) communicative competence model (Herring, 2013; González-Lloret et al., 2019; Locher & Bolander, 2021). By bridging theoretical concepts with real-world classroom application, technology-mediated activities promote noticing, reflection, and interactive practice while demonstrating the flexibility of pragmatic theory in modern digital learning contexts (Herring, 2013; González-Lloret et al., 2019).

After-training pedagogical model

Through directive and expressive speech acts, the study suggests an After-Training Pedagogical Model to improve the communicative competence of EFL learners. Hymes's communicative competence (1972) and Digital Pragmatics (Herring, 2013; Locher & Bolander, 2021; González-Lloret et al., 2019) are incorporated into tangible steps like assessment, technology-enhanced instruction, practice with feedback, reflection, and continuous integration.

Conclusion

The study identifies strategies for improving English language proficiency through the creation of creative teaching resources and organized teaching techniques. It highlights how important it is for authors of English as a foreign language textbook to incorporate authenticity into their writing. To expose

students to real language use in a range of social contexts, examples of speech acts and real-life contexts should be woven throughout the curriculum. By gaining a better understanding of cultural quirks and using speech acts appropriately, students can enhance their pragmatic communication abilities.

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