

The Effects of Conversational Implicature Training on the development of TEFL Omani Students' Language Proficiency and Pragmatic Competence

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Abstract

According to several EFL scholars in pragmatics, pragmatic competence is seen as an essential part which a foreign language teacher should have. One of the basic areas in pragmatics is Gricean conversational implicatures. Hence, the current research aims to investigate the effects of interpreting conversational implicature training (TEFL) on the development of Omani Undergraduate Students Pragmatic Competence and Language Proficiency. The participants of the study were 20 undergraduate students from Sultan Qaboos University. Two instruments were used in this research, the TOEIC test for language proficiency and the pragmatic competence test. The two tests were given to the students as pre-test and post-test and then both results were compared. The findings of the study statically proved that there is an effect of instructional implicature on students' pragmatic competence and their language proficiency development. In addition, the findings show that a significant correlation occurred, at the level of 0.720, between the pragmatic competence of the participants and their language proficiency. Based on the findings, TEFL teachers should have sufficient pragmatic competence knowledge through their study program. Consequently, it is suggested that there should be more research on this topic in the Omani context.

Keywords: Language Proficiency, Pragmatic Competence, Pedagogical implications, Conversational implicature, English foreign language teachers (EFLT)

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Pragmatics is considered as one of the most important extremes in the English language. This area has been studied by many scholars like Leech, Austin, and Leech. There are many scholars who claim that pragmatics and teaching can be connected. "Considerable attention has been recently given to the teachability of pragmatics" (Murray, 2011; Rose, 2005), "particularly to the value of explicit teaching of pragmatic theory in classroom settings" (Blight, 2002; Lee, 2002). In addition, Rasekh (2008) supported learners' pragmatic competence definition which is: "the ability to use the language to express a wide range of functions as well as interpret their illocutionary force in discourse according to the socio-cultural context in which they are used" (p. 178). Another important point is that Garcia (2004) stated and highlighted the major

difference between processing pragmatic meaning and processing linguistic meaning. While the learner focuses on contextual information that expresses the attitudes and feeling of the speaker using an indirect utterance which should be inferred by the hearer, they focus, in the latter, on linguistic information, like syntax and vocabulary in the former. This study goes in the same line with other studies that focused on the pragmatics explicit teaching (e.g., Murray, 2011) to non-native (TEFL) students and try to explore some implications for theory and practice in Omani students specifically. Nhung (2023) says that "The importance of conversational implicatures in expressing a message indirectly is well-established." Grice is the father of conversational implicature, his pragmatic theory dealt with this conversational implicature. It has been considered as a theoretical underpinning for research of pragmatics. The cooperative principle is considered the basic and the foundation of Gricean theory, which he, Grice, defined as "Make your conversational contribution, such as is required at the stage it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Çiftlikli, & Demirel, Ö, 2022). To achieve the cooperative principle, Grice introduces maxims to guide the contribution of the speaker in conversation. There are four maxims:

1. Quality: When information has adequate evidence in order to be believed as true.
2. Quantity: When provided information is of an appropriate amount.
3. Manner: When information is said in a way that is clear, brief and without ambiguity.
4. Relation: When information is related and relevant to the topic.

When the speaker is applying these maxims, he may not observe them accidentally (infringement) or deliberately to make or create an implicature that is noticed by the hearer. Instead, implicatures are made by the speaker to convey many different and various communicative effects (such as understated negative evaluation or irony). On another hand, the hearer is somehow expected to notice the that speaker breached these maxims, and also consider and focus why this is the case, and try to get the meaning which is intended to be delivered together with any other information that can be retrieved from the way in which it was conveyed. Various forms of pragmatic failure and miscommunication will result if the hearer is not able to notice implicature. "All communications take place on multiple levels simultaneously and that there is always a potential for unintended (or at times) deliberate mismatches between a speaker's meaning and a hearer's understanding." Murray (2011). The role of pragmatic instruction needs to be examined in supporting the nonnative speakers of English (NNS), who are Omani students in this research, to understand and interpret conversational implicatures. Vásquez & Sharpless (2009) stated that "However pragmatic competence is part of the knowledge base of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) professionals, little attention is usually given to pragmatics in teacher education. Garcia (2004) asserted the need for research on pragmatic comprehension to understand this important component of communicative competence. According to that, this study is an attempt

to examine the Gricean conversational implicature and its effect on Omani students' pragmatic and language competence.

1.2. Aim / Purpose of the Research

The main aim of this research is to examine the effects of conversational implicature instruction on developing TEFL Omani students' pragmatic competence and language proficiency. In other words, this research intends to study the Gricean four maxims and their effect on the Omani students' language and pragmatic competence if they are get implemented and instructed.

To achieve the present aim, three hypothesis have been set:

- R.H 1: 1. There is a statistically significant difference between the means of scores obtained by the participants in the pre/post-measurements of the test of pragmatic competence favoring the post-test.
- R.H 2: There is a statistically significant difference between means of scores obtained by the participants in the pre/post-measurements of the language proficiency test favoring the post-test
- R.H 3: There is a statistically positive correlation between the participants' pragmatic competence and language proficiency.

- Research Questions

Three research questions are retrieved from the research hypotheses.

- **RQ1 (Descriptive Inquiry):**
To what extent do participants' scores in pragmatic competence differ between the pre-test and the post-test?
- **RQ2 (Comparative Focus):**
How does the participants' performance on the language proficiency test change from pre- to post-intervention?
- **RQ3 (Relational Focus):**
In what way is participants' pragmatic competence related to their overall language proficiency?

2. Literature Review

Relevant studies which have been previously reviewed with regard to the effect of teaching or training students the implicature on improving their pragmatic and language competence and the relationship between the two competencies, pragmatic and language. The majority are

western research. The most known studies in this regard are Bouton (1994), Eslami-Rasekh (2008), Murray (2011), Tuan (2012), and Farahian, Rezaee, and Gholami (2012).

In Bouton's study (1994), he explored the extent to which non-native English talking international understudies could decipher conversational implicatures contrasted with native speakers and the impact of instruction on conversational maxims on improving NNS' capacity to decipher conversational implicatures of different types. The population stepped through an exam of conversational implicatures in American English. The students were asked to select the right interpretation from four options following every dialogue. The results uncovered that the non-native students performed fundamentally less fortunate than local or native speakers. They additionally uncovered those non-local students of English accomplished advancement in interpreting conversational implicatures after explicit instruction.

The second research was conducted by Rover (2001), the main aim was to investigate the relationship between comprehension of implicature and the level of language ability. The participants were 181 German high school students, 94 ESL American University students, 25 Japanese college students, and 14 native speakers. The instrument was a test in which the participants were asked to choose four answers which accurately the meaning of the implied utterance. The findings of the research show that there is a positive correlation within the ability levels. In the same line, another study was conducted by Cook and Liddicoat (2002). The study was a comparison between the English language learner's abilities and high proficiency and low proficiency to understand contextual knowledge and linguistic knowledge. The researchers found that high proficiency learners can understand both contextual and linguistic knowledge. They achieve high levels of language processing automaticity. On the other hand, the findings revealed that low proficiency learners focus on interpreting linguistic information by relying on bottom-up processing. They also found that low proficiency students failed to understand contextual information.

The following study was conducted by Lee (2002) whose research was mainly about investigating 15 Korean NNS of English with (HLP) high language proficiency and other 15 native speakers of English. The investigation was in both categories' ability to interpret conversational implicature. She found that the accuracy of pragmatic comprehension is influenced by the high proficiency of English. Lee came up with some recommendations that the high language proficiency of NNS would lead to the same competence that NS has. Taguchi (2005), with a similar focus, conducted a study in which he investigated the effect of L2 proficiency on pragmatic comprehension. In other words, the capability to comprehend implied meaning in spoken dialogues. The participants were 160 college Japanese students of English who were at different language proficiency levels and 56 American native speakers in the US. To measure their ability to comprehend the conversational implicature of different types, the

participants were given a 38-item computerized listening task. The findings revealed a significant Language proficiency effect on comprehension accuracy.

The next study was done by Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh (2008). They adopt a quasi-experimental, pre/post-test design. Their study was, mainly about investigating the pragmatic instruction's effect on improving EFL learner's competence in language generally and pragmatics particularly. The population of the study were master students of Art major and 25 participants were studying (TESL) teaching English as a second language. The context was Iran, the university of Azan in particular. The results were positive as they show that the explicit pragmatic instruction is raising L2 learners' awareness about the features of input by providing input reinforcement as well as by engaging them in interactive activities in class and language use precipitated and make it easier for TESL students' pragmatic improvement to a reasonable degree. This study has raised the attention towards the importance of relating pragmatic competence with EFL professionals which should be somehow a part of their teacher education program. Also, it shows that it is significant to teach pragmatics in the EFL/ESL classroom.

The third research regarding this topic was for Murray (2011) who tried to explore the method of developing the 11 NNS teachers' pragmatic competence to make their work easier. Their work was English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teachers in primary and secondary schools in Australia. The researcher used the qualitative method in her research as she used a multiple-choice inference task that consists of 10 questions. She trained the participant to interpret the conversational implicature through a pragmatic training program which was for nine 3-hour sessions. Murray found that 56% is the overall success rate for the group. Despite that, they were clearly able to apply what they understood about Gricean pragmatic maxims to a post-hoc analysis of their responses to inferring conversational implicature tasks. Her study was very useful in the way that it drew the attention towards the importance of pedagogical implication, Gricean maxims in particular, in teaching English for speakers of other languages (TESOL) to develop their pragmatic competence.

Another paper was published by Farahian, Rezaee, and Gholami (2012) who investigated how direct instruction affects the development of intermediate university students' pragmatic competence. The number of the population was 64. The data were gathered using a written discourse completion test and self-report, this was done by adopting a design of a pretest-posttest with a control group and a treatment group. The findings of the research show that instructional intervention resulted in gains in the L2 capability of the experimental group. What the researchers found is that the pragmatic competence development of L2 learners is a prerequisite for the communicative competence development. They recommended that it is significant for L2 teachers to foster pragmatic competence among their learners.

In addition, Tuan (2012) conducted research that is somehow close to the current one. This researcher attempted to investigate the effect of teaching conversational implicature explicitly

on developing college EFL learner's pragmatic competence as well as the relationship between language proficiency and the learner's pragmatic competence. The number of populations was 40 Taiwanese students. The researcher used a test of English for international communication (TOEIC) and a web-based implicature test as an instrument of the test. The duration of the instruction was 10 weeks. Regarding the findings, they were positive as the researcher found that there is, statically, a significant difference in the implicature competence of the learner in favor of the post-test. The findings also revealed a positive correlation ($r = .82$) between English language proficiency and the learner's implicature competence. Tuan highlighted that it is necessary to provide direct or guided instruction implicature to equip the learners with pragmatic competence.

More recently, studies have continued to explore the link between implicature instruction and pragmatic competence. Taguchi (2019) emphasized the role of task-based instruction in promoting pragmatic development among Japanese EFL learners, indicating that tasks involving authentic communication helped learners grasp implied meanings better. Similarly, Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018) found that using explicit metapragmatic instruction significantly improved Iranian EFL learners' comprehension of implicature types, particularly indirect refusals and requests. In a study by Fukuya and Zhang (2016), the researchers highlighted how scaffolded, form-focused instruction enhanced the pragmatic competence of intermediate learners over a 5-week period. These newer studies confirm that pragmatic instruction continues to be relevant and effective in EFL contexts, and they reaffirm the value of focusing on implicature as a core component of pragmatic awareness and language development.

As you see in the previous research, they mainly highlighted the relationship between language proficiency and the ability to interpret implicature. In addition, they highlighted the role of explicit instruction in conversational implicature in developing the pragmatic competence and language proficiency of EFL learners. Kondo (2008) stated "pragmatic instruction sensitizes learners to cultural differences and variables involved in language use." As highlighted by Takahashi (2005) this study, aligns with this area and perspective, aims to make and create an awareness level in which the participant could be more cognizant of implicature through and able to focus on the relationship between the communication effectiveness and language choices. To prepare TEFL students for the job market, we suggest that pragmatic competence should be undertaken as a major part of a broader program. We expect that TEFL students can comprehend the meaning which is implied in conversational implicature and they are able also to communicate with their prospective learners using these meanings. To conclude, this study attempts to find out whether training TEFL students in inferring conversational implicature is developing their language-proficiency and pragmatic competence as well or not. This is done by helping the participant to recognize and interpret different implicature types. This research seeks to prepare the participants to avoid failure in pragmatics and also to be ready for the

intercultural needs that they will face when they start working as EFL teachers at school or college.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

The participants of the study are 20 undergraduate TEFL students at Sultan Qaboos University who are currently in the fourth year of Bachelor's Degree in the College of Education, English language department. They are taking an advanced speaking course. The course instructor is the one who helped me as a researcher to conduct this study on these students as the area of the course is quite close to the research as well as the instructor is a Ph.D. holder in the area of pragmatics.

The participants were selected through convenience sampling, based on their accessibility and the relevance of their course content to the research focus. While this may limit the generalizability of the findings, the consistency in instruction and testing conditions helped minimize potential biases.

The selection of participants was based on convenience sampling, drawing from a cohort of 20 undergraduate TEFL students enrolled in an advanced speaking course at Sultan Qaboos University. This group was purposefully chosen due to the alignment between the course content and the focus of the current study, which centers on pragmatic competence. The students, all in their fourth year of study in the English Language Department at the College of Education, had reached a level of language proficiency that made them well-positioned to engage with pragmatic instruction and reflective tasks.

The collaboration with the course instructor—who holds a doctoral degree in pragmatics—further reinforced the relevance of the selected group. This cooperation ensured smooth access to the participants and allowed for the integration of the instructional intervention within the existing academic schedule, enhancing the ecological validity of the study.

While the use of convenience sampling may introduce limitations regarding the generalizability of the results, efforts were made to mitigate bias through consistent instructional delivery and standardized testing conditions. All participants underwent the same training program, completed the same tasks, and were assessed using validated instruments administered under controlled conditions. These measures support the reliability of the findings and the internal validity of the research design.

3.2. Instrument

The instruments of the study are two tests, the TOEIC test, and the pragmatic competence test. Regarding the TOEIC test, it is used in the current study to measure the language proficiency

of the participants. It consists of two parts, reading comprehension and listening comprehension. In the reading comprehension questions, the participants are asked to answer several types of reading comprehension in different texts. They are given 100 multiple-choice items divided into three parts and lasts for 75 minutes. For the listening comprehension part, the participants are given also 100 items in four sections in order to demonstrate how they perfectly understand the spoken variety of English. The test lasts for 45 minutes. The TOEIC test is based on Edmunds and Taylor's (2007) TOEIC. Schedl (2010) emphasized that the test has been recognized as a global and worldwide standard in the use of international English assessment. Regarding the pragmatic competence test, it has consisted of 20 multiple-choice items that measure the ability of interpreting non-literal utterances in American English. The test has to be completed in 30 minutes. Tuan (2012) is the one who developed this test based on Bouton's work (1999). It is important to mention that the items of the test are deliberately chosen because there is existed literature already on their use, and the test items had been extensively trialed and validated (Bouton, 1999; Murray, 2011). Through common NNS incorrect answers, the distractors were adapted. On the other hand, the correct or preferred multiple-choice answers and responses have been originally improved via the actual native speaker NS. The interpretation of speakers' meanings in several scenarios. Both tests are conducted online due to the circumstances of COVID19.

3.3. Materials of the Training

Mini-conversation representing the model of Gricean' four maxims (flouted) is the material introduces for the training. The students are expected to interpret and recognize the implicatures in groups and individually. Besides, the participants are given a group task to submit at least 60 formulaic expressions with their interpretation. This is considered as a part of out of class activities. The main purpose of this task is to make them familiar with the implied meaning of what being said.

3.4. Procedures and Duration of the Training

The instructional activities were presented based on Blight's (2002). Four-stage-classroom explicit instructional procedure and conversational implicature. The four stages are: theory presentation, analysis of a model conversation by Grice, implicature interpretation of a mode conversation, and the fourth is a group interaction of a social interaction range. some activities were designed to make the participants familiar with the pragmatic theory and also to assess the prior impact of awareness-raising sessions on the capability to infer implicature. The Gricean framework is the material or the tool that helps to elicit the response and reflections of the participants. According to the intercultural learning of TEFL participants who can access the native culture, the Gricean model of implicature has been modified and justified. Also, one of the tasks is to ask the participants to explain the Gricean model elements to make sure that

they comprehend the new concepts. Some activities consist of items that cover the four Gricean maxims breaches. An example of this activity is making open class discussions, for example, a real-life communicative event in which an implicature might be inferred. The participants are also given a context-inference-activity, in which they are encouraged to use the conversations provided to infer the cultural and experiential context in which the conversations occurred in. The last task of the training period is asking the participants to prepare a presentation about one of the maxims and try to cover it in terms of definition, examples, real-life situations, and how it can be applied in class. This is done in the last session so we make sure that the participants comprehend these maxims.

The total sessions of the program are "online" 7 two-hour sessions through the Zoom application. Two additional sessions were conducted for administrating the pre-test and post-test.

3.5. Data Analysis

The data from both types of instruments, the TOEIC test, and the pragmatic competence test, consists of participants' responses to the pre-test and post-test. Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. To make a comparison of the participants' scores in pre/post-measurement of language proficiency test and the test of pragmatic competence, the t-test was implemented. Besides, the Pearson correlation coefficient strategy was employed to measure the correlation between language proficiency of the participants and their pragmatic competence.

4. Analysis/Discussion of Findings

4.1. Results

According to the quantitative analysis via the t-test and Pearson correlation, I found that all three hypotheses are confirmed. Regarding the first hypothesis, the t-test showed a statically significant difference in the level of 0.06 between the means of scores done by the participants in the measurement of pre-test and post-test for the pragmatic competence test favoring the post-test. According to that, the first hypothesis is accepted.

Table 1. The pragmatic competence results via T-Test.

	T	d.f	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean-difference	STD deviation	94% confidence
<i>Pre-test</i>	16.78	20	0.0	8.6	2.89	7.8
<i>Post test</i>	25.89	20	0.0	13.56	2.76	12.4

At it is seen in the above, the pragmatic competence of the participants has improved as the mean score increased 4.47. Tuan (2012) had a similar result regarding this point in his research. He trained his participants for 10 weeks. Their pragmatic competence developed with an increase of 4.4 in the mean score.

Regarding the second hypothesis, the t-test showed a statically significant difference in a level of 0.05 between the means of scores done by the participants in the measurement of pre-test and post-test for the language proficiency test favoring the post-test. According to that, the second hypothesis is accepted.

Table 2. The language proficiency results via T-Test.

	T	d.f	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean-difference	STD deviation	94% confidence
<i>Pre-test</i>	22.30	20	0.0	57.88	14.33	52.60
<i>Post test</i>	38.84	20	0.0	76.28	11.17	71.66

Regarding the third hypothesis, there was a statically significant positive correlation between the pragmatic competence of the participants and their language proficiency. The result was 0.720 according to the Pearson correlation coefficient.

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Results

		Post-test of proficiency	Post-test of implicature
<i>Language Proficiency Post-test</i>	Pearson-correlation	1	0.720
	Sig.(1--tailed)	-	0.000
	N	20	20
<i>Pragmatic Competence Post-test</i>	Pearson-correlation	0.720	1
	Sig. (1--tailed)	0.000	-
	.N.	20	20

**Note. "Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 (1-tailed)"

As we can see clearly from the results, there is an obvious positive correlation between participants' pragmatic competence and language proficiency. There are several studies showing the same findings. For example, Lee (2002) found that one of the tools to facilitate

the abilities of the learners to interpret implicature is language proficiency. Another study had the same finding is Tuan's (2012) study in which he found that there is a positive correlation between students' pragmatic competence and their language proficiency ($r = 0.82$). Tuan then suggested that pragmatic competence is one of the important elements to identify one's language proficiency.

4.2. Discussion

As the findings revealed that there is a significant effect of conversational training on the improvement of students' pragmatic competence and their LF. Getting back to literature, there is much research that supports this finding and found out that formal training is a very effective method to improve the proficiency of non-native students in interpreting implicature. Examples of this research are: (Bouton, 1994; Broersma, 1994; Rose, 2005; Takimoto, 2006; Felix, 2008). Also, previous studies, like (Roever, 2001; Lee, 2002; Taguchi, 2005; Tuan, 2012), have supported the findings of this study regarding the positive correlation between the students' pragmatic competence and their language proficiency. The post-test showed also that the participants' ability to interpret and recognizing conversational implicatures improved representing the Gricean model of the four maxims, especially quality and quantity maxims.

The following will be an analysis of the four maxims (quality, Quantity, manner and relation) in which I will shed the light on some items of the pragmatic test. It draws a on descriptive statistics of the items individually. The analysis is divided into 4 sections with examples from the test.

Flouting the maxim of "Quality"

According to the research findings, the participants were able to comprehend and interpret violation of quality maxim. They had the ability to understand irony behind the literal meaning. Item number 11 is an example of this.

Item 11:

"In a recent party, there was a lot of singing and playing Piano. At one stage, Matt was playing the piano while Brian was singing. Jill was not at the party, but Linda, her friend, was.

Jill asking: *What did Brian sing?*

Linda: *I am not sure, but Matt was playing "Yesterday".*

(Narrator) What does Linda probably mean?

- a. She was only interested in Matt and did not listen to Brian.
- b. Brian sang very badly.
- c. Brian and Matt were not doing the same song.

d. The song that Brian sang was "Yesterday". "

In this item, 83% of the participants chose "B" in the post-test which is the expected answer. On the other hand, 4% chose this answer in the pre-test. In the example, it is obvious that Linda did not like Brian's singing. However, she would not tell directly. In the pre-test, the majority chose "A" which clearly indicates that they just understand the surface meaning. On the other hand, a percentage of 10.8 chose "A" in the post-test. This huge difference in the percentage between pre-test and post-test shows the true effect of the training.

Flouting the maxim of "Manner"

Regarding the maxim of Manner, the findings also revealed positive effect. the results showed that the participants' ability to interpret maxim of manner breaches improved. A clear example is item 13.

Item 13:

"Tom and Jennifer are taking a course together. Tom asked Jennifer about her feelings about the class.

Tom: *Do you like linguistics?*

Jennifer: *Well, let us just say I do not jump for joy before class.*

(Narrator) What does Jennifer probably mean?

- a. She likes the course very much.
- b. She hates the course.
- c. She is not very sure about her feelings about the course.
- d. She wants to leave the course."

52% of the participants chose "A" in the pre-test while only 13% chose it in the post-test. In the post-test, 70% of the participants chose "C" which is the expected answer while in the pre-test 22% chose it only. Again, we can see clearly that training the participants including the ability to decipher ambiguity had a positive effect on their ability to understand and flout the maxim of manner.

Flouting the Maxim of "Relation"

"Flouting the Maxim of "Relation" Implicatures related to the maxim of relation were found to be the easiest for both NS and NNS groups" (Bouton, 1988). This fact by Bouton could be true in this study where the scores of the participants were higher than any other maxim. Item "6" is a clear example for this claim. Scores in the post-test were lower than the pre-test.

Item 6:

"Jack is talking to his housemate Sarah about another housemate, Frank.

Jack: *Do you know where Frank is, Sarah?*

Sarah: *Well, I heard music from his room earlier.*

(Narrator) What does Sarah probably mean?

- a. Frank forgot to turn the music off.
- b. Frank's loud music bothers Sarah.
- c. Frank is probably in his room.
- d. Sarah does not know where Frank is."

In this item, around 85% of the participants chose "C" in the pre-test which is the expected answer. The strange thing is that this percentage decreased to 72.4% in the post-test which is unexpected finding. Murray (2011) gave us a useful explanation for this unexpected finding.

"When the speaker commences the utterance with a hedging "well," it could be taken as an indication of the possibility of ignorance, which points to a clash of maxims." So, If the speaker has an authentic and genuine doubts of the status of her own knowledge, she might choose to flout the relation maxim, rather than taking the risk breaching the quality maxim.

Flouting the maxim of "Quantity"

In item 10, the implicature is conveyed. When someone is asked for an opinion about a person, object or action that they do not want to criticize directly. They usually reply with a favorable comment.

Item 10:

"Jose and Tanya are professors at a college. They are talking about a student, Mark.

Jose: *How did you like Mark's term paper?*

Tanya: *Well, I thought it was well typed.*

(Narrator) How did Tanya like Mark's term paper?

- a. He liked it; he thought it was good.
- b. He thought it was important that the paper was well typed.
- c. He really had not read well enough to know.
- d. He did not like it."

According to the findings, the participants became more able, at a highly significant level, to interpret and recognize understated negative evaluation. In this item, the effect of training is burly seen as the percentage of the participants increased from 4,2% in the pre-test to 87.4% in the post-test. This shows how training enabled the participants to interpret understated negative evaluation.

4.3. Pedagogical Implicature

Based on these research results, we can say that there are many useful pedagogical implicatures that TEFL teachers can apply. "Ability to recognize and interpret conversational implicatures could inform and enhance teaching" (Murray, 2011). The conversation is an essential part of both teachers and students in a daily classroom. "Successful conversations in the classroom will result in effective communication" (Tuan, 2012). Farahian et al. (2012) highlighted the fact that the development of pragmatic competence is considered a pre-requisite for communicative competence development. It is inevitable to use conversational implicature for effective communication. Conversational implicature can be used as a servant for different communicative purposes. Implicatures can effectively carry out certain language functions such as irony. According to this, learners need to be trained in using them. "Fostering pragmatic competence among EFL learners could be one of the L2 teacher roles" (Farahian et al., 2012).

Various types of implicature can be applied in the classroom by the teacher. The relation maxim, for example, its implicatures are known to be relevant to the silly questions that students ask in class. If the teacher does not know how to respond to these types of questions, he might give the students a pop exam or he might be angry. This all depends on his pragmatic competence regarding the implicature of the relation maxim. For instance, if a student asks an irrelevant or overly simplistic question, a teacher might respond with a rhetorical question or a playful remark, signaling the inappropriateness of the question without explicitly criticizing the student. Murray (2011) said that the "teacher's inability to distinguish between an utterance that is gently cajoling or biting sarcasm can have a long-term negative impact on teacher-student and other workplace relationships."

Another maxim that can be used in the classroom is the quality maxim, which its implicature can be used especially during the communicative practice stages of EFL lessons. For example, when teaching a lesson on the past tense, a teacher might say, "It was sunny last week, but it could have rained," implying a suggestion of hypothetical situations. This helps students understand the use of language for expressing conjecture or hypothetical ideas. Besides, the manner maxim can be also used in class, especially in terms of ambiguity. As we know that ambiguity happens a lot in class and it is considered a normal thing to happen and it results in a failure of communication between the learner and the teacher. For instance, when a teacher says, "You can find this in the textbook," without specifying which page, it could lead to confusion. To avoid ambiguity, learners should be trained on how conversations and ideas can be carried out vaguely or clearly. Teachers can model how to give clear, concise directions or clarify vague language. For example, during instructions, the teacher could say, "Please open your books to page 45 and look at the first exercise," ensuring clarity and reducing the chance for misunderstandings.

Regarding the last maxim, which is quantity, it can be implemented in the way that the teacher conducts controlled versus free practice. For example, during controlled practice, a teacher might provide specific examples and a limited set of questions for the students to answer, ensuring that they only give the necessary information. However, during free practice, the teacher might encourage students to elaborate on their answers and engage in more open-ended discussions. This allows students to practice adjusting their language according to the context, providing enough information without overwhelming the listener.

For instance, during role-playing activities, teachers can model how much detail to provide depending on the context, guiding students in using appropriate amounts of information. In other activities, like group discussions, teachers can encourage students to give more elaborate responses, helping them develop their fluency and confidence in using language effectively.

In summary, by recognizing and implementing these implicature maxims in the classroom, teachers can create an environment where students are more aware of how to use language effectively in various contexts. Training students to recognize the nuances of conversational implicature can not only help them in their language development but also prepare them for real-world communication challenges where ambiguity, irony, and indirectness are often encountered.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, this paper addresses a significant area in teaching related to pragmatics. The findings revealed the effects of instructional implicature on improving TEFL Omani student's language proficiency and pragmatic competence. The findings also show that there is a positive correlation between the TEFL students' pragmatic competence and their language proficiency. There are many interesting topics that can be researchable in the Omani context like exploring the effect of pragmatic instruction on developing the understanding of learners of why, when, with whom a student, a teacher or a person chooses to speak ironically. A future study might be conducted in this regard on evaluating the application level pragmatic competence of EFL student teachers. Murray (2011) emphasized that ethnographic research would give the ability to expand implicature knowledge in a classroom atmosphere and also help to identify the lack of pragmatic competence in which would lead to communication breakdown between teachers and students.

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Appendixes

- A link for the TOEIC test.

https://www.examenglish.com/TOEIC/?gclid=CjwKCAjwk6P2BRAIEiwAfVJ0rB-93AKQSTcRnAhGV649hpe_eTmrJ8Z11g4IFs74DCpD_56QRt7oGhoCf_MQAvD_BwE

- A link for the pragmatic competence test references

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4751735/>

- Links for the websites from which I took the activities and materials of the training

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Browse/Search:pragmatics%20activities>

<https://www.pinterest.com/xtinejones85/pragmatic-language-activities/>

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1094828.pdf>

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