Exploring the effects of instruction on EFL learners' pragmatic development

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Abstract

In the present study an attempt was made to focus on pragmatic instruction and feedback as a kind of discriminatory factor. To teach English compliment and compliment responses, this paper evaluated the relative effectiveness of input-based instruction involving 132 Iranian EFL learners at intermediate and advanced levels. The main purpose of the study was to investigate to what extent instruction affected learners' knowledge and ability to use compliment strategies. Students were divided into three groups: explicit, implicit and control. They were taught common strategies regarding how to compliment and respond to it. Whereas the explicit groups received instruction by means of explicit feedback on the use of appropriate compliments, the implicit groups were provided with instruction plus implicit feedback. The results of the data analysis based on the pre-tests, post-tests and follow up tests including discourse-completion tasks and self-assessment tests indicated that although instruction had a positive effect on the development of students' socio-pragmatic competence of both explicit and implicit groups, the explicit group did better. The study may have some implications for

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teaching compliment forms which have been forgotten somehow in EFL classrooms today.

1. Introduction

Learning a second or foreign language is a complex process which has long been an area of attention. Many studies have focused on L2 learning with illustrated documents (Billmyer, 1990). They suggest that L2 learners start learning the target language assuming that memorizing the grammatical structure or long lists of vocabularies help them be successful L2 speakers which is far from the reality. Language is not sum of its parts and as many significant cultural and social aspects of a language are not covered in language teaching methodologies, students are left to acquire them on their own. Communicative competence and the ability to use a language in an appropriate manner are not achieved through rote memorization of grammatical and lexical components of the language. As Sauvignon (1997) argued, helping language learners become effective language users is achieved when the main focus of attention is directed to the communicative aspect of the language. This makes the need for pragmatic instruction through equipping learners with necessary tools to be able to communicate appropriately.

Research on the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction to make the students aware of factors beyond the routine language structures has failed to come up with conclusive results especially in an EFL context. Consciousness in second language acquisition, as an issue of controversy, has long been considered important in cross-cultural studies. Some scholars (Krashen, 1985) emphasised the need to provide comprehensible input rather than to teach language explicitly whereas others (Ayoun, 2001; Da Silva, 2003; Tajeddin & Ghamari, 2011) indicated that conscious attention to both form and meaning is also needed. Although most of the researchers

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focused on the centrality of this issue, a few of them determined the details of how different constructs of the debate are realised in actual classrooms.

In the current study, an attempt was made to determine the ways teaching pragmatics may foster EFL learners' pragmatic ability. The speech act of complimenting was selected. Because of the necessity of comparing the results with control groups or different experimental groups, there was a need to define a discriminatory factor. To this purpose, two types of feedback were used to let students grasp what they need in different ways. However, pragmatic instruction and the way students feel they need it (their self-confidence) were of the main concern in this study.

According to Oxford Dictionary's definition, a compliment is a remark that expresses praise or admiration of somebody. Compliments may be used to maintain or create solidarity between the speaker and the hearer. The limited number of syntactic formulas for the speech act of complimenting provides useful pragmalinguistic resources that are easily accessible for language teachers and provide appropriate materials for syllabus designer and educational authorities. Three common formulae according to Wolfson and Manes (1980, pp. 402-403) are: (1) NP is/looks (intensifier) ADJ like "Your dress looks really beautiful"; (2) I like/love NP like "I love your hairstyle"; and (3) PRO is ADJ NP like "That's a good idea". They also considered the occurrence of over 1000 compliments in different situations and found that *great*, *good*, *beautiful*, *pretty* and *nice* are the most common adjectives used in compliments and their replies. These routine formulas may be incorporated easily into language teaching materials and syllabus design as are other components of the language like grammar or vocabulary. As Wolfson (1981) proposed "When learners are given the three major syntactic patterns and the five most frequently found adjectives, they have little difficulty in producing compliments which conform to the patterns used by native speakers" (p. 122).

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2. Literature Review

To investigate the effect of instruction and task-based activities on learning process and outcomes of L2 pragmatics, four questions are considered: (1) What opportunities do learners have to develop their pragmatic level in language classrooms?, (2) Do pragmatic competence and ability develop in classes without teaching pragmatics?, (3) What is the effect of different teaching approaches to pragmatic development? (Rose & Kasper, 2001), and (4) What is the effect of psychological factors such as attitude and feedback in pragmatic instruction? Rose and Kasper (2001) in their article about pragmatics in language teaching examined the first three questions whereas the last two questions are mainly addressed in this study to determine the effect of instruction and feedback on pragmatic features in general and compliments as one speech act in particular.

In traditional approaches with the main focus on linguistic elements of the language, teachers were the only speakers in the classroom and students had few opportunities to express themselves by using target language. The necessary discoursal strategies to change the linguistic form based on the addressee, his/her age, social level, etc., to take turns in conversations and maintain it, to respect others' face, etc. were of minor importance. There were a few discussions on the point in question and because the main language of the classroom was not the target language, little was communicated between teachers and students. Many studies focused on the role of teachers in teacher-fronted teaching and many researchers argued that the students were not involved in the conversations (Ur, 1981).

These findings brought the effect of learners' experience into the light. The importance of the learners' knowledge and their experience was explored in a study by Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005). The authors considered the effect of awareness-raising activities in an ESL context on pragmatic development. There were five intact classes with students of 18 different language backgrounds. The finding of their study was significant because it indicated the importance of learners' familiarity with cross-cultural

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differences considering both linguistic and pragmatic features to be able to communicate appropriately.

Ishihara (2003) conducted a case study to examine the effect of pragmatic instruction on the speech act of complimenting in an ESL context. There was a positive effect for such an instruction and the students were able to use appropriate compliment strategies in their outside-of-class interactions. Through continuous classroom evaluations and discussions, the students improved their cross-cultural perspectives and were able to compare it with their mother tongue. Ishihara's (2003) general conclusion was in line with the findings in previous studies such as the study conducted by Billmyer (1990) exploring the effects of teaching compliments in an ESL context. Billmyer (1990) also concluded that formal classroom instruction can help learners in their production and reception of appropriate and meaningful language use. He advocated the need for instruction to let learners understand social rules governing paying compliments in particular and language use in general.

To consider the effect of different teaching approaches on pragmatic development, two studies are reviewed. Rose and Kwai-fun (2001) compared the usefulness of deductive and inductive approaches to teach compliments to university Chinese learners of English. Whereas the deductive group received explicit instruction of the metapragmatic information the inductive group was left to deduce how compliments are realised. The authors found no effect for compliment instruction comparing the scores of students' confidence and pragmatic assessment task in pre-test and post-test. However, concerning the discourse completion task, although the two groups used compliment formulae more in their sentences, the deductive group outperformed the inductive group in using appropriate compliment responses. They concluded that both deductive and inductive approaches help the students to attain pragmalinguistic competence, but only the deductive approach results in the development of sociopragmatic proficiency.

In a recent study conducted by Vahid Dastjerdi and Farshid (2011) the effect of explicit instruction focusing on the routinised nature of speech acts was explored. The structure of compliments

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was taught to two groups of EFL learners. The explicit group outperformed the control group in their study indicating that through focusing on the routinized nature of compliments in English, EFL learners may develop their pragmatic ability.

As the studies show it may be concluded that pragmatic instruction is needed especially in an EFL context to help learners acquire necessary strategies. This fact brings us back to the question of effectiveness of various approaches to teach pragmatic competence. It is not possible to apply one single method for each and every language class or to put priority over one because of the variables involved in different situational contexts. In what follows, the effect of pragmatic instruction on the speech act of complimenting focusing on two types of feedback is presented to provide answers to the research questions. Indeed, the learners' confidence in providing answers to the scenarios and how their confidence changed before and after the intervention is estimated.

3. Purpose of the Study

After considering the literature, the students' needs, and the importance of pragmatic instruction especially in an EFL context, the following research questions and hypotheses were formulated and addressed in this study to examine the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction:

1. Does pragmatic instruction concerning the speech act of complimenting lead to a better understanding of this speech act among Persian EFL learners?
2. Does feedback, of explicit and implicit types, help students grasp instructional materials more rapidly in a sustained way?
3. Is there any effect of pragmatic instruction on developing learners' self confidence?

The above questions led us to the following hypotheses:
1. There is no effect for teaching the structure of compliments in English among Persian EFL learners.

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2. Providing feedback, of both explicit and implicit types, does not influence Persian EFL learners` production of the speech act of complimenting.
3. There is no effect of pragmatic instruction on developing learners' self-confidence.

4. Method
4.1 Participants

The participants for this study included 132 EFL students at a state university. There were both male and female students who were divided into two basic levels according to their language proficiency. Using the first version of the Quick Oxford Placement Test, the students were assigned to intermediate and advanced levels. This was regarded as a general test with 60 multiple choice questions to answer. Learners who scored at least 50 (out of 60) were regarded as advanced students whereas those scoring 49 or lower comprised the intermediate groups in the current study. Each level was divided into three groups namely explicit, implicit and control. As most of the students were in their twenties, they were divided into two age groups: the students aged 22 years old and younger were regarded as the members of age group 1 whereas those older than 22 were assigned to age group 2.

4.2 Materials

The materials and activities for instructional purposes of the study included authentic sources of native speaker compliments which were provided by investigators from the studies of complimenting (Fukasawa, 2011; Othman, 2011). Different exercises which were utilised to raise students' awareness in this study were selected from Tran (2007) with some changes. Handouts including the summary of the main points of each session accompanied by some exercises were also distributed after the class. All the exercises provided for the learners were of precisely the kind recommended by House and Kasper (1981) and Thomas (1983). The exercises were aimed at raising students' awareness of the most frequent topics for

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complimenting as well as providing enough opportunities for social interaction rather than simply focusing on particular linguistic forms. Furthermore, these activities provided opportunity for exposure to genuine sociolinguistic data and thus let the students interpret authentic material, something which is of great value and importance to many adult learners.

The students were divided into different proficiency levels based on the results of the first version of the Quick Oxford Placement Test. To measure students' ability in pragmatics and to determine how they are able to use compliments in their utterances, a pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test were designed. A total of 36 scenarios (12 in each test, 6 scenarios related to complimenting and 6 scenarios related to the ways people respond to others' compliments) were used to elicit the students' replies.

4.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The treatment for the experimental groups employed a combination of instruction and feedback. These two techniques were used with the assumption that, in a short period of time for instruction, the combination is more effective than only providing instruction or feedback in isolation. The data for this study were collected in two months. Intermediate and advanced learners were randomly assigned to three different groups, namely explicit, implicit and control. The participants made up six different classes but only four classes were taught common compliment strategies because two of them (intermediate control and advance control groups) were considered as control groups. The experimental groups were coded as *Intermediate Explicit, Intermediate Implicit*, *Advanced Explicit*, and *Advanced Implicit*. The name of the groups indicates the type of feedback they received.

How compliments are realized in American culture was taught to the four experimental groups similarly. While pragmatic instruction was systematically implemented in all activities, the only difference between these groups was in the type of feedback they received. Experimental groups received the same instructional materials, but the explicit groups were provided with explicit

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feedback and implicit groups were taught through implicit feedback. Explicit feedback includes extra explanations regarding the structure of compliments in each and every scenario and further discussions with students about the appropriateness of their replies. In doing so, the students could compare the appropriateness of their utterances in different situations to determine how their compliments are accepted or rejected. However, implicit feedback is operationalised as providing feedback only with facial expressions or body language or the words "Yes" and "No" as responses to the students. The students' incorrect use of compliments was corrected implicitly by peer correction or teacher's recast with no extra explanation. In other words, the implicit groups only studied the structure and content of the compliments without any further discussion or explanation.

There were twelve scenarios in pre-test, twelve in post-test, and twelve in delayed post-test. The students were required to read each scenario carefully and to imagine themselves in each situation to be able to provide an appropriate answer. It was of prime importance to ask English native speakers code the replies provided by the students. Native speakers from UCLA in US coded the answers from 1 (very unsatisfactory) to 5 (completely appropriate) after two months.

The students in pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test were also asked to rate themselves from 1 (very unsatisfactory) to 5 (completely appropriate) according to the criteria which was presented to them. This way, we could estimate how well the learners were confident in providing answers to the scenarios and how their confidence changed before and after the intervention. For example in post-testing, each student received two scores, one related to their replies to the scenarios and one related to their own judgments. Some of the students rated most of the scenarios as 5 before the intervention and indicated the highest level of confidence in using compliments in an appropriate manner but received low scores after the papers were corrected. The results of their own judgment scores were compared amongst the three tests.

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The students took the pre-test in the first week of instruction that was considered the first session. During the next four sessions, the students at all levels (except controls) were taught the structure of compliments by means of teacher explanation, power point slides, and information sheets summarising the main points of the lessons. Compliment forms and functions, appropriate topics and contexts, a variety of social, cultural and situational factors that condition this speech act in foreign culture were presented. Since both compliments and compliment responses were the main focus of the present study, common strategies to respond compliments made by others were also taught to the students. Post-test was given to the students on the sixth session and after two weeks interval, the delayed post-test was administered.

After the required data were collected, for purposes of analysis, the students' scores at time one (pre-test), time two (post-test), and time three (delayed post-test) were compared. For SPSS analysis, multiple regression program, MANOVA, and mixed between-within ANOVA were used to evaluate the effects of instruction and feedback (explicit, implicit and control), proficiency level, age group 2 (22 years old and younger, older than 22), gender and time (time 1, time 2, time 3) on the students' continuous scores. To conduct MANOVA the continuous scores of pre-, post-, and delayed post-test were considered as dependent variables. Analyses of data included frequencies, means, standard deviations, mixed between-within ANOVA, and two-way MANOVA. Two-way MANOVA was conducted several times to determine whether instruction, feedback, and level of the students had any effect on the students' scores. The interactional effects were also calculated using Bonferroni as the appropriate alpha value.

5. Results
5.1 Pragmatic Instruction and Complimenting

To analyse the data using mixed between-within analysis of variance, time was considered as the within subject variable among groups consisting of three levels (pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test) and other variables such as instruction, feedback, level,

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gender and age were all considered as between subject factors. The effect of each independent variable on the compliment scores was examined at three time periods. The students were divided into two groups in terms of the availability of instruction (Group 1: those who received instruction; Group 2: those who did not receive instruction). Table 1 indicates the main effect of between-subjects variable (instruction: yes/no). There was a statistically significant main effect for instruction [F (1,127) = 16.37, p<.0005] with a very large effect size (partial eta squared = .11). This finding indicates that there was a significant difference in the compliment scores for those who received instruction and those who did not. The mean score for the students who received instruction (M = 25.43, SD = 8.78) was significantly different from those who did not (M = 20.08, SD = 8.63).

Table 1: The significant contribution of instruction and level

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Instruction	1	16.372	.000	.114
Level	1	6.713	.011	.050
Gender	1	1.815	.180	.014
Age	1	.656	.419	.005
Error	127			

a. computed using alpha = .05

The main effect for level [F (1,127) = 6.71, p = .01] was also significant but age (Sig = .419) and gender (Sig = .180) did not reach significant value. The same result was obtained through multiple regression analyses. This fact is indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: The contribution of each independent variable, post-test scores

Model	Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta		
Instruction	-.298	-3.762	.000
Level	.397	4.216	.000
Gender	.130	1.631	.105
Age	-.034	-.358	.721

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Because the significant value of instruction and level was less than .05 (Sig = .000 for both), it was concluded that the variables were making a significant unique contribution to the prediction of post-test scores. There was no significant effect for gender and age set as independent variables (Sig = .105 and Sig = .721 respectively). Concerning the effect of age and gender, similar results were obtained in pre-test, and delayed post-test scores, therefore, age and gender were considered as covariate variables in the present study and the main focus shifted to the efficiency of other independent variables including instruction, feedback and proficiency level of the learners.

After finding a statistical significant effect for instruction, seeking the answer to the second question of the study to determine whether feedback had any effect on the scores at three time periods, another analysis of variance was conducted. The students were divided into three groups according to the type of feedback they received (Group 1: control; Group 2: implicit; Group 3: explicit). The scores on the compliment speech act at time 1, time 2 and time 3 were compared. There was a significant effect for time. There was also a statistically significant main effect for feedback [F (2,126) = 6.09, p<.0005] with a large effect size. The mean score for the control group (M = 21.65, SD = 8.63) was significantly different from the explicit group (M = 27.05, SD = 8.36). The implicit group (M = 25.12, SD = 8.90) did not differ significantly from either of the other groups. Table 3 displays the mean differences among groups.

Table 3: The mean scores of different groups

Feedback	Mean	Std. Error
Control	21.648	1.286
Implicit	25.125	1.397
Explicit	27.050	1.138

It was concluded that there was a main effect for feedback and level when the effect of gender and age was removed. The students who received feedback performed better than the control group who did not receive either instruction or feedback. It was not yet clear

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which type of feedback contributed more to the variability of scores. To find out the answer, multivariate analysis of variance was conducted. Only this way, the difference between explicit and implicit groups became clear.

5.2 Feedback and Complimenting

A two-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate the effect of feedback on the compliment scores. Three dependent variables were used: pre-test scores, post-test scores, and delayed post-test scores. The independent variables were proficiency level of the students (intermediate and advanced) and feedback (with three levels: control, implicit, explicit) whereas the effect of age and gender was statistically controlled for. Preliminary assumption testing was conducted to check for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, and multicollinearity, with no serious violations noted.

The results showed a significant difference on the feedback, between the groups who received instruction plus explicit feedback, those who were taught through implicit feedback and the last group who did not receive any feedback, on the combined dependent variables: $F_{(4, 218)} = 5.61$, $p<.0005$; Wilks' Lambda = .69; partial eta squared = .28. It was also found that there was a statistically significant difference on the level on the combined dependent variables: $F_{(2, 116)} = 4.23$, $p = .03$; Wilks' Lambda = .70; partial eta squared = .10 at the .05 level. This is indicated in Table 4.

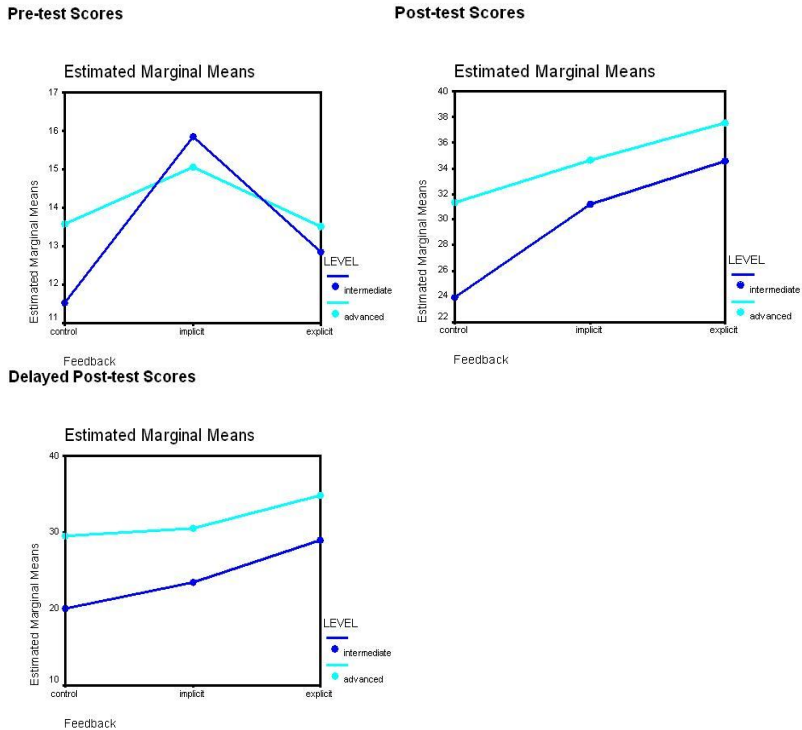**Table 4:** The effect of feedback and level on the combined dependent variable

Effect		Value	f	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Gender	Wilks' Lambda	.843	1.295	.500	.002
Age	Wilks' Lambda	.743	.401	.610	.001
Feedback	Wilks' Lambda	.692	5.610	.000	.280

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Level	Wilks' Lambda	.697	4.231	.030	.099
Feedback*Level	Wilks' Lambda	.769	.159	.856	.001

Concerning feedback, when the results for the dependent variables were analysed separately, post-test scores $F(2, 126) = 9.04$, $p<.0005$ and delayed post-test scores $F(2, 126) = 7.59$, $p = .010$ reached statistical significance using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .017. An inspection of the mean scores indicated that the students who were taught the structure of compliments with explicit feedback reported the highest scores on compliments in post-test (M = 36.17, SD = 7.92) in comparison to the other two groups. The same results were obtained in delayed post-test because the explicit group reported the highest compliment mean sores (M = 31.89, SD = 9.24) in comparison to both the implicit group (M = 26.99, SD = 8.55) and the control group (M = 24.79, SD = 8.66). This finding indicates that providing explicit feedback helped the students more. For level, on the other hand, when the results for the dependent variables were considered separately, only delayed post-test scores $F(1, 126) = 9.32$, $p = .010$ reached statistical significance. It was concluded that level did not have an influential effect on participants' behavior on the post-test. The mean scores of the three groups are compared in Figure 1.

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Figure 1: The effect of feedback and level between groups

As Figure 1 indicates, for pre-test, both intermediate and advanced implicit groups got the highest mean scores on compliments in comparison to either group. In post-test, however, whereas there was an increase in the mean scores for both intermediate and advanced groups, advanced learners outperformed the intermediate one in all three groups. In post-test, although advanced control group received slightly higher scores on compliments than the intermediate implicit group, the latter received higher scores than the intermediate control group. Explicit groups in post-test performed better than either group. The third diagram which indicates the group differences in delayed post-test conveys to some extent the information of the second diagram but the differences between scores is less than that for post-test scores.

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This fact indicated that the students forgot some of what they had been taught in compliment structure after a two-week interval.

5.3 Prgmatc Instruction and Self-confidence

After performing the analyses in terms of compliment scores to indicate the way instruction had an effect on pragmatic development of EFL learners, the results of self-assessment tests were analysed. A mixed between-within analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of instruction on the compliment judgment scores after removing the effect of all other variables. The students were divided into two groups in terms of the instruction availability (Group 1: those who received instruction; Group 2: those who did not receive instruction). The judgment scores at time 1 (prior to the intervention), time 2 (following the intervention), and time 3 (two week follow-up) were compared. There was a significant effect for time (Wilks' Lambda = .99, $F(2,126) = 2.24$, $p = .01$, partial eta squared = .09) indicating that there was a significant change in judgment scores across the three time periods. Instruction as the between subject variable reached statistical significance. Table 5 displays this fact.

**Table 5:** The significant contribution of instruction on judgment scores

Source	df	f	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Instruction	1	9.608	.002	.070
Level	1	2.943	.105	.002
Gender	1	1.593	.209	.012
Age	1	.104	.747	.001
Error	127			

It was found that there was a statistically significant main effect for instruction [$F(1,127) = 9.61$, $p = .002$] with a large effect size (partial eta squared = .07). This indicated that there was a significant difference in the judgment scores for those who received instruction and those who did not. The mean score for the students who received instruction (M = 42.25, SD = 6.24) was significantly different from the other group (M = 39.05, SD = 8.11).

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Figure 2 displays the pre-test judgment scores between intermediate and advanced groups. The explicit groups rated themselves very low in pre-test while the advanced implicit group felt they could use compliments appropriately. There was a fluctuation in the judgment mean scores in the pre-test with no increase or decrease among groups.
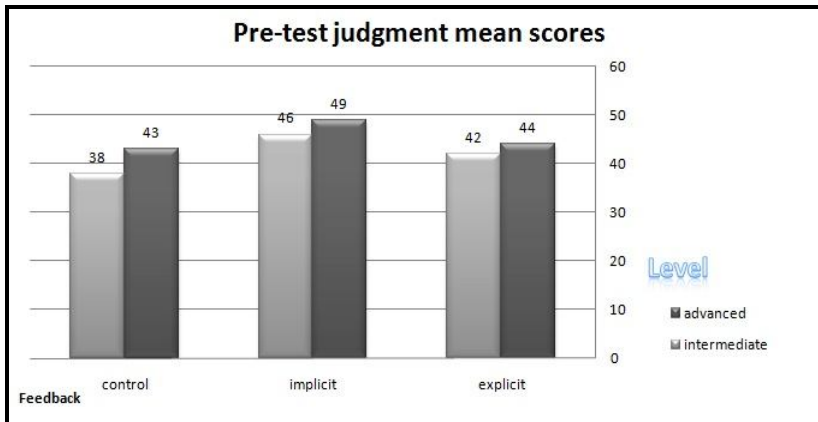
Figure 2: Self-assessment test scores on the pre-test

However, as Figure 3 indicates, there was an increase on the judgment mean scores of experimental groups after the intervention. While the control groups received the lowest judgment mean scores, the explicit groups rated themselves high on the post-test indicating that after they were taught the compliment structures, they were more confident in using compliments. Those who were taught the structure of compliments did better on the self-assessment test, the post-test, and delayed post-test. There was a statistically significant difference between experimental group and the control group in both tests (Sig = .002). This finding indicates that students were more confident in their abilities after the intervention and rated themselves higher in comparison to the time they were not aware of the ways compliments are realised among native speakers.

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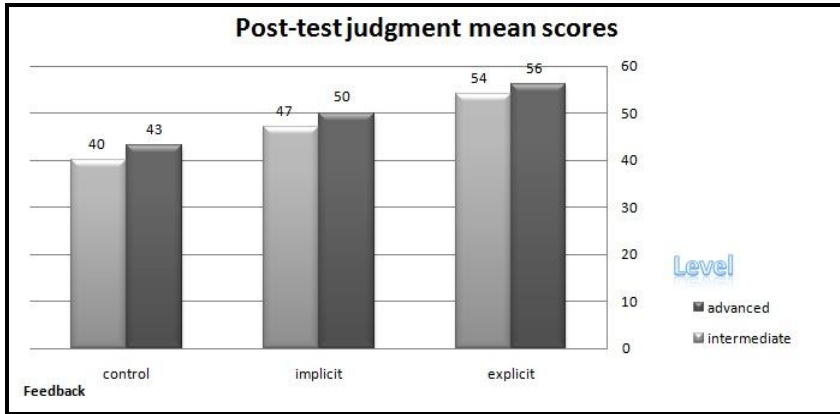
Figure 3: The participants' degree of confidence on the post-test

6. Discussion

Different studies considered the effect of instruction to examine the way the students' pragmatic abilities develop considering the realization of different speech acts. All researchers who conducted an experimental or a quasi experimental study especially in the field of communication and pragmatics, faced some difficulties. Whereas some of them tackled the problems successfully and tried to control the effect of all related variables, others sacrificed the effect of other variables at the cost of arriving at some conclusions (Billmyer, 1990; Rose, 2000). The instructors of the experimental groups in this study dedicated six weeks to teaching compliments by explaining the relationship between form and function (achieving solidarity), the role of different variables such as educational level of the interlocutors, their gender and social status etc. The outcome was that the present study widened the scope of teachable speech acts considering the influential effect of attitudinal factors in the field of compliments.

After analysing the data, a positive answer was found for the first question of the research. There was a significant effect for pragmatic instruction among learners of different proficiency levels. The results of mixed between-within analysis of variance indicated

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that there was a statistically significant difference between the compliment scores across three time periods when the effect of age and gender was removed. Instruction and level had significant main effect. This finding indicates that there was a significant difference in the compliment scores for the students who were taught compliment structure and those who did not receive instruction. By using MANOVA, it was also found that pragmatic instruction had a significant effect on the post-test and delayed post-test scores with a high eta squared.

Explicit and implicit feedback in the present study let the students realise the linguistic gaps between their own compliments and those given by native speakers in different situations. It helped the students enhance their learning because feedback made the learners to compare their utterances and the equivalent target forms. After finding a statistical main effect for pragmatic instruction, to find out the answer to the second question, SPSS analyses were conducted. There was a statistically significant main effect for feedback indicating that the explicit and implicit groups performed better than the control groups. In this study, explicit groups outperformed implicit groups on the post-test and the delayed post-test.

This was in line with the previous studies which showed that recasts are more effective in comparison to positive evidence alone (Ayoun, 2001; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Han, 2004; Mackey & Philp, 1998). Although the implicit group in the current study improved on the post-test over the pre-test, there was no significant difference between the implicit group and the control group at the .01 level. This fact was in contrast with Martinez-Flor and Fukuya`s (2005) study on appropriate suggestions where the implicit group significantly outperformed the control group on the post-test. However, the study done by Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) was totally different from the present study because in their study the effect of pragmatic instruction, on the one hand, and feedback type, on the other hand, remain vague.

Concerning the last question proposed above (Is there any effect of pragmatic instruction on developing learners' self

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confidence?), it was found that although experimental groups ⬜ especially the explicit groups ⬜ rated themselves very low before the intervention, they scored themselves higher on the post-test and delayed post-test. Explicit groups received the highest scores on the post-test and delayed post-test concerning judgment scores of their ability to use compliments. This finding indicates that teaching pragmatics to students helps them improve their self-confidence and trust their abilities to communicate with native speakers.

This conclusion was predictable, however, because in most cases when one does not know how to use something, he tries to replace it with a more familiar thing. Students in language classes use avoidance strategies when they are not familiar with the grammatical structure to convey their intended meaning. They try to express their intended meaning using what they know and refuse to use structures at which they are not good enough. The same happens in actual conversations where the students are not familiar with the speaking rules and cultural norms. Because of their low levels of self-confidence, they are not even eager to start a conversation with native speakers. This study indicated that pragmatic instruction makes L2 learners more confident and helps them trust their own abilities to communicate.

Including pragmatic features in language teaching may play a significant role to motivate the learners and make them interested. This way, the teacher can remove the negative attitudes L2 learners bring into the class and show them how learning and acquiring the target language with a new culture is enjoyable. Focusing on the syntax and lexicon of the language and neglecting other communicative aspects in language classes not only is boring for the students, but also forms a negative attitude toward the target language. In doing so, the students feel learning another language is similar to learning mathematics or history. Therefore, teaching pragmatics, discourse, communicative rules and all cross-cultural factors related to communication are what learners need and this fact necessitates considering them in teaching and testing.

7. Conclusion

Instructional effects on EFL learners' pragmatically appropriate use of compliments was investigated in this study. In line with previous research, there was a significant main effect for instruction indicating the need to incorporate pragmatics into syllabi. This study was different from the previous research in the field of pragmatic development in general and compliments in particular because it considered the effect of instruction and the way students' confidence changes before and after the intervention. It was found that presenting materials through explicit feedback is more effective than just correcting the students' mistakes without further discussions on the reasons, that is, implicit feedback. One of the reasons of the superiority of explicit group over implicit group was that the students in this group received more comprehensible input with discussions and extra explanations.

As Ellis (1994) proposed, providing sufficient input for the learners has an important influence on the development of pragmatic ability. Hill (1997) also indicated that input in EFL classrooms comes through teacher talk and instructional materials. However, foreign language teaching in Iran is conducted in traditional ways in the classroom, i.e., talking about the structure of the target language in Persian and asking students to memorise long lists of words. The classes are conducted in a teacher-centered way with even no discussion on the structures. When it comes to the communication, nothing is presented nor discussed. It was indicated in the current study that pragmatic instruction even in such a short period of time has significant effects on L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Although even teacher-fronted classroom discourse provides some opportunities for L2 learners to develop their pragmatic competence; it is not enough to expect the students to be able to communicate appropriately only through this type of input. Role-plays, pair-work, and group-work activities are as significant as lectures, conferences, etc. As the results of self-assessment test indicated, there is a need to pay some attention to pragmatic knowledge in English classes conducted at different levels. More

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research is also needed to analyse those aspects of compliment behavior that differ significantly from one culture to the other.

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Appendix

SCENARIOS

1. One of your sons is a business major. He has an interview today for a part-time job with a large investment company, so he is wearing his best suit. You compliment him on his appearance. You say:
…………………………………………………..……….. .
Rating: …………….

2. You have an important meeting and for that reason you wear something good to look really professional. On seeing you, your friend tells you, "You look really chic today!" You answer:
……………………………………………..………….. .
Rating: …………….

3. You are at university and class has just finished. While your professor is putting his books away, you notice his new book you have just studied and enjoyed. You compliment having such a book. You say:
………………………….………….. .
Rating: …………….

4. You are at the university and your teacher has handed back the paper that you wrote two weeks ago. As you are getting ready to leave, your teacher tells you that your paper was very good. You answer:
……………………………………….. .
Rating: …………….

5. You are at the university, and class has just ended. Your classmate gave a good presentation in class and you compliment her or him on it. You say:
………………………………………………………………..………
….. .
Rating: …………….

6. You have been going to a health club for some time. There, one of your colleagues tells you, "What a great athletic body you've got." You answer:
…………………………….. .
Rating: …………….

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7. You go to your student's house to help him study math. You notice that he has a new pencil case, and you tell him that you like it. You say:
…………………….…………... .
Rating: …………….

8. You have recently purchased a new car. On seeing it, your colleague's son tells you, "What an awesome car!" You answer:
………………………….………….. .
Rating: …………….

9. Your mother and grandmother have just returned from shopping. Your grandmother bought a new handbag and you tell her you think it's nice. You   say:
…………………………………………………………………….………….. .
Rating: …………….

10. You rarely have any complaints about anything happening in your life and you are content with whatever you've got. Once your father tells you, "I'm so glad you are happy and satisfied with your life." You answer:
…….................................………….. .
Rating: …………….

11. The taxi driver is driving past the other cars on a busy street very smoothly and overtaking them. You as one of the passengers compliment on his driving.
You   say:
……………………………………………………………….………….. .
Rating: …………….

12. You and your colleagues go for swimming classes organized by your workplace. At the end of one of the sessions, a guy you don't know comes to you and says "Wow! You swim great." You answer:
……………….......………….…………. .
Rating: …………….

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