THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE AND TURKISH EFL RESEARCH CONTEXT

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This study mainly aims to present a literature review on the factors that are thought to have an impact on EFL learners' acquisition of pragmatic competence in target language. The present study is composed of five sections; the importance of input and feedback on instruction; the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on learners' acquisition of pragmatic norms; the association of individual differences with pragmatic development; context and discourse practices; speech acts and semantic formulas. Emphasizing the inadequacy of the related studies, particularly in Turkish context, this study is anticipated to prompt more linguists to investigate pragmatic factors that affect Turkish EFL learners' acquisition of target language sociocultural norms.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence, EFL learners, Language context, Individual differences.

Introduction

Pragmatics has long been one of the most important aspects of language for learners to understand and be understood in a variety of contexts. Pragmatics is 'the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication' (Crystal, 1997:301). Pragmatic competence or the ability to use language appropriately in a given context has been one of the basic matters of EFL studies for more than two decades (Ifantidou, 2013).

Many studies have been carried out in the past two decades on speech acts, such as; requests, refusals, apologies and compliments (Ahn, 2007; Halenko & Jones, 2011; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Macaulay, 2001; Takimoto, 2009). But the studies on understanding the way how second language (L2) learners produce particular speech acts are limited in number and there has been little investigation on how learners learn pragmatic norms (Ahn, 2007; Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Martinez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005; Soler, 2005). Numerous studies have investigated the factors which are considered to be effective on learners' communicative interactions, such as; motivation, individual variables, instruction, feedback, input, speech acts and others. However, only one or two of these factors have been examined at a time in these studies. For instance, in a study on explicit instruction, Shively (2010) found that explicit instruction plays an important role in providing learners with appropriate L2 pragmatic norms. Takimoto (2009) focused on structured input activities, Koike and Pearson (2005) examined the effects of instruction and

input together, Kaypak and Ortaçtepe (2014) dealt with the relation of beliefs with second language acquisition, LoCastro (2001) concentrated on attitudes and motives of learners' towards second language learning in their studies in the field of pragmatics.

Literature Review

Some of the important studies carried out on the affective factors of pragmatics are presented below with sub headings. Table 1 summarizes the studies reviewed.

Table 1. Studies Reviewed

Factor	Number of Studies Reviewed	Studies Reviewed
Discourse and Context	2	Nikula (2005), Meibauer (2012)
Feedback	2	Koike & Pearson (2005), Takimoto (2006)
Individual Differences	5	Ehrman, Leaver, & Oxford (2013), Kaypak & Ortaçtepe (2014), Kim (2014), LoCastro (2001), Macaulay (2001)
Input	2	Martinez-Flor & Fukuya (2005), Takimoto (2009)
Instruction	5	Ghobadi & Fahim (2009), Halenko & Jones (2011), Ifantidou (2013), Nyugen, Pham, & Pham (2012), Soler (2005)
Motivation	2	Lee (2014), Papi (2010)
Speech Acts	10	Aksoyalp & Toprak (2015), Alagözlü & Büyüköztürk (2009), Asmalı (2013), Aşık & Cephe (2013), Babanoğlu (2014), Bulut (2003), Çapar (2014), Demirci (2001), Özdemir & Rezvani (2010), Tuncel (2011).
Total	28	

1. The Importance of Input and Feedback on Instruction

Some studies examined the impact of feedback and instruction on teaching speech acts (Koike & Pearson, 2005; Takimoto, 2006, 2009). The results are mixed. Koike and Pearson's (2005) study on explicit and implicit feedback and instruction types involved 99 adult native speakers and focused on the effectiveness of instruction and feedback in teaching particular speech acts. The researchers designed four treatment groups and one control group. Results of the study demonstrated that instruction and feedback in general had a positive impact on the development of learners' pragmatic competence. Especially, implicit instruction and feedback group was found to be more successful than the other treatment groups and the control group.

Similarly, Takimoto (2006) carried out a study on the effects of explicit feedback on the development of pragmatic competence in consciousness-raising tasks. The researcher formed three groups comprising 45 participants: two treatment groups (one was provided with consciousness-raising instruction, the other was provided with consciousness-raising instruction with feedback) and one control group. Although, the pre-test results of these three groups were nearly the same, there were clear differences between the pre-test and post-test results of these groups. The findings of the research revealed the positive impact of explicit feedback on consciousness-raising tasks.

Another study, carried out by Takimoto (2009), focused on the effects of input-based treatment on improving learners' pragmatic competence. Sixty Japanese participants were divided into four groups,

three of which are treatment groups and one of which is control group. Three different input-instruction based methods were applied to each experimental group; however, the control group had no instruction at all. Post- and follow-up test results demonstrated that input-based methods were quite successful in improving learners' pragmatic competence. As the results indicated, integrating input into instruction process was a beneficial technique.

2. The Association of Individual Differences with Pragmatic Development

According to Ehrman et al. (2003), individual differences such as learning strategies, learning styles, affective factors, etc. cannot be handled with one by one, as these categories are actually interconnected with each other. For example; Ehrman, et al. proposed that many researchers dealt with the matter of attitude indirectly over other factors that influence learners' success in target language, like learning styles, interests, personality, etc. Thus, in their study they dealt with certain individual differences that are effective on language learning in order to present the field's overall development to date and put assumptions forward on how much it might develop in the future. Results revealed that learners learn best when they are provided with adequate opportunities to create their own learning styles and strategies through a program that would present them a comfortable and positive learning environment.

In another study, LoCastro (2001) investigated individual factors, such as; motivation and attitudes, and their association with pragmatic development in a Japanese context. Four experimental groups were attained four different courses and they were evaluated in terms of their individual motives and attitudes towards English language. Questionnaire results indicated that learners who had positive attitudes towards English language were mostly instrumentally oriented. At the end of the study, motivation and attitudes were found to play an inevitable role in learners' adaptation to pragmatic norms of target language.

Likewise, Papi (2010) investigated the relationship of learners' anxiety and internal motivation with their success in foreign language learning. In total 1011 Iranian high-schoolers between the ages of 14 and 19 responded to a questionnaire assessing their pre-experiences, motivation, anxiety, and attitudes. Findings of the study showed that learners' positive attitudes had an impact on decreasing foreign language learning anxiety. While learners' integrative motivation and positive pre-experiences played an important role in reducing their anxiety level and enhancing their success in foreign language learning, learners' instrumental motives were found to increase their anxiety level and reduce their success rate in foreign language.

Next, Kaypak and Ortaçtepe (2014) examined the connection between learners' beliefs and L2 acquisition, specifically the probable changes that might occur in learners' attitudes and perceptions when they go abroad and get in touch with English-speaking communities in various communication mediums. Fifty-three Turkish exchange students took pre- and post- belief tests. Results obtained from the questionnaires and journals indicated that learners' attention on using proper and accurate forms shifted to be fluent in the target language in order to communicate effectively. Also, there weren't any significant differences in terms of learners' attitudes when pre- and post-questionnaire results were compared. The study confirmed the assumption that more time is needed to observe whtether there are any significant differences in learners' attitudes towards English language as a lingua franca.

Some researchers believe that there are certain individual differences in speech acts of males and females. It is still argumentative whether there is an association between gender and language learning. In this context, Macaulay (2001) examined the interviewing styles of men and women speakers in order to see whether there was any significant difference between them. Including three Canadian and one American interviewer working for CNN and CBC, famous broadcasting corporations, the study focused on detecting differences between genders in performing requests regarding direct-indirect or polite-impolite use of speech acts. Results showed that there was a slight difference in interviewers' using requests for obtaining information in that although women preferred indirect requests in their overall speech acts, they used more polite forms than men did. Also, the study revealed that females were powerful interviewers during conversations as they used more provocative speech forms than the men did.

When learners get in touch with native speakers of any language in communicative settings, they organize and form their own identities (Kim, 2014). However, most of the L2 learners encounter with obstacles in forming their learner identities in various settings and they sometimes find it difficult to make contact with native English speakers in academic discourses (Lee, 2014). In a case study, Lee (2014) investigated the impact of learner motivation on L2 improvement and examined the effects of learner investment and learning strategies on forming an identity. The data were collected through periodic face-to-face interviews conducted with a university student named Mina. Lee examined the relation of Mina's previous experiences, identity and motives with her L2 improvement for a period of 12 months. The research showed that Mina's strong efforts to be a native-like speaker improved her English level considerably during this process. It was observed with the help of the notes taken from Mina's teachers that not only made she progress in basic language skills, but also she gained fluency in English language.

Kim (2014) examined the relationship between learner background and L2 acquisition of 30 Korean university students. The study mainly focused on the factors that might affect learners' investment. The data were gathered through questionnaires, interviews, role-plays, and discourse completion tests. Results showed that learners had the ability to associate their native language knowledge with the target language they learned. Also, older learners were found to be less inclined to learn pragmatic norms of the target language than the younger ones who were more broad-minded and concerned about learning pragmatic features of the target language.

3. The Impact of Explicit and Implicit Instruction on Learners' Acquisition of Pragmatic Norms

A number of studies on explicit and implicit instruction types' effect on learners' acquisition of L2 pragmatic rules made a further contribution to the general study of factors affecting appropriate language use in various contexts. Soler (2005) compared these two instruction types in terms of their impact on pragmatic development. Focusing on pragmatic awareness and production of requests, the researcher included 132 participants into the study and divided them into two treatment groups; one implicit group, one explicit group and one control group. After a period of 15 weeks, the results of post-tests revealed that both implicit instruction and explicit instruction were effective in improving learners' awareness of requests. However, considering the production of requests, the group receiving explicit instruction was clearly superior to the group receiving implicit instruction.

Similarly, in their study Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) primarily focused on the impact of implicit and explicit instruction types on learners' proper use of target language pragmatic norms. They examined whether learners' proper use of suggestions might be improved when an input enhancement technique was applied. The research was carried out on 81 Spanish participants who were divided into three groups; an explicit group (provided with mental instruction on suggestions), an implicit group (supported with input enhancement courses) and a control group (untreated. The data were collected through e-mail pre- and post- tests and phone pre- and post- tests. Participants' e-mail responses and phone tasks revealed that explicit and implicit groups' pre- and post- test results were quite different from each other and these two groups were found to get ahead in e-mail post-test when compared to the control group. Although control group's phone task pre-test results were higher than the groups receiving implicit and explicit instruction, these two groups performed better than the control group in the post-tests. Similarly, the input enhancement tasks were useful techniques for learners in raising awareness of pragmatic norms of L2.

Likewise, Ifantidou (2013) carried out a study on the effects of explicit instruction on learners's pragmatic development comparing their performances in speech acts and implicatures through pre- and post-tests. A pre-test was applied to 90 non-native university students. Then, they were divided into three groups: a developmental group (assessed for pragmatic awareness) and two explicit groups (one assessed just after the pragmatic instruction and the other assessed one year later in order to have an insight about the long-term effects of this type of instruction). The results confirmed that explicit instruction of pragmatics had long-term positive effects on learners' development in L2 pragmatic norms. Also, the developmental group was found to be successful in improving their pragmatic skills in the L2 that they learn.

In their study, Nyugen, Pham, and Pham (2012) primarily focused on exploring the impact of explicit and implicit focus on form instruction on learners' developing target language pragmatic norms. Sixty-two participants who were found to be approximately at the same level took part in the study and were randomly divided into two treatment groups (one explicit and one implicit) and one control group. Although pre-test results of the three groups were nearly the same, post- and delayed post-test results showed that both explicit and implicit group outperformed the control group. Comparing the two treatment groups, the explicit group was found to be more successful than the implicit one in producing proper constructive criticisms. As a result of the instructions, both of the treatment groups improved their pragmatic skills and input enhancement tasks and corrective feedback were found to raise awareness of learners in producing appropriate speech acts.

Likewise, Holenko and Jones (2011) carried out a research on improving learners' ability to produce requests through explicit instruction. Twenty-six Chinese participants of the study were divided into two groups: one treatment group with explicit instruction and one control group. Although pre-test results revealed no significant differences between the groups, intermediate and post-test results indicated that explicit instruction of requests improved treatment group's success in L2 pragmatics.

In a recent study, Ghobadi and Fahim (2009) examined the impact of explicit teaching of English 'thanking formulation enhancing Iranian learners' pragmatic development. The researchers formed two groups from the participants of the study: one was provided with explicit instruction and the other with implicit instruction. Role-play, questionnaire and test results revealed that explicit group was better than the implicit one on producing appropriate thanking formulas and pragmatic awareness level of the explicit group was proven to be higher than the implicit one.

4. Context and Discourse Practices

In most of the content and language integrated learning contexts (CLIL), English is commonly preferred as it is a universal language yet our knowledge is limited in how English as a tool of teaching influences various classroom discourses (Nikula, 2005). According to Nikula (2005) teaching a language is far beyond a regular education, it means to support the learners with adequate facilities to improve their conversational skills and gain pragmatic competence. That's why, in her socio-cultural study on language learning, Nikula (2005) compared and contrasted Finnish and English contexts according to the features of discourse practices used in Finnish and English contexts from a pragmatic perspective rather than examining one's superiority over the other. The data were collected through video and audio recorded EFL lessons and CLIL lessons with the participation of 40 Finnish students. The findings of the research revealed that discourse practices let the learners have an insight about different roles of English and they could adapt to various discourses in both of the classroom settings. Observations showed that CLIL students used the language not just practically but also pragmatically when they interacted with each other. On the other hand, in EFL classrooms English was not used as a tool of communication and it was just practiced in an imaginary way, not authentically.

Meibauer (2012) speculates that pragmatic evidence is essentially related with the context in which we form and perceive utterances. Meibauer (2012) examined the impact of stories (as a context type) on general intuitions of pragmatics. The research indicated that stories had a significant role in improving learners' intuitions of pragmatics. Also, rich contexts were found to increase learners' perceptions of pragmatical norms.

Aksoyalp and Toprak (2015) investigated the existence of speech acts such as complaints, apologies, and suggestions in Turkish EFL course books from different levels of language proficiency in order to detect their efficiency in providing pragmatic input for language learners. Seventeen English language teaching course books were examined so as to determine the type and frequency of these utterances throughout the books except for grammatical sections through the use of content analysis technique. The results proved that presentation of complaints, apologies, and suggestions shows variety according to the level of coursebooks; nominately, it was observed that as the complexity level of the books increased,

the variety and type of speech acts that they include increased accordingly. Furthermore, the study was anticipated to arouse the attention of the course material designers and book writers.

5. Speech Acts and Semantic Formulas

Similarly, in a corpus-based study Babanoğlu (2014) aimed to determine whether there is any significant difference between EFL learners and native English speakers regarding the use of aural features in academic writings. In line with this objective, the frequency of the oral pragmatic markers was analyzed based on Turkish, Japanese and English learners' corpus data. The result of the comparison showed that the use of speech-like pragmatic features in academic essays of Turkish and Japanese students was higher than the native English speakers'. Further, overuse of the oral pragmatic features resulted from L1 transfer which was a commonly applied case by Japanese and Turkish students in both oral and written contexts. Moreover, the study recommended further research on distinctive L1 backgrounds by highlighting the importance of consciousness-raising tasks in reducing the inappropriate use of pragmatic features

Likewise, in another corpus-based study Aşık and Cephe (2013) compared Turkish EFL students' use of discourse markers with native English speakers' from Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) in terms of variety and frequency of pragmatic items. Twenty EFL students' presentations in two distinct courses were recorded; 'Sociolinguistic and Language Teaching' and 'Pragmatics and Language Teaching'. The findings revealed that frequency and variety of discourse markers used by native English speakers were significantly higher than the Turkish EFL students' use of these oral features. Further, the results indicated that providing learners adequate exposure to pragmatic norms had a significant role in their acquisition of appropriate pragmatic features.

In their studies, Alagözlü and Büyüköztürk (2009) aimed to explore the association between learners' acquisition of pragmatic competence and their oral and written performance levels. The level of learners' pragmatic awareness and their familiarity with speech acts and conversational implicatures were assessed through a multiple-choice questionnaire with the participation of 25 freshman students at the average age of 22 years old. They were divided into two sub-groups; exemption exam group (composed of newly enrolled students) and preparatory school group (students completed one-year prep class). The results revealed no significant association between grammatical knowledge and pragmatic competence of the learners. Although it was found that there was a considerable impact of writing on students' pragmatic awareness, learners' oral performances had no impact on their oral pragmatic competence. Further, there was not any significant difference between the two sub-groups' test results. In this context, the results indicated that learners' pragmatic awareness is related to neither their oral performances nor their linguistic knowledge.

In 2001, Demirci investigated the ways how pragmatic knowledge influenced the interpretation of L2 reflexives by adult Turkish EFL learners. Focusing on the interaction of reflexive binding with pragmatic information, the study mainly aimed to determine how adult learners acquire the binding of English reflexives. In the study, reflexive domains of Turkish and English languages were also compared and contrasted. Two hundred and twenty students (between the ages of 22-25) participated in the study and were divided into three groups; two control groups (one composed of 25 English learners and the other composed of 25 Turkish learners) and one treatment group (composed of 170 Turkish learners). The treatment group was treated according to learners' language proficiency level and they were explicitly instructed about the antecedents that take place in any sentence type. The data were gathered through a test (an interpretation task) that was applied to all of the participants of the study. The results indicated that the experimental group performed better than the Turkish control group in interpreting pragmatically neutral sentences. Also, the experimental group was found to be superior to the Turkish control group regarding the acquisition of syntactic knowledge of English language.

In order to detect the impact of L1 pragmatic transfer on English refusals, Çapar (2014) conducted a study on the strategies that Turkish EFL learners usually apply when they refuse in specific Turkish and English

contexts. Eighty-two female students who were divided into two groups; one was composed of 62 intermediate level students and the other was composed of 20 elementary level students. The first group was asked to complete an English discourse completion task (DCT) while the second group was asked to complete a Turkish DCT. The DCTs were assessed qualitatively. So as to substantiate the results of the study an interview was held with 10 randomly chosen students after the application of DCTs to all of the participants. It was found that the first group that accomplished English DCT preferred to refuse mostly by stating a reason, excuse or regret. Likewise, the second group that completed Turkish DCT applied to the same strategies while refusing. Both of the groups generally used indirect strategies when they refuse people from high and low status and they used direct statements when they refuse a friend. However, it was explored that learners' native language pragmatic awareness was higher than their L2 pragmatic knowledge. Thus, it was recommended that incorporation of DCTs into EFL classroom settings might enhance learners' pragmatic awareness in L2.

In another similar study, Bulut (2003) aimed to determine probable significant differences between the refusing strategies of American English (AE), Turkish (TT) and Turkish-English (TE) regarding most frequently used pragmatic norms. Closed-role plays and a DCT were used for data collection procedure. The subjects of the study were composed of three groups of students; interlanguage group (composed of Turkish EFL learners), American learners and Turkish native learners. Qualitative and quantitative interpretation of the written data revealed that AE students' refusing statements were shorter than TT and TE groups. However, AE group's refusal responses were found to be longer than TT and TE groups in closed-role plays. Also, it was observed that all three groups mostly preferred indirect statement while refusing. Further, it was found that semantic formulas used in refusing were similar cross-culturally and the ways in which people express these pragmatic norms varied from culture to culture.

Tuncel (2011) studied the transfer of sociopragmatic norms that EFL learners use in the realizations of apologies and investigated the types of speech acts that these students generally prefer when they express apologizing statements in specific contexts. Tuncel carried out the study through 50 native English speakers who live in Turkey, 68 prep-school students and 61 senior class students from ELT department of Anadolu University. The data were collected through a DCT and a background questionnaire, focusing on the differences in realizations of speech acts between native English speakers and Turkish EFL learners from a different level of language proficiency. Turkish EFL students' responses to apologizing situations in DCT revealed that they mostly transferred their native language's pragmatic norms negatively and they generally used semantic formulas that differentiate significantly from both their L1 nd L2.

In 2013, Asmalı carried out a study investigating probable differences that could occur in non-native English learners' refusing strategies. The speech acts that were performed by these non-native speakers were evaluated according to their appropriateness to the given situations. In total 45 prospective English language teachers participated in the study from Latvia, Poland and Turkey and three separate groups were composed of 15 students from each country. A DCT and the Speech Act Appropriateness Scale were used to collect the data. The results of the study revealed no significant difference between the groups in terms of the strategies that they applied while refusing in spite of the fact that these students had different cultural norms of their own. Moreover, it was determined that the participants of each group used nearly the same number of refusing expressions in their responses to the given situations.

In another study on interlanguage pragmatics, Özdemir and Rezvani (2010) investigated native English learners' realizations of thanking formulas in specific EFL contexts focusing especially on Turkish and Persian learners' expressions of gratitude regarding the length of the statements and preferred strategies. The research was carried out with the involvement of 74 graduate learners from different countries (32 Turkish, 32 Iranian and 10 native English speakers) who were divided into three sub-groups. A DCT was applied to all of the participants. The results showed that both native and non-native English speakers most frequently used almost the same thanking strategies; thanking and attention getter. However, the native group was found to have expressed gratitude with a large variety of strategies and they used a different length of expressions to different situations. Consequently, the study indicated that Persian and Turkish speakers had difficulty in stating thanking formulas in their L2.

EFL learners in Turkey may face several difficulties in using English in a variety contexts due to the factors associated with pragmatic and linguistic competence. This study attempts to examine many of them together in order to find their relation with the pragmatic development of learners. There is clearly a need for more research on relationships among input, instruction, feedback, motivation, speech acts, attitudes, and pragmatic development. So, this paper particularly concentrated on two areas: a) main factors affecting the L2 pragmatic acquisition, b) the relationship among these factors.

Discussions and Conclusion

In the present study the impacts of pragmatic competence acquisition on Turkish EFL learners has been researched. The researchers have frequently focused on pragmatic factors and assessed them in terms of five different aspects: a) the importance of input and feedback on instruction, b) association of individual differences with pragmatic development, c) the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on learners' acquisition of pragmatic norms, d) context and discourse practices, and finally e) speech acts and semantic formulas. Findings from the evaluation have revealed that 'speech acts and semantic formulas' are the most researched factor of pragmatic competence in Turkish context. 'Context and discourse practices' is ranked at the second place. The rest three aspects were rarely searched in Turkish context.

Most studies have determined the level of learners' pragmatic awareness and their familiarity with speech acts; such as complaints, apologises, suggestions, refusals (e.g. Aksoyalp &Toprak, 2015; Bulut, 2003; Çapar, 2014; Tuncel, 2011). Some other studies have used different context and discourse types; stories, conversational implicatures, thanking formulas (Alagözlü & Büyüköztürk, 2009; Özdemir & Rezvani, 2010). Briefly, the results of the studies have shown that Turkish EFL learners have faced with some difficulties while using English in a variety of contexts. The study tried to highlight that EFL Turkish learners may need to develop pragmatic competence acquisition and it is clearly a need to make more research on other factors.

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