The Effect of Explicit Vs. Implicit Instruction on Mastering the Speech Act of Thanking among Iranian Male and Female EFL Learners

Mahdi GHAEDRAHMAT*
Parviz ALAVI NIA**
Reza BIRIA***

Abstract

This pragmatic study investigated the speech act of thanking as used by non-native speakers of English. The study was an attempt to find whether the pragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL learners could be improved through explicit instruction of the structure of the speech act of "Thanking". In fact, this study aimed to find out if there was a significant difference between the performances of EFL learners in using the speech act of thanking when they were taught through explicit instruction of speech acts compared with implicit instruction. To this end, 30 Iranian intermediate EFL learners at Pars language institute were chosen, and they were classified as experimental and control group. The researcher adopted a discourse completion test (DCT) to gather the necessary data. The results showed that those learners who were taught explicitly outperformed those to whom implicit instruction was used.

Keywords: Speech acts; the speech act of "Thanking"; implicit instruction; explicit instruction; Iranian EFL learners.

*   University of Urmia, Iran. mehdighaedrahmat@yahoo.com
**   University of Urmia, Iran. P.alavinia@urmia.ac.ir
*** Islamic Azad University, of Isfahan (Khorasgan Branch), Iran. R_biria@yahoo.com

Los efectos de la instrucción explícita vs. la instrucción implícita en el dominio del acto de habla de dar las gracias entre estudiantes iraníes de inglés

Resumen

Este estudio de corte pragmático investigó el acto de habla de dar las gracias usado por hablantes no nativos de inglés. El estudio tuvo por objetivo hallar si la conciencia pragmática de los estudiantes iraníes de inglés podría mejorarse a través de la instrucción explícita de la estructura del acto de habla de dar las gracias. De hecho, se pretendió averiguar si hubo una diferencia significativa entre los desempeños de los estudiantes en el uso de este acto de habla cuando se les enseñaron los actos de habla a través de la instrucción explícita y se comparó con la instrucción implícita. Para ello, se seleccionaron treinta estudiantes de inglés intermedio del instituto iraní Pars de lenguas, quienes posteriormente fueron clasificados en el grupo de control y experimental. El investigador usó una prueba de finalización de discurso (DCT) para reunir los datos necesarios en el estudio. Los resultados indican que aquellos estudiantes que fueron instruidos de forma explícita superaron a quienes fueron instruidos de forma implícita.

Palabras clave: actos de habla; el acto de dar las gracias; instrucción implícita; instrucción explícita; estudiantes de inglés iraníes.

Os efeitos da instrução explícita versus a instrução implícita no domínio do ato de fala de agradecer entre os estudantes iranianos de inglês

Resumo

Este estudo, de corte pragmático, pesquisou o ato de fala de agradecer usado por falantes não nativos de inglês. O estudo teve como objetivo encontrar se a consciência pragmática dos estudantes iranianos de inglês poderia ser melhorada por meio da instrução explícita da estrutura do ato de fala de agradecer. De fato, pretendeu-se averiguar se houve uma diferença significativa entre os desempenhos dos estudantes no uso desse ato de fala quando foram ensinados os atos de fala por meio da instrução explícita e comparou-se com a instrução implícita. Para isso, selecionaram-se trinta estudantes de inglês intermediário do instituto iraniano Pars de lenguas, os quais, posteriormente, foram classificados no grupo de controle e experimental. O pesquisador usou um teste de finalização de discurso (DCT) para reunir os dados necessários no estudo. Os resultados indicam que aqueles estudantes que foram instruídos de forma explícita superaram os que foram instruídos de forma implícita.

Palavras-chave: atos de fala; ato de agradecer; instrução implícita; instrução explícita; estudantes de inglês iranianos.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural factors play an important role in the development of different ways of talking and communicating. For example, in some cultures it is considered very bad to speak when another person is talking, while in others, it is not so. In general, we can say that there exists a certain linguistic behavior that allows us to deal with similar situations in similar ways across cultures, such as thanking, requesting, and apologizing (Mey, 1998). However, when it comes to a certain speech act between two languages like English and Persian, problems arise. Nonnative language users including EFL learners face such problems when they use the speech acts that differ from their own language in terms of cultural differences and expressions.

People from different cultures often return compliment in different ways. Let us assume that, in a particular context, speakers of a particular language (e.g. English) accept compliments without showing modesty. In such cases a speaker might accept a compliment such as "You did a really good job" with a simple expression of "Thanks", i.e. without expressing any idea about the importance of the compliment. Let us assume further that in the same type of situation, native speakers of another language (e.g. Persian) typically accept compliments, but they are expected to show their humbleness. It seems possible to assume that native speakers of the Persian who are learning English may return compliments in English in the same way as they do in their mother tongue (Persian). For example, they might return the compliment, "You did a really a good job" with an expression of modesty (e.g. نظر لطفتونه. [*Nazare lutfetune.*], "It's very kind of you."). If this happens, we can assume that native speakers of Persian have carried over some pragmatic knowledge associated with the culture of their native language to the performance of compliments in English. In other words, they have carried over the L1 cultural knowledge that an expression of modesty is an appropriate response to a compliment, while in fact an acceptance/agreement response is more usual in English; for example, an English man in the same situation may say, "You're right".

Responding with an expression of modesty in a situation where an expression of acceptance is more suitable in the target language is an example of negative pragmatic transfer, because the L2 learner has mistak-

enly generalized from pragmatic knowledge of L1 to a L2 setting. Negative pragmatic transfer leads to imperfect pragmatic competence in L2, but imperfect pragmatic competence does not necessarily cause communicative breakdown. For example, if native speakers of L2 realize that a non-native speaker's pragmatic knowledge of L2 is imperfect, they may accept. For example, in Iranian culture, an individual is expected to offer the watch he is wearing if another person offers a compliment over its elegance. However, an American is expected to say, "Thank you" or "My mother gave it to me on my birthday". Therefore, if the American pays a compliment over the elegance of an Iranian watch and receives an offer, he may realize that the non-native speaker's pragmatic knowledge of English is imperfect and simply he does not know that this answer is not appropriate in the English culture. On the other hand, if the native speaker of English does not realize this, negative pragmatic transfer causes cross cultural pragmatic failure (Rizk, 2003). The native speaker may be shocked of the offer, which seems strange.

Communicating with speakers of other languages is a complex behavior that requires both linguistic and pragmatic competence. Whether we speak in a first or second language, we are influenced by sociocultural norms and limitations that affect the way we communicate. For example, what is considered appropriate in one language might not be so in another. Praising a girl for being fat, for instance in a Western African Community, is considered a compliment; while in an American context, it is perceived as an insult (Rizk, 2003). It seems that the same norm exists in Iranian culture and talking about a girls' weight is considered insulting.

Simin, Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, and Ketabi (2014) believed that improving socio-pragmatic competence, which is a prerequisite in cross-linguistic communication contexts, could help avoid cross-cultural failures. These researchers also believed that main problems that language learners face in intercultural communication are pragmatic which deals with use of language in an appropriate style. Therefore, for language learners, mastering the correct use of L2 speech acts is important in acquiring L2 pragmatic competence.

Most of the problems that learners of English as a foreign language (EFL learners) face in intercultural communication are mainly pragmatic.

EFL teachers do not often stress pragmatic knowledge in their classrooms, focusing instead on linguistic knowledge. Eslami-Rasekh *et al*. (2004) warn that this might result in pragmatic failure when EFL learners actually communicate with native speakers (NSs). The only way to minimize pragmatic failure between NSs and non-native speakers (NNSs) is by acquiring pragmatic competence, that is, the ability to use language effectively in order to understand language in context (El Samaty, 2005). Iranian EFL students are not exposed to the target community and culture and they find it extremely difficult to produce or sometimes understand a speech act.

The speech act of thanking is in two theories: in Searle's (1969) speech act theory, it is an *expressive* speech act, and in Austin's (1962) theory, it is a *behabitive* speech act.

Socio-cultural and socio-economic background of the society under investigation

Goodenough (1964) believed that culture is a set of behaviors that are considered norms of society, and every member of society should follow the norms in order to be accepted by the society. Language is considered as a crucial tool of communication; accordingly, it seems impossible to investigate and analyze language apart from its situational context. Consequently, in any sociolinguistic investigation mutual relations between language and social context should be taken into consideration.

Since language allows a variety of alternatives, the choice of an appropriate form is influenced by various social factors. In other words, social structures have a strong influence on the linguistic forms and the variety in a language is a reflection of heterogeneous society. In Iranian EFL context, the compliments rule the social relationships; however, there is no formal training on the speech acts. As it was mentioned, Iranian EFL learners respond differently to compliments.

Native speakers of English might consider the way Iranian speakers of English returning compliments offending or bizarre, because they understood only the words without the cultural rules that govern them and vice versa.

The problem here is that Iranian learners of English do not produce target-like compliment responses, and so pragmatic transfer can occur

due to many factors one of which is culture. In Iranian language institutes and in the curriculum of universities, mostly the pragmatic knowledge of speech acts is underestimated and therefore the Iranian EFL learners may face problem when they want to communicate with native speakers. Among different speech acts, the speech act of *thanking* seems one to which just little attention is paid (if any). In conversation classes, usually the speech acts, the speech act of thanking in this case, are taught implicitly and there is little explicit instruction in this case. Therefore the purpose of this study was to examine if explicit instruction of the speech act of thanking in comparison with implicit instruction has any significant effect on pragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL male and female learners or not.

Questions and hypotheses of the study

Based on what was said above, the present study tried to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: Compared with implicit instruction of the speech act of *thanking* does explicit instruction have any significant impact on mastering this speech act among Iranian EFL learners?
- RQ2: Is there any significant difference between the performance of Iranian male and female learners in mastering the speech act of thanking when they are taught using explicit instruction compared with the time when they are exposed to implicit instruction?
  Based on these research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:
- H01: Compared with implicit instruction of the speech act of *thanking* explicit instruction has no significant impact on mastering this speech act among Iranian EFL learners.
- H02: There is no significant difference between the performance of Iranian male and female learners in mastering the speech act of thanking when they are taught using explicit instruction compared with the time when they are exposed to implicit instruction?

Review of literature

So far, the notions of speech act and successful communication in context have been investigated by different researchers, such as Grice (1975),

Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Bollinger and Sears (1981). Grice (1975) discussed the cooperative principle and its maxims. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) classified the speech acts into categories. The speech act of thanking, which is the core of this study, is an expressive speech act in Searle's terminology and a behabitive one in Austin's words. They also stressed the importance of the illocutionary act over the locutionary and perlocutionary acts. Moreover, Searle (1969) and Bollinger and Sears (1981) provided an explanation of what makes the utterance felicitous. The main aim of speech is to communicate a message or a meaning to the hearer. This message or meaning is intended by the speaker to be understood correctly by the hearer. If the message is misunderstood, this means that the speaker fails to convey the intended effect on the listener even if the speech is syntactically and semantically true. Therefore, it is not always possible to communicate a certain message successfully by just using a sentence that has a correct structure or word order.

Moreover, speakers have to cooperate in order for communication to be carried out successfully. This is called the *cooperative principle*, which was first devised by Grice (1975). Grice's theory is very much relevant to this study, as it deals with the performance of speech acts and how to show the intended purpose of messages. Despite its importance, Grice's cooperative principle along with its four maxims: quantity, quality, manner and relation, has received a great deal of criticism on ground of its being too difficult to apply and on the overlap among the four maxims (Mey, 1998).

According to Austin (1962), uttering a sentence like "Thank you!" is in itself an action since the speaker of that utterance makes a "speech act" of *thanking*. Therefore, this *performative* utterance is a speech act with which interlocutors perform actions. Austin claims that the utterance conveys three kinds of acts; namely, the *locutionary act* which is the *communicative function* of the utterance used by the speaker to convey his intended message thus establishing what is called the 'illocutionary force' of the speech act. The *perlocutionary act* is the effect of uttering the speech act on the receiver. Austin's focus is primarily directed towards the illocutionary act since it includes the force via which the utterance conveys its performativity.

Language consists of grammatical and pragmatic competences. Thomas (1983) differentiates between the two competences. The grammatical one is concerned with the de-contextual linguistic knowledge without giving importance to the context in which it occurs. On the other hand, the pragmatic competence is concerned with conveying an intended meaning. If L2 speaker's intended meaning is misunderstood by L1 speaker, this means that the utterance did not achieve L2 speaker's intended purpose. This results in pragmatic failure, which may result in communicative breakdowns and other undesirable consequences (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).The researchers in the present study focused on pragmatic knowledge, which is very essential for communication to be carried out successfully. Cultural norms and styles are considered very important part of the pragmatic competence of which speakers should be aware.

Pragmatic transfer occurs when there is a difference in usage because of L1 norms and culture that affect L2 usages. Therefore, similarities and differences between languages and the speech acts of these languages have to be studied in order to realize what the differences are so as to avoid pragmatic transfer. The researchers of the present study hypothesized that explicit instruction on speech acts, the speech act of *thanking* in this case, could raise the pragmatic awareness of the EFL learners. Language users have to know the uses of speech acts in the target culture because language functions are performed through speech acts, such as invitations, requests, refusals, apologies, and compliments. There is no significant difference between the performance of Iranian male and female learners in mastering the speech act of thanking when they are taught using explicit instruction compared with the time when they are exposed to implicit instruction?

Actually, the universality of a speech act does not necessarily suggest a similarity in the form used to express the same speech act. For example, accepting a compliment in English is different from accepting the same compliment in Persian, thus an American might accept a compliment like "Your yellow scarf looks great on you!" by saying "Thanks. It's also my favorite!", whereas an Iranian might say "Yeah. It's because you are a nice person!". Saying "Thank you!" in a certain context in a given culture might be used to show that the one who utters this speech act has received help

or been praised and that he is thankful for the giver. On the other hand, the same utterance in the same context might be understood differently; it can express an offense showing that the speaker does not need the giver's help i.e. "rejection of an offer".

The way of understanding the speech act of thanking differs in the context of a particular situation in two different cultures. The problem here does not lie in understanding the linguistic meanings of the words used; it lies in figuring out the intended message behind the speech act of thanking.

Recommendations have been made since the late 1980's, for the inclusion of pragmatic instruction as part of foreign and second language (L2) curricula (e.g. Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). These instructional suggestions have been backed up by authors such as Kasper & Schmidt (1996) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001). In recent years, there has been an increasing body of empirical studies on the effectiveness of instruction in the development of pragmatic knowledge dealing with discourse markers (House & Kasper, 1981), pragmatic routines (Tateyama, 2001), conversational structure and management (Myers-Scotton & Bernstein, 1988), conversational closings (Bardovi-Harlig et al, 1991), pragmatic fluency (House, 1996), requests (Hasaal, 1997), apologies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), compliments (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001), and complaints and refusals (Morrow, 1996). The results from most of these studies are promising with regard to the positive effect of pedagogical intervention, supporting the view that instruction of pragmatics can facilitate the development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bacelar da Silva, 2003; Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005).

Research about the performance of speech acts by EFL learners has offered various explanations for the differences between learners' and native speakers' (NSs) realizations (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

In a recent study in Iran, Simin, Eslami Rasekh, Eslami Rasekh, and Ketabi (2014) examined the effect of explicit teaching of the speech act of apology on learning and recognition of Persian EFL learners through exchange of e-mails. The participants were divided into two groups: a) the explicit teaching group and b) the implicit teaching group.

Accordingly, instruction on various apology situations was provided, and the experimental group was asked to have e-communication through

e-mail exchanges with their instructor during the semester. After the treatment, the participants were given a posttest. The Analysis of the results revealed that the learners in the explicit teaching group who participated in e-mail exchanges gained significantly in terms of pragmatic proficiency required for strategies of apology. Moreover, the use of explicit teaching of apology involving them in e-communication exchanges significantly enhanced the pragmatic awareness of Persian EFL learners.

Eslami, Rasekh, and Mardani (2011) conducted an investigating in which, 60 subjects were exposed to an explicit apology strategy instruction. Two questions were proposes. The first question was to examine the effect of explicit teaching of apology speech act. The Analysis revealed that the subjects in explicit teaching group gained significantly in terms of apology speech act. The second question was to measure the application of intensifying devices. To answer the second question, the results of the frequency of the occurrence of intensifiers of apologetic exchanges was calculated and compared across Iranian EFL learners. The result of the frequency of showed that learners who received explicit apology strategy instruction used intensifiers more appropriately than the other group.

Gu Xiao-le (2011) in a study under the title of "The Effect of Explicit and Implicit Instructions of Request Strategies" among Chinese EFL learners made use of written discourse completion task, and found that both groups demonstrated improvements in the WDCT after the intervention, but to different degree. The explicit group showed greater progress in the appropriate level of formality, directness, and politeness realized through the syntactic patterns, internal and external modifications, and sequence of request components. This suggests the necessity of incorporating consciousness-raising activities in the classroom instruction of pragmatics.

El Samaty (2005) and Eslami-Rasekh *et al.* (2004) found that linguistically proficient learners were the ones who transferred the acts negatively. Therefore, most of these studies approve that the culture and proficiency variables have a great effect on the L2 learner's performance of the speech acts in general with some slight differences here and there.

According to El Samaty (2005), even if learners are proficient in L2 linguistically, it is still possible for them to transfer their L1 pragmatic norms and strategies into L2 causing negative transfer or pragmatic failure. Eslami-Rasekh

et al. (2004) also proposed a similar opinion, saying that learners who are grammatically competent may not use L2 properly because of their L1 different norms. Moreover, being linguistically competent does not entail being pragmatically competent.

Al-Khateeb (2009) in a study investigated the speech act of thanking as a compliment response as used by non-native speakers of English. The study is an attempt to find whether different cultural backgrounds, specializations, levels of evaluation and the gender of the speakers affect their use of the speech act of thanking as a compliment response. The researcher adopted a discourse completion test (DCT) in both Arabic and English as the tool of the study. The results showed that there are significant differences in the ways Arab learners of English and native speakers of English use the speech act of thanking due to the differences in their cultural backgrounds and in their specializations. The results also revealed that there are no significant differences in the ways Arab learners of English use the speech act of thanking due to the gender of the speakers and their proficiency levels.

In another contrastive study of compliment responses, Cedar (2006) compared the compliment responses of the Thai speakers of English and American native speakers. The study revealed that Americans were positive in their responses and accepted the compliments. On the other hand, Thai speakers of English turned to their native language and used formulaic expressions to respond to compliments. That was due to the Thai's low proficiency pragmatic level in English, so they were not able to accept the compliments positively.

In a similar study, Al-Khatib (2001) studied the corpus of letters in terms of sociocultural background of the writers. The results showed that EFL learners used a language that was the result of their difference between two cultures.

One of the studies that displayed the transfer of L1 norms into L2 was conducted by Cohen & Olshtain (1981) on the Hebrew learners of English as L2 concerning the speech act of apology. The study showed that L2 learners transferred the Hebrew feature of using less apology semantic expressions into their apologies in English. According to what was said above,

and based on the existing literature, it is clear that there is not enough research on the topic of explicit and implicit instruction of the speech act of *thanking*. Therefore, the present study was an attempt to shed light on the topic and intended to find out if explicit instruction of this speech act can improve the pragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL learners.

METHOD

Participants

The subjects of this study were 30 intermediate Iranian male and female EFL learners who were following the career of language learning at Pars language institute in Isfahan. They were studying the second part of the English language teaching material titled "Interchange 3, the green book". The demographic survey showed that the participants were female learners between 20 to 29 years old, some of which were university students and some others were not. Their level of general English was set using an Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT hereafter). These participants were divided into two classes, 15 each (with 7 male and 8 female learners in each class). Since the topic of this research was about pragmatic, it was necessary to assure the pragmatic competence of the participants in the case of the speech act of thanking. Therefore, they were asked if they had had any authentic communication with the native speakers of English. None of them had been abroad or had had any experiences in direct contacts with native speakers of English.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study included, the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), the learners' course book, a pamphlet provided by the researcher about the different ways of saying "thanks" in English by native speakers, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS) version 19. The topic is approached by using quantitative data from Discourse Completion Test (DCT i.e. a tool used for collecting data through responding to real like situations). The DCT consisted of 10 situations, in which participants were expected to

return compliments in English using the speech act of thanking. A copy of the DCT is available in the Appendix at the end of this article. In order to prevent misunderstanding the DCT was translated into Persian. This method of investigation was used by many researchers, for example, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) distributed DCT consisting of written role-play situations to Japanese ESL learners living in the United States and EFL learners in Japan to investigate refusals and face-threatening acts. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) also used DCT to analyze the utterance length of requesting strategies in Hebrew. They collected the data from non-native speakers of Hebrew at three proficiency levels. Therefore, the researcher, with consult of some experts in this field, found out that it is a suitable method for investigating these kinds of pragmatic studies, which cannot but be situated in a context. Thus, the researcher adopted a DCT of ten situations in two versions, Persian and English.

The Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) was used to measure the participants' language proficiency. The test consisted of sixty items with different question formats comprising of two parts. All of the 30 participants for the present study were able to pass the test with a score among 30-46. Based on the test scoring level chart, those whose scores in the test were between 30 and 46 were considered as the intermediate-level and categorized to be at the same level according to the OQPT results. The reason why the researcher of the study decided to utilize OQPT as the students' measure of proficiency was because the test is a standard test of proficiency, and its validity and reliability were assumed to be satisfactory.

Data collection procedures

The present study made use of quantitative design of study. At the onset of the study, in order to set the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their general English proficiency, the OQPT was run among all language learners learning English at Pars language institute in Isfahan. Of all the language learners, the 30 males and females who passed the test with the scores between 30 to 46 were chosen for the purpose of this research. Since just a few sessions were needed for teaching the speech act of thank-

ing, the participants were divided into two groups namely experimental and control group, 15 each. In order to assure that the participants do not have background knowledge about the explicit features of the speech act of thanking, they were given the DCT, and the results showed no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups. Then they were asked to take part in the classes that were held for the purpose of the present research. Both groups then underwent the treatment, which included teaching of the speech act of *thanking*. While the experimental group was taught using explicit instruction of the speech act of thanking used by native English speakers, the participants in control group were taught this speech act in an implicit manner without any reference to the structures used in the speech act of thanking.

The structure and examples of different situations were explained to the participants in control group. Having followed the treatment phase in 3 sessions, the researcher distributed the DCTs among all the participants and then the participants' responses were checked and compared with the norms of the socio-pragmatic norms of the native speakers, this way each participant gained a score. All the gathered data was coded into the SPSS. Then an independent sample t-test was run among the scores of the participants of the two groups. Then in order to check whether implicit and explicit instruction of the speech act of thanking is gender-specific or not a one way analysis of variances (ANOVA) was conducted among the gained scores of the participants. The results of these tests are discussed in the next section.

RESULTS

The present study intended to find out the differences between the amount of pragmatic awareness through implicit and explicit instruction of the speech act of thanking, to this end, a DCT was given to 30 male and female intermediate Iranian EFL learners. What follows are the statistical results of the DCT. At first, the descriptive statistics of the results were compared. Table 1 shows the mean comparison of the scores of experimental and control groups.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of experimental and control groups

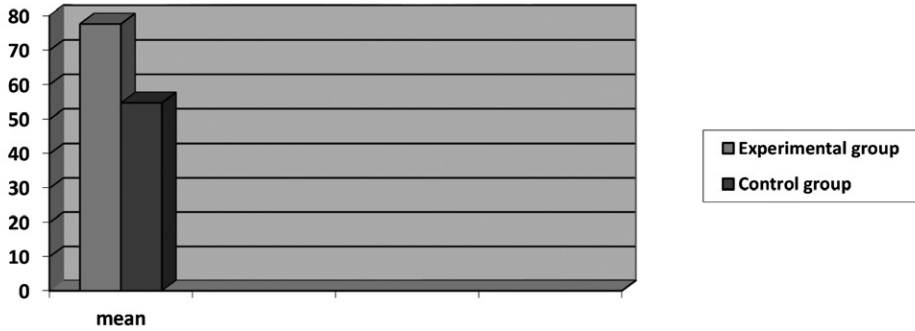|	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Scores	Experimental Group	15	77.6667	11.59844	2.99470
	Control Group	15	54.8000	14.15324	3.65435

As it can be seen, the mean score for the experimental group is 77.66 and the mean for control group is 54.15; that is a mean difference of 22.8, which is statistically significant. However, to make sure of the significance an *independent samples t-test* was run between the scores of the participants of the two groups, the result of which is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Independent Samples Test for the results of DCT

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
VAR00002	Equal variances assumed	.443	.511	4.840	28	.000	22.86667	4.72467	13.18861	32.54472
	Equal variances not assumed			4.840	26.959	.000	22.86667	4.72467	13.17175	32.56158

According to the results of the independent samples test, the level of significance is 0.000 which is lower than 0.05 (0.000 < 0.05). Therefore, it can safely be claimed that the participants in experimental group outperformed those in control group in terms of their performance in DCT about the speech act of *thanking*. Figure 1 depicts the difference between the experimental and control group in the DCT.

Figure 1. The difference between the participants in experimental and control group in DCT

The reason for such finding may be because explicit teaching of speech acts can raise EFL learners' awareness of speech acts, and this leads to higher mean scores of experimental group when they are exposed to explicit teaching of the speech act of *thanking*. The findings of this study are in line with what Gu Xiao-le (2011) found about the effect of explicit instruction on mastering the speech act of "request" among Japanese EFL learners. It also lends support to El Samaty's (2005) study in which he found that even if learners are proficient in L2 linguistically, it is still possible for them to transfer their L1 pragmatic norms and strategies into L2 causing negative transfer or pragmatic failure. Eslami-Rasekh *et al.* (2004) also proposed a similar opinion, saying that grammatically competent learners may still not use the L2 properly because of their L1 different norms. Moreover, being linguistically competent does not entail being pragmatically competent.

In order to find answer to the second research question, the following tables show the results of the one-way ANOVA.

As shown, the means in experimental group were 76.28 for males and 78.87 for females. The mean score for males in control group is 57.28 and that for females in control group is 52.62. Therefore, a difference in posttest means of both males and females in experimental group is obvious. However we still do not know if the mean difference is significant or not. In order to compare the performance of both genders in both groups and to see if the difference between them is statistically significant or not, a

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of the participants' performances based on their gender

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	7	76.2857	11.49948	4.34640	65.6505	86.9210	59.00	90.00
2	8	78.8750	12.33390	4.36069	68.5636	89.1864	58.00	95.00
3	7	57.2857	12.84152	4.85364	45.4093	69.1621	35.00	72.00
4	8	52.6250	15.73837	5.56436	39.4674	65.7826	33.00	82.00
Total	30	66.2333	17.23005	3.14576	59.7995	72.6671	33.00	95.00
Note:	1. Experimental group male learners.							
	2. Experimental group female learners.							
	3. Control group male learners.							
	4. Control group female learners.							

one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run on the results of the post-test. Table 4 represents the results.

Table 4. One-way analysis of variance of males and females of experimental and control group

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4027.760	3	1342.587	7.619	0.001
Within Groups	4581.607	26	176.216		
Total	8609.367	29			

As can be seen, the significant value is smaller than 0.05 (0.001 <0.05), so it can be claimed that the mean scores of the four sub groups were significantly different. However, because an ANOVA gives inferential statistics only about whether or not the groups differ; the source of the difference is still unknown. To find out where the difference had occurred, a

post-hoc test on the results of ANOVA was run. Table 5 depicts the results of the post-hoc test.

Table 5. Results of post-hoc tests, multiple comparisons

(I) VAR00001	(J) VAR00001	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	2	-2.58929	6.87027	.709	-16.7113	11.5328
	3	19.00000*	7.09559	.013	4.4148	33.5852
	4	23.66071*	6.87027	.002	9.5387	37.7828
2	1	2.58929	6.87027	.709	-11.5328	16.7113
	3	21.58929*	6.87027	.004	7.4672	35.7113
	4	26.25000*	6.63731	.001	12.6068	39.8932
3	1	-19.00000*	7.09559	.013	-33.5852	-4.4148
	2	-21.58929*	6.87027	.004	-35.7113	-7.4672
	4	4.66071	6.87027	.504	-9.4613	18.7828
4	1	-23.66071*	6.87027	.002	-37.7828	-9.5387
	2	-26.25000*	6.63731	.001	-39.8932	-12.6068
	3	-4.66071	6.87027	.504	-18.7828	9.4613
Note:		* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.				
Note:		1. Experimental group male learners.				
		2. Experimental group female learners.				
		3. Control group male learners.				
		4. Control group female learners.				

Asterisks, which are beside the numbers and values in Table 5, indicate significant differences. According to the results of Table 5, sub-group 1 or males in experimental group are significantly different from sub-groups 3 (males in experimental group) (.013<.05) and sub-group 4 (females in experimental group) (.002<.05).

According to the statistics depicted in Table 5, it is not the males in the experimental group that performed better than all other subgroups; however, females in experimental group ranked the second and outperformed both sub groups of control group. Based on what was said, even

though males in experimental group performed better on post-test compared with all other groups, the research hypothesis cannot be rejected. Because the observed difference was not statistically significant in comparison to that of females in both groups, we cannot reject the hypothesis. Differently stated, the second null hypothesis should be accepted.

DISCUSSION

In this research, it was hypothesized that Compared with implicit instruction of the speech act of *thanking* explicit instruction has no significant impact on mastering this speech act among Iranian EFL learners. According to the results gained from the instruments of this study, it can be claimed that explicit instruction of the speech act of thanking improves its usage by Iranian EFL learners significantly; however, males and females did not differ in this regard.

Based on this finding, it is suggested that the curriculum developers should include materials that cover the explicit nature of different speech acts like the speech act of thanking. In addition, the English language practitioners should be aware that teaching the speech acts explicitly enhances the pragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL learners and leads to the formation of more competent learners.

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APPENDIX

Dear recipient,

The researcher is conducting a research entitled "The speech act of thanking as a compliment response used by Iranian speakers of English. Therefore, she is collecting the necessary data and information using the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the tool of the study. Please read the test parts carefully and fill in with the personal information, and then give your response to the ten situations realistically. The researcher hopes you are confident that the purpose of the study is purely for scientific research and not for any other purposes. That is why, it is not necessary to write your name.

Thanks a lot for being cooperative,

The researcher

* How would you respond to speakers in such situations?

Situation 1:

You were very tired yesterday and you did not study for the exam. You ask your teacher to postpone the exam and the teacher says, "I'll just postpone it because you are a good student!" You answer

_____

Situation 2:

Your new friend visits you on your birthday and gives you a precious present that you wanted to buy before. You answer

_____

Situation 3:

You were shopping for a shirt and a (male) stranger approaches you and says, this would look amazing on you! You answer

_____

Situation 4:

You were shopping for a shirt and a (female) stranger approaches you and says, "This would look amazing on you!" Your answer

_____

Situation 5:

Some friends are over at your house. One of them looks at a clock hanging on the wall and says, "I love your clock. It looks great in your living room!" Your answe

_____

Situation 6:

You are wearing a new shirt and a colleague looks at you and says, "This shirt looks great on you! Blue is a great color for you." Your answer

_____

Situation 7:

You have some friends and relatives over for tea and cake that you baked. Someone says, "Tastes yummy!". Your answer

_____

Situation 8:

You have just finished presenting your research paper. At the end of the class (when you were just leaving the classroom), one of your classmates says, "You did an excellent job! I really enjoyed your presentation." Your answer

_____

Situation 9:

You are a teacher wearing a new suit today, and one of your students says, "Your suit fits you well and looks great on you." Your answer

_____

Situation 10:

You are walking, and your papers are blown by the wind. A male/ female stranger helps you collect them. You answer

_____

Thanks a lot for being cooperative,
The researcher