

## The Impact of Student-Paced Pragmatics Instruction through Nearpod on EFL Learners' Request Performance

Mustafa Civelek<sup>1\*</sup>, Çiğdem Karatepe<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Institute of Educational Sciences, Bursa Uludag University, Turkey*

<sup>2</sup>*English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Education, Bursa Uludag University, Turkey*

**Corresponding Author:** Mustafa Civelek, E-mail: mustafacivelek179@gmail.com

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### ABSTRACT

Although the use of technology for pragmatics instruction has attracted significant attention from scholars, the number of studies regarding the impact of self-access materials to this end is limited. Nearpod is a useful cloud-based application to support self-paced learning. This paper aims to probe the effect of learning through Nearpod on EFL learners' request performance. Researchers designed seven self-access courses to teach requests. The data was collected from 11 EFL learners through Online Oral Discourse Completion Tasks before and after the treatment. The post-test results revealed that the participants significantly improved their request performance after the treatment. The learners' responses in the pre-test and the post-test were also qualitatively analyzed for an in-depth investigation of the changes in their requesting behavior. The findings revealed that the learners stopped modality generalization and started using a variety of modal verbs according to the context of situation after the treatment. Additionally, it was indicated that self-paced pragmatics instruction helped learners overcome the pragmatic failures regarding the main verb use in request head acts. Furthermore, the differences regarding the learners' use of internal and external modifiers were also documented. After the treatment, they performed various internal modifiers that were either absent or uncommon in the pre-test data. Alerters and grounders were found to be the most frequent external modifiers in both the pre-test and the post-test data set. In summary, the results indicated that self-paced learning helped learners improve strategies for performing appropriate requests.

### INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing interest in the field of instructional pragmatics for the last two decades. However, it is still under-represented in EFL classrooms. With the nascence of various models of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990), the view of language instruction shifted from learning grammatical formulas and lexicon to learning to use language effectively and appropriately in various contexts. This shift, as a result, has made pragmatics instruction an indispensable component of foreign language classrooms.

Pragmatic competence is a crucial component of communicative competence. It is a must for nonnative speakers of English to gain pragmatic competence for successful communication (Cohen & Felix-Brasdefer, 2012). Pragmatically competent speakers of English are expected to perform appropriate language and interpret the intended messages by considering contextual factors such as the relationship between speakers, where the interaction takes place, etc. Yet, learning the pragmatic dimensions of English is a challenging task for learners to achieve on their own. Many studies have revealed that even proficient speakers of English

fail to perform appropriate language according to the context of the situation (Karatepe, 1998, 2001; Tajeddin & Pirhosseinloo, 2012).

Lack of pragmatic ability leads to inappropriate language use and misinterpretation of intended messages when the interlocutors' L1 and the target language norms mismatch. When nonnative speakers do not have adequate pragmatic knowledge, they tend to transfer the pragmatic norms of their L1 (Karatepe, 2016). Pragmatic transfers are likely to confuse interactants because they violate the pragmatic norms of the target language. This can lead to pragmatic failure (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011).

Cohen (2008) stated that pragmatic competence cannot develop as a natural by-product of language proficiency. In other words, learning pragmatics requires systematic classroom instruction. It has been recommended that pragmatics instruction should be a part of language curriculums from the very beginning of the language learning process (Cohen & Felix-Brasdefer, 2012). In addition, many studies revealed that critical aspects of pragmatics are teachable (For a detailed review, see Taguchi, 2015).

In spoken interaction, interlocutors have seconds to interpret the intended messages and respond in an appropriate manner. However, without solid background knowledge, NNSs have only their L1 pragmatics knowledge to rely on. According to *Skill Acquisition Theory* (Anderson, 1993), individuals need to practice the newly-introduced knowledge repeatedly for automatization of that specific skill. However, automatization of pragmatic performance is a daunting endeavor in EFL environments since learners do not have the opportunity to be exposed to pragmatic language input or practice pragmatics outside their classrooms. Cohen and Felix-Brasdefer (2012) underscored that EFL learners generally get exposed to modified language inside their classrooms, so they do not have the opportunity to get exposed to authentic pragmatic language input that is necessary to develop pragmatic awareness. Civelek and Karatepe (2021) have recommended to benefit from technology to overcome these constraints. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of student-paced instruction through *Nearpod*, which is an application providing language teachers with facilities to prepare interactive lesson content for their learners, on EFL learners' request performance.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Technology-Enhanced Pragmatics Instruction

Advancements in technology provide both language teachers and learners with various tools to expand the language learning process beyond the language classroom or make the in-class language learning process more effective. As Skyes (2005) suggests, CALL technologies provide several benefits such as "presenting pragmatic-based materials in a contextualized, authentic, and personalized manner, while at the same time addressing other language skills" (p. 399). In recent years, there has been a growing number of publications on technology-integrated teaching of pragmatics. However, these studies mostly focused on the impact of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) on pragmatic performance by a majority (Skyes, 2005; Eslami & Liu, 2013; Eslami et al., 2015; Mirzaei et al., 2016). All these studies advocated that technology incorporation is a good way to enhance learners' pragmatic performance.

In a more recent study, Ajabshir (2019) compared the impact of pragmatics instruction through CMC tools and in a traditional face-to-face context. The participants were assigned to three intact groups according to their scores in a computer literacy survey: synchronous CMC, asynchronous CMC, and face-to-face instruction. The study was based on a pre-test/post-test design. The findings indicated that both CMC groups outperformed the face-to-face instruction group in the post-test. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the post-test results of the two experimental groups. Additionally, it was revealed that while the asynchronous group was more likely to perform syntactic and lexical modifiers, the synchronous group appeared to have performed more varying request strategies according to the level of imposition when compared to the other groups.

The potentialities that technology offers also enable learners to have access to self-access materials to maintain the language learning process beyond the traditional language classroom. Such tools are self-access materials that do not require any teacher presence. The impact of self-access materials on pragmatic development has also been the scope of research in Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) studies. For example, Sydorenko et al. (2018) conducted a case study to investigate the effect of self-access video-based computer simulations on the pragmatic performance of learners of English from various cultural backgrounds. Throughout the treatment process, the learners were exposed to pragmatic language models that are combined with learning tasks by means of *SimCon* which is a Web application. It was emphasized that such tools provide learners with oral practice. The findings demonstrated that the participants benefited from self-access video-based computer simulations to a great extent. Furthermore, it was revealed that the majority of the participants adopted positive views toward their experience using *SimCon*. Likewise, Sydorenko et al. (2020) later conducted further research to compare the impact of implicit only, and implicit and explicit instruction on ESL learners' request performance employing *SimCon*. The results revealed that both instruction types had a positive influence on EFL learners' request performance. However, the significance of individual differences was underscored and it was suggested that some learners may need explicit instruction more than others.

### The Speech Act of Request in EFL Contexts

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, requests are face-threatening speech acts since the hearer is asked to do something. In other words, requests are demanding speech acts, speakers, therefore, tend to perform more indirect language to protect the listeners' face. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) divided requests into three categories in terms of (in)directness: (1) direct requests (e.g., *open the window, please*), (2) conventionally indirect request (e.g., *Could I possibly borrow your pen, please?*), and (3) non-conventionally indirect requests (e.g., *Sorry but I can't hear the voice on the video*). Brown and Levinson (1978) stated that the directness level of a request depends on three variables: degree of imposition, power, and social distance. In the English language, politeness is largely conveyed through conventionalized forms that non-native speakers cannot perform by utilizing their lexical and grammatical knowledge. Thus, teaching requests should be emphasized more in EFL curriculums.

Bialystok (1993) asserted that producing appropriate requests requires not only the ability to employ one's lexicogrammatical knowledge but also the knowledge of making requests in a less face-threatening way appropriately in various contexts. However, it was proven that even proficient speakers of English fail to perform appropriate requests (Karatepe, 1998). Similarly, Karatepe (2001) conducted a study to investigate the request strategies of prospective EFL teachers who are advanced speakers of English in Turkey and native speakers. The findings revealed that EFL learners

differed from native speakers regarding the request forms they employed in different contexts. Moreover, it was also reported that EFL learners had a quite limited repertoire of expressions to perform requests. Some pragmatic failures were also observed in the requests of EFL learners due to L1 transfer.

In another study, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) investigated the requests of EFL learners in e-mails in an academic context. The findings of the study indicated that EFL learners tended to perform direct requests in their e-mails. In the light of the findings, it can be concluded that the participants employed inappropriate request strategies considering the status of the reader. Additionally, it was proven to be no different in the Turkish context (Burgucu-Tazegül et al., 2016; Karatepe 2016).

As seen in the findings of the studies presented in this section, EFL learners fail to use appropriate requests regarding directness. The reason behind this can be lack of pragmatic language input, underrepresentation of speech acts in EFL textbooks, a mismatch between the norms of speakers' L1 and L2, or inadequate repertoire to perform appropriate requests (Karatepe & Civelek, 2021).

### Request Modification

EFL learners' request modification has also received considerable attention in the field of ILP. Native speakers of English tend to use various verbal tools to adjust requests' degree of politeness. Such tools are identified as internal and external modifiers (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). As the name implies, internal modifiers refer to the modifications made to the request head act. Internal modifiers are subdivided into two categories: downgraders (lexical and syntactic) and upgraders. While downgraders are performed to decrease the imposition of a request, upgraders are employed to support the illocutionary force of the request. External modifiers (also known as supportive moves), on the other hand, are used before or after the sentence that includes head act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

Several cross-sectional studies have been carried out to investigate EFL learners' request modification at different proficiency levels. For example, Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) conducted a study to investigate the request modification strategies of native speakers of English and EFL learners at different proficiency levels. The findings revealed that EFL learners fail to perform internal modification strategies. Moreover, the results showed that that external modification strategies were acquired by EFL learners earlier than internal ones. They also documented that the mother tongue of learners had an influence on their main verb choice which sometimes led them to employ inappropriate forms. Similarly, both comparative and cross-sectional studies revealed that EFL learners were likely to employ external modification strategies earlier than internal ones (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009, 2012; Najafabadi & Paramasivam, 2012). Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012) stated that internal modifiers were acquired later due to their syntactic complexity.

It has been noted that the improvement of EFL learners' request modification can be quite slow (Göy et al., 2012;

Borovina, 2017). Rose (2005) stated that a broad range of pragmatic features of the language was teachable. Even though some studies investigated the impact of pragmatics instruction on EFL learners' request modification (Tajeddin & Hosseinpour, 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis et al., 2018; Kaivanpanah et al., 2020), there are no studies, to the knowledge of the authors, which have investigated the impact of self-paced computer-mediated instruction on the modification of learner requests.

### Study Background and Context

In Turkey, pupils generally start learning English in the second grade. However, by the time they graduate from high school, except for a few students, almost none of them will have developed fluency – even after 10 years of the language learning process. Several reasons can be listed for such failure, such as very few opportunities to interact in English, a test-oriented language learning system, a heavily loaded curriculum, and so on (Doğan, Karababa & Soğuksu, 2017). Yet, learning English is seen as the first step to move up the career ladder in Turkey. Therefore, many EFL learners, who failed to develop satisfying English language skills, attend various online or face-to-face English courses during their university education or even after graduating from university (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005).

With the outburst of Covid-19, the institutions offering EFL courses to those learners were closed as part of the precautions announced. Thus, the EFL learning process of learners either stopped or moved to virtual platforms. As one of the Web 2.0 tools, Nearpod is a useful application to foster the language learning process in distance educational contexts since it both enables teachers to prepare self-paced course contents for their learners and can be integrated with virtual meeting environments.

Nearpod (<https://nearpod.com>) is a cloud-based application that provides teachers with facilities to create interactive lesson contents for their students. Multiple choice and open-ended questions, matching activities, slide shares, interactive video activities, discussion boards, and gamified quizzes are some of the facilities that Nearpod offers to its users. Students can have access to interactive course contents by using a code or a URL, both of which are to be shared by the teacher. It also provides students with immediate feedback in all interactive activities except for open-ended questions. Furthermore, it provides teachers with the opportunity to observe their students' achievement by presenting reports.

There have been some studies examining online pragmatics instruction. These studies mostly focused attention on the use of CMC tools for teaching pragmatics. However, what Web 2.0 can offer to language teaching is not limited to CMC. These tools have a huge potential for facilitating language learning and teaching in a variety of ways. However, this potential has not been noticed by the researchers yet. To the authors' knowledge, the number of studies focusing on the impact of self-access materials on pragmatic performance is limited. There seems to be a huge gap in the field of interlanguage pragmatics (Sydorenko et al., 2020). There-

fore, this study attempts to fill this gap by answering the following research question:

1. To what extent can self-paced pragmatics instruction through Nearpod impact EFL learners' request performance?

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

The participants of this study were 11 EFL learners whose language studies had been hindered due to the Covid-19 pandemic since the language institutions offering them courses were closed at the time of the study. The participants were selected via "convenience sampling" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.113-114). The sample consisted of 6 males and 5 females. All the participants took part in the study voluntarily. Their ages ranged from 20 to 33. The participants were either university students or working individuals in various sectors. They were all early intermediate learners. All the participants expressed their desire to improve their English language skills for better career opportunities. Additionally, none of the participants have been to an English-speaking country before.

### Instruments

The data were collected through Online Oral Discourse Completion Tests (OODCT). The same OODCTs consisting of 11 scenarios were employed as pre-test and post-test. The scenarios varied in terms of the degree of imposition, power, and social distance in accordance with Brown & Levinson's Politeness Theory. The pre-test and post-test were prepared by means of Nearpod. The URLs of the tests were shared with the participants via e-mail. The participants had 2 minutes to read each scenario and perform appropriate language accordingly. The pre-test was administrated the day before the student-paced Nearpod lessons started and the post-test was conducted two days after the end of the treatment. In the post-test, some changes were made regarding the sequence of the scenarios so as to avoid familiarity.

### Treatment

The self-paced Nearpod lessons were prepared by the author by reviewing the literature (Schmidt,1990; Crandall & Baştürkmen, 2004; McConachy, 2009; Siegel, 2016; Siegel et al., 2019). The total number of lessons was 7. The learning tasks were designed considering the recommended exercises in the previous research. These lessons were prepared to support learning without any real-time teacher support or instruction. The participants were given one or two days to complete each lesson depending on its length. After the completion of each lesson, the URL of the following lesson was shared with the participants.

Each lesson consisted of three stages: (1) warm-up, (2) focused practice, and (3) production. The activities in the warm-up stage aimed either to prepare learners for the lesson content or make it more relevant to learners' lives

(Karatepe & Yılmaz 2018). In the following stage, learners were exposed to model pragmatic language input and asked to complete various focused-noticing tasks that would help them gain meta-pragmatic awareness. In the final stage, learners were given tasks that allowed them to produce the target language expressions. Sample activities for each stage are presented in Appendix A.

### Data Analysis

The results obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively for an in-depth investigation of the effect of student-paced pragmatics instruction on the participants' request performance. First, the grading of OODCTs was based on the rating scale presented by Taguchi (2011). Each request performed by the participants was graded from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). Since the total number of scenarios was 11 in the OODCT, the highest score that could be received was 55. Second, the scores of each participant in the pre-test and the post-test were tabulated to show the percentage of increase in their scores. Next, a paired samples t-test was run utilizing SPSS 26 to find out whether there was a statistically significant difference between their pre-test and post-test performance. For qualitative analysis, request modification strategies employed by the learners in pre-test and post-test were manually coded according to Schauer's (2009) coding scheme (see Appendix B). Additionally, the use of modal and main verbs in the pre-test and the post-test was also compared.

## FINDINGS

### The Findings Obtained from the Quantitative Analysis

The comparison of the pre-test and the post-test results indicated that student-paced instruction through Nearpod developed learners' pragmatic competence. Table 1 shows the pre-test and the post-test scores of each learner and the percentage of increment. The numbers presented in Table 1

**Table 1.** Comparison between the pre-test and the post-test results

Participant	Pre-test (?/55)	Post-test (?/55)	Difference (%)*
P1	23	33	+18
P2	29	39	+18
P3	30	46	+29
P4	32	50	+33
P5	34	46	+22
P6	34	50	+29
P7	34	49	+27
P8	36	50	+25
P9	40	51	+20
P10	41	50	+16
P11	42	53	+20

\*Approximate increment rates are presented in the table

reveal that all the participants improved their request performance. Yet, the increment rates appeared to vary from participant to participant to some extent. For instance, P4, who received the third-lowest score from the pre-test, and P6 relatively improved their appropriate language use more than the others. Furthermore, while three participants (P5, P6, and P7) obtained the same score from the pre-test, their increment rates regarding their request performance after the treatment showed variations. Additionally, the pre-test results reveal that some participants (P9, P10, and P11) were already more aware of the pragmatic norms of the target language than the others. However, it is notable that they still improved their pragmatic performance more than some of the participants (P1 and P2).

In order to find out whether the difference between the pre-test and the post-test results was significant, a paired samples t-test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 2. As Table 2 indicates, there is a statistically significant difference between the results obtained from the pre-test and the post-test ( $p < 0.05$ ).

### The Findings Obtained from the Qualitative Analysis

The requests obtained from the pre-test and the post-test were also analyzed qualitatively to show on what grounds the learners improved their request performance. The prior aim of the qualitative analysis was to shed light on the changes made to the request head acts. Since modal verbs are commonly used to soften the illocutionary force of requests, the modal verbs employed in the pre-test and the post-test were first analyzed. Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of modal verbs that occurred in the OODCTs before and after the treatment.

Table 3 shows that the participants were already aware of the face-saving function of modal verbs before the treatment, and they used more *Query Preparatory* formulae rather than direct requests in the pre-test. However, it was found that they had a narrow repertoire of expressions to perform appropriate language since they tended to use the same expression "can you.?" in the majority of cases (61.9 %). After the treatment, significant changes were observed in the frequency of modal verbs. For instance, *Could* became the most frequent modal verb (55.4 %), while *Can* was the third most frequent one in the post-test (15.7 %) after *Would* (20.6 %). Therefore, it can be concluded that the learners' tendency to employ the same expression in each scenario was less likely to occur after the student-paced instruction.

What is surprising is that they ignored use of the modal verb *May* when compared to the others (4.1 %), even though it was introduced during the treatment period.

The main verbs in request head acts were also analysed. The most common main verbs in each scenario in the pre-test and the post-test were determined. The qualitative analysis revealed that the participants failed to perform appropriate main verbs in the pre-test due to their overreliance on L1 knowledge. For illustration, they frequently used the verb *take* (*almak* in Turkish), of which Turkish equivalence is commonly used instead of the verbs *borrow*, *have*, and *buy*, in the pre-test. Similarly, they tended to use the verb *give* rather than *lend* and the verb *mail* rather than *e-mail* in many instances. This demonstrates the influence of L1 on learners' preference for main verbs. Yet, they were more aware of the pragmatic norms of the English language after the self-paced pragmatics instruction, and they were less likely to make such pragmatic failures stemming from the L1 transfer.

The second aim of the qualitative analysis was to discover the request modification strategies employed by the learners in the pre-test and the post-test. First, the frequencies of every internal modifier (lexical and syntactic downgraders) performed by the learners in the pre-test and the post-test were tabulated (see Table 4). Table 4 demonstrates that self-paced pragmatics instruction through Nearpod helped learners improve their use of internal modifiers. It is seen that the learners were more likely to rely on the politeness marker *please* to decrease the imposition of their requests in the pre-test. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the majority of them did not employ the politeness marker. However, they used the politeness marker *please* almost twice as much in the post-test. Additionally, the learners started using some internal modifiers (e.g., downtoners, aspect, appreciative embedding, and tentative embedding) that were absent in the pre-test, after the treatment. Moreover, they began to use past tense modals more to mitigate the illocutionary meaning of their requests. All in all, self-paced pragmatics learning appears to have helped learners become aware of internal modifiers that were either unavailable in their repertoire or uncommon in use.

The use of external modifiers in the pre-test and the post-test was also examined throughout the qualitative analysis. The frequencies of each external modifier before and after the self-paced instruction are shown in Table 5. The results revealed that grounders were the most frequent supportive move performed by the learners in both the pre-test (N= 59) and the post-test (N=78). Even though the results demon-

**Table 2.** Paired Samples t-test results

Pair	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Posttest-Pretest	12.90909	3.01511	0.90909	14.200	10	0.000

**Table 3.** Frequency Counts of Modal Verbs in the Pre-test and the Post-test

	Can	Could	Would	May	No Modal	Total
Pre-test	75 (61.9%)	18 (14.8%)	4 (3.3%)	4 (3.3%)	20 (16.5%)	121 (100%)
Post-test	19 (15.7%)	66 (55.4%)	25 (20.6%)	5 (4.1%)	6 (4.9%)	121 (100%)

**Table 4.** Frequency counts of internal modifiers in the pre-test and the post-test

Name	Pre-test	Post-test
Downtoner	0	23 (7.8%)
Politeness Marker	49 (59.0%)	97 (33%)
Understater	1 (1.2%)	1 (0.3%)
Past Tense Modals	22 (26.6%)	91 (31%)
Consultive Device	2 (2.4%)	12 (4.1%)
Aspect	0	17 (5.8%)
Marked Modality	4 (4.8%)	5 (1.7%)
Conditional Clause	5 (6.0%)	8 (2.7%)
Appreciative Embedding	0	19 (6.5%)
Tentative Embedding	0	21 (7.1%)
Total	83 (100%)	294 (100%)

\*The internal modifiers that were non-existing in the data are not presented in the table.

**Table 5.** Frequency counts of external modifiers in the pre-test and the post-test

Name	Pre-test	Post-test
Alerter	53 (36.0%)	60 (35.9%)
Preparator	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.6%)
Grounder	59 (40.2%)	78 (46.7%)
Disarmer	12 (8.1%)	6 (3.6%)
Imposition minimizer	11 (7.4%)	14 (8.4%)
Sweetener	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.6%)
Appreciator	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.6%)
Small talk	6 (4.1%)	4 (2.4%)
Considerator	2 (1.4%)	2 (1.2%)
Total	147 (100%)	167 (100%)

strate that the learners used more external modifiers in the post-test, the difference regarding the use of these modifiers in the pre-test and the post-test was not as conspicuous as the internal ones.

## DISCUSSION

The present study is an attempt to investigate the impact of self-paced pragmatics learning through Nearpod on EFL learners' request performance. In the light of quantitative findings, it was found that self-paced pragmatics learning helped learners improve their requesting behaviour in the target language. This is also in line with the findings of the previous research (Sydorenko et al., 2018; Sydorenko et al., 2020). This further reveals that technology-enhanced self-access materials can be useful for learning pragmatics beyond the language classroom, especially in contexts where learners have little or no exposure to pragmatic language input outside the language classroom. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that Nearpod is a useful Web 2.0 tool, which is accessible to everyone, for learning and teaching pragmatics. The results indicated that the partici-

pants showed varying degrees of increment rates after the treatment. Sydorenko et al. (2020) explain this with individual differences among the learners. The participants' pre-existing linguistic and pragmatic knowledge may have been responsible for such diversity in their increment rates.

The qualitative findings provided us with real insights about on what grounds the learners improved their pragmatic language use. First, it was reported that the participants showed a tendency to use the same modal verb *can* in most of the scenarios before the treatment, a tendency to which Kasper (1982) refers as "modality generalization" (p.107). Karatepe (1998, 2001) also documented that even advanced Turkish speakers of the English language tend to use the same modal verbs in situations regardless of contextual variables. After the self-paced instruction, the post-test results reported that the learners were more likely to employ past modal verbs such as *could* and *would* which are commonly used to mitigate the illocutionary force of the request (Schauer, 2009).

Additionally, it was revealed that the learners used inappropriate main verbs in their request head acts before the treatment due to L1 transfer. Likewise, Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) in their cross-sectional study documented that Turkish EFL learners are likely to perform inappropriate main verbs in their requests owing to their overreliance on their L1 knowledge. However, the post-test findings demonstrated that self-paced pragmatics instruction through Nearpod helped learners avoid such failures. Learners tended to transfer the use of *take* (almak) which is the short form of *ödünc almak* (to borrow) and the use of 'give' (vermek) which is the short form of *ödünc vermek* (to lend) in Turkish (Karatepe 2001; 2019). These short forms are often used in daily Turkish because the acts of borrowing and lending are understood from the context of situation. However, learners are not aware of the fact that when they translate Turkish *borrow* (*ödünc almak*) as *take* (almak), it has different connotations. Therefore, this use of the verb *take* can invoke a strong reaction from an interactant when used in English. The verb *take* in English gives the impression that the person would like to have or own the item in question. In addition, the use of 'give' to mean *lend* appear to be based on the same interlingual transfer process in their interlanguage (Saville-Troike 2012). The fact that learners stopped using *take* instead of *borrow* and *give* instead of *lend* show a significant step forward because it seems an indication that learners started to develop an awareness about how pragmatic features operate in English. They appear to have stopped relying on their easily accessed automatized procedural knowledge of Turkish and to have begun automatizing their knowledge of English verbs (Anderson 1993; Saville-Troike 2012).

Economidou-Kogetsidis et al. (2018) emphasized the significance of instruction to develop learners' use of internal and external modifiers. Thus, the study also shed light on the internal and external modification strategies that the participants performed in the pre-test and the post-test. The most frequent internal modification device was found to be the politeness marker *please* in the pre-test and the post-test. Borovina (2017) also demonstrated that the politeness

marker *please* is the most recurring internal modifier at all levels in her cross-sectional research. Likewise, Kaivanpanah et al. (2020) reported the politeness marker *please* as the most recurrent internal modifier before and after pragmatics instruction. Faerch and Kasper (1989) described the reason behind learners' overuse of the politeness marker *please* as its "double function as illocutionary force indicator and transparent mitigator" (p. 233). What is more, the findings indicated that the participants started performing internal modifiers such as downtoners, aspect, tentative embedding, and appreciative embedding, which did not exist in the pre-test data, after the self-paced instruction. Furthermore, they began to use past tense modals more in the post-test more frequently. This was not surprising for us since Schauer (2009) stated that these modal verbs were easy to employ in a sentence and are taught from the very beginning of language instruction. While Göy et al.'s (2012) findings displayed a small degree of development regarding internal modifiers among different proficiency levels, the present study revealed that self-paced pragmatics instruction through Nearpod is useful to this end. Regarding external modifiers, the findings documented that alerters and grounders were the most common strategies occurring in both the pre-test and the post-test data. Alerters and grounders were also the most frequent external modifiers in Borovina's (2017) learner corpus. Kasper and Rose (2002) and Rose (2009) regarded learners' frequent use of grounders as an indicator of pragmatic development.

## CONCLUSION

Although the teaching and learning of pragmatics have received considerable attention thanks to the internet and CMC in the last decades, unfortunately, it is still quite challenging to develop learners' pragmatic competence in EFL contexts due to an inadequate level of pragmatic language input and practice. However, learning has no boundaries thanks to advancements in technology. It has been underscored that technology is a valuable tool to teach pragmatic aspects of the target language (Eslami & Liu, 2013; Eslami et al., 2015; Mirzaei et al., 2016; Ajabshir, 2019). With the self-access materials that technology offers, it is possible to extend pragmatics instruction beyond the language classroom (Sydorenko et al., 2018; Sydorenko et al., 2020). In compliance with the previous research, the present paper confirmed that self-access materials are useful to help learners improve their pragmatic competence outside the traditional language classrooms. Furthermore, it was shown that Nearpod is a handy tool to this end. Yet, it is notable that it may be challenging for many language teachers to make use of Web 2.0 tools like Nearpod for teaching pragmatics since it requires both the knowledge of pragmatics and adequate level of digital literacy (Civelek & Karatepe, 2021). Therefore, Civelek et al. (2021) highlighted the significance of covering online instructional methodologies in EFL teacher training programs.

The current study also presented an overview of the impact of student-paced pragmatics instruction on the learners' development of request performance through the

qualitative analysis. The findings showed that the learners gave up their tendency to employ the same modal verb in each scenario. Moreover, it was reported that, after self-paced instruction, the learners overcame the failures which occurred in the pre-test data due to L1 transfer in terms of the use of main verbs. Additionally, it was documented that the participants improved their repertoire of internal modifiers to soften their requests considering the context of the situation. In terms of external modifiers, they mostly employed grounders and alerters before and after the treatment. All in all, the findings revealed that self-paced pragmatics learning through Nearpod influenced learners' pragmatic performance in a positive way. Furthermore, it was indicated that request modification strategies are teachable and the learning of which lends itself to extensive instruction. Unless learners are explicitly made aware of issues related with appropriateness and politeness, EFL learners' pragmatic competence will be limited within the borders of the classroom. In order to enable learners to go beyond the walls of the classroom, they need to gain awareness about how context influence language choice and how important appropriate language use is in communication.

The previous studies also included a native speaker corpus (For instance, Economidou-Kogetsidis et al., 2018; Kaivanpanah et al., 2020). This helped them to indicate deviations regarding learners' performance of request modification strategies from native speakers after the instruction period. Even if this paper lacks native speaker corpus, we do not regard this as a limitation since learners are not required to solely rely on native-speaker pragmatic norms in English as an International Language (EIL) era (Tajeddin et al., 2018). It has been suggested that teachers should aim to improve learners' strategic competence. This way, they can help learners "accommodate a variety of EIL interactions" (ibid., p. 311). In summary, this paper showed that student-paced pragmatics learning through Nearpod enabled learners to employ various internal and external modifiers to achieve linguistic politeness regardless of to what extent they deviate from native speakers' performance. However, the small sample size could be considered as a limitation of this paper. Thus, we suggest that experimental or quasi-experimental studies with larger sample sizes could be conducted to shed light on the efficacy of student-paced learning of pragmatics through different Web 2.0 tools.

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### Appendix A- Sample warm-up, focused noticing, and production activities from SP Nearpod Lessons

Sample warm-up activities aiming either to prepare learners for the upcoming model language or make the lesson content more relevant to the learners' lives:



Figure 1. Sample open-ended questions prepared for the warm-up stage through Nearpod

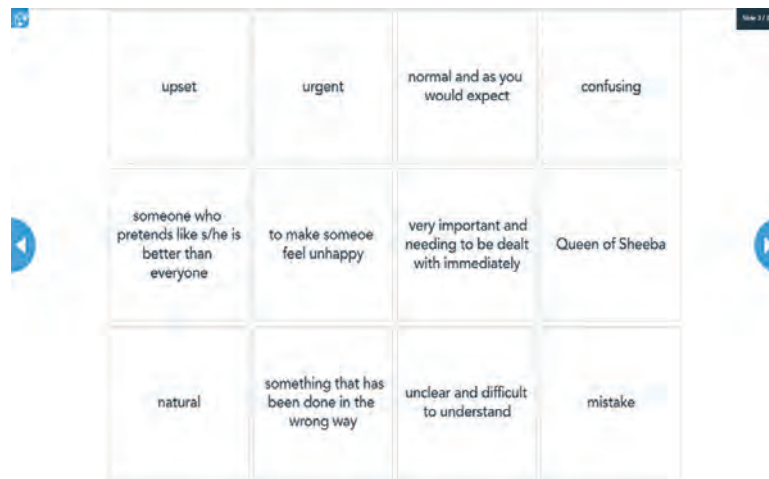


Figure 2. Sample matching activity aiming to prepare learners for the model dialogue

Sample focused-noticing activities aiming to increase learners' awareness of appropriate language use in the target language:



Figure 3. A sample focused noticing exercise

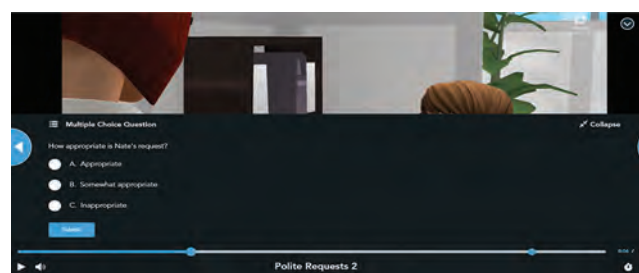


Figure 4. A sample focused noticing activity prepared through Nearpod's interactive video facility

In the activity given above, learners hear the request, and are then asked to grade the request in terms of appropriateness. Later in the video, another question pops up asking learners why they think the request is (in)appropriate.

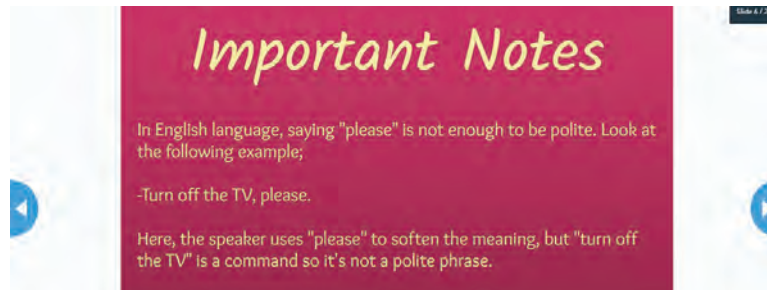


Figure 5. Sample meta-pragmatic explanations



Figure 6. A sample controlled production activity

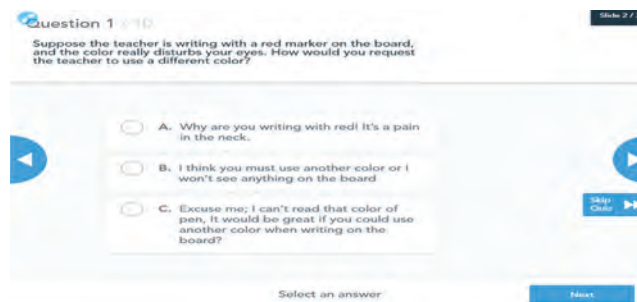


Figure 7. A sample multiple-choice discourse completion task

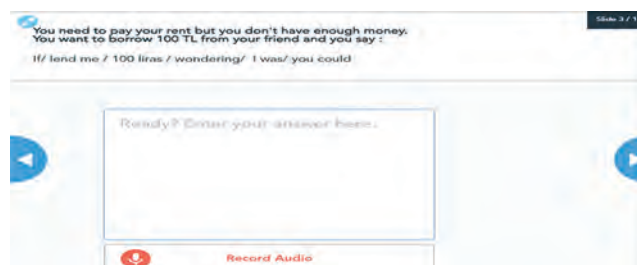


Figure 8. A sample production task

### Appendix B- Shauer's (2009) coding scheme of internal/external modifiers

The modifiers, which were absent in the learner data, are not presented in the tables.

**Table 6.** Internal modifiers

Name	Examples
Downtoner	Could you <i>possibly</i> lend me your book for a few days?
Politeness Marker	Could you e-mail me the new files, <i>please</i> ?
Understater	Can you turn up the volume <i>a bit</i> , please?
Past Tense Modals	<i>Would</i> you be able to lend me your pen, please?
Consultive Device	<i>Would you mind</i> sharing your notes with me?
Aspect	I was wondering if you could give me a few days to finish my project.
Marked Modality	<i>May</i> I have a steak, please?
Conditional Clause	<i>If</i> you're going out, can you buy a tube of toothpaste for me?
Appreciative Embedding	It <i>would be great</i> if you could lend me your book.
Tentative Embedding	I <i>was wondering if</i> I could borrow your book.

**Table 7.** External modifiers

Name	Example
Alerter	<i>Teacher</i> , I cannot hear it clearly. Would you be able to turn up the sound, please?
Preperator	<i>I need your help.</i>
Grounder	<i>I want to buy a pair of shoes but I don't have enough money.</i> It would be great if you could lend me 400 liras, please.
Disarmer	Excuse me, <i>I saw your extra pen.</i> Can I use it, please?
Imposition minimizer	Can you lend me 400 TL, please? <i>I promise I'll pay it back next month.</i>
Sweetener	<i>I hear that you love to help students.</i> I really appreciate that. If you don't mind, could you possibly lend me your book?
Appreciator	<i>I really appreciate that.</i>
Small talk	<i>Nice to meet you.</i>
Considerator	<i>if that is possible, of course.</i>