CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The study aimed at developing pragmatic competence in the target language by providing learners with a pragmatic treatment through classroom instruction. It was hypothesized at the very outset (Chapter 1 Section 1.4) that pragmatic competence can be developed through explicit interventional teaching. To prove the hypothesis the researcher undertook an empirical study. A pretest (Appendix B) at the entry level was followed by a forty clock hour pragmatic treatment. A posttest (Appendix C) was administered at the end of the instructional module in order to assess the progress made by the learners.

Results from the study have confirmed the researcher's hypothesis (Chapter 1 Section 1.4) and also supported the claim concerning the effect of explicit instruction in learners' production of the four speech acts formulations namely Requests, Compliments, Compliment Responses, Complaints and Apologies and inferencing implicatures.

The study evaluated the learners’ pragmatic abilities based on realizations of these Speech act functions in relation to social distance and power and how politeness as a sociocultural construct plays an important role in this regard.
The participants' performance was examined at two different points

(i) pre instruction (pretest) (See APPENDIX B)

(ii) post instruction (posttest) (See APPENDIX C)

WDCT designed for this study (See Chapter 2 Section 2.2) had proved to be a valuable tool to measure the differences pertaining to the learners' performance (see Chapter 4, the Score Chart: Page 115). The observations after instruction with respect to posttest are as follows:

(i) the ability to recognize the illocutionary force of the speech acts in the sections I & II of the posttest was significantly higher.

(ii) the performance of the learners in using softeners and intensifiers was found to be higher in section VII which dealt with Hedges.

(ii) there was significant change dealing with pragmalinguistic productions of the four speech act functions in sections III, IV, V & VI

The results of the empirical study demonstrated learners' ability to interpret indirect speech acts, i.e., the ability to recover the understated speaker meaning (Sections I & II of posttest). The results also evidenced qualitative change in the learners' use of speech act realizations in the sense that they used more polite forms with social appropriateness in relevant contexts. The study also demonstrated quantitative increase of speech act productions with reference to their using longer and complex forms in talk exchanges (Sections III to VI of posttest). Therefore, the results have definite indications to maintain the hypothesis and confirm findings.
The fact that learners' performance improved after being engaged in the awareness-raising, explanation and production activities leads to pedagogical implications for the study of these pragmatic aspects in the second language learning setting.

**5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

1. Results of the pretest (See Chapter 4, Score Chart) showed that even those students with high grammatical knowledge did not have pragmatic awareness of speech acts in the absence of any pertinent instruction. This implies that explicit metapragmatic instruction is necessary. Result of the data show that explicit metapragmatic instruction by providing input enhancement, raises learners' awareness about the input features, and engages students in productive class activities and language use, facilitates pragmatic competence to a considerable degree.

2. The results of the posttest demonstrated the researcher's claim that after teaching the selected pragmatic aspects the learners' pragmatic abilities increased. They showed a greater degree of politeness and appropriacy of language use. Their perception of inferencing implicatures was also sharpened. Therefore, it is imperative that pragmatic component be a part of language teaching.

The researcher's assumption that helping learners to make the process of pragmatic decision making explicit helped them in communicating successfully and creatively in the target language with sociocultural appropriacy.
(3) Learners' proficiency was measured by making the learners repeat the exercises on *pragmalinguistic routines* and correcting the pragmatic errors and also helping them in choosing an appropriate routine to match with the sociocultural expectations.

The study had focused on four speech act productions, viz., *requests*, *apologies*, *complaints*, *compliments/compliment responses* and also *inferencing implicatures*, *hedges* and *performative verbs*. The rationale behind these selections was, firstly, the fact that these speech acts are observed most frequently in day to day communication of any speaker, and thus, worth paying attention. Secondly, studies on implicatures are not explored enough and, therefore, the researcher included indirectness of utterances in the study as part of pragmatic treatment. Results of the study supported the assumption of the researcher that this pragmatic treatment had been useful in improving the learners’ proficiency.

(4) The researcher would like to shed light on the issue of effect of explicit instruction on pragmatic development, viewing the results of pretest and posttest. By engaging the learners in productive class activities and language use precipitated and facilitated pragmatic development to a considerable degree. The informal feedback from the Select Group indicated that the materials and the instruction provided were useful and helpful. And also it was indicated by the group through the feedback that the researcher's explicit explanation about the ways to recover the implied meaning of different *implicatures* and also about the use of routine expressions of speech acts studied, played a significant role in their understanding of pragmatics.
5.2 WDCT AS A TOOL

The WDCT used in this study (Appendices B & C) as a format for pretest and posttest, proved to be a valuable tool in assessing the politeness strategies to make requests, complaints, compliments, compliment responses and apologies used by participant and also inferencing implicatures. Based on the results of the pretest, the instructional materials had been prepared for the pragmatic treatment. The results of the posttest elicited the significant improvement in the performance of the participants.

Despite its advantages, the format of the WDCT may have caused confusion. In some cases, though they were few, participants seemed to misunderstand the goal of the WDCT and left portions of the survey blank, perhaps due to oversight or unwillingness to disclose certain information. Also significant is the uneven distribution of formal/informal contexts presented in the WDCTs. On the other hand, however, choosing these scenarios may have aided in the assessment process as the learners may have recognized a pattern and become aware of the research objectives. As such, they may have chosen forms they believed to be the most appropriate based on their experience with “textbook norms” rather than submitting responses that seemed natural in their individual dialects of the language.
5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

Pedagogical decisions concerning what and how to teach speech act behaviour are based on the student strength and their goals. The first step toward acquisition of pragmatic rules of speech act realization patterns is a program aimed at sensitizing learners to cultural differences in speech act behaviour across languages. Making learners aware of major patterns of behavior in the target language and of available choices for speech act realization may well help learners become better users of pragmatic input in L2 and help them make informed choices in the speech act production as they become more proficient.

There is a vast amount of literature describing what major semantic formulae make up the English speech acts like requests, compliments/compliment responses, apologies and complaints. For the purpose of syllabus design, the researcher assumed that the learner needed to know how to interpret and produce these speech acts in a variety of interactive discourse situations in the target language. However, in what contexts, and which of these speech acts learners are most likely to come across must be considered by teachers and syllabus designers in each case.

In order to empower learners to make their own choices, one needs to expose them to patterns used most commonly by the speakers of the L2. It seems appropriate then to incorporate the most common linguistic forms speakers use to realize a speech act at the beginning, while the various sub formulas and supportive moves that either mitigate or
intensify the force of the speech act can be introduced gradually as learners become more proficient.

A critical issue in relation to conforming to target language community norms is the willingness or necessity for learners to perform according to the pragmatic norms. Learners in this study are going to be future teachers of English and one can assume that they are desirous of improving L2 pragmatics, especially pragmatic awareness. Learners need to recognize the social function of different speech acts and the significance of different degrees of indirectness. Making contextualized, pragmatically appropriate language input available to learners in which they do not have the chance to encounter this input outside the classroom is pedagogically necessary. Helping students to understand the way pragmatic principles operate in other cultures, encouraging them to look for the different pragmatic or discourse norms which may underlie national and ethnic stereotyping, is pedagogically necessary. As Thomas (1983) suggests, learners must be given the knowledge and tools to make an informed choice and allowing them the freedom to flout pragmatic conventions, is to acknowledge their individuality and freedom of choice and to respect their system of values and beliefs. The adoption of socio-cultural rules as one’s own in L2 pragmatic production is an individual decision. However it is a collective responsibility of teachers to equip the learners with enough knowledge to make an informed choice and not to inadvertently convey messages they did not intend.
Therefore, it is concluded that pragmatic component should be included in the second language curriculum, taking into account the fact that it is one of the main components of communicative competence.

5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

Suggestions for future research regarding developing the pragmatic competence of L2 learners include an analysis of the various factors surrounding pragmatic input in the classroom. One way to do this is through an evaluation of textbooks and the manner in which pragmatic material is presented. Textbooks, however, are not the only source of pragmatic input for the L2 learner in the classroom. The teacher’s role and what s/he considers his/her role to be pertaining to pragmatic input would be of particular interest in this study. Future research may imply an examination of teachers' perceptions on explicit pragmatic teaching in the classroom setting. Jointly, these future research suggestions will help in understanding the various factors that facilitate pragmatic competence. Further research of these issues as well as those that have been examined in this study will bring most of the people one step closer to understanding all of the complex processes involved in SLA. These will be of great value to language learners and teachers in their efforts to effectively teach and learn the target language.