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**The Effect of Pragmatic Instruction on EFL  
Learners' Constructive Peer Criticism Competence  
The Case of Second Year LMD Students of  
English at Batna University 2, Algeria**

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Linguistics**

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## ***Dedication***

*The words can never express how much we owe to our families for their love and support through our study career.*

*We dedicate this work to our parents for their sacrifice.*

*To our brothers and sisters without exception.*

*To our adorable husbands: BOUCETTA Hamza and Nacer Eddine kalla, and children: Semmache Rawane, Mohamed Sif ElIslam, Kinda Miral and Adam Iyes who were besides us in every step during the whole year.*

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## **Abstract**

English movies are available in many countries around the world, and they are a popular form of entertainment with many students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Watching English movies with subtitles to learn a foreign language can facilitate students' motivation, solve ambiguity, and remove some of the anxiety of the non-native learners. This study aimed to find out whether there is significant effectiveness of watching English subtitled movies on first-year English student's speaking skill. In total, 250 first-year students of the English department at Batna-2 University participated in this study and the descriptive analysis of watching subtitled movies of speaking skill is conducted. A questionnaire was administered for this study after assigning subjects randomly. The current study assumes that watching English subtitled movies can improve students' engagement in learning and enhancing their oral performance. However, more studies need to be done in the future in order to get the most advantages out of the movie materials in EFL classrooms.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

**EFL:** English as a foreign language

**ESL:** English as a second language

**L1:** first language

**L2:** second language

**CAF:** Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency

**VS:** versus

**SDH:** Subdural Haemorrhage

**e.g.:** example

**TV:** television

**FL:** foreign language

**SEEU:** South East European University

**Q:** question

**LMD** Licence Master Doctorate

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	01
ABSTRACT.....	02
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	03
TABLE OF CONTENT.....	04
LIST OF TABLES.....	06
LIST OF FIGURES.....	07

### CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I-1 Background of the Study.....	10
I-2- Statement of the Problem.....	13
I-3-Research Questions.....	15
I-4-Research Hypotheses.....	15
I-5-Limitations.....	15

### CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

SECTION 1: Speaking Skill .....	17
Introduction.....	17
II-1-1 Definition of Speaking.....	17
II-1-2 The Importance of Speaking.....	18
II-1-3 Differences between L1 and L2 Speaking.....	19
II-1-4 The Purposes of Speaking.....	20
II-1-4.1 Informative Speech.....	20
II-1-4.2 Invitational Speaking.....	20
II-1-4.3 Dispositional Persuasive Speaking.....	21
II-1-4.4 Actuation Persuasive Speaking.....	21
II-1-5 Speaking Evaluation.....	21
II-1-5.1 Pronunciation.....	21
II-1-5.2 Fluency.....	22
II-1-5.3 Accuracy.....	23
II-1-6-Learners' Speaking Difficulties.....	23
II-1-6.1 Lack of Motivation.....	24
II-1-6.2 Inhibition.....	24
II-1-6.3 Poor Listening Practice.....	25
II-1-6.4 Speaking Anxiety.....	25
Section 2: Learning Speaking through Subtitled Movies.....	25

II-2-1 Definition of Subtitles.....	25
II-2-2 Subtitles Benefits on EFL Learning: A Review of Related Studies.....	26
II-2-3 Reasons behind Watching Subtitled Movies.....	27
Conclusion.....	28

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Introduction.....	30
III.1. Population.....	30
III-2 The Students.....	30
III-3 Data Collection Tools .....	30

### **CHAPTER 4: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

Part one: Participants' Personal Details.....	32
Part two: Facts and opinion.....	34

### **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **CHAPTER 6: GENERAL CONCLUSION**

VI. 1. Suggestions and Recommendations.....	50
VI. 2.General Conclusion.....	51
VII. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	52
VIII. APPENDIX.....	54

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table1:</b> students' gender.....	33
<b>Table2:</b> distribution of students according to their ages.....	34
<b>Table3:</b> students' reasons behind watching movies.....	35
<b>Table4:</b> students' responses toward the effects of watching subtitled movies.....	36
<b>Table5:</b> duration of watching movies.....	37
<b>Table6:</b> Selecting movies genres to watch.....	38
<b>Table7:</b> students' responses toward pronunciation through watching subtitled movies.....	39
<b>Table8:</b> students' responses toward enhancing comprehension of the language through subtitles	40
<b>Table9:</b> students' responses toward teachers' motivation to learn through movies.....	41
<b>Table10:</b> students' responses toward the impact of watching English movies with subtitles on EFL learners speaking skill.....	42



## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure1:</b> students' gender.....	<b>33</b>
<b>Figure2:</b> distribution of students according to their ages.....	<b>34</b>
<b>Figure3:</b> students' reasons behind watching movies.....	<b>35</b>
<b>Figure4:</b> students' responses toward the effects of watching subtitled movies.....	<b>36</b>
<b>Figure5:</b> duration of watching movies.....	<b>37</b>
<b>Figure6:</b> Selecting movies to watch.....	<b>38</b>
<b>Figure7:</b> students' responses toward pronunciation through watching subtitled movies.....	<b>39</b>
<b>Figure8:</b> students' responses toward enhancing comprehension of the language through subtitles.	<b>40</b>
<b>Figure9:</b> students' responses toward teachers' motivation to learn through movies.....	<b>41</b>
<b>Figure10:</b> the impact of watching English movies with subtitles on EFL learners speaking skill...	<b>42</b>

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## I-1- BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The English language is one of the most powerful and well known languages in the world. In each and every word, it has grown to be the language of age; that is; most attitudes toward English are positive since the majority of countries adopt it as their second or foreign language used in education, government, politics, trade, and external dealings and relations.

The Arab world, as a part of the globe, has also given English its status as the first foreign language taught in schools and academic institutions, and used it in business, in medicine, and communication with other part of the world.

In terms of instructions, teaching English is supposedly not confined only to grammar, it should include several aspects of the language such as the four skills: Listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The main focus, however, is probably devoted to writing. Students do a lot of writing since the first academic year till they submit graduation dissertation. Therefore, students need to assess efforts and time given to speaking as a vital part of language learning and they should determine the level of proficiency necessary for effective communication. One way to do so, is watching English subtitled movies.

Watching English movies can help viewers, specifically the students to enhance their vocabulary and make it in use through a direct contact with real life English language, and for them to acquire new words. In this modern generation, there are so many people watching foreign movies most of them are students who are interested in watching English movies instead of reading English books.

In the world, the cultural heritage of a nation is the language. During the last decade, learning languages has become more important. Learning a new language not only develops individual intelligence, but also it gives learners, permission to enter and gets learners near to another culture and prepares them with the essential skills to succeed and change their behavior in a rapidly changing world (Chan and Herrero, 2010). Movies are a part of visual literacy and “*movies are an enjoyable source of entertainment and language acquisition*” (Ismaili, 2012, p. 122).

Watching movies can support motivation of the learners because of their playful component, and they can be used as task activities to give an ideal environment for learning, as well as encouraging participation and interaction among students (Chan and Herrero, 2010). Many scholars have revealed that watching English movies can become an essential part of language learning. This is based on the fact that movies give exposures to “*Real language,*” used in authentic settings and in the cultural context which the

foreign language is spoken. They also have recognized that movies attract the learner, and it can positively affect their motivation to learn (Ismaili, 2013). Herron and Hanley (1992) contented that

*“Watching movies serve as a bridge between learning skills and language objectives (output), and provide background information that activates foremost knowledge, which is important in stimulating the four skills” (p.72)*

Watching subtitled movies make students interact with the movies. When EFL learners watching a subtitled movie, watching and listening to the audiovisual materials, they are also understand and interact with the movie, and they make a translation, between the source language and target language. This interaction seems to be in its pick in case of watching movies in reversed subtitled mode. While watching reversed subtitled movies, learners try less to understand aural input due to their familiarity with the audio language (Gorjian, 2014).

Furthermore, Scholars have revealed that movie fragments are useful to enhance memory and improve recovery of information in reading skill and listening skill (Pezdek, Lehrer, and Simon, 1984). Using the same pattern, movies help the development of the writing skill of the learner and give interesting and motivating clues to accompany audio or written inputs, in that way they help understanding and producing of second language input/output (Ismaili, 2012). Videos that related to the content of the curriculum can be used in EFL classrooms to bring a realistic phase of what is being taught in the class. This issue work as a supporter and motivator to the learners (Furmanovsky, 1997). Within this respect, Ismaili (2012) contented that watching the movie of famous and current novels as a supplementary source for the reading.

Movies pave the way for EFL learners and give the opportunities to see the social dynamics of communication just like native speakers incorporate into real settings (Ismaili, 2012). In addition, movies provide a great chance to students to gain background understanding to combine with their own understanding of a story or concept. When students reading a text, movie features can help them connect to new information they may have not had a background in and change their new thoughts, images, and feelings to the text at hand (Gambrell and Jawits, 1993).

*“The main component of watching the movies is actually enabling the reader to picture or to visualize the events, characters, narration, story and words in the context ” ( p. 123).*

Draper (2012) has described visualization as a foremost prerequisite for a good reader. Helping students gain visualization skills is an essential way to advance greater understanding while reading. It

permits students the ability to become more engaged in their reading and they use their images to draw conclusions, create interpretations of the text, and recall details and elements from the text (Keene and Simmerman, 1997).

Draper (2012) has researched and recognized that expert readers impulsively and purposefully create mental images in their mind at the time, and after they read. The creation of the images comes from the five senses and emotions, and they are stored in readers' encyclopedic knowledge. They use images to put themselves in detail while they read. The detail provides depth and dimension to the reading, engaging the reader more deeply, and making the text more memorable. Expert readers get the benefit from images to draw conclusions to create different and unique interpretations of the text, to remember the essential elements of the text, and to remember a text after it has been read. This is a good reason to support English instructors to be more imaginative and motivated using movies in EFL classrooms (Ismaili, 2012). Therefore, teachers believed that using movies in EFL classroom can increase the interaction among learners; they improve learners' speaking skill and offer learners more opportunities to use English (Ismaili, 2012). Students are more excited to see and hear real-life situations because movies provide a relaxed atmosphere for them (Ismaili, 2012) .

In short," films provide an invaluable extension of what we might call the technologies of language acquisition that have been used to teach students the basics of English learning in elementary and high schools or institutes"(Sabouri, Zohrabi and Osbouei, 2015, p. 110).

Language production within a meaningful context and through interaction has been demonstrated to assist second language acquisition (Ellis and He, 1999). According to Swain's (1993) output hypothesis, language production within a meaningful context and through interaction: (1) provides the opportunity for contextual use of linguistic resources, which leads to automaticity in language use; (2) forces syntactic processing, where students pay more attention to syntax when listening in order to use it in their own language production later on; (3) helps students to recognize what they do not know or know only partially ; (4) provides opportunity for testing out hypotheses in order to see the linguistic features that work. With the increasing access to TV, video equipment and more recently, computers, teachers have found more opportunities to use audio-visual materials at all levels of foreign language teaching, and they have frequently used them effectively in language classes (Meskill, 1996). According to Champoux (1999), movies are a comfortable familiar medium to contemporary students that can keep student s interest in the theories and concepts under discussion. Although most movies are fiction, they can offer powerful experiences that students are unlikely to have in a classroom. Film scenes can offer visual portrayal of abstract theories and concepts taught in management and social sciences courses. Explaining

concepts through different film scenes bring theories closer to realistic situations. Films can also provoke good discussion, assessment of one's values and self if the scenes have strong emotional content. Cinema's ability to create a unique experience gives it unbeatable power as a teaching tool.

Psychologists have argued in favor of films' impact on cognitive learning of students . Blasco et al., (2006) have stated that the use of films in learning and teaching is crucial to provoking the reflective processes and attitudes in the learner. Some others (Lesser and Pearl, 2008; Casper et al., 2003; Butler et al., 2009) have also argued that learners' ability to retain and recall information as well as overall satisfaction with the learning experience was significantly higher where film was an integral part of the learning activities. Champoux (1999) maintained that movies offer both cognitive and affective experiences. Moreover, movie scenes could be very helpful in enhancing analytical skills of students and changing their worldview as they offer opportunity to connect theories to realistic situations. Researchers have considered several benefits of watching movies. For example, Pescosolido (1990) argued that watching movies can be important in learning and also highlighted that active learning can be encouraged and better supported through the use of audio-visual materials from the popular culture arena. On the other hand, Butler et al., (2009) argued that when information mentioned in texts is not consistent with information revealed in movies, students tend to recall incorrect information rather than correcting inconsistencies in information, which needs to be handled cautiously. In sum, watching captions or subtitles to facilitate the comprehension of video materials is taken for granted by many teachers and researchers. Moreover, many educators believe that television programs with captions seem to provide a rich context for foreign language.

## **I-2- STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Speaking is one of the four macro skills necessary for effective communication in any language particularly when speakers are not using their mother tongue. As English is universally used as a means of communication, especially in the internet world, English speaking skills should be developed along with the other skills so that these integrated skills will enhance communication achievement both with native speakers of English and other members of the international community. Because of the significant role of speaking in action, the researchers argued that the main cause of weak pronunciation among ESL\EFL Arab learners may be the negative transfer of the native language \_ weak pronunciation among English as a Second Language (ESL)\English as a Foreign Language (EFL )Arab learners may be the negative transfer of the native language (Arabic), and the lack of listening to and practicing the pure English as it is the problems of pronunciation and speaking skills of first year English students at Batna-2 University in an attempt to find new techniques for promoting their pronunciation to sound comprehensible and native-like. One of

the techniques used and would like to investigate how English movies would be beneficial for improving their speaking skill and how English movies can be used as a means for enhancing pronunciation because this technique is believed to give students the opportunity to listen to authentic spoken English from the native speakers themselves.

EFL learners, such as Arabs, specifically Algerians find it difficult to acquire the real English spoken by native speakers; that is, such language has its own special phonological system and rules differing from that of the mother tongue of the learner. Accordingly, the extent of difficulty of learning English depends greatly on its relation to the first\ native language of the learner; whether it is a cognate to English (i.e., L1 and L2 are both descendants of the same language family) or not. For example, it may somehow be easier for a French person to learn English than an Arab if both learners received the same instruction under the same conditions; that is, French and English are cognates of the same family which is 'Germanic', and, therefore, both share many features, sounds and vocabulary. However, Arabic is a 'Semitic' language not Germanic, which means a total difference between Arabic and English in vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, phonetics and phonology. As a result, Arab learners should exert extra effort to master English language in general, and speaking skill in specific. Gimson (1980, p. 322) advises EFL learners of pronunciation "to establish certain basic discriminatory skills" by distinguishing between the features of the mother tongue and those of English, in addition to recognizing the contrastive features of English itself. Another matter that should be taking care of is that although English speaking follows rules, the application of such rules is not always systematic; there are irregularities and exceptions, especially in word stress when it comes to pronouncing verbs, nouns, and derivations of the same root or stem (Gimson, 1980). In terms of connected speech, the story is more complicated because sometimes we need to switch the stress\ accent to a particular word or phrase, that originally do not receive stress, in order to convey a specific meaning or message, depending on the context of speech. Therefore, we should be aware of the way we do that in order not to be misunderstood by others especially native speakers. That is, it happens that wrong usage of stress, pitch of voice, or intonation in connected speech gets misinterpreted (Gimson, 1980). Gimson (1980, p. 297) recommends the foreign learner of English "to aim at a careful colloquial style of English in his own speech and, at the same time, be aware of the features which characterize the rapid colloquial style he is likely to hear from native speakers," which can probably be achieved by listening to English movies whether spoken with the Received Pronunciation (which is the advisable accent by Gimson), with the General American, or with any other English accent. The phase of acquiring English speaking skill through watching English movies is according to Gimson (1980), " *Practice in reception and comprehension*" (p.54)

### **I-3-Research Questions**

The current study addresses three overarching research queries:

- 1 .What is the status of speaking skill in the English language instruction at Batna-2 University?
2. What are the problems the first year English students suffer from in pronunciation and speaking skills?
3. To what extent do English subtitled movies have impact on improving students' pronunciation and speaking skills?

### **I-4-Research Hypotheses**

The current study hypothesizes the following:

1. It is expected that the status of pronunciation and speaking skill learning in the English Department at Batna2 University is of minor importance.
2. First-year English students at Batna-2 University are expected to have problems in pronunciation and speaking.
3. Watching English movies is expected to have positive impact on the pronunciation and speaking skills of the first year English students at Batna-2 University.

### **I-5-Limitation**

This study is based on a survey from where data collected from a questionnaire distributed to 250 first-year students; thus the study was limited to a relatively small number of students. Due to the short time frame, this study collected data from a questionnaire only. Future research might be conducted through interviewing students to gain more information, or designing a test of students' speaking skill.



# CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Section 1: Speaking Skill

### Introduction:

English today is believed to be the most influential language. A large proportion of learners study English to express themselves in order to reach specific purposes, or to communicate with native speakers or speakers from other languages. This involves mastering English four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Speaking is considered as the most important skill to direct people and to communicate with them. As YunZhong (1985; 2002; p.133) states, many language teachers consider speaking as the most effective tool by which learners gain fluent reading knowledge and correct speech. For English teachers, speaking fluently is often given much more value in the field of EFL/ESL. Despite its importance, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills and memorization of dialogues; however, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve communicative skill.

This chapter concerns itself with speaking skill on which we try to go deep and focus on the process of speaking skill. In addition, the different purposes of speaking, differences between L1 and L2 speaking, and the main cause behind the difficulty of speaking and the main challenges that face students in their learning how to speak are considered. We would, also, tackle the different activities that are used to teach speaking and how to evaluate speaking, the importance of teaching speaking in learning English, and, finally, the impact of subtitled movies on English language learning.

### II-1-1 Definition of Speaking:

Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. It was conceived as by Chaney (1988) as being:

*“The process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts” (p.13)*

It was defined as *“an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information.”* (Brown, 1994; Burns and Joyce, 1997). It is a form of any meaning that depends on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment and the purposes of speaking. It is often spontaneous, open-ended and evolving. Despite its importance, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills and memorization of

dialogues and speech. However, today's world requires improving the communicative skill. According to Bygate (1989),

*“Speaking is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business. It is also the medium through which much language is learnt and which for many is particularly conducive for learning. Perhaps, then, the teaching of speaking merits more thought.” (p.1)*

When interacting with a native speaker we produce incidental acquisition, that is to say, we learn unconsciously. When we speak or write to a native speaker, or even with a non-native speaker, we **negotiate meaning**, and it is precisely because of this negotiation that the process of learning is facilitated. The adjustments we make during a conversation, as well as the provision of negative evidence by our interlocutor (through corrections and feedback), all contribute to this process. In short, conversation or simple chatting gives us a lot of opportunities for producing modified output.

## **II-1-2 The Importance of Speaking:**

The value of speaking has been underpinned by many scholars over the last few decades. Huxley (1958) contended that:

*“ Language has made possible man's progress from animality to civilization ”*

*(p.167)*

Learning to speak English confidently is nowadays a need. A large number of EFL teachers state the importance of speaking skill during English lessons; they consider the speaking skill of a huge value especially in one's career. It is a tool by which learners express ideas, opinions, feelings, thoughts; travel abroad and communicate with foreign people. Within the same respect, Bygate (1987) claimed that

*“Speaking is, however, a skill which deserves attention every bit much as literary skill in both first and second languages, [...]. It is a skill by which learners are frequently judged, and through which they may make or lose friends. It is the vehicle par excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business.” (p.1)*

Hence, the importance of speaking skill is enormous for EFL learners to be especially and purposely trained in the skill of speaking which provides them with several distinct advantages in order to be well rounded communicators. An effective speaker can gain the attention of the audience, and hold it till the

completion of his message Learning English as a second language offers many benefits in today's business world not only as a means to communicate with people on the other side of the world, but it serves to show a person's intelligence too. When a person is willing to commit to learn what has become known as the International Language of today's modern world it shows they want to be a success. And finally, having English as a second language opens up many work opportunities no matter what ethnicity, colour or background a person comes from.

### II-1-3 Differences between L1 and L2 Speaking:

A considerable number of L2 speakers suffer from lacks in terms of accuracy, fluency, low pronunciation level, and so many other problems they may face. Those factors can lead to the interruption of face-to-face interaction and more precisely the lack of confidence. Like L1 speakers, L2 speakers, also, produce speech through process of conceptualizing then formulating, articulating and finally self monitoring. According to Thornbury (1998), it is too important when dealing with speaking skill to clarify the differences between first and second speaking processes.

Teachers argue that many factors are considered to be causes in developing speaking skill; thus, their grammatical and lexical knowledge is not enough. According to Thornbury (1998), the shortage of chances and opportunities for practice as well as the shortage of interactive speaking in classroom atmosphere are among those difficulties encountered. So, many L2 speakers, in spite of possessing vocabulary knowledge and grammar, are not able to speak fluently, accurately and with a good pronunciation, that is why the first step toward speaking a second language is to know the differences between L1 and L2/target language. In reverence with this, Thornbury (1988) asserted that:

*“They are essentially the same and should, in theory, be transferable from the speaker's first language into the second.” (p.28)*

Comparing between L1 and L2 in term of speaking as a mental process, it seems clearly that there is probably no difference at all because this process (speaking) follows the same stages. Thornbury (1988) argued that:

*“They will be attending to, their interlocutors, adjusting their message accordingly and negotiating the management of conversational turns.” (p.28)*

Thornbury explains that the skill of speaking seems to be completely the same in L2, but the difference is that grammar and vocabulary knowledge is not the same, this problem of knowledge differences may be clarified when examining the availability of that knowledge. Thornbury explained this latter to be

insufficient integrated into L1 speakers existing knowledge, and rarely accessed or not yet easily retrievable and most important.

## II-1-4 The Purposes of Speaking:

When we talk about speaking purposes, we can question why a specific speech was given and how we are supposed to use the information within a speech; that is, speakers are whether informing, persuading or something between.

### II-1-4.1 Informative Speech:

The first general purpose of speaking is to inform. Speaking to inform is one of the most important skills that help students develop. Many students are concerned with building an informative speech for their audience. Informative speaking can be defined as sharing information and knowledge between people. It describes an activity, event, process, concept and many other things. In this way, the speaker is sharing meaning and ways of understanding clearly and thoroughly and increases listeners' knowledge; he should then be wary of overestimating what the audience know. Within this respect, Foresman (1986) contended that

*"It is required when of a speaker when audience demands clarification of a particular idea or subject."(p. 166).*

Informative speaking uses facts, evidences, logic and structured presentations to help the listeners understand and remember the information presented.

Informative speaking consists of three types:

**Descriptive speeches:** they describe objects and events

**Exploration speeches:** they clarify ideas and go in details.

**Demonstrative speeches:** they teach a process and structure of objects.

At the end of this type of speech purposes, the listener can form his own opinion about the topic that has been discussed.

### II-1-4.2 Invitational Speaking:

Invitational speaking is often similar to informative speaking, but adds judgement to the mix. According to Griffen (2003), invitational speaking is a type of public speaking in which a speaker enters

into a dialogue with an audience in order to clarify positions, explore issues and ideas, or articulate beliefs and values. It uses evaluation and judgemental language and rational logic to present the case. It is more difficult than informative speaking. An invitational speaker engages the audience in a civil and open investigation of a topic, and explores its complexities without trying to persuade the audience of the right decision. Academics perform invitational speaking when they criticize other's research.

### **II-1-4.3 Dispositional Persuasive Speaking:**

This type of speech is more persuasive than the invitational speaking. It is designed to influence and listener's dispositional toward the topic and gain agreement on an attitude, value or belief. This, according to experts can be very difficult to do. Beliefs and attitudes are often closely related. For example, people valuing wisdom and believing that older people are probably wise have a favourable attitude toward older people in the workplace.

### **II-1-4.4 Actuation Persuasive Speaking:**

Actuation speaking is a type that intends to get listeners act or perform an action. It is designed you influence behaviour. To actuate means to move someone to action. For example, a student is engaged in an actuation persuasive speaking to convince her professor reconsiders her mark. In practice, this can be easy for the simple actions and hardest of all for actions that persons may not normally undertake.

### **II-1-5 Speaking Evaluation:**

As mentioned before, speaking is the mirror of students' level of mastering the language; the learners are generally judged according to their way of presenting the subject. In order to assess the speaking ability of learners, we must first ask what constitutes the speaking ability. According to Thornbury (1998),

*“Testing both formally and informally takes place at the beginning and at the end of most language course, as well as at various times during the course itself [...] it aims to test progress during the course, or achievement at the end of it.” (p. 124)*

Following this quotation, teachers consider many criteria to assess their learners' pronunciation, fluency accuracy and interaction.

#### **II-1-5.1 Pronunciation:**

Kelly (2000) asserted that:

*“A consideration of learners’ pronunciation errors and how these can inhibit successful communication is a useful basis on which to assess why it is important to deal with pronunciation in classroom.” (p.11)*

Pronunciation generally refers to the learners’ ability to produce intelligible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. Pronunciation is involved in the assessment of oral language proficiency and performance, but in scoring such tests. Pronunciation is sometimes explicitly included by test creators and sometimes ignored. In addition, pronunciation ability must, also, be assessed in order to create an accurate picture of student needs.

According to Harris (1997), pronunciation is the most difficult part to assess English spoken form because there is no agreement about on what good pronunciation means.

In a communicative test of speaking, students are asked to pronounce the language intelligibly even if some influences from L1 remain or through residual accent is acceptable (Hedge, 2000). In this task, learners have to produce individual sounds correctly, link words appropriately and use stress and pitch to convey the intended meaning. Hughues (2002) stated that:

*“The aim of pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other (competent) speakers.”(p. 68)*

It is difficult for teachers to spend enough time in teaching their students how to pronounce English words accurately, and then students should find other ways learn words’ pronunciation.

### **II-1-5.2 Fluency:**

Fluency is defined by Harris and Hodges (1981) as

*“The ability to read smoothly, easily, and readily with freedom from word recognition problems.”(p.120)*

It is necessary to determine the impact of fluency on foreign language comprehensibility. According to Hughues (2002), it refers to

*“learners’ ability to speak with normal level of continuity (speed), rate and efforts to link both ideas and language together to form coherent connected speech.” (p 77)*

A lack of fluency is characterised by a slow, halting pace, frequent mistakes, poor phrasing and inadequate information (Samuel, 1979). In assessing learners' fluency, learners are not asked to produce speech fast following the same rhythm as native speakers, but to follow a normal speed with clear continuity and logical sequencing of sentences.

### II-1-5.3 Accuracy:

Accuracy refers to the mechanics of producing a target-like and free errors language, more specifically in producing clear and articulated speaking free from grammar mistakes. It is spelling words without mistakes and producing language appropriately to the situation and/or the context.

It seems that many teachers skirt around the issue of accurate language production. As long as students speak fairly intelligibly, then teachers tend not to correct. Some reasons include:

1. A lack of ability/confidence with the grammar mechanics of the language.
2. Fear of over-correction, which may lead to discouragement.
3. Fear of over-correction, which may hinder smooth speaking.
4. Students more or less understand the target material, even if they are not using it correctly at the moment.

According to Hughes (2002),

*“Candidates are awarded marks for the accurate and appropriate use of syntactic forms and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirements at each level.”* (p. 88)

Assessing accuracy means measuring the speaker's performance against the standard of native speakers. It was seen by Pye and Greenal (1996) to examine *“evidence of a wide range of structures and vocabulary, errors minimal in number and gravity.”* (p. 99)

### II-1-6-Learners' Speaking Difficulties:

Speaking is not an easy skill to improve; students may face several difficulties while speaking in term of CAF (Complexity, Accuracy and Fluency). They are still incompetent in communicating orally in English. It is the role of the teacher to know about the constraints and difficulties that might face their students to develop their speaking skill performances (Yang, 1993)

Ur (1996) stated many factors that may cause difficulties or challenges in the way of improving speaking.



**II-1-6.1 Lack of motivation:**

Gardner (2010) contended that:

*“There are many explanation of how second languages are learned as well, and when the focus is on how they are learned in school contexts, the focus is often on motivation.” (p.1)*

Motivation is the most important factor for students to achieve speaking proficiency, and learning in a real sense gets completed only with motivation. According to Harmer (2007, p. 98) motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) stated that:

*“Motivation is identified primarily with the learners’ orientation toward the goal of learning a second language.” (p471)*

EFL/ESL students consider the traditional ways of learning, such as the course books, as boring and demotivating tool to learn because basically students need to have willingness from themselves to succeed in speaking.

From another perspective, not all students in EFL speaking classrooms have the courage to speak (Widiati, p 278) It is supported by Padmadewi (1998, p.60-67), cited in Widiati and Cahyono (2006, p.278) that many of the students feel anxious in a speaking class, and some are likely to keep silent. Students attending speaking class often feel anxious due to pressure from the speaking tasks which require them to present individually and spontaneously within limited time.

**II-1-6.2 Inhibition:**

Students often consider inhibition as a negative factor in achieving speaking CAF. Ur, 1998 contended that:

*“Foreign language learners are noticeably inhibited to talk or express their ideas in front of the others using the target language.”(p. 4)*

Learners are generally afraid of speaking in front of their colleague, they are afraid of making errors and to be exposed to irony. Teachers’ role here is to soothe them and make them relax while presenting in front of their classmates.

### **II-1-6.3 Poor Listening Practice:**

According to Doff (1998), speaking skill cannot be achieved unless we develop listening skill..

Listening and speaking are complementary skills. When we speak, the others are listening carefully in order to understand what has been said and pick up new vocabulary, new accent, and new body language every speaker plays the role of both listener and speaker. Therefore, one is certainly unable to respond if he cannot understand what is said

Students' inability to speak is not only affected with the lack of motivation or interest, but also with the lack of listening practice to a model, generally native speaker. Hence, students should be aware of listening benefits on learning how to speak.

### **II-1-6.4 Speaking Anxiety:**

For Basic (2011),

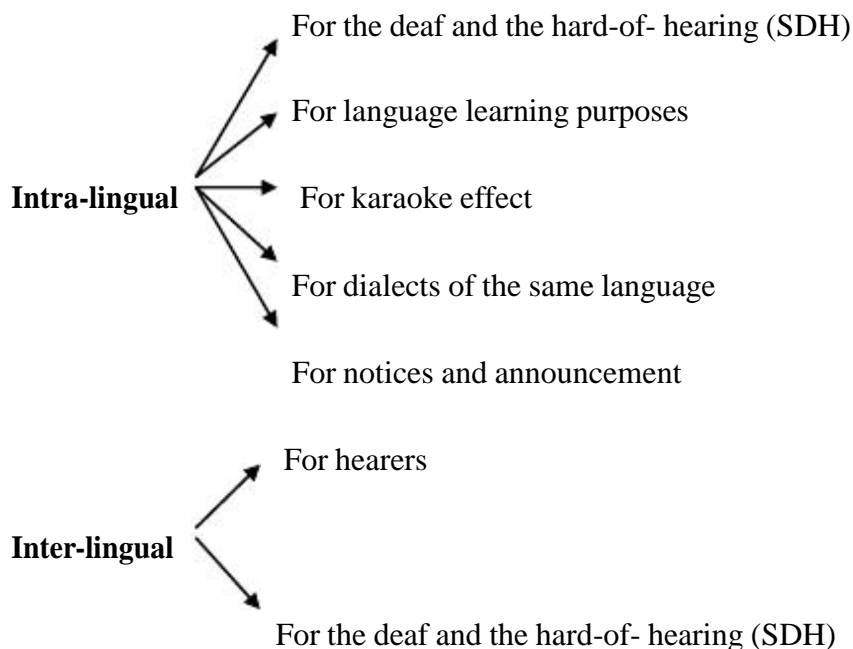
*"Anxiety is often explained as a sort of fear that is manifested by visual signs."* (p. 4)

According to Basic (2011), some students show some fear when asked to speak in front of their colleagues. This fear can be noticed through some physical signs such as sweating, tension, blushing or increased pulse. It is most likely that these signs inhibit learners' ability to speak. It is obvious that anxiety affects learner's self confidence and makes him fail in expressing himself.

## **Section 2: learning speaking subtitled movies**

### **II-2-1 Definition of Subtitles:**

Subtitling is regarded as an inter-semiotic translation transforming speech into a written form, generally on the lower part of the screen that endeavour to recount the original dialogue of the speaker. It involves a change of medium (speech vs. writing), channel (auditory vs. visual), form of signals (phonic vs. graphic) and code (speech form vs. written form). In terms of subtitles classification, the literature identifies them as intra-lingual and inter-lingual. Intra-lingual subtitles represent the speech of a language into the written form of the same language while inter-lingual subtitles accomplish the subtitling by working with different languages (e.g. from English into Arabic).



Intra-lingual subtitling involves a shift from oral to written but stays always within the same language; however, inter-lingual implies a translation from the source into the target language.

Subtitled movies are originally made for an applied purpose, often end up in other research context, in the classroom or on the TV.

## II-2-2 Subtitles Benefits on EFL Learning: A Review of Related Studies:

In the context of FL education, subtitles are very useful for users with audio-visual impairments. In recent years, there has been a significant growth in online learning. Reviewing previous studies, Lwo and Chia-Tzu Lin (2012) applied Mayer's framework (1993) on their study of the effect of captions on the multimedia processing of junior high school Chinese learners of English as FL. Four groups of people viewed an animation with English narrating under different conditions: no captions, Chinese captions, English captions and Chinese subtitles with English captions. The viewing was followed by the testing of vocabulary and comprehension. The researchers found a significant difference in performance based on the pupils' level of proficiency in English and in the nature of the test activity. They concluded that the lower attainer seemed to find "English- Chinese captions were helpful in comprehending simple sentences structures and have a positive effect on the correct repetition of the sentences.

Merita Ismaili (2012) conducted a study about the effectiveness of using movies in the EFL classroom at South East European University (SEEU) on a sample of two groups: an experimental and a control group taught conventionally. The participants in that study were pre-intermediate and intermediate level of students, the results of the study have shown significant differences between experimental and

control group of students on integrated skill. She concluded that movies attract students' attention and present language in a more way that found in the course books.

Regarding vocabulary acquisition, results from other surveys showed that subtitles can improve EFL learners' speaking skill, the language used in subtitled movies is the same as real life language, and this helps learners to tick native accents and pronunciation using many idioms and expressions. Various studies (Baltova, 1999; Borrás and Lafayette, 1994; Garza, 1991; Neuman and Koskinen, 1992; Vanderplank, 1988, 1990) have demonstrated the positive effects of subtitling on productive skills such as a verbatim recall and retention of vocabulary in the proper context, as well as communicative performance in specific oral and written communication tasks. Canning-Wilson and Wallace (2000) suggest that subtitled movies encourage learners to consciously notice new vocabulary and idioms, and as such, may have potential to facilitate vocabulary acquisition without being a distraction for learners.

### **II-2-3 Reasons behind Watching Subtitled Movies:**

Learning through movies has recently taken place among EFL learners; many reasons are behind choosing to watch subtitled movies. According to experts, this had many benefits as was mentioned before. Teachers wonder about those reasons which lead EFL students to watch English movies with subtitles.

#### **Learning from Films is Motivating and Enjoyable:**

Movies are funny, interactive, inspiring and ultimately one of the best teaching tools available to ESL professionals and are loved by students from all cultural background. Film, as a motivator, also makes the language learning process more entertaining and enjoyable.

#### **Films Provide Authentic and Varied Language:**

Movies are rich with vocabulary, accents, sounds and rhythms; they help to consolidate language that learners have been learning elsewhere. For example, learners have learnt a word in a textbook and hear it later in a movie that might help it to stick. . Film provides students with examples of English used in „real“ situations outside the classroom, particularly interactive language – the language of real-life conversation. Film exposes students to natural expressions and the natural flow of speech. If they are not living in an English-speaking environment, perhaps only film and television can provide learners with this real-life language input.

**Films Give a Visual Context:**

Learning context must be extracted rapidly to aid recognition „visuality“ of film makes it an invaluable language teaching tool, enabling learners to understand more by interpreting the language in a full visual context. It stimulates learners“ brains and leads them to learn unconsciously. Films assist the learners“ comprehension by enabling them to listen to language exchanges and see such visual supports as facial expressions and gestures simultaneously. These visual clues support the verbal message and provide a focus of attention.

**Conclusion:**

Learning speaking is a complicated and a dynamic process. To express an idea, learners have to speak, but this is not an easy task to do once specific criteria are taken into consideration. This chapter has shown, according to previous surveys and experiments that watching English movies with subtitles has a great impact on learning English as a foreign language and especially on learners“ oral production

# CHAPTER III

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY DESIGN

## **Introduction**

This present study is conducted to investigate the effectiveness of students speaking skill through watching English subtitled movies. To perform this research, a questionnaire was designed for first-year students at the department of English, Batna-2 University. To collect data and examine the hypothesis assuming that watching English movies with subtitles is expected to have positive impact on the pronunciation and speaking skills of the first year English students at Batna2 University, this will enhance students speaking skill and oral performance used in the movies and thus motivate students to learn.

### **1-Population:**

#### **1-1 The students:**

First-year English students at Batna-2 University represent the entire population. We dealt with 250 students who were chosen randomly out of the whole population about 900. Students were divided into (16) groups. The reason behind choosing the first-year students is that they are new in the field of EFL, so they want to express themselves better in oral performance.

#### **2-Data collection Tool:**

In order to fulfill the purposes of our study, a questionnaire was designed for students who were selected randomly, 250 copies were distributed among first-year students at the English department of Batna-2 University.

This questionnaire is composed of seventeen (17) questions, and it consists of two (2) parts, the first part deals with participants' personal details and the second part deals with attitudes and perceptions toward the impact of watching English subtitled movies on learners speaking skill. According to Sunderland (2010),

*“Research questions are important, as helpful tools*

*When collecting and analyzing data “(p.9).*

In addition to that, this questionnaire took only five (5) minutes for first-year students to fill up. All these procedures for this study were conducted in the second semester of 2017.

# CHAPTER IV

# DATA ANALYSIS



## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

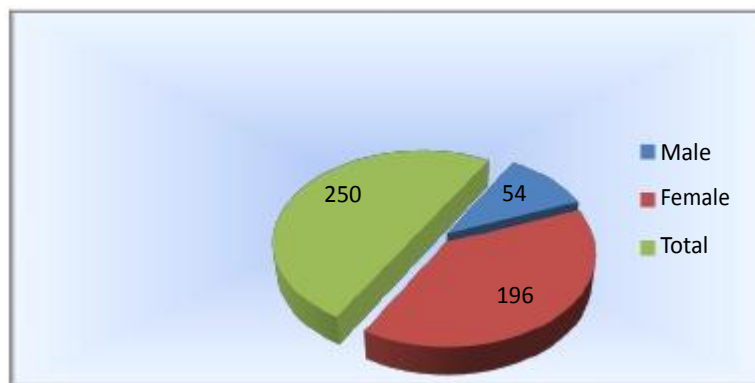
For quantitative data analysis, statistical tools of Excel software for windows (version 2007) were used for data input and analysis. The statistical results were presented in tables form then converted to graphs, charts and pie charts, with details" description and analyzed in combination with qualitative data. At the end, a combination had been conducted with the previous literatures to draw a conclusion.

### Part one: Participants' Personal Details

**Table 1:** Distribution of Students According to their Genders.

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Numbers	54	196	250
Percentage%	22%	78%	100%

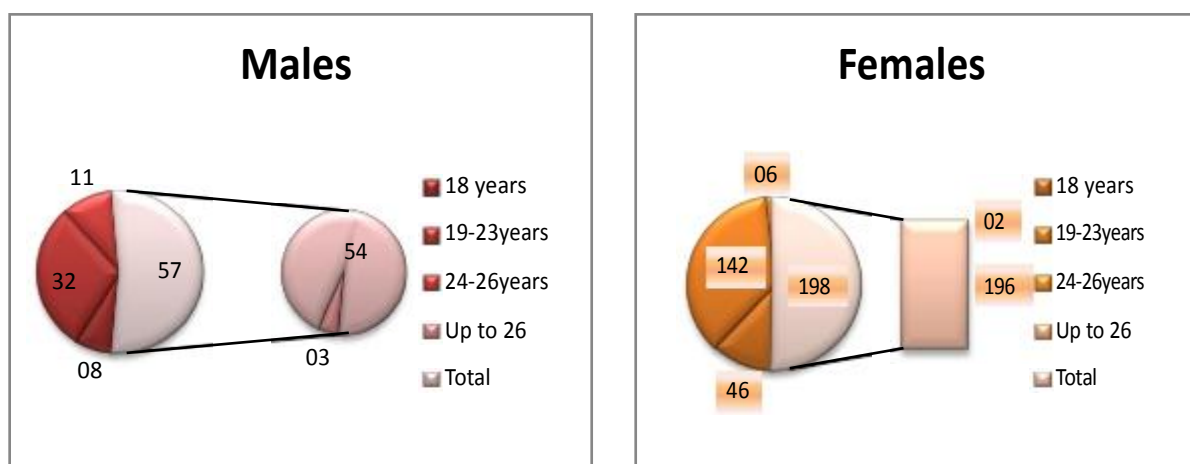
**Figure 1 :** Students 'Gender



If we take a look at the table above, we can notice that the majority of first-year students at department of English at Batna-2 University are females. They are of a considerable number rather than males. 196 participants of this questionnaire are females making up (78%) of the whole sample. 250 students, on the other hand, 54 males represent (22%) of the whole sample.

**Table 2:** Distribution of Students According to their Ages

Age	Males	Percentage%	Females	Percentage%
18 years	08	15%	46	23%
19-23 years	32	59%	142	72%
24-26 years	11	20%	06	3%
Up to 26	03	6%	02	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>196.</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure2: Students 'Age**

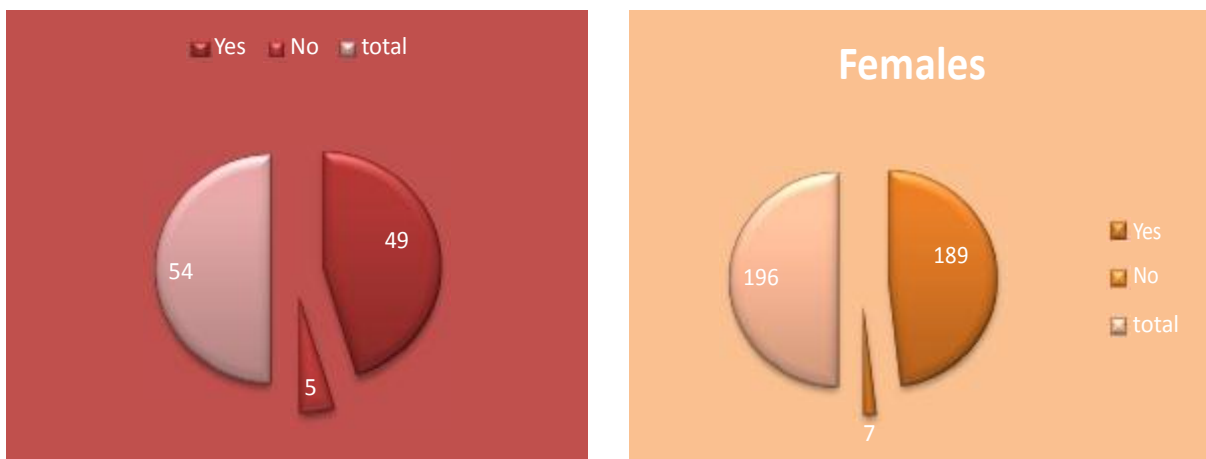
The table above consists of four (4) rows. Each row represents the age of the participants. It includes both genders “Male and Female”. (15%) and (23%) are percentages that describe the students who are aged 18 years. With a look to the table, we can notice that most of the participants of this questionnaire are aged between 19-23 years with an estimated rate of (72%) of female and (59%) of male which is the highest rate within this respect proved that students whether “Male” or “Female” are studying English language in their normal average age. On the other hand, (3%) of female and (20%) of female are students aged between “24-26” years. Whereas, only (1%) of female and (6%) of male are participants aged up to 26 years. These percentages indicate that both genders are studying English only to ameliorate their levels to get a job.

### Part two: Facts and opinion

**Table1** : Q1. Do you watch English movies?

Options	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage
Yes	49	91%	189	96%
No	05	9%	07	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>

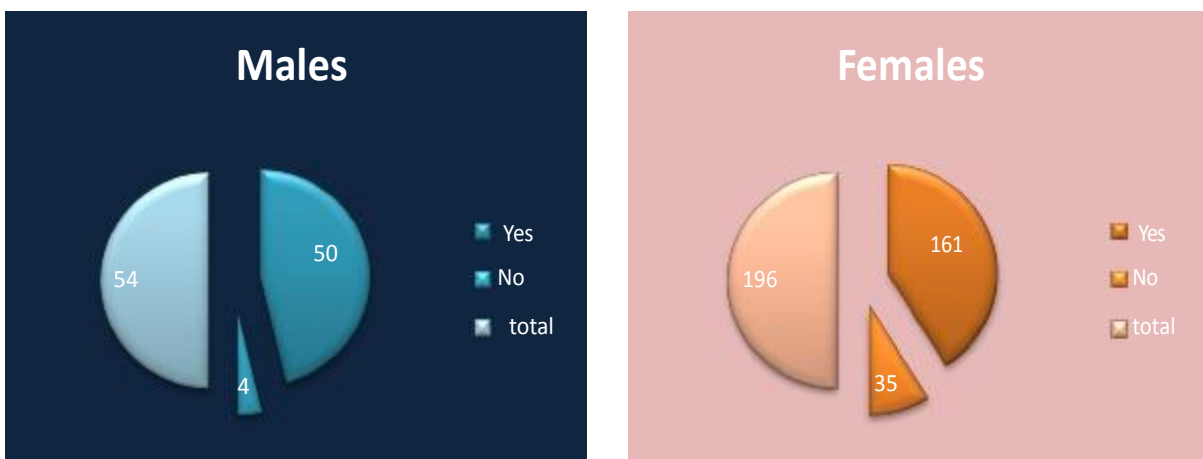
**Figure1: Students' Choices of Watching Movies**



The results illustrated in the table above show whether first-year students “Male, Female” are watching English movies. These results are considered as a bridge to accomplish our study. The results showed that nearly all of the students that have been taken as a sample to our study are watching movies.

**Table 2:** Q2. Do you watch English movies with subtitles?

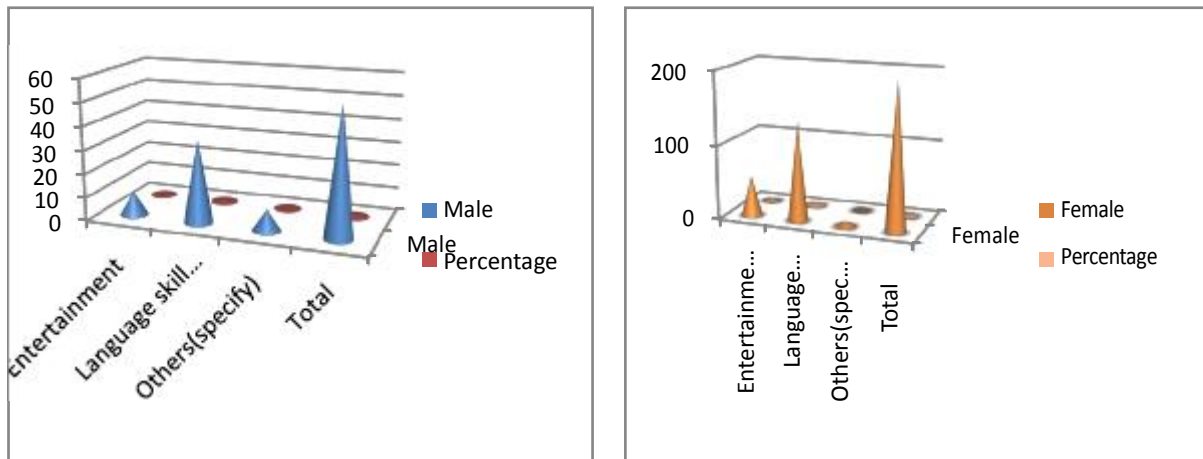
Options	Males	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Yes	50	93%	161	82%
No	04	7%	35	18%
Total	54	100%	196	100%

**Figure2: Students' Choices of Watching Movies with Subtitles**

A quick look at this pie- chart design can infer that there were no significant differences between “Males and females” on watching subtitled movies. In addition, the majority of the participants from both genders were answered with “Yes”. The percentages are respectively (93%) of male and (82%) of female. However, only (7%) of male and (8%) of female were answered with «No». From these results, we conclude that watching English subtitled movies is the choice of the majority of students rather than watching movies without subtitles because they think that subtitles can enhance students speaking skill and oral performance, moreover, their scores increased significantly.

**Table 3:** Q3. What are the reasons that lead you to watch subtitled movies?

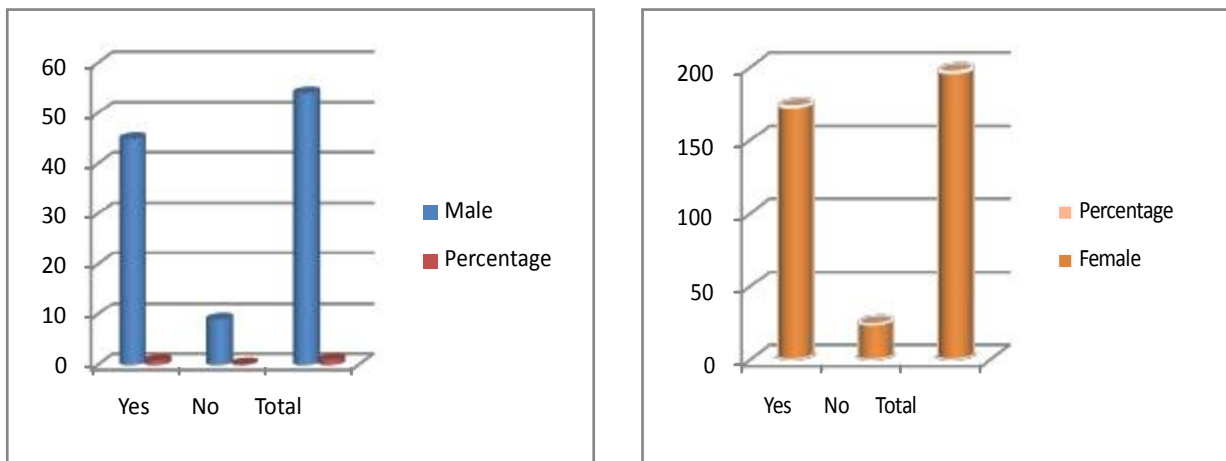
Options	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage
Entertainment	10	19%	54	28%
Language skill improvement	35	65%	135	69%
Others(specify)	09	17%	07	4%
Total	54	100%	196	100%

**Figure3: Students' Reasons of Watching Movies**

This chart shows the reasons that led the students to watch English subtitled movies. A quick look to the chart reveals that both genders are nearly equal with the following respective percentages Male (65%) and Female (69%), and the majority of them tend to choose “language skill improvement” because they believe that English movies with subtitles can provide them with authentic and varied language while (19%) of male and (28%) of female are watching movies to enjoy only. On the other hand, (17 %) of male and (04%) of female are students who chose others specify.

**Table 4:** Q4: Do you think that watching subtitled movies has beneficial effect on learning English?

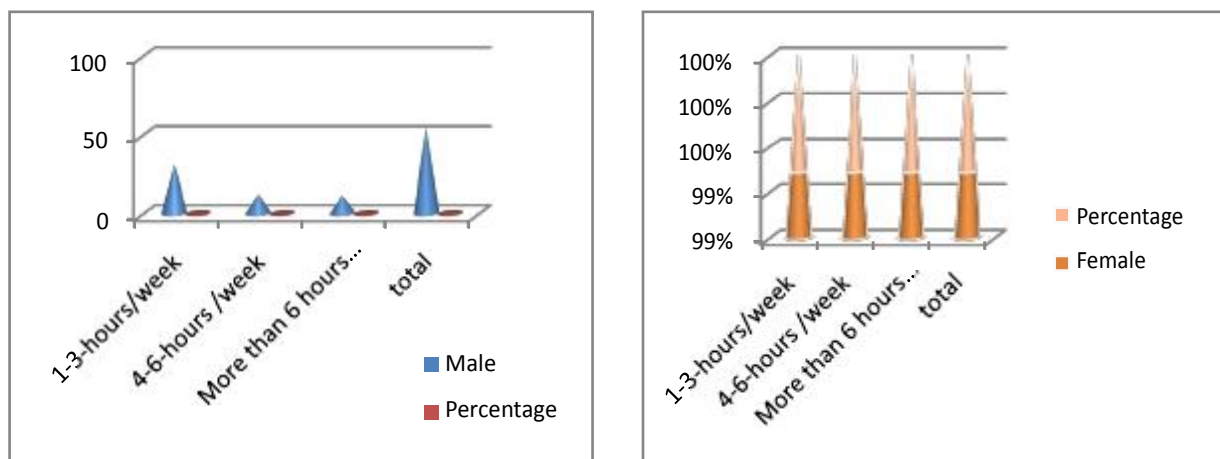
Options	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage
Yes	45	83%	172	88%
No	09	17%	24	12%
Total	54	100%	196	100%

**Figure4: The Effect of Watching Movies**

What is shown in Table (4) is something quite hopeful. (83 %) of male and (88%) of female are participants from both genders who agreed that watching English movies with subtitles have the beneficial effect on learning English language. This is an excellent feedback to use English subtitled movies as a purpose for learning a language. From this day forwards, it is a good recommendation for students to watch English subtitled movies as a beneficial way to learn English language along with other ways.

**Table 5:** Q5: How often do you watch movies for the sake of educational purposes?

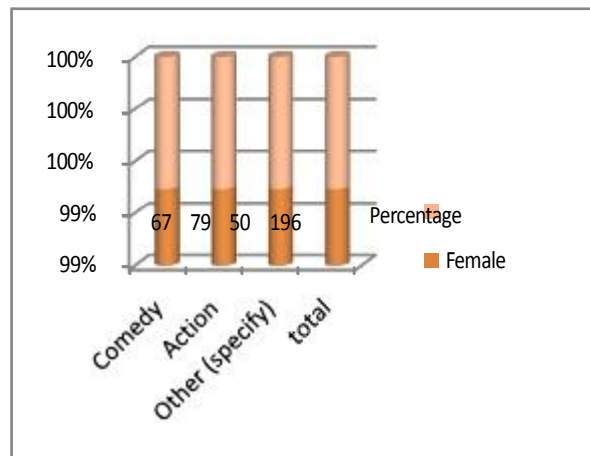
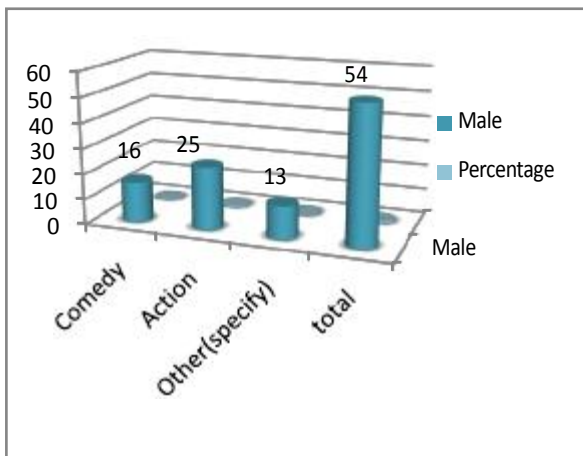
Options	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage
1-3hours/week	31	57%	123	63%
4-6hours/week	12	22%	43	22%
More than 6 hours/week	11	20%	30	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure5: Duration of Watching Movies.**

The table above (5) shows that the majority of the participants from both genders are approximately similar in their percentages. Furthermore, most of them are light watchers of English subtitled movies representing the rate of (57%) of male and (63%) of female, they are watching movies (1 to 3) hours per week. It can be said that 1-3 hours of watching movies per week is not enough to improve the speaking skill and learn a language, at least, a learner needs to watch movies 4-6 hours per week which is estimated with (22%) for both genders. (20%) of male and (15%) of female they are participants who watch subtitled movies more than six hours per week. These participants can be called heavy watchers. Being a heavy movie watcher will be a good approach to learn English language quite faster, if followed by attention and focus.

**Table 6:** Q6: Which genre do you prefer to watch?

Options	Males	Percentage	Females	Percentage
Comedy	16	30%	67	34%
Action	25	46%	79	40%
Others(specify)	13	24%	50	26%
total	54	100%	196	100%

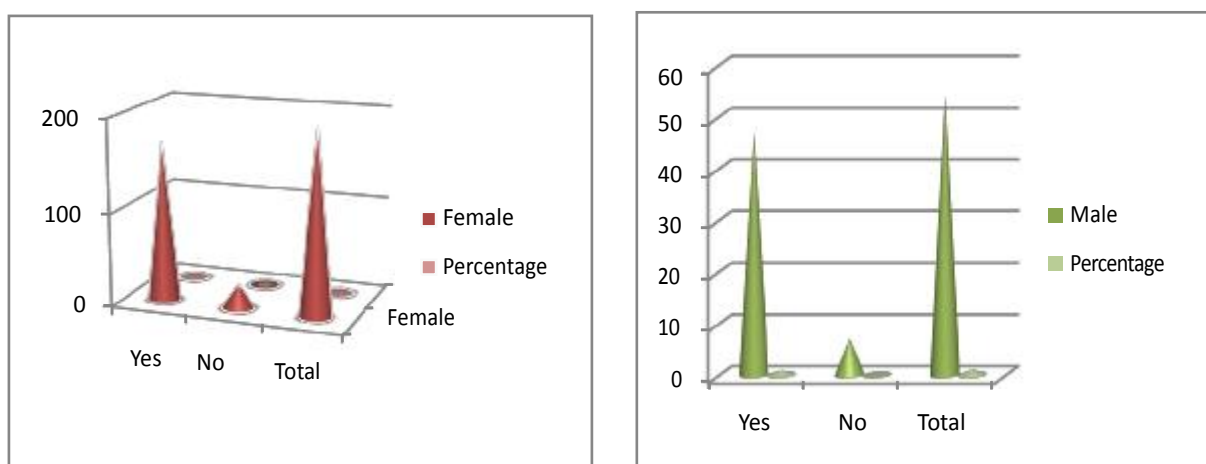
**Figure6:** Selecting Movies to Watch

Movies have several genres including: comedy, action, drama, documentary horror, and many others. Depending on these genres, the impact of the movies on learning language changes because of the statements in the movie which are the most important feature, and they affect the learner's comprehension. As it is shown in table (6), the majority of the participants from both genders (46%) of male and (40%) of female stated that they prefer watching action movies. (30%) of male and (34%) of female are watching comedy movies and (24%) of male and (26%) of female are watching other genres like, romance, drama, documentary.



**Table 7:** Q7-Does watching subtitled movies improve your pronunciation?

Options	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Yes	47	87%	170	87%
No	07	13%	26	13%
Total	54	100%	196	100%

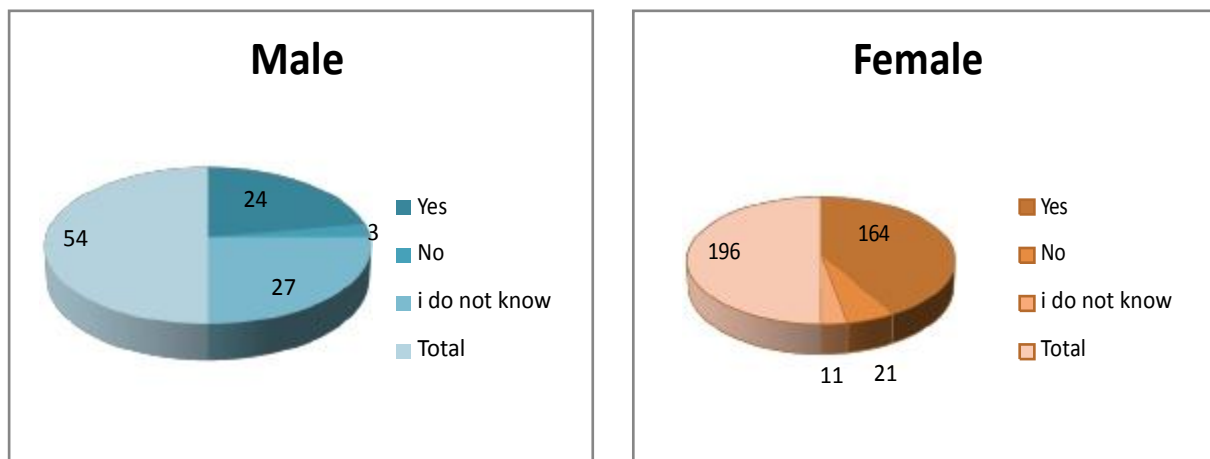
**Figure7: Students' Pronunciation through Movies**

For EFL learners, English pronunciation is a challenge and extremely difficult, and when you read words, it is hard to know how they should be said. Hearing native English speakers „talk to each other will help learners to hear how words are pronounced. If they are using English subtitles, they will also be able to see how the words are written. As it is shown in table (7), the majority of the participants from both genders (87%) have answered with »yes«. Whereas only (13%), from both genders believed that watching English subtitled movies is not the best way to improve their pronunciation.

**Table 8:** Q8-Do subtitles enhance comprehension of the language used in the movies and thus motivate students to learn?

Options	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Yes	24	44%	164	84%
No	03	6%	21	11%
I do not know	27	50%	11	6%
Total	54	100%	196	100%

**Figure8: Comprehension of the Language.**

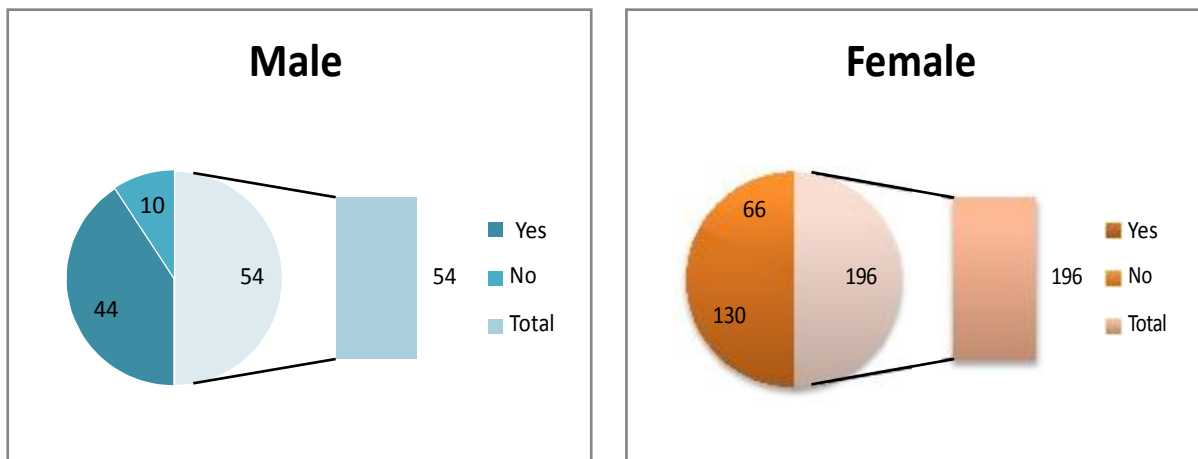


In English classes, students learn a huge amount of vocabulary and grammar, but they may not know how to use it in real life. Watching English subtitled movies will help them understand how to use all the knowledge they have learnt in everyday situations. That is why, the results above reveal that the majority of participants from both genders (44%) of male and (84%) of female believed that subtitles enhance comprehension of the language used in the movies and thus motivate students to learn.

**Table 9: Q9-**do your teachers encourage you to watch English movies for the sake of learning English language?

Options	Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
Yes	44	81%	130	66%
No	10	19%	66	34%
Total	54	100%	196	100%

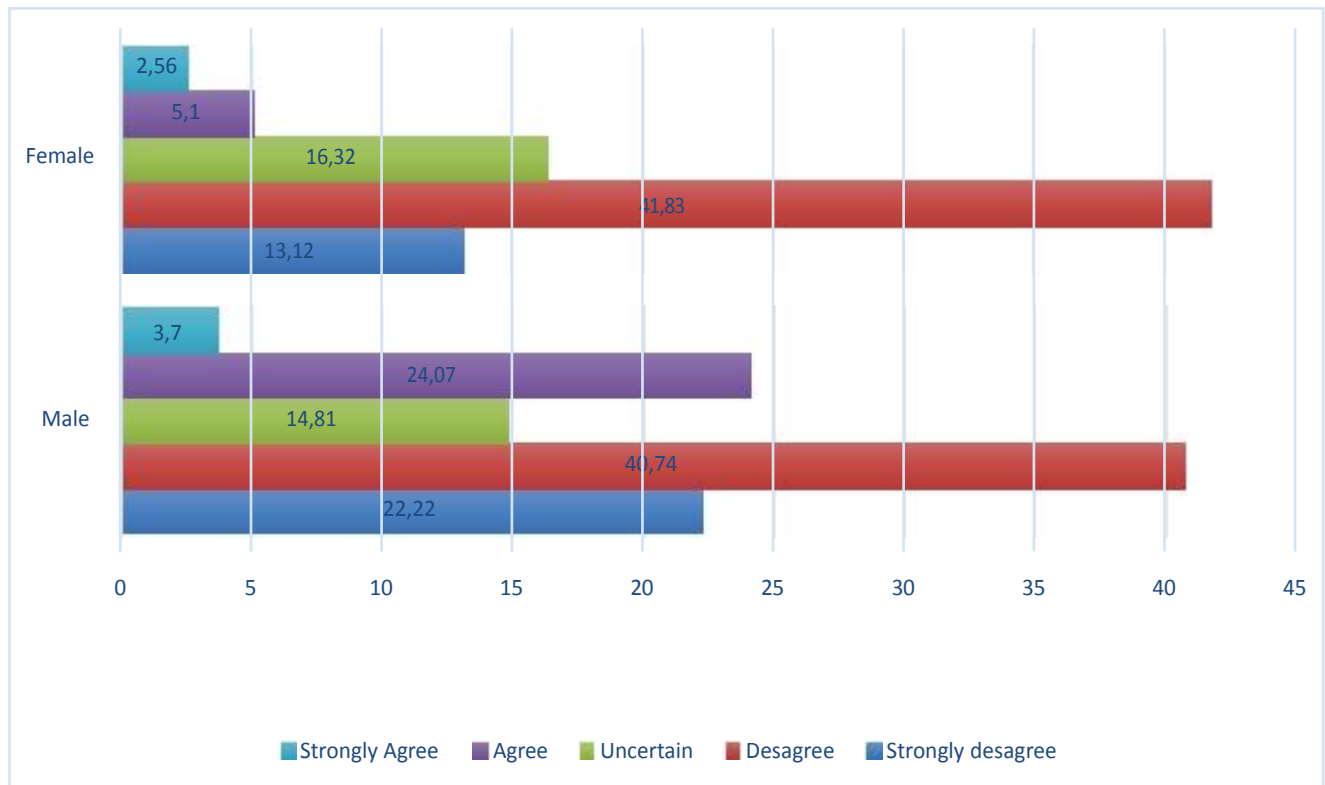
**Figure9: Motivating Students.**



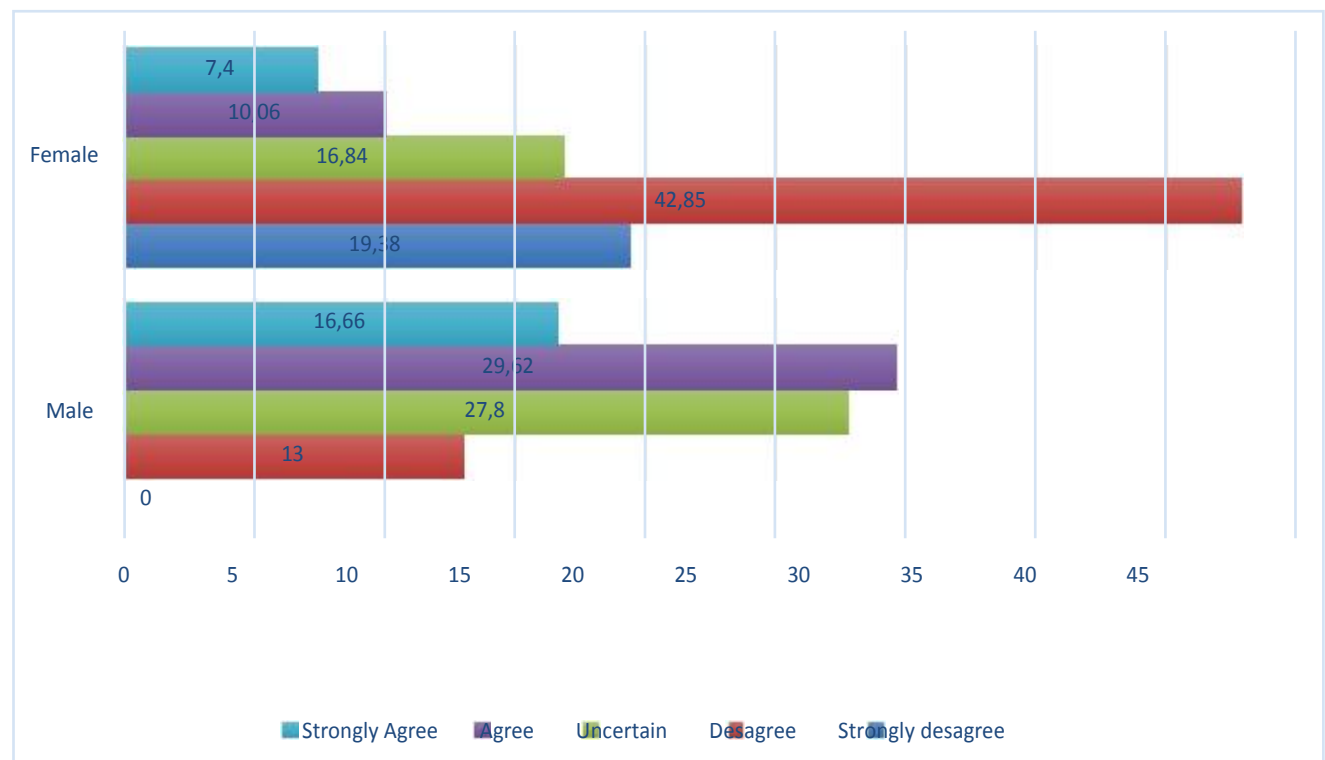
Motivation is a significant key to succeed. Students need to be motivated and encouraged in order to pass the barriers. That is why; teachers are the role models of students. So, they have a big role on learning their students and they should be motivators of their students. In the questionnaire, as it is shown in the table (9) in the response of the question (Do your teachers encourage you to watch movies for the sake of learning English, (81%) of male and (66%) of female are participants from both genders who answered with (Yes) which is the highest percentage and (19%) of male and (34%) of female are participants who answered with (No).

**Question 10:**

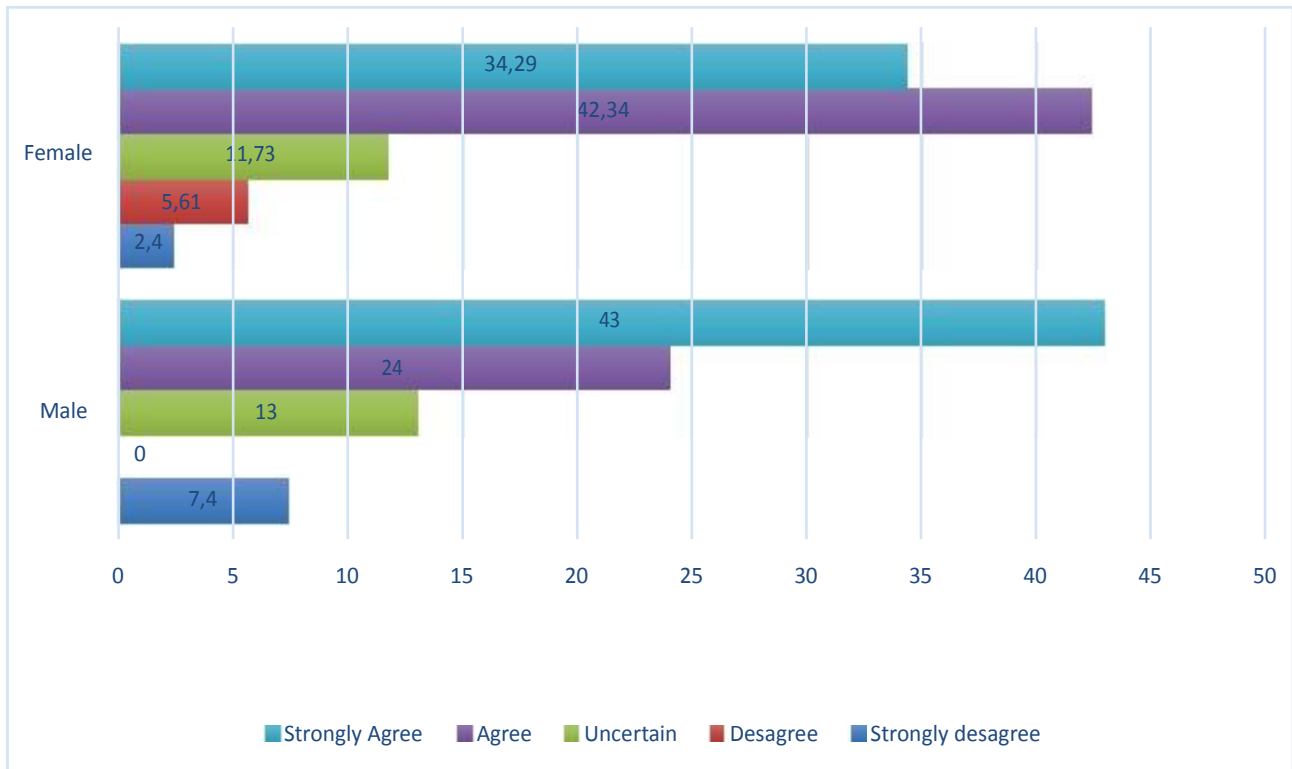
✓ EFL students learn correct pronunciation through movies :



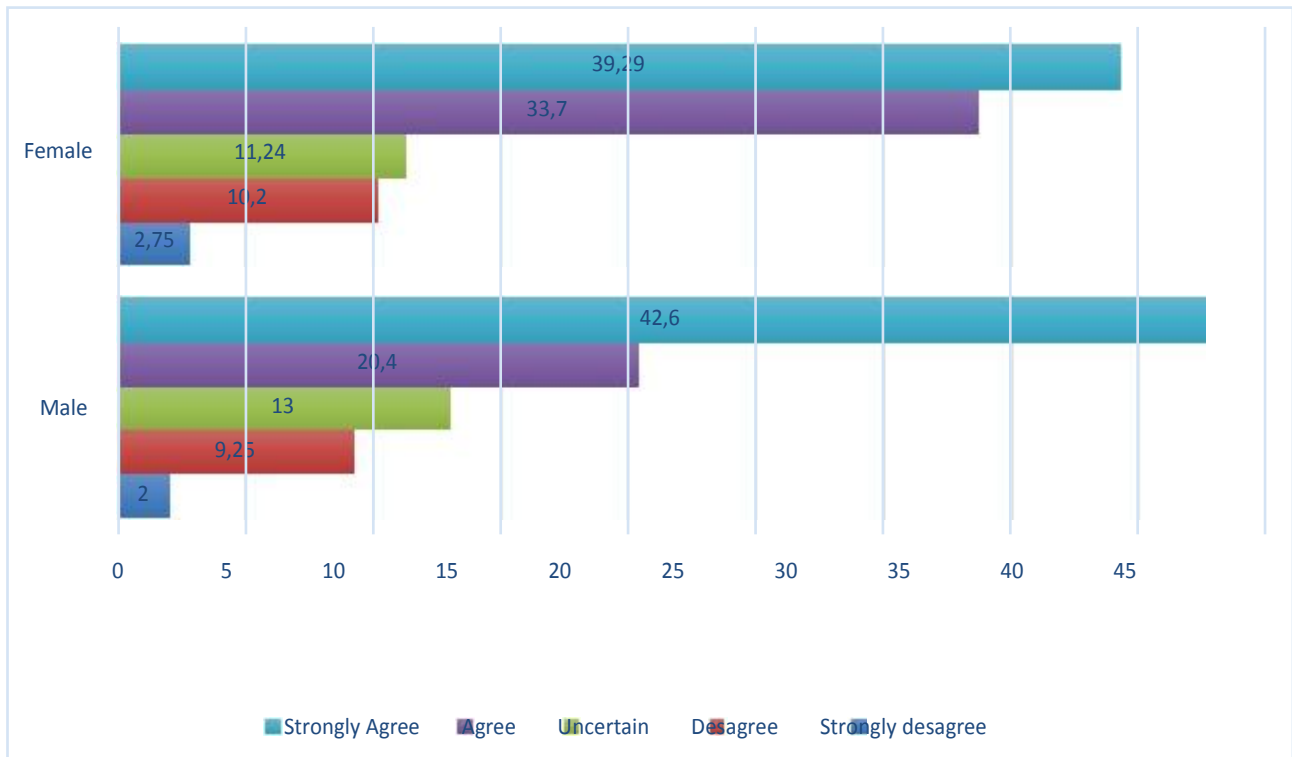
✓ EFL students understand unfamiliar accents and dialects through movies :



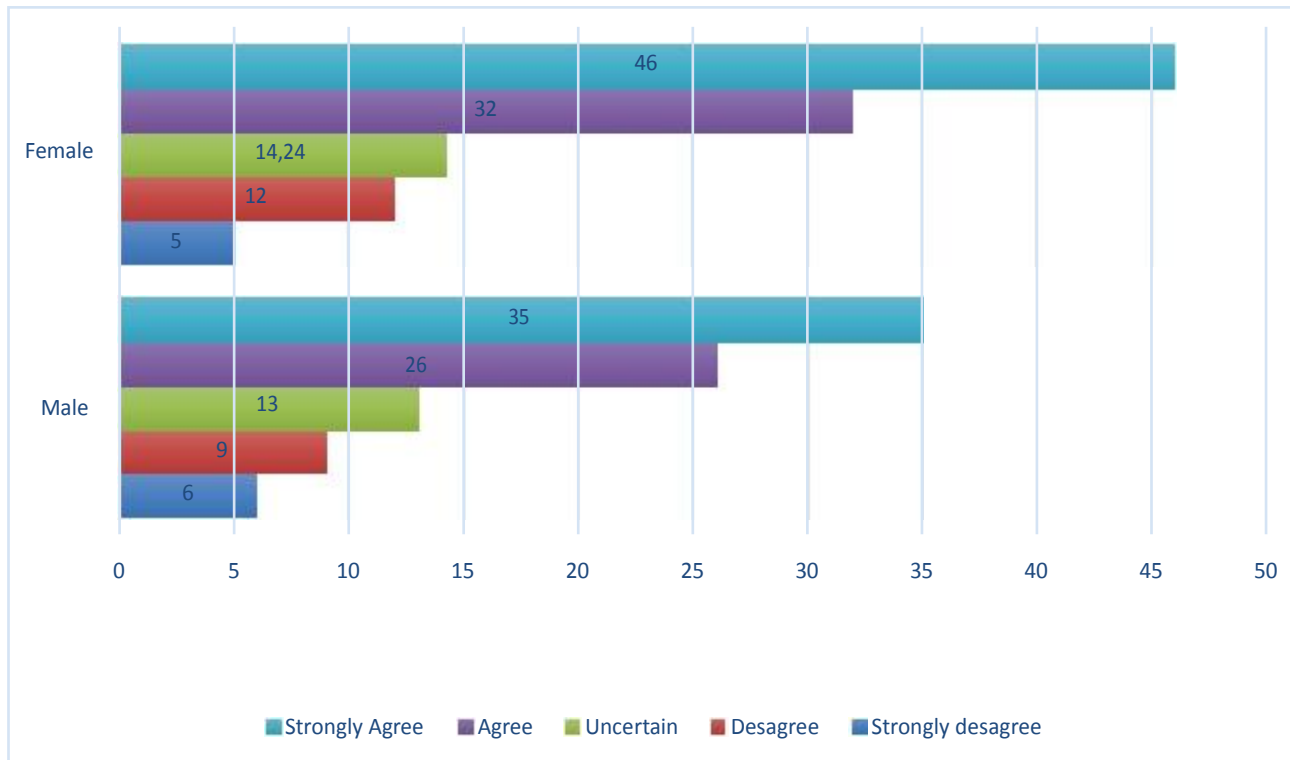
✓ Learners learn new vocabularies from movies:



✓ The subtitles in the movies help you understand the conversation better:



- ✓ English subtitled movies are good for teaching both listening and speaking for students:



In English, people often say that 30% of what we say expressed through our words and the other 70% is all about how you say it, knowing what someone is saying is important. But knowing how they are saying it is even more important:

- ✓ **Figure one:** It represents the percentages of student's opinion with respect to watching subtitled movies that will not improve their pronunciation. Among all participants, 82 % participants disagree on pronunciation improvement.
- ✓ **Figure two:** It shows that watching subtitled movies will not help the EFL students to understand unfamiliar accents and dialects. Within this regard, 68% of the respondents disagree
- ✓ **Figure three:** It represents the percentages of student's opinion on learners and how they learn new vocabularies from movies. 80% of the participants agree
- ✓ **Figure four:** It represents the percentages of student's perception on watching subtitled movies. The figure shows that watching subtitled movies will improve their English life and help them understand the conversation better with a rate of 90% of the participants who agreed

**Figure five :** Among all the items, participants tend to agree most on English subtitled movies as being good for teaching both listening and speaking with a rate of 90% of participants

# CHAPTER V

# DISCUSSION

## Discussion

The results gathered from the analysis revealed that watching subtitled movies has an effect on the development of students speaking skill.

The findings of the present study have statistically proven that females have a considerable number in learning a foreign language rather than males. This is based on the scientific truth. Studies have, also, proven that females' brains show greater activity in the areas used for language encoding. On the other hand, males' brains are more analytical, and thus, they tend to prefer structured work, and they need some sensory reinforcement to process the data. For males the most effective way to study language is to learn visually (listening, seeing the word written down and repeating it) (Kate Figueredo, 2014).

In the second part of the students' questionnaire, students from both genders are approximately similar in their percentages. They show a great willingness to learn English and speak it fluently. The collected data show that the majority of the students are watching subtitled movies. This finding is considered as a bridge to conduct our study. Also, it is worth considering that *«the more you interact, and contact with native speaker, the more you learn and acquire a language»* Vygotsky's claimed (p.86). From here, it could be assumed that English movies with subtitles could provide students with examples of English used in „real life“ situations. Also, they expose students to natural expressions and the natural flow of speech. If they are not living in an English-speaking environment, the only one way to speak English fluently is watching English movies with subtitles which can provide learners with this real-life language input. According to Brain Stow and Lavaur (2011), *“subtitles can be used to; enhance comprehension”* (International Journal of Psychology 46.6, 455-462). Various studies (Baltova, 1999; Borrás and Lafayette, 1994; Garza, 1991; Neuman and Koskinen, 1992; Vanderplank, 1988, 1990) have demonstrated the positive effects of subtitling on productive skills such as a verbatim recall and retention of vocabulary in the proper context, as well as communicative performance in specific oral and written communication tasks. This information reveals that the majority of first-year students are watching English subtitled movies for language skill improvement because they believed that English with subtitles can provide them with authentic and varied language. In addition, watching subtitled movies for the sake of educational purposes requires to be a heavy watcher which means to watch English subtitled movies more than 6 hours per week, and this is a good approach to learn English quite faster if followed by attention and focus. Furthermore, English pronunciation is extremely difficult, but according to Marian (2009) *“the presence of written text in films is beneficial to language learning”* (p.88). Watching English movies with subtitles will help students improve their pronunciation by hearing native English speakers talk to each other and see how the words are written .



Finally, subtitles play a capital role in movie comprehension, so that English movies with subtitles are an integral part of students' lives. It makes perfect sense to bring them into the language and speak fluently.

### **Conclusion**

The results of the present study conclude that movies are powerful tools that can help in developing students' language skill. The participants in the study have positive attitudes toward the integration of subtitled movies in their daily life. The study, also, indicates that watching movies can enhance the students' motivation to learn the language. The students believe that movies can improve their vocabulary acquisition, comprehension of the language, and pronunciation improvement.

# CHAPTER VI

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

## General Conclusion

The study aims at investigating the role of watching subtitled movies in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skill since this latest is the powerful skill through which learners are mostly judged. The survey was conducted in the department of English at Batna-2 University. It aimed at confirming or rejecting the hypotheses that subtitled movies can improve learners' speaking production and not being only the interactive tasks carried in the classroom.

The research case study was first-year LMD students selected randomly for the academic year 2016/2017. Dealing with learners' experiences outside the classroom, led to the use of only one questionnaire which was designed to students as a data gathering tool. The obtained data from the questionnaire revealed that subtitled movies are powerful instructional tools that can help in developing students' speaking skill. They motivate students to learn correct pronunciation, acquire new vocabulary, understand unfamiliar accents and dialects, and understand the conversation better. As many related studies have shown, subtitled movies with their special features such as subtitles and chapter separation would help to develop an effective learning environment

To conclude, teachers should be aware of the importance of using subtitled movies to design movies related activities and integrate them into instructions to motivate their students to learn in a funny way.

## Suggestions and Recommendations:

On the basis of the present research findings, it is advisable to suggest these recommendations to the students to improve their speaking skill:

Watching movies with subtitles is a great method to work on your English speaking skill. By watching English subtitled movies students can learn many new words and how to pronounce them.

- In order to speak English fluently students must try out the mimicking technique "listening and repeat sounds and words" especially when they are watching English movies with subtitles.
- Before watching the movies, find a short summary of its plot and read through it.
- Look up the words that you did not understand in a dictionary.
- Make a mind map with the words you did not know. This is a great way to memorize them.
- English language instructors should motivate and encourage their students to watch English movies with subtitles to develop their language skills.
- Watch English subtitled movies more than six hours per week.

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# APPENDIX

## Students' questionnaire

**Research topic:** The impact of watching English movies with subtitles on EFL learners' speaking skill

**Dear students:**

This questionnaire is an attempt to gather information needed for a master dissertation. This study aims to investigate the impact of watching English subtitled movies on EFL learners' speaking skill. You are kindly invited to answer the following questions promising that your answers will be kept confidential. We will be grateful for helping us.

Hoping for your full participation

**THANK YOU**

### **Part1: Participants personal details**

1. Gender : Male  Female :

2. Age :

Up to 18

19-23 year

24-26 years

Up to 26 years

### **Part2: Facts and opinions**

1-Do you watch English movies?

Yes  No

2- Do you watch English movies with subtitles?

Yes  No

3-What are the reasons that lead you to watch subtitled movies?

Entertainment

Language skill improvement

Others (specify).....

4-Do you think that watching subtitled movies has beneficial effects on learning English?

Yes  No

5-How often do you watch movies for the sake of educational purposes?

1-3 hours/week

2 -6 hours/week

More than 6hours/week

6-Which genres do you prefer to watch?

Comedy  action  other (specify)

7-Does watching subtitled movies improve your pronunciation?

Yes  No

8-Do Subtitles enhance comprehension of the language used in the movies and, thus, motivate students to learn?

Yes  No  I don't know

Explain how.....

.....

.....

9-Do your teachers encourage you to watch English movies for the sake of learning English Language?

Yes  No

10-Read the statements about the impact of watching English movies with subtitles on EFL learners speaking skill and then put a tick in the box according to the rating scales bellow:

Strongly agree =5

agree = 4

uncertain = 3

disagree = 2

strongly disagree = 1.

STATEMENTS	Level of agreements				
	5	4	3	2	1
1) EFL students learn correct pronunciation through movies.					
2) EFL students understand unfamiliar accents and dialects through movies.					
3) Learners Learn new vocabularies from movies.					
4) The subtitles in the movies help you understand the conversation better.					
5) English subtitles movies are good for teaching both listening and speaking for students.					

**Thank you.**







## **Declaration**

I, Tobbi Saida, a PhD candidate at the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages of Batna 2 University, hereby declare that the work entitled “The Effect of Pragmatic Instruction on EFL Learners’ Constructive Peer Criticism Competence: The Case of Second Year LMD Students of English at Batna University 2, Algeria” is my original work. I have not copied from any other students’ works or from any other sources except where due reference or acknowledgement is clearly made in the text. Moreover, this thesis, which is supervised by Prof. Ghouar Amor, is my own personal effort. No part in it has been written for me by another person.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my parents, husband, and son, for their love, support, and especially patience when this doctoral project kept me away from being the kind of daughter, wife, and mother I always wanted to be.

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## Abstract

It was noticed that although EFL learners have fairly good critical thinking skills and language proficiency, they face difficulties in realizing appropriate constructive peer criticisms. Moreover, they hesitate to provide constructive peer feedback. This is mainly due to face-saving issues. The present study aimed at determining the effect of a pragmatic-focused instructional treatment on second year English as a foreign language learners' production of constructive peer criticism. A mixed-methods approach was employed. For the experiment, data were captured from two intact groups. The experimental group (N = 52) received a 15-hour treatment which consisted of teacher-fronted discussions, explicit metapragmatic explanation, consciousness-raising activities, and explicit teacher corrective feedback. The control group (N = 48) received no treatment. Oral data of both groups were compared on a pretest, three progress tests, and a posttest performance. All tests were made up of an oral peer feedback task and an oral discourse completion task. Data were analyzed using an analytic rating scheme and discourse analysis. The former consisted of rating the three components of constructive criticisms, namely: politeness, clarity, and linguistic accuracy, using a validated scoring rubric. The latter, however, consisted of comparing the frequencies of constructive criticisms' discourse features, namely: semantic formulas and mitigators of both groups before and after treatment. Results of analytic rating corroborated those of discourse analysis and revealed that the speech-act instruction helps learners perform linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. Moreover, using students' written self-report and attitude scale, it was also found that the instruction caused a significant change in the experimental group's attitudes towards providing constructive criticism to peers. With regard to EFL teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards the effect of pragmatic instruction on the production of the speech act in focus, results of the questionnaire showed that all the respondents (N = 7) view pedagogic intervention as quite necessary to develop learners' constructive criticism competence in relation to appropriateness. These findings were discussed with implications for classroom practices and future research.

**Key words:** Pragmatic competence; constructive peer criticism; pragmatic instruction; speech act; politeness; appropriateness

## **List of Abbreviations**

- AA:** Algerian Arabic
- CP:** Cooperative Principle
- DCT:** Discourse Completion Task
- SD:** Social Distance
- EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- FL:** Foreign Language
- FLT:** Foreign Language teaching
- FTA:** Face Threatening Act
- H:** Hearer
- IL:** Inter Language
- ILP:** Interlanguage Pragmatics
- L1:** First Language
- L2:** Second Language
- MDCT:** Multiple Discourse Completion Task
- MSA:** Modern Standardized Arabic
- NL:** Native Language
- NSs:** Native Speakers
- NNSs:** Non-Native Speaker
- ODCT:** Oral Discourse Completion Task
- OPFT:** Oral Peer Feedback task
- P:** Power
- R:** Ranking of Imposition
- RP:** Role Play
- S:** Speaker
- SL:** Second Language
- SPSS:** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
- WDCT:** Written Discourse Completion Task

## List of Tables

<b>Table 1:</b> Taxonomy of Constructive Criticism Realization Strategies and Semantic Formulas	36
<b>Table 2:</b> Taxonomy of Mitigation Devices	40
<b>Table 3:</b> Phase One’s Constructive Peer Criticisms and their Realization Formulas	110
<b>Table 4:</b> The Number of Criticisms and Criticism Formulas in the Two Phases	112
<b>Table 5:</b> Number of Constructive Peer Criticisms Produced by the Learners in the Pilot Study of the ODCT	116
<b>Table 6:</b> The Activity Timeline	123
<b>Table 7:</b> The Analytical Scoring Rubric Used in the Present Study	133
<b>Table 8:</b> Students’ General Information	149
<b>Table 9:</b> Learners’ Perceptions of the Usefulness of Constructive Peer Criticism	152
<b>Table 10:</b> Learners’ Perceptions of the Face-Threatening Nature of Constructive Peer Criticism	153
<b>Table 11:</b> Frequency of Providing Oral Constructive Peer Criticism	155
<b>Table 12:</b> Reasons of Providing Little Oral Constructive Peer Criticism	155
<b>Table 13:</b> Constructive Peer Criticism and Critical Thinking	156
<b>Table 14:</b> Constructive Peer Criticism and Linguistic Proficiency	157
<b>Table 15:</b> Constructive Peer Criticism and Clarity	157
<b>Table 16:</b> Constructive Peer Criticism and Politeness	158
<b>Table 17:</b> Challenges and Desired Aspects of Mastery in Constructive Peer Criticism Realization	159
<b>Table 18:</b> The Experimental Group’s OPFT Pretest Scores	162
<b>Table 19:</b> The Way of Calculating Each Component’s Score	164
<b>Table 20:</b> The Experimental Group’s Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Pretest	164
<b>Table 21:</b> The Control Group’ OPFT Pretest Scores	166
<b>Table 22:</b> Difference in the Means of both Groups in the OPFT Pretest	167
<b>Table 23:</b> The Control Group’s Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and	168



Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Pretest

<b>Table 24:</b> Difference Between both Groups' Percentages in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Pretest	169
<b>Table 25:</b> The Experimental Group's ODCT Pretest Scores	171
<b>Table 26:</b> The Control Group's ODCT Pretest Scores	172
<b>Table 27:</b> Difference Between both Groups' Means in the ODCT Pretest	173
<b>Table 28:</b> The Experimental Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest	174
<b>Table 29:</b> The Control Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Pretest	175
<b>Table 30:</b> Means of both Groups in the Pretest	176
<b>Table 31:</b> Scores of the Experimental Group in the OPFT Progress Test no. 1	177
<b>Table 32:</b> Scores of the Control Group in the OPFT Progress Test no. 1	179
<b>Table 33:</b> The Experimental Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 1	183
<b>Table 34:</b> The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 1	185
<b>Table 35:</b> Both Groups' General Means in Progress Test no. 1	187
<b>Table 36:</b> The Experimental Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 2	188
<b>Table 37:</b> The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 2	190
<b>Table 38:</b> The Experimental Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test No. 2	193
<b>Table 39:</b> The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 2	195
<b>Table 40:</b> Both Groups' General Means in Progress Test no. 2	197
<b>Table 41:</b> The Experimental Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 3	197
<b>Table 42:</b> The Control Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 3	200
<b>Table 43:</b> The Experimental Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 3	203
<b>Table 44:</b> The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 3	206
<b>Table 45:</b> Both Groups' General Means in Progress Test no. 3	208
<b>Table 46:</b> The Experimental Group's OPFT Posttest Scores	209
<b>Table 47:</b> The Control Group's OPFT Posttest Scores	210
<b>Table 48:</b> Comparison Between both Groups' Means of the OPFT Posttest	211
<b>Table 49:</b> Comparison Between the OPFT Pretest and Posttest Means of both Groups	212
<b>Table 50:</b> The Experimental Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest	213

<b>Table 51:</b> The Control Group’s Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest	215
<b>Table 52:</b> The Experimental Group’s ODCT Posttest Scores	216
<b>Table 53:</b> The Control Group’s ODCT Posttest Scores	217
<b>Table 54:</b> Difference Between both Groups’ OPFT Means in the Posttest	218
<b>Table 55:</b> Comparison Between the OPFT Pretest and Posttest Means of both Groups	219
<b>Table 56:</b> The Experimental Group’s Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Posttest	220
<b>Table 57:</b> The Control Group’s Average Scores and Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Posttest	221
<b>Table 58:</b> Comparison Between the Experimental Group’s Performance in the OPFT and the ODCT Posttest	222
<b>Table 59:</b> Both Groups’ General Means in the Posttest	223
<b>Table 60:</b> Squared Scores of the Experimental Group	226
<b>Table 61:</b> Squared Scores of the Control Group	228
<b>Table 62:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the OPFT Pretest	233
<b>Table 63:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the OPFT Posttest	233
<b>Table 64:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the OPFT Pretest	236
<b>Table 65:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the OPFT Posttest	237
<b>Table 66:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the OPFT Pretest	239
<b>Table 67:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the OPFT Posttest	240
<b>Table 68:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the OPFT Pretest	242
<b>Table 69:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the OPFT of the Posttest	243
<b>Table 70:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas	245

of the Experimental Group in the ODCT Pretest	
<b>Table 71:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentage of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the ODCT Posttest	246
<b>Table 72:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentage of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the ODCT Pretest	248
<b>Table 73:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the OPFT Posttest	248
<b>Table 74:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the ODCT Pretest	251
<b>Table 75:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the ODCT Posttest	252
<b>Table 76:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the ODCT Pretest	255
<b>Table 77:</b> Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the ODCT Posttest	255
<b>Table 78:</b> The Students' AS	262
<b>Table 79:</b> Paired-samples T-test of Students' Attitudes Towards Constructive Peer Criticism in the Three Attitudinal Variables (Affective, Cognitive, Behavioral)	266
<b>Table 80:</b> The Values of the Effect Sizes of the Three Attitudinal Components and their Total	270
<b>Table 81:</b> Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Clarity of Instructions	281
<b>Table 82:</b> Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Clarity of Questions	281
<b>Table 83:</b> Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Unclear Questions	281
<b>Table 84:</b> Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Time Taken to Complete the Questionnaire	282
<b>Table 85:</b> Teachers' General Information	284
<b>Table 86:</b> Objective(s) in the Oral Expression Class	286
<b>Table 87:</b> Sufficiency of Oral Expression Allocated Time	286
<b>Table 88:</b> Designer of Second Year Oral Expression Program	287
<b>Table 89:</b> Developing Learners' Pragmatic Competence as a Teaching Goal	287
<b>Table 90:</b> Reasons Behind not Developing Learners' Pragmatic Competence	288
<b>Table 91:</b> Frequency of Asking Students to Criticize their Peers	289

Constructively	
<b>Table 92:</b> Perceptions of the Usefulness of Constructive Peer Criticism	290
<b>Table 93:</b> Learners' Psychological State when Providing Constructive Peer Criticism	292
<b>Table 94:</b> Reasons Behind Learners' Unease	293
<b>Table 95:</b> Easiness of Handling Teachers' vs. Peers' Constructive Criticism	294
<b>Table 96:</b> The Most Common Errors in Learners' Constructive Peer Criticisms	295
<b>Table 97:</b> Constructive Peer Criticisms Compliance with Clarity Rules	297
<b>Table 98:</b> Constructive Peer Criticisms Compliance with Politeness Rules	298
<b>Table 99:</b> Constructive Peer Criticisms Compliance with Linguistic Accuracy Rules	299
<b>Table 100:</b> Learners Constructive Peer Criticisms' Pragmatic Appropriateness Level	300
<b>Table 101:</b> Teachers' Perception of Pragmatic Competence	301
<b>Table 102:</b> Teachers' Perceptions of Pragmatic Competence Development	302
<b>Table 103:</b> Teachers' Perceptions of the Need for Constructive Criticism Speech Act Instruction	302
<b>Table 104:</b> Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Constructive Criticism Teaching Practices	302
<b>Table 105:</b> Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Explicit vs. Implicit Instruction	308
<b>Table 106:</b> Teachers' Opinion About the Role of Authentic Input	309
<b>Table 107:</b> Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Authentic vs. Non-authentic Input	310
<b>Table 108:</b> The Most Effective Techniques of Teaching Constructive Criticism Speech Act	311

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> The Cultural Onion	19
<b>Figure 2:</b> Bachman's Model of Language Competence	53
<b>Figure 3:</b> The Process of Learning Implicit Knowledge	67
<b>Figure 4:</b> The Research Design of the Present Study	105
<b>Figure 5:</b> The Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the Experimental Group's OPFT Pretest	165
<b>Figure 6:</b> Difference in the Means Between Both Groups in the OPFT Pretest	169
<b>Figure 7:</b> The Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the Control Group's OPFT Pretest	168
<b>Figure 8:</b> Difference Between Both Groups in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Pretest	170
<b>Figure 9:</b> Difference Between Both Groups' Means in the ODCT Pretest	173
<b>Figure 10:</b> The Experimental Group's Percentages in the Areas of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest	174
<b>Figure 11:</b> The Control Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest	175
<b>Figure 12:</b> Difference Between the Pretest and Progress Test No. 1 in the Experimental Group's Performance of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy	181
<b>Figure 13:</b> Difference Between the Pretest and Progress Test No. 1 in the Control Group's Performance of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy	181
<b>Figure 14:</b> Comparison Between Both Groups' Performance in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Progress Test no. 1	182
<b>Figure 15:</b> Comparison Between Both Groups' Performance of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Progress Test No. 1	187
<b>Figure 16:</b> Comparison Between Both Groups in the Three Areas of Assessment in Progress Test No. 2	192
<b>Figure 17:</b> Comparison Between the Experimental Groups' Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Tests No. 2 and 3	200
<b>Figure 18:</b> Comparison Between the Control Group's Performance in	202

Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Tests No. 2 and 3	
<b>Figure 19:</b> Comparison Between the Experimental Group's ODCT Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Test No. 2 and Progress Test No. 3	205
<b>Figure 20:</b> Comparison Between Both Groups' Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Test No. 2 and Progress Test No. 3	208
<b>Figure 21:</b> Difference in the Means Between Both Groups in the OPFT Posttest	212
<b>Figure 22:</b> Comparison Between the OPFT Pretest and Posttest Means of Both Groups	213
<b>Figure 23:</b> The Experimental Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest	214
<b>Figure 24:</b> The Control Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest	215
<b>Figure 25:</b> Comparison Between Both Groups' Performance in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Posttest	216
<b>Figure 26:</b> The Experimental Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Posttest	220
<b>Figure 27:</b> The Control Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Posttest	221
<b>Figure 28:</b> Comparison Between the Experimental Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT and the ODCT Posttest	222
<b>Figure 29:</b> Difference in the Means of Both Groups in the Different Tests	224
<b>Figure 30:</b> Comparison Between the Experimental Group Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest	234
<b>Figure 31:</b> Comparison Between the Control Group Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest	238
<b>Figure 32:</b> Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions Among the Experimental Group in the Pretest and Posttest	241
<b>Figure 33:</b> Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions Among the Control Group in the Pretest and Posttest	244

<b>Figure 34:</b> Comparison Between the Experimental Group ODCT Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest	246
<b>Figure 35:</b> Comparison Between the Control Group ODCT Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest	249
<b>Figure 36:</b> Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions Among the Experimental Group in the Pretest and Posttest	252
<b>Figure 37:</b> Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions Among the Control Group in the Pretest and Posttest	256
<b>Figure 38:</b> Reasons Behind Learners' Unease	294
<b>Figure 39:</b> The Most Common Errors in Learners' Constructive Peer Criticisms	296

# Table of Contents

Contents	Page
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Dedication</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>List of Figures</b>	<b>xx</b>
<b>General Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1 Background of the Study	1
2 Statement of the Problem	2
3 Objectives of the Study	3
4 Research Questions	3
5 Hypotheses	4
6 Significance of the Study	4
7 Methodology	4
8 Structure of the Thesis	5
9 Operational Definition	6
<b>CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.1 The Speech Act of Criticizing in the L2 Setting</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1.1 The linguistic reality of Algerian EFL learners	7
1.1.2 Speech act theory	10
1.1.2.1 Austin's seminal work	10
1.1.2.2 Searle's indirect speech act theory	11
1.1.2.3 Speech act theory criticized	13
1.1.3 Speech act and context	14
1.1.3.1 The nature of context	15
1.1.3.2 Three dimensions of context	17
1.1.4 Speech act and strategy	20
1.1.4.1 The notion of face	20



1.1.4.2 Theories of politeness	22
1.1.4.2.1 The conversational-maxim view	22
1.1.4.2.2 The face-saving view	24
1.1.4.2.3 The social-norm view	28
1.1.4.2.4 The conversational-contract view	29
1.1.5 The speech act of criticizing	30
1.1.5.1 Definition of criticism	31
1.1.5.2 Direct and indirect criticisms	34
1.1.5.3 Criticism realization strategies and semantic formulas	35
1.1.5.4 Criticism mitigation devices	39
1.1.5.5 Characteristics of good and bad criticisms	41
1.1.5.6 Previous studies on l2 learners' realizations of the speech act of criticizing	43
<b>1.2 Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence</b>	<b>45</b>
1.2.1 Competence	45
1.2.1.1 Language and competence	46
1.2.1.2 The Chomskyan notion of competence	46
1.2.1.3 Chomsky's theory of competence criticized	48
1.2.2 Communicative competence	48
1.2.2.1 Early sociolinguistic contributions	49
1.2.2.2 Hymes' notion of communicative competence	49
1.2.2.3 Models of communicative competence	52
1.2.3 Pragmatic competence	54
1.2.3.1 Pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics defined	54
1.2.3.2 Pragmatic competence defined	56
1.2.3.3 Factors determining interlanguage pragmatic competence	58
1.2.3.4 Pragmatic failure and L2 learning	59
1.2.3.5 Non-native speakers' use of speech acts	60
1.2.3.6 Speech acts, politeness, and pragmatic competence	61
<b>1.3 Pragmatic Instruction and Assessment</b>	<b>62</b>
1.3.1 Instruction and L2 pragmatic development	63
1.3.1.1 The Input Hypothesis	63
1.3.1.2 Input in the EFL context	65

1.3.1.3 The Noticing Hypothesis	66
1.3.1.4 Input enhancement	73
1.3.1.5 Learning contexts and L2 pragmatic development	73
1.3.1.6 The context of speech act instruction	75
1.3.1.7 The tradition of functional language teaching	76
1.3.1.8 Pragmatic development and Littlewood's model of language learning	78
1.3.1.9 The content of pragmatic instruction	78
1.3.1.10 Methodologies of pragmatic instruction	79
1.3.1.11 Explicit and implicit teaching approaches	81
1.3.2 Pragmatic assessment	84
1.3.2.1 Background on interlanguage pragmatic assessment	85
1.3.2.2 Problems in the assessment of pragmatic competence	87
<b>1.4 Peer Feedback and Learning in the L2 Classroom</b>	<b>89</b>
1.4.1 Errors and error indicators	89
1.4.2 Negative feedback and its effect on L2 learning	91
1.4.3 Peer Interaction and feedback and learning in the L2 classroom	92
1.4.3.1 Learning and interaction in the L2 classroom	92
1.4.3.2 A social constructivist perspective of peer feedback	93
1.4.3.3 Peer feedback and L2 development	94
1.4.3.4 Learners' perceptions of peer interaction and feedback	98
1.4.3.5 Negative peer feedback and face-saving issues	99
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>2.1 Research Orientations</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>2.2 Choice of the Method</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>2.3 The Population Investigated and Sampling</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>2.4 Test Instruments</b>	<b>106</b>
2.4.1 Test instruments used in the previous interventional interlanguage pragmatics studies	106
2.4.2 Test instruments used in the present study	108
2.4.2.1 The oral peer-feedback task	108



<b>Introduction</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>3.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Preliminary Questionnaire Data</b>	<b>146</b>
3.1.1 Rationale for using the students' preliminary questionnaire	146
3.1.2 Description of the students' preliminary questionnaire	146
3.1.3 Validity of the students' preliminary questionnaire	147
3.1.4 Piloting the students' preliminary questionnaire	147
3.1.5 Reliability of the students' preliminary questionnaire	148
3.1.6 Administration of students' preliminary questionnaire	148
3.1.7 Analysis and interpretation of the results	149
3.1.7.1 Section One: Students' general information	149
3.1.7.2 Section Two: Students' perceptions of constructive peer criticism face-threatening nature	151
3.1.7.3 Section Three: Students' difficulties when providing constructive peer criticism	155
<b>3.2 The Experimental Study</b>	<b>161</b>
3.2.1 The teaching effects after instruction	161
3.2.1.1 Results of the analysis of constructive criticism competence analytic rating	161
3.2.1.1.1 Scores of both groups in the pretest	162
3.2.1.1.2 Scores of both groups in Progress Test no. 1	176
3.2.1.1.2 Scores of both groups in Progress Test no. 2	188
3.2.1.1.2 Scores of both groups in Progress Test no. 3	197
3.2.1.1.5 Scores of both groups in the posttest	209
3.2.1.1.6 Summary of the tests' results	224
3.2.1.1.7 Statistical analysis and interpretation	224
3.2.1.1.7.a The mean	225
3.2.1.1.7.b The variance	226
3.2.1.1.7.c The standard variation	230
3.2.1.1.7.d The degree of freedom	230
3.2.1.1.7.e The t-value and alpha level	230
3.2.1.1.7.f The critical value	231
3.2.1.1.7.g Necessary data for testing the main hypothesis	231

3.2.1.1.8 Significance of these data	231
3.2.1.2 Results of discourse analysis	232
3.2.1.2.1 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism semantic formulas' frequencies and percentages in the oral peer-feedback task	232
3.2.1.2.2 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism modifiers' frequencies and percentages in the oral peer-feedback task	239
3.2.1.2.3 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism semantic formulas' frequencies and percentages in the oral discourse completion task	245
3.2.1.2.4 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism modifiers' frequencies and percentages in the oral discourse completion task	250
3.2.2 Discussion of the teaching effects after instruction	257
3.2.2.1 Factors for improvement after instruction	257
3.2.2.2 Factors for variation between the two tasks	259
<b>3.3. Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Attitude</b>	<b>261</b>
<b>Scale and Written Self-report Data</b>	
3.3.1 Analysis and interpretation of the attitude scale data	261
3.3.1.1 Rationale for using the attitude scale	261
3.3.1.2 Design of the attitude scale	262
3.3.1.3 Validity of the attitude scale	264
3.3.1.4 Piloting of the attitude scale	264
3.3.1.5 Reliability of the attitude scale	264
3.3.1.6 Administration of the attitude scale	265
3.3.1.7 Calculation of students' attitudes on the attitude scale	265
3.3.1.8 Analysis and interpretation of the results	266
3.3.2 Analysis and interpretation of the written self-report data	271
3.3.2.1 Rationale for using the written self-report	271
3.3.1.2 Design of the written self-report	271
3.3.1.3 Validation of the written self-report	271
3.3.2.4 Piloting the written self-report	271

3.3.1.5 Reliability of the written self-report	271
3.3.1.6 Administration of the written self-report	272
3.3.1.7 Procedures for categorizing the written self-report data	273
3.3.1.7 Analysis and interpretation of the results	273
3.3.1.6.1 Pragmatic changes after instruction	273
3.3.1.6.2 Attitudes towards constructive peer criticism after instruction	274
3.3.1.6.3 Comments on the teaching method	276
<b>3.4 Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Questionnaire Data</b>	<b>278</b>
3.4.1 Rationale for using the teachers' questionnaire	278
3.4.2 Description of the teachers' questionnaire	279
3.4.3 Validity of the teachers' questionnaire	279
3.4.4 Piloting the teachers' questionnaire	280
3.4.5 Reliability of the teachers' questionnaire	282
3.4.6 Administration of the teachers' questionnaire	283
3.4.7 Analysis and interpretation of the results	283
3.4.7.1 Section One: Teachers' general information	284
3.4.7.2 Section Two: Teaching Oral Expression and constructive criticism speech act	285
3.4.7.3 Section Three: Students' constructive peer criticisms	292
3.4.7.4 Section Four: Pragmatic instruction and students' constructive peer criticism competence	300
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>General Conclusion</b>	<b>314</b>
1 Summary of the Study's Major Findings	314
2 Implications and Recommendations	317
3 Limitations, delimitations, and Suggestions for Further Research	321
<b>References</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
المُلخَص	

## **General Introduction**

### **1 Background of the Study**

The last six decades have witnessed an emerging view in which language has no longer been seen as an isolated set of grammatical rules but rather considered a communicative activity. Following this major shift, the field of foreign language teaching (Henceforth FLT) has welcomed the arrival of the Communicative Language Teaching. With a view to developing learners' communicative competence, this approach specifies that teaching and learning a language are not merely teaching and learning its grammar. Rather, they should be about how to use it appropriately for communicative purposes in real-life situations (Richards, 2015). In fact, appropriateness varies from one context to context within one language and also from one language to another. Hence, it may be interpreted differently by people of different cultural backgrounds (Bonvillain, 2013). In language teaching, raising learners' awareness of the appropriate linguistic behavior of the target community is crucial. Indeed, pragmatic competence constitutes one of the major components in a number of communicative competence models (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

Teaching pragmatics simply means teaching how to use the target language (Henceforth TL) with its functional requirements i.e. teaching how to use it in its appropriate sociocultural context. Because of the challenging nature of this task, researchers long believed that pragmatic competence is that aspect of communicative competence that is beyond the reach of foreign language (Henceforth FL) learners. However, in the past three decades, some researchers recognized that pragmatics can be taught to them in highly illuminating ways (Rose & Kasper, 2001). It is a matter of fact that instructional interlanguage pragmatics (Henceforth ILP) research has long been restricted to a rather "relatively well-defined" set of speech acts such as requesting and complimenting (Ellis, 1994). Although this line of research has begun to investigate the teachability of potentially more complex speech acts such as criticizing, the number of studies investigating this area of inquiry is still limited given that speech acts as such may cause even more problems for FL learners in intercultural communication (Nguyen, 2005).

## **2 Statement of the Problem**

In institutional settings, the teacher's constructive criticism is fully sanctioned due to his/her authority but peer criticism is often problematic not only because learners generally lack the knowledge required to give constructive criticism but also because they lack pragmatic competence to express it in an appropriate manner in the TL (Nguyen & Basturkmen, 2010). Although to date, a great deal of pedagogical effort has been devoted to direct English as a foreign language (Henceforth EFL) learners' attention to the content of peer feedback (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Liu & Hansen, 2002; Rollinson, 2005), scant attention has been given to the language used to provide negative peer assessment (Nguyen & Basturkmen, 2010). Due to the language difficulties that EFL learners encounter when participating in peer feedback sessions, they should be instructed on the speech act of criticizing to boost their competence in it. In this study, constructive peer criticism competence means the ability to realize linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. Pragmatic instruction becomes inevitable in the FL context since EFL learners lack the chance of being exposed to authentic pragmatic input. So, formal instruction serves as the only regular source of the TL pragmatic knowledge.

Based on the researcher's two years English language teaching experience at Batna 2 University, it was noticed that there are some learners whose FL proficiency is advanced but are not able to carry out some communicative acts successfully. This mirrors the fact that language is still taught and learnt out of its context despite the emergence of a new paradigm which prepares EFL learners for contextualized communication. One of the most important communicative acts which is used in peer feedback sessions and which EFL learners, according to the researcher's observation and the students' preliminary questionnaire results, find hard and feel uncomfortable to realize is constructive peer criticism. One of the reasons that makes it hard to realize is its face-threatening nature. In this study, constructive peer criticism refers to a negative assessment of a peer's current work with the aim of improving present or future performance. It usually involves the identification of a problematic action, choice, or product, as well as advice on how to change or correct the problem.



### **3 Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of investigating the issue of the effect of pragmatic-focused instruction on second year English major learners' constructive peer criticism competence is set in the general perspective of verifying the present study's hypotheses. In addition, this investigation also attempts to achieve a number of objectives summarized in the following points:

1. To show that teaching EFL learners how to criticize their peers accelerates their ability of realizing this speech act in a linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate manner
2. To show that pragmatic-focused instruction can also change the learners' attitudes towards providing negative peer feedback positively and this helps them to make the most out of collaborative learning: building their independence and developing their self-advocacy
3. To suggest some pedagogical recommendations concerning the teaching of constructive peer criticism to promote the learners' competence in it

### **4 Research Questions**

The present study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Does pragmatic instruction accelerate EFL learners' ability of realizing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms?
2. What evidence of pragmatic development (if any) can be inferred from changes that occur in learners' use of specific discourse features and strategies as a result of speech-act instruction?
3. Is there any change in the learners' attitudes towards providing constructive peer criticism before and after instruction?
4. What are the EFL teachers' attitudes towards instructing learners on constructive peer criticism to foster their competence in it?

## **5 Hypothesis**

The main hypothesis set for the present study is that:

Pragmatic instruction is likely to improve EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence.

A secondary hypothesis can be stated in the following terms:

Pragmatic instruction can also positively change the EFL learners' attitudes towards the experience of negative peer feedback.

## **6 Significance of the Study**

The importance of the present investigation lies in the following points. First, from a general perspective, its findings will redound to the benefit of society considering that students are a vital part of it and it is important for them to be aware of the need of criticizing others constructively and at the same time appropriately. Constructive criticism is a valuable tool that does not only allow individuals to learn and grow but also helps create bonds between them as it shows that the people who provide it care about the person criticized and want to see him/her improve his performance with a little bit of guidance. Specifically, teachers will benefit from the pedagogical recommendations introduced in this study as they guide them in the teaching of constructive criticisms. Students will also benefit from it as it hopefully provides them with tips on how to realize appropriate constructive peer criticisms and changes their negative attitudes towards negative peer feedback. In this way, they can make the most of collaborative learning without putting their personal feelings in jeopardy. Moreover, this study offers baseline data for future studies related to it and presents suggestions for researchers who want to conduct further research. In general, this investigation fills the gap in the field of instructional pragmatics in the Algerian EFL context.

## **7 Methodology**

The present study is conducted through the mixed-methods research. As will be detailed on page 103. Justification to mix both types of methods and data is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods could adequately within themselves cover the

scopes and depths of the research questions. For the experiment, data were collected from two second year EFL intact groups at Batna 2 University, Algeria. The experimental group, which consisted of 52 students, received a 15-hour explicit pragmatic-focused treatment targeting the speech act of constructive criticism, while the control group, which contained 48 students, received no treatment. For assessment purposes, oral data were gathered from both groups using an oral peer feedback task (Henceforth OPFT) and a discourse completion task (Henceforth ODCT). These data were compared on a pretest, three progress tests, and a posttest performance to determine the instructional effect.

The research methodology of the present investigation did not rely on the experiment only but on a questionnaire, a written self-report (Henceforth WSR), and an attitude scale (Henceforth AS) too. The experimental and the descriptive methods are seen to complement one another.

## **8 Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of three chapters in addition to a general introduction and a general conclusion. Chapter One reviews relevant literature related to the issue under investigation and presents it in four sections. The first section discusses the main considerations related to the issue of the speech act of criticizing in the EFL context. The second section is mainly devoted to interlanguage pragmatic competence while the third one focuses on pragmatic instruction and assessment highlighting important theoretical frameworks in second language acquisition (Henceforth SLA) and interlanguage pragmatics (Henceforth ILP). The last section, however, sheds light on peer feedback and learning in the second or foreign language classroom (L2).

Chapter Two accounts for the research design and methodology followed by the researcher in the present investigation while Chapter Three presents the field work results obtained from quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The first section in the third chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of the students' preliminary questionnaire data. The second section is devoted to the experimental study while the third one shows the analysis and interpretation of the students' AS and WSR data. The last section deals with the analysis and interpretation of the teachers' questionnaire data. The thesis ends with a general conclusion which includes a summary of the study's

major findings, a set of implications and recommendations drawn in the light of the research results, and some limitations and suggestions for further research. The general conclusion is followed by a list of references and appendices in addition to the Arabic version of the abstract.

## **9 Operational Definition**

Although 2.7.1.1, 2.7.1.2, 2.7.1.3, 2.7.1.4, and 2.7.1.5 attempt to account for the construct of speech-act competence elaborately, it is judged imperative to introduce, at this level, the meaning of constructive peer criticism *competence* espoused in the present study. It simply refers to the learners' *ability* to realize linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive criticisms directed to peers. This definition is adhered to because it can be converted into palpable behaviors that can be easily observed, scored and compared in the experimental procedure.

## CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter presents in a synthesized way the main principles and concepts mostly related to pragmatic-focused language teaching and learning which underpin the current thesis. Pragmatic instruction and constructive peer criticism competence are the main points discussed here for they are important variables in the present study. Indeed, a scrutiny of these elements is essential as it serves as standards against which data collected in the field work are measured and compared. Other notions worth examining such as negative peer feedback and related face-saving issues are also highlighted. The previous studies reviewed in this part are either organized chronologically, or by design features or results which connect them.

### 1.1 The Speech Act of Criticizing in the L2 Setting

The way non-native speakers (Henceforth NNSs) perceive and perform speech acts has been the main focus of ILP. The present thesis investigates the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction on the acquisition of the speech act of constructive criticism by Algerian EFL learners. Before introducing this speech act in details, it is of crucial importance to introduce those learners in terms of language profile. More importantly, it is worth to shed light on the status of English for them. Therefore, the present section entitled *The Speech Act of Criticizing in the EFL Context* starts with explaining the complex linguistic reality of Algerian EFL learners. In doing so, it shows their first, second and FLs. Then, since constructive criticism is a speech act, the section moves to expose the speech act theory. Next, it discusses the relationship between speech acts and context since speech acts are situated. Later, the means-ends relationship between a certain speech act and strategies adopted is disclosed. The section ends with placing a special emphasis on the speech act of criticizing—the main concern of the study reported in the present thesis.

#### 1.1.1 The linguistic reality of Algerian EFL learners.

To understand the status of English for Algerian EFL learners, one should first have an overview of Algeria's linguistic profile which can be described as complex. Linguistic diversity is common among many countries of the world and Algeria is no

exception. Like most North African countries, Algeria is characterized by multilingualism and linguistic complexity as a consequence of historical, cultural, social and political factors (Chemami, 2011). This diversity can be explained by the presence of many languages, namely: Arabic with its different varieties (Classical Arabic, Modern Standardized Arabic (Henceforth MSA), and Algerian Arabic (Henceforth AA)), Berber or Tamazight with its varieties (Kabylian, Chaoui, Mazabi, Chalha, Targi, etc.), French, and finally English, which is encountering a growing interest among the new generation in the recent years.

To start with, Arabic is a semitic language that was firstly introduced to Algeria with the arrival of Islamic Conquests. Arabic was officially declared as a national language in the Algerian Constitution of 1967. It is characterized by the existence of three varieties. The first variety is Classical Arabic which is the form of the Arabic language used in Umayyad and Abbasid literary texts from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD to the 9<sup>th</sup> century AD (Djennane, 2014). MSA has replaced Classical Arabic. MSA is institutionally and officially adopted where its use is associated with media, education and literature. One should make the claim that this variety is not a native one for any sector in society. It is rather acquired through formal education. The third variety is AA. It is also known as Darija or dialectal Arabic (Benyelles, 2011). It is restricted to informal contexts such as casual conversations in daily life. Unlike MSA, which is taught at school by both Algerian Arabic speakers and native Tamazight speakers, AA is the first language acquired by 73% of Algeria's population (Leclerc, 2009). In the present study, a first language (L1), native language (NL) or mother tongue refers to the language that a person has been exposed to from birth or within the critical period (Bloomfield, 1996).

As already explained, AA is not the first language of all Algerian speakers. Approximately 27% of Algerian population speak Berber or Tamazight as a first language (Leclerc, 2009). Its major dialects are Kabylian which is spoken by Kabylien northeast of Algeria, Chaoui spoken in Auras and east of Algeria, not to mention, Mazabi, Chalha and Targi in south. It was officially approved as a national language since 2002 (Constitution of Algeria 2002), but not as an official one used as a language of administration and instruction besides Arabic. In spite of the existence of Tamazight in Algeria for 5000 years, this language has never been codified (Boukous, 1995).

Recently, Titmatine and Suleiman (as cited in Mouhleb, 2005) used the Latin alphabet to write Tamazight as it is “practical and scientifically adequate” (p. 17).

What can be understood so far is that AA and Tamazight are the first languages of Algerians with AA spoken by 73% of the population and Tamazight by 27%. MSA can be considered a SL for people whose NL is AA and a third language for those whose NL is Tamazight and SL is AA.

In addition to Arabic and Tamazight, French is widely used in Algeria. It has no official status but it is widely used in government, media and in education since the primary school. It is estimated that a large majority can understand this language, but only about 20% can read and write it. Maameri (2009: 10) assumes that “The language spoken at home and in the street remains a mixture of Algerian dialects and French words”.

To understand the status of English for Algerian EFL learners, some essential aspects about the Algerian context have to be introduced. Being a FL, English is learnt by most Algerian EFL learners at the age of 11 or 12 in the first year of middle school. It is taught until the baccalaureate degree as a subject like French, physics, mathematics, science, and so forth. At the university, it is taught as a secondary subject for the majority of the specialties, but it has an independent department at the Algerian universities. In other words, English is not a language of instruction unless learners major in it at the university. Moreover, it is not used by administrations and media in Algeria. All these nuances distinguish English as a FL in Algeria rather than being a SL.

To sum up, it can be said that the linguistic situation in Algeria is characterized by complexity as a result of the long tradition of multilingualism. Most importantly, English can be considered the fourth language for Algerian speakers whose NL is AA, SL is MSA, and third language is French. However, it can be considered a fifth one for those whose NL is a variety of Tamazight, be it Kabyle, Chaoui, Mazabi, Chalha, Targi, etc.

### **1.1.2 Speech act theory.**

The speech act theory is one of the central issues in general pragmatic research (Levinson, 1983). In this sub-section, Austin's and Searle's works are first briefly reviewed in order to provide theoretical frameworks. The speech act of criticizing, which is the focus of the present thesis, is then discussed and existing research on it is introduced.

#### ***1.1.2.1 Austin's seminal work.***

The speech act theory originated with J. L. Austin. It is summarized in his William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955 (Austin, 1962). Austin started by examining the view that a statement of fact ought to be verifiable in some way. He believes that many philosophical problems had taken place because of a desire to treat all utterances as verifiable statements. Austin (1962) gives the term "constative" to straightforward statements of fact, but he also describes statements which

... do not 'describe' or 'report' or constate anything at all are not 'true' and 'false' and [for which] the uttering of a sentence is, or is a part of the doing of an action which would not normally be described as saying something.  
(p. 3)

Here, he refers to utterances such as "I name this ship...". He calls this class of utterances "performatives". In doing so, Austin identifies a specific problem that not all statements could be verified as true or false. Moreover, Austin attempts to distinguish between performatives and constatives. However, his distinction turns out to be untenable because he found that some performatives can also be verified as true or false and some constatives also have the problems related with felicity or infelicity. In other words, there is no essential difference between performatives and constatives but both sentences can be used to perform speech acts. Therefore, Austin gave up differentiating performative utterances from constatives and "began by distinguishing a whole group of senses of 'doing something' which are all included together when we say" (Austin, 1962: 94).

Using the abstract methodology, Austin (1962) classifies speech acts into three levels: A locutionary act, an illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act



refers to the movement of vocal organs to produce a stretch of meaningful sounds. Illocutionary act refers to the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. to fulfill the purpose of speaking. Perlocutionary act indicates its actual effects left on the audiences such as persuading, convincing, scaring, etc. Among the three levels of acts, illocutionary act is the central concept and also the focal point of pragmatic research because it performs the speakers' communicative intention. However, Austin (1962) presumes that there is one-to-one correspondence between illocutionary act and performative verbs. Therefore, his classifications of illocutionary acts are by the criteria of the performative verbs, which only belong to the explicitly expressed illocutionary act and cannot stand serious scrutiny. In fact, Austin's pioneering work on speech acts has really enlightened and guided the succeeding linguistic researchers and scholars to carry this theory through. The typical representative is Austin's student, John Searle, who specified Austin's study and established Searle's theory of speech acts.

### ***1.1.2.2 Searle's indirect speech act theory.***

Searle (1969, 1975), based on Austin's (1962) work, puts forward the important notion of indirect speech acts. He describes:

In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer. (p. 31)

From this description, it can be understood that an indirect utterance has two illocutionary acts, and the interpretation of indirect speech acts requires a mutually shared background information about the conversation as well as hearers' rationality and linguistic convention. Moreover, Searle introduces the notions of "primary" and "secondary" illocutionary acts. The primary illocutionary act is the indirect one. It is not literally performed. The secondary illocutionary act is the direct one. It is performed in the literal utterance of the sentence (Searle, 1979). These two terminologies can be explained with the following example:

(1) Speaker X: "Let's go to concert tonight."

(2) Speaker Y: "I have to take care of my little brother."

Here, the primary illocutionary act is Y's rejection of X's suggestion, and the secondary illocutionary act is Y's statement that she has to take care of her little brother. By

dividing the illocutionary act into two subparts, Searle explained that we can understand two meanings from the same utterance all the while knowing which is the correct meaning to respond to.

What is more, Searle (1979) classifies speech acts. He ends up with a taxonomy of five broad categories:

1. Assertives: The assertive class commits the speaker to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition. Examples include assert, predict and insist.
2. Directives: These are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. Examples include direct, order and entreat.
3. Commissives: These are acts that commit the speaker to some future course of action. Examples include commit, promise and threaten.
4. Expressives: These express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition; acts of this kind express the speaker's own feelings. Examples include apologize, thank and praise.
5. Declaratives: These are acts which bring about a corresponding change in the world, e.g. I declare X to be Y, X shall henceforth be known as Y, assuming the speaker has the authority to make the declaration.

Felicity conditions are an important notion in the speech act theory. These are conditions necessary for the success or achievement of a performative. They take their name from a Latin root—"felix" or "happy". Searle (1979) refines Austin's set of felicity conditions, calling the fulfillment condition "essential condition" and introducing a "propositional content condition", which partially substitutes the executive condition. The propositional content condition focuses only upon the textual content. The executive/preparatory conditions focus upon the background circumstances. The sincerity condition focuses upon the speaker's psychological state. Finally, the fulfilment/essential condition focuses upon the illocutionary point (Haverkate, 1990).

As for felicity conditions, if someone is kidding with some friends and says, "Now, I pronounce you husband and wife." In fact, s/he has not married them because his/her speech act is infelicitous. Also, if someone is in a play and says the line, "I promise to kill X". S/he has not, in fact, promised to kill anyone. The first speech act fails because, among other things, the speaker must have a certain institutional authority

for his/her words to have the appropriate illocutionary force. Part of the felicity conditions for marrying people concerns the institutional position of the speaker. As for the second one, it fails because the words are uttered in a context where they are not used by the speaker, but in effect quoted from a text.

### ***1.1.2.3 Speech act theory criticized.***

The speech act theory is not without its criticisms. It has been attacked from two different angles. The first one has arisen because of the problems caused by integrating indirect speech acts into it. The theory is based on the assumption that there are certain features of utterances which are identifiable in a systematic way that make it possible to map utterances onto speech act types. For example, the indicative mood indicates an assertive speech act, whereas the imperative mood points to a directive. Obviously, indirect speech acts pose a threat for this assumption, particularly when the surface form points to an assertive and the indirect interpretation indicates a directive (this would happen in the case of a hint: I'm very short of money this month).

If it proves impossible to relate linguistic form to function in a systematic way, then it becomes necessary to resort to pure pragmatics, i.e. lifting speech act theory entirely away from linguistic form and this does not seem to be very desirable. One way out of this problem might be to describe in a systematic way the reasons why indirection is used and what form it takes. After all, it ought to be possible to describe the different ways of being indirect, because if there are an infinite number of possible ways, then it becomes impossible to recognize when someone is speaking indirectly (Smith, 1991).

A second attack on speech act theory comes through the study of discourse structure. If we accept the notion that a speech act equates roughly to a sentence (and it is not clear that this is or should be the case), and if we are to accept the idea that discourse has some form of structure, then we must be prepared to integrate speech act theory into a theory of discourse structure. There are those who advocate that discourse has no identifiable structure, in which case the problem does not arise, but equally, there are some theories of discourse that are incompatible with speech act theory (Smith, 1991).

### **1.1.3 Speech act and context.**

As was explained in A.I.2.4, the speech act theory has faced various criticisms. The main reason for its inefficiency lies in the fact that speech acts are treated as isolated sentences out of specific contextual factors. Here, it is noteworthy that it would be unfair to claim that speech act theory ignores contextual factors since it is one of the fields in the philosophy of language where context is introduced earliest. However, the notion of context changed. For instance, Austin (1962: 148) emphasizes the importance of context when he states “the total speech act in the total speech situation”. An utterance cannot be performative unless it is uttered in the appropriate circumstances or meets the contextual requirements. What is more, Searle (1969, 1979) agrees with Austin and holds that speech acts do have felicity conditions that need to be satisfied by the context, but he tends to regard context as a set of propositional attitudes, beliefs or intentions of the participants. Sbisà (2002) provides a comprehensive review on the change of context.

van Dijk (1981) sheds light on the notion of linguistic context. He points out that “a serious linguistic pragmatics should not only account for speech acts, but also for the relations between speech acts and the ways these relations are expressed in the sentences and texts used to perform such speech act sequences” (p. 163). It is argued that speech act studies should not focus on single acts but account for the relations between them as well as larger structures such as topics and episodes, which can be taken as the linguistic context of speech acts.

Moreover, speech act analysis should also focus on non-linguistic context, such as the place and time concerning speech acts as well as background information involving socio-cultural factors. Mey (2001) highlights the importance of context in speech acts and argues that in order to be effective, speech acts have to be situated. Speech acts not only rely on but also actively create the situation in which they are realized. Speech can be considered as centered on an institutionalized social activity of a certain kind, such as teaching, visiting a doctor’s office, participating in a tea-ceremony, and so on. In all such activities, speech is, in a way, prescribed: only certain utterances can be expected and will thus be acceptable; conversely, the participants in the situation, by their acceptance of their own and others’ utterances, establish and reaffirm the social situation in which the utterances are uttered and in which they find

themselves as utterers. In other words, speech acts actively create the situation rather than merely rely on it. In specific social activities, participants share expectations about the occurrence of certain utterances and contribute to the creation of the social situation.

Another problem with the speech act theory lies in the static nature of pre-assumed felicity conditions. According to Austin (1962) and Searle (1979), felicity conditions such as the procedure or proper participants are independent of the performance of speech acts since they are necessary and sufficient conditions to make an utterance count as a speech act. However, performance of a specific speech act depends on the context which seems to be dynamic and constructed *in situ* (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992) rather than static.

As stated above, a proper understanding of a speech act or an utterance has to be based on contextual factors. Then, what does context include? Should we include all the facts in the world where the utterance is performed or only the activated contextual factors? Is context static or dynamic? These questions are answered in the following sub-section.

#### ***1.1.3.1 The nature of context.***

In this sub-section, analysis of the nature of context is based on two questions: Is context limited or unlimited? Is it given or constructed? The first question concerning the context of a certain speech act is whether it should be perceived as limited or unlimited. If context is limited, we need to decide what factors should be included in utterance understanding. If it is unlimited, this indicates that we should possess all information in interaction, which sounds like an impossible mission.

According to Austin (1962), the context of a speech act is limited because felicity conditions help single out contextual factors against which the felicity of the speech act is evaluated. Austin claims that we have to consider the situation in which an assertion is made, such as the participants' goals, in order to judge it as true or false. For instance, the assertion of "France is hexagonal" is regarded as true if it is made under the goal of considering from how many sides an army could invade France and as false when it is used to describe the shape of the borders of France in detail. In this example, the limited context, specifically the goal of the utterance, determines whether the assertion is true or false. This view is shared by Kaplan (1989), who also holds that

context is limited and only includes what is needed for doing what we want to use it for. Stalnaker (1999) also regards context as delimited on every occasion by presuppositions a speaker happens to make. Sperber and Wilson (1986) share the view that only certain assumptions are present or activated in the mind of a speaker or a receiver. When these assumptions do not suffice to make an utterance relevant enough, the context will be enlarged by activating further assumptions. In a word, when context is regarded as limited, only activated contextual factors can be included in the analysis of speech acts.

As for the question of whether context is given or constructed, some hold that context is just out there, while others argue that it can be created. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) consider context as given or established before the performance of a speech act. Felicity conditions for a speech act have to be satisfied before the speech act since they seem to be necessary and sufficient conditions for certain words to count as a speech act. For them, context is regarded as a static notion, combining a set of factors such as time, place, situation, and participants. It is pre-determined as the background knowledge shared by participants.

However, communication is a dynamic process, where participants manipulate certain context in order to achieve their communicative goals. When understanding or performing a certain speech act, we do not need to check out its felicity conditions but tend to assume they are satisfied whenever no alarm signal (Goffman, 1971) suggests to us that they do not. Duranti and Goodwin (1992) argue in favor of the constructed nature of context and hold that the context of an event is set up by its participants. Instead of being defined in advance as the external factor, context is developed, extended, and constructed in the dynamic process. Young (2008) lists examples to prove that the actual speaker may create context instead of simply responding to it. For instance, people can speak in a more gendered way if they want to or choose different ways of speaking to express solidarity with others. Furthermore, speakers do not create contexts alone since hearers also play a role in co-constructing contexts. In a word, context is continuously shifting or changing; it can be created and co-constructed in interaction.

In the present study of constructive criticism speech acts, context is considered as limited and co-constructed. Contextual factors centering on the focal event are

activated. Participants can bring changes to the context. At each moment of an interaction, constructive criticism utterances are analyzed against the context set by the goals of the interaction.

### *1.1.3.2 Three dimensions of context.*

This sub-section attempts to shed light on the various contextual factors that play a role in performing and understanding constructive criticism speech acts. These factors can be placed in three groups: situational context, social context and cultural context. Among these three types of context, the situational context is most readily changing, while the cultural context is relatively stable.

One important way to study context originates in the writings of Hymes (1974). He notices that a certain speech event happens at a particular place and at a particular time between people who have various relationships. Accordingly, the immediate situation includes factors such as time, place and participants. The term “setting” is adopted to identify some features of context such as the time and place of a speech act. In addition to the setting, roles played by participants in interactions are also very important in the situational context. Participants—both speaker and hearer—can be analyzed with Goffman’s (1981) notion of “footing”, which refers to the various representations of participant roles.

As shown above, time, place and participants constitute the situational context in which utterances or speech acts occur. In daily interactions, people are not completely free to perform any speech act in a particular situation because they are also in a way limited by the social context. In other words, speech acts are closely related to social context which includes social norms and conduct rules. If an action violates conduct rules or social norms, it will be considered as impolite or rude and evaluated negatively.

Linde (1997), when identifying dimensions of evaluation, proposes the dimension of reference to social norms. According to him, it refers to

moral comments or demonstrations of the way the world is, the way the world ought to be, what proper behavior is, and the kind of people that the speaker and addressees are. This is one particular form of normative

judgement: what kind of behavior can be expected of a good person.  
(p.153)

In other words, social norms regulate the good quality of a person or a behavior in the society. Social norms can be regarded as criteria of behavior, which are shared by members of a social group and taken as authoritative or obligatory. They presuppose what people under a certain social context ought to do and prescribe the appropriate behavior or the suitable way of doing things in a certain context, i.e., rules of conduct. According to Goffman (1967), there are two general ways by which rules of conduct can impinge on the individual, including ways by obligations and ways by expectations. When a person fulfills his obligations and meet others' expectations, he will be evaluated positively. Otherwise, negative evaluation may be triggered by the target's non-fulfillment of his obligations or his not meeting relevant expectations. A speaker's performance of a constructive criticism speech act shows his awareness of social norms. His negative attitude may be aroused when the evaluated entity or the target of evaluation violates social norms, conventions and conduct rules.

Cultural context also plays an important role in speech act understanding. Various studies in cross-cultural linguistics have shown that speech acts should be situated in the cultural context (Trosborg, 1995; Wierzbicka, 2003). According to Hall and Valde (1995), human behaviors are meaningless unless they are understood in certain cultural context or with a particular pattern of understanding.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) visualize the hidden elements of culture by comparing them to the image of an onion, with deeper and more out-of-awareness elements at the center.



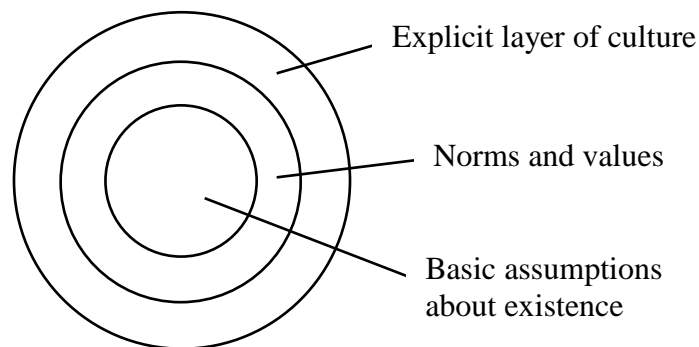


Figure 1 *The Cultural Onion* (From: Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997: 22)

The outer layer of culture consists of explicit elements such as language, food, houses, agriculture, markets, fashion and art. These visible products usually take the form of cultural symbols. The middle layer includes norms and values. Norms can be defined by what is right and wrong. They can be formalized as in laws or inform as in daily customs about how to eat, telling people what acceptable behavior is. Values reflect a cultural group's definition of good and bad, serving as criteria to choose between alternatives. The core of the cultural onion covers assumptions about existence, which are rarely questioned by people since they lie deeper. Shaules (2007) makes a distinction of the three layers as follows:

If you ask an American why they call their boss by the first name, they may reply that everyone in the company does so (norm) or because it is good for people to be treated equally (value). If you ask why being treated equally is good, the person may express surprise because the answer seems so self-evident. (p. 58)

Cultural assumptions, norms and values will determine what kinds of behaviors are proper or improper. In other words, culture shapes and affects the attitude of its members towards a particular state or an event. A behavior in a specific cultural community will arouse criticism if it violates these assumptions, norms and values.

In summary, three dimensions of context, including situational context, social context, and cultural context, play an important part in utterance understanding. The present analysis of constructive criticism utterances needs to be conducted with consideration of these three dimensions.

#### **1.1.4 Speech act and strategy.**

As shown in A.I.2.2, five types of speech acts, including assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, can be recognized according to the point or purpose of these acts (Searle, 1979). This classification does not mean a one-to-one relationship between a certain speech act and strategies that can be adopted to perform that act. If we take the speech act of request as an example. We can request a person to close the door via different utterances including “Close the door, please.”, “Can you close the door?”, or “The door is open.” In a word, speakers can choose various means to perform the act of request and these means are strategies adopted to fulfill the speaker’s intention. Thus, the relationship between strategies and a speech act is a complex means-ends relationship rather than a one-to-one correspondence.

A speech act can be performed via different strategies, the choice of which largely depends on face and politeness considerations. Politeness can be seen as a result of the need for balanced interpersonal relations because being polite increases the potential of successful communication. The performance of speech acts, especially face-threatening acts (Henceforth FTAs), involves the employment of politeness strategies to do face work. Constructive criticism utterances are face-threatening in most cases since a criticism threatens the evaluated person’s positive face of being acknowledged or appreciated. In the following sub-section, face and politeness theories are introduced to present the means-ends relationship between strategies and speech acts.

##### ***1.1.4.1 The notion of face.***

The core of politeness is the want of face, a term proposed by Goffman (1967). According to his study of social interactions, face is defined as:

the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes. (p. 5)

In other words, a person’s face is attributable to himself, but its configuration can only be bestowed by others in interaction. Rather than a private property that is inherent in a person himself, face refers to a public image that individuals need to earn from others in the society.

Brown and Levinson (1987) define face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (p. 61). It can be lost, saved, maintained, enhanced, or damaged in interaction. Face consists of two related components: positive face and negative face. The former refers to the individual’s desire “to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired” (p. 62), while the latter can be defined as the individual’s desire that his actions “be unimpeded by others” (p. 62). A person’s positive face is reflected in his desire to be treated as a member of the relevant group, to be respected, to know that his wants are shared by others. His negative face can be reflected in his desire to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed upon.

After the comparison of these two definitions above, it can be found that social interdependence is emphasized in Goffman’s (1967) definition since it focuses not only on the positive value that a person himself wants, but also on what others assume about this person. For instance, a person feels bad about how he is seen in others’ eyes when his face is lost. By contrast, in Brown & Levinson’s (1987) definition, face becomes a self-oriented or individualistic image since the importance of “others” and “social attributes” is neglected.

Most researchers hold that the notion of face is associated with both personal value and social value. Spencer-Oatey (2000) defines face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p.14). She classifies face into quality face and social identity face, with the former being individually-based and the latter group-based. Quality face refers to people’s desire for others to evaluate them positively in terms of personal qualities such as their appearance, competence, and abilities. It is closely related to people’s sense of personal self-esteem, concerning with the value that people claim for themselves. On the other hand, social identity face is people’s desire for others to acknowledge and uphold their social identities such as their roles of group leaders, close friends, or valued customers. It is closely associated with people’s sense of public worth, concerning with the value people claim for themselves in terms of social or group roles. Following Spencer-Oatey’s distinction, we can find that face does not only involve the individual himself, but also the group he belongs to. For instance, one’s face is closely related to the face of his family, school or community. His face will be lost when his personal quality (e.g., his physical appearance) or social identity (e.g., his role of being a group leader) is evaluated negatively.

#### *1.1.4.2 Theories of politeness.*

According to Fraser (1990), most researches on politeness can be grouped into the following four views: the conversational-maxim view, the face-saving view, the social-norm view, and the conversational-contract view. In this sub-section, relevant studies on politeness are introduced, with Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory as the main focus.

##### *1.1.4.2.1 The conversational-maxim view.*

The conversational-maxim view of politeness is grounded principally on Gricean Cooperative Principle (Henceforth CP) (1967, published 1975) and relevant maxims which are formulated on the assumption that the main purpose of conversation lies in the effective exchange of information. According to the CP, participants of a conversation are expected to obey the four maxims of being truthful, informative, relevant and clear. When one of these maxims is violated, e.g. the speaker (Henceforth S) says something that seems irrelevant on the surface or uninformative enough; the hearer (Henceforth H) is expected to infer some other hidden meaning that S wishes to convey. Politeness in this view is the flouting of Gricean maxims.

Lakoff (1973) proposes a "politeness rule", which is complementary to the Gricean "clarity rule". As Lakoff puts it, if communication is the major aim, S will opt for message clarity in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding. On the other hand, if the main purpose is to make H feel good, clarity can be sacrificed for the sake of politeness. Lakoff also posits the following three politeness sub-rules: (1) Don't impose; (2) Give options; and (3) Make [Alter] feel good. In a later work, Lakoff (1990) claims that those three sub-rules of politeness may not necessarily have an equal weight in different cultures. European cultures may prefer Distance (sub-rule 1), while Asian cultures can be Deferential (sub-rule 2) and modern American culture adheres to Camaraderie (sub-rule 3).

Leech (1983) also builds his politeness model on Gricean CP but equates politeness with favorableness to H along the scale of cost vs. benefit, praise vs. dispraise, agreement vs. disagreement, and sympathy vs. antipathy. For example, in classifying imperatives according to the cost-benefit scale, Leech claims that an imperative is more polite when it brings benefits to H and less polite when it is uttered

at cost to H. Thus, while “Peel these potatoes” sounds impolite (at cost to H), “Have another sandwich” does not necessarily (at benefit to H). Generally, Leech’s model can be presented as follows:

- (1) Tact Maxim: (a) Minimize cost to others; (b) Maximize benefit to others
- (2) Generosity Maxim: (a) Minimize benefit to self; (b) Maximize cost to self
- (3) Approbation Maxim: (a) Minimize dispraise of others; (b) Maximize praise of others
- (4) Modesty Maxim: (a) Minimize praise of self; (b) Maximize dispraise of self
- (5) Agreement Maxim: (a) Minimize disagreement between self and others; (b) Maximize agreement between self and others
- (6) Sympathy Maxim: (a) Minimize antipathy between self and others; (b) Maximize sympathy between self and others (Leech, 1983: 132).

Like Lakoff (1990), Leech also (1983) suggests that these maxims have different weightings in different cultures, which accounts for cross-cultural variations in politeness norms. Various speech act studies have supported his claim. For example, Schneider (as cited in Barron, 2002) finds out that the modesty maxim is more important in Chinese culture while the agreement maxim is more important in American culture.

Among Leech’s (1983) six maxims, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim seem to be closely related to the present study of constructive peer criticism utterances that involve both assertives and expressives. For instance, according to the approbation maxim, participants should avoid saying unpleasant things about others, especially when the evaluated entity concerns the H (Leech, 1983: 135). Criticism utterances such as “What a bad essay you wrote!” are quite impolite, which requires various strategies to mitigate the effect of negative evaluation:

E.g.

A: Her performance was magnificent, wasn’t it!

B: Was it?

(Leech, 1983: 135)

In the example above, A and B are talking about another person’s performance. While A gives a positive evaluation towards the performance, B holds a different opinion with an answer that indicates a negative attitude. B’s negative evaluation is expressed in an evasive or implicit way through a question (“Was it?”), which does not

require an answer but shows B does not agree with A's judgment. Here, the lack of praise of the other can be taken as a sign of dispraise or negative evaluation.

Following the modesty maxim, participants are inclined to minimize praise of self, which may lead to understatement of entities related to self. For instance, in Japanese culture, a speaker may say "This is a gift which will be of no use to you, but..." when giving presents (Leech, 1983: 138). The phrase of "be of no use" apparently conveys one's dispraise of the gift from himself and is closely associated with negative evaluation.

#### *1.1.4.2.2 The face-saving view.*

With Goffman's (1967) notion of face as the main building block, Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory has been regarded as a comprehensive and explicit theory of politeness. It is held that conversation is more concerned with redress of face than with the exchange of information, emphasizing the importance of politeness expectations. They assume the universality of politeness as a regulative factor in exchanges. Politeness can be understood as ways employed to show awareness of others' face. It is assumed that every competent adult member of a society is concerned about his face, the self-image he presents to others, and the face wants of other people. Brown and Levinson distinguish positive politeness from negative politeness, the former being oriented towards satisfying another person's positive face while the latter towards one's negative face.

It is argued that certain acts are inherently face-threatening, which can be called face-threatening acts (Henceforth FTAs). Some FTAs such as orders, requests, suggestions and warnings primarily threaten the H's negative face because the S intends to put pressure on him to do or refrain from doing something, while other acts mainly threaten the positive face want since they indicate that the S does not care about the H's feelings or wants. FTAs that threaten one's positive face can be reflected by acts where Ss show their negative evaluation of certain aspects of hearers' positive face, including personal characteristics, goods, beliefs or values. For instance, acts such as criticism, contempt, complaints, accusations and insults all indicate that a certain S does not like one or more of the H's wants. Contradictions, disagreements and challenges also indicate that the S thinks the hearer is wrong or unreasonable about a certain issue. At

least some cases of these acts can be put under the range of constructive peer criticisms in the present study.

The ideal situation appears when people interact with others without threatening their face wants. However, it is almost impossible since interaction itself can also be a FTA in a sense because it requires the other side's attention or response. FTAs frequently occur during daily interactions, for instance, when a S refuses an invitation, gives negative evaluation, or requests others to do something. When a FTA cannot be avoided, the S tends to adopt strategies to soften the face-threatening force in most cases in order to reduce the possibility of damaging his own face or others' face.

A model of politeness that consists of five categories has been proposed (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Five possible strategies can be ordered as follows in terms of the degree of politeness involved: (1) do the FTA without redressive action, baldly; (2) do the FTA with positive politeness; (3) do the FTA with negative politeness; (4) do the FTA off-record; (5) don't do the FTA. The risk of losing face increases as one moves from (1) to (5); the greater the risk, the more polite the strategy employed. The first strategy is employed when the face-threatening risk is minimal. There is no need for redressive action when interlocutors are on intimate terms or when other demands, for instance, efficiency, override face concerns. Thus, the act will be performed in the most direct, clear, concise and unambiguous way. With the second and third strategies, the S tries to maintain his face as much as possible and mitigate the potential face-threatening force as well. The fourth strategy is employed when the face-threatening risk is great, so the S gives a hint and leaves its interpretation to the addressee. The fifth strategy refers to cases where nothing is said since the risk involved is maximal or too great.

Except for the last choice of not performing the FTA, it can be found that a FTA is performed either by on-record or off-record means. On-record strategies refer to those by which speakers convey the information or express their communicative intentions directly, while off-record strategies are those by which Ss' intentions are implied or indirectly expressed. For instance, a S may perform a constructive criticism by directly expressing his annoyance or identifying the problem; he can also adopt an indirect way by showing that he likes the other way around.

Speakers can choose positive politeness or negative politeness strategies to do some redressive work of mitigating the face-threatening force of a speech act. Positive

strategies are mainly adopted to satisfy Hs' wants of being liked or acknowledged, while negative politeness strategies are used to meet their wants of being respected and recognized.

Positive politeness can be realized by claiming common ground, conveying that the S and the H are cooperators, and fulfilling the H's want for something. These three ways can be further divided into strategies as follows (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 101-129): (1) notice, attend to H (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods), (2) exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H), (3) intensify interest to H, (4) use in-group identity markers, (5) seek agreement, (6) avoid disagreement, (7) presuppose/raise/assert common ground, (8) joke, (9) assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, (10) offer, promise, (11) be optimistic, (12) include both S and H in the activity, (13) give (or ask for) reasons, (14) assume or assert reciprocity, and (15) give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

Negative politeness refers to redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face. It includes five aspects: be direct, don't presume/assume, don't coerce the H, communicate the S's want to not impinge on the H, and redress other wants of the H's. They can be further classified into the following sub-strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 129-211): (1) be conventionally indirect, (2) question, hedge, (3) be pessimistic, (4) minimize the imposition, (5) give deference, (6) apologize, (7) impersonalize S and H, (8) state the FTA as a general rule, (9) nominalize, and (10) go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebteding H.

The choice of negative or positive politeness strategies depends on their pay-offs or advantages (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In most cases, the S will choose the more advantageous strategies under specific circumstances. Positive politeness strategies help the S vent his feelings and express concern for the H, while negative politeness strategies help him lower the risk of conflict or breakdown in interaction by softening potential censure from the H.

When performing a potentially face-threatening act, the S needs to decide on the degree of face-threatening force of the act. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), a scale can be used to evaluate the degree of politeness required in a specific situation. The S assesses the required face work on the basis of three social variables that are independent and culturally-sensitive. These three factors (D, P, R) can influence



the amount of face-threat ( $W_x$ ) of a particular act in a certain situation:  $D$  refers to the social distance between participants;  $P$  is the  $H$ 's relative power over the  $S$ ; and  $R$  refers to the ranking of imposition inherent to the act in a certain culture. The values of  $D$ ,  $P$ , and  $R$  are added to assess the amount of face work that needs to be performed, as shown in the formula of  $W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$ . Depending on the judgment of  $W_x$ , the  $S$  will take different strategies to avoid or mitigate FTAs. These three factors are not necessarily real but are what participants in interaction perceive them to be.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory has aroused criticisms since its introduction, which mainly focus on problems involving the three factors and the universality of politeness. Although the proposal of these three factors can help a  $S$  decide on the strategy to mitigate the face-threatening force of a particular speech act, it has been criticized because these factors are relatively static, fixed or predetermined in a particular culture. Researchers (Meier, 1995; Locher, 2004; Hatfield & Hahn, 2011) present specific examples which show that the three factors including  $D$ ,  $P$ , and  $R$  are not pre-set but prone to the immediate situation. For instance, students in a research meeting, though close in  $D$  and equal in  $P$ , perform the same act of apology in different ways. The reason lies in the situational context of the formal occasion, where participants' roles of classmates or casual friends are changed to roles of researchers. Thus, values of  $D$ ,  $P$ , and  $R$  can change with the immediate situation.

Meanwhile, cultural factors are largely ignored in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, but the realization of politeness is culture-specific. For instance, the speech act of request, which can be classified into directives, usually threatens the  $H$ 's negative face since his freedom of action is impeded. However, in Greek culture, requests to in-group members are not regarded as impositions since people have the duty to help others in the in-group. Accordingly, people prefer positive politeness strategies when performing requests (Sifianou, 1992).

This universal politeness model is empirically challenged by studies of politeness in the East. Most researchers argue that Eastern politeness is fundamentally different from Western politeness, which can be termed as the "East-West divide" (Leech, 2007) centering on Chinese and Japanese (Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1989; Gu, 1990; Chen, 2010) in the East and English in the West. It seems that western politeness tends to be individual-centered while eastern politeness is society-centered.

Specifically, Matsumoto (1989) argues that in Japan, individuals are more concerned with conforming to social norms. Discernment, instead of face, underlies the notion of politeness and manipulates peoples' behaviors. After analyzing Chinese politeness, Gu (1990) holds that the universal politeness model is inadequate to account for the situation in China since that model is individual-based, which cannot address the collective culture in China. Four maxims, which include respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement, are proposed as the basic elements of Chinese politeness. Respectfulness mainly indicates appreciation of others or respect for others' social status; modesty requires self-denigration; Chinese people also emphasize attitudinal warmth that can be shown in one's demonstration of kindness, consideration, and hospitality toward others; refinement calls for behavior meeting certain social standards or self-cultivation.

#### *1.1.4.2.3 The social-norm view.*

Unlike the view of universal politeness adopted by the face-saving approach, the social norm approach assumes that each society has its own set of rules and standards and that politeness is the awareness of one's social obligations to other members of the society. This means that politeness is more concerned with conforming to norms of expected behavior than with attending to one's public self-image in Brown and Levinson's sense. Accordingly, the notion of face is also no longer seen in terms of psychological wants and face-threatening in terms of ignoring people's individual wants. On the contrary, face is related to social expectations and face-threatening is the failure to fulfill the society's wants.

The social-norm approach is empirically based on a number of studies of oriental politeness (e.g., Matsumoto & Ide, 1989; Gu, 1990; Nwoye, 1992). Hence, it serves as an appropriate model for accounting politeness in these cultures. Nwoye (1992) indicates that in a society where public face (related to social norms and expected behavior) is placed over private face (related to individual desire), it is more important for individuals to discern what is appropriate and act accordingly than to act according to strategies designed to accomplish a particular inter-personal goal. Likewise, based on their studies of the honorific system in Japanese, Matsumoto and Ide (1989) argue that in a culture where the individual is more concerned with conforming to the social norm, it is discernment but not face that underlies the notion

of politeness and governs the interactants' behavior. A similar argument is found in Gu (1990) which states that the politeness principle is "a sanctioned belief that an individual's social behavior ought to live up to the expectations of respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement" (p. 245).

On the basis of Leech's (1983) model, Gu (1990) proposes his own model, which indicates how one should go about behaving in conformity with norms and expectations in Chinese culture. The four maxims involved in this model are Self-denigration, Address, Tact and Generosity. The self-denigration maxim dictates the S to "denigrate Self and elevate Other". The address maxim admonishes him/her to address the H with an appropriate address term based on the H's social status, role and the S-H relationship. The tact and generosity maxims are close to Leech's. Politeness also involves a balance principle, which requires the reciprocation of politeness or the cost/benefit. An example is paying back a debt incurred as a result of a request, or performing a counter-offer, or counter-invitation.

#### *1.1.4.2.4 The conversational-contract view.*

The conversational-contract view by Fraser is developed in Fraser and Nolan (1981) and elaborated in Fraser (1990). The importance of face is also emphasized here, but this perspective on politeness differs from Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. It involves an implicit understanding of rules governing the social interaction between cooperative interlocutors. According to Fraser (1990), each participant in interaction has his own understanding of certain rights and obligations, which in a way determine his expectations of what others should do. With the change of contextual factors, there is always a possibility for participants to renegotiate their conversational contract, according to which they can readjust what rights and obligations they hold towards each other.

Fraser (1990) notices that these rights and obligations seem to be highly culturally determined. They may take various forms such as sociocultural norms and social parameters. Based on expected norms, both participants know what to expect and how to behave accordingly in interaction. For instance, competent participants know when they are expected to take turns and how much should they speak. Social parameters such as status and power can also be perceived, which helps participants

grasp what to say and how to address each other in a proper way. Since these rights and obligations are under the influence of culture, the realization of speech acts and degrees of politeness vary in different cultural contexts.

Negotiation of the conversational contract also plays an important role. Participants, being aware of their rights and obligations, abide by the conversational contract and negotiate their intentions in order to maintain balance in conversations. Politeness is taken as a dynamic process which can be developed through cooperation and negotiation. In the present study, negative evaluative utterances may be evoked if the target of evaluation fails to fulfill the expected rights and obligations. The degree of politeness can be negotiated in the process of communication.

### **1.1.5 The speech act of criticizing.**

The study reported in this thesis attempts to investigate the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners' competence of giving constructive criticism to peers in a learning environment. The reason behind focusing on this speech act in particular is threefold. First, unlike other speech acts such as requesting and apologizing, criticizing has been rather under-researched in literature (House & Kasper, 1981; Tracy, van Dusen & Robinson, 1987; Tracy & Eisenberg, 1990) though it is, as Min (2008) states, an important and indispensable speech act in our daily communication, which is just as important as compliments, apologies, requests, etc. Second, this speech act is of crucial importance for EFL learners in academic contexts. It is frequently performed in Western academic settings where learning is an interactive process, characterized by rich student-student discussions. Third, if even native speakers (Henceforth NSs) find performing this speech act difficult, often needing to pre-plan their performance (Murphy & Neu, 1996), it is obvious that EFL learners will find it more difficult to realize.

This sub-section starts with defining the speech act of criticizing. It doing so, it sheds light on its felicity conditions and differentiates it from other related speech acts. Then, it introduces direct and indirect speech acts as well as criticism realization strategies and semantic formulas. Later, it presents the mitigation devices as this speech act is a face-threatening one and should be softened. The sub-section ends with previous studies on EFL learners' realizations of the speech act of criticizing.

### *1.1.5.1 Definition of criticism.*

The concept of criticism was defined by many scholars. Tracy, Van Dusen, and Robinson (1987: 56) define it as the act of finding fault which involves giving “a negative evaluation of a person or an act for which he or she is deemed responsible”. Nguyen (2005: 7) defines criticizing as “an illocutionary act whose illocutionary point is to give negative evaluation of H (hearer) actions, choice, words, and products for which he or she may be held responsible”. This act is performed in the hope of influencing the H’s future actions for his betterment as viewed by the S or to communicate the S’s dissatisfaction with or dislike regarding what the H has done but without the implying that what the H has done brings undesirable consequences to the S (Wierzbicka, 1987). From the S’s point of view, the following preconditions need to be satisfied in order for the speech act of criticizing to take place:

1. The precipitating act performed, or the choice made, by the H is considered inappropriate according to a set of evaluative criteria that the S holds, or a number of values and norms that the S assumes to be shared between him/herself and the H.
2. The S holds that this inappropriate action or choice might bring unfavorable consequences to the H or to the general public rather than to the S him/herself.
3. The S feels dissatisfied with the H’s inappropriate action or choice and feels an urge to let his/her opinion be known verbally.
4. The S thinks that his/her criticism will potentially lead to a change in the H’s future action or behavior and believes that the H would not change or offer a remedy for the situation without his/her criticism.

It should be helpful to distinguish the type of criticisms given consideration in the present study from other types of the same speech act. In fact, giving critical feedback in a learning environment is expected to be constructive and supportive in nature. Thus, the type of criticisms under inquiry in the present investigation involves a lower level of “infracture” than the more “biting” types of criticisms such as criticizing one’s appearance. More specifically, the present investigation focuses on constructive peer criticism which, as Nguyen (2005) states, refers to a negative assessment of a peer’s current work with the aim of improving current or future performance.

There are some speech acts that are related to the speech act of criticizing such as complaining, fault-finding, and trouble-telling (e.g., Tracy, Van Dusen, & Robinson, 1987; Morris, 1988; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Wajnryb, 1993). One study in which the researchers try to discuss what constitutes a criticism as opposed to related speech acts such as a complaint is Tracy et al. (1987). They define both complaining and criticizing as the act of “finding fault” which involves giving “a negative evaluation of a person or an act for which he or she is deemed responsible” (p. 56). However, they make two main points to distinguish them. With regard to the first point, whether an utterance can be taken as a complaint or a criticism seems to depend on its “content and form and the salient role identity” (p. 56) of the giver and the recipient: criticisms are usually associated with higher social status and complaints with lower social status, although there may also be exceptions. For example, a subordinate may act “atypically” (p. 56) by criticizing his or her supervisor and signaling this linguistically.

However, there seem to be some reservations about this point. First, Tracy et al. (1987) are inconsistent in suggesting that a distinction can be made between criticisms and complaints based on content and linguistic form because, as they suggest earlier, both criticisms and complaints are concerned with the same content i.e. “finding fault”. Thus, it can be argued that they may also be realized by similar linguistic structures. Second, it does not seem convincing to define a speech act based on the relative social status of the S and the H because social role identity does not seem to constitute an exclusive defining criterion. While it is the case that certain speech acts can only be performed by a particular person (e.g. those highly institutionalized speech acts tied to laws, religions, or highly official ceremonies), this may not be true for many everyday speech acts, including criticisms and complaints. Indeed, Tracy et al. acknowledge that criticisms may also be given by subordinates. More importantly, the attempt to assign a particular social status and specific linguistic form to a speech act and to draw on these criteria to interpret it seems to overlook the fact that speech acts are context sensitive and dependent. In fact, contexts can sometimes be a more influential factor in determining the illocutionary point and force of a speech act, especially in the case of non-conventional indirectness (i.e. hints).

The second point that Tracy et al. (1987) make about the differences between a complaint and a criticism is the focus of the negative evaluation. They correctly argue

that those utterances in which “the self-involvement is transparent” (p. 56), i.e. if the S perceives the act done by the H as bringing negative or undesirable consequences to him or her, are more appropriately categorized as complaints. Another definition of criticisms is found in House and Kasper’s (1981) investigation, that considers criticisms, accusations, and reproaches as different kinds of complaints. Their reasons for this are that all of these speech acts share the same two features, namely “post-event” (i.e. the “complainable” has already happened before the negative evaluation is expressed) and “anti-speaker” (i.e. the event is at cost to the speaker). However, one might argue against this definition at least on the following grounds.

The arguments that can be used against House and Kasper’s (1981) definition are listed as follows: Firstly, a criticism does not necessarily have to be always targeted at an event which happens earlier in the sense used by House and Kasper. It can also be made about something static, permanent, and independent of chronological time such as a person’s personality or appearance (Wierzbicka, 1987). Secondly, the feature “anti-speaker” seems more applicable to complaints than to criticisms as pointed out by Tracy et al. (1987). Both the illocutionary force (i.e. the communication effect) and the illocutionary point that a critic and a complainer intend are inherently different. In criticizing, the S may intend the H to try to improve to his or her own benefits, or the S may just wish to express his or her opinion known. In complaining, the S implies that something bad has happened to him or her or that the H has done something bad to him or her and therefore expects a repair from the H (Wierzbicka, 1987). Thus, criticisms are usually, though not necessarily, associated with constructive “attitudes” or at least with non-self involvement, which is not the case with complaints.

In light of this discussion, it is apparent that compared to other speech acts, our understanding of the speech act of criticizing is rather limited due to the fact that it is under-researched in literature. It is therefore necessary that more studies be conducted to shed light on the pragmatic properties of criticizing, thus supplementing the existing body of speech act research, which is presently confined to a rather small set of speech acts (Ellis, 1994).

As in the case of complaining, criticizing may be composed of different acts, each of which carries a different illocutionary force and none of which is the head act. For example, a criticism can be a compilation of an expression of disapproval, an

expression of negative evaluation, a statement of the act of wrongdoing, and a suggestion for change. A criticism response can be made up of an agreement with criticism and an offer of repair, or a disagreement with criticism and an expression of annoyance. Therefore, neither of the taxonomies given by Austin (1962) nor Searle (1979) may apply to these two speech acts. Instead, criticizing may be better described in terms of speech act sets which are made up of multiple components.

#### ***1.1.5.2 Direct and indirect criticisms.***

As cited earlier, the choice of strategy and directness level is an important dimension of speech act production. It should be noted that Ss can vary how direct their speech acts are and in so doing communicate less than the literal meaning of what they say and yet still perform the act, and this is what the speech act theory comes with when it makes a distinction between direct and indirect speech acts (Searle, 1975, 1979). As Searle (1975) states, “The simplest cases of meaning are those in which the speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says.” In these cases, there is a direct correlation between the utterance type and its function and giving a direct speech act. Therefore, the utterance “I criticize” would be a direct speech act because the type and function are related. In that sense, a direct criticism is the direct expression of negative evaluation without reservation. It means that the interlocutor directly points out the H’s mistakes and demands correction directly instead of beating around the bush, including insulting, threatening, and so on. On the other hand, an indirect criticism means that the illocutionary force of criticism is uttered by means of the performance of other speech acts, so the interlocutor’s real intention can be partially concealed.

Toplak and Katz (2000) focus on the communicative effects of direct and indirect criticisms (sarcastic comments). They gave the participants a set of passages in which one of the interlocutors criticized the other in two ways, directly (“You are not really helping me out”) or sarcastically (“You are really helping me out!”). Then, they required them to complete a questionnaire for each passage about what they (the participants) thought the critic’s intent and the effect of the given criticism were from the perspectives of both the critic and the recipient. Similar to Wajnryb (1993, 1995), Toplak and Katz found a difference between the S and the addressee in their judgments of the criticisms given. The addressee tended to view sarcasm (as opposed to a direct



criticism) as more severe than the S intended. However, they also found that sarcasm was not perceived by the recipient as having as negative an impact on the relationship between the interlocutors as direct criticisms.

Tracy and Eissenberg (1990) investigate the preferences for message clarity and politeness in giving criticisms in a workplace context among people from different races and gender. The authors found that superiors tended to give more weight to message clarity than did subordinates. However, this preference also varied according to gender and race. For example, in either role, females were found to be more face-attentive than men and whites were more concerned about others' positive face (i.e. the desire to be approved or accepted by others—Brown & Levinson, 1987) than nonwhites.

### *1.1.5.3 Criticism realization strategies and semantic formulas.*

In the study reported in the present thesis, criticism realization strategies refer to the pragmalinguistic conventions of usage by which criticisms are realized. This definition is adapted from Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) and Takahashi's (1996) definitions of request strategies. Conventions of usage in the sense used by Clark (1979) are further made up of two other kinds of pragmalinguistic conventions, namely: conventions of means and conventions of forms. The former refers to the semantic devices (or semantic formulas) by which a speech act is performed. The latter involves the exact wordings used. For example, a criticism can be realized by means of different semantic formulas, from a direct statement of the problem or wrongdoing to a suggestion for change or repair. A suggestion for change in turn can be realized by means of different wordings such as "I suggest that you rewrite it", "Can you rewrite it?", "Do you think you can rewrite it?", or "Why don't you rewrite it?" and so on. Criticism semantic formulas in the above sense are semantic structures that have acquired an illocutionary force representing criticisms (Clark, 1979).

The following table presents the taxonomy of criticisms, illustrated with samples from the data of Nguyen's (2013) study. As has been said previously, a criticism may be made up of a number of formulae. For example, the following criticism consists of three formulae (two *statements of problem* [that the writer had two conclusions and there were structural problems] and a *suggestion* [that it might be better if the writer ordered the two conclusions in a certain way]): "umm I've just got through

this ah and then it's once again in the end of the structure I thought you had two conclusions as well (.) so (.)2 but they're both good (.) so I thought maybe if that one came after that one cause that was more of a conclusion than that one perhaps that would be better so they were more like the structural problem".

Table 1 *Taxonomy of Constructive Criticism Realization Strategies and Semantic Formulas* (Adapted from Nguyen, 2013)

Type	Characteristics	Examples
1. Direct criticism	Explicitly pointing out the problem with the H's choice/actions/work/ products, etc.	
a. Negative evaluation	Usually expressed via evaluative adjectives with negative meaning or evaluative adjective with positive meaning plus negation.	"I think ah it's not a good way to support to one's idea". "Umm that's not really a good sentence".
b. Disapproval	Describing the S's attitude towards the H's choice, etc.	"I don't like the way you write that".
c. Expression of disagreement	Usually realized by means of negation word "No" or performatives "I don't agree" or "I disagree" (with or without modal) or via arguments against the H.	"I don't quite agree with you with some points (.) about the conclusion". "I don't really agree with you 3as strongly as4 you put it here".
d. Statement of the problem	Stating errors or problems found with the H's choice, etc.	"And there are some incorrect words, for example "nowadays" "You had a few spelling mistakes".

e. Statement of difficulty	Usually expressed by means of such structures as “I find it difficult to understand . . .”, “It’s difficult to understand”.	“I can’t understand”. “I find it difficult to understand your idea”.
f. Consequences	Warning about negative consequences or negative effects of the H’s choice, etc. for the H himself or herself or for the public.	“Someone who don’t— doesn’t agree with you (.) would straight away read that and turn off”.
2. Indirect criticism	Implying the problems with the H’s choice/ actions/ work/ products, etc. by correcting the H, indicating rules and standard, giving advice, suggesting or even requesting and demanding changes to the H’s work/ choice, and by means of different kinds of hints to raise the H’s awareness of the inappropriateness of the H’s choice.	
a. Correction	Including all utterances which have the purpose of fixing errors by asserting specific alternatives to the H’s choice, etc.	“safer” not “safe”, “And you put “their” I think th-e-r-e”.
b. Indicating standard	Usually stated as a collective obligation rather than an obligation for H personally or as a rule which S thinks is commonly agreed upon and applied to all.	“Theoretically, a conclusion needs to be some sort of a summary”.
c. Demand for change	Usually expressed via such structures as “you have to”,	“You must pay attention to grammar”

	“you must”, “it is obligatory that” or “you are required” or “you need”, “it is necessary”.	“You have to talk about your opinion in your summary”.
d. Request for change	Usually expressed via such structures as “will you . . . ?”, “can you . . . ?”, “would you . . . ?” or imperatives (with or without politeness markers), or want-statement.	“I still want you to consider some points”, “What I would have liked to have seen is like a definite theme from the start like you’re just TA:LKING about it”.
e. Advice about change	Usually expressed via the performative “I advise you . . .”, or structures with “should” with or without Modality	“You should change it a little bit”.
f. Suggestion for change	Usually expressed via the performative “I suggest that . . .” or such structures as “you Can”, “you could”, “it would be better if” or “why don’t You” etc.	“I think if you make a full stop in here the ah (.) this sentence is clear is clear” “It could have been better to put a comma (.) so ah ((laugh))”.
g. Expression of uncertainty	Utterances expressing the S’s uncertainty to raise the H’s awareness of the inappropriateness of the H’s choice, etc.	“Are there several paragraphs ah not sure about the paragraphs”.
h. Asking/ presupposing	Rhetorical questions to raise the H’s awareness of the inappropriateness of the H’s choice, etc.	“Did you read your writing again after you finish it?”

i. Other hints	Including other kinds of hints that did not belong to (h) and (i). May include sarcasm.	“I prefer a writing style which are not too personal”.
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#### ***1.1.5.4 Criticism mitigation devices.***

The speech act of criticizing belongs to the group of speech acts that threaten the hearer’s positive face. Min (2008: 74) states that, “Criticism is an intrinsically face-threatening act in Brown and Levinson’s terms. In order to make the criticism more acceptable to the hearer, the speaker tends to reduce the imposition of criticism, which means the increase of degree of politeness”. Because of their face-threatening nature, criticisms are often mitigated. In the literature on pragmatics, mitigation strategies can take the form of external or internal modification. External modification does not affect the utterance used for realizing a speech act (head act), but rather the context in which the act occurs. It is affected through supportive moves (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) i.e. various devices that may precede or follow the head act (e.g. reasons or justifications for the act), thus modifying indirectly its illocutionary force.

It should be noted that while the softening of negative effects and the smoothing of social interaction during the negotiation of a face threatening act is considered to be the primary function of mitigation (Fraser, 1990; Caffi, 1999), the precise nature and politeness functions of both external and internal modifiers are context-specific, i.e. these devices are not inherently polite, but they may derive their politeness value when employed in certain situations (Bella, 2011).

Table 2 presents a taxonomy of mitigation devices adapted from House and Kasper (1981). These modifiers are categorized according to their relative locations within the criticisms. A criticism formula may contain more than one modifier. In the above cited example, the *suggestion* “so I thought maybe if that one came after that one cause that was more of a conclusion than that one *perhaps that would be better*” contained a total of 6 modifiers: one *grounder* (“cause that was more of a conclusion than that one”), two past tense structures with present time reference (“I thought” and “if that one came . . . would be better”), two *downtoners* (“perhaps” and “maybe”), and one *subjectivizer* (“I think” in past tense).

Table 2 *Taxonomy of Mitigation Devices* (Adapted from House & Kasper, 1981)

Type	Characteristics	Examples
1. External:	The supportive moves before or after the head acts.	
a. Steers	Utterances that the S uses to lead the H onto the issue s/he is going to raise.	“I read your essay and here are some my own ideas of this” “Ah I have some comments about your writing”.
b. Sweeteners	Compliments or positive remarks paid to the H either before or after a criticism to compensate for the offensive act.	“There are quite good relevant ideas that you presented (.) ah but...”
c. Disarmers	Utterances that the S used to show his or her awareness of the potential offense that his or her speech might cause the H.	“You had a few spelling mistakes (.) but I think that’s because you’re writing too quickly, (.) nothing too major.”
d. Grounders	The reasons given by the S to justify his or her intent.	“I think “is” is better than “are” there because traffic (2) ah single?”
2. Internal:	Part of the criticism	
a. Syntactic:	Syntactic devices to tone down the effects of the offensive act	
– Past tense	With present time reference.	I thought you missed out something. Should we change a little for its clearness?
– Interrogative		Should we change a little for its clearness?
– Modal	All structures showing possibility.	May, could, would
b. Lexical/ phrasal		

– Hedges	Adverbials	Sort of, kind of
– Understaters	Adverbial modifiers	Quite, a (little) bit
– Downtoners	Sentence modifiers	Maybe, possible, probably
– Subjectivisers		I think, I feel, in my opinion
– Consultative	Usually ritualized	Do you think? Do you agree?
– Cajolers		I mean, you see, you know
– Appealers		Okay? Right? Yeah?

### *1.1.5.5 Characteristics of good and bad criticisms.*

Tracy et al. (1987) investigate the characteristics of good and bad criticisms as perceived by people from different cultures via an open-ended questionnaire. Five stylistic characteristics that distinguish “good” from “bad” criticisms are highlighted. First, a good criticism needs to display a positive language and manner. Then, the changes suggested in it should be specific enough and the critic must offer to help make them possible. The reasons for criticizing must usually be justified and made explicit and the criticism compensated for by being placed in a larger positive message. A “good” criticism also does not violate the relationship between interlocutors and is accurate.

These findings are in line with Wajnryb’s (1993) study, which reports that an effective criticism, in his teachers-participants’ view, must be kept simple, specific, well-grounded in the lesson, linked to strategies for improvement, and delivered as an attempt to share experience. It also needs to be softened by means of a number of strategies. To save students’ face, one teacher even emphasized that a criticism should be “oblique and approached via the third person” (p. 60). Interestingly enough, this perception seems to clash with what the student in Wajnryb’s (1995) case study expected. She prefers to receive a direct and “economical” criticism rather than an indirect, wordy, and “timewasting” one. In the present study, the components of “good” academic constructive criticisms are adapted from Morrow (1995). They are as follows:

**a. Stimulus:**

It refers to the subject's reporting of the main circumstances of the problematic behavior through stating facts. If the subject is very specific about them, then this specificity may increase the likelihood that the receiver of the constructive feedback will understand it better. It is not necessary that this disapproval is stated directly. It can be conveyed in a variety of ways.

**b. Rationale:**

It implies the explanation provided by the S as to why the stimulus is a problem. Ss usually provide rationales in order to clarify their constructive criticisms. They can be descriptions of the rules, norms, standards, and expectations conventionally agreed on by a certain group, community or culture. Omission of the rationale component has the effect of leaving the addressee without clear indications of the S's motivation. In conventional situations, this is easy to infer from the other components. If not, however, the S may appear pushy (wanting change without specifying why it is important) or evasive.

**c. Consequences:**

Speakers producing constructive criticism usually mention the consequences that may result from the behavior/action they have found problematic.

**d. Desired change:**

Speakers usually specify the change they desire to see in the future action of the person(s) criticized. This too does not have to be necessarily very explicitly stated. Omission of the desired change component could produce an unsatisfactory result for the S since the addressee may not know exactly how s/he should change his/her behavior. A constructive criticism is sometimes reduced to request of change. For example, a classmate may address his peer saying, "What I would have liked to have seen in your presentation is having a clear opinion from the start and keeping arguing it". Implied in this is the stimulus which could be that the presenter did not show a definite opinion.



### ***1.1.5.6 Previous studies on L2 learners' realizations of the speech act of criticizing.***

As already mentioned, research on the speech act of criticizing reveals that it is an under-investigated one. Studies on L2 learners' realizations of the speech act of criticizing whether in academic settings or non-academic ones are even scarcer. Below are the main relevant ones.

Nguyen's (2005) study examines pragmatic development in the use of criticizing and responding to criticism by a group of Vietnamese EFL learners shedding light on the pragmatic properties of these speech acts. Interlanguage (Henceforth IL) data were collected from 12 high beginners, 12 intermediate learners, and 12 advanced ones, via a written questionnaire and role play. They were analyzed with reference to L1 and L2 baseline data collected from 12 Vietnamese and 12 Australian NSs via the same methods. Metapragmatic data were collected via retrospective interview. Four main findings were discussed. Firstly, the learners criticized and responded to criticism very differently from the NSs. This difference might have adversely affected how the learners negotiated their intentions expressed via speech act realizations. Secondly, there was little evidence of any proficiency effect on the learners' use of these two speech acts. This was probably because pragmatic development was limited by the EFL context, as the learners had had insufficient exposure to the target norms. Thirdly, there was evidence of pragmatic transfer in the learners' production. This transfer was affected by the learners' perception of L1-L2 proximity and assumption of L2 reasonableness. Finally, the retrospective interviews with learners suggested four main sources of influence on their pragmatic decision-making: insufficient L2 pragmatic knowledge, transfer of communication and learning, processing difficulty, and learning experience.

Nguyen's (2008) study examines how Vietnamese adult learners of Australian English learn to modify their criticisms in a peer-feedback session. Data were collected from three groups of learners (12 beginners, 12 intermediate and 12 advanced), via a conversation elicitation task, a written questionnaire, and a retrospective interview. L1 and L2 baseline data were collected from two respective groups of 12 Vietnamese NSs and 12 NSs of Australian English, via the same conversation elicitation task and questionnaire. Results showed that learners, regardless of their proficiency levels, tended to under-use modality markers, especially internal modifiers. A number of

factors might have influenced this pragmatic behavior: incomplete L2 linguistic competence, L1 transfer, and cognitive difficulty in spontaneous language production. The study also found evidence of an acquisitional order for criticism modifiers: learners tended to acquire lexicalized modifiers before grammaticalized ones. This finding lent support to Meisel, Clahsen, & Pienemann's (1981) Complexification Hypothesis, which holds that the order of acquisition of L2 forms is dependent upon their structural complexity and the processing demands involved; thus, syntactically complex structures, which are also more cognitively demanding, are usually acquired later than simpler structures which require a minimum of processing capacity.

In another study, Nguyen (2013) investigates how a group of NSs and NNSs of New Zealand English perform criticism via eight role-play situations. Findings showed that the speech act of criticizing is very complex in nature and might not be best described in terms of a single act. Rather, it should be better described as a set of speech acts, i.e., a range of strategies, any combination of which could help to perform it. Like many other ILP studies on other speech acts (e.g. Kasper & Rose 2002; Ellis 2008), Nguyen's (2013) investigation also reveals salient differences between the learners and the NSs in their pragmatic strategies. For example, unlike the NSs who made quite regular use of all strategies, the learners relied predominantly on "direct criticism" and "requests for change." The learners also opted out for different reasons than the NSs in those situations where both groups found criticizing inappropriate, and varied their pragmatic choices less considerably according to context. Furthermore, where learners used the same strategy as the NSs, they differed greatly in their choice of linguistic resources for expressing their meanings and mitigating devices. These findings are not surprising given the complexity of the speech act of criticizing. Given that learner difficulty in the pragmatic area is often perceived by NSs as rudeness rather than a lack of competence in the L2 (Thomas 1983; Boxer 1993), Nguyen (2013) recommends instruction at the pragmatic level.

All the previously reviewed studies on L2 learners' realizations of the speech act of criticizing reveal that it is difficult to carry out because of its complexity—being made up of various speech acts—and also because of its face-threatening nature. If it is hard for English NSs and in a less degree for ESL learners, it must be harder for EFL learners. Hence, pragmatic-focused instruction on this speech act becomes inevitable in the FL context since EFL learners lack the chance of being exposed to authentic

pragmatic input and formal instruction serves as the only regular source of the TL pragmatic knowledge. The study reported in the present thesis attempts to fill the gap in ILP by investigating the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction on Algerian EFL learners' ability of carrying out linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate academic criticism directed to peers. Since the notion of pragmatic competence is an important one here, it is necessary to tackle the issues related to it. The subsequent section is devoted for this.

## **1.2 Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence**

The section entitled *Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence* considers three notions: Competence, communicative competence, and pragmatic competence. It starts with an attempt to define the concept "competence" by trying to find out its connection (if any) with Saussure's "langue/parole" and Chomsky's "competence/performance". Then, it focuses on the Chomskyan notion of competence and presents some of the criticisms it has received. Next, attention moves to one of the key words in language teaching—communicative competence. Here, the main earlier sociolinguistic contributions that contributed in one way or another in shaping this notion are briefly reviewed before attention moves to Hymes' notion of communicative competence itself. After this, models of communicative competence are introduced. The last subsection entitled *Pragmatic Competence* begins with providing operational definitions of some key terms such as pragmatics, IL pragmatics as well as pragmatic competence. Then, it moves to discuss factors determining pragmatic competence. Next, it sheds light on pragmatic failure and NNSs' use of speech acts. It ends with connecting the three key notions of the present study: speech acts, politeness and pragmatic competence.

### **1.2.1 Competence.**

Before the 1960s, the meaning of competence was associated with grammatical knowledge. When linguists attempted to contribute anything to the field which concerns the nature of language, they related discussions to the dichotomy "competence/performance". Nonetheless, their contributions were constructed on theoretical bases only and lacked empirical support for this highly theorized concept.

Therefore, linguists had to have resort to communicative competence which Taylor (1985) describes as “a more realistic substitute to linguistic competence”.

### ***1.2.1.1 Language and competence.***

Chomsky (1965) is the pioneer to introduce the idea of competence in its modern image via his distinction “competence/performance”. This distinction itself is a reframing of Saussure’s (1922) central dichotomy “langue/parole”. This is clearly stated in Hymes (1972), “Chomsky associates his views of competence and performance with the Saussurean concepts of langue and parole.” (p. 273).

Nevertheless, this view is not commonly approved. “Competence” and “langue” are different, at least at their level of sociability. “Langue” is a purely social concept while “competence” is claimed to be more an individual property than a social product (Lyons, 1996). In addition to this, Lyons (1996) asserts that Chomsky himself refuses to identify his notion of “competence” with Saussure’s “langue”. In the first section of *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Chomsky, 1965) entitled “Generative Grammars as Theories of Linguistic Competence”, Chomsky comments that it was “...necessary to reject [Saussure’s] concept of ‘langue’ as merely a systematic inventory of items and to return rather to a conception of underlying competence as a system of generative processes” (p. 4). For Chomsky, the difference between Saussure’s “langue” and his own concept of linguistic (or grammatical) “competence” is the difference between an inventory “basically a store of signs with their grammatical properties, that is, a store of word-like elements, fixed phrases and perhaps, certain limited phrase-types” (p. 23), and an innate system of generative rules.

To summarize, there should be no association between the Chomskyan “competence” and the Saussurean “langue” as Chomsky was reacting to what Saussure came with and not substituting it.

### ***1.2.1.2 Chomskyan notion of competence.***

Undeniably, Saussure’s “langue” is considered as one of the most important linguistic concepts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; however, Chomsky’s revolutionary “competence” found more echo. Lyons (1996) justifies that knowledge of a language—including knowing how to generate an infinite number of sentences from a limited

set of grammatical rules i.e. competence—is much more important than possessing the appropriate language system (i.e. langue).

The core of Chomsky's theory of competence is introduced in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) in which he writes:

Linguistic theory is primarily concerned with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of language in actual performance. (p. 3)

He continues:

[...] We thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of the language) and performance, the actual use of language in concrete situations. (p. 4)

Through these quotes, Chomsky attempts to show that the linguist is more concerned with knowledge than with the use of this knowledge since for him, generative grammar “attempts to characterize in the most neutral possible terms knowledge that provides the basis for actual use of language by a speaker-hearer” (1965: 9). He emphasizes “that what we loosely call 'knowledge of language' involves in the first place knowledge of grammar—indeed that language is a derivative and perhaps not very interesting concept” (1980: 90). Then, he is not, at this level of defining what he called “competence”, concerned with other dimensions of human language, like variability in the proficiency of language use from one speaker to another or any other grammatically irrelevant condition that is, according to him, out of the scope of syntax.

Brown (1984) states that what can be understood from Chomsky's theory is that competence is logically prior to, and thus more important than performance. The same criticism has been addressed by many linguists later on. One of them is Hymes (1972) who assumes that Chomsky's vision of competence is too narrow. Indeed, Chomsky thought of performance as a kind of residual “dustbin” into which all those linguistic phenomena which did not primarily concern him were swept. Hymes objects in

particular the “absence of a place for socio-cultural factors and the linking of performance to imperfection” (1972: 272).

Moreover, Chomsky (1965) emphasizes that the meaning of his “competence” is far from its general meaning—ability or capability. He puts as follows:

The notions 'capacity' and 'family of dispositions' are more closely related to behaviour and 'language use'; they do not lead us to inquire into the nature of the 'ghost in the machine' through the study of cognitive structures and their organization... (p. 23)

Here, “competence” is a static cognitive state defining the innate knowledge of grammar and not the behavioral process to use this knowledge. Hence, it could be by no means equated with ability.

### ***1.2.1.3 Chomsky's theory of competence criticized.***

Introducing his theory of competence, the linguist Chomsky has contributed a lot to the literature on language, but language research is not only about theories. In addition to theories, it also needs a practical setting to prove their efficiency. Chomsky's notion of competence has been criticized because of its purely theoretical nature. It ignores language use and users. Besides, it does not demonstrate on how competence is acquired. Francis (1980), for instance, asserts that the Chomskyan conception of competence faces challenges if applied to the study of child language development as the child is not an “ideal speaker or hearer”. Also, it is not applicable in L2 learning.

The previously mentioned deficiencies in the Chomskyan competence pushed the language practitioners to make some changes in it emphasizing some elements they thought significant but Chomsky neglected. This new idea which is characterized by a sociolinguistic perspective is labelled communicative competence.

### **1.2.2 Communicative competence.**

As has been said in A.II.1.3, Chomsky's theory of competence is inapplicable in real life situations. Thus, in the 1970s, some linguists and education experts tried to give it a communicative dimension. It is known that Dell Hymes is the first who coined the term “communicative competence”; however, there had been numerous

sociolinguistic contributions which paved the way for this view. They are presented below.

### ***1.2.2.1 Early Sociolinguistic Contributions.***

Halliday (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) argues that we can understand the functions of specific grammatical structures only if we carefully observe the context of the situation.

Linguistics is concerned with the description of speech acts or texts, since only through the study of language in use are all the functions of language, and therefore all components of meaning, brought into focus. (p. 159)

For Halliday, function is the use to which a grammatical structure is put. It is the purpose of an utterance rather than the particular grammatical form an utterance takes.

In addition to Halliday, Le Page (1978) added a social dimension to competence too for he asserts:

A society only exists in the competence of its members to make it work as it does; a language only exists in the competence of those who use and regard themselves as users of that language; and the latter competence is the essential mediating system for the former. (p. 41)

From the previous quotation, it becomes clear that competence for Le Page is a social construct.

### ***1.2.2.2 Hymes' notion of communicative competence.***

In his conference paper entitled *Competence and Performance in Linguistic Theory* (1971), and later in an article entitled *On Communicative Competence* (1972), Hymes brought his ideas to light. For him, as already explained, Chomsky not only views competence in a narrow way, but also views performance as a secondary concept. What is more, he attacks Chomsky's theory because it does not take into consideration the socio-cultural factors, something which makes it inapplicable in teaching.

Another reason for Hymes's dissatisfaction with Chomsky's theory is that it conflicts with his idea of *differential competence* (Hymes, 1971) which concerns the

differences among individuals. This idea contradicts Chomsky's assumption that competence is the property of the individual (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992). Hymes (1972: 3) states that "even the ethnographies that we have, though almost never focused on speaking, show us that communities differ significantly in ways of speaking, in patterns of repertoires and switching, in the roles and meanings of speech". In other words, different people have different competences and language use has a social dimension.

Furthermore, Hymes (1971) emphasizes on the interactive nature of the language by stating that meaning does not stop at the level of the sentence but it is stimulated by the participants' expectations and attitudes; their shared knowledge about each other and the world as well as the context of the situation. In addition to this, Hymes tries to widen Chomsky's view of competence for he thinks that it neglects language acquisition. He notes:

We have to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate. He or she acquires competence as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner. [...] This competence, moreover, is integral with attitudes, values and motivations concerning language, its features and uses, and integral with competence for, and attitudes toward, the interrelation of language, with the other codes of communicative conduct. (p. 277-78)

In Hymes' view, competence is not only concerned with the grammatical knowledge but also entails knowing what to say, to whom, when, etc. i.e. the sociolinguistic knowledge.

In addition to considering the sociolinguistic side of the language, Hymes (1971) also revises Chomsky's view of performance. He states that some aspects of what Chomsky assembles under performance are systematic and can be therefore described in the form of rules. Thus, they can be seen as a form of competence (Taylor, 1985). Chomsky (1980) himself later acknowledged this, when in addition to grammatical competence, he recognizes pragmatic competence, which he perceives as "underlying the ability to make use of the knowledge characterized as grammatical competence" (p. 59). He later elaborates this as follows:



For purposes of enquiry and exposition, we may proceed to distinguish 'grammatical competence' from 'pragmatic competence,' restricting the first to the knowledge of form and meaning and the second to knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use, in conformity with various purposes. [...] The grammar thus expresses grammatical competence. A system of rules and principles constituting pragmatic competence determines how the tool can effectively be put to use. (p. 224)

In a word, this is in line with what Hymes (1971, 1972) has in mind when he talks about competence for use as a component of his overall concept of communicative competence. He (1972) says:

There are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless. Just as rules of syntax can control aspects of phonology, and just as rules of semantics perhaps control aspects of syntax, so rules of speech acts enter as a controlling factor for linguistic form as a whole. (p. 279)

Hymes (1967) defines communicative competence as follows:

Communicative competence is experience-derived knowledge that allows speakers to produce utterances (or texts) that are not only syntactically correct and accurate in their meaning but also socially appropriate in culturally determined communication contexts. Communicative competence also allows speakers to understand the speech (or texts) of their communication partners as a function of both the structural and referential characteristics of the discourse and the social context in which it occurs. (p. 72)

Based on the previous definition, it can be said that the term "communicative competence" entails the speaker's ability to produce situationally as well as socially acceptable utterances.

Hymes' (1972) distinction between the linguistic competence and the communicative one helps to clarify the domain of performance and to isolate the systematic nature of some of the conditions governing language use. So, the term "performance" according to him refers to 'actual use and actual events' and 'ability for use' (Hymes, 1971).

### 1.2.2.3 Models of communicative competence.

The notion of communicative competence has been influential among linguists—especially the sociolinguistic ones. Some of them even have gone further in it than Hymes. Canale and Swain's (1981) contribution, for instance, has been very influential. Canale (as cited in Beale, 2002) describes communicative competence as “the underlying systems of knowledge of vocabulary and skill in using the sociolinguistic conventions for a given language.” (p. 1). Canale and Swain first make a distinction between knowledge of use i.e. “communicative competence” and a demonstration of this knowledge i.e. “performance”. Canale says that communicative competence comprises of both knowledge and skills in using acquired knowledge when interacting in actual communication. Knowledge, according to him, means what one knows (consciously or unconsciously) about the language and about other aspects of life and the world, and skill refers to how well one can perform.

Moreover, Canale and Swain (1981) suggest a model of communicative competence which comprises of four sub-competences:

- a. Grammatical competence: It refers to mastery of the language code at the sentence level, e.g. vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronunciation and spelling. These features focus directly on the knowledge and skills required in understanding and expressing accurately the literal meaning of utterances.
- b. Sociolinguistic competence: It involves socio-cultural rules of language use. “It addresses the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts depending on contextual factors such as status of participants, purposes of the interaction, and norm or conventions of interaction” (Canale & Swain, 1981: 34).
- c. Discourse competence: It refers to the “mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve a unified spoken or written text in different genres” (Canale & Swain, 1981: 34).
- d. Strategic competence: deals with “mastery of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action. It is concerned with improving the effectiveness of communication, and compensating for breakdowns in communication.” (Canale & Swain, 1981: 34)

It is noteworthy that the meaning of the strategic competence is different in Bachman and Palmer (1996). It means meta-cognitive strategies. For them, the language ability is made up of language knowledge and meta-cognitive strategies.

Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model of communicative language ability has three components: (a) language competence, (b) strategic competence, and (c) psycho-physiological mechanism. The following diagram explains this.

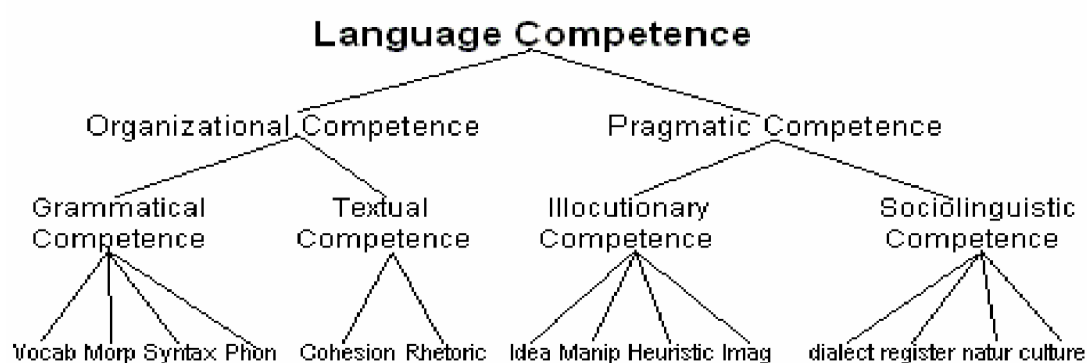


Figure 2 *Bachman's Model of Language Competence*

From: Bachman (as cited in Brown, 1994: 229)

The figure above shows that Bachman (1990) puts the grammatical and discourse competence under one layer which he calls organizational competence. The discourse competence is now called textual competence. It includes all the rules and systems that tell us what we can do with the terms of language, whether they are sentence level rules (grammar) or rules that govern how we arrange sentences. The two are put under organizational competence. For pragmatic competence, Canale and Swain's (1981) sociolinguistic competence is now divided into two separate pragmatic categories: illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. Illocutionary competence means conveying and interpreting intended meanings. Richards and Rodgers (1986) define sociolinguistic competence as "an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants and their communicative purpose for their interaction" (p. 71).

Furthermore, Bachman (1990) adds strategic competence but puts it as an entirely separate element of communicative language ability. He thinks that it “acts or serves as an 'executive' function of making the final decision among many possible options or wording, phrasing and other productive and receptive means for negotiating meaning” (p. 85). Said differently, strategic competence is a set of general abilities that puts to use all the elements of language competence.

In a nutshell, both Canale and Swain’s (1981) model as well as Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) model make clear that communicating effectively in a language requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use this linguistic knowledge appropriately in the given socio-cultural context. In order for the EFL learners, the case of the present study, to understand and be understood in real interactions, they should have command of a very important, yet long neglected aspect of language ability which language experts refer to as pragmatic competence.

### **1.2.3 Pragmatic competence.**

The following sub-section sheds light on pragmatic competence. In order to understand it clearly, pragmatics and ILP have to be defined first.

#### ***1.2.3.1 Pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics defined.***

Pragmatics has been accused of having no clear-cut focus. Indeed, the term *pragmatics* was associated with the metaphor of “a garbage can” (Leech, 1983) for the attempts to define it did only gather the study elements not dealt with in the other disciplines. Nevertheless, all these attempts agree that it is concerned with the implied meaning i.e. the study of how we recognize what is meant even when it is not said (or written). Kasper (1997) states that a useful definition could be David Crystal’s (1985) that conceives pragmatics as:

[...] the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.  
(p. 240)

So, according to Kasper, pragmatics can be conceived as a systematic way of explaining language use in context bearing in mind that every context has a special meaning and it is the context which decides meaning. Furthermore, meaning is determined by the relative quality of language used and the intention of the S to the H. In other words, pragmatics concerns the study of what the S means by saying something and what the H understands when something is said. It is also concerned with how the S uses language in a particular context and how it is interpreted in the use of the same context.

Levinson (1983) holds a similar view. He defines pragmatics as “the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate.” (p. 24) He (2003), on the other hand, perceives it as “a discipline of interpretive science which is designed to understand utterances from a context-dependent point of view” (p. 3).

Although the previously presented definitions are useful, they do not differentiate pragmatics from the other social interactional approaches to language study. This is a good reason to define it in relation to its related notions as He (2013) proposes.

To start with, semantics and pragmatics are interrelated in the sense that semantics’ incapability to solve the problem of context of use paved the way to pragmatics. Levinson (1983) claims, “Pragmatics is the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in semantic theory” (p. 12). Leech (1983) states:

Meaning in pragmatics is defined relative to a speaker or user of the language, whereas meaning in semantics is defined purely as a property of expressions in a given language, in abstraction from particular situations, speakers, or hearers. (p. 15)

This means that pragmatics takes into account some meaning facets overlooked by semantics. It can be said that pragmatics is concerned with utterance meaning while semantics with sentence meaning.

Drawing the line between sentence and utterance is of crucial importance in understanding the concept of pragmatics. Essentially, a sentence is an abstract theoretical entity defined within grammar, while an utterance is an issuance of a sentence, a sentence analogue or sentence fragment, in an actual context. Context,

within the framework of pragmatics, is defined by Leech (1983) as “any background knowledge assumed to be shared by S (addresser) and H (addressee) and which contributes to his interpretation of what S means by a given utterance” (p. 13). In other words, pragmatics is the contribution of context to language understanding.

In addition to semantics, another discipline that is related to pragmatics is sociolinguistics. Pragmatics in its very origin is part of the sociolinguistic view, and this is demonstrated through the different models of communicative competence accounted for in the previous sub-section. As already shown, Canale and Swain’s (1981) framework consists of three components: grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. At first glance, this trinity suggests a relevant absence, which prompted Schachter (1990) to ask, “Where does pragmatics fit into the Canale and Swain framework? Is it assumed not to exist?” (p. 42). Here, a quick look at how sociolinguistic competence was operationalized in the project gives the answer. Because Sociolinguistic ability was defined by Canale and Swain as “the ability to produce and recognize socially appropriate language in context” (p. 14), it can be said that pragmatics was not overlooked the framework; it had just not yet come to its own name.

The aim of the present study is to investigate the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners’ constructive peer criticism competence (The ability to produce linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms). Since EFL learners are NNSs, defining ILP is a must. Kasper (1996) defines it as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge” (p. 145). In other words, it studies how NNSs understand and perform linguistic action in a TL, and how they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge. It is relatively new research area that SL researchers noticed from the studies of pragmatics.

### ***1.2.3.2 Pragmatic competence defined.***

Nowadays, the term *pragmatics* is broadly used in the fields of SLA and teaching, especially in reference to *pragmatic competence* as one of the abilities incorporated by the concept of communicative competence. As already discussed, the notion of pragmatic competence was defined by Chomsky (1980) as the “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use [of the language], in conformity with various purposes” (p. 224). The concept was seen in opposition to grammatical competence

which is, in Chomskyan terms, “the knowledge of form and meaning.” Again, as already explained, in a more contextualized fashion, Canale and Swain (1981) included pragmatic competence as one important component of their model of communicative competence. In this model, pragmatic competence was identified as sociolinguistic competence and defined as the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). Later on, Canale (1988) expands this definition, and states that pragmatic competence includes “illocutionary competence, or the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context” (p. 90).

In Bachman’s (1990) model of language competence; however, pragmatic competence is no longer subsumed “indirectly”. It is now a central component incorporating the ability to use the language to express a wide range of functions and interpret their illocutionary force in discourse according to the sociocultural context in which they are uttered. More recently, Rose (1999) proposes a working definition of pragmatic competence, which has been largely accepted by researchers in the field of ILP. He defines the concept as the ability to use available linguistic resources (pragmalinguistics) in a contextually appropriate fashion (sociopragmatics), that is, how to do things appropriately with words (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). In other words, pragmatic competence is defined in terms of the two components that it includes: pragmalinguistics and sociolinguistics. According to Kasper (1997), pragmalinguistics “includes strategies like directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts.” (p. 1). On the other hand, sociopragmatics refers to the social perception of communicative action.

The relationship between sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence in the development of L2 pragmatic competence has been addressed in several studies (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Barron, 2003; Rose, 2009). They mostly favored the precedence of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics instead of dealing with the reciprocity of the two pragmatic levels. For instance, Barron (2003) examines the development of Irish learners of German in producing the three speech acts of request, refusal, and offer. They found that the learners achieved great improvement in their pragmalinguistic competence, but little sociopragmatic

development. The participants' exposure to L2 input triggered some important developments in their use of routines, syntactic, and lexical downgraders. Yet, Chang (2011) asserts that the relationship between the two competences is a complex and interwoven one. Consequently, it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between them. Thus, any exploration of pragmatic variability should address the pragmalinguistic forms and strategies in relation to the sociopragmatic values and norms of language speakers.

### ***1.2.3.3 Factors determining the acquisition of interlanguage pragmatic competence.***

There are many factors that may influence the acquisition of IL pragmatic competence, namely: input, instruction, level of linguistic proficiency, length of stay in the TL culture in addition to L1 culture (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998). To start with, shortcomings pertaining to input may be found in academic materials such as textbooks or even instructors. Analysis of several textbooks reveals that speech acts are scarcely ever presented (Moradi, Karbalaeei, & Afraz, 2013); therefore, primarily using textbooks to teach students pragmatic information about a certain language may be ineffective. Furthermore, as far as the input provided by the instructor is concerned, instruction may be influenced by what s/he considers appropriate according to his/her understanding of the cultural norms of the TL (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998).

Another factor that influences pragmatic competence is the learner's level of linguistic proficiency. In spite of the fact that a limited amount of research has been done in this area, some studies show that advanced learners are more likely to perform a speech act that is considered more appropriate in a given context. Koike's (1996) study which aimed at evaluating the pragmatic knowledge of ESL and EFL learners from Hungary found that both groups of advanced learners were more pragmatically competent than intermediate ones. Besides, Bardovi-Harlig (1998) asserts that the longer the learner interacts with NSs or is immersed in a community of speakers of L2, the more pragmatically aware s/he becomes.

Last but not least, the area that has received the greatest attention in the literature pertaining to the factors that affect the speech acts' realization is the L1 and L1 culture. Kasper (as cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 2001) defines pragmatic transfer as "the use of L1 pragmatic knowledge to understand or carry out linguistic action in the L2" (p. 435) and explains that, in a language learning situation, a positive or negative transfer may



occur. A positive transfer occurs when the learner successfully communicates the message s/he is trying to convey because of a similarity between L1 and L2. A negative transfer, on the other hand, takes place when the learner incorrectly uses a speech act or opts to omit a speech act where it is needed based on his/her comparison of L1 and L2 (Bardovi-Harlig, 1998).

#### ***1.2.3.4 Pragmatic failure and L2 learning.***

The opposite of pragmatic competence is pragmatic failure. The term was firstly coined by Jenny Thomas in her article *Cross-cultural Pragmatic Failure* (1983). She argues that pragmatic failure refers to “the inability to understand what is meant by what is said” (Thomas, 1983: 22). Unfortunately, Thomas only tries to analyze what pragmatic failure is like and does not give a specific concept to define what pragmatic failure is. Many other scholars base their research on her analysis of pragmatic failure and supplement the definition of pragmatic failure. He (1988: 26), for example, argues that “pragmatic failure does not refer to the general wording and phrasing errors that appear in language use, but rather refers to the failure to reach the expected result because of speaking improperly, expressing ideas in unidiomatic way.” Qian (2002) defines pragmatic failure in a more specific way pointing out that “Pragmatic failure is committed when the speaker uses grammatically correct sentences, but unconsciously violates the interpersonal relationship rules, social conventions, or takes little notice of time, space and addressee.” (p. 2)

It is only from the perspective of L2 pedagogy that the importance of pragmatic accuracy and the severe consequences of pragmatic failure have begun to be systematically explored. Pragmatic failure has often been attributable to negative transfer from L1 (Kasper, 1992) or to overgeneralization of norms learned from instruction or exposure to L2 input. Tanaka (1988), for example, believes that Japanese ESL teachers may have strengthened the Japanese attitude that “Western communication tends to be generally relaxed and informal” (Loveday, 1986: 103). Although Japanese speakers usually vary their utterances well depending on social factors when they speak Japanese, Tanaka found that they did not vary their requests depending on social factors when they speak English. The reason behind that, as he speculated, is that Japanese ESL learners may have an inaccurate perception that English interaction is more egalitarian than it actually is.

When speakers with high levels of linguistic proficiency commit pragmatic errors, their L2 hearers may not detect the error at all but rather assume that the speaker understood the force of his utterance. Wolfson (1989a) notes, “Since linguistic competence is an aspect of communicative competence, people who have one are expected to have the other and are therefore held responsible for sociolinguistic violations in a way in which those with less ability to communicate would not be” (p. 149). For example, Russian (Thomas, 1984) and Polish (Wierzbicka, 1991) speakers of English are prone to overuse the imperative mood in commands and requests, but their hearers may simply assume they are domineering by nature.

#### ***1.2.3.5 Non-native speakers’ use of speech acts.***

Previous research in pragmatics shows that L2 learners’ speech act knowledge is incomplete (Ellis, 1994). Low proficiency learners, for example, tend to employ a rather narrow range of speech act realization strategies as well as mitigating devices (Scarcella, 1979). Moreover, they show several problems in varying their strategies according to context (Tanaka & Kawade, 1982; Ervin-Tripp, 1987). Research has also proved that even advanced learners do not acquire the full native-like pragmatic competence in terms of their comprehension as well as production of speech acts (e.g. Olshtain & Weinbach, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; House & Kasper, 1987). Their TL speech acts are often characterized by over-sensitivity to politeness and verbosity. As far as verbosity is concerned, it is used to put themselves on the safe side as response to the absence of the TL socio-pragmatic knowledge. This evidence suggests that L2 learners’ pragmatic competence tend to lag behind their linguistic competence.

As already emphasized, the consequences of pragmatic errors are more serious than the grammatical ones. The reason behind this is that NSs tend to treat NNSs’ pragmatic errors as offensive rather than indicating lack of knowledge as in the case of grammatical errors (Thomas, 1983; Kamimoto, 1993; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Tanaka, 1997; etc.). Wolfson (1989) and Boxer (1993) show that L2 learners’ distinctive pragmatic behavior may deprive them of the opportunity to interact with NSs. Consequently, they may receive less input and produce less output, which affects their L2 learning negatively.

Describing L2 learners' pragmatic behavior, Kasper (1992) assumes that general pragmatic knowledge is universally available. Moreover, he maintains that learners have full access to the same range of strategies to realize particular speech acts as do NSs and are also aware of various contextual constraints on a particular strategy choice. However, a number of associated factors may affect their performance. These include their lack of TL pragmalinguistic sophistication, L1 sociopragmatic negative transfer and over-generalization. TL learners may practice modality reduction under the pressure of spontaneous interaction (Kasper, 1982, 1984). In other words, they prioritize message clarity before face-work (Ellis, 1994).

In opposition to what ILP researchers often assume, Blum-Kulka (as cited in Ellis, 1994) asserts that L2 learners sometimes willfully resort to their L1 pragmatic norms because they may want to become competent TL users while maintaining their own cultural identity. The problem here, as Ellis (1994) brings out, is that while this view may be relevant to learners' sociopragmatic choices, it does not seem to apply to their pragmalinguistic ones. This is because as Thomas (1983) notes:

Sociopragmatic decisions are *social* (italics as in the original) before they are linguistic, and while foreign learners are fairly amenable to corrections they regard as linguistic, they are justifiably sensitive about having their social ... judgement called into question. (p. 104)

This might mean that L2 learners may not always choose to target NS' norms.

#### ***1.2.3.6 Speech acts, politeness, and pragmatic competence.***

Speech acts, politeness and pragmatic competence are in a way or in another interrelated. The evidence of a speech act's role in pragmatic competence can be reflected in its communicative nature. This is because the sociocultural context of an utterance determines the actual grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic entities of the speech act. Each of these systems contributes to the overall communicative process. The grammatical system concerns interdependent linguistic fields such as syntax, phonology, and lexicon/morphology. The semantic system concerns itself with the individual messages and their meanings, or interpretations, as they relate to one another. Finally, there is the pragmatic system. The speaker chooses from a set of linguistic forms to express him/herself. These linguistic forms may be expressed by particular

speech acts in the speaker's attempt to convey a particular message to the hearer. The amalgamation of these systems is governed by cultural rules and expectations, establishing organization schemes and order in that society (Koike, 1992). If the speaker is not aware of these rules and expectations, he will not be able to convey the degree of politeness s/he wishes to express as politeness is a phenomenon that directly reflects the norms of a community.

When it comes to L2 speakers, the problem arises because pragmatic competence develops neither the same way as grammatical competence nor the same way as L1 pragmatic competence. The reason behind that is that it depends on context and context is culture-bound. Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996) assert that SL pragmatic acquisition is "second culture acquisition". Research on pragmatics' acquisition shows that even ESL learners, who are surrounded by sufficient linguistic and cultural input, find it quite difficult to achieve native-like levels of pragmatic competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005; Cohen, 2008). For EFL ones, who have neither adequate input nor practice opportunities, the challenge grows greater and hence instruction on pragmatics becomes indispensable. Therefore, the next sub-section is concerned with pragmatic instruction and assessment.

### **1.3 Pragmatic Instruction and Assessment**

In spite of the fact that pragmatics is strongly established as a critical research area in L1 development, it has long been a neglected one in L2 research. Indeed, pragmatics is a relatively new emphasis in L2 language pedagogy. Hurley (1992) notices that there is no evidence available yet as whether pragmatic instruction is beneficial for L2 learners or not. Although theories and techniques for teaching oral communication and language functions have been developing over the last forty years, there are still many unresolved issues concerning the application of pragmatic norms to classroom instruction. The effectiveness, procedures as well as approaches of pragmatic instruction are rather controversial in nature.

As it appears from its title, the present section is further divided into two sub-sections: pragmatic instruction and pragmatic assessment. The first sub-section begins with an overview of some theoretical frameworks in SLA such as the Input Hypothesis and the Noticing Hypothesis. It then moves to discuss the relationship between learning

contexts and L2 pragmatic development. Next, it briefly outlines functional language teaching, Littlewood's Model of Language Learning, and the content of pragmatic instruction. Finally, this sub-section scrutinizes pragmatic development in relation to the "explicit-implicit" teaching dichotomy. The second sub-section is concerned with pragmatic assessment. It provides a background on ILP assessment and highlights some problems in the assessment of pragmatic competence.

### **1.3.1 Instruction and L2 pragmatic development.**

The study of L2 pragmatic development has been widely neglected in ILP though developmental issues are also a principal research goal of ILP. The reason behind this shortage of developmental research is that ILP research originally derives its theoretical considerations, research questions as well as methods from cross-cultural pragmatics rather than from SLA (Kasper, 1992). This section mainly reviews studies of NNSs' use of speech acts and their developmental patterns. It then discusses the role of input in L2 pragmatic development. The role of input is addressed in terms of learning contexts and instruction.

#### ***1.3.1.1 The Input Hypothesis.***

Input plays a vital role in the process of SL and FL learning. Therefore, a considerable amount of research has been devoted to explore the nature its processing. Researchers in SLA have always attempted to answer questions such as: How is input processed during TL acquisition? How is it incorporated into learners' IL systems? What are the different facilitative attributes of input? How much input is necessary for learning to take place? etc. Now, it becomes clear that defining the term *input* is a must before attempting to approach how input is processed. Allwright and Bailey (1991: 20) perceive input as "the language the learners hear or read—that is the language sample to which they are exposed". Similar to them, Sharwood (1994: 167) thinks that input as "the potentially processible language data which are made available, by chance or by design to the learners". Simply, input is the language to which the learner is exposed.

Krashen (1985) in his Input Hypothesis claims that for learning to take place, SL input needs to be understood. That is why the term comprehensible input is a key element in Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The rationale behind this is that, by simplifying input, it becomes more comprehensible and this, in turn, facilitates the cognitive

demands on the learners' part and enables them to pay more attention to forms in the input that are not part of their current IL systems and thereby acquire more language (Krashen, 1985). Therefore, according to the Input Hypothesis, the learner improves and progresses along the "natural order" when s/he receives SL input that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence. So, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when s/he is exposed to a "comprehensible input" that belongs to level "i+1". Since not all the learners can be at the same level of linguistic competence at the same time, Krashen (1985) suggests that "natural communicative input" is the key to designing a syllabus. This way ensures that each learner will receive some "i+1" input that is appropriate for her/his current stage of linguistic competence.

A question that comes to light here is whether all the available language (data) the learner is exposed to can be absorbed by him/her and later converted from input into intake (elements of the input that are noticed by the learner and become available for acquisition). At this point, it becomes necessary to turn the spotlight to the discussion over the mechanisms and processes that are responsible for converting input to intake. Actually, the term intake was first introduced by Corder (1967). It means the language that is available to and used by the learners in order to promote TL acquisition. In his pioneering paper about how input is perceived in the process of L2 acquisition, Corder (1967) discusses the notion of input and states that:

The simple fact of presenting a certain linguistic form to a learner in the classroom does not necessarily qualify it for the status of input, for the reason that input is "what goes in" not what is available for going in, and we may reasonably suppose that it is the learner who controls input or more precisely his intake. (p. 161)

It then becomes clear that for Corder, not all available data in the learner's environment can be absorbed and used in TL acquisition. Chaudron (1985) proposes a model that explains the process of input-intake conversion. The model comprises three essential intake stages. The first stage is labeled the preliminary intake where the input is perceived. The second stage represents the recoding and encoding of the semantic information into long term memory. The third stage is the intake where learners fully integrate and incorporate the linguistic information available in the input into their developing grammars.

The main idea in Chaudron's (1985) model of input-intake processing is that first, a neural-based and bottom-up signal processing takes place. At this stage, auditory detectors receive speech or visual signals as neural impulses and analyze them according to constraints involved in the detectors. Second, the received input is then analyzed and stored in short-term memory. The linguistic rules and other knowledge systems can then be called upon from the long-term memory to be interpreted and synthesized into phoneme and word strings. Once the surface structures fade in short-term memory, more abstract representation of the speech, through rehearsal and recoding, is retained in long-term memory. During this phase, processing operates both in a bottom-up and top-down manner. In fact, in this input-comprehending phase, a continuous interaction and exchange is taking place in working memory. So, once comprehension takes place in the first two intake stages, ultimately learners may move to the last stage where their IL grammar is restructured and developed.

It seems that Chaudron's (1985) model is in line with both Krashen's (1982) and Kasper's (1982) views. Both of them assert that by the comprehending input, learners may notice the gap that exists in their current IL grammar using their L2 competence and extra linguistic knowledge. For Krashen (1982), the (*i*) and the (*i*+1) presented in the input would become the materials that trigger their next step of development. This gap once noticed by the learners would pave the way to their innate language acquisition device to use these new materials to formulate IL rules and perform hypothesis-testing. Finally, learners' output and the feedback they receive will be used to test, confirm or revise the rules before they are definitely incorporated into the learners' IL grammar.

### ***1.3.1.2 Input in the EFL context.***

Pragmatic competence is likely to be developed when providing learners with sufficient and adequate input for their cognitive process to turn input into intake and implicit knowledge (Ellis, 1994). This means that the input to which learners are exposed is determinant in terms of both quality and quantity. If we take the learning context into consideration, SL learners are in advantageous position compared with FL ones in terms of contact opportunities with the TL. FL learners' input mainly comes from the classroom where three main sources of input can be distinguished: the teacher, the materials, and the peers.

The first source of input (teacher talk) has been considered as language that is generally simplified and adapted to the learners needs. Trosborg (1995) states that this adapted or “easified” language is characterized by a simple register, short utterances, and no ungrammatical speech. Though teachers are the models that provide their learners with different pragmatic aspects such as accurate use of formulaic expressions, appropriate use of linguistic forms depending on social parameters, use of the rules of politeness, etc., many studies have revealed that the teacher talk as input is hardly favorable for developing pragmatic competence in the classroom. It is a matter of fact that most of the time, teachers, who are considered as models for their learners; do not really master all the aspects of the pragmatic competence of the TL. Therefore, teachers have to join teacher-training programs to be aware of the importance of their talk (Kasper, 1997b; Bardovi-Harlig, 1992, 1996, 2001).

Consequently, in the FL context, it is essential to use adequate materials that help learners develop their pragmatic competence. Bardovi-Harlig (1996: 34) states that “it is important that learners observe native speakers in action”. Nunan (1997) also argues that exposing learners to authentic texts is important because of the rich language provided by these materials. In fact, the introduction of spontaneous speech captured in authentic data is likely to develop the underlying strategies of speech behavior. The advantage of such materials is that they provide a link of classroom language learning with language usage outside the classroom in real life contexts.

### ***1.3.1.3 The Noticing Hypothesis.***

The role of conscious and unconscious processes in FL or SL learning has been controversial in applied linguistics. Since Schmidt (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995) puts forward the Noticing Hypothesis, the concept has been widely discussed in SLA. Unlike Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985), Schmidt assumes that input alone, be it comprehensible or not, is insufficient to facilitate the acquisition of L2. The Noticing Hypothesis claims that for acquisition to take place, learners must consciously notice forms (and also the meanings that these forms realize) in the input. The Noticing Hypothesis as founded by Schmidt (1995: 20) states that “what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning” and available for further mental processing. According to Schmidt, intake is the language material that aids acquisition and is that part of the input that the learner notices. Noticing, however, is not seen as guaranteeing



acquisition. It is only “the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input to intake for learning” (Schmidt, 1994: 17). In other words, noticing enables learners to process forms in their short-term memory but does not guarantee that they will be incorporated into their developing IL.

Ellis’ (1997) model helps clarify Schmidt’s hypothesis and the role of noticing in L2 acquisition.

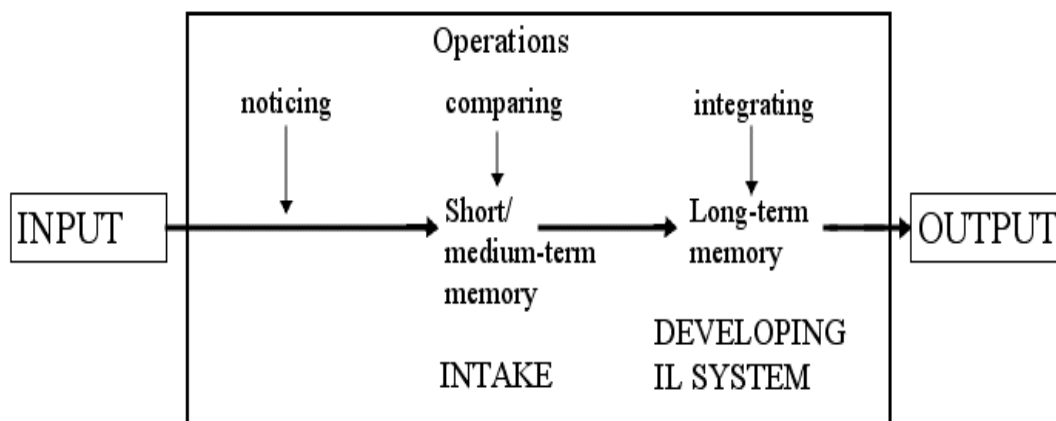


Figure 3 *The Process of Learning Implicit Knowledge* (Ellis, 1997: 119)

Ellis’ (1997) model is based on current theories of L2 acquisition. It is made up of two main stages involved in the process of input becoming implicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge is easily accessible and can be consciously analyzed. It is memory-based rather than rule-based. It manifests in naturally occurring linguistic behavior and cannot be easily accessed separately from it (Ellis, 1990). The first stage in the model represented in Figure 3 above consists of input becoming intake. At this stage, learners notice language features in the input, absorb them into their short-term memories, and compare them to features produced as output. As far as short-term memory is concerned, Kihlstrom (1984) suggests that consciousness and short-term memory are basically the same and that language features must first be processed in short-term memory before they can be stored in long-term memory. He adds that features that are not processed into short-term memory or not further encoded into long-term memory from short-term memory are likely to be lost. At the second stage, intake is absorbed into the learner’s IL system. Changes to this IL system only occur when language features become part of the long-term memory.

As already said, the Noticing Hypothesis has acknowledged the role of consciousness in language learning and argues that learners must first consciously “notice”, that is, demonstrate a conscious apprehension and awareness of particular forms in the input before any subsequent processing of that form can happen. That is, noticing is a necessary condition for the conversion of input to intake for learning (Leow, 1997). In fact, The Noticing Hypothesis is concerned with the initial phase of input processing and the attentional conditions required for input (the L2 data available in the learner’s environment) to become intake (the subset of the input that the learner appropriates to build his/her IL) (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Noticing and understanding are defined by Kasper and Rose (2002) as follows:

Noticing is defined as the ‘conscious registration of the occurrence of some event’. It refers to surface level phenomena and item learning; understanding is implied ‘the recognition of some general principle, rule, or pattern’. It refers to deeper level(s) of abstraction related to (semantic, syntactic, or communicative) meaning, system learning. (p.21)

Based on Schmidt (1993), Rosa and Leow (2004) note that the only material that can be taken in is that which the individual is aware of. To account for item learning versus system leaning, Schmidt (1993) posits two levels of awareness: awareness at the levels of noticing and understanding.

This view has been disproved by Tomlin and Villa (1994), whose fine-grained model of attention made detection (i.e. attention without any crucial role for awareness) is the first step towards language development. Tomlin and Villa (1994) argue that while awareness may enhance input processing, its presence is not required. Robinson (1995) incorporates both Schmidt’s and Tomlin and Villa’s attentional postulations into his model by assuming that noticing included detection and rehearsal in short-term memory. According to Robinson (1995), the concept of noticing can be defined as “detection plus rehearsal in short-term memory, prior to encoding in long-term memory” (p. 296). He views awareness as the “function of the interpretation of the nature of the encoding and retrieval processes required by the task” (p. 301) and “not only critical to noticing but also distinguishing noticing from simple detection” (p. 298). By placing noticing further along the acquisitional process than detection, Robinson (1995) agrees with Schmidt (1993) that lack of awareness inhibits learning.

A few published classroom-based studies showed empirical support for the facilitative effects of awareness on FL behavior and accordingly for Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995). Examples of these studies include Alanen (1995), Leow (1997), Rosa and O'Neil (as cited in Leow, 2000) and Rosa (1999). Leow's (1997) mixed-methods study addressed the role of awareness in relation to Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis in SLA. It analyzed both think-aloud protocols produced by 28 beginning adult L2 learners of Spanish completing a problem-solving task and their immediate performances on 2 post-exposure assessment tasks, a recognition and a written production task. Findings showed that different levels of awareness resulted in differences in processing and that more awareness led to more recognition and accurate written production of noticed forms. These findings are evidence of the facilitate effects of awareness on FL behavior.

In another Leow's (2000) mixed-methods study, effects of awareness on 32 adult L2 learners' subsequent intake and written production of target Spanish morphological forms were investigated. Findings revealed that learners who demonstrated awareness of the targeted morphological forms during the experimental exposure produced more of these noticed forms in writing significantly when compared to the group that demonstrated a lack of such awareness. The findings supported the claim that awareness plays a crucial role in subsequent processing of L2 data.

Schmidt (1993) extends his postulate of consciousness and learning to the field of ILP by focusing on the ways consciousness may be involved in learning the principles of pragmatics in L2. He thinks that the role of awareness in L2 learning can also relevant for the learning of pragmatics. Schmidt (2001: 30) observes that "in order to acquire pragmatics, one must attend to both the linguistic forms of utterances and the relevant social and contextual features with which they are associated." He raised four points which can be summarized as follows: First, learners need to notice both the specific relevant pragmalinguistic and contextual features of an event in order to motivate encoding. Second, attention to input is an essential condition for any learning to take place, and that what must be attended to is not input in general, but whatever features of input play a role in the system to be learned. Third, consciously paying attention to linguistic features of the input and trying to analyze their significance in terms of deeper generalizations both have extremely facilitative effects on L2 pragmatic

behavior. Forth, simple exposure to sociolinguistically appropriate input is likely to be insufficient.

According to Schmidt's (1993) framework, awareness and attention are inseparable. Schmidt concludes that "for the learning of pragmatics in a second language, attention to linguistic forms, functional meanings, and the relevant contextual features is required" (p.35). He claims that learners experience their learning, that attention is subjectively experienced as noticing and that the attentional basis for noticing is the same as the basis for learning.

In pragmatics, Schmidt (1995) applies his distinction between noticing and understanding to pragmatics. Schmidt (as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2002) maintains that:

In pragmatics, awareness that on a particular occasion someone says to their interlocutor something like, "I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but if you have time could you look at this problem?" is a matter of noticing. Relating the various forms used to their strategic development in the service of politeness and recognizing their co-occurrence with elements of context such as social distance, power, level of imposition and so on, are all matters of understanding. (p. 27)

Schmidt (2001) states that "the objects of attention and noticing are elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input-instance of language, rather than any abstract rules or principles of which such instances may be exemplars" (p. 5). In addition, Schmidt (2001) claims that "most discussions concerning the role of attention in L2 development focus exclusively on morphology and syntax, although a few have dealt with lexical learning and pragmatic development" (p. 6-7). Likewise, Koike and Pearson (2005) argue that "since the majority of focus-on-form studies address grammatical development, more research is needed on the effect of focus-on-form and pragmatic development" (p. 483).

An enormous growing body of research has adopted Schmidt's (1993, 1995, 2001) Noticing Hypothesis about how input becomes intake (e.g., Schmidt & Forta, 1986; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Kasper, 2000, 2001; Rose & Ng, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Takahashi, 2005, 2010a; Narita, 2012; Mahani, 2012) Moreover, results obtained by many researchers (e.g., Fukuya & Clark, 2001; Silva, 2003; Takshashi,

2005) in the field of ILP studies supported Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis as they all illustrated how learning can be promoted by having the learners notice the specific target language features as a result of instruction. As Kasper and Rose (2002) state, "considering its demonstrated potential as a major theoretical foundation of second language learning, it is our prediction that cognitive theory will remain a key approach to explain interlanguage pragmatic development" (p. 61). As a matter of fact, most instructional ILP studies adopted the view of the Noticing Hypothesis as their theoretical framework.

Adopting differing theoretical beliefs, debates continue about the Noticing Hypothesis in the general field of cognitive psychology. Some researchers claim that it has earned its wide support on the basis of assumptions and instincts rather than on validated findings of exhaustive experimental research. Truscott (1998) along with Zhisheng (2008), for instance, assert that the case of noticing is vital for L2 learning remains unresolved and that it is a source of huge confusion. Therefore, they call for further empirical studies in this respect. Other researchers, however; such as Carr and Curran (1994) in addition to Tomlin and Villa (1994) suggest dividing awareness and learning as their relationship is notoriously elusive as they claim. Also, Truscott (1998), who equates noticing with conscious awareness, argues that noticing alone does not necessarily mean that learners inevitably acquire language. Rather, the hypothesis advocates that noticing, be it conscious or subconscious, is a necessary departing point for attainment. Indeed, Schmidt (1993, 1995, 2001) and Leow (2000) argue that noticing is vital in triggering the cognitive processes and this leads to L2 learning. Schmidt (1990) provides an operational definition for noticing by stating that it is the "cognitive operation that takes place both during and immediately after exposure to the input that is available for self-report." (p. 132). Nonetheless, with only a limited empirical research conducted on the role of noticing in L2 acquisition, some researchers question the foundations of the Noticing Hypothesis in cognitive psychology. Truscott (1998), for example, challenges this strong view of the hypothesis and prefers its weaker version which claims that noticing is helpful but might not be necessary or vital for learning and acquisition. He even goes further suggesting a reformulation of the hypothesis that narrowed down its strong version. He advocates that noticing is merely tied to the acquisition of metalinguistic knowledge but not to the development of communicative competence. Furthermore, Terrell (1991) and Taguchi (2005), for

example, also oppose the view which holds that metalinguistic knowledge can lead to developed comprehension, which will then assist in the improvement of competence.

Moreover, Carr and Curran (1994) and Leow (2001) indicate that attention and noticing are more or less synonymous that one cannot distinguish between paying attention to something and noticing it. Schmidt (1995) notes that although not all learning is intentional, yet all learning requires attention. He maintains that “attention is crucial to learning by which knowledge has mental representations, whether it is gained incidentally or intentionally (p. 8). This claim is supported by both psychology and cognitive science in terms of memory retention, automaticity of retrieval and use. It is stated that attention is a necessary and sufficient condition for encoding in long-term memory to occur (Chun & Turk-Browne, 2007). Taking the same stance, McLaughlin (1990) states that the literature in experimental psychology shows that long-term learning of new materials cannot be achieved without awareness as an essential departing point, but not sole condition.

Keeping with the same views, Truscott (1998) argues that the Noticing Hypothesis fails to provide conclusive findings from experimental research in attention to indicate that language acquisition requires what is more than global awareness of input, saying that that hypothesis is “too vague to offer any principled means of determining what learners must notice” (p. 110). He adds that proponents of the Noticing Hypothesis fail to show that learning requires conscious attention to particular details or information to be learnt, rather than attending to the task or the situation that is the source embodying those details or information (Truscott, 1998). Nonetheless, it has been concluded that overall conscious learning seems to contribute to successful L2 development (Long, 1983, 1990; Ellis, 1990).

To sum up, Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis provides a framework for examining the effects of instruction in pragmatics. It claims that the mere exposure to input is likely to be insufficient for the development of pragmatic competence. Schmidt (1993, 2001) maintains that during the input, pragmatic aspects are not salient for learners. Therefore, pedagogical intervention is a must to facilitate the development of learners’ pragmatic competence.

#### ***1.3.1.4 Input enhancement.***

It is worth mentioning that it was Sharwood (1985) who advances the concept of awareness in language instruction. He modifies it later and calls it *input enhancement*. Given the importance of noticing to the process of acquisition in directing the learners' attention to language forms and features, Sharwood's (1991, 1993) Input Enhancement has been under investigation as an approach that is consistent with noticing in raising the learners' awareness (Dastjerdi & Farshid, 2011; Norouzian & Eslami, 2016). Sharwood (1991) states that input enhancement is "the process by which language input becomes salient to the learner" (p. 119), to direct him/her to how the language system works. Leow (2007) provides a broader definition of input enhancement by referring to it as "any effort to draw learners' attention to certain language features" (p. 38) whether this selective attention on the learners' part should be handled reactively (Doughty & Williams, 1998) or proactively (Ellis, 2001). Polio (2007) offers a narrower definition by saying that input enhancement is a process in which teachers, materials designers and developers visually enhance materials by coloring, boldfacing, italicizing, underlining, capitalizing, etc. to highlight certain aspects and features in the input. Highlighting L2 target forms cannot be done typographically only but intonationally too. Such implicit ways of letting learners notice the input can be used as an implicit type of instruction for the teaching of pragmatics. In general, input enhancement is about bringing the TL features to the focal attention of L2 learners where certain language features are attended to, and therefore; they become ready for internalization from the input.

#### ***1.3.1.5 Learning contexts and L2 pragmatic development.***

Studies have shown that the learning environment (learning context or learning opportunities) influences learners' pragmatic development (Cai & Wang, 2013). Indeed, evidence of the superiority of SL settings to FL ones in terms of developing learners' pragmatic competence has been confirmed by previous research on the effects of learning contexts. Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) study finds that Japanese learners in the EFL context made use of their NL when performing refusals far more frequently than their counterparts in the ESL context. Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei's (1998) investigation shows a higher rate of pragmatic awareness for Hungarian ESL learners than for EFL learners. Furthermore, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1993) one-

year longitudinal study of academic advising sessions suggests a correlation between the learners' lengths of stay in the TL environment and their competence in carrying out suggestions and rejections. Barron's (2002) study also finds that Irish learners of German as a FL produced offer-refusal exchanges that approximate the TL after just a few months of stay in Germany, thus adding evidence of the advantages of SL contexts.

Bialystok's (1993, 1994) Two-Dimensional Model of L2 Proficiency Development is relevant to disclose the advantages of the SL context. Bialystok claims that in order for L2 learners to acquire pragmatics, they must develop control in processing input. This can be done only through continuous practice. It can be argued that the SL context may provide learners with more opportunities for both obtaining the TL pragmatic input and practicing it. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) argue that learning a language outside the TL environment does not seem to facilitate both contextual familiarity and acquisition of the TL patterns required for learners to approximate the TL behavior. Additionally, learning a language outside the TL environment does not seem to provide learners with sufficient opportunities for engaging in interaction, and thus in practicing what they have learnt.

In contrast to the superiority of SL contexts found in the studies reported above, Niezgoda and Rover (2001) and Rover (2001) provide another perspective on the relationship between learning contexts and pragmatic development. In an attempt to test the findings of Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei's (1998) study, Niezgoda and Rover attempt to investigate the inevitability of the environmental effect and the possibility of having it superseded by other factors such as learners' proficiency. On a pragmatic error-rating task, they compared the performance of two groups: ESL learners from various NL backgrounds and Czech EFL learners. The EFL group included English teacher trainees that had passed a highly competitive entrance exam into the university English program making an "elite" sample. The ESL group outperformed the EFL one in terms of pragmatic awareness. These results are in line with those of the previous studies. It is noteworthy that the EFL group that took part in this study matched Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei's ESL group more closely than their EFL one. This result suggests, as Niezgoda and Rover propose, the little effect of the learning context. Niezgoda and Rover (2001) are also aware that their findings might have been influenced by some methodological problems such as test effect. Nevertheless, their study still implies that a high level of pragmatic awareness can be attained if learners



are highly motivated and well instructed even though FL contexts may offer limited opportunities for L2 pragmatic development.

A similar implication is suggested in Rover (2001, cited in Kasper & Rose, 2002) who finds that learners' L2 proficiency affects their pragmatic development more than the learning environments do. Rover's study shows that the most proficient learners who had not stayed in the TL environment approximately followed the NSs in their ability to comprehend the TL pragmatic routines. This finding brings up that these learners' EFL instruction was effective in raising their awareness of comprehending the TL implicatures (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

### ***1.3.1.6 The Context of speech-act instruction.***

A challenge faced in the development of pragmatic instruction is the disadvantageous effect that classroom discourse has on language development. Strong evidence of this comes from a study conducted by Kasper (1989a) which compares the features of educational discourse (teacher-mediated FL classroom) with non-educational discourse (dyadic face-to-face conversations). Considerable differences were found between the two settings with respect to the occurrence and application of opening and closing sequences as well as the use of gambits. In general, the discourse features of the classroom contexts seemed to be reduced both qualitatively and quantitatively when compared to non-classroom contexts. Kasper confirms that traditional frontal teaching prevents the acquisition of the lexicalized gambits that characterize the regulation of natural interaction.

Moreover, after examining the developmental trends of 410 requests produced by two child learners in an ESL classroom over 21-month period, Ellis (1992) finds that their request performance improved, but they did not develop a broad linguistic repertoire for realizing their requests. They instead relied abundantly on formulaic, direct and mood-derivable requests, rather than the indirect strategies preferred by NSs and advanced NNSs of English. Ellis assumes that the learners did not acquire the ability to encode social meaning (i.e. use politeness strategies). In other words, they did not accommodate their requests with different addressees. The author suggests that this might be repaired by drawing the learners' attention to encoded social meaning.

In addition to Ellis (1992), Koike (1989) also investigates the deficiencies in the politeness levels of requests produced by American FL students. She asked beginning Spanish students to write the words they would use to ask the teacher for a glass of water. She found that even though the students had already studied polite request formulae, 60% of them used less polite request forms (i.e., command forms). In another study conducted by Phillips (1993) with advanced French students, findings showed that only 22% of the subjects used the conditional mood in two request tasks although they were better at using other politeness strategies. While poor grammatical competence might justify the disuse of the conditional in Koike's (1989) study of beginners, it seems that is not the case in Phillips' (1993) study of advanced learners. The textbooks' and teachers' tendency to use the imperative mood, as Phillips speculated, may have made students less sensitive to use conditional verbs in polite conversation.

The previously mentioned studies indicate that classroom discourse influences pragmatic development in instructional contexts. A characteristic of classroom discourse is the stability of social roles. This reduces the learners' natural pressure to be polite to avoid offence and affirm solidarity. These limitations may be overcome by explicit focus on appropriateness/politeness (Widdowson, 1992).

### ***1.3.1.7 The tradition of functional language teaching.***

Since functional language teaching is the predecessor of pragmatic instruction as both have placed an extensive emphasis on the development of speech-act competence (Halliday, 1975), it is necessary to review its tradition. Although functional language teaching has left a tremendous impact on modern instructional methodology (Flowerdew, 1988) and many teachers have adopted it as the main organizing principle of syllabi (Wilkins, 1976), there is yet no empirical evidence that notional/functional syllabi are superior to structural ones as a means of promoting communicative ability (Krahnke, 1987). Cook (1991) observes that there is a gap in research pertaining to functional syllabi, especially in comparison to structural studies of language development. She states:

While there are many lists of communicative functions for teaching and many accounts of the gaps that L1 children and L2 learners have in their knowledge, hardly any research has dealt with the crucial relationship

between such descriptions and the actual processes of L2 learning, vital as this is to its teaching application. (p. 48)

Cook (1985) describes three general types of knowledge necessary for functional competence. These types bear some similarities to the components of pragmatic knowledge proposed by Faerch and Kasper (1984). These types of knowledge are:

1. A set of language functions for use in the SL
2. A set of ways of realizing and interpreting language functions (The literal meaning of the words that are commonly used to perform functions often varies considerably from their use in context.)
3. A set of situational factors and sequential factors affecting the choice of function and realization (A speaker's decision to select a particular utterance to perform a certain function is based upon his consideration of several features in the social situation.)

FLT has been criticized because of its overemphasis on formulae and phrases (i.e., superficial pragmalinguistic knowledge) and ignorance of underlying illocutionary meaning and situational factors. Tarone and Yule (1989) assert that FLT is principally strategic in nature. They state:

The focus is upon teaching students how to get a given general meaning across, with minimal attention paid either to sociolinguistic nuances, or to the implications of choosing, for example, a more formal or a less formal linguistic expression which might get the same general meaning across. (p. 92)

Pragmatic competence encompasses the three types of knowledge described by Cook (1985) and more explicitly deals with the external and internal influences on speech act performance. Cook acknowledges that the third type of functional knowledge (i.e. situational and sequential factors) is the most difficult to teach, but she does not seem pessimistic about the prospect of modifying current approaches to incorporate this area. Her small-scale studies of greeting, thanking, and leave-taking provide a clear example of the importance of this type of knowledge. For example, she found that learners always understood the need to express thanks (type 1 knowledge), and they quickly learned formulae for expressing them (type 2), but they are much less aware of when to use "thank you" and when to use "thanks" (type 3). She concluded

that “the chief learning problem is in fact the interaction between functions, realizations (i.e. utterances), and situational factors” (p. 193). This latter type of knowledge is essentially pragmatic in nature, and it is often omitted from language teaching.

#### ***1.3.1.8 Pragmatic development and Littlewood’s Model of Language Learning.***

William Littlewood’s (1992) cognitively-based model of SL learning is among the few that can be used to explain pragmatic development because, unlike most current models of language development, this model concentrates on pragmatic learning rather than grammatical learning. Moreover, it gives guidelines for pragmatic instruction. Littlewood’s performance-oriented model of language learning is based on hierarchical skill-development, and his major premise is that part-skills should be learned prior to the development of holistic competence. The following are its main aspects:

1. Learners have to become aware of the key features of the target performance, so that they can create the mental plans which are necessary for producing it themselves.
2. They have to practice converting these plans into actual behavior, so that in due course, the lower-level plans can operate automatically in response to higher-level decisions.
3. They must learn to start from a higher-level plan (e.g., an idea or a reaction) and select lower-level plans which are appropriate for carrying it out.

Furthermore, Littlewood’s model is methodologically helpful as it provides guidelines for pragmatic instruction. Littlewood (1992) suggests that initially functional/social meanings be practiced first (Repetitive exercises that are controlled by the teacher). Gradually, these can be expanded into role-playing tasks that may be open-ended enough to allow the learners to create their own meaning within certain limits. This perspective seems well suited to the teaching of constructive criticisms. Littlewood (as cited in Morrow, 1995) asserts that implicit in this model is the notion that part-skills could include pragmatic norms as well as more conventional linguistic information (e.g., functional phrases and techniques of mitigation and aggravation).

#### ***1.3.1.9 The content of pragmatic instruction.***

The content of pragmatic instruction cannot be described relying on generalizations as the communicative needs of TL learners vary so much. A great number of authors have regretted the tendency of speech-act materials and instruction

which is relying totally on NSs' intuition to account for the realizations and uses of language functions (e.g. Wolfson, 1989b; Kasper, 1990; Olshtain & Cohen, 1991). Although Takahashi and Beebe (1987), among others, promote descriptive research as a basis for establishing empirical norms for pragmatic instruction, few attempts have been made to translate such findings to the classroom. Furthermore, Widdowson (1992) argues that intracultural variation and the specificity of pragmatic norms may make pragmatic information less relevant for learners.

In addition to NSs' intuitions and descriptive research, some instructors use the patterns of negative pragmatic transfer from L1 as content for instruction. There are three major types of pragmatic differences, as Cook (1989) describes: obvious differences, deceptive differences, and hidden differences. The most serious of these are the deceptive differences that occur when an utterance has a completely different meaning in L1 and L2 (e.g., "I will do my best" might mean "no" in Japanese). To learn hidden differences, learners have to be sensitive to features that they usually consider meaningless (e.g., gestures). This type is the hardest to learn.

#### ***1.3.1.10 Methodologies of pragmatic instruction.***

Literature on acquisitional pragmatics consists of few methodologies of pragmatic instruction that are either analytic or synthetic in nature, using Wilkin's (1976) terms to describe language syllabi. The main difference between the two schools of thought is that analytic methods rely on inductive identification of pragmatic patterns, while synthetic ones emphasize student acquisition of norms that are prescribed by the instructor.

Tarone and Yule's (1989) model is an example of analytic speech-act instruction models. They endorse a learner-as-ethnographer method that focuses on the analysis of transcribed dialogues that students audio-tape themselves. Tarone and Yule recommend that teachers start by having students identify the types of interaction they would like to study. Then, students tape-record speech samples featuring either NSs or themselves and NSs. Next, students listen to and transcribe the recordings in class. Finally, reflection upon the data is encouraged as students attempt to answer questions such as: What are the roles of the participants? What, in the lexicon, grammar, or phonology, gives you clues to the answers to these questions? etc.

It is clear that Tarone and Yule (1989) insist on the indirect way of teaching pragmatics. They claim, “Because the knowledge which must be mastered (that is, sociolinguistic competence) is so complex, and because so much of it operates below the level of consciousness, we have argued that it is best taught indirectly” (p. 102).

Supporting Tarone and Yule’s (1989) technique of learner-as-ethnographer but viewing it as accessory aspect to functional language use, Widdowson (1992) advocates a more reflective approach to speech-act instruction. His approach is based on increasing learners’ sensitivity to socio-cultural norms through conducting pragmatic consciousness-raising activities separately from (but parallel with) a course which emphasizes practical ability in a language. Hurley (as cited in Morrow, 1995) asserts that Widdowson’s rationale for placing less emphasis on socio-cultural appropriateness is that authentic pragmatic development usually occurs later when learners are actually immersed in the TL community

In addition to analytic approaches to speech-act instruction, there are others that are rather synthetic in nature. Hurley (1992) divides these further into those which stress cognitive learning (i.e. knowledge oriented) and those which consider practice as a means of achieving proficiency. He assumes that the cognitive approach which makes learners consciously aware of pragmatic norms and strategies would be successful for teaching pragmatics. He, however, acknowledges that his assumption needs to be tested. Olshtain and Cohen (1991) adopt the cognitive approach and put forward techniques for teaching the speech act of apologizing. In doing so, they propose five major activities that are applicable to other speech acts. These are:

1. The teacher carries out a diagnostic assessment of the learners’ pre-existing level of awareness of the particular speech act to be taught.
2. S/he uses natural model dialogues to focus attention on linguistic information (i.e., formulaic expressions) and relevant situational factors.
3. S/he has students practice evaluating the speech-act situation. This can be accomplished by presenting them with situations and asking them to decide if the violation requiring the apology is severe or mild, for instance.
4. S/he has his/her students act out the speech acts through role-play activities. At this stage, the students should get sufficient information about the interlocutors to make the communication as contextualized as possible.

5. The teacher provides feedback on the students' performance with special attention on negative and positive transfer from the L1 to the L2.

#### ***1.3.1.11 Explicit and implicit teaching approaches.***

In instructed SLA, discussions over the benefits of explicit versus implicit teaching approaches have always occupied much debate. Indeed, one of the underlying issues to be addressed in the design of interventional studies is the choice of the explicit or implicit approach. These approaches are differentiated by the presence (explicit) or absence (implicit) of metapragmatic information as part of the input (Alcon-Soler & Martinez Flor, 2008). To date, most instructional ILP studies have adopted an explicit approach to teaching pragmatics (e.g., Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Takahashi, 2010; Taguchi, 2015). This approach is generally characterized by teacher-led introduction of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic goals of the TL. Activities generally include awareness-raising tasks and activities which provide communicative practice such as role plays (Kasper, 1996; Safont-Jorda, 2004).

Overall, findings showed that students profited from explicit instruction (e.g., Bouton, 1994; Cohen & Tarone, 1994; Lyster, 1994; Fukuya, 1998; Wishnoff, 2000; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Kondo, 2010; Uso-Juan, 2013). As far as the speech act of criticizing is concerned, only one study compared between the effectiveness of both approaches. It is Nguyen's (2012) which evaluates the relative effectiveness of two types of form-focused instruction on the acquisition of the speech act of constructive criticism by 69 Vietnamese EFL learners. Over a 10-week course, the explicit group participated in consciousness-raising activities, received explicit meta-pragmatic explanation and correction of errors pertaining to forms and meanings whereas the implicit group participated in pragma-linguistic input enhancement and recast activities. The two treatment groups were compared with a control group on pretest and posttest performance, consisting of three production tasks. A delayed posttest comprising of the same production tasks was also conducted for the two treatment groups to measure long-term retention. The results revealed that both treatment groups significantly improved in the immediate posttest over the pretest, outperforming the control group. The two treatment groups also maintained their improvement in the delayed posttest. All in all, the explicit group performed significantly better than the implicit group on all measures.

Similarly, other studies targeting request and apology speech acts also found explicit instruction to be more beneficial than implicit instruction. Safont-Jorda's (2004), Martinez-Flor's (2008), as well as Halenko and Jones's (2011) studies on requests, Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh's (2008) study on requests and apologies along with Johnson and de Haan's (2013) investigation on requests and apologies are some examples. For the sake of brevity, only the two first ones are reported. Safont-Jorda (2004) adopts a pre-posttest measure with 160 beginner-immediate level Spanish undergraduate learners on an EAP course. Following one semester of explicit instruction targeting linguistic forms in oral and written requests, gains from two oral and written production tasks were analyzed according to the amount and type of request head acts employed. Findings showed an increase in quantity and type of request head acts produced due to instruction. Specifically, a higher frequency of conventionally indirect strategies and fewer direct strategies were reported.

Martinez-Flor's (2008) study on low level Spanish undergraduate EFL students also follows the same trend. Martinez-Flor adopted a pre-posttest design where he examined the frequency and type of internal and external request modifiers after six hours of explicit treatment through phased sessions consisting of awareness raising and production activities. Positive instructional effects were again reported, with requests containing a greater number and variety of modifiers, and frequent instances of fixed expressions.

Nevertheless, explicit instruction has not consistently been found to be superior. When it comes to the retention effect measured through delayed posttest, results from Kubota (1995)'s study, for instance, showed that the immediate gains from explicit instruction disappeared after the immediate post-experimental observation. Furthermore, Rose and Ng's (2001) pre- and posttests did not produce positive results on all of the assessment measures employed. Moreover, Martinez-Flor (2006) reports similar levels of effectiveness for both explicit and implicit treatments. Taguchi (2005) suggests that variability in operationalizing these two methods is a possible cause of the discrepancy in results. In fact, explicit instruction was not consistently found to be superior, as several studies comparing the explicit and implicit approaches found. Kubota (1995), for instance, shows that the initial gains from explicit instruction disappear by the time a delayed posttest is employed, Rose and Ng's (2001) pre- and posttests did not produce positive results on all of the assessment measures employed,



and Martinez-Flor (2006) reports similar levels of effectiveness for both explicit and implicit treatments. Variability in operationalizing these two methods is a suggested cause of the discrepancy in results (Taguchi, 2015). In fact, the implicit approach also yields positive results in its own right so it cannot be entirely dismissed (e.g., Fukuya & Zhang, 2002; Takimoto, 2009).

In fact, what characterizes the implicit approach is the learners' inductive self-discovery of the TL features. Fukuya and Zhang (2002) investigates the effects of implicit corrective feedback in the form of pragmatic recasts with an experimental and control group. The twenty intermediate L1 Chinese speakers participated in seven 50-minute sessions of role play practice of requests. This was enhanced by the inclusion of pragmatic recasts for the experimental group. Results from a written production task of the same role play items revealed that the experimental group used significantly more target-like forms than the control group. The noticeable effects of the implicit treatment were attributed to the recasts which encouraged learners to "notice" the gaps between the IL and TL forms. For Fukuya and Zhang, this is also aided by the formulaic nature of the recasts such as "*would you mind*" and "*I was wondering if*". The authors think that these expressions can be easily stored as patterns.

In fact, the reported variability of instructional effectiveness can also be attributable to an interplay between the instructional approach and other external factors. Instructional time is a first factor. Research has evidenced that pragmatic-focused instruction should not be shorter than five hours to be effective (Salazar, 2003; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Uso-Juan, 2013). This contradicts Norris and Ortega's (2000) conclusion which states that grammar-focused instructional shorter treatments of up to three hours were more beneficial. Here, the instructional targets have to be taken into consideration. Suggestive that perhaps L2 pragmatic instruction requires more attention through longer instructional periods than other language features such as grammar due to: a) The traditional emphasis which has always been placed on grammatical knowledge over pragmatic one in the classroom, b) the fact that pragmatic knowledge has been given little attention in language text books, c) the subconscious nature with which it is acquired by NSs, and most importantly, d) the fact that this type of knowledge (pragmatic knowledge) has no codified rules.

In addition to treatment time, individual learner differences such as proficiency (e.g., Codina-Espurz, 2008) and motivation (e.g., Takahashi, 2012) are also reported to have an influence on pragmatic development. Recently, there has been a call to integrate technology-enhanced learning and assessment materials in the process of pragmatics teaching and learning. Last but not least, “learnability” as well as “teachability” of the target feature are also reported to impact the instructional success (Taguchi, 2010). For instance, Johnson and deHaan (2013) give an account of greater semantic gains at the macro-level when testing for appropriateness of request and apology production than at the micro-level when measuring accuracy of response. Specifically, the study reveals that politeness strategies and discourse moves are more easily acquired and recalled than knowledge of the linguistic form. In line with Johnson and deHaan’s (2013) investigation, findings of Sykes’ (2009, 2013) online studies, which aimed at developing requests and apologies, revealed unnoticeable change in choice of request strategies and clear improvements in some aspects of apology language such as head acts. The author explains that the structural and functional simplicity of apology formulae at the lexical level facilitated learning.

To sum up the discussion of explicit versus implicit teaching approaches’ effectiveness, it can be said that though the overwhelming evidence of the superiority of the explicit teaching approach reported in the previous studies, the number of instructional studies still falls short of comparative investigations.

### **1.3.2 Pragmatic assessment.**

Although pragmatic competence has been considered a very important component of communicative competence by most prominent models of language ability (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996), its development and assessment have only fairly recently attracted SLA researchers’ serious attention. Despite the fact that the necessity of teaching pragmatics has been recognized, assessment of L2 pragmatics is still a very young field of inquiry, awaiting further research and development (Roever, 2006). The sub-section entitled *Pragmatic Assessment* attempts to provide a background on IL pragmatic assessment then highlights some problems in it.

### ***1.3.2.1 Background on interlanguage pragmatic assessment.***

The research issues on ILP have attracted attention for many decades. However, the concept of pragmatic assessment and testing has a more recent history. It was first introduced by John W. Oller in 1979 (Trosborg, 2010). Roever (2007) agrees that assessment of L2 pragmatics is “a relatively recent part of L2 testing, and not many tests exist” (p. 165). Oller (1979) defines a pragmatic proficiency test as:

any procedure or task that causes the learners to process sequences of elements in a language that conform to the normal contextual constraints of that language, and which requires the learners to relate sequences of linguistic element via pragmatic mapping to extralinguistic context. (p. 38)

With regard to the instruments used to measure L2 learners’ pragmatic proficiency, researchers have used six main types of tests introduced by James D. Brown (2001). They are named as: (1) the Written Discourse Completion Tasks (Henceforth WDCTs), (2) ODCTs (3) Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Tasks (Henceforth MDCTs), (4) Discourse role play tasks, (5) Discourse self-assessment tasks, and (6) Role play self-assessments. Tests of L2 pragmatics either focus on pragmalinguistics or sociopragmatics aspects of language assessment. Roever (2007) argues that both “Sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics are intertwined in real-world language use, and users need both to function in communication”. (p. 166)

Some main studies can be mentioned in the domain of sociopragmatics testing. Cohen and Olshtain (1981), for instance, use a role play test to measure the sociocultural appropriateness of L2 learners’ speaking performance and decide on whether a rating scale can effectively be used to assess their sociocultural competence. To be more precise, their study is mainly concerned with measuring students’ ability of apologizing appropriately in a specific context by selecting appropriate forms of language. Cohen and Olshtain succeed in categorizing stylistically and culturally inappropriate realizations of L2 apologies. However, they fail to develop a rating scale to measure sociocultural competence.

In a later investigation, which Roever (2007) describes as the largest validation study in the domain of testing sociopragmatics, Hudson, Brown, and Detmer (1995) develops six types of tests: WDCTs, MCDCTs, ODCTs, self-assessments, role play

discourse tasks and role play self-assessments. Their tests, whose participants were ESL students in the United States, aimed at systematically developing tests of pragmatic knowledge on requests, apologies, and refusals. After gathering the scores on all these tests and reporting the descriptive statistics, reliability and validity of the measures, they concluded that only the MDCT type of measurement was not much successful.

Another study that reached the same conclusion is Yamashita's (1996). It employed the same instrument used in Hudson et al. (1995). The participants of Yamashita's study were Japanese ESL students from four different universities in Japan. What's specific to her study is the use of the Japanese version of the tests. All the measures were found appropriate for the purpose of measuring language students' pragmatic ability except the MDCT format. A year later, Yoshitake (1997) changes the context and applies the Discourse Completion Tasks (Henceforth DCTs), MDCTs, ODCTs and role plays on Japanese EFL learners from Tokyo University to assess their effectiveness. The MDCT type was found to be not much successful.

In the domain of pragmalinguistics testing, a comprehensive instrument that must be mentioned is Roever's (2005, 2006) web-based test of ESL pragmatics. The advantage of his test battery is that it is not designed for any specific L1 group. It tests learners' knowledge of three aspects of pragmalinguistics: implicature, routines, and speech acts. Proving a rationale for choosing these aspects in particular, Roever (2007) maintains, "The overall test construct assumes that these components of pragmatic knowledge are to some degree related because they are affected by similar developmental factors (most notably exposure and L2 proficiency), but they differ in the degree to which these developmental factors influence them" (p. 167). The implicature section takes a multiple-choice format to measure comprehension of two types of implicatures: Formulaic implicatures that are marked by conventional structures and idiosyncratic, non-conventional implicatures. The routine items also take a multiple-choice format and test recognition of situational and functional routines. The speech act section has 12 WDCT items that elicited requests, refusals, and apologies, which were evaluated by NS raters based on a four-point scale, ranging from "fail" to "immaculately perfect."

In addition to pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics testing issues, a new research area in pragmatic assessment is related to rating and rater criteria. Recently,

some studies have been concerned with emphasizing the importance of coming up with unified and comprehensive rating criteria in pragmatic assessment. For example, Alemi (2012) investigates the criteria that native English teachers and non-native Iranian English teachers consider when rating EFL learners' apologies and refusals. In her study, Alemi found that teacher raters used five macro criteria to rate the speech act of apology (expression of apology, explanation/reasoning, politeness, repair offer, and promise for future) and eleven criteria (brief apology, statement of refusal, offer suitable consolation, irrelevancy of refusal, explanation/reasoning, cultural problem, dishonesty, thanking, postponing to other time, statement of alternative, and politeness) to rate the speech act of refusal.

In the same line, Tajeddin and Alemi (2013) focus on the criteria that native English raters consider when rating EFL learners' pragmatic competence of realizing apologies. In addition to discovering the criteria of the raters, the researchers also emphasized the existence of any bias among the raters. To fulfill this purpose, 51 educated native English teachers from the U.S.A, the U.K, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada took part in their study. They rated six diverse pragmatic situations for an apology discourse completion task which were accompanied by an L2 learner's response to each situation. The raters were asked to rate the appropriateness of the productions and comment on the answers. Analysis of the raters' justifications revealed five macro criteria frequently applied in their rating. They include: *expression of apology, situation explanation, repair offer, promise for future, and politeness*. The facet procedure was also utilized to trace the rater bias. Results depicted that raters showed different ratings and were not much consistent in their ratings. Tajeddin and Alemi (2013) conclude that NSs' criteria cannot always be regarded as a standard as their ratings can have many variations.

### ***1.3.2.2 Problems in the assessment of pragmatic competence.***

Numerous theoretical and practical issues remain unresolved in the assessment of pragmatic competence. Shohamy (1990), for instance, observes that the efforts to assess discourse competence have failed to clarify associations between this construct and specific linguistic features. Shohamy believes that this theoretical obstacle and the expense of evaluating discourse features have precluded serious consideration of discourse in today's most popular oral proficiency tests.

Thomas (1983, 1984) explores the difficulty of separating pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics in pragmatic analysis. Her main contention is that teachers must avoid judging the content of students' language in use. Doing so means enforcing the narrow sociopragmatic norms of a particular social subgroup to which the teacher belongs. Thomas maintains that competent teachers are in a position to judge whether or not a given utterance can realize a speaker's true intention (i.e., pragmalinguistic competence), but knowledge of intentions can only be inferred indirectly under testing conditions.

A major question that has attracted attention in pragmatic assessment is identification of norms or standards. According to Byrnes (1991), instruction should be "less concerned with getting learners to perform in highly specific ways than with having them conduct themselves within a range of possibilities that are accepted and acceptable with the C2 cultural reality" (p. 208). Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985a) offer some valuable insights regarding the crucial question of delimiting this 'range of possibilities' for evaluative purposes. They suggest that evaluators first administer proposed tests to NSs of the TL so as to use their performance for establishing ranges of acceptability. However, the limitation of this approach is that the range of NSs' behavior is likely to be narrower than their range of acceptability. To use Hymes's terminology, everything that is "possible" and "appropriate" is not always "done" by NSs (Hymes, 1971: 29).

Others researchers argue that NSs' norms are inappropriate in certain respects for evaluating NNSs. For example, Faerch and Kasper (1989) study the request performance of Danes who were learning English and German. Their subjects tended to be verbose compared to natives; they used "more transparent, overcomplex, explicit, and longer procedures of request modification" (p. 245). The researchers conclude that the NNSs' concern for clarity was not necessarily a deficiency, and that "a different set of criteria [would] have to be invoked for assessing the success of nonnative verbal interaction" (p. 246). Their analysis suggest that the nature of intercultural communication needs to be taken into account in pragmatic assessment since NSs probably do not expect NNSs to be completely native-like (Widdowson, 1992).

To summarize, a number of crucial issues remain unresolved with respect to assessment of the pragmatic aspects of speech-act proficiency. The primary ones seem to be:

- a. The difficulty of defining the set of objective discourse features that correspond directly to low or high proficiency (e.g., general strategies, content, and/or modifiers);
- b. The importance of NSs' perception of appropriateness and/or acceptability, and the difficulty of establishing these ranges of acceptability for evaluative purposes;
- c. The problems of accounting for intracultural variability (i.e., whether the speech-act norms of only one segment of a country's population would be considered normative, or whether there is a way to broaden these norms to make them more inclusive)

## **1.4 Peer Feedback and Learning in the L2 Classroom**

In the last three decades, there has been a strong interest in formative assessment i.e. assessment designed to provide rich feedback and support for learning. This interest has also been accompanied by a renewed interest in peer assessment as a tool for learning. During formative peer assessment, "judgements" often include qualitative remarks in addition to (or instead of) marks. These comments are called peer feedback, which can be positive or negative as will be shown later. Negative peer feedback is expected to support the learning process by checking the performance against some already-specified criteria, accompanied by comments on weaknesses and/or tips for improvement. However, not all negative peer feedback leads to performance improvement and hence boosts learning. It can be destructive if it does not respect the criteria mentioned in the characteristics of good criticisms above. Ignoring the quality criteria of peer feedback is not the only factor that inhibits learning but the perceptions of the learners, being negative peer feedback providers or receivers, towards this experience is a playing factor too. Below is an overview of the different errors that could take place in the L2 classroom, negative feedback and its effect on L2 learning, and the learners' perceptions of peer feedback.

### **1.4.1 Errors and error indicators.**

Errors have two characteristics: First, they can only be noticed through interaction and this takes place at two different levels. At the intra-level, errors may be recognized by learners themselves when their own performance interacts with the

linguistic knowledge that they consider correct. At the inter-level, errors may be noticed by learners when they observe the divergence between their own output and that of their interlocutors. The second characteristic of errors is that they are not a fixed phenomenon. They are changeable. When two learners interact with each other, their knowledge of the TL is the “reference point” that they can rely on in judging the correctness of their outputs. In this case, errors may go unnoticed because of the learners’ inadequate linguistic knowledge. In SLA, errors are broadly defined as a misuse of a linguistic item due to “faulty or incomplete learning” (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992: 159). As far as terminology is concerned, Corder (1967) distinguishes between errors and mistakes based on whether the “fault” is made intentionally or unintentionally by L2 learners. In the present thesis, however; this distinction is not considered since what matters is to what extent pragmatic instruction affects EFL learners’ ability of realizing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive criticisms in reaction to their peers’ errors or mistakes made either intentionally or unintentionally.

Bearing in mind the interchangeable use of the terms “errors” and “mistakes” adopted in the present thesis; James (1998) suggests five indicators of L2 learners’ errors: namely, grammaticality, acceptability, correctness, strangeness and infelicity. According to him, grammaticality refers to linguistic well-formedness which means something uncorrectable in terms of syntactical, semantic and phonological rules. Among these three rules, the uncorrectability of semantics is troublesome for it depends on the context and the speaker’s intentions. This is what the second indicator, acceptability, considers. Thus, a well-formed utterance may still be regarded unacceptable when it does not fit into the context of the wider linguistic unit or fails to fulfil the speaker’s intention. The third indicator, correctness, concerns the difference between what a NS of L2 would say instinctively. The fourth indicator, strangeness, comes from anomalous expressions such as in “wet water”—the example provided James (1998). He states that such an expression may be considered strange when made by a NS but ungrammatical when produced by a language learner. Finally, infelicity was interpreted by James, based on Austin’s (1962) idea, as being an inappropriate speech act from a sociolinguistic perspective.



### **1.4.2 Negative feedback and its effect on L2 learning.**

Before examining the concept of negative feedback, feedback in general has to be defined. Hattie and Timperley (2007: 81) explain it as “information provided by an agent regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding”. They state that the purpose of feedback is to reduce the distance between current understandings and the goal. In general, feedback is seen as a response given to one who performed something.

Feedback can be positive or negative. While positive feedback confirms that a learner’s response to an activity is correct, negative feedback flags, in one way or another, that the learner’s utterance is linguistically deviant. In Iwashita’s definition, negative feedback is “an interlocutor’s interactional move that indicates explicitly or implicitly any nontargetlike feature in the learner’s speech” (2003: 2). The terms negative evidence, negative feedback, error correction, and corrective feedback have been used by SLA researchers to describe the same phenomena. However, the last two terms imply a more pedagogical intention of correction. In many instances where an interlocutor provides information about the ungrammaticality of an utterance, it is not always clear whether the intention of correction is present (Ortega, 2009: 71). Therefore, the term negative feedback is used in the present thesis.

Negative feedback is more common in the classroom setting than in the natural setting. Whether learners receive any negative feedback outside the classroom would for example depend on the relationship between the interlocutors, their personalities, their attitude and eagerness to learn and improve their language skills, and whether there are opportunities to communicate with NSs or other language learners (Ortega, 2009). It is worth noting that the focus in the present study falls on the negative feedback that takes place in the classroom.

There have been divergent voices about the effect of negative feedback among SLA researchers. Schwartz (1993) maintains that language is fundamentally learned without the supply of negative feedback. Likewise, Truscott (1999) claims that the evidence that proves that negative feedback works is both insufficient and inconclusive. Krashen (1981) argues that negative feedback is unnecessary and might even be harmful. Therefore, according to him, any attempt to draw the learner’s attention to linguistic form should be avoided, and L2 educators should strive to maximize the learner’s exposure to positive evidence.

Nonetheless, skeptics like the aforementioned ones are in a minority among SLA researchers, at least within the cognitive-interactionist approach to SLA, as most argue that negative feedback is useful for learning (e.g., Long, 1996; Lyster et al., 1999; Russel & Spada, 2006; Li, 2010). Classroom studies have proven that the use of negative feedback is more effective than just providing the learners with input. Extensive improvements in learners' accuracy are observed especially in content-based and communicative language classes where communication tasks are accompanied by negative feedback and other types of focus on form (e.g.; Doughty & Varela, 1998; Williams & Evans, 1998; Williams, 2001). Laboratory experiments have come to the same conclusion (Carroll & Swain, 1993; Mackey & Philp, 1998; Ayoun, 2001). Most of these classroom studies are comparable to the experimental ones with regard to their methodology. With Lightbown and Spada (1990) as well as Williams (2001) as exceptions, their research includes one (or more) treatment groups in addition to a control group, and treatment is limited to one or two structures. Hence, on the basis of studies, the evidence in favor of a positive effect of negative feedback in language acquisition is certain.

### **1.4.3 Peer Interaction and feedback and learning in the L2 Classroom.**

Below is an outline of the most important areas of peer feedback and learning in the EFL classroom. First, because peer interaction is a prerequisite for peer feedback to occur, this sub-section starts first with disclosing the relationship between learning and interaction in the L2 classroom. Then, it sheds light on the social constructivist perspective to peer feedback. Later, it shows with evidence how peer feedback boosts L2 learning. Last but not least, L2 learners' perceptions of peer interaction and feedback are examined to validate the present study's assumption—learners' unwillingness or hesitation to provide negative peer feedback due to face-saving issues.

#### ***1.4.3.1 Learning and interaction in the L2 Classroom.***

Peer interaction, as a prerequisite for peer feedback to take place and as a context for L2 learning in classrooms, is an important notion in the study reported in present thesis. It is assumed that it helps learning. Before exploring how it does so, it is necessary to see first what is meant by learning and interaction themselves. With regard to learning, there has been much debate over how L2 learning process takes place. Larsen-Freeman (2010) adopts Sfar's (1998) "having-doing continuum" and

differentiates between two influential views of learning: “Learning is having”, under a cognitive perspective, and “Learning is doing”, under a social perspective. This can be understood by distinguishing between “acquisition” and “participation”. While the “having” view as acquisition emphasizes the individual mind and how language learning is associated with knowledge acquisition as a result of an individual mental act, the “doing” view as participation places emphasis on social activity and language learning involving participation between individuals and others. Coming to interaction, it refers to “either dyadic or multiparty talk that has a primary focus on communicating meaning, rather than on language form in isolation” (Philp, Adams & Iwashita, 2014: 7). Peer interaction means “any communicative activity carried out *between learners* (Italics as in original), where there is minimal or no participation from the teacher” (Philp et al., 2014: 3).

The two views of learning see interaction differently. The former seeks to account for how interaction as a source of input, such as “linguistic data”—words, phrases and sentences—serves as a trigger for acquisition. The latter, on the other hand, rejects the view of cognitive learning, arguing that interaction is a socially-negotiated event and is collaborative rather than an individual mental phenomenon. It illustrates how language is used and acquired holistically, qualitatively and interpretatively in terms of social context (Firth & Wagner, 2007). It seems that it is not possible to claim that one theory is superior to another, and the only way to avoid the debate is to have a theory that combines the two perspectives: cognitive and social (Ellis, 2010). Despite the fact that the two theories of learning are still influential, contemporary research has shown more interest in understanding socially co-constructed knowledge and its process through learners’ participating in the social activity. As the present thesis is concerned with whether or not realization of constructive criticism between peers—a social activity of making comments and exchanging ideas—can be improved through pragmatic instruction, the conceptual framework for this study is based on the socio-cultural view for learning as it relates to spoken feedback.

#### ***1.4.3.2 A social constructivist perspective of peer feedback.***

A significant justification for including peer feedback as part of speaking class instruction is the Vygotsky’s theoretical framework of social constructivism. Liu and Hansen (2005) point out that “cognitive development is a result of social interaction in

which an individual learns to extend her or his current competence through the guidance of a more experienced individual” (p. 5), thus helping him or her advance his or her zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development refers, according to Vygotsky (1978), to “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving [...] in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). In this sense, students who engage in collaboration during peer feedback sessions have the opportunity to negotiate meaning and construct their understanding of language mechanics and discursive.

Social interaction and negotiation of meaning are the essence of the construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978; Lantolf, 2000; Doolittle & Hicks, 2003; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This approach involves social interactions in which “a more knowledgeable ‘other’ structures the learning experience in a way that allows the novice to overcome whatever limitations in skill might impede his or her attainment of a desired goal” (Prawat, 1996: 217). That is to say, learning and knowledge construction are mediated through interaction with others (Doolittle, 1997). Another point of emphasis is the importance of this social mediation being situated in authentic environments and tasks where the individual has the opportunity to interact with others and thus “becom[e] self-regulated, self-mediated, and self-aware [through] feedback received from the environment (e.g. others, artifacts) and self-reflection on [his/her] understanding and experience” (Doolittle & Hicks: 2003).

This social constructivist perspective can be applied to the teaching of speaking in a foreign language for the purpose of helping students improve their spoken performance. The EFL speaking classroom should include peer interaction (a form of social interaction). Collaboration among peers “allows students to use language to mediate their language learning because in collaboration students use language to reflect on the language they are learning” (Shrum & Glisan, 2005: 25). One way to incorporate peer collaboration in FL speaking is in the form of peer feedback sessions.

#### ***1.4.3.3 Peer feedback and L2 development.***

From a cognitive perspective, peer interaction has been investigated primarily as conversational exchanges in which meaning is negotiated (e.g., Pica, 1994; Gass, 2003). It has much strength which benefits L2 development. With regard to the role of

peer-to-peer interaction in the process of L2 learning, many empirical studies have been conducted. Ohta (2000) investigates how college-level Japanese EFL learners aided each other's performance in the classroom. Results showed that learners not only asked for but also offered feedback to scaffold each other's performance. Moreover, even less proficient peers were found able to support more proficient students with feedback. In another investigation with 20 college-level learners of English in London and 19 learners of Japanese in America, Foster and Ohta (2005) finds evidence of learners paying attention to linguistic forms in the output of their peers. More interestingly, peer feedback in this study was demonstrated to have not only cognitive but also affective advantages in facilitating language learning as learners expressed interest in each other's talk and encouraged each other to continue during conversations. Iwashita (2001) explores which types of dyadic peer interaction (low-low, high-high, and high-low groups) provide more opportunities for interactional moves and modified output among university learners of Japanese. She found that among the three types of groups, mixed-level dyads had more interactional moves than same-level ones.

Along with investigations into the role of peer-to-peer interaction in the process of L2 learning, some studies have explored the relationship between expert versus novice feedback and IL development. Findings indicate that, in comparison to interaction with NSs and language teachers, learners interacting with peers tend to engage in more such negotiations (Varonis & Gass, 1985; Porter, 1986; Futaba, 2001) during which they use interactional moves claimed to benefit L2 development, such as input modifications (if learners are highly proficient) (García Mayo & Pica, 2000) and interactional feedback (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1989; Soler, 2002). These results can be attributed to the fact that during peer interaction, learners feel more comfortable so they tend to use those beneficial interactional moves (Gass, Mackey, & Ross-Feldman, 2005). For instance, in Sato and Lyster's (2007) study, learners provided a better type of feedback than did NSs. By comparing the two types of dyads (i.e., learner-learner and learner-NS) statistically, it was revealed that learners provided more elicitation types of feedback than reformulation types of feedback, the former of which were hypothesized to provide opportunities to modify their initial erroneous utterances. Sato and Lyster confirmed that learners' comfort level is a key deciding factor in their psycholinguistic interactional moves. By conducting in-depth interviews after dyadic activities, they found that, on the one hand, learners were under pressure when

interacting with NSs because they believed that their English was “incorrect” English and NSs’ English was “perfect” English. In peer interaction, however, they thought that they had more time to decide what to say and felt much more comfortable to test their linguistic hypotheses.

In another study, Soler (2002) compares choices of corrective strategies between the teacher and learners of English in a Spanish university, as well as the impacts of teacher feedback versus peer feedback on learners’ ability to make oral requests in a role-play task. With regard to the choice of feedback strategies, despite no statistically significant difference being revealed, the data showed much more indirect feedback in learners’ interaction and much more direct feedback in interaction between learners and the teacher. In the immediate posttest, learners experiencing peer-to-peer interaction outperformed those in teacher-learner interaction. What is interesting about Soler’s qualitative data is that the majority of participants in the learner-learner group did not perceive their collaborative conversations as learning. In contrast, most students in the other group claimed to have learnt much from teacher feedback. Explaining this contradictory finding, Soler (2002) asserts that Spanish learners believe that teachers are the “right” people to transmit explicit knowledge while students are not.

Lynch (2007) investigates the relationship between teacher feedback versus peer feedback and speaking development. Empirical evidence of peer feedback being more effective than teacher feedback in developing learners’ speaking performance was found. Lynch had two groups of learners transcribe the recordings of their prior oral performance in pairs. Next, he asked Group One to modify the transcripts that had been corrected by teachers, and Group Two to keep working on their original transcripts. He had all the transcripts from both groups corrected by the teacher to create a final version, and returned them to all the learners. Finally, both groups performed the same task again based on the final version of the transcripts. The results indicated that Group Two reached a higher degree of accuracy than Group One in forms that had been focused on in previous discussions. Lynch (2007) concludes that learner-initiated feedback provokes more talk among learners about language, as well as greater, deeper cognitive processing activities, which may benefit learners more than teacher-initiated feedback does in such tasks.

In addition to Lynch's (2007) study, Sato and Lyster's (2012) investigation looks at the effects of peer interaction on developing 167 Japanese EFL university-level learners' speaking accuracy and fluency. They had three experimental groups and one control group in their quasi-experimental design. Each group consisted of around 40 learners. The first experimental group received training about feedback type "prompts" and English-speaking practices. The second experimental group had training about feedback type "recasts" and English speaking classes whereas the third experimental group received no corrective feedback training but had English speaking classes. The control group had neither corrective feedback training nor English speaking classes. Each of the English speaking classes lasted for 60 minutes and was conducted on a weekly basis over a 10-week period. Results of pretests and posttests of English-speaking performance showed that learners in the first two experimental groups improved accuracy and fluency in speaking in the posttest. Learners in the third experimental group outperformed the control group only on fluency but not accuracy measures. Sato and Lyster (2012) conclude that peer feedback accelerates learners' speaking skill.

In sum, the studies reviewed above indicate that peer interaction and feedback offer L2 learners linguistic, cognitive and affective assistance in language learning. Nonetheless, classroom peer interaction mainly lacks two important elements to be conducive to L2 development. They are autonomous attention to linguistic forms and positive perceptions of peer interaction itself. With regard to the first element, although error treatment sequences usually aim at correctness (Bruton & Samuda, 1980; Porter, 1986), negotiation of form i.e. negotiation whose purpose is to work on grammatical errors barely takes place in peer interaction unless the task itself focuses on it (e.g., consciousness-raising tasks: Fotos & Ellis, 1991). Although some studies reported negotiation of form in peer interaction, showing that learners can pay attention to form and signal it to their partners (Mackey, Oliver, & Leeman, 2003; Sato, 2007), their interactional feedback is not observed frequently and usually entails simple segmentations of their partners' erroneous utterances (Pica et al., 1996; Sato & Lyster, 2007). As far as the second element is concerned, learners' perceptions of each other may hinder the effectiveness of peer interaction. Though peer interaction may provide a comparably more comfortable interactional environment than when interacting with NSs or teachers, Foster's (1998) classroom observation data revealed that in order to

save face, students were very unwilling to indicate communication problems as it would make them look incompetent. She claims that “uncoached negotiation for meaning is not ‘alive and well’ in the classroom” (p. 19). If learners do not believe in each other’s linguistic ability; feedback may be missed, unnoticed, or ignored and its effectiveness may be discarded (Yoshida, 2008b).

#### ***1.4.3.4 Learners’ perceptions of peer interaction and feedback.***

How learners perceive classroom peer interaction, which is a prerequisite for peer feedback to take place, has been under-investigated. In this regard, Tulung’s (2008) study is worthy of mention. In her investigation with Indonesian university-level EFL learners, they said that they feel more motivated in peer interaction sessions than teacher-fronted ones. Moreover, they think that they benefit from practicing the TL with their peers, and they are not afraid of making errors.

Research on perceptions of peer feedback is scarce. This is simply because peer feedback, especially the one which entails corrective intention, rarely takes place due to its social inappropriateness (Pica et al., 1996; Sato & Lyster, 2007). One of the very few studies that examined corrective feedback during peer interaction activities is Yoshida’s (2008a). In her data which consists of stimulated recall interviews with Japanese EFL university-level learners, Yoshida found that the effectiveness of corrective peer feedback depends on the learners’ level of readiness to interact with their peers. That is to say, when learners are resistant, feedback from their peers is misunderstood or discarded. Further, results from the aforementioned study showed that one learner reported that she believed in her peer’s metalinguistic feedback because he sounded confident. This indicates learners’ uncertainty in their classmates’ corrective feedback and therefore inconsistency in its effectiveness.

Yoshida’s (2008a) findings are not peculiar. Philp, Walter, and Basturkmen (2010) report similar findings. In retrospective interviews after engaging in peer interaction tasks, the learners reported that they hesitated to give corrective feedback to their partners because of (a) their proficiency (e.g., readiness to correct as a learner), (b) task-related discourses (e.g., interruption during a role-play), and (c) social relationship (e.g., face-saving issues). In general, Philp et al. shows that although the learners felt less anxious during peer interaction compared to students- instructor interaction, they were reluctant to provide corrective feedback to each other. Sato



(2007) reports motives for corrective peer feedback. In the stimulated-recall learners' interview data, he found that most of it was unintentional; that is, learners were not trying to correct their classmates' errors. Of 17 peer feedback instances, there was one case where a learner reported that he gave feedback with corrective intention. This leads us to think of the pedagogical potential of corrective peer feedback.

#### *1.4.3.5 Negative peer feedback and face-saving issues.*

The already mentioned studies on the effect of peer feedback on L2 learners' development prove its positive role, but what can decrease its effectiveness are the face-saving issues. Freedman (1992) and van DeWeghe (2004) argue that peer feedback is shown to be least beneficial when issues of face-saving lead peers to avoid critique. Since the study reported in the present thesis assumes that Algerian EFL learners are reluctant to provide constructive criticism to their peers mainly because of the face-threatening nature of this act, what affects their L2 learning negatively; it is rational to briefly review the literature on negative peer feedback and face-saving concerns.

Carson and Nelson (1996) investigate the interaction styles and perceptions of Chinese students who engaged in the editing of their ESL peers' writing. Carson and Nelson identify several perceptions of the Chinese ESL students in relation to their participation in a peer feedback experience; specifically, the students expressed a reluctance to criticize drafts, to disagree with peers, and to claim authority. In addition, students expressed feelings of vulnerability. Carson and Nelson (1996) conclude that "the kinds of behaviors that Chinese students would normally exhibit in groups are different from the behaviors that are frequently desired in writing groups" (p. 18). Moreover, the authors state that Chinese ESL students seemed more preoccupied with maintaining group cohesion than with giving their peers negative feedback on their writing, recognizing "that making negative comments on a peer's draft leads to [group] division" (p. 18).

In a follow-up study, Nelson and Carson (1998) investigate the interaction styles and perceptions of Hispanic students in a peer feedback experience. They found that these students expressed a preference for negative comments. The researchers conclude that the readiness of criticizing peers is based on cultural differences. Indeed, Henry, Martha, Mark and Jeanne (2004) state that members who belong to several Eastern cultures, such as the Chinese one, that emphasize maintaining harmony and value

saving face do less peer criticism. Conversely, team members from cultures that are typically highly assertive, “aggressive” and dominant in social relationships are more likely to provide negative feedback to peers than those in less assertive cultures. Moreover, people in highly assertive countries such as the United States prefer direct negative peer feedback and have no problem with “tell like it is”.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, Chapter One (Theoretical Overview) attempts to lay the groundwork for the subsequent investigation of the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners’ constructive peer criticism competence. From discussions already presented, some important points can be summarized as follows: First, the various models of communicative competence reviewed make clear that communicating effectively and efficiently in any given language requires more than just linguistic knowledge. Rather, what is required is the ability to use this linguistic knowledge appropriately in a given socio-cultural context—pragmatic competence. When it comes to an SL/FL speaker, the problem arises because pragmatic competence develops neither the same way as grammatical competence nor the same way as L1 pragmatic competence. The reason behind that it that is depends on context and context is culture-bound.

Second, research on acquisitional pragmatics has already shown that even SL learners, who are surrounded by sufficient linguistic and cultural input, find it quite difficult to achieve native-like levels of pragmatic competence. For FL ones, who have neither adequate input nor practice opportunities, the challenge grows greater and hence instruction on pragmatics becomes indispensable. Moreover, as far as actional competence is concerned, previous research in ILP shows that L2 learners’ speech-act knowledge is incomplete. Low proficiency learners tend to employ a rather narrow range of speech act realization strategies as well as mitigation devices. Besides, they encounter several problems in varying their strategies according to context. What is more, advanced learners do not acquire the full native-like pragmatic competence in terms of their comprehension as well as production of speech acts. Pragmatic instruction on speech acts, especially a complex and face-threatening one like criticism, becomes indispensable.

Third, the studies reviewed above indicate that peer interaction and feedback offer L2 learners linguistic, cognitive and affective assistance in language learning.

However, what is indicative of many of these studies is that a large number of them hold a negative attitude towards providing negative peer feedback, specifically; the students expressed reluctance to criticize peers, to disagree with them, and to claim authority. In addition, a considerable number of them expressed feelings of vulnerability. These behaviors exhibited are far from the ideal ones desired. Moreover, they are likely to diminish the usefulness of negative peer feedback. In order to enable L2 learners realize pragmatically appropriate constructive criticisms directed to peers, and therefore make the most out of peer feedback, they should be formally instructed on the speech act in focus. The next chapter gives details about the methodology chosen for the present study and addresses issues of subjects, instruments, validity, reliability, framework of data analysis, etc.

## **CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of the research design and methodology used in the present study. In order to test the hypotheses mentioned in the general introduction. Data were collected from two intact groups of English on their production of constructive peer criticisms. The methodological design consists of pretest—treatment and three progress tests—posttest. Two data gathering instruments were used. Beginning with a brief description of the population investigated and sampling, Chapter Two (Research Design and Methodology) moves to outline the test instruments used in the previous instructional ILP studies. Then, it presents the ones used in the present investigation and the reasons why they were chosen over others. Next, this chapter details the procedures of data collection and describes the data transcription method and coding scheme. Issues of reliability and validity are also addressed here. Moreover, it describes the administration of the different tests, the instructional materials, procedures as well as time. Finally, it introduces data analysis procedure. In doing so, it operationalizes the construct of constructive criticism competence, specifies its components, presents the scoring criteria of each component, and discusses the reliability of rating as well as the scoring procedures of the OPFT and ODCT. This chapter ends with providing the rationale for using discourse analysis, introducing the analytical technique, and presenting some ethical issues.

### **2.1 Research Orientations**

In the study reported in the present thesis, the teacher is the researcher. In SL or FL teaching, this is called action research or teacher research. Cohen and Manion (2007) define it as a process in which teachers examine their own educational practice systematically using techniques of research. Watts (1985) asserts that it is based on the following assumptions: First, teachers work best on problems they have identified for themselves. Second, they become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently. Third, they help each other by working collaboratively. Forth, working with colleagues helps teachers in their professional development.

From these assumptions, three defining characteristics of action research can be deduced. First, it is performed by teachers and not “outside” researchers. Second, it is collaborative in nature and third, it aims at change. Although the second characteristic (i.e. collaboration) is not fulfilled in the present study, it can be still considered action research for Nunan (1992: 18) clarifies that “Many teachers who are interested in exploring processes of teaching and learning in their own context are either unable, for practical reasons, or unwilling, for personal reasons to do collaborative research. The work that such people carry out should not necessarily be excluded as action research”. Thus, the study reported in this thesis belongs to individual teacher research, a form of action research.

## **2.2 Choice of the Method**

In any type of research, researchers go through a number of interrelated phases which together make up the research design. Reduced to the simplest of terms, research design is “a mapping strategy. It is essentially a statement of the object of the inquiry and the strategies for collecting the facts, analysing them and reporting the findings.” (Singh, 2006: 77). In educational research, two main approaches have been often followed by researchers: First, the quantitative (experimental) approach and second, the qualitative (descriptive) approach. The experimental approach attempts at deriving verified functional relationships among phenomena under controlled conditions i.e. identifying the conditions underlying the occurrence of a particular phenomenon. From a practical point of view, this approach varies the independent variable (Henceforth IV) in order to study the effect of such variation on the dependent variable (Henceforth DV). Contrary to the experimental approach, in which the researcher makes use of manipulation and controlled testing to understand causal relationships, the descriptive approach describes situations and events such that, an observer observes an event or a situation and tries to describe it as best as s/he can according to how things unfold (Creswell, 2013). In fact, sticking dogmatically to one approach rather than the other would be a mistake especially in educational research where it is difficult to control all the variables. When it comes to classroom-based research, no approach is without its problems.

The choice of the method is of crucial importance in the success of any research. As Robson (1993: 38) notes, “the general principle is that the research strategy or

strategies, and the methods or techniques employed must be appropriate for the questions you want to answer". The present study investigates the effect of pragmatic instruction on second year English major learners' constructive peer criticism competence. Thus, it belongs to interventional classroom research. It identifies pragmatic instruction as the independent variable and learners' constructive peer criticism competence as the dependent one. This possible cause/effect relationship suggests the adoption of the experimental approach to measure the effect of treatment by identifying causal relationships among variables.

Bernard (2000) and Creswell (2013) mention three factors that distinguish experiments: Whether participants are randomly assigned to each group, whether they have an experimental group and a control group and whether the effect of the treatment is measured by a pretest and a posttest. Because the present study belongs to interventional classroom research which necessitates working with intact groups due to institutional constraints and therefore makes random assignment impossible, it can be described as quasi-experimental. It has an experimental group and a control group. Some interventional classroom ILP studies did not have control groups (e.g., Wildner-Bassett, 1994; Tateyama et al. 1997; Tateyama 2001; Koike & Pearson, 2005) because of ethical or practical constraints. The present study employed a pretest, three progress tests and a posttest as an experimental design. As Appendix 1 shows, most interventional ILP studies employed mainly a pretest and a posttest and a few made use of delayed posttests. Some studies (Takahashi, 2001; Rose & Ng, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002) indicate that a delayed posttest was planned but not possible because of institutional constraints or the unavailability of participants. The present study did not use a delayed posttest because it does not aim at knowing whether or not the instructional effects are long-lasting. Another way to say it is that it does not seek to measure the retention effect. The following diagram sketches the present study's design.

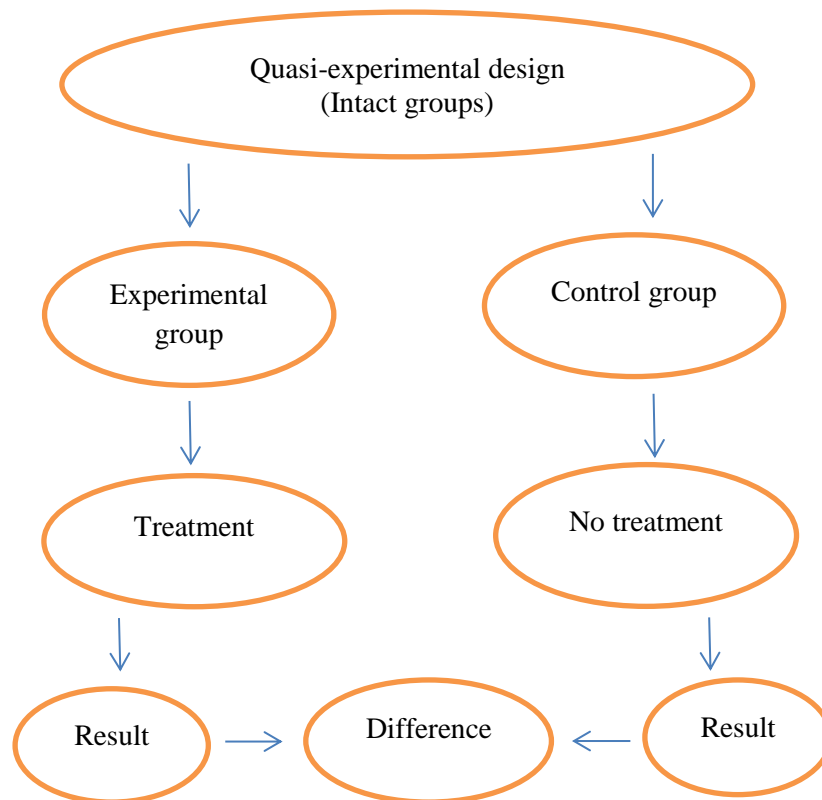


Figure 4 *Research Design of the Present Study*

According to Robson (1993: 42), “experimental studies are appropriate for explanatory studies. They may be qualitative and/or quantitative”. Creswell (2013) suggests three alternative strategies of inquiry which make a very clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative, but proposes to combine the two methods as mixed methods. The quantitative research method tries to answer predetermined instrument-based questions in line with performance data as well attitude data; the results are reached by statistical analysis. The qualitative method, however, attempts to answer open-ended questions based on interview data, observation data, document data, audiovisual data, etc. The results are represented by text and image analysis. In order to answer the research questions of the present study, a mixed method approach was employed. Justification to mix both types of methods and data is that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods could adequately within themselves cover the scopes and depths of the research questions. When combining the two, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and provide a holistic and in-depth view of the research problem.

## **2.3 The Population Investigated and Sampling**

Conducting an experiment on the whole population of second year English major students at Batna 2 University (486 students) is impossible. Therefore, sampling is necessary. As the present study adopted a quasi-experimental design, the participants, who belonged to two intact groups, were selected without random assignment. To initiate the experiment, the intact groups were randomly divided into an experimental group and a control group. The former consisted of 52 students (40 girls and 12 boys) while the latter was made up of 48 students (37 girls and 11 boys). They belonged to the same age group (19-23 years old). They studied English as a subject in school for about 7 to 10 years and none of them had studied or had been to an English-speaking country.

Second year learners were chosen in particular because of the following reasons: First, unlike first year students, they are supposed to be more familiar with the data gathering tools (test instruments) used in the present study: OPFT and ODCT. It is assumed that second graders are more familiar with collaborative learning, critical thinking, as well as problem-solving situations than first graders. Second, the duration of the class in which the treatment is to be delivered—Oral Expression—is three hours per week in the second year but only one hour and a half in the third one. This makes the pedagogic intervention more convenient.

The researcher believes that the opinions and attitudes of second year teachers of Oral Expression based on their teaching experience are also significant for investigating the issue under study. So, in addition to students, teachers were also surveyed to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Because there are only seven teachers and it is practical to deal with this number, there was no sampling and all of them participated in the present study.

## **2.4 Test Instruments**

### **2.4.1 Test instruments used in the previous interventional interlanguage pragmatics studies.**

The steps of data collection are very important in research as they determine the final product (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). The instrument of data collection also creates



another critical area of concern because it is challenging to collect data that is naturalistic and at the same time allows for the researcher's control of the variables interfering in the study. Before explaining the data collection tools used in the different linguistic tests of the present study, it is important to review the ones employed for collecting spoken data in the previous ILP studies.

Different types of data were used. One type is naturalistic data collected via telephone conversations, field notes and observation. They were used by 21 studies only. Taking the fact that naturalistic data is more appropriate for the study of speech acts into account, this number can be said to be small. The reason behind the researchers' avoidance of this type of data is their incapacity to control the relevant social and contextual variables that are likely to make the findings less comparable. Another reason might be the difficulty of building large corpuses of naturalistic data. Due to these difficulties, many ILP researchers tend to resort to elicited data as an alternative. Thirty-five (35) studies employed ODCTs and WDCTs, 27 studies employed open and closed role plays (Henceforth RPs), and 15 employed questionnaires (including multiple choice questionnaires). Twenty-four (24) studies did not depend on one data gathering tool but combined many tools in three ways. Of these, 14 studies used a combination of different elicitation methods or one or more elicitation methods with naturalistic data and 10 studies combined one or more elicitation methods with meta-pragmatic assessment methods such as assessment questionnaires and rating scales.

Naturalistic data is not the only problematic type of data. Previous studies report that elicitation methods are problematic too (Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Ellis, 1994; Kasper, 1999; Yuan, 2001). Although DCTs and questionnaires are practical and allow for gathering data in a short time, their shortcoming is that they do not represent authentic speech in terms of actual wordings, response lengths, turn-taking exchanges, and chance for opting out (Beebe & Cummins, 1985; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Wolfson, Marmor, & Jones, as cited in Ellis, 1994; Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Turnbull, as cited in Yuan, 2001). Although some researchers claim that these instruments allow for multiple-turn exchanges and opting out, they are still unable to exactly reflect what the participants would say in real life situations. This is because, as highlighted by Wolfson (1989a), what participants think they would say may be totally different from what they actually say under communicative pressure. Likewise, although an RP shares more similarities with natural speech production than a DCT or a questionnaire in the sense

that it allows for L2 production in conversational sequences, it is still of questionable authenticity. Another difficulty associated with an RP is that if the tasks are not realistic enough or if interlocutors are not good actors, they might find it hard to carry out the task naturally (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). Furthermore, an RP lacks pure naturalness for, unlike natural communication; it involves a certain degree of conscious decision-making.

The difficulty of collecting naturalistic data and the drawbacks of elicitation tools such as DCTs, RPs and questionnaires have given rise to a method which not only allows the researcher to control relevant variables but also enables him/her to generate relatively natural speech. As an example, in Baba's (1999) study which aimed to investigate L2 English and Japanese compliment responses, NSs of both English and Japanese were recruited to act as conversation leaders and instructed to extend compliments to their friends based on the photographs that these people brought along with them to the data collection session. The aim behind choosing this method of gathering data in Baba's investigation is twofold: First, it enables the researcher to manipulate the relationship between the interlocutors (social power and social distance) as well as the topic of compliments. These factors are deemed to influence the choice of compliment responses. Second, it permits data authenticity (Baba, 1999).

#### **2.4.2 Test instruments used in the present study.**

The study reported in the present thesis used two test instruments: an OPFT and an ODCT.

##### ***2.4.2.1 The oral peer-feedback task.***

###### *2.4.2.1.1 The rationale for using the oral peer-feedback task.*

The present study attempts to overcome the limitations of data collection in the previous ILP interventional studies by using an OPFT. The reason behind opting for this method is that it allows for both of the elicitation of relatively naturalistic data and researcher's control of relevant variables (e.g. equal social power). Furthermore, because the focus in the present study is on constructive criticisms directed to peers, the OPFT makes a suitable data gathering tool as it is usually used as a learning task in academic settings. Also, second year university-level learners are supposed to be

familiar with this task as they are introduced to collaborative learning as well as critical thinking at this level.

#### *2.4.2.1.2 Piloting the oral peer-feedback task.*

Piloting the OPFT aimed at answering two questions: First, is this instrument able to elicit constructive peer criticisms as intended? Second, is it able to elicit constructive peer criticisms consistently? Participants of the pilot study belonged to the experimental group and the control group.

The OPFT is piloted in order to establish its validity and reliability as a data collection instrument to be used in the experiment. As far as data collection procedures are concerned, piloting was conducted in two phases: the first phase aimed at validating the instrument while the second one aimed at establishing its reliability. While Phase One aimed at answering the question of whether or not the OPFT is capable of eliciting constructive peer criticisms as intended, Phase Two sought to answer the question of whether or not this instrument would succeed in eliciting criticisms consistently. Phase One was carried out in the fourth week of Oct. 2016 in the Oral Expression regular class which lasted for three. The pilot study participants were already divided alphabetically into two groups by the researcher in the first contact a week prior to piloting for better learning conditions as the class was Oral Expression. The first sub-group consisted of 24 learners while the second one consisted of 22 ones. The researcher made sure to have an even number of students in each group so that they can work in pairs as this study is concerned with constructive peer criticisms. Data collection with the first sub-group and the second one took place in the first part of the session and the second one respectively. Each session lasted 85 minutes.

Instructions on the prerequisite product on which the learners were supposed to provide constructive peer criticisms were explained clearly one session prior to piloting in the regular class when the researcher told the students that each one of them is required to prepare a 5-minute individual oral presentation on any topic, record it, save it on a flash drive and bring it to class the following session.

In the data collection sessions, both learners in the two sub-groups were recruited in dyads randomly and instructed to provide feedback on their partners' recorded presentations that were projected against a wall using a data show. The random

assignment of learners into dyads guarantees that they do not choose their partners on personal basis which could lead to exaggerated praise or criticism. Furthermore, in order to make the task less leading and therefore more naturalistic, the researcher did not use the word “criticize” but used “provide feedback” when she wanted to elicit constructive peer criticisms. In doing so, she clarified that they may provide both positive and negative feedback but insisted that they identify at least one unsatisfactory point in their peers’ recorded oral presentations. Moreover, learners were free to provide as much feedback as they wanted. Efforts were made to guarantee that the pilot study participants fully understood what was required of them. The OPFT was carried out based on the prompting assessment criteria specified in an instruction sheet (Guidelines for Evaluating Oral Presentations) shown in Appendix D.

In order to answer the pilot study’s first question, Phase One’s constructive peer criticisms were analyzed according to Nguyen’s (2003) two coding schemes that were previously validated by her (Nguyen, 2003). They were already presented in the first chapter (1.1.5.3). Coding results showed that only one comment out of 46 comments on peers’ oral presentations from Phase One did not include the speech act of criticizing (Table 3). The reason might be that the student thought that his/her peer’s performance was perfect; therefore s/he made only positive comments, not criticisms as had been expected. The other students’ comments yielded a total of 59 constructive peer criticisms realized by means of 13 semantic formulas. This confirms that the OPFT is capable of eliciting the speech act of criticizing.

Table 3 *Phase One’s Constructive Peer Criticisms and their Realization Formulas*

Sub-groups	Dyads	Learners	Constructive Criticisms	
			Number of constructive criticisms	Number of realization formulas
	1	1	1	1
		2	1	1
	2	3	3	2
		4	1	1
	3	5	3	2

<b>The first sub-group</b>		6	2	1	
	<b>4</b>	7	3	2	
		8	1	1	
	<b>5</b>	9	2	1	
		10	2	2	
	<b>6</b>	11	1	1	
		12	No criticism	No criticism	
	<b>7</b>	13	2	1	
		14	1	1	
	<b>8</b>	15	1	1	
		16	3	2	
	<b>9</b>	17	1	1	
		18	1	1	
	<b>10</b>	19	1	1	
		20	1	1	
	<b>11</b>	21	3	3	
		22	1	1	
	<b>12</b>	23	2	2	
		24	1	1	
	<b>The second sub-group</b>	<b>13</b>	25	1	1
			26	1	1
		<b>14</b>	27	3	2
			28	1	1
		<b>15</b>	29	2	2
30			1	1	
<b>16</b>		31	3	1	
		32	1	1	
<b>17</b>		33	2	2	
		34	2	2	
<b>18</b>		35	1	1	
		36	1	1	
<b>19</b>		37	2	1	

		38	1	1
	<b>20</b>	39	1	1
		40	2	1
	<b>21</b>	41	1	1
		42	2	2
	<b>22</b>	43	1	1
		44	2	1
	<b>23</b>	45	1	1
		46	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	46	72	58

As said earlier, piloting was conducted in two phases: the first phase aimed at validating the instrument while the second one aimed at establishing its reliability. Phase Two was accomplished one week after Phase One, exactly in the first week of Nov. 2016. Six (6) out of 12 dyads of the first sub-group learners and 5 out of 11 dyads of the second sub-group ones who had previously participated in Phase One were randomly selected and administered the same treatment. The OPFT seemed to elicit an equal number of constructive peer criticisms in the two phases.

Table 4 *The Number of Criticisms and Criticism Formulas in the Two Phases*

Dyads	Learners	Phase 1			Phase 2		
		Number of Constructive criticisms	Number of realization formulas	Average	Number of Constructive criticisms	Number of realization formulas	Average
<b>1</b>	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
	2	1	1	1	2	3	1.50
<b>2</b>	3	3	2	0.66	2	1	0.50
	4	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>3</b>	5	3	2	0.66	2	1	0.50
	6	2	1	0.50	2	1	0.50
<b>4</b>	7	3	2	0.66	3	2	0.66

	8	1	1	1	2	2	1.50
<b>5</b>	9	2	1	0.50	1	1	1
	10	2	2	1	1	1	1
<b>6</b>	11	1	1	1	2	1	1
	12	No criticism			No criticism		
<b>13</b>	25	1	1	1	2	1	0.50
	26	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>14</b>	27	3	2	0.66	2	1	0.50
	28	1	1	1	3	2	0.66
<b>15</b>	29	2	2	1	1	1	1
	30	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>16</b>	31	3	1	0.33	2	2	1
	32	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>17</b>	33	2	2	1	1	1	1
	34	2	2	1	1	1	1
<b>Total</b>		37	29	0.78	34	27	0.79

Table 4 shows a total of 37 criticisms produced in Phase One and a total of 34 criticisms realized in Phase Two. It also shows a total of 29 criticism formulas for Phase One and a total of 27 criticism formulas for Phase Two. The average number of constructive formulas per criticism in Phase One is 0.78, almost the same as that of Phase Two (0.79).

Paired samples t-test was conducted for the mean number of criticism formulas per criticism for those learners who participated in both phases. No significant differences between the two phases were found.

In many cases, the learners used the same criticizing sub-strategies and semantic formulas in the two phases. Moreover, they produced very similar wordings. For instance, Learner 1 employed “An explicit statement of a problem” in both phases to criticize his/her peer’s introduction. His/her wordings were almost the same in the following two examples:

Phase One: *“I think it was somehow a long introduction but not motivating”*.

Phase Two: *“I think that was problem of introduction. It didn’t attract our attention”*.

Thus, in view of the above findings, it could be concluded that the OPFT was capable of fairly consistently eliciting the speech act under inquiry.

#### ***2.4.2.2 The oral discourse completion task.***

##### *2.4.2.2.1 The rationale for using the oral discourse completion task.*

The DCT is a data gathering tool used in pragmatics to elicit particular speech acts. Its items consist of a short prompt describing the setting and situation followed by (at least) a one-sided RP as an open slot to be completed by the participant (hence the term “discourse completion”). The prompt generally includes information on social distance between the interlocutors and pre-event background to guide the participants in constructing the scenarios. This instrument was originally developed by Shoshana Blum-Kulka for studying speech act realizations comparatively between native and non-native Hebrew speakers based on E. Levenston’s work (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989).

Bonikowska (as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2002) mentions that the DCT formats vary in a number of ways:

- 1) Whether they include a first pair part or rejoinder, rejoinder type;
- 2) Whether respondents have to provide both (or all) discourse contributions;
- 3) Whether the instructions include specific reference to opting out, that is, choosing not to perform the act in question, thus, permitting the researcher to identify sociopragmatic differences in the appropriateness of communicative acts

In the study reported in the present thesis, an ODCT is used to cross-check the OPFT data as Kasper (as cited in Barron, 2002) maintains that a combination of different instruments of data collection is likely to help reduce task bias. The ODCT is chosen in particular as a data gathering tool in the present study for many reasons. First, it is easy to administer and suitable for collecting large amounts of data in a short time. Second, it allows the researcher to control features of the situation. Third, data elicited with the ODCT are consistent with naturally occurring data, at least in the main patterns and formulas (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000; Golato, 2003). Last but not least, the ODCT encourages oral production, the mode of constructive peer criticisms the present study is concerned with. It might be argued that the RP also encourages oral production but it is not chosen as a data gathering tool in the present study as it is believed that it cannot



fully provide information about the learners' declarative knowledge of the L2 pragmatics due to the processing load exerted on them.

Despite its advantages, the ODCT has limitations. First, unlike the written DCT, data from the ODCT needs transcription. Second, its data do not show the interactional facets of a speech event. This limitation was not a major problem as investigating the interactional aspects of constructive peer criticisms is not one of the present study's purposes.

#### *2.4.2.2.2 Piloting the oral discourse completion task.*

Piloting the ODCT aimed at verifying whether or not it is capable of eliciting constructive peer criticisms as intended. Piloting the OPFT was done in two phases. In Phase Two, in addition to verifying whether or not this task would succeed in eliciting criticisms consistently, another aim was to pre-trial the ODCT intended for the experiment. This instrument was tested on the remaining 6 out of 12 dyads of the first sub-group and 6 out of 11 dyads of the second one who did not take part in piloting the OPFT in Phase Two. Piloting the ODCT was carried out in the second part of the Oral Expression session on the same day the OPFT was piloted in the second phase. This was exactly in the first week of Nov. 2016.

Coding of the data revealed that all five situations were capable of eliciting constructive peer criticisms. Piloting the instrument yielded a total of 110 constructive criticisms realized via 145 criticism formulas. The average number of criticism formulas per criticism was 1.32.

Table 5 *Number of Constructive Peer Criticisms Produced by the Learners in the Pilot Study of the ODCT*

Sub-groups	Dyads	Learners	Phase One		
			Number of Constructive criticisms	Number of constructive criticism formulas	Average
The first sub-group	1	1	5	6	1.20
		2	5	5	1
	2	3	5	7	1.40
		4	5	5	1
	3	5	5	8	1.60
		6	5	10	2
	4	7	5	5	1
		8	5	6	1.20
	5	9	5	5	1
		10	5	7	1.40
	6	11	5	6	1.20
		12	5	7	1.40
The second sub-group	13	25	5	6	1.20
		26	5	5	1
	14	27	5	6	1.20
		28	5	9	1.80
	15	29	5	11	2.20
		30	5	5	1
	16	31	5	8	1.60
		32	5	5	1
	17	33	5	6	1.20
		34	5	7	1.40
<b>Total</b>			110	145	1.32

The instruction of the ODCT used in the present study reads, “Imagine that you are in the Oral Expression class. Your classmate has just done an oral presentation. S/he and your teacher ask you to give feedback on it. What would you say in each of the following situations?” When reading this instruction and the accompanying situations, the participants were unsure whether they were supposed to refer back to the real peer-feedback task that they did before or to an imaginary one. The researcher recognized that the instruction was not well worded and amended it as follows for the main study (experiment): “Imagine that you are in the Oral Expression class. Your classmate has just done an oral presentation. S/he and your teacher ask you to give feedback on it. In reference to this imaginary presentation that your classmate has just done, what would you say in the following hypothetical situations?”

## **2.5 The Experiment**

### **2.5.1 The pretest.**

The aim of the present study’s pretest is to test both the experimental and control group before starting the treatment to make sure that they are similar in terms realizing constructive peer criticisms. The pretest consists of two tasks: the OPFT and the ODCT.

The OPFT pretest was administered in the second and third weeks of Feb. 2016. Participants of both groups were alphabetically divided into two groups by the researcher. The experimental group had 26 learners in each sub-group and the control group consisted of 24 learners in each sub-group. The researcher made sure to have an even number of learners in each sub-group so that they could work in pairs as this study is concerned with constructive criticisms directed to peers. The OPFT pretest was administered in both groups’ regular class. Data collection took two sessions for the experimental group and two others for the control group. Each session lasted three hours. In general, data gathering procedures of the OPFT pretest were identical to those of the pilot study.

In addition to the OPFT, the pretest also consists of the ODCT. The ODCT pretest (Appendix E) was administered to both groups in their regular Oral Expression classes in the fourth week of Feb. 2016. The division of the students (two sub-groups) that was used in the OPFT was kept in the ODCT. In both groups, in order to have the learners answer the questions at ease, the researcher told them that she would like to

know how they would respond to some academic situations in English and that their responses are just for the sake of research and will not be scored. She explained the purpose of the task, the instructions and the five hypothetical scenarios. Then, she called the participants to her desk one by one and gave each the sheet of the ODCT which consists of two parts: the introduction and the task. The introduction explains the purpose of the ODCT and encourages the participants to ask questions if anything is not clear before doing the task. It is worth mentioning here that though the task instructed the students to provide spoken responses, they were handed a sheet written on it the instruction and the scenarios of the ODCT for the sake of practicality.

The task elicited constructive peer criticisms via five situations. These situations were based on the frequently occurring topics of constructive criticisms revealed via the pilot study of the OPFT, namely: the topic, organization of the presentation and its clarity, preparation, ideas, vocabulary, grammar as well as pronunciation. Referring to these topics would make the task more naturalistic. The instruction reads, “Imagine that you are in the Oral Expression class. Your classmate has just done an oral presentation. S/he and your teacher ask you to give feedback on it. In reference to this imaginary oral presentation that your classmate has just done, what would you say in the following hypothetical situations?”

The five situations are:

- (1) If you think that the topic was not well focused and/or researched;
- (2) If you think that your classmate wandered off the topic, his/her ideas were not properly linked, his/her presentation was not organized and hard to follow, his/her delivery was not fluent and expressive, or s/he did not speak clearly;
- (3) If you think that your classmate was not well prepared, not in control of the sequence, pacing and flow of the presentation, and/or s/he relied heavily on notes;
- (4) If you think that your classmate’s ideas were superficial, unclear, irrelevant and not well supported by evidence and examples;
- (5) If you think that your classmate’s English is poor in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, etc.

## 2.5.2 The instructional treatment.

### 2.5.2.1 Instructional target forms.

There are two instructional targets in the present study: constructive criticism strategies and mitigators. As far as constructive criticism realization strategies are concerned, all strategies shown in Table 1 were targeted so as to make the study more comprehensive. For the criticism mitigation devices, both forms of modifiers (external and internal) shown in Table 2 were included in the treatment too. As far as the social distance and relative power of participants are concerned, since the present study deals with EFL learners' performance of constructive criticism in equal-status academic exchanges, the instructional treatment was concerned with how to give constructive criticism to peers only and not to people of higher or lower social statuses. All participants of the experimental group received the treatment as part of their curricular activity during regular class periods.

### 2.5.2.2 Instructional materials, procedures and time.

This sub-section is devoted to the materials and procedures used in the treatment. For the sake of brevity, only one lesson plan (Week 1) appears here so as to give the reader an idea about the instructional objectives, materials, procedures, etc. The other lesson plans along with the instructional handouts appear in the appendices (Appendix F). The teacher adopted an explicit teaching approach based mainly on teacher-fronted discussions, metapragmatic explanations, conscious-raising activities, and teacher explicit corrective feedback.

<b>Course:</b> Oral Expression	<b>Level:</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	<b>Week:</b> 1	<b>Time:</b> 170 m
<b>Lesson:</b> Understanding the Nature of Constructive Peer Criticism			
<b>Objectives:</b>			
By the end of this lesson, learners should be able to:			
1. Distinguish between constructive and destructive peer criticism			
2. Know the academic situations which require providing constructive peer criticism			
3. Understand the characteristics of constructive peer criticism			
4. Recognize the importance of accepting constructive criticism from peers			

5. Provide and handle constructive peer criticism
<b>Materials:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Instructional worksheets and handouts</li><li>2. Video on giving and receiving negative criticism along with its vignette</li><li>3. Role plays designed by the researcher</li></ol>
<b>Procedure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As a warm up, the teacher tells an anecdote then asks the students to guess what the lesson is about.</li><li>• The teacher discusses with the students their experiences of giving and receiving criticism (from parents, friends, teachers, peers, customers, etc.). This task should take 15 minutes.</li><li>• The teacher explains the meaning of academic constructive criticism and explains its sources briefly: self-criticism, teacher criticism and peer criticism.</li><li>• The teacher divides the class into groups of four learners and then gives a worksheet (Worksheet 1) to each group and asks them to work together in order to answer its questions. The learners need ten minutes to work on this task.</li><li>• After the learners finish the task, they read their answers aloud. The teacher refrains from commenting on the groups' responses at this stage because these comments may distort the learners' answers at later stages.</li><li>• Keeping the same sub-groups, the teacher distributes a worksheet (Worksheet 2) to the learners and asks them to answer the questions in ten minutes.</li><li>• The teacher holds a 15 minutes teacher-fronted discussion (a series of teacher-learners questions and answers) that attempts to raise learners' consciousness of the difference between constructive and unconstructive peer feedback. She elicits the characteristics of constructive peer feedback from the learners.</li><li>• The teacher explains Handout 1 to the learners. The explanation lasts for 15 minutes.</li><li>• The teacher has the students review the vignette of a video titled "For Every Action there is an Equal Reaction: How to Act when Giving and</li></ul>

Receiving Negative Criticism”. Reviewing the vignette should not take more than two minutes.

- The teacher introduces the video to the class.
- The teacher holds a 10-minute teacher-fronted discussion that attempts to explore the message provided in the video.
- The teacher asks the students to draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. At the top of the left column, she asks them to write “Do”; and at the top of the other column, she has them write “Don’t”. She gives them five minutes to think about the appropriate and inappropriate rules of accepting and providing constructive peer criticism.
- When five minutes are up, the teacher asks them to read their lists and discusses with them the similarities and differences in their opinions. She lets them know if their lists matched those on Handout 2.
- The teacher asks two volunteers to read a script of a role play about giving and receiving unconstructive peer criticism then act it out. The teacher asks the students some questions about the role play.
- The teacher asks students to recall the most important points of the lesson then think of some constructive criticisms and read them aloud. This task should take 20 minutes.
- The teacher dictates two criticism situations and asks the students to work individually and imagine themselves constructive peer criticism providers using what they have learned in the lesson. The students take 15 minutes to do this task.
- The teacher asks volunteers to read their answers aloud and provides explicit comments for the inappropriately realized criticisms.
- The teacher asks the students to imagine another situation where they might use constructive peer criticism, decide how to address the problem using the new learnt skill and share their responses with the whole class. This practice should take ten minutes

### **2.5.3 The progress tests.**

The experiment was chunked into three phases corresponding to the instructional aims. By the end of each teaching unit, a progress test was administered to both groups in order to track the students' development in realizing the speech act in focus. As far as the assignment of students into dyads is concerned, the same dyads used in the pretest were kept throughout the three progress tests and posttest for two reasons: First, this helps students build trust and honesty, and second, the researcher holds the dyads accountable for their work (providing constructive peer criticism). However, the product to be criticized by peers in the OPFT changed from one progress test to another in order not to cause boredom for the learners and hence distract their attention. In the first progress test, every learner was asked to provide critical feedback on his/her peer's performance of an autobiographical play acted in the classroom. In the second progress test, motivational speeches were used as to-be criticized product while in the third one, comedies were employed. For the ODCT, its design remained identical throughout all the tests. However, slight changes in the wording of the scenarios and their order took place in order to avoid practice effect. The administration of each progress test took three three-hour sessions for both groups.

### **2.5.4 The posttest.**

By the end of the investigation, a posttest was administered to both groups in their regular class periods. It also consisted of the OPFT and ODCT. For the former, the same dyads were used and learners were instructed to provide feedback on their peers' oral presentations as they did in the pretest. For the latter, the same ODCT pretest was employed with slight modifications in wording and order of scenarios. For both groups, the administration of the posttest took two three-hour sessions only as students became familiar with the procedures of the tests. The following table summarizes the activity timeline of the present study.



Table 6 *The Activity Timeline*

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the preliminary questionnaire</li> <li>• Administering the pre-AS to the experimental group</li> <li>• Administering the OPFT pretest (1<sup>st</sup> sub-group)</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Nov. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the OPFT pretest (2<sup>nd</sup> sub-group)</li> </ul>	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of Nov. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the ODCT pretest</li> </ul>	4 <sup>th</sup> week of Nov. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 1<sup>st</sup> chunk of the treatment</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> week of Dec. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 1<sup>st</sup> OPFT progress test (1<sup>st</sup> sub-group)</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Dec. 2016
Winter holidays	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> week of Dec. 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 1<sup>st</sup> OPFT progress test (2<sup>nd</sup> sub-group)</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> week of Jan. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 1<sup>st</sup> ODCT progress test</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Jan. 2017
1 <sup>st</sup> term exams	3 <sup>rd</sup> + 4 <sup>th</sup> week of Jan. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 2<sup>nd</sup> chunk of the treatment</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> + 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Feb. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 2<sup>nd</sup> OPFT progress test</li> </ul>	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of Feb. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 2<sup>nd</sup> ODCT progress test</li> </ul>	4 <sup>th</sup> week of Feb. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 3<sup>rd</sup> chunk of the treatment</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Mar. 2017
Spring holidays	3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> week of Mar. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 3<sup>rd</sup> OPFT progress test</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> week of Apr. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the 3<sup>rd</sup> ODCT progress test</li> </ul>	2 <sup>nd</sup> week of Apr. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the OPFT posttest</li> </ul>	3 <sup>rd</sup> week of Apr. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the ODCT posttest</li> </ul>	4 <sup>th</sup> week of Apr. 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administering the WSR and the post-AS to the experimental group</li> </ul>	1 <sup>st</sup> week of May 2017

2 <sup>nd</sup> term exams	2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> week of May 2017
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## 2.6 Data Transcription and Coding

After data of the pretest, the three progress tests and posttest were recorded, they were transcribed and then coded by the researcher. The transcription conventions used in the present study were based on the work of Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cumming and Paolino (1993) shown in Appendix J. Coding of constructive criticism realization strategies and semantic formulas is done according to the taxonomy adapted from Nguyen (2013) and categorization of modifiers is determined based on the taxonomy of mitigation devices adapted from House and Kasper (1981). They are already shown in Chapter One (1.1.5.3 and 1.1.5.4).

## 2.7 Data Analysis

### 2.7.1 Rating of constructive criticism competence.

As said earlier, as contextualized language use has increasingly become fundamental for L2 communicative competence, close attention has been turned over methods for assessing pragmatic competence. Comprehension of implicatures and routines as well as production of speech acts have been the most targeted pragmatic constructs for assessment. Rating scales have used two types of aspects: pragmatic-specific and general command of language use. The former includes the use of strategies as well as semantic moves to support speech acts, levels of formality, directness, politeness, and clarity of intention. However, the latter incorporates aspects of grammar, word choice as well as typicality of expressions, coherence and amount of speech. In fact, rating scales can be analytic or holistic. The former reveals breakdowns in the learners' performance in each of the aforementioned dimensions while the latter notes general impression of their performance comprising all dimensions (Taguchi, 2011).

The study reported in the present thesis adopted an analytic approach to assessing constructive peer criticisms. A rating scheme was developed to determine whether or not the acceleration (if any) in the learners' level of producing linguistically

accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms is a result of formal pragmatic-focused instruction. The technique of rating is used in the present study because of its practicality: First, it allows assessing performances that consist of both appropriate and inappropriate features. Second, it permits to assess pragmatic and linguistic features concurrently. The subsequent sub-section sheds light on the basic assumptions of the nature of pragmatic competence on which the rating scale is based.

### *2.7.1.1 Operationalizing the construct of speech-act competence.*

The literature on pragmatic competence is rich with a number of terms that have attempted to describe it. Nevertheless, these terms are quite difficult to define for evaluative purposes. A favored definition in literature associates speech act competence with the ability of language users to match sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate. Although appropriateness seems to be the ultimate concern of pragmatic competence, this view unfortunately poses problems because appropriateness incorporates many factors and is therefore difficult to characterize in particular contexts. In other words, it is true that NSs performance may illustrate appropriateness but the problem lies in the fact that what they exactly use might be different from what they consider appropriate. Hymes (as cited in Morrow, 1995) maintains that NSs' data tells us whether or not and to what extent something is said (i.e. occurrence) but it slightly helps in understanding whether or not something is appropriate in a certain context (i.e. appropriateness). What might illustrate the "dichotomy" of occurrence-appropriateness could be the NSs' non-usage of the expression of "I'm sorry", for instance, to express regret when realizing the speech act of refusal. One cannot deduce that they do not consider this semantic formula inappropriate for refusals (Morrow, 1995).

Another problem that pertains to associating pragmatic competence with appropriateness is that appropriateness is affected by personality. McNamara and Roever (2006), for example, state that pragmatic assessments tend to focus on "testing appropriateness in the context of social relationships" (sociopragmatics) or "testing linguistic forms necessary to achieve communication" (pragmalinguistics) (p. 56) and caution that "[j]udgements of what is and what is not appropriate differ widely among [speakers] of a language and are probably more a function of personality and social background variables than of language knowledge" (p. 57).

In fact, speech act competence has something to do with Spitzberg's (1988) work that aims at investigating the problems of developing construct validity for non-linguistically oriented assessment procedures of communication competence. By means of a comprehensive survey, Spitzberg assessed interactional and social competence in fields such as social psychology, clinical psychology, behavioral therapy, education, and business. He summarizes the problems that pertain to defining communicative competence as follows. If communicative competence is considered "the ability to interact well with others" (Spitzberg, 1988: 68), what does the term "well" exactly mean? He states that competence is evaluated conventionally in terms of "quality". In other words, there are some relevant criteria of adequacy to judge a particular communication behavior in any given particular context.

It is worth mentioning here that Spitzberg (1988) thinks that competence is context-dependent. He says that "Competence is a judgment made about a given behavior or set of behaviors, and made in reference to socially negotiated criteria of relevance to the context in which behavior is performed and evaluated" (p. 68). For him, a communicative behavior can be evaluated as competent or not according to the context in which it is performed. Spitzberg gives the example of a flirtation behavior (such as a smile or a joke) which can be quite acceptable in an informal party but unlikely to be evaluated as competent in a job interview or in the receipt of tragic news. Thus, he maintains that competence "is not an ability or set of skills or behaviors per se, but a judgment about the adequacy or value of that behavior in context" (p. 68).

In viewing competence as a context-dependent evaluative inference related to "quality", Spitzberg (1988) attributed the following features or attributes to it: accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness. All of them seem to be governed by a general concept of quality, but appropriateness and effectiveness seem to be the most accepted criteria, partly because they subsume many of the other characteristics.

Appropriateness refers to the agreeableness or suitability of behavior to a given context. It is often equated with conventional standardized behavior which avoids violating the expectancies or rules of the situation. A problem with this view, as Spitzberg (1988) puts forward, is that an action may be novel but competent, and therefore not normative or expected. He gives the example of a person who invites

another to view an art auction or exhibition, feed parrots at an exotic bird rehabilitation site, or walk a path through a park as a first date (creative behavior) instead of meeting him/her at a social place where food and drink and music are present (normative behavior). Thus, the best communicator is not the one who conforms to the standardized societal norms of behavior but who redefines the very nature of the situation when s/he faces it for the first time and finds a way of renegotiating its rules (Dailey, Pfiester, Jin, Beck, & Clark, 2009).

Effectiveness, on the other hand, is often equated with the ability to achieve relatively desired outcomes in a given context (Spitzberg, 1988). A problem with this equation, in Spitzberg's eyes, is that there are contexts in which any action may produce undesired outcomes such as delivering bad news. Nonetheless, there are more and less competent ways of delivering such news. Therefore, effectiveness refers to "the achievement of outcomes that are preferable *relative to* (Italics as in the original) the possibilities the context permits, even if this means the best way of minimizing losses or costs" (Spitzberg, 2009: 76). Spitzberg and Cupach (2002) assert that effectiveness and appropriateness go hand in hand to a great extent in the sense that a person who is capable of communicating in a way that is perceived as effective at achieving preferable outcomes, and doing so in a way that preserves the collective sense of appropriateness in a given context, is likely to have performed in a manner of high quality (i.e. competent).

In trying to conceptualize pragmatic competence, Spitzberg (1988) is not the only one who emphasizes appropriateness and effectiveness. Imahori and Lanigan's (1989) study in the area of cross-cultural communicative competence insists on these attributes too. They develop a comprehensive model of intercultural communication competence that incorporates both concepts. They go even further than this and criticize earlier models which tended to emphasize either the skills shown during interaction (i.e. appropriateness) or the speaker's success at the end of the interaction (i.e. effectiveness).

Answering the question of which of these two, if either, should be accorded primary significance in defining pragmatic competence, both qualities are equally useful in the sense that the means and the ends of interpersonal communication are important aspects of speech-act competence. It is noteworthy that their importance

depends on many factors. A NNS's refusal may be effective by achieving the desired results even though it is not appropriate simply because it is more or less easy for a hearer to infer the speaker's intended intention. However, an inappropriate complaint carried out by the same NNS may not be effective.

### ***2.7.1.2 Politeness and clarity as major components of constructive criticism competence.***

Despite the rich literature on ILP, there are hardly any studies elucidating the qualities of NNSs' skillful pragmatic performance. It seems that the already existing pragmatic research has only contributed to explaining the concept of pragmatic competence by scrutinizing instances of pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983), but it has not made its criteria clear-cut yet. As already discussed in Chapter One (Theoretical Overview), Grice's (1975) conversational maxims as well as Brown and Levinson's (1978) face-saving theory are thought of as the basis of an analytic system for assessing pragmatic competence. The efforts of pragmaticians, though not primarily intended to be evaluative, provides a broader framework for making judgements about NNSs' ability to perform constructive criticisms.

Attempting to found the fundamentals of pragmatically-competent behavior, both Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) consider clarity and politeness the two ultimate concerns of speakers. However, other variations of this "pair" exist. Bühler's (1934) "representative/expressive" dichotomy is the pioneering of these functional dichotomies. Bühler's view influenced Jakobson who puts forward the "referential/emotive" functions of language (Morrow, 1995). The referential function refers to the context, and emphasizes that communication is always dealing with something contextual, what Bühler calls representative. This function can be matched with the cognitive use of language, which emphasizes the informational content of an utterance, and virtually deemphasizes the focus on the speaker or on the addressee. On the other hand, the emotive function focuses on the addresser, and it is best manifested by way of emphatic speech, interjections and other sound changes that do not alter the denotative meaning of the utterance but tells about the speaker's internal state. It mirrors Bühler's expressive function (Jakobson, 1963).

Bühler's and Jakobson's functional dichotomies are not the only ones that echo clarity and politeness but Halliday's, Lyons's, Brown and Yule's and Littlewood's also

do (Morrow, 1995). To start with, Halliday comes up with the “ideational/interpersonal” purposes of language. While the ideational function is responsible for “constructing representations of the world”, the interpersonal one is responsible for “constituting social interactions” (van Leeuwen, 2006: 290). The former resembles clarity and the latter corresponds to politeness. Another division that is quite similar to Halliday’s (1978) is Lyons’s (1977) “descriptive/social-expressive”. Lyons (1977) asserts that there are three types of meaning: descriptive, social and expressive. While descriptive meaning is related to grammatical meaning (the meaning in terms of grammar), social and expressive meanings are two types of pragmatic meaning. Although the social and expressive meanings differ in that social meaning “serves to establish and maintain social relations” (Lyons, 1977: 51) and expressive meaning is more particular to the individual and characterizes the particular meaning that individuals add to language when they speak, the distinction between them is far from being clear-cut and both can be grouped under a single term such as “interpersonal”, “expressive” or “emotive”. Another distinction that is quite similar to Lyons’s is Brown and Yule’s (1983) transactional and interactional language functions. While transactional language expresses “content”, interactional language has the function of “expressing social relations and personal attitudes”. The former parallels clarity whereas the latter includes forms of attention to the face needs of others and hence echoes politeness. Last but not least, Littlewood’s functional and social meanings of language (1992) also stand in general correspondence to clarity-politeness dichotomy. While the former means the communicative purpose words have, e.g. asking, suggesting, hinting, etc.; the latter implies that words can mirror the relationship between people, for example what they feel for each other or what they want from each other.

The above-mentioned functional dichotomies do not stand in general correspondence to clarity and politeness only but to effectiveness and appropriateness to some extent too when applied to face-threatening speech acts. Like effectiveness, clarity is primarily related to the speaker’s ability to achieve his own goals, while appropriateness and politeness correspond to his/her ability to meet the needs of his addressee. It is a matter of fact that the status of clarity and politeness in authentic speech is clearer than in elicited or simulated speech for in the former the concepts of clarity and politeness are connected to the outcomes of the interaction while in the latter,

their status is ambiguous as hearers may be informed of what speakers want before they begin speaking. Stated differently, the reactions of the allied interlocutor (be s/he speaker or hearer) are never necessarily representative of how effective or successful s/he would be in comparable real-life situations.

### ***2.7.1.3 Criteria of rating constructive criticism politeness.***

Successful interaction takes place when people interact with others without threatening their face wants. As already explained in 1.1.4.2.2, speakers can choose positive politeness or negative politeness strategies to do some redressive work of mitigating the face-threatening force of a speech act. Positive strategies are mainly adopted to satisfy hearers' wants of being liked or acknowledged (solidarity), while negative politeness strategies are used to meet their wants of being respected and recognized (deference) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The politeness rating scheme used in the present study made no preference of one politeness type to the other.

The sub-scheme is a 4-point Likert scale which has four defined levels: Very Polite (Level 4), Polite (Level 3), Impolite (Level 2), and Very Impolite i.e. Rude (Level 1). While the first three levels were largely differentiated by the extent to which the subjects succeeded in meeting the face wants of their interlocutors, Level 1 is distinguished by the speaker violating and intentionally or unintentionally confronting the common norms of interpersonal interaction. The adjectives that correspond to the aforementioned levels are: Level 4 "Strong", Level 3 "Moderate", and Level 2 "Very little". Level 3 in politeness rating scale approximates the minimum level of conventional politeness generally shown by NSs. The construct of oral proficiency was taken into consideration when designing the rating scheme since it affected the hearers' ability of understanding what was intended. Its consideration appeared under the sub-heading of "Execution" in Levels 2, 3 and 4 where deviations from NSs' norms of accuracy (lexis, grammar and pronunciation) and appropriateness lowered politeness scores.

### ***2.7.1.4 Criteria of rating constructive criticism clarity.***

In addition to being relevant, informative, brief, truthful and orderly, being clear is a quality that hearers would like to see present in their interlocutors' speech (Grice, 1975). In the study reported in the present thesis, clarity refers to the speakers' ability



of accomplishing their prescribed illocutionary goals (here, realizing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms). It is worth mentioning here that a hearer-oriented understanding of clarity is maintained in this study. In other words, the easier hearers can interpret subjects' performance as constructive peer criticism, the more subjects are clear.

The clarity sub-scheme is similar to that of politeness in that it is a 4-point Likert scale which consists of four defined levels: Level 1 (*Very Unclear*), Level 2 (*Unclear*), Level 3 (*Clear*) and Level 4 (*Very Clear*). To remind the reader, Level 3 corresponds to the lowest level of clarity at which most NSs would realize constructive criticisms. The levels are described as follows:

Level 4: Never difficult to interpret as a constructive criticism

Level 3: Mainly easy to interpret as a constructive criticism

Level 2: Generally difficult to interpret as a constructive criticism

Level 1: Very difficult to interpret as a constructive criticism

Because constructive criticisms are mainly characterized by their indirectness of realization, some constructs that have to do with clarity are integrated in the rating scheme for the sake of defining the clarity scales more precisely and increasing rater reliability. They are the following: conventionality, explicitness, comprehensibility and completeness.

To start with, as far as conventionality and explicitness are concerned, very high levels of explicitness and directness are often avoided in English conversations as they reflect impoliteness. Using grammatical and lexical criteria to index directness, Blum-Kulka (1989) categorizes the directness levels that Australian speakers of English used to realize the speech act of requesting. He found that 9.8% of their request strategies were direct, 82.4% were conventionally indirect, and 7.8% were non-conventionally indirect. This tendency of indirectness is not prevalent in the Canadian French speakers' requests (24%) and Hebrew speakers' (33.4%). The clarity rating criteria categorizes constructive criticisms that make use of indirect forms, which are very conventional and therefore easily interpretable, at least under Level 3. Nevertheless, high degrees of indirectness that give rise to ambiguous and indecisive constructive criticisms are likely to lessen the clarity levels. Therefore, misleading constructive criticisms are assigned lower scores. Likewise, not easily interpretable

ones that are conveyed in non-conventional strategies score low.

It might be argued that directness is equated to explicitness and that direct approaches are pragmatically less skillful than the indirect ones, but the study reported in the present thesis adopts a pragmatic approach to evaluating constructive criticisms' clarity and not a grammatical or lexical one. "I'm sorry but ... I can't attend your wedding party." can be considered an indirect refusal as it does not contain words such as no, I will not, etc. but it is instantly recognizable as a refusal as it is conventional and therefore pragmatically clear though not necessarily explicit. On the whole, the general principle of clarity adopted in this study is that the easier constructive criticisms are recognized by hearers, the more that are considered clear. Additionally, clarity ratings are not designed to indicate pragmatic competence by themselves. Instead, they are intended to be considered together with politeness ratings.

In addition to conventionality and explicitness, comprehensibility is another construct that is integrated in the rating scheme of clarity when defining its scales. In general, comprehensibility refers to the quality of constructive criticisms being understandable. Specifically, it pertains to the effect of lexis, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation on the subjects' ability of realizing constructive peer criticisms. It did not escape our attention that oral fluency—including the rate and smoothness of speech—affects the intelligibility of this speech act but it is not taken into consideration in the clarity rating scheme as the subjects are intermediate-level EFL students and therefore it is not expected from them to realize constructive criticisms smoothly. This does not mean that oral fluency is disregarded completely; rather a minimum level of it is necessary to guarantee that the hearers understand the speakers' intention.

#### ***2.7.1.5 Criteria of rating constructive criticism linguistic accuracy.***

As the study reported in the present thesis aims at investigating the relative effect of pragmatic instruction on second year English major learners' ability of carrying out linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms, the rating scale does not consist of pragmatic appropriateness (politeness and clarity) only but of linguistic accuracy too. Linguistic accuracy is determined by the correct usage of relevant linguistic structures (e.g. Part of the correct linguistic structure when giving a piece of advice is "If I were in your place, I would..." but not "If I were

in your place, I will...”). It is worth mentioning here that the component of linguistic accuracy rated in the scheme is concerned with pragmatic-specific linguistic accuracy i.e. the one related to in/correct usage of targeted pragmalinguistic forms and modifiers and not general command of language use (aspects of grammar, word choice, coherence, etc.). In doing so, scores are assigned for both constructive criticism linguistic realization strategies and modifiers (softeners). The linguistic accuracy rating scheme is a 4-point Likert scale which consists of four levels. The constructive criticism competence analytic rubric is shown in the following table.

Table 7 *The Analytical Scoring Rubric Used in the Present Study*

<b>Component</b>	<b>Weight</b>	<b>Levels and descriptors</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
<b>Politeness</b>	2 ×	Level 1: Very impolite (Rude)	1	<p>The S violates a common norm of interpersonal interaction and therefore seems aggressive.</p> <p>Clearly contains at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discourse Style: The S berates the H so that the latter finds no chances to defend himself/herself.</li> <li>• Stimulus: The S exaggerates the scope of the problem.</li> <li>• Judgement: The S strongly and explicitly judges the H personally instead of describing (or at least judging) his/her performance.</li> <li>• Disapproval: It is expressed emphatically and seems insulting.</li> <li>• Rationale: The S keeps avoiding mentioning the rationale behind the criticism</li> <li>• Desired Change: Ordered</li> </ul>

		<p style="text-align: center;">Level 2: Impolite</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p>	<p>The S places a <b>very little</b> or <b>no</b> emphasis on meeting the face needs of the H.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The discourse style is <b>neither</b> cautious <b>nor</b> indirect (e.g. Using less polite modals such as <i>will</i> and <i>can</i> and when demanding change, using commands instead of requests)</li> <li>• The scope of the problem (stimulus) is <b>not</b> limited.</li> <li>• The way of expressing disapproval is <b>not</b> controlled.</li> <li>• <b>No</b> discomfort is shown when giving negative feedback.</li> </ul> <p>Execution: Deviations from NSs' norms of accuracy and appropriateness do interfere with the S's comprehensibility.</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;">Level 3: polite</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3</p>	<p>The S places a <b>moderate</b> emphasis on meeting the face needs of the H by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making the discourse style <b>kind of</b> cautious and respectful by being indirect or skillfully using elaboration and/or modification (e.g. Using more polite modals such as <i>would</i> and <i>could</i> and when demanding change, using requests rather than commands)</li> <li>• Making the scope of the problem (stimulus) <b>kind of</b> precise and limited.</li> <li>• Controlling the way of expressing disapproval <b>to some extent</b></li> <li>• Showing <b>some</b> discomfort about giving negative feedback</li> </ul> <p>Execution: Deviations from NSs' norms of accuracy and appropriateness occasionally interfere with the S's comprehensibility.</p>

		<p style="text-align: center;">Level 4: Very polite</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p>	<p>The S places a <b>strong</b> emphasis on meeting the face needs of the H by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making the discourse style <b>very</b> cautious and respectful by being indirect or skillfully using elaboration and/or modification (e.g. Using more polite modals such as <i>would</i> and <i>could</i> and when demanding change, using requests rather than commands)</li> <li>• Making the scope of the problem (stimulus) <b>very</b> precise and limited.</li> <li>• Controlling the way of expressing disapproval <b>well</b></li> <li>• Showing <b>much</b> discomfort about giving negative feedback (through hesitation or the use of interjections)</li> <li>• Using depersonalize statements (e.g. “Do not take it personally...”, “It’s not because <b>you</b> said/did...”)</li> <li>• Attributing the S’s disapproval of the H’s problematic action to its bad consequences</li> <li>• Stating that criticism is done for the H’s betterment of future action</li> <li>• Showing awareness of the H’s perspective on the situation and his probable feelings, (e.g. “I realize that you..., but...”)</li> <li>• Offering suggestions that help improvement</li> <li>• Expressing the S’s certainty that the H’s work will be much better next time</li> </ul> <p>Execution: Deviations from NSs’ norms of accuracy and appropriateness do not interfere with the S’s comprehensibility.</p>
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<b>Clarity</b>	2 ×	Level 1: Very unclear	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The speech act of constructive criticism bears very little resemblance to the common constructive criticism speech events because of the existence of one or more of the following conditions.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a.</b> The S shows contradiction in his criticism, e.g. by approving with the problematic behavior rather than disapproving which makes his criticism misleading.</li> <li><b>b.</b> All of the components are difficult to understand due either to their realization in unconventional strategies or incompleteness</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>Execution: Frequent errors of grammar, pronunciation, and/or lexis greatly detract from the subject's comprehensibility and hence make his criticism very difficult to understand.</p>
		Level 2: Unclear	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The speech act of constructive criticism partly resembles common constructive criticism speech events because of the existence of one or more of the following conditions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a.</b> The component of the stimulus is completely absent and not inferable from the other components.</li> <li><b>b.</b> Two or more components are difficult to understand due to:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The use of unconventional, indirect strategies (e.g., extended vague hinting, prolonged circuitous reasoning, etc.)</li> <li>2. Incompleteness</li> </ol> </li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>Execution: Errors of grammar, pronunciation, and/or lexis often detract from the subject's comprehensibility.</p>

<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	$1 \times$	Level 3: Clear	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The speech act of constructive criticism partly resembles common constructive criticism speech events because of the existence of one or more of the following conditions:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a.</b> The component of the stimulus is completely absent and not inferable from the other components.</li> <li><b>b.</b> Two or more components are difficult to understand due to:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The use of unconventional, indirect strategies (e.g., extended vague hinting, prolonged circuitous reasoning, etc.)</li> <li>2. incompleteness</li> </ol> </li> </ol>               Execution: Errors of grammar, pronunciation, and/or lexis often detract from the subject's comprehensibility.             </li> </ul>
		Level 4: Very clear	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The four major components (stimulus, rationale, consequences, and desired change) are either completely described and explicitly stated or can be inferred.</li> </ul> Execution: Errors of grammar, pronunciation or lexis rarely detract from the subject's comprehensibility.
	Level 1: Absolutely inaccurate	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorrect pragmalinguistic form + incorrect modifier (e.g. Your ideas would be more coherent if you are using transitional words). The correct form is "Your ideas could be more coherent if you use/used transitional words".</li> </ul>	
	Level 2: Slightly accurate	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorrect pragmalinguistic form + correct modifier (e.g. Your pronunciation is good but you must pay more attention to the pitch). The compliment "Your pronunciation is good" is to be awarded a score of 2 only because the head act "You must" is not appropriate.</li> </ul>	

		Level 3: Moderately accurate	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct pragmalinguistic form + incorrect connecting part/inaccurate modifiers (e.g. It would be better if you could revising it). The correct form is “if you could revise it”.</li> </ul>
		Level 4: Very accurate	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Correct pragmalinguistic form + correct connecting part/ accurate modifiers (e.g. You may want to explain this a little bit more).</li> </ul>

Adapted from: Morrow, 1995; Nguyen et al. (2012)

There are two main categories of rubrics that can be distinguished: holistic and analytical. In holistic scoring, the rater makes an overall judgment about the quality of performance, while in analytic scoring, the rater assigns a score to each of the dimensions (components) being assessed in the task. The choice between these two types is guided by the rater’s objective (Brookhart, 2013). It can be noticed that the rubric shown above is analytic and not holistic. Though time consuming to construct and score, the present study opts for an analytic rubric for the following reasons: First, an analytic scoring rubric allows us to track the students’ development in each component of constructive peer criticism at different time intervals and hence enables us to determine the effect of instruction on the separate components. Second, an analytic rubric is likely to yield more consistent scores across students and tasks. It can also be noticed that the rubric is weighted i.e. the components are not assigned the same point value. It is intended to be so because of two reasons: First, those components vary in importance. In the researcher’s eyes, politeness and clarity are more important than linguistic accuracy. Second, a weighted rubric makes calculating each student’s total score of a generated criticism and a whole task more practical as the final score can be 20. In a more detailed explanation, the full score of politeness is 4 and when weighted ( $\times 2$ ), it becomes 8; the full score of clarity is 4 and when weighted ( $\times 2$ ), it becomes 8 too; and the full score of linguistic accuracy is 4 and when weighted ( $\times 1$ ), it remains 4; the total score therefore becomes 20.



***B.VII.1.6 Reliability and validity of the scoring rubric.***

Because scoring has consequences on the results of any study in educational research or any other type of research (Black, 1998), it should be independent of who does it and the scores should be similar no matter when and where it is carried. The more consistent the scores are over different raters and occasions, the more reliable the assessment is thought to be (Moskal & Leydens, 2000). Although the “major threat to reliability is the lack of consistency of an individual marker” (Brown, Bull, & Pendlebury, 1997: 235), only seven studies in this review have reported on intra-rater reliability—the type of reliability the present study is concerned with as it has one scorer (The researcher).

In the present study, it is claimed that scoring is consistent because of the following reasons. First, the present study adopts a topic-specific analytic scoring rubric. In answering the question of whether or not analytic rubrics enhance the consistency of scoring, results from previous studies investigating intra-rater reliability indicate that they seem to aid raters in achieving high internal consistency when scoring performance tasks. Second, previous research has shown that reliability of an assessment can be raised to acceptable levels by: providing tighter restrictions to the assessment format, having scoring procedures well defined and having all students do the same task or test (Brennan, 1996). It is the case in this study, so reliability is most likely to be of an acceptable level. Third, a measure that was followed for further clarifying the levels of the scoring rubric is the use of anchor papers which are a set of scored responses that illustrate the nuances of the scoring rubric. The researcher prepared them then asked two fellow EFL teachers to use the rubric and those anchor papers to evaluate a sample set of responses in both tasks of the present study (OPFT and ODCT). There were no major discrepancies between the scores assigned by teachers. Last but not least, another measure that was considered to maintain scoring consistency in the present study is that the researcher (The scorer) was revising the established criteria from time to time throughout the scoring process.

As far as reliability is concerned, it is argued that using a scoring rubric, especially an analytic one, is likely to enhance reliability of scoring. However, it cannot be concluded that scoring with a rubric is probably more valid than scoring without. In other words, rubrics do not facilitate valid judgment of performance assessments and

this could be facilitated by using a more comprehensive framework of validity when validating the rubric (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). With regard to validity concerns in the development of the present study's scoring rubric, content validity is given consideration. This form of evidence is concerned with reflecting on the purpose and the objectives of assessment. The intention of the present investigation's assessment instruments is to elicit evidence of students' mastery within specific content areas; therefore, content-related evidence is judged to be the most appropriate. Content validity refers to the question of whether or not all the intended content is referred to in the scoring instrument (Moskal & Leydens, 2000). In the scoring rubric of constructive peer criticism competence, this was ensured during the development process of the rubric by discussions with two EFL experts who confirmed that the evaluation criteria of the scoring rubric cover all aspects of the intended content and more importantly, they do not address any extraneous content.

#### ***2.7.1.6 Scoring procedures of the oral peer-feedback task.***

As already said in 2.5.1, 2.5.3, and 2.5.4; students were not limited by a precise number of comments they should make on their peers' oral productions in the OPFT. So, some of them made more than one constructive criticism. A student's final score in this task, be it pretest, progress test or posttest, is obtained according to the following procedure: First, the final score for each constructive criticism is generated by summing the scores of politeness, clarity, and linguistic accuracy. Second, the total score of criticisms (in case the student generates more than one) is divided by the number of the criticisms made.

#### ***2.7.1.7 Scoring procedures of the oral discourse completion task.***

Unlike the OPFT which allows each student to produce more than one constructive peer criticism if s/he wishes, the ODCT permits him/her to generate only one criticism per each hypothetical situation. A student's final score in the ODCT, be it pretest, progress test, or posttest, is calculated according to the following procedure: First, the final score for each constructive criticism that corresponds to one hypothetical scenario is generated by summing the scores of politeness, clarity, and linguistic accuracy. Second, the sum of the five criticisms is divided by five (The number of hypothetical situations).

### ***2.7.1.8 Technique of statistical analysis.***

The present study aims at assessing the effect of pragmatic instruction on second year EFL learners' ability of realizing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. Since changes before and after instruction in the subjects' performances on a specific task are less important than the global changes in constructive peer criticism competence, the means of the OPFT and ODCCT were pooled together to get each group's score in the pretest, progress tests, and posttest. The t-test value was calculated to evaluate these differences. It was chosen as a statistical technique of data analysis because it allows us to assess whether or not the means of the experimental and control group are *statistically* different from each other.

### **2.7.2 Discourse analysis.**

Two tools of assessment were used to measure the change in the learners' performance of constructive peer criticisms as a result of instructional treatment: analytic rating of constructive peer criticism competence and discourse analysis. The former is based on the assumption that pragmatic competence is reflected through politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy and the latter is established on previous research classification of constructive criticism realization strategies, formulas and mitigation devices in addition to inductive techniques of analysis.

#### ***2.7.2.1 The rationale for using discourse analysis.***

In ILP, discourse analysis has been used to scrutinize discourse features such as head acts, semantic formulae and their sequences, modality markers, supporting moves, etc. This tool has been considered as an indirect evaluation of pragmatic competence through which functional, structural, and semantic differences between NSs and NNSs are depicted. This form of pragmatic evaluation has been advocated and implemented in recent pragmatic research on apologies, requests, and refusals on the grounds that it is the most valid way of making judgements about the extent to which NNSs' speech acts are native-like (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Beebe et al. 1990). It has even been used to identify the pragmatic deficiencies of NNSs. Russian speakers of English, for instance, were perhaps committing a pragmatic error when they used an illocutionary force indicating device "I'm telling you to ..." which made them sound excessively domineering (Thomas, 1984). Yet, whether or not pragmatic

differences between NNSs and NSs represent pragmatic deficiencies has been disputable.

Nevertheless, Hudson et al. (1992) claims that discourse features cannot be said to indicate levels of pragmatic competence. In such a way, he argues that researchers in ILP can only infer conjectures about the correspondences between appropriate and inappropriate discourse features and pragmatic competence. Thomas (1983), for example, attacks studies that try to set up a “hierarchy of politeness” by asking subjects to rate the levels of deference carried by different request forms (e.g., Can you..?, Could you..?, etc.). She concludes, “It would be fatuous to suppose that there is any absolute 'politeness quotient' which can be assigned unambivalently and out of context to a particular linguistic structure” (p. 97).

In the study reported in the present thesis, the purpose of discourse analysis is to (a) determine the frequencies with which the participants of both groups use various discourse features in both tasks (OPFT and ODCT), and (b) compare those frequencies between both groups to know whether or not they are due to instructional effects. The technique of discourse analysis was used in order to stand as an evidence of pragmatic development with which to corroborate the results of the analytic rating.

#### ***2.7.2.2 Coding framework of constructive criticism formulas and modifiers.***

The categorization of semantic formulas was done according to the taxonomy adapted from Nguyen (2013) and that of modifiers was determined based on the taxonomy of mitigation devices adapted from House and Kasper (1981).

#### ***2.7.2.3 Analytical technique***

The most used analytical technique by previous research is identifying the frequencies of discourse features. Using discourse analysis to determine the effectiveness of instruction on pragmatic competence, previous studies compared NNSs' data to NSs'. In other words, NSs' data have always been used as a means to establish the general range of acceptable discourse features for specific tasks (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). They have been the empirical basis on which researchers make tentative judgements of the appropriateness and/or acceptability of specific aspects in the NNSs' realizations of certain speech acts. For example, Beebe et al. (1990) compare NNSs' refusal data to that of NSs'. Results showed that some Japanese ESL refusals did not

contain “positive comment” phrases and this is likely to be considered a pragmatic deficiency.

However, using NSs’ data for comparative purposes has been criticized for the following reasons: First, as already discussed in 1.3.2.2, the range of linguistic formulae NSs often use might be different from and perhaps considerably narrower than what they consider appropriate/acceptable. Indeed, according to Hymes (as cited in Morrow, 1995), NSs’ data tell us whether or not and to what extent something is said (i.e. occurrence) but it slightly helps in understanding whether or not something is appropriate in a certain context (i.e. appropriateness). Second, another drawback of using NSs’ data for comparative purposes is that they do not allow for identifying the typical circumstances of intercultural communication (Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Piirainen-Marsh, 1991). Third, NSs’ data fail to pinpoint the developmental restrictions of low-proficiency NNSs (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985a).

As said above, discourse analysis can be used as an assessment tool to evaluate NNSs’ pragmatic competence by comparing their performance with NSs’. In the present study, however; for merely practical reasons (The difficulty of administering the OPFT and the ODCT to NSs and comparing this baseline data with the experimental group’s data in the pretest, progress tests, and posttest to see to what extent their performance of constructive criticisms in the different test conditions converges toward NSs’ norms and therefore determine the effect of instruction), discourse analysis is used in another attemptive form. More precisely, frequencies and percentages of constructive criticism semantic formulas and modifiers in the datasets of both groups in both test conditions (pretest and posttest) are compared. The aim of comparison is identifying discourse features that occur at substantially different frequencies in the pretest and posttest data of both groups.

In the present study, since NSs’ data were not used to provide an empirical basis for identifying evidence of pragmatic development, NSs’ norms of appropriate behavior in the realization of criticizing speech act already defined in previous literature were used as a standard to evaluate any observed developmental changes. In her ILP studies, Nguyen (2008) compares modifying L2 constructive criticisms between Vietnamese EFL learners and NSs of English and Nguyen (2013) compares constructive criticism realization strategies between the same populations. The chosen target norm for her

baseline TL data was used as a standard of NSs' pragmatic behavior in the present study. In Nguyen's two ILP studies, NSs' criticism behavior is characterized as follows: wide range use of criticism semantic formulas and modifiers, high frequency of modification, and preference for indirectness in criticism realization strategies. In the present study, these benchmarks were used as general guidelines of any pragmatic developmental changes in discourse features.

## **2.8 Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent, voluntary participation, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, avoiding harm to participants, honesty, objectivity, and respect for intellectual property are cardinal guidelines for research ethics that were emphasized by the researcher when conducting the present study. However, learners who took part in the quasi-experiment were not provided with detailed information about the study hypothesis, design, etc. It was believed that this can distort the way they do activities, answer questions, and behave in general. This can undermine the validity of the findings as Kimmel (1988) argues. All they were told is that they are requested to participate in a scientific research that is likely to benefit the teaching and learning of English. They were also informed that participation is voluntary and that non-participation or withdrawal will lead to no academic penalties or repercussion. Moreover, security measures were taken to secure data taken from the participants as well as their anonymity. To ensure anonymity, data collection and analysis of the ODCT, AS and WSR were kept under pseudonyms in all research processes. Opinions of colleagues in the same department were exchanged concerning the ethical considerations of the present study.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter details a description of the research methodology and design in order to determine how best to accomplish the purpose of the present study. Participants of the experiment belonged to two pre-existing classes of second year English major students at the English department of Batna 2 University. This investigation followed a quasi-experimental methodological design which consisted of a pretest, treatment and three progress tests, and a posttest. It used two test instruments (the OPFT and ODCT) to collect constructive peer criticisms from the participants of the experimental group and the control group. The rationale for choosing these tools in particular is explained.

The use of two test instruments allows to take advantage of triangulation by contrasting data from each data gathering tool. Both tools were piloted and their validity and reliability were established. Detailed description of the different tests, scoring scheme, the framework of analysis along with statistical analysis is outlined in this part too. The next one presents the results of data analysis.

## CHAPTER THREE: FIELD WORK

### 3.1 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Preliminary Questionnaire Data

#### 3.1.1 Rationale for using the students' preliminary questionnaire.

The present study aims at investigating the effect of pragmatic instruction on second year English major learners' ability of realizing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. It assumes that these learners face difficulties in realizing this speech act appropriately. At the same time, they feel uncomfortable to carry it out. This assumption is put forward based on the researcher's observation. However, observation alone cannot prove that the problem actually exists. Hence, it was thought of the necessity to administer a preliminary questionnaire to the members of the experimental and the control group before taking part in the experiment to confirm that the reason behind their reluctance of criticizing peers negatively is mainly lack of knowledge of pragmatic "protocols" and hence being afraid of hurting their peers' feelings. It is worth mentioning here that this questionnaire is described as *preliminary* to stress its function—standing as an evidence for the statement of the problem i.e. proving that the problem really exists. In doing so, it is distinguished from another questionnaire that aims, for instance, at answering the study's question(s) such as the teachers' questionnaire used in the present study.

#### 3.1.2 Description of the students' preliminary questionnaire.

Since the basic unit of the questionnaire is the question, considerations of questions' content, format, and sequencing were taken into account when formulating the questionnaire. Its elaboration from the first draft until the final one was a long process in which the following criteria were taken into account: Using clear and simple language as much as possible, avoiding ambiguity by formulating concrete questions, in addition to varying and sequencing them from the least to the more difficult.

As far as the design of the questionnaire is concerned, it consists of three sections. The first section concerns students' general information such as gender, age, nationality, mother tongue, duration of studying English, being to English-speaking countries, etc. The second section aims at investigating their perceptions of the



usefulness of constructive peer criticism and its face-threatening nature while the third one seeks to locate the difficulties they face when providing constructive peer criticisms. The questionnaire's final version in its whole comprises four open-ended questions, three closed-ended questions, four multiple choice questions, and three Likert scale questions.

### **3.1.3 Validity of the students' preliminary questionnaire**

Once the first version of the questionnaire was created, it was imperative to validate it to know whether or not it actually measures what it claims to measure. In the present study, content validity, a more sophisticated form of validity, was opted for as it is considered the best method that could provide more accurate information about the appropriateness of the items and their relevance to the study. Content validity refers to how accurately a tool taps into the various aspects of the specific construct in question (Wainer & Braun, 2013). Another way of saying this is that it primarily concerns the adequacy with which the data gathering tool items representatively sample the content area in focus.

Expert judgement was opted for to determine whether or not the instrument has content validity. In doing so, four subject-matter experts were invited to evaluate it. They are professors and doctors in different Algerian universities. Two apologized for not being able to cooperate. So, the expertise was done by two experts only. They were emailed a copy of the questionnaire. After analyzing it, they offered some comments that were mainly related to omitting some items and compacting the questionnaire since it is just explorative. Their feedback was taken into account and after getting approval from them, a refined version was developed.

### **3.1.4 Piloting the students' preliminary questionnaire.**

Because piloting is an important step that helps the researcher not only estimate the time it takes the participants to complete a survey questionnaire but more importantly identify any irrelevant questions or any problems with it that might cause biased answers (Hazzi & Maldaon, 2015), the students' preliminary questionnaire was first tried out on a small group of students that have the same profile as the participants of the study. The pilot study participants are a total of 29 students who belong to four different groups at the English department of Batna 2 University, Algeria. It would be

much practical for the researcher to conduct piloting on an intact group but because the time the questionnaire was tested (The third week of Oct. 2016), only few students joined their groups; it was inevitable to invite many students from different groups. The researcher told the participants that this questionnaire is part of a research project that they are not part in, and that answering it is not obligatory but their complete answers will help ensure the success of this research. All of them did it voluntarily.

Piloting the questionnaire led to the following modifications: First, the researcher included an item about the learners' nationality in the questionnaire's refined version because when the pilot study participants answered the question of the NL, two reported that theirs are official national languages of Niger, namely Kanuri and Tassawaq. Second, the question of "What is your first language?" in the questionnaire's first draft was changed to "What is your mother tongue? In other words, what is the language that you have been exposed to from birth?" in the revised draft. The reason behind this paraphrasing is that the question as asked in the pilot study led many of the respondents to ask whether or not their first language is Arabic though they are Chaoui or Kabyle. As far as the mother tongue is concerned, not only the question was paraphrased but also its type was changed from an open-ended question to a multiple-choice one with an option of "other, please specify" to make it clearer for the learners.

### **3.1.5 Reliability of the students' preliminary questionnaire.**

After collecting pilot data, the internal consistency of questions was checked in order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Internal consistency checks whether or not the responses are consistent across the items on a multiple-item measure (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach's alpha was used because it is the most standard test and easy to calculate using SPSS. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found 0.81 which means that questionnaire is satisfactorily reliable.

### **3.1.6 Administration of students' preliminary questionnaire.**

After the final draft of the questionnaire was elaborated, it was administered to both the experimental group and the control group in the second week of Nov. 2016 in their regular classes of Oral Expression. The researcher's presence during the questionnaire's administration allowed a high percentage of completion. During

piloting, she specified the average time needed for completing the survey. All the students finished it in less than 15 minutes.

### 3.1.7 Analysis and interpretation of the results

It is necessary to analyze the data collected in order to prove that the problem on which the statement of the problem is built actually exists. This section consists of the descriptive analysis and interpretation of each question separately. It ends with a conclusion in the form of a summary.

#### 3.1.7.1 Section One: Students' general information.

##### Items 1 through 9

Table 8 *Students' General Information*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		
<b>n</b>	24		76		
<b>(%)</b>	(24)		(76)		
<b>Age</b>	<b>Between [18-21] years old</b>	<b>Between [22-25] years old</b>	<b>Between [26-29] years old</b>	<b>30 years old or above</b>	
<b>n</b>	60	38	2	0	
<b>(%)</b>	(60)	(33)	(2)	(0)	
<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Algerian</b>			<b>Other</b>	
<b>n</b>	100			0	
<b>(%)</b>	(100)			(0)	
<b>Mother tongue</b>	<b>Arabic</b>	<b>Chaoui</b>	<b>Kabyle</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>n</b>	37	61	2	0	0
<b>(%)</b>	(61)	(61)	(2)	(0)	(0)
<b>Learning English</b>	<b>8 years</b>		<b>More than 8 years</b>		
<b>n</b>	83		17		
<b>(%)</b>	(83)		(17)		

<b>Overseas</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>English language learning experience</b>		
<b>n</b>	0	100
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(100)
<b>Specific instruction on critical peer feedback</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	0	0
	(0)	(0)

*Note.* In the whole thesis, n = Frequency, % = Percentage

With regard to the students' gender, the high number of females enrolled at the Department of English Language and Literature at Batna 2 University proves the common belief that females have more tendency towards studying FLs in general and English in particular. They enable them to be hired as language teachers or interpreters which are commonly considered as feminine jobs in Algeria. The number of males is nearly one fifth of females. Males generally tend to prefer scientific and technical streams.

As for age, Table 8 shows that 60% of the participants are aged between 18 and 21, 38% are aged between 22 and 25 and just 2% are aged between 26 and 29 years old. No respondent exceeds 29. This shows that the young learners have tendency to learn FLs more than the old ones. Furthermore, it reveals that English is chosen to be studied as a first major since majoring in two fields at the university simultaneously has been banned by the Algerian ministry of higher education in the recent years.

For nationality and mother tongue, Table 9 shows that all the respondents are Algerians. This item has been included because results of the pilot study showed that there are international students enrolled at the aforementioned department. For the mother tongue, most of the respondents speak Chaoui as a NL (61%). It is no surprise

to have this number if we know that Batna 2 University is situated in the region of the Aures which has a large population of Chaoui inhabitants. Thirty seven percent of the respondents (37%) speak Arabic as a mother tongue and 2% speak Kabyle.

As far as learning English as a subject is concerned, the majority of the respondents (83%) said that they have been learning English for 8 years on average. This is logical if we refer back to their reported age. The majority of the learners are aged between 18 and 21 which means that they studied according to the recent educational reforms which integrated English into their curriculum starting from the first year of middle school. More precisely, they learnt English four years in the middle school, three years in the secondary school and one year as a major at the university. For the respondents who reported that they learned English for more than 8 years, they might be repetitives or they might have studied English as a subject while they majored in other fields. No matter the participants took the course of English for 8 years or more, this period is quite enough to claim that they should be able to communicate in English fluently in the spoken and written form. Although no proficiency test was administered to them because of time constraints, second year learners of English at the English department of Batna 2 University are considered to be intermediate EFL learners.

As for the overseas learning experience and special training on how to criticize peers critically in whatever language, all the respondents answered negatively. The aim of these two items is to eliminate the respondents whose answers are positive from the experimental study. The phrase “pragmatic instruction” was avoided because the learners have not studied Pragmatics. This module is not taught until the first year of Mater for Language and Applied Linguistics option and second year of Master for Language and Culture option. Hence, participants are not probably familiar with the term “pragmatic”.

### ***3.1.7.2 Section Two: Learners’ perceptions of constructive peer criticism face-threatening nature.***

#### **Item 10: Learners’ perceptions of the usefulness of constructive peer criticism**

Table 9 *Learners' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Constructive Peer Criticism*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b> <b>n</b> <b>(%)</b>	<b>Agree</b> <b>n</b> <b>(%)</b>	<b>Neutral</b> <b>n</b> <b>(%)</b>	<b>Disagree</b> <b>n</b> <b>(%)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b> <b>n</b> <b>(%)</b>
<b>1</b>	93 (93)	2 (2)	5 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>2</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (4)	5 (5)	91 (91)
<b>3</b>	96 (96)	4 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>4</b>	1 (1)	3 (3)	11 (11)	17 (17)	68 (68)

Statement 1: It is helpful to get negative feedback from peers.

Statement 2: The negative feedback I get from my peers is often useless and wrong.

Statement 3: Negative peer feedback allows me to view learning critically and constructively.

Statement 4: It is more helpful to receive feedback only from the teacher.

This item aims at knowing the learners' perceptions of the usefulness of constructive peer criticism. Knowing this is important because it reveals to some extent their motivation and readiness to take part in peer feedback sessions. If their attitudes towards the usefulness of constructive peer criticism are negative, then they cannot fully be aware of the difficulties they face and will not wish to improve their performance.

This item addresses how much respondents agree/disagree with four statements. The highest percentage in a statement rating indicates a higher level of respondents' choice. Results of Statements 1 and 3 show that the respondents acknowledge and are aware of the usefulness of constructive peer criticism as 96% and 93% of them strongly agreed with them accordingly. This is what justifies their opposition with Statements 2 and 4 in which the highest percentages were for the option "strongly disagree". What attracts our attention too is that 11% of the learners' carry a neutral point of view towards the benefit of receiving negative feedback from the teacher only though 0% of them agreed or strongly disagreed with Statement 2 which says that "The negative feedback I get from my peers is often useless and wrong". In our view, those 11% which

hold an undecided stand classify the teacher's negative feedback higher than their peers' in terms of its efficiency, but they do not consider the latter wrong or useless.

### Item 11: Constructive peer criticism and face-saving issues

Learners' responses to this item are reported in Table 10.

Table 10 *Learners' Perceptions of the Face-threatening Nature of Constructive Peer Criticism*

Statements	Strongly agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly disagree n (%)
<b>1</b>	77 (77)	22 (22)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>2</b>	100 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>3</b>	89 (89)	4 (4)	2 (2)	5 (5)	0 (0)
<b>4</b>	81 (81)	10 (10)	7 (7)	2 (2)	0 (0)
<b>5</b>	100 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>6</b>	67 (37)	29 (45)	3 (3)	0 (0)	1 (1)
<b>7</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (4)	96 (96)
<b>8</b>	89 (89)	8 (8)	3 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)

Statement 1: The reason behind the learners' reluctance of providing negative oral peer feedback is not being able to detect errors in their peers' performances.

Statement 2: Providing negative peer feedback in the form of written comments is less embarrassing than face-to-face comments.

Statement 3: The reason behind the learners' reluctance of providing negative oral peer feedback is not being able to say it in a polite (appropriate) way.

Statement 4: Unsoftened negative oral feedback from the teacher is not as hurting as that from peers because of the teacher's authority.

Statement 5: Constructive peer criticism could be more honest if it was anonymous.

Statement 6: Unsoftened negative oral peer feedback can be destructive and counterproductive.

Statement 7: The degree of politeness and directness in negative oral peer feedback is not an issue because this feedback happens in an academic context.

Statement 8: I would have provided more constructive peer criticism if I had been able to deliver it politely and guaranteed that it does not cause embarrassment or discomfort to my peers.

Statements 1 and 3 tackle the reason behind the learners' unwillingness to provide oral negative peer feedback. Results of the former show that the majority of them (77) strongly agree with the statement which suggests that critical thinking is not the obstacle which makes them hesitant to criticize their peers negatively because after all no work is perfect. Statement 3 tries to dig deep into the reason by being more precise and suggesting that the problem is being unable to formulate negative oral peer feedback politely. It supports the learners' answers to Statement 1 as 89% of them strongly agree with it and no one strongly disagree. This proves that they suffer with face-saving issues.

What consolidates this more is the respondents' answers to Statements 2, 5 and 8. Having 100% of them, who strongly agree that providing negative peer feedback in the form of written comments is less embarrassing than face-to-face comments and that constructive peer criticism could be more honest if it was anonymous, strongly indicates the unease brought to them by negative oral peer feedback done in public. Indeed, 89% of the participants strongly agree and 8% of them agree that they would have provided more of it if they had been able to deliver it politely and guaranteed that it does not cause embarrassment or discomfort to their peers. This shows their motivation to participate in this activity if they were only able to guarantee that their faces and those of peers are kept safe. For the 3 learners who are undecided, this can be due to their demotivation, anxiety, poor linguistic proficiency, etc.

Statements 6 and 7 aim at knowing the learners' perceptions of the necessity of softening peer criticisms. Results of the former indicate that the majority of them (67%) perceive it as important and that its absence could make negative oral peer feedback destructive and counterproductive. Results of the latter show that no respondent agrees or even hold a neutral stance towards considering peers' politeness in criticism unimportant in academic contexts. This suggests the learners' emphasis on it as they consider it a crucial part in peer criticism which boosts learning.



### 3.1.7.2 Section Three: Students' difficulties when providing constructive peer criticism

#### Item 12. A. Frequency of providing oral constructive peer criticism

Table 11 *Frequency of Providing Oral Constructive Peer Criticism*

Options	n	(%)
Always	0	(0)
Often	5	(5)
Sometimes	7	(7)
Rarely	29	(29)
Never	59	(59)

As can be seen from Table 11, answers *never* and *rarely* took the lion's share with percentages of 59% and 29% respectively. *Often* and *sometimes* got very small portions while no respondent reports that s/he always criticizes peers critically. This echoes the learners' little participation in oral peer feedback sessions. This is probably due to some difficulties that they face. They are disclosed in part B of the same item.

#### B. Reasons of providing little oral constructive peer criticism

Table 12 *Reasons of Providing Little Oral Constructive Peer Criticism*

Options	n	(%)
You do not like to participate in the classroom.	9	(9)
Your English is poor.	46	(46)
You are afraid of hurting your peers' feelings.	77	(77)
You are afraid of speaking in public.	39	(39)
You cannot find negative points in your peers' performances so you do not have anything to say.	0	(0)
You feel ill at ease when you criticize peers.	57	(57)
Other	0	(0)

As indicated in Table 12, being afraid of hurting peers' feelings and being ill at ease when criticizing them took the dominant percentages between the options. The

poor linguistic proficiency and phobia of public speaking ranked third and fourth respectively. Lack of desire to speak in the classroom and having nothing to say came at the end of the list. No other reasons were mentioned by the respondents. Once again, these results prove that the main cause behind the learners' disinclination to criticize peers has to do with face-saving issues.

### Item 13. Students' self-report about their constructive peer criticism competence

#### 1. Critical thinking

Table 13 *Constructive Peer Criticism and Critical Thinking*

Statements	Yes n (%)	No n (%)
1. I am not able to think critically about my peers' performances.	0 (0)	0 (0)
4. I cannot detect mistakes in my peers' performances.	0 (0)	0 (0)
5. I face problems in deciding on the aspects of peers' performances I should comment on negatively.	13 (13)	87 (87)

As Table 13 displays, for Statement 1 and 2, all the respondents said that they are able of thinking critically of their peers' performances and therefore detecting their mistakes. When asked more precisely about whether or not they face problems in deciding on specific aspects they should comment on negatively, a small percentage of them reported that they do. However, analysis of the three statements reveals that it is not critical thinking which stands as an obstacle.

## 2. Linguistic proficiency

Table 14 *Constructive Peer Criticism and Linguistic Proficiency*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Yes n (%)</b>	<b>No n (%)</b>
<b>2.</b> I face problems in providing negative peer evaluation in correct English including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.	21 (21)	79 (79)
<b>8.</b> My English is not good enough to accomplish negative peer evaluation in the simplest way.	11 (11)	89 (89)

Results of Statement 2 and 8 show that a considerable number of respondents are hindered by language i.e. they face obstacles in criticizing their peers using correct English. However, only eleven (11) confessed that their English is poor that they cannot accomplish negative peer evaluation even in its simplest way. This can be explained by the heterogeneous nature of the respondents. It is true that it has been claimed earlier that though second year EFL learners of English have a good language proficiency, they are still unable to realize pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms based on the researcher's observation; but this is not true for all of them. Said differently, for the majority of learners, language is not the main factor behind their reluctance to provide constructive peer criticism, but unfortunately it is for some.

## 3. Clarity

Table 15 *Constructive Peer Criticism and Clarity*

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Yes n (%)</b>	<b>No n (%)</b>
<b>3.</b> I am not able to express my critical feedback in a way that my peers can easily understand that my intention is to convey negative constructive criticism and not something else such as praise.	0 (0)	100 (100)

7. I face problems in finding appropriate clear strategies to formulate my critical feedback in the form of negative comments.	19 (19)	81 (81)
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As Table 15 shows, in terms of clarity, results of Statement 3 indicate that the respondents do not suffer from extreme problems when expressing constructive peer criticism to the extent that their interlocutors fail in interpreting their intention as criticism. When it comes to finding clear strategies, 19 participants reported that they face problems in thinking of some in order to formulate their critical feedback in the form of negative comments. In general, clarity does not seem to pose an issue for the respondents.

#### 4. Politeness

Table 16 *Constructive Peer Criticism and Politeness*

Statements	Yes n (%)	No n (%)
6. I cannot convey my constructive criticism in a relatively softened way that is likely to make it less embarrassing for my peers.	89 (89)	11 (11)
9. I face problems in structuring my negative comments in a way that does not hurt my peers' feelings.	97 (97)	3 (3)

On the contrary of clarity, politeness seems to be the weakness of the majority of respondents as they expressed their inability to soften constructive criticism in a relatively softened way that is likely to make it less embarrassing and hurting for peers.

#### **Item 15. Challenges and desired aspects of mastery in constructive peer criticism realization**

Only 43 respondents out of 100 answered this question and they were not productive enough. This could be due to tiredness, boredom, unwillingness to write or

having nothing to say. The challenges they usually face and desired aspects they wish to master are summarized in the following table with examples.

Table 17 *Challenges and Desired Aspects of Mastery in Constructive Peer Criticism Realization*

<b>Code</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>n</b>
<b>Honesty</b> (Challenge)	<p>1. <i>If evaluation was anonymous, it would be more honest.</i></p> <p>2. <i>Most of the time, I find myself obliged to praise more than to criticize though I have much to say. If it was written on a piece of paper and my name was not written on it, I would have let it be more honest.</i></p>	17
<b>Linguistic accuracy</b> (Desired aspect of mastery)	<p>1. <i>I wish I could express myself (I mean constructive feedback to classmates) in a more beautiful language.</i></p> <p>2. <i>One area that I desire to master is saying sentences that have complex grammatical structures (long I mean) and also interjections so that I sound like native speakers.</i></p>	11
<b>Grammar</b> (Challenge)	<i>Sometimes my grammar deceives me especially when it comes to saying it orally.</i>	9
<b>Social issues</b> (Challenge)	<i>I am convinced that peer criticism helps students learn from each other, but it sometimes leads to bullying.</i>	9
<b>Anxiety</b> (Challenge)	<i>I usually don't involve myself in criticizing peers a lot because I am shy and this is my nature. I don't mean the topics are not interesting, but I don't know, I've public speaking phobia.</i>	5
<b>Self-confidence</b> (Desired aspect of mastery)	<i>I wish I could speak more confidently when I do that.</i>	3
<b>Logical reasoning and</b>	<i>I have always wanted to provide feedback to classmates in a clear way of presenting arguments and defending them.</i>	

<b>smoothness of ideas</b> (Desired aspect of mastery)	<i>Also, it is better that ideas proceed in a logical order so that the criticized person gets my point and follow you easily.</i>	1
<b>Humor</b> (Desired aspect of mastery)	<i>I do wish I could give negative peer feedback that is humorous so that classmates accept it comfortably like stars (jury) in the American TV show America's Got Talent do. They give funny criticism and they smile so that they do not embarrass the candidates.</i>	1

Analysis of answers to this item suggests that the biggest challenge that faces the respondents when criticizing peers is that of that of face-saving concerns. As one respondent in the open-ended question puts it, "Most of the time, I find myself obliged to praise more than to criticize though I have much to say. If it was written on a piece of paper and my name was not written on it, I would have let it more honest." The problem of linguistic proficiency and clarity rank second and third respectively while critical thinking and anxiety come at the end of the list. For the aspects the learners wish to master more when performing negative peer feedback, few were mentioned and this could be due to their unawareness of the characteristics of good constructive criticisms yet.

To sum up, analysis and interpretation of the students' preliminary questionnaire data revealed that the problem, on which the present study is mainly based, actually exists. In spite of their awareness of the importance of negative peer feedback in the process of English language learning, their fairly good level of critical thinking and linguistic proficiency, EFL learners face difficulties in realizing appropriate criticisms, mainly at the politeness level. This makes them reluctant to criticize their peers constructively.

## **3.2 The Experimental Study**

### **3.2.1 The teaching effects after instruction.**

The present research deals with the experimental study conducted with second year learners of English at Batna 2 University in an attempt to put the issue under investigation on the field work. The aim of the study is to see whether or not pragmatic instruction accelerates their ability of criticizing peers constructively in an appropriate manner. If it does, we can confirm our main hypothesis. The participants are evaluated to see to what extent our experiment would entail positive results in mastering the elements of well realized constructive peer criticisms.

#### ***3.2.1.1 Results of the analysis of constructive criticism competence analytic rating.***

Two complementary research techniques are described in 2.7: analytic rating of constructive peer criticism competence and discourse analysis. In the present study, these techniques serve complementary purposes. The rating procedure makes explicit judgements of the participants' pragmatic proficiency based on the scoring criteria developed for the present study in order to determine whether or not the speech-act instruction accelerates their constructive criticism production. In doing so, it is proposed that politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy are the components of constructive peer criticism competence. The discourse coding schemes, on the other hand, were employed to identify specific types of developmental changes that instruction may have on production of criticisms through describing the various discourse features (e.g., functional, lexical, syntactic, etc.). The discourse analysis technique allows to separately examine these discourse features that are combined during the analytic rating.

Despite the fact that speech acts have been the focal point of EFL functional language teaching methods, very little is known about the effect of formal pragmatic instruction on the development of specific pragmatic characteristics of speech act performance such as clarity and politeness (Hurley, 1992). This has been caused by the lack of valid and reliable methods of pragmatic competence assessment (Hudson et al., 1992). The following sub-section deals with the short-term teaching effects. Although the type of the task might influence the effect of speech-act instruction on the subjects' pragmatic competence with regard to constructive peer criticisms (i.e. Pragmatic

instruction might affect the subjects' performance of linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate criticisms differently depending on the task they perform: OPFT vs. ODCCT), the researcher does not intend to consider the task-induced variability a moderator independent variable. Hence, both tasks' means of scores are pooled together in the pretest, the three progress tests as well as the posttest to produce general means that will be compared to determine if pragmatic development took place due to interventional treatment.

### *3.2.1.1.1 Scores of both groups in the pretest.*

As already mentioned, the aim of the present study's pretest is to test both the experimental group and the control group before receiving the treatment to make sure that they are similar in terms of being able to realize linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. The pretest consists of two tasks: the OPFT and ODCCT. Both groups' scores in the two tasks in the pretest, progress tests and posttest are first shown separately and then both groups' means (OPFT and ODCCT averaged) in the different tests are calculated for statistical purposes. The following table shows the scores of the experimental group in the OPFT pretest.

Table 18 *The Experimental Group's OPFT Pretest Scores*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
<b>1</b>	4.33	6.33	2	12.66	<b>27</b>	4	6	2	12
<b>2</b>	4	4	2	10	<b>28</b>	3.5	5	2	10.50
<b>3</b>	4	3	2	9	<b>29</b>	3	4.33	2.67	10
<b>4</b>	5.33	8	3.33	16.67	<b>30</b>	5.75	7.50	4	17.25
<b>5</b>	3.50	5	2	10.50	<b>31</b>	4	7	2	13
<b>6</b>	4.33	6.33	3.33	14	<b>32</b>	4	7	4	15
<b>7</b>	3	6	2	11	<b>33</b>	5.75	7.50	4	17.25
<b>8</b>	5.33	6	4	15.33	<b>34</b>	3.33	5.33	2	10.66
<b>9</b>	4	5.50	4	13.50	<b>35</b>	5	8	4	17
<b>10</b>	5	7	4	16	<b>36</b>	3.50	6	2	11.50
<b>11</b>	4	5	4	13	<b>37</b>	5	7	4	16



<b>12</b>	4	6	4	14	<b>38</b>	4.50	7	2	13.50
<b>13</b>	5	8	4	17	<b>39</b>	6.50	7.50	3	17
<b>14</b>	3	6	2	11	<b>40</b>	4	7	4	15
<b>15</b>	5.33	6	2	13.33	<b>41</b>	4.33	6	2	12.33
<b>16</b>	7.50	7.50	3	18	<b>42</b>	4.33	5.33	2	11.66
<b>17</b>	5	8	4	11.67	<b>43</b>	5.33	7.33	3.33	16
<b>18</b>	7	7.33	2.67	17	<b>44</b>	3.50	6.50	2	12
<b>19</b>	5	4	4	13	<b>45</b>	3	4	2	9
<b>20</b>	3.50	6.50	2	12	<b>46</b>	4.33	5.66	2.33	12.33
<b>21</b>	5	8	4	17	<b>47</b>	5	8	4	17
<b>22</b>	5	4	4	13	<b>48</b>	3.33	5.33	2	10.67
<b>23</b>	4	5.33	1	10.33	<b>49</b>	5	4	4	13
<b>24</b>	6	8	4	18	<b>50</b>	6	8	4	18
<b>25</b>	4	3	2	9	<b>51</b>	3	6	2	11
<b>26</b>	4.50	6	3	13.50	<b>52</b>	4.75	7.25	4	15

*Note.* N = number of the subjects

Table 18 shows that the learners' scores in the OPFT are far from being excellent. The highest score is 18 whereas the lowest one is 9. Ideally, the full score would be 20 for all the subjects which would entail a total score of  $\Sigma X_E = 1040$  and  $X_E = 20$  as an average. The experimental group's low scores in the OPFT pretest reflect that the learners' constructive peer criticisms do not obey the criteria of linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive criticisms designed by the researcher.

The present study's desire to examine the effect of pragmatic instruction on the development of politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy separately necessitates the presentation of the subjects' detailed scores. They are calculated in the following way. The individual scores of each criterion (politeness, clarity, and linguistic accuracy) for all the constructive criticisms a learner makes are pooled together then divided by the number of criticisms. The following table illustrates this in details.

Table 19 *The Way of Calculating each Component's Score*

<b>N</b> / <b>Criteria</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1</b>	6	7	4	17
<b>2</b>	6	8	4	18
<b>3</b>	4	8	4	16
<b>4</b>	4	6	3	13
<b>5</b>	6	7	4	17
<b>Total</b>	26	36	19	81/5 = 16.20
<b>Detailed scores</b>	26/5 = 5.20	36/5 = 7.20	19/5 = 3.80	5.20 + 7.20 + 3.80 = 16.20

So, for this learner who performs five constructive criticisms, the scores of politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy are 5.20, 7.20 and 3.80 respectively.

Table 20 *The Experimental Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Pretest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>
<b>Total scores</b>	234.71	321.38	153.31
<b>Average scores</b>	4.51	6.18	2.95
<b>Percentage</b>	56.37%	77.25%	73.75%

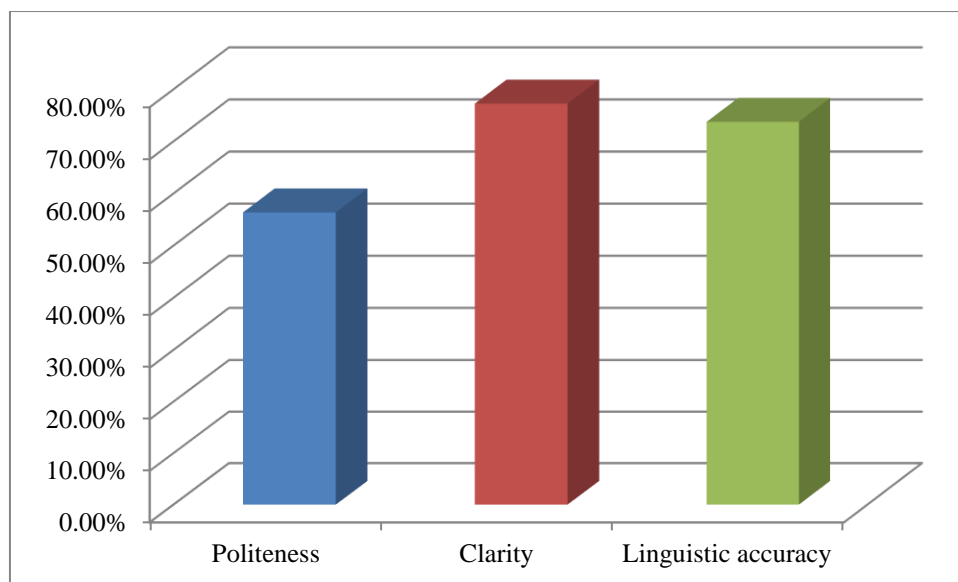


Figure 5 *The Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the Experimental Group's OPFT Pretest*

As Table 20 shows, the average scores of politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy are transformed into percentages because of the unequal weight given to these areas in the rating scheme. In other words, the higher score a subject could get in politeness and clarity is 8, but in linguistic accuracy, just 4. Hence, using percentages helps better in knowing what areas are more mastered by the participants. As Figure 5 reveals, the participants' clarity percentage is the highest among the areas of assessment (77.25%), politeness percentage is the lowest (56.37%) while that of linguistic accuracy ranks second. This means that the participants' level of producing clear peer criticisms is good because the clarity average score exceeds 6. Level 3 in clarity scoring guidelines represents a criticism that is generally easy to interpret but contains some features that detracted from the intention of constructive criticism. The clarity average score is 6.18. This means that the experimental group's participants could produce constructive peer criticisms with the lowest level of clarity at which an American NS performs one under normal conditions.

To see how the control group performed in the same task, the scores of its participants have to be seen. They appear in the following table.

Table 21 *The Control Group' OPFT Pretest Scores*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
1	5.25	8	4	17.25	25	4.25	6	2	12.25
2	3.5	6	2	11.50	26	4	6	4	14
3	5.20	5.6	3.2	14	27	5	6	4	15
4	4	5.33	1	10.33	28	4.75	7.25	3	15
5	5	7	4	16	29	3	7	4	14
6	4.33	6.33	3.33	14	30	4.33	5.33	2	11.66
7	4	6	4	14	31	5	8	4	17
8	3	4.5	2	9.50	32	4.33	7.33	2	13.66
9	4	5.33	1	10.33	33	4.50	6	2	12.50
10	4	6	2	12	34	6	8	4	18
11	5	7	4	16	35	4	7	4	15
12	3	4	2	9	36	4	7.75	4	15.75
13	3	7	4	14	37	5	7	4	16
14	3.33	7	2	12.33	38	4.33	6.33	3.33	14
15	4	7	4	15	39	6.4	7.6	4	18
16	4	5.50	4	13.50	40	4	6	4	14
17	6	7	4	17	41	4.5	6	2	12.50
18	5	8	4	17	42	5	4	4	13
19	4.50	6	2	12.50	43	5.60	6.20	3.20	15
20	6.33	4.33	3.33	14	44	3	7	4	14
21	4	5	4	13	45	3	4.33	2	9.33
22	4	5.33	1	10.33	46	3	6	2	11
23	4	6	4	14	47	3	5.50	2	10.50
24	4	5	4	13	48	4.40	5.20	2.40	12

Note. N = Number of the subjects

The situation of the control group is not different from that of the experimental group. As Table 21 shows, the learners' scores in the OPFT are far from being judged

excellent. The highest score is 18 and the lowest one is 9 which is below the average score (10). The majority of the scores range between 9 and 14. Few students got above 15. The control group's low scores in the OPFT pretest reflect that the learners' constructive criticisms do not obey the criteria of linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive criticisms designed by the researcher. A comparison between both groups' scores in the aforementioned task indicates how close they are. Table 22 and Figure 5 show the difference in the means of the two groups.

Table 22 *Difference in the Means of both Groups in the OPFT Pretest*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>OFFT pretest mean</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	13.52
<b>Control group</b>	13.57
<b>Difference between the means</b>	0.05

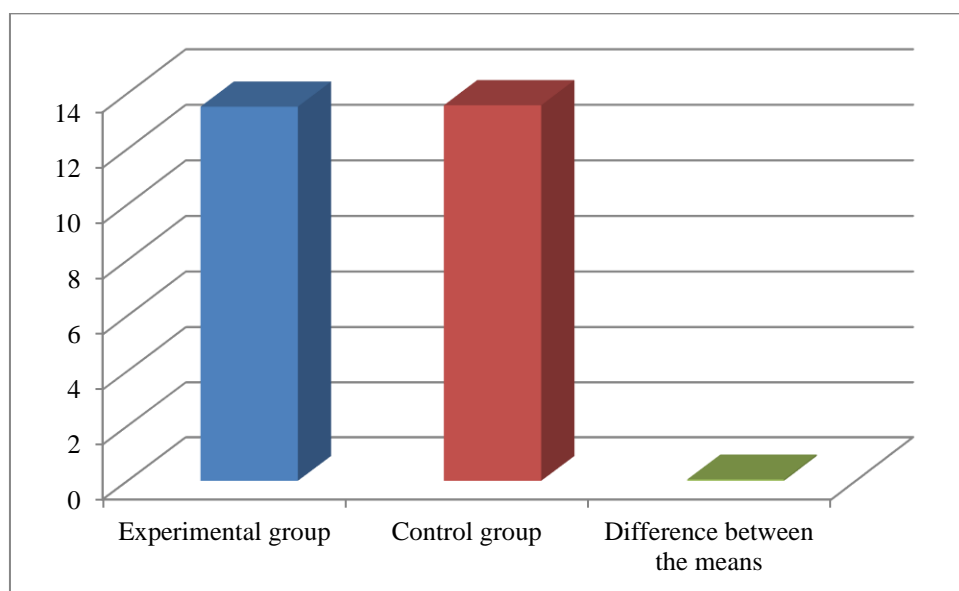


Figure 6 *Difference in the Means Between both Groups in the OPFT Pretest*

As Table 22 and Figure 6 show, the pretest means of scores reveal that the control group recorded numerically just a bit higher than the experimental group (The difference in the means is only 0.05). Nevertheless, this insignificant over scoring puts us in a position to claim that at the starting point, as far as the OPFT is concerned, the constructive peer criticism competence level is almost the same for both groups. However, since the present study used another data gathering tool (the ODCT), it cannot

be claimed yet that both groups' overall pragmatic competence is equal without seeing their scores in the second task.

As just said, the general level of constructive peer criticism competence that both groups exhibited so far is similar but in order to know whether or not the different areas of assessment in the control group's constructive peer criticisms are distributed in the same way as in the experimental group's, the total and average scores of each component have to be consulted. They appear in the following table.

Table 23 *The Control Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Pretest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	207.72	297.07	147.77
<b>Average score</b>	4.32	6.18	3.08
<b>Percentage</b>	54%	77.25%	77%

After transforming the average scores into percentages, it can be seen how well the control group's members did in the three assessment areas of constructive peer criticisms.

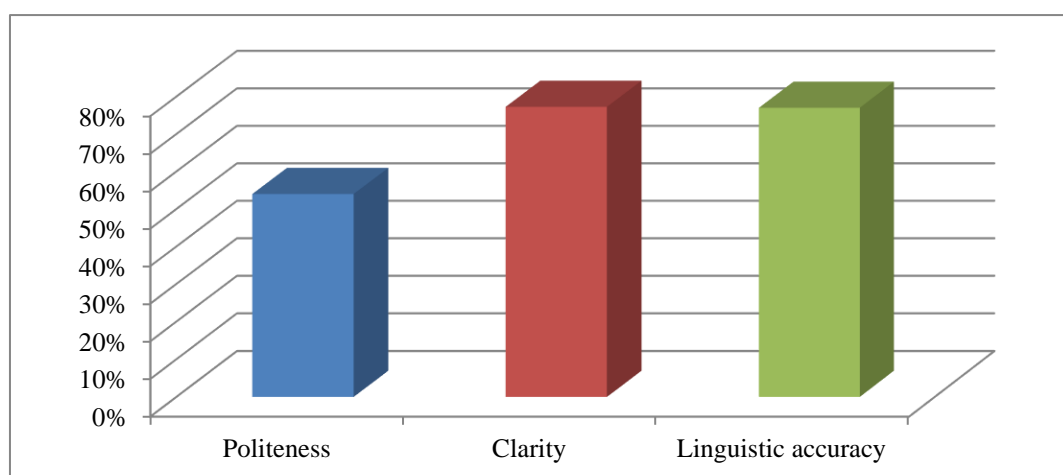


Figure 7 *The Percentage of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the Control Group's OPFT Pretest*

Exactly like the experimental group, clarity ranks first as the area most respected in constructive criticisms (77.25%). Moreover, its average score is also similar in both groups (6.18). It is beyond the score of 6 which corresponds to the least clear criticizing speech act that could be realized by an American NS under normal circumstances. This

score, though not perfect, is quite acceptable for EFL speakers and this means that the subjects of both groups are able to perform clear criticisms even before pragmatic instruction.

Additionally, it seems that the control group members can produce criticism speech acts that are equally linguistically accurate. Indeed, difference between clarity and linguistic accuracy percentages is only 0.25—a negligible value. This is not true for the area of politeness which seems the least respected by them. Its average score is very low (4.51 for the experimental group and 4.32 for the control group). This value represents an intermediate score that ranges between Levels 2 and 3 in the rating scheme. These two represent criticisms whose producers definitely place only little emphasis on meeting the face needs of the H.

Table 24 *Difference Between both Groups' Percentages in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Pretest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	56.37%	77.25%	73.75%
<b>Control group</b>	54%	77.25%	77%
<b>Difference between the percentages</b>	2.37%	0%	-3.25%

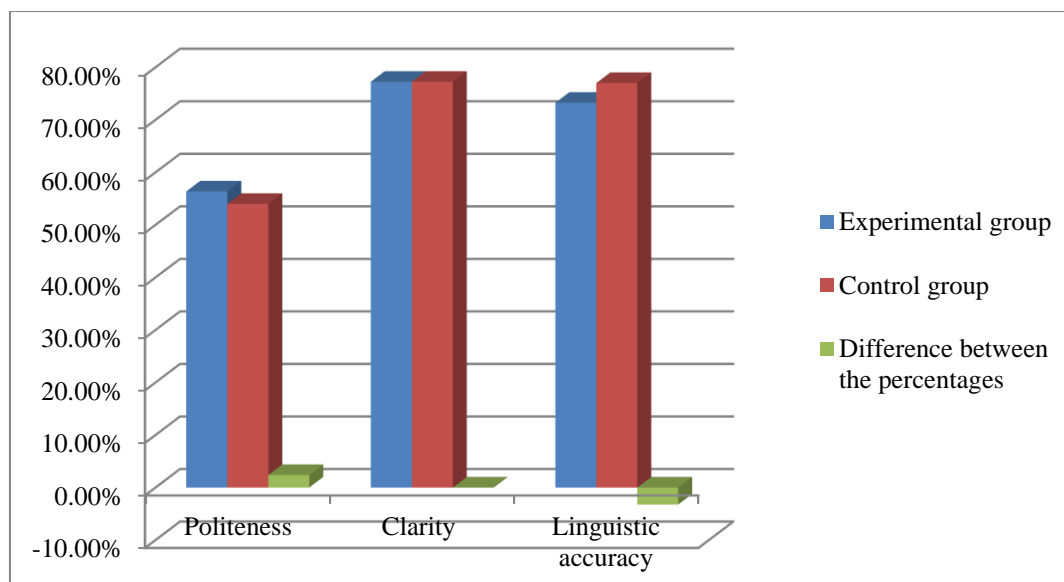


Figure 8 *Difference Between both Groups in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Pretest*

From the first look at Figure 8, it can be said that both groups performed equally fairly well in clarity. The experimental group outperformed the control group in politeness and the opposite took place in linguistic accuracy. However, because the differences are negligible, it can be concluded that both groups' overall level of realizing constructive peer criticisms is alike so far.

As already stated, both groups' level of constructive peer criticism competence before the treatment cannot be determined via the scores of the OPFT alone because the pretest has, in addition to this task, another one which is the ODCT. Analysis of this task's scores proceeds in the same way as in the OPFT's. More precisely, comparison is made between both groups' final scores then attention is directed towards the detailed ones to determine which areas of assessment the learners are more aware of in the realization of the speech act in focus in the five proposed hypothetical situations. The scoring procedures of the ODCT are explained in 2.7.1.8. The following table displays the experimental group's ODCT pretest scores.



Table 25 *The Experimental Group's ODCT Pretest Scores*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
1	3	5.40	2.80	11.20	27	4	7	2.80	13.80
2	3	6.80	2.80	12.60	28	4	4	2	10
3	4	4.60	2	10.60	29	3	5.40	2.80	11.20
4	5	5	4	14	30	4.80	7.60	3.60	16
5	4.40	5.60	1	11	31	3	6.60	2.40	12
6	4.40	5.20	2.40	12	32	5	5.20	4	14.20
7	4	4	2	10	33	4	6.20	2.80	13
8	4	7	2.80	13.80	34	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
9	4	6.20	2.80	13	35	5.40	7	4	16.40
10	5	5.80	3.60	14	36	3	5	2	10
11	3	6.60	2	11.60	37	4	6.40	2.80	13.20
12	4	6	4	14	38	4	5	2	11
13	5	7	3.80	15.80	39	4.80	7.60	3.60	16
14	4	5	2	11	40	5	5.80	3.60	14
15	3	5	2	10	41	4	5	2	11
16	5.40	7	4	16.40	42	4	7	2.80	13.80
17	3	4	2	9	43	4.80	6.60	3.60	15
18	4.80	5.40	2.80	13	44	4.40	5.80	2.40	12.60
19	3	5	2	10	45	3	5	2	10
20	4.40	5.20	2.40	12	46	4	4	2	10
21	4.80	6.20	2.80	13.80	47	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
22	3	5	2	10	48	3	5.60	2	10.60
23	3	6.60	2	11.60	49	4.80	6	3.20	14
24	4	6	4	14	50	6	7	4	17
25	3.40	3.60	1	8	51	4	5.60	2.40	12
26	3	5.60	2	10.60	52	4	7	3.20	14.20

Note. N = Number of the subjects

Table 26 *The Control Group's ODCT Pretest Scores*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
1	5	6	4	15	25	5	6	2.80	13.80
2	3	5	2	10	26	4.80	6.60	3.60	15
3	4.40	5.20	2.40	12	27	3	6.80	2	11.80
4	3	6.60	2	11.60	28	3	4	2	9
5	4.80	6	3.20	14	29	4	6.20	2.80	13
6	4.40	5.20	2.40	12	30	4.80	6.60	3.60	15
7	3	5.40	2.80	11.20	31	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
8	3	5	2	10	32	5	6	4	15
9	3	6.60	2.40	12	33	4	6	4	14
10	4	5	2	11	34	4	5	2	11
11	6	6.40	2.80	15.20	35	4	6	4	14
12	3	4	2	9	36	3	5.60	2	10.60
13	3	6.60	2.40	12	37	3	6.60	2.40	12
14	4	5	2	11	38	4	6.20	2.80	13
15	4	7	4	15	39	5	4	2	11
16	4.40	5.60	1	11	40	3	5.40	2.80	11.20
17	4	6.60	4	14.60	41	4	6.20	2.80	13
18	4.80	6.60	3.60	15	42	4.40	5.60	1	11
19	4	5	2	11	43	4	6.20	2.80	13
20	3	6.60	2.40	12	44	3	5.60	2	10.6
21	3	5.40	2.80	11.20	45	3	6.60	2.40	12
22	3	5	2	10	46	5	6	4	15
23	3	6.60	2.40	12	47	4	6.40	2.80	13.20
24	4	6	1	11	48	6	7	4	17

Note. N = Number of the subjects

Analyzing both groups' pretest data in the ODCT after assigning a final score to each learner for his/her performance of constructive criticisms directed to peers, it appears that both groups' subjects have problems of linguistic accuracy and pragmatic

appropriateness. Their scores are far from the ideal score—20. For the experimental group, the highest score is 17 and the lowest one is 8 producing an average of 12.46. For the control group, the highest score is 17 and the lowest one is 9 producing an average of 12.39. Table 27 and Figure 9 represent both groups' means in the ODCCT pretest and the difference between them.

Table 27 *Difference Between both Groups' Means in the ODCCT Pretest*

Groups	ODCT Pretest Mean
Experimental group	12.46
Control group	12.39
Difference in the means	0.07

Comparing the means of both groups, it becomes apparent that the experimental group outperformed the control group but the difference is not significant (just 0.07). This insignificant over scoring puts us in position to claim that at the starting point, both groups' constructive peer criticism competence level is equal and any significant differences that could appear after the analytical evaluation of their scores in the coming tests would be due to treatment.

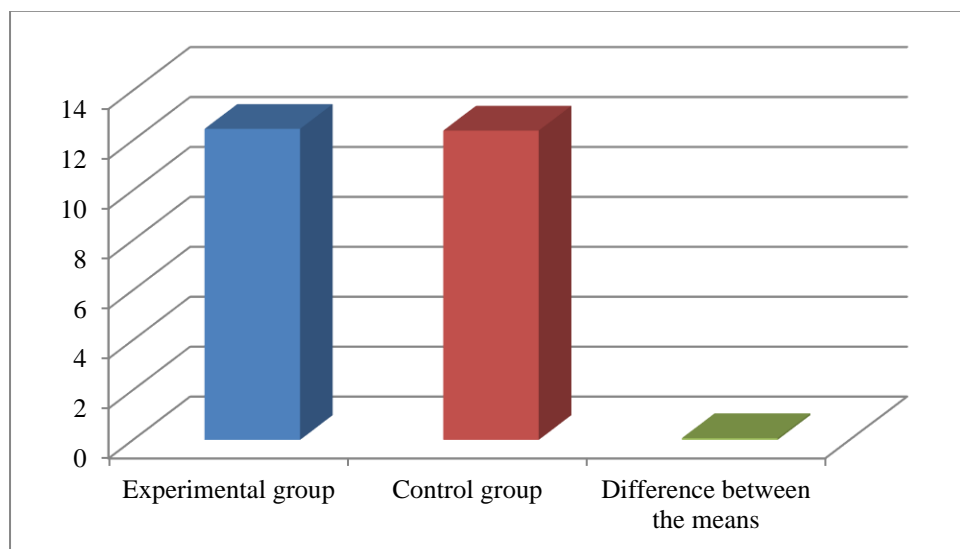


Figure 9 *Difference Between both Groups' Means in the ODCCT Pretest*

Figure 9 shows that both groups have approximately a similar general level of realizing constructive peer criticisms but it does not tell about the difference between the two groups in the three areas of assessment. In other words, it cannot answer the

question of which component's average score took the lion's share in the criticisms produced in this task. To answer this question, the detailed scores of both groups have to be tracked. The following table displays those of the experimental group.

After pooling the individual scores of each component together and dividing them by the number of the subjects in the experimental group, the average scores are got. They are then transformed into percentages because of the unequal weight given to those components in scoring. Results of these calculations are reported in the following table.

Table 28 *The Experimental Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic Accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	210	298.6	139.40
<b>Average score</b>	4.03	5.74	2.68
<b>Percentage</b>	50.37%	71.75%	67%

Figure 10 below gives a more concrete picture of Table 28.

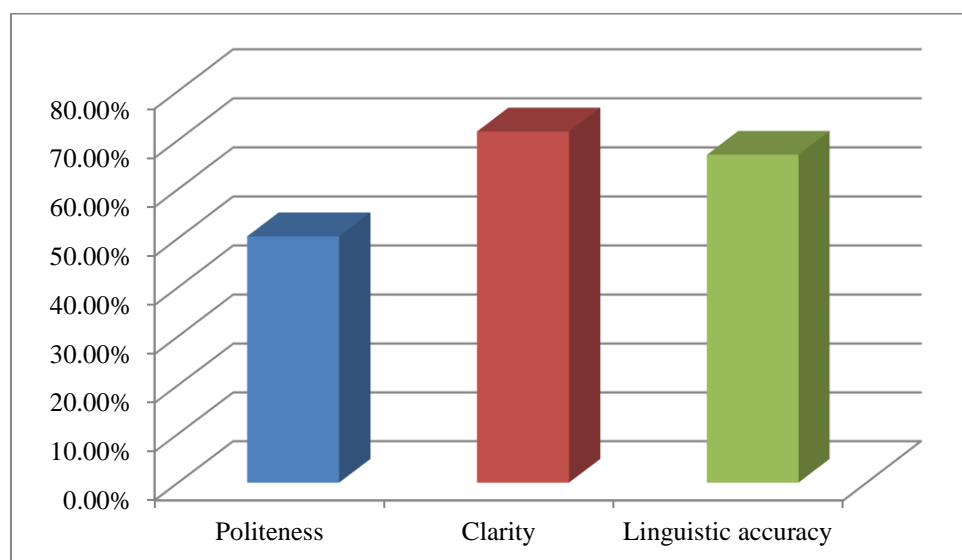


Figure 10 *The Experimental Group's Percentages in the Areas of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest*

The percentages of the three components in the control group's ODCT pretest are calculated in the same way followed with the experimental group. Calculations yielded the results reported in Table 29.

Table 29 *The Control Group's Percentages in the Areas of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic Accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	188.60	280.40	126
<b>Average score</b>	3.93	5.84	2.62
<b>Percentage</b>	49.12%	73%	65.50%

Figure 11 below gives a more concrete picture of Table 29.

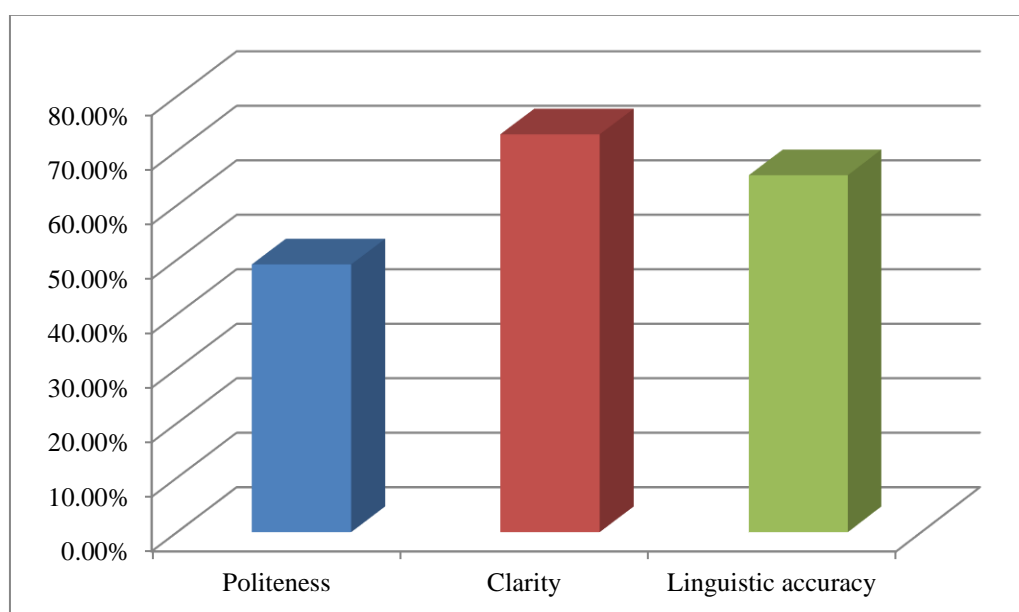


Figure 11 *The Control Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Pretest*

The average score of clarity always takes the lion's share and keeps ranking first. Its percentage in the experimental group is 71.75% and in the control group, 73%. Linguistic accuracy ranks second in both groups while politeness always comes last no matter the participants belong to the experimental or the control group and are providing critical feedback on their peers' real oral presentations or hypothetical scenarios in academic settings. It seems that the participants place little emphasis on meeting the face needs of their Hs. Furthermore, comparing Figures 10 and 11 with Figures 5 and 7, it becomes apparent that the order of the three areas of assessment in terms of learners' performance does not change.

As already emphasized, although the type of the pragmatic task might influence the effect of speech-act instruction on the subjects' constructive peer criticism competence (if any), task-induced variability is not considered a moderator independent variable. Thus, each group's means of scores in the two tasks are averaged to have one mean of the pretest for each group as shown in the table below.

Table 30 *Means of both Groups in the Pretest*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Mean of scores in the OPFT</b>	<b>Mean of scores in the ODCT</b>	<b>Mean of the Pretest</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	13.52	12.46	12.99
<b>Control group</b>	13.57	12.39	12.98

As Table 30 shows, the difference between the final means of both groups is 0.01 (nearly 0). Hence, one can conclude that they are similar in terms of constructive criticism competence before the treatment. In other words, there are no pre-existing differences in their level of realizing constructive criticisms and if the experiment is well conducted and all the variables are controlled, any further over scoring in the coming tests will be due to pragmatic instruction.

#### *3.2.1.1.2 Results of both groups in Progress Test no. 1.*

After the experimental group was taught the first part of the instructional material designed by the researcher for the treatment (The nature of constructive criticism) and the control group was taught part of the Oral Expression traditional syllabus usually taught to second year English major learners (no treatment), the first progress test was administered to both groups.

The participants' constructive peer criticisms were analyzed according to the elements the researcher thinks ensure an accurate and appropriate realization of the speech act in focus. As was done in analyzing the pretest data, both groups' scores in the two tasks of the first progress test are shown separately and then, for each group, the two tasks' means (OPFT and ODCT) are averaged to get the first progress test mean for comparison purposes. The following table shows the experimental group's OPFT scores.

Table 31 Scores of the Experimental Group in the OPFT Progress Test no. 1

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	5.33	6	4	15.33
2	4	3	2	9
3	4	4	2	10
4	5.33	8	4	17.33
5	3.50	5.50	2	11
6	5	6.33	3.33	14.66
7	3	5.5	2	10.50
8	4.33	6.33	4	14.66
9	4	6	4	14
10	5	7	4	16
11	4	5.50	4	13.50
12	4	6	2	12
13	5	7	4	16
14	4	6	2	12
15	6.50	7	4	17.50
16	5.33	7.50	3	15.83
17	5	8	4	18
18	4.33	5	1	10.33
19	5	4	4	13
20	5	6	2	13
21	5	8	4	17
22	5	4	4	13
23	7	7.33	2.67	17
24	6	8	4	18
25	3.50	5	2	10.50
26	5	6	4	15
27	4.50	6	2	12.50
28	4.50	6	3	13.50
29	5.75	7.50	4	17.25

<b>30</b>	4.50	7	2	13.50
<b>31</b>	4.50	6	3	13.50
<b>32</b>	4	7	3	14
<b>33</b>	6	7.50	4	17.50
<b>34</b>	4	5.33	3	12.33
<b>35</b>	6	7	3	16
<b>36</b>	4.50	5.50	3	13
<b>37</b>	4.50	6	2	12.50
<b>38</b>	4.33	5.50	3	12.83
<b>39</b>	6	8	4	16
<b>40</b>	4.50	7	3	14.50
<b>41</b>	5	7	3	15
<b>42</b>	4.50	5.33	2	11.83
<b>43</b>	5	6	3.33	14.33
<b>44</b>	3.33	5.33	2	10.66
<b>45</b>	3	4.33	2	9.33
<b>46</b>	4.50	5	2	11.50
<b>47</b>	4.50	6	2.33	12.83
<b>48</b>	4	5.50	2	11.50
<b>49</b>	4.50	6	3	13.50
<b>50</b>	5.50	7	4	16.50
<b>51</b>	3.33	6	2	11.33
<b>52</b>	5	7.50	3	15.50
<b><math>\Sigma X_E</math></b>	242.89	318.64	155.293	716.85
<b><math>X_E</math></b>	4.67	6.13	2.99	13.78

*Note.* N = Number of the subjects, E = The experimental group,  $\Sigma X_E$  = Sum of the scores of the experimental group,  $X_E$  = The average of the scores of the experimental group



Table 32 Scores of the Control Group in the OPFT Progress Test no. 1

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	5.33	7	4	16.33
2	3.50	5	2	10.50
3	5.33	6.33	3.33	14.99
4	5	5	3	12
5	4.50	6	3	13.50
6	5	6.33	3	14.33
7	5	6	4	15
8	4	6.33	2.67	12
9	3	5	2	11
10	3	6	2	11
11	5	7.67	3.33	16
12	3.33	5	2	10.33
13	4	7	3	14
14	4.33	6	3	12.33
15	4	7	4	15
16	4.33	5.5	4	13.83
17	5	7.67	3.33	17
18	5	8	4	17
19	4	5	2	11
20	6	4.33	3.33	13.66
21	4.33	5	3	12.33
22	4	5	3	12
23	4	6.67	3.33	14
24	4	6	3	13
25	4.33	5.60	2.40	12.33
26	4.50	6	3	13.50
27	4	5	3.33	12.33
28	4	5	2	11
29	4	7	4	15

<b>30</b>	4	6.67	3.33	14
<b>31</b>	5	7	4	16
<b>32</b>	4	6	3	13
<b>33</b>	4	6.20	2	12.20
<b>34</b>	6	8	4	17
<b>35</b>	4	7	4	14
<b>36</b>	4	6	3	13
<b>37</b>	4	6.20	2	12.20
<b>38</b>	5.50	6.50	4	16
<b>39</b>	5	7.5	4	17.50
<b>40</b>	4	6	3	13
<b>41</b>	5	6.33	3	13.33
<b>42</b>	4	6	3.33	14.33
<b>43</b>	4.50	7	4	15.50
<b>44</b>	4	7	3	14
<b>45</b>	3.33	5	2	10.33
<b>46</b>	3	6	2.40	11.40
<b>47</b>	3	6	2	11
<b>48</b>	4	5	2.33	11.33
<b><math>\Sigma X_C</math></b>	211.14	294.89	146.6	645.41
<b><math>X_C</math></b>	4.29	6.14	3.05	13.47

*Note.* N = Number of the subjects, C = The control group,  $\Sigma X_C$  = Sum of the scores of the control group,  $X_C$  = The average of the scores of the control group

Considering the results, both groups are more or less similar with slight differences. Comparing the means, the experimental group outperformed the control group but the difference between them is only 0.31. What is striking is both groups' failure to realize polite constructive criticisms. It is true that politeness score for both groups exceeds the average (4.67 for the experimental group and 4.29 for the control group) but it still remains low. Figures 12 and 13 below present a summary of both groups' progress in the three areas of assessment since the pretest.

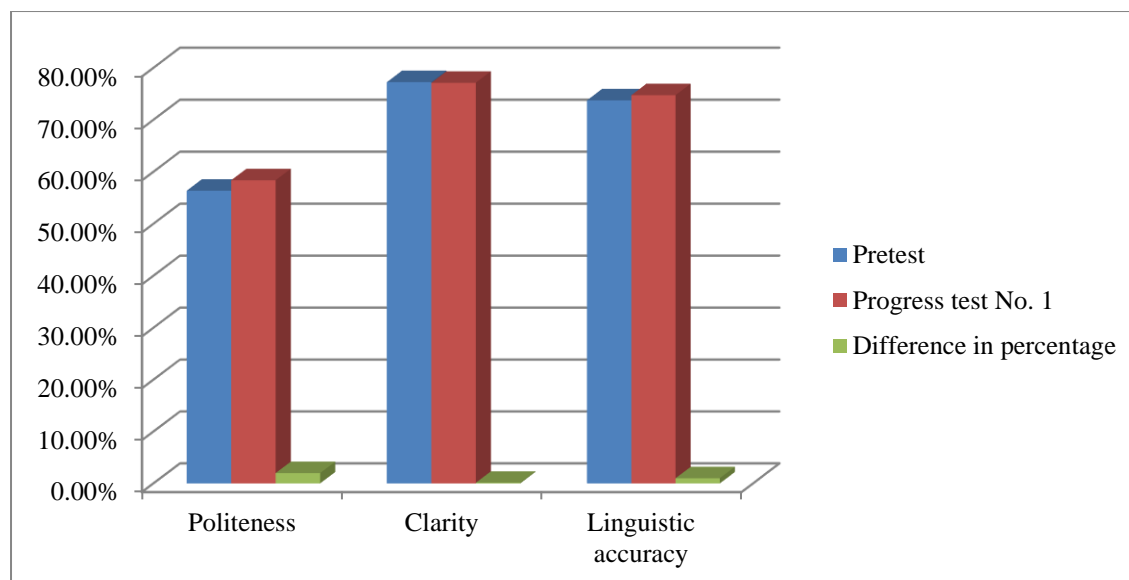


Figure 12 *Difference Between the Pretest and Progress Test no. 1 in the Experimental Group's Performance of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy*

It seems from Figure 12 that the highest achievement in both the pretest and Progress Test no. 1 is in the area of clarity. Its level remained almost stable since the pretest. For politeness and linguistic accuracy, their levels increased a little bit since the pretest. For the control group, however, as Figure 13 below tells, the achievement in the three areas of assessment decreased but the regress was almost negligible; it was below 1%.

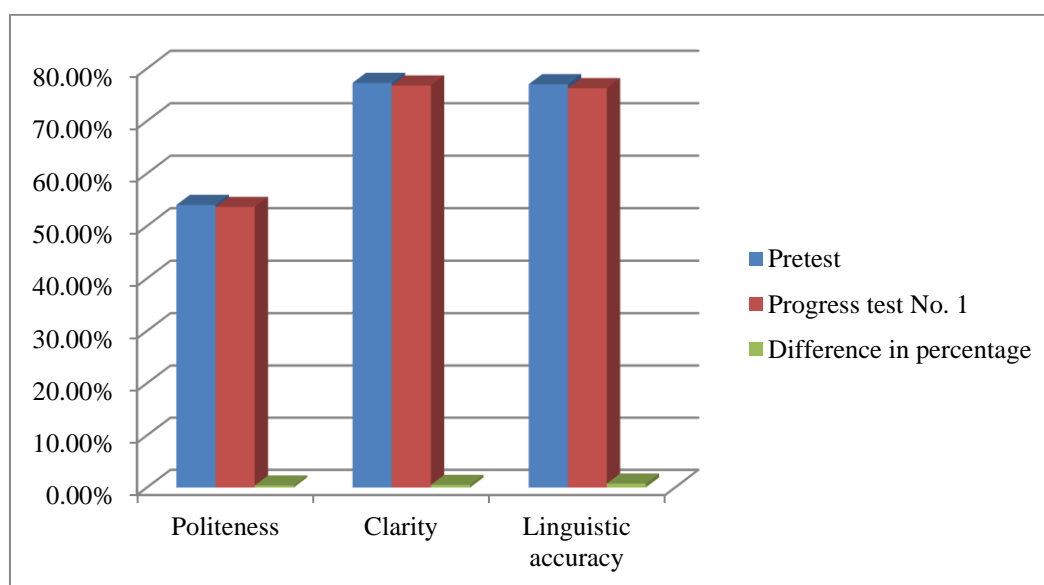


Figure 13 *Difference Between the Pretest and Progress Test no. 1 in the Control Group's Performance of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy*

Not only pretest-Progress Test no. 1 comparison suggests that no instructional effect took place in both groups' politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy so far but comparison between both groups' performance in these areas in the first progress test too. This can be clearly seen from Figure 14 below.

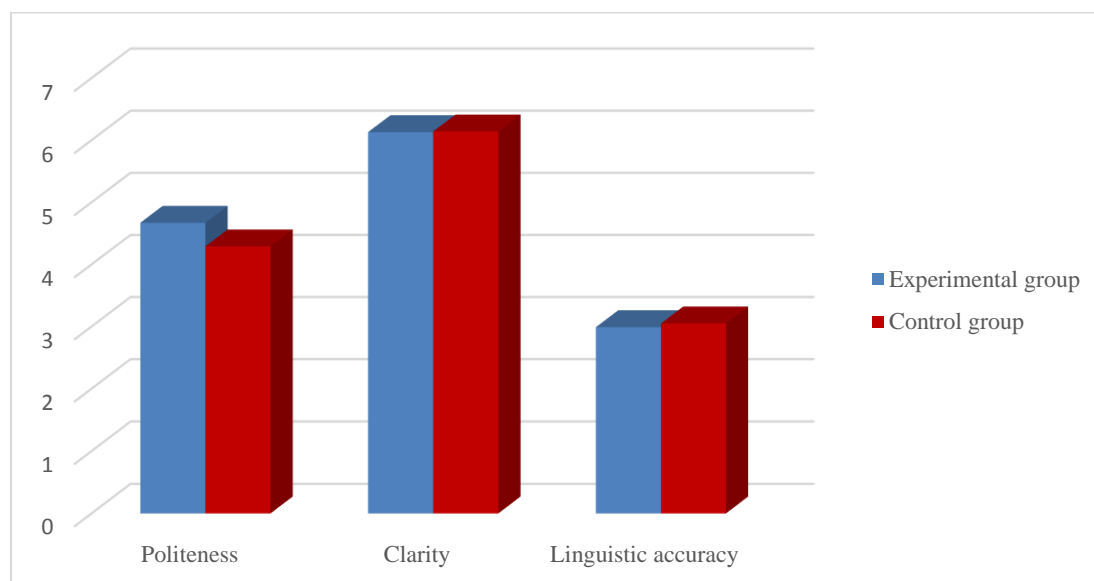


Figure 14 *Comparison Between both Groups' Performance in the Three Areas of Assessment in Progress Test no. 1*

The data gathered along Progress Test no. 1 reveal different elements of analysis that are important for investigating the scale of development in our experimental work through learners' scores. In conclusion, the data collected affirm the following main reality: the participants' average score in clarity and linguistic accuracy are the highest ones among all the areas of assessment. Besides, while clarity is just a bit higher among the experimental group participants than the control group ones, accuracy is slightly higher among the experimental group participants. Politeness seems not to be well assimilated by the learners as an important component of appropriately realized constructive peer criticisms. At this stage, it is too early to pronounce any verdict or make any judgment. The following table gathers the experimental group's ODCCT scores in Progress Test no.1

Table 33 *The Experimental Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 1*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
<b>1</b>	3	6.80	2.80	12.60
<b>2</b>	3	5.40	2.80	11.20
<b>3</b>	5	5	3.80	13.80
<b>4</b>	4	4.60	2	10.60
<b>5</b>	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
<b>6</b>	4.60	5.60	2	12.20
<b>7</b>	4	6	4	14
<b>8</b>	4	7	3.80	14.80
<b>9</b>	4	7	3.60	14.60
<b>10</b>	5	5.80	3.80	14.60
<b>11</b>	4	6	2.40	12.40
<b>12</b>	4	6	3.60	13.60
<b>13</b>	5	7	4	16
<b>14</b>	4	5.60	2	11.60
<b>15</b>	3	5	2	10
<b>16</b>	5.40	7	4	16.40
<b>17</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>18</b>	5	5.40	2.80	13.20
<b>19</b>	5	5	2.80	12.80
<b>20</b>	4.80	6	3.80	14.60
<b>21</b>	5	6	2.80	13.80
<b>22</b>	4	4	2	10
<b>23</b>	5	6.60	4	15.60
<b>24</b>	4	6	4	14
<b>25</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>26</b>	3.60	4	2	9.60
<b>27</b>	4	7	3.80	14.80
<b>28</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>29</b>	3	4.50	2.80	10.30

<b>30</b>	4.40	6.20	3.80	14.40
<b>31</b>	4	6.60	3.60	14.20
<b>32</b>	5	6	4	15
<b>33</b>	4	6.20	2.80	13
<b>34</b>	4	5.2	2	11.20
<b>35</b>	5.40	7	4	16.40
<b>36</b>	3	5	2	10
<b>37</b>	4	6.20	2.80	13
<b>38</b>	4	5.40	2	11.40
<b>39</b>	4.80	6.60	3.60	15
<b>40</b>	5	5.40	2.80	13.20
<b>41</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>42</b>	4	6	2.80	12.80
<b>43</b>	4	6.60	3.60	14.20
<b>44</b>	4.40	4.80	2	11.20
<b>45</b>	3	5	2	10
<b>46</b>	4	4	2	10
<b>47</b>	4.40	5.20	2	11.60
<b>48</b>	3	5.60	2	10.60
<b>49</b>	4.4	7	3.2	14.6
<b>50</b>	5	6	4	15
<b>51</b>	4	5.60	2.40	10.80
<b>52</b>	4.80	6	3.20	14
<b><math>\Sigma X_E</math></b>	218.40	297.10	149.76	665.10
<b><math>X_E</math></b>	4.20	5.71	2.88	12.79

Note. N = Number of the subjects, E = The experimental group,  $\Sigma X_E$  = Sum of the scores of the experimental group,  $X_E$  = The average of the scores of the experimental group

The following table displays the control group's ODCT scores in the same test.

Table 34 *The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 1*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	5	5	2	12
2	3	5	2	10
3	4.80	6	3.20	14
4	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
5	5	6	3	14
6	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
7	3	6.40	2.80	12.20
8	3	5	2	10
9	3	5.20	2	10.20
10	4	5	2	11
11	5	6.40	2.80	14.20
12	3	4	2	9
13	3	6.60	2.80	12.40
14	4	5	2	11
15	4	7	4	15
16	4.40	5.60	2	13.83
17	4	6	3.60	13.60
18	4.60	6.60	3.80	15
19	4	5	2	11
20	3	6.20	2.80	12
21	3	6	3	12
22	4	5	2.40	11.40
23	3	5.40	2	10.40
24	4	6.20	2	12.20
25	5	5.60	2.80	13.40
26	4.40	6.60	3.60	14.60
27	4	5	3	12
28	4	5	2	11
29	4	6.20	3	13.20

<b>30</b>	4.40	6.20	4	14.80
<b>31</b>	4.40	6.60	4	15
<b>32</b>	4.60	6.80	4	15.40
<b>33</b>	4	6	3.80	12.20
<b>34</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>35</b>	4	6	4	14
<b>36</b>	3	5.60	2	10.60
<b>37</b>	3	6.20	2	11.2
<b>38</b>	4	5.60	3	12.60
<b>39</b>	3	3.80	1	7.80
<b>40</b>	4	6	3	13
<b>41</b>	4.20	6.20	3	13.40
<b>42</b>	5	5.60	2	12.60
<b>43</b>	4	6.20	3	13.20
<b>44</b>	3	6	2	11
<b>45</b>	3	6	3	12
<b>46</b>	4	6	2.40	12.40
<b>47</b>	4	6.40	2.80	13.20
<b>48</b>	6	6	4	16
<b><math>\Sigma X_C</math></b>	189.60	275.80	130.20	596.03
<b><math>X_C</math></b>	3.95	5.74	2.71	12.42

*Note.* N = Number of the subjects, C = The control group,  $\Sigma X_C$  = Sum of the scores of the control group,  $X_C$  = The average of the scores of the control group

It seems that both groups' average scores in clarity and linguistic accuracy exceed the average (4 and 2 respectively). For politeness score, it is almost equal to the average among the experimental group and below it among the control group. Hence, the learners' level in linguistic accuracy and clarity can be described as average fair while that of politeness as low. Like the OPFT, the order of the three areas of assessment in terms of performance remains the same i.e. both groups' learners performed better in clarity then linguistic accuracy then politeness. It is true, as Figure 15 below shows; that there is a bit over scoring in politeness made by the experimental but its scores in both groups are still far from the expected ones.



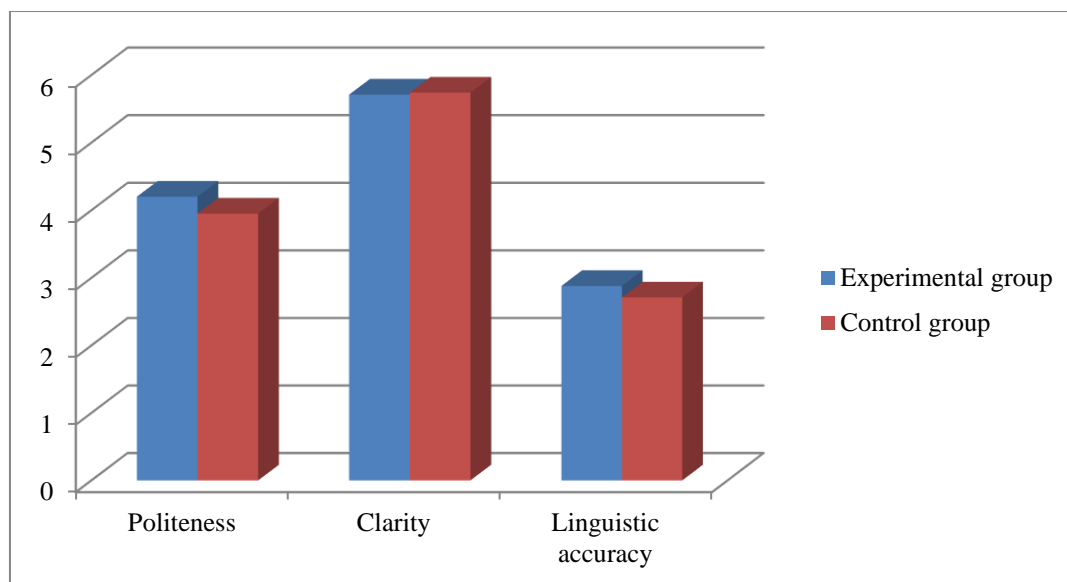


Figure 15 *Comparison Between both Groups' Performance of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Progress Test no. 1*

The data gathered along Progress Test no. 1 reveal different elements of analysis that are important for investigating the scale of development in our experimental work through learners' scores. To sum up, it can be said that the highest scored average for both groups in the two tasks is in clarity followed by linguistic accuracy and politeness comes in the last place. Moreover, while both groups recorded almost the same score in clarity in both tasks, the experimental group outperformed the control group a bit in politeness and linguistic accuracy. Table 35 below reports both groups' means in the first progress test after averaging the two tasks' means.

Table 35 *Both Groups' General Means in Progress Test no. 1*

	OFFT mean	ODCT mean	Progress Test no. 1 general mean
<b>Experimental group</b>	13.78	12.79	13.28
<b>Control group</b>	13.47	12.49	12.98

From Table 35, it seems that the experimental group's general mean is 1.5 % higher than the control group's after they had the same level in the pretest. However, as already said, it is too early to judge any progress resulting from treatment at this stage.

### 3.2.1.1.3 Scores of both groups in Progress Test no. 2.

After six hours of instruction in which the experimental group learned about constructive criticism realization strategies as well as semantic formulas while the control group learned no such instructional targets; the second progress test, which also consists of two tasks (OPFT and ODCI) was administered to both groups. The following table shows the experimental group's OPFT scores.

Table 36 *The Experimental Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 2*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	5.75	6	4	15.75
2	5	5	2	12
3	5.50	5	2	12.50
4	6	8	4	18
5	4	5.75	3	12.75
6	5.50	6.33	3.33	15.16
7	4	5.50	3	12.50
8	5.75	6.33	4	16.08
9	5	6	4	15
10	5	7	4	16
11	5.50	5.50	4	15
12	4	6	3	13
13	6	7	4	17
14	4	6	2.67	12.67
15	6.50	7	4	17.5
16	5.33	6.50	4	15.83
17	5.33	8	4	17.33
18	5	5.33	2	12.33
19	6	6	4	16
20	5	5	3	13
21	5	8	4	17
22	5	5	4	14
23	6	6	4	16
24	6	8	4	18
25	5	5	2	12
26	5	6	4	15
27	4.50	5	3	12.50
28	5	6	3	14
29	6	7.50	4	17.50

30	5	7	3	15
31	4.50	6	3	13.50
32	4	6	4	14
33	6	7.50	4	17.50
34	5	5.33	3	13.33
35	6	7	3	16
36	5	5.50	3	13.50
37	4.50	5	3	12.50
38	4.50	5.50	3	13
39	6	7	4	17
40	4.50	6	4	14.50
41	5	6	3	14
42	6	6	3	15
43	5	6	3.33	14.33
44	5	6	4	15
45	4	4.75	3	11.75
46	6	7	4	17
47	6	6	3	15
48	6	5	3	15
49	5	6	3	13
50	5.50	7	4	16.50
51	4	6	3	13
52	6	7.50	4	17.50
$\Sigma X_E$	270.16	320.82	171.33	768.31
$X_E$	5.19	6.17	3.29	14.77

Note. N = Number of the subjects, E = The experimental group,  $\Sigma X_E$  = Sum of the scores of the experimental group,  $X_E$  = The average of the scores of the experimental group

The data collected show that the learners' scores in this test are significantly different from those in the first progress test. The general score increased from 13.78 to 14.77. Although the average score of clarity remains stable and that of linguistic accuracy does not increase considerably, there is a remarkable progress in politeness (from 4.67 in the first progress test to 5.19 in the current one). In the researcher's view, this is mainly due to the learners' enlarged use of polite constructive criticism polite formulas, especially the indirect ones. Along with this phase of the experiment, lessons targeted constructive criticism formulas and the indirect ones were often stressed by the teacher. Meanwhile, the learners' scores of politeness ranged from average to fair but yet did not reach the expected level. As Figure 15 below tells, the order of the three assessment areas in terms of performance remains stable since the previous tests. The situation in general, as Table 38 illustrates, is not similar among the control group.

Table 37 *The Control Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 2*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	4.50	6	3	13.50
2	4	5	2	11
3	5	6.33	3	14.33
4	5.33	7	4	16.33
5	5.33	6	3	13.50
6	5.33	6.33	3.33	14.99
7	5	7	3	15
8	4	6.33	2.67	12
9	3	6	2	11
10	4	5	2	11
11	4.33	7.67	4	16
12	3.33	6	3	12.33
13	4	7	3	14
14	3.33	5	2	10.33
15	4	6	3	13
16	4.33	7	3	14.33
17	5.33	6.67	4	16
18	4	7	4	15
19	4	5	2	11
20	5	7.33	3	14.66
21	4	5	3	12
22	4.33	5	3	12.33
23	4	6.67	3.33	14
24	4	6	3	13
25	4.33	5.60	2.40	12.33
26	4	7	4	15
27	5	5	3.33	13.33
28	4	5	2	11
29	5	6	3	14

<b>30</b>	4	6.67	3.33	14
<b>31</b>	5	7	4	16
<b>32</b>	4	6	3	13
<b>33</b>	3	6.20	3	12.20
<b>34</b>	5	7	3	15
<b>35</b>	4	7	3	14
<b>36</b>	5.50	6	3	14.50
<b>37</b>	4	6.20	3	13.20
<b>38</b>	5.50	6.50	3	15
<b>39</b>	6	6.50	4	16.50
<b>40</b>	5	6	3	14
<b>41</b>	4	6.33	3	13.33
<b>42</b>	5	6	3.33	14.33
<b>43</b>	4.75	7	3	14.75
<b>44</b>	4.50	7	4	15.50
<b>45</b>	3.33	5	2	10.33
<b>46</b>	3	6	2.40	11.40
<b>47</b>	4.50	6	3	13.50
<b>48</b>	4	5	3	13
<b><math>\Sigma X_C</math></b>	210.88	295.33	144.39	649.83
<b><math>X_C</math></b>	4.37	6.15	3.01	13.56

*Note.* N = Number of the subjects, C = The control group,  $\Sigma X_C$  = Sum of the scores of the control group,  $X_C$  = The average of the scores of the control group

Compared to the experimental group, it seems that the control group could not make a noticeable progress in its achievement since the first progress test (Mean = 13.47 in Progress Test no. 1 vs. 13.56 in Progress Test no. 2, a difference of 0.9 only). This is especially the case in politeness where the scores of the experimental group are noticeably higher. In clarity and linguistic accuracy, both groups seem to stand on the same level with a slight advance for the experimental group. The following figure represents a more concrete picture of the situation.

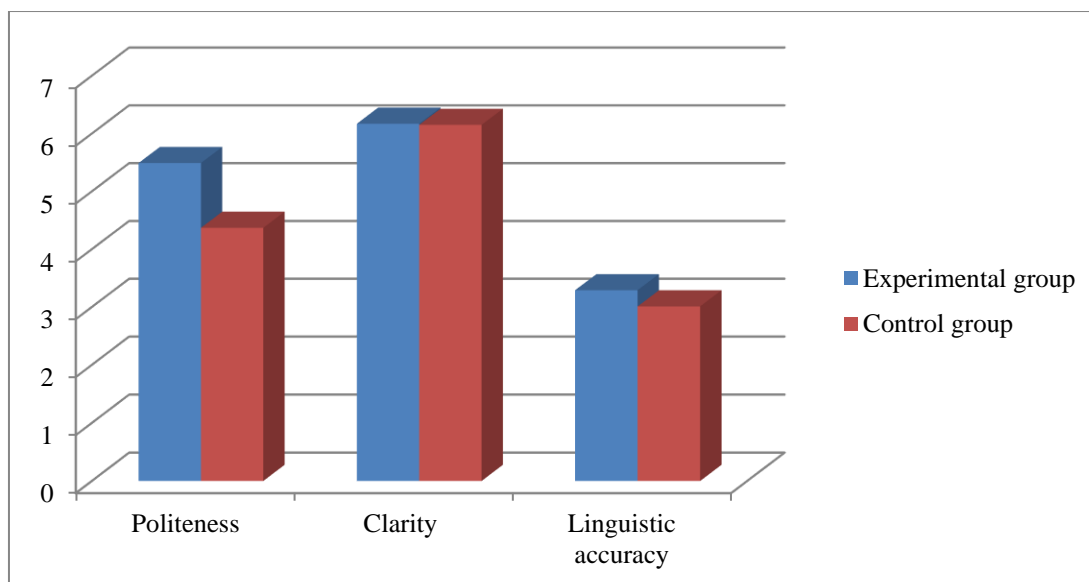


Figure 16 *Comparison Between both Groups in the Three Areas of Assessment in Progress Test no. 2*

It is worth mentioning here that Figure 16 does not depict the real order of the three areas of assessment in terms of performance as they are not given equal weight in the rating scheme. Rather, it compares between the two groups' achievement in Progress Test no. 2. The control group's performance remains stable in clarity, regresses insignificantly in linguistic accuracy and improves insignificantly in politeness too. For the experimental group, however, while the performance remains stable in clarity, it accelerates significantly in linguistic accuracy in the first place and in politeness in the second one. In the researcher's view, this is mainly due to the first positive effects of instruction. Along the second phase of the experiment, the experimental group participants learned about the constructive criticism realization formulas stressing the indirect strategy. While learning about those formulas, they gained knowledge of pragmalinguistic resources which were then utilized accurately and this pushed the scores of linguistic accuracy higher.

To see whether or not the same positive effects touch the experimental group in the ODCT, its achievement in this task has to be seen first. The scores are gathered in the following table.

Table 38 *The Experimental Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 2*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	4	7	2.80	13.80
2	4	6	2.80	12.80
3	5	5	2.80	12.80
4	5.40	4.60	2	12
5	5	5.60	2	12.60
6	6	7	4	17
7	5.40	6	3.60	15
8	6	7.2	3.60	16.80
9	5	6	3.60	14.60
10	6	6.20	2	14.20
11	6	6	3.60	15.60
12	5	6	3.60	14.60
13	6	7.80	3.20	17
14	5.40	5.60	2	13
15	4	5	2	11
16	6	7.80	3.20	17
17	6	6.80	2	14.80
18	5	6.20	2	13.20
19	6	5	2.80	13.80
20	6	6.40	3.20	15.80
21	5.40	6	2.80	14.20
22	5	5.60	2	12.60
23	5	6	4	15
24	5.40	6	4	15.40
25	4	5	2	11
26	5.40	5	2	12.40
27	5	6	3.80	14.80
28	4	5	2	11
29	3	4.50	2.80	10.30

30	5	6.20	3.80	15
31	5	7	3.20	15.20
32	5	5	2.80	12.80
33	5	5	2.80	12.80
34	4	5.20	2	11.20
35	5.40	6	4	15.4
36	3	4	2	9
37	4	6	2.80	12.80
38	4	5.40	2	11.40
39	5	6.60	3.2	14.80
40	5	5.40	2.80	13.20
41	4	5	2	11
42	4.40	6	2.80	13.20
43	4	6.60	3.60	14.20
44	5	4.80	2	11.80
45	4	5	2	11
46	5	5.40	2	12.40
47	4.40	5.20	2	11.60
48	4	5	2	11
49	4.40	7	3.20	14.60
50	6	6	4	16
51	5.40	5.60	2.40	13.40
52	4	6	3.20	13.20
$\Sigma X_E$	254.40	301.90	145.60	706.40
$X_E$	4.89	5.80	2.80	13.49

Note. N = Number of the subjects, E = The experimental group,  $\Sigma X_E$  = Sum of the scores of the experimental group,  $X_E$  = The average of the scores of the experimental group

The data collected show that the learners' scores in this test are significantly different from those in the first progress test. The task's general score increased from 12.79 to 13.49. Although the average score of clarity did not accelerate greatly and that of linguistic accuracy remained stable compared to the previous test, the average score of politeness increased notably (from 4.2 in the first progress test to 4.89 in the current one). As already indicated, in the researcher's view, this is mainly due to the learners'



introduction to varied semantic formulas for realizing polite constructive criticisms in this phase of the experiment. Nonetheless, politeness still ranks the last among the three areas of evaluation. That this improvement is due to instructional effect can be further proved by the control group's scores in the same task and test displayed in Table 40.

Table 39 *The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 2*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
<b>1</b>	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
<b>2</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>3</b>	5	6	4	15
<b>4</b>	4	6.20	2	12.20
<b>5</b>	4.80	6	3.20	14
<b>6</b>	4	6.4	4	14.40
<b>7</b>	3.40	6	2.40	11.80
<b>8</b>	3	5	2	10
<b>9</b>	4	6.60	2	12.60
<b>10</b>	3	6	2	11
<b>11</b>	5	6	4	15
<b>12</b>	3	5	2	10
<b>13</b>	3	6.60	2.80	12.40
<b>14</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>15</b>	5	6	2.80	14
<b>16</b>	4.60	6	3.20	13.80
<b>17</b>	5	6	3.20	14.20
<b>18</b>	3.60	6	2.80	12.40
<b>19</b>	4	5.40	2	11.40
<b>20</b>	4	5.40	3.80	13
<b>21</b>	3	6.20	2.80	12
<b>22</b>	4.40	5	2.40	11.80
<b>23</b>	3	5.40	2	10.40
<b>24</b>	4	6.20	2.80	13
<b>25</b>	5	5.60	2.80	13.40

26	5	6	2.40	13.40
27	5	5	2.80	12.80
28	3	4	1.80	8.80
29	5	6	2.80	13.80
30	4.40	6.20	4	14.60
31	4	6.20	3.20	13.40
32	4	6.20	4	14.6
33	4	6	3.80	13.8
34	4	4.80	3.20	12
35	3	6.60	3.80	13.40
36	4	7	2.80	13.80
37	4	6	3.20	13.20
38	4	5.60	2	11.60
39	3.80	4	1	8.80
40	4	6	3.80	13.80
41	4.20	6.20	3.20	13.60
42	4	5.80	2.80	12.60
43	4	5.40	2.80	12.20
44	3	4.80	3.20	11
45	4	6	3.20	13.20
46	3	4.80	1	8.80
47	4	5.40	2.80	12.20
48	3	6	2.20	11.40
$\Sigma X_C$	190.80	275.40	132	598.20
$X_C$	3.97	5.74	2.75	12.46

Note. N = Number of the subjects, C = The control group,  $\Sigma X_C$  = Sum of the scores of the control group,  $X_C$  = The average of the scores of the control group

As far as the overall achievement of the control group is concerned, it appears that there is no significant progress since the first progress test. The general average increased by 0.04 points only. This is true for politeness. Not only it still ranks the last among the three areas of assessment but also its average score does not increase significantly compared to the first progress test. Table 45 below reports both groups' general means in the second progress test after averaging the two tasks' means.

Table 40 *Both Groups' General Means in Progress Test no. 2*

	<b>OFFT mean</b>	<b>ODCT mean</b>	<b>Progress Test no. 2 general mean</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	14.77	13.49	14.13
<b>Control group</b>	13.56	12.46	13.01

From Table 40, it seems that the experimental group's general mean is 5.6 % higher than the control group's after the difference was only 1.5% in the second progress test. However, since the experiment has not come to an end yet, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of the treatment at this time.

#### *3.2.1.1.4 Scores of both groups in Progress Test no. 3.*

The following table shows the experimental group's scores of the OPFT in the third progress test.

Table 41 *The Experimental Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 3*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
<b>1</b>	6.33	7	4	17.33
<b>2</b>	5.50	6	3	14.50
<b>3</b>	7.50	6.50	3.33	17.33
<b>4</b>	7.50	8	4	19.50
<b>5</b>	6.50	5.75	3	15.25
<b>6</b>	7.33	6.33	3.33	16.99
<b>7</b>	7	7	3	17
<b>8</b>	7.66	6.33	4	17.99
<b>9</b>	6	6	3	15
<b>10</b>	8	7	4	19
<b>11</b>	6	5.33	2.67	14
<b>12</b>	5.33	6	4	15.33
<b>13</b>	5.2	5	3.8	14

14	6	6	2.67	14.67
15	6.50	6	3	15.50
16	5.33	6.50	3.67	15.50
17	6.33	5	2.67	14
18	6	7	4	17
19	6	5	3.80	14.80
20	5	4	3	13
21	7.67	7.33	4	19
22	7	7	4	19
23	6.50	6	3	15.50
24	7	6	4	17
25	5	5.50	3	13.50
26	6	6	4	16
27	4.75	4.50	2	11.25
28	5	5	4	15
29	6	6	4	16
30	6.33	6	4	16.33
31	5	5	2	12
32	7	6.60	3	16.60
33	6	7.50	4	17.50
34	6	5.33	3	14.33
35	6	6	4	16
36	5.75	5	2	12.75
37	7.50	7.50	3	18
38	6.50	5.50	2	14
39	6	7	4	17
40	5.50	6	4	15.50
41	6	6	3	15
42	6	6	2.80	14.80
43	6	6	3.33	15.33
44	6	6	2.80	14.80
45	5	4.75	3	12.75

<b>46</b>	6	7	4	17
<b>47</b>	6	6	3	15
<b>48</b>	6.50	6	4	16.50
<b>49</b>	5.50	6	3	14.50
<b>50</b>	5.75	7	4	16.75
<b>51</b>	6	6	3	15
<b>52</b>	7	7.50	4	18.50
<b><math>\Sigma X_E</math></b>	323.26	320.60	172.20	816.06
<b><math>X_E</math></b>	6.21	6.16	3.31	15.69

*Note.* N = Number of the subjects, E = The experimental group,  $\Sigma X_E$  = Sum of the scores of the experimental group,  $X_E$  = The average of the scores of the experimental group

If we compare Tables 36 and 41 in terms of participants' overall achievement, it can be noticed that the experimental group's general average in the OPFT increased notably from 14.77 in the second progress test to 15.69 in the third one. Moving to the average scores of the three areas of evaluation, comparison shows that the level of clarity remained always stable and that of linguistic accuracy increased insignificantly from 3.29 in the second progress test to 3.31 in the present one. It is worth mentioning here that the level of the last assessment area did not accelerate greatly as it did in Progress Test no. 2 because the third phase of the experiment targeted mitigators while the second one targeted realization strategies as well as semantic formulas and emphasized on pragmalinguistic forms. So, it can be concluded that it is the score of politeness which pushed the general performance higher. Indeed, its score accelerated from 5.19 to 6.21. Figure 16 below visualizes this progress better.

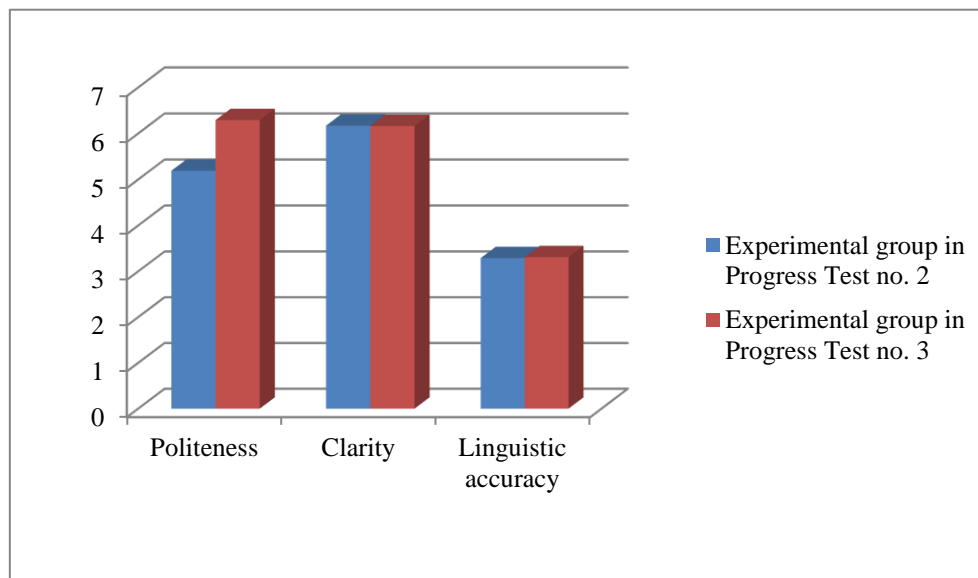


Figure 17 *Comparison Between the Experimental Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Tests no. 2 and 3*

In the researcher's view, as already explained, the improvement in politeness level is due to the effects of instruction— mainly, softeners targeted in the third phase of the experiment. It is only until the end of this phase that the subjects of the experimental group are able to produce constructive criticisms with moderate emphasis on meeting the face needs of their peers as politeness score corresponds with Level 3 according to the rating scheme. In order to further confirm this instructional effect, comparison has to be made with the control group that did not benefit from interventional treatment. Its scores in the OPFT Progress Test no.3 are indicated in the following table.

Table 42 *The Control Group's OPFT Scores in Progress Test no. 3*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
<b>1</b>	5	6.33	3	14.33
<b>2</b>	4	5	2	11
<b>3</b>	3.50	7	3	13.50
<b>4</b>	5.50	7	4	16.50
<b>5</b>	5.33	6	3	13.50
<b>6</b>	5	7	3	15

7	5.33	6.33	3.33	14.99
8	4	6.33	2.67	12
9	4	5	2	11
10	3	6	2	11
11	5.33	7.67	3.33	16.33
12	5	6	3.33	13.33
13	4	7	3	14
14	3.33	5	2	10.33
15	4.33	7	3	14.33
16	4	6	3	13
17	6	6.67	3.33	16
18	5	7.33	3	14.66
19	4	5	2	11
20	5	7	3	15
21	4	5	3	12
22	4.33	5	3	12.33
23	4	6.67	3.33	14
24	4.33	5.60	2.40	12.33
25	4	6	3	13
26	5	6	4	15
27	5	5	3.33	13.33
28	4	5	2	11
29	4	6.67	3.33	14
30	5	6	3	14
31	5	7	4	16
32	4	6	3	13
33	4	6.20	2	12.20
34	5.50	6.50	3	15
35	4	7	3	14
36	5.50	6	3	14.50
37	4	6.20	3	13.20
38	4.50	7	4	15.50

39	6	6.50	4	16.50
40	5	6	3	14
41	5	6.33	2	13.33
42	5	6	3.33	14.33
43	5	7	3	15
44	5.50	7	4	16.50
45	3.33	5	2	10.33
46	3	6	2.40	11.40
47	5	6	3	14
48	4	5	3	12
$\Sigma X_C$	207.88	294.72	147.39	651.84
$X_C$	4.33	6.16	3.07	13.58

Note. N = Number of the subjects, C = The control group,  $\Sigma X_C$  = Sum of the scores of the control group,  $X_C$  = The average of the scores of the control group

Unlike the experimental group, a glance at the control group's scores tells that there is almost no change between its achievement in the second progress test and this one either in the overall performance or in the three areas of assessment. The progress made since the previous test can be better seen through Figure 18 below.

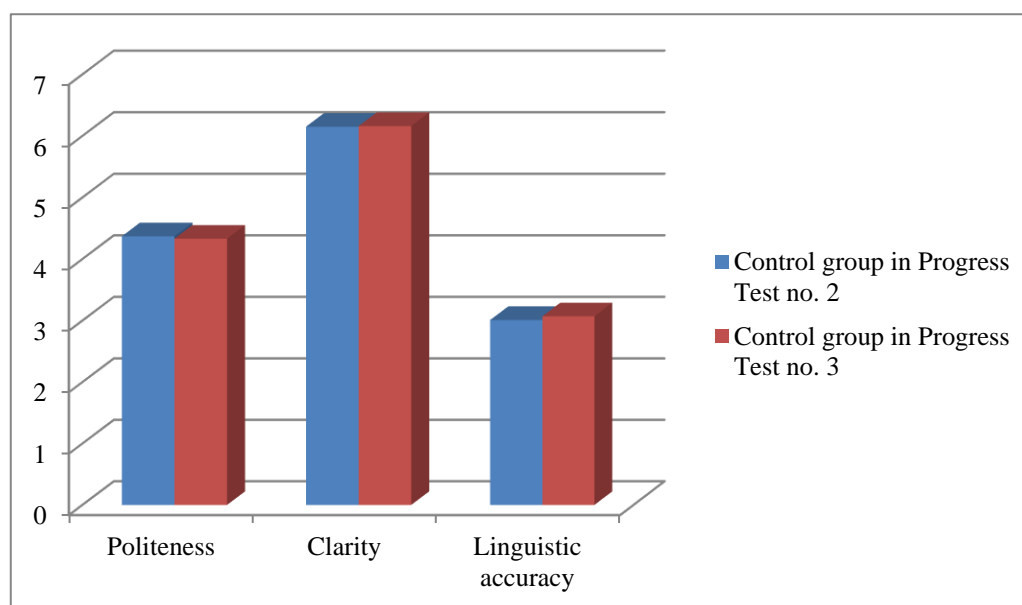


Figure 18 Comparison Between the Control Group's Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Tests no. 2 and 3



Figure 18 reveals that insignificant improvement took place in clarity (from 6.14 to 6.16) as well as in linguistic accuracy (from 3.01 to 3.07) but on the other hand, politeness regressed insignificantly too (from 4.37 to 4.33). This can be explained by the control group participants' unawareness of politeness realization strategies and softeners as they were not instructed on them. To see if the situation of the OPFT is similar to that of the ODCT in the third progress test or not, both groups' performances in this task have to be observed first starting with the experimental group.

Table 43 *The Experimental Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 3*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	5.40	7	3.60	16
2	5	5.80	4	14.80
3	6	6	3.20	15.20
4	5.40	6.20	2.80	14.40
5	5.60	5.80	2.80	14.60
6	6	7	4	17
7	6.60	6	4	16.60
8	6.80	7.20	4	18
9	6	6	3.60	15.60
10	6.20	6.40	4	15.60
11	7	7	4	18
12	6	6	3.60	15.60
13	7.20	7.8	4	15.40
14	6.40	6	4	14.60
15	6	6	2.80	14.80
16	6	7	4	17
17	6	6.40	3.40	16.40
18	6.20	6.8	2.8	15.80
19	6.40	7	4	17.40
20	6	5.60	4	15.60
21	6	6	3.80	15.80
22	5.80	6	3.20	15
23	6	7	4	17
24	6.20	6.20	4	16.40
25	5	5	4	14
26	6	4.80	4	14.80
27	6	6.80	4	16.80
28	5	5	2	12
29	4	4.80	2.80	11.60

30	6.20	7	4	17.20
31	6.80	7	4	17.80
32	5.20	6.40	2.80	14.40
33	5	5.40	3.8	14.20
34	5	6.20	2	13.20
35	6	6	4	16
36	4	4.20	2.80	11
37	5	5.80	3.20	14
38	4	5.4	2	11.40
39	5.60	6.60	3.80	16
40	5.80	5.20	4	15
41	5	6	2.80	13.80
42	5	6	2.80	13.80
43	5	7	4	16
44	5	6	2.80	12.60
45	4.20	6	2.80	13
46	5.40	6.20	3.20	14.80
47	5	6.20	2.80	14
48	5	5	2	12
49	6.20	7	4	17.20
50	6.20	7	4	17.20
51	5.20	6.80	4	16
52	5.80	6	3.20	15
$\Sigma X_E$	293.80	314.96	179.60	788.60
$X_E$	5.65	6.05	3.45	15.16

Note. N = Number of the subjects, E = The experimental group,  $\Sigma X_E$  = Sum of the scores of the experimental group,  $X_E$  = The average of the scores of the experimental group

The data collected show that the learners' scores in this test are significantly different from those in the first progress test. The general score increased from 13.49 in the second progress test to 15.16 in the third one. Although the average score of clarity did not accelerate greatly, those of politeness and linguistic accuracy did as shown in Figure 19 below. This can be explained by the positive effect of the lessons which targeted constructive criticism realization formulas and encouraged the learners to employ indirect strategies. Along those lessons, the participants could master the pragmalinguistic forms through which the formulas are carried out and this pushed the score of linguistic accuracy up.

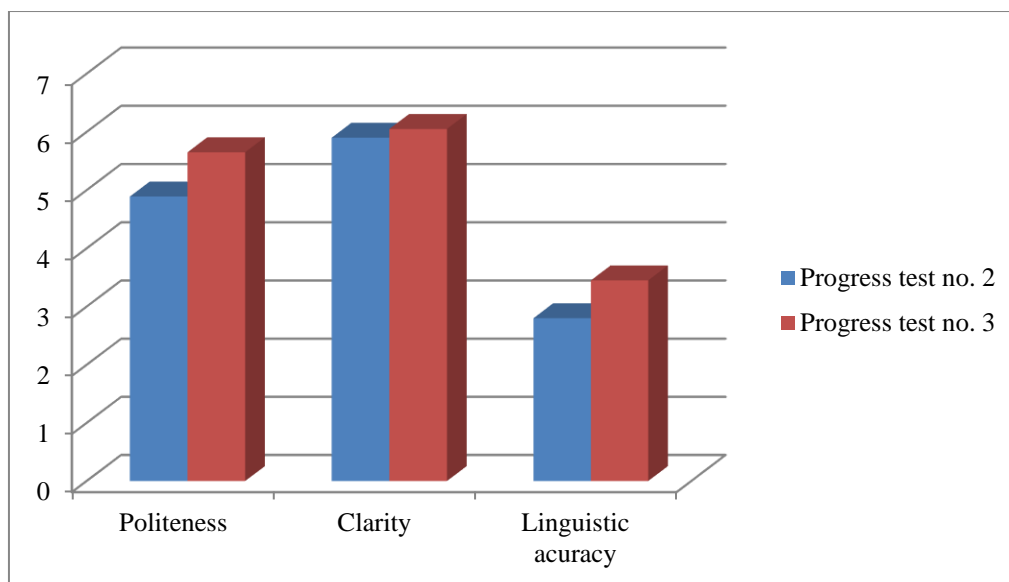


Figure 19 *Comparison Between the Experimental Group's ODCT Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Tests no. 2 and 3*

It might be argued that the experimental group participants' score has not reached Level 3 yet. In other words, it can be claimed that instruction has not succeeded in accelerating politeness level. Here, the task type has to be taken into consideration and the control group's politeness level by the end of the experiment can be taken as a parameter. As mentioned earlier, the fact that the ODCT is an elicited task in which the respondents provide constructive criticisms to imaginary peers might have made them reluctant to care about greater levels of politeness. This can be proved by the fact that the same respondents showed greater ones in the OPFT where they faced real peers.

Again, that the increased average score of politeness in this progress test compared to Progress Test no. 1 and 2 is due to instruction can be proved by comparing it to that of the control group. The following table shows its achievement in the third progress test.

Table 44 *The Control Group's ODCT Scores in Progress Test no. 3*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
1	4	6.60	2	12.60
2	3	6	2	11
3	5	7	4	15
4	4	6.20	2	12.20
5	4	6.40	4	14.40
6	4.80	6	3.20	14
7	3.40	6	2.40	11.80
8	3	5	2	10
9	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
10	4	5	2	11
11	5	6	4	15
12	3	5	2	10
13	3.60	6	2.80	12.40
14	4	5	2	11
15	5	6	2.80	14
16	5	6	3.20	14.20
17	4.60	6	3.20	13.80
18	3	6.60	2.80	12.40
19	4.40	5	2.40	11.80
20	4	6.40	3.80	14
21	3	6.20	2.80	12
22	4	5.40	2	11.40
23	3	5.40	2	10.40
24	4	6.20	2.80	13
25	5	6	2.40	13.40
26	5	5.60	2.80	13.40
27	5	5	2.8	12.8
28	3	5	2	10
29	4	6.20	3.20	13.40

<b>30</b>	4.40	6.20	4	14.60
<b>31</b>	5	5	2.80	12.80
<b>32</b>	4	6.20	4	14.20
<b>33</b>	4	6	3.80	13.80
<b>34</b>	4	5.80	3.20	13
<b>35</b>	4	6	3.20	13.20
<b>36</b>	4	7	2.80	13.80
<b>37</b>	3	6.60	3.8	13.40
<b>38</b>	4	5.60	2	11.60
<b>39</b>	4	4	1	9
<b>40</b>	4.20	6.20	3.20	13.80
<b>41</b>	4	60	3.80	13.80
<b>42</b>	4	5.80	2.80	12.60
<b>43</b>	3	6	2.20	11.20
<b>44</b>	4	5.40	2.80	12.20
<b>45</b>	4	6	3.20	13.20
<b>46</b>	4	4	1	1
<b>47</b>	4	5.40	2.80	12.20
<b>48</b>	3	4.80	3.20	11
<b><math>\Sigma X_C</math></b>	192.80	276.40	132	600.20
<b><math>X_C</math></b>	4.02	5.76	2.75	12.50

*Note.* N = Number of the subjects, C = The control group,  $\Sigma X_C$  = Sum of the scores of the control group,  $X_C$  = The average of the scores of the control group

Compared to the experimental group, it seems that the control group could not make a noticeable progress in its overall achievement since the second progress test (12.46 in Progress Test no. 2 vs. 12.50 in Progress Test no. 3, a difference of 0.04 only). This is especially the case in politeness and linguistic accuracy where the scores of the experimental group are noticeably higher. In clarity, both groups seem to stand on the same level with a slight advance for the experimental group. The following figure represents a more concrete picture of the situation.

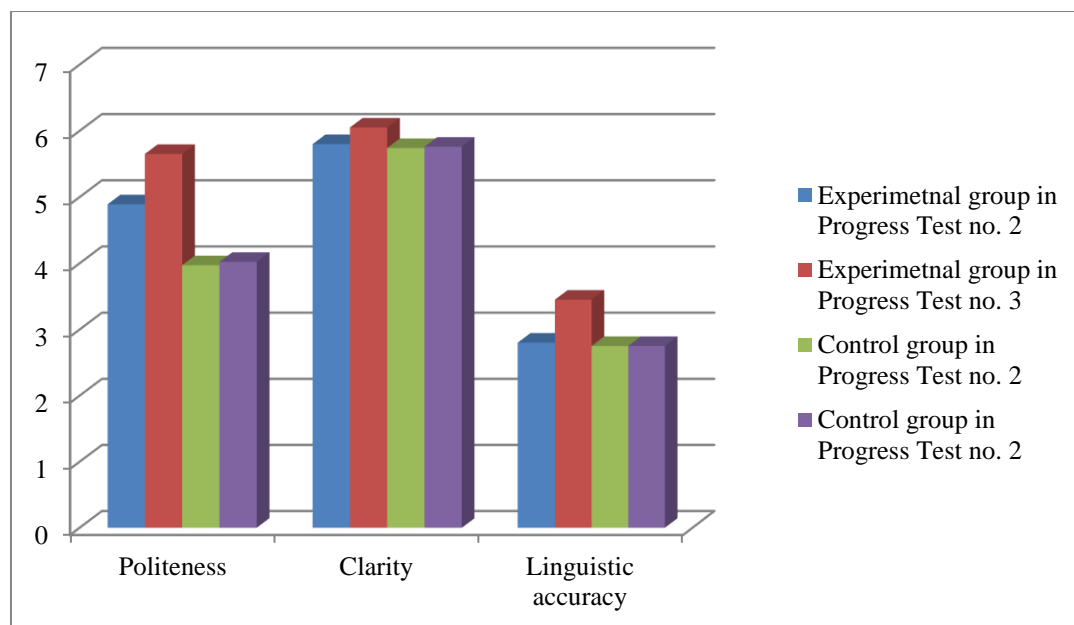


Figure 20 *Comparison Between both Groups' Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in Progress Tests no. 2 and 3*

As Figure 20 clearly reveals, for the control group, there is no noticeable difference between the second and the third progress test in the three areas of assessment (a difference of 0.05 in politeness, 0.02 in clarity and 0 in linguistic accuracy). On the contrary, the experimental group made a significant improvement in politeness as well as linguistic accuracy and a slight one in clarity.

As done with both groups' means of the two tasks in Progress Tests no. 1 and 2, those of the Progress Test no. 3 are also averaged to get both groups' general means. Results of calculations are reported in the following table.

Table 45 *Both Groups' General Means in Progress Test no. 3*

	OFFT mean	ODCT mean	Progress Test no. 3 general mean
<b>Experimental group</b>	15.69	15.16	15.42
<b>Control group</b>	13.58	12.50	13.04

From Table 45, it seems that the experimental group's general mean is 11.9% higher than the control group's after the difference was only 1.5% in the first progress

test and 5.6% in the second one. However, since the experiment has not come to an end yet, it is yet early to judge the effectiveness of the treatment at this time.

### 3.2.1.1.5 Scores of both groups in the posttest.

After completing the three phases of the experiment and ending the teaching/learning sessions, the participants in both groups were given a final test. The posttest consisted of the same type of tasks used in the previous tests: OPFT and ODCI. Nonetheless, the product to be criticized changed. As far as the OPFT is concerned, learners were required to provide constructive criticisms on peers' oral presentations as done in the posttest. Changing the product to be commented on was necessary in order to avoid the learners' boredom from one hand and to avoid task practice effect from another hand. For the ODCI, the same hypothetical situations of the previous tests were slightly modified and used. Furthermore, the dyads of the previous tests were kept as the teacher thinks that members of one pair have already developed a kind of trust and honesty between them. The following table shows the scores of the experimental group in the OPFT posttest.

Table 46 *The Experimental Group's OPFT Posttest Scores*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final Score</b>
<b>1</b>	7	6	4	17	<b>27</b>	7	6	2	15
<b>2</b>	5.20	7.20	3.80	16.20	<b>28</b>	6	4.50	2	12.50
<b>3</b>	7.33	7	2.67	17	<b>29</b>	6	5.33	2	13.33
<b>4</b>	7	7	4	18	<b>30</b>	8	6	3	17
<b>5</b>	7.50	7.50	3	18	<b>31</b>	7.50	7.50	3	18
<b>6</b>	7.500	5	4	16.50	<b>32</b>	8	6.60	2.80	17.40
<b>7</b>	7.50	6.50	3	17	<b>33</b>	8	6.50	4	18.50
<b>8</b>	8	8	4	20	<b>34</b>	7.33	7	2.67	17
<b>9</b>	8	8	2	18	<b>35</b>	8	8	4	20
<b>10</b>	8	6	2	16	<b>36</b>	7	6	2	15
<b>11</b>	7.33	7	2.67	17	<b>37</b>	7.50	7.50	3	18

12	7.50	7	3	17.50	38	7.50	7.50	2	17
13	8	8	4	20	39	8	8	4	20
14	6.33	5	3.33	14.66	40	7.33	7	2.67	17
15	7.66	7.33	4	19	41	7	5.50	3	15.50
16	8	8	4	20	42	7	6	2	15
17	6.33	4.33	3.33	14	43	8	6	4	18
18	7.50	7	4	18.50	44	7.33	7	2.67	17
19	7	6	2	15	45	6.33	4	2	12.33
20	7	5	2	14	46	8	7	4	19
21	7.66	7.33	4	19	47	7.50	6.50	4	18
22	8	8	2	18	48	7.66	7.33	4	19
23	5.75	4	2	11.75	49	6	4.50	3	13.50
24	8	8	4	20	50	7	8	4	19
25	7.50	5	4	16.50	51	5.75	4	2	11.75
26	7.25	4.75	3	15	52	7	6	4	17

In order to compare between both groups, the scores of the control group in the OPFT posttest have to be seen first. The following table reports them.

Table 47 *The Control Group's OPFT Posttest Scores*

N	Politeness	Clarity	Linguistic accuracy	Final Score	N	Politeness	Clarity	Linguistic accuracy	Final Score
1	5.75	7.50	3	16.25	25	4.33	5.33	2	11.66
2	3.50	6.50	2	12	26	4	7	4	15
3	5	6.50	3	14.50	27	5	6	4	15
4	3	4	2	9	28	4.75	7.25	3	15
5	4	7	4	15	29	4	5	4	13
6	4.50	7.50	3	15	30	4.33	5.33	2	11.66
7	5	7	4	16	31	6.33	6.33	3.33	17
8	4.33	4.33	1.66	10.33	32	3.5	7	3	13.50
9	3	5	2	10	33	4.44	6.33	3.33	14



<b>10</b>	4.50	6	2	12.5	<b>34</b>	5	7.5	4	16.50
<b>11</b>	5	7	4	16	<b>35</b>	3	6	4	13
<b>12</b>	3.50	6.50	2	12	<b>36</b>	4	7	4	14
<b>13</b>	4	7	4	15	<b>37</b>	5	7	4	16
<b>14</b>	4	6	4	14	<b>38</b>	5.75	6.50	3	15.25
<b>15</b>	5	7	4	15	<b>39</b>	3.33	6.33	3.33	17
<b>16</b>	4.50	6	2	12.50	<b>40</b>	3	7	4	14
<b>17</b>	6	8	4	18	<b>41</b>	4.500	6	2	12.50
<b>18</b>	6.5	8	4	18.50	<b>42</b>	4	5	4	13
<b>19</b>	4.50	6	2	12.50	<b>43</b>	6.33	6	3.33	15.66
<b>20</b>	6.33	4.33	3.33	14	<b>44</b>	3	7	4	14
<b>21</b>	3	6	2	11	<b>45</b>	4	4	2	10
<b>22</b>	4.33	4.33	1.66	10.33	<b>46</b>	3.50	6	1	9.50
<b>23</b>	4	6	4	14	<b>47</b>	3	7	2	12
<b>24</b>	4.50	5	2	11.50	<b>48</b>	3	6.50	4	13.50

Note. N = Number of the subjects

The following table compares between both groups' overall performances.

Table 48 *Comparison Between both Groups' Means of the OPFT Posttest*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>OPFT posttest mean</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	16.81
<b>Control group</b>	13.65
<b>Difference between the means</b>	3.16

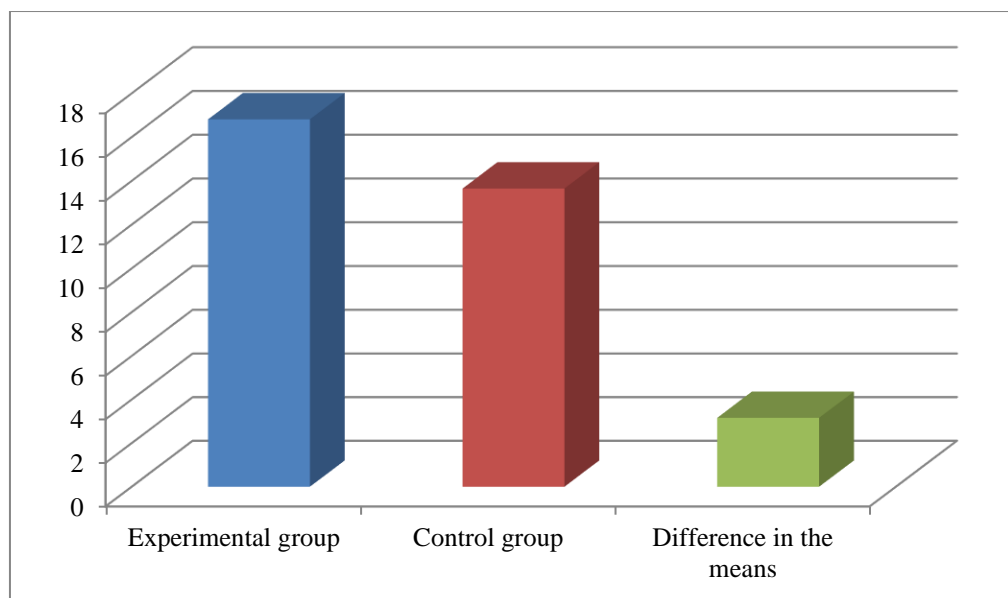


Figure 21 *Difference in the Means Between both Groups in the OPFT Posttest*

Comparing the means, one can conclude that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the OPFT. The former did better by 15.8%. In the pretest, difference between both groups was negligible as Figure 22 below shows. These results confirm further the experimental group's progress made via the interventional treatment. In order to exclude the possibility of this improvement made by chance, the t-test will be used later.

That the speech-act instruction had a positive effect on the experimental group participants' performance of constructive peer criticisms in this task cannot be proved through comparing between the experimental group and the control group in the posttest only but between the experimental group's two test conditions too (pretest and posttest).

Table 49 *Comparison Between the OPFT Pretest and Posttest Means of both Groups*

Groups	OPFT pretest mean	OPFT posttest mean
<b>Experimental group</b>	13.52	16.81
<b>Control group</b>	13.57	13.65

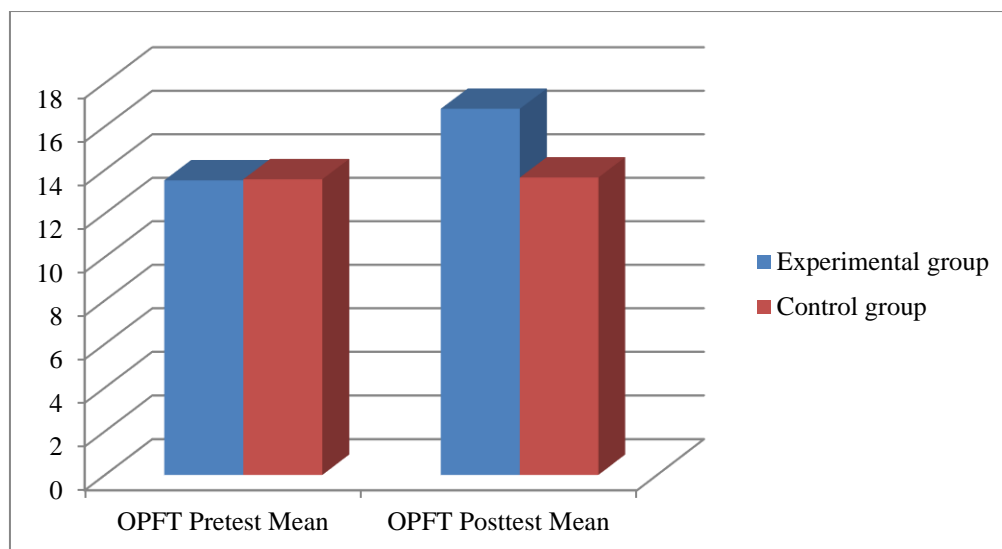


Figure 22 Comparison Between the OPFT Pretest and Posttest Means of both Groups

As shown in Table 49 and better visualized in Figure 22, while the control group achieved a very little progress from the pretest to the posttest (only 0.08), the experimental group made a gain of 3.29. Moreover, whereas only five participants from the experimental group scored 6 and above in politeness in the pretest (As shown in Table 18) which means that 90.38% of the remaining subjects realized constructive criticisms in which little or very little emphasis was placed on the hearers' face, only 3 participants in the posttest got below 6 in the same area of assessment (As Table 46 tells) which means that 94.23% of the subjects scored 6 and above. The reader may recall that Level 3 corresponds to constructive criticisms in which the S places a moderate emphasis on meeting the face needs of the H. The improvement in the subjects' politeness scores suggests that the treatment has a positive effect on their level of performing polite criticisms. In order to see its impact on the other two areas of assessment, the average score and percentage of each component have to be calculated first then compared to the pretest results. Those of the experimental group in the OPFT posttest are introduced in the following table.

Table 50 *The Experimental Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	377.52	334.88	161.72
<b>Average score</b>	7.26	6.44	3.11
<b>Percentage</b>	90.75%	80.5%	77.75%

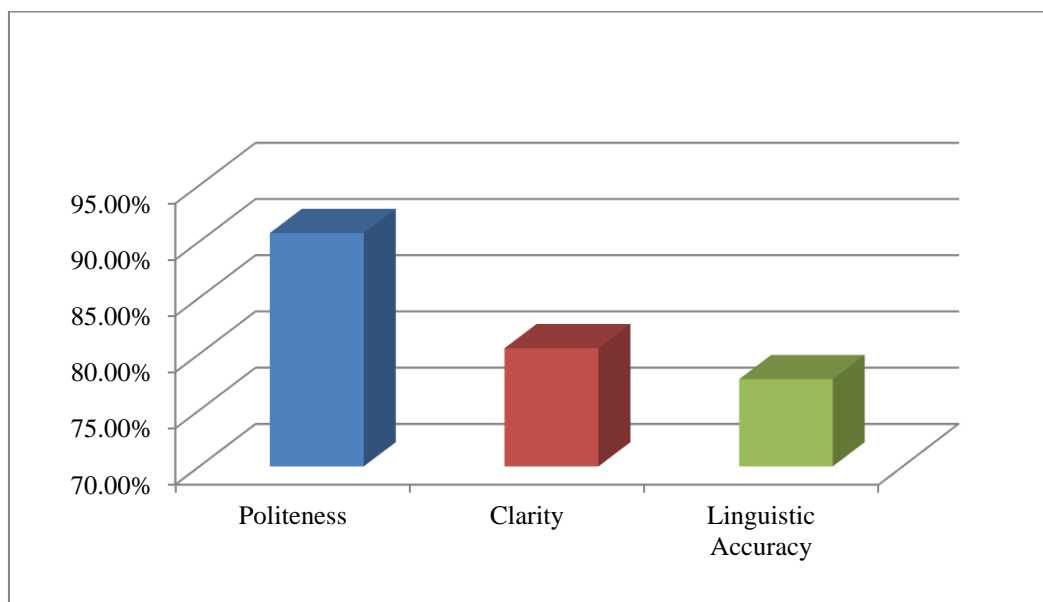


Figure 23 *The Experimental Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest*

As Table 50 and Figure 23 reveal, the participants' politeness average is the highest one among the areas of assessment. It approaches the perfect level (90.75% / 100%). It is the area that improved the most as its average increased from 4.51 in the pretest to 7.26 in the posttest, a gain of 2.75. It could be then concluded that politeness now poses no problems for learners' criticisms as it used to do. Like politeness, the obtained average score of clarity in this test is good too (80.5% / 100%). However, as shown in Table 20, the experimental group's pretest clarity mean exceeds 6 (6.18) which means that the majority of the subjects did not face a problem in realizing constructive peer criticisms in the pretest. In other words, the mean of clarity was relatively high even before instruction. The score of linguistic accuracy increased too, but still, it did not approach the full score (4). In our view, this might be due to the participants' public speaking stress which makes them commit grammatical mistakes unconsciously even though their language proficiency is good. To see whether or not the same development took place among the control group in the same task, the average score and percentage of each area of assessment have to be calculated.

Table 51 *The Control Group's Average Scores of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic Accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	211.44	298	143.04
<b>Average</b>	4.40	6.21	2.98
<b>Percentage</b>	55%	77.62%	74.5%

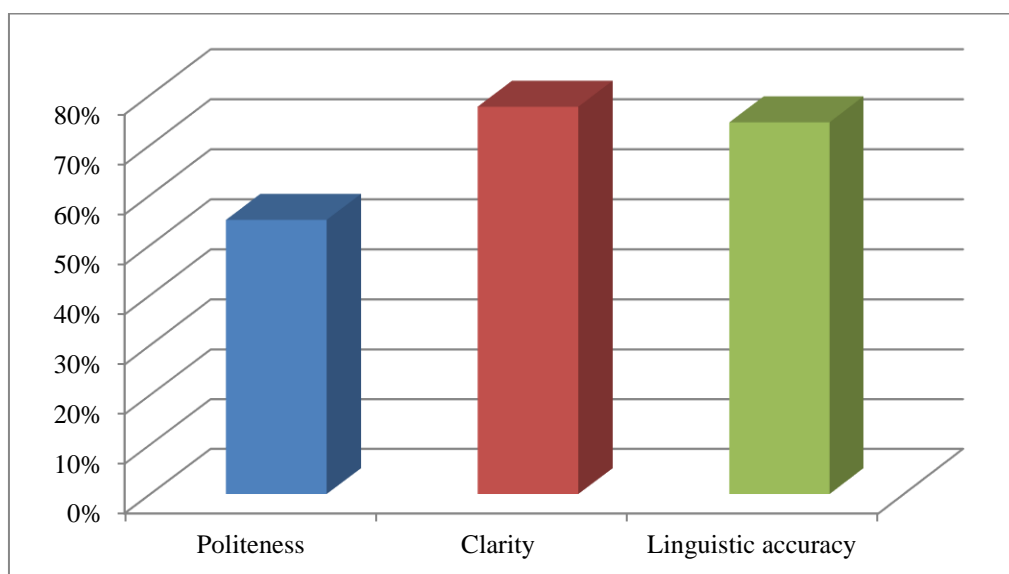


Figure 24 *The Control Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT Posttest*

As Table 51 tells and Figure 24 visualizes, unlike the experimental group, the control group participants' clarity average still keeps the first rank among the areas of assessment (77.62%) since the pretest. It is followed by linguistic accuracy (74.5%) and then politeness (55%). Because the control group was not instructed on realizing pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms, it failed to a certain extent to produce polite ones even though their linguistic accuracy level is fair.

Before moving to examine both groups' achievement in the ODCT, their developments in the OPFT with regard to the three areas of assessment have to be compared first.

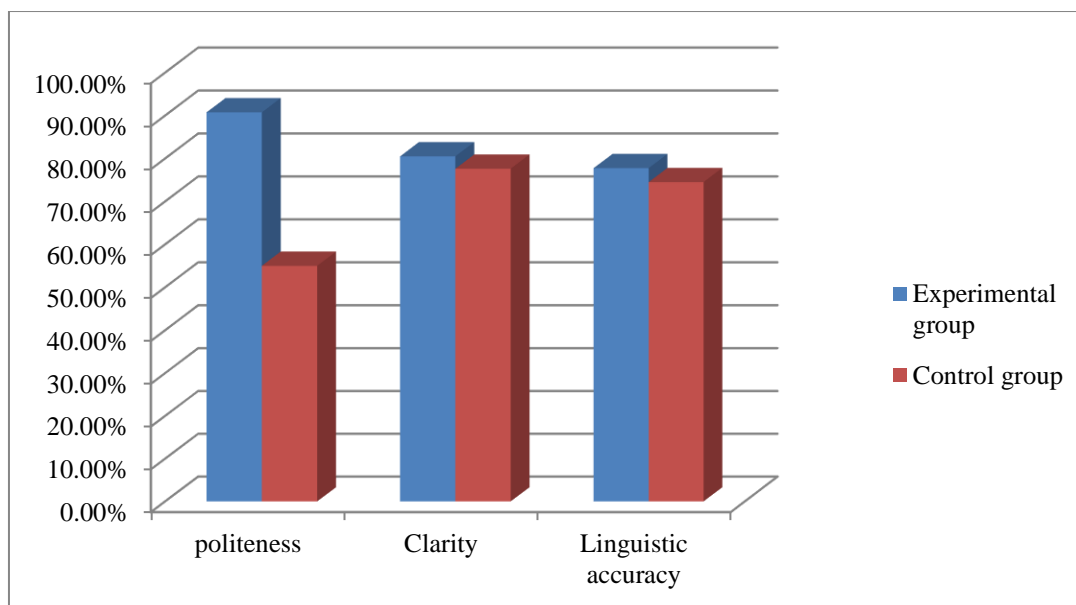


Figure 25 Comparison Between both Groups' Performance in the Three Areas of Assessment in the OPFT Posttest

The experimental group outperformed the control group at all levels. However, disparity in clarity and linguistic accuracy is modest compared to that of politeness. After three phases of the experiment, the control group's politeness performance is still very low compared with that of the experimental group and the two other areas of assessment. This resulted from the absence of instruction. To see whether or not this is typical to the OPFT, both groups' performances in the ODCT have to be examined.

Table 52 The Experimental Group's ODCT Posttest Scores

N	Politeness	Clarity	Linguistic accuracy	Final score	N	Politeness	Clarity	Linguistic accuracy	Final score
1	5.60	6.60	4	16.20	27	5.20	5.40	4	14.60
2	5.20	5.80	3.20	14.20	28	5	5.80	3.20	14
3	5.60	6.20	3.20	15	29	5	4	4	13
4	5.20	6	2.80	14	30	8	8	4	20
5	6.20	6.40	4	16.60	31	5.80	6.60	4	16.40
6	6	6	4	16	32	5.60	6.20	3.20	15
7	6.40	6.60	4	17	33	6	7	4	17

<b>8</b>	5.20	6	2.80	14	<b>34</b>	5.20	6	2.80	14
<b>9</b>	5.80	6	3.20	15	<b>35</b>	6.40	7.60	4	18
<b>10</b>	6.40	6.80	4	17.20	<b>36</b>	4.40	5.40	2.40	12.20
<b>11</b>	6	6	4	16	<b>37</b>	4.80	6.60	3.60	15
<b>12</b>	6.40	7.60	4	18	<b>38</b>	4.20	4.40	1.20	9.80
<b>13</b>	8	8	4	20	<b>39</b>	6.40	7.60	4	18
<b>14</b>	5	5.80	3.20	14	<b>40</b>	5.60	6.20	3.20	15
<b>15</b>	4.40	5.20	2.40	12	<b>41</b>	7.20	7.80	4	19
<b>16</b>	7.40	7.80	4	19.20	<b>42</b>	6.40	6.60	4	17
<b>17</b>	6.40	7.60	4	18	<b>43</b>	5	5	4	14
<b>18</b>	6.40	6.60	4	17	<b>44</b>	8	8	4	20
<b>19</b>	5	5	2	12	<b>45</b>	5.20	6	3	14.20
<b>20</b>	5.20	5.80	3.20	14.20	<b>46</b>	5	5.80	4	14
<b>21</b>	6.40	6.60	4	17	<b>47</b>	6.40	7.60	4	18
<b>22</b>	4.80	6.60	3.60	15	<b>48</b>	5.40	6.60	4	16
<b>23</b>	7.20	7.80	4	19	<b>49</b>	7.20	7.80	4	19
<b>24</b>	5.20	5.60	3.20	14	<b>50</b>	6.20	7.40	4	18.80
<b>25</b>	4.20	4.80	1.20	10.20	<b>51</b>	5.20	6	2.80	14
<b>26</b>	4.40	5.20	2.40	12	<b>52</b>	5.60	6.60	3.80	16

Note. N = Number of the subjects

In order to compare between both groups, the scores of the control group in this task have to be seen too. The following table displays them.

Table 53 *The Control Group's ODCT Posttest Scores*

<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>	<b>Final score</b>
<b>1</b>	5	8	4	17	<b>25</b>	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
<b>2</b>	4	6	1	11	<b>26</b>	5	5	4	14
<b>3</b>	4	5.80	2.40	12	<b>27</b>	4	5	4	13
<b>4</b>	3	5	2	10	<b>28</b>	3	6	2	11

5	5	7	4	16	29	4	6.80	3.20	14
6	4	5	4	13	30	4	5	4	13
7	4	5.60	2.40	12	31	3	5	2	10
8	3	6	2	11	32	3	6	2	11
9	3	6	2	11	33	4	6.80	3.20	14
10	3	5	2	10	34	4	5.80	2.40	12
11	5	5.80	3.20	14	35	4	6	4	14
12	4	5	2	11	36	4	5	2	11
13	3	5	2	10	37	4.40	5.20	2.40	12
14	4	5	2	11	38	3	5	2	10
15	4	6	4	14	39	4.60	4.80	3.60	13
16	4	5	4	13	40	4	4.80	1	9
17	5	7	4	16	41	4	5.60	2.40	12
18	5	7	4	16	42	4	5.60	2.40	12
19	4	6	4	14	43	5	5	4	14
20	4	6.80	3.60	14	44	4	5.60	2.40	12
21	4	5.60	2.40	12	45	3	5	2	10
22	4	7	4	15	46	4	5	4	13
23	4	5.60	2.40	12	47	4	7.40	3.60	15
24	3	6	2	12	48	4.20	6	2.80	13

Note. N = Number of the subjects

The following table compares between both groups' overall performances.

Table 54 *Difference Between both Groups' OPFT Means in the Posttest*

Groups	ODCT Posttest mean
Experimental group	15.70
Control group	12.52
Difference between the means	3.18

Comparing the means, one can conclude that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the ODCT. The experimental group did better by 15.9%. These results further approve the premise that the interventional treatment



boosts the participants' constructive peer criticism competence. In order to exclude the possibility of this progress made by chance, the t-test is used later.

That the speech-act instruction had a positive effect on the experimental group participants' performance of constructive peer criticisms in the ODCT cannot be proved by comparing between both groups in the posttest only but between their means in two test conditions (pretest and posttest) too. As Table 56 below makes clear, while the control group achieved a very little progress from the pretest to the posttest (only 0.13); the experimental group made a gain of 3.24.

Table 55 *Comparison Between the OPFT Pretest and Posttest Means of both Groups*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>ODCT pretest mean</b>	<b>ODCT posttest mean</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	12.46	15.70
<b>Control group</b>	12.39	12.52

Back to the experimental group's accomplishment, the nature of its progress in the posttest can be better understood by examining the distributions of the three areas of assessment (Table 56). Starting with politeness, if we compare its scores with those of the pretest, we can easily see that the number of the relatively low scores (i.e. those  $< 5$ ) decreased from 44 (84.61%) to 7 (13.46%) and the number of relatively high scores (i.e. those  $\geq 5$ ) increased considerably from 8 (15.38%) to 45 (86.54%). This represents an increase in the number of constructive criticisms in which the S places a strong emphasis on meeting the face needs of the H, and this is due to pragmatic instruction. Moving to clarity, the number of criticisms that scored below 6 in clarity decreased from 30 in the pretest (57.69%) to 15 (28.84%) in this test. Moving to clarity, the number of participants that scored above 5 in the pretest is 47 (90.38%) and in the posttest is 49 (94.23%). This indicates that the participants produced fairly clear criticisms even before being instructed. With regard to linguistic accuracy, the number of participants who obtained the full score is 7 (13.46%) in the pretest and 29 (55.77%) in the posttest.

Table 56 *The Experimental Group's Performance in Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCCT Posttest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	327.38	300.56	188.46
<b>Average score</b>	6.29	5.78	3.49
<b>Percentage</b>	78.62%	72.25%	87.25%

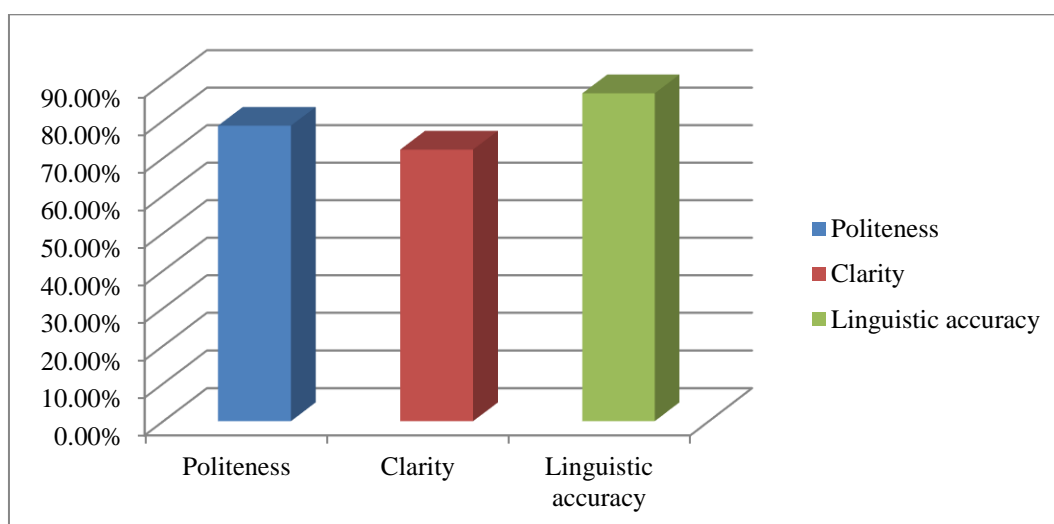


Figure 26 *The Experimental Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCCT Posttest*

As Table 56 and Figure 26 reveal, unlike the OPFT, the participants' linguistic accuracy average is the highest average in the areas of assessment (87.25%). It is followed by politeness (78.62%) then clarity (72.25%). These fairly high scores reflect the effectiveness of instruction on constructive criticisms' production. That politeness and clarity levels come in the second and last place respectively preceded by linguistic accuracy should not undermine the pragmatic instructional effect. In fact, their levels increased from the pretest to the posttest, especially that of politeness. Its average score jumped from 4.03 and in the pretest to 6.26 in the posttest. It exceeds Level 3 which suggests that the experimental group participants are finally able to realize criticisms with a good degree of emphasis on meeting their peers' face needs. Before comparing these results with those of the control group, its members' scores of the three areas of assessment have to be known first. They are reported in the following table.

Table 57 *The Control Group's Average Scores and Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Posttest*

	<b>Politeness</b>	<b>Clarity</b>	<b>Linguistic accuracy</b>
<b>Total score</b>	198.40	275	132.40
<b>Average score</b>	4.05	5.73	2.76
<b>Percentage</b>	50.62%	71.62%	69%

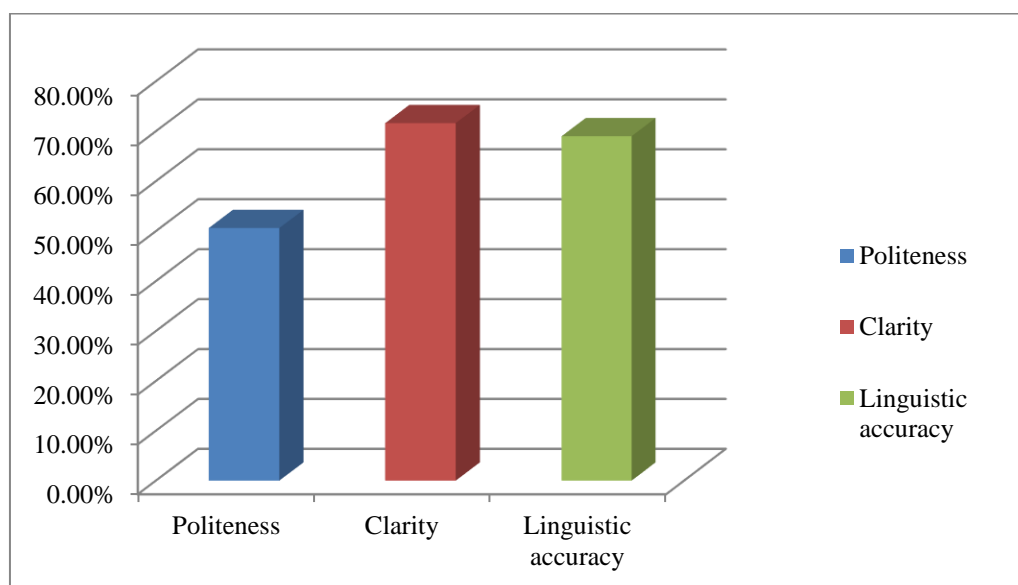


Figure 27 *The Control Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the ODCT Posttest*

As Table 57 and Figure 27 reveal, like the experimental group, the participants' linguistic accuracy average is the highest in the areas of assessment (69%). It is followed by clarity (71.62%) then politeness (50.62%). Because the control group was not instructed, it failed to a certain extent to realize pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. This confirms the present study's preconception that second year EFL learners at Batna 2 University face problems in realizing pragmatically appropriate constructive criticisms.

Another trend that deserves attention is that the experimental group's performance in the OPFT is better than in the ODCT as Table 58 below shows.

Table 58 *Comparison Between the Experimental Group's Performance in the OPFT and the ODCT Posttest*

Components	Politeness	Clarity	Linguistic accuracy
OPFT of the posttest	90.75%	80.50%	77.75%
ODCT of the posttest	78.62%	72.25%	87.25%

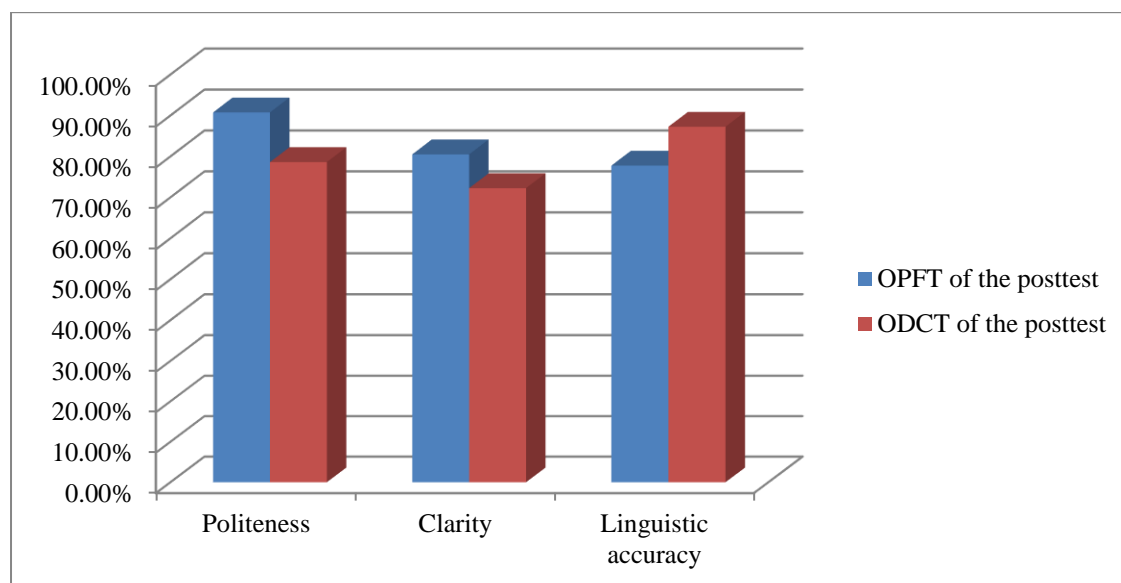


Figure 28 *Comparison Between the Experimental Group's Percentages of Politeness, Clarity and Linguistic Accuracy in the OPFT and the ODCT Posttest*

The different percentages of politeness, clarity and linguistic accuracy between the OPFT and the ODCT of the posttest push us to think of the possible task type effect on the effectiveness of instructional intervention. Our interpretation of this is as follows: First, for politeness, it is higher in the OPFT than in the ODCT because the former is a natural task while the latter is an elicited one. In other words, the OPFT participants tried to be as polite as possible when they criticized real peers sitting in front of them. However, in the ODCT, they did not care a lot about politeness because they knew that they were criticizing imaginary peers in hypothetical situations. For clarity, it had almost the same percentage in both tasks and this reflects that the participants insisted on it and wanted their constructive criticisms to be interpreted as constructive criticism speech acts no matter the pragmatic task was natural or elicited. With regards to linguistic accuracy, it was higher in the ODCT than in the OPFT. The reason behind

this could be that the former is more attention-demanding than the latter. Nevertheless, all these speculations need empirical validation. The direct causes of variability between the two tasks are beyond the scope of the present study

For the experimental group, not only politeness and linguistic accuracy average scores were higher in the OPFT than the ODCT but the general mean too. This could be due to two reasons in our view. In the OPFT, the participants were free to produce as many constructive peer criticisms as they wanted. The actual number produced ranged from one to five. In the ODCT, however; they were obliged to produce five constructive peer criticisms in correspondence to five hypothetical scenarios. The more participants produce constructive criticisms, the more they are likely to make errors. In addition to the number of criticisms, the nature of the ODCT too can affect the learners' scores. First, the ODCT is based on imaginary scenarios so the participants might not had understood exactly what to do though the researcher had insisted on them to ask questions if something was not clear. Second, performing the ODCT is more stressful than the OPFT. The former was done as an ordinary part of the lesson while the learners did not know that they were watched by the researcher and their critical feedback was recorded while the latter was done at the teacher's (researcher's) desk. Third, the critical feedback in the OPFT was offered in front of the class so the participants probably had hints from each other's constructive criticisms, but in the ODCT, no participant knew how his/her peer answered.

Nonetheless, comparing between the two tasks is not the present study's aim. Therefore, for statistical reasons, their means should be averaged to get both groups' general means in the posttest. The following table shows the results.

*Table 59 Both Groups' General Means in the Posttest*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Mean of the OPFT</b>	<b>Mean of the ODCT</b>	<b>Mean of the posttest</b>
<b>Experimental group</b>	16.81	15.70	16.26
<b>Control group</b>	13.65	12.52	13.09

### 3.2.1.1.6 Summary of the tests' results.

The following figure sums up the general means of both groups in the different tests.

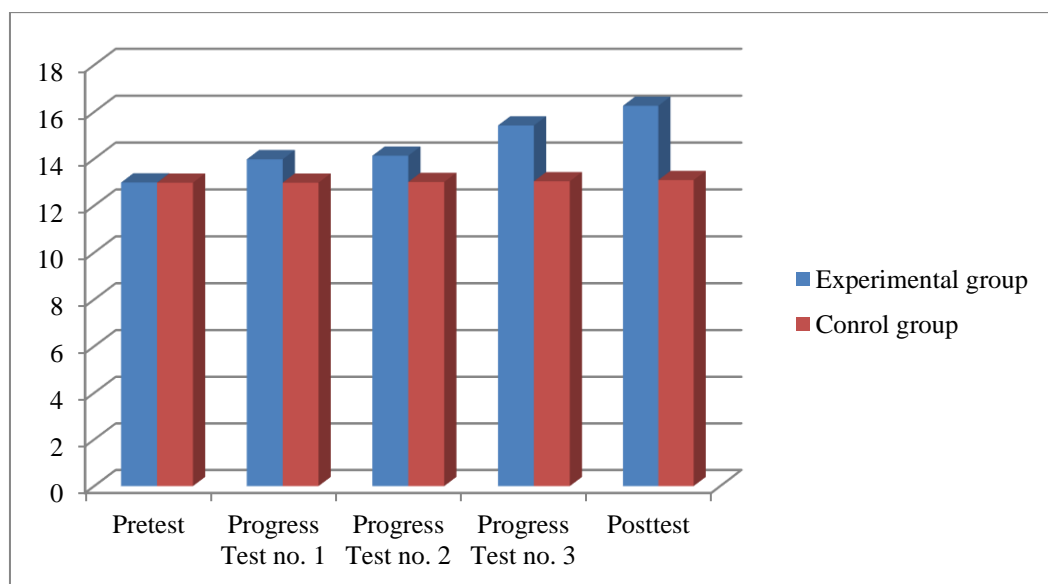


Figure 29 *Difference in the Means of both Groups in the Different Tests*

According to the graphical representation of the mean changes, it is obvious that the experimental and the control group have demonstrated different progress of constructive peer criticism competence. This change, however, is not scientifically enough as a proof of the positive effect of pragmatic instruction on the present study participants' constructive peer criticism competence if it is not statistically confirmed via the t-test.

### 3.2.1.1.7 Statistical analysis and interpretation.

The descriptive statistics already done cannot fully determine that the significant difference between the means of the two groups is due to treatment. One type of inferential statistics—the t-test—is needed. Once applied, it reveals, with a very tiny error probability, the effect of the IV on the DV. To calculate the value, the following formula, as stated in Miller (1989: 78), needs to be applied:

$$T_{N_1 + N_2 - 2} = \frac{(\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2)\sqrt{(N_1 + N_2 - 2)N_1N_2}}{\sqrt{(N_1S_1^2 + N_2S_2^2)(N_1 + N_2)}}$$

With:

- $\bar{x}_1$  = Mean of the first group
- $\bar{x}_2$  = Mean of the second group
- $N_1$  = Number of the participants in the first group
- $N_2$  = Number of the participants in the second group
- $S_1$  = Standard deviation (sample variance) of the first group
- $S_2$  = Standard deviation (sample variance) of the second group
- $N_1 + N_2 - 2$  = Degree of freedom

So before calculating the t-value, we need to:

- Calculate the mean of each group
- Calculate the variance of each group
- Calculate the standard deviation of each group
- Calculate the degree of freedom

The t-test is applied on the scores of the pretest and the posttest.

### 3.2.1.1.7.a The mean

The mean is the sum of scores divided by the number of subjects.

- **Mean of the experimental group's pretest scores**

$$\bar{x}_1 = \frac{\sum x_1}{N_1} = \frac{675,58}{52} = 12,99$$

- **Mean of the control group's pretest scores**

$$\bar{x}_2 = \frac{\sum x_2}{N_2} = \frac{623,33}{48} = 12,98$$

- **Mean of the experimental group's posttest scores**

$$\bar{x}_1 = \frac{\sum x_1}{N_1} = \frac{845,59}{52} = 16,26$$

- **Mean of the control group's posttest scores**

$$\bar{x}_2 = \frac{\sum x_2}{N_2} = \frac{628,33}{48} = 13,09$$

**3.2.1.1.7.b The variance**

The variance is defined as a measure of how spread out a distribution is. It is computed as the average squared deviation of the sum of numbers from the mean. In order to calculate the variance of each group, we have first to calculate the squared scores of that group in the posttest. The following table represents the squared scores of the experimental group in the posttest.

Table 60 *Squared Scores of the Experimental Group*

<b>N</b>	<b>OPFT</b>	<b>ODCT</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Squared score</b>
<b>1</b>	17	16.20	16.60	275.56
<b>2</b>	16.20	14.20	15.20	231.04
<b>3</b>	17	15	16	256
<b>4</b>	18	14	16	256
<b>5</b>	18	16.60	17.30	299.29
<b>6</b>	16.50	16	16.25	264.06
<b>7</b>	17	17	17	289
<b>8</b>	20	14	17	289
<b>9</b>	18	15	16.50	272.25
<b>10</b>	16	17.20	16.60	275.56
<b>11</b>	17	16	16.50	272.25
<b>12</b>	17.50	18	17.75	315.06
<b>13</b>	20	20	20	400
<b>14</b>	14.66	14	14.33	205.35
<b>15</b>	19	12	15.50	240.25
<b>16</b>	20	19.20	19.60	384.16
<b>17</b>	14	18	16	256
<b>18</b>	18.50	17	17.75	315.06
<b>19</b>	15	12	13.5	182.25
<b>20</b>	14	14.20	14.10	198.81
<b>21</b>	19	17	18	324
<b>22</b>	18	15	16.50	272.25
<b>23</b>	11.75	19	15.37	236.24



<b>24</b>	20	14	17	289
<b>25</b>	16.50	10.20	13.35	178.22
<b>26</b>	15	12	13.50	182.25
<b>27</b>	15	14.60	14.80	219.04
<b>28</b>	12.50	14	13.25	175.56
<b>29</b>	13.33	13	13.16	173.18
<b>30</b>	17	20	18.50	342.25
<b>31</b>	18	16.40	17.20	295.84
<b>32</b>	17.40	15	16.20	262.44
<b>33</b>	18.50	17	17.75	315.06
<b>34</b>	17	14	15.50	240.25
<b>35</b>	20	18	19	361
<b>36</b>	15	12.20	13.60	184.96
<b>37</b>	18	15	16.50	272.25
<b>38</b>	17	9.80	13.40	179.56
<b>39</b>	20	18	19	361
<b>40</b>	17	15	16	256
<b>41</b>	15.50	19	17.25	297.56
<b>42</b>	15	17	16	256
<b>43</b>	18	14	16	256
<b>44</b>	17	20	18.50	342.25
<b>45</b>	12.33	14.2	13.26	175.82
<b>46</b>	19	14	16.50	272.25
<b>47</b>	18	18	18	324
<b>48</b>	19	16	17.50	306.25
<b>49</b>	13.50	19	16.25	264.06
<b>50</b>	19	18.80	18.90	357.21
<b>51</b>	11.75	14	12.87	165.64
<b>52</b>	17	16	16.50	272.25
<b>Total</b>	874.42	816.76	845.59	13886.59

Note. N = Number of the subjects

The following table represents the squared scores of the control group in the posttest.

Table 61 *Squared Scores of the Control Group*

<b>N</b>	<b>OPFT</b>	<b>ODCT</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Squared score</b>
1	16.25	17	16.62	276.22
2	12	11	11.50	132.25
3	14.50	12	13.25	175.56
4	9	10	9.50	90.25
5	15	16	15.50	240.25
6	15	13	14	196
7	16	12	14	196
8	10.33	11	10.66	113.63
9	10	11	10.50	110.25
10	12.50	10	11.25	132.25
11	16	14	15	225
12	12	11	11.50	132.25
13	15	10	12.50	156.25
14	14	11	12.50	156.25
15	16	14	15	225
16	12.50	13	12.75	162.56
17	18	16	17	289
18	18.50	16	17.25	297.56
19	12.50	14	13.25	175.56
20	14	14	14	196
21	11	12	11.50	132.25
22	10.33	15	12.66	160.27
23	14	12	13	169
24	11.50	12	11.75	138.06
25	11.67	12	11.83	139.95
26	15	14	14.50	210.25
27	15	13	14	196

28	15	11	13	169
29	13	14	13.50	182.25
30	11.67	13	12.33	152.03
31	16	10	13	169
32	13.50	11	12.25	150.06
33	14	14	14	196
34	16.50	12	14.25	203.06
35	13	14	13.50	182.25
36	14	11	12.50	156.25
37	16	12	14	196
38	15.25	10	12.62	159.26
39	16	13	14.50	210.25
40	14	9	11.50	132.25
41	12.50	12	12.25	150.06
42	13	12	12.50	156.25
43	15.67	14	14.83	219.93
44	14	12	13	169
45	10	10	10	113.63
46	9.50	13	11.25	126.56
47	12	15	13.50	182.25
48	13.50	13	13.25	175.56
<b>Total</b>	655.66	601	628.33	8374.77

Note. N = Number of the subjects

- **The experimental group variance:**

$$S_1^2 = \frac{\sum x_1^2}{N_1} - \overline{x_1^2}$$

$$S_1^2 = \frac{13886,59}{52} - (16,26)^2$$

$$S_1^2 = 267,05 - 264,38$$

$$S_1^2 = 2,67$$

- **The control group variance:**

$$S_2^2 = \frac{\sum x_2^2}{N_2} - \overline{x_2^2}$$

$$S_2^2 = \frac{8374,77}{48} - (13,09)^2$$

$$S_2^2 = 174,47 - 171,34$$

$$S_2^2 = 3,13$$

### 3.2.1.1.7.c The standard deviation

The standard deviation SD measures the dispersion (The extent to which a set of scores varies in relation to the mean). It is the square root of the variance S.

- **The standard deviation of the experimental group**

$$SD_e = \sqrt{2,67} = 1.63$$

- **The standard deviation of the control group**

$$SD_C = \sqrt{3,13} = 1.77$$

### 3.2.1.1.7.d The degree of freedom

Following (Brown, 1998), the degree of freedom (*df*) for the t-test of independent means is the first sample size minus one plus the second size minus one. It helps to find the critical value for “t”.

$$df = (N_{1-1}) + (N_{2-1})$$

$$df = (52 - 1) + (48 - 1)$$

$$df = 51 + 47$$

$$df = 98$$

### 3.2.1.7.e The t-test and alpha level

As already said, to test the present study’s main hypothesis, the appropriate statistical procedure is the t-test which is considered to be the most suitable test to compare two means. To calculate the t-value, the following formula needs to be applied:

$$T_{N_1 + N_2 - 2} = \frac{(\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2)\sqrt{(N_1 + N_2 - 2)N_1N_2}}{\sqrt{(N_1S_1^2 + N_2S_2^2)(N_1 + N_2)}}$$

$$T_{N_1 + N_2 - 2} = \frac{(16,26 - 13,09)\sqrt{(52 + 48 - 2)52 \times 48}}{\sqrt{(52 \times 2,67 + 48 \times 3,13)(52 + 48)}}$$

$$T_{N_1 + N_2 - 2} = \frac{3,17\sqrt{98 \times 2496}}{\sqrt{138,84 + 150,24) \times 100}}$$

$$T_{N_1} + N_2 - 2 = \frac{3,17\sqrt{244608}}{\sqrt{289,08 \times 100}}$$

$$T_{N_1} + N_2 - 2 = \frac{3,17 \times 494,57}{\sqrt{28908}}$$

$$T_{N_1} + N_2 - 2 = \frac{1567,79}{170,02} = 9,22$$

Still according to Brown (1998), the  $\alpha$  level may be between 0.01 and 0.05. In our case we decided to set alpha at  $\alpha = .05$  to have more tolerance. This means that only 05% chance of error can be tolerated.

#### 3.2.1.1.7.f The critical value

Since alpha is set at  $\alpha = .05$ , and  $df = 98$ , according to Fisher and Yates's (1974) table of critical values, the value for "t" is 1.98

The value observed in this investigation is higher than the critical value suggested  $t_{obs} > t_{crit}$  ( $9.22 > 1.98$ )

#### 3.2.1.1.7.g Necessary data for testing the main hypothesis

The necessary data needed for testing our main hypothesis are the following:

**Mean of each group:**  $\bar{X}_e = 16.26$ ,  $\bar{X}_c = 13.09$

**Alpha Level:**  $\alpha = .05$

**Observed value:**  $t_{obs} = 9.22$

**Critical value:**  $t_{crit} = 1.98$

**Degree of freedom:**  $df = 98$

**Null hypotheses:**  $H_0: \bar{X}_e = \bar{X}_c$

#### 3.2.1.1.8 Significance of these Data

Since the observed statistical value  $t_{obs}$  is greater than the critical value  $t_{crit}$ , the null hypothesis is rejected. Having rejected the null hypothesis, and given the degree of freedom tolerated, this means that there is only 05% probability that the observed difference in the mean which represents the change on the DV (students' level in constructive peer criticism competence), occurred by chance; and that 95%, it was due to the effect of the IV (pragmatic instruction).

In a nutshell, during the three phases of the experimental treatment, members of the experimental group received an interventional instruction on the speech act of criticizing in an attempt to enable them realize linguistically accurate, and most importantly, pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. The progress of the experimental group in the tests has proved the effectiveness of this pragmatic instruction. Despite the fact that few learners did not get any better, it is still believed that the general opinion made at the end of the experiment optimistically encourages us to say that through more learning in the same framework, these students can go beyond their actual competences.

These findings can be taken as an answer to the research question “Do EFL learners demonstrate improvement in their level of pragmatic competence as measured by analytic rating?” As stated in Chapter Two (Research Design and Methodology), the second question is addressed through discourse analysis. The next section in the field work presents data and their analysis on this same issue.

### ***3.2.1.2 Results of discourse analysis.***

As said earlier, two research techniques, that serve complementary purposes, are opted for. The previous section deals with analytic rating and concludes that the speech-act instruction accelerates the participants’ constructive peer criticism competence. That technique; however, does not allow for identifying specific types of developmental effects that instruction has on constructive peer criticisms’ production.

#### *3.2.1.2.1 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to constructive criticism semantic formulas’ frequencies and percentages in the oral peer feedback task.*

The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of criticism semantic formulas of the experimental group in the OPFT pretest.

Table 62 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the OPFT Pretest*

Type of constructive criticism strategy	Semantic formulas	n	(%)
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	31	(25.20)
	Disapproval	13	(10.57)
	Expression of disagreement	2	(1.62)
	Statement of the problem	42	(34.15)
	Statement of difficulty	1	(0.81)
	Consequences	0	(0)
Indirect criticism	Correction	7	(5.69)
	Indicating standard	0	(0)
	Demand for change	22	(17.88)
	Request for change	0	(0)
	Advice about change	3	(2.44)
	Suggestion for change	2	(1.62)
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)
	Asking/presupposing	0	(0)
	Other hints	0	(0)
Total		123	(100)

The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of criticism semantic formulas of the experimental group in the OPFT posttest.

Table 63 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the OPFT Posttest*

Type of constructive criticism strategy	Semantic formulas	n	(%)
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	3	(2.29)
	Disapproval	2	(1.52)
	Expression of disagreement	2	(1.52)
	Statement of the problem	8	(6.11)

	Statement of difficulty	0	(0)
	Consequences	0	(0)
Indirect criticism	Correction	10	(7.63)
	Indicating standard	11	(8.40)
	Demand for change	2	(1.52)
	Request for change	31	(23.66)
	Advice about change	4	(3.05)
	Suggestion for change	29	(22.18)
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)
	Asking/presupposing	8	(6.11)
	Other hints	21	(16.03)
	Total		131

Figure 30 summarizes Tables 62 and 63.

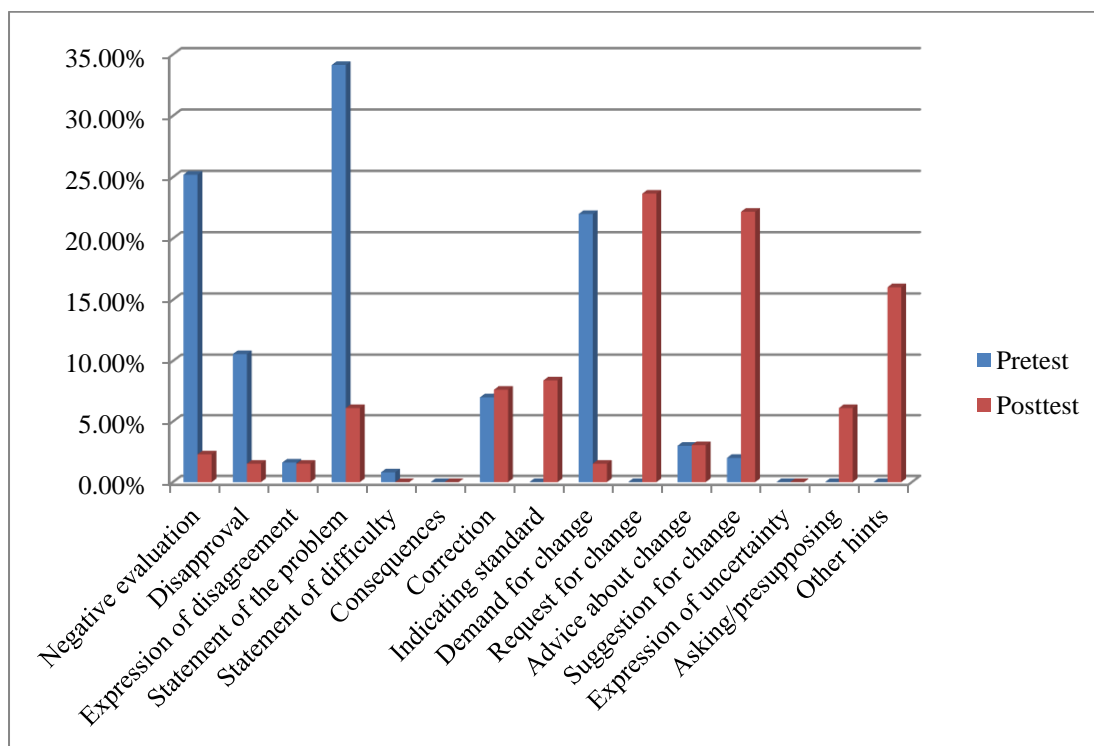


Figure 30 Comparison Between the Experimental Group Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest

As the two previous tables and figure clearly show, members of the experimental group did not make use of all semantic formula types either in the pretest or in the posttest. *Consequences* and *expression of uncertainty* got 0% in both test



conditions. In the pretest, the participants showed more preference for direct constructive criticism strategies mainly *statement of the problem* and *negative evaluation* (34.15% and 25.20% respectively). The overuse of these formulae might be their relative ease compared to the others. For an EFL intermediate learner, who has never been instructed on constructive criticism realization formulas, it seems intuitively easier when providing feedback on a peer's work to say, for example, "Your arguments are not strong" (Negative evaluation) or "There is a contradiction in your arguments" (Statement of the problem) than "Someone who listens to your arguments will not even try to revise his thoughts and will simply turn off" (Consequences) or "What I would have liked to have seen in your debate is like a definite stand supported by logical arguments from the start" (Request for change). For the other direct criticism semantic formulas, the participants used little *disapproval* (only 10.57%) and almost no *statement of disagreement* and *statement of difficulty* (just 1.62% and 0.82% respectively). As far as the use of criticism formulas under the category of indirect strategy in the pretest is concerned, *indicating standard*, *request for change*, *expression of uncertainty*, *asking/presupposing* as well as *other hints* were not used at all (0%). The only indirect semantic formula which is employed remarkably is *demand for change* (17.88%).

In the posttest, however; the use of the indirect constructive criticism strategies increased while that of the direct ones decreased considerably. In direct semantic formulas, both *statement of the problem* and *negative evaluation* kept to be the two most favorite strategies by the participants. Nonetheless, their percentage decreased from 34.15% in the pretest to 6.11% in the posttest (almost 6 times) and 25.20% in the pretest to 2.29% in the posttest (almost 12 times) respectively. This decrease went with a noticeable increase in the use many indirect strategies from the pretest to the posttest, namely *indicating standard* (0% vs. 8.40%), *request for change* (0% vs. 23.66%), *suggestion for change* (1.62% vs. 22.18%), *asking/presupposing* (0% vs. 6.11%) and *other hints* (0% vs. 16.03%). So, comparison between the pretest and posttest reveals an increase in the range of constructive criticism semantic formulas and a preference for indirect ones in the posttest. This can be interpreted as a tendency of using more polite forms. The two aspects of change evince the effect of pragmatic instruction on the experimental group's constructive criticism production.

To see whether or not this change from the pretest to the posttest is due to instruction, the control group's employment of constructive criticism strategies and formulas has to be also seen. The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of semantic formulas in the OPFT pretest.

Table 64 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the OPFT Pretest*

<b>Type of constructive criticism strategy</b>	<b>Semantic formulas</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	27	(22.88)
	Disapproval	11	(9.32)
	Expression of disagreement	1	(0.85)
	Statement of the problem	41	(34.74)
	Statement of difficulty	1	(0.85)
	Consequences	0	(0)
Indirect criticism	Correction	9	(7.63)
	Indicating standard	1	(0.85)
	Demand for change	20	(16.95)
	Request for change	0	(0)
	Advice about change	4	(3.39)
	Suggestion for change	3	(2.54)
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)
	Asking/presupposing	0	(0)
	Other hints	0	(0)
Total		118	(100)

The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of criticism semantic formulas of the control group in the OPFT posttest.

Table 65 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the OPFT Posttest*

<b>Type of constructive criticism strategy</b>	<b>Semantic formulas</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	23	(19.17)
	Disapproval	9	(7.50)
	Expression of disagreement	0	(0)
	Statement of the problem	51	(42.50)
	Statement of difficulty	2	(1.66)
	Consequences	1	(0.83)
Indirect criticism	Correction	7	(5.83)
	Indicating standard	2	(1.66)
	Demand for change	22	(18.33)
	Request for change	3	(2.50)
	Advice about change	3	(2.50)
	Suggestion for change	5	(4.16)
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)
	Asking/presupposing	0	(0)
	Other hints	1	(0.83)
Total		120	(100)

Figure 31 summarizes Tables 64 and 65.

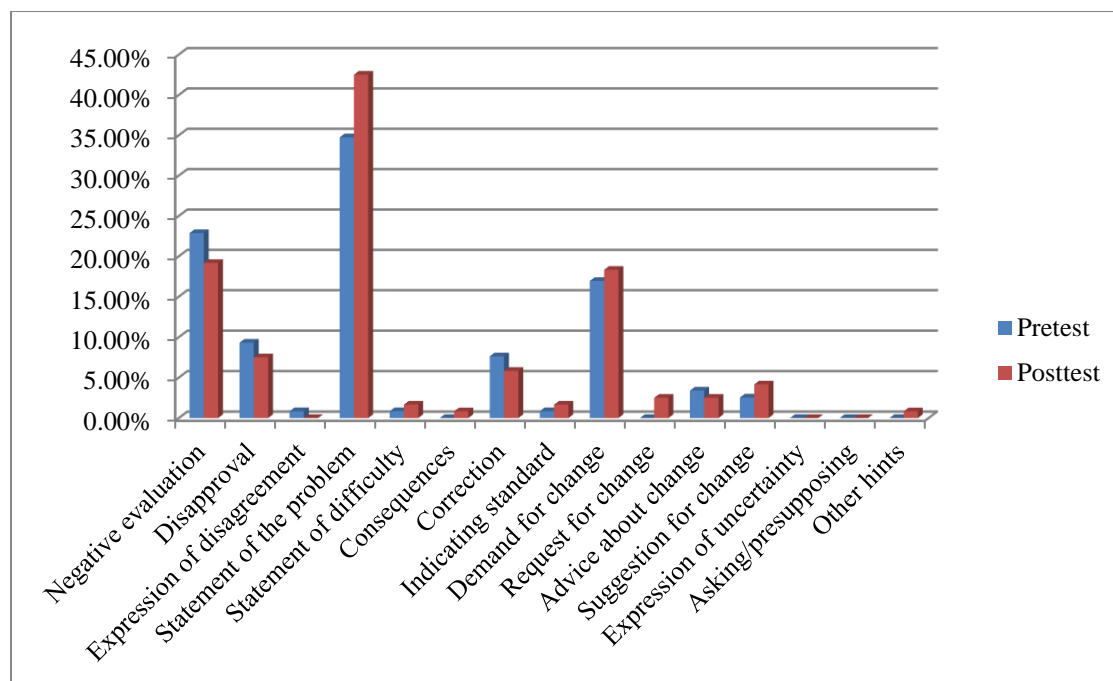


Figure 31 Comparison Between the Control Group Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest

As Figure 31 tells, there is no detectable disparity in the distribution of the semantic formulas used between the pretest and the posttest. In both test conditions, the control group participants showed preference for the direct strategy. More specifically, *statement of the problem* and *negative evaluation* constituted areas where they showed most salience. So, one can observe that because the participants of the control group were not instructed on the different constructive criticism semantic formulas, they kept overusing these two even in the posttest (34.74% [pretest] vs. 42.50% [posttest] for *statement of the problem* and 22.88% [pretest] vs. 19.71% [posttest] for *negative evaluation*). What is more, they did not seem to rely on more indirect formulas in the posttest. Their use was kept to a minimum except for *demand for change* which was considerably employed (16.95% [pretest] vs. 18.33 [posttest]). Its noticeable usage could be due to L1 interference. When criticizing someone, Arabic speakers use *demand for change* abundantly realized by the modal verb “must”. For the other semantic formulas categorized under the indirect strategy, it seems that there was no significant change in their employment from the pretest to the posttest, namely *correction* (7.63% in the pretest vs. 5.83% in the posttest), a decrease of 1.8%; *indicating standard* (0.85% vs. 1.66%), an increase of 0.81% only; *request for change* (0% vs. 2.5%), an increase of 2.5%; *advice about change* (3.39% vs. 2.5%), a decrease

of 0.89%; *suggestion for change* (2.54% vs. 4.16%), a difference of only 1.62%; and finally *other hints* (0% vs. 1%), a difference of only 1%. *Expression of uncertainty* as well as *asking/presupposing* were used neither in the pretest nor in the posttest. So, a quick comparison between the pretest and posttest reveals neither increase in the range of constructive criticism semantic formulas nor preference for the indirect strategy in the posttest. This suggests that non-instruction led the control group to show no change in the use discourse features from the pretest to the posttest.

### 3.2.1.2.2 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism modifiers' frequencies and percentages in the oral peer-feedback task.

As mentioned earlier, because the speech act of criticizing is face-threatening in nature, its offence needs to be reduced through modifiers. The following table illustrates their use by the experimental group in the pretest.

Table 66 Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the OPFT Pretest

Modifiers		n	(%)	
External	Steers	4	(4.50)	
	Sweeteners	15	(16.85)	
	Disarmers	30	(33.71)	
	Grounders	6	(6.74)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	0	(0)
		Interrogative	0	(0)
		Modal	0	(0)
	Lexical/phrasal	Hedges	6	(6.74)
		Understaters	7	(7.86)
		Downtoners	5	(5.62)
		Subjectivisers	13	(14.60)
		Consultative	0	(0)
		Cajolers	2	(2.25)
		Appealers	1	(1.12)
Total		89	(100)	

The table below illustrates the raw frequencies and percentages of mitigation devices employed by the same group (experimental) in the posttest.

*Table 67 Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the OPFT Posttest*

<b>Modifiers</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>	
External	Steers	7	(2.80)	
	Sweeteners	55	(22)	
	Disarmers	47	(18.80)	
	Grounders	31	(12.40)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	6	(2.40)
		Interrogative	2	(0.80)
		Modal	4	(1.60)
	Lexical/phrasal	Hedges	23	(9.20)
		Understaters	12	(4.80)
		Downtoners	15	(6)
		Subjectivisers	29	(11.60)
		Consultative	11	(4.40)
		Cajolers	5	(2)
		Appealers	3	(1.20)
Total		250	(100)	

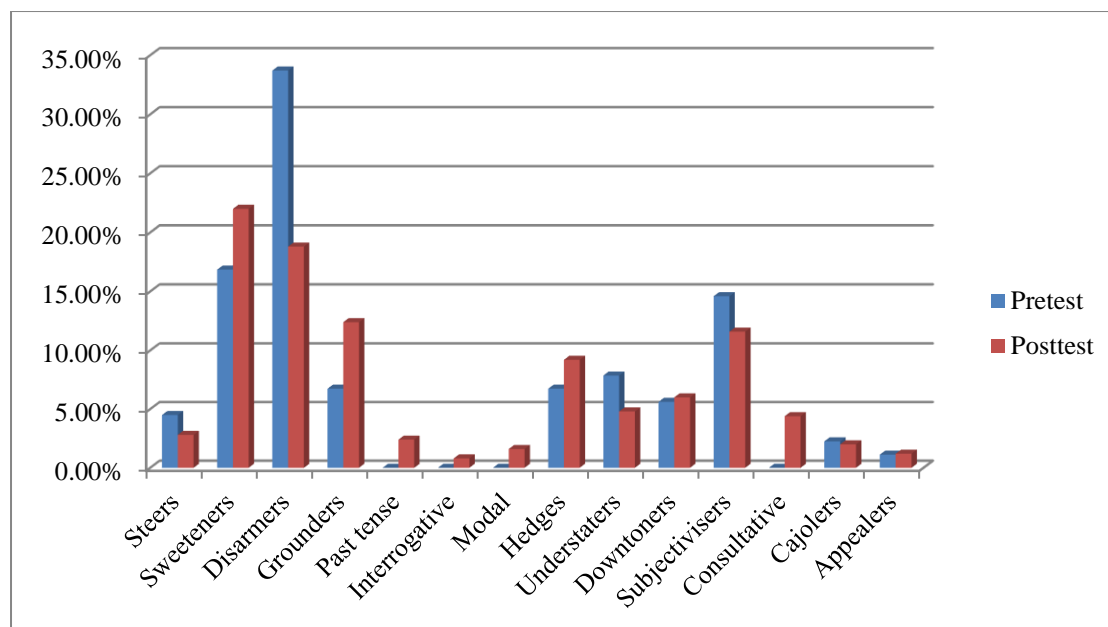


Figure 32 *Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions among the Experimental Group in the Pretest and Posttest*

The first noticeable difference between Table 66 and Table 67 is that the number of modifiers increased considerably in the posttest. In the pretest, the experimental group employed only 89 modifiers to mitigate 123 constructive criticisms, resulting in an average number of 0.72 modifiers per constructive criticism. In the posttest, however, 250 modifiers were used to help reduce the offence of 131 face-threatening criticisms, resulting in an average of 1.91. This significant increase in the number of modifiers from the pretest to the posttest indicates the experimental group's awareness of the need of mitigating their criticisms and this is due to pragmatic instruction.

Not only had the number of modifiers increased but their range too. In the pretest, only 10 types out of 14 types of modifiers were used, be they external or internal. In the posttest, all types were employed. What is more, the experimental group depended heavily on external modifiers in the pretest making little use of internal ones in the pretest (61.8 % for external modifiers vs. 38.2 for internal ones). The under-use of internal modifiers (i.e. those making up an integral part of the head act) is probably due to two reasons: First, they tend to contribute only minimal propositional meaning to the speech act (Hassal, 2001), and hence, they are less likely to be used. Second, this type of modifiers might increase the structural complexity of the speech act (Hassal, 2001; Nguyen, 2005) and this requires more processing time

from the part of the participants that are intermediate learners i.e. they still face some problems when constructing grammatically complex sentences. However, in the posttest, both types of modifiers were employed almost equally (56% external vs. 44% internal). What is more, *sweeteners* took the lion's share in the posttest modification and this can be explained by the participants' desire to be both polite and pedagogic. It might sound more systematic to mention the positive points in a peer's work before moving to the negative ones.

Another noticeable difference in the discourse features between the pretest and the posttest is the use of syntactic modifiers in the posttest. As mentioned before, they were totally absent in the pretest. Nonetheless, they are still less used than lexical modifiers (4.8 % syntactic vs. 39.2% lexical) and this might be a matter of preference or availability. It is a matter of fact that lexical modifiers are more available than syntactic ones.

All the aforementioned developmental changes in discourse features made by the experimental group from the pretest to the posttest indicate the effectiveness of instruction, but reference needs always to be made to the control group in order to be able to accredit them to the interventional treatment. Hence, the following table sketches the raw frequencies and percentages of both external and internal modifiers detected in the control group's constructive criticisms in the OPFT pretest.

Table 68 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the OPFT Pretest*

<b>Modifiers</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>	
External	Steers	3	(3.12)	
	Sweeteners	16	(16.66)	
	Disarmers	28	(29.16)	
	Grounders	7	(7.29)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	0	(0)
		Interrogative	0	(0)
		Modal	1	(1.04)
		Hedges	11	(11.46)
		Understaters	5	(5.21)



	Lexical/phrasal	Downtoners	7	(7.29)
		Subjectivisers	15	(15.62)
		Consultative	0	(0)
		Cajolers	3	(3.12)
		Appealers	0	(0)
Total			96	(100)

The following table shows the raw frequencies and percentages of both external and internal modifiers detected in the control group's constructive criticisms of the OPFT posttest.

*Table 69 Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the OPFT Posttest*

Modifiers		n	(%)	
External	Steers	2	(1.85)	
	Sweeteners	19	(17.59)	
	Disarmers	23	(21.30)	
	Grounders	9	(8.33)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	0	(0)
		Interrogative	1	(0.92)
		Modal	0	(0)
	Lexical/phrasal	Hedges	17	(11.46)
		Understaters	6	(5.21)
		Downtoners	10	(7.29)
		Subjectivisers	17	(15.74)
		Consultative	0	(0)
		Cajolers	2	(1.85)
		Appealers	2	(1.85)
Total		108	(100)	

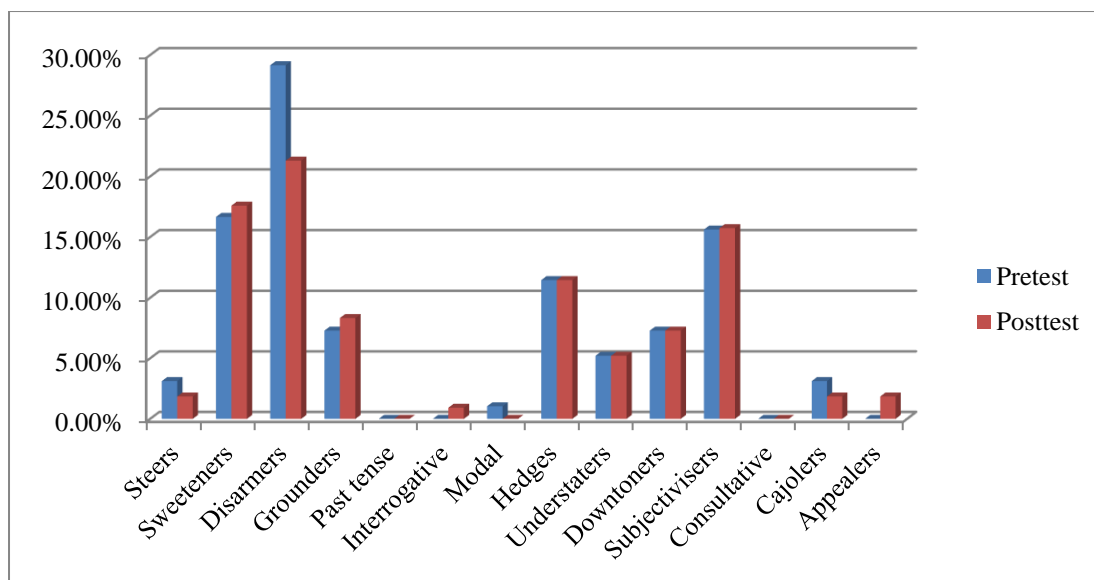


Figure 33 Comparison between Modifiers' Distributions among the Control Group in the Pretest and Posttest

Talking about the general frequency of mitigators, one could easily notice that the number of modifiers used by the control group did not increase considerably from the pretest to the posttest. Manual calculations show that the average of pretest modification is 0.83 modifiers per criticism formula and that of posttest modification is 0.86, a difference of only 0.03. This insignificant increase in the number of modifiers indicates the control group's unawareness of the need of mitigating their criticisms and this is due to non-instruction.

Moving from the general frequency of modification to the range of mitigation devices, Figure 33 shows that the control group used almost the same types of modifiers in both test conditions. External modifiers were preferred over internal ones, and this, as already said, might be due to the fact that they contribute maximal propositional meaning to the speech act without adding structural ambiguity to it. Interestingly, under the category of external modifiers, *disarmers* were favored over *steers*, *sweeteners*, and *grounders* in both the pretest and posttest. What is more, the control group kept avoiding some types completely in the posttest such as *past tense*, *modals* and *consultative*. In other words, no efforts were demonstrated to include new types of modifiers in the posttest. The inconsiderable rise in the frequency of mitigating criticisms as well as the stable range of modifiers used in the pretest and

posttest indicate that no important developmental changes took place in the use of discourse features from the pretest to the posttest and this is due to non-instruction too.

### 3.2.1.2.3 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism semantic formulas' frequencies and percentages in the oral discourse completion task

The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of criticism semantic formulas of the experimental group in the ODCT pretest.

Table 70 Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the ODCT Pretest

Type of constructive criticism strategy	Semantic formulas	n	(%)
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	99	(20.50)
	Disapproval	61	(12.63)
	Expression of disagreement	9	(1.86)
	Statement of the problem	179	(37.06)
	Statement of difficulty	0	(0)
	Consequences	1	(0.21)
Indirect criticism	Correction	7	(1.45)
	Indicating standard	1	(0.21)
	Demand for change	90	(18.63)
	Request for change	0	(0)
	Advice about change	19	(3.93)
	Suggestion for change	17	(3.52)
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)
	Asking/presupposing	0	(0)
	Other hints	0	(0)
Total		483	(100)

The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of criticism semantic formulas of the experimental group in the ODCT posttest.

Table 71 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Experimental Group in the ODCT Posttest*

Type of constructive criticism strategy	Semantic formulas	n	(%)
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	19	(3.93)
	Disapproval	8	(1.65)
	Expression of disagreement	7	(1.45)
	Statement of the problem	51	(10.56)
	Statement of difficulty	5	(1.03)
	Consequences	1	(0.21)
Indirect criticism	Correction	6	(1.24)
	Indicating standard	82	(16.98)
	Demand for change	7	(1.45)
	Request for change	101	(20.91)
	Advice about change	49	(10.14)
	Suggestion for change	93	(19.25)
	Expression of uncertainty	3	(0.62)
	Asking/presupposing	4	(0.83)
	Other hints	47	(9.73)
Total		483	(100)

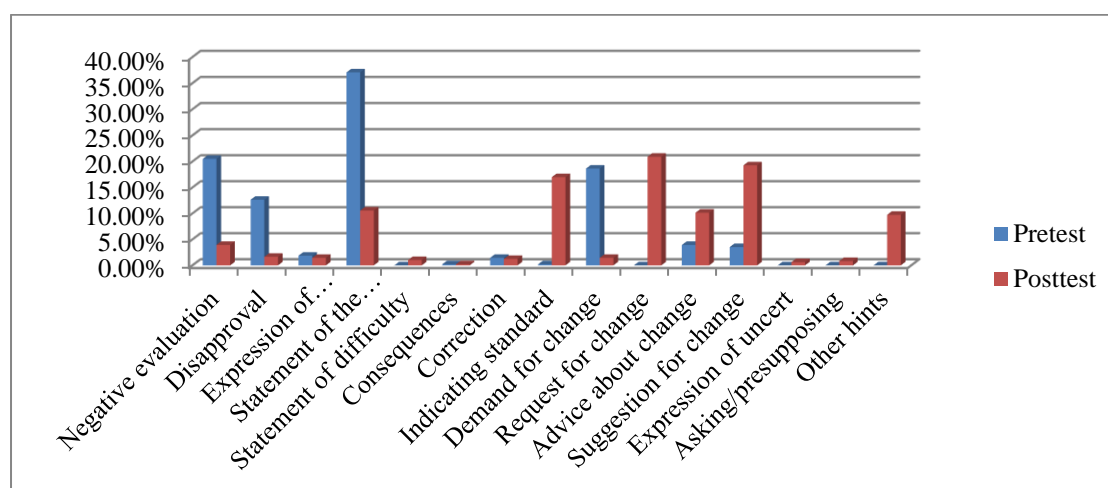


Figure 34 *Comparison Between the Experimental Group ODCT Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest*

What attracts attention the most in Figure 34 is that many semantic formula types were totally absent in the pretest (0%): *Statement of difficulty*, *request for change*, *expression of uncertainty*, *asking/presupposing*, and *other hints*. However, they were used in the posttest. Another aspect of change from the pretest and the posttest is the use of more indirect semantic formulae in the posttest (81.15% indirect semantic formulae vs. 18.85% direct ones) after relying mainly on direct ones in the pretest (27.74% indirect semantic formulae vs. 72.26% direct ones). It is the use of the indirect strategy which helped increase the politeness of constructive criticisms. Interestingly, the indirect semantic formulas were used with varying frequencies. *Suggestion for change* and *request for change* were the two areas where the learners showed most salience. This could be probably due to their relative ease compared to the other forms. *Indicating standard* was employed noticeably too and this is could be due to the nature of the task the learners performed. In other words, when reacting to hypothetical errors that imaginary peers did in the ODCT, it is more likely that the participants of the experimental group pointed out the standard form that should have been used instead of correcting the errors as they did not see a real presentation in front of them like in the OPFT. Indeed, the percentage of *correction* is only 1.24%. Last but not least, another developmental change that took place in the posttest is the fair employment of hints (0% in the pretest vs. 9.73% in the posttest) and this automatically elevates the degree of criticisms' politeness.

To conclude, comparison between the pretest and posttest reveals an increase in the range of constructive criticism semantic formulas and a preference for indirect ones in the posttest. This can be interpreted as a tendency of using more polite forms. These two aspects of change affirm the effect of pragmatic instruction on the experimental group's ability of producing more polite peer criticisms. To further confirm whether or not this change from the pretest to the posttest is ascribable to instruction, the control group's employment of the same strategies and formulas has to be seen. Those of the pretest are shown first.

Table 72 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the ODCT Pretest*

Type of constructive criticism strategy	Semantic formulas	n	(%)
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	107	(22.15)
	Disapproval	63	(13.04)
	Expression of disagreement	8	(1.65)
	Statement of the problem	161	(33.33)
	Statement of difficulty	1	(0.21)
	Consequences	2	(0.41)
Indirect criticism	Correction	2	(0.41)
	Indicating standard	13	(2.70)
	Demand for change	93	(19.25)
	Request for change	0	(0)
	Advice about change	15	(3.10)
	Suggestion for change	13	(2.70)
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)
	Asking/presupposing	0	(0)
	Other hints	5	(1.03)
Total		483	(100)

The following table represents the raw frequencies and percentages of criticism semantic formulas of the control group in the ODCT posttest.

Table 73 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Criticism Semantic Formulas of the Control Group in the ODCT Posttest*

Type of constructive criticism strategy	Semantic formulas	n	(%)
Direct criticism	Negative evaluation	115	(23.81)
	Disapproval	70	(14.50)
	Expression of disagreement	13	(2.70)
	Statement of the problem	177	(36.64)

	Statement of difficulty	8	(1.65)	
	Consequences	3	(0.62)	
Indirect criticism	Correction	2	(0.41)	
	Indicating standard	19	(3.93)	
	Demand for change	51	(10.56)	
	Request for change	0	(0)	
	Advice about change	29	(6)	
	Suggestion for change	3	(0.62)	
	Expression of uncertainty	0	(0)	
	Asking/presupposing	0	(0)	
	Other hints	2	(0.41)	
	Total		483	(100)

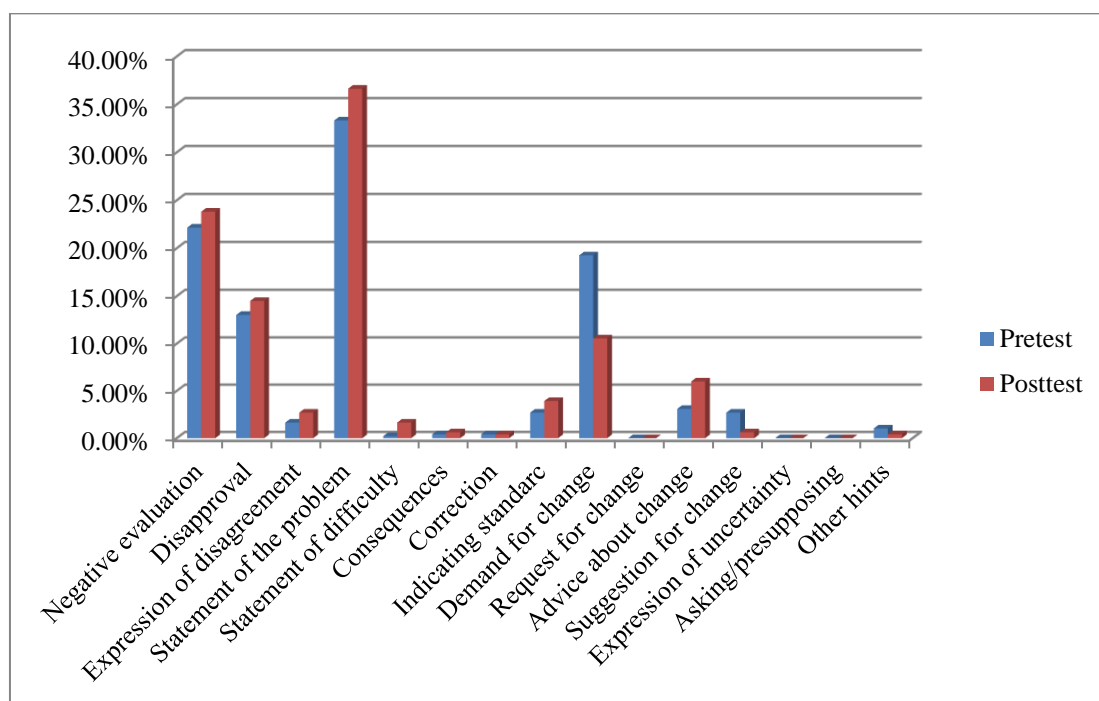


Figure 35 Comparison Between the Control Group ODCT Constructive Criticism Formulas' Distributions in the Pretest and Posttest

As it appears from Figure 35, the posttest could not show any integration of the semantic formulas that were already completely missing in the pretest. Said differently, *request for change*, *expression of uncertainty* in addition to *asking and presupposing* were not used in the pretest and kept to be absent in the posttest. Moving to the semantic formulas used, no detectable disparity in their distribution between the pretest and the

posttest can be seen. In both test conditions, the control group participants showed preference for the direct strategy. More specifically, *statement of the problem* and *negative evaluation* constituted areas where they showed most salience. In other words, the posttest did not introduce a varied use of the different forms. So, one can observe that because the participants of the control group were not instructed on the different constructive criticism semantic formulas, they kept overusing just *statement of the problem* and *negative evaluation* even in the posttest (33.33% [pretest] vs. 36.64% [posttest] and 22.15% [pretest] vs. 23.81% [posttest] respectively).

What is more, the control group members did not seem to rely on more indirect formulas in the posttest. Their use was kept to a minimum except for *demand for change* which was fairly employed (19.25% [pretest] vs. 10.56% [posttest]). Its noticeable usage could be due to L1 interference. When criticizing someone, Arabic speakers often use *demand for change* abundantly conveyed by the modal verb “must”. For the other semantic formulas categorized under the indirect strategy, it seems that there was no significant change in their employment from the pretest to the posttest, namely *correction* (0.41% in the pretest vs. 0.41% in the posttest); *indicating standard* (2.70% in the pretest vs. 3.93% in the posttest), an increase of 1.23% only; *advice about change* (3.10% in the pretest vs. 6% in the posttest), a difference of 2.9%; *suggestion for change* (2.7% in the pretest vs. 0.62% in the posttest), a decrease of 2.08% and finally *other hints* (1.05% in the pretest vs. 0.41% in the posttest), a decline of 0.64%. So, to sum up, a quick comparison between the pretest and posttest reveals neither increase in the range of constructive criticism semantic formulas nor preference for the indirect strategy in the posttest. This suggests that non-instruction led the control group to demonstrate no developmental changes in the use discourse features from the pretest to the posttest.

#### 3.2.1.2.4 Comparison between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticism modifiers' frequencies and percentages in the oral discourse completion task

The study reported in the present thesis seeks to investigate the effect of pragmatic instruction on second year English major learners' ability of producing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. To remind the reader, two techniques were opted for to detect this cause-effect relationship: analytic rating and discourse analysis. In the latter, the use of semantic formulas as well



as modifiers was taken as a reference to report specific changes of discourse features that could take place due to instruction. The previous sub-section compared between the pretest and posttest with regard to criticisms' semantic formulas and modifiers in the OPFT and the present section reports the change in the use of modifiers in the ODCT. The following table shows their use by the experimental group in the pretest.

Table 74 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the ODCT Pretest*

<b>Modifiers</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>	
External	Steers	47	(24.35)	
	Sweeteners	3	(1.55)	
	Disarmers	5	(2.59)	
	Grounders	45	(23.32)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	0	(0)
		Interrogative	0	(0)
		Modal	4	(2.07)
	Lexical/phrasal	Hedges	19	(9.84)
		Understaters	13	(6.73)
		Downtoners	5	(2.59)
		Subjectivisers	51	(26.42)
		Consultative	0	(0)
		Cajolers	1	(0.52)
		Appealers	0	(0)
Total		193	(100)	

The table below illustrates the raw frequencies and percentages of mitigation devices employed by the same group (experimental) in the posttest.

Table 75 Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Experimental Group in the ODCT Posttest

Modifiers		n	(%)	
External	Steers	52	(9.83)	
	Sweeteners	7	(1.32)	
	Disarmers	9	(1.70)	
	Grounders	79	(14.93)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	17	(3.21)
		Interrogative	2	(0.38)
		Modal	69	(13.04)
	Lexical/phrasal	Hedges	81	(15.31)
		Understaters	79	(14.93)
		Downtoners	17	(3.21)
		Subjectivisers	107	(20.27)
		Consultative	7	(1.32)
		Cajolers	3	(0.57)
		Appealers	0	(0)
Total		529	(100)	

Figure 36 illustrates Tables 74 and 75 concretely.

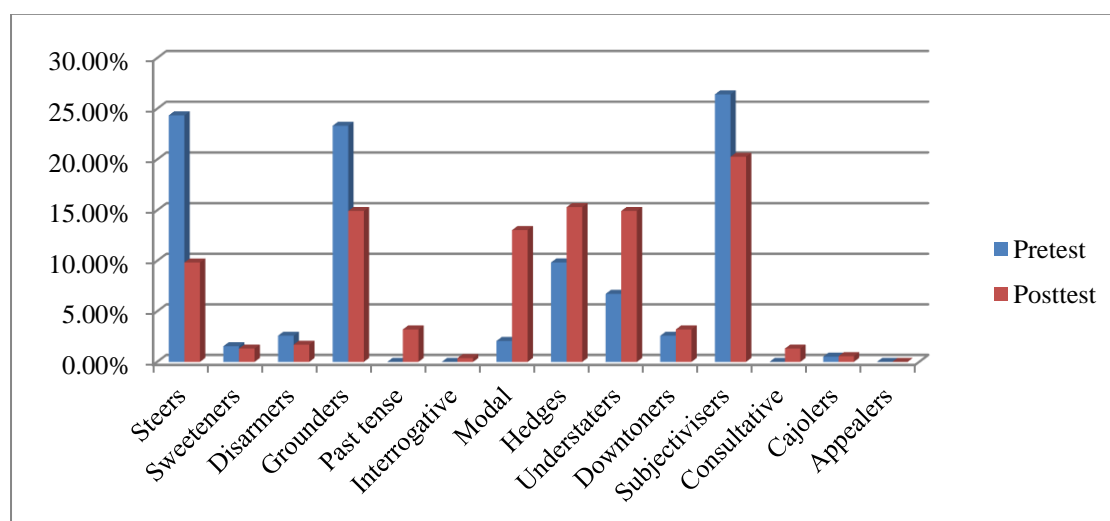


Figure 36 Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions among the Experimental Group in the Pretest and Posttest

The first noticeable difference between Table 74 and Table 75 is that the number of modifiers increased considerably in the posttest. In the pretest, most of the constructive criticisms produced were not mitigated. There were only 193 modifiers softening 483 criticism formulas i.e. 0.4 modifiers per one criticism formula. In the posttest, however, 529 modifiers were used to help reduce the offence of 483 face-threatening criticisms, resulting in an average of 1.09 modifiers per criticism formula. This significant increase in the number of modifiers from the pretest to the posttest indicates the experimental group's awareness of the need of mitigating their criticisms and this is due to pragmatic instruction. Nonetheless, what attracts attention is that in the posttest, the experimental group mitigated their peer criticisms in the OPFT more than in the ODCT. This could be likely due to the nature of the task itself. As already highlighted, the OPFT is a naturalistic task whereas the ODCT is an elicited one. That is to say, in the OPFT, the participants felt a real need to soften their criticism because of face-saving issues. After all, the peers they criticized are real persons sitting in front of them in the classroom. On the contrary, the ones criticized in the ODCT are just imaginary characters, so, it was not that necessary to have the interlocutors' faces saved.

Instruction increased not only the number of mitigation devices but their range too. In the pretest, four types of modifiers were not used, namely *past tense*, *modals*, *cajolers* and *appealers*; but they were employed in the posttest except the last. Indeed, another detectable difference between the pretest and the posttest is the expansion in the use of syntactic modifiers especially *modals* (2.07% in the pretest vs. 13.04% in the posttest) and *past tense* (0% in the pretest vs. 3.21% in the posttest). What is more, the experimental group used external modifiers and internal ones almost equally in the pretest (51.81% external vs. 48.19% internal) but in the posttest, it relied heavily on internal ones (27.76 % external vs. 72.24% internal). This tendency of relying on internal modifiers (i.e. those which make up an integral part of the head act) reflects the experimental group members' ability of handling the structural ability which results from those modifiers' usage. As already brought to light, this type of modifiers might increase the structural complexity of the speech act (Hassal, 2001; Nguyen, 2005) and this requires more processing time from users.

The second possibility behind relying on internal modifiers is that the nature of the task itself (ODCT) necessitates this. If we compare the distribution of modifiers

used by the experimental group in the OPFT to that of the ODCT (both in the posttest); we find that in the former task, *sweeteners* took the lion's share in modification. As a reminder, sweeteners are compliments or positive remarks paid to H either before or after a criticism to compensate for the offensive act (House & Kasper, 1981). The experimental group used the real oral presentations as a source of peers' positive points and mentioned them before the negative ones for the sake of being both polite and pedagogic. Because the ODCT was not based on real oral presentations and the members of the experimental group failed to use their imagination so as "to fabricate" some positive comments, this type of modifiers was almost absent. Interestingly, it was replaced by *steers*. It is logical that the participants used the scenarios of the ODCT (e.g. What would you say to your peer if you think that s/he wandered off the topic, his/her ideas were not properly linked, his/her presentation was not organized and hard to follow, his/her delivery was not fluent and expressive, or s/he did not speak clearly) as steers (Utterances that S used to lead H onto the issue s/he is about to raise) to soften their criticisms.

We cannot turn out of the topic of how the task could influence the developmental changes of discourse features from the pretest to the posttest without talking about three types of modifiers (*consultative*, *cajolers* and *appealers*). It might be claimed that there is no considerable increase in their frequency from the pretest to the posttest (0% vs. 1.32%, 0.52% vs. 0.57%, and 0% vs. 0% respectively). This can be explained by the fact that the learners did not felt the need to use such "conversational" modifiers as they addressed an imaginary peer in the ODCT. In spite of this stable frequency in the use of some types of modifiers, it is undeniable that their number and range grew immensely from the pretest to the posttest and this proves the effectiveness of instruction on the experimental group's constructive peer criticism production. However, this production has to be compared with that of the control group in terms of mitigation devices' use in order to be able to accredit the improvement to treatment. Hence, the following table shows the raw frequencies and percentages of both external and internal modifiers detected in the control group's constructive criticisms in the ODCT pretest.

Table 76 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the ODCT Pretest*

<b>Modifiers</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>	
External	Steers	58	(28.71)	
	Sweeteners	2	(0.99)	
	Disarmers	4	(1.98)	
	Grounders	39	(19.30)	
Internal	Syntactic	Past tense	0	(0)
		Interrogative	1	(0.49)
		Modal	7	(3.46)
	Lexical/phrasal	Hedges	23	(11.38)
		Understaters	19	(9.40)
		Downtoners	5	(2.47)
		Subjectivisers	43	(21.29)
		Consultative	0	(0)
		Cajolers	1	(0.49)
		Appealers	0	(0)
Total		202	(100)	

The following table shows the raw frequencies and percentages of both external and internal modifiers detected in the control group's constructive criticisms in the ODCT of the posttest.

Table 77 *Raw Frequencies and Percentages of Modifiers among the Control Group in the ODCT Posttest*

<b>Modifiers</b>		<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
External	Steers	49	(26.34)
	Sweeteners	3	(1.61)
	Disarmers	5	(2.69)
	Grounders	32	(17.32)
Syntactic	Past tense	0	(0)
	Interrogative	0	(0)

Internal	Lexical/phrasal	Modal	9	(4.84)
		Hedges	17	(9.14)
		Understaters	22	(11.83)
		Downtoners	2	(1.05)
		Subjectivizers	47	(25.27)
		Consultative	0	(0)
		Cajolers	0	(0)
		Appealers	0	(0)
Total			186	(100)

Figure 37 provides a concrete comparison between Tables 76 and 77.

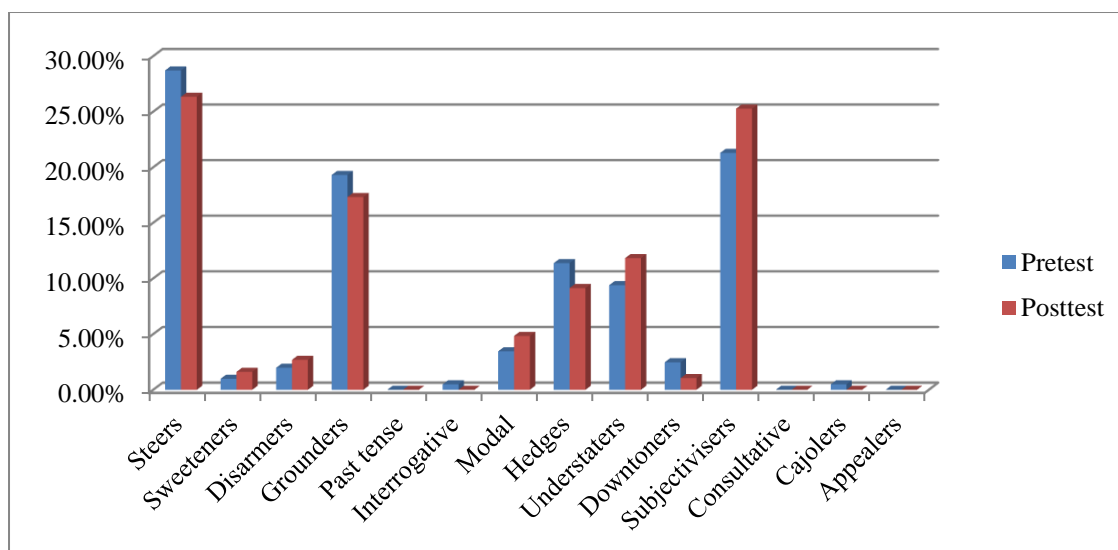


Figure 37 *Comparison Between Modifiers' Distributions among the Control Group in the Pretest and Posttest*

Talking about the general frequency of mitigating constructive criticisms, one could easily notice that the number of modifiers used by the control group did not increase; but on the contrary, it decreased from the pretest to the posttest. Manual calculations show that the average of pretest modification is 0.42 modifiers per criticism formula and 0.38 in posttest modification. This indicates the control group's unawareness of the need of softening their criticisms and this is due to non-instruction. Not only the general frequency of modification decreased but the range of mitigation devices remained stable too. Figure 37 shows that the bars representing both groups

are nearly similar in height. This means that the same types of modifiers were used in both test conditions with almost the same distribution. *Steers*, *subjectivizers* and *grounders* kept to be the areas where the control group members showed the most salience while *past tense*, *interrogative*, *consultative*, *cajolers* and *appealers* remained ignored. To sum up, the reduction in the frequency of mitigating criticisms and the restricted range of modifiers used in the pretest and posttest indicate that no important developmental changes took place in the use of discourse features from the pretest to the posttest. All this is due to non-instruction.

### **3.2.2 Discussion of the teaching effects after instruction.**

#### ***3.2.2.1 Factors for improvement after instruction.***

The present study aims at examining the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners' constructive peer criticism performance. According to the descriptive and inferential statistics shown in 3.2.1.1 and 3.2.1.2, instruction has a good effect on the production of the speech act in focus. That is to say, learners who receive treatment outperform those who do not. The improvement after instruction in the present study could be due to the following three factors.

The first factor is that the teaching method in the present study was suitable for the students' learning needs. The explicit teaching drew attention to every pattern along with its importance and the situation in which it could be used. The degree of the learners' noticing was very high and the teacher's explanation and feedback could enhance their awareness of the target forms. Despite the relationship between the depth of noticing (or the degree of awareness) and the learning outcome has been debatable in SLA, previous studies have maintained that higher levels of noticing or awareness are associated with more explicit teaching and that learners with greater awareness have an increased ability to produce target forms than those with less awareness (Leow, 2000). Indeed, Takahashi (2001) asserts, "lots of previous studies provided evidence that high levels of attention-drawing activities are helpful for learners in gaining the mastery of target-language structures" (p.171).

The second factor is that the experimental group participants showed a great interest in learning how to criticize peers appropriately in English. Their motivation was very high; therefore, learning was effective. They learned English in its oral and

written form in many modules such as grammar, writing, linguistics, phonetics, literature, civilization and culture of language, etc. but it was their first time ever to learn pragmatics. This enabled them to re-shape their understanding of everyday utterances as far as the speech act of criticizing is concerned. This is in line with Tateyama's (2001) study in which one reason that accounts for a good effect of teaching is motivation. She found that the explicit group which indicated a strong interest in learning the Japanese language and culture could score higher. In Cohen's (2008) small-scale study also, which investigates the use of websites to learn Spanish requests, apologies, and service encounters, it was found that learner motivation accelerates pragmatic skills. That the experimental group participants in the present study were motivated to learn how to carry the speech act of constructive criticism appropriately could be proven by the data of the written self report. When being asked about their opinion of the teaching method, Learner 5, for instance, said, "*We stayed for a long time but we never felt bored. On the contrary, I wished it lasted longer.*" Learner 8 reported, "*It makes us motivated and we learned a lot from it.*"

In addition to the suitability of the teaching method and motivation, a third factor that probably influenced the experimental group's pragmatic development is their linguistic proficiency. This intact group has some advanced learners but the general level of the group can be described as intermediate. As said earlier, no proficiency test was conducted but second grade learners at the English department of Batna 2 University are generally believed to be intermediate learners.

Jeon and Kaya (2006) and Takahashi (2010) maintain that function-driven targets, such as speech acts, are more accessible learning targets for proficient learners whereas unanalyzed chunks and form-driven routines are more convenient for less proficient ones. In fact, researchers in the majority of interventional studies, which target learners with intermediate to advanced proficiencies, seem to hold an implicit assumption that a linguistic threshold "may be considered as a prerequisite for intervention on certain pragmatic features to have a positive effect" (Takahashi, 2010, p. 136). When it comes to isolating proficiency as a variable, Codina-Espurz (2008) finds that lower proficiency learners may not have the necessary linguistic knowledge to benefit from the explicit instruction on request mitigators. Yet she comments that the exact influence of linguistic proficiency on pragmatic outcome merit further research. In a nutshell, the present study's instructional effect on the mastery of constructive peer



criticisms would not have been such positive if the experimental group participants' linguistic proficiency was less than intermediate, taking the other contributing factors into account.

Last but not least, the amount of instructional time in the present study (15 hours over a 5-week period) could be behind the improvement of the learners' constructive peer criticism performance. Broadly speaking, when it comes to instructional time, the longer, the better. Addressing the relationship between the treatment length and outcome measure, Jeon and Kaya's (2006) meta-analysis reveals that even 50 minutes' treatments can lead to seemingly larger gains. The instructional time was usually short in most of the previous studies due to the features of every speech act. The usual time ranges from 2 to 8 hours (e.g., Billmyer (1990a, 1990b) with six hours; Morrow (1995) with 3.5 hours; Fukuya & Zhang (2002) with seven 50-minute sessions during a 10-day period). The shortest is Silva's (2003) interventional study which took only 50 minutes for teaching refusal while the longest is Liddicoat and Crozet's (2001) with 13-week period. It was found that Yoshimi's (2001) explicit instruction which took 80 hours and was added to a regular third year curriculum accounting for approximately 30% of the total contact hours yielded much better results than others. Yet, the difference is not statistically significant enough to posit any definite causal relationship between the treatment length and instructional effects.

### ***3.2.2.2 Factors for Variation in the Two Tasks.***

Before addressing the issue of how variation in assessment tasks can possibly impact the effect of pragmatic instruction on learners' constructive criticism performance, what is meant by "task" should be made clear first. The term "task" has been widely accounted for in L2 learning (Ellis, 2003; Skehan, 2003). Skehan (1998) contributes one of the most well-known and comprehensive definitions. He describes a task as follows:

In tasks, meaning is primary and there is some communication problem to solve. There is some sort of relationship to comparable real-world activities. Task completion has priority over other performance outcomes and this is what the assessment of the task is based on. (p. 85)

In the study reported in the present thesis, however; the term “task” does not carry that exact meaning given to it in Task-Based Language Teaching. Rather, it simply means an activity or a tool used to elicit the speech act in focus.

Even though investigating the effect of data gathering methods on pragmatic data is not an aim of the present study, the fact that the experimental group performed better in the OPFT than the ODCCT in the pretest, the three progress tests, and the posttest leads us to think about it. In the researcher’s view, this can be explained as follows: First, the task design, more particularly, the number of constructive peer criticisms produced in each task could be a playing factor. Indeed, whereas the participants were free to produce as many criticisms as they wanted in the OPFT, they were required to produce five in the ODCCT. Probably, the more participants generated constructive criticisms, the more they did errors at the level of accuracy or appropriateness.

Besides, familiarity with the task could play a role in the participants’ performance too. They might be unfamiliar with the ODCCT in its standard format. Though the teacher (the researcher) encouraged them to ask for clarification if anything is not well understood, it is possible that they did not get exactly what they were supposed to do.

Another reason connected with task familiarity is stress. Performing the ODCCT is more stressful than the OPFT. The former was done as an ordinary part of the lesson while the learners did not know that they are watched by the researcher and their critical feedback is recorded. On the contrary, the latter was done at the teacher’s desk. Moreover, the critical feedback in the OPFT is offered in front of the class so the participants could have hints from each other’s constructive criticisms but in the ODCCT, no participant listened to his/her peer’s answer.

In addition to task design, familiarity, stress, and peers’ hints; planning time could also be a factor behind the participants’ dissimilar performance in the two tasks. It seems that in the OPFT, they had more time to plan for their answers than in the ODCCT. Learners planned their critical feedback during their peers’ oral presentations. That is to say, while a peer was presenting a topic or acting a play, the one supposed to provide feedback was thinking of what to say. In the ODCCT, however, subjects did not plan their answers. Previous research findings revealed that giving learners time to plan,

deliberately or undeliberately, leads to better performance (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Skehan & Foster, 1997; Foster, 1999).

Task effect was not visible in the experimental group subjects' general scores only but in two specific areas of assessment too, namely politeness and linguistic accuracy. The different percentages of politeness and linguistic accuracy between the two tasks in the three progress tests and posttest can be interpreted as follows: For politeness, it is higher in the OPFT than in the ODCT because the former is a natural task while the latter is an elicited one. As for linguistic accuracy, its scores were interestingly higher in the ODCT than in the OPFT. The reason behind this could be that the former is more attention-demanding than the latter. In other words, in the OPFT, the learners spoke spontaneously, but in the ODCT, they watched their language as the activity took the usual form of an Oral Expression exam. Nevertheless, all these speculations need empirical validation.

To sum up, a combination of naturalistic and elicited data gathering tools was used to collect learners' constructive criticisms directed to their peers in all the tests. Data were transcribed, coded and analyzed through two techniques: analytic rating of constructive criticism competence and discourse analysis. Results of the former showed that the interventional speech-act instruction left a positive impact on the experimental group's level of linguistic accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness. Some factors were found to be behind this improvement. Moreover, strong evidence of pragmatic development from the pretest to the posttest seems to be varied use of constructive criticism semantic formulas and abundant employment of modifiers, be they external or internal, to lessen the face-threatening nature of the speech act in focus.

### **3.3 Analysis and Interpretation of the Students' Attitude Scale and Written Self-report Data**

#### **3.3.1 Analysis and interpretation of the students' attitude scale data.**

##### ***3.3.1.1 Rationale for using the students' attitude scale.***

One of the aims of this study is to know whether or not students' attitudes towards constructive peer criticism change after instruction. To this end, an AS was opted for because, as an advantage, it does not only expect a simple yes/no answer from

the respondent but also allows for degrees of opinion and even no opinion at all. Therefore, quantitative data is obtained, which means that the data can be analyzed with relative ease.

### 3.3.1.2 Design of the students' attitude scale.

An attitude is a psychological construct. It is a person's predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to people, activities, objects, etc. Attitudes are often considered precursors to behavior. According to Albarracin, Johnson, and Zanna (2014), attitudes have three components: Affective (which deals with a person's feelings and emotions), cognitive (which deals with a person's awareness and knowledge), and behavioral (which deals with a person's actions). Accordingly, the scale used in the present study consists of statements that aim to measure the experimental group's attitudes towards constructive peer criticism in terms of affective, cognitive and behavioral aspects of attitude. There are 18 items which are put in a 5-point Likert scale from Level 1: Totally agree to Level 5: Totally disagree. The AS is designed taking into consideration the two following points: First, using clear, simple and direct items. Second, addressing the three components of attitude i.e. affect, cognition, and behavior. Table 78 represents the AS.

Table 78 *The Students' AS*

Attitudinal value	Statements	Totally agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totally disagree
Affective	1. I enjoy providing negative evaluation, which is constructive in nature, to my peers.					
	2. I feel ill at ease when I criticize peers negatively.					
	3. I feel lost when my teacher asks me to provide constructive criticism to a peer.					

	4. I wish peer feedback sessions end quickly.					
	5. Providing constructive peer criticism is embarrassing.					
	6. I feel comfortable when I provide constructive peer criticism.					
Cognitive	7. Constructive peer criticism teaches me to think critically.					
	8. The academic criticism I get from my peers is often useless and wrong.					
	9. Constructive peer criticism builds learners' independence and develops their self-advocacy.					
	10. It is helpful to get constructive criticism from peers.					
	11. It is more helpful to receive constructive criticism only from the teacher.					
	12. Providing constructive peer criticism makes me confident.					
Behavioral	13. I think that I can provide effective and polite constructive criticism to peers.					
	14. I pretend to be busy in peer feedback sessions so that the teacher does not ask me to provide constructive criticism to peers.					
	15. I am interested in providing constructive criticism to peers.					
	16. I voluntarily raise my hand and ask for the floor to provide					

	constructive peer criticism to peers.					
	17. I do not know how to structure a statement of constructive criticism directed to a peer.					
	18. I think the peer criticism I can provide is neither polite nor effective.					

### ***3.3.1.3 Validity of the students' attitude scale.***

To guarantee the validity of the AS, it was submitted to two EFL teachers at the Department of English Language and Literature of Batna 2 University. They were asked to evaluate the suitability of the scale's items to measure the students' attitudes towards constructive peer criticism. They confirmed its validity.

### ***3.3.1.4 Piloting of the students' attitude scale.***

A pilot study was done by administering the AS to a second year English major intact group at Batna 2 University. This group consisted of 49 students. Changes that were made as a result of piloting consisted of the modification of the language of the items that were too long, vague and/or difficult to understand. These items were rewritten with the help of two experienced EFL teachers at the aforementioned department and the newly corrected items were rechecked by them. Piloting the AS enabled the researcher to estimate the time needed for answering it. The average time was twenty minutes. No student needed an extension of time.

### ***3.3.1.5 Reliability of the students' attitude scale.***

As any other measuring instrument, the reliability of the AS depends upon the consistency with which it has been applied. There are many procedures that can be adopted for determining reliability, e.g. the rational equivalence or inter-item reliability, the test-retest method, the parallel form, the split half method, etc. The test-retest method was opted for in the present study because it is, in the researcher's eyes, the most practical one though it involves a greater recall in the retest. In doing so, the AS

was administered to a sample of 49 students other than the experimental group. Then, the same scale was administered to the same group after two weeks under relatively the same conditions in terms of time and place. The two sets of scores were correlated and the reliability coefficient was obtained using Cronbach's alpha. The estimated value was 0.86. Since the value is higher than 0.70, the scores of the AS can be considered reliable for the purpose of the current study.

### ***3.3.1.6 Administration of the students' attitude scale.***

After the improvement of items, ensuring reliability, and specifying the time needed for completing the AS, the pre-AS was administered to the experimental group two weeks prior to the experiment in the writing class because of time constraints. The post AS was administered in the speaking class regular time one week after the posttest. The instruction reads, "Here are some statements about constructive peer criticism. Five options are given in front of each statement which are: "Totally agree", "Agree", "Uncertain", "Disagree", and "Totally disagree". You have to tick (✓) any one option, which you think is most suitable to you. You have to put a tick in front of all the statements. After filling the attitude scale, return it to the teacher. You are given twenty minutes to complete it, but you can get extra time. The survey is anonymous and your answers will be kept confidential".

Anonymity was insisted on so that validity is not compromised due to social desirability. Previous research has shown that respondents may lie to put themselves in a positive side. If a Likert scale was measuring prejudice, for instance, no respondent would admit to being racist. Therefore, offering anonymity on self-administered questionnaires is likely to reduce social pressure, and thus may likewise reduce social desirability bias (Paulhus, 1984). For the sake of correlating the scores, the present study's AS respondents were asked to write the same pseudonym on their pre and post AS sheets.

### ***3.3.1.7 Calculation of students' attitudes on the attitude scale.***

The scoring technique was decided on the basis of Likert's method. It was decided to do scoring of positive statements as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 and scoring of negative ones as 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. In other words, negatively worded statements are reverse-coded

or reverse scored. Then, scores are summed across statements to arrive at a total or summated score. The highest score a student could get is 90, the lowest score is 18, and the neutral score is 45. In addition, the mean scores of the three components of attitudes towards constructive peer criticism among the respondents were also calculated separately. The highest score a student could get in every component is 30, the lowest score is 6, and the neutral one is 15.

### 3.3.1.8 Analysis and interpretation of the results.

Table 79 Paired-samples T-test of Students' Attitudes Towards Constructive Peer Criticism in the Three Attitudinal Variables (Affective, Cognitive, and Behavioral)

Attitudinal value	Pre Post	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	df	Sig.
Affective	Pre	52	09.03	2.11	-13.51	51	0.05
	Post	52	20.40	3.26			
Cognitive	Pre	52	19.80	3.52	-4.84	51	0.05
	Post	52	23.31	3.97			
Behavioral	Pre	52	13.49	2.69	-9.65	51	0.05
	Post	52	24.90	6.19			
Total	Pre	52	42.32	6.34	-11.22	51	0.05
	Post	52	68.61	9.29			

Table 80 indicates that the students' affective attitude towards constructive peer criticism was negative before the treatment. The mean score of the affective attitude in the pre-administration of the scale is 9.03, which is much lower than the neutral score—15. Also, the table indicates that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level in the affective attitude between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the AS in favor of the post-administration as the estimated t-value is -13.51. This means that the students have a more positive affective attitude towards constructive peer criticism after the interventional treatment.

Unlike the affective attitude, the cognitive one was positive even before the treatment as its mean score in the pre-administration of the scale exceeds the neutral score (15). It is 19.80. As Table 79 indicates, there is a statistically significant difference



at 0.05 level in this attitude between the mean scores of the experimental group in the pre- and post-administration of the scale in favor of the post-administration as the estimated t-value is -4.84. This suggests that students hold a more positive cognitive attitude towards constructive peer criticism after instruction.

Also, Table 79 indicates that the students' behavioral attitude towards constructive peer criticism was negative before the pragmatic instruction as its mean score in the pre-administration of the scale is 13.49, which is lower than the neutral score. Moreover, the table indicates that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.05 in the behavioral attitude between the mean scores of the pre- and post-administration of the AS in favor of the post-administration as the estimated t-value is -9.65. This reveals that the students hold a more positive behavioral attitude towards constructive peer criticism after the treatment.

For the mean scores of the overall attitudes (total), those of the post-administration are much higher than those of the pre-administration. Also, Table 80 indicates that there is a statistically significant difference at 0.05 level in the overall attitudes between the mean scores of the pre- and post-administration of AS in favor of the post-administration as the estimated t-value is -11.22.

In the present study, the effect size values of the three attitudinal components were used to see whether or not pragmatic instruction has a considerable effect on students' attitudes in the post-administration as compared to theirs in the pre-administration of the AS. The effect size is the difference between two means divided by the standard deviation of the two conditions. Whereas statistical tests of significance tell us the likelihood that experimental results differ from chance expectations, effect-size measurements tell us the relative magnitude of the experimental treatment. They tell us the size of the experimental effect. Effect sizes are especially important because they allow us to compare the magnitude of experimental treatments from one experiment to another (Ellis, 2010). In the simplest form, a t-test's effect size indicates whether or not the difference between two groups' averages is large enough to have practical meaning, whether or not it is statistically significant. The present study used Cohen's *d* from t-tests of significance and not the other effect size measurements because it is simple and more practical as Cohen (1992) suggests. The effect sizes of

0.20 are small, 0.50 are medium, and 0.80 are large. This enables us to compare an experiment's effect-size results to known benchmarks.

Cohen's  $d$  is calculated from  $t$ -tests using the following formula:

$$d = \frac{\bar{X}_t - \bar{X}_c}{S_{pooled}}$$

With:

$d$  = Cohen's  $d$  effect size

$x$  = Mean (average of treatment or comparison conditions)

$s$  = Standard deviation

*Subscripts:*  $t$  refers to the treatment condition and  $c$  refers to the comparison condition (or control condition).

$$S_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{(n_t - 1)S_t^2 + (n_c - 1)S_c^2}{n_t + n_c}}$$

With:

$s$  = Standard deviation

$n$  = Number of subjects

*Subscripts:*  $t$  refers to the treatment condition and  $c$  refers to the comparison condition (or control condition).

- **Calculating the effect size value of the affective component**

$$d = \frac{\bar{X}_t - \bar{X}_c}{S_{pooled}}$$

$$S_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{(n_t - 1)S_t^2 + (n_c - 1)S_c^2}{n_t + n_c}}$$

$$S_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{(52 - 1) \times 3,26^2 + (52 - 1) \times 2,11^2}{52 + 52}}$$

$$S_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{(51 \times 10,73) + (51 \times 4,45)}{104}}$$

$$S_{pooled} = \sqrt{\frac{547,23 + 226,95}{104}} = \sqrt{\frac{774,18}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{7,44} = 2,73$$

$$d = \frac{20,4 - 9,03}{2,73} = \frac{11,37}{2,73} = 4,16$$

- **Calculating the effect size value of the cognitive component**

$$d = \frac{\bar{X}_t - \bar{X}_c}{S_{\text{pooled}}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(n_t - 1)S_t^2 + (n_c - 1)S_c^2}{n_t + n_c}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(52 - 1) \times 3,97^2 + (52 - 1) \times 3,52^2}{52 + 52}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(51 \times 15,76) + (51 \times 12,39)}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{803,76 + 631,89}{104}} = \sqrt{\frac{1435,65}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{13,80} = 3,71$$

$$d = \frac{23,31 - 19,80}{3,71} = \frac{3,51}{3,71} = 0,94$$

- **Calculating the effect size value of the behavioral component**

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(52 - 1) \times 6,19^2 + (52 - 1) \times 2,69^2}{52 + 52}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(51 \times 38,32) + (51 \times 7,24)}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{1954 + 369,24}{104}} = \sqrt{\frac{2323,24}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{22,34} = 4,73$$

$$d = \frac{24,90 - 13,49}{4,73} = \frac{11,41}{4,73} = 2,41$$

- **Calculating the effect size value of the overall attitudes (Total)**

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(52 - 1) \times 9,29^2 + (52 - 1) \times 6,34^2}{52 + 52}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{(51 \times 86,30) + (51 \times 40,19)}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{\frac{4401,3 + 2049,69}{104}} = \sqrt{\frac{6450,99}{104}}$$

$$S_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{62,03} = 7,87$$

$$d = \frac{68,61 - 42,32}{7,87} = \frac{26,29}{7,87} = 3,34$$

Table 80 summarizes the values of the effect sizes of the three attitudinal components and their total.

Table 80 *The Values of the Effect Sizes of the Three Attitudinal Components and their Total*

<b>Attitudinal value</b>	<b>d</b>
Affective	4.16
Cognitive	0.94
Behavioral	2.41
Overall attitudes	3.34

The calculated effect size values of the affective, cognitive, behavioral, and overall attitudes are 4.16, 0.94, 2.41, and 3.34 respectively. All these values are higher than 0.80 which means that pragmatic instruction has a large effect on the experimental group's attitudes in the post-administration as compared to the pre-administration of the AS. However, the three components of attitude towards constructive peer criticism do not change in the same rate, but differently. They are arranged in order of development from the highest to the lowest as follows: (1) affective component, (2) behavioral component, and (3) cognitive component.

### **3.3.2 Analysis and interpretation of the students' written self-report data.**

#### ***3.3.2.1 Rationale for using the written self-report.***

The rationale for using the WSR is two-fold: to collect qualitative data and to triangulate the data drawn from the OPFT, the ODCT, and the AS. In other words, it consolidates the results of these data gathering tools and evaluates the effects of instruction. It was chosen as a data collection tool as its form is more open-ended and participant-directed and therefore allows for knowing the learners' views of the effects of instruction.

#### ***3.3.1.2 Design of the written self-report.***

As far as its design is concerned, the WSR consists of three open-ended questions. Answers to the first question mainly concern the changes (if any) that took place in the learners' way of criticizing peers constructively after instruction. The second question relates to their readiness of providing negative peer feedback after instruction i.e. whether or not they feel comfortable doing this task. Finally, answers to the third question pertain to opinions about the teaching method. The participants were allowed to answer in Arabic so that they can express themselves more clearly. The three questions are:

1. Have you noticed any changes in your way of realizing constructive peer criticisms before and after instruction? If any changes are noticed, please mention them.
2. What are the changes that took place in your attitudes towards constructive peer criticism before and after instruction?
3. What do you think of the teaching method used in the instruction of teaching constructive criticisms? Please refer to specific aspects of the instruction?

#### ***3.3.1.3 Validation of the written self-report.***

In qualitative data gathering tools, validity and reliability are generally not held to be applicable to evaluate the findings but rather, rigor is associated with trustworthiness. Although there have been debates among qualitative researchers for decades, no unified approach to describing the criteria for quality has emerged clearly yet. It might be that there is no single method that can be identified as the nature of qualitative research makes it difficult to reach consensus on common criteria for assessing its quality (Bowen, 2005). In the present study, peer face validity checking

and peer coding were opted for to ensure the trustworthiness of the WSR findings. Three full-time EFL teachers at the English department of Batna 2 University were requested to check the WSR and give their opinions of whether or not it seems to “measure” what it claims to “measure”. They were asked to check the clarity of the questions too. They showed positive opinion on the clarity of wording, layout, and style as well as the likelihood that the target audience would be able to answer the questions. They ensured that they are unambiguous, not biased and not leading.

#### ***3.3.1.4 Reliability of the written self-report.***

When a dataset is coded by one coder as it is the case in the present study, we have to make sure that the coding of the data is consistent across time. In other words, we need to show that the coder codes the data consistently over time. This is referred to as intra-coder reliability. The practice followed in the present study to check it was as follows: The researcher randomly chose about 20% of the WSR data and made three copies of them. She coded the first copy according to the devised coding scheme. After about three weeks, she coded the second copy of the sample data. The correlation between the two codings was calculated using Krippendorff’s alpha since it is the most flexible method among the seven methods available for checking the inter-coder reliability that produces the most possible accurate result (Nili, 2017). Krippendorff’s alpha was calculated using PRAM software. The result was 0.81. It is not perfect but can be still considered suitable for an exploratory purpose (Lombard et al., 2002; Feng 2014). The third copy of the sample data was coded by a second coder, who is a Chinese Ph.D. candidate whose research direction is pragmatics and natural language understanding. She was not told about the present study’s research questions and objectives. The correlation between the main coder’s (The researcher’s) coding and the second coder’s coding was used as an index of inter-coder reliability. It was also calculated using Krippendorff’s alpha. The value was found to be 0.70. Previous research frequently has reported that intra-coder index is often higher than inter-coder reliability index for obvious reasons. The coding of the WSR can then be claimed to be systematic and consistent.

#### ***3.3.1.5 Administration of the written self-report.***

After the WSR was piloted, it was administered to the experimental group one week after the posttest in the speaking class regular session. As the researcher was

walking along the classroom aisles when the students were answering the WSR, she encouraged them to write as much as possible i.e. they were required to write more if they provided less information than she needed. If someone, for instance, wrote only “yes, I’ve learned a lot”, s/he was requested to add more specific information.

### ***3.3.1.6 Procedures for categorizing the written self-report data.***

Analysis of the WSR three open-ended questions was done through content analysis. The analysis process began with the open coding of the data followed by inducing categories from these codes, which were then gathered under general themes for each set of data relating to specific questions. As already said, the categories and themes were subject to intra-coder reliability checking.

### ***3.3.1.7 Analysis and interpretation of the results.***

#### ***3.3.1.7.1 Pragmatic changes after instruction.***

Question One in the WSR concerns any changes in the participants’ performance of constructive peer criticisms after instruction. Most of the experimental group subjects reported positive changes. First, the one that was very common in their answers is that they became able to criticize peers more politely through the use of softeners. Second, the majority of them held that they became more familiar with the ways in which constructive criticism can be performed in the TL. Before the instruction, they used to say just “This is not good”, for instance, when they wanted to evaluate something negatively, but after it, they no longer used this formula in every situation, but rather used more varied semantic formulas. Third, not only politeness and variety were learnt, but indirectness too. A big portion of the respondents mentioned that instruction enabled them to use more indirect criticisms and they were very happy with them because they sound more native-like. Fourth, almost half the subjects reported that they were heavily influenced by L1 before instruction, but after it they were able to avoid that L1 negative transfer. Answers to this question corroborate the results of the instructional effects obtained through the analytic rating and discourse analysis of constructive peer criticisms.

### 3.3.1.7.2 Attitudes towards constructive peer criticism after instruction.

Question Two concerns the changes that took place in the experimental group's attitudes towards negative peer feedback before and after instruction. All of them reported that after instruction, they felt much more ready and comfortable when asked to provide comments on their peers' performances. They said that before it, this job was not only very challenging but also face-threatening. Here are two extracts from their answers to this question.

E.g. 1: *My attitude change very much after instruction. before, I always stay silent when the teacher asked me to give my opinion on my classmates presentation because I feel shy, not shy to speak but I don't know how to say that their job has many mistakes. I'm afraid I hurt their feelings. But now, when I learn how to say the mistakes in a polite way, I feel it's OK to say them of hurting feelings and I always participate without fear because my speech is polite.*

E.g. 2: *Though I always held a positive attitude towards peer correction, my status of preparation when it comes to criticize others changed completely before and after instruction. Before it, I used to hesitate a lot. I always said to myself that it hurts me and embarrasses me when people evaluate me negatively, so it should be the same with everybody in this situation. My intention was not to cause unease to people but to tell them that things should not be done this way. They should change it in order to make it better. But I did not know how to transmit it in a way that does not cause embarrassment. After learning about peer criticism, I no longer have a problem. I feel relaxed to say negative evaluation because I learned how to say it. I learned for e.g. that I can mix between positive and negative points and also to attribute people's mistakes to possible circumstances eg. "you mispronounced some words but I know it's because of stress".*

In addition to talking about how instruction affected their readiness of providing negative peer feedback comfortably, learners also highlighted that it helped them appreciate it more as they discovered its true nature by time. A considerable number of experimental group subjects asserted that before instruction, they thought of negative peer feedback as destructive i.e. it only aims at showing that the performance of the peer has no validity and lacks any merit. Along the instruction, however, they



discovered that negative peer feedback is suggested for improvement i.e. how things could be done better or more acceptably. The following three extracts describe the change in the way three learners conceived negative peer feedback.

E.g. 1: ... *It [instruction] was very useful in making me understand the true meaning of the negative comments my classmates said. Before I learn about it, I hated it a lot but now I do appreciate it a lot. Why I hated it is because I thought that it destroys the classmate criticized for example me. I thought that for example one sb criticizes me, he or she is attacking me and this makes me out of control. I can tell you about what happened to me last year. A friend said a bad remark about my own way of thinking and the debate turned into a real war. I think this happened because both of us were nervous and did not get the meaning of what it really means to be criticized in a constructive way. But now, thanks god, after instruction, I got it. Now I understand that negative evaluation means that your classmates want your work to be better. They are not destroying you but in the opposite building your work so that you do better next time.*

E.g. 2: *All the time spent on learning criticism led me to change my thinking about it radically. Before learning, I thought that the negative feedback from classmates should be avoided because it causes problems to students. I mean it is harmful for ex. students think that they are inferior when they are criticized and it also brings personal matters to the classroom but after learning about it, my attitude towards it changed. Negative points should not be taken personally and they are for the sake of improving the work done. Now I think it is good and the teacher should always ask us to do it.*

E.g. 3: *I used to have a very negative attitude towards negative feedback before I discover its bright side via what I learned about it this year in the module of oral expression. I hated it because the negative comments of students to their friends always turned to quarrels. It always looked like someone digging into the defects of another and just want to destroy him. But it was not the case in our lessons and I changed my mind about it. Now I like it.*

Another change in the perception of negative peer feedback before and after instruction relates to its usefulness. Some learners reported that before the instruction,

they thought of it as a useless task but after it, they perceived it as a beneficial one as it helped them improve their critical thinking. Along the following lines, some learners described this change in their perception.

E.g. 1: *Before learning about peer criticism, neither its providers not receivers find it useful. Honestly, I found it a waste of time. The truth is that I saw it useless. To give you an example, before the instruction, I used to give unhelpful negative peer feedback (one which is too general and does not have specific points) but after the instruction, I use the tricks that the teacher taught me, for example, the criticism should be clear and well-focused. Providing such kind of feedback to peers is not an easy task, it needs good analysis and of course paying big attention to what the speaker is saying. I think that learning about how to give precise peer feedback helped me improve my critical thinking a lot. In this way, criticizing other students is useful!*

E.g. 2: *... In the past, I thought negative peer feedback has no function in classroom... because when the teacher ask my friends to correct or to give their opinion concerning presentations, they say nothing or just good things because they are afraid of hurting others feelings... but after we learn many things about it, we discuss and analyze the works done and this teach us to think.*

### 3.3.1.7.3 Comments on the teaching method.

Question Three in the WSR concerns the experimental group's opinions about the teaching method used in the instruction of constructive peer criticism. Answers to this question detected two opinions: one was highly praising while the other one acknowledged that there was a room for improvement. However, in general, the majority of the learners thought that the teaching effect was good as the instruction let them know more about English constructive criticism patterns and softeners. They told that they enjoyed learning about them. They described the teaching method as the following extracts show:

E.g. 1: *If I come to evaluate the teaching method, that of being organized and effective goes without saying. What I would like to mention is that it was lively and transmitted in an active way. It lasted for a long time but we never felt bored. On the contrary, I wished it lasted longer.*

E.g. 2: ... *I think that the teaching method is good. It was organized and clear. I mean the lessons and handouts are detailed and this makes it effective. It makes us motivated and we learned a lot from it...*

E.g. 3: *Well, concerning the teaching method, I think that the teacher was organized in her teaching. First, she put clear objectives. She does not move from one point until she asks us we understand it or no, I like the activities too and what I like the most in the teaching method is the examples from real life. They helped me to understand the lesson.*

Not all the learners thought that the teaching method was perfect. Two of them evaluated it negatively and others held that there was a room for improvement.

E.g. 1: *For the teaching method, I think that it was mixed, because the lessons are the same and I was confused [...] another observation the teacher was fast and I could not concentrate.*

E.g. 2: [...] *I don't know why we must learn this. We don't need it in our daily use of English. It is better if we learn other beneficial things that we can use them when we speak English.*

E.g. 3: [...] *but I have just one reservation about it [teaching method]. You spoke about pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English and you said that it's not good, not all the time of course. I mean you said we should think in English and speak in English, but you did not give us exactly the Arabic expressions that we should avoid. I mean it would be better to know them, no major problem.*

E.g. 4: *Having more homework exercises about criticism strategies would be a great thing so that we consolidate our knowledge about them more.*

E.g. 5: *I wonder whether or not you thought about using some extracts from English movies or some staff like that to teach us criticizing because they can show us how native speakers actually do it. I think it's because of technical conditions. It's just a "wish" if the word is correct.*

E.g. 6: [...] *and also concerning maybe the movement of the lesson, why not each time going back to previous points that we studied in criticism and revise them. in this way, when new things is learnt, we do not forget the old things.*

In a nutshell, pragmatic instruction left not only positive linguistic effects among the experimental group but psychological and cognitive ones too as its members showed more awareness of the importance of negative critical feedback and a clearer understanding of the constructive nature of peer criticism. Furthermore, they exhibited more readiness to participate in peer evaluation sessions as they become able to carry out the very face-threatening speech act of criticism at ease. At the pragmatic level, learners acknowledged that speech-act instruction enabled them to produce more pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms using advanced language.

### **3.4 Analysis and Interpretation of the Teachers' Questionnaire Data**

#### **3.4.1 Rationale for using the teachers' questionnaire.**

To investigate the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence taking Licence second year learners of English at Batna 2 University as a sample, it was hypothesized that instructing them on pragmatic insights is likely to accelerate their ability of realizing linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms. It was thought of the necessity to involve the Oral Expression teachers of those students in the qualitative dimension of the present study by including their viewpoints concerning the subject under investigation. Teachers' perceptions are introduced to make sure that the subject matter is viewed from different perspectives and studied from different angles. This was done through a questionnaire which is structured in such a way so as to spur collecting the respondents' different opinions about the topic under scrutiny to consolidate the opinion made after the experiment.

Among the many data gathering tools used by educational researchers, the present study opts for a questionnaire because it is regarded an appropriate tool as "it affords a good deal of precision and clarity, because the knowledge needed is controlled by the questions" (McDonough & McDonough, 1997: 171). Moreover, the use of a questionnaire, unlike an interview for example, enables the researcher to collect standardized answers since all the participants respond to the same questions and saves him/her time and effort either in data collection or handling (Dörnyei, 2003).

### **3.4.2 Description of the teachers' questionnaire.**

The elaboration of the questionnaire generally depends on the nature of the issue under investigation and the objectives to be attained. In the present study, after setting the objectives, reviewing the related literature, especially the previous studies that used the questionnaire as an instrument to gather qualitative data, the teachers' questionnaire was created.

As the basic unit of the questionnaire is the question, considerations related to the questions' content, format, and sequencing were all taken into consideration when formulating the questionnaire of the present investigation. Elaboration of the questionnaire from the first draft until the final one was a long process in which the following criteria were taken into account: Using clear and simple language as much as possible, avoiding ambiguity by constructing concrete questions, varying the questions, and sequencing them from the least to the more difficult.

As far as the design of the questionnaire is concerned, it consists of four sections. The first section concerns teachers' general information such as university teaching experience, Oral Expression teaching experience, and overseas learning experience. The second section aims at investigating their teaching of Oral Expression in general and constructive criticism in particular. The third section seeks to know about EFL students' constructive peer criticisms through teachers' eyes. The fourth and last section attempts to investigate the teachers' attitudes towards the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL students' constructive peer criticism competence. The questionnaire in its whole comprises six open-ended questions, four closed-ended questions, twelve multiple-choice questions, and six Likert scale questions.

### **3.4.3 Validity of the teachers' questionnaire.**

After the first version of the questionnaire was created, ensuring its validity was imperative. Content validity was opted for as it is considered the best method that could provide us with more information about the appropriateness of the items and their relevance to the study. It refers to how accurately a tool taps into the various aspects of the specific construct in question. That is to say, do the questions really assess the construct in question? Or, are the responses by the participants answering the questions influenced by other factors?

Because content validity is most often measured by relying on the knowledge of people who are familiar with the construct being measured, we consulted subject-matter experts, provided them with access to the questionnaire via email and requested them to provide feedback on how well each question measures the construct in question. The experts contacted were a total of four. They are Algerian professors at three different Algerian universities specialized in applied linguistics, research methodology, and didactics of English as a FL. After analyzing the questionnaire, they put forward some comments that mainly concerned the clarity of questions, deletion of unnecessary items, better sequencing of questions, and writing style. Their feedback was taken into account and after getting approval from them; a refined version of the questionnaire was developed.

#### **3.4.4 Piloting the teachers' questionnaire.**

The teachers' questionnaire was piloted to estimate the time needed for answering it and check the clarity of its items. As Bell and Waters (2014: 161) argue, "If respondents are confused, irritated or offended, they may leave the item blank or even abandon the questionnaire". Hence, ambiguity, vagueness and offence have to be avoided if the researcher wants the respondents to answer all his/her questions appropriately. The questionnaire was piloted on six Oral Expression teachers who belong to two different Algerian universities. They are different from the participants of the main study. The researcher got their emails from their faculties' websites and asked them whether or not they would like to complete the questionnaire. After getting their agreement, they were sent a copy of the questionnaire and a brief evaluation sheet which comprises four main questions to help them comment on the clarity of instructions and questions, say how much time it took them to fill the questionnaire out, and add any additional comments if they want. The questions are as follows:

##### **Item 1: Clarity of instructions**

A. Are the questionnaire instructions clear?

Yes

No

Table 81 *Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Clarity of Instructions*

<b>Options</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
<b>Yes</b>	6	(100)
<b>No</b>	0	(0)
<b>Total</b>	6	(100)

All the volunteer teachers answered yes, which means that the instructions are well-worded and therefore easy to understand.

### Item 2: Clarity of questions

B. Are the questions clear?

Yes

No

Table 82 *Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Clarity of Questions*

<b>Options</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Yes	3	(50)
No	3	(50)
Total	6	(100)

As Table 82 indicates, half the respondents stated that the questions are clear while the other half said the opposite. Part B of the question seeks to detect the unclear questions as reported by the second category.

B. If *no*, which questions (s) you find unclear?

Table 83 *Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Unclear Questions*

<b>Response</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Qs 15, 16	3	(66.67)
Q 21	3	(66.67)
Q 25	1	(16.67)

C. What exactly confuses you? Or why do you think the question(s) is/are unclear?  
Please feel free to ask any questions or put forward any comments?

This open-ended question probes into the reasons behind the ambiguity of the located questions. Answers to it yield one category of responses: unfamiliarity with terms in pragmatics. Indeed, if we have a glance at the ambiguous questions, we can easily notice that they are related to teaching pragmatics. As far as suggestions are concerned, one teacher suggested the inclusion of a glossary of unfamiliar terms.

### Item 3: Time taken to answer the questionnaire

Approximately, how much it took you to fill out the questionnaire?

- About 15 minutes
- About 30 minutes
- About 40 minutes
- More than 40 minutes

Table 84 *Piloting the Teachers' Questionnaire: Time Taken to Complete the Questionnaire*

Time	n	(%)
About 15 minutes	0	(0)
About 30 minutes	2	(33.33)
About 40 minutes	4	(66.67)
More than 40 minutes	0	(0)
Total	6	(100)

As Table 84 above shows, most of the respondents could complete the questionnaire in about 40 minutes. Its length is therefore reasonable.

After ensuring that the questionnaire is able to collect the data we want to obtain, the instructions as well as items are clear, and its length is acceptable, a refined version of it was elaborated.

#### 3.4.5 Reliability of the teachers' questionnaire

After collecting pilot data, the internal consistency of the questions was checked in order to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire. Internal consistency checks whether or not the responses are consistent across the items on a multiple-item measure (Cronbach, 1951). For example, Oral Expression teachers who say that they themselves



elaborate the syllabus of this module, set its objectives, and decide on its content should not say that they cannot integrate pragmatic insights in their teaching because they are restricted by the official syllabus. In checking the internal consistency of the items of the teachers' questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used because it is the most standard test and easy to calculate using SPSS. Cronbach's alpha value was found 0.73. Because this value is not high though acceptable, two items were deleted successively from the last section after the SPSS function "scale if item deleted" showed that Cronbach's alpha value is likely to increase to 0.82. With this value, the questionnaire is thus considered reliable.

#### **3.4.6 Administration of the teachers' questionnaire.**

After the final version of the questionnaire was elaborated, it was administered to seven second year Oral Expression teachers at the English department of Batna 2 University, Algeria. Four are full-time teachers and the three others are part-time ones. In fact, the issue of constructive criticism speech act instruction and its possible effect in fostering the EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence would be best addressed to the teachers of Pragmatics but since this module is not taught to undergraduates at the aforementioned department, it was judged that Oral Expression teachers would comprise the most suitable population for the present study for the nature of the module—being spoken and productive—makes it more likely to integrate such pragmatic insights into its syllabus. Since there are only seven teachers and this number is practical to deal with, sampling becomes needless. Thus, all the teachers were selected as the target population of the present study. As far as the questionnaire's administration is concerned, all the questionnaires were conducted in person in the teachers' room of the aforementioned department. The in-person method of distribution was unavoidable due to the probable unfamiliarity of some teachers with pragmatics-related terms as piloting clearly revealed. Another reason for opting for this method is that it allows high percentage of completion.

#### **3.4.7 Analysis and interpretation of the results**

After the teachers' questionnaire was administered and data were gathered, they were analyzed and the results were interpreted. This section consists of the analysis and interpretation of each question separately. It ends with a conclusion in the form of a summary.

**3.4.7.1 Section One (Items 1 through 4): Teachers' general information.**Table 85 *Teachers' General Information*

<b>University teaching experience</b>	<b>Less than 5 years</b>	<b>5 to 9 years</b>	<b>10 to 15 years</b>	<b>More than 15 years</b>
<b>n</b>	3	3	1	0
<b>(%)</b>	(42.86)	(42.86)	(14.28)	(0)
<b>Oral Expression teaching experience</b>	<b>Less than 5 years</b>	<b>5 to 9 years</b>	<b>10 to 15 years</b>	<b>More than 15 years</b>
<b>n</b>	4	3	0	0
<b>(%)</b>	(57.14)	(42.86)	(0)	(0)
<b>Studying Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Ethnography of Communication, etc.</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	2		5	
	(28.57)		(71.43)	
<b>Overseas learning experience</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	0		7	
	(0)		(100)	

Among the seven participants, there are four experienced teachers (who have been teaching for more than five years) and three novice ones. As far as experience in teaching Oral Expression exactly is concerned, three teachers have been teaching this module for more than five years. The reason behind including this item is that we still believe that the teacher's experience affects his/her perceptions and/or classroom practices of one or more of the following notions: the objective of learning in general and that of teaching Oral Expression in particular, the importance of peer feedback in general and negative peer feedback in particular, the importance of EFL learners

carrying out felicitous speech acts, the significance of peers criticizing each other politely and how this affects their readiness of giving negative feedback and handling it easily, the need for pragmatic instruction, and the list goes on.

Another question in the teachers' questionnaire is whether or not they studied Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Intercultural Communication/Interactions, Sociolinguistics, Ethnography of Communication or any other courses that deal with language in use when they were students. The reason behind including this item is that it is generally believed that teachers who studied these courses are more familiar with pragmatic aspects and more aware of the importance of teaching them too. In case they teach them, they are likely to teach them more methodically compared to teachers who are less familiar with them. Analysis of this item showed that only two teachers out of seven took such courses. Indeed, these modules were integrated in the undergraduate and postgraduate English language curricula just in the recent years.

Because having a good command of pragmatic appropriateness in communication cannot be guaranteed through learning only but through acquisition too, one item in the questionnaire asked the participants whether or not they studied in an English-speaking country. None of the respondents reported that s/he did. This means that they did not get knowledge of felicitous constructive criticisms from direct exposure to the TL environment.

#### ***3.4.7.2 Section Two: Teaching Oral Expression and constructive criticism speech act.***

##### **Item 5. Objective(s) in the Oral Expression class**

According to you, what should be the teacher's objective(s) in the Oral Expression class?

- Enhancing learners' accuracy and fluency
- Enabling learners to use English in real life situations
- Other (Please, specify.....)

Table 86 *Objective(s) in the Oral Expression Class*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Enhancing the learners' accuracy and fluency</b>	<b>Enabling learners to use English in real life situations</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>n</b>	0	100	0
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(100)	(0)

This question was asked to determine what aspects of language teaching the teachers associate with Oral Expression. Answers show that all the teachers see that the objection of this class is to enable learners use English in real life situations. This entails the ability to use it accurately, fluently and most importantly appropriately. Results of this item suggest that teachers are aware that the ultimate aim of FLT should be developing the EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence and not only the linguistic one.

#### **Item 6. Sufficiency of allocated time to achieve the objective of Oral Expression teaching**

Is the time allocated for this course in your department sufficient for achieving this objective?

- Yes  
 No

Table 87 *Sufficiency of Oral Expression Allocated Time*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>n</b>	0	7
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(100)

As can be seen from Table 88, all teachers think that the time allocated for teaching Oral Expression is not sufficient for enabling learners to use English appropriately in real life situations. Indeed, second year classes do three hours of Oral Expression a week. In our view, the moderate level of students and therefore the stuff they still have to learn and more importantly the crowded classes cause teachers to see three hours insufficient to achieve the expected objective.

**Item 7. Designer of second year Oral Expression program**

Is second year Oral Expression program?

- An official inflexible program (You cannot modify its objectives and content.)
- An official flexible program (You can modify its objectives and content.)
- A program elaborated by you

Table 88 *Designer of Second Year Oral Expression Program*

Options	An official inflexible program	An official flexible program	A program elaborated by you
n	0	0	7
(%)	(0)	(0)	(100)

As Table 88 shows, all the participants said that they themselves elaborate the second year Oral Expression syllabus. It might be elaborated individually or in collaboration with colleagues. This question was asked to check the extent to which the participants' have the freedom of deciding on what to teach. Results show that all of them design their syllabi and therefore can integrate some pragmatic aspects in their instruction if they wish.

**Item 8. Developing learners' pragmatic competence as a teaching goal**

A. Is developing your learners' pragmatic competence one of your teaching goals?

- Yes
- No

Table 89 *Developing Learners' Pragmatic Competence as a Teaching Goal*

Options	Yes	No
n	1	6
(%)	(14.28)	(85.72)

In Algeria, where English is taught as a FL, developing learners' pragmatic competence should be at top of teachers' goals. Table 89 shows that this is the teaching goal of one teacher only, but not of the others. This finding is surprising as their answers to Item 6 say that the Oral Expression module's overall objective should be enabling

learners to use English in real life situations. Why theory does not match practice can be explained by the different reasons chosen by teachers in Part B of Item 9. Their distribution is shown in Table 90 below.

B. If your answer is *no*, say what reason(s) excluded developing learners' pragmatic competence from your teaching goals. You can more than one choice.

- You lack training of how to teach Oral Expression integrating pragmatic aspects in it.
- You think that integrating some pragmatic aspects is not important.
- You think that students' level does not allow them to grasp pragmatic aspects.
- You do not have enough time to teach pragmatics.
- You have limited knowledge of pragmatics and TL culture.
- You are confused which aspects of pragmatics to cover.

Table 90 *Reasons Behind not Developing Learners' Pragmatic Competence*

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>(%)</b>
Lack of teacher training	6	(100)
Issue of importance	0	(0)
Students' low level	3	(50)
Time allotment	1	(16.67)
Limited knowledge of Pragmatics and TL culture	5	(83.33)
Confusion with which aspects of pragmatics to cover	5	(83.33)

Analysis of the respondents' answers shows that all of them think that the lack of teacher training on how to integrate pragmatic aspects in teaching is the most important reason behind excluding developing learners' pragmatic competence from their teaching goals agenda. Another two reasons, which come in the second position, are: limited knowledge of pragmatics as well as TL culture and confusion with which aspects of pragmatics to cover. The third position is occupied by the students' low level which, according to respondents who ticked this reason, hinders them from grasping pragmatic knowledge. Time allotment comes in the fourth position while the importance of the teaching goal itself ranks last. Once more, these results suggest that Oral Expression teachers in the English department of Batna 2 University are quite

aware of the priority of developing their learners' pragmatic competence but many obstacles block them.

### Item 9. Frequency of asking students to criticize their peers constructively

A. How often do you ask your learners to criticize their peers constructively?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Occasionally
- Never

Table 91 *Frequency of Asking Students to Criticize their Peers Constructively*

Options	Always	Often	Sometimes	Occasionally	Never
<b>n</b>	0	1	0	6	0
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(14.28)	0	(85.72)	(0)

As Table 91 shows, only one respondent declared that s/he often asks students to criticize peers constructively and the remaining six ones stated that they occasionally do.

B. If you answered *sometimes*, *occasionally* or *never*, please say why.

When asking the participants who reported little or no use of constructive peer criticism to justify this, their answers varied. The causes they mentioned are the following: Four teachers attributed this to their students' reluctance to perform this activity while two said that peer criticism becomes ineffective if its quality does not match the expected level. In stressing the issue of quality, teachers remarked that students often avoid giving honest feedback due to face-saving issues and prefer praising peers instead. In doing this, peer feedback sessions become "social compliment sessions" as one teacher stated. In addition to students' unwillingness to perform the task and the dishonest comments, time constraints and crowded classes were also reported as influential factors. Indeed, the number of students in second year classes usually exceed 50 students per class.

**Item 10. Perceptions of the Usefulness of Constructive peer criticism**

The necessity to investigate second year Oral Expression teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of constructive peer criticism was thought of because it is believed that this point influences the way they perceive the importance of learners realize pragmatically appropriate criticisms and hence the need for pragmatic instruction. In other words, it is more likely that the teachers who are aware of the usefulness of constructive peer criticism in the process of learning work to ameliorate its quality. Teachers were asked to rate the statements related to the issue in focus on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement. Results are reported in the following table.

Table 92 *Perceptions of the Usefulness of Constructive Peer Criticism*

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree n (%)</b>	<b>Agree n (%)</b>	<b>Neutral n (%)</b>	<b>Disagree n (%)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree n (%)</b>
<b>1.</b> Constructive peer criticism is not useful at all.	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>2.</b> Constructive criticism from peers is not as efficient as that from the teacher.	7 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>3.</b> Constructive peer criticism engages learners in the highest level of learning: asking them to teach.	0 (0)	2 (28.57)	5 (71.43)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>4.</b> Constructive peer criticism builds learners' independence and develops their self-advocacy.	7 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)



<p><b>5.</b> Because feedback is a reciprocal process in which only a truly self-aware student can effectively evaluate peers and only a good student can get the most out of effective peer feedback, the relationship between the giver and the receiver develops both students as learners.</p>	<p>7 (100)</p>	<p>0 (100)</p>	<p>0 (100)</p>	<p>0 (100)</p>	<p>0 (100)</p>
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Results of Statement 1 reveal that all the teachers completely disagree with the statement which holds that constructive peer criticism is not useful at all. This proves their recognition of its utility. However, all of them agreed that it is less effective than teachers' constructive criticism. This is in line with findings of previous research that looked at the relationship between teacher's negative feedback (expert) vs. peers' negative feedback (notice) and IL development. Soler (2002) investigates the effect of feedback type as coming from peers or teacher on learners' production of oral requests in a RP task. Interestingly, qualitative data revealed that the majority of participants in the student-student group did not perceive their collaborative conversation as learning. In contrast, most students in the other group (teacher-student group) claimed to have learnt much from teacher negative feedback. In explaining the finding, Soler (2002) attributes this to the Spanish students' belief that teachers are the people to transmit explicit knowledge, while students do not. Similar to the present study, Chu's (2013) also shows teachers' preference for their negative feedback over peers' feedback as the former is more likely to provide accurate remarks on learners' errors due to the teacher's knowledge and experience.

It seems also that even though the questionnaire respondents acknowledged the benefit of constructive peer criticism in learning, they still have reservations concerning Statement 3 which says that "Constructive peer criticism engages learners in the highest

level of learning: asking them to teach.” The majority of them (71.43%) chose *neutral* and the remaining ones (28.57) ticked *agree*. In the space provided for additional comments on statements, two teachers wrote, “It is true that when you ask students to criticize their peers constructively, they take decisions as what is ok and what is not, but you cannot expect students to be experts. They cannot be asked to teach.” (Respondent 2). The other one noted down, “It is not uncommon for students to know more about certain topics than teachers, but when providing constructive criticism to peers, teachers think more critically than students do. It’s not a matter of who knows more but who sees things better. Students are still students.” (Respondent 7). In our view, teachers’ reservations about Statement 3 stems from their responsibility as teachers. In other words, they are afraid that students provide wrong or inaccurate criticisms.

In response to Statements 4 and 5, the full percentage (100%) is attained by the option *strongly agree*, suggesting that all teachers think that constructive peer criticism builds learners’ independence, develops their self-advocacy, and helps them learn in general either as givers and receivers. In a nutshell, analysis of the respondents’ perceptions of the usefulness of constructive peer criticism yield positive results as they are highly aware of its utility.

### 3.4.7.3 Section Three: EFL learners’ constructive peer criticisms.

#### Item 11. Learners’ psychological state when giving constructive peer criticism

If your answer to Question 9 is anything except *never*, how do your learners look like when they give constructive criticism to peers?

- At ease
- Ill at ease
- I did not notice

Table 93 Learners’ Psychological State when Providing Constructive Peer Criticism

Options	At ease	Ill at ease	I did not notice
n	0	6	1
(%)	(0)	(85.72)	(14.28)

Six respondents said that learners look ill at ease while just one respondent said that s/he did not notice how they look like. This is in line with previous research (e.g., Nelson & Carson, 1998) which finds that students from some countries may find giving constructive criticism a positive exercise, while others from other cultures may find it scaring and they are often uncomfortable expressing it.

### Item 12. Reasons behind learners' unease

If your answer to Question 11 is *at ease* or *I did not notice*, go directly to the next question. If your answer is *ill at ease*, is it, in your opinion, because of? (You can choose more than one answer)

- Low linguistic proficiency
- Fear of public speaking
- Fear of hurting peers' feelings
- Having nothing to say
- Other (Please, specify.....)

Table 94 *Reasons Behind Learners' Unease*

Reasons	n	(%)
Low linguistic proficiency	5	(71.43)
Fear of public speaking	3	(42.86)
Fear of hurting peers' feelings	7	(100)
Having nothing to say	0	(0)
Other	0	(0)

The following figure gives a clearer image of the distribution of the reasons responsible for the learners' unease when providing constructive peer criticism.

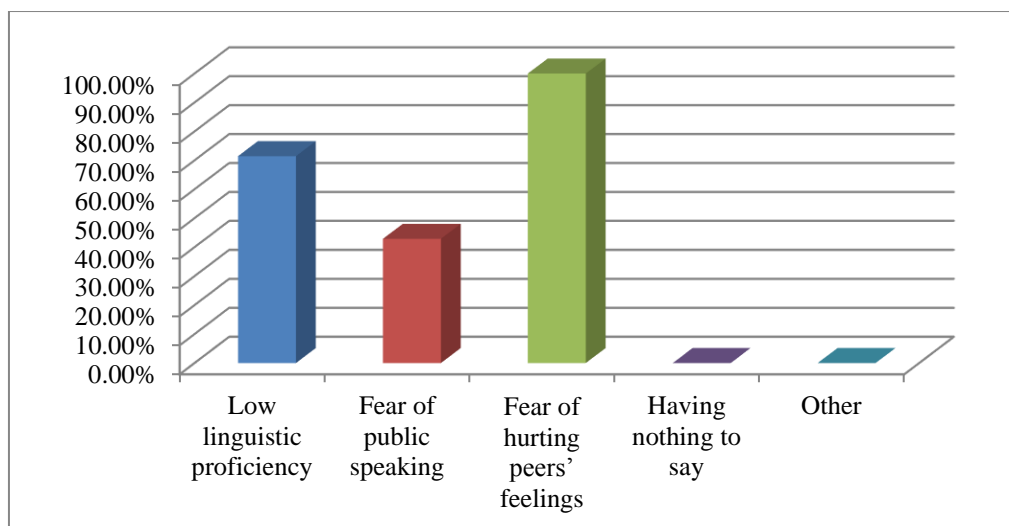


Figure 38 *Reasons Behind Learners' Uneasiness*

As can be seen from Figure 38, all the respondents agreed that fear of hurting peers' feelings is the main reason behind the learners' uneasiness. The cause which ranks second is low linguistic proficiency and the one which comes third is public speaking stress. No teacher said that students feel ill at ease because they have nothing to say and no one reported other reasons other than those already proposed. The total percentage of the reasons exceeds 100 % as the participants were allowed to tick more than one choice.

### Item 13. Easiness of handling teacher's vs. peers' constructive criticism

When receiving constructive peer criticism, in your opinion, which one is easier for learners to handle?

- Teacher's constructive criticism
- Peers' constructive criticism

Table 95 *Easiness of Handling Teacher's vs. Peers' Constructive Criticism*

Options	Teacher's constructive criticism	Peers' constructive criticism
<b>n</b>	4	3
<b>(%)</b>	(57.14)	(42.86)

As Table 95 clearly shows, this time, the respondents' answers to this item diverged. Four think that teacher's constructive criticism is easier to handle while three

see the opposite. The first party thinks that the teacher's authority makes criticism less embarrassing as s/he, as a teacher, is supposed to know more than the learner and correct him/her. On the contrary, peers have equal power; they are of the same age and theoretically have the same level of knowledge which makes it embarrassing for them to be corrected by peers especially if the learning atmosphere is competitive. The other party, who advocates that students handle peers' criticism easier than teacher', thinks that negative feedback from classmates makes learners less nervous and more relaxed as they sense security coming from familiarity with peers. Another reason might be that it is less embarrassing for learners to be criticized and corrected by peers who make mistakes too.

#### **Item 14. The most common errors in learners' constructive peer criticisms**

What are the most common errors that your learners tend to make when providing constructive peer criticisms?

Grammaticality (something uncorrectable in terms of syntactical, semantic and phonological rules)

Acceptability (A well-formed utterance may still be regarded unacceptable when it does not fit into the context of the wider linguistic unit or fails to fulfil the speaker's intention)

Correctness (The difference between what a native speaker of L2 would say instinctively)

Infelicity (An inappropriate speech act from a sociolinguistic perspective)

Table 96 *The Most Common Errors in Learners' Constructive Peer Criticisms*

<b>Error Type</b>	<b>Grammaticality</b>	<b>Acceptability</b>	<b>Correctness</b>	<b>Infelicity</b>
<b>n</b>	5	1	3	6
<b>(%)</b>	(71.43)	(14.28)	(42.86)	(85.71)

Figure 38 below represents the distribution of the most common errors in learners' constructive peer criticisms in a more concrete manner.

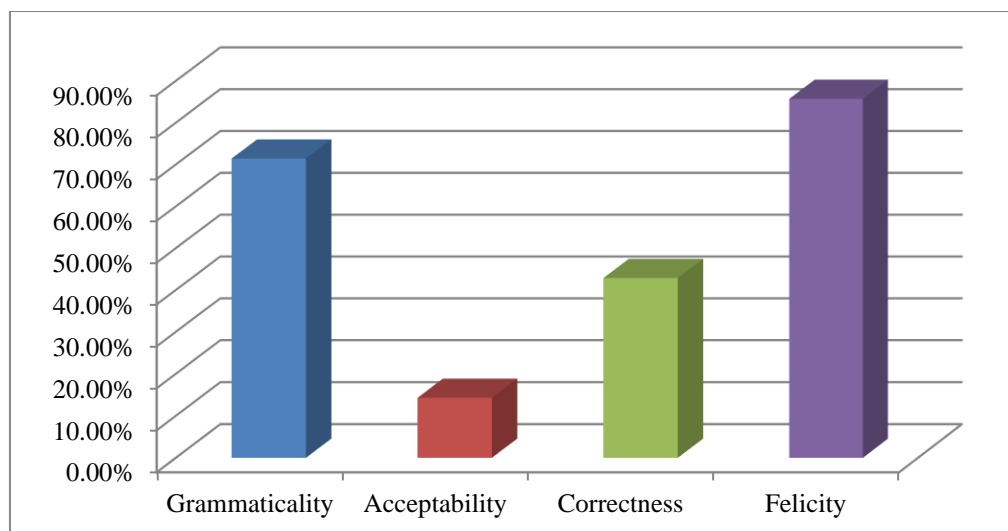


Figure 39 *The Most Common Errors in Learners' Constructive Peer Criticisms*

As Table 96 reveals, the most common type of errors in learners' constructive peer criticisms is infelicity errors i.e. inappropriate constructive criticisms from a sociolinguistic perspective. The type of errors that ranks second is that of grammaticality i.e. errors that can be grouped under the categories of syntax, semantics and phonology. Errors of correctness come in the third place and those related to acceptability in the last. These findings consolidate those of the students' preliminary questionnaire where it was found that the most common difficulties faced by students when trying to provide constructive peer criticisms are those of politeness and linguistic accuracy. Here, politeness is grouped under felicity while linguistic accuracy is categorized under grammaticality.

**Item 15. EFL learners' constructive peer criticisms compliance with criteria of pragmatic appropriateness and linguistic accuracy**

The following table contains criteria of pragmatically appropriate and linguistically accurate constructive peer criticisms as perceived by the researcher. Say whether or not they are generally obeyed in your learners' criticisms by ticking *yes* or *no*?

### a. Compliance with clarity rules

Table 97 *Constructive Peer Criticisms' Compliance with Clarity Rules*

<b>Clarity Criteria</b>	<b>Yes n (%)</b>	<b>No n (%)</b>
1. Stating the problematic behavior in peers' performances (Stimulus)	6 (85.72)	1 (14.28)
2. Providing the justification (Explanation of judgement i.e. saying why the stimulus is a problem)	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)
3. Mentioning the consequences that may result from the problematic behavior/action	2 (28.57)	5 (71.43)
4. Suggesting the desired change(s)	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)

The first look at Table 98 tells that the number which represents the respected rules or criteria is higher than that which stands for the overlooked ones. The component that the majority of teachers said to be present in their learners' constructive criticisms is the stimulus and then the rationale and desired change(s). However, the element that is generally absent is the consequences of the problematic behavior which is of crucial importance in making the peer recognize the follow-up of his/her fault and handle the criticism easily. These results analyzed globally suggest that the learners do not suffer from major problems of clarity especially if we know that mentioning the consequences that may result from the peer's problematic behavior/action as not as essential as other elements such as the stimulus.

### b. Compliance with politeness rules

Teachers' evaluation of their learners' constructive peer criticisms against certain politeness criteria already set up by the researcher based on literature review are indicated in the following table.

Table 98 *Constructive Peer Criticisms' Compliance with Politeness Rules*

<b>Politeness Criteria</b>	<b>Yes n (%)</b>	<b>No n (%)</b>
<b>5.</b> Using indirectness when providing peer criticism	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>6.</b> Stating that criticism is done for the peer's betterment of future action	5 (71.43)	2 (28.57)
<b>7.</b> Softening the criticism through mitigators	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>8.</b> Showing awareness of the peer's perspective on the situation and his probable feelings, (e.g. "I realize that you..., but...")	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>9.</b> Using depersonalize statements (e.g. "Do not take it <b>personally</b> ...", "It's not because <b>you</b> said/did...")	1 (14.28)	6 (85.72)
<b>10.</b> Attributing the speaker's disapproval of the peer's problematic action to its bad consequences <b>only</b>	0 (0)	7 (100)

Having a glance at Table 98, we can understand that the majority of the teachers stated that the majority of politeness rules are not obeyed by their learners. No teacher thinks that indirectness is opted for, mitigators are employed, awareness of the peer's perspective on the situation as well as his/her probable feelings is shown, and the speaker's disapproval of the peer's problematic action is attributed to its bad consequences only. What is more is that teachers think that these criteria are totally absent in learners' constructive criticisms. To be optimistic, the only practice which reflects politeness and it done by the students is stating that criticism is done for the peer's betterment of future action. Moreover, one teacher declared that the majority of learners use depersonalized statements. Analysis of these results altogether suggests that politeness is extremely overlooked in the learners' constructive peer criticisms in their teachers' eyes.



### c. Compliance with linguistic accuracy rules

Table 99 *Constructive Peer Criticisms' Compliance with Linguistic Accuracy Rules*

<b>Linguistic accuracy criteria</b>	<b>Yes n (%)</b>	<b>No n (%)</b>
<b>11.</b> Doing frequent errors of pragmalinguistic forms and modifiers that rarely detract from the subject's comprehensibility and hence made his/her criticism difficult or almost impossible to understand	7 (100)	0 (0)
<b>12.</b> Showing excellent command of relevant linguistic structures (pragmalinguistic forms and modifiers) when realizing the speech act of criticizing	0 (0)	7 (100)

No respondent thinks that when performing the speech act of criticizing directed to peers, learners commit frequent errors of pragmalinguistic forms and modifiers which greatly detract from their comprehensibility and hence make their criticism difficult or almost impossible to understand. On the other hand, no teacher states that the majority of his/her learners exhibit an excellent choice of relevant linguistic structures either at the level of head acts or connecting parts (softeners). These results suggest that, in the teachers' eyes, the learners' pragmatic-specific command of language use when criticizing peers is moderate or average.

#### **Item 16. Learners constructive peer criticisms' pragmatic appropriateness level**

How do you evaluate your learners' constructive peer criticisms as far as appropriateness is concerned?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Low

Table 100 *Learners Constructive Peer Criticisms' Pragmatic Appropriateness Level*

<b>Level</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>n</b>	0	0	4	3
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(0)	(57.14)	(42.86)

After teachers evaluated specific areas in their learners' constructive peer criticisms, they were asked to judge their general level. According to them, learners' level of performing this speech act ranges from average to low. This is not surprising if we recall that the level of clarity, as determined by teachers is acceptable or moderate, that of politeness is low while that of pragmatic accuracy is average.

#### **3.4.7.4 Section Four: Pragmatic instruction and learners' constructive peer criticism competence.**

##### **Item 17. Teachers' perception of pragmatic competence**

According to you, an EFL learner is pragmatically competent if:

- S/he masters the linguistic aspects of the target language
- S/he is aware of what is socioculturally appropriate in the target language community

Table 101 *Teachers' Perception of Pragmatic Competence*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Mastering the linguistic aspects of the target language</b>	<b>Being aware of what is socioculturally appropriate in the target language community</b>
<b>n</b>	0	7
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(100)

Table 101 clearly shows that all the respondents are aware of the essence of pragmatic competence. For them, to be pragmatically competent necessitates being aware of what is socioculturally appropriate in the TL community.

**Item 18. Teachers' perceptions of EFL learners' development of pragmatic competence**

**A.** In the Algerian EFL context, do you think that EFL learners' pragmatic competence?

Justify your answer.

- Develops naturally  
 Needs to be formally taught

Table 102 *Teachers' Perceptions of Pragmatic Competence Development*

Options	Develops naturally	Needs to be formally taught
<b>n</b>	0	7
<b>(%)</b>	(0)	(100)

All respondents agree that pragmatic competence cannot develop naturally and hence needs to be formally taught. In answering the open-ended question which demanded their justification, they stressed that when neither adequate input nor practice opportunities are available for English learners in an Algerian EFL context, teaching pragmatic competence becomes imperative.

**Item 19. Teachers' perceptions of the need for constructive criticism speech act instruction**

To what extent do you agree with the statement which says that "Because pragmatic knowledge of EFL learners (nonnative speakers) can be quite different from that of native speakers and since part of pragmatic variability emerges in the production of speech acts, they need to be instructed in order for their constructive peer criticisms to be pragmatically appropriate"?

- Strongly agree  
 Agree  
 Neutral  
 Disagree  
 Strongly disagree

Table 103 *Teachers' Perceptions of the Need for Constructive Criticism Speech Act Instruction*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>n</b>	7	0	0	0	0
<b>(%)</b>	(100)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)

It is true that the teachers' opinion of the necessity of teaching pragmatic competence was known through the previous item, but this one seeks to investigate their perceptions of constructive speech act teachability in particular as teaching pragmatics entails in addition to speech acts many other aspects such as implicatures, presuppositions, deixis, pragmatic routines, gambits, etc. It seems clear from Table 103 that all teachers agree on the need for constructive criticism speech act instruction. Only one teacher commented on the statement by shedding light on the notion of L1 negative transfer. In doing so, the respondent says it is extremely important to teach how to criticize peers because this practice is rooted in culture.

**Item 20. Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of constructive criticism teaching practices**

Respondents' answers to this item are indicated in the following table.

1 = Not at all effective, 2 = Slightly effective, 3 = Moderately effective, 4 = Very effective and 5 = Extremely effective

Table 104 *Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Constructive Criticism Teaching Practices*

<b>Statements (Classroom Practices)</b>	<b>1 n (%)</b>	<b>2 n (%)</b>	<b>3 n (%)</b>	<b>4 n (%)</b>	<b>5 n (%)</b>
<b>1. Teaching learners to focus on observation rather than</b>	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (28.57)	4 (57.14)	1 (14.28)

inference and generalizations when criticizing peers					
<b>2.</b> Encouraging learners to use descriptive language rather than evaluative language when criticizing peers	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (42.86)	2 (28.57)	5 (71.43)
<b>3.</b> Teaching learners to use complete criticisms that include the four major components of constructive criticisms (stimulus, rationale, consequences, and desired change)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (42.86)	4 (57.14)
<b>4.</b> Teaching learners to describe these components explicitly or state them in an easily inferable way	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (57.14)	3 (42.86)
<b>5.</b> Presenting authentic input to learners in which the speech act of criticizing is used in natural settings	0 (0)	1 (14.28)	3 (42.86)	2 (28.57)	1 (14.28)
<b>6.</b> Introducing some awareness-raising activities that focus on the sociopragmatic aspects implied in authentic/non-authentic conversations or texts by asking questions about the participants, their relationship, social statuses, etc.	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (14.28)	5 (71.43)	1 (14.28)
<b>7.</b> Directing learners' attention towards the pragmalinguistic aspects involved when making	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (85.71)	1 (14.28)	0 (0)

criticisms in those conversations or texts					
<b>8.</b> Asking learners to compare between criticism situations of different social and contextual factors	0 (0)	1 (14.28)	5 (71.43)	1 (14.28)	0 (0)
<b>9.</b> Showing learners how to choose pragmalinguistic forms according to sociopragmatic factors	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>10.</b> Explaining to learners how culture can be a factor responsible for the speakers' varying assessments of the contextual variables (e.g. power, social distance and degree of imposition) resulting in differences in the selection of (in)appropriate criticism strategies	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (28.57)	5 (71.43)
<b>11.</b> Telling learners about the commonalities and differences between their own cultural norms and those of the target culture as far as the speech act of criticizing is concerned	0 (0)	3 (57.14)	4 (42.86)	0 (0)	0 (0)
<b>12.</b> Presenting a taxonomy of criticism strategies to learners and explaining the graduation of all the linguistic formulae for criticizing on the basis of politeness criteria	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (14.28)	6 (85.71)

<b>13.</b> Showing learners the importance of using different mitigators to soften the face-threatening nature of criticism	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>14.</b> Giving learners explicit corrective feedback in the form of comments on infelicitous realizations of criticism speech act	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)
<b>15.</b> Asking learners to do pragmatic comprehension (pragmatic judgement activities such as multiple-choice activities) to test their understanding of the correct use of the speech act of criticizing	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (71.43)	2 (28.57)
<b>16.</b> Asking learners to do pragmatic production activities to test their understanding of the correct use of the speech act of criticizing	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (100)

After teachers' perceptions of the need for constructive criticism speech-act instruction were known through Item 18, this item attempts to unveil their viewpoints concerning the effectiveness of specific classroom practices in increasing their competence in producing this speech act. Starting with Statement 1, the majority of the respondents think that teaching learners to focus on observation rather than inference and generalizations is very effective in developing their constructive peer criticism competence. A possible reason of crediting this degree of effectiveness to this practice might be thinking that this task makes students learn to be not only specific and polite but rational too. Indeed, the first tip in giving constructive criticism to peers is to rely on visible behavior (observation) and not on assumptions. Assumptions make the criticism producer look bad especially when his/her assumption is wrong. Moreover,

using generalizations makes the speaker's attitude presumptuous and creates embarrassment for him/her.

For Statement 2, most teachers (71.43%) agreed on the power of teaching students to use descriptive language rather than evaluative one in boosting their constructive peer criticism competence which suggests that they are aware of the importance of this point. Though criticism implies evaluation of what is right and wrong, good and bad, learners should emphasize descriptions by reporting what has occurred. By doing this, the need of the criticized peer to respond defensively will be reduced and therefore conflict will be avoided.

The greater part of respondents acknowledged the efficacy of not only teaching learners how to rely on observations and descriptive language when criticizing peers but instructing them on feedback completeness and clarity too. Completeness means that the four major components of constructive criticisms (stimulus, rationale, consequences, and desired change) are included in the criticism and clarity stands for stating them conventionally. These elements contribution to better appropriate criticism is as follows: Making the scope of the problem very limited and precise elevates the speaker's politeness level from one hand and makes the feedback more actionable and therefore effective from another hand by letting the criticized peer understand his/her problem and seek betterment. However, just mentioning the stimulus is not enough for the criticism producer to appear clear and rational. What is also needed is the rationale which can take the form of descriptions of rules, norms, standards, or expectations conventionally agreed on. Omission of the rationale has the effect of leaving the addressee without clear indications of the speaker's motivation and letting the speaker appear pushy or evasive. In addition to the stimulus and rationale, mentioning the consequences of the problematic action adds to clarity by letting the criticized peer sees intelligibly the fallout of his mistake. Last but not least, because every constructive criticism can be understood differently as everyone has varying perspectives, mentioning the desired change can tie up the criticism in a nice bow and give the addressee a clear idea of what the speaker has in mind.

Furthermore, the majority of the respondents agreed on the effectiveness of explicitly instructing learners to express constructive criticisms. However, what attracts attention here is that for Statements 5, 7, 8 and 11, the lion's share in the distribution of



percentages is gained by the point *moderately effective* (42.86%, 85.43%, 71.43% and 42.86% respectively). This suggests that the teaching practices reported through these practices are neither very nor extremely effective in the teachers' eyes. These results might be explained by the fact that they echo the implicit mode of teaching which seems to be not of extreme effectiveness according to the respondents. Previous research (e.g., Gu, 2011) shows that authentic input is not effective in helping EFL learners achieve pragmatic appropriateness if not accompanied by explicit pragmatic instruction. Showing once more the advantage of explicit instruction over implicit teaching, previous studies (e.g. Khatib & Hosseini, 2015) makes evident the primacy of form-focused input enhancement over implicit teaching in developing the learners' pragmalinguistic competence. With regards to teaching culture, telling EFL learners about the similarities and differences between their L1 and the target culture without explicitly explaining to them how the latter can be a factor responsible for the speakers' varying assessments of the contextual variables (e.g. power, social distance and degree of imposition) resulting in differences in the selection of (in) appropriate is of questionable utility in ameliorating EFL learners' intercultural and sociopragmatic competence (e.g., Neddar, 2011).

Contrary to the teachers' ratings of Teaching Practices 5, 7, 8 and 11, Teaching Practices 9, 10, 14, 15 and 16 were thought of to be very or extremely effective. The explicit awareness-raising approach was proved by previous research to be effective in the teaching of sociopragmatic variation (Lemmerich, 2010). Furthermore, explaining to learners the graduation of all the linguistic formulae for criticizing on the basis of politeness via a taxonomy (Statement 12) and teaching them the importance of using different mitigators to soften the face-threatening nature of this speech act (Statements 13) were perceived by the majority of the respondents (85.71% and 100% respectively) to be extremely effective in enhancing the learners' production of polite constructive criticisms. Indeed, results of previous research (e.g., Tan & Farashaiyan, 2012; Khatib & Safari, 2013) found that explicit form-based instruction was useful for learners in producing politeness strategies effectively when making speech acts.

**Item 21. Teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of explicit vs. implicit instruction**

A. According to you, is it better to teach the speech act of criticizing?

Explicitly

Implicitly

B. Justify your answer, please.

Table 105 *Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Explicit vs. Implicit Instruction*

Options	Explicitly	Implicitly
n	7	0
(%)	(100)	(0)

Though it is true that the teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the explicit mode of teaching the speech act in focus were already disclosed via Item 19, Item 20 is set to recheck their preferences and investigate their motives. As Table 106 clearly tells, once more, all the respondents agreed on the effectiveness of explicit instruction of the speech act in focus. Their explanation, based on their teaching experience, is that unless learners consciously target one aspect of the TL, they cannot develop competence in it. It is as if they were referring indirectly to the noticing hypothesis. Moreover, the context of learning English in Algeria is a forceful factor behind their perception too. They said that Algerian EFL learners have neither adequate input nor practice opportunities and therefore explicit pragmatic instruction becomes indispensable. Additionally, teachers mentioned that the learners' level of observation and inference is too low for implicit teaching to work.

**Item 22. Teachers' opinion about the role of authentic input**

In your opinion, what role do you attribute to authentic input in enhancing EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence?

Unimportant

Somewhat important

Quite important

- Very important  
 Extremely important

Table 106 *Teachers' Opinion About the Role of Authentic Input*

Options	Unimportant	Somewhat important	Quite important	Very important	Extremely important
n	0	0	1	2	4
(%)	(0)	(0)	(14.28)	(28.57)	(57.15)

This item is set to explore the importance teachers attach to the role of authentic input in the FL classroom. Their answers show that they are well aware of its importance. Though answers varied a little bit from *quite important* (14.28%), *very important* (28.57%) to *extremely important* (57.15%), this question gained unanimity among respondents as they all agreed that input is important. This evidently demonstrates the teachers' beliefs in the importance of input regardless of the theoretical approach to FLT. Connection between input and language acquisition is best expressed by Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) which maintains that "successful acquisition as being very bound up with the nature of the language input which students receive" (p. 12). Whether gathered out of class or brought into the classroom through audiovisual media, input, and more specifically authentic input, is vital for pragmatic development.

### **Item 23. Effectiveness of authentic vs. non-authentic input**

What type of input do you think can be more effective in enhancing EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence?

- Authentic  
 Non-authentic  
 Equally effective

Table 107 *Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Authentic vs. Non-authentic Input*

<b>Options</b>	<b>Authentic</b>	<b>Non-authentic</b>	<b>Equally effective</b>
<b>n</b>	2	1	4
<b>(%)</b>	(28.57)	(14.28)	(57.14)

Table 107 shows that the highest percentage is that of respondents who think that both types of input are equally effective (57.14%). It is followed by those who think that authentic input is more effective than non-authentic one (28.57%) while the least percentage corresponds to respondents who hold an opposite opinion (14.28%). Although during the last three decades, there were calls for more authenticity in the language classroom, teachers' might still be using unauthentic materials and think that they are very effective since they are carefully planned by language specialists. Nonetheless, their common disadvantage is the deliberate choice of language situations and people to comply with communicative, structural, or behavioral needs.

**Item 24. The most effective techniques of teaching constructive criticism speech act**

Since the challenge in FLT is how to arrange learning opportunities in such a way that benefit the development of the targeted competence, Item 25 is set up to investigate the surveyed teachers' attitudes towards the efficiency of some teaching techniques.

In your opinion, how could constructive criticism speech act be effectively taught?

- Through mere exposure to authentic materials reflecting the speech act in focus
- Through teacher's talk
- Through explicit metapragmatic explanation about pragmalinguistic forms
- Through awareness raising activities that help students learn appropriateness

Table 108 *The Most Effective Techniques of Teaching Constructive Criticism Speech Act*

Options	n	(%)
Through mere exposure to authentic materials reflecting the speech act in focus	0	(0)
Through teacher's talk	0	(0)
Through explicit metapragmatic explanation of pragmalinguistic forms	2	(28.57)
Through awareness-raising activities that help learners develop appropriateness	5	(71.43)

According to teachers, the most effective way to teach constructive criticism speech act is through awareness raising activities. This technique was ranked first by the majority of respondents (71.43%). This suggests that they are quite aware of the sociocultural aspect of language which is imposed by the tight interrelation between language, culture and social meaning of language. Indeed, language mirrors culture since it embodies the cultural content of its owners. It is obvious that the values and norms that members of a particular culture share certainly shape the way they communicate (Kramsch, 1998). In other words, their linguistic repertory is controlled by culture-bound parameters such as comprehensibility and appropriateness (Ekwelibe, 2015). The existence of these social norms which reflect how people use language highly proves that the human behavior has a social meaning. If people are unaware that the linguistic behavior of others who belong to a different culture is controlled by a different set of rules that define the appropriate way of speaking, misunderstandings may arise in cross-cultural encounters.

The second most effective technique is explicit metapragmatic explanation of pragmalinguistic forms. Teachers who chose this option think that equipping their students only with constructive criticism realization strategies enables them to carry this speech act appropriately. This is untrue. Mere knowledge of pragmalinguistic forms isolated from their contexts yields sociopragmatic failure. Said differently, for learners to be pragmatically competent, they should be able to interpret the sociopragmatic meanings in communicative criticism situations with sociocultural differences and vary

the way they frame their criticisms according to the sociopragmatic variables such as power, social distance and degree of imposition. As expected, no respondent thinks that mere exposure to authentic input can be extremely effective in accelerating the learners' targeted competence because their answers to some previous item questions suggest their support of input enhancement. However, unexpectedly, despite being a very useful source of pragmatic input (Benjamins, 2010), teacher's talk was thought of as the last effective technique.

### **Item 25. Respondents' additional comments and suggestions concerning the research topic**

This open-ended question was answered by four respondents only. It allowed us to collect a number of interesting comments. To start with, teachers highlighted the originality of the topic. This is not to claim that the present study is pioneering in introducing the notion of pragmatic instruction effectiveness but it sheds light on the Algerian EFL learners with reference to the topic investigated. Not only was the originality of the topic commented on but its importance too. Two teachers stated that the present investigation can change a lot of teaching practices and hence peer constructive criticism can regain its credibility as a valuable tool of cooperative learning.

Additionally, one respondent went far beyond commenting on the topic to calling for teachers' training in order to enable them cope with the latest trends and issues in FLT. Another teacher proposed introducing pragmatic aspects to TL learners since early stages in order to avoid fossilization of L1 cultural norms.

To sum up, throughout the analysis of the results obtained from the teachers' questionnaire, important concluding remarks were made. The results indicated that the surveyed teachers are aware of the importance of the overall objective of TL teaching—enabling EFL learners to use language appropriately in real life situations. However, this awareness is not mirrored in their classroom practices. In other words, the majority of them do not integrate pragmatic aspects in teaching Oral Expression. This is because they are unfamiliar with the rules of contextualized language use. Therefore, training in this area is suggested. Moreover, the results of this questionnaire are in line with those of the students' preliminary questionnaire in relation to the reasons which stand

behind the learners' reluctance to criticize peers constructively. In the light of the foregoing data analysis, it becomes clear that the responses and their interpretations sit well with the hypotheses on which of the present study is grounded. The current research has developed from a powerful claim that though second year English major learners are conscious of the benefits of negative peer feedback, and their critical thinking skills and language proficiency are fairly good, they hesitate to provide constructive criticisms to peers due to face-saving issues.

With regard to teaching the speech act in focus, all the surveyed teachers view pedagogic intervention as quite necessary to develop learners' constructive criticism competence in relation to appropriateness. Analysis also revealed preference for the explicit mode of instruction. Besides, it showed that teachers are all aware of the potential benefits of using authentic materials in the classroom. There is a wide recognition among them that exposure to this sort of input can bring the missing sociocultural aspects of this speech act production.

## **General conclusion**

This section summarizes the major findings of the present study vis-à-vis its four research questions. It also presents implications of the role of pragmatic instruction in the development of EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence. Moreover, it lays some limitations of this study and offers some suggestions for future research.

### **1 Major Findings of the Study**

The present study was designed to explore the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence. It took second year English major students at Batna 2 University as a case study. Findings of this study confirm previous research findings on the positive effect of speech-act instruction on the development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Results of the present investigation support the fact that although EFL context is poor in terms of authentic input and opportunities of TL practice, learning in it does not necessarily handicap pragmatic development. As a matter of fact, TL pragmatics is extensively responsive to classroom instruction. This can be accomplished through explicit metapragmatic information and well as awareness-raising techniques and activities.

This instruction enables learners to realize constructive peer criticisms compatible with TL sociocultural conventions. Based on the findings of the present study, pragmatic instruction is deemed necessary in order to enable EFL learners carry out pragmalinguistically accurate and socioculturally appropriate constructive peer criticisms and therefore overcome the reluctance of providing negative peer feedback. To better understand pragmatic competence development, four research questions were explored as follows:

The first research question focuses on whether or not pragmatic instruction accelerates EFL learners' ability of realizing linguistically accurate and most importantly pragmatically appropriate constructive peer criticisms as measured by analytic rating of the competence in focus. A combination of naturalized and elicited data gathering tools was used to collect data of two groups. Data analysis revealed that the experimental group outperformed the control group significantly by the end of the experiment after they had the same level before the treatment. Moreover, the largest gains were in the area of politeness, followed by linguistic accuracy then clarity. In fact,



learners' level of clarity was fairly good before the treatment. The t-test confirmed that these improvements did not happen by chance and it was pragmatic instruction which greatly lifted the scores of the experimental group up. The learners' targeted competence improved at the post-intervention due to the good use of explicit metapragmatic explanation and awareness-raising techniques.

With reference to the second research question which looks for evidence of pragmatic development that can be inferred from changes which took place in the learners' use of specific discourse features and strategies as a result of speech-act instruction, results showed that there was a great disparity in the distribution of semantic formulas used between the pretest and the posttest in both the OPFT and the ODCT among the experimental group. Developmental changes appeared mainly at two levels: the frequency and range of using criticism semantic formulas as well as modifiers, and indirectness. To start with, in the pretest, the experimental group participants showed more preference for direct constructive criticism strategies mainly *statement of the problem* and *negative evaluation* and employed only one indirect formula. In the posttest, however, the use of the indirect constructive criticism strategies increased while that of the direct ones decreased considerably. Opting for indirectness can be interpreted as a tendency of using more polite forms. These two aspects of pragmatic change were absent among the control group.

Discourse features that were also positively influenced by treatment are mitigators. Like semantic formulas, their frequency and range increased considerably. In the pretest, the average of modification per criticism was very low. In the posttest, however, it accelerated to help reduce the offence of the face-threatening speech act in focus. Not only had the number of modifiers increased but their range too. In the pretest, only 10 types out of 14 types of modifiers were used, be they external or internal. In the posttest, all types were employed. What is more, in the pretest, the experimental group depended heavily on external modifiers making little use of internal ones but in the posttest, both types of modifiers were employed almost equally. Another noticeable difference in the discourse features between the pretest and the posttest is the use of syntactic modifiers in the posttest. As mentioned before, they were totally absent in the pretest. All the aforementioned post-interventional developmental changes in discourse features among the experimental group indicate the effectiveness of instruction.

The third research question focuses on the learners' attitudes towards providing negative peer feedback after pragmatic instruction. It also aims to know their opinion of the instruction. Comparing the findings of the preliminary questionnaire with those of the WSR, it seems that they are perfectly aligned. The findings of the former suggest that fear of losing face and hurting peers' feelings is the major reason behind learners' reluctance to criticize them though they are fully aware of the utility of collaborative learning in general and negative feedback in particular. Over the 5-week instruction, learners developed a more positive attitude towards negative peer feedback. Their psychological state when providing it also changed positively in that they became much more comfortable.

Results of the WSR do not only match those of the preliminary questionnaire, but those of analytic rating and discourse analysis too. All the experimental group subjects reported that they became able to criticize peers more politely using softeners. Moreover, they highlighted their familiarity and ability to use a larger battery of semantic formulas and mitigators. In addition to politeness and variety, learners mentioned their acquired tendency of opting for indirectness. All these changes coming from their voices evince that pragmatic instruction affects EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence positively.

With regard to the fourth research question which concerns EFL teachers' attitudes towards instructing learners on constructive peer criticism to foster their competence in it, it was found that they are initially convinced that pragmatic competence in the Algerian EFL context does not develop naturally, but it needs to be formally taught. This is because the pragmatic knowledge of Algerian EFL learners can be quite different from that of NSs, and part of pragmatic variability emerges in the area of speech act production. Nonetheless, this conviction is not mirrored in their classroom teaching practices as far as the speech act in focus is concerned. In other words, though teachers view pedagogic intervention as quite necessary to develop learners' constructive criticism competence in relation to appropriateness, they do not teach them how to realize this speech act appropriately. This is mainly due to their unfamiliarity with the rules of contextualized language use.

## **2 Implications and Recommendations**

Theoretically, the study reported in the present thesis may contribute to the growing body of research on instructed ILP by filling in the gap in literature between interventional and developmental studies in L2 pragmatics. So far, research in ILP has concentrated on the need for teaching L2 pragmatics, teachability of speech acts, and the effectiveness of the different instructional techniques to develop pragmatic competence in a single-moment research on one hand; if not on the other hand, it examined the pragmatic development of individual learners on a long-term. Neither research paradigm has combined both perspectives. Unlike previous studies, the present one widened its scope to embrace investigation of the learners' development on two levels: production of constructive criticism speech act and attitude towards negative peer feedback.

With regard to this perspective, the present study is a valuable addition to the ample body of literature in that it provides a better understanding of the learners' voice. It does so by a deep probing into their attitudes to know the pre-instruction period impediments and post-instruction period developmental changes. Because language learning behavior is believed to be largely influenced by the learners' attitude towards the TL, this study adds the integrant of the learners' voice together with pragmatic production as essential constituents of the learners' pragmatic language learning experience.

Most of the available research on learners' TL pragmatic production outlined their realization of pragmatic areas focusing on their linguistic abilities. A handful of studies even went further and compared their pragmatic production with NSs. Few exceptions examined learners' pragmatic development as a result of treatment. Needless to say, there is a gap in literature in relation to interventional strands of research. There is hardly any available research that investigates the Algerian EFL learners' attitudes towards their pragmatic acquisition experience and more precisely opinions about instruction using self-reports. This research provides insights into the Algerian EFL learners' pragmatics learning experience. In so doing, it contributes to the literature of ILP research in general and EFL interventional research in particular.

The present study carries theoretical and pedagogical implications as well as applications for Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis. Among the empirical studies which defied the foundations of this hypothesis in cognitive psychology and investigated the role of noticing in L2 acquisition, some preferred the weaker version of the hypothesis which holds that though noticing is helpful, it might not be necessary for learning to take place. On the contrary to them, this study uses the learners' pragmatic production as well as their self-reports to support the strong version. Findings made clear that learners began to process input when they noticed specific pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic variables of the targeted speech act.

In addition to theoretical implications, the present study has methodological ones too. With regard to research design, this investigation showed how coupling quantitative and qualitative methods within the same study allows to zoom in and zoom out on particular points of interest. Besides, this method enables the results from one approach to explain those from the other. Hence, future classroom-based research could use the mixed-methods approach to better explain the complex and multi-faceted nature of FL learning.

Besides, combining naturalized and elicited data in this study may contribute to the long-debated issue regarding the optimal data collection method within ILP research. A peer-feedback task was used to elicit spontaneous relatively naturalistic criticisms from the learners as they were not asked to perform in imaginary situations. Indeed, giving peer-feedback was part of their academic life and they were not also asked to take on social roles different from their own as students. The OPFT thus met the requirements of oral data gathering tools, namely the ability to elicit relatively natural data and at the same time control social and contextual variables: power (equal status) and distance (neutral) between participants. Only a handful of ILP studies have made use of this method (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2000, 2001; Nguyen, 2005).

Findings of the present study not only contribute to further explication of speech act competence in general and constructive criticism speech act in academic contexts in particular, but also serve as a springboard for better integration of pragmatic insights into the teaching-learning process. As our understanding of the meaning of language and competent L2 speakers has changed, a shift in paradigm in English language teaching and learning has undeniably become necessary. In Algeria, this task is

challenging as there are still some teachers who devote the greatest portion of their efforts to running their classes and teaching the lexico-syntactic features of language instead of investigating the social and psychological dynamics of the classroom. We believe that the potential of language learning can be fully achieved only if teachers make efforts to understand the social and psychological factors at work and direct them towards maximizing learning. Unfortunately, this is challenging in Algeria as social pressures prevent learners from openly and freely expressing their opinions and feelings.

Furthermore, the present study carries implications for practitioners. From a pedagogical perspective, findings of this study can be considered as needs analysis that guide EFL syllabus designers to reflect on the learners' communicative purposes and needs. Learners of this investigation disclosed their specific need for pragmatic instruction which enables them to become more effective communicators in the TL interactions. This echoes their positive attitude towards learning the TL cultural features from affective, cognitive and behavioral perspective. L2 classroom research attests that positive attitude and motivation are key elements to successful attainment of L2. Therefore, it is widely recommended that EFL language teachers and practitioners should cater for their learners' needs by developing appropriate pragmatic-oriented instructional approach. Also, while they are developing these pragmatics-driven materials, they should leave a room for learners' subjectivity and do not oblige them to compromise their L1 cultural identity. Additionally, teachers as well as syllabus developers could use the learners' voices that come out from journals or diaries and tell about their language learning needs, difficulties, fears, etc. to give strong support to these learners. They are also invited to understand their learners' inner conflicts and accommodate their teaching practices accordingly.

In order to develop the EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence, teachers should:

- Teach learners to focus on observation rather than inference and generalizations, and encourage them to use descriptive language rather than evaluative language when criticizing peers

- Teach learners to use complete criticisms that include stimulus, rationale, consequences, as well as desired change, and show them how to describe these components explicitly or state them in an easily inferable way
- Use awareness-raising activities that focus on constructive criticisms' sociopragmatic aspects implied in authentic/non-authentic conversations or texts and ask learners questions about the participants, their relationship, social statuses, etc.
- Direct learners' attention towards the pragmalinguistic forms and strategies in relation to those sociopragmatic values and norms
- Engage learners in comparisons between constructive criticism situations that involve different social and contextual factors
- Teach learners how to choose pragmalinguistic forms according to sociopragmatic factors
- Present a taxonomy of criticism strategies to learners and explain the graduation of all the linguistic formulae on the basis of politeness criteria
- Teach learners how to use different internal and external as well as lexical and syntactic mitigators to soften constructive peer criticisms
- Tell learners about the similarities and differences between their L1 cultural norms and those of the target culture in relation to the realization of constructive criticisms
- Give learners explicit corrective feedback in the form of comments on infelicitous constructive peer criticisms
- Test and consolidate learners understanding of the correct use of the speech act of constructive criticism via pragmatic comprehension (pragmatic judgement activities such as multiple-choice activities) as well as pragmatic production activities

With regard to input, it would be more effective to seek authentic input and naturally-induced data to arrive at appropriate TL linguistic forms, sociopragmatic variables, pragmatic meanings and rules. However, authentic input should not be used randomly. As Schumman (1997) claims, there is a number of elements that determines to what extent we engage with input and these are: novelty, pleasantness, goal, and need. The issue of authentic materials selection should be raised here. Because this sort of materials necessitates knowledge of sociocultural background in order to be well

understood, teachers should select those which fit their learners in terms of needs and interest.

The value of the teacher-researcher in teaching constructive peer criticisms in EFL contexts is another major teaching implication that could be realized from the present findings. Here, the teacher has a double role as an educational practitioner and a researcher. According to Cohen (2012: 33), it is widely believed that there is “a noticeable gap between what research in pragmatics has found and how language is generally taught today”. Therefore, it is expected that the teacher-researcher should proceed and work on incorporating pragmatic instruction efficiently in curricula using authentic, audio-visual input and naturally-induced resources. However, if the FL teachers are NNSs of the TL, it is recommended that these teachers should have pragmatics as part of their coursework and teacher development programs to avoid inadvertently transmitting their erroneous pragmatic intuitions to their learners. If they are to adopt pragmatic-focused instruction, teachers and practitioners should be made aware of the TL pragmatics because they are part of the cyclic process that facilitates the learners’ pragmatic development. They should be sensitized to where they stand on their pragmatics awareness of the NSs’ benchmark norms. Moreover, universities and institutions should plan specific training to enable teachers overcome obstacles (both pedagogical and technical in case they use information and communications technology) and acquire better pedagogical skills.

All in all, particularly in Algeria, where English is taught as a FL, teachers and practitioners should embrace a pragmatically-oriented approach to language pedagogy. EFL language teachers and practitioners are advised to work with the recommendations of the present study to help learners become competent users of the TL.

### **3 Limitations, delimitations, and Suggestions for Further Research**

The action research reported in the present thesis provides evidence for the effectiveness of speech-act instruction in the EFL context. However, it suffers from some limitations that need to be addressed in future research. To start with, in terms of the research design, the participants’ profile was restricted to a sample of Algerian English major undergraduate learners of the same age group in an EFL setting. Thus, the findings may not be generalizable to other learner groups and contexts. Recent meta-

analyses have recommended broadening the scope of L1 groups of different proficiency levels and ages, and studying a range of FLs to avoid the high concentration of studies employing university-level participants studying English as L2 (Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Taguchi, 2015).

Moreover, gender ratio was not controlled as the present research design used intact groups. The case of gender has always been claimed to affect learners' motivation and involvement (Holmes, 1988; Wolfson, 1989b). Hence, we would like to know whether either just female or male participants yield different results. In addition to gender, participants' linguistic proficiency level can be considered an extraneous modifying variable that might have a substantial influence on the results of the study. Carefully planned interventional studies could address these variables' effect(s) on the effectiveness of speech-act instruction.

Another issue which is related to learners is their subjectivity in TL pragmatics learning and the extent to which this might influence their responsiveness to instruction. Previous research has shown that EFL learners may not aim to achieve NSs' pragmatic competence but may only want to be competent L2 users while maintaining their cultural identity (e.g. Hinkel, 1996; Siegal, 1996). In other words, TL may only serve as a tool for communication rather than a language for identification as L1 (House, 2003). Therefore, while EFL learners might be very responsive to teacher or peer correction of pragmalinguistic errors (i.e. incorrect usage of linguistic structures), they might be less so to correction of sociopragmatic choices (e.g. choices of realization strategies and the extent to which they wish to modify the illocutionary force of their speech acts) because these are closely related to issues of cultural identity (Thomas, 1983). Unfortunately, the extent to which learners' subjectivity may affect their receptivity to pragmatic instruction remains unexplored in the current study but it obviously deserves attention in future research.

Additionally, the present study has a limitation in the number of subjects in the groups. While the experimental group had 52 learners, the control group had only 48 ones. Even though these numbers were statistically appropriate, each group should have ideally had the same number of learners to allow for efficient statistical analysis and more reliable results. Having equal number of subjects in each group was impossible because of institutional constraints.



Another limitation concerns data collection instruments, particularly the ODCT. Though this instrument previously stood reliability tests, employing it for data collection, rather than other instruments such as RPs and interviews, might pose some limitations. Although the DCT helps gather large amounts of data with ease of administration and straightforwardness of applying coding taxonomies on these data, the fact that it cannot be equated to natural speech cannot be denied (Tran, 2004; Beebe & Cummings, 1996). Notwithstanding, a delimitation to this methodological shortcoming is that: First, this study applied a well-established coding manual (Nguyen, 2003). Second, it also used data triangulation by opting for a naturalized task—the OPFT—and the learners' WSRs. These two data-gathering tools allowed to validate the findings of the ODCT. Third, the situations employed in the ODCT were very similar to the real-life academic situations that EFL learners often face.

Still with regard to the ODCT, another limitation concerns the limited number of hypothetical situations which might not be representative of all possible situations in real-life academic constructive criticism contexts. The number of the situations was limited because the learners' fatigue and boredom were taken into consideration. Furthermore, the practice effect was not perfectly well-managed though the order of the situations in the ODCT was shuffled and slight modifications in wording were done in order to minimize that undesirable effect. To avoid all these methodological challenges, further research on data collection tools that enable elicit more spontaneous pragmatic data is needed.

Another limitation concerns the fact that the data gathering tools of the present study did not elicit any interactional data. If RPs, for example, in which one learner criticizes and the other one responds to criticism were used and their data were analyzed by means of conversational analysis, pragmatic development of interactional competence, especially turn-taking protocols could have been examined too. Moreover, the present study's results would be ascertained if thinking-aloud protocols or retrospective interviews were used to show how and why learners made a particular pragmatic choice. This type of methods does not allow for knowing the participants' decision-making only but other issues too such as utterance planning, attention focus and language of thinking (Tateyama, 2001).

Limitations did not touch data gathering tools only but data analysis too. To determine the effectiveness of instruction on speech-act competence, previous research compared NNSs' data to NSs'. NSs' data have always been used as a means to establish the general range of acceptable discourse features for specific tasks (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). In other words, they have been the empirical basis on which researchers make tentative judgements of the appropriateness of specific aspects in the NNSs' realizations of certain speech acts. In the present study, however; for merely practical reasons (The difficulty of administering the OPFT and the ODCT for NSs and having this baseline data compared with the second-year English major students' data), frequencies and percentages of constructive criticisms' semantic formulas and modifiers before and after instruction were compared instead.

Last but not least, this study only captured pragmatic development of constructive criticism speech act over a short period of time. Future research can measure maintenance of instructed pragmatic input over an extended period of time. Future studies can be carried out where participants are monitored and tested more frequently over a longer period. Furthermore, a longitudinal study might identify whether or not there is a turning point at which instructional benefits decrease. Further, correlations between length of instructional periods and how long pragmatic knowledge is recalled and pragmatic awareness is maintained have yet to be addressed. This can be done by administering multiple delayed tests that provide qualitative or quantitative information on developmental transitions beyond the immediate post-experimental observation.

In conclusion, despite all the limitations outlined above, it is hoped that the present study contributes to the growing body of research dealing with the effect of pragmatic instruction on developing EFL learners' speech-act production.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interventional ILP Studies

<b>Author</b>	<b>Theory</b>	<b>Instructional Targets</b>	<b>Instructional Methods</b>	<b>Research Design</b>
House & Kasper, 1981	grammar teaching	discourse markers, strategies	explicit implicit	pretest-posttest, L2 baseline
Wildner-Bassett 1984, 1986	pedagogy	pragmatic routines	eclectic suggestopedia	pretest-posttest, control
Billmyer, 1990a, 1990b	pedagogy	compliments	+/-instruction	pretest-posttest, control, L2 baseline
Olshtain & Cohen, 1990	pedagogy	apologies	teachability	pretest-posttest, L2 baseline
King & Silver, 1993	pedagogy	refusals	explicit	pretest-posttest
Lyster, 1994	cognitive theory	sociostylistic variation	+/- instruction	pre-post-delayed test, control, classroom observation
Wildner-Bassett, 1994	cognitive theory	pragmatic routines strategies	teachability	one group, pretest-posttest,
Bouton, 1994	Consciousness-raising	implicature	+/- instruction	pretest-posttest, control,
Kubota,	Consciousness-		rule	pretest-

1995	raising	implicature	explanation	posttest, delayed posttest, control
House, 1996	metapragmatic instruction	pragmatic fluency	explicit implicit	pre-interim posttest, classroom observation, interviews
Morrow, 1995	metapragmatic instruction	complaints, refusals	teachability/ explicit	pretest- posttest, delayed posttest, L2 baseline
Tateyama et al., 1997	metapragmatic instruction	pragmatic routines	explicit implicit	posttest
Fukuya, 1998	metapragmatic instruction	downgraders (requests)	consciousness- raising	one group, pretest posttest
Fukuya et al., 1998	metapragmatic instruction	requests	focus on form focus on forms	pretest- posttest, control,
Pearson, 1998	metapragmatic instruction	thanks, apologies, commands, requests	metapragmatic discussion vs. additional input	pretest- posttest, delayed posttest,
Fukuya & Clark, 2001	noticing hypothesis	mitigators (requests)	input enhancement, explicit	posttest, control
Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001	noticing hypothesis	interactional norm	four-phase instructional treatment	pretest- posttest, delayed posttest

Rose & Ng, 2001	noticing hypothesis	English compliments and compliment responses	inductive deductive	pretest-posttest, control
Takahashi, 2001	noticing hypothesis	English request	degree of input enhancement	pretest-posttest
Tateyama, 2001	noticing hypothesis	gratitude, apologies	explicit implicit	posttest
Yoshimi, 2001	noticing hypothesis	discourse markers	explicit	pretest-posttest, control
Kondo, 2001	noticing hypothesis	refusal	explicit implicit	pretest-posttest
Fukuyu & Zhang, 2002	recast	request	implicit	recast group, control group, pretest-posttest
Silva, 2003	task-based noticing hypothesis	refusal	explicit	implicit group, control group, pretest-posttest
Rueda, 2004	noticing hypothesis	requests, apologies, compliments	+/- pragmatics-oriented instruction	pretest-posttest, delayed posttest
Alcon, 2005	noticing hypothesis	requests	explicit implicit	pretest-posttest, control
Martinez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005	focus on form	suggestions downgraders	explicit implicit	pretest-posttest, control
Koike & Pearson,	noticing hypothesis	suggestion and suggestion	explicit implicit	pretest-posttest,

2005	focus on form	response		delayed posttest
Takshashi, 2005	noticing hypothesis	requests	two instructional conditions	pretest-posttest
Jernigan, 2007	focus on form	pragmalinguistic forms	+/- Output	pretest-posttest
Liu, 2007	noticing hypothesis	requests	Three instructional conditions	pretest-posttest
Bardovi- Harlig, Mossman & Vellenga, 2015	noticing hypothesis	academic routines	+/- instruction	pretest-posttest
El Shazly, 2017	noticing hypothesis	requests	+/- instruction	pretest-posttest

## Appendix B: Students' Preliminary Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is part of a research study that attempts to pinpoint the EFL learners' perceptions of the importance of oral constructive peer criticism and their problems when providing it. As there is no right or wrong answer, please answer all the questions as honestly as you can. The data you provide in this questionnaire will be handled in an anonymous basis and will be used for research purposes only. Your cooperation in this regard is highly valued and appreciated.

Please tick the answer you think the most appropriate, or provide relevant information in the provided space.

### Section One: Students' General Information

**1. Gender:**  Male  Female

**2. Age: Is your age?**

- Between [18-21] years old  Between [26-29] years old  
 Between [22-25] years old  30 years old or above

**3. What is your nationality?**

- Algerian  
 Other (Specify, please. ....)

**4. What is your mother tongue? In other words, what is the language that you have been exposed to from birth?**

- Arabic  
 Chaoui  
 Kabyle  
 French  
 Other (Specify, please. ....)

**5. Without counting the present academic year, how long on average have you been learning English?**

.....

**6. Have you been to English-speaking countries (e.g. the UK, America, or Canada)?**

- Never



Yes (If you choose *yes*, do question 7 directly).

7. How long have you stayed there? And why did you go there?

.....  
.....  
.....

8. Have you received any training, be it formal or informal, on how to criticize peers negatively in English, Arabic, French, etc?

Yes (If you choose *yes*, do question 9 directly).

No

9. Who instructed you? When did this take place and where? What did you learn in this training briefly?

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**Section Two: Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of Constructive Peer Criticism and its Face-threatening Nature**

10. Please read the following statements carefully and say to what extent you agree/disagree with them.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. It is helpful to get negative feedback from peers.					
2. The negative feedback I get from my peers is often useless and wrong.					
3. Negative peer feedback allows me to view learning critically and constructively.					
4. It is more helpful to receive negative feedback only from the teacher.					

**11.** Please read the following statements carefully and say to what extent you agree/disagree with them.

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
1. The reason behind the learners' reluctance of providing oral negative peer feedback is not being able to detect errors in their peers' performances.					
2. The reason behind the learners' reluctance of providing oral negative peer feedback is not being able to say it in a polite (appropriate) way.					
3. Providing negative peer feedback in the form of written comments is less embarrassing than face-to-face comments.					
4. Unsoftened negative feedback from the teacher is not as hurting as that from peers because of the teacher's authority.					
5. Constructive peer criticism could be more honest if it was anonymous.					
6. Direct negative oral peer feedback can be destructive and counterproductive.					
7. The degree of politeness and directness in negative peer feedback is not an issue because this feedback happens in an academic context.					
8. I would have provided more constructive peer criticism if I had been able to deliver it politely and guaranteed that it does not cause embarrassment or discomfort to my peers.					

**Section Three: Students' Difficulties when Providing Constructive Peer Criticism**

**12. A.** How often do you provide constructive peer criticism?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

**B.** If your answer is *sometimes*, *rarely* or *never*, is it because...? You can choose more than one option.

- a. You do not like to participate in the classroom.
- b. Your English is poor.
- c. You are afraid of hurting your peers' feelings.
- d. You are afraid of speaking in public.
- e. You cannot find negative points in your peers' performances so you do not have what to say.
- f. You feel ill at ease when you criticize peers.
- g. Other (Please specify: .....)

**13.** Tick *yes* or *no*.

Statements	Yes	No
1. I am not able to think critically about my peers' performances.		
2. I face problems in providing negative peer evaluation in correct English including vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.		
3. I am not able to express my critical feedback in a way that my peers can easily understand that my intention is to convey negative constructive criticism and not something else such as praising them.		
4. I cannot detect mistakes in my peers' performances.		
5. I face problems in deciding on the aspects of peers' performances I should comment on negatively.		
6. I cannot convey my constructive criticism in a relatively softened way that is likely to make it less embarrassing for my peers.		
7. I face problems in finding appropriate strategies to formulate my critical feedback in the form of negative comments.		
8. My English is not good enough to accomplish negative peer		



## Appendix C: Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear colleagues,

This questionnaire is part of a research study that attempts to pinpoint second year Oral Expression teachers' perceptions of the effect of pragmatic instruction on EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence. As there is no right or wrong answer, please answer all the questions as honestly as you can. The data you provide in this questionnaire will be handled in an anonymous basis and will be used for research purposes only. Your cooperation in this regard is highly valued and appreciated.

Please tick the answer you think the most appropriate, or provide relevant information in the provided space.

### Section One: Teachers' General Information

1. Including this year, how many years have you been teaching at the university?

Less than 5 years

5 to 9 years

10 to 15 years

More than 15 years

2. Including this year, how many years have you been teaching Oral Expression:

Less than 5 years

5 to 9 years

10 to 15 years

More than 15 years

3. Did you study Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Intercultural Communication/Interactions, Sociolinguistics, Ethnography of Communication or any other courses that deal with language in use when you were a student?

Yes

No

4. Did you study for your degree(s) overseas or have you had any overseas English learning experience?

Yes, which country / countries? .....  No

### Section Two: Teaching Oral Expression and Constructive Criticism Speech Act

5. According to you, what should be the teacher's objective(s) in the Oral Expression class?

Enhancing learners' accuracy and fluency

Enabling learners to use English in real life situations

Other (Please, specify.....)

6. Is the time allocated for this course in your department sufficient for achieving this objective?

- Yes
- No

7. Is second year Oral Expression program?

- An official inflexible program (You cannot modify its objectives and content.)
- An official flexible program (You can modify its objectives and content.)
- A program elaborated by you

8. A. Is developing your learners' pragmatic competence one of your teaching goals?

- Yes
- No

B. If your answer is *no*, say what reason(s) excluded developing learners' pragmatic competence from your teaching goals. You can more than one choice.

- You lack training of how to teach Oral Expression integrating pragmatic aspects in it.
- You think that integrating some pragmatic aspects is not important.
- You think that students' level does not allow them to grasp pragmatic aspects.
- You do not have enough time to teach pragmatics.
- You have limited knowledge of pragmatics and TL culture.
- You are confused which aspects of pragmatics to cover.

9. A. How often do you ask your learners to criticize their peers constructively?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Occasionally
- Never

B. If you answered *sometimes*, *occasionally* or *never*, please say why.

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**10. A.** Please read the following statements carefully and say to what extent you agree/disagree with them.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
<b>1.</b> I do not find constructive peer criticism to be useful at all.					
<b>2.</b> Constructive criticism from peers is not as efficient as that from peers.					
<b>3.</b> Constructive peer criticism engages learners in the highest level of learning: asking them to teach.					
<b>4.</b> Constructive peer criticism builds learners' independence and develops their self-advocacy.					
<b>5.</b> Because feedback is a reciprocal process and only a truly self-aware student can effectively evaluate peers and provide constructive peer criticism, the relationship between the giver and the receiver develops both students as learners					

**B.** Please add your additional comment on any statement in the above table if you have any.

Additional comment concerning statement #\_\_:

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Additional comment concerning statement #\_\_:

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Additional comment concerning statement #\_\_:

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**Section Three: Students' Constructive Peer Criticisms**

**11.** If your answer to Question 9 is anything except *never*, how do your learners look like when they give constructive criticism to peers?

- At ease
- Ill at ease
- I did not notice

**12.** If your answer to Question 11 is *at ease* or *I did not notice*, go directly to the next question. If your answer is *ill at ease*, is it, in your opinion, because of? (You can choose more than one answer)

- Low linguistic proficiency
- Fear of public speaking
- Fear of hurting peers' feelings
- Having nothing to say
- Other (Please, specify.....)

**13. A.** When receiving constructive peer criticism, in your opinion, which one is easier for learners to handle?

- Teacher's constructive criticism
- Peers' constructive criticism

**B.** Why?

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**14.** What are the most common errors that your learners tend to make when providing constructive peer criticisms?

Grammaticality (something uncorrectable in terms of syntactical, semantic and phonological rules)

Acceptability (A well-formed utterance may still be regarded unacceptable when it does not fit into the context of the wider linguistic unit or fails to fulfil the speaker's intention)

Correctness (The difference between what a native speaker of L2 would say instinctively)

Infelicity (An inappropriate speech act from a sociolinguistic perspective)

**15.** The following table contains criteria of pragmatically appropriate and linguistically accurate constructive peer criticisms as perceived by the researcher. Say whether or not they are generally obeyed in your learners' criticisms by ticking *yes* or *no*?

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>1.</b> Stating the problematic behavior in peers' performances (Stimulus)		
<b>2.</b> Providing the justification (Explanation of judgement i.e. saying why the stimulus is a problem)		
<b>3.</b> Mentioning the consequences that may result from the problematic behavior/action		
<b>4.</b> Suggesting the desired change(s)		
<b>5.</b> Using indirectness when providing peer criticism		
<b>6.</b> Stating that criticism is done for the peer's betterment of future action		
<b>7.</b> Softening the criticism through mitigators		
<b>8.</b> Showing awareness of the peer's perspective on the situation and his probable feelings, (e.g. "I realize that you..., but...")		

9. Using depersonalize statements (e.g. “Do not take it <b>personally</b> ...”, “It’s not because <b>you</b> said/did...”)		
10. Attributing the speaker’s disapproval of the peer’s problematic action to its bad consequences <b>only</b>		
11. Doing errors of grammar, pronunciation or lexis that rarely detract from the speaker’s comprehensibility		
12. Choosing appropriate words, using relevant linguistic structures (correct pragmalinguistic forms and accurate modifiers), and uttering the speech act in correct English		

16. How do you evaluate your learners’ constructive peer criticisms as far as appropriateness is concerned?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Low

**Section Four: Pragmatic Instruction and Students’ Constructive Peer Criticism Competence**

17. According to you, an EFL learner is pragmatically competent if:

- S/he masters the linguistic aspects of the target language
- S/he is aware of what is socioculturally appropriate in the target language community

18. A. In the Algerian EFL context, do you think that EFL learners’ pragmatic competence?

- Develops naturally
- Needs to be formally taught

B. Justify your answer please.

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**19. A.** To what extent do you agree with the statement which says that “Because pragmatic knowledge of EFL learners (nonnative speakers) can be quite different from that of native speakers and since part of pragmatic variability emerges in the production of speech acts, they need to be instructed in order for their constructive peer criticisms to be pragmatically appropriate”?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**B.** In the space provided below, you can comment on the previous statement or justify your choice.

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**20.** Please tell to what extent you think the following classroom practices are effective in improving EFL learners’ constructive peer criticism competence.

1 = Not at all effective, 2 = Slightly effective, 3 = Moderately effective, 4 = Very effective and 5 = Extremely effective

<b>Classroom Practices</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.</b> Teaching learners to focus on observation rather than inference and generalizations when criticizing peers					
<b>2.</b> Encouraging learners to use descriptive language rather than evaluative language when criticizing peers					
<b>3.</b> Teaching learners to use complete criticisms that include the four major components of constructive criticisms (stimulus, rationale, consequences, and desired change)					
<b>4.</b> Teaching learners to describe those components					

explicitly or state them in an easily inferable way					
<b>5.</b> Presenting authentic input to learners in which the speech act of criticizing is used in natural settings					
<b>6.</b> Introducing some awareness-raising activities that focus on the sociopragmatic aspects implied in authentic/non-authentic conversations or texts by asking questions about the participants, their relationship, social statuses, etc.					
<b>7.</b> Directing learners' attention towards the pragmlinguistic aspects involved when making criticisms in those conversations or texts					
<b>8.</b> Asking learners to compare between criticism situations of different social and contextual factors					
<b>9.</b> Showing learners how to choose pragmlinguistic forms according to sociopragmatic factors					
<b>10.</b> Explaining to learners how culture can be a factor responsible for the speakers' varying assessments of the contextual variables (e.g. power, social distance and degree of imposition) resulting in differences in the selection of (in)appropriate criticism strategies					
<b>11.</b> Telling learners about the commonalities and differences between their own cultural norms and those of the target culture as far as the speech act of criticizing is concerned					
<b>12.</b> Presenting a taxonomy to learners and explaining to them the graduation of all the linguistic formulae for criticizing on the basis of politeness criteria					
<b>13.</b> Showing learners the importance of using different mitigators to soften the face-threatening nature of this speech act.					
<b>14.</b> Giving learners explicit corrective feedback in the form of comments on infelicitous realizations of criticism speech act					

15. Asking learners to do pragmatic comprehension or judgement activities to test their understanding of the correct use of the speech act of criticizing					
16. Asking learners to do pragmatic production activities to test their understanding of the correct use of the speech act of criticizing					

21. A. According to you, is it better to teach the speech act of criticizing?

- Explicitly
- Implicitly

B. Justify your answer, please.

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22. In your opinion, what role do you attribute to authentic input in enhancing EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence?

- Unimportant
- Somewhat important
- Quite important
- Very important
- Extremely important

23. What type of input do you think can be more effective in enhancing EFL learners' constructive peer criticism competence?

- Authentic
- Non-authentic
- Equally effective

24. In your opinion, how could constructive criticism speech act be effectively taught?

- Through mere exposure to authentic materials reflecting the speech act in focus

- Through teacher's talk
- Through explicit metapragmatic explanation about pragmalinguistic forms
- Through awareness raising activities that help learners learn appropriateness

**25.** Please feel free to add any further comments concerning “The Effect of Pragmatic Instruction on EFL Learners’ Constructive Peer Criticism Competence”.

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Thank you very much for your cooperation.

## **Appendix D: Oral Presentations' Evaluation Criteria**

**1. Subject.** Was the presentation informative? Did it have a clear focus? Was it well researched?

**2. Organization/Clarity.** Was it easy to follow? Was there a clear introduction and conclusion?

**3. Preparation.** Had the speaker rehearsed? Was s/he in control of the sequence, pacing and flow of the presentation? Did s/he make effective use of notes, without relying on them too heavily?

**4. Sensitivity to audience.** Did the speaker maintain eye contact with all members of the class? Did s/he give you time to take notes as needed? Did s/he repeat the main ideas more than once? Did s/he make effective use of pauses, gestures, change in pace and pitch?

**5. Visual aids.** Did the speaker make effective use of handouts, overheads and/or the blackboard? Were overheads or board writing large enough to see easily?

(Adapted from: Goring, 2003)

## Appendix E: ODCCT Pretest

Imagine that you are in the Oral Expression class. Your classmate has just done an oral presentation. S/he and your teacher ask you to give feedback on it. In reference to this imaginary presentation that your classmate has just done, what would you say in the following hypothetical situations?

### Situation 1:

You think that your classmate's topic was not well focused and/or researched.

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### Situation 2:

You think that your classmate wandered off the topic, his/her ideas were not properly linked, his/her presentation was not organized and hard to follow, his/her delivery was not fluent and expressive, or s/he did not speak clearly.

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### Situation 3:

You think that your classmate was not well prepared, was not in control of the sequence, pacing and flow of the presentation, and/or s/he relied heavily on notes.

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### Situation 4:

You think that your classmate's ideas were superficial, unclear, irrelevant and not well supported by evidence and examples.



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**Situation 5:**

You think that your classmate's English is poor in terms of vocabulary, grammar, etc.

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## **Appendix F: Instructional Handouts and Worksheets (Sample)**

### **Worksheet 1: Reflecting on Giving or Receiving Constructive Peer Criticism**

Work with your group to answer the following questions. Write down your answers.

Instruction: Reflect on your own experience of giving or receiving constructive peer criticism in the EFL classroom. Specifically, explain:

1. How often do you offer or receive constructive peer criticism in your EFL classroom?
2. When is constructive peer criticism necessary? In other words, what situations require criticizing peers constructively?
3. Do you think that it is useful? Justify your answer please?
3. What are the difficulties that you have faced when providing constructive peer criticism?

### **Worksheet 2: Constructive vs. unconstructive peer criticism**

Work with your group to answer the following questions. Write down your answers.

Specifically, explain:

1. According to you, what is the purpose of criticizing peers' work in the EFL classroom?
2. What are the characteristics of constructive peer feedback? In other words, what should be done and what should be avoided when criticizing peers' work?

## **Handout 1: Characteristics of constructive peer criticism**

Constructive peer criticism is an essential element in any EFL classroom. Your **objective** in giving negative feedback is to provide guidance to your peers by supplying information in a useful manner to guide them back on track toward successful performance.

### **Some situations which require giving constructive peer feedback include:**

- Ongoing performance discussions
- Providing specific performance pointers
- Giving corrective guidance

### **Some clues that constructive peer feedback is needed are when:**

- The teacher or the presenter asks for your opinion about the performance
- Errors occur again and again
- A peer's performance does not meet expectations
- A peer's performance habits disturb you

### **Tips to make peer criticism constructive**

Part of being a good critic is knowing what feedback to give. The trick is learning how to give it **constructively** so that it is a tool that is used to build things up, not break them down. It lets your peers know that you are on their side.

**1.** If you cannot think of a **constructive purpose** for criticizing your peer, do not criticize him/her at all.

#### **2. Focus on the action rather than the person.**

Refer to what your peer does rather than him/her. To focus on the behavior, use adverbs, which describe action, rather than adjectives, which describe qualities. For example: "You talked considerably during the staff meeting, which prevented me from getting to some of the main points," rather than "You talk too much."

#### **3. Focus on description rather than judgement.**

Describing behavior is a way of reporting what has occurred, while judging

behavior is an evaluation of what has occurred in terms of "right or wrong", or "good or bad". By avoiding evaluative language, you reduce the need for your peer to respond defensively.

For example: "You demonstrated a low degree of confidence when you answered the classmates' questions about the difference between smartness and intelligence." rather than "Your self-confidence is low."

#### **4. Focus on observation rather than inference and generalization.**

Observations refer to what you can see or hear about an individual's behavior, while inferences refer to the assumptions and interpretations you make from what you have seen or heard. Focus on what your peer actually did and do not generalize. For example: "When you answered Maria's question, I could not see how the answer relates to the question." rather than describe what you assume to be the person's motivation, "I suppose you answer all questions that way. You say anything for the sake of not keeping silent".

#### **5. Provide a balance of positive and negative feedback.**

If you consistently give only positive or negative feedback, peers will distrust the feedback and it will become useless.

#### **6. Be aware of feedback overload.**

Select two or three important points you want to make and offer feedback about those points. If you overload your peer with feedback, she or he may become confused about what needs to be improved or changed.

## **Handout 2: Dos and Don'ts when Providing and Receiving constructive peer feedback**

It is fact that all of us experience negative criticism either as someone who receives criticism or as someone who has to constructively criticize others. We can truly use the golden rule as our guiding principle to giving and receiving peer criticism: Treat peers as you want to be treated. If you use anger or strong emotions to deal with negative criticism, emotions will get you nowhere. Remember the **ABCs** of constructive peer criticism: **A**lways **B**e **C**ourteous. Below are some dos

and don'ts that might guide you when providing or receiving constructive peer criticism.

### **DOs of Giving and Receiving Criticism**

- Give negative feedback with sensitivity for the other person's feelings.
- Give negative feedback in person, directly to the person at issue.
- Give negative feedback discretely so the receiver is not embarrassed.
- Give negative feedback based on facts, not opinion or feelings.
- Make certain your negative feedback is honest and truthful with the intention of helping.
- Accept the feedback by listening to what the other person is saying.
- Learn from what you are hearing, no matter how painful it is.
- Change your behaviors that generated the negative feedback.
- Let the speaker finish talking before you try to defend yourself.
- Take the feedback with class and grace.
- Keep cool, no matter how rude the speaker might be.
- Try to understand why the speaker is upset with your behavior.
- Take the point of view of the person who is upset with you or your behavior.
- Respond by paraphrasing what you heard the speaker say so he/she knows you got the message.
- Sincerely ask the person to give you specific examples of what you need to change.

### **DON'Ts of Giving and Receiving Criticism**

#### **DON'T...**

- Use criticism to hurt someone's feelings.
- Give negative feedback because you are in a bad mood and want to hurt someone else.
- Be rude or act in a tough way when giving negative feedback.
- Argue with the person who is giving you negative feedback.
- Argue with the person to whom you are giving negative feedback.

- Minimize what the other person is saying to you.
- Tune the speaker out.
- Think the entire conversation is about you.
- Lose your temper.
- Swear.
- Fight.
- Cry.
- Yell or scream.
- Interrupt the speaker just so you can defend yourself.
- Repeat the behavior that prompted the negative feedback.
- Miss this as a chance to learn something about your performance.

### **Worksheet 3: Reflecting on Giving constructive criticism in the EFL classroom**

Work with your group to answer the questions below.

Recall your experience of giving or receiving constructive peer critical feedback in the EFL classroom. If you have never experienced this in an English learning context, use your experience in the Arabic or French class. Specifically, explain:

1. What are some typical ways (strategies, clauses, phrases, etc.) in which you have provided constructive peer criticism? Illustrate with examples please.
2. What are the factors that might influence the choice of these strategies?

### **Handout 3: An Introduction to Speech Acts**

#### **1. What are Speech Acts?**

A speech act is an utterance that serves some function in communication. It might contain just one word, as in “Sorry!” to perform an apology, or several words or sentences: “I’m sorry I forgot your birthday. It just slipped my mind.” Speech acts

include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language, but also knowledge about how to use that language appropriately in a given situation within that culture. Speech acts are often difficult to perform in a foreign language because they are so closely tied to the culture. An utterance that works in English may not convey the same meaning when translated into the second language. When performing speech acts, there are two key questions that the speaker must attempt to understand and answer.

1. Who is the person I am addressing? That is, what is the age, social class/status, familiarity, role being played in this situation, and gender of the person to whom I am talking?

2. What is the context? That is, where are we (at work, school, home, in public), who is present (family, friends, acquaintances, strangers), and what are we doing (eating, socializing, working, casual or formal)?

In other words, a speech act has to be appropriately realized according to a given context. The truth is that in dealing with language in a social context, there is always variation, even among natives – given their personality, their level of schooling, their cultural background, and so forth.

For this reason, many times there is no one best way to say something. Rather, there are preferred approaches.

## **2. The Interactive Nature of Speech Acts**

One of the truly attractive features of speech act work is that it calls for looking at language in context. Sometimes in language class, there is a tendency to study and to learn language out of context or at least in a non-interactive way. In order to apologize or complain, it implies that there is someone else who is being apologized or complained to and this person's response is not necessarily predictable. It is not necessarily clear just where the interaction will lead. So in order for you to fine-tune your ability to perform speech acts, you need partners and practice.

## **3. Why Should Speech Acts be Taught?**

Learners of all languages tend to have difficulty understanding the intended meaning communicated by a speech act, or producing a speech act using appropriate language and manner in the language being learned. Research has found that classroom instruction in speech acts can help learners improve their performance of

speech acts and thus their interactions with native speakers.

Speech acts have been taught in some second language (L2) classrooms, yet most materials have been written based on the intuition of the textbook writers. There seems to exist a shared belief that native English speakers just know intuitively how to interact in their language and should be able to explain the social use of the language to the learners. However, this commonly shared belief is not necessarily true; in fact, a native speaker's intuition is sometimes unreliable. For example, a textbook writer for English as a Second Language (ESL) might have a teenager greeting his friend at the airport with, "Hello, Justin. How was the flight? I see you got a new bag," when he might actually say something like, "Hey, man — what's happening? I like your bag. It's awesome!" Often the use of the language is unconscious and speakers of the language may be able to explain what one "should say", but are unlikely to have an accurate, comprehensive, or objective picture of how people actually interact. For example, in ESL textbooks, speakers typically accept a compliment modestly and with grace:

**A:** What a beautiful dress!

**B:** Thank you. I'm glad you like it.

However, in real life, when someone compliments us, we may reply:

**A:** That's a cute dress you're wearing.

**B:** Really? This old rag? I got it at the Salvation Army for \$2.00!

or

**B:** You're the third person today who's complimented me on it. I must have done something right!

Research has shown that native speakers of American English accept a compliment only about one third of the time, which would suggest that what ESL learners are learning from textbooks may be grammatically correct, but inauthentic in terms of real language and real interactions with native speakers.

#### **4. Indirect speech acts**

Searle described, "In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer" (Searle, 1969:31). From



this description, we can understand that an indirect utterance has two illocutionary acts, and the interpretation of indirect speech acts requires mutually shared background information about the conversation as well as hearers' rationality and linguistic convention. Moreover, Searle introduced the notions of "primary" and "secondary" illocutionary acts. The primary illocutionary act is the indirect one. It is not literally performed. The secondary illocutionary act is the direct one. It is performed in the literal utterance of the sentence (Searle, 1979). We can explain these two terminologies with the following example:

(1) Speaker X: "Let's go to concert tonight."

(2) Speaker Y: "I have to take care of my little brother."

Here, the primary illocutionary act is Y's rejection of X's suggestion, and the secondary illocutionary act is Y's statement that she has to take care of her little brother. By dividing the illocutionary act into two subparts, Searle explained that we can understand two meanings from the same utterance all the while knowing which is the correct meaning to respond to.

## **5. Felicity conditions**

We cannot turn out of the topic of speech acts and Indirect Speech Act Theory without looking at felicity conditions. These are conditions necessary for the success or achievement of a performative. They take their name from a Latin root—"felix" or "happy". Searle refined Austin's set of felicity conditions, calling the fulfillment condition "essential condition" and introducing a "propositional content condition", which partially substitutes the executive condition. The propositional content condition focuses only upon the textual content. The executive/preparatory conditions focus upon the background circumstances. The sincerity condition focuses upon the speaker's psychological state. Finally, the fulfilment/essential condition focuses upon the illocutionary point (Haverkate, 1990).

As for felicity conditions, suppose I am kidding with some friends and say, "Now, I pronounce you husband and wife." In fact, I have not married them because my speech act is infelicitous. Also, suppose I am in a play and say the line, "I promise to kill X". I have not, in fact, promised to kill anyone. The first speech act fails because, among other things, I must have a certain institutional authority for my words to have the appropriate illocutionary force. Part of the felicity conditions for marrying people concerns the institutional position of the speaker. As for the second one, it fails because the words are

uttered in a context where they are not used by the speaker, but in effect quoted from a text.

### **6. The felicity conditions of the speech act of criticizing**

Tracy, Van Dusen and Robinson (1987: 56) define criticism as the act of “finding fault” which involves giving “a negative evaluation of a person or an act for which he or she is deemed responsible”. Nguyen (2005: 7) defines criticizing as “an illocutionary act whose illocutionary point is to give negative evaluation of the hearer’s (H) actions, choice, words, and products for which he or she may be held responsible”. This act is performed in the hope of influencing H’s future actions for H’s betterment as viewed by the speaker (S) or to communicate S’s dissatisfaction with or dislike regarding what H has done but without the implying that what H has done brings undesirable consequences to S (Wierzbicka, 1987). From S’s point of view, the following preconditions need to be satisfied in order for the speech act of criticizing to take place:

1. The precipitating act performed, or the choice made, by H is considered inappropriate according to a set of evaluative criteria that S holds, or a number of values and norms that S assumes to be shared between him/herself and H.
2. S holds that this inappropriate action or choice might bring unfavorable consequences to H or to the general public rather than to S him/ herself.
3. S feels dissatisfied with H’s inappropriate action or choice and feels an urge to let his/her opinion be known verbally.
4. S thinks that his/her criticism will potentially lead to a change in H’s future action or behavior and believes that H would not change or offer a remedy for the situation without his/her criticism.

## **Worksheet 4: Identifying Constructive Peer Criticisms**

Read the constructive criticism from one native speaker to another, then for each comment, determine the following:

1. What aspects of the essay did the speaker give feedback on (i.e., what problem does the speaker identify)?
2. What advice did the speaker use in giving feedback (i.e., what advice did she give

on how to correct or improve the problem)?

**Comment 1:**

Anne: Okay, well, I think it's a pretty good paper, pretty good argument, so most of the problems I have are probably with the organizational structure and a couple of grammatical things. Um to start, I think it seems like both of these introductory paragraphs may be put together as just one paragraph. It would be easier because they're both good paragraphs. They're both introductory ones so I think if they were together they would make more sense (laugh).

**Comment 2:**

Anne: And I thought you had sort of two conclusions as well. But they're both good so I thought maybe if that one came after that one, because that was more of a conclusion than that one, perhaps that would be better.

**Comment 3:**

Anne: Then just a couple of the other problems were grammatical, like I think *is* is better than *are* there because *traffic* is single. I think I'm not sure about that (laugh). It's just what I think. You might want to check that.

**Comment 4:**

Anne: And yeah this phrase here, I wasn't sure that was the best phrase you could've used. So you could think of one.

**Comment 5:**

Anne: And ah you put "their" but I think "t-h-e-r-e". Yeah that's just a grammatical thing.

**Comment 6:**

Anne: Um and down here I don't think the comma should've been there. It could've been better without the comma so ah ... (laugh).

## **Handout 4: Strategies for Providing Constructive Peer Criticism**

Two main strategies for offering constructive criticism to peers are illustrated in this handout. They are 1) Identifying the problem and 2) Giving advice for correcting the problem.

### **1. Identifying the problem**

State the problems or errors found with Hearer's choice, work or products. Be as specific as possible. Avoid using negative words such as “wrong”, “weak”, and so on.

The following examples illustrate acceptable problem identification statements.

E.g. 1. I thought you had two conclusions

2. I didn't see your introduction

## **2. Giving advice: One “do” and some “don'ts”**

Explain how the problem can be repaired.

E.g. You wrote “their” but I think it should be “t-h-e-r-e”

Peer feedback can be tricky, especially between speakers of equal status—the case of peer feedback. To avoid sounding imposing, native speakers of English often choose to avoid the following:

**Don't** use the modals/phrasal modals *should, must, have to, ought to*

Too Strong: You should elaborate more on this.

**Do** use the modals *could, may, might*.

Softened: You might want to give more examples.

**Don't** use imperatives.

Too strong: Give more examples.

## Appendix G: Lesson Plans (Sample)

<b>Course:</b> Oral Expression	<b>Level:</b> 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	<b>Week:</b> 2	<b>Time:</b> 170 m
<b>Lesson:</b> Constructive criticism realization strategies and semantic formulas			
<b>Objectives:</b> By the end of this lesson, learners should be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Understand the meaning of a speech act</li><li>2. Understand the felicity conditions of the speech act of criticizing</li><li>3. Realize constructive criticisms using different pragmalinguistic forms</li><li>4. Recognize the differences in realization of constructive criticisms between Algerian and English NSs</li><li>5. Use L1 transferable pragmatic knowledge in FL contexts</li></ol>			
<b>Materials:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Instructional worksheets and handouts</li><li>2. Authentic and non-authentic TL samples of giving academic constructive critical feedback</li><li>3. NSs' extracts of constructive criticisms</li><li>4. L1 teacher-made samples for comparison with NSs extracts</li></ol>			
<b>Procedure:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As a warm up activity, the teacher asks the students to recall their experiences of giving or receiving constructive peer critical feedback in the EFL classroom or in an Arabic or French class.</li><li>• The teacher divides the class to groups of 4 and gives each group Handout 5. The learners take 10 minutes to answer the questions and write the answers down.</li><li>• After the learners finish doing the task, they read their answers aloud and discuss them with the whole class under the supervision of the teacher. This task should take 10 minutes.</li><li>• The teacher uses Handout 6 to help learners understand that speaking is doing by explaining the speech act theory, felicity conditions, and the indirect speech act theory.</li><li>• The teacher has the students work in pairs and answer two questions (Handout 7) after they read some comments taken from transcriptions of naturally occurring feedback by native speakers. Students take 5 minutes to</li></ul>			

do this task.

- The teacher elicits answers from the students and then explains Handout 8.
- The teacher discusses the differences in realization of constructive criticisms between Algerian and English NSs and encourages learners to use their L1 transferable pragmatic knowledge in TL contexts.

## Appendix H: Students' Attitude Rating Scale

Here are some statements about constructive peer criticism. Five options are given in front of each statement which are: "Totally agree", "Agree", "Uncertain", "Disagree", and "Totally disagree". You have to tick (✓) any one option, which you think is most suitable to you. This way you have to mark tick in front of all the statements. After filling the attitude scale return it to the teacher. You are given twenty minutes to complete it, but if you need extra time, ask for it from the teacher. The survey is anonymous and your answers will be kept confidential

Attitudinal value	Statements	Totally agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Totally disagree
Affective	1. Criticizing peers constructively is an enjoyable activity.					
	2. I feel ill at ease when I criticize peers constructively.					
	3. I feel lost when my teacher asks me to provide constructive criticism to a peer.					
	4. I wish peer feedback sessions end quickly.					
	5. Providing constructive peer criticism is embarrassing.					
	6. I feel comfortable when I provide constructive peer criticism.					
	7. Constructive peer criticism teaches me to think critically.					
	8. The academic criticism I get from my peers is often useless and wrong.					

Cognitive	9. Constructive peer criticism builds learners' independence and develops their self-advocacy.					
	10. It is helpful to get constructive criticism from peers.					
	11. It is more helpful to receive negative feedback only from the teacher.					
	12. Providing constructive peer criticism makes me confident.					
Behavioral	13. I think that I can provide effective and polite constructive criticism to peers.					
	14. I pretend to be busy in peer feedback sessions so that the teacher does not ask me to provide constructive criticism to peers.					
	15. I am interested in providing constructive feedback to peers.					
	16. I raise my hand and ask for the floor to provide constructive peer criticism.					
	17. I do not know how to structure a statement of constructive criticism directed to a peer.					
	18. I think the negative peer feedback I can provide is neither polite nor effective.					







## Appendix J: Transcription Conventions

The transcription conventions used in this dissertation are based on the work of Du Bois et al. (1993). The most relevant symbols are given below. Further details can be found online (<http://www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/projects/transcription/representing>).

### Boundary/Closure

terminative	.
continuative	,
truncated intonation unit	--

### Pause

pause, timed	(1.0)
pause, short	..
pause, long	...
lag (prosodic length)	=

### Sequence

overlap (1st pair)	[ ]
overlap (2nd pair)	[2 2]

### Vocalism

breathe (in)	(H)
exhale	(Hx)
laugh	@
laughing word	@you're@kidding
glottal stop	%

### Manner/Quality

Voice of another	<VOX> </VOX>
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## المخلص :

لقد لوحظ أنه بالرغم من أن طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية يتمتعون بمهارات نقدية ولغوية جيدة، إلا أنهم يواجهون صعوبات في إنتقاد زملائهم بطريقة مناسبة تداولياً، علاوة على ذلك فإنهم يترددون في توجيه هذه الإنتقادات، هذا راجع للطبيعة الحرجة للإنتقاد كفعل كلام، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحديد تأثير المعالجة التداولية على إستخدام طلبة السنة الثانية إنجليزية ليسانس للإنتقادات البناءة لزملائهم، حيث تم استخدام المنهج المختلط، أين تم جمع البيانات من مجموعتين، تلقت المجموعة التجريبية التي تضم 52 طالباً معالجة دامت 15 ساعة، شملت مناقشة مقدمة من طرف الأستاذ، تفسير استيضاحي واضح ، وأنشطة رفع الوعي ، إضافة إلى ملاحظات تصحيحية واضحة من طرف الأستاذ، أما المجموعة الضابطة التي شملت 48 طالباً فلم تتلق أي معالجة، تمت مقارنة البيانات الشفاهية لكلا المجموعتين في الاختبار القبلي، ثلاثة اختبارات مستمرة، والاختبار البعدي، وقد إحتوت جميع الاختبارات على نشاطين: نشاط النقد البناء للزملاء، ونشاط إكمال الخطاب الشفهي.

تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام تقنية التنقيط التي تعتمد على تصنيف المكونات الثلاثة للنقد البناء، وهي: اللباقة، الوضوح، والدقة اللغوية، و تقنية تحليل الخطاب التي تعتمد على مقارنة ترددات سمات الخطاب وهي: الصيغ الدلالية والمخففات لكلا المجموعتين في الإختبار القبلي و البعدي، حيث توافقت نتائج التنقيط مع نتائج تحليل الخطاب وكشفت أن المعالجة التداولية تساعد الطلبة على أداء انتقادات بناءة دقيقة لغوياً ومناسبة براغماتياً، علاوة على ذلك باستخدام التقرير الذاتي للطلاب وقياس حجم المواقف، تبين أن المعالجة تسببت في تغيير كبير في مواقف المجموعة التجريبية تجاه تقديم النقد البناء للزملاء بطريقة إيجابية، فيما يتعلق بأراء أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه فعالية المعالجة التداولية للنقد البناء على أداء هذه المهارة، أظهرت نتائج الاستبيان أن جميع المشاركين البالغ عددهم سبعة (07) يرون أن التدخل البيداغوجي ضرورياً جداً لتطوير مهارة النقد البناء، وقد نوقشت هذه النتائج مع الآثار المترتبة على ممارسات الفصول الدراسية والبحوث المستقبلية .

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الكفاءة البراغماتية؛ نقد الأقران البناء؛ المعالجة التداولية؛ فعل الكلام؛ اللباقة؛ ملاءمة