The American University in Cairo
School of Humanities and Social Sciences

Grammatical Versus Pragmatic Awareness:
The Case of Egyptian Students in an English-medium University

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of Applied Linguistics
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Arts

By

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Under the supervision of Dr. Lori Fredricks

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ABSTRACT

Proficiency in a second language (L2) has traditionally been linked to grammatical competence. It has been widely believed that grammaticality is the main indicator of proficiency in a second language. This limited view of L2 proficiency, however, disregards the fact that communicative competence constitutes an integral part of linguistic competence. According to Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991), the development of grammatical competence in L2 usually takes place without the development of the necessary pragmatic competence. This absence of pragmatic competence is one of the major causes of communication breakdowns that may take place between proficient speakers and learners of a language.

The purpose of this study is to compare the pragmatic awareness of Egyptian students in an English-medium university to their grammatical awareness in an attempt to determine whether or not there is, in fact, a need for ESL instruction there to focus more on developing ESL learners’ pragmatic awareness. Data were collected from 67 Egyptian ESL learners at two different proficiency levels by means of a judgment task questionnaire adapted from Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s 1998 study. To supplement the quantitative data, interviews were conducted with four instructors with the aim of gaining insight into their perception of L2 pragmatic awareness.

In-group comparisons revealed no significant differences between the grammatical awareness and the pragmatic awareness of the members within each proficiency group. The results of the cross-group comparisons indicated, however, that the high-proficiency group displayed a significantly higher level of grammatical awareness than the low-proficiency group. On the other hand, analysis of the difference in the pragmatic awareness between the high- and low-proficiency groups did not yield any significant results.
These findings were not consistent with the results of similar studies carried out earlier in diverse settings where there were apparent and significant differences between the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of learners at different proficiency levels. This inconsistency may be due to the fact that the nature of the context in which this study was conducted is different from the typical EFL and ESL contexts which were examined in previous research. The study was conducted in a university in Egypt where the language of instruction is English rather than in a typical EFL/ESL setting. The importance of the present study lies in that it sheds light on the interrelationship between grammatical and pragmatic awareness in the unique setting of an English-medium university in the heart of Egypt.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ......................................................................................................................... v

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................ vii

LIST OF TABLES ................................................................................................................... x

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................... xi

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................... 1

Background and Rationale of the Study .............................................................................. 1
Research Gap ....................................................................................................................... 4
Statement of the Research Problem .................................................................................... 5
The University Context ....................................................................................................... 6
Research Questions ............................................................................................................. 7
Delimitations ....................................................................................................................... 8
Definitions of Constructs ................................................................................................... 8
Theoretical Definitions ................................................................................................------ 8
Operational Definitions ..................................................................................................... 10
List of Abbreviations ........................................................................................................ 10

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................... 12

Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 12
Communicative Competence ........................................................................................... 12
Models of Communicative Competence ........................................................................... 14
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic Failure</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interlanguage Pragmatics</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Interlanguage Pragmatics</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on Pragmatic Production</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on Pragmatic Comprehension and Awareness</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studies on the Interrelationship between L2 Pragmatic and Grammatical Awareness</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</strong></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Awareness versus Pragmatic Awareness</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences Within Each Group</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences Across the Groups</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severity Ratings of Identified Errors</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructors’ Perspective on L2 Pragmatic Instruction

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Discussion of Findings

Implications

Limitations

Recommendations for Future Research

REFERENCES

Appendix A: Judgment Task Questionnaire

Appendix B: Interview Questions and Instructors’ Responses

Appendix C: IRB Approval of Study

Appendix D: Consent Form for Student Participants

Appendix E: Consent Form for Instructors
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Demographics of the Participants .............................................. 31
Table 2. Demographics of Interviewed Instructors................................. 32
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Low-proficiency Group............... 40
Table 4. Paired-samples $t$ Test for Low-proficiency Group................ 41
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for the High-proficiency Group .......... 42
Table 6. Paired-samples $t$ Test for High-proficiency Group.............. 42
Table 7. Independent-samples $t$ Test for Cross-group Comparisons ...... 44
Table 8. Frequencies of Error Severity Ratings by the Two Groups ...... 46
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.</td>
<td>Questionnaire scenario from the original 1998 study containing a pragmatic infelicity</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.</td>
<td>Questionnaire scenario from the present study in the modified format</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.</td>
<td>Comparison of the valid severity ratings assigned by the two participant groups</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background and Rationale of the Study

Up until Hymes (as cited in Canale & Swain, 1980) coined the term *communicative competence*, the ability to produce grammatically accurate structures in a second language (L2) had traditionally been considered the primary and sometimes even the sole indicator of L2 proficiency. Contrary to popular belief and common misconceptions about language learning, however, being proficient in a second language does not only mean that one is able to produce grammatically correct sentences, but it also entails the ability to use this language appropriately. According to Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991), the development of grammatical competence in L2 usually takes place without the development of the necessary pragmatic competence. This deficiency in pragmatic competence is one of the main causes of the discrepancy which usually exists between L2 learners’ grammatical knowledge and their pragmatic knowledge (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bella, 2012; Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Schauer, 2006).

In his discussion of the principles of pragmatics, Leech (1983) argues that language cannot be understood without an understanding of pragmatics. He defines pragmatics as “the study of how utterances have meanings in situations” (Leech, 1983, p.1). The present study aims at comparing the extent to which Egyptian learners of English recognize grammatical violations versus pragmatic infelicities. By comparing the learners’ awareness of grammatical errors to their pragmatic awareness, the researcher set out to explore the discrepancy between the learners’ grammatical and pragmatic awareness in an attempt to determine whether or not there is, in fact, a need for ESL
instruction in the academic context of an English-medium university in Egypt to focus more on developing ESL learners’ pragmatic awareness.

Models of linguistic competence encompass grammatical competence as well as communicative competence (Finch, 2003). In turn, all major models of communicative competence include pragmatics as a key component (Röver, 2011). In a recent model developed by Bachman and Palmer (2010), the construct of language knowledge was presented as comprising what they referred to as “organizational knowledge” (p. 44) and “pragmatic knowledge” (p.46). Under organizational knowledge Bachman and Palmer (2010) listed grammatical knowledge, which includes knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and phonology/graphology. Pragmatic knowledge, on the other hand, was presented as a separate area of language knowledge dealing primarily with the relationship between the “communicative goals of the language user” and “the features of the language use setting” (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 45).

In the field of second language acquisition (SLA), research investigating the communicative competence of non-native speakers of a language falls under the purview of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Coined by Selinker (1972), the term *interlanguage* refers to the series of stages that a language learner typically passes through in the process of learning a second language. ILP as a particular area of research is primarily concerned with the study of the “pragmatics of language learners” (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, p. 678) and the way non-native speakers use and acquire pragmatic knowledge (Barron, 2012).
The construct of interlanguage pragmatics has been explored using a myriad of approaches. Many studies on ILP have been conducted with the aim of comparing the pragmatic production of L2 learners to that of native speakers from a cross-cultural point of view (Bella, 2012; Chang, 2009; Harlow, 1990; Sabaté i Dalmau, 2009; Smith, 2009). Studies of this nature have addressed a wide variety of questions pertinent to pragmatics and second language learning by analyzing the pragmatic output of L2 learners and comparing it to native speakers’ pragmatic production.

While most of the research into interlanguage pragmatics has focused on cross-cultural differences and pragmatic transfer in the production of language learners’ speech acts in L2, a relatively smaller number of studies aimed at examining the learners’ awareness of L2 pragmatics. This area of research is interested in the notion of pragmatic awareness in L2 learners. Rather than examining the degree of appropriateness of speech acts produced by L2 learners, studies on pragmatic awareness investigate the extent to which L2 learners comprehend different speech acts, and recognize pragmatic violations in an L2. Schauer (2006, 2009) points out the fact that an even smaller number of studies have explored the relationship between pragmatic and grammatical awareness, the most important of which is the study conducted by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998).

In a large-scale, influential study, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) investigated the grammatical and pragmatic awareness of a total of 543 learners of English in Hungary, the USA, and Italy. The sample was intended to compare and contrast between learners in EFL and ESL contexts. Data were elicited using a judgment task questionnaire designed to measure pragmatic and grammatical awareness in context. The participants were asked to watch a video with 20 scenarios, and to judge these scenarios in terms of
grammaticality and pragmatic appropriateness. In addition, the participants were asked to rate the gravity of the identified errors and pragmatic violations using an answer sheet developed by the researchers. Niezgoda and Röver (2001) and Schauer (2006) replicated Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) study but in different contexts with different populations. While Niezgoda and Röver (2001) studied ESL learners in Hawaii and EFL learners from the Czech Republic, Schauer (2006) conducted her study on German learners of English in England (ESL) and German learners of English in Germany (EFL). The results of these three studies were relatively similar in that they indicated that learners in an ESL context tend to demonstrate a higher degree of pragmatic awareness than those in an EFL context. Another finding was that EFL learners typically tend to rate grammatical errors higher in severity than learners in ESL contexts. Schauer (2009) summarizes the findings of this small number of studies comparing grammatical and pragmatic awareness by pointing out that the learners’ proficiency level, the learning environment, and their access to L2 input are the three most significant factors that affect their linguistic awareness in general and their pragmatic awareness in particular.

**Research Gap**

Schauer (2009) notes that very little attention has been dedicated to the examination of “the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of L2 learners in an integrated paradigm” (p. 22). An integrated paradigm here refers to a framework or a model in which grammatical awareness and pragmatic awareness are viewed in interaction rather than as separate entities. In other words, there appears to be a gap in the body of ILP research examining this particular interrelationship between awareness of L2 grammar and L2 pragmatic norms. A survey of the literature on ILP also indicates the need to
investigate this interrelationship in different contexts and with different types of learners. While earlier studies on pragmatic and grammatical awareness focused on the differences between ESL and EFL learners (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Niezgoda & Röver, 2001), the present study takes place in a different context which does not neatly fit into the traditional EFL/ESL dichotomy. The study was carried out in a university in Egypt where the language of instruction is English as described further in detail in the following section. This study hence aims to investigate the pragmatic awareness of Egyptian English-medium university students in relation to their awareness of grammaticality in an attempt to contribute to this growing field of ILP research.

Statement of the Research Problem

Focus on pragmatics in the ESL classroom often pales in comparison to the attention which grammar and vocabulary receive. Smith (2009) explains that because most ESL teachers find grammar and vocabulary easier to teach and assess, they tend to not put enough emphasis on pragmatics in the classroom especially since it requires them to have solid knowledge of the sociocultural norms of the English language. The tendency in ESL instruction to focus more on grammaticality than on pragmatic appropriateness results in a gap between the learners’ grammatical competence and their pragmatic competence and awareness. This often renders ESL learners unable to distinguish between what is and what is not appropriate in the target language.

The importance of L2 pragmatic knowledge lies in the fact that without it, breakdowns in communication between native and non-native speakers become inevitable. This kind of breakdown in communication has often been referred to as
pragmatic failure. According to Thomas (1983), pragmatic failure is the inability to understand the illocutionary force of an utterance, i.e. the meaning behind what is said.

**The University Context**

The university in which this study was conducted is Egypt’s oldest and highly respected English-medium university. The diverse international nature of the faculty members and student body is one of the factors that distinguishes this particular university from other universities in Egypt. According to the university’s Faculty Handbook (2012), the university strives to maintain a balance between the number of Egyptian and non-Egyptian faculty members with a "mix of faculty that is 45% Egyptian, 45% American, and 10% of any other nationality". This university is, therefore, quite a unique speech community. Unlike other English-medium universities in Egypt, a large number of the faculty members of this university are native speakers of English whereas the overwhelming majority of the students are native speakers of Egyptian Arabic. It does not adequately fit in the typical dichotomy of EFL versus ESL; it is rather a blend of both. If placed on a continuum with EFL at one end and ESL at the other, it would probably lean more toward the ESL context especially because of the extent to which English permeates most out-of-class communication. In the context of this particular English-medium university, most students use English rather than Arabic to communicate with their Egyptian counterparts. It is not unusual, for example, to see a group of Egyptian students in the food court having a casual conversation mostly in English. This is different from other English-medium universities where the use of English is limited to the classroom and which can thus be considered similar to an EFL context.
This distinct nature of the context of this university is what makes the relationship between grammaticality and pragmatic appropriateness regarded as rather complex. In order for Egyptian students of this university to be able to communicate effectively with their native English-speaking professors, they are expected to not only use English correctly, but also appropriately. Normally, problems in communication are more likely to arise from using language in a pragmatically inappropriate way than from making grammatical errors. This is often observed in email communications between Egyptian students and their native English-speaking professors and instructors especially those who have not spent much time in Egypt and are still not familiar with Egyptian cultural norms.

**Research Questions**

The present study aims to explore the discrepancy between the students’ ability to recognize ungrammaticality and their ability to recognize pragmatic inappropriateness. Instead of situating the study in an EFL versus ESL context, however, the study was conducted in an English-medium university in Egypt in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. Do Egyptian students at different proficiency levels display discrepancies in their awareness of grammatical versus pragmatic violations?
2. In what way does the students’ proficiency impact their awareness and judgment of pragmatic versus grammatical violations?
3. How grave do Egyptian students consider pragmatic inappropriateness in comparison to ungrammaticality?
4. What are the perceptions of the learners’ ESL instructors about L2 pragmatic instruction?

**Delimitations**

The study is designed to focus primarily on grammatical versus pragmatic awareness. The participants’ pragmatic performance and production are beyond the scope of this study. The present study focuses solely on their awareness of grammatical accuracy versus their awareness of pragmatic violations. Variables of age and gender are outside the scope of this study.

Since the study aims to answer questions related to the notion of awareness, the researcher does not make a distinction between what Thomas (1983) referred to as pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. According to Thomas (as cited in Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008), pragmalinguistics entails the use of linguistic knowledge to express meaning, while sociopragmatics refers to the social perceptions embedded in the way speakers perform and interpret communicative acts. The researcher, however, views these components in interaction as suggested by Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor (2008).

**Definitions of Constructs**

**Theoretical Definitions**

*Communicative competence:* Communicative competence was defined by Hymes (as cited in Canale & Swain, 1980) as “as the interaction of grammatical (what is formally possible), psycholinguistic (what is feasible in terms of human information processing),
sociocultural (what is the social meaning or value of a given utterance), and probabilistic (what actually occurs) systems of competence” (p.16).

Grammatical knowledge: Purpura (2004) contends that grammatical knowledge is “a set of internalized informational structures” related to grammatical form and meaning and “available for use in long-term memory” (p. 86). He makes a distinction between knowledge and ability. Purpura (2004) describes ability as encompassing “more than just a domain of information in memory”. According to him, ability “involves the capacity to use these informational structures in some way” (p. 86).

Interlanguage pragmatics: Alcón-Soler and Martínez-Flor (2008) define interlanguage pragmatics as a field of research which describes and investigates “learners’ use, perception and acquisition of second language (L2) pragmatic ability both in L2 and FL contexts” (p. 8).

Pragmatics: “Pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate” (Levinson, 1983, p.24).

Pragmatic competence: The ability to “understand and create language that is appropriate to the situation in which one is functioning, employing the proper illocutionary patterns in accordance with the sociocultural parameters of the specific situation” (Judd, 1999, p. 152).

Pragmatic failure: Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic failure as “the inability to understand what is meant by what is said” (p. 91). She further distinguishes between pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. For the purpose of this study, however, both types are to be viewed in interaction.
Speech act: “an action performed by the use of an utterance to communicate” (Yule, 1996, p.134).

Operational Definitions

Grammatical awareness: This is operationalized as the ability to detect grammatical errors. For the purpose of the present study, this type of awareness is measured by looking into the learners’ ability to identify the scenarios in the judgment task questionnaire (Appendix A) which contain grammatically incorrect utterances. It also entails that they do not erroneously identify a grammatically correct scenario as containing a grammatical inaccuracy.

Pragmatic awareness: The ability to distinguish between what is and what is not appropriate to say in a given situation. This is translated as the learners’ ability to identify the pragmatic infelicities in the judgment task questionnaire. It also entails that they do not erroneously mark a pragmatically appropriate scenario as containing a pragmatic infelicity.

List of Abbreviations

DCT: Discourse completion task

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELI: Department of English Language Instruction

ESL: English as a Second Language

IEP: Intensive English Program

ILP: Interlanguage pragmatics
IRB: Institutional Review Board

L1: First language

L2: Second language

RHET: Department of Rhetoric and Composition
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This review of literature aims at presenting a summary of the theoretical frameworks underpinning the field of interlanguage pragmatics, and providing an in-depth survey of the published research in this domain. The first section, therefore, discusses the construct of communicative competence. The second section of this literature review outlines the different perspectives from which ILP has been approached over the years. Special attention is given to studies which have examined L2 pragmatic awareness and the interrelationship between L2 grammar and pragmatics. Because the present study is classified under the field of interlanguage pragmatics, studies from a purely cross-cultural perspective remain beyond the scope of this review.

Communicative Competence

Being a competent user of a language has been conventionally linked to the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences. This very limited view of linguistic competence is most probably a result of decades of grammar-focused language instruction where grammatical accuracy was the sole indication of proficiency. In response to Chomsky’s (1965) distinction between the terms competence and performance, the question of what exactly constitutes knowledge of a language has been the topic of much debate among scholars in the fields of linguistics and language teaching. Chomsky (as cited in Canale & Swain, 1980) describes competence as “the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of his language”, and performance as “the actual use of language in concrete situations” (p.3). These definitions, however, were later criticized by Hymes in 1972 (as cited in Leung, 2005) for being too abstract. According to Canale
and Swain (1980), Hymes was one of the first scholars to note the absence of the socioculturally significant notion of appropriateness in Chomsky’s competence-performance paradigm. He illustrates his argument by explaining that “we have then to account for the fact that a normal child acquires knowledge of sentences, not only as grammatical, but also as appropriate” (Hymes, 1972, pp. 277-278). Hymes’ critique, in addition to the advent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), paved the way for scholars and researchers to develop models and frameworks to adequately describe the building blocks of language knowledge in general and communicative competence in particular.

The models developed by Canale & Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Bachman (1990), and Bachman and Palmer (1996) made major contributions to the conceptualization of the notion of communicative competence. In his widely cited framework, Bachman (1990) views language ability as “the ability to use language communicatively” (p. 81), and argues that it includes two main components: language competence, which he and Palmer (2010) later referred to as language knowledge, and strategic competence. The former will be discussed in detail in the following paragraph because it is more relevant to the topic of the present review. As for the latter, Bachman and Palmer (2010) define it as “a set of metacognitive strategies that manage the ways in which language users utilize their different attributes (e. g., language knowledge, topical knowledge, affective schemata) to interact with the characteristics of the language use situation” (p. 44).

According to Alcón-Soler and Martínez-Flor (2008), the first model to include a separate pragmatic component was the one proposed by Bachman (1990) which was later revised by Bachman and Palmer (2010). Their most recent model offers a comprehensive
description of the components of language knowledge within the contexts of language
testing and assessment. It comprises organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge.
Under organizational knowledge Bachman and Palmer (2010) include knowledge of
vocabulary, syntax, phonology, cohesion, and rhetorical or conversational organization
(p. 45). Organizational knowledge is thus mainly associated with the ability to produce
grammatically accurate sentences, and to identify grammatical inaccuracies.

Pragmatic knowledge, on the other hand, is defined as “how utterances or sentences
and texts are related to the communicative goals of language users” (Bachman & Palmer,
2010, p. 45). It encompasses functional knowledge and sociolinguistic knowledge.
Bachman and Palmer (2010) contend that sociolinguistic knowledge includes knowledge
of the different genres, dialects, varieties, registers, idiomatic expressions, and cultural
references and figures of speech (p. 45). It is this particular type of knowledge that much
earlier models such as Chomsky (1965) completely overlooked. Pragmatic knowledge,
thus, establishes a link between the sentences and utterances spoken or written in a
language, the actions they perform, and the surrounding circumstances with the aim of
using the language appropriately (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008).

Models of Communicative Competence

In their proposal of a model of communicative competence based on Canale and
Swain’s (1980) framework, Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) refer to what has
thus far been called “sociolinguistic knowledge” as “sociocultural competence”. Unlike
the models mentioned above, the model developed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) was
designed with specific attention to L2 pedagogy rather than language testing and
assessment. They eloquently define “sociocultural competence” as “the speaker’s
knowledge of how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication, in accordance with the pragmatic factors related to variation in language use.” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 23). This particular type of competence subsumes four main categories each containing a set of variables that construct the sociocultural context, and hence determine what is and what is not appropriate to say in a given situation. The Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) model provides a detailed account of the components of sociocultural competence. It goes without saying, for example, that the age, gender, and status of the interlocutor as well as the social distance between the participants are but some of the relevant variables in any communicative event. In addition, they include a component for stylistic appropriateness which includes factors such as degrees of formality, politeness conventions, and specific registers.

The inclusion of communicative and pragmatic competence in models describing language ability signals a paradigm shift from the highly abstracted views of earlier scholars such as Chomsky (1965) in which linguistic ability was treated as an entity completely separate from the context in which it is employed. The importance of the communicative competence models surveyed above lies in the fact that they offer valuable insight into the complexity and delicacy which characterize linguistic knowledge. Being proficient in a language is no longer equated with merely mastering a set of grammatical rules. L2 instruction which focuses exclusively on grammar is, therefore, basically setting up the learners for failure because it does not adequately equip them with the pragmatic knowledge they need to use the L2 efficiently in real-life situations. These breakdowns in communication which can occur between native and
non-native speakers of a language are referred to as *pragmatic failure* in the literature (Thomas, 1983).

**Pragmatic Failure**

Leech (1983) defines pragmatics as the way “language is used in communication” (p. 1). Kasper and Rose (2001) explain that pragmatics is concerned with the study of communicative actions within the broader sociocultural environment in which they occur. By *communicative action* they mean the different actions performed through language such as the various speech acts like requesting, apologizing, refusing, complaining, and complimenting. The term “pragmatic failure” was introduced by Thomas (1983) to describe the breakdown that is likely to occur when a non-native speaker of a language communicates with a native speaker. Thomas argues that there are two areas of pragmatic failure, namely pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure.

The same distinction was made by Leech (1983); he states that pragmalinguistics is related to grammar, whereas sociopragmatics is related to sociology. Thomas (1983) adds that pragmalinguistic failure is relatively easily resolved through instruction because it is “simply a question of highly conventionalized usage” (p. 1). Both Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) agree that sociopragmatics is a much more delicate and an often problematic area because, as Kasper and Rose (2001) elaborate, it is about “proper social behavior” (p. 3) and the various ways different participants from different backgrounds can interpret and perform speech acts in accordance with something as slippery and ambiguous as rules of social behavior. In keeping with Alcón-Soler and Martínez-Flor’s (2008) suggestion, the two terms will be viewed, from this point onward, in interaction rather than in isolation.
In the 1970s and 1980s the field of pragmatics, as well as the way language was perceived and conceptualized, underwent significant changes. These fundamental developments paved the way for the emergence of a new discipline that would adopt an integrative, interdisciplinary approach to the study of pragmatics and second/foreign language learning. The following section of the present literature review offers an overview of the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), and surveys the studies conducted to unravel the intricacies of acquiring and properly using the pragmatic competence of a second/foreign language.

**Interlanguage Pragmatics**

**Defining Interlanguage Pragmatics**

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) falls under the purview of two different branches of linguistic research, namely second language acquisition (SLA) and pragmatics. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) define ILP as the discipline investigating how people acquire, perceive, and use the pragmatic knowledge of a second language. In other words, ILP studies the way learners of a language “encode and decode meaning in their L2” (Schauer, 2009, p. 15). Research into ILP can be classified into two broad categories: (a) studies looking into non-native speakers’ pragmatic production, and (b) studies looking into their awareness and comprehension of L2 pragmatics. There has also been a growing body of research into L2 pragmatic instruction and its effects on learners’ pragmatic competence; however, this area of ILP remains outside the scope of the present review.

In the following, a brief overview of studies inspecting non-native speakers’ production is provided. In keeping with the purpose of the present study, the primary
focus of the remainder of this literature review is, however, on studies exploring pragmatic awareness. Pragmatic awareness has been studied in a several different contexts employing different research designs. In addition to longitudinal and cross-sectional studies on pragmatic awareness, an in-depth analysis of the few studies exploring the interrelationship between pragmatic and grammatical awareness is presented. It is important, at this point, to reiterate that grammatical awareness is merely used as a control or “counterpoint” for pragmatic awareness, and will not therefore be reviewed here (Schauer, 2006, p. 271).

**Studies on Pragmatic Production**

The pragmatic performance of learners of a language, both in second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) contexts, has been examined, for the most part, using studies with a cross-sectional design. Cross-sectional studies in ILP are primarily interested in comparing the pragmatic production of non-native speakers of a language in a target language (TL) with that of the native speakers of the language.

In 2009, Chang conducted a cross-sectional study in which he explored the production of the speech act of refusal by Chinese learners of English of different proficiency levels. He was particularly interested in examining pragmatic transfer from the learners' first language (L1) to their L2 production. Like Sabaté i Dalmau (2009), Chang (2009) included participants whose native language was English in order to compare their production to that of Chinese learners. As with the majority of studies on pragmatic production, Chang (2009) used discourse completion tasks (DCTs) to elicit the targeted speech act from the participants. Chang's study differed, however, in that it examined the extent to which the Chinese learners’ productions displayed evidence of
pragmatic transfer by looking into the discrepancy between the semantic formulas used by the Chinese learners and the American English native speakers. The results showed that the native speakers of American English produced refusals which were far more direct than those produced by the learner group. Chang (2009) also concluded that the learners’ proficiency level did not affect the amount of pragmatic transfer in their productions.

In the same year, Sabaté i Dalmau (2009) examined the way Catalan learners of English perform the speech act of complaint and compared it to two control groups of native speakers of British English and native speakers of Catalan. The variables examined were proficiency level and the years of exposure to L2. Through the analysis of a corpus of 118 open-ended DCTs eliciting complaints, the study analyzed the participants' lexical choices and explored the extent to which the participants’ L1 sometimes interfered with their production in L2. It also tapped into the cross-cultural differences manifested in the way the British and the Catalan perform the speech act of complaining. The results showed that the higher the L2 proficiency level, the more the produced speech acts resemble those produced by the native speakers of the target language. The results rendered by this study proved that learners at an intermediate level were capable of producing speech acts characterized by a “high degree of variability” (Sabaté i Dalmau, 2009).

What sets this particular study apart from the majority of earlier cross-sectional ILP is the fact that it does not conform to the ‘difference=deficit’ hypothesis which postulates that any difference between the performance of native speakers and non-native speakers is erroneous and defective. Sabaté i Dalmau (2009) emphasized that she is not in favor of
describing pragmatic infelicities produced by non-native speakers of a language as failures or errors, and noted that she would instead use the term “non-target-like-performance” (p.144). In keeping with this outlook, Sabaté i Dalmau (2009) suggested adopting an awareness-raising approach targeting not only the language learners but also the native speakers of the target language to overcome the difficulty inherent in the acquisition process of L2 pragmatics. In other words, she proposed that the learners of English be given examples of “hearer-alienating performances” and that the native speakers of English be informed about the “non-target-like utterances” (p.144) which the learners are likely to produce and which are likely to cause miscommunication or misunderstandings.

Departing from the cross-sectional design characteristic of studies on learners’ pragmatic production, Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) explored the strategies used by Jordanian EFL learners in their production of the speech act of apology. Unlike the aforementioned studies, they did not compare the learners’ production to that of native speakers of English; their focus was rather on the differences between the apology strategies used by the female and male participants. A 10-item DCT was used to elicit apologies from the participants in English. The results indicate that Jordanian male and female EFL learners displayed different preferences in their choice of apology strategies. The researchers also found that, in their apologies, the female participants tended to hold themselves accountable more often than their male counterparts. In their analysis, Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) also discussed the instances in which non-apology strategies were used. They pointed out the fact that while both the female and male
participants occasionally opted out of performing the speech act of apology, the male participants were more likely to “offend or blame the victim” (p. 1921).

It is important at this point to note that a key problem with the studies looking into pragmatic production is that most of them use controlled elicitation techniques like DCTs and questionnaires to scrutinize the pragmatic performance of non-native speakers. These data collection instruments produce data that lacks authenticity (Yuan, 2001). While some natural data collection instruments such as field notes and recordings of naturally-occurring conversations do not suffer from this weakness, they have been avoided for being cumbersome and time-consuming (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006).

To overcome the limitations associated with the use of unnatural data, Bataller (2010) used open role-play to investigate how the length of residence in the target culture influences the development of learners’ pragmatic competence. She looked into the effect of being immersed in the target culture on the development of the production of the speech act of request of 31 native speakers of English from the United States who stayed in Spain for a period of four months as part of a study abroad program. The study set out with the assumption that pragmatic competence increases when the learner is immersed in the target culture. Bataller (2010) used a coding scheme to analyze the request strategies by broadly categorizing them into direct and indirect request strategies. The results demonstrated a slight change in the strategies used by the learners of Spanish to make requests, but they were still considerably and significantly different from the strategies employed by native speakers of Spanish (Bataller, 2010). She attributed this finding to the fact that a four-month-long stay in the target culture would not provide learners with sufficient opportunity for exposure to and use of the target language.
A similar study was conducted by Bella (2012) to explore the developmental patterns evident in the performance of requests in learners of Greek as a foreign language after a six-week summer language course. In addition to using open DCTs, verbal report data were retrospectively collected from the participants to provide more profound insight into the learners’ perceptions. The results were consistent with results of other studies investigating more or less the same issue, namely that being immersed in the target culture does indeed contribute the development of the learners’ pragmatic competence.

**Studies on Pragmatic Comprehension and Awareness**

Another major area of ILP research is concerned with the examination of learners’ comprehension and awareness of L2 pragmatic norms. Whereas the amount of literature published on learner production is abundant, the body of research addressing the question of pragmatic comprehension and awareness appears to be smaller (Kasper & Rose, 2001).

Koike (1996), Cook and Liddicoat (2002), and García (2004) explored the relationship between L2 proficiency and pragmatic awareness. Koike’s 1996 study aimed at investigating the extent to which English-speaking learners of Spanish at different proficiency levels are able to comprehend the speech act of suggestion in Spanish particularly when the form of the Spanish speech act is similar to the English one but expresses a completely different meaning. Koike (1996) discovered that participants at a higher proficiency level were more likely to understand and recognize the illocutionary force of the Spanish suggestions than the lower-level participants.

Cook and Liddicoat (2002) similarly found a relationship between L2 proficiency and the ability to comprehend the speech act of request with varied degrees of directness.
They conducted their study on a total of 150 participants, 100 of whom were Chinese and Japanese ESL learners in Australia. The rest constituted the control group of native speakers of English. The Chinese and Japanese learners were categorized into a high-proficiency group and a low-proficiency group. To measure the extent to which the learners were able to interpret different types of requests with varying degrees of directness, a multiple choice questionnaire with 15 short written scenarios was administered. Statistical analyses revealed that the low-proficiency group found it significantly more difficult to interpret the more indirect and unconventional requests in comparison to the high-proficiency group. In light of their findings, Cook and Liddicoat (2002) argued that there is a discrepancy between the way native speakers of English and ESL learners process linguistic input. They attributed this discrepancy to the low-proficiency learners’ lack of contextual knowledge which in turn causes them to rely solely on their linguistic knowledge as they attempt to arrive at the meaning of indirect speech acts.

In 2004, García set out to assess and compare the linguistic and pragmatic processing of both beginning and advanced learners of English. Unlike Cook and Liddicoat (2002), however, she used a listening comprehension task to look into the participants’ comprehension of conversational implicatures. The strength of her research design lies in the fact that instead of using scripted, contrived exchanges for the listening task, she used naturally-occurring dialogues from a corpus of academic spoken English. In keeping with the conclusions reached by Koike (1996) and Cook and Liddicoat (2002), she found that the advanced participants outperformed the beginning ones “on linguistic comprehension,
pragmatic comprehension, comprehension of speech acts, and comprehension of conversational implicatures” (García, 2004, p.11).

Bouton (1988) also investigated the ability of non-native speakers of English to comprehend conversational implicatures. Rather than looking into L2 proficiency, he aimed at probing the effect of a learner’s cultural background on his or her ability to interpret conversational implicatures in English. Statistical analyses of the test results displayed significant discrepancies in the ability to interpret implicatures among the different groups from different cultural backgrounds.

Another more recent study exploring pragmatic awareness and comprehension was published by Bardovi-Harlig in 2014. Rather than focusing on the comprehension of speech acts, the purpose of this study was to investigate the ability of ESL learners in an intensive English program to identify the meanings of conventional expressions. Conventional expressions are defined as “pragmatic routines, situation-based utterances, and formulas” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2014, p. 41); these include phrases such as “Watch out”, “Get out of here!” and “No problem!” The Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) used to collect data required the learners to report the extent to which they are familiar with the expression, and prompted them to define it and/or use it in an example sentence. The results of this study suggest that learners use the conventional expressions whose meaning they comprehend. The findings also shed light on the learnability of conventional expressions. Bardovi-Harlig (2014) proposed that the VKS be used along with other pragmatic tasks to enhance L2 pragmatic instruction.
Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) investigated pragmatic awareness by employing both a pragmatic comprehension task and a production task. They asked their 43 ESL leaner participants to identify pragmatic infelicities in video-recorded scenarios, and to correct these infelicities by performing short role-plays. The researchers concluded that even though the learners generally identified the scenarios which were pragmatically inappropriate, they found it particularly challenging to repair them. The strength of this study lies in its pedagogical implications. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) argue that pragmatic instruction should target both; the sociocultural content and the syntactic form of the learners’ pragmatic production.

**Studies on the Interrelationship between L2 Pragmatic and Grammatical Awareness**

Even though a substantial body of literature has been published on various aspects of L2 pragmatic competence, the number of studies exploring the relationship between L2 pragmatic and grammatical awareness remains quite limited. Schauer (2006) notes that the “interrelatedness of pragmatic and grammatical awareness” (p. 270) has not received sufficient attention in the literature. In the following, the few studies located by the researcher on this particular interrelationship are presented.

In their large-scale research project Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) brought the relationship between L2 grammatical and pragmatic awareness into the limelight. They used video-taped scenarios and a judgment task questionnaire to compare their participants’ ability to recognize grammatical inaccuracies and pragmatic infelicities. In addition, they also asked the participants to assess the severity of the grammatical and pragmatic errors which they identified. The study was conducted on a large number of
ESL learners in the USA and EFL learners in Hungary and Italy. The results displayed a significant discrepancy between the ESL learners and their EFL counterparts. They discovered that learners in the ESL context were considerably more aware of pragmatic errors than grammatical violations. Learners in the EFL contexts, on the other hand, recognized a higher number of grammatical errors and rated them as more severe than the pragmatic violations. Additionally, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) looked into the impact of L2 proficiency on pragmatic and grammatical awareness. They found that, in contrast to the high-proficiency groups, the low-proficiency groups tended to consider pragmatic infelicities less severe than grammatical violations. Schauer (2009) points out that the learner’s proficiency level, the learning environment, and the access to L2 input highly affect a learner’s linguistic awareness.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s 1998 study paved the way for further research to investigate the complex link between pragmatic and grammatical awareness in L2. Niezgoda and Röver (2001) replicated the 1998 study in an attempt to gain further insight into the role of the learning environment and the proficiency level in raising the learners’ awareness of pragmatic and grammatical violations. Their participants consisted of two groups: ESL learners in the USA and EFL learners in the Czech Republic. Despite having used the same instrument with a similar population, the results did not fully substantiate the findings of the original study.

Niezgoda and Röver (2001) found that the learning environment played a much smaller role in the learners’ awareness as opposed to the significant effect this particular variable had on the learners in the original study. Surprisingly, their data indicated that
the low-proficiency EFL group displayed a relatively high level of pragmatic awareness. This is in sharp contrast to what the data in the original study had suggested.

Another replication was carried out by Schauer (2006) in which she worked with a group of German ESL learners in England and a group of third-year German students of English translation studies in Germany to explore their pragmatic and grammatical awareness. With special attention given to developmental aspects, Schauer’s study arrives at results similar to those rendered by the original study. In contrast to Niezgoda and Röver’s 2001 study, significant differences in awareness between EFL and ESL learners were detected. In addition, a significant increase in pragmatic and grammatical awareness was discovered among the learners who spent time in the target culture.

Conclusion

As demonstrated in this review of literature, research in the field of ILP has tended to focus, for the most part, on examining second and foreign language learners’ pragmatic performance and their production of speech acts in L2. The number of studies on L2 pragmatic comprehension and awareness, on the other hand, has been relatively small. Moreover, there has been even less research published on the interrelationship between pragmatic and grammatical awareness in L2. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) notes that studies investigating L2 pragmatic awareness are underrepresented in ILP research. Similarly, Schauer (2009) argues that the number of studies exploring the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of L2 learners is very small. There appears to be, therefore, a gap in the literature on this particular aspect of pragmatic competence.
The few studies examining this relationship mainly aimed at illustrating the disparity between ESL and EFL learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. Even though the learners’ proficiency level was one of the variables examined in most of these studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bella, 2012; Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Schauer, 2006), the primary focus was on the effect of the learning environment. There appears to be an absence of published studies on pragmatic and grammatical awareness in the Middle East in general, and in Egypt in particular. Informed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s 1998 pioneering research project, the present study aspires to fill this particular gap in the literature.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study leans toward the applied, exploratory, quantitative end of the research design continuum illustrated by Perry (2011). Due to the inconclusive nature of the findings of previous similar studies, this study is not designed to test or confirm any hypotheses. The purpose is rather to find adequate answers to the aforementioned research questions in the context of an English-medium university in Egypt. Data were collected from a convenience sample of Egyptian students at two different proficiency levels in a university where the researcher works as a teaching fellow. A purely quantitative approach to the data analysis provided the researcher with the information necessary to gain insight into the differences between grammatical and pragmatic awareness. Quantitative analysis was also indispensable when it came to quantifying the ratings the participants were asked to give to the ungrammatical and pragmatically inappropriate items on the judgment task. To answer the fourth research question, however, structured interviews were conducted and analyzed using qualitative methods.

Participants

The researcher set out to compare the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of two learner groups at different proficiency levels by means of a judgment task questionnaire (Appendix A). The first group, the low-proficiency group, comprised almost all Egyptian students enrolled in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at an established English-medium university in Egypt (n = 23). Their ages ranged from 18 to 22. Due to exceptionally low enrollment in the IEP in the Spring semester of 2015, data from the first group could only be collected from 23 students instead of the 50 which the
researcher had originally aimed for. The judgment task questionnaire was originally given out to 32 of the 35 students enrolled in the IEP, but the researcher had to discard some of the questionnaires for the following two reasons: (a) some of the students were not of Egyptian nationality; (b) a number of participants skipped a substantial amount of questions.

The IEP is designed to offer intensive courses in English to students whose TOEFL iBT scores are lower than 61, or whose IELTS scores are lower than 5, and therefore cannot be fully admitted to the university. Upon successful completion of the IEP, and according to their final exam battery scores, the students are either placed in the Academic English for Freshmen course (ENGL 0210) or they are placed in RHET.

To represent the higher-proficiency group, data were collected from a total of 46 students enrolled in advanced freshman writing classes offered by the Rhetoric and Composition department (RHET) in the same university. Two completed questionnaires had to be discarded, however, because the respondents were not Egyptian. Students in RHET are at an advanced English proficiency level with TOEFL iBT scores of 83 and above or IELTS scores of 6.5 and above. In RHET classes, students receive advanced, theme-based academic writing instruction. The participants in this group (n = 44) ranged in age from 17 to 21.

Even though convenience sampling typically lacks generalizability, it compensates for it by its purposefulness (Perry, 2011). The purpose of the study is not to reach generalizable results. The researcher’s aim was rather to compare L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness to their grammatical awareness within the unique context of an English-
medium university in Egypt. Table 1 provides an overview of the participants in the two proficiency groups.

Table 1

**Demographics of the Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-proficiency</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(IEP)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-proficiency</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>17-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RHET)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the two learner groups, interviews were conducted with instructors who have experience teaching in the IEP and/or RHET. The interviews were carried out via email. Four instructors agreed to participate in the interview, three of whom have experience teaching the two levels of students. Table 2 displays the interviewees’ demographic information. The purpose of conducting the interviews was to explore the instructors’ perceptions on L2 pragmatic instruction in general and L2 pragmatic instruction in an academic context in particular and to supplement the quantitative data with the instructors' take on the issues in question.
Table 2

*Demographics of Interviewed Instructors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>35 - 45</td>
<td>10 – 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Above 55</td>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>25 - 35</td>
<td>3 – 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>35 - 45</td>
<td>10 – 15 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

**Instruments**

**Judgment task questionnaire.** This study was largely informed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) seminal research project which aimed to investigate the effects of the learning context on the grammatical and pragmatic awareness of L2 learners. Unlike the original study, however; the purpose of this study was not to compare learners in an ESL context to learners in an EFL context. Instead, the study examined the discrepancy between the grammatical and pragmatic awareness of Egyptian university students at different proficiency levels. The original study investigated the grammatical and pragmatic awareness of a total of 543 learners of English in Hungary, the USA, and Italy. Data were elicited using a judgment task designed to measure pragmatic and grammatical awareness in context. The judgment task was presented to the participants in a video format. The participants were asked to watch a video with 20 scenarios, and to judge these scenarios in terms of grammaticality and pragmatic appropriateness. In addition, the
participants were asked to rate the gravity of the identified errors and pragmatic violations using an answer sheet developed by the researchers. An example of the original questionnaire format is shown in Figure 1.

| 7. Teacher: Anna, it’s your turn to give your talk. | Was the last part appropriate/correct? |
| Anna: I can’t do it today, but I will do it next week. | □ Yes □ No |

*If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?*  
Not bad at all ___:___:___:___:___:___: Very bad

*Figure 1. Questionnaire scenario from the original study containing a pragmatic infelicity*

With regard to the present study, the researcher opted not to replicate the video prompt used in the original study for a number of reasons. First of all, using the video prompt would have posed logistical challenges for the researcher during her data collection. Gathering a large number of students, enrolled in two different programs with different schedules, and asking them to watch video clips and answer the questionnaire would have been a very cumbersome task. Secondly, although the video prompt would have been inherently richer in contextual information, the listening comprehension component underlying the task would have been a challenge to the participating students with lower proficiency levels. In their discussion of their data collection instruments, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) expressed this idea by attesting to the fact that “the video task, with its listening comprehension component, may have been inherently more challenging than the written presentation” (p. 242). Therefore, the judgment task was administered in the form of a written questionnaire adapted from the one used in the original study. However, major formatting modifications were made to the original judgment task questionnaire as illustrated in the example in Figure 2. The modifications
were made in order to eliminate some ambiguities in the original questionnaire which were pointed out by Schauer (2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adam: Good morning, Sally. Sally: Good night, Adam.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is the part in bold grammatically correct?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your answer is <strong>no</strong>, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Very ungrammatical ☐ Ungrammatical ☐ Somewhat ungrammatical ☐ Slightly ungrammatical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is the part in bold appropriate in the situation?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your answer is <strong>no</strong>, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Very inappropriate/unacceptable ☐ Inappropriate/unacceptable ☐ Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable ☐ Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2. Questionnaire scenario from the present study in the modified format*

The judgment task questionnaire (Appendix A) contains a total of 18 scenarios in which the following speech acts occur: requests, apologies, and refusals. Eight scenarios contain grammatical errors only, eight scenarios contain pragmatic infelicities only; and two scenarios containing neither grammatical errors nor pragmatic infelicities were used as distracters. Twelve of the 20 scenarios on the judgment task questionnaire used in this study were based on items in the original questionnaire developed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998). The remaining six items were modeled on actual learner errors and pragmatic infelicities which the researcher and some of her colleagues received in emails from their students. The students’ and teachers’ identities remain confidential. It should be pointed out, however, that after the data were collected, the researcher discovered an
unintentional grammatical error in scenario number 12. This item was therefore discarded from the analysis.

Another point worth highlighting is that the change in the format of the judgment task questionnaire necessitated that the data analysis be done using an approach different from that used by the researchers in the original study. In the original study, the participants were asked if they could identify “a problem” in the scenario without being explicitly asked about the two possible types of problems. Schauer (2009) pointed this out as one of the limitations of the Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei 1998 study. She explained that “the researchers had to assume that when the participants indicated that there was an infelicity in a scenario, they had in fact detected the one planted by the researchers rather than identifying a ‘false error’” (p. 23). The judgment task questionnaire used in the present study was designed to overcome this problem. As illustrated in Figure 2, in the present study the participants had to make two distinct decisions after reading each scenario. They had to (a) decide on whether or not the scenario is grammatically correct; and (b) decide on whether or not the scenario is appropriate. In other words, each scenario was presented and later analyzed as having a grammar component and a pragmatics component.

To reiterate, grammatical awareness was measured by analyzing not only the learners’ ability to identify the scenarios which contain grammatically incorrect utterances, but also their ability not to erroneously identify a grammatically correct scenario as containing a grammatical inaccuracy. Similarly, the participants’ pragmatic awareness was measured by their ability to identify the pragmatically inappropriate
scenarios as well as their ability not erroneously mark a pragmatically appropriate scenario as containing a pragmatic infelicity.

**Instructor interviews.** To answer the fourth research question, the researcher contacted five instructors and invited them to participate in the study by answering four interview questions (Appendix B). The purpose of the interview was to supplement the quantitative data and to explore the teachers’ perceptions of L2 pragmatic instruction in general and L2 pragmatic instruction in an academic context in particular. Examining opinions and perceptions entails the use of data collection instruments that yield in-depth information to answer the research question at hand. Interviews generally allow researchers to delve deep into the matter being investigated, providing them with the insight necessary to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and opinions explored.

Due to the instructors’ limited time, the interviews were conducted in writing via e-mail rather than face-to-face. This proved to be more convenient and practical for the instructors as well as the researcher because the interviews were conducted during a particularly busy point of the semester. Written informed consent was obtained from the interviewees. During the coding process, the researcher attempted to discover recurring themes in the interviewees’ responses, as well as unique and interesting views on the questions under investigation.

**Procedures**

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and after obtaining permission of the Program Director and the instructors to collect data, the researcher made hard copies of the modified judgment task (Appendix A), and asked
students enrolled in IEP and RHET classes to fill them out. The participants had to be Egyptian native speakers of Egyptian Arabic who are currently receiving ESL instruction in the IEP or the RHET department.

To ensure accuracy of the responses, the researcher explained to the participants the meaning of the terms ungrammatical and pragmatically inappropriate by illustrating the difference between an ungrammatical and an inappropriate utterance. The researcher also walked the students through the steps of the questionnaire using the sample scenario on the first page of the judgment task questionnaire. This helped to minimize the number of invalid responses.

After the judgment task questionnaire was administered, the researcher scored each response individually and entered the data using Microsoft Excel. The scoring was fairly straightforward; if a student failed to identify an error or if s/he marked a correct scenario as containing an error, the answer was considered incorrect (0). If a student correctly identified a scenario as containing an error, the answer was marked as correct (1).

**Data Analysis**

To adequately answer the research questions, the data were analyzed quantitatively using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Two paired-samples t tests and an independent-samples t test were conducted to test whether or not the differences between the low-proficiency and high-proficiency groups in their pragmatic and grammatical awareness were statistically significant. Analysis of the severity ratings assigned to pragmatic infelicities and grammatical errors by the two learner groups was conducted using a simple frequency count.
The interviews, on the other hand, were analyzed qualitatively. The coding of the interview data was fairly simple because they were conducted in writing via email. The researcher examined the answers provided by the four instructors for each question separately with the aim of detecting commonalities and differences among them. The interview questions aimed at exploring how the instructors address pragmatic issues in class and how they perceive the level of pragmatic awareness of their students in the two programs.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This study was conducted in order to determine whether or not there are significant differences between the L2 grammatical awareness and the L2 pragmatic awareness of Egyptian university students. The effect of the students’ proficiency level on these two types of awareness was also examined. In addition, the present study examined how serious the students perceive grammatical errors to be in comparison to pragmatic infelicities. In the following, the researcher presents the results of the study. The results are organized according to the following research questions guiding the study:

1. Do Egyptian students at different proficiency levels display discrepancies in their awareness of grammatical versus pragmatic violations?
2. In what way does the students’ proficiency impact their awareness and judgment of pragmatic versus grammatical violations?
3. How grave do Egyptian students consider pragmatic inappropriateness in comparison to ungrammaticality?
4. What are the perceptions of the learners’ ESL instructors about L2 pragmatic instruction?

Grammatical Awareness versus Pragmatic Awareness

Differences Within Each Group

The first research question looked into whether or not there are discrepancies between the pragmatic and grammatical awareness within each one of the participant groups. The overall scores of the participants on the two components of the judgment task
questionnaire were calculated. As mentioned earlier, the judgment task was scored using 1 for correct answers and 0 for incorrect answers.

**Low-proficiency group.** The level of grammatical awareness of the members of this group was quantified at 66%. This percentage refers to the proportion of correct answers given by all 23 members of the group on the grammar component of the 17 scenarios in the judgment task questionnaire. In the same vein, their level of pragmatic awareness was quantified at 72%. The table below provides the mean scores and the standard deviation values of the grammar and pragmatics components for the 23 members of this group.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for the Low-proficiency Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>10.78</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>.548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatics</td>
<td>11.43</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>.596</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To find answers to the first research question which looked into whether or not there are discrepancies between the grammatical and pragmatic awareness within each participant group, a paired-samples *t* test was run using SPSS. According to Green and Salkind (2005), in a paired-samples *t* test, “each case must have scores on two variables” (p. 161); this is the case here because each participant received scores on the grammar and the pragmatic component of each scenario. The results indicated that there are no significant differences between this group’s grammatical awareness (*M* = 10.78, *SD* =
2.62) and their pragmatic awareness ($M = 11.43$, $SD = 2.86$), $t(22) = -1.07, p > .05$. The results of this paired-samples $t$ test are summarized in the table below.

Table 4

*Paired-samples $t$ Test for Low-proficiency Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-.65217</td>
<td>2.91717</td>
<td>.60827</td>
<td>-1.91365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

**High-proficiency group.** The members of this group were almost double the number of the members of the low-proficiency group. Their level of grammatical awareness was higher than that of the low-proficiency group at 79%. Again, this percentage refers to the percentage of correct answers given by all 44 members of the group on the grammar components of the 17 scenarios in the judgment task questionnaire. Similar to the low-proficiency group, the level of pragmatic awareness of the members of the high-proficiency group was quantified at 72%. Table 5 provides the mean scores and the standard deviation values of the grammar and pragmatics components of the high-proficiency group.
Table 5

*Descriptive Statistics for the High-proficiency Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>12.64</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatics</td>
<td>12.05</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.262</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To compare between the grammatical and pragmatic awareness of the high-proficiency group, another paired-samples *t* test was conducted using SPSS. The results showed that the mean of the difference between this group’s grammatical awareness (*M* = 12.64, *SD* = 1.526) and their pragmatic awareness (*M* = 12.05, *SD* = 1.738) bordered on being statistically significant, *t*(43) = 2.01, *p* = 0.05. The results of the paired-samples *t* test for the high-proficiency group are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Paired-samples *t* Test for High-proficiency Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>1.94480</td>
<td>.29319</td>
<td>-.00036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Error Mean</td>
<td>.95091</td>
<td>.29319</td>
<td>-0.00036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences Across the Groups

The purpose of the second research question was to examine the effect of the participants’ proficiency level on their grammatical and pragmatic awareness. The grammatical awareness and the pragmatic awareness of the members of the low-proficiency group were each compared to those of the high-proficiency group.

An independent-samples $t$ test was run using SPSS to calculate the difference between the means of the two independent groups (Green & Salkind, 2005). In the present case, the independent groups were the low-proficiency group (IEP) and the high-proficiency group (RHET). Each case had scores on two variables; namely, the grammatical component and the pragmatic component of the judgment task questionnaire.

The researcher originally planned to report the results of the one-way multivariate analysis of variance (one-way MANOVA) she had conducted in order to minimize the chance of making Type I errors. However, testing the assumption of homogeneity using Box’s $M$ statistic revealed a violation of Assumption 2 underlying one-way MANOVA. A violation of this type is problematic in that “a significant result may be due to violation of the multivariate normality assumption for the Box’s $M$ test, and a nonsignificant result may be due to a lack of power” (Green & Salkind, 2005, p. 220). The researcher thus opted for running the several $t$ tests reported here.

The independent-samples $t$ test revealed no significant differences between the pragmatic awareness of the two participant groups ($t = -1.09, p > 0.05$). In other words, the participants’ proficiency level did not seem to have an effect on their pragmatic
awareness. On the other hand, the results indicated that the difference between the grammatical awareness of the two groups is statistically significant ($t = -3.12, p < 0.05$).

The effect size for this analysis was $d = 0.87$ which exceeds the value set by Cohen for a large effect size ($d = 0.80$). The detailed results of the independent $t$ test are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7

*Independent-samples $t$ Test for Cross-group Comparisons*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gr.</th>
<th>Equal variances not assumed</th>
<th>Levene's Test for Equality of Variances</th>
<th>$t$-test for Equality of Means</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gr.</td>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pr.</td>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>8.041</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

**Severity Ratings of Identified Errors**

The third research question was related to the severity ratings the participants were asked to give to the scenarios they had identified as ungrammatical or inappropriate. To answer this research question, a simple frequency count was carried out. It is worth pointing out that the ratings were only included in the analysis if the scenario was correctly identified as either ungrammatical or inappropriate.
Although the numbers of severity ratings collected from the high-proficiency group (RHET) far outnumber those collected from the low-proficiency (IEP) group, it is clear from Figure 3 that their ratings followed a relatively similar pattern. The most frequently assigned rating in both groups was “ungrammatical” and “inappropriate” respectively. The ratings by the low-proficiency group were then followed by “somewhat ungrammatical/inappropriate”, then “very ungrammatical/inappropriate”, and lastly “slightly ungrammatical/inappropriate”. This goes to show that the low-proficiency group did not seem to make a distinction between how grave they perceive ungrammaticality as opposed to inappropriateness; they ranked them both in more or less the same order.

Figure 3. Comparison of the valid severity ratings assigned by the two participant groups

The ratings by the high-proficiency group differed slightly in that the members of this group seemed to consider grammatical errors to be more severe than pragmatic infelicities. As mentioned earlier, “ungrammatical” and “inappropriate” were the most
frequently assigned ratings; however, they were followed in frequency by “very ungrammatical” and “somewhat inappropriate” respectively. Table 7 contains the total number of ratings for each category assigned by the members of the two groups. It is noteworthy that the number of ratings of grammatical errors is larger than that of pragmatic infelicities. This may have been caused by the fact that the participants from the two groups sometimes failed to identify the pragmatic infelicities.

Table 8

*Frequencies of Error Severity Ratings by the Two Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned Rating</th>
<th>Low-proficiency Group (IEP)</th>
<th>High-proficiency Group (RHET)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very ungrammatical</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungrammatical</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat ungrammatical</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly ungrammatical</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very inappropriate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat inappropriate</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly inappropriate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instructors’ Perspective on L2 Pragmatic Instruction

When asked about whether or not they address issues pertaining to appropriateness and pragmatics in the classroom, all four instructors gave affirmative answers. They all referred to email etiquette as something which they try to make their students sensitive to. Instructor 3, for instance, explained that she has given “explicit lessons in appropriate email communication.” Instructors 1 and 2 also mentioned register and level of formality as examples of areas of L2 pragmatics that they address in the classroom. They both also mentioned how they use formal classroom debates and group discussions to train their students to use a more formal variety of language in their speech. In addition, Instructor 1 pointed out that she talks to her students about hedging and “how we can politely disagree or politely ask for clarification etc.” In their responses, the first two instructors also touched upon the importance of L2 pragmatics in teaching L2 academic writing. Instructor 1 explained that she teaches her students about the “connotations of words” and the importance of “following the conventions of formal academic writing.” In the same vein, Instructor 2 recounted the following incident to illustrate how she deals with inappropriateness in academic writing:

For example, just last week I projected the words “weird” and “stupid” to describe characters in a story they were analyzing, and asked them to come up with more academic synonyms, which they did. I also point out differences in the way we would say something (like a sentence fragment starting with “because” as a response in a conversation) and the way we need to write it as a complete sentence. (Instructor 2)

In response to how they perceive the pragmatic awareness of IEP students versus that of RHET students, the four instructors gave slightly different answers. Instructor 2 and
Instructor 3 agreed that there are differences between the two groups of students. Instructor 2, for instance, explained that RHET students “seem to have a better awareness of how to write a formal email.” She pointed out, however, that this does not apply to all students. She noted that “both sets of students come off sounding rather aggressive at times” and attributed this to the students’ inability to use hedging devices appropriately.

Instructor 1, on the other hand, argued that “there is not always a great difference in students’ pragmatic awareness at the beginning of the semester.” She alluded to the fact that the deciding factor is whether or not the students come to university from one of the “better international schools” and are directly placed in RHET classes without having to take any remedial English courses.

Three of the four instructors described developing students’ pragmatic competence in general as “extremely important”. Instructor 1, for example, considered teaching pragmatic competence to be of great importance because lack thereof “can easily lead to communication breakdown”. Similarly, Instructor 2 pointed out that the necessity of developing students’ L2 pragmatic competence lies in the fact that it prepares them for being able “to interact and communicate appropriately and successfully in the adult world of work.” She further elucidated this point by saying that “learning the right balance of assertiveness and respect is very important, whether it comes from tone of voice, nonverbal communication, or the language that students use.”

Instructor 3, on the other hand, acknowledged the importance of developing pragmatic competence in general, but not for IEP (lower-proficiency) students. She did not regard this as “the top priority”. She explained this view by shedding light on the fact
that, generally speaking, Egyptian learners of English “will be using English mainly in Egypt, so pragmatic awareness is probably not a huge priority of them.”

In response to the question about whether to focus more on linguistic accuracy or on appropriateness, all four instructors pointed out that both go hand in hand. Instructor 4 emphasized that “both language aspects are important. Without them, students’ linguistic functionality might be obscured and even totally distorted.” Instructor 3 added that context also plays a vital role in deciding which issues of linguistic appropriateness to address. Instructor 2 similarly mentioned that raising the language learners’ awareness about appropriateness helps “create successful communicators.”

On the other hand, Instructor 2 stated that focusing on appropriateness is more important than focusing on linguistic accuracy. She explained that, “accuracy … can affect the effectiveness of communication and so we need to teach this as well, but if I had to choose, I would teach appropriateness over accuracy, which I think comes more easily with time.”
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In the following, the key findings of the study are presented and analyzed in relation to previous work published on interlanguage pragmatics. This chapter also includes an in-depth discussion of the limitations of the study. Suggestions for future research and implications of the study are also presented here.

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed at comparing the level of L2 pragmatic awareness of Egyptian university students to their level of L2 grammatical awareness. Data were collected from two groups of students at two different proficiency levels to examine the effect of proficiency on the two types of awareness. Data were analyzed on two levels; in-group comparisons as well as cross-group comparisons were carried out in order to answer the first two research questions.

Statistical analysis revealed that the difference between grammatical awareness and pragmatic awareness within the low-proficiency group was not statistically significant. Interestingly, however, members of the low-proficiency group displayed a higher level of pragmatic awareness ($M = 11.43, SD = 2.86$) than of grammatical awareness ($M = 10.78, SD = 2.62$). This finding seems to contradict what Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) found in their study in which they discovered that the level of grammatical awareness of the Hungarian EFL student sample was significantly higher than their level of pragmatic awareness. Nevertheless, the results of the present study are in keeping with the findings of Niezgoda and Röver’s 2001 study. Similarly to the results of the present study, their findings revealed that the low-proficiency group recognized a significantly higher number of pragmatic errors than grammatical errors.
In keeping with the results of Niezgoda and Röver’s 2001 study, members of the high-proficiency group in the present study displayed a higher level of grammatical awareness \((M = 12.64, SD = 1.526)\) than of pragmatic awareness \((M = 12.05, SD = 1.738)\). Again, this finding in both the present study and in Niezgoda and Röver’s study are at odds with the results discussed in the original study (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998) where the mean scores of the high-proficiency group on pragmatics were higher than on grammar in both the ESL and the EFL sample.

A possible explanation for the disparate findings rendered by the present study, the original study, and the 2001 replication could lie in the different nature and background of the participants in each study. While the participants in the original study could be classified as “average language learners” (Schauer, 2009, p. 24) who received L2 instruction in a typical, low-stakes language learning setting, the participants in Niezgoda and Röver’s study as well as in the present study can be considered as above average learners of English because they have been through a relatively rigorous language testing experience and were enrolled in intensive English programs at the university level. The results of the present study cannot therefore be generalized to the entire population of Egyptian learners of English; they seem to be emblematic only of learners of English in academic contexts.

Another unforeseen finding is that the difference between the pragmatic awareness of the high-proficiency group and the low-proficiency group was not statistically significant. In other words, the participants’ proficiency level did not seem to affect their awareness of pragmatic norms. This particular finding is peculiar in that it contradicts the findings of the original 1998 study where high proficiency was linked to a higher level of
pragmatic awareness. The only statistically significant difference emerged when the grammatical awareness of the two proficiency groups was analyzed. This particular finding is rather self-evident; the grammatical awareness of the low-proficiency group is naturally lower, which explains why they were enrolled in an intensive English program at the time of the study.

The severity ratings for the grammar and pragmatics errors in the two earlier studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Niezgoda & Röver, 2001) reflected differences among the ESL and the EFL participants. In the two studies, the ESL sets rated pragmatic infelicities as more serious than grammatical errors, whereas the EFL sets perceived the grammatical errors to be more grave and salient. The participants in the present study, on the other hand, did not project the same pattern in their ratings of grammatical and pragmatic errors. Unlike the samples in the previously mentioned studies, the participants in the current study rated grammatical errors and pragmatic infelicities almost exactly the same way. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the two participant groups in the present study assigned “ungrammatical” and “inappropriate” respectively at the highest frequency. The high-proficiency group differed from the low-proficiency group merely in that the rating “very ungrammatical” came second after “ungrammatical” rather than “somewhat ungrammatical” as was the case with the low-proficiency group. This finding is again congruent with the fact that the low-proficiency group appeared to have a lower level of grammatical awareness.

Contrary to the results rendered by the judgment task questionnaire, the interviews revealed that the instructors believe that generally the two learner groups examined do not possess an adequate level of pragmatic awareness. Several examples of how some of
the students at the two different proficiency levels address their instructors or make requests inappropriately were provided by the instructors to support their claim.

Implications

The study has one major implication. It demonstrated that possessing a high proficiency level in an L2 does not necessarily entail a higher level of pragmatic awareness. The high-proficiency sample in this study is a case in point. Despite being placed in advanced academic writing university classes based on their achievement on rigorous language examinations, their pragmatic awareness was not significantly higher than that of the low-proficiency group. This might be perceived as an impetus for finding more effective ways of integrating pragmatics into L2 instruction and assessment. This is in line with what the instructors pointed out when they stated that pragmatic competence is “extremely important”, especially in an academic context where the students are expected to interact and communicate in their L2 with their professors and colleagues.

The findings thus bring to the forefront the issue of L2 pragmatic instruction. Research has consistently demonstrated that instructional intervention positively affects L2 pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2011). Taguchi cites a number of empirical studies which were conducted to compare “the effects of certain teaching methods over others by measuring the degree of learning from pre- to post-instruction” (p. 291). In an investigation of the effect of explicit and implicit L2 pragmatic instruction, Alcón-Soler (2007), for instance, discovered that both types of instruction resulted in better performance on the post-test. Explicit instruction, however, was different in that “the explicit group maintained learning up to the delayed posttest given 3 weeks after the treatment” (Taguchi, 2011, p.292). Koike and Pearson (2005) also examined the effects
of implicit and explicit instruction on the development of pragmatic competence. The results revealed that both types of instruction were conducive to the development of the learners’ pragmatic competence.

There appears to be a consensus in the ILP literature that teaching pragmatics whether implicitly or explicitly is instrumental in improving learners’ pragmatic competence which is understood to include both awareness and productive abilities. In fact, pragmatic instruction has been linked to an increase in pragmatic awareness in particular (Sykes, 2009, 2011, as cited in Taguchi, 2011).

There is an abundance of literature on L2 pragmatic instruction with reference to teaching resources, materials, and suggested activities that can be used to develop learners’ pragmatic competence in the L2 classroom. In her study on how native and non-native speakers of English perform request speech acts in emails to their professors and instructors, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) notes that ESL books tend to focus, for the most part, on general email etiquette rather than on the teaching of how specific speech acts are performed in emails. She proposes a five-step plan for pedagogical intervention which can be used to explicitly teach advanced learners how to write appropriate request emails to faculty. Sample teaching materials obtained from the author included a wide range of awareness-raising activities as well as productive activities which, among other things, highlight the notion of high-imposition versus low-imposition requests and provide ample email writing practice.

Taguchi (2011) explains that awareness-raising tasks usually involve activities where the learners listen to conversations and evaluate their level of appropriateness
using a rating scale for example. Other activities can target productive skills. Role-plays, guided writing practice, and discourse completion tasks for instance can be used in the L2 classroom to provide students with the opportunity to practice the production of speech acts “by assuming specific roles in hypothetical scenarios and interacting with peers” (Taguchi, 2011, p.296).

Huth and Tleghani-Nikazm (2006) extensively discuss the benefits of using conversation analysis in teaching L2 pragmatics. They propose that this type of pedagogical intervention be carried out in five instructional phases: “(a) in-class reflection about conversational practices, (b) contrastive in-class analysis of L1 and L2 sequence structure, (c) using written transcripts, audio and video materials, (d) practicing sequence structures with role-plays, and (e) reflection and evaluation: discussing the cross-cultural differences” (Huth & Tleghani-Nikazm, 2006, pp. 66-69).

In light of the findings of the present study, there seems to be a need for instruction in the IEP as well as in the advanced freshman writing courses (RHET) to address and shed light on issues pertaining to L2 pragmatics in the classroom. Even the learners who are considered to be at a high level of L2 proficiency could benefit from pragmatic instruction to hone their communicative skills.

**Limitations**

The present study is not without limitations. The limitations can be broadly divided into two categories: (a) limitations pertaining to the data collection and analysis, and (b) limitations pertaining to the validity of the judgment task questionnaire as a data
collection tool. A thorough discussion of the limitations of the study is detailed in the following section.

The most apparent limitation is the number of participants. Enrollment figures in the IEP were remarkably low in the spring semester of 2015. Only three classes were opened and a number of instructors were given teaching assignments in other departments. Therefore, data from the IEP (low-proficiency group) could only be collected from 23 participants. Initially, all enrolled students were asked to participate in the study. Some responses were not included in the analysis because they belonged to students who are not Egyptian. Two other students refused to take part in the study. Other responses were discarded because the participants did not complete the questionnaire. This was probably caused by the length of the judgment task questionnaire; the task of filling out an 11-page questionnaire seemed to be too daunting and demanding for some students in the low-proficiency group.

In addition, the results of the severity ratings should be interpreted with caution because of the questionable reliability of this particular element of the judgment task questionnaire. The problem with this part of the questionnaire is that a relatively large number of the respondents occasionally skipped it. The other problem is that only the ratings for the correctly identified errors were included in the analysis. This caused the number of valid ratings collected from the high-proficiency group to be much larger than those collected from the low-proficiency group.

The other major drawback in the study is related to the validity of the judgment task questionnaire as a tool for assessing learners’ pragmatic awareness. In a personal
interview with Professor James Purpura, the prominent scholar and professor of second
and foreign language assessment and author of the seminal book Assessing Grammar
(Purpura, 2004), the researcher was faced with the central question of what is and what is
not appropriate. In a discussion about the extent to which the data collection instrument
used in this study is valid, Purpura made the insightful remark that “measurement is
supposed to match reality” (J. E. Purpura, personal communication, March 11, 2015).
Although the scenarios in the judgment task questionnaire are similar to situations
university students encounter in their day-to-day life, the written format in which the
questionnaire was administered inherently lacks the contextual clues necessary to make
the scenarios mirror reality. Another point worth mentioning is that treating grammar and
pragmatics as dichotomous is a relatively dated approach and it thus might have
compromised the validity of the judgment task questionnaire.

Another limitation is related to the various levels of pragmatic meaning proposed
by Purpura (2004). He contends that pragmatic meaning encompasses five levels of
meaning: contextual, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, and rhetorical
meanings. The present study, on the other hand, adopted a somewhat simplistic view of
pragmatic appropriateness which does not necessarily take into account the five levels
underlying pragmatic meaning. The scenarios in the judgment task questionnaire which
contain pragmatic infelicities were designed to be clearly marked as pragmatically
inappropriate. In other words, none of the pragmatically inappropriate scenarios was
arguable or could be interpreted differently by different people. It is worth mentioning
that the purpose of the study was not to devise an assessment to adequately measure L2
pragmatic knowledge. Purpura (2004) acknowledges that “the measurement of pragmatic
knowledge presents a major challenge for test developers” (p. 77). The aim of the present study was rather to explore pragmatic awareness as opposed to grammatical awareness in a unique academic context using an already established data collection tool.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Instead of exploring the effect of proficiency only on grammatical and pragmatic awareness, future studies could also look into the effects of the learning environment and the learners’ access to authentic L2 input.

When data were collected from the high-proficiency group, no distinction was made between the direct entry students who were directly placed in the RHET classes and those who were previously required to take remedial English classes in the IEP or in the Academic English for Freshman program (ENGL 0210). Future studies could take this variable into account and explore whether or not there are differences between these two sets of students.

Another suggestion would be to study a larger sample. The grammatical and pragmatic awareness of Egyptian students in different English-medium universities across Egypt would potentially render richer results. Post hoc interviews with the participants could also render very rich findings as described in Schauer (2009). Using this data collection method can give the researcher better insight into why the participants assigned a specific severity rating to one scenario rather than another, for example.
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Sabaté i Dalmau, M. (2009). The interlanguage of complaints by Catalan learners of English. In R. Gómez Morón, M. Padilla Cruz, L. Fernández Amaya, & M. de la O Hernández López (Eds.), *Pragmatics applied to language teaching and*
learning (pp.141-164). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.


Appendix A: Judgment Task Questionnaire

Section I: Biographical Data

Thank you for participating in this study. Before you begin with the judgment task questionnaire, please complete some questions about yourself. All information will be kept confidential.

1. Are you Egyptian? YES NO

2. What is your gender? Male Female

3. Please circle where you are currently taking English classes:

   Intensive English Program (IEP)    Rhetoric & Composition
   (RHET)

4. I would rate my English proficiency as...
   a. Superior
   b. Advanced
   c. Intermediate
   d. Beginner

5. How old are you? ____________________________
Section 2: The Judgment Task Questionnaire

Instructions

Thank you for helping me with my research. In the following, you are going to read conversations with Sally and Adam talking to classmates and teachers. You will also see some emails they sent to their professors. Their English will sometimes be correct but sometimes there will be a problem.

Your job is to decide how well Sally and Adam use English in different conversations and emails. After you read each conversation, decide whether you think there is a mistake or not and mark your answer sheet.

Please note that each conversation can be one of the following:

a) Grammatically incorrect;

b) Inappropriate in the situation;

c) Correct and appropriate.

None of the situations contains the two types of errors.

Let's look at an example:

Adam: Good morning, Sally.
Sally: Good night, Adam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the part in bold grammatically correct?</th>
<th>Is the part in bold appropriate in the situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If your answer is no, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:

- Very ungrammatical
- Inappropriate/unacceptable
- Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
- Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

There is something wrong with Sally’s answer. It is grammatically correct, but it is not appropriate for the situation. So in the example on your answer sheet put an X in the box marked No. After this, you decide how big the mistake is.
**Scenarios**

[Grammatical errors are indicated by *, pragmatic infelicities by #.]

1. The teacher asks Adam to help with the plans for the class trip.

   Teacher: OK, so we'll go by bus. Who lives near the bus station? Adam, could you check the bus times for us on the way home tonight?

   Adam: # No, I can't tonight. Sorry.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the part in bold grammatically correct?</th>
<th>Is the part in bold appropriate in the situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
   If your answer is **no**, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:

   - Very ungrammatical
   - Ungrammatical
   - Somewhat ungrammatical
   - Slightly ungrammatical
   - Very inappropriate/unacceptable
   - Inappropriate/unacceptable
   - Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
   - Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

2. Sally and Sarah are classmates. Sarah invites Sally to her house, but Sally cannot come.

   Sarah: Sally, would you like to come over to my house tonight?
   Sally: *I'm sorry, I just can't. I'm very tired. I couldn't sleep on last night.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is the part in bold grammatically correct?</th>
<th>Is the part in bold appropriate in the situation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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   - Very ungrammatical
   - Ungrammatical
   - Somewhat ungrammatical
   - Slightly ungrammatical
   - Very inappropriate/unacceptable
   - Inappropriate/unacceptable
   - Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
   - Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable
3. Adam goes to the snack bar to get something to eat before class.
Server: May I help you?
Peter: # If it’s not too much to ask, could you possibly give me a sandwich and yogurt please?

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- □ Very inappropriate/unacceptable
- □ Inappropriate/unacceptable
- □ Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
- □ Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

4. Sally sent the following email to one of her professors in university:

*  
Dear Dr. Smith,
I hope my mail find you well.
I cannot find the link for the power point that you cover in class yesterday. Can you please send it to me?
Thank you.
Regards,
Sally

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- □ Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable
5. Sarah is going to the library. Sally asks her to return a library book.

Sarah: Well, I'll see you later. I've got to go to the library to return my books.

Sally: Oh, if you are going to the library, can you please return my book too?

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6. Adam is talking to his teacher. The conversation is almost finished.

Teacher: Well, I think that's all I can help you with at the moment.

Adam: *That's great. Thank you so much for all the informations.*

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- Very inappropriate/unacceptable
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- Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
- Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable
7. Sally sent the following email to one of her instructors in university:

Dear Ms. Elizabeth,
I hope this email finds you well.
When I solve my homework, I didn't know many question.
Can you please send me the answer key?
Thank you.
Best regards,
Sally

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8. Adam sent the following email to one of his writing instructors.

Dear Ms. Stephens,
I still don’t understand what our next essay is about, so I want an appointment from you.
Best regards,
Adam

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9. It is Sally’s day to give her presentation in class, but she is not ready.

Teacher: Thank you Sarah, that was very interesting. Sally, it's your turn to give your talk now.

Sally:  *I can't do it today but I will do it next week.*

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- Slightly ungrammatical

If your answer is **no**, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:

- Very inappropriate/unacceptable
- Inappropriate/unacceptable
- Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
- Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

10. Adam has borrowed a book from a classmate, Sammy. Sammy needs it back, but Adam has forgotten to return it.

Sammy: Adam, do you have the book I gave you last week?

Adam:  *Oh, I'm really sorry but I was in a rush this morning and I didn't brought it today.*

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- Very inappropriate/unacceptable
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- Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable
11. Adam needs directions to the library. He asks another student.

Adam: Hi.
Student: Hi.
Adam: *Tell me how to get to the library.*

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If your answer is no, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:

- Very inappropriate/unacceptable
- Inappropriate/unacceptable
- Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
- Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

12. Sally writes the following email to one of her professors:

#
Dear Dr. Smith,
I hope you enjoyed your weekend. I finished the paper and I submitted it to Blackboard at 2 pm. Till now no feedback!!! I got nothing!!! I don't know do if I have a problem in my account?? I really need to know so I can fix it before the deadline.
Thanks.
Sally

[Note: This item was discarded from the analysis due to the unintentional error in grammar.]

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13. Adam has borrowed a book from his professor. His professor needs it back, but Adam has forgotten to return it.

Professor: Adam, have you brought back the book I gave you yesterday?
Adam: *Oh, I'm very sorry, I completely forgot. Can I giving it to you tomorrow?

Is the part in bold grammatically correct?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If your answer is no, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:
☐ Very ungrammatical  ☐ Ungrammatical  ☐ Somewhat ungrammatical  ☐ Slightly ungrammatical

Is the part in bold appropriate in the situation?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If your answer is no, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:
☐ Very inappropriate/unacceptable  ☐ Inappropriate/unacceptable  ☐ Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable  ☐ Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

14. Adam writes the following email to one of his professors:

* 
Dear Dr. Smith,
I hope this emails finds you well.
In class, you told us that you would send us the assignment via email. However, nothing have been sent to me. Could you please send it to me?
Sorry for the inconvenience.
Best regards,
Adam

Is this email grammatically correct?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If your answer is no, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:
☐ Very ungrammatical  ☐ Ungrammatical  ☐ Somewhat ungrammatical  ☐ Slightly ungrammatical

Is this email appropriate in the situation?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If your answer is no, how serious do you think this mistake is? Check only one:
☐ Very inappropriate/unacceptable  ☐ Inappropriate/unacceptable  ☐ Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable  ☐ Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable
15. Adam goes to see his professor at his office. When he arrives, his professor is busy.

Adam: (knocks on the door)
Professor: Yes, come in.
Adam: Hello, Mr. Gordon. Are you busy?
Professor: Erm ... I'm afraid so. Could you please come back a bit later?
Adam: # OK, I'll be here tomorrow morning at 8.

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Sally: Dr. Smith?
Professor: Yes?
Sally: *Could I possibly borrow this book for the weekend if you not need it?*

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17. Sarah invites Sally to her house but Sally cannot come.

Sarah: Sally, would you like to come over this afternoon?
Sally: I'm sorry, I'd really like to come but I have a difficult history test tomorrow.

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- Somewhat inappropriate/unacceptable
- Slightly inappropriate/unacceptable

18. Adam has a problem with his email and sends the following email to his instructor:

#
Dear Ms. Elizabeth,

Couldn't you send me the assignment on Yahoo email? I have a huge problem with my AUC email and I didn't receive the assignment. Any help?

Best regards,
Adam

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Appendix B: Interview Questions and Instructors’ Responses

1. As a teacher, do you tackle issues pertaining to pragmatics in the classroom? If yes, can you give examples?

2. Have you ever noticed any discrepancies between the pragmatic awareness of IEP students and the pragmatic awareness of RHET students? If yes, do you remember any specific examples?

3. How important do you think it is to develop students' pragmatic competence in general?

4. Do you think instruction in programs designed to help students improve their academic English to perform effectively in an English-medium university should focus on linguistic accuracy only or on appropriateness as well? Could you please explain why?
Instructor 1

1. Yes, I do try to tackle pragmatics issues in the classroom. In my IEP Perspectives class for example, I worked on teaching them appropriate phrases for participating in an effective group discussion. We talked about hedging and how we can politely disagree or politely ask for clarification etc. We also talk about formality in writing – in emails for example I try to teach them how to address a faculty member appropriately. In essay writing, we talk about connotation of words and the importance of not using absolute language (like never and always) and following the conventions of formal academic writing.

2. Yes, I think there are some differences in pragmatic awareness, though not in all students. In IEP for example almost all students start out not knowing how to use appropriate language in emailing me as their instructor. They often do not include a salutation and then use sms language like “u” or no punctuation. In the RHET most of the students seem to have a better awareness of how to write a formal email to me, though not all! I have noticed that both sets of students come off sounding rather aggressive at times in speaking with me and with their colleagues. They do not use hedging – for example they might say something like “You are wrong” instead of “I’m not sure I understand your point” or “I’m not sure if I agree with you”. Another example is they might say something to me like “You should give us easier readings” instead of something like “I am finding the level of the readings too difficult – might it be possible to include easier ones?” etc. Both sets of students also speak with me too informally at times as well – chatting and sometimes making inappropriate jokes or comments. They seem to have very little awareness of boundaries when it comes to appropriateness of
how to communicate with faculty. Again, this is not all students, but I have seen this pattern in both sets of students.

3. I think it is extremely important in terms of learning to communicate successfully and constructively. This is not necessarily even just an ESL issue but a general issue that all students should be taught. Of course ESL students need it even more. If students speak too strongly (for example not using soft modals) this can so easily lead to communication breakdown in discussions. I think it is one of the most important things we can teach our students.

4. I think it is more important to focus on appropriateness than accuracy. The purpose of language is to communicate and if students are using inappropriate language, this greatly affects the effectiveness of their communication and can lead to serious misunderstandings. However, I think there is an overlap between ESL and good communication skills in general. By that I mean that just because someone is fluent in English does not mean that they know how to communicate effectively. This is what leads to so many destructive arguments between people and even war on a larger scale. I think in teaching appropriateness we should have the discussion with students of how the choice of language affects audience. I do a nice activity called “Good listener bad listener” where I have them come up with phrases and behavior that a bad listener uses and for a good listener. Then I have them role play in pairs where one time they behave as a bad listener and then as a good listener. Afterwards we talk about how the two felt different and what happened to the effectiveness of the communication in each case. This focuses on listening which is not exactly pragmatic competence, but it gets them thinking. Then we can move on to discussing the language we use to communicate and
role play with that. Accuracy on the other hand can also affect the effectiveness of communication and so we need to teach this as well but if I had to choose, I would teach appropriateness over accuracy, which I think comes more easily with time.

Instructor 2

1. The main type of pragmatic awareness I aim to raise in my students both in the IEP and the RHET programs is the difference in register required in academic writing, i.e., a more formal register. I often use common examples from student writing to demonstrate what not to do, i.e., no contractions in formal writing, do not use informal (usually verbal) transitions like “Well,” and “Anyways;” and to try to get them to use more academic vocabulary. For example, just last week I projected the words “weird” and “stupid” to describe characters in a story they were analyzing, and asked them to come up with more academic synonyms, which they did. I also point out differences in the way we would say something (like a sentence fragment starting with “because” as a response in a conversation) and the way we need to write it as a complete sentence. I have not really tackled the pragmatics of writing a slightly more formal email than what they are used to doing, but I try to simply model a more formal email style in my emails to my students, and I notice that some of the better students begin to imitate me by the end of the semester.

In teaching grammar in the IEP, I also call students’ attention to the type of formal writing or less formal speaking situation in which they might best use a structure they are learning, e.g., using subjunctive noun clauses to make recommendations in the conclusion of an essay or adjective clauses to define terms or to help focus the thesis
statement. Or the use of two-word verbs more in speaking situations and perhaps less in formal writing.

I also try to raise students’ awareness of listening and responding respectfully to others’ opinions and the importance of expressing disagreement clearly but respectfully. I sometimes hold formal debates in class and invite other classes or teachers to attend and judge the debate to create a more formal situation in which students have to use more formal language of presentation.

2. There is not always a great difference in students’ pragmatic awareness at the beginning of the semester. They are all EFL learners in their first semester or two at university. This semester all of the RHET students I have came from ELIN 0102 and ENGL 0210, and they have similar problems with register in their academic writing unless they have specifically been taught otherwise. The examples I gave in #1 above came from both my ELIN 0101 class last semester and my RHET class this semester. The big difference comes with direct entry students from the better international schools, whom I have taught in the past at the RHET 1010/CORE 1010 level. Those students come in usually having read and written more, and therefore have better awareness of differing registers and levels of formality and a wider range of vocabulary and structures appropriate to good academic writing. However, there are exceptions to that rule, too, and I have had some direct entry students from America diploma schools over the years who were very undisciplined and informal in their style and who needed to learn to use different registers in their university essays. One of the challenges in teaching the CORE 1010/RHET 1010 tandem course is to get the students to understand the difference in register between the more reflective opinion-based writing they do in the CORE 1010
course as a way to understand their readings and the more formal, structured, and academic analysis and argumentative papers they must write in the RHET 1010 course. We have just begun to implement summary—response papers in the IEP to help students prepare more purposefully for RHET/CORE, and I did not teach both types of writing to my IEP students, but I think it is a challenge to get students to differentiate the two at first. With time, they get it.

I think one difference between the IEP and RHET courses is that there is a specific attempt to make the students in RHET aware of and able to analyze the rhetorical situation in what they are reading, i.e., who the intended audience is, what the writer’s purpose is, and what the writer’s message about a topic is, as well as the appeals he/she uses to convey a message. These all lead to a heightened awareness of pragmatics, I believe, one that most students do not have at the beginning of the course, but they do acquire by the end. Therefore, they end the course with far more pragmatic awareness of elements of their readings, to be reflected in their writing, than students in the IEP, but that is because it is part of the learning outcomes of the course.

3. I think it is extremely important. University students are about to enter the adult world of work, and they need to be able to interact and communicate appropriately and successfully. I was once on a university disciplinary committee, and I was shocked at the behavior of one of the students we interviewed. He had a high position in the SU but was very confrontational and dismissive of people in authority. I told him directly that if he wanted to succeed in negotiating with university administrators he should behave more respectfully toward them. Learning the right balance of assertiveness and respect is very
important, whether it comes from tone of voice, nonverbal communication, or the language that students (and other people) use.

4. It should include both, for reasons that should be obvious from what I have mentioned in the paragraph above. Learning to use language appropriate to the situation, including verbal and non verbal communication, is key to a person’s successful communication in both university and the workplace beyond. Teaching students to use appropriate language to handle questions or politely disagree as we teach them “soft skills” such as giving presentations and participating in debates is important to help create successful communicators. To that end, the Freshman Program has incorporated learning outcomes not only in oral, critical reading, and written communication skills but also in the 21st century skills of critical thinking and collaboration/teamwork, both of which may involve awareness of a rhetorical situation or register and what is/is not appropriate language to use in a given situation.

Instructor 3

1. I do not tackle them deliberately or systematically but I do touch upon them as they come up. Since we have students who are new to the university environment […] I have given explicitly lessons in appropriate email communication, for example, and saw my students improve quite dramatically after doing so.

2. N/A

3. Developing pragmatic awareness is important in general but for IEP students I don’t think it is the top priority. More than general pragmatic awareness they need pragmatic awareness about functioning in a US University context. Pragmatic awareness is always
culturally linked which leads to the question of which culture these students will be functioning in. For most of them, they will be using English mainly in Egypt so pragmatic awareness is probably not a huge priority for them except as it pertains to the University setting.

4. I think focusing on both is important, particularly issues of appropriateness as they relate to the kinds of contexts in which students will use English in the University setting. For example, one area that I have never taught but that I believe would be beneficial to the students in the IEP is that of turn taking. At the university level, students will be assessed based on their participation in class so it is important that they be aware of the importance of participating and the importance of ‘demanding’ a turn in class discussions whether they are usually talkative or more reserved. I think it is also important to increase awareness of the sorts of pragmatic knowledge they need when dealing with their professors especially since they will likely have professors who aren’t that familiar with their L1 & cultural norms and expectations from their native culture. The ‘impressions’ their professors have of them may affect their grades and letters of recommendations so it is an issue that can have long-term effects on their career and their success.

**Instructor 4**

1. Yes, I do. I sometimes need to explain differences in different degrees of politeness for different language expressions. In emails, some students seem to be unaware of the different rhetorical contexts: they don’t use the appropriate opening or they would use the imperative to make requests.
2. Yes, most EIP students have lack of pragmatic awareness as opposed to RHET students. It’s also worth mentioning that many RHET students are former EIP participants.

3. Extremely important.

4. Both language aspects are important. Without them, students’ linguistic functionality might be obscured and even totally distorted.
Appendix C: IRB Approval of Study

CASE #2014-2015-53

To: Nourhan Sorour
Cc: Maida Torrossian
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB
Date: Dec 21, 2014
Re: Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your research proposal entitled “Grammatical Versus Pragmatic Awareness: The Case of Egyptian Students in an English-medium University,” and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. The proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Atta Gebril
IRB chair, The American University in Cairo
2046 HUSS Building
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Appendix D: Consent Form for Student Participants

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO
Institutional Review Board

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in a Research Study

Project Title:
Grammatical Versus Pragmatic Awareness: The Case of Egyptian Students in an English-medium University

Principal Investigator: Nourhan Sorour (nsorour@aucegypt.edu)

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to investigate grammatical versus pragmatic awareness in Egyptian ESL learners, and the findings may be published, presented, or both. The expected duration of your participation is 15 minutes.

The procedures of the research will be as follows: You will be asked to read 18 short scenarios in English and judge them in terms of how grammatical/ungrammatical and appropriate/inappropriate you think they are.

There will not be any risks or discomforts associated with this research.

There will not be any benefits to you from this research.

The information you provide for purposes of this research is confidential.

Questions about the research should be directed to Nourhan Sorour at nsorour@aucegypt.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature _________________________________
Printed Name _______________________________
Date _________________________________
Appendix E: Consent Form for Instructors

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in a Research Study

Project Title: Grammatical Versus Pragmatic Awareness: The Case of Egyptian Students in an English-medium University

Principal Investigator: Nourhan Sorour (nsorour@aucegypt.edu)

You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to investigate grammatical versus pragmatic awareness in Egyptian ESL learners, and the findings may be published, presented, or both. The expected duration of your participation is 15 minutes.

The procedures of the research will be as follows: You will be asked to answer four open-ended interview questions in writing.

There will not be any risks or discomforts associated with this research.

There will not be any benefits to you from this research.

The information you provide for purposes of this research is confidential.

Questions about the research should be directed to Nourhan Sorour at nsorour@aucegypt.edu.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature

Printed Name

Date