

Retraction

Retracted: The Modality Density of Pragmatic Apology in L2

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This article has been retracted by Hindawi following an investigation undertaken by the publisher [1]. This investigation has uncovered evidence of one or more of the following indicators of systematic manipulation of the publication process:

- (1) Discrepancies in scope
- (2) Discrepancies in the description of the research reported
- (3) Discrepancies between the availability of data and the research described
- (4) Inappropriate citations
- (5) Incoherent, meaningless and/or irrelevant content included in the article
- (6) Peer-review manipulation

The presence of these indicators undermines our confidence in the integrity of the article's content and we cannot, therefore, vouch for its reliability. Please note that this notice is intended solely to alert readers that the content of this article is unreliable. We have not investigated whether authors were aware of or involved in the systematic manipulation of the publication process.

Wiley and Hindawi regrets that the usual quality checks did not identify these issues before publication and have since put additional measures in place to safeguard research integrity.

We wish to credit our own Research Integrity and Research Publishing teams and anonymous and named external researchers and research integrity experts for contributing to this investigation.

The corresponding author, as the representative of all authors, has been given the opportunity to register their agreement or disagreement to this retraction. We have kept a record of any response received.

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- [1] D. Li and C. Liu, "The Modality Density of Pragmatic Apology in L2," *International Transactions on Electrical Energy Systems*, vol. 2022, Article ID 8055892, 7 pages, 2022.

Research Article

The Modality Density of Pragmatic Apology in L2

Dongyan Li¹ and Chunbo Liu²

¹English Department, College of the Humanities & Social Sciences, Heilongjiang Bayi Agricultural University, Daqing 163319, China

²English Department, College of Foreign Languages, Changji University, Changji 831100, China

Correspondence should be addressed to Dongyan Li; lidongyan@byau.edu.cn

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In this study, multimodal interaction analysis is used to analyze the apology act of two Chinese EFL learners and two Bangladeshi EFL learners in face-to-face interaction through task-role-playing via the multimodal software Elan. The radar figures are also drawn to show the similarities and differences of the modal density of six different modal resources: gesture, head movement, gaze, facial expression, posture, and utterances. It is found that the intensity of the gaze modality used by the four participants is higher with the gaze modality and utterance modality occupying the central position in the sequence of the apology act. Chinese learners of English and Bangladeshi learners of English achieve the highest values as regards the intensity of each mode in explanatory strategy and repair strategy, respectively. It indicates that they attach importance to different apology strategies. Chinese EFL learners, by contrast, have low modal complexity, suggesting that they do not engage in complex actions, but still use verbal and nonverbal modes together to build the ongoing meaning of conversations. As is indicated, pragmatic competence is the ability of language users to communicate properly in social interaction. And, communication needs different modes to coordinate, produce resultant force and play a role. Meanwhile, the application of multi-modal analysis to the speech act of apology is a new paradigm to re-examine the classic study of pragmatic competence, in which the construction and negotiation of utterance meaning can be revealed, to a greater extent, more clearly and completely.

1. Introduction

Multimodality, also called multisemiotics, refers to the multisemiotic resources used to construct meaning. And, a text that is constructed by multiperception modes or by two or more semiotic systems is considered as multimodality discourse. In the twenty-first century, multimodality has become “the normal state of human communication” [1]. Many scholars at home and abroad have explored the analytical framework, research methods, and theoretical application of multimodal discourse studies. Jewitt [2] distinguished social semiotics analysis, systemic functional grammar analysis, and social interaction analysis from the multimodal perspective. Among them, the achievements of multi-modal discourse analysis based on systemic functional grammar are really rich [3–6]. However, there are not many studies that combine multimodality with pragmatic

competence. In the past, pragmatic studies focused on language ontology with emphasis on the interpretation of language use. Multimodal research, however, goes beyond the linguistic dimension of pragmatics by explaining how different semiotic patterns coconstruct specific communicative behaviors [7].

It is emphasized that all kinds of semiotics are significant language resources, and the correct use of them can achieve communicative purposes and build harmonious interpersonal relations. The speech act of apology occurs frequently in daily life and is an important part of speech communication. Most of the research studies focus on the differences in the language strategies of the apologists in different cultures. In real life, however, 55% of the information we receive in oral communication comes from our body language, such as facial expressions, movements, and gestures, and 38% comes from our emotions, such as the volume of

our voice, tone of voice, and speed of speech, and 7% comes from the discourse itself [8].

Therefore, the multi-modal discourse, which orchestrates gesture, head movement, gaze, facial expression, posture, and utterances, can be used to analyze the choice and coordination of the modes of the speech act of apology, the discourse meaning of the offense, and the conflict of the apology recipient, and the discourse strategy of maintaining the harmonious interpersonal relationship between the speakers.

2. Review of Multimodal Pragmatics

Pragmatic competence is centered around the study of language from the point of view of users, especially the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication [9]. Crystal believes that pragmatic competence includes both the speaker and the listener. Therefore, the study of pragmatics can be conducted from the perspective of conversation. Pragmatics is mainly based on the analysis of the meaning expressed in the interaction between the speaker and the hearer, and how the interacting participants adapt to each other to construct and negotiate pragmatic understanding, and how to solve the problems in communication together. This brings the study of pragmatics into the single-mode field of vision. Not surprisingly, scholars have shown interest in the nonlinguistic aspects of pragmatics [10]. In fact, discourse in social communication comes from context, and other modes in context also participate in the communication. Therefore, studies only from the perspective of language which neglects the ongoing and situated meaning of the communication can not see the whole picture of pragmatic social communication. The semiotic modes beyond language are also “semiotic resources for creating meaning” [1]. In face-to-face interaction, participants can use a variety of symbolic resources, including features of oral interaction such as speech acts and turn-taking, language-centered resources along with extralinguistic resources such as gestures and facial expressions [11]. In other words, multiple semiotic systems are brought into a unified category of analysis by means of creating meaning together in context and forming a multi-dimensional space for meaning construction.

Dicerto [10] points out that the application of pragmatics to multimodality implies the choice of a theoretical framework. He argues that Grice’s cooperative principles and norms seem well suited to the analysis of stimuli in the form of discourse. Streeck [12] explores a rigorous and observational approach to interactive analysis by studying the physical state of interactive interactions in a real-world shop environment. Xinren Chen and Yonghong Qian [13] constructed a multimodal pragmatic analysis framework for pragmatic analysis by drawing on the framework of systemic functional linguistics, whose paper discusses the necessity and feasibility of the application of multimodal analysis in pragmatic analysis. Some scholars have expanded the field of the research of speech acts and studied more specific speech

acts from the multimodal perspective. Drew and Couper-Kuhlen [14] explored the multimodal resources of request speech act in a natural environment. Lihe Huang [15], based on the multimodal corpus, explores the role of speech force in the study of speech acts from the perspectives of affective states, prosodic features, physical appearance, and movement. Xiaoyu Pei, Lianrui Yang and Haijuan Yan [16] used multimodal interaction analysis to study the similarities and differences of apology acts made by English learners from different cultural backgrounds. A speech act is the basic unit of language communication. Beltrán Palanques [17] explores the complaints and responses to complaints by English learners at different levels through paralinguistic and body language resources in order to explore how to implement and construct sequences using various semiotic modes. Beltrán-Palanques and Querol-Julian [11] used English as an additional language to analyze the complaint sequences of two groups of learners at different levels, other semiotic modes participating in meaning negotiation, and meaning construction of utterances. In conclusion, the combination of multimodality and L2 pragmatics is possible, and the application of multi-modality can provide more possibilities for the study of L2 pragmatics. Yet, as a matter of fact, the studies on the integration of the multimodality and pragmatic competence are not often seen as expected. So, in this study, a multimodal interaction analysis is used to explore the similarities and differences of modality density in the process of apology-making interaction; in particular, the patterns of various symbolic patterns used by Chinese and Bangladeshi English learners in face-to-face conversation, which is conducive to promoting cross-cultural study and communication.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Problems. This study answers the following questions: (1) what are the important modes used by Chinese and Bangladeshi EFL learners in the interaction between making an apology and accepting an apology? What are the differences in modal intensity? (2) In the interaction of making an apology and accepting an apology, to what extent do Chinese EFL learners and Bangladeshi EFL learners interweave different modes? What are the differences in modal complexity? How do they coordinate different modal resources to construct the situated meaning?

3.2. Participants’ Tasks. In this study, two Chinese English learners and two Bangladeshi English learners in the first year of the university (both of them were rated as B1 by CEFR before the experiment) were selected. To control for as many variables as possible, participants in both groups were asked to have similar real relationships, the same degree, the same age, and the same gender in real life situations. In previous linguistic studies, Bangladeshi English learners were seldom selected as subjects, and they have different social and cultural backgrounds and ideologies from Chinese English learners. There are some differences in communication traditions, people’s thinking patterns, and living

habits, on which basis is to analyze the similarities and differences of the modes of apology used by English learners in different social and cultural contexts.

Two groups of learners engaged in a dialogue on a specific topic in a simulated situation to complete a role-playing task. The apology situation is adapted from a daily life scenario where A and B have a friend relationship, who are recently busy with campus activities. One day they just happened to meet each other and took the opportunity to talk about whether they would have a get-together on holiday. A said no to B and then apologized to B. Two groups of participants were given warm-up role-playing before the task to familiarize themselves with the type of role-playing task so that they could act more naturally and realistically in the later tasks. In addition, participants engaged in conversation in an environment where they feel as natural as possible with no time limit and use as many turns as possible for the purpose of communication.

At the end of the task, we immediately conducted retrospective oral interviews with the participants. The participants noted that the video recording device had little effect in the simulation tasks and that they did so in real-world situations. That provides a certain guarantee for the authenticity of the experiment.

3.3. Research Methodology. Multimodal interaction analysis is one of the most important methods in multimodal research. It focuses on how participants use modal resources such as utterances, gesture, and gaze to mediate interactions in specific contexts. One of the key points of multimodal interaction analysis is to jointly show the formal characteristics and relationships of various modes of social activities. Modal density is an important part of modal features, and its analysis can clearly show the quantity and weight of modes used by communicators in communication [16]. This study aims to explore the modality density present in different modal resources together used by the participants from different social and cultural backgrounds through the application of multimodal interaction analysis to the speech act of apology.

Software Elan is used to collect the data. It is an annotation tool for audio and video recordings. So it is utilized to analyze the participants' utterances, facial expression, and hand movements by carefully transcribing video files with multilevel synchronization annotation done with time measurement based on the generally employed standardization. Annotations of the explanatory strategy and the repair strategy in the head acts and the auxiliary acts are made. The analytical theory is fundamentally involved with modal density, which is embodied by the modal intensity and modal complexity. Modal intensity refers to the importance or weight of a mode in an interaction, as measured by the time (in seconds) the participant chooses each mode in the interaction. "The stronger or heavier the modal load, the higher the modal density" [18]. Modal intensity is expressed as the duration of each mode, as indicated by the values of each resource plotted on a separate axis from the center of the figure to the end of the outer ring. Modal

complexity is "the number of modes used by "social actors" to construct behavior, and the more modes there are, the more modal complexity there is" [19]. "The more complex the interweaving of multiple modes, the higher the modal density" [18]. In this study, the mode density is represented by the area formed by the intersection of the moving time (seconds) of each mode in the radar figures.

The synergy of hand gestures, head movements, gaze, facial expressions, postures, and utterances is studied. The utterance is one of the important modes. According to Blum Kulka, House and Kasper [20], a classification in which the speech used in an apology consists of a head act and auxiliary speech act. The former refers to an expression of apology and the latter is about an explanation of the situation and/or an offer of a repair. Actually, the head act is the smallest speech unit to realize the apology with such expressions used frequently as "sorry," "I'm really sorry," etc. As an indirect speech act of apology, an auxiliary act is composed of a series of auxiliary strategies. Based on the classification of apology strategies by Olshtain and Cohen [21], this study adopts their classification as for the strategies of the speech act of apology.

4. Results and Discussion

According to the exported data from Elan, radar figures were drawn to visualize the modal density of four participants during the process of making an apology and accepting the apology. For the convenience of statistics, the number of Chinese English learners who apologized and the number of Chinese English learners who accepted apology were C1 and C2, respectively; the numbers of Bangladeshi English learners were B1 and B2, respectively. Six different modes including posture, gestures, head movements, gaze, facial expressions, and utterances were labeled, and time was measured in the study. The modal density of the six modes in Head Acts and in the Strategy of Explanation has been presented and discussed as follows in more detail.

4.1. Modal Density in Head Acts. As shown in Figure 1, the modal complexity shown by C1 and B1 during the apology process shares much similarity. Both use six modes (utterances, gestures, facial expressions, head movements, gaze, and posture) to express the meaning of an apology. However, the area of mode formation used by B1 is large, so the intensity of B1 in the process of using six modes is larger. The intensity of the six modes of B1 is higher than that of C1, and the difference of facial expression between B1 and C1 is the biggest. In the apology, C1's utterances and gaze are important modes, while B1, relatively speaking, uses more gestures, head movements, and facial expressions besides utterances and gaze. In the gaze direction, interestingly, both C1 and B1 tend to look away during the start of the apology, and then at the person receiving the apology until the end of the turn. As shown in Figure 2, the modal density of C2 and B2 is shown to be different when accepting an apology. C2 uses five modes for interaction, while B2 uses all the six modal resources. The mode intensity of B2 is higher than that of C2. C2, and B2 are really active in listening and

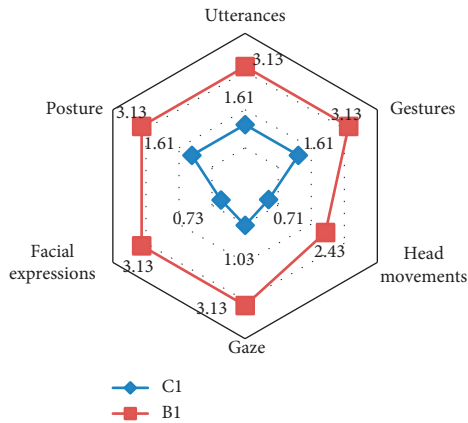


FIGURE 1: Modal density of C1 and B1 in head acts.

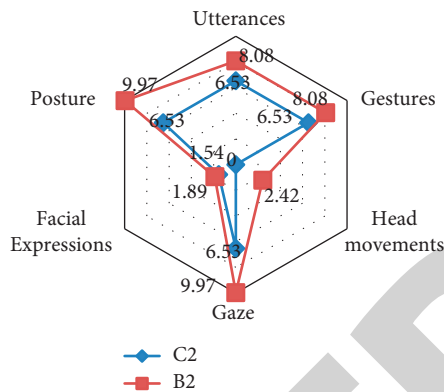


FIGURE 2: Modal density of C2 and B2 in head acts.

interaction by employing gazing, speaking, and gestures as the most important modes of receiving an apology.

5. Modal Density in the Strategy of Explanation

As an indirect speech act of apology, the auxiliary speech act serves as an auxiliary to realize the act of apology. Both of them used an explanation strategy before and after the apology, specifying the reason to reduce the level of a face threat. As shown in Figure 3, B1 shows a higher modal density than C1 when interpreting face-threatening behavior. B1 has a higher modal complexity, and all six modes are used to express utterance meaning. According to the mode intensity, the other five mode intensity of C1 is lower than that of B1 except for gesture. C1 has a high intensity of utterances, gestural, and gaze modes, which are important modes and similar in mode density used by B1. Both C1 and B1 use utterances, gestures, head movements, and gaze to help explain the reason for the apology. As shown in Figure 4, C2 and B2 show little difference in modal density as compared to the apologists. The two recipients still use multiple modes of interaction with the apologists at this stage. C2 uses a higher intensity of utterances and gaze than B2 does. In addition, both oral and gaze modes are

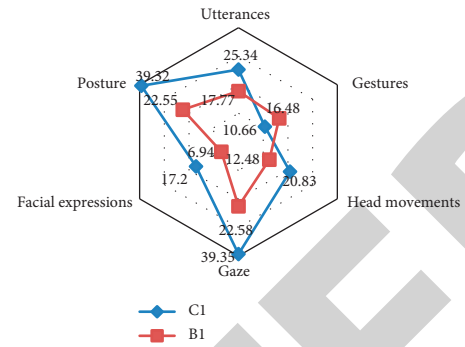


FIGURE 3: Modal density of C1 and B1 in explanation.

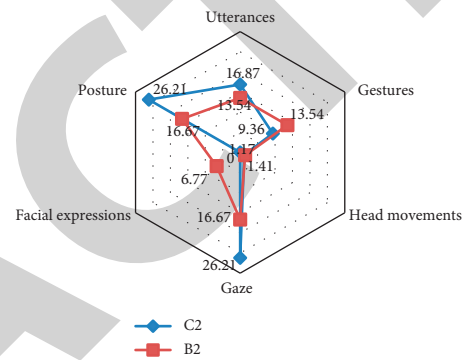


FIGURE 4: Modal density of C2 and B2 in explanation.

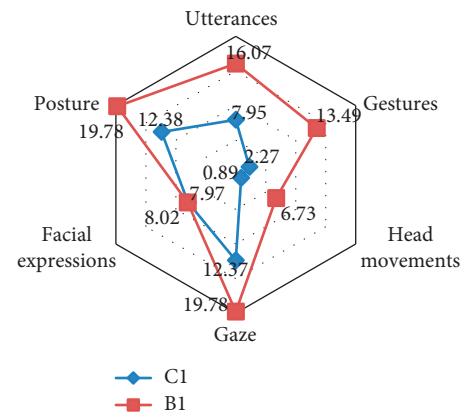


FIGURE 5: Modal density of C1 and B1 in repair.

important modes used by C2 and B2, which show a high degree of listening to and cooperation with the apologists.

5.1. Modal Density in the Strategy of Repair. A repair strategy is an indication of a willingness to compensate. The mode density of C1 and B1 is quite different in the application of repair strategy. As shown in Figure 5, the modal density of B1 is much higher than that of C1. It is shown that B1 has different degrees of using six modes and the intensity of each mode is higher than that of C1. Among them, gestures, facial expressions, gaze, head movements, and utterances are used together to show surprise, smile, and happy emotions. C1

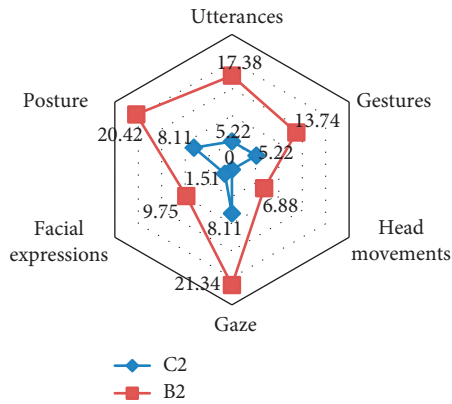


FIGURE 6: Modal density of C2 and B2 in repair.

has the highest intensity in the mode of gaze and looks at the recipient when making a promise of compensation. As shown in Figure 6, the mode density of B2 is higher than that of C2. First, C2 uses four modes for interaction (facial expression, gesture, gaze, and utterances), while B2 uses all modes. The mode intensity of B2 is also much higher than that of C2. After the apologist expressed a desire to make amends, C2 chose to accept and expressed gratitude directly, but B2 offered a different solution. After a little hesitation from B1, the modal intensity of B2 increased. As in the explanation strategy stage, the major modes used by the two apology recipients were utterances, gesture, and gaze.

6. Discussion

Different speech acts are the core topics in the field of pragmatics. Much research has focused on the internal factors of language but has not really addressed them as part of speech act theory [15]. If we analyze it from the perspective of traditional pragmatic theory, we may not be able to understand the speaker's intention accurately only from the perspective of language and context. The nonverbal modes used by the communicators can support the understanding of the recipients to a great extent. For example, when C2 responded to C1's apology by saying that "it did not matter," she employed the modes of smiling, shaking the head, and so on, which contributed a lot to the emotional meaning of the interaction. That may not be the same as the modalities with no facial expression and head movement. Therefore, the other modal information of communicators is supposed to be included in the scope of analysis. That is why the reasonable pragmatic efforts made by communicators to meet their communicative needs are mainly manifested in the coordination of verbal and nonverbal modes.

The microscopic analysis of modal density includes modal intensity and modal complexity. In the aspect of modality intensity, Chinese English learners as a whole have higher gaze modality in the head act and the auxiliary speech act. Gaze is also an important modality in Bengali English learners. The intensity of each mode used by the two Chinese English learners is lower than that used by the two Bangladeshi English learners except that the intensity of each mode in the explanatory strategy is higher than that of two

Bengali English learners but the gesture. That is important in explaining the reasons because a gesture is a unique, unlikely-to-recur, spontaneous, individually formed expression of the speaker's idea at the time of speaking [22]. Utterances, gestures, and gaze are important modes in the ongoing communicative conversation.

Gaze is especially important in face-to-face interactions. Leathers and Eaves [23] hold that gaze has seven communicative functions, namely, showing concern and interest, establishing and maintaining an intimate relationship, embodying discourse credibility or persuasion, mediation, emotion, right, and impression management. The gaze direction of the participants in the process of listening and utterance production mostly pointed to the other side, which has the function of attention and persuasion. However, the participants do not have a communicative function when gazing at the components in the environment, such as the floor and window, which indicates the thought and utterance organization process. In the interaction between the nonverbal modality and the verbal modality, the attention and persuasion reflect the reinforcement of the gaze on the verbal modality, that is, the gaze assists the meaning generation of the verbal modality to a certain extent [24].

Chinese learners of English and Bangladeshi learners of English have the highest modal intensities in explaining strategies and remedial strategies, respectively, which shows the importance they attach to the application of different strategies. The use of both strategies suggests that participants attempt to repair the situation in order to maintain a harmonious relationship, which requires some pragmatic competence. Chinese culture and Bengali culture are both in high-context cultures, whose value orientation is collectivism. In the event of a face threat, it is natural to save each other's faces and stay in harmony. C1 apologizes after an offence has been committed and focuses on explaining the reason to reduce the level of offence. C1 apologizes, offers remedies to mitigate responsibility, and maintains a harmonious relationship with C2. We believe that as a country with English as the official language, Bangladesh also has the characteristics of specific high-context culture in the face to face communication, focusing on maintaining harmonious interpersonal relations. For example, after the apologist made an offer of repair, C2 then chose to accept and show understanding, and similarly, B2 immediately accepted B1's voluntary offer of repair as well.

In the aspect of modal complexity, Chinese English learners' are in general low compared with Bangladeshi learners'. For each of the interactive resources, English learners of the two countries use at least five modal resources to construct the discourse meaning, however, the area of modality resources used by Chinese EFL learners in their interaction is significantly smaller than that of Bangladeshi EFL learners in their interaction between the head act and the repair strategies. Two Chinese EFL learners use six modal resources to construct the interaction in the explanation strategy, which achieves the highest modal complexity. Although the two Chinese EFL learners' modal complexity is low, the nonverbal modes used by the four participants are closely connected with the oral modes and coordinated with

each other to facilitate the production of the meaning of making the apology and accepting the apology, promoting the whole interaction and the achievement of communicative meaning. Just as Kendon [25] thinks, a consideration of using these different modes supports the view that these actions are to be regarded as components of a speaker's final product. They are integral components of a speaker's expression which, in the cases we have been considering, are composed as an ensemble of different modalities of expression.

7. Conclusion

The present study investigated the differences and similarities in the modal densities of six different modes of apology used by two Chinese EFL learners and two Bangladeshi EFL learners, namely, gestures, posture, facial expressions, head movements, gaze, and utterances. Modal density can be used to identify the differences among the semiotic resources chosen by the participants, including modal intensity and modal complexity. It is found that the overall modal complexity of the two Chinese EFL learners is lower than that of the Bengali EFL learners, but verbal and nonverbal modes are still used together to help the communicators convey the meaning more fully. In terms of modal intensities, Chinese and Bangladeshi learners achieved the highest levels of modal intensities in explanatory and remedial strategies, indicating that they attach importance to different apology strategies. The intensity of gaze was higher in all four participants and it was one of the most important modes. The participants used gaze, a nonverbal modality, to enhance the meaning of the utterances while showing signs of active listening, which is especially important in face-to-face interactions. This study shows that second language pragmatic competence can be studied from a multimodal perspective, with a comprehensive view of the functions and interactions of various modes including utterances in the ongoing situated communication. However, the number of subjects selected in this study is too small and the modal resources are limited. In the future, further research will be continued to explore synchronizing the employment of multimodal resources in second language learners' communicative interaction by enlarging the sample size and adding other modal resources, with a view to improving their pragmatic communicative competence.

Data Availability

No data were used to support this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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