

A Video-driven Approach to Promoting Pragmatic Development in the Context of English as a Foreign Language

Nuha Abdullah Alsmari

Department of English, College of Science and Humanities
Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University
Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

While pragmatic competence has proven to be teachable over the past three decades, determining the most appropriate and effective approach to facilitating English as a foreign language (EFL) students' pragmatic development is still a central concern for researchers of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). An investigation into the effects of video-driven prompts on less-studied and more complex teaching speech acts, such as complaints, will significantly supplement the inconclusive results of pragmatic interventional studies in foreign language contexts. To this end, the present study aims to investigate the effects of metapragmatic instruction on English complaints through the implementation of video-driven prompts to raise Saudi female EFL students' awareness of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects associated with the production of appropriate and accurate target-like complaints during one academic semester. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data from 62 English majors, assigned to an experimental group ($n = 31$) and a conventional group ($n = 31$), at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. To elicit the required data, a proficiency test and pre-/post-test written discourse completion tests (WDCT) were distributed among participants. The results of the post-test demonstrated significant improvement in participants' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills in the production of English complaints. The experimental group immensely outperformed the control group due to their exposure to authentic, contextualized video excerpts. The study supports the teachability of complaints as well as the benefits of incorporating metapragmatic awareness tasks based on contextually authentic input, which can, in turn, accelerate EFL students' ability to produce pragmatically appropriate and accurate target-like complaints.

Keywords: consciousness-raising, complaints, metapragmatic instruction, pragmatic development, speech acts, video-driven prompts

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence has been established as a critical element in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and a core component of communicative competence models (Bachman, 1990), being “the ability to comprehend and produce meaning in context” (Taguchi, 2011, p. 432). From a pragmatic point of view, language competence entails two interrelated domains, known as pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence (Leech, 1983). The former comprises awareness of the relationships between language functions and power, social distance, and the amount of imposition involved in the performance of a speech act, as well as conventional practices, social status, and the implications of what you do, when you do it, and to whom (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The latter includes the comprehension of and ability to utilize target language conventions of means and conventions of form appropriately (Thomas, 1983). It is, therefore, necessary for language learners to master not only the grammar of the target language (TL) forms but also the social and cultural values associated with the use of these formulas to use them in a contextually appropriate manner. Research has shown that linguistic proficiency does not necessarily parallel pragmatic ability. Bardovi-Harlig (2013) has reported that even advanced second language (L2) learners may fail to use pragmatically appropriate language, and therefore appear uncooperative or even rude. Besides, some pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are not sufficiently salient to be noticed by learners despite extended language exposure in TL communities (Taguchi, 2019). This suggests that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge need to be systematically taught to help learners acquire them consciously.

A large and growing body of literature has been published to date on the cross-cultural performance of various kinds of speech acts as well as on the teachability of different interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) features in classroom-based interventional treatments, including apologies, refusals, requests, and compliments, in L2 contexts (for reviews, see Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). Research has conclusively reported positive effects of classroom instruction on students’ pragmatic development, regardless of linguistic background; therefore, instructional intervention is beneficial and facilitative for the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, the degree of pragmatic progress is susceptible to several variables affecting the learning process, such as the targeted pragmatic feature, contextual factors, and individual differences among learners (Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019). In the same vein, other ILP researchers have proposed that language learners’ attainment of the ability to use the pragmatic aspects of the TL accurately and appropriately is profoundly affected by three factors: “appropriate input, opportunities for output and provision of feedback” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 9). As a result, empirical investigations have sought to securitize the effects of various contextual parameters that may activate the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence, such as motivation, language proficiency, emotional intelligence, the educational setting, length of residence in a TL country, and metapragmatic discussions (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2015; Sánchez-Hernández & Alcón-Soler, 2019; Rafieyan et al., 2014; Roever, 2012; Takahashi, 2010a; Takahashi, 2010b). As pragmatics have increasingly proven to be amenable to intervention, ILP researchers and practitioners have begun examining the effectiveness of dichotomous teaching approaches and modes of instruction in comparison to others and exploring whether different teaching approaches yield different outcomes in various contextual settings, namely explicit vs. implicit, inductive vs. deductive, input vs. output-based instruction, and metapragmatic instruction, with a few studies focusing on the

integration of modern technological tools into L2 pragmatics instruction (e.g., Alcón-Soler & Pitarch, 2010; Alsmari, 2020; Takahashi, 2010a).

Despite the increasing interest in cross-cultural pragmatic research addressing speech act performance and the recorded success of pedagogical interventions in teaching pragmatic features within ILP literature, limited research has undertaken cross-cultural variations among Arab foreign language learners and native speakers of the target language in speech acts (e.g., Al-Maymoon, 2013; Altheeby, 2012; Morkus, 2014). Additionally, Arab learners of English are relatively under-represented in the field of ILP research, particularly concerning the speech act of complaint (Deveci, 2015; Rashidi, 2017; Umar, 2006). Surveying related ILP literature indicates that the complaint speech act, the focal point of this study, has not been as thoroughly tackled as other speech acts, particularly in countries where English is a foreign language (El-Dakhs et al., 2019). The current research has further documented that the speech act of complaint represents a communication difficulty for ESL/EFL learners in various aspects, such as formulas, strategy selection, the realization of the influence of contextual variables due to its complex nature, and lack of sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge among non-native speakers of English (Deveci, 2015; Li & Suleiman, 2017; Yuan & Zhang, 2018). Very few studies have been conducted on Saudi EFL students' performance of the speech act of complaint (Al-Shorman, 2016; Assallom, 2010; El-Dakhs et al., 2019), and interventional pragmatic studies on complaints are still lacking. Rashidi (2017) argues, "Saudi learners have not so far contributed to interlanguage pragmatic research on complaints" (p. 12). Hence, due to the scarcity of research on the acquisition of English complaints by EFL learners and the inconclusive findings on the effective instructional approaches and best practices for pedagogical intervention to support the advancement of L2 pragmatic competence, the current study sets out to fill a research gap and contributes to the existing ILP research by investigating the effects of metapragmatic awareness via video-driven instruction on Saudi EFL production of pragmatically appropriate and accurate target-like complaints in a classroom setting. Moreover, the study examines whether the probable beneficial effects of the pedagogical intervention on the development of pragmatic proficiency are linked to the video-driven teaching approach in comparison to conventional teaching approaches.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

With the rise of international investments, the increasing demand for English proficiency in various sectors in Saudi Arabia, and the growing number of Saudis pursuing higher education abroad (Al-Seghayer, 2015), effective communication is a priority, which entails learners' ability to apply language functions in different situations and convey culturally appropriate messages. However, successful communication depends mostly on learners' attainment of pragmatic competence. That is, EFL students need to learn the pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic aspects of all kinds of speech acts to be able to produce pragmatically appropriate language functions and speech acts in various communicative situations. Contrariwise, failure to do so may result in being assumed inconsiderate or even rude (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). According to El-Dakhs et al. (2019), "developing pragmatic competence is becoming a requirement for Saudi learners of English to advance a successful career, especially when most well-paying jobs require work in multi-cultural contexts where English is the main language for communication" (p. 297).

However, the acquisition of pragmatic aspects seems to be a daunting venture, particularly in foreign language (FL) settings in which opportunities for processing adequate authentic input are minimal, and classrooms constitute the only place for communication, which is mostly teacher-oriented. Research has acknowledged that pragmatic competence will not be sufficiently acquired unless learners are systematically provided with various learning opportunities of authentic language exposure and consciousness-raising tasks that help enhance the attainment of and reflection on the linguistic and sociopragmatic features of spoken discourse (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Cruz, 2015; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). One such learning opportunity involves the use of video-driven prompts and multimodal strategies, which are thought to offer opportunities for meaningful practice during formal classes and hence maximize and enhance the intercultural competence of EFL learners (Derakhshan & Arabmofrad, 2018; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020; Taguchi, 2015). The present study aims to explore whether incorporating contextualized video-driven instruction in a classroom setting can accelerate Saudi EFL students' pragmatic awareness and aid their production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate English complaints.

1.2 Questions of the Study

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- In what ways can the video-driven approach to pragmatic instruction promote Saudi EFL students' ability to produce pragmatically appropriate and accurate target-like complaints?
- To what extent will the mode of instruction (video-driven vs. conventional) affect Saudi EFL students' performance of appropriate and accurate target-like complaints?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Complaint speech act

Complaints fall within the classification of expressive speech acts with the illocutionary meaning of expressing some kind of disapproval or negative feeling towards a specific past event (Searle, 1969). Therefore, as Olshtain and Weinbach (1993) point out, complaints are an extremely complicated speech act in which “the speaker expresses displeasure or annoyance as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which affect the speaker unfavorably” (p. 19). According to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993), there are four necessary preconditions for the speech act of complaint to be undertaken. These conditions create the speech events that reflect what makes speakers complain, what they are complaining about, and what the point of complaining is. These four preconditions are: (1) the speaker has some expectation—either for a favorable event to occur (appointment, debt return, a fulfillment of a pledge, etc.) or for an unfavorable event (cancellation, injury, attack, etc.) to be prevented from occurring. The action that arises violates the speaker's expectations by either preventing the favorable event or failing to deter the unfavorable activity; (2) the speaker finds the action to be offensive, as it has adverse consequences for him/her; (3) the speaker deems the hearer liable for the action, and (4) the speaker opts to convey his/her feelings of dissatisfaction and frustration verbally.

In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish between two major types of complaints: direct and indirect complaints. According to Boxer (2010), a direct complaint is one that is “directed to a person either responsible of a perceived offense or in a role in which s/he can remedy the offense” (p. 164) while an indirect complaint is made to a listener who is not liable for the perceived offense. Direct complaints are typically characterized as face-threatening acts to the hearer, since they

involve the interlocutor in remedying the complaint. However, for indirect complaints, the speaker does not hold the hearer responsible for the grievance, but s/he seeks agreement or venting from him/her. Accordingly, Cruz (2015) states that direct complaints are cases in which the hearer becomes the target of a complaint, such as, “*You are always so late!*”. In contrast, indirect complaints are cases in which the goal is beyond the speaker’s or the hearer’s control, such as, “*Peter is so ungrateful! He is always asking for favors; he cannot return!*”. In this case, the target is labeled as complainable, and the complaint can be considered a rapport-inspiring speech act (Boxer, 2010). The selection of these complaint formulas, which vary from direct to indirect realizations, is further dependent on three different parameters that contribute to politeness between the interlocutors, namely (1) the interlocutor’s comprehension of the severity of the offense implicated in the communicative action, (2) the degree of social distance, and (3) the difference in social power between the speaker and hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The speech act of complaint is considered a face-threatening act in terms of the politeness theory, in which the complainant must take into consideration the complainee’s face in to avoid any possible threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987). That is to say, complaining threatens the hearer’s public image (need to be respected and appreciated) as the speaker reveals his/her disappointment with the hearer. Hence, the speaker needs to handle complaining of special care to deliver the message and persuade the hearer to act while maintaining rapport with the hearer. Due to the delicate nature of complaints, a certain degree of nuance is required, a nuance which does not come naturally to those learning English as a second language. Miller (2006) points out that it is essential to understand that speech acts involve real-life interactions and require knowledge of the language as well as the ability to use that language appropriately within its culture. Social variables, such as power, social distance, and situational setting, directly influence the appropriateness of politeness strategies.

Given the complexity encountered in the complaint exchange, the speaker must be alert to the existence of various formulas that can be utilized to appropriately express a complaint to the hearer and avoid communication breakdowns between the two interlocutors. What is perceived as polite in Arabic may not be seen as so in English or French. As a result, EFL learners who lack adequate pragmatic competence in L2 or draw on their L1 pragmatic norms may fall into pragmatic failure; that is, they may be at risk of offending other interlocutors or miscommunicating face-threatening acts (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Gaily, 2014). Pragmatic failure has two levels: (1) the pragma-linguistic level resulting from assigning pragmatic force to an utterance different from that usually attached to it by the native speaker or transferring inappropriate conversational strategies; (2) or the sociopragmatic level resulting from differences in cultural norms governing linguistic behaviors in different societies (Thomas, 1983). Accordingly, studying complaints involves various perspectives; that is, linguistic, sociopragmatic, and cultural concerns. To do so, especially in FL contexts where there are limited opportunities to experience authentic complaint situations, pedagogical interference appears to be crucial.

2.2 *Interventional pragmatic studies on complaints*

A large and growing body of interventional classroom-based experiments has been conducted in the field of ILP research that is directed at promoting pragmatic competence via short- and long-term pedagogical frameworks in L2/FL contexts (for reviews, see Plonsky &

Zhuang, 2019; Taguchi, 2015). Many have conclusively reported positive effects on language learners' pragmatic performance regardless of linguistic background. The speech act of complaint is a relatively under-represented speech act in interlanguage pragmatic research, particularly in foreign language contexts (Al-Shorman, 2016; Deveci, 2015; El-Dakhs et al., 2019; Umar, 2006). Unlike other speech acts, complaining was comparably less investigated due to its complexity; it does not have pre-determined linguistic forms and the interpretations of the complaint formulas are often negotiable (Chen et al, 2011). More specifically, hardly any attention has been given to the teachability, learnability, and performance of complaints among Arab foreign language learners (Al-Shorman, 2016; El-Dakhs et al., 2019; Rashidi, 2017), and this has motivated the present study.

Using a pre-test/post-test design, Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, and Fatahi (2004) attempted to examine the impact of explicit metapragmatic instruction on learners' comprehension of three speech acts: requesting, apologizing, and complaining. Findings revealed that EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge of the speech acts under study developed significantly, supporting the advantages of incorporating direct instruction in EFL classrooms to foster learners' pragmatic competence. Similar findings were documented in research conducted by Gaily (2014), Noonkong et al. (2017), and Li and Zhoumin (2019). They reported that significant improvement in students' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic skills and concluded that pragmatics couldn't be effectively acquired without explicit pragmatic intervention.

It should be noted from the literature mentioned above, that only a small number of investigations tackle the speech act of complaint with EFL learners. Although the last decade witnessed a growing interest in teaching pragmatics to Arab learners of English, no study, to the researcher's knowledge, has considered the teachability of complaining to Saudi EFL undergraduate students. Thus, it is reasonable to focus on the development of the production of complaints with the help of some innovative teaching approaches and different modes of instruction, such as video-prompt instruction. What follows is a review of the use of authentic audio-visual excerpts in the area of pragmatics.

2.3 Research on authentic video-driven prompts

Research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign language learners has highlighted essential principles that should be considered when teaching pragmatics and its components in educational contexts. One of these fundamental principles that may contribute significantly to the acquisition of communicative competence is the use, as frequent as possible, of authentic language in classroom settings. Nunan (1999) describes authentic language as any spoken or written resource that has been generated in the course of genuine communication to serve some social function in the language community rather than written explicitly for purposes of language instruction.

Authentic audio-visual material has caught the attention of many ILP researchers, has recently become one of the wealthiest resources available for EFL teachers. Some benefits of using genuine audio-visual input, as reported by Lingzhu and Yuanyuan (2010), are exposing students to real language, promoting student motivation, and accumulating student knowledge. Such observations were further supported by Brock and Nagasaka (2005). They argue that using videos,

films, and television shows makes the classroom atmosphere more exciting and stimulating as they provide a variety of natural, everyday life exchanges with various expressions spoken in the TL accompanied by verbal, as well as non-verbal, communication strategies. These authentic materials may work as an adequate substitute to textbook conversations, which focus primarily on linguistic competence rather than pragmatic competence, and which, for some researchers, are not a reliable source of pragmatic input either (Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2014). In the same vein, Alcón-Soler and Pitarch (2010) find that authentic, video-driven prompts pose a solution for many EFL teachers overwhelmed by assisting their students in acquiring pragmatically appropriate speech act use—particularly in the case of complaints, which have no stereotypical forms and no corresponding second part. Similarly, Derakhshan & Zangoei (2014) cherish the use of video-driven prompts for bringing real life to the classroom and presenting learners with the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge needed for the acquisition of pragmatic competence in EFL contexts, which sorely lack native-like and naturalistic input inside and outside classrooms.

Using a pre-/post-test research method with a control group, Birjandi and Derakhshan (2014) addressed the effect of consciousness-raising, video-driven prompts on the pragmatic listening comprehension of the speech acts of apology, request, and refusal among 78 upper-intermediate EFL learners. Participants were assigned randomly into four groups: metapragmatic, form-search, role-play, and control. Each group adopted a specific instructional approach accompanied by 45 video clips taken from the *Flash Forward* and *Stargate* TV shows and the film *Annie Hall*. In contrast, the control group followed regular listening comprehension lessons, which consisted of comprehension questions, repetition, and vocabulary drills. Utilizing a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MCDT), findings have shown the significant effect of using audio-visual data on the progress of the comprehension of targeted speech acts, as the three experimental groups outperformed the control group. The most considerable improvement was for the metapragmatic group, followed by the form-search group, which had a better performance than the role-play and control groups.

Similar results were confirmed in two follow-up studies conducted by Derakhshan and Eslami-Rasekh (2015) and Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018). Likewise, Hashemian, Domakani, and Ansari (2016) examined the efficacy of using movies as a contextualized teaching strategy to enhance EFL learners' pragmatic abilities. Results have demonstrated a beneficial impact of using films to promote EFL students' utilization of various request and apology strategies after watching the videos. Considering the Saudi context, Alerwi and Alzahrani (2020) proposed the use of sitcoms to improve EFL freshmen students' acquisition of speech acts of requests, refusals, apologies, and compliment responses on the targeted speech acts represented through video clips from different sitcoms. Statistical post-test findings indicated a vast improvement in EFL students' performance of the targeted speech acts despite the brief period of the experiment. Also, the sitcom experience had a profound influence on students' perceptions and willingness to learn.

Overall, the review mentioned above of the interventional pragmatic studies on speech acts has highlighted the beneficial effects of incorporating video-driven prompts, extracted from authentic language multimedia, into planned pedagogical sessions to enhance the learnability of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of speech acts. Nonetheless, none of these studies

has examined this method's efficacy on teaching complaints as the targeted pragmatic feature, nor have any been conducted in the Saudi context. Accordingly, as Martínez-Flor (2016) argues, additional investigation is required to broaden the scope of participants' first language and examine the effects of different instructional approaches using various modes of teaching on the pragmatically appropriate speech act performance. Apart from this aspect, all previous studies have mainly implemented a quantitative approach to examining statistical differences. To this end, employing a mixed-methods research design, the present study intends to explore the influence of a video-driven approach on teaching Saudi EFL students' use of accurate and appropriate complaints over one academic semester.

3. Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated to evaluate the effect of a video-driven prompts approach on female Saudi EFL students' production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate English complaints. The independent variable is the instructional approach, whereas the dependent variable is EFL students' performance of complaining before and after the treatment.

3.1 Participants

The sample of the study consisted of 62 female Saudi EFL students majoring in English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. They were assigned to two intact classes: "video-driven prompt group" (n = 31) and "conventional group" (n = 31). Respondents aged 22 to 24 years were selected based on a demographic questionnaire and a written version of the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allan, 2006) that were administered before the treatment to ensure homogeneity of the two groups. Participants had no previous experience of studying abroad, nor had they been introduced to any pragmatics program prior to the pedagogical intervention; thus, the treatment represented their first exposure to pragmatics. Students were of an intermediate level of English language proficiency, and this level is appropriate for acquiring pragmatic competence (Kasper, 2001).

3.2 Instrument of the study

To gather the required data, a written discourse completion test (WDCT) was utilized as the pre-test and post-test. The WDCT was adopted from Blum-Kulka (1984), culturally validated by Assaloom (2010) then Aldaghri (2018), and finally adapted in line with the objective of the study (see Appendix A). The WDCT consisted of six scenarios, each involving a situation that simulated a complaint to someone in students' family, social, or academic lives to ensure the naturalness of data. The scenarios were devised to elicit complaints from interlocutors of high, equal, and low social status in situations of high and low levels of impositions that are practically implicated in different contexts in which students need to make complaints. The social variable of distance was controlled as learners need to deal with people with whom they are familiar to derive as natural a response as possible (see Appendix A). The test took about 45 minutes to complete. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the WDCT was handed to a jury of five professors to seek their viewpoints on the clarity, accuracy, and appropriateness of the research tool. The WDCT was further piloted with 25 participants to ascertain the reliability of the instrument, which was found to be 0.86 using Cronbach's alpha.

3.3 Procedure

Using a pre-/post-test design with a control group, the process of collecting the data took one semester. A total of 62 level-six English undergraduates were allocated into two intact classes: video-driven and conventional groups at the Department of English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University. A WDCT was developed to assess participants' pragmatic productive ability before and after the treatment. The data collected through the pre-test and post-test were evaluated and scored by three raters according to Taguchi's (2011) scoring system for assessing pragmatic production. The metapragmatic information of the complaint speech act patterns, strategies, and rules was drawn from ILP research that is empirically established in the literature. The sociopragmatic elements of these patterns were extracted using the relations, notions, and concepts defined by the literature. Over twelve-weeks, the teaching sessions were held once a week for approximately 60 minutes in which learners of the experimental group were exposed to various types of metapragmatic instruction, and awareness-raising tasks based on 44 video prompts concerning the speech act of complaint. These vignettes were extracted from different episodes of the sitcom *Friends* due to the resemblance of the linguistic and extralinguistic features in *Friends* to those of natural conversations (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020). Quaglio (2009) notes that *Friends* shares some key characteristics that embody various registers in natural conversations. The validity of the selection of these video prompts was cross-checked by the researcher and two professors of applied linguistics.

The instructional method embraced in this study was a modification of the pedagogical approach suggested by Alcón (2012) and further developed by Martínez-Flor (2016), who generated a framework to teach apologies featuring episodes from TV shows. To this end, the researcher followed a four-step procedure adopted from Martínez-Flor (2016), which includes: 1) recognizing complaints in communication, 2) clarifying the speech act set and sequence, 3) negotiating and analyzing learners' use of complaints, and 4) providing feedback on learners' complaint responses. The aim of this video-driven prompt approach is three-fold: first, provide learners with the contextualized authentic input necessary for acquiring the target feature under study; second, raise their awareness of the pragmalinguistic (referring to the linguistic resources for formulating a speech act) and sociopragmatic (referring to the contextual and social variables which determine the appropriateness of a linguistic choice) features involved in making complaints; and third, encourage them to reflect on this metapragmatic information through collaborative practice and role-plays. By engaging learners in such an instructional approach, Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) claim that learners are equipped with the three mandatory requirements to improve their pragmatic proficiency in the English language—specifically, access to the appropriate input, opportunities for production, and provision of feedback.

At the beginning of the session, learners of the experimental group were provided with the plot of the studied vignettes as well as the transcripts in which the speech act of complaint was introduced. After watching the targeted video prompts, learners had to identify the sequence of the complaint structure. Then, the teacher-researcher had to develop EFL learners' pragmatic comprehension through elaborating on the metapragmatic aspects of the complaint formulas, including the critical elements of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics associated with the appropriate use of these complaint strategies as contextualized in the video scenes regarding power, distance, and level of imposition. Once learners are aware of the various forms of the speech act of complaint and their appropriate uses, they are further provided with opportunities to

produce them in a variety of different role-plays equivalent to the encounters experienced in the video-driven prompts and pragmatically focused tasks. The teacher-researcher offered immediate feedback on students' performance as well as metapragmatic explanations concerning the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic issues associated with their practice. On the other hand, the control group received regular instruction on the targeted speech act under study, as presented in the course curriculum, which discusses some aspects and theories of pragmatics, including the speech act theory.

3.4 Data Analysis

The present study adopts both quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the collected data. Using the statistical software SPSS, data collected were statistically analyzed using paired-samples t-tests and independent-samples t-tests to calculate any prominent variations between the experimental and control groups in the pre-tests and post-tests at the level of significance ($p < 0.01$). Participants' performance on the WDCT was rated by two native speakers and the researcher. The rating was based on Taguchi's (2011) six-point rating scale of appropriateness, ranging from 'no performance' (0) to 'excellent' (5) and including detailed descriptions of the pragmatic as well as the grammatical aspects.

Table 1. *Rating scale*

Ratings	Description
5 Excellent	- Expressions are almost entirely appropriate and effective in the level of directness, politeness, and formality. - No or almost no grammatical and discourse errors.
4 Good	- Expressions are not perfect but adequately appropriate in the levels of directness, politeness, and formality. They fall short of target-like, but are pretty good. - Very few grammatical and discourse errors.
3 Fair	- Expressions are only somewhat appropriate in the level of directness, politeness, and formality. They are more direct or indirect than the situation requires. - Grammatical and discourse errors are noticeable, but they do not interfere with appropriateness.
2 Poor	- Expressions are inappropriate. They sound almost rude or too demanding. - Due to the interference from grammatical and discourse errors, appropriateness is difficult to determine.
1 Very Poor	- Expressions are very difficult or too scarce to understand. There is almost no evidence that the intended speech acts are being performed.
0 No Performance	

Source: Adapted from Taguchi, 2011.

For the qualitative analysis, the researcher presented her observations regarding participants' responses and patterns used in the pre-test/post-test and compared them to support the statistical results qualitatively. The complaint formulas were categorized based on the

taxonomy displayed in Table 2, which is built on Olshtain and Weinbach's (1993) categorization of complaint strategies along with Trosborg's (1995) severity scale coding scheme to explain the differences in the learners' performance in the pre-test and post-test responses.

Table 2. *Coding scheme of complaint strategies*

Severity level	Strategy	Definition	Example
Least Severe	Below the level of reproach	A speaker avoids explicit mention of the offense by using remarks that do not directly blame an interlocutor.	Don't worry about it, such things happen.
	Expression of annoyance or disapproval	A speaker employs indirect or vague indications that something has been violated without holding the interlocutor directly responsible. The speaker avoids confrontation with the interlocutor and makes general remarks that something has happened by expressing some sort of annoyance at the violation.	This behavior is unacceptable.
	Requests for repair	Questions are directed to the hearer to remediate the problem	Please see if you can fix this as soon as possible.
Somewhat Severe	Justifications	The speaker gives reasons to defend or lend support to their position or demand for repair.	Look at these things all over the place.
	Explicit complaint	The speaker overtly states a direct complaint, holding the interlocutor responsible for a violation. It is a direct and unmitigated complaint pointed at the interlocutor's face.	You are such an impolite person; you should've consulted with me first.
Fairly Severe	Accusation and warning	It is an overt action conducted by the speaker to make an explicit complaint that may carry potential consequences for the interlocutor.	Next time, you will pay for it with your own money!
Severe	Threat	The speaker threatens the interlocutor by applying some sort of punishment.	If we don't finish the project today, I'll have to discuss it with the boss.
Very Severe			

4. Results

4.1 Quantitative Findings

In response to the research questions of the study, an independent-samples t-test was carried out to calculate whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-test scores of both the experimental and conventional groups before and after the treatment. The results of applying the statistical procedure, shown in Table 3, illustrate that there was no statistically significant difference between the experimental ($M = 14.50$) and control ($M = 15.11$) groups in terms of pragmatic performance ($t = 0.31$; $p = .83 > 0.01$) before the intervention, and this result is compatible with the objective of the study. Accordingly, any progression found in the results of the post-test can be mainly attributed to the pedagogical intervention.

Table 3. *Independent-samples t-test for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on pre-test*

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	31	14.50	6.55	0.311	59	.83
Control	31	15.11	5.69			

Attempting to compare the post-tests, the findings of an independent-samples t-test, displayed in Table 4, demonstrate that the mean score of the experimental group ($M = 27.22$) was substantially higher than that of the control group ($M = 17.51$), and this difference is statistically significant ($p = .000 < 0.01$). The substantial increase in the mean score of the experimental group indicates that the pedagogical intervention in the EFL classroom had a positive effect on the pragmatic development of complaints used by EFL learners after being enrolled in the teaching experiment. While conventional teaching may, to some extent, facilitate the development of the control group's pragmatic knowledge, as there is a slight increase in the post-test score, there is a great potential to expedite the advancement of EFL students' pragmatic abilities through integrating authentic video-driven prompts in EFL classrooms, as seen in the experimental group's performance. Hence, the effectiveness of video-driven prompt instruction over conventional instruction is advocated in contributing to successful learning outputs in the production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate complaint speech acts.

Table 4. *Independent samples t-test for the difference in the mean scores of the experimental group and the control group on post-test*

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	31	27.22	2.90	8.692	59	.000
Control	31	18.51	5.77			

To explore differences within groups, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare the pre- and post-tests in the experimental and control groups before and after the experiment. The results in Table 5 indicate that participants' performance in the experimental group considerably increased on the post-test ($M = 27.22$), and it was a statistically significant outperformance ($p < .01$) in contrast to the pre-test. On the other hand, the mean score of the control group slightly increased, which can be attributed to the students' ongoing progress as a result of conventional instruction. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the quantitative difference between the two

groups confirms the beneficial impact of utilizing authentic audio-visual vignettes in EFL classrooms to promote the pragmatic abilities of FL learners.

Table 5. Paired-samples *t*-test for experimental and control groups

	Test	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental	Pre-test	14.50	5.56	11.77	29	.000
	Post-test	27.22				
Control	Pre-test	15.11	3.83	3.23	29	.043
	Post-test	18.51				

4.2 Qualitative Findings

To obtain a more detailed understanding of the quantitative findings mentioned above, participants' performance in the pre- and post-tests were further explored. The qualitative analysis focused on three aspects: EFL learners' awareness of complaints, their linguistic repertoire when producing the target speech act, and their sociopragmatic knowledge of the social parameters affecting the production of complaints. Based on the pre-test results, the teacher-researcher observed that Saudi EFL students were suffering from linguistic weaknesses and pragmatic deficiencies in English. First, most learners used the same strategy to respond to all scenarios, such as using rhetorical questions to express annoyance, like "*Why did you do that?*" or expressions like "*never do it again,*" which could be interpreted as a threat. Second, some students portrayed their emotional state or the action they would take instead of performing a complaint speech act, such as "*we will have a fight,*" "*I will say nothing and dress up anything else,*" "*I will lose my mind,*" and "*I get so angry.*" Some students reacted to some scenarios by opting out—"*I will say nothing,*" or "*I cannot say anything*"—and some of them even provided a justification for doing so, particularly in scenarios where the interlocutor is the mother or a young sister. Third, the excessive use of imperatives with no polite markers is further proof of the lack of sufficient pragma-linguistic knowledge as well as the misuse of inquiries when seeking clarification and justification, such as responding to the scenario of the professor with "*Give my recommendation letter now. I need it,*" "*Give it to me right now,*" and "*Why don't you send the letter?*" It was noticeable that some students did not use the suitable degree of severity or the appropriate strategy depending on the complaint situation, such as using "*It's okay don't worry about it*" and "*never mind*" as a reaction to the housemaid who damaged the skirt, thereby implementing a strategy below the appropriate level of reproach instead of making a direct complaint. Fourth, learners' complaints were restricted to the head act; accordingly, intensifiers (upgraders) and softeners (down-graders) were notably absent. In addition, there were several grammatical and spelling errors that made it necessary to provide the students with the video scripts depicting the speech act of complaint as well as several representations of the first culture effect.

In the post-test results, WDCT responses of the experimental group differed utterly from those in the pre-test, as shown in the following samples:

Table 6. *Samples of the experimental group's performance*

Experimental group participants	Interlocutor	Pre-test	Post-test
Student 1	Maid	Be careful next time.	Oh God, how did that happen? Can you please be more careful next time?
Student 2	Little sister	I will beat her.	Please do not play with my stuff again without my permission! Because you have deleted an important file.
Student 3	Professor	You are delaying my application. How can you forget something important like that?	Oh no, this is the final day for applying, could you please spare some time today to do it for me. I will be thankful.
Student 4	Professor	Please write me a letter of recommendation. I need it as soon as possible.	Sorry for bothering you professor. This form is very important to me. I really hope that you give me a hand and write the form. Thank you.
Student 5	Mother	Okay mom.	Mom. I gave them my word. Please mom let me go this time and I promise to attend the next occasion.
Student 6	Classmate	Bring them tomorrow.	Why did you forget to bring them? I really need them by now to study for the quiz. I think you have to come to my house with the notes.
Student 7	Cousin	Never talk to me today.	Are you serious? I waited all night long while you're sleeping. Don't do it again.

Compared to the pre-test, the performance of the experimental group participants outperformed the control group in terms of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge after receiving the metapragmatic video-driven prompts instruction, as displayed in Table 4. For instance, student 1 responded to the housemaid scenario, where imposition is considered to be high, with an imperative as a request for repair in the pre-test, while in the post-test, she used a rhetorical question to express annoyance along with a proper form of request. In the scenario of the little sister, student 2 decided to opt out in the pre-test due to a lack of linguistic pragmatic knowledge. However, in the post-test, she used an imperative as an accusation and warning. She also used justification—“*You have deleted an important file*”—as well as a softener: “*please*.” As for the scenario of the professor, student 3 used a rhetorical query to express annoyance as well as an explicit complaint, and student 4 used an imperative and justification as an expression of his complaint in the pre-test. On the other hand, in the post-test, student 3 used an explanation—“*This is the final day for applying*”—followed by a polite and formal request for repair and concluded the complaint with “*I will be thankful*.” Student 4 used pre-complaint-stage strategies (i.e., excusing herself for the imposition and establishing a context), followed by request for repair and a “*thank you*” as a closing strategy. Concerning the scenario of the mother, where imposition is

low, student 5 used an approach below the appropriate level of reproach in the pre-test. However, in the post-test, she used an expression of annoyance and a justification followed by request for repair. In the last two scenarios, where students 6 and 7 had equal power with their interlocutor, (female classmate and female cousin, respectively), both speakers used imperatives as expressions of annoyance in the pre-test. In contrast, both students used different strategies in the post-test depending on the level of imposition. Student 6 used an accusation in the form of a rhetorical question followed by a justification and ended with a request for repair. Student 7 used an explicit complaint with a justification and concluded with a warning, “*Don't do it again,*” as the scenario was of a high imposition.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The present study presents an investigation into the effects of metapragmatic, video-driven instruction on Saudi EFL students’ production of pragmatically appropriate and grammatically accurate target-like complaints. Given the qualitative and quantitative post-test findings, it is evident that pragmatic intervention facilitates interlanguage pragmatics development. More specifically, the experimental group participants became more aware of the pragmalinguistic, and sociopragmatic aspects associated with language functions and speech acts, as shown by the significant improvement of their production abilities in the post-test results. Students became more expressive and used extended responses instead of the linguistically limited answers used in the pre-test. Students who couldn’t produce a complaint or used partial complaints were later able to use more suitable strategies for different situations, showing sensitivity to different social variables. It is evident that students incorporated several strategies in one response and involved multiple components of a complaint. The prominent results from the WDCT post-test have further proved that the pedagogical intervention of pragmatic competence implementing authentic language conversations to teach speech act realizations, patterns, and rules can foster participants’ interlanguage pragmatic ability to make native-like complaints using various linguistic strategies and considering social variables existing between interlocutors. These findings are compatible with Birjandi and Derakhshan (2014), Gaily (2014), Hashemian, et al. (2016), Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018), and Alerwi and Alzahrani (2020), in which they reported that using consciousness-raising video prompts extracted from authentic materials supported by metapragmatic instruction and planned pedagogical intervention had an immense impact on EFL students’ pragmatic performance of speech acts.

These results support Schmidt’s (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, which argues that learners’ noticing of the target feature is an essential prerequisite for learners’ ability to convert the input to intake, thereby resulting in further second language development. Although some pragmatic knowledge is universal and some can be transferred from learners’ L1, EFL students do not always use what they know. Hence, pedagogical interventions can help them conceive what they already know and enable them to use their L1 pragmatic knowledge appropriately in L2 contexts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). In the study context, participants of the experimental group consciously acquired the pragmatic features of the target language presented in the classroom by recognizing the targeted expressions used for complaining and understanding the effects of contextual parameters affecting language use; this resulted in more appropriate formulas being employed in the post-test.

The results cast light on the role of video-driven prompts as an influential source of authentic input in teaching and learning interlanguage pragmatics, especially when a growing body of research has documented that textbook conversations are not a reliable source of pragmatic knowledge as they do not confer sufficient meta-linguistic and meta-pragmatic information (Jalilian & Roohani, 2016; Tatsuki, 2019). As compensation, the use of audio-visual prompts, extracted from sitcoms, movies, and TV series, can overcome the inherent limitations of FL contexts. They can provide EFL teachers with solutions for the obstacles encountered when dealing with teaching sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects as they contain real-life situations and common cultural issues and portray characters with which learners can sympathize and imitate (Alcón-Soler & Pitarch, 2010; Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2014). Similarly, the results were in line with Al-Shorman (2016), who found that exposing EFL learners to authentic learning situations can enrich their pragma-linguistic repertoire, increase their motivation for learning, and decrease their anxiety and stress when learning a foreign language. It can further help them to achieve successful communication by minimizing the production of culturally specific expressions when responding to complaints in the target language that may cause communication breakdown and violation of the target language's social-cultural norms. Furthermore, based on a pedagogical framework, genuine materials can make the classroom setting more interesting and inspiring, accelerating learners' pragmatic and strategic competence when effectively exploited in consciousness-raising activities, collaborative output production tasks, and role-plays in which FL learners can notice gaps in their knowledge and receive explicit feedback (Hashemian et al., 2016; Tognozzi, 2010).

Although the findings of this study are substantial and significant, the researcher recommends several areas for further inquiry. First, the study focuses on the impact of video-driven prompts on the production of the speech act of complaint. It is suggested that further research should focus on the instruction of other kinds of speech acts and pragmatic aspects. It is also advised to duplicate the experiment with a larger number of participants across different levels of proficiency to confirm the effects of instruction and methodology. Second, while the study results provide a persuasive proof that pedagogical intervention can improve EFL learners' pragmatic abilities, there is still inconclusive evidence as to which approach is most useful to promote pragmatic knowledge, particularly in the Arab world, and most specifically in the Saudi context, where interlanguage pragmatic research is severely lacking. Third, the treatment was confined to female learners, as the study was conducted in a female college. Additional research may explore gender differences, which may hold different results.

In conclusion, this study presents a proposal for pragmatic intervention on English complaints through the implementation of video-driven prompts to raise Saudi female EFL undergraduates' awareness of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects associated with the production of accurate and appropriate complaints. The most valuable contributions of this study will be its classroom applications and its significance and pedagogical benefit to the teaching and learning of foreign language. The findings of the study have proven that if EFL learners are exposed to contextualized learning conditions, their linguistic performance and pragmatic competence will accelerate dramatically, given the rich input provided by authentic audio-visual materials. The findings also hold implications for language educators, curriculum planners, and EFL material designers in Saudi Arabia, given the lack of pragmatically centered materials, in that

if they consider teaching speech acts in classrooms, they can implement excerpts from sitcoms, films, and TV shows that will offer various opportunities for EFL learners to raise their awareness of the communication norms of the native culture as well as the socio-pragmatic rules associated with the use of these kinds of speech acts. In summation, to become pragmatically competent, EFL learners need to gain knowledge of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of all types of speech acts to be able to comprehend and produce pragmatically appropriate language functions in various communicative situations.

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About the Author

Dr. Nuha A. Alsmari is an Assistant Professor of applied linguistics at the Department of English, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests include foreign language teaching and learning, pragmatic instruction, language learning strategies and self-directed learning. ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9121-0868>

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Appendix A

Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT)

Name: _____

Read the following scenarios carefully then write your response in the space below. Imagine yourself in such situations and give your response as naturally as possible. Your answers will be used for research purposes.

1. It is 5 p.m. and now you will be meeting your friends at the mall in 20 minutes. You go to your room to dress up, but you find that the skirt that you intend to wear needs ironing. You give it to your housemaid to iron. After 10 minutes, she returns it back burnt with a big hole that exposes your legs. What would you say to your housemaid?
2. Last night, you stayed up late writing a research paper, which is due within two days and must be submitted to your professor on time. You finished writing your paper and you went to bed at 3:00 a.m. Two hours later, you woke up to find your youngest sister, who is 9 years old, entered your room, played with your laptop. Then, she mistakenly deleted your file. You tried to search for a copy, and you found one, but the latest changes are missing. What would you say to your youngest sister?
3. You are applying for post graduate studies in the university. It is required to have 3 recommendation forms filled out by your professors. 3 weeks ago, you asked one of your professors, who is originally American, to do that for you. Today is the final day for applying. You meet her to collect the form, but she said that she has totally forgotten about the form. You complain to her saying:
4. Yesterday, you got your mother's permission to go to your friends' monthly gathering. Today, when you start dressing up, your mother asks you: "where are you going to go?" When you tell her that you are going to the restaurant, she says that she can't let you go because she forgot to tell you that there is an important family occasion tonight. What would you say to your mother?
5. On Monday, you have a lecture about English literature for which you spend two hours writing down some notes. At the end of the lecture, one of your classmates asks you to lend her your hand-written lecture notes to photocopy to get prepared for next- week quiz and return it by tomorrow. On Wednesday, when you ask her to return your notes, she says that she has forgotten both copies at home. What would you say to the classmate?
6. Your female cousin, who is about your age, promises to visit you at home tonight. So, you start preparing for this invitation from about 5:00 p.m. she is expected to arrive at 7:00. Now it is 9:00 p.m. and your cousin has not shown up yet. After calling your uncle's house, her mother informs you that your cousin is still sleeping. You cancel your dinner and next day you call her. What would you say to your cousin?

Appendix B

Categorization of the Six WDCT Items According to the Two Social Variables of Power and Imposition

No. Scenario/ interlocutor	Power	Imposition
1. Damaging your skirt/ housemaid	High	High
2. Deleting some information in important file/young sister	High	Low
3. Forgetting about recommendation letter/ professor	Low	High
4. Forgetting about your visit to your friends/ mother	Low	Low
5. Forgetting to return your notes/ classmate.	Equal	Low
6. Not paying you a prescheduled visit/ cousin.	Equal	High