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Research Article

The Effect of Web-based Dynamic Assessment (WDA) on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Pragmatic Knowledge: Apology, Refusal and Request

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Abstract

Speech acts, as a main category of pragmatic competence in the success of communication, are considered one of the important research areas in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) due to the heed to pragmatic competence as a main component of language competence**.** As a dominant change in the area of language assessment, the emergence of an assessment procedure, namely dynamic assessment (DA), can be mentioned. This quasi-experimental study sought to investigate the effect of web-based dynamic assessment (WDA) on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. The participants of this study consisted of 100 female Iranian intermediate EFL learners studying English in one of the private language institutes of Tehran, Iran. They were selected through convenience sampling in the form of five intact classes based on their availability. The Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) and a multiple-choice Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT), adapted from Birjandi and Rezaei (2010, taken from Tajeddin & Bagherkazemi, 2014) and other WDCTs available in the market, were used to collect the data. For data analysis, descriptive statistics and the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) along with Bonferroni multiple comparisons were run. The results showed that web-based Brown's graduated prompt approach and Feuerstein's mediated learning experience (MLE) approach were more effective than the other two models (Guthke's learntest approach and Carlson and Wield's testing the limits approach) on EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of apology, refusal, and request. The findings have implications for EFL teachers, learners, and curriculum planners.

Keywords: apology, pragmatic knowledge, refusal, request, web-based dynamic assessment (WDA)

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Introduction

Language teaching is an arena wherein some notions are closely interrelated. Among such notions, instruction and assessment can be mentioned. Due to such a relationship, any change in instruction can contribute to modifications in assessment and vice versa (Poehner, 2008). As a dominant change in the area of language assessment, the emergence of an assessment procedure, namely dynamic assessment (DA), can be considered (Poehner, 2008).

DA, obtained from Vygotsky's (1989) Socio-cultural Theory of Mind (SCT) and his theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It cultivates its roots in the opinion that viewing people's free-standing execution reveals the consequences of their past improvement; however, the objective of most evaluations is to predict learners' performance in the future (Poehner, 2008). Based on this view, if one wishes to have a thorough grasp of the development processes and to scaffold individuals to cope with learning difficulties, he or she should be aware that it does not suffice to just observe their sole performance in the present (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). Rather, what is needed is interaction with individuals is to activate their full range of abilities and support their development (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011). Applying this to the context of education, educators ought to recognize their learners' abilities (assessment) and help them develop (instruction) in dialectically merged activities. This approach is what Poehner (2008) called DA.

Researchers are increasingly focusing on web-based DA (WDA) in education, a form of DA that eliminates face-to-face interaction between teachers and students using web 2.0 technologies like wikis, blogs, and social networking (Besharati & Ahmadi, 2017). However, there are different DA models and some are really under-investigated. They include Guthke's Lerntest Approach, Carlson and Wield's Testing-the-Limits Approach, Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach, and Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience Approach.

On the other hand, Speech acts, a key component of pragmatic competence, constitute a crucial research area in English language teaching

(ELT) due to their significant role in language proficiency (Kasper, 2000).

The speech acts of request, refusal, and apology are researched more and more frequently than other speech acts for several reasons. These types of speech behaviors are more prevalent in casual conversations. We make requests in order to get things done, refuse requests in order to deny requests, and apologize in order to show we feel bad about what we did. Getting what we desire and preserving social relationships depend on these speaking behaviors. Compared to other speech acts, these three are more intricate. To utilize them successfully, we need to consider the social environment, the speaker-listener connection, and the speaker's objectives. Learning these speech acts is more difficult for those who experience second language learning. They call for a sophisticated comprehension of etiquette and linguistic rules (Searle, 1969; Thomas, 1983; Bardovi-Harlig& Dörnyei, 1998 , 2002; Matsumoto, (2002).

Speech act knowledge consists of language user's sociocultural knowledge and his/her sociolinguistic knowledge (Sadri et al., 2018). Moreover, according to Austin (1962), speech acts are considered as important factors in effective communication (Mendes & Martines, 2022; Sadri et al., 2018). As stated by Leech (1983), the main contribution of speech acts is to reduce disruption and to keep the social balance and friendly ties. In linguistic theory, this is an important issue regarding relational communication (Sadri et al., 2018).

Given the proved effectiveness of the use of technology on EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge (Alibeigloo et al., 2021), and with a view to the fact that implementing WDA is based on using technology, coupled with the significant effect of DA on different aspects and skills of English language, possibly different models of DA contribute to improvement in EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. Although the number of advocates of using technology in language teaching is increasing, there is no consensus on the issue that using technology can result in academic success and language achievement; in other words, technology use has led to contradicting results in different fields, including science, technology, engineering, math, etc. (Moranski & Kim, 2016).

The other side of the problem under investigation in this study is that

in spite ofthe increase in the popularity of the use of technology in education worldwide, field observations show that in the Iranian system of education, traditional teaching methods are still used regarding the instruction of English pragmatics in many settings. Thus, naturally many language teachers and learners are not familiar with the potentials of this technology for language teaching and learning . For example, Olyaei et al. (2020) and Alibeigloo et al. (2021) have referred to Iranian EFL teachers' low familiarity with different technological tools and approaches.

Last but not least, despite the potential of DA in any form or type to promote EFL learning and measure language learning potential, traditional assessment methods in the Iranian educational system are still prevalent, and many Iranian EFL teachers are unfamiliar with DA's potential. The same argument has been mentioned by Besharati and Ahmadi (2017) when they spoke of prevalence of traditional teaching and assessment procedures in education system of Iran. In addition, most studies done in this area have failed to show which DA model is more appropriate to be used in classrooms. For example, Besharati and Ahmadi (2017) examined the impact of WDA on EFL learners' essay writing and showed the significant impact of DA on essay writing of learners; however, they did not deal with different DA models. There are some other similar studies in the literature among which those by Ebadi and Saeedian (2016) and Ashraf et al., (2016) can be mentioned.

In sum, it seems that literature suffers from a scarcity of research on the effectiveness of different models of DA and WDA in EFL learning. In this scarcity, the researcher found no study on the effect of different WDA models on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. As an attempt to bridge this gap, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Do different models of web-based dynamic assessment (WDA) have a significant differential effect on EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of apology?
2. Do different models of web-based dynamic assessment (WDA) have a significant differential effect on EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of refusal?

3. Do different models of web-based dynamic assessment (WDA) have a significant differential effect on EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of request?

Review of the Related Literature

This study is theoretically based on DA. In DA, both instruction and feedback occur in the testing process (Allal & Ducrey, 2000). The purpose of DA is to change language behavior and to see what happens in the learning process. Furthermore, DA can improve students' performance on a test by presenting them some help during assessment (Allal & Ducrey, 2000).

On the whole, DA originates in two theories: the first one is Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and the second one is Feurestein's structural cognitive modifiability. In the former, it is stated that social understanding is interrelated with cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). He suggested that higher mental functions stem from our interactions with more capable people. Vygotsky put forward the idea of "difference score", which is the difference between a learners' pretest (before intervention) and his post test (after intervention) scores, or it can be the score on the posttest alone (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002).

In structural cognitive modifiability theory, it is claimed that people are able to modify their cognitive ability, and the mediator should take full responsibility for this (Feuerstein et al., 2002). The building block of this theory is MLE. In MLE, it is stated that what causes change in individuals is not environmental stimulus rather the mediation offered by a more capable person (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005). MLE is formed based on some assumptions. First, human beings are able to modify their cognitive abilities; second, cognitive abilities are not impeded from making a progress by factors, such as age; third, MLE lends itself to cognitive modifiability better than unmediated learning experience (Feuerstein et al., 1980).

Among different DA models, this study was delimited to Guthke's Lerntest Approach, Carlson and Wield's Testing-the-Limits Approach, Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach, and Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience

(MLE). The rationale behind the researchers' decision to concentrate on specific models was that each of the four models possesses unique advantages and can help evaluate and enhance the pragmatic proficiency of intermediate EFL students.

Guthke's Lerntest Approach (1992) is especially well-suited to encourage learners' intrinsic motivation and their self-directed inquiry and learning. This method allows students to take charge of their education and experiment with ideas and abilities through unstructured assignments. In the same vein, deeper involvement and better learning results can be achieved. Trying the limited approach by Carlson and Wield (1992) is very useful for pushing students and enabling them to grow in their cognitive capacities. Giving students challenging assignments, this method helps them discover their strengths and shortcomings and acquire new abilities. The approach's steady assistance can also aid in learners' development of self-assurance and independence. Brown's (1984) Graduated Prompt Approach balances freedom and direction by enhancing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Feuerstein's MLE fosters higher-order cognitive abilities and metacognition by improving memory and concentration. The four DA models evaluate and enhance the pragmatic competence of intermediate EFL students, benefiting students with varying skill levels. (Feuerstein et al., 1980; Vygotsky, 1978; Flavell, 1979; Bloom, 1956).

Guthke and his colleagues offered their own model of DA. They named their model Lerntest (Guthke, 1977). Building on Vygotsky's theory, Guthke (1977) claims that people do not possess only one ZPD, but multiple ZPDs. He stated that DA should not only include intelligence testing, but language aptitude, too (Guthke et al., 1986).

Guthke et al. (1986) believes that mediation should occur within the test. In the early versions of what they called Leipzig Lerntest (LLT), assistance was offered to students, and if the students, despite the assistance provided, could not answer correctly, the mediator revealed the answer (Guthke et al., 1986). Therefore, as mediation is integrated with assessment, LLT can be considered to be dynamic. A second administration of the test is required in

LLT, and this does not mean that students will not need any hints during the second administration; it is expected that the hints should be more implicit. If this is the case, we can claim that the students have reached their potential level.

An alternative approach to LLT was put forward by Wield called Testing-the-Limits. What makes this approach different from that of Guthke(et al. 1986) is that the mediation in the former is much more extensive than the latter. The other point which should be noticed is that what is significant in this approach is to know how students found the correct answer. In other words, whether they give a correct or an incorrect response to an item is not of paramount importance, but the process of reaching the answers is significant in this approach (Poehner, 2008).

Carlson and Wield (1992) have come up with some standardized hints to encourage learners to think aloud. Carlson and Wield (1992) argue that there should not be a separate period to mediate learners; the mediator should mediate whenever necessary. As in this approach standardized hints are given to students, examiners can adopt this approach readily (Poehner, 2008).

Like other interventionist models, Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach is an interventionist model that uses standardized hints to teach students but differs from other models by incorporating transfer tasks, allowing students to solve new problems in new situations (Campione & Brown, 1987).

First of all, students are required to solve some problems called *near transfer*. After they are done with these tasks, new tasks called far transfer should be provided for them by the teacher. In the end, the students are required to answer very far transfer problems (Campione & Brown, 1987). Mediation never ends in this approach; if they do not face problems, no mediation is offered. The teacher or the examiner is always there to help whenever there is a problem.

Finally, Feuerstein's MLE is directly related to interactionist model. In this model, instruction and assessment are completely merged. In MLE, it is argued that the development of human cognitive abilities can be changed

(Feuerstein, 2003). The mediator paves the way for the child's internalization, as a result of which, the child passes the inter-mental plane and moves towards the intra-mental plane (Vygotsky, 1978).

Feuerstein suggests that students' failures can vary depending on the situation and can be identified through Dynamic Assessment, an intensive observation of their interaction with a skilled person. (Feuerstein et al., 1988). Empirically looking at the issue, several studies have been done concentrating on pragmatic knowledge and DA. For instance, Alsmari (2020) reported the significant effect of the flipped teaching on pragmatic knowledge and English achievement of Saudi EFL undergraduates. In a similar study by Katchamat (2018), the impact of the flipped learning on EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge was examined and a significant effectiveness of the flipped learning was confirmed. Within the same research path, Haghighi et al., (2018) uncovered that flipped classroom has led to significant improvements in EFL learners' appropriate use of refusal. Further, Ashraf et al., (2016) supported the significant influence of a form of WDA on the listening skill of Iranian EFL learners. Additionally, Ebadi and Saeedian (2016) found that WDA has the potential to develop Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension in a significant way. Finally, Alemi (2015) approved the effect of DA on Iranian EFL students' writing self-assessment. What is clearly perceived from the reviewed literature is that more investigations are needed to document the effect of different WDA models on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. This study was an attempt to bridge this gap.

Method

Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test control group design. The independent variable in this study was WDA in four different models, and the dependent variable was pragmatic knowledge.

Participants

one hundred female Iranian intermediate EFL learners studying

English in one of the private language institutes of Tehran, Iran, took part in the study. Since five intact classes were picked up, the sampling method was convenience sampling. They were randomly divided into five groups, including four experimental groups and one control group for the purpose of the present study. Their age range was 19-37. To observe ethical issues, the consent of the participants was taken for participation in the study. Moreover, they were ensured that their personal information would be kept anonymous.

Instruments

The required data were collected through the following instruments:

Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP). For the purpose of homogenizing the participants in terms of their English proficiency, the MTELP was administered at the beginning of the study. The test is composed of grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening sections. The test consists of 120 multiple choice items (40 grammar, 40 vocabularies, 20 reading, and 20 listening) and the learners were asked to choose the correct option. The scores were in a range from 0 to 120.

Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT). A multiple-choice Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT), adapted from Birjandi and Rezaei (2010, taken from Tajeddin & Bagherkazemi, 2014) and other WDCTs available in the market, was used as pre-test and post-test. The test consisted of 21multiple choice items, 7 items on the use of refusal speech act, 7 items on the use of request speech act, and 7 items on the use of apology speech act. Each item of the test described a situation; there were three responses following each situation; the respondents were asked to select the most appropriate response in each situation. The whole test was validated by the expert judgement. Moreover, the test-retest reliability of the test was confirmed through a pilot study as .89.

Data Collection Procedure

At the outset of the study, the participants were selected through convenience sampling in the form of five intact classes consisting of female

Iranian intermediate EFL learners studying English in one of the private language institutes of Tehran, Iran. Next, in order to homogenize the participants, the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was administered. More specifically, those whose scores fell within one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as the participants of the study. Next, the selected classes randomly divided into five (four experimental groups and one control group) to receive different treatments:

Group 1 received instruction through web-based Carlson and Wield's testing-the-limits approach, group 2 through web-based Guthke's lertntest approach, group 3 through web-based Brown's Graduated Prompt (GP) Approach, and group 4 through web-based Feuerstein's MLE. However, the fifth group, which was the control group, was deprived of any DA approach in web-based format and was just exposed to the web-based mainstream method and educational materials used in the institute.

Before the treatment period starts, an adapted multiple choice WDCT was implemented in the five groups as the pre-test in 40 minutes through Adobe Connect Application. Next, all the five groups were exposed to 14 sessions of instruction on the appropriate use of refusals, apologies, and requests. It is worth mentioning that in all the experimental groups, DA was administered through designing multiple-choice quizzes based on popular course books on speech acts available in the market (e.g., Searle, 1969, 1979). More particularly, for each class session, the researcher designed a quiz consisting of five multiple choice questions on speech acts, and administered WDA through it in the last 40 minutes of the class time. That is, when the participants were answering the questions of the quizzes, the researcher administered WDA using Adobe Connect Application, as explained in the next paragraph. In this way, parallel with the length of the treatment period, 14 quizzes were designed and used in the present study. It should be mentioned that WDA was administered in the experimental groups as complementary to the mainstream teaching method and instructional materials used in the institute.

In the first group, participants were given web-based Carlson and

Wield's testing-the-limits approach during the last 40 minutes of class time. This method encouraged them to think aloud while answering quizzes, explaining why they chose a choice among available options. The process of arriving at the correct answer was paramount in this group, and the teacher (mediator) asked the participants to explain how they arrived at the answer. Some hints were also given to help the participants reach the correct answer, such as focusing on the first two choices when choosing the correct answer.

In the second group, participants were instructed using Guthke's Lerntest approach and Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) scale for mediation. If correct answers were given, no mediation was provided. If incorrect answers were given, the mediator moved forward until full explanation was provided. Similar to the previous group, hints were used to guide participants. If incorrect answers were given, the mediator suggested identifying relevant options, and if incorrect answers were repeated, the mediator made more explicit hints. If all hints failed, the mediator provided the correct answer and explained why it was correct. The study aimed to provide a more comprehensive approach to mediation.

In the third group, Brown's GP Approach was utilized to teach the participants. In this approach, the teacher predicted the participants' readiness to learn the benefits of the instruction. What made this approach different from other approaches was the use of transfer tasks in this approach. The participants in this group were provided with opportunities to answer some questions in new situations in order to make sure that they are able to transfer their knowledge to new tasks. To be more specific, if the question was concerned with making request in a restaurant, a new question on making request in a formal session was given to the participants to make sure that they have learnt the point fully. Therefore, in this group, there were some questions in different situations which served as transfer tasks.

In the fourth group, the participants enjoyed Feuerstein's MLE. This approach is called interactionist model. In this model, teaching and assessment are fully integrated. Based on this model, the mediator gave hints and mediated whenever it was necessary. The hints in this approach were not standardized

because the mediator was supposed to pave the way for the participants' internalization. In this approach, the following attributes were used: 1) intentionality and reciprocity; 2) mediation of meaning; and 3) transcendence.

In the fifth group (i.e., control group), the participants were just taught through the mainstream teaching method and instructional materials used in the institute in the absence of using any DA model.

Ten days after the termination of the treatment sessions, the WDCT was implemented in the five groups as the post-test in 40 minutes through Adobe Connect Application. It is worth mentioning that in all the five groups, teaching was conducted through a web-based method using Adobe Connect Application.

For data analysis, first, descriptive statistics for the research variables in pretest and posttest administration was run. Then, prerequisite assumptions of the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) were checked. The results of the ANCOVA along with Bonferroni multiple comparisons were the last part of data analysis

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The mean and standard deviation of the subscales of pragmatic knowledge in pretest and posttest administration are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Control and Experimental Groups

	control		Cuthke		Carlson & Wield		Brown		Feuerstein	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
Apology, pretest	4.65	1.50	4.85	1.39	4.80	1.39	4.70	1.40	4.85	1.39
Refusal, pretest	5.20	1.34	4.65	1.14	4.90	1.15	5.05	1.32	4.90	1.33
Request, pretest	5.10	1.12	5.10	1.12	5.10	1.12	5.10	1.12	5.10	1.12

	control		Cuthke		Carlson & Wield		Brown		Feuerstein	
	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
Apology, posttest	5.35	1.90	6.90	1.48	6.70	1.30	8.45	0.94	8.30	1.22
Refusal, posttest	5.50	1.36	7.25	1.37	7.50	1.57	8.70	1.30	8.60	1.14
Request, posttest	5.35	1.10	7.35	1.27	7.65	1.53	8.65	1.09	8.85	1.18

As presented in the Table 1, the mean scores of pragmatic knowledge subscales (apology, refusal and request) dramatically improved after being exposed to WDA in the experimental groups.

Examining the Underlying Assumptions of ANCOVA

The ANCOVA procedure was tested for its prerequisite assumptions, including normality of data distribution using Shapiro-Wilk's test, homogeneity of variance using the Leven test, and homogeneity of regression using a customized F test. In Table 2, the result of Shapiro-Wilk's test of the pretest scores is presented.

Table 2

The Results of Shapiro-Wilk's Test of the Pretest Scores to Check the Normality of Data

	Groups	Shapiro-Wilk	d.f	P
Apology	Control	0.95	20	0.44
	Cuthke's Lerntest Approach	0.93	20	0.14
	Carlson & Wield's Testing the limits	0.93	20	0.14
	Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach	0.92	20	0.12
	Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience	0.93	20	0.14
Refusal	Control	0.94	20	0.21
	Cuthke's Lerntest Approach	0.91	20	0.06
	Carlson & Wield's Testing the Limits Approach	0.92	20	0.11
	Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach	0.93	20	0.17
	Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience	0.93	20	0.17

	Groups	Shapiro-Wilk	d.f	P
Request	Control	0.91	20	0.06
	Cuthke's Lerntest Approach	0.91	20	0.06
	Carlson & Wield's Testing the Limits Approach	0.91	20	0.06
	Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach	0.91	20	0.06
	Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience	0.91	20	0.06

Table 2 shows that the assumption of normality is met in all pretest phase subjects for all three pragmatic knowledge subscales, but in some post-test, phase groups, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

The Results of Shapiro-Wilk's Test of the Posttest Scores toCheck the Normality of Data

	Groups	Shapiro-Wilk	d.f	P
Apology	Control	0.97	20	0.66
	Cuthke's Lerntest Approach	0.93	20	0.13
	Carlson & Wield's Testing the limits	0.96	20	0.18
	Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach	0.87	20	0.01
	Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience	0.91	20	0.06
Refusal	Control	0.93	20	0.18
	Cuthke's Lerntest Approach	0.90	20	0.04
	Carlson & Wield's Testing the Limits Approach	0.92	20	0.12
	Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach	0.72	20	0.07
	Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience	0.85	20	0.13
Request	Control	0.86	20	0.09
	Cuthke's Lerntest Approach	0.94	20	0.27
	Carlson & Wield's Testing the Limits Approach	0.92	20	0.09
	Brown's Graduated Prompt Approach	0.80	20	0.23
	Feuerstein's Mediated Learning Experience	0.85	20	0.01

The analysis of variance and covariance is robust to normality violations, making small deviations from the normal distribution ignorable. The

Leven test was used to examine error variance equality, with results presented in Table 4.

Table 4

The Results of Leven Test for the Equality of Error Variance

Dependent Variables	F	d.f1	d.f2	P
Apology	2.09	4	95	0.09
Refusal	0.88	4	95	0.48
Request	1.49	4	95	0.21

As it can be seen in Table 4, the assumption of homogeneity of variance has been met in all cases. Then the homogeneity of the regression assumption was examined using the inspection of the interaction between pretest scores and levels of the independent variable. Table 5 shows the results.

Table 5

The Results of Interaction between Pretest and Independent Variable to Examine the Assumption of Homogeneity of Variance.

source	S.S	d.f	M.S	F	P
Apology*Group	8.67	4	2.17	2.08	0.17
Refusal*Group	2.84	4	0.71	0.38	0.83
Request*Group	6.10	4	1.53	1.23	0.30

As presented in the Table 5, there was no evidence of violation of the homogeneity of regression assumption.

First Research Question

The ANCOVA model was used to examine the first research question, involving pretest scores of participants in appropriate use of apology, posttest administration scores, and the group variable, including the control group and four other conditions (DA approaches). The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

ANCOVA Results to Examine Differences between Groups in Appropriate Use of Apology

source	SS	df	MS	F	P	η^2
Apology (pretest)	32.91	1	32.91	19.99	0.0001	0.18
Groups	125.40	4	31.35	19.04	0.0001	0.45
Error	154.79	94	1.65			
Total	318.04	99				

Table 6 shows significant differences in mean scores between two groups, with the independent variable explaining 45% of the total variance of the dependent variable after controlling for pre-existing differences.

To find out the differences between mean scores of which groups are significant, Bonferroni multiple comparisons were used. The result of the these pairwise comparisons is presented in table 7.

Table 7

The Result of Bonferroni Cultiple Comparisons to Examine between Group Differences (Apology)

Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
control	Cuthke	-1.47*	0.41	0.005
	Carlson & Wield	-1.27*	0.41	0.02
	Brown	-3.04*	0.41	0.001
	Feuerstein	-2.88*	0.41	0.0001
Cuthke	Carlson & Wield	0.20	0.41	1.00
	Brown	-1.57*	0.41	0.002
	Feuerstein	-1.40*	0.41	0.01
Carlson & Wield	Brown	-1.77*	0.41	0.0001
	Feuerstein	-1.60*	0.41	0.002
Brown	Feuerstein	0.17	0.41	1.00

Table 7 shows that all experimental groups had significantly higher mean scores than the control group in terms of appropriate use of apology. Guthke's approach group had higher mean scores than the control group, but its differences with Carlson and Wield's approach group were not significant. Brown's approach group and Feuerstein's approach group had greater mean scores than the other two groups.

Second Research Question

The ANCOVA was conducted to address research question two, involving pretest scores of participants in appropriate refusal use as a covariate, posttest administration scores as dependent, and group variables like the control group and four other conditions as independent variables. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

ANCOVA to Examine Differences between Groups in Appropriate Use of Refusal

source	SS	df	MS	F	P	η^2
Refusal (pretest)	1.75	1	1.75	0.95	0.33	0.01
Groups	134.07	4	33.52	18.21	0.0001	0.44
Error	173.00	94	1.84			
Total	308.99	99				

Table 8 shows significant differences in mean scores between two groups, with the independent variable explaining 44% of the total variance of the dependent variable after controlling for pre-existing differences.

To find out the location of this difference, Bonferroni multiple comparisons were used. The result of the these pairwise comparisons is presented in Table 9.

Table 9

The Result of Bonferroni Multiple Comparisons to Examine between Group Differences (Refusal)

Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
Control	Cuthke	-1.79*	0.43	0.001
	Carlson & Wield	-2.02*	0.43	0.0001
	Brown	-3.20*	0.43	0.0001
	Feuerstein	-3.11*	0.43	0.0001
Cuthke	Carlson & Wield	-0.23	0.43	1
	Brown	-1.41*	0.43	0.02
	Feuerstein	-1.32*	0.43	0.03
Carlson & Wield	Brown	-1.17	0.43	0.08
	Feuerstein	-1.09	0.43	0.13
Brown	Feuerstein	0.08	0.43	1

Table 9 reveals that all experimental groups had significantly higher mean scores in appropriate refusal use compared to the control group. Guthke's approach group had higher scores, but there was no significant difference between it and Carlson and Wield's approach. Brown's and Feuerstein's approach groups had higher scores.

Third Research Question

The third research question was examined using ANCOVA, with pretest scores as covariates, posttest scores as dependents, and group variables as independent. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10

ANCOVA to Examine Differences between Groups in Appropriate Use of Request

source	S.S	df	M.S	F	P	η^2
Request (pretest)	1.84	1	1.84	1.19	0.28	0.01
Groups	134.56	4	33.64	21.78	0.0001	0.48
Error	145.16	94	1.54			
Total	281.56	99				

Table 10 shows significant differences in mean scores between two groups, with the independent variable accounting for 48% of the total variance in appropriate use of request.

To locate the significant differences, Bonferroni multiple comparisons were run whose result is presented in table 11.

Table 11

The Result of Bonferroni Multiple Comparisons to Examine between Group Differences (Request)

Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
control	Cuthke	-1.75*	0.39	0.0001
	Carlson & Wield	-2.05*	0.39	0.0001
	Brown	-3.05*	0.39	0.0001
	Feuerstein	-3.25*	0.39	0.0001

Groups		Mean Difference	Std. Error	P
Cuthke	Carlson & Wield	-0.30	0.39	1
	Brown	-1.30*	0.39	0.01
	Feuerstein	-1.50*	0.39	0.002
Carlson & Wield	Brown	-1.00	0.39	0.13
	Feuerstein	-1.20*	0.39	0.03
Brown	Feuerstein	-0.20	0.39	1

Table 11 reveals that the control group had lower mean scores on appropriate use of requests compared to all experimental groups. However, Guthke's and Carlson and Wield's approach groups had higher mean scores than the control group.

Discussion

This study sought to find answer to three research questions. Concerning the first research question, the results showed that web-based Brown's approach and Feuerstein's approach were more effective than the other two models on EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of apology. The study suggests that web-based versions of Brown and Feuerstein's approaches are more effective for teaching and evaluating EFL intermediate learners' proper use of apology than Carlson and Wield's testing-the-limits method and Guthke's alertness technique. Furthermore, WDA delivery can be beneficial for teaching and testing students in language competency due to its vast array of materials and exercises, as well as its ability to gather and evaluate student performance data, providing personalized support and feedback.

Regarding the second research question, as revealed by the results, Brown's approach and Feuerstein's approach proved to more influential than the other two models on EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of refusal. Furthermore, WDA delivery could be handy for instructing and testing students in this area of language competency. This is because web-based platforms may give students access to a vast array of materials and exercises that will enable them to study and practice using refusal in several situations. Web-based systems may also gather and evaluate student performance data, which can be

utilized to give them individualized support and feedback. The study's findings point to the potential of web-based Feuerstein's and Brown's approaches for instructing and evaluating EFL intermediate learners in the proper use of refusal. These strategies' emphasis on providing clear direction and teaching and the advantages of web-based distribution may make them incredibly successful.

Finally, regarding the third research question, it was indicated that Brown's approach and Feuerstein's approach were more effective than the other two models in case of EFL intermediate learners' appropriate use of request. Based on the study's findings, web-based versions of Brown's and Feuerstein's approaches may be more effective in teaching and evaluating EFL intermediate learners' proper use of requests in comparison to Carlson and Wield's testing-the-limits method and Guthke's alertness approach. Furthermore, WDA delivery could be handy for instructing and testing students in this area of language competency. This is because web-based platforms can give students access to various materials and exercises that enable them to study and practice using requests in several situations. Web-based systems may also gather and evaluate student performance data, which can be utilized to give them individualized support and feedback.

The study highlights the potential of web-based Feuerstein's and Brown's approaches for teaching and evaluating EFL intermediate learners, highlighting their clear direction and teaching advantages. The study's findings imply that each of the four DA techniques, that is Field's MLE, Brown's Graduated Prompt (GP) Approach, Guthke's alertness approach, and Carlson and Wield's testing-the-limits strategy, was successful in raising the participants' cognitive capacities. Feuerstein's MLE, however, was the most successful strategy; it was followed by Guthke's alertness technique, Brown's Graduated Prompt (GP) technique, and Carlson and Wield's testing-the-limits strategy. The study suggests that DA can be effectively managed by combining complex tasks with assistance and scaffolding, aligning with previous research suggesting that challenge and support are key to improving learning outcomes. The study also found that web-based platforms are the most efficient for

delivering DA, offering a wide range of materials and tasks. The above findings are consistent with the outcome of the research by Tajeddin and Tayebipour (2012) which showed the effect of DA on pragmatic competence of EFL learners. Furthermore, the results are implicitly in line with Naeini's (2015) and Fani and Rashtchi's (2015) study, which reported the significant effect of Brown's graduated prompt on Iranian EFL learners' English learning. Additionally, the outcomes are somehow similar to the results of the study by Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014), and Jarrahzade and Tabatabaei (2014), which revealed that employing Feuerstein's MLE approach can significantly enhance EFL learners' English achievement. At a more general level, the findings support the reports of the research by Khoshsima and Farokhipours (2016) and Mohammadimoghadam (2015) wherein the effect of DA on different English skills was significant in EFL contexts. However, it is worth noting that the enumerated studies have been conducted in face-to-face contexts since the researchers could not find any study on the effectiveness of WDA models on the pragmatic knowledge of EFL learners.

The results reveal that the effectiveness of web-based Brown's graduated prompt approach in EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge can be attributed to the scaffolding and hints provided during treatment sessions, ensuring maximum benefit for the learners. On the effectiveness of Feuerstein's MLE approach on EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge, the ground can be taken that MLE can enhance learners' problem-solving potential (Feuerstein, 2000). Moreover, with the help of MLE, learners gain more control over the language learning process. In addition, it makes ZPD co-construction easier (Ash & Levitt, 2003; Isman & Tzuriel, 2008; Poehner, 2009; Harraqi,2006), Finally, the belief by Anton (2009), Hessamy and Ghaderi (2014), and Knodel (1997) that MLE contributes to learners' more engagement in the process of learning by increasing their motivation and reducing their anxiety can be considered as a rationale behind the effectiveness on MLE in the present study.

Moreover, as documented in the extant literature, web-based English language teaching enhances learners' self-regulation and autonomy (Mohsen & Shafeeq, 2014; Yunus et al., 2013), motivation (Shaqaqi & Soleimani, 2019),

higher order critical thinking (Emezue, 2020), self-efficacy (Fathi & Derakhshan, 2019) and their sense of agency in learning (Jan et al., 2017; Radia, 2019). It can also reduce their stress, anxiety (Bracket et al., 2010), and burnout feeling (Mosleh et al., 2022). All these may lead to higher pragmatics learning among them.

Conclusion

The findings showed that using Web-Based Adaptive Teaching (WDA) approaches, such as Brown's graduated prompt approach and Feuerstein's mediated learning experience approach, can significantly improve English for Foreign Language (EFL) learners' pragmatic knowledge. These approaches involve the use of apology, refusal, and request. They can also be used as scaffolding and hints for learners. The study suggests that English teachers can use these WDA approaches to help EFL learners identify their weak points and improve their future performance in EFL pragmatics. WDA components, such as intentionality, reciprocity, transfer of learning to a new situation, meaning mediation, learner competency feelings, goal-setting, self-regulation, individualization, standardized graduated prompts, pre-determined mediations, and psychological differentiation are positively effective on EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge.

Web-based teaching improves EFL learners' self-regulation, autonomy, motivation, criticality, self-efficacy, learning control, agency, stress, anxiety, and burnout, making pragmatics learning easier in EFL contexts and significantly solving English pragmatics learning problems.

The study suggests that English teachers can use WDA approaches like Brown's graduated prompt approach and Feuerstein's mediated learning experience approach instead of conventional treatment to help their students better learn English pragmatics. Curriculum planners can also benefit from these findings and plan future curricula that incorporate WDA-oriented instruction, providing teachers with opportunities to use WDA-oriented instruction in their classes.

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