

# The Impact of Explicit Film-Based Instruction on EFL Learners' Comprehension of Conversational Implicatures

Noha Almansour<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Noha Almansour, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: [naalmansour@imamu.edu.sa](mailto:naalmansour@imamu.edu.sa)

Received: January 18, 2024

Accepted: February 18, 2024

Online Published: February 21, 2024

doi: 10.5539/elt.v17n3p64

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v17n3p64>

## Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of explicit film-based instruction in enhancing the comprehension of conversational implicatures among Saudi undergraduate learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Overall, 144 participants were randomly assigned into experimental and control groups. Explicit film-based instruction on conversational implicatures was given to the experimental group. Pretest and posttest multiple-choice tests were employed as assessment instruments. This study focused on six types of conversational implicatures based on Bouton's taxonomy: irony, indirect criticism, sequential, minimum requirement, pope question, and relevance. The findings revealed explicit film-based instruction had a significant positive impact on the development of learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures, specifically in irony, pope question, relevance, and sequential implicatures. However, the study found certain types, namely indirect criticism and minimum requirement, demonstrated resistance to instruction in EFL settings and remained problematic. The pedagogical implications of the study offer valuable insights for language teachers, curriculum designers, and students.

**Keywords:** conversational implicatures, explicit instruction, film-based instruction, EFL learners

## 1. Introduction

The development of pragmatic competence in second-language acquisition (SLA) has gained considerable attention in recent years. Pragmatic competence has been defined as "the ability to comprehend and produce meaning in context" (Taguchi, 2008, p. 433). Bachman (1990) conceptualized pragmatic competence as a fundamental component of communicative competence, recognizing its importance in effective and appropriate communication. He emphasized that linguistic accuracy is not sufficient for successful communication, highlighting the need for language learners to develop pragmatic competence alongside their grammatical and structural knowledge. According to Leech (1983), L2 pragmatic competence can be divided into sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence. Sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence are crucial for EFL learners in relation to conversational implicatures. Sociopragmatic competence enables learners to understand conversational implicatures effectively. It involves awareness of the social and cultural norms that shape the interpretation of conversational implicatures. Pragmalinguistic competence is equally significant for EFL learners. It involves understanding the linguistic devices and strategies used to convey implicatures.

Several studies have highlighted the significance of language exposure, metapragmatic awareness, and explicit instruction in enhancing pragmatic competence for EFL learners. Roever (2012) emphasized that even EFL learners who lack exposure to the target language context can enhance their pragmatic skills through suitable language exposure. However, certain pragmatic forms may go unnoticed by language learners, necessitating instruction to raise learners' pragmatic awareness (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Kasper (2001) argued explicit instruction and a metapragmatic awareness approach, involving description, explanation, and discussion of the pragmatic feature in question, can increase learners' understanding of appropriate pragmatic features. Likewise, Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) suggested explicit instruction using authentic language examples and classroom discussion is crucial for developing EFL learners' pragmatic competence, particularly in acquiring the most challenging forms. These studies supported Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis, which asserts learners must consciously notice the focus of forms to promote pragmatic awareness. According to Schmidt (1993),

noticing a feature is “the necessary and sufficient condition for the conversion of input into intake” (p. 209).

Within the field of pragmatics, the comprehension of conversational implicatures has been identified as one of the most demanding tasks for EFL learners (Bouton, 1994; Taguchi, 2013). Bouton (1994) asserted that, without explicit instruction, EFL learners are unlikely to comprehend implicatures, which highlights the fundamental role of explicit instruction in improving EFL learners’ pragmatic competence. Although conversational implicatures pose challenges for many Saudi EFL learners, few studies have investigated the effectiveness of explicit instruction in developing learners’ comprehension of conversational implicatures. This research gap has resulted in difficulties for Saudi EFL students in interpreting conversational implicatures, meaning they often rely heavily on their pragmatic competence in their first language.

This study aims to address the dearth of research on instructional approaches for developing learners’ comprehension of conversational implicatures. Specifically, this study investigates the potential significant effect of film-based instruction on EFL learners’ comprehension of conversational implicatures. As an experimental study, it seeks to provide comprehensive answers to the following research questions:

- (1) Does explicit film-based instruction have a statistically significant effect on developing EFL students’ comprehension of conversational implicatures?
- (2) What are the most challenging conversational implicatures for EFL learners?

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Null hypothesis: Explicit film-based instruction has no statistically significant effect on developing EFL students’ comprehension of conversational implicatures.

Alternative hypothesis: Explicit film-based instruction has a statistically significant effect on developing EFL students’ comprehension of conversational implicatures.

By investigating the impact of explicit film-based instruction on EFL learners’ comprehension of conversational implicatures, this study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge on instructional approaches for developing pragmatic competence. The findings can inform language teachers, language educators, and curriculum designers in designing effective strategies to enhance learners’ pragmatic competence in the SLA context.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Conversational Implicatures

Grice (1989) introduced the concept of implicature to refer to the additional meaning conveyed through communication. Moreover, it has been defined as meaning one thing by saying something else (Davis, 2007). Comprehending implicatures requires learners engage in a process of decoding both linguistic and contextual cues and subsequently use them to draw inferences (Taguchi et al., 2013). Grice’s (1975) framework identifies two types of implicature: conventional and conversational. Conversational implicatures involve the process of inference that allows for interpreting the meaning of an utterance in relation to its surrounding context, based on Grice’s cooperative principle (Bouton, 1994). Grice (1975) asserted that, in any conversation, there is a principle called the cooperative principle, according to which the participants will collaborate when communicating their contributions. Grice (1975) proposed four maxims of the cooperative principle: quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. Quality means the speaker’s contribution should be true, quantity means the speaker’s contribution should be as informative as necessary, relevance means the speaker’s contribution must be relevant to the conversation, and manner means the speaker should avoid ambiguity and obscurity (Grice, 1975). Violations of these maxims often indicate additional or implied meanings beyond the literal interpretation of words (Grice, 1975).

Various taxonomies of conversational implicatures have been proposed in the literature. Grice (1975) categorized conversational implicatures into four types based on the maxim that is manipulated to produce the implicature: quantity, quality, manner, and relevance. Grice (1975, 1989) also distinguished between particularized and generalized conversational implicatures. A particularized implicature relies on specific features of the context, whereas a generalized implicature is an implicature that does not depend on specific features of the context (Grice, 1975). Bouton (1992, 1994) expanded Grice’s taxonomy by dividing conversational implicatures into idiosyncratic and formulaic ones. Idiosyncratic implicatures, also called relevance implicature, violate a Gricean maxim of relevance (Bouton, 1990). Formulaic implicatures, in contrast, refer to implicatures that have specific semantic and pragmatic patterns, and they can be categorized into five subtypes: pope question, minimum requirement, sequential, indirect criticism, and irony. Pratama (2017) defined Bouton’s formulaic implicature subtypes: The pope question implicature occurs when a person responds to a yes/no question with another

question; indirect criticism occurs when the speaker wants to convey their negative opinion while maintaining a level of politeness; sequential implicatures indicate the order of events; minimum requirement implicatures involve the speaker implicitly conveying a minimum number of quantity; and irony involves conveying a different or opposite implied meaning.

### *2.2 Factors Influencing the Comprehension of Conversational Implicatures*

Several studies have explored the factors affecting EFL or ESL learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures (Bouton, 1988, 1994, 1999; Lee, 2002; Roever, 2006; Taguchi, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2013; Yamanaka, 2003). These studies have revealed the factors that can affect learners' comprehension, including language proficiency, L2 exposure, cultural background, implicature type, and instruction. It is important to note these factors often interact with each other and can influence comprehension in a complex manner.

Language proficiency and L2 exposure are two important factors influencing learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures (Bouton, 1999; Lee, 2002; Roever, 2006; Taguchi, 2002, 2005, 2007; Yamanaka, 2003). Bouton (1999) found no correlation between participants' proficiency and implicature comprehension test scores, whereas L2 exposure correlated with higher scores. In contrast, Roever (2006) examined EFL and ESL learners' performance in conversational implicature comprehension and found proficiency could improve implicature deduction. He argued implicature knowledge is a pragmalinguistic component unaffected by social context, making it proficiency dependent. Taguchi (2005) and Lee (2002) also found L2 proficiency influenced the accuracy of the comprehension of conversational implicatures. Yamanaka (2003) concluded language proficiency and L2 exposure are interrelated and influence learners' implicature comprehension.

Culture has also been investigated as a factor influencing learners' ability to interpret implicatures (Bouton, 1988; Lee, 2002). Bouton (1988) conducted a cross-cultural study comparing native English speakers and ESL learners from different cultural backgrounds. He found notable disparities in the ability of these groups to interpret implicatures, with variations among ESL learners from different cultural backgrounds. He attributed ESL learners' difficulty in interpreting implicatures to their cultural background rather than language proficiency. Similarly, Lee (2002) investigated the role of culture and language proficiency in learners' ability to interpret conversational implicatures. She found a high level of proficiency enabled ESL learners to understand implicatures in a manner similar to that of English native speakers. However, there were variations in the strategies used by the two groups to interpret implicatures due to learners' cultural knowledge of the target language, which could lead to biases, stereotyping, and transference of knowledge from the native culture into the target one.

The type of implicature has also been found to affect learners' implicature comprehension (Bouton, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1999; Pratama et al., 2017). Bouton (1999) found teaching formulaic implicatures was easier than idiosyncratic implicatures due to their remarkable structural, semantic, and pragmatic features. However, formulaic implicature was more difficult to learn than idiosyncratic implicature because it requires learners to recognize specific linguistic patterns. Bouton (1988, 1994, 1999) compared ESL learners' comprehension of various implicature types, including relevance, sequential, irony, pope question, and indirect criticism implicatures. The findings revealed idiosyncratic implicature of relevance was easier for ESL learners, whereas pope question, sequential, irony, and indirect criticism implicatures were more challenging. Bouton (1994) further explained that relevance-based implicatures are relatively easy for language learners because they operate on the maxim of relevance. Similarly, Pratama et al. (2017) investigated the role of implicature types in learners' comprehension and found results consistent with Bouton's (1994). They concluded indirect criticism implicatures were the most challenging for all learners, and other problematic formulaic implicatures included minimum requirement rules and scalars. From these studies, it can be concluded different types of implicature pose varying levels of comprehension difficulty. Although numerous studies have explored the factors influencing implicature comprehension, there is a paucity of research directly examining instructional strategies or interventions for teaching implicatures. The following section reviews the instructional approaches for teaching implicature.

### *2.3 Teachability of Conversational Implicatures*

The issue of teaching conversational implicatures has been heavily discussed in the literature (Bouton, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1999; Cignetti & Di Giuseppe, 2015; Kubota, 1995; Taguchi, 2008). These studies have consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of the consciousness-raising approach and explicit instruction in enhancing learners' comprehension. Bouton (1988, 1992, 1994, 1999) was the first to emphasize the importance of raising learners' awareness to interpret implied meanings and avoid communicative failure. He argued explicit instruction significantly influences the development of ESL students' comprehension of conversational

implicatures. Similarly, Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) highlighted the importance of incorporating pragmatic awareness activities in ESL contexts.

Several studies have compared the consciousness-raising approach with explicit instruction in promoting learners' comprehension of implicatures. Kubota (1995) investigated the teachability of conversational implicatures to Japanese EFL students using two approaches: the consciousness-raising approach and explicit instruction. She found both experimental groups scored higher on the posttest, leading her to conclude both explicit and implicit instruction were more effective than no treatment. In line with Kubota's (1995) findings, Bardovi-Harlig et al. (2015) found both the consciousness-raising and explicit instruction approaches were effective in developing pragmatic competence in ESL/EFL settings. They proposed a four-step approach to address any pragmatic feature: warming up activities, focused-noticing activities, explicit instruction, and production activities.

The use of explicit instruction in classrooms has been shown to be an effective approach in developing learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures. Bouton (1994) examined the effectiveness of explicit instruction in developing learners' interpretation of implicatures in American English. ESL learners in the experimental group were taught implicatures explicitly and were encouraged to provide examples of implicatures in the production stage. He concluded explicit instruction has a significant effect on developing ESL learners' ability to comprehend implicatures.

A few researchers have investigated the integration of technology-based materials into implicature instruction (Cetinavci, 2019; Cignetti & Di Giuseppe, 2015; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020). Cignetti and Di Giuseppe (2015) incorporated videos with explicit instruction to investigate whether explicit-inductive instruction could enhance EFL learners' ability to identify formulaic and nonformulaic implicature types. The treatment group received five 1-hr sessions, and a written multiple-choice test was administered before and after the treatment. The findings showed students in the experimental group exhibited superior performance compared to those in the control group in both formulaic and nonformulaic implicatures. Derakhshan and Eslami (2020) used the consciousness-raising approach with video extracts containing implicatures to develop EFL learners' comprehension. Participants were assigned into four groups: metapragmatic awareness, translation, discussion, and control. The experimental groups outperformed the control group in a multiple-choice implicature listening test, with the metapragmatic awareness group performing significantly better than the other experimental groups. These findings confirm the effectiveness of implementing different methods to enhance EFL learners' ability to comprehend implicatures and draw learners' attention to salient pragmatic features to improve their implicature interpretation skills. In summary, the reviewed studies provide empirical evidence that both explicit instruction and the consciousness-raising approach have a significant effect on promoting learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures in ESL/EFL settings.

### **3. Method**

#### *3.1 Sample*

This study included a sample of 144 Saudi EFL undergraduate students at the College of Languages and Translation. They were enrolled in a three-credit-hour course entitled Semantics and Pragmatics and divided into four intact classes. The four classes were randomly assigned into two groups: an experimental group ( $n = 82$ ) and a control group ( $n = 62$ ). The participants were all native Arabic-speaking and in the 20–25 age range. Their proficiency level varied between upper intermediate and intermediate based on their STEP scores, which ranged from 54 to 97. This sample was chosen because the students had been exposed to conversational implicatures and the cooperative principle in their textbook.

#### *3.2 Instruments of the Study*

To measure learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures, this study used two versions of a multiple-choice test adapted from Cignetti and Di Giuseppe (2015). The pretest and posttest consisted of 12 items, covering the six types of conversational implicatures: irony, relevance, minimum requirement, indirect criticism, pope question, and sequential. The selection of these six types was based on Bouton's (1988) taxonomy. Two test versions were used to minimize the potential influence of test familiarity or memorization. The internal consistency reliability of both tests was assessed using Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , and it yielded a satisfactory value ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ). The pretest showed a reliability coefficient of 0.71, whereas the posttest demonstrated a higher reliability coefficient of 0.78. Additionally, the subset items within the test exhibited reliabilities ranging from 0.70 to 0.90. Content validity was ensured by four native speakers who taught English in ESL centers in Riyadh.

### 3.3 Procedure

The instructional material comprised 12 video vignettes that involved different types of conversational implicatures extracted from the sitcom *Friends*. These vignettes were used in explicit film-based instruction for the experimental group. Vignettes from *Friends* were chosen based on their resemblance to daily conversations in terms of linguistic and paralinguistic features (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020). The content validity of the selected video materials was cross-checked by the researcher and two native speakers of English.

Prior to the intervention, the pretest was administrated to both groups to assess the equivalence of their performance. A week later, the experimental group received explicit film-based instruction for five 1-hr sessions over 5 weeks. The instruction was based on Bardovi-Harlig et al.'s (2015) suggestions for teaching pragmatics in ESL/EFL classrooms (e.g., warm-up activities, focused-noticing activities, explicit instruction, and production activities). The fourth step, which concerns production, was not applied because the focus of the study was on the comprehension of implicatures rather than production.

The first session introduced students to Grice's cooperative principle and maxims, the concept of implicature, and the types of conversational implicature, along with their labels, definitions, and examples. In the following two sessions, the students were presented with 12 video vignettes with their written scripts, featuring the six types of implicature. The students were encouraged to identify the implicatures, infer the implied meanings, share their experiences with implicatures, and provide similar implicatures in their native language. In the inferencing process, the participants were encouraged to apply Taguchi et al.'s (2013) measures for making inferences, including decoding linguistic and contextual cues. Then the students were asked to interpret the conversational implicatures in each vignette.

After the experiment, the posttest was administrated to both groups to measure the effectiveness of the intervention on the experimental group. Although it was desirable to conduct a delayed posttest to evaluate the long-term effect of instruction, it was not feasible due to the unavailability of intact classes for some participants following the treatment.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

This study used quantitative approaches to analyze the collected data. The statistical software SPSS was used to conduct three types of tests. First, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test of homogeneity was used to examine the normality of distribution between the groups. This test showed the scores were not normally distributed in both groups; nonparametric tests were therefore used. The Mann–Whitney U test was used to assess potential differences between the participants' pretest and posttest performances in both the experimental and control groups. The aim of this test was to determine whether the intervention had a notable effect on the experimental group. Additionally, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to identify any significant differences between the pre- and post-experiment results within the student groups. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients were used to assess the internal consistency reliability of the tests.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The Effect of Explicit Film-Based Instruction on Learners' Implicature Comprehension

The analysis of the data revealed no significant differences between the two groups in their overall pretest scores ( $p = .772$ ). Additionally, the mean ranks of the two groups were found to be similar, with values of 71.63 and 73.65, respectively. Furthermore, before the treatment, no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups in regard to the six types of conversational implicatures (see Table 2). The mean ranks for each implicature type exhibited similar patterns between the two groups before the intervention. This finding shows the two groups had similar overall comprehension of the different types of conversational implicatures before the treatment.

Table 1. Mann-Whitney test results of the differences between the two groups before and after the intervention

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks	U	Z	P-value
Pretest	Experimental	82	71.63	5873.50	2470.000	-0.290	0.772
	Control	62	73.65	4566.50			
Posttest	Experimental	82	81.98	6722.00	1765.000	-3.150	0.002*
	Control	62	59.97	3718.00			

In contrast to the pretest results, the Mann–Whitney U test revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the posttest, with a p-value of 0.002. This result rejects the null hypothesis and provides evidence to accept the alternative hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis predicted explicit film-based instruction would have a positive impact on improving EFL learners' conversational implicatures. As shown in Table 1, the experimental group had a higher mean rank of 81.98 compared to the control group's mean rank of 59.97. The sum of ranks for the experimental and control groups was 6,722.00 and 3,718.00, respectively. This resulted in a U value of 1,765.00 and a corresponding z-value of  $-3.150$ . These findings reveal the explicit film-based instruction had a positive effect on the learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures, as evidenced by the notable differences in the posttest scores between the experimental and control groups.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney test results of the differences between the two groups before the intervention

Implicature Type	Experimental			Control			U	Z	P-value
	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks			
Irony	82	73.01	5987.00	62	71.82	4453.00	2293.000	-0.216	0.829
Relevance	82	74.67	6123.00	62	69.63	4317.00	2351.500	-0.838	0.402
Minimum requirement	82	70.35	5768.50	62	75.35	4671.50	2365.500	-0.801	0.423
Indirect criticism	82	72.41	5937.00	62	72.62	4502.00	2334.500	-0.034	0.973
Pope question	82	72.29	5928.00	62	72.77	4512.00	2525.000	-0.074	0.941
Sequential	82	70.79	5805.00	62	74.76	4635.00	2402.000	-0.605	0.545

Table 3 shows the results of the Mann–Whitney test, examining the differences between the experimental and control groups after the intervention. The results indicated statistically significant differences, with p-values less than 0.05 for four types of implicatures: irony, sequential, relevance, and pope question. This finding indicates the experimental group performed better than the control group for these four implicatures. No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups for the remaining two types of implicatures, minimum requirement and indirect criticism, where the p-values were above the significance level ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 3. Mann-Whitney test results of the differences between the two groups after the intervention

Implicature Type	Experimental			Control			U	Z	P-value
	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks			
Irony	82	81.65	6695.00	62	60.40	3745.00	1792.000	-3.259	0.001*
Relevance	82	77.41	6347.50	62	66.01	4092.50	2139.500	-2.017	0.044*
Minimum requirement	82	73.48	6025.00	62	71.21	4415.00	2462.000	-0.364	0.716
Indirect criticism	82	73.96	6065.00	62	70.56	4375.00	2422.000	-0.525	0.600
Pope question	82	79.06	6483.00	62	63.82	3957.00	2004.000	-2.370	0.018*
Sequential	82	80.34	6588.00	62	62.13	3852.00	1899.000	-2.813	0.005*

The Wilcoxon signed-ranks test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences between the scores of participants in the experimental group before and after the intervention. As shown in Table 4, the sum of negative ranks for the experimental group's scores was 449.50, whereas the sum of positive ranks was 2,106.50. These results indicate the posttest scores of the experimental group generally had higher ranks than their pretest scores, indicating improved performance. The test results demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the experimental group ( $z = -4.777$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This provides evidence the explicit film-based instruction intervention had a significant positive effect on the learners' overall comprehension of conversational implicature.

After the intervention, learners' performance showed significant progress ( $p > 0.05$ ) in four of the implicature types presented in Table 4. These implicature types were irony ( $p = 0.004$ ), relevance ( $p = 0.042$ ), sequential ( $p =$

0.018), and pope questions ( $p = 0.002$ ). The greatest significant effect was observed in the irony implicatures, with a  $p$ -value of 0.001, indicating substantial improvement. Conversely, the relevance implicature exhibited the least significant effect, with a  $p$ -value close to the significance level (0.05). However, the results did not show any significant differences after the intervention for two formulaic implicatures: minimum requirement and indirect criticism. The  $p$ -values for these implicature types were above the significance level at 0.153 and 0.088, respectively. This suggests the minimum requirement and indirect criticism displayed resistance to explicit instruction. Among the six types of implicatures, minimum requirement exhibited the least progress, as the mean ranks before and after the intervention were similar (22.41 and 21.76, respectively) with a  $p$ -value of 0.71.

In summary, the findings support the conclusion that explicit film-based instruction had a positive effect on students' comprehension of conversational implicatures. The experimental group showed significant improvement in their overall posttest scores and in the implicature types of irony, relevance, sequential, and pope questions. However, no significant improvements were observed for the minimum requirement and indirect criticism implicatures, indicating their resistance to explicit instruction.

Table 4. Wilcoxon signed-rank test for the pretest and posttest of the experimental group

Posttest-Pretest Implicature Type	Negative Ranks			Positive Ranks			Ties	Z	P-value
	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks	N	Mean Rank	Sum Ranks			
Irony	11	23.41	257.50	37	24.82	918.50	33	-3.497	0.004*
Relevance	10	13.50	135.00	20	16.50	330.00	52	-2.126	0.042*
Minimum requirement	16	22.41	358.50	27	21.76	587.50	39	-1.430	0.153
Indirect criticism	13	18.69	243.00	24	19.17	460.00	45	-1.709	0.088
Pope question	10	16.90	169.00	28	20.43	572.00	44	-3.097	0.002*
Sequential	15	21.00	315.00	30	24.00	720.00	37	-2.358	0.018*
Total	16	28.09	449.50	55	38.30	2106.50	11	-4.777	0.001*

#### 4.2 The Most Problematic Implicatures for EFL Learners

The participants' performance on the test indicated the difficult conversational implicatures were reflected in the low scores, whereas relatively easy implicatures were associated with high scores. Table 5 provides an overview of the average mean scores for each type of implicature, before and after the intervention. Each implicature type was assessed through two questions on the test, with a maximum mean score of 2.0 per type. Scores closer to 2.0 indicate the implicatures were easier for the participants, whereas scores closer to 0 indicate more challenging implicatures. The results reveal the relevance implicature was the easiest, both before and after the instruction.

The most problematic implicature types before the explicit film-based instruction were irony, minimal requirement, and indirect criticism, with average mean scores of 0.611, 0.625, and 0.645, respectively, out of a maximum possible score of 2.0. These findings are consistent with previous studies exploring the difficulty of different types of conversational implicatures (Bouton, 1988; Pratama et al., 2017).

After the explicit film-based instruction, minimum requirement and indirect criticism remained problematic (see Table 5). These two types of implicatures still received the lowest average mean scores of 0.756 and 0.817, respectively, indicating the learners continued to struggle with them.

Table 5. The average mean scores of implicatures before and after the instruction

Implicature Type	Before Instruction			After Instruction		
	N	Means	Rank	N	Means	Rank
Irony	82	0.561	1	82	1.048	3
Relevance	82	1.487	6	82	1.670	6
Minimum requirement	82	0.573	2	82	0.756	1
Indirect criticism	82	0.634	3	82	0.817	2
Pope question	82	0.987	5	82	1.292	5
Sequential	82	0.853	4	82	1.158	4

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary Key Findings

This study investigated the effectiveness of explicit film-based instruction in enhancing EFL learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures. The current study revealed two key findings:

First, the results provided strong support for the hypothesis that using explicit film-based instruction has a positive effect on developing EFL learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures. The results revealed that four implicatures, namely irony, pope question, sequential, and relevance implicatures, have shown positive progress after explicit film-based instruction. These findings support Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis and align with Kasper and Rose's (2002) claims regarding the effectiveness of explicit instruction in drawing the learner's attention to specific pragmatic features. They also confirm Bouton's (1994) perspective on the necessity of explicit instruction in teaching conversational implicatures. Moreover, the findings are consistent with previous research (Cetinavci, 2019; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020) that highlighted the benefits of using authentic materials in pragmatic instruction.

Second, this study found two formulaic implicatures, namely minimal requirement and indirect criticism, remained problematic for many EFL learners, even after explicit instruction. In contrast, the idiosyncratic implicature of relevance was consistently considered the easiest type of implicature, both before and after the instruction, with minimal progress observed after the intervention. These findings align with Bouton's (1994) view that idiosyncratic implicatures are relatively easy for learners to acquire but challenging to teach, and that the formulaic implicatures, such as indirect criticism, pose difficulties for language learners. These results also support Pratama et al.'s (2017) findings, highlighting the resistance of certain formulaic implicatures to instruction. These findings underscore the significance of explicit instruction targeting the most problematic types of implicatures, which may necessitate additional instructional strategies or interventions to enhance learner comprehension. Furthermore, although irony was initially identified as the most problematic implicature, explicit instruction significantly improves learners' performance in comprehending irony, rendering it less problematic after instruction. The differential effects of instruction on various types of implicatures emphasize the complexity and challenges associated with comprehending conversational implicatures. Although some implicatures showed significant improvement after the intervention, others remained difficult for learners, confirming the varying effects of instruction on different types.

### 5.2 Pedagogical Implications

This study's findings have several pedagogical implications that could benefit EFL teachers, learners, and curriculum designers in the field of pragmatics and language skills. First, it highlights the value of using films as authentic materials for teaching implicatures. By incorporating authentic materials, learners are exposed to context-rich examples of implicatures, which can enhance their understanding of these pragmatic features. Second, this study provides empirical evidence supporting the role of explicit instruction in developing learners' comprehension of implicatures. This finding emphasizes the importance of explicitly teaching implicatures to facilitate the learner's acquisition of these complex pragmatic aspects. Third, this study identifies the most problematic types of implicatures for Saudi EFL learners. Language teachers should pay particular attention to these types to help learners overcome the challenges associated with understanding and using conversational implicatures. However, it is important to note the existing textbooks in higher education often do not focus on the interpretation of conversational implicatures, and limited attention has been given to the integration of authentic materials for interpreting implicatures. The findings of the study should therefore be taken into consideration by language teachers and curriculum designers, who should adjust their curriculum to prioritize the teaching of conversational implicatures and include authentic materials such as films or video-driven prompts in explicit instruction. By doing so, they can facilitate the learning of the most challenging task for many EFL learners who have limited exposure to authentic language, namely the interpretation of conversational implicatures.

### 5.3 Limitations and Suggestions

This study had several limitations that future research could address. For example, it investigated the effectiveness of explicit film-based instruction on learners' comprehension of conversational implicature. However, further research could investigate the effect of explicit film-based instruction on the production of conversational implicatures. Additionally, this study suggests further investigation on the reasons behind the difficulties associated with comprehending two implicatures: minimum requirement and indirect criticism.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrated the effectiveness of explicit film-based instruction in enhancing EFL learners' comprehension of conversational implicatures. The findings highlight the value of incorporating explicit instruction on pragmatics and conversational implicatures, particularly through film-based activities in EFL contexts. Overall, explicit film-based instruction shows promise for improving learners' pragmatic competence and their ability to comprehend conversational implicatures in EFL settings. However, it is important to acknowledge that certain formulaic implicatures continue to present challenges for many EFL learners, even with explicit instruction. Further research and instructional interventions are needed to address these specific challenges.

#### Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank the university students who voluntarily participated in the study experiment.

#### References

- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Griffin, R. (2005). L2 pragmatic awareness: Evidence from the ESL classroom. *System*, 33, 401-415. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2005.06.004>
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Mahan-Taylor, R. (2003). Introduction to teaching pragmatics. *English Teaching Forum*, 41(3), 37-39. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.10.127>
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., Mossman, S., & Vellenga, H. E. (2015). The effect of instruction on pragmatic routines in academic discussion. *Language Teaching Research*, 19(3), 324-350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168814541739>
- Bouton, L. F. (1988). A cross-cultural study of ability to interpret implicatures in English. *World Englishes*, 7(2), 183-196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.1988.tb00230.x>
- Bouton, L. F. (1990). The effective use of implicature in English: Why and how it should be taught in the ESL classroom. *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, 1, 43-52.
- Bouton, L. F. (1992). The interpretation of implicature in English by NNS: Does it come automatically without being explicitly taught? *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 3, 53-65.
- Bouton, L. F. (1994). Can NNS skill in interpreting implicature in American English be improved through explicit instruction? A pilot study. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 5, 89-109.
- Bouton, L. F. (1999). Developing nonnative speaker skills in interpreting conversational implicatures in English. *Culture in Second Language Teaching and Learning*, 30(1), 47-70.
- Cetinavci, U. R. (2019). The effects of explicit film-based instruction on EFL teacher trainees' interpretation of implied meanings. *European Journal of Educational Research*, 8(2), 581-605. <https://doi.org/10.12973/eu-jer.8.2.581>
- Chen, Y., & Rau, V. (2013). Developing multiple-choice discourse completion tasks as pedagogical materials in L2 pragmatics. *Research Gate*, 106-120. <https://doi.org/10.22158/selt.v1n1p106>
- Cignetti, L. M., & Di Giuseppe, M. S. (2015). Pragmatic awareness of conversational implicatures and the usefulness of explicit instruction. *Revista Nebrija de Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza de Lenguas*, (19), 42-70. <https://doi.org/10.26378/rnlael019282>
- Davis, W. A. (2007). How normative is implicature. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39(10), 1655-1672. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2007.05.006>
- Derakhshan, A., & Eslami, Z. (2020). The effect of metapragmatic awareness, interactive translation, and discussion through video-enhanced input on EFL learners' comprehension of implicature. *Applied Research on English Language*, 9(1), 637-664. <https://doi.org/10.22108/are.2019.118062.1476>
- Grice, P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics: Speech Acts*, 3, 41-58. New York: Academic Press. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004368811\\_003](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004368811_003)
- Grice, P. (1989). *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Kasper, G. (2001). Four perspectives on L2 pragmatic development. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(4), 502-530. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/22.4.502>

- Kasper, G., & Rose, K.R. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kubota, M. (1995). Teachability of conversational implicature to Japanese EFL learners. *IRLT Bulletin*, 9, 35-67.
- Lee, J. S. (2002). Interpreting conversational implicatures: A study of Korean learners of English. *The Korea TESOL Journal*, 5(1), 1-26.
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London, England: Longman.
- Pratama, H., Nurkamto, J., Rustono, R., & Marmanto, S. (2017). Second Language Learners' Comprehension of Conversational Implicatures in English. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 23, 50-66. <https://doi.org/10.17576/3L-2017-2303-04>
- Roever, C. (2006). Validation of a web-based test of ESL pragmalinguistics. *Language Testing*, 23(2), 229-256. <https://doi.org/10.1191/0265532206lt329oa>
- Roever, C. (2012). What learners get for free: Learning of routine formulae in ESL and EFL environments? *ELT Journal*, 66, 10-21. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccq090>
- Schmidt, R. W. (1993). Awareness and second language acquisition. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 13, 206-26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190500002476>
- Taguchi, N. (2002). An application of relevance theory to the analysis of L2 interpretation processes: The comprehension of indirect replies. *IRAL*, 40(2), 151-176. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.2002.006>
- Taguchi, N. (2005). Comprehending implied meaning in English as a foreign language. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(4), 543-562. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00329.x>
- Taguchi, N. (2007). Development of speed and accuracy in pragmatic comprehension in English as a foreign language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41(2), 313-338. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1545-7249.2007.tb00061.x>
- Taguchi, N. (2008). The role of learning environment in the development of pragmatic comprehension: A comparison of gains between EFL and ESL learners. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 30(4), 423-452. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263108080716>
- Taguchi, N. (2013). Comprehension of conversational implicature. *Technology in Interlanguage Pragmatics Research and Teaching*, 19-41. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.36.03tag>
- Yamanaka, J. (2003). Effects of proficiency and length of residence on the pragmatic comprehension of Japanese ESL learners. *Second Language Studies*, 22(1), 107-175.

### Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).