

Exploring Implicature Awareness and Instructional Adequacy in Greek EFL Curriculum: A Pragmatic Perspective

Aglaia Rouki

Department of English Language and Literature, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece
Email: rouki_aglaia@hotmail.com

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Abstract

This research paper addresses the burgeoning discourse surrounding pragmatics instruction, reflecting a broader trend of increased scholarly interest in the field with a particular focus on the explicit teaching of pragmatics within English as a Foreign. Within the context of Greek EFL education, where English is introduced at a young age, proficient Greek speakers of English often grapple with cross-cultural misunderstandings during communication. This study presents an extensive examination of the curriculum used in the initial year of Greek high school education (lyceums), with a specific focus on implicature. The central objective is to assess the adequacy of the instructional materials in cultivating learners' pragmatic awareness, particularly their competence in identifying implicatures within written contexts. Notably, the analysis reveals a prevalence of non-creative implicatures, suggesting that contextual cues played a marginal role in their comprehension. Implicatures prominently featured in literary and lyrical forms, underscoring the propensity of poetic language for non-literal expression, while news articles demonstrated a predilection for literal language usage due to their objective nature. Furthermore, a limited utilization of relevant implicatures in instructional exercises is observed, with only a fraction of tasks capitalizing on this vital pragmatic facet. Specifically, among a total of 97 tasks, merely 8 exhibited partial incorporation of implicatures, representing less than 10% of the total exercise pool. The implications of these findings underscore the imperative of enhancing pragmatics instruction to better equip learners for effective cross-cultural communication.

Keywords

Pragmatics, Teaching Pragmatics, Conversational Implicature, EFL Learners,

1. Introduction

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, the nuanced understanding of implicature holds a pivotal role in nurturing effective communicative prowess. This research endeavors to delve into the extent of familiarity that Greek high-school students possess with the intricate concept of implicature, as imparted through the curriculum designated for first-grade learners. Emphasizing a targeted investigation into the realm of creative conversational implicatures, as distinct from their conventional counterparts, forms the cornerstone of this study's scope. Notably, conventionalized implicatures, by virtue of their formulaic and structured nature, often prove more accessible to EFL learners, thereby mitigating potential hurdles to effective communication (Vega, 2007). In the pursuit of illuminating this facet of linguistic competence, the study embraces the framework of relevance theory, championed by influential theorists such as Carston (2001), Wilson and Sperber (2004), and Wilson (2009). Through this analytical lens, the research aspires to unravel the intricacies that underlie the acquisition and application of creative conversational implicatures, shedding light on the dynamics of language instruction, which refers to the strategies, techniques, and methodologies used by educators to impart language skills to students focusing on how the instruction of creative conversational implicatures contributes to students' overall pragmatic awareness, and its vital role in equipping learners for proficient cross-cultural communication.

2. Pragmatic Competence in EFL

While several studies have been conducted on both pragmatic competence and pragmatic awareness, very few have provided definitions of these concepts which explain their differences. This section aims to provide definitions of pragmatic competence, pragmatic awareness and metapragmatic awareness in an EFL context and explain why and which were adopted and tested for the purposes of the current PhD research. Moreover, it aims to provide adequate evidence for the importance of explicit teaching of implicatures in order to raise the pragmatic awareness of learners, thus making them more competent users of English.

2.1. Defining Pragmatic Awareness and Meta-Pragmatic Awareness

The notion of pragmatic competence and its relation to EFL constitutes a relatively recent issue of concern in that it has been the focus of L2 studies for no more than twenty years (Ifantidou, 2014). The notion of pragmatic competence has been termed as “the ability to produce and recognize socially appropriate language contexts” (Harley et al., 1990: p. 14; Hedge, 2000: p. 48; Barron, 2003:

p. 10; Taguchi, 2009: p. 2).

Although pragmatic competence has been accepted as one of the most significant components of communicative competence (Bachman, 1990), for many years there was a lack of a clear and widely accepted definition of the term. According to Bachman's model (1990: p. 87), language competence is divided into "organizational competence" and "pragmatic competence". The former comprises knowledge of linguistic units and the rules for joining them together at the levels of sentence and discourse. The latter consists of illocutionary competence, which is knowledge of speech acts and speech functions, and sociolinguistic competence, which entails the ability to use language appropriately according to context (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004).

For the purposes of this study, I adopted Ifantidou's (2014) model of defining pragmatic competence, pragmatic awareness and metapragmatic awareness to which I turn next. According to this model, pragmatic competence is the sum of three different kinds of awarenesses, namely linguistic awareness, pragmatic awareness and metapragmatic awareness. When learners have adequately acquired these aspects of pragmatic competence, they are considered pragmatically competent users of L2 to varying degrees.

Traditionally, linguistic awareness refers to the ability to identify relevant linguistic indexes in a given utterance (Ellis, 2012: p. 2). The Association for Language Awareness (ALA) defined linguistic awareness as the explicit knowledge of language and conscious perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use. According to this definition, linguistic awareness covers a wide spectrum of fields as it includes the exploration of the benefits that can be derived from developing a good knowledge of language, a conscious understanding of how languages work and of how people learn and use them. Pragmatic awareness refers to the ability to retrieve relevant pragmatic effects (Ellis, 2012: p. 12), and has been defined as "the conscious, reflective, explicit knowledge about pragmatics" (Alcón-Soler & Safont Jorda, 2008). Regarding the terms "pragmatic awareness" and "explicit knowledge of pragmatics", data have been retrieved from discourse completion tasks, verbal protocols, naturalistic prompts and metalinguistic explanations provided by L2 learners or pragmatic knowledge fostered by "explicit instruction". Alcón-Soler & Safont Jorda (2008) argued that "reflective" and "conscious" pragmatic knowledge refers to the recognition of speech acts in a conscious way, a process in which EFL learners do not usually engage. Finally, metapragmatic awareness relates to the ability to explicate the link between lexical indexes and retrieved pragmatic effects (Ellis, 2012: p. 12). Perhaps it was Jakobson (1960) who, for the first time, introduced the concept of metalanguage by distinguishing it from object language. He attributed the glossing function to the former, whereby speakers or writers are able to detach themselves from the object use of language. Since Jakobson's definition, many other scholars have introduced their own conceptualizations of metalanguage. Metapragmatics, according to Silverstein (1976), is the description of how effects and conditions of language use themselves become objects of dis-

course. Lucy (1993: p. 12), while distinguishing between metalanguage and object language, defined the former as “language referring to language” and the latter as “ordinary language referred to”. Metapragmatic awareness was later defined as knowledge of the social meaning of various L2 forms and awareness of the ways in which these forms mark different aspects of social contexts, therefore rendering it an important force behind the meaning-generation capacity of language in use (Verschueren, 1999).

Contrary to previous work, which relied on short and prefabricated sets of discourse, central in Ifantidou’s (2014) genre-driven framework are two processes by means of which pragmatic awareness and metapragmatic awareness are explored, namely conversion of academic and media genres and metapragmatic analysis of editorials and news reports.

Adopting authentic material input, I used corpora as a source of natural language input for realistic interpretations and as a linguistic tool to attest pragmatic—not metapragmatic—awareness at an advanced level of language proficiency. Since I am interested in raising learners’ pragmatic awareness I did not engage the L2 learners participating in the present study in a meta-pragmatic analysis of the link between linguistic and overall relevance of the chosen texts. Therefore, the material I have developed does not focus on the analysis of these elements and is thus, as has already been stated, not meant to raise the meta-pragmatic awareness of L2 learners.

To conclude, by adopting Ifantidou’s (2014) definition of pragmatic awareness, I set out to explore the connection between explicit teaching and raising the pragmatic awareness of L2 learners through the material I have developed, which is the focus of the following section. I am specifically interested in implicature awareness, which refers to an individual’s conscious recognition and understanding of implicatures in language. Implicatures are indirect or implied meanings that arise from the context of a conversation, rather than from the literal meaning of the words used. Implicature awareness involves the ability to identify and interpret these implied meanings, recognizing that a speaker may intend to convey something beyond the literal content of their words (Yang, 2007; Taguchi, 2015).

2.2. The Importance of Raising Pragmatic Awareness

Raising students’ pragmatic awareness is important as it equips them with the skills and understanding necessary for effective and nuanced communication. Pragmatic awareness refers to the ability to recognize and appropriately use language in different social and contextual situations. It helps students understand not just the literal meanings of words, but also the implied meanings, intentions, and social nuances behind them. This leads to more effective and accurate communication, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2005; Fa, 2011).

Moreover, different situations and settings require different communication styles. Pragmatic awareness enables students to adjust their language and beha-

behavior based on the context, such as speaking differently to a friend versus a teacher, or in a formal versus informal setting. Students with strong pragmatic awareness are better equipped to navigate conversations, address potential misunderstandings, and resolve conflicts more effectively. In addition, in the professional world, effective communication is vital. Pragmatic awareness enables students to navigate workplace interactions, understand workplace culture, and appropriately interpret communication from colleagues, supervisors, and clients (Mey, 2001; Gholamia & Aghaib, 2012).

Also, pragmatic awareness allows them to infer emotions and attitudes that are not explicitly stated. This fosters empathy by helping them understand others' perspectives and emotions, leading to more compassionate interactions. Finally, exposure to various pragmatic contexts and styles enriches students' vocabulary and language skills. It helps them grasp the subtleties and intricacies of language usage, enhancing their ability to express themselves creatively and precisely. For these reasons, incorporating pragmatic awareness into education helps students become not only proficient language users but also adept communicators who can navigate diverse social landscapes with confidence and sensitivity (Tuan, 2012).

2.3. Explicit Teaching and Raising of Pragmatic Awareness

In the domain of interlanguage pragmatics, several researchers have studied the notion of pragmatic awareness under the influence of a variety of variables, such as motivation (Takahashi, 2005), language proficiency (Matsumura, 2001; Takahashi, 2005), learning environment (Matsumura, 2001; Schauer, 2006), target language exposure (Matsumura, 2001), length of residence in target language country (Bella, 2011), emotional intelligence (Rafieyan et al., 2014) and the effect of teaching (Lo Castro, 2003; Taguchi, 2010). Regarding the teaching of pragmatics, researchers have examined the effectiveness of a variety of instructional methods, including input- and output-based instruction, skill acquisition and practice, metapragmatic discussion, teaching within the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) and implicit or explicit instruction (Rose & Kasper, 2001; Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2005, 2008; Rose, 2005).

My aim is to review the literature regarding whether pragmatic awareness is more effectively raised through explicit teaching. The following studies were analyzed thoroughly in Taguchi's (2015) research on instructed pragmatics. Here, I will discuss only those that relate to the aim and focus of the present research, namely those which dealt with implicature and those which used similar methods to the ones I used in the current research.

Taguchi (2015) noticed that L2 learners experience considerable difficulty when learning pragmatics due to the complexity of language use, which involves more than just focus-on-forms. In order to understand pragmatic meaning, learners must attend to multipart mappings of form, meaning, function, force and context. Moreover, adult L2 learners have to face an additional challenge in

their pragmatic development stemming from the co-existence of L1- and L2-based pragmatic systems (Mey, 2001). Bearing in mind these challenges, and also considering previous findings that revealed slow pragmatic development in a naturalistic setting (Taguchi, 2010), this PhD research focuses on the importance of teaching pragmatics in an explicit way based on the attested assumptions that explicit pragmatic instruction can direct EFL learners' attention towards the target pragmatic meanings and therefore raise their pragmatic awareness (Tanaka, 1997; Lee, 2002; Taguchi, 2002; Fa, 2011; Taguchi, 2005). Certain pragmatic phenomena such as implicatures cannot be automatically acquired until the learners' focus is drawn by means of pragmatic instruction (Gholamia & Aghaib, 2012; Kim, 2017).

As a consequence, the significance of pragmatics has inspired researchers to increase their efforts on the empirical study of pragmatic instruction resulting in about 60 instructional intervention studies within the field of interlanguage pragmatics (Taguchi, 2015). Probably the first scholar who exhibited a strong interest in the explicit teaching of pragmatics was Gabriele Kasper, whose plenary talk on the explicit teaching of pragmatics at the TESOL Convention in Orlando in 1997 inspired applied empirical investigation into the effectiveness of instruction. The first studies appeared during the 1990s and showed that pragmatics is teachable; emphasizing that explicit instruction will benefit the development of pragmatic competence (for a review, see Kasper, 1997). Subsequently, researchers and practitioners began to look for creative ways of including pragmatics in a classroom since the available English-language materials did not provide natural or even pragmatically appropriate conversational models, as indicated by various studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006; Sykes & Cohen, 2006; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Houck & Tatsuki, 2011).

Taguchi (2015) provided an analytical review of 31 studies and found a clear benefit of explicit instruction over other teaching methods. All 31 studies showed significant gains in L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge from pre- to post-instruction. In the studies that used a control group, the instructed group outperformed the control group in pragmatic development, a significant finding considering that these 31 studies represented diverse L1 and L2 groups, pragmatic targets and measures of learning. In what follows I will refer to some characteristic examples from those studies with emphasis on explicit instruction of pragmatics for EFL purposes.

Kasper (1997) suggested various techniques and tasks that could contribute to EFL learners' pragmatic development. Regarding the techniques, Kasper suggested, firstly, teacher presentation and discussion on different aspects of pragmatics and, secondly, student-discovery procedures in which learners obtain information through real-life material. Given that I used a corpus, my research is closer to the second type of techniques. Regarding the tasks, these could be classified into two main categories, namely tasks aiming at raising learners' pragmatic awareness and tasks offering opportunities for communicative practice. In

the first group of tasks, learners had to identify the implicatures and analyze their meaning (comprehension tasks) while in the second one they had to produce their own implicatures (production tasks). The tasks illustrated how it is possible to incorporate key elements of pragmatics—social context, functional language use and norms of interaction—into classroom tasks (Taguchi, 2015). For example, learners had to perform in certain scenarios, such as an apology or a request scenario, and then discuss with their classmates and teacher what grammar corrections were required or what could be changed in order to make their utterances politer or more straightforward.

Although both groups of tasks deserve attention, the present research particularly focuses on awareness-raising tasks, which are designed to develop recognition of how language forms are used appropriately in a given context (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). The corpus that I used aims to expose L2 learners to implicatures, such as ironies, metaphors and indirect answers, and provide them with the theoretically-driven analytical tools they need in order to arrive at their own generalizations about what an implicature is and which its effect is when used in a specific context of occurrence.

In the speech act tradition of EFL pragmatics, Rasekh-Eslami and Fatahi (2004) explored the effect of explicit pragmatic instruction on advanced EFL learners' speech act comprehension. They pointed out that explicit instruction not only enhanced advanced EFL learners' awareness of pragmatic input features, but also improved their performance in producing speech acts appropriately. The study focused on 3 types of speech acts, namely requests, apologies and complaints. The materials compiled started with presenting descriptions of the notions of speech acts, levels of directness and types and factors of variability. Each speech act set encompassed the major sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic patterns and strategies of interpreting and realizing one particular speech act at the "explicit," "conventional" and "implicit" or "indirect" levels (Blum-Kulka & Olsh-tain, 1984), considering both "internal" and "external" modifications specified under the effects of various situational, social or cultural factors of variability. The results indicated that the role of explicit pragmatic instruction was relatively significant for L2 learners and claimed that in order for noticing to take place, input had to be made salient through input enhancement, which could raise learners' awareness of the target features.

In the same direction, Koike and Pearson (2005) examined the effectiveness of teaching pragmatic information, and more specifically the effects of pragmatic interventions on the learning of Spanish suggestions, through the use of both explicit and implicit pre-instruction and explicit as well as implicit feedback to English-speaking learners of Spanish. The results of the pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test indicated that the groups who underwent explicit pre-instruction and explicit feedback during tasks conducted in class performed significantly better than the other experimental group which had received implicit instruction. Although the delayed post-test indicated that such gains were not clearly retained in the long-term, the two post-tests showed that the group receiving

both explicit instruction and feedback appeared to be more pragmatically aware.

In more recent studies, there is a noticeable trend in the use of technology-enhanced authentic tasks to treat and assess the learning of pragmatics. [Cunningham and Vyatkina \(2012\)](#) implemented direct teaching of polite modal verbs (“may” or “could”) and the subjunctive mood in German in a U.S. university. The instruction consisted of explicit teaching of the formal register, which was provided via worksheet and web conferences with German-speaking professionals using Adobe Connect Pro. The results verified the researchers’ initial assumption that the learners’ ability to use modal verbs and the subjunctive mood would be improved. This study, in addition to those by [Belz and Vyatkina \(2005\)](#), [Kakegawa \(2009\)](#) and [Johnson and deHaan \(2013\)](#), has also influenced the present research towards incorporating technology in retrieving authentic material and in particular using online corpora.

More importantly, research has also been conducted in the area of the explicit teaching of implicature. [Bouton \(1999\)](#) investigated non-native speakers’ ability to interpret native speaker use of conversational implicatures by comparing interpretations from six cultural groups of non-native speakers with the interpretations provided by an American native speaker control group. The results showed that cultural background was a reliable predictor of the results, since the German and Spanish learners were most likely to derive the same implied meanings as those of the American group, while the Japanese and Chinese learners were the least likely to derive the same meanings.

Later studies showed that explicit instruction was considerably more beneficial than implicit techniques both with European ([Bouton, 1994](#)) and Japanese learners ([Kubota, 1995](#)), suggesting that learners can benefit from instruction aimed at raising pragmatic awareness of native speaker use of implicature. [Roever \(2001\)](#) conducted a study on 181 German high school learners, 25 Japanese college students in Japan, 94 ESL students at an American university and 14 native speakers. After receiving a six-week period of instruction on implicature, the participants were asked to complete a test by selecting one of four answer choices that conveyed the meaning of the implied utterance. The findings revealed a positive correlation with ability levels and highlighted the positive results of explicit instruction. [Tuan \(2012\)](#) investigated the effect of explicit teaching of conversational implicatures on Taiwanese college EFL learners and the relationship between the learners’ pragmatic competence and language proficiency. After a ten-week-instruction period, the findings revealed a statistically significant difference in the learners’ implicature competence after instruction and a positive correlation between learners’ implicature competence and English language proficiency. This is why Tuan emphasized the need for explicit instruction of implicature towards developing learners’ pragmatic competence.

Worth mentioning is also the fact that several studies have pointed out the positive effects of the implicit teaching of pragmatics. For example, [Fukuya and](#)

Zhang (2002) examined the effect of recasts (corrective feedback) on EFL learners' acquisition of the speech act of requests. The study participants role-played a scenario that featured request making and received a recast from their instructor when they produced non-target-like request forms. Given that the recasts occurred through meaningful communication, learners were able to establish a connection among the target pragmalinguistic form, the function it expressed and the context of its occurrence with ease. This connection was strengthened by repeatedly activating it via recast, essentially leading to learning, as was found in relation to the post-instructional gains in accuracy and appropriateness of request forms in the DCT task (Taguchi, 2015).

Concerning "noticing", Narita (2012) used consciousness-raising tasks to draw L2 Japanese learners' attention to hearsay evidential markers (e.g., the expression "rashii" meaning "I heard that"). Narita measured the learning outcome using two knowledge tests and one oral production test that assessed the learners' ability to use hearsay expressions. The results indicated that the treatment groups outperformed the control group on both immediate and delayed posttest. Through subsequent analysis, Narita revealed no significant difference between the learners who demonstrated only noticing of the target forms and the learners who also showed understanding of the forms – although the understanding-level group performed slightly better on the post-tests. The overall conclusion was that learning pragmatics is possible without a provision of explicit metapragmatic explanation (Narita, 2012).

To conclude, while the implicit approach can be just as effective in improving learners' pragmatic awareness, the explicit method can produce larger effect sizes than the implicit method and involves a greater range of tasks that draw learners' attention to focal pragmatic forms and form-function-context mappings (Jeon & Kaya, 2006). Hence, explicit pragmatic instruction is significantly more effective in both enhancing EFL learners' pragmatic awareness and developing their pragmatic performance (Fa, 2011).

Having discussed how pragmatic awareness can be raised through explicit language instruction and the use of real-life sources, I move on to a presentation of how it can be effectively taught in a classroom context with the use of authentic material.

3. Existing Textbook Material

The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the English textbook taught in the first grade of high school with reference to implicature retrieval. More specifically, I will be focusing on how English is taught in the first grade of high school (first grade of lyceum). The textbook I will be presenting is entitled "English for General Lyceum 1".

Before doing so, however, I will be presenting an overview of previous L2 pragmatic research on implicature retrieval aiming at describing the main findings of previous studies that are relevant to the current research.

3.1. Overview of L2 Pragmatic Teaching Research on Implicature Retrieval

Although teaching aids have considerably changed because of digitalization, textbooks (for a definition, see Sheldon, 1988) still play a significant role in teaching. They are considered as central to the curriculum and syllabus in most classrooms (Vellenga, 2004) and provide the primary form of linguistic input (Kim & Hall, 2002). Nevertheless, it has been reported that they rarely provide enough information for learners to successfully acquire pragmatic competence and may even lead to pragmatic failure (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009).

Bardovi-Harlig (2001), for example, reported that speech act realizations included in textbooks might not reflect the manner in which native speakers commonly realize a speech act. In addition, textbooks have been criticized for decades for failing to provide EFL learners with adequate and appropriate pragmatic knowledge (Yang, 2007). Despite the constant criticism (Bardovi-Harlig, & Hartford, 1991; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Cane, 1998; Grant & Starks, 2001), little seems to have changed in the authenticity of language samples. More specifically, Vellenga (2004) reported that metalinguistic and metapragmatic information with regard to ways of speaking were missing from most ELT textbooks. Detailed presentation of conversational norms and practices is another element missing from ELT texts, which often fail to adequately demonstrate communicative practices in the target language appropriately (Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Burns, 1998; Cane, 1998; Grant & Starks, 2001; Gray, 2002). Particularly in EFL contexts, the only opportunity learners have to learn target-like conversational norms comes from either authentic language models or comprehensible metalinguistic descriptions that represent actual ways of speaking. As far as textbooks are concerned, learners are not frequently given the tools required to recognize and analyze language in a variety of contexts, and therefore, are not equipped with the appropriate linguistic apparatus to be polite or rude intentionally (Grant & Starks, 2001).

A number of studies have been carried out on pragmatic knowledge contained in English textbooks that are used for EFL purposes in schools in various countries. One of the main conclusions reached was that L2 textbooks fail to provide learners with adequate and appropriate input (Yang, 2007).

More specifically, Vellenga (2004) conducted a study based on 8 intermediate to upper-intermediate level ESL and EFL textbooks. The books included 4 integrated-skills EFL texts and 4 grammar ESL texts. The results indicated that the textbooks lacked metalinguistic and metapragmatic knowledge, which was also seldom adequately supplemented in teachers' manuals. Detailed analysis focused specifically on the use of metalanguage, explicit treatment of speech acts and metapragmatic information, including discussion(s) of register, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and usage. In another study, Takafumi et al. (2007) explored how speech acts were introduced and practiced in the "Oral Communication 1" textbooks used in Japan; the study included 17 textbooks

used in Japanese public schools. The pragmatic feature taught was speech acts. The results verified Vellenga's finding that a limited number of speech acts, such as requests, complaints and refusals, were explicitly presented in each textbook while learners could learn only a few linguistic forms for each speech act as they had limited opportunities to practice. In addition, metapragmatic information was judged as insufficient both in terms of quantity and quality. In a similar vein, Ji (2007) conducted a content analysis to explore the nature of pragmatic materials and tasks in the textbooks entitled "College English (New) Listening and Speaking Course". The results showed that the variety of pragmatic material in the books was rather limited and most of the metapragmatic explanations were very simple. For example, the textbooks included very few explanations of the functions of speech acts in terms of politeness (e.g. illocutionary force, conversation norms and context).

Ulum and Bada (2016) conducted a study which aimed to examine the extent of pragmatic elements referring to speech acts in the EFL textbooks "Yes You Can" for 9th grade state high school learners, which are recommended by the Turkish Ministry of National Education. The study identified the existence of pragmatic elements such as speech acts in EFL textbooks used by state schools in Turkey, following the pragmatic modes of Searle's (1976) speech acts. For the purposes of the study, 4 English textbooks of different language proficiency levels were analyzed using Searle's (1976) speech act classification. The data analysis clearly showed that the quantity of pragmatic data in the evaluated textbooks was insufficient for EFL learners to attain pragmatic competence. According to Ulum (2015), teaching speech acts is an important aspect of teaching English as a foreign language. As a result, the textbooks should contain pragmatic features such as speech acts in order to compensate for the lack of natural context.

Aksoyalp and Toprak (2015) also conducted a content analysis of 17 textbooks of different language proficiency levels (i.e. from beginner to advanced) aiming at finding out whether the textbooks included an adequate number of speech acts, the range and frequencies of linguistic strategies used to perform these speech acts and whether their frequency showed variation across proficiency levels. The findings of the study demonstrated that although the three speech acts in question—complaints, apologies and suggestions—were present in the textbooks examined, their linguistic realizations and complexity varied. Despite the fact that the speech acts in question were present in textbooks of all levels with varying complexity and frequency, the findings of the study pointed out that speech acts received limited attention when compared to other language components, such as grammar units, phonology, spelling and so on. Additionally, the findings suggested that pragmatic knowledge does not receive the attention it deserves from material developers and textbook writers, hence more attention should be devoted to it.

Overall, it can be concluded that most course materials failed to provide an adequate amount of pragmatic knowledge in order for learners to develop their pragmatic competence. What follows is a detailed presentation of the conclu-

sions I have reached with regard to the treatment of implicatures in the English book for the first grade of Greek high schools.

3.2. Overview of the L2 Teaching Practices and the English Textbook Used in the 1st Grade of Greek High-Schools (Lykeio)

The decision to focus on Greek learners in the exploration of implicature awareness through the utilization of corpora stems from the unique advantage of being an English teacher within the Greek educational context. This vantage point provides an intrinsic accessibility to Greek schools, facilitating not only convenient access to participants but also a comprehensive understanding of the specific linguistic challenges and cultural nuances that Greek learners encounter. As an English teacher in a Greek school, I possess a firsthand insight into the pedagogical landscape, the curriculum, and the prevailing teaching methodologies. This familiarity equips me with a nuanced awareness of the pragmatic gaps that may exist among Greek students when it comes to comprehending and utilizing the subtleties of English language pragmatics. By concentrating on Greek learners, the study can effectively tailor interventions to address the distinctive linguistic needs of this specific demographic, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of their pragmatic competence and facilitating more effective cross-cultural communication skills.

According to the Greek Ministry of Education, after completing the first grade of high school (Lykeio) students will have obtained a C1 level of English. I decided to work with a class of this grade, for both my pilot and main studies, since I considered it essential for learners to have obtained this level in order to be able to deal with the pre- and post-tests on implicatures. The second reason concerned the fact that during the last two years of high school English is not an obligatory subject and only learners who either show a special interest or are willing to be examined in the subject of English in Pan-Hellenic examinations choose to attend English classes at school¹.

The textbook (“Φάκελος Αγγλικά Γενικού Λυκείου 1”) consists of 102 pages and is divided into eight modules. Each module includes comprehension and production tasks of both written and oral speech, which have been developed with a view to activating learners’ existing communicative skills through authentic communicative situations. For example, some of the topics covered in this book are connected with social and political issues (“Refugee’s dreamland”), ethical issues (“On Duty”), art (“Vincent van Gogh”), animals and environment (“Animal Rights”), literature (“Pride and Prejudice”) and technology (“Social Media”). Teachers are given the chance to adjust their teaching practices according to the L2 level of their learners as well as their interests and needs by taking advantage of the technological tools provided.

As my interviews with the teacher revealed, the English lesson is conducted

¹As the Greek Ministry of Education suggests, the existing teaching material, which is recommended for the teaching of English in the first grade of Greek high schools, intends to provide learners with chances to put into use their already acquired L2 knowledge and participate in various tasks aiming at their linguistic, social and emotional development.

twice a week. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes and, apart from the book recommended by the Ministry of Education, no extra material is used. During class, the learners are asked to read texts, do vocabulary and grammar exercises and, most of all, interact in classroom, discuss ideas and form groups to do projects. Unfortunately, due to lack of IT equipment in the classroom it is not possible for the teacher to take advantage of the online material suggested in the book on a weekly basis. Homework includes mainly vocabulary and grammar exercises and more rarely writing tasks. Tests are also conducted in class once every three or four months and the scores of the learners together with their oral performance determine their final grade.

In what follows, I will provide a detailed presentation of the way the book treats the concept of implicature, the number of implicatures found in it and the number of tasks focusing on it. While each module includes additional sections referring to certain grammatical phenomena, vocabulary exercises and some writing and listening tasks, I will be referring only to those texts and tasks which include examples of implicatures providing a few examples from each case.

Presentation of Each Module of the Book

The first module of the book is entitled “Group Work” and—being the opening module—includes only speaking tasks aiming at helping learners to get to know each other and interact in English. This module includes no instances of implicature and there is no reference to the pragmatic dimension of language at all.

The second module is entitled “A refugee’s dreamland” and begins with an article about the island of Tilos (pp. 15-18). This text includes 5 implicatures (example 1: “refugees have been stuck”: implicating that the refugees could not actually leave the island, example 2: “the presence of the refugees has injected money into the island”: implicating that the presence of the refugees had many financial benefits) which, nevertheless, are not used in any of the reading comprehension tasks that follow (pp. 19-20).

With the exception of a few speaking tasks (pp. 24-25), the third module, entitled “On duty”, includes a police report (pp. 26-27) which presents the events without relying on implicatures.

The fourth module is entitled “Vincent van Gogh” and opens with a song inspired by the famous painter’s life (pp. 36-38). The song includes 11 instances of non-literal use of language. In the third task, based on this song, learners pay attention and understand some of the implicatures of the song for the first time in the book. More specifically, learners are asked to refer to van Gogh’s attitude and feelings by mentioning specific verses from the song. In order to complete this task, learners need to refer to specific implicatures (example 3: “suffered to your sanity”: indicating that Van Gogh was unhappy despite his good character, example 4: “the darkness in my soul”: indicating Van Gogh’s great sadness). In addition, learners are provided with a two-page short biography of the painter (pp. 41-42), which includes two instances of implicature (example 5: “Vincent...was well-known as the tortured artist”: implying the psychological prob-

lems Van Gogh was facing, example 6: "...who reported his last words as the sadness will last forever": indicating how pessimistic he was about his future). The reading exercises that follow (p. 43) make use of the second instance of implicature appearing in the text. More specifically, learners are asked to comment on the metaphorical phrase "The sadness will last forever" and explain the reasons why van Gogh decided to commit suicide. Then, learners are asked to engage in a discussion based on YouTube videos (pp. 44-45) and read extracts from letters sent by van Gogh to his brother (pp. 46-47). These extracts include seven instances of implicature (example 7: "I fell in the abyss of the most bitter discouragement": implying that he was facing depression, example 8: "I felt with horror how a deadly poison penetrated my stifled heart": implying how deeply hurt he was by his friend). Here, for the third time in the book, learners work on a task that takes advantage of the implicatures in the text. Learners are asked to discuss Vincent's attitude towards life by retrieving some of the implicatures mentioned in the text.

The fifth module is entitled "Animal Rights". In this module, learners are asked to read an internet article on Factory Farms (p. 56). This article includes one implicature that is not used in the listening (pp. 57-58) or speaking tasks (pp. 59-60) that follow.

In the sixth module, entitled "Fast Fashion", learners are provided with a text retrieved from the internet on the environmental impact of the fashion industry (pp. 69-71). The text includes one implicature (example 9: "we are faced with a tempting array of newness on offer in the shops": implying the wide range of new productions that people buy without needing them), which is not used in the reading comprehension tasks that follow (p. 72). One of these tasks, however, takes into account the non-literal use of language. More specifically, learners are given four headings and they have to match them with suitable paragraphs from the text. Two of these headings are metaphorical—"hunger for newness" and "fast fashion: a killer". Learners should be able to understand the meaning of the implicatures in order to make the correct choice.

The title of the seventh module is "Pride and Prejudice" (pp. 82-83), which is an adapted summary of the first chapters of Jane Austen's novel, and includes seven instances of implicature, mainly ironies and contradictions expressed by the main characters (example 10: "Jane is the most beautiful creature": indicating that he does not like Jane at all, example 11: "she is tolerable but not handsome enough to tempt me": implying that, in fact, he likes her very much). The reading comprehension question (p. 84) that follows the text requires learners to pay attention to irony, spot the ironies and comment on them. It also provides them with metalanguage about what irony is. In the second reading comprehension task, learners match the titles with each paragraph. One of the titles given is metaphorical ("A spark is born"). In the following extracts from Austen's original novel, accompanied by a number of reading comprehension, open-form exercises (pp. 88-90), six ironies are included (example 12: "Yet, how a humiliation! Had I been in love, I could not have been more wretchedly blind!": imply-

ing that he is in love with her). Learners need to understand the ironies in order to answer the multiple-choice questions under each extract.

The eighth module, which is entitled “Social Media”, includes a text on the negative impact of social media (pp. 94-96), which includes four instances of implicature (example 13: “it seems there is a merry-go-round of interrelated issues at play”: implying the continuing problems, example 14: “it’s not a fluid situation where social media is bleeding into every part of your life without any buffer zone”: implying the disastrous effects of social media in our lives). Out of the 5 reading comprehension exercises (pp. 96-97), only the second one asks learners to guess the meaning of the phrase “staying hot on the heels of social media popularity”. The next text of this module, which concerns teenagers and social networking, includes three instances of implicature (example 15: “radio was gaining an invincible hold of their children”: implying that parents were not able to take action in order to protect their children from the dangers connected with the use of the internet). Nonetheless, none of the implicatures are used in the tasks that follow the text.

The main findings of my analysis could be summarized in **Table 1**:

Table 1. Number of implicatures and tasks on implicatures found in the school English language book.

	Number of implicatures	Number of tasks making use of implicatures
Unit 1	0 (0%) ²	0 (0%) ³
Unit 2	5 (3.35%)	0 (0%)
Unit 3	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unit 4	20 (4.39%)	3 (33.3%)
Unit 5	1 (1.6%)	0 (0%)
Unit 6	3 (1.34%)	1 (10%)
Unit 7	14 (9.4%)	3 (33.3%)
Unit 8	7 (2.72%)	1 (3.12%)
Total	50 (3.44%)	8 (9.96%)

4. Conclusion

Overall, after a thorough examination of the textbook with regard to the treatment of implicature, I have reached a number of conclusions. Firstly, most of the implicatures encountered were non-creative and, therefore, the context in which they appeared played no significant role in their understanding. Implicatures were predominantly found in literature and songs while the texts with the fewest implicatures were newspaper articles. This is normal, since literature and songs use more poetic language that offers fertile ground for non-literal use of lan-

²The percentages illustrate the number of words comprising the implicatures in relation to the total number of words of each unit.

³The percentages illustrate the number of tasks that make use of implicatures in relation to the total number of tasks of each unit.

guage, whereas newspaper articles are meant to be more objective and, therefore, exhibit a preference for the literal use of language. Moreover, only a limited number of exercises took advantage of relevant implicatures. More specifically, out of a total number of 97 tasks only 8 partially took advantage of implicatures, namely 9,96% of the total number of exercises offered.

Furthermore, in light of the evolving landscape of language and communication, it is essential that educational materials keep pace with the dynamic nature of linguistic interactions. The study's findings underscore the need for a curriculum that adapts to the ever-changing nuances of language use, encompassing the diverse array of implicatures that arise in modern discourse. By fostering a deeper appreciation for the subtleties of implicature, educators can empower students to not only decipher implied meanings accurately but also to harness these linguistic intricacies to express themselves more eloquently and persuasively. As we endeavor to prepare the next generation for the multifaceted realm of English communication, a holistic approach to implicature education is paramount, bridging the gap between formal instruction and the rich tapestry of real-world language usage.

To conclude, the material offered to learners in the first grade of high schools is not adequate to practice or raise their awareness of implicature. Consequently, although the linguistic level they reach after the completion of the course might be quite high, learners are not properly prepared to deal with everyday interactions in English where implicatures, such as metaphors, are relatively common.

To address this deficiency, it is imperative that future curriculum development places a stronger emphasis on imparting a comprehensive understanding of implicature. Integrating exercises that encourage critical thinking and nuanced interpretation of implied meanings can significantly enhance students' linguistic acumen. By engaging students in tasks that require them to decipher implicatures across a wider spectrum of contexts, ranging from formal to informal language use, educators can better equip them with the skills necessary for effective communication. Moreover, fostering an appreciation for the creative aspects of implicature, including metaphors and figurative language, will empower learners to navigate the intricate layers of language in real-world situations. A well-rounded approach to implicature instruction will undoubtedly empower students to not only excel academically but also thrive in their interpersonal interactions, enabling them to confidently decipher the intricate tapestry of implied meanings that permeate everyday conversations in the English language.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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