The Effect of Flipped Classroom Instruction on Developing Emirati EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence

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Abstract. This study investigates the effect of flipped classroom instruction on developing Emirati EFL learners' pragmatic competence. It compares flipped classroom instruction with the conventional method of developing learners' request speech acts. To this end, the participants were randomly divided into two groups: experimental and control. A Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was conducted as pre- and post-test to determine whether flipped classroom instruction is more effective than the conventional method in providing learners with pragmatic knowledge needed to produce request speech acts successfully. Data were analysed using a paired sample t-test. The results showed that flipped classroom instruction was more effective than the other method in raising the level of pragmatic competence among the participants. The study results also revealed that the participants' performance on request speech acts in the treatment group remarkably improved in the post-test. This is because they had a more flexible and accessible e-learning environment, which in turn, enhanced their pragmatic competence after the treatment. The study concludes with recommendations for further research.

Keywords: Linguistics, Pragmatic competence; Flipped classroom; Request speech act, EFL learners.

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence as a fundamental factor of EFL learners' communicative competence is defined as "the knowledge of communicative action" (Kasper, 1997). To develop learners' pragmatic competence, they need to be taught using an appropriate teaching method and to have a proper skill to use language in authentic situations (Kasper, 1997). Another definition is proposed by Taguchi (2009) who stated that pragmatic competence is "the ability to use language appropriately in a social context". In a similar vein, Eslami-Rasekh (2005) suggested that developing learners' pragmatic competence leads to improve their communicative competence which concentrates on the accurate use of language in a given situation. Therefore, the role of EFL teachers is to motivate students to learn pragmatics effectively by concentrating on effective teaching strategies.

To use speech acts appropriately, EFL learners must acquire the language form and function as well as the context in which these acts are used (Taguchi 2015). Furthermore, to enhance the effectiveness of L2 pragmatic performance, learners need to master both linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. Besides, they need a suitable strategy to implement this knowledge interactively. Bachman & Palmer's (1996) model emphasized that communicative ability has two major components: language knowledge such as grammatical, discourse and pragmatic knowledge and component includes functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. According to Nuridin (2018), EFL instruction needs to incorporate pragmatic competence in its curriculum because if learners fail to meet pragmatic competence, this may lead to unsuccessful communication.

Additionally, educational technology becomes a key challenge in the education sector nowadays as it revolutionizes all means of getting knowledge. Consequently, it is the university programs' responsibility for preparing pre-service teacher graduates to use appropriate strategies to facilitate EFL learning and develop students' performance by creating, using and managing appropriate technological processes and resources (Robinson: 2016). As a result, the flipped classroom, as an innovative trend in educational technology, is used to create an interactive environment in classrooms. Moreover, flipping the curriculum in teaching pragmatics could be an effective strategy to give students more opportunities to interact with their instructors and peers.

 In this context, the flipped classroom has emerged as a new pedagogical approach in the field of educational technology. Researchers and educators have found that flipped instruction is more effective than conventional approaches through adopting innovative instructional technology such as video conferences and interactive activities in their teaching process (Johnston, 2017). Flipped classroom instruction is best defined as a form of active learning approach based on the use of video technology in teaching. It is designed and provided to students in a digital fashion that can be accessible at home at any time they want. It is characterized by pre-class and post-class activities and followed by assessments and application exercises (Velegol et al.'s, 2015; DeLozier & Rhodes, 2017). However, the conventional approach refers to the traditional way of

teaching such as lecture method which involves face to face interaction, textbooks and exams. It is dominated by the teacher who is delivering information to the students in the classroom.

The flipped classroom is considered a real gateway for students' engagement into the learning process. Because it converts the classroom into an active learning place where instructors become instructional designers and inspirational instructors rather than traditional lecturers. Instructional designers and inspirational instructors are faculty members who play a vital role in designing effective and interactive e-Learning courses. Nowadays, such courses are preferred by students since they focus on student-centred approach. Instructional designers are skilful in applying instructional technology through developing, producing and designing the instructional materials based on the latest technology. Inspirational instructors are also clever and knowledgeable teachers who make learning easy, affordable and enjoyable which increases students' motivation towards the learning process. However, traditional lecturers use a lecture style and an inflexible method of teaching. Students are not able to cope with them because lessons are not challenging enough (Meguid, el al. 2017; Haghighi et al., 2019).

Concerning the students, they become active and problem-solving learners rather than passive recipients. Moreover, the implementation of the flipped classroom as a creative strategy has been increasingly used to facilitate the language learning process (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Taking into account the importance of teaching pragmatics, the researchers examine if the flipped classroom method was effective in teaching request speech act by allowing students to watch lessons at home and use class time for exercises and questions.

2. Background
2.1. Pragmatics and Speech act theory
Pragmatics is described by Bardovi-Harlig (2013) as "the study of how-to-say-what-to-whom-when and that L2 pragmatics is the study of how learners come to know how-to-say-what-to-whom-when". Felix- Brasdefer (2015) defines pragmatics as the study of "language used in context, with actions that are accomplished and negotiated during social interaction".

Additionally, Thomas (1995) pointed out that to understand pragmatics successfully, learners have to interact with each other to understand language functions. (Thomas 1995) defined pragmatics as the study of "meaning in communication". Therefore, spoken or written language is used for a purpose behind it. We are also performing that language through speech acts which are accomplished through different utterances such as apologizing, inviting, promising, requesting and complaining. This is indicated by Yule (1996), who stated that speakers act when they produce utterances. He said that the speech act theory (SAT henceforth), as modern linguistic theory, is dedicated to help learners to use language accurately and appropriately and develop their pragmatic competence (how utterances are used effectively in communicative situations) i.e. language functions and usages. Moreover, Bazerman (2004)

focused on speech act in writing especially "genre". He believed that it has a function in the given text which he called a "social fact".

Austin (1962) was the first philosopher to introduce SAT. He used the term "speech act" to refer to an utterance used in a situation. He illustrated that the theory attempts to explain how the speaker's utterances are related to the surrounding setting. Cohen (2006) also described speech acts as utterances that people use to perform language functionally, they include acts such as inviting, apologizing, requesting, complaining, complementing, promising, ordering, warning, congratulating and refusing.

The most effective way to evaluate students' comprehension and performance of using speech acts is to ask them to react to real speech act situations created by the instructor such as missing information in certain provided situations. To achieve this goal, this study addresses the effectiveness of the flipped classroom on the pragmatic competence of Emirati EFL learners.

2.2. Request Speech Acts

Searle (1969) specified that a request is considered as a directive speech act whose illocutionary aim is to get the hearer to do something in environments where it is not understandable that he/she will perform the action normally. By being an essential act in people's daily life, in requests, the speaker believes that the hearer can perform an action which in turn enhances their social relationship. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1989) divided a request into three strategies according to the level of directness. These request strategies are influenced by situational and cultural factors. The three types of requests include:

"***Direct strategies*** *(marked explicitly as requests such as imperatives)*

e.g.

> *Clean up your room.*
> *I'm asking you to clean up your room.*
> *I'd like to ask you to clean your room.*
> *You'll have to clean up your room.*
> *I really wish you'd clean up your room*

Conventionally indirect strategies *(referring to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance as conventionalized in the language): e.g.*

> *How about cleaning up?*
> *Could you clean up your room, please?*

Non-conventionally indirect strategies *(hints) (partially referring to the object depending on contextual clues): e.g.*

> *You have left your room in a right mess.*
> *I'm a nun. (in response to a persistent hassler)"*

(Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1989: 11)

2.3. What is a Flipped Classroom Instruction?

 A flipped classroom is a kind of blended learning which incorporates instructional technology i.e. e-learning and the conventional teaching methods i.e. face to face learning to create an interactive environment especially in

classrooms containing a large number of learners (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Therefore, Abeysekera & Dawson (2015) considered the flipped classroom as an operative method of teaching because the traditional lecture becomes a practical process including home preparation, classroom tasks and then the application process which comprises assignments and projects related to the main topic.

With regard to the advantages of the flipped classroom method, many researchers have revealed that flipped learning significantly improves students' learning performance (Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017; Hung, 2015; Sahin, Cavlazoglu, & Zeytuncu, 2015), students' engagement in the flipped classroom (Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014), as well as students' learning outcomes (Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017; Baepler, Walker & Driessen, 2014). Besides, flipped learning supports students to learn independently; and therefore, they will be more flexible to distribute their studying time successfully (O'Flaherty & Phillips 2015). Chen Hsieh et al.'s (2017) examined the effect of flipped classroom model on idioms used by EFL learners using the LINE app as a platform to post material. They also used pre-test and post-test to collect data, two questionnaires and an interview to examine the participants' attitude towards flipped learning. Furthermore, flipped classroom as interactive online learning helps students to develop strong relationships with their classmates to enhance their collaborative work and improvement of knowledge about the chosen topics (Murdock & Williams, 2011). Additionally, Bishop and Verleger (2013) specified that a flipped classroom is an educational method that consists of two important components: the former is the use of computer technologies such as video lectures, and the latter is the use of interactive learning activities. Therefore, students in present schools should be more active participants in learning since flipped learning is about creating opportunities for a dynamic interactive environment where educators only guide their students to be creative and innovative.

Chen et al.'s (2014) designed the FLIPPED model (see Figure 1) which allows teachers to provide their students with seven components and characteristics. The model supports students' engagement in flipped learning, especially in a higher education context.
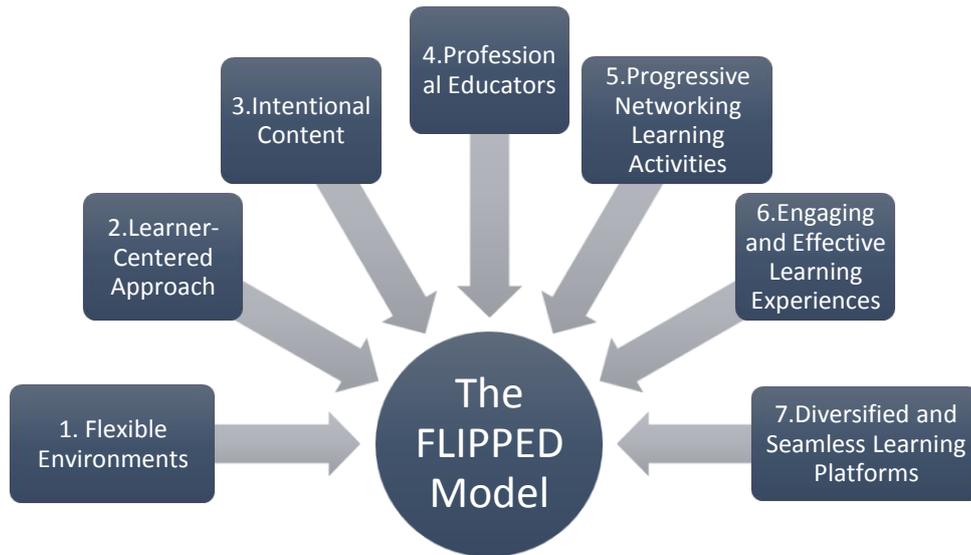
Figure 1: The Seven Pillars of the Flipped Learning Model

In EFL contexts, it has been noticed that learners, in general, have insufficient exposure to the target language and most classroom activities are decontextualized ones that do not help learners to be exposed to a real situation which simplifies their pragmatic competence acquisition (Kasper, 2000). He added that pragmatic competence cannot be acquired without concentrating on pragmatic instructions. As a result, the flipped classroom could show the proper way of using request speech acts and how they can be applied in authentic situations through watching real videos containing conversations or debates of native speakers of English. Blended learning involves both face to face learning and online learning as shown in Figure 2.
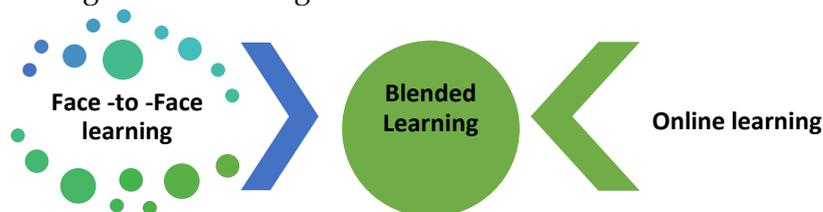
Figure 2. Blended Learning Involves Face to Face Learning and Online Learning

This strategy which flips the teaching/homework paradigm offers information about how speech acts are used. Students will also learn natural English while listening and watching carefully to a pre-recorded lesson about specific speech acts at home usually with their parents. Then, they will use the classroom time for interacting cooperatively with other students under the supervision of their instructor. They will practice various activities and tasks which may develop their pragmatic competence successfully (Bishop &Verleger, 2013). In Katchament's (2018) study, 22 EFL Thai participants majoring in English took a business English course at Thepsatri Rajatbhat University. The researcher studied the effect of flipped classroom instruction on appropriacy of English apology by EFL learners. The findings revealed that the students' appropriacy of English apology significantly improved. The results also pointed out that

teaching pragmatic competence should include adequate self-learning, presentation, discussion, and questions to build interactive environments which are needed for the language classroom, rather than focusing on lecturing.

Furthermore, one of the most important studies that inspired the current study was conducted by Haghighi et al. (2019). The researchers investigated the impact of the flipped classroom on EFL learners' appropriate use of refusal to enhance their pragmatic competence. Additionally, the researchers investigated the participants' perception of flipped learning. Data were collected using a DCT with other five tools. The participants in the experimental group learned the refusal speech act by watching different video clips and accessing the recommended websites before coming to the class. Conversely, the control group was given the material through the conventional method. The findings showed that there was more engagement with the course content by the flipped group who enjoyed learning English in the flipped learning environment, and accepted Telegram as a suitable platform in learning the language. The study also revealed that the participants showed a positive attitude towards flipped learning (Haghighi et al., 2019).

2.4. The Teaching Strategy

Flipped learning may empower students to engage in meaningful learning by using language in real-life situations. So in this study, the researcher prepared the instructional e-lecture to be watched at home. The learning contents were uploaded on the Moodle where students have access there. It contains 5 recorded authentic videos that contain several dialogues with animations and visuals to use the speech act of request correctly. The five videos were selected from several movies to set request situations for EFL learners. They covered various degrees of formality, power, and distance between interlocutors with the focus on everyday life context, educational context, and workplace context. These videos were accessible anytime and allowed them to learn and repeat several times at their own pace. The instructional design followed by self-assessment practices about the use of request speech act by native speakers of English. Thus, the participants were given the first exposure to content before class time. After viewing the e-lecture, in the next day's class time, participants would come to the class prepared to engage with their instructor who provided further clarification through examples.

In-class activities include some practices such as dialogue exercises, play certain roles to imitate native speakers, or complete a short conversation using the learned speech act. The researcher followed up the participants while doing their assignments individually or in groups, saw where they needed help and encouraged them to interact successfully and complete the missing roles in the given tasks.

As far as the evaluation process is concerned, the researchers focused on the participants' performance and creativity by allowing them to produce their scenarios in their final projects. These projects were including a well-designed video about how to use the request speech act and then shared it with their instructor through the assigned website. Participants were also motivated to develop their Wiki pages on topics related request speech act. Besides,

participants were responsible for researching and planning, writing, inserting videos or files and editing the content of their pages which could be accessed by other students anytime and anywhere (Kinshuk and Chen, Ibid).

On the other hand, the control group was taught traditionally in the classroom by the instructor and then part of the activities might be given in form of class activities, then, both groups might be given assignment i.e. the activities done by the experimental group in the class, were given as home assignment to the control group. The common features of both instructions are shown in Figure 3.
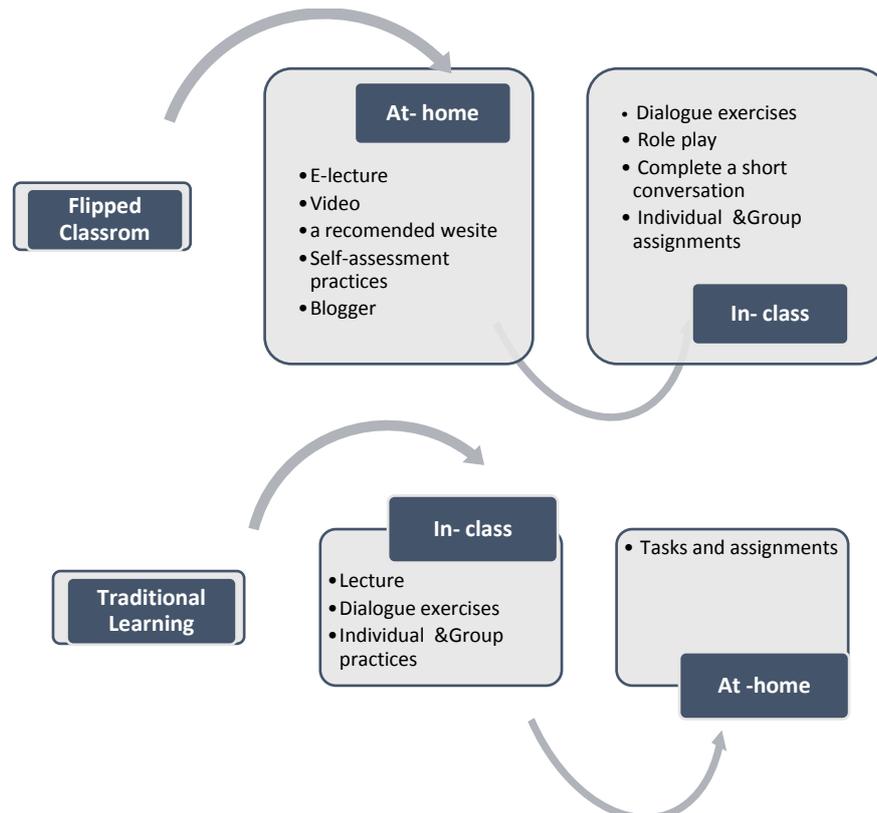

Figure 3. The Common Features of a Flipped and Traditional Learning

All in all, teaching pragmatics and speech acts are essential for EFL learners to acquire the English language fruitfully. Unfortunately, learners of the English language struggle to understand the intended meaning of all speech acts. Although teaching pragmatics is important in EFL classes, it is practically ignored in English courses due to several reasons as stated by Siegel (2016) including insufficient class time, lack of interest, or a shortage of practical and achievable activities for the classroom. Accordingly, Emirati university EFL learners are not aware of the correct utilization of speech acts in EFL contexts. As learners require interaction and collaboration for practising their L2 pragmatic skills, the researchers proposed the flipped classroom technique as an effective step to teach the speech act of request. It would be a kind of challenge that allows learners to understand how to use language successfully in the act of communication. Designing a flipped classroom in conducting speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, complimenting, refusing, and thanking could enhance students' engagement and motivation in learning the English language accurately. As a result, the present study investigates the effectiveness of flipped

classroom to teach request speech act on Emirati university pre-serves EFL learners' pragmatic competence development by providing answers to the following research questions:

1. Does flipped classroom instruction have any statistically significant effect on EFL learners' pragmatic competence?
2. To what extent does the flipped classroom instruction help participants choose the appropriate linguistic and pragmatic forms in performing the speech acts of request?

2.5.   The Pros and Cons of Flipped Learning

As stated above, the flipped classroom is designed to enhance students' learning and achievements by reversing the traditional method of teaching. This allows teachers to focus class time on students' comprehension of the material through discussion, doing collaborative exercises and projects rather than on lecturing. Therefore, there are numerous advantages of using flipped classroom instruction as confirmed by many educators. First, Bergmann & Sams (2012) posited that flipped classroom has positive effects on both students and teachers; through using this method, teachers can achieve their ultimate goal of teaching. As well as, students can be motivated to acquire the 21-century skills that are necessary not only for school time but also for a lifetime. It also increases students' comprehension of the content through engaging them in inclusive discussions and activities. Second, as noted by Kepler (2016), "flipped classroom gives teachers the chance to respond to the individual needs of the students." He also believed that students can be engaged actively outside the classroom by taking responsibility for their learning. Third, flipped classroom supports self-studying and independent learning as students can study independently anytime and anywhere (Vassiliou, 2015). Finally, flipped classroom matches students' needs, increases their engagements in the learning environment, builds good relationships among students, saves teachers' time and efforts, fosters students' ability to work interactively, reduces students' problems of classroom management, increases student performance and satisfaction levels and then converts the learning process into a flexible one (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Enfield, 2013, Vassiliou, 2015; Taylor, 2015; Kepler, 2016).

However, some educators have also noted disadvantages of using the flipped classroom method. For example, Enfield (2013) stated that preparing the material needs time and effort from the teacher. It is also not useful and effective in every context. Besides, students could face technological risks with internet access and troubles with downloading and watching videos. Additionally, its effectiveness relies on preparation and trust because students may not prepare their lesson at home (Vassiliou, 2015).

3. Methodology
3.1. Participants
The participants, in the current study, were 30 males and females EFL learners studying at Al-Ain University of Science and Technology in Al Ain city, UAE during the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019. Those participants

were English-major postgraduates enrolled in a required Professional Diploma in Teaching Program within the College of Education. Professional Diploma has been designed for teachers and educators who already hold undergraduate degrees but wish to obtain a professional qualification in English teaching which lasts for almost one year. Its objective is to emphasis active learning rather than traditional teaching. This can be done through research, technology, clinical processes, and collaboration with local schools and educational establishments in the UAE (Professional Diploma in Teaching Program, 2019). They were in their first year and between the ages of 23 and 27. The participants were native speakers of Arabic and their English proficiency level was considered to be advanced because they had studied EFL in universities for around four years.

The current study used the pre-test, post-test, control group, quasi- experimental design to examine if flipped classroom instruction contributes to the development of English request speech act. Therefore, to guarantee the effectiveness of the flipped classroom in improving the students' pragmatic competence, the participants were non- randomly divided into two groups. The experimental group taught request speech act using the flipped learning method and the control group taught request speech act using the conventional method of teaching. A paired sample t-test was used to check if the English Language level of both groups is statistically different or not. It has been shown no significant differences between the two groups on the pre-test; the p-value was 0.302 which is more than 0.05 (See Table 7). Table 1 shows the descriptions of the participants in the present study.

Table 1: Demographic Information the Participants

Group	Gender	
	Male	**Female**
Flipped Classroom Instruction	4	11
Conventional Instruction	3	12

3.2. Instrument and Procedure

A Discourse Completion Task (DCT; Appendix 1) was used to collect the data for this study. The tool was applied via an online questionnaire through Moodle which is an online learning platform designed to help educators create effective online courses. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about how the Emirati EFL learners use the request speech act appropriately to enhance their pragmatic competence through responding to the situations and write the appropriate request accordingly.

The purpose of this task is to evaluate the students' ability to use the request speech act as L2 users of English by taking into consideration a specific social variable (e.g., social status). To get more insight into the participants' experience about the flipped classroom technique, an introspective session was conducted (Altakhaineh & Zibin: 2017). During this session which was administered after the post-test, the researchers asked the participants about the advantages and disadvantages of this technique and wrote down their responses.

3.2.1. Discourse – Completion Task (DCT)

A Discourse - Completion Task (DCT) is a tool developed by (Blum-Kulka & Kasper, 1989) used in linguistic and pragmatics to elicit particular speech acts. A DCT is a written questionnaire which includes some brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act understudy" (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). The data was collected through eliciting the participants' answers of the DCT which contains eight written authentic situations adopted from Rose's (1994) study on requests speech act. The DCT used as a pre/post-test to measure the effects of the flipped classroom on learners' pragmatic development of request.

The researchers believed that it is valuable to teach request speech act through an attractive method such as the flipped classroom. A DCT was conducted two weeks before the treatment as a pre-test to measure how students could use the language functionally in request contexts. The treatment period lasted for eight weeks (three hours a week). Thirty participants from Al-Ain University had registered in a 3 credit hours course (45 teaching hours) named "Instructional Technology" in the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019. The course aims at using the currently available technologies to enhance learners' teaching and learning methods and styles that are suitable for certain educational situations and to help improve their teaching abilities. In addition, this course develops interactive technological skills to improve learners' pragmatic performance in different social activities and their work environment. The experimental group was taught through an e-lecture video, some recommended website for reading the material, a productive lesson containing multimedia presentation with different video clips inserted to display certain situations about the request speech act. At the end of the productive lesson, there were some self-assessment practices to improve their self- learning skills. All of these procedures were accessible on the Moodle Cloud Platform which allows uploading long videos (up to 10 GB) to help participants practice request speech acts at any time they want. The participants also got used to Google Chrome to create their blogs and download some recommended videos or post their assignments. So the lesson has to be prepared before the class. Then, in class, they had to practice tasks such as dialogue exercises, role plays, complete a short conversation and do individual and group assignments. Finally, the participants were asked to create their blogs to interact effectively with both their classmates and their instructor. However, the control group was taught the request speech act content through the conventional way.

A post-test consisting of eight parallel situations was administered two weeks after the treatment. The purpose of this final post-test was to measure the effect of flipped classroom instruction on learners' pragmatic development of request comparing with the conventional instruction using SPSS, namely paired sample t-test (see Altakhaineh & Zibin, 2017 and Zibin & Altakhaineh, 2019 for more detail on this test).

3.2.2. Analysis of Request Speech Act

To analyze the participants' request speech act production, the researcher used two methods:

1. Coding of linguistic expressions used for request speech act based on both Bluma- Kulka et al.'s CCSARP framework (1989) and Takahashi (1996) and
2. A rating scale of overall appropriateness. Data were coded and analyzed functionally (pragmatic aspect) and linguistically (grammatical aspect) in terms of their appropriateness to the situations

3.2.3. Coding Framework of Request Expressions

The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) framework adopted by Blum-Kulka et al has been widely used in analysing and coding the speech act of request because it is commonly used in the experimental studies of pragmatics across cultures. Moreover, Takahashi (1996) subdivided request speech act into another four components:

1) Preparatory questions to inspire the hearers' motivation and ability to perform a certain role.
2) Permission questions asking for approval
3) Mitigated expressions which are embedded within other expressions
4) Mitigated wants expressions to express the speaker's needs

The CCSARP framework contains three main levels of request expressions according to the level of inference that is needed to realize the intended meaning of the utterance. The three levels of requests include direct and indirect requests. The indirect request composes both the conventional and non-conventional expressions. Each level contains certain types of request expressions as follows:

1. The first level is the direct requests which include imperatives, obligations and want statements.
2. The second level is the conventional indirect requests which include preparatory and suggestions.
3. The third level is the non-conventional indirect expressions requests which contain strong hint and mild hint request expressions.

In the current study, the researchers adopted the Bulm-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding framework which has twelve request expressions (see Table 2).

Table 2. Coding Framework for Requests based on Blum- Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP and Takahashi (1996)

Level of request	Request expressions	Examples
Direct	1. Imperatives	Please lend me 20 dollars.
	2. Performatives	I'm asking you to lend me 20 dollars.
	3. Implicit performatives	I want to ask you to lend me 20 dollars.
	4. Obligation statements	You should lend me 20 dollars.
	5. Want statements	I want you to lend me 20 dollars.

A conventional indirect	6. Preparatory questions	Could you lend me 20 dollars?
	7. Suggestion	How about lending me 20 dollars?
	8. Permissions	May I borrow 20 dollars?
	9. Mitigated preparatory	I'm wondering if you could lend me 20 dollars.
	10. Mitigated wants	I'd appreciate it if you could lend me 20 dollars.
Non-conventional indirect	11. Strong hint	I'm out of money. I need 20 dollars.
	12. Mild hint	Can you guess what I want?

As well, the situations used in the DCT are the same as Rose's (1994) used in the study of requests. They were eight situations in which participants were placed in the role of a student making a request. Each situation was based on two social variables (relative power and social distance between the interlocutors). To say more, each situation has social factors: an equal status and high status. Besides, it looks at the request realization between familiar interlocutors and strangers as shown in Appendix 1.

3.2.4. The Rating Scale for Appropriateness

Appropriateness, as defined by Taguchi (2006), is how students able to accomplish speech acts properly of the given roles according to a scoring rubric. Therefore, to assure higher inter- ratter reliability, the researcher adapted Taguchi (2006) scoring rubric which is consisting of six points Likert scale that ranges from zero performance to excellent ones and regarding the appropriateness of request speech act. Additionally, he improved the original rubric scale to be ten points (Table 3).

The scale evaluated whether the participants' responses were pragmatically appropriate and grammatically correct in responding to the given situations. Accordingly, the participants' scores were calculated. For instance, if the participant's response was completely pragmatically appropriate and grammatically correct, it received a high rate.

However, if situations had major grammatical and vocabulary choice error, or poor and illogical response, or incoherent speech, they were rated at a low rate. Note that the participant has graded 10 points under the scoring rubric if he/she used an expression entirely appropriate for the situation and it had no grammatical and discourse errors. This means the participant was fluent in English and almost native-like. Whereas, if the participant's expressions were only somewhat appropriate and there were noticeable grammatical and discourse errors, this participant deserved 6 points according to the given criteria.

Table 3. Appropriateness Rubric for Request Speech Act

Rating	Points	Criteria
Excellent(5)	10	- Fully appropriate request expressions in the given situations - Request expressions with free grammatical mistakes

Good (4)	8	- Almost suitable request expressions - Some grammatical mistakes in request expressions
Fair (3)	6	- Request expressions somehow acceptable - Several grammatical mistakes are in the request expressions
Poor (2)	4	-The request expressions are not appropriate due to grammatical mistakes.
Very poor (1)	2	- The situations are not understood due to wrong request expressions or grammatical mistakes.
(0)	0	- No any request expression used

Alemi & Khanlarzadeh (2016) indicated that appropriateness should be calculated quantitatively by native speakers' ratters to rate the learners' performance of the given speech. Besides, they should calculate the specific linguistic expressions used in the situation by the learner to perform a particular speech act. Therefore, the researcher asked two native ratters to quantitatively rate the participants' responses.

4. Results and Discussion
As the current study aimed to examine the relationship between the teaching methods and pragmatic competence of Emirati EFL learners, the effectiveness of flipped classroom instruction on the development of students' pragmatic competence was measured by analysing the participants' performance in the pre-test and post-test DCTs. In order to achieve the purpose of the study and answer its questions, request realization among participants has been statistically analysed according to:

1) a descriptive analysis of the request strategies' types used by the participants,
2) a descriptive analysis of appropriateness ratings of the participants' performance in the pre-test and post-test and
3) the relationship between the appropriateness ratings and the strategies' types used to perform request speech act. Tables below showed the results of the study followed by discussions.

Table 4. Percentage of Request Strategy Type Used at Pre- and Post-Instructional Process

Request strategy	Experimental		Control	
	Pre-test N(15)	Post-test N(15)	Pre-test N(15)	Post-test N(15)
I. Direct Expressions	**34%**	**20%**	**35%**	**25%**
1. Imperatives	13%	9%	8%	2%
2. Performatives	2%	0	0	0
3. Implicit performatives	15%	12%	11%	1%
4. Obligation Statements	0	0	9%	10%
5. Want Statements	4%	0	7%	12%

II. Indirect Expressions	66%	80%	60%	75%
II. A. Conventional indirect	62%	72%	59%	68%
6. Preparatory questions	10%	9%	13%	10%
7. Suggestions	20%	21%	19%	25%
8. Permissions	13%	7%	15%	12%
9. Mitigated Preparatory	10%	20%	7%	10%
10. Mitigated Wants	9%	15%	5%	11%
II. B. Non-conventional indirect	4%	8%	1%	7%
11. Strong hint	1%	4%	0	3%
12. Mild hint	3%	4%	1%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4 above displays percentage distributions of request strategies used by participants in the pre-test and post-test of both groups. According to the above table, the experimental and the control groups at the beginning of the term had almost similar knowledge of the request speech act. On the other hand, the percentages of the post-test showed significant differences between experimental and control group performance of requests.

It also shows the strategies of requests produced in the post-test were more indirect on the side of flipped learning which means participants were responding to request properly i.e. almost like native speakers. There was an increaseing number of request strategies used particularly in indirect forms on the side of flipped classroom instruction and almost an equal number between the use of direct and conventionalized forms (as shown in Fig. 3 below).
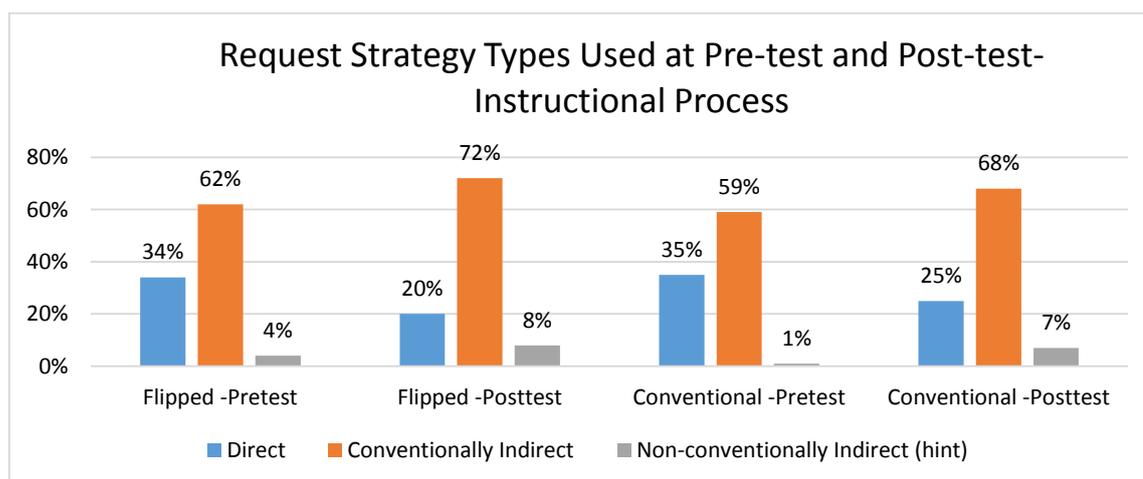

Figure 4: Request Strategy Type Used at Pre-test and Post-test Instructional Process

Table 5. Examples of Request Strategies Used by Participants in the Pre- and Post-Tests

Groups	Test	Request Strategy
Experimental	Pre-test	Imperative Implicit performatives
	Post-test	1. Suggestions 2. Mitigated Preparatory 3. Mitigated-wants 4. Strong hint
Control	Pre-test	1. Imperative
	Post-test	1. Obligation Statements 2. Want statement 3. Suggestions

Table 5 displays some examples of request strategies used by participants in the pre-test and post-test. These examples indicate remarkable development in EFL learners, pragmatic competence of the request speech act. The strategies of requests produced in the post-test were much pragmatically appropriate.

Moreover, by analysing the participants' responses to request expression strategies, it was found that the experimental group used more complex request expressions than the control group did. The experimental group used requests in embedded clausal structures (for example I'm wondering if+ verb), such as mitigated-preparatory or mitigated-wants and strong hint. Based on the coding system, they were considered indirect expressions which means more precise and appropriate to be native-like request expressions. While the control group used more direct expressions such as obligation and want statements or imperatives. This indicated that the learners were not acquainted with mitigated preparatory expressions as the experimental group because they have not practised utilizing some complex linguistic forms.

Furthermore, it was observed that in the pre-test, the majority of participants directly asked what they want to and used a more straightforward and uncomplicated form of performing a request. They preferred to use direct requests with want statement and implicit performatives such as: "I want to ask …please lend me…" or obligation as: You should lend me…. However, the post-test results revealed that the respondents prefer to use indirect request with modal for example: "Could you please", mitigated preparatory such as: "I'm wondering if you could lend me". Besides, mitigated wants for example "I'd appreciate if you could lend me" and strong hint: "I'm out of money. I need 20 Dollars". This indicated that the flipped classroom instruction was more effectively and efficiently enhanced EFL learners' pragmatic competence than conventional instruction.

Besides, to find the results of the second question of the research: the extent does the flipped classroom instruction help participants select the proper linguistic and pragmatic expressions to perform the speech act of request. The participants' responses to the pre-test and post-test were rated according to the appropriateness of linguistic and pragmatic forms used in performing request speech act. The researcher considered the differences between the experimental

and control groups scores calculated from the appropriateness rubric of request speech act. Furthermore, to calculate if there is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, paired-samples t-test was used in Table 6.

When comparing the teaching scores, the descriptive statistics indicated that in both types, the mean score of post-test was higher than that of the pre-test. Table 6 also shows that the mean score of the flipped classroom instruction (M= 63.71) was higher than that of the conventional instruction (M = 56.85) which means that the flipped classroom instruction is a better teaching method to enhance the participants' pragmatic competence compared to the conventional one.

Table 6. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-Flipped	49.640	15	5.099	1.316
	Pre-Conventional	48.466	15	5.270	1.360
Pair 2	Post-Flipped	63.706	15	4.217	1.089
	Post-Conventional	56.846	15	4.545	1.173
Pair 3	Pre-Flipped	49.640	15	5.099	1.316
	Post-Flipped	63.706	15	4.217	1.089
Pair 4	Pre-Conventional	48.466	15	5.270	1.360
	Post-Conventional	56.846	15	4.545	1.173

However, to examine if there are statistically significant differences between the results of both test of the experimental and control groups, a paired sample t-test was conducted as in Table 7.

Table 7. The Differences between the Mean Scores of the Pre- and Post-Tests of both Groups

		Paired Differences							
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean			Lower	Upper	t	df	
Pair 1	Pre-Flipped - Pre-Conventional	1.17	4.24	1.09	-1.17	3.52	1.07	14	.302
Pair 2	Post-Flipped - Post-Conventional	6.85	5.12	1.32	4.02	9.69	5.18	14	.000
Pair 3	Pre-Flipped - Post-Flipped	-14.06	4.24	1.09	-16.41	-11.71	-12.84	14	.000
Pair 4	Pre-Conventional - Post-Conventional	-8.37	4.07	1.05	-10.63	-6.12	-7.96	14	.000

The Paired Samples Test in table 7 indicated that there are statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-tests for both groups (See Pairs 3 and 4). Table 7 also shows that there is a statically significant difference (p < .001) between the two groups on the post-tests in favour of the flipped classroom instruction. In other words, the results showed that while both methods of instructions were effective in developing the participants' pragmatic competence, the flipped classroom instruction contributed to significantly better results than that of the conventional one. This result confirms that the participants learned to apply request speech act via the flipped classroom instruction effectively.

The findings of this study are in line with the previous studies on the effect of flipped classroom instruction on developing EFL learners' pragmatic competence (Murdock & Williams, 2011; Verleger, 2013; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014; Chen et al.'s, 2014; Hung, 2015; Sahin, Cavlazoglu, &Zeytuncu, 2015; O'Flaherty & Phillips 2015; Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017). Specifically, these studies confirmed the advantages of flipped classroom instruction on learners' pragmatic competence development in the request speech act. This is because they had sufficient opportunities for interacting and engaging using authentic contexts.

Specifically, the flipped classroom technique has developed the participants' pragmatic competence because it was able to offer precise examples of what the students could do to prepare their lessons well and to provide them with tangible evidence from daily life to understand request speech acts. This result is similar to that of Abeysekera & Dawson (2015), who considered the flipped classroom as an effective method because it supports the transformation of a transmissive class into a program to be a pre-class preparation, in-class tasks, and post-class work. The results of this study are also parallel with those of Murdock & Williams (2011) as well as Bishop & Verleger (2013) studies, who indicated that flipped classroom is considered as an interactive online learning community that helps students to develop strong relationships with their classmates and offers learners the chance to contact regularly with their partners for cooperative work in order to improve their awareness about the selected topics.

Generally, some studies on flipped classroom instruction indicated that it reduced students' stress in the classroom which enhanced their performance, classroom participation, interaction and engagement with their teacher and classmates. Mostly, students' classroom participation increased and then they became less stressful while doing their assignments because the only assessments used were completing dialogues, taking short quizzes, and creating videos on their bloggers. This result is similar to many studies which showed that flipped learning develops learners' performance effectively and raised their motivation towards flipped learning (Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017; Hung, 2015; Sahin, Cavlazoglu, & Zeytuncu, 2015), students' engagement in the flipped classroom (Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014), and achieving learning outcomes successfully (Chen Hsieh et al.'s, 2017); Baepler, Walker & Driessen, 2014;). However, it was different from Chen Hsieh et al.'s, (2017) in the types of platforms and the tools using for collecting data. In this regard, the

flipped classroom technique provides students with self-guidelines so they became responsible for their own learning and as such become independent learners. The efficiency of flipped classroom method in the present study is in harmony with O' Flaherty & Philips (2015), who believed that flipped learning supports learners to study by themselves and therefore have more flexible time for their studying. However, more responsibility is put on their shoulder in the learning process. The current study is also in line with that of Katchament's (2018) who indicated that students usually showed high acceptance towards technology in their learning process through enhancing self-learning, building interactive environment and improving students' appropriacy of English.

Furthermore, the result of this study is in agreement with Haghighi et al. (2019) who used Telegram Platform to investigate the impact of the flipped classroom on EFL learners' appropriate use of refusal to enhance their pragmatic competence. They concluded that participants were involved with flipped learning and displayed positive attitude towards using this kind of learning in teaching the refusal speech act. This result is consistent with the current study which revealed that flipped classroom groups scored higher marks in the post-test than the conventional group. This means that they mastered using request speech act effectively and enhanced their pragmatic knowledge. Nevertheless, there are some differences between Haghighi et al.'s (2019) study and the current study. The present study aimed to investigate the effect of flipped classroom instruction on developing the pragmatic competence of Emirati EFL learners using Moodle Cloud as a platform for uploading and posting the course materials as well as a blog for creating participants' assignments. Additionally, a DCT was used as a pre- and post-test to determine whether flipped classroom instruction is more effective than the conventional method.

As mentioned in section 3.2, the researchers conducted an introspective session with the participants of the treatment group after the post-tests to identify what kind of challenges they encountered during the tests. Based on their answers, they indicated that they encountered minor difficulties in the types of request speech act strategies after the treatment. They clarified that they preferred to use indirect request such as modal e.g., "could you please," mitigated preparatory such as: "I'm wondering if you could lend me". Besides, mitigated wants for example "I'd appreciate if you could lend me" and strong hint: "I'm out of money. I need 20 Dollars". The participants indicated that the flipped classroom instruction was more effective and efficient in enhancing their pragmatic competence in comparison with conventional instruction. They also posited that the flipped classroom technique is more enjoyable and interesting compared to the conventional method. In the former, the participants can access the information vis Moodle anytime anywhere at their convenience, which is not the case in the latter (Zibin & Altakhaineh, 2019).

All in all, teaching via flipped classroom instruction affects the scores of the participants much better than teaching through the conventional instruction which means that it provides participants with opportunities for effective communication and interaction which helps to develop their pragmatic competence positively.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the effect of flipped classroom instruction on developing the pragmatic competence of Emirati EFL learners. The results showed that flipped classroom instruction is statistically significant in raising the participants' pragmatic competence compared to the conventional method. Therefore, the flipped classroom technique enhances the participants' performance on request speech acts effectively because they have a more flexible and accessible e-learning environment to achieve more positive outcomes. Besides, the results suggested that flipped classroom instruction enables students to manage their studying time well and learn on their own which helps them to perform the flipped learning activities. It also facilitates practice and autonomous learning through lively interactive and constructive feedback. Furthermore, it offers them chances to interact online with their partners for cooperative work which all leads to improvement of their pragmatic competence.

Finally, some pedagogical implications can be suggested. Firstly, flipped learning could be effectively applied to teach pragmatics in an EFL context. Secondly, it provides learners with an authentic context that raises their motivation, engagement and awareness. As a result, this enhances learning outcomes and by extension improves pragmatic competence. Finally, teachers should use various teaching techniques for monitoring students' progress throughout performing the flipped learning activities outside and inside the classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The eight DCT situations as adopted from Rose (1994)

Please respond to the following role-play situations as you would in a real situation. After each situation you will be asked to write a response in the blank after "What does s/he say:" Give the first thing that comes to your mind, considering the person to whom you are speaking. Thank you very much for your contribution in this study.

1. Situation 1: (student –student) student asks another student in nearby room whom s/he does not know to turn his/her music down. What does s/he say……….
2. Situation 2: (student –student) student asks to borrow a friends notes from a class the s/he has missed. What does s/he say……….
3. Situation3: (student –professor) student asks professor to be allowed to take on another day a test that s/he has missed due to an out-of- town wedding. What does s/he say……….
4. Situation 4: (student –man) student asks a man whom s/he does not know wearing a suit and carrying a briefcase to take a photo of the student and his/her friend. to be allowed to take on another day a test that s/he has missed due to an out-of- town wedding. What does s/he say……….
5. Situation 5: (student –student) student asks a friend to help him/her study for an upcoming test. What does s/he say……….
6. Situation 6: (student –student) student asks another student whom s/he does not know to move over on the bus. What does s/he say……….
7. Situation 7: (student –friend's mother) student asks a friend's mother for more food during dinner at the friend's house. What does s/he say……….
8. Situation 8: (student –professor) student asks professor whom he does not know to open a door which the student cannot open because his/her hands are full. What does s/he say……….