

THE EFFECT OF CONTENT INSTRUCTION IN L2 ON L1 PRAGMATICS

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Abstract

This study investigates whether content instruction in English has an impact on L1 pragmatics. In this study a discourse completion test with eight request situations in Turkish was given to three groups of Turkish students enrolled in undergraduate programs in a faculty of education in Turkey. One group of students received most of their education in English. The other two groups received their education in Turkish. An interesting finding is that the differences in the make-up of the situations were only observed in situations with high imposition. This shows that instruction in the foreign language has an impact on sociopragmatic interpretation in L1. Overall, the results reveal that instruction in foreign language has an impact on first language pragmatic use.

Key words: Language transfer, cross-linguistic influence, pragmatic transfer, L2 effect

1. Introduction

“English as a Lingua Franca” (Seidlhofer, 2005: 339) is a term that has emerged to refer to communication among people who do not share a native language. A necessity for this term possibly emerged because of the global spread of English and the resulting millions of people worldwide who do not speak it as a mother tongue. In fact, the spread today has reached a point where the speakers of English as a second or foreign language outnumber native speakers drastically. According to approximations made by Graddol (2000) and Crystal (1997) there are about one and a half billion speakers of English in the world and only one fourth of them speak English as a mother tongue. Among the rest, one fourth are the speakers of English as a second language in postcolonial regions such as India and Nigeria. The remaining half of English speakers speak it as a foreign language. Moreover, this gap is continuously expanding. With this picture in mind, it would not be wrong to argue that most exchanges in English in the world take place between speakers of English who do not share a common language other than English. This type of conversations, without the presence of native speakers and ESL speakers, or English as a Lingua Franca, accounts for the most common exchanges globally. Today, English is everywhere we look. It is the language of international education, business, transportation, publication, media, and internet. This widespread function of English results in global learning of English. Today, English is introduced at the primary stages of formal schooling in Turkey. For example, in Turkish state schools, English is

introduced in fourth grade. In the private sector, it can be introduced as early as kindergarten. Another effect of the global function of English is offering English-medium programs in English at universities where neither the lecturers nor the students are native English speakers. According to a survey conducted in 1,558 higher education institutes in 19 non-English speaking countries in Europe in 2001/2002, 30% of the programs were in English (Maiworm & Wächter, 2002; cited in Coleman, 2006: 6). Airey (2004) says the general reasons behind this is “internationalization, preparing students for an academic world dominated by English and competitive advantages on the job market”. He (Airey, 2003: 47; in Airey, 2004) also lists seven advantages of offering programs in English:

1. In a number of disciplines, the publication of academic papers takes place almost exclusively in English. Teaching in English is therefore seen as necessary in order to prepare students for an academic career.
2. In many disciplines the majority of textbooks used are written in English and therefore the step to teaching in English may not be seen as a large one.
3. The use of English develops the language skills and confidence of Swedish lecturers and can be seen as promoting movement/exchange of ideas in the academic world.
4. Using English as the language of instruction allows the use of visiting researchers in undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.
5. Teaching in English allows exchange students to follow courses at Swedish universities.
6. Swedish students can be prepared for their own studies abroad.
7. A sound knowledge of English has become a strong asset in the job market.

He also lists the concerns about offering programs in English as domain losses to English, possible future diglossia and the quality of content. Although he is concerned with Swedish higher education, this issue is global. Another concern should be raised about this issue. Opening programs in English could bring in the advantages listed above. However, the possibility of its affecting the native language of the learners should be a strong concern.

The influence of a language on another is not a new phenomenon. It has been acknowledged for several decades now. For example, Lado (1957: 2) says:

Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture – both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and respectively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives.

Selinker (1972) proposed the view that by transferring from their native language, learners create an interlanguage that is different from both the native and the target language. This transfer has often been referred to as language transfer and crosslinguistic influence. These terms have been used to mean the effect of the first language on the second language (Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002: 190) sometimes as an imposition (Gass, 1979: 328) while at other times as a coping strategy with the new

challenges in learning a second language (Jarvis & Odlin, 2000: 537). Although language transfer is not a new phenomenon, the reverse case, that is the effect of the second language on the first, has not received enough attention until recently (Pavlenko & Jarvis, 2002: 191). In recent years, some scholars acknowledge the possibility of the effect of the second language on the first. Scott and Odlin (2000: 537), for instance, say “cross-linguistic influence can also work in the opposite direction, where the acquisition of L2 structures causes some kind of change in the L1.” Kecskes and Papp (2003: 251) also assert that transfer refers to movements in either direction between the first and second language. Pavlenko and Jarvis (2002: 190) refer to this movement in either direction as the concept of bidirectionality. Different scholars have proposed different theories regarding the movement between languages in the mind of an L2 user. For example, Cook (2003: 2, citing Cook, 1991) claims that while learning additional languages, learners develop multi-competence, a term used to refer to the ‘knowledge of two or more languages in one mind’. Jarvis (2003: 82) also explains this phenomenon with a multi-competence framework. On the other hand, Kecskes & Papp (2003: 249-252) approach this phenomenon in terms of conceptual transfer. As the learner continues further along the learning of a second language, concepts of the second language is transferred to the first language and the vice versa and eventually a Common Underlying Conceptual Base emerges in the mind of the L2 learner. They also claim that while low proficient learners transfer linguistic elements from L1, high proficient learners start to make conceptual transfer between the languages they know and they develop CUCB that is distinct from both L1 and L2.

In the area of pragmatics, most studies and papers concerning transfer has reflected on transfer from one’s native language to the target language. Among the languages and the direction of effect researched are from Arabic L1 to English L2 (Al-Eryani, 2007), Chinese L1 to English L2 (Chang, 2009; Jia, 2007; Qu & Wang, 2005; Rose, 2000), from English L1 to Indonesian L2 (Hassall, 2003), from 10 different L1s to English L2 (Kecskes, 2000), from Japanese L1 to English L2 (Sasaki & Beamer, 2002), from Vietnamese L1 to English L2 (Tran, 2007), and from Thai L1 to English L2 (Wannaruk, 2008). On the other hand, only a few studies investigated the opposite case, namely pragmatic transfer from the second language to the first (e.g. Blum-Kulka and Shaffer, 1993; Cenoz, 2003; Silva, 2000). This study deals with this latter type of pragmatic transfer by investigating whether content instruction in L2 has an impact on L1 pragmatics.

2. Methods

The data was collected using a discourse completion test. Initially eight request situations in Turkish were created based on three sociopragmatic variables of relative power of speaker to hearer, distance between speaker and hearer and the absolute ranking of imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Hudson, Detmer and Brown, 1995). The variables distribute to eight situations based on their being rated either high or low. Neutral rankings were not used.

	Speaker	Hearer	Request
Situation 1	A human resources manager	An applicant from another city	Come again next week for a second interview
Situation 2	A customer	A sales representative	Take out a watch from a display case
Situation 3	A manager in a factory	A worker	Work overtime
Situation 4	A school principal	A teacher	Submit grading roster
Situation 5	An employee in a restaurant	A customer who reserved a table	Move to another table
Situation 6	A sales representative	A customer	Move aside
Situation 7	A college student	A professor	Extend deadline for a project
Situation 8	An employee	A department administrator	Give another form for annual leave

Table 1: Situations

The eight situations created were given to 10 educated native speakers of Turkish to rate the sociopragmatic variables so that the researcher could see the situations reflect the intended sociopragmatic design. Next, necessary modifications were made to two situations that seemed to be interpreted differently than the researcher intended. The revised situations were rated again by the native speakers. Upon completion, 10 other native speakers took the test by providing requests appropriate in each situation. The aim of this process was to see whether the situations were able to elicit requests. Then, the test was given to 107 native Turkish speaking seniors at four undergraduate degree programs at a faculty of education in Istanbul, Turkey. Forty of them were males and 67 of them were females. Moreover, 42 of them were in English language teaching (ELT) program, receiving 67% of their content education in English throughout their education. The students in the other three programs, namely, Turkish language teaching (TLT), social science teaching (SST) and primary school teaching (PST), received their education in Turkish except for two two-unit mandatory English courses. The students in

these programs were randomly divided into two groups to see if random differences occur between these students' language use. Group 1 is composed of the students from ELT program who received their education mostly in English and group 2 and 3 refer to the students from three programs who received their education in Turkish. Tables 2 through 4 show participants' profiles.

		Program				Total
		ELT	TLT	SST	PST	
Gender	1	19	8	10	3	40
	2	23	12	15	17	67
Total		42	20	25	20	107

Table 2: Participant profile by degree program

		Group			Total
		1	2	3	
Gender	1	19	11	10	40
	2	23	22	22	67
Total		42	33	32	107

Table 3: Participant profile by groups

Group	Mean	N	Min.	Max.
1	22,55	42	21	25
2	22,70	33	21	26
3	22,84	32	20	30
Total	22,68	106	20	30

Table 4: Age of participants by groups

At the end, the requests from three groups were coded into request based on the coding manuals in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) and Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995). Length of requests and the number of strategies used were also coded. Head acts, supportive moves and downgraders were analyzed with the chi-square test. Moreover, length of requests and the number of strategies were analyzed with ANOVA.

3. Results

Results are presented below in tables 4 through 13. Chi-square values for head acts, supportive moves and downgraders are presented in tables 5 through 7. Next, in tables 8 through 14, the results from the ANOVA for the lengths of requests and the numbers of strategies in groups of head act, supportive moves and downgraders are presented. When significant differences are evident, ANOVA tables are followed by post-hoc tests to see the source of difference.

Situations	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Situation 1	17,926	14	,210
Situation 2	4,099	6	,663
Situation 3	19,445	16	,246
Situation 4	21,939	12	,038*
Situation 5	14,639	16	,551
Situation 6	11,142	12	,517
Situation 7	20,035	14	,129
Situation 8	9,759	10	,462

Table 5: Chi-square values for head acts

Table 5 shows provide the results of chi-square test for head acts. As table shows, there is a significant difference between the groups only in situation 4. In all other seven situations, the strategies in the head act used by the groups used distribute similarly.

Situations	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Situation 1	9,231	14	,816
Situation 2	15,253	12	,228
Situation 3	11,844	16	,755
Situation 4	7,117	10	,714
Situation 5	10,422	16	,844
Situation 6	10,630	12	,561

Situations	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Situation 7	22,042	20	,338
Situation 8	6,345	8	,609

Table 6: Chi-square values for supportive moves

Table 6 shows that the groups did not differ significantly in any of the situations in terms of the strategies in the category of supportive moves.

Situations	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Situation 1	19,638	18	,354
Situation 2	6,235	14	,960
Situation 3	11,442	20	,934
Situation 4	15,825	16	,465
Situation 5	17,242	20	,637
Situation 6	11,095	14	,679
Situation 7	31,701	18	,024*
Situation 8	31,779	20	,046*

Table 7: Chi-square values for downgraders

Table 7 shows that there are significant differences between the groups in situation 7 and 8 in terms of the strategies used in the category of downgraders. The groups did not show differences in situations 1 through 6.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
s1Length Between Groups	479,027	2	239,514	4,293*	,016
Within Groups	5802,169	104	55,790		
Total	6281,196	106			
s2Length Between Groups	63,723	2	31,862	1,264	,287
Within Groups	2620,632	104	25,198		

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	2684,355	106			
s3Length Between Groups	42,942	2	21,471	,384	,682
Within Groups	5821,619	104	55,977		
Total	5864,561	106			
s4Length Between Groups	37,265	2	18,633	,548	,580
Within Groups	3537,931	104	34,019		
Total	3575,196	106			
s5Length Between Groups	377,654	2	188,827	4,174*	,018
Within Groups	4704,589	104	45,236		
Total	5082,243	106			
s6Length Between Groups	26,263	2	13,132	,623	,539
Within Groups	2193,363	104	21,090		
Total	2219,626	106			
s7Length Between Groups	348,635	2	174,317	3,761*	,026
Within Groups	4819,795	104	46,344		
Total	5168,430	106			
s8Length Between Groups	3,400	2	1,700	,097	,908
Within Groups	1821,366	104	17,513		
Total	1824,766	106			

Table 8: ANOVA values for lengths of requests

According to table 8, the length of requests the groups used was significantly different in situation 1, 5 and 7. In the rest of the situations, the groups' requests were similar in length.

Dependent Variable	(I) Grup	(J) Grup	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
s1Length	1	2	4,680*	1,738	,022
		3	3,879	1,753	,074

	2	1	-4,680*	1,738	,022
		3	-,800	1,853	,902
	3	1	-3,879	1,753	,074
		2	,800	1,853	,902
s5Length	1	2	4,102*	1,565	,027
		3	3,530	1,578	,070
	2	1	-4,102*	1,565	,027
		3	-,572	1,669	,937
	3	1	-3,530	1,578	,070
		2	,572	1,669	,937
s7Length	1	2	,002	1,584	1,000
		3	3,943*	1,597	,040
	2	1	-,002	1,584	1,000
		3	3,941	1,689	,056
	3	1	-3,943*	1,597	,040
		2	-3,941	1,689	,056

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 9: Post-hoc tests for lengths of requests

Table 9 shows the post-hoc test results for the length of requests. In situation 1, the length of requests provided by group 1 was greater than group 2 and there was no difference between group 2 and 3. Similarly in situation 5, group two used longer requests than group 2 and there was no difference between group 2 and three. In situation 7, the length of requests of group 1 was greater than group 3 and there was no difference between group 2 and three.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
s1NumHA	Between Groups	,067	2	,034	,427	,654
	Within Groups	8,176	104	,079		

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total		8,243	106			
Between Groups		,290	2	,145	2,807	,065
s2NumHA	Within Groups	5,374	104	,052		
Total		5,664	106			
Between Groups		,154	2	,077	,992	,374
s3NumHA	Within Groups	8,089	104	,078		
Total		8,243	106			
Between Groups		,030	2	,015	,280	,757
s4NumHA	Within Groups	5,633	104	,054		
Total		5,664	106			
Between Groups		,116	2	,058	2,102	,127
s5NumHA	Within Groups	2,874	104	,028		
Total		2,991	106			
Between Groups		,014	2	,007	,770	,465
s6NumHA	Within Groups	,976	104	,009		
Total		,991	106			
Between Groups		,102	2	,051	1,134	,326
s7NumHA	Within Groups	4,665	104	,045		
Total		4,766	106			
Between Groups		,000	2	,000	.	.
s8NumHA	Within Groups	,000	104	,000		
Total		,000	106			

Table 10: ANOVA for number of head acts

Table 10 shows the result of ANOVA for the number of head acts. As requests, by nature, are single-headed speech acts, there is no significant difference between the groups in the number of strategies they employed.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
s1NumSup	Between Groups	,889	2	,444	,627	,536
	Within Groups	73,672	104	,708		
	Total	74,561	106			
s2NumSup	Between Groups	2,358	2	1,179	2,453	,091
	Within Groups	49,997	104	,481		
	Total	52,355	106			
s3NumSup	Between Groups	,210	2	,105	,280	,756
	Within Groups	38,949	104	,375		
	Total	39,159	106			
s4NumSup	Between Groups	1,865	2	,932	2,320	,103
	Within Groups	41,799	104	,402		
	Total	43,664	106			
s5NumSup	Between Groups	5,547	2	2,773	4,029*	,021
	Within Groups	71,593	104	,688		
	Total	77,140	106			
s6NumSup	Between Groups	1,184	2	,592	1,207	,303
	Within Groups	51,022	104	,491		
	Total	52,206	106			
s7NumSup	Between Groups	2,051	2	1,025	1,603	,206
	Within Groups	66,510	104	,640		

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total		68,561	106			
s8NumSup	Between Groups	,916	2	,458	1,328	,269
	Within Groups	35,851	104	,345		
	Total	36,766	106			

Table 11: ANOVA for number of supportive moves

Table 11 lists the result of ANOVA for the number of supportive moves used by the participants. According to the table, there is a significant difference between the groups in situation 5.

Dependent Variable	(I) Grup	(J) Grup	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
s5NumSup	1	2	,517*	,193	,023
		3	,391	,195	,115
	2	1	-,517*	,193	,023
		3	-,126	,206	,814
	3	1	-,391	,195	,115
		2	,126	,206	,814

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 12: Post-hoc tests for number of supportive moves

According to table 12, group 1 used more supportive moves in situation 5 than group 2 and there was no significant difference between group 2 and 3.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
s1NumDown	Between Groups	3,579	2	1,790	3,557*	,032
	Within Groups	52,327	104	,503		
	Total	55,907	106			
s2NumDown	Between Groups	1,376	2	,688	,790	,457
	Within Groups	90,624	104	,871		
	Total	92,000	106			
s3NumDown	Between Groups	5,045	2	2,523	4,965*	,009
	Within Groups	52,843	104	,508		
	Total	57,888	106			
s4NumDown	Between Groups	2,590	2	1,295	1,782	,173
	Within Groups	75,578	104	,727		
	Total	78,168	106			
s5NumDown	Between Groups	7,424	2	3,712	6,434*	,002
	Within Groups	59,997	104	,577		
	Total	67,421	106			
s6NumDown	Between Groups	,086	2	,043	,073	,930
	Within Groups	61,055	104	,587		
	Total	61,140	106			
s7NumDown	Between Groups	5,547	2	2,773	3,451*	,035
	Within Groups	83,593	104	,804		

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total		89,140	106			
s8NumDown	Between Groups	3,021	2	1,511	2,398	,096
	Within Groups	65,521	104	,630		
	Total	68,542	106			

Table 13: ANOVA for number of downgraders

Table 13 shows the result of ANOVA for the number of downgraders. According to the table, there is a significant difference between the groups in situation 1, 3, 5, and 7 in terms of the number of downgraders they employed in their requests.

Dependent Variable	(I) Grup	(J) Grup	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
s1NumDown	1	2	,071	,165	,902
		3	,426*	,166	,032
	2	1	-,071	,165	,902
		3	,354	,176	,114
	3	1	-,426*	,166	,032
		2	-,354	,176	,114
s3NumDown	1	2	,383	,166	,059
		3	,491*	,167	,011
	2	1	-,383	,166	,059
		3	,108	,177	,815
	3	1	-,491*	,167	,011
		2	,572	1,669	,937
s5NumDown	1	2	,587*	,177	,004
		3	,040	,178	,972
	2	1	-,587*	,177	,004
		3	-,546*	,188	,013

	3	1	-,040	,178	,972
		2	,546*	,188	,013
s7NumDown	1	2	,517*	,209	,039
		3	,391	,210	,155
	2	1	-,517*	,209	,039
		3	-,126	,222	,838
	3	1	-,391	,210	,155
		2	,126	,222	,838

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 14: Post-hoc tests for number of downgraders

Table 14 show that in situation 1 group 1 used more downgraders than group 3 and there was no significant difference between group 2 and 3. Again, in situation 3, group I used more downgraders than group 3 and there was no difference between the group 2 and 3. In situation 5, group 1 and group 3 used more downgraders than group 2. In situation 7, group 1 used more strategies than group 2 and there was no difference between group 2 and 3.

Probability Values								
	Sit. 1	Sit. 2	Sit. 3	Sit. 4	Sit. 5	Sit. 6	Sit. 7	Sit. 8
<i>Power</i>	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Distance</i>	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
<i>Imposition</i>	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
<i>Length</i>	.016*	.287	.682	.580	.018*	.539	.026*	.980
<i>Head Act</i>	.654	.065	.374	.757	.127	.465	.326	1.0
<i>Supportive Move</i>	.536	.091	.756	.103	.021*	.303	.206	.269
<i>Downgrader</i>	.032*	.457	.009*	.173	.002*	.930	.035*	.096

Table 15: Summary of probability values in ANOVA tests.

As table 15 indicates, the differences that occurred only occurred in situation 1, situation 3, situation 5 and situation 7. What is common among these situations is that in these situations the imposition of the request on the hearer is high. In other situations in which

no differences occurred, the imposition is low. Another finding is that except for one case where there is a significant difference between group 2 and 3 (namely the number of downgraders in situation 5), the differences were either between group 1 and group 2 or group 1 and group 3.

4. Conclusion

Results show that receiving education in another language, in this case English, does not seem to have an effect of the selection of strategies. However, the results do show that the make-up of requests such as the length or the number of strategies employed seem to be affected by the language of education. One of the most interesting findings of this study is that the differences only occurred in situations with high impositions. This tells us that receiving education in another language seems to affect sociopragmatic interpretation in the native language. Students who received their education in English used longer requests and more strategies in situations with high imposition than those who received their education in their native language, Turkish. This shows that students who received their education in English interpreted the situations with high imposition differently from the other groups and tended to use longer requests with more strategies. This was not the case in situation with low imposition. The findings of this study are significant because if receiving education in another language has an impact on students' first languages, different types of native speakers of a language will emerge and such differences in the native language will result in the question of "native speakerness". Thus, before making a decision of offering a program in another language, possible advantages, shortcomings and outputs should be carefully critiqued. We may be doing harm with the intention of doing good.

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