THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE
IN A MIDDLE SCHOOL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT:

This article examines the development of pragmatic competence at the middle school stage by analysing the amount and type of pragmatic input provided in the four middle school textbooks. The speech act of greetings is taken as an example to test middle school learner's pragmatic competence. The study aims at testing learners' appropriate use of greetings and exploring learners' understanding and choice of the appropriate greetings formulas that fit each context.

Key words: *Pragmatics- Pragmatic competence- interlanguage pragmatics- Input- Output- Feedback.*

الملخص:

يتناول هذا المقال تنمية الكفأة التداولية لدى تلاميذ مرحلة المتوسط و ذلك من خلال تحليل نوع و كمية المعطيات التداولية الموجودة في الكتب الدراسية الأربعة في مرحلة المتوسط. و قد تم التطرق إلى التحيات كمثال لاختبار الكفأة التداولية لتلاميذ المتوسط. و تهدف هذه الدراسة، إلى اختبار الاستعمال الصحيح للتحيات من طرف التلاميذ و إلى اكتشاف فهم التلاميذ للتحيات و مدى قدرتهم على اختيار التحيات المناسبة في السياق المناسب.

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1. **Finalities of teaching English In Algeria**

English is the second foreign language in Algeria. Before 2002, the English language was introduced in 2nd year in the fundamental school (8 AF), thus learners studied it for two yeas (8AF and 9 AF), but from 2003 Algerian middle school learners start studying English in the 1st year at the middle school level, so, they study it for four years. In some regions, especially in Bejaia and Tizi ouzou, Algerian pupils learn three languages before thy encounter English (i.e. Arabic, French and Thamazight).

 Foreign languages were not neglected in education reforms because the Algerian decision makers see the teaching of foreign languages (i.e. particularly French and English…etc) as a clue to:

- Communicate with different parts of the world.

- Have access to modern sciences and technologies.

- Encourage pupils to develop creativity in its universal dimensions.

- Make pupils autonomous in exploring and exploiting materials having a relation with their field of study, and be prepared to successfully seat for examination.

Generally speaking, the major goal of teaching English or any other foreign language in Algeria is to equip learners with a set of competencies which enable him to use the foreign language in communication. By doing so, the pupil is encouraged to share and acquire ideas and experiences in the field of science, culture and civilization.

Now, due to the fact that my participants are fourth year pupils I see that it is important to dwell upon teaching English to 4th year middle school pupils.

1.1 Teaching English to 4th year middle school pupils

As it is stated in the " Programme d'accompagnement 4 AM (M.E.N 2005)", The importance of the English language requires that school allows more time for communication in order that the pupil acquires abilities (through language activities) to interact with his schoolmates as well as the adults around him. These abilities consolidated through listening, speaking, reading and writing, serve four types of objectives:

a)Linguistic objectives

- Consolidate and develop what learners have already acquired in terms of knowledge, functions and skills in MS 3, MS 2 and MS 1.
- Help learners to complete the middle school level and prepare them to start the next level (secondary school).

b) Methodological objectives

- Consolidate and develop the learning strategies acquired in the previous year (3AM).
- Reinforce the methods of working and thinking (organization, coherence and relevance) acquired in the 3 AM.

c) Cultural objectives

- The textbook contributes to make the pupil open up his mind through discovering the context of English civilization and culture. This implies providing learners with texts that deal with English civilization as well as making them discover how to use different speech acts according to the English culture.

d) Socio-professional objectives

- Equip learners with a linguistic tool which helps him to integrate into a professional environment.

    This implies the necessity to:

- Identify the pupils' real needs.

- Regard English as a real tool of communication.

- Develop oral communication (listen/ speak) and written communication (read/ write).

- Set up situations of real life communication.

- Choose subjects according to the pupils' age and interests.

- Use suitable teaching aids (iconographic and audio visual).

1.2 The syllabus

The 4th year English syllabus begins with an introduction that explains the goals and finalities of English language teaching as set by the Ministry of Education. As stated above the aim of these finalities is to supply 4th year middle school learners with the necessary pedagogical tools to promote learning.

The syllabus is based on the competency based approach which aims at helping the pupil to give sense to his learning by making him acquire intellectual competencies and develop various processes that are necessary to the assimilation and the use of his knowledge. Also, it teaches the learner how to re-invest the knowledge acquired at school in problem- situation he may face or in the other disciplines. Arab et al (2005), in his introduction to Teachers' Book Middle School- Book Three, argues that competency- based approach is characterized by the following:

- It is **action oriented** since it gears language learning to the acquisition of know-how embedded in functions and skills. This acquired know- how will allow the learner to become an effective/ competent language user in real life situations outside the classroom.

- It is **a problem solving approach** since it places learners in situations that test / check their capacity to overcome obstacles and problems. The reason is that problems make the learners think and they learn by thinking.

- It is **social- constructivist** because it regards that learning does not occur only within the pages of the textbook or in the classroom but it occurs through social interaction with others.

Finally and most importantly the competency- based approach is a cognitive approach.

 The privileged competencies for this fourth year are:

- Interact orally in English.
- Interpret oral and written texts.
- Produce oral and written texts.

1.3 Fourth Year English Textbook

"On the move" is the official textbook designed by the Ministry of Education in April 2005 for the learners in their last year of English study in the Middle school. This textbook handles the new official syllabus adopted within the framework of recent Education Reform. This textbook is a follow up course to Spotlight on English: Book One, Spotlight on English: Book Two and Spotlight Three. It is designed for learners aged 15 to 17, who have already 160 hours tuition in English. It consists of six files (It's my treat, You can do it, Great expectations, Then and Now, Dreams Dreams and Fact and Fiction). All these files follow the same structure i.e. two main parts subdivided into three sections each. Thus, the first part, Language Learning, comprises:

- **Listen and Consider**
- **Read and Consider**
- **Words and Sounds**

And ends with a recreational space called **Take a Break.**

 The second part entitled **Skills Building** comprises:

- **Research and Report**
- **Listening and Speaking**
- **Reading and Writing**

These two parts are followed by a rubric called **Where do we Stand Now** which is devoted to the students' achievements. The file finally closes with **a Time For**… rubric which is another moment for learners to take a break before moving on to the next file.

  The overall aim of "On the move" is to consolidate and extend the competencies acquired in the course of the previous three textbooks i.e Spotlight One, Two and Three. These broad competencies are worded in the syllabus as follows:

- interacting orally in English
- interpreting oral and written texts
- producing oral and written texts

   After discussing some elements that have a relation with my participants who belong to a 4th year middle school class, I will move to the method that I employ in order to answer the research questions that are the milestones of this investigation. But, before going to this point I find that it is essential to define the investigated speech act i.e. greetings and explain the motivation for this study.

1.4 The investigated speech act: Greetings

Greetings are classified under the category of *Behabitives* which is defined by Austin (1962:159) as *"reactions to other people's behaviour and fortunes and attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct".* From this classification, Austin (ibid) relates greetings to attitudes and social behaviour. Searle on the other hand, proposed to analyse them as an example of the *expressive* type of speech acts, because in performing such acts the speaker expresses his feelings.

The speech act of greetings refers to verbal and non-verbal forms that the majority of people expect to give and receive when they are engaged in face to face conversations or in a delayed written interaction; this latter is used to refer to letters and e-mails. I choose this speech act because it is the first speech act that the majority of persons in different cultures use in order to start a conversation with a foreigner. In addition, greetings are often one of the first verbal routines learned by children and certainly one of the topics introduced in foreign language classes (Duranti 1997b), for example in Algerian middle schools which represent the setting in which my study takes place, greetings is the first file that 1st year pupils, who learn English for the first time, start with. Also, this speech act is part of pragmatic competence which is considered by some authors as the mastery of speech acts. Moreover, greetings are culture specific since they differ from one culture to another. For example, Algerians greet themselves by saying *"Assalam Alaikom" (i.e. Peace be upon you)*. But if an Algerian uses this expression to greet a British tourist, he will not understand it because the British tourist heard an expression in the English language that has no meaning in his schemata. This kind of speech acts has many features that make them differ from one culture to another. The use of "God" is one of these distinctive feature, thus God is disappearing from greetings formulas in English but not in German and Arabic (in German they say "*Gruss Gott*" which means Hayak Allah i.e. "God greets you" in Arabic).

1.5 Motivation for the present study

As any piece of research, this article is based on the following needs:

1. The need to examine the teachability of greeting formulas and its effects on learners' pragmatic competence.

2. The need to focus on learners' awareness and production of the pragmatic feature under study especially by examining its appropriateness in different situations.

2. Research questions and hypotheses

As any piece of research, this investigation is influenced by research questions which have relation with aim at discovering the nature of input (greetings) taught to Algerian middle school learners and how it can contribute to learners output. Each research question is mentioned with its hypothesis as follow:

-Research question 1

  Is there a difference between UK greetings and the ones taught to Algerian middle school learners?

Hypothesis1

 Algerian middle school learners are taught greetings that are similar to the English norms.

-Research question2

 Can Algerian middle school learners produce appropriate greetings in English?

Hypothesis 2

 They will produce appropriate greetings in English since they study and acquire forms that are not transferred from their L1.

3. Method

 The textbook is thought by many educationists as the primary and sometimes only provider of reliable linguistic input (Neddar 2008), especially in FL classrooms where it is considered to be the most important tool used in the classroom (Altbach, 1991). This chief source of input in Algerian FL classrooms is taken into account for the purpose of answering the first research question which asks about the nature of greetings formulas taught to Algerian middle school learners. To answer this question I devoted the next section to the analysis of the four EFL textbooks designed to Algerian middle school learners. This step is twofold :i) to discover and evaluate textbook greetings formulas which represent the available input that learners are exposed to and ii) to highlight the role of textbooks in guiding learners to develop a correct attitude toward target culture since greetings are culture specific. If EFL textbooks include greetings that are transferred from their mother tongue; this means that textbooks prevent learners from developing their pragmatic competence, and on the other hand they participate in intercultural miscommunication. Sharifian (2004: 119) offers the following example from an Iranian student which concretes the notion of intercultural miscommunication:

An Iranian student at Shiraz University receives from her American lecturer the recommendation letter that she has asked him to write for her and then turns to him and says,

"I'm ashamed." Bewildered by the student's response, the lecturer asks, "What have you done?!!!

In this interaction between the Iranian student as a NNS and the American lecturer as a NS, the student transferred an expression of gratitude from his L1 to thank a native speaker. The result is that the American lecturer did not understand the speaker's meaning, because the expression used would be more appropriate when an offence is committed, rather than to show gratitude and appreciation.

To test learners' appropriate use of greetings, I tested their production by using a written questionnaire. The role of this instrument is to explore learners' understanding and choice of the appropriate greetings formulas that fit each context.

4. Textbook analysis

As I said before, the role of this part is to answer the first research question. Thus, the four EFL textbooks designed to Algerian middle school learners are analysed. The aim of the analysis is to pick out textbook greetings formulas and comparing them with the ones used by NS, to see if they are taught according to L2 norms or just a translation from L1 to L2. Bearing in mind that the notion of a native speaker means different things to different people, in the sense that there are different varieties of such as American English, British English, Singaporean English...etc, and for the purpose of being more precise in my study, I compared textbook greetings formulas with the British ones in both formal and informal situations. The Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary (2003) is the source of the British greetings that I used in the comparison. Before starting the analysis, I wish to mention that these textbooks; Spotlight One (1er A.M), Spotlight Two (2eme A.M), Spotlight Three (3eme A.M) and On the move (4eme A.M) are the outcome of school reform in Algeria. The first Textbook (Spotlight One) was used during the school year 2003/2004. Bearing in mind that Algeria is a country which receives tourists from different countries each year, I devote my analysis to spoken language rather than the written one. In other words, I concentrate on greetings that are used in face to face conversations. The reason is to see to what extent can an Algerian pupil greet a tourist who speaks English in an appropriate way. Table 1 below presents the British greetings formulas used in this analysis.

Formal greetings	Informal greetings
Good morning	All right
Good afternoon	Hi
Good evening	Hiya
Good bye	Morning
Hello	Bye
How are you	Cheers
How do you do	Ta-ta
Glad to meet you	Wotcha, watcher
Nice to meet you	How are things
Pleased to meet you	How is everything
Give/ send/ convey my regards	How is it going
It was a pleasure seeing you	How is life treating you
	See you later
	Catch you later
	So long
	Mind how you go
	What's up

Table1 UK Greetings formulas (adopted from The Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary 2003).

After providing some samples of greetings formulas used by British speakers in everyday situations either in formal or informal ones, I will analyse the content of the four middle school textbooks in order to compare the greetings formulas that they contain with the ones mentioned above (table1).

Table 2 below shows the details of pages and files in each textbook and table 3 deals with the kinds of greetings formulas used in the four EFL Textbooks.

EFL Textbooks	Number of files	Number of pages

Spotlight One	7	189
Spotlight Two	5	125
Spotlight Three	4	188
On the move	6	192

Table 2. Number of files and pages in Algerian middle school textbooks

Textbooks greetings formulas
Hi
Hello
Good morning
Good afternoon
How are you
How do you do
Nice to meet you
Glad to meet you
Glad to see you

Table 03. Textbooks' greetings formulas

 With reference to the information from table 2 and table 03 above two remarks can be picked out; the first one concern the number of pages and files in each textbook, thus one may observe that the total number of pages and files changes from one textbook to another with **Spotlight One** having the largest number of files (07 files) and **On the move** having the largest number of pages (192 page), according to Neddar (2008) "*the variability is not related to print style or font or size. It is rather related to the actual amount of texts and pictures included in each textbook"*. Thus, when I analysed the four EFL Textbooks I remarked that each file starts with a graphic illustration of the topic. The reason, here, is not to make the file attractive but this illustration serves as a general introduction to the whole file. Moreover, these illustrations pave the way for learners' discussions and analysis which help them to build expectations about the contents of the files (Arab et al 2005).

 The second information that is provided in the table above concerns the types of greetings formulas, thus, when comparing British greetings provided in table 1 with the ones taught to Algerian middle school learners I found that these textbooks contain formal greetings *(e.g How do you do, Nice to meet you...etc)* and informal ones *(e.g Hi),* that are similar to the British norms, thus they are not transferred from L1 to L2 (i.e from Arabic to English).

Bearing in mind that English has greetings which are appropriate to a particular time of day, Algerian middle school learners are taught how to use greetings according to time of speaking. Another remark concerns the selection of greetings, thus, I remarked that a great importance is given to teach greetings that can be used in formal and informal situations such as *Hello, Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening and Good night* whereas forms that are very informal such as *morning, catch you later, what's up* ...etc are not found in the four textbooks. This means that middle school learners will not use these forms to greet English speakers. On the other hand, these forms may cause problems of misinterpretation for our learners because in some situations these learners have to respond the greetings produced by other people, so, how can an Algerian middle school learner respond to greetings that are not clear for him? . Thus, if they fail to respond in a proper way they will threaten the listener's face since failure to respond to a greeting is a very serious FTA (Rash 2004).

Now after knowing that EFL textbooks contain greetings that are not transferred from L1 to L2, it is important to mention that Algerian textbooks writers also give importance to the Para-verbal aspects of greetings such as Kisses and handshakes. These gestures are also regarded as meaningful as the words of greeting formulas since they are other means of expression to talk about feelings, wants and needs. In addition, the EFL teacher has to tell his learners that in English speaking societies it is unusual for close friends and relatives to shake hands, they usually hug and kiss on the check, British people usually shake hands when meeting someone they haven't seen for a long time or do not see regularly . In doing so, learners build up expectations about the relationship between the status and greetings in the British culture.

The use of both formal and informal greetings as well as the variability that characterise the four textbooks in terms of length stimulates the reader's thinking since it paves the way for a question that has a relationship with the amount of greetings formulas in each textbook, so, do Algerian EFL textbooks share the same percentage of greetings formulas? If no, which textbook includes the lowest number and which one includes the widest spread of numbers? The answer to these questions is to be found in table 04 below and the two figures (figure 01 and 02) which reflect the number and percentage of greetings formulas in each textbook.

Texbooks	Number of files/ Units	Pages which include	Total Number of pages	Percentage of pages which include

		greetings formulas		greetings formulas
Spotlight One	7	26	189	13,75%
Spotlight Two	5	14	125	11,2%
Spotlight Three	4	23	188	12,23%
On the Move	6	5	192	2,60%

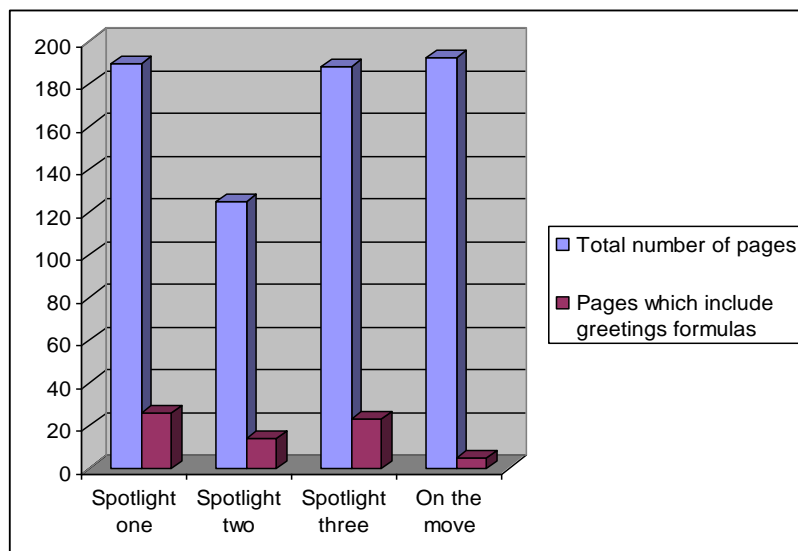**Table 04** The amount of greetings formulas in each textbook

Figure 1 The total number of pages vs pages which include greetings formulas.
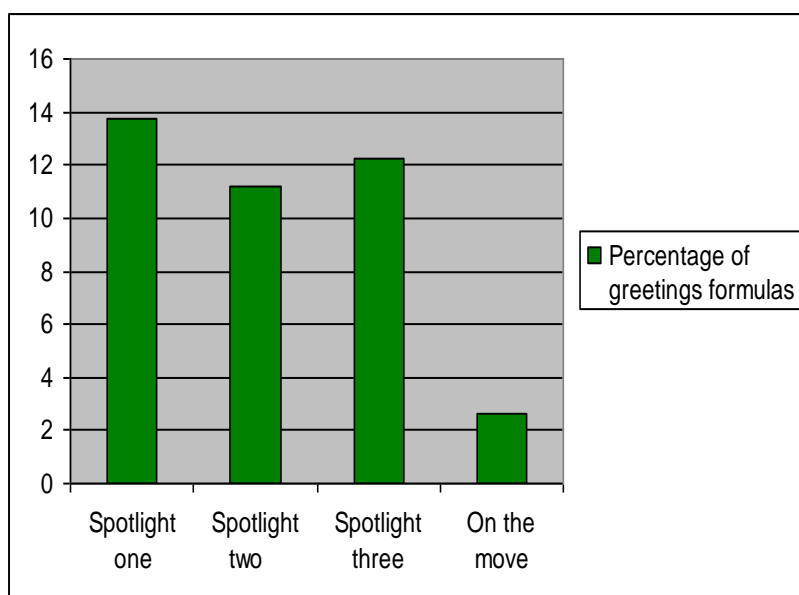
Figure 2 The percentage of greetings formulas.

As illustrated in figure 1 and 2 the number of pages in each textbook does not affect the number of pages containing greetings formulas since the highest percentage (13,75%) is in Spotlight One which contains 189 page, whereas the lowest percentage (2,60%) is in On the move which contains 192 page *(the highest number of pages in middle school textbooks).* The reason for this difference is related to the range of speech acts among the four textbooks, **Spotlight One,** for example, contains eight speech acts (*Asking for location, Complementing, Describing people, Giving information, Giving instruction, Greetings people, Making introductions, Making suggestions*) whereas **On the move** contains eleven speech acts (*Asking/ giving advice, Asking/giving directions, Asking for a favour, Expressing obligations, Expressing opinions, Expressing sympathy, Expressing preference, Making introductions, Making suggestions, Refusing invitations, Requesting*). Taking into consideration that **Spotlight one** is the first

textbook that learners start with, textbook designer devote the first file to teaching greetings since they are the one of the first verbal routines learned by children and certainly one of the first topics introduced in FL classes (Duranti 1997b) .In addition to the range of speech acts EFL textbooks also include grammar lessons which helps learners to develop their grammatical competence because they have to learn about the Grammar that builds of the English language.

4.1 Results of research question 1

Hypothesis 1 suggests that Algerian middle school learners are taught greetings that are similar to the British norms. Thus, after analysing the four EFL textbooks designed to middle school learners I found that textbooks' greetings are similar to the British ones, because they are not transferred from L1 to L2. By doing this, textbook designers give importance to input as condition for the development of pragmatic competence.

Bearing in mind that Algerian pupils have not got the opportunity to learn in real life situations, and for the purpose of helping them in their learning, EFL textbooks are designed to improve both learners' attitude and aptitude for learning English. These two terms (aptitude and attitude) refer to the knack of learning foreign languages (V. Cook 2001:124), Krashen (1981a) makes a difference between them by suggesting that *"aptitude is important for formal situations such as classrooms and attitude is important for informal real world situations"*.

To sum up, the analysis of the four textbooks designed to Algerian middle school learners' shoes that they are taught speech acts, especially greetings, that are similar to the British norms. In this context middle school textbooks provide learners with opportunities to develop their cultural schemata which help learners to bridge the cultural gap with British people since greetings are cultural specific. In this context, (Risager in Cunningsworth 1990:90) argues that:

"Foreign language teaching textbooks no longer just develop concurrently with the development of foreign language pedagogy in a narrow sense, but they increasingly participate in the cultural transmission with the educational system and in the rest of the society".

Now, in the next section, I will shed light on the investment of these acquired greetings in learners' output.

5. The participants

The subjects are 40 fourth year pupils who study at Mostafa Khaled Middle School in Tiaret. This school is situated in what we call a popular area called *"Zaaroura"*. They studied English

for four years and they were taught by the same teacher from the first year to the last one; this means that they have received the same kind of instruction as well as they have been exposed to the same teacher talk and the same teaching materials.

I selected my subjects from the fourth year level because they are familiar with all the greetings formulas provided in **Spotlight one**, **Spotlight two**, **Spotlight three** and **On the move**. Also, the 4th year is considered as a bridge to the next level (i.e Secondary School), so, it is essential to test learners' pragmatic competence in performing the speech act of greetings at the Middle School level. The participants involved in this study belong to different social classes (i.e. high class, middle class and low class) and these differences may affect their motivation toward learning. Also, all of them benefit from education reforms at the middle school level because they studied six years at the Primary School. The second common feature between them is related to the fact that all of them are Arabic speaking Algerians i.e. none of them belongs to Berber speaking Algerians.

6. The questionnaires

To investigate the second research question a corpus was gathered in Mostafa Khaled Middle School and two questionnaires were given to learners to fill them. The first questionnaire is a background questionnaire in which subjects were asked to give personal information such as age, gender and other aspects related to the sources of English available to them as well as their motivation toward this foreign language. The purpose is to make sure that these subjects share similar and different features and, also, to find out whether the FL classroom is the principal place which gives learners the opportunity of exposure to the English language.

The second questionnaire is designed to test learners' production of appropriate greetings formulas in the appropriate situations and at the same time it investigates the degree of learners' familiarity with some informal greetings formulas that are used by British people in their real life situations. This questionnaire is a combination between Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ) and Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT). MCQ refers to the type of questionnaires that provides learners with the description of the situation followed by several alternative responses from which they are asked to select the alternative that best fits that particular situation. Whereas, DCT refers to the type of questionnaires which implies an open response in which learners are asked to write what they think is coherent and appropriate in that particular situation (Kasper and Rose 2002). My questionnaire is a combination of these two types of questionnaires (MCQ and DCT) in the sense that learners have to choose one appropriate greetings among the given ones and at the same time, they can provide appropriate greetings

from their own. The reason for doing this is to provide learners with responses and the same time give them the opportunity to produce their own responses.

Table 05 below presents a summary of the information provided by learners in the background questionnaire.

	The group of pupils
Total number of pupils	40
Mean age	
Gender	
Female	25
Male	15
Motivation	
Need in the Brevet Exam	21
Means of communication	08
Immigration	06
Interest in foreign languages	05
English- speaking countries visited	
Yes	00

No	40
Sources of English	
EFL textbook only	21
EFL textbook + Movies and cartoons	11
EFL textbook +The internet	08
With whom do you speak English	
Teacher	22
Penfriends	08
Parent	10

Table 05: Personal information about the group of pupils in study

As it is mentioned in the table above, there are more females than males in this group. The difference can be related to demographic reasons; girls are more than boys in the Algerian society, and to the degree of motivation toward learning in general (girls are more motivated and give more importance to learning than boys). The participants were also asked about their reasons in learning English, so, as mentioned in the table above more than 50% (21 pupils) of my participants regard English as a tool which helps them to succeed in the BEM Exam (*Brevet d'enseignement moyenne),* other ones are interested in it since they use as a means of communication to discuss with others through the internet. Also, I found that more than the third of the boys involved in this study learn English in order to use it when travelling abroad. Finally, the last 5 pupils (veiled girls) said that they learn English because the prophet Mohammed advices Muslims to learn foreign languages. The response of these five girls is twofold; on the one hand, it highlights a motivation factor in learning foreign languages and on the other one, it sheds lights on the influence of religion in learning foreign languages in the Arab countries. I also asked them if they had the opportunity of visiting an English speaking country but none of them travelled abroad.

Bearing in mind that input plays an important role in language learning and acquisition I asked them about the sources of English available to them. From their answers I found that the EFL textbook is regarded as the only source of input for the majority of them (21 pupil rely on it) whereas movies and cartoons constitute another source of English for the quarter of the pupils involved in this study (11 pupil), also the internet is another source of English but only few

pupils use it and it is important to mention that the same pupils who answered that they are motivated to learn English because they use it in communication are the only ones who mention that they use the internet as another source of English. This questionnaire also included a question about the opportunities of practice, thus more than the half of these pupils practised English with their teacher, whereas a quarter of them practised it with their parents and only 08 of them use it with their pen pals.

Taking into consideration all the information mentioned above it seems that the EFL textbook and the EFL teacher are key elements in the equation of English language teaching and learning in Algeria. Thus, more than a half of the pupils in this study rely on the EFL textbook as a source of English and also they practise and use the English language with their EFL teacher.

Now in order to examine the pupils' production and awareness of specific greetings formulas in different situation I used a written questionnaire which is presented below.

6.1 The written questionnaire

As I said before, this questionnaire is a combination between MCQ and DCT for the purpose of making learners free in responding to each situation. It is composed of 07 questions each one has 03 choices. The learner answers by putting a cross on the appropriate greetings form, and at the same time he can write greetings from his own. The questions of the questionnaire are presented as follow:

Procedure: Read the following situations then put a cross in the appropriate box.

- Question 1: what do you generally say in English when you want to greet your friends at 8:00 a.m?

a) Morning   b) Hello   c) Hi

*- Other possibilities***:...**

-Question 2: what do you generally say in English when you want to greet your friends at 1:00 p.m?

a) Good morning   b) Nice to meet you   c) Good afternoon

- Other possibilities:………………………………………………………………

-Question 3: what do you generally say in English when you want to greet your   teacher at 6:00 p.m?

a) Good evening, sir   b) Hi man   c) Pleased to meet you

- *Other possibilities:………………………………………………………………………*

- Question 4: John works at a hospital which greeting will he use to greet his boss?

a) Hi, sir   b) How is it going?   c) How do you do?

 - *Other possibilities:………………………………………………………………*

- Question 5: You are a travel agent and you want to greet a client which greeting do you use?

a) Good morning   b) Hi   c)Nice to meet you

- *Other possibilities:………………………………………………………………*

- Question 6: which greeting do you use instead of *what's up?*

a) Pleased to meet you   b) catch you later   c) How is it going?

- *Other possibilities:………………………………………………………………*

- Question 7: which greeting do you use instead of *catch you later?*

a) Bye   b) What's up?   c) How do you do?

- *Other possibilities:………………………………………………………………*

6.2 The Results of the questionnaire

After reading learners' copies I found that the whole group answered the seven questions by selecting the greeting which seems appropriate for every one of them, thus their choice differs from one pupil to another. Pupils' answers are presented in the tables above.

Question 1	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	30	75%
Response b	10	25%
Response c	00	00%

Table 06: Learners' responses to question1

Question 2	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	00	00%
Response b	00	00%

Response c	40	100%

Table 07: Learners' responses to question 2

Question 3	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	40	100%
Response b	00	00%
Response c	00	00%

Table 08: Learners' responses to question 3

Question 4	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	15	37.5%
Response b	13	32.5%
Response c	12	30%

Table 09: Learners' responses to question 4

Question 5	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	05	37.5%
Response b	19	47.5%
Response c	06	15%

Table 10: Learners' responses to question 5

Question 6	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	08	20%
Response b	10	25%
Response c	22	55%

Table 11: Learners' responses to question 6

Question 7	Number of learners	Percentage of learners' responses
Response a	23	57.5%
Response b	10	25%
Response c	07	17.5%

Table 12: Learners' responses to question 7

6.3 The interpretation of results

From these tables which summarise learners' responses toward each question, it can be seen that all the pupils are able to produce greetings which are based on the time of the day since question 1,2 and 3 are about choosing the appropriate greeting that can be used to greet others at particular times of the day. In question 2 and 3 all the pupils selected the appropriate form however when answering question 1 which was about the appropriate greeting used at 8:00 a.m

I found that 10 pupils selected Hello and the rest of the group circled choice a which is morning, but they added *good* to the word *morning* (*i.e good morning*) and when I asked these 30 pupils why they did that they said that they thought that it was a trick. These pupils reacted like that because they do not know that *morning* is an informal greeting which is used alone without adding the adjective good. Bearing in mind that greetings vary according to the social status between the interlocutors; participants were asked, in question 4, to circle the appropriate greeting formulae that should be used by the worker to greet his boss. From their answers I found that that only 30% of the pupils circled the appropriate greeting formulae (*i.e c- how do you do)* and this means that they do not know how to use greetings formulas according to the variable of social status. In question 5, another variable which is *social distance* is addressed because it contributes in the choice of greetings formulas. So, when analysing pupils' responses I found that this variable was not taken into consideration by a great number of my subjects because by 62.5% of the pupils involved in this study because there were only 15 pupil who selected the right answer (*i.e. a- good morning).* Apart from these two variables, *social status* and *social distance*, and for the purpose of testing learners' familiarity with some informal greetings that are used by British in real life situations, but are not available in their textbooks I asked the pupils in question 6 and 7 to select the equivalent of *what's up* and *catch you later*. When analysing their answers I found that only 07 pupils knew the meaning of what's up whereas only 08 knew the meaning of catch you later. It is important here to mention that the pupils who gave the right answer in question 6 and 7 are the eight pupils who said that they learn English because they use it as a means of communication and they practise it with pen friends.

From this questionnaire it can be seen that this group of middle school learners were able to use greetings formulas according to different times of the day but they failed in using them according to the variables of social status and social distance. This means that they have a weak comprehension of pragmatic meaning which it requires the listener to understand not only linguistic information, such as vocabulary and syntax, but also contextual information, such as the role and status of the interlocutor, the physical setting of the conversation, and the types of communicative acts that would likely occur in that context .

 For me, the problem is in the type of instruction adopted by their teacher during the four years of study, thus he taught them greetings by focusing only on when to say them without taking into consideration with whom and under what circumstances. Also, in an investigation that I

carried with other teachers I found that they do not take the variables of role and social status into account when designing their tasks. The examples below are about the types of tasks used by some teachers to test learners' production and comprehension of greetings formulas:

Example 01: A) Complete the dialog

Steve: Hello! I'm Steve. What's your name?

Eva:......! Steve. My name is EVA.

Steve: Nice to meet you Eva.

Eva:....... .... Steve.

Example 02: Work in pairs.

-Greet your friend.

-Return greeting.

-Give your name, age.

-Give the name of your city, country.

Example 03: Order the sentences and write down the conversation.

Nice to meet you Khalid, what's your name- Hi, Sally I'm Khalid- glad to meet you Sally- hello, I'm Sally-

Sally:..?

Khalid:..?

Sally:..?

Khalid:..?

In line with Neddar (2004:86) who suggests that *"teachers should give the students a general idea about what, when and how an expression is said in a socio-cultural event"*, I think that EFL teachers have to help their learners by providing them with when to use greetings formulas with whom and under what circumstances, so they have to focus on form and how to use it instead of focusing only on the form itself.

6.4 Research question 2

The second research question of this study is about the ability of middle school learners to produce appropriate greetings. My hypothesis is that middle school learners are able but after analysing learners' answers I found that my hypothesis did not work because a large number of my pupils do not know how to use greetings according to social status and social distance, also they do not know the meaning of some greetings formulas such as *what's up* and *catch you later*; this means that they will not respond properly if they hear these two greetings formulas and failure to respond to a greeting is a very serious FTA. So, due to the outcomes of this

questionnaire I think that providing learners with forms does not guarantee appropriate output on the one hand, as well as it does not help learners to develop their pragmatic competence. Learners will be able to produce appropriate greetings formulas when they are provided with L2 greetings formulas and how to use them because this study shows that input without instruction is not sufficient to guarantee appropriate output. The effect of instruction teaching pragmatic feature is also addressed by Kasper and Rose (2002) who conclude that pragmatics is teachable and that instruction is clearly beneficial, outpacing the effects of exposure alone. More specifically the authors note that:

"Teachers can explicitly model and guide students in their use of target practices, engage students in awareness-raising activities of L2 pragmatics, and provide feedback on students' productions. Peer activities enable students to collaboratively work on tasks and support each other's development of pragmatic ability through using the target language and metapragmatic discussion".

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present dissertation article was to shed light on the development of pragmatic competence in the EFL classroom. Learners in this setting have limited exposure to the target language and the chief sources of pragmatic input for them are the EFL teacher and the EFL textbook. In order to achieve my aim I focused on the speech act of greetings by comparing British greetings formulas with the ones taught to Algerian middle school learners, to determine the nature of greetings formulas that are included in their textbooks (i.e similar to L2 or transferred from L1 to L2). As any piece of research my study was guided by the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis1: *Algerian middle school learners are taught greetings that are similar to the L2 norms.*

Hypothesis 2: *They will produce appropriate greetings since they studied and acquired forms that are not transferred from their L.1*

In order to test Hypothesis 1; which has a relation with the nature of greetings formulas that are taught to Algerian middle school learners, I started by analysing the four EFL textbooks

designed to Algerian middle school learners. The analysis showed textbook greetings are British greetings formulas which can be used in formal and informal contexts.

After testing this hypothesis I moved to Hypothesis 2 which predicted the production of appropriate greetings formulas by middle school learners because they acquired L2 greetings formulas. To test this hypothesis a written questionnaire was given to the learners. The results of this questionnaire revealed that middle school learners' pragmatic competence is still poor because the majority of them were not able to choose the appropriate greeting formulas in situation where the variables of social distance and social status plays an important role in the selection of the greeting formulae. Also, I found that these pupils could not guess the meaning of some informal greetings formulas which are used by British people in their daily life, but are neither taught by their EFL teacher nor included in their EFL textbook. The results of this questionnaire proved that Hypothesis 2 did not work but at the same time made me think about other ways to teach greetings.

In light of these findings, some pedagogical implications may be proposed. First, Input alone is not sufficient for pragmatics learning since my study has demonstrated that L2 greetings formulas did not guarantee appropriate output.

 The second pedagogical implication is related to the need of instruction in teaching pragmatic features in the FL setting. The study showed that focusing only time in teaching greetings formulas is insufficient especially in situations where politeness variables such as social distance and social status are more important.

 A final pedagogical implication derived from my study concerns the role of the EFL teacher. My study has demonstrated that the EFL teacher of this group did not provide his learners with other greetings formulas that can be used by British people; he relied only on the formulas designed by textbook designers, through his attitudes this teacher did not play the role of a researcher, so he is just "a super learner".

        In conclusion, the present study has contributed the body of research investigating the teachability of pragmatic features in an EFL context by focusing on teaching the speech act of greetings to Algerian middle school learners. Also, it has highlighted the role of instruction in developing pragmatic competence in an EFL classroom where the chief source of pragmatic input is: the EFL teacher and the EFL textbook. Finally, the results answer some questions and ask others which may be examined in future research.

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