

From Act to Action:

(Meta)pragmatic instruction with young EFL
learners in Norway

by

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Stavanger, 2021

Summary

This doctoral research project is a case study of the impact of teaching English pragmatics to Norwegian primary school learners in 7th grade (aged 12-13). The importance and the impact of teaching second/foreign language (L2) pragmatics have been much discussed in both empirical and theoretical work, shifting the focus from whether pragmatics is teachable to the affordances of various teaching approaches. However, the evidence is largely based on (young) adult learners, with young language learners (YLLs) comprising an underexplored group. Similarly, YLLs' development of pragmatic ability, i.e. ability to produce and interpret language in context, and metapragmatic awareness, i.e. reflections about language use, remain largely uncharted waters. Hence, the discussions about how L2 pragmatics can be taught and researched are largely informed by research with older language learners.

This forms the backdrop for the present doctoral study, which specifically investigates the impact of teaching L2 requests to the target group. The impact of instruction is explored through the learners' request production, their use of scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings, and their engagement with the project. Informed by sociocultural theory (SCT), the instruction adopted a concept-based approach to teaching L2 pragmatics to two intact classes in a Norwegian primary school. The overarching aim of the instruction was to foster agency, that is to promote the learners' ability to make informed choices in communication. In addition, the study was influenced by the growing body of literature on research with children, which aims to enable them to express their views and be listened to, that is, to give them a voice. Informed by this view, the current study included a focus on giving learners a voice through the use of innovative data elicitation techniques. This thesis is the synopsis of an article-based Ph.D. which comprises four articles (I-IV).

Article I presents a systematic review, investigating the data elicitation techniques used in prior research exploring YLLs' metapragmatic awareness, i.e. their verbalised reflections about language use, contextual considerations, and/or their interplay. The review revealed that previous research was sparse and that the elicitation techniques employed largely mirrored those used with adults. In light of these findings and informed by literature on research with children, the article presents three elicitation techniques, developed and used by the authors in research projects with learners aged 9-13, with aims to scrutinise their affordances.

Article II investigates the impact of the instruction on the learners' request production strategies. The data was collected through a video-prompted oral discourse completion

task (VODCT), which was administered in a pre-post-delayed design, enabling the researcher to investigate both short- and long-term changes in strategy use following the instruction. These changes were measured through statistical tests. The study revealed significant longer-term retention of some request strategies, e.g. internal modification through modal verbs, whilst others revealed no significant changes.

Article III explores the learners' use of scientific concepts to express their metapragmatic understandings. The analysis was conducted through a framework aiming to identify metapragmatic episodes and subsequently three excerpts were analysed in-depth to explore how the learners used in discussions the scientific concepts introduced during the instruction. The study revealed that, although used relatively infrequently in the dataset as a whole, scientific concepts were used to discuss the importance of linguistic variation, the communicative value of hints, and to compare strategies in the first language (L1) and the L2. Thus, the study reveals a potential for teaching pragmatics through concept-based approaches.

Finally, Article IV investigates how the learners appraised various components of the project, including the different data elicitation techniques, and how they explained their appraisals. The study revealed that the target of instruction (requests) presented a novel topic, which the learners found engaging and relevant. In addition, the learners were positive to their perceived learning outcomes and to the focus on choices related to requests of which they became aware. The study provides valuable insights into YLLs' engagement in pragmatics research and the importance of giving them a voice in projects of this kind.

First and foremost, the thesis contributes to our limited understanding of whether and how pragmatics can be taught with YLLs, both generally and within SCT-informed instructional pragmatics research. From the perspective of SCT-informed instruction, the instructional approach employed presents a novel focus: whilst prior research has employed concept-based approaches for teaching L2 pragmatics with adults, the present study is, to the best of the author's knowledge, the only one of its kind to investigate the affordances of such approaches with YLLs. The study shows that an explicit focus on pragmatics is indeed feasible with YLLs and that the focus of instruction and the teaching approaches resonated with the learners (Articles II, III, and IV). In addition, since YLLs' voices have largely been under-communicated within the field of instructional pragmatics, this thesis contributes to addressing this gap (Articles I and IV). The thesis contributes to our understanding of the affordances of explicit instruction with YLLs through concept-based approaches, both from the perspective of teaching practice and research, and adds to the knowledge about participant-friendly

methodologies aiming to promote, and ultimately act upon, children's perspectives in pragmatics research.

Sammendrag

Dette doktorgradsprosjektet er en kasusstudie som undersøker påvirkningen av undervisning i engelsk pragmatikk til norske grunnskoleelever i syvende trinn (12-13 år). Betydningen og effekten av å undervise i andre-/fremmedspråkspragmatikk (S2-pragmatikk) har vært mye diskutert, både i empiri og teori, og gått fra et fokus på om pragmatikk kan læres til å fokusere på mulighetene og utfordringene ved ulike undervisningsmetoder. Empirien som denne forskningen tar utgangspunkt i, er imidlertid stort sett basert på studier av studenter, altså unge voksne. Språkinnlærere i grunnskolealder representerer dermed en gruppe det er gjort lite forskning på i denne sammenheng. Derfor vet vi lite om unge språkelevers utvikling av pragmatiske evner (hvordan de uttrykker og tolker språk i kontekst), og deres metapragmatiske bevissthet (deres refleksjoner om språkbruk). Som en følge av dette, tar diskusjonene knyttet til undervisning og forskning på S2-pragmatikk utgangspunkt i forskning på eldre språkelever.

Med bakgrunn i dette er formålet med denne studien å undersøke hvordan målrettet undervisning av engelske anmodninger påvirker språkinnlærerens språkbruk. Undervisningens påvirkning utforskes gjennom å undersøke elevenes produksjon av anmodninger, deres bruk av vitenskapelige begreper for å uttrykke metapragmatisk bevissthet, og deres engasjement i prosjektet. Undervisningen tok utgangspunkt i et sosiokulturelt læringssyn (SCT), og tok i bruk en begrepsbasert tilnærming til undervisning av S2-pragmatikk til to klasser i en norsk barneskole. Undervisningens overordnede mål var å fremme handlingsfrihet (agency), det vil si å fremme elevenes evne til å ta informerte valg i kommunikasjon. I tillegg tok studien utgangspunkt i forskningslitteratur som tematiserer hvordan en kan gjøre barn i stand til å uttrykke sine synspunkter og bli lyttet til – altså hjelpe dem til å utvikle en stemme (voice). Med utgangspunkt i dette synet har fokuset i denne studien vært å gi elevene verktøy til å uttrykke sin egen stemme gjennom bruken av innovative datainnsamlingsteknikker. Denne avhandlingen er en artikkelbasert ph.d. som består av fire artikler (I-IV).

Artikkel I presenterer en systematisk review, som undersøker datainnsamlingsteknikkene brukt i tidligere forskning på unge språkelevers metapragmatiske bevissthet, det vil si deres verbaliserte refleksjoner om språkbruk, kontekstuelle hensyn og/eller deres samspill. Reviewen viste at det var lite tidligere forskning og at innsamlingsteknikkene i stor grad gjenspeilet de som har blitt brukt med voksne. I lys av disse funnene og basert på litteratur om forskning med barn, presenterer artikkelen tre datainnsamlingsteknikker. Teknikkene er utviklet og brukt av

artikkelforfatterne i to forskningsprosjekter med elever i alderen 9-13 år, og tar sikte på å belyse mulighetene og utfordringene ved disse teknikkene.

Artikkel II undersøker undervisningens påvirkning på elevenes anmodningsstrategier. Dataene ble samlet inn gjennom en test der en undersøger elevenes anmodningsstrategier, på engelsk kalt video-prompted oral discourse completion task (VODCT), som ble gjennomført i en pre-, post-, og forsinket post-test, slik at forskeren kunne undersøke både kortsiktige og langsiktige endringer i strategibruk etter undervisningen. Disse endringene ble målt gjennom statistiske tester. Studien avdekket signifikante langsiktige endringer i bruk av noen anmodningsstrategier, for eksempel intern nedtoning gjennom modale verb, mens andre strategier ikke avdekket noen signifikante endringer.

Artikkel III utforsker elevenes bruk av vitenskapelige begreper for å uttrykke sine metapragmatiske forståelser. Analysen ble utført gjennom et rammeverk som tok sikte på å identifisere metapragmatiske hendelser. Deretter ble tre utdrag analysert i dybden for å utforske hvordan elevene brukte de vitenskapelige begrepene som ble introdusert i løpet av undervisningen, i diskusjoner. Studien viste at selv om vitenskapelige begreper ble brukt relativt sjelden i datasettet som helhet, ble vitenskapelige begreper brukt til å diskutere betydningen av språklig variasjon, den kommunikative verdien av hint, og for å sammenligne strategier på førstespråket (S1) og S2. Studien avdekker dermed et potensial for å undervise i pragmatikk gjennom begrepsbaserte tilnærminger.

Artikkel IV undersøker hvordan elevene evaluerte ulike deler i prosjektet, inkludert datainnsamlingsteknikkene, samt hvordan de utdypet disse evalueringene i diskusjon. Studien viste at undervisningsmålet (opplæring i anmodninger) var et nytt tema som elevene fant engasjerende og relevant. I tillegg var elevene positive til det de vurderte som eget læringsutbytte og til fokuset på bevisstgjøringen av ulike valg knyttet til anmodninger. Studien gir verdifull innsikt i unge språkelevers deltakelse i pragmatikforskning, og viktigheten av å gi dem en stemme i slike prosjekter.

Først og fremst bidrar avhandlingen til vår begrensede forståelse av hvordan pragmatikk kan undervises til unge språkelever, både generelt og innenfor forskning på SCT-informert pragmatikkundervisning. Fra et SCT-basert undervisningsperspektiv presenterer tilnærmingen i dette prosjektet et nytt fokus: Mens tidligere forskning har benyttet begrepsbaserte tilnærminger for å undersøke undervisning av S2-pragmatikk for voksne, undersøker den nåværende studien mulighetene og utfordringene med slike tilnærminger hos unge språkelever. Studien viser at et eksplisitt fokus på pragmatikk faktisk er gjennomførbart med unge språkelever, og at undervisningsfokuset og undervisningsmetodene resonerte med elevene (artikkel II, III og IV). I tillegg, siden unge språkelevers stemmer i stor grad har vært underkommunisert innen forskning på

pragmatikkundervisning, bidrar denne avhandlingen til å adressere dette gapet (artikkel I og IV). Avhandlingen bidrar til vår forståelse av mulighetene og utfordringene med eksplisitt undervisning med unge språkelever gjennom begrepsbaserte tilnærminger, både fra et undervisnings- og et forskningsperspektiv, og bidrar til kunnskapen om deltakervennlige metoder som tar sikte på å fremme, og til slutt handle ut fra, barns perspektiver i pragmatikkforskning.

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Article II: Myrset, A. (Pending revisions). 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?' Request production and the impact of instruction on young EFL learners. *Journal of Pragmatics*.

Article III: Myrset, A. (2021). Scientific concepts as meaning-making resources for young EFL learners in the learning of pragmatics. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 4(2), 191–212. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v4n2.485>

Article IV: Myrset, A. (In preparation). Giving young language learners a voice: learner feedback on pragmatics instruction. [To be submitted to *TESL-EJ*]

List of abbreviations

DCT – Discourse completion task

EFL – English as a foreign language

L1 – First language

L2 – Second/foreign/additional language

LK06 – Norwegian national curriculum 2006-2020

LK20 – Norwegian national curriculum 2020-

RT – Readers Theatre

SCT – Sociocultural theory

VODCT – Video-prompted oral discourse completion task

YLL – Young Language Learner

1 Introduction

This doctoral research project is a case study exploring the impact of teaching English pragmatics on Norwegian primary school learners in 7th grade (aged 12-13). More specifically, informed by sociocultural theory (SCT), the instruction focused on the teaching of requests in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context¹. The study aimed to explore the learners' language production and understandings of language use in connection with requests following the instruction, as well as their engagement with the project. The data the study is based on is presented in four articles attached at the end of this synopsis.

In essence, pragmatics is "the study of language from the perspective of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (Crystal, 1997, p. 301). In other words, pragmatics deals with how language is performed and interpreted within the context in which it occurs. It is thus of vital importance in communication, particularly when interacting in a foreign, second, or additional language² (L2). For this reason, and in the wake of early calls for more research on the teachability of L2 pragmatics (Kasper, 1997), there has been much theoretical discussion and empirical research aiming to answer two main questions: Firstly, can pragmatics be taught successfully to L2 learners? Secondly, is there a need for L2 pragmatics instruction? Today, the consensus is *yes* on both counts, and the field of L2 pragmatics has since moved to exploring the affordances of different teaching approaches. These have largely been informed by three broader language ideologies, namely the interlanguage pragmatics (often referred to as ILP) paradigm,

¹ Whereas Norwegian learners have a generally high proficiency in English (Education First, 2020), the role of English as a foreign versus a second language has been debated in Norway (Rindal, 2014; Vattøy, 2017). For instance, Rindal (2014) argues that whilst English has traditionally been treated as a foreign language in Norwegian education, English plays a significant role in work and higher education. In addition, Norwegians experience substantial exposure to English through media (audio and visual) and travel (Rindal, 2014). This is also evident in policy, where Norwegian (first language, L1) and English (L2) are the only two languages which are taught as compulsory subjects from 1st grade, and with their own curricula (Udir 2020b), with English being referred to as the first foreign language in policy reports (Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2003). However, the role of English as a second or foreign language remains somewhat opaque (Rindal, 2014; Vattøy, 2017), which is further emphasised in the distinction between English and foreign languages in the curriculum. However, English does not have a role as an official language. Thus, the learners in this thesis are viewed as learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

² Given the increasingly multilingual nature of language classrooms, English as an additional language (EAL) has been used by some authors (e.g. Lorenz et al., 2021; Portolés & Martí, 2017) rather than the labels 'foreign' or 'second language'.

sociocultural theory, and intercultural pragmatics (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020). Of these, ILP, which is grounded in cognitive theories of L2 acquisition (Ohta, 2005) is the most widely researched – and by extension influential – perspective, whilst the latter two have received increased traction in recent years.

Nevertheless, despite a growing interest in the teaching of L2 pragmatics from various language perspectives, young language learners (YLLs), here defined as those aged approximately 5-13 (Drew & Hasselgreen, 2008), remains a largely overlooked group. It is uncertain whether this has to do with a view that pragmatics is considered too advanced for these learners, that pragmatic ability is deemed less important for them, or simply that access to adult participants is more easily attainable (e.g. students in university settings). What is clear, however, is that despite calls for introducing pragmatics at an early stage of language teaching and learning (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Ishihara, 2013), the majority of studies explore the affordances of pragmatics instruction as they relate to adult learners (Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Taguchi, 2015). Thus, there is a gap of knowledge when it comes to pragmatics instruction with YLLs, both within the Norwegian and an international context, which the present study aims to address.

1.1 The present study

1.1.1 A focus on requests

The present study focuses on the teaching of requests. Requests are “attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest attempts as when I ask you to do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it” (Searle, 1979, p. 13). Originating from theoretical discussions in language philosophy and Speech Act Theory as ‘directives’ (e.g. Austin, 1962; Searle, 1965; Searle, 1979), requests, and other speech acts, have since become empirically described (Cohen, 1996). Within empirical research, one of the seminal works is Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, which presented a large-scale study comparing requests and apologies in seven countries, focusing on both L1 and L2 speakers. Importantly, in order to explore cross-cultural and intralinguistic variation, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) provided a coding manual, which has since been extensively used in research. This coding manual served as a framework in the instruction and analysis in the present study.

From the perspective of the L2, request production has been widely researched, with (young) adults (e.g. Awedyk, 2003; Infantidou & Tzanne, 2012; Krulatz, 2016) and YLLs (e.g. Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Portolés & Safont, 2018; Savić, 2015; Savić et

al., 2021)³. However, less evidence is provided in relation to *teaching* requests to YLLs, despite the fact that requests are frequently used in communication (Stavans & Shafran, 2018), and the development of request production and comprehension begins at an early age (Cekaite, 2013; Portolés, 2015). Thus, considering the sparse research on teaching requests to YLLs, and their frequent use and early development, they were considered an appropriate focus (pragmatic target) of the instruction.

1.1.2 *A sociocultural approach to teaching pragmatics*

The instruction was informed by sociocultural theory and adopted a concept-based approach (e.g. van Compernelle, 2014). Within this approach, pragmatics is seen as mediated action. What this means is that rather than successful pragmatic performance being viewed as “adherence to social conventions” (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 42), the focus is on making informed choices in communication. These choices are informed by two dimensions: pragmalinguistics, that is, the link between pragmatics and grammar, and sociopragmatics, the link between pragmatics and culture (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983; van Compernelle, 2014). Thus, mediated action involves taking into consideration, for instance, the context and interpersonal aspects (sociopragmatics) in order to make informed pragmalinguistic choices, which results in accomplishing a goal in communication (e.g. requesting, apologising) (van Compernelle, 2014). Following this view, language teaching and learning aims to foster agency, i.e. “the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act and to assign meaning to one’s actions” (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 21), rather than teaching and learning rules of thumb, e.g. generalised prescriptions about language norms, politeness, and appropriateness in given contexts (Liddicoat & McConachy, 2019; van Compernelle, 2014). In order to foster agency, concept-based approaches aim to introduce scientific concepts, with a view that these foster a deeper, conceptual understanding of language use (Nicholas, 2015; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Furthermore, in addition to conceptual development, metapragmatic awareness, that is, learners’ own understandings and reflections about pragmatic phenomena, such as politeness, is viewed as serving a vital mediating role for agency (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming). In the present study, metapragmatic awareness is viewed as being displayed through verbalised reflections about language use, contextual considerations, or their interplay, to varying degrees of sophistication.

With the SCT perspective on pragmatics in mind, teaching requests involves raising awareness of the multitude of pragmalinguistic strategies. Drawing on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), there is a range of request strategies. However, apart from the minimal unit

³ Portolés and Safont (2018) explored requests in three languages, that is, Spanish (majority language), Catalan (minority language), and English (foreign language). In their study, English is referred to as the third language (L3).

that is necessary to realise the request itself (referred to as the head act), all these strategies are non-essential. In other words, they can be included to modify the head act, but are not necessary. In the present study, increasing the learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire was considered a prerequisite for fostering agency. This repertoire, mediated by the learners' conceptual understandings and metapragmatic awareness, would provide tools for pragmalinguistic variation in communication, where meaning is dynamically negotiated (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Therefore, teaching pragmatics with a view to developing agency was considered a useful approach for this study, thus exploring the affordances of such approaches with a previously uncharted group, namely YLLs.

1.1.3 *Focus on young language learners (YLLs)*

Because of its focus on YLLs, this study was largely informed by literature on research with children (e.g. Christensen & James, 2017; Eckhoff, 2019; Pinter & Kuchah, 2021). Within this interdisciplinary paradigm of research, often referred to as the 'new sociology of childhood', an emphasis is placed on the role of children in research, moving from being mere objects of study to taking active part in the research (e.g. Fielding, 2001). From the perspective of children as experts of their own worlds, the aim is to provide them with a voice, which is manifested in the methodological considerations of a research project, for instance, in the choice of the data elicitation techniques, the analyses, and in the research reports. This focus on children being active agents in the research and being given a voice is often attributed to the introduction of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), which states that children have a right to share their views about matters concerning them. Thus, it could be argued that the introduction of the UNCRC promoted a view of children as active agents. A paradox, however, is that whilst children are amongst the most institutionally governed citizens, they also carry the least influence in decision-making (Kellett, 2010). This includes democratic engagement in educational settings (Kuchah & Milligan, 2021). Nevertheless, governments and state institutions – and thus, by extension, schools and researchers – are required to provide spaces where children can voice their opinions and democratically engage in matters concerning them, which is apparent in the Norwegian curriculum (Udir, 2020a). Providing children with a voice was therefore an important consideration in the present study.

1.1.4 *The curriculum and English teaching in Norway*

The current project was conducted during the introduction of a new curriculum (*LK20*) in Norway. Thus, the project occurred in a transitioning period between the national curriculum of 2006 (*LK06*) and the new curriculum of 2020. Consequently, the learners

participating in this study were still taught in accordance with the *LK06*. However, the study is even more relevant in the light of the new curriculum.

The national curriculum consists of three parts: 1) the core curriculum, which addresses the overarching purposes, obligations, and values of education, as decreed by law; 2) the overarching principles of the subject, i.e. “Purpose” (Udir, 2006a) or “About the subject” (Udir, 2020b), which includes the relevance and central values of the subject, across all grades (primary and secondary levels); and 3) the subject-specific competence aims and assessment, in primary school after 2nd, 4th, and 7th grades respectively. With the UNCRC (1989) in mind, the core curriculum both in the *LK06* (Udir, 2006b) and the *LK20* (Udir, 2020a) is highly relevant, as it states that the school should promote democratic values and facilitate active participation⁴. With regard to the purposes of the English subject, both curricula emphasise a focus on world Englishes and the ability to communicate across cultural backgrounds⁵. Finally, concerning the subject-specific competence aims specifically related to pragmatics, aims with similar foci can be found in both curricula, with a progression from 2nd to 7th grade. For instance, at the time of the instruction in the present study, the curriculum stated that learners were expected to be able to “use expressions of politeness and appropriate expressions for the situation” after 7th grade (Udir, 2006a)⁶.

In light of the competence aims and the curriculum, it is relevant to draw attention to the English proficiency of Norwegian learners, which may help shed light on the teaching context. English has been a compulsory subject from 1st grade in Norway since 1997, and is in fact the only additional language taught as a compulsory subject, while others, e.g. German or Spanish, being elective subjects from 8th grade. Norwegian learners of English are relatively proficient in English and are currently ranked fifth on the English proficiency index (Education First, 2020). With regard to the primary level, the expected levels according to the CEFR are approaching A1 (2nd grade), A1-A2 (4th grade), and A2-B1 (7th grade) (Hasselgreen, 2005). The present study took place in the 7th grade.

⁴ The *LK20* is more specific in this respect and states that “[t]he pupils must experience that they are heard in the day-to-day affairs in school, that they have genuine influence and that they can have impact on matters that concern them” (Udir, 2020a). This mirrors Article 12 in the UNCRC (1989), i.e. “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”.

⁵ However, there is a shift from an explicit focus on L1 English contexts in the *LK06* to a focus on intercultural communication, regardless of L1 backgrounds, in the *LK20*.

⁶ Albeit broader in scope, an aim focusing on the ability to use ‘polite expressions’ can also be found in the *LK20*: “express himself or herself in an understandable way with a varied vocabulary and polite expressions adapted to the receiver and situation” (Udir, 2020b).

To sum up, at the time of the instruction, the *LK06* included specific learning aims that emphasised a focus on pragmatics. In addition, the purpose of the English subject was to foster the ability to communicate across cultures and backgrounds. Thus, the present study aimed to teach requests with the view to developing agency. Furthermore, in line with the core curriculum, the present study aimed to provide the learners with a voice in the project. However, despite the study being grounded in the *LK06*, it has become increasingly relevant in light of the *LK20*, where the link to the UNCRC (1989) is even clearer, and the focus on intercultural communication is emphasised.

1.1.5 An overview of the study

With the aforementioned sections as a backdrop, I turn to the present study, which aimed to explore the teaching of English requests, using a concept-based approach, with two intact 7th-grade classes in a primary school. The instruction lasted for four weeks (four hours total), with the researcher teaching the material. Data was collected prior to and following the instruction, resulting in approximately three months of fieldwork. The study was conducted in the spring of 2019 and aimed to explore the impact of a concept-based approach to teaching requests on the learners' request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics. Figure 1.1 provides a chronological overview of the fieldwork, which lasted approximately three months.

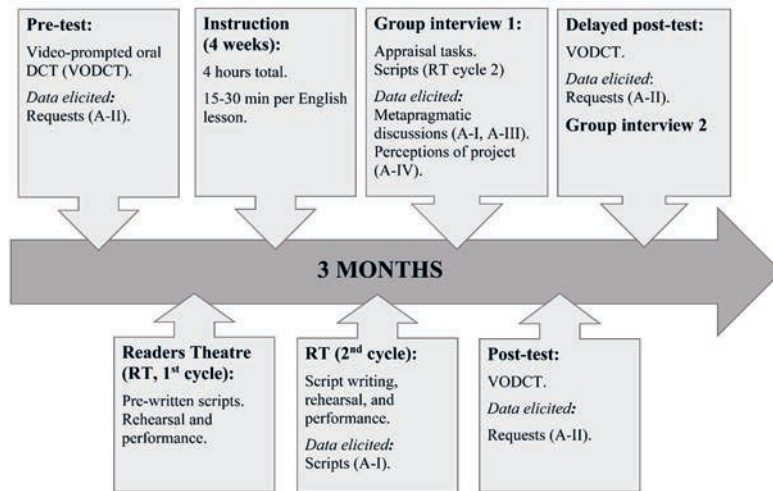


Figure 1.1: Overview of the fieldwork with the techniques used and the data they elicited. The “A” followed by a roman numeral (e.g. A-I) refers to the article in which the data was presented.

In the study, the researcher adapted data elicitation methods, e.g. the discourse completion task (DCT) and group interviews, informed by the literature on research with children within 'the new sociology of childhood'. Considerations taken during the research included building trust with the participants, using participant-friendly techniques, and combining tasks to facilitate responses in different modalities. The research is presented in four articles. In Article I, learner-produced scripts from Readers Theatre (see section 3.3.2) were used to prompt metapragmatic discussions. Article II employed the Video-prompted Oral Discourse Completion Task (VODCT, see section 3.3.1) to elicit production data in a pre-post-delayed design. Articles III and IV employed task-based interviews to enable both verbal and non-verbal responses (see section 3.3.3). Table 1.1 presents the main research question of the study and an overview of the four articles, stating the aims and research questions for each article (Article I-IV).

Table 1.1 The main research question of the study, and the titles, aims or research questions of the four articles.

Main research question	
How does a concept-based approach to teaching requests impact young language learners' request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics?	
Articles	
I	Myrset, A. & Savić, M. (2021). "If an astronaut were on the moon...": Eliciting metapragmatic data from young L2 learners. <i>Applied Pragmatics</i> , 3(2), 163-196.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide an overview of the methods used to elicit metapragmatic data in research with young language learners - To present three data collection techniques designed and used in two research projects conducted by the authors
II	Myrset, A. (Pending revisions). 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?' Request production and the impact of instruction on young EFL learners. <i>Journal of Pragmatics</i> .
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To what extent does concept-based instruction of EFL requests with young learners influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o the learners' linguistic repertoire of head acts, and internal and external modification strategies? o the learners' linguistic variation depending on familiarity and age of the interlocutor?
III	Myrset, A. (2021). Scientific concepts as meaning-making resources for young EFL learners in the learning of pragmatics. <i>Intercultural Communication Education</i> , 4(2), 191-212.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do young language learners employ scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings following a period of concept-based instruction? If so, how?

IV Myrset, A. (In preparation). Giving young language learners a voice: learner feedback on pragmatics instruction. *To be submitted to TESL-EJ*.

- How did young language learners appraise various components in a project related to pragmatics instruction?
 - What were the learners' explanations behind their appraisals?
-

Four articles are included in this synopsis. Of these, three articles (II-IV) aimed to address the three important aspects (i.e. production, awareness, and engagement) in the overarching research question, whereas Article I, an investigation of previous elicitation techniques used in research exploring YLLs' metapragmatic awareness through a systematic review, provided the background and rationale for the selection of techniques. Furthermore, this article presents some elicitation techniques employed in the present study. Article II explores the requests produced by the learners in a pre-, post-, and delayed post-test, through the VODCT. Article III draws on discussions emerging in group interviews and investigates the learners' use of scientific concepts to express their metapragmatic understandings about requests. Finally, Article IV discusses the learners' perceptions about the project, aiming to give them a voice in research.

1.2 Contributions of the study

Considering the gap in research with YLLs both in Norway and more broadly within the field, this study adds to knowledge both locally and globally. For the Norwegian context, despite the curriculum providing pragmatics-related learning aims already at the primary school level, empirical research investigating learners' pragmatic development remains sparse. Most studies of request production have focused on older English L2 speakers, such as teachers (Krulatz, 2016), learners in upper secondary school (Brubæk, 2012), and university students (Awedyk, 2003). Some developmental studies have investigated request production (Savić, 2015; Savić et al., 2021) and metapragmatic awareness (Savić, 2021; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b) of young English language learners in primary school. However, despite calls for instruction studies in L2 pragmatics (Brubæk, 2012; Savić, 2015), none have been conducted in the Norwegian context to the best of the author's knowledge. The global context paints a similar picture, that is, some research has explored YLLs' L2 (meta)pragmatic development in English (e.g. Achiba, 2003; Lee, 2010; Portolés, 2015). However, few studies have explored L2 pragmatics instruction with YLLs (e.g. Ishihara, 2013); thus, the evidence pertaining to YLLs remains sparse compared to that with adults, which is a general trend in applied linguistics (Pinter, 2014). With this in mind, the paucity of empirical evidence results in a lack of knowledge in relation to

what can be taught within pragmatics, and ultimately *how* pragmatics teaching can be approached. Thus, the current study adds to previous knowledge by providing evidence regarding the teachability of pragmatics and learners' engagement with this process. Consequently, the study may serve as a support for researchers, teacher educators, teacher students and teachers, both in Norway and globally.

Another contribution of the study lies in the teaching approach it has adopted. Informed by SCT, the study adopted a concept-based approach for teaching pragmatics (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014). Whereas this approach has gained traction within the field, its affordances have been explored exclusively with (young) adult learners. Thus, by tailoring a concept-based approach specifically for YLLs, the present study provides empirical evidence of YLLs' pragmatic gains and affective responses to this kind of instruction, broadening the scope of instructional pragmatics studies by focusing on an uncharted group of learners.

Finally, in terms of methodology, the study was largely informed by literature on conducting research with children. This involved adapting elicitation techniques aiming to provide the learners with a voice, whilst at the same time ensuring that the techniques generated relevant data. Since prior pragmatics research with YLLs has largely been based on research methods mirroring those used with adults (Culpeper et al., 2018), and thus not taking into account the potential differences between children and adults (Pinter, 2014; Punch, 2002b), the current research study provides a novel approach to data collection within the field. The use of innovative data elicitation techniques (e.g. Readers Theatre) and an emphasis on child voices, opening up for a discussion about their involvement in research, present a major contribution to the field of pragmatics.

1.3 Structure of the synopsis

This synopsis provides insight into the project as a whole and how the four articles are linked together by offering a more detailed overview of its theoretical and methodological underpinnings, as well as the most important findings. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical concepts and empirical studies relevant to the current project. Chapter 3 sheds light on the methodological considerations regarding the design of the study, the instruction, and the data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter 4 presents summaries of the four articles, which are attached at the end of this synopsis. Chapter 5 provides a discussion and conclusion based on the findings from the project as a whole, as well as its limitations and suggestions for future directions of research within the context of YLLs and pragmatics instruction.

2 Theory and previous research

This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings of the study presented herein. In addition, it provides reviews of the relevant previous research. Section 2.1 explores the nature of requests, the pragmatic target of the instruction in the present study, and how they develop in language learning. In addition, the request strategies relevant for the current study are presented in this section. Section 2.2 presents sociocultural theory (SCT), which provided the guiding principles for the instruction, focusing on some of the core aspects related specifically to instructional pragmatics and pragmatic development. These include the zone of proximal development, spontaneous and scientific concepts, and learner agency (e.g. van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 1934/2012, 1978). In addition, this section provides a review of previous studies that have adopted SCT as a pedagogical foundation for teaching pragmatics through concept-based approaches. Section 2.3 presents reviews of research investigating pragmatics with YLLs. More specifically, this section provides an overview of the previous research that has explored YLLs' metapragmatic awareness, grounded in a systematic review⁷, and explores previous instructional pragmatics research with YLLs. Finally, Section 2.4 concludes the chapter with a brief summary.

2.1 Requests

Requests are attempts at moving the hearer to perform an action (Searle, 1979), most often to the benefit of the speaker (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Pérez-Hernández, 2021). The way in which requests are performed may vary as they occur in a “relationship between form, meaning, and pragmatic prerequisites involved” with potentially “high social stakes involved for both interlocutors in choice of linguistic options” . (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 11). Thus, the act of requesting involves balancing two sets of considerations: pragmalinguistic ones, i.e. the link between pragmatics and grammar, and sociopragmatic ones, i.e. the link between language and culture (e.g. Kasper, 2001; Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983; van Compernelle, 2014). With this in mind, requests are multifaceted and contextually situated (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Ogiermann, 2009; Pérez-Hernández, 2021; Spencer-Oatey, 2008), which means that producing requests involves choosing between a range of pragmalinguistic strategies as well as taking into consideration the context in which they occur.

Requests, which have been vastly researched (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Pérez-Hernández, 2021), occur from an early stage of L1 development (Bernicot, 1994;

⁷ The systematic review was conducted by the author and his supervisor and provided the backdrop for Article I (Myrset & Savić, 2021) of this thesis.

Cekaite, 2013; Dorcheh & Baharlooie, 2016; Zufferey, 2014). Indeed, requests can be produced non-verbally, such as through pointing, and verbally (accompanied by gestures) by toddlers, and by the age of two and a half include a “wide repertoire [...] that gradually become[s] more sophisticated and refined” (Cekaite, 2013, p. 2). These early stages of development are characterised by learners engaging with their social world, such as interacting with adults and peers (Bernicot, 1994; Cekaite, 2013). Furthermore, requests are commonly used in communication (Pérez-Hernández, 2021; Stavans & Shafran, 2018). Thus, it is clear that requests are an important part of communication, reflected by their early appearance, with production and reception becoming increasingly sophisticated with age and frequent use in everyday life, which is why they were chosen as the pragmatic target in the current study.

2.1.1 Request strategies

Following Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p. 275)⁸, requesting involves a range of strategies⁹ starting from the head act, i.e. “the minimal unit which can realize a request”. These head acts can be manifested in various ways, depending on their directness. Directness is the “degree to which the speaker's illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 278). In other words, the directness is dependent on the level of transparency, leaving more or less responsibility for interpretation on the hearer (Blum-Kulka, 1987). The directness of the head act, or request proper, can thus be viewed as on a continuum from transparent to opaque, and can be divided into three overarching categories: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect (henceforth referred to as ‘hints’).

On this continuum, direct requests are the most transparent, being “realized by requests syntactically marked as such, such as imperatives, or by other verbal means that name the act as a request, such as performatives” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 201), e.g. ‘Close the window!’ (imperative) and ‘I am asking you to close the window.’ (performative). Situated in the middle of the continuum, conventionally indirect requests are realised through contextual preconditions, and are conventionalised within a language (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), e.g. ‘Could you close the window?’. Finally, the head act characterised by various degrees of opacity are hints. These are

⁸ Since the publication of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), a number of taxonomies related to request strategies have been proposed (e.g. Alcón Soler et al. 2005; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). However, the framework proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. remains the most widely cited (Kádár & Haugh, 2014; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021) and has provided the foundation for more recent taxonomies. Thus, their framework was used in the current study.

⁹ The strategies presented are those relevant for the current study.

realised “by either partial reference to object or element needed for the implementation of the act (‘Why is the window open’), or by reliance on contextual clues (‘It’s cold in here’)” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 201).

The head act can be modified internally and externally through modification strategies. These strategies enable the speaker to soften or increase the force of the requests. For example, requests can be internally softened through lexical downgraders, i.e. optional lexical devices that soften the force of the request, such as *possibly/perhaps* and the marker *please*¹⁰; or aggravated through lexical uptoners, which add negative connotations to the request, e.g. “[c]lean up that *mess!*” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 286). Another internal modification strategy is syntactic modification, which is achieved through optional syntactic devices that mitigate the requestive force, e.g. negation (‘you *couldn’t* lend me some money, could you?’), as well as modal verbs, which frequently occur in requests, e.g. ‘*can/may/could* I have a glass of water?’.

When it comes to external modification, it can be realised through alerters, i.e. elements to get the hearer’s attention, such as titles/roles (e.g. *teacher* or *Mrs*), attention getters (e.g. *excuse me*), and supportive moves. Similar to internal modification, supportive moves, which precede or follow the head act, can be mitigating or aggravating. Examples of mitigating supportive moves are: preparators, i.e. announcements of an upcoming request through enquiring about the hearer’s availability or by asking for permission to make a request; grounders, i.e. providing a reason, explanation, or justification that accompanies the request; promises of reward, i.e. announcing that fulfilling the request will be rewarded; and sweeteners, i.e. showing appreciation through, for instance, compliments (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). On the opposite end, aggravating moves can be realised through, for example, insults and threats.

In sum, starting from the head act, requesting can involve a range of strategies that modify the request internally and externally. These strategies play various functions in requesting as they can either mitigate or aggravate the force of the request and represent the linguistic options that are available to speakers in communication.

2.2 Sociocultural theory

The core of sociocultural theory (SCT) is rooted in a belief that development occurs in a unity between biological conditions and the social world (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Lantolf et al., 2018), with its origins in Vygotsky’s work (1934/2012, 1978). In other

¹⁰ ‘Please’ is often referred to as a ‘politeness marker’ (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Pérez-Hernández, 2021).

words, a child's cognitive development is influenced by social interaction, where, for instance, values, beliefs, and strategies for problem-solving are acquired in collaboration with more knowledgeable people from their social world. This development occurs from infancy, but for Vygotsky, formal learning was "the natural initial stage of development of scientific knowledge" (Gal'perin, 1992, p. 69; Negueruela, 2003). In other words, the educational context was considered a platform in which development could move from simply learning from the social environment to directing focus towards theoretical knowledge. Vygotsky's theories became internationally recognised following the translated publication of *Mind in Society* (Vygotsky, 1978), both as a theoretical lens for investigating development and as an influential foundation for (language) teaching (Gredler, 2012; Kinginger, 2002; Lantolf et al., 2018)¹¹. Theoretical constructs from Vygotsky's work (1934/2012, 1978), e.g. the zone of proximal development (ZPD), have since inspired new concepts, such as 'scaffolding'. The ZPD and scaffolding have since become prominent for understanding how learning occurs in education and how development can be mediated, i.e. through involvement of, for instance, a person or concepts as a third factor in interaction (Kozulin, 2018; Lantolf & Poehner, 2014; Negueruela, 2003; van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 1978).

The appearance of SCT also sparked new ways of viewing second and foreign language acquisition, which Vygotsky also theorised in his own work, such as conceptual knowledge in a foreign language in *Thought and language* (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Consequently, the SCT paradigm has become "a theory that L2 scholars draw heavily upon" (Lantolf et al., 2018, p. 5), with aims to understand the process of language learning and its relation to the socio-cultural context. Following the surge of SCT-informed research, explorations of pragmatics instruction have also been approached through this theoretical lens, namely through dialogic (Ishihara, 2013; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014) and concept-based approaches (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2012, 2014; van Compernelle et al., 2016), the latter drawing heavily on works by Gal'perin (1979, 1989, 1992) and Negueruela (2003). Consequently, some constructs grounded in SCT that have been fundamental for informing pragmatics instruction specifically will be further explored here. These are *scientific* and *spontaneous concepts*, and the *zone of proximal development*.

¹¹ See Lantolf et al. (2018) for a detailed discussion about the history and influence of SCT on language learning.

2.2.1 *Learner development*

In essence, the zone of proximal development (ZPD) is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). In other words, the ZPD captures the essence of SCT by describing a relationship between the individual and their social world, namely how children’s development occurs through interaction with adults and peers. The ZPD has thus become widely used in research and teaching, the latter with a view that “learning is a socially creative activity, and [...] an effective way of people to develop as learners” (Holzman, 2018, p. 51).

Development through the ZPD occurs from early childhood, through schooling and beyond, and is linked to what Vygotsky (1998) referred to as ‘periods of crisis’ (i.e. turning-points). These periods of crisis occur at different ages, respectively newborn, 1, 3, 7, 13, and 17 (Vygotsky, 1998), and there is thus a gradual shift, in concert with children’s social and emotional growth (McKay, 2006), moving from a reliance on parents/guardians as the capable others to peers serving such roles. One such turning point, according to Vygotsky, occurs at the age of 13, when learners are in the last year of primary school in Norway, which is the age in focus in the present study. At this stage, children move from attention to what is obvious, to understanding and deduction, and ultimately to a higher form of intellectual activity. As a result, these learners will have a larger cognitive capacity for abstract thought and a focus on scientific concepts (discussed below). The focus on learner reflections and scientific concepts was thus considered appropriate for the instruction in the present study.

With the ZPD in mind, development does not happen solely by maturation and interaction with the environment. Rather, it happens through help from more capable others: first, through adults interpreting the world to children and, later, through external mediators, with “specifically constructed activities, formal educational activities being the most prominent of them” (Kozulin, 2018, p. 38). These external mediators facilitate development towards each period of crisis, and, in the case of language, shape children's ability to communicate in and with their surroundings. Furthermore, formal learning, i.e. education, aims to foster development of self-regulation (agency), in which reflection and metacognition play a vital role (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Kozulin, 2018). Considering that learners develop through interaction with their surroundings, two concepts proposed by Vygotsky (1934/2012)

become highly relevant: *spontaneous* and *scientific*¹² concepts, both characterised and differentiated by how they are acquired. It is important to note, however, that although they follow different trajectories for acquisition, both play an important role in development (Karpov, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/2012), and the one does not exclude the other. There is a strong link between the ZPD and conceptual knowledge, namely spontaneous concepts indicate the current stage of development, whilst scientific concepts indicate directions and potential for future development (Vygotsky, 1934/2012).

2.2.2 Spontaneous and scientific concepts

Spontaneous concepts are empirical and characterised by developing without conscious attention (van Compernelle, 2014), in a “spontaneous manner in the course of engagement in social activities” (Negueruela, 2003, p. 63). In other words, spontaneous concepts are acquired from lived experiences, and their development “knows no systematicity and goes from the phenomena upward toward generalizations” (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 157). For example, through interaction with their environment, children learn how to use the L1, e.g. the verb ‘give’, before they develop knowledge and more in-depth understanding about the overarching functions and meanings of verbs. As Vygotsky (1934/2012, p. 205) points out, “[t]he inception of a spontaneous concept can usually be traced to a face-to-face meeting with a concrete situation”, and a spontaneous concept is formed on the basis of generalisations from lived experiences in “the absence of systematic instruction” (Karpov, 2018, p. 102). Spontaneous concepts are thus by nature unsystematic¹³, and their limitation lies in a learner’s “inability to use these concepts freely and to form abstractions” (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, pp. 157-158). Consequently, spontaneous concepts lack transferability to other contexts different from where they were encountered. At the same time, spontaneous concepts are also vital as they provide the foundation for the development of scientific concepts (Infante, 2018; Karpov, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/2012).

Whereas spontaneous concepts are unsystematic and empirically acquired through lived experiences, scientific concepts are characterised by their systematic, hierarchical, and abstract nature (Karpov, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Their

¹² In the literature, these are also referred to as ‘everyday’, ‘empirical’ or ‘experiential’ concepts (spontaneous); and ‘academic’ or ‘theoretical’ concepts (scientific) (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; Negueruela, 2003; van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 1934/2012).

¹³ Karpov (2018) uses the example of birds to describe the unsystematic nature of spontaneous concepts. At an early stage of a child’s development birds are characterised by their ability to fly; thus, pre-schoolers may not define a penguin as a bird, but will do so with a bat.

acquisition is grounded in systematic instruction¹⁴, and whilst the development of scientific concepts can be found in other forms of learning, e.g. apprenticeship (Negueruela, 2003), they are particularly prevalent in school. As Vygotsky (1934/2012, pp. 166-167) holds, “[i]nstruction is one of the principal sources of the schoolchild’s concepts and is also a powerful force in directing their evolution”. Thus, to Vygotsky, education was more than simply acquiring new knowledge. Rather, education could foster development through scientific concepts which are unavailable in everyday life (Lantolf & Zhang, 2017).

Furthermore, as opposed to the limited transferability of spontaneous concepts, scientific concepts are independent of specific contexts, and can thus be recontextualised to other (diverse) situations (Infante, 2018; Negueruela, 2003; Swain et al., 2015; Vygotsky, 1934/2012), thereby providing knowledge that goes beyond what can be spontaneously acquired. An instructional focus on scientific concepts therefore provides an orienting basis for action in diverse situations (Gal’perin, 1989; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming). This systematic focus on scientific concepts enables learners to generalise and provides a foundation for awareness and reflection (Karpov, 2018; Negueruela, 2003; van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 1934/2012; Zuckerman, 2004), with thinking becoming “independent of their personal experiences” (Karpov, 2018, p. 103). As Vygotsky (1934/2012, p. 181) argues, “[r]eflective consciousness comes to the child through the portals of scientific concepts”, where the formal learning mediates development in the ZPD (Zuckerman, 2004).

With this in mind, scientific concepts provide a set of interrelated features that can guide action in diverse contexts (Gal’perin, 1989; Negueruela, 2003; Vygotsky, 1934/2012), and provide a foundation for reflection about the object in question. It is important to note, however, that Vygotsky argued that both forms of conceptual knowledge (spontaneous and scientific) are vital to development, closely connected, and develop over time, and that the “introduction of new concepts does not preclude spontaneous development, but rather charts new paths for it” (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 161). This conceptual development was also theorised by Vygotsky in relation to foreign language learning and its contingency on the L1. However, it is worth pointing out that Vygotsky’s context was vastly different from the one that 21st-century learners reside in, where the borders between learning a first language and other languages are substantially more blurred, e.g. exposure to languages through different forms of media, leisurely travel, and migration. Nevertheless, the distinction between spontaneous and scientific concepts is still relevant due to their conditions for acquisition.

¹⁴ Drawing again on Karpov’s (2018) example of birds, scientific concepts provide other characteristics that provide a system, such as vertebrate and animals that lay eggs.

2.2.2.1 Sociocultural theory and L2 pragmatic development

When it comes to languages and L2 acquisition, Vygotsky argued that the systems of meaning in the L1 are transferred to the process of learning the L2, whilst “a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language” (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, p. 207). Whilst the L2 serves as support for mastery in the native language, in Vygotsky’s view, the L1 also plays a mediating role in the L2 through the meanings already established in the L1. Thus, the L1 and lived experiences can serve as scaffolding in the process of L2 learning (Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018). Indeed, Chavarría and Bonany (2006, p. 136) argue that “the L1 may be strategically used as a means of communication in the classroom”, with one positive aspect being as a “stepping stone into potentially difficult contents (e.g. textual or cultural aspects)”.

From the perspective of pragmatics, specifically in relation to requests, one could thus argue that the use of strategies and their linguistic manifestations are mainly developed spontaneously through everyday interaction in the L1. Considering that requests occur early in language development (Cekaite, 2013), and are used frequently, even before conscious attention, this knowledge about requesting can be brought into the L2 and used as a scaffold for production and interpretation. Unless pragmatic phenomena, such as requests, are systematically addressed through scientific concepts, learners are potentially deprived of tools for reflection and making informed decisions about their meaning and use. Figure 2.1 provides an example of scientific concepts related to a pragmalinguistic aspect of requesting: directness of head acts. Such concepts provide abstract knowledge focusing on the (intended) meaning potential of strategies, e.g. *hints*, rather than focusing only on specific pragmalinguistic resources, e.g. “Do you have a pencil?”.

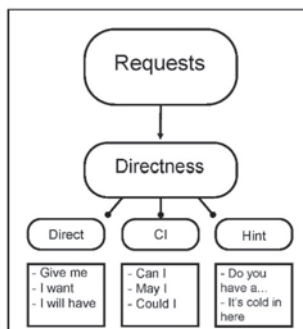


Figure 2.1: A visual representation of a hierarchy of scientific concepts relating to directness, with sub-concepts for directness levels, as well as examples of pragmalinguistic resources within each sub-concept (also presented in Article III (Myrset, 2021))

2.2.3 Teaching pragmatics through concepts

Within SCT, mediated action is central for instructional pragmatics (van Compernelle, 2014; van Compernelle et al., 2016). This means that rather than aiming to teach adherence to social conventions, the instruction aims to provide learners with conscious control over their choices. This control includes an “ability to break with pragmlinguistic and/or sociopragmatic conventions in order to achieve a desired effect in light of present circumstances, constraints, and potential conflicts and/or points of tension” (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 42). Thus, SCT-informed concept-based approaches focus on teaching concepts related to the pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions (Al Jumah, 2021; Nicholas, 2015), adhering to the view that social action is mediated by pragmlinguistics, which is again mediated by sociopragmatics (van Compernelle, 2014). In other words, concepts related to pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions serve as an orienting basis for making choices in communication.

2.2.3.1 Agency and rules of thumb

Within SCT, agency is defined as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act and to assign meaning to one’s actions” (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 21). In other words, it is the ability to make informed choices and act on them, mediated by sociocultural, contextual, and interpersonal conditions, which allows learners to create and expand meaning (Levi & Poehner, 2018; Martin, 2004; Mercer, 2011). What is central in SCT-informed instruction is that it aims to foster learner agency rather than teaching pragmatic ‘rules of thumb’ (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014). Such rules of thumb are prescriptive generalisations of linguistic forms as inherently im/polite, in/formal or in/appropriate in certain communicative contexts, or mapping specific pragmlinguistic forms onto specific sociopragmatic features, e.g. familiarity with and age of the interlocutor (Liddicoat & McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014, 2018). In this respect, teaching pragmatic rules of thumb to some extent aligns with a traditional perspective of politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983), in which contextual variables were reduced to three static variables, i.e. the relative power (P) and distance (D) between the interlocutors, and the imposition (R) of the speech act.

Following van Compernelle (2014, 2018), when aiming to foster agency and the ability to negotiate social meaning, rules of thumb are problematic for three main reasons.

Firstly, whilst rules of thumb may provide practical guidelines, such prescriptive rules are inconsistent in communication. Secondly, since teaching rules of thumb assign specific forms to particular contexts, they inhibit agency. Finally, rules of thumb focus on what to say to whom, rather than taking into account the meaning potential of various choices. One could also argue that teaching prescriptive norms as rules, e.g. “you should say X to Y”, is counterproductive as it would be impossible to teach learners about all available situations and contexts of language use. Rules of thumb may therefore “have potential pernicious effects on L2 development since they direct L2 learners to form hypotheses and understandings of language and communication in a simplified, incomplete, and unsystematic fashion” (Negueruela, 2003, p. 85).

Teaching pragmatics by presenting a “set of doctrinal, norm-referenced rules of thumb” (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 5) raises a question about the role of the native speaker, where instructional pragmatics has often relied on native speaker performance as a benchmark (e.g. Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Hosseini & Safari, 2018)¹⁵. However, the native speaker construct is in itself ambiguous (Davies, 2004), with norms being fluid (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021), and languages being characterised by intralinguistic variation, which has, for instance, been identified in native speakers of different varieties of English (Barron, 2008, 2021). This is not to argue that it is not useful to acquire knowledge about L2 pragmatic norms (McConachy, 2013), but rather that one should avoid viewing native speaker norms as prescriptive rules of thumb, since such rules may result in overgeneralisations (van Compernelle, 2014). Furthermore, with English serving as a lingua franca, where meaning is negotiated against a backdrop of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, coming across as a native speaker is not necessarily the aim of acquiring the language (House, 2010; Taguchi, 2011). As House (2010, p. 365) holds:

Localized, regionalized or otherwise appropriated varieties – whose linguistic surface is English, but whose speakers creatively conduct pragmatic shifts in their use of this auxiliary language – are taking over the linguistic landscape. Non-native speakers of English anywhere in the world are developing their own discourse strategies, speech act modifications, genres and communicative styles in their use of ELF.

The focus on fostering agency in teaching and learning L2 pragmatics has thus become increasingly emphasised from the perspective of the intercultural learner (e.g. Liddicoat & McConachy, 2019; McConachy, 2013, 2018; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016;

¹⁵ This bears resemblance to the traditional perspective of politeness, namely the Model Person, i.e. a speaker or hearer that is “a wilful fluent speaker of a natural language” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 58).

Morollón Martí, Forthcoming). Furthermore, the focus on agency aligns with discursive perspectives of politeness, in which politeness starts from a lay conceptualisation of the term (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003), rather than a “a superordinate, universal term that can then be applied universally to any socio-cultural group at any point in time” (Watts, 2003, p. 9). As McConachy (2018, p. 26) argues, “it is difficult for language learners to develop a true sense of agency in their use of L2 pragmatics if they are socialized into a view of language as a highly constrained system”. Rather, there is a need for learners to reflect and develop awareness about pragmatic variation in language use in which learners construct “a more dynamic perspective on language as a whole” (McConachy, 2018, p. 26). Such a view is thus closely linked to operationalisations of metapragmatic awareness within SCT-informed approaches to pragmatics instruction.

2.2.3.2 Metapragmatic awareness within concept-based approaches to pragmatics instruction

When it comes to teaching pragmatics, there is consensus that learners benefit more from explicit input, i.e. the teacher providing direct metapragmatic explanations, as opposed to implicit instruction¹⁶ (Kasper, 2001; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Taguchi, 2015). This distinction, however, is not as dichotomous as often presented, and input should be viewed as on a continuum from implicit to explicit (Taguchi, 2015). Furthermore, what presents itself as a challenge within research on L2 pragmatics teaching is that the term metapragmatic awareness is used inconsistently or not always clearly defined (McConachy, 2018; Nikula, 2002) and explicitly operationalised. It is thus difficult to compare the impact of various instructional studies since the kinds of metapragmatic information with which learners were provided may have varied considerably.

Broadly speaking, metapragmatic awareness is “a crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use” (Verschueren, 2000, p. 439), and refers to reflexivity about language usage. This reflexivity concerns language users’ awareness about how language is used in communication with others (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014)¹⁷. In L2 pragmatics research, metapragmatic awareness has been operationalised in markedly different ways. For example, in some studies, metapragmatic awareness has

¹⁶ Implicit pragmatics instruction does not provide any metapragmatic explanations, but rather aims to develop learners’ implicit understandings in which they deduce their own rules through, for instance, input flood and consciousness raising activities (Kasper, 2001; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Taguchi, 2015).

¹⁷ Such reflexivity may involve interpersonal evaluations, such as those pertaining to politeness (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021), for instance valency, i.e. evaluative categorisations of language use through scales ranging from e.g. good-bad, polite-impolite, or appropriate-inappropriate (Kádár & Haugh, 2013).

been operationalised as “knowledge of *what* is considered (in)appropriate language use in a given context rather than *why*” (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016, p. 16), or as mappings between form, function, and context (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020), and metapragmatic explanations have thus been presented as rules of thumb (van Compernelle, 2014). In the case of requests, such mappings could, for instance, be linking specific strategies to specific relational categories, such as ‘friend’, ‘boss’, or ‘colleague’. Other studies have conceptualised metapragmatic awareness more holistically and focused on learners’ (co-)construction of understandings about different pragmatic phenomena, such as politeness or self-representation (e.g. Liddicoat & McConachy, 2019; McConachy, 2013, 2018; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014).

The different views of metapragmatic awareness could partly be explained by different fundamental paradigms of L2 acquisition and use (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020), and also how politeness and pragmatic behaviours are viewed. For example, Tajeddin et al. (2012) assessed EFL learners’ metapragmatic awareness before and after instruction through tightly controlled questionnaires, focusing on imposition, power (referred to as status), and distance (referred to as intimacy), and compared their responses to those of native speakers. Thus, the study by Tajeddin et al. (2012) aligns with traditional theories of politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983), by relying on static contextual variables and a model person. McConachy (2013), on the other hand, investigated learners’ metapragmatic awareness through their interpretations, e.g. emotional dimensions, in discussions between the instructor and the learners in which the learners (co-)constructed their understandings in dialogues. This aligns with discursive views of politeness (e.g. Eelen, 2001; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021; Watts, 2003), in which interpretations of politeness originate from the individual’s own understandings negotiated through interaction. In other words, one study treated metapragmatic awareness as knowledge about (and conformity with) target language norms, whereas the other viewed it as an interpretative tool constituting “a bridge from the learners’ culture to the L2” (McConachy, 2013, p. 102), the latter being more in line with views about the role of metapragmatic awareness in SCT.

Following the central tenets of SCT, in which agency is an important part of a learner’s language development, metapragmatic awareness becomes an important aspect of the language learning process¹⁸. As language is essentially about making choices (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014), metapragmatic awareness enables learners to make informed choices in communication, which ultimately leads to agentive language use (Morollón Martí,

¹⁸ Indeed, Verschueren (2000) makes a direct link between sociocultural theory and the dynamic processes that occur in interpretation and production of language.

Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014). Metapragmatic awareness thus plays a vital mediating role (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming), in which both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions are taken into account to perform social actions. Thus, in the present study metapragmatic awareness is defined as verbalised reflections about language use, contextual considerations, or their interplay, which can vary in their degree of sophistication.

2.2.4 Research on concept-based pragmatics instruction

Whereas some studies have approached pragmatics instruction with YLLs through SCT (e.g. Ishihara 2013; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014), to the best of the author’s knowledge, no studies have explored the impact of introducing scientific concepts (see Section 2.2.2), i.e. concept-based instruction, with these age groups. However, recent years have seen a growing interest in concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics with older learners (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014; van Compernelle et al., 2016). A common denominator in these studies are references to the work by Negueruela (2003), who first introduced concept-based approaches for L2 instruction¹⁹. Consequently, the literature review was conducted through forward searches or citation searching (Booth et al., 2016). This forward search aimed to retrieve primary studies that had cited Negueruela (2003), focusing specifically on research exploring pragmatics. The forward search provided a first indication of studies using concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics. An additional string search was conducted in Google Scholar. This search included the terms:

- 1) “concept based”
AND
- 2) (“pragmatics instruction” OR “teaching pragmatics”)

Table 2.1 presents the findings from the searches²⁰.

¹⁹ Negueruela’s (2003, p. 230) study focused on teaching grammatical concepts, i.e. “indicative/subjunctive, conditionals, relative pronouns, articles, aspect, and verbal tense”, in L2 Spanish to university students.

²⁰ Six of the retrieved citations are not included, of which five were not empirical research (e.g. van Compernelle, 2018) and one could not be accessed (van Compernelle & Henery, 2016).

Table 2.1: Pragmatics instruction using concept-based approaches

Author	Target language	Pragmatic target	Age
Al Jumah (2021)	English	Requestive behaviour	19-24
Henery (2015)	French	CBPI ^a	19-22
Kim (2013)	English	Sarcasm	29-37
Kuepper and Feryok (2020)	German	CBPI	17-20 (University students)
Morollón Martí (Forthcoming)	Spanish	(Im)politeness	Adult learners ^b
Nicholas (2015)	English	Speech acts	19-21
van Compernelle (2011)	French	CBPI	Adult learners ^b
van Compernelle (2012)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle (2013a)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle (2013b)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle (2014)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle (2015)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle et al. (2016)	Spanish	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle and Henery (2014)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle and Henery (2015)	French	CBPI	Teacher
van Compernelle (2016)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle and Kinginger (2013)	French	CBPI	Adult learners
van Compernelle and Williams (2012)	French	CBPI	Adult learners

^a CBPI refers to Concept-Based Pragmatics Instruction. These studies are based on the same dataset or have departed from the teaching material developed by van Compernelle (2012, 2014). These focus on teaching sociopragmatic concepts related to self-presentation, social distance, and power hierarchies.

^b These studies do not refer to ages, per se, but rather refer to the participants as a “university learner of French” (van Compernelle, 2011, p. 3267) or Spanish learners “at a northeastern U.S. university” (van Compernelle et al., 2016, p. 341). These are thus referred to as adult learners.

As displayed in Table 2.1, some trends can be found in previous research using concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics. First and foremost, all the studies focus on adult learners. In addition, the majority of studies focus on teaching L2 French. Finally, the vast majority of the studies use material developed by van Compernelle (2012, 2014) as mediational tools for instruction, in both French (e.g. Henery 2015) and Spanish (van Compernelle et al. 2016). Thus, some of these will be presented below.

In addition, some studies have also explored the teaching of EFL speech acts (Al-Jumah, 2021; Nicholas, 2015).

Focusing on the sociopragmatic dimension, van Compernelle (2012; 2014) introduced concepts related to self-presentation, social distance, and power hierarchies. Simply put, the underlying premise is that sociopragmatic knowledge informs pragmalinguistic choices, resulting in social action. For instance, through the sociopragmatic concepts of “presenting oneself as tee-shirt-and-jeans or as suit-and-tie”, learners were provided with generalisable knowledge to describe pragmatic phenomena, such as formality and social distance (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 77). These concepts served as an orienting basis for making pragmalinguistic choices, e.g. the second person pronouns *tu* and *vous* in French (e.g. Henery, 2015) and *tú* vs. *usted* in Spanish (van Compernelle et al., 2016).

Studies drawing on van Compernelle’s (2012, 2014) have revealed that the learners used the sociopragmatic concepts when providing their reasonings in dialogic verbalised reflection with the instructor (van Compernelle, 2014). For instance, one learner in van Compernelle’s (2014) study displayed a shift in her understandings of social distance when making pragmalinguistic choices (*tu* vs. *vous*). During these reflections, the instructor served as a mediator by co-constructing the reflections with the learner, focusing the learners’ attention towards examples of interlocutors (a professor and a child) and pointing to the scientific concept (distance) to ground the reflection. Henery (2015) used transcripts from TV interviews, in which learners were asked to provide their interpretations of the language used. Similar to van Compernelle (2014), Henery found that the instruction enabled the learners to draw attention to sociopragmatic concepts (self-representation, social distance, and power) when interpreting pragmalinguistic choices, e.g. “and then:: they’re both **equally**- they’re both *tu*” (Henery, 2015, p. 327, original highlights).

In addition to a focus on individual learners’ verbal responses, van Compernelle et al. (2016), who focused on Spanish, investigated sociopragmatic development through written responses, to which they assigned scores (Awareness of concepts, Type of awareness, and Agency) for the learners (n= 19). They found that following the instruction, all but one learner had an increased score. This suggests that the concept-based instruction had improved the conceptual understandings and awareness of sociopragmatics, which ultimately led to agentive language use. Consequently, the instruction provided the learners with tools for verbalisations and problem-solving.

Al Jumah (2021) investigated the teaching of EFL requests, focusing on both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions with Iraqi learners. The sociopragmatic concepts introduced were: power, distance, and imposition (referred to

as ‘size of the request’), as well as self-presentation. In addition, the students were told that “age, gender, frequency of the request, etc., may also play influencing roles depending on the situation” (Al Jumah, 2021, p. 61). The pragmalinguistic dimension focused on the “main stages of request making” (Al Jumah, 2021, p. 62), i.e. pre-request, main request, post-request, and response to request. Data was collected through open-ended interviews, appropriateness judgement questionnaires, and strategic interaction scenarios (planning and producing requests). Thus, the study allowed for the exploration of both the learners’ understandings and production related to requesting.

With regard to production, there was a shift from direct to conventionally indirect requests as a result of the instruction (seven sessions, 4-5 weeks). The learners also employed a wider range of head act strategies. Similarly, internal modification devices increased following the instruction, albeit to a lesser extent than head act strategies, that is, the learners used a wider range of available resources following the instruction, whilst the use of ‘please’ decreased. Al Jumah (2021) argues that the limited use of ‘please’ could be related to the request situations or L1 influence.

With regard to the sociopragmatic dimension, distance was mentioned in a pre-intervention interview. However, following the instruction, the learners also showed an awareness of power and imposition when requesting. Furthermore, scientific concepts related to power, distance and imposition served as an orienting basis in their verbalisations, that is, the learners could employ these to ground their reasonings during the interviews. Through the scientific concepts, the learners were able to provide more nuanced explanations, displaying their awareness about social factors (power, distance, imposition), cultural differences between Arabic and English, and “awareness of the American cultural values influencing requests and how they are different from Arabic” (Al Jumah, 2021, p. 131) ²¹.

Finally, Nicholas (2015) focused on two overarching concepts, interactional competence and requesting, in a study with Japanese learners. The focus on interactional competence aimed to introduce the learners to sub-concepts related to speech-as-action, adjacency pairs, conversation sequencing, and preferred and

²¹ It is worth noting that whereas Al Jumah (2021, p. 97) highlights “cultural differences in requests including politeness level, directness, clarity, brevity, (non)-compliance to the request, request organization, etc.” as “American cultural values”, it is not clear how these were presented or addressed during the instruction.

dispreferred turns²²; whilst the focus on requesting introduced request stages (pre-stage, main request, and post-stage). In addition, Nicholas introduced both verbal and non-verbal behaviours related to request responses. The instruction included stages of orientation (introducing a concept), execution (interaction tasks), and control (reflection) to ensure that the learners internalised conceptual understandings. The study revealed that the learners' conceptual understandings developed during the instruction, that is, they became more sophisticated and nuanced over the course of the instruction. Furthermore, in informal post-instruction interviews, the majority of learners reported that their L2 proficiency related to requests had improved. Nicholas (2015, p. 392) argues that “[b]y promoting the development of a more nuanced, conceptual understanding of English language pragmatic norms among EFL learners, they will be equipped to apply their knowledge to a variety of contexts”. At the same time, Nicholas points out that such approaches need to consider the age and educational background of the learners.

What this review highlights is that YLLs represent a group that has been overlooked with regard to teaching pragmatics through concept-based approaches. Although YLLs are largely overlooked more generally in pragmatics instruction (Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019), this could also suggest an assumption that concept-based approaches are too challenging for these age groups. Considering the focus of the present study, prior research with YLLs' focusing on their metapragmatic awareness and affordances of instruction may, thus, help shed light on findings that informed the present study.

2.3 Previous research with young language learners

2.3.1 Research on young language learners' metapragmatic awareness

As part of the research, the present study set out to explore the learners' metapragmatic awareness, which plays a vital mediating role in L2 learning (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014), through the instruction itself and in the interviews following the instruction. Consequently, as a point of departure for this doctoral research project, a systematic review was conducted aiming to explore the

²² These concepts were operationalised in the study as follows: Speech-as-action, i.e. “the view that speech is *doing* something, such as apologizing” (Nicholas, 2015, p. 384, original highlights); adjacency pairs, i.e. the isolated speech act and its response; conversational sequencing, i.e. situating speech acts in “sequences of talk-in-interaction” (p. 387); and preferred and dispreferred turns, i.e. “utterances by speakers have a response that is socially comfortable (preferred), and responses that are not (dispreferred)” (p. 387).

previous research on YLLs' metapragmatic awareness. The result of this review is presented in Article I (Myrset & Savić, 2021), which focuses on the research methods employed in previous research. A systematic review is in essence "a methodology using a systematic, transparent process for gathering, synthesizing, and appraising the findings of studies on a particular topic or question" (Sweet & Moynihan, 2007, p. 5). In addition, a systematic review is reproducible (Booth et al., 2016), and employs strings of search terms to gather the (potentially) relevant studies in various databases.

In the present study the review process, which is presented in Figure 2.2, included string searches in four databases, namely Academic Search Premier (ASP), ERIC, Web of Science (WoS), and SCOPUS²³. A string search involves creating a set of search terms, for instance, related to metapragmatic awareness²⁴, using the Boolean operator 'OR' (string 1 in the figure)²⁵. Each string is first searched for separately, followed by a search in which the strings are combined using the Boolean operator 'AND'. The search was limited to peer-reviewed studies published in English between the years 2000 and 2019. Limiting the scope to empirical studies published after the year 2000 is in line with Rose (2000, p. 56), who argued that "there is clearly a need to refine and develop this form of data elicitation via metapragmatic assessment – not yet done with child L2 learners". The search resulted in 594 references (864 before excluding duplications). These were reviewed and references were excluded based on the following criteria:

- Publications in languages other than English
- Publications that were not empirical
- Publications with participants younger than 5 and older than 13
- Publications not focusing on metapragmatic awareness

²³ During the initial stage of the process, the researchers and a university librarian piloted a search individually before agreeing on a satisfactory string of search terms and sets (Booth et al., 2016).

²⁴ As displayed in Figure 2.2, the string search for metapragmatic awareness included a wide range of search terms. The reasoning behind the wide range of terms was the inconsistent use of the term 'metapragmatic awareness' itself (e.g. McConachy, 2018). In other words, rather than solely retrieving studies explicitly using the term, the search aimed to retrieve research falling within the definition of the study, i.e. "the ability to verbalize reflections on linguistic forms, contextual features and/or their interplay" (Myrset & Savić, 2021, p. 165).

²⁵ The search in the present study included a combination of proximity operators and truncation. Proximity operators specify that terms can be near each other rather than right next to each other (e.g. "young W1 learner" where *W1* indicates that any one word can be between 'young' and 'learner'). Truncation includes terms with various word endings (e.g. "child*" would include publications using words such as child and children). In addition, the searches were adapted for each database by including their thesaurus, or controlled vocabulary (Booth et al., 2016).

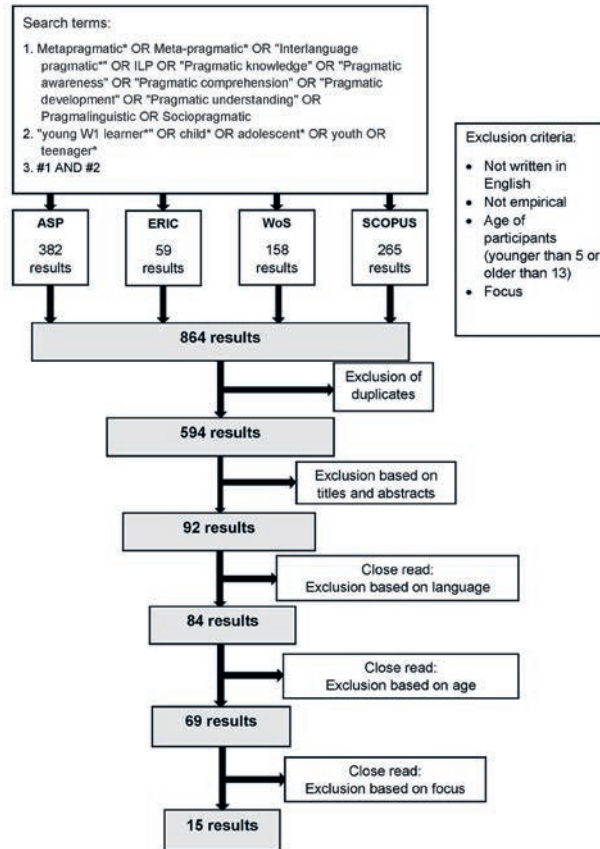


Figure 2.2 Systematic review process (also presented in Article I)

Considering that the review was conducted in 2019, more research has since added to the original knowledge. Thus, an additional stage aimed to retrieve relevant research published after the systematic review had been conducted. In this post-review stage, Google Scholar was used to retrieve relevant research. Furthermore, for the purposes of Article I, the systematic review focused specifically on the data elicitation techniques used in previous studies, and included both L1 and L2 research “due to the limited number of studies in L2 contexts” (Myrset & Savić, 2021, p. 166). However, studies conducted in L1 contexts may also indicate what learners are capable of understanding and provide reasonings for. More specifically, learners’ L1 and lived experiences may serve as a scaffold for L2 development (Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2013, 2018; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a). In other words, how learners come to understand pragmatics phenomena in their L1 may serve as a mediational tool when

learning and communicating in the L2. Thus, both L1 and L2 research helped inform the instructional approach in the present study. For this reason, L1 studies are also included in Table 2.2, which presents the empirical research retrieved in the systematic review and in the post stage (marked in grey).

Table 2.2: Previous research on YLLs' metapragmatic awareness

Author	Context	Age	Focus	Participants
Adams et al. (2018)	L1 English	6–11	Metapragmatic ability	82
Ben-Shlomo and Sela (2021)	L1 Hebrew	4-10	Conversational violations	75
Bernicot et al. (2007)	L1 French	6–10	Nonliteral forms (hints, idioms and implicatures)	60
Bosco et al. (2006)	L1 Italian	3–8	Recognition and repair of communicative failures	80
Buson and Billiez (2013)	L1 French	9–11	Stylistic variation	196
Caillies et al. (2012)	L1 French	7–11	Irony comprehension	20
Chang (2016)	L1 Mandarin Chinese	9–19	Apologies	240
Chang (2018)	L1 Mandarin Chinese	9–19	Apologies	240
Collins et al. (2014)	L1 English	6–11	Metapragmatic ability	88
Hsieh and Hsu (2010)	L1 Mandarin Chinese	6, 9, adults	Idiom comprehension	32
Ishihara (2013)	Japanese EFL learners	9	Pragmatic awareness and metapragmatic judgments of formality and politeness	3
Ishihara and Chiba (2014)	Japanese EFL learners	7-12	Pragmatic awareness and metapragmatic judgments of formality and politeness	5
Lacroix et al. (2010)	L1 French	6–17	Idiom comprehension	57
Laval (2003)	L1 French	6, 9, adults	Idiom comprehension	48
Lee (2010)	Cantonese EFL learners	7–12	Comprehension of direct and indirect speech acts	176 ^a
Lockton et al. (2016)	L1 English	6–10	Conversational pragmatic ability and metapragmatic awareness	39
Savić (2021)	Norwegian EFL learners	9-13	Co-construction of metapragmatic understandings in relation to requests	79

Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-a)	Norwegian EFL learners	9-13	Learners' evaluations of request behaviours	79
Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b)	Norwegian EFL learners	9-13	Metapragmatic appraisals of requests	79
Zhang and Yan (2012)	Mandarin EFL learners	6	Sociopragmatic awareness regarding request and reply strategies	128

^a In Lee's (2010) study, a selection of the learners (n= 60) participated in a think-aloud and verbal protocol, which aimed to explore the learners' processing strategies, i.e. their reasonings, during a comprehension exercise.

2.3.1.1 L1 metapragmatic awareness

As displayed in Table 2.2, the majority of studies explore children's L1 metapragmatic awareness²⁶, with a selection of these exploring children with developmental disabilities (Adams et al., 2018; Caillies et al., 2012; Collins et al., 2014; Lacroix et al., 2010; Lockton et al., 2016)²⁷. These studies have explored YLLs' metapragmatic awareness related to non-literal forms, such as hints, idioms, and irony (e.g. Bernicot et al., 2007; Caillies et al., 2012), pragmatic violations (e.g. Adams et al., 2018; Ben-Shlomo & Sela, 2021), communicative failures (Bosco et al., 2006), and speech acts (Chang, 2016, 2018)²⁸. The number of participants ranged from 20 (Caillies et al., 2012) to 240 (Chang, 2016, 2018). The majority of these studies employed some form

²⁶ It is worth noting that the studies found in the review did not always use the label 'metapragmatic awareness'. This lends support to scholars (e.g. McConachy, 2018; Nikula, 2002) who argue that the term is used inconsistently. Furthermore, Buson and Billiez (2013, p. 328) point to this inconsistency in definitions as a factor making it difficult to pin down exactly when children's "metapragmatic competence" starts developing: "[i]f certain authors posit that metapragmatic activity exists from the age of 2 or 3, whereas others situate it at 8-10, this is perhaps because of varying definitions of what metapragmatic competence actually is".

²⁷ Due to the participants in focus, these will not be explored further.

²⁸ Some of the L1 studies are cross-sectional studies which look at larger samples of learners and report on the statistics. Whereas the data elicitation included explanations in addition to the tasks, thus providing methodological insights for the systematic review, there is limited evidence that provides insights into knowledge and experiences that could inform understandings in the L2. For instance, Chang's (2016, 2018) studies were conducted through a questionnaire in which the learners made judgements of the severity of an offence and their emotional response (whether they would feel embarrassed) through a Likert-scale response (Chang, 2016), followed by a suggested appropriate response in form of an apology. However, due to the vast number of participants, the study does not go into details about the learners' responses. For this reason, these will not be elaborated on.

of audio-visual stimulus followed by verbal explanations, that is, the researchers invited the learners to explain their reasonings for their choices.

Studies focusing on YLLs' L1 metapragmatic awareness show that learners are indeed capable of comprehending and explaining pragmatic phenomena from the age of six (e.g. Laval, 2003), with evidence of development with age (Ben-Shlomo & Sela, 2021; Bernicot et al., 2007; Hsieh & Hsu, 2010). For instance, learners aged 9-11 are capable of drawing on contextual cues when spontaneously commenting on stylistic variation, i.e. formality and informality, in utterances (Buson & Billiez, 2013). Indeed, Buson and Billiez found eight broad categories of interpretations. These categories ranged from focusing solely on the content of the utterance (Category 1) to referring to the "characteristics of the interaction [...] [and] other criteria" (Categories 5-8) (Buson & Billiez, 2013, p. 335). In addition, the learners used evaluative statements, e.g. "speaks kind of badly", "it doesn't sound nice the way he talks", and "rude words" (2013, pp. 333-335), as a frame when providing their explanations.

In a study with L1 French learners, Bernicot et al. (2007) focused on indirect requests, i.e. hints, as one of the nonliteral forms. This study focused on whether learners could comprehend nonliteral language forms, and subsequently provide an explanation of the form. The study revealed that whilst most of the learners (aged 6, 8, and 10) could comprehend hints, the number of elaborate explanations was low (less than 7%). At the same time, there were very few irrelevant responses. Indeed, the majority resorted to explanations focusing on the "context or the utterance itself", suggesting that the learners understood hints, but were not able to provide explanations for them.

In addition, replication studies, such as Ben-Shlomo and Sela (2021) replicating the study by Collins et al. (2014), and Hsieh and Hsu (2010) replicating Laval (2003), have made it possible to observe similarities across L1s (English, French, Hebrew, Mandarin Chinese). In the latter replication study, Hsieh and Hsu (2010) explored Mandarin Chinese learners' idiom comprehension through a word-card task and a picture selection task. The picture selection task involved the use of stories and pictures leading up to the use of an idiomatic utterance. The learners were then asked to choose between two pictures: one reflecting the idiomatic meaning, the other the literal meaning. The study revealed that a reliance on literal interpretations remained dominant, but that the youngest learners in the study (aged 6) had started to produce idiomatic answers when provided with a context. This reliance on the context was also clear when the learners provided their explanations. Adults focused more on the linguistic conventions in their explanations, whereas the younger learners (aged 6 and 9) relied mainly on the contextual aspects for providing their reasonings. These findings mirror to some extent Laval's (2003) findings, where the youngest learners (aged 6) relied on the context to

provide their explanations, whilst older learners (aged 9) started incorporating their linguistic knowledge about idiomatic meanings. Thus, there seems to be some correspondence in the results between the two studies in different contexts. Furthermore, Hsieh and Hsu (2010, p. 520) found that learners also used their “knowledge of the world” to make inferences about language use.

Ben-Shlomo and Sela’s (2021) replication study focused on awareness of conversation rules and violations. More specifically, they explored the developmental trajectories of L1 Hebrew learners (aged 4-10) explaining pragmatic violations in videos. Four questions, including one in which the learners were asked to provide their reasoning, were asked to elicit metapragmatic understandings. The study revealed that the learners highlighted violations of non-verbal features, e.g. proxemics, and communicative collaboration, i.e. staying on topic. Furthermore, the researcher found a correlation between age and performance, suggesting a linear developmental trajectory with regard to L1 metapragmatic awareness. Furthermore, the study largely reflected the findings from Collins et al. (2014)²⁹, thus providing “a first step in generalizing our understanding regarding metapragmatic development across languages and cultures” (Ben-Shlomo & Sela, 2021, p. 58). In other words, the ways in which YLLs come to understand pragmatic phenomena, and the resources that they employ, continue to develop from when the learners are roughly 5 to 13 years of age.

2.3.1.2 L2 metapragmatic awareness

Moving to L2 contexts, few studies have explored YLLs’ metapragmatic awareness (see Table 2.2), with the cross-sectional studies conducted with EFL learners providing a mixed picture with regard to developmental patterns: Lee (2010) did not find any clear trajectories, whereas Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b) found some evidence of development. The following section first explores studies from other contexts before moving to the findings with Norwegian learners.

In one study, Lee (2010) explored Cantonese EFL learners’ comprehension of direct and indirect speech acts in a cross-sectional study with learners aged 7, 9, and 12. The overarching study focused on responses to a multiple-choice comprehension exercise. However, 60 learners completed the exercise with a verbal protocol, in which the learners explained their choices during the exercise. This enabled Lee to explore their processing strategies. The study revealed that the majority of the learners attended to the semantics of utterances, e.g. creating a relationship between cause and result.

²⁹ The study by Collins et al. (2014, p. 31) compared learners with a communication impairment and children with “typical language development”. The latter was used as data for comparison in the study by Ben-Shlomo and Sela (2021).

However, to various extents, the learners also attended to sociopragmatic features, such as speakers' intentions and feelings, and the context in which the utterance was made. Furthermore, the learners compared the L1 and L2, and employed their world knowledge to provide their reasonings. Interestingly, there were no clear developmental trajectories in the processing strategies, which Lee (2010, p. 363) assigns to "unknown socio-cultural factors such as school instruction". However, the study revealed that YLLs draw on various frames of reference to make sense of pragmatic phenomena.

In another study, Zhang and Yan (2012) explored the impact of immersion programs on YLLs', aged 6, sociopragmatic competence. The study was based around request and response scenarios and sought to explore the learners' understandings of these. The study included three questions for each request scenario. The first question aimed to explore the learners' comprehension of the speaker's intentions, e.g. "What does Xiaogang expect his peer to do by saying, 'Could you pick up the teddy bear on the floor for me?'" (2012, p. 38). The second question focused on the learners' ability to compare the appropriateness of two requests with the same intentions. Finally, drawing on the comparison in the second question, the learners were asked to explain their reasoning for their choice, i.e. "Why do you think the former (latter) is a better choice for Xiao Gang (Xiao Hong)?" (2012, p. 45). The study revealed that the learners in immersion programs had higher levels of sociopragmatic awareness in English as opposed to the non-immersion group. These findings were significant in relation to requests, but not responses. The authors ascribe the findings to L1 transfer, that is that the norms in the two languages are similar in responses as opposed to requests. Consequently, the significant difference in relation to requests, the authors argue, was a result of the communicative approach in immersion programs, in which the learners used the language in a variety of authentic contexts. It is important to note, however, that this study was tightly controlled, i.e. focusing on "distinguishing the polite request forms from the impolite ones" (Zhang & Yan, 2012, p. 42), with the learners providing explanations for their choices. While the data presented through statistics revealed that a larger number of learners in the immersion program provided appropriate explanations for their choices, there is little detail about the content of the reflections themselves. Thus, it is not possible to deduce how the learners provided their reasonings or the frames of reference they invoked to provide these. Rather, the study reveals that the learners in the immersion program, as opposed to those in the non-immersion program, employed a wider range of aspects, i.e. intentions, appropriateness, and reasoning, to make sense of requests.

In a third study outside of Norway, Ishihara (2013)³⁰ focused on three YLLs, aged 9, in an instructional study (see also Section 2.3.2). The study revealed that the learners spontaneously identified non-verbal cues, such as the lowering of a hat, and made judgements about the situational formality using a formality judgement scale. Furthermore, comments such as “[i]s it rude language” (Ishihara, 2013, p. 142) show that the learners resorted to valency to question the appropriateness of utterances. The learners’ L1 was also used, for instance to translate English requests, and to scaffold understandings about the interplay between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics.

In the Norwegian context, one project has investigated EFL learners in 3rd, 5th, and 7th grade, aged roughly 9, 11, and 13 respectively (Savić, 2021; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b). This project aimed to explore learners’ (n= 79) metapragmatic awareness related to EFL requests through verbalised learner reflections. Studies from this project have revealed that the learners drew on various frames of reference, co-constructed ideas, and drew on pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features to provide their understandings of requests and pragmatic behaviours.

In Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b), the learners provided reasonings for their appraisals of requests as appropriate or inappropriate. In this study, conventionally indirect requests were appraised more positively than direct requests and hints, especially by younger learners. Indeed, when asked how those requests appraised less positively could be improved, a common tendency was to change the requests into conventionally indirect requests or adding the marker ‘please’, which was also often highlighted as a reason for positive evaluations. Overall, the study revealed that the learners drew on a range of pragmalinguistic features, such as word choice and using supportive moves, and sociopragmatic considerations, such as interlocutor age and familiarity, or their interplay. An interesting finding from this study was that although learners in all grades produced hints, e.g. “I like the little kite” (3rd grade), they displayed uncertainties when appraising such requests. This was reflected in both the appraisals and their reasonings in the subsequent discussions, which Savić and Myrset argue could be an indication of the learners having difficulties determining the communicative intent, with similar findings among learners in L1 contexts (e.g. Bernicot et al., 2007).

Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-a) explored the interpretative frames that the learners drew on, and their evaluative stances, when discussing pragmatic practices. The study revealed a range of interpretative frames that the learners employed to make sense of

³⁰ Ishihara’s study and Ishihara and Chiba’s (2014) were instructional studies. These are thus also presented in Section 2.3.2

pragmatic phenomena. These frames included the perceived feelings of the hearer, stereotypes about L1 and L2 and their speakers, lived experiences, and historical and cultural knowledge. For instance, one group of learners compared and contrasted L1 and L2 politeness, arguing that the English are more polite than Norwegians – a commonly held stereotype. Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-a) argue that the learners' various frames of reference and positive evaluative stances towards the L2 and its speakers highlight a potential for challenging stereotypes and nuancing the view of certain linguistic resources as inherently polite in language teaching, suggesting that the primary level is a useful time to start focusing on teaching pragmatics.

Finally, Savić (2021) investigated the learners' co-construction of metapragmatic understandings, drawing specifically on data generated from the discussions in 3rd and 5th grade. The study revealed that learners used a variety of discursive devices to co-construct metapragmatic understandings. These included expanding on each other's utterances, grounding their positionings through personal and hypothetical stories, invoking perceived thoughts and utterances by other people (i.e. hypothetical quotes), and taking on various perspectives to deduce an argument (i.e. heterogeneous positionings). Savić (2021) argues that the dynamics of collaborative dialogue in the research setting, in which the learners formed 'thinking societies' for the creation of ideas, reveal a potential for using peer discussion for teaching pragmatics, where the teacher has a crucial role for the creation and scaffolding of metapragmatic discussion.

2.3.1.3 A summary of young language learners' metapragmatic awareness

In sum, research has identified some developmental patterns with regard to YLLs' metapragmatic awareness, both in L1 (e.g. Ben-Shlomo & Sela, 2021; Hsieh & Hsu, 2010) and L2 contexts (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b). Furthermore, learners have been found to draw on a range of frames of reference to facilitate the expression of their metapragmatic understandings. These include comparisons between L1 and L2, lived experiences, evaluations (e.g. valency), and world knowledge (e.g. Ishihara, 2013; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b). Furthermore, the studies reveal that the learners attend to both pragmalinguistic features, such as word choice, semantics, and content of utterances (e.g. Buson & Billiez, 2013; Lee, 2010; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), and sociopragmatics, such as perceived feelings of the interlocutor, situation, and familiarity (Lee, 2010; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b).

Research from the Norwegian context reveals a rather complex picture related to YLLs' metapragmatic awareness, which helped inform the present study and the choices related to the instruction. First and foremost, learners aged 9, 11 and 13 were found to

pay attention to both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects when discussing the (in)appropriateness of requests (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b); thus, the instruction in the present study aimed to focus attention on both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimension. Furthermore, in relation to making sense of pragmatic phenomena, the learners use various frames of reference, such as lived experience, hypothetical stories, cultural and historical knowledge, and stereotypes (Savić, 2021; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a). As a result, the instruction aimed to probe reflections in which the learners could employ their previous experiences and knowledge as a scaffold. Finally, learners actively co-construct metapragmatic understandings through collaborative dialogue (Savić, 2021), which was incorporated in the instruction through pair, group and whole-class activities and discussions, scaffolded in various ways. Thus, the resources YLLs bring to the learning situation were utilised in the current study as a springboard for teaching L2 pragmatics and fostering agency, which is considered of vital importance within sociocultural theory (SCT). Furthermore the way in which learners co-construct metapragmatic understandings in groups suggests that collaborative dialogue and instruction informed by SCT (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, 1978) may be appropriate for teaching pragmatics with YLLs. Consequently, an SCT-informed approach to instruction was selected for the present study, which in addition to broadening the learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire, aimed to develop their metapragmatic awareness through reflections.

2.3.2 Pragmatics instruction with young learners

When it comes to pragmatics instruction with young learners (aged 5-13), there is still a limited pool of research. For instance, recent meta-analyses (Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Taguchi, 2015) have found that explicit instruction is more favourable, but this claim is largely based on findings from studies with (young) adults (e.g. Alcón Soler, 2005; Halenko & Jones, 2011). The following review departed from the findings in Plonsky and Zhuang's (2019, p. 291) meta-analysis, which provided a rigorous and exhaustive literature search, comprising "four library-housed databases (ERIC, LLBA, PsycINFO, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses) and two non-library databases (Google and Google Scholar)". In these databases, Plonsky and Zhuang used various string searches to explore both broad terms, such as 'pragmalinguistics' and 'teaching', and narrow terms, such as 'request' and 'refusal'. In addition, they used ancestry searches through investigating references from previous reviews, and forward searches, through exploring articles that had cited "seminal review papers and existing meta-analyses on pragmatics instruction" (2019, p. 291). Importantly, in open science attempts to ensure transparency, the authors provided the references retrieved and the coding schemes

available for download³¹. Consequently, this provided a rigorous point of departure for reviewing relevant literature for the current doctoral research project. Following this review, the author conducted searches to further explore relevant literature published after 2016, the year Plonsky and Zhuang's review was conducted. This process employed string searches combining Boolean operators, e.g. "AND" or "OR", truncation, e.g. "learner*", and categories of search terms. The overarching categories of the search terms were: 1) young language learners, 2) pragmatics instruction, and 3) target language (English). Combined, these categories generated the following search:

- 1) child* OR "young learner*" OR "young language learner*" AND
- 2) "pragmatic* instruction" OR (pragmalinguistic* AND instruction) OR (sociopragmatic* AND instruction) AND
- 3) English OR ESL OR EFL OR EAL OR "English as a second language" OR "English as a foreign language" OR "English as an additional language"

Whereas the search confirmed that instructional pragmatic studies focusing on young learners are extremely sparse, some studies investigating the teachability of pragmatics with these age groups have been identified, thus providing insights into both the approaches and targets of instruction (see Table 2.3 for an overview). These studies are discussed in this section³².

³¹ Available at <https://www.iris-database.org/> (Accessed, 19.04.2021)

³² Whilst the current study focused on requests, due to the paucity of research with young learners, studies focusing on other pragmatic targets are included. Furthermore, some studies focused on groups of participants where only some were within the age group defined herein as young language learners. These have also been included. The review is limited to those that focused on L2 English as target. Consequently, studies such as Lyster (1994), which explored French, have been excluded.

Table 2.3: Pragmatics instruction studies with young language learners

Author	Context	Target	Participants	Instruction	Methods
Alemi and Haeri (2020)	Iran, EFL	Requests, Thanking	N= 38 3-6 years	Short Dialogic (constructivism)	Pictorial DCT ^a Pre-post
Ishihara (2013)	Japan, EFL	Formality: Requests, greetings	N= 3 (all male), 9 years	Very short Dialogic (SCT)	FJT, DCT, SVDCT ^b
Ishihara and Chiba (2014)	China, Hong Kong, EFL (Japanese learners)	Formality: Requests, greetings	N= 5 7-12 years	Short Dialogic (SCT)	FJT, DCT, SVDCT
Sa'd and Gholami (2017)	Iran, EFL	Refusals	n=24 (all male), 12-18	Half-semester (5 weeks) Explicit	DCT Pre-post
Taguchi and Kim (2016)	South Korea, EFL	Requests	n=74 (all female), 13-14 years	Very short Explicit Collaborative vs individual + control	DCT Think- alouds Pre-post- delayed

^a Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

^b Formality Judgment Task (FJT), Student-generated Visual DCT (SVDCT).

As displayed in Table 2.3, very few studies have investigated the teachability of pragmatics with young learners. The majority of the studies included requests as a pragmatic target, with Sa'd and Gholami (2017) being the only study focusing on a different target (refusals). With regard to the instructional approach, following Bardovi-Harlig (2015), the length of the studies ranged from very short (Ishihara, 2013; Taguchi & Kim, 2016), short (Alemi & Haeri, 2020; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014), to half-semester long (Sa'd & Gholami, 2017). There are variations in materials used in the various studies, and the studies seem to align with two paradigms of pragmatics research

(McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020): interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) (Sa'd & Gholami, 2017; Taguchi & Kim, 2016) of explicit and implicit instruction (in line with Kasper's (2001) definitions), and dialogic approaches rooted in SCT (Ishihara, 2013; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014)³³, in which the learners co-constructed knowledge through dialogue with the teacher as mediator.

All the studies report on the benefits of pragmatics instruction, albeit to a lesser or greater extent. Although the studies focused on different age groups and pragmatic targets for instruction, some trends in the testing approaches can be found within the different studies. All the studies used a written discourse completion task (DCT) as a technique for testing the learners' language production. In addition, most studies employed a form of oral response, through think-alouds (Taguchi & Kim, 2016), and classroom interaction (Ishihara, 2013; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014). Furthermore, a formality judgment task was employed in two studies (Ishihara, 2013; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014).

Although all the studies report on language production through a DCT, they vary considerably in both how the data were analysed and their results. In pre-post designs, Taguchi and Kim (2016) and Sa'd and Gholami (2017) analysed the responses based on the frequencies of use of linguistic resources. However, only Taguchi and Kim (2016) tested the long-term effect of instruction, concluding that the retention was only apparent in some linguistic categories. Their study revealed a short-term effect on head act scores, with both treatment groups (individual and collaborative) outperforming a control group in the post-test. In addition, the frequencies of internal (amplifiers and hedges) and external (grounders and preparators) modifications revealed "a mixed picture" (p. 429). Amplifiers and hedges were used to a limited extent, though still revealing an instructional effect with both treatment groups. However, this effect was not long-lasting and disappeared in the delayed post-test. For external modification, the test revealed a high use of grounders in all groups, suggesting that the learners were

³³ Alemi and Haeri (2020) focus on the learners' ability to produce utterances relevant for a specific situation, e.g. asking to go to the bathroom, and through linking an action with an utterance, e.g. waving for goodbye. The authors attribute their approach to discovery learning and learning through experience. They explored development through Robot-Assisted Language Learning (RALL), in which a humanoid robot served as a teaching assistant with half the group of learners. In the RALL group, the robot engaged in conversations and performed actions together with the teacher, and the learners practised with the robot. The learners in the non-RALL group received the same treatment, without the robot. Both groups were tested with a pictorial DCT, i.e. provided with a pictured and asked to produce the correct speech act. Not being able to produce the correct speech act was viewed as the child having acquired "neither comprehension nor production". The learners in the RALL-group outperformed the learners in the non-RALL group. Considering, the differences in age from the present study, and the way in which the learners were tested, this study will not be presented beyond this.

already familiar with this strategy. Preparators, on the other hand, were used more frequently following the instruction, and were the only modification that showed signs of longer-term retention, with both groups outperforming the control in the delayed post-test. Consequently, the study revealed some positive effects of instruction with no significant differences between individual and collaborative learning in terms of production, but the length of the instruction most likely did not provide "enough time to boost their robust learning" (Taguchi & Kim, 2016, p. 434).

Focusing specifically on SCT-informed pragmatics instruction, Ishihara (2013) and Ishihara and Chiba (2014), whose samples comprised fewer learners, three and five participants respectively (see Table 2.3), report on the learners' production through the DCTs and observations. In these two studies, there seem to be conflicting results. In Ishihara's (2013) study the learners were able to produce pragmatic formulas, although they relied on external scaffolding from the teacher to do so. Ishihara argues that this could indicate that the learners had not yet internalised the formulas, which were thus not readily available in production. In Ishihara and Chiba (2014, p. 97), on the other hand, the oldest learners were able to produce and vary between the pragmatic targets ("Can you pass the X, please?; Could you pass the X, please?; Can I have the X, please?; and May I have the X, please?"). Considering that these studies were similar in the teaching approaches, the reported differences could be related to the learners' age (9 vs 12 years), duration of instruction (120 vs 180 minutes), or individual learner differences³⁴. However, the small samples render it impossible to reach firm conclusions or generalisations.

When it comes to sociopragmatic aspects, Ishihara (2013) and Ishihara and Chiba (2014) used visual aids as support. For instance, to facilitate the learners making evaluations about politeness, the terms 'polite' and 'impolite' were presented on a continuum on which learners could indicate their perceptions through pointing or marking. Thus, this could be interpreted in such a way that the instruction facilitated evaluations through valency (e.g. Kádár & Haugh, 2013; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021). In the study, politeness was linked to the pragmatic target, e.g. "the levels of politeness and formality of the target expressions introduced in the instruction were often closely intertwined" (Ishihara & Chiba, 2014, p. 91). However, in the two studies, less emphasis was placed on theoretical constructs related to politeness, suggesting that the instruction focused on learners relying on lived experiences, i.e. their own perceptions, and (co-)constructing understandings with their peers and the teacher through dialogue. In Ishihara's study, the learners became increasingly attuned to sociopragmatic dimensions, such as making evaluative judgments about

³⁴ Ishihara (2013) argues that the learners' difficulties in producing target formulas could be related to limited exposure to the language.

appropriateness and situational formality, and visual cues. Comments related to the latter appeared both spontaneously and directed by the teacher. Thus, the development occurred through collaboration between the teacher and the learners. Ishihara and Chiba (2014, p. 15) also observed such “interactive and collaborative meaning-making”, in which peers co-constructed their ideas. Furthermore, non-verbal responses through drawings in the SVDCT revealed understandings about sociopragmatic features, such as age, gender, and physical distance. Thus, the two studies revealed both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic development to various extents. Furthermore, these studies seem to align with instruction favouring the development of agency (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming), in which learners developed their own understandings, as opposed to teaching rules of thumb.

As revealed through the review, pragmatics instruction with young learners is an under-explored area of research. Previous research suggests that there is potential for teaching pragmatics with YLLs. However, due to the discrepancies in instructional approaches, pragmatic targets, length, and design, more studies are necessary. Consequently, the field of pragmatics still needs to “determine what type of instruction may be more compatible with how they generally learn and what aspects of pragmatics may be beneficial to teach them” (Ishihara, 2010, p. 946). Studies investigating young learners’ pragmatic development (Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992; Rose, 2000; Savić, 2015; Savić et al., 2021) and the pragmatics-related content in EFL language textbooks (Jakupčević & Portolan Čavar, 2021; Limberg, 2016; Schauer, 2019) give reason to believe that young language learners receive some form of pragmatics input, implicitly or explicitly. At the same time, pragmatic phenomena are still largely overlooked or disregarded in the YLL language classroom (Glaser, 2018). There are thus vast knowledge gaps concerning effective ways of teaching pragmatics, as well as the pragmatic targets that should be taught with these age groups.

2.4 Concluding remarks

This chapter has aimed to conceptualise the theoretical underpinnings of the present research project and demonstrate how they have informed the present study. Requests have been chosen as the pragmatic target due to their early occurrence in language development, their frequency of occurrence in speech, and a range of strategies and pragmalinguistic resources through which they can be realized. They were addressed in the classroom through an SCT-informed concept-based approach, which aimed to foster agency mediated through scientific concepts and the learners’ metapragmatic awareness. Previous research using concept-based approaches was presented through a literature review. This review revealed that whereas such approaches have gained traction in instructional pragmatics, prior research has focused on adult learners, mainly

in university settings. In addition, the majority of these studies have focused on other languages and pragmatic targets than those explored in the present study. Thus, whilst previous studies using concept-based approaches helped inform the instruction in the present project, they did not provide insights in relation to YLLs. Consequently, two more reviews were conducted, both of which confirmed that YLLs remain largely under-explored within pragmatics.

The first review, focusing on YLLs' metapragmatic awareness, aimed to provide insights into the frames of reference and strategies that learners employ when expressing their understandings, and the pragmatic topics that they can discuss. In line with an SCT perspective, this review focused on both L1 and L2 studies, as L1 lived experiences may serve as a scaffold in SCT. This review revealed that learners draw on, for instance, their world knowledge, L1 and L2 differences, and speaker intentions and feelings to make sense of various pragmatic phenomena (e.g. nonliteral forms, speech acts, and formality). Thus, the research suggests a potential for (meta)pragmatic learning through fostering reflection. The second review related to YLLs focused on previous instructional pragmatics research, specifically that focusing on English as a target language. This review revealed a paucity of research, with the majority of studies focusing on requests as a pragmatic target. However, these instructional studies vary considerably in the teaching approaches. The previous research on pragmatics instruction with YLLs reveal that pragmatics is indeed teachable with this group of learners, but questions remain unanswered about the affordances of various approaches. However, two studies informed by SCT reveal a potential for grounding pragmatics instruction in SCT to facilitate pragmatic development. Thus, the successful implementation of dialogic approaches in previous research and the findings on YLLs' metapragmatic awareness suggest that concept-based approaches aiming to foster agency may have a potential with YLLs, which was the focus of the present study.

Against this backdrop, I turn to the present study, which aimed to explore the impact of concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics with YLLs in relation to their pragmalinguistic development, their metapragmatic awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics.

3 Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological approaches, considerations, and choices for data collection, in addition to the detailed description of the instruction carried out in this project. The case study adopted a mixed methods design. Section 3.1. provides an overview of the research design and its coherence. Since the aim of the study was to explore the impact of concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics to young language learners (YLLs) of English, Section 3.2 provides an overview of the instruction the learners received. In the current study, data was collected prior to and following the instruction, and included an adapted video-prompted oral DCT, group interviews, and Readers Theatre. Section 3.3 provides a detailed account of these techniques and the data analyses. Section 3.4 presents the quality assessment of the study, that is, the degree to which it is scientifically sound. Section 3.5 presents topics related to researcher reflexivity. Finally, the ethical considerations related to the study are addressed in Section 3.6.

The current project aimed to investigate the impact of EFL pragmatics instruction in a Norwegian primary school, with learners in 7th grade (aged 12-13). Thus, the methodological considerations in the present study were largely informed by literature on research with children (see for instance Christensen & James, 2017; Eckhoff, 2019; Pinter & Kuchah, 2021), or the ‘New Sociology of Childhood’. This debate about YLLs participation and involvement in research has been heavily influenced by the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), which has led to discussions about participatory research with children (e.g. Shamrova & Cummings, 2017), the varying degrees to which they are included in the research (e.g. Fielding, 2001; Hart, 1992; Lansdown, 2005), and their influence in research (e.g. Kellett, 2010; Lundy, 2007). However, within applied linguistics research, children have traditionally been “objects of research” and Pinter (2019, p. 421) calls for broadening the scope “to include children’s own views, perspectives and experiences”. Consequently, this chapter draws on relevant literature beyond the field of applied linguistics when relevant.

3.1 Overview of research design

The present study aimed to answer the following overarching research question: *How does a concept-based approach to teaching requests impact young language learners’ request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics?* The overarching research question has since been divided into aims and research questions

to explore this question from various perspectives through four articles (see Chapter 4 for summaries).

3.1.1 Case study

Considering that the present study concerns an in-depth exploration of the impact of instruction, the project is in essence a case study. Although there are some ambiguities with regard to the definition of the case study (Nunan, 1992; Simons, 2009; Starman, 2013; Swanborn, 2010; Verschuren, 2003), there seems to be a consensus that it entails the study of “an individual, a family, a program, a nation, or another structure or entity” (Duff, 2020, p. 145). Furthermore, it usually entails investigating a phenomenon over time (Lew et al., 2018). Thus, the case study offers explorations of a phenomenon from various perspectives, and includes generating vivid and detailed insights into the object of research (Lew et al., 2018; Swanborn, 2010). It is perhaps for this reason that case studies are frequently used in education and applied linguistics (Duff, 2020; Lew et al., 2018; Miles, 2015; Starman, 2013; Verschuren, 2003), which strive for in-depth explorations into complex phenomena such as language learning and teaching. However, a challenge with the case study, which is also evident in the various definitions (see Simons, 2009; Verschuren, 2003 for comprehensive presentations of definitions), is the differing views of whether it is a research method or whether it serves as a frame for the design (Miles, 2015; Starman, 2013).

The view of the case study as a method could perhaps help explain the criticism towards its scientific rigour. Due to the in-depth focus on what can be a single participant (Lew et al., 2018), or “the ‘N of 1’ problem” (Stoecker, 1991, p. 91), the case study has been accused “of being at the nonrigorous and nonscientific end of the research spectrum” (Mukhija, 2010, p. 418). However, the criticism is generally grounded in the quantitative paradigm of research, in which scientific rigour is commonly tested against criteria of external/internal validity and reliability (Dörnyei, 2007; Miles, 2015; Mukhija, 2010; Stoecker, 1991; Swanborn, 2010), for instance, the generalisability of the research which “is often categorically dismissed with case study” (Duff, 2020, p. 150). Although some argue for the possibility of generalisations within case study research (see Starman, 2013 for a discussion of various views), generalisations to larger populations may not be the aim of the research. Rather, the aim is to gain in-depth insights into processes occurring within the case. Another concern raised about case studies relates to researcher biases (Mukhija, 2010; Starman, 2013; Stoecker, 1991), that is, the researcher imposing their own views (subjectivity) on the data. This is a particularly relevant critique in “the traditional case study” which is “conducted most

often by a single researcher” (Duff, 2020, p. 145). With this in mind, the common consensus is that case study research requires rigid analyses, heightened self-awareness, and detailed descriptions to maintain objectivity (Simons, 2009; Starman, 2013; Swanborn, 2010). Given the general aim of case study research and the role of the researcher within it, some of the critique about the validity and reliability of case studies may be viewed as somewhat unfounded. Thus, rather than assessing the scientific rigour through a quantitative lens, other forms of quality assessment may be more appropriate. However, the criticism highlights a concern for case studies, and should be taken into account through critically assessing the quality of research (see Section 3.4).

Considering the ambiguities regarding the definition and the purposes of the case study, the present study aligns with Simons (2009, p. 21), who holds that a

[c]ase study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a ‘real life’ context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action.

Within this view, the case study is viewed as a form of inquiry, that is, a “selection of what will be explored” (Starman, 2013, p. 32), rather than being limited to a research method (usually qualitative) (see also Miles, 2015). In the context of the present study, for instance, the researcher aimed to explore the impact of instruction, which forms the case, through prolonged engagement. The case study, thus, provided a framework for investigating the instruction from various perspectives to gain in-depth insights into the learners’ request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics. Furthermore, as several authors posit (Duff, 2020; Simons, 2009; Starman, 2013; Swanborn, 2010), a case study may include the use of a range of methods, such as surveys and interviews. Following this, the fieldwork of the present study lasted for approximately three months, and included various forms of data collection prior to and following the instruction. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of the data collection.

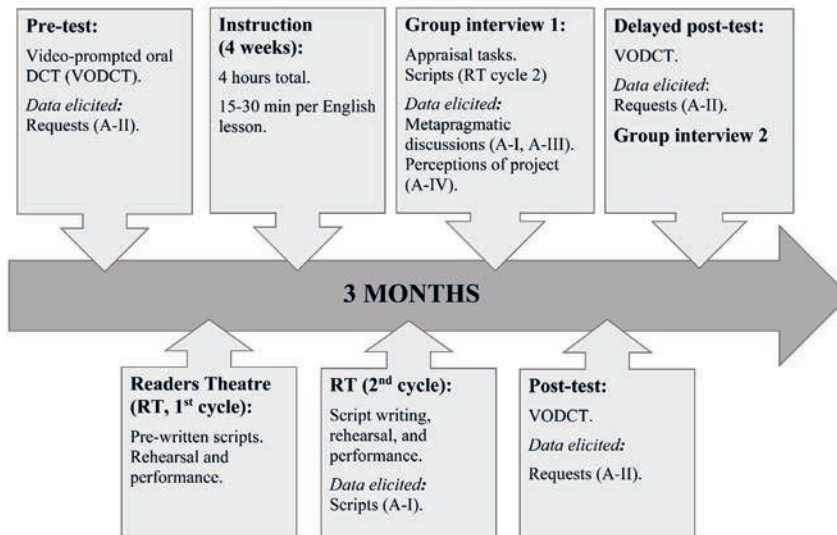


Figure 3.1: Overview of the fieldwork with the techniques used and the data they elicited. The “A” followed by a roman numeral (e.g. A-I) refers to the article in which the data was presented.

As displayed in Figure 3.1, the data was collected at different points of time in relation to the instruction and with the purpose of eliciting different types of data. The data generated was used in the four articles comprising this thesis (Articles I-IV). The video-prompted oral discourse completion task (VODCT, see Section 3.3.1), used in Article II, aimed to elicit requests in a pre-, post-, and delayed post-test. With aims to explore the learners’ metapragmatic awareness, the scripts and requests produced in the second cycle of Readers Theatre (Section 3.3.2) were used as a discussion prompt in the group interview, presented in Article I³⁵. This group interview also employed appraisal tasks which aimed to prompt metapragmatic discussions presented in Article III, and perceptions about the project in Article IV (Section 3.3.3). The approach of eliciting data through various techniques is in line with the case study approach, where researchers use “a combination of data generation processes, such as tests, questionnaires, [and] interviews” (Duff, 2020, p. 147). Thus, the case study lends itself

³⁵ The project as a whole generated a large pool of data. This is a common feature in case studies and qualitative research (e.g. Duff, 2020; Lew et al. 2018). However, considering research quality, it is also important to provide rich descriptions of the data (see also Section 3.4). Thus, researchers should be reflexive about the intersection between data collection and analysis (Tracy, 2010). In the present study, the articles present rich descriptions of the data generated and the analysis. Consequently, the data generated in the second interview was not used in the articles presented in this thesis, but will rather be used for future publications. With this in mind, the second interview will not be elaborated on in this thesis.

to the use of mixed methods (Simons, 2009; Swanborn, 2010), which was also the approach employed in the present study.

3.1.2 *Mixed methods approach*

In the current project, the data was elicited concurrently. The analyses in the project – statistical analyses of requests (Article II) and qualitative analyses of interviews (Articles I, III, and IV) – entailed a mixing of methods with both a qualitative and a quantitative strand. This study is thus positioned on a continuum between the two strands, thus drawing on the strengths and reducing the weaknesses from both strands (Gobo, 2008; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Mixing methods was considered the optimal approach as its interactive nature between methods helps to explain phenomena, which in effect may enhance the integrity and credibility of the findings (Biesta, 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). Opting for mixed methods corresponds well with trends in applied linguistics and educational research, where combining the two strands has become increasingly popular and influential (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Phakiti et al., 2018). The mixing in this project was a concurrent triangulation, or QUAL+quan (Dörnyei, 2007), in which the data was collected at the same time (see Figure 3.1), but with the weighting placed on the qualitative strand (Jones et al., 2006; Mackey & Bryfonski, 2018).

3.1.3 *Project coherence*

Considering the use of mixed methods and the case study framing, the present study is positioned within pragmatism. Case studies are largely driven by research questions and action (Duff, 2020; Starman, 2013), in which researchers find appropriate techniques to answer their research questions (Simons, 2009), evidenced in the range of methods employed (e.g. Lew et al., 2018; Swanborn, 2010). This also aligns with Gobo (2008), who calls for a less categorical distinction between quantitative and qualitative strands by rather foregrounding components such as cognitive modes, response types, and research techniques.

The critical selection of various techniques is also relevant for research with children (e.g. Griffin, 2019; Punch, 2002b). For instance, drawing on Gobo (2008), selecting techniques that engage different response modes, may be of particular value in research with children. This may include taking into account children's cognitive growth (McKay, 2006), through incorporating mixed methods, and enabling different response types, e.g. oral, written, or kinaesthetic, aimed at increasing participation (O'Kane, 2017; Pinter, 2014). Furthermore, combining tasks with interviews may enable children

to feel comfortable in the research setting, ensure multimodal responses, and give learners control over their responses (Punch, 2002b). Such considerations were also incorporated in the present study (see Section 3.3), for instance, combining tasks and interviews and using videos (Yamada-Rice, 2017). At the core of such considerations, however, is the focus of inquiry, namely, the techniques were selected on the basis of what was being explored, that is, techniques driven by the research question. Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the project's coherence.

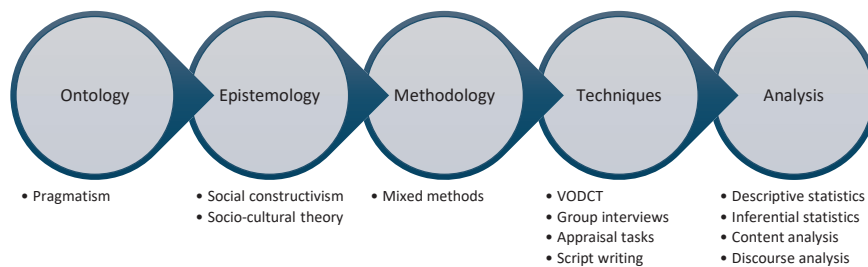


Figure 3.2: Coherence of project

As displayed in Figure 3.2, pragmatism as an ontological foundation was considered a useful positioning as “it offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action [...] and it offers a method for selecting methodological mixes that can help researchers better answer many of their research questions” (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). As such, pragmatism can be seen as a view in which the inquiries and research questions dictate the choices of data elicitation techniques and analysis. The epistemological positioning in this thesis is social constructivism (Hacking, 1999), and views language as constructed by social actors through social interaction, which is reflected both in the socio-cultural approach to the instruction and in the data elicitation techniques relying heavily on interaction and co-construction of meaning among peers. For instance, the current study aimed to explore both the learners’ language production and their reflections, requiring different forms of data elicitation techniques (e.g. language production tasks and interviews) and analyses (statistics and discourse analysis). Consequently, this called for using techniques and analyses belonging to different methodological strands.

3.1.4 *Sample*

Conducting research in educational settings, such as a primary school, can be challenging. Dörnyei (2007, p. 188) points out that teachers can often be very busy, making it difficult to “bring them on board, and it is a real challenge in almost every case to keep up their commitment”. In this study, the teachers would play a significant role in facilitating the project by organising the learners into groups and allowing the researcher to conduct research during regular classes. Thus, the project employed two sampling strategies: convenience sampling and homogenous sampling. In other words, in order to find teachers that would be willing to participate for the duration of the project, the researcher used his network of schools to come into contact with teachers. Once the teachers were recruited, the participants were selected from a specific entity, namely 7th graders, which Dörnyei (2007, p. 127) refers to as homogenous sampling, allowing the researcher to “conduct an in-depth analysis to identify common patterns in a group with similar characteristics”. This sampling strategy resulted in participants from two intact classes (Bardovi–Harlig, 2015) of 51 learners, comprising one class of 25 learners (14 girls and 11 boys) and one of 26 learners (12 girls and 14 boys). Of these, all but one agreed to participate in the study. This learner was involved in the instruction, but did not participate in the data collection. Choosing not to participate did not put the learner at a disadvantage (Mayo, 2021)³⁶. Instead, the researcher made the decision not to audio record the learners during the lessons to ensure that they could all participate equally. All the learners were born in Norway and were, thus, fluent in Norwegian. As regards their English proficiency, the learners’ expected level, according to the CEFR, was in the range of A2-B1 (Hasselgreen, 2005).

For the data collection, the learners were divided into groups of 4-5, so-called ‘friendship groups’ (Pinter, 2014), in attempts to reduce the researcher-child power imbalance (Griffin, 2019; Gu et al., 2005). The criterion for organising them into groups was that the learners should be able to work well together rather than being at similar levels of proficiency. As a result, the groups were mixed ability groups. These groups remained permanent for the duration of the data collection. Organising the learners into groups resulted in a total of 12 groups (6 per class). However, one learner had lived abroad in an English-speaking country, and in order to avoid this learner’s background influencing the data generated, this group was not included in the data analysis. Instead, this learner’s group (four learners) served as a pilot group for the duration of data

³⁶ Indeed, this was explicitly mentioned in the consent form (Appendix 15) and relates to ethical considerations of not doing harm (see also Section 3.6).

collection to ensure that the tasks and questions were appropriate³⁷. As a result of one learner opting out and four learners serving as a pilot group, the data presented in the articles were generated from 11 groups (n= 46 learners).

3.2 Instruction

The instruction introduced requests as a pragmatic target with a focus on promoting agency, that is, making informed choices in language use. The researcher taught the material³⁸. The primary language during the instruction was English, but Norwegian (L1) served as a scaffold for meaning-making, for instance, when prompting learner reflections (e.g. Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018; Zuckerman, 2004). In order to promote agency, the instruction had the following aims: 1) introduce the pragmalinguistic dimension, i.e. head act directness levels, and internal and external modification strategies, through scientific concepts; 2) raise awareness of how the sociopragmatic dimension may influence request choices; 3) raise awareness of individual differences in perceptions of appropriateness. The instruction was distributed over four weeks (four hours in total), and used aims from the national English subject curriculum, *LK06*, as a point of departure. The *LK06* (Udir, 2006a) stated that by the end of 7th grade learners should be able to:

- use expressions of politeness and appropriate expressions for the situation
- express oneself to obtain help in understanding and being understood in different situations
- converse about the way people live and socialise in different cultures in English-speaking countries and in Norway, including the Sami culture

Considering that these aims are very broad, and thus do not reflect a daily focus of language instruction, they were broken down by using aims from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2018), and finally aims for the individual sessions were developed (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). In addition, while the use of the term 'expressions of politeness' in the *LK06* implied that certain language resources are inherently polite, the instruction itself aimed to problematise this view of language. The term 'polite' was therefore used as a starting point for raising the

³⁷ In addition to piloting the data elicitation techniques with this group, all the data elicitation techniques had been used in previous research with learners of similar ages (Myrset, 2014; Myrset & Drew, 2016; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), but had been adapted for the present study.

³⁸ In preliminary meetings, the teachers voiced concerns about teaching the material. Together they decided that the researcher would serve as a teacher. Whilst the initial plan had been for the teacher to teach the material, the change was both an ethical and methodological consideration in attempts to not take more time than necessary from the teachers' schedule (Dörnyei, 2007).

learners' awareness of the contextually situated and sometimes idiosyncratic interpretations of politeness and appropriateness (e.g. Eelen, 2001; Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Watts, 2003).

3.2.1 Pedagogical approach and classroom procedures

Sociocultural theory (SCT) was the pedagogical foundation for instruction. More specifically, a concept-based approach to teaching pragmatics was employed (see Section 2.2). Previous studies employing concept-based approaches (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014) have tended to focus their instruction on sociopragmatic concepts, assuming that the learners were already familiar with the pragmalinguistic resources. The current project focused on YLLs and aligns with previous research employing concept-based approaches in the overarching principles: explicit instruction of scientific concepts, reflection as an important tool for development, metapragmatic awareness as a vital mediating tool for making choices, avoiding the teaching of rules of thumb, and fostering agency. However, considering that a broad pragmalinguistic repertoire is a prerequisite for agency, the project introduced scientific concepts related to pragmalinguistics as the point of departure.

Grounding the instruction in SCT was also considered appropriate as it entails a dialogic approach of collaboration common in Norwegian schools, taking into account the instructional context (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015). Thus, the learners would develop knowledge through meaning-making with peers and the teacher as a mediator (Kozulin, 2018). Furthermore, as learners bring with them understandings from their L1 when learning the L2, the L1 was used as a basis, or scaffolding, when making sense of pragmatic phenomena (McConachy, 2013, 2018). Consequently, the instruction viewed the L1 and lived experiences as resources for meaning-making rather than as obstacles for L2 development (e.g. Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018).

The instruction had two overarching themes: the pragmalinguistic and the sociopragmatic dimension of requesting. However, as Kasper (2001) points out, in pragmatics, language and contexts are interrelated and one cannot be taught without the other. As a consequence, these were addressed simultaneously when necessary. The rationale for dividing the two was that the instruction on pragmalinguistics would provide the learners with a pragmalinguistic repertoire that they could employ and vary when being introduced to sociopragmatic features of communication.

The instruction lasted for four weeks and included three sessions per week – one 30-minute and two 15-minute sessions. The first six sessions focused on the pragmalinguistic dimension, while the last six focused on the sociopragmatic one. The

following sections (3.2.2 and 3.2.3) present each of the two overarching themes in detail.

3.2.2 *The pragmalinguistic dimension*

In order to present and discuss the pragmalinguistics related to requesting, the researcher introduced scientific concepts during the first two weeks of the instruction period. The scientific concepts, e.g. ‘in-between’, were adapted to make them suitable for the target group, which is in line with van Compernelle (2014, p. 45), who argues that concepts need to “be simplified for pedagogical use [...] without compromising [their] coherence and systematicity”. The framework of request strategies developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) was thus chosen as it provides systematicity, but the terms were adapted for the purposes of the instruction. Table 3.1 presents the scientific concepts introduced during the instruction.

Table 3.1: Scientific concepts employed during the instruction (also presented in Article III (Myrset, 2021))

	Terminology	
	Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)	Adapted
Directness levels	Direct Conventionally indirect Non-conventionally indirect/hints	Direct ^a In-between Hint ^a
Internal modification	Alerter Address term Lexical downgraders	Attention getters Address term Polite words ^b
External modification	Grounder Sweetener Promise of reward	Reason Compliment Promise

^a The two terms ‘direct’ and ‘hint’ are very similar to their Norwegian equivalents (*direkte* and *hint*) and were thus employed during the instruction

^b The term ‘polite’ was used for three reasons: 1) Considering the age of the learners the term itself was one that the learners were familiar with and could attach meaning to. 2) It was grounded in the learning aim from the national curriculum. 3) The term functioned as a starting point for raising the learners’ awareness about the contextually situated and sometimes idiosyncratic interpretations of the term (e.g. Watts, 2003).

To foster the internalisation of the scientific concepts (e.g. van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 1934/2012), after being introduced, the concepts were used consistently for the duration of instruction. For instance, in the sessions following the introduction of directness levels, the terminology, i.e. ‘direct’, ‘in-between’, and ‘hint’, would be used

when they were relevant in the subsequent discussions and activities. Each session opened with a short repetition of the concept from the previous session before a new concept was introduced by the researcher, complemented with scaffolded discussions. Following each introduction, the learners were given activities adapted from those used in previous research and pragmatics literature (see Table 3.2) in which they could practise the pragmalinguistic forms. During these activities, which were either written or oral, the learners were reminded of previously introduced concepts. For instance, during the activity focusing on external modification, e.g. 'reason', the learners were asked to choose between being 'direct', 'in-between', or to 'hint' when making a request containing a 'reason'. Each session ended with a short discussion to prompt reflection. Table 3.2. provides an overview of each session (1-6) focusing on the pragmalinguistic dimension.

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Table 3.2: Overview of the sessions in the first two weeks focusing on the pragmatic linguistic dimension.

Session	Concept	Aim	In focus	Activities
1	Directness	Learners will be able to perform and respond to requests.	Directness strategies, i.e. direct, conventionally indirect, and hints. <i>May, could, would</i>	<p>Class discussion: Using video clips from <i>Dumb and Dumberer</i> and <i>The Big Bang Theory</i> in which the characters request. <u>What did they ask for in the clips, and what did they say?</u> ^a The requests from the clips are then presented on a PowerPoint slide, and subsequently placed on a continuum from 'direct' to 'hint'. Following this, more pragmatic linguistic resources are added to the continuum.</p> <p>Activity (adapted from Eslami and McLeod (2010) and Rinnert and Iwai (2010)): Three requests for each directness level are given on a worksheet. In pairs, the learners revise them into a different directness level, e.g. a direct request to a hint. <i>See Appendix 1 for worksheet.</i></p>
2	Downgraders	Learners will be able to utilise downgraders to modify requests.	<i>Please, perhaps, possibly</i>	<p>Class discussion: Can you think of any words we use in Norwegian that make requests sound less 'harsh'? Is there a way to make them 'softer'? What do you think I mean by 'softer'? Provide the learners with examples of words.</p> <p>Activity (adapted from Rinnert and Iwai (2010)): In pairs, the learners make requests and add downgraders.</p>

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3	Alerters	Learners will be able to utilise alerters to get someone's attention when modifying requests.	<p><i>Excuse me, pardon me, sorry</i></p> <p>Class discussion: Using a learner as prop. S/he stands with his/her back towards the class: What can we say to get his/her attention, in Norwegian or English? Show the learners some examples of alerters: Where do you think it makes sense to place these in a request?</p> <p>Activity: Onion circle. The learners stand in two concentric circles facing each other. The learner in the outer circle produces a request with an alerter (and downgrader) to a learner in the inner circle who responds. The learners in the outer circle take a step to the right so that they are facing a new learner, and repeat the process. Switch to inner circle producing request and outer circle responding.</p>
4	Address Terms	Learners will be able to utilise address terms to modify requests.	<p><i>Mr, Mrs, miss, sir, madam.</i></p> <p>Used as contrasting examples: <i>dude, mate, love</i></p> <p>Class discussion: Using two learners as props. They bow, one deeper than the other: What is going on? Why do you think s/he is bowing deeper than him/her? What if I tell you it has to do with something called 'status' and 'respect'? Who do you think is trying to show respect to the other? Can you think of ways we could do this by using language?</p> <p>Activity: The learners are mobile in the classroom. They approach each other, and produce requests with an address term.</p>
H1	Homework week 2	Internal modification strategies.	<p>Worksheet: Two pairs of requests are provided on a worksheet. Learners ask a parent/guardian to choose the request in the pair that they think is "nicer". Afterwards the parent/guardian explains their choice^b. The learners' findings are used as prompts for a class discussion, aiming to explore differences in perceptions. Did the parents/guardians in the class have different preferences? Why do the learners think that is? <i>See Appendix 2 for worksheet.</i></p>

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5	Supportive moves	Learners will be able to utilise supportive moves to modify requests.	Grounders, sweetener, promise of reward	<p>Class discussion: Show three head acts on the board, each with arrows before and after. Sometimes we add something before or after the request itself. Add a grounder, a sweetener and a promise of reward, e.g. "You're such a great driver. Could you give me a lift?" <u>What do these do to the request?</u></p> <p>Pair activity: A worksheet where the learners make requests with a supportive move. <i>See Appendix 3 for worksheet.</i></p> <p>Group activity: As a group (4-5), the learners make a request with an aggravating move (referred to as 'insults' and 'threat'). After deciding on a request, they write it down on a piece of paper and make a tableau (three-dimensional image) where they act as the speaker, hearer(s), and bystanders. Discussion: How did they come up with the request, and their choices when making the tableau.</p> <p>Class discussion: <u>What have we talked about so far? What have we added to the requests?</u></p> <p>Activity: Individual work. Using a computer, the learners write as many request formulations as they can think of, e.g. "Can I have a pencil?", "Can I have a pencil, please?", in 10 minutes. <i>See Appendix 4 for examples of requests produced.</i></p>
6	Summary	Learners will be able to utilise internal and external modification strategies to modify requests.		<p>^a Underlined sentences are questions used to prompt the learners. The questions were asked in English, but often followed up in Norwegian.</p> <p>^b Whereas this activity focused on decontextualised utterances, that is, making a pragmatic choice without considering the sociopragmatic dimension, the activity aimed to focus specifically on the pragmatics of requests to raise awareness of individual differences in perceptions. This was grounded in a previous study (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b) in which the learners often viewed specific words and phrases, e.g. 'please' and 'can I/you', as inherently polite, regardless of the context. This was a view that he wanted the learners to question in the present study. Thus, the activity aimed to raise awareness that such individual preferences can be found even in decontextualised utterances. The activity was then used to stimulate a discussion about contextual situatedness of request appropriateness as well as about variability in individual speaker preferences.</p>

3.2.3 The sociopragmatic dimension

Whereas the first two weeks (pragmalinguistic dimension) were based on introducing a concept accompanied by terminology, the focus on the sociopragmatic dimension (the final two weeks) had a more consciousness-raising nature, in which the conceptual knowledge related to pragmalinguistics could be employed. As a result, this component had a stronger emphasis on prompting verbalised reflections (McConachy, 2013, 2018; van Compernelle, 2014, 2018; Zuckerman, 2004), and encouraged the use of L1 and lived experiences as part of meaning-making (e.g. Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; Eun & Lim, 2009; McConachy, 2013, 2018). The topics in focus for the sociopragmatic dimension were interlocutor characteristics (familiarity and age), place of interaction, and situation. The sessions started by engaging the learners' prior knowledge and lived experiences related to the topic (e.g. What types of roles do you have (sibling, son/daughter, friend, etc.)? Do you use different language depending on who you are talking to?) followed by activities and reflection. The discussions and activities (see Table 3.3) aimed to prompt the learners to consider the context and utilise the pragmalinguistic resources that they had acquired during the first two weeks. Furthermore, the use of scientific concepts related to pragmalinguistic strategies was encouraged to facilitate internalisation and to serve as an orienting basis (Gal'perin, 1992; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 1934/2012).

The contextual features were introduced through the use of images. First, requests were presented without the context, before using different images of situations to show how the requests, and their appropriateness, related to contextual factors. Figure 3.3 provides examples of how the context was introduced to the learners.



Figure 3.3: Slides for introducing the context

Through the first slide in Figure 3.3, the learners were presented with a direct request and told that it was written in capitalised letters to signal that someone was yelling 'Give me a hose!'³⁹. The class was then asked what the statement meant to ensure that

³⁹ The scientific concepts, in this particular case 'direct', were also used in these discussions.

everyone understood its meaning before proceeding. The researcher then showed the request in relation to the picture from the DIY shop and explained to the learners that the customer was yelling this remark to the clerk. The learners were subsequently asked what they thought about the request being performed in the shop in this manner. Finally, the researcher showed the slide from the fire and asked the learners what they thought about the request in this situation.

The aim of the discussion was to make the learners aware of how the context affects interpretation and meaning, i.e. the relationship between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. In addition to the slides presented above, three more requests were used to help draw the learners' attention to the context. This was achieved through visual aids and discussions. By using class discussions, the learners were able to (co-)construct metapragmatic understandings as a group (Swain, 1997). Furthermore, this approach enabled them to use their own experiences as frames of reference and the L1 as a scaffold (e.g. Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; Eun & Lim, 2009). Table 3.3. provides an overview of each session (7-12) focusing on the sociopragmatic dimension.

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Table 3.3: Overview of the sessions in the last two weeks focusing on the sociopragmatic dimension.

Session	Topic	Aim	In focus	Activities
7	Introducing the context	Learners will develop an awareness of how the context can influence the meaning of requests.	Introducing the impact context has on the force of a request and on interpretation.	<p>Group and class discussions: Discussing various requests and deciding in which contexts they would be appropriate. <u>What do you think about using this request in this situation?</u>^a</p> <p>Activity: Request perception journey (adapted from Hancock (1995)): The learners are provided with a worksheet. A pair of requests is shown on the board, and the learners choose the one they prefer by going right or left depending on their choice^b. Three such choices result in reaching one of eight cities. By raise of hand the learners respond to which city they ended up in. The ensuing discussion focused on how they perceived appropriateness and their thoughts about the learners ending up at different 'destinations'. <i>See Appendix 5 for worksheet and request pairs.</i></p>
8	Employing requests with different interlocutors: Familiarity and age	Learners will develop an awareness of how their language may change depending on age and familiarity, and practise using their linguistic resources with this in mind.	<p>Family members: Young, old</p> <p>Friends: Young, old</p> <p>Strangers: Young, old</p>	<p>Group and class discussions: <u>What types of roles do you have (sibling, son/daughter, friend, etc.)? Do you use different language depending on who you are talking to?</u></p> <p>Worksheet in pairs (adapted from Yates (n.d)): The learners are expected to produce request for the same thing in two different situations.</p> <p>Individual worksheet (adapted from Yates and Springall (2010) and using Hill et al. (1986)): Matching request and interlocutor by drawing a line between the two. Each selection task has 6-8 requests and 11 options for interlocutors, of which two are blank and one states that the learner would not use this form of request. <i>See Appendix 6 for worksheets.</i></p>

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9	Employing requests in various places	Learners will develop an awareness that requests are performed in different places, and practise using their linguistic resources with this in mind.	Place Prompts to help the learners: restaurant vs fast food restaurant; at home vs at a friend's house	<p>Class discussion: <u>What types of places can you think of where you would use requests?</u></p> <p>Dice game (adapted from Kontra (n.d.)): In pairs, the learners use a sheet with a list of interlocutors (e.g. sibling or old stranger) and a list of what to request (e.g. water or money), both lists are numbered 1-6. The learners roll a dice twice to select an interlocutor and what to request, and then produce a request. <i>See Appendix 7 for worksheet.</i></p>
H2	Homework week 4		Pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics.	<p>Worksheet: The learners ask their parents/guardians what they think are important considerations when requesting. Of the things they list, the parents/guardians choose the three they think are the most important. The learners then write <i>why</i> they think their parent/guardian chose those three. <i>See Appendix 8 for worksheet.</i></p>
10	Employing requests in various situations	Learners will develop an awareness that requests are performed in different places and situations, and practise using their linguistic resources with this in mind.	Place and situation Prompts to help the learners: restaurant vs fast food; school vs home; wedding vs birthday	<p>Group and class discussions: Follow-up from previous session. <u>Did you vary your requests depending on what and who you were asking when you rolled the dice?</u></p> <p>Dice game 2.0 (adapted from the previous dice game and Kontra (n.d.)): The class is divided into two groups (A and B). Group A is mobile and learners in Group B are seated by their desk. Learner A (L-A) receives a dice and a note with alternatives for what to request, numbered 1-6. Learner B (L-B) receives a post-it note with an assigned role and a sheet to keep tally of the types of request strategies employed. The learner attaches the post-it to their chest. L-A approaches L-B, rolls the dice, reads the assigned role of L-B, and performs the request. L-As and L-Bs switch roles when half the time of the activity has passed. <i>See Appendix 9 for sheet used to count linguistic resources.</i></p>

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11	Employing requests with different interlocutors and in different places	Learners will develop an awareness of the interplay between pragmatics and sociopragmatics, and practise using their linguistic resources with this in mind.	Interlocutor, place, situation. Prompt: remind the learners of the previous topics that were brought up.	<p>Class discussion: <u>What do you think is important to think about when you are making requests? What have we talked about in the past couple of weeks?</u></p> <p>Pair activity: Story completion task (inspired by the DCT (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989)). Learners receive a script where parts of the story are pre-written. The learners fill in the gaps to finish the dialogue and story. Optional: A second page with blanks to continue the story. <i>See Appendix 10 for script.</i></p> <p>Group and class discussions: Discussing the content of the four weeks.</p>
12	Summary	Learners will be able to utilise internal and external modification strategies to requests, and be aware of some contextual considerations when requesting.		<p>^a Underlined sentences are questions used to prompt the learners. The questions were asked in English, but often followed up in Norwegian.</p> <p>^b Whereas this activity deals with decontextualised utterances, the aim of the activity was to raise awareness of individual differences in preferences even when drawing solely on the pragmatics. In a previous study (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), the researcher found that learners often viewed specific words and phrases, e.g. 'please' and 'can I/you', as inherently polite, regardless of the context. This was a view that he wanted the learners to question in the present study. For this reason, the activity first separated the utterances from the context. The learners were thus asked to choose a direction based solely on the utterance. The raising of hands for each destination following the activity then provided a visual representation of these individual preferences, even within a group of peers. Finally, the ensuing discussion aimed to stimulate reflections about why the learners thought their peers had reached a different destination, followed by drawing in the contextual situatedness of request appropriateness as well as about variability in individual speaker preferences.</p>

3.3 Data collection

This section presents the elicitation techniques employed and the data analysis procedure for each dataset in this project. The techniques included a video-prompted oral discourse completion task (VODCT), Readers Theatre (RT), group interviews, and appraisal tasks. All the learner data comprised of verbal responses and were thus audio-recorded. The audio-recordings were later transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The techniques generated data for the four articles presented in this thesis, which contributed to answering the overarching research question, that is, *How does a concept-based approach to teaching requests impact young language learners' request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics?*.

3.3.1 Request production data

3.3.1.1 Elicitation technique: video-based oral discourse completion tasks (VODCT)

In order to explore the impact of instruction on the learners' request production, this study employed a video-prompted oral discourse completion task (VODCT) to elicit requests. The VODCT was conducted in a pre-post-delayed design, that is, two weeks prior to the instruction (pre-test), in the week following the instruction (post-test), and six weeks after the instruction (delayed post-test). This technique was adapted from a study by Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b), focusing on the development of young Norwegian EFL learners' (meta)pragmatic awareness in which the VODCT served as a pre-task to elicit requests⁴⁰. Thus, the previous study served as a pilot. Furthermore, the researcher's prior engagement with the VODCT ensured that he was familiar with its procedures and the data it generated (see also Section 3.4 for quality criteria). The VODCT was conducted in English.

The nature of a discourse completion task (DCT) is that the participants are provided with the social situation leading up to a speech act and asked to state what they would say in the given situation (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013). DCTs have become standard for eliciting data in pragmatics research (Bardovi-Harlig, 2018). For instance, Félix-Brasdefer (2010) found that approximately half of the studies on refusals and rejections conducted in cross-cultural, single-moment, and ILP research, employed written DCTs. Similarly, with regard to requests, the written DCT has been commonly used (e.g. Brubæk, 2012; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Krulatz, 2016; Ogiermann & Bella,

⁴⁰ The VODCT has since been employed in a study by Savić et al. (2021), which aimed to explore the pragmalinguistic development of Cypriot Greek and Norwegian learners of English, aged roughly 9, 11, and 13.

2020; Pinto & Raschio, 2007; Svanes, 1989). A possible reason for this is access to large amounts of data while controlling the social variables within the scenarios (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013). Thus, the written DCT generates comparable data. However, in spite of its advantages, the written DCT has also been subject to criticism, for instance, because it does not reflect the modality it seeks to investigate (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013). In other words, it represents a so-called 'written-for-oral' test (Bardovi-Harlig, 2018), in which the written test aims to explore language that usually occurs in speech. Furthermore, the written DCT provides scenarios with hypothetical interlocutors, resulting in a potential gap between utterances elicited through the test scenarios with those that occur in face-to-face interaction (Woodfield, 2008). This latter point could also be extended to the situations themselves, namely, the DCT may invite the participant to respond to scenarios where both the interlocutor and situations are hypothetical, i.e. the participants may not have had any real-life experience with such situations. With this in mind, whilst the written DCT enables the researcher to elicit large quantities of comparable data, the results do not mirror authentic speech.

Considering that the setting for data collection was an EFL classroom, and that the researcher employed a pre-post-delayed design, a form of DCT was selected to ensure comparability between the tests. However, the researcher aimed to remedy some of the criticism by eliciting the requests verbally, that is by conducting oral-for-oral testing (Bardovi-Harlig, 2018). In addition, employing oral DCTs was considered appropriate, as they can be administered regardless of the participants' proficiency level (Bardovi-Harlig, 2018). Furthermore, since the study focused on YLLs, the test was conducted in friendship groups (Gu et al., 2005; Pinter & Zandian, 2014), which aimed to empower the learners and make them feel comfortable in the research setting. In addition, drawing on literature on research with children (Johnston, 2008; Punch, 2002a; Yamada-Rice, 2017), the test incorporated visual elicitation techniques, that is, language learning videos to prompt request production and the printed pictures of each request situation as an additional stimulus. This approach aimed to engage the learners by mirroring activities with which they were familiar in their everyday lives. In addition, the visuals also aimed to draw attention away from the researcher. These considerations were particularly important for the pre-test, considering that it represented the learners' first experience as participants in the present study.

Given that requesting is contextual in nature (e.g. Kasper, 2001; Spencer-Oatey, 2008), the researcher selected videos that provided a range of situations and interlocutors to investigate whether the learners used different strategies depending on the situation, familiarity, and age of the interlocutor. Furthermore, the videos included situations that the learners were familiar with from their everyday lives, thus aiming to reduce the

hypotheticality of the test (Woodfield, 2008). Thus, the VODCT included eight language learning videos in which child characters produced requests to interlocutors of different familiarity and age, for example a friend (familiar, same age), a sales assistant (unfamiliar adult), and a teacher (familiar adult). The same videos were used in all three tests (pre-post-delayed). Whilst this may be viewed as a potential limitation (see also Section 5.2), intervals of 5-6 weeks between the tests were found to be enough time to avoid retest biases (Brown et al., 2008; Randall et al., 2016). Table 3.4 provides an overview of the videos, which comprised a total of 23 request scenarios. Furthermore, in addition to the videos, the learners were provided with a supplementary printed screenshot of the situation in question to serve as a visual stimulus (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4: A screenshot from one of the videos used in the project as a visual prompt (<https://youtu.be/P5Vi4j1F4sE>).

Table 3.4: Videos used in the VODCT (videos retrieved: 16.08.19).

Video	Test	Situation	Interlocutor	Familiarity	Request
Library https://youtu.be/f14VXienOvs	Pre, Post	Library Library Playground	Friend Friend Friend	Familiar Familiar Familiar	Play outside Play outside in snow Build a snowman
Museum https://youtu.be/IFT4XhfUFkk	Pre, Post	Outside school Street	Friend Stranger	Familiar Unfamiliar	Go to museum Directions
Phone call https://youtu.be/gWOqA3pLjgTk	Pre, Post	On the phone On the phone	Friend's parent Friend	Unfamiliar Familiar	Speak to friend Go outside and play
Fast food https://youtu.be/49QFHWIkv-k	Pre, Post	Counter Counter Counter	Sales assistant Sales assistant Sales assistant	Unfamiliar Unfamiliar Unfamiliar	Burger, fries, coke Two cheeseburgers Two cokes
Shopping https://youtu.be/P5Vt4i1F4sE	Pre, Post, Del	Market Market Store Store	Sales assistant Sales assistant Parent Parent	Unfamiliar Unfamiliar Familiar Familiar	Doll Car Kite Hat
Classroom https://youtu.be/UFy02dqJCUs	Pre, Post, Del	Classroom Classroom Classroom Classroom	Friend Teacher Teacher Friend	Familiar Familiar Familiar Familiar	Crayon Green paper Orange paper Yellow pencil
Dinner https://youtu.be/CtsG2klnuGk	Pre, Post, Del	At the table At the table At the table	Friend's parent Friend's parent Friend's parent	Unfamiliar Unfamiliar Unfamiliar	Fork More soup Ask to come back
Restaurant https://youtu.be/IWMMkp35d6Y	Pre, Post, Del	Restaurant Restaurant	Waiter Parent	Unfamiliar Familiar	Green salad Glass of water

3.3.1.2 Procedures of the VODCT

The VODCT took place in the school. The researcher was provided with a group room opposite the learners' classroom and was allowed to take the groups of learners out of the regular classes. This ensured that the VODCT, which lasted approximately 30 minutes per group, could be conducted within three days. The pre-post-delayed design was conducted with the pre-test two weeks before instruction, the post-test during the week following the instruction, and the delayed post-test approximately six weeks after the instruction was completed (see also Figure 3.1). Furthermore, considering the school context, the researcher attempted to avoid unintended stress for the learners and to create a relaxed atmosphere in which the learners felt comfortable speaking, thus reducing an inherent researcher-child power imbalance (e.g. Griffin, 2019; Gu et al., 2005), by emphasising that there were no incorrect answers (Beauchamp et al., 2019; McKay, 2006; Mukherji & Albon, 2015; Pinter & Zandian, 2014; Punch, 2002b).

Each video was introduced by the researcher (e.g. This video is about a girl and a boy who go to the market to look at a doll and a toy car. Afterwards, a girl goes to the store with her parents. She looks at a kite and a hat.) and played up to the point leading to a request to provide the context. The video was paused before a child character uttered a request. During this pause, the researcher presented the visual stimulus (Figure 3.4) and asked the group to suggest what they thought the child would say in the video, e.g. "The girl really likes the doll. What does she say to the sales assistant?" (see Appendix 13 for the questions for each video).

The first two cycles (pre- and post-test) were organised in the same manner, by playing the eight videos in random order and supplying the visual prompts for each request scenario. However, during the second cycle, the researcher sensed that the learners were growing impatient with the task, most likely due to its repetitive nature and, as a result, decided to change the final cycle of the VODCT. According to Dörnyei (2007), making such a change is quite common in educational research, due to its emergent and fluid nature, and allows the researcher to be flexible. Thus, in the delayed post-test, four of the eight videos were selected for the test. These were selected to include the three main interlocutor characteristics in the videos (see Table 3.4), namely friend (same age), familiar adults (e.g. parents), and unfamiliar adults (e.g. waiter). Furthermore, in addition to only using four of the videos (i.e. Shopping, Classroom, Dinner, Restaurant), rather than playing the videos, the researcher reminded the learners orally about the context, showed them the visual stimuli, and asked what they thought the

children would say⁴¹. The questions prompting the request production were phrased in the same manner in all three tests. Considering the 'oral-for-oral' testing (Bardovi-Harlig, 2018), the response type in the VODCTs was verbal. The groups were audio-recorded during the three tests and their responses were transcribed. The VODCTs in the pre-, post-, and delayed post-test resulted in a total of 2180 requests.

3.3.1.3 Analysis of request production data

The requests produced in the VODCTs were analysed quantitatively. More specifically, each request was analysed and coded into different categories (see Table 3.5) in the statistics software SPSS (IBM, 2019), using a coding manual adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The purpose of this coding was to quantify the learners' language use in the VODCT to "a construct that cannot be directly seen or observed" (Roever & Phakiti, 2018). In other words, the coding provided the researcher with the frequencies of language use, for instance, the number of times the learners used sweeteners (e.g. 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?') in each test and in which scenarios. Drawing on Ellis (1992), the requests labelled 'Requests for information', e.g. 'How much is it?', were omitted prior to the analysis, leaving 2015 (pre: 699, post: 872, delayed: 444) requests for analysis.

Although the requests were elicited in groups, each request was analysed in full, including instances in which the learners within a group produced similar or even identical requests potentially by drawing on their peers (Holzman, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Whilst this may be seen as a limitation, the decision to include all the requests produced was influenced by the instructional approach of the study as well as learning processes occurring in the classroom, in which learners co-construct ideas in collaborative dialogues (Swain, 1997). All the learners in the groups produced requests in all three tests.

⁴¹ In addition, the researcher had planned to have the learners act out some of the situations in the form of a role play. However, this was attempted with the pilot group, but turned out to confuse the learners more than making the test more engaging. Consequently, the role plays were not conducted with the 11 groups generating the data (see also Section 3.4 for quality assessment).

Table 3.5: Coding manual for requests

Variable	Value
Test	1: Pre-test 2: Post-test 3: Delayed post-test
Learner	1-46 (number assigned to each learner) ^a
Group	1-11 (number assigned to each group) ^a
Directness	1: Direct 2: CI (Conventionally indirect) 3: Hint 4: Request for information*
Modals	1: Can 2: May 3: Could 4: Would 5: Other
Attention getter	1: Excuse me 2: Pardon me 3: Sorry 4: Hey 5: Hello 6: Hi 7: Yo
Address term	1: First name 2: Address term (e.g. professional title) 3: Mum/Dad
Downgrader	1: Maybe 2: Perhaps 3: Possibly 4: Please 5: Please+ (Please + additional downgrader)
Supportive move	1: Grounder 2: Sweetener 3: Preparator
Situation	1-23 (number assigned to each situation)

^a Requests for information, e.g. 'How much is it?' were not included in the final analysis

The coding resulted in raw frequencies of instances of language use, or nominal data⁴². It has become increasingly common in applied linguistic research to investigate "rates of occurrence of a particular linguistic feature" (Egbert & LaFlair, 2018, p. 525). Nominal data thus assigns numerical values within a group, e.g. modal verbs, for ease of analysis (Christmann, 2012; Cox, 2017). This was the type of data used to analyse

⁴² This type of data has also been referred to as "[c]ategorical data [...] frequency data, nominal data, or data with nonquantitative outcomes" (Egbert and LaFlair, 2018, p. 525).

the learners' request production and it allowed for an investigation of frequencies of use of specific pragmalinguistic resources. The quantified language use in the learners' requests enabled the researcher to run statistical tests, thus distinguishing the research from "an anecdotal account of events" (Turner, 2014, p. 12). Two tests were conducted in cooperation with a statistician: a chi-square test of independence and a z-test for difference of proportions.

The chi square test is a versatile tool as it only requires frequencies (Roever & Phakiti, 2018), and is common for measuring differences in nominal data (Egbert & LaFlair, 2018). Thus, it was considered appropriate for the current study. In essence, the chi-square test is an inferential statistic test that investigates discrepancies between observed and expected frequencies (Christmann, 2012; Roever & Phakiti, 2018). In this project specifically, the chi-square test measured the significance of the differences in the frequency of use of specific request strategies and pragmalinguistic resources. The z-test, on the other hand, measures the increase or decrease of use (Abbott, 2017; Bruce, 2015). By using the frequencies from the pre-test as baseline, the z-test aimed to highlight the increase or decrease of use of linguistic resources and whether these changes were statistically significant or not. In other words, it enabled the researcher to explore the increase or decrease in frequencies between the tests, namely, from pre- to post-test, from post- to delayed post-test, and from pre- to delayed post-test. The results from the statistical analyses are presented in Article II (Myrset, Pending revisions).

3.3.2 Readers Theatre

As part of the project, two cycles of Readers Theatre (RT), a group reading aloud of a text (Drew, 2018), were conducted. The aim is to read the text aloud to an audience, normally peers in a classroom context. In educational contexts, three types of scripts can be used: pre-written scripts, adapted scripts, or learner-produced scripts. The first cycle⁴³ was conducted in the week before the instruction and employed pre-written scripts produced by the researcher. This cycle aimed to introduce the learners to the topic (requests), RT as an activity, and the researcher. The second cycle was conducted in the week following the instruction, and the learners produced scripts based on a story outline. The aim of the second cycle was to collect scripts, including requests, produced by the learners, which could later be used to prompt metapragmatic discussions (presented in Article I). Both cycles were completed with the learners performing in front of their peers. In a previous study (Myrset, 2014; see also Myrset & Drew, 2016),

⁴³ A cycle refers to a full sequence of RT. For instance, when using pre-written scripts in the present study (Cycle 1), the cycle opened with handing out the scripts. The learners then read through the text as a group and assigned roles. After the learners had been assigned roles they rehearsed the script through repeated reading. Finally, they performed their script in front of their peers (see also Young and Rasinski, 2009, for a detailed plan of a full cycle).

the researcher investigated the cognitive and affective effects of RT among Norwegian learners of English in 6th grade. Myrset (2014) also conducted two cycles of RT: first, by providing the learners with pre-written scripts and second, by learners producing their own Christmas story. The findings from the previous study, with learners of similar characteristics (age and educational context), suggested that RT was indeed a feasible method to include with the learners in the current study⁴⁴.

3.3.2.1 The first RT cycle: purpose and procedures

In the present study, the first cycle, which employed pre-written scripts and was conducted prior to the instruction (see Figure 3.1 for overview), served three purposes: 1) to introduce the researcher to the learners and facilitate rapport-building, 2) to introduce requests as a topic, and 3) to familiarise the learners with RT scripts before they wrote their own scripts in the second cycle (see Section 3.3.2.2). When it comes to introducing the researcher into the teaching context, previous research has found that RT has affective benefits such as increasing learners' confidence and motivation (e.g. Bridges, 2008; Casey, 2006; Drew & Pedersen, 2010, 2012; Young & Rasinski, 2009, 2018). Such benefits were also evident in the researcher's prior study with 6th graders (Myrset, 2014; Myrset & Drew, 2016). In the present study, it was important for the researcher to build rapport with the learners so that they would feel comfortable with him (Kuchah & Milligan, 2021; Kuchah & Pinter, 2012; Punch, 2002b; Urbach & Banerjee, 2019; Zandian, 2021). Thus, RT was considered an engaging activity that could serve as a rapport-building activity to familiarise the learners with the researcher.

Additionally, considering its affective benefits, RT was considered an engaging way to introduce – and potentially spark the learners' curiosity about (Ness, 2019) – requests. Thus, the first cycle aimed to introduce the topic of the project through different request scenarios. As preparation for the first cycle, the researcher produced six scripts (see Appendix 11 for an example). These scripts were based on outlines that the researcher had produced in advance. The six outlines involved different situations in which the main characters made requests, e.g. asking for help, or asking to get something. The main characters were all children, whereas the interlocutors were of different familiarity and age. When preparing the scripts, the criterion was to include a variety of linguistic resources for requesting, namely directness levels, and internal and external modification (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). After the researcher had written the scripts, he sent them to a native speaker of English to ensure their quality.

⁴⁴ It is important to note that data was not collected *during* the cycles. Thus, the learner who had not given consent to take part in the study could participate in the cycles on equal terms with their peers.

The scripts were written as a developed rather than traditional model of RT (Shepard, 2004), with learners reading the roles of either narrators or characters⁴⁵. In other words, the narrators would tell the story and provide the audience with the context (e.g. Arthur has been saving his allowance to buy a PlayStation 4, and there's a sale on the console at the local store. Unfortunately, he is still 30 pounds short, so he decides to ask his dad to lend him some money.), and the characters would provide the dialogues (e.g. Arthur: Dad, they have a sale on PlayStation 4, but I still haven't saved up enough money to buy it. Could I borrow 30 pounds?). The reason for using the developed model was twofold: firstly, in a previous study (Myrset, 2014), the 6th grade learners reported that they could more easily comprehend the performances of a developed as opposed to a traditional model and also opted for a developed model when they produced and performed their scripts in the second RT cycle. Secondly, the narration and dialogues enabled the learners to contextualise the dialogues, and ultimately the requests, within the performances they were watching; namely, narrators provided the background story and context, such as where the characters were or what they did, while the characters performed the dialogues.

During the first RT cycle, each friendship group was handed a script⁴⁶. They were given two English lessons (45min*2) to rehearse. As preparation, the learners read through the script individually or together as a group. Following the first reading of the text, each group assigned the different roles from the scripts. Before rehearsals started, some of the learners chose to highlight the lines that they would be reading. The rehearsals involved very little guidance by the English teacher and the researcher, who spent their time during rehearsals moving between the groups, answering questions about pronunciation of words, or providing tips about how to make the performance more effective. Since the scripts involved more characters than group members, some learners chose to use simple props or costumes in order to shift between scenes or characters. The cycle was completed with the learners performing in front of their peers, where 90 minutes had been allotted to the performances.

3.3.2.2 The second RT cycle: purpose and procedures

As a result of the first cycle, the learners were familiar with the nature of RT and the structure of scripts. This provided a foundation for the second RT cycle, in which the learners produced their own scripts. In this cycle, the learners were provided with outlines based on the scripts from the first RT cycle, which provided the learners with a foundation for the story, as well as including scenarios in which they had to produce

⁴⁵ The traditional model does not divide the reading roles according to whether they involve narration or reading the role of a character, as is the case in the developed model. In the traditional model, the readers usually stand or sit in a row and alternate their reading in a fixed order.

⁴⁶ These procedures were identical for both classes.

requests. The researcher had taken great care when writing the outlines to ensure that they did not influence the requests produced by the learners. The outlines were included in a four-page folder (see Appendix 12 for an example), consisting of writing guidelines, the outline, cartoons of the characters created by a cartoonist, and an example text of a script. The scripts produced by the learners were later used as a discussion prompt in the group interviews. In other words, the researcher would bring the script produced by the group to prompt discussions about the learners' choices, specifically those relating to deciding on request formulations during the writing process (see Article I).

In the second RT cycle, each group in the class was provided with a different outline, which ensured that each group performed a unique story for their peers⁴⁷. As in the researcher's previous study (Myrset, 2014), the learners were provided with more time in this cycle. The production and rehearsals of the script were conducted over a week (approximately 5 hours total). At the school, each learner had access to their personal Chromebook, and the groups were thus able to co-write the script in the same document. During the introduction of the cycle, the English teacher and the researcher instructed the learners on how to structure the writing and urged them to use dialogues as much as possible.

Similar to the first cycle, the learners did most of the work without guidance from the English teacher and the researcher, allowing the latter to move between the groups and answer questions. However, to ensure that the teacher and the researcher did not influence the learners' request production, for questions specifically related to the request situations, the learners were prompted with questions such as "Think about what you have learnt in the past four weeks". This ensured that the learners produced the requests themselves, which was important for the discussions during the interviews. Following the script production, the cycle followed a similar pattern to the first RT cycle: repeated readings of their text (rehearsals), and planning the performance. In the week following the script production and rehearsals, the learners performed for the class.

The script production resulted in 11 scripts, ranging from 308 to 1032 words. The scripts themselves were not analysed for the requests produced, but were used in group interviews as a stimulus to facilitate discussion about the considerations related to formulating the requests the groups had made during the writing process. Illustrative examples of discussions prompted by the script-production are presented in Article I

⁴⁷ The groups were provided with an outline that did not match the script they had been given in the first cycle.

(Myrset & Savić, 2021) in relation to the affordances of RT to elicit metapragmatic data.

3.3.3 Interview data

3.3.3.1 Elicitation techniques: Group interviews

Articles III and IV aimed to investigate the learners' (meta)pragmatic awareness and perceptions about the project. In order to elicit relevant data, the learners were interviewed in groups. The interviews were semi-structured with an unstructured response mode (Cohen et al., 2000). This meant that the questions followed a guide (see Appendix 14 for interview guide), but were raised in a manner that allowed the respondents to answer freely (Rolland et al., 2020). The semi-structured interview is the most commonly used in research (Polkinghorne, 2005), also in educational research, as it provides both objectivity and depth and is particularly suitable for YLLs (Griffin, 2019; Holmes, 2019; Johnston, 2008; Kingdon, 2019). In addition, if necessary, the researcher would prompt, or ask follow-up questions, enabling the learners to extend or elaborate on a topic. These prompts aimed to generate the "richness, depth of response, comprehensiveness, and honesty that are some of the hallmarks of successful interviewing" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 278). Using this approach allowed the researcher to compare the answers provided in the various groups, while making attempts to keep the participants relaxed, thus avoiding a stressful or overwhelming environment (Mukherji & Albon, 2015; Pinter, 2014). Furthermore, to allow the learners to speak freely, and thus provide them with a voice (e.g. James, 2007; Lundy, 2007; McTavish et al., 2012), the learners were invited to use both Norwegian and English (Pinter & Zandian, 2014). Since the topics in the interviews aimed to prompt reflections, and verbalising reflections can be difficult for YLLs (Zuckerman, 2004), the default language was Norwegian to reduce cognitive load (McKay, 2006; Pinter & Zandian, 2014). This resulted in the learners mainly using Norwegian when they explained their choices. However, the learners would resort to English when, for instance, they provided specific examples or used the scientific concepts introduced during the instruction.

In addition, the interviews were task-based, which aimed to facilitate the learners' expression of ideas (e.g. Andrews, 2021; Holmes, 2019; Lyndon, 2019; Mayo, 2021; Punch, 2002a, 2002b). Using tasks in research with children may serve as a resource for the learners to express their understandings through different modalities and make communication easier (O'Kane, 2008). Facilitating communication was particularly important in the present study: the interviews aimed to generate reflections which may be difficult to verbalise (Zuckerman, 2004), thus, in addition to the use of Norwegian, the tasks included as additional response modes (Gobo, 2008), such as non-verbal.

Consequently, the task functioned as a resource facilitating shared understandings between the researcher and the learners (McTavish et al., 2012; Rollins, 2018), and ensured that learners could participate equally regardless of language proficiency (Pinter, 2014). The tasks also gave the learners additional time to think during their responses (Punch, 2002b) and provided a visual stimulus in the discussions (Holmes, 2019; Lyndon, 2019). Finally, task-based interviews were also considered important for building rapport, namely by decreasing the adult-child power imbalance and making the learners comfortable to speak freely (Beauchamp et al., 2019; Griffin, 2019; Gu et al., 2005; Johnston, 2008; Kuchah & Pinter, 2012; McTavish et al., 2012; Mukherji & Albon, 2015; Punch, 2002b). This latter point of enabling learners to speak freely was considered vital in the present study, as it provided the foundation for giving the learners a voice (Lundy, 2007; McTavish et al., 2012; Schiller & Einarsdóttir, 2009).

3.3.3.2 Interview procedures

Similar to the VODCT and the RT cycles, the interviews were conducted in the friendship groups (Kuchah & Pinter, 2021; Pinter & Zandian, 2014) to ensure that the learners felt comfortable in the research setting and alleviate the power imbalance (e.g. Punch, 2002b). In addition, considering that the research was conducted in the school setting, the learners were reminded that there were no correct or incorrect answers (McKay, 2006; Mukherji & Albon, 2015; Pinter & Zandian, 2014). In this way, the researcher aimed to create an environment in which the learners could express themselves freely, negotiate and co-construct meaning. In addition, the task-based component included two appraisal tasks, adapted from a previous study by Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b). The scripts from RT cycle 2 (see Section 3.3.2.2) served as an additional prompt. The group interviews aimed to elicit data on the learner reflections about the writing process, specifically their considerations when producing requests (presented in Article I); metapragmatic understandings (presented in Article III); and their perceptions of the project, e.g. elicitation techniques and instruction (presented in Article IV).

In addition to the questions, two versions of the appraisal task were employed during the first interview. The first variant included the appraisal of two requests from the scripts from the first RT cycle (Figure 3.5). These requests were taken from the same story on which the learners worked in RT cycle 2. Thus, each group within a class appraised a different set of requests, matching the outline they had developed in RT cycle 2. As a result, the learners could appraise, the request itself and give reasons for their appraisals, but also compare the requests with the ones from their own script. Unless asked, the researcher did not inform the learners that he had written the scripts

for the first cycle to avoid influencing the learners' appraisals and to ensure that the learners felt comfortable and could speak freely.

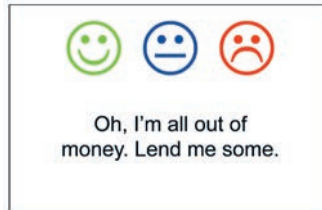


Figure 3.5: A request appraisal sheet (also presented in Article III (Myrset, 2021))

During the request appraisal task, the learners were first asked if they thought that the request was a “nice” (😊), a “so-so” (😐), or a “not so nice” (😞) way to ask (see Appendix 14 for interview guide), and to leave a mark on the emoticon using a marker. Each marker in the group was a different colour, which enabled the learners to see (visual stimulus) where they had left a mark during the discussion. In addition, it enabled the researcher to analyse each individual response. Following the appraisal, the learners were asked to provide their reasoning (e.g. Why do you think it was blue (😐)? What would we have to do to get it up to green (😊)?). This task aimed to prompt metapragmatic discussions, some of which were included in Article III (Myrset, 2021).

The second appraisal task aimed to facilitate the discussion about the learners’ perceptions of the project (Figure 3.6). The appraisal task included four components from the project: Performances (RT cycle 1), Class activities (the instruction), Writing scripts (RT cycle 2), and Videos (VODCT). In addition, the sheet had two empty slots, in which the learners could decide for themselves what they wanted to appraise to provide them with agency in the task (Pinter & Zandian, 2014).

	😊	😐	😞
Performances			
Class activities			
Writing scripts			
Videos			

Figure 3.6: Appraisal sheet for the project components (also presented in Article IV (Myrset, In preparation))

For each component the learners were first asked if they could remember it (e.g. Do you remember the activity when I gave you a script?). Then they were asked to brainstorm aspects of the component that they could remember. Following the reminder and the brainstorming, they were asked to appraise the component. Similar to the request appraisals, the learners used markers to make their appraisals, which served as a visual stimulus during the discussions and enabled subsequent analyses. The questions were structured in a similar way as with the first emoticon task, both for the appraisal (e.g. Do you think it was fun, so-so, or not so fun?) and to prompt discussions (e.g. Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?) (see Appendix 14 for interview guide). In addition, the learners were invited to select topics for appraisals in the two open slots. In these, the learners mainly chose specific activities (e.g. the request perception journey) or approaches during the instruction (e.g. working in groups or the use of PowerPoint slides). These were subsequently discussed using questions similar to those for the pre-decided components.

3.3.3.3 Analysis of interview data

The transcribed interviews were analysed using NVivo 12 (QSR, 2016), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. The analyses for the interview data were conducted through content analysis, "a highly flexible, pragmatic, and systematic method used for investigation of a wide range of topics" (Selvi, 2020, p. 450). This approach to analysis, in which the data can be understood through an inductive (data-driven) or deductive (theory-driven) approach, has become more widely used by researchers in applied linguistics in the last couple of decades (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Selvi, 2020). Whilst the labels 'inductive' and 'deductive' provide insights into how the data was approached, that is, in a data-driven or a theory-driven manner, the present study adopts Selvi's (2020, p. 442) less categorical view between deductive and inductive content analysis, in which there are "possible convergences" between the two. With this in mind, in the present study, the data was approached deductively for Article III and inductively for Article IV.

For both Articles III and IV, the preparation stage involved acquiring an overview of the data, which involved reading the transcripts for content through open coding (Dörnyei, 2007; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Following Saldaña (2016), coding was practised as a cyclical, heuristic process, in which the codes were constantly refined. This process allowed the researcher to arrange the data in a systematic manner in a process where the data was "divided, grouped, reorganized, and linked in order to consolidate meaning and develop explanation" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9). In addition, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher, which is "an important first step in data analysis" (Bailey, 2008, p. 129; Dörnyei, 2007). However, following the first stage of coding, the analyses for Articles III and IV followed different patterns.

Article III aimed to explore the learners’ metapragmatic understandings in the interviews, with a specific focus on their use of scientific concepts. The open coding revealed that the learners collaboratively engaged with each other’s ideas in order to (co-)construct meaning (Swain, 1997). This co-construction occurred over multiple turns, or within “identifiable units of a *collaborative* activity” (Fortune & Thorp, 2001, p. 146). Fortune and Thorp (2001) refer to these units as ‘episodes’ and present four stages of analysis for such episodes. These stages are to 1) identify the episodes, 2) organise the data into categories, 3) organise the data into subcategories, and 4) quantify the data. The present study followed a similar pattern. Firstly, following the open coding, the researcher coded the transcriptions to identify the episodes that occurred within each group, more specifically those in which the learners expressed metapragmatic understandings. Secondly, the episodes were organised into overarching categories. Thirdly, the researcher adapted the framework developed by Fortune and Thorp (2001), which originally aimed to highlight language related episodes (i.e. the learners’ use of metalanguage in relation to grammar) to focus specifically on metapragmatic awareness and scientific concepts. The original codes by Fortune and Thorp (2001, p. 150) were: M (metalanguage alone, e.g. “Shall we put ‘a’ or ‘the’ before ‘zoo’?”), M+G (metalanguage and grammatical terminology, e.g. “‘A zoo’? Or is it the definite article?”), M+R (metalanguage and rule or generalisation, e.g. “We use ‘the’ when something’s been mentioned before.”), and M+T (metalanguage and text knowledge to inform the decision, e.g. “No, ‘the zoo’. We know which zoo. The one the keeper worked in.”). The adapted codes are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Coding framework, adapted from Fortune and Thorp (2001) (adapted from Article III (Myrset, 2021)).

Code	Meaning	Explanation
P	Scientific concepts for pragmatics	Instances in which learners were able to identify linguistic resources by using scientific concepts.
Metapragmatics		
M+R	Metapragmatics and rule	Episodes in which the learners took a firm stance, or resorted to evaluations, such as valency, in order to provide a rule.
M+L	Metapragmatics and pragmalinguistics	Episodes in which the learners reflected on language use.
M+C	Metapragmatics and sociopragmatics	Episodes in which the learners reflected on the context.
M+EX	Metapragmatics and example	Episodes in which the learners used an example of a specific linguistic resource, e.g., excuse me, or provided a request.
M+P	Metapragmatics and scientific concepts for pragmatics	Episodes in which the learners used scientific concepts in their reflections.

Comparing the original and the adapted framework, two codes could be re-employed with minor changes: M+R, in which the learners provided a rule, and M+G, in which the learners used terminology. However, in the present study, the latter code was renamed and used exclusively when the learners used scientific concepts as part of their reflections (M+P). The codes M and M+T could not be transferred to the present study. However, two codes were added to reflect the definition of metapragmatic awareness used in the study as well as the instructional targets, that is, learners' verbalised reflections about language use (M+L) and contextual considerations (M+C). In addition, drawing on previous research (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), as well as the data from the open coding (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Saldaña, 2016), the code M+EX was added, identified when the learners resorted to specific pragmalinguistic resources as examples in their reflections. Finally, an additional code (P) was added to highlight instances where the learners used scientific concepts, that is, to indicate the extent to which they had started to internalise the concepts (e.g. van Compernelle, 2014), but not to express metapragmatic understandings.

The adapted framework provided the researcher with frequencies of occurrences in the various categories, thus representing the final stage of Fortune and Thorp's (2001) analysis – quantification. In addition, the coding helped identify the episodes in which the learners used scientific concepts to scaffold their understandings. Three such episodes were selected for an in-depth analysis. These were episodes where “a) the learners collaboratively engaged in the discussion and b) the scientific concepts served different purposes for the discussion, that is, concluding remarks, a springboard for the discussion, and as prompts introduced by the researcher” (Myrset, 2021, p. 200). Drawing on previous literature (Bloome et al., 2008; Marková et al., 2007), the excerpts were analysed using discourse analysis. The analysis emphasised how the learners “jointly co-construct[ed] messages and meanings, and [how] they change[d] their positions” (Marková et al., 2007, p. 202) and what roles scientific concepts served in facilitating metapragmatic understandings. Furthermore, the discourse analysis was selected as it enabled the researcher to focus on both the content and the discursive practices taking place in the episodes (Bloome et al., 2008; Marková et al., 2007).

The interview data presented in Article IV aimed to explore the learners' perceptions about the project and was analysed inductively. In other words, the analysis was data-driven and focused on the topics emerging in the interviews (Selvi, 2020). Following Elo and Kyngäs (2008), considering the limited previous research on the topic, an inductive approach was deemed more appropriate. Due to the focus of Article IV, the dataset comprised the discussions concerning the appraisal of the project components

(see Figure 3.6). Subsequently, the analysis was conducted in three stages, which aimed to identify 1) the component of discussion, e.g. the instruction; 2) the content discussed for each component, e.g. worksheets; and 3) the learners' evaluative positionings, through lexical items or comments. Following the coding, the codes were reorganised into categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). For instance, the codes 'dice game', 'cities' (request perception task), and 'onion circle' were all assigned to the overarching category 'Specific activities'. Thus, the analysis provided an overview of 'component – evaluation – category', e.g. *Instruction – Positive – Specific activities*. Figure 3.7 exemplifies the result of the inductive coding for the instruction component (Class activities), also presented in Article IV.

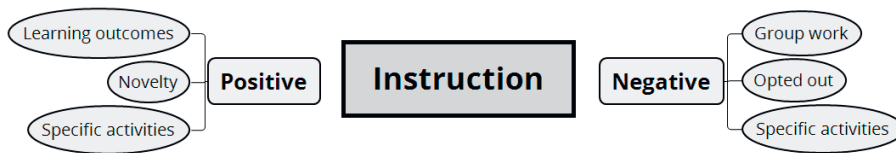


Figure 3.7 Categories occurring in the discussions about the instruction

As displayed in Figure 3.7, the analysis provided the researcher with an overview of the component discussed (i.e. Instruction), the learners' evaluative positioning (i.e. positive-negative), and the topics raised to provide their reasonings (e.g. specific activities). In addition to providing the overview of categories, the learners' appraisals were also analysed and quantified. Thus, the coding followed a similar pattern to the stages presented by Fortune and Thorp (2001): first, the discussions about each component were identified; second, the content and evaluative positionings for each component were organised into codes; third, the codes were reorganised into categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008); fourth, the appraisals of the components were quantified. The percentages of the appraisals, which were presented in the final report, along with the categories identified in the interviews, aimed to ensure a broad description of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Krippendorf, 1989), both during the analysis and in the final report.

The data-driven approach in Article IV aimed to avoid a priori interpretations of the data. However, such approaches to analysis are perhaps particularly prone to researcher biases (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Selvi, 2020). Thus, it is important to assess the quality of the study (see Section 3.4). This is particularly important in research with children, such as the present study, which aims to give children a voice (e.g. Lundy, 2007). As Punch (2002b, p. 326) argues, in research with children there is a "danger of imposing adult views" in the interpretations. Thus, considering the inductive approach taken in Article IV, in addition to providing the categories identified through coding and the frequencies

of the learners' appraisals, the report prioritised incorporating direct quotations from the data.

3.3.4 Overview of the data collection and analysis

In the present study, the overarching RQ was addressed through four articles, each of which draw on different datasets and data analyses. The overarching research question of the study is: *How does a concept-based approach to teaching requests impact young language learners' request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics?* Table 3.7 provides an overview of how the techniques and the analyses presented in this synopsis informed the articles.

Table 3.7: The research questions, data sources and data analysis approaches in the four articles

Article	Instrument	Focus	Data analysis	Software	Approach
I	Aim: 1) <i>To provide an overview of the methods used to elicit metapragmatic data in research with young language learners and 2) to present three data collection techniques designed and used in two research projects conducted by the authors</i>				
	Systematic review RT	Data elicitation techniques	Systematic Review	Excel	
II	RQ: <i>To what extent does concept-based instruction of EFL requests with young learners influence</i>				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the learners' linguistic repertoire of head acts, and internal and external modification strategies?</i> - <i>the learners' linguistic variation depending on familiarity and age of the interlocutor?</i> 				
	VODCT	Request production	Descriptive and inferential statistics	SPSS	QUAN+qual
III	RQ: <i>-Do young language learners employ scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings following a period of concept-based instruction? If so, how?</i>				
	Group interviews Appraisal task	Metapragmatic awareness Scientific concepts	Framework for metapragmatic episodes Quantification Discourse analysis	NVivo	QUAL+quan
IV	RQ: <i>How did young language learners appraise various components in a project related to pragmatics instruction?</i>				
	- <i>What were the learners' explanations behind their appraisals?</i>				
	Group interviews Appraisal task	Perceptions of the project.	Inductive content analysis Quantification	NVivo	QUAL+quan

3.4 Scientific quality: Quality criteria

When it comes to the quality of research, Marsden (2020, p. 16) argues that methodological transparency "runs in tandem with the life cycle of a research project". In other words, ensuring the quality of the research is an ongoing process, from planning the design to presenting the data. These stages are often measured in light of internal and external validity, that is, simply put, the extent to which the outcomes are true (internal validity) and whether the findings are generalisable to larger populations (external validity) (Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Rogers & Révész, 2020). However, this understanding of scientific quality is rooted within the quantitative paradigm (Dörnyei, 2007; Tracy, 2010). Thus, these criteria do not transfer easily to the qualitative strand, which has resulted in proposals of new frameworks for quality criteria for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010), which has different aims (Lew et al., 2018).

A challenge with the present case study is that mixed methods research is positioned between the quantitative and qualitative paradigms. This has resulted in various views about the role of quality frameworks within the mixed methods research paradigm, i.e. whether new frameworks should be developed or be adopted from the quantitative and/or the qualitative strand (Dörnyei, 2007; Fàbregues & Molina-Azorín, 2017). For instance, Fàbregues and Molina-Azorín (2017) conducted a systematic review to investigate the discourses regarding quality assessment in mixed methods research literature. While the study revealed an increase in literature addressing quality within mixed methods research, there was still inconsistent use of terminology and a lack of agreement on core quality criteria in the 64 publications included in the review⁴⁸. Indeed, the review found that a large selection of the studies used terminology from quantitative or qualitative research. Furthermore, Fàbregues and Molina-Azorín (2017, p. 2859) found three positions concerning agreement on quality criteria: 1) agreement results in clarity, 2) agreement is "neither desirable nor feasible, given that quality is heavily context-dependent", and 3) an intermediate position, that is, a minimum agreement on quality is necessary for clarity. Thus, Fàbregues and Molina-Azorín (2017) call for greater consistency in the terminology used, as well as agreement on the core quality criteria.

Considering the current state of quality assessment within mixed methods research, the present study aligns with a view of adopting quality criteria and terminology from the qualitative or quantitative strand. This study is in essence a case study, which included – from a quantitative perspective – a small sample. Furthermore, the data collection techniques and analyses were predominantly qualitative, i.e. with the weighting in most

⁴⁸ In their study, 4028 publications were screened.

of the articles on the qualitative strand (QUAL+quan). The study thereby favours a qualitative view on quality, presented through Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for trustworthiness. These criteria were selected as they “have the advantage of parsimony and they are frequently referred to in the literature” (Bryman et al., 2008, p. 266). Their criteria comprise credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability⁴⁹ (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility refers to the truth value, that is, the trustworthiness of the research. Transferability relates to the extent to which the research is applicable to other contexts. Dependability refers to the stability or consistency of the findings and whether these could be reproduced. Finally, confirmability relates to the findings deriving from the data and whether they could be confirmed by others. Drawing on a number of sources (Dörnyei, 2007; Roy et al., 2019; Tracy, 2010) to supplement Lincoln and Guba (1985), Table 3.8 presents an overview of the quality assessment (criteria and strategies) for the present study, which will be discussed below. However, as displayed in the table, there is a good deal of overlap, with one strategy addressing more than one quality criterion. Consequently, rather than being discussed separately, the criteria and various strategies will be highlighted when relevant.

Table 3.8: Quality criteria for the present study

Criterion	Strategy employed
Credibility	Prolonged engagement, or time in the field Mixed methods (Triangulation) Sample Data collection and piloting Data analysis and peer checking
Transferability	Contextualisation and thick descriptions Sample (intact classes) Elicitation techniques Data analysis Teaching material
Dependability	Audit trail Examining outliers or negative cases
Confirmability	Audit trail Thick descriptions and direct quotations

When it comes to credibility, the present study, firstly, involved prolonged engagement in the research setting. Whereas the time spent is dependent on the research context (Tracy, 2010), the quantity of engagement increases the study’s credibility (Dörnyei, 2007; Roy et al., 2019). The present study involved approximately three months of

⁴⁹ Dörnyei (2007) refers to these as the qualitative counterparts of the quantitative quality criteria: credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

fieldwork and data collection before and after the instruction⁵⁰. This ensured that the researcher had time to gain in-depth insights into the research context. In addition, the prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to build rapport and trust with the teachers and learners (Roy et al., 2019), which is crucial for reducing the power imbalance in research with children (e.g. Kuchah & Pinter, 2012; Pinter, 2014; Punch, 2002b). The emerging rapport was particularly evident in the data presented in Article IV, where the learners gave their honest, sometimes negative, responses about the project (Holmes, 2019). Similarly, Article II reports on a learner who questioned the study design by saying that the test would not necessarily show the full extent of the learning outcomes. The inclusion of such responses in the report can be viewed as an attempt by the researcher to be sincere and honest through transparency about negative cases (Dörnyei, 2007; Duff, 2020; Tracy, 2010), thus addressing dependability. This transparency also relates to Articles II and III. In Article II some requests strategies did not reveal significant changes. However, the researcher decided to include the frequencies and test results as an appendix to provide future researchers with the additional insights. Similarly, in Article III the frequencies of all the metapragmatic episodes were included, thus showing that the use of scientific concepts occurred in a comparatively small number of metapragmatic episodes.

The mixed methods research design of the study also adds to the credibility of the research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). More specifically, the mixing of methods allowed the researcher to explore the impact of instruction from various perspectives (Dörnyei, 2007). It enabled the researcher to explore the instructional impact on the learners' request production (Article II), their use of scientific concepts (Article III), and their engagement with the project (Article, IV). The weighting on the quantitative strand in Article II enabled the researcher to observe changes through descriptive and inferential statistics rather than providing "an anecdotal account of events" (Turner, 2014, p. 12), with the qualitative strand providing additional insights, such as requests produced and learner comments. In Articles III and IV, the weighting on the qualitative strand provided in-depth insights about the discussions that emerged in the interviews, whilst the quantitative strand, in the form of frequencies, helped identify relevant episodes for qualitative analysis and revealed the extent to which such episodes were represented in the data. Thus, the use of both strands strengthened the research. In addition, the use of an interview guide ensured that all the groups were asked the same questions, which provided the researcher with a rich dataset to explore

⁵⁰ Considering the prolonged engagement, it was important to account for participant attrition (Dörnyei, 2007), that is, the lack of physical or attentive presence. For instance, if learners missed parts of the study, this should be accounted for by, for example, excluding them from the analysis. With this in mind, the study included a cut-off for the instruction at 75% attendance (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015), which all the learners exceeded.

the research phenomenon from various perspectives (Dörnyei, 2007; Mackey & Bryfonski, 2018), so that the data "provide[d] for and substantiate[d] meaningful and significant claims" (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). Furthermore, the sampling resulted in two intact classes, with 11 groups (46 learners) generating the data in the VODCT (Article II) and the group interviews (Articles I, III, and IV). Therefore, in addition to using a range of methods, the combination of multiple groups in the sample and data collected at various stages of the fieldwork contributes to the credibility by providing rich data, while the use of intact classes yielded data that may be transferable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tracy, 2010).

Mackey and Gass (2005) argue that reflection about the design of the study is important. This is particularly important in studies with prolonged engagement, in which the researcher reflexively plans a thorough design which is both systematic and flexible at the same time (Watt, 2007)⁵¹. This ensures that the elicitation techniques generate data relevant for what is being investigated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), which is further ensured through piloting the instruments (Dörnyei, 2007). Furthermore, two of the techniques, namely the Emoticon task, which was adapted in the current study, and Readers Theatre (RT), were scrutinised in Article I, both in relation to the data generated and their instrumentation (Punch, 2002b). In terms of the transferability of elicitation techniques, Articles I and IV in particular provide thick descriptions of the techniques and their procedures (Tracy, 2010), allowing for replication or adaptation in future studies and other contexts.

To ensure credibility of the study, the techniques were piloted. For Article I the researchers and a university librarian separately conducted a trial run for the systematic review (Booth et al., 2016). This piloting of the search terms helped refine the string searches that were used in the final search. In addition, this article presents data elicited through RT, which the researcher had used in a previous study with Norwegian EFL learners in 6th grade (Myrset, 2014). He was thus familiar with the structure and the potential challenges for the learners of a similar age when producing and performing

⁵¹ Watt (2007) suggests writing about the design in journal entries in order to reflect on the data collection techniques. Drawing on this, the researcher created mind maps and timelines that aimed to provide visual overviews of the fieldwork, that is, the stages of data collection, the types of data collected, etc. This enabled the researcher to critically reflect on the design and discuss it with peers (peer-checking) by drawing on the mind map. The reflexive engagement with the techniques and the timeline can be traced to methodological decisions in the study, for instance, in the attempts of not imposing the researcher's views: firstly, the open-ended questions aimed to reduce the risk of asking leading questions during the data collection and enabling the learners to speak freely. Secondly, the questions leading up to the requests in the VODCT avoided words that could influence the request production (e.g. 'want'). Finally, the instructions and discussions regarding the appraisal task were based on the emoticons and their colours, to avoid the researcher imposing words or evaluations on the learners.

the texts. For Article II, the researcher employed the VODCT, which also had been used in a previous study (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b) with a similar age group. In the current project, he employed some of the videos from the previous study and structured the questions in the same way. As a result, he was familiar with the instrumentation of the technique and the types of data it would generate. Moreover, his previous experience with the instrument ensured that the tests were conducted in the same way with all the groups. For Articles III and IV the instruments included appraisal tasks, which were adapted from the Emoticon task used in Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b) with 7th-grade Norwegian learners. In addition to the researcher's aforementioned familiarity with the techniques, the group that was not included in the data analysis, due to one learner's experience of living in an English-speaking country, served as a pilot group for the duration of the study. Indeed, their role as a pilot group resulted in a change of the delayed post-test (VODCT). Furthermore, the pilot group ensured that the learners could understand and respond to the open-ended questions in the interviews and that the tasks were engaging.

The employed data-eliciting techniques generated a large pool of data that was subsequently analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, which by itself contributes to the study's credibility (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Dörnyei, 2007). During the analysis the researcher used peer checking at various stages (Dörnyei, 2007). In Article I, in addition to cooperating with a university librarian, the two researchers cooperated in the inclusion/exclusion process. A challenge in this selection process was the inconsistent use of the term 'metapragmatic awareness' (McConachy, 2018; Nikula, 2002), or not using the label at all. With publications where the researchers were uncertain, they would discuss the study in relation to the relevant criteria and agree whether the publication should be included or not. Thus, in addition to the rigid criteria for inclusion, the collaboration between the researchers strengthened the credibility of the final choice of the studies included in the review. This is evident in the final result of the review, which includes articles not using the term 'metapragmatic awareness' but still investigating the phenomena falling within the definition of metapragmatic awareness employed in the systematic review (e.g. Bosco et al., 2006; Lee, 2010). Furthermore, a step-by-step guide of the review process in the final report ensured that the researchers provided an audit trail, which strengthens the dependability and confirmability of the study.

In Article II, two stages of the analysis relate to peer checking. Firstly, during the coding, which followed a coding manual (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), the author would discuss requests in the data with a peer who was familiar with the coding manual and had previously used it in their research to ensure that the request strategies were assigned the appropriate codes. Secondly, following the coding of the data, the

researcher collaborated with a statistician to ensure that the tests were appropriate for the data. This latter point addresses a potential limitation within mixed methods research, namely that researchers are often trained within one paradigm (Mackey & Bryfonski, 2018). Thus, acknowledging this limitation by collaborating with a statistician strengthens the credibility of the analysis. In addition, the provision of the raw frequencies and the use of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) coding manual ensured the dependability and confirmability of the research through an audit trail.

Article III involved multiple rounds of coding (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Saldaña, 2016) before the researcher employed an adapted framework (Fortune & Thorp, 2001). This framework was peer checked to ensure that it was a) appropriate for the material, and b) transparent in the final report. The adaptation of Fortune and Thorp's (2001) framework and the detailed description of the framework can also be viewed as ensuring transferability, namely that the framework may be used in future research and contribute to "methodological craft skills" (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). Furthermore, in this study the transcripts were translated by both the researcher and a professional translator separately (Thompson & Dooley, 2020), which strengthens their credibility and reduces the possibility of misinterpretation of the data. Finally, the excerpts that were analysed in-depth were presented through thick descriptions and direct quotations in the final reports. This strengthens their quality through an honest account of the researcher's interpretations (Tracy, 2010), ensuring the dependability and confirmability of the results by leaving the excerpts as an audit trail.

Finally, Article IV follows a similar pattern to Article III. During the coding stage, the researcher conducted multiple rounds of coding. Following these rounds, the analysis was peer checked to ensure that the researcher did not misinterpret the learners' responses before abstracting the data to overarching categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Furthermore, the transcripts were translated separately by the researcher and a peer to ensure their credibility. Direct quotations from these transcripts were included in the article to ensure confirmability. The frequencies of the learners' appraisals also provide contextualisation of the findings. In addition to the data presented, this article also provided thick descriptions of the techniques and activities that the learners appraised, providing further contextualisation. These thick descriptions may thus also result in transferability of practical use (Tracy, 2010), in which the materials and procedures may be used in the language classroom or in future intervention studies.

3.5 Reflexivity

Given the complex nature of the study and the weighting largely placed on the qualitative strand, it was important for the researcher to consider his own biases, an essential component in educational research (Musgrave, 2019). Reflexivity is the “careful consideration of the phenomenon under study, as well the ways a researcher’s own assumptions and behavior may be impacting the inquiry” (Watt, 2007, p. 82). The view that “the researcher is an instrument” (Lew et al., 2018, p. 83) involves reflecting on one’s own personal background, motivations, and the impact of the research (Musgrave, 2019). In the present study, the researcher’s positioning has been discussed in relation to a number of methodological choices, such as the design and researcher’s positionality (see Section 3.1); the data collection techniques informed by research with children, for instance giving the learners a voice (see Section 3.3); the quality assessment of the techniques and analysis, such as peer checking to ensure that the data was not misinterpreted (see Section 3.4); and the ethical considerations made during the fieldwork (see Section 3.6). Since these issues are highlighted in sections throughout this chapter, the current section will discuss some issues related to reflexivity that are not addressed elsewhere, particularly related to the researcher’s background, motivations, and role.

When it comes to the personal background and motivations, the present study was conducted in a primary school, which was a familiar context for the researcher as a former primary school teacher. In addition to having worked as a primary school teacher, the researcher also had prior experience in tertiary education as a teacher educator and as a co-author of English language textbooks for primary schools in Norway. During this time the researcher was also involved in a cross-sectional study exploring YLLs’ metapragmatic awareness, which included revisiting schools to share the findings with the teachers. These prior experiences resulted in many discussions about English language teaching with a particular focus on pragmatics. The discussions revealed limited (explicit) focus on pragmatics. Whilst these findings were anecdotal at best, this limited focus was also apparent in the research. Thus, instructional pragmatics, with YLLs in particular, provided an interesting topic that was considered useful for both teaching practice and research. This served as the motivation for this study.

The researcher’s former role as a teacher was also an important factor. In case study research and studies with prolonged engagement, the researcher can be viewed as being on a continuum between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. Following Hellawell (2006, pp. 484-485), the insider is someone “who possesses a priori intimate knowledge of the community and its members” and the outsider is someone who “is not a priori familiar with the setting and people s/he is researching“. Considering the researcher’s prior

experience as a teacher, he was an insider to the national teaching context, but an outsider in the local teaching context (school, class). This was advantageous from the perspective of building rapport with the learners and teachers (Hellawell, 2006), whilst at the same time having a personal distance from the participants. The insider-outsider role, however, is not static when conducting research with prolonged engagement. For instance, in the present research, which involved the researcher as a teacher and his conscious attempts of building rapport with the learners to make them comfortable in the data collection setting, there was a gradual shift on the continuum towards becoming an insider within the local context. Thus, the pre-planned data collection techniques and questions, and the peer checking of the analysed material were important to counter researcher biases which may have developed in concert with a movement along the outsider-insider continuum.

The researcher spent almost full days in the school for several weeks. Considering his heavy presence, and the fact that he taught all the sessions for the duration of the instruction, it was important to avoid becoming too involved in the role as educator during the fieldwork, while at the same time attempting to reduce an inherent adult-child power gap (e.g. Griffin, 2019; Gu et al., 2005; Kuchah & Pinter, 2012). Following Kuchah and Pinter (2012, p. 286), rapport-building activities, such as participating in activities during recess or chatting with the participants when opportunities arise⁵² may reduce this power gap, thus "establishing confidence and a favourable interview atmosphere". However, drawing on personal experiences and prior research, the researcher was aware that such settings may also involve conflicts between peers. Thus, as an outsider in the local context (Hellawell, 2006), the researcher decided prior to the fieldwork that he would only be present with another member of staff who could intervene during an incident that required problem-solving. This was both an ethical and methodological consideration emerging from reflexivity prior to data collection: children may be sensitive to criticism, especially from unfamiliar adults, thus school staff would be better equipped to intervene (see, for instance, Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016, for a discussion about not interfering in pedagogical work). In addition, the researcher intervening in peer conflicts could potentially be attached to him, thereby affecting rapport and making the learners less comfortable with him in the data collection setting and thus influencing the data generated. Consequently, during the rapport-building activities outside of the classroom, the researcher ensured that he

⁵² One example of such involvement is that as part of their homework, the learners conducted interviews about requestive behaviours with an adult at home (Appendix 8). James (pseudonym) did not have someone he could interview that day and asked the researcher to be the interviewee during recess, which the researcher agreed to.

was not “directing their [the learners’] activities and intervening in disputes” (Corsaro & Molinary, 2017, p. 16).

3.6 Ethical considerations

Making ethical considerations is "paramount for the continuing success of any research field" (Sterling & De Costa, 2018, p. 163). There is an overarching principle in research of respecting persons, doing no harm, and justice (De Costa et al., 2020). Pimple (2002, p. 192) proposes that “the ethics of any particular research product or project can be divided into three categories: (A) Is it true? (B) Is it fair? (C) Is it wise?”. The first relates to truthfulness in presenting data. The second relates to the relationship between the researcher and others, e.g. fellow researchers, and participants. The last refers to the research agenda and the world, e.g. is it morally acceptable? However, De Costa et al. (2020) point out that the ethical considerations have by and large been focusing on institutional guidelines, e.g. ethical review boards, thus not taking into account the emergent nature of ethics in the research process, so-called ‘situated ethics’ (Ebrahim, 2010). Sterling and De Costa (2018, p. 163) also point out that “research ethics takes on a different role when the data being collected and analyzed comes from human beings”. Consequently, the process of conducting research is often more ‘messy’ than a generic ethical one-size-fits-all. The ethical considerations thus pertain to both institutional guidelines and those within the research context, e.g. research field and place of fieldwork, thereby falling into two categories (Kuchah & Pinter, 2021).

The first category is the legal frameworks and guidelines researchers are required to uphold, i.e. macro-ethics (De Costa et al., 2020), which will be referred to as ‘formal ethics’. The second category is the ethical considerations taken by the researcher, i.e. micro-ethics (De Costa et al., 2020), and will be referred to as ‘informal ethics’. Both formal and informal ethics are equally important in research. However, whereas formal ethics are requirements that every researcher must adhere to, informal ethics will change depending on the focus of the research.

Formal ethics ensure appropriate conduct by all researchers in line with Pimple's (2002) categories, e.g. honest reports of data, co-authorship, and fair treatment of the participants, regardless of the research field. Such requirements can be found locally at the institution, e.g. university guidelines⁵³; nationally, e.g. the Norwegian legal framework *forskningsetikkloven*⁵⁴, the National Committee for Research Ethics in the

⁵³ <https://www.uis.no/nb/forskning/forskningsetikk-ved-uis> (02.09.2021)

⁵⁴ <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2017-04-28-23> (Accessed: 02.09.2021)

Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH)⁵⁵ or the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD)⁵⁶; or globally, e.g. *The Vancouver Recommendations* (ICMJE, 2019) or *The General Data Protection Regulations* (GDPR)⁵⁷. Regarding this project, all relevant considerations were made to ensure that the conduct of formal ethics was followed through an approval of the project design by NSD; equal participation for co-authorship, following *The Vancouver Recommendations*; storage and anonymisation of data in line with the GDPR; and, when reporting on the data, not presenting falsified or tampered data.

This project includes one co-written article (Article I, Myrset & Savić, 2021). The Vancouver Recommendations (ICMJE, n.d.) state that authorship has “important academic, social, and financial implications” and “implies responsibility and accountability for published work”. This is arguably also an ethical consideration relating to Pimple's (2002, p. 192) second category (is it fair?) as it includes “issues such as relationships among researchers (authorship and plagiarism)”. The recommendations state that authorship entails substantial contributions in the design, drafting or revising the work, final approval, and accountability for all aspects of the work. In Myrset and Savić (2021), both authors were involved in all aspects of the project, from design to the final product, thus ensuring that the recommendations were followed.

Following Politou et al. (2018), the relatively new regulations in the GDPR state that participants must have the right to withdraw themselves and be forgotten from the study. This has implications not only for how data should be treated if a participant chooses to revoke their consent, but also for how the consent forms are phrased. To ensure that the consent form followed the new GDPR regulations, it was approved by the NSD (See Appendix 15 for consent form and NSD approval).

The NSD also approved the project with regard to how the data was being stored and anonymised during analysis, and in the report. In this project, the identifiable data, e.g. names of the participants, were kept separate from the other data and each participant was assigned a number during transcription. The raw data material was stored on an encrypted device that required a pin code to access the files. Later, in publications, the participants were given pseudonyms, thus ensuring anonymity (Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016; Pimple, 2002; Truscott et al., 2019).

⁵⁵<https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/guidelines/social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/guidelines-for-research-ethics-in-the-social-sciences-humanities-law-and-theology/> (Accessed: 02.09.2021)

⁵⁶<https://www.nsd.no/> (Accessed: 02.09.2021)

⁵⁷<https://gdpr-info.eu/> (Accessed: 02.09.2021)

Moving to informal ethics, concerning the consent forms, the children participating in the study were underage, and consequently informed parental consent was required and obtained for all the participants. However, it is questionable in such instances whether the children have actually given their consent (Ebrahim, 2010; Truscott et al., 2019). Children's consent can be given both verbally or non-verbally (Ebrahim, 2010; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016). In addition, given that the parental consent form provides information about the nature of the study, the children should also be allowed to make an informed choice about participating (Truscott et al., 2019). In the current project, the researcher started the pre-test by introducing himself and asking the learners whether they knew why he was there. Their explanations would thus ensure that they had understood his role and the nature of the research project. If learners said that they did not know the reasons for his presence, the researcher explained this and answered questions before proceeding with the data collection. This process was revisited throughout the data collection to ensure the continued consent of the learners.

The research setting and the instruction itself also called for ethical considerations. For instance, continuing in the vein of consent, one learner did not consent to participation. Thus, the researcher decided not to audio record during the instruction so that the learner could participate equally with their peers and not experience any negative consequences (Kuchah & Pinter, 2021; Mayo, 2021). Furthermore, considering that the teacher taught English to both the classes included in the study, it was considered unethical to assign one class as a control group, that is, to only give the instruction to one group (Mayo, 2021). Indeed, drawing on Pimple's (2002, p.192) notion of fairness, dividing the learners into control and treatment groups was considered unethical both in relation to the learners and the teacher: for the learners, it would potentially deprive one group of the potential benefits of the instruction, and for the teacher, it would require them to prepare two different sets of lessons for the duration of the fieldwork. In addition to the English teacher, it was considered imperative to involve all the 7th grade teachers to gain their trust and acceptance (Corsaro & Molinary, 2017), and to ensure that they – like the child participants – were treated fairly (Pimple, 2002). Prior to the study, the researcher had preliminary meetings with them where he presented a detailed plan of what the project would entail to ensure that they were aware of the time required before they agreed to participate. Furthermore, during the fieldwork, the researcher held informal meetings where he updated the teachers on the progress of the study. Finally, after the project, the researcher returned to the school and presented the findings to the teachers who had been involved and to the school administration (Shamrova & Cummings, 2017), which also gave the learners a voice through providing an audience and influence (Lundy, 2007). In addition, all the teaching material developed was shared with the English teacher so that they could benefit from the project long-term.

Regardless of the specific research focus, all research methods employed with children need to be designed and implemented in such a way as to ensure that they are adjusted to the cognitive, social and emotional development of young research participants. Consequently, when conducting research with children, generating 'good data' is not the only concern, but also ensuring that the elicitation techniques are “non-invasive, non-confrontational, and participatory [...] diminishing the ethical problems of imbalanced power relationships between researcher and researched at the point of data collection and interpretation” (Morrow & Richards, 1996, p. 100). Truscott et al. (2019, p. 21) argue that although techniques developed for research with children have been “ethically and epistemologically motivated to facilitate children’s participation in research, diffuse inherent power dynamics between children and adults, and assist researchers to ‘tune in’ and ‘listen’ to children’s voices”, this does not ensure that they are ethically fool-proof. In other words, close attention to the development of the techniques employed does not ensure that the research is conducted ethically. Consequently, Ebrahim (2010, p. 290) argues that ethics is contextually situated and requires a “reflexive stance to how ethics is mediated by situational factors”. An example of such situated ethics in this project was the role of the researcher in the school context as a former teacher and as an adult. In the current project the researcher engaged with the learners during recess (Kuchah & Pinter, 2012), while at the same time ensuring that he would not have to direct or intervene (Corsaro & Molinary, 2017).

In sum, ethical considerations are important for any research project (Pimple, 2002; Sterling & De Costa, 2018). In the present study, both formal and informal ethics were followed and revisited on multiple occasions during the various stages. This was considered crucial given the context of the research, that is, prolonged engagement in an educational setting with young learners.

4 Summary of articles

The current doctoral research project comprises four articles. The study aimed to explore the impact of concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics. More specifically, it examined young language learners' request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics. Considering the paucity of research focusing on YLLs in pragmatics and in applied linguistics more generally (Pinter, 2014), the articles (Table 4.1) aimed to contribute to this knowledge gap. This section presents a summary of each article.

Table 4.1: Articles of the doctoral research project

Article	Aim/research question
I	<p><i>Aim:</i></p> <p>1 “[T]o provide an overview of the methods used to elicit metapragmatic data in research with young language learners through a systematic review” [...]</p> <p>2 To provide “a thorough description of three techniques the authors have employed to collect metapragmatic data”</p>
II	<p><i>RQ:</i> To what extent does concept-based instruction of EFL requests with young learners influence</p> <p>1 the learners’ linguistic repertoire of head acts, and internal and external modification strategies?</p> <p>2 the learners’ linguistic variation depending on familiarity and age of the interlocutor?</p>
III	<p><i>RQ:</i> Do young language learners employ scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings following a period of concept-based instruction? If so, how?</p>
IV	<p><i>RQ:</i> How did young language learners appraise various components in a project related to pragmatics instruction?</p> <p>What were the learners’ explanations behind these appraisals?</p>

4.1 Article I – “If an astronaut were on the moon...”: Eliciting metapragmatic data from young L2 learners

This article aimed to explore elicitation techniques employed in previous empirical research on YLLs’ metapragmatic awareness, defined as “the ability to verbalize reflections on linguistic forms, contextual features and/or their interplay” (p. 2). Following the presentation of techniques in prior research, three techniques developed by the authors were scrutinised by discussing their affordances in the light of literature on the considerations specifically related to conducting research with children (e.g. O’Kane, 2008; Punch 2002a, 2002b), and by providing examples of data that the

techniques generated. These techniques were the ‘Emoticon task’, the ‘Ranking circle’, and ‘Readers Theatre’⁵⁸.

In order to explore the prior research, the authors conducted a systematic review aimed to retrieve research conducted with YLLs, defined as those aged 5-13 (Drew & Hasselgreen, 2008), specifically focusing on the elicitation techniques employed in the studies. The systematic review, which included research published between 2000-2019 in journals indexed in Academic Search Premier, ERIC, Scopus, and Web of Science, revealed sparse research with these age groups. Furthermore, the majority of the studies focused on L1 learners (n=12) in various contexts (e.g. French, English, Mandarin Chinese), whilst only 3 studies focused on L2 EFL learners (Japanese, Cantonese, and Mandarin). In addition to the limited number of studies retrieved, the systematic review revealed that the techniques employed in previous studies largely reflected those used with (young) adult learners (Culpeper et al., 2018), e.g. one-on-one interviews with learners, pre-decided topics, and the learners being expected to respond through questions-and-answers or questionnaires.

With this review as a backdrop, the Emoticon task, the Ranking circle, and Readers Theatre were presented, both in relation to the methodological considerations made in the design and implementation of the studies, by drawing on literature on conducting research with children (e.g. Gu et al., 2005; Punch, 2002a, 2002b), and in relation to the data that they generated. As opposed to the majority of the studies retrieved through the systematic review, the three techniques presented were employed in groups (3-5 learners), thus empowering the learners through peer activities (Gu et al., 2015; McKay, 2006).

The Emoticon task was a request appraisal task in which the learners appraised the requests they themselves had produced through a VODCT, followed by a discussion in which they were invited to explain their choices. Three to four requests were selected for appraisals with each group, where learners were asked to place stickers of different colours on an A3 sheet with three emoticons, based on whether they thought the request was ‘nice’ (😊), ‘so-so’ (😐), or ‘not so nice’ (😞). These appraisals enabled individual, non-verbal responses. In addition, the different colours of the stickers ensured that the appraisals could be traced to the individual learner and served as a visual representation and reminder of the choices they had made during the ensuing discussion. The data revealed interesting findings both in relation to the methodology and metapragmatic awareness. Methodologically, the data showed that although the

⁵⁸ The techniques presented were used in two research projects: a cross-sectional study with 9-13-year-olds (see also Savić, Forthcoming; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b), and the current doctoral research project.

requests were produced by the learners themselves in the VODCT, they ascribed the requests to the characters from the videos. Furthermore, the emoticons and their colours (green (😊), blue (😐), and red (😞)) were used as part of the meaning-making process, for instance, by using the colours to make evaluations about requests (e.g. “it [the request] was better than red [😞]”). Thus, the visuals enabled the learners to explain their choices without access to metalanguage. Indeed, both the researcher who facilitated the discussions and the learners used the colours as a point of reference in the discussion. This enabled the researcher to use language relatable to the learners and avoid researcher influence through terms such as im/polite and in/appropriate.

The metapragmatic data generated through the Emoticon task showed its potential for eliciting relevant data on various aspects of requesting. For instance, the exchanges presented revealed how the learners viewed certain features as polite, e.g. asking (‘can’) rather than demanding (‘I will have’), and that the learners attended to the content of supportive moves (compliment), discussing how to reformulate them in an attempt to improve the request.

The Ranking circle was a group discussion and ranking task. The activity aimed to explore the learners’ awareness of linguistic and contextual features related to EFL requests and employed two sub-tasks. First, the learners engaged in a discussion prompted by the question ‘What is important to think about when we ask for something in English?’, thus ensuring that the topics were learner-generated (Pinter & Zandian, 2014). Second, the topics raised within each group were ranked by the learners on a sheet with three concentric circles. Three circles represented the perceived importance of the topics: the inner circle represented the most important issues, whereas the outer circle represented the least important ones. The placement of each topic required the learners to agree on its importance. Thus, the task involved two rounds of discussions, i.e. brainstorming topics and agreeing on their importance, providing additional opportunities for reflection and contribution (Punch, 2002a).

The exchanges presented revealed that the task created opportunities to co-construct metapragmatic understandings, focusing for instance on the interplay between politeness and context. In addition, both the L1 and L2 were used as frames of reference in the discussion. Through the task, the learners were also provided with opportunities to compare Norwegian and English requestive behaviours, e.g. discussing the use of address terms, based on the learners’ perceptions. In the case of address terms, the learners’ perceptions about different L1/L2 uses of address terms were reflected in the

different rankings, with address terms being perceived as very important in English and not important in Norwegian⁵⁹.

The third and final elicitation technique presented in the article is Readers Theatre (RT) (see also Section 3.3.2), which aimed to explore the learners' reasonings about request production during script writing. The data presented was elicited through interviews where the learners were provided with hard copies of the scripts they had produced in the second RT cycle.

The exchanges presented in the article revealed how the learners displayed understandings of request variations depending on the interlocutor, i.e. an interplay between linguistic and contextual features. For instance, familiarity and relationships (friend-friend and parent-child) were highlighted in order to discuss the use of request strategies. Furthermore, the L1 was used as a frame of reference with the learners considering the way in which they interacted with their own parents, both when writing scripts and providing their reasonings for specific request formulations in the interview. Although not all the groups generated elaborate discussion related to the writing process, the examples provided in the article revealed RT's potential for eliciting metapragmatic data.

The three techniques were organised in ways that aimed to enable participation and engagement (Gu et al., 2005; Punch, 2002b). For instance, the learners were organised in groups and were seated in a semi-circle, in which the tasks were in focus. Furthermore, the learners were constantly reminded that the researcher(s) were not looking for a correct answer, but rather that the learners should provide their opinions. The authors argue that such considerations seemed to have created a non-threatening atmosphere. Furthermore, to ensure reliability (Punch 2002b), the learners were asked to comment on how they perceived the tasks themselves, which they seemed largely positive towards.

The article revealed how there is a need within the research field to explore YLLs' metapragmatic awareness. Furthermore, the previous studies focusing on YLLs were largely informed by techniques used with adults, thus not taking into account considerations that may be highly relevant with YLLs. With this in mind, the article contributes to the research field by a) proposing novel, participant-friendly techniques for eliciting metapragmatic data with young L2 learners, and b) bringing the discussion

⁵⁹ Thorough analyses of exchanges prompted by the Ranking circle have been presented in Savić (Forthcoming) and Savić & Myrset (Forthcoming-a).

about considerations relevant for conducting research with children into the limelight of pragmatics research.

4.2 Article II – 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?' Request production and the impact of instruction on young EFL learners.

This article explores the impact of pragmatics instruction, specifically focusing on the pragmlinguistic dimension and whether the instruction had an impact on the learners' request production by broadening their linguistic repertoire. Pragmatics instruction informed by SCT places emphasis on agency (Henery, 2015; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014) i.e. making informed choices in interaction. In this article it is argued that a prerequisite for agentive language use is having a broad pragmlinguistic repertoire. With this in mind, the study employed a VODCT, adapted from Article I (Myrset & Savić, 2021), to prompt request production in a pre-, post-, and delayed post-test in order to explore changes in request production through statistical analyses: first, by investigating the overall changes in the use of head acts and internal and external modification strategies, and subsequently by exploring differences depending on the context (familiarity with and age of the interlocutor). Additionally, some illustrative examples of requests produced and comments by the learners provided further insights in the discussion of the paper. Thus, the article incorporates the mixing of methods, although the weighting is largely placed on the quantitative strand.

The analysis of changes in the use of pragmlinguistic resources paints a mixed picture, with changes in some categories, whilst others remained static. For instance, when it comes to directness, there were significant changes in the use of direct and conventionally indirect requests between the pre- and post-test. However, these changes disappeared in the delayed post-test, suggesting no longer-term retention. Modals, on the other hand, revealed significant longer-term changes, with a decreased use of *can* and an increased use of *may* and *could*, the changes in the latter being the most significant ($p < .001$). Similarly, the use of supportive moves almost doubled from the pre- to delayed post-test, and the increased use of sweeteners longer-term could be observed in the z-test ($Z = -2.59, p = .01$). As for attention getters, address terms, and lexical downgraders, few significant changes were identified, and in the case of lexical downgraders, *please* was the preferred strategy.

In order to explore changes in the use of pragmlinguistic resources depending on familiarity and age of the interlocutor, the request situations in the videos in which the learners produced the requests were divided into three categories of familiarity and

age⁶⁰: unfamiliar adult, familiar adult, and friend. The analysis revealed significant differences in directness, particularly in requests produced to a friend, namely the use of hints increased from the pre- to delayed post-test ($Z = -2.97, p = .003$). With regard to modals, which had shown significant changes overall, the most notable differences were observed with unfamiliar adults. There were no statistically significant changes among lexical downgraders, with *please* being dominant with all interlocutors. However, downgraders were used more often with familiar (26.3%) and unfamiliar adults (28.8%) compared to with friends (9.9%). When it comes to supportive moves, they were used more often with unfamiliar adults, and sweeteners were only employed in situations with these interlocutors. In the case of familiar adults, all but one instance – a preparator – were grounders. Thus, the chi-square test revealed statistical significance with unfamiliar adults ($X^2 = 6.3879, p = .041$) and friends ($X^2 = 8.5849, p = .014$), but not with familiar adults.

Overall, the results reveal that the majority of requests produced were conventionally indirect, which reflects the findings from previous research with young Norwegian EFL learners (Savić, 2015). Furthermore, some learners chose to comment on their use of hints during the VODCT, which suggests that the learners had internalised a conceptual understanding of their communicative function and willingly externalised these during the test. This comprehension of hints is in stark contrast to findings from previous research in which learners produced hints, but had difficulties comprehending them (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b). The increased variation in request strategies following the instruction suggests that the learners had acquired a wider repertoire, which influences their ability for agentive language use. The lack of variation in attention getters and address terms, where learners mainly resorted to strategies with which they were already familiar, could also be an indication of agency. For instance, although the address terms Mr and Mrs, which are near extinct in the Norwegian context (Fretheim, 2005), were introduced, the learners did not seem to employ these, suggesting that these were at odds with their culturally situated preferences. In the case of external modification, the study revealed an overreliance on *please*. At the same time the learners started to use other forms (*perhaps* and *possibly*), which suggests a potential for more focused attention with this strategy. Finally, with supportive moves, the results revealed an increase, both in frequency and in variation. Compared to previous research with learners in this age group, this suggests an expansion of the learners' linguistic repertoire. Furthermore, the ways in which the learners produced requests suggests that they had become familiar with the function of supportive moves, enabling them to vary the content and orientation (object/hearer) of the sweetener.

⁶⁰ Alerters and internal modification strategies were not analysed due to the lack of significant changes in the overall tests.

The article shows how teaching requests through a focus on scientific concepts may have an impact on the learner's linguistic repertoire, thus providing the learners with a foundation for agency. The study adds empirical evidence to the sparse research on pragmatics instruction with YLLs by focusing on Norwegian learners. Furthermore, it shows that explicit instruction also has a potential with 12/13-year-old learners. In the case of concept-based approaches to teaching pragmatics, this study expands the scope of SCT instructional studies, which have so far solely focused on adults (e.g. Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014; van Compernelle et al., 2016; van Compernelle & Henery, 2014), and provides evidence of the potential of focusing on concepts with YLLs.

4.3 Article III – Scientific concepts as meaning-making resources for young EFL learners in the learning of pragmatics

The instruction in this research project focused on introducing scientific concepts relating to requests. Following this vein, Article III investigates the learners' use of scientific concepts to articulate metapragmatic understandings following the instruction. The theoretical framework is thus rooted in SCT (e.g. Vygotsky, 1934/2012), specifically related to pragmatics and concept-based instruction (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014, see also Section 2.2). Furthermore, this article aligns with holistic perspectives of metapragmatic awareness (e.g. McConachy, 2018; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014), which was defined as “being displayed through verbalised reflections about language use, contextual considerations, or their interplay, to varying degrees of sophistication (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Myrset & Savić, Forthcoming)” (Myrset, 2021, p. 192).

The article draws on data generated in group interviews following the instruction. As part of these interviews, the Emoticon task (Article I) was adapted in order to prompt discussions. The analysis entailed a mixed methods approach, resulting in both frequencies of occurrence of metapragmatic episodes and in-depth analyses of some episodes, with weighting on the latter. The raw data was first analysed through a coding framework, adapted from Fortune and Thorp (2001), which aimed to identify metapragmatic episodes, i.e. “identifiable units of collaborative dialogue in which learners display metapragmatic awareness, with or without the researcher as a mediator” (Myrset, 2021, p. 192). This coding provided the frequencies of the various types of discussions that surfaced in the interviews: 1) metapragmatics with a rule, e.g. through the use of valency; 2) metapragmatics grounded in pragmalinguistics; 3) metapragmatics grounded in sociopragmatics; 4) metapragmatics grounded in a

linguistic example, e.g. by providing a request; or 5) metapragmatics grounded in the use of scientific concepts (see Table 2 in the article).

With regard to answering the question of whether the learners used scientific concepts as part of their discussions, the coding revealed that learners did indeed employ scientific concepts related to requests in their discussions. However, episodes in which scientific concepts were used occurred much less frequently ($n=20$) than other categories, e.g. metapragmatics grounded in pragmalinguistics ($n=176$) (see Table 3 in the article for frequencies). Indeed, the episodes containing scientific concepts comprised only 3.5% of the total number of episodes and were the only category that did not appear in all groups. This supports claims by Vygotsky (1934/2012) that the process of internalising concepts is long and complex.

The coding also enabled the researcher to identify the episodes in which the learners used scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understanding. Three such episodes were selected as they presented instances of learners collaboratively engaging in discussions and where the scientific concepts served different purposes for expressing understandings. The episodes were analysed focusing on the content and the discursive practices in the discussions (Bloome et al., 2008; Marková et al., 2007).

The in-depth analysis of the episodes revealed that the collaborative dialogue enabled the learners to co-construct meaning and offer support to each other. Furthermore, a range of topics surfaced in the discussion. The first discussion focused on the choices, i.e. agency, related to requesting, in which the learners incorporated sociopragmatic features by contrasting a friend with a distant interlocutor, and valency was used as an evaluative frame (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Importantly, towards the end of the episode, as a concluding remark, a learner resorted to scientific concepts to ground the discussion and demonstrate an awareness of the interplay between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. More specifically, the concepts were used to highlight agentive language use by emphasising the importance of knowing the difference between levels of directness in order to make informed choices in communication.

In the second episode, the discussion was initiated through the use of a scientific concept to discuss the communicative value of hints. This focus on the communicative value (appropriateness) of hints was a noteworthy finding in the light of previous research by Savić and Myrset (Forthcoming-b) in which the learners produced hints, but seemed insecure when appraising them. In Article III, through a scientific concept and their understanding of hints as requests, the learners could discuss the request in light of evaluative frames, the hearer's perspective, and L1 behaviours.

The third and final episode presented a discussion in which the learners compared request strategies in the L1 and the L2. This discussion developed from an impromptu question by the researcher and showed how the learners had gained deeper insights into their own L1 by using the scientific concepts introduced in L2 instruction to produce request strategies in the L1. Thus, the episode supports claims by Vygotsky (1934/2012, p. 207) that “a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language”, where the L2 instruction facilitated deeper insights into the L1.

What the findings in this article suggest is that a focus on scientific concepts in instruction provides tools for reflection about language use. Furthermore, it provides evidence that explicit instruction may also be beneficial with learners in these age groups. This is particularly important considering the sparse research on YLLs, since claims about the potential for pragmatics instruction have largely been based on findings with adults or on general YLL characteristics (e.g. Ishihara, 2010; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). Thus, the findings suggest that language teachers should aim to develop YLLs’ metapragmatic awareness, and explicit input, in this case through scientific concepts, may enable such a development.

4.4 Article IV – Giving young language learners a voice: learner feedback on pragmatics instruction

The final article of this thesis investigates the learners’ perceptions about the project. Such perceptions about instruction and research projects seem to be largely overlooked among both child and adult participants. However, within the overarching discourse of conducting research with children, providing the participants with a voice in research has been increasingly emphasised, especially following the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Furthermore, children’s right to be heard is stated in the Norwegian core curriculum. Thus, this paper aimed to address this gap by inviting the learners to appraise and comment on various components in the project. The project and the learners’ feedback are presented in this article through Lundy’s (2007) four facets of voice, i.e. Space, Voice, Audience, and Influence. The aim was to provide insights from the learners who participated in the project.

In order to elicit these insights, the researcher used an adapted version of the Emoticon task in Article I (Myrset & Savić, 2021), in which the learners appraised four pre-decided components of the project (Readers Theatre (RT) cycles 1 and 2, the instruction itself, and the VODCT), as well as two aspects/topics of their choice. The topics raised by the learners were, for instance, specific activities, their own RT performances, group work, and the researcher. Thus, the open slots covered a wide range of topics and

increased the learners' participation by giving them agency in choosing the topics they found relevant.

The article draws on data from the group interviews conducted in the week following the second cycle of RT, and presents both descriptive statistics, i.e. percentages of the learner appraisals, as well as recurring categories and quotations from the interviews. Thus, the article incorporates a mixing of methods, with the weighting on the qualitative strand. The interview data was coded inductively to avoid a priori interpretations, and aimed to identify 1) the project component being discussed, e.g. RT cycle 1; 2) the categories occurring in the discussions of each component; and 3) the lexical items signalling the learners' evaluative positionings, i.e. positive or negative stances.

When it comes to the appraisals, the descriptive statistics revealed that the learners were generally positive towards both the instruction and RT. The VODCT, on the other hand, was appraised more negatively. The recurring categories when the learners discussed the VODCT were the monotony of the task and the videos used being childish. It is likely that the monotony of the VODCT was a result of the repetitive nature of the task, with eight videos being played in a consecutive order and paused before each request scenario. Such insights are valuable in the research field as the DCT has been extensively used in the field, but only scrutinized in relation to the authenticity of the data rather than in relation to learner perceptions (e.g. Ishihara & Chiba, 2014; Taguchi & Kim, 2016). Furthermore, the negative appraisals provide credibility to the findings of the study as a whole as they indicate that the learners offered honest accounts of their views. This suggests that the learners were comfortable in the research context and that the researcher had managed to reduce an inherent adult-child power gap (Kuchah & Pinter, 2012; Punch, 2002b).

Moving to the components that were appraised positively, both cycles of RT were appraised positively by the learners. The recurring categories in both cycles were: the autonomy the learners experienced, collaboration with peers, and the novelty of RT. In addition, the atmosphere of RT, which gave the learners confidence to speak aloud in front of their peers, was highlighted. When it comes to autonomy, the learners pointed to the decision-making and use of imagination involved when producing scripts. Furthermore, the learners also highlighted the collaborative aspect, where some learners found working in groups a fruitful enterprise, whilst other groups found it challenging to collaborate. The majority of the learners seemed to be positive towards RT and the topics occurring seemed to largely mirror previous research on the positive effects of RT as a method for developing literacy and oral skills (Drew, 2018). Considering that RT presents a novel approach within pragmatics, it is argued that the findings presented

in the article show potential for further explorations of RT in pragmatics research and teaching.

The instruction was also appraised positively, the common categories for positive appraisals being: learning outcomes, the novelty of the instructional focus, and specific activities. The learners seemed to perceive the instruction as having provided them with more linguistic resources. In addition, the learners highlighted choices related to requesting, indicating that the aim of fostering agency and moving away from teaching rules of thumb (e.g. Liddicoat & McConachy, 2019; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014) had made an impact on their language use. With regard to the novelty of instruction, some groups mentioned movement as a positive aspect. Furthermore, the focus itself (requesting) and the instruction materials were highlighted as novel aspects of the instruction. In addition, the article argues that the researcher teaching the material, instead of the learners' English teacher, may have added to the novelty of the instruction. Indeed, some groups chose to appraise the researcher in the open slots. The open slots also provided the learners with agency in the data collection and many groups seemed to use this opportunity to provide nuances to what they had discussed in the pre-decided components, for instance by appraising specific activities from the instruction.

This article contributes to the field of pragmatics research by emphasising the importance of involving learners in the research process. Through giving learners a voice, this article provides insights into their perceptions about the relevance of requesting as an instructional target, the general teaching approach and specific activities both in terms of perceived learning outcomes and learner engagement. Such insights are crucial for advancing our understandings of how pragmatics can be taught and how it can be researched with these age groups, as well as how it can be made relevant to YLLs' lives.

Summary of articles

5 Discussion and conclusion

This final chapter discusses the results obtained in the four articles included in the doctoral research project. Following the discussion of the results, the limitations of the study are stated, as well as the implications for teaching and researching pragmatics with YLLs. Finally, the study's contribution to the field is discussed before the chapter is concluded.

5.1 Overall findings

The articles included in this doctoral research project aimed to answer the following overarching research question: *How does a concept-based approach to teaching requests impact young language learners' request production and awareness, and their engagement with pragmatics?*

When it comes to the impact of the instruction, the findings in Articles II and III reveal that pragmatics instruction influenced the young learners' appropriation of linguistic resources and scientific concepts related to requesting. From the perspective of agency, this is a valuable insight, namely agency requires a broad pragmatolinguistic repertoire in order to make informed choices and to act on these to create meaning (e.g. Levi & Poehner, 2018; Martin, 2004; Mercer, 2011; van Compernelle, 2014). Furthermore, Article IV revealed that not only did the instruction provide a foundation for agentive language use, but the learners were also aware of their own development and the opportunities their new knowledge offered in communication. Thus, the instruction had provided a foundation from which the learners could produce a variety of request strategies (Article II), engage with scientific concepts in metapragmatic reflection (Article III), and reflect on their own development and engagement in learning (Article IV), thus aligning with Vygotsky's (e.g. 1978, 1934/2012) views on the role of education (formal learning), that is, to scaffold children's development into self-regulated learners (Kozulin, 2018). On this path to becoming self-regulated learners, reflection and metacognition are key dimensions (Kozulin, 2018), and scientific concepts play an integral role in this development as these facilitate abstraction (Fox & Riconscente, 2008; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Thus, the focus on teaching pragmatics through scientific concepts, which has previously been shown to facilitate development with (young) adult learners (e.g. Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; Nicholas, 2015), has also yielded positive results in the present study. The results presented in Articles II, III, and IV thereby show the affordances of this instructional approach for fostering agency even with YLLs.

During the instruction, reflection was viewed as an important tool for developing agency (Kozulin, 2018; McConachy, 2013, 2018; van Compernelle, 2014, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/2012, 1978). Three perspectives in relation to reflections were studied: how the learners used scientific concepts in their reflections (Article III), reflections related to their perceptions about the project (Article IV), and designing data elicitation techniques to prompt reflections (Article I). Following Zuckerman (2004, p. 10), highly developed reflection constitutes three main abilities, namely “(a) to consider the goals, motives, methods, and means of one’s own and other people’s actions and thoughts [...] (b) to take other people’s point of view [...] and (c) to understand oneself; study one’s own strong points and limitations in order to find the ways to excel or to accept one’s shortcomings”. Whereas Zuckerman (2004) argues that these are achieved in adulthood, the emergence of all these abilities was identified in Articles III and IV, namely the learners’ ability to consider the goals and motives of actions and take on the perspective of others (Article III), as well seeing their own language development (Article IV). This provides another indication of the affordances of the instructional approach adopted in the present study: the instructional focus on reflection had made an impact on the learners’ zone of proximal development (Holzman, 2018; Kozulin, 2018; Vygotsky, 1934/2012, 1978; Zuckerman, 2004). In other words, the repeated engagement with the material through reflections with their peers and the researcher, provided support for the learners to reorganise their knowledge (Vygotsky, 1934/2012, 1978).

Continuing in the vein of reflection and agency, the concept-based approach provided learners with knowledge that directly influenced their ability to articulate their understandings about pragmatics phenomena (Article III). The concepts served as an orienting basis when expressing the learners’ understandings in verbalised reflections (e.g. Gal’perin, 1979; Negueruela, 2003; van Compernelle, 2014). Thus, in addition to having access to a range of pragmlinguistic resources (Article II), agency also involves making choices about using these in concert with the sociopragmatic dimension (e.g. Al Jumah, 2021; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014, 2018). Action is the result of pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic choices (van Compernelle, 2014). What Article III revealed is that the learners started externalising conceptual knowledge related to requesting when articulating their understandings about requesting. Their discussions included a focus on both dimensions. An interesting finding from this study is that not only did the concepts enable deeper insights with regard to English requests, but they also provided a framework for the learners to gain insights into their L1 (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). The learners’ emergent use of scientific concepts suggests that the concept-based approach provided the learners with a framework in which they could act and assign meaning rather than resorting to rules of thumb (e.g. Liddicoat & McConachy, 2019; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; van Compernelle, 2014). However, these

concepts were used much less frequently in the metapragmatic reflections than other categories. Thus, it was only a relatively small number of learners who could readily use them in discussions, suggesting that the internalisation of scientific concepts is a process that takes time (Vygotsky, 1934/2012). Considering that the instruction was relatively short (four hours), the findings reveal a potential for teaching pragmatics through concept-based approaches with 12/13-year-old learners. Although internalisation requires time for the learners to readily externalise conceptual knowledge, they already showed vast progress in this respect.

The relationship between scientific concepts and reflection highlights another important dimension, namely learners' metapragmatic awareness (Article III). Pragmatics instruction informed by SCT adopts a holistic perspective on metapragmatic awareness, which is closely linked to fostering agency as opposed to teaching rules of thumb (e.g. McConachy, 2018; Nicholas, 2015; van Compernelle, 2014). The findings from Article III revealed that the learners started externalising the scientific concepts to express their understandings. This can be viewed such that the learners' metapragmatic awareness became more sophisticated (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016), as the scientific concepts enabled abstract thinking and generalisations. Thus, it adds a new dimension to the sparse research identified in Article I: the instruction enabled the learners to frame their understandings through conceptual knowledge. What the findings suggest is that the instruction had started taking the learners on a path towards internalisation, whereby they had gained in-depth knowledge about requesting and could externalise this knowledge as part of their reflections. With this in mind, the instruction provided the learners with a broader pragmalinguistic repertoire that they could choose from (Article II), and the internalised concepts enabled them to reflect about language use on an abstract and generalised plain.

Building on the previous research findings indicating that YLLs draw heavily on their L1 to mediate pragmatic understandings (e.g. Ishihara, 2013; Lee, 2010; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), the use of both the L1 and the L2 was an integral part of the instruction. Whereas the use of the L1 is debated in language teaching (Ellis, 2012), scholars within pragmatics argue that the L1 serves as a scaffold in L2 pragmatics (e.g. Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; Eun & Lim, 2009; McConachy, 2018), which has been confirmed in empirical studies exploring YLLs' metapragmatic awareness (Lee, 2010; Savić, 2021; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a). Similar to previous research, this study has further enforced this view, where learners were invited to use the L1 as part of their reflections, both during the instruction and in the interviews.

Strategic use of the L1 (and lived experiences) may provide an entry point for approaching pragmatics in the YLL classroom, especially given the scarcity of pragmatics-related learning outcomes and materials in beginner-level language teaching, most likely driven by an assumption that YLLs' mastery of the L2 is insufficient and that pragmatics is "simply an area to be fine-tuned once the learners' proficiency has reached an intermediate or advanced level" (Ishihara, 2013, p. 136). It is worth pointing out, however, that the researcher and the participants in this study shared an L1, which made it possible for the researcher to scaffold learning through the L1, as shown in Article III. Thus, the findings about the affordances of mediating L2 development through the L1 are perhaps particularly context dependent. Around the world, learners are becoming increasingly multilingual (Lorenz et al., 2021; Portolés & Martí, 2017), with multilingualism becoming "the norm rather than the exception" (Portolés, 2015, p. 13). Thus, the language classroom is becoming increasingly multilingual as well. This offers a new set of opportunities for building on the multitude of language resources in the classroom and raising awareness of inter- and intra-language variation in pragmatic behaviours, with learners coming to understand pragmatics from diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives (see, for instance, chapters in McConachy & Liddicoat, Forthcoming). At the same time, this requires a different set of teacher competences (Lorenz et al., 2021). The path towards acquiring such competences arguably begins in teacher education (Krulatz & Dahl, 2016; Portolés & Martí, 2017). Whereas the multilingual perspective goes beyond the scope of the present study, the findings indicate that shared languages may be successfully utilised in pragmatics instruction, thus providing insights for future teaching and teacher education. Future research in the Norwegian context could pursue this avenue further, especially since the acknowledgment of multilingualism as a resource is also reflected in the new English subject curriculum in Norway, where learners should be able to "explore and talk about some linguistic similarities between English and other languages that the pupil is familiar with and use this in their language learning" after 7th grade (Udir, 2020b).

Continuing with the curriculum, the present study was grounded in aims from the English subject curriculum, the *LK06* (Udir, 2006a), but is even more relevant in the light of the new *LK20* curriculum (Udir, 2020b)⁶¹. The instructional approach in the current study sheds light on how some learning aims could be further nuanced, i.e. that the learners are indeed capable of more in-depth understandings than viewing certain expressions as inherently polite, and how more complex goals from the core curriculum and interdisciplinary topics can be addressed in concert. On the one hand, the *LK20*

⁶¹ Considering the recent renewal of the national curriculum, which was introduced during the writing of this thesis (August, 2020), the findings of the study will be discussed in relation to the *LK20*.

states that a learner should “express himself or herself in an understandable way with a varied vocabulary and *polite expressions* adapted to the receiver and situation” after 7th grade (Udir, 2020b, the author's highlights), with corresponding competence aims after 2nd and 4th grade. Meanwhile, the central values of the English subject offer a view that “English shall help the pupils to *develop an intercultural understanding of different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns*” (Udir, 2020b, the author's highlights). This is further emphasised in the interdisciplinary topic Democracy and citizenship⁶², which states that English should help “the pupils to *develop their understanding of the fact that the way they view the world is culture dependent*” (Udir, 2020b, the author's highlights). Whereas the subject-specific aims invoking ‘polite expressions’ seem to be rooted in the traditional view of politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1987; Leech, 1983), and teaching rules of thumb, in which specific language forms are viewed as inherently polite and can be mapped to specific contexts, the overarching principles recognise that understandings about language use are culturally dependent. Thus, the latter perspective can be argued to be broadly grounded in discursive views of politeness (e.g. Spencer-Oatey, 2008; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021; Watts, 2003), and supports a focus on developing metapragmatic awareness as a tool for fostering agency. What the instructional focus and subsequent findings of the present study (Articles II, III, and IV) thus suggest is that fostering agency through reflection about pragmatics is not beyond the reach of learners in primary school, but rather an aim that can and should be emphasised in primary teaching. This also relates to the choice of using the L1 during the instruction, namely that the L1 enabled the learners to articulate and challenge understandings they could not readily achieve in the L2.

Finally, with regard to the methodology, the design of the data elicitation techniques in this study was heavily informed by literature on research with children (e.g. Brown & Perkins, 2019; Christensen & James, 2017; Eckhoff, 2019). Whereas this focus is most explicitly emphasised in Articles I and IV, all the articles were influenced by this paradigm, namely the VODCT (Article II), adapted versions of the Emoticon task (Article III and IV), and the learner-produced RT scripts (Article I), were all informed by this literature. Hence, the data elicitation techniques were designed to facilitate YLL participation and expression of thoughts and thus incorporated the use of visual stimuli and pictures (e.g. Johnston, 2008; Punch, 2002b), videos and technology (Punch, 2002a; Yamada-Rice, 2017), and data elicitation in groups (e.g. Pinter, 2014). Importantly, the study aimed to provide the learners with a voice (Kellett, 2010; Lundy,

⁶² The renewed curriculum introduced three interdisciplinary topics, which aim to focus on societal issues from various perspectives across the subjects. These are: Health and life skills, Democracy and citizenship, and Sustainable development. The former two are to be included in the English subject.

2007). Learner voices (Article IV) were included and provide insights into both the elicitation techniques and the instruction, further supporting the benefits of innovative elicitation techniques. Firstly, the learners seemed to be positive towards RT, for instance, highlighting confidence and collaboration, which has also been found in prior research (e.g. Drew & Pedersen, 2010, 2012; Myrset & Drew, 2016). Considering that RT is a ‘whole language’ approach to teaching, with both cognitive and affective benefits, this emphasises the potential of RT for data collection and instruction within pragmatics (Articles I and IV). Secondly, the VODCT, was viewed less positively by the learners, which provides new insights into the field of pragmatics. The written DCT, a commonly used technique, has been criticised for the authenticity of the data it generates (Bardovi-Harlig, 2018; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2013; Woodfield, 2008), but less so with regard to how learners perceive such tests. In the present study, videos and oral responses were used to address some of this criticism. Considering that the negative feedback from the learners focused mainly on the content of the videos (childish) and the number of videos (monotony), this suggests that the technique itself has potential for future use. Finally, the learners were mainly positive to the target of instruction (requests), which they viewed as novel and relevant. Furthermore, the focus on agency through concepts resonated with them, thereby suggesting that pragmatics instruction is both beneficial and perceived as relevant for YLLs.

5.2 Limitations

This study and the findings presented should be viewed in the light of some limitations, the two major limitations of this project relating to the sampling and the design of the instruction. The sample comprised two intact classes of EFL learners ($n = 51$), of which 46 learners generated the data presented in the articles. Thus, the study is relatively small-scale. This provided an in-depth study of the participants and enabled a mixed methods approach with data collection before and after the instruction. In addition, the sampling strategy, accessing participants from a specific group (homogenous sampling) through the researcher’s network (convenience sampling), may have resulted in the research being carried out in a setting in which the teachers – and possibly by extension the learners – were positive to participation, which may potentially affect the credibility of the study (Dörnyei, 2007). At the same time, the study involved time constraints, a lack of resources (the study being carried out in its entirety by the researcher), and considerable time taken from regular teaching. Furthermore, the sample being positive towards participation may result in a willingness to contribute and create a rich dataset (Dörnyei, 2007). However, since the mixed methods approach aimed to provide a detailed focus on various aspects of the chosen case, the sampling strategy and the focus on a relatively small group of learners were considered optimal for the research design.

Another limitation concerning the sample is that the study does not include a control group, which is commonly used in instructional pragmatics research. The inclusion of a control group would have enabled the researcher to make comparisons with groups of learners who did not receive the treatment and would have ultimately strengthened the claims of the findings. At the same time, as pointed out in Articles I, III and IV, the considerable time spent with the classes during the instruction enabled the researcher to develop rapport with the learners. Thus, a multisite design, in which data was elicited in a different classroom context, with learners unfamiliar with the researcher or the data collected by proxy, would also have created challenges for generating comparable data, where one group would have been more comfortable with the researcher. Since the school in which the project was conducted comprised only two 7th-grade classes, the lack of a control group could have been remedied by offering the treatment to only one class, using the other as control. However, this would have limited the number of participants receiving the treatment, thus reducing the richness of the data (Dörnyei, 2007). In addition, with the same English teacher teaching both classes, it was considered unethical to conduct the instruction with one class (Mayo, 2021), both for the sake of the learners and the teacher. Finally, and most importantly, the focus of the instruction on scientific concepts related to requesting rendered the inclusion of the control group unfeasible; namely, the control group could not have been expected to use these concepts to scaffold metapragmatic understandings without having had any exposure to them.

Another limitation related to the data collection may be the use of friendship groups throughout the project. Whereas this was a conscious choice by the researcher to make the learners comfortable in the research setting and reduce the power imbalance between the researcher and the children (e.g. Beauchamp et al., 2019; Gu et al., 2005; Kuchah & Pinter, 2012), the data generated in groups did not enable the researcher to explore individual responses and progress specifically related to request production. At the same time, this kind of data reflects learners' collaborative co-construction of knowledge in classroom settings (Swain, 1997; Vygotsky, 1934/2012). More importantly, however, as revealed in Article IV, some learners appraised group work negatively, but did not want to elaborate on their negative appraisals. This may indicate that the learners were shy or did not feel comfortable sharing their experiences with the other group members (Kuchah & Pinter, 2021), which was important to keep in mind during the interpretation and presentation of the data. Such an interplay between the potential advantages and disadvantages of employing friendship groups further points to the complexity of methodological choices in research with children.

As for the limitations of the instruction itself, two aspects are particularly important to consider: the researcher teaching the material and the duration of the instruction. The

instruction was carried out by the researcher, rather than by the regular teacher, and as discussed in Article IV, this may have influenced the learners' perceptions and positive attitudes towards the instruction as it added to its novelty. Furthermore, an expert mediator, i.e. someone with in-depth knowledge about pragmatics, may have influenced the results of the instruction. Thus, while the present study reveals that the approach adopted in this study is possible with YLLs, it does not provide insights into such approaches in authentic teaching contexts. The learners and the researcher also shared the same L1, which made it an accessible scaffold that could be actively used during the instruction, which may not reflect all teaching contexts. However, this suggests that the approaches and findings in this study are highly relevant for teacher education and multilingual pedagogies. When it comes to the duration of the instruction, it was relatively short (4 hours total). Thus, the findings are limited to what was achieved over the course of a month and do not reflect an authentic teaching context in which language related phenomena are introduced and revisited over time.

With these limitations in mind, it is not possible to make generalisations to larger populations. Similarly, with the researcher teaching the material the results may not be directly transferable to other teaching contexts. Thus, the researcher aimed to be transparent in the articles about how the data was collected and analysed, and how the results were presented. For instance, the rich data and detailed descriptions (particularly in articles I, III, and IV) may have resonance with and be transferrable to other contexts (Tracy, 2010). Similarly, in order to account for the lack of a control group, the researcher has been careful with the ways in which the data is presented in the articles, e.g. referring to the impact rather than the effects of instruction, as the latter suggests the use of a control group.

5.3 Implications for teaching L2 pragmatics

The current research project offers some implications for teaching pragmatics, both within the Norwegian context and globally. For instance, the findings from the current study suggest that providing explicit input through concepts is plausible with YLLs, and that such an approach can indeed serve to develop learner agency. Consequently, concept-based approaches may be useful in L2 pragmatics instruction with YLLs. Explicit input has more generally been favoured with adult learners (Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). However, the sparse research on YLLs has led to uncertainties about the affordances of such approaches in YLL classrooms (Ishihara, 2010, 2013). While the present findings suggest that explicit input, with emphasis on scientific concepts, may indeed foster YLL's pragmatic development, it is important to note that the current study explores the upper ages of YLLs, i.e. 12-13 years. Thus, some discretion is

advised when considering the extent to which explicit input is appropriate with learners younger than those included in this study.

This instruction adopted a view that the L1 can serve as scaffolding for L2 pragmatic development. This enabled the learners to draw on both languages (knowledge and experiences) when articulating their understandings (e.g. Chavarría & Bonany, 2006). Provided that teachers and learners share one or more additional languages, this approach may be useful to adopt when focusing on pragmatic phenomena. Thus, rather than viewing the L1 as an obstacle for L2 development, the conscious use of the L1 should be viewed as a resource that serves as a springboard in the classroom for making sense of pragmatic phenomena, where a body of individuals with different language abilities and experiences may potentially expand each other's perspectives emerging through collaborative dialogues. This is particularly useful from the perspective of teaching pragmatics with YLLs and in the growing multilingual classrooms (Lorenz et al., 2021; Portolés & Martí, 2017).

The study placed emphasis on providing learners with a voice. When asked to appraise and comment on the instruction, the learners were indeed capable of providing well thought-through and nuanced feedback. This shows that YLLs should indeed be involved and have an impact in the decision-making process (Lundy, 2007). In fact, facilitating children's democratic engagement in matters concerning them in the school context, or learner-centred education (Kuchah & Milligan, 2021), is a right stated in both the Norwegian curriculum (Udir, 2020a) and the UNCRC (1989). However, YLLs' right to express their views is often overlooked (Kuchah & Milligan, 2021; Kuchah & Pinter, 2021), leaving adults solely in charge of the decision-making. The findings from this study show that providing learners with a voice may offer highly useful input for teaching. Thus, rather than treating children as objects, teachers should strive to provide spaces in which YLLs become active agents in their education. However, it is worth noting that expectations about child-adult interactions and child agency are culturally engrained, and in some cultural contexts children may be perceived "as recipients, not generators of knowledge (Kuchah & Pinter, 2012)" about matters concerning them in education (Kuchah & Milligan, 2021, p. 169).

Furthermore, the learners provided feedback on the instructional design (Article IV) and were generally positive to the incorporation of movement and collaboration, as well as RT. Thus, RT, which is a 'whole language' approach to teaching, can serve to train different aspects of language development at the same time, making it a low-threshold approach to teaching pragmatics in the classroom. Furthermore, the learners' feedback suggests that pragmatics instruction should incorporate movement and collaborative tasks, thus acknowledging YLLs' physical and social growth (McKay, 2006). Through

movement and collaborative tasks, the learners are provided with hands-on experience in producing language as well as opportunities for reflecting on language use. Such experience enables the learners to practise the immediacy of production in communication in classroom settings, where the stakes are lower. A classroom will perhaps always be scrutinised for its authenticity, but collaborative tasks present a huge step in the right direction.

5.4 Contributions

This study has contributed both to the Norwegian and global context of pragmatics research. Although some research has explored pragmatics in the Norwegian context, both in L1 Norwegian (e.g. Fretheim, 2005; Svanes, 1989; Urbanik & Svennevig, 2019) and L2 English (e.g. Awedyk, 2003; Brubæk, 2012; Krulatz, 2016), few production studies have explored pragmatics with YLLs (Savić, 2015; Savić et al., 2021). Thus, the current study contributes to investigating this under-represented group of learners. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, pragmatics instruction presents uncharted waters in the Norwegian context. Since the national curriculum (LK20) includes aims addressing topics related to pragmatics already in primary school, the current study contributes both empirically and pedagogically through presenting evidence of learners' production, awareness, and engagement.

Furthermore, the study provides teaching materials used with these learners and RT scripts, which may directly contribute to addressing learning aims in the Norwegian curriculum, especially within the newly introduced interdisciplinary topic *Democracy and citizenship*, as it relates to the English subject. In addition, from a global perspective, materials addressing pragmatics, for instance in language learning textbooks (Jakupčević & Portolan Čavar, 2021; Limberg, 2016; Schauer, 2019), remain limited or tend to present oversimplified rules of thumb. Thus, the materials developed by the researcher for this study provide teachers and researchers with activities that aim to explore pragmatics in more sensitive and nuanced ways.

In a similar vein, the overarching approach to teaching is a contribution to instruction. The instruction in this study adopted a concept-based approach by tailoring it specifically for learners aged 12-13. With this in mind, the current study contributes to: 1) empirical research using concept-based approaches by focusing on YLLs, and 2) the more general discussion about pragmatics instruction with young learners. This discussion has so far largely derived from evidence found in research with adults and/or YLL characteristics (Ishihara, 2010; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). By providing in-depth explorations of two intact classes of YLLs, with findings from learners' request

production, their reflections, and their engagement, this study provides empirical evidence showing the affordances of explicit input in instructional pragmatics.

One such affordance was the learners' use of scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings, which can arguably be attributed to the instruction itself. These scientific concepts served as a tool during the discussion, facilitating abstract thinking and generalising. Thus, the current study adds a new dimension to prior research on YLL's metapragmatic awareness, both more generally (e.g. Lee, 2010; Savić, 2021; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b) and in instructional settings (Ishihara, 2013; Ishihara & Chiba, 2014).

Finally, this study (Article IV) systematically investigated learner perceptions about the project. Thus, the study contributes to our understandings of how learners perceive instruction. Such learner feedback seems to be largely overlooked in pragmatics research: with YLLs and adults alike, the focus has mainly been on instructional outcomes (production and awareness) rather than the learners' engagement with the instruction, resulting in perceptions about instruction being either excluded (e.g. Taguchi & Kim, 2016) or added as an addendum in the report (e.g. Nicholas, 2015). In this study, the systematic exploration of the learners' perceptions of the project through feedback was informed by literature on research with children (e.g. O'Kane, 2008; Pinter, 2014; Pinter & Zandian, 2014, 2015; Punch, 2002a, 2002b). This focus on methodological considerations (Articles I and IV) highlights another salient contribution to the field, namely, designing and using innovative methods to elicit (meta)pragmatic data and facilitating learner voices in research, which has been largely overlooked. More importantly, the articles also invite for a discussion about methodological considerations when conducting research with YLLs within pragmatics.

5.5 Conclusion

The case study presented herein was designed and conducted in order to explore the impact of EFL pragmatics instruction with YLLs. More specifically, informed by SCT and concept-based approaches for teaching pragmatics, the current study focused on the teaching of English requests. The aim was to investigate the impact of instruction on the learners' request production and awareness, as well as their perceptions about the project as a whole. The research was conducted in two intact 7th-grade classes, with one group of four learners serving as a pilot group for the duration of the project. The fieldwork lasted approximately three months, with data collection prior to and following one month (4 hours) of instruction.

The study comprises four research articles. Article I focused on elicitation techniques in research on YLLs' metapragmatic awareness and served as a background for the design of the study. The remaining three articles focused on reporting the findings from the study: firstly, Article II investigated the learners' request production; secondly, Article III explored the learners' use of scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings; and finally, Article IV focused on the learners' perceptions about the project. Overall, despite focusing on a limited number of learners, the articles have revealed a huge potential for teaching pragmatics to YLLs. The in-depth focus on various aspects of pragmatics shows that the 12-13-year-old learners were more than ready for learning pragmatics. Fostering agency through language instruction will ultimately serve as a foundation for interaction with people from diverse L1 and cultural backgrounds, where the increased linguistic repertoire enables the learners to vary between strategies and their metapragmatic awareness serves a mediating role for making informed communicative choices.

Despite early calls urging researchers to explore whether, how, and when pragmatics should be taught (Kasper, 1997), the field of pragmatics still needs more evidence with YLLs. Thus, similar calls can be reiterated today with emphasis on YLLs. For instance, as research has revealed that pragmatics content is presented in YLL textbooks (e.g. Schauer, 2019) and that pragmatic development is evidenced in YLLs (e.g. Savić, 2015), a potential research avenue could be to explore the current state of pragmatics instruction in classrooms through observations and teacher interviews. In other words, research could explore whether teachers of YLLs a) teach pragmatics, b) are aware of pragmatics, as well as c) their beliefs about pragmatics and pragmatics instruction. These would serve as a useful point of departure for teacher education and pragmatics research.

Specifically related to the approach used in this study, more studies employing concept-based approaches with YLLs would provide further insights into their applicability with these age groups. Drawing on the findings and materials from the current study, future research could investigate requests and request responses, or conduct multiple cycles focusing on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions. In other words, future research using such approaches could revisit both dimensions to explore whether they foster internalisation of concepts and generate more sophisticated reflections about language use.

Another possible research avenue includes investigating a broader range of instructional targets. In this study requests were selected as the pragmatic target of instruction. These were selected due to their early appearance in children's speech and their frequent use in communication. Furthermore, requests have been extensively

researched, and even with the limited focus on YLLs in pragmatics research, requests have been a common focus with this group. However, other pragmatic foci, e.g. other speech acts or idioms, should also be explored in future studies. Such studies would inform the field about the pragmatic targets that are attainable with YLLs. Furthermore, studies exploring learners' (meta)pragmatic development would also provide evidence that may inform instructional targets.

In addition, future studies could explore the longitudinal impact of instruction, i.e. teaching pragmatics over the course of a semester or more. Based on the design and findings from this study, with short periods of instruction (15-30 minutes per session), there is reason to believe that in longitudinal studies pragmatics could be more fully incorporated along with other foci. It is possible that such a design would make it easier to gain access to schools and learners. Such longitudinal studies would be a useful addition to the field since research focusing on YLLs, including the current doctoral research study, is largely based on relatively short periods of instruction. In most of these studies, the instruction itself has lasted four hours or less, which limits the current state of knowledge with regard to gains through longer-term input. An additional avenue in longitudinal studies could be to explore how pragmatics can be integrated more fully into English language teaching.

Specifically related to the Norwegian context, to the best of my knowledge, this is the only study that has explored pragmatics instruction with learners in primary school. The study has revealed that pragmatics can be addressed systematically in the classroom and that learners largely respond positively. However, the study focused on learners in 7th grade. Given that the curriculum states that topics related to pragmatics should be covered all through primary school, e.g. learners should be able to “ask and answer simple questions, follow simple instructions and use some polite expressions” after 2nd grade and “use a number of common small words, polite expressions and simple phrases and sentences to obtain help to understand and be understood” in 4th grade (Udir, 2020b), future studies should aim to explore how such aims can be addressed in early language teaching. Such studies would both be highly important for the Norwegian context and contribute to the field of pragmatics internationally.

Regardless of the pragmatic target, length of the instruction, or teaching context, an aspect that pragmatics research should take into account is the learners' perceptions about the research in which they are participating, which has become increasingly emphasised in research with children (e.g. Eckhoff, 2019; Fielding, 2001). However, as argued in Article IV, this should also be highlighted within the field of pragmatics, as feedback on, for instance, instruction may provide insights into the affordances of various pragmatics teaching approaches to engage and motivate learners. At the very

Discussion and conclusion

least, researchers should reflect more critically on children's role as participants, e.g. their agency in the research, their ability to voice their opinion, and how they are presented in the data.

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References

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Worksheet directness

NAME: _____

Direct:

Give me a pencil. _____

I want an apple. _____

Help me. _____

In between:

Can you give me a ball? _____

Would you mind telling me where the museum is? _____

May I have a glass of water? _____

Appendices

NAME: _____

Hints:

Do you have a pencil? _____

It's cold in here. _____

The kitchen is a mess. _____

Appendix 2 – Homework (H1)

Name: _____

Ask a parent or guardian which of these is a nicer way to ask. Draw a circle around the one they liked the most.

1)

Could I borrow some money?

Could I possibly borrow some money?

Why does he/she think it is nicer? (You can explain in English or Norwegian)

2)

Can you give me a lift, please?

Can you perhaps give me a lift?

Why does he/she think it is nicer? (You can explain in English or Norwegian)

Appendix 3 – Worksheet, supportive moves

NAME: _____

Together in pairs or threes, make a request with a reason, compliment, or promise. Decide if you want to be direct, in between, or make a hint. It is up to you if you want to get the attention, add polite words, and/or if you want to address the person.

Ask someone to make dinner for you

Ask someone to give you money

Ask someone to come with you to the store

Appendix 4 – Requests produced by learners

Example, Learner 1

Excuse me, may i have a pencil.
Excuse me, Sir could i borrow a pencil.
I don't have a pencil.
Do you have a pencil
Sorry, could i get a pencil.
Sorry to interrupt you, but could i borrow a pencil.
Excuse me, could i possible get a pencil.
Pardon me, can i have a pencil.
Give me a pencil.
I want a pencil.
Give me a pencil or **i'll punch you.**
I have nothing to write with.
Could i possibly get a pencil
Can i borrow a pencil.
Sorry, may i get a pencil.
Excuse me, Miss may i borrow a pencil.
Please give me a pencil.
Could you please give me a pencil.
May i borrow your pencil please.
Give me a pencil please.
May i possibly borrow your pencil.
Excuse me, could i borrow a pencil please.
Could i perhaps borrow your pencil.
May i perhaps get a pencil.
Excuse me sir could i perhaps borrow your pencil.
Pardon me, may i perhaps borrow your pencil.

Example, Learner 2

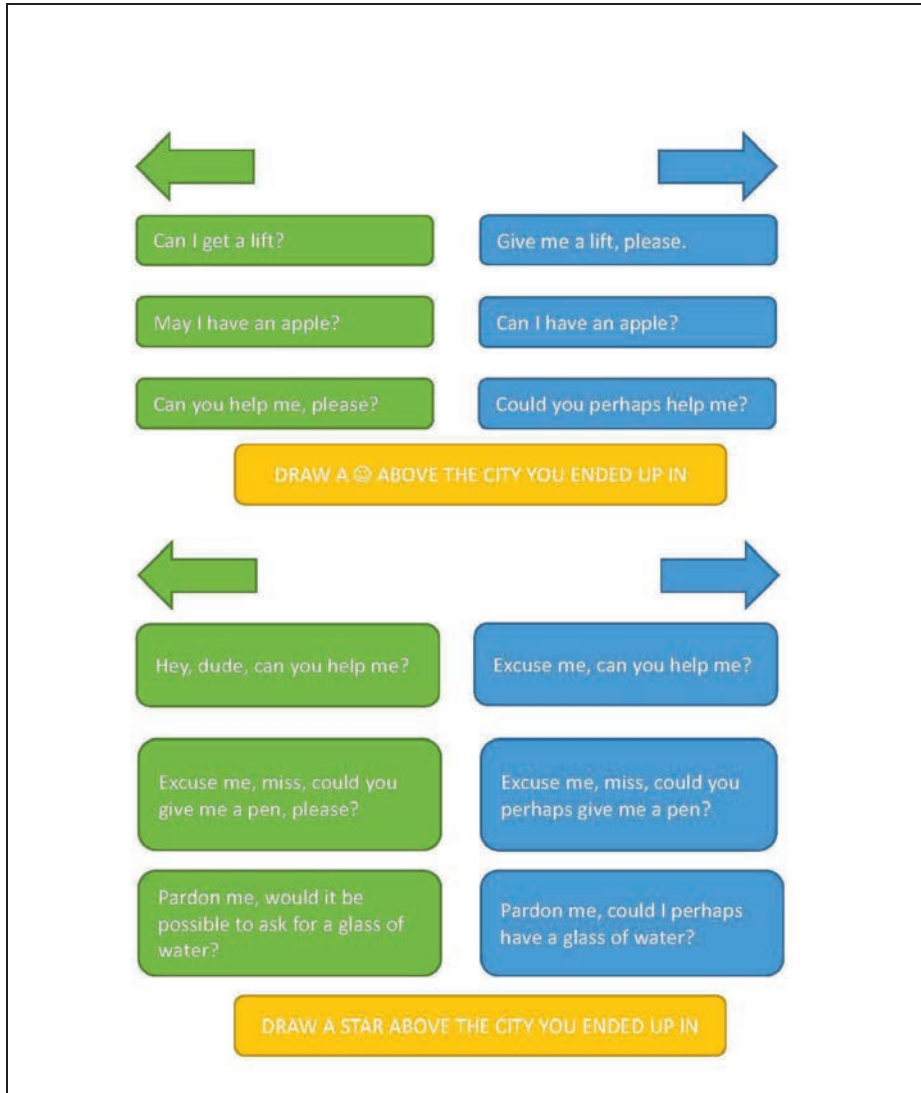
Can I borrow a pencil, please?
Do you have a pencil?
Give a pencil, **or I will kick you.**
I am so hungry.
Can you make some dinner, you are so good at cooking?
I am going to the mall.
Do you want to come to the mall with me?
I am going to my friend, can you give me a lift please?
I don't want to walk to my friend.
I am so thirsty.
Do you have something to drink?
Give me water now!
Can you help me with these things?
Excuse me, miss can you help me.
If it's possibly, can you throw me the ball?
Sorry, can I have a glass of water?
Do you have a glass?
Do you may have a car?
Can you may give me a lift?

Example, Learner 3

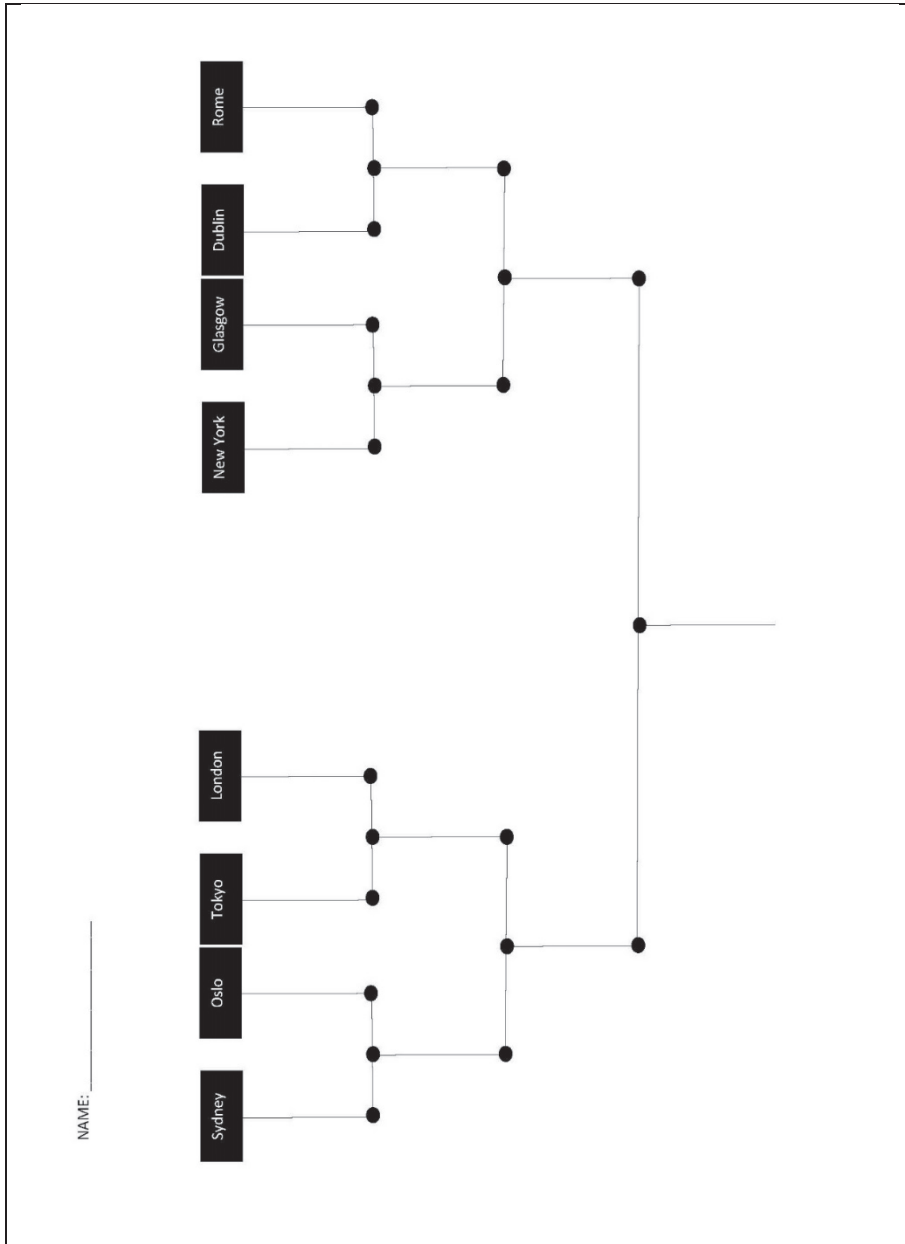
kan i hav a pensel .
mr have juo a pensel.
give me a orange.
miss can i please have a orange.
may i have an apple.
please can you give me a book.
kan i hav a book you are so gud til å read.
someone to make me dinner.

Appendix 5 – Request perception journey

Requests from the slides



Worksheet for the learners.



Appendix 6 – Match request and interlocutor

Example of task

Name: _____

Draw a line between the request and the person you think it would be okay to ask in this way. Fill in the blanks if you feel a person is missing.

1. Would you mind lending me a pen?	a. a classmate
2. Could you give me a pen?	b. a parent
3. Can you give me a pen?	c. a friend
4. Give me a pen.	d. a brother or sister
5. May I have a pen?	e. a friend's parent
6. Would you mind if I got a pen?	f. a police officer
7. Let me borrow a pen.	g. a teacher
8. Is it okay if I borrow a pen?	h. a stranger
	i. _____
	j. _____
	k. I WOULDN'T SAY THIS

Appendix 7 – Dice game

Roll the dice

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Older brother or sister2. Parent3. Young stranger4. Old stranger5. Friend6. Teacher | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Directions to the library2. Water3. Money4. Food5. Give you a lift (drive you)6. Give you a pair of trousers (for this, the stranger is a sales assistant) |
|---|--|

Appendix 8 – Homework (H2)

Name: _____

Ask a parent or guardian what they believe is important to think about when requesting (asking for something we want or someone to do something for us), and add them to the list. Circle the three things they think are the most important. (You can write in Norwegian and/or English). This could, for instance, be: examples of words we should use, who we are talking to, or where we are.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Why do you think these three things were the most important for them? (You can write in Norwegian or English)

Appendix 9 – Labels Dice game

Name: _____ I'm a: _____

Direct	
In-between	
Hint	
Polite words (please, possibly, perhaps)	
Address term (mr/mrs/miss, sir, etc)	
Attention (Excuse me, Pardon me, Sorry)	
Reason	
Compliment	
Promise	

Appendix 10 – Script, worksheet

Fill in the blanks

NAME: _____

Fill in the blanks, and finish the story.

Narrator	_____ and _____ are going to the butcher's to buy some veal for their mum. To get there they must take the bus and they ask the bus driver for two tickets.
_____	_____
Bus driver	Here you go.
_____	Thank you.
Narrator	_____ and _____ get to the butcher's. A man outside is asking for money to a charity.
Man	_____
_____	I don't have much money on me, but you can have 5 pounds.
Man	Thank you.
_____	You're welcome.
Narrator	_____ and _____ walk into the butcher's. A large man with a white apron is at the counter.
Butcher	Hi, how may I help you?
_____	_____
Butcher	Very well. Anything else?
_____	No, thanks. That's it.
What happens next? You decide. Just turn the page and keep writing 😊	

Optional: Continue the story

Appendix 11 – Example of a pre-written script (RT Cycle 1)

BUYING A PLAYSTATION	
Narrator	Arthur has been saving his allowance to buy a PlayStation 4, and there's a sale on the console at the local store. Unfortunately, he is still 30 pounds short, so he decides to ask his dad to lend him some money.
Arthur	Dad, they have a sale on PlayStation 4, but I still haven't saved up enough money to buy it. Could I borrow 30 pounds?
Dad	30 pounds? I don't know.
Arthur	Please. You know how I've been saving for ages to buy one, and now I can get a great deal.
Narrator	His dad doesn't seem too happy about giving the money, but he does.
Dad	Here you go.
Arthur	Thank you.
Dad	You're welcome, but remember that this is a loan.
Arthur	Yes, dad.
Narrator	Arthur decides to call his friend, Tom, to ask if he wants to join him to the store. Tom's mother picks up the phone.
Ms. Roberts	Hello?
Arthur	Hi Ms. Roberts, it's Arthur. Is Tom there?
Ms. Roberts	Sure. Let me get him for you.
Narrator	Arthur is so excited as he waits for Tom. Finally he's getting the PlayStation he has been saving all that pocket money for.
Tom	Yes?
Arthur	Hey Tom, I finally have enough money to buy a PlayStation. I'm heading down to the store now to buy one.
Tom	That's great.
Arthur	Yeah. Do you want to come?
Tom	Sure.
Arthur	Cool. I'll drop by your house on the way to the store.
Tom	Sounds good. I'll see you in a little while.
Narrator	Arthur walks down to Tom's house with his pocket full of money. He picks up Tom, and the two boys head down to the electronics store.
Arthur	I can't wait to get a PlayStation.
Tom	I know, it's going to be so much fun. Now we can finally play online.

Arthur Finally.
Tom Which games are you buying?
Arthur I don't know. I'm definitely buying Fortnite.
Tom Cool.
Narrator Arthur and Tom get to the electronics store and walk inside. It is huge: shelves, TVs, and stereos as far as the eye can see. They walk to the section where the PlayStations are.
Arthur Look. There they are.
Narrator A boy is playing a new game on a PlayStation in the store.
Tom What game is that?
Boy It's a new game called Spyro. It's so much fun. I've been playing all day.
Tom Can I have a go?
Boy Sure. Here you go.
Narrator The boy hands over the controller to Tom. Meanwhile, Arthur looks at the PlayStations locked inside a display cabinet. A note on the cabinet says: "PlayStations locked inside cabinet to avoid theft. See member of staff." Arthur walks over to a saleswoman.
Arthur Excuse me, would you mind opening the PlayStation cabinet. I want to buy one.
Saleswoman Yes, of course.
Narrator The saleswoman picks up a key, walks over to the display, and unlocks it. She grabs a box and hands it over to Arthur.
Saleswoman Here you go.
Arthur Thank you.
Saleswoman Just follow me to the counter.
Arthur Okay.
Narrator Arthur follows after the saleswoman. He turns around and sees that Tom is still playing the new game.
Arthur Tom, let's go.
Narrator Tom hands the controller back to the boy.
Tom Thanks for letting me try the game.
Boy No problem.
Tom We're going to buy a soda afterwards. Do you want to come with us?
Boy Thanks, but I can't leave the store. My Mum is going to meet me here when she's finished shopping clothes for my brother.
Tom Okay, maybe next time.

Appendices

Boy	Sure.
Narrator	Tom leaves the boy and joins Arthur.
Arthur	Who was he?
Tom	I don't know. I just asked him if he wanted to come with us.
Arthur	Okay.
Narrator	Arthur pays for the PlayStation, and the two boys head outside.
Tom	Fortnite, here we come.
Arthur	Yes, I can't wait.
Tom	Can we get that soda now?
Arthur	Yup.
Narrator	Arthur opens his wallet. He has no money left.
Arthur	Oh, I'm all out of money. Lend me some.
Tom	Sure.
Narrator	Arthur and Tom go to a kiosk across the street. Tom buys two cokes
Tom	Here you go.
Arthur	Thanks. Let's go home and set this up so that we can play.
Tom	Yes.

Appendix 12 – An example of a folder for script-writing (RT Cycle 2)

Write your own script

- Use the outline to develop a script of your own. What do the different characters say? What is going on in the story?
- You will need to include both narration and dialogue to guide the audience through your performance.
- You will need to work as a group in order to make the best script possible. Remember that everyone has something to contribute to when writing, and your story will only become as great as your cooperation allows.
- The teachers will be visiting your group from time to time to help you. Do not let any hurdles stop you from writing. If you're stuck, ask for help, or continue writing and go back to what you're struggling with later.
- Remember to think about the tense you write in. Is it past or present tense? This should be the same throughout the script.

GOOD LUCK!

Buying a PlayStation

OUTLINE OF THE STORY

Arthur has been saving his pocket money to buy a PlayStation. He is 30 pounds short and asks his dad to borrow the rest. His dad says yes. Arthur calls home to his friend, Tom, to ask if he wants to come with him. Tom's mother picks up the phone. Arthur asks to talk to Tom. Tom comes the phone, and Arthur asks him to come with him to buy a PlayStation. Arthur says yes. They head down to the store and find the PlayStations, but they are locked inside a display cabinet. There's a note on the cabinet saying, "Locked to avoid theft. Contact staff." Arthur finds a saleswoman, and ask hers to unlock the cabinet. She helps him. . Meanwhile, Tom meets a boy in the store playing on a PS4. Tom asks the boy to let him try. Arthur pays for the PlayStation, and finds Tom. Tom asks the boy to come with them to buy soda. The boy says no because he's waiting for his mum. Arthur and Tom leave. They go to a kiosk to buy a soda, but Arthur doesn't have any money left. Arthur asks Tom to borrow 2 pounds. Tom says yes, and the two boys order their sodas.

Buying a PlayStation

CHARACTERS

Arthur



Tom



Arthur's dad



Boy in store



Saleswoman



Clerk at kiosk



Script model

- Narrator** Axel and Susie are on their way to a concert. They have saved money for quite some time, and finally the day has come for them to get to see their favourite artist perform live.
- Axel** I can't wait. I've been looking forward to this for as long as I can remember.
- Susie** Me too.
- Narrator** They walk down the street and see a poster advertising the concert. Axel points at the poster.
- Axel** I can't believe that we will see her in an hour.
- Susie** I know, right?
- Axel** What's your favourite song?
- Susie** My favourite song is 'Breaking the chain'.
- Axel** Mine too.
- Narrator** They enter the venue. It is already full of people who have found places close to the stage.
- Susie** Oh no! We should have come earlier. I was hoping we would be next to the stage.
- Axel** I know. I think many of them slept outside the venue last night.
- Narrator** They walk past several people and find a nice spot close to the stage.
- Axel** This is perfect.
- Susie** Yes, it is.
- Narrator** The lights go down and the artist comes on stage to the sound of thousands of people screaming.

Appendix 13 – Questions for the VODCT

Intro Fast food:

This video is about two children who go to McDonald's and order food.

Questions:

- The boy is hungry. This is what he orders. What do you think he says?
- The girl is hungry. This is what she orders. What do you think she says?
- She also orders this. What do you think she says?

Intro classroom:

This video is about four learners who are drawing in class.

Questions:

- The girl doesn't have a crayon. What does she ask her friend?
- The girl doesn't have green paper. What does she ask the teacher?
- The girl doesn't have orange paper. What does she ask the teacher?
- The girl doesn't have a yellow pencil. What does she ask her friend?

Intro At the shop:

This video is about a girl and a boy who go to the market to look at a doll and a toy car. Afterwards, a girl goes to the store with her parents. She looks at a kite and a hat.

Questions:

- The girl really likes the doll. What does she say to the sales assistant?
- The boy really likes the car. What does she say to the sales assistant?
- The girl really likes the kite. What does she say to her parents?
- The girl really likes the hat. What does she say to her parents?

Intro At the table:

This video is about two children who are visiting their friend and her mother for dinner.

Questions:

- The girl cannot use chopsticks and asks the mother for a fork. What do you think she says?
- The boy is still hungry and asks the mother for more. What do you think he says?
- The two friends enjoyed their stay and ask to come back. What do you think they say?

Intro Snowman

This video is about three children sitting inside at a library when it starts snowing outside.

Questions:

- The boy asks the girls to go outside and play. What do you think he says?
- The boy looks out the window. It has started to snow. He asks them again. What do you think he says?
- The boy would like to make a snowman with the girls. What do you think he says?

Intro may I talk to Kate

This video is about a boy who calls his friend to arrange a play date.

Questions:

- The boy asks the mother to speak to Kate. What do you think he says?
- The boy asks Kate to meet in the park to play badminton. What do you think he says?

Intro restaurant

This video is about a boy and his mum at a restaurant.

Questions:

- The boy is hungry and orders this. What do you think he says?

- The boy burnt his tongue because the food was hot. He asks his mum for water. What do you think he says?

Intro museum

This video is about a group of friends who go to the museum.

Questions:

- The boy suggests going to the museum. What do you think he says?
- They ask the lady for directions to the museum. What do you think they say?

Appendix 14 – Interview guide

(translated from Norwegian)

Questions based on scripts:

Why did you choose this particular request?

- What directness level is it?
- Did you all agree at once?
- Do you remember any alternatives you discussed?

Would you change the request if we changed the person they are asking?

- What if s/he's talking to a _____ (add characteristics?)

Appraisal task.

- Do you think this request was a nice, a so-so, or a not so nice way to ask?
- If green (😊): Why do you think it was green? What made it green?
- If blue (😐): Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?
- If red (😞): Why do you think it was red? What would we have to do to get it up to blue or green?

Potential prompts as follow-up:

What's important to think about when making requests?

- Prompt: Situation?
- Prompt: Who we talk to?

What does it mean to be polite?

Questions about project:

Appraisal task:

Performance: What did you think about the performance?

- Do you think it was fun, so-so, or not so fun?
- If green (😊): Why do you think it was green? What made it green?
- If blue (😐): Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?
- If red (😞): Why do you think it was red? What would we have to do to get it up to blue or green?

Follow-up: Was there anything you particularly liked / didn't like about the performance?

Class activities: What did you think about our classes in general?

- Do you think it was fun, so-so, or not so fun?
- If green (😊): Why do you think it was green? What made it green?
- If blue (😐): Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?
- If red (😞): Why do you think it was red? What would we have to do to get it up to blue or green?

Follow-up: Was there anything you particularly liked / didn't like about the classes?

Writing scripts: What did you think about writing scripts?

- Do you think it was fun, so-so, or not so fun?
- If green (😊): Why do you think it was green? What made it green?
- If blue (😐): Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?
- If red (😞): Why do you think it was red? What would we have to do to get it up to blue or green?

Follow-up: Was there anything you particularly liked / didn't like about writing scripts?

Videos: What did you think about the videos?

- Do you think the activity was fun, so-so, or not so fun?
- If green (😊): Why do you think it was green? What made it green?
- If blue (😐): Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?
- If red (😞): Why do you think it was red? What would we have to do to get it up to blue or green?

Follow-up: Was there anything you particularly liked / didn't like about the videos?

Open slots: Is there anything else you want to appraise?

- Do you think it was fun, so-so, or not so fun?
- If green (😊): Why do you think it was green? What made it green?
- If blue (😐): Why do you think it was blue? What would we have to do to get it up to green?
- If red (😞): Why do you think it was red? What would we have to do to get it up to blue or green?

Potential prompts as follow-up:

What have you learnt during this project?

- What was particularly difficult / interesting / easy / fun?
- Did you feel that you were able to use what you have learned in the videos and the scripts?

Do you think what you have learned will be useful for you in the future? If so, when?

Appendix 15 – Consent form and NSD approval

Consent form.

Kjære elev og foreldre/foresatte,

Forskningsprosjekt om pragmatisk kompetanse i engelsk som fremmedspråk utført av Universitetet i Stavanger

Spørsmål om deltakelse i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke om undervisning med fokus på pragmatisk kompetanse, dvs. en forståelse av hvordan språk brukes og påvirkes av sosial kontekst og situasjon, kan bidra til økt forståelse i engelsk kommunikasjon.

Prosjektbeskrivelse:

Jeg er en doktorgradsstipendiat fra lærerutdanningen ved Universitetet i Stavanger, med fokus på engelsk som fremmedspråk. For tiden utvikler jeg et undervisningsopplegg, og planlegger et forskningsprosjekt for å kartlegge hvordan elever i norsk skole ordlegger seg avhengig av hva de ønsker å oppnå, og hvem de snakker til. Dette tar utgangspunkt i engelskfaget, og dreier seg om bruken av engelsk som fremmedspråk, og dekker følgende kompetansemål fra læreplanen:

- identifisere og bruke ulike situasjoner og læringsstrategier for å utvide egne ferdigheter i engelsk
- bruke høflighetsuttrykk og situasjonsrelaterte uttrykk
- uttrykke seg for å få hjelp til å forstå og bli forstått i ulike situasjoner
- skrive sammenhengende tekster som forteller, gjenforteller, beskriver opplevelser og uttrykker egne meninger
- bruke digitale verktøy og andre hjelpemidler for å finne relevant informasjon og lage ulike typer tekster

Universitetet i Stavanger, Institutt for Grunnskole, Idrett og Spesialpedagogikk, er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

Prosjektet i skolen (våren 2019):

Dette prosjektet fokuserer i hovedsak på kommunikasjon og effekten av undervisning. Denne effekten vil undersøkes ved hjelp av tester før og etter et undervisningsopplegg. Undervisningsopplegget har en varighet på ca. 6 uker. Under følger en oversikt:

- 30 minutters samtale i grupper med forsker, der deltakerne jobber med filmer, samt har en diskusjon med fokus på kommunikasjon. En slik samtale vil holdes en gang før og to ganger etter selve undervisningsopplegget.
- Et undervisningsopplegg der 10-15 min av vanlig undervisning benyttes til å fokusere på kommunikasjon og språkets påvirkning av kontekst og situasjon. Dette undervisningsopplegget utvikles i samarbeid med klassens engelsklærer.
- En skriveoppgave der elevene jobber gruppevis for å konstruere en tekst. Denne teksten vil senere analyseres av forsker.
- En 30 minutters samtale der elevene forteller om valg og utfordringer med tekstskrivingen.

Samtalene med forsker, samt deler av undervisningen og gruppearbeidet vil tas opp på lydbånd og transkriberes slik at de senere kan analyseres.

Personopplysninger:

I prosjektet vil det ikke lagres navn eller andre direkte identifiserende opplysninger om deltakerne. Alle bidrag til prosjektet vil være uten navn eller andre direkte identifiserende opplysninger i eventuelle publikasjoner. Skulle mot formodning deltakere komme til skade for å oppgi personidentifiserende data, for eksempel navn på deltakere/lærere, under opptak, vil dette slettes før behandling og analyse av data. All data vil lagres på en kryptert lagringsenhet. Etter prosjektslutt – sommeren 2021 – vil opptak og øvrig datamateriale bli slettet. Det er ingen andre enn

prosjektets forskere – mine veiledere og jeg – som har tilgang til opplysningene som samles inn. Vi er underlagt taushetsplikt og opplysningene vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. I publikasjoner vil alle direkte identifiserbare opplysninger være tatt bort, og ingen enkeltpersoner vil kunne gjenkjennes.

Frivillig deltakelse:

Det er frivillig å delta i dette prosjektet, og deltakerne kan på hvilket som helst tidspunkt trekke seg. Hvis en ikke ønsker å delta, eller ønsker å trekke seg underveis, vil ikke dette påvirke undervisning eller deltakerens forhold til lærer og skole. Jeg håper likevel at alle vil være med å delta i prosjektet, da dette vil hjelpe med forskningens validitet, og enda viktigere, fordi det er tett knyttet til kompetansemål i engelskfaget og vil hjelpe elevenes videre utvikling og språklig bevissthet rundt engelsk kommunikasjon.

Ved ønske om å trekke seg, kan dette enten gjøres ved å kontakte engelsklærer ved skolen, eller forsker på epost.

Jeg håper at dere vil delta, både fordi det vil gjøre prosjektet mest mulig lærerikt, men også fordi jeg håper og tror at hver enkelt av dere vil ha utbytte av å delta.

For spørsmål om innsyn i prosjektet eller spørsmål kan dere kontakte forsker på epost.

Rettigheter som deltaker:

Så lenge deltaker kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har deltaker rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert,
- å få rettet personopplysninger,
- få slettet personopplysninger,
- få utlevert en kopi av personopplysninger (dataportabilitet), og
- å sende klage til personvernombudet eller Datatilsynet om behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vi behandler opplysninger basert på ditt samtykke:

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Stavanger har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor du kan finne ut mer:

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Universitetet i Stavanger ved Anders Otterbech Jølbo Myrset (anders.myrset@uis.no)
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS, på epost (personvernombudet@nsd.no) eller telefon: 55 58 21 17.

På forhånd takk for samarbeidet.

Med vennlig hilsen

Anders Otterbech Jølbo Myrset
anders.myrset@uis.no
Doktorgradsstipendiat
Universitetet i Stavanger

Svarslipp

Forskningsprosjekt om pragmatisk kompetanse utført av Universitetet i Stavanger

Jeg/vi har mottatt informasjon om prosjektet.

JA

NEI

Jeg/vi er villig til å delta i studien.

JA

NEI

Signatur foreldre/foresatte: _____

Dato: _____

NSD Approval

22/05/2020	Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger
 NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA	
NSD sin vurdering	
Prosjektittel	
Moving beyond the literal meaning: Effects of instruction on pragmatic ability and metapragmatic awareness with Norwegian EFL learners in 7th grade	
Referansenummer	
686390	
Registrert	
06.12.2018 av Anders Otterboch Jelbo Myrset - [REDACTED]	
Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon	
Universitetet i Stavanger / Fakultet for utdanningsvitenskap og humaniora / Institutt for grunnskolelærerutdanning, idrett og spesialpedagogikk	
Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)	
Anders O. J. Myrset, [REDACTED]	
Type prosjekt	
Forskerprosjekt	
Prosjektperiode	
01.01.2019 - 01.01.2022	
Status	
22.05.2019 - Vurdert	
https://meldeskjema.nsd.no/vurdering/5cd01025-2e1a-443a-8a2e-4579407db5d	1/3
22/05/2020	Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger
Vurdering (2)	
22.05.2019 - Vurdert	
NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 20.05.2019. Det er inkludert et nytt utvalg i prosjektet.	
Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaset med vedlegg den 22.05.2019. Behandlingen kan fortsette.	
OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET	
NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.	
Tjykke til med prosjektet!	
Kontaktperson hos NSD: Kajsa Amundsen	
Tlf. Personverntjenester: [REDACTED]	
24.01.2019 - Vurdert	
Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaset med vedlegg den 24.01.2019. Behandlingen kan starte.	
MELD ENDRINGER	
Dersom behandlingen av personopplysninger endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaset. På våre nettsider informerer vi om hvilke endringer som må meldes. Vent på svar for endringer gjennomføres.	
TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET	
Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 01.01.2022.	
LOVLIG GRUNNLAG	
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.	
PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER	
NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:	
- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen	
- formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål	
https://meldeskjema.nsd.no/vurdering/5cd01025-2e1a-443a-8a2e-4579407db5d	2/3

Appendices

22052020

Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger

- dataminimering (art. 5.1 e), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1 f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Marianne Hogstveit Myhren
Tlf. Personvernjenester: (022) 22 22 22

<https://meldeskjema.nsd.no/vurdering/5c091025-2e1a-4d3a-8a2e-4557d407db6d>

3/3

Articles

Article I: Myrset, A., & Savić, M. (2021). “If an astronaut were on the moon...”: Eliciting metapragmatic data from young L2 learners. *Applied Pragmatics*, 3(2), 163-196.

Article II: Myrset, A. (Pending revisions). 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?' Request production and the impact of instruction on young EFL learners. *Journal of Pragmatics*.

Article III: Myrset, A. (2021). Scientific concepts as meaning-making resources for young EFL learners in the learning of pragmatics. *Intercultural Communication Education*, 4(2), 191–212. <https://doi.org/10.29140/ice.v4n2.485>

Article IV: Myrset, A. (In preparation). Giving young language learners a voice: learner feedback on pragmatics instruction. [To be submitted to *TESL-EJ*]

**Article I - “If an astronaut were on the moon...”:
Eliciting metapragmatic data from young L2
learners**

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Article II - 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?' Request production and the impact of instruction on young EFL learners

Due to copyright restrictions, this article is not available here.

Article III - Scientific concepts as meaning-making resources for young EFL learners in the learning of pragmatics



Scientific concepts as meaning-making resources for young EFL learners in the learning of pragmatics



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Abstract

This article reports on a study investigating the role of scientific concepts in the metapragmatic awareness of Norwegian primary EFL learners following a four-week instructional intervention on requesting informed by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). Through introducing pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions of requesting, the intervention aimed to develop metapragmatic awareness and foster learner agency by teaching pragmalinguistic resources related to request strategies, raising awareness of contextual considerations, and drawing attention to individual perceptions of appropriateness. The instruction focused on scientific concepts, that is, systematic and abstract objects of study which facilitate learner reflections. This article draws on data collected during group interviews to analyse whether learners used scientific concepts introduced during the instruction—for example, directness of the head act and attention getters—and if so, how these were used to express metapragmatic understandings. The analysis shows how such scientific concepts were internalised and used by learners to express their understandings of the importance of linguistic variation and the communicative functions of requests, as well as compare request strategies in English and Norwegian. Lived experiences, contextual considerations, and prior knowledge were also used as frames of reference for interpreting the appropriateness of requests. Adding to pragmatics research using concept-based approaches with (young) adults (e.g., van Compernelle, 2014), this study reveals that internalising a conceptual understanding of pragmatic phenomena in a foreign language is possible even for young language learners, thus contributing to knowledge about how learners come to understand pragmatic phenomena and how pragmatics can be taught with these age groups.

Keywords: EFL pragmatics instruction, sociocultural theory, scientific concepts, young language learners, agency, metapragmatic awareness

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Data Availability Statement: All relevant data are within this paper.

Introduction

This article explores young English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' (aged 12-13) metapragmatic awareness following four weeks of pragmatics instruction focusing on requests. Pragmatics involves the construction and interpretation of meaning in communication, and is an increasingly important area of focus within language pedagogy that aims to develop learners' awareness of the role of linguistic and cultural diversity in interaction (McConachy & Liddicoat, Forthcoming). In this development, particular importance is attributed to metapragmatic awareness – the learner's ability to articulate interpretations of language use – and the role that such awareness plays in interactional decision making (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014). Developing metapragmatic awareness entails providing classroom opportunities for learners to “reflect, notice and compare aspects of pragmatics across cultures” (McConachy, 2018, p. 159), and is therefore a crucial step in supporting L2 learners to become interculturally competent communicators.

Despite the increasing attention to pragmatics, young language learners (YLLs) are largely overlooked in pragmatics research, with sparse evidence about their metapragmatic awareness and the impact of instruction (Myrset & Savić, 2021; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). The paucity of pragmatics research with YLLs – a trend in applied linguistics more generally (Pinter, 2014) – leaves knowledge gaps regarding various target languages (e.g., English), pragmatic foci (e.g., speech acts), and effective teaching approaches with these age groups.

This article contributes to this knowledge gap by investigating YLLs' internalisation of conceptual knowledge related to EFL requests following four hours of instruction informed by sociocultural theory (SCT). Specifically, it focuses on whether and how learners use scientific concepts to articulate their metapragmatic understandings. Metapragmatic awareness is here viewed as being displayed through verbalised reflections about language use, contextual considerations, or their interplay, to varying degrees of sophistication (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Myrset & Savić, 2021). The learners' use of scientific concepts is analysed in relation to metapragmatic episodes from group interviews. Drawing on previous literature (e.g., Fortune & Thorp, 2001; Verschueren, 2000), metapragmatic episodes are here viewed as identifiable units of collaborative dialogue in which learners display metapragmatic awareness, with or without the researcher as a mediator. Exploring YLLs' internalisation of conceptual knowledge is highly relevant for the field of instructional pragmatics by providing insights into the role of explicit instruction with younger age groups. Furthermore, it advances our limited knowledge of how YLLs employ scientific concepts as a resource for their metapragmatic understanding, providing a conceptual foundation for agency in communication.

Literature Review

Metapragmatic awareness in instruction

In instructional pragmatics research, the consensus is that providing learners with metapragmatic information to raise awareness through explicit input is more conducive to learning than implicit input (Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). However, the evidence underpinning this consensus has largely derived from studies on (young) adult learners, and the sparse research on YLLs has led to uncertainties regarding the effectiveness of explicit instruction with these age groups (Ishihara, 2010), with claims often based on general YLL characteristics or on findings from studies with adults. Furthermore, the metapragmatic information provided has traditionally been limited to target language norms, in which metapragmatic awareness is “knowledge of *what* is considered

(in)appropriate language use in a given context rather than *why*" (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016, p. 16), that is, metapragmatic awareness has tended to focus on the acquisition of simplified rule-based knowledge known as "rules of thumb" (van Compernelle, 2014). This has led scholars to reconceptualise metapragmatic awareness within a more holistic perspective which focuses on how learners come to understand and (co-)construct knowledge about pragmatic phenomena such as self-representation and politeness, with a view to develop learner agency (e.g., McConachy, 2018; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014; see also Ishihara, 2010). Within such a perspective, metapragmatic awareness is closely associated with learners' own explicit interpretations and evaluations of language use.

Sociocultural theory and pragmatics instruction

The fundamental tenet of SCT is that learner development is a unity between biological conditions and the social environment (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). Within SCT, conceptual knowledge is central for development, specifically spontaneous and scientific concepts, the latter being more prevalent in L2 teaching and acquisition where learners internalise conceptual knowledge by making it their own (van Compernelle, 2014; Vygotsky, 2012/1934). These concepts are characterised by their developmental trajectories: a spontaneous concept develops without "systematicity and goes from the phenomena upward toward generalization," whereas a scientific concept "evolve[s] under the conditions of systematic cooperation between the child and the teacher" (Vygotsky, 2012/1934, p. 157). Thus, spontaneous concepts are acquired through lived experiences and socialising with the environment, whilst scientific concepts require focused attention through systematised mediation. In the case of requesting, L1 request strategies are acquired through exposure; they are learnt and produced in their social environment without conscious attention. In an L2, the language is often acquired through systematic attention and learnt to be performed in foreign contexts, culturally different from learners' lived experiences, requiring a heightened need for reflection. From this perspective, the strength of scientific concepts lies in their capacity to develop deeper insights into language meanings and restructuring their knowledge about spontaneous concepts acquired through lived experiences (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). Thus, the relationship between the two form a dialectic in which one feeds the other – from lived experiences to theoretical knowledge, and vice versa.

In SCT-informed pragmatics instruction, concept-based approaches have gained momentum (e.g., Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014). This approach aligns with traditional views of favouring explicit input, but foregrounds a vital mediating role of learners' own interpretations of language use and the role of metapragmatic awareness in developing agency. Agency is "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act and to assign meaning to one's actions," which occurs in a relationship between two key dimensions when performing social action: pragmalinguistics, that is, the link between pragmatics and grammar or the available linguistic resources, and sociopragmatics, namely, the link between pragmatics and culture such as knowledge about behaviours (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 21). With the explicit input placing emphasis on overarching concepts within these dimensions, concept-based instruction aims to move away from teaching pragmatic rules of thumb, that is, focusing on *what* to say to *whom*, thus considering the contextual nature of communication (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The aim is to provide learners with systematic and generalisable knowledge, applicable to any communicative situation (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014).

From the pragmalinguistic dimension, Figure 1 illustrates scientific concepts related to directness of requests. Such concepts provide abstract knowledge focusing on the (intended) meaning of strategies, for example, *hints*, rather than specific forms, such as "*Do you have a pencil?*" Such conceptual knowledge provides an orienting basis for interpretations and reflections about learners'

own choices rather than assigning specific forms to given contexts. These reflections about language use allow learners to go beyond specific communicative situations, which is particularly important in classroom-based L2 learning, providing a foundation for social encounters, including those with people from other L1 and cultural backgrounds.

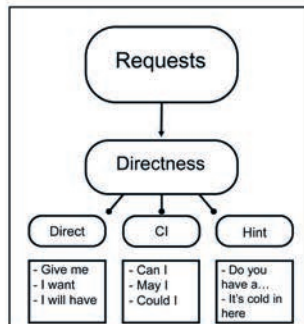


Figure 1 Scientific concepts relating to requests, with sub-concepts for directness, and examples of pragmalinguistic resources within each sub-concept

In the sociopragmatic dimension, van Compernelle's concept-based approach (e.g., van Compernelle, 2014) focused on French, and later Spanish (van Compernelle *et al.*, 2016), by introducing concepts of "presenting oneself as tee-shirt-and-jeans or as suit-and-tie" in various social contexts to describe formality and social distance (van Compernelle, 2014, p. 77). Through these concepts, the learners were provided with tools to reflect on self-representation, which they could employ in dialogues with the researcher. For instance, the learners were provided with the label "suit-and-tie" to support reflections on the situational use of available pragmalinguistic resources, for example, the second person pronouns *tu* and *vous*.

It is important to note, however, some marked differences between previous concept-based instruction studies and the one presented herein, with age being the most salient. Following van Compernelle (2014), agency relates to the choices used in communication by drawing on sociopragmatic knowledge to employ available pragmalinguistic resources (e.g., *tu* and *vous*) to perform social actions. However, a prerequisite is that these resources are indeed available. With this in mind, as opposed to previous studies starting from sociopragmatic concepts, the current study first focused on the pragmalinguistic dimension, ensuring that the learners had a range of pragmalinguistic resources at hand, before introducing the sociopragmatic dimension.

Metapragmatic awareness and young language learners

Previous research indicates that YLLs can reflect on language, contexts, and their interplay in their L1 from the age of five and six (Bernicot, 1991; Hsieh & Hsu, 2010). Although Myrset & Savić's (2021) systematic review revealed that research on YLLs' metapragmatic awareness is sparse (especially in EFL settings), some studies provide insights into young EFL learners' metapragmatic awareness (e.g., Ishihara, 2013; Lee, 2010; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b). Such

studies reveal different pragmatic phenomena that these learners are capable of reflecting on, and various frames of reference that support these reflections, such as L1 and L2 stereotypes, cultural knowledge, and lived experiences.

In a cross-sectional study, Lee (2010) focused on YLLs' (aged 7, 9, and 12) comprehension of direct and indirect speech acts. Whereas the term "metapragmatic awareness" was not employed per se, 60 learners responded along with a think-aloud protocol, thus verbalising their choices. Lee identified comprehension processes where learners attended to semantic structures of utterances, for example, identifying keywords or linking the cause and result. The learners also displayed contextual considerations to various extents, such as speaker feelings or intentions, drew on their L1 (Cantonese) by comparing it with English, or used their world knowledge to provide their reasoning. Thus, Lee's study revealed that YLLs employ diverse processing strategies to comprehend and explain their choices. The study did not show clear developmental trajectories with age, which could derive from "unknown socio-cultural factors such as school instruction" (Lee, 2010, p. 363), but displayed that YLLs draw on a range of experiences and knowledge to make sense of pragmatic phenomena.

Ishihara (2013) studied three Japanese learners (aged nine) in an instructional setting. The instruction focused on pragmatic phenomena, such as formality, politeness, and request behaviours, using picture books and class discussions mediated by the teacher. In the study, the learners spontaneously identified non-verbal cues, for example the lowering of a hat, and made judgements about the situational formality with the help of a formality scale. The learners also questioned the appropriateness of utterances, such as "[i]s it rude language" (Ishihara, 2013, p. 142). Furthermore, the learners' L1 was used, like translating English requests, to scaffold understandings of the interplay between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Although the study focused on a small group of learners, it showed that YLLs making sense of pragmatics involves various frames of reference, such as use of the L1, identifying verbal and non-verbal cues, and valency, that is, various evaluative "scales ranging from good to bad, appropriate to inappropriate" (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, pp. 62-63), mediated by visual stimuli and the teacher.

In studies investigating young Norwegian EFL learners' metapragmatic awareness, learners in third, fifth, and seventh grade (aged roughly 9, 11, and 13) discussed the (in)appropriateness of requests and ranked features they found important when requesting (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b). These studies took a dialogic approach, in which the learners collaboratively discussed topics in groups, accompanied by tasks and visual stimuli to facilitate discussions (see Myrset & Savić, 2021, for the data elicitation techniques). The learners adopted various positions to make sense of EFL pragmatics. When exploring requests (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), the discussions became increasingly nuanced with age. The learners drew attention to pragmalinguistics, for example, word choice; sociopragmatics, such as interlocutor characteristics (age and familiarity) and the situation; or their interplay. Furthermore, the learners brought attention to speaker intentions. Hints functioning as requests appeared difficult to make sense of. Indeed, learners in all grades produced hints, but displayed uncertainties about their communicative function. When exploring pragmatic practices (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a), the learners displayed a range of evaluative stances. Furthermore, the learners used their L1 or lived experiences as a scaffold. Cultural knowledge and stereotypical views about the L1 and L2 were discussed and contested in groups, with positive evaluations often assigned to L2 practices. Both studies revealed that the learners drew on a range of reference points, including knowledge about language itself, as well as its effects in the context of its production. Collaboration facilitated co-construction, with learners drawing on each other's ideas to further expand on discussion topics.

In sum, previous research on young EFL learners' metapragmatic awareness reveals various frames of reference and topics that occur in learner reflections. These were often grounded not only in their L1 lived experiences but also include, for instance, perceptions about feelings, stereotypes, and contextual understandings. Such verbalisations generate insights into learners' understandings and their meaning-making processes. This awareness is vital for agency and provides a springboard for language teaching (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a). Furthermore, from an SCT perspective, understandings deriving from scientific concepts can guide learner choice-making in an informed and flexible way. However, to the best of the author's knowledge, no prior studies have explored YLLs' use of scientific concepts as a resource for expressing metapragmatic understandings.

The Study

This article aims to investigate whether and how YLLs used scientific concepts to express their metapragmatic understandings during group interviews. The interviews were conducted after four weeks of instruction (four hours total), focusing on pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics related to requesting. The researcher taught the material. The data presented derives from a larger study that included data collection in pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests (Myrset, In review), two cycles of Readers Theatre (RT) (Myrset & Savić, 2021), and group interviews (see Figure 2). The overall fieldwork lasted for three months and followed two intact classes of Norwegian seventh graders (aged 12-13). A group interview in the week following RT cycle 2 generated the data presented in this article. The research question is:

Do young language learners employ scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings following a period of concept-based instruction? If so, how?

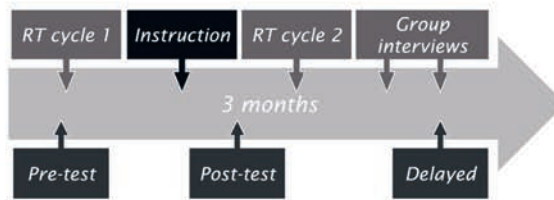


Figure 2 An overview of the fieldwork

Sampling

The sampling strategy was homogenous convenience sampling (Dörnyei, 2007), in which the researcher used his network to contact EFL teachers in a specific grade (seventh grade), resulting in the participation of two intact classes in one school (51 learners). Of these, 46 were included in the analyses. They were divided into 11 friendship groups of 4-5 (Pinter & Zandian, 2014), which remained permanent for the data collection.

In Norway, seventh graders are expected to be within the range of A2-B1 in English, following the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Hasselgreen, 2005), and

Norwegian learners are currently ranked fifth on the English Proficiency Index (Education First, 2020). Thus, the learners' mastery of English was considered appropriate for the project, which was approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), ensuring that the treatment of participants, including information about the study and parental consent, and data was in accordance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Instruction

The instruction was informed by SCT (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). Aiming to foster agency (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014), the instruction introduced the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions of requesting by teaching request strategies, raising awareness of the interplay between language use and the context, and drawing attention to individual perceptions of appropriateness. The instruction was carried out over four weeks (four hours total), with each week comprising one session lasting 30 minutes and two sessions lasting 15 minutes as part of the regular English lessons. The first two weeks focused on the pragmalinguistic dimension with scientific concepts adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) (see Table 1), and the last two weeks on the sociopragmatic dimension. Thus, the learners would first be given opportunities to broaden their linguistic repertoire through scientific concepts. These scientific concepts and the pragmalinguistic resources could then be employed when discussing and working with the sociopragmatic dimension, such as familiarity and age.

Table 1 Scientific concepts for pragmalinguistic strategies employed during the instruction

	Terminology	
	Blum-Kulka et al. (1989)	Adapted
Directness levels		
	Direct	Direct ^a
	Conventionally indirect	In-between
	Non-conventionally indirect/hints	Hint ^a
Internal modification ^b		
	Attention getters	Attention getters
	Title/role	Address term
	Lexical downgraders	Polite words ^c
External modification		
	Grounder	Reason
	Sweetener	Compliment
	Promise of reward	Promise

^a The terms "direct" and "hint" were employed due to similarities to their Norwegian equivalents (*direkte* and *hint*).
^b Although modal verbs can function as syntactic downgraders (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), these were introduced in relation to directness levels, and were thus not in focus as a separate topic during the instruction.
^c The term "polite" was used for three reasons: 1) Considering the learners' age, the term itself was one that they were familiar with and could attach meaning to. 2) It was grounded in learning aims from the national curriculum, namely an ability to "use expressions of politeness and appropriate expressions for the situation" (Udir, 2006). 3) The term functioned as a starting point for raising the pupils' awareness about the contextually situated and sometimes idiosyncratic interpretations of the term (Watts, 2003).

During the first two weeks, each session introduced a new concept along with its functions and linguistic resources, followed by activities for practising their use. After introducing a concept (e.g.,

“attention getters”), its label was employed whenever it was discussed. The concepts were revisited in succeeding sessions when appropriate to facilitate internalisation and encouraging externalisations in discussions. Whereas English was the target language, the learners’ L1 served as a foundation for the meaning-making process (Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018), and as a resource for making sense of pragmatic behaviours (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a). In other words, the L1 served as scaffolding with the learners being invited to use it when needed in the discussions and draw on their lived experiences as part of their reflections. To facilitate the co-construction of meaning (Swain, 1997), the discussions were organised in pairs, groups, or as a whole class.

Group interviews and visual stimuli

During the week following RT cycle 2, the groups were interviewed. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were employed to guide the participants whilst maintaining the opportunity for elaborating on topics (Dörnyei, 2007). A combination of visual stimuli and questions was used to prompt learner reflections. The interviews, lasting 30-40 minutes per group, were conducted in the learners’ L1 to enable them to share their thoughts more freely. They were later transcribed verbatim (see Appendix for transcription guidelines) and translated into English by the researcher and an independent translator to ensure reliability. The participants were assigned pseudonyms.

Visual stimuli were used to facilitate the discussions, including an Emoticon task for appraising requests (adapted from Myrset & Savić, 2021). The learners appraised requests produced by the researcher and were familiar with the contexts in which the requests took place through their group work in RT cycle 2 (see Myrset & Savić, 2021). For the Emoticon task, the learners were provided with a sheet accompanied with a request (Figure 3) and asked whether they thought it was a “nice” (😊), a “so-so” (😐), or a “not so nice” (😞) way to ask. Each group member was provided with a marker of a different colour and asked to place a mark on the emoticon reflecting their appraisal. Thus, the individual learners’ appraisal could be identified during the analysis. Following the task, the learners were invited to explain their choices.

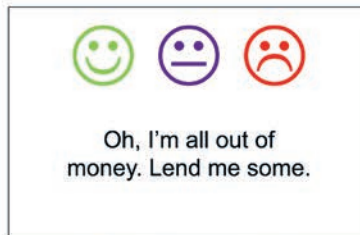


Figure 3 Appraisal sheet

Identifying episodes and analysis

To explore whether and how the learners employed scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings, the interviews (approx. 5.5 hours of audio) were transcribed verbatim and coded in NVivo 12 (QSR International) for episodes, namely, multiple turns concerning one topic, in which the learners reflected on the language, the context, or their interplay relating to requests. These episodes were identified using a framework adapted from Fortune and Thorp (2001). Since Fortune

and Thorp investigated episodes relating to grammar, their framework has hereby been adapted for pragmatics (Table 2).

Table 2 Coding framework, adapted from Fortune and Thorp (2001)

Code	Meaning	Explanation
P	Scientific concepts for pragmatics	Instances in which learners were able to identify linguistic resources by using scientific concepts.
Metapragmatics		
M+R	Metapragmatics and rule	Episodes in which the learners took a firm stance, or resorted to evaluations, such as valency.
M+L	Metapragmatics and pragmalinguistics	Episodes in which the learners reflected on language use.
M+C	Metapragmatics and sociopragmatics	Episodes in which the learners reflected on the context.
M+EX	Metapragmatics and example	Episodes in which the learners used an example of a specific linguistic resource, e.g., excuse me, or provided a request.
M+P	Metapragmatics and scientific concepts for pragmatics	Episodes in which the learners used scientific concepts in their reflections.

The coding provided an overview of the frequencies of metapragmatic episodes occurring in the interviews. These frequencies enabled the researcher to explore whether the learners used scientific concepts to express their understandings, and subsequently how these were used. In addition to highlighting metapragmatic episodes, a code (P – Scientific concepts for pragmatics) was used when learners identified and labelled scientific concepts for request strategies, for example, “attention getters.” While this category does not suggest that the learners engaged in metapragmatic reflections, it was considered useful to provide insights into whether the learners had started internalising the scientific concepts.

In line with SCT, knowledge is constructed in dialogic collaboration (Swain, 1997; Vygotsky, 2012/1934), that is, individuals developing understandings of the (social) world through interaction with others (Marková *et al.*, 2007), for instance between peers and researcher. Since this paper aims to investigate how learners used scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings, this study includes an in-depth analysis of the content and discursive practices in the dialogues, namely, how learners act and react to each other as well as the topics themselves (Bloome *et al.*, 2008; Marková *et al.*, 2007).

Results and Discussion

To investigate whether the YLLs employed scientific concepts to express metapragmatic understandings following the instruction, the interviews were coded to identify metapragmatic episodes. Table 3 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 3 Frequencies of metapragmatic episodes, including scientific concepts

	P ^a	M+R	M+L	M+C	M+EX	M+P	Total
Group 1	6	19	19	15	19	0	72
Group 2	6	5	18	11	14	3	51
Group 3	6	15	20	17	21	2	75
Group 4	3	12	16	13	15	0	56
Group 5	7	13	15	10	10	1	49
Group 6	2	2	8	4	7	0	21
Group 7	8	10	19	15	17	4	65
Group 8	3	9	17	10	6	2	44
Group 9	7	13	24	13	16	3	69
Group 10	5	4	8	8	5	2	27
Group 11	5	8	12	7	6	3	36
Total	58	110	176	123	136	20	565

^a Instances coded as "P" are not included in the overall frequencies of metapragmatic episodes.

Table 3 shows how learners employed scientific concepts to express their metapragmatic understandings. It can be noted that the episodes coded as "M+P" occurred much less frequently (n=20) than the other categories, comprising 3.5% of the metapragmatic episodes (n=565). Indeed, the learners were more prone to using scientific concepts when identifying request strategies ("P"), which indicates that they had internalised the concepts, yet did not readily externalise them in their reflections. Internalising concepts is important for L2 development (van Compernelle, 2014), but is also a long and complex process (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). Consequently, it suggests that the explicit instruction had provided the learners with a foundation for conceptual knowledge, which could have provided them with further insights arising from this knowledge had the instruction continued.

Regarding how the learners used scientific concepts, three excerpts were selected as they present episodes where a) the learners collaboratively engaged in the discussion and b) the scientific concepts served different purposes for the discussion, that is, concluding remarks, a springboard for the discussion, and as prompts introduced by the researcher. The excerpts are extracted from interviews with Group 3 and 7 and divided into sub-sections relating to the topics discussed in the episodes. These are: to highlight request choices (Example 1), to discuss the communicative value of hints (Example 2), and to raise awareness of requesting in the L1 (Example 3). Examples 1 and 2 were prompted by the Emoticon task, while Example 3 developed from an impromptu question by the researcher. Each excerpt is discussed separately.

Promoting agency in requesting

Group 3 appraised a request "Oh, I'm all out of money. Lend me some.," where a boy, Arthur, asks

his friend, Tom, for money. The appraisals were divided evenly between neutral and negative (Table 4). Example 1 presents the ensuing discussion.

Table 4 *Appraisal of the request*

	↔	↔	↔
Emily			X
Leo		X	
Oliver		X	
Sophia			X

Example 1

- 1 Int: "Oh, I'm all out of money. Lend me some." What do you think about this one?
[...]
- 2 Leo: But it really (.) depends on whom one is saying it to.
- 3 Oliver: Uh-huh
- 4 Leo: If it had been a FRIEND, I still think it would be quite impolite.
- 5 Int: [Yes]
- 6 Oliver: [What] is – it's a friend. It's still impolITE, but it's not as bad as for example if one is saying it to someone one doesn't know that well.
- 7 Int: Uh-huh.
- 8 Oliver: But it's not exactly positive to just say like, "lend me so:me" (.) "Lend me some."
- 9 Int: [No]
- 10 Oliver: [[It must be]
- 11 Emily: [Just say "give me some"] lend me something.
- 12 Leo: [But he must have a]
- 13 Emily: [You don't say] "can you lend me something?"
[You say] "give me something – lend it to me" (laughs)
- 14 Oliver: [One must have –]
- 15 Int: Yes.
- 16 Oliver: One must have a little bit more of a reason than just that one.
- 17 Int: Uh-huh
- 18 Oliver: One doesn't have to have a reason all the time, but it depends on how, like, the sentence is in the first place.
- 19 Int: Yes.
- 20 Oliver: Before, one can then like, "oh, but you don't have to be so nice there."
- 21 Int: Yes.
- 22 Oliver: Like that.
- 23 Int: So – so: what you're saying is that, like, such as (.) THIS one, it was sort of fine – you didn't need to say more (.) whilst here then, "can I have a go?" then it was – then it was fine?
- 24 Emily: [Uh-huh]
- 25 Oliver: [Yes], sort of like the context has something to do with it.
- 26 Int: Yes. The context?

- 27 Oliver: Uh-huh.
[...]
- 28 Oliver: Had it been “*can I – Can you lend me some? I’ll pay you back.*” or just “*can you lend me some?*” it would certainly have been much better.
- 29 Emily: Yes.
- 30 Int: Yes.
- 31 Emily: Just like, “LEND me money.”
- 32 Int: Uh-huh
- 33 Oliver: It’s like, two words can make it much better.
[...]
- 34 Int: Yes (2.5) great (2.0) Do you have something else that you – or uhm (.) that you would like to say, or has Oliver kind of said what-
- 35 Emily: Yes, it’s sort of (.) it’s RUDE if you say “lend me money,” but if you say “can you lend me money?” then it’s, like, much better.
- 36 Int: Yes.
- 37 Sophia: But (.) you could’ve, like, said the entire (.) “I don’t have more (.) money left. Can I please borrow?” You could’ve said that.
[...]
- 38 Int: That we should’ve had “*can I – can you lend me some?*” (.) or “*can I borrow?*”
- 39 Oliver: Yes, because it’s not always good when one can use *direct*.
- 40 Int: No.
- 41 Oliver: Sometimes you must – you must be able to know the difference between *direct* and *in-between*.

Leo initiates the discussion by introducing the context as a force for judging the appropriateness of the request (turn 2), whilst putting himself in a generic position with the pronoun “one” (Norwegian: *man*) (Marková *et al.*, 2007), a position both Leo and Oliver use somewhat consistently throughout. Leo is supported by Oliver’s backchanneling (Marková *et al.*, 2007) in turn 3 before Leo elaborates by providing an example of a virtual interlocutor (“If it had been a friend”), followed by a valenced statement (“I still think it would be quite impolite”) (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Oliver lends support to Leo, and provides nuances by contrasting a friend with “someone one doesn’t know that well” (turn 6). Oliver also resorts to valency, which continues when returning to the request discussed (turn 8).

In turns 11 and 13, Emily contrasts direct and conventionally indirect requests by jokingly (marked by the subsequent laughter) taking a personal position presented as a rule (Bloome *et al.*, 2008), that is, “You say” and “You don’t say.” Meanwhile, Oliver’s overlapping speech in turns 10 and 14 suggests that he is thinking aloud and not paying attention to the others’ contributions (Marková *et al.*, 2007), as he attempts to ground his position (turns 16 and 18). He also proposes providing a reason for the request, which he in turn 18 seemingly connects with the requestive force (“depends on how, like, the sentence is in the first place”). Whereas this was produced in Norwegian (reason = *grunn*), *reason* was also used as a scientific concept for grounders, namely, “reasons, explanations, or justifications” external to the request itself (Blum-Kulka *et al.*, 1989, p. 287), during instruction. Thus, it is possible that Oliver drew on his conceptual knowledge, and his comment could be interpreted as a call for softening the force of direct requests by employing grounders. In turn 20, Oliver produces a virtual voice (Marková *et al.*, 2007), which brings in a notion of choice when requesting.

Thus far, Oliver has largely directed the discussion, the researcher mainly backchanneling and

employing monosyllabic utterances, allowing the learners to (co-)construct their reflections. However, in turn 23, the researcher becomes involved by attempting to clarify. This is confirmed by Emily and then Oliver, who argues that “the context has something to do with” request choice (turn 25). Oliver then takes a personal position (Bloome *et al.*, 2008), reverting to the pragmalinguistics of requesting (turn 28) by demonstrating how to make the request “better”: opting for a conventionally indirect request. This is supported by Emily (turns 29 and 31), who also provides an example of a direct request as a contrast, emphasising the verb “lend.” Oliver subsequently makes a pragmalinguistic observation that “two words can make it much better” (turn 33), referring to the modal verb and second person pronoun (“can you”).

Once again, the researcher becomes involved by attempting to include the others (turn 34), upon which both Emily and Sophia further support Oliver’s notion. Emily (turn 35) makes a firm negative stance towards the request “Lend me money” as “rude,” marked by emphatic stress, and suggests a conventionally indirect request to make it “much better”. Sophia modifies a conventionally indirect request with a grounder (turn 37). Their stances are supported by Oliver, who employs scientific concepts relating to directness. First, he once again brings in the context, namely that direct requests are “not always good” (turn 39). Then, almost presented as a rule, he points out the importance of having a wide repertoire of request strategies, possibly to make informed choices in communication.

In Example 1 the learners spend a considerable time working with the request, indicated by the number of turns before the episode reaches a conclusion. After revisiting and building on each other’s ideas, scientific concepts are employed following a discussion about the contextually situated nature of requesting (Spencer-Oatey, 2008), that is, through a relational lens exemplified with a particular group of interlocutors, namely “friend.” This is contrasted with a distant interlocutor and the valenced term *impoliteness* is used as an evaluative frame (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). The learners seemed to opt for conventionally indirect requests as more appropriate than direct ones and used examples to ground their discussion. Conventionally indirect requests, namely, requests containing suggestions or referencing preparatory conditions (e.g., “Could you give me a lift?”) (Blum-Kulka *et al.*, 1989), are common in both Norwegian and English (Barron, 2008; Fretheim, 2005) and in EFL requests produced by young Norwegian learners (Savić, 2015; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b).

Towards the end of the discussion (turns 39 and 41), Oliver employs scientific concepts, pointing to direct requests as not always being preferable, thus demonstrating an awareness of the interplay between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Ishihara, 2013; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b). More importantly, his comment may be interpreted such that knowing the difference between direct and conventionally indirect (referred to as *in-between*) requests is an important factor for requesting. This displays an awareness of agency related to requestive behaviour. By incorporating conceptual vocabulary to articulate their understanding (van Compernelle, 2014), the learners make explicit references to knowledge about—and the choices related to—requesting in communication by elevating the discussion to an abstract realm (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). This indicates that exposure to and engagement with these concepts become driving forces towards making informed choices in communication, with the scientific concepts thus making the learners capable of self-regulating their behaviours (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014). Furthermore, such comments suggest that the learners had internalised the scientific concepts to the extent of using them in their verbalised reflections and recognising their implications in use (Vygotsky, 2012/1934).

The communicative value of hints

In a similar vein, Group 7 appraised a request taking place in a supermarket. In this request John and Alex ask a stranger to help them: “Excuse me, we can’t reach the chopped tomatoes.” All the group

members had a neutral assessment of the request (Table 5). Example 2 presents the ensuing discussion.

Table 5 Appraisal of the request

	Yes	No	Yes
Archie		X	
Charlotte		X	
Ethan	X		
Isabella		X	

Example 2

- 1 Int: What do you think about this one? Here you thought it was in the middle { 5 }
- 2 Isabelle: [Yes]
- 3 Archie: [Uhm]
- 4 Int: [What] is it that makes it end up in the middle?
- 5 Isabelle: You could perhaps a (.) ask if like (.) if he could help them.
- 6 Archie: *Hint* is actually quite okay, but I don't think it's that polite.
- 7 Charlotte: They could perhaps have said
- 8 Int: [No]
- 9 Charlotte: I 'can you] please help?'
- 10 Archie: Yes, because-
- 11 Int: They could've said ['can you please help?']
- 12 Archie: [Then he must, sort of - he] - then, like, HE has to ask if he should do it.
- 13 Int: [Uh-huh]
- 14 Charlotte: [That is], he has to {say} "Shall I help you?"
- 15 Archie: Must you, like, bother him with it?

In Example 2, Isabelle and Archie respond to the researcher's question, signalling their involvement in the discussion (Marková *et al.*, 2007), with Isabelle confirming their appraisal (turn 2). The researcher then redirects his question towards the appraisal. Afterwards, there is minimal researcher involvement apart from backchanneling and the validation of the learners' points through repetition in turn 11 (Bloomer *et al.*, 2008). Displaying uncertainty through an adverb ("perhaps"), Isabelle (turn 5) points to the pragmalinguistics of the request, suggesting changing it into a question focusing on the hearer's availability. Isabelle's comment prompts Archie to use the scientific concept *hint* (turn 6), pointing to the communicative function of hints as requests ("actually quite okay"), whilst taking a valenced position (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Charlotte (turns 7 and 9) suggests improving the requests by producing a conventionally indirect request, thus supporting Isabelle's previous statement. Archie (turn 12) then elaborates on the group's position by taking the hearer's perspective, marked by emphatic stress; the request in question is an added imposition as it forces the hearer's action, that is, offering to help. This is further developed by Charlotte (turn 14), who produces a virtual response (Marková *et al.*, 2007). Finally, Archie asks a rhetorical question, grounding the learners' view that the speaker should attempt to minimise the imposition on the hearer.

After appraising the request, the learners make an explicit reference to its directness using an internalised scientific concept, namely *hint*, followed by a valenced statement (Kádár & Haugh, 2013) as not “that polite.” Compared with a previous study with YLLs (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), this focus on the communicative function of hints is noteworthy. Savić and Myrset found that although Norwegian EFL learners produced hints in third, fifth, and seventh grade, they seemed insecure when appraising such requests. This insecurity was confirmed when they explained their choices. They seemed uncertain about the communicative function of hints as requests, which can be explained by YLLs’ ability to comprehend hints preceding metapragmatic understandings (Bernicot *et al.*, 2007). Considering this, the concept-based approach to instruction seems to have provided the learners with tools for reflection. Deriving from an understanding about their functions as requests, the scientific concepts enabled a more nuanced discussion, focusing on the communicative value, or appropriateness, of hints for the specific situation rather than the communicative intent. In this case, the learners clearly state their position about hints and the imposition on the hearer by putting themselves in “the other person’s shoes as a means of understanding the situation and their feelings toward it” (Thomas, 2006, p. 85), stating that the request requires an unnecessary response to complete the “transaction.” Their ability to see the request from the other’s perspective is a sign of metapragmatic awareness, also identified by Lee (2010).

Furthermore, as found in previous research with YLLs (e.g., Ishihara, 2013; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a), the L1 may have served as a scaffold for metapragmatic awareness (Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018). In this case, the learners may have considered a Norwegian ethos as the rationale for their judgment: “‘self-sufficiency, independence’ are key notions of Norwegian individualism, and that this is connected with values of self-control (not to bother others/manage on one’s own) and the belief that people need ‘peace and quiet’” (Rygg, 2017, p. 10). Consequently, the learners’ appraisals derive from a sociocultural frame of reference with which they view the request through their lived empirical experiences (van Compernelle, 2014), using an internalised scientific concept to generalise. In other words, the scientific concept *hint* had made the learners aware of their function as requests, allowing them to reflect on the appropriateness of hints in such situations from an abstract position.

Scientific concepts as an awareness-raising tool in the L1

Example 3 shows a discussion by Group 3. Developing from an impromptu question on directness, the learners compare strategies in Norwegian and English. The learners had already employed these scientific concepts prior to the question.

Example 3

- | | | |
|---|---------|---|
| 1 | Int: | Yes (.) Ehm. Now I’ll – I’ll ask a question that MIGHT be difficult to answer, uhm, but I’ll ask anyway. (.) We’ve talked about (.) <i>direct</i> , (.) <i>in-between</i> , (.) and <i>HINT</i> . |
| 2 | Emily: | Uh-uh. |
| 3 | Int: | Do we have them in Norwegian? (1.5) |
| 4 | Emily: | [Hmm] |
| 5 | Int: | [Do we] have the same three in Norwegian? |
| 6 | Oliver: | YES! |
| 7 | Int: | Do we? |

- 8 Leo: [No.]
 9 Emily: [Wait a minute,] I just need to think a little bit.
 10 Leo: Or (1.2) not really.
 11 Emily: Yes, ACTually.
 12 Int: What would be (.) if you were *direct* in Norwegian?
 13 Sophia: Then it's like (.)
 14 Oliver: Then it's (.)
 15 Int: If we say – if we have – [if we say-]
 16 Leo: ["Gi meg penger. "] {Give me money}
 17 Oliver: Yes. "Give me money."
 18 Int: "Give me money."
 19 Oliver: "Gi meg den kontrolleren, eller så knekker jeg den i to." {Give me that controller, or I'll snap it in two.}
 20 All: ((laughter))
 21 Int: Yes, that's with a threat.
 22 Emily: Yes.
 23 Oliver: A threat.
 24 Int: But *direct*, "give me that controller." (.) Uhm what would that be as *in-between* then?
 25 Oliver: *In-between* ehm (1.4) Uhm. "Jeg vil ha- Kan jeg kanskje få" {I will have – Can I perhaps have} (.) uhm
 26 Emily: Pizza.
 27 Oliver: "Kan vi ha pizza til middag?" {Can we have pizza for dinner?}
 28 Int: "Can we have pizza [for] dinner?"
 29 Emily: [Yes]
 30 Int: *Hint* then?
 31 Oliver: [*Hint*. Then it's like]
 32 Emily: [Then it's like] "Åh, jeg er sulten." {Oh, I am hung-y.}
 33 Oliver: That one is a little more diffic-
 34 Int: "Oh, I am hungry. "
 35 Oliver: Yes, that exists in Norway too.

Initiated by the question (turn 1), the learners attempt to compare requesting in Norwegian and English. Initially the learners' responses differ. Oliver and Leo respond categorically (turns 6 and 8), whereas Emily seems uncertain (turn 9). Oliver displays most certainty, marked by the emphatic stress (turn 6). Leo then modifies his response (turn 10), the pause suggesting a more hesitant position. Emily then comes to a realisation marked by the added stress ("ACTually"). Using scientific concepts, the researcher mediates the discussion by prompting the learners to produce requests in their L1, with both Sophia and Oliver pausing mid-sentence when responding (turns 13 and 14), possibly showing uncertainty or taking time to think. Leo then produces a direct request (turn 16), which Oliver confirms and lends support to through reiteration (Marková *et al.*, 2007). Prompted by the example, Oliver produces his own example by adding a threat. Using Oliver's example, the researcher turns to conventionally indirect requests, which Oliver and Emily co-construct (turns 25 and 26) before Oliver presents the final product (turn 27). This is validated through the researcher's repetition (Bloome *et al.*, 2008), and supported by Emily (turn 29). The researcher then redirects the attention towards hints (turn 30). Using the example of asking for dinner (turns 25-27), Emily produces a hint in turn 32 ("Oh, I am hungry"). Interestingly, Emily's example

is framed by Oliver's comment on the difficulty regarding Norwegian hints, which is interrupted by the researcher reiterating the request (turn 34), before Oliver reaches a conclusion about L1 request strategies, supporting his initial response in turn 6.

In Example 3, the learners compare their L1 and the target language, prompted by the researcher's questions and use of scientific concepts. More specifically, this example shows how knowledge about the L1 is co-constructed, with the researcher as mediator, by using the scientific concepts as scaffolding for gaining deeper understandings. This is in line with Vygotsky's (2012/1934, p. 207) view that "a foreign language facilitates mastering the higher forms of the native language" which leads to awareness in the L1. This suggests that not only can the learners' L1 lived experiences serve as a framework for developing an awareness in the target language (Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-b), but the target language may generate deeper insights into the L1. Thus, in addition to internalising concepts to be used in various situations (Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014), in this excerpt the concepts transcended languages, rendering it possible for the learners to transfer their systematic and abstract knowledge into their L1. Whereas these findings stem from an impromptu question, they suggest that concept-based approaches may also have a washback effect for language development. Rather than maintaining a dichotomy between languages in the classroom, or unidirectional pragmatics instruction from L1 to L2, concept-based approaches provide a foundation for developing an awareness in both languages.

Summary

The overall coding of metapragmatic episodes revealed a limited number in which the learners employed scientific concepts as part of their reflections. This is in line with Vygotsky (2012/1934, p. 161), who holds that "the path from the first encounter with a new concept to the point where the concept and the corresponding word are fully appropriated by the child is long and complex." What this suggests is that learners need to work with such concepts over time before they become internalised resources for reflection and action.

In contrast to previous research with learners of a similar background who had not received pragmatics instruction (Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a, Forthcoming-b), this study shows how scientific concepts provided the learners with tools for elevating their discussions to an abstract sense. Consequently, the explicit input of concepts enabled the learners to explore phenomena related to requests, that is, choices, communicative intent, and comparisons between the L1 and the target language, in a more generalised sense (Vygotsky, 2012/1934). Considering that metapragmatic awareness develops on a continuum of increased sophistication (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016), one could argue that the reflections provide examples of how this sophistication increased with the help of scientific concepts.

Implications and Future Research

This study provides pedagogical and methodological insights. Pragmatic behaviours are already (un)consciously acquired in YLLs' L1 and developing in their L2. In this L2 development, the study has revealed that scientific concepts can provide learners with knowledge that is generalisable beyond the strategies themselves and has a washback effect on their L1. Thus, both concept-based approaches and the conscious use of the L1 during instruction may serve as powerful tools for reflection (e.g., Chavarría & Bonany, 2006; McConachy, 2018; Savić & Myrset, Forthcoming-a), in which instruction provides insights into the target language and charts new paths of knowledge about the learners' L1 through mediation (Vygotsky, 2012/1934).

The discussions and use of scientific concepts presented herein highlight the potential for using concept-based approaches when teaching pragmatics with YLLs. As Ishihara (2010, p. 946) holds, “[w]hile adults have been found to benefit from explicit instruction of pragmatics, the same approach is unlikely to serve young children in the same manner.” Thus, the current study shows that explicit input does indeed facilitate YLLs’ pragmatic development. Furthermore, the discussions revealed an awareness of the resources available when requesting, which serves a basis for moving away from misconceptions about one-on-one mappings of language resources, or rules of thumb (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; van Compernelle, 2014), also found with older language learners (e.g., Savić, 2014).

Interestingly, whilst scientific concepts were introduced to move away from teaching rules of thumb, the learners resorted to valency (e.g., “rude,” “impolite”) as frames to comment on specific linguistic resources. Still, the learners showed a heightened awareness of choices related to requesting, both relating to context and strategies. This suggests that the instruction had provided the learners with a foundation in which further instruction could have facilitated more nuanced discussions about the language, context, and their interplay, thus fostering additional development towards agency. From the perspective of L2 teaching, in which learners are not necessarily able to engage with the target language in everyday settings outside the classroom, such reflections, mediated by scientific concepts and their lived experiences, may serve as a powerful foundation for gaining an understanding of the complexities of language in context.

The findings from this study provide potential research avenues. Future instructional pragmatics research could employ concept-based approaches with YLLs to: 1) provide further evidence of the overall impact for pragmatics instruction; 2) investigate how scientific concepts can support learner reflections in classroom settings, that is, conceptual development with peers and the teacher; and 3) explore the teachability of other pragmatic targets, for example, other speech acts. Since YLLs remain under-researched, such explorations would provide evidence to answer which pedagogical approaches and pragmatic targets are suitable for this group of learners (Ishihara, 2010; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019). Furthermore, the framework used to identify the metapragmatic episodes could be employed in future studies of YLLs’ metapragmatic awareness, another under-explored area (Myrset & Savić, 2021).

Conclusion

This article has explored whether and how YLLs used scientific concepts to express their metapragmatic understandings. It shows that the learners had appropriated the scientific concepts to various extents, evidenced by their appearance during the interviews. The in-depth analysis of excerpts revealed that these were employed as a point of departure and a conclusion for discussions in which the learners drew on various frames of reference and topics, such as lived experiences, valency, and contextual considerations. In addition, the appropriation of scientific concepts enabled the learners to gain new insights into their L1. The data indicates that conscious use of scientific concepts in mediation may facilitate learners’ (meta)pragmatic development. By providing insights from intact classes of YLLs, thus adding to previous research (e.g., Morollón Martí, Forthcoming; van Compernelle, 2014; van Compernelle *et al.*, 2016), this study reveals the potential for concept-based pragmatics instruction with these age groups. Furthermore, it suggests that these learners benefit from explicit input, thus providing insights into previous claims about the feasibility of explicit pragmatics instruction with YLLs (e.g., Ishihara, 2010).

It is, however, important to consider these findings in the light of their limitations. This was a small-scale study with the researcher teaching the material. Although the prolonged engagement

influenced the instruction, with an expert mediator giving the treatment, it facilitated rapport-building, reducing a learner-researcher power imbalance during the interviews (Pinter & Zandian, 2014). Furthermore, the data is limited in scope, but presents detailed accounts of how the discussions developed. Providing children with a voice and opportunities to share their perspectives is important in YLL research. However, a potential pitfall is misinterpretations of their formulations (Pinter, 2014). Consequently, the author has attempted to be transparent in the procedures for identifying and selecting the examples, and by providing thick descriptions (Tracy, 2010). Given the small sample and limited data pool, generalisations are not possible. However, these findings may be transferrable to other contexts.

This study shows that beyond “plant[ing] pragmatic seeds in young learners of pragmatics” (Ishihara, 2013, p. 146), explicit pragmatics instruction through scientific concepts provides YLLs with a foundation for metapragmatic reflections. Thus, language teachers should aim to develop YLLs’ metapragmatic awareness, and explicit input through scientific concepts can support this development. Reflections and deeper insights into the target language may facilitate the learners’ ability to make informed choices in language use, thus preparing them for communication outside the classroom. This is relevant for any language, but particularly in English, considering its position as a global language. Introducing a conceptual foundation that can be employed in any communicative situation fosters YLLs’ agency mediated by their metapragmatic awareness. Ultimately, this foundation enables them to regulate their own learning and prepares them to confidently and reflexively engage in communication with people of diverse L1 and cultural backgrounds.

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Appendix – Transcription guidelines

Meaning	Symbol	Example
<i>Language used</i>		
English	Italics	<i>“Oh, I’m all out of money. Lend me some.”</i>
Norwegian	Roman	What do you think about this one?
Overlapping speech	word [word]	[Yes]
	[word]	[What] is – it’s a friend
<i>Pauses</i>		
Brief pause	(.)	But it really (.) depends on whom one is saying it to.
Pause of indicated length in seconds	(1.2)	Or (1.2) not really.
<i>Prominence</i>		
Lengthened segment	wo:rd	<i>“lend me so:me”</i>
Emphasised syllable	WORD	If it had been a FRIEND
<i>Relevant additional information</i>		
Comments on verbal and non-verbal communication	((comment))	[You say] “give me something – lend it to me” ((laughs))
Clarification	{comment}	[That is], he has to {say} “Shall I help you?”

***Article IV - Giving young language learners a voice:
learner feedback on pragmatics instruction***

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Articles

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