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ARTICLE

The Role of Collaborative vs. Individual Learning of Pragmatics in Enhancing Iraqi EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence and Pragmatic Motivation: The Predictive Power of Pragmatic Mindset

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ABSTRACT

Motivational factors play an important role in language learners' learning and achievement. While a lot of research has been done on various motivational aspects of second language learning, less research has been done on motivation and mindsets specific to the pragmatics of second language learning. This study investigated the effect of collaborative learning, as compared with individualized instruction, on Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic performance and pragmatic motivation and how learners' growth pragmatic mindset could predict their pragmatic performance. Following quasi-experimental and correlational designs, the study used a discourse completion test to collect data on learners' pragmatic competence and questionnaires to collect data on their pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindsets. This study employed a quasi-experimental design with three groups (collaborative, individual, control) and a correlational analysis to examine mindset. The results of the study indicated that collaborative learning had significant positive effects on EFL learners' pragmatic performance and pragmatic motivation and that EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset could significantly predict their pragmatic performance. Based on the findings, it is suggested that teachers adopt collaborative learning strategies in textbooks and classroom instruction to promote language learners' pragmatic competence and pragmatic motivation and assess learners' pragmatic mindsets at the beginning of instructional courses involving pragmatics.

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence plays a key role in shaping second language (L2) learners' communicative competence. Since the introduction of the communicative competence hypothesis[1], the importance of L2 learners' pragmatic competence in successful communication has been widely recognized in both L2 research and pedagogy. Hymes's[1] communicative competence hypothesis marked a milestone in the fields of L2 acquisition and pedagogy by recognizing learners' ability to use language besides their implicit knowledge of language. In fact, Hymes's[1] hypothesis was an objection to earlier models of linguistic competence, particularly that of Chomsky[2]. Later, more detailed models of communicative competence were proposed by Canale and Swain[3] and Bachman[4]. Canale and Swain's[3] initial model was composed of grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence, while their later model was composed of four components with the addition of discourse competence. Bachman's[4] model has probably been the most comprehensive model of communicative competence, comprising linguistic and strategic competence and psychophysiological factors. In this model, L2 learners' pragmatic competence is considered a part of psychophysiological factors and includes illocutionary and sociolinguistic competencies. Pragmatic competence has been defined as the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real use contexts. It involves understanding the intended meaning of utterances beyond their literal meaning, including social and cultural factors. Speech acts, actions performed through language, such as requests, apologies, or compliments form the core of pragmatic competence.

Two factors are particularly important in developing L2 pragmatic competence: pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindset. Pragmatic motivation refers to L2 learners' desire for "the acquisition and development of pragmatic competence and its components..... learners' motivation for the acquisition of language functions, speech acts and their realization patterns, pragmalinguistic forms, and sociopragmatic norms"[5]. Pragmatic mindsets refer to L2 learners' implicit theories about pragmatic aspects of language and the extent to which learners' knowledge of pragmatics is fixed or changeable[6]. Research has shown that language learners' mindsets can predict their motivation for learning language and knowledge of language. Past studies have shown that fixed mindsets negatively correlate with the intention to learn language but positively correlate with fear of failure[7]. Also, growth mindsets positively correlate with learning goals and negatively with fear of failure[7].

An important question in L2 instruction is what methods to use for teaching pragmatic knowledge. There are two types of pragmatics instruction: explicit and implicit[8]. Numerous studies have examined these types of teaching. Explicit instruction encompasses direct meta-pragmatic explanations of sociopragmatic rules, while implicit instruction does not directly teach the target feature but employs different methods to enhance learners' incidental thinking on pragmatic rules[9]. Research has also indicated an advantage of explicit over implicit instruction in developing pragmatic competence[10,11]. However, the evidence is not conclusive about the effectiveness of various instructional methods of L2 pragmatics[12,13]. Collaborative learning has been shown to have strong potential for enhancing L2 knowledge, skills, and pragmatics. Collaborative learning has its roots in Vygotsky's[14] sociocultural theory of mind and uses techniques such as peer and group work, collaborative dialogue, negotiation of meaning, peer teaching, small group discussions, role plays, role simulations, jigsaw reading and writing, think-pair-share, information gap activities, and dictogloss to promote L2 development. All these activities are intended to enhance collaboration and interaction among learners to assist them acquire English speech acts, mainly requests and apologies.

Research on traditional collaborative learning principally investigated the efficacy of collaboration, impacts of group heterogeneity, individual preconditions, characteristics of collaborative tasks, and interactions between collaborators[15]. With the advent of educational technology, it has changed into technology-enhanced collaborative learning[16]. In this type of collaborative learning, instructors de-

sign collaborative tasks, and learners do the tasks in groups or pairs[17]. Technology-enhanced collaborative learning has been found to be more effective than conventional collaborative learning since it provides more initiative and independence for learners[18], visualizes collaborative processes, and enables them to learn anytime, anywhere[19]. In L2 acquisition literature, studies have revealed that technology-enhanced collaborative learning improves input, brings diversity to learning tasks, reduces teachers' lecturing load, and enhances learners' interest[19–21].

In studying the learning outcome of different instructional methods employed for teaching L2 pragmatics, Ren et al.'s[8] meta-analysis of 29 relevant studies is of paramount importance. The study found significant positive effects for pragmatics instruction. Also, teaching pragmatics in foreign language contexts yielded better results compared with L2 contexts. The results of early studies of L2 pragmatics instruction showed that pragmatics can be instructed[21–23]. In another review of 49 studies Takahashi[24], found that explicit teaching was more effective than implicit teaching. In another review of 49 experimental studies Taguchi[13] found that direct teaching of pragmatics not only enhanced language learners' pragmatic knowledge, but it also improved their performance of pragmatics. The study also found that some pragmatic features better lend themselves to teaching than others. Another review conducted by Jeon[25] indicated that explicit instruction of pragmatics was more effective than implicit instruction. In the same lines, Badjadi[26] reviewed 24 studies on pragmatics instruction with the goal of investigating the effect of task design and outcome measures. The findings revealed that, on average, meta-pragmatic discussion yielded better results than input-based tasks, but in pragmatic comprehension, input-based tasks were more effective. Another meta-analysis of pragmatics instruction Yousefi and Nassaji[27] reviewed 39 studies carried out from 2006 to 2016. The study evaluated the effects of both face-to-face and computer-mediated teaching of L2 pragmatics. The review indicated that explicit instruction of pragmatics was more effective than implicit teaching and that instruction improved comprehension more than production. Further, the study found that computer-mediated teaching created better results compared with face-to-face teaching. A more comprehensive review was conducted by Plonsky and Zhuang[12] examining 50 studies on pragmatics instruction. The findings revealed lasting and satisfactory learning effects for L2 pragmatics instruction. This research also found that explicit teaching was more effective than implicit instruction.

Regarding the relationship between L2 learners' mindsets (fixed or growth) for learning pragmatics and development of L2 pragmatics, as Zarrinabadi et al.[6] note, no study has investigated this topic. L2 pragmatic mindsets refer to learners' beliefs about the learnability of L2 pragmatic norms[28,29]. Fixed pragmatics mindset means believing that one's knowledge of pragmatics is unchangeable while growth mindset means believing that one's pragmatics knowledge is changeable. The importance of mindsets lies in the fact that learners' mindsets affect their motivation for learning language. Zarrinabadi et al.[6] investigated the relationship between EFL learners' mindsets, motivation, and pragmatic behaviour. They found that L2 learners' mindsets and language competence could significantly predict their pragmatic motivation. This finding supported the results of earlier studies referring to the relationship between L2 learners' mindsets and motivation for language learning. Furthermore, Zarrinabadi et al.[6] found that L2 learners' growth mindset is positively related to the pragmalinguistic dimensions of pragmatics. Moreover, the study indicated that fixed pragmatic mindsets could negatively predict the sociopragmatic aspect of L2 pragmatics.

In spite of all the research conducted on L2 pragmatics and the appreciation of the role of pragmatics in acquiring communicative competence[30], pragmatics instruction has generally been ignored in EFL contexts. Iraqi EFL instructors tend to adopt the traditional teacher-centered approach; hence, students do not usually get sufficient opportunity for interaction, communicative practice, and collaborative work involving pragmatics. In such an instructional context, learners gradually lose interest in learning pragmatics since the language is not used for communicative purposes in the social context[31]. Collaborative learning can be utilized to create a social situation reflecting real-life language use.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Foundations of Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning studies have roots in three theoretical approaches: Vygotsky's[14] sociocultural perspective,

the second language acquisition (SLA) perspective, and the motivational perspective. Social constructivism highlights learners' active involvement in social interaction for knowledge making[14]. The most important concepts within social constructivism are collaborative learning and negotiation of meaning. In this era of technology, a key concept in this approach is computer-assisted collaborative learning emerged as an extension of the previous theoretical framework[32].

In sociocultural theory, the key concepts are private speech, zone of proximal development (ZPD), mediation, internalization, scaffolding, activity theory, and situated learning[33]. Social constructivist theory argues that learners co-construct knowledge by constant interaction and assistance[14]. In activities rooted in this framework, when learners are required to complete a task together, they depend on each other and share the responsibility for completing the task[34]. Key constructs of the sociocultural approach have guided collaborative learning activities in the literature. Collaborative dialoguing shows that interlocutors gain successful communication by prompts, co-construction, and recasts, involving expert-novice interaction[17]. Framing forms the core of collaborative learning, collaboration; in this process, learners' languages and behaviors are in line with the needs of the community, which further facilitates learners' linguistic development[35]. According to this viewpoint, students gain pragmatic knowledge not just through formal instruction but through collaborative engagement with their peers. Collaborative assignments can help students improve their pragmatic skills by allowing them to engage in authentic conversation and reflect on language use in context[36].

Collaborative learning in EFL also has a close interconnection with the theory of SLA[37]. Two hypotheses are of critical importance in SLA: the input hypothesis[38] and the output hypothesis[38–40]. The former stated that L2 acquisition basically takes place through the comprehensible input a learner receives. The latter argues that when the language input is comprehensible and essential for learners, it enables them to speak and produce output for restructuring their interlanguage grammar. As Swain[40] puts it, "the act of producing language constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning." In a collaborative learning setting, students are provided with more prospects to repair their comprehension in the community. The communication between learners can determine L2 learning[41].

The third approach underlying collaborative learning is the motivation perspective. Some researchers[42,43] state that motivation is a vital aspect besides cognitive abilities to determine L2 achievement. In collaborative learning, motivation emerges when learners receive group rewards at the time they can accomplish learning objectives. Additionally, learners are more motivated when they work together instead of working individually.

2.2. Collaborative Learning and Pragmatics

Collaborative learning refers to instructional methodologies where students work together to accomplish shared learning goals. Through collaborative learning, learners or collaborators share useful information and activate collective strengths to solve common problems[15]. The heart of collaborative learning is collaborative dialogue[39], which shifts the focus from cognitive to the sociocultural theory of mind[14]. It follows a more dynamic and learner-centered approach for L2 acquisition. As Swain[39] notes, collaborative dialogue is a dialogue where "language use and language learning can co-occur. It is language use that mediates language learning. It is cognitive activity, and it is social activity"[39]. According to Swain et al.[44], throughout collaborative dialogue, language works as social and cognitive meditational means; it is a cognitive tool considering its meaning-making function, and a social tool considering communication. Collaborating learners learn from each other to overcome weaknesses[16]. Other benefits of collaborative learning, compared with individual learning, include enhanced communicative competence, critical-thinking skills, and problem-solving capabilities[45].

Collaborative dialogue with peers facilitates language acquisition in both second and foreign language environments[46–48]. Nevertheless, in foreign language contexts, engaging in collaborative dialogue can be challenging due to the scarcity of L2 speakers. Furthermore, it is essential for this interaction to encompass a variety of speakers and contexts, enabling L2 learners to acquire socio-pragmatic knowledge, which pertains to the norms and behaviors dictating cultural interactions, as well as pragma-linguistic competence, which relates to the language associated with these norms and behaviors. For learners to become proficient users of language, it is imperative that their L2 be not only fluent, accurate, and complex but also contextually appropriate.

Being pragmatically competent means that learners utilize language that aligns with their interlocutors' relationships and backgrounds within a specific context to achieve communicative goals. Additionally, this process must unfold dynamically and interactively as conversations progress. Mastering pragmatics is challenging and necessitates numerous practice opportunities. Consequently, when native speakers are not easily accessible, computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools such as Google Meet present an opportunity to connect with speakers in distant locations, thereby offering students the necessary contexts for engaging in genuine, authentic, and meaningful interactions. Technology-mediated tasks serve as excellent platforms for facilitating authentic and contextualized interactions that can enhance L2 pragmatic learning [36].

Collaborative learning shares several characteristics with communicative language teaching. Both underline interaction; in both methods, learners engage in communicative practice while the teacher acts as the facilitator of communication. Collaborative language learning reduces students' stress and provides a relaxed learning environment. Learners interact with each other, feeling comfortable and confident. Face-to-face interaction reduces pressure and encourages learners to attain optimal learning outcomes. In foreign language contexts, collaborative learning is often represented by collaborative writing [49], dictogloss [50], grammar learning with peers [51], peer feedback and interaction on writing [52], and speaking [53], and similar small group activities.

Apart from learning, collaboration and cooperation among learners enhance motivation [54], which is a critical requirement for maintaining learner interest and engagement. The commitment and enthusiasm learners experience while working in groups facilitate their active participation in the tasks [55]. Finally, collaborative learning gradually promotes learner autonomy and independence from the teacher [56]. It also enhances critical thinking skills [57,58], which help learners analyze arguments and make decisions [59]. In addition, it improves students' metacognition [60] and metacognitive skills, in turn, help learners to recognize their thinking to clarify their beliefs and concepts.

2.3. Technology-Enhanced Collaborative Learning and Pragmatics Instruction

The application of technology in collaborative learning has been a major focus of recent SLA literature. Zhao [61] discusses four aspects of application of technology in L2 learning: technology used to increase input or exposure; technology used to enhance exercise and feedback; technology used for promoting authentic communication; and technology used for maintaining learner motivation. Digital platforms facilitate real-time interaction and resource sharing among students [62].

Studies investigating the effectiveness of technology-enhanced collaborative learning approaches have used Google Docs, Google Sites, Digital Mysteries [63], Digital Storyboard [64], and subtitling [65] to enhance collaboration among learners and facilitate learning. The study [66] has indicated that technology-enhanced collaborative learning can significantly improve student engagement and learning outcomes by providing flexible and accessible means for collaboration.

A line of this research has focused on the integration of technology with L2 pragmatics instruction. Several studies have focused on learner-teacher communication through the medium of e-mail; these studies have primarily focused on interaction involving directness, mitigators, politeness, and supportive moves in various speech acts. Overall, the results of these works have revealed that even advanced L2 learners face problems regarding facework and appropriate use of mitigators in unequal power situations [67–71]. L2 learners, including Arab EFL learners, might mistakenly transfer some of the pragmatic features of their L1 to L2 [72].

2.4. Empirical Studies

A review of literature on L2 pragmatics instruction provides a better insight into the present state of research on the topic. One of the earliest studies [73] looked at how learners acquire pragmatics through input and interaction, highlighting the significance of exposure to real language use. Collaborative learning was found as an effective method for improving learners' capacity to interpret and apply pragmatic signals in context. Another relevant research Kasper and Rose [74] established a fundamental paradigm for teaching pragmatics. The study proposed that pragmatics instruction should emphasize real-world communication rather than grammatical perfection. The researchers described how explicit instruction paired with pragmatic awareness raising can help learners enhance their capacity to use language effectively in social situations. The work has encouraged

collaborative approaches to pragmatic instruction [75].

In another study, González-Lloret [36] explored the use of technology in collaborative learning of pragmatics, focusing on online communication. She found that online collaborative tasks allow students to negotiate meaning and practice pragmatic tactics like requests, apologies, and arguments, which are typically difficult to master through solitary study.

Another study [23] of teaching L2 pragmatics revealed that learners benefit from interactional tasks requiring collaborative problem-solving. The study emphasized the value of task-based learning and interaction for establishing pragmatic competence. In this manner, collaborative learning allows students to negotiate meaning while also being exposed to authentic communicative practice.

Hinkel [76] also found that collaborative learning activities allow students to investigate cultural disparities in pragmatic norms. She highlighted the importance of pragmatic competence in L2, including the ability to overcome intercultural communication barriers.

Pardo-Tolentino and Aggabao [77] examined the effect of collaborative strategies on learners' attitudes towards such learning procedures. The learners rated five collaborative strategies as effective for language learning: jigsaw puzzle, mind mapping, round robin, think-pair-share, and send a problem. The learners who enjoyed collaborative learning strategies also demonstrated a significant gain on the post-test. The study concluded that applying collaborative learning not only enhances learners' attitudes towards such instruction, but it also improved learning outcomes.

Adopting a social constructivist approach [78], examined the impact of social factors on university students' collaborative learning, engagement, and performance. The results revealed that social factors including peer and teacher interaction, social presence, and use of social media support students' collaborative learning and engagement leading to improved learning performance.

Similarly, Fakher et al. [79] examined how peers' collaborative dialogue help EFL learners to perform the pragmatic functions of requesting, apologizing, and refusing. Analysis of the results of the speech act post-test indicated that the peer collaborative dialogue group significantly outperformed the teacher scaffolding group. The findings underlie the potential of peer mediation included in collaborative dialogue and asymmetrical proficiency pairing in learning L2 pragmatics.

Some studies [80–84] have examined the effect of L2 learners' motivation on acquiring pragmatics. For instance, Takahashi [11,84] examined the relationship between Japanese learners' language learning motivation and acquisition of L2 pragmatics. The results revealed a strong correlation between learners' motivation and pragmatic awareness.

Similarly, Cook [80] studied polite speech styles of Japanese EFL learners. The learners had to listen to some speakers and find the person who was polite enough to get a job. The researcher found that learners instructed by the same teacher differed in their discrimination of polite from impolite speech styles depending on their motivation. Thus, Cook [80] argued that motivation can lead to EFL learners' socio-pragmatic awareness.

In the same lines, Tagashira et al. [83] studied the relationship between EFL learners' motivation and pragmatic awareness. The researchers used Hiromori [85,86] scale to assess the participants' language learning motivation. They also used Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's [87] scales for measuring learners' pragmatic awareness. The findings indicated that EFL learners' pragmatic awareness differed based on their motivation; further, more self-regulated learners were more aware of L2 pragmatic rules.

Similarly, Tajeddin and Zand Moghadam [5] studied L2 pragmatic motivation from two perspectives: (1) general pragmatic motivation, representing motivation to acquire pragmatic strategies, pragmatic routines, politeness strategies, turn-taking patterns, and cultural familiarity; and (2) speech-act-specific motivation, involving learners' motivation to acquire pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms. The findings indicated that EFL learners were highly motivated to learn the pragmatic features of English from both motivational perspectives. Further analyses showed that the learners did not have satisfactory L2 pragmatic production; also, it was found that speech-act-specific motivation could predict pragmatic production in EFL learners but general pragmatic motivation could not. The researchers concluded that high general pragmatic motivation does not correlate with improved pragmatic production. This research is particularly relevant to the present study due to its focus on the relationship between pragmatic motivation and pragmatic performance.

In spite of researchers' attention to L2 pragmatics, prag-

matic motivation, collaborative learning of L2 pragmatics, pragmatic mindsets, and the relationship among these variables, there still seems to be a paucity of research on these topics. More specifically, the literature is not conclusive on these constructs and their interrelationships. In other words, there is not sound empirical evidence on the effect of collaborative learning on L2 pragmatics and pragmatic motivation, and how learners' growth pragmatic mindsets can predict L2 pragmatic performance. As with motivation research, the value of motivation in the acquisition of L2 pragmatics has only been explored in a few studies [80–84]. Such studies have mainly investigated the effect of learners' general motivation, and have not investigated the role of L2 pragmatic motivation on learning pragmatic rules and sociopragmatic norms. This lack of empirical findings is more evident in the literature on the acquisition of English pragmatics by Arab learners, especially Iraqi EFL learners.

Moreover, Iraqi EFL teachers and curriculum designers do not have enough empirical evidence to appreciate the importance of EFL learners' pragmatic competence in enhancing their communicative competence. Furthermore, there is not sufficient empirical evidence to convince Iraqi EFL educators to apply collaborative learning activities in regular EFL courses. This study was a preliminary attempt to fill in these gaps in the literature and to provide sound empirical evidence for decision makers in EFL contexts to value collaborative instruction and learning of English pragmatics.

Overall, a thorough review of the literature indicates that although this research has flourished over the past two decades, studies on the effectiveness of collaborative learning for supporting L2 pragmatic development and the relationship between EFL learners' pragmatic motivation, pragmatic mindset, and pragmatic performance are inconclusive. Specifically, in the Iraqi EFL context, such studies are so rare. Thus, this study attempted to explore the following research questions:

1. How does the type of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) affect the development of Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic performance?
2. How does the type of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) affect Iraqi EFL students' pragmatic motivation?
3. How does Iraqi EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset predict their pragmatic performance?

3. Method

3.1. Research Design

The first two research questions followed a quasi-experimental design adopting Creswell's [88] interpretation that is "a design in which the investigator can control the treatment and the measurement of the dependent variable but cannot control the assignment of the subjects to treatment and control groups." Three groups (collaborative learning, individual learning, and control) participated in the study. The three groups took the same pre-test and post-test, and the study was conducted under the same conditions to avoid threats to internal validity such as maturation, instrumentation, pre-testing, history, and regression. The third research question followed a correlational design as explained by Creswell [88].

3.2. Participants

The participants were 180 (95 male and 85 female) EFL students majoring in Medicine at AL-Kufa University, Iraq, who participated in the study in three intact groups: collaborative learning, individualized instruction, and control. In the collaborative learning group, there were 31 (51.7%) female and 29 (48.3%) male students with an age range of 18 to 33. In the individualized instruction group, there were 24 (40%) female and 36 (60%) male students with an age range of 19 to 28. In the control group, there were 30 female and 30 male learners (50% from each gender) with an age range of 19 to 28. All the participants' first language was Arabic, with similar educational backgrounds in English. All ethical considerations were met throughout the study. All the participants took part in the research voluntarily. They all read and signed an informed consent form for participation and were ensured that the collected data would be analyzed and the results would be communicated anonymously. **Table 1** shows the participants' demographic information.

Figure 1 shows the gender distribution of the participants: 53% of the participants were male, while 47% were female.

Table 1. The Participants' Demographic Information.

Groups	Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean of Age	SD	Mean of English Learning Experience/Years	SD
Control	Female Male	30 30	50.0 50.0	21.87	2.55	8.55	1.68
Individual Instruction	Female Male	24 36	40.0 60.0	21.67	2.14	8.28	2.26
Collaborative Learning	Female Male	31 29	51.7 48.3	21.85	2.70	8.95	1.66
Total	Female	85	47.2	-	-	-	-

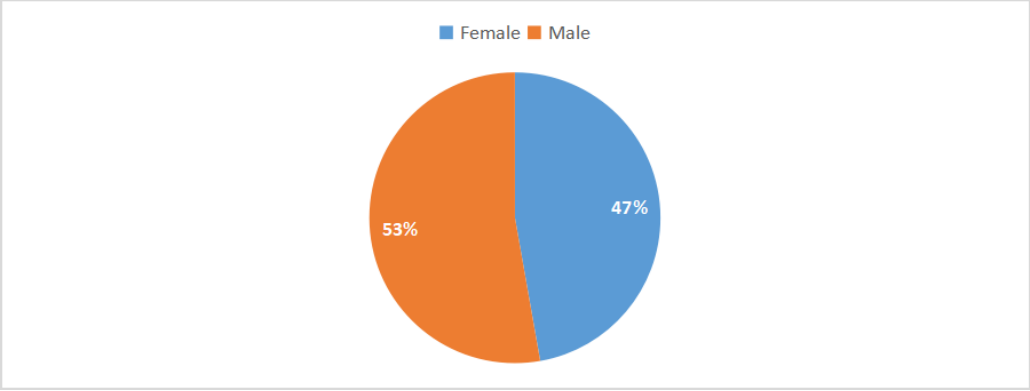

Figure 1. The Participants' Gender Distribution.

3.3. Instruments

Four instruments were used for data collection: the Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT), the discourse completion task (DCT), and the pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindset scales.

3.3.1. Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT)

The OQPT is a globally available test assessing L2 learners' general proficiency for placement purposes. The test was designed and published by Oxford University Press and University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate. The printed version of the test was administered to the three groups at the beginning of the study. It is composed of 60 multiple choice items assessing knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The results of this test were used to assure the homogeneity of the participants in terms of general language proficiency before treatment. This test is internationally known as a valid and reliable instrument.

3.3.2. The Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

According to del Mar Vanrell et al.[89], a discourse completion task (DCT) is an instrument used in linguistics to elicit language users' knowledge of speech acts. It consists of a one-sided scenario containing a situational prompt that a participant reads to elicit the responses of another participant. The instrument was originally developed by Shoshana in 1989 for studying speech act realization comparatively between native and non-native Hebrew speakers, based on the work of Levenston[90]. The DCT used in this study was composed of 16 scenarios, each describing a situational prompt followed by three answers; the students had to read the scenarios and choose the most appropriate answer based on the pragmatic and sociocultural rules of English. The tasks assessed the participants' pragmatic competence in making polite requests and apologies. The following is an example scenario of the DCT, followed by three answers:

Scenario 1:

You are attending a seminar. It is a very sunny day and the classroom is hot. The professor is standing near the window. You ask him to open it.

1. *Excuse me professor it's really hot in here. Could you open the window please?*
2. *Excuse me please open the window.*
3. *Hey open that.*

3.3.3. The Pragmatic Motivation Questionnaire

The pragmatic motivation questionnaire was adopted from Tajeddin and Zand Moghadam[5] and was designed to assess EFL learners' motivation for learning pragmatics. The questionnaire is composed of 40 items on a five-point Likert. As the authors note, the scale measures language users' "cultural familiarity, politeness strategies, familiarity with speech acts, and situations, and strategies for meaning conveyance" (p. 356). The goal of the questionnaire is to determine if language learners are appropriately motivated to acquire the pragmatic aspects of English, or if they merely focus on learning grammar and vocabulary. The authors report that they piloted the questionnaire with 300 learners and obtained a Cronbach's alpha internal consistency index of 0.86. As Tajeddin and Zand Moghadam[5] report, the results of factor analysis revealed that 12 factors underlie the questionnaire, including psychological barriers, cultural familiarity, appropriacy, situational acquisition, difficulty in language use, real-world language use, turn-taking, language forms, meaning conveyance, language use context, communication needs, and indirect language use. Before the main phase of the study, the test was piloted with 30 Iraqi EFL students; Cronbach's alpha index for the test was 0.84; thus, it was considered a reliable instrument.

3.3.4. The Pragmatic Mindset Scale

The pragmatic mindset questionnaire was adopted from Zarrinabadi et al.[6] and was composed of 6 items on a five-point Likert-type scale. Three items assessed a fixed pragmatic mindset, and three measured growth pragmatic mindset. An example of items reflecting growth pragmatic mindset was *"You can always get better at understanding and using a foreign language in conversations."* The test was piloted with 30 Iraqi EFL learners; its reliability (Cronbach's alpha) index was 0.85.

It should be noted that the validity of the scales was ensured by using expert judgment and using the scales that have been used for assessing these variables in the field before.

3.4. Treatment

Three treatment procedures were offered: the collaborative learning treatment, the individual learning treatment, and the control group treatment.

3.4.1. Collaborative Learning Treatment

First, the instructor divided the collaborative group into smaller groups with 4 or 5 students per group to work together collaboratively. She allowed students to sort themselves into groups of friends and deliberately mixed them with different language proficiency levels and social capabilities. In each group, one student acted as the leader and took the lead in the activities. The group leader was responsible for reporting the outcome of the group activity to the teacher and communicating with other groups. Since the roles were already assigned, the instructor expected the group members to meet the goals by enabling the students to understand what is instructed. The instructor took the role of a facilitator to help learners continue communication and interaction when they had problems performing tasks. She supervised and instructed the students and encouraged discussions among them, and provided them with the necessary feedback to help group interaction go on.

The instructional materials for the experimental group consisted of a researcher-made PowerPoint file and a series of YouTube videos through which the she taught the students how to make polite requests and apologies. She taught major speech acts, minor speech acts, direct and indirect speech acts, and politeness speech acts in making requests and apologies in English. She guided them to watch the videos and try to find out how the speakers use language to make requests or apologies in different situations. She asked them to pay attention to the situations, the relationship between the interlocutors, the social status of the interlocutors, and the degree of formality or informality of the language. Then, the teacher presented the conversations to the class through PowerPoint slides she made based on the content of the videos. Next, each subgroup was asked to simulate the conversations they watched in the videos using the language they observed in the PowerPoint presentations. Members of each group had to engage in conversations similar to the one they watched in the videos and try to perform the speech acts of requesting or apologizing using pragmatically and socio-linguistically appropriate language.

In this group, collaborative learning was implemented mainly through strategies of peer teaching, small group discussions, role plays, role simulations, jigsaw reading, writing, and listening, think-pair-share, information gap activities, peer teaching, and dictogloss. All these activities were intended to

enhance collaboration and interaction among the learners.

3.4.2. Individualized Instruction Treatment

The individual learning group received eight sessions of instruction on the same content and materials taught to the collaborative learning group; however, the treatment was completely different. The instructor taught this group as a whole class using conventional explicit instruction procedures with no pair, group, or team work. She taught the same pragmatic functions presented in the collaborative learning group, mainly including appropriate ways of making requests and apologies in English. She taught them the language required for making apologies and requests. The teacher-student interactions were mostly teacher-centered and did not involve any peer collaboration.

The individualized learning group also watched the videos displaying the use of pragmatics, but each student was individually responsible for extracting the language used for making requests and apologies; there was no group for learning the pragmatic knowledge conveyed through the videos. The group received the teacher's instruction using the PowerPoint slides, but it was a one-way, teacher to student explicit instruction. The teacher provided metapragmatic and cultural information on how to use the English language to make polite requests and apologies. Each student had to struggle independently to learn the presented pragmatic knowledge. Each student received instruction and immediate corrective feedback from the teacher.

3.4.3. Control Group Treatment

The control group received no specific treatment on pragmatic rules or sociopragmatic norms. It received conventional instruction in English without any direct or indirect reference to pragmatics. The control group took the same pre-tests and post-tests as the collaborative and individual learning groups. However, it experienced only conventional instruction on different aspects of English, including vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, and other subcomponents of language, with no instruction of pragmatics and no collaborative learning activities.

3.5. Procedure

The study was conducted in Al-Kufa University in Najaf, Iraq in the fall semester of 2025. The participants studied English at six classes of 30 students; every two classes were assigned to one of the collaborative learning, individual instruction, or control groups. There were 60 students in each group (N = 60). Before treatment, the researcher administered the OQPT and the DCT to the three groups in order to assure their homogeneity in terms of general language proficiency and pragmatic competence. Also, the pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindset questionnaires were administered to the three groups. The three groups' scores on the OQPT and the DCT were compared using the One-way ANOVA procedure. Then, the treatment started, and the researcher taught the three groups for two months comprising eight instructional sessions of 80 minutes. Experimental group 1 was taught on English pragmatics using collaborative learning procedures; experimental group 2 was taught on English pragmatics through individual learning procedures; and the control group was taught through conventional instruction with no instruction of pragmatics.

After treatment, the researcher administered the DCT, and the pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindset questionnaires to the three groups. She used the SPSS software to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of the three groups. In fact, the three groups' pragmatic motivation, pragmatic mindset, and DCT scores before and after treatment were compared using quantitative data analysis procedures.

4. Data Analysis

The following statistical analyses were applied to the data to probe the research questions. To address research questions 1 and 2, examining the effect of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) on the participants' pragmatic performance and pragmatic motivation, MANOVA analysis was applied to the data.

To explore research question 3, examining how learners' growth pragmatic mindset could predict their pragmatic performance, first, all the data from the pre-test of all groups were combined as a single sample (N = 180). Then, correlation and regression analyses were applied on the pragmatic mindset and pragmatic performance (DCT) data.

5. Results

The study investigated how applying collaborative learning procedures affected Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic

competence and pragmatic motivation as compared with individualized instruction and how EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset could predict their pragmatic performance. Results of analyses targeting the research questions are presented below.

5.1. Results of Homogeneity Tests (OQPT and DCT)

Before treatment, the three groups (collaborative learning, individualized instruction, and control) took the OQPT to ensure that they were homogeneous in terms of general English and pragmatic proficiency. A One-way ANOVA was applied on OQPT scores. As **Table 2** indicates, there was no significant difference between the three groups' means ($F(2, 177) = 0.20$, $p = 0.81 > 0.05$).

To ensure the three groups' homogeneity in terms of pragmatic competence, another One-way ANOVA was applied on their means on the DCT. As **Table 3** illustrates, there was no significant difference between the three groups' pragmatic competence ($F(2, 177) = 0.047$, $p = 0.95 > 0.05$). Thus, possible differences in the three groups' pragmatic performance (DCT scores) could be attributed to different instructional procedures.

Table 2. ANOVA: Collaborative Learning, Individualized Instruction, and Control Groups' Means on OQPT before Treatment.

Test	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Condition	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
OQPT Pre-test	Control Group	35.20	5.65	Between Groups	14.8	2	7.4	0.20	0.81
	Individualized instruction group	34.80	5.53	Within Groups	6274.2	177	35.44	-	-
	Collaborative learning group	35.50	6.62	Total	6289	179	-	-	-

Note: *p* is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 3. ANOVA: Collaborative Learning, Individualized Instruction, and Control Groups' Means on DCT before Treatment.

Test	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	Condition	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pragmatic performance pre-test	Control	35.02	7.34	Between Groups	5.37	2	2.68	0.047	0.95
	Individualized instruction	34.65	7.42	Within Groups	10210.28	177	57.68	-	-
	Collaborative learning	34.65	8.00	Total	10215.66	179	-	-	-

Note: *p* is significant at 0.05 level.

5.2. Data Normality

To check the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis was applied to the data collected on all the variables. As **Table 4** indicates, all the data sets bore normality since the *p*-value was greater than 0.05 for all the variables. Therefore, parametric tests could be safely applied for data analysis.

5.3. Research Question One

The first research question asked: *How does type of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) affect the development of Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic performance?* **Table 5** depicts the descriptive statistics of the three groups' scores on pre and post-tests of pragmatic competence (DCT).

Table 4. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test for Normality of Variables on the Pre-Test and Post-Test.

Variable	Condition	Pre-Test			Post-Test		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pragmatic Motivation	Control Group	0.068	60	0.2	0.061	60	0.2
	Individual instruction group	0.09	60	0.2	0.075	60	0.2
	Collaborative learning group	0.094	60	0.2	0.072	60	0.2
Pragmatic Performance (DCT)	Control Group	0.076	60	0.2	0.066	60	0.2
	Individual instruction group	0.082	60	0.2	0.084	60	0.2
	Collaborative learning group	0.083	60	0.2	0.086	60	0.2
Growth Pragmatic Mindset	Control Group	0.079	60	0.2	0.069	60	0.2
	Individual instruction group	0.082	60	0.2	0.072	60	0.2
	Collaborative learning group	0.084	60	0.2	0.088	60	0.2

Note: Test distribution is Normal.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of the Three Groups' Performance on the Pre-test and Post-test of DCT.

Groups	Pre Test		Post Test		Average Difference between Pre-Test and Post-Test
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Control	35.02	7.34	34.33	7.30	−0.68
Individualized instruction	34.65	7.42	43.45	8.60	8.80
Collaborative learning	34.65	8.00	55.97	9.31	21.32

As **Table 5** indicates, the average differences between the means of the collaborative learning group, individualized instruction group and the control group on the pre-test and post-test of DCT were 21.32, 8.80 and −0.68, respectively. **Figure 2** also illustrates the three groups' means on the pre-test and post-test of DCT.

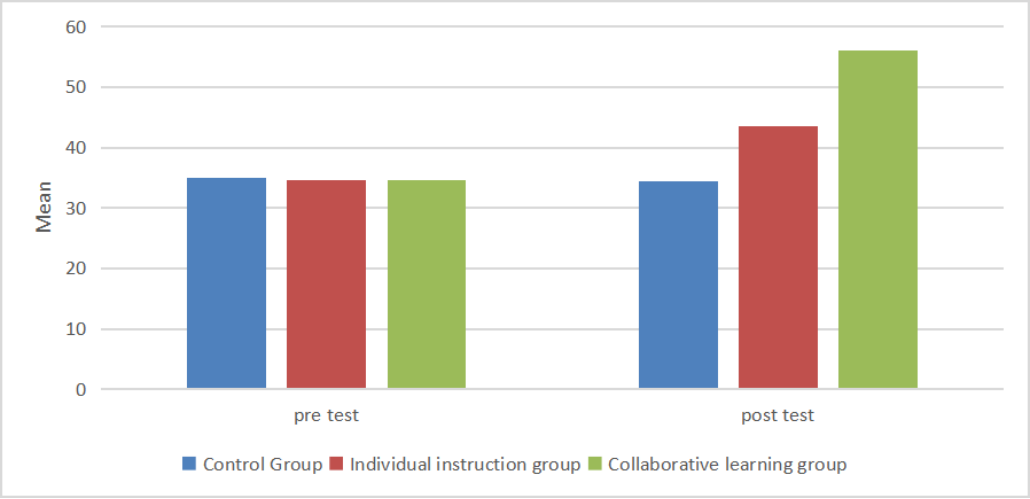

Figure 2. Means of Collaborative Learning, Individualized Instruction, and Control Groups on the Pre-test and Post-test of DCT.

As **Figure 2** shows, all three groups had almost equal performance on the pre-test. Then, the highest increase from the pre-test to the post-test occurred in the mean of the collaborative learning group (21.32). The individualized instruction group experienced an increase of 8.80 in its mean, while the control group experienced a slight decrease (−0.68).

To address research question one, a One-Way MANOVA was applied on the three groups' scores on the pre-test and post-test of DCT. **Table 6** depicts the results of the analysis. It also illustrates the MANOVA results for the effect of type of instruction (collaborative vs. individualized) on EFL learners' pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindsets.

Table 6. MANOVA: Effect of Collaborative vs. Individualized Instruction on EFL Learners' Pragmatic Performance, Pragmatic Motivation, and Growth Pragmatic Mindset.

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pragmatic performance	Pragmatic performance	4346.59	1	4346.591	214.08	0.000
	Pragmatic motivation	0.16	1	0.161	0.004	0.949
	Growth mindset	0.032	1	0.032	0.03	0.863
Motivation	Pragmatic performance	14.11	1	14.117	0.69	0.406
	Pragmatic motivation	19,866.99	1	19,866.99	498.55	0.000
	Growth mindset	5.37	1	5.37	4.97	0.027
Growth mindset	Pragmatic performance	0.36	1	0.36	0.018	0.893
	Pragmatic motivation	117.78	1	117.78	2.95	0.087
	Growth mindset	478.22	1	478.22	442.29	0.000

Table 6. *Cont.*

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Group	Pragmatic performance	14,514.49	2	7257.24	357.44	0.000
	Pragmatic motivation	28,092.23	2	14,046.11	352.48	0.000
	Growth mindset	30.42	2	15.21	14.06	0.000

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

As **Table 6** indicates, there were significant differences between collaborative learning, individualized instruction, and the control groups' mean differences from the pre-test to the post-test of pragmatic performance ($F(2, 173) = 357.44$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the first null hypothesis stating *"Type of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) has no significant effect on the development of Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic performance,"* was rejected.

To further test this hypothesis, an ANCOVA was applied on the three groups' means on the pre- and post-test of pragmatic performance (DCT). As **Table 7** indicates, there were significant differences between collaborative learning, individualized instruction and control groups on the post-test of pragmatic performance ($F(2, 176) = 350.77$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

To locate the differences between the three groups, pairwise comparisons were conducted using the Bonferroni Test. As **Table 8** indicates, there were significant differences between the three groups, with the collaborative learning group outperforming the other two groups.

Table 7. ANCOVA: The Three Groups' Means on the Pre and Post-tests of Pragmatic Performance.

Test	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	23,122.53	3	7707.51	370.91	0.000
Intercept	1160.94	1	1160.94	55.86	0.000
Pre-test	8966.90	1	8966.90	431.52	0.000
group	14,577.80	2	7288.90	350.77	0.000
Error	3657.21	176	20.78	-	-
Total	38,4561	180	-	-	-
Corrected Total	26,779.75	179	-	-	-

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 8. Bonferroni Test: Pairwise Comparisons for Results of Pragmatic Performance Test (DCT).

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Control	Individual instruction group	−9.46	0.832	0.000
	Collaborative learning group	−21.977	0.832	0.000
Individualized instruction	Collaborative learning group	−12.517	0.832	0.000

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

The results of the Bonferroni test showed that the collaborative learning group significantly outperformed both individualized learning and control groups on the post-test of pragmatics. Although both collaborative learning and individualized instruction of English pragmatics led to improvements in learners' pragmatic performance on the post-test, the collaborative learning group significantly outperformed the individualized instruction group.

5.4. Research Question Two

The second research question asked: *How does type of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) affect Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic motivation?* **Table 9** depicts the descriptive statistics of the three groups' means on the pre and post-tests of pragmatic motivation and the differences between the three groups' means.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of the Three Groups' Performance on the Pre and Post-test of Pragmatic Motivation.

Group	Pre Test		Post Test		Average Difference between Pre-Test and Post-Test
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Control	122.28	18.04	121.48	17.43	−0.80
Individualized instruction	122.38	18.85	133.17	19.46	10.78
Collaborative learning	123.83	20.95	153.23	20.27	29.40

The differences between the pre-test and post-test means of the collaborative learning group, individualized instruction group and control group were 29.40, 10.78 and −0.80, respectively. Thus, the improvement in the pragmatic motivation of the collaborative learning group was almost three times higher than that of the individualized instruction group. The control group experienced a slight decrease in its mean.

Figure 3 also illustrates the pre-test to post-test changes in the three groups' pragmatic motivation. As the figure depicts, the three groups enjoyed almost the same pragmatic motivation before treatment, but their motivation scores were significantly different after treatment. The highest increase belonged to the collaborative learning group, outperforming the other two groups.

As the results of MANOVA in **Table 6** indicated, there were significant differences between collaborative learning, individualized instruction, and control groups' mean differences from the pre-test to the post-test of pragmatic motivation ($F(2, 173) = 352.482$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the second null hypothesis stating *"Type of pragmatic instruction (collaborative vs. individual) has no significant effect on Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic motivation*," was rejected. Then, an ANCOVA was applied to the three groups' means on the pre and post-test of pragmatic motivation. As **Table 10** indicates, there were significant differences between the three groups on the post-test of pragmatic motivation ($F(2, 176) = 340.49$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

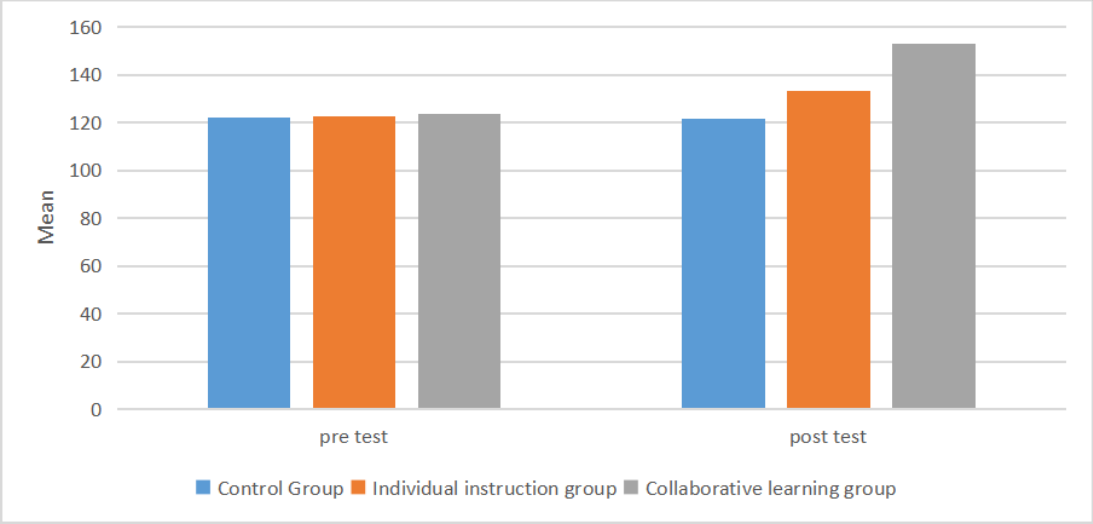

Figure 3. Means of Collaborative Learning, Individualized Instruction, and Control Groups on the Pre-test and Post-test of Pragmatic Motivation.

Table 10. Bonferroni Test: Pairwise Comparisons for the Pre-test and Post-test of Pragmatic Motivation.

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Control	Individual instruction	−11.59	1.171	0.000
	Collaborative learning	−30.30	1.172	0.000
Individualized instruction	Collaborative learning	−18.71	1.172	0.000

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

To locate the differences between the three groups' pragmatic motivation, pairwise comparisons were conducted using the Bonferroni Test. As **Table 10** illustrates, the collaborative learning group's pragmatic motivation mean was significantly higher than that of the individualized instruction and control groups on the post-test. Both collaborative learning and individualized instruction groups' pragmatic motivation improved significantly after treatment (see **Table 9**), but the collaborative learning group outperformed the individualized learning group.

5.5. Research Question Three

The third research question asked: *How does Iraqi EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset predict their pragmatic performance?* To explore this research question, both correlation and regression analyses were applied to the data collected on learners' growth mindset and pragmatic performance (DCT). As **Table 11** depicts, there was a significant positive correlation between learners' growth pragmatic mindset and pragmatic performance ($r = 0.38$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Thus, the third research question was rejected at a 0.95 level of confidence.

ANOVA was also applied to the data to test the significance of the correlation between EFL learners' growth mindset and their pragmatic performance. As **Table 12** indicates, there was a significant correlation between the two variables ($F(1, 178) = 31.60$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

Table 13 depicts the coefficients of the regression model for growth pragmatic mindset and pragmatic performance. As it indicates, the coefficient of regression for growth pragmatic mindset was 1.17 and the p value was 0.000. Thus, EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset had a significant effect on their pragmatic performance.

Table 11. Pearson's Correlation between EFL Learners' Growth Pragmatic Mindset and Pragmatic Performance.

Variable		N	Pearson's Correlation	Sig.
Growth Pragmatic Mindset	Pragmatic Performance	180	0.38	0.000

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 12. ANOVA for Pragmatic Performance and the Independent Variable of Growth Pragmatic Mindset.

Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R Squared
Regression	1540.50	1	1540.50	31.60	0.000	0.15
Residual	8675.15	178	48.73	-	-	-
Total	10,215.66	179	-	-	-	-

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 13. Coefficients for Regression Model: Growth Pragmatic Mindset and Pragmatic Performance.

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	21.14	2.47	-	8.532	0.000
Growth pragmatic mindset	1.17	0.20	0.388	5.622	0.000

Note: p is significant at 0.05 level.

Overall, the results of analyses depicted in **Tables 11**–**13** revealed that Iraqi EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset could significantly predict their pragmatic performance.

6. Discussion

The present study investigated the effect of collaborative learning on Iraqi EFL learners' development of English pragmatics (speech acts of requests and apologies) and pragmatic motivation as compared with individualized instruction. It further examined how EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset can predict pragmatic performance. The findings revealed that collaborative learning had significant positive effects on Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic competence and pragmatic motivation. Moreover, EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset could significantly predict their pragmatic performance. Interestingly, the stronger effect of growth

mindset observed in this study compared with some earlier works may be partly due to the specific sociocultural context of Iraqi EFL education, where learners' communicative exposure is often restricted. In such environments, learners' belief in their ability to improve pragmatically may play a more pronounced motivational and compensatory role.

The efficacy of collaborative pragmatics instruction over individualized pragmatic instruction can be interpreted on four grounds. The first interpretation, adopting Vygotsky's[14] social constructivist theory of cognitive development, can be that learners' interdependence and shared responsibility experienced in collaborative tasks cause feelings of commitment and cooperation, encouraging them to persist in learning barriers until they attain the desired goals. This feeling of shared responsibility also enhances learners' cognitive and affective engagement and motivation for learning pragmatics. Looking at the issue from a sociocultural perspective, as Yeh[32] note, learners also experience meaning negotiation when facing communication breakdowns where they struggle to attain mutual understanding, and this helps their learning of pragmatics. Learners also engage in collaborative dialoguing where they can use scaffolding provided by more knowledgeable peers supporting their pragmatic development. Besides, from a Marxist approach to education, through engaging in collaborative tasks, learners cooperate to achieve success; hence, they feel closer together to support each other. This feeling of mutual support and commitment to succeed in collaborative tasks promotes pragmatic development**.** The second explanation can be that, as Behroozizad et al.[91] mentioned, the constructions of human psychology do not survive in the mind unless they are created as an outcome of interaction with their social context. This can be a plausible reason for why the instructed pragmatic functions were better retained in the minds of the collaborative learning group. This hypothesis is in line with Oxford's[92] and Kaendler's[93] argument that the role of a teacher in collaborative learning environments is that of a facilitator, a guide, or a contributor, supporting learners to improve their language and cultural skills. The third possible explanation for the efficacy of collaborative learning, viewing the issue from the SLA perspective involving Krashen's[38] input hypothesis and Swain's[39,40] output hypothesis, can be that in the collaborative learning condition, learners received sufficient comprehensible input and produced output that they processed again and adjusted their interlanguage utterances; this resulted in the improvement of their L2 pragmatic system. Thus, the findings empirically support Storch's[41] argument that in a collaborative learning setting, students are provided with more opportunities to repair their comprehension in the community and that communication between learners can determine L2 development. The fourth reason for the efficacy of collaborative pragmatics learning can be suggested from a motivational perspective. At least one important cause for the efficacy of collaborative learning was students' enhanced motivation. We can argue that the joint accomplishment of pragmatic tasks in the collaborative learning group acts like a group reward, leading to the enhancement of individual learners' motivation. Therefore, the findings provide empirical support for Yildiz and Celik's[55] hypothesis that the commitment and enthusiasm learners experience while working in groups facilitate their active participation in the tasks and improve learning outcomes. This enhanced motivation also gives the belief to the students that they can improve their pragmatic knowledge through communicative and collaborative practice. In other words, the enhanced motivation and the concomitant pragmatics acquisition eventually support students' growth pragmatic mindsets. While the advantages of collaborative learning have been repeatedly highlighted, such reiteration serves to reinforce how consistently these benefits emerged across theoretical, pedagogical, and empirical dimensions of this study, rather than representing mere redundancy.

Considering the literature, the findings empirically support González-Lloret's[36] explanation that collaborative assignments help learners promote their pragmatic skills by engaging in authentic conversation and reflecting on language use in context. The findings can also be taken as evidence for Ellis's[46] and Mackey's[47] argument that collaborative dialogue has a strong potential for facilitating L2 learning. The findings further support the explanation proposed by Long[94,95] in his interaction hypothesis that learner-learner interaction and negotiation of meaning, two salient features of collaborative learning, facilitate L2 development. This takes place through providing negative evidence from more capable peers and directing learners' attention to what Schmidt[96] called the hole in their interlanguage system. It can be argued that the interaction embedded in collaborative learning activities increases learners' needs for communi-

cation and enhances their development of communicative competence.

The findings support the results of Bardovi-Harlig[73] reporting that collaborative learning is an effective method for improving learners' ability to understand and use pragmatic signals in context. The results also confirm González-Lloret's[36] finding that collaborative tasks allow students to negotiate meaning and practice pragmatic tactics like requests, apologies, and arguments. Besides, the results are in line with Taguchi's[23] finding that learners benefit from interactional tasks requiring collaborative problem-solving. Similarly, the findings provide evidence for Hinkel's[76] argument that collaborative learning activities allow students to investigate cultural disparities in pragmatic norms and overcome intercultural communication barriers.

There is also a close relationship between the findings of this study and those of Pardo-Tolentino and Aggabao[77]. Their participants rated jigsaw puzzle, mind mapping, round robin, think-pair-share, and send a problem as effective strategies. The same strategies were used in this study, too. Both studies reported significant increases in learners' pragmatic competence. The results further support the findings of Qureshi et al.[78] reporting that peer and teacher interaction support students' collaborative learning and engagement, leading to improved learning performance.

Besides, the results support the findings of Fakher et al.[79] reporting that peer collaborative dialogue significantly improves learners' ability to perform the pragmatic functions of requesting and apologizing, speech acts under examination in this study. From both studies, it can be concluded that collaborative learning is more effective than individualized instruction for promoting pragmatic competence.

The findings provide empirical support for Takahashi[84] reporting a strong correlation between Japanese learners' motivation and pragmatic awareness. In the same lines, the results support those of Cook[80] reporting that strong L2 motivation leads to enhanced pragmatic awareness. Further, the findings provide strong empirical support for Tagashira's[83] research that learners with higher motivation levels were more aware of L2 pragmatic rules. However, the findings do not support those of Tajeddin and Zand Moghadam[5] that general pragmatic motivation does not correlate with improved pragmatic production. These findings also add to our understanding of the pragmatics as a field of inquiry[97–99] and as a contribution of the instruction of L2 pragmatics[100–102] and developing pragmatic knowledge among foreign language learners[103–105].

7. Conclusions and Implications

This study investigated the potential of collaborative learning to enhance Iraqi EFL learners' pragmatic competence and pragmatic motivation and how EFL learners' growth pragmatic mindset can predict their pragmatic performance. The findings revealed that collaborative learning significantly enhanced learners' pragmatic competence and pragmatic motivation. Besides, learners' growth pragmatic mindset could significantly predict their pragmatic performance. The findings underscore the importance of the type of instruction on the development of pragmatic competence and pragmatic motivation and the power of learners' growth mindset in predicting their pragmatic performance.

This study makes several contributions to the literature on pragmatics instruction. It provides strong empirical support for the instructional value of collaborative learning procedures such as peer and group work, collaborative dialogue, negotiation of meaning, small group discussions, role plays, jigsaw reading, think-pair-share, information gap, and dictogloss for enhancing EFL learners' knowledge of English pragmatic functions. Besides, the study sheds new light on the relationship between collaborative learning and motivation for learning pragmatics. It provides new insight into the role of growth mindset in promoting learners' pragmatic knowledge. These contributions help fill the gaps in existing literature, particularly regarding the impact of collaborative learning on developing L2 pragmatics in the under-researched EFL context of Iraq.

From the pedagogical perspective, the findings provide strong evidence for applying collaborative learning strategies in regular EFL courses in international contexts and in Iraq. Based on the findings, curriculum developers, syllabus designers, and EFL teachers in international contexts as well as in Iraq are encouraged to use the potential of collaborative learning to enhance both learners' pragmatic motivation and their pragmatic competence[106–108], which ultimately improves their communicative competence

The study carries a number of practical implications for improving EFL learners' knowledge of pragmatics and

pragmatic motivation. First, the findings provide a framework for studying the actual causes of EFL learners' problems in performing pragmatic functions. Then, the findings highlight the need for planned intervention using collaborative learning strategies to promote EFL learners' pragmatic competence, a key requirement for attaining communicative competence[30], and pragmatic motivation. Moreover, the results underscore the value of assessing and determining EFL learners' pragmatic mindsets as key areas for promoting their pragmatic knowledge before conducting instructional courses. Additionally, the findings indicate that the instructional methods applied for teaching pragmatics in L2 classrooms might be the source of most of language learners' problems in performing pragmatic functions. Through engaging students in collaborative learning activities, teachers can help EFL learners solve their rather prevalent problems with performing pragmatic functions, particularly requesting and apologizing. Further, EFL teachers in Iraq can work on raising learners' pragmatic motivation and nurturing their growth pragmatic mindsets to enhance their pragmatic competence and communicative competence.

Despite its valuable contributions to L2 research and pedagogy, the study has certain limitations too. First, the short period of employing the collaborative learning intervention might have affected the results. Second, since the participants were EFL learners studying Medicine at Al-Kufa University in Iraq, the findings might not be generalizable to other cultural contexts with different participants. Replicating the study in other cultural contexts can strengthen the generalizability of the findings to all L2 contexts around the world. Third, as it is characteristic of quantitative methods, individual differences might be overlooked as a result of averaging the data. Fourth, as the success of collaborative learning procedures depends on teachers' mastery of the relevant strategies, the teachers' familiarity with this type of instruction might have affected the results. Lastly, the data collected through pragmatic motivation and pragmatic mindset questionnaires might have jeopardized the validity of the findings since participants might overestimate or underestimate their abilities in answering self-report questionnaires. Therefore, the results of the present study are limited to the shortcomings of self-report and quantitative data collection such as social desirability bias.

Future researchers are recommended to use mixed-methods studies involving both quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain a better insight into teachers' and learners' perceptions about collaborative learning and its relationship with pragmatic competence, pragmatic motivation, and pragmatic mindset. Future studies are also recommended to employ longitudinal designs tracking changes in EFL learners' pragmatic competence over a year or more to yield more valid results. Additionally, future research can investigate the potential of technology-enhanced collaborative learning to promote EFL learners' pragmatic competence and motivation. Moreover, future research in the field can examine the effects of growth mindset interventions on the students' pragmatic motivation and mindsets.

Author Contributions

H.A.A.: investigation, data analysis, methodology, writing. N.Z.: supervision, conceptualization, formal analysis, editing and reviewing. S.K.: supervision. H.B.: reviewing and editing, supervision. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Isfahan, Iran.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from the participants before the study.

Data Availability Statement

Data are available upon request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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