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REQUEST MODIFICATION IN THE PRAGMATIC PRODUCTION OF INTERMEDIATE ESP LEARNERS

Abstract

The present paper explores the types and frequency of usage of internal and external request modifications in the production of ESP learners in an attempt to provide a fuller picture of their request performance. The devices under scrutiny include both lexical and syntactic downgraders, upgraders and both mitigating and aggravating supportive moves. The research participants were 37 ESP students, aged 20-22, whose level of general linguistic competence was intermediate (B1 or B2 according to CEFR). Performance data were elicited using a modified version of the written discourse completion test (WDCT) including six situations in which the variables of social power and degree of imposition were varied. The results of the research support the initial hypothesis, which is that the request production of intermediate ESP learners will show very limited variation both with respect to the type of modifications (both external and internal) and the frequency of their usage. The pragmatic production of the intermediate ESP learners who participated in this research is thus shown to be the result of pedagogical instruction and is clearly at a significantly lower level than their linguistic development.

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Key words

ESP, pragmatic competence, speech act, request, internal modification, external modification.

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