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Requests and Refusals in Adult ESL: Self-Perceived Pragmatic Competence and Reported Instructional Experiences Among Immigrant Learners in New York

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ABSTRACT

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Adult ESL learners in New York need English for socially appropriate communication in everyday institutional and community contexts. This study examined immigrant adult ESL learners' self-perceived pragmatic competence in two speech acts, requests and refusals, and their reported experiences of classroom instruction in these acts. It described the levels of competence learners attributed to themselves, the instructional practices they reported experiencing, and the learner-background variables associated with differences in self-perceived competence. Data were collected from 95 adult ESL students in the final week of the second 14-week instructional cycle using a 15-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Requests and refusals had been scheduled for instruction during Week 5 of each cycle; thus, the questionnaire was administered nine weeks after the most recent scheduled lesson. Learners rated their competence close to the scale midpoint and appeared to rate themselves considerably more able to make requests than to refuse politely. This difference seems to be specific rather than general, since learners reported equivalent command of the expressions for both speech acts while reporting substantially less ability to produce a refusal without external support. Learners also reported frequent single-episode presentation of target expressions and frequent teacher explanation of appropriateness, together with very limited delayed review and very limited practice with varied interlocutors. No learner-background variable was associated with self-perceived competence. The findings indicate that recycled, contextualized, and interlocutor-varied practice was largely absent from the instruction these learners reported, and that refusals may warrant more sustained instructional attention than requests in adult ESL settings.

KEYWORDS

adult ESL, immigrant learners, requests, refusals, pragmatic competence, instructed pragmatics, self-assessment

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1. Introduction

Adult ESL education in New York takes place in one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse urban contexts in the United States. Recent data from the Center for Migration Studies of New York show that New York City has approximately 3.1 million foreign-born residents, representing 38% of the city's population. The same briefing indicates that the city's immigrant population has remained relatively stable since 2010, confirming immigration as a structural feature of New York life rather than a temporary demographic condition (Center for Migration Studies of New York 2025).

Language access is important to the New York context. The New York City Public Advocate's 2025 language access report states that approximately 25% of New Yorkers have limited English proficiency, approximately 50% speak a language other than English, and approximately 48% of immigrants are limited-English-proficient (New York City Public Advocate 2025). These numbers show that adult ESL instruction in New York is an educational issue and also a matter of access to public services, institutional communication, employment, housing, healthcare, and community participation. Recent work on adult education ESL in the United States also highlights the need for more research on adult ESL program contexts and instructional outcomes (James et al. 2026).

For immigrant adult ESL learners, requests and refusals are especially important. Learners may need to ask a supervisor for a schedule change, request repairs from a landlord, ask a doctor or school official for clarification, or request help from a public office. They may also need to refuse extra work, decline an invitation, say no to an unreasonable request, or set a boundary politely but firmly. They require pragmatic judgment: knowing how to adjust language according to relationship, authority, urgency, seriousness, politeness, and communicative purpose.

Requests and refusals are also socially delicate because they often involve power, imposition, and possible face threats. A request politely asks another person to do something, while a refusal requires the speaker to say no without unnecessarily damaging a relationship. In adult immigrant contexts, these speech acts are not simply textbook functions; they are everyday tools for participation, access, negotiation, and self-advocacy.

This social delicacy has a systematic basis, since requests and refusals are highly context-sensitive, a point long established in interlanguage pragmatics. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project demonstrated that request realization varies systematically with social power, distance, and degree of imposition across languages and learner groups (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), and this variation has been a central concern of the field ever since (Brown and Levinson 1987, Kasper and Rose 2002). Recent work continues to document the same relationships in new populations and languages. Karpava (2025) showed that L2 English request strategies are shaped by social distance, power, familiarity, and imposition, and Cañas et al. (2026) found that request production varied according to proficiency and sociopragmatic demands. Request-making therefore requires more than memorizing polite expressions; learners must also understand how request forms change across social relationships and communicative situations. Although instruction can improve pragmatic awareness, learners' judgments remain sensitive to request type and level of imposition (López-Serrano 2025).

Refusals, on the other hand, present a comparable difficulty, since the speaker must withhold compliance with an act that has already been performed while attending to the addressee's face, which ordinarily calls for mitigation through explanation, apology, or the offer of an alternative rather than a bare negative (Brown and Levinson 1987). Learners tend to experience greater difficulty in unequal power, socially distant, and high-imposition situations (Kulyagina and Sánchez-Hernández 2026). Refusal strategy use has accordingly been shown to vary with proficiency and the type of act being refused (Lu et al. 2025). More generally, in a study of ELF learners' translation choices, Kim (2023) argues that learners' pragmatic strategies reflect meaning negotiation and intercultural adaptation rather than simple error, supporting the view of pragmatic competence as flexible and

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context-sensitive.

Even so, successful classroom performance does not by itself indicate that learners can retain, adapt, and independently use the same strategies in later interactions (Qi and Chen 2025). Learners' own reports are pertinent to that concern, since in the absence of classroom observation or a performance measure they constitute the evidence that can be obtained from learners directly, although they speak to what learners believe themselves able to do and not to what they are able to perform. In the setting examined here, publicly funded adult ESL programs in New York City are organized around functional, immediately usable language for workplace, housing, healthcare, educational, and public-service settings, an orientation reflected in the stated aims of the city's adult literacy providers (New York City Department of Youth and Community Development n.d.).

In this light, three gaps follow. First, the pragmatic competence that immigrant adult ESL learners attribute to themselves in performing requests and refusals has not been described for this population, and whether their self-assessments differ between the two acts remains unknown, since the two are more often studied separately than compared within the same learners (Karpava 2025, Lu et al. 2025). Second, how requests and refusals are taught in publicly funded adult ESL programs has not been documented empirically, and learners' own accounts of that instruction are scarce; the character of the instruction is therefore treated here as an open question to be described from learners' own reports, with no prior assumption that it does or does not attend to the context-sensitive nature of pragmatic language use. Third, learner-background variables such as proficiency, length of residence, and first language have been examined mainly in relation to observed pragmatic performance (Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos 2011, Karpava 2025), whereas their relationship to what learners believe about their own pragmatic ability is not fully established.

The present study addresses these gaps through a cross-sectional questionnaire survey of adult ESL learners in New York, administered nine weeks after requests and refusals were scheduled for instruction in their programs. This descriptive survey therefore examines the request and refusal instruction that immigrant adult ESL learners in New York report experiencing, the pragmatic competence they attribute to themselves following that instruction, and the learner characteristics associated with differences in self-perceived competence.

Because the analysis is based on questionnaire responses, the study does not directly measure actual pragmatic performance or establish causal relationships; rather, it provides an exploratory descriptive account of learners' self-perceived competence and reported instructional experiences. Because measurement occurred at a single point in time, the study cannot establish that any change occurred as a result of instruction, and the results are not interpreted as evidence of retention. The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What levels of self-perceived pragmatic competence in requests and refusals do learners report following instruction? And do these levels differ between the two speech acts?

RQ2. What classroom practices do learners report experiencing in request and refusal instruction?

RQ3. Which learner-background variables are associated with differences in self-perceived pragmatic competence in requests and refusals?

2. Literature Review

2.1 L2 Pragmatic Competence, Requests, and Refusals

L2 pragmatic competence refers to learners' ability to use language appropriately according to social, cultural,

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and interactional contexts. This competence involves more than grammar and vocabulary; it requires learners to judge how language choices should vary according to power, social distance, imposition, relationship, setting, and communicative purpose. Following Kasper and Rose (2002), the construct is understood here as comprising pragmalinguistic knowledge of the forms available for performing a given act and sociopragmatic judgment about which of those forms is appropriate to a particular configuration of participants and circumstances. Requests and refusals are especially important because they are socially sensitive speech acts. Requests ask another person to do something and may impose on the hearer, while refusals require the speaker to say no while managing clarity, politeness, relationship, and sometimes self-advocacy. Foundational work on politeness and speech act realization has therefore emphasized that pragmatic performance is shaped by face concerns, social meaning, and contextual variation (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Brown and Levinson 1987).

Recent L2 pragmatics research argues that requests and refusals remain difficult because learners must coordinate linguistic form with sociopragmatic judgment. Karpava (2025) found that L2 English request strategies vary according to directness, request perspective, internal and external modification, and contextual factors such as power, distance, and imposition. Similarly, Cañas et al. (2026) showed that request production is influenced by proficiency and sociopragmatic variables. Refusals are also complex because learners often need to combine strategies such as regret, explanation, appreciation, alternatives, and firmness. Lu et al. (2025) found that refusal strategy use is shaped by proficiency, power relations, and eliciting acts, which suggests that refusal ability cannot be reduced to a single expression such as I'm sorry, I can't.

Competent request and refusal performance therefore appears to require resources beyond a stock of appropriate expressions, and this seems especially consequential for adult ESL learners who use English in immediate institutional, workplace, and community encounters. Evidence for this claim comes from studies examining what learners actually deploy when performing these acts. Youn and Chaipuapae (2022) found that L2 pragmatic competence in role-play interaction draws on grammatical accuracy, contextualization of talk, turn organization, and repair, none of which is captured by knowledge of a formula alone. Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) found that host-environment learners' command of conventional expressions depended on proficiency and the intensity of their interaction outside the classroom, indicating that knowledge of expressions and the ability to deploy them develop on partly separate tracks. Both findings point to the same conclusion that knowing the forms is a necessary but insufficient condition for appropriate performance.

A terminological clarification is warranted at this point, since the constructs involved are related but not equivalent. Pragmatic competence, as the term is used in the present study, is an attribute of an individual learner, namely the ability to produce and interpret language appropriately for a given social context. Interactional competence, by contrast, is a property of a discursive practice and concerns the resources that participants co-construct within a specific interaction (Young 2011). Understanding-in-interaction, the focus of Lo's (2022) study of adult ESL classrooms, is narrower still, and refers to the manner in which mutual understanding is achieved and repaired moment by moment. The present study is concerned with pragmatic competence in the first sense, and more specifically with learners' own assessment of it. Work on interactional competence and on understanding-in-interaction is thus relevant mainly because it demonstrates that appropriate performance is accomplished interactionally, and hence cannot be inferred from knowledge of forms alone.

2.2 Instructed Pragmatics and Classroom Practices

A major finding in L2 pragmatics is that pragmatic competence can be taught, but it often requires targeted instruction and not exposure alone. Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) argued that pragmatics should be

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made visible in language teaching, while Jeon and Kaya's (2006) meta-analysis showed positive effects of L2 pragmatics instruction on interlanguage pragmatic development. Pragmatics instruction also requires attention to the relationship between language forms, sociocultural context, and learner choice (Ishihara and Cohen 2010). Taguchi (2011) similarly reviewed evidence that pragmatic development can be promoted through instructional approaches such as input-based activities, awareness raising, and practice. A distinction that recurs throughout this literature is that between explicit and implicit instruction. Explicit instruction supplies metapragmatic information, namely direct description of the target speech acts, of the contextual factors bearing on their realization, and of the relationship between form and appropriateness, whereas implicit instruction enhances input or provides practice opportunities without stating pragmatic regularities (Kasper and Rose 2002, Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Ren et al. 2023, Taguchi 2015).

Instruction targeting requests has been shown to improve pragmatic awareness, production, and confidence. López-Serrano (2025) found that self-access web-based instruction improved learners' pragmatic awareness of email requests to faculty. López-Serrano et al. (2025) further showed that web-based pragmatic instruction supported EFL students' email request production and confidence. These findings are relevant to the present study because confidence in independent use is one facet of the competence learners were asked to assess. This evidence base, however, is drawn from foreign-language settings. Instructional research conducted with second-language learners in host environments is more directly comparable to the present context and is considerably scarcer. Riddiford and Joe (2010) tracked skilled migrants in a New Zealand workplace-communication program and found that sociopragmatic instruction improved learners' handling of face-threatening acts, including requests and refusals, although gains varied markedly across individuals. Holmes and Riddiford (2011) followed learners from the classroom into workplace placements and found that classroom-developed sociopragmatic skills did transfer, but that transfer depended on the interactional opportunities each workplace afforded. In this regard, this body of ESL work indicates that instruction matters in host-environment settings, but that learners' circumstances outside the classroom substantially shape what instruction can accomplish. It also motivates attention, in the present study, to background variables such as length of residence and length of study, which have been examined elsewhere in relation to learners' pragmatic outcomes.

A parallel body of work has documented both what pragmatics instruction requires in order to be effective and why those requirements are difficult to meet in ordinary classrooms. Qi and Chen (2025) emphasized that L2 pragmatic competence benefits from contextualized and authentic or semi-authentic interaction, particularly because pragmatics depends on the relationship between language forms and social contexts. Tosounidou and Terkourafi (2026) found that teachers may recognize the importance of L2 pragmatics but still face challenges integrating it systematically into classroom practice because of teacher preparation, learner factors, and contextual constraints. These findings support the need to document what request and refusal instruction learners actually report encountering, instead of assuming a particular instructional profile in advance.

2.3 Self-Assessment of Pragmatic Competence

The present study focuses on learners' self-assessment of their pragmatic competence rather than directly observed pragmatic performance. Self-assessment refers to learners' own evaluation of what they are able to do with the language. Ross's (1998) meta-analysis of 60 correlations reported in the second language testing literature found that self-assessment correlates moderately with criterion measures, with accuracy varying by skill and by how closely items are tied to concrete, recently experienced tasks. Self-assessment is therefore treated here as an informative but imperfect index. It captures learners' sense of what they can do, which is itself consequential for

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whether they attempt requests and refusals outside the classroom, but it is not a proxy for measured pragmatic performance. Learners may overestimate or underestimate their ability, especially when pragmatic success depends on social roles, power relations, and unfamiliar real-life situations.

The study is grounded in established constructs. The learner-outcome items were written to correspond to recognizable facets of pragmatic competence as it applies to requests and refusals: command of appropriate expressions, production without external support, adjustment across interlocutors, the ability to articulate why one option is more appropriate than another, and confidence in use beyond the classroom. Each of these facets has an established place in interlanguage pragmatics research: conventional expressions in Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011), interlocutor and situational sensitivity in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and metapragmatic awareness in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998). They are treated here as facets of a single self-assessed construct, not as components of a new theoretical model, and no claim is made that the present questionnaire could establish such a model.

Two findings from the wider learning literature inform the instructional dimension of the study. Roediger and Karpicke (2006) showed that retrieval practice strengthens long-term retention, and Cepeda et al. (2006) demonstrated the benefit of distributing practice across time. These findings motivate the inclusion of questionnaire items asking whether target expressions were revisited after an interval. They are used here to justify asking the question, not to classify particular classroom practices as more or less effective in advance of evidence.

Overall, previous research shows that L2 pragmatic competence is teachable, context-sensitive, and socially consequential, but also difficult to retain and transfer when instruction is brief, decontextualized, or insufficiently recycled. Existing studies have examined L2 pragmatic instruction, request and refusal performance, adult ESL interaction, and classroom implementation challenges. However, comparatively little of this work documents what pragmatics instruction immigrant adult learners in publicly funded community ESL programs actually report receiving, or how those learners assess their own competence in requests and refusals following it. The present study addresses these gaps.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design with both descriptive and inferential components. The design was appropriate because the study aimed to describe the request and refusal instruction that immigrant adult ESL learners reported experiencing, to describe the pragmatic competence they attributed to themselves following instruction, and to examine whether learner-background characteristics were associated with differences in self-perceived competence.

The study was non-experimental. No intervention was introduced, no comparison group was formed, and no measurement was taken before or immediately after instruction. The design therefore supports description of response patterns and estimation of associations among them, but it does not support inferences about change over time or about causal relationships between instruction and learner competence. Because participants were not sampled in a probabilistic manner, the estimates reported below describe this sample and not a defined population, and the findings are interpreted as indicators of self-perceived competence and reported instructional experience rather than as evidence of actual pragmatic performance.

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3.2 Participants and Settings

The participants in this study were 95 adult ESL students enrolled in English language classes in New York. A non-probability convenience sampling approach was used because the data were collected from adult ESL learners attending two language schools. The 95 participants were drawn from four classes taught by four instructors across the two schools. All participants were adult learners enrolled in ESL classes at the time of data collection. Participants were eligible for the study if they were foreign-born adults enrolled in ESL instruction in New York.

To protect institutional privacy and confidentiality, the names of the participating centers are not reported. Classes were offered in the morning, afternoon, evening, and on Saturdays to accommodate adult learners with varying work and family responsibilities. The setting provided an appropriate context for examining self-perceived pragmatic competence because participants were likely to encounter requests and refusals in everyday communication involving workplaces, housing, healthcare, education, public services, and other community interactions.

The academic year was structured into three instructional cycles, each lasting 14 weeks. Students attended two three-hour classes per week, amounting to approximately 84 instructional hours per cycle. All participants were enrolled in the same cycle and followed the same curriculum. Instruction on requests and refusals was scheduled during Week 5 of each cycle. Both speech acts were addressed within the same Week 5 sequence and not in separate weeks, so the interval between instruction and questionnaire administration was identical for requests and for refusals. Data were collected in the final week (Week 14) of Cycle 2. Because Cycle 1 had delivered the same Week 5 sequence, participants had received two planned instructional exposures to these speech acts by the time of data collection, the most recent of which preceded administration by nine weeks.

The curriculum specified that requests and refusals be addressed in the Week 5 unit but did not prescribe how they were to be taught; the choice of materials, activities, and instructional approach rested with each instructor. No classroom observation was conducted and no record was kept of what occurred in the participating classes. The study therefore cannot characterize the instruction these learners received. What can be established is that requests and refusals were scheduled for instruction in Week 5 of each cycle and that data were collected in Week 14, nine weeks later. The character of the instruction is thus treated as part of what the study sets out to describe, and it is described from the only evidence available, namely learners' own reports.

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

Characteristic	*n*	%	Characteristic	*n*	%
Age group			*Self-perceived English level*		
18–24	29	30.5	Beginner	71	74.7
25–34	57	60.0	High beginner	22	23.2
35–44	9	9.5	Intermediate	2	2.1
Length of residence in New York			*Length of English study in the U.S.*		
Less than 1 year	14	14.7	Less than 6 months	51	53.7
1–3 years	27	28.4	6–12 months	28	29.5
4–6 years	31	32.6	1–2 years	11	11.6
7+ years	23	24.2	More than 2 years	5	5.3
First language					
Spanish	83	87.4			
French	10	10.5			
Arabic	2	2.1			

Note. $N = 95$. English level and all background information were self-reported.

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The participating schools followed a curriculum approved by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), which supports adult literacy and ESOL programming for immigrant and limited-English-proficient adults in New York City (New York City Department of Youth and Community Development n.d.). This context strengthens the relevance of the findings for similar DYCD-supported adult ESL settings, although the results should not be treated as statistically generalizable because the study used a non-probability convenience sample.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire designed to examine immigrant adult ESL learners' self-perceived pragmatic competence in requests and refusals and their reported classroom experiences with request and refusal instruction. The questionnaire was aligned with the study's three research questions. It included 15 closed-ended Likert-scale items and was kept short because most participants were beginner or high-beginner adult ESL learners. The full list of items is presented in Appendix A.

The questionnaire was informed by existing instruments and reporting conventions in L2 pragmatics and language assessment. Each item was nevertheless derived from a documented dimension of the construct. Items 1–4 and 8 address command of conventional expressions, independent production, and confidence in use, following López-Serrano et al. (2025). Items 5 and 6 operationalize the contextual variables shown to govern request and refusal realization, namely power, social distance, familiarity, and imposition (Karpava 2025, Lu et al. 2025). Item 7 addresses metapragmatic awareness (Yalew et al. 2025). Items 9–15 describe observable features of instructional delivery, drawing on dimensions identified in recent classroom-based work (Qi and Chen 2025, Tosounidou and Terkourafi 2026). Specifically, Items 9 and 12 concern the temporal distribution of instruction, Items 10, 11, 13 and 14 the mode of practice, and Item 15 metapragmatic explanation by the teacher. Item wording and response format followed general guidance on questionnaire construction in second language research, including the use of short, concrete statements and a five-point agreement scale (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010).

The questionnaire included background items on age group, length of residence in New York, first language, self-perceived English level, and length of English study in the United States. These items were used both to describe the sample and, in the analysis addressing RQ3, as predictor variables. The questionnaire did not ask for names, legal immigration status, contact information, or any directly identifying personal information.

Preliminary validation procedures were conducted before data collection. Two experienced ESL instructors reviewed the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, comprehensibility, and alignment with the research questions. The questionnaire was then piloted with five students whose proficiency profile was similar to that of the target participants. Based on instructor and student feedback, several terms and sentence structures were simplified, and oral translations were recommended during administration when needed. The five pilot students were not included in the final sample.

Internal consistency was examined only for Items 1–8, which are theoretically expected to reflect a single self-assessed construct. The coefficient was acceptable ($\alpha = .81$), and the average inter-item correlation was .36, which appears to indicate coherence without redundancy. Cronbach's alpha is not reported for Items 9–15. Those items document distinct instructional events instead of indicators of a common latent variable, and internal consistency is therefore not an appropriate criterion for them: a teacher who revisits material after an interval need not also vary interlocutors, and low agreement between such items would indicate nothing about measurement quality. Reliability evidence for the practice items is consequently not reported, and those items are analyzed and interpreted individually.

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3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Administrative permission to conduct the study was obtained from the participating language schools before data collection. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the participants' final class during Week 14 of the second instructional cycle. Because requests and refusals had most recently been taught in Week 5, approximately nine weeks elapsed before questionnaire administration. All participants followed the same curriculum and were scheduled to receive the same number of instructional exposures to these speech acts.

Before completing the questionnaire, students were informed about the general purpose of the study. They were told that the study examined adult ESL learners' experiences with remembering and using polite requests and refusals in English after classroom instruction. Moreover, several measures were taken to reduce possible pressure to participate. In this regard, students were informed that participation was voluntary and separate from classroom evaluation. They were also told that their decision to participate or not participate would not affect their grades, attendance, placement, relationship with their teacher, or access to program services. No names, legal immigration information, or other directly identifying information were collected, and responses were treated confidentially.

The questionnaire was administered on paper during regular class time, in a single sitting, and took approximately 8–10 minutes to complete. Written instructions appeared at the head of the questionnaire, and because most participants were beginner or high-beginner adult ESL learners, the first author also read these instructions aloud in simple English before students began. Students were encouraged to ask for clarification if they did not understand the instructions, but no answers were suggested or explained in a way that could influence their responses. The questionnaire was written in English. Oral translations of the instructions and questionnaire items were provided in Spanish, Arabic, and French as needed during administration to support comprehension. These translations were intended only to clarify meaning; the researcher did not suggest or explain responses in ways that could influence participants' choices. After the questionnaires were completed, the responses were collected and prepared for analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 29), following a quantitative procedure that aligns with the study's three research questions. All responses were first screened for completeness and consistency. The final dataset included responses from 95 adult ESL students. The 15 questionnaire items were coded numerically from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. The five background variables were coded categorically and summarized using frequencies and percentages. All analyses were conducted on participant-level responses.

For the 15 Likert-scale items, descriptive statistics were calculated separately for each item based on the distribution of responses across the five response categories (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Not sure*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly agree*). Frequencies and percentages were first calculated to show the number and proportion of participants selecting each response option. Means and standard deviations were calculated to indicate the degree of variability in responses, while medians were reported as an additional measure of central tendency appropriate for the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data. To facilitate interpretation and provide a clearer overview of response patterns, the five response options were also collapsed into three broader categories: disagree (scores of 1 and 2), not sure (score of 3), and agree (scores of 4 and 5). The original five-category distributions were retained for statistical calculations, while the three-category groupings were used only to summarize and interpret patterns of agreement, uncertainty, and disagreement.

RQ1 was addressed through item-level descriptive statistics for Items 1–8 together with a composite self-

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perceived competence score formed by averaging those eight items. RQ2 was addressed through item-level descriptive statistics for Items 9–15, reported individually and grouped by the dimensions of instructional design.

A within-subjects comparison examined whether self-perceived competence differed between the two speech acts. Three item pairs are matched in wording and differ only in whether they refer to requests or refusals: Items 1 and 2 (command of expressions), 3 and 4 (production without external support), and 5 and 6 (adjustment across interlocutors). Because Likert responses are ordinal and paired within participants, Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used for each pair and for the aggregated request and refusal scores, with matched-pairs rank-biserial correlation reported as the effect size. The Holm–Bonferroni procedure was applied across the family of paired comparisons, with the nominal alpha set at .05.

RQ3 examined whether learner-background variables were associated with differences in self-perceived competence. The predictors were age group, length of residence in New York, self-perceived English level, and length of English study in the United States. First language was also examined, since L1 background has been shown to shape L2 pragmatic performance (Karpava 2025). Because the distribution is markedly unbalanced, with 87.4% of the sample reporting Spanish, learners reporting Spanish were compared with the combined French- and Arabic-L1 group by means of a Mann–Whitney test, with matched-pairs rank-biserial correlation as the effect size and a bootstrap 95% confidence interval on the difference in medians. That comparison was planned as an estimate reported with its interval rather than as a test expected to be conclusive. Given the sample size of 95, the number of candidate predictors was deliberately restricted, and all available variables were not entered into a single model. Bivariate associations between each predictor and the composite competence score were examined first, using Spearman's rank-order correlation for ordinal predictors, and predictors showing an association at $p < .10$ at this stage were carried forward into a multiple regression model with the composite competence score as the outcome.

4. Results

This section reports the results for each research question in turn, following the order of the questionnaire. Self-perceived pragmatic competence and the comparison between the two speech acts are presented first (RQ1), followed by reported classroom practices (RQ2) and the analysis of learner-background variables (RQ3). Because all data are self-reported, the findings describe learners' perceptions and reports rather than observed instruction or measured performance.

4.1 Self-Perceived Pragmatic Competence in Requests and Refusals (RQ1)

To address RQ1, Items 1–8 examined learners' self-assessed pragmatic competence following instruction. These items addressed multiple facets of the construct: command of request and refusal expressions, using them independently, adapting them to different interlocutors, explaining appropriateness, and feeling confident using requests and refusals outside the classroom. Overall, the average of the item-level means for Items 1–8 was 2.97, close to the midpoint of the five-point response scale. However, the item-level results showed substantial variation across the different facets. Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and medians for the eight self-perceived competence items.

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Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Self-Perceived Pragmatic Competence Items (Items 1–8)

Item	Content	*M*	*SD*	*Mdn*
1	Remember request expressions	3.25	0.74	3
2	Remember refusal expressions	3.25	0.86	3
3	Produce request unaided	3.86	0.93	4
4	Produce refusal unaided	2.83	0.99	3
5	Adjust request to interlocutor	2.83	1.19	3
6	Adjust refusal to interlocutor	2.65	1.11	3
7	Explain appropriateness	2.48	1.09	3
8	Confidence outside class	2.58	1.14	3

Note. Responses were scored 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Item content is abbreviated; full wording appears in Appendix A. The complete five-category frequency distribution for each item is given in Appendix B.

The highest mean was found for Item 3 (M = 3.86, SD = 0.93), which asked whether learners could make a polite request without using notes, a script, a translation app, or AI. A majority of students agreed with this item (n = 58, 61.1%). This suggests that participants felt relatively confident in producing polite requests independently.

For Item 1 (M = 3.25, SD = 0.74), 23.2% of students agreed that they could still remember useful expressions for making polite requests, while 70.5% selected “Not sure.” Similarly, for Item 2 (M = 3.25, SD = 0.86), 27.4% agreed that they could still remember useful expressions for refusing politely, while 61.1% selected “Not sure.” These results suggest that many learners were uncertain about how much request and refusal language they had retained after instruction. The concentration of responses at the midpoint on these two items is notable and is considered further in Section 6, since it may reflect genuine uncertainty, difficulty in self-appraisal, or limited comprehension of the item.

The lower-scoring items were related to refusal use, contextual adaptation, explanation of appropriateness, and confidence outside the classroom. Item 4 (M = 2.83, SD = 0.99) showed that only 16.8% of students agreed that they could refuse politely without relying on notes, scripts, translation apps, or AI. Similarly, Item 5 (M = 2.83, SD = 1.19) and Item 6 (M = 2.65, SD = 1.11) showed weaker perceived ability to adapt requests and refusals to different interlocutors, such as friends, teachers, supervisors, landlords, doctors, or office workers.

The weakest areas were pragmatic explanation and real-life confidence. For Item 7 (M = 2.48, SD = 1.09), only 15.8% of students agreed that they could explain why one request or refusal was more appropriate than another. For Item 8 (M = 2.58, SD = 1.14), only 20.0% agreed that they felt confident using requests and refusals outside the classroom.

Overall, self-perceived competence was strongest for independent request production and weaker for refusal use, contextual adaptation, pragmatic explanation, and confidence outside the classroom. This pattern indicates that students’ self-assessments were not uniform across request and refusal capacities. Figure 1 summarizes these results.

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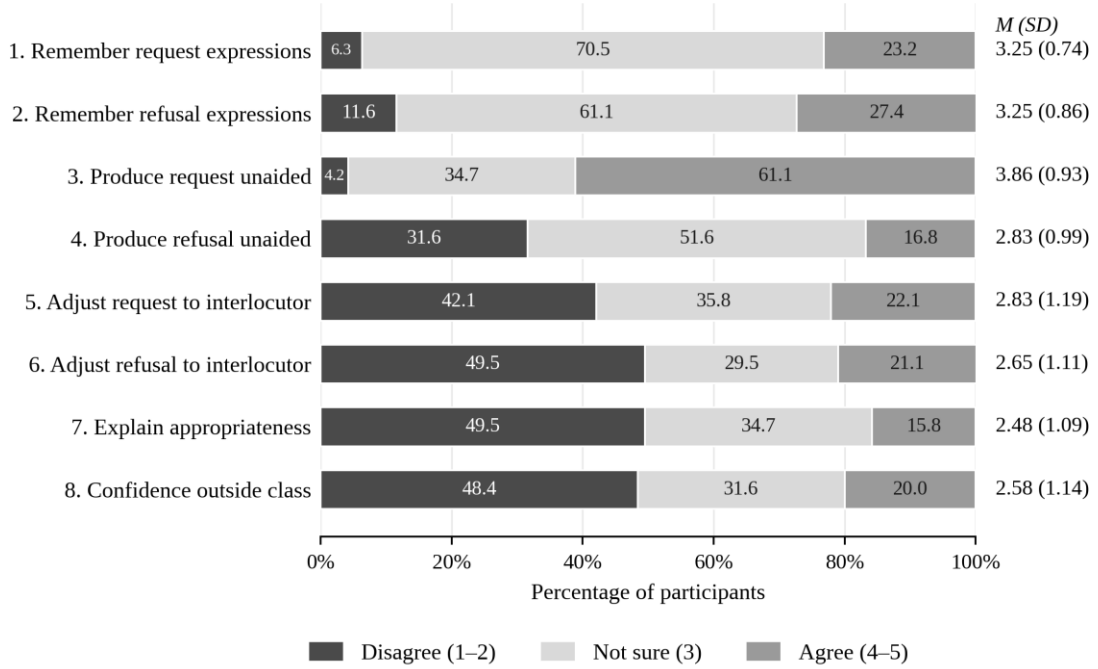


Figure 1. Distribution of Responses for Self-Perceived Competence Items (Items 1–8)

A within-subjects comparison was also possible, since three item pairs are matched in wording and differ only in the speech act referenced. Table 3 reports these comparisons.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Comparisons of Matched Request and Refusal Items

Facet	Items	*M* (req vs ref)	*Z*	*p*	*rrb*	*n*
Command of expressions	Item 1 vs Item 2	3.25 vs 3.25	−0.09	.928	−.02	40
Production without support	Item 3 vs Item 4	3.86 vs 2.83	−6.87	< .001	.91	72
Adjustment across interlocutors	Item 5 vs Item 6	2.83 vs 2.65	−1.24	.433	.16	73
Aggregated (1, 3, 5 vs 2, 4, 6)	Requests vs refusals	3.32 vs 2.91	−5.09	< .001	.65	81

The results appear to differ by facet. Learners rated their command of expressions for the two acts identically, and this comparison was not significant. Their rated ability to produce the act unaided was considerably higher for requests, a large effect (*rrb* = .91) in which 66 of the 72 learners whose ratings differed favored requests. The adjustment facet showed a small difference that did not survive correction, with both means below the scale midpoint, indicating that interlocutor adjustment was rated weak for requests as well as refusals, and does not appear to be a refusal-specific difficulty. Aggregated across the three facets, requests were rated above refusals, $Z = -5.09$, $p < .001$, *rrb* = .65. Equivalent reported knowledge of the forms thus coincided with markedly unequal reported ability to deploy them, consistent with the argument in Section 2.1 that these are partly separable.

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4.2 Reported Classroom Practices in Request and Refusal Instruction (RQ2)

Items 9–15 addressed the instruction learners reported experiencing, grouped by the dimensions of instructional design set out in Section 3.3. Taking the temporal dimension first, the strongest single result across the practice items was Item 9 ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.96$), where 74.7% of learners agreed that requests and refusals were practiced once before the class moved to a new topic. Its counterpart, Item 12, produced the opposite pattern: only 6.3% agreed that expressions were revisited after several days or weeks ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 1.02$), and 73.7% disagreed. Instruction as these learners describe it was therefore concentrated in a single episode, with revisiting after an interval largely absent. Table 4 presents means, standard deviations, and medians for the reported classroom practice items.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics for Reported Classroom Practice Items (Items 9–15)

Item	Content	*M*	*SD*	*Mdn*
9	Practiced once, then move on	3.93	0.96	4
10	Memorized without context	2.19	0.99	2
11	Role plays script-dependent	2.97	1.14	3
12	Revisited after days or weeks	1.85	1.02	2
13	Practiced in real-life situations	3.51	1.20	4
14	Practiced with varied interlocutors	1.80	0.82	2
15	Teacher explains appropriateness	3.81	0.95	4

Note. Responses were scored 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Item content is abbreviated; full wording appears in Appendix A. The complete five-category frequency distribution for each item is given in Appendix B.

Turning to the mode of practice, reports were mixed. Item 13 indicated that contextualized practice was reasonably common, with 53.7% agreeing that requests and refusals were practiced in real situations such as work, housing, healthcare, school, or public offices ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.20$). Item 11 was more evenly divided, with 40.0% agreeing that role plays depended mostly on scripts or notes ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.14$). Two items showed pronounced floor effects. Item 10 recorded only 6.3% agreement that expressions were memorized without discussing when to use them ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.99$), and Item 14 recorded only 4.2% agreement that learners practiced with varied interlocutors ($M = 1.80$, $SD = 0.82$), against 86.3% disagreement. Decontextualized rote memorization was thus not a feature of the reported instruction, but neither was systematic variation of interlocutor.

On the metapragmatic dimension, Item 15 showed high agreement as 72.6% reported that the teacher explained the appropriateness of one form over another ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.95$). Taken together, the reported instructional profile combines frequent metapragmatic explanation and reasonably frequent contextualized practice with single-episode presentation, minimal delayed review, and minimal interlocutor variation.

Two caveats apply. First, these results describe instruction as learners perceived and recalled it nine weeks later, not instruction as delivered; no classroom observation was conducted, and the choice of materials and activities rested with each instructor (Section 3.2). Second, the severe floor effects on Items 12 and 14 leave little variance in those items, which constrains the analyses reported in Section 4.3. Figure 2 summarizes these findings.

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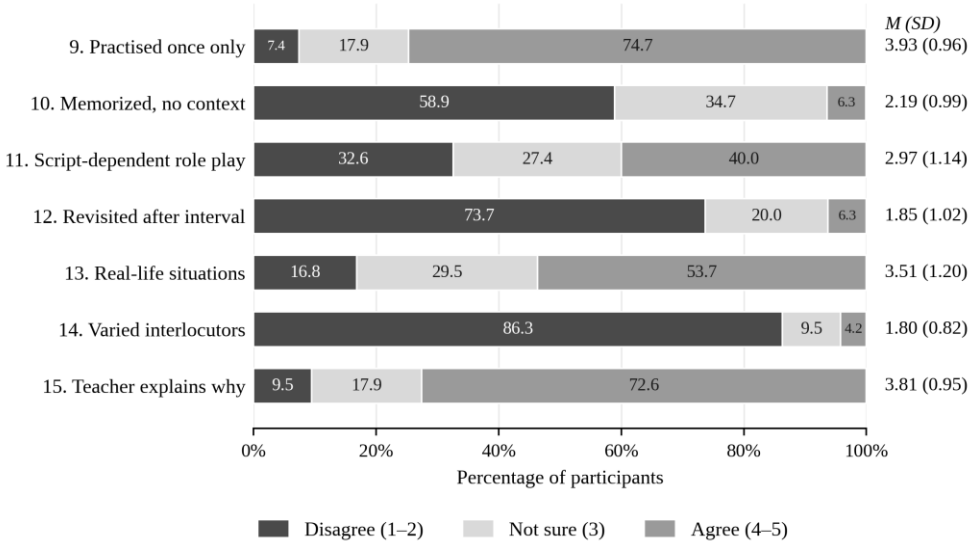


Figure 2. Distribution of Responses for Classroom Practice Items (Items 9–15)

4.3 Learner-Background Variables and Self-Perceived Competence (RQ3)

RQ3 examined whether learner-background characteristics were associated with differences in self-perceived pragmatic competence. Bivariate associations between each candidate predictor and the composite competence score (Items 1–8) were examined. Table 5 reports the results.

Table 5. Associations Between Learner-Background Variables and Self-Perceived Pragmatic Competence

Predictor	*n*	r_s	*p*	95% CI / note
Length of residence in New York	95	.08	.439	—
Length of English study in the U.S.	95	−.04	.665	—
Self-perceived English level	95	−.12	.232	—
Age group	95	.06	.586	—
First language (Spanish vs other)	83 / 12	.11	.548	[−0.62, +0.38]
Model summary	No predictor met the $p < .10$ screening criterion; regression model not estimated			

None of the five background variables was associated with self-perceived competence. All four ordinal predictors produced negligible coefficients, and Spanish-L1 learners did not differ from the combined French- and Arabic-L1 group. That comparison is reported as an estimate with its interval rather than as a test, since the group sizes preclude adequate sensitivity; it indicates the absence of a large L1 difference and not evidence that L1 background is unrelated to pragmatic self-assessment. Moreover, although length of residence in New York, length of English study, and self-perceived English level all index greater accumulated exposure to English, none of the three was associated with self-assessed competence, which appears to indicate that requests and refusals remain demanding even for learners with longer residence and higher self-rated proficiency.

Two supplementary analyses confirm that this pattern is not an artefact of the screening procedure. Entering all five predictors simultaneously, contrary to the pre-specified plan, produced a non-significant model explaining under 5% of the variance, and Pearson correlations computed as a check on the ordinal treatment of the predictors were similarly negligible.

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This outcome should be read with the study's sensitivity in mind rather than as evidence that learner background is irrelevant to pragmatic self-assessment. At $N = 95$, the analysis had approximately 80% power to detect a correlation of $\rho = .30$, so smaller associations would not reliably have been detected, and restricted variance in self-perceived proficiency and length of study attenuates any association those variables might show. These results establish that no large background effect is present in this sample; smaller effects, and effects of unmeasured variables such as intensity of interaction outside class (Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos 2011), remain possible.

5. Discussion

This study examined immigrant adult ESL learners' self-assessed pragmatic competence in requests and refusals in New York, the classroom practices they reported experiencing, and the learner characteristics associated with differences in that self-assessment. The results revealed an uneven profile of self-perceived competence, with stronger self-reported confidence in independent request production than in refusal use, contextual adaptation, pragmatic explanation, or real-life use.

These findings are consistent with recent L2 pragmatics research showing that pragmatic competence is not simply the memorization of polite expressions. Rather, it requires the ability to adjust language according to contextual variables such as power, distance, imposition, and communicative purpose. The weaker results for contextual adaptation are consistent with Kulyagina and Sánchez-Hernández's (2026) finding that requests and refusals become more difficult when learners must respond to unequal power relations, greater social distance, or higher imposition. Similarly, learners' lower self-reported confidence in refusals is compatible with Lu et al. (2025), who found that refusal performance is shaped by proficiency, power relations, and the eliciting act.

This convergence should be read cautiously, and one alternative explanation deserves particular weight. Because no baseline measure was taken before instruction, it cannot be determined whether the request–refusal gap observed here reflects a differential effect of instruction or a pre-existing difference. Requests are more frequent in everyday transactional encounters than refusals, appear earlier and more often in general-purpose ESL materials, and are likely to have been practiced by these learners outside class in workplace, retail, and service settings. Learners may therefore have entered the Week 5 lesson already more familiar with and more confident in making requests. A further possibility is that the two acts differ in how readily learners can appraise their own ability: a request that produces the desired outcome offers clear feedback, whereas the social consequences of a refusal are harder to read. The present design cannot adjudicate among these accounts. At the point of measurement, nine weeks after instruction, learners rated themselves markedly less able to refuse than to request, and this gap coexisted with equal self-rated command of the relevant expressions.

The findings also partly support recent research on the value of explicit pragmatic instruction. Students reported relatively high exposure to teacher explanation of request or refusal appropriateness, and many also reported practices in real-life situations. Yalew et al. (2025) found that pragmatics-awareness instruction involving metalanguage and metapragmatic description activities contributed to the development of EFL learners' communicative competence. This agrees with López-Serrano (2025), who found that instruction can improve learners' pragmatic awareness of requests and help them attend to appropriateness. The effectiveness of explicit pragmatic instruction is, however, not a recent or provisional finding. It has been supported consistently across three decades of intervention research, from the syntheses assembled by Kasper and Rose (2002) through successive meta-analyses reporting a reliable overall advantage for instruction and a further advantage for explicit over implicit approaches (Jeon and Kaya 2006, Plonsky and Zhuang 2019, Ren et al. 2023, Taguchi 2015). The

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contribution of the present findings is therefore not to add further evidence that explicit instruction works, but to describe what learners in one under-documented setting report receiving. However, the present findings also complicate this conclusion. Although students reported receiving teacher explanation, many still did not feel able to explain appropriateness themselves, suggesting a possible gap between reported teacher explanation and learners' own perceived ability to explain appropriateness; learners may also need opportunities to verbalize, compare, and justify their own pragmatic choices.

On that description, the instructional profile reported here is partial rather than absent. Metapragmatic explanation, the element most consistently associated with effective instruction, was among the most frequently reported practices, and contextualized practice was reported by a majority. What was almost entirely missing was distribution across time and across interlocutors. This matters for the ESL setting specifically. Riddiford and Joe (2010) and Holmes and Riddiford (2011) found that sociopragmatic gains among adult migrant learners depended on sustained, varied practice and on the interactional opportunities available beyond the classroom, and Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) found that intensity of interaction predicted command of conventional expressions better than length of residence did. For learners who must perform these acts with supervisors, landlords, clinicians, and public officials, the near-absence of varied-interlocutor practice reported here (4.2% agreement) appears to represent a substantive gap in the instruction these learners described.

Most learners reported that requests and refusals were practiced once before the class moved on, while very few reported review after several days or weeks. Whether this pattern has consequences for durable learning cannot be established from these data, since no measure of learning over time was taken; it is reported here as a description of instruction, and the connection to distributed practice (Cepeda et al. 2006) and retrieval practice (Roediger and Karpicke 2006) is offered as a reason the pattern is worth investigating, and not as a finding about its effects. In the present study, the issue was not simply that instruction lacked context; students did report real-life scenarios. Rather, the main reported gap concerned limited recycling of request and refusal strategies over time and across different interlocutors.

The analysis of learner-background variables produced no associations. Neither length of residence, length of English study, self-perceived proficiency, age, nor first language differentiated learners' self-assessments. Two readings are available and the design cannot separate them. The first is statistical: the study was sensitive only to moderate or large effects, and restricted variance in proficiency and study length attenuates whatever association those variables might carry. The second is substantive and connects to the ESL literature reviewed in Section 2.2. Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) found that intensity of interaction outside class predicted command of conventional expressions better than length of stay did, and Holmes and Riddiford (2011) found that transfer depended on the interactional opportunities a given workplace afforded. Neither of those variables was measured here. If what matters is the quality and frequency of the English interaction learners actually engage in, rather than the elapsed time during which such interaction was possible, then the null results reported above are what one would expect from the variables this study collected. That interpretation is a direction for further work, and not a conclusion these data can establish.

Finally, the study's reliance on self-assessment shapes what these findings can support. As noted in Section 2.3, self-assessment correlates only moderately with criterion measures. Even so, learners at beginner level may have limited grounds for calibrating their own pragmatic performance, and the high proportion of midpoint responses on Items 1 and 2 is consistent with genuine difficulty in self-appraisal. The results are therefore best read as evidence about learners' sense of their own capability, which is consequential in its own right because it plausibly affects whether they attempt requests and refusals outside the classroom, rather than as an estimate of what they can actually do.

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6. Recommendations and Limitations

The findings suggest that adult ESL instruction on requests and refusals should give more systematic attention to delayed review, interlocutor variation, and learner explanation, which were the elements least often reported in this sample. Teachers may wish to revisit request and refusal strategies after several days or weeks, recycle them through real-life scenarios, and practice them with different interlocutors such as friends, teachers, supervisors, landlords, doctors, office workers, and coworkers. This is especially important because learners reported weaker confidence in refusing politely, adapting language to different social roles, explaining appropriateness, and using requests and refusals outside the classroom. Therefore, refusal instruction may need more attention, including strategies such as giving reasons, showing appreciation, offering alternatives, and setting boundaries politely but firmly. These recommendations follow from the descriptive profile reported here together with existing evidence on instructed pragmatics; they are not warranted by the present design alone, which did not test the effect of any practice on any outcome.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The study relied on self-reported questionnaire data, so it measured learners' self-assessed competence rather than their actual spoken or written pragmatic performance. The design was cross-sectional, with no baseline and no immediate post-test, so it cannot establish that any change occurred as a result of instruction; no claim about retention is made. In addition, the sample was limited to 95 adult ESL students, most of whom were Spanish-speaking and self-identified as beginner-level learners; therefore, the findings may not represent all immigrant adult ESL learners. The study also focused only on requests and refusals and did not include classroom observations or teacher interviews, so the instructional profile reported in Section 4.2 reflects learners' recollections and not instruction as delivered.

Three measurement limitations also warrant note. The questionnaire was written in English and translated orally on request, with no written translation prepared, even though 87.4% of the sample reported Spanish as a first language and 74.7% self-identified as beginners; this is a plausible contributor to the high rate of midpoint responses on Items 1 and 2. Because the midpoint was labeled "Not sure," such responses may represent uncertainty, neutrality, limited recall, or difficulty in self-appraisal, and should not be read as a single psychological position. Finally, several items showed severe floor effects, and the analysis of learner-background variables had approximately 80% power only at $\rho = .30$, so the null results in Section 4.3 rule out large associations without establishing their absence. The first-language comparison is further confounded in this setting, where reporting Spanish is entangled with neighborhood, workplace language ecology, and the availability of Spanish-language services.

Future research should combine questionnaires with role plays, discourse completion tasks, delayed performance assessments, classroom observations, and larger multilingual samples to examine how pragmatic competence develops over time. A design incorporating a pre-instruction baseline and an immediate post-test would allow the request–refusal difference reported here to be attributed to instruction or to prior familiarity, which the present design cannot do. Although the study was conducted in two language schools, both followed a DYCD-approved adult ESL curriculum, so the findings may be transferable to similar DYCD-supported programs in New York City; because the study used convenience sampling, however, the results should not be treated as statistically generalizable.

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7. Conclusion

The focus of the present study has been the pragmatic competence that immigrant adult ESL learners in New York attribute to themselves in performing requests and refusals, together with the classroom practices they report having encountered. Learners reported stronger confidence in making polite requests than in refusing politely, adapting language to different interlocutors, explaining appropriateness, or using requests and refusals outside the classroom. Students also reported teacher explanation and real-life scenarios, but limited delayed review and limited varied-interlocutor practice. The study's contribution is descriptive. It documents what pragmatics instruction learners in an under-researched setting report receiving, and shows that within a single self-assessed construct, competence in requests and competence in refusals diverge sharply and specifically. Learners rated their command of the relevant expressions identically for the two acts, yet rated themselves a full-scale point less able to produce a refusal without support. No learner-background variable accounted for differences in self-assessment. Together these findings indicate that refusals, and the distribution of practice across time and across interlocutors, merit closer attention in adult ESL programs serving immigrant learners than the instruction reported here afforded them.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Language: English
Applicable Level: Tertiary

Appendix A

Student Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a research study about adult ESL students' experiences with requests and refusals. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and there will be no penalty. Your decision will not affect your grades, attendance, class placement, relationship with the instructor, or access to school/program services.

The questionnaire is anonymous. Please do not write your name or any identifying information. Your answers will be used only for research purposes. By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you indicate that you understand this information and agree voluntarily to participate.

Instructions for students: Please choose the answer that best describes your experience. There are no right or wrong answers. Your answers will not affect your class.

Response Scale

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree

Optional Background Information

These questions are optional. Do not provide information you do not want to share.

1. Age group	18-24 / 25-34 / 35-44 / 45-54 / 55+ / Prefer not to answer
2. How long have you lived in New York?	Less than 1 year / 1-3 years / 4-6 years / 7+ years / Prefer not to answer
3. First language	_____
4. Current English level	Beginner / High beginner / Intermediate / Advanced / Not sure
5. How long have you studied English in the U.S.?	Less than 6 months / 6-12 months / 1-2 years / More than 2 years

Part A. Requests and Refusals

Item	Statement	Response (circle one)
1	I can still remember useful expressions for making polite requests in English.	1 2 3 4 5
2	I can still remember useful expressions for refusing politely in English.	1 2 3 4 5
3	I can make a polite request without using notes, a script, a translation app, or AI.	1 2 3 4 5
4	I can refuse politely without using notes, a script, a translation app, or AI.	1 2 3 4 5
5	I can change my request depending on whether I speak to a friend, teacher, supervisor, landlord, doctor, or office worker.	1 2 3 4 5
6	I can change my refusal depending on whether I speak to a friend, teacher, supervisor, landlord, doctor, or office worker.	1 2 3 4 5
7	I can explain why one request or refusal is more appropriate than another.	1 2 3 4 5
8	I feel confident using requests and refusals outside the classroom.	1 2 3 4 5

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Part B. Classroom Practices

Item	Statement	Response (circle one)
9	In my ESL class, we practice requests and refusals one time and then move to a new topic.	1 2 3 4 5
10	In my ESL class, we memorize request and refusal expressions without discussing when to use them.	1 2 3 4 5
11	In my ESL class, role plays for requests and refusals depend mostly on scripts or notes in the school book.	1 2 3 4 5
12	In my ESL class, we review request and refusal expressions again after several days or weeks.	1 2 3 4 5
13	In my ESL class, we practice requests and refusals in real-life situations, such as work, housing, healthcare, school, or public offices.	1 2 3 4 5
14	In my ESL class, we practice requests and refusals with different people, such as friends, teachers, supervisors, and school or office workers.	1 2 3 4 5
15	In my ESL class, the teacher explains why one request or refusal is more appropriate than another.	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

Full Response Distributions for the 15 Questionnaire Items

Item	1 *n* (%)	2 *n* (%)	3 *n* (%)	4 *n* (%)	5 *n* (%)
1	1 (1.1)	5 (5.3)	67 (70.5)	13 (13.7)	9 (9.5)
2	2 (2.1)	9 (9.5)	58 (61.1)	15 (15.8)	11 (11.6)
3	1 (1.1)	3 (3.2)	33 (34.7)	29 (30.5)	29 (30.5)
4	9 (9.5)	21 (22.1)	49 (51.6)	9 (9.5)	7 (7.4)
5	11 (11.6)	29 (30.5)	34 (35.8)	7 (7.4)	14 (14.7)
6	13 (13.7)	34 (35.8)	28 (29.5)	13 (13.7)	7 (7.4)
7	21 (22.1)	26 (27.4)	33 (34.7)	11 (11.6)	4 (4.2)
8	19 (20.0)	27 (28.4)	30 (31.6)	13 (13.7)	6 (6.3)
9	3 (3.2)	4 (4.2)	17 (17.9)	44 (46.3)	27 (28.4)
10	29 (30.5)	27 (28.4)	33 (34.7)	4 (4.2)	2 (2.1)
11	14 (14.7)	17 (17.9)	26 (27.4)	34 (35.8)	4 (4.2)
12	47 (49.5)	23 (24.2)	19 (20.0)	4 (4.2)	2 (2.1)
13	9 (9.5)	7 (7.4)	28 (29.5)	29 (30.5)	22 (23.2)
14	37 (38.9)	45 (47.4)	9 (9.5)	3 (3.2)	1 (1.1)
15	3 (3.2)	6 (6.3)	17 (17.9)	49 (51.6)	20 (21.1)

Note. $N = 95$. 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. Percentages are of the full sample.

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