The Effects of Explicit, Implicit, and Incidental Learning on Comprehension of Indirect Refusals

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ABSTRACT
The present study investigates the effects of explicit, implicit and incidental learning on comprehension of indirect refusals used in American English (AE). Twenty first-year students in an advanced English class majoring in Medicine at Tokai University participated in this study. They were randomly assigned to one of the Learning conditions: Explicit, Implicit, and Incidental. Different instruction was given on the questionnaire to each group. After participants read instructions, they completed the multiple-choice questionnaire. A one-way ANOVA was employed to compare the effect of learning on comprehension of indirect refusals. The results show that there were no significant differences among the three learning groups. However, further analyses were conducted on the basis of descriptive statistics. On the basis of mean comparisons, the Implicit learning group scored the highest, then the Explicit learning group, and the Incidental learning group (a control group) the lowest. This suggests the possibility of implicit learning. The study finishes with suggestions for research design improvements.

METHOD

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. Are there any differential learning effects on comprehension of indirect refusals among three groups: Explicit, Implicit, and Incidental groups?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES
H1a: The Explicit learning group will score the highest among three groups.
H1b: The Implicit learning group will score lower than the Explicit learning group, but higher than the Incidental learning group.
H1c: The Incidental learning group will score the lowest among the three groups.
PROCEDURES

Materials

Each Learning group received different explanations in Japanese about the rules and the explanations of AE indirect refusals. Multiple-choice options consisted of two totally different interpretation options, one literal meaning, and one correct interpretation. The task of participants was to read 20 situations and followed by conversation including refusals, and to select the interpretation that closely matched the intended meaning of the indirect refusal statement.

RESULTS

Main analyses

Sixteen situation questions were scored and analyzed. A one-way ANOVA was conducted. No significant differences were observed for Learning factors.

Descriptive statistics

1) The mean score of Explicit group was 6.71, Implicit group 7.29, and Incidental 5.6. Overall, the Implicit group scored the highest, and the Incidental group scored the lowest.

2) In order to examine the Situation factor on the effects of learning, means for each learning group on each situation were further analyzed. The total score for each situation was 4.

![Means for four situations](image)

Although results were mixed, the Implicit learning group overall scored the highest in Request, Suggestion, and Invitation situations on the basis of mean comparisons. Among the three groups, the Incidental learning group overall scored the lowest, except in the Offer situation.

3) The mean score of participants choosing correct answers and literal options was also analyzed. They chose more correct answers than literal options, in the Explicit and Implicit groups. Participants in three learning groups chose more correct answers than literal meaning options in the Suggestion and the Offer situations, but the results for the Request and the Invitation situations were mixed.