



Exploring the Potential of Explicit/Implicit Teaching through Plays for EFL Learners' Pragmatic Development

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The present study investigated the possible contribution of *plays* as a medium of instruction for pragmatic development through explicit and implicit instruction. To this end, 80 English-major university students formed four intact experimental groups: two literary and two nonliterary groups. One of the literary groups (Implicit Play) received typographically enhanced plays containing the speech acts of apology, request, and refusal, and the other (Explicit Play) received the same plus metapragmatic instruction on the speech acts. The medium of instruction for the nonliterary groups were dialogs containing the given functions; they were also given either enhanced input (Implicit Dialog) or input plus metapragmatic information (Explicit Dialog). All the groups took a written discourse completion test (WDCT) and a multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) before and after instruction. Analysis of the groups' performance on the WDCT pretest and posttest did not show an advantage for the literary medium, that is, there was no significant difference between literary and nonliterary groups. It was rather the mode of instruction that mattered most; explicit groups outperformed their implicit counterparts. As for the groups' performance on the MDCT pre and posttest, analyses revealed that the groups had improved, but there was no significant difference among the groups as a result of the four teaching conditions, suggesting that pragmatic instruction regardless of the medium and mode of teaching can improve learners' knowledge of speech acts.

Keywords: explicit, implicit, literature, play, pragmatic development

Introduction

Interlanguage pragmatics—the study of the ways in which nonnative speakers acquire, comprehend, and use L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1996)—has been a thriving area of inquiry in the past two decades as the teaching of pragmatic competence has gained greater attention. There have been many empirical studies that describe instructional methods and learning opportunities for pragmatic development (Taguchi, 2011). Since the 1990s, the majority of the studies in the field have addressed three main questions: (a) Can pragmatic features be taught?, (b) Is instruction more effective than no instruction or mere exposure?, and (c) Are different teaching approaches differentially effective (Rose, 2005)? The first two questions have been answered positively, while the third is yet to be answered through more empirical research (Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015). Though the literature on the differential effects of instructional approaches on teaching pragmatics is predominantly occupied with the explicit-implicit dichotomy, the research is yet inconclusive. As Takahashi (2010) points out, although explicit

instruction has overall proved to be more effective than implicit instruction, there is not enough research as to make any definitive claim as to the superiority of explicit teaching over implicit instruction. This might be attributed to the fact that there are a variety of ways in which explicit and implicit instruction can be realized.

The by-product of research on teaching methods is a variety of teaching materials generated to teach pragmatics in the classroom (Taguchi, 2015). However, there has been little effort to study the effect of teaching materials independently or in combination with teaching methods. One way that could be explored in teaching pragmatics either explicitly or implicitly is the use of literature. As a resource for delivering both motivating and authentic content, literature has long been used in language teaching. Besides its contribution to the development of grammatical and lexical knowledge, literature can be utilized as a means of familiarizing the learners with the social practices and norms of the target culture (Allington & Swann, 2009; Hall, 2005; Kim 2004). In other words, it can cater to both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions of pragmatic competence, and hence seems to be an appropriate means for delivering pragmatic instruction.

Drama or play, as one literary genre, is an effective tool for teaching communicative competence, including pragmatic awareness (Goodwin, 2001). According to Olshtain and Cohen (1991), role plays, drama, and mini-dialogs afford learners the opportunity to practice and develop a wide range of pragmatic abilities. In the face of this appreciation, most studies in the field have addressed the linguistic side of the communicative competence (e.g., Hanauer, 2001; Iida, 2012; Paesani, 2005), while the pragmatic side has gone unexplored. The present study is an attempt to investigate the potential of plays, which are dialogic, and hence seem to be useful for teaching patterns of interaction and pragmatic functions. The study will investigate how plays can be used to foster pragmatic development through both explicit and implicit instruction of certain speech acts.

Literature Review

Teaching Pragmatics

As suggested above, intervention studies on the effect of instruction on pragmatic development could be classified into teachability studies, instruction versus no instruction studies, and various teaching approach studies. Rose (2005) reviewed a number of the teachability studies and found that overall the research provided ample evidence as to the teachability of pragmatic features and the effectiveness of instruction for pragmatic development. However, there remains the question of which instructional approach yields better results.

In general, experimental studies have revealed that explicit teaching of pragmatics, that is, instruction through metapragmatic information in terms of social status, social and psychological distance, and degree of imposition, seems to be more effective than implicit instruction (Takahashi, 2010). Explicit teaching seems to enhance learners' attention to specific linguistic features and their understanding of how these features relate to contextual factors. This is in line with the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), which requires conscious attention to information about pragmatics in the L2 class, rather than mere exposure to input. Mere exposure to pragmatic input may not bring about pragmatic development, or may set learning in motion very slowly (e.g., Alcon, 2005; Rose, 2005). However, implicit teaching can be effective if it goes beyond mere exposure and "involves activities that draw learners' attention to focal pragmatic forms and form-function-context mappings" (Taguchi, 2015, p. 11). This could be achieved through typographically enhanced instructional materials and/or consciousness-raising activities. In a review of empirical studies comparing the effects of instructional methods, Taguchi (2015) came up with three categories: difference, no difference, and mixed findings. Studies falling into the first category revealed a significant difference between explicit and implicit methods in favor of the former. For example, Nguyen, Pham, and Pham (2012) analyzed the relative effectiveness of explicit (meta-pragmatic

explanation and correction of errors of forms and meanings) and implicit form-focused instruction (pragmalinguistic input enhancement and recast activities) on the development of English pragmatic competence. The results indicated that the explicit group did significantly better than the implicit group on all measures.

There were also studies that revealed no significant difference between explicit and implicit instructional methods. For instance, Takimoto (2006) evaluated the relative effectiveness of two types of input-based instruction for teaching English polite request forms: structured input instruction (implicit) and structured input instruction with feedback (explicit). The results indicated that the two treatment groups performed better than the control group, but that there was no significant difference between the two experimental groups.

Finally, there were studies that showed mixed findings depending on the types of assessment measures used. For example, Alcon (2005) examined the extent two instructional paradigms (explicit versus implicit instruction) influenced learners' knowledge and ability to use request strategies. Results of the study suggested that learners' awareness of requests benefited from both explicit and implicit instruction. However, the explicit group performed better on the production task, while there was no significant difference between the groups on the recognition task.

As Takimoto (2013) points out, what these studies imply, regardless of explicit-implicit differences, is that without some sort of pragmatic emphasis in L2 classrooms, learners would not attend to and hence not acquire the target pragmatic features.

Teaching Literature

Language teaching was once equated with teaching literature and the appreciation of literature. Nevertheless, since the arrival of the new methods and approaches, particularly the communicative approach, teaching literature has not been so welcome in L2 contexts as it is in L1 contexts (Iida, 2013). However, there has recently been a renewal of interest in literature teaching in applied linguistics as research in the field is shifting its focus from a theoretical discussion to a more practical one (Iida, 2012). Literature can solve one of the persistent problems of language teaching, that is, the search for engaging and authentic content (Bibby, 2012), particularly in EFL contexts. Currently, the potential uses of literature as a resource for not just motivating content but also the necessary context (Bibby, 2012) are being discussed.

Even though there are a growing number of studies underway on the use of literature in the language classroom, the field is not yet fully developed. Paran (2008) conducted a survey on the state of the art of research articles on literature use in L2 education and noticed the lack of empirical studies. His survey also revealed that almost all the studies had focused on the impact of reading literature on learning L2 skills and components and that other aspects of communicative competence such as pragmatic knowledge had not received due attention. Hanauer (2001), for example, studied the use of poetry reading in the EFL classroom. He found that the task allowed the learners to 'focus on form' as they were able to use the poems to "extend their understanding of the potential range of uses and meanings of existing linguistic structure" (p. 319).

In another study, Kim (2004) explored the effect of literature discussions on classroom interactions. The study aimed at examining the features of student interactions with literary texts (e.g., short stories and novels) and with their peers, and investigating the relationship between these interactions and the learners' language development. The qualitative analysis of classroom discourse revealed that literature discussions made it possible for the learners to engage in enjoyable reading, enabled them to practice the L2 through active social interactions, and offered them the chance to express themselves meaningfully in English.

Wang (2009) conducted another empirical study of literary reading where he investigated the value of using novels in advanced-level first-year classes at a university in Taiwan. In this study, literature instruction was shown to enhance students' lexical and grammatical knowledge, and their reading,

listening, speaking, writing, translation, and problem-analysis abilities. The study exemplified a model of using literature for the development of both students' overall English proficiency and their L2 cultural knowledge in advanced-level English courses.

These empirical studies about the use of literature in the language classroom lend support to the theoretical rationale of using literature in L2 education. Despite the difference in genres, practical approaches, and contexts, the use of literature has been shown to have a positive impact on L2 learning. Overall, these empirical studies support the idea that literature can be used to improve learners' linguistic and cultural knowledge of the target language, and hence develop their L2 communicative competence.

The Present Study

Most of the studies on teaching different genres of literature have attended to their contribution to general English proficiency, or certain language skills and components, and few, if any, have either directly or indirectly addressed the effect of literary instruction on the development of pragmatic competence. Besides, studies in the field of interlanguage pragmatics have generally focused on social or cognitive approaches to teaching pragmatics and have been less explicit on specific techniques and teaching practices. In addition, research has paid little attention to the potential of literary genres in stimulating pragmatic development in EFL learners.

In view of the fact that literature has much to offer in terms of both linguistic (Hanauer, 2001; Iida, 2012; Paesani, 2005) and cultural knowledge (Allington & Swann, 2009; Kim 2004), and that literary plays have a conversational structure, hence providing an opportunity for the realization of speech acts, the present study investigated whether implicit or explicit instruction through plays had any effect on learners' pragmatic competence as indexed by their recognition and production of the most appropriate instantiation of the speech acts of apology, request, and refusal. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the recognition and production of the given speech acts among the four groups as a result of the four different types of instruction?
2. Is there any significant difference in the recognition and production of speech acts between the literary (Explicit Play and Implicit Play) and nonliterary (Explicit Dialog and Implicit Dialog) groups?
3. Is there any significant difference in the recognition and production of speech acts between the explicit (Explicit Play and Explicit Dialog) and implicit (Implicit Play and Implicit Dialog) groups?

Method

Participants

The participants of the study were 80 EFL students, and all were freshmen majoring in English Translation or English Language and Literature at Hazrat-e Ma'soumeh University, Mofid University and Qom University in Qom, Iran. The participants comprised 48 female and 32 male students with an age range of 18 to 23. As there was not a large enough student population to choose from, the available participants formed four intact groups. Based on the treatment condition, they were randomly assigned to four experimental groups: Explicit Play (EP), Implicit Play (IP), Explicit Dialog (ED), and Implicit Dialog (ID).

As the study required native English speakers (NESs) to help authenticate the discourse completion tests (DCTs) and to decide the answer key for the multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT), 20

NESs (11 North American, 6 British, 3 other) took the test. They comprised 10 female and 10 male participants with the following age ranges: 12 were above 50, 5 between 40 and 50, 2 between 30 and 40, and one below 20.

Instruments

A test of General English Proficiency, the MDCT, and a written discourse completion test (WDCT) were used as the three testing instruments of the study.

The proficiency test, used for testing homogeneity within and among the groups, was a 60-item tailored test which comprised three sections: structure, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. The test was adapted from a proficiency test developed by an Iranian university (Tarbiat Modarres University). To ensure the validity of the test, it was administered alongside a TOEFL test (2005) to one of the groups, and the scores highly correlated ($r=0.86$) with the TOEFL scores. To address the reliability concern (as the test had been truncated for practicality), a Cronbach's Alpha analysis was conducted, and the result indicated a high reliability ($\alpha= 0.78$) for the test.

The MDCT and the WDCT both included 12 items that tested students on the three speech acts of apology, request, and refusal (4 items for each act). For each task, there was a scenario which provided the necessary context on the status and distance of the participants involved for a given speech act. In the case of the MDCT, the test-takers were supposed to choose the most appropriate option in terms of the given parameters (Appendix A). As for the WDCT, the test-takers were required to write what they would say in the given situation (Appendix B). The items for apology and request sections of the two tests were adapted from Khatib and Ahmadi-Safa (2011), and the refusal items were taken from Valipour and Jadidi (2015). Both tests were posted online as a Google Form (online survey software) and on Linked-in, a social networking service. The native speakers were asked to complete the form and comment on the items. The options that were most frequently selected by the NESs were designated as the keys for each item on the MDCT.

Materials

The materials used for pragmatic instruction included some one-act plays, dialogs, and some metapragmatic information. The plays were *St. Martin's Summer* by Cosmo Hamilton, *Her Tongue* by Henry Arthur Jones, *Roulette* by Douglas Hill, *Bloody Mary* by Greg Vovos, and *The Boor* by Anton Chekhov. The plays were scanned and the instances of the acts and their adjuncts were underlined for easy access and input enhancement. The dialogs were taken mainly from *Functions* (Matreyek, 1990) and partly from the *Four Corners* series (Richards & Bohlke, 2012). The dialogs focused on a specific speech act and provided the context and the necessary structures for their fulfillment. Six dialogs were picked for each instructional session.

The metapragmatic information delivered to the two explicit groups (Explicit Play and Explicit Dialog) came before the introduction of the plays and sample dialogs in each session. The information for the first lesson included a definition of an apology speech act and a classification of apology strategies (see Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). The second lesson was an account of the request speech act and the levels of directness associated with this act (see Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), and a description of politeness in terms of position, distance, and imposition. The third lesson was about adjuncts for requests, which are known as external modifiers. The information on the speech act of refusal, delivered in the fourth session, included a categorization of refusal strategies and its related adjuncts (see Salazar et al., 2009). Finally, the fifth lesson was an instruction on how to refuse requests and invitations, and it included suggestions for interacting with people of different statuses and degrees of familiarity.

Procedure

To begin with, the proficiency test was given to the participants to ensure homogeneity within and among the four groups in terms of their general proficiency. Then, the participants took the pretests (the MDCT and WDCT), which were meant to determine their level of pragmatic competence prior to the inception of instruction and to make sure that the groups were not significantly different. Subsequently, the students started to receive the five-week pragmatic instruction.

With the explicit groups, the teacher first reviewed the metapragmatic information and explained the way the speech act in question should be used regarding the situations and the people involved. Then, the students were asked to read the play or the dialogs and determine the head act, its adjuncts, and the strategies used to fulfill the speech act, and to decide if the act had been appropriately materialized with regard to the actors involved in the play or dialogs. It took 25 to 30 minutes to complete a lesson.

In the implicit groups, the learners did not receive any metapragmatic instruction, instead they were asked to read the play or the dialogs, focusing on the underlined parts, and see how the speech act in question had been realized, and decide whether it had been properly fulfilled in each case. Each session lasted 15 to 20 minutes.

Finally, a week after the last instructional session, the participants took the posttest (i.e., the same MDCT and WDCT tests which had been used as pretest).

Data Analysis

The study had two dependent and two independent variables. Pragmatic comprehension and production were the dependent variables which were indexed in the participants' performance on the MDCT and WDCT, respectively. The medium and the mode of instruction were the two independent variables. The terms were arbitrarily used to refer to instructional materials and teaching approach, respectively. The medium of instruction had two levels: literary and non-literary. The mode of instruction also had two levels: explicit and implicit.

The MDCT was scored using the answer key developed from the native speaker responses. As for the WDCT, the author and two other nonnative professionals (researchers in interlanguage pragmatics) rated the participants' performance using Taguchi's (2006) rating scale of appropriateness (Appendix C). It was a 6-point rating scale (ranging from 0 (no performance) to 5 (excellent)) that evaluated the learners' performance on the basis of appropriate and accurate production of the speech acts in the given situations. The inter-rater reliability estimated using the Pearson correlation was $r=.90$, suggesting high agreement among the raters.

To compare the groups prior to instruction, their scores on the proficiency test and the MDCT and WDCT pretests were analyzed with ANOVA. Because a statistically significant difference was found among the groups, ANCOVA was used for comparing the groups' performance on the MDCT and WDCT posttests.

Results

Pretest Analysis

As was pointed out earlier, the EFL students available for the study made up the four intact experimental groups. However, to check whether the participants were homogeneous in terms of their general English proficiency, the performance of the groups on the proficiency test were compared using a one-way ANOVA. The analysis revealed a significant difference among the groups (Table 1). The P value (Sig = .00) was considerably below the critical value (.05), which suggested that there was a significant difference among the groups.

TABLE 1
ANOVA of the Four Groups' Performance on the Proficiency Test

Proficiency	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	536.25	3	178.75	4.99	.00
Within Groups	2723.30	76	35.83		

To compare the performance of the groups on the MDCT pretest, another one-way ANOVA was carried out on the MDCT pretest scores. The results of the ANOVA of the MDCT pretest (Table 2) revealed that there was no significant difference (Sig= .57) among the four groups. That is, the groups were equal in terms of speech act recognition prior to the onset of instruction.

TABLE 2
ANOVA of the Four Groups' Performance on MDCT Pretest

MDCT Pretest	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.04	3	2.34	.66	.57
Within Groups	269.45	76	3.54		

In addition, the performance of the groups on the WDCT pretests was compared using a one-way ANOVA. The P value (Sig. = .00) was considerably below the critical .05 value (Table 3), suggesting a statistically significant difference among the four groups in terms of their production of the speech acts. In other words, the four groups were not homogeneous regarding pragmatic production ability before the onset of instruction.

TABLE 3
ANOVA of the Four Groups' Performance on the WDCT Pretest

WDCT Pretest	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2443.64	3	814.54	16.02	.00
Within Groups	3863.25	76	50.83		

Posttest Analysis: Results Considering Research Questions

The first research question was whether the groups performed differently under the effect of the four teaching conditions. As the groups differed significantly in their general proficiency scores, ANCOVA, which takes account of the initial difference, was used to analyze their posttest performance. The result of the one-way ANCOVA revealed no significant difference among the four groups regarding MDCT performance. The P value (Sig =.08) was above .05, suggesting that the difference was not great (Table 4). Therefore, there was no significant difference in the *recognition* of speech acts among the four groups as a result of the four different types of instruction (methods).

TABLE 4
ANCOVA of the Method Effects on MDCT Posttest

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
MDCT Pretest	1	164.44	.00	.68
Methods	3	2.25	.08	.08

The one-way ANCOVA analysis of the performance of the groups on the WDCT posttest showed that there was a significant difference (Sig=.00) among the four groups as a result of the four methods (Table 5). In other words, each method or teaching condition contributed differentially to the production of the speech acts on the posttest.

TABLE 5
ANCOVA of the Method Effects on WDCT Posttest

Source	df	F	Sig.	Partial Eta ²
WDCT Pretest	1	60.11	.00	.44
Methods	3	4.89	.00	.16

In order to locate the significant differences among the groups, a Scheffe post hoc test was done. The analysis found that the differences between ED and IP (Sig = .00), and between EP and IP (Sig = .01) were significant, while the other differences were not (Table 6). In other words, ED and EP did significantly better than IP on the WDCT posttest, but the three groups (ED, EP, and ID) performed similarly, though there were some insignificant differences among them.

TABLE 6
Multiple Comparisons of the Groups on the WDCT Posttest

(I) Methods	(J) Methods	Mean Diff. (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^a
ED	ID	3.03	1.64	.07
	EP	1.09	1.99	.58
	IP	5.59*	1.66	.00
ID	EP	-1.93	1.72	.26
	IP	2.56	1.56	.10
EP	IP	4.49*	1.71	.01

a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least Significant Difference.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The second research question related to the effect of the medium of instruction on learners' performance. In other words, it explored whether the literary or nonliterary groups did better on recognition and production of the speech acts.

The one-way ANCOVA of the performance of the literary (explicit play and implicit play) and nonliterary (explicit dialog and implicit dialog) groups on the MDCT posttest (Table 7) revealed no significant difference (Sig = .08) between the two groups, and hence the *medium* of presenting (play or dialog) pragmatic lessons had no significant effect on the participants' recognition of the most appropriate speech act in the given situations.

TABLE 7
ANCOVA of the Medium Effects on MDCT Posttest

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
MDCT Pretest	1	189.49	169.14	.00
Medium	1	3.36	3.00	.08

As for the WDCT, the one-way ANCOVA of the performance of the groups on the posttest did not yield a similar finding. The P value (Sig = .10) for the medium was considerably above the critical .05 value, indicating that there was no significant difference between the literary (EP and IP together) and nonliterary (ED and ID together) groups (Table 8). Therefore, the medium (play/dialog) of instruction had no significant effect on the learners' production of the speech acts.

TABLE 8
ANCOVA of the Medium Effects on WDCT Posttest

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
WDCT Pretest	1	2153.11	78.18	.00
Medium	1	72.29	2.62	.10

The third question related to the effect of the mode of instruction on pragmatic performance. It explored whether explicit or implicit ways of teaching affected learners' recognition and production of the speech acts differently.

The one-way ANCOVA of the performance of the explicit (explicit play and explicit dialog) and implicit (implicit play and implicit dialog) groups on the MDCT posttest (Table 9) showed that there was no significant difference (Sig = .058) between the two groups, and hence the *mode* of presentation (implicit or explicit) of pragmatic lessons had no significant effect on the participants' recognition of the most appropriate realization of the speech act in each situation.

TABLE 9

ANCOVA of the Mode Effects on the MDCT posttest

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
MDCT Pretest	1	177.65	159.997	.000
Mode	1	4.12	3.714	.058

However, the one-way ANCOVA of the performance of the groups on the WDCT posttest revealed that there was a significant difference (Sig = .001) between the explicit and implicit groups (Table 10). In this case, there was a significant effect from the mode of presenting speech acts.

TABLE 10

ANCOVA of the Mode Effects on the WDCT posttest

Source	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
WDCT Pretest	1	2171.21	87.707	.000
Mode	1	286.70	11.581	.001

Discussion

The study aimed at examining the potential of plays, a literary genre dialogic in nature, as a medium for delivering pragmatic instruction through either explicit or implicit instruction. However, the analysis of the results yielded no advantage for this medium of instruction. Following, the findings of the study are reviewed with regard to theory and past research.

The first broad question was if the four groups differed on their performance on the posttest as a result of the differing teaching conditions. There were mixed findings regarding the receptive and productive aspect of pragmatic competence. On the one hand, the statistical analyses found no significant difference among the groups in terms of pragmatic comprehension, that is, regarding their recognition of the most appropriate instance of the speech acts in the given situations. This may come as no surprise when we take the medium of instruction into account as the plays and the dialogs were materials that were different only in terms of length. However, when the mode of instructions is considered, the results are at odds with the majority of the research conducted in the field, which have posited an advantage for explicit teaching over implicit instruction (for a review see Rose (2005), and more recently Taguchi (2015)).

On the other hand, there was found to be a significant difference among the groups regarding pragmatic production (i.e., the written production of the speech acts). The Explicit Dialog group outperformed the other three groups, the Explicit Play group was second, the Implicit Dialog group ranked third, and the Implicit Play group was last. These findings imply that, in general, an explicit mode of pragmatic instruction has an advantage. This is in line with most of the past research findings that showed the superiority of explicit instruction over implicit teaching (e.g., Koike & Pearson, 2005; Nguyen et al., 2012). It also suggests that explicit instruction is more effective when it is accompanied with dialogs (nonliterary materials) than a relatively long play (literary materials). The second and third questions addressed the medium and mode issues separately.

Concerning the medium of instruction, the comparison of the literary (Explicit Play and Implicit Play) groups with nonliterary (Explicit Dialog and Implicit Dialog) groups revealed no significant difference in terms of both pragmatic comprehension and production. This suggests that the instructional material did not affect learners' performance on the posttest. As there is no precedence in the ILP literature as to the

use of plays, and the studies in the field have paid only secondary attention to the medium of delivering pragmatic instruction, we are not in a position to make any claim as to the fit or misfit of this finding. In the case of pragmatic production, however, the gain scores (i.e., the difference between pretest and posttest) of the non-literary groups were better than their literary counterparts. This could be explained by the fact that the non-literary groups were exposed to several dialogs with each providing enough context on the situation and the people involved, and they could easily access instances of the acts within a short space. Moreover, the dialogs had been adapted from textbooks specially written for instructional ends. On the other hand, the literary groups had to peruse one relatively long extended dialog (i.e., an excerpt from a play), which had not been written with a pedagogical aim, and thus they had to process the sporadic cases of the given speech act within a wider context. The theoretical explanation for this could be made with reference to cognitive science.

For one thing, according to Van Patten (2004), meaning and form compete for learners' attention, and that only when learners can understand input easily are they able to attend to form. Along this line of reasoning, while reading a play, learners could have been so preoccupied with meaning, or more specifically with the story line, that they have not attended to the rather dispersed instances of a given speech act in the play. For another interpretation, according to Ellis (2013), the frequency of exposure promotes learning: "The more times we experience something, the stronger our memory for it, and the more fluently it is accessed" (p. 261). In this regard, the learners in the nonliterary (dialog) groups were exposed to more instances of the given speech acts than their literary counterparts as the handful of dialogs provided to the nonliterary groups had one or more instantiations of the speech act, while the play given to the literary groups had fewer instances of the target speech acts overall.

As for the question of the mode of instruction, there were again mixed findings. On the one hand, it was found that the explicit (Explicit Play and Explicit Dialog) groups were not significantly different from the implicit (Implicit Play and Implicit Dialog) groups in terms of pragmatic comprehension. That is, the groups' performance in the recognition task was not affected whether they were taught explicitly or implicitly. This finding agrees with other studies that found no significant differences between explicit and implicit instruction (e.g., Martinez-Flor, 2006; Takimoto, 2006). These studies, unlike mainstream research, reject the superiority of explicit teaching, and suggest that implicit instruction can be as effective.

On the other hand, the explicit groups performed much better than the implicit groups in pragmatic production. This finding is in line with the majority of the research in the field (Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2015; Takahashi, 2010). In a review of more than 58 experimental studies in interlanguage pragmatics, Taguchi (2015) found that explicit form-focused instruction which involves metapragmatic information was generally more effective than implicit instruction. Accordingly, input exposure alone could not yield as much learning as the explicit instruction, even when the input is made salient through enhancement techniques. Explicit metapragmatic information on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the speech acts, plus explicit awareness-raising tasks, probably raised the learners' metapragmatic awareness. It is also likely that pragmatic features are more amenable to explicit, rather than implicit, teaching (Rose, 2005). According to Taguchi (2015), for the implicit condition to be as effective as the explicit condition, instruction needs to be arranged in a way that involves learners in processing the form-function-context mappings.

Conclusion

The study aimed at exploring the possibility of fostering pragmatic competence through the medium of literary plays and the well-established dichotomy of explicit-implicit approaches to teaching pragmatics. The analyses of the results of the four medium-mode configurations as teaching conditions yielded no significant difference among the groups in terms of their pragmatic comprehension, while the groups differed significantly in their pragmatic production. Moreover, the findings suggested that it did not make

much difference whether we choose to teach pragmatics by means of original literary plays or specially designed dialogs. Besides, teaching pragmatics either explicitly or implicitly did not affect pragmatic comprehension, but it led to differential pragmatic production. Accordingly, the thing that matters is choosing to teach pragmatics rather than not teaching it. That is to say, instruction on the pragmatic features of a language, however we teach, is effective for the development of the pragmatic competence. To be more specific, different teaching conditions can bring about similar pragmatic awareness in the recognition and production of the most appropriate instantiation of given speech acts. The findings in general point to the significant role of pragmatic input and to the benefits of pragmatic instruction, especially in EFL contexts. Thus, teachers and materials developers need to incorporate a blend of authentic engaging material rich in the targeted pragmatic features and metapragmatic information into language classes and teaching materials.

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Appendix A

MDCT Sample Items

Dear test taker, choose the most appropriate response regarding the formality level and familiarity of the speakers to complete the dialogs in the following situations.

Apology

1. **Context:** You accidentally spill your friend's coffee. You would say:

- a. Oh, I beg your pardon!
- b. Oops! I'll get you another one.
- c. Excuse me please, I am sorry.

2. **Context:** You are late for a job interview. You hurriedly enter the office and since you see no secretary at that moment there you rush into the interview room. Quite unexpectedly you see the interviewer busy with someone else. How would you apologize?

- a. Oh! Didn't realize you were busy! I'll be waiting outside
- b. I'm afraid nobody told me you were busy with someone else. Not my fault!
- c. Please forgive me for I didn't realize you were busy with someone else.

Request

1. **Context:** Two strangers having their meal on a table in a restaurant:

Mr. Jones: Excuse me; could you pass me the salt, please?

Miss Wilson:.....

- a. Give it back afterwards, please.
- b. Could I have it back when you are finished, please?
- c. Give it back when you are finished please. Will you?

2. **Context:** David has gone to the Red Lion pub. There he sees Victoria a girl he knows from his work. She is with some friends. Victoria asks him to join them and wants to buy a drink for him. Becky, one of Victoria's friends, wants a drink too

She says:

- a. Excuse me, me too.
- b. Can you get me one too, please Vicky?
- c. You will get me a drink too, please Vicky.

Refusal

1. **Context :** Your close friend asks you to help decorate his house. You have an important exam coming up. What would you say if you want to refuse?

- a. Sorry, I'm afraid I couldn't.
- b. I would be happy to help you If I hadn't too hard exam tomorrow.
- c. Sorry, I'm really busy these days preparing for my exam.

2. **Context:** Your teacher asks you to stay after school to help clean up his office. You really have many other things that you need to do. What would you say if you want to refuse?

- a. Sorry, I'm afraid I can't.
- b. I wish I could.
- c. Miss Li, I'm afraid I can't. I have something important to do during that time.

Appendix B

WDCT Sample Items

Dear Test Taker: complete the following dialogues in the given situations with the most appropriate sentences. Please pay attention to the situation and the people who are involved.

Apology

1. **Context:** You accidentally step on someone's foot on the bus. How would you apologize?

Man: Oh! Be careful, would you?

You:

2. **Context:** You are late for a meeting with a friend. How would you apologize?

Friend: What happened to you? You're late!

You:

Request

1. **Context:** You, a college student, wants to borrow your professor's book. What's the best way to ask your professor to lend you the book?

You: Actually, the book is not available in the library.

Prof.: But that is your main source. You need to have it for next week.

You:

2. **Context:** You need to ask a friend on the phone to bring some drinks to your party.

You: Can you make it to the party tonight?

Friend: well, yes sure. I am already done with my chores.

You:

Refusal

1. You are an English teacher in institute. One of English teacher whom you don't know has invited you to his home. You have a problem and must write some questions for exam. You refuse his request by saying:
.....

2. You are a university teacher. One of your students has a birthday party in his house. He comes to you and invites you to the party. You don't like to attend the party.

You refuse his invitation by saying:
.....

Appendix C

Taguchi's (2006) rating scale of appropriateness

Ratings	Descriptors
5 Excellent	- Expressions are fully appropriate for the situation. - No or almost no grammatical and discourse errors.
4 Good	- Expressions are mostly appropriate. - Very few grammatical and discourse errors.
3 Fair	- Expressions are only somewhat appropriate. - Grammatical and discourse errors are noticeable, but they do not interfere appropriateness.

2 Poor	- Due to the interference from grammatical and discourse errors, appropriateness is difficult to determine.
1 Very Poor	- Expressions are very difficult or too little to understand. There is no evidence that the intended speech acts are performed.
0	- No performance

Appendix D

Apology Lesson Sample (Explicit Play)

Apologizing implies that you recognize that there is something wrong with what you have said or done, and that you are completely or partly responsible for that. Apology like most speech acts consists of two parts: the head act which is the very function of apologizing and the adjunct which is an accompanying statement meant to give more force and sincerity (sense of realness) to that function.

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) provide a classification of apology strategies into five main categories where the first strategy relates to the head act and is more direct, and the rest has to do with adjunct to the act:

1. *An expression of an apology* (head act);

- a. An expression of regret, e.g., "I'm sorry"
- b. An offer of apology, e.g., "I apologize"
- c. A request for forgiveness, e.g., "Pardon me", "Excuse me"

2. *Acknowledgement of responsibility*. It is used when the offender recognizes his/her fault and he/she feels responsible for the offence. The recognition level consists of:

- a. Accepting the blame, e.g., "It's my fault"
- b. Expressing self-deficiency, e.g., "I was confused", "I didn't see you", "I was thinking"
- c. Expressing lack of intention, e.g., "I didn't mean to"
- d. Recognizing of deserving apology, e.g., "You are right"

3. *An offer to repair*. It is something to do with physical injury or other damage resulting from the speaker's infraction, e.g., "I'll buy/pay for the lost book", and "Would you be willing to reschedule the meeting?"

4. *An explanation or account of the situation*. The offence explains the situation that brings about him/her to do an indirect way of apologizing. For instance, "There was a terrible traffic jam", "The bus was delayed"

5. *A promise of forbearance*. The offender promise not to do the offense again, e.g., "It won't happen again".

Following there is a one-act play containing several instances of apology. Read the play focusing on the underlined sentences and determine the head act and the type of adjunct used to support it. Regarding the people involved, do the expressions appropriately fulfill apology?

ST. MARTIN'S SUMMER by Cosmo Hamilton

ENID: [*seated, calling*] Jack! [*A pause, she lowers her voice slightly to talk to a boy who is under the window.*] I say, Jack, I can't come for half an hour. Isn't it rot?

[*Enter HAWKHURST. He crosses to the fireplace and stands with his back to it. Loading a pipe, he puts*

a silver tobacco box on couch.]

ENID: What? I know I did, but father's got to see his agent, and has told me off to keep the Colonel and Mrs. Allingham amused until he's free. Frightfully sorry. And look here, it isn't for you to look surly. The Colonel's a darling, and Mrs. Allingham's the sweetest thing on earth; but I never know what to say to old people-- what?--aren't they? Oh well, they seem old to me.

HAWKHURST: *[who, at the mention of age, has drawn himself up and raised his eyebrows]* I agree with Jack, my child-sensible young man, Jack.

ENID: *[turning quickly]* You've heard?

HAWKHURST: Mrs. Allingham and I are *not* old people.

ENID: I'm awfully sorry.

HAWKHURST: *[playing at indignation]* Old people!

ENID: I'm most awfully! It is a bad habit of mine sort of think-aloud and I didn't mean to insult you.

HAWKHURST: Shun! Six paces to the front. Quick march.

ENID: *[comes across to him]* Please forgive me. I don't know how can I make up for that.

HAWKHURST: *[putting his hands on her shoulders]* Old people, are we? *[He laughs.]* ... Will you withdraw your libelous remark?

ENID: *[with a smile]* Consider it scratched. I'll never say that you're old again, and I won't even think it. ...

Appendix E

Request Lesson Sample (Explicit Dialog)

Requests express the speaker's wish that the hearer do something behave in such-and-such a way, i.e. do something for or act on behalf of the hearer. A request as an speech act may comprise three segments: (a) Address Term (Alerter); (b) Head act; (c) Adjuncts to Head act

e.g., Danny! Could you lend me £100 for a week? I've run into problems with my tuition fee.

Alerter

Head act

Adjunct

There seem to be three major levels of directness that can be expected to be manifested universally by requesting strategies:

a. the most **direct** level

imperatives (Open the door!),

performatives (I ask you to open the door) and

hedgedperformatives (I would like you to open the door);

b. the **indirect** level

conventional: indirect speech acts (e.g., 'could you do it' or 'would you do it' meant as requests);

nonconventional: indirect strategies (hints) that realize the request by reference to contextual clues (e.g., 'Why is the window open?' / 'It's cold in here').

Adjuncts to requests

In the previous lesson we learned about the levels of directness of request in relation to the situation in which it is used and the participants involved. Now we turn to the sentences that are used before or after the head act of request the provide the ground for or support this function.

a. **Preparator**. The speaker precedes the act by an utterance that attempts to prepare the interlocutor for the request.

Will you do me a favor? Could you perhaps lend me your notes for a few days?

b. **Checking on availability.** Before he/she makes a request, the speaker uses an utterance to check if the precondition necessary for the act is available.

Are you going in the direction of the town? And if so, is it possible to join you?

c. **Grounders.** The speaker indicates the reasons for the request. (Grounders may precede or follow the Head act)

Judith, I missed class yesterday, could I borrow your notes?

d. **Sweetener.** By expressing exaggerated appreciation of the hearer's fulfilling of the request, the speaker lowers the imposition involved.

You have beautiful handwriting, would it be possible to borrow your notes for a few days?

e. **Disarmer.** The speaker indicates his/her awareness of a potential offense, thereby attempting to anticipate possible refusal.

Excuse me, I hope you don't think I'm being forward, but is there any chance of a lift home?

Following are four conversations containing request. Read the dialogs focusing on the underlined parts and determine the head act and the adjuncts and their type. Regarding the people involved, do the expressions appropriately fulfill request?

1. A woman talking on the telephone asks his husband to turn down the TV.

W: Just a minute, Patty. I can't hear you. Bill's watching the football game on TV. Bill ... turn down the TV a little, will you?

H: What?

W: Can you turn down the volume on the TV a little?

H: Yeah, yeah ... O.K. Is this better?

W: A little ... Can you turn it down a little more? I'm on the phone ...

H; **Oh**, sure. Sorry.

2. A man calls the waitress at a restaurant

M: Excuse me, Miss. Can I please have another glass of water?

W: Of course. I'll bring it in a moment.

(A few minutes later)

W: I'm sorry to take so long. Here you are. How's your meal?

M: It's fine.

W: Is there anything else I can get you?

M; This is enough. I'd like to have the check, though.

W: Yes Sir! I'll bring it in a few minutes.