

The Role of Literary Instruction on Speech Act Recognition

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Abstract

This quasi-experimental study was an attempt to investigate possible contribution of literary plays as a medium of instruction to the development of pragmatic awareness through either explicit or implicit mode of instruction. Eighty university students majoring in English were assigned to four experimental groups: two literary and two nonliterary groups. One literary group (Implicit Play) was exposed to typographically enhanced plays containing the three speech acts of apology, request, and refusal and the other (Explicit Play) received the same plus metapragmatic instruction on the speech acts. The nonliterary groups were presented with dialogs rich in the cases of the given acts; they also received enhanced input (Implicit Dialog) or input plus metapragmatic information (Explicit Dialog). Analyses of the four groups' performance on MDCT pretest and posttest did not indicate any significant difference among the groups.

Keywords

Apology, Explicit, Implicit, MDCT, Play, Refusal, Request.

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Introduction

Interlanguage pragmatics as 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 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). Rose contends that the first two questions have been answered positively, while the third is yet to be answered through more empirical research. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), *sociopragmatic* (relating to the social knowledge required to comprehend and perform communicative/speech acts) and *pragmalinguistic* (relating to the structures needed to convey communicative acts) features of the input will not be attended to unless language learners are directed to them through *implicit* or *explicit* instruction. Though the literature on differential effects of instructional approaches toward teaching pragmatics is predominantly occupied with explicit-implicit dichotomy, the research is yet inconclusive. As Takahashi (2010) points out, the explicit instruction has overall proved to be more effective than implicit instruction, but 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. 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 is grist to the mill of pragmatic instruction. Drama or play, as one literary form, 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 in which learners have some choice of what they say afford them 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; Lida, 2012; Paesani, 2005), and the pragmatic side has gone unexplored. The present study is an attempt to investigate the potential of *Play* as a literary genre, which is of a dialogic nature and hence seems to be fit for teaching patterns of interaction and realization of pragmatic functions, to foster pragmatic development through both explicit and implicit instruction of certain speech acts.

Literature review

Teaching Pragmatics

As pointed above, interventional studies on the effect of instruction on pragmatic development could be classified into teachability studies, instruction versus no instruction or mere exposure studies, and various teaching approach studies. Rose (2005) reviewed some of the teachability studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Safont, 2003; Salazar, 2003) and found that overall the research provides ample evidence as to the teachability of pragmatic features and the effectiveness of instruction in pragmatic development. However, there remains the question that which instructional approach yields better results.

Experimental studies have revealed that explicit teaching of pragmatics, i.e. instruction through metapragmatic information, seems to be more effective than implicit instruction (Rose, 2005; Rose &

Kasper, 2001). Metapragmatic information can embrace contextual information considered in terms of social status, social and psychological distance, and degree of imposition. Mere exposure to pragmatic input may not bring about pragmatic development, or set learning in motion very slowly (Alcon, 2005; Fukuya & Clark, 2001; Rose 2005). In general, explicit teaching seems to enhance learners' attention to specific linguistic features and their understanding of how these features relate to contextual factors. An explicit approach which provides an analysis of language and context has been found to be generally more effective than implicit teaching in experimental studies. This is along the lines of the noticing hypothesis that requires conscious attention to information about pragmatics in the L2 class, rather than learners' mere exposure to input rich in pragmatics. Now let's review a number of such studies.

Regarding the question of instruction or mere exposure, Koike and Pearson (2005) investigated the effectiveness of teaching pragmatics through the use of explicit or implicit pre-instruction, and explicit or implicit feedback, to English-speaking learners of Spanish. Results on a pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest revealed that the groups that received explicit pre-instruction and explicit feedback during exercises significantly outperformed the other experimental group and the control group on a multiple choice test.

Similarly, 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 than the implicit one.

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.

Teaching literature

Once upon a time, language teaching was equal to literature teaching as the main goal of the language learning was supposed to be the appreciation of literature. Nevertheless, since the arrival of the new methods and approaches, particularly the communicative approach, teaching literature has not been so well-received in second language context as it is in first language situation (Iida, 2013). Among the reasons offered are the lexical and syntactic complexity associated with literary texts which make their comprehension difficult (Chen, 2006; Lazar, 1994), the so-called time-consuming nature of literary reading, and focus on training academic rather than creative writers (Paran, 2006). In the face of all these setbacks, literature can solve one of the persistent problems of language teaching, i.e. “the search for engaging and authentic content” (Bibby, 2012), particularly in EFL context, and recently there has 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). Now, 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 focus on the impact of reading literature on L2 learning (e.g., Chen 2006; Hanauer, 2001; Kim, 2004; Wang, 2009).

Hanauer (2001), for example, studied the use of poetry reading in the EFL classroom, and found that the learners were able to construct meaning from the texts by using their existing linguistic knowledge and then applying that knowledge in a creative way to construct meaning. In addition, this 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” (Hanauer, 2001, p. 319). This study provides some

empirical evidence that poetry reading can help advanced learners develop L2 linguistic and cultural knowledge.

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. This study exemplifies 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 of the use of literature in the language classroom, more or less, lend support to the theoretical rationale of using literature in L2 education. In spite of 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 linguistic and cultural knowledge of the target community as well as to develop the students' L2 communicative competence.

The Present Study

The majority 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. On the other side, studies in the area of interlanguage pragmatics have generally focused on social or cognitive approaches to teaching pragmatics (particularly the pragmalinguistic component), and have been less explicit on the special techniques and practices. Besides, they have paid no 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; Lida, 2012; Paesani, 2005) and cultural knowledge (Allington & Swann, 2009; Kim 2004), and that literary plays have a conversational structure, hence providing an opportunity for realization of speech acts, the present study investigated if implicit or explicit instruction through plays has any effect on learners' pragmatic competence as indexed by their recognition of the most appropriate instantiation of the speech acts of apology, request, and refusal. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any significant difference in the recognition of speech acts between the four groups as a result of the four different types of instruction, i.e. explicit instruction using drama, implicit instruction using drama, explicit instruction without drama (through dialogue), implicit instruction without drama?
2. Is there any significant difference in the recognition of speech acts between literary (Explicit Play and Implicit Play) and nonliterary (Explicit Dialog and Implicit Dialog) groups?
3. Is there any significant difference in the recognition of speech acts between explicit (Explicit Play and Explicit Dialog) and implicit (Implicit Play and Implicit Dialog) groups?
4. Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest performance of each of the four groups?

Method

Participants

The participants of the study were some 80 second-semester EFL students as the study called for a degree of proficiency (intermediate)

to comprehend English plays. They were majoring in English Translation and English Language and Literature at Hazrat-e Masoumeh University, Mofid University and Qom University in Qom, Iran. The participants, who were 48 female and 32 male students with an age range of 18 to 23, formed four intact groups as there were not enough student population to choose from.

As the study required some native English speakers (NESs) to authenticate the pragmatic test and to help decide the answer key, 20 NESs (11 North American, 6 British, 3 other) took the test. They were 10 female and 8 male participants (2 not mentioned) with the following age range: 12 were above 50, 5 between 40-50, 2 between 30-40, and one below 20.

Instruments

A test of General English Proficiency and a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) were used as the testing instruments of the study. The proficiency test, used for ensuring homogeneity within and across the groups, was a 60-item tailored test which comprised three sections: *Structure* section (25 items) with two subsections (10 gap-fill and 15 structural error recognition items); *Vocabulary* section (15 items testing synonymy); and *Reading* section (20 items) with four passages/paragraphs on a variety of subjects (education, science, and society).

The test was an adapted version of a sample of proficiency tests developed by an Iranian university (Tarbiat Modarres University). To validate the test, a TOEFL test (2005) was given alongside to one of the groups, and the scores highly correlated ($r=0.86$) with the TOEFL scores. As for the reliability question (as the test was truncated for practicality considerations), a Cronbach's Alpha analysis was carried out, and the result indicated still a high reliability ($\alpha= 0.78$) for the test.

The MDCT 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, and three choices. The test-takers were supposed to choose the most appropriate option in terms of the given parameters. The *apology* section comprised four situations wherein the offender needed to apologize on the harm/offence done in terms of the addressee's position and distance, control over the offence, and the gravity of the situation. As for the *request* section, there were again four scenarios in which the requester needed to choose a request option according to addressee's status (equal or unequal) and distance (familiar or unfamiliar). The refusal section included situations where the testees needed to choose a refusal statement in response to an invitation (from an equal familiar person), and three requests (one from an equal familiar; another from an unequal (higher) familiar person; the other from an unequal (lower) familiar person). The items for *apology* and *requests* were adapted from Khatib and Ahmadi-Safa (2011), and *refusal* items were taken from Valipour and Jadidi (2015). The test items were then given to the native English speakers, and the option that was most frequently chosen was selected as the key for each item.

Materials

The materials used for pragmatic instruction included some short or one-act plays, dialogs, and some metapragmatic information. The plays, which were retrieved from *one-act-plays.com*, 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 through and the instances of the acts and their adjuncts were underlined for easy access and input enhancement. *St Martin's Summer* was used as a content for teaching apology, *Her Tongue* and *Roulette* were employed for teaching request, *Bloody Mary* and *The Boor* were used for refusal. The dialogs were adapted mainly from *Functions* (Matreyek, 1990) and partly from the Four Corners series (Richards & Bohlke, 2012). The dialogs centered on a specific speech act and provided the context and the pragmalinguistic resources (structures) needed for fulfilling each act. On the average six dialogs were picked for each instructional

session; as the apology speech act was taught in a single session, it received only 6 dialogs, while request and refusal, with each being taught during two sessions, got 9 and 12 samples respectively. The metapragmatic information delivered to the two explicit groups (Explicit Play and Explicit Dialog) preceded the plays and sample dialogs in each session's lesson. The information for the first session/lesson consisted of a definition of the apology speech act and a classification of apology strategies by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), followed by a note on the use of a combination of those strategies with unfamiliar people or people of a higher status. The second lesson was on the specification of the request speech act and the levels of directness associated with this act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), and a description of politeness in terms of position, distance, and imposition plus a categorization of downgraders meant to extenuate the directness of request especially with unfamiliar, or higher people in high-imposition situations. The third lesson discussed adjuncts to request, which are known as external modifiers. The information on the speech act of refusal, which was given in the fourth session, included a categorization of refusal strategies and the adjuncts used with this act (Salazar et al., 2009). And the last (fifth) lesson was an instruction on how to refuse requests, invitations, and suggestions made by people of different status and familiarity.

Procedure

To begin with, the proficiency test was given to the participants in order to ensure homogeneity within and among the four groups in terms of their general proficiency, and to see if there was any positive relationship between general proficiency and pragmatic competence. Then, the participants took the pretest (the MDCT), which was meant to determine their level of pragmatic competence before the onset of instruction, hence set a basis for later comparison, and to make sure that the groups did not significantly differ at the outset. 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 with regard to the situations and the people involved. Then, students were supposed to read the play or the dialogs and determine the head act, its adjuncts, and the strategies used to fulfill the speech act, and decide if the act had been appropriately materialized in terms of the actors involved in the play or dialogs.

In the implicit groups, the learners received no 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. The play-implicit group members were required to act out the play on an almost voluntary basis the following session.

Finally, a week after the last treatment session the participants took the posttest (the same MDCT test used as pretest) to reveal the effect of the different modes and mediums of instruction on the acquisition of the given speech acts. (As the time interval between the pretest and the posttest was almost two months, due to the two-week Iranian New Year's Holidays, the same test was used as both pretest and posttest, safe in the knowledge that the test-takers would not remember much from the first administration of the test.)

Results

General Proficiency Test

First, the descriptive statistics of the four groups' performance on the test of general proficiency were computed. Table 1 exhibits the descriptive statistics of the performance of the four groups on the proficiency test. The Explicit Play group has the highest and Implicit Play group has the lowest mean score, with the nonliterary (dialog) groups falling in between the two extremes.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the groups' proficiency test scores

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Explicit Dialog	20	33.45	5.45	1.21
Implicit Dialog	20	34.20	5.15	1.15
Explicit Play	20	36.95	6.22	1.39
Implicit Play	20	29.70	6.94	1.55
Total	80	33.57	6.42	0.71

In order to compare the performance of the groups on the proficiency test, one-way ANOVA was used. The one-way ANOVA analysis of the groups' performance on the general proficiency test revealed that there was a significant difference among the groups (Table 2). The P value (Sig = .003) was considerably below the critical value (.05), which confirms that there was a significant difference among the groups. This great difference was due to the relatively weaker performance of the Implicit Play group since the mean differences of the other three were not very large.

Table 2. 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	.003
Within Groups	2723.30	76	35.83		
Total	3259.55	79			

MDCT Pretest

Moreover, to compare the performance on the groups on the MDCT pretest, one-way ANOVA was carried out on the MDCT pretest scores. The results of the ANOVA of the MDCT pretest (Table 3) revealed that there was no significant difference (Sig= .578) among the four groups. That is, the groups were equal in terms of speech act recognition prior to the onset of instruction.

Table 3. ANOVA of the four groups' performance on MDCT pretest

MDCTPretest	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7.04	3	2.34	.662	.578
Within Groups	269.45	76	3.54		
Total	276.49	79			

Table 4 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the groups on the MDCT pretest. Explicit Play group has the highest mean score (M= 6.85) and Implicit Dialog groups has the lowest (M= 6.05).

Table 4. Descriptives of the four groups' performance on MDCT pretest

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Explicit Dialog	20	6.30	2.05	0.46
Implicit Dialog	20	6.05	2.09	0.47
Explicit Play	20	6.85	1.60	0.36
Implicit Play	20	6.25	1.74	0.39
Total	80	6.36	1.87	0.21

Posttest Analysis: Results Considering Research Questions

1. Is there any significant difference in the *recognition* of speech acts among the four groups as a result of the four different types of instruction?

To compare the performance of the four groups on the MDCT posttest and hence the effect of the four methods on the acquisition of speech acts, and since the groups were not significantly different on the MDCT pretest, a one-way ANOVA analysis was carried out. The ANOVA of the groups' performance on the MDCT posttest (Table 5) revealed that there was no significant difference (Sig = 0.281) among the four groups, and thus the effect of the four methods were not significantly different.

Table 5. ANOVA of the four groups' performance on MDCTPosttest

MDCTPosttest	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.45	3	4.48	1.30	0.281
Within Groups	262.50	76	3.45		
Total	275.95	79			

Although the groups were not significantly different in their MDCT pretest performance, their general proficiency scores differed significantly. Therefore, ANCOVA was used for their posttest performance analysis taking account of the difference. The results of the one-way ANCOVA analysis, which takes pretest performance into consideration, also revealed no significant difference among the four groups (Sig = .089). This is given under the category of Methods (teaching conditions) in Table 6.

Table 6. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	193.73 ^a	4	48.43	44.179	.000	.702
Intercept	39.04	1	39.045	35.615	.000	.322
MDCTPretest	180.28	1	180.28	164.446	.000	.687
Methods	7.40	3	2.46	2.250	.089	.083
Error	82.22	75	1.09			
Total	5050	80				
Corrected Total	275.95	79				

a. R Squared = .702 (Adjusted R Squared = .686)

Therefore the analyses indicated that the four groups and the four teaching methods (medium-mode combinations) were not significantly different, and there was no significant difference in the *recognition* of speech acts between the four groups as a result of the four different types of instruction.

2. Is there any significant difference in the recognition of speech acts between *literary* (play) and *nonliterary* (dialog) groups?

The one-way ANCOVA analysis of the performance of the literary (explicit play and implicit play) and nonliterary (explicit dialog and implicit dialog) groups on the MDCT pretest and posttest (Table 7) revealed that there was no significant difference (Sig = .087) between the two groups, and hence the *Medium* of presenting (play/dialog) pragmatic lessons had no significant effect on the participants' acquisition of speech acts in terms of their recognition of the most appropriate speech act in the given situations.

Table 7. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	189.69 ^a	2	94.84	84.663	.000
Intercept	36.83	1	36.83	32.879	.000
MDCTPretest	189.49	1	189.49	169.148	.000
Medium	3.36	1	3.36	3.000	.087
Error	86.26	77	1.12		
Total	5050	80			
Corrected Total	275.95	79			

a. R Squared = .687 (Adjusted R Squared = .679)

3. Is there any significant difference in the recognition of speech acts between *explicit* and *implicit* groups?

The one-way ANCOVA analysis of the performance of the explicit (explicit play and explicit dialog) and implicit (implicit play and implicit dialog) groups on the MDCT pretest and posttest (Table 8) 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' acquisition of speech acts in terms of their recognition of the most appropriate realization of the speech act in each situation.

Table 8. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects on MDCT Posttest

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	190.45 ^a	2	95.22	85.762	.000
Intercept	41.74	1	41.74	37.596	.000
MDCTPretest	177.65	1	177.65	159.997	.000
Mode	4.124	1	4.12	3.714	.058
Error	85.50	77	1.11		
Total	5050	80			
Corrected Total	275.95	79			

a. R Squared = .690 (Adjusted R Squared = .682)

4. Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of each of the four groups on the MDCT test?

4.1. Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of *Explicit Dialog* group on the MDCT test?

The paired samples t-test analysis of the performance of the Explicit Dialogue (ED) group on the MDCT pretest and posttest revealed that there was a significant difference (Sig = .000) between the performance of the group on the MDCT pretest and posttest (Table 9). The means were 6.30 and 8.10 on the pretest and posttest respectively, suggesting that the group performed better in the second administration of the test.

Table 9. Paired Samples T-Test of ED on Pre- and Posttest

Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CID				
			Lower	Upper			
-1.80	1.151	.257	-2.34	-1.26	-6.990	19	.000

4.2. Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of *Implicit Dialog* group on the MDCT test?

The paired samples t-test analysis of the Implicit Dialogue (ID) group's performance on the MDCT pretest and posttest (Sig = .000) showed that there was a significant difference between the performance of the group on the MDCT pretest and MDCT posttest (Table 10). The means were 6.05 and 7.45 on the pretest and posttest respectively, which suggests that the group's performance on the posttest was an improvement over their pretest performance.

Table 10. Paired Samples T-Test of ID on Pre- and Posttest

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CID		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
			Paired Differences				
-1.40	.99	.22	-1.86	-.93	-6.294	19	.000

4.3. Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of *Explicit Playgroup* on the MDCT test?

The paired samples t-test analysis of the performance of the Explicit Play (EP) group on the MDCT pretest and posttest (Sig=.000) revealed that there was a significant difference between the performance of the group on the MDCT pretest and MDCT posttest (Table 11). The means were 6.85 and 8.15 on the pretest and posttest respectively, indicating the group's better performance on the posttest.

Table 11. Paired Samples T-Test of EP on Pre- and Posttest

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CID		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
			Paired Differences				
-1.30	1.30	.29	-1.91	-.690	-4.466	19	.000

4.4. Is there any significant difference between the pretest and posttest results of *Implicit Dialog* group on the MDCT test?

The paired samples t-test analysis of the Implicit Play (IP) group's performance on the MDCT pretest and posttest (Sig = .000) revealed that there was a significant difference between the performance of the group on the MDCT pretest and MDCT posttest (Table 12). The means were 6.25 and 7.20 on the pretest and posttest respectively, showing that the group's performance improved on the second administration (the posttest).

Table 12. Paired Samples T-Test of IP on Pre- and Posttest

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% CID		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
			Paired Differences				
-.95	.88704	.19835	-1.36515	-.53485	-4.790	19	.000

5. Is there a relationship between proficiency and pragmatic comprehension?

The Pearson Correlation analysis comparing the performance of the participants on the general proficiency test and the MDCT pretest (Table 13) revealed that there is a significant relationship between general proficiency and pragmatic competence, in terms of therecognition of speech acts. The Pearson Correlation analysis of the general proficiency test and the MDCT pretest indicated that the correlation between the two tests was statistically significant (.032).

Table 13. Correlations between Proficiency and MDCT Pretest

		MDCTPretest
Proficiency	Pearson Correlation	.241 *
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.032
	N	80

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

explicit or implicit mode of teaching, but the analyses of the results yielded no advantage for this medium of instruction. Following, the findings are reviewed more specifically in terms of the given research questions.

The first broad question was if the four groups differed on their performance on the posttest as a result of differing teaching conditions. The statistical analyses found no significant difference among the groups, meaning that the four teaching methods or medium-mode blends were not much different in their outcome despite the apparent mean difference. 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 taken into account the finding stands 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)). Despite this general finding, the issue of mode and medium are treated separately in the second and third questions.

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, suggesting that the instructional material did not affect learner's performance differentially. That is, it makes no difference whether we choose to teach pragmatics by means of dialogs or plays that are rich in instances of the given speech acts. As there is no precedence in the ILP literature as to the use of play, and the studies in the field have paid a 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 the current finding.

As for the question of mode of instruction, 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, that is, the groups' performance was not affected whether they were taught the speech acts explicitly or implicitly. This finding is in disagreement with the most of the research comparing explicit and implicit teaching. According to Rose (2005), Takahashi (2010) and Taguchi (2015), explicit instruction has in general proved to be more effective than implicit instruction. Explicit instruction involving metapragmatic information is generally more effective than implicit teaching, and even input that has been made salient through enhancement techniques alone cannot bring about the level of learning produced by the explicit instruction. However, there are studies (Kubota, 1995; Martinez-Flor, 2006; and Takimoto, 2006, 2007, 2009) that show that the explicit method is not superior, that is to say, the implicit method can be as good as the explicit method, and the findings of the present study fall into this category of ILP studies.

Concerning the comparison of the groups across the two administration of the same test as pretest and posttest, significant difference was found between the groups' performance on the MCT pretest and posttest. This suggests that all the teaching conditions regardless of the medium (play or dialog) and mode (explicit or implicit) of instruction performed better on the posttest. This finding is in line with the conclusion that Rose (2005) had drawn upon review of a number of experimental studies as to the effectiveness of instruction, but he made it clear that we are far from making a definite claim as to the best approach to teaching pragmatics. Although there

were no significant difference among the groups on the posttest as indicated by ANCOVA analysis, the Explicit Dialog group literally gained the most (Mean Diff. =1.8) and the Implicit Play's gain was the least (MD=.95), with Implicit Dialog (MD=1.4) and Explicit Play (MD=1.3) falling in between. This suggests that instruction whether explicit or implicit through either play or dialog is effective, but the learning outcomes may differ as a matter of the differential teaching conditions. The relative advantage of the Explicit Dialog group could be attributed to the fact that explicit teaching has an edge over implicit teaching as attested by the majority of research findings, and that dialogs can function better as a concise package of the structures and instances of the given speech acts than the relatively lengthy plays with dispersed speech act instances.

Finally, the relationship between general proficiency and the MDCT was significant, suggesting that proficient language learners are at an advantage over less proficient students in their recognition of the most appropriate speech act. Put simply, the more proficient a student is, the more likely she is to perform better on a test of pragmatics as manifested in her choice of the most suitable speech act instantiation in a given context. This finding agrees with the past literature that as proficiency increases, the ability to produce and perceive speech acts appropriately improves (e.g., Roever, 2005; Rose, 2000; Taguchi, 2006, 2011).

Conclusion and Implication

The study aimed at exploring a new possibility in fostering pragmatic competence through the medium of literary play and the well-established dichotomy of explicit-implicit approach 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 performance across the two administration of an MDCT testing learners' recognition of the given speech acts. The findings suggested it does not make much difference whether we choose to teach pragmatics by means of original literary plays or specially designed dialogs; it does not matter much whether

we teach pragmatics explicitly or implicitly. The thing that matters is choosing to teach pragmatics than not to teach 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 in the learners. To be more specific, the different teaching conditions can bring about the pragmatic awareness implicated in the recognition of the most appropriate instantiation of the 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 context. Then, teachers and materials developers need to incorporate a blend of authentic engaging material rich in the targeted pragmatic features and metapragmatic information into the language class and teaching materials.

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