
Title	The relative effects of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction on the development of L2 pragmatic competence
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Title: The relative effects of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction on the development of L2 pragmatic competence

Abstract

This study evaluates the relative effectiveness of two types of form-focused instruction on the acquisition of the speech act of constructive criticism by sixty nine Vietnamese learners of English. Over a 10 week course, the explicit group ($N=28$) participated in consciousness-raising activities, received explicit meta-pragmatic explanation and correction of errors of forms and meanings. The implicit group ($N=19$), on the other hand, participated in pragma-linguistic input enhancement and recast activities. The two treatment groups were compared with a control group ($N=22$) on pre-test and post-test performance, consisting of a discourse completion task, a role play and an oral peer-feedback task. A delayed post-test comprising of the same production tasks was also conducted for the two treatment groups to measure long term retention. The results revealed that both of the treatment groups significantly improved in the immediate post-test over the pre-test, outperforming the control group. The treatment groups also maintained their improvement in the delayed post-test. However, the explicit group performed significantly better than the implicit group on all measures. These findings are discussed with implications for classroom practices and future research.

Key words: pragmatic competence, form-focused instruction, speech act, constructive criticism, second language acquisition, interlanguage pragmatics

1. Introduction

Previous studies have documented that second language (L2) learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics may differ considerably from the native speaker (NS) in their pragmatic performance in the target language (TL) (see Kasper and Rose, 2002). Unlike grammatical errors, pragmatic idiosyncrasies may “reflect badly” on the learner as a person, thus likely adversely affecting his or her communication with the NS (Thomas, 1983: 97). Previous studies also show that pragmatic knowledge is acquired slowly in naturalistic contexts (see for example Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993; Bouton, 1994). In other words, mere exposure is insufficient for L2 pragmatic development and therefore instruction is necessary to raise the learner’s consciousness of form-function mappings and pertinent contextual variables which may not be salient enough to be noticed (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). In the foreign language context, pragmatic instruction is even more desirable since opportunities for input and interaction outside the classroom are often limited and formal instruction serves as the only regular source of L2 knowledge.

The above findings have led researchers to argue for a greater emphasis on pragmatics in the L2 classroom (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Rose, 2005). Indeed, recent years have seen a steady increase in the number of studies that have examined the effects of instruction on L2 pragmatics learning (see Rose, 2005). This line of research addresses three important questions: (1) whether L2 pragmatics is teachable; (2) whether instruction makes a difference; (3) and whether there are different effects for different teaching approaches. Generally, the findings of these studies have suggested that although certain L2 pragmatic areas remain difficult for learners, L2 pragmatics can be taught and instruction is beneficial to pragmatic development (see Jeon and Kaya, 2006; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Rose, 2005 for a comprehensive review). Findings have also suggested

that explicit instruction (referring to a wide range of classroom techniques which serve to direct learners' attention to form) may produce more effects than implicit instruction (referring to methodological options which allow learners to infer rules without awareness) (Jeon and Kaya, 2006). However, as warned by Jeon and Kaya (2006), due to a limited number of studies that have examined implicit instruction and methodological issues such as unequal treatment lengths for explicit and implicit instruction and variation in data collection methods, the above findings should be treated with caution. Therefore, in order to understand the relative effectiveness of these two types of pedagogical interventions, further research is certainly needed (Ellis, 2008; Jeon and Kaya, 2006).

The current study is an attempt to investigate the relative efficacy of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction (FFI) on the performance of constructive criticism by a group of Vietnamese student teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in an academic setting. It has been conducted both to contribute to furthering our understanding of the roles of these two types of instruction and to expand the range of learning targets. Since earlier L2 pragmatics studies have focused predominantly on relatively easily defined speech acts such as requests and suggestions (e.g. Fukuya et al., 1998; Fukuya and Clark, 2001; Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor, 2008; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005; Safont, 2003, Salazar, 2003; Takahashi, 2001; 2005; Takimoto, 2009), it has remained little known whether instruction works for more complex speech act sets ⁽¹⁾ such as constructive criticism which may require multiple realization strategies.

In this study, constructive criticism refers to a negative assessment of a peer's current work with the aim of improving current or future performance. It usually involves the identification of a problematic action, choice, or product, as well as advice on how to change or correct the problem (see Nguyen 2005). In institutional settings teachers' constructive criticism is fully sanctioned by

their authoritative role. At the same time, giving criticism by one peer to another is often tricky, not only because learners generally lack the knowledge required to give fair criticism but also because they lack pragmatic competence to express their criticism in an appropriate manner in the TL (Nguyen and Basturkmen, 2010). Research has shown that while students from some countries may find giving constructive criticism that can improve a colleague's work a positive exercise, students from other cultures (particularly Asian cultures) are uncomfortable expressing criticism of another's output (Nelson and Carson, 1998; Soares, 1998). Other studies have indicated that learners of English may give constructive criticism very differently from the NS. For example, they tend to soften criticism less frequently but aggravate criticism more often than their NS fellow students. The learners also employ modal verbs such as *must*, *should*, and *have to* inappropriately and thus need pedagogical in this area (see Nguyen, 2005, 2008a, 2008b).

Nonetheless, although to date a great deal of pedagogical effort has been devoted to orienting L2 learners to the content of peer feedback and the structure of peer feedback sessions (Liu and Hansen, 2002; Mendonca and Johnson, 1994; Rollinson, 2005), fairly little attention has been focused on the language used to provide negative assessment (see Nguyen and Basturkmen, 2010). The present study is conducted to address some of the language problems that L2 learners may have with constructive criticism while participating in peer feedback sessions. It focuses specifically on a group of Vietnamese student-teachers of EFL who are undertaking an English-medium teacher education program. It is argued that these students need training in how to give constructive criticism appropriately so that they can successfully transfer the acquired knowledge and skills to their future professional practices. It is also believed that they should be equipped with L2 pragmatic knowledge so that they can assist their students in making informed pragmatic

decisions that both fit their systems of values and beliefs and do not break communication with the NS.

Related to the instructional approaches employed in the current study is the distinction between explicit and implicit FFI. DeKeyser (2003) defines the former as involving rule formulation and the latter as the absence of it. In other words, while the former works to develop learners' metalinguistic awareness of rules, the latter is directed at enabling learners to infer rules without awareness (Ellis, 2008). However, as noted by Jeon and Kaya (2006), the above distinction tends to constitute a continuum rather than a dichotomy in previous L2 pragmatics studies. As commonly found in these studies, at each end of the explicit-implicit continuum are absolutely extreme explicit (e.g. teacher-fronted instruction and overt correction of forms and meanings) and implicit conditions (e.g. sole exposure to TL input without any form of manipulation of learners' attention to target forms). On the adjoining point of this continuum toward either end lie other instructional techniques. For example, visual input enhancement lies toward the implicit end because although in this technique input is manipulated in a way that induces learners to notice target forms in the input, there was no attempt to direct learners' attention to the forms (e.g. by asking them to deduce rules) (see Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005).

The current study bases its definition of explicit and implicit instruction on Jeon and Kaya (2006) and treats the distinction between these two types of instruction as a continuum. In particular, the current study defines explicit FFI as a pedagogical approach that combines consciousness-raising, meta-pragmatic generalizations and explicit correction of forms and meanings which occur in output practice. Implicit FFI, on the other hand, is conceptualized as a provision of enriched input via input enhancement techniques and recasting of pragmalinguistic errors which arise out

of meaning-focused communication (see also Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005). These conceptualizations respectively represent two paradigms of FFI instruction in second language acquisition (SLA), focus on forms (i.e. intentional learning of linguistic elements via meta-linguistic presentation) and focus on form (i.e. incidental learning of linguistic elements within a meaning-focused context)⁽²⁾ (see Doughty and Williams, 1998; Ellis, 2001; 2008; Long, 1991; Long and Robinson, 1998).

In conceptualizing its instructional designs, the current study draws on Schmidt's (1990, 1993, 1995) Noticing Hypothesis, Swain's (1985, 1995, 2005) Comprehensive Output Hypothesis, and Long's (1983, 1996) Interaction Hypothesis which specify conditions for language learning as opportunities for input noticing, corrective feedback and output. In other words, it is believed that learners can benefit from types of instruction that allow them not only to attend to linguistic forms and see the relationship between forms and meanings, but also to use these forms in meaningful communication, receive negative evidence about their output and modify it accordingly. Details of these instructional implementations will be discussed in the sections below.

2. The role of form-focused instruction in L2 pragmatics development

2.1. Methodological options

Ellis (2008: 870-871) specifies four methodological options for the focus on forms approach: (1) input-based instruction where input is manipulated in a way that directs learners' attention to the target form; (2) explicit instruction involving consciousness-raising or/ and meta-linguistic explanation; (3) output-based instruction which enables learners to manipulate and create texts; and (4) explicit corrective feedback, e.g. by means of meta-linguistic explanation or elicitation.

These options share characteristics of explicit FFI discussed by Ellis (2008: 879); that is they (1) direct attention to target forms; (2) are planned; (3) are obtrusive; (4) present target forms in isolation; (5) involve the use of meta-language; and (6) include controlled practice of forms.

In contrast, Ellis (*ibid.*) points out that a focus on form might involve one or all of these options: (1) input-based instruction where input is manipulated in a way that causes attention to forms to take place incidentally; (2) implicit instruction (i.e. absence of rule explanation or instruction to attend to form); (3) output-based instruction which enables learners to create texts; and (4) implicit corrective feedback, e.g. by means of recasts or requests for clarification. Unlike the focus on forms approach, focus on form instruction does not direct but only attract learners' attention to target forms while they are engaged in meaning-based activities. It is therefore unobtrusive, meaning it only minimally interrupts communication. It presents target forms in context, makes no use of meta-linguistic terminology and encourages free production of target forms. In other words, it carries characteristics of implicit FFI.

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the effects of explicit and implicit FFI on L2 pragmatic development (see a collection of studies in Alcon-Soler, 2008; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Rose and Kasper, 2001). These studies vary greatly in their methodological options. For example, explicit pragmatic instruction may refer to a wide range of focus on forms techniques, from meta-pragmatic explanation to different input conditions with or without meta-pragmatic information (e.g. Hernandez, 2011; Fukuya, 1988; House, 1996; Liddicoat and Crozet, 2001; Martinez-Flor, 2008; Rose and Ng 2001; Safont, 2003; Takahashi, 2001; Takimoto, 2009; Tateyama *et al.* 1997; Tateyama, 2001; Yoshimi, 2001). Many of these studies also include production options since using multiple instructional strategies is often believed to produce most effects (Ellis, 2008).

Compared to explicit pragmatic instruction, however, implicit pragmatic instruction has been less adequately conceptualized. As a result, Fukuya and Zhang (2002: 2-3) describe implicit pragmatic instruction as “a somewhat underdeveloped area, both conceptually and methodologically”. In many studies, implicit instruction is simply defined as mere exposure to pragmatic input (e.g. Hernandez, 2011; Pearson, 1998; Tateyama, 2001; Takahashi, 2001) or the withholding of meta-pragmatic information (e.g. House, 1996). Very few studies have taken a step further to operationalize this type of instruction in terms of the focus on form paradigm, which more closely reflects the principles of implicit form-focused instruction. For example, Fukuya and Clark (2001) define implicit pragmatic instruction as using typographically enhanced input. Fukuya and Zhang (2002) conceptualize it as involving recasts of pragmalinguistic errors. Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) include both input enhancement and recasts.

The lack of a systematic conceptualization of implicit instructional approaches in many early studies, as pointed out by Ellis (2008), shows that they are perhaps more pedagogically than theoretically motivated and oriented. Obviously, this calls for more rigorous designs in future L2 pragmatics research to bring this line of research closer to traditions of mainstream second language acquisition (SLA) research.

2.2. The roles of explicit form-focused instruction

Studies exploring the effects of explicit FFI constitute a majority in the literature on L2 pragmatics instruction (Jeon and Kaya, 2006). Findings of these studies generally show that explicit FFI is effective in promoting L2 pragmatic ability, attesting to the role of attention and awareness in L2 learning (see Gass, 1988; Schmidt, 1983, 1993, 1995; Sharwood Smith, 1981).

For example, three studies, namely Fukuya (1988), Martinez-Flor (2008) and Safont (2003) have found positive effects for awareness-raising combined with meta-pragmatic instruction in teaching request modifiers in L2 English. Similarly, Yoshimi (2001) examined the combined effect of meta-pragmatic explanation, communicative practice, and feedback on the use of Japanese interactional markers in extended discourse and found an overall effect for the instructed learners. Hernandez (2011) found positive effects for the combination of input flooding (i.e. input that contains abundant examples of the target forms) with meta-pragmatic instruction on the use of discourse markers by learners of Spanish. Similar effects were also reported for those learners who received explicit instruction in Takahashi (2001), and those who received structured input with explicit information in Takimoto (2009).

In addition to the compelling evidence for the positive effects of explicit instruction on L2 pragmatic learning, there is also contrary evidence. For example, Fukuya and Clark (2001) found no significant results for learners who received explicit instruction of requesting modifiers as compared to a control group. However, these researchers attributed their findings to methodological limitations such as brevity of treatment, absence of a pre-test, small sample size, and insensitivity of the post-test in measuring pragmatic ability. Yoshimi in the above study pointed out that despite the overall benefit of instruction, not all target features were learned equally well. Yet she acknowledged that the inadequacies in instruction, feedback and practice components of the study might explain her findings.

2.3. The role of implicit form-focused instruction

Implicit FFI seems to have received less attention in L2 pragmatics research than explicit FFI. For example, in a meta-analysis recently conducted by Jeon and Kaya (2006) thirteen studies with quantitative data were reviewed. While twelve of them included explicit treatment, only seven of them included implicit treatment. Because of limited data, the findings of these studies are also less conclusive than those regarding the role of explicit FFI. Fukuya and Zhang (2002) investigated the effectiveness of pragmalinguistic recast on the learning of request strategies. They found a relatively large effect size for both pragmatic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy by the treatment group as compared to a control group, attesting to the effect of implicit corrective feedback in developing L2 pragmatic competence. Hernandez (2011) found a significant increase in the use of discourse markers by learners who received input flooding without meta-pragmatic information when measured on both an immediate and delayed post-tests. Similar effects were also reported for learners who received visually enhanced input and pragmalinguistic recast in Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005).

On the contrary, Fukuya et al. (1988) failed to find effects for a focus on form on teaching sociopragmatics. Fukuya and Clark (2001) also found no significant impact of visual input enhancement on the learning of English request modifiers. Despite a lack of significant results due to methodological limitations (e.g. the brevity of treatment and small sample size), these studies had opened up the possibility to explore focus on form instruction in the pragmatic area. This line of inquiry has been continued in later studies, for example in Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) and in the current study.

2.4. The relative effects of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction

Implicit FFI also seems less effective in developing pragmatic awareness and ability in L2 learners as compared to explicit FFI (e.g. Rose and Ng, 2001; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001). Rose and Ng (2001), for example, found effects for both explicit and implicit instruction in developing learners' pragmalinguistic proficiency, but reported effects for only explicit instruction in developing learners' sociopragmatic proficiency. Takahashi (2001) found that the most explicit type of instruction produced more effects than instruction that involves form-comparison, form-search, or meaning-focused conditions (i.e. reading, listening and answering questions based on the input). Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) found that while there were significant impacts for both groups of learners who received meta-pragmatic instruction and those who received typographically enhanced input and pragmalinguistic recast, the magnitude of effects was larger for the former group. Perhaps Kubota (1995) was the only study that found superior effects for implicit instruction over explicit instruction. However, these initial differences vanished by the time a delayed post-test was conducted.

In their meta-analysis study, Jeon and Kaya (2006) warn that it is not yet possible to conclude with confidence which type of FFI instruction is more effective because of the limited data available for comparison, particularly a limited number of studies exploring implicit FFI, as well as several methodological issues observed in previous studies, for example unequal treatment lengths for explicit and implicit group, lack of delayed post-tests, and variations in data collection methods. To achieve more conclusive research outcomes, obviously, this line of research should be continued and methodological issues should be improved in future studies.

3. The present study

Due to the mixed results of the above reviewed studies as well as their methodological issues as discussed earlier, there is a need for continuing this line of research to further our understanding of the relative efficacy of explicit and implicit FFI in the pragmatic realm. The current study aims to address this need by answering the following research questions:

- 1) What are the effects of explicit and implicit FFI on learners' performance of constructive criticism in English?
- 2) Do the instructional effects (if any) last beyond the immediate post-experimental observation?
- 3) Which type of instruction is more effective?

3.1. Participants

This study adopts a quasi-experimental, pre-test/ post-test design with a control group. Three high intermediate EFL intact classes ($N=69$) were recruited. The learners (6 males and 63 females) were pre-service EFL teachers doing their Year 3 English major at a teacher training institution in Vietnam at the time of data collection. Their lengths of English study ranged between six and nine years. None of them had ever visited an English-speaking country. They had had limited exposure to English use in their daily life and little chance to use English for communication outside the classroom. The three classes were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: control ($N=22$), explicit ($N=28$), and implicit ($N=19$).

3.2. Choice of target forms

The treatment was incorporated into a writing program where students were taught how to write paragraphs and different types of academic essays in English. As part of the syllabus requirements, the students participated in peer-feedback activities for at least four writing assignments where they had to read and give critical comments on a peer's work. English was the language of instruction and communication in the classroom. One of the authors taught the two treatment groups and another author taught the control group. The three groups followed the same writing syllabus and schedule. The only difference was that while the two treatment groups respectively received explicit instruction of language for giving constructive criticism and exposure to enriched target pragmatic input via input enhancement and recast activities, the control group did not receive any equivalent instruction or exposure but only followed the normal schedule.

The target forms included two major criticism realization strategies: (1) identification of problem and (2) giving advice, and two types of criticism modifiers: (1) external modifiers (compliments, disarmers and grounders) and (2) internal modifiers (past tense, modal verbs, modal adverbs, expression of uncertainty, hedges and understaters) (see Table 1). A list of pragmalinguistic conventions for realizing criticism is included in Appendix 1. These strategies, modifiers and pragmalinguistic conventions were selected as instructional foci because they tended to occur most frequently in native speaker (NS) criticism in equal power situations as found by Nguyen (2005). They also constituted areas of difficulty for many learners of English (see Nguyen, 2005).

PUT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

3.3. Instructional procedures

Instruction was implemented for the two treatment groups for one class hour (i.e. 45 minutes) every week over a period of 10 weeks, resulting in an approximate total of seven instructional hours. The procedures for these implementations are summarized in Table 2 below. Materials for the two treatment groups were designed based on the same authentic NS speech samples, but the versions used for the implicit group contained boldfaced target structures for the purpose of inducing learners' noticing of form.

PUT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

3.3.1. Explicit treatment:

The instructional procedure for the explicit group comprised of the following components:

- (1) Consciousness-raising (e.g. identifying criticizing strategies and recognizing directness levels) in the first three sessions.
- (2) Meta-pragmatic explanation following each consciousness-raising activity.
- (3) Follow-up class discussion of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects of giving constructive criticism in both L1 and L2.
- (4) Productive activities (e.g. providing softeners for unmitigated constructive criticism, plus providing oral feedback on peer's written assignments) in the remaining seven sessions.
- (5) Reflection on output and working to improve it. For this activity, learners recorded their peer-feedback conversation, listened to the recording and thought about how much they liked or disliked the way they gave criticism and how they would have improved it.

(6) Explicit correction of both pragmatic and grammatical errors in both teacher-fronted and pair-work activities.

3.3.2. Implicit treatment:

Over the ten weeks, the implicit group participated in the following activities:

(1) Input enhancement in the first three sessions. For input enhancement activities, learners read samples of NS peer-feedback conversations containing bold-faced target structures, answered comprehension questions and compared NS criticism with their own in terms of effectiveness (i.e. whether the criticism is specific, well-grounded and includes suggestion for improvement). They were also instructed to pay attention to the highlighted parts when reading the samples in order to find answers to comprehension questions.

(2) Communicative tasks comprising of a discourse completion task and oral peer-feedback tasks in the remaining seven sessions.

(3) Reflection on output and working to improve it, as with the explicit group.

(4) Recast of both pragmatic and grammatical errors which arise out of communicative tasks.

The correct versions were also written on the blackboard at the end of the lesson for students to memorize.

In the current study, recasts were provided in the form of confirmation checks, which were assumed to present a clearer corrective intention than the reformulation of errors alone. Gass and Mackey (2007, pp. 182-185) have argued that confirmation checks imply a lack of comprehension, which may lead the learner to infer that there is a problem with his or her

production. In particular, recasts were done as follows in this study. First, the teacher repeated the deviant part of the utterance in a rising tone to attract students' attention. Then, the teacher said the appropriate utterance, preceded by 'You mean', also using a rising tone, similarly to the way confirmation checks were done. The corrected part was also stressed, as seen in the example below.

Student: *You must pay attention to grammar.*

Teacher: *Must?↑ You mean 'Perhaps you could pay more attention to grammar?↑*

In order to decide what and how to recast the current study adopted the framework proposed by Fukuya and Zhang (2002). That is, if an utterance is pragmatically appropriate but grammatically inaccurate, the teacher recasts only the linguistic form (type 1). If an utterance is pragmatically inappropriate but grammatically accurate, the teacher recasts it by using one of the pragmalinguistic conventions for expressing constructive criticisms (type 2). Finally, if an utterance is neither pragmatically appropriate nor grammatically accurate, the teacher also recasts it by using one of the pragmalinguistic conventions for expressing constructive criticisms (type 3). Examples of these three scenarios are presented in Table 3 below.

PUT TABLE 3 AROUND HERE

3.4. Data collection:

Constructive criticisms were collected by means of multiple instruments: an 8-item written discourse completion task (DCT), a 6-item oral role play (RP), and oral peer feedback (OPF) on actual written works (see Appendix 2). The employment of multiple instruments serves three purposes. First, elicitation and observational methods have their own pros and cons regarding the

amount and quality of data (see Kasper and Dahl, 1991). Using both types of methods would help compensate for the cons of each. Second, using both highly structured and free constructed responses as outcome measures would allow us to avoid favoring one type of instruction and biasing against the other (see Ellis, 2001; 2008). Third, previous research has shown that the type of outcome measure might affect the observed magnitude of instructional effects (Jeon and Kaya, 2006). Studies employing elicited data only tend to produce smaller effect size than those employing both elicited plus natural data. Thus, to maximize the possibility to track post-experimental changes, both elicited and naturalistic data were employed in this study.

The OPF task was adopted from Nguyen (2005) which was originally used to elicit constructive criticism from a group of Vietnamese EFL learners and Australian NSs. For this task, learners were paired up to give constructive criticism on each other's writing assignments, which was also one of the learning tasks on this writing program. They were instructed to critique their peer's essays based on three main assessment criteria, namely the organizational structure of the essay, the quality of argumentation, and grammar and vocabulary. Their feedback conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed for later analysis.

The DCT was also adapted from Nguyen (2005), which was originally devised to triangulate the OPF data. The original DCT consisted of four criticizing scenarios, which were constructed based on the peer-feedback data taken from a pilot study with four dyads of learners and three dyads of NSs one month prior to Nguyen (2005)'s main study. In the present study, four more scenarios were added to increase the number of test items. These scenarios were also based on Nguyen (2005)'s peer-feedback data.

For the RP task, learners were required to give responses to hypothetical situations involving giving critical feedback to peers in a range of classroom situations, for example, commenting on a peer's presentation, lesson plan or micro-teaching demonstration. The RP conversations were also audio-recorded and transcribed.

The same OPF task was used in a pre-test, immediate and delayed post-tests but each time the learners were required to critique a different essay written by their peers. Three versions of the DCT were distributed in the pre-test, immediate and delayed post-tests. These versions contained similar peer-to-peer criticizing scenarios. However, the order of these scenarios was different in each test. This was done to avoid the learners memorizing responses from the pre-test. The same held true for three RP versions, which were used in the pre-test, immediate and delayed post-tests. It should also be noted that at the onset of the study learners were allowed to choose their own pairs for the RP and OPF. This pairing was then kept consistent throughout the three tests to keep variables such as social distance under control.

Pre-test data were collected at the onset of the study and consisted of the control and two treatment groups' performance on three production tasks: DCT, RP and OPF. Immediate post-test (hereafter referred to as post-test 1) data were collected at the end of the treatment period, and also consisted of the three group's performance on all three production tasks. Due to limited resources, however, delayed post-test (hereafter referred to as post-test 2) data were collected only for the treatment groups five weeks after the treatment. Apart from performing on the production tasks in the delayed post-test, the learners from the treatment groups were also required to write an end-of-course reflective essay, in which they recorded and commented on their learning experience throughout the course. Data from this source were then analyzed for instances of input noticing.

3.5. Data analysis:

Data consisted of 1480 DCT responses, 1110 RP conversations and 185 OPF conversations, altogether yielding 11052 criticisms. Data were coded independently into different types of criticizing strategies and modifiers, adapting a categorization scheme devised and validated by Nguyen (2005) (summarized in Table 1), and then carefully cross-checked and discussed by all researchers on the team until an absolute agreement was achieved.

An analytical assessment was conducted to assign scores to each learner for his or her performance of constructive criticisms in the tests, using a 10 point scale (with 10 being the highest possible score) adapted from Martinez-Flor & Fukuya (2005). This scale consisted of two parts, allowing the researchers to assess both pragmatic appropriateness and linguistic accuracy in learners' constructive criticisms. Each part was rated from 0-5, making a total score ranging from 0-10 when added up (see Appendix 3). Pragmatic appropriateness was assessed in terms of knowledge of what to say to a particular interlocutor in a particular context of situation and determined by the right choice of realization strategies and politeness devices. Linguistic accuracy was assessed in terms of knowledge of various expressions for conveying intentions and determined by the correct usage of relevant linguistic structures (see Appendix 3 for examples). Note that although learners were assessed for both pragmatic appropriateness and linguistic accuracy, they were to be awarded scores in the latter area only when they were awarded scores in the former area. In other words, linguistic accuracy was to be scored only when pragmatic appropriateness had been achieved. Note also that scores were awarded only when learners made use of one of the target forms which had been taught to them in the experiment (see Table 1 and Appendix 1). A learner's final score on a task was obtained by averaging the sum of sub-scores that he or she achieved for each of the criticisms that he or she

had made when performing the task. Scoring procedures were conducted independently and cross-checked carefully by all researchers on the team with the agreement rate of 90%.

4. Results

4.1. Results from the immediate post-test

4.1.1. The DCT:

Results of a mixed between-within subjects ANOVAs revealed a significant main effect for Time across the pre-test and immediate post-test [$F(1, 66)=106.5, p<.001, \eta^2 =.61$]. A significant main effect for Group for the two treatment groups and control group was also found [$F(2, 66)=8.76, p<.001, \eta^2 =.21$]. In addition, the results revealed a significant interaction effect between Group and Time [$F(2, 66)=44.5, p<.001$] (see Table 5).

Table 4 and Figure 1 illustrate two important results of the DCT: (1) there were no significant differences among three groups on the pre-test [$F(2, 66) =2.95, p >.05$]; (2) while the two treatment groups displayed improvement from the pre-test to the immediate post-test ($p <.05$), the control group did not ($p >.05$).

Posthoc LSD analyses conducted on the immediate post-test scores for the main effect for treatment showed that (1) the explicit group performed significantly better than the control group on the DCT ($p<.001, d =2.17$), but the implicit group did not ($p >.05$); (2) the explicit group also significantly outperformed the implicit group ($p <.001, d=2.31$). Cohen's d effect sizes of 2.17 and 2.31 suggested a very large magnitude of instructional effect for the explicit group as compared to the implicit group and the control group.

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4.1.2. The RP:

The results of a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA for the RP test scores revealed the same significant main effects as the DCT: a significant main effect for Time [$F(1, 66) = 99.4, p < .001, \eta^2 = .60$], a significant main effect for Group [$F(2, 66) = 18.1, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$] and a significant interaction effect between Group and Time [$F(2, 66) = 45.1, p < .001$] (see Table 5).

The results displayed for RP in Table 4 and Figure 2 showed that (1) there were no statistically significant differences among the three groups on the pre-test scores [$F(2, 66) = 2.30, p > .05$]; and (2) the two treatment groups made gains from the pre-test to the immediate post-test ($p < .05$), but the control group did not ($p > .05$).

Posthoc LSD analyses conducted on the immediate post-test scores for the main effect for treatment showed that (1) both treatment group performed significantly better than the control group on the RP (explicit vs. control: $p < .001, d = 2.79$; implicit vs. control: $p = .001, d = 1.21$); (2) the explicit group also significantly outperformed the implicit group ($p < .001, d = 1.54$). Cohen's d effect sizes calculated for these comparisons suggested a very large magnitude of instructional effects for the two treatment groups as compared to the control group and for the explicit group as compared to the implicit group.

PUT FIGURE 2 AROUND HERE

4.1.3. The OPF:

As with the DCT and OPF, results of a mixed between-within subjects ANOVA for the OPF test scores also revealed a significant main effect for Time [$F(1, 66)=38.7, p<.001, \eta^2 =.37$], a significant main effect for Group [$F(2, 66)=4.98, p =.010, \eta^2 =.13$] and a significant interaction effect between Group and Time [$F(2, 66)=21.7, p<.001$] (see Table 5).

Table 4 and Figure 3 showed that (1) there were no significant differences among the three groups [$F(2, 66) =2.475, p >.05$]; and (2) the two treatment groups improved from the pre-test to the immediate post-test ($p <.001$), but the control group did not ($p >.05$).

Posthoc LSD analyses conducted on the immediate post-test scores for the main effect for treatment showed that (1) both treatment group performed significantly better than the control group on the RP (explicit vs. control: $p <.001, d=2.01$; implicit vs. control: $p =.001, d=.92$); (2) the explicit group also significantly outperformed the implicit group ($p =.005, d=1.00$). In addition, the Cohen's d effect sizes calculated for these comparisons suggest a very large magnitude of instructional effects for the two treatment groups as compared to the control group and for the explicit group as compared to the implicit group.

PUT FIGURE 3 AROUND HERE

4.2. Results from the delayed post-test

Results of paired samples t tests conducted for the pre-test and delayed post-test scores gained by the two experimental groups showed that both groups scored significantly higher in the delayed post-test than in the pre-test. This improvement was evident as learners were measured by all three production tasks: DCT [explicit group: $t(27) = 11.9, p <.001$; implicit group: $t(18) = 3.13, p$

=.006]; RP [explicit group: $t(27) = 11.0, p < .001$; implicit group: $t(18) = 5.04, p < .001$]; and OPF [explicit group: $t(27) = 5.59, p < .001$; implicit group: $t(18) = 3.63, p = .002$] (see Table 6; Figures 4, 5 and 6). These results indicated that the positive effects for the two types of treatments were maintained beyond immediate post-experimental observation.

PUT TABLE 6 AROUND HERE

Results of independent t tests also showed that the explicit group significantly outperformed the implicit group in all three tasks: DCT [$t(45) = 8.55, p < .001, d = 2.59$]; RP [$t(45) = 6.29, p < .001, d = 1.71$]; and OPF [$t(45) = 2.82, p = .007, d = .79$] (see Table 7; Figures 4, 5 and 6). Cohen's d effect sizes suggested a large magnitude of instructional effect for the explicit group as compared to the implicit group.

PUT TABLE 7 AROUND HERE

PUT FIGURE 4 AROUND HERE

PUT FIGURE 5 AROUND HERE

PUT FIGURE 6 AROUND HERE

5. Discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relative efficacy of two types of pedagogical interventions, explicit and implicit FFI, on a group of Vietnamese EFL learners' performance of constructive criticism in equal status academic exchanges. The results showed that learners who received either type of instruction improved in the immediate post-test over the pre-test and maintained their improvement in the delayed post-test. Results also showed that when

performing in the immediate post-test, the explicit group significantly outperformed the control group in all three production tasks; however, the implicit group performed significantly better than the control group only when measured on the RP and OPF. Between the two treatment groups, the explicit group scored significantly higher than the implicit group in both of the immediate and delayed post-tests. Generally, these results seemed to suggest that although both types of instruction proved effective in developing learners' pragmatic performance, explicit instruction tended to produce a larger magnitude of effects. These results are consistent with findings of previous research in both grammar instruction and pragmatics instruction (e.g. see Jeon and Kaya, 2006; Norris and Ortega, 2000; Rose, 2005 for a comprehensive review) and might be explained in light of a number of second language acquisition theories.

First, the overall effectiveness of both types of instruction might be attributed to the fact that learners in both treatment groups were not only presented with contextually rich input, which serves as positive evidence about the way constructive criticism may be performed in the target language (TL), but also made to attend to this input (e.g. via awareness-raising activities for the explicit group and visual input enhancement for the implicit group), which is an important condition for acquisition to take place (see Gass 1988; Schmidt, 1993; 1995; Sharwood Smith, 1981). Indeed, instances of input noticing were evidenced in end-of-course reflective journals where learners from both groups recorded pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic issues they had noticed throughout the course. For example, a learner from the explicit group wrote:

“Previously, I always went straight to the writer’s problem and made them disappointed. For example, I said ‘*You made a lot of mistakes of word choice*’. However, I now know how to make my comments softer. Instead of using sentence like above, I use ‘*I*

think that you might want to pay more attention to your word choice'. This way seems to be better. Also, I have learned many ways to give soft comments such as using past tenses, using structures such as *'I'm not sure'*, questions, and so on."

Another learner from the implicit group commented:

"Critical feedback is an important stage of improving one's writing skills. In my opinion, giving critical peer feedback has to be clear on what mistakes they [my peers] make and how to improve. Moreover, to reduce the bad impression of critical feedback, the person who gives it has to be careful on [about his or her] expression."

What is more, learners in both groups were also made to process the input further in production activities (i.e. oral peer-feedback tasks), in which they had an opportunity not only to try out newly learned forms and receive corrective feedback from the teacher, but also to gain control over this newly learned knowledge (see Bialystok, 1993). In other words, apart from an opportunity for input noticing, learners in both group also benefitted from an opportunity to use language in a meaningful way to develop fluency and to receive negative evidence regarding the appropriateness and accuracy of their constructive criticism. Both of the explicit and implicit groups were also engaged in reflection on their own output after each peer-feedback session, which, too, provided opportunity for gap noticing and modified output (see Swain, *ibid.*).

Nonetheless, the superiority of explicit instruction over implicit instruction is not surprising. Presumably, learners who were made to deduce and discuss pragmatic rules from the provided input had an opportunity to process the input at a deeper level than those who received only

enhanced input without working further on it (see Takimoto, 2009 for similar finding and discussion). As a result, the former group would also develop a higher level of awareness of these pragmatic rules, which, in turn, made them more receptive to teacher corrective feedback. Indeed, Izumi (2002) has indicated that input enhancement may not work equally successfully for every learner, particularly if he or she is not form-conscious or has prior advanced meta-linguistic knowledge. Perhaps in this case the learner might require training in noticing strategies, which was, however, absent in the current study.

Further, the explicit group also advantaged from receiving meta-pragmatic explanation. While input enhancement may only induce noticing of pragmalinguistic forms, meta-pragmatic explanation may also promote understanding of sociopragmatic rules governing these forms. According to Schmidt (2001), noticing is a phenomenon that happens at the surface level, but understanding concerns a deeper level of abstraction that involves the learning of rules. Gass (1988) also points out that not all input that is noticed may be comprehended, and thus may be internalized and integrated into the learner's interlanguage system. In other words, comprehension is also important for learning to take place. Because the implicit group did not receive meta-pragmatic explanation, it was unknown to what extent their awareness of target norms was achieved at the level of understanding, as it may be the case for the explicit group.

Explicit correction also seemed more successful than recast in causing learners to attend to problematic forms and meanings, especially when occurring in content-based instructional contexts where learners' attention was on meaning rather than on form (see Lyster, 1998) and when learners are less advanced (see Ellis, 2008), like in this study. Although considered a useful type of feedback because of their non-obtrusive nature, more than often recasts carry an ambiguous corrective intention as compared to explicit correction. Recasts are likely to be

perceived as non-corrective repetitions because of their identical forms and similar frequencies of occurrence in teacher-student interactions (Ammar and Spada, 2006; Lyster, 1998; Nabei and Swain, 2002). For example, Doughty (1994) and Lyster (1998) observed that teachers in communicative L2 classrooms often repeated and rephrased both error-free and erroneous learner utterances. Their repetitions of the learner's well-formed utterances even occurred almost as frequently as their reformulations of ill-formed utterances. Besides, recasts often accompanied affirmative comments for the truth value of the learner's reply, which made them almost identical to non-corrective repetitions. Thus, recasts might easily be mistaken for a confirmation of the content of the learner's message rather than a disconfirmation of its form, particularly if the learner was not form-conscious and linguistically advanced enough to notice the gap between his or her output and the TL form. In the current study, recasts were made more noticeable to learners by means of emphasis. They were also written on the blackboard at the end of the lesson to promote noticing. However, it is assumed that although learners might recognize the teacher's correction, without being told explicitly as with the explicit group, they might still have difficulty identifying the source of their errors, especially those caused by L1-L2 differences.

Indeed, an analysis of frequency of use of target as opposed to non-target forms by the implicit group before and after treatment showed that although learners significantly increased their use of the former and decreased their use of the latter in both post-tests ($p < .001$), their total use of the latter in three production tasks were still relatively high (36% in each post-test, as compared to only 16% in each post-test for the explicit group). A further qualitative analysis showed that many of these non-target forms might be caused by L1 influence, for example the use of strong modal verbs '*should*' and '*must*' when giving advice for improvement (see Nguyen, 2008a for a discussion of modality in Vietnamese pragmatics). This result seemed to suggest that recasts did

not succeed in eradicating L1-induced pragmatic errors, particularly when learners lacked both extensive and prolonged exposure to TL input in order to notice the differential sociopramatics-pragmalinguistic connection in their L1 and L2,

An additional factor that may have reduced the efficacy of recasts in the current study is that the current study included instruction of a total of 15 pragmalinguistic conventions and eight types of modifiers. We would assume that instruction of a smaller number of forms would produce more effect. In fact, Ellis and Sheen (2006) have pointed out that recasts can be more effective when they are focused and intensive (i.e. directed repeatedly at a single linguistic form) than when they are incidental and extensive (i.e. directed at all types of errors that occur).

5. Conclusion

The primary purpose of the present study is to examine the relative effectiveness of explicit and implicit FFI in developing L2 learners' competence in performing the speech act set of constructive criticism in academic contexts. Findings of the present study show that although it is a challenging speech act set which may require a relatively high degree of linguistic complexity as well as pragmatic sophistication, constructive criticism can be taught using both types of FFI instruction. The findings thus make a strong case for teaching this speech act in the L2 classroom to help learners improve their pragmatic skills in using it. Since uninstructed learners may have difficulty using this speech act in an appropriate manner in the TL, learners should be made aware of target-like criticizing strategies so that they can make informed pragmatic decisions which do not break communication while allowing them to maintain their cultural identity. Such instruction is particularly important in the EFL context where opportunities to hear and use English outside the classroom are minimal.

Findings of the present study have also contributed to our further understanding of the roles of the two types of FFI instruction, particularly the possibility of implementing focus on form instruction in the pragmatic realm (see Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005). Although it is considered beneficial for L2 learning (Long and Norris, 2009), focus on form instruction has been scarcely addressed in L2 pragmatic research (Fukuya and Clark, 2001; Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005). The present study therefore helps to shed light on the applicability of this type of instruction at the pragmatic level, particularly when compared with the conventional explicit focus on forms approach to teaching pragmatics. Its findings have shown that although explicit pragmatic instruction is more desirable, there might also be a scope for implicit work on pragmatics in the classroom.

Traditionally, L2 pragmatic features are taught explicitly following a focus-on-forms approach where pragmalinguistic features are taught as discrete points, presented with rule explanation, and consolidated by means of production practice (see Rose and Kasper, 2001 for a collection of these studies). The present study has shown that alongside with meta-pragmatic instruction, there is a potential for focus on form techniques such as visual input enhancement and recast in teaching L2 pragmatics, particularly when these two techniques are combined to enhance the effectiveness of each (see Han, Park and Combs, 2008). Implicit focus on form instruction can permeate many levels of language teaching (O’Keeffe, Clancy, and Adolphs, 2011). For example, in the current study it can be incorporated into a writing class to respond to learners’ need for instruction in the language used to provide critical peer feedback. Indeed, indirect teaching of pragmatic skills, including the recasting of pragmatic errors, has been used successfully with young children learning their L1 pragmatics (see Becker, 1988). A small but growing number of

instructional L2 pragmatics research has also pointed in this direction (see Fukuya and Zhang, 2002; Martinez-Flor and Fukuya, 2005).

The present study also raises some concerns regarding the implementation of implicit FFI techniques such as input enhancement and recasts to less advanced learners in the input-poor context. That is, instruction focusing on only a few forms might produce more effects because it does not overload learning capacity. Further, perhaps some learner training in what to attend to in positive and negative input might help produce better learning outcomes. In the current study it is assumed that a lack of such training has reduced the noticing function of the input enhancement activities and recasts provided to learners

Finally, the current study suffers from limitations that need to be addressed in future research. These limitations included the employment of a small, nonrandomized, gender biased sample (with all but six being females), which was likely to affect the representativeness of the findings and the extent to which they could be applied to a larger population. What is more, the fact that the study employed two different instructors for the treatment and control groups may also contribute to the differences in learning outcomes. In particular, although the instructors were aware of the purpose of the study and therefore made sure that they did not differ considerably in their classroom procedures, they might still differ in their teaching styles, which could affect learners' motivation to learn. Therefore, carefully planned future studies should address all these limitations in order to better understand the issues outlined above.

Another important issue that is worth addressing in instructed L2 pragmatics study but has not been considered in the present study is concerning the role of learners' subjectivity in L2 pragmatics learning and the extent to which this might impact on their responsiveness to

instruction. Previous research has shown that L2 learners may not aim to achieve NS pragmatic competence but may only target at becoming competent L2 users while maintaining their cultural identity (e.g. Hinkel, 1996; Siegal, 1996). In other words, L2 may only serve as a tool for communication rather than a language for identification as L1 (see House, 2003). Therefore, while they might be responsive to teacher correction of pragmalinguistic errors (i.e. incorrect usage of linguistic structures), they might be less so to the correction of sociopragmatic choices (e.g. choices of realization strategies and the extent to which they wish to modify the illocutionary force of their speech acts) because these are closely related to issues of cultural identity (Thomas, 1983). Unfortunately, the extent to which learners' subjectivity may affect their receptivity to pragmatic instruction remains unexplored in the current study but it certainly deserves attention in future research.

Note

⁽¹⁾ A speech act set is composed of a range of strategies, any combination of which could perform it. This term was first used by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) to describe apologies. In the current study the term is adopted to describe constructive criticism, the realization of which also involves multiple strategies.

⁽²⁾ There have been a number of attempts to discuss the distinction between the two types of form-focused instruction: focus on form and focus on forms (Doughty and Williams, 1998; Ellis, 2001; Long and Robinson, 1998) since Long (1991)'s first introduction of these terms. In Long (1991)'s original sense of the terms, focus on forms refers to the teaching of discrete language forms in traditional approaches, whereas focus on form attempts to draw student's attention to linguistic elements only when the need incidentally arises out of communication. In other words, Long (1991) assumes an incidental (as opposed to planned) approach to form. However, this initial idea has been changed as later Long and Robinson (1998) expand the concept of focus on form to include both proactive (i.e. involving the preselecting of target structures) and reactive (i.e. using corrective feedback) attention to form. Ellis (2001) therefore recommends that form-focused instruction be conceptualized as involving three rather than two types: focus on forms, incidental focus on form and planned focus on form. The current study deals with both types of focus on form instruction.

An alternative definition, offered by Doughty and Williams (1998), is to view focus on form as instruction that entail form-meaning mappings and focus on forms as instruction directed at only formal accuracy. According to this definition, both types can include explicit instruction. However, as pointed out by Ellis (2008), an essential feature of focus on form is that it involves

incidental rather than intentional learning, which he believes cannot be achieved if students receive explicit instruction. In this study we adopt Ellis (2008)'s view and base our choice of instructional techniques on Ellis (2008)'s list of methodological choices.

Appendix 1: Pragmalinguistic conventions for realizing constructive criticism

1. Identification of problem:

- NP was ADJ
- You V (past tense)
- You had (a/an) (ADJ) NP

2. Giving suggestion:

- You can
- You could + V
- You could have + V (past participle)
- You may + V
- You might + V
- You might want to + V
- (If I were you) I would
- It would be better if you + V
- It would be better + V (infinitive)
- If you + V, it may
- NP may be + V (past participle)
- Why don't you?

NOTE: Structures to be avoided because they might produce a negative effect on the hearer:

- Imperatives: "Give more examples"
- Strong modal structures: *should, must, have to, ought to*
- Negative words: "wrong", "weak", etc.

Appendix 2: Samples of data collection instruments (English translation)

1. Discourse Completion Task

Please read the instruction and the given situations carefully and **write your answers in English** in the space provided under each situation. It is important that you understand the requirements completely, so before you start, you are encouraged to ask questions if you find something you do not understand.

Thank you for your assistance.

Example:

Situation 0: *What would you say to your friend if you thought her essay exceeded the limit of 250 words?*

You: "I think"

Situation 1: *What would you say to your friend if you thought his or her paragraphs were not sequenced logically enough so ideas did not flow naturally?*

You:

Situation 2: *What would you say to your friend if you thought his or her essay presented only one-sided arguments, and so the essay was hardly convincing to the readers?*

You:

Situation 3: *What would you say to your friend if you thought he or she sometimes wandered off the topic?*

You:

Situation 4: *What would you say to your friend if you thought his or her linking words were not always helpful and sometimes they even confused readers?*

You:

Situation 5: *What would you say to your friend if you thought some of his or her paragraphs lacked topic sentences, so it was difficult to know what he or she was trying to discuss in these paragraphs?*

You:

Situation 6: *What would you say to your friend if you thought he or she did not develop his or her arguments very well but repeated himself or herself at times?*

You:

Situation 7: *What would you say to your friend if you thought he or she did not adequately address the essay question because he or she answered only one part of it?*

You:

***Situation 8:** What would you say to your friend if you thought he or she did not make an appropriate choice of words so his or her tone was too informal at times?*

You:

2. Role-play:

Instruction: You will **take turn to talk** in the following hypothetical role-play situations. Take some minutes to read the procedure for conducting the role plays and the descriptions of the role-play situations. Try to imagine yourself in the situations and respond to them as you would do in the real life.

It is important that you understand the procedure and situations completely, so before you start you are encouraged to ask questions if you find something you do not understand.

Your role-play conversations will be audio-recorded with your consent. Thank you for your cooperation.

Situation 1: Student A and student B are attending the same writing course and have been paired up to give peer-feedback on their essays. Student A thinks that student B has not done enough research on the topic so his or her essay lacks depths and has a superficial account of the issue under discussion. Student A also suggests some useful readings to improve the essay.

Situation 2: Student A and student B are attending the same English course. Now student A is helping student B to rehearse his or her presentation on his or her research topic for tomorrow's class. Student A thinks the presentation is not engaging enough and suggests adding visual aids to make more impact.

Situation 3: Student A and student B have been working together on a research project assignment for their course. Each of them has had to gather information on different aspects of the research topic and they meet weekly to discuss what they have found. In one of the meetings, student A thinks that the sources of information that student B is using are already outdated and suggests some more recent sources.

Situation 4: Student A and student B have been working together on a research project assignment for their course and are preparing their final research report. Each of them has had to write part of the report and then they put their parts together. Student A thinks that student B has left out some important points and suggests adding them to make the report more robust and rigorous.

Situation 5: Student A and student B are attending the same teacher training course and working in the same micro-teaching team. Together they have been drafting a lesson plan which they will demonstrate to their tutor and classmates in the class meeting tomorrow. Student A thinks that one of the teaching activities that student B has designed is not engaging enough and suggests

turning it into a language game to boost students' motivation.

Situation 6: Student A and student B are attending the same teacher training course. Student B has just demonstrated his or her lesson plan to the class in a micro-teaching session. Student A thinks that student B spends too much time on explaining new grammatical structures and too little time for students to practice these structures. Student A suggests that student B reconsider the timing of his or her lesson.

3. Oral peer-feedback task

Instruction: You have written a 250 word essay. Now show it to your friend and work in pairs. Take as much time as you need to read your friend's essay. Try to find something you are **unsatisfied** with about the essay and comment on it. Does your friend think the same? Discuss with him or her some of the things you think are **wrong** with the essay. Your friend will also give comments on your essay. Do you agree with his or her ideas?

Do not try to discuss two essays at the same time. Work on one at a time only. You may discuss between yourselves whose essay to work on first.

Your feedback conversations will be audio-recorded with your consent. Thank you for your cooperation.

Note:

1. It is important that you understand the task completely, so before you start you are encouraged to ask questions if you find any detail you are not sure of.
2. Although the task requires you to comment specifically on the points you are unsatisfied with in your friend's essay, you can also comment on the good points (if any) in his or her essay.

You may want to ask yourself the following questions when giving feedback on your friend's essay:

Organization:

1. Does the essay directly discuss the topic?
2. Is there a clear organizational structure, i.e. does it have three parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion?
3. Is the introduction brief and to the point? Does it indicate the main ideas that the writer will discuss in the body?
4. Are there several paragraphs in the body, each making a different specific point?
5. Is there a brief conclusion that summarizes the main points in the argument?

6. Are the ideas properly linked?

Ideas:

7. Is the writer's opinion clear or do you think the writer is not quite sure what he or she thinks?

8. Are the ideas relevant and well supported by evidence and examples?

9. Are the ideas presented logically?

10. Are the ideas developed from one paragraph to another or does the writer just repeat himself or herself?

Grammar/vocabulary:

11. Is there a variety of sentence structure and vocabulary or is there a lot of repetition?

12. Are the linking words (i.e. words used to link ideas) helpful or do they confuse you?

13. Are the sentences grammatically accurate?

Appendix 3: Grading criteria

Scoring for pragmatic appropriateness level:

*appropriateness: knowing what to say to a particular interlocutor in a particular context of situation; determined by the right choice of realization strategies, e.g. giving suggestion rather than demanding changes because of the equal power status between the interlocutors.

Appropriateness level	Score	Examples
Inappropriate Head Act (HA)	0	You must pay attention to grammar.
Appropriate HA (without modifiers or with inappropriate modifiers)	2.5	You can rewrite your introduction (without modifiers). You can rewrite your introduction <u>because it's too bad</u> (with inappropriate modifier).
Appropriate HA + appropriate modifiers	5	Perhaps you could pay more attention to grammar.

Scoring for linguistic accuracy:

*accuracy: knowing the expressions for conveying intentions; determined by the correct usage of relevant linguistic structures, e.g. saying “*if I were you, I would*” but not “*If I were you, I will*”.

Grammatical level	Score	Examples
Incorrect pragmalinguistic form	0	Your ideas would be more coherent (the correct form is “Your ideas could be more coherent”).
Correct pragmalinguistic form + incorrect connecting part/ inaccurate modifiers	4	It would be better if you could revising it (the correct form is “if you could revise it”).
Correct pragmalinguistic form + correct connecting part/ accurate modifiers	5	You may want to explain this a little bit more.

Note:

- Scores to be assigned for the target forms only (see Appendix 1)
- Scores to be assigned for both linguistic realization strategies (i.e. identifying problem and giving advice) and modifiers (i.e. softeners).
- Scores to be assigned for both pragmatic appropriateness and linguistic accuracy but linguistic accuracy is to be scored only when pragmatic appropriateness has been achieved. In other words, pragmatic appropriateness is a necessary condition for linguistic accuracy.
- Modifiers to be awarded scores only when appropriate head act has been used. E.g. if a candidate says “Your writing is good but you must pay attention to grammar”, the compliment “Your writing is good” is not to be awarded a score because the head act “You must” is not appropriate.

- A candidate's final score will be calculated following this procedure: (1) calculate the total number of criticisms he or she has made; (2) then generate the score for each criticism by adding its score for appropriateness and score for accuracy; (3) calculate the sum for all criticisms made; (4) finally divide this sum by the number of criticisms made.

(adapted from Martinez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005)

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Table 1: Target forms included in the study (adapted from Nguyen, 2005)

Target forms	Examples
Realization strategies	
1. Identification of problems	<i>I thought you had two conclusions.</i> <i>I didn't see your conclusion.</i>
2. Giving advice	<i>You might want to delete the comma.</i> <i>Perhaps you could pay more attention to grammar.</i>
Modifiers	
1. External:	
a. Compliment	<i>It was an interesting paper.</i> <i>That was a great presentation.</i>
b. Disarmer	<i>You had a few spelling mistakes here and there <u>but I think that's because you're writing pretty quick, nothing too major.</u></i>
c. Grounder	<i>I think <u>is is better than are there because traffic is single</u></i>
2. Internal:	
a. Question	<i>Did you summarize the main idea?</i> <i>Could this work?</i>
b. Past tense	<i>I <u>thought it would</u> make more sense that way.</i> <i>Maybe you <u>could've explained</u> it a little bit more.</i>
c. Modal verbs (e.g. <i>may, might [want to], could, would</i>)	<i>I'm not sure but maybe you <u>could</u> cut out the second section.</i>
d. Modal adverbs	<i>maybe, perhaps, probably</i> <i><u>Perhaps</u> you <u>might</u> want to check that again.</i>
e. Uncertainty phrases	<i><u>I wasn't sure</u> that was the best phrase you could've used.</i> <i><u>I don't know</u> that I agree with the point you made.</i>
f. Hedges (e.g. <i>kind of, sort of, seem</i>)	<i>This sentence was <u>sort of unclear</u>.</i>
g. Understaters (e.g. <i>a bit, a little [bit], quite, rather</i>)	<i>Your introduction seemed <u>a little</u> too long.</i>

Table 2: Instructional procedures for the explicit and implicit groups

Week	Explicit instruction	Implicit instruction
1	Pre-test at the beginning of session 1	
	Class discussion of experience of giving and receiving criticism in both L1 and L2.	Class discussion of experience of giving and receiving criticism in both L1 and L2. Input enhancement
2	Consciousness-raising of criticizing strategies Meta-pragmatic instruction Distribution of explanatory handout Class discussion	Input enhancement
3	Consciousness-raising of modifiers Meta-pragmatic instruction Distribution of explanatory handout Class discussion	Input enhancement
4	Recognizing directness level in criticism Explicit correction	Input enhancement
5	Softening constructive criticism Explicit correction	Discourse completion task Recast
6-10	Oral peer-feedback Explicit correction Reflection on output	Oral peer-feedback Recast Reflection on output
	Immediate post-test at the end of session 10	
15	Delayed post-test in Week 15	

Table 3: Examples of types of errors and corresponding recasts

Problem	Recast
Type 1 <i>If I were you, I will revise it.</i> (The modal verb “will” should be in the past tense form).	<i>If I were you I would revise it.</i>
Type 2 <i>You must pay attention to grammar.</i> (The modal verb “must” indicates strong obligation and thus is inappropriate to be used in equal status feedback situations).	<i>Perhaps you could pay more attention to grammar.</i>
Type 3 <i>Your introduction are too long.</i> (This utterance is rather direct because of the adverb ‘too’ and does not display a subject-verb agreement. Also, if the verb is in the past tense form, the force of the utterance can be modified).	<i>Your introduction was probably a bit long.</i>

Table 4: Means scores gained by the three groups in the pre-test and immediate post-test

Task	Group	N	Pre-test		Post-test 1		Pre-test-post-test gain
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
DCT	Explicit	28	2.92	1.33	7.11	1.42	4.19
	Implicit	19	3.58	1.37	4.38	.79	0.80
	Control	22	3.79	1.32	4.03	1.49	0.24
RP	Explicit	29	3.51	.92	6.63	1.18	3.12
	Implicit	18	3.88	.57	4.91	1.08	1.03
	Control	22	3.97	.82	3.79	.82	-0.18
OPF	Explicit	29	3.42	1.47	6.02	1.23	2.60
	Implicit	18	2.88	1.58	4.81	1.51	1.93
	Control	22	4.04	1.96	3.34	1.52	-.070

Table 5: Results of mixed within-between subjects ANOVA for the scores gained by three groups in the pre-test and immediate post-test

Source	SS	df	MS	F	<i>p</i>	ηp^2
<i>DCT</i>						
Within-group						
Time	137.9	1	137.9	106.5	<.001	.61
Group x Time	115.4	2	57.7	44.5	<.001	.58
Error	85.5	66	1.29			
Between-group						
Group	38.2	2	19.1	8.76	<.001	.21
Error	143.7	66	2.18			
<i>RP</i>						
Within-group						
Time	76.8	1	76.8	99.4	<.001	.60
Group x Time	69.6	2	34.8	45.1	<.001	.58
Error	50.9	66	.772			
Between-group						
Group	35.3	2	17.6	18.1	<.001	.35
Error	64.3	66	.98			
<i>OPF</i>						
Within-group						
Time	64.08	1	64.1	38.7	<.001	.37
Group x Time	71.70	2	35.9	21.7	<.001	.39
Error	109.3	66	1.66			
Between-group						
Group	31.0	2	15.5	4.98	.010	.13
Error	205.4	66	3.1			

Table 6: Results of paired sample *t* tests for the scores gained by two experimental groups in the pre-test and delayed post-test

Task	Group	N	Pre-test		Post-test 2		Pre-test- Post-test gain	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
DCT	Explicit	28	2.91	1.33	7.08	1.19	4.16	11.9	<.001
	Implicit	19	3.58	1.37	4.34	.89	.76	3.13	.006
RP	Explicit	28	3.51	.92	6.71	1.35	3.20	11.0	<.001
	Implicit	19	3.88	.57	4.81	.71	.93	5.04	<.001
OPF	Explicit	28	3.42	1.47	5.74	1.42	2.33	5.59	<.001
	Implicit	19	2.88	1.58	4.60	1.27	1.72	3.63	.002

Table 7: Results of independent *t* tests for the scores gained by two experimental groups in the delayed post-test

Task	Group	N	Post-test 2		<i>Mean difference</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
DCT	Explicit	28	7.08	1.19	2.74	8.55	<.001
	Implicit	19	4.34	.89			
RP	Explicit	28	6.71	1.35	1.90	6.29	<.001
	Implicit	19	4.81	.71			
OPF	Explicit	28	5.74	1.42	1.14	2.82	.007
	Implicit	19	4.60	1.27			

Figure 1: DCT scores gained by three groups in the pre-test and immediate post-test

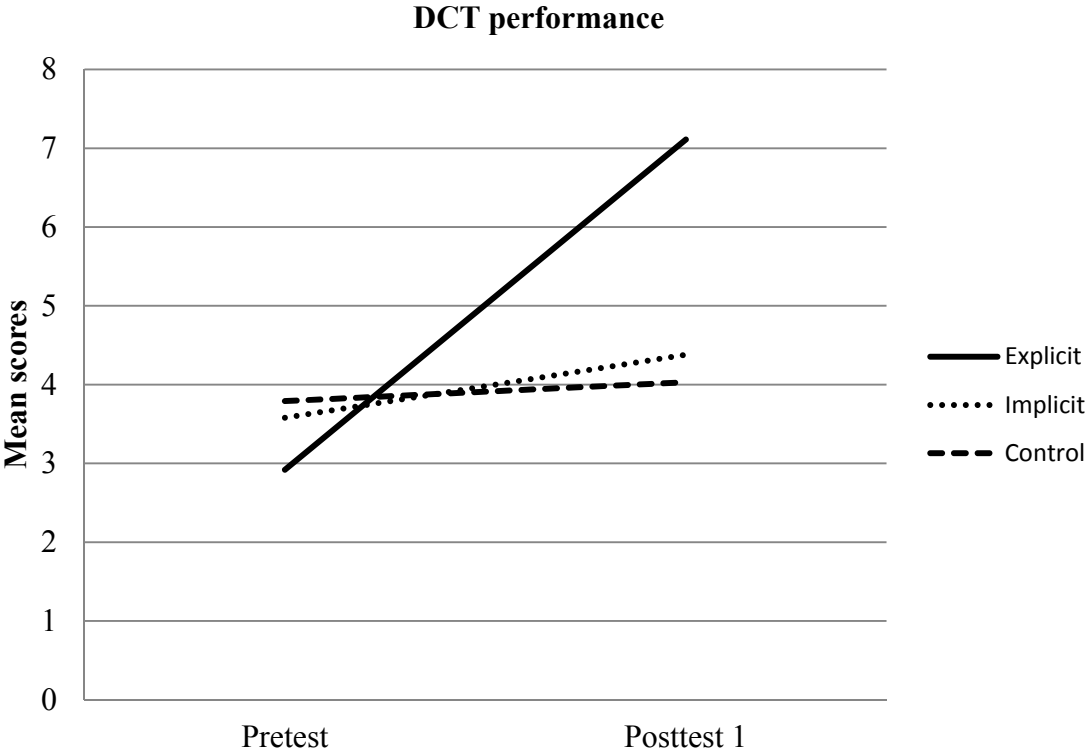


Figure 2: RP scores gained by three groups in the pre-test and immediate post-test

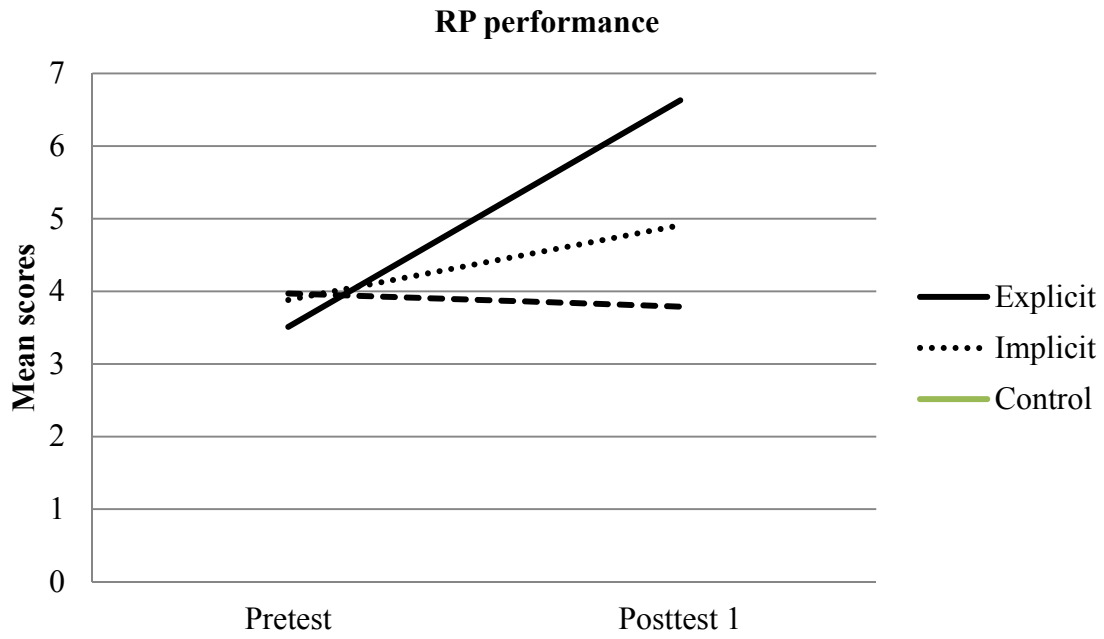


Figure 3: OPF scores gained by three groups in the pre-test and immediate post-test

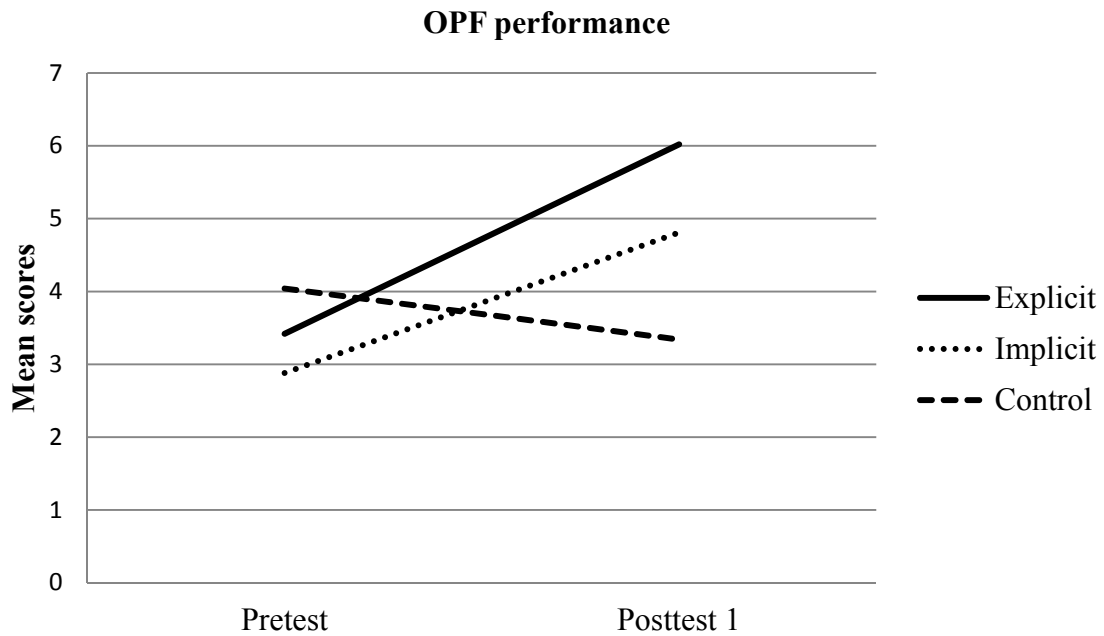


Figure 4: DCT scores gained by the two experimental groups in the pre-test and delayed post-test

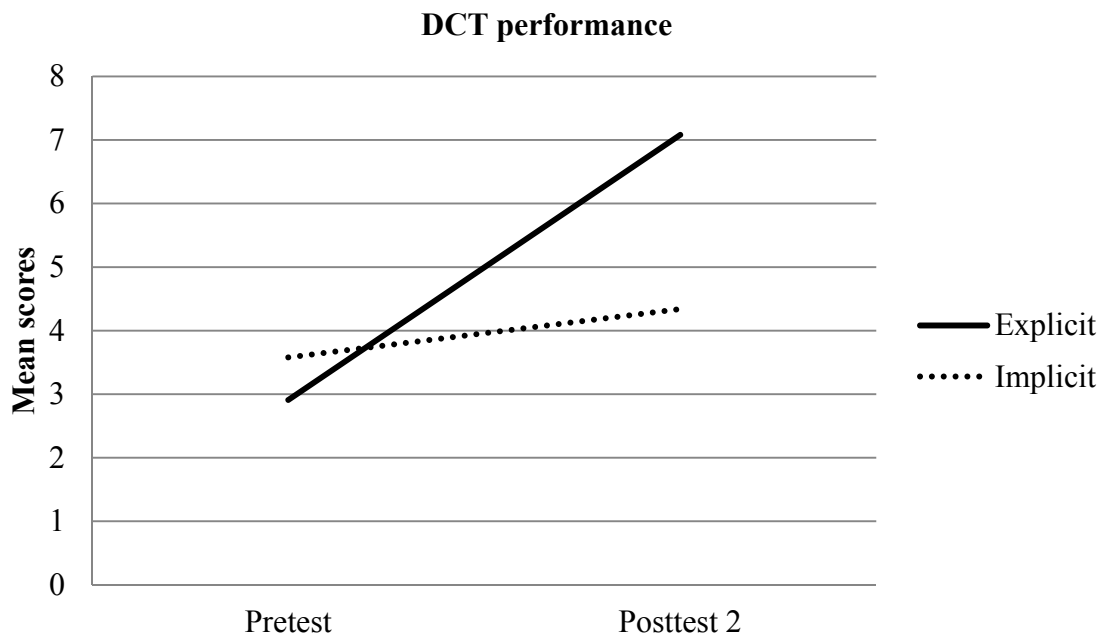


Figure 5: RP scores gained by two experimental groups in the pre-test and delayed post-test

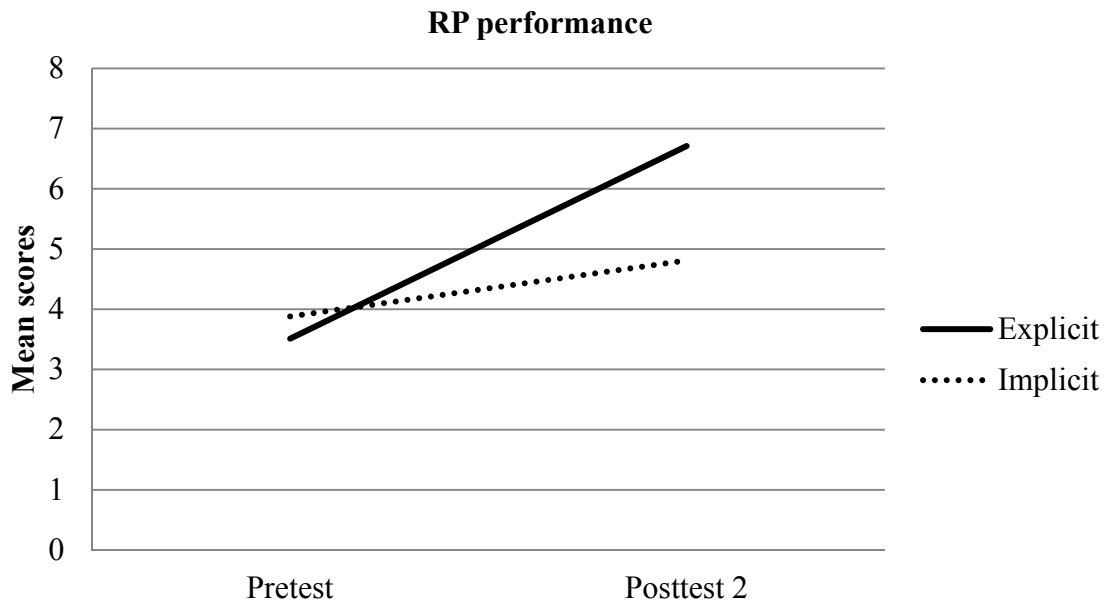


Figure 6: OPF scores gained by two experimental groups in the pre-test and delayed post-test

