Effects of Task Repetition and EFL Proficiency on English Speech Act Production

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Abstract
Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) studies substantiate the teachability of some aspects of second language (L2) pragmatics. However, there are controversies over the most effective instructional methods. Therefore, following a comparison group design, the present study aims to investigate the relative efficacy of two conditions of output-production task repetition on high- and low-level English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' production of speech acts. The main effects of the instructional conditions, EFL proficiency level, and the potential interaction between them are examined. Two classes of English-major students take speech act lessons involving output-generation task repetition as follows: (1) the implicit task-repetition (ITR) group is provided with visually enhanced input plus a consciousness raising task before repeating the output-generation tasks, and (2) the explicit task-repetition (ETR) group is provided with input plus metapragmatic information before repeating the output-generation tasks. The learners' speech act production is assessed through a written discourse completion test (WDCT) across a pretest and a posttest. The results demonstrate significant gains for both groups from the pretest to the posttest. Moreover, the ETR group significantly outperforms the ITR group in the posttest. Furthermore, EFL proficiency level is found to have a significant effect on learners' speech act production, with high-level learners outperforming low-level learners. The results reveal no significant interaction between the effects of instructional condition and EFL proficiency level. Regarding pedagogical implications, the findings attest the efficacy of output-generation task repetition in L2 speech acts instruction, particularly when task repetition is coupled with explicit instruction.
Keywords: EFL proficiency, enhanced input, metapragmatic information, speech acts, task repetition

Introduction
There is evidence that learners considerably differ from native-speakers in their pragmatic performance (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). ILP research shows that many aspects of pragmatic competence cannot develop sufficiently without some form of instructional intervention (Kasper, 1997). Hence research on ILP, particularly speech acts, has noticeably increased in the last two decades. Early ILP studies attest the teachability of various pragmatic features, including speech acts (e.g., Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Safont, 2003; Wildner-Bassett, 1994). However, later studies explore the effects of different instructional approaches on L2 pragmatic development, particularly comparing explicit and implicit instruction (e.g., Alc´on-Soler, 2005; Eslami & Liu, 2013; F´elix-Brasdefer, 2008; Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Takimoto, 2006).

Explicit instruction usually involves direct metapragmatic explanation followed by focused practice. Whereas, implicit instruction withholds metapragmatic explanation and tries to develop learners' implicit understanding of the target features by using input flood, input enhancement, consciousness-raising tasks, and implicit feedback (Taguchi, 2015). Review of the related literature reveals that some pragmatic features are learnable through implicit instruction (e.g., Fukuya & Zhang, 2002; Narita, 2012; Takimoto, 2006). However, ILP research generally supports the superiority of explicit approaches over implicit approaches to pragmatics instruction (e.g., Alc´on-Soler, 2005; F´elix-Brasdefer, 2008; Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009).

Besides the studies examining implicit vs. explicit methods of L2 pragmatics instruction, there are numerous studies investigating L2 pragmatics instruction from other perspectives. For instance, Jernigan (2007) investigates the effects of output-based instructional treatment on adult ESL learners' L2 pragmatic perception and production using video vignettes. Jernigan's study reveals that the group engaging in output production makes a significant gain from the pretest to the posttest in a pragmatic appropriecy judgment test. However, no significant progress is found for the group deprived from output production. The results of a WDCT reveal no significant gains for either of the groups. Finally, an oral DCT shows a significant improvement for the group deprived from output production, but not for the group involved in output generation.

In another study, Li (2012) examines the impact of practice on developing accurate and speedy requests in L2 Chinese. He assigns thirty intermediate-level learners to an intensive training group (IT), a regular training group (RT), and a control group. The IT and the RT groups practice the request forms through computerized structured input activities. The IT group practice using the request forms twice as much as the RT group. However, the control group does not receive any practice of the targeted request forms. Li finds that input-based practice enhances accuracy in an oral DCT and speed in a pragmatic listening judgment task.

Drawing on the concept of TBLT, Kim and Taguchi (2015) study the effect of task complexity in the learning of request expressions. They operationalize Task complexity as +/− reasoning. They divide seventy three Korean junior high school students into three groups: simple, complex, and control. The treatment groups perform a pretest, two collaborative tasks, and two posttests, whereas the control group takes only the pretest and the posttests. The researchers audiorecord the learners' oral interactions during tasks and analyze them by the number of pragmatic-related episodes (PREs). They find that task complexity levels influence the occurrence of PREs, but there is no difference in the quality of task outcome between the

treatment groups. However, the treatment groups perform significantly better than the control group.

Despite the existence of a great number of interventional studies on L2 pragmatics, the potential effect of task repetition on ILP development is an under-researched area. Takimoto (2012) investigates the effects of identical task repetition and task type repetition on EFL learners' acquisition of request forms. Takimoto applies input processing tasks as treatment. One control group and two treatment groups are employed. The results indicate that the two treatment groups perform better than the control group, and the identical task repetition group demonstrates more improvement in a WDCT and an acceptability judgment test than the task type repetition group.

The Present Study
As Taguchi (2015) contends, there is a wealth of studies in the area of TBLT in L2 instruction, and these can serve as guidelines in designing studies in L2 pragmatics research. Moreover, as Taguchi (2011) maintains "very few studies have aimed at comparing learning success of learners with different proficiency levels" (p. 295). Taking these issues into consideration, the present study is designed to investigate the effects of task repetition on EFL learners' speech act production across EFL proficiency levels. The study follows a comparison group design, which includes no control group and aims to compare two or more groups with different treatments (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Two instructional conditions are created: output-generation task repetition accompanied by visually enhanced input plus a CR task (ITR condition), and output-generation task repetition accompanied by input plus metapragmatic information (ETR condition).

Based on the purpose of the study, the following research questions (RQs) are formulated:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference between the effects of ITR and ETR conditions on EFL learners' speech act production ability?
RQ2. Is there a statistically significant difference between low-level and high-level EFL learners in speech act production ability?
RQ3: Is here any statistically significant interaction between the effects of EFL proficiency level and task repetition conditions on EFL learners' speech act production ability?

Method
Participants
Nineteen native speakers of British English (13 males and six females) and 64 EFL learners (23 males and 41 females) participate in the present study. The native speakers are undergraduate and postgraduate students or university graduates, and their average age is 37.78. The EFL learners are English-major students from three universities in Iran. They have no experience of life in another country, and their average age is 21.2 years old. Their average English proficiency level is judged to be at lower intermediate level, as identified by their OPT mean score (mean = 123.6).

Initially, ten native speakers of British English (seven males and three females), and ten EFL learners (four males and six females) are recruited to take part in the study for situation likelihood investigation and metapragmatic assessment of the initial 36 scenarios, from which 21 are selected to construct the WDCT. Next, nine other native speakers of British English (six males and three females) are asked to complete the WDCT to examine its content validity. Finally, 54 English-major students participate in the experimental phase of the study. These participants are from two intact classes. The two classes are randomly assigned to the ITR group (n = 28) and the ETR group (n = 26).

Instruments

Two instruments are employed in this study: the Oxford Placement Test (Allen, 2004) and a WDCT.

Oxford Placement Test (OPT). The OPT comprises a listening section and a grammar section, each consisting of 100 items. According to Allen (2004), the OPT has been calibrated against the levels system of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages; international examinations such as IELTS, TOEIC, and TOEFL; and the Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

Written discourse completion test (WDCT). In order to construct the WDCT, the researchers prepare a pool of 36 scenarios. Some are adapted from the literature (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Cheng, 2005; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986), and some are constructed by the researchers themselves. The prepared scenarios are subjected to situation likelihood investigation and matapragmatic assessment. As the scenarios are judged by the learners' instructors to be too difficult for some of the learners to comprehend, they are translated into the learners' native language (i.e., Persian). Following Liu (2007), the researchers check the equivalence of the L1 and L2 versions by means of back translation – that is, the situations are translated into Persian first, and then back to English by another translator. A comparison of the original and the back-translated version reveal consistency in the description of the scenarios.

Based on the results of situation likelihood investigation and matapragmatic assessment, the researchers construct a 21-item WDCT, containing 7 scenarios on each of the three speech acts of thanking, apologizing, and refusing. The scenarios represent various combinations of the three social variables of "power," "distance," and "imposition / severity," as introduced by Brown and Levinson (1987). Then the WDCT is reviewed and revised by a native speaker of British English. To ensure the content validity of this test, the researchers pilot it with another group of native speakers of British English (n = 9). The results of this pilot study indicate that the scenarios in the WDCT elicit the intended speech acts.

This WDCT takes about 40 minutes to complete. The participants' responses are rated based on a 6-point rating scale developed by Taguchi (2006). Based on this rating scale, each response receives a score from 0 (no performance) to 5 (excellent). This scale evaluates the learners' responses on the basis of contextual appropriateness and grammatical accuracy.

Regarding the inter-rater reliability of scoring, 30 of the papers are rated by one of the researchers and a native speaker teacher of British English. There is a very high correlation coefficient of .92 between the two sets of scores. Concerning the internal consistency reliability of the WDCT, the analysis of the participants' pretest scores reveals a Cronbach's Alpha value of .89, suggesting very good internal consistency reliability.

Instructional Process

Materials. In this study the participants in both groups are involved in collaborative text creation activities (Ellis, 1997) of writing English conversations and English letters. Eight conversations and two letters for each of the three speech acts are prepared. Some of the conversations and letters are adapted from English language teaching textbooks (Craven, Thaine, & Logan, 2008; Dignen, Flinder, & Sweeney, 2004; Oxenden & Latham-Koenig, 2006; Swan & Walter, 1993) and internet sources (Savetz Publishing, 2010a; Savetz Publishing, 2010b), and some of them are constructed by the researchers themselves.

Each conversation or letter comprises 4 –7 turns or sentences and includes instances of one of the three speech acts. The conversations and letters are prepared in two formats. The ETR group receives the plain format, and the ITR group receives the visually enhanced format. The visually enhanced format aims at drawing the learners' attention to the pragmatic strategies associated with the given speech acts. In the visually enhanced format, the clauses containing the pragmatic strategies are bolded and underlined. For example:

David: Did you buy that apartment?
Michael: Not yet. I'm in shortage of 5000 dollars.
David: Don't worry. I can lend you the money.
Michael: Oh no, I didn't mean to borrow the money from you.
David: Let me write the check for you. Here you are.
Michael: **Oh, you're a life saver. Thanks. I'll never forget it. You really can't imagine what this means to me.**
David: It's my pleasure.

Then a scenario is developed based on each conversation or letter. For instance, the scenario description written based on the above conversation is as follows:

Scenario: David asks his friend Michael if he bought the apartment he wanted to. Michael says that he is in shortage of $ 5000. David offers to lend him the money, but Michael does not accept it first. David writes the check for him, and Michael thanks him.

The scenarios are translated into Persian, as the English descriptions of some of the scenarios are judged to be difficult for some of the learners to comprehend. In addition to the conversations, letters, and scenarios, the participants in the ETR group are provided with metapragmatic information about the pragmatic strategies associated with the speech acts of thanking, apologizing and refusing. The instructional materials are used only in the class and are collected from the learners to prevent possible treatment diffusion.

Treatment. Before the main tasks in each treatment session, the participants engage in a five-minute warm-up activity, which is a whole-class discussion about the learners' daily-life experiences of the speech act which is to be presented in that session. Then the materials are used in both groups. The instructions, grammar explanations, and meanings of the new words are presented in Persian to ensure the participants' understanding. The main treatment tasks are presented as follows:

Step A (approximately 5 minutes): In both groups, a scenario is presented to the learners. The learners are paired up and instructed to write collaboratively a conversation (four to seven turns) or a letter (four to seven sentences) in English based on the scenario. The learners are provided with an answer sheet and are instructed to write the conversations or letters (henceforth text) on it. The teacher monitors the learners to ensure that they understand the scenarios correctly and provides any help they require about lexico-grammatical aspects, but not pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic issues.

Step B (approximately 5 minutes): After the learners construct their text, the learners in the ETR group receive the plaint format of the original text, and the learners in the ITR group receive the visually enhanced format. Then the original texts are read aloud and explained by the teacher. In the ETR group, first the lexico-grammatical issues are explained. Then, drawing on the contextual clues, the teacher explains the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the given speech acts, with a focus on how the social variables of power, distance, and severity determine the choice of speech act strategies and expressions. However, in the ITR group, the teacher presents explanations only about the lexico-grammatical aspects of the text, without any metapragmatic explanation. Instead, the participants are required to read the visually enhanced text and discuss, in pairs, how the given speech act is materialized in the given text (CR). The purpose is to raise the learners' awareness of speech act realization patterns.

Step C (approximately 3 minutes): Then the learners in the ETR group and ITR group are required to compare their own text with the plaint format and the visually enhanced format of the text respectively and discover any differences between the two texts. The learners are not allowed to take notes or copy the original text.

Step D (approximately 4 minutes): In both groups, the teacher collects the original texts (i.e., the plaint format and the visually enhanced format) as well as the texts generated by the participants. Then the learners are required to produce another text about the same scenario, with making any changes they prefer. The learners write down the text on another answer sheet. While the learners in both groups are generating the text for the second time, the teacher monitors them and provides assistance and feedback only about lexico-grammatical issues, but not about pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects.

Procedure

Two intact classes of English-major students take part in the experimental phase of this study. Before the outset of treatment, the OPT is administered to the participants to check the homogeneity of the two groups in terms of EFL proficiency level. The result of an independent samples t-test reveals no statistically significant difference between the OPT mean scores of the two groups, t (52) = .728, p = .470. The first group (n = 28) is randomly assigned to the ITR condition, the second group (n = 26) is assigned to the ETR condition. Then the WDCT is administered to the participants as the pretest.

Then the groups receive instruction on the three speech acts. The instruction involves six sessions lasting about 90 minutes each. Two sessions are devoted to the instruction of each of the three speech acts of thanking (sessions one and two), apologizing (sessions three and four), and refusing (sessions five and six). As the type of the speech act (thanking, apologizing, and refusing) is not treated as an independent variable in the study, the order in which the three speech acts are presented does not matter. The instruction in both classes is carried out by the first researcher. After the instruction is completed, the WDCT is administered to the participants two days after the last instructional session as the posttest. Then the collected data are analyzed.

Results

Mixed between-within subjects ANOVA is required to examine the effects of group and EFL proficiency level (as two between-groups variables) and time (as a within-groups variable) on the learners' speech act production and the possible interaction between them.

Regarding the assumptions underlying mixed ANOVA, an insignificant Box's M statistic shows equality of intercorrelations [Box's M = 10.45, p = 0.376]; and Levene's test indicates that the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met in the pretest (F = 1.38, p =.260) and the posttest (F = 1.45, p =.240). Concerning the assumption of normal distribution of scores, the results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test suggest that this assumption is met in the ITR group's pretest (p = .200) and posttest (p =.200); and in the ETR group's pretest (p = .200) and posttest (p = .072).

Subsequent to examining the assumptions, mixed ANOVA is performed. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics. As demonstrated in Table 1, the mean scores of the ITR group and ETR group in the posttest are higher than their mean scores in the pretest. Moreover, the mean score of the ETR group is higher than the mean score of the ITR group in the posttest.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of WDCT

Group	EFL PL	Pretest			Posttest		
		M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
ITR	Low	61.00	7.38	14	67.28	7.82	14
	High	71.79	13.13	14	79.00	11.77	14
	Total	66.39	11.80	28	73.14	11.47	28
ETR	Low	55.14	11.95	14	75.57	10.48	14
	High	71.50	9.28	12	86.33	8.36	12
	Total	62.69	13.47	26	80.54	10.86	26

Note. ITR = implicit task-repetition group; ETR = explicit task-repetition group; EFL PL = EFL proficiency level

Table 2
Mixed between-within Subjects ANOVA Results

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η_p^2
Between subjects						
EFL PL	4136.24	1	4136.24	25.271	**.000**	.336
Group	150.86	1	150.86	.922	.342	.018
EFL PL × Group	35.84	1	35.84	.219	.642	.004
Within subjects						
Time	3994.57	1	3994.57	84.625	**.000**	.629
Time × EFL PL	36.59	1	36.59	.775	.383	.015
Time × Group	795.61	1	795.61	16.855	**.000**	.252
Time × EFL PL × Group	71.50	1	71.50	1.515	.224	.029

Note. EFL PL = EFL proficiency level

As demonstrated in Table 2, the mixed ANOVA results reveal a significant effect for EFL proficiency level, time and Time × Group interaction. The Time × Group interaction is also demonstrated in Figure 1.
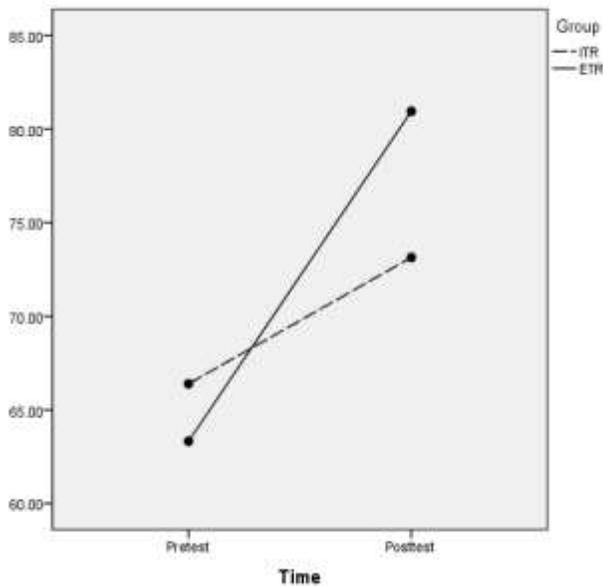

Figure 1: Mean Plot Demonstrating Time × Group Interaction

The effects of time and group are interpreted in the light of the significant Time × Group interaction. To this end, paired sample t-test is conducted to examine the significance of the

differences between the pretest and posttest means for each group. The t-tests results reveal that the ETR group makes a statistically significant gain from the pretest to the posttest, t (25) = -7.834, $p < .001$, and eta squared statistic (.59) indicates a large effect size, based on the guidelines proposed by Cohen (cited in Pallant, 2013, p. 256). Similarly, in the ITR group, the increase in the mean score from the pretest to the posttest is statistically significant t (27) = -4.706, $p < .001$, with a large effect size (.32).

As to the differences between the two groups, an independent samples t-test is run to compare the WDCT mean scores of the two groups in the pretest. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the ETR group (M = 62.69, SD = 13.47) and ITR group (M = 66.39, SD = 11.80) in terms of speech act production at the outset of the study, t (52) =1.08, $p = .287$ (two-tailed), but eta squared (.144) suggests a large effect size. To determine whether the two groups of learners have differences in their ability to produce the speech acts after the treatment, the data collected through the posttest are analyzed through another independent samples t-test. The results reveal that the ETR group (M = 80.54, SD = 8.36) performs significantly better than the ITR group (M = 73.14, SD = 11.47); t (52) = -2.43, $p = .019$ (two-tailed), and eta squared (.314) indicates a large effect size. The fact that the two groups are equal in the pretest but perform differently in the posttest can account for Time × Group interaction.

As noted above, the first research question is whether there is a significant difference between the effects of ITR and ETR conditions on learners' pragmatic production ability. The answer to this research question is positive. The ETR group has a significantly better performance than the ITR group in the posttest although there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups in the pretest.

The second research question is if there is a significant difference between low-level and high-level learners in terms of speech act production ability. The results of the mixed ANOVA (see Table 2) reveal a significant main effect for EFL proficiency level, $F = 25.27$, $p <.001$. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between low-level and high-level learners in terms of speech act production ability. As it is shown in Table 1, the mean score of the high-proficiency group is higher than the mean score of the low-proficiency group in both instructional conditions and in both test times.

The third research question is whether there is any interaction between the effects of EFL proficiency level and task repetition conditions (i.e., group) on EFL learners' speech act production ability. As it is presented in Table 2, there is no statistically significant interaction between the effects of EFL proficiency and group and/or time. In fact the EFL learners' performance in the instructional conditions is not moderated by their EFL proficiency level.

Discussion

This study explores the main effects on L2 speech act production of two instructional conditions, EFL proficiency level, and the potential interaction between them. Regarding the instructional conditions, the effects of output-generation task repetition accompanied by visually enhanced input plus CR and output-generation task repetition accompanied by input plus metapragmatic information on EFL learners' speech act production ability are examined. The results demonstrate that the performance of both groups significantly improves from the pretest to the posttests. Furthermore, the ETR condition is found to be significantly more effective than the ITR condition in enhancing the learners' speech act production ability.

The findings demonstrate the usefulness of output-generation task repetition in L2 pragmatics instruction. The results of this study are in line with the results of previous studies on output-based task repetition (e.g., Ahmadian, 2011; Bygate & Samuda, 2005), which find that task repetition can enhance L2 learners' production and acquisition. Takimoto (2012) also finds that identical task repetition and task type repetition are both effective in improving L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Similar to Takimoto (2012), the present study supports the effectiveness of task repetition in L2 pragmatics instruction.

The learners in the present study engage in output-generation tasks. In order for effective learning to take place, learners need to use the newly received language in their own production. As Bygate and Samuda (2005) rightly argue "a common learning and teaching problem is to get learners to integrate knowledge that is available to them into their active language use" (p. 270). The task repetition technique used in this study makes it possible for the learners to apply in their second performance their previously known pragmatic knowledge as well as the new pragmatic knowledge that they acquire through visually enhanced input, or input plus metapragmatic information presented to them after their first performance. Perhaps, the integration of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge into the second performance of the task significantly contributes to the learners' pragmatic development.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of text creation tasks used in this study can be explained in terms of output hypothesis and the three functions of output (Swain, 1995). (1) The output may cause the learners to notice the gaps in their own pragmatic knowledge. (2) Their first output may enable them to produce pragmatic hypotheses and test them against the input they receive before the second performance of the task. (3) The third function that Swain refers to is the use of metalanguage. In the present study the learners in the ITR group are asked to discuss the underlined and bolded expressions and clauses in the visually enhanced text presented to them. In addition, the learners in the ETR group receive input plus metapragmatic information and engage in metapragmatic discussion in the second performance of the task.

The next point to discuss is the role of explicit versus implicit input in L2 pragmatics instruction. In the ITR group, the participants receive visually enhanced input plus a CR task, whereas the participants in the ETR group receive input plus metapragmatic information. In other words, the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic information presented to the former group is less explicit than that provided for the latter group. However, there is a significant gain in speech act production by both groups from the pretest to the posttest, with the ETR group outperforming the ITR group in the posttest.

Rose and Ng (2001) argue that inductive instruction and guided discovery may result in more confusion than comprehension. However, in the present study guided discovery based on visually enhanced input and consciousness raising does not lead to the learners' confusion. As noted earlier, the learners in ITR group made a gain in their pragmatic production from the pretest to the posttest. This improvement may be attributed to the combined effects of the output and input the learners dealt with through the instructional procedure employed in this study. In other words, the participants in the ITR group are exposed to input containing the targeted speech acts after their first output-production activity. The first output-production task might

have enabled them to notice the deficiencies in their speech act production ability. It is likely that this sets the ground for them to notice the relevant pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features in the subsequent input (Swain, 1995). Moreover, based on the role of practice in cognitive skill acquisition (Ericsson & Charness, 1994), the conclusion may follow that the second performance of the task creates an opportunity for the learners to reinforce their mastery over the newly acquired sociopragmatic and pramalinguistic features.

The superiority of the ETR group over the ITR group in the posttest is in line with previous studies (e.g., Alc´on-Soler, 2005; F´elix-Brasdefer, 2008; Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Nguyen, Pham, & Pham, 2012). As mentioned earlier, explicitness and implicitness are operationalized differently in different studies. However, the distinguishing feature is the provision of metapragmatic information in explicit instruction and the lack of it in implicit teaching (Taguchi, 2015). The present study attests the advantage of explicit pragmatics instruction over implicit instruction when these instructional approaches are coupled with output-based task repetition as operationalized in this study.

Concerning the effect of EFL proficiency on the learners' speech act production, the results indicate that the high proficiency group outperforms the low proficiency group. Furthermore, regarding the interaction effects, there is no interaction between the effects of EFL proficiency level and the other two independent variables (i.e., time and group). This implies that high-level learners outperform low-level learners in both instructional groups and both test times.

These results suggest that before the treatment (i.e., in the pretest), the high-level learners have a significantly better performance than the low-level learners in pragmatic production. This is compatible with some previous studies (e.g., Garcia, 2004; Roever, 2005; Yamashita, 1996) which show that high L2 proficiency participants outperform low proficiency participants in tests of pragmatics. However, the results of the present study differ from the findings of some other studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Liu, 2006; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), which conclude that learners' pragmatic competence does not necessarily progress as their EFL proficiency improves. In contrast to the present study, Liu (2006), for example, finds that low-level and high-level EFL learners are not significantly different in their performance in a discourse completion test and a discourse self-assessment test.

Furthermore, the lack of EFL proficiency $\times$ Group interaction indicates that the learners' EFL proficiency level does not moderate the effects of instructional methods on the learners' speech act production ability. This suggests that the learners from both high and low levels of EFL proficiency can significantly benefit from explicit and implicit EFL speech acts instruction in the same way.

Conclusion and Implications
This study is an attempt to examine the effects of output-generation task repetition on EFL learners' speech act production ability. The results attest the teachability of thanking, apologizing, and refusing speech acts to high- and low-level EFL learners. Moreover, the study demonstrates the utility of output-generation task repetition accompanied by input plus metapragmatic information (ETR condition) and output-generation task repetition accompanied

by visually enhanced input plus CR tasks (ITR condition) in teaching English speech acts to learners with high and low levels of EFL proficiency. However, the findings reveal the primacy of explicit instruction over implicit instruction when input is coupled with output-generation task repetition activities.

One pedagogical implication is that output-generation task repetition should be preferably accompanied by metapragmatic information so that speech act instruction can become more effective. Furthermore, speech act instruction can even be incorporated into EFL classes for low-level learners. In other words, it does not need to be postponed to higher levels of EFL proficiency. However, the researchers do not mean to claim that there is no threshold level of EFL proficiency below which EFL speech acts cannot be taught effectively or above which EFL speech acts instruction can be more effective. Undoubtedly, this is a point that requires further research. As Takahashi (cited in Taguchi, 2011) argues, although the nature of intervention plays a vital role, such factors as L2 proficiency, instructional targets, and assessment methods moderate the learning outcomes. Therefore, the efficacy of output-based task repetition in EFL speech acts instruction can be investigated more to see if it is moderated by such factor as learners' age, instructional targets, methods of measurement, etc.

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