Research Paper

Enhancing EFL learners' Pragmatic Performance: The Case of Suggestions

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Abstract

The present study aimed to explore whether Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' pragmatic performance of making suggestions improve after receiving discourse completion task (DCT) and role-play with discussion. One Hundred twenty intermediate Iranian EFL learners whose scores ranged between 41 and 59 at the Oxford Proficiency test were selected for participation in the study from several Iranian language schools through convenience sampling. They were assigned to the control group receiving no treatment and discourse completion group, and role plays with the discussion group. Before the treatments, the experimental groups received instruction on the exemplar forms, conversational practice, and performance of suggested activities in the book "Function." After the familiarity of the participants with various suggestion forms and their appropriate use, the first experimental group was provided with a discourse completion task and the second one received role play with discussion. The learners were provided with an explicit explanation of formality, and status as socio-pragmatic factors influencing the selection of appropriate suggestion forms. Then, they were supposed to act out the scenarios and discussed and evaluated the appropriateness of the responses. After the two treatments, the participants took a post-test with 4 sample conversations. The findings were indicative of the effectiveness of the two treatments. The conclusion drawn from the results was that EFL learners could benefit from pragmatic instruction via pragmatic awareness-raising tasks in their pragmatic performance.

Keywords*: Discourse completion task, Pragmatic performance, Role play with discussion, Speech act, Suggestion*

عملکرد زبان آموزان انگلیسی ایرانی به عنوان زبان خارجی (EFL) در بیان پیشنهاد پس از آموزش بواسطه تکلیف تکمیل گفتمان

مطالعه حاضر با هدف بررسی اینکه آیا عملکرد زبان آموزان انگلیسی ایرانی به عنوان زبان خارجی (EFL) در بیان پیشنهاد بواسطه تکلیف تکمیل گفتمان (discourse completion task) و ایفای نقش در قالب بحث گروهی (role play with discussion) پیشرفت می نماید یا خیر. یکصد و بیست زبان آموز ایرانی در سطح متوسط که نمرات آنها در آزمون مهارت آکسفورد بین 41 تا 59 بود، از چندین آموزشگاه زبان ایرانی به روش نمونه گیری راحت برای شرکت در این تحقیق انتخاب شدند. شرکت کنندگان به دو گروه گواه و گروه تکمیل گفتمان و ایفای نقش در قالب بحث گروهی قرار گرفتند. قبل از اجرای دو روش آموزشی، گروههای تجربی در خصوص فرمهای نمونه، تمرین مکالمه و اجرای فعالیتهای پیشنهادی در کتاب «Function» آموزش دیدند. پس از آشنایی شرکت‌کنندگان با فرمهای مختلف برای بیان پیشنهاد و استفاده مناسب آنها، به گروه تجربی اول، تکلیف تکمیل گفتمان، و به گروه دوم، ایفای نقش در قالب بحث گروهی ارائه گردید. به فراگیران توضیح صریح رسمیت، موقعیت به عنوان عوامل اجتماعی-کاربردی مؤثر در انتخاب فرم های مناسب برای بیان پیشنهاد به وضوح توضیح داده شد. در وحله بعد، بنا بود فراگیران سناریوها را اجرا کنند و مناسب بودن پاسخ ها را مورد بحث و ارزیابی قرار دادند. پس از اجرای دو روش آموزشی، شرکت کنندگان پس از آموزش در یک آزمون متشکل از 4 نمونه مکالمه شرکت کردند. یافته ها حاکی از اثربخشی دو روش آموزشی بود. نتیجه گیری از یافتها این بود که فراگیران زبان انگلیسی می توانند از آموزش از طریق تکالیف افزایش آگاهی از کاربرد زبان در عملکردشان در حوزه کاربرد زبان بهره مند شوند.

واژگان کلیدی: تکلیف تکمیل گفتمان، ایفای نقش در قالب بحث گروهی، گفتمان، بیان پیشنهاد

Introduction

Language learning was formerly conceived of as mastery over language components such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and four skills (Lado, 1961). Recently, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) researchers' attention has shifted to how to use language appropriately; however, Kasper's (1997) study discloses the fact that the focus of L2 pragmatic inquiries has been on learners' language performance in social contexts, which renders research on pragmatics acquisition warranted by SLA researchers in light of inadequateness of the acquisition of communicative skills apart from pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990). Bialystok (1993) defined this competence as the way language learners use and interpret language in context and for different purposes. Kasper (1997) states that such a competence concerns how learners perform communicative action and use language appropriately in context, which involves both using linguistic devices to convey meanings and intentions (pragma-linguistics) and socio-cultural conventions on the use of these means (socio-pragmatics). In Backman's (1990) model of communicative language ability, it is one indispensable aspect of language competence.

According to Kasper's definition, Studies of cross-cultural pragmatics suggest that the pragmatic aspect of language or language use varies across languages. This inter-cultural difference can sometimes bring about miscommunication, or what Thomas (1983) called pragmatic failure, which occurs as a result of transferring pragmatic norms from L1 into L2. One effective way to avert such problems and make students cognizant of cross-cultural variation and socio-cultural norms of a foreign or second language is instructional intervention (Jeon & Kaya, 2006). It should be pointed out that studies on teaching pragmatic competence as an inevitable fact of foreign or second learning and teaching abound (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2001). In fact, one corollary of pragmatic instruction is pragmatic consciousness-raising. In this regard, the results of the studies of Kasper and Schmidt (1996) and Schmidt (1990, 1993) show that noticing L2 features is a necessary but not sufficient condition for pragmatic development and consciousness of language structure and the use relationship and relevant contextual factors are needed to acquire pragmatics. Raising pragmatic awareness on the part of learners can bolster learners' awareness of intercultural differences (Kramsch, 1993, p. 236). Bardovi-Harig (1996) as well argues that a classroom is a place where pragmatic instruction can take place and pragmatic consciousness-raising can increase.

The effect of teaching different speech acts such as requesting and apologizing has been widely investigated in the area of interlanguage pragmatics; however, as far as the pertinent literature review reveals, few inquiries have probed into suggestion speech act, and the effect instruction has on the pragmatic performance of suggestion. Besides, the present study utilized discourse completion task (DCT) and role-play with discussion as the instructional techniques in teaching suggestion speech act, which is unlike the mainstream studies in the realm of pragmatics which have utilized DCT as an instrument for measuring performance in speech acts and role-plays and discussion activities as part of learning activities.

Therefore, the present study can make some contributions to the existing literature since it investigates the suggestion, which as the review of the related literature makes manifest, is very meager in comparison to other speech acts like an invitation or apologizing, warranting further studies on this Cinderella speech act. This said the researchers of the present paper believe that this study contributes to the literature on speech act instruction by patching up a conspicuous gap (see literature review for the dearth of research studies on suggestion speech act). On top of that, the present study made use of DCT as an instrument for the teaching speech act of suggestion, while in almost all previous studies as reviewed in the literature, DCT has been utilized as a measuring instrument for speech act performance, and this makes a huge difference and opens up a new window to look at DCT as a vehicle of instruction of speech acts besides measuring them.

By the same token, role play akin to DCT was employed as a teaching instrument in the present study rather than a testing instrument, and the findings might light up new horizons in the teaching of speech acts by taking advantage of these two techniques.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

As affirmed by studies by Bachman (1990), Bachman & Palmer (1996) Canale and Swain (1980), learning a second language is not considered a command of linguistic competence per se. To put it in another way, the acquisition of sociolinguistic and functional aspects of language, as well as the ability to use language appropriately in social contexts, have to be treated as integral aspects of L2 learning. Schmidt's (1990) noticing and Sharwood Smith's (1993) input enhancement hypotheses, respectively, constitute the theoretical spines of the present study. Noticing Hypothesis suggests that learners learn any target language (TL) features only if they notice them. According to Schmidt (1995), the input which is noticed by learners becomes intake and available for further mental processing. This hypothesis highlights the way input influences pragmatic development. As Kasper (2000) cited, "Schmidt refers to 'noticing' as the conscious attention to a phenomenon. He extended the concept by proposing learners' comparison between their own inter-language, output, and target language norms to identify and overcome errors. Such a comparison makes a significant contribution to L2 learning" (p. 14). This hypothesis can be extended in pragmatics through the conclusion of Schmidt's observation (2001) that "L2 learners acquire pragmatic competence when they have dual focus both on linguistic forms and social, contextual factors for their use" (p.14).

Furthermore, the Noticing Hypothesis as an eye-opening insight to the learning of different aspects of a second language and the notion of Sharwood-Smith's input enhancement hypothesis have been recognized as approaches to directing learners' attention to how language works through the process of making language input salient for them. In fact, as second language learning is a conscious process, learners need to develop an awareness of TL features to facilitate the process of learning a foreign or second language. Thus, in instructed settings, there are several ways to raise this awareness while teaching the linguistic forms and functions and their relationship. As Polio and Lew (2007) suggest, input enhancement is the process of using such techniques as underlining, coloring, boldfacing, italicizing, etc., or employing some procedures to highlight certain features to focus learners' attention on them. Pragmatics is one of the areas of language learning which has been marginalized and needs attention. It should be noted that instruction can play a facilitative role in learning pragmatics. In this regard, some empirical studies have been conducted, the results of which are reported as follows.

Empirical Studies

The studies of Rose and Kasper (2002) on the effect of pragmatic instruction led to the conclusion that the development of pragmatic competence is facilitated through explicit instruction. For example, Koike and Pearson (2005) found English speaking learners of Spanish acquired pragmatic competence faster after the delivery of explicit instruction and feedback provision. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005), in their study on one of the tasks, including noticing and repairing the speech act of apologizing, reported that explicit classroom instruction can be beneficial for ESL learners from different backgrounds.

Teachers play a sine quo non-role in accelerating learners' pragmatics development and help them comprehend and produce speech acts more rapidly. As an illustrative example, Ishihara's (2004, 2007) studies document the impact of formal instruction on learning English and of an awareness-raising virtual program for Japanese learners, respectively. The results of the first study revealed the students' awareness of the strategies they use to give and respond to

compliments and a greater variety of responses they gave to complements. In the second study, a web-based pragmatics curriculum was applied for teaching Japanese speech acts as a foreign language through consciousness-raising activities. The curriculum included a set of awareness-raising tasks containing naturalistic audio materials and pragmatic information. The reflective journaling of the learners indicated that the curriculum helped them develop pragmatic awareness of speech acts performance.

To investigate the in/effectiveness of teaching speech acts to English learners throughout the globe, for instance, Rose and Ng (2001) investigated the production of English complement/complement-response among Cantonese learners. The results indicated the positive effect of pragmatic instruction on learners' performance of complementing, corroborating Bardovi-Harlig (2001) for the fact that exposure to pragmatic input can be effective in developing learners' pragmatic competence when accompanied by instruction. In another study by Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) on pragmatic explicit and implicit teaching for learning to produce suggestion head acts along with downgraders among Spanish learners of English, the results proved the effectiveness of both modes of instruction. Along the same lines, the findings of the study by Alcon Soler (2005) revealed the gains of explicit pragmatic instruction on the production of request strategies for EFL learners. Takahashi (2005) investigated pragmatic performance regarding request speech act among Japanese learners of English after their exposure to noticing tasks. The results of DCT and self-report showed the beneficial effect of such tasks on the learners' request strategy. Martinez-Flor and Solar (2007), in a research study, concluded that implicit and explicit instruction enhances Spanish EFL learners' awareness and production of the speech act of suggestion. The results of the study by Takimoto (2012) on the use of request downgraders among Japanese EFL learners showed the positive influence of meta-pragmatic discussion and problem-solving tasks. The Iranian researchers, Ghavamnia, Eslami-Rasekh, and Dastjerdi (2014) made an inquiry on the beneficial effect of four types of input-enhancement instruction with pre-test post-test design. Two forms of post-tests were administered. The post-test scores revealed the effectiveness of all four treatments, although two treatment groups outperformed the other two treatment groups in the post-tests.

Many representative studies on teaching speech act in the Iranian context can be documented as supporting evidence. The study by Mirzaei and Esmaeeli (2013) on the speech act of apology with Iranian learners showed that pragmatic instruction was beneficial for Iranian EFL learners. In another study on the speech act of refusal among 49 Iranian participants, Derakhshan and Shakki (2020) found that pragmatic learning improved through pragmatic instruction, and intervention and interaction were effective in learning to use refusal. Along the same lines, Ghaedrahmat, Alavi Nia, and Biria (2016) examined the impact of teaching thanking to Iranian EFL learners. What was made manifest was the outperformance of EFL learners provided with explicit instruction.

In parallel with the previous studies, the study by Abolfathiasl and Nadzimah Abdullah (2015) in the Iranian context suggests that the body of research on instructional techniques for teaching pragmatics, especially DCT, on English as EFL learners' awareness as well as production of suggestion is rather thin, thereby warranting the present study. Also, the suggestion speech act is one of the face-threatening and challenging acts to perform in real-life communication and proves far from easy for language learners in the Iranian context. It is hypothesized that learners' focus on suggestion speech act and making it salient for them might induce its acquisition. Since the vast majority of studies, as regards the literature review, have centered on other speech acts than a suggestion, the authors found research on suggestion act warranted. On the other hand, in many pragmatic instruction studies, DCT has regularly been utilized as a means of obtaining and eliciting learners' responses to written prompts in different pragmatic situations, and role-plays

were applied mostly as learning activities in which learners played different roles in different situations while in the present study, DCT and role play with a discussion which includes both role-play and discussion, have been manipulated as instructional techniques to trigger learners' pragmatic awareness. The present study was an effort to examine how DCT and role play with discussion as pragmatic awareness-raising tasks can ameliorate suggestion strategies among intermediate EFL learners through the provision of input, output, interaction, and feedback.

Regarding what was discussed, the study was an attempt to address the research questions as follows:

Q1. Does teaching suggestion through DCT and role play with discussion significantly affect suggestion strategies among learners?

Q2. Does using both DCT and role play with discussion make any significant difference in the production of suggestions?

Method

Research Design

A quasi-experimental design with three intact classes was employed in the study. A pre-test and post-test were administered to examine the effectiveness of the treatments on the pragmatic performance of suggestion. The study adopted an explanatory sequential design in which qualitative data were considered to build on the quantitative results.

Participants

Participants of the study included 120 Iranian intermediate EFL learners based on the basis of their scores in an actual version of the Oxford Proficiency Test. The learners' scores ranged between 41 and 59 on the Oxford Proficiency test, which was consistent with a B1 grade at the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Using convenience sampling, they were selected from a population of 250 twenty up to twenty-seven-year-old native speakers of Persian in some other schools in Karaj and Tehran who majored in different majors. Their age ranged from 20 to 27 years. Eighty participants were assigned to the experimental groups, who were provided with the intervention on the use of suggestion, and forty to the control group who received teaching discreet parts of general English such as grammar and vocabulary in order to satisfy ethical requirements.

Instruments
Oxford Proficiency Test

To determine their proficiency level and establish the basis for their selection in the study, the participants took an English Proficiency Test. The test included four English language skills. The scores range from 0 to 120. They represent five levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2). The criterion determining the level was the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as Pretest

One written production test as a pre-test in the form of a DCT or production questionnaire was administered. Four hypothetical situations were designed for the test, and the participants were supposed to produce pragmatically appropriate forms of suggestion in four hypothetical situations (see Appendix A). To ensure the reliability of the pre-test questionnaire, alpha reliability of the scores was conducted. As regards the validity, the pre-test had face and content validity since the learners' pragmatic performance regarding suggestion speech act was the ability or characteristic being examined in the study after the treatments.

Sample Conversations for Posttest

To administer the post-test, four different conversations, which included four blank spaces and required the learners to complete them using appropriate forms of suggestion, were constructed. In fact, the purpose of using these conversations, which included different contexts, was to find out whether the treatments were effective and evaluate the learners' awareness of the appropriateness of suggestion forms in different contexts, including different social status of interlocutors (equal status/higher status/lower status). Regarding the reliability of the test, inter-rater reliability of the raters' scores (alpha coefficient of reliability) was obtained, and in the case of validity, the test was face and content valid for the same reason as was mentioned for the pre-test (see Appendix B).

DCT for Treatment

The purpose of employing DCTs which prompt the learners to give different pragmatic responses was twofold: testing learners' pragmatic abilities and teaching and practicing pragmatics (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). The DCTs used in the study contained open-ended scenarios (See Appendix C). As proposed by Beebe and Takahashi (1989) and Ogiermann (2009a), DCTs include different role relationships, higher/equal/lower status, and social distance and are created to elicit different realizations of suggestion. Also, the purpose of using DCTs was to practice and learn the pragmatic rules related to the production of suggestion-appropriate forms. They consisted of instructions that were related to some specific situations, including different participants' role relationships and status. The learners were required to read the instructions and imagine themselves in those situations and produce their own utterances as they would act in actual situations.

Role Play with Discussion

Role-plays are useful tasks or activities which help learners practice using speech acts in various situations. Such tasks encompass a string of contexts and social settings related to situations with different status and role relationships. Learners role-played in several scenarios and acted them out for the class. Finally, the researcher-led a discussion of the learners' suggestion forms, strategies, and word choices.

Interview

A scenario-based interview which consisted of three questions relating to different scenarios was applied to elicit appropriate realization of suggestions from the participants. The participants were supposed to select the appropriate and correct forms from among the instructed target forms in the hypothetical scenarios with different statuses, degrees of formality, and social distance. Their answers were transcribed for analysis (See Result Section).

Procedure

First, to make the participants homogeneous with respect to their proficiency, an actual version of the Oxford Proficiency Test was administered to 250 participants. So, hundred twenty participants who took scores between 41 and 59 were selected to participate in the study. Then, a pre-test was administered to the selected participants to establish a baseline for the effect of DCT and role play with discussion and gain information about their background knowledge of the suggestion speech act. The pre-test, which was a production DCT and in an open-ended format, contained four natural situations, which required participants to respond as they would do in actual contexts. To ensure the reliability of the test results, which depends on the degree of agreement between raters, the inter-rater reliability (alpha coefficient of reliability) was computed for both pre-test and post-test using SPSS software. The final version of written DCT, which was

characterized as having high reliability and validity indices, was used to assess the participants' performance.

To give the treatment, some actual situations or scenarios, including different statuses, role relationships, and social distance, were created. Three practitioners, who had experience investigating in the area of pragmatics, were asked to comment on them. The final version of the DCT was used for learners' practice of making a suggestion for one experimental, and the other experimental group practiced role play with discussion in different situations with different role relationships and statuses. Fifteen minutes at twelve sessions of teaching programs were devoted to each intervention. In the first session, the researcher in the study told the learners they were going to use their language knowledge in some real-life situations in order to make their learning goal-oriented. To this end, they would act out some scenarios to practice the linguistic forms they had learned via instruction. They were encouraged to produce the pragmalinguistically appropriate forms of suggestion they would do if they were in the actual situations. After eliciting their responses, the participants discussed and evaluated the appropriateness of their answers for the first treatment (DCT). For the second treatment (role play with discussion), the learners' role played four different scenarios with a variety of statuses in pairs and discussed the appropriateness of their responses. Then, they acted their role plays out for the class. Finally, the whole class discussed the appropriateness of the responses.

During the second and third sessions, the learners were provided with the selected forms of suggestions used based on social status and three categories of suggestion strategies proposed by Martinez-Flor (2005) as follows:

(equal status)	*(higher status)*
– Why don't you . . .?	*– I would probably suggest that . . .*
– Have you tried . . .?	*– Personally, I would recommend that . . .*
– You can just . . .	*– Maybe you could . . .*
– You might want to . . .	*– It would be helpful if you . . .*
– Perhaps you should . . .	*– I think it might be better to . . .*
– I think you need . . .	*– I'm not sure, but I think a good idea would be.*

Table 1
Suggestion Strategies proposed by Martinez-Flor (2005)

Type	Strategy
Direct	Performative verb
	The noun form of suggestion
	Imperative
	Negative imperative
Conventionalized forms	Specific formulae
	question forms
	Possibility
	Should
	Need
	Conditional
Indirect	Impersonal
	Hints

Also, the suggestion part of the book "function" was taught to practice and use different forms of suggestion. The suggested activities of the book prepared the learners for practicing the scenarios designed for the treatment. At the fourth and fifth sessions, the learners practiced the DCTs, which required the learners to produce pragma-linguistically appropriate forms of

suggestion. At the sixth and seventh sessions, after giving a response, they discussed the responses and judged the appropriateness of the responses based on the target forms they learned at the previous sessions. At the eighth and ninth sessions, the learners were asked to change the status of scenarios and produce the suggestion forms in those scenarios. At the tenth session, they were asked to give the reasons why some responses were appropriate, and some were not. In other words, they discussed both pragma-linguistic forms of making suggestions and the socio-pragmatic factors influencing the appropriateness of the responses. They were also assigned to provide the appropriate responses in cases where the pragma-linguistic forms were inappropriate. At the last two sessions, the participants were free to provide some scenarios which were relevant to their personal experiences as extra activities to perform and practice suggestion speech acts.

The purpose of discussing the answers and the pragmatic points was to increase their awareness of socio-pragmatic factors influencing the use of speech act formulation and cross-cultural differences. Also, the suggestion unit of the book "Function" was integrated with written production and awareness-raising tasks. The appropriate and accurate use of suggestions based on social distance and status was explained to the participants in each session, and some questions were raised for the purpose of raising their awareness about the socio-pragmatic factors influencing the choice of appropriate forms. Then, the other learners discussed the answers and judged the appropriateness of the suggestion forms provided. Finally, the teacher provided the necessary hints and prompts.

After instructional treatment, they were asked to complete four conversations using the forms of suggestion, which they would use if they were in real situations based on the level of formality and status at the post-test stage. The control group received no treatment regarding their awareness of the socio-pragmatic factors and pragma-linguistic forms of suggestion. Finally, their responses were compared for the pre-test and post-test.

In light of rating the learners' responses, Two highly experienced TEFL instructors who were familiar with the judgment on the degree of appropriateness of various speech act forms in different situations rated the responses on the basis of a 5-point rating scale considering the three criteria of politeness, directness, degree of formality and grammatical accuracy and authenticity, as follows: 1- unacceptable, 2- a little better, 3- fairly good with some problems, 4- good with some minor problems, 5- acceptable.

Results

The study was an effort to elucidate whether DCTs and role play with discussion significantly influenced EFL learners' pragmatic abilities to produce suggestions". To deal with this issue, an independent t-test was run at the pre-test to determine to what extent the participants in each group are homogeneous regarding their pragmatic knowledge of suggestions. Descriptive and inferential statistics are summarized as follows.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics for pre-test

groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
control	12.5750	1.28876	40
experimental1	12.5750	1.24319	40
experimental2	12.5375	.79572	40
Total	12.5625	1.12190	120

Table 3

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

protest suggestion

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[b]
Corrected Model	.038[a]	2	.019	.015	.985	.000	.029	.052
Intercept	18937.969	1	18937.969	14796.894	.000	.992	14796.894	1.000
groups	.038	2	.019	.015	.985	.000	.029	.052
Error	149.744	117	1.280					
Total	19087.750	120						
Corrected Total	149.781	119						

In table 2, the level of significance for the fourth row (groups) is 0.985, which is higher than 0.05. Then, we can claim that the means of the treatment groups are not significantly different from that of the control group. So, the conclusion that can be drawn is that the participants of the two groups are homogenous in their background pragmatic knowledge of the suggestion speech act.

Following the conduction of the two treatments in twelve 15-minute sessions of each treatment, a post-test was administered to the three groups. The participants' pre-test and post-test scores were compared to examine whether the treatments were effective in learners' pragmatic performance of making suggestions or not.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics for post-test

Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Control	13.3375	1.41143	40
experimental1	14.2375	1.43664	40
experimental2	14.0875	.72402	40
Total	13.8875	1.28740	120

Table 5

Tests of between-subjects' effects for post-test

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[b]
Corrected Model	18.600[a]	2	9.300	6.091	.003	.094	12.183	.880
Intercept	23143.519	1	23143.519	15158.555	.000	.992	15158.555	1.000
Groups	18.600	2	9.300	6.091	.003	.094	12.183	.880
Error	178.631	117	1.527					
Total	23340.750	120						
Corrected Total	197.231	119						

In table 5, the level of significance for the third row (groups) is 0.003, which is lower than 0.05. Then, we can claim that the means of treatment and control are significantly different. So, the analysis of the post-test results can lead to the conclusion that it can be concluded that the use of the discourse completion task was effective in the pragmatic performance of the suggestion speech act.

Table 6
Post hoc tests for suggestion post-test

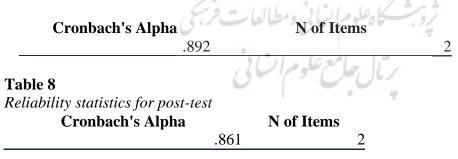| Tukey HSD[a,b] | control | 40 | 13.3375 | |
	experimental2	40		14.0375
	experimental1	40		14.2375
	Sig.		1.000	.753
Scheffe[a,b]	control	40	13.3375	
	experimental2	40		14.0375
	experimental1	40		14.2375
	Sig.		1.000	.772

Table 6 shows the post hoc tests for the treatments. It indicates the effectiveness of both treatments in the pragmatic performance of the learners in making suggestions and reveals no significant difference between the two treatment groups in their' pragmatic performance of making a suggestion.

Inter-Rater Reliability
Tables 5 and 6 below show the internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of the raters' scores estimated for both pre-test and post-test. A high correlation between two sets of scores shows inter-rater reliability. The internal consistency reliability for both tests was high (respectively 0/892, 0/861). This sheds light on the fact that there was a considerable amount of agreement in the two ratings.

Table 7
Reliability statistics for pre-test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.892	2

Table 8
Reliability statistics for post-test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.861	2

Qualitative Analysis
After a statistical analysis of the results, a qualitative analysis was conducted to reflect the participants' production of suggestions in different situations. Some language samples from the treatment groups can be reveal their development from pre-test to post-test.

Situation 1 (from the pre-test)

A: You are a high school student. You have a math class. When your teacher starts teaching issues of this course, you find a problem understanding the taught materials. What do you say to your teacher?

Participant 44 responded, "You should teach in an easier way." The suggestion type is not clear, and the strategy used was a performative verb.

Participant 62 gave the response, "Hello, professor. My suggestion is that you devote some time to solve the students' problems."

Participant 83 posited, "Hello, teacher. To me, more group works in class can help students interact and be involved in their learning". Suggestion type and strategy are not clear.

The suggestion from Participant 100 produced was, "Hello, teacher. I have some ideas. A good solution is to hold a question-and-answer session". Suggestion type and strategy are not among those taught in the classroom.

Participant 115 made his suggestion as uttering, "I have a suggestion. You'd better change the course book". The suggestion form is not in line with the instructional intervention.

The response (44) above on situation one was rated as 1 for the reasons as follows: 1- the structure was much different from the instructed forms 2- it was inappropriate. Answer (62) was rated one due to its absence in the target forms and inappropriateness for the situation. Also, Responses 83 and 100 were scored 1 and 2 since they both produced inappropriate forms. The score for response 115 was scored one because the structure used was not taught to the learners and was appropriate for the situation.

Situation 3 (from the post-test)

You work in a business company. The company did not make any profit the last year. You make a phone call to your boss and ask him to talk to you about the problem.

You: Hello, boss. May I take a few minutes of your time?

Boss: Sure. What's the problem?

You: Sorry. I remember last year the company did not make any profit because of low sales of our products. I think it is a big problem.

Boss: Ok! What's your suggestion to solve the problem?

You: ---

Participant 44 express the suggestion by stating, "It might be better to sell our goods at a lower price than other companies." The strategy and type used are indirect and impersonal, respectively.

Participant 62 formulated the suggestion as "I think a better choice might be to cooperate with big companies." The strategy used is impersonal and is categorized as indirect

The suggestion form produced by participant 83 was "I think it would be helpful if we employ more personnel." The suggestion type is indirect, and the participant's strategy in impersonal.

Participant 100 gave the response, "It would be better to hold regular marketing courses." The response is indirect and impersonal.

Participant 115 suggested as, uttering, "If I were you, I would sell up-to-date and best-quality products. The type and strategy of suggestion are conventionalized form and conditional.

The response participant's 44 provided on situation three was rated as 3.5 because it had some minor problems regarding authenticity and style, which are a little different from the target forms taught to the participants. Response 62 was scored three because its expression was a little different from the target forms but appropriate for the situation. Also, Responses 83 and 100 were scored 3 and 4, which signal both participants' improvement regarding the directness and politeness of suggestion forms. Response 115 was rated as five because it was explicitly taught to the learners and was an appropriate form, and complied more with the rating criteria.

After the participants completed the sample conversations at the post-test level, a scenario-based interview including different scenarios with various status and social distances and degrees of formality was conducted to gain information about their awareness of the appropriateness of pragma-linguistic forms of suggestion. The scenarios of the interview are as follows:

1. Your friend is thinking of starting a new business this fall. She does not know what to do at the first step? What would you say?

2. Suppose your family would like to go to a picnic on Friday. You suddenly remember an interesting place you visited with your friend once. You decide to suggest that place to your father. How would you do it?

3. You are a physics student. Your teacher asks you for your suggestion about the way she can improve her teaching style. What would you suggest?

The sample responses of some participants for the interview seem to confirm the quantitative results related to their improvement after receiving the treatment concerning the use of pragma-linguistically appropriate forms based on socio-pragmatic factors such as status and social distance. The responses of some participants and the reason they provided for their realization of suggestions can illustrate the point:

In response to the scenarios, participant 44 produced the suggestion forms "Perhaps you should go to different companies personally," "Maybe we could go to the north of Tehran for a picnic," and "I know an informative course book. I would recommend you to introduce and talk about its content to the students" respectively.

The utterances Participant 86 gave to the scenarios were "Perhaps you can just go to different companies personally," "Maybe you could go to the north of Tehran for a picnic," and "I think it is better to hold question and answer sessions after teaching the course book.

When asked to provide the reason for their response to interview scenarios, most of the reasons they provided were concerned with their awareness of the socio-pragmatic aspect. For example, the reason participant 44 gave regarding the selection of a specific form in scenario1 was "It is appropriate because my friend is an equal status."

The above-stated sample responses at both post-test and interview are indicative of the better pragmatic performance of the participants after the pedagogical intervention and depict a clearer picture of their pragmatic development. The important point to use this instrument is that the qualitative data which were collected through interview after gathering the quantitative data support the quantitative results.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was threefold. First, it aimed to examine the effect of teaching suggestions on pragmatic production among Iranian EFL learners using both DCT and role play with discussion. Second, it was an attempt to inquire whether there was a significant difference between the effect of DCT and that of role play with a discussion on pragmatic performance. Third, it tried to find out how DCT and role play with discussion as pragmatic awareness-raising activities affected the way learners use various structures to make a suggestion.

Considering the first research question of the study, the results substantiate the enhancing impact of DCT and role play with discussion on the development of effective suggestion strategies. Through the obtained results, it can be inferred that learners practice and review the use of linguistic forms in appropriate contexts and better map form-function relationships. During the interventional treatment, the researcher, as a more proficient participant and awareness-raising mediator in the study, assisted other participants to do the task and raise their consciousness regarding the appropriate use of suggestion forms.

The findings of the study confirming the effectiveness of DCT and role play with discussion are in agreement with those of Lantolf and Thorn (2006), who implicated that an unskilled individual learns by performing tasks or activities through the mediation of more skilled individuals (teacher-learner). Learners' attention was drawn to the pragmatic features such as socio-cultural variables incorporating status, social distance, and formality for the production of pragma-linguistically appropriate forms of suggestion in various situations, as confirmed by the conclusion of Schmidt's observation (2001, p.14) arguing that "linguistic features and socio-cultural norms, as well as contextual factors, are a sufficient condition to develop L2 learners' pragmatic competence". The current study involved the participants in discussing the reason as to why some forms were appropriate, and some were inappropriate when utilized in different situations.

Along the same lines, the studies of House (1996) and Takahashi (2001) showed the effectiveness of instructional intervention in teaching pragmatics in contexts such as Germany and Japan. House (1996) found the significant impact of input, communicative practice, and explicit meta-pragmatic information on pragmatic fluency. The results of the study showed that pragmatic fluency benefited more from meta-pragmatic awareness and that implicit teaching was ineffective without explicit instruction. In the other study, Takahashi investigated the effect of input enhancement on developing pragmatic competence using four input conditions. The analysis of the results showed that the explicit teaching condition was the most effective technique in the development of target request strategies. Takimoto (2012) conducted a study on the impact of meta-pragmatic discussion. The results showed that the learners gained in such an activity.

The present study also showed that DCT, as well as role play with discussion, significantly affected the learners' pragmatic production of making a suggestion, as confirmed by Narita (2012), arguing that awareness-raising tasks have both immediate and delayed positive effects on foreign or second language learners' speech act realization. Other scholars such as Smith (1993) and Truscott (1998) take an opposite position in the conclusion of their studies, stating that awareness of a specific feature does not guarantee the ability of L2 learners to learn or use the feature adequately. The post-test results endorse Sharwood Smith's (1991) Input Enhancement Theory, asserting that awareness of TL norms facilitates the process of language learning. The analysis of post-test results suggests that learners can learn pragmatic rules of appropriateness through practicing different pragma-linguistic forms in different scenarios, as proposed by Rose (1994), arguing that pragmatic consciousness-raising activities are effective in teaching pragmatics inductively in EFL classrooms.

The study is consistent with Long's (1981, 1983a, 1996) Interaction Hypothesis arguing that engaging learners in interaction leads to the increased comprehensibility of input and its usefulness and suits the learning needs of learners. The study is also supportive of Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985, 1995) in that learners' production was elicited during the study, and they noticed their output, so they could compare their suggestion forms with target forms and find out about the gap in their pragmatic inter-language.

As regards the second research question, the present study signaled both the benefit of pragmatic instruction using both DCT and role play with discussion and the lack of the significant difference between the impact of DCT and that of role play with discussion. Both pedagogical interventions raised the learners' awareness of the pragmatic norms related to suggestion responses in various situations. The findings of the study confirm Taguchi (2015), arguing that it is required to raise learners' awareness of the pragmatic features so that they might process it and finally make it part of their background knowledge. Both DCT and role play with discussion raised the learners' pragmatic awareness of suggestion forms considering that they noticed and processed the pragmatic features concerning their suggestion response strategies.

Also, the findings add weight to the study conducted by Zainab Alsuhaibani (2020) on the impact of two pragmatic instruction techniques on EFL learners' development of complement responses. The findings showed that both interventions were effective in the pragmatic instruction of complement responses.

The differences in the strategies and structures the learners employed in the pre-test and post-test, as discussed in qualitative analysis, reveal the enhanced pragmatic performance of the participants. The results endorse the pragmatic instruction along the same lines as those of Derakhshan and Arabmofrad (2018) and Fakher and Panahifar (2020) with pre-post-control design. The results of both studies showed that learners gained from pragmatic instruction.

As a matter of fact, the learners' appropriate responses to interview scenarios and the reasons they provided for their responses reflect their positive impression of teaching pragmatics through DCT and role play with discussion, confirming Kim (2016) in that the learners found pragmatic instruction effective and important.

Conclusions

The findings revealed that both DCT and role play with discussion burgeoned better strategies in the production of suggestion speech act. Therefore, it can be concluded that both interventions, which include pragmatic awareness-raising and production activities, bear a significant effect on EFL learners' use of effective speech act realizations. Such tasks provide more opportunities for group interaction and meaning negotiation and can contribute to inter-language pragmatic development as they provide input, output, and feedback, which are essential elements for language learning and communicative practice.

The analysis of the findings of the study can make some contributions to both EFL pedagogy and L2 pragmatic instruction. First, as pragmatics has been marginalized in L2 instruction and due to restrictions in L2 pedagogical contexts, pragmatic awareness-raising activities in EFL classrooms ought to be applied with caution. Second, L2 teachers and practitioners are required to integrate pragmatic awareness-raising activities and meta-pragmatic discussion and explanation as a method of L2 pragmatic instruction into their teaching materials and syllabi. Third, EFL learners should be provided with some culture-specific situations or scenarios which are close to real-life situations to engage them in the real use of language and put their linguistic knowledge into practice. Fourth, EFL teachers can make a transition from a teacher-oriented classroom to a more learner-oriented one and turn EFL classrooms into interactive and challenging learning atmospheres. The corollary of such integration can be the enhanced pragmatic knowledge of L2 learners and increased focus on pragmatic input in EFL classrooms.

In fact, pragmatic instruction has been one of the challenging issues in teacher education and ELT material development, and EFL learning. As pragmatics is often unnoticed and not salient without instruction, especially in EFL contexts (Alsuhaibani, 2020), it is advisable to integrate teaching pragmatics into EFL courses and hold some pragmatic instruction courses in teacher training and education in order to boost teachers' pragmatic knowledge and their awareness of pragmatics instruction techniques, develop their pragmatic instruction skills and guide them on how to use different techniques in pragmatics instruction. As there is no exposure to face-to-face context for language use in Iran, teaching pragmatics seems warranted and sine quo non in improving learners' pragmatic performance in the target language.

The implication the study may have for curriculum designers, material developers, EFL researchers, and language teachers is that it may sensitize them to the significance of consciousness-raising activities of speech acts in language pedagogy, syllabus design, and materials writing. Therefore, as pragmatics has gained little importance in language instruction contexts in Iran so far, it is recommended to pragmatic awareness-raising activities be integrated

into EFL teaching syllabi and practice. Since this is a pioneering study using DCT and role play with discussion in teaching the speech act of suggestion, the researchers suggest that future researchers replicate this study and verify if using DCT and role-play in teaching speech acts yields the same results with other proficiency levels, and other speech acts.

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Appendix A
Discourse Completion Test (DCT) for Pretest

Instruction:
You will read some situations which include two participants playing different roles. Imagine you are in those situations and have to act the situation and interact with the other person. Write your own real responses.

Situations related to Suggestions
A: You are a high school student. You have a math class. When your teacher starts teaching issues of this course, you find a problem understanding the taught materials. What do you say to your teacher?

B: A friend of yours is going to visit his boss at a restaurant, but cannot decide which restaurant to choose for the appointment. He asks you for the suggestion. What do you say?

C: You are on New Year holyday. Your uncle and his family have come to your home for some days. He is going to go out for a picnic with the family. What kind of place do you suggest to him?

D: You are a doctor. A patient who has caught a bad cold comes to your office and asks you for a medicine. What do you say?

Appendix B
Posttest
You happen to see your cousin on the way home. You are an automobile expert. He asks you about buying a Rav four Toyota.

Cousin: I am thinking of buying a Rav 4 Toyota this summer.
You: I think this car is very expensive and you can buy a cheaper car?
Friend: Ok, what is your suggestion?
You: --
You come across one of your close friends working in national book library in Tehran.
You: Hi. How is it going?
Friend: Ok. I've been reading a long book today.
You: You look tired!
Friend: Yeah, I'm quite tired and my eyes have been aching since this morning.
You: Well, no wonder! ---------------------------------.

You work in a business company. The company did not make any profit last year. You call your boss's office and request him to talk to you about the problem.
You: Hello, boss. May I take a few minutes of your time?
Boss: Sure. What's the problem
You: Sorry. I remember last year the company did not make any profit because of low sale of our products. I think it is a big problem.
Boss: Ok! What's your suggestion to solve the problem?
You: ---
You are working as an assistant at a computer department of a state university. A new professor comes to you and asks you about new syllabi designed for computer BS classes.
Professor: Excuse me, I am new at the University and I don't know how to get new syllabi design for BS computer classes. Could you explain to me how to do it?
       You: I am not sure about it, --

Appendix C
Sample DCTs
1. Instructions: You are working as a computer expert at a computer center. Your friend would like to install an antivirus on his computer which is booted by Windows 7 Ultimate. What would you say to him?
You:

Classmate: thank you. I didn't know that.

2. Instructions: In a language school, your teacher decides to teach "Round up" grammar book and you think there is a more interesting and informative one. What would you say to him?
You:

Teacher: Oh, good. I think it is more useful for the class.

3. Instructions: Your colleague is considering buying a crypto currency. He does not know which currency to buy: Cardano or Dodgecoinr. Suggest a coin you think is better for him:
You:

4. Instructions: You are a new boss at a new company. The server computer does not function. You ask one of personnel who has a good knowledge of computer, for help.
You:

Role play with discussion for Suggestion

Situation	Situation	Situation	Situation
You come across one of your close friends working at the National Library in Tehran. Because of reading a long book, his eyes have been aching.	You meet one of your English teachers in a library. He/she is considering teaching an interesting book about English conversation. You know an interesting conversation book which is available in the library.	You are waiting for your teacher in one of the classes at Safir institute. You see one of your classmates sitting next to you. You suddenly realize that the collar of his T-shirt is not straight	You are an assistant at the computer department in one of the state universities. A new professor comes to you and asks you about new syllabi designed for computer BS classes
Suggestion Take a rest		Suggestion Make your collar straight	Suggestion Call the educational programming room
	Suggestion Use this		