



The Effects of Input-Based and Output-Based Tasks on Learning the Speech Act of Suggestion by Iranian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The effect of task type on interlanguage pragmatics development has remained under-researched. This study aimed to explore the effects of an input-based task (i.e., consciousness-raising task) and an output-based task (i.e., discourse completion task) on learning the speech act (SA) of suggestion. To this end, sixty Iranian EFL ninth graders were selected as the participants of the study through convenience sampling. Then, they were assigned to three non-equivalent groups (i.e., one control group and two experimental groups). A 10-item scenario-prompted written discourse completion test (WDCT) was administered as the pretest and posttest to all three groups. Afterward, the input-based group received the target SA, enhanced with colored bold-face subtitles, and output-based group received the same clips with regular subtitles and were asked to do WDCTs. The control group was taught through a traditional instructional procedure with the same clips. Finally, they sat for an immediate posttest. The results demonstrated that input-based task had the most significant within-group effect on learning the target SA from the pretest to the posttest, followed by output-based task and traditional instruction. At the same time, no statistically significant differences were found among the groups' posttest performance. The implications for researchers, language teachers, material developers, and language learners are offered finally.

KEYWORDS: Consciousness-Raising Task; Discourse Completion Task; Speech Act; Suggestion

INTRODUCTION

A brief examination of the literature on communicative competence reveals that pragmatic competence has received less attention than the other components of communicative language ability (Salazar, 2007). All the same, second language (L2) researchers have highlighted the importance of mapping the formal, functional, and contextual dimensions of language (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017; Taguchi, 2015). However, previous research has shown that some L2 learners lack the necessary pragmatic or functional information to convey their intended messages appropriately



in communicative contexts in spite of their mastery of grammar and vocabulary because the pragmatic and grammatical competences do not develop in tandem (e.g., Keshavarz & Eslami-Rasekh, 2006; Yu, 2008). Moreover, many learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) may not be competent in the L2 pragmatic norms as they are not exposed to authentic L2 language in the EFL classroom as the primary locus of acquiring the target language. As a result, they tend to value grammatical knowledge over pragmatic knowledge (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001). Hence, the instruction of pragmatics in the EFL classroom has been recommended (Rose & Kasper, 2001). All the same, what matters is not whether pragmatics should be taught, but how teaching pragmatics should be approached (Tajeddin & Hosseinpour, 2014).

According to Ifantidou (2014), the mastery of speech acts (SAs) constitutes the core of the interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) that the language learners need to achieve since the ability to construct and comprehend interactions relies highly on knowing target language pragmatics, and the inability to understand and produce L2 pragmatic features leads to miscommunication (Thomas, 1983). Moreover, as put by Crandall and Basturkmen (2004), pragmatic errors by L2 speakers may have more dire consequences than syntactic errors. For the same reason, Félix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012) asserted that "Like phonology, morphology, and syntax, which are necessary for learning an L2, pragmatics should be integrated into the language curriculum from the beginning levels of language instruction" (p.650) so that L2 learners make sense of different SAs (Leech, 2016).

In the same vein, there has been a long debate over the contribution of input-based and output-based tasks to ILP. According to Ellis (2012), input-based instruction "includes the control of the input that students are provided with or are expected to process" (p. 285). In the same vein, an input-based task aims to promote interlanguage development by directing learners' attention to L2 input through listening or reading without requiring them to produce the L2 (Shintani, 2012). There are also some scholars, who believe that enhancing an L2 system through output is more beneficial and causative than input-oriented approaches to L2 acquisition although they do not discount the significance of input role in learning L2 (e.g., Izumi, 2002; Swain, 2005).

Hence, understanding how input and output affect comprehension and production of L2 pragmatic forms has been considered as a vital issue in ILP research. As a result, a few empirical studies (e.g., Ahmadi, Ghafar Samar, & Yazdanimoghaddam, 2011; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2015, Li, 2012) have been conducted to compare the effects of different input-based tasks (e.g., dictogloss, consciousness-raising task, and structured input task) and output-based tasks (e.g., discussion, role play, and interactive translation) on learning different SAs by EFL learners. However, as recommended by Rose (2005), more studies are needed to address the question of whether a particular area of pragmatics is teachable with certain tasks and whether there are differences among the effects of these task types must be dealt with. When the related literature was inspected, it was found that no comparable studies were done into Iranian EFL learners' acquisition of SAs of suggestion through task-based instruction. Accordingly, this study aimed to address the paucity of the literature on the effects of two understudied input-based and output-based tasks (i.e., consciousness-raising and discourse completion tasks) on Iranian EFL learners' ILP development.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Suggestions are classified as directive or expressive SAs, which get the listener to do something (Searle, 1969). Haverkate (1984) opined suggestions are non-impositive SAs, which signal a benefit to the hearer. Even though the SA of suggesting is not impositive compared to the requesting and ordering SAs, Brown and Levinson (1987) deemed them to be face-threatening because the speaker intrudes into the hearer's reality, which may threaten the hearer's face. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed that while using the SAs of suggestion, various factors should be considered, including the urgency of the suggestion, the degree of embarrassment in the



circumstance, social distance, and the power relationship between the interlocutors. As a result, in order not to upset the listener or reduce the degree of imposition, speakers employ politeness strategies.

Accordingly, such subtle features of pragmatic competence could be difficult to learn or manifest gradually in L2 system (Taguchi, 2010). In fact, L2 learners find it challenging to acquire pragmatics as they must handle the various contextual elements, functional feasibilities, and accessibility of linguistic forms (Taguchi, 2015). Therefore, many researchers believed that there is a need for L2 pragmatic pedagogy to raise learners' pragmatic awareness (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). In the same vein, Blum-Kulka, Kasper, and House (1989) have opined that even fairly advanced L2 learners fail in comprehending and producing communicative acts properly. For the same reason, pedagogical pragmatics empowers L2 learners to recognize target pragmatic customs (Eslami-Rasekh & Noora, 2008).

According to Martínez-Flor (2005), discourse completion tasks (DCTs) can help people activate their pragmatic knowledge. Brown (2001) has classified DCTs into six categories (i.e., written discourse completion task, multiple-choice discourse completion task, oral discourse completion task, discourse role-play task, discourse self-assessment task, role-play self-assessment). Written discourse completion task (WDCT) has been defined by Brown (2001) as "any pragmatics instrument that requires the students to read a written description of a situation including factors such as setting, roles of participants, and degree of imposition and asks them to write what they would say in that situation" (p.301). Generally speaking, a bulk of studies have been carried out on different types of speech acts by means of WDCT as follows: requesting (e.g., Jalilifar, 2009; Taguchi, 2006), apologizing (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh & Mardani, 2010; Harris, Grainger, & Mullany, 2006), complimenting (e.g., Sharifian, 2008), thanking, requesting, promising (e.g., Marquez-Reiter, 2000) and refusing (e.g., Allami & Naeimi, 2010).

Moreover, Sharwood-Smith's (1993) input enhancement hypothesis has been identified as a method for focusing learners' attention to language forms and functions by making language input salient. Indeed, L2 learners must become aware of TL features to facilitate the process of learning acquisition. Thus, there are numerous strategies to raise this awareness in instructional situations while teaching the linguistic forms and functions and their relationships. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) stated that enhanced input "limits the focus of intervention to drawing learners' attention to form through external operations carried out on input" (pp. 38-39). According to Polio (2007), input enhancement is the process of highlighting certain elements to focus learners' attention on them by using strategies such as underlining, coloring, boldfacing, italicizing, and so on. A number of studies have been done such input-based tasks as consciousness-raising task (e.g., Ahmadi et al., 2011), and structured-input task (e.g., Takimoto, 2009).

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

So far, researchers have attempted to investigate the SA of suggesting in different ways. Alfghe and Mohammadzadeh (2021) investigated the functioning and structuring of the speech acts of request, suggestion, and apology by Libyan Arab EFL undergraduate students and Amazigh EFL undergraduate students. They used two measures to assess students' socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic competences (i.e., a discourse completion test and a rating scale). The findings show that all of the speech acts were performed similarly by Libyan Arab and Amazigh participants. However, there were some substantial gender differences among Libyan EFL students. Overall, it appeared that both groups were more skilled in functioning than in structuring the three specified speech acts.

Şenel (2021) investigated the use of the SA of suggestion by EFL students at a Turkish state university. A WDCT and a semi-structured interview were used for data collection. Martínez-Flor's (2005) framework of the SA of suggestion was utilized to assess the data. It was found that the majority of the participants used more



conventionalized forms than the other forms. Moreover, direct strategies were the least used, and hints were not used at all. Furthermore, it was revealed that gender and high school background did not have any significant effects in the development of the SA of suggestion.

Gu (2014) explored the differences between Chinese EFL learners and native English speakers in their production of suggestion forms. The findings showed that the learners used significantly more modal verbs, explicit performatives, and conditional structures, and significantly fewer interrogatives, and inclusive structures than the native speakers. Moreover, Li (2010) investigated high-school aged Cantonese EFL learners in both L1 and L2 with Australian high-school students. The findings revealed that the ILP of the Cantonese speakers were different from their L1 pragmatics and from that of the Australian speakers of English at high school.

Santos and Silva (2008) examined native speakers, heritage learners, and non-heritage learners of Portuguese in the production of the SA of suggestion in the workplace. The findings demonstrated that non-heritage learners were less flexible in their use of forms, which implies that it is constituted by the underdeveloped sociopragmatic awareness. In the same vein, Takimoto (2009) investigated the efficacy of three various input-based tasks (i.e., structured input tasks with explicit knowledge, structured input tasks without explicit knowledge, and problem-solving task) in teaching English polite requestive forms to Japanese learners of English language. To make input enhancement more effective, the tasks were repeated. The findings demonstrated that the three treatment groups did noticeably better than the control group.

In the Iranian EFL context, Fath-Pour Pakzad and Sarkhosh (2022) examined whether EFL learners' pragmatic performance in producing suggestions improved after doing output-based tasks (i.e., DCTs and discussions). The participants were divided into three groups (i.e., discourse completion task, discussion task, and control group). The findings indicated that the two output-based tasks were more effective than the traditional technique. The conclusion drawn from the results was that EFL learners could benefit from task-based instruction in their pragmatic development. Moreover, Derakhshan and Eslami (2015) explored the effect of output-based tasks (i.e., discussion, role play, and interactive translation with video-driven prompts) on the development of two SAs (i.e., apology and request) on sixty upper-intermediate EFL learners. The groups were exposed to 36 video extracts, including eighteen requests and eighteen apologies extracted from different episodes of the Flash Forward, Stargate TV series, and the movie Annie Hall. The results showed that the three groups' pragmatic awareness of requests and apologies improved from the pretest to the posttest. However, the results demonstrated that the discussion group outperformed the role play and interactive translation groups.

Ahmadi et al. (2011) examined the effects of an output-based task (i.e., dictogloss) and an input-based task (i.e., consciousness-raising task) on the Iranian EFL learners' acquisition of the English SA of request. The findings demonstrated that both treatment conditions significantly improved the participants' performances on the immediate and delayed posttests. Tajeddin and Pezeshki (2014) also examined the effects of input-based and output-based tasks on the comprehension and production of politeness markers among the Iranian EFL learners. Both input-based and output-based groups received a teacher-fronted explanation of the target forms and then watched a series of films on requests. After watching the films, some pragmatically inappropriate requests were written on the board by the instructor, and the output group was required to change them and to provide pragmatically appropriate and polite forms. However, the input group was given the film transcripts, and received the instruction, and watched the films. They finally were required to highlight the politeness markers in the transcripts. The analyses of the pretest and posttest data showed the two types of instruction had positive effects on the acquisition of politeness markers of request.

In general, despite the importance of the SA of suggestion to EFL / ESL learners in real life, ILP researchers have not paid due attention to it (Pishghadam & Sharafadini, 2011). Although there exists a bulk of empirical studies



about the SAs in general, few studies have looked at the SA of suggestion as compared to other SAs in EFL classrooms. Hence, further work is necessary to investigate the effect of less studied task types on learning the SA of suggestion. To that end, the following questions were formulated in this experiment as follows:

RQ1: Are there any statistically significant differences among the input-based task (i.e., consciousness-raising), the output-based task (i.e., discourse completion), and traditional language instruction on learning the SA of suggestion by the Iranian elementary EFL learners?

RQ2. Does the traditional language instruction have any statistically significant effect on the learning of suggestion speech act by the Iranian elementary EFL learners?

RQ3. Does the input-based task have any statistically significant effect on the learning of suggestion speech act by the Iranian elementary EFL learners?

RQ4. Does the output-based task have any statistically significant effect on the learning of suggestion speech act by the Iranian elementary EFL learners?

METHODOLOGY

DESIGN

The present study aimed to assess the differences among the learning of suggestion SA by Iranian EFL learners who were instructed through input-based, output-based, and traditional language instructions. Due to lack of true randomization, a quasi-experimental design (i.e., pretest, posttest, non-equivalent groups design) was employed to study the performance of three groups of the participants (i.e., two experimental groups and a control group) on the pretest and the posttest (Dörnyei, 2007).

PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 60 Iranian elementary-level EFL learners, who were selected through convenience sampling from a high-school in a city in Central Iran. Their ages ranged from 14 to 16. They were only male students whose mother tongue was Persian. The participants were assigned non-randomly to three groups (i.e., input-based, output-based, and control group). The data collected from the pre-intermediate participants were excluded in data analysis because the target participants in this study were delimited to the beginners, and those with higher levels of language proficiency were removed for homogeneity purposes (Dörnyei, 2007).

INSTRUMENTATION

QUICK OXFORD PLACEMENT TEST

The first version of the Quick Oxford Placement Test (QOPT), which is developed by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2001), was used to ensure language homogeneity. The QOPT is a standardized test of proficiency, whose reliability and validity had been established. The test consists of 65 multiple-choice questions, including 15 vocabulary, 20 grammar, and 30 cloze-format items.

DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST

The 10-item written discourse completion test (WDCT), which was validated by Kim and Taguchi (2015, 2016), was modified and used to measure the SA knowledge of participants on the pretest and posttest based on Martínez-Flor's (2004) taxonomy of suggestion forms (i.e., direct, indirect, and conventionalized forms). In each item, there



was a description of a suggestive situation, followed by a short conversation. The participants were required to read the descriptions and conversations to provide the appropriate suggestion for each situation. The students were supposed to complete the test in 30 minutes. Based on the previous studies, WDCT is the best tool for measuring students' pragmatic knowledge after writing tasks since the treatment tasks have the same modality as the WDCT (Kim & Taguchi, 2015, 2016). To ensure the participants' understanding, each scenario was written in English. The WDCT scenarios presented equal social status (i.e., friend or classmate). In order to reduce practice effects, two WDCT versions were created, each with a different character, but in similar conversation contexts. For the pretest, one version was used, while the other version was used as the posttest. The scenarios in the WDCTs focused on the SA of suggestion. The scenarios were selected based on a high frequency of conventional expressions observed by language learners in respect to the book Prospect 3. The following is an instance of the DCT items:

Direction: You and your friend, Amin, are talking about TV programs in the class. He tells you that there is a football match on TV tonight. You like to watch the football match together. Read the following conversation and write your suggestion.

Amin: I really enjoyed the football match last night.

You: Yeah, it was wonderful.

Amin: By the way there is another football match tonight.

You: Oh, really? That's nice. _____.

Amin: Excellent. That will be fun.

MATERIALS

Two tasks were selected and implemented (i.e., consciousness-raising task and discourse completion task). Accordingly, in the input-based group, the participants received short clips in which the target SA was enhanced using colored and boldface fonts to raise the participants' consciousness without requiring them to produce output (Shintani, 2012). The other task was the WDCT, as an output-based task, which was used to push the participants to "recall pragmatic information from memory and report rather than use it" (Barron, 2003, p.85).

PROCEDURE

Initially, the participants took a language proficiency test (i.e., the QOPT) in the first session. Afterward, the pretest was given to the participants in the second session, which required them to read each of the 10 scenario-based WDCT. Then, the target SAs were taught to the participants in thirty minutes. Afterward, the participants in the input-based group received the language input through 5 subtitled short clips. Hence, the target SAs were enhanced in the colored and bold font to raise the participants' awareness. However, in the output-based group, the clips were provided with regular subtitles because the main focus was on language output. After watching the clips, they were required to do the WDCTs. Moreover, those in the control group were presented the suggestion forms and were requested to memorize them through out-of-class rote memorization. Finally, the participants appeared for the posttest in the sixth session.

DATA ANALYSIS

In order to answer the research questions, the collected data were codified and then analyzed by SPSS software 24.0. A number of parametric statistics (i.e., one-way ANOVA, and paired-samples t-test), and their non-parametric equivalents (i.e., Kruskal-Wallis test, and Wilcoxon-Signed Rank tests) were run to analyze the data collected through this study because the assumption of normality was violated on the proficiency test for input-based group, and the SA pretest for control group (Dörnyei, 2007).



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objectives behind the present study were twofold. First, it aimed to explore any statistically significant differences among the input-based (consciousness-raising) and output-based (discourse completion) tasks on learning the SA of suggestion by the Iranian elementary EFL learners. Second, it investigated the effects of each of the three methods (i.e., input-based, out-based, traditional language instruction) on the participant pragmatic development from the pretest to the posttest.

RESULTS OF DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

As displayed in Table 1, the assumption of normality was violated on proficiency test for the input-based group, and the pretest of the control group. It should be noted that the ratios of skewness and kurtosis higher than +/- 1.96 indicate that the distribution of data were not normal (Field, 2018).

Table 1
Pretest and Posttest Normality

Groups		N	Skewness		Kurtosis			
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	
Control	Pretest	20	1.97	.51	3.86	4.26	.99	4.30
	Posttest	20	.90	.51	1.76	.34	.99	0.35
	Proficiency	20	-.56	.51	-1.11	-.87	.99	-0.88
Input-Based	Pretest	17	.03	.55	0.06	-.17	1.06	-0.16
	Posttest	17	.19	.55	0.35	-1.11	1.06	-1.05
	Proficiency	17	1.87	.55	3.40	3.48	1.06	3.28
Output-Based	Pretest	23	.78	.48	1.62	.61	.93	0.66
	Posttest	23	.07	.48	0.16	-.43	.93	-0.47
	Proficiency	23	.48	.48	1.00	-.17	.93	-0.19

Since the distribution of the scores on the proficiency test was not normal (Table 1), the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was run to compare the input-based, output-based, and control groups' means on the language proficiency test in order to prove that the three groups were homogeneous in terms of their language proficiency prior to the administration of the treatments.

Table 2
Means Ranks and Medians: Proficiency Test by Groups

	Groups	N	Mean Rank	Median
Proficiency	Control	20	34.15	16.5
	Input-Based	17	24.59	13
	Output-Based	23	31.70	16
	Total	60		

Table 2 displays the median scores of the three groups on the proficiency test. The results showed that control ($Md = 16.5$) and output-based ($Md = 16$) groups had higher medians than the input-based group ($Mdn = 13$). Table 3 displays the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test.



Table 3

Kruskal-Wallis Test: Proficiency Test by Groups

	Proficiency
Kruskal-Wallis H	2.95
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.22

The results indicated that there were not any significant differences between the three groups' medians on the proficiency test with a weak effect size, $H(2) = 2.95, p > .05, \epsilon^2 = .051$. Thus, it can be concluded that the three groups were homogenous in terms of their general language proficiency prior to the administration of the treatments.

PRETEST RESULTS

Since the distribution of scores on the pretest of SAs was not normal (Table 1), the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test was run to compare the input-based, output-based and control groups' means on the pretest in order to prove that the three groups were homogeneous in terms of their knowledge of SAs prior to the administration of the treatments. Table 4 displays the median scores of the three groups on the pretest.

Table 4

Means Ranks and Medians: Pretest Data by Groups

	Groups	N	Mean Rank	Median
Pretest	Control	20	28.15	2
	Input-Based	17	35.82	3
	Output-Based	23	28.61	2
	Total	60		

The results showed that control ($Md = 2$), input-based ($Md = 3$) and output-based ($Md = 2$) groups had fairly close medians on the pretest of SAs. Table 5 displays the results of the Kruskal-Wallis test. The results indicated that there were not any significant differences among the three groups' medians on the pretest with a weak effect size, $H(2) = 2.32, p > .05, \epsilon^2 = .039$. Thus, it can be concluded that the input-based, output-based and control groups were homogenous in terms of their knowledge of SAs at the beginning of the study.

Table 5

Kruskal-Wallis Test: Pretest of Data by Groups

	Proficiency
Kruskal-Wallis H	2.32
Df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.31

RESULTS FOR THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION

A one-way ANOVA was run to probe the first research question. Before discussing the results of the one-way ANOVA on the pretest, it should be noted that the assumption of homogeneity of variances of the groups was met.



Table 6

Test of Homogeneity of Variances: Posttest Data by Groups

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
posttest	Based on Mean	.91	2	57	.40
	Based on Median	.88	2	57	.41
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.88	2	53.46	.41
	Based on trimmed mean	.89	2	57	.41

As displayed in Table 6, the results of the Levene’s test indicated that the three groups were homogeneous in terms of their variances on post-test, $F(2, 57) = .885, p > .05$. Table 7 displays the descriptive statistics for the three groups on the posttest.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics: Posttest Data by Groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Control	20	3.65	3.20	.71	2.15	5.15
Input-Based	17	5.59	3.24	.78	3.92	7.25
Output-Based	23	4.74	2.59	.54	3.62	5.86
Total	60	4.62	3.04	.39	3.83	5.40

The results showed that the input-based ($M = 5.59, SD = 3.24$), output-based ($M = 4.74, SD = 2.59$), and control ($M = 3.65, SD = 3.20$) groups had fairly close means on the posttest. Table 8 displays the results of one-way ANOVA.

Table 8

One-Way ANOVA; Posttest Data by Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	35.08	2	17.54	1.95	.15
Within Groups	511.10	57	8.96		
Total	546.18	59			

The results indicated that there were not any significant differences between the three groups’ means on the posttest with a moderate effect size, $F(2, 57) = 1.95, p > .05, \eta^2 = .064$. Thus, it can be concluded that the null-hypothesis of the first research question was retained.

RESULTS FOR THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

Since control group’s scores on the pretest did not enjoy a normal distribution (Table 1), non-parametric Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test was run to compare the control group’s improvement of means from the pretest to the posttest to probe the second research question. As displayed in Table 9, the control group had a higher median score on the posttest ($Md = 3$) than the pretest ($Md = 2$).

Table 9

Mean Ranks and Median Scores of Control Group’s Pretest and Posttest Data



		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Pretest - Posttest	Negative Ranks	10 ^a	7.60	76.00
	Positive Ranks	3 ^b	5.00	15.00
	Ties	7 ^c		
	Total	20		

a. Pretest < Posttest

b. Pretest > Posttest

c. Pretest = Posttest

Table 10 displays the results of the Wilcoxon-Signed Rank test. The results indicated that control group had a significantly higher median on the posttest than the pretest, $Z = -2.15$, $p < .05$, $r = .29$. Thus, the null-hypothesis of the second research question was rejected, although it should be interpreted cautiously for the weak effect size.

Table 10

Wilcoxon-Signed Rank Test: Control Group's Pretest and Posttest Data

		Pretest – Posttest
Z		-2.15
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.03

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

RESULTS FOR THE THIRD RESEARCH QUESTION

Since the input-based group's means on the pretest and posttest enjoyed normal distribution, a paired-samples t-test was run to compare this group's means on the pretest and the posttest in order to probe the third research question.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics: Input-Based Group's Pretest and Posttest

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	5.59	17	3.24	.78
Pretest	2.53	17	1.66	.40

Based on the results displayed in Table 11, it can be claimed that the input-based group had a higher mean on the posttest ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 3.24$) than the pretest ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.66$). The results of the paired-samples t-test, shown in Table 12, indicated that the input-based group had a significantly higher mean on the posttest than the pretest with a large effect size, $t(16) = 3.97$, $p < .05$, $r = .70$. Thus, the null-hypothesis of the third research question was rejected.

Table 12

Paired-Samples t-test: Input-Based Group's Pretest and Posttest Data

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
3.05	3.17	.76	1.42	4.68	3.97	16	.001



RESULTS FOR THE FOURTH RESEARCH QUESTION

Because output-based group’s means on the pretest and posttest was normally distributed, a paired-samples t-test was conducted to compare this group’s means on the pretest and the posttest in order to probe the fourth research question.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics: Output-Based Group’s Pretest and Posttest Data

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	4.74	23	2.59	.54
Pretest	1.91	23	1.56	.32

Based on the results displayed in Table 13, it can be claimed that the output-based group had higher mean on the posttest ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 2.59$) than on the pretest ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.56$). A paired-samples t-test was also run to compare this group’s pretest and posttest means to address the third research question.

Table 14

Paired-Samples t-test: Output-Based Group’s Pretest and Posttest Data

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
2.82	2.60	.54	1.70	3.95	5.20	22	.000

The results of the paired-samples t-test, displayed in Table 14, indicated that the output-based group had a significantly higher mean on the posttest than the pretest with a large effect size, $t(22) = 5.20$, $p < .05$, $r = .743$. Thus, the fourth null-hypothesis was rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the effects of input-based (i.e., consciousness-raising task), an output-based (i.e., discourse completion task), and the traditional language instruction on the pragmatic development of Iranian elementary EFL learners in terms of learning the direct, indirect and conventionalized forms of suggestion. In line with the facilitative function of intervention in developing ILP, it might be argued that pragmatic competence cannot be acquired without proper instruction. Concerning the tasks employed in this study, the results revealed that the input-based and output-based instructions are more effective in promoting learners' pragmatic proficiency than traditional language instruction.

With regard to the effects of the input-based task (i.e., consciousness-raising task) on learning the SA of suggestion, the results of the data analysis showed that this task had a significant effect on learning SA of suggestion. Simply put, the language learners who received input-based task had a statistically significant development on learning the SA of suggestion from the pretest to the post-test. This finding corroborates some previous research findings, which revealed that pragmatic features are open to input-based tasks (e.g., Ahmadi et al., 2011; Takahashi, 2001; Takimoto, 2009). It can be justified by Schmidt's (1995) noticing hypothesis as many studies on pragmatic instruction have confirmed this justification (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008). According to Schmidt (1995), noticing language input is necessary for language development so that it may become intake and be available for more processing. Moreover, as Ellis (2003) pointed out, consciousness-raising tasks make L2 features salient enough to be noticed and raise L2 learners’ consciousness. Therefore, it can be justified that the target



pragmatic forms (i.e., suggestions) were made salient and the participants' awareness was raised, leading to better English pragmatic development in terms of the SA of suggestion. However, the findings of the present study with regard to the consciousness-raising task ran against the findings of Alcón-Soler (2001), who showed that despite having teachers' input, students continued to use inappropriate suggestion forms.

Considering the effects of the output-based task on learning the SA of suggestion, the results of the data analysis showed that this task had a significant effect on the participants' learning the suggestion SA. To put it simply, the language learners who received this type of task had a statistically significant improvement on learning the SA of suggestion from the pretest to the post-test. This study finding corresponds with some other research findings, which revealed that output-based tasks constitute pragmatic development (e.g., Fath-Pour Pakzad & Sarkhosh, 2022; Tajeddin & Bagherkazemi, 2014; Tajeddin & Pezeshki, 2014). This is justifiable based on Swain's (1985) output hypothesis, which highlights the role of language output in eliciting L2, noticing the output, and finding the gaps in L2 interlanguage. However, this finding is at odds with the findings of Gass (2017), and Han, Park, and Combs (2008), who concurred with the importance of input prior to output. That is, input is essential for language learning (Gass, 2017) and it need to be noticed and processed depending on its characteristics (e.g., saliency, communicative value of the forms) and what the learner brings to the task (i.e., the learners' communicative needs, prior language knowledge in terms of L2 proficiency or first language, motivation, etc.) (Han et al., 2008).

Regarding the effect of traditional method on learning suggestion SA, the results of the study revealed that traditional method had a positive effect on the learning of the SA of suggestion. However, in contrast to the learners who received input-based and output-based tasks, the effect of traditional method was not statistically significant from the pretest to the post. That is, the traditional method in terms of language instruction can be effective on learning the SA in question. This finding of the present study may be justified based on Stern (1983), who stated that the traditional methods may not help L2 learners to communicate effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study revealed that the employment of both input-based and output-based tasks have significant effects on the acquisition of the SA of suggestion by the Iranian EFL learners. This is due to the fact that by completing pedagogical tasks, learners would focus mainly on conveying meaning. Additionally, L2 learners can focus on form by interacting with authentic input, notice linguistic gaps in their interlanguage, receive corrective feedback, and produce pushed output (Gass & Mackey, 2015; Swain, 2005). Therefore, the input-based tasks assist learners to process a specific feature in input (Ellis, 2003), however; output-based tasks have substantial role in obtaining L2 linguistic competence and automatizing the learned knowledge (DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996). Consequently, input-based tasks are necessary for comprehension while output-based tasks have a key role in producing L2 linguistic.

In fact, both input-and output-based tasks are beneficial in the process of learning and producing this SA. However, input-based tasks should be given more priority over output-based tasks. As Doughty (2001) stated, when L2 learners engage in task performance, they are technically exposed to input and produce output (both external to the learner). They are consequently involved in both input and output processing by which they activate the micro- and macroprocesses involved in L2 learning.

The findings of this study may have implications for researchers, language teachers, material developers, and language learners. For researchers, it may open new research avenues for the role of input-based and output-based language instruction in their future studies. Moreover, as L2 teachers have a key role in choosing and implementing tasks in the classroom, they can make use of the given tasks to improve their L2 learners' ILP in the classroom. The material developers may benefit from these findings to design input-based and output-based tasks for L2 learners'



ILP development. Besides, the findings of this study may be useful for language learners since they can enhance their ILP in terms of the SA of suggestion by engaging in these task types.

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