The effect of different types of instruction and feedback on the development of pragmatic proficiency: The case of pragmatic markers

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The necessity of conducting more studies addressing the development of pragmatic proficiency and strong pragmatic awareness for English language learners has made the role of instruction and feedback in teaching pragmatic knowledge of utmost importance. The present study evaluates the relative effectiveness of four types of instruction for teaching some pragmatic markers including topic change markers, mitigation markers, interjections and hybrid basic markers to 75 advanced Iranian learners of English: explicit instruction only, explicit instruction with metalinguistic feedback, structured input instruction only, and structured input instruction with metalinguistic feedback. Treatment group performance was compared with control group performance on pre-tests, post-tests and follow-up tests which contained an open-ended discourse completion test and a multiple-choice pragmatic listening comprehension test. The results of the data analysis revealed that students' ability to comprehend and produce pragmatic markers improved significantly in treatment groups and that pragmatic interlanguage is permeable to instruction in EFL settings. However, there were statistically significant differences among the four treatment groups regarding awareness of different pragmatic markers and their appropriate use. These findings give us some useful insight on the teachability of pragmatic markers and the role of instruction and feedback in the classroom to develop pragmatic competence of EFL learners.

Keywords: Pragmatic proficiency; Pragmatic markers; Explicit instruction; Structured input instruction; Metalinguistic feedback.