

The impact of predeparture instruction on pragmatic development during study abroad

A learning strategies perspective

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This study investigates the impact of a predeparture intervention on developing pragmatic knowledge in a study abroad context. The study included 66 university-level Japanese learners of English who participated in a four-month study abroad program in Canada. The intervention consisted of the implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, and explicit-inductive methods of instruction on speech acts. Pragmatic development was measured by gain scores on a written discourse completion test requiring realization of apologies. Results of the analysis of covariance, controlling for levels of English proficiency, revealed that the explicitly taught groups had significantly larger gains in pragmatic knowledge than the implicitly taught group, and that when comparing the deductive and inductive approaches in the explicit instruction, the two groups did not differ significantly. Follow-up interviews using extreme-case sampling revealed that the metacognitive strategies they had acquired at the predeparture stage contributed to the gains. Implications for maximizing pragmatic development during study abroad are discussed.

Keywords: L2 pragmatics, instructional pragmatics, predeparture instruction, pragmatics learning strategies

1. Introduction

As part of their internationalization efforts, higher education institutions are increasingly offering study abroad programs in which students are expected to develop intercultural communication skills in a second language (L2) (Paige et al., 2004; see the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2020, for a summary). Pragmatic competence, the ability to convey and

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comprehend intended meaning appropriately in social contexts (Thomas, 1983), is an essential part of intercultural communication because lack of competence might be a source of misunderstanding and communication breakdown. Even worse, lack of pragmatic competence may result in a speaker's negative stereotyping (e.g., "they don't know how to say things") and bring about unfavorable consequences in interpersonal relationships between speakers and listeners beyond the interactions at hand. The study abroad context has been considered beneficial for developing pragmatic competence (see Xiao, 2015, for a review) because it provides L2 learners with "the chance to observe and practice contextually appropriate use of language, experience the real-life consequences of language behavior, and be exposed to pragmatic variation in different settings" (Pérez Vidal & Shively, 2019: 356).

Recent research on L2 pragmatics has indicated that the benefits of study abroad are significantly enhanced by instructional interventions (e.g., Alcón-Soler, 2015; Henery, 2015). Several researchers (e.g., Kinginger, 2011; Winke & Teng, 2010) have pointed to the need for pedagogical interventions to ensure that language learners abroad enjoy access to and engagement in the practices of their host community and can interpret their pragmatics-related experiences. Moreover, Hernández and Boero (2018) have advocated for the integration of classroom-based pragmatic instruction into study abroad programs to equip learners with "the tools and understandings that are necessary to interact with native speakers using socially appropriate language" (p. 406). Despite these calls, the impact of predeparture instruction on pragmatic development during study abroad has largely been underexplored (Halenko & Jones, 2017). The present study is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature, focusing on the predeparture instruction offered at a Japanese university for students who participated in a one-semester-abroad program in Canada. Instruction was given at the predeparture stage only, using three different methods (i.e., implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, and explicit-inductive methods), and with a special focus on cultivating students' ability to "develop L2 pragmatic awareness and knowledge on their own" (Taguchi, 2018: 53). The study examined the effects of the three methods of instruction employed in the predeparture course on the development of students' self-directed strategies for dealing with pragmatics, and in turn, on pragmatic gains that they made during study abroad. The study provides important extensions to existing research on L2 pragmatics instruction, particularly at the predeparture stage of the study abroad cycle.

2. Background

2.1 Predeparture instruction on L2 pragmatics

Research has shown that teaching key elements of pragmatics such as functional language use and sociocultural norms of interaction is not only feasible and desirable, but also more effective than mere exposure to the target language or no instruction (see Takahashi, 2010, for a review). A growing body of research has investigated how L2 pragmatic features should be taught (Taguchi, 2015). This line of inquiry has been extended to study abroad contexts (e.g., Alcón-Soler, 2015; Halenko & Jones, 2017; Henery, 2015). As far as predeparture instruction is concerned, previous research has shown mixed results concerning its effect on pragmatic development during study abroad. For example, Cohen and Shively (2007) compared an experimental group who received a strategy-based intervention (i.e., using a self-access workbook designed to raise their awareness about the learning of pragmatics) both prior to and during a semester abroad with a control group who received no such intervention. The participants were 86 university-level American students who studied for one semester abroad in a Spanish- or French-speaking country. The results indicated non-significant differences between the two groups, although the experimental group showed more pragmatic gains than the control group with respect to native-like production of requests and apologies in Spanish.

In contrast, Halenko and Jones (2017) found a statistically significant, strong, and immediate effect of intensive predeparture instruction in an experimental study with a cohort of 34 Chinese learners of English studying over a six-month period at a British higher education institution. The instructional effect was assessed based on the development of pragmatic awareness and production of appropriate request forms. The data were collected at three time points: before the instruction, immediately after the instruction (i.e., prior to their departure for the United Kingdom), and during study abroad. The results of an oral computer-animated production test revealed that the instructed group outperformed the control group receiving no instruction on the immediate posttest, although attrition in pragmatic development was observed among the instructed group during study abroad. Findings suggested that intensive predeparture instruction might have a significant effect in the short term and that repeated attention during study abroad might be necessary for long-term recall of what they learned in the predeparture course. Hernández and Boero (2018) investigated the effect of predeparture instruction on the appropriateness of request performance by 15 university-level American students of Spanish enrolled in a four-week program in Spain. Results revealed that their request strategies – as measured by a written dis-

course completion test – became more target-like over time, due to their increased use of downgrading from pretest to posttest. The analysis of their retrospective verbal reports also revealed that pragmatic interventions prior to and during study abroad made them attend to social and situational variables that could affect linguistic choices. Findings suggested that L2 learners' pragmatic development is facilitated, particularly when opportunities to perform L2 pragmatics in the host country are combined with predeparture instruction in their home country.

All the studies reviewed above focused on whether and how the knowledge and skills in specific speech acts (i.e., requests and apologies) that L2 learners had learned in the predeparture course developed through their study abroad experience. It is not known, however, whether similar development can be observed in the speech acts that are not taught in a predeparture course. As discussed in the literature concerning strategy-based learning of pragmatics (e.g., Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Sykes & Cohen, 2018; Taguchi, 2018), it is not enough to learn or memorize a set of specific formulaic expressions to be applied or a set of predetermined sociocultural rules to be followed. This is particularly true for students in study abroad contexts because they encounter a myriad of untaught and unknown target-language pragmatic behaviors. In addition, they are expected to dynamically deal with not only common patterns but also varieties of pragmatic phenomena within the target speech community (Sykes & Cohen, 2018). Given these challenges that L2 learners face in study abroad contexts, one critical goal of predeparture instruction should be to equip them with the ability to determine autonomously and independently “what to say, when to say it, how to say it, and when to diverge from the norm” while paying attention to various social and contextual factors in a given context (Sykes & Cohen, 2018: 397). Therefore, to understand how effectively pragmatics is taught and learned in a predeparture course, it is important to examine whether (and to what extent) L2 learners develop the ability to apply pragmatic knowledge and analysis skills from one situation to another.

2.2 Methods of pragmatics instruction

Previous studies on pragmatics instruction have confirmed the overall superiority of explicit over implicit intervention (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Fordyce, 2014). In many studies, explicit teaching has been operationalized by providing L2 learners with metapragmatic rules that explain the relationships among linguistic forms, functions, and sociocultural norms and conventions associated with language use. Given the effectiveness of explicit metapragmatic rule provision, Glaser (2013) raised a question as to its sequencing, namely, when and how to best provide the metapragmatic information in the course of a pragmatics lesson. She

pointed to the need to distinguish two possible types of explicit instruction by utilizing DeKeyser's (2003) explicit/implicit and deductive/inductive dichotomies. One is an explicit-deductive approach, in which students are given metapragmatic rules first and subsequently engage in exercises and activities designed to practice those rules. The other is an explicit-inductive rule discovery approach, in which students are exposed to an input flood of real language use that contains the pragmatic features to be acquired, and provided the rules later in a summary of the lesson. Both approaches contain a direct explanation of target pragmatic features by a teacher, but the latter approach withholds metapragmatic rule provision while students try to discover the rules on their own. As for the implicit approach, theoretically, only the inductive approach is possible. In the implicit-inductive approach, there is no rule provision throughout the lesson. Teachers try to enhance students' implicit understanding of pragmatic rules while utilizing input flood, consciousness-raising tasks, and teacher and peer feedback.

In a quasi-experimental study of 49 adult English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Germany, Glaser (2016) compared the effectiveness of the deductive and inductive approaches in explicit instruction on students' realization strategies for refusals. A discourse completion test and role play were used in the pretest and posttest design. The results indicated that the gains in the inductive group were larger than those in the deductive group, and that the inductive approach was more effective in developing the EFL learners' pragmatic competence. Martínez-Flor and Alcón-Soler (2007) examined which type of instruction, explicit or implicit, was more effective in enhancing 81 university-level Spanish-speaking learners' pragmatic awareness of making suggestions in English. The explicit instruction employed was inductive in nature because it was initiated with various awareness-raising tasks, followed by explicit explanations of target forms for suggestions. The implicit (inductive) instruction involved input enhancement using videotaped situations and recasts during the role-play practice. The pretest and posttest results indicated learners increased recognition of appropriate suggestions in both instructional groups, but that there was no statistically significant difference between the two, suggesting the effectiveness of both explicit-inductive and implicit-inductive teaching methods. As Glaser (2013) observed, however, research contrasting these teaching methods is scarce in L2 pragmatics instruction studies. This is particularly true for those in study abroad contexts, which warrants further empirical investigation.

2.3 Research questions

The present study was carried out to determine the impact of three methods of pragmatics instruction (i.e., implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, and explicit-

inductive methods) on the development of students' self-directed strategies for dealing with pragmatics, and in turn, on pragmatic gains that they made during study abroad, while exploring the question of "what instructional methods could best assist the learning of pragmatics" (Taguchi, 2015:2). The specific research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Is there a difference in the degree of gains in pragmatic knowledge that students make during study abroad, depending on the method of instruction they receive in the predeparture course?
2. How do students utilize the self-learning strategies that they have acquired through predeparture instruction to learn L2 pragmatic features during study abroad?

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The present study took place at a private university in Japan where students were required to complete a semester-long (four-month) study abroad program to graduate. They were allowed to choose individual destinations from among partner institutions, depending on their own interests. Participants in the study consisted of 66 students who were in the second or third year of an undergraduate program of study (e.g., International Relations, Languages, History, etc.). They were admitted to study in partner universities in Canada where they were enrolled in both regular classes with local students and English as a second language (ESL) classes designed exclusively for international students. As for living arrangements, 56 of them chose to live with a local host family and 10 opted for student dormitories where they lived with local and/or international students in a four- or five-person unit. A questionnaire on demographic information indicated that 21 students had experienced short stays abroad (e.g., homestays) in the past, but none had studied abroad. The remaining students were going abroad for the first time.

3.2 Settings of the predeparture orientation course

The university provided a predeparture orientation course for all study abroad participants one month before departure. The course was delivered in an intensive manner in which teachers and students met for three 90-minute sessions a day for five days during one week (22.5 hours in total). The course was graded based on students' performance in coursework, including presentations and

essays, and they received two academic credits for successful completion. Two sessions per day were designed to increase students' cross-cultural adaptability while addressing topics commonly included in predeparture orientation courses such as stereotyping, value differences, taboos, culture shock, reverse culture shock, and health and safety abroad (Bennett, 2008). The other session each day was designed to improve intercultural communication skills with a particular focus on the teaching of pragmatics. Thus, participants had pragmatics instruction for a total of 7.5 hours during the week of the predeparture orientation. Each session focused on one speech act: requests, refusals, complaints, compliments and compliment responses, and greetings.

3.3 Treatment procedure

Given the size of the cohort going to Canada, the predeparture course was offered in three classes. The allocation of 66 students to the classes was made in such a way that all students were first ranked by the official scores on the *Test of English for International Communication* (TOEIC) that they had submitted in the program application process and then placed in one of three classes, which resulted in there being 22 students in each class. For the purpose of the study, one of the three methods of instruction (i.e., an implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, or explicit-inductive method) was employed as a means to teach pragmatics in respective classes. The same teaching materials were used in all three classes.

Three native English-speaking instructors were assigned to teach one of the three classes and asked to adhere to the same teaching method for the duration of the course. Since they had obtained master's degrees in language education and had taught English language classes at Japanese universities for more than 15 years each, they were all familiar with the teaching of pragmatics and the methods used in the study. Since they were all fluent speakers of Japanese, the class was taught in a mixture of English and Japanese. While their expertise was well acknowledged, they were given two 90-minute training sessions where they learned how to teach speech acts using one of the three methods assigned.¹

The teacher responsible for the explicit-deductive instruction was asked to conduct the following classroom activities in the sequence shown below:

1. inform students of the speech act of the day,

1. In the training sessions, each teacher received a teacher's manual and a DVD that the present research project members made for the purpose of the study. The manual contained an overview of the study and the 5 lesson plans respective teachers were expected to implement during the intervention period. The DVD contained video clips of a teacher's model lesson.

2. address metapragmatic information, namely, both appropriate realizations of the speech act in focus and the social and contextual features associated with them,
3. show video vignettes as a means to raise students' consciousness about how the speech act is realized in English in real-life situations,
4. use handouts containing various scenario examples of pragmatically successful and unsuccessful interactions compiled from interviews with students who had returned from study abroad,
5. give students time to role play a few target speech act scenarios described on the handout, and
6. give students time to discuss target pragmatic features in pair or group, while guiding them in becoming "self-directed data-gatherers" in pragmatics (Shively, 2010).

The teacher responsible for the explicit-inductive approach was asked to conduct the activities in the same order as shown above, except that the class always ended with the explicit metapragmatic rule provision. Occasionally, the activities were re-ordered at the teachers' discretion, taking into account the content of the materials used as well as a smooth flow of the lesson. However, the metapragmatic rule provision always came first in the explicit-deductive class and last in the explicit-inductive class. On the other hand, the teacher entrusted with the implicit-inductive instruction was asked to do the same as in the explicit-inductive approach, except that no metapragmatic information was provided throughout the lesson. In all methods of instruction, corrective feedback was given to the students throughout the lesson because it could draw their attention effectively to mismatches between their non-target-like forms and more target-like forms (e.g., Hernández & Boero, 2018; Simin et al., 2014). Recast was used as the only form of corrective feedback in this study because it was the one that all three instructors were commonly using in their regular English classes.

Prior to actual teaching in the predeparture course, all three teachers were asked to do mock lessons for the researcher and two faculty members in the department. In the debriefing session, the level of their treatment adherence (i.e., teaching pragmatics in an implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, or explicit-inductive manner) was reviewed. Subsequently, they were given opportunities to teach students who would go to another destination four months earlier than those going to Canada. Their lessons were videotaped and reviewed, and their treatment adherence was checked and found to be at a satisfactory level, as there was no deviation from the features of classroom activities discussed above.

3.4 Quantitative phase

3.4.1 *Data collection*

The pretest and posttest were administered on the final day of the predeparture course and two weeks after students' return to Japan, respectively. The tests consisted of items requiring realization of apologies that were not dealt with in the predeparture course. The rationale for using an untaught speech act was that the primary focus of the study was not on whether they learned speech act realization strategies per se, but on whether they learned "how to learn" realization strategies. Therefore, the intention of the pretest was to assess the level of students' pragmatic knowledge about untaught speech act realization strategies at the predeparture stage.² A comparison of the pretest and posttest results would indicate the level of knowledge that they gained on their own during study abroad.

3.4.2 *Instrument*

There have been various criticisms regarding the use of a written discourse completion test as a means to measure L2 learners' pragmatics production ability (e.g., unnatural scenario prompts, unusually short responses). One major problem with this data elicitation technique concerns low comparability with natural data. As Cohen (2020) pointed out, it is difficult to make inferences about what they would actually produce in real-life situations. Despite these criticisms, a written discourse completion test was employed in the present study because it is considered usable when purely describing the range of pragmatic knowledge that respondents have available (Taguchi & Roever, 2017), and because the effect of an instructional intervention is more apparent on tasks that do not have much processing demand (Taguchi, 2015).

With reference to the literature containing the speech act of apologies (Cohen & Shively, 2007; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010), a test was constructed. It contained eight items, each of which asked respondents to read a description of a situation requiring an apology to either a professor or a classmate and then write in English what they imagined local Canadian university students would typically say, rather than what they would actually say, in the situation. This way, focus was given to their knowledge about apology strategies in the target language community.

2. Due to institutional constraints, it was impossible to administer a test prior to the predeparture course. Therefore, it is not clear whether the result of the pretest administered at the end of the course indicated the level of knowledge participants had before taking the course, or the level that they acquired through application of learning strategies that they learned in the course. In either case, the pretest and posttest comparison indicated the degree of expansion of knowledge about the untaught speech act during study abroad.

All situations contained in the test were controlled for the level of acquaintance between speaker and listener and the degree of severity of infraction (i.e., high or low). The descriptions of the situations in test items were written in both English and Japanese to avoid misunderstanding of situations caused by varying levels of English reading comprehension, but the dialog was given in English only.

The quality of the translation was checked by two bilinguals (a native English-speaking teacher fluent in Japanese and a native Japanese-speaking teacher fluent in English). The test draft was piloted with a cohort of 12 students who had returned from study abroad in Canada in the year preceding this research project. Follow-up interviews were also conducted, with the aim of exploring the content and face validity of the test draft. As a result, the situations that more than half of the students thought they would never encounter in their university life (e.g., commuting to school by car) were replaced to maximize relevance to the students, and several wordings were refined in the descriptions of the situations. The modified version of the test was piloted again with another cohort of 12 students. No major concerns were found in the second pilot administration. Sample items in the final version of the test in which the Japanese translations are omitted are shown below (see Appendix A for a summary of the scenarios used in the test):

- (1) Apologizing to a classmate in the situation where the level of acquaintance between speaker and listener is high and the level of severity of infraction is low.

Situation: You have known your classmate Julie well. You and Julie have worked on a couple of assignments together. You invited Julie for lunch today. You are now having lunch with Julie at the school cafeteria.

You: So, Julie, how is your meal?

Julie: Nice actually. Japanese food is a lot healthier than the food I usually eat. <Your phone rings.> Oh, is that your phone?

You: Yes. <You pick up a call and talk briefly on the phone.> _____

Julie: Okay then. It was nice talking with you.

You: Likewise. See you again.

- (2) Apologizing to a professor in the situation where both the acquaintance and severity levels are high.

Situation: Upon your request, your supervisor agreed to meet you at 11 a.m. in his office, although he was extremely busy marking final exams. You arrived 30 minutes late.

You: <You knock on the office door.> Hello.

Teacher: Hello.

You-1: _____

Teacher: This is the third time you've been late for the appointment.

You-2: _____

Teacher: Okay. I guess that'll help. Try to come on time next time.

Responses were scored by three English-speaking teachers who had never taught those participant students in the past: one was a native English speaker from the United States and two were competent users of English as a second or foreign language (their first languages were Hindi and Mandarin Chinese, respectively) who had earned master's degrees at a Canadian university.

The responses were scored item-by-item on the basis of three categories: (1) the selection and use of strategies (i.e., expression of an apology, acknowledgment of responsibility, explanation, offer of repair, promise of non-recurrence, and intensification); (2) the appropriateness of the level of formality; and (3) the level of politeness (Cohen & Shively, 2007; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Each category was scored using a four-point semantic differential scale with 4, 3, 2, and 1 indicating *very good*, *good*, *poor*, and *very poor*, respectively. For example, a response such as "Sorry, I'm late" for You-1 in Situation 2 above was given 5 points, the breakdown of which was 2 points for the selection and use of strategies, 1 point for the appropriateness of the level of formality, and 2 points for the level of politeness. A response like "I'm sorry, from now I'll put reminders in my smart-phone" in You-2 in Situation 2 was rated highly because it involved an expression of apology with appropriate level of formality and politeness and a promise of non-occurrence with specific measures, and thus given 12 points, namely, four points for all three categories. When more than one response was required in one item, as in sample 2 above, the scoring was made for each response and the scores were then averaged for the item. Therefore, 12 points and 3 points would be, respectively, the highest and lowest possible scores that one teacher could give on the item, and the total scores summed across eight items would range from 24 to 96 points, unless respondents left items unanswered.

The same written discourse completion test was used on both pretest and posttest occasions, although all items were re-ordered randomly to reduce a potential memory effect. The raters were given all responses at once without being informed of any pretest and posttest information. To enhance inter-rater reliability, the raters scored about 5% of responses separately, at which point their scores were compared and scoring criteria were reconfirmed among them. The inter-rater reliability using Cronbach's alpha was found to be high ($r = .81$). When they completed scoring all the remaining students' responses, the inter-rater reliability of total scores was estimated, yielding .89 and .83 in the pretest and posttest, respectively. Given the degree of consistency in scoring among the three raters,

the average of their total scores that individual respondents received was used for analyses discussed below.

3.4.3 *Data analysis*

To answer research question 1, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted with SPSS version 26. In the model, gain scores (i.e., the difference from pretest to posttest in total scores on the written discourse completion test) were used as the dependent variable. The grouping variable representing the three methods of pragmatics instruction (i.e., implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, and explicit-inductive methods) that students received in the predeparture course was used as a between-subject factor. The level of English proficiency (i.e., TOEIC scores) collected prior to the predeparture course was included as a covariate to examine accurately the effect of different methods of instruction on test scores. The rationale for the inclusion of learners' proficiency is that there is still a need for research that investigates the relationship between the effectiveness of classroom interventions and learners' levels of proficiency. Fordyce (2014) stated, for example, "proficiency has rarely been operationalized as a variable in intervention studies on L2 pragmatics" (p.12). Taguchi (2015) also argued that learners' instructional readiness in terms of proficiency needs to be factored in when considering the effects of instructional methods. For all statistical analyses, the alpha-level was set at $p < .05$. However, when multiple significance tests were carried out, a Bonferroni adjustment was applied for the alpha level. Partial eta squared (η^2) served as an indicator of effect size, which was judged to be small at .01, medium at .06, and large at .14 (Cohen, 1988).

3.5 Qualitative phase

3.5.1 *Data collection*

Qualitative data were collected to gather insights into students' experiences in the predeparture instruction and during study abroad and to answer research question 2. After collecting and analyzing the quantitative data, semi-structured one-on-one interviews with six students were conducted in their first language, with the aim of exploring whether they had developed their self-directed strategies for dealing with L2 pragmatics through the predeparture instruction, and what kind of strategies they had actually utilized to gain pragmatic knowledge during study abroad. The students who made the largest and smallest gains in the three respective groups were selected for the interview (see Table 1).

It was explained before the interviews that their interview data would be recorded and used for research purposes only. Since the researcher had known

Table 1. Information about interviewed students

	Gender	Living	Proficiency	Pretest	Posttest	Gains
Implicit-inductive						
Student 1	Male	H	555	56	50	−6
Student 2	Female	H	625	60	67	+7
Explicit-deductive						
Student 3	Female	D	645	64	59	−5
Student 4	Female	H	710	66	75	+9
Explicit-inductive						
Student 5	Female	H	590	59	57	−2
Student 6	Female	D	605	63	76	+13

Note. D and H in the living arrangement category indicate dormitory and homestay, respectively.

the students since they entered the university, a relaxed atmosphere was established in the interview so quickly and easily that all students expressed very freely their experiences in the host country, as well as their opinions and thoughts about the predeparture course and the test administered to them. It took about 50 minutes for each interview to be completed.

3.5.2 *Data analysis*

The project members read all transcriptions to get a holistic sense of the data, extracted descriptive phrases that explained how students developed pragmatic knowledge, and analyzed their use of self-learning strategies with reference to three dimensions of metacognitive strategies: paying attention to pragmatics-related communicative acts while understanding the form-function relationship and connecting it with context; obtaining resources for observing and performing communicative acts through interaction with local community members; monitoring and evaluating their own performance of communicative acts by reflecting on successful and unsuccessful interactions (see Taguchi, 2018, for a detailed discussion).

4. **Results**

4.1 *Descriptive statistics*

The results shown in Table 2 indicated that there was an increase from pretest to posttest in the observed mean scores of the three groups. Given that scores on the

written discourse completion test ranged from 24 to 96 points, the mean scores of the pretest were found to be below the midpoint (i.e., 60 points), and those of the posttest were at best only close to the midpoint. A comparison of the gain scores indicated that the largest difference was observed in the explicit-inductive group, whereas the smallest difference was found in the implicit-inductive group.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of scores on English proficiency, pretest, posttest, and gains

Groups	Proficiency		Pretest		Posttest		Gains	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Implicit-inductive (<i>n</i> = 22)	540.91	66.75	54.14	6.53	54.68	7.02	0.55	4.15
Explicit-deductive (<i>n</i> = 22)	564.77	81.89	55.96	7.72	59.05	7.64	3.09	3.52
Explicit-inductive (<i>n</i> = 22)	542.73	74.67	53.77	7.60	59.91	6.54	6.14	3.85
Total (<i>n</i> = 66)	549.47	74.35	54.62	7.26	57.88	7.34	3.26	4.43

As for the normality of the raw data, the skewness and kurtosis values for gain scores were $-.23$ and $-.24$, respectively, whereas those values for proficiency were $.04$ and $-.50$, respectively. Given that a normal distribution of scores is characterized by skewness and kurtosis values approximating zero (Curran et al., 1996), the observed data on gain scores (i.e., dependent variable) and proficiency (i.e., covariate) can be considered generally approximating a normal distribution.

4.2 Analysis of covariance

The sources of potential bias were checked before running ANCOVA. First, a one-way analysis of variance was carried out to determine whether there were any significant differences across the groups in the mean scores of the pretest administered prior to study abroad. The results indicated that there was no significant difference, $F(2, 63) = .56$, $p = .572$, suggesting that changes in the mean scores of the posttest administered after students returned from study abroad could not be related to the effect of preexisting differences among the groups. The results also revealed that there was no significant difference in the level of English proficiency among the three groups, $F(2, 63) = .70$, $p = .500$. This result was not surprising because the allocation of the participants to the groups was made while controlling for their levels of proficiency. Given the independence of the proficiency vari-

able (i.e., covariate) and the grouping variable (i.e., treatment effect), it can be said that it was reasonable to use proficiency as a covariate in the present analysis.³

The results of the one-way ANCOVA indicated that the covariate, English proficiency, was significantly related to the dependent variable, pragmatic gains, $F(1, 62) = 4.44, p = .039$, partial $\eta^2 = .067$, suggesting the medium size of the effect of proficiency on gain scores. There was also a significantly large effect of the grouping variable on pragmatic gains, while controlling for the effect of students' levels of English proficiency, $F(2, 62) = 12.37, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .285$, suggesting that about 28.5% of the variance among gain scores can be attributed to the variance between the groups. A comparison of the values of partial eta squared revealed that the methods of instruction influenced pragmatic gains to a larger degree than levels of proficiency.

Table 3. Results of the planned contrasts and parameter estimates in ANCOVA

	<i>M dif. (b)</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95%CI
Implicit-inductive, vs Explicit-deductive	2.87 [*]	1.14	2.52	.044	[0.59, 5.14]
Implicit-inductive, vs Explicit-inductive	5.62 [*]	1.13	4.97	.000	[3.36, 7.87]
Explicit-deductive, vs Explicit-inductive	2.75	1.14	2.42	.056	[0.48, 5.03]

Note. The adjusted mean scores were 0.43, 3.30, and 6.05 for the implicit-inductive, explicit-deductive, and explicit-inductive groups, respectively.

^{*} The mean difference is significant after a Bonferroni correction. CI = Confidence Interval.

3. The homogeneity of variance assumption was checked when the ANCOVA was run. Levene's test showed a non-significant result, $F(2, 63) = .33, p = .722$, indicating that the error variance of the dependent variable could be considered similar across groups. The variance ratio (i.e., the value of the largest variance divided by the smallest in the groups) was 1.39, suggesting that the differences in group variances were not a serious issue in the present model. Moreover, to test the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes, the interaction between the covariate and dependent variable was checked. The result indicated that the interaction effect was non-significant, $F(2, 60) = .62, p = .541$, suggesting that the assumption was tenable and that the relationship between pragmatic gains and proficiency was consistent across the three groups. Given these findings, it was concluded that the assumptions required of the general linear model were not seriously violated for the current model and that examination of the results of the ANCOVA was justified.

Table 3 summarizes the results of parameter estimates based on the adjusted means in the ANCOVA. Inspection of the *b*-values and *t*-tests indicated that with a Bonferroni correction being applied for the alpha level (i.e., $p=.017$), the group means differed significantly between the implicit-inductive group and both explicit-deductive group, $t(62)=2.52$, $p=.015$, $r=.30$, and the explicit-inductive group, $t(62)=4.97$, $p<.001$, $r=.53$, and that the 95% confidence intervals for both *b*-values did not contain zero. Inspection also revealed that with a Bonferroni adjustment being made, the group means did not differ significantly between the explicitly taught groups, $t(62)=2.42$, $p=.019$, $r=.29$. Thus, the answer to research question 1 (i.e., is there a difference in the degree of gains in pragmatic knowledge that students make during study abroad, depending on the method of instruction they receive in the predeparture course?) is affirmative in the comparison between the explicit and implicit methods, but not in the comparison between the deductive and inductive approaches.

4.3 Analysis of the interview data

Regarding the question of whether students acquired the self-learning strategies through activities in the predeparture instruction, those who received the explicit instruction – whether it was deductive or inductive – seemed to pay attention to target-language pragmatic behaviors. This finding is illustrated by an interview excerpt from student 3 in the explicit-deductive group. She said, “In the predeparture course, I learned I had to be careful about choice of words when talking to a professor in English, just as I normally did in Japanese” (Excerpt 1). Student 5 in the explicit-inductive group also said, “I usually took a moment to think about how to construct grammatically perfect sentences before I spoke out in English, but through role plays, I found it important to use that moment to instead think about how to talk without sounding rude” (Excerpt 2). Moreover, student 6 in the explicit-inductive group said, “I started to think it was fun to find pragmatic meanings not only in English but also in Japanese daily communication” (Excerpt 3). On the other hand, those who received the implicit-inductive instruction seemed to pay attention to grammar rather than pragmatics. Student 2 who made the largest gains in the implicit-inductive group said, “When working on the written discourse completion test, I thought it was kind of a grammar test” (Excerpt 4), and went on to say, “I had thought that teachers’ corrective feedback in the role play activities was aimed at correcting my grammatical errors” (Excerpt 5). Student 1 in the same group showed similar perceptions about the test by saying, “I knew I was not good on that grammar test” (Excerpt 6). These comments suggest that the explicit over implicit instruction might be more effective

in cultivating students' metacognitive strategies of paying attention to pragmatics-related concepts.

With respect to the question of how students utilized the self-learning strategies to learn L2 pragmatic features during study abroad, those in the explicit-inductive instruction seemed to utilize the metacognitive strategy of obtaining resources for pragmatics in the authentic learning environment. For example, student 5 in the explicit-inductive group said, "When apologizing in English, I used to use 'I'm sorry' in almost all situations, but when my roommate dropped and broke my favorite teacup I brought from Japan, she used the word 'terribly sorry' and noticed that that's the word I should use in similar situations" (Excerpt 7). There were also comments about their effective use of the strategy of monitoring their own communicative performance. For example, student 6 in the explicit-inductive group said, "When I saw a little surprise on my professor's face when I said, 'I want you to give me a feedback on my report', I realized I might have said something wrong. My native English-speaking friend taught me that the expression I used might have sounded rude to a professor" (Excerpt 8). Interestingly, students in the explicit-deductive group seemed to have difficulty in maintaining the self-directed learning habit during study abroad. For example, student 4 said, "I got good scores on the test administered at the end of the predeparture course, so I had probably understood well what was taught. I had forgotten about it before I knew it" (Excerpt 9). These comments suggest that as far as the duration of instructional effect is concerned, the inductive over deductive approach might be more beneficial in the explicit instruction.

5. Discussion

Since studies focusing on pragmatics instruction at the predeparture stage are still scarce (Halenko & Jones, 2017), the present study examined the effect of instruction delivered in a predeparture course on the development of students' self-directed learning strategies for dealing with pragmatics, and in turn, on the pragmatic gains that they made during a sojourn abroad. Results shown in Tables 2 and 3 confirmed that there was a significant difference among the groups in the degree of pragmatic gains, depending on the method of pragmatics instruction that they received prior to study abroad. Specifically, the results of the planned contrasts suggest that the groups that received the explicit instruction, whether it was deductive or inductive, had significantly larger gains than the group that received the implicit-inductive instruction, which is congruent with findings of previous studies from the wider area of L2 pragmatics instruction conducted in the non-study abroad context (Taguchi, 2015; Takahashi, 2010). In

addition, inspection of the adjusted mean score of the implicit-inductive group revealed that there was almost no change in test scores between pre- and post-study abroad. The interviews with two students selected from this group revealed that they had rarely paid attention to the appropriateness of their own and interlocutors' utterances in interactions; rather, they were more concerned about the grammatical correctness of those utterances (e.g., Excerpts 4, 5, 6). On the other hand, the interviews with four students who received the explicit instruction revealed that they were all aware of what was taught in the class and what knowledge was evaluated on the tests (e.g., Excerpts, 1, 2, 3). Given these findings, the implicit-inductive instruction, which did not include any explanation or discussion of pragmatic rules, may not have functioned sufficiently as a factor that attracted students' attention to pragmatic meanings rather than linguistic forms. In contrast, the explicit instruction seems to have worked as intended.

Further inspection of results based on the adjusted mean scores suggests that when comparing the deductive and inductive approaches in the explicit instruction, the two groups did not differ in gain scores significantly (cf. Glaser, 2016), but the *p*-value was very close to the critical point. If more students had been included in the study, a significant result may have been revealed. Although both groups increased their pragmatic competence, the difference was found in the interview data. Specifically, two students in the inductive group acquired the self-motivated data-gathering strategy (Shively, 2011), whereby they tried to discover pragmatic rules in interactions on their own (e.g., Excerpts 7, 8). The comments shown in Excerpt 7 suggest that the strategies learned from the predeparture instruction were successfully transferred to learn a new speech act (i.e., apologies) that had not been taught. It seems that 7.5 hours of inductive instruction worked well to enhance their pragmatic awareness. On the other hand, turning to students receiving the deductive instruction, they also stated in the interview that they found it valuable to learn pragmatic rules in the classroom. However, given their much smaller gains compared to those observed in the inductive group, as shown in Table 2, it appears that their interest and attention to pragmatic uses of English may not have been maintained for the entire duration of study abroad. This finding is corroborated by the comments shown in Excerpt 9. These findings lend support to Glaser's (2016) claim that learners benefit most from inductive instruction in which a guided discovery of pragmatic rules is provided, as well as Takimoto's (2008) claim that the explicit knowledge developed through learners' engagement in the deductive treatment is weakly established.

The quantitative results also showed that students' pragmatic gains through a study abroad experience were influenced by their levels of English proficiency. In the interviews, all six students agreed that their level of proficiency was a factor that affected with whom they pursued interactions during their study abroad.

These findings are congruent with other research suggesting the indirect effect of proficiency on pragmatic development via exposure in study abroad contexts (Matsumura, 2003). One of the explicit-deductive group students whose score dropped in the posttest (student 3) commented that while abroad, she felt insecure when talking to native English-speaking roommates who did not try asking her intentions when they had trouble understanding her English. She also mentioned that she lost confidence in communicating in English and that except for greetings, she tried not to talk with those roommates in daily life. Obviously, such psychological factors related to English proficiency affect the social networks that students develop in the target language community and eventually shape their opportunities to learn pragmatic features during study abroad (Kinginger, 2011). Moreover, learners' personality might have been a decisive factor in this specific event, which is beyond scope of this research, but it may be worthy of further investigation.

Finally, several limitations in the present study that merit consideration for future research are in order. The first limitation concerns the use of gain scores in the pretest-posttest design rather than residual scores, with the pretest score being set as a covariate in the model. The criticism regarding the use of gain scores is concerned with ceiling and floor effects, a problem of regression toward the mean (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).⁴ Given the vulnerability in the variance of a small sample, more research is needed to ascertain the findings of the study using, for example, a longitudinal growth model with a much larger sample. Second, the present study attempted to control for the effect of students' levels of English proficiency at the predeparture stage on pragmatic gains. It is highly likely, however, that students' levels of proficiency changed (probably improved) over the course of studying in the target language community. Therefore, their scores on the posttest could have been influenced more or less by their improved proficiency, which could not be controlled for in the present model. Future studies may wish to take this possibility into account in a longitudinal design. Third, the written discourse completion test may not be the best method to measure students' pragmatic gains, although it has been used in other L2 pragmatics studies in study abroad contexts (e.g., Hernández & Boero, 2018). Given that students might have had more opportunities to enhance their pragmatic competence through oral rather than written interactions particularly while abroad,

4. Rogosa (1988) pointed out, however, that when the variance of a measure increases over time, regression toward the mean does not hold. In the present data, the variance of the dependent variable increased slightly, with the variance of the implicit-inductive group increasing from pretest to posttest to a large degree, that of the explicit-deductive group being almost constant, and that of the explicit-inductive group decreasing severely.

they might have been able to convey pragmatic meaning by prosodic features such as intonational variations or pitch and tone choices. If so, oral conversation elicitation tasks (e.g., Nguyen, 2017) or computer-delivered oral discourse completion tests (e.g., Taguchi & Sykes, 2013), possibly combined with a written test, might have been able to capture their pragmatic gains more accurately. As Hirschberg (2006) pointed out, since the interpretation of such intonational variations is dependent upon contextual factors, it is possible to define intonational “meaning” as essentially pragmatic in nature. More studies are needed that examine whether and to what extent students’ awareness and perception of such prosodic variations and their related meaning differentials change during study abroad.

6. Conclusion

Despite these methodological limitations, the present study has demonstrated some important practical and pedagogical implications for maximizing a study abroad experience to develop university-level students’ pragmatic competence. The study has confirmed the effectiveness of explicit instruction in a predeparture course at a home institution. Of particular benefit was an explicit-inductive method that may help students develop and maintain their self-learning metacognitive strategies in the study abroad cycle. The findings have yet to be re-examined on a larger sample with a wider range of English proficiency at various levels of educational sectors. Moreover, although the activities in the predeparture course could contribute to the development of students’ self-learning strategies, it might have been more effective to teach pragmatics strategies directly (Cohen, 2005; Sykes & Cohen, 2018; Taguchi, 2018). Furthermore, given that students may forget what they learned in the predeparture course, continued efforts to provide students with effective pragmatics instruction in a predeparture course and during study abroad would help students become better prepared for studying and living in multilingual and multicultural environments. Further research on the effects of predeparture instruction will provide a broader perspective on the effectiveness of study abroad on L2 pragmatic development.

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Appendix A. A summary of the scenarios used in the discourse completion test


Scenario title	Description	Social status of hearer	Level of acquaintance	Level of severity of infraction
Interrupting lecture	Apologizing for interrupting the lecture with a big noise from your cellphone ringtone.	Professor	Low	Low
Lost book	Apologizing for having lost a valuable book that the professor had lent you.	Professor	Low	High
Book return	Apologizing for having forgotten to return the book you had borrowed on a promised day.	Professor	High	Low
Being late	Apologizing for being late for a scheduled meeting with a professor for a third time.	Professor	High	High
Bumping	Apologizing to a student you bumped into while texting on your smartphone.	Peer	Low	Low

Scenario title	Description	Social status of hearer	Level of acquaintance	Level of severity of infraction
Spilling coffee	Apologizing to a student for spilling her coffee on the desk as you bumped into the table.	Peer	Low	High
Leaving early	Apologizing to a classmate for leaving early from the lunch you invited her to.	Peer	High	Low
Erasing data	Apologizing to a classmate for having erased her data file from the USB you borrowed.	Peer	High	High

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