

THE IMPACT OF IMPLICIT INSTRUCTION UPON THE USE OF ENGLISH DISCOURSE MARKERS IN WRITTEN TASKS AT THE ADVANCED BEGINNERS' LEVEL OF EFL PROFICIENCY

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Abstract. This article aims at examining the impact of implicit instruction upon the use of English discourse markers (further – DMs) in written tasks at the advanced beginners' level of proficiency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The theoretical premises of the present research are based upon the role of implicit instruction associated with pragmatic competence, conceptualised as a fundamental dimension of language ability (Laughlin et al., 2015). The research further described in the article involves a quantitative computer-assisted methodology of computing the frequency of DMs in the written tasks by a group of EFL learners at the advanced beginners' level of EFL proficiency (further referred to as participants). The frequency of DMs calculated by the computer program WordSmith (Scott, 2012) revealed that implicit instruction in EFL settings had no positive effects on the participants' use of English DMs in the written tasks. These findings are further discussed in the article.

Key words: advanced beginners' level, discourse markers, EFL learners, written tasks

INTRODUCTION

The article addresses the impact of implicit instruction upon the use of English DMs in written tasks at the advanced beginners' level of EFL proficiency. Research further described in this article is set against a broader theoretical framework associated with the role of instruction, explicit and implicit, in the teaching of a foreign language, in particular EFL (Howatt, 1984; Krashen, 1985; Wildner-Bassett, 1986; Long, 1996; Martinez-Flor and Soler, 2007; Andrews, 2007; Bell, 2017). Traditionally, implicit instruction in EFL settings is thought to involve no overt references to the rules and/or forms of the language (Doughty, 2003: 265). In contrast to implicit instruction, explicit teaching involves 'directing learners' attention towards the target forms with the aims of discussing those forms.' (Martinez-Flor and Soler, 2007: 50).

There exists a substantial body of research comparing the effectiveness of explicit and implicit teaching and learning (Bell, 2017). To emphasise the notion of explicit and implicit instruction, it seems relevant to refer to the working

definition of these two approaches proposed by Andrews (2007: 2). In particular, it is posited by Andrews (*ibid.*) that in explicit instruction

a proactively selected form is intensely taught – either by the presentation of the rules and then the giving of examples (deductive reasoning) or by giving examples and then eliciting the rules (inductive reasoning) from the students.

As far as the implicit instruction is concerned, it is indicated that in implicit instruction ‘the learners may infer ‘rules’ from the examples with or without awareness that they are doing so’ (*ibid.*). It is further posited by Andrews that the implicit mode of instruction is typically associated with sentence structures taken from authentic texts that are presented as input tasks, whereby ‘the input is done not so much by the teacher but by the task ...’ (*ibid.*).

Given that the teaching and learning of DMs explicitly appears to be common (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007), the present study focuses upon an implicit context of EFL learning. Specifically, this study is based upon the contention that DMs constitute a feature that is not readily noticeable by EFL learners (Schmidt, 1993; Rose, 2005). Consequently, EFL learners seem to possess a limited repertoire of DMs compared to those of native speakers (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007). Following Rose (1997; 1999; 2005), implicit instruction associated with the teaching and learning of DMs in EFL is deemed to be insufficient at the advanced beginners’ level of EFL proficiency. The research further presented in the article seeks to verify Rose’s (2005) contention by means of examining the use of DMs in a written task at the beginning of the semester and the use of DMs in another written task at the end of the semester. The written tasks are executed by a group of participants whose first language (L1) is Ukrainian. All the participants are adult university educated EFL learners enrolled in an optional stand-alone EFL course designed for advanced beginners.

The relevance of this research involves a number of considerations: First, it seeks to ascertain whether or not implicit instruction involving DMs leads to positive gains in the participants’ use of English DMs. It is assumed that the findings of this research would lend further support to previous literature (Rose, 2005; Soler, 2005) that is suggestive of the importance of explicit learning strategies in the teaching and learning of DMs in EFL settings. Second, another focal point of this research rests with a specific group of participants comprised of speakers of Ukrainian as their L1. Given that more Ukrainians study abroad nowadays (Rebisz and Sikora, 2015), this research is deemed to be relevant to the educators and educational establishments providing EFL courses and/or instruction in EFL to Ukrainian L1 speakers at the advanced beginners’ level of EFL proficiency. Third, following Polat (2011), it is assumed that a longitudinal study of the use of English DMs has important implications for EFL teaching and learning.

Further, this article is structured as follows: First, an overview of previous research literature involving DMs will be presented. Second, previous studies associated with the teaching and learning of DMs in EFL will be outlined. Third,

this quantitative computer-assisted research will be introduced and discussed. Fourth, conclusions will be presented in conjunction with didactic implications for the EFL instruction involving DMs.

1 AN OVERVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH LITERATURE INVOLVING DMS

There is a wealth of previous research literature dealing with DMs from the perspectives of linguistics, applied linguistics, and EFL studies (Schiffrin, 1987; Kyratzis and Ervin-Tripp, 1999; Fox Tree and Schrock, 1999, 2002; Andersen, 2001; Iglesias Moreno, 2001; Morell, 2004; Hellermann and Vergun, 2007; Buysse, 2010, 2012; Polat, 2011; Liu, 2013; Babanoğlu, 2014; Fox Tree, 2015). Judging from the literature it is possible to distinguish two broad approaches towards the definition of DMs depending on whether or not DMs are viewed as a phenomenon associated with oral discourse or both oral and written discourse. The approach to DMs as a feature of oral discourse is foregrounded in Schiffrin (1987), Kyratzis and Ervin-Tripp (1999), Andersen (2001), Iglesias Moreno (2001), Fox Tree and Schrock (2002) and Fuller (2003). Regarded from the vantage point of the role of DMs in oral discourse, DMs are defined as

linguistic, paralinguistic, or nonverbal elements that signal relations between units of talk by virtue of their syntactic and semantic properties and by virtue of their sequential relations as initial or terminal brackets demarcating discourse units. (Schiffrin, 1987: 40)

Similar definition is found in Andersen (2001: 39), who indicates that DMs are 'a class of short, recurrent linguistic items that generally have little lexical import but serve significant pragmatic functions in conversation.' Fox Tree and Schrock (2002: 728) argue that DMs serve a wide range of functions in language production or comprehension, especially in turn-taking. The aforementioned views of DMs are echoed by Fuller (2003: 24), who suggests that DMs negotiate the speakers' roles in oral discourse. Similarly, the interactive functions of DMs in oral discourse are emphasised by Kyratzis and Ervin-Tripp (1999:1322) and Iglesias Moreno (2001: 29). These scholars suggest that DMs are indicative of the interlocutors' discursive strategies and social behaviour.

Another approach towards the classification and definition of DMs involves the consideration that DMs constitute a feature of oral as well as written discourse (Fraser, 1990; Morell, 2004; Hellermann and Vergun, 2007; Alba-Juez, 2009; Fox Tree, 2015). For instance, Morell (2004: 324) considers DMs to be textual units that facilitate comprehension of an oral and/or written text. DMs establish relationships between discursive topics and grammatical units in discourse (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007: 158), signal the information structure of oral and written discourse (Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh, 2007: 26), and play an important role in the parsing of natural language discourse (Hutchinson, 2004). Similarly, Buysse (2012: 1764) posits that DMs are 'optional linguistic

items that fulfil an indexical function, in that they connect an utterance to its context and/or the context’.

Alba-Juez (2009) indicates that DMs are associated with different communicative registers in oral and written discourse. Specifically, some DMs are associated with the written register and others with the spoken one (Alba-Juez, 2009: 172). Following the line of argument involving the register and usage, Fox Tree (2015) posits that whilst DMs may be infrequent in prepared manuscripts and speeches, DMs are more frequent in spontaneous speech. Based upon whether or not DMs occur in spontaneous or prepared written and/or oral settings, Fox Tree (2015) classifies DMs into attitudinal (e.g., *actually, really, oh*), tailored and temporally sensitive (e.g., *like, you know*, the fillers *um* and *uh*), and *cohesive* (e.g., *so, therefore*). Arguably, a definition of DMs which is equally applicable to both oral and written discourse is provided by Fraser (2015), who regards DMs as typically occurring in S2 sentence-initial position in a S1-S2 combination, and signaling a semantic relationship between the two sentences.

As seen in the above-mentioned approaches, DMs are referred to as a pragmatic phenomenon that is categorised differently by various authors (Polat, 2011: 3746). The ambiguity of DMs is associated with a variety of linguistic levels marked by the presence of DMs in oral and written modes of communication (Babanoğlu, 2014). Following this line of argument (Polat, 2011; Babanoğlu, 2014), it can be claimed that DMs by virtue of being ambiguous are multifunctional, since they are problematic to be associated with only one linguistic level or a semantic category (Sprott, 1992: 424; Brinton, 1996).

2 AN OUTLINE OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE ON THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF DMS IN EFL

Previous literature on the teaching and learning of DMs in EFL settings appears to be well-represented (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007; Polat, 2011; Kapranov, 2017b; Buysse, 2012; Liu, 2013). A cornucopia of research publications in the field of EFL and ESL studies seems to share a common focus on the functions and use of DMs in the light of the pedagogical significance of DMs in the teaching of pragmatic and communicative competence to EFL/ESL learners (Aşık and Cephe, 2013). Within the field of EFL studies, the acquisition of DMs is investigated from the perspectives of a developmental EFL learner corpus (Polat, 2011), relative effects of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction on the development of EFL pragmatic competence (Nguyen et al., 2012), the effects of explicit instruction on the development of genre-appropriate DMs usage in academic writing by secondary school teacher candidates (Kapranov, 2017b) and by the primary school teacher candidates (Kapranov, 2017a), the usage of DMs by adult EFL learners in the implicit educational settings (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007), and the extent to which DMs are used by advanced EFL learners in formal instruction of English (Buysse, 2012).

Prior to providing an outline of the above-mentioned studies, it seems relevant to specify the notion of pragmatic competence. Judging from the literature, this notion is an important construct in Second Language Studies (SLA), and in EFL, respectively (Wildner-Bassett, 1984; Kasper and Rose, 1999; Chen, 2010). In general terms, pragmatic competence is regarded as the 'knowledge of communicative action and how to carry it out (illocutionary competence) ...' (Kasper, 1996: 145). On the micro-level, however, pragmatic competence is viewed as

the knowledge that enables a speaker to express his/her meanings and intentions via speech acts (e.g. requests, invitations, disagreements and so on) appropriately within a particular social and cultural context of communication'. (Nguyen, 2011: 17)

As indicated by Ifantidou (2013), there are multiple definitions of the term *pragmatic competence*. Whilst it is beyond the scope of the present article to provide a meta-analysis of previous publications on pragmatic competence, it should be, nevertheless, noted that traditionally this competence is defined as the choices the speakers make, the constraints the speakers encounter 'in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication' (Crystal, 1997: 301). The present research is informed by the definition of pragmatic competence formulated by Laughlin et al. (2015: 19):

pragmatic competence is viewed as mastery of strategically relating linguistic and nonlinguistic contextual information in order to generate meaning beyond the grammatical level in oral, written, or a hybrid mode of communication.

Having specified pragmatic competence, it appears possible to generalise that the studies by Polat (2011), Buysse (2012), Liu (2013), as well as Hellermann and Vergun (2007) address the issue of the use of English DMs within the tenets of the learners' pragmatic competence in oral discourse. In particular, Polat (2011) examines the development of DMs by an adult immigrant ESL learner in the USA in a longitudinal case study. Polat (2011: 3754) reports that the untutored ESL learner exhibits notable patterns of DMs use and development over one year period. Specifically, Polat (2011) indicates that the participant's excessive use of *you know* has declined, while the use of *like* has increased. Polat (2011: 3754) notes that unsupervised ESL learning results in an uneven distribution of DMs in speech. Similar to Polat (2011), the usage of English DMs is analysed in a study by Liu (2013), who seeks to contrast DMs in oral narratives by the group of Chinese L1 participants after their sojourn in the USA with those of the English L1 speakers. Liu (2013) concludes that even though the Chinese L1 participants have experienced a period of residence in the US, they encounter difficulties associated with English DMs in oral narratives compared to the English L1 control group (Liu, 2013: 169). Hellermann and Vergun (2007) aim at elucidating the impact of implicit learning of DMs on adult EFL learners, who have not studied English

previously and who have not been explicitly taught the use of DMs. The focus of the investigation is on the participants' usage of the DMs *you know*, *like*, and *well* in oral speech. The findings presented by Hellermann and Vergun (2007) indicate that EFL learners use *you know*, *like*, and *well* less frequently than English L1 speakers. Analogous to Hellermann and Vergun (2007), Buysse (2012) examines the use of the DM *so* by adult EFL students in oral communication. Buysse's (2012) findings demonstrate that adult EFL learners use the DM *so* more often in comparison with their English L1 peers.

Explicit instruction of DMs in EFL university settings is addressed in Nguyen et al. (2012), Kapranov (2017a) and Kapranov (2017b), who focus on EFL written tasks. In particular, in a quantitative study by Kapranov (2017b), DMs are identified in EFL academic writing by pre-service secondary school teachers of English whose L1 is Swedish. The focus of the study involves the role of DMs in the use of genre-appropriate conventions of academic writing in English by the pre-service secondary school teachers. Guided by the view of genre as a set of constraints to be met by a novice EFL writer, the study examines a learning curve undertaken by the participants in mastering the genre-appropriate use of DMs in their academic essays (Kapranov, 2017b). The use of DMs by the participants has been contrasted across the corpus of essay drafts and the corpus of the final essays. It has been found that explicit instruction taken in conjunction with the pedagogical interventions by the course teacher and the peer-review student groups have led to positive gains in genre-appropriate use of DMs by the participants manifested by a tendency to employ the formal register DMs in the final essays (e.g., *however*, *furthermore*, *therefore*, *while*). That tendency has been found to be concurrent with the decline in informal DMs (e.g., *like*, *just*).

In another quantitative study by Kapranov (2017a), the explicit instructional approach to DMs in the English language is analysed in academic writing in EFL by primary school teacher candidates. The study has revealed a wider repertoire of DMs in the final course essays contrasted with the mid-course essays written by the primary school teacher candidates. Specifically, the following DMs have been identified only in the corpus of the final course essays, e.g. *also*, *basically*, *concerning*, *first*, *firstly*, *generally*, *hence*, *hopefully*, *indeed*, *initially*, *in particular*, *it follows*, *just*, *later*, *next*, *otherwise*, *such*, *thereafter*, *thereby*. The use of informal DMs *basically*, *hopefully* and *indeed*, identified in the study, seems to support the findings by Šimčikaitė (2012), who indicates that EFL learners tend to use stylistically inappropriate DMs that are more typical of informal spoken discourse than of academic writing. However, the presence of DMs *hence*, *in particular*, *it follows*, *otherwise*, *thereafter*, and *thereby* in the corpus is suggestive of the choice of DMs that are stylistically appropriate in academic writing.

EFL written discourse is examined in a study by Nguyen et al. (2012), who analyse the EFL students' pragmatic competence associated with modifiers, hedges, and DMs in explicit and implicit instructional settings. It should be noted, however, that the study does not specifically address the use of DMs. The study is embedded into an EFL writing programme, 'where students were taught how to

write paragraphs and different types of academic essays in English.’ (ibid.: 420). The findings reported by Nguyen et al. (2012) are suggestive of positive effects of both types of instruction (explicit and implicit) in developing learners’ pragmatic performance. However, as indicated by the authors, explicit instruction tended to produce a larger magnitude of effects (ibid.: 427).

The above-mentioned studies appear to focus upon the teaching and learning of DMs in instructed settings (Buyse, 2012; Liu, 2013; Kapranov, 2017a) and on the juxtaposition of explicit and implicit instructional settings (Nguyen et al., 2012), whereas previous research involving implicit instructional settings seems to be underrepresented in the current literature (see Hellermann and Vergun, 2007; Polat, 2011). This observation is supported by Fukuya and Zhang (2002), who indicate that implicit instruction of pragmatics is an underdeveloped area, both conceptually and methodologically. Further, this article introduces the present research that aims at exploring the effect of implicit instructional settings on the teaching and learning of English DMs in order to generate new knowledge about this underrepresented research area.

3 THE PRESENT RESEARCH. HYPOTHESIS AND SPECIFIC RESEARCH AIMS

As indicated in the introduction, implicit EFL instruction is not sufficient at the advanced beginners’ level of EFL proficiency as far as the teaching and learning of English DMs is concerned (Rose, 2005). To verify this assumption, the present research is conducted with a group of participants whose L1 is Ukrainian. Based upon previous findings (Hellermann and Vergun, 2007), the hypothesis involves an assumption that the absence of explicit instruction associated with the usage of English DMs in written texts would result in the participants’ limited repertoire of English DMs evident from a series of written tasks, such as a one-paragraph essay *My Usual Day* written by the participants at the start of the semester and in another one-paragraph essay *My Unusual Day* written at the end of the semester. Hence, the specific aims of this research are to (1) establish the frequency of DMs in these written tasks and (2) juxtapose the frequencies in order to explore whether or not there would be quantitative changes involving DMs in the tasks.

3.1 CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The research was carried out with a group of adult EFL learners enrolled in an optional stand-alone EFL course designed for advanced beginners at a university in Central Ukraine. The course was offered to those learners who had previous experience of EFL learning from their respective secondary school studies. The EFL course involved two weekly study sessions (two contact hours each), thus making it four contact hours per week in five months during the spring semester of 2017. The book that was used during the course was titled *Real Life* (Hobbs and Keddle, 2010), which was communicatively oriented and contained

authentic texts in the forms of dialogues and monologues. It was accompanied by a CD with the texts narrated by the L1 speakers of British English. In total, there were 18 DMs in the book, summarised in alphabetical order in Table 1 below.

Table 1 DMs in the course book Real Life

| No. | DMs | Units and pages of the course book introducing DMs |
|-----|----------|--|
| 1 | Also | Unit 1, p. 12 |
| 2 | And | Unit 1, p. 8 |
| 3 | Anyway | Unit 7, p. 57 |
| 4 | As | Unit 1, p. 9 |
| 5 | Because | Unit 2, p. 22 |
| 6 | But | Unit 2, p.16 |
| 7 | Finally | Unit 8, p. 64 |
| 8 | Luckily | Unit 11, p.88 |
| 9 | Oh | Unit 1, p.8 |
| 10 | OK | Unit 4, p.34 |
| 11 | Or | Unit 1, p.14 |
| 12 | Possibly | Unit 7, p.61 |
| 13 | Probably | Unit 6, p. 50 |
| 14 | Quite | Unit 3, p.27 |
| 15 | Right | Unit 1, p. 14 |
| 16 | So | Unit 1, p. 8 |
| 17 | Still | Unit 7, p. 56 |
| 18 | Then | Unit 4, p. 36 |

The participants were exposed to the implicit mode of instruction as far as the teaching of DMs was concerned, whilst the controls were exposed to an explicit mode of instruction. In this research, both the implicit and explicit modes of instruction followed the approach formulated by Andrews (2007). In accordance with this approach, the implicit instruction involved the understanding of the meaning of the DMs that were presented in the course book. The DMs from the course book (see Table 1 above) were introduced in the texts and other course book-related activities (e.g., oral and written exercises) to ensure that the participants were provided with an adequate translation of the DMs from English into Ukrainian. However, no specific information regarding the pragmatic functions of DMs in discourse and their use was given. The course teacher did not introduce any additional materials associated with the DMs. Additionally, it was ensured that throughout the entire duration of the course the teacher (who is the author of the present article) did not use any DMs which were not identified in the course book. In contrast, the control group was exposed to the explicit mode to the teaching of DMs. Following Anderson (2007: 2), that mode consisted in ‘the presentation of the rules and then the giving of examples (deductive reasoning)’. The controls were taught by another EFL

teacher, who followed the same course book as the participants did. The controls were exposed to the protocol that involved (1) the translation of the DMs from English into Ukrainian; (2) specific information about the function of DMs in oral and written discourse in the English language; and (3) the focus on the DMs used in the course book both in oral and written exercises.

3.2 PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 9 students (2 males and 7 females, mean age = 30 years) enrolled in the same EFL course at a university in a city in Central Ukraine. They indicated that Ukrainian was their L1, and English was their foreign language. Whilst all the participants had studied English at secondary school and were university educated (see Table 2), they reported that their level of EFL proficiency was at the advanced beginners' level (i.e., A 2 level in the common EU framework). The participants signed the Consent Form allowing the author of this article to use their written data for scientific purposes in the anonymised form (the codes P1 – P9 were used by the author to ensure the participants' confidentiality). The participants' socio-linguistic background was summarised in Table 2 below.

*Table 2 The Participants' Socio-Linguistic Background**

| No. | Participants | Gender | Age | Education | Employment | L1 | L2 | EFL level |
|-----|--------------|--------|-----|-----------|---------------------|-----|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | P1 | Male | 26 | Tertiary | IT | Ukr | Rus (limited) | Adv Beginner |
| 2 | P2 | Female | 25 | Tertiary | doctor-intern | Ukr | Rus (limited) | Adv Beginner |
| 3 | P3 | Female | 25 | Tertiary | doctor-intern | Ukr | Rus (limited) | Adv Beginner |
| 4 | P4 | Female | 34 | Tertiary | Doctor | Ukr | Rus (fluent) | Adv Beginner |
| 5 | P5 | Female | 25 | Tertiary | IT | Ukr | Rus (limited) | Adv Beginner |
| 6 | P6 | Female | 26 | Tertiary | government official | Ukr | Rus (limited) | Adv Beginner |
| 7 | P7 | Female | 26 | Tertiary | government official | Ukr | Rus (limited) | Adv Beginner |
| 8 | P8 | Male | 35 | Tertiary | government official | Ukr | Rus (fluent) | Adv Beginner |
| 9 | P9 | Female | 52 | PhD | university lecturer | Ukr | Rus (fluent) | Adv Beginner |

* Abbreviations: Ukr = Ukrainian; Rus = Russian; AdvBeginner = an advanced beginner level of EFL proficiency

The participants were matched with a respective control group. Initially, the control group consisted of 12 (4 males and 8 females) students on the A 2 level of EFL proficiency. However, given that gender and age could be potential variables, the number of controls was reduced by factoring out 2 males and 1 female, so that the control group was matched in the number, gender, and age variables with the group of participants (total 9, 2 males and 7 females). The controls' mean age was 28 years. The controls were enrolled in the identical EFL course taught by another EFL teacher.

3.3 PROCEDURE AND METHOD

The procedure involved the following steps: First, one month after the start of the semester the participants were asked to write a one-paragraph descriptive essay between 200 and 250 words *My Usual Day* in English and send it electronically to the course teacher's email. Second, at the end of the semester, the participants were instructed to write a one-paragraph descriptive essay titled *My Unusual Day* in English of the same length as the first essay and send it electronically to the course teacher. The participants were given one week for the execution of each written task. The controls received the identical set of tasks and instructions.

Given that DMs were usually studied from the vantage point of corpora analysis (Fox Tree and Schrock, 1999: 280), quantitative methodology was employed in the present research. The methodology involved the computer-assisted calculations of word frequencies by the software program WordSmith (Scott, 2012). Based upon previous research on DMs in EFL written tasks (Povolna, 2012; Kapranov, 2017a), the software program WordSmith was considered to be reliable and suitable for the purposes of the present investigation. The participants' essays were collapsed into two files, *My Usual Day* and *My Unusual Day*, and analysed quantitatively in WordSmith (Scott, 2012). Similarly, the controls' essays were collapsed into two files and analysed in WordSmith (*ibid.*).

3.4 CORPUS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The corpus of the study involved two sets of data, the essays *My Usual Day* and *My Unusual Day*, respectively. It should be reiterated that the participants' essays were collapsed into one file and subsequently analysed in WordSmith (2012), hence the descriptive statistics summarised in Table 3 below involved the group means rather than individual values associated with each task written by an individual participant (the same procedure was used with the essays written by the control group):

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

| No. | Descriptive statistics | Participants | Controls |
|-----|------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| 1 | Mean number of words in Task 1 | 219 | 213 |
| 2 | Mean number of sentences in Task 2 | 24 | 21 |
| 3 | Mean number of words in Task 2 | 237 | 230 |
| 4 | Mean number of sentences in Task 2 | 25 | 24 |

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application of WordSmith (2012) to the corpus has yielded the frequency and occurrence of DMs per 1000 words. The results of the quantitative computer-assisted analysis of the corpus are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 DMs in the Participants' and Controls' Written Tasks 1 (*My Usual Day*) and 2 (*My Unusual Day*)

| DM | Frequency/ Occurrence in Task 1 by Participants | Frequency/ Occurrence in Task 2 by Participants | Frequency/ Occurrence in Task 1 by Controls | Frequency/ Occurrence in Task 2 by Controls |
|----------|--|--|--|---|
| Also | 5 (0.3%) | 3 (0.1%) | 0 | 6 (0.3%) |
| And | 87 (43%) | 94 (4.4%) | 14 (1%) | 72 (3.8%) |
| As | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 (0.6%) |
| Because | 2 (01%) | 7 (0.3%) | 3 (0.3%) | 7 (0.3%) |
| But | 5 (03%) | 11 (0.5%) | 9 (0.8%) | 6 (0.3%) |
| OK | 0 | 0 | 3 (0.3%) | 0 |
| Or | 22 (1%) | 10 (0.5%) | 3 (0.3) | 5 (0.3%) |
| Possibly | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 (0.3%) |
| Quite | 1 (0.05%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| So | 2 (0.1%) | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Still | 1 (0.05%) | 0 | 0 | 3 (0.3%) |
| Then | 10 (0.5%) | 8 (0.4%) | 9 (0.5%) | 15 (1.3%) |

It has been assumed in the hypothesis that implicit instruction associated with the teaching of English DMs entails a limited repertoire of DMs used by the participants. Following the results presented in Table 4, it can be argued that the hypothesis is supported by the present data. Specifically, out of 18 DMs introduced in the course book (e.g., *also, and, anyway, as, because, but, finally, luckily, oh, OK, or, possibly, probably, quite, right, so, still, then*) the participants use 10 DMs (e.g., *also, and, because, but, or, quite, so, still, then*) in Task 1 (*My Usual Day*) executed at the start of the semester, and 6 DMs (e.g., *also, and, because, but, or, then*) in Task 2 (*My Unusual Day*) written at the end of the semester. Arguably, if the implicit

mode of instruction was successful, the use of the DMs by the participants would be, ideally, equal to the DMs introduced in the course book.

However, it is observed in the data that apart from the qualitative changes in the repertoire of DMs, the implicit mode of instruction has resulted in quantitative changes. For instance, in contrast to Task 1, there is a quantitative decrease of the DMs in Task 2, e.g. the usage of *also*, *or*, and *then* decreases, whilst the following DMs have disappeared from the participants' repertoire of DMs in Task 2, namely *quite*, *so*, and *still*. To reiterate, the DMs *quite*, *so*, and *still* are present in Task 1 and are absent from Task 2 written at the end of the semester. These findings are suggestive of the impoverishment of the participants' repertoire of DMs, which eventuated in the context of the implicit mode of instruction.

At the same time, the control group tends to exhibit a qualitative increase in terms of their usage of English DMs. As evident from Table 4, the controls' repertoire of DMs appears to involve a number of DMs that have been identified in Task 2, not being present in Task 1, specifically *also*, *as*, *possibly*, *quite*, *so*, and *still*. It is observed in the data that the informal DM *OK* disappears from the controls' repertoire of DMs in Task 2. This finding could be taken to indicate that the controls, who enjoyed the explicit mode of instruction, have increased their repertoire of DMs concurrently with the understanding of the usage of English DMs in the written tasks. Specifically, the absence of the DM *OK* in Task 2 is suggestive of the controls' awareness of the usage of the DM *OK* that is predominantly employed in oral communication in English and less so in written discourse.

Whilst the control group demonstrates a tendency to widen their repertoire of DMs in Task 2, the participants appear to establish a certain preference for several DMs that the participants readily use in Task 1 and Task 2. For instance, it is evident from Table 4 that the DM *and* (introduced in Unit 1 in the course book) is amply used in Task 1 and even more so in Task 2. Similarly, the DM *or* (introduced in Unit 1 of the course book) is employed in Task 1, as well as in Task 2. The DM *then* (introduced in Unit 4 of the course book) is found in the both tasks, but its use decreases in Task 2. The DM *but* (introduced in Unit 2) is characterised by the increased use in Task 2. The DM *also* (introduced in Unit 1 of the course book) appears to be used in Task 1 and in Task 2. Notably, the usage of *also* decreases in Task 2.

Judging from the data, it can be observed that the participants underutilise the DMs provided in the course book (see Table 1). The scarcity of the DMs in the tasks is exemplified by the following excerpts which involve Task 1 (*My Usual Day*) and Task 2 (*My Unusual Day*) written by the participant whose name has been coded as P7:

- (1) My usual day. I want to tell you about my usual day. I wake up at 7:20 a.m. **and** get up at 7:40 a.m. After that, I have a shower **and** have a light breakfast. I go to work by bus. I come in at half past eight. I work hard **but** sometimes I have free time. At work we wear special

uniform. Next time I'm waiting for my lunch. At one p.m. our workers **and** I go to the canteen. I eat a soup, macaroni with meat **and** two pieces of white bread. After lunch I work. Sometimes I drink tea or coffee **and** eat snacks with girls from my work **and** we are talking about our guys. I finish work at quarter past five p.m. I play volleyball. Our team's name is "WINNER". At 6 p.m. I get dressed in sportswear **and** go to gym. There is a T-shirt, there is a sport shorts, there are trainers and there are knee pads in my bag. After that, we hang out in the bar. It is called "TIGA". **Also** we play cards, drink beer or juice **and** smoke. In the evening I prepare dinner with my sister. After we have dinner, we drink tea **and** watch films. **And** after bathroom we go to sleep.

(2) My unusual day. I had many unusual days in my life **and** I want to tell you about one of them. My family **and** I spent holidays in the Crimea four years ago. Every day we went to the beach. There we sunbathed, swam, drank beer with snacks **and** sometimes I played volleyball. **But** we didn't think to sit in one place. Next day we left our beach **and** rode by car to look for something new. At first, we saw a waterfall. It's called Jur-Jur **and** it's one of the highest waterfalls in Ukraine. We went into the water. The water was cold (8°C) **because** it flows from mountains. After that, we rode to the famous city of Yalta. We wanted to visit the Swallow's Nest Castle, **but** it was closed. **Then**, we went to the Vorontsov Palace **and** to the Livadia Palace. These palaces have a lot of beautiful sculptures, fantastic gardens **and** exciting fountains. There are many exhibitions of plants, animals **and** butterflies. After that, we went to mountain Ay Petri. It is 1234.2 metres high **and** we climbed to the top. At the top we could to see our beach, the Yalta city **and** the Ayu-Dag or other name is the Bear Mountain. We were very tired, **but** our journey wasn't over. My father always wanted to visit one cave. It's the Marble Cave. It's one of the most amazing places. When we came back we saw many interesting museums, **but** we didn't want to go to them **because** we were hungry **and** wanted to go to bed. It's a fantastic day **and** I will remember it all my life. (Participant P 7)

It is seen in Excerpts 1 and 2 that Participant P 7 predominantly employs the DM *and*, *because*, *but*, and, less frequently, *then*. A plausible explanation of the impoverished repertoire of DMs evident from Excerpts 1 and 2 may eventuate from the implicit mode of instruction involving DMs. In the implicit instructional context, no opportunity for drawing attention to the usage and function of DMs in EFL writing appears to compromise pragmatic learning. The present data seem to lend further support to similar findings described by Rose (1997; 1999; 2005), who posits that implicit instruction is not sufficient in terms of the pragmatic learning and that explicit instruction in different aspects of pragmatics is both

necessary and effective. The present findings, as well as those of Rose (*ibid.*), are in contrast to the assumption by Bell (2017), who argues that both types of instruction, implicit and explicit, are equally effective.

Presumably, this line of argument is further supported by the previously introduced contention about the scarcity of the participants' repertoire of the DMs in the implicit mode of instruction. The limited repertoire of DMs is further illustrated by Excerpts 3 and 4, where the Participant consistently makes use of the following set of DMs, namely *and*, *by*, and *then*, e.g.

(3) My Usual Day. I wake up at six or seven o'clock. I love mornings. It is my time of the day. I have a shower, I get dressed. I have a breakfast. I drink coffee during my breakfast. I tidy up **and** cook food in the morning. I like to cook healthy food. **Then** I go to work by bus or by car. My work starts at 9.30 am. I listen to English news on the bus **or** in the car. I study English at work. After lunch I go home. Sometimes I put sandwiches **and** apples **and** bananas in my bag. I do not have much time. I am very busy. After lunch, I meet my daughter when she is at home. We walk to the city centre. There is a fantastic park **but** we never walk there to enjoy it. We do not have much free time. There are a lot of brilliant great clothes shops **and** cafes around. We go to a café, talk **and** eat. I often work from home. I work **and** study English after work. I like studying **but** it is hard. I surf the net a lot to study English. I never rest during the day. It is not an easy life. My dinner is a soup **or** a cake **and** tea. In the evening I study English **and** watch TV with my husband. (Participant P9)

(4) My unusual day. I wake up at eleven o'clock. I have a shower. I get dressed. I am ready for my journey. I have got a big suitcase with a lot of clothes. **And** I have got all my favourite stuff, my camera **and** my mobile phone. I travel to Manchester. There are a lot of things to do there. It is an exciting multicultural city. There are interesting museums **and** art galleries. It is the Urbis Museum of City Life which is interesting. This Museum is the place to be. There are also two football teams there. **And** Manchester has got a lot of parks. There are a lot of beautiful buildings. There are exciting restaurants with food from all over the world. There are hundreds of clubs **and** bars with fantastic live music. It is near the beautiful countryside **but** the weather on this unusual day is terrible. It is cold **and** wet. Manchester has got fantastic shopping malls. Shopping malls have everything. I am walking to the station. I am waiting for a bus. I am going to the airport and listening to my MP3 player. I have to meet my best friend at the airport. My friend is Natasha **and** she lives in England **but** she was born in Ukraine. I want to meet her **and** have a coffee with her **and** spend some time with her. **Then** we fly on the plane together. This is a fantastic **and** unusual day. (Participant P9)

Similarly, Excerpts 3 and 4 exhibit the presence of an impoverished repertoire of DMs. It should be emphasised that the impoverishment associated with the usage of the DMs by the participants is present in Task 2 not only in Participant's 9 writing, but in Task 2 executed by the whole group. To illustrate the point, it is pertinent to refer to the data again, for instance, the DMs *quite*, *so*, and *still* are absent in Task 2, whilst being present in Task 1. The absence of these DMs taken in conjunction with the decrease in the usage of other DMs in Task 2 is indicative of the negative impact of implicit instruction upon the participants' pragmatic competencies associated with the role and usage of DMs in EFL writing. The present findings are in unison with previous research (Kapranov, 2017a) that suggests that EFL learners should be taught English DMs in written tasks explicitly.

Obviously, a cautious approach should be taken as far as the present findings are concerned. Given that the group of participants consists of 9 EFL students, it is logical to assume that further studies with more participants are needed to offer a robust generalisation. However, as indicated by Povolna (2012), it seems relevant to test, examine and analyse a realistic set of data involving the number of participants at hand. I concur with Povolna (2012) in this respect, especially in the circumstances of EFL teaching in Eastern Europe. Due to the negative demographic growth and emigration, typical EFL classes in several Eastern European countries, such as Ukraine and the Baltic states, have only a limited number of EFL students. Currently in Ukraine, small EFL classes are a typical feature of the tertiary landscape (*osvita.ua*, 2015: Online). Given a small group of participants, the present study has provided only a limited insight into the dynamics of teaching and learning of English DMs in the implicit mode of instruction. However, even with a limited number of participants, this research has offered further support to the previous studies by Buysse (2012), Kapranov (2017a), and Kapranov (2017b), who suggest that the teaching and learning of English DMs explicitly is more beneficial in contrast to the implicit mode of instruction.

CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This article was aimed at elucidating how implicit teaching of English DMs influences the participants' pragmatic competence in terms of their use of DMs in a set of two written tasks. The results of the quantitative analysis revealed a certain impoverishment of the repertoire of the DMs used by the participants in Task 1 (*My Usual Day*) contrasted with Task 2 (*My Unusual Day*). In particular, the impoverished and limited repertoire of DM was evident from the juxtaposition of the DMs identified in the participants' essays with those of the controls'.

The present findings were assumed to bear the following implications relevant to EFL didactics. First, implicit teaching of English DMs at the advanced

beginners' level of EFL proficiency appeared to be inadequate in terms of the participants' pragmatic competencies associated with the use of DMs in the written tasks. Specifically, an implicit mode of teaching resulted in the quantitative decline of English DMs by the EFL learners. The quantitative decline eventuated in conjunction with a qualitative impoverishment of English DMs over time. Second, the teaching and learning of English DMs at the advanced beginners' level should involve an explicit mode of instruction to ensure positive gains in pragmatic competencies involving the use of English DMs.

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