

Effects of Concurrent Group Dynamic Assessment on Iranian EFL Learners' Pragmatic Competence: A Case of Requests and Refusals¹

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Abstract

Pragmatic competence is one of the most important components of successful communication; also, it is the most difficult aspect of SLA. This study aimed to explore the effects of concurrent group dynamic assessment (G-DA) on Iranian EFL learners' learning of requests and refusals, following a mixed method design. In the experimental part of the study, 2 intact classes were homogenized by a pretest, with 24 written discourse completion tasks (WDCTs), carried out by the participants as the treatment. Concurrent G-DA group received calibrated feedback, whereas the nondynamic assessment (N-DA) group was explicitly provided with pertinent assistance without considering their zone of proximal development (ZPD). Additionally, for the sake of a qualitative study, all the dialogues between the teacher and pairs of students under investigation were audiorecorded while they were receiving the treatment. Finally, a WDCT posttest was administered to both groups. Results of the analysis of the data, using *t* test, showed that the G-DA group performed significantly better than the N-DA group. Also, the qualitative microgenetic analysis of the dialogues between the learners and their teacher indicated the effectiveness of concurrent G-DA in learning requests and refusals, thus corroborating the efficiency of dynamic assessment (DA) in pragmatic instruction. Implications and applications are discussed in this study.

Keywords: Pragmatic Instruction; Speech Acts; Refusals; Requests; Concurrent Group Dynamic Assessment (G-DA)

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1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence, defined as the ability to communicate effectively and involving knowledge beyond the level of grammar (Senowarsito, 2013), gained prominence as a major component of the model of the communicative language ability proposed by Backman (1990). Pragmatic competence is one of the most important competencies that are also essential in the way of achieving successful communication (Bachman, 1990; Brown, 2001; Canale & Swain, 1980; Wilson, 2017). Kasper (1997) eloquently talks of such a competence as “not being extra or ornamental, like the icing on the cake” (p. 3). Rather, it is a fundamental component of a speaker’s language competence and is, therefore, essential for successful communication (Wilson, 2017). Furthermore, pragmatic competence has been claimed to be the most difficult aspect of language to master in learning an L2 (Blum-Kulka & Sheffer, 1993, as cited in Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos, 2003). The evidence comes from the fact that L2 learners are most susceptible to making pragmatic errors in communication, the major problem being that these errors may not be as salient as grammatical or pronunciation errors, and they may be left unnoticed by learners (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

In addition, native speakers seldom identify pragmatic deficiencies of L2 learners, and their pragmatic failures may be considered as impolite or unfriendly (Ueda, 2006), as well as arrogant, intolerant, and rude (Azizi Abarghoui, 2012). Moreover, research carried out in the area of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has shown that even advanced L2 learners’ pragmatic performance deviates from the L2 canonical patterns and possibly fails to convey the intended illocutionary point (Kim, 1995). The participants in these studies were often EFL learners who might have little access to the L2 input and even a slim chance of participating in real communication outside the confines of the classroom (Rose & Kasper, 2001).

As a result, limitations of access to the L2 in EFL settings motivate researchers to conduct studies on the teachability of pragmatic knowledge and the most effective approaches to L2 pragmatic instruction. Until recently, a considerable number of studies have been done (e.g., Billmyre, 1990; Bouton, 1994; House, 1996; Kobuta, 1995; Morrow, 1996; Norouzian, & Eslami, 2016; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Rose, 2005; Takimoto, 2006; Wilson, 2017) on the teachability of pragmatic information, addressing different learning goals. The results of such studies indicate that most pragmatic features are teachable and instruction of pragmatic information is generally facilitative and necessary when input is poor in terms of such features. For instance, Bardovi-Harlig (2001), Kasper and Rose (1999, 2002), and Wilson (2017) showed that the development of noticeable aspects of pragmatic competence requires instruction and directed attention of scholars to seeking an ideal method for facilitating and enhancing learning pragmatic features. Besides, according to Kasper

(1997), “without some form of instruction, many aspects of pragmatic competence do not develop sufficiently” (p. 3). According to what was cited above, it becomes quite conspicuous that pragmatics is a delicate area of inquiry in applied linguistics, and it is not immediately obvious how it can be taught (Lin, 2014; Thomas, 1983). Thus, there is a dire need for applying more promising approaches to ILP instruction.

A review of the literature on ILP instruction unveils that one of the most efficient, but overlooked, methods of teaching ILP is dynamic assessment (DA), clearly defined by Lidz (1987) as an approach that follows a test-intervene-retest format and that focuses on learner modifiability, based on producing interventions by more knowledgeable individuals towards improving the learner’s performance. It is, in fact, a process-mediated assessment (Kirschenbaum, 1998, as cited in Sanaeifar & NafarzadehNafari, 2018). Also, Poehner (2008) views DA as an active collaboration with L2 learners, which simultaneously shows their current abilities and promotes their potential future development. DA is concerned with the learner’s performance with the assistance of the teacher and the extent to which the learner can benefit from this assistance both in completing the task and in transferring this mediated performance to different tasks (Poehner & Lantolf, 2005).

As Tajeddin and Tayebipour (2012) point out, “DA proposes a novel approach to SLA research according to which a dialectical relationship is envisaged between instruction and assessment” (p. 87), an approach which is more learner-friendly and joins assessment and instruction into a unified activity. Moreover, Merghati and Ahangari (2014) view DA as a tool that constructs L2 students’ learning tunnel on their weak points. Also, they believe that DA has the capacity to push the pragmatic knowledge forward in a visible manner. In line with the arguments made, the present study was an endeavor to provide evidence for the premise that DA can push pragmatic instruction in a very positive manner. Aiming to more substantiate the efficacy of DA in ILP instruction, this study, more precisely, was an attempt to investigate the effects of concurrent group dynamic assessment (G-DA) on Iranian EFL learners’ learning of requests and refusals.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

A fundamental premise of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory is that the essence of all kinds of learning is situated in the sociocultural milieu. From this perspective, learning is originally shaped and constructed through social interactions with more educated individuals in a way that we can bring this coconstructed knowledge under our control and attain internalization (Vygotsky, 1962). From the same viewpoint, our relationship with the external world is established by some

mediatory physical (e.g., books, computers, etc.) and mental (e.g., language) tools (Wells, 1992). Moreover, it is worth mentioning that mediation best brings about development when it occurs within the learners' zone of proximal development (ZPD), which Vygotsky (1978) defined as the discrepancy between the actual developmental level (i.e., interpsychological) and the potential developmental level (i.e., intrapsychological). Actually, the rationale behind ZPD is that Vygotsky (1998) questioned the adequacy of the trend adopted in the construction of conventional tests. He believed that these tests did not provide evidence with regard to embryonic functions, which had not yet matured but were in the course of maturing (Lidz, 1987).

Likewise, DA challenges traditional views on teaching and testing by arguing that, to fully assess an individual's development, we must determine not only his or her intrapsychological ability (i.e., the actual level of development), but also his or her interpsychological capacity (i.e., the potential level of development). In essence, through conducting the DA process, a teacher tries to activate and flourish a learner's potential ability by offering assistance attuned to his or her ZPD. Therefore, "assessment and instruction become as tightly conjoined as two sides of the same coin and there are no one-sided coins" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 274).

Despite the abovementioned positive effects, a major restriction of implementing DA in the L2 classroom has been referred to as not lending itself to one-to-one teacher-learner mediation (Poehner, 2009). Consequently, in an attempt to find a solution to this practicality problem grounded in Vygotsky's ZPD, researchers like Poehner (2009) and Poehner and Lantolf (2005) have proposed a new framework known as G-DA, which is a group-based and one-to-one DA procedure, applying the same general principle of offering learners ZPD-sensitive mediation to transcend their ZPD, but differing in that G-DA broadens the focus on the group's ZPD (Poehner, 2009) to promote the development of the group as a whole.

Bearing in mind that G-DA targets a group of learners, Poehner (2009) classified the changing role of learners as cumulative and concurrent. In cumulative G-DA, the teacher affords the first addressed learner with the most implicit to the most explicit prompt towards the mastery of a problem and, then, shifts to another. In other words, "cumulative G-DA attempts to move the group forward through coconstructing ZPDs with individuals, but concurrent G-DA supports the development of each individual by working within the group's ZPD" (Poehner, 2009, p. 478). Therefore, in concurrent G-DA, the teacher gives some assistance to the learner to rectify his or her error. If the learner fails to respond to the teacher's mediation, the teacher calls upon another learner to offer a response while he or she is upgrading the assistance. Indeed, concurrent G-DA highlights that the development of each individual depends on working within the group's ZPD. This current study adopted concurrent G-DA because we thought it was more manageable and practical

in the Iranian context, especially when L2 learners are at the elementary or intermediate levels of language proficiency.

2.1.1. ILP competence: The case of requests and refusals

The original definition of ILP development goes back to Kasper and Dahl (1991), who defined ILP as referring to nonnative speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts and how their L2-related speech act knowledge is acquired (as cited in Taguchi, 2017). Also, Kasper and Rose (2002) viewed ILP as having an interdisciplinary or hybrid nature derived from pragmatics and SLA together. Later, Kasper and Rose (2003) claimed that ILP examines how nonnative speakers comprehend and produce actions in an L2 and how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform actions in the L2. More recently, Bardovi-Harlig (2010) stated that ILP "bridges the gap between the system side of language and the use side, and relates both of them at the same time. Thus, ILP brings the study of acquisition to this mix of structure and use" (p. 219). Likewise, Taguchi (2017) defined ILP as "a branch of second language acquisition which examines second language (L2) learners' knowledge, use, and development in performing sociocultural functions" (p. 1). Last but not least, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) viewed the ILP field as being dedicated to research that deals with the speech act behavior of nonnative speakers. To put it another way, pragmatic knowledge is defined by Kasper (2001) as the ability to understand and produce speech acts in language. Thus, speech acts are one of the most important aspects of pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 2001; Mohebbali & Salehi, 2011).

The concept of *speech acts* was, first, coined by Austin (1962) and considered as a set of utterances by which people perform a specific function like apologizing, complaining, requesting, refusing, complimenting, or thanking (as cited in Lin, 2014). From the above list, the speech acts of requests and refusals have been the subject of interest for researchers in the ILP field because they have been classified as face-threatening acts (Alshoboul, Yasin, & Maros, 2012). In line with this argument, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory deals extensively with face-threatening acts, which they define as "those acts that by their very nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or speaker" (p. 65). Brown and Levinson (1987) created an extensive list of various speech acts that can cause such face threats, including both requests and refusals (Kim, 2016). Refusals are speech acts that occur as negative responses to other acts such as requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions that can lead to unintended offense and a breakdown in communication (Moaveni, 2014). Thus, the speech act of refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener because it is not well-matched with his or her expectations (Hassani, Mardani, & Hossein, 2011).

Being classified as another face-threatening act by Brown and Levinson (1987), requesting is an essential speech act frequently used in social interactions (Saadatmandi, Modarres Khiabani, & Pourdana, 2018). Requests are utterances intended to denote the speaker's desire to regulate the behavior of the listener, to make him or her do what the speaker intends him or her to perform (Felix-Brasdefer, 2010). Thus, it is noteworthy that both inappropriate comprehension and production of requests and refusals can corrupt the interaction between interlocutors, as these speech acts involve some degree of offensiveness (Han & Burgucu-Tazegül, 2016). Taking into consideration the significance of acquiring the speech acts of requests and refusals in developing L2 learners' pragmatic knowledge, this study aimed to investigate whether DA could be an effective method of instruction in developing Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic competence of requests and refusals.

2.2. Empirical Studies

2.2.1. Impact of instruction on ILP competence development: Requests and refusals

ILP research had been in the marginal area of the studies of SLA until the 1970s when comparative studies regarding specific speech acts or discourse features started to be conducted. Later, ILP was more popularly researched, directing attention to the teachability of pragmatic features in classroom settings. Nevertheless, a majority of interventional studies of pragmatic instruction have mainly examined the effects of pragmatic instruction on L2 learners' pragmatic competence (Kim, 2016). For example, pragmatic instructional studies have been categorized as one of the major lines of the research focus proposed by Taguchi's (2017). Taguchi and Roever (2017) viewed instructed ILP as a growing area of research, supported by mounting empirical studies published since the 1990s. As the focus of the present study was on ILP instruction, studies related to this area of research enquiry focusing on the speech acts of requests and refusals are only reviewed here.

To start, Khodareza and Lotfi (2012) intended to find out whether formal instruction of pragmatic knowledge plays any role in the enhancement of Iranian intermediate L2 learners' interpretation and use of the speech acts of requests and refusals. To this aim, 60 Iranian intermediate EFL learners were selected via administering the Oxford Placement Test. Applying Martinez-Flor and Uso-Juan's 6-R approach (2006), two researcher-made tests of speech acts were administered as the pretest before the targeted speech acts were instructed to them for 10 sessions as the treatment. Two posttests of speech acts were, then, administered, and the data were analyzed via calculating ANCOVAs for the pretest and posttest scores of each participant group independently. The results indicated that the intermediate Iranian EFL learners showed a higher progress in the interpretation, but no significant change in the use of the speech acts from the pretest to the posttest was unveiled.

Zooming in on refusals, Farrokhi and Atashian (2012) investigated whether either of the instruction types, explicit vs. implicit, proved more efficient in improving pragmatic performance of Iranian EFL learners. Sixty Iranian EFL learners were assigned to three groups of explicit, implicit, and control. All the groups were exposed to conversations from *Spectrum* English books, where refusals stood out. In the treatment groups, the researchers intended to raise pragmatic awareness, whereas the conversations acted as a source of English comprehension and production for the control group. The findings showed the efficiency of explicit instruction over the implicit one in boosting the Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance.

Due to the consensus over the need to teach pragmatic competence, Tajeddin and Hosseinpur (2014) aimed to investigate the effectiveness of deductive, inductive, and L1-based consciousness-raising instructional tasks in EFL learners' acquisition of the request speech act during a 7-week instruction period. The results obtained through a written DCT administered to 140 EFL learners indicated that the instruction had a significantly positive effect on the learners' acquisition of the request speech act. The researchers suggested that consciousness-raising instructional tasks could be utilized in raising L2 students' sociopragmatic awareness and applied to their development of ILP.

In another study, to develop ILP competence of Iranian EFL learners' acquisition of the speech acts of apology and request, Shirazi, Ahmadi, and Gholami (2016) included a video game-based pragmatic competence instruction as a facilitative tool. By administering the Oxford Placement Test, 40 Iranian intermediate EFL learners were selected as homogeneous participants. Liu's (2004) pragmatic competence test of apology and request was administered as the pretest before the targeted speech acts were instructed to the participants for 8 sessions. The posttest of apology and request speech acts was, then, administered, and the data were analyzed by calculating ANCOVA and Mann-Whitney *U* tests. The results indicated that the video game-based instructed EFL classroom showed positive progress in the acquisition of apology and request speech acts.

Perhaps, the most recent study in this respect has been conducted by Saadatmandi, Modarres Khiabani, and Pourdana (2018). They tried to explore the possible impacts of teaching English pragmatic features on Iranian high school students' use of request speech acts. To this end, a sample of 50 Iranian female high school students, with the same level of proficiency, were assigned into two experimental and control groups. A multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) was administered as both the pre and posttests. The pragmatic features were selected from the high school English textbooks and the excerpts taken from the *Top Notch* series (2A, 3A, 2B). With a focus on request speech acts, the control group

received conventional instructions, whereas the experimental group was exposed to request speech act interventions. The findings revealed that teaching pragmatic features had significant impacts on the Iranian high school students' performance on the speech act of request.

In addition to local studies done regarding the impact of instruction on ILP competence development, some international ones with the same scope are worth mentioning here. As an example, Liu (2007) investigated the effectiveness of explicit pragmatic instruction in the acquisition of requests. The researcher examined Taiwanese learners' perceptions towards pragmatic instruction by dividing participants into three groups: (1) control group, (2) teacher instruction group who were given explicit pragmatic instruction in a classroom setting from an instructor, and (3) computer-mediated communication group who learned pragmatics explicitly through e-mail and Web CT discussion with English native speaking partners. The two experimental groups indicated that pragmatic instruction, in general, was practical and essential for their learning of English. In addition, most participants believed that learning pragmatics helped them communicate in English and that they gained more knowledge concerning L2 pragmatics after receiving the instruction.

Being a bit different in scope from other pragmatic instruction studies, Kim (2016) investigated EFL learners' perception towards pragmatic instruction provided as a part of regular English curricula. A total of 52 university students from various majors participated in the study. The treatment was given for 9 weeks during the regular class hours in terms of four speech acts of compliments, apologies, requests, and refusals, with the goal of enhancing the learners' pragmatic awareness as well as pragmatic competence. A questionnaire and the learners' reflection journals were adopted as the data collection instruments and an eclectic design was adopted to analyze their perception. Both intermediate and low groups showed positive perception in terms of the four major categories of interest, usefulness, importance, and motivation; yet, more than half of the learners from the low group found that learning L2 pragmatics was difficult due to the complexity and length of some of the sentence patterns of formulaic expressions. Further, there were significant differences between the participants regarding the category of difficulty for each speech act. Nevertheless, they expressed that pragmatic instruction facilitated their communication skills, enhanced their pragmatic awareness of intercultural differences, and instilled confidence in English interactions.

All in all, the abovementioned studies reveal that most pragmatic features are teachable, meaning that instruction helps boost L2 learners' pragmatic development. To put it another way, there is a strong case for the teaching of L2 pragmatics in EFL classrooms. As Wilson (2017) notes, "empirical research reveals that without instruction, L2 pragmatic competence is unlikely to develop at the same

pace as linguistic competence, which may result in pragmatic failure” (p. 14). Therefore, the salient implication is that pragmatic competence requires as much focus as the other components of language competence in EFL classrooms.

2.2.2. ILP within DA perspective

Research on the effects of DA on SLA has been the focus of substantial attention in the last few years (e.g., Haywood & Lidz, 2007; Lantolf, 2009; Lantolf, & Poehner, 2004, 2006, 2011; Mehri & Amerian, 2015; Poehner, 2005, 2009; Wilson, 2017). However, few studies have ever been conducted on ILP development from the perspective of DA (e.g., Merghati & Ahangari, 2015; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012).

Perhaps, the most well-known study in our local context has been conducted by Tajeddin and Tayebipour (2012) who investigated the effect of DA on the Iranian EFL learners’ acquisition of requests and apologies among university students. The findings revealed that the DA groups significantly outperformed the nondynamic assessment (N-DA) groups, and that the DA groups of both high- and low-proficiency levels differed significantly from the pretest to the posttest and to the delayed posttest, supporting the efficiency of DA in and its applicability to ILP instruction. In line with the same argument, Razavi and Tabatabaei (2014) explored the effect of DA and N-DA on the acquisition of apology speech act among 120 Iranian EFL learners. The results revealed that both high and low DA and N-DA groups did not have a significant difference on the pretest, but both DA groups significantly outperformed both N-DA groups on the posttest. The major difference was related to the performance of the low DA group on the posttests, which indicates that the application of DA had a significant effect on the performance of this group. More recently, Merghati and Ahangari (2014) investigated the impact of DA on the Iranian EFL learners’ ILP development. The data, out of 46 learners in the two experimental and control groups, revealed that DA affected the participants’ pragmatic development in a very significant manner because of the significant differences between the control and experimental groups in their ability to use the L2.

To conclude, even a cursory look at the literature reveals that although there is an abundance of research in the field of ILP both in terms of pragmatic instruction and intercultural communication, there is a dearth of research on the impact of DA in ILP competence development. Bearing this gap in mind, the present study aimed to investigate the impact of DA on developing Iranian EFL learners’ pragmatic competence including the speech acts of requests and refusals.

3. Purpose of the Study

Understanding DA, as a subset of interactive assessment, Poehner (2005, p. iv) argues that “DA should be taken seriously by Applied Linguistics researchers

interested in language assessment, teaching, and learning.” Hence, consistent with Ohta’s (2000) seminal article where she encouraged L2 researchers to apply Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and his ZPD to ILP instruction, the current study was an attempt to cast some light on the effect of concurrent G-DA on Iranian EFL learners’ acquisition of speech acts of requests and refusals both empirically and through microgenetic lenses. More precisely, the following questions were raised and explored in order to accomplish the objectives of the current study:

1. Is there any significant difference in the scores on a WDCTs posttest between L2 learners who learn the speech acts of requests and refusals through concurrent G-DA and those who learn the same speech acts through N-DA processes?
2. How does concurrent G-DA contribute to gains in learning the speech acts of requests and refusals by Iranian EFL learners at the preintermediate level?

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

The participants came from two male intact classes of preintermediate EFL learners who were randomly assigned to two groups: G-DA group ($n = 25$) and N-DA group ($n = 25$) in Khorramabad, Lorestan province in 2018. According to the information offered by the registration office of the language institute, the majority of the participants ($n = 46$) had started learning English in the institution 2 years ago; moreover, their ages ranged between 12 to 15. The results of the Quick Oxford Placement Test revealed that the participants were homogeneous in terms of their language proficiency. Besides, the comparison of the experimental and control groups’ scores on the WDCTs pretest revealed no significant difference between the participants in terms of their pragmatic competence. Further, the results of the formative and summative assessment for the term before the time the study was carried out confirmed the homogeneity of the two groups. The participants normally received three sessions of instruction per week, they were 12 sessions in total, and each session lasted about 90 min, that is, 80 hr in total. In addition, a point worthy of note here is that both groups were taught by a teacher who had more than 15 years of experience in TEFL.

4.2. Instruments

4.2.1. Tasks

Twelve WDCTs appropriate for the Iranian EFL context were adopted from a questionnaire on requests and refusals used by Mahani (2012) and Allami and Naeimi (2011). Each task contained two situations, requiring the participants to make

requests and refusals in a given situation between various interlocutors like a close friend, a classmate, a boss, and so on.

4.2.2. Tests

An Oxford Placement Test (OPT) and a modified version of a WDCTs, adopted from Jalilifar (2009) and Sahragard and Javanmardi (2011), were given to the participants to be answered as the pretest. The reliability of the two pretests was estimated to be .76 and .73, respectively. Besides, a modified version of WDCTs, taken from Jalilifar (2009), Amarien (1997), and Tanck (2002), was administered as the posttest. The modification to the two tests was no more than the simplification of the instructions and removing difficult vocabulary from the items to make them more comprehensible to the participants. Also, some items were removed and other ones were included to match their English proficiency. Each test consisted of 24 items (i.e., 12 items on requests and 12 items on refusals). The reliability of the WDCTs posttest was .72, using Cronbach's alpha.

4.3. Procedure

Two intact classes, each with 25 learners, were randomly assigned to G-DA and N-DA groups. A paper-and-pencil version of the Oxford Quick Placement Test was used to examine the homogeneity of the groups prior to the actual study. At the onset of the study, a test consisting of 24 WDCTs was administered to the two groups to assess their ILP competence. All the learners were asked to respond to the items individually, as they would occur in actual conversations in 40 min. Afterwards, to run the treatment sessions, 12 WDCTs, adopted from Mahani (2012) and Allami and Naeimi (2011), were offered in a time span of 12 sessions while the learners were working together in a friendly milieu. It is worth mentioning that, in the first 2 treatment sessions, the teacher asked pairs of learners to write their responses on the board in order to shape their contribution. In the concurrent G-DA group, whenever the pairs made an error while completing the WDCTs, the teacher used an interactionist approach to concurrent G-DA to remove their errors. Just-right and just-in-time mediation attuned to the pairs' needs and ZPD were provided to help the learners to complete the WDCTs and to boost their ILP competence. On the contrary, whenever the pairs in the N-DA group encountered a problem, the teacher, who was the authority in the class, explicitly provided the solution to the problem without considering the pairs' ZPD. Additionally, for the sake of having a more comprehensive observation, all the dialogues between the teacher and the G-DA pairs under investigation were audiorecorded and meticulously scrutinized by the researchers so as to know what actually happened in the classroom, hence documenting the possible microgenetic progress. Four days after the treatment sessions, both groups took the revised WDCTs posttest.

4.4. Data Analysis

4.4.1. Scoring procedure

The data collected through the WDCTs pretest and posttest were analyzed according to Kondo (2008) and Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989). Their effectiveness regarding that situation was judged based on a 6-point Likert scale adopted from Taguchi (2006), which ranged from 0 to 5: 0 (*no performance at all*), 1 (*very poor performance*; the expressions were very difficult to understand), 2 (*poor performance*) due to the difficult determination of correctness because of the interference from grammatical and sociolinguistic errors, 3 (*fair performance*), meaning that the expressions were only somewhat accurate and appropriate, 4 (*good*; i.e., the expressions were mostly accurate and appropriate), and 5 (*excellent performance*), meaning that the expressions were fully accurate and appropriate for the situation.

4.4.2. Microgenetic analysis

To answer the second research question, a microgenetic analysis, as “the moment-to-moment coconstruction of language and language learning” (Gutiérrez, 2008, p. 2), was conducted with the purpose of portraying how the concurrent G-DA group enhanced their ILP competence as a consequence of receiving concurrent G-DA. To that end, the audiorecorded collaborative dialogues between the teacher and the EFL learners were transcribed verbatim and, then, meticulously analyzed several times to identify and illustrate how the collaborative dialogues between the teacher and the learners led to developmental changes in the learners’ ILP competence.

5. Results

The first research question addressed if there was any significant difference in the effect of concurrent G-DA and N-DA on the acquisition of the speech acts of requests and refusals by Iranian EFL learners at the preintermediate level. As Table 1 shows, the mean of the DA group (95.40) was higher than the mean of the N-DA group (70.64). Also, the results of Levene’s test reported in Table 2 attested to the equality of variances of the two groups’ distributions and to the parametric nature of the data collected. To check the significant difference between the two groups, an independent samples *t* test was administered. As Table 2 indicates, the G-DA group significantly outperformed the N-DA group ($t = 10.41$, $df = 48$, $p = .00 < 0.5$, 2-tailed), indicating that G-DA was more significantly conducive in pragmatic development than N-DA:

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics of G-DA and N-GDA Groups on WDCTs Posttest*

Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SEM
G-DA	25	95.40	9.30	1.86
N-GDA	25	70.64	7.39	1.47

Table 2. *Results of Independent Samples *t* Test for Comparing WDCT Posttest of Two Groups*

Levene's Test for Equality				<i>t</i> Test for Equality of Means of Variances				
95% Confidence Interval of the Difference								
<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
.32	.57	10.41	48	.00	24.76	2.37	24.64	24.90

To answer the second research question, a microgenetic analysis was conducted to analyze the naturally occurring collaborative dialogues between the EFL learners and their teacher while they were undertaking concurrent G-DA in the classroom context. The following episodes represent some of the transcribed interactions between the teacher and the learners in the first, eighth, and last sessions to reveal the internal processes of concurrent G-DA through which their ILP competence was promoted (see Appendix for the transcription key). For the sake of preserving ethical values as well as fulfilling the anonymity of the learners, pseudonyms were used. Also, for dialogic interactions to occur in the classroom and for the sake of eliciting appropriate responses on the part of the learners, they were allowed to communicate in both Persian and English, but they were required to produce their final forms of speech acts of requests and refusals in English.

Episode # 1 is as an example of a conversation between the teacher and a pair of the participants while they were completing the first task. What is apparent from this episode is that the participants cannot interact beyond their actual capabilities or ZPD very well:

- **Episode # 1**

1 Hossein: Your paper is due next week. However, you will be very busy this week and don't have enough time to complete it. How would you make a request from your teacher for an extension?

2 Nima: Sorry...

3 Teacher: Sorry... ↑

4 Hossein: Yeah...

- 5 Teacher: Why did you say SORRY?
- 6 Nima: Mm...
- 7 Teacher: It's better to say 'excuse...'
- 8 Nima: (.) Ohhh ↑ excuse me.
- 9 Hossein: (10) Excuse me mmm...
- 10 Nima: Excuse me sir...
- 11 Hossein: (20) Please, give me (.) a bit more time... ↓
- 12 Nima: Ok? ↑
- 13 Teacher: NO.....:
- 14 Nima: How to say it, Hossein? ↑
- 15 Hossein: Mm...
- 16 Teacher: Think about the situation again, Hossein...
- 17 Hossein: (.) Excuse me sir...
- 18 Nima: Let's say, I'm so busy this week.
- 19 Hossein: How should we say it in English?
- 20 Nima: I am not sure....
- 21 Hossein: We want to say the work load is too much for me this week. How should I say it in English?)
- 22 Teacher: The work load is too much for me this week OK? ↑
- 23 Hossein: The work load is too much for me this week...
- 24 Nima: The work load is too much for me this week. Please, give me more time.
- 25 Teacher: Bearing in mind that he is your teacher (.) Please, give me more time ↑.
- 26 Hossein: Mmm...
- 27 Nima: The work load is too much for me this week. Please, give me more time...
- 28 Teacher: You can use some other expressions to make a request.. ↑
- 29 Hossein: For example... ↑
- 30 Teacher: May you (.) could you...?
- 31 Nima: (.) Could you please give me more time? ↓
- 32 Teacher: That's great...
- 33 Hossein: Mm... (20)
- 34 Nima: The work load is too much for me this week. Could you please give me a bit more time?
- 35 Hossein: Wait! I think it's better to make a more polite request)
- 36 Nima: Request....
- 37 Teacher: Yeah, very good...
- 38 Hossein: (.) I have something to ask... ↑
- 39 Teacher: AH-ha.
- 40 Nima: Excuse me sir, I want to make a request, the work load is too much for me this week...
- 41 Hossein: (15) Let's say, so it will be difficult for me to do my job next week.
- 42 Nima: Say it in English so that we can write it down, mm...)

- 43 Hossein: (.) So it will be difficult for me mm...
- 44 Teacher: Very good go on... ↑
- 45 Nima: Mm do...
- 46 Teacher: No to do... ↑
- 47 Nima: To do (.) what did you request?
- 48 Hossein: By the next week...
- 49 Nima: Ok? ↑
- 50 Teacher: Excuse me sir (.) I want to make a request. The work load is too much for me this week (.) So it will be difficult for me to do what you have requested. Could you please give me a bit more time? AH- HA
- 51 Nima: What else?)
- 52 Teacher: What about promising? Maybe, he will be annoyed.....: (laughter)
- 53 Hossein: Oh yes (20). I will do it (.) as soon as possible...
- 54 Teacher: That's great. (Laughter)

At the beginning of the conversation, Hossein read out the task that led to Nima's response accompanied by the teacher's echoing his utterance in a questioning intonation, showing a surprise at Nima's statement (Turn # 3). In response to Nima's utterance, Hossein produced a simple *yeah*, showing that he still failed to get the point. Not receiving an appropriate response, the teacher launched a *wh*-question along with putting a heavy emphasis on the word *sorry* to help the pair of students reflect more on their response (Turn # 5). Just following that, Nima produced the nonlexical token *mm*, which was a sign of his inability to offer a response, leading to the teacher's more explicit level of assistance (Turn # 7). Rightly after that, Nima uttered the nonlexical token *ohhh* along with echoing the teacher's suggestion that was an indication of his understanding of the problematic point (Turn # 8). After a 10 s hesitation, Hossein resorted to repetition as a regular tool for reflecting on Nima's utterance that was met with Nima's extending his turn. After a relatively long pause (20 s), Hossein aired his view in a low, quiet, whispered tone that was a suggestion of his doubt about the appropriateness of his answer (Turn # 11), successively followed by Nima's request for evaluation by the teacher. In pursuit of Nima's request, producing the negative token *no* along with sound stretching, the teacher demonstrated her rejection of their unsuccessful attempt (Turn # 13). Through the next turn, Nima's elicitation provoked a strong discussion followed by Hossein's showing his inability to help with a hesitation form *mm* (Turn # 15), leading to the teacher's suggestion in the pleasant environment of the classroom to take heed of the demands of the situation (Turn # 16). In the following turn, Hossein's echoing the prior response overlapped with Nima's suggestion in their L1 (Turn # 18), which was a sign of the appropriation of the help given by the teacher.

What is apparent from the next two turns is the pair's inability to recall a request strategy in English coupled with Hossein's request for assistance in the form of a question, getting the teacher to provide the translation of the prior turn along with a confirmation check with the word *ok* (Turn # 22). Upon receiving this kind of help, Hossein acknowledged the teacher's utterance by echoing his response, followed by Nima's expanding his turn (Turn # 24). Failing to receive an appropriate response, the teacher tried to raise the pair's awareness of the sociopragmatic points (Turn # 25), but his assistance was not useful enough to trigger an appropriate response from the pair (Turns # 26 & 27). Right then, the teacher went further and obviously upgraded his assistance by reminding the pair of other request strategies to help them enrich their response. The teacher's turn was followed by Hussein's request for instantiation (Turn # 29), which served as a sign of his failure to get the point, accompanied by the teacher's assistance. The teacher's turn overlapped with Nima's response, serving as an instantiation of his understanding of the rationale behind the teacher's suggestion (Turn # 31), followed by the teacher's positive evaluation of Nima's utterance. Making a relatively long pause, along with echoing the prior response, was an indication of the pair's reflection on the task (Turns # 33 & 34). In the next turn, asking the waiting time led to Hossein's suggestion that was a sign of his awareness of the given recipient's power. Nima's subsequent utterance was punctuated by sound stretching to reflect more on how to make a politer request that was followed by the teacher's interjecting *yeah*, along with a positive evaluation of Hossein's suggestion to encourage him to continue the conversation (Turn # 37). Upon receiving the teacher's satisfaction, Hossein repeated his response in a high pitch that could be interpreted as a need for confirmation (Turn # 38). Producing the immediate emphatic acknowledgment token *ah-ha*, the teacher made an attempt to entice the pair to continue their job (Turn # 39).

What becomes clear from the next two turns is the pair's resorting to L1 to facilitate the flow of conversation followed by Nima's invitation to interact in English that led to Hossein's translation of Nima's turn, preceded by a brief silence (Turn # 43). Confirming Hossein's utterance with the positive evaluation *very good*, along with offering some encouragement by the teacher (Turn # 44), resulted in an unsuccessful response by Nima, along with the teacher's dissatisfaction and instant correction of the inappropriate form (Turn # 46). Through Turns # 45 and 46, Nima and Hossein extended the teacher's turn that can be interpreted as a sign of the appropriation of the help given by the teacher, followed by Nima's elicitation attempt as a sign of seeking the teacher's support (Turn # 49). Then, the teacher summarized all the responses, along with the nonlexical token *ah-ha* to entice the pair to offer some increment accompanied by Nima's request to evaluate their response (Turn # 51). In the subsequent turn, by a laugh token, the teacher tried to draw the pair's attention to a problematic point in their response. Upon receiving this kind of

assistance, Hossein showed his awareness and aligned his talk with that of the teacher after a 20-s pause. In the last turn, the teacher's display of satisfaction with the conversation was clear from the positive assessment *that's great*, accompanied by a laugh token. The first episode was teacher-initiative in which the teacher regulated the dialogic interactions in the classroom conversation. Episode # 2, taken from the eighth session, is reiterated to show that the L2 learners self-regulated themselves in handling the interactions:

- **Episode # 2**

1 Mahan: Look Amir Hossein, you are meeting your boss in the evening. Your boss says, "If you don't mind, I'd like to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work." You have to reject the boss's offer because your wife is sick. How would you do that?

- 2 Amir Hossein: (.) I'm so sorry.
- 3 Mahan: (15) I'd love to do it...
- 4 Amir Hossein: I'd love to do it mm...
- 5 Teacher: But::
- 6 Amir Hossein: My wife is sick...
- 7 Mahan: (.) I should take her to the hospital...
- 8 Amir Hossein: (10) take her to the hospital...
- 9 Teacher: Bravo.
- 10 Amir Hossein: (20)
- 11 Mahan: I think it's better to make a promise to help the boss as soon as possible in order not to annoy him.)
- 12 Teacher: Very good
- 13 Amir Hossein: (.) The next time ↓
- 14 Mahan: (10) The next time...
- 15 Teacher: HOPE ↑ some other time...
- 16 Mahan: I'm so sorry I'd love to do it but my mum is sick. I should take her to the hospital. ↑ Hope some other time...
- 17 Teacher: OK.

As it could be seen from the above episode, Mahan took the initiative by reading the task in a questioning intonation to invite Amir Hossein to voice his attitude. Producing a micropause, Amir Hossein offered his suggestion, followed by taking a 15-s silence. along with completing the prior turn by Mahan. Amir Hossein's subsequent utterance was a repetition of Mahan's utterance. accompanied by producing the nonlexical token *mm* as a tool for spending some time mulling over the given situation (Turn # 4). Detecting the pair's trouble, the teacher provided *but::* in a continuation sound to stimulate the pair to expand their response. Receiving the teacher's elicitation, Amir Hossein quickly extended his prior utterance (Turn # 6). Following a micropause, Mahan provided his suggestion in Persian to carry out the task more easily. Taking a 10-s silence, Amir Hossein provided Mahan with an

English translation to show his acceptance of Mahan's utterance (Turn # 8), coupled with the teacher's positive evaluation *Bravo* to show her satisfaction with the pair's utterance. Then, Amir Hossein took a relatively long pause (20 s), which was a sign of his reflection on the task, leading to Mahan's suggestion that was a clue to his understanding of the given context (Turn # 11).

This was accompanied by the teacher's immediate positive reaction *very good* to offer Mahan some encouragement. Making a micropause, Amir Hossein offered a partial translation of Mahan's suggestion, followed by Mahan's echoing Amir Hossein's turn to perform the task at hand, preceded by a 10-s silence. Not receiving an enriched response, the teacher herself put the pair's response in a more organized way (Turn # 15). Through the next turns, Mahan delivered a full response in an upward intonation to receive the teacher's evaluation, followed by the teacher's positive evaluation *ok*. A remarkable transition in the learners' ILP competence appeared to have occurred here because they showed some signs of microgenetic development from the intermental to the intramental plane by responding to an implicit level of help (Turns # 3, 6, 8, & 11). Episode # 3, taken from the last treatment session, is presented below in order to show the learners' progress in ILP competence as a consequence of receiving the concurrent G-DA process through the 12 sessions:

- **Episode # 3**

- 1 Farid: Mm... (15)
- 2 Hossein: Excuse me...
- 3 Farid: (10) Excuse me! I lost my pen...
- 4 Hossein: Excuse me! I lost my pen... ↓
- 5 Teacher: OK...
- 6 Hossein: Can I say? Give me your pencil ↑ Mm... (10) No, it is better to say: May you lend me your pencil?...
- 7 Farid: Wait a moment! (.) Excuses me (.), I lost my pen (.) May you lend me your pen?
- 8 Teacher: \$

As Farid was reflecting on the task for a relatively long time (15 s) in Turn # 1, Hossein ventured and provided his response. Following a 10-s silence, Farid repeated the prior turn and went on to deliver an extended response, coupled with Hossein's echoing the prior turn in a soft voice to seek his approval, accompanied by the teacher's quick acknowledgment token *ok* to ensure Hossein to continue his job (Turn # 5). Right then, Hossein managed to take the floor and provided his response, followed by the nonlexical token *mm* to spend some time searching for a more adequate strategy. In the same turn, delivering the self-directed negative token *no*, along with a more enriched response, Hossein projected his awareness of the given situation. Following Hossein's suggestion in Turn # 6, Farid overtly requested more

time to reflect on his responses, coupled with the teacher's laughter, showing her positive evaluation.

6. Discussion

We tried to find out effects of concurrent G-DA on Iranian EFL learners' acquisition of requests and refusals. In a nutshell, the results revealed that implementing concurrent G-DA significantly facilitated the participants' ILP competence. Generally speaking, this study provides more support for taking a sociocultural stance for L2 pragmatic development by applying DA in pragmatic instruction. Still, the results put a confirmation seal for the efficacy of instruction in L2 pragmatics development and add to the abundance of research in this respect because pragmatic instruction is indispensable in EFL settings, as an L2 classroom does not afford the learners ample opportunity to experience the L2 (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Eslami & Ahn, 2014; Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002).

More specifically, the first research question aimed to answer if there was a significant difference in the effect of concurrent G-DA and N-DA on the Iranian preintermediate EFL learners' acquisition of the speech acts of requests and refusals. The results indicated that the G-DA group significantly outperformed the N-DA group (see Table 2). In other words, pragmatic instruction through G-DA led to the development of the EFL learners' pragmatic competence.

As Rose (2005) mentioned, the teachability of pragmatic features and the efficacy of pragmatic instruction have motivated a wide array of pragmatic studies. As a result, in terms of the role of pragmatic instruction, the findings of the current study are in line with those of previous studies (Farrokhi & Atashian, 2012; Khodareza & Lotfi, 2012; Kim, 2016; Li, Suleiman, & Szalgie, 2015; Liu, 2007; Mirzaei & Esmaili, 2013; Nemati & Arabmoradi, 2014; Saadatmandi, Modarres Khiabani, & Pourdana, 2018; Shirazi, Ahmadi, & Gholami, 2016; Tajeddin & Hosseinpour, 2014; Wilson, 2017), which emphasize that pragmatic competence can be developed through classroom instruction. Indeed, the main impetus for conducting these studies comes from the fact that instruction in L2 pragmatics is necessary because there are L2 learners whose language proficiency is advanced, but their communicative acts frequently contain pragmatic errors. Moreover, the results of this study, further, support Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis in that the pedagogical intervention had made specific L2 features more salient for the learners and directed their attention to these features and resulted in the increased depth of processing of the speech acts of requests and refusals. To put it simply, instruction can cause noticing and create awareness on the part of L2 learners (Brown, 2007). Finally, it is worth mentioning here that although the literature of ILP supports the facilitative effect of instruction on L2 pragmatic development, the results are tentative until a

larger number of studies on the instructional effects of particular L2 forms have been conducted in EFL classrooms (Alcón & Martínez-Flor, 2008, as cited in Mirzaei & Esmaeili, 2013).

To answer the second research question, a microgenetic analysis was conducted to analyze the naturally occurring collaborative dialogues between the EFL learners and their teacher while they were undertaking concurrent G-DA in the classroom context. The main reason for choosing microgenetic analysis was that this method has been specifically devised to document change processes in development over a relatively short period of time (i.e., weeks, months, etc.), as well as investigating the effects of instructional procedures (Siegler, 2002, as cited in Lavelli, Pantoja, Hsu, Messinger, & Fogel, 2005). Obviously, the main issue under discussion here was the efficacy of applying a sociocultural stance through DA for pragmatic instruction.

As an upshot of the sociocultural theory, DA has received scant attention from researchers until recently. As Tajeddin and Tayebipour (2012) state, L2 DA studies, in general, and ILP DA studies, in particular, do not have such a robust literature. Thus, because of the scarcity of studies in this respect, the findings of this study are in harmony with only three studies (i.e., Merghati & Ahangari, 2015; Razavi & Tabatabaei, 2014; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012) in that applying DA to L2 pragmatic instruction could lead to considerable gains in L2 learners' ILP competence. Furthermore, the findings obtained from the microgenetic analysis showed how the participants moved towards self-regulation by being mediated during concurrent G-DA processes.

The microgenetic analysis of the second research question clearly indicated that in episode # 1, the learners could not interact beyond their actual capabilities or ZPD. The evidence comes from their inability to recall a request strategy at the beginning of the episode and from their resorting frequently to L1 for facilitating the flow of conversation. Episode # 1 was teacher-initiative in which the teacher regulated the dialogic interactions in classroom conversations. However, the teacher was not the authority in that the responsibility for the learners' performance was distributed between the learners and the teacher, with the teacher having a more pivotal role in this performance than the learners (Turns # 7, 22, & 52). The teacher used several levels of implicit regulation (Turns # 16, 25, & 30), hinted at the nature of the error (Turn # 5), specified its location and rejected inappropriate attempts by the learners (Turns # 13 & 46) to assist them improve their ILP competence. Yet, in this episode, the teacher was still unable to trigger an adequate responsive move from the learners. It is quite conceivable that these findings provide support for Ohta's (2005) claim that the assistance an L2 learner receives through collaboration or interaction with an L2 expert will push pragmatics development forward.

Interestingly enough, in episode # 2, some signs of the learners' ILP competence development in their eighth performance through implementing concurrent G-DA are displayed. The evidence comes from the lesser assistance from the teacher and more interaction between the pairs. As formerly mentioned, a significant transition in the learners' ILP competence appeared to have occurred within this episode, as the learners showed some signs of microgenetic development from the intermental to the intramental plane by responding to an implicit level of help (Turns # 3, 6, 8, & 11). In other words, the learners benefitted from the concurrent G-DA sessions during which they had been given the chance of expressing their ideas and benefiting from fine-tuned assistance to evolve through the stages of decreasing reliance on the teacher towards increasing reliance on their selves. In essence, dialogic interactions by means of which the teacher instructs the learners within their ZPD and assesses them concurrently can, as Poehner (2007, 2009) says, set the scene for L2 learners to expose their initial thoughts, to self-assess, to orient their attention to their problems, to resolve them, and to cocreate knowledge through mediated interactions in the classroom.

Still in episode # 3, a grounded analysis highlights that the learners transferred what was discussed at the social level (i.e., the intermental level) through previous sessions to the individual level (i.e., the intramental level). In principle, getting engaged in the collaborative interaction and being provided with fine-tuned assistance, the learners encountered problems, deepened their knowledge, and attained enhanced performances within the ILP scope (Swain, 2000, 2006). This illustration fits quite well with Skidmore's (2006) view that involving L2 learners in the dialogic interactions in which the learners play a prominent role can help them secure improved attainments in the outcome.

Accordingly, the results can be justified on the basis of the underlying principle that through concurrent G-DA, mediated dialogues and ZPD-sensitive mediation, the concurrent G-DA group engaged in completing the WDCTs to process knowledge at a deeper level, to ultimately grow beyond their actual capabilities, and to boost their potential level in the scope of ILP (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995; Poehner, 2005, 2007, 2009; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005; Swain & Lapkin, 1995; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012; Vygotsky, 1987). Also, the microgenetic findings of the current study documented persuasive evidence to Vygotsky's (1978) statement that cognitive development is a collaborative undertaking owing to regulation and mediation, supplied by other more capable peers and its transmission to the individual level (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008). In addition, the upshots run in accordance with Vygotsky's developmental theory (1998) upon which DA rests, showing that mediated interactions within the group's ZPD result in the development of L2 learners' independent performance by enhancing and moving beyond their actual

current status, as well as their hidden potential in ZPD (Haywood & Lidz, 2007; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). On the other hand, due to the fact that the learners in the N-DA group were deprived of the opportunity to be provided with the contingent and graduated assistance (Lantolf, 1996), they might not have been able to show signs of self-regulation and move beyond their actual competence in their ILP competence.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the effectiveness of instruction and applicability of the sociocultural theory to ILP development. Besides, the results could provide support for both Cheng (2015) and Ohta (2005) who believe that conducting interventional studies from a socially grounded perspective is promising because it will give classroom researchers and language professionals a better understanding of learner engagement in classroom activities as well as the link between instructional treatments and learning outcomes in L2 pragmatics. However, because of the dearth of research, more studies are still needed in this realm that could target the effectiveness of a sociocultural standpoint in L2 pragmatic instruction and development.

7. Conclusion

This study unveiled that concurrent G-DA was significantly conducive in the learners' pragmatic competence development. Essentially, the G-DA group profited from ZPD-sensitive assistance to coconstruct knowledge and to gradually move towards self-regulation by being mediated by either their teacher or peers through collaborative dialogues in the classroom (van Compernelle & Williams, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). On the contrary, the N-DA group, deprived of ZPD-activated context to develop their ILP competence, did not achieve considerable growth on the WDCTs posttest. As a result, G-DA has a great potential to assist L2 learners in gradually developing their pragmatic competence. Thus, English teachers are recommended to apply G-DA in the ELT context and provide their learners with appropriate calibrated aids on their performance. In so doing, they not only enhance the learners' knowledge and awareness of pragmatic competence, but also promote their capacities to appropriately use the collective pragmatic competence so coconstructed.

To conclude, due to some of the limitations of the present study, some factors were not considered in the experiment. So, several areas of research are opening up that need to be pursued: First, the focus of this study was on the EFL learners at the preintermediate level of language proficiency. However, research on different proficiency levels can shed more light on this topic in the future. Second, we confined our focus to male L2 learners. Thus, there is a need for more empirical evidence to explore whether male and female L2 learners would react differently to

G-DA. Third, because we employed WDCTs as the data collection instrument, future studies can benefit from other task types and administer various instruments to attain more reliable and valid results. Finally, the data were collected exclusively in the audio format, which eliminated from the analysis a potentially important source of nonverbal information. Owing to the fact that interaction between L2 learners and their teachers entails a rich gestural element, it is clearly worthwhile for future research on G-DA to analyze video recordings to capture a better picture of the meanings displayed by L2 learners.

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Appendix Transcription Key

(partially adopted from Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008)

(1.8) Numbers enclosed in parentheses indicate a pause. The number represents the number of seconds of duration of the pause, to one decimal place. A pause of less than 0.2 seconds is marked by (.).

? Question mark expresses slight rising intonation (and sometimes questions).

. A dot shows slight falling intonation.

:: Colon(s) means prolonging of sound and the number of colons says the length of the extension.

↑ high pitch on the word.

↓ low pitch on the word.

(hh, hm) Audible exhalation of air

(.) Micropause (0.2 second or less)

(0.4) Numbers in parentheses demonstrate length of silence in tenths of a second

(word) Words in parenthesis shows transcriptionist doubt Speaker's utterance

\$ Smiley expression of utterances

WORD Capital letters shows loud speech