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Impact of Task-based and Task-supported L2 Teaching on the Use of Connective Markers in Learners' Written Performance

Abstract

The current study investigates the impact of two types of instruction on teaching connective markers in learners' written performance. Eighty-two EFL learners were assigned to two experimental groups (EG1, $n = 29$ and EG2, $n = 25$) and one control group (CG, $n = 28$). The experimental groups were introduced to a set of connective markers in two sessions. EG1 followed a task-based approach, while EG2 experienced task-supported language teaching. CG took part in regular classes that were not intended to teach connective markers. The analysis of variance showed that instruction in both experimental groups positively impacted the number and quality of connective markers used in learners' essays, with a slight but non-significant advantage of TBLT in the delayed post-test. The study is timely in that it addresses an inconclusive line of research on L2 pragmatics instruction, investigates the thriving area of task-based teaching, and employs the most often-used type of essay on a nationwide secondary school-leaving examination.

Keywords: L2 pragmatics, TBLT, TSLT, connective markers

In the past forty years, applied linguistics research has given growing attention to L2 pragmatics instruction. Alongside teaching other language subsystems, such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, the importance of preparing learners to use socio-culturally appropriate language has been generally acknowledged by theorists and empirical researchers (Cutting & Fordyce,

2021; Nguyen & Le, 2019; O’Keeffe et al., 2020; Taguchi, 2015; Taguchi & Roever, 2017; Roever, 2022). One example of L2 pragmatic targets are discourse markers. The literature has widely discussed calls to incorporate them into L2 education (Asadi, 2018; Crossley et al., 2016; El-Dakhs et al., 2022; Shahriari & Shadloo, 2019). Connective markers (or connectives) are a subgroup of discourse markers which are indispensable for written expression in a foreign language (Fraser, 2009; Hall, 2007; Halliday & Hassan, 1976; van Dijk, 1979). These have particularly caught the attention of researchers (Cheng & Tsang, 2022; Chiang, 2003; Crossley et al., 2016; Liu & Braine, 2005; Lu, 2019). Connective markers provide a way to link concepts and sentences together while helping to create a cohesive and organised flow of thoughts. They include phrases such as “First of all,” “Therefore,” or “Moreover.” Studies show that teaching L2 connective markers is feasible; it needs to be clarified, however, what type of instruction is most conducive to doing so.

Around the same time as the interest in L2 pragmatics instruction appeared, different types of task implementation in language pedagogy have also seen a rise in research attention, beginning with the guides of Ellis (2003), Nunan (2004), and Willis (1996) on the implementation of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in a foreign classroom context. In line with the current SLA research and theory (East, 2021; Ellis et al., 2020; Long, 2015; Van den Branden, 2022), the use of tasks seems to be a viable option in L2 instruction. Tasks are employed as both a learning resource and organisational lesson units, while language is regarded primarily as a tool for communication (as opposed to being an object to be studied). A TBLT syllabus focuses on tasks to be performed instead of language structures to be taught, emphasising authentic and meaning-focused tasks rather than vocabulary and grammar items to be presented to the learners. Examples of tasks that can be included in a TBLT lesson are: understanding the weather forecast, filling out a job application, or ordering a takeaway over the phone. Studies have suggested that TBLT can promote second language acquisition through a combination of focus on meaning and focus on form and allowing learners to engage in possibly most natural communication (Ellis, 2003; Ellis et al., 2020; Long, 2015). Hence, the primary goal of any TBLT course is to prepare learners to perform communicative tasks outside classrooms and use language in different social contexts.

A distinction is made between task-based and task-supported language teaching (TSLT). TSLT involves the use of tasks during the concluding stages of a lesson (or a series of lessons) as a means of practising specific linguistic forms. The curriculum is reliant on linguistic structures that are reinforced through the use of tasks. For example, Communicative Language Teaching is a common instance of TSLT, as tasks are implemented to practise the target structures. The PPP (presentation-practice-production) framework can be implemented as tasks draw out learners’ use of the target structures (Ellis, 2019).

However, there is lingering uncertainty in the literature about the difference between TBLT and TSLT. As Loewen and Sato (2021) contend, it is up to the field to clear up the terminological confusion. In the current study, TBLT is an approach that combines implicit and explicit instruction, whereas TSLT represents a clearly explicit approach to teaching pre-selected target items.

To this day, research has been scarce on the links between TBLT and L2 pragmatics instruction, and the two have rarely been explored together. The study reported below aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of TBLT and TSLT on the use of connective markers in for-and-against essays produced by teenage learners of English as a foreign language.

Problem Statement

Both pragmatics and TBLT focus on communication in situated contexts, real-world communicative needs, and conversation objectives (Taguchi & Kim, 2018; Taguchi & Rover, 2017; Roever, 2022). Though there is limited research on the compatibility of these two areas, TBLT's emphasis on the use of language in a given context seems to make it a potentially well-suited approach to L2 pragmatics instruction (Nguyen & Le, 2019).

An example of pragmatic targets that can be addressed through some form of task implementation are discourse markers. There have been calls to incorporate them into L2 pedagogy (Asadi, 2018; Crossley et al., 2016; Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010; El-Dakhs et al., 2022; Sarani & Talati-Baghshahi, 2017; Shahriari & Shadloo, 2019). In particular, connective markers, which are essential to written performance in a foreign language (Fraser, 2009; Hall, 2007; Halliday & Hassan, 1976; van Dijk, 1979), seem to be of interest to researchers (Cheng & Tsang, 2022; Chiang, 2003; Crossley et al., 2016; Liu & Braine, 2005; Lu, 2019). Connective markers (or connectives) provide a way to link ideas and sentences together and help create a cohesive, logical flow of thoughts. They also aid in making written performance more accessible and understandable for the readers. By using connectives, writers can avoid confusion and stay on the topic since they provide structure and help writers avoid rambling.

Aims and Scope

The present study aims to compare the efficacy of TBLT and TSLT in teaching L2 pragmatic targets operationalised here as the connective markers in a for-and-against essay. The study employs a pre-test/post-test design in which 82 intermediate teenage learners of English as a foreign language are assigned to one of the three conditions (TBLT, $n = 29$; TSLT, $n = 25$; and CG, $n = 28$). The findings may guide further inquiry into second language acquisition and provide valuable insights to instructors of additional languages.

Literature Review

Discourse Markers—A General Overview of Pertinent Research

Discourse markers are words, phrases, or short sentences used to convey a speaker's attitude to the topic under discussion, to provide continuity to a conversation, and to signal a transition from one topic to another (Sarani & Talati-Baghsiahi, 2017). These markers help the listener comprehend the flow of the conversation and express the speaker's opinion or attitude. In second/foreign language contexts, discourse markers can indicate the speaker's attitude towards the topic being discussed or signal a change in the direction of the conversation.

A fruitful but still inconclusive line of investigation is the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on the development of L2 discourse (Nguyen et al., 2012; Sarani & Talati-Baghsiahi, 2017). Studies find that explicit instruction in discourse markers can be beneficial for learners to develop their understanding and use of discourse markers in academic writing. For instance, Nguyen et al. (2012) conducted a study to examine the relative effects of explicit and implicit form-focused instruction on the development of L2 pragmatic competence. The study showed that explicit instruction was more effective than implicit instruction in improving the participants' use of discourse markers. Similarly, Escobar and Fernandez (2017) showed that the participants' use of lexical bundles, boosters/hedges, and stance-taking strategies improved after explicit instruction. Additionally, Dastjerdi and Shirzad (2010), Asadi (2018), and Farahani (2019) found that explicit instruction in discourse markers can improve learners' writing performance.

However, El-Dakhs et al. (2022), who conducted a study to investigate the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on the use of interactional metadiscourse markers, found a positive, albeit very limited, influence for the

explicit/implicit teaching condition with the markers of self-mentions, appeals to shared knowledge, directives and questions. At the same time, Kapranov (2018) investigated the use of English discourse markers in written tasks at the advanced beginners' level of EFL proficiency. The study's results showed that implicit instruction positively affected the participants' use of discourse markers in their writing.

The use of discourse markers has also been studied in the context of international postgraduate business students' texts (Alyousef, 2015). The study found that using interactive and interactional markers was a beneficial tool for the students to express their ideas and opinions while engaging in multimodal finance texts. In addition, Darwish (2019) investigated writer-reader interaction in the writing of English L1 and L2 writers. The study found that L2 writers used fewer interactional markers and more interactive markers than L1 writers. This suggests that L2 writers may need to be made aware of how to use interactional markers to create a dialogue with the reader.

In the context of academic writing, it has been found (Lin, 2005; Lotfi et al., 2019) that the use of discourse markers can be beneficial for the writer to indicate their stance towards the topic and to signal transitions between points. In addition, Wishnoff (2000) conducted a study on the acquisition of pragmatic devices in academic writing and computer-mediated discourse and found that using discourse markers can be beneficial for the writer to express their opinion and signal shifts in the conversation.

Connective Markers as a Class of Discourse Markers

A more specific line of research focuses on instruction in connective markers. Connective markers are a subclass of discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987). They are words and phrases that help to connect ideas and form coherent sentences (Fraser, 2009; Hall, 2007; van Dijk, 1979). Examples of connective markers include words and phrases such as: first of all, secondly, in summary, and consequently. Connectives are essential in academic writing because they can help the reader understand the structure of the text and assist in the development of an argument (Williams, 2012). The types of connectives used in a text depend on the purpose of the writing, for example, whether the writer is trying to compare, contrast, or explain a concept.

It is believed that learners with higher proficiency tend to use more connective markers and display a greater understanding of the function of connectives. Additionally, they are more likely to use connective markers appropriately within their writing (Cheng & Tsang, 2022; Crossley et al., 2016; Liu & Braine, 2005; Lu, 2019). Chiang (2003) and Zhang (2000) showed that the use of cohesive markers significantly affected the perceived quality of writing and

suggested that learners should be encouraged to use cohesive markers in their writing. Yang and Sun (2012) studied the use of cohesive devices in argumentative writing by Chinese EFL learners at different proficiency levels. Results showed that learners with higher proficiency levels used more cohesive devices than those with lower proficiency levels. The study also concluded that the use of cohesive devices positively affected the perceived quality of writing.

Overall, these studies suggest that teaching connective markers to EFL learners is possible and can be beneficial for their writing. It needs to be clarified, however, whether implicit or explicit instruction is more conducive to the acquisition of connective discourse markers.

Task-based and Task-supported Instruction

The first instructional approach to teaching L2 connectives employed in the current study is task-based language teaching. As the name suggests, tasks are essential to TBLT. Over the last thirty years, researchers and promoters of TBLT have offered several definitions of a task (see East, 2021 or Ellis, 2003). While they differ in detail, the general idea is that a task allows for L2 acquisition through obtaining comprehensible input, allowing for output, or encouraging interaction between learners. A task is any situation in which learners must call upon their linguistic resources to perceive or convey some content, such as writing a comment on social media, listening to a podcast, filling out a form, or making a coffee appointment. These are examples of situations where learners need to use language focusing primarily on content rather than form. The teacher responds to problems with form when they arise during task performance. Thus, the task-based approach uses cognitive processes that promote language learning. Learners develop both their explicit and implicit L2 knowledge. They learn consciously and involuntarily (Ellis, 2003; Long, 2015; Nunan, 2004).

In TBLT, tasks are differentiated from exercises. While exercises require the use of language to perform a language-focused activity, tasks require language to perform a meaning-focused activity. Exercises may involve multiple matching, gap-filling, paraphrasing, or a cloze test. Language is used for the sake of completing the exercise; it has no communicative function. In a task, learners have to use language to achieve a goal that is beyond just the use of language, for example, understanding a voicemail message, watching a video, or reading a book. Learning a language is a by-product of using it. According to the criteria of a task (Ellis & Shintani, 2014), the primary focus of a task is on meaning, learners should experience some communication gap and rely on their own linguistic resources to complete the gap, and the outcome of a task is other than the use of language.

A typical TBLT lesson follows the so-called task cycle (Ellis, 2003; Willis, 1996). The pre-task phase involves activities conducted prior to the task itself, serving as an advanced organiser for learners. These activities include activating background knowledge through brainstorming or mind mapping related to the task topic, observing model task performances, engaging in similar tasks, or allowing time for task planning. The during-task phase focuses on the task itself and the options available to learners. Teachers can choose to let learners work independently or set time limits. Additionally, teachers can determine whether learners are permitted to access input data during the task. The introduction of surprising elements into a task is also an option. The post-task phase involves procedures for following up on task performance with three primary goals: providing an opportunity for task repetition, encouraging reflection on task performance, and fostering language-focused attention (Ellis et al., 2020).

The second instructional approach used in the study below is task-supported language teaching. It is based on a structural syllabus in which the teacher pre-selects specific lexical-grammatical features (e.g., connective markers), provides learners with an explicit explanation of when and how to use them and then offers mechanical exercises. The learners perform the task only after these initial stages (Ellis, 2019). An example of a TSLT implementation can be seen in Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), where certain tasks are integrated into the curriculum for the purpose of practising specific target structures. TBLT often adopts the traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) framework, employing focused tasks to elicit learners' application of the target structures (Ellis, 2019).

The main difference between TBLT and TSLT is that the former follows a task cycle and moves from implicit instruction and/or scaffolding in the pre- and while-task phases to explicit language-focused activities in the post-task phase (i.e., only after the learners have had the chance to perform the task). TSLT, on the other hand, provides explicit instruction in the initial phases of a lesson and uses tasks in the last stage of the lesson as an opportunity for free practice. However, current scholarship still exhibits some ambiguity regarding the interpretation of these terms, and it is the responsibility of the field to address and clarify the terminological confusion, as concluded by Loewen and Sato (2021) and East (2021).

The Study

The current study concerns teaching connective markers in the context of a foreign language classroom. It aims to investigate the efficacy of TBLT

and TSLT in developing EFL learners' ability to use connective markers in the written production of for-and-against essays. To the best of our knowledge, no previous research has addressed the impact of the two types of instruction on connective markers, although various studies investigated the extent to which implicit and explicit approaches impact the teaching of connectives (see Literature Review). The research question entertained in the study can thus be phrased as follows: what is the effect of the two types of instruction on teaching L2 connective markers?

Participants

The sample group for this research consisted of 82 (nationality) secondary/high school students who were learning English as a foreign language. They were selected for the study as part of convenience sampling, as they all shared the same level of proficiency and were taught by the same person. All of the participants were 15 years of age during the study. In addition, they had already been exposed to English for a minimum of five years in their primary school education. The students had five hours of English classes per week at the secondary school, but the study was conducted when they were beginning their first grade. This means that their teacher had taught them for two months, having conducted about 20 classes of 45 minutes each. The EFL program followed an eclectic framework prior to the study and was based on the *Focus 3* coursebook (MM Publications). The participants' proficiency at the time of the study could be categorised as B1/intermediate (according to the CEFR scale) or Novice High (according to the ACTFL rating). The level has been established based on the "Focus 2E placement test," an online test on a "Pearson eDesk" platform.

Instrument and Procedure

The study was implemented among 82 homogenous intermediate EFL learners who were assigned to two experimental groups (EG1, $n = 29$ and EG2, $n = 25$) and one control group (CG, $n = 28$). The participants in EG1 and EG2 received different types of instruction in connective markers (i.e., TBLT and TSLT, respectively), whereas the participants in CG attended their regular classes. A for-and-against essay was used as a data collection tool since this is the most often used type of written production in a school-leaving exam required for the completion of secondary education and university entrance.

The instructional treatment described in this section took place during the learners' regular class hours. Data collection was carried out at three points in time, following the pre-, post-, and delayed post-test design. Thus, the inter-

vention in weeks 1, 4, and 6 was the same in all three groups, that is, the learners were asked to produce a for-and-against essay. No access to dictionaries or reference materials was allowed. The aim was to keep the time of intervention and the materials used as similar as possible in the studied groups to minimise interference from other covariates (see Table 1 for a summary).

In week 1, all three groups were asked to write a for-and-against essay on the benefits and drawbacks of mobile phones. This was used as a pre-test. Learners' essays were later analysed for the number of connective markers used. The learners were informed that the essays would be returned to them at a later date. This was done in week 2 in EG1 and EG2 and week 3 in CG. The essays were, however, not corrected by the teacher. Instead, learners were encouraged to self-correct them (details of this procedure are included in descriptions of treatments in particular study groups).

In week 2, EG1 followed a TBLT lesson format. The first session took 90 minutes (two 45-minute lessons in a row). The pre-task phase included an introduction to the topic of the essay (i.e., to shop or not to shop at the weekends). The learners were asked to brainstorm their ideas (first individually, then with a partner). Some of their ideas were elicited by the teacher and put on the whiteboard. Then the pairs of learners were asked to discuss their ideas with other pairs thinking about both the positive and negative aspects of weekend shopping. The teacher monitored and provided reactive feedback if needed. The main task phase of the lesson included a jigsaw reading activity of an exemplary for-and-against essay. The learners received the model essay previously divided into six fragments (introduction, two arguments for, two arguments against, and a conclusion). They had to work with a partner to arrange these parts in a coherent whole. The text included bolded connective markers (see Appendix 1). This was followed by a brief teacher-led discussion on how a for-and-against essay should be composed to follow a logical structure. No explicit instruction on the use of connective markers was given, but some of the learners asked about the meanings of "therefore" and "not only... but also." The teacher explained the meanings of these terms using L1 equivalents. One of the learners asked why some parts of the text were bolded. The teacher briefly explained that these phrases help organise the text. The learners were then asked to answer several comprehension questions. In the post-task phase of the session, the teacher distributed learners' essays which they produced in week 1. The essays were not marked and the learners were asked to analyse them and try to self-correct in light of what had been said about the structure of a for-and-against essay. The learners were encouraged to use dictionaries and ask the teacher for help. After about twenty-five minutes of this silent work, the teacher asked the learners to refer to the sample essay and try to clearly organise and link their thoughts. The teacher then collected the improved versions of the essays.

In week 3, one session in EG1 was devoted to teacher-led feedback on the essays written by the learners. Special attention (apart from language errors) was given to the structure of a for-and-against essay and the use of connective markers. The teacher focused on the function of connectives and suggested a number of alternative markers. The learners were asked to analyse their essays for the use of connective markers and suggest improvements, especially in the essay written in week 1. Then the learners completed a multiple-choice test in which they had to choose the most appropriate connective marker. The same procedure was adopted in EG2 in week 3.

EG2 followed a TSLT lesson framework in week 2. Learners' attention was explicitly drawn to the target phrases. First, learners were provided with explicit instruction on how to write a for-and-against essay with a particular focus on L2 connective markers. The teacher provided the learners with a sample essay (the same as in EG1), discussed its structure, and drew learners' attention to the use of connective markers, explaining their role in making the text more cohesive. Next, the learners were asked to brainstorm alternatives to the connectives in the sample essay and their ideas were put on board. Then, the learners were given a multiple-choice test (the same as in week 3 in EG1) in which they had to decide which discourse marker best fits a given sentence. The learners were then asked to answer comprehension questions related to the sample essay. A discussion on weekend shopping followed. Then, the learners were handed in their unmarked essays from week 1, which they were asked to self-correct (following the same procedure as in EG1). Week 3 of the intervention followed the same procedure as in EG1, that is, explicit language-focused activities related to the composition of a for-and-against essay.

CG followed their coursebook in week 2. They took part in a lesson devoted to formal and informal ways of apologising (see Table 1).

In week 4, one session was devoted to a post-test in which the learners were asked to write a for-and-against essay on the benefits and drawbacks of living in a big city.

In week 6, the three groups were asked to produce an essay on the benefits and drawbacks of replacing traditional education with digital learning.

Table 1*Procedure in the Studied Groups*

Week	EG1 (TBLT)	EG2 (TSLT)	CG
1	Pre-test: Write an essay about the benefits and drawbacks of a mobile phone (45 minutes)		
2	Pre-task: brainstorming and discussion (20 minutes); Main task: jigsaw reading task, comprehension questions (25 minutes); Post-task: self-correction of the for-and-against essay from week 1 and a multiple-choice test (45 minutes).	1. Explicit instruction on the structure of the essay and the role of connective markers (10 minutes). 2. Multiple-choice test (10 minutes). 3. Reading task: comprehension questions and a discussion (15 minutes). 4. Self-correction of the for-and-against essay from week 1 and a multiple-choice test (45 minutes).	1. Teacher writes up different examples of apologies on the board. Learners are asked to think of a time when they have had to apologise to someone and what they said to apologise. 2. Learners look at the examples of apologies and decide which ones are formal and which ones are informal. They explain why they think this. 3. Learners come up with their own examples of formal and informal apologies in small groups. 4. Role-play of a situation in which learners apologise to someone. 5. Learners write a short dialogue between two people, one apologising and one accepting the apology (two 45-minute sessions).
3	Feedback and language focus (45 minutes).	Feedback and language focus (45 minutes).	Self-correction of the essay from week 1 (45 minutes).
4	Post-test: Write an essay about the benefits and drawbacks of living in a big city (45 minutes).		
6	Delayed post-test: write a for-and-against essay about the benefits and drawbacks of replacing traditional education with digital learning (45 minutes).		

Statistical Analysis and Results

The collected for-and-against essays from all the groups were first analysed for the use of connective markers. The researchers read the essays independently and identified all instances of connective markers. A point was awarded for the correct use of a given marker, that is, when the connective was used appropriately and following standard English rules. The inter-rater reliability was measured using percentage agreement and yielded 96%. The first rater's data was used in the analysis. The number of connectives for each learner from all

three data collection times was entered into an Excel sheet which was later transferred to the JASP package.

The Shapiro-Wilk tests indicate the p -values are all below .001, yet skewness and kurtosis are < 1 indicating a normal distribution of data. The data also satisfied the homogeneity of variance assumption ($p > .05$ in Levene's test). The standard deviation for all conditions is relatively low, suggesting that the data is relatively consistent.

In the next step, within-subjects effects were calculated. Since repeated measures violated Mauchly's assumption of sphericity, the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied to the F -statistic. The results of repeated measures ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the groups with respect to the number of connectives used (see Table 2).

Table 2
Within-subjects Effects

Within subjects effects								
Cases	Sphericity Correction	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	η^2	η^2_p
number of connectives	None	275.660 ^a	2.000 ^a	137.830 ^a	506.204 ^a	$< .001^a$.326	.865
	Greenhouse-Geisser	275.660	1.703	161.835	506.204	$< .001$.326	.865
number of connectives * group	None	150.451 ^a	4.000 ^a	37.613 ^a	138.140 ^a	$< .001^a$.178	.778
	Greenhouse-Geisser	150.451	3.407	44.164	138.140	$< .001$.178	.778
Residuals	None	43.020	158.000	.272				
	Greenhouse-Geisser	43.020	134.564	.320				

^a Mauchly's test of sphericity indicates that the assumption of sphericity is violated ($p < .05$).

The within-subjects effect revealed a significant main effect of the written test $F(2, 158) = 506.204$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .865$. The partial eta-squared value indicates that the effect size is large, indicating that the number of connectives used significantly affects the mean scores of the groups. Additionally, the results suggest that there is a significant difference between the groups with respect to the number of connectives used when accounting for the effect of the group. $F(4, 158) = 138.140$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .778$ indicates that the

difference is statistically significant. The effect size is medium, indicating that when accounting for the effect of the group, it significantly affects the number of connectives used.

With regard to between-subjects effects, Table 3 indicates that intervention was a significant factor $F(2, 79) = 309.840, p < .001, \eta^2_{\text{partial}} = .887$.

Table 3
Between-subjects Effects

Between-subjects effects							
Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	η^2_p
group	333.100	2	166.550	309.840	< .001	.394	.887
Residuals	42.465	79	.538				

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

This suggests there was a significant difference between the three groups in terms of the outcome variable, and the differences between the groups are unlikely to be due to chance. Furthermore, the effect size is large, indicating a strong effect.

Since the ANOVA results proved to be significant, post hoc testing was carried out using the Holm-Bonferroni correction (see Table 4). To illustrate the magnitude of differences between the groups, Cohen's *d* was used to assess effect sizes. These were interpreted as small (.40), medium (.70), and large (1.00) (as per Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

Table 4
Post hoc Comparison (Group)

Post hoc Comparison—group										
		95% CI for Mean Difference				95% CI for Cohen's <i>d</i>				
		Mean Difference	Lower	Upper	SE	<i>t</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	Lower	Upper	p_{holm}
pre-test	post-test	−2.386	−2.583	−2.188	.082	−29.217	−3.972	−4.212	−3.142	< .001
	delayed post-test	−2.084	−2.282	−1.886	.082	−25.521	−3.470	.161	−2.727	< .001
post-test	delayed post-test	.302	.104	.499	.082	3.696	.503		.845	< .001

Note. *p*-value and confidence intervals adjusted for comparing a family of 3 estimates (confidence intervals corrected using the Bonferroni method).

Note. Results are averaged over the levels of: group

The post hoc test compared the mean difference between pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test for the number of connectives. The results show that the mean difference between pre-test and post-test was -2.386 , and between pre-test and delayed post-test -2.084 . The mean difference between post-test and delayed post-test was $.302$. The p -value for the test was less than $.001$, indicating that the differences between the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test were statistically significant, with the pre-test and post-test having the largest difference with a Cohen's d of -3.972 .

Table 5
Post hoc Comparison (Number of Connectives)

Post hoc Comparisons—Number of Connectives										
		95% CI for Mean Difference				95% CI for Cohen's d				
		Mean Difference	Lower	Upper	SE	t	Cohen's d	Lower	Upper	p_{holm}
CG	TBLT	-2.423	-2.697	-2.149	.112	-21.603	-4.034	-4.942	-3.126	< .001
CG	TSLT	-2.489	-2.773	-2.204	.116	-21.366	-4.144	-5.079	-3.208	< .001
TBLT	TSLT	-.066	-.348	.217	.116	-.569	-.109	-.580	.362	.571

Note. p -value and confidence intervals adjusted for comparing a family of 3 estimates (confidence intervals corrected using the Bonferroni method).

Note. Results are averaged over the levels of: the number of connectives

Finally, as evidenced in Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference between CG and TBLT ($p < .001$) and between CG and TSLT ($p < .001$), but there is not a statistically significant difference between TBLT and TSLT ($p = .571$). Specifically, the results show that the mean difference between CG and TBLT is -2.423 . This difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The mean difference between CG and TSLT is -2.489 , and again this difference is statistically significant ($p < .001$). The mean difference between TBLT and TSLT is $-.066$, with a 95% confidence interval between $-.348$ and $.217$, and this difference is not statistically significant ($p = .571$).

Table 6 shows descriptive statistics for three groups: EG1, EG2, and CG, across three points in time: pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test.

Table 6
Descriptive Statistics

	Descriptive Statistics								
	pre-test			post-test			delayed post-test		
	CG	EG1	EG2	CG	EG1	EG2	CG	EG1	EG2
Valid	28	29	25	28	25	29	28	29	25
Mean	2.464	2.552	2.640	2.464	6.280	6.069	2.286	5.862	5.760
SD	.508	.506	.490	.508	.678	.799	.460	.693	.663
<i>p</i>	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001

The three treatment groups had similar numbers of participants and similar distributions of scores on the pre-, post-, and delayed post-test. The mean scores for EG1 and EG2 are higher than in CG, indicating that the intervention had an overall positive effect. The mean scores for EG1 and EG2 show an increase in the post-test and delayed post-test relative to the pre-test, suggesting that the treatments are effective.

On the pre-test, CG had the lowest mean score of 2.464, while EG2 had the highest mean score of 2.640. Similarly, on the post-test, EG2 had the highest mean score of 6.069, while CG had the lowest mean score of 2.464. On the delayed post-test, EG1 had the highest mean score of 5.862, while CG had the lowest score of 2.286.

Discussion

The main goal of the present study was to assess the impact of TBLT and TSLT on the written production of connective markers of 82 intermediate EFL learners who produced three different for-and-against essays in three time periods (before the intervention, directly after it, and two weeks later). EG1 followed a TBLT task cycle in which implicit instruction was provided in the pre-, and main-task phases, and explicit instruction in the post-task phase (following Ellis, 2003). EG2 experienced a pre-task explicit instruction of the target structure as in TSLT (Li et al., 2016). CG took part in their regular coursebook-based classes.

The results showed a statistical difference between the groups concerning the number of connectives used and revealed that the type of intervention significantly affected the number of connectives used. The most significant differences, as expected, were reported between the pre- and the post-test. A sta-

tistically significant difference was observed in favour of EG1 and EG2. In the delayed post-test, there was a slight but not statistically significant ($p = .571$) difference in favour of EG1. In other words, both types of instruction (TBLT and TSLT) brought about similar positive results.

Looking at the findings of SLA research in general, there is a consensus (de Graaff & Housen, 2009; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada & Tomita, 2010) that instruction is effective and facilitates the rate of ultimate achievement in language learning. The finding that both experimental groups reported significant gains following instruction is also in line with Li et al. (2016) in that treatments that involve attention to the form of the target structure are more effective than focus-on-meaning-only conditions where there is no such attention. However, Li et al. (2016) found the more explicit TSLT condition to have a greater effect than other conditions. Previous research into L2 discourse markers (e.g., Asadi, 2018; Dastjerdi & Shirzad, 2010; Escobar & Fernandez, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2012) also showed that explicit instruction was more effective than implicit instruction in improving the participants' use of these target features. In fact, investigations into the effectiveness of L2 pragmatics instruction in general (Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Plonsky & Zhuang, 2019; Ren et al., 2022) found that, on the whole, explicit instruction was more effective than implicit approaches. However, the current study found that the implicit/explicit condition (EG1) was also effective for the acquisition of connective markers.

Although SLA meta-analyses provide converging evidence for the advantage of explicit over implicit instruction, some researchers (e.g., Doughty, 2003; Goo et al., 2015) point out that these results might be an overestimation resulting from the bias of explicit testing of L2 knowledge and short intervention periods which put implicit learning at a disadvantage. In the current study, both TBLT and TSLT conditions had similar effects, although descriptive statistics and post hoc comparisons showed that it was the combination of implicit and explicit instruction, as in EG1, which proved to have a slight advantage in the delayed post-test. In a similar study to the current one, which targeted meta-discourse markers, El-Dakhs et al. (2022) also reported a positive but limited influence of the implicit/explicit condition on the markers of self-mentions, appeals to shared knowledge, directives and questions. Perhaps more extended intervention periods of implicit/explicit instruction might benefit attainment more than explicit-only conditions. The findings of a statistical meta-analysis (Li, 2010) suggest, for instance, that while the immediate and short-term effects of explicit feedback are greater, the long-term effects of implicit feedback are larger, more enduring, and increasing over time. Pawlak (2022) maintains that in foreign language classrooms with learners who have limited exposure to the target language, instruction should commence with explicit knowledge at the beginner level. However, more priority should be given to productive activities, interactive communication, and corrective feedback. He further asserts that at

higher proficiency levels, a gradual transition to a task-based syllabus should occur, with learners focusing on the meaning of language while concurrently paying proactive and reactive attention to its form.

Previous research findings (Cheng & Tsang, 2022; Crossley et al., 2016; Liu & Braine, 2005; Lu, 2019) also pointed to the fact that the more advanced the learners, the more effective the instruction was. Perhaps the fact that the learners in the current study were not beginners helped them benefit more from pragmatic instruction. The results might have been different with lower proficiency learners, although it is debatable whether the knowledge of connectives would be of primary importance to them.

Conclusion

The current study aimed to investigate the effect of two types of intervention, namely TBLT and TSLT, on the development of connective markers in the written production of a for-and-against essay of 82 intermediate Polish learners of English as a foreign language. Connective markers were chosen as the targets of the study as they help link ideas and sentences together to create a cohesive and logical flow of thoughts, and the for-and-against essay was used as a data collection tool since it is used as part of a secondary school-leaving exam.

Our findings indicate that instruction in both experimental groups positively impacted the number and quality of connective markers used in learners' essays. This suggests that instruction is effective and facilitates attainment. It remains to be seen, however, whether explicit or a combination of implicit/explicit conditions is more feasible for teaching connective markers. Previous research on L2 pragmatics instruction pointed to the advantage of explicit over implicit instruction. The current study did not investigate an implicit-only condition but used a task-based condition which proved as effective as task-supported language teaching. Therefore, some caveats are in order.

First, given that random sampling was not employed in this study, readers should consider that the participants were intermediate English learners when assessing the relevance of the findings to lower-level learners or second-language contexts. Jeon and Kaya's (2006), Plonsky and Zhuang's (2019), and Ren et al.'s (2022) meta-analyses have established that more proficient learners benefit more from pragmatics instruction. With regards to discourse markers, research (Cheng & Tsang, 2022; Crossley et al., 2016; Liu & Braine, 2005; Lu, 2019) has also found a similar relation. Future research should investigate the effects of such instruction on lower-level learners.

Secondly, this study focused on teaching English as a foreign language, a dominant trend in SLA studies. Future studies should explore the teaching of other languages. This is especially true since task-based principles should, in theory, apply to the teaching and learning of any second or foreign language (Shehadeh, 2019).

Thirdly, this research was based on a short-term intervention, so a longitudinal study of the effects of the two types of instruction may provide a more detailed understanding of their effectiveness. In particular, since the long-term treatments seem to favour implicit learning (Doughty, 2003; Li, 2010).

Finally, it should be highlighted that the linguistic forms targeted in the instruction were predetermined and not derived from the use of language, which is the approach recommended by task-based language teaching theorists (Long, 2015). Therefore, future studies ought to focus on the effects of instruction based on forms that emerge from language use.

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A For and Against Essay

It is commonly known that doing the shopping at weekends has become very convenient these days in Poland. A great number of people go shopping on Sundays and they cannot imagine this could be different. There are those who believe that purchasing things should not take place then. **Therefore**, the question arises whether shops should be open at weekends or not?

This cannot be denied that there are a lot of advantages of shopping at weekends. **Firstly**, the one who is busy can spend long hours walking around a mall to find the best products. **Additionally**, one can take their friends or family and choose from various forms of entertainment. Besides, stores attract customers by holding sales at the weekend. Thus, it is a sin not to take advantage of it.

Opponents point out that there are more drawbacks to weekend shopping rather than benefits. Someone once said “the quickest way to know a woman is to go shopping with her,” and this quote appears to be true in the times of consumerism. **First of all**, a shopping mall is treated like a meeting point, and the majority of people are inclined to admit they do it just to kill time. **Not only** do shop assistants need to stay at work, **but also** they cannot spend leisure with their families. **Moreover**, it is a vicious circle if everyone goes to commercial centres and helps this phenomenon to implant into everyday routine.

To sum up, there are different points of view on whether weekend shopping is good or bad. I personally believe that shopping centres ought to be closed, and there is enough time to buy items on a daily basis. Most European countries do not have problems with that, so why should we?

(adapted from: www.gettinenglish.com/rozprawka-za-i-przeciw/)

1. What are the advantages of shopping at weekends? 2. What is the reason why some people oppose weekend shopping? 3. What is the opinion of the author regarding weekend shopping? 4. How do people usually use shopping malls? 5. What is the current situation regarding weekend shopping in most European countries?