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THE INFLUENCE OF CONTRASTIVE LEXICAL APPROACH ON EFL LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC PERFORMANCE: THE CASE OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study is an investigation into the role of contrastive lexical approach (CLA), in comparison with explicit and implicit methods, in Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance. Contrastive and lexical underpinnings of CLA, as theories that lend themselves to teaching pragmatic competence, provided the impetus to compare CLA with the other two instructional methods. 47 participants were randomly assigned to three treatment groups. The participants received instructional treatment for 10 sessions through the use of video clips and PowerPoint files. Although no significant difference was found across language teaching methods, results revealed that all of them promoted the participants' pragmatic performance. Taking translation as a subcomponent of explicit teaching may have confounded the results of other similar studies to the advantage of explicit teaching. The relative advantage of CLA over the other two methods in this study, research literature, and the participants' comments about the positive role of contrastive practices in their easier use of native-like target forms may provide motivation for the inclusion of contrastive LCs in language classrooms. As the findings in this study suggest, language teaching practices can be improved through the use of contrastive techniques in teaching pragmatic performance.

Keywords: *Explicit Teaching, Implicit Teaching, Contrastive Lexical Approach, Pragmatic performance, Role-Plays, Lexical Chunks*

INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic competence is one of the main aspects of language learners' proficiency. Crystal (1997) defines pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication". Rose (1999) contends that pragmatic competence refers to a person's capacity in exploiting available linguistic resources (pragmalinguistics) proper to different contexts (sociopragmatics). Kasper (1997) believes that foreign language teaching has a way to promote language learners' metalinguistic awareness and this, in turn, makes it effective in enhancing their metapragmatic understanding in second language. Despite the critical role of pragmatic competence in EFL/ESL learners' successful use of language, compared to other skills, such competence has received sporadic, if any, attention in the course of language teaching and EFL/ESL materials (Aquino, 2011; Echeverria Castillo, 2009). When this advocacy has resulted in ardent support of teaching pragmatic in the course of language teaching (Bardovi-Harling, 2001; Jordan, 1992; Saville-Troike, 1992; Schmidt, 1993), there is not yet a general consensus on the appropriate methodology which best compensates for such shortcomings.

According to Rose (2005), research done so far in the field of pragmatics revolves around three major domains: (a) the teachability of pragmatics, done mostly through one group pretest-posttest design, with the prevalent evidence in support of teachability; (b) the role of instruction versus simple, non-manipulated exposure in affecting learning; and (c) comparing the effect of different teaching approaches mostly in the form of explicit instruction of metapragmatic information, and implicit intervention which involves manipulated exposure. What seems to be of importance with regard to research types is the fact that the third category could be further broken down into more varied language

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teaching approaches which are categorized under either explicit or implicit forms of instruction. As an example, when translation has been subsumed under explicit teaching, it could be considered as a separate language teaching approach in its own right.

In teaching pragmatic competence, research has been to the favor of explicit teaching. Some scholars have advocated an explicit consciousness-raising strategy in teaching pragmatics (cf. Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Thomas, 1983). Schmidt (1993) advocates a conscious attention to both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic information as prerequisites to learning pragmatics. Fukuya (1988), Takahashi (1996, 2001) and Takimoto (2009) reported the positive influence of explicit instruction on aspects of pragmatic competence. Franch (1998) believes that raising non-native learners' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic consciousness (through increasing their metapragmatic awareness which involves knowledge about social rules and functions of language forms in context) about the similarities and differences between L1 and L2, almost certainly, prevents negative outcomes of transfer. Franch's contention can be a further support for taking L1-L2 comparisons as a facilitative approach to teaching pragmatics which could be compared with other explicit and implicit teaching methods with regard to the capacity to promote language learners' pragmatic competence.

On the other hand, research shows a general endorsement of the positive role of both lexical chunks (cf. Conklin and Schmitt, 2008; Ellis *et al.*, 2008; Erman, 2009; Harwood, 2008; Jiang and Nekrasova, 2007; Millar, 2011; Nekrasova, 2009; Wood, 2002, 2006, 2007; Wray and Perkins, 2000) and translation in second language learning (cf. Cummins, 1983; Cook, 2010; Cook, 1992; Ellis, 1994, 2003; Sunderman and Kroll, 2006). This could provide an incentive for assigning a more independent and critical role to a contrastive lexical approach in teaching languages, which may in turn encourage researchers to investigate its educational effects in comparison with other language teaching approaches.

In this article, lexical chunks (LCs), which is defined as single word or multiword lexical units of language which are stored as single linguistic units in mind, represent an umbrella term to refer to lexical phrases, lexical chunks, lexicalized sentence stems, ready-made (complex) units, multi-word units, prefabricated chunks, formulas, and other similar formulaic linguistic units.

The role of first language has also received prominence in second language learning. Vivian Cook (1999) believes that if L1 is used as the first stage in language teaching, learners' L1 is approved as an advantageous source to draw on and not as an interfering adversity and this provides the opportunity to focus on pragmatics rather than formal language. In accordance with Cook's contention, it can be argued that through providing learners with L2 equivalents for L1 LCs, learners have a chance to resort to their L1 but this time they do not match literal translations of L2 forms with their L1, rather they are equipped with (pragmatic) equivalents as available sources to take advantage of.

To put it into a Contrastive Lexical Approach (CLA) viewpoint, the differences and similarities between languages and the interference of L1 pose no threat since L1-L2 LCs are considered as building blocks for language acquisition and this is expected to facilitate (pragmatic) L2 learning. CLA is a new teaching approach which, in this study, provides the opportunity to compare and discover pragmatic equivalents for LCs between languages and also supports EFL learners in employing LCs in conveying certain functions.

The present study is an attempt to discover if CLA enhances EFL learners' pragmatic performance. It was also carried out as an attempt to discover the effect of CLA on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance in comparison with other two major pragmatic teaching methods (i.e. explicit and implicit). The study was conducted on 47 Iranian EFL university students who were majoring in TEFL/TESL. The participants were assigned to three instructional groups and data were obtained through scoring written role-plays which were done by the participants at the end of each session. This article focuses on three major types of language learners' pragmatic competence, i.e. implicature, speech act and routine formulas and their ability to use them in proper contexts. In order to answer the main research questions, after presenting a general review of related literature and the methodology of the research, quantitative and qualitative results are provided and the related discussions are made based on obtained results and the final conclusions will ensue.

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Review of Literature

The Role of Translation in Language Learning

In order to rationalize the CLA stance taken in this article researches in favor of translation and LCs are presented and then studies which substantiate the potential of committing lexicon to contrastive practices are introduced. With regard to the role of translation and contrastive L1-L2 language teaching practices, research is rich with evidence which emphasizes the positive and supportive role of translation or L1 transfer in students' language learning (cf. Atkinson, 1987; Baynham, 1983; Butzkamm and Caldwell, 2009; Cohen and Brooks-Carson, 2001; Fernandez-Guerra, 2014; Hall and Cook, 2012; Husain, 1994; Kern, 1994; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 1992; Lengyel and Navracsecs, 1996; Mogahed, 2011; Newmark, 1991; Omura 1996; Pan and Pan, 2012; Perkins 1985; Prince 1996; Ellis 1985; Titford, 1985).

After doing an experiment on 72 intermediate language learners, Vaezi and Mirzaei (2007) found that translations promoted language learners' accuracy. Kallkvist (2004) refers to the research on L2 vocabulary retention and contends that despite the general belief which is based on the idea that watching movies with subtitles helps learners better preserve words, his research surprisingly turned out to suggest that when the movie is played in L1 with L2 subtitles, vocabulary retention is promoted and he believe that this may have critical implications for both language teachers and learners who held different beliefs on how to watch movies to promote language teaching and learning. He attributes this prolonged memory retention to the complex cognitive processes involved in L1-L2 translation exercises. Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) discovered that those Japanese university students who used Japanese translation to write English essays gained higher scores compared to Japanese students who did not. They further reported that Japanese language learners who took advantage of translation found it easier to generate thoughts, to clearly communicate their beliefs and viewpoints, and finally, to look up words in dictionaries. Kallkvist (2013) found that translation had an effective role in promoting language learners' initiation and active participation.

Some researchers have advocated the use of translation for advanced language learners. This may be due to the fact that advanced language learners have a strengthened basis for learning a target language, i.e., their L1. Perkins (1985) suggested that advanced language learners are always exposed to and thus preoccupied with L1-L2 cross-linguistic equivalences at syntactic, semantic and stylistic levels and this situation promotes their chances of advancing their proficiency in L2. Tiford's (1985) claim is also in keeping with the idea that, for advanced language learners, translation is advantageous strategy to resort to. Kallkvist's (2008) study reveals that two types of focus-on-formS instruction (translation and fill-in-the-blank) work best in combination and provides evidence for the beneficial role of translation in language teaching. He further contends that if language learners need to get involved in communications in contexts which necessitate translation, there is no point in depriving learners of the opportunity to promote their proficiency in this area. In a similar vein, researchers put emphasis on the positive role of LCs in promoting language learners' proficiency. Next section involves a review of substantiated findings for the positive role of LCs in language teaching and learning.

The Role of Lexical Chunks in Language Learning

Research supports the idea that the knowledge and abundant use of formulaic language facilitates language learners' achieving naturalness in language use. Millar (2011) carried out a study to discover the processing demand of formulaic sequences made by non-native speakers for addressees. Thirty native speakers of British English participated in his study. Formulaic sequences were operationalized through bigram collocations. By using eye-tracking technique he showed that collocations made by 960 Japanese University students who were learning English as a foreign language, which involved deviations from native formulaic norms, demanded more prolonged time to be processed by native speakers. Millar realized that sentences with words selected by non-native speakers were read less quickly by native speakers than sentences containing words chosen by native speakers. He came to the conclusion that formulaic sequences facilitate processing and that the inability to use formulaic language results in communication difficulties.

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Zhao and Dong (2009) indicated that there was a correlation between the quality of language production and the amount of lexical chunks that Chinese language learners use. Hsu (2005) also found a considerable correlation between the oral proficiency of Taiwanese participants and the number of lexical collocations they used. Boers *et al.*, (2006) compared two groups. Both groups received the same language materials within eight months. One group was taught to concentrate on “standardized word combinations”, and the second group was not made aware of such combinations and the teaching method was similar for both groups. It was found that the first group outperformed the other group in an oral proficiency test. Interviews at the end of the research showed a correlation between the oral proficiency test results and the quantity of formulaic sequences employed.

The proper language teaching method which best facilitates the presentation and use of LCs is still under debate. Cortes (2006) believes that teaching practices in the classroom does not provide learners with the chance to freely use lexical bundles in their writing and this may account for her language learners’ unwillingness to use lexical bundles. However, her students reported that the lesson had promoted their awareness of the functional role of bundles. Jones and Haywood (2004) also tried to introduce a technique to teach bundles to facilitate deep processing and support learners in taking notice of both grammatical and semantic features of lexical bundles. They had a focus on the use of formulaic sequences in academic reading and writing. In their research 21 EAP learners from two intact classes at the University of Nottingham were subjected to educational treatment. They contend that since there is no methodology for teaching formulaic sequences, their teaching involved a cautious approach which aimed at raising the participants’ awareness of formulaic sequences in academic texts and their further use of formulaic sequences in academic productions in the form of discursive essays.

The techniques they employed in the reading phase included normal meaning-focused activities, awareness-raising activities for formulaic sequences through input enhancement, and teaching strategies for using formulaic sequences. In the writing phase, which expanded on the reading instruction phase, the participants wrote four academic essays after they were supplied with grammatical and functional characteristics of formulaic sequences. At the end the students produced concordance texts. Although the pretest-posttest results suggested that they had successfully increased the participants’ awareness of the crucial role of phrases in academic texts, they were less satisfied with their participants’ improvements in the use of phrases in controlled situations and in their essays. In the light of these uncertainties about the appropriate methodology for teaching LCs, this research provides an opportunity to weigh the strength of CLA in promoting language learners’ awareness and effective use of LCs.

Some studies have a focus on the role of formulaic knowledge in effective language use (cf. Chan and Liou, 2005; Fahim and Vaezi, 2011; Osman, 2009). Osman (2009) discovered that Malaysian language learners who received instructions on a series of lexical chunks scored higher in communicative tasks in groups. Osman’s participants reported the positive influence of LCs on their confidence and comfort when communicating in English. Bircan (2010) found that teaching vocabulary through phrases increases the chances of lexical retention by Turkish language learners. Tremblay *et al.*, (2011) discovered that lexical bundles were read more readily than similar groups of words that were not considered as lexical bundles. They further showed that sentences constituting lexical bundles had more odds of being accurately remembered compared with sentences without lexical bundles, and participants declared that they made more sense. All these findings positively support the argument that LCs are in fact processed more readily than other non-chunk groups of words, and thus they probably facilitate the production and comprehension of fluent speech.

The Role of Contrastive Lexical Approach in Language Learning

There exists a plethora of research with the findings which can be construed as an endorsement of the advantageous role of CLA approach in SLA. In the field of neurolinguistics, Abutalebi (2008) showed that L2 is acquired through almost the same neural structures involved in L1 acquisition. Despite the tenets of critical period hypothesis, his study further indicated that different neural processing between L1 and L2 may fade away as one achieves a more native-like proficiency, “reflecting a change in language processing mechanisms: from controlled processing for a weak L2 system (i.e., a less proficient L2) to

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more automatic processing” (Abutalebi, 2008). Yamashita and Jiang (2010) carried out a research and discovered that after being stored in the memory, L2 collocations are processed independent of L1. They further found out that in acquiring L2 collocation, even in the case of congruent collocations which are similar to L1 collocations in form and function, learners do not necessarily rely on such similar L1 collocations. They also suggested that the acquisition process of L2 collocations takes a long time, and both L1 congruency and the amount of L2 input are interactively effective in the acquisition process.

Laufer and Girsai (2008) performed a research and investigated the role of three approaches (meaning-focused instruction, non-contrastive form-focused instruction and contrastive analysis and translation) on high school students’ vocabulary learning. They discovered that the contrastive analysis group was more successful than the other two groups in the retention of vocabulary. They concluded that contrastive analysis and translation should play a role in language teaching. They further argue that the revival of these approaches does not necessarily mean the exclusion of communicative practice and undermining the significance of functional ability in target language, rather such communicative goals may be better accomplished through the means of translation and contrastive analysis. Laufer and Girsai (2008) further contend that:

The pervasive influence that L1 has on the learner lexis and the persistence of L1-based errors at advanced levels of learning suggest that contrastive form-focused instruction, which raises the learners’ awareness of the L1–L2 differences and provides practice in the areas of these differences, may prove more effective than teaching methods that ignore the cross linguistic influence on lexical learning.

Prince’s (1996) research also indicated the advantage of translation practices with regard to the amount of vocabulary one masters. Yet in another study, Husain (1995) found that translation techniques had the capability to promote language learning in general. He further reported that using translation enhanced language learners’ ability in learning vocabulary and phrases, when it was not found supportive in learning tenses. He believes that such results are indicative of the fact that languages share semantic rather than structural features.

On the other hand, major research carried out in the field of pragmatic competence suffers from a major drawback which Grabowski (2007; 2008) refers to as pragmatic underrepresentation, since they put their major focus on pragmatic comprehension. Norris and Ortega (2000) provide some recommendations to improve research on the role of instruction of pragmatic competence, including simplification of designs through manipulating few variables, having pretest, posttest, and true control groups, exercising a long-term program to replicate certain variables and presenting thorough and exact report for variables and statistical analysis. What is more, the negligence of translation to the advantage of explicit-implicit research models in studies that focus on the effect of different teaching approaches on pragmatic competence and also the much appreciated role of contrastive LCs in facilitating language learning and teaching necessitate a comparative study.

The Present Study

In order to compare the effect of CLA on Iranian EFL language learners’ pragmatic performance with two other instruction methods three experimental groups are to be taught for 10 sessions and their performances measured. Each group is to receive specific instruction in the form of explicit, implicit or contrastive treatment. Each session, the participants’ pragmatic performance is measured through scoring written role-plays. Two raters score all the participants’ productions. Two participants from each group are interviewed in order to reach more accurate interpretation of quantitative findings in the repeated measure statistical analysis phase.

This study aims at investigating the role of contrastive lexical approach in Iranian EFL learners’ pragmatic performance and is an attempt to see whether instruction in the form of CLA facilitates learning second language pragmatics and further, if CLA better promotes EFL learners’ pragmatic performance compared to implicit and explicit instructions. Attempt is made to delineate the specific contributions of CLA to teaching pragmatic performance compared with the other two methods through obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data. Further, this research aims at satisfying Norris and Ortega’s (2000) call for a long-term pragmatic program through measuring the participants’ repeated

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pragmatic performances throughout the pragmatic treatment. This study, therefore, seeks to answer the following research questions:

Q1: Does contrastive lexical teaching promote Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance?

Q2: Does contrastive lexical teaching promote Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance more than explicit language teaching?

Q3: Does contrastive lexical teaching promote Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance more than implicit language teaching?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method

Design

In order to obtain multifaceted data and to achieve triangulation, one of the most desirable mixed method designs in educational research, i.e., sequential explanatory mixed methods design was employed (cf. Creswell, 2002, 2003; Creswell *et al.*, 2003; Ivankova *et al.*, 2006). This research approach is in keeping with one of the research designs proposed by Dornyei (2007) named experiments with parallel interviews, which involves the improvement of the experiments through conducting interviews in order to obtain participants' viewpoints and thoughts which are not available in experimental findings. Dornyei believes that adding a qualitative step to examine the nature of developmental processes through treatment is extremely beneficial in promoting internal validity. Therefore, this study involved an experimental research which was complemented by interviews in order to achieve triangulation in interpreting results.

The experiment involved a repeated measure design which was adopted in order to investigate the ongoing effect of experimental treatments on the participants' pragmatic performances. Role-plays were scored and subjected to repeated measure analysis and descriptive analysis of the trends that the three experimental groups represent within a diagram. Scores were assigned to written role-plays based on an analytic scoring rubric of a validated pragmatic performance test proposed by Grabowski's (2007; 2008), which is presented in Appendix A.

Participants

Participants were 47 Iranian university students from Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz, Iran. All participants were majoring in TEFL/TESL at Master's degree (MA) level. At first, 66 participants (15 male and 51 female students) were randomly assigned to three experimental groups. Randomization was achieved through using SPSS software version 20. Among all 66 participants, 47 students managed to complete all ten-session role-plays which could be quantitatively scored. The first experimental group, i.e., Group A or the Implicit Experimental Group (IEG) consisted of 18 participants. The second experimental group was named Group B or Explicit Experimental Group (EEG) with 14 participants. Finally, there were 15 participants in Group C or the Contrastive Lexical Approach Experimental Group (CEG). Participants had no prior experience in learning pragmatics.

Instrumentation

A standard Oxford Quick Placement test or QPT (version 1) was used to control the proficiency level of three experimental groups. This test consisted of 60 multiple-choice items which evaluated the test takers' vocabulary and grammar knowledge. It also included cloze-test sections and 5 sign notice questions. According to Geranpayeh (2003), this test has already been issued and validated in 20 countries with more than 6000 language learners.

In order to rate the participants' pragmatic production data which were gained through written role-plays, Grabowski's (2007; 2008) rubric for scoring pragmatic performance was adopted. This rubric includes four general scales (grammatical control, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and psychological appropriateness) each representing a 0 (no effective use) to 4 (effective use) scoring range (cf. Grabowski, 2008). The analytic scoring rubric is represented in Appendix A.

Soler (2005) believes in the usefulness of audiovisual materials in providing learners with the pragmatic contents of target languages. Soler further asserts that audiovisual discourse analysis can be the basis of pragmatic judgment tasks as a way to promote learners' capability in communicating in various cultural

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environments. Therefore, one of the TV series which was considered to be quite replete with implicatures, situational routines and speech acts was used as the main source of pragmatic instruction. This TV series was adapted to be taught to three experimental groups (i.e. EEG, IEG, and CEG).

Procedure

An online pragmatic self-assessment test with instances of pragmatic contents, i.e., situational routines and implicatures extracted from American TV series, was issued and sent to all of the participants' emails. In this online test, the participants selected one number for each instance of pragmatic content from likert-scales to show their ability in using that pragmatic unit in real situations. As the major pragmatic contents of the instructions to three experimental groups, less known pragmatic units, i.e. those selected by the participants in the online pragmatic self-assessment test, were selected to be included in the pragmatic course (for situational routines and implicatures). Three experimental groups were taught for 10 sessions, 30 minutes for each session. At the end of each session, the participants wrote role-plays in pairs and tried to include the pragmatic utterances (implicature, routine and speech act), taught each session, in one conversation as immediate posttests.

Instructional Treatment for EEG

Doughty (2003) asserts that all types of explicit instruction involve the explanation of rules to learners. The EEG received a sequential method which involved performing a range of activities beginning from awareness-raising tasks and ending in production activities in the form of role-plays. The EEG received a plain text caption, but metapragmatic explanations and explicit definitions followed all the contents with information on implicatures, routines, and speech acts included.

Pragmatic instruction to the EEG involved four stages. In the first stage, i.e. input exposure phase, students watched specific parts related to implicature, situational routines, and speech acts from a TV series. In the second stage, after the participants finished answering to metapragmatic questions, presented to them in the form of PowerPoint illustrations, explicit underpinnings for pragmatic contents were provided. Metapragmatic instructions on pragmatic contents (speech acts, routines and implicatures) were given and metapragmatic rules for speech acts, implicatures and routines were also taught through PowerPoint illustrations. Next, routines were explicitly defined, types of implicatures were determined, and the request modifications and strategies were explained for each pragmatic unit after the participants' attempts to delineate pragmatic characteristics of each pragmatic unit.

The fourth stage, i.e. production practice phase involved fabricating written role-plays which engaged students in different social roles with implicatures, routines and speech acts, where they could practice and gain familiarity with pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of implicatures, routines and speech acts. In this stage, learners created meaningful conversations and included certain pragmatic sentences into their fabrications. All these materials had been prepared in the form of PowerPoint illustrations. The participants in this group were allowed to look up words in monolingual dictionaries and only read dictionary definitions for words (cf. Appendix B).

Instructional treatment for IEG

Since research literature shows that implicit instruction is not thoroughly operationalized (Doughty and Williams, 1998), in order to be comprehensive, the treatment of the IEG involved a parallel method and combined two implicit techniques, i.e., input enhancement through highlighting and bolding implicatures in the captions (thus a typographical enhancement), and paraphrasing exercises. The participants in the IEG were involved in four stages during each of the ten instructional sessions (without the metapragmatic stage).

The first stage involved exposure with a focus on the same pragmatic contents presented to the students in the explicit group, although this version was remodeled by including captions in bold-face and capital letters which addressed the pragmatic content of the series extracts. These series extracts were the same as those forms for making implicatures, routines, and speech acts in the explicit group. The material to be taught to IEG was captioned and all the pragmatic contents were shown in bold-face and capital letters.

The second stage involved reading comprehension activity through which the learners were required to answer to non-pragmatic comprehension questions. In the third stage, the participants paraphrased

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pragmatic units which were put within textual contexts adapted from two online corpora (Corpus of Contemporary American English and Corpus of American Soap Operas). Pragmatic units were underlined and were presented in boldface form.

In the fourth stage, a series of role-plays were created and written by the participants in order to promote students' engagement in different social roles with implicatures, routines and speech acts. In this stage, learners fabricated meaningful conversations and inserted certain pragmatic sentences into their fabrications. All these materials had been prepared in the form of PowerPoint illustrations. The participants in this group were permitted to look up words in monolingual dictionaries through reading samples and contexts in which unknown words occurred (cf. Appendix B).

Instructional Treatment for CEG

CLA instruction is similar to the IEG in that it provides no metapragmatic, consciousness-raising and explicit instruction. The CEG also received four stages of instruction, without the two metapragmatic stages which was only provided to the EEG. The first stage involved CLA exposure with a focus on the content of the series extracts. These series extracts were the same as those presented to the students in the explicit teaching condition, although this version contained extracts from TV series containing implicatures, situational routines, and speech acts with instances of all these translated into Persian and presented through PowerPoint illustrations.

The second stage involved a guessing game through which whenever a pragmatic point (in Persian subtitle) came up, the learners guessed the equal implicature, situational routine, or speech acts in English in the conversation they were going to hear after the pause. This stage was in the form of guessing equivalent implicatures, situational routines, and speech acts in English with Persian equivalents at hand, which was expected to result in learners' noticing the gap between their current proficiency and target language proficiency.

Next, the participants proposed other pragmatic equivalents for each English implicature, situational routine and speech acts in Persian and decided which Persian equivalent for pragmatic units represented the English pragmatic units in all other contexts (i.e. translexeme). They were also asked to find other pragmatic equivalents for each translated Persian implicature, routine and speech act. Finally, they were asked to choose among translations for each pragmatic unit within a context which was taken from two online corpora (Corpus of Contemporary American English and Corpus of American Soap Operas).

In the fourth stage (production practice), EFL learners wrote feasible written role-plays in order to promote their engagement in different social roles with implicatures, routines and speech acts where they could practice and gain contrastive familiarity with pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of implicatures, routines and speech acts. In this stage, learners were supposed to create meaningful conversations and include certain pragmatic sentences into their fabrications. The participants in this group looked up words in bilingual English to Persian dictionaries. All these materials had been prepared in the form of PowerPoint illustrations (cf. Appendix B).

Pilot Study of the Experimental Procedure

A pilot study was carried out at a university in Iran with 49 MA students majoring in TEFL in order to find possible shortcomings and to prevent future mistakes. Based on feedback obtained from the participants and the experimental procedures the Web-Based pragmatic self-evaluation test was modified and the prompts of the likert-scale self-rating items were shortened. It was decided that in order to write meaningful and pragmatically acceptable conversations, the participants needed more time. Thus, in the main study the participants had the opportunity to write conversations as homework assignments and could send them through emails every week. Based on the results gained from pilot study the least known routines and implicatures were included as the instructional contents for all the experimental groups in the main study. Data gathered from the participants of the main experimental study (63 Ahvaz M.A. TEFL students) also yielded similar routines and implicatures as the least known items by the participants.

Data Analysis

Inter-coder (inter-rater) reliability ensures that the results obtained are not because of the personal judgments of researchers. With regard to pragmatic performance test (role-plays), due to the presence of

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two raters in this study, and in order to control for the raters' bias, tests of inter-rater consistency and reliability between raters were performed for the entire test as well as for each individual language knowledge component using Krippendorff's (1980) alpha. Raters make peace between qualitative and quantitative techniques by quantifying subjective judgments in numbers and as Krippendorff (1980) claimed results in credibility of our findings through triangulation. The researchers took advantage of Krippendorff's alpha as the index of reliability between two raters because of some benefits such as considering and measuring agreements due to chance, imposing no limit for the number of coders and no limit for levels of measurement (ordinal, interval, nominal, ratio) etc. The acceptable alpha level was decided to be 0.70.

Two raters scored all the conversations and after the inter-rater reliability was ensured, the mean scores were taken as the final scores for each instance of conversation written by participants. After ensuring the inter-rater reliability of role-play scores pragmatic performance test scores were subjected to mixed repeated measure two-way ANOVA (or mixed between-within subjects ANOVA or split-plot ANOVA) in order to find possible significant differences between groups with regard to performances across time and also in order to discover whether the participants in each group had gained more capability in their pragmatic performance.

As the second step of sequential explanatory mixed methods design, this study involved a qualitative multiple case study approach. Qualitative data were obtained through interviewing 6 participants (two participants from each classroom), together with EFL learners' performances in the form of written role-plays in the classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Proficiency of Experimental Groups

In order to ensure the homogeneity of the three treatment groups with regard to their general proficiency, the results obtained from QPT were subjected to one-way ANOVA statistics. Some statistical tests assume the equality of variance of groups. Levene's test confirms the presence or absence of such assumption. Since the significance value (Sig.) for Levene's test was .88, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated. There was no significant difference at $p < .05$ level in QPT scores for the treatment groups: $F(2, 44) = .74, p = .49$ (More details can be found in table 1). Results suggest that the participants in the three groups are similar with regard to their general language proficiency.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for one-way ANOVA on QPT scores

Groups	n	Mean	SD
IEG	18	35.11	6.54
EEG	14	36.93	7.02
CEG	15	37.93	6.75

Parametric Assumptions

The assumption of normality was explored for all ten variables. Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistics reveals if the scores are normally distributed. Non-significant values indicate the normality of distributions (Pallant, 2007). In this research, the test of normality revealed the normality of the distribution of scores (except for the third variable). Kolmogorov-Smirnov Sig. values were 0.20, 0.20, 0.04, 0.11, 0.20, 0.20, 0.20, 0.2, 0.20, 0.20 for each session score respectively. Normal Q-Q plot presents the observed value together with the expected value of normal distribution. If the plot shows a fairly straight line the score distribution is normal (Pallant, 2007). As Pallant (2007) further suggests, in a Detrended Normal Plot, which indicates the score deviations from straight line, points should not cluster around zero line. Histograms, Normal Q-Q plots and Detrended Normal Q-Q Plots all suggested normal distributions. The outlying cases pose no serious threat since the 5% Trimmed Mean statistic revealed similar values for ten variables (As presented in table 2), thus, all cases were retained.

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Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Pragmatic Performance Scores across Ten Time Periods

Time Periods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mean	7.86	8.30	8.95	8.29	8.70	9.45	9.87	9.38	9.58	9.57
5% Trimmed Mead	7.90	8.28	8.93	8.27	8.70	9.39	9.93	9.46	9.57	9.58

Inter Rater and Intra Rater Reliability

Two raters were employed to assign scores to the participants’ pragmatic performances in the form of role-plays. The inter-rater reliability was examined through running a macro in SPSS which calculated Krippendorf’s alpha for 47 participants and 10 performances during the experiment (470 scores in general). The intra-rater reliability was also assessed through examining the performances of the first 20 participants. For the grammar, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and psychological sections the Krippendorf’s alpha were 0.74, 0.73, 0.75, and 0.73 respectively. The general reliability for the two raters in the pragmatic performance test (1880 score pairs) was 0.75.

The intra rater reliability of the scores given by the author as one of the main raters was also calculated. For the grammar, sociolinguistic, sociocultural and psychological sections the Krippendorf’s alpha were 0.80, 0.72, 0.71, and 0.72 respectively. The general reliability for the two raters in the pragmatic performance test (800 score pairs) was 0.75.

Repeated Measure Results

A mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance was conducted to assess the impact of three different language teaching approaches (implicit, explicit and CLA) on the participants’ scores on pragmatic performance tests across ten time periods (through ten experimental sessions). 47 participants’ pragmatic performances (in the form of written role-plays) were scored (18 participants from the implicit group, 14 participants from the explicit group and 15 participants from the CLA group). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated since the significance value for each variable (except the third one) in Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variance is non-significant (.15, .08, .01, .09, .30, .45, .79, .22, .77, .91). Further, in Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices the significant value is .034 which is higher than .001. There was no significant interaction between instruction type and time, Wilks Lambda = .52, $F(18, 72) = 1.55$, $p = .09$, partial eta squared = 0.28. There was a substantial main effect for time, Wilks Lambda = 0.49, $F(9, 36) = 4.20$, $p < .005$, partial eta squared = 0.51 with all three groups showing an increase in their pragmatic performance (See table 3).

Table 3: Pragmatic performance test scores for implicit, explicit and CLA approaches across ten time periods

Time	Implicit			Explicit			CLA		
	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD
1	18	8.16	2.74	14	6.92	2.23	15	8.36	3.25
2	18	8.11	1.65	14	7.75	2.38	15	9.06	3.26
3	18	8.69	2.69	14	9.25	2.43	15	9.00	3.70
4	18	7.63	2.7	14	8.35	2.15	15	9.03	3.30
5	18	7.91	3.21	14	8.67	2.19	15	9.66	3.20
6	18	9.50	2.99	14	8.82	2.35	15	10	3.48
7	18	9.38	3.25	14	9.03	2.58	15	11.23	3.00
8	18	9.19	3.34	14	8.50	2.03	15	10.43	2.95
9	18	9.52	3.05	14	9.17	2.27	15	10.03	3.07
10	18	9.52	2.99	14	8.71	2.93	15	10.43	3.27

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The main effect comparing the three types of intervention was not significant, $F(2, 44) = 1.05$, $p = 0.35$, partial eta squared = 0.04, suggesting no difference in the effectiveness of the three teaching approaches. Since, based on the trend analysis, the linear trend seems to fit best (Sig. = .000), it can be concluded that in general all treatments have promoted the pragmatic performance ability of the participants. All three groups show a gradual and incremental promotion with regard to their capability in producing pragmatically sound conversations. The developmental process of all three groups is presented in figure 1.

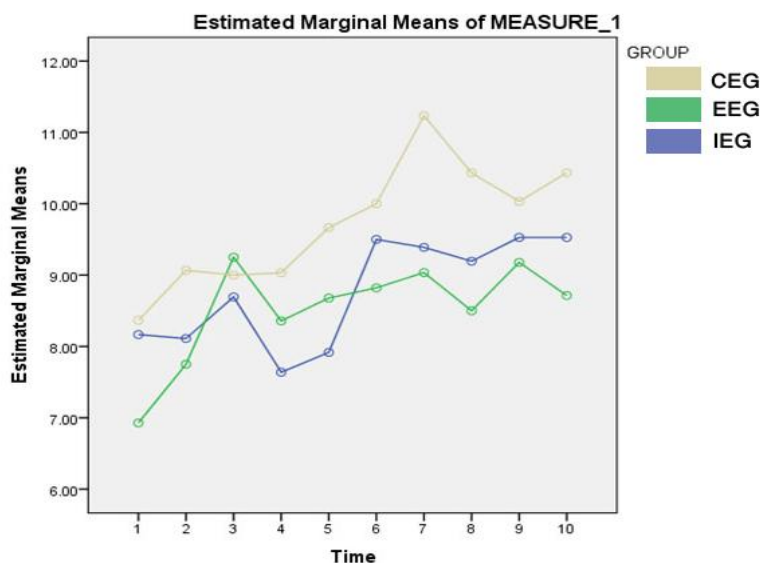


Figure 1: Developmental Process of Three Treatment Groups

Qualitative Results

This section is a further inquiry into the influence of three language teaching approaches on the participants' pragmatic performance, and aims at proper and more accurate interpretation of results and findings. Based on their scores in pragmatic performance test, two participants from each group who showed a constant developmental trend in their performances were interviewed. The two participants in IEG (participants A and B) were in agreement with each other with regard to the fact that the two major practices (pragmatic units in context and paraphrasing) facilitated the process of producing written role-plays through providing them with a higher understanding of the uses of pragmatic speech. They further believed that their growing involvement with the course improved their pragmatic performance in writing role-plays. The participants referred to the positive role of input enrichment strategies as triggering prompts which provided them with a more clear understanding about the focus of instruction and guided them throughout the course. These claims are supported by Kubota's (1995) findings in favor of implicit instruction for Japanese EFL learners, although the authors of this article have a more productive aspect of pragmatic competence in mind.

As Participant A commented, the treatment had raised her awareness about the lack of native-like speech in her target language use and incapability in conveying intended messages. Participant B attributed his development in pragmatic production to the highly meaningful nature of the course which was in contrast with other language courses which encouraged parroting and simple repetition of language.

The two participants in EEG group (participants C and D) put more emphasis on the role of video clips and the enjoyment they experienced through watching these clips in promoting their performance. Participant C reported that she lost the role-plays she had written and was dismayed at the thought of doing it all over again. When she began to write the conversations anew, she found it much easier to do for the second time. She further claimed that she was quite unaware of the pragmatic content of the target language and that the effect of instruction on sociopragmatic aspects of her learning during the course was

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significant. This is quite in keeping with Rose and Ng's (2001) findings that when both explicit and implicit instructions positively influenced learners' pragmatic proficiency, only explicit instruction developed learners' sociopragmatic proficiency. In a similar vein, Participant D considered explicit pragmatic exercises as effective practices in enhancing his attention and concentration.

The participants in CEG (participants E and F) perceived discovering their gaps in their language proficiency as the main advantage of the treatment they experienced. During the treatment course, they reported that they lacked appropriate knowledge in choosing the proper speech which fit specific situations. Participant E claimed that as a consequence of the treatment she became more aware of the more native-like speech and that the course made her less think in Persian and encouraged her to look for more reasonable target forms. Participant F criticized equivalency exercises for being confusing and thought that she came up with indecisive answers.

Discussion

These assertions approve of Myles, Hooper, and Mitchell's (1998) suggestion that classroom interactions with competent L2 speakers must be increased as a scaffolding strategy to help learners see the gap between their knowledge of formulaic language and the incoming input as they try to analyze and use them. The common point in almost all participants' comments was their falling back on the use of their L1 (Persian) when fabricating the conversations and this is quite in line with Danchev's (1982) finding that translation is a natural process and that in any case learners show a tendency to resort to translation. Kopczyński (1983) also believes that L1 exists in language learners' minds and the claim that such background knowledge is used by second language learners is a logical explanation. He believes that the learners' falling back on their native language for an explanation is a natural process and that in the continuous process of language learning there exists a contrastive mental process in learners' minds. Kopczyński further asserts that translation is advantageous in the elicitation of structures with low odds of being called for in the absence of such contrastive process. The commonality across these three groups was their emphasis on the positive role of movie clips and also their inescapable use of translation in writing role-plays.

Putting all these findings together one may come up with the conclusion that contrastive language learning promotes language learners' opportunity in easily remembering L2 native-like structures which might be more difficult and thus less likely to occur without translation. It seems that such contrastive practices do not impose an L1 thinking process when using L2 forms on language learners. On the other hand, L1-L2 equivalents easily supply language learners' with automaticity in L2 native-like use without making them think in their L1 before producing L2 forms. This is the idea that Abutalebi (2008), Yamashita and Jiang (2010) and some others support.

The results indicate that teaching pragmatic knowledge through three different methods promote EFL learners' ability in producing acceptable pragmatic speech. However, it was also found that the three language teaching methods were not significantly different from each other with regard to their effectiveness in enhancing the language learners' ability in their pragmatic performances. Considering the fact that the participants were Iranian EFL language learners at MA level who were majoring in TEFL, these results are in keeping with the findings which suggest that advanced language learners are quite capable of learning pragmatic competence through instruction which may be difficult for them to learn through other means (cf. House, 1996; Olshtain and Cohen, 1990). The results are also in line with the studies which approve of teachability of pragmatic competence (cf. Bagheri and Hamrang, 2013; Khodareza and Lotfi, 2012; Liddicoat and Crozet, 2001; Olshtain and Cohen, 1990; Rose, 2005; Safont, 2003; Salazar, 2003). Safont (2003) found that upon instruction, language learners showed a significantly higher rate of pragmatic use of request modifications. This research puts even more emphasis on the positive role of instruction on developing EFL learners' pragmatic capacity in putting their knowledge into immediate productive use.

Although CEG outperformed the other two experimental groups, such difference did not show to be significant. This lack of considerable difference between teaching approaches in pragmatic instruction is in keeping with Fukuya *et al.*, (1998) and Fukuya and Clark's (2001) findings which showed that there

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was no significant difference across treatment groups with regard to the use of pragmatic target forms. As suggested by the results and claimed by the participants, the length of time may account for arriving at inconclusive results in research on teaching pragmatics. The complexity of pragmatic subcomponents in this research (routines, speech acts, and implicatures) may be another reason for gaining similar results for three treatment groups. Further research with longer instructional duration and higher number of participants may better delineate the real difference between these three approaches to teaching pragmatics.

Another possible justification for the lack of significance difference between three language teaching methods in this research may be the use of contrastive practice as an independent form of instruction rather than a form of explicit treatment which has been the case in other researches (cf. Nguyen *et al.*, 2012; Lingli and Wannaruk, 2010). Studies that suggest significant differences between explicit and implicit language teaching methods in promoting language learners' pragmatic competence have considered translation as one form of explicit language teaching (cf. Koike and Pearson, 2005).

What is more, the lack of significant difference between explicit and implicit language teaching methods has been reported in studies that did not operationalize their explicit language teaching through the inclusion of contrastive L1-L2 practices (cf. Fukuya and Clark, 2001; Fukuya *et al.*, 1998). The findings of this study and those of other researchers may be suggestive of the fact that the positive role of explicit language teaching on enhancing language learners' pragmatic competence has been overestimated due to the use of translation in explicit instructions. When we reordered explicit and implicit language teaching treatments into explicit, implicit, and contrastive, although they all increased language learners' pragmatic abilities, no significant difference emerged.

Conclusion

In this article three language teaching methods were compared in order to weigh the effect of contrastive lexical approach (CLA) on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic competence in comparison with the other two instructional treatments, i.e. explicit and implicit instructions. CLA was compared with the other two instructions due to its reliance on translation and LCs as notions lending themselves to the effective teaching of pragmatic competence, as research literature suggests.

Through placing participants into three experimental groups attempt was made to compensate for the lack of research in evaluating the effect of translation relative to implicit and explicit teaching methods. The relative advantage of CLA over the other two methods and the participants' comments about the positive role of contrastive practices on the learners' easier use of native-like target forms may be a motivation for the inclusion of more contrastive LCs in language classrooms. These findings lend further support to Franch's (1998) claim that contrastive practices in teaching pragmatic competence could facilitate language learners' avoidance of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failures.

Findings of this study may also encourage EFL teachers and practitioners to use the aforementioned techniques, exercised in each teaching method, in their own pragmatic and general language teaching courses. Providing contexts for pragmatic units, paraphrasing, and input enrichment techniques may be facilitative in promoting the language learners' awareness about native-like speech, involvement and higher perception of pragmatic meanings. Explicit teaching of pragmatic competence may be constructive in enhancing EFL learners' sociopragmatic competence, among the other pragmatic subcomponents. Equivalency and contrastive practices may be useful for EFL learners in finding about their gaps and thus thinking in the target language they are learning. The effectiveness of these techniques seems to be enhanced when accompanied by native English speaking movies. In general, it can be suggested that a pragmatic teaching course which embodies these language teaching techniques and strategies in combination with movie clips could highly promote the rather neglected pragmatic competence of EFL learners, mostly with regard to their efficient pragmatic performance.

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