

A Study of EFL Learners' (Meta) Pragmatic Learning through Explicit (Teacher Explanation) and Implicit (Foreign Film) Interventions: The Case of Compliment

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Abstract—One of the controversies regarding teaching ‘pragmatics’ is whether the medium of instruction would make a difference in the development of learners’ pragmatic awareness and pragmatic use in both second and foreign language contexts. The present study compared the impact of two types of teaching conditions: explicit teacher explanation and implicit foreign film watching, on the process of (meta) pragmatic learning (here, compliment) of 32 Iranian female elementary EFL learners. To examine the effect of each type of instruction, the data collected through a written discourse completion test (WDCT) were later analyzed by a paired samples t-test, and the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). The results indicated that instruction of both types improved learners’ awareness of compliments. Also both types of instruction were beneficial in terms of raising learners’ (meta) pragmatic use. The findings provide insight into the facilitative impact of (meta) pragmatic instruction and present suggestions for EFL/ESL teachers and materials developers.

Index Terms—(meta) pragmatic instruction, explicit/implicit pragmatic instruction, speech acts, compliment, (meta) pragmatic use, pragmatic awareness

I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatic awareness or meta-pragmatics is particularly difficult for those studying in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context and most learners fail to interact successfully with native and non-native English speakers due to pragmatic failure or negative L1 pragmatic transfer. In line with these facts, Kasper and Schmidt (1996, p. 160) state that “pragmatic knowledge should be teachable”. Kasper (1997) argues that the classroom is a place where pragmatic learning can be explored. This motivated researchers in the last decade to investigate the role of instruction in pragmatic development, and it has been found that as textbooks alone do not provide sufficient pragmatic information and practice opportunities to the learners, those learners who received instruction on different aspects of pragmatics are at a distinct advantage” (Kasper, 1997; Jianda, 2007; Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Grossi, 2009; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Dastjerdi & Rezvani, 2010; Silva, 2010; Malaz, Rabiee & Ketabi, 2011; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami, 2012, & Sadeghi & Foutooh, 2012). For instance, Wichien and Aksornjarung (2011) examined pragmatic features of some speech acts in English course materials used at a Thai university through line-by-line investigation of both Student’s and Teacher’s books. Results indicated that not every pragmatic feature focused in this study was presented in each book. They concluded that the quantity and quality of pragmatic information in the books are inadequate as a source to gain pragmatic competence for EFL learners.

Consequently language teachers were advised to resort to explicit and implicit instruction techniques such as teacher explanation and authentic video-driven materials, English stories and conversations to enhance the students’ pragmatic and socio-pragmatic knowledge and as a result help them avoid negative L1 pragmatic transfer. Soler and Martinez-Flor (2009), for instance, studied the role of explicit and implicit instruction on learners’ pragmatic development of ‘suggestions’ to ascertain the instructional effects of these two types of teaching conditions. The findings illustrated the benefits of both explicit and more implicit instructional approaches to developing learners’ pragmatic awareness in the classroom. Dastjerdi and Rezvani (2010) have investigated the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ ability to use requests in English. They considered three groups, two of which received explicit and implicit treatment (listening to short conversations and receiving their scripts) and one of which was the control group (providing with typographical enhancement of the target forms). The results indicated that both explicit and implicit groups showed significant effect on learners’ production, although the explicit group outperformed the implicit group; however the observed difference was not statistically significant. However, close examination of the multiple choice test results revealed that findings were controversial with most showing that the explicit textbook/ teacher based groups outperformed those in video-driven instruction condition, which suggests

that the explicit instruction resulted in higher pragmatic awareness (Tateyama, 2001; Kasper, Mui, Tay & Thananart, 1997) (as cited in Wang, 2007). Yoshimi (1999) has studied the effect of explicit instruction on Japanese foreign language (JFL) learners' use of interactional discourse markers. The instruction provided information about the function and use of English items, exposure to native models of non-formal extended discourse and opportunities for communicative practice of the target items. The results indicated the overall beneficial effect on the learners' use of interactional markers (as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2001, pp.223-243). Maeda (2011) examined the efficacy of implicit and explicit teaching of the usage of request strategies to investigate to what extent two teaching approaches affect learners' pragmatic understanding. The results showed that explicit teaching groups' post-test scores were significantly significant over implicit teaching groups' post-test scores.

Ishihara and Cohen (2010) have suggested that an explicit approach with a provision of analysis of language and context is more effective than implicit teaching in experimental studies. They have also emphasized the use of technology—feature films and situational comedies, audio/visual materials and other forms of visual support-- which helps teachers diversify their instruction in ways that greatly benefit their learners through raising their motivation. As nearly all the studies sound their uncertainty by postulating that other intervening variables might have affected the effectiveness of instruction (Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Sedeghi & Foutooh, 2012; Ishihara, 2010; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami, 2012), more studies to investigate the impact of teaching techniques even to beginners before they develop pragmatic knowledge in second language seems necessary.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent studies in inter-language pragmatics (ILP) have suggested that the attention to the pragmatic ability of EFL learners can determine the areas of difficulty in their pragmatic development process and also help learners to improve their communicative competence. This caused second and foreign language researchers to look for possible intervention in teaching target like pragmatic structures and routines to the ESL and EFL learners.

According to SLA research, the interventional studies are based on three interrelated hypotheses: "Schmidt's (1993, 1995) **noticing** hypothesis, Swain's (1996) **output** hypothesis and Long's (1996) **interaction** hypothesis, all of which being based on a cognitive perspective" (as cited in Soler & Martinez Flor, 2008, p.6). Noticing hypothesis which distinguishes noticing and understanding holds that the essential element which turns input into intake and also makes further processing available is *awareness*. Also Schmidt's *consciousness-raising* approach includes "paying conscious attention to relevant forms, their pragma-linguistic functions and the socio-pragmatic constraints these particular forms involve" (Soler & Martinez-Flor, 2008, p.6). This perspective necessitates conscious attention to pragmatic information, so that the input can become intake and be stored in long-term memory.

Whereas learners in a second language context are frequently and naturally exposed to the second language with lots of opportunities to communicate language with other native or non-native speakers, learners, who are learning the language in a foreign language context, might not have the chance to get involved in communicative situations. According to Kasper (1997), in order to communicate successfully in a target language, pragmatic competence in L2 must be reasonably well-developed. Also Alcon (2005) believes that "learners are exposed to pragmatic input through classroom interaction, textbook conversations and films. However, research conducted in FL settings reports that in this context the range of speech acts, realization strategies and opportunities for practicing them is quite narrow" (as cited in Soler & Martinez-Flor, 2008, p.9). "One way of remedying this lack of direct exposure to target culture may be through teaching pragmatics" by which teachers can raise learners' awareness about target pragmatic features (Jianda, 2007).

Sadeghi and Foutooh (2012) have tried to investigate the effect of explicit instruction of compliment responses strategies on intermediate Iranian EFL learners' ability to respond to compliments appropriately. They have considered the relationship between explicit instruction and Vygotsy's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development. They also investigated social and cultural norms and values that can affect the formulation of compliment responses strategies. The results showed that the instruction was effective, since the increase in the use of compliment formulas was observed. Also the results indicated the importance and power of a teacher's expertise in a classroom setting by which scaffolding can occur as a help to learners to construct new knowledge.

In the same vein, Fahim and Ghobadi (2009) have examined the effect of explicit teaching of English "thanking formulas" (compliments) on sixty Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level students at English language institutes to determine the students' socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic awareness. 12 conversation pairs taken from the New Headway and New Interchange and 2 anecdotes from "Anecdotes in American English" were chosen for the introductory phase. Two tasks were used for this study: a written discourse completion task (WDCT) and a series of four role-plays devised based on the situations presented in the WDCT. By analyzing the mean differences between the post-test and pre-test results (the T scores) for the DCT for both explicit and implicit groups, it was observed that the experimental group receiving the explicit instruction possessed a higher mean than the implicit group receiving no instruction on pragma-linguistic issues. However, they suspected that variables such as motivation, or students' academic performance might have affected the findings.

Kasper (1997) suggests that researchers consider the following three questions (1) what pragmatic components could be teachable, (2) what opportunities for developing L2 pragmatic competence are offered in the classroom, and (3) what kind of instructional approaches are available and how effective they are, if they intend to examine the impact of

instructional contexts and activities on pragmatic learning. In response to this suggestion, the present study explored the question of what kind of instructional approaches are more effective on pragmatic learning of beginner EFL students by selecting the speech act of complimenting as the focus of teaching, and offering the opportunities such as explicit teacher explanation, implicit foreign film driven activities, role plays, and other pragmatically oriented tasks the opportunities to promote the learning of the intended speech act were.

A. Research on Teaching Compliment

Research on compliments is traced back to “the work of Wolfson and Manes (1980-1983), which provided the first comprehensive description of the formulaicity of compliments in American English” (Kasper & Rose, 2001, Pp.145-146). They considered a corpus of 686 naturally occurring compliments and found that 97.2% of them fall into one of the following nine syntactic formulas as pragma-linguistic resources available for complimenting in American English:

1. “NP {is, looks} (really) ADJ (PP)
2. I (really) {like, love} NP
3. PRO is (really) (a) (ADJ) NP
4. You V (a) (really) ADJ NP
5. You V (NP) (really) ADV (PP)
6. You have (a) (really) ADJ NP
7. What (a) (ADJ) NP!
8. Isn’t NP ADJ!”
9. How ADJ (PRO) (is/are)! (as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2001, p.146)

Among these formulas the first three were the most used compliments by American English speakers (85 % with 53.6 % of the first formula). Wolfson and Manes (1983) have also presented three dimensions based on which complimenting can occur: “*appearance, act or ability and possession*” (ibid).

Although the speech act of compliment enables the speaker to use available opportunities to express and interest in the hearer, linguistic and cultural differences regarding how and what is complimented may cause misunderstandings. Grossi (2009) believes that “culturally appropriate behavior can vary even when speakers share similar linguistic resources” (p.2). Wierzbicka (1991) has stated that “communicative interaction routines are realized with regard to different cultural norms in different communalities” (as stated in Karimnia&Afghari, 2011, p.20). Comparing compliment structures in terms of giving and responding to compliments used by different communities has been the subject of study by some researchers in recent years (Gass & Neu, 1995; Billmyer, 2007; Kim, 2009; Grossi, 2009; Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Yousefvand, 2010; Karimnia & Afghari, 2011, & Sadeghi & Foutooh, 2012).

There are several reasons compliments are targeted for many studies: (a) they reflect cultural values and norms of behavior; (b) they’re detailed descriptions used by Ns and also their knowledge in appropriate contexts; and (c) complimenting is also really helpful for learners in various ways: “they can sustain interaction; they can soften the effects of criticism; they express gratitude or greeting; they can initiate conversations with Ns” (Billmyer, 2007, p.3).

Therefore learning how to compliment and how to respond to them, creates opportunities for learners to take part in meaningful conversations or negotiated interactions with Ns or other NNs. In other words failing to give compliments due to linguistic or pragmatic or sociolinguistic reasons may indicate an offence. Knowledge of compliments also helps learners to avoid pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic failure.

B. Teacher Explanation and Film as Influential Sources of Input

As stated earlier, the classroom is a place where pragmatic instruction can occur (Kasper, 1997); however, relatively less attention has been paid to how classroom-based instruction can contribute to the pragmatic development of foreign language learners. According to him, in order to communicate successfully in a target language, pragmatic competence in L2 must be reasonably well-developed. Explicit instruction can thus foster pragmatic competence development by raising ESL or EFL learners’ awareness about pragmatic and cultural differences. This kind of instruction is particularly effective in an EFL context where there is no or really little opportunity outside the classroom for learners to communicate the target language and also keep their identity in cross-cultural communication. Although they may develop their grammatical competence well, most of them fail to get mastery of pragmatic features specific to the target culture regardless of their levels.

Takahashi (1998) has studied the effect of input enhancement on the learning of target request strategies. Participants were 138 Japanese college students who had received formal instruction in English for 7 to 10 years in Japan. They made up four intact general English classes, taught by the researcher, which were randomly assigned to the four input conditions: explicit teaching (ET) conditions, form-comparison (FC) condition, form-search (FS) condition and meaning-focused (MF) condition. Post-test results showed that for all situations, the target request forms were provided by the ET participants to a greater extent than any of the remaining three input conditions and also a significantly smaller number of ET participants provided non-target forms (as cited in Kasper & Rose, 2001, Pp.171-198).

Consequently teachers need to look for creative ways to make students aware of the cultural differences and provide them with a better knowledge of pragmatics by awareness-raising tasks and input enhancement techniques including role-plays, audio-visual materials, interviews, etc. “Learners need to attend to the language form and to the relevant factors that affect the form in the given context. This indicates that “merely exposing learners to the contextualized

input is unlikely to lead to students’ learning of pragmatics” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, p. 102). They also need to be aware of the features they’re exposed to explicitly, so that they can learn how to use them in meaningful contexts.

EFL learners who limitedly practice natural communicative interactions in English need to gain knowledge of pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic awareness and also cultural similarities and differences of L2 to communicate successfully. In this regard explicit instruction can also foster learners’ pragmatic competence by providing supplementary materials and activities such as role-plays, stories and audio-visual sources (movies). Audio-visual materials—especially a film—with its rich context is a powerful instructional tool known to have a motivational, attentional, and affective impact on viewers, which in turn facilitates auditory processing. “Video clips from movies expose learners to speech activities as discourse and help them explore cultural differences in initiating or closing conversations” (Davies, 2004, p.6).

According to Massi and Merino (1996), “good films can serve as a valuable pedagogical aid, both for classroom use and self-study”. In fact, “films present slices of life, and as such, provide a realistic, authentic and entertaining way of improving the learners’ command of the language” (as cited in Ahangari & Mahammad Amiri, 2012, p.2). Ishihara and Cohen (2010) believe that the situational context, the high- interest content, and the rich visual imagery of films “combine to provide learners with multi-sensory input that tends to be reasonably close to what we find in authentic interaction” (p.245). Hence carefully selected video clips can be suitable sources of pragmatic models especially in foreign language contexts where learners’ authentic input might be limited.

Although a growing body of research has demonstrated that there’s a need for explicit pragmatic instruction to teach compliments (Kasper, 1997; Jianda, 2007; Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Schauer, 2009; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996 & Franch, 1998), a few of them have emphasized fruitful techniques to raise learners’ pragmatic awareness (Davies, 2004; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010) or have tried to explore more effective kind of instruction. Moreover, only a few studies have focused on media-based teaching of compliments to beginner or elementary-level EFL learners. In other words most studies have been conducted at either intermediate or advanced level. However, Sessarego (2009) investigated the effect of instruction on pragmatic language ability in Spanish as a Foreign Language of beginner learners in an Anglophone classroom context. The results of his study indicated that form-function connections in discourse can start to be addressed at beginner levels of proficiency and learners do not have to wait till they reach higher levels of linguistic knowledge to use the target language to negotiate meaning in interaction.

In line with the facts above, we tried to bridge the gap by conducting a study on the effectiveness of two types of instruction--teacher explanation and film--on the development of the speech act of compliment in foreign language classrooms at elementary level.

III. METHOD

A. Participants

A total of 32 elementary level students (all female, age range: 16-35) from a well-known English language institute (Kish) voluntarily participated in this study. In order to determine the starting language proficiency of the participants and make sure that they are homogeneous, they took part in a sample of KET (Key English Test of Cambridge, 2004). Those who scored 70-100 in KET were identified as elementary-level learners. The elementary learners were then divided into two groups (N=16) each receiving a particular type of instruction (teacher explanation and film).All participants were native speakers of Persian who did not experience living in a foreign country, had English language learning experience ranged from 9 months to 2 years and were receiving two 90-minute sessions of English instruction weekly.

B. Materials

Teaching Materials

A number of family-related movies in which compliments have been used more frequently were employed. These movies include some episodes of ‘Friends’ (1994-2004) and 12 other films each of which have been cut for about 25 seconds to 2 minutes using Jet audio software and have been used during our film-based treatment sessions based on the compliment structure they represent. For each compliment structure 5-16 episodes have been played for the learners. Thus, not only were learners exposed to authentic uses of compliments but also they were able to notice cultural similarities and differences by which they could avoid pragmatic failure.

TABLE 1.
LIST OF STRUCTURES AND NUMBER OF RELATED EPISODES

1. NP{is, looks, sounds}(really) ADJ (PP)	16 episodes
2. PRO is (really) (a) (ADJ) NP	16 episodes
3. What (a) (ADJ) NP!	10 episodes
4. How (ADJ) (PRO) (is, are)!	7 episodes
5. I (really) {like, love} NP	6 episodes
6. Isn’t/Aren’t NP ADJ?!	8 episodes
7. You have (a) (really) ADJ NP	6 episodes
8. You V (a) (really) ADJ NP	7 episodes
9. You V (NP) (really) ADV (PP)	4 episodes

In addition to the instructional methods (films and teacher's explanation) used for 2 groups of learners, about 25 English stories containing different compliment structures were provided for the learners as situational contexts of giving compliments. These stories were selected from 'American anecdotes' (Hill, 1980) and 'Steps to understanding' (Hill, 2004). 2-3 stories were read each session and the required compliment structures were elicited by the learners.

Assessment-Materials

An open-ended Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) (See Appendix B) was employed as the main procedure to collect data, both for pre- and post-test in the present study. The WDCT in this study was designed based on the situational descriptions found in the studies of Dastjerdi and Rezvani (2010), Sadeghi and Foutooh (2012), Grossi (2009), and Silva (2010) which were used to elicit learners' responses on different speech acts. However Golato (2005) state that the data collected by discourse completion tests "don not always represent actual natural data, because DCTs require participants to articulate what they believe would be situationally appropriate" and this makes generalizability of the results invalid (p.22).

Consequently a more reliable WDCT was devised which represented as much contextual and social clues as possible, so that learners are provided with situations which approximate authentic communication more. All situations were described with regard to the time and place of the event, participants, gender, names, social relations and distance, and purpose of speaker. We have also extended the number of situations to 10 prompts all of which require EFL learners' reaction when giving compliments. As Wolfson and Manes (1981) have stated compliments fall into three main domains of "appearance, someone's possessions and ability, character or accomplishments" (as cited in Yousefvand, 2010, p.8). Therefore our situations contained 5 prompts on character, 3 prompts on appearance and 2 prompts on possession.

C. Procedure

This study adopted a two-group pre-test experimental design to measure the effects of instruction medium on participants' aware-ness and use of compliment. The research involved 10 sessions of treatment (consisting of 5 weeks); with approximately 30-40 min of instruction for two sessions a week. The treatment that each group received is explicated separately as follows:

Group 1 (Teacher Explanation): This medium was aimed at developing learners' understanding of pragmatics by presenting the key elements of pragma-linguistics and socio-pragmatics and providing explicit information on the pragma-linguistic forms of L2 compliments. As stated above, participants (N=16) responded to WDCT (pre-test) in the first session and the following 10 instructional sessions started in the next session with each session focusing on teaching one of these compliment structures (Table 2):

TABLE 2.
LIST OF ENGLISH COMPLIMENT STRUCTURES AND THEIR EXAMPLES

1. NP{is, looks, sounds}(really) ADJ (PP)	<i>She looks really beautiful in that dress.</i>
2. PRO is (really) (a) (ADJ) NP	<i>That's really a nice house.</i>
3. What (a) (ADJ) NP!	<i>What a beautiful sunset!</i>
4. How (ADJ) (PRO) (is, are)!	<i>How lovely you are!</i>
5. I (really) {like, love} NP	<i>I really like your voice.</i>
6. Isn't/Aren't NP ADJ?!	<i>Isn't the view fantastic?!</i>
7. You have (a) (really) ADJ NP	<i>You have really beautiful eyes.</i>
8. You V (a) (really) ADJ NP	<i>You did a great job.</i>
9. You V (NP) (really) ADV (PP)	<i>You play the piano beautifully.</i>

Group 2 (Film): The major objective of film episodes was to make students aware of the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic aspects involved in giving compliments. This group received about 75 video excerpts and also 30-40 minute nine sessions of instruction on the video prompts twice a week. First some (5-16) episodes including the required compliment structure was played to the students and they were to write down any conversational exchanges they heard. They then compared their sentences with their partners and added any possible information. All sentences were written on the board so that students could find many similar structures used in the films. This facilitated giving more examples by the students. Students' examples were also written on the board and their components were discussed by the teacher and students. Final steps were exactly conducted as the first group.

D. Data-analysis

According to Brown (2004), a fundamental consideration of teacher-based assessment stipulates that the choice of criteria in the evaluation rubric aligns with the instructional goals in a consistent manner. Therefore the present study considered the Pragmatic Assessment Rubrics encompassing three constructs which are as follows:

- Linguistic aspects (pragma-linguistic ability)
- Cultural aspects (socio-pragmatic ability)
- Analytic aspects "(ability to analyze and evaluate pragmatic use-referred to as *meta-pragmatic ability*)". In this regard pragma-linguistic aspect included vocabulary and phrases for compliments. With regard to socio-pragmatic aspects level of formality and politeness were taken into account.

In order to determine if any pragmatic development occurred between the pre- and post-test and to measure between groups differences paired samples *T-test* and ANCOVA (using Statistical Package of Social Sciences-SPSS version 19) were used respectively. Since more than one answer was regarded as the correct answer (due to different compliment structures), answers which were linguistically and culturally appropriate (appropriate L2 transfer) were assigned 2, those which were linguistically incorrect but culturally appropriate were assigned 1, and those which were linguistically incorrect and culturally inappropriate, or those which had emerged from L1 transfer were assigned 0.

IV. RESULTS

Research Question One: *Does the medium of teaching English compliments, i.e. film and teacher explanation make any significant difference in the pragmatic awareness of Iranian EFL students at the elementary level?*

In order to investigate the significance of the difference in each group, a paired samples *t-test* was used. Table 3 shows the differences in learners' pragmatic awareness of complimenting for the first group before and after the treatment:

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND SAMPLES T-TEST OF GROUP 1 (TEACHER EXPLANATION) BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
pre-test - post-test	-8.938	4.597	1.149	-11.387	-6.488	-7.777	15	.000

As is evident in the table, the level of significance (Sig. two tailed) of pre- and post-test scores for explicit group (teacher explanation) is .000 which is less than .05; this implies that there is a significant difference between two scores of pre- and post-test in this group which means participants greatly benefited from the instruction and considerably improved their pragmatic knowledge of complimenting.

Table 4 shows the differences in learners' pragmatic awareness of complimenting for the second group before and after the treatment:

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND SAMPLES PAIRED T-TEST OF GROUP 2 (FILM) BEFORE AND AFTER TREATMENT

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
pre-test - post-test	-10.250	3.376	.844	-12.049	-8.451	-12.143	15	.000

As can be seen in the table the *sig.* value in the implicit group is also less than .05 (.000), so we can conclude that there was a significant difference in the pre- (before treatment) and post-test (after treatment) score in this group (films). Therefore instruction had a really positive effect on EFL learners' awareness of pragmatic strategies in the case of giving compliments.

By analyzing the *means* it can also be claimed that there was a statistically significant increase in the scores of the first group from pre-test (M=12.31, SD=3.807) to post-test {M=21.25, SD=2.671, t(15)=-7.77}, and the second group from pre-test (M=1.38, SD=3.86) to post-test {M=22.63, SD=2.12, t(15)=-12.14}.

Thus the results indicated that both explicit and implicit teaching of English compliments had a significant effect on raising Iranian elementary EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic information in the specified situations.

Research Question 2: *Is there any significant difference between two types of instruction, i.e. film and teacher explanation in terms of raising Iranian EFL learners (meta) pragmatic use?*

A one-way between groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different interventions designed to raise learners' (meta) pragmatic ability. The independent variable was the type of instruction (teacher explanation, film), and the dependent variable consisted of scores on the post-test administered after the intervention was completed. Participants' scores on the pre-intervention administration were used as the covariate in this analysis. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there was no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariate. Therefore we could proceed with data analysis using ANCOVA (table 5).

TABLE 5
TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTSEFFECTS

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	24.409 ^a	2	12.205	2.139	.136	.129
Intercept	1077.766	1	1077.766	188.892	.000	.867
Pretest	9.284	1	9.284	1.627	.212	.053
Medium	14.925	1	14.925	2.616	.117	.083
Error	165.466	29	5.706			
Total	15590.000	32				
Corrected Total	189.875	31				

According to the data provided in the table, there was not a significant difference between two treatment groups on post-intervention scores [$F(1,29)=.11$, $p=2.61$, partial eta squared=.083]. This implies the fact that neither group outperformed the other, and both raised learners' (meta) pragmatic ability. In other words both groups greatly benefited from the medium-based instruction (explicit/implicit) and both types of treatment increased EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic awareness and ability to use grammatically correct and culturally appropriate English compliments.

In conclusion, as the results of one-way ANCOVA indicate the medium-based instruction of English compliments had a significant effect on Iranian elementary EFL learners' pragmatic behavior (use and cross-cultural transfer) and their hindrance of L1 pragma-linguistic transfer. They also showed that there was not a significant difference between two explicit and implicit instruction (teacher explanation and films) in terms of raising EFL learners' pragmatic behavior—the case of compliments.

V. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION

This study intended to examine the impact of medium-based teaching on EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic awareness and development in terms of giving compliments. The results indicated that due to two kinds of treatment (teacher explanation and films) in this study the participants of both groups gained a noticeable improvement in their (meta) pragmatic information. Besides no significant difference was found between two types of instruction regarding raising learners' (meta) pragmatic information and behavior. The results are in line with the fact that many aspects of L2 pragmatics are not acquired without the benefit of instruction, or they are learned more slowly. "There is thus a strong indication that instructional intervention may be facilitative to, or even necessary for, the acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability" (p.8). The crucial role of pedagogical intervention (explicit/implicit) becomes even more dominant in EFL contexts such as Iran where learners are rarely exposed to any other target language materials and interactions outside the classroom and also the opportunities to practice pragmatic elements are too limited. That is why "even grammatically advanced EFL learners may use language inappropriately and suffer from pragmatic failures" (Mirzaei & Esmaili, 2013, p.3). Therefore, English language teachers should help the EFL learners to develop and internalize their linguistic and socio-linguistic skills in expressing and interpreting compliments. In addition, the instruction should aim to develop students' awareness of target language's social and cultural norms and values related to complimenting "so that they will not be misunderstood by native speakers of English when they are engaged in conversation with them" (Kim, 2009, p.10).

Our first research question addressed the effectiveness of two different instructional approaches—teacher explanation (explicit teaching) and films (implicit teaching) on raising learners' (meta) pragmatic awareness and the second research question sought to answer which type of instruction could possibly lead to more awareness (in the case of complimenting). Although most pragmatic studies indicate that explicit instruction is more facilitative than implicit one and learners of the explicit group outperform the implicit group's learners in pragmatic awareness (Yoshimi, 1999; Suh, 2000; Maeda, 2011; Soler & Martinez-Flor, 2009; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Grossi, 2009; Ishihara, 2008 and Ishihara & Cohen, 2010), the results of our study indicated that both treatment groups significantly improved their (meta) pragmatic ability in terms of giving compliments after instructional sessions. It was also revealed that the two instructional treatments (explicit and implicit) did not differ significantly in raising EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic ability. It's noteworthy to state that the examined and controlled variables of the above-mentioned studies were quite different and this might have affected the results. These variables include: age, sex, English language background, various first languages, proficiency level, length of stay in an English language country, number of participants, length of treatment, English language learning context (ESL/EFL), different instructional media and the kind of speech act under investigation. For the purpose of narrowing down the scope of the study and controlling the extraneous variables, we investigated the effect of two instructional approaches on 32 Iranian EFL elementary level female students studying at a well-known language institute. Therefore further research on various speech acts with larger numbers of research participants of both sexes (male and female) of different language proficiencies, at different language institutes are recommended. The findings of this study confirm previous research on the positive effect of explicit and implicit instruction on learners' pragmatic development in terms of speech acts (Billmeyer, 1990; Kasper, 1997; Suh, 2000; Silva, 2010; Jianda, 2007; Grossi, 2009; Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Ishihara, 2010; Ketabi, Rabiee & Malaz, 2011; Sadeghi & Foutooh, 2012; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami, 2012, & Dastjerdi & Rezvani, 2010) and indicate the fact that Iranian EFL teachers and material developers may need to revise their teaching methods with regard to (meta)

pragmatic and socio-linguistic field methods, if they are to gain more effective instructional outcomes. Moreover this study draws attention to the fact that although developing (meta) pragmatic ability of EFL learners can be well facilitated by the use of technology-based audio-visual materials and media such as films and video clips, undoubtedly teachers can foster (meta) pragmatic awareness of learners even without having to apply technology-based media, through giving clear explanations about the importance of cross-cultural pragmatics and its use in everyday communication, providing appropriate examples (i.e. stories and anecdotes which contain the required pragmatic feature), and also pair and group work activities (role-plays/conversations on different speech acts).

The results of our study contribute to previous research on the facilitative effects of instruction on second and foreign language learning in general (Billmyer, 2007; Kasper & Rose, 2001, Kasper, 1997; Silva, 2010 and Jianda, 2007), and the benefits of instruction on the development of learners' pragmatic ability of giving compliments in particular (Kim, 2009; Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Grossi, 2009; Sadeghi & Foutooh, 2012, & Karimnia & Afghari, 2011). Although considerable progress has been made during the past few decades in improving EFL learners' pragmatic ability by explicit and implicit instruction (Kasper, 1997; Suh, 2000; Sadeghi, 2012; Billmeyer, 1990; Jianda, 2007; Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Ishihara, 2010; Ketabi, Rabiee & Malaz, 2011; Farahian, Rezaee & Gholami, 2012; Silva, 2003; Dastjerdi & Rezvani, 2010, & Grossi, 2009) the present study, by applying two types of medium (teacher explanation and films), constitutes a step forward in the evaluation of Iranian elementary EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic information and opens up new avenues for future investigation.

Given the research questions of the present study, important findings were obtained. Obviously, the first outcome of research was consistent with previous studies. Like previous researches on the effects of instruction on EFL/ESL learners' pragmatic awareness—in the case of speech acts (Silva, 2003; Grossi, Fahim & Ghobadi, 2009; Karimnia & Afghari, Malaz, Rabiee & Ketabi, 2011, & Sadeghi & Foutooh, 2012), the current research confirmed strong positive impact of media-based teaching of English compliments on elementary EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic development regardless of the kind of instruction. In other words both media facilitated EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic ability in the case of compliments.

Surprisingly the results of the study showed that neither groups outperformed the other in terms of raising EFL learners' (meta) pragmatic development. This is different from some other studies such as Davies (2004) that revealed the use of authentic discourse such as video clips from films and television, illustrating prototypical discourse from both the native culture and the target culture, is extremely important and can easily foster learners' awareness of pragmatic routines and strategies. In contrast the present research found that meta-pragmatic instruction which combines explicit instruction, awareness-raising activities, guided practice and meaningful opportunities for language use also results in significant (meta) pragmatic gains for beginner EFL learners. Consequently it can be claimed that an unobtrusive method such as input enhancement by films can be as effective as explicit instruction which requires execution of various awareness-raising tasks and explanation of (meta) pragmatic information.

In light of the present findings which reveal that explicit instruction is significantly facilitative in teaching pragmatic speech acts, certain pedagogical implications may be proposed. First, a more direct link should be made between ILP research and the field of second language acquisition. In other words, materials developers and instructors should integrate pragmatics into their second and foreign language instruction to better develop learners' pragmatic competence. Learners should be made aware of native speakers' usage of the variety of compliment structures to realize a certain pattern, depending on the situation where they are used. Second, awareness-raising tasks and input enhancement techniques (authentic audio-visual materials) should be operationalized and implemented by language instructors to equip learners with a better knowledge of pragmatics. Teachers should develop learner understanding of target language compliments and provide them with knowledge of the linguistic forms or stylistic strategies appropriate to convey the intended meaning in different contexts or situations.

To thoroughly examine the effect of media-based instruction, further research should start with learners of other proficiency levels and follow them by delayed post-test. This provides researchers with beneficial opportunities to examine the relationship of learners' (meta) pragmatic development and their level of proficiency. Researchers can also find whether this development remains constant after treatment sessions.

For the purpose of narrowing down the scope of the study and controlling the extraneous variables, we investigated the effect of two instructional approaches (teacher explanation and films) on 32 Iranian EFL elementary level female students studying at a well-known language institute. As this is not comprehensive, further studies can consider gender, students' majors, the type of language institutions, type of speech act, and proficiency level as determinant variables.

APPENDIX. SITUATIONAL PROMPTS OF DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST

Directions: Please read each situation carefully and write your response in the blank area. Try to respond as naturally as possible and as you feel you would say it in the situation.

1. *It's your birthday party and you've got many presents. Terry is your old best friend who has asked you to open her gift at the end. You finish opening presents one by one and finally you open Terry's and find a really beautiful white blouse. You've become extremely surprised. That blouse is the one you and Terry had seen two weeks ago. You really liked to have it but you didn't have enough money. Terry has bought it for you to express her love to you. What would you tell her?*

2. You had a great time with your friends when you went to high school. Anna, Isabel and Janet were your close friends. After a few years you had to move in to another city because of your father's job, so you were really upset. Now five years have been passed and you've come back to take part in Anna's wedding party. You've met your old friends, Isabel and Janet. Anna comes in and everybody is attracted to her beauty. She happily comes to you and your friends. You are also really surprised by her beautiful wedding dress and different appearance. What would you say to her?

3. You're studying mathematics at high school. You've been a successful student in most subjects but physics. You were always disappointed about it. After having studied very hard and purposefully you have passed a very difficult examination in physics and gotten one of the highest scores in the class. Your teacher is really delighted and surprised about your score. He comes to you and says....!

4. You've had the same hairstyle for a few years, so you've become tired of it. You go to a hairdresser's and ask the woman to change your hair in a way that looks nice on you. You've just gotten your haircut in a new style and you like it better than the old way. You go to see some friends and surprise them. All of them have been really pleased with your new haircut and start talking about it.

5. You have graduated from the university and have decided to go on a short trip with some friends to a popular island in order to have fun and make good memories. You've just arrived there. The weather is nice and every where's green and really beautiful. You take a taxi and go to your reserved hotel. It's near the sea and your room has an eye-catching view. The window opens to the sea and the fantastic shore. You're enjoying the view and say...!

6. It's a sunny afternoon in a busy street. You're walking along it to go shopping and buy something. You see a blind man who tries to cross the street but it's too busy and dangerous. So you help him to go to the other side of the street healthily. He's now an admirer of you and says...!

7. One of your great professors has passed away in a car accident. All students were really interested in his classes and he was really into his teaching. He respected all and also helped anyone as much as possible. Your university has held a ceremony in his honor. The dean of your university is giving a speech to thank all his efforts. Everybody starts expressing profound admiration for him. Then the dean starts speaking about him...!

8. You've bought a new mobile phone which is modern and beautiful. You haven't told anyone about it yet. You are in a restaurant with your friends when suddenly your mobile phone starts ringing. You take it out and answer. Everybody's attention is given to your new phone. They start talking about its model and nice design...

9. You've recently met a nice girl at work. Julia is very kind and funny. She has helped you a lot in your job and also has tried to make you feel confident and happy. Therefore you really like to appreciate her favors. You've talked to her about the beautiful and modern design of your house, various colorful flowers in your garden and a big aquarium with a lot of fishes, so she can't wait to see your house. It's Monday evening. You've put on your nice clothes and are waiting for her. She rings the doorbell and you invite her into the house. She's really astonished to see such an amazing house and says:

10. You've just started a job in a company for about six months. Your manager has been really satisfied with your work and has really admired you. The manager has held a meeting in the manager's office today to express his gratitude to faithful and hardworking staff. The meeting starts. He stares at you and says:

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