

# Pragmatic Consciousness-raising Activities and EFL Learners' Speech Act Performance of 'Making Suggestions'

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**Abstract**—The present study examined the impact of pragmatic consciousness-raising activities on EFL learners' immediate and delayed performance of suggestions, using a pretest, treatment, posttest design. Two intact classes consisting of 52 Iranian intermediate EFL learners during an intensive English course were assigned as an experimental group with 27 learners and a control group with 25 learners. A Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) was given to both groups prior to the intervention that revealed no significant difference between the groups' pragmatic performance. The experimental group then underwent an eight-week pragmatic consciousness-raising treatment on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of performing suggestions. After the completion of the intervention, a posttest and, after eight weeks, a delayed posttest was given to both groups to examine the effectiveness of the PCR intervention. The analyses of the scores of the groups revealed that first, the treatment was effective on the EFL learners' pragmatic performance and second, the treatment significantly enhanced the experimental group's ability to produce appropriate suggestions. Also, the study showed that the trend of structure and strategy use by learners in the treatment group changed as a result of the PCR treatment from the pretest to posttest and delayed posttest conditions. This study showed that consciousness-raising at the metapragmatic level improved EFL learners' pragmatic performance and variety of form-strategy use substantially; thus, it should be taken more seriously in L2 instruction and material development.

**Index Terms**—pragmatic consciousness-raising activity, speech act performance, suggestion, EFL

## I. INTRODUCTION

Helping learners develop the ability to communicate appropriately in different situations has been generally recognized as one of the goals of teaching in English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) contexts. Second language learners often experience difficulties in their communication efforts because they need to possess not only the grammatical and lexical knowledge of a language but also the knowledge of the social and contextual factors underlying that language (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). These norms of interaction constitute one of the components of communicative competence, i.e., pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990). Crystal (2004) has defined 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” (p. 301). In their model of communicative competence, Canale and Swain (1980) introduced pragmatic competence as sociolinguistic competence, defining it as the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use. Later, Canale (1983) provided an extended definition for pragmatic competence, which included illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence, which refer to the knowledge of pragmatic conventions and sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context. Another definition for pragmatic competence proposed by Bialystok (1993) includes having the ability to use language for different purposes, the ability to understand the speaker's real intentions beyond the language, and the mastery of the rules to produce utterances in discourse.

Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) observed the existence of pragmatic errors in fairly advanced language learners' communicative acts. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) noted that “a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily show concomitant pragmatic competence” (p. 21). The above-mentioned observations and concern about the consequences of pragmatic failure in communication (Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Widdowson, 1990) are evidence illustrating the significance of pragmatic knowledge in second/foreign language learning. The need for developing EFL/ESL learners' pragmatic competence through a focus on sociocultural and sociopragmatic aspects of English language and the facilitative role of teaching pragmatic features and strategies in second language (L2) learners' pragmatic development have been supported by instructional intervention research on pragmatic learning (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Morrow, 1995).

There has been a growing interest in studying the effects of pedagogical intervention on L2 learners' pragmatic development in EFL/ESL contexts. The rationale for exploring the effect of teaching on learners' pragmatic development, as Rose (2005) notes, has been underscored by Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), contending that simple exposure to the target language is not enough since there are pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors which are often not salient to learners and so less likely to be noticed even after exposure for a long period of time. Unlike Krashen (1985) and Reber (1989) who claim that unconscious learning processes are better than conscious ones and are responsible for most L2 production, some other second language acquisition researchers argue that making certain forms noticeable through consciousness raising (CR) and drawing learners' attention to these forms can help learners in the language acquisition process (R. Ellis, 1995; Rod Ellis, 2008; Schmidt, 1990, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2001, 2012; Smith, 1993). In earlier research on CR, the focus was on grammar instruction and learning (Fotos, 1993, 1994; Smith, 1993), while Rose (1994) proposed pragmatic consciousness raising (PCR) as an important approach towards teaching pragmatics. PCR is an inductive approach to raise learners' awareness about the appropriate use of language forms in specific contexts and it aims to sensitize and expose learners to pragmatic features of the target language and encourages development of tools for learners to analyze and formulate precise generalizations related to the use of language appropriately in context and encourage development of tools with which learners can analyze and formulate precise generalizations about appropriate language use in context (Rose, 1999).

The impact of pragmatic consciousness raising (PCR) activities on L2 learners' pragmatic development has been investigated by a small number of researchers in recent years. Mwinelle (2005) examined the impact of viewing video, explicit instruction and meta-pragmatic discussion on the intermediate level learners' learning of advice in Spanish. The results of the study showed that learners who watched video and were engaged in meta-pragmatic discussion with providing explicit pragmatic instruction performed better than the other two groups that were not engaged in meta-pragmatic discussion and did not receive explicit pragmatic information about advice speech act in Spanish. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) examined ESL learners' pragmatic consciousness by using an activity during which learners attempted to identify pragmatic infelicities in videotaped scenarios in pairs. They performed role plays with the aim of repairing the identified infelicities. The role plays revealed that upper intermediate learners were able to recognize and supply missing speech acts and formulas; however, the forms and content provided by them were in some respects different from target language norms. They conclude that learners may supply a missing speech act or semantic formula in a conversation, but the form and content provided may not be transparent either culturally or linguistically. Hence, the findings of this study show the areas that need instruction and will benefit L2 learners.

The findings of the study by Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) implies that even though learners displayed pragmatic awareness to some extent and were able to repair some infelicities, they did not possess the tools needed to make more target-like forms in the repairs. The implication of this is that mere pragmatic awareness may not be enough for producing target-like forms and that language learners should be provided with meta-pragmatic awareness, which is a higher level of consciousness about various structures and strategies and their relationships with contextual factors in speech act performance so that L2 learners would be capable of producing target-like and contextually appropriate speech acts.

In some recent studies, Halenko and Jones (2011) found that pragmatic awareness-raising had a positive enhancing effect on the production of request downgraders by ESL learners, despite the lack of noticeable maintaining of that knowledge after 6 weeks. The results of the study by Narita (2012) indicate that pragmatic consciousness-raising activities enhanced performance of hearsay evidential markers among JFL learners and Takimoto (2012) showed that employing metapragmatic discussion with problem-solving tasks led to the improvements in the production of English request downgraders in Japanese EFL learners. In regard to suggestions, Martínez-Flor and Soler (2007) investigated the impact of explicit and implicit teaching on the production and awareness related to the speech act of suggestion among Spanish EFL learners. They showed that overall instruction positively affects pragmatic awareness and that both type of instruction proved to be effective in enhancing EFL learner's awareness of suggestions. The speech act of suggesting has not been studied extensively in terms of the effect of PCR on learners' performance of suggestions in the EFL context. Since suggesting is regarded as a face-threatening speech act and can be challenging to perform in real-life situations, it requires more investigation, especially in terms of EFL learners' use of politeness strategies in making suggestions in their communicative efforts. A study conducted by Martínez-Flor and Soler (2007) focused only on some of the linguistic structures used for making suggestions and did not take strategies such as politeness strategies into account. Moreover, their study, which aimed to compare explicit and implicit teaching methods in teaching pragmatics in the EFL context, did not examine the long-term effects of teaching on learners' pragmatic performance. Thus, there seems to be a need for further research to be conducted in order to provide deeper insight into and an understanding of how teaching through PCR can affect EFL learners' production of suggestions immediately, as well as in the long run. The current study was an attempt to determine the impact of consciousness-raising technique on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' immediate and delayed performance of the speech act of suggesting.

The motivation to conduct the current study, however, mainly came from the personal observations of the researcher regarding the EFL learners' struggle in producing pragmatically appropriate utterances in their communicative attempts in classroom and encounters in real world situations. As most EFL instruction focuses on teaching grammar and vocabulary, learners appear not to gain sufficient knowledge regarding the pragmatic aspects of performing accurate

and appropriate speech acts in different situations. The frustration and lack of awareness regarding how to pragmatically perform in different situations with interlocutors of differing status and distance relationships are very common among EFL learners (Jannani, 1996). Since EFL learners seem to need a higher and deeper level of pragmatic awareness than ESL learners because of their limited opportunities of contact with target language speakers to develop their pragmatic competence, this study aimed, first, to determine whether pragmatic consciousness-raising activities enhances EFL learners' performance of the suggestions, and second, how these activities might change the trends in which EFL learners employ various strategies and structures to perform the speech act of suggesting.

## II. METHOD

### A. Participants

Two intact groups consisting of 52 adult male learners took part in the study. They were attending an intensive English course in a university in Iran and were assigned as an experimental group with 27 learners and a control group with 25 learners. The intensive course met Saturday through Wednesday (six hours per day). The participants of the study had Bachelor's degree in different fields and spoke Persian as their first language and had similar English learning background with 6 years of studying English in secondary and high school and taking a few English courses at the undergraduate level prior to enrolling in the intensive course. They also had similar socio-economic and cultural background.

### B. Instrumentation

The instruments used to gather data and implement the intervention in the current study are as follows:

1. The Preliminary English Test (PET): for the selection of homogeneous participants with regard to their level of language proficiency
2. A Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT): was used to evaluate the participants' ability to perform suggestions and also to determine the possible differences between groups prior to and after the intervention, thus, the effectiveness of the treatment. The WDCT was developed by the researcher according to the purpose of the study and based on other pragmatic production tests developed and used in previous research (Narita, 2012).
3. Model conversations: in which contextual factors, structures and strategies were considered
4. Situations: based on the power, distance, and politeness variables. The purpose of using the scenarios was to engage learners in pragmatic and meta-pragmatic discussion and production.
5. Discourse completion tasks: were used for production and PCR purposes
6. Audio-visual material: film segments were employed for consciousness-raising purpose

### C. Target Features

The present study focused on various structures and strategies in performing suggestions in different situations. These targeted pragmatic features were based on the taxonomies provided by Martinez-Flor (2005) and Jiang (2006) and politeness strategies by Li (2010) and were focused on during the PCR intervention sessions.

### D. Data Collection Procedure

The following steps were taken to carry out the current study. First, a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT), developed by the researcher, was piloted with 30 adult EFL learners prior to the intervention. The content validity of the test was confirmed by consulting a panel of experts who were experienced ELT professionals and researchers. The evaluation of internal consistency of the test showed the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.82 for the WDCT. Therefore, a good level of reliability was obtained for WDCT. The WDCT (see Appendix A) consisted of 12 different situations in which the participants were asked to produce appropriate suggestions in no more than two sentences. To homogenize the participants in terms of their level of English proficiency prior to the intervention, the Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered to sixty learners in two intact classes. The Reading subtest of PET was used for homogenization purpose. Fifty-two learners who obtained 70% of the total score (i.e. the passing score for each subtest of PET), were selected as the participants of the study with 27 learners assigned as the experimental group and 25 learners as the control group. Next, all participants took the WDCT as the pretest to evaluate their pragmatic performance ability as well as the possible differences in the production of suggestions between the groups prior to the start of PCR intervention.

Then, the treatment group received a PCR intervention for 8 weeks, meeting a 90-minute session a week for the treatment. The intervention involved pragmatic consciousness-raising about suggestions focusing on reading conversations for noticing, awareness-raising questions, meta-pragmatic discussion related to the features of suggestions, watching film segments and discussing the pragmatic features of suggestions made in the segments, DCT completion and role-play activities aimed at raising EFL learners' consciousness about the contextual factors affecting pragmatic performance as well as the strategies and structures and politeness strategies in making suggestions. Written materials such as modified conversations and scenarios for making suggestions in various situations with participants of differing power and distance relationships were used for instruction through consciousness-raising in the classroom.

Based on the recommendation by the researchers to provide opportunities for learners to perform speech acts in different situations both orally and written (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006), the EFL learners were engaged in role-play based on different situations with the purpose of performing suggestions. Also, they completed DCTs, attempting to produce appropriate and accurate suggestions. The aim of meta-pragmatic discussion was to stress various formulae used to make suggestions, the relationship between contextual factors and performance of suggestions and the differences and similarities between learners' pragmatic performance and target language norms regarding the structures and strategies used in the speech act performance. The participants in the control group received regular conversation lessons on general topics without any awareness-raising activities. After the treatment phase was completed, an immediate WDCT as a posttest was administered to the learners in both groups in order to determine their pragmatic performance at the end of the PCR treatment phase. Finally, a delayed WDCT posttest was administered to all participants eight weeks after the first posttest, as well. The delayed posttest was intended to evaluate the EFL learners' long-term performance of suggestions and determine whether the intervention had a durable effect on learners' pragmatic performance of making suggestions. The pretest, posttest, and the delayed posttest results were analyzed to assess the impact of the PCR intervention on the participants' performance of suggestions during the study.

### III. RESULTS

#### A. Results on the Effectiveness of the Treatment

The independent samples t-test on the WDCT pretest scores of the two groups showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and control group ( $t = .480$ ;  $df = 50$ ;  $p > .05$ ), suggesting that the performances of both groups were similar in the pretest. The results of the independent samples t-test of pretest are presented in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR THE PRETEST WDCT SCORES OF THE GROUPS

Performance Pretest	Levene's Test		T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference
	F	Sig.				
Exp. & Cont.	.205	.652	.48	50	.633	.899
			.48	19.97	.632	.899

As presented in Table 2, an independent samples t-test was performed to assess the significance of difference between mean scores of the experimental and control group in the delayed WDCT test. The analysis showed a significant difference between the mean scores of the treatment group ( $M = 29.48$ ) and the control group ( $M = 16.28$ ) in the delayed performance test ( $t = 6.596$ ;  $df = 50$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

TABLE 2  
INDEPENDENT SAMPLES T-TEST FOR THE DELAYED WDCT SCORES OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUP

Performance Delayed	Levene's Test		T	Df	Sig.	Mean Difference
	F	Sig.				
Exp. & Cont.	3.107	.048	6.59	50	.000	13.20
			6.65	49.04	.000	13.20

The result of the repeated measures of ANOVA shows that there was a significant difference between the mean scores in the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest of learners' pragmatic performance in the experimental group. Since Mauchly's test showed that the assumption of sphericity of data was violated,  $p < .05$ , the Greenhouse-Geisser correction was employed to determine the significance of the treatment effect within subjects which showed a significant effect with the new degrees of freedom, ( $F(1.13, 29.39) = 393.4$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, pragmatic consciousness raising activities improved EFL learners' pragmatic performance in the treatment group significantly. The ANOVA results are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3  
REPEATED MEASURES OF ANOVA FOR WDCT SCORES IN THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Group & Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Experimental	2781.50	2	1390.75	393.41	.000	.938
	2781.50	1.13	2459.88	393.41	.000	.938
Performance	183.82	52	3.535			
	183.82	29.39	6.253			

Additionally, as displayed in Table 4, the pair-wise comparison of mean scores of the pretest, posttest and delayed posttest in the treatment group showed that there was a significant difference between mean scores of the WDCT posttest ( $M = 29.88$ ) and pretest ( $M = 17.25$ ) and between the means of the delayed posttest ( $M = 29.48$ ) and pretest ( $p < .05$ ). Also, the analysis showed that there was no significant mean difference between WDCT posttest and delayed posttest scores was not significant ( $p = .116 > .05$ ).

TABLE 4  
PAIR-WISE COMPARISONS BETWEEN PRAGMATIC PERFORMANCES IN EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Performance		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Test	Test			
Pre	Post	12.63*	.587	.000
	Delay	12.22*	.637	.000
Post	Pre	12.63*	.587	.000
	Delay	.407	.187	.116

It can be concluded from the analysis results presented above that PCR intervention improved Iranian learners' performance of suggestions and that pragmatic consciousness-raising strategy had a long-term enhancing impact on EFL learners' production of appropriate suggestions over a period of two months after the PCR intervention.

*B. Frequency of Structure and Strategy Use in the WDCT*

The main purpose of using WDCT in the present study was to determine EFL learners' overall improvement in their pragmatic performance regarding the production of accurate and appropriate suggestions as a result of PCR treatment. However, the frequency of targeted structures and strategies used by PCR group in the pretest, posttest and delayed posttest of the production WDCT test and the possible changes in the frequencies was also determined. The analysis of the participants' responses to WDCT items revealed that the frequency of using suggesting linguistic structures, their related strategies and also politeness strategies has changed from pretest to posttest and delayed posttest. The number of participants who had used a category of structure or strategy at least once in their responses to 12 items of WDCT was the basis of determining the frequencies as shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5  
FREQUENCY OF STRUCTURE AND STRATEGY USE BY TREATMENT GROUP IN WDCT

STRATEGY	STRUCTURE	Pretest WDCT N:27	Posttest WDCT N:27	Delayed WDCT N:27
DIRECT	Performatives & Noun of Suggestion	15(55%)	7(26%)	9(33%)
	Imperatives & Negative imperatives	22(81%)	9(33%)	11(40%)
	Let's...	15(55%)	11(40%)	9(33%)
INDIRECT	Pseudo-cleft Structures	2(7%)	10(37%)	11(40%)
	Extraposed <i>to</i> -clauses	3(11%)	13(48%)	11(40%)
	Hint	0(0%)	9(33%)	7(26%)
CONVENTIONALIZED FORMS	Modals & Semi-modals	27(100%)	20(74%)	21(77%)
	Conditionals	8(29%)	19(70%)	15(55%)
	<i>Wh</i> -Questions (interrogative)	8(29%)	22(81%)	19(70%)
	<i>Yes-no</i> Questions (interrogative)	6(22%)	18(66%)	15(55%)

Overall, these findings show that direct strategy type with its related structures and modals in the conventionalized form category were the mostly used structures by EFL learners in the treatment group to perform the speech act of suggesting before receiving consciousness-raising treatment, while indirect strategy and structures and other conventionalized forms were used less by learners to make suggestions in the discourse completion test. However, after the PCR treatment, the number of learners who used direct strategy and modals decreased, while more learners used indirect strategy and conventionalized forms such as interrogative forms and conditionals. The consciousness-raising treatment seems to have been effective in changing the manner in which EFL learners made suggestions before the treatment and after gaining awareness about pragmatic aspects of performing suggestions, so that there was a higher variety of structures and strategies in their post-treatment performance of suggestions, compared to their pretest performance. A closer look at the rates of change in the percentage of learners who used different structures before and after the treatment shows that the participants preferred more indirect strategy type and conventionalized forms after the PCR activities, which can be an indication of the presence of a higher awareness about the affecting contextual factors, i.e. power and distance, while making suggestions.

*C. Frequency of Politeness Strategy Use in WDCT*

Another important aspect of speech act performance considered in the present study was using politeness strategies in making suggestions. Politeness strategy use was one of the scoring criteria for pragmatic performance in WDCT; however, the analysis of participants' responses in the discourse completion test revealed the trend in which EFL learners used politeness strategies in making suggestions before and after they received pragmatic consciousness-raising treatment as shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6  
FREQUENCY OF POLITENESS STRATEGY USE BY TREATMENT GROUP IN WDCT

POLITENESS STRATEGY	ACTION	Pretest WDCT N:27	Posttest WDCT N:27	Delayed WDCT N:27
INTERNAL REDRESSIVE ACTION	Subjectivizers	10(37%)	16(59%)	17(63%)
	Appealers	4(15%)	14(52%)	16(59%)
	Past tense	0(0%)	7(26%)	4(15%)
	Cajolers	2(7%)	11(40%)	8(29%)
	Politeness markers	5(18%)	15(55%)	12(44%)
	Subjunctive forms	2(7%)	9(33%)	7(26%)
	Downtoners	7(26%)	22(81%)	23(85%)
EXTERNAL REDRESSIVE ACTION	Grounders	5(18%)	18(66%)	15(55%)
	External politeness markers	3(11%)	13(48%)	10(37%)
	Preparators	2(7%)	12(44%)	11(40%)
	Downgrading commitments	5(18%)	18(66%)	14(52%)

Overall, the percentage of learners in the treatment group who used politeness strategies in the WDCT posttest and delayed test increased notably, compared to the pretest, where most of the redressive acts were used by only a small number of learners. This seems to suggest that PCR activities remarkably enhanced EFL learners' ability to use politeness strategies in making suggestions in the production WDCT.

#### IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of the current study seem to support and provide more evidence for the main SLA theory it was based on, i.e. the claim about the role that awareness plays in the development of L2 pragmatic competence (Schmidt, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2001). According to noticing hypothesis Schmidt (1990) attention is necessary for second language acquisition in general and for L2 pragmatic acquisition in particular. The EFL learners who received consciousness-raising treatment about speech act features and performance in the present study, performed significantly better than the control group. The present study also supports the proposal by Rose (1994) for a Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising as an effective method of teaching pragmatics inductively in the EFL classroom. The findings of the study show that PCR activities can enhance EFL learners' pragmatic acquisition to a great extent by helping them focus their attention on specific L2 pragmatic features, notice the features in the input, and turn this into explicit knowledge that they can utilize in their later pragmatic performance. The previous research on L2 pragmatics acquisition based on noticing hypothesis has shown different results. The studies by Witten (2004), Narita (2012) and Takimoto (2012) support Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, while Pearson (2001) provides little support for the hypothesis. Among the above-mentioned studies, Pearson (2001) and Witten (2004) both concluded that although learners showed some noticing, they were not necessarily able to integrate their knowledge into pragmatic production. However, Narita (2012) showed that learners in the PCR group outperformed those in the control group significantly, that is they were able to integrate their metapragmatic knowledge into their production of Japanese hearsay evidential markers as a result of consciousness-raising instruction. Takimoto (2012) also showed that learners who were engaged in metapragmatic discussion as a consciousness-raising activity performed better than those who did not, regarding learning English request downtoners. It should be noted that no quantitative analysis of the data was used by Pearson (2001), so the statistical significance of learners' pragmatic noticing could not be determined and was based on speculative classroom observation only. Also, since Witten (2004) did not use a pretest to measure learners' pragmatic knowledge prior to the treatment, the results of the study might have been tainted. Therefore, the results obtained by Pearson (2001) and Witten (2004) should be taken with caution. The current study employed a pretest-posttest design to make sure that the statistical significance of the measurements was determined. Thus, the findings of the study support results by Narita (2012), confirming that consciousness-raising activities can have not only an immediate significant effect on L2 learners' pragmatic production, but they can also enhance learners' delayed pragmatic production. One of the issues in L2 acquisition research has been whether awareness can lead to actual L2 acquisition and production. On the one hand, researchers such as Smith (1993), Truscott (1998), and Judd (1999) argue that knowing an L2 feature or having awareness of it does not necessarily mean one can acquire or use that L2 feature efficiently. On the other hand, researchers such as Schmidt and Frota (1986), Fotos (1993), and Narita (2012) have shown a positive relationship between noticing L2 features and their emergence in learners' later L2 output.

The findings of the present study, contrary to the argument by Truscott (1998) and Judd (1999), seem to provide further support for the claim pointed out by the latter group of researchers mentioned above, in favor of the positive effect of noticing L2 features on their emergence in learners' ultimate L2 production. Thus, we can claim that noticing can generally lead to production in L2 pragmatic production. The findings of the present study also revealed that pragmatic consciousness-raising activities can have a durable positive effect on EFL learners' performance of the speech act of suggesting for a period of at least two months. Norris and Ortega (2000) showed that the effectiveness of instruction on L2 grammar acquisition lasted beyond its immediate effects, despite its gradual deterioration. In pragmatics research, Narita (2012) and Takimoto (2012) reported a durable effect of PCR activities and metapragmatic discussion on learners' pragmatic production that lasted for a while after the immediate posttest. The current study

aimed at finding out whether EFL learners were able to retain the pragmatic knowledge they obtained through PCR activities over a longer period of time, i.e., two months. Although EFL learners' pragmatic performance deteriorated slightly over two month after the treatment, they were still able to make use of their acquired knowledge and produce L2 suggestions in the delayed posttest. Therefore, it can be claimed that, as a result of gaining meta-pragmatic awareness through consciousness-raising instruction, EFL learners were able to activate their knowledge of L2 pragmatic features over a longer period of time and appropriately use it in pragmatic production.

Regarding the use of structures and strategies, the participants who received PCR treatment were able to use a wider range of linguistic structures and strategies to make suggestions in the posttest and delayed posttest. A comparison between the PCR group's pretest and posttest WDCTs showed that before the instruction, a low percentage of EFL learners used a wide range of structures and strategies in their performance of suggestions (they mostly used direct strategy type and modals such as *should* and *can* for most suggestions), while they used a wider range of structures and strategies in their posttest performances. There can be two explanations for the extensive use of direct strategy type and modals by Iranian EFL learners in the WDCT pretest. First, direct strategy type and structures such as *performative* or *imperatives* and modals are the easiest accessible strategy and structures for EFL learners since they mostly do not possess the knowledge and awareness about the social factors such as power and distance and their effect on the choice of strategy and structure in making a suggestion and they usually turn to their L1 for the structures to make suggestions. Regarding the use of modals such as *should* and *can*, another explanation can be the fact that these learners have learned only those structures for making suggestions in high school and college English courses. Thus, it might be traced back to the participants' English learning background and the textbook-based input they received before, which is considered unrepresentative and insufficient to teach pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). The analysis of production posttest revealed that the participants in the experimental group used more indirect and conventionalized strategies such as impersonal strategies and question forms after receiving PCR treatment, while the EFL learners who used direct strategy and related structures decreased. This finding seem to suggest that, in addition to textbooks, other sources such as speech act taxonomies and authentic language input such as films and internet sources should be used in teaching pragmatics in the EFL classroom to ensure learners gain the awareness and knowledge about possibly all pragmatic aspects of different speech acts and their performance in different contexts.

With regard to the use of redressive actions to express politeness in making suggestions, the changing trend in the use of these redressive acts by the treatment group from pretest to posttest and delayed posttest was noticeable in the use of both internal and external redressive acts. For instance, the percentage of learners in the treatment group who used external redressive acts in their production of suggestion in the WDCT pretest were less than 20%, whereas this percentage increased to over 40% of learners in the posttest and delayed posttest for all the external redressive acts. These findings reveal that before the consciousness-raising treatment, most of the learners seem not to have been familiar with the concept of face and the significance of politeness in making a face-threatening speech act such as suggesting. The dramatic increase in the number of participants, who were able to use politeness strategies in making suggestions after receiving consciousness-raising instruction, suggests that PCR activities have been effective in enhancing learners' ability to make polite suggestions to a great extent.

The findings of the study suggest that intervention and teaching L2 pragmatics features in the form of consciousness-raising activities can facilitate and accelerate EFL learners' pace of learning L2 pragmatics, without which it might take years of cultural immersion for learners to acquire L2 pragmatic competence, as stated by Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985). Pragmatic consciousness-raising activities, according to the results of this research, seem to compensate for the lack of opportunities for EFL learners to acquire and practice pragmatic knowledge in real-life situations with native speakers. Thus, these activities can be integrated into any pragmatics instruction program, especially in EFL settings. The findings of the study can also be considered by L2 teachers and teacher trainers in their practice. The present study showed that employing awareness-raising activities about the various features of pragmatics, as an inductive teaching approach, can be an effective way to help EFL learners improve their pragmatic knowledge and performance even for longer periods of time after they receive instruction. Therefore, language teachers and teacher trainers, particularly in EFL context, can integrate pragmatic consciousness-raising activities into their daily practice of L2 teaching and teacher training. the findings of this study can be used in L2 material development by adding pragmatic consciousness-raising activities to L2 textbooks and in the activities aimed for teaching different language skills in the classroom. Consequently, language learners can acquire the knowledge and develop an ability to analyze the pragmatic input and turn it into intake in their long-term memories and become conscious and independent learners of L2 pragmatics outside the classroom as well.

The current study had some limitations. First, it was conducted in an EFL context; therefore, the findings obtained may not be generalizable to other settings such as ESL context. Second, the current study used adult EFL learners with tertiary level education as participants; thus, the findings of the study might not be applicable to learners of other groups such as adolescents and children. Third, the tests used for measurement purposes in the study were developed by the researcher as there were no existing standard tests available that can be used in the current study. Lastly, the participants in this study were intermediate-level EFL learners; thus, the findings of the study may not be generalized to beginners or advanced-level learners. Future studies can do similar research in an ESL context to determine if and how PCR affects ESL learners' pragmatic development in the classroom and their pragmatic learning in their encounters outside

the classroom. A different study could be done to compare this method of teaching with more implicit methods including giving recasts and providing verbal instruction without any consciousness-raising activities. The present research was intended to determine the effectiveness of PCR intervention on pragmatic performance over a period of two months after the observation of immediate results. The delayed performance period could be extended even more to examine whether and to what extent PCR can improve EFL/ESL learners' pragmatic performance over longer periods of time after the instruction is completed.

#### V. CONCLUSION

The present study was an attempt to determine the impact of pragmatic consciousness-raising activities on Iranian EFL learners' production of suggestions. This was conducted by comparing the performance scores of the experimental group in repeated measurements and also by comparing the posttest mean scores of the experimental and control groups. The changes in the trends in which treatment group learners used various suggesting structures and strategies before and after the PCR treatment were also identified by determining the percentage of learners who used the targeted features at least once in their speech act production. The findings of the study show that first, EFL learners in the experimental group significantly outperformed those in the control group regarding the production of appropriate suggestions, and second, PCR activities remarkably enhanced learners' ability to produce the speech act of suggesting in the experimental group, who received treatment. In addition, the study showed that as a result of the PCR treatment, learners in the treatment group were able to use a wider range of linguistic structures and strategies as well as more politeness strategies in making suggestions in their posttests performances. With regard to strategies, learners shifted from more direct strategies in the pretest to more indirect strategies and conventionalized forms in the posttests. Also, the number of learners who used a variety of politeness strategies in their post-treatment performances increased noticeably. The consciousness-raising activities about the structures and strategies of performing the suggestions drew EFL learners' attention to specific pragmatic features, helped them become aware of these L2 features, and consequently improved their production of appropriate suggestions in various situations.

#### APPENDIX. WRITTEN DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST (WDCT)

*Instructions: The following test consists of 12 different situations. Read the situations carefully. Imagine yourself in each situation as in real life, then make an appropriate and natural 'suggestion' in each situation in no more than 2 sentences.*

1. One of your classmates has problems adjusting to life in university and living alone away from his/her family. S/he is talking with you about his/her problem and asks for your suggestion to solve the problem. **You:**

2. You share an apartment with your best friend. Your friend likes to bring friends to your apartment and stays up late most nights. S/he is getting bad grades this semester and s/he is unhappy with this situation. What would you suggest to him/her to study well and better his/her grades? **You:**

3. Some of your classmates have recently complained that they have problem with understanding some grammar lessons well. Your English teacher asks for students' suggestions to improve grammar lessons. What would you suggest to your teacher? **You:**

4. You are in a computer store looking around for a good laptop computer. A stranger, seeing you checking out laptops, comes up to you and asks your opinion.

Stranger: I want to choose a good brand but I'm not sure. Which brand should I buy, do you think? **You:**

5. You are working part time in an office. You have a new boss who intends to build a good relationship with the employees and work well with them. S/he turns to you for some advice.

What would you suggest to him/her to succeed? **You:**

6. Your friend has a Canadian friend called Mr. Taylor who has decided to come to visit your country for a week. Since your friend does not have much information about what or where to see in your country, s/he asks you to reply his/her friend's email and suggest some interesting places for him to visit during a week he will be in your country. **You:**

7. Two of your friends tell you that they have not taken a vacation for 2 years and would like to go on vacation with you this summer. They are looking for a very special place to go and have a great time there together. What places would you suggest to go together? **You:**

8. You are working in a travel agency/at the airport so you have good information about travelling by plane. One of your friends is going to fly abroad for the first time and would like to have a comfortable and enjoyable flight. What would you suggest to him/her to have a good first experience? **You:**

9. You are a third year student and you are doing well in all your courses. Some freshmen in your major ask you about what to do to be successful in their studies in your field. What would be your main suggestion to them? **You:**

10. You get to know a teenage boy at a party who is a high school student. As the conversation between you and him goes on, he tells you about his interest in movies and that he stays most week nights awake to watch movies. But he mentions that he has problems at school and cannot study well. What would you suggest to him to solve his problem? **You:**



11. One of your lecturers plans to travel to a city/town in your country where you have travelled several times before. What would you suggest for him to do/see there? **You:**

12. You are planning to go out on the weekend with an elderly relative of yours who lives abroad and has recently come to visit you. Suggest some activities to do together during your outing. **You:**

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