# THE IMPACT OF EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT INSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' PRODUCTION AND RECOGNITION OF LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS

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## Abstract

Since the early 1980s, researchers have established that the foreign language learners' development of various aspects of pragmatic competence may be facilitated by the instruction of pragmatic routines and strategies in the foreign language classroom (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Consistent with this line of research, this study investigated the extent to which two instructional paradigms, explicit vs. implicit instruction, affect learners' ability to produce and recognize speech acts of request and invitation in English. Thirty homogeneous Iranian Intermediate EFL learners were randomly assigned to two groups: Explicit Group (EG) and Implicit Group (IG). A pre-test was given to the two groups to measure their ability of producing and recognizing request and invitation speech acts prior to any treatment. Then, they were exposed to two kinds of instructions. While the explicit group received explicit metapragmatic instruction and explicit feedback, the implicit group was provided with implicit instruction and implicit feedback. The results of the posttest, administered after the treatment, indicated that the participants, who received explicit focus on form instruction, outperformed those in the implicit group. The findings are encouraging for the use of explicit pragmatic instruction in classrooms to develop a greater pragmatic competence.

**Keywords:** Discourse Completion Task, form-focused instruction, interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic competence, Speech acts

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## 1. Introduction

The introduction of communicative competence for language learning and testing (Canale& Swain, 1980) has involved awareness that effectively learning a second language, requires more than memorizing vocabulary, mastering the rules of grammar; and therefore entails acquiring pragmatic competence (Bachman,1990) or sociolinguistic competence (Canale,1983; Canale& Swain,1980).

Despite this awareness, researchers have demonstrated that acquiring the rules of appropriate language behavior can be difficult even for fairly advanced learners and often leading them to experience a breakdown in communication known as pragmatic failure (Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Eisenstein &Bodman, 1986; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987; Thomas, 1983; Wolfson, 1989).

Beebe, Takahashi &Uliss-Weltz (1990), Rose & Kasper (2001) and Thomas (1983) have pointed out that unlike grammatical errors, which are easily recognized and often expected of language learners, pragmatic failure is more difficult to detect and may result in misjudgment in cross-cultural interaction. Language teachers, researchers or students know about an interaction that resulted in cross-cultural pragmatic misunderstanding. Lots of miscommunications have occurred between second language learners and native speakers of a language despite the exchange of perfect grammatical utterances (Al-Momani, 2009).

The recognition of the critical importance of pragmatics in learning a second language has led to the ascendancy of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), the study of how nonnative speakers comprehend, develop and produce speech acts (Kasper, 1997). In this respect the present study aims to explore the effects of implicit and explicit focus on form instructions on Iranian EFL learners' development of pragmatic functions namely request and invitation speech acts.

Speech acts have been a major problematic area for second language learners. Blum-Kulka (1989) described speech acts as "one of the most compelling notions in the study of language use" (p. 1). Billmyer (1990) argued that a major difficulty faced by nonnative speakers in acquiring pragmatic competence is that "speech acts are highly complex and variable and require that non-native speakers understand the multiple functions each serves" (p. 2).

In addition, language instructors and learners must remain aware that speech acts vary in both conceptualization and realization across languages and cultures due to deep-seated differences in cultural conventions and assumptions (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Cohen, 1996a; 1996b; Houck &Gass, 1996; Lyuh, 1992; Wierzbicka, 1991; Wolfson, 1989).

Since ILP researchers have investigated nonnative speakers from a limited number of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, namely English, Danish, Hebrew, German, Japanese, Spanish and Korean, it is requisite to extend ILP research to include the study of more languages and cultures. This expansion would provide teachers and curriculum designers with some knowledge on the pragmatic needs of learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Al- Momani, 2009).Iranian EFL learners are one of these understudied groups. There are a few existing ILP studies that included some Iranian learners as part of participants (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004; Ghobadi&Fahim, 2008). Thus what we know about Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic abilities is undoubtedly minimal. And this contradicts the prominent role played by pragmatics in communicative language teaching and testing. So a crucial need was seen for a line of ILP research to examine the pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners before and after instructions. In this study, the focus is on speech acts of invitations and requests since few studies (e.g., Dastjerdi&Rezvani, 2007) have examined their production and recognition among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

## 2. Pragmatics and language instruction

For second or foreign language learners, the opportunity to develop the pragmatics of the second language comes from two main channels: exposure to input and production of output through classroom use of the target language, or from a planned pedagogical intervention directed toward the acquisition of pragmatics (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Compared to the environment outside the classroom, language classrooms are poor environments for developing pragmatic ability in a target language because they offer low interaction with native speakers of the target language. Foreign language learners have limited exposure to the target language compared to second language learners. Language class activities in EFL settings often focus on decontextualized language exercises, which do not expose learners to the type of sociolinguistic input that facilitates pragmatic competence acquisition. In addition, research has shown that many aspects

of pragmatic competence cannot be acquired without a focus on pragmatics instruction (Kasper, 2000). Schmidt (1993) suggested that simple exposure to the target language is insufficient; pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not salient to learners and thus are not likely to be noticed despite prolonged exposure. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) proposed the necessity of instruction in pragmatics by documenting that second language learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics differ significantly from native speakers in their pragmatic production and comprehension in the target language. The addition of pragmatics to the classroom could compensate for the restricted opportunities for developing competence in a foreign language setting. As mentioned before, Kasper and Rose (2002) stated that learners may develop the pragmatic competence of the target language through two modalities found in the classroom: students may learn from exposure to input and production through instructional activities not necessarily intended for the development of a pragmatic function, and they might learn as a result of planned pedagogical action directed towards the acquisition of pragmatics. The present study was directed by the second statement that explicit pragmatics instruction is needed in foreign language classrooms in order for language learners to develop their pragmatic ability and practice the target language pragmatic abilities through a planned intervention that helps them further acquire pragmatic competence. Derived on the previous studies of learners' pragmatic development (Billmyer, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Wishnoff, 2000; Yoshimi, 2001; and Lyster, 1994) it was proved that learners receiving instruction in pragmatics outperformed those who did not.

## 2.1 Implicit and Explicit pragmatics instruction

Many studies have been done to compare the effectiveness of different teaching approaches of focus on form pragmatic instruction. Most of them have selected two types of implicit and explicit pedagogical intervention. The distinction between explicit and implicit teaching has been addressed by Doughty (2003). According to her, explicit teaching involves directing learners' attention towards the target forms with the aim of discussing those forms. In contrast, an implicit pedagogical approach aims to attract the learners' attention while avoiding any type of metalinguistic explanation and minimizing the interruption of the communicative situation. In relation to the effect of different teaching approaches to pragmatic learning, the advantage of the planned and explicit teaching condition over the implicit one, was reported in House and Kasper

(1981), House (1996), Rose and Ng Kwai-Fun (2001) and Takahashi (2001). House and Kasper's (1981) study involved German university students of EFL and focused on a variety of discourse markers and gambits. The authors designed two versions of the same communicative course, one explicit and one implicit, which provided learners with adequate input and opportunities to practice. Learners in the explicit version of the course received metapragmatic information and participated in discussions related to their performance in the role plays, whereas learners in the implicit treatment group did not receive any metapragmatic explanation. Results of the study indicate that both groups improved but the explicit group had an advantage over the implicit one. Similar findings are reported in House (1996), since both the implicit and explicit group benefited from instruction focused on developing pragmatic fluency, but the explicit group used a higher variety of discourse markers and strategies. The effect of different teaching approaches is also reported in Rose and Ng Kwai-Fun (2001). The authors compared the use of inductive and deductive approaches in teaching compliments and compliment responses to university learners of English in Hong Kong. The main difference between the groups involved whether learners were provided with metapragmatic explanations or not. Results of the study showed that although a deductive and inductive approach proved effective as far as pragmalinguistics is concerned, only the deductive approach involving metapragmatic discussion showed a positive effect on developing learners' sociopragmatic proficiency. Focusing on requests, Takahashi (2001) reported the explicit instruction as being more effective. The author who examined the effect of four input enhancement conditions (explicit teaching, NS- learners request comparison, NS-NNS request comparison and reading comprehension) on Japanese EFL learners' development of request strategies addressed in the study.

As pointed out by the above mentioned studies on pragmatic instructional intervention, explicit metapragmatic instruction seems to be more effective than implicit teaching. However, more recently, a few studies that have examined how implicit instruction works for pragmatic learning present inconclusive results. The studies conducted by Fukuya et al. (1998), Fukuya and Clark (2001) and Martinez-Flor(2004) illustrate how the focus on form approach can be conceptualized in the interventional research on pragmatic learning by adopting a pro-active focus on form. On the one hand, Fukuya et al. (1998) implemented recasts as implicit feedback on learners' production of requests. The authors employed an interaction enhancement technique consisting in showing a sad face to indicate a sociopragmatic error followed by repetition of students'

inappropriate utterance with rising intonation. Results of the study didn't support the hypothesis that this implicit feedback would be efficient in comparison to the explicit group that received explicit instruction on the sociopragmatic factors that affected appropriateness of requests in different situations. On the other hand, the studies conducted by Fukuya and Clark (2001) and Martinez- Flor (2004) used input enhancement techniques to draw learners' attention to the target features. In Fukuya and Clark's (2001) study, English as second language (ESL) learners were randomly assigned to one of the three groups, namely explicit, implicit, and control group. While explicit group learners were provided with explicit instruction on sociopargmatic features affecting mitigation on requests, typographical enhancement of the mitigators appeared in the version presented to the implicit group. Findings from the three groups' performance on listening comprehension and pragmatic recognition did not reveal significant differences in learners' pragmatic ability. The authors claimed that a different operationalization of the input enhancement may have reported differences as far as potential of saliency is concerned. Izumi's (2002) suggestion of using a combination of implicit techniques to help learners notice the target features could also be added to their explanation. In line with Izumi (2002), Martinez-Flor (2004) used a combination of implicit techniques to analyze the effect of implicit and explicit teaching on the speech act of suggestions. Results of her study demonstrated that both implicit (operationalized by the combination of input enhancement and recasts) and explicit instructional (teachers' explanation of suggestions) treatment groups outperformed the control group in awareness and production of the speech acts of suggesting. Besides, there were no significant differences in the pragmatic ability of learners from both the implicit and explicit treatment groups. Based on the interventional studies conducted in pragmatic development, this study attempts to provide empirical evidence on the way explicit and implicit teaching techniques benefit the development of learners' pragmatic competence. Additionally, all the above mentioned studies have involved adult language learners. Few studies, (Lyster, 1994) have included intermediate learners. In this study Iranian intermediate EFL learners are instructed implicitly and explicitly.

## 3. The present study

Due to the mixed results of the above reviewed studies and their different methodologies, there is a need for continuing this line of research to further our understanding of the effects of explicit and implicit focus on form instructions in the pragmatic realm. The current study aims to address this need by answering the following research questions:

Is there a significant difference between explicit and implicit instructions with regard to the influence these two approaches to teaching have on EFL learners' production and recognition of linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate requests?

Is there a significant difference between explicit and implicit instruction with regard to the influence these two approaches to teaching have on EFL learners' production and recognition of linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate invitations?

### 3.1 Participants

This study adopts a quasi-experimental, pre-test/ post-test design. Thirty female students, who were between 14 and 19 years of age, participated in this study. According to the placement test of Tasnim Language Institute of Mahabad, their proficiency level of English was at the intermediate level. Along with their studies in high school, those students had completed two years of studying English at the language institute. All the participants had studied *Interchange II* and were going to start *Interchange III*. Their mother tongue was Kurdish and none of them had the experience of living in or visiting an English-speaking country and English was studied as a foreign language. They were divided into two English classes taught by the researcher and were assigned to two instructional groups: 15 learners in Explicit Group and 15 learners in Implicit Group.

### 3.2 Instructional procedures

The materials used in this study consisted of conversations taken from *Interchange Series* (Richards 2005) and *Tactics for Listening Series* (Richards, 2003). From among the various conversations, those involving requests and invitations were chosen. Learners in the explicit group were given the written versions of the selected conversations in which the linguistic forms used to make request and invitation speech acts were boldfaced. Also the implicit group learners received the written versions of those conversations but they were not textually enhanced.

### 3.2.1 Explicit treatment

As a warm-up activity, the teacher asked the explicit group learners to identify two or three examples of the use of requests and invitations in various situations based on their first language and to translate the examples in English and discuss the problems and difficulties that result. Then, the teacher provided how native speakers express the same examples of speech acts in English and had the students compare them with their own examples. The purposes behind that activity were first to motivate the students to learn pragmatics and to focus their attention on the other activities, also to demonstrate how cultural norms were reflected in people's use of requests and invitations in their first language and finally to illustrate the challenging nature of pragmatic translations of language use in different cultural contexts. According to Eslami-Rasekh (2005), translation is an encouraging and motivating activity to illustrate the complex nature of the pragmatic aspects of the language.

After drawing explicit group learners' attention to cultural differences between two languages in how invitations and requests were made, they listened to 12 conversations on request and invitation speech acts taken from *Interchange Series* (Richards, 2005) and *Tactics for ListeningSeries* (Richards, 2003). Then they were given a hard copy of the conversations in which the linguistic forms used to make requests and invitations were boldfaced. Those pre-modified enhanced inputs made learners aware of the appropriate ways of making requests and invitations. Next the teacher provided explicit metapragmatic information on the intended speech acts in the scripts. The teacher discussed the forms taken by various request and invitation situations, including factors such as age, power, social distance (close/friend/stranger) and social status (professor/student) that might affect learners' use of a request or an invitation. Also some examples of requests and invitations using different social distances (friend/stranger), power levels (lower power/higher power) were provided. Making requests and invitations in formal and informal contexts was clarified to the students; for example how a student can invite her friend/her teacher to a picnic/graduation party or how she can ask her boss/friend to do a favor for her. In order to help the students to use what they had learned in various situations and to practice the use of requests and invitations in various contextual factors, the teacher gave them some Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT) and had them respond to the situation.

Then, several examples of appropriate responses in the above situations were provided to make students aware of appropriate ways of requesting or inviting in different contexts. Afterwards the teacher equipped the students with instances of various linguistic forms of request and invitation to introduce direct and indirect ways of requesting and inviting. Then, some role-play tasks were given to the students in which they were required to role-play them in pairs in front of the class. It provided some opportunities for them to orally practice whatever they had learned. Explicit feedback and recasts were used to correct learners' appropriacy and accuracy-based errors. The correct forms of learners' errors were elaborated and if necessary further examples of the appropriate forms of making requests and invitations were given to the learners.

3.2.2 Implicit treatment

Implicit group learners listened to 12 conversations on request and invitation speech acts taken from *Interchange Series* (Richards, 2005) and *Tactics for Listening Series* (Richards, 2003). Then, they were given the written versions of the conversations. In contrast to the explicit group, they didn't benefit from input enhancement technique; nothing was boldfaced in their scripts. After exposing the implicit group learners to high frequencies of request and invitation speech acts, as their typical treatment, they were required to role-play lots of tasks in different contexts and different social status. In addition to their accuracy-based errors, their appropriacy-based errors were corrected implicitly implying that no explicit pragmatic-oriented feedback was provided. Learners were informed only whether their answer was correct by teacher stating 'Yes' or simply nodding or moving on to the next time , or incorrect by the teacher saying 'What was that?', 'Not accepted. Change it.' Or 'I didn't understand'.

3.3 Data collection

Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCT) and Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Tasks (MDCT) were adopted to collect the required data. WDCTs are written questionnaires including a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study. Participants are asked to provide a response that they think is appropriate in the given context.MDCTs consist of test items where the test taker is required to choose the correct response (the key) from the several given options. Most commonly multiple-choice items include an instruction to the test-taker and a stem (typically either a phrase or sentence to be completed or a question). The key and several distractors follow in random order.

A pre-test and a posttest were constructed by the researcher to assess the participants' knowledge of request and invitation speech acts prior to and after the treatment phase of the study. Both tests were DCTs constituting 10 open-ended discourse completion items in which the students were required to respond by providing requests and invitations and 10 multiple-choice discourse completion items in which the students were asked to recognize the best answer from the given options depending on the appropriate context, social distance, age and status. In choosing the distractors, appropriacy was considered. The reliability and validity of the test was checked before embarking on the research. For checking the reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was estimated. The value for Alpha coefficient was 0.75 which is an acceptable figure. In order to check the validity, criterion-related validity was estimated for the test. For this purpose, the test scores were correlated with Lyster and Ranta's (1994) pragmatic test which is a standard test. The correlation was a high one of 0.89. In other words, $r = 0.89$; $n = 30$; $p < 0.05$.

Participants' responses to open-ended items of pre- and post- tests were scored considering the type of language used; that was each linguistically accurate and pragmatically appropriate request or invitation was given a single point. Answers that were grammatical but not pragmatically appropriate or vice versa, were given half a point and answers that were neither grammatical nor pragmatically appropriate, were given zero. All the correct answers were added up to a total sum. Since the learners were taught that it was essential to consider the formality/informality of the contexts, social distances and role-relationships in making requests and invitations, so the appropriateness of learners' statements were decided upon considering those variables. For multiple-choice items in pre- and post-tests, the best response was grammatically and pragmatically appropriate one depending on the context, social distance and status. Accordingly, a learner answered all 10 multiple-choice items correctly, was given 10 points. After the data were categorized and coded, as explained above, the coded data were analyzed using t-test.

## 4. Results

Before embarking on the t-test, it is necessary to check the data for anomalies such as extreme values or distorted distributions. This can be carried out through checking the box plot. The

following box plot shows that the data set did not have any outliers nor extreme values. Therefore, the researcher could proceed with the t-test.
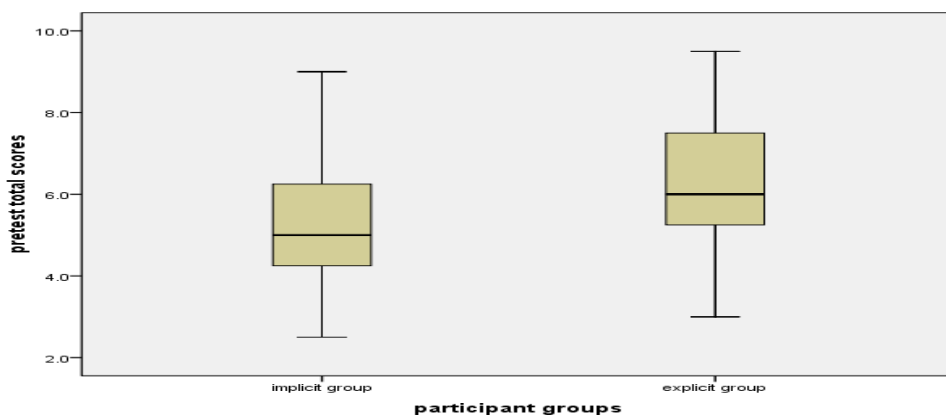


Figure 1. Box plot for pre-test total scores

The results of the independent samples t-test showed that there were not significant differences between the two groups (implicit and explicit) with regard to their pretest scores. The results are provided below:

$$t_{\text{open-ended}}\ (28) = -1.96;\ p > 0.05$$

$$t_{\text{MC}}\ (28) = -0.97;\ p > 0.05.$$

This finding is reasonable because this is the pretest and the treatment had not been administered yet.

**Table1 . Independent samples t-test** for the pretest

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| pretest open-ended items | Equal variances assumed | .01 | .94 | -1.96 | 28 | .06 | -.57 | .29 |

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| | | | | -1.96 | 27.94 | .06 | -.57 | .29 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| pretest multiple choice items | Equal variances assumed | .40 | .54 | -.97 | 28 | .34 | -.53 | .55 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -.97 | 27.08 | .34 | -.53 | .55 |

The independent samples t-test for the posttest showed that there were significant differences between the implicit and explicit groups in both open-ended items and multiple-choice items. The results are summarized as follows:

$$t_{\text{open-ended}} (28) = -5.33; \; p < 0.05$$

$$t_{\text{MC}} (28) = -4.85; \; p < 0.05.$$

**Table 2. Independent samples t-test for the posttest**

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| posttest open-ended items | Equal variances assumed | .58 | .46 | -5.33 | 28 | .00 | -2.90 | .54 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -5.33 | 27.44 | .00 | -2.90 | .54 |
| posttest multiple choice items | Equal variances assumed | .02 | .90 | -4.85 | 28 | .00 | -3.47 | .72 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -4.85 | 27.40 | .00 | -3.47 | .72 |

Checking the mean scores of both groups shows that the mean scores of the explicit group were higher than those of the implicit group in both open-ended and multiple-choice posttests. In other words, the explicit group had a better performance on both open-ended and multiple-choice tests.

**Table 3. Group statistics for the posttest**

|  | participant groups | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| posttest open-ended items | implicit group | 15 | 3.10 | 1.38 | .36 |
|  | explicit group | 15 | 6.00 | 1.59 | .41 |
| posttest multiple choice items | implicit group | 15 | 4.13 | 1.81 | .47 |
|  | explicit group | 15 | 7.60 | 2.10 | .54 |

## 5. Discussion

Since the early 1980s, researchers have established that a foreign language learner's development of various aspects of pragmatic competence may be facilitated by the instruction of pragmatic routines and strategies in the foreign language classroom (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Along with the line of research on the effects of instruction in pragmatics, this study sheds more light on the findings of the previous works in the area of cross-cultural and inter-language pragmatics. The findings confirm those of the earlier similar research on instructional inter-language pragmatics (House, 1996; Tateyama, 2001; Rose and Ng, 2001) which argues for more advantageous influence of explicit instruction on raising L2 pragmatic awareness. Alcon (2005) in a similar study on requests found that although an improvement in learners' appropriate use of requests did take place after instructional period, the explicit group showed an advantage over the implicit one.

In comparison with the study done by Rose and Ng's (2001), the present study has provided somewhat different results. They reported the results of a study which compared the effects of

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inductive and deductive approaches to the teaching of English compliments and compliment responses to university level learners of English in Hong Kong. All participants in the study were first year students in the Faculty of Business at the City University of Hong Kong. They shared basic demographic characteristics, such as L1, age, and the field of study. Also as indicated by rather high pretest scores, the learners who took part were quite advanced. As reported by Rose and Ng's (2001), results from their study indicated that inductive and deductive instruction may both lead to gains in pragmalinguistic proficiency; whereas the findings in this study show that only explicit instruction could enable the students in the explicit group to understand the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic differences between L1 and L2. That is, the results from the posttest indicated a significant difference between the two groups, showing the implicit group not being very successful in understanding the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic differences between the two languages, namely Farsi and English, as the result of not receiving explicit instruction on the mentioned issues.

Another point of concern which the researcher wishes to bring into notice is the 'communicative needs' of the foreign language learner seeming to be neglected in the Iranian educational system. As mentioned before in the present study, for Iranian students to pass the university entrance exam they should have a good understanding of English grammar; making it their ultimate goal to learn a foreign language. On the other hand, the students' efforts centering on developing the vocabulary and syntax in learning to speak English seem unfruitful. Whereas Richards'(1983) emphasis on understanding the communicative needs of the learner, the teaching of other components of language ability, especially those interactional and social aspects of language ability, is unfortunately being overlooked by Iranian teachers and material developers. Where he (1983, p. 243) states:

"Those involved in second language instruction and material development must understand how people communicate and how their communicative needs affect the discourse patterns of nonnative speakers. The more understanding we possess about the functions of language, the better out teaching and the stronger our materials will be. Through such understanding, we can be helped to better comprehend the difficulties that our students experience in acquiring a second language (foreign language), and we can become more appreciative of their success when mastery is achieved."

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of the present study would inform the teaching of the speech acts of requests and invitations of Iranian EFL learners by incorporating L2 pragmatic knowledge into the course program, learners' attention can be directed towards specific elements of the input such as those investigated in this study. Furthermore, given the importance of the social parameters in shaping learners' perception and production of speech acts –and given that most EFL textbooks do not include contextual information – instructor could outline different request and invitation types based on the interlocutor's status, familiarity, rights and obligations.

In addition, learners can be informed through explicit instruction on certain features that persist in their performance of requests and invitations due to negative pragmatic transfer. Although not all features lead to pragmatic failure, certain trends that were observed in this study, such as intensive use of direct strategies (e. g. "I want to use your computer", "Open this section for me" and "Come to my home") are more likely to do so. Having observed that the politeness marker 'please' was the major internal modification used by the EFL participants, language instruction should emphasize the wealth of internal modification used in English, including *play – downs* (e. g., "I was wondering if …"), *consultative devices* (e.g., "Would you mind…"), and *down toners/hedges* (e.g., "Can I borrow your notebook for a few hours?"), and their impact on softening the imposition created by the request and invitation.

The findings of this study should be interpreted in the light of its limitations. The selection of a DCT as the primary data collection tool was due to its applicability to the research design as well as the advantages it provided. Most importantly, it allowed for control over contextual variables (e.g., status, power, and gender) and thereby collects a consistent body of data for the investigation of the influence of these variables across cultures and situations. The use of a DCT also helps eliminate the anxiety and nervousness that normally accompany nonnative speakers when tested orally. However, the DCT is limited due to its lack of real social context, thus making it difficult to determine whether the data collected from its use reflect the wider population and real – life situations. Moreover, the DCT is not designed to elicit data on the features specially associated with oral interaction, such as turn taking, prosody, and hesitations, which can be valuable source of data.

Another factor posing limitations on the generalizability of this piece of research is the limited sample size; the data derived from a sample of only 30 EFL language learners. It is obvious that clearer results on how pragmatic focus on form is implemented would have been obtained with a larger sample size or with a longer observation period.

The entire area of ILP research in Iran is still in its infancy. Much can and should be done to bridge this important research gap. First, this study could be replicated by researchers investigating a wide range of EFL learners. Second, this study could be replicated using different data collection methods, such as ethnographic observation or role – plays, which would provide more insight into the advantages and dis advantages of each data collection method, leading to the development of a more grounded approach to speech act studies. Future researchers could include participants from various age groups, educational and economic backgrounds to collect more representative data for analysis and thus provide more insight into the types of requests and invitations used by different members of society

This study investigated the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on Iranian EFL learners' production and recognition of pragmatic functions. A major finding of the study is that explicit instruction is better than implicit instruction for teaching English requests and invitations. Implicit instruction was also effective but it was not as good as explicit instruction. Therefore, the hypotheses of the study that: there is no significant difference between the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on Iranian EFL learners' production of request and invitation pragmatic functions and that there is no significant difference between the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on Iranian EFL learners' recognition of request and invitation pragmatic functions are rejected. The major reason is that explicit instruction includes a very clear and systematic teaching method and due to its salient features, the performances in the quality of information, and the level of formality and strategy choice in EG were better than IG.

**Appendix A. Samples of data collection instruments (Pre-test and posttest)**

**1. Written discourse completion task**

**Instruction:** In this questionnaire, you will find several communication situations in which you interact with someone, you will be asked to write a response in the blank. Try to write your response as you feel you would say in the situation.

## Example:

**Situation 1:** You are in a meeting with your boss. However, you forgot to bring a pen with you. You would like to borrow a pen from him/her. What would you say to your boss?

You

**Situation 2:** It is raining now. You need a ride to go home. You call your brother for help. What would you say to him?

You

**Situation 3:** Tomorrow is your birthday party. How would you invite your teacher to your party?

You

**Situation 4:** You have been in a boring class for three hours. You invite some of your classmates to drink a cup of tea and a cake. What would you say?

You

## 2. Multiple choice discourse completion tasks

**Instruction:** Please read the following situations. Some options are given for each situation. Read all of them carefully and decide on the most appropriate response. In choosing the answer, please consider role-relationships between participants and formality and informality of the context.

## Example:

**Situation 1:** You need to take some photos on your sister's birthday and you want to borrow your friend's digital camera.

a.      Tomorrow is my sister's birthday. I take your digital camera.

b.      I need your digital camera. Can you please lend me?

c.      Would it be ok if you lent me your digital camera?

**Situation 2:** You are a teacher. You ask one of your students to open the class window.

a.        Would you please open the window?

b.        It's hot. Open the window.

c.        Can you open the window

**Situation 3:** You are at your friend's house, having dinner. You want to ask her mother to give you the salt.

a.        Pass me the salt.

b.        Can you pass me the salt?

c.        Could you please pass me the salt?

**Situation 4:** You are doing a part-time job and you are tired from working too hard. You want to take a break, you say to the manager.

a.        I can't work well. Can I take a rest?

b.        I am tired. I take a rest.

c.        May I take a rest, please?

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