



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***EFFECTS OF PRAGMATIC CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING ACTIVITIES ON
IRANIAN TERTIARY EFL LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE
AND META-PRAGMATIC AWARENESS IN
THE SPEECH ACT OF SUGGESTING***

HOSSEIN ABOLFATHIASL

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By

HOSSEIN ABOLFATHIASL

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2014

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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HOSSEIN ABOLFATHIASL

December 2014

Chair: Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, PhD

Faculty: Educational Studies

Learners of English as a foreign language appear to have problems with pragmatic features of the English language and often display a poor knowledge and performance in their communicative efforts. Although they may have developed a good knowledge of L2 grammar and vocabulary, EFL learners' ability to make pragmatically appropriate utterances in varying situations seems to lag behind. The significant role and spread of English as an international lingua franca for communication in a globalized world today makes this inability more noticeable and thus requiring more attention. Since EFL learners have limited or no opportunities to interact with native speakers to improve their pragmatic competence, providing them with effective instruction of the pragmatic features of English language has attracted much interest in recent years. To address the issue, the present study investigated the effects of pragmatic consciousness-raising (PCR) activities on Iranian intermediate-level EFL learners' pragmatic performance and metapragmatic awareness of 'suggestions'. Fifty-two adult male learners in two intact classes, who were taking an intensive English language course at the Foreign language Center, Imam Ali University in Tehran, were assigned as an experimental group (n= 27) and a control group (n= 25). A pretest-posttest-delayed posttest design was used in the present study. The experimental group received PCR treatment for a period of 8 weeks. A written discourse completion test (WDCT) and a metapragmatic awareness test (MAT) were used to collect data during the study. The participants' pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest scores in both tests were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the PCR treatment on the treatment group's production and meta-pragmatic awareness of suggestions.

The result of repeated measures of ANOVA shows a statistically significant difference between the mean test scores in the pre-, post-, and delayed test measurements of participants' pragmatic performance in the experimental group, i.e. $F(1.13, 29.39) = 393.4, p < .05$. Moreover, the repeated measures of ANOVA for

metapragmatic awareness revealed that the treatment group's mean scores in pre-, post-, and delayed tests were significantly different over time, i.e. $F(2, 52) = 173.04$, $p < .05$. Further, the independent samples t-test analysis of the delayed posttest scores of the treatment and control groups revealed that the difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the delayed WDCT is statistically significant, i.e. $t_{\text{observed}} = 6.596 > t_{\text{critical}}(50) = 2.008$; $\alpha = .05$. Finally, the independent samples t-test analysis of the delayed posttest scores of the treatment and control groups revealed that the difference between the mean scores of the two groups in the delayed MAT is statistically significant, i.e. $t_{\text{observed}} = 4.25 > t_{\text{critical}}(50) = 2.008$; $\alpha = .05$. Thus, the findings of the study provided evidence that PCR activities had a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance and metapragmatic awareness regarding the speech act of suggesting. 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 structures and strategies as well as politeness strategies in making suggestions in their posttest 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 findings of the present study have implications for EFL teachers, teacher trainers, and material developers. However, more studies are needed to investigate the role and impact of pragmatic consciousness-raising approach in the EFL classroom further.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**KESAN AKTIVITI KESEDARAN PENJANAAN PRAGMATIK (PCR) DI
KALANGAN PELAJAR UNIVERSITI EFL DI IRAN SERTA PRESTASI
PRAGMATIK DAN KESEDARAN METAPRAGMATIK DARIPADA
CADANGAN**

Oleh

HOSSEIN ABOLFATHIASL

Disember 2014

Pengerusi: Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, PhD

Fakulti: Pengajian Pendidikan

Pelajar yang mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing ini kelihatan mempunyai masalah dengan ciri-ciri pragmatik dalam Bahasa Inggeris dan sering memaparkan pengetahuan yang lemah dan prestasi dalam usaha komunikasi mereka. Walaupun mereka boleh meningkatkan pengetahuan yang baik tata bahasa dan perbendaharaan kata L2, keupayaan EFL pelajar untuk membuat ucapan-ucapan pragmatik sesuai dalam situasi yang berbeza-beza masih ketinggalan di belakang. Peranan yang besar dan penyebaran bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa perantaraan antarabangsa untuk komunikasi dalam dunia global hari ini membuat ketidakupayaan ini lebih ketara dan dengan itu memerlukan lebih perhatian. Disebabkan peluang untuk pelajar EFL untuk berinteraksi dengan penutur asli untuk meningkatkan kecekapan pragmatik mereka adalah terhad atau tiada langsung, dengan menyediakan mereka dengan pengajaran ciri pragmatik bahasa Inggeris yang berkesan telah menarik minat dalam beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini. Untuk menangani isu ini, kajian ini menyiasat kesan aktiviti kesedaran penjaan pragmatik (PCR) ke atas Iran pertengahan peringkat EFL pelajar prestasi pragmatik dan kesedaran metapragmatik dengan 'cadangan'. Lima puluh dua pelajar lelaki dewasa dalam dua kelas utuh, yang telah mengambil kursus bahasa Inggeris intensif di Pusat bahasa asing, Imam Ali University di Tehran, telah ditugaskan sebagai kumpulan eksperimen ($n = 27$) dan kumpulan kawalan ($n = 25$). Satu reka bentuk ujian pra-pasca pasca-tertanggung telah digunakan dalam kajian ini. Kumpulan eksperimen menerima rawatan PCR untuk tempoh 8 minggu. Ujian wacana bertulis siap (WDCT) dan ujian kesedaran metapragmatik (MAT) telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data dalam kajian ini. Ujianpra, pasca, dan skor pasca melambatkan peserta dalam kedua-dua ujian telah dianalisis untuk menentukan keberkesanan rawatan PCR pada pengeluaran kumpulan rawatan dan kesedaran cadangan metapragmatik .

Hasil daripada langkah-langkah yang berulang-ulang ANOVA menunjukkan terdapat perbezaan statistik yang signifikan antara skor min ujian dalam pra, pasca, ujian dan pengukuran ditangguhkan prestasi pragmatik peserta dalam kumpulan eksperimen, iaitu $F(1.13, 29.39) = 393.4, p < .05$. Selain itu, langkah-langkah yang berulang-ulang ANOVA untuk kesedaran metapragmatik mendedahkan bahawa markah kumpulan rawatan ini min di pra, pasca, dan tests were ditangguhkan dengan ketara berbeza dari masa ke masa, iaitu $F(2, 52) = 173.04, p < .05$. Di samping itu, sampel bebas analisis ujian-t markah pasca lambat daripada kumpulan rawatan dan kawalan mendedahkan bahawa perbezaan di antara skor min kedua-dua kumpulan dalam WDCT yang ditangguhkan adalah statistik yang signifikan, iaitu $t\text{-diperhatikan} = 6.596 > t\text{-kritikal}(50) = 2.008; \alpha = .05$. Akhir sekali, sampel bebas analisis ujian-t markah pasca lambat daripada kumpulan rawatan dan kawalan mendedahkan bahawa perbezaan di antara skor min kedua-dua kumpulan dalam MAT yang ditangguhkan adalah statistik yang signifikan, iaitu $t\text{-diperhatikan} = 4.25 > t\text{-kritikal}(50) = 2.008; \alpha = .05$. Oleh itu, dapatan kajian ini membuktikan bahawa aktiviti PCR mempunyai kesan positif atas prestasi pragmatik Iran EFL serta meningkatkan kesedaran pelajar meta-pragmatik mengenai perbuatan cadangan ucapan. Di samping itu, kajian menunjukkan bahawa hasil daripada rawatan PCR, pelajar dalam kumpulan rawatan dapat menggunakan pelbagai struktur dan strategi serta strategi kesopanan dalam membuat cadangan dalam persembahan post tests mereka. Berhubung dengan strategi, pelajar beralih daripada strategi yang lebih langsung dalam ujian pra kepada strategi yang tidak langsung dan bentuk konvensional dalam post ujian. Juga, bilangan pelajar yang menggunakan pelbagai strategi kesopanan dalam persembahan selepas rawatan mereka meningkat dengan ketara. Dapatan kajian ini mempunyai implikasi untuk guru EFL, pengajar, dan pemaju bahan. Walau bagaimanapun, lebih banyak kajian diperlukan untuk menyiasat peranan dan kesan pendekatan pragmatik kesedaran penjaanaan di dalam kelas EFL lagi.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 2 December 2014 to conduct the final examination of Hossein Abolfathiasl on his thesis entitled "Effects of Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising Activities on Iranian Tertiary Efl Learners' Performance and Meta-Pragmatic Awareness in the Speech Act of Suggesting" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Roselan bin Baki, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Arshad b Abd Samad, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Chan Swee Heng, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Modern Language and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Zohreh R. Eslami, PhD

Associate Professor
Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture
Texas A&M University
(External Examiner)



ZULKARNAIN ZAINAL, PhD

Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 26 February 2015

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Ain Nadzimah Abdullah, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairperson)

Rosnaini Bt. Mahmud, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Habsah Bt. Hussin, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD

Professor and Dean
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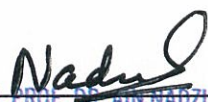
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Name and Matric No: Hossein Abolfathiasl GS26808

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Signature: 
Name of **ASSOC. PROF. DR. AM NADZIMAH ABDULLAH**
Chairman of **Deputy Dean (Graduate Studies and International Affairs)**
Supervisory **Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication**
Committee: **Universiti Putra Malaysia**
43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor

Signature: 
Name of **DR. HABSAH BINTI HUSSIN**
Member of **Pensyarah Kanan**
Supervisory **Jabatan Pendidikan Bahasa dan Kemanusiaan**
Committee: **Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan**
Universiti Putra Malaysia
43400 UPM Serdang
SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN

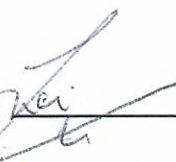
Signature: 
Name of **Dr. Rosnaini Bt Mahmud**
Member of **Jabatan Asas Pendidikan**
Supervisory **Fakulti Pengajian Pendidikan**
Committee: **Universiti Putra Malaysia**
43400 Serdang, Selangor

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CR	Consciousness-Raising
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
EFL	English as A Foreign Language
ESL	English as A Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
FTA	Face Threatening Act
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MAT	Meta-pragmatic Awareness Test
MCT	Multiple Choice Test
NS	Native Speaker
NNS	Nonnative Speaker
PCR	Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising
SL	Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language
WDCT	Written Discourse Completion Test

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the background of the study, the statement of the problem, and significance of the study. It also describes the objectives, research questions, and research hypotheses of the study. Finally, the limitations of the study and definition of key terms are presented.

1.2 Background of the Study

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 (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) contexts. Foreign language learners often experience difficulties in their communication efforts as they should have not only knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary (i.e. syntax and semantics) of a language but they also need to be familiar with social and contextual factors underlying that language (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). These norms of interaction comprise 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 using language appropriately in the context. 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 to perform contextually appropriate language functions. 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. Pragmatic competence has also been defined as the understanding of form and context relationship that helps us to express and interpret intended meaning in an accurate and appropriate manner (Murray, 2010).

Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) observed the existence of pragmatic errors in advanced language learners’ communicative efforts. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) noted that ‘a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily show concomitant pragmatic competence’ (p. 21). Halenko and Jones (2011) report that despite their residency in the ESL context for a long period of time, non-native speaker (NNS) learners were often unable to produce pragmatically appropriate language in their interactions with their classmates and outside the classroom. Even

though they had an adequate level of grammatical and lexical competence, they had problems with performing simple speech acts such as requesting.

The above-mentioned observations and concern about the consequences of pragmatic failure in communication (see Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Widdowson, 1990) are evidence to illustrate 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) in learners' pragmatic development have been supported by instructional intervention research on pragmatic learning (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Halenko & Jones, 2011; 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 Schmidt (1993a) in the Noticing Hypothesis contending that simple exposure to L2 is not enough since there are pragmatic functions and their related contextual factors which are non-salient to learners and thus less likely to be noticed by L2 learners even after they are exposed to the target language 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 and drawing learners' attention to these forms can help learners in the language acquisition process (Ellis, 1995; Schmidt, 1990, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 2001, 2012; Smith, 1993).

As advocated by Smith (1981), consciousness raising (CR) is aimed at drawing learners' attention to the forms of target structures. It has been argued that CR is more effective for learners at post-critical period (Gass & Madden, 1985; Rutherford, 1988; Schmidt, 1993a, 1993b; Smith, 1981, 1991, 1993). Also, Pienemann (1989) claimed that CR accelerates L2 learning process. In earlier research on CR, the focus was on grammar instruction and learning (Fotos, 1993, 1994; Smith, 1981), while Rose (1994) proposed pragmatic consciousness raising (PCR) as an important approach towards teaching pragmatics, especially in EFL context, as well. PCR is an inductive approach to raise learners' awareness about the appropriate use of language forms in specific contexts and it aims is 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 (Rose, 1994).

One of the important issues in communicative teaching approaches in recent years has been the speech acts, based on the speech act theories developed by scholars such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1976). Their theoretical models deal with the successful performance of speech acts by the speaker to fulfill a set of 'felicity conditions'. The classification of utterances into locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts by Austin (1962) and speech act classification and indirect speech acts contributed a lot to the development of the speech act theories. However,

in these theories the role of context was not taken into account, which is believed to have a significant role in the study of speech acts and on the different aspects of pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990).

Researchers in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics have attempted to show whether speech act realizations vary from one language to another (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Kwon, 2004). They have established some universals of pragmatic competence related to speech act realizations and speech act interpretation, i.e. differing choice of speech acts by learners in various situations and similar group of speech acts used by learners and native speakers.

On the other hand, research in interlanguage pragmatics has shown that language learners' speech act realizations are different from those of native speakers of the language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990, 1993). According to Ishihara and Cohen (2010), the causes of pragmatic divergence among L2 learners include negative transfer from L1, limited L2 grammatical knowledge, insufficient teaching materials and overgeneralisation of L2 pragmatic conventions. Another possible cause, as Halenko and Jones (2011) believe, is that successful performance usually depends on knowledge of the social and cultural norms of the target language, which may be different in the L1 and thus need to be particularly taught and they are mostly undocumented and not easily understandable to learners in interaction. The differences are caused by L2 learners' dependence on their first language that can lead L2 learners' overreliance to their L1 conventions to a great extent if they do not develop their L2 pragmatic knowledge. Thus, they fail to adhere to the target language norms which can cause communication problems or even failure in different communicative contexts.

Determining ways to prepare learners to avoid misunderstandings and violations of social norms in the target language is considered a task for interlanguage pragmatics researchers, thus providing a description of L2 learners' speech act realizations can also help in understanding the linguistic gap and miscommunication that L2 learners may experience in real-life situations (Tada, 2005). This could be done through pragmatic consciousness-raising, i.e. awareness-raising activities such as pragmatic and metapragmatic discussion focusing on various linguistic forms and strategies as well as the social factors affecting pragmatic performance in different situations in L2 classroom.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite developing their lexical and grammatical proficiency, L2 learners, especially in the foreign language settings, often seem to have many problems with the pragmatic aspects of English language and display a poor performance in communicative activities (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). It seems that pragmatic competence of L2 learners, especially in the EFL context, does not develop much compared to their syntactic or semantic knowledge of English language and they are often unable to make contextually appropriate and linguistically accurate utterances in their communication attempts with other L2 learners and native speakers in different contexts (Halenko & Jones, 2011). This becomes more noticeable and requires more attention as the role of English as an

international lingua franca for communication is becoming more and more significant in a globalized world today.

There are several reasons for this inability or non-target-like pragmatic performance. First, L2 learners, especially in the EFL setting, have very limited or no opportunities to interact with target language speakers to enhance their pragmatic competence (Cenoz, 2007; Rose, 1994). Second, developing pragmatic competence has been emphasized less than other aspects of L2 (i.e. grammar and vocabulary) in the classroom which can be traced back to the teachers' extremely formal linguistic training background (Cots & Baiguet, 1997). Third, the negative L1 transfer can lead to pragmatic divergence among L2 learners (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Fourth, the input provided by pedagogical materials is incomplete or misleading and they cannot provide realistic examples and contextual information needed to analyze the socio-pragmatic issues. Finally, the teacher-fronted classroom language cannot be a sufficient and appropriate model for L2 learners' pragmatic learning (Kasper, 1996, 1997).

Canale and Swain (1988) observed that L2 learners' grammatical errors are tolerated more than their pragmatic errors by native speakers. Halenko and Jones (2011) believe that L2 learners' struggle or failure in making simple speech acts such as requesting information could be considered rude as they may not consider politeness in their performance and even leads to the frustration of other more competent learners interacting with them in groups in an academic setting. Phillips (1993) pointed to the frequent lack of relevant activities and information in instructional materials for the development of sociopragmatic competence. In a study on EFL textbooks, LoCastro (1997b) found that these materials lack L2 pragmatics. According to Ragone (1998), the pragmatic information provided in the instructional materials of Spanish textbooks was often presented with little or no usage context. Also, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) states that textbooks cannot be considered reliable sources of pragmatic input for classroom L2 learners. She argues that one of the major obstacles to be overcome is the unnatural or unrepresentative content in instructional materials and stresses the need for authentic, representative language in classroom instruction. As it is obvious from abovementioned findings and conclusions, L2 pragmatics instruction has not been practiced seriously in L2 pedagogy and it should be incorporated into classroom teaching through the use of appropriate methods and authentic language and materials.

Studies on pragmatic learning and performance of Iranian EFL learners have also shown that most of these learners fail to approximate the target-like production of speech acts and that Iranian students' speech act production includes many deviations from target-like or native production norms (e.g. Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Jannani, 1996). Therefore, these researchers have called for attempts to raise EFL learners' consciousness about sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of speech acts in the Iranian context. Furthermore, research findings indicating the existence of noticeable differences between pragmatic performance of Iranian EFL learners and English native speakers (e.g. Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005) seem to imply that most EFL learners may not be aware of these differences and may adhere to the use of their first language system in their communicative efforts. This appears to make it necessary to take teaching of pragmatic features in Iranian EFL classes more seriously and to move beyond mere exposure to these

features by undertaking awareness-raising related to less salient sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects of speech act production in English language.

The significance of consciousness and noticing in pragmatic development of L2 learners has been stressed in interlanguage pragmatics literature as well (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Niezgodna & Röver, 2001; Schmidt, 1993a, 1995, 2001, 2012). Baiget and Chavarría (2006) provide four reasons why socio-pragmatic issues should be included in the activities designed to develop explicit knowledge about language. First, the actual performance of specific pragmatic functions seems to be unclear to learners. Second, relevant contextual factors may be overlooked by learners. Third, in terms of interlocutor tolerance, socio-pragmatic errors may be graver than grammatical ones, since they may have more negative social consequences for the learner. Finally, explicit reflection on socio-pragmatic issues such as politeness, indirectness, humor and face can help learners to become aware of cultural differences, and to become less ethnocentric.

The impact of pragmatic consciousness-raising (PCR) approach and activities on L2 learners' pragmatic development, advocated by Rose (1994), have been studied by few researchers in recent years (Narita, 2012; Takimoto, 2012). Narita (2012) examined the effect of PCR on Japanese as a foreign language learners' development and awareness of hearsay evidential markers. The study by Takimoto (2012) focused on the effect of meta-pragmatic discussion on recognition and production of English request downgraders among Japanese EFL learners. In addition, the speech act of suggesting has not been studied extensively in terms of the effect of PCR on performance and awareness of suggestions in the EFL context. Since suggesting is regarded a face-threatening speech act and difficult to perform in real-life situations, it requires more investigation, especially in terms of politeness strategies and structures used for making suggestions and also L2 learners' awareness while performing this specific speech act in their communicative efforts.

The study 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 in their study. Moreover, their study aimed to compare explicit and implicit teaching methods in teaching pragmatics in EFL context. The current study would include pragmatic strategies and study more linguistic forms in producing suggestions in EFL classroom and examine the impact of consciousness-raising technique on EFL learners' immediate and delayed performance and awareness of the speech act of suggesting. This study would also shed light on the rarely investigated problem of learning pragmatic aspects of English language among Iranian EFL learners whose speech act production usually suffers from considerable not-target-like forms and frustration in communicative situations and strategies to resolve this issue in teaching pragmatics in that particular EFL setting.

Considering teaching pragmatics in the ESL/EFL classroom, researchers (Vasquez & Sharpless, 2009; Vellenga, 2011) have underlined the issue that language teachers are not usually provided with specific training to effectively teach pragmatics to L2 learners and that seldom are the methods of teaching pragmatics dealt with in training programs. Thus, most language teachers lack the knowledge of methods and techniques related to teaching various pragmatic features to L2 learners, especially in the Iranian EFL context where language teachers do not usually experience learning

L2 pragmatics in their formal educational background. Considering this problem, employing a particular strategy including different types of activities for teaching pragmatics in the present study, could help to resolve the above-mentioned issue by offering a teaching technique that could be modified and applied by EFL teachers for teaching pragmatics in their daily practice.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The current study is an attempt to investigate the effects of a PCR intervention on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance and metapragmatic awareness. The first objective of the study is to examine the impact of PCR activities on EFL learners' performance of suggestions in English language. The second objective of the study will be determining the effectiveness of PCR activities on EFL learners' metapragmatic awareness related to pragmatic features of suggestions in different situations. The last objective of the study is to examine the effects of PCR intervention on Iranian EFL learners' long-term pragmatic performance as well as their meta-pragmatic awareness regarding suggesting speech act.

1.5 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The current study is an attempt to answer the following questions based on the objectives of the study:

Objective A: Determining the effect of PCR activities on Iranian EFL learners' performance of suggestions.

RQ1. Do PCR activities have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' performance of the speech act of suggesting?

H₀1. There will be no significant difference between pre, post, and delayed posttest scores of the Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) in the experimental group.

RQ2. Does engaging in PCR activities significantly enhance EFL learners' performance of suggestions?

H₀2. There will be no significant mean difference between the experimental and control group in the delayed WDCT posttest.

Objective B: Determining the effects of PCR activities on Iranian EFL learners' metapragmatic awareness about strategies and linguistic forms used to produce suggestions.

RQ3. Do PCR activities have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness of the speech act of suggesting?

H₀₃. There will be no significant difference between pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest scores of the Meta-pragmatic Awareness Test (MAT) in the treatment group.

RQ4. Does engaging in PCR activities significantly enhance EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness of the features of suggestions?

H₀₄. There will be no significant difference between the experimental and control group in the delayed MAT posttest.

Objective C: Examining the effects of PCR on Iranian EFL learners' long-term pragmatic performance as well as their meta-pragmatic awareness regarding suggestions.

RQ5. Do PCR activities have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' long-term performance of the speech act of suggesting?

H₀₅. There will be no significant difference between pretest and delayed posttest scores of the Written Discourse Completion Test (WDTC) in the experimental group.

RQ6. Do PCR activities have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' long-term meta-pragmatic awareness regarding suggestions?

H₀₆. There will be no significant difference between pretest and delayed posttest scores of the Meta-pragmatic Awareness Test (MAT) in the experimental group.

1.6 Conceptual Framework of the Study

From the theories presented as the basis for the current study, the concepts of pragmatic consciousness-raising (PCR) technique (as the independent variable), L2 pragmatic performance and meta-pragmatic awareness (as the dependent variables) have been selected for the purpose of carrying out the current study. Through PCR activity, which is the independent variable of the study, L2 learners' attention would be directed inductively to the linguistic structures and strategies needed to make appropriate and accurate suggestions in various situations. In addition, opportunities would be provided for learners to produce suggestions using written DCT tasks and role-play, following awareness-raising questions and meta-pragmatic discussion about social factors and structures involved in the production of the speech act of suggesting appropriately. The above-mentioned activities and tasks might be proven to improve EFL learners' pragmatic performance and heighten their metapragmatic awareness of different aspects of the speech act of suggesting, which have been assumed as two dependent variables of the present study. Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the current study.

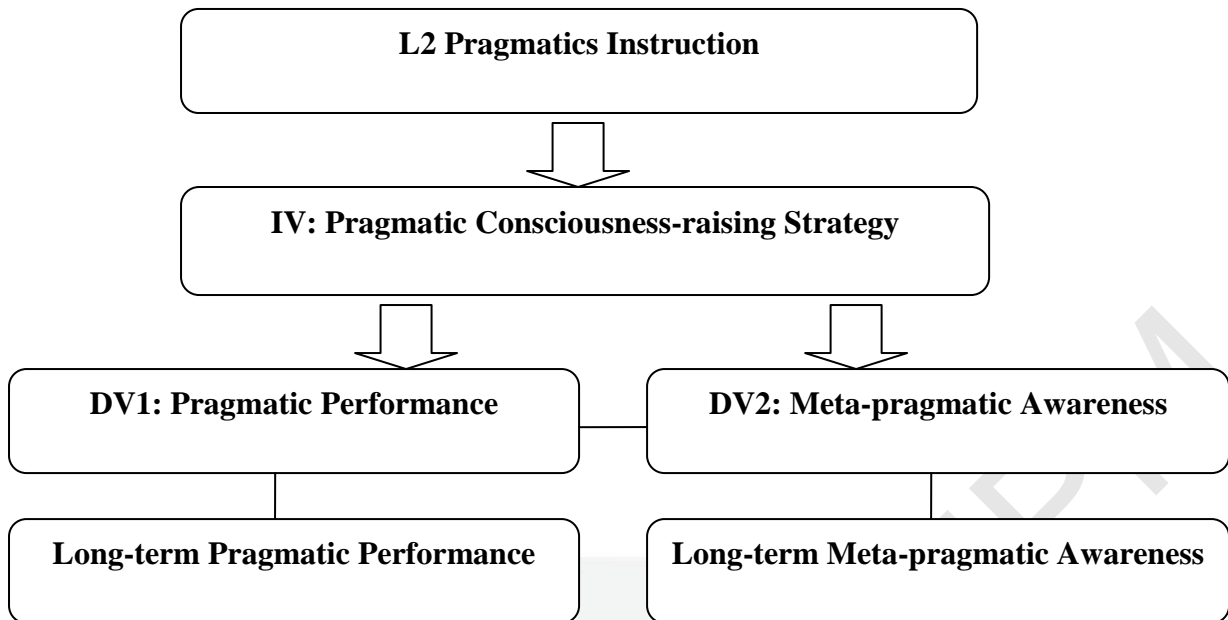


Figure 1-1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.7 Significance of the Study

The current study is aimed at determining the effects of pragmatic consciousness-raising (PCR) intervention on adult Iranian learners' performance and metapragmatic awareness about suggestions. This study would make a significant contribution to the research literature on L2 pragmatics instruction and awareness by focusing on pragmatic consciousness-raising approach and its effects on EFL learners' production and awareness of linguistic forms as well as strategies in producing linguistically accurate and contextually appropriate suggestions in various situations. It would also provide a better understanding of the use of consciousness-raising strategy to teach L2 pragmatics in L2 classroom for foreign language teachers and teacher trainers.

Pragmatic consciousness-raising as a teaching strategy in teaching pragmatics has not been studied extensively so far and seems to demand more attention and investigation in interlanguage pragmatics research. The small number of previous studies addressing the effects of consciousness raising on the acquisition of pragmatics have focused on the acquisition of compliment and compliment responses, requesting, apologizing, request strategies and downgraders, formulaic expressions, L2 Spanish speech acts and Japanese hearsay evidential markers (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Eslami-Rasekh, Eslami-Rasekh, & Fatahi, 2004; Narita, 2012; Pearson, 2006; Rose & Ng, 2001; Takahashi, 2001; Takimoto, 2012; Tateyama, 2001; Witten, 2004).

The current study focuses on the EFL learners' pragmatic performance and metapragmatic awareness of suggesting speech act. The strategies and linguistic structures used to make suggestions in English language established in the literature to date are focused on in the present study for instructional purposes. The above-mentioned studies have tried to determine the effect of deductive vs. inductive

teaching methods, various input conditions, i.e. explicit teaching, form comparison, form search, etc., explicit vs. implicit teaching, metapragmatic discussion and instruction, input enhancement and conversational analysis on pragmatic development of L2 learners. Among these studies, a small number of them have determined the metapragmatic awareness and noticing of learners after completion of the treatment period (Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Martínez-Flor & Soler, 2007; Narita, 2012; Rose & Ng, 2001) using metapragmatic assessment questionnaires and pragmatic knowledge tests. Therefore, the current study will provide a better insight into metapragmatic awareness and contribute further to the literature on metapragmatic awareness and its relation to instructional intervention in the EFL classroom.

In addition, material developers would benefit from the results of the present study. Consciousness-raising activities have long been a missing part in L2 textbooks and teaching materials and there seems to be a need for considering and including this type of activities in instructional materials. The results of this study would underscore this necessity further. The study would also focus on the effect of PCR activities on long-term retention and awareness of pragmatic features in EFL learners' delayed pragmatic performance as well. Language learners' pragmatic learning or performance in the long run has seldom been considered in previous studies.

The current study would also provide insights on the nature and components of speech acts to be considered in L2 pragmatics research. Since the focus of the present study will be on the structures and strategies of making suggestions as well as politeness strategies employed in appropriate suggestions, it would signify the importance of possibly including all aspects of a speech act in the pragmatics research, rather than studying a limited number of pragmatic aspects of a given speech act. Although studying aspects of speech acts separately is often justified due to institutional or time constraints, focusing on different aspects simultaneously would yield a better and more comprehensible picture of L2 speech act knowledge and performance.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The present study is limited in some ways. First, it was conducted in an EFL context; therefore, the findings obtained may not be generalisable 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 generalised to beginners or advanced-level learners.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

1.9.1 Pragmatic Performance

According to Cohen (1996), speech act performance consists of two components, namely sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge. In the current study, sociopragmatic knowledge will be regarded as the knowledge of the appropriateness of an utterance in a given context regarding status and power relationships and politeness and pragmalinguistic knowledge will be regarded as the knowledge of various structures to make appropriate suggestions in different contexts. The possession of these two types of knowledge will be measured by a written production test which requires L2 learners to make appropriate suggestions in various situations.

1.9.2 The Speech Act of Suggesting

In the current study, suggestions which benefit both the hearer and the suggestion maker, i.e. inclusive suggesting in which either the hearer or both interlocutors will be the agent of future course of action, will be the focus of the study.

1.9.3 Pragmatic Consciousness-Raising (PCR)

Pragmatic consciousness raising (PCR) is defined by Rose (1994) as an inductive approach to sensitize EFL learners to and raise their awareness of appropriate use of language forms in particular contexts. The current study will focus on pragmatic consciousness-raising as an intervention strategy including activities such as meta-pragmatic discussion, role-play and DCT completion to inductively direct EFL learners' attention to how different linguistic forms and strategies are used to perform suggestions appropriately and accurately in various situations, highlight them by metapragmatic discussion and questions, and provide performance opportunities for them in the classroom.

1.9.4 Meta-pragmatic Awareness

In the current study, awareness at the level of understanding which refers to relating various structures to strategies and politeness and the recognition of their co-occurrence with contextual factors such as social distance and power relationship will be taken into account and will be measured using a meta-pragmatic awareness test.

1.9.5 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learner

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner refers to a learner whose first language is not English. In the current study, the participants were adult Iranian EFL learners at the intermediate English language proficiency level with the age range of 20-40. They had studied English as a foreign language in high school and had passed some

English courses during their undergraduate studies and were taking an intensive English course during the present study.



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