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Original Research

Factors Contributing to Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) Competence Development: Evidence from the Iranian EFL Setting

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Abstract

This study sought to explore the factors contributing to Iranian EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) competence development. In line with the objective, 20 conveniently selected Iranian advanced EFL learners attended a semi-structured interview which consisted of three open-ended questions addressing the factors contributing to EFL learners' ILP competence development. The data underwent qualitative thematic analysis. The findings showed that the factors like grammatical knowledge, input and output enhancement, explicit instruction, corrective feedback, realistic material, simulation activities, class negotiations, online resources, teachers and teachers' speech, textbooks, classroom tasks and activities, and context play a main role in developing the target ILP. The findings offer some implications for EFL learners, teachers, teacher trainers and curriculum developers. For instance, EFL learners can leverage these findings by incorporating the identified factors into their strategies to enhance their ILP competence.

Keywords: ILP competence development, Pragmatic competence, ILP assessment

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1. Introduction

In the process of language learning, learners begin to compare their first language with the second/foreign language and, over time, they invent a new language that is an idiosyncratic combination of the rules and regulations in both first and second language. Such an innovation by language learner is called interlanguage (IL). IL was first presented by the American etymologist Selinker (1972) alluded to the linguistic framework displayed when a grown-up language learner tries to show implications in the language being studied. IL is seen as a different linguistic framework, plainly unique in relation to both the students' first and target languages, yet connected to both of them (Tarone, 2001). IL consists of the same subcategories as syntax, semantics, and pragmatics that each of which with some specific linguistic features. Semantics is regarded as the study of postulates; syntax is the study of phrases and sentences; and pragmatics investigates linguistic performances and the settings in which they are executed (Stalnaker, 1998). Pragmatics refers to "the study of language from the perspective of its users which focuses on the choices they make, the challenges they face during social interactions, and the impact their language use has on others involved in communication" (Crystal, 1997, p. 301).

Among the subcategories of IL, pragmatics has been well-studied in the literature. In this regards, Huang (2007) noted that pragmatics touches upon the efficient investigation of meaning concerning language use in context. At the point when pragmatics is contemplated amidst two languages, ILP appears to be more proper. In other words, pragmatics is normally referred to interlanguage pragmatics. ILP deals with IL features, which is identified with learning the language and pragmatics which is the investigation of language in each specific situation. Hence, ILP considers learning the second/foreign language in the specific situation it is applied. In line with this, Kasper and Rose (2002) offered a comprehensive definition of ILP: "As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how non-native speakers comprehend and produce actions in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform actions in a target language" (p. 5).

Chomsky (1980), a pioneer in linguistics, first defined pragmatic competence as the ability to use language effectively in different contexts to achieve specific goals. Canale and Swain (1980) later echoed this idea, integrating pragmatic competence as a basis of their communicative competence model. They termed it sociolinguistic competence, emphasizing

the social and cultural aspects of language use (Canale, 1983). While developing grammar and vocabulary is essential for language learning, pragmatic competence is equally crucial for effective communication. Numerous studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Kasper, 1997; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985) have shown that even learners with strong grammatical skills often struggle to convey their intended meaning or interpret others' intentions accurately. This gap stems from a lack of pragmatic knowledge, which includes understanding social norms, and appropriate language use in various situations. Research on adult EFL learners has further highlighted the challenges of developing pragmatic competence. For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1997) found that strong grammatical skills are not sufficient for developing pragmatic competence. Additionally, studies on speech acts (e.g., Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001) have revealed that even advanced learners may struggle to express politeness appropriately or interpret others' intentions accurately.

Research by Edmondson et al. (1984) has revealed that certain pragmatic aspects of English are not developed naturally in EFL settings and even after years of English study, many learners still struggle to use the language appropriately in real-world situations. This highlights the critical need for explicit pragmatics instruction in EFL teaching/learning, especially given that formal education is often the primary exposure to the target language for most learners. The challenge of learning English pragmatics is even greater in EFL environments compared to ESL settings. This is primarily due to the limited opportunities for EFL learners to communicate with native speakers. Cook (2001) noted that language classrooms frequently prioritize academic language learning over communicative proficiency. This emphasis on decontextualized language practice, limits learners' exposure to the social and cultural aspects of language use and consequently hinders the development of pragmatic competence. While linguistic forms can be developed through grammar study and practice, language use is not governed by fixed rules. The complex interplay of various factors influences appropriate language use, often leaving EFL learners uncertain about how to improve their pragmatic skills in their interlanguage. Furthermore, the lack of authentic, learner-centered teaching methods further hinders the expansion of pragmatic skills in EFL learners.

This problem can be partially solved by exploring the factors contributing to EFL learners' ILP competence development so that the identified factors can be more focused by EFL teachers in teaching English pragmatics. In fact, such a study can empower language

teachers to take appropriate strategies and apply them correctly in line with the needs of learners in various situations and support them to enrich their ILP competence. However, reviewing the existing literature, the researcher found that although factors affecting pragmatic competence of learners have been explored in some research (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford,1993, Brown & Jernigan, 2012; Jernigan, 2012; Nassaji & Tian, 2010), the missing link in the literature is a recent study in the context of Iran. With a view to these problems, the current investigation sought to address the features which contribute to EFL students ILP competence development in Iran. Accordingly, the following research question was addressed:

What are the factors contributing to Iranian EFL learners ILP competence development?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pragmatic Competence in EFL Learning

Studies on pragmatic development in foreign language show diverse results. In other words, consistent exposure to the target language can develop language learning, research findings are mixed. Kanagy and Igarashi (1997) found that English-speaking children in a Japanese immersion program significantly improved their use of natural speech after limited exposure to pragmatic routines. Similarly, Cohen (1997) observed similar gains in a self-study of Japanese language learning and recognized that FL contexts refer to environments where the target language differs from the learners' native languages or those spoken outside the classroom. German learners in the United States provide a prime example of such a context.

The assessment of FL learners' pragmatic competence becomes particularly contentious when compared to that of second language (SL) learners. As Kasper and Schmidt (1996) observed:

> "Given that pragmatic knowledge is inherently sensitive to the social and cultural aspects of context, it stands to reason that more diverse and frequent input both in quality and quantity would lead to better learning outcomes. A second language environment is more likely to offer learners the varied and abundant input necessary for pragmatic development compared to a foreign language learning context, particularly if the instruction is pre-communicative or non-communicative" (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, pp. 159-160).

Takahashi and Beebe (1987) conducted an early study comparing EFL and ESL

learners' pragmatic performance. They found that Japanese EFL learners produced less target-like refusals than their ESL counterparts. Röver (1996) observed similar results, linking extended stays in English-speaking countries to improved pragmatic routine use among German EFL learners. Even brief stays of six weeks were found to enhance learners' knowledge of situational routines. However, Röver's (2001) subsequent study suggested that general language proficiency might be a more significant factor, as highly proficient EFL learners performed comparably to native English speakers. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study, one of the most influential in the field, compared EFL and ESL learners' ability to identify pragmatic and grammatical errors in speech acts. Their findings revealed that EFL learners were more skilled at detecting grammatical errors, while ESL learners were more sensitive to pragmatic infelicities.

However, Niezgoda and Röver (2001) offered counterevidence to these findings through their replication of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study. In this replication, they compared Czech EFL learners at both low and high proficiency levels with their ESL counterparts in the United States. A key finding of Niezgoda and Röver's (2001) study mirrored Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's results (1998) in which both studies revealed that ESL learners perceived pragmatic errors as more significant than grammatical ones. Moreover, the Czech EFL students with high-proficiency in Niezgoda and Röver's study exhibited a level of pragmatic awareness comparable to that of the ESL learners and far exceeded the awareness shown by the Hungarian learners in the original study. Niezgoda and Röver attributed this heightened awareness among the Czech learners to students being a "highly select sample who likely engaged in considerable top-down processing, actively searching for grammatical rules and pragmatic conventions" (p. 77). This indicated that the unique characteristics of the Czech EFL students made direct comparisons with the Hungarian participants in the original study more complex.

Despite the ongoing debate about the impact of learning environments on sensitivity to grammatical and pragmatic errors, there is growing consensus that a second language setting can significantly enhance a learner's pragmatic abilities. Such an environment provides abundant exposure to the foreign or second language and numerous opportunities for practical use which leads to substantial improvements in pragmatic competence (Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996).

2.2. Related Studies

Factors affecting pragmatic competence of learners have been explored in some studies. For instance, in the investigation by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), Bishop (1996), and Takahashi and Beebe (1987), it was shown that grammatical knowledge is a main factor that affects second language learners' pragmatic competence. Brown and Jernigan (2012), Izumi (2002), Jernigan (2012), Nassaji and Tian (2010), Schmidt (2001), Swain (2005), Swain and Lapkin (2002), and Takimoto (2009) found that input and output enhancement contributes to learning pragmatics among EFL learners. Félix-Brasdefer (2018), Glaser (2014), Ishihara and Cohen (2010), and Norris and Ortega (2000) reported direct training as a contributor to pragmatic competence in SLA settings. Brown (2016), Cohen (2017), Holden and Sykes (2013), Li and Vuono (2019), Lyster et al. (2013) and Sykes and Dubreil (2019) found that pragmatic knowledge of students is significantly affected by corrective feedback.

In the studies by Vellenga (2004) and Vivekmetakorn (2018), realistic material was found to be effective on pragmatic development of EFL learners. DeKeyser (2010), Suzuki et al. (2019), and Young (2013) found that simulation activities contribute to second language learners' pragmatic competence. Furstenberg (1997), Mezzadri (2001), and Warschauer et al. (2000) recognized online resources among influential factors on development of pragmatics in language learners. As the outcome of the study by Glaser (2013) and Kasper and Rose (2002), pragmatic competence was impacted by teachers and teachers' speech. Berry (2000), Biber and Reppen (2002), and Grant and Starks (2001) concluded that textbooks really contribute to learners' knowledge of pragmatics. Bygate (2015), Ellis (2009), Ellis and Shintani (2013), Long (2015), Taguchi and Kim (2016) and Van den Branden et al. (2009) recognized classroom tasks and activities as the factors contributing to pragmatic development. Finally, House (1996), and Tarone and Kuhn (2000) emphasized that context can significantly influence pragmatic knowledge development of learners.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design and Context of the Study

To achieve the objectives of this study, a qualitative thematic analysis was employed. The context of the study included language institutes in Tehran and Mashhad.

3.2. Participants

The participants consisted of 20 conveniently selected Iranian advanced EFL learners (12 females and 8 males) from language institutes in Tehran and Mashhad. All participants were Persian speakers aged between 25 and 40. In adherence to research ethics, the learners were informed about the research objectives, provided written consent for their participation, and were assured that their personal information would remain anonymous and confidential.

3.3. Instruments

To collect data, a semi-structured interview list was developed based on relevant research and seven English Language Teaching experts. The interview list included three open-ended questions designed to explore the factors contributing to EFL learners' ILP competence development. The interviews were conducted in English, with no time limit imposed on each session, and were conducted individually. To accommodate participants, all interviews were carried out using popular social media platforms, Telegram and WhatsApp. The researcher personally conducted and transcribed each interview, resulting in verbatim written data. These transcripts were then analyzed using a qualitative thematic approach.

To enhance the credibility and dependability of the data, the researcher employed both member checks and low-inference descriptors. Low-inference descriptors involved directly quoting participants' statements, allowing readers to experience their perspectives firsthand (Ary et al., 2010). Member checks, on the other hand, involved sharing the researcher's interpretations of the data with the learners to prevent misunderstandings, correct inaccuracies, and demonstrate respect for their voices. This process also enabled participants to provide feedback on the study's findings (Ary et al., 2010).

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted through interviews as previously outlined. The interviews were implemented in English, in individual format with no time constraint. Interviews were done using popular social media platforms, Telegram and WhatsApp. The first researcher herself conducted and transcribed interviews to create verbatim written data. These transcripts were then analyzed using a qualitative thematic approach.

3.5. Data Analysis Procedure

The qualitative thematic analysis followed a four-step process. First, the researcher immersed themselves in the data by taking notes and reviewing the content. Second, the data went through coding by highlighting key sentences and phrases and assigning descriptive codes. Third, the researcher examined these codes to detect recurring patterns or themes. Finally, the extracted patterns were revisited to confirm their precision and relevance to the research questions.

4. Results

To answer the research question 'What are the factors contributing to Iranian EFL learners ILP competence development?', through thematic analysis of the interview data, the following themes were extracted as the factors contributing to Iranian EFL learners ILP competence development. For more clarity, each theme is presented with three quotations from the participants.

4.1. Grammatical Knowledge

The first extracted theme is 'Grammatical Knowledge'. This theme revolves around the role of learners' grammatical knowledge in their ILP competence development. As noted by Participant 2:

> I think grammatical proficiency is influential on pragmatic skills. When you know how to express a sentence grammatically, you can regulate it more easily in pragmatic senses. Grammar has a key role in pragmatic competence.

The role of grammatical knowledge in ILP competence development is also evident in the following quotation by Participant 10:

> Learning pragmatics has some presuppositions one of which is knowledge of language structures. The knowledge of language structures is very helpful in using language pragmatically.

According to Participant 18:

> Learning pragmatic functions is dependent on grammatical proficiency. For example, using tense correctly leads to appropriate use of language in the context. That is a sign of the role of grammatical proficiency in ILP competence development.

4.2. Input and Output Enhancement

The second prominent theme is 'Input and Output Enhancement'. This theme shows notable role of enhancing input and output in ILP competence development. This is clearly reflected in the following quotation by Participant 2:

> Training on pragmatics with the aim of enhancing students' attention to form is one way to increase their pragmatic knowledge. For example, highlighting pragmatic points in reading comprehension texts can make them more sensitive to those points.

Participant 5 said:

> Teachers can make pragmatic structures more prominent and salient by making them bold or italic. In this way, students' consciousness of pragmatics is raised and they learn pragmatics more easily.

As said by Participant 11:

> Input-based and even output-based teaching strategies leads to better learning of English pragmatics. When students are asked to write or speak on a topic or specific situation, they inevitably pay more attention to different features of language including pragmatics.

4.3. Explicit Instruction

The third recurrent theme is 'Explicit Instruction'. According to this theme, explicit teaching is a factor that contributes to ILP competence development. The following quotations represent this explicitly:

According to Participant 20:

> When students are taught pragmatic rules, their pragmatic competence is improved. Instruction plays a significant role in improving ILP competence.

As said by Participant 13:

> Pragmatics should be trained to learners. Explicit training is an effective method to learn pragmatics. Thus, providing learners with explicit training is an influential factor on ILP competence.

As mentioned by Participant 7:

> Among different factors, teaching is still a dominant factor. When humans are taught deductively, they retain the matters more consistently. Education is of importance in pragmatics learning.

4.4. Corrective Feedback

The fourth recurrent theme is 'Corrective Feedback'. The meaning of this theme is that providing learners with corrective feedback by teachers is a factor that contributes to ILP competence development. In this respect, Participant 18 said:

> EFL learners learn appropriate use of language by receiving feedback showing their errors. The feedback that is given after a production, acts positively in pragmatic competence development.

According to Participant 6:

> Various factors contribute to pragmatic knowledge development. A factor which cannot be neglected is teachers' comments on students' pragmatic performance. In this approach, teacher comments on mistakes and learners learn correct structures.

In the words of Participant 3:

> Effective corrective feedback has a high potential in ILP competence improvement. This is feedback that makes students aware of appropriate language use. Teachers should be aware of the potentials of corrective feedback and use them in teaching pragmatics.

4.5. Realistic Material

The fifth recurrent theme is 'Recurrent Material'. According to this theme, learners' ILP competence is developed by exposure to authentic material. According to Participant 5:

> Pragmatic knowledge can be developed by observation of natural English dialogues in films. Such dialogues are considered as useful resources to learn pragmatics.

In the saying of Participant 19:

> To me, authentic conversations are rich in speech acts. Through authentic conversations, students see how speech acts are rightly expressed in English language.

In the words of Participant 14:

> As you know, pragmatic competence development involves learning pragmatic routines and markers which are usually absent in textbooks. They contribute to ILP competence. To take advantage of them, teachers can use social media or television programs which contain realistic scripts of language use in different contexts.

4.6. Simulation Activities

The sixth prominent theme is 'Simulation Activities'. This theme indicates the role of simulation practices in development of ILP competence. The following quotations confirm this:

> According to Participant 8:
>
> Learners should be exposed to different situations of language use and asked to simulate it. To this end, role plays are good options. For instance, demonstrating learners a clip on asking address and then, asking students to replicate that is a good strategy for development of pragmatics.
>
> In the words of Participant 3:
>
> Role play is very effective in developing learners' pragmatic knowledge. Modeling a piece of language use by teachers and subsequent replaying of it by students helps them reconstruct their pragmatic knowledge.
>
> As expressed by Participant 15:
>
> It seems interesting to encourage learners to practice different incidences of using language in different contexts. This can be achieved by playing different incidences by teachers and repeating them by students.

4.7. Class Negotiations

The seventh extracted theme is 'Class Negotiations and Discussions'. As understood from this theme, class discussions, negotiations and debates are appropriate techniques for developing ILP competence. As noted by Participant 16:

> Classroom should be turned into a place for group negotiation of meaning. Class discussions integrate IPL in students. Teachers should benefit from interactional learning. A real-life topic can be presented in the class to be discussed by students.
>
> As perceived by Participant 4:
>
> Open and active debates foster pragmatic competence. More interestingly, by participating in debates, learners learn from one another. Conversational communication encourages students to ask questions from each other and share their experiences.
>
> According to Participant 11:
>
> Group discussion and dialogue have proved to be effective on ILP competence

development. These techniques serve as authentic cases of language use which stimulate pragmatic knowledge.

4.8. Online Resources

As the eighth recurrent theme, 'Online Resources' was extracted. This theme means that online resources are appropriate tools for developing students' ILP competence. As stated by Participant 7:

> Online resources serve useful functions in ILP knowledge. For instance, when we chat each other, we learn pragmatics unconsciously.

Participant 10 stated:

> A useful tool for learning pragmatics is online space. Virtual platforms play a role in learning to use language in its appropriate context. Samples of texts or videos posted in channels are helpful.

Participant 14 mentioned:

> Conversations are among important factors in ILP competence. Specifically, if one part of dialogue is more expert than the other one, the learning goals are more fulfilled. They use structures in their talks which can be used as a model of pragmatic knowledge.

4.9. Teachers and Teachers' Speech

The ninth extracted theme was 'Teachers and Teachers' Speech'. According to this theme, teachers and their speech act as a source of ILP competence development for students. As admitted by Participant 9:

> The role of teachers, I think, is crucial in ILP competence development. The content provided by them is a bed for pragmatic rules and samples. In reality, students count on teachers as a reliable source of knowledge.

According to Participant 13:

> Speech of teacher in the class contains pragmatic examples and parts of speech. They implicitly teach pragmatics through their speeches. Thus speech of teacher is a contributing factor to ILP competence improvement.

As recognized by Participant 17:

> Teachers' pragmatic competence is high. They use correct structures in their lectures.

When such structures are noticed, they can be learned as pragmatic input. It is important to notice them.

4.10. Textbooks

The tenth theme 'Textbooks' revolves around the fact that textbooks can contribute to Iranian EFL learners ILP competence development. As evidence to this, the following quotations can be referred to.

As perceived by Participant 11:

Textbook is a vital part of English language teaching. Usually, textbooks present different aspects of English language. Pragmatic materials are also covered in them as user-friendly tools of learning English. This is why I consider textbooks as a factor contributing to ILP competence.

As put by Participant 9:

There is no doubt that textbooks contain actual conversations. As a result, they give good hints about pragmatic rules and regulations. Many pragmatic rules are hidden in textbooks. They influence development of ILP competence.

As said by Participant 12:

English textbooks can be considered as a reliable factor in learning pragmatics in English. Textbooks contain descriptions about polite use of language. Or they contain appropriate patterns of using language structures. I think they can contribute to ILP competence development.

4.11. Classroom Tasks and Activities

As the eleventh theme, 'Classroom Tasks and Activities' was extracted. This theme means that the tasks and activities used in the classroom serve a factor contributing to ILP competence development. According to Participant 19:

Tasks that are used in the class makes pragmatic learning more comfortable. They practically show how language should be used. They help students. Some tasks like paired work are more effective.

Participant 13 said:

Class activities are good strategies for ILP competence. Because some activities are simulations of real life, they are memorized well. Therefore, they show us how

pragmatics work in English language. I regard class activities as a factor which contribute to ILP competence development.

As worded by Participant 15:

Speaking practices or tasks assigned by teachers really improve one's knowledge of pragmatics. Productive tasks are more effective than reading texts on pragmatics.

4.12. Role of Context

The last theme extracted was 'Role of Context'. According to this theme, context plays a significant role in developing ILP competence. Participant 10 stated:

Context in which language is really used promotes pragmatic ability. It is the best method of exposure to pragmatic knowledge and information. The reason that films are appropriate for learning language pragmatics is this.

According to Participant 3:

Environment of language use contributes to development of pragmatic ability. If language is not used in real situations, learning pragmatics is too difficult. I deadly believe in the role of real situations.

According to Participant 16:

Social context is among influential factors on ILP competence. Social interactions and communications in English are fruitful in improving ILP knowledge.

Codes and extracted themes are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1.

Codes and Extracted Themes

Number	Themes	Codes
1	Grammatical Knowledge	I think grammatical proficiency is influential on pragmatic skills. When you know how to express a sentence grammatically, you can regulate it more easily in pragmatic senses. Grammar has a key role in pragmatic competence. Learning pragmatics has some presuppositions one of which is knowledge of language structures. The knowledge of language structures is very helpful in using language pragmatically. Learning pragmatic functions is dependent on grammatical proficiency. For example, using tense correctly leads to appropriate use of language in the context. That is a sign of the role of grammatical proficiency in ILP competence development.
2	Input and Output Enhancement	Training on pragmatics with the aim of enhancing students' attention to form is one way to increase their pragmatic knowledge. For example, highlighting pragmatic points in reading comprehension texts can make them more sensitive to those

		points. Teachers can make pragmatic structures more prominent and salient by making them bold or italic. In this way, students' consciousness of pragmatics is raised and they learn pragmatics more easily. Input-based and even output-based teaching strategies leads to better learning of English pragmatics. When students are asked to write or speak on a topic or specific situation, they inevitably pay more attention to different features of language including pragmatics.
3	Explicit Instruction	When students are taught pragmatic rules, their pragmatic competence is improved. Instruction plays a significant role in improving ILP competence. Pragmatics should be trained to learners. Explicit training is an effective method to learn pragmatics. Thus, providing learners with explicit training is an influential factor on ILP competence. Among different factors, teaching is still a dominant factor. When humans are taught deductively, they retain the matters more consistently. Education is of importance in pragmatics learning.
4	Corrective Feedback	EFL learners learn appropriate use of language by receiving feedback showing their errors. The feedback that is given after a production, acts positively in pragmatic competence development. Various factors contribute to pragmatic knowledge development. A factor which cannot be neglected is teachers' comments on students' pragmatic performance. In this approach, teacher comments on mistakes and learners learn correct structures. Effective corrective feedback has a high potential in ILP competence improvement. This is feedback that makes students aware of appropriate language use. Teachers should be aware of the potentials of corrective feedback and use them in teaching pragmatics.
5	Realistic Material	Pragmatic knowledge can be developed by observation of natural English dialogues in films. Such dialogues are considered as useful resources to learn pragmatics. To me, authentic conversations are rich in speech acts. Through authentic conversations, students see how speech acts are rightly expressed in English language. As you know, pragmatic competence development involves learning pragmatic routines and markers which are usually absent in textbooks. They contribute to ILP competence. To take advantage of them, teachers can use social media or television programs which contain realistic scripts of language use in different contexts.
6	Simulation Activities	Learners should be exposed to different situations of language use and asked to simulate it. To this end, role plays are good options. For instance, demonstrating learners a clip on asking address and then, asking students to replicate that is a good strategy for development of pragmatics. Role play is very effective in developing learners' pragmatic knowledge. Modeling a piece of language use by teachers and subsequent replaying of it by students helps them reconstruct their pragmatic knowledge.

		It seems interesting to encourage learners to practice different incidences of using language in different contexts. This can be achieved by playing different incidences by teachers and repeating them by students.
7	Class Negotiations	Classroom should be turned into a place for group negotiation of meaning. Class discussions integrate IPL in students. Teachers should benefit from interactional learning. A real-life topic can be presented in the class to be discussed by students. Open and active debates foster pragmatic competence. More interestingly, by participating in debates, learners learn from one another. Conversational communication encourages students to ask questions from each other and share their experiences. Group discussion and dialogue have proved to be effective on ILP competence development. These techniques serve as authentic cases of language use which stimulate pragmatic knowledge.
8	Online Resources	Online resources serve useful functions in ILP knowledge. For instance, when we chat each other, we learn pragmatics unconsciously. A useful tool for learning pragmatics is online space. Virtual platforms play a role in learning to use language in its appropriate context. Samples of texts or videos posted in channels are helpful. Conversations are among important factors in ILP competence. Specifically, if one part of dialogue is more expert than the other one, the learning goals are more fulfilled. They use structures in their talks which can be used as a model of pragmatic knowledge.
9	Teachers and Teachers' Speech	The role of teachers, I think, is crucial in ILP competence development. The content provided by them is a bed for pragmatic rules and samples. In reality, students count on teachers as a reliable source of knowledge. Speech of teacher in the class contains pragmatic examples and parts of speech. They implicitly teach pragmatics through their speeches. Thus speech of teacher is a contributing factor to ILP competence improvement. Teachers' pragmatic competence is high. They use correct structures in their lectures. When such structures are noticed, they can be learned as pragmatic input. It is important to notice them.
10	Textbooks	Textbook is a vital part of English language teaching. Usually, textbooks present different aspects of English language. Pragmatic materials are also covered in them as user-friendly tools of learning English. This is why I consider textbooks as a factor contributing to ILP competence. There is no doubt that textbooks contain actual conversations. As a result, they give good hints about pragmatic rules and regulations. Many pragmatic rules are hidden in textbooks. They influence development of ILP competence. English textbooks can be considered as a reliable factor in learning pragmatics in English. Textbooks contain descriptions about polite use of language. Or they contain appropriate patterns of using language structures. I think they can contribute to ILP competence development.

11	Classroom Tasks and Activities	Tasks that are used in the class makes pragmatic learning more comfortable. They practically show how language should be used. They help students. Some tasks like paired work are more effective. Class activities are good strategies for ILP competence. Because some activities are simulations of real life, they are memorized well. Therefore, they show us how pragmatics work in English language. I regard class activities as a factor which contribute to ILP competence development. Speaking practices or tasks assigned by teachers really improve one's knowledge of pragmatics. Productive tasks are more effective than reading texts on pragmatics.
12	Role of Context	Context in which language is really used promotes pragmatic ability. It is the best method of exposure to pragmatic knowledge and information. The reason that films are appropriate for learning language pragmatics is this. Environment of language use contributes to development of pragmatic ability. If language is not used in real situations, learning pragmatics is too difficult. I deadly believe in the role of real situations. Social context is among influential factors on ILP competence. Social interactions and communications in English are fruitful in improving ILP knowledge.

5. Discussion

The findings showed that the following factors contribute to Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence development: Grammatical knowledge, input and output enhancement, explicit instruction, corrective feedback, realistic material, simulation activities, class negotiations, online resources, teachers and teachers' speech, textbooks, classroom tasks and activities, and role of context. These factors resonate with the studies by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), Bishop (1996), and Takahashi and Beebe (1987) (grammatical knowledge), Brown and Jernigan (2012), Izumi (2002), Jernigan (2012), Nassaji and Tian (2010), Schmidt (2001), Swain (2005), Swain and Lapkin (2002), and Takimoto (2009) (input and output enhancement), Félix-Brasdefer (2018), Glaser (2014), Ishihara and Cohen (2010), and Norris and Ortega (2000) (explicit instruction), Brown (2016), Cohen (2017), Holden and Sykes (2013), Li and Vuono (2019), Lyster et al. (2013) and Sykes and Dubreil (2019) (corrective feedback), Vellenga (2004) and Vivekmetakorn (2018) (realistic material), DeKeyser (2010), Suzuki et al. (2019), and Young (2013) (simulation activities), Furstenberg (1997), Mezzadri (2001), and Warschauer et al. (2000) (online resources), Glaser (2013) and Kasper and Rose (2002) (teachers and teachers' speech), Berry (2000), Biber and Reppen (2002), and Grant and Starks (2001) (textbooks), Bygate (2015), Ellis

(2009), Ellis and Shintani (20130, Long (2015), Taguchi and Kim (2016) and Van den Branden et al. (2009) (classroom tasks and activities), House (1996), and Tarone and Kuhn (2000) (role of context). However, the factor 'class negotiations' was unique to the present study.

The first factor was 'grammatical competence'. To interpret this factor, knowledge of grammar has shown to be effective on learning different language skills. In fact, grammar knowledge is of importance in learning different parts of English language. Inevitably, it is of paramountcy in learning English pragmatics.

The second factor was 'input and output enhancement'. Input and output exposure has shown to be influential on retention of English knowledge. Exposure and boldness of pragmatic structures make them salient in the minds of learners. This saliency helps pragmatic rules and structures to be memorized by learners.

The third factor was 'explicit instruction'. Explicit instruction, as name speaks for itself, teaches pragmatic rules and structures explicitly. Accordingly, learners explicitly are exposed to pragmatics and this eventually leads to pragmatics learning.

Through explicit instruction, deductive learning takes place. Deduction is still a powerful technique for learning. That learners learn pragmatics through deductive learning is theoretically approved and accepted in EFL learning.

The fourth factor was 'corrective feedback'. Corrective feedback makes learners aware of their pragmatic errors. Moreover, it provides learners with the correct forms of pragmatic structures. Therefore, learners become aware of erroneous structures of pragmatics they have used.

Furthermore, corrective feedback acts as a model of appropriate use of pragmatic rules. Modeling has proved to be influential on successful language learning. Through modeling, a kind of exposure to language occurs which acts effective on pragmatic learning.

The fifth factor was 'realistic material'. Realistic material makes learners engaged in learning. They simulate real life for them. In this way, learning pragmatics is made more enjoyable for them.

The sixth factor was 'simulation activities'. Simulation activities are effective in the way mentioned for realistic material. So, what was argued about realistic material is also true about simulation activities. They act through similar mechanisms. Simulation activities try to simulate conditions that are familiar to learners. Familiarity makes learning pragmatics

much easier and less time-consuming.

The seventh factor was ‘class negotiations’. Class negotiations contribute to IL pragmatic competence through a form of output enhancement. Negotiations serve as a type of output through which learners are exposed to pragmatic use of language. Class negotiations develop IL pragmatic competence through negotiation of meaning. Meaning negotiation effectiveness goes beyond pragmatic learning.

The eighth factor was ‘online resources’. Online resources are rich in terms of pragmatic instances of language use. They provide learners with language occurrences without time and place limitations. Learners see how others use pragmatic structures across different places and locations.

The ninth factor was ‘teachers and teachers’ speech’. Teachers and their speech are reliable sources of learning. They are known as rich providers of knowledge of pragmatics. Indeed, they are good learning models for learning pragmatics.

The tenth factor was ‘textbooks’. Although emergence of technology and e-learning has injected several new resources into EFL teaching/learning, textbooks are still reliable references for learning English pragmatics. They contain proofread materials which are ready to be learned and used.

The eleventh factor was ‘classroom tasks and activities’. Classroom tasks and activities serve as practices which are useful for development of IL pragmatic competence. Because classroom tasks and activities engage learners in using pragmatic structures, they act as contributors to IL pragmatic competence.

The twelfth factor was ‘role of context’. Simply speaking, pragmatics is appropriate use of language in its specific context. Therefore, the role of context is important in learning pragmatics. Contextualization is a process that makes pragmatic learning more effective.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that several factors contribute to Iranian EFL learners’ ILP competence development. This implies that ILP competence is not developed in vacuum but it is under the effect of a variety of factors. It can also be concluded that some factors including grammatical knowledge which contribute to Iranian EFL learners’ ILP competence development are learner-based. Some other factors are teacher-based among which input and output enhancement, explicit instruction, corrective feedback, and teachers

and teachers' speech can be referred to. There are also pedagogical factors among the ones identified as contributing to ILP competence development. Examples of such factors include realistic material, simulation activities, class negotiations, online resources, textbooks, and classroom tasks and activities. Last but not least, contextual factors have the potential to contribute to Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence development. In sum, it is concluded that a set of different factors jointly lead to EFL learners' ILP competence development.

The findings offer a number of pedagogical implications for various groups of stakeholders in the field. EFL learners can refer to the findings and use the extracted factors in developing their ILP competence. Teachers can also benefit from the identified factors in training learners on ILP. Curriculum planners can utilize the factors in developing future EFL curricula in a way that learners can develop in their ILP competence more effectively.

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