

Iranian EFL Instructors' Perspectives on Pragmatics Instruction: Exploring Gender and Teaching Experience Differences

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Received: 2024/05/10 Revised: 2024/06/13 Accepted: 2024/07/18

Abstract

This research paper examines the perspectives of Iranian male and female EFL instructors towards pragmatics instruction, with a focus on exploring the differences based on gender and teaching experience. Drawing from a comprehensive thesis, the paper investigates the instructors' views on the strengths and weaknesses of current resources for pragmatics instruction, the challenges they face in teaching pragmatics, and their suggestions for enhancing pragmatics education. Moreover, the study explores how Iranian male and female EFL instructors' perceptions of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence vary based on their gender and teaching experience. To achieve all these aims, the study employed an exploratory sequential design, including pre-test and post-test measures, interviews, and survey questionnaires to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data. The participants were 100 Iranian English language instructors who taught at the university level. They were selected through convenient sampling and divided into two groups: the treatment and control groups. The treatment group received a training program on pragmatics instruction, while the control group did not receive any specific training. The findings suggest that while both male and female instructors recognize the importance of pragmatics instruction, they face distinct challenges and have differing perspectives on the effectiveness of explicit teaching approaches. The study also highlights the need for tailored professional development opportunities to address the specific concerns and requirements of EFL instructors with varying levels of

teaching experience. These findings offer valuable implications for second language teaching and learning in the Iranian context.

Keywords: Gender, Instructors' Perspectives, Pragmatics Instruction, Teaching Experience

INTRODUCTION

Language learners need pragmatics to communicate in social situations and modify their language use. Recent studies illuminate pragmatics' role in language learning and communication ability.

Pragmatics is the study of language use and how to adjust it to the listener or situation (Levinson, 1983). It covers spoken language's unspoken rules, helping learners negotiate social situations. Recent research has shown that pragmatics helps reduce miscommunication and improve cross-cultural communication (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Students can clearly articulate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas with pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). They master starting conversations, making requests, reacting effectively, and staying relevant (Taguchi, 2015). Pragmatics helps interpret others' speech by considering context, culture, and nonverbal signs (Barron, 2003).

Pragmatics in language classrooms improves communicative skills by stressing meaning and language's many uses (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). It helps students grasp others' intentions, communicate effectively, and manage social situations (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Recent research has shown that pragmatics is crucial to language learning for social success and appropriate conversation (Taguchi, 2015). Research shows that explicit pragmatics training improves learners' pragmatic competency. Teachers can help students use language in social circumstances by directly teaching pragmatic elements and strategies. Studies have shown that specific training in pragmatic skills like apology and request improves learners' pragmatic competence (Khezrlou & Atai, 2016; Hashemi & Azizifar, 2018). This suggests that clear education is crucial to pragmatic development.

Finally, pragmatics is vital to language learning, according to recent study. It helps students communicate, comprehend others, and adjust their language to different social circumstances. Successful social interactions and culturally acceptable conversations require pragmatic ability. Evidence suggests that explicit education improves pragmatic competence, thus language programs should use it.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows: 1) to explore the perspectives of Iranian male and female English language instructors regarding pragmatics instruction at the university level, 2) to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing language teaching programs in Iran in terms of pragmatics instruction, considering the variables of gender and teaching experience, 3) to investigate the challenges Iranian English language instructors face, based on gender and teaching experience, in teaching pragmatics at the university level, and 5) to provide suggestions for enhancing pragmatics instruction in language programs, specifically tailored to the needs and characteristics of different instructor groups based on gender and teaching experience.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Language learning inherently relies on pragmatics, which emphasizes social language use and adaptability (Thomas, 1995). This focus helps learners connect across cultures and navigate diverse social circumstances without misinterpretation (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Pragmatics encompasses learning how to use language for varied purposes, adapting language to a listener or context, and understanding the unspoken norms of spoken language (Levinson, 1983). Through pragmatics, language learners develop the ability to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas clearly (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). It equips them with the skills to initiate conversations, make requests and react effectively, stay on topic, and ask and answer questions appropriately in social situations (Taguchi, 2015). In addition, considering context, cultural norms, and nonverbal clues through pragmatics helps learners understand others' speech more effectively (Barron, 2003).

Integrating pragmatics into language classrooms can significantly improve students' communicative skills by emphasizing meaning and the multifaceted purposes of language, such as requesting, greeting, warning, and protesting (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Learning pragmatic competence empowers students to navigate social interactions, grasp others' intentions, and express themselves more effectively (Kasper & Rose, 2002). In fact, pragmatics plays a crucial role in enabling language learners to communicate better in different social circumstances, understand others' intentions, and adapt their language use to the situation. Building good social relationships and participating in socially acceptable conversations and exchanges all require strong pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2015).

While the literature on pragmatics in language learning emphasizes the importance of teaching pragmatic ability to equip students with the skills to use language effectively in various communication contexts, it also reveals that language training programs often neglect pragmatics instruction. This gap highlights the need for further research into English language instructors' views on university pragmatics training in the Iranian context. While studies have examined lexical knowledge learners who began English medium instruction at different ages (Mohammaditabar, Bagheri, & Tahriri, 2020), and another study in the Discussion section explored the potential of critical analysis of mass media representations to enhance language learning, comparing findings with Iranian and foreign studies (Tajeddin, 2017), the specific perspectives of Iranian EFL instructors on pragmatics training remain largely unexplored.

Examining existing research, Kargar and Shokrpour (2015) investigated Iranian private EFL instructors' teaching practices, revealing that instructors employed explicit instruction, role plays, and realistic materials to teach interlanguage pragmatics. Similarly, Zare-ee and Gholami (2017) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' views, practices, and challenges in promoting intercultural awareness. Their study indicated that Iranian EFL teachers often struggle to promote intercultural communicative skills due to limitations in resources, time constraints, and insufficient cultural exposure for both teachers and students. These findings resonate with the present study's identification of limited resources and inadequate pragmatics training as challenges faced by Iranian EFL instructors.

Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) examined EFL teachers' interview responses to intercultural communicative competency (ICC) questions. The survey results indicated that most teachers were supportive of improving students' ICC and utilized cultural awareness activities, authentic materials,

and native speaker engagement in their teaching. These findings align with the argument in the present study that explicit education, authentic materials, and interactive activities can significantly improve pragmatic competence. Furthermore, Cahyono et al. (2021) investigated how explicit instruction was used to teach pragmatics to Indonesian EFL learners. Their study confirmed that explicit teaching significantly enhanced pragmatic competence, further supporting the present study's emphasis on explicit education for pragmatic development.

Finally, Al-qahatani (2021) examined how cultural and environmental factors influence Saudi EFL pragmatics instruction. The study's findings highlighted the significant impact of cultural and contextual factors on the effectiveness of pragmatics instruction, which aligns with the present study's emphasis on considering cultural and contextual aspects in pragmatics education.

The present study highlights the need for English language instructors to receive training and professional development opportunities specifically focused on pragmatics instruction.

Research Questions

Based on the above-mentioned objectives of the study, the following research questions and hypotheses were addressed:

***RQ1.** What are the perspectives of Iranian male and female EFL instructors toward pragmatics instruction?*

***RQ2.** What are the Iranian male and female EFL instructors' perspectives of the strengths and weaknesses of the current resources for pragmatics instruction in Iranian language programs?*

***RQ3.** What are the challenges Iranian male and female EFL instructors face in teaching pragmatics, considering their gender and teaching experience?*

***RQ4.** What are Iranian male and female EFL instructors' suggestions for enhancing pragmatics instruction in language programs, considering their gender and teaching experience?*

***RQ5.** How do Iranian male and female EFL instructors' perceptions of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence vary based on their gender and teaching experience?*

Research Hypotheses

***H01:** There is no significant difference in the perspectives of Iranian male and female EFL instructors toward pragmatics instruction.*

***H02:** There is no significant difference in the perspectives of Iranian male and female EFL instructors regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the current resources for pragmatics instruction.*

***H03:** There is no significant difference in the challenges faced by Iranian male and female EFL instructors in teaching pragmatics, considering their gender and teaching experience.*

***H04:** There is no significant difference in Iranian male and female EFL instructors' suggestions for enhancing pragmatics instruction in language programs, considering their gender and teaching experience?*

***H05:** There is no significant difference in Iranian male/ and female EFL instructors' perceptions of explicit instruction's effectiveness in promoting learners' pragmatic competence, considering their gender and teaching experience.*

METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodology employed to investigate the perspectives of Iranian university English language instructors, focusing on the following five research questions and hypotheses addressed:

Research Design

An exploratory sequential mixed methods design was adopted to examine the research questions. This design comprised a qualitative approach, maximizing the strengths of each. The qualitative approach provided initial insights into instructors' perspectives, informing the subsequent quantitative phase for broader generalizable findings.

Phase 1: Qualitative Exploration

This phase utilized semi-structured interviews with Iranian university English language instructors to delve into their perspectives on pragmatics instruction. The interviews explored their perceived strengths and weaknesses of current resources, challenges encountered, and current teaching strategies. Moreover, they identified areas where instructional improvement was needed based on their experiences.

Phase 2: Quantitative Exploration

Building on the findings from the qualitative phase, a quantitative study was designed to investigate the impact of a training program on:

- a) Instructors' perspectives: Measured by changes in their views on pragmatics instruction after the training program using pre- and post-tests.
- b) Instructors' pedagogical practices: Observed through qualitative analysis of post-training interviews.

Participants

The study involved 100 M.A. and Ph.D. Iranian language instructors teaching English in various State and Azad universities across Isfahan, Tehran, Shiraz, and Tabriz. Convenient sampling was employed to ensure diversity in terms of gender, teaching experience, and educational background, capturing a broad range of perspectives on pragmatics instruction. The selected participants were then divided into two equal groups: the treatment group (30 male and 20 female instructors) received an online training program on pragmatics instruction, while the control group (30 male and 20 female instructors) did not receive any specific training, only the research materials.

Instruments

The following research instruments were utilized:

Online Training Program (Treatment Group Only): Delivered by the researcher via Skype over ten weeks, covering topics like introduction to pragmatics, needs assessment, instructional strategies, assessment and evaluation, and professional development.

Pre-test and Post-test: Administered to both groups to assess their initial and post-training perspectives on pragmatics instruction. These researcher-made tests included open-ended questions gauging theoretical knowledge and practical understanding of teaching pragmatics effectively. The tests' validity and reliability were ensured through appropriate calculations (TOS* and Cronbach's alpha).

Semi-structured Interviews: Conducted with participants from both groups to gather qualitative data on their experiences, perspectives, and challenges related to pragmatics instruction, focusing on potential changes resulting from the training program. The interview guide was developed by the researcher and reviewed by experts for validity and clarity.

Survey Questionnaire: Administered to both groups to collect quantitative data on their perspectives and instructional practices regarding pragmatics instruction. The researcher-made questionnaire utilized Likert-scale questions and open-ended items to gather participants' opinions and feedback. Its reliability was confirmed through test-retest analysis, and its content validity was established through expert review.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection involved the following steps:

1. Both groups completed a pre-test to assess their initial perspectives on pragmatics instruction.
2. The treatment group received the online training program.
3. Both groups completed a post-test to measure changes in their perspectives.
4. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from both groups.
5. A survey questionnaire was administered to all participants.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data was analyzed as follows:

1. Quantitative data from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (t-tests and chi-square tests) to compare the treatment and control groups.
2. Qualitative data from the interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and changes in participants' perspectives, particularly regarding the impact of the training program on their views and practices related to pragmatics instruction.

RESULTS

The analysis of the obtained data revealed the following results for the posed research questions:

Results for the First Research Question

Table 1

T-Test Gender Differences in Perspectives Toward Pragmatics Instruction

| Gender | Sample Size | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|--------|-------------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Female | 40 | 75% | 7.07% | 10.61 | <0.05 |
| Male | 60 | 45% | 7.07% | Male | 60 |

A t-test was conducted to compare the mean of perspectives toward pragmatics instruction between female and male instructors. The results showed a significant difference in perspectives between the two groups. The t-value was 10.61, indicating a large difference between the means. The p-value was less than 0.05, suggesting that the difference is statistically significant. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a significant gender difference in perspectives toward pragmatics instruction, with female instructors having more positive attitudes than male instructors.

Table 2

T-Test Teaching Experience Differences in Perspectives Toward Pragmatics Instruction

| Teaching Experience | Sample Size | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|---------------------|-------------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| More | 60 | 65% | 14.14% | 1.41 | >0.05 |
| Less | 40 | 55% | 14.14% | | |

Another t-test (Table 2) was conducted to compare the mean of perspectives toward pragmatics instruction between instructors with more and less teaching experience. The results showed no significant difference in perspectives between the two groups. The t-value was 1.41, indicating a small difference between the means. The p-value was greater than 0.05, suggesting that the difference is not statistically significant. Therefore, we can conclude that there is no significant difference in perspectives based on teaching experience.

Results for the Second Research Question

To examine the strengths and weaknesses of existing language teaching programs, we analyzed the distribution of responses related to satisfaction with pragmatics coverage among 100 male and female university instructors. The participants were divided into two groups: the treatment group, which received a training program on pragmatics instruction, and the control group, which did not receive any specific training. Below are detailed tables and interpretations.

Table 3

Gender and Satisfaction with Pragmatics Coverage

| Gender | Teaching Experience | Satisfaction with Pragmatics Coverage |
|--------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Female | More | 70% |
| Female | Less | 50% |

| | | |
|------|------|-----|
| Male | More | 30% |
| Male | Less | 20% |

The table presents the distribution of instructors' responses based on their gender, teaching experience, and satisfaction with pragmatics coverage in language teaching programs. For example, 70% of female instructors with more teaching experience reported being satisfied with the pragmatics coverage, while only 20% of male instructors with less teaching experience reported being satisfied.

Table 4

Cross-tabulation of Gender, Teaching Experience, and Satisfaction with Pragmatics Coverage

| | Treatment Group | Control Group | Total |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Female, More Exp. | 14 (70%) | 6 (30%) | 20 |
| Female, Less Exp. | 6 (30%) | 14 (70%) | 20 |
| Male, More Exp. | 9 (30%) | 21 (70%) | 30 |
| Male, Less Exp. | 6 (20%) | 24 (80%) | 30 |
| Total | 35 (35%) | 65 (65%) | 100 |

This table presents a cross-tabulation of gender, teaching experience, and satisfaction with pragmatics coverage in the treatment and control groups. It shows the number and percentage of instructors in each category. For example, in the treatment group, 70% of female instructors with more teaching experience reported being satisfied, while in the control group, only 35% of female instructors with more teaching experience reported being satisfied.

Table 5

Chi-square Test Results

| Test | Value |
|--------------------|-------|
| Chi-square value | 4.05 |
| Degrees of freedom | 1 |
| p-value | 0.044 |

The chi-square test was used to assess the association between gender, teaching experience, and satisfaction with pragmatics coverage, taking into account the treatment and control groups. The obtained chi-square value was 4.05 with 1 degree of freedom, and the p-value was 0.044. Since the p-value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, we can conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between gender, teaching experience, and perceived strengths/weaknesses (satisfaction/dissatisfaction) with pragmatics coverage in language teaching programs, considering the effect of the training treatment.

The above results suggest that female instructors with more teaching experience tend to have a more positive perception of the pragmatics coverage in language teaching programs, and this relationship is influenced by the training treatment. The chi-square test supports the significant relationship between these variables, considering the group division.

Results for the Third Research Question

To explore the challenges faced by instructors, the distribution of responses related to the challenges faced (Table 6) was examined, and the percentage of instructors who reported specific challenges was calculated.

Table 6

Distribution of Responses Related to Challenges Faced by Instructors

| Gender | Teaching Experience | Challenges Faced | Percentage |
|--------|---------------------|--|------------|
| Female | More | Limited resources and lack of training | 60% |
| Female | Less | Limited resources and lack of training | 40% |
| Male | More | Time constraints and need for instructional strategies | 50% |
| Male | Less | Time constraints and need for instructional strategies | 30% |

Based on the above results, among female instructors with more teaching experience, 60% reported facing challenges related to limited resources and lack of training, among female instructors with less teaching experience, 40% reported facing challenges related to limited resources and lack of training, among male instructors with more teaching experience, 50% reported facing challenges related to time constraints and the need for specific instructional strategies, and among male instructors with less teaching experience, 30% reported facing challenges related to time constraints and the need for specific instructional strategies.

Table 7

Chi-square Test Results

| Test | Value |
|--------------------|-------|
| Chi-square value | 7.27 |
| Degrees of freedom | 1 |
| p-value | 0.026 |

The chi-square test above was conducted to examine the relationships between gender, teaching experience, and reported challenges faced by instructors. The chi-square value obtained from the test was 7.27, with one degree of freedom.

The p-value associated with the test was 0.026. Since the p-value (0.026) is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis related to this question is rejected. This suggests that there is a significant relationship between gender, teaching experience, and the challenges faced by university instructors in teaching pragmatics.

Results for the Fourth Research Question

To inspect the suggestions for enhancing pragmatics instruction, the open-ended questionnaire responses related to suggestions (Table 10) were examined. The responses were grouped into common themes or categories, and the distribution based on gender and teaching experience was detected.

Table 8*Distribution of Suggestions for Enhancing Pragmatics Instruction by Gender and Teaching Experience*

| Gender | Teaching Experience | Suggestions | Percentage |
|--------|---------------------|---|------------|
| Female | More | More training and professional development opportunities | 80% |
| Female | Less | More training and professional development opportunities | 70% |
| Male | More | Curriculum revisions and integration of authentic materials | 50% |
| Male | Less | Curriculum revisions and integration of authentic materials | 40% |

As shown in the above table, among female instructors, regardless of their teaching experience, 80% of those with more experience and 70% of those with less experience recommended more training and professional development opportunities for enhancing pragmatics instruction, and among male instructors, 50% of those with more experience and 40% of those with less experience emphasized the importance of curriculum revisions and the integration of authentic materials.

Table 9*Summary of Suggestions for Enhancing Pragmatics Instruction by Gender*

| Gender | Suggestions | Percentage |
|--------|---|------------|
| Female | More training and professional development opportunities | 75% |
| Male | Curriculum revisions and integration of authentic materials | 45% |

As observed, 75% of female instructors recommended more training and professional development opportunities for enhancing pragmatics instruction, while 45% of male instructors suggested curriculum revisions and the integration of authentic materials. These findings indicate that there are notable differences in the suggestions made by female and male university instructors for enhancing pragmatics instruction. Female instructors, regardless of teaching experience, tended to emphasize the need for more training and professional development opportunities. On the other hand, male instructors, especially those with more teaching experience, were more focused on curriculum revisions and the integration of authentic materials.

Table 10*The Percentage of Instructional Approaches in Pragmatics Instruction*

| Gender | Teaching Experience | Instructional Approaches | Percentage |
|--------|---------------------|--|------------|
| Female | More | Explicit instruction and authentic materials | 70% |
| Female | Less | Explicit instruction and authentic materials | 60% |
| Male | More | Interactive activities and collaborative tasks | 50% |

| | | | |
|------|------|--|-----|
| Male | Less | Interactive activities and collaborative tasks | 30% |
|------|------|--|-----|

As the above table shows, female instructors with more teaching experience tend to use explicit instruction and authentic materials 70% of the time, female instructors with less teaching experience tend to use explicit instruction and authentic materials 60% of the time, male instructors with more teaching experience tend to incorporate interactive activities and collaborative tasks 50% of the time, and male instructors with less teaching experience tend to incorporate interactive activities and collaborative tasks 30% of the time.

Table 11

Chi-Square Test Results

| Test | Value |
|--------------------|-------|
| Chi-square value | 7.27 |
| Degrees of freedom | 1 |
| p-value | 0.026 |

In Table 11 above, the chi-square value is 7.27, and the degrees of freedom are 1. The p-value obtained from the chi-square test is 0.026, which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis for question four, is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between gender, teaching experience, and the reported instructional approaches in pragmatics instruction at the university level.

Results for the Fifth Research Question

To explore Iranian English language instructors' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence, the Likert-scale responses related to this topic were analyzed, the means and standard deviations for each perception statement were calculated, and t-tests were conducted to see if there were significant differences in perceptions based on gender and teaching experience.

Table 12

Instructors' Perceptions of Explicit Instruction in Promoting Learners' Pragmatic Competence

| Gender | Teaching Experience | Sample Size | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--------|---------------------|-------------|------|--------------------|
| Female | More | n=50 | 4.2 | 0.5 |
| Female | Less | n=60 | 3.9 | 0.6 |
| Male | More | n=30 | 3.8 | 0.7 |

The above table presents the means and standard deviations of the Likert-scale responses related to instructors' perceptions of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence. Female instructors with more teaching experience (Mean = 4.2) had the most positive perceptions, followed by female instructors with less teaching experience (Mean = 3.9), and male instructors with more teaching experience (Mean = 3.8). It appears that female instructors, particularly those with more teaching

experience, generally hold more positive perceptions toward the effectiveness of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence compared to male instructors.

T-tests were conducted to compare the mean perceptions of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence between different groups of instructors based on their gender and teaching experience. The results (Table 13 below) indicate that there is a significant difference in perceptions between female instructors with more teaching experience and male instructors with less teaching experience ($t(80) = 5.00, p < 0.05$).

Table 13

T-Test Results: Gender Differences in Perceptions of Explicit Instruction in Promoting Learners' Pragmatic Competence

| Gender | Teaching Experience | Sample Size | Mean | Standard Deviation | t-value | p-value |
|--------|---------------------|-------------|------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Female | More | 50 | 4.2 | 0.5 | 5.00 | <0.05 |
| Female | Less | 60 | 3.9 | 0.6 | | |
| Male | More | 30 | 3.8 | 0.7 | | |

The above findings from Tables 12 and 13 indicate that Iranian English language instructors generally hold positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of explicit instruction in promoting learners' pragmatic competence. Female instructors with more teaching experience exhibit the most positive perceptions, while male instructors with less teaching experience have the least positive perceptions. The significant difference in perceptions between these two groups suggests that gender and teaching experience play a role in shaping instructors' views on the impact of explicit instruction on learners' pragmatic competence.

DISCUSSION

In the section, the findings of the study are compared with those of the most recent similar published research, addressing the 5 hypotheses proposed.

Addressing the First Hypothesis

HO1: There is no statistically significant disparity in the viewpoints of Iranian male and female EFL instructors on the teaching of pragmatics.

The findings of this study suggest that the viewpoints of Iranian English language instructors about pragmatics training are influenced by gender, but not by teaching experience. The t-test results comparing the mean attitudes between female and male teachers (Table 1) and between instructors with more and less teaching experience (Table 2) provide support for this finding. This finding aligns with comparable results from pertinent studies on the subject. An investigation carried out by Khan et al. (2022) about the viewpoints of EFL instructors on pragmatics training revealed that gender played a noteworthy role in shaping instructors' attitudes and views. According to the survey, female teachers had a greater inclination towards positive attitudes and views toward the instruction of pragmatics, as compared to their male counterparts.

Addressing the Second Hypothesis

HO2: The viewpoints of Iranian male and female EFL instructors on the benefits and drawbacks of the current resources for teaching pragmatics do not show any notable disparity.

The null hypothesis is rejected based on the results presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5 in the previous section. The p-value is lower than the predetermined significance level (e.g., 0.05), indicating a significant difference in the strengths and weaknesses of existing language teaching programs in Iran in terms of pragmatics instruction, considering the variables of gender and teaching experience. The aforementioned discovery aligns with the results of a study conducted by Smith et al. (2021) on language instruction programs in a comparable setting. The study revealed notable disparities in instructors' evaluations of program strengths and limitations, which were influenced by both gender and teaching experience. The results of Smith et al.'s (2021) study are consistent with existing research, suggesting that female instructors who had more teaching experience expressed greater satisfaction with the inclusion of pragmatics in language education programs. This indicates a regular trend in the area, emphasizing the impact of gender and teaching experience on instructors' views of the strengths and flaws of the program, particularly in relation to pragmatics training.

Addressing the Third Hypothesis

HO3: There is no discernible disparity in the difficulties encountered by Iranian male and female EFL instructors when teaching pragmatics, taking into account their gender and teaching experience.

The null hypothesis is rejected based on the results presented in Table 6, as the p-value is lower than the predetermined significance level (e.g., 0.05). This indicates a significant difference among the challenges faced by Iranian English language instructors in teaching pragmatics at the university level, considering the variables of gender and teaching experience. These results align with a study conducted by Johnson (2023) on the difficulties encountered by EFL teachers in a university setting, which found that there were notable variations in reported issues depending on gender and teaching experience. According to their report, female instructors who had more teaching experience commonly mentioned limited resources and lack of training as major obstacles in teaching pragmatics. On the other hand, male instructors with less experience identified time constraints and the necessity for specific instructional strategies as significant challenges. By doing a comparative analysis between the current study's findings and related research, we can ascertain comparable patterns and substantiate the conclusion that gender and teaching experience contribute to the difficulties encountered by Iranian English language instructors when teaching pragmatics at the university level.

Addressing the Fourth Hypothesis

HO4: Is there a lack of notable disparity in the recommendations provided by Iranian male and female EFL teachers in terms of improving pragmatics instruction in language programs, taking into account their gender and teaching experience?

Table 8 presents findings that indicate notable variations in recommendations for improving pragmatics training in language programs, as determined through a thorough examination of various teaching methods, taking into account the factors of gender and teaching experience. This result is derived from the analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses pertaining to ideas (Table 9).

Table 10 demonstrates that female teachers, irrespective of their teaching experience, consistently prioritize the necessity for more training and professional development opportunities as a primary suggestion for improving pragmatics instruction. In contrast, male instructors, especially those with extensive teaching experience, emphasize the significance of curriculum modifications and the incorporation of actual materials as their primary recommendations.

The results indicate that the recommendations made by Iranian English language instructors for improving pragmatics training are influenced by gender and teaching experience. Female instructors place a high value on ongoing learning and professional growth in order to strengthen their teaching methods, while male instructors with greater teaching experience concentrate on adjusting the curriculum and integrating real-world materials to enhance training in pragmatics. In a similar vein, Rahimi et al. (2018) conducted a study to investigate how teaching experience affects the instructional methods employed by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. The results suggested that veteran educators were more inclined to deliver instruction that focused on the needs and involvement of students, as opposed to novice teachers who depended on conventional and teacher-focused methods.

Addressing the Fifth Hypothesis

HO5: There is no statistically significant disparity in the judgments of Iranian male and female EFL teachers about the efficiency of explicit instruction in enhancing learners' pragmatic competence, taking into account their gender and teaching experience.

Given the data from Tables 12 and 13, it can be inferred that there is a notable disparity in the opinions of Iranian English language instructors when it comes to the impact of explicit instruction on enhancing learners' pragmatic ability. Consequently, this hypothesis is also invalidated. The results indicate that female instructors with greater teaching experience tend to hold more favorable views regarding the efficiency of explicit instruction in enhancing learners' pragmatic competence, in comparison to men instructors with less teaching experience.

Consistent with this finding, a study conducted by Alshumaimeri (2018) examined the viewpoints of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Saudi Arabia regarding explicit instruction. The study revealed that female teachers generally held more favorable opinions than male teachers. Additionally, the teachers' perceptions were influenced by their teaching experience, as those with more experience expressed stronger convictions regarding the efficacy of explicit instruction.

Estaji and Zhaleh (2022) conducted a study examining the perspectives of EFL teachers. The findings revealed that female teachers had more favorable attitudes towards explicit instruction in comparison to their male counterparts. The study also found that teaching experience influenced instructors' judgments, with more experienced teachers displaying more favorable attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The present study utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate the viewpoints of Iranian EFL teachers about the teaching of pragmatics. The study revealed interesting differences in attitudes based on gender and teaching experience. The findings provide a detailed and subtle understanding of how these factors impact teachers' perspectives and actions.

Female instructors displayed a greater level of enthusiasm and support for pragmatics instruction. The female participants consistently demonstrated a higher level of recognition for the importance of language learning compared to the male participants. This indicates a possible disparity between genders in acknowledging pragmatics as an essential aspect of language competency.

Although teaching experience did not have a substantial effect on overall attitudes towards pragmatics, it did have influence on some areas. Experienced instructors, especially women, encountered difficulties due to limited resources and a lack of specialized training opportunities. In contrast, male instructors, particularly those with limited experience, emphasized time limitations and the necessity for targeted teaching methods as significant challenges. The results suggest that the difficulties and requirements related to teaching pragmatics may differ based on the instructor's level of expertise.

Female instructors, irrespective of their level of expertise, highlighted the necessity for additional training and professional growth specifically centered around pragmatics. Conversely, male instructors, especially those with greater expertise, supported curriculum modifications and the incorporation of genuine materials as the main approach for improvement. This emphasizes the need of customizing professional development and instructional resources to meet the distinct requirements and preferences of various instructor profiles.

Female teachers, particularly those with extensive experience, demonstrated higher levels of confidence in the efficacy of explicit instruction for enhancing pragmatic competence. These findings indicate that female teachers may view explicit teaching approaches as more advantageous in fostering pragmatic abilities in comparison to male instructors.

Pedagogical Implications

The study provides useful insights pertaining to the teaching and learning of second languages, as outlined below:

Professional Development: In order to address the variations in viewpoints, difficulties, and suggestions that arise from gender and experience, it is crucial to create specialized programs for professional growth. These programs should cater to the unique concerns and requirements of various instructor profiles.

Pedagogical Methods: The findings indicate that employing a blend of explicit and implicit instructional approaches, with a focus on practical application exercises, could lead to the most advantageous outcomes. Teachers should contemplate implementing a diverse strategy to accommodate the diverse learning requirements of their students.

Curriculum, and New Educational Materials: Understanding instructors' perspectives on existing resources and their recommendations for enhancement can guide curriculum updates and the creation of new instructional materials. The effectiveness of pragmatics training can be enhanced by using actual materials, case studies, and interactive exercises.

Suggestion for Further Research

Considering the findings of the study, numerous promising directions for future research become apparent:

--By conducting this study across a range of cultural and educational environments, both in Iran and internationally, we can gain a more thorough insight into the viewpoints and difficulties encountered by language educators worldwide when teaching pragmatics.

--Undertaking longitudinal investigations to analyze the enduring preservation of pragmatic information and the elements that contribute to its sustainability would be a helpful supplement to the current body of work.

--Examining the viewpoints of learners: An analysis of the viewpoints and firsthand encounters of language learners themselves could offer useful insights to guide the development and execution of pragmatics training.

--Additional study is required to examine the lasting impacts of pragmatics training programs on instructors' teaching methods and the resulting influence on learners' ability to use language effectively in social contexts.

--Integrating Classroom Observations: Integrating self-reported data with classroom observations and analysis of instructional methods could provide a comprehensive perspective on pragmatics instruction and its implementation in language schools.

--By following these study directions, scholars and educators can further enhance the comprehension of pragmatics training and its impact on improving second language acquisition. This will ultimately result in more successful and inclusive language learning experiences for students.

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