



The Effect of Task-based Instruction and Corrective Feedback on Pragmatic Competence Development: The Study of Intermediate Learners of Persian

Amir Zand-Moghadam¹
Zahra Tahavvori²

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1. Introduction

Developing pragmatic competence as a component of communicative competence has been emphasized by many L2 scholars. This competence enables L2 learners to use their linguistic resources to produce contextually appropriate utterances. Learning a second language is not limited to developing the linguistic competence; understanding L2 functions, speech acts, pragmatic routines, politeness system, etc. is a necessary aspect of second language learning.

Research has shown that even advanced L2 learners may have difficulty with the pragmatic aspects of the second language they are learning. Given its importance, many scholars believe that knowledge of L2 pragmatic system can be developed through instruction. Consequently, teaching L2 pragmatics has become a focus in many studies. Since the pragmatic system forms part of the learners' interlanguage, this area is referred to as Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). ILP is rooted in both second language acquisition and pragmatics. A key issue in ILP is to determine the most effective method or mode of instruction for teaching L2 pragmatics.

Throughout the literature, some researchers have compared explicit with implicit methods. Others have focused on inductive and deductive modes of instruction. Recently, however, a few studies have examined the effect of task-based instruction (TBI) on L2 learners' pragmatic competence, observing that TBI can be helpful in developing many aspects of L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Additionally, studies on corrective feedback (CF) have focused on developing pragmatic competence by providing different types of CF. However, there is still no definite answer to the question "what is the best method to teach ILP?". Furthermore, most

¹ Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics, Departments of English Language and Literature and Linguistics, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University (corresponding author); zandmoghadam@atu.ac.ir

² PhD Candidate of Teaching Persian to Speakers of Other Languages, Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Persian Literature and Foreign Languages, Allameh Tabataba'i University; tahavvori_z96@atu.ac.ir

studies on the development of pragmatic competence and ILP have focused on English as the target language. This means that the effectiveness of instruction and different ways of teaching on the development of pragmatic competence has not been widely investigated in other languages.

Given the lack of comprehensive studies on the effect of TBI and CF on Persian language learners' pragmatic competence, this study aimed to examine the potential impact of TBI and CF on intermediate Persian learners' production of the speech acts of request, refusal, and apology.

2. Materials and methods

To conduct this study, 80 Persian language learners at the intermediate level were selected based on convenience sampling method. The participants were then randomly assigned to four groups: (1) TBI and metalinguistic feedback, (2) TBI and recast, (3) non-TBI and metalinguistic feedback, and (4) non-TBI and recast. A valid and reliable written discourse completion test (WDCT) on the three speech acts of request, refusal, and apology was used as both the pre- and post-test.

All participants in the four groups received treatment over nine sessions, with each session lasting 30 minutes. The TBI groups were assigned tasks designed based on Ellis's (2003) model. A collection of different types of tasks was provided as a pamphlet. The instruction in the TBI group followed the three phases of pre-, while-, and post-task. However, the non-TBI groups were taught the three speech acts using traditional methods. After nine sessions, participants were administered the WDCT as a post-test.

3. Results and discussion

At the end of the study, the responses of the members of the four groups in the pre- and post-test were compared and analyzed statistically. The findings revealed that the production of the speech acts -request, refusal, and apology- improved from pre-test to post-test in all the four groups. Since the four groups were homogeneous in terms of pragmatic production at the start of the study, their post-test performance was compared statistically. The results showed that the four groups performed differently in the post-test. Furthermore, it was found that the TBI and metalinguistic feedback group outperformed the other groups.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to teach Persian speech acts to non-Iranian learners of Persian. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that instruction in the Persian pragmatic system can enhance learners' pragmatic competence. Additionally, task-based instruction of Persian speech acts, compared with non-task-based instruction, significantly improves the pragmatic production of non-Iranian learners. Furthermore, metalinguistic feedback, as opposed to recast, can affect Persian language learners' pragmatic competence positively.

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatics, speech act, task-based instruction, recast, metalinguistic feedback