

# The Impact of Textbook Input on EFL Iranian Learners' Pragmatic Awareness

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## Abstract

The study was carried out within an area of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) that centered on the learners' degree of awareness concerning speech acts, conversational implicatures, speakers' attitude (or register) and communication key. Targeting a gap in ILP, the researcher aimed to compare the performance of three groups of EFL Iranian students of different conversation textbook backgrounds (i.e. *New Interchange*, *Headway*, *Iran Language Institute Textbook*) and of different genders on a multiple-choice discourse completion task (MDCT) to see whether the type of input, represented by the textbook and instruction, affects their performance. The elicitation task, validated by the researcher, required the subjects to read a written description of a situation (including such factors as setting, participant roles, and degree of imposition) and asks them to select what would be the best to say in that situation. This required recognizing pragmatically correct utterances which differs from recognizing linguistically correct sentences because appropriate language requires an L2 learner to understand not only linguistic information, such as vocabulary and syntax, but also contextual information such as the role and status of the interlocutor. To this end, 121 male and female students from three language institutes with different textbooks on their curriculum were selected and assigned to the groups. The descriptive statistics revealed a below-average performance (i.e. below one third of the total score) for all three groups and the results of two-way ANOVA showed no significant differences among groups in terms of pragmatic awareness. The findings imply that FL Learners' pragmatic information should be raised explicitly by language teachers and textbook developers.

**Keywords:** *interlanguage pragmatics; multiple-choice discourse completion tasks; pragmatic awareness; textbook background*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, the ability to act and interact by means of language, is a necessary and sometimes daunting task for second and foreign language learners. The challenge that learners face in acquiring the pragmatics of an SL is considerable because they have to learn not only how to do things with target language words but also how communicative actions and the words that implement them are both responsive to and shape activities, situations, and social relationships (Austin, 1962). In fact, it is an area of linguistics which is inextricably bound with communicative competence, the central paradigm in SL teaching since 1980s. Major models of communicative competence (Canale & Swin, 1980; Canale, 1983; Backman, 1990; Backman & Palmer, 1996) contain:

1. A code component, describing a language learner's procedural knowledge of the rules of syntax, semantics, morphology and phonology
2. A use component, describing a language learner's knowledge of the social norms governing language use and the assignment of linguistic options to speech intentions

Actually, it is the second component, use, which is related to pragmatics. There have been numerous attempts to define it, the most popular of which are as follows:

1. Liu (2008): the study of how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech situation which is usually a conversation. It distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication. One is the informative intent or sentence meaning, and the other communicative intent or speaker meaning (Leech, 1983; Sperber & Wilson, 1986).
2. Kasper (1997): the ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act which often includes one's knowledge about the social distance, social status between the speakers involved, the cultural knowledge such as politeness, and the explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge
3. Crystal (1997): the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication

Furthermore, some detailed specifications underlying pragmatic ability are existent in the field, the aims of which are to characterize and compartmentalize the competence. In Backman's (1990) model, pragmatic competence is one of the two components of language competence, which subdivides into illocutionary competence (knowledge of communicative action, speech act, and how to carry it out) and sociolinguistic competence (the ability to use language appropriately according to context). Following Leech (1983), there are two intersecting domains of pragmatic competence:

- Sociopragmatic competence: knowledge of the relationship between communicative action and power, social distance, and the imposition associated with a past or future event, knowledge of mutual rights and obligations, taboos and conventional practices or quite generally the social conditions and consequences of "what to do, when and to whom."
- Pragmalinguistic competence: the knowledge and ability for use of conventions of means (such as the strategies for realizing speech acts) and conventions of form (such as linguistic forms implementing speech act strategies).

Therefore, becoming pragmatically competent can be understood as the process of establishing sociopragmatic (interface between pragmatics and social organization) and pragmalinguistic (intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms) competence and the increasing ability to understand and produce sociopragmatic meanings with pragmalinguistic conventions. Defining second language pragmatic competence, Roever (2008) subdivides it into knowledge dimension, being aware of L2 sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics and mapping pragmalinguistic convention on sociopragmatic norms, and process dimension (ability to use) which includes :

- online processing of pragmatically relevant contextual information
- online retrieval of appropriate strategies
- online access to appropriate forms
- online integration of these forms of utterances during utterance planning
- online processing of context features, decoding of forms, recognition of strategies, extraction of meaning/communication intent for comprehension

### *1.2 Interlanguage Pragmatics*

As a domain within second language studies, pragmatics is usually referred to as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Roughly but adequately for the purpose, Kasper and Rose (2002) distinguish two sections within the wider domain of interlanguage pragmatics. As the study of SL use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how non-native speakers comprehend and produce actions in a target language. As the study of SL learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language. From cognitive psychological and social psychological perspectives, interlanguage pragmatics research has investigated how the process of becoming pragmatically competent in second or foreign language is influenced by such factors as input, noticing and understanding L2 proficiency, transfer and individual differences (Kasper & Roever, 2005).

Together with the themes and questions, ILP has also incorporated the theoretical perspectives from which its research problems are conceptualized and often it is the theoretical outlook that pulls together objects and questions into view in the first place. A good illustration is the division of labour between approaches to classroom learning of pragmatics: interventional classroom research has been conducted from a cognitive processing perspective, whereas observational studies have been guided by theories of L2 learning as socially constituted. These two outlooks, psycholinguistics and conversation analysis (CA) contrast in several critical respects:

1. Consistent with their contrasting ontological stance, psycholinguistics and CA conceptualize the object and process of learning in different ways. Under a psycholinguistic framework, the learning object is theorized from a rationalist perspective, mainly drawing on Searle's theory of speech acts as speaker intention encoded in linguistic conventions (Kasper, 2006). The process of L2 learning is seen as intra-individual cognitive operations on knowledge representations. CA, by contrast, views the learning object, actions located in talk exchanges, as a socially constituted discursive practice. CA approaches to L<sub>2</sub> development examine learning as a social practice and a social process- that is, as a matter of social construction (Kasper, 2006; Markee, 2000; Seedhouse, 2004).
2. The psycholinguistic representational view and CA's specific version of constructionism (Hauser, 2005; Wagner, 1996) translate into opposing epistemological stances and attendant consequences for research methodology;
3. In the history of SLA, psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology more generally were among the foundational sources of the discipline, and they can claim the dignity of a long continuing line of intellectual ancestry. In contrast, CA as an approach to SLA is a recent arrival, and also one that is often viewed with skepticism and sometimes outright rejection. In this paper I wish to argue in favor of a strong psycholinguistic and micro sociological foundation of L<sub>2</sub> pragmatics research.

### *1.3 Speech Acts and Illocutionary Meaning*

As Bardovi-Harlig (2002) mentions, speech acts have received the greatest attention in ILP out of the other main areas (deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition, and conversational structure). According to Ellis (2008), there are two major strands within the scope of ILP: interactional acts and speech acts. While the former give structure to the discourse by ensuring that one utterance leads smoothly to another and concern how speakers manage the process of exchanging turns, how they open and close conversations, and how they sequence acts to ensure a coherent conversation, the latter constitute attempts by language users to perform specific actions, in particular interpersonal functions such as compliments, apologies, requests, or complaints.

According to speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), the performance of a speech act involves the performance of three types of act: a locutionary act (the act of saying), an illocutionary act (the performance of a particular language function by what is said), and a perlocutionary act (the achieving of some kind of effect on the addressee). Searle also distinguished 'direct' and 'indirect' speech acts. In a direct speech act, there is a transparent relationship between form and function as when an imperative is used to perform a request. In an indirect speech act, the illocutionary force of the act is not derivable from the surface structure.

Other considerations of a secondary nature also enter into speech act performance, one of which is politeness. According to Ellis (2008), performance speakers have to take account of their relationship with the addressee and degree of imposition imposed by the illocution and its propositional content in order to ensure that harmonious social relations between the speakers are not endangered. In so doing they give recognition to the need to signal solidarity with and or power over their hearers, both of which determine the nature of their relations with them. Brown and Levinson (1978) and Scollo and Scollon (2001) have developed two models of politeness.

The two questions addressed in the study of speech acts in ILP, concentrated on illocutionary meanings or language functions, are to what extent and in what ways learners perform illocutionary acts in the L2 differently from native speakers of the target language and how learners learn to perform different illocutionary acts. The bulk of the research has been cross-sectional, so little is currently known about the second question. Examining illocutionary acts in SLA, Thomas (1983) mentions sociopragmatic failure, which is of concern in this paper, as taking place when a learner tries to perform the right speech act but uses the wrong linguistic means (i.e. deviates with regard to appropriateness of form).

Different studies have focused on different functions and modalities: learners' perception/comprehension of requests (Walters, 1979; Fraser, Tanaka & Kawade, 1982; Olshtain & Blum-kulka, 1982; Ervin-Tripp et al., 1987; Takahashi, 1996; Matsuura, 1998), learners' production of requests (Scarcella, 1979; Cathcart, 1986; Blum-kulka & Olshtain, 1986; House & Kasper, 1987; Tanaka, 1988; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Rintell & Mithell, 1989; Trosberg, 1995; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000), Learners' acquisition of requests (Schmidt, 1983; Ellis, 1992; Achiba, 2003), apologies (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Fraser, 1981; Olshtain, 1983; Blum-kulka and Olshtain (1984); House, 1989; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989); Lintell et al., 1922; Maeshiba et al. (1996); Kondo, 1997; Rose, 2000) and refusals (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989 a, 1989 b; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Gass & Houck, 1999; Felix & Brasdefer, 2004).

The research to date in general supports the following conclusion:

1. The differences between native speakers and non-native speakers in the production of speech acts in terms of choice, semantic formulas, content and form
2. The occurrence of pragmatic and pragmalinguistic kinds, the second of which is easier for them to overcome
3. The absence of a linear relationship between how learners perform specific illocutionary acts and their general proficiency
4. Positive correlation between proficiency and positive transfer and negative correlation between proficiency and negative transfer
5. The possibility of learners' varying their style of speaking, sometimes opting to perform in accordance with their stereotypes of native speakers and sometimes emphasizing their status as learners
6. Controversy over length of stay or amount of exposure to L2 having a greater effect than linguistic proficiency
7. The effect of psycholinguistic factors (e.g. communicative pressure) on the production of illocutionary acts in socially appropriate ways

#### *1.4 Attitudes of Speakers and Communicative Key*

What is addressed in the above mentioned research reveals a gap within the framework of pragmatic awareness: attitudes of speakers and communicative key. Discussing the theoretical basis of functional/ notional approach, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) stress the fact that in this approach emphasis has shifted from the former overweighing preoccupations with structure and setting to the communicative purpose of the speech act. Since a speech act takes place in definite but varied sociolinguistic situations, both linguistic and extralinguistic factors have been taken into considerations. The approach takes cognizance of the social rules and psychological attitudes of the participants toward each other in a conversation (employer-employee, teacher-pupil, doctor- patient, parent- child, for example). The place, time of the communicative act, and the activity or topic being discussed will determine to a large extent the form, tone, and the appropriateness of any oral or written message.

They add that while communicative behavior is always situationally conditioned and therefore subject to infinite variations, we should like to single out three factors that underline any speech act: a) the functions that language serves in real world b) the varieties of language that are possible within each of the functions; and c) the shared sociocultural allusions which not only are necessary to a complete understanding of the oral or written messages we receive, but also determine their acceptability or appropriacy.

Concerning the first factor, there are different classifications of major functions (Wilkins, 1976; Van Ek, 1975; Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983). If we consider the second factor, varieties of language, we are concerned with the varieties of each of the functions that can sometimes either obscure the message or render it totally inappropriate.

In this regard, there are three principal factors that influence them: geographical factors such as in the case of dialects, social factors which depend not only on social roles but also on differences related to social classes, status in the community or nation, and educational background and the factors which underlie the elements contained in the term register used by some writers. The term register is generally defined as variation of language which differs according to a) the formality or the informality of situation; b) the topic, activity, work, or profession under discussion, and c) the mode-oral or written- of the discourse.

According to Martin Joos (cited in Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983), there are shades of informality and formality in speech and in writing ranging from casual or colloquial to frozen: formal, informal, daily, polite, familiar and tentative.

In a model for specifying communicative competence, Munby (1978) names communication needs processor as an element, the final variable of which is communicative key. This term is taken from Hymes (1972), for whom it was "the tone, manner, and spirit in which an act is done."

In the communicative event parameter, the activities that the participant needs to handle are worked out; here, a specification is given of the keys that need to be understood or produced for each of these activities. In order to categorize the features of keys, Munby uses Lyon's tests to organize an attitudinal-tone index, consisting of a potentially finite set of continua, each one labeled with a pair of antonymous keys which are super ordinate to the other terms on that continuum.

The actual meaning of each micro function for attitudinal-tone takes place when the activities are broken down into the functional subcategories in the meaning processor. Here, one starts the process by specifying the keys that may

reasonably be expected in connection with an activity, given the particular input information on the social relationship that has previously been identified. On the receptive side, this specification is more a prediction of the keys that are likely to be met, given the same input information of the derivational sources, the most influential in the specification, of key are social relationships and psychological environments.

A simple way of characterising the variables in any act of communication is to ask the question: who is communicating with whom, why, where, when, how, at what level, about what and in what way? To operationalize the idea of attitude, Harmer and Arnold (1985, pp.1-9) state that in English, as in most other languages, one can say the same thing in a number of ways; the language one chooses depends on some or all of the following things: the relationship we have with the people we are talking to (e.g. whether they are close friends, strangers, people in authority, etc.), the situation we are in (at a friend's party, at an official reception, etc.), the mood we are in (angry, happy nervous, etc.) the mood of the people we are talking to (we will probably be specially careful when talking to a friend who is in a bad mood), and what we are talking about (we will be more careful in our choice of words if we want to complain to a friend about his/her behavior than we would if we were offering him/her a drink.)

Therefore, appropriate language according to the type of situation is given one of the various labels which are used to indicate the attitude which particular language items show. The following is a list of the various labels and what they mean:

<Tentative>: This means 'unsure' and we use <tentative> language:

- a) When we are genuinely unsure of our facts or of how we feel, e.g. It's *very kind of you to invite me, but I'm not sure if I can come.*
- b) When we want to give the impression of being unsure in order to be tactful and diplomatic. For example, if we want to disagree with a superior, it would probably be too strong to say *I can't agree with you* and it would be more appropriate to be <tentative> and say *I'm not sure if I'd agree with you.*

<Direct>: <Direct> language is the opposite of <tentative> language; it gives the impression that the speaker is very sure. This impression is appropriate if, for example, we want to agree with someone, but it can sound presumptuous and rude in a great many situations and would be *inappropriate* in such situations (e.g. inviting a superior to a party).

<Polite>: We use <polite> language when we want to sound particularly <Polite> without being <tentative>.

<Formal>: <Formal> language creates the impression of social distance between people. It occurs mostly in 'official' situations e.g. business meetings, official receptions.

<Informal>: <Informal> language is used between friends, mainly. It is generally *inappropriate* to use it with anyone else.

<Strong>: <Strong> language has a strong sense of conviction. It usually sounds very direct.

<Blunt>: <Blunt> language is very frank indeed. It should be used with extreme care, as in most situations it will simply sound rude.

### 1.5 Research Questions

Out of the fourteen questions, proposed by Kasper and Schmidt (1996), within the framework of interlanguage pragmatics, the following general questions are of major focus in this study:

1. Does type of input make a difference?
2. Does instruction make a difference?

The above- mentioned questions are actually related to interventional pragmatics which is the study of the effects of instruction in second language pragmatics. More specifically, this area of pragmatics has addressed three main research questions: whether pragmatics is teachable, whether instruction in pragmatics produces results that outpace exposure alone, and whether explicit and implicit instruction yield different outcomes.

Results of these studies strongly suggest that most aspects of L2 pragmatics are indeed teachable, that instructional intervention is more beneficial than no instruction specifically targeted on pragmatics, and that for the most part, explicit instruction combined with ample practice opportunities results in the greatest gains. However, there are limits to the effects of instruction, room for improvements in the research methodology, as well as for a wider range of theoretical orientations.

It follows that there is little research concerning the role of textbooks in pragmatic development (e.g. Panahi, 1998;

Vellenga, 2000), particularly in EFL classroom where it plays a key role in the curriculum and syllabus, and provides the primary form of linguistic input. Even these researchers focus on the quality and quantity of pragmatic information in textbooks. That is to say, there is a gap regarding the effect of textbook on EFL students' performance in functions tests which measure the production and recognition of appropriate attitudes and communicative keys as two elements of pragmatic competence. To address this issue, the present study aims to focus on the awareness of appropriate realization of basic speech acts and attitudes (the appropriateness in terms of the choice of a way of saying something which expresses our attitude appropriately, i.e. showing that we are being <polite>, <informal>, <tentative> and so on).

Accordingly, the questions related to the pragmatic awareness of foreign language learners in the present study are as follows:

1. Do the groups with different textbook backgrounds perform differently from one another on the functions test?
2. Do the male and female groups with different textbook backgrounds perform differently from one another on the functions test?
3. Is the interaction effect of textbook type and gender significant in the groups' performance on the functions test?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Subjects

To answer the questions related to the effectiveness of conversation course books in developing learners' pragmatic awareness, a sample of EFL advanced learners from different language institutes was selected. As it is the case with most interventional classroom research, the researcher was forced to work with intact groups and to conduct the research without control groups due to ethical and practical constraints. Accordingly, there were three groups comprising 121 subjects of different gender and three textbook backgrounds: Passages (grades 7 and 8), Headway Advanced (grades 1 and 4), Iran Language Institute Text book (Advanced 1 and 4). It is worthy of note that all of the participants were university, high school and secondary school students speaking Persian as their L1.

### 2.2 Instruments

Reviewing instrument designs and the relevant challenges, Roever (2008) indicates that tasks need to provide sufficient context, not overload test takers cognitively, have variety in terms of channel (i.e. written, oral and visual), and consists of different formats (e.g. MCQ, essay-type and interaction).

As it was mentioned in background, most studies have concentrated on the production of foreign language features or their use in interaction. However, the role of textbook background on pragmatic awareness has received far less attention. One of the aspects which has received no attention in this regard is the recognition of speakers' attitude within the framework of speech act realizations.

In order to test this aspect, a functions test was used, which was developed from a speaking and listening course book written by Harmer and Arnold (1981). The test was of a multiple-choice discourse completion type, which is easy to administer and score in comparison to other types of pragmatic tests (Brown, 2001). In my opinion, it is the most suitable one due to the fact that it takes the least time for test-takers to answer. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), it is a versatile questionnaire format that allows the researcher to elicit information on pragmatic comprehension, production, and awareness. The multiple-choice items in the elicitation task specified fifteen situational contexts and included prompts for responses, but rather than leaving the response selection to the participants, they specified several response alternatives from which one had to be chosen.

As Brown (2001) indicated, the variables of power (the relative power differences between the listener and speaker based on rank and professional status), distance (the relative social distance between the listener and speaker based on familiarity and shared solidarity due to presence or absence of group membership) and imposition (the degree of imposition of speech acts within the cultural context in terms of expenditure and or obligation) were taken into account in writing the choices. Also, to choose the distracters, the researcher paid attention to Blum-Kulka's (2000) positing a three way division among social acceptability (i.e. this determines when to perform a speech act, sequencing and appropriateness, and degree of directness), linguistic acceptability (deviations from which results in utterances that are 'perfectly grammatical', but fail to conform to the target language in terms of what is considered an 'idiomatic' speech act realization), and pragmatic acceptability (whether the utterance has the intended illocutionary force).

The idea of appropriate language is contextualized in terms of different realizations of several speech acts. These speech acts are categorized under interpersonal relations (politeness and status; degree of formality and informality), emotional relations (greeting, flattery, etc), argument (relating to the exchange of information and views, information asserted and sought, agreement, disagreement, denial, concessions) in Wilkin's (1976) list of major functions among others (e.g. Van Ek, (1975); Finnahiaro & Brumfit, 1983).

With reference to appropriate language and speakers' attitudes explained in background, one can refer to Munby's (1978) attitudinal index and communication key and Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983)'s attitudes of speakers and appropriate language. These aspects of pragmatic production are actually operationalized in the questions.

### 2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Administering the major task, the linguistic background questionnaire was distributed among participants to be filled. However, brief explanation in Persian was given to students about each part. The participants, managers of the institutes and the teachers were assured that the information would be used and interpreted anonymously.

The functions tests were given to participants, accompanied with brief instructions on how to fill out the answer sheet. It was particularly emphasized that the subjects should pay particular attention to role relationship, the place, the mood, the topic and the possible combinations of power, distance, and imposition in the situation. Therefore, they need to choose the most appropriate option. In addition, they were told that they had enough time to answer the questions. The total mark was 15 and the sessions for the administration of the test lasted from 20 minutes to half an hour.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Results were tabulated by marking each item correct for each participant in the groups and entered on to a spread sheet for carrying out statistical analysis (i.e. SPSS). The test was validated and the choices were modified by having it answered by thirty native male and female university students with an age range of 15 to 46.

The first research question focused on the effect of different textbook backgrounds on pragmatic awareness. Proficiency was defined in terms of the participant's performance on the final exam of the institutes and their textbook background. Pragmatic awareness was operationalized by the total number of correct responses in each group. Accordingly, the mean scores and standard deviations for the four groups were determined. In order to determine if the differences in scores were significant, independent samples two-way ANOVA was run. The second research question asked whether the subjects' gender affected pragmatic awareness. Pragmatic awareness was operationalized by the total number of correct responses in each group. The calculation of mean scores and standard deviations for the four groups was carried out. Independent samples two-way ANOVA was used to determine if the differences in scores were significant. As for the third research question, the interaction between subjects' gender and textbook background in terms of their effect on pragmatic production was determined by two-way ANOVA.

## 3. Results

The results of the subjects' performance on the functions test are displayed in the following tables and figures: between-subjects factors, the variables and the number of subjects in each group, descriptive statistics consisting of means and standard deviations, and the results of ANOVA.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables of Textbook across Genders

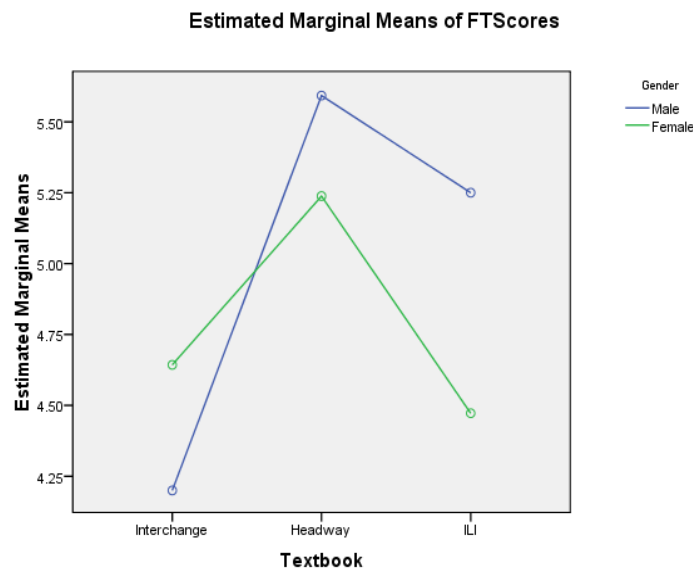
| Textbook    | Gender | Mean | Std. Deviation | N   |
|-------------|--------|------|----------------|-----|
| Interchange | Male   | 4.2  | 1.3            | 5   |
|             | Female | 4.64 | 1.5            | 28  |
|             | Total  | 4.57 | 1.46           | 33  |
| Headway     | Male   | 5.59 | 1.7            | 27  |
|             | Female | 5.23 | 1.9            | 21  |
|             | Total  | 5.43 | 1.76           | 48  |
| ILI         | Male   | 5.25 | 1.7            | 4   |
|             | Female | 4.47 | 1.74           | 36  |
|             | Total  | 4.55 | 1.74           | 40  |
| Total       | Male   | 5.36 | 1.67           | 36  |
|             | Female | 4.71 | 1.7            | 85  |
|             | Total  | 4.9  | 1.71           | 121 |

**Table 2.** Tests of Between Subjects

| Source            | Type III Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F           | Sig. | PartialEta Squared |
|-------------------|-------------------------|-----|-------------|-------------|------|--------------------|
| Corrected Model   | 26.721 <sup>a</sup>     | 5   | 5.34        | <b>1.88</b> | .104 | .075               |
| Intercept         | 1444.64                 | 1   | 1444.64     | 507.62      | .000 | .815               |
| Textbook          | 13.33                   | 2   | 6.67        | <b>2.34</b> | .101 | .039               |
| Gender            | .79                     | 1   | .79         | <b>.28</b>  | .598 | .002               |
| Textbook * Gender | 3.16                    | 2   | 1.58        | <b>.56</b>  | .575 | .010               |
| Error             | 327.28                  | 115 | 2.84        |             |      |                    |
| Total             | 3270                    | 121 |             |             |      |                    |
| Corrected Total   | 354                     | 120 |             |             |      |                    |

### 3.1 Effect of Different Textbook Backgrounds on Pragmatic Awareness

The first research question asked whether the groups with different textbook backgrounds performed differently from one another on the functions test. As it is clear in the table 1, there are apparent differences between means of the three groups ( $M_A=4.57$ ;  $M_B=5.43$ ;  $M_C=4.53$ ). In fact, ( $M_B < M_A < M_C$ ) is the hierarchy of difference, which figure 1 vividly shows:

**Figure 1.** Mean of Pragmatic Awareness Scores across Different Groups

However, in order to answer the question and the other two questions, a two-way ANOVA was run to see if such differences among mean scores are statistically significant or not. As it can be observed in table 4, the F-value with 2 and 120 degrees of freedom for numerator and denominator, respectively, is 2.343 :  $F(2,120) = 2.343$ . Since this value is less than the critical value for F (2.120) at  $P < .05$  ( $F_{crit} = 3.07$ ), we cannot reject the first null hypothesis of the study and it is concluded that such a difference between groups is not significant, i.e. the three groups with different course book backgrounds did not perform differently on functions test. It is worthy of note that homogeneity test for equality of means reveals that the difference in the number of subjects in the three groups did not violate the assumptions of the used tests since the obtained F value and the related Sig. value are both greater than .05 ( $F = .469$ , Sig. = .798).

### 3.2 Effect of Gender on Pragmatic Awareness

The second research question asked whether male and female groups with different textbook backgrounds performed differently from one another on the functions test. With reference to table 2, apparent differences among means of the groups can be observed ( $M_m = 5.36$ ;  $M_f = 4.71$ ), which can hierarchically be represented as  $M_m < M_f$ . Also, the differences between male and female groups were observed, the visual representation of which can be observed in figure 1.

Following this, the ANOVA revealed that the F-value ( $F(1,120) = .279$ ) was less than the critical value ( $F_{crit} = 3.92$ ) for



F (1,120) at  $P < .05$ . Not having statistically significant differences among mean scores, we cannot reject the second null hypothesis of the study. Also, the results of homogeneity test indicate that the difference in the number of subjects in the four groups did not violate the assumptions of the used tests (table 3).

### *3.3 Interaction Effect of Textbook and Gender on Pragmatic Awareness*

The third question asked whether there is an interaction effect of textbook type and gender on pragmatic awareness. The results of ANOVA showed that the F-value (2,120) = .556 was less than the critical value for F (2,120) at  $P < .05$  ( $F_{crit} = 3.07$ ). Therefore, we cannot reject the third null hypothesis of the study and it can be said that such a difference between groups is not significant.

## **4. Discussion**

In answer to the first question seeking the effect of different textbook backgrounds on pragmatic awareness, ANOVA results showed that there were not significant differences among the groups in terms of their performance in spite of the mean differences. The fact that the mean scores of all the groups were lower than half of the total score for pragmatic production (i.e.15) may indicate that the three textbooks did not provide enough opportunities for the learners to produce pragmatically appropriate utterances. This is exactly what is lacking in all the three textbooks; the amount of pragmatic information is quite small with little focus on speakers' attitudes and variables of distance, imposition, and power.

The second question explored the effect of gender on pragmatic awareness. The results of calculated ANOVA showed lack of significant differences among the groups as far as their performance on the functions test was concerned. In fact, a more important fact is that the average performance of all the groups was lower than one third of the total mark on the test (i.e. the maximum of 5.6 out of 15).

The findings actually support Enrich's (1997) hypothesis that there is no evidence for gender-based differences in language learning. As it is mentioned in Kasper and Rose (2002), there are contrasting results concerning the effect of gender on pragmatic competence/performance (e.g. Rintell, 1984; Kerekes, 1992). The main point of gender as social practice is that gender is understood as activity mediated. This is true about the contexts where men and women use the language differently because of their engagement in different social activities and not because of some inherent trait. While in EFL classroom, everything revolves around the activities in textbook, and there is little room for teachers' innovative activities for students' pragmatic development.

These findings can be in line with those of Vellenga (2004), which are indicative of the fact that textbooks (e.g. Headway, Passages) as the center of EFL curriculum and syllabus rarely provide enough information for learners to successfully acquire pragmatic competence. In other words, textbooks do not focus on pragmatic information such as the use of metalanguage, explicit treatment of speech acts, and metapragmatic information, including discussions of register, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and usage.

The analysis of the textbooks in the present study show that they include a paucity of explicit metapragmatic information and teacher's manuals rarely supplement adequately. And above all, EFL teachers in Iran lack enough knowledge, time, expertise and motivation to develop their own methodology in order to enhance students' pragmatic competence and performance.

The third question focused on whether there is any interaction between sex and type of textbook to influence students' pragmatic awareness. The results of ANOVA run for the groups indicated that there were not significant differences between groups.

On the whole, results support L2 English (Hoffman- Hicks, 1992) and first language English (Leinonen, et al, 2003) research showing that linguistic competence does not match pragmatic competence.

These findings point out several implications for language teachers. Firstly, L2 English learners can benefit from targeted focus on pragmatic awareness. This can be done by using authentic language samples to provide practice with how native English speakers express themselves pragmatically, not just linguistically. A dual focus on pragmatic and linguistic meaning will provide learners with a fuller picture of English language use.

Secondly, as Schmidt (2001) mentions, for input to be acquisitionally relevant, it has to be noticed or detected under attention. Accordingly, teachers should create an atmosphere and devise some activities so that learners attend the action that is being implemented, its immediate interactional or textual context and the dimensions of situational context that are indexed by linguistic and pragmatic choices. This can be done by focusing on some consciousness-raising activities related to appropriate language and speaker's attitudes. This is actually in line with

Vygotskyan ZPD, on the basis of which the effectiveness of instructional arrangements (teaching/ learning processes and materials) can be evaluated to see whether they afford the type and amount of assistance necessary for the students to notice or produce the targeted pragmatic objects. Eslami's (2000) suggestions regarding how to help students develop their pragmatic competence can be quite insightful; this approach consists of distinct phases of awareness raising (teacher presentation, discussion and student discovery) , motivation phase (translation activities, DCT and potentially problematic interaction), provision of focus and students' collection of data.

Finally, within the framework of task-based teaching (TBT), the role of pragmatic meaning as a critical factor in accuracy of utterance and speech comprehension should be highlighted. Therefore, it is necessary to reconsider the notion of task complexity, with attendant implications for task-based teaching and testing.

### 5. Limitations and Implications for Future Research

The present study adopted an innovative instrument to measure one of the aspects of pragmatic awareness which has not received attention: the awareness of appropriate language and speaker's attitudes, and partially confirmed the previous findings for L2/FL English. Future research is needed over different participant populations to confirm the generalizability of the findings. The grouping of the participants in advanced levels in their institutes and universities may not be in accordance with standard definitions of advanced proficiency level. Therefore, a well-defined measure as an indicator of proficiency should be developed and administered to operationally define the proficiency level of the sample.

Brown (2001), reviewing the types of instruments in measuring pragmatics and discussing the pros and cons of the elicitation tasks, enumerates the written discourse completion tasks, multiple-choice discourse completion tasks, oral discourse completion tasks and role-play self-assessment. Therefore, these tasks can be implemented to further investigate this rarely investigated aspect of pragmatic awareness, i.e. the role of textbook.

The focus of this study was the realizations of some speech acts and some of speaker's attitudes on the basis of attitudinal index. Accordingly, future research can concentrate on other speech acts, attitudes and proficiency levels. One of the shortcomings of the study was the small n-size of female groups; the results of this study should be interpreted keeping this in mind. It is also worthy of note that future studies should concentrate on standardizing test task, administration and scoring.

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