The Construct of Interlanguage Pragmatic Learning Strategies: Investigating Preferences of High vs. Low Pragmatic Performers

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Abstract

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has witnessed a growing body of research in the past two decades. One of the under-explored domains of L2 pragmatics is the role of learning strategies specifically tailored for the development of ILP knowledge. Therefore, this investigation aimed to determine the significant interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) used by high vs. low L2 pragmatic achievers. It was conducted in two phases. First, a multiple-choice discourse completion test including five common English speech acts was administered to 500 EFL learners. Next, 80 highest and 80 lowest ILP performers were orally interviewed and their answers were audio-taped. The most important interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies were extracted from L2 learners' interviews. The elicited IPLS were arranged based on Cohen's (2005, 2010) classification, the findings of the study itself, and an analogy with general language learning strategies (LLS) classification suggested by Oxford (1990). The extracted IPLS were divided into six categories of memory-related, cognitive, social, affective, metacognitive and compensatory IPLS. The high ILP performers used more strategies in all the six categories. The main conclusion of this study is that the use of more IPLS means a better ILP knowledge of speech acts. The most significant implication of the current study was that ILPS need to be taught to L2 learners to enhance their ILP knowledge in general and their speech-act-specific competence in particular.

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS), language learning strategies (LLS), pragmatic performance strategies (PPS), ILP achievers

1. Introduction

Since the use of English as an international language in real-world situations has rapidly increased in recent years, achieving communicative competence has been introduced as the main goal for EFL and ESL instruction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Ellis, 2008). Achieving this goal requires that English be used communicatively in authentic interactions with native or competent nonnative speakers demanding a deeper understanding of how it functions in collaboration with contextual factors and sociopragmatic considerations (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Hence, developing an effective pragmatic competence as an integral component of communicative competence has also gained an outstanding position (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi, 2011). In fact, interlanguage pragmatic competence is where other components of communicative competence, i.e. grammatical, discourse, and strategic competences, are called into active use. Therefore, many scholars have attempted to study the nature, production, and comprehension of pragmatic knowledge using different approaches and models in both ESL and EFL situations (Alcón Soler, & Martinez-Flor, 2008; Barron, 2003; Felix-Brasdefer, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi, 2011).

Speech acts, as the main building blocks of interlanguage pragmatic competence, were also widely studied, categorized in various ways, and were compared and contrasted across different languages (Al-Ghanati & Rover, 2010; Barron, 2003; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Felix-Brasdefer, 2007). Most of speech act investigations are descriptive, comparative, and cross-linguistic and the number of acquisitional and developmental studies is rare. The obvious problem is that although the acquisition of English speech acts is such a crucial necessity for all ESL and EFL learners, fewer seminal studies have been conducted on the acquisitional patterns, processes, and strategies which are specifically responsible for the development of effective or poor speech act knowledge. Except for Cohen's (2005, 2010) few studies, no other investigation have been done about the language learning strategies which particularly determine the acquisition of pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms related to different speech acts. Such special learning strategies were termed "pragmatic learning strategies" by Cohen (2005);

however, the current study named them "interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS)." The important position of these IPLS in the learning and teaching of English speech acts on the one hand and severe lack of research in this regard on the other hand provided the rationale to conduct an investigation in this unexplored domain of interlanguage pragmatics.

2. Literature Review

Interlanguage Pragmatic Learning Strategies (IPLS) are those strategies which have been used by the L2 learners in their past language learning experience or are currently used in order to acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge (Cohen, 2010). A distinction should be made between these strategies and "pragmatic performance strategies." Pragmatic strategies or pragmatic performance strategies are related to performance and refer to those moment-by-moment strategies which are used by L2 learners to produce the needed speech acts appropriately and to comprehend them. Pragmatic performance strategies (PPS) include choices such as politeness aspects, decisions related to the proper choice of vocabulary and structures, and choices relating to the power relations between speaker and hearer during the interactions in which the speakers are engaged.

As Cohen (2003, 2010) and Cohen and Sykes (2013) have asserted, there is a bilateral relationship between interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) and pragmatic performance strategies (PPS), i.e. using more IPLS will definitely enhance the use of PPS and more use of PPS in interactions in the form of pragmatic and communicative output can, in turn, enhance the use of IPLS and reinforce L2 learners' control over the previously learned IPLS. It can be argued that these two types of pragmatic strategies shape the strategy module of interlanguage pragmatic competence. Accordingly, if IPLS and PPS are studied together, more valuable information can be obtained about the relationships and mechanisms of their joint cooperative function within ILP competence.

Cohen pioneered the investigation of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) in a series of studies (Cohen, 2003, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Cohen & Ishihara, 2005; Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Sykes & Cohen, 2009). Cohen (2005) proposed the first taxonomy of learning strategies for

interlanguage pragmatic development with a focus on speech acts. Later, he expanded this framework, elaborated on its parts, and employed it in some classroom studies in Japanese and Spanish L2 settings. Cohen (2005, 2010) suggested his taxonomy for the learning and performance of L2 speech acts. According to Cohen (2010), the sources for IPLS taxonomy include general language learning strategy literature (Chamot, 2004; Cohen, 1998; Cohen, 2007; Cohen & Weaver, 2006; Griffiths, 2007, 2008), speech act literature (Cohen, 1996; Cohen & Olshtain,1993; Cohen & Shively, 2007), insights from LLS research conducted to enhance college students' learning of Japanese L2 speech acts through a strategies-based online curriculum (Cohen & Ishihara, 2005; Ishihara, 2008), and insights from language and culture study abroad projects (Cohen, 1998; Grenfell & Harris, 1999).

Cohen's (2010, p. 229) taxonomy includes three classes of strategies: (1) strategies for the initial learning of speech acts, (2) strategies for using the speech act material that has already been learned to some extent, and (3) learners' strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their pragmatic strategy choices (the metacognitive strategies). Each of these three broad classes of strategies is further divided into other concrete strategies. Cohen (2010) argues that three groups of factors influence the successful use of speech acts learning strategies: characteristics of the learners, the nature of the task, and the contexts for language use. Learner characteristics such as age, gender, language aptitude, language learning styles, and personality factors affect the use of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies and pragmatic performance strategies. Factors such as similarities and differences between L1 and L2, differences between the sociopragmatic norms and pragmalinguistic forms of the two languages, differences in politeness considerations, and other aspects of the attended speech act are very decisive in the choice of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) and pragmatic performance strategies.

Regarding the context of language use, EFL learners may have limited access to the special speech acts situations and feel uncertain how to behave in that situation. For example, the L2 learner may never encounter a funeral situation in his language learning experience and he may not know how to handle this sensitive situation. In these kinds of situations, the L2 learner

may use transfer from L1 in order to find the most appropriate speech act to express his condolences towards the deceased person's family. Cohen (2010) claims that "it is likely that learners will acquire the speech acts that they come in contact with the most, that they notice, or for which they have the most need" (p. 239). So, for example, L2 learners acquire greeting sooner and better than condolences because they need to deal with forms of greetings immediately in comparison with rare funeral situations demanding condolences.

Like general language learning strategies, the goal of research on IPLS is to help learners "be more effective pragmatically in L2" (Cohen, 2010, p. 227). Some studies have explored this issue, reporting that explicit strategy instruction is very effective in the development of L2 sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge related to different speech acts (Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012). Cohen (2010) supports the instruction of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies, claiming that "given the challenges associated with learning L2 pragmatics, it makes sense for learners to develop their own repertoire of strategies for both learning and performing pragmatics" (p. 227).

Cohen (2005, 2010) maintains that although his taxonomy provides an effective list including the interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) and pragmatic performance strategies, it has not been confirmed by a considerable number of studies and its application to the acquisition of speech acts is still limited and preliminary. Cohen's (2005) taxonomy has been criticized by Blitvich (2006) to be simplistic and weak on its basic theories. Cohen' (2005, 2010) framework for interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) cannot account for the number and nature of learning strategies in his first component (i.e. strategies for the initial learning of speech acts). It is reasonable to expect that a variety of IPLS exist for the initial learning of speech acts, but Cohen's model does not include all these strategies and limits its list to some cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Like general language learning strategies, L2 learners may rely upon many strategies belonging to different cognitive, metacognitive, memory, affective, social, compensatory, and other types of

strategies in their language learning experience to develop an effective pragmatic competence.

Among the very few studies addressing interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies, one pioneering one was conducted by Bagherkazemi (2013). She developed a pragmatic learning strategy inventory (PRASLI) and tried to investigate the relationship between EFL learners' pragmatic learning strategies use and their speech-act performance. Learners in this study answered the PRASLI and a written discourse completion test (WDTC) across three language proficiency levels: lower-intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced. This investigation revealed three groups of implicit, inductive explicit, and deductive explicit pragmatic learning strategies. Bagherkazemi found that strategy use in general and the use of explicit strategies in particular positively correlated with speech act production. Another finding of this study was that higher L2 proficiency implied more use of pragmatic learning strategies.

3. Purpose of the Study

Interlanguage pragmatic development demands profound scrutiny and meticulous speculation on the nature of the involved learning strategies. The scarcity of studies in this regard indicates that research on IPLS is in its infancy and many serious investigations are required to provide information on such an unexamined issue. Therefore, the present investigation has pursued to investigate the main interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) used by high vs. low interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) achievers. To this end, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the main interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) of high vs. low interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) performers among Iranian EFL learners?

2. Are there any significant differences between the interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) used by high vs. low pragmatic performers among Iranian EFL learners?

4. Method

4.1 Participants

There were 500 intermediate and advanced EFL learners in the present investigation. They were 337 females and 163 males. These participates were selected on the basis of their performance on a TOEFL test among the Iranian EFL learners studying English at different language institutes in Tehran, Kraj, Shar-e-Ray, Qazvin, Takestan, and Hamedan in 2013 and 2014. They were from different social strata and their age range was between 14 and 40 with an average age of 20.2 .The participants were high school, pre-university, university, graduate and in few cases post-graduate students. Their majors and educational degrees were different.

4.2. Instruments

The present research used two major data collection instruments: a multiple-choice discourse completion task (MDCT) as an ILP test and semi-structured oral interviews.

4.2.1 Multiple-choice ILP test

To gather the required data, an Interlanguage Pragmatic test (ILP Test) was developed and validated. This test showed an acceptable reliability based on the two pilot studies: one in the United States and Canada and the other in the participants' L2 context. The ILP test consisted of 35 items. Each item included a speech act situation followed by three options. One of these three options was the most appropriate one considering all the pragmalinguistic/lexico-grammatical and sociopragmatic dimensions of the situational context and the given options. The situations ranged from very informal to extremely formal. Developing an ILP test containing all speech acts was not possible considering the scope of the current study. The inclusion of too many speech acts would make the test lengthy for the participants to complete and might demotivate them and hence decrease their participation. Therefore, the five most frequent speech acts of requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, and compliments/compliment responses were selected for the ILP test of English speech acts.

The original ILP test included 50 items. The first pilot study was done based on the performance of the native speakers of American English with a high reliability index of nearly 0.9. Item discrimination, item facility, item reliability, and choice distribution indices demanded the exclusion of 10 items and changes in the content and format of some other items. These 10 items were deleted from the ILP test because of overlap with other items, poor structures in the stem or choices, and cultural inappropriateness based on native speakers' judgments. For many items, parts of the conversations were judged to be redundant. These conversations were shortened to keep only the necessary sections. The second version of the validated test containing 40 items was administered to 80 EFL learners. The analysis of the test yielded a reliability index of 0.75. In the revision process, five poor items were discarded and some other items were modified. All the items showed IF indices between the acceptable range of .37 and.50. The ID indices for all the items were well beyond .45 and .90, indicating the power of this multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) to discriminate between more as less pragmatically knowledgeable L2 learners. For example, item number 1 was modified after the two pilot studies:

1. Todd works in an office. He is going away for the weekend. The traffic is always bad on Friday afternoons, so he is going to take the day off in order to get an early start. He is in Paula's room. Paula is the manager of that office section. What would Todd say to ask for a day off?

   a. Hey Paula, can I take the Friday off? I am going on a picnic this weekend!

   b. I need a day off and I guess it's my right to have it. I mean this Friday!

   c. I was wondering if it would be all right with you if I took Friday off.

The final version of the test included 35 items. The final version of the ILP test is depicted in Table 1. There were 7 request, 9 apology, 8 refusal, 7 compliment/ compliment response, and 4 complaint speech acts in this final draft.

Table 1. ILP test sections

Speech Act	Number of Items
Request	7
Apology	9
Refusal	8
Compliment/ Compliment Response	7
Complaint	4
Total	35

4.2.2 Semi-structured oral interview

The semi-structured oral interviews conducted in the present investigation were aimed at eliciting high vs. low ILP achievers' interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) used to acquire speech acts. The main theories in the literature on interlanguage pragmatics such as politeness theory, implicatures, power relations, sociocultural norms, and the appropriate use of speech acts in different situations were used to develop the content of the interview. The questions used in the oral interviews were operationalized, developed, and modified through negotiations with two Iranian (NNs) and two native English experts in the field of discourse analysis and interlanguage pragmatics. The interview consisted of 15 items. The time limit was from 10 to 40 minutes. Table 2 depicts the content of the interview:

Table 2. The focus of questions in the semi-structured oral interview

No.	Content
1	noticing different speech acts, focusing on them and practicing them
2	noticing the relation powers, contextual factors, age and gender considerations; practicing and using them
3	noticing politeness considerations in the use of speech acts and mastering them
4	noticing sociocultural norms, learning and using them
5	noticing lexical and grammatical aspects of speech acts, learning and using them

6	noticing fixed conversational patterns, gambits, routines and collocations; learning; practicing and using them
7	understanding implicatures
8	cross-cultural comparisons between Persian and English speech acts, sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects; practicing and using them
9	the role of external factors such as book, instructional materials, and the teacher's methodology on ILP development
10	flash cards, highlighting, note-taking, underlining, recording, and repetition in ILP development
11	using English appropriately by involving in face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, chat rooms, social networks, and so on
12	referring to teacher, instructional and conversational books, dictionary, language software, website, or native speaker
13	asking for help from the other interactants
14	organizing, evaluating and shaping the ILP knowledge
15	handling feelings in the case of pragmatic failures/ misunderstandings

The interviews were audio-taped for further analysis after data collection. The oral interviews' content was translated into L1, so all the interviews were carried out in the participants' mother tongue. Participants were given some helpful examples and information in case of misunderstanding about the special terms, their meanings, and probable definitions.

4.3 Data collection procedure

An ILP test including five common English speech acts (requests, apologies, refusals, compliments/compliment responses, and refusals) was developed and validated in this study. The test was developed and piloted by the cooperation of native English speakers in the United States. A second pilot study was done by non-native speakers. The data were collected in two phases. In the first phase, the ILP test of English speech acts was administered to 500 EFL learners. It was a paper-and-pencil test and participants were required to answer the 35 items on this test in a time limit of one hour. In the second phase, the top 80 participants who scored high on

the ILP test and the lowest 80 performers were selected for the semi-structured oral interviews to elicit their interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies.

4.4 Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the performance of participants on the ILP test using the SPSS program (version 18). Then, the top 25% of learners who had scored +1SD (scores above 25.9) on the ILP test were selected as the high group, and the lowest 25% of the participants who had scored –1SD (scores below 11.8) on the ILP test were chosen as the low group. This way the top 125 high and the low 125 ILP achievers were located. Then, 80 high and 80 low ILP achievers were orally interviewed. The most significant IPLS used by high vs. low ILP achievers were elicited. The elicited IPLS were counted for each category and percentages of their use were calculated for high and low groups to give to a quantitative index of the differences between the strategies used by the two groups.

4.5 Intercoder reliability

Intercoder reliability for deciphering the interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies from the participants' answers to the oral interview questions was reached through the judgments provided by two raters: an Iranian nonnative speaker of English who has lived in the United States for 7 years and teaches interlanguage pragmatics at Michigan State University and a native English-speaker who also teaches discourse and pragmatics in the American Universities. Although this study reported the elicited IPLS by the use of frequency and percentages, percent agreement was not used for establishing intercoder reliability as a critical component of content analysis. Instead Cohen's kappa and Krippendorff's Alpha were calculated through the use of SPSS and ReCal programs, respectively. The calculated Cohen's κ [κ = .813, 95% CI, .683 to .935, p < .05] and Krippendorff's Alpha [Kalpha = .85 95% CI, .783 to .962, p < .05] indicated that there was a strong agreement between two raters' judgments on whether 160 interviewees mentioned the use of the same IPLS.

5. Results

In the first phase of the study, high vs. low ILP achievers were identified by administering an ILP test of common English speech acts. Descriptive statistics for the ILP Test showed that the lowest and highest observed ILP scores were 4 and 35, respectively (Table 3). The ILP test had a mean of 18.85 and a standard deviation of 7.05. Then, the 25% of the participants with the lowest and 25% with the highest ILP scores were located. The descriptive statistics for the low and high groups have been depicted in Table 3. High ILP achievers performed on the ILP test with a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 35 whereas the minimum score for low achievers was 4 and the highest score was 14. The mean for high achievers was 28.28, but it was 10.4 for low achievers.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for high and low ILP achievers

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
ILP total	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
High Achievers	125	24	35	28.28	.28	3.19
Low Achievers	125	4	14	10.04	.23	2.67

To examine if the apparent difference between ILP mean scores for the two groups were statistically significant, an independent t-test was run. The obtained t value of 48.89 with 248 degrees of freedom was statistically significant at p<.05. Therefore, it was concluded that distinction between high and low ILP performers was statistically dependable.

The semi-structured oral interviews were carried out, tape-recorded, and transcribed. Afterwards, these written transcriptions were meticulously scrutinized to find regularly reported pragmatic learning strategies for both groups. The discovered interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) for both groups of high vs. low ILP achievers were classified under six categories of memory, cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social, and compensatory interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies. Strategy type, number of participants using the strategies, and percentage of strategy use for high and low groups have been summarized in the following tables.

5.1 Memory IPLS

Those language learning strategies which were specifically used to help L2 learner memorize, internalize, and keep sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge in short-term and long-term memories and later on retrieve the ILP knowledge were called memory-related interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies. These strategies included highlighting and underlining speech acts, taking notes, relating the newly learned speech acts with the previously learned ILP knowledge, reviewing, and using flashcards and memorizing by repetition. The number and percentage of used memory-related ILPS are listed based on their frequency for the High Group in descending order (Table 4).

Table 4. The frequency (F) and percentage (P) of Memory-related IPLS used by high vs. low groups

Memory IPLS	Low Group F (P)	High Group F (P)
- highlighting or underlining instances of different speech acts and their special words and grammar in conversation books	27 (34%)	72 (90%)
- taking notes about the form, meaning, or the use of different speech acts	22 (28%)	66 (83%)
- thinking of relationships between already acquired knowledge about English speech acts and new pragmatic information about them	----	64 (80%)
- remembering English speech acts by making a mental picture of a situation/ conversation in which they are used	-----	62 (78%)
- reviewing the identified speech acts and the sentences, conversations and extra information previously written for different situations	-----	62 (78%)
- using different forms of a special speech act and writing them in two to four line short conversations in order to remember them more easily	-----	60 (75%)
- using special flashcards for remembering speech acts and their different linguistic forms	16 (20%)	56 (70%)
- memorizing English speech act patterns by their vocal repetition	24 (30%)	55 (69%)

5.2 Cognitive IPLS

Mental processes including noticing, focusing, attending, comprehending, analyzing, comparing and contrasting, practicing, creative using, and

searching for new ways and better input in order to acquire and use sociopragmatic norms and pragmalinguistic forms constituted cognitive IPLS (Table 5). Noticing the role of age and gender in the use of speech acts, noticing the conversational gambits, noticing the formality and lexico-grammatical aspects of speech acts, using speech acts in interactions with those who can speak English, and noticing hidden aspects of meaning such as implicatures, turn-taking patterns, politeness considerations, and facial and body gestures were instances of cognitive IPLS. The frequency and percentage of these cognitive ILPS are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency (F) and percentage (P) of Cognitive IPLS used by high vs. low groups

Cognitive IPLS	Low Group F (P)	High Group F (P)
-noticing how native or non-native English speakers use different speech acts	28 (35%)	73 (91%)
-noticing how the age and gender of speakers affect their speech act performance and learning these age and gender-related aspects	16 (20%)	70 (88%)
-noticing the fixed conversational patterns, routines and collocations which are regularly used by native English speakers to express different speech acts	18 (22%)	69 (86%)
-noticing native speakers' nonverbal behaviour (e. g. facial expressions, body posture, and gestures) in the use of speech acts in English conversations through movies and TV programs or pictures in the textbooks	17 (21%)	68 (85%)
-paying attention to how power relations, job positions and social ranks of speakers in affect the use of English speech acts	----	66 (83%)
-paying attention to the formality of words (slang, colloquial, informal, formal words) and grammatical structures in the use of English speech act based on the sociocultural and contextual factors	19 (23%)	64 (80%)
-noticing the tone of native speakers' voice when they are using speech acts	----	64 (80%)
-noticing and learning the linguistic and social politeness devices used by native speakers of English in the use of different speech acts	27 (34%)	62 (78%)
-trying to understand speakers' intentions and implied meanings through the words and grammatical structures used for expressing different speech acts	----	62 (78%)

Cognitive IPLS	Low Group	High Group
	F (P)	F (P)
and the contextual factors in the situation while listening to or studying English conversations		
-learning English speech acts by oneself through implicit and peripheral learning using the textbooks and instructional materials	22 (27%)	60 (75%)
-noticing and then trying to learn the important speech acts which are needed for different situations	----	58 (73%)
-practicing the use of different speech acts alone or with classmates through co-constructed conversations or role plays	26 (32%)	55 (69%)
-trying to use different needed speech acts in conversations with those who know English	----	53 (66%)
-noticing and acquiring the turn-taking patterns for different speech acts in English interactions	----	51 (64%)
-visiting the websites with instructional materials on English speech acts	----	49 (61%)
-asking native speakers and competent friends or classmates to give information about speech acts	----	45 (56%)
-noticing and writing out on the sociocultural similarities and differences between Persian and English speech acts	19 (23%)	44 (55%)
-practicing the conversational gambits for the related speech acts with other learners	26 (32%)	43 (54%)
-learning English speech acts through direct instruction by the teachers	16 (20%)	41 (52%)
-thinking that power relations between speakers have trivial grammatical or lexical impacts on the speech act production	36 (45%)	----
- considering learning or practicing of social factors as unnecessary because they are learned gradually without direct focus	34 (43%)	----
-thinking that sociocultural differences do not make radical changes in the form and content of speech acts	31 (39%)	----
-thinking that form and function of speech acts are universal and their learning is a matter of grammar and vocabulary not sociocultural considerations	25 (31%)	----

5.3 Metacognitive IPLS

These strategies included organizing the previous, current and future pragmatic acquisition, evaluating the effectiveness/deficiencies of previous and current ILP learning, noticing ILP knowledge gaps and failures, having clear future goals to develop ILP knowledge, and looking for better ways to

learn speech acts. The used metacognitive IPLS, the frequency, and the percentage of Low vs. High Group leaners who employed these strategies are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Frequency (F) and percentage (P) of Metacognitive IPLS used by high vs. low groups

Metacognitive IPLS	Low Group	High Group
	F (P)	F (P)
-noticing mistakes in the proper use of English speech acts	19 (24%)	59 (74%)
-looking for opportunities to learn, practice and use English speech acts as much as possible	24 (30%)	56 (70%)
-noticing the knowledge gaps regarding pragmatic features and speech acts	20 (25%)	54 (68%)
-finding out how to be a better learner in the acquisition and use of English speech acts and pragmatic aspects	----	53 (66%)
-organizing learning of English speech acts	16 (20%)	50 (62%)
-assessing and evaluating progress in learning different speech acts and their related pragmatic knowledge	16 (20%)	48 (60%)
-trying to predict kinds of speech acts or their functions which are needed and reviewing pragmatic knowledge in those regards before participation in English conversations	----	46 (57%)
-audio/videotaping one's English conversations to observe his strengths and weaknesses regarding the used speech acts	----	42 (52%)
-having no specific goal for improving pragmatic knowledge of speech acts	41 (51%)	----

5.4 Social IPLS

Social interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies included learning ILP knowledge in interaction with other learners/native speakers/competent nonnative speakers, learning through peers' feedback, developing sociocultural and pragmatic awareness, using the language pragmatically to develop pragmatic ability, and applying politeness considerations in the use of the speech acts. The used social ILPS, their frequency, and their percentage by the two groups are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Frequency (F) and percentage (P) of Social IPLS used by high vs. low groups

Social IPLS	Low Group	High Group
	F (P)	F (P)
-following politeness aspects of speech acts while using them in conversations with native or non-native speakers of English	16 (20%)	64 (80%)
-paying attention to the gender and social class of interlocutors and trying to use the most appropriate forms of the involved speech acts	16 (20 %)	59 (74%)
-using English speech acts appropriately by involvement in situations such as face-to-face conversations, telephone conversations, chat rooms, social networks such as face-book, twitter and so on	25 (31%)	56 (70%)
-taking part in free discussion sessions with more competent learners and try to use knowledge of speech acts	20 (25%)	55 (69%)
-learning the sociocultural aspect of English speech acts	----	50 (62%)
-practicing the use of speech acts with other learners	----	48 (60%)
-asking pragmatically competent speakers of English for feedback on the appropriateness of used speech acts in L2 interaction	----	46 (57%)
-respecting the different cultural perceptions of accepted behaviour in the use of speech acts in English conversations	----	44 (55%)

5.5 Compensatory IPLS

These strategies compensated for missing pragmatic knowledge during learning or performing speech acts through switching to L1 pragmatic knowledge, avoiding a special speech act, using similar speech acts instead of the intended one, using the easiest pragmalinguistic form of an intended speech act, asking for help from native or competent non-native speakers, getting help from the other interlocutor, and referring to teachers, books and websites. The mostly applied compensatory IPLS and their use percentage by the learners are depicted in Table 8.

Table 8. Frequency (F) and percentage (P) of Compensatory IPLS used by
high vs. low groups

Compensatory IPLS	Low Group F (P)	High Group F (P)
-asking for help or find another way to use speech acts properly or to express one's intended meaning if s/he fail to do so in conversations with native or non-native speakers of English	----	51 (64%)
-explaining in simple language when one doesn't know to express his intentions through the speech acts	----	50 (63%)
-translating from Persian in the case one doesn't know how to use and a needed English speech act	24 (30%)	46 (57%)
-referring to instructional and conversational books, dictionaries, language softwares, websites written in either Persian or English, or native speaker when one doesn't understand speech acts and their appropriate and polite use in English	20 (25%)	46 (57%)
-referring to the teacher, when one doesn't understand speech acts and their appropriate and polite use in English	28 (35%)	41 (51%)
-referring to the other interlocutor in the conversation, when one doesn't understand speech acts and their appropriate and polite us in English	----	41 (51%)
-referring to the native speakers, when one doesn't understand speech acts and their appropriate and polite us in English	16 (20%)	40 (50%)
-avoiding to talk when one cannot use the needed speech cat properly	29 (36%)	----
-preferring to change one's intended meaning when he cannot express it through the appropriate speech act	26 (33%)	----

5.6 Affective IPLS

These strategies were used to manage negative emotions caused by pragmatic failures through lowering anxiety, motivating and rewarding oneself, sharing the unpleasant feelings about ILP learning, or performing with someone. They included feeling capable to learn speech acts, feeling motivated to learn and use speech acts, trying to be calm in the case speech act misuse, and managing one's anxiety in the learning and performing of speech acts. The important affective IPLS elicited from high vs. low ILP achievers and their use percentages are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Frequency (F) and percentage (P) of Affective IPLS used by high vs. low groups

Affective IPLS	Low Group F (P)	High Group F (P)
-feeling capable to learn English pragmatic features and speech acts	16 (20%)	72 (90%)
-feeling still motivated to learn English or to engage in conversations in spite of pragmatic and speech act failures	17 (21%)	67 (84%)
-trying to be calm in the case of pragmatic mistakes, failures or misunderstandings	----	59 (74%0
- encouraging oneself to use the needed speech acts in English even when one is afraid of making a mistake	----	55 (69%)
-noticing one's embarrassment when he misuses or misunderstands pragmatic features and speech acts	----	50 (62%)
-enjoying and giving oneself a reward or treat for successful conversations in English involving the appropriate use of speech acts	----	48 (60%)
-feeling embarrassed after making mistakes in the use of speech acts	56 (70%)	----
-feeling anxiety when one cannot make himself understood in conversation with native or nonnative speakers of English	54 (68%)	----
-getting demotivated to learn English speech acts after pragmatic failures	53 (66%)	----
- feeling incapable to learn English speech acts completely	50 (62%)	----
-being hesitant to use the speech acts that one thinks he knows how to use	48 (60%)	----

As it has been depicted in Table 4-9, high group reported the use of more IPLS than the low group in all of the six types of the extracted IPLS. The high group reported 55 IPLS whereas the low group reported 36 IPLS. However, as Table 10 shows, the greatest difference lies in the percentage of participants who used these strategies in each group.

Table 10. Statistics for IPLS use by high vs. low groups

IPLS	Number of the used IPLS		Average Percentage of the learners who have used the mentioned IPLS	
	High Group	Low Group	High Group	Low Group
Memory	6	4	79.8%	28%
Cognitive	19	14	72.32%	28%
Metacognitive	8	5	63.62%	30%

	Number of the used IPLS		Average Percentage of the learners who have used the mentioned IPLS	
IPLS	High Group	Low Group	High Group	Low Group
Social	9	2	67.44%	29%
Compensatory	7	6	56.15%	29.84%
Affective	6	5	73.16%	17.6%

The only percentage which is higher for the low group is the percentage of learners who used affective IPLS. However, a look at the table shows that they used the strategies negatively, i.e. they reported on their feelings of high embarrassment and anxiety in the case of pragmatic failures or demotivation for acquiring speech acts.

6. Discussion

The current study yielded a more comprehensive and concrete picture of the nature and range of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) compared with the few previously done studies in this regard. The findings of this study helped classify these strategies into six main categories: memory, cognitive, metacognitive, social, compensatory, and effective IPLS. This investigation extracted the main IPLS used by high and low ILP achievers through conducting semi-structured oral interviews. Findings of this study also indicated that high ILP achievers used more IPLS than low ILP achievers in all of the six strategy types in the presented classification. These findings will be discussed below.

First, the IPLS construct modeled in this study seems quite appealing in view of the concept of LLS in SLA literature. The findings of this investigation and some other studies (Bagherkazemi, 2013; Cohen, 2005, 2010; Cohen & Ishihara, 2005; Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Ishihara, 2008) support the construct validity of IPLS and suggest that IPLS are crucially involved in L2 speech act acquisition. Having identified the effective IPLS used by high ILP achievers, we can say that interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) are any sets of intentional and conscious thoughts, behaviors, mental operations, steps, techniques, plans, activities, and tasks which are used by L2 learner to make the obtaining, storage, retrieval and use of interlanguage pragmatic knowledge including speech acts and their related sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic information easier, faster, more

efficient, more self-directed, and more enjoyable. Put it another way, interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies are what L2 learners use to acquire the linguistic, social, and cultural components of pragmatic competence, how they manage and self-direct these learning efforts, and what they know about their level of ILP progress, i.e. how L2 learners assess, evaluate, and organize the previously learned pragmatic materials. Interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies are transferable to new world situations and authentic contexts. Sykes and Cohen (2008) argued for the significant role of pragmatic learning strategies in learning and performing Spanish speech acts as an L2 for English-speaking learners through designed websites and self-learning materials. They concluded that learners' familiarity with the most effective pragmatic learning strategies could trigger better engagement with L2 speech acts and could develop their knowledge in this regard. Cohen and Sykes (2013) also considered the part of pragmatic learning strategies in L2 speech act development as integral and supportive.

Second, higher ILP performance means that L2 learners have used more categories of IPLS and more strategies from each category than lower pragmatic achievers. This implies that higher ILP achievers might have developed a practical competence of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge accompanied by common English speech acts. Therefore, it can be claimed that higher ILP development leads to a better use of IPLS both quantitatively and qualitatively. Accordingly, developing an effective repertoire of IPLS can be considered as a reliable predicator of L2 pragmatic development. Cohen and Sykes (2006) revised and modified Cohen's (2005) taxonomy of "pragmatic learning strategies" and applied it in the design and development of an especial website for learning Spanish speech acts. They reported that learners used these pragmatic learning strategies to enhance their knowledge of Spanish speech acts. Of course, Cohen and Sykes (2006) stated that these pragmatic learning strategies were rarely applied in isolation, but rather with other strategies in clusters and sequences. Cohen and Sykes's study directly supports the findings of the current study, indicating that the use of clusters of IPLS leads to the more effective learning of L2 speech acts. Cohen (2008b) also argued for the integral role

of specifically tailored interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies in learners' speech act development needed for effective speaking in a foreign language. He asserted that using, practicing, and expanding these learning strategies through different offline and online programs and softwares can help learners become more independent and successful in acquiring speech acts and their related knowledge of sociopragmatic norms and pragmalinguistic forms.

The findings of this research attempt are also supported by results of Yuan's (2012) study. Yuan (2012) investigated the Chinese college English students' perceptions of pragmatics, their pragmatic competence in selected speech acts, and learning strategies they used in acquiring pragmatic knowledge. Although Yuan did not use the term "pragmatic" or "interlanguage pragmatic" learning strategies, he listed the 13 general language learning strategies which specifically had helped Chinese college students acquire the pragmatic knowledge related to refusal, compliment response, and apology speech acts. He concluded that Chinese EFL learners' inadequate pragmatic knowledge is the result of low proficiency and limited knowledge in the use of language learning strategies which specifically contribute to the development speech act pragmatic knowledge. Bagherkazemi's (2013) study also supports the findings of this study in two ways. First, her study revealed and confirmed the construct reality of three groups of implicit, inductive explicit, and deductive explicit pragmatic learning strategies. Second, she found that strategy use in general and the use of explicit the strategies in particular was positively correlated with EFL learners' speech act production.

This study provided a new classification of the interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS) based on the classification of general learning strategies into memory, cognitive, metacognitive, compensatory, social, and affective strategies. The significance of the classification proposed by the current study is that it puts interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies in the general theoretical framework of learning strategies in the SLA literature, which has been previously set up and empirically studied. This classification seems to be more comprehensive than Cohen's (2005, 2010) taxonomy for IPLS. Cohen's model incorporates three layers: pragmatic learning

strategies, performing strategies, and metacognitive strategies. In his classification, all different kinds of IPLS have been put under the rubric of "pragmatic learning strategies" and no distinction is made between memory, cognitive, metacognitive, social, affective, and compensatory strategies. However, it can be argued that Cohen's (2010) classification has its own logic because general LLS research has made no clear-cut distinction between the strategies directed at learning L2 and those strategies focusing on using it (Chamot, 2004; Griffiths, 2007). This seems to be a plausible justification and it can be extrapolated to IPLS as well.

7. Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study help draw a few conclusions about the IPLS. First, L2 learners need to apply specific learning strategies called interlanguage pragmatic learning for the acquisition of L2 speech acts. These strategies can be defined and classified into six categories of memory, cognitive, metacognitive, social, compensatory and affective strategies based on the results of current investigation, the studies conducted by Cohen (2005, 2010) and his colleagues (Cohen & Ishihara, 2005; Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Ishihara, 2008), and an analogy with LLS classification proposed by Oxford (1990). It can be argued that the use of clusters and sequences of these IPLS can help L2 learners improve the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge related to different speech acts. This newly proposed taxonomy is more comprehensive than the few taxonomies proposed by Cohen (2005, 2010) because it includes a broader scope of strategies and has categorized the IPLS into six main strategy types while Cohen's models have generally classified these strategies as "pragmatic learning strategies" and have not separated them based on their similarities and differences.

The second conclusion is that different kinds of IPLS, based on Cohen's classification and current investigation's IPLS inventory, may contribute to the development of different aspects of ILP competence or different speech acts. For example, some cognitive IPLS promote pragmatic knowledge of implicatures and their internal discoursal processes and regularities. On the other hand, a larger number of IPLS can be applied for remembering the pragmalinguistic forms of a specific speech act. However, fewer IPLS were reported by the participants for learning how to

compensate for lack of enough ILP knowledge. This implies that L2 learners need to use IPLS more flexibly by choosing those strategies which are appropriate for solving or performing a particular pragmatic task. Therefore, L2 learners should enhance their pragmatic awareness to choose the most effective IPLS during their learning experiences and should increase their metapragmatic awareness to compensate for the lack of adequate IPLS. It should be noted that "flexibility" and "transferability" are two substantially important characteristics cited in the definition of IPLS proposed based on the findings of this research.

Third, the finding on frequent IPLS used by successful pragmatic achievers indicated that these strategies can be taught to less successful pragmatic performers. The teachability of IPLS and usefulness of such instruction have been supported in some studies. Felix-Brasdefer and Cohen (2012), for example, examined the role of explicit strategy instruction in interlanguage pragmatic development and concluded that such instruction is very effective in the acquisition of the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge associated with different L2 speech acts. Cohen and Sykes (2013) also emphasized the salient role of direct instruction on the strategy-based learning of pragmatic knowledge. Cohen (2010) supported the explicit instruction of IPLS as well as pragmatic performance strategies (PPS) and considered this instruction mandatory. Therefore, one of the most important conclusions from the current research is that IPLS needs to be taught to L2 learners.

Findings of this study have several pedagogical implications for teaching pragmatics in EFL contexts. This study provided evidence for a new classification of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLS). The IPLS classification has implications for language learners, instructors, and researchers. For example, researchers can use it to study different aspects of IPLS and hence they may revise this taxonomy. From the pedagogical perspective, this classification can help language teachers obtain a more reliable estimation of their L2 learners' preparedness and potential for the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge and the enhancement of their interlanguage pragmatic ability. Language instructors can decide what kinds of interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies should be taught, practiced,

and focused upon for individual L2 learners based on their IPLS preferences to help them promote their acquisition of speech acts and their pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms. The IPLS used by high or successful ILP achievers are thought to be teachable to other less successful learners (Cohen, 2010; Cohen & Sykes, 2013; Felix-Brasdefe & Cohen, 2012); therefore, teaching IPLS used by high pragmatic achievers can lead to a better development of pragmatic knowledge.

The fledgling domain of IPLS research provides investigators with a multitude of unexplored and neglected issues and topics for further research. The relationship between IPLS and pragmatic or metapragmatic awareness can be more thoroughly examined. Besides, the relationship between IPLS and personality factors yields multiple topics for further research. Another issue needing investigation is the relationship between language proficiency level and the use of IPLS and the nature or direction of this relationship. Further studies can be designed to scrutinize the relationship between IPLS on the one hand and important learner variables such as willingness to communicate (WTC), pragmatic motivation, and L2 social identity on the other hand. Gender-based differences in the use of IPLS can also be investigated.

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