Research Article

THE EFFECT OF FLIPPED VERSUS UNFLIPPED INSTRUCTION ON IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

The present study attempted to examine the impact of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. To this end, 30 Iranian female EFL learners, aged 15 to 17 years old, studying at Olum Iran English language institute in Tehran city were selected based on convenience sampling. Prior to the study, the Oxford Placement Test and a Discourse Completion Test were administered, and the participants were assigned to experimental and control groups with 15 members in each group. During sixteen sessions, the experimental group experienced flipped instruction as a treatment, whereas the control group experienced unflipped instruction. After completing the treatment stage, the participants answered a Discourse Completion Test as a post-test. The net results revealed a statistically significant difference between the pragmatic knowledge of the experimental and control groups. In order to restate, the experimental group outperformed the control group in pragmatic knowledge. The study has some implications for the EFL/ESL students in the pedagogy of pragmatic competence. As for the theoretical aspect, this study can provide some hints for researchers interested in developing a comprehensive model for teaching L2 pragmatic competence. Considering the practical implications, all the instructors and teachers could employ a set of flipped instruction via collaborative activities in their different classroom activities and enhance interactions.

Keywords: EFL learner, Flipped instruction, Pragmatic knowledge, Unflipped instruction.

INTRODUCTION

Speech act as a functional subcomponent of pragmatic competence is the most important research area of English language teaching, and significantly pragmatic competence is the second facet of language competence. Moreover, it has a dominant role in the appropriate employment of language based on context (Kasper, 2000; Rashtchi *et al.,* 2020). Speech act knowledge consists of a language user's socio cultural knowledge and their sociolinguistic knowledge. Based on a linguistic perspective, it is an important issue relevant to relational communication (Sadri *et al.,* 2018). Indeed, pragmatics is concerned with the appropriate employment of language. But utilizing language properly does not involve just correct phonology, morphology, semantics and syntax. It needs pragmatic knowledge or, in a more precise sense, cultural awareness to avoid misunderstandings or communication failures (Hyde, 1998). This issue goes beyond grammatical or structural accuracy, and the matter becomes more complex in EFL settings. Consequently, teaching pragmatics, teaching learners how to employ language properly, has turned into a significant issue. Accordingly, classroom instruction should involve various strategies and techniques for teaching and learning pragmatics (Hyde, 1998). In this regard, flipped learning is shaped by the emergence of internet in academic setting (Lin & Chen, 2016). In the context of flipped learning, teacher's role has been changed from authority to facilitator in the process of learning and learners experience a self-initiating model (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2016). It is worth pointing out that through technological innovation, flipped instruction has become easier for educators. They can thoroughly compile and present educational material and engage learners in an academic setting. It is also appropriate for learners with special needs and learners of different learning abilities (Moranski & Kim, 2016). In this realm, students' willingness to cooperate is the most important factor for the successful implementation of flipped instruction (Kvashnina & Martynko, 2016). Thus, one of the central challenges teachers experience in implementing flipped instruction is preparing learners for task implementation in a classroom setting. According to Moranski and Kim (2016), flipping lessons have led to challenging results in different fields. The volume of study on the employment of flipped classrooms in language lessons is not rich. The other issue associated with flipped classrooms is that teachers need to plan for providing videos which seems time-consuming; thus, implementing flipped learning requires additional skills on the part of teachers. Despite the increasing popularity of this method worldwide, in the Iranian pedagogical system conventional teaching approaches are predominant and Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been practiced in some settings recently (Alibeigloo *et al.,* 2021). Thus, many language teachers and learners are not familiar with the probability of this technology. Since pragmatics as a field of teaching and learning is not very old in foreign language teaching and the amount of work done in this regard is not vast in EFL contexts (Zappe *et al.,* 2009). The other challenging issue in academic contexts is related to teachers' and learners' beliefs. They think correct use of grammatical rules is more important than appropriate use of language, while the critical role of pragmatics or appropriate use of language cannot be ignored in academic contexts (Zappe *et al.,* 2009). Given the growing use of technology, including instructive videos in educational environments worldwide, such a study is worth noticing. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some forms of technology have been introduced and applied to the Iranian educational system. Thus, conducting such a study may lead to valuable results and may result in increased popularity and applicability of flipped learning. Therefore, the current study attempted to examine the impact of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

In a traditional teaching context, students were passively given information, and the focus was merely on language accuracy (Nugroho & Rekha, 2020). Through digital technology development, more learner-centered teaching has been presented with technology-based learning tasks (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2015). For several years, the goal of teaching was to give L2 learners awareness of grammatical structures and vocabulary (Krisnawati, 2011). Major alterations particularly occurred in teaching pragmatic knowledge through flipped instruction. Bergman and Sams (2012), the earlier advocates of flipped learning, have defined it as a tactic where "work that was traditionally done in the class is now done at home, and what was traditionally homework is now completed in class" (p.13). Regarding techniques, flipped learning suggests a loose model. Based on Bergman and Sams (2012), there is no particular method to flip a classroom, and every teacher does so differently. Still, it seems important to redirect attention and concentrate on the learner. It is worth noting that flipped learning typically includes watching videos online before learners come to class; thus, it may be regarded as a practice of blended learning (Hockly, 2017). According to Kostka and Marshall (2017) flipped learning is an appealing approach to teachers because it provides chances for interaction and enhances cooperative problem solving. This will resound with communicative language teachers who consider themselves as facilitators in communication among language learners. Several studies have been conducted in this realm around the world. Concerning flipped instruction, several studies (e.g., Day & Foley, 2006; Deslauriers *et al.,* 2011; Dill, 2012; Hazaymeh & Altakhaineh, 2019; McLaughlin *et al.,* 2014; Moravec *et al.,* 2010; Singay, 2020; Webb & Doman, 2020; Zappe *et al.,* 2009) have specified that employing flipped learning can increase performance of language learners as well as their engagement. Some other empirical studies (e.g., Baepler *et al.,* 2014; Hung, 2015) showed that flipped classrooms can lead students towards active learning as well as higher thinking order. Besides, some studies (e.g., Fathi & Rahimi,2019; Joshaghannezhad & Bagheri, 2018; Madani & Mahmoodi Nasrabadi,2017) are conducted in Iranian EFL context. In this realm, Fathi and Rahimi's (2019) investigation showed the effectiveness of flipped learning on writing accuracy, fluency and complexity of EFL learners. Similarly, Haghighi *et al.'s* (2019) findings showed a positive correlation between flipped classroom instruction and learners' pragmatic competence. Recently, RezaeiFard and Talebinejad (2021) investigated the effect of the flipped classroom on Iranian ESP students' vocabulary learning, retention, and perceptions. Findings revealed learners' improvement in vocabulary learning and retention via flipped learning. In spite of the significant role of pragmatic competence in the quality of communication and interaction between learners and teachers in language classes, and the role of pragmatic competence in the quality and amount of learners' learning, few studies have examined the pragmatic competence in flipped classrooms in academic context. Based on the results obtained from the studies on flipped instruction, the researchers of the current study believe that there is still a great need for further investigation because pragmatic competence requires strategy training. To fill this gap, the present research examined the effect of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian EFL students' pragmatic knowledge. Therefore, the following research question was formulated to explore the issue in the present quasi-experimental study with a nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design. The main two variables of the study consisted of an independent variable, flipped instruction, and a dependent variable, pragmatic knowledge.

RQ: Does flipped / unflipped instruction affect Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge and appropriate use of request and apology?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Thirty Iranian female, young EFL students at the intermediate level, were selected from a language institute in Tehran city. They were selected based on convenience sampling. The participants' age ranged from 15 to 17 years old. They came from different socio-economic backgrounds naturally. The participants' first language (L1) was Persian. They already had nearly five years of contact with English as a foreign language, with an average of three hours of English classes per week. They were selected from two intact classes, including 15 members in each group. They were randomly assigned into two groups. The students were taught through flipped instruction in the experimental group named Flipped Instruction Group (FIG). In the control group, they were taught through unflipped instruction, named as Unflipped Instruction Group (UFIG).

Instruments

The researcher used the following instruments to achieve the objectives of the study. The Oxford Placement Test (OPT) (Allen, 2004) is a validated placement test published by Oxford University Press and was used to homogenize the learners regarding general English proficiency. It included 60 items on vocabulary and grammar. The reliability of the test was calculated through Cronbach's alpha formula in SPSS software. The reliability index was 72.9. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is a validated multiple-choice test developed by Birjandi and Rezaei (2010). It included 20 multiple-choice items, and its reliability was (80). It was utilized as a pretest and posttest to measure the students' pragmatic knowledge at the beginning and at the end of the study. The reliability indices for the pretest and posttest of apology were .786 and .721. The pretest and posttest of request had KR-21 reliability indices of .770 and .713, respectively.

Procedure

The two intact classes met two sessions a week with a 90-minute duration. The participants studied units 4 to 7 of "American English File 2" (Latham-Koenig *et al.,* 2014) which contains grammar, vocabulary, idioms, expressions, phrases, and all four language skills and speech acts. It is worthy to point out that both groups studied the same course books. About 40 minutes of each session was devoted to the speech acts activities as the treatments in the FIG group. A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was utilized as the pretest and posttest to measure the students' pragmatic knowledge at the beginning and at the last phase of the present study. The pretest enabled the researcher to ensure that both classes were homogeneous in terms of pragmatic knowledge.

Flipped Instruction Group (FIG)

The present study occurred in the Olum Iran English language institute in Tehran city during a sixteen-session semester. Thirty Iranian female, young EFL learners at the intermediate level, studied units 4 to 7 of the "American English file 2" (Latham-Koenig *et al.,* 2014). Each session was 90 minutes on Saturdays and Tuesdays. After administering the homogeneity test and pretest in the FIG, the students received the treatments based on flipped instruction through using PowerPoint files and video lectures on the appropriate use of speech acts, such as apology and request. Forty minutes of each

session were devoted to flipped instruction. Before class, the participants studied the assigned sections of the units, and during class, students watched instructional video presentations concerning speech acts and their appropriate context of use presented by the teacher. The content of the book, especially the grammar points, was presented through PowerPoint slides. The teacher also used video lectures in the class for speech acts instruction which included the conversation sections. Through video lectures, the students were taught how to use apology and request speech acts in a step-by-step process. After watching the videos, the class was divided into groups. Each group included three members who experienced a think pair share activity about the given presentations. Every session, the students collaboratively discussed the content of the PowerPoint slides and video lectures. Then, they completed the exercises through joint problem solving and received feedback from the teacher. The teacher in FIG engaged students in collaborative activities and role playing to reinforce their knowledge, enhance learning, and develop higher-order thinking.

Unflipped Instruction Group (UFIG)

After administering the homogeneity test and pretest, UFIG students only benefited from traditional mainstream instruction on pragmatics. The teacher explicitly explained the speech acts such as apology and request and their appropriate context of use each session. In UFIG, the teacher taught the units based on the content of the book every session, and students in this cluster did not benefit from flipped instruction. They only had the traditional teaching method during the educational period.

Post-test

Lastly, after completing the treatment phase, the FIG and UFIGs' participants were retested on the pragmatic knowledge to examine whether the treatment had any impact on the participant's pragmatic knowledge or not. The researcher assessed the pragmatic knowledge of the participants both in the pretest and posttest. The posttest was a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test developed by Birjandi and Rezaei (2010), administered to both groups. Students were asked to read the 20 situations, and had to choose the most appropriate option in 45 minutes.

RESULTS

The data were analyzed through independent-samples t-test and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), which, besides their specific assumptions, assume normality of data which was probed using the skewness and kurtosis indices and their ratios over the standard errors. As shown in Table 1, the computed ratios were all lower than ± 1.96 (Field, 2018). Thus, it was concluded that the assumption of normality was retained. The specific assumptions related to the independent-samples t-test and MANOVA will be discussed when reporting the main results.

Table 1. Skewness and Kurtosis Indices of Normality

Group		N	Skewness				Kurtosis		
			Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio	Statistic	Std. Error	Ratio
Flipped	OPT	15		.886	.580	1.53	.291	1.121	0.26
	Pre-Apology	15		.457	.580	0.79	-1.040	1.121	-0.93
	Pre-Request	15		.682	.580	1.18	.007	1.121	0.01
	Post-Apology	15		.070	.580	0.12	-.752	1.121	-0.67
	Post-Request	15		.631	.580	1.09	-.804	1.121	-0.72
UnFlipped	OPT	15		-.180	.580	-0.31	-.733	1.121	-0.65
	Pre-Apology	15		.593	.580	1.02	-.047	1.121	-0.04
	Pre-Request	15		.653	.580	1.13	-.390	1.121	-0.35
	Post-Apology	15		.059	.580	0.10	-1.067	1.121	-0.95
	Post-Request	15		.594	.580	1.02	.291	1.121	0.26

An independent-samples t-test was run to compare the flipped and unflipped groups' means on Oxford Placement Test (OPT) in order to probe whether the two groups were homogenous in terms of the general language proficiency before the treatment. Table 2 shows the results of the descriptive statistics for the two groups on the OPT. The results indicated that the flipped (M = 24.13, SD = 6.36) and unflipped (M = 26.60, SD = 6.86) groups had almost the same means on the OPT.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics; Oxford Placement Test by Groups

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
OPT	Unflipped	15	26.60	6.864	1.772
	Flipped	15	24.13	6.368	1.644

Table 3 displays the results of the independent-samples t-test. Before discussing the results, it is worth mentioning that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was retained on OPT. As indicated in Table 3, the non-significant results of the Levene's test (F = .182, p > .05) showed that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their variances on OPT. That was why the first row of Table 3, "Equal variances assumed" was reported.

Table 3. Independent-Samples t-test; Oxford Placement Test by Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Equal variances assumed	.182	.673	1.020	28	.316	2.467	2.418	-2.485	7.419	
Equal variances not assumed			1.020	27.844	.316	2.467	2.418	-2.487	7.420	

The results of the independent samples t-test; (t (28) = 1.02, p > .05, r = .189 representing a weak effect size) indicated no significant difference between the two groups' means on the OPT. Thus, the two groups were homogeneous in terms of their general language proficiency before the treatment. MANOVA was run to compare the flipped and unflipped groups' means on pretests of apology and request. The results showed that the two groups were homogenous in terms of their pragmatic knowledge before the treatment. Besides the assumption of normality reported in Table 1, MANOVA has two more assumptions; homogeneity of variances of groups; and homogeneity of covariance matrices.

Table 4 illustrates the results of the Levene's test, indicating that the groups enjoyed homogenous variances on pretests of apology (F (1, 28) = .524, p > .05), and request (F (1, 28) = .700, p > .05).

Table 4. Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance of Pretests of Apology and Request by Groups

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pre-Apology	Based on Mean	.891	1	28	.353
	Based on Median	.524	1	28	.475
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.524	1	27.492	.475
	Based on trimmed mean	.836	1	28	.368
Pre-Request	Based on Mean	.619	1	28	.438
	Based on Median	.700	1	28	.410
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.700	1	27.998	.410
	Based on trimmed mean	.714	1	28	.405

MANOVA also requires that the correlations between pretest of apology and pretest of request be roughly equal across the two groups or homogeneity of covariance matrices. The assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices is probed through Box's test. The non-significant results of the Box's test (Box's M = 2.28, p > .001) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices was retained (Table 5). As noted by Tabachnick and Fidell (2014), and Field (2018), the results of the Box's test should be reported at a .001 level of significance.

Table 5. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices Pretests of Apology and Request by Groups

Box's M	2.283
F	.702
df1	3
df2	141120.000
Sig.	.551

Table 6 displays the flipped and unflipped groups' means on pretests of apology and request. The results showed that the two groups had fairly close means on apology and request pretests. These results will be discussed in detail when reporting the results in Table 8.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of Pretests of Apology and Requ by Groups

Dependent Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pre-Apology	Flipped	4.000	.759	2.445	5.555
	Unflipped	4.000	.759	2.445	5.555
Pre-Request	Flipped	4.333	.743	2.812	5.855
	Unflipped	3.800	.743	2.278	5.322

Table 7 displays the results of MANOVA. The results (F (2, 27) = .125, p > .05) indicated that there was no significant difference

between the flipped and unflipped groups' overall means on pretests of apology and request. The results will be discussed in detail when reporting the results of the between-subjects effects (Table 8).

Table 7. Multivariate Tests Overall Pretest of Apology and Request by Groups

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squard
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.814	58.912	2	27	.000	.814
	Wilks' Lambda	.186	58.912	2	27	.000	.814
	Hotelling's Trace	4.364	58.912	2	27	.000	.814
	Roy's Largest Root	4.364	58.912	2	27	.000	.814
Group	Pillai's Trace	.009	.125	2	27	.883	.009
	Wilks' Lambda	.991	.125	2	27	.883	.009
	Hotelling's Trace	.009	.125	2	27	.883	.009
	Roy's Largest Root	.009	.125	2	27	.883	.009

Table 8 displays the results of the between-subject effects. Based on these results and the means in Table 7, it can be concluded that;
A: There was no significant difference between the flipped (M = 4.00) and unflipped (M = 4.00) groups' means on the pretest of apology (F (1, 28)<.001, p > .05).

Table 8. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Pretests by Groups

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Group	Pre-Apology	.000	1	.000	.060	1.000
	Pre-Request	2.133	1	2.133	.258	.616
Error	Pre-Apology	242.000	28	8.643		
	Pre-Request	231.733	28	8.276		
Total	Pre-Apology	722.000	30			
	Pre-Request	730.000	30			

B: There was no significant difference between the flipped (M = 4.33) and unflipped (M = 3.80) groups' means on pretest of request (F (1, 28) = .258, p > .05, $p\eta^2$ = .009 representing a weak effect size).

Exploring Research Questions

Does flipped/unflipped instruction affect Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge and specifically appropriate use of request and apology?

MANOVA was performed to compare the flipped and unflipped groups' means on posttests of apology and request in order to probe the research question. Table 9 displays the results of Levene's test of homogeneity of variances. The results showed that the groups enjoyed homogenous variances on posttest of request (F (1, 28) = 1.54, p > .05); however, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated on posttest of apology (F (1, 28) = 5.06, p < .05). There is no need to worry about the violation of these assumptions. If the groups enjoy equal sample sizes, as is the case in this study, the violation of this assumption can be ignored (Field 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell 2014).

Table 9. Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance of Posttests of Apology and Request by Groups

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Post-Apology	Based on Mean	6.386	1	28	.017
	Based on Median	5.063	1	28	.032
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	5.063	1	25.492	.033
	Based on trimmed mean	6.252	1	28	.019
Post-Request	Based on Mean	2.193	1	28	.150
	Based on Median	1.540	1	28	.225
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.540	1	20.720	.228
	Based on trimmed mean	2.071	1	28	.161

The assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices probed through Box's test was retained. As displayed in Table 10, the non-significant results of Box's test (Box's M = 8.90, p > .001) indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices was retained. As noted by Tabachnick and Fidell (2014), Pallant (2016), and Field (2018), the results of the Box's test should be reported at .001 level.

Table 10. Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices Posttests of Apology and Request by Groups

Box's M	8.905
F	2.739
df1	3
df2	141120.000
Sig.	.042

Table 11 shows the flipped and unflipped groups' means on posttests of apology and request. The results showed that the flipped group had higher means than the unflipped group on both posttests of apology and request. These results will be discussed in detail when reporting the results in Table 13.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics of Posttests of Apology and Request by Groups

Dependent Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Post-Apology	Flipped	7.600	.537	6.500	8.700
	Unflipped	4.400	.537	3.300	5.500
Post-Request	Flipped	7.533	.555	6.397	8.670
	Unflipped	4.600	.555	3.463	5.737

Table 12 displays the results of MANOVA. The results (F (2, 27) = 9.18, p > .05, pη^2 = .405, representing a large effect size) indicated that the flipped group had significantly higher means than the unflipped group on posttests of apology and request. Thus, the null hypothesis, "there is no statistically significant difference between the mean of the flipped group and unflipped group in the appropriate use of request and apology" was rejected.

Table 12. Multivariate Tests Overall Posttest of Apology Request by Groups

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.912	139.310	2	27	.000	.912
	Wilks' Lambda	.088	139.310	2	27	.000	.912
	Hotelling's Trace	10.319	139.310	2	27	.000	.912
	Roy's Largest Root	10.319	139.310	2	27	.000	.912
Group	Pillai's Trace	.405	9.183	2	27	.001	.405
	Wilks' Lambda	.595	9.183	2	27	.001	.405
	Hotelling's Trace	.680	9.183	2	27	.001	.405
	Roy's Largest Root	.680	9.183	2	27	.001	.405

Table 13 reveals the results of the between-subject effects. Based on these results, and the means displayed in Table 12 it can be concluded that:

A: The flipped group (M = 7.60) had a significantly higher mean than the unflipped group (M = 4.40) on the posttest of apology (F (1, 28) = 17.47, p < .05, pη^2 = .388 representing a large effect size).

B: The flipped group (M = 7.53) had a significantly higher mean than the unflipped group (M = 4.60) on the posttest of request (F (1, 28) = 13.97, p < .05, pη^2 = .333 representing a large effect size).

Table 13. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects of Posttests by Groups

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	Post-Apology	76.800	1	76.800	17.743	.000	.388
	Post-Request	64.533	1	64.533	13.971	.001	.333
Error	Post-Apology	121.200	28	4.329			
	Post-Request	129.333	28	4.619			
Total	Post-Apology	1278.000	30				
	Post-Request	1298.000	30				

DISCUSSION

The present study examined the effect of flipped versus unflipped teaching on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. The findings showed that flipped instruction had a positive effect on improving learners' pragmatic competence. The present study also supported the previous research findings (e.g., Chen Hsieh *et al.,* 2017; Chen *et al.,* 2014; Hung, 2015; Jamaludin & Osman, 2014; Murdock & Williams, 2011; O'Flaherty & Phillips, 2015; Sahin *et al.,* 2015; Bishop & Verleger, 2013) specifically, on the advantages of flipped classroom teaching on developing learners' pragmatic competence concerning the request aspect of speech act. The research outcome aligns with Chen Hsieh *et al.'s* (2017) study concerning the efficacy of flipped instruction for improving students' pragmatic knowledge and idioms learning. Additionally, Bishop and Verleger's (2013) perspective supports the recent study's outcome. It specified that flipped learning creates opportunities for a dynamic interactive environment where teachers guide their students to be more innovative in academic contexts.

Besides, the present study is in accordance with Katchament's (2018) study, which showed that flipped instruction improved the appropriate use of English apology by EFL learners. The results also supported the notion that teaching pragmatic competence resulted in self-learning, comprehensive presentation, and discussion-based learning, enhancing interactive context in the classroom. Similarly, the findings of recent investigation support Haghighi *et al.,* (2019) findings concerning the positive effect of the flipped classroom on EFL learners' appropriate use of refusal for enhancing EFL students' pragmatic competence. Equally, the findings highlighted flipped instruction as an effective educational procedure for engaging students dynamically with the course content and providing an enjoyable learning context. Besides, the results are consistent with Abeysekera and Dawson (2015), who highlighted the flipped classroom as an effective teaching procedure for supporting the transformation of a class into a program based on pre-class preparation, and in-class tasks, and post-class work. In line with the present study, Murdock and Williams (2011) indicated that flipped classrooms provided an interactive learning context and helped students develop strong relationships with classmates. Such classes offer learners the chance to contact regularly with their partners for cooperative learning. However, some research findings (e.g., RahimiDomakani *et al.,* 2013; Joshaghan Nezhad & Bagheri, 2018; Webb *et al.,* 2014) were incompatible with the current study's findings. They found that the flipped model did not match learner expectations of teacher roles in the classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the current study was to determine the effect of flipped versus unflipped instruction on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge, specifically appropriate use of request and apology. The overall result implied that flipped instruction was effective in boosting EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge. The outcomes of the existing research could be effective in enhancing EFL learners' communicative competence, especially their pragmatic knowledge. The current research had some practical and theoretical implications for the EFL/ESL students in the pedagogy of pragmatic competence. As for the theoretical aspect, this study can provide some hints for researchers interested in developing a comprehensive model for teaching L2 pragmatic competence. Considering the practical implications, all the instructors and teachers could employ a set of flipped instruction via collaborative activities in their different classroom activities and enhance interactions. Moreover, the result of the current study could encourage language teachers to conduct action research on the efficacy of incorporated flipped instruction in EFL classes for activating learners' background knowledge at various levels of language proficiency. Students could benefit from a stress-free atmosphere created in the class that encourages group interaction; additionally, it might be fruitful to provide a variety of activities via flipped instruction to find optimal conditions for language learners and their needs. Hopefully, this study could also call material designers' attention to coordinating special activities through flipped instruction in conversation sections of the textbooks. Another implication might be related to the English language book publishers. Publishers may consider the creation of more interactive and creative books with explicit pedagogical purposes for English language teaching as a foreign language by integrating different technological tools and contents that can be learned better through flipped instruction. The study can have implications in the classroom context, especially because it enables the learning session to go beyond the walls of the class. Thus, teachers can notice students' interests and provide different flipped learning contexts. Besides, Teachers can apply flipped instruction to create dynamic teaching and students can improve their learning by pausing, re-listening, and re-watching films or videos. Students would be more accountable for their learning in such a learning context. Further, language practitioners can make English language teaching and learning in the EFL context easier by considering and discovering the issues related to flipped instruction in academic contexts. This study was limited on the grounds that individual differences of the participants, such as age, motivation, and IQ, could not be controlled by the researcher, although they might affect the results. The other limitation was that the participants were selected from two intermediate intact English classes held at a language institute in Tehran; therefore, a randomization procedure was not possible. Secondly, all of the participants in the research were females. Due to time-consuming filliped instruction, a relatively few students (30) were involved in the research.

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