Raising pragmatic awareness: Effect of contrastive discourse markers on iBT speaking module

Mansoor Fahim
Associate professor, IAU, Science and Research Branch, Tehran
Mahdi Aghabagheri[1]
Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, Meybod Nursing School
Mohammad Javad Rezai
Assistant professor, University of Yazd, Yazd,

Abstract

Although discourse markers lend themselves widely to spoken as well as written discourse, unfortunately there is not any common consensus on categorization, classification, status and other related issues. The present study endeavored to find out if raising pragmatic awareness in the case of contrastive discourse markers has a statistically significant effect on speaking proficiency. The effect of raising pragmatic awareness on speaking proficiency through peer interactions was also investigated. To this end, 30 EFL Iranian high intermediate learners (25 females and 5 males), homogenized by standardized placement test of Cambridge, participated in the study. After going through the pre-test, namely iBT speaking sample, they were exposed to 18 speaking tasks listed in Phillips (2007), followed by a post-test as well as a delayed post-test. Next, three raters

[1]Corresponding author at Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences
Email address: mahdi.aghabagheri@gmail.com

considering data-driven reasoning processes listened to 540 participants' recorded files and scored the performances. The results of the research revealed a statistically significant effect of raising pragmatic awareness on speaking proficiency by contrastive discourse markers deductive teaching on one hand and the statistically significant effect of raising pragmatic awareness on speaking proficiency through peer interactions on the other.

Keywords: raising pragmatic awareness, contrastive discourse markers, iBT speaking module, peer interactions

1. Introduction

Halliday and Hasan (1976) argued that even though structure appears to be a definitional source of a text, a more compelling source is the level of semantic relationships underlying the text. Thus, particular items such as pronouns, adverbs, and conjunctions help create discourse not because of their rule-governed distribution, but since they account for an interpretive link between two parts within the text. Although we can recognize a cohesive element by its surface appearance in a clause, what such an element actually displays is a connection between the underlying propositional content of two clauses – the clause in which the element appears and a prior clause. In short, the cohesive link is established because the interpretation of an element in one clause presupposes information from a prior clause.

Schiffrin (1985, p. 281) demonstrates the contribution of discourse markers, metalingual phrases, and paraphrases to the structural unity, interpretative cohesion, and interactional coherence of a discourse. She operationally defines markers as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk".

Considering the posed factors, the study will be presented in following sections. First, a brief literature on fundamental related issues will be presented. Second, statement of the problem and research questions will be posed. Next, method section and the sub-categories will be illuminated. Then results of the study will be discussed. And in the end, conclusion section will be an ending for the probe.

2. Review of Literature

Schiffrin (2006, p. 178) defines discourse markers as "small words and phrases that indicate how what someone is about to say (often at the beginning of a spoken utterance) fits into what has already been said and into what they are about to say next."

In Fraser's (1999) words, discourse markers are expressions drawn from the syntactic categories of *conjunctions*, *adverbials*, or *prepositional phrases*, have the syntactic properties connected with their category membership, have a meaning which is procedural, and have co-occurrence limitations which are in complementary distribution with their conceptual equivalents.

Verschueren (2003, p. 189) offers a definition of metapragmatic awareness as "the systematic study of the metalevel, where indicators of reflexive awareness are to be found in the actual choice-making that constitutes language use, is the proper domain of what is usually called metapragmatics". Sanger, Hux, and Ritzma (1999, p. 283) state that "metapragmatic awareness refers to an individual's ability to state and define social rules governing conversational interactions." In this regard, Cenoz and Hornberger (2008) define pragmatic awareness as students' conscious and reflective knowledge of structural and strategic organizations, conventions and rules of spoken interaction and of how the target language is typically used to achieve successful communication.

Harmer (2001, p. 269) defines speaking proficiency as "the ability to speak fluently presupposes not only a knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language on the spot". Language features include connected speech, expressive devices, lexis and grammar, and negotiation language. The matter of processing consists of mental and social processing. In this case, language processing, interacting with others, and (on-the-spot) information processing are worth considering.

The mentioned definition clarifies some aspects, but from TBLT view, Luoma (2004, p. 31) defines speaking tasks as "activities that involve speakers in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular speaking situation."

Raising pragmatic awareness

2.1 Previous Studies on DMs and Their Applications

Considering the DMs functions, they can have multiple ones in some situations. These varieties pave the way for the engagement in influential communication. For example, Gumperz (1982, cited in Johnstone, 2008) referred to contextualization cues as "elements of discourse which serve metacommunicative functions" (p. 238).

Schiffrin (1987) provided an illustration of how the contextualization process works, and focused on a subset of contextualization cues, a set of words and phrases including *and*, *so*, *well* and *like*, which can function as discourse markers.

Discourse markers show what a speaker can be seen as doing on several different planes. For example, the words *so* and *because* can be categorized in the same class when showing the concept of result, yet they can be regarded differently in other uses.

In traditional grammatical terms, both *so* and *because* fall into the rather vaguely defined category of "function words". *So* is labeled as "coordinating conjunction" and *because* as "subordinating conjunction". This terminology suggests something about one of the uses of *so* and *because*: to mark semantic relations among clauses.

Schiffrin (1987) shows that *so* marks effects and *because* marks causes or reasons on structural and semantic levels as well as on the level of speech act and communicative action. Chaume (2004, p. 854), in the concluding part of his study , claiming that audiovisual translations seem to be less cohesioned texts than their source counterparts while the audience can repair the possible misunderstanding. The results of the study demonstrate that audio-video activities can raise learners' awareness of how speakers mark topic shifts by means of activities focusing on points in the talk where speakers make summaries and evaluations, and on markers and pitch changes.

In the concluding section of his article, Lam (2009, p. 273) refers to the wide discrepancies which are found between teaching materials and naturally-occurring examples in one of the most frequently used discourse particles, *well*, in the English language, raising this issue that to what extent the textbooks studied reflect natural usage and accordingly allowing learners to be aware of how discourse particles are used. In this regard, discourse particles are deemed to be a

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

valuable linguistic resource which learners have a right to gain access to. Therefore, for a basic understanding of these items, textbooks are required to be described and presented in the ways they are used in naturally-occurring examples.

Findings of a probe by Fahim, Aghabagheri, Dehghan, and Tavakoli (2010) on cause DMs clearly supported the proposition that electronic peer correction has a statistically significant effect on academic writing. In addition, the difference between the pre-test (4 out of 6), and post-test (5 out of 6) was significant. On the other hand, the percentage of the production of complex sentences and the percentage of adverbial clauses of cause reveal the fact that electronic peer correction has a statistically significant effect on academic writing especially when the focus of writing is on written discourse particles of cause.

Besides, there are other highlighted points which are note-worthy and eye-catching: first, the positive effect of peer correction and its intimate nature; Second, the visualization of the errors and mistakes by review facility of MS word, and finally the role of the conductors who were instructors and real facilitators.

2.2 Previous Researches on Pragmatic Awareness

Casting some light on pragmatic awareness, we offer a brief review of some related studies. Eslami-Rasekh (2005) posed some tasks such as translation activities and potentially problematic interactions to raise pragmatic awareness. She came to the conclusion that some activities can surely raise the pragmatic awareness and the nature of these activities can be different for various levels. Kondo (2003) found the best way to raise the pragmatic awareness in using a textbook that is designed for this purpose as 'Heart to Heart'. Rose (1994) introduced active video-viewing activities and suggested that an approach using pragmatic consciousness-raising had the distinct advantage of providing learners with a foundation in some of the central aspects of the role of pragmatics, and it could be used by teachers of both native and non-native speakers. To expand the assumption of pragmatic awareness raising, the crucial point is that

Raising pragmatic awareness

suggested activities cannot be generalized to all classes and different learners. Each and every class and learner has the characteristics of their own. In the case of educational environment, some factors such as facilities, realia, curricula, and materials are important. On the other hand, in the case of the learners such factors like personality factors, social ranks, and sex are crucial to be considered.

There are plenty of suggested activities by different and noticeable scholars, some of which are mentioned here.

(1) Motivation phase (Rose, 1999);
(2) Translation activities (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005);
(3) Think (aloud) (Bardovi-Harling & Griffin, 2005; Kondo, 2003);
(4) DCT (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989);
(5) Deductive/explicit vs. inductive/implicit teaching of grammar (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Martinez-Flor & Alcon Soler, 2004);
(6) Focusing on use of the appropriate forms, formality vs. informality, solidarity: social ranks (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005);
(7) Input enhancement (Martinez-Flor & Alcon Soler, 2004);
(8) Contrastive patterns (Bardovi-Harling & Griffin, 2005);
(9) Familiarizing with different speech acts (Martinez-Flor & Alcon Soler, 2004) (Allami & Aghabagheri, 2010);
(10) Interaction enhancement: verbal vs. nonverbal (Sanger, Hux, & Ritzman, 1999);
(11) Self-monitoring, self-awareness skills (Sanger, Hux, & Ritzman, 1999);
(12) Focus on perception vs. production, (Bardovi-Harling & Griffin, 2005).

2.3 Speaking Module in iBT

Given the clarification of sub-skills of speaking, the focus will be concentrated on speaking tasks in iBT and the suggested strategies to tackle them properly. There are various sources which try to simulate different modules of iBT. One of them is Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test conducted in 2007 by Deborah Phillips. On page 189, the speaking overview part of speaking section, speaking is introduced as the third section of the TOEFL iBT. This section includes six tasks: two independent tasks and four integrated

tasks. Two of the integrated tasks combine reading and listening with speaking, and the other two integrated tasks combine listening with speaking. To complete these tasks, participants should speak into a microphone and their responses will be recorded on the computer.

- The two independent tasks each include a question to be answered. The ideas in applicants' responses come from their personal experience rather than from material that is given to them.

- The two reading, listening, and speaking integrated tasks each include a reading passage, a listening passage, and a question that asks how the ideas in the two passages are related.

- The two listening and speaking integrated tasks each include a longer listening passage and a question that asks you to summarize key points of the passage.

3. Purpose of the Study

Myriad researches have been conducted in the domain of discourse markers. DMs have been investigated from different perspectives such as: the studies of Genre Analyses, Four Skills and Sub-skills surveys, and Corpus Probes. Interestingly, pragmatic awareness and speaking proficiency were not the variables accompanied by DMs. As DMs lend themselves to two general classifications, namely Written and Spoken Discourse, most of the mentioned domains can be scrutinized in both fields. Considering the mentioned issues, the main purpose of this probe is to answer whether raising pragmatic awareness in the case of contrastive discourse markers has any statistically significant effect on speaking proficiency or not.

Intuitively, most of the learners face such a problem due to the lack of information about different steps of success. A leaner who does not know anything about the awareness and self-awareness cannot be pragmatically aware. A learner who is not autonomous is like a soldier and in all the situations he is waiting for a command to

Raising pragmatic awareness

do; contrary to the mentioned fact, a good learner must be responsible for the process of his own learning, i.e. he is required to use cognitive, meta-cognitive, and socioaffective strategies to learn new matters, to evaluate himself, to co-operate with others, and to ask questions when he cannot understand an issue. This kind of learner is in urgent need of a devoted teacher to teach him how to learn.

4. Method

4.1 Participants

30 EFL Iranian high intermediate learners (25 females and 5 males), homogenized by standardized placement test of Cambridge, were allocated as probe participants.

4.2 Materials
4.2.1 Cambridge Placement Test
The test includes 3 parts as Objective Placement Test consisting of 70 multiple questions: 20 questions in the case of Listening Comprehension, 20 questions in the case of Reading Comprehension, and 30 questions in the case of Language Use comprising Vocabulary and Grammar. The placement conversation is a 10-minute, face-to-face interaction with an individual student. During the conversation, the participants are inspired to perform specific functions (e.g., introduce themselves, compare, give advice) and to demonstrate their capability to use language appropriate to each given topic or task. The last part of the test is the Placement Essay. The Placement Essay is a composition on an assigned topic to be completed by the participants within a 30-minute period. The participants were provided with some topics and required to choose one of them so as to expand it.

4.2.2 Fraser's Classification of Contrastive Discourse Markers
Fraser (1999, 2009) presented a thorough classification of contrastive discourse markers. The complete list accompanied by comprehensive elaboration and authentic examples was presented in chapter 2 of Aghabagheri's (2012) M.A. thesis.

4.2.3 Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test (iBt)

This instrument was used for taking pre-test, post-test 1, post-test 2, and giving assignments. Speaking section included 18 skills on independent and integrated tasks was covered during treatment sessions.

4.2.4 The Software of Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test (iBT)

To conduct the mentioned tests and assignments, iBT software was used. Some important features of the software include: 1. the simulation of exam in the cases of time, rubrics, steps etc., 2. the possibility of running the program for 30 participants simultaneously, 3. recording the data and classifying them in identifiable files for the conductor.

4.2.5 Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

This dictionary was mainly used for adopting the explanations and examples in the case of contrastive discourse markers.

4.2.6 Oxford Collocations Dictionary

This dictionary was mainly used for adopting the possible collocations of contrastive discourse markers.

4.2.7 NTC Preparation Course for the TOEFL (PBT)

This instrument was used for presenting the categorizations and positions of contrastive discourse markers as well as some examples and grammatical explanations relevant to the mentioned case.

4.2.8 Longman Preparation Course for the TOEFL Test (PBT)

This instrument was used for presenting the categorizations and positions of contrastive discourse markers as well as some examples and grammatical explanations germane to the mentioned case.

4.3 Data Collection Procedure

To accomplish the purpose of the study, 7 steps were taken. These steps are enumerated below.

Raising pragmatic awareness

1. 60 EFL learners who claimed they were Upper-Intermediate were called upon to participate in Cambridge Placement Test which includes 20 questions for Listening, 20 questions for Reading Comprehension, 30 questions for Language Use (Grammar & Vocabulary), Placement Essay, and Placement Conversation. Based on the Placement Guidelines of the mentioned package, those who can get the average 9 out of 12 are considered as upper-intermediate learners.

2. As a pre-test, an iBT sample of Speaking Module through computer facilities was conducted. The participants were not aware of the arrangements of the questions, time, rubric, the way of recoding except some of them who had experienced the real exam. Considering the scoring rate of iBT mentioned in ETS website, each participant would gain a score ranging from 0 to 4 which are then converted to the speaking scaled score ranging from 0 to 30 based on Phillips's (2007) chart. To boost the consistency of scores, a group of raters - the conductor, an MA graduate, a Ph.D. candidate - judged on the accomplishments. Then the average of the scores revealed the true score. Because the rating scale was extracted from ETS, the validity and reliability of that was not under the question. To feel sure of reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was conducted; however, and the obtained score was 0.957. The mentioned score was completely in line with the presupposition about reliability.

3. The participants attended 4 sessions of treatment. In 3 sessions, they were exposed to 18 tasks of Phillips' (2007) speaking section which were required for the participants to tackle the questions of speaking module. In the last session, the classification of contrastive discourse markers by Fraser including grammatical explanations and authentic examples was presented by the conductor. In addition, raising pragmatic awareness of the learners through deductive teaching of grammar was conducted. In the case of grammar, all the words mentioned in Fraser's classification were extracted from Longman Dictionary. For each, part of speech, definition, usage, use, and in some cases notes on

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

comparison among them were provided. The participants were exposed to a comprehensive elaboration on these words.

4. After the treatment sessions, post-test 1 was conducted to make clear the viability of the treatment sessions especially in the case of positive effect of raising pragmatic awareness. Post-test 1 was administered via the computer software similar to the pre-test and the data were collected for the analysis. Identical to the pre-test, post test 1 included 6 questions. The first two questions dedicated to independent tasks, questions 3 and 4 were in the case of integration of reading, listening, and speaking, and 5 and 6 were pertained to integration of listening and speaking.

5. The next step was dedicated to the assignment. 2 mini-tests of the mentioned software were chosen. Each one included 3 questions totally 6 questions; 2 for independent tasks, 2 for integration of listening, reading and speaking, and 2 for integration of listening and speaking. The theme of the episodes was modified to contrasting the ideas. Each of the participants was asked to listen to the episodes, take note, and then try to address the follow-up questions. They could practice as much as they needed. When they felt sure that they were capable of speaking based on the criteria presented in treatment sessions, they were asked to record the audio files of their own performance through software facilities and upload the file in the site designed for this purpose. They were given two days off for this assignment. Having uploaded the files, they were required to listen to their friends' files and provide appropriate feedback to each other. They interacted in this phase with each other perfectly. The major objectives of this co-operation were raising pragmatic awareness through peer interaction, and fostering the autonomy of learners.

6. The next step was conducting the second post-test that was a sample of Speaking Module of iBT and, like 2 previous tests, was conducted by software facilities. The purpose of this test was determining the efficacy of peer interaction. Like the pre-test step, the performance of the participants in post-test 1, and post-test 2 were analyzed.

7. The present study was conducted based on 3 hypotheses; therefore, to confirm or reject each one, some statistical processes

Raising pragmatic awareness

were needed. In these phases, first the hypothesis and then the required statistical processes are presented.

H1: Raising pragmatic awareness in the case of contrastive discourse markers has a statistically significant effect on speaking proficiency.

To confirm or reject this hypothesis, the results of pre-test and post-test 1, through Paired T-test were compared. In this assessment, the significance level was determined as < 0.05.

H2: Raising pragmatic awareness through peer interactions has a statistically significant effect on speaking proficiency.

To confirm or reject this hypothesis, the results of the post-test 1 and post-test 2 were compared through Paired T-test. In this assessment, the significance level was determined as < 0.05.

H3: The suggested tasks to raise the pragmatic awareness lead to a statistically significant improvement.

To confirm or reject this hypothesis, three Paired T-tests between Pre-test and Post-test1, Pre-test and post-test 2, and post-test 1 and post-test 2 regarding the frequency and appropriate use of contrastive discourse markers were conducted.

5. Results

To elaborate the mentioned issues, first a quick glance at the process of data gathering is mandatory. As mentioned in preceding sections, after homogenizing the participants, three tests were conducted, namely pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2. The findings of the mentioned tests were analyzed to confirm or reject the probe hypotheses. In the following paragraphs, each of them will be explained in detail.

5.1 Pre-test Results

Ignoring the matter of awareness in the case of speaking test in iBT TOEFL, 30 participants were called upon and asked to answer six questions sampling the questions of iBT. An important point which is highly required to insert is dedicated to the nature of the questions. It means all the questions in different tests and assignment were in need of expansion exactly through contrasting the ideas; in better statement, participants were required to use one of the CDMs to make the relationship.

   In short, the maximum raw score is 3.78 out of 4 and 29 out of 30. In comparison, minimum raw score is 2 out of 4, and 15 out of 30. These extremes depict that the highest score is very satisfying and it is very close to 30; in comparison, the lowest one shows the exact half and it seems it is not very disappointing. The following figure depicts the mean difference of pre-test and iBT range.
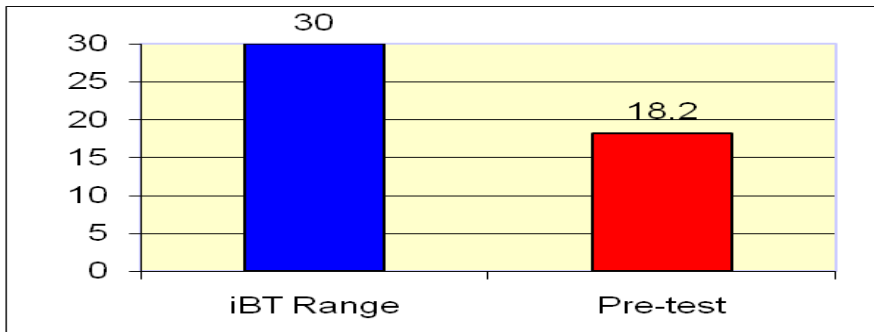

Figure 1: Mean score of pre-test

5.2 Post-test 1 Results

Illustrating the vital figures in pre-test, post-test 1 figures are summarized as follow. The maximum raw score is 3.83 out of 4 and 29 out of 30. In comparison, minimum raw score is 2.33 out of 4, and 18 out of 30. These extremes depict that the highest score is very satisfying and it is very close to 30; in comparison, the lowest one stands above average and it seems it is improving in comparison to the minimum of pre-test. The calculated mean of scaled score by

Raising pragmatic awareness

SPSS shows the number of 25.06 out of 30 that is really convincing for upper-intermediate participants; also it shows the efficacy of treatment. The following figure depicts the mean   difference of pre-test and iBT range.
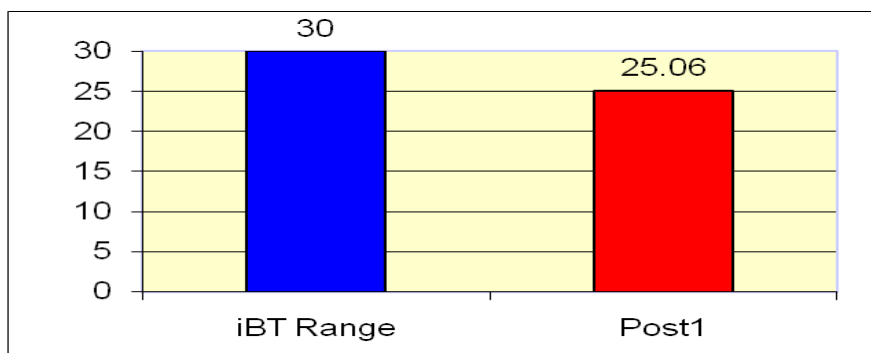

Figure 2: Mean score of post-test 1

5.3 Assignment (Time Interval)

The next phase of the probe was dedicated to the assignment given to the participants. Six questions sampling the ones in iBT were chosen and delivered to the participants. Each one was asked to answer the questions, record his/her voice and upload the file on the designed site mentioned as www.Yazd.digital.ir; in addition, for each participant a user and password were allocated. The participants were given two days off to conduct the assignment, upload the file, listen to the files of others and comment on them. In this phase, owing to the evaluation of interaction efficacy, the conductor was in the background.

5.4 Post-test 2 Results

The next phase of tests is dedicated to figures of post-test 2. The maximum raw score is 4 out of 4 and 30 out of 30. In comparison, the minimum raw score is 3 out of 4, and 23 out of 30. These extremes depict that the highest score is very satisfying and it is the exact 30; in

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

comparison, the lowest one stands above average and it seems it is improving in comparison to the minimum of post-test 1. The calculated mean of scaled score by SPSS shows the number of 26.93 out of 30 that is absolutely convincing for upper-intermediate participants; also it shows the efficacy of interaction. The following figure depicts the mean difference of pre-test and iBT range.
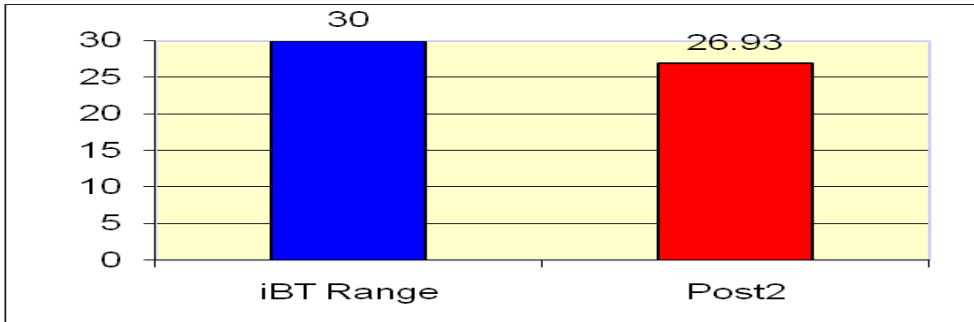

Figure 3: Mean score of post-test 2

5.5 Results of Pre-test, Post-test 1, and Post-test 2

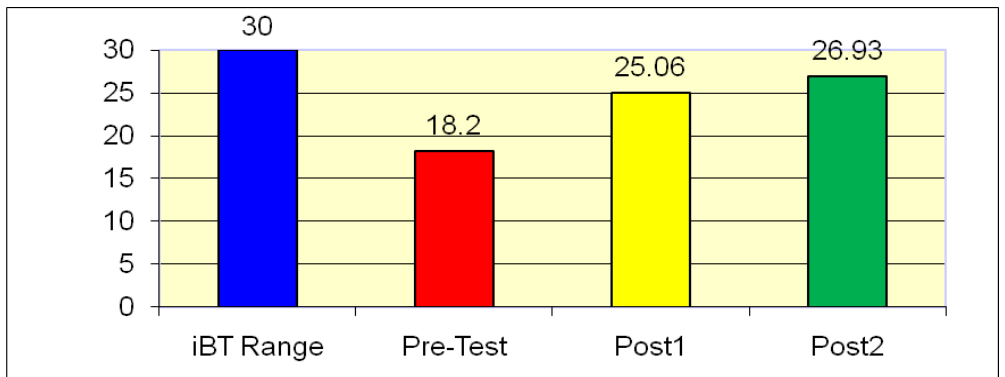Figure 4 below summarizes the results of pre-test, post-test 1, and post-post 2.

Figure 4: Results of pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2

Raising pragmatic awareness

In the following table, the significant descriptive statistics of the conducted tests are presented.

Table 1: Essential scores of pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2

	Pre-test	**Post-test 1**	**Post-test 2**	**iBT Range**
Mean Score	18.20	25.06	26.93	30
Raw score Max.	3.78	3.88	4	4
Scaled Score Max.	29	29	30	30
Raw Score Min.	2	2.33	3	0
Scaled Score Min.	15	18	23	0

In Table 1, there are some attention-worthy points which are in need of illumination. The first point is dedicated to the mean score. As it is clear there is a noticeable increase from pre-test to post-test 1 and post-test 2. This raise can be figured out as the efficacy of treatment, but the raise is statistically significant or not will be revealed by the following tables. The second point is dedicated to the maximum scores. Again in both cases, raw and scaled scores a raise can be observed. The eye-catching point is the oneness of post-test 2 scores and iBT ranges. And finally, minimum scores showed an increase among three tests. In addition, the scaled score minimum in post-test 2 (23) is close to raw score maximum in pre-test (29). As mentioned to find the answer of significance, paired T-test is inevitable. There are five paired T-tests and each was conducted for a specific purpose. The following table shows them in a glance.

Table 2: Paired t-tests in a glance

	Paired T-tests	Pairs	purpose
1.	P. T-test 1	pre-test & post-test 1	Efficacy of treatment
2.	P. T-test 2	post-test 1& post-test 2	Efficacy of interaction
3.	P. T-test 3	pre-test & post-test 1	Efficacy of the suggested task
4.	P. T-test 4	post-test 1& post-test 2	Efficacy of the suggested task
5.	P. T-test 5	pre-test & post-test 2	Efficacy of the suggested task

5.6 Paired T-test 1 Results (Pre-test & Post-test 1)

In the Table 3, there are some pieces of evidence. The mean difference is 6.86, with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 8.36 to an upper bound of 5.36. The *t* value is 9.34 and degree of freedom is 29. The significance or probability is .000 which is less than .05; in addition, the eta squared statistic (.75) indicates a large effect size. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test 1. Regarding the mentioned table, the treatment was perfectly viable.

Table 3: Paired t-test 1 results

Paired Samples Test								
		Paired Differences						
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	PRE - POST1	-6.86667	4.02349	.73459	-8.36906	-5.36427	-9.348	29	.000

5.7 Paired T-test 2 Results (Post-test 1 & Post-test 2)

In Table 4, the mean difference is 1.86, with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 2.79 to an upper bound of .94. The *t* value is 4.13 and the degree of freedom is 29. The significance or probability is .000 which is less than .05; in addition, the eta squared statistic (.37) indicates a large effect size. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between post-test1 and

Raising pragmatic awareness

post-test 2. Regarding the mentioned table, the participants' interaction was perfectly viable.

Table 4: Paired t-test 2 results

		Paired Differences							
				Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation		Lower	Upper	t	df	
Pair 1	POST1 - POST2	-1.86667	2.47377	.45165	-2.79039	-.94295	-4.133	29	.000

5.8 The Frequency and Appropriate Use of CDMs across Time

To confirm the third hypothesis of the probe, which is, "The suggested tasks to raise the pragmatic awareness lead to a statistically significant improvement", three paired T-tests between the pre-test and post-test 1, post-test 1 and post-test 2, and pre-test and post-test 2 were carried out. The major purposes of the mentioned tests were showing the frequency and appropriate use of contrastive discourse markers.

Considering the proposed category for CDMs by Fraser, the DMs were identified and counted; the total number obtained was 25. The comparison among three tests revealed the number of CDMs was increasingly improved; however, to confirm the third hypothesis the increasing number solely cannot show pragmatic awareness raising. Therefore, to confirm the third hypothesis, the focus is on frequency and appropriate use of CDMs. Regarding the mentioned factor, these 25 were ranked into three groups, namely the most common use, less common use, and the zero occurrence. Then, in line with these rankings, 25 CDMs were categorized into eight scales as follows. For example, in the first scale, the digits are 1-3; it means one to three different CDMs were used in one of the conducted tests by the participant.

Scale 1 (1-3),
Scale 2 (4-6),
Scale 3 (7-9),
Scale 4 (10-12),
Scale 5 (13-15),
Scale 6 (16-18),
Scale 7 (19-21),
Scale 8 (22-25).

As mentioned above, the total number of CDMs proposed by Fraser is 25. None of the participants, even the more proficient ones, could use all of them and the zenith of that was only nine different kinds of CDMs. In accordance with the present findings, these 25 markers were categorized into three groups as, the most common, less common, and zero occurrence. In Table 5, these three categories are presented.

Table 5: The categorization of CDMs use

THE MOST COMMON
But, Although, Despite, However, In spite of, Instead, Nevertheless, On the other hand
LESS COMMON
Alternatively, On the contrary , Conversely, In comparison, In contrast, Still, While
ZERO OCCURENCE
Notwithstanding, Though, Contrariwise, Contrary to expectation, Nonetheless, Contrary to this, Rather, Regardless, Whereas, Yet

The following table shows the frequency and percent of three scales in a glance.

Raising pragmatic awareness

Table 6: Frequency and percent of CDMs scales

		Pre-test, Post-test 1, Post-test 2 Scales		
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	1.00	(27), (16), (6)	(90),(53.3),(20)	(90),(53.3),(20)
	2.00	**(2), (12), (20)**	**(6.7),(40),(66.7)**	**(6.7),(40),(66.7)**
	3.00	(1), (2), (4)	(3.3),(6.7),(13.3)	(3.3),(6.7),(13.3)
	Total	30	100.0	100.0

The significance of Table 6 is devoted to a raise in the case of scale 2. As it is clear, in the pre-test, the frequency is 2, in the post-test 1, 12, and in the post-test 2, 20. On the other hand, there is a raise dedicated to the percents. In pre-test is 6.7, in post-test 1 is 40, and in post-test 2 is 66.7. These figures show an improvement from pre-test to post-test 2. The significance of the mentioned raise shows in following tables.

5.9 Paired T-tests 3, 4, 5 Results

5.9.1 Pre-test & Post-test 1

In Table 7, there are some pieces of evidence. The mean difference is .40, with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of .65 to an upper bound of .14. The *t* value is 3.24 and the degree of freedom is 29. Significance or probability is .003; in addition, the eta squared statistic (.26) reveals a large effect size. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test1. Regarding the mentioned table, the suggested task – teaching grammar deductively – was effective in the case of pragmatic awareness raising.

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

Table 7: The comparison between pre-test and post-test 1

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pre scale - post1 scale	-.40000	.67466	.12318	-.65192	-.14808	-3.247	29	.003

5.9.2. Post-test 1 & Post-test 2

In table 8, the mean difference is .40, with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of .65 to an upper bound of .14. The *t* value is 3.24 and degree of freedom is 29. The significance or probability is .003 which is less than .05; in addition, the eta squared statistic (.26) indicates a large effect size. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between post-test 1 and post-test 2. Regarding the mentioned table, the suggested task – teaching grammar deductively – was effective for pragmatic awareness raising.

Table 8: the comparison between post-test 1 and post-test 2

		Paired Differences							
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	post1 scale - post2 scale	-.40000	.67466	.12318	-.65192	-.14808	-3.247	29	.003

Raising pragmatic awareness

5.9.3 Pre-test & Post-test 2

In Table 9, the mean difference is .8, with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 1.00 to an upper bound of .59. The *t* value is 7.95 and degree of freedom is 29. The significance or probability is .000 which is less than .05; in addition, the eta squared statistic (.68) reveals a large effect size. Therefore, there is a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test 2. Regarding the mentioned table, the suggested task – teaching grammar deductively – was perfectly effective in the case of pragmatic awareness raising.

Table 9: the comparison between the pre-test and post-test 2

		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre scale - post2 scale	-.80000	.55086	.10057	-1.00570	-.59430	-7.954	29	.000

5.10 Reliability

The next step in this section is the issue of reliability or consistency of scores. Due to the considerations about reliability in the case of rating scales, the obtained scores based on the mentioned instrument are considered as inconsistent scores (Mousavi, 1999, 2009). Because in the present research, the base of scoring was the rating scale of iBT, a Cronbach's Alpha was conducted. Interestingly, the mentioned test showed Alpha value of .957 out of 1. This figure shows that the premise about the lack of reliability is not plausible at least in the present study.

Considering the findings in this case, the reliability for each participant is also close to one. To dispel the other doubt related to

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

the same interpretation of raters in the case of rating scale, all the data again were tabulated in SPSS. Mentioning the number of participants who were 30, and the number of tasks in three tests which were six, every participant obtained 18 raw scores. It means 540 raw scores for each rater were reported totally 1620 raw scores. These raw scores were tabulated as one variable, and the code for each rater, i.e. 1, 2, and 3 was mentioned as the other variable. Owing to the categorical nature of data, Kruskal Wallis was conducted.

Table 10: Mean ranks of raters

Mean ranks of raters

	rater	N	Mean Rank
score	1	540	820.00
	2	540	798.07
	3	540	813.44
	Total	1620	

Table 11
Test Statistics[a,b]

	score
Chi-Square	.715
df	2
Asymp. Sig.	.699

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: rater

 In sum, a Kruskal-Wallis Test did not reveal a statistically significant difference in scoring across the three different rates (R1, 540, R2, 540, R3, 540), df: 2, n= 1620, X2=.715, p= .699. The mean scores of three raters are close to each other, the first one is 820.00, the second one is 798.07, and the last one is 813.44. The findings reveal the raters' interpretation of rating scale is closely similar owing to the lack of significance value (.699) which is much bigger than 0.05.

Raising pragmatic awareness

6. Discussion

In the present section, the following three domains are elaborated: the pragmatic awareness raising, the role of peer interaction, and the deductive teaching position of grammar; in addition, a thorough comparison and contrast among the findings of the present probe and other ones is presented to link the present study to the others' endeavors.

6.1 Raising Pragmatic Awareness

To discuss raising pragmatic awareness, some rudiments are essential to consider. In line with the order presented in section 2, each of the rudiments is posed and then the similarities and differences of different probes with the present study are elucidated.

The first topic for discussion is the issue of pragmatic competence introduced by Bachman (1999) as one of the subcategories of communicative competence for the first time. Different learners are required to be pragmatically competent to communicate effectively. There are many probes which clarify the mentioned concepts and some of which are raised and expanded here. For example, Fraser (2010, p. 15) defines pragmatic competence as "the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended".

Kasper (1997) asserts research into the pragmatic competence of adult foreign and second language learners has convincingly revealed that the pragmatics of learners and native speakers are quite different. In line with this finding of Kasper, the results of the present study reveal that even advanced learners have some crucial problems in the case of communicative competence.

Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) report that, even fairly advanced language learners' communicative acts commonly consist of pragmatic errors, or deficits, in that they fail to convey or interpret the intended illocutionary force or politeness value. Therefore, there is a need for L2 instruction to stay focus on the pragmatics of the language, and researchers in this area in general point out the positive effect of instruction aimed at raising learners' pragmatic awareness. In

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

line with the findings of the mentioned probe, pragmatics can be instructed in some cases even for advanced learners because a good learner is someone who can focus on form as well as forms; therefore, both usage and use of language are equally important.

The other important matter is related to the concept of interlanguage pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics is the learners' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability. Previous studies in 'Interlanguage Pragmatics" (Kasper & Rose; 1999, Cohen, 1996; Ellis, 1994, Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993) among others have shown that differences and similarities exist in how to carry out communicative actions between language learners and native speakers of target languages. One related example is the preference of some specific CDMs among advanced learners. The important point for them is organizing a communicative task, when they can make a contrastive relationship by *however*, there is not any need to make it by *notwithstanding*.

Schmidt (1990, 1993), King (2006), Verschueren (2003), Kasper (1997), and Eslami-Rasekh (2005) come to a common agreement that pragmatic can be instructed; on the other hand, learners can be pragmatically made aware and this awareness can be raised through different activities. In section 2, a list of suggested activities for pragmatic awareness raising was presented. Among all, Rose (1999) emphasizes the role of motivation; this activity is used in the present probe through extrinsic motivation, teaching skills of iBT by the conductor, and the intrinsic motivation, making a belief in learners that they can achieve the goal. The other one is Eslami-Rasekh (2005) who proposes deductive teaching of grammar for advanced learners. The mentioned activity was one of variables of the present probe the efficacy of which was confirmed in section 4.

6.2 Role of Peer Interaction

The role of peer interaction was verified in the present study both explicitly and implicitly. As mentioned in previous sections, after the pre-test and post-test 1, the participants were called upon doing assignment. The major objective of this phase was explicit interaction. Because in this phase of the probe, the conductor was in

Raising pragmatic awareness

the background the participants were indirectly organized themselves as autonomous learners one hand and internalizing the cooperation processes of learning not competition.   In line with the tenets of interaction, scaffolding was considered as well; specially, in the domains of time management and facilitative anxiety. One of the series that sheds lots of light on the considered matter is Mosaic. In all books for skills and sub-skills, the matter of scaffolding is crucially important. In the mentioned series the relation between scaffolding and iBT is also considered; therefore, one of the factors that can play a vital role in iBT success is scaffolding in broad view and interaction in narrow one.

A suggested activity proposed by Sanger et al. (1999) is interaction enhancement. Sanger believes this activity can be conducted in two ways, namely verbal and nonverbal. In the present study, verbal interaction or peer interaction was one of the variables; the efficacy of which is corroborated in the current study.

In line with the present findings in the case of peer interaction is the study conducted by Fahim el al. (2010) which focused on peer electronic feedback on academic writing. The results of both surveys confirm the significant role of interaction in improving language skills.

In line with the ideas of Vygotsky (1987), the tenets of task-based language teaching are worth considering. The first one is the matter of the autonomous learner. In the philosophy of TBLT as Ellis (2003) mentions, a learner should be autonomous. Indicating he should manage his process of learning. He should be aware of his cognitive, meta-cognitive, and socio-affective strategies. One of the eye-catching issues in the domain of meta-cognitive strategies is self-assessment. A good learner can correct his own production in different situations and check the path of his improvement.

The other important point is dedicated to active versus passive learners. Conditions and situations of learning are two important and inevitable factors in the case of learning. A good teacher should provide a condition as well as a situation for interaction between and among learners in the formats of peer and group works. These two paths are real resorts for changing a passive learner to an active one. The next important factor is devoted to a change from a teacher-

centered method to a learner-centered method. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) mentions some teacher-centered methods like audio-lingual method focus on teacher as a conductor of an orchestra while some learner-centered ones like TBLT focus on teacher as a facilitator and the major focus is on learner. As Brown (2000) puts, a good teacher is someone who teaches the learners how to learn.

6.3 Role of Deductive Teaching of Grammar

In line with the tenets of TBLT, there are different suggestions for teaching grammar. A common consensus among most of the experts is deductive teaching for advanced learners, and inductive teaching for elementary ones. To clarify the issue, some examples are posed. The first one is a probe by Eslami Rasekh (2005) who claims deductive teaching of grammar for advanced learners can lead to raising pragmatic awareness. Interestingly, the findings of present probe are exactly in line with this suggestion offered by Eslami-Rasekh. In a replicable situation through the third hypothesis, the suggestion was tested and the results confirmed the fact that deductive teaching of grammar can leave a positive effect on the advanced participants' performance.

There are two other examples to confirm the posed issue. The first one is on Interchange series. Utilizing a personal experience reveals the fact that in basic series, the suggested way to teach grammar is absolutely inductive. It is highly recommended in teacher's edition that learners are required to learn grammar inductively in context; therefore, syllabus designers of the book put a conversation before the grammar part deliberately to foster the contextualization of grammatical issues. A good teacher should familiarize the students with grammatical issue in conversation or in better statement; he should engage the learners before teaching the grammar part. Contrary to the mentioned issue, in advanced series especially Passages 1 and 2, the suggested method of teaching is deductive. A teacher should clarify the issues deductively and illuminate them for the students. For example, in passages 2, there are some parts dedicated to teach different kinds of adverbial clauses. A teacher should present the complex sentence, independent as well as

dependent clause and elucidate different connectors which can make different kinds of adverbial clauses.

The other example to confirm the mentioned issue is dedicated to Landmark series, upper-intermediate and advanced one. Again as a personal experience in teaching both series, this conclusion is drawn that in both the method for teaching grammar is absolutely deductive. A well-improved and knowledgeable teacher can handle baffling explanations of the mentioned series and make them easy to digest for learners. In sum, a thought-provoking decision is urgent for teachers that the assigned source of teaching is American or British based.

7. Conclusion

The concluding statements of the probe were classified in three categorizations. First, raising pragmatic awareness is required to be clarified. As in result section was manifested, the findings of the probe were in line with the findings of previous scholars. Pragmatic awareness is an undeniable reality in the learning process, and it can be enhanced through different ways. Deductive teaching of grammar is one of them and it is viable especially for advanced learners. The second issue is dedicated to discourse markers. In accordance with the literature, from Halliday's time (1976), discourse markers have been playing an important role obviously in the case of text cohesion. Their names, classifications, categorizations, statuses have been changed during the time, but their essence is almost same. In this study, only contrastive discourse markers were focused and through a personal communication with Fraser, the conductor came to a logical conclusion about their nature and function. CDMs can be used as a device to enhance pragmatic awareness. In most of the iBT speaking module, the participants are required to make a compare and contrast relationship. Being aware of the mentioned relationship rudiments can guarantee an acceptable performance. Final scope is devoted to the iBT speaking module. As in different sections the issue was posed, success in iBT speaking module is not restricted to general proficiency. All the participants were homogenized, and the results of Cambridge placement test revealed they can be classified in upper-

Fahim, Aghabagheri, and Rezaie

intermediate level. Contrary to this fact, the scores of pre-test did not show the obtained achievement of placement. The reason is nature of speaking questions, it means the success in iBT speaking module is in urgent need of two indispensable factors the first one is competence which is general proficiency while the second one is a high mastery in skills. In sum, test awareness, time management, and facilitative anxiety accompanied by such a high GP can create a realm of success assurance.

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