The Effect of Corrective Feedback on Iranian English as a Foreign Language Learners' Interlanguage Pragmatics Development

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of corrective feedback on Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) development in the context of invitation acceptance and declination. Three intact experimental groups were selected via convenience sampling from an English institute in Tehran: a recast group (N = 13), a metalinguistic group (N = 17), and a clarification request group (N = 12). Prior to the treatment, the groups participated in a dialogic extended discourse pretest. The dialogues for invitation acceptance and declination were drawn from Top Notch, American English File, English Result, and Four Corners. Learners' performance was assessed using two checklists—one for pragmalinguistic and the other for sociopragmatic knowledge—based on a five-item Likert scale ranging from inappropriate to most appropriate. Treatment sessions were conducted three times per week, each lasting 60 minutes, over a period of one month. The findings reveal that corrective feedback significantly enhanced ILP development. Notably, the metalinguistic group outperformed the recast and clarification request groups. Consequently, metalinguistic corrective feedback proved more effective than recast and clarification feedback in fostering Iranian EFL learners' ILP development concerning invitation acceptance and declination.

Introduction

Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) plays a pivotal role in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by focusing on learners' ability to use language appropriately in diverse social and cultural contexts. It emphasizes the acquisition of pragmatic competence, such as performing speech acts (e.g., requests, apologies), understanding politeness strategies, and interpreting implied meanings. ILP also helps learners recognize and adopt culturally specific norms, fostering cross-cultural competence and reducing the risk of miscommunication. By integrating sociolinguistic and interactional competence, ILP ensures a more holistic approach to language learning, preparing learners for real-world communication beyond grammar and vocabulary.

ILP's pedagogical implications are significant, as it informs language teaching methodologies by advocating for explicit instruction in pragmatics. Teachers can use activities like role-playing or analyzing conversational breakdowns to enhance learners' understanding of context-sensitive language use. Moreover, ILP aids in the development of soft skills such as empathy, adaptability, and negotiation, which are essential for social integration and effective collaboration in multicultural settings. In an increasingly globalized world, ILP equips learners with the tools to adjust their language use to different cultural expectations, improving their ability to engage in both professional and personal intercultural interactions.

The study of ILP has become a central theme in SLA research (Barron, 2012; Derakhshan et al., 2024; Khorshidi & Nimchahi, 2013; Siddiqa, 2018; Taguchi, 2017). Pragmatics can be understood as the study of knowledge in relation to its users and their contexts (Ariel, 2010; Rose, 2009). ILP is characterized as the examination of how non-native speakers acquire and use pragmatic knowledge in a second language, encompassing both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions (Kasper & Roever, 2005; Taguchi, 2020; Trosborg, 2011). Recent research underscores ILP's critical role in enabling effective intercultural communication, particularly as global interactions become increasingly common (Kecskes, 2014; Taguchi, 2022). Fundamentally, ILP investigates how learners develop, understand, and use pragmatic competence in their target language to navigate diverse social and linguistic contexts.

ILP focuses specifically on the development of learners' ability to understand and perform communicative actions in the target language (Hussain & Khan, 2024; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Nguyen, 2022; Taghizadeh, 2017). This area of research holds significant importance within SLA due to its critical role in fostering effective communication (Alemi & Khanlarzadeh, 2016; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Roever, 2005; Taguchi, 2022). Numerous studies underscore the gap between learners' grammatical competence and their pragmatic abilities (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020). Even highly proficient learners often commit pragmatic errors, which, as (Blum-Kulka, 1997) argues, are more likely to hinder communication than grammatical errors. Further research suggests that learners tend to be more attuned to grammatical inaccuracies than to pragmatic inappropriateness (Kecskes, 2014; Kitikanan, 2019). These findings highlight the importance of developing pragmatic competence alongside linguistic proficiency.

One enduring challenge in teaching pragmatic competence is addressing learners' errors in speech. According to (Gass, 1997), language learners rely on two types of input: positive evidence and negative evidence. While positive evidence provides examples of correct

language use, negative evidence draws attention to errors and often involves corrective feedback (CF). CF, defined by (Sheen & Mackey, 2007) as teacher interventions aimed at improving learners' grammatical accuracy, serves as a vital tool for highlighting and addressing pragmatic and linguistic errors. (Ellis et al., 2006) identify three key components of CF: (1) indicating an error, (2) providing the correct form, and (3) offering metalinguistic explanations.

(Lyster & Ranta, 1997) classify CF into various types, including recast, explicit correction, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, repetition, and clarification requests. Among these, recast, metalinguistic feedback, and clarification requests were selected for this study due to their relevance in SLA research. Recasts and clarification requests represent implicit feedback, while metalinguistic feedback is an explicit form of correction (Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Tamayo & Cajas, 2017).

Despite extensive research on the effects of explicit and implicit feedback on linguistic elements such as grammar, lexis, and phonology (Alamri, 2023; Ellis et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2023; Nemati et al., 2019; Salemi et al., 2012; Taguchi, 2019), the role of feedback in ILP development remains underexplored (Ajabshir, 2014). Given the importance of pragmatic competence in effective communication, this study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of three types of CF—recast, metalinguistic feedback, and clarification requests—on the ILP development of Iranian English as a Foreign (EFL) learner. Specifically, the study focuses on learners' ability to perform invitation acceptance and declination, two essentia aspects of pragmatic competence. The findings are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between CF and ILP development, offering insights for both research and practice in SLA.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have examined the role of CF in SLA in different conventional and technology-mediated educational contexts (e.g., (García Laborda et al., 2024; Momenanzadeh et al., 2023; Monjezi & Mashhadi, 2021)), offering diverse perspectives on the relative effectiveness of explicit versus implicit feedback. (Spada, 1997) and (Seedhouse, 1997) advocate for explicit feedback, emphasizing its ability to align pedagogy with interaction and prevent fossilization by providing learners with clear, repeated negative evidence (Gass, 1988). Conversely, (Long, 1996) emphasizes the value of implicit feedback, such as recasts, which subtly provide negative evidence through interactional modifications, fostering syntactic and linguistic development in learners. Despite teachers' preference for implicit feedback due to its non-intrusive nature (Seedhouse, 1997), explicit methods have shown superior outcomes in specific contexts, particularly in fostering error awareness and facilitating self-correction (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen & Mackey, 2007).

Studies have also investigated CF's role in pragmatic and syntactic development. For example, (Mackey & Philp, 1998) found that recasts positively impacted the acquisition of question forms among developmentally ready learners, while (Mirzaei-Shojakhanlou et al., 2023) demonstrated that recasts improved pragmatic competence in request-related speech acts. (Shirkhani & Omidi, 2024) revealed that written corrective feedback (WCF) frequently overlooked formulaic sequences in writing, highlighting the need for teacher training. Similarly, (Lyster, 1998) observed that young learners often misinterpreted recasts as positive

reinforcement rather than negative evidence. (Chen et al., 2023) demonstrated that metapragmatic feedback yielded a greater effect than direct feedback for the low proficiency learners, and the learners in general held positive perceptions towards the feedback they received. The meta-analyses by (Lyster & Saito, 2010) and (Li, 2010) underscore the nuanced efficacy of CF: explicit feedback yields immediate learning benefits, whereas implicit feedback demonstrates lasting effects, with prompts proving particularly effective in eliciting learner responses.

In pragmatic contexts, (Ajabshir, 2014) demonstrated the superior efficacy of explicit feedback in enhancing Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic development, while (Bagherkazemi & Harati-Asl, 2022) found task-based instruction effective in improving speech act production. (Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020) also explored pragmatic comprehension strategies, identifying sociopragmatic, lexicopragmatic, and cognitive strategies without significant gender differences.

These studies collectively highlight the complexity and contextual dependency of CF in SLA. Explicit feedback consistently demonstrates strong immediate outcomes, especially in raising learners' error awareness, facilitating self-correction, and addressing persistent linguistic challenges. This is particularly evident in contexts requiring clear, structured guidance, such as grammatical rules or pragmatic competence development. On the other hand, implicit feedback aligns closely with interactional theories, offering a subtle and sustained means of promoting language development. Its long-term effectiveness stems from its ability to integrate seamlessly into natural communication, allowing learners to refine their interlanguage without interrupting the flow of interaction.

Furthermore, the literature underscores the importance of learner-specific factors in determining CF effectiveness. Developmental readiness, cognitive abilities, attitudes toward error correction, and the nature of the linguistic target all play pivotal roles in mediating outcomes. For instance, younger learners or those in meaning-focused settings may benefit more from implicit strategies like recasts, while more advanced learners or those with strong analytic abilities might gain more from explicit, metalinguistic feedback. Similarly, task types and instructional goals shape the distribution and utility of CF, with prompts and recasts serving complementary purposes in facilitating comprehension, production, and self-repair.

Overall, the choice of CF strategy should be informed by a balanced consideration of these factors. The findings suggest that no single approach is universally superior; rather, effective feedback requires a nuanced, learner-centered approach tailored to specific instructional contexts and individual learner profiles. This complexity underscores the need for continued research into how different feedback strategies interact with diverse learner variables, as well as the importance of teacher training to ensure effective and flexible implementation of CF in diverse educational settings.

Despite extensive research on ILP development, the effects of various types of CF remain underexplored. Pragmatic competence is essential for effective communication, yet even proficient L2 learners often struggle due to limited pragmatic knowledge, resulting in communication breakdowns. Blum-Kulka (1997) noted that pragmatic errors are less

acceptable than linguistic errors, underscoring the need to enhance learners' pragmatic knowledge.

In the Iranian EFL context, limited opportunities for English communication outside the classroom amplify the importance of CF in ILP development. Teachers must understand when and how to use different types of feedback and identify the most effective strategies for fostering ILP development. This study investigates the effects of three types of CF—recasts, metalinguistic feedback, and clarification requests—on Iranian EFL learners' ILP development in invitation acceptance and declination scenarios.

In line with the study's objectives, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the impact of CF on the ILP development of Iranian EFL learners in terms of accepting and declining invitations?

2. Among the different CF types, which one is the most effective in enhancing ILP development in this context?

Method

Study Design

This research adopted a quasi-experimental, quantitative approach involving three intact experimental groups. The study aimed to assess how different types of corrective feedback influence Iranian EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) abilities, particularly regarding invitation acceptance and declination. The dependent variable was ILP development, and the independent variables were the three CF types.

Participants

The research explored the role of CF in improving Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic performance in accepting and declining invitations. Forty-two male and female learners from the Maham English Institute in Tehran participated, selected through convenience sampling. They were categorized into three experimental groups: recast (N = 13), metalinguistic (N = 17), and clarification request (N = 12). The participants, aged between 16 and 31, were intermediate-level learners with Persian as their native language. They had completed pre-intermediate English courses and received formal English instruction for approximately five years. The Oxford Placement Test (OPT), administered by the institute, was used to determine their proficiency levels before the intervention. Instructional materials included popular textbooks such as *Top Notch*, *American English File*, *English Result*, and *Four Corners.*

Instrumentation

In this study, a dialogic extended discourse assessment (Roever, 2011) to evaluate learners' ILP, focusing on their ability to respond to various communicative exchanges, such as questions, requests, and offers was employed. The assessment emphasized interactional sequencing, contextual cues, and speech style appropriateness, with two checklists measuring pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. To ensure reliability, we conducted a pilot test, established inter-rater reliability with independent raters, and confirmed internal consistency through review and Cohen's kappa were conducted. For validity, content validity

was ensured by covering a range of pragmatic constructs, consulted ILP frameworks, and the prompts were refined through expert feedback. Additionally, construct validity was verified by aligning scoring criteria with theoretical models and confirmed criterion-related validity by cross-checking Oxford Placement Test (OPT) scores with ILP performance. Triangulation of both the dialogic assessment and the OPT provided a comprehensive evaluation of learners' pragmatic and linguistic competence. Through these steps, it was ensured that both the dialogic extended discourse assessment and the OPT were reliable and valid tools for evaluating ILP in the context of this study.

Procedure

The study followed a pretest-posttest design with three experimental groups: recast, metalinguistic, and clarification request groups. Before the treatment, participants underwent proficiency assessment via the OPT and completed a dialogic extended discourse pretest. During the pretest, the teacher introduced scenarios and evaluated learners' performance using pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic checklists.

The intervention lasted one month with 10 sessions held three times a week, each lasting 60 minutes. Role-play activities were central to the instruction, with each group receiving a specific type of corrective feedback (CF). We designed the role-play scenarios by first identifying common sociopragmatic contexts learners are likely to encounter. We consulted relevant literature and experts to ensure the scenarios reflected diverse, authentic social interactions, drawing from sources like movies, TV shows, and textbooks. The scenarios included both equal-status interactions, such as conversations between friends, and hierarchical-status interactions, like exchanges between a boss and an employee, to help learners navigate different power dynamics and social roles.

For example, in one equal-status role-play, learners practiced negotiating how to split the bill after a meal, using polite disagreement and turn-taking strategies. In a hierarchical-status scenario, learners acted out an employee requesting a day off from their manager, focusing on softening their request with indirect language and politeness markers. We created engaging flashcards for each scenario, which included descriptions, illustrations, and clearly defined roles, ensuring clarity in instructions. The scenarios were scaffolded across sessions, starting with simple interactions like greetings and progressing to more complex situations, such as apologizing for a missed deadline, to build learners' pragmatic competence in a supportive and challenging way.

By carefully designing and selecting these scenarios, we ensured the intervention was both practical and theoretically grounded, offering learners the opportunity to engage with and internalize pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of communication.

The teacher provided CF tailored to each group during role plays when learners produced inappropriate speech acts or incorrect linguistic forms. CF types were defined as follows: recasts, where the teacher reformulates the learner's utterance minus the error (Lyster & Ranta, 1997); metalinguistic feedback, involving comments or questions about the well-formedness of the utterance; and clarification requests, which use cues to prompt learners to self-repair.

After the intervention, a dialogic extended discourse posttest was administered, and learners' performances were scored using the same checklists as in the pretest.

Results

The one-way ANOVA test helps identify significant differences between the three corrective feedback types (recast, metalinguistic, and clarification) by evaluating whether the observed variance in scores is greater than what would be expected by chance. If significant differences are found, post-hoc tests can be used to further explore which specific groups differ. This approach ensures a reliable and valid analysis of the effectiveness of the different feedback types in improving learner performance, contributing to a meaningful understanding of the intervention's outcomes.

The results of the normality assessments (Table 1) show that the data for all groups in both the pretest and posttest conditions follow a normal distribution, with all Kolmogorov-Smirnov test significance values exceeding 0.05. This confirms that the data meets the assumptions required for parametric tests, specifically one-way ANOVA. The normality of the data justifies the use of parametric tests, which are more powerful and less likely to make Type II errors compared to non-parametric tests. Additionally, using one-way ANOVA allows for the comparison of means across multiple groups, ensuring statistical power and maintaining the Type I error rate.

Table 1. *Results of Normality Assessment*

	Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
		Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	Recast	.15	13	.20[*]
	Metalinguistic	.19	17	.10
	Clarification	.21	12	.13
Posttest	Recast	.19	13	.18
	Metalinguistic	.18	17	.14
	Clarification	.22	12	.08

The results confirm that all sets of scores were normally distributed. Consequently, a parametric test, one-way ANOVA, was employed to compare scores before and after the treatment. Tables 2 and 3 summarize the descriptive statistics and the homogeneity of variance test results for the pretest, while Table 4 shows the ANOVA results.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics of Pretest Scores Across Groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
recast	13	13.84	1.40	.38	12.00	16.00
metalinguistic	17	13.64	1.36	.33	12.00	16.00
clarification	12	14.00	1.20	.34	12.00	16.00
Total	42	13.80	1.31	.20	12.00	16.00

Table 3. *Test of Homogeneity of Variances (Pretest)*

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest	.11	2	39	.892

Table 4. *ANOVA Results for Pretest Scores*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pretest	Between Groups	.90	2	.45	.25	.77
	Within Groups	69.57	39	1.78		
	Total	70.47	41			

The one-way ANOVA results (Table 4) show that there were no statistically significant differences in pretest scores between the three groups (F (2,39) =0.253, p=0.778, F (2,39) =0.253, p=0.778). The between-group variance ($SS_{between}$=0.90) was minimal compared to the within-group variance (SS_{within}=69.57), suggesting that the observed differences in group means are likely due to chance rather than any systematic differences.

The lack of significant differences in pretest scores confirms that the groups were comparable in their initial proficiency levels before the intervention. This equivalence is critical for ensuring that any observed differences in the posttest scores can be attributed to the effects of the intervention rather than pre-existing disparities. Additionally, meeting the assumptions of normality, homogeneity of variances, and group equivalence enhances the validity of subsequent analyses and interpretations.

Following the treatment, descriptive statistics, homogeneity of variances, and ANOVA results for the posttest scores are presented in Tables 5, 6, and 7, respectively.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics of Posttest Scores Across Groups*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
recast	13	20.53	1.19	.33	19.00	23.00
metalinguistic	17	23.17	2.69	.65	18.00	29.00
clarification	12	19.91	1.50	.43	18.00	23.00
Total	42	21.42	2.46	.37	18.00	29.00

Table 5 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the posttest scores across the three groups: Recast group: M=20.53, SD=1.19M=20.53, SD=1.19; Metalinguistic group: M=23.17, SD=2.69M=23.17, SD=2.69; Clarification group: M=19.91, SD=1.50M=19.91, SD=1.50; Overall: M=21.42, SD=2.46, M=21.42, SD=2.46. The metalinguistic group achieved the highest mean score (M=23.17, M=23.17), followed by the recast group (M=20.53, M= 20.53) and the clarification group (M=19.91, M=19.91). This suggests that the metalinguistic feedback was potentially more effective than the other corrective feedback types in enhancing performance on the posttest.

Table 6. *Test of Homogeneity of Variances (Posttest)*

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Posttest	2.71	2	39	.07

Table 6 presents the results of the Levene's test for homogeneity of variances, with a non-significant result (F (2,39) =2.71, p=0.07, F (2,39) = 2.71, p = 0.07). Since p> 0.05p > 0.05, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is satisfied. This confirms that the variances in posttest scores across the three groups are statistically comparable, which is a critical assumption for conducting a one-way ANOVA.

Table 7. *ANOVA Results for Posttest Scores*

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Posttest	Between Groups	89.66	2	44.83	11.02	.000
	Within Groups	158.61	39	4.06		
	Total	248.28	41			

The one-way ANOVA results (Table 7) reveal a statistically significant difference in posttest scores among the three groups (F (2,39) =11.02, p=0.000, F (2,39) =11.02, p=0.000). The between-group variance ($SS_{between}$=89.66) is substantial compared to the within-group variance (SS_{within}=158.61), indicating that the observed differences in mean scores are unlikely to have occurred by chance.

The significant ANOVA result demonstrates that the type of corrective feedback had a statistically significant effect on learners' performance in the posttest. Specifically, the differences in mean scores suggest that the effectiveness of the feedback types varied, with metalinguistic feedback leading to the highest performance gains. However, the specific group differences (e.g., between the recast and metalinguistic groups) would need to be explored further using post-hoc tests to identify where these significant differences lie.

Post-hoc analysis using the Tukey HSD test (Table 8) revealed statistically significant differences between specific groups.

Table 8. *Tukey HSD Test Results for Multiple Comparisons*

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
recast	Metalinguistic	-2.63*	.74	.0	-4.44	-.82
	clarification	.62	.80	.72	-1.34	2.58
metalinguistic	Recast	2.63*	.74	.0	.82	4.44
	clarification	3.25*	.76	.0	1.40	5.11
clarification	Recast	-.62	.80	.72	-2.58	1.34
	Metalinguistic	-3.25*	.76	.0	-5.11	-1.40

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance confirmed a statistically significant effect of CF type on learners' ILP development, F (2,39) =11.023, p=.000F (2, 39) = 11.023, p = .000F (2,39) =11.023, p=.000. The effect size (calculated using eta squared) was .36, indicating a substantial difference. Post-hoc analysis demonstrated that the metalinguistic group (M = 23.17, SD = 2.69) significantly outperformed both the recast group (M = 20.53, SD = 1.19) and the clarification request group (M = 19.91, SD = 1.50).

An effect size of 0.36 (calculated using eta squared) indicates a moderate to large effect in practical terms, suggesting that the type of corrective feedback (CF) had a substantial impact on learners' development of ILP. In the context of ANOVA, eta squared (η^2) is a measure of the proportion of the total variance in the dependent variable (in this case, learners' ILP development) that can be attributed to the independent variable (the type of corrective feedback). An eta squared value of 0.36 means that 36% of the variance in posttest scores can be explained by the type of corrective feedback provided. This is a substantial effect size, suggesting that the CF type contributed meaningfully to differences in learners' performance.

The results of this study demonstrate that the type of CF significantly influences Iranian EFL learners' ILP development in invitation acceptance and declination. While no significant differences were observed between groups in the pretest, the posttest findings revealed substantial improvements in the metalinguistic feedback group compared to the recast and clarification request groups. These findings suggest that metalinguistic feedback is particularly effective in enhancing both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. The calculated effect size further underscores the practical significance of these differences, highlighting the potential for targeted feedback strategies to facilitate more nuanced and contextually appropriate language use in EFL learners.

Overall, these findings highlight the varied effects of different types of CF on ILP development, with metalinguistic feedback showing the most substantial impact. This underscores the value of explicit corrective strategies in fostering learners' ability to appropriately use invitation acceptance and declination in English. A detailed discussion of these results, their implications, and their alignment with previous research is presented in the following section.

Discussion

This study examined the effects of three types of CF—metalinguistic feedback, recast feedback, and clarification request feedback—on Iranian EFL learners' ILP development, particularly in the context of invitation acceptance and declination. The results contribute to the growing body of SLA literature by confirming the overall effectiveness of CF in fostering ILP development while highlighting the differential impacts of specific feedback types.

The first research question addressed whether CF influences ILP development. The findings clearly support the positive role of CF in advancing learners' pragmatic competence. Learners who received any form of feedback demonstrated notable improvements in their ability to navigate complex pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic demands, as evidenced by posttest performance. This aligns with the broader SLA literature (Ajabshir, 2014; Lyster & Saito, 2010; Seedhouse, 1997; Spada, 1997), which emphasizes that CF can bridge the gap between learners' current interlanguage state and target-like performance. This is also in line with the results of previous studies that examined the possible impact of different CF types on the acquisition of grammatical features in various teaching contexts (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Goo, 2012; Yang & Lyster, 2010). The study underscores how CF facilitates learners' internalization of pragmatic norms by drawing their attention to errors, and offering opportunities for reflection and self-repair.

The second research question explored the comparative efficacy of different types of CF. The results revealed that metalinguistic feedback was significantly more effective than recast and clarification request feedback in fostering ILP development. This finding aligns with existing research (Li, 2010; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen & Mackey, 2007) that underscores the advantages of explicit CF in promoting deeper cognitive engagement. Metalinguistic feedback's explicit nature appears to prompt learners to reflect on the underlying rules and structures of the target language, facilitating more robust and sustained learning outcomes.

Recasts and clarification requests were less effective in this context likely due to the implicit nature of the feedback and the lack of explicit information provided to learners. Recasts, which involve repeating an incorrect utterance with the correct form, may not engage learners sufficiently or prompt them to reflect on language rules, hindering cognitive processing. Similarly, clarification requests may make learners aware of an error but do not offer enough guidance on how to correct it, particularly when they are unfamiliar with the language rule. In contrast, metalinguistic feedback, with its clear and explicit explanations, better engages learners and supports deeper cognitive processing, leading to more effective ILP development. This highlights the importance of aligning feedback with learners' cognitive needs and proficiency levels for optimal language learning.

Metalinguistic feedback promotes deeper cognitive processing and long-term retention by providing explicit, structured information that aids learners in understanding language rules. Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1994) suggests it reduces overload, allowing learners to focus on key concepts. Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Nhung, 2020) explains how it helps learners notice gaps in their interlanguage, while Sociocultural Theory (Daneshfar & Moharami, 2018) views it as scaffolding in learners' zone of proximal development, fostering independence. Additionally, metalinguistic feedback supports self-regulation (Zimmerman, 2002), encouraging reflection and improving future language monitoring. These factors collectively enhance learners' ability to internalize and apply language rules effectively.

This study highlights the role of learner attention and noticing in SLA. As (Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009) have argued, feedback that draws explicit attention to linguistic forms fosters a heightened level of awareness, allowing learners to compare their interlanguage output against target norms. The results suggest that metalinguistic feedback enables learners to validate and adjust their interlanguage forms, supporting (Chaudron, 1986) claim that explicit feedback serves as a catalyst for interlanguage restructuring. This is also in line with (Ioannou & Tsagari, 2022) who suggest that CF might have an important role to play also in the instructional context of Greek as an L2. The factors that seem to mediate the efficacy of CF are related to students' proficiency. By providing clear explanations, metalinguistic feedback helps learners move beyond surface-level corrections, allowing them to internalize pragmatic rules and apply them in communicative contexts.

In contrast, the limited effectiveness of implicit feedback (recast and clarification request) challenges earlier findings that favor implicit techniques (Long, 1996; Mackey & Philp, 1998). Recasts, while widely used, may not effectively signal error correction to learners, as (Lyster & Ranta, 1997) observed. Learners often misinterpret recasts as meaning reinforcements rather than corrections, diminishing their potential to facilitate form-focused learning. The findings

contrast the results of the previous classroom studies where metalinguistic feedback or prompts found to have more significant effects on the development of the target form compared to recasts (Ellis et al., 2006; Kartchava & Ammar, 2014; Sheen & Mackey, 2007; Yang & Lyster, 2010). Similarly, clarification requests, while useful for prompting learner output, may lack the explicitness necessary to address deeper pragmatic issues. These findings highlight the need for explicitness in feedback to effectively support ILP development, particularly in contexts where learners may lack prior exposure to target pragmatic norms.

The pedagogical implications of these findings are substantial, offering valuable insights for language instructors, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers. The significant role of CF, particularly metalinguistic feedback, highlights the need to reexamine and refine instructional practices in second language learning.

First, language instructors should prioritize incorporating metalinguistic feedback into their teaching practices, especially when addressing complex pragmatic features such as speech acts, politeness strategies, and context-specific sociolinguistic norms. The explicit explanations provided through metalinguistic feedback not only help learners recognize and correct errors but also enable them to understand and internalize the nuanced sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic rules required for effective communication. By engaging learners in metalinguistic reflection, teachers can foster greater awareness of the relationship between form, function, and context, facilitating deeper cognitive processing and more durable learning outcomes.

Second, the findings call for the integration of explicit feedback strategies into language curricula to bridge the gap between learners' linguistic and communicative competence. Curriculum designers should develop instructional materials and activities that incorporate opportunities for metalinguistic feedback. For instance, role-plays, task-based activities, and pragmatic awareness-raising tasks can be designed to create meaningful contexts for feedback and encourage learners to actively engage with and reflect on their interlanguage development. Instructors can further enhance these activities by embedding CF that explicitly addresses learners' pragmatic errors, fostering a more targeted and effective approach to learning.

Third, teacher training programs should emphasize the importance of providing explicit CF, equipping teachers with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed to deliver metalinguistic feedback effectively. This includes training teachers to identify pragmatic errors, provide concise and accurate explanations, and encourage learners to monitor and refine their output. By empowering teachers with these tools, professional development initiatives can ensure that explicit feedback becomes a core component of language instruction, particularly in settings where pragmatic competence is often overlooked.

Fourth, the results underscore the importance of balancing explicit and implicit feedback strategies in the classroom. While metalinguistic feedback proved to be the most effective in this study, implicit feedback, such as recasts and clarification requests, still plays a role in promoting fluency and communicative immediacy. Instructors should adopt a flexible approach, tailoring their feedback strategies to learners' proficiency levels, learning goals, and individual needs. For instance, while lower-proficiency learners may benefit more from explicit

feedback, advanced learners might prefer a mix of explicit and implicit techniques that align with their communicative priorities.

Finally, these findings have implications for developing assessment frameworks that measure pragmatic competence. Language assessments should incorporate components that evaluate learners' ability to perform speech acts, use appropriate politeness strategies, and navigate sociolinguistic norms. By integrating CF into assessment practices, educators can provide learners with actionable insights into their performance and guide them toward achieving greater pragmatic accuracy.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration. First, the study's focus on a specific speech act—invitation acceptance and declination—may limit the generalizability of the findings to other pragmatic contexts. Future research could explore the impact of CF across a broader range of speech acts and interactional scenarios. Second, the study was conducted with Iranian EFL learners in an intact classroom setting, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to different learner populations or instructional contexts. Comparative studies involving diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds could provide more comprehensive insights. Finally, the relatively short duration of the intervention may not capture the long-term effects of CF on ILP development. Longitudinal studies are recommended to investigate the sustained impact of various feedback types on learners' pragmatic competence.

Overall, this study underscores the critical role of CF in fostering ILP development, particularly highlighting the efficacy of metalinguistic feedback. By addressing the limitations and expanding on the findings, future research can further elucidate the mechanisms through which CF shapes second language pragmatic competence, ultimately enhancing instructional practices in SLA.

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