

Content Analysis of Iranian High School English Textbooks in terms of Politeness Markers, Speech Acts, and Language Functions

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Abstract

Considering the indispensable role pragmatic knowledge plays in not only comprehending L2 materials, but also in making and maintaining proper communication, and the fact that Iranian EFL learners are primarily exposed to the target language through textbooks, this research intended to discern how frequently and appropriately Politeness Markers (PMs), Speech Acts (SAs), and Language Functions (LFs) are being incorporated in newly-published Iranian high school English textbooks: Prospect and Vision Series. Furthermore, the study set out to investigate the possible relations between the level of the textbooks and the frequency of pragmatic components being included. To this end, 172 conversations of the aforementioned textbooks were thoroughly analyzed to determine the frequency of the PMs based on House and Kasper (1981) taxonomy, the frequency of SAs based on Searle's (1976) paradigm, and the frequency of LFs according to Halliday's (1978) framework. Findings revealed that Committers were the most frequently-used PMs, Representatives and Directives were the most commonly-used SAs, and Informatives enjoyed the highest frequency among LFs. The results also indicated that these pragmatic components were not equally distributed throughout the conversations and no significant relationship existed between the level of the textbooks and the frequency of the pragmatic elements. In addition to the consciousness-raising dimension of the study, material developers might be able to appropriately represent and include pragmatic information into their materials. Moreover, teachers might also be able to amend and modify their adopted approaches to foreign language teaching and adjust them to accommodate potential learner styles and their preferences.

Keywords: Pragmatic awareness, Prospect, and Vision series, Informatives, Directives, Representatives

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INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, language is fundamentally used for communicative purposes. Thoughts, emotions, and various types of information can be expressed through language. Moreover, knowledge of languages boosts our understanding of ourselves, of other nations, and enables us to think globally and communicate internationally (Gholami, 2015, Kasper & Roever, 2005). Traditionally, Iranian English high school textbooks have mainly focused on teaching mechanical grammar drills. The rationale behind this has been derived from the notion that grammar and vocabulary are the basic building blocks of a language. However, this outlook, seemingly satisfactory for the elementary levels of language learning, has resulted in frustrations and disappointment on the part of language learners at more advanced levels. Communicative aspects of language teaching were mostly turned a blind eye to in the old Iranian high school English textbooks (Gholami, 2015; Moradi Karbalaei, & Afraz, 2013).

Considering the indispensable role of the communicative aspect of language, the development of learners' communicative needs is a fundamental responsibility of schools (Kasper & Roever, 2005). The pragmatic aspects of language might either be directly teachable to the learners or not, but the students should be equipped with authentic pragmatic input to enhance their pragmatic knowledge (Salimi & Karami, 2019). In EFL contexts, however, it is difficult to provide learners with authentic pragmatic knowledge because of limited and minimal exposure of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to English. Textbooks are seen as one of the most vital sources of information for many EFL learners and can play a pivotal role in teaching and learning a foreign language (Dabbagh & Safaei, 2019; Razmjoo, 2007). Given this important fact, it behooves material developers, teachers, and textbook designers to constantly evaluate the newly-published English textbooks to see whether the textbooks appropriately meet the required purposes and to ensure that modifications are made if deemed necessary.

In addition to the consciousness-raising dimension of the study, material developers might be able to appropriately represent and include pragmatic information into their materials. Moreover, educators might be able to amend and modify their adopted approaches to foreign language teaching and adjust them to accommodate potential learner styles and their preferences. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to delve into the pragmatic components of the newly-published Iranian high school English textbooks to discern how appropriately the pragmatic components (politeness markers, language functions, and speech acts) are being included.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics

Pragmatics primarily copes with deeper levels of meanings rather than the literal and surface meaning of a statement. It deals with what is typically meant with a saying or statement according to specific social norms and practices, or a particular setting in which the conversation transpires. Thus, possessing a fair mastery over the contextual norms and traditions helps the interlocutor to set up and keep efficient and proper communication and understand one another distinctly (Yule, 2006) and this capability is broadly regarded and accepted as pragmatic competence. Bachman (1990) classifies pragmatic competence into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. He further proposed four main functions for illocutionary competence: ideational function enables the speakers to express their thoughts and emotions; manipulative function assists language users to gain what they desire; through the heuristic function opportunities will be created to comprehend new events and phenomena and apply language as a problem-solving instrument; and imaginative function enhances individuals' creativity. In this study pragmatic competence was operationalized by considering three major aspects of politeness markers, speech acts, and language functions.

Politeness Markers

The concept of politeness as a global and sociolinguistic event has increasingly drawn the attention of many researchers. Huang (2007) believes that politeness helps people to create and maintain interpersonal relationships and interactions. Due to the limiting role of politeness in communicative language, speakers knowingly and unknowingly tend to consider certain factors that determine the linguistic shape of the interactions (Longcope, 1995). Politeness markers are defined as certain linguistic structures and expressions such as “please”, “I wondered if ...”, “kind of”, and many other structures that are frequently used by native speakers to show consideration and respect and to soften or mitigate the force of the certain speech acts (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Different taxonomies of politeness markers have been suggested by researchers (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Crystal & Davy, 1975; Edmondson, 1977; Holmes, 2000). Nevertheless, the most comprehensive and widely-cited taxonomy is the one put forward by House and Kasper (1981). Therefore, this study adopted House and Kasper’s (1981) model of politeness markers as a point of reference. This framework includes 11 categories that can be employed to show politeness:

Politeness markers are statements appended to a remark or speech to display honor or to demand cooperation. ‘Please’ and ‘if you wouldn’t mind’ are the most commonly-used examples of politeness markers.

Consultative devices can be utilized to apprehend structures that engage the addressee and ask for their collaboration, e.g., “Would you mind...” or “Could you...”.

Play-downs are expressions used to soften the perlocutionary influence that a remark or speech could leave on the addressee. For example, past tense utilization, e.g. “I wondered if...”, and past continuous, e.g. “I was wondering if...”.

Understaters are some adverbial modifiers such as “a second”, “a moment”, and “a bit”, which are employed by the speakers to reduce the

imposition of an utterance by underrepresenting the proposition of an utterance.

Hedges are some expressions such as “*kind of*”, “*somewhat*”, “*rather*” by which the speakers leave an utterance open for the addressee and avoid presenting a precise propositional content and let the addressee keep their intent.

Forewarnings are some kind of meta-comments on a face-threatening act made by the speaker. They are strategies like paying a compliment or using utterances such as “*far be it from me to criticize, but...*” and “*you may find this a bit boring, but...*”

Hesitators are employed to complete pauses with non-lexical phonetic words e.g. “*er*”, “*uhh*”, “*mmm*”.

Downtoners reduce the force and imposition of the interlocutor’s remark e.g. “*just, simply, possibly*”.

Committers are expressions like “*I guess*”, “*I think*”, and “*in my idea*” which function to mitigate the speaker’s commitment to the propositional content of an utterance.

Scope-staters can be applied to show the speaker’s personal opinion about the subject of a discussion e.g. “*I’m sorry you’re in my seat*”, “*I’m frustrated that you couldn’t*”.

Agent avoiders refer to the utilization of passive structure in a sentence in which the agent is impersonalized, therefore turning the disapproval away from the addressee to a general entity, doer, or phenomenon, e.g. “*people don’t do X*” (Watts, 2003).

Speech Act

The notion of speech act was put forward by Austin (1962) for the first time and expanded by Searle (1969). Austin describes speech acts as actions carried out in uttering something. He specifies three distinctive levels of action beyond the act of utterance itself. He makes a distinction between the act of uttering something, what an individual does in uttering it, and what a

person does by uttering it, and names these the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary act, respectively. Imagine, for instance, that a shopkeeper remarks: "The shop will be closed in five minutes". He is then engaged in the locutionary act of stating that the shop will be closed in five minutes. In uttering this, the shopkeeper is doing the illocutionary act of notifying the buyers of the shop's forthcoming closure and probably also the act of advising them to buy and leave the store as soon as possible. Whereas the final result of these illocutionary acts is understanding on the audience side, perlocutionary acts are done with the intent of generating a further impact. The shopkeeper seeks to carry out the perlocutionary actions of encouraging the customers to think that the shop is going to shut and of having them shop and leave. He is involved in doing all these speech acts, at all three levels, merely by making certain utterances. Like Austin, Searle (1979) states that meaning cannot be accounted for when a speech act context is absent. In Searle's idea, a proposition is expressed through contextual tokens rather than types.

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1991) speech acts are typically but the patterned and routinized language that native and nonnative language users apply to carry out a request, compliment, refusal, complaint, and apology speech acts. Yule (2006) states that speech acts are actions done through utterances. In English, they are labeled as an apology, offer, compliment, invitation, promise, or request. However, this study adopted Searle's (1976) model of speech act as the reference point. Searle's (1976) model includes:

Declaratives which bring about a change via the utterance, e.g. "you are fired", "I quit" and "I declare you husband and wife".

Directives, which attempt to get the addressee to do something. The different kinds are request, suggestion, command, asking, e.g. "Could you turn on the light?".

Commissives which commit the speaker her/himself to do a future course of action, like promising, planning, vowing, e.g. "I'm going to Paris tomorrow".

Representatives which assert the truth value of a statement. They include: asserting, predicting, swearing, e.g. “No one makes better pancake than I do.”

Expressives which describe what the interlocutor thinks of the context like thanking, apologizing, welcoming, and deploring, e.g. “I am so sorry for not helping out”.

Language Functions

Different linguists have categorized functions of language differently. According to Lyons (1977), there are three categories of language functions:

The descriptive function is a function of language that transfers factual information, e.g. There are 18 students in the classroom.

The expressive function provides information about the speaker, his/her feelings, preferences, and experience, e.g. I will never order Cheese Tacos again. The speaker didn't like Cheese Tacos.

Social function, is used to establish and mention social relations between people, e.g. Are you ready to order sir? This kind of sentence most probably is used by a waiter in a restaurant, signaling a particular social relationship.

The most well-known theory and classification about Language Function belong to Halliday (1974). He believes that a young child, in the early phases of his/her language development is capable of mastering some preliminary language functions. To him, children are encouraged to expand and flourish their language so that various objectives can be achieved. Halliday (1974) identified seven functions of language: *Instrumental Function* is the language used to fulfill a need e.g. “I want an apple”.

Regulatory Function is the language used to influence other peoples' behavior like persuading, requesting, or commanding, e.g. “go away”, “come here”. *Interactional Function* is the language used to develop relationships and ease interaction, e.g. "I love you Daddy" or "Thanks". *Personal Function* is the language through which personal opinions,

feelings, and attitudes can be expressed, including a speaker's identity, e.g. "here I come". *Heuristic Functions* is the language used to seek, learn and discover, e.g. "why?". *Imaginative Function* is used to create a world of one's own, e.g. "let's pretend". *Informative Function* is used to communicate new information, e.g. "I've got something to tell you".

Empirical Studies

Using Searle's (1976) model of speech act to analyze the conversations, Tavakoli (1995) conducted a study to investigate various formats of speech acts and how frequent the functions were in high school textbooks. Findings revealed that representative, directive, and expressive functions were represented in the textbooks, whereas commissives and declaratives were not introduced at all.

Ansary and Babayi (2002) carried out a study using a corpus of 10 EFL/ESL textbook reviews and 10 EFL/ESL textbook evaluation checklists to discover the universal features of ESL/EFL course books to systematize coursebook evaluation. It was revealed that no matter how perfect a book was, it was merely a simple device in educators' hands and what counted more than the textbook was what the instructors could do with it.

Rahimi and Nabilou (2009) conducted a study concerned with materials evaluation in the Iranian EFL context. They maintained that English textbooks were inefficient from the instructors' point of view. The problems they pointed to in these books were as follows: ignoring the communicative aspect of language teaching, high density of the incorporated information, improper instructional content, the incongruity between the content and the learning objectives, ignorance of students' cognitive and metacognitive development, incomplete and insufficient explanation for vocabulary, scarcity of entertaining and authentic materials, insufficient attention to developing oral skills, and absence of scientific methods to teaching pronunciation.

Jahangard (2007) evaluated four EFL textbooks used in Iranian

public high schools and investigated the merits and demerits of the textbooks using a 13-item checklist. He concluded that the fourth book was far more advantageous than the other three and recommended that high school textbooks had to be reexamined, revisited, and reevaluated by experts in the field.

In another major study, Razmjoo (2007) compared and contrasted how representative the Iranian high school and private institute textbooks were of the CLT tenets using Hymes' (1972) scheme. The results demonstrated that high school textbooks were not conducive to CLT implementation, and the textbooks in private institutes represented the CLT principles to a greater extent.

Azizifar, Koosha, and Lotfi (2010) used Tucker's (1975) textbook evaluation model to evaluate two textbook series applied to teach English in Iranian high schools from 1965 to 2010. As they mentioned, there is an introduction section at the beginning of these two series in which the intended teaching objectives are clarified, but the results of the study show these objectives were not achieved especially the communicative goals of language teaching. They suggested that the learners should be provided with ample and sufficient opportunity to practice the language communicatively.

Gholami (2015) examined the extent to which pragmatic knowledge had been incorporated in the Iranian EFL textbooks. Three high school English textbooks were thoroughly delved into based on speech acts, four politeness strategies, and lexical and syntactic classification. The findings indicated that the inclusion of pragmatic knowledge was not given enough and due consideration in developing such materials. This major flaw was reasonably explained by the artificiality inherent in the textbooks. The study implied that more pragmatic knowledge should be integrated into Iranian EFL textbooks to boost both the authenticity of the textbooks and learners' pragmatic awareness.

Sanie and Vahid Dastjerdi (2018) compared and contrasted the application of various forms of greeting in *Prospect Series* (1, 2, 3) and

Four Corners Series (1, 2, 3, 4). Based on Searle's (1976) model of speech act, they analyzed the conversations. The findings revealed that 'greeting by using questions' was the most commonly used form in both series. The study further implies that The study implied that there could be significant differences between the content of Iranian EFL textbooks and their authentic counterparts.

Dabbagh and Safaei (2019) investigated how representative the *Prospect and Vision Series* was concerning learning objective attainment and compared them with their internationally-released counterparts. Bloom's revised taxonomy was adopted as a point of reference. The results demonstrated that both higher and lower-order thinking skills were more significantly represented in *Four Corners* compared to *Prospect and Vision Series*. The study calls for a modification of the cognitive burden of *Prospect and Vision Series*. Considering the indispensable role pragmatic knowledge plays in not only comprehending L2 materials, but also in making and maintaining proper communication, and the fact that Iranian EFL learners are primarily exposed to the target language via textbooks, a study seems necessary to discern how frequently and properly the pragmatic components (politeness markers, language functions, and speech acts) are being represented in *Prospect and Vision Series*.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Given the fact that not all six high school textbooks (*Prospect and Vision*) have been analyzed in terms of politeness markers, speech acts, and language functions so far; this research intends to delve into the newly-developed Iranian high school textbooks and fill the above-mentioned gap. Based on the objectives of the study, the researchers formulated these questions:

1. What are the most frequently-used Politeness Markers used in *Prospect and Vision Series*?

2. What are the most frequently-used Speech Acts used in *Prospect* and *Vision Series*?
3. What are the most frequently-used Language Functions used in *Prospect* and *Vision Series*?
4. Is there a relation between the level of the textbooks (*Prospect* and *Vision Series*) and the extent to which these pragmatic components are being used?

METHOD

Instruments and Materials

The instruments employed in this study to evaluate the textbooks were 1) taxonomy of politeness structure proposed by House and Kasper (1981), 2) Searle's (1976) model of classifying speech acts, 3) Halliday's (1978) language function model. The newly published English textbooks being taught nation-wide in Iranian high schools, *Prospect* and *Vision*, are also important materials of this research. Table 1 shows the name, grade, number of pages, the number of units, and the number of conversations in each textbook. More specifically, the conversations of speaking and listening tasks incorporated in the *Prospect and Vision Series* were chosen for pragmatic content analysis since such components are often more frequently used and represented in the ongoing dialogues between the interlocutors and listeners in real-time communication compared to other language skills.

Table 1: Name, number of pages, units, and conversations of textbooks

| | Grade | Number of pages | Number of units | Number of conversations |
|-------------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Prospect 1</i> | 7 | 76 | 8 | 49 |
| <i>Prospect 2</i> | 8 | 88 | 7 | 48 |
| <i>Prospect 3</i> | 9 | 133 | 6 | 34 |
| <i>Vision 1</i> | 10 | 124 | 4 | 17 |
| <i>Vision 2</i> | 11 | 11 | 3 | 12 |
| <i>Vision 3</i> | 12 | 99 | 3 | 12 |

Data Collection Procedure

The following steps were taken to collect the data and accomplish the stated objectives of the study: First, all the 173 conversations included in the Prospect 1 - Vision 3 were studied and analyzed line by line to comprehend the information of the texts. Then, the conversations were respectively numbered from 1 to 173. To facilitate the understanding and categorization of the data, the researchers applied a coding system; each subcategory of PMs, SAs, and LFs received a code (Table 2).

Table 2: Assigned codes for each pragmatic component

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Politeness Markers | politeness markers (PM.1), play-downs (PM.2), consultative devices (PM3), hedges (PM.4), understaters (PM.5), downtoners (PM.6), committers (PM.7), forewarnings (PM.8), hesitators (PM.9), scope-staters (PM.10), agent avoiders (PM.11) |
| Speech Acts | representatives (SA.1), directives (SA.2), commissives (SA.3), expressives (SA.5), declarations (SA.5) |
| Language Functions | Instrumental Function (LF.1), Regulatory Function (LF.2), Interactional Function (LF.3), Personal Function (LF.4), Heuristic Functions (LF.5), Imaginative Function (LF.6), Informative Function (LF.7) |

Next, the clauses containing the aforementioned pragmatic components were identified and classified based on these three instruments: House and Kasper's model of politeness markers (1981), Searle's model of speech acts (1976), and Halliday's model of language functions (1978). And finally, after all the conversations of the textbooks were analyzed and coded, the findings were thoroughly double-checked by the two researchers of the study as well to locate and remove potential discrepancies and ambiguities. An independent researcher expert within the realm of pragmatics was invited to be involved in the blind coding of the conversations. To ensure the inter-rater reliability, the researchers ran Cronbach Alpha inter-reliability test and it stood at .67.

Data Analysis

Having determined the frequency and types of the pragmatic components in the textbooks, the researchers also calculated the frequency of occurrence and the percentage for each category to answer the first three questions. To answer the fourth research question, the researchers employed the Chi-square formula to make a comparison between the distribution rate of the pragmatic components within each book.

RESULTS

Analysis of Politeness Markers in Prospect and Vision Series

The first research question examined all the dialogues of the six textbooks (*Prospect and Vision Series*) in terms of the taxonomy of politeness markers proposed by House and Kasper (1981). A total number of 56 politeness markers were utilized in *Prospect Series*.

As displayed in Table 3, the most frequently-used politeness category is Politeness Markers with 23 occurrences accounting for 41.07 % of all the politeness categories. After Politeness Markers, Consultative devices with 14 occurrences (25%) and Hesitators with 12 occurrences (21.42%) were numbered respectively as the most frequently-used PMs in these books. Downtoners with only 3 occurrences (5.35%), Understaters, and Committers with 2 (3.57%) were rarely-used PMs in *Prospect Series*. Notably, it was also revealed that no instances of PMs of Play-downs, Hedges, Forewarnings, Scope-staters, and Agent avoiders could be found in the dialogues of *Prospect Series*.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of politeness marker categories in Prospect 1-3

| | <i>Prospect 1</i> Freq % | <i>Prospect 2</i> Freq % | <i>Prospect 3</i> Freq % | Total | Total Percentage |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| Politeness markers | 8 53.3 | 8 38.09 | 7 35 | 23 | 41.07 |
| Play-downs | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Consultative devices | 5 33.33 | 6 28.57 | 3 15 | 14 | 25 |
| Hedges | 0 0 | 0 0 | 2 10 | 2 | 3.57 |
| Understaters | 0 0 | 0 0 | 3 15 | 3 | 5.35 |
| Downtoners | 0 0 | 1 4.76 | 1 5 | 2 | 3.57 |
| Committers | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Forewarnings | 2 13.33 | 6 28.57 | 4 20 | 12 | 21.42 |
| Hesitators | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scope-staters | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Agent avoiders | 15 100 | 21 100 | 20 100 | 56 | |
| Total | 1.36 | 1.90 | 1.81 | | |
| Mean | 2.56 | 2.96 | 2.16 | | |
| SD | | | | | |

As Table 4 reveals, the absence of five PMs (Hedges, Understaters, Forewarnings, Scope-staters, and Agent avoiders) is noticeable in the dialogues of *Vision Series* as well. It can also be readily discerned from Table 4 that unlike the *Prospect series*, Politeness Markers are not the most frequently-used PMs, but Committers with the frequency of 13 (30.95%) are the most-frequently-used ones. After Committers, there are 12 instances of Politeness Markers (28.57%). Hesitators (19.04%), Downtoners (9.52%), and Consultative devices (9.52%) are respectively other commonly-used PMs in *Vision Series*. There was only one instance (2.38%) of Play-downs found in vision 3.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of politeness marker categories in Vision 1-3

| | <i>Vision 1</i> Freq % | <i>Vision 2</i> Freq % | <i>Vision 3</i> Freq % | Total 1 | Total Percentage |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Politeness markers | 4 25 | 4 30.76 | 4 30.76 | 12 | 28.57 |
| Play-downs | 0 0 | 0 0 | 1 7.69 | 1 | 2.38 |
| Consultative devices | 2 12.5 | 2 15.38 | 0 0 | 4 | 9.52 |
| Hedges | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Understaters | 1 6.25 | 1 7.69 | 2 15.38 | 4 | 9.52 |
| Downtoners | 6 37.5 | 3 23.07 | 4 30.76 | 13 | 30.95 |
| Committers | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Forewarnings | 3 18.75 | 3 23.07 | 2 15.38 | 8 | 19.04 |
| Hesitators | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Scope-staters | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Agent avoiders | 16 100 | 13 100 | 13 100 | 42 | |
| Total | 1.45 | 1.81 | 1.18 | | |
| Mean | 1.97 | 1.57 | 1.52 | | |
| SD | | | | | |

Analysis of Speech Acts in Prospect and Vision Series

The second research question delved into all the dialogues of the *Prospect* and *Vision Series* (172 conversations). The incorporated dialogues were scrutinized in terms of Searle's (1976) speech act category. Then, the frequency, mean, percentage, and standard deviation were determined. According to Table 5, the Representative speech act with 135 accounting for 44.40% of all occurrences was found to be the most frequently-used speech act in *Prospect Series* while Directives with 105 occurrences accounting for 34.53%, Expressives with a total number of 58 accounting for 19.07%, and Commissives with a total number of 6 accounting for 1.97%, all speech act categories were respectively ordered as the most-frequently-used SAs in *Prospect Series*.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of speech act categories in Prospect 1-3

| | <i>Prospect 1</i> Freq % | <i>Prospect 2</i> Freq % | <i>Prospect 3</i> Freq % | <i>Total</i> | Total Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Representative | 51 41.46 | 37 42.04 | 47 50.53 | 135 | 44.40 |
| | 50 40.65 | 33 37.5 | 22 23.65 | 105 | 34.53 |
| Directives | 3 2.43 | 2 2.27 | 1 1.07 | 6 | 1.97 |
| Commissives | 19 15.44 | 16 18.18 | 23 24.73 | 58 | 19.07 |
| Expressives | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Declarations | 123 100 | 88 100 | 93 100 | 304 | |
| Total | 24.6 | 17.6 | 18.6 | | |
| Mean | 22.11 | 15.29 | 17.33 | | |
| SD | | | | | |

As it can be seen in Table 6, the total number of speech acts in *Vision Series* equals 396, with Vision 1 containing the highest number (154). Table 6 reveals the frequencies and percentages of SAs in *Vision Series*: 111 occurrences (28.03%) for Representatives, 173 (43.68%) for Directives, 78 (19.69%) for Expressives, 26 (6.56%) for Commissives, and 8 (2.02%) for Declaratives. Therefore, like *Prospect Series*, the least frequently-used speech act belongs to Declaratives. However, unlike *Prospect Series*, Directives are the most frequently-used speech act in *Vision Series*.

Table 6: Descriptive statistics of speech act categories in Vision 1-3

| | <i>Vision 1</i> Freq % | <i>Vision 2</i> Freq % | <i>Vision 3</i> Freq % | Total | Total Percentage |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Representatives | 55 35.71 | 21 17.07 | 35 29.41 | 111 | 28.03 |
| Directives | 64 41.55 | 54 43.90 | 55 46.21 | 173 | 43.68 |
| Commissives | 10 6.49 | 14 11.38 | 2 1.68 | 26 | 6.56 |
| Expressives | 23 14.93 | 33 26.82 | 22 18.48 | 78 | 19.69 |
| Declarations | 2 1.29 | 1 0.81 | 5 4.2 | 8 | 2.02 |
| Total | 154 100 | 123 100 | 119 100 | 396 | |
| Mean | 30.8 | 24.6 | 23.8 | | |
| SD | 24.53 | 17.98 | 19.65 | | |

Analysis of Language Function in Prospect and Vision Series

The third research question intended to delve into all the dialogues of the textbooks. The language functions were analyzed according to Halliday's (1978) model of language functions. As it can be seen in Table 7, Informative Function with a total number of 251 accounting for 36.48% was the most frequently-used language function in *Prospect Series*, whereas Imaginative Function with a total number of 5 accounting for 0.72% was the least frequently-used language function.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics of language function categories in Prospect 1-3

| | <i>Prospect 1</i> | <i>Prospect 2</i> | <i>Prospect 3</i> | Total | Total |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| | Freq % | Freq % | Freq % | | Percentage |
| Instrumental | 2 0.99 | 1 0.34 | 5 2.52 | 8 | 1.16 |
| Regulatory | 19 9.4 | 27 9.37 | 13 6.56 | 59 | 8.57 |
| Interactional | 42 20.79 | 39 13.54 | 33 16.66 | 114 | 16.59 |
| Personal | 12 5.94 | 31 10.76 | 26 13.13 | 69 | 10.02 |
| Heuristic | 51 25.24 | 85 29.51 | 46 23.23 | 182 | 26.45 |
| Imaginative | 0 0 | 2 0.69 | 3 1.51 | 5 | .726 |
| Informative | 76 37.62 | 103 35.76 | 72 36.36 | 251 | 36.48 |
| Total | 202 100 | 288 100 | 198 100 | 688 | |
| Mean | 28.85 | 41.14 | 28.28 | | |
| SD | 26.24 | 36.25 | 22.88 | | |

As shown in Table 8, like the *Prospect Series*, in *Vision Series* the most and the least frequently-used language functions were the Imaginatives and Informatives. While the Imaginative Function with only 4 occurrences accounting for 0.8% of all language functions was the least frequently-used language function, the Informative Function with a total number of 145 accounting for 29.23% of all functions counted as the most-frequently-used language function.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics of language function categories in Vision 1-3

| | <i>Vision 1</i> Freq % | <i>Vision 2</i> Freq % | <i>Vision 3</i> Freq % | Total | Total Percentage |
|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------------------|
| Instrumental | 3 1.76 | 15 9.37 | 7 4.21 | 25 | 5.04 |
| Regulatory | 11 6.47 | 14 8.75 | 16 9.63 | 41 | 8.26 |
| Interactional | 20 11.76 | 30 18.75 | 19 11.34 | 69 | 13.91 |
| Personal | 27 15.88 | 35 21.87 | 23 13.85 | 85 | 17.13 |
| Heuristic | 49 28.82 | 37 23.12 | 41 24.69 | 127 | 25.60 |
| Imaginative | 0 0 | 3 1.87 | 1 0.60 | 4 | .80 |
| Informative | 60 35.29 | 26 16.25 | 59 35.54 | 145 | 29.23 |
| Total | 170 100 | 160 100 | 166 100 | 496 | |
| Mean | 24.28 | 22.85 | 23.71 | | |
| SD | 21.15 | 11.6 | 18.59 | | |

Addressing the Fourth Research Question

To answer the fourth question and find the possible relation between the level of the textbooks and the frequency of pragmatic components, the researchers employed chi-square.

Distribution of the Politeness Markers in *Prospect* and *Vision* Series

Due to the absence of four PMs and the low frequency of some other PMs in the textbooks (Tables 1 and 2), chi-square could not be applicable and meaningful for the statistical analysis of PMs in the textbooks.

Distribution of the Speech Acts in *Prospect* and *Vision* Series

The following Tables 9 demonstrate the results of chi-square analysis for the textbooks and SAs frequency.

Table 9: Textbook series and frequency of SAs crosstabulation

| | | Representatives | Directives | Commissives | Expressives | Declarations | Total |
|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------|
| <i>Prospect 1</i> | Count | 51 | 50 | 3 | 19 | 0 | 123 |
| | % within freq | 20.7% | 18.0% | 9.4% | 14.0% | 0.0% | 17.6% |
| <i>Prospect 2</i> | Count | 37 | 33 | 2 | 16 | 0 | 88 |
| | % within freq | 15.0% | 11.9% | 6.3% | 11.8% | 0.0% | 12.6% |
| <i>Prospect 3</i> | Count | 47 | 22 | 1 | 23 | 0 | 93 |
| | % within freq | 19.1% | 7.9% | 3.1% | 16.9% | 0.0% | 13.3% |
| <i>Vision 1</i> | Count | 55 | 64 | 10 | 23 | 2 | 154 |
| | % within freq | 22.4% | 23.0% | 31.3% | 16.9% | 25.0% | 22.0% |
| <i>Vision 2</i> | Count | 21 | 54 | 14 | 33 | 1 | 123 |
| | % within freq | 8.5% | 19.4% | 43.8% | 24.3% | 12.5% | 17.6% |
| <i>Vision 3</i> | Count | 35 | 55 | 2 | 22 | 5 | 119 |
| | % within freq | 14.2% | 19.8% | 6.3% | 16.2% | 62.5% | 17.0% |
| Total | Count | 246 | 278 | 32 | 136 | 8 | 700 |
| | % within freq | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

According to Table 10, the difference between the frequencies of the SAs is significant and meaningful. In other words, the speech acts in the conversations of *Prospect* and *Vision Series* are not equally distributed or at the same levels of frequency, i.e. Sig. = .000 ($p < .05$).

Table 10: Chi-Square result for SAs

| | Value | Df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 71.071 ^a | 20 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 71.582 | 20 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 700 | | |

a.8 cells (26.7%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.01

Distribution of the Language Functions in *Prospect* and *Vision Series*

Table 11 displays the findings of Chi-Square for the textbooks and LFs frequency.

Table 11: Textbook series and frequency of LFs crosstabulation

| | | Instrumental | Regulatory | Interactional | Personal | Heuristic | Imaginative | Informative | Total |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Prospect 1 | Count | 2 | 19 | 42 | 12 | 51 | 0 | 76 | 202 |
| | % within freq | 7.4% | 19.0% | 23.0% | 7.8% | 16.5% | 0.0% | 19.0% | 17.1% |
| Prospect 2 | Count | 1 | 27 | 39 | 31 | 85 | 2 | 103 | 288 |
| | % within freq | 3.7% | 27.0% | 21.3% | 20.1% | 27.5% | 22.2% | 25.8% | 24.4% |
| Prospect 3 | Count | 5 | 13 | 33 | 26 | 46 | 3 | 75 | 201 |
| | % within freq | 18.5% | 13.0% | 18.0% | 16.9% | 14.9% | 33.3% | 18.8% | 17.0% |
| Vision 1 | Count | 3 | 11 | 20 | 27 | 49 | 0 | 60 | 170 |
| | % within freq | 11.1% | 11.0% | 10.9% | 17.5% | 15.9% | 0.0% | 15.0% | 14.4% |
| Vision 2 | Count | 15 | 14 | 30 | 35 | 37 | 3 | 26 | 160 |
| | % within freq | 55.6% | 14.0% | 16.4% | 22.7% | 12.0% | 33.3% | 6.5% | 13.5% |
| Vision 3 | Count | 1 | 16 | 19 | 23 | 41 | 1 | 59 | 160 |
| | % within freq | 3.7% | 16.0% | 10.4% | 14.9% | 13.3% | 11.1% | 14.8% | 13.5% |
| Total | Count | 27 | 100 | 183 | 154 | 309 | 9 | 399 | 1181 |
| | % within freq | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% |

Table 12 indicates that the difference between the frequencies of the LFs is significant and meaningful. In other words, the Language Functions in the conversations of *Prospect* and *Vision Series* are not distributed equally and not at the same levels of frequency, i.e. Sig. = .000 ($p < .05$).

Table 12: Chi-Square result for LFs

| | Value | Df | Asymptotic significance (2-sided) |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------|--|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 101.663 ^a | 30 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 95.539 | 30 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 1181 | | |

a.11 cells (26.2%) have an expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.22

DISCUSSION

The study aimed at investigating the pragmatic components in Iranian newly-published high school textbooks and the findings pointed to some critical deficiencies in pragmatic representation in these series. The findings

of this research are in line with the findings of previously-done studies (e.g., Gholami, 2015; Roohani & Alipour, 2016; Sanie & Vahid Dastjerdi, 2018; Shams, 2015; Zaferanieh & Hosseini-Maasoum, 2015) all unanimously agreeing upon the fact that there are some serious shortcomings in pragmatic representation in Iranian high school textbooks. However, previous research mostly adopted a limited and narrow scope of pragmatic representation with fewer textbooks.

Contrary to the often-made claims made by the authorities that the newly-published Iranian textbooks have been revised and edited according to CLT principles and maxims, the findings of the current study indicate that these textbooks suffer from insufficient pragmatic input and lack different communicative structures. This inadequacy is more obvious when it comes to the scope of Politeness Markers. Therefore, the lack of PMs in all of the conversation models of the *Prospect* and *Vision Series* may be regarded as one potential weakness for these textbooks. According to Schmidt (2001), learning needs consciousness at the noticing level and what learners attend to in input becomes intake for learning. Hence, since the learners are provided with insufficient politeness markers and politeness strategies for input enhancement in these books, learning will not fully occur and develop concurrently with Schmidt's noticing hypothesis.

Regarding the significant absence of PMs in these textbooks, one important but neglected structure was Play-downs. They are those politeness structures that are employed to mitigate the perlocutionary negative impact of an utterance on the hearer. In an EFL context such as Iran where learners always need politeness strategies for everyday communication, particularly requesting something from someone, Play-down structures are applied enormously in various situations and settings. As most conversations were dialogues between students and their friends, teachers, or parents, and in which the interlocutors asked for a favor or some information, using Play-down structures would be considered an extreme demand.

Other common and useful Politeness strategies that were not taken into account in any of the textbooks were Hedges and Understaters. These

structures are applied to diminish the illocutionary forces of request or direct questions. The interlocutors employ Hedges such as kind of, sort of, somehow, etc., and Understaters such as a little, a moment, a bit, etc. to signal politeness by reducing and toning down the impact of their utterance. Considering the EFL context of Iran, to communicate politely and appropriately, learners must acquire enough awareness about the politeness norms in the target language. One way to increase this awareness is that politeness structures should be included sufficiently in the EFL textbook conversations. However, the most frequently-used politeness strategy was found to be Politeness Markers. This strategy can be commonly used to display respect to the addressee and to ask for cooperation. The most obvious examples of a politeness marker found in *Prospect* and *Vision Series* were please and excuse me.

One possible explanation for the superiority of this PM over 10 other PMs, stems from the fact that this strategy is the most commonly-used way in the Iranian context as well. In Iranian daily life when people intend to offer or ask someone to do something or provide a service, they usually apply the same Politeness Markers (please and excuse me). The frequent use of one specific PM and absence of other PMs in Iranian high school textbooks can be reasonably justified because the authenticity of the conversations has not been taken into account by the authors. This is in line with the study of Vellenga (2004) who states that English textbooks typically cannot present students with sufficient opportunities to learn an authentic language. This could stem from the fact that rather than using authentic language samples that native speakers generate, a lot of textbooks merely rely on native speakers' instincts and perceptions about language use, which could be unreliable.

Concerning the second and third research questions, the content of newly-developed English textbooks (*Prospect* and *Vision Series*) was investigated to examine the types and frequencies of speech acts and language functions that were incorporated in the dialogues. The findings indicated that there were some essential drawbacks and constraints about

speech act and language function representation and inclusion in the textbooks.

Regarding the Speech Acts, although all 5 types of speech acts were observed in the textbooks, there were some shortcomings. The first shortcoming was the insufficient coverage of Declaratives and Commissives in all six textbooks. Findings revealed that the total number of speech acts used in Iranian high school textbooks is 700 in all six textbooks. However, based on a study conducted by Moradi, et al. (2013), the total number of speech acts in some popular English textbooks such as New Interchange is 1100 in all three textbooks! These findings are in accord with Bardovi-Harlig's (1996) explanation that a primary reason for the underrepresentation of pragmatic knowledge in such textbooks stems from the fact that not enough range of speech acts are covered, and there are insufficient expressions to present those speech acts.

Considering the EFL context of English textbooks of Iranian high school, it can be argued that Language Functions have also the same condition as Speech Acts. Regulatory, Instrumental, and Imaginative Functions have been rarely included in these textbooks. Besides the lack of frequency, the second major constraint which was distinctly observable throughout the dialogues was related to lack of authenticity. The simplified versions of dialogues lack authenticity and were remote from what L2 native speakers perform and utter in actual settings. Therefore, these textbooks more often resemble Persian books transliterated into English.

The third and one of the most significant shortcomings regarding pragmatic representation in Iranian high school textbooks was the improper contextualization of the pragmatic dimension of the second language. Furthermore, an attempt was made to embed pragmatic points in some dialogues in all textbooks, these dialogues were related to Iranian culture, religion, and traditions rather than those of a second language. Broadly speaking, seemingly Iranian culture, lifestyle, and religion were represented in English. In this respect, some examples of Language Functions (Informatives and Instrumental) and Speech acts (Representatives) used in

dialogues of the textbooks were provided. The context in which such information is presented is different from that of the English context.

- She is the tall one with the black manto. (*Prospect 1*, page 31)
- It's very cold from Aban to Farvardin. (*Prospect 2*, page 48)
- How about Friday mornings? (*Prospect 2*, page 18)
- I was looking for Parvin Etesami's Divan (*Vision 1*, page 88)
- I wanted to go to the Museum of Holy Defense. (*Vision 3*, page 90)

This accords with Wolfson's (1989) viewpoint that EFL textbook dialogues often use a language that is different from the language employed in the second language setting. The above-mentioned limitations point to "a reductionism that works against the teaching and learning of pragmatic phenomena" and in these situations, it seems very unlikely for EFL learners to learn something about the pragmatics of the second language, and develop their L2 pragmatic competence (McConachy & Hata, 2013, p.295). Yet another likely argument that can be put forward for the underrepresentation of pragmatic components in the *Prospect* and *Vision Series* is the absence of a principled and systematic model to present pragmatic knowledge particularly speech acts and language functions. To be consistent with the maxims and tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the speech acts must have been used and distributed among the dialogues systematically. Not only should all types of speech acts be present in dialogues of the textbooks, but they should also be distributed equally among all of them. Speech acts are commonly employed in day-to-day speech and interactions, and various settings enable us to apply such speech acts to keep the fundamental relations in our social lives intact. This unsystematic, ad hoc, and haphazard representation of pragmatic knowledge were also associated with an absence of grading from simple to hard tasks and dimensions. This is in agreement with Shams (2015) who investigated the speech acts and language functions in the dialogues of *Prospect 1*. Besides the disorderly presentation of SAs and LFs, Shams argued that the

pragmatic aspects were primarily incorporated and either misrepresented or underrepresented very briefly at the end of each unit. This implies the peripheral significance of pragmatic knowledge compared to vocabulary and grammar. Accordingly, to become pragmatically competent and apply appropriate PMs, SAs, and LFs in different communicative contexts, learners need to gain mastery over various types of pragmatic knowledge or at least become fully aware of what it entails.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The present study aimed to specify and categorize the pragmatic components of Politeness Markers, Speech acts, and Language Functions in the dialogues of Iranian junior and secondary high school English textbooks (*Prospect* and *Vision Series*), based on House and Kasper's (1981) Politeness framework, Searle's (1976) speech acts taxonomy, and Halliday's (1978) Language Functions. The results revealed that the most frequently-used PMs were Politeness Markers whereas Hedges, Forewarnings, Scope-staters, and Agent avoiders were not included in the textbooks. The most frequently-used SA was Directives and the least frequently-used ones were Declaratives. Finally, the most frequently-used LFs were Informatives and the least frequently-used ones were Imaginatives. Furthermore, the results indicated that there was not a significant relation between the level of the textbooks and the frequency of pragmatic elements.

Considering the findings of the study, this research may have some implications for Iranian material developers, specifically those who are in charge of preparing high school textbooks. This work and similar studies, make textbook designers cognizant of the fact that there exist considerable differences between the content of Iranian EFL textbooks and their authentic counterparts. Second, they would know that pragmatic points need to be presented systematically and authentically consistent with L2 cultural practices, norms, and conventions. Since the English language is more easily learned if it is presented to EFL learners through real-life and equally-

distributed instances of speech act forms, observing these principles would enable students to communicate effectively and appropriately in real contexts. Thus, there is a need for the presently-taught materials to be revised appropriately and accordingly. Third, through attending meticulously to the consciousness-raising aspect of the study, material developers can attempt to properly represent and incorporate pragmatic knowledge into their materials. Teachers can make possible amendments in their adopted approaches to foreign language teaching and adjust them to accommodate potential learner styles and their preferences as the restrictions and constraints enforced by the textbooks on pragmatically-appropriate input could prevent students from communicating efficiently and properly in the target language.

One major limitation which may have affected the generalizability of the study is that all the conversations under investigation were restricted to the official Iranian high school textbooks. In other words, the only resources of pragmatic input available in the English teaching system of Iranian high schools were the conversations in these textbooks. This could, in turn, have undermined the overall generalizability of the findings.

The current study makes the following suggestions for future studies: The place of needs analysis in editing Iranian English high school textbooks should be revisited, reconsidered, and reevaluated. The degree to which Western culture education has been addressed in the newly-edited books needs further analysis and consideration. Other dimensions of pragmatics like politeness strategies in high school textbooks can also be considered. The ways that the number of PMs, SAs, and LFs can be increased in school textbooks and EFL and ESL settings might differ concerning representation and incorporation of pragmatic components in their highly-taught textbooks.

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