The Effect of Explicit Instruction of Metadiscourse Awareness on Developing Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension and its Relationship to the Learners' Memory

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Abstract

The term metadiscourse refers to the material which helps to organize the text, signal the writer's attitude, intended message and assumptions thus shaping the overall organization of the text and providing a better understanding for the interlocutors. It is a rhetorical device writer's use for conveying their ideas, determining the social distance of reader-writer relationship. Writers can create an involved style of writer persona or a more remote stance by using the appropriate metadiscourse devices.

So, this useful concept, namely metadiscourse is used to better understanding of the texts and the purpose of this study is to show the effect of explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on developing Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension by using metadiscoursal taxonomies proposed by Hyland (2005). The metadiscourse elements in this research will be examined in two categories as interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers. Based on proficiency test 60 institute participants were selected and randomly, based on even and odd, divided in two equal homogeneous groups first, as an experimental group and second as a control group in Pishgaman institute in Kermanshah province that results showed the positive effect of metadiscourse awareness on developing Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension in two stages of pre and posttest. Also, by conducting the delayed post-test after two weeks only for experimental group, this research indicated that this effect was on short-term, rather than on long-term memory.

Keywords: Metadiscourse, Interactive resources, Interactional resources, Reading comprehension

1. Introduction

Nowadays reading has received considerable attention, because of the difficulty that many students have in making the shift from reading narrative to expository prose. Crismore (1983).

Reading as receptive skills and as a level of understanding of text come from the interaction between words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside of the text. But difficulties of these skills cause a barrier for students to get main idea of text. This is because of lack of much knowledge, that one of them is metadiscourse awareness and different types of it. Metadiscourse is an anthropological term used by Joseph .m William (1981), that is writing that guide the reader (distinguish from) writing that inform the reader about the Primary topics, discourse about discourse. Crismore p. (47)

In Williams' view, metadiscourse is writing about writing whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed. This includes all connecting devices such as, therefor, however, for example, in the first place, all comments about author's attitude, I believe, in my opinion, and so on. Metadiscourse is self-reflective linguistic material referring to the evolving text and to the writer and imagined reader of that text. It is based on a view of writing as social engagement and in academic contexts reveals the ways that writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitude towards both the propositional content and the audience of the text. But attended to Hyland's (2005) definition and Hyland's types of metadiscourse is interesting to use in this article.

2. Types of Metadiscourse

This section describes three different classifications of metadiscourse, at the first Williams, (1982) has classified metadiscourse into three general types:

a. Advanced organizers

b. Connectives

c. Inter personal discourse

Crismore's two types, then Hyland's definition and classification of metadiscourse that is base for this article.

Then Crismores' classifies metadiscourse into two broad common types with subtypes for each one:

1. Informational 2. Attitudinal

Subtypes of informative metadiscourse:

1. Goals   2. Pre-plans 3. Post-plans 4. Topicalizers

Subtypes of attitudinal metadiscourse:

1. Saliency   2. Emphatics 3. Hedges   4. Evaluative [2].

And the Hyland's classification that, this typology includes two general categories: a.the interactive, & b. Interactional with subtypes for each one, to show how it is useful for reading comprehension at any level.

Interactive resources: That helps to guide reader through the text and involves;

1. Transitions markers 2. Frame markers 3. Endophoric markers 4. Evidentials markers 5. Code-glosses.

Interactional resources: That involves the reader in the argument and concludes;

1.Hedges 2. Boosters 3.Attitude markers 4. Engagement markers 5. Self-mentions

2.1 Interactive Versus Interactional Metadiscourse

Interactive metadiscourse is the term proposed by Thompson (2001) instead of textual metadiscourse and interactional metadiscourse term is used instead of interpersonal metadiscourse.

Textual metadiscourse simply is related to the organization of the text, enabling semantic relations between sentences, designing the text in a considerate way. On the other hand, by using interpersonal devices, the writer interacts with the readers, express his/her views, support or reject an idea or inform the reader of his/her own personal interpretation and reaction about the content. Also, these devices have a pragmatic function in which by using them, one can write a more reader-friendly, clear and persuasive prose.

2.2 Theoretical Assumption and Hypotheses

Starting with assumption that use of metadiscourse and explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers, for learners indicate the effective communication between author and reader, and positive comprehension for learners. We have based our research on the following hypotheses:

1) Explicit instruction in textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers does not effect on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension.

2) Explicit instruction in textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers effects on learners' long- term memory.

2.3 The Purpose of Research

Bearing in mind the above hypotheses, the purpose of research can be formulated as following a uniform classification model and explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers has a positive effect on learners' reading comprehension, and improving the students' reading comprehension also show that, this effect is on short-term memory.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and Materials

The population from which the participants were selected for this study included Iranian EFL learners, who enrolled in language institute in Kermanshah province. To begin data collection, almost all the students at the intermediate levels of English were initially considered to participate in the study. A cohort of about 80 students who selected to take part in this study was male and female students whose age range was between fifteen and twenty-five. After determining their age, sex, and language proficiency level, these 80 students were chosen to take part in the study based on their scores on pet proficiency test.

The participants were, then, randomly assigned to two equal groups, first as an experimental group and second as a control group, whose description will appear as follows. Only about 60 students who had already been placed at the intermediate levels of English proficiency (through the pet-exam) and were unfamiliar with the concept of metadiscourse (assessed through a reading comprehension test) were randomly chosen to be included within the groups described above. In order to assure the homogeneity of the participants' levels of proficiency in two groups of instruction, the proficiency test was later run on the pet results for the participants in both groups.

3.2 Proficiency Test

A group of 80 students took a proficiency test. Based on the mean (36.65) plus and minus one standard deviations, (6.39) 60 subjects were selected to participate in the main study. One main reason for choosing only sixty of our large number of candidates was related to classroom space, since classes at the institute could nearly provide enough room for, at most, twenty five learners. The K-R21 reliability index for the proficiency test is .85.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics Proficiency Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	K-R21
PROFICIENCY	80	36.65	6.394	40.889	.85

The participants were, then, randomly assigned to two equal groups, first as an experimental group and second as a control group.

As to the purpose of the study, two types of tests in different stages were prepared. They included: (1) pet- exam for matching the participants on their levels of proficiency in each group; (2) pre-test on reading comprehension to check for initial differences among participants; (3) a reading comprehension post-test (twice) first to measure the participants' achievement as a result of the treatment; and again after two weeks as a delayed post-test to measure that whether this effect is on long-term or short-term memory

3.3 Text Exam and Scoring Method

The text that selected for this exam was some part of institute learners' textbook, at intermediate level. For this purpose 30 items prepared for both pre and post reading comprehension test. The tests scores were basically objective because of the use of multiple choice items.

After proficiency test, a reading comprehension pre-test, was given to all participants in both groups, to examine the participants' achievement in reading comprehension before any specific instruction in metadiscourse.

Then the reading comprehension post-test, examined the participants' achievement in reading comprehension at the end of their relevant courses of explicit instruction. The participants' scores on this test were compared with the pretest results, to find points of differences and significance between them. The participants' Experimental group was also given 30-item metadiscourse post-test to evaluate their ability in reading comprehension.

Finally, Delayed posttest conducted (That is the repetition of the posttest for only experimental group after three weeks) to measure that the effect of metadiscourse markers on EFL learners' is on short-term or long-term memory.

3.4 Procedure and Design

For this purpose sixty students studying at a language school (placed at intermediate levels of English language proficiency) were selected (through proficiency test) to participate in the experiment. Students who selected to take part in this study were both male and female students whose age range is between fifteen and twenty-five. After determining their age, sex, and language proficiency level, about sixty students were initially selected from large number of learners who enrolled in language institute in Kermanshah, to take part in the study based on their scores on pet-exam. The subjects were randomly divided into two equal groups, each containing thirty students. The experimental group (EG) was received instructions on metadiscourse markers. The control group (CG) receives no specific instructions of metadiscourse and was only exposed to text books level, and relevant exercises. Then, participants in two groups attended eight sessions on eight weeks at even and odd days, at the same clock, based on the same lesson plan. this study carried out in three stages at first pretest before any specific instructions of metadiscourse, and then used of treatment for experimental group, that involve explicit instruction on both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers, and confirm posttest to measure the effect of explicit instruction on students reading comprehension and after three weeks, delayed posttest only for experimental group were conducted, to show is the effect on learner's long-term or short-term memory? During the first three sessions, the participants in the experimental group will be instructed on the essential meaning of a hedge, boosters, frame markers, transition,… as well that all questions of the pre and posttest, were included items for assessing the comprehension of students in their area of specialization in the objective way, that involves multiple choice question, comprehension question, cloze passage, and vocabulary knowledge, by use of students institute text book that is a new interchange. In order to assure the homogeneity of

the participants' levels of proficiency in two groups of instruction, a T-TEST method will be later run on the placement test results for the subjects in each group. Results of data will be elaborated, to show the effect of interpersonal and textual metadiscourse markers on learners reading comprehension, and if metadiscourse effect on learners' reading comprehension, is the effect on long term or short term? The result of pre, post and delayed posttest were showed in the table 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 &7 and Graph 1, 2 & 3 below

An independent t-test was run to compare the experimental and control groups' mean scores on pretest of reading comprehension in order to prove that the two groups enjoyed the same level of reading comprehension ability prior to the main study. As displayed in Table 2 the mean scores for experimental and control groups on pretest of reading comprehension are 14.27 and 13.43 respectively.
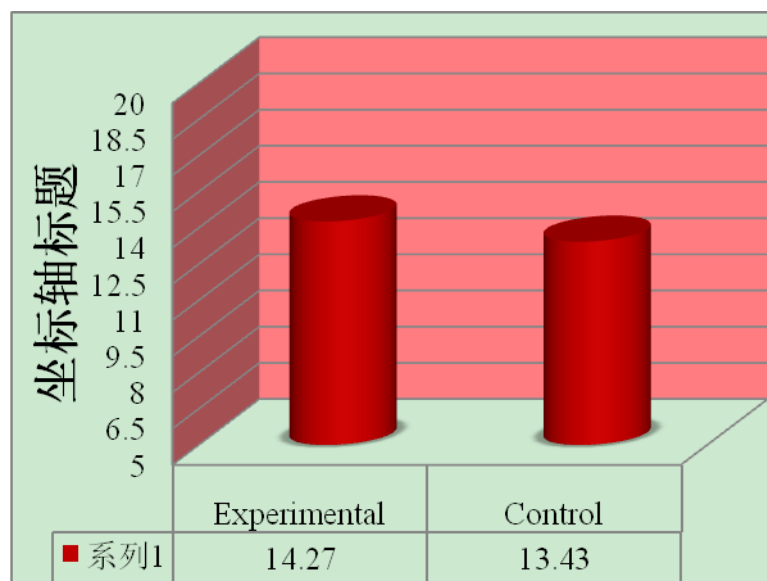
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Pretest of Reading Comprehension by groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	30	14.27	1.760	.321
Control	30	13.43	1.755	.321

The results of the independent t-test (t (58) = 1.83, P = .071 > .05; R = .23 it represents a weak to moderate effect size) indicate that there is not any significant difference between experimental and control groups' mean scores on the pretest of reading comprehension. Thus it can be concluded that the two groups enjoyed the same level of reading comprehension ability prior to the main study, as show in table 3,

Table 3. Independent t-test Pretest of Reading Comprehension by groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.063	.802	1.83	58	.071	.83	.454	-.075	1.742
Equal variances not assumed			1.83	58	.071	.83	.454	-.075	1.742

Graph 1. Pretest of Reading Comprehension by groups

An independent t-test is run to compare the experimental and control groups' mean scores on posttest of reading comprehension in order to probe the effect of explicit instruction of interpersonal and textual Metadiscourse markers on the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners. As displayed in Table 4. the mean scores for experimental and control groups on posttest of reading comprehension are 16.83 and 15.10 respectively.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Posttest of Reading Comprehension by groups

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	30	16.83	1.289	.235
Control	30	15.10	1.155	.211

The results of the independent t-test (t (58) = 5.48, P = .000 < .05; R = .58 it represents a large effect size) indicate that there is a significant difference between experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest of reading comprehension. Thus the first null-hypothesis as explicit instruction of interpersonal and textual Meta-discourse markers does not affect the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners is rejected, as show in table 5.

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Table 5. Independent t-test Posttest of Reading Comprehension by groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.009	.925	5.48	58	.000	1.73	.316	1.101	2.366
Equal variances not assumed			5.48	57.31	.000	1.73	.316	1.101	2.366
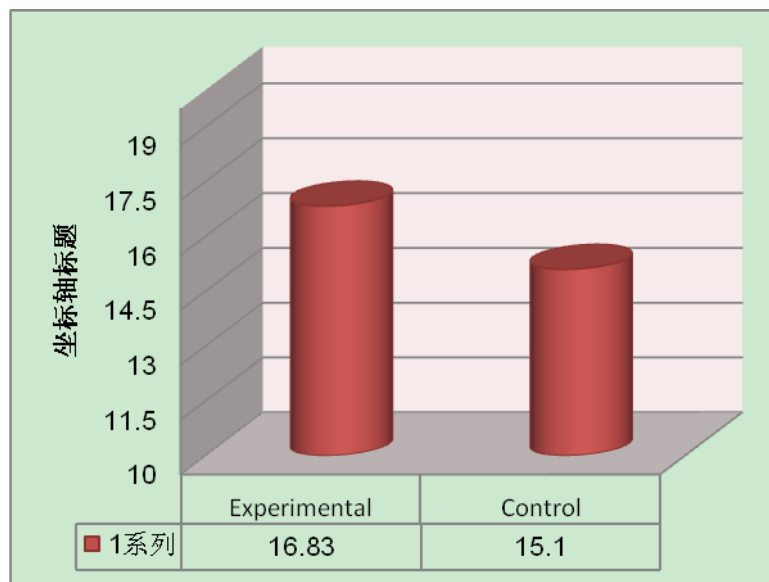
Graph 2. Posttest of Reading Comprehension by groups

A paired-samples t-test is run to compare the experimental group's mean scores on the posttest and delayed posttest of reading comprehension to probe the whether it is the effect of long-term or short- term memory. As displayed in Table 6 the experimental group's means on the posttest and delayed posttest of reading comprehension are 16.83 and 15.27.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics Posttest and Delayed Posttest Reading Comprehension

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
POSTTEST	16.83	30	1.289	.235
DELAYED	15.27	30	1.639	.299

The results of the paired-samples t-test (t (29) = 5.80, P = .000 < .05; R = .73 it represents a large effect size) indicate that there is a significant difference between experimental group's means on the posttest and delayed of reading comprehension. Thus the second null-hypothesis is rejected. Since the students' mean score on the posttest of reading comprehension (16.83) is higher than their mean on the delayed posttest (15.27) it can be concluded that the effect of explicit instruction of interpersonal and textual metadiscourse markers is on short-term memory.

Table 7. Paired-Samples t-test Posttest and Delayed Posttest Reading Comprehension

Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
			Lower	Upper			
1.567	1.478	.270	1.015	2.119	5.805	29	.000
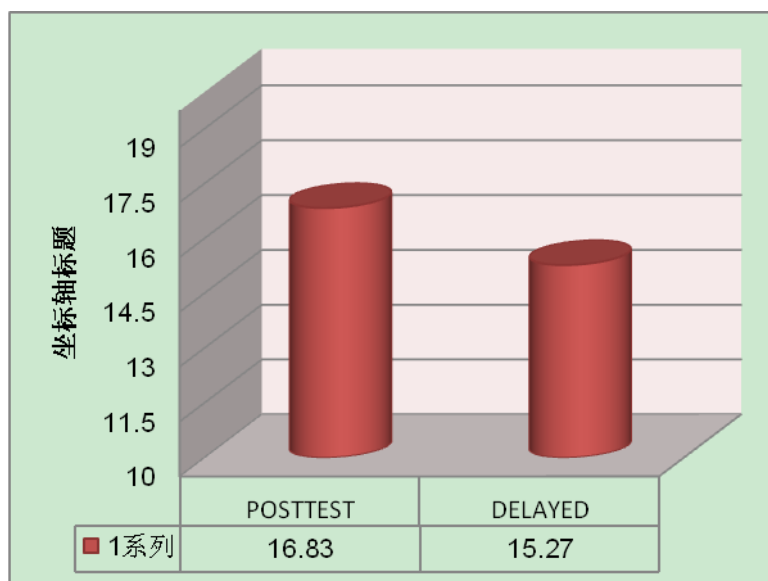
Graph 3. Posttest and Delayed Posttest Reading Comprehension

As is clearly depicted in the above Graph, the learners' mean score on the posttest of reading comprehension (16.83) is higher than their mean on the delayed posttest (15.27) it can be concluded that the effect of explicit instruction of interpersonal and textual Meta-discourse markers is on short-term memory.

4. Conclusion and Result

According to the findings obtained in the light of running different statistical tests, as Independent samples T-test for study of significance between learners' posttest scores in both experimental and control groups in a comparative approach base on learner's metadiscourse knowledge, and paired-samples t-test for comparative study between pre and posttest results, the results show that learners' performance improved after that learners' received treatment. The results of the independent t-test (t (58) = 5.48, P = .000 < .05; R = .58 it represents a large effect size) indicate that there is a significant difference between experimental and control groups' mean scores on the posttest of reading comprehension. Thus the first null-hypothesis as explicit instruction of interpersonal and textual Meta-discourse markers does not affect the reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners **is rejected**.

The results of the paired-samples t-test (t (29) = 5.80, P = .000 < .05; R = .73 it represents a large effect size) indicate that there is a significant difference between experimental group's means on the posttest and delayed posttest of reading comprehension. Thus the second null-hypothesis **is rejected**. Since the students' mean score on the posttest of reading comprehension (16.83) is higher than their mean on the delayed posttest (15.27) it can be concluded that the effect of explicit instruction of interpersonal and textual metadiscourse markers is of short-term memory. The results of this study indicate that all the participants of the study performed significantly better after received explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers. Also the comparative study between posttest result of experimental group and delayed posttest show that this effect is for short term memory. The results obtained from this group were then analyzed, and certain significant findings were obtained which are presented

here from most to less important ones.

1) Explicit instructions in metadiscourse improved learners' reading comprehension;

2) Explicit instructions in metadiscourse markers improved learners' short-term memory;

3) Metadiscourse awareness in EFL courses can affect learners' other language skills and components too.

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