An Interplay Between Iranian EFL Learners' Specific and General Interlanguage Pragmatic Motivation and Their Meta-pragmatic Awareness

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Abstract

The present study aimed to investigate the relationship between Iranian advanced EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness, its subscale features, and their general and specific pragmatic motivation. In this regard, the speech act of refusal was selected as a target speech act because of its face-threatening feature. Eighty-two participants took part in the study, of whom 78 were Iranian EFL learners, and the rest (N=4) were American native speakers. All participants were required to complete a multiple choice meta-pragmatic awareness questionnaire (MPAQ) consisting of 12 situations representing refusal to four topics. Refusal scenarios were balanced in terms of interlocutors' social status, degree of familiarity, and degree of imposition. Iranian learners were then asked to complete 48 items of general and specific pragmatic motivation questionnaire adopted from Tajeddin and Zand-Moghadam (2012). Analyzing data using Pearson correlation indicated that there was a significant correlation between Iranian advanced EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness and their general and specific pragmatic motivation. In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness and severity, familiarity, and degree of imposition or severity. Moreover, employing Path Analysis through Amos 24 to examine whether meta-pragmatic awareness and its subscales could predict general and speech-act-specific pragmatic motivation demonstrated that all three sub-constructs of meta-pragmatic awareness predicted general and specific pragmatic motivation positively and significantly. This study is of immense importance as it helps teachers consider the importance of maintaining face in a conversation to help learners increase the motivation of learning making refusals.

Keywords: Interlanguage pragmatics, Interlanguage Pragmatic Motivation, Meta-pragmatic Awareness

1. Introduction

In recent years, learning a foreign language has come to be known as a cardinal feature in exchanging information and international communication. It is widely believed that communication has the most important role in learning a foreign language and in the area of foreign language teaching (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006). Therefore, researchers have shown an increased interest in L2 learners' development of communicative competence (Kasper & Rose, 2001) which is accomplished by the appropriate use of grammar and vocabulary in an appropriate socio-cultural context. Additionally, learning sociocultural conventions and norms of language use to achieve a communicative goal collaboratively with others is a crucial part of becoming a competent speaker in

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L2 (Taguchi, 2015, 2019; Tanck, 2002).   Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding in a real act of communication, paying attention to pragmatic features of language seems necessary in second language acquisition (SLA) studies (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Taguchi & Kim, 2018; Taguchi & Roever, 2017; Xiao-Le, 2011; Yates, 2010). Incorporating pragmatics in L2 instruction and research results in the formation of a new research area which has been known as *Interlanguage Pragmatics* (ILP) (Alco´n Soler, 2005; Alco´n Soler & Martinez-Flor, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman, & Su, 2019; Kasper & Rose, 2001).   ILP, as a subcategory of pragmatics and interlanguage studies, applies pragmatics theories and principles to understand how language learners encode and decode meaning in their L2 (Bardovi-Harlig, 2010; Li, 2019; Schauer, 2009).

The central issue in the development of pragmatics that cannot be neglected is the *speech act theory (*Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Speech acts are communicative activities like rejecting, asking, complimenting for which language is used (Culpeper, Mackey, & Taguchi, 2018; Ghazanfari, Bonyadi, & Malekzade, 2012). In fact, pragmatic competence is operationalized in terms of speech acts. Speech acts have been considered the dominant area of investigation in ILP inasmuch as the study of speech acts enables scholars to scrutinize non-native speakers' comprehension, production, and choice of linguistic action under the impact of context variables (Bardovi-Harlig, 2010). The present study aims to focus on the speech acts of refusal since refusals have been characterized as a major cross-cultural sticking point for ESL students (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Turnbull, 2001; Vilar-Beltrán & Melchor-Couto, 2013) leading to unintended offence and a breakdown in communication.

Another important aspect in ILP studies that cannot be overlooked pertains to contextual parameters like individual differences. According to Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis, learners must be aware of sociocultural features. Being aware of sociocultural norms refers to learners' awareness of the culture, social class, and status. The rationale behind this noticing is that non-native speakers lack sensitivity to certain sociocultural norm distinction that native speakers make in their production (Olshtain, Cohen, & Rosenstein, 1986). Takahashi (2005) also suggested owing to some effects of learner characteristics, such as aptitude, proficiency or motivation, levels of noticing target speech act in learning a language differed from one learner to another. Regarding Takahashi's (2005) assertion, it seems necessary to know to what extent sociocultural variables could have a bearing effect on learners' motivation in acquisition and comprehension of speech acts.

Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the individual differences, specifically motivation, in learning a second language (Lo Castro, 2001; Takahashi, 2001). Although, a large and growing body of literature has investigated the crucial role of motivation in SLA (e.g., Chalak & Kassaian, 2010; Dornyei, 1990, Mirzaei, & Forouzandeh, 2013; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Pishghadam & Khajavi, 2014; Pishghadam, Makiabadi, Shayesteh, Zeynali, in press), there are just a number of motivation studies in the area of ILP carried out so far to investigate the place of motivation for learning pragmatic features (Cook, 2001; Lo Castro, 2001; Niezgoda & Roever, 2001; Tagashira, Yamato, & Isoda, 2001; Takahashi, 2001; Tajeddin & Zand-Moghaddam, 2012). Moreover, such studies have failed to address learners' meta-pragmatic awareness and its relation to general and specific pragmatic motivation. In fact, a neglected area of all these studies is their inadequate attention to sociocultural variables. In other words, learners' motivation for the acquisition of language functions, speech acts, and their realization patterns, pragma-linguistic forms, and socio-pragmatic and sociolinguistic norms have little been investigated (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghadam, 2012). Thus, it is necessary to investigate motivation through sociocultural variables in order to explain and judge EFL learners' pragmatic acquisition.

To sum up, in order to fill this research lacuna in ILP literature, this study sought to investigate the relationship between meta-pragmatic awareness and interlanguage pragmatic motivation. More specifically, the present study examined the relationship between sociocultural variables and EFL learners' general and specific pragmatic motivation. To do so, the following research questions were formulated:

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Research Question One: Is there any significant relationship between advanced Iranian EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness (status, familiarity, and severity) and general pragmatic motivation?

Research Question Two: Is there any significant relationship between advanced Iranian EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness (status, familiarity, and severity) and speech act specific motivation?

Research Question Three: Is there any significant relationship between advanced Iranian EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness and its three subscales of status, familiarity and severity?

Research Question Four: To what extent can meta-pragmatic awareness and its subscales predict general and speech-act-specific pragmatic motivation?

2. Review of the Related Literature

An overview of SLA literature indicates that individual differences are among the essential factors influencing ILP acquisition. In this respect, many studies have demonstrated the relationship between SLA and individual variables such as age, gender, language aptitude, intelligence, self-esteem, anxiety, learning styles, and motivation (Arnold, 1999; Dornyei, 2005; Dornyei & Skehan, 2003; MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Clément, 2016; Robinson, 2005; Schmidt, 2010; Taguchi, 2012). Motivation as an individual difference has a pivotal and determining role in ILP acquisition and development and is conceived of as an important determinant of the allocation of attentional resources (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). However, a quick review of the literature shows that there have been few attempts in the investigation of pragmatic motivation despite its important role in pragmatic acquisition (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghadam, 2012).

As Schmidt (1993) argues, it is more likely that motivated learners pay closer attention to the pragmatic features of input than those who are not so motivated. LoCastro (2001) also carried out a content analysis on the data collected from the group discussions, essays, and language awareness worksheets to report the extent Japanese EFL learners seek to adopt L2 communicative norms. The results indicated that individual differences, specifically motivation, might have had an effect on the Japanese EFL learners' willingness to accommodate to NS norms.

Takahashi's (2001, 2005) studies were considered pioneers in investigating the role of motivation in ILP. Takahashi (2001) thought of motivation as one of the most effective individual differences that affect learners' noticing of target forms. Takahashi (2005) employed the motivation questionnaire developed by Schmidt, Boraei, and Kassabgy (1996) but with some modification to investigate the relationship between Japanese EFL learners' motivation for language learning as a manifold cognitive construct and the way learners process L2 pragmatic input. Participants were asked to complete a metapragmatic awareness questionnaire, a general English proficiency test as well as the 47-item motivation questionnaire including seven subscales of motivation, namely, motivational strength, personal goals, attitudes, expectancy/control components, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and anxiety. The results revealed that there was a strong correlation between pragmatic awareness and motivation subscales particularly intrinsic motivation but not with their proficiency.

Cook (2001) pointed the possible relationship between Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) learners' intrinsic motivation and their ability to notice the socio-pragmatic features and to assess what constitutes a polite speech style in Japanese. Tateyama (2001) also employed MDCTs and role-plays to compare the use of explicit and implicit instruction in a number of basic pragmatic routines in Japanese. The results indicated a better performance of highly motivated JFL learners in a role-play in which they produced a Japanese routine formula, 'sumimasen'. Niezgoda and Roever (2001) replicated Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study with ESL learners in the United States (N = 48) and Czech EFL learners (N=124) to find the effects of proficiency (i.e., low proficiency vs. high proficiency) and learning environment on pragmatic awareness. Gathering the data through a videotape and a questionnaire, they found higher degree of pragmatic awareness in Czech EFL learners than the ESL ones. They attributed Czech-speaking English learners' sensitivity to pragmatic and grammatical errors to their being highly motivated owing to their participation in a competitive program.

Tagashira, Yamato, and Isoda (2011) were to assess the extent to which Japanese EFL learners' pragmatic awareness as a feature of ILP was influenced by their motivational profiles based on the systematic psychological approach of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). They adapted Hiromori's (2004) questionnaire on motivation to investigate the relationship between motivation and pragmatic awareness. The questionnaire was comprised of 18 items and covered topics such as intrinsic motivation (four items), identified regulation (four items), introjected regulation (four items), external regulation (three items), and a motivation (four items). In their study, 162 Japanese EFL university learners were divided into five classes of self-determined motivation group, moderately motivated group, externally regulated motivation group, and a motivated group. The results showed that EFL learners' degree of motivation affects their pragmatic awareness and the more the learners were self-regulated, the more they could become aware of L2 pragmatic features.

While the above-mentioned have all focused on the concept of motivation in general, Tajeddin and Zand-Moghadam (2012) were the only pioneers who studied EFL learners' motivation specific to pragmatic acquisition. Considering the fact that ILP acquisition is related to the language use, they concluded that ILP-related motivation should also take into account some pragmatic aspects of L2 acquisition. Therefore, they classified ILP motivation into two groups of general pragmatic motivation and speech act specific motivation. While the former refers to "L2 learners' motivation to acquire pragmatic strategies, pragmatic routines, politeness strategies, turn-taking patterns, and cultural familiarity" (p. 353), the latter displays learners' motivation to acquire the socio-pragmatic features and pragma-linguistic tools specific to different speech acts. Data were gathered through General Pragmatic Motivation Questionnaire (GPMQ), Speech-act-specific Motivation Questionnaire (SASMQ), and Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT). The results indicated the explanatory power of speech-act-specific motivation in predicting pragmatic production in EFL learners; however, general pragmatic motivation does not reveal such an effect on L2 learners' production. The present study adopted the motivation questionnaire from Tajeddin and Zand-Moghadam (2012) to assess the relationship between students' metapragmatic awareness and their pragmatic motivation.

3. Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

In order to first explore the relationship between meta-pragmatic awareness and interlanguage pragmatic motivation, and second to examine the relationship between sociocultural variables and EFL learners' general and specific pragmatic motivation, a correlational ex post facto was utilized.

3.2. Participants

The study included 78 (F=52, M=26) Iranian advanced EFL students and four native American speakers. Iranian students' age ranged from 16 to 32 years (M=18.44, SD=4.35), and the Americans (two male and two female) were between 17 to 50 years of age. The participants were from Safir Language Institute, Ofogh Language Institute, and Iran Language Institute in Gorgan. They had completed the book Topnotch Summit one (Saslow & Ascher, 2015) according to which their proficiency level of English is supposed to be advanced. These students had completed 4 to 6 years of studying English at different institutes. Their mother tongue was Persian, and none of them had the experience of living in or visiting an English speaking country, and English was their foreign language. The native speakers were two males and two females who have been living in the United States for more than 20 years. Their answers to the meta-pragmatic awareness questionnaire items were considered as the native speakers' norms; on this basis, an EFL students' correct answer was awarded a score of 1 and a wrong answer 0 (See Appendix A).

3.3. Materials and Instruments

Four instruments were employed in the study. An elaborated account of these instruments is given below: Background Information Questionnaire, General Pragmatic Motivation Questionnaire, Speech-act-specific motivation questionnaire, and Meta-pragmatic Awareness questionnaire

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3.3.1. Background Information Questionnaire

Participants were first asked to complete a background questionnaire consisting of questions related to learners' personal information to make sure that participants share similar features and to find out about their principal exposure to the English language in the foreign language classroom.

3.3.2. General and Specific Pragmatic Motivation Questionnaire

To measure pragmatic motivation, Tajeddin and Zand-Moghadam's (2012) pragmatic motivation questionnaires were adopted. In their study, two types of questionnaires based on two types of pragmatic motivation were designed. First, the general pragmatic motivation questionnaire (GPMQ) that focused on the motivation for the learning of L2 pragmatics. Second, speech-act-specific motivation questionnaire (SASMQ) focusing on motivation to use knowledge of words and structures to produce a specific speech act appropriately. The GPMQ consists of 42 items that examine learners' cultural familiarity, politeness strategies, speech act familiarity, and meaning conveyance strategies. The SASMQ includes 6 items on the target speech act of the study, (i.e. refusal). The learners had to mark their response on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (See Appendices B & C).

3.3.3. Meta-pragmatic Awareness Questionnaire

In this study, the participants were required to read 12 DCT situations adapted from Lingli and Wannaruk (2010) which focused on the speech act of refusal and then answer three questions for each item. The first question for each scenario of the questionnaire addressed the degree of severity. It requires the EFL learners to read every situation and show their response on a five-point Likert scale from 1 to 5 (i.e., 1 equals to most trivial and 5 equals to most severe). The second question addressed the degree of formality; it requires the participants to indicate the relationship between interlocutors whether higher, lower or equal status. In this regard, participants of the study were required to determine whether both interlocutors have the same status or the "speaker" (presented as "You") or the "Hearer" has the higher status. The third question was designed to assess the degree of familiarity (intimacy) or social distance between the interlocutors in every situation. Thus, having read each scenario, the participants were required to determine the level of familiarity, that is, whether the relationship between speakers of the conversation is formal, semi-formal or informal. The MPAQ was administered before the interlanguage pragmatic motivation questionnaire (See Appendix D for sample items).

3.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

Data collection was conducted in two subsequent sessions in Safir Language Institute, Ofogh Language Institute, and Iran Language Institute in Gorgan at the end of language semester. In the first session, the participants were asked to fill out a consent form for being involved in a demographic survey and the meta-pragmatic awareness questionnaire the administration of which took 30 minutes. Then, in the next session, they were required to complete the pragmatic motivation questionnaires of the study, the administration of which took about one hour.

In order to compare EFL learners' awareness of L2 meta-pragmatics with the other variables and to make the values of the three questions the same, four native speakers of English answered the same questions. Then, having calculated the frequencies of the native speakers' responses to every question below each situation, the researchers considered the frequencies as the native speakers' norms for each question. Thus, those EFL learners' responses which were the same as the native speakers' norms were given the score of 1, and the other different responses were given the score of zero (0). Furthermore, reliability of the instruments was analyzed to see whether the participants and the questionnaires were reliable, then data were analyzed through Pearson correlation.

3.5. Reliability of the Instruments

To check the reliability of the EI scale, the internal consistency was taken into account. The scales enjoyed an optimum Cronbach's alpha (see Table 1). The optimum reliability of the scales demonstrates the scales were reliable with this particular sample of participants.

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Table 1: Reliability of Tests

Scale	Subscales	Cronbach alpha
	Status	.87
	Familiarity	.89
Meta-pragmatic awareness	Severity	.92
	Total	.90
	GPM	.91
Motivation	SPM	.82
	Total	.93

4. Results

4.1. Assessing Normality of Data (Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test)

To check the normality of data distribution, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was employed. Table 2 shows the results of normality test. As presented in Table 2, the significant values for metapragmatic and motivation scores were above .05. This suggests no violation of the assumption of normality in pragmatic awareness and general and specific pragmatic motivation. Hence, it can be concluded that the data are distributed normally and therefore parametric tests can be employed for the analysis of the data of the present research.

Table 2: Kolmogorov–Smirnov Test (K-S)

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]		
	Statistic	DF	Sig.
Metapragmatic awareness	.08	78	.06
General pragmatic motivation	.06	78	.11
Specific pragmatic motivation	.07	78	.08

4.2. The Descriptive Statistics of Metapragmatic Awareness and Motivation Questionnaires

The descriptive statistics for the metapragmatic awareness test, its subscales and general and specific pragmatic questionnaires are detailed in Table 3. Based on the following table, the mean score for the metapragmatic awareness was 33.28 and the mean scores for each of the status, familiarity and severity subscales are 12.85, 9.32 and 11.12 respectively. In addition, the means for general pragmatic motivation and specific pragmatic motivation, respectively, are 104.51 and 14.99.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Metapragmatic Awareness Scales General and Specific Pragmatic Motivation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Status	78	2	28	12.85	7.15
Familiarity	78	0	30	9.32	9.72
Severity	78	0	50	11.12	12.57
MPA	78	10	100	33.28	28.93
GPM	76	61	194	104.51	32.18
SPM	78	6	30	14.99	7.27

Note: MPA = Metapragmatic awareness; GPM = General pragmatic Motivation; SPM: Specific Pragmatic motivation

With regard to metapragmatic features, as observed in Table 3, a comparison of the means of the metapragmatic features demonstrates that the participants gained the highest score in the status feature, and they had the least awareness in the familiarity feature. That is, they had much more awareness regarding the recognition of the status and most difficulty in figuring out the familiarity of the interlocutors.

4.3. The First Research Question

The research question was to examine if meta-pragmatic awareness and its subscales had any significant relationship with general pragmatic motivation. Table 4 shows the results of Pearson Correlation between Iranian EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness (status, familiarity, and severity) and general pragmatic motivation. The results indicated a positive significant correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness and general pragmatic motivation ($r = 0.88$, $n = 78$ $p = .000$). In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness feature of status and general pragmatic motivation ($r=.88$, $n= 78$, $p= .000$), a significant relationship between relationship meta-pragmatic awareness feature of familiarity with general pragmatic motivation ($r= .89$, $n= 78$, $p= .000$) and a significant correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness feature of severity and general pragmatic motivation ($r =.85$, $n= 78$, $p= .000$).

Table 4: Correlation between Meta-Pragmatic Awareness and its Subscales and General Pragmatic Motivation

	status	familiarity	severity	Total MPA
GPM	.88**	.89**	.85**	.88**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Note: MPA = Metapragmatic awareness; GPM: General Pragmatic motivation

4.4. The Second Research Question

The research question was to examine if there was any significant relationship between meta-pragmatic awareness and its subscales and specific pragmatic motivation. Pearson correlation was employed to find the relationship between the two variables. The results, as indicated in Table 5, show that there was a significant correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness and specific pragmatic motivation [$r = 0.89$, $n= 78$, $p= .000$], a significant correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness feature of status and specific pragmatic motivation [$r= .86$, $n=78$, $p= .000$], a strong, negative, but non-significant correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness feature of familiarity and specific pragmatic motivation [$r = .90$, $n= 78$, $p= .000$] and no significant correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness feature of severity and specific pragmatic motivation [$r= .86$, $n=78$, $p= .000$].

Table 5: Correlation between Meta-Pragmatic Awareness and Its Subscales and Specific Pragmatic Motivation

	status	familiarity	Severity	Total MPA
Speech act specific motivation	.86**	.90**	.86**	.89**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Note: MPA = Metapragmatic awareness; SPM: Specific Pragmatic motivation

4.5. The Third Research Question

The third research question concerned the possible relationship between metapragmatic awareness and its three subscales. The results as indicated in Table 6, showed a strong significant positive correlation between metapragmatic awareness and status ($r= .97$, $n=78$, $p= .000$), a significant positive correlation between metapragmatic awareness and familiarity ($r= .98$, $n=78$, p = .000) and a very strong significant positive correlation between metapragmatic awareness and severity ($r= .98$, $n=78$, $p= .000$). That is, all three sub-constructs of meta-pragmatic awareness correlated positively and significantly with total meta-pragmatic awareness.

Table 6: The Correlation between Metapragmatic Awareness and Its Three Subscales

	1	2	3	4
1. Status	1.00			
2. Familiarity	.95**	1.00		
3. Severity	.94**	.94**	1.00s	
4.Total MPA	.97**	.98**	.98**	1.00

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4.6. The Fourth Research Question

The fourth research question sought to determine if meta-pragmatic awareness and its subscales could predict general and speech-act-specific pragmatic motivation. In order to answer the last research question, Path Analysis was utilized through Amos 24. Figure 1 shows the proposed model of the interrelationships among subscales of meta-pragmatic awareness, general and speech-act-specific pragmatic motivation.
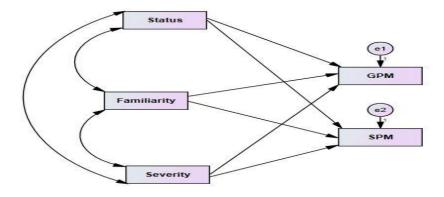

Figure 1. The Proposed Model

To check the strengths of the causal relationships among the components, the standardized estimates were examined. Figure 2 shows the model of the interrelationships among variables.
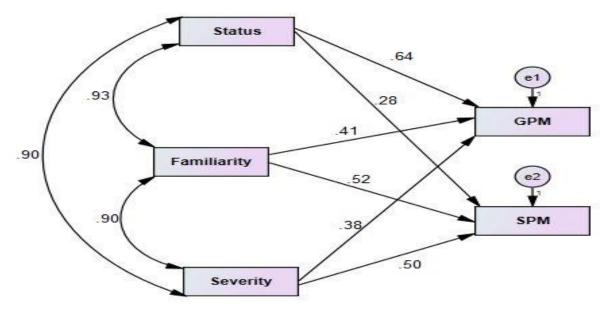

Figure 2. The Model of the Interrelationships among Variables

To check the model fit, goodness of fit indices were used. Goodness of fit indices can be seen in Table 7. In this study, $\chi2/df$, GFI, CFI and RMSEA were used. To have a fit model, $\chi2/df$ should be less than 3, GFI CFI, and NFI should be above .90, and RMSEA should be less than .08.

Table 7: Goodness of Fit Indices

	X2/df	GFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit	<3	>.90	>.90	>.90	<.08
Revised Model	2.55	.92	.90	.94	.05

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As Table 7 shows, all the goodness of fit indices is within the acceptable range. Therefore, the model enjoyed acceptable validity. As indicated in Figure 2, all three sub-scales of meta-pragmatic awareness predicted general pragmatic motivation positively and significantly: Status (β= .32, $p<0.05$), Familiarity (β= .32, $p<0.05$), and Severity (β= .32, $p<0.05$). In addition, all three sub-constructs of meta-pragmatic awareness predicted specific motivation positively and significantly: Status (β= .28, $p<0.05$), Familiarity (β= .52, $p<0.05$), and Severity (β= .50, $p<0.05$).

5. Discussion

The present study touched upon learners' meta-pragmatic awareness which considers learners' awareness of interlocutors' social distance, degree of familiarity, and degree of imposition or severity in a conversation. Having the knowledge of social distance, degree of familiarity, and imposition are some of the factors involved in politeness; therefore, findings of the present study can be related to maintaining politeness in a conversation. Politeness is a universal phenomenon which can be expressed verbally or non-verbally in human interactions, but it differs from group to group, from situation to situation, and from individual to individual (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Gumperz, 1978). Focusing on non-verbal politeness, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between learners' meta-pragmatic awareness and their general and specific pragmatic motivation.

Analyzing data for the first question revealed that there was a positive significant relationship between meta-pragmatic awareness and general pragmatic motivation. More specifically, statistical analysis demonstrated that there was a positive significant correlation between the degree of familiarity, degree of imposition, and general pragmatic motivation. This finding can be justified on several grounds. First, since the basis for politeness theory is saving face, and face is a public self-image or a social-self (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Gumperz, 1978) which is established, maintained, or rebuilt in a social interaction (Brown & Levinson, 1987), it can be claimed that maintaining face in an interaction results from high general pragmatic motivation. So, any kind of learners' efforts to keep the face polite in public arises from a relative increase in general pragmatic motivation. This finding is in tune with Cook (2001) in which learners' socio-pragmatic awareness proceeded from their high motivation, particularly intrinsic motivation. It is also in accordance with findings of Baker's (1992) study in which she indicated that motivation along with other individual differences influences learners' desire to gain an understanding of native speaker standards. This is also in line with Eslami, Kim, Wright, and Burlbaw's (2014) study in which motivation type together with other factors such as purpose of learning the L2 affects learners' degree of pragmatic transfer.

Second, obtaining high scores of the three metapragmatic features by Iranian advanced EFL learners might be the result of the positive correlation between language proficiency and L1 transfer. That is, advanced Iranian EFL learners draw on their native language pragmatic knowledge. This is in harmony with the results of some studies finding that transfer can take place with those L2 learners who have gained sufficient target language resources to make it possible (Blum-Kalka, 1980; Hill, 1997; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). Takahashi and Beebe (1987), as an example, found that advanced Japanese participants often drew on their native language when performing English refusals. Moreover, it can be stated that status, imposition and familiarity are transferable areas in L2 acquisition, and high scores in status and degree of familiarity derived from the positive pragmatic transfer.

ILP research provides plenty of studies on pragmatic transfer in learner language (Abrams, 2013; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Carrel & Konneker, 1981; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Garcia, 1989; House, 1988, Kasper, 1992; Pinto, 2012; Pinto & Raschio, 2007, 2008; Taguchi, 2011). What has been in common in all these studies was learners' conceptualizations of politeness underlying their native language which have affected learners' selection of L2 politeness strategies. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) and Tanak (1997) also claimed that learners' perception of L2 speech acts is affected more by their sociopragmatic transfer. They concluded that sociopragmatic transfer is more important than pragmalinguistic transfer which leads to learners' success in intercultural communication. Therefore, the findings of the present study can make a contribution to a positive and significant relationship between sociopragmatic transfer and general pragmatic motivation.

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Additionally, the significant relationship between meta-pragmatic awareness and general pragmatic motivation tells that learners' development of meta-pragmatic awareness might lead to their development of pragmatic motivation.

However, comparing scores of meta-pragmatic subscale features showed that learners' scores on degree of imposition (i.e., severity) and status were higher than those on degree of familiarity. In other words, learners' knowledge and performance on status and the degree of imposition were more than their knowledge and performance on the degree of familiarity. The probable reason for obtaining low score in degree of familiarity can be interpreted from the fact that the degree of imposition is not as transferable as other two metapragmatic features for Iranian advanced EFL learners, and it results from Iranian EFL learners' lack of shared group membership in a target language. Since politeness is rule-governed and speakers in a conversation can intuitively and unconsciously (Lakoff & Ide, 2005) choose between polite and rude utterances, a lower score of the degree of familiarity signals that Iranian EFL learners may not get internalized shared cultural assumptions which lead to violating politeness rules and felicity conditions in a conversation. Based on Austin's (1962) felicity conditions, words and actions in a conversation must be appropriate according to interlocutors' roles and specifications of the procedure. Therefore, to compensate learners' misunderstanding of the degree of imposition and lack of shared social rationality of a target language, there is a need to instruct Iranian EFL learners on the rules of politeness.

As to the second question, the results of the correlation between meta-pragmatic awareness and specific pragmatic motivation were indicative of a significant relationship between them. It can be said that Iranian advanced EFL learners learnt or acquired sociopragmatic factors of the speech act of refusal as they were interested in or were aware of the learning process for that specific speech act. On the other hand, specific pragmatic motivation might come from being unconsciously aware of sociopragmatic rules.

The answer to the third question was positive because there was a positive correlation between general pragmatic motivation and specific pragmatic motivation. It is demonstrated that although factors that EFL learners take into account for the acquisition of one speech act are different from those for another speech act (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghadam, 2012), the relative increase in general pragmatic motivation leads to the increase in specific pragmatic motivation. Therefore, to keep learners motivated in instructing a specific speech act and to prevent learners from fluctuation in learning pragmatic norms, teachers can encourage learners paying attention to issues in socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic variables.

In respect of the fourth research question, it was revealed that both general and specific pragmatic motivation can be predicted by the features of the metapragmatic awareness. That is, pragmatic motivation construct can be to a great extent accounted by the metapragmatic knowledge of the learners. This, as stated by Tajeddin and Zand-Moghadam (2012), reveals that pragmatic motivation is not only a psychological trait but also a psychopragmatic trait in nature accounting for "language learners' motivation for the acquisition of L2 use and the appropriate use of their L2 linguistic resources" (p.366). This confirms the importance of socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic knowledge of the speakers in their learning the pragmatic aspects of the SL.

6. Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the present study shed light on Iranian advanced EFL learners' meta-pragmatic awareness and its relationship with general and specific pragmatic motivation. It was found that Iranian advanced EFL learners lacked shared cultural group membership; they are partially aware of the appropriate degree of familiarity in an English context, resulting in the negative pragmatic transfer. One reason is the lack of necessary interactions in many EFL contexts, even Iranian advanced EFL learners are not exposed to the authentic use of target language. In addition, lack of evidence between meta-pragmatic awareness and specific speech act motivation demonstrated that although specific speech act motivation can predict learners' pragmatic production based on the motivation for that speech act is higher (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghadam, 2012), it cannot be a true indicative of learners' meta-pragmatic awareness. In closing, with respect to Tajeddin and Zand-

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Moghadam's statement that "general pragmatic motivation does not reveal anything about learners' current level of pragmatic knowledge" (p. 368), current study differs slightly and demonstrated that general pragmatic motivation can be predicted learners' meta-pragmatic awareness.

This study offers a number of implications for the second and foreign language research. In respect of the theories of motivation, learners' general and specific pragmatic motivation can be examined and compared, with other types of motivation. It also helps teachers have a better understanding about learners' pragmatic competence and areas of language transfer. With respect to the acquisition of ILP, the study highlights the need for instruction of different pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic features to increase the motivation specific to interlanguage pragmatic development.

There are a number of limitations and delimitations in this study that can be regarded not as shortcomings but as the indicators of potential research directions that need to be addressed in future research studies. One of the first limitations the present study was related to the way learners' knowledge is measured through meta-pragmatic awareness questionnaire and pragmatic motivation questionnaire, it would not seem practicable to collect the data through other measures of speech act production, e.g., oral discourse completion tasks (ODCTs), or role plays (RPDCTs), written discourse completion (WDCTs). A further limitation concerns the fact that this study was conducted in five classes in three institutes in Gorgan and due to the limited number of advanced EFL learners in each class there was no possibility to get access to more population. In addition, only four native American speakers participated in the present study, because the researchers did not have access to more people in the united states. However, since this study was narrowed down in terms of participants and kind of pragmatic tests, it seems necessary to point out some further research to be done in different contexts focusing on one gender and employing other types of pragmatic tests like discourse role play tasks (DRPT), (WDCT), and ODCTs. Additionally, similar studies can be conducted to investigate the possible relationship among learners' meta-pragmatic awareness, interlanlanguage pragmatic motivation and their language learning strategies.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix A. Sample of Native Speaker's Answers to the Metapragmatic Awareness Questionnaire

		Nataly	Gass	Kile	Tessa	Selected answer
Question 1	Status	3	3	3	3	3
	Formality	2	2	1	2	2
	Severity	4	4	3	5	4
Question 2	Status	2	2	2	2	2
	Formality	2	2	2	2	2
	Severity	3	3	1	2	3
Question 3	Status	1	1	1	1	1
	Formality	3	2	2	2	2
	Severity	2	2	2	2	2
Question 4	Status	3	3	3	3	3
	Formality	2	3	3	2	2
	Severity	3	4	4	1	4
	Status	2	2	2	2	2

Appendix B: General Pragmatic Motivation (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghaddam, 2012)

Please do your best to indicate your opinion with regard to your motivation in learning English. Thank you very much for your cooperation

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I think it is necessary to learn British or American culture if I'm going to learn English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I wish I could make myself understood more appropriately.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I like to speak English as politely as necessary.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I'm learning English because I want to speak it appropriately if I'm in an English-speaking country.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	If I can speak English well, native speakers can understand me better.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	If I can talk about my intentions exactly, no misunderstanding will occur.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	When I listen to English, I like to pay attention to how they use the words to convey meaning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I like to learn how to speak about my intentions in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I'm good at conveying my meaning indirectly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I try to memorize what native speakers say in each situation to express their intentions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	When I'm learning English, I pay attention to the situation in which conversations happen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	If I can't speak English, it will be because I can't understand the situation in which conversations happen.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	If I can't speak well, it will be because I don't know how to talk about that specific situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	When I listen to a conversation in English, I try to understand not only the situation but also the positions and the degree of familiarity between the speakers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	When I watch an English movie, I take notes of the sentences actors use in every situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	When I learn every word or sentence, I first pay attention to the degree of formality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	I try to learn the culture as I'm learning English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	I like to learn to say little but mean a lot.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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19	I think a good learner of English can use language for different functions (e.g., apologizing, requesting, complaining).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	In English exams, when I read situations I can't decide what forms to use.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	I often have difficulty saying the right form in every situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	I always like to check my sentences with a native speaker or my teacher.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	When I listen to native speakers or watch a movie, I always pay attention to the appropriate use of language.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24	When I learn a new word or phrase, I like to learn how to use it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	When I learn a new structure, I like to learn how to use it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	I need to learn the cultural norms when I learn English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	When I'm speaking English, I try to adjust my language to the formality of the situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	I like to learn how to start, continue, and finish a conversation in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	I like to learn how to take turns when I speak English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	Conveying the meaning in English is a challenge for me when learning English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31	Using the appropriate form to convey a specific meaning is a challenge when I'm learning English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32	It embarrasses me if I can't make myself understood.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33	I feel uncomfortable if I get someone wrong.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34	I am afraid other students will laugh at me if I don't use the right form to convey my meaning.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35	I need to be familiar with different situations in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36	I think, if I want to use English well, I have to know what forms to use in each situation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37	I like to learn English grammar based on the situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38	I think I need to learn vocabulary based on the situations in which language is used.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39	I need to be able to clarify my intentions by rephrasing, explaining, etc. when talking to a person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40	I get nervous if I can't express myself in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41	I think I need to know different situations if I want to learn English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42	I think learning English grammar is more important than learning different functions (e.g. how to request, invite, complain) in English.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix C: Specific Pragmatic Motivation (Tajeddin & Zand-Moghaddam, 2012)

Please do your best to indicate your opinion with regard to your motivation in learning English. Thank you very much for your cooperation

		Strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	Strongly disagree
43	I like to learn how to make refusals in English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44	I like to learn the appropriate refusing expressions according to the speakers and the situations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45	I like to learn how to be polite when I make refusals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46	I want to learn how to refer to the reasons when I make refusals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47	I need to know the cultural norms when I make refusals	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48	I need to know how to use appropriate words, appropriate forms, and appropriate tone of voice when I make refusals.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Appendix D: Sample of Meta-pragmatic Awareness Questionnaire Items

In this questionnaire, you will find several communication situations in which you interact with someone. Imagine you are the person in the situation which refuse each scenario and determine the degree of formality, familiarity, and imposition in each situation. (please just write the numbers in the given table)

Status: 1. *Higher to lower Status/ 2. Equal to Equal status/ 3. Lower to higher status*

Degree of Familiarity: 1. *Formal / 2. Informal/ 3. Semi-Formal*

Degree of severity: most trivial 1-2-3-4-5 most severe

1. You are in your professor's office talking about your final paper which is due in two weeks. Your professor indicates that he has a guest speaker coming to his next class and invites you to attend that lecture but you cannot. (Invitation: refusing to higher status)

Your professor: By the way, I have a guest speaker in my next class who will be discussing issues which are relevant to your paper. Would you like to attend?

You refuse by saying: **I'd like to come but I've already made plans.**

Status			Degree of Formality			Degree of Severity				
1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5