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and common variance; that is the higher the correlation, the higher the common variance and vice versa...

The finding of the research has the pedagogical implication that the distinctive characteristics of each type of conjunction should be pointed out to EFL learners, so that they will be able to recognize and or produce them correctly. That is, regardless of the level of the learners –low and high, different syntactic and semantic characteristics of these two structures and also their distributions should be explicitly clarified for the students. This observation and recommendation thereby is based on the belief that a conscious and systematic analysis, presentation and practice of language contributes to language learning. Yet, it should not be overlooked that the usefulness of explicit teaching of FL grammar is not absolute and necessarily guaranteed in all teaching contexts. If the teaching of grammar is pedagogically inadequate, it will have no impact on the development of learners' grammatical proficiency. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the success of explicit teaching of grammar also depends on so many variables, among which perhaps learner factors rank the highest. Therefore, knowledge of rules, it must be remembered, reinforces the use learners might make of them, and not to replace them. Larsen-Freeman has adequately summarized the controversy by observing that "...teaching grammar means enabling language students to use linguistic forms accurately, meaningfully and appropriately (cited in Celce-Murcia, 1991:280).

To investigate the degree of go-togetherness of the scores on the TOFEL and the elicitation test, using Pearson Correlative Formula, a correlational analysis was conducted, i.e. to test the null hypothesis of no significant relationship ($H_0: r_{xy} = 0$) at $\alpha < .05$ directional (because any correlation found was expected to be positive). The assumption for the statistics was found to be met and the correlation coefficient that was obtained ($r = .98$) was significant ($p < .05$).

As the result indicates the correlation coefficient between the results of the two tests appears to be relatively high. It means that different groups of high and low, behave differently on the corrdinate and disjunctive conjunctions. That is, the higher the subjects' proficiency in EFL, as shown by the result of the TOFEL, the better they had performed in the elicitation test and vice versa. Therefore the null hypothesis – there is no significant systematic relationship between the level of language proficiency of Iranian learners of EFL and the ability to perform correctly on the disjunctive conjunctions **neither** and **nor** used independently on the one hand, and the correlative conjunctions **neither... nor**, used together, on the other hand, was rejected and the predictions of the researcher were supported.

Discussion and Implications

The present research aimed at finding the relationship between the level of proficiency and the ability to perform on the disjunctive and correlative conjunctions of **neither** and **nor** used independently and **neither ... nor** used together, by the Iranian learners of EFL. The statistical analysis used-correlational analysis, resulted in the important finding that there is a significant degree of go-togetherness between the scores on the TOFEL and the elicitation test. According to Hatch and Farhady (1982), there is a positive relationship between correlation

Data Analysis

In order to find an answer to the research question, two sets of statistical analyses were carried out. The first set included the descriptive statistics on the TOFEL and the elicitation tests independently. Therefore, for example the means and variances of each group's performance on the TOFEL was computed and compared with the other group to determine whether the two groups randomly selected had been homogenous as regards their language proficiency or not? Consequently as mentioned above, the scores above the mean were assigned to the high group and the scores below the mean were assigned to the low group. Those subjects who got the mean score were excluded from the statistical analysis. Tables 2 and 3 give the descriptive statistics for both the proficiency and the elicitation tests respectively.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics on the TOFEL

Group	X	SD	N
High	67.05	11.81	70
Low	42.12	5.76	85
Total	54.58	8.78	155

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on the Elicitation Test

Group	X	SD	N
High	29.31	6.01	70
Low	13.10	2.66	85
Total	21.20	4.33	155

allowance for probable malfunctioning items. In addition, the elicitation test was 'pretested' with five colleagues in order to determine relatively objectively, the characteristics of the individual items as well as the characteristics of the test as a whole.

The mean of the facility index of 40 items of the elicitation test was found to be 0.55, which is very close to an ideal index (Farhady, et.al. 1995). This indicates that the test items had been neither too easy nor too hard. The reliability coefficient of the elicitation test estimated on the basis of the KR-21 formula was found to be 0.75 which seems to be an acceptable index.

Table 1. Item Facility and Reliability of the Elicitation Test

IF	reliability
0.55	0.75

Since the number of the items in the elicitation test was 40, the Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula was used to determine the reliability of the elicitation test when adjusted to two and half times its original length (i.e.100 items as in the TOFEL).The desired reliability in this case was that of the TOFEL which was 0.94 for the total of 100 items. After applying the Spearman Brown Prophecy Formula, the adjusted reliability of the elicitation test increased to 0.85.

The necessary data for research were collected at two stages. In the first stage, the TOFEL was administered to all 165 subjects. Within a short interval of two weeks the elicitation test was administered to the same subjects.

Data Collection

In order to answer the research question, two sets of: 1) proficiency and 2) elicitation tests were used to collect the necessary data.

The first testing instrument was a TOFEL Standardized Test of English proficiency (1992). It consisted of a total of 100 items in two sections of:

a) 40 items on structure and written expression, and b) 30 items on vocabulary and another 30 items on reading comprehension of 5 reading passages. The total raw score of the TOFEL was 100, because the subjects were given 1 point for each correct answer. The subjects were expected to choose the one BEST answer to each question and mark it on a separate answer sheet. The administration of the whole test of proficiency took 70 minutes.

The role of TOFEL was two-fold. First, on the basis of the performance of the subjects in the TOFEL, they were divided into two groups of high and low. Second, the performance of the subjects in the elicitation test was compared with their results in the TOFEL, in order to find out whether there is any relationship between the two scores and if so what is the nature of that relationship.

The elicitation test, which was exclusively developed for the purposes of the present research, consisted of 40 multiple-choice items, which contained different usages of disjunctive conjunctions **neither** and **nor** used independently, and correlative conjunctions **neither... nor** constituting a single syntactic device in different contexts. The goal of the test was to measure the quality of the subjects' performance in the use of these two grammatical structures. The test was believed to have a reasonable number of items to render it reliable, because it has been shown that beyond 30 items, the reliability of the test would not increase significantly (Farhady, et.al.1995). In this way, extra caution was taken to make

H0: There is no significant systematic relationship between the level of language proficiency of Iranian learners of EFL and the ability to perform correctly on the disjunctive conjunctions of **neither** and **nor** used independently, on the one hand, and the correlative conjunctions **neither... nor** used together, on the other hand.

Method

Subjects

The total number of subjects who participated in this research were 165 Iranian students, both male and female with an average age of 25. The subjects were senior students from four different classes majoring in English Translation of Azad University of Takestan branch. Since five of the subjects had not completed the proficiency or the elicitation tests properly, their scores were discarded. In addition, the scores of another five subjects who got the mean scores on the TOFEL were also excluded from the statistical analysis in order to separate the low and high groups by at least one point. Therefore the final results were based on the performance of 155 subjects. The subjects were divided into two proficiency groups-85 in the low group and 70 in the high group, on the basis of their performance on a TOFEL Test. Those who scored one standard deviation above the mean of the scores on the TOFEL were considered to have high level of proficiency in EFL; those who scored one standard deviation below the mean were regarded as having low level of proficiency.

competency in English, the performance of the learners will reveal a corresponding improvement in the use of these structures. The definition of the terms grammatical and acceptable which were adopted from Crystal (1992:160-3) were respectively "...also called well-formed... a sentence which conforms to the rules defined by a specific grammar of a language "and" ... any usage which native speakers feel is possible or normal in a language."

Finally, it should be mentioned that despite the fact that at present according to some scholars quantitative and qualitative research should both be integrated (e.g. Wolfson, 1986) in order to get more comprehensive pictures, the present research is primarily of the quantitative nature. This is in line with the observations of Lazarton (1995) who believes that the quantification of data is not only possible, but also it is necessary. Henning even goes further in supporting quantification and claims that "without some recourse to quantitative methods... it is non conceivable that the investigation of language acquisition will ever be said to belong to the realm of scientific inquiry (1986:703).

Research Question and Hypothesis

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research question was proposed:

Is there any relationship between Iranian learners' level of proficiency in EFL and the ability to perform correctly on the disjunctive conjunctions of **neither** and **nor** used independently, on the one hand, and the correlative conjunctions **neither ... nor** used together, on the other hand?

In order to answer the above research question, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

“Ali loves Pari and intends to marry her”., can be negated by correlative coordinator **neither... nor** as:

“Ali **neither** loves Pari **nor** intends to marry her”.

On the other hand, **neither** and **nor** used independently, as non-correlatives are also used as negators. In this usage, they usually presuppose that the preceding clause is either explicitly or implicitly negative. It should be mentioned that in negative clauses **neither** or **nor** can be used instead of **either** with obligatory subject-operator inversion:

“All of the students were obviously very miserable. **Nor** were the teachers satisfied with conditions at the school.” (Quirk, et.al. 1987:937).

It has also been observed that the ability to understand and use these grammatical structures correctly is one of the distinctive features of a high proficiency of Iranian students in EFL. The notion of language proficiency, which is so crucial in language program design, language teaching and testing, is not properly defined and there are discrepancies of opinions. Yet as Farhady believes “...in spite of differing theoretical views as to its definition, a general issue on which many scholars seem to agree is that the focus of proficiency is on the students’ ability to use language (1982:44).

Considering the above factors, the aim of the present research was to verify or refute the researcher’s intuition that there is a strong direct relationship between Iranian learners’ competency in EFL and the use of conjunctions **neither** and **nor** independently, and correlative conjunctions **neither ... nor** used together as a single grammatical structure. That is, it was believed that the students with low competency in EFL will not be able to recognize and use these structures grammatically and acceptably. On the other hand, with an increase in their

neither and **nor** used independently. on the one hand, and the correlative conjunctions of **neither ... nor** used together on the other hand. Halliday and Hassan (1976) believe that conjunctions are one of the cohesive devices, which are on the borderline between grammatical and lexical cohesion. That is, they are mainly grammatical but they also have a lexical component. Furthermore, it should be remembered that conjunctions are formal devices, which mainly appear in written texts. Halliday and Hassan (1976:226-7) believe that:

Conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their meaning; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) texts; conjunctions express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse... conjunction is a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before.

Shiffrin (1987) calls conjunctions as discourse markers, because by means of which extended stretches of discourse are organized and managed (McCarthy 1991).

For many years the Iranian educators including the present researcher as a student and a teacher of EFL have noticed that the distinction between these two grammatical structures takes too much time and effort on the part of the Iranian learners to master. The problem has gained grave consequences because these two structures not only have similar semantic features, but also there are superficial similarities between their distribution. For example when **neither... nor** are used together as correlative coordinators, more specifically as negative coordinators, they negate two conjuncts joined by **and**. On the one hand, for instance the sentence:

purpose, there is no need for conscious learning of the form of a TL. That is to say that, according to this approach, the conscious knowledge of grammar can not be utilized by the learner in the verbal communicative interactions. It can be only utilized to monitor the kind of knowledge referred to as acquired knowledge. Accordingly, the explicit teaching of grammar was downgraded in practices of teaching foreign languages.

Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of interest of grammatical competence and it will not be far fetched to claim that most of the courses of teaching second or foreign languages throughout the world continue a grammatically based organization (Richards, 1985:144). That is, according to some researchers (e.g. Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1990), despite the popularity of communicative approaches, as practitioners of teaching foreign languages have acknowledged, it must be admitted that, form does not take care of itself. This is in line with the concept of language awareness (LA) which brings together the notions of input enhancement (Sharwood Smith, 1991) and consciousness raising (Rutherford, 1987; Sharwood Smith, 1981). According to LA approach, grammar is not regarded as a collection of structures, which should be internalized, rather it is treated as a network of systems to be interacted with. In other words, according to LA based approaches, teaching grammar is not an end in itself rather it is treated as a means of foreign language development. This means that, unlike traditional practices and as some researchers have also suggested (e.g. Clece-Murcia and Hills, 1988) it is possible to teach grammar explicitly through communicative means.

One of the troublesome areas of English syntax for Iranian students is the use and especially the recognition of the differences between disjunctive conjunction of

learners, the better they will perform on the two conjunctions especially selected for the present research and vice versa. On the basis of the findings, it is argued that the grammatical structures should be taught explicitly, meaningfully and appropriately.

Introduction

One of the controversial issues in language pedagogy has been the question of whether grammar should be taught explicitly or not? The controversy, in a sense, reflects the debate between the formal and the functional approaches to the teaching of foreign languages. On the one hand grammatical skills have traditionally been directly associated with language proficiency. Higgs and Clifford (cited in Richards, 1985:155-57) for example claim that “grammatical accuracy is a fundamental component of proficiency for many communicative tasks”. They also observe that if learners of second / foreign languages are forced too early to communicate, without proper regard for accuracy, this may result in fossilization. Pienemann also observes that “giving up the instruction of syntax is to allow for the fossilization of interlanguage in simplified form” (1948:209). Consequently, for many decades the explicit teaching of grammatical structures was regarded as an indispensable part of language courses. However, with the advent of the communicative approach (Widdowson, 1978), applied linguists and teachers alike came to believe that perhaps too much attention has been paid to the conscious knowledge of explicit grammatical rules (also Widdowson, 1988). The distinction between ‘acquisition’ and ‘learning’ as suggested by Krashen (1987) added further weight to the observation that in order to master a language for communicative

Disjunctive and Coordinate Conjunctions as Markers of Competency in EFL

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Abstract

One of the problematic grammatical structures for Iranian EFL learners which is believed to have direct relationship with general competency is conjunctions. In order to validate or refute this assumption, the present research was designed. The question is addressed within the perspective of explicit teaching of grammar, itself a controversial question in TFL. 165 senior students of English Translation majors participated in the study. The subjects were first given a TOFEL to determine the level of their competency. Another especially developed test for the present study, containing different usages of two different types of conjunctions was also administered to the same subjects after an interval of two weeks. The analysis of 155 answer sheets to both of the tests and especially their go-togetherness revealed that the higher the competency of the

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