Focus on Lexis and L2 Learners' Development of Oral Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency Measures

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Abstract

Second language (L2) theories have for long acknowledged the importance of focus on formulaicity or conventionalized lexical chunks. Yet, there has been little attempt to examine the impact of this on foreign language learners' development of complexity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF) measures. The purpose of this study was twofold: First, to see whether lexis-based instruction had any significant effects on EFL learners' oral CAF, and, second, whether different types of lexis-based instructions (e.g., using corpus-based concordances, textual lexis enhancement, and audio-visual captioned lexis) had differential effects. Participants were 54 EFL undergraduates at an Iranian university. After checking the initial homogeneity, *2* groups of participants were randomly assigned to experimental (lexis) and control (non-lexis) groups. After pretesting on CAF, the lexis sub-groups received the *3* types of lexis-based instructions in a counterbalanced manner. After each lexis instruction, students' oral data were also obtained. The control group received mainstream non-lexis instruction. One-way MANCOVA results pointed to the significant effects of lexis instruction on oral CAF measures. Specifically, repeated-measures MANOVA results revealed that audio-visual captioned lexis was the most effective modality in heightening formulaicity. The findings suggest that focus on lexis is beneficial to L2 learners' oral skills. Further theoretical and pedagogical implications are discussed.

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Traditionally, language was analyzed into grammar (structure or 'sentence grammar') and vocabulary (words). Vocabulary was considered as the fixed non-generative words, while grammar, as the more fundamental and creative component, subsuming elements of the generative system of language; that is, a lexico-grammatical view of language. Therefore, many scholars and syllabus designers represented such a 'lexicalized grammar' view (Lewis, 1993), meaning that the focus of language teaching should be emphasizing learners' development of grammatical competence, with the attainment of words coming after just to slot in the potentially meaning-bearing structures (Zhao, 2009).

The lexical approach, LA, (Lewis, 1993), however, has been amongst the recent views that challenge this traditional conception of language. LA was first propounded by Lewis (1993) and further explained in Lewis (1997a, 2000). LA can be regarded as an approach for L2 teaching based on the notion of *lexis* as the pivot of linguistic knowledge, especially from a developmental standpoint (Lewis, 1997b). Lexis refers to lexical combinations which are stored in (and later recalled from) language learners' mental lexicons as unanalyzed chunks and form the basis of language (Mirzaei, Rahimi, & Rahimi, 2016a). LA then holds that "grammar as structure is subordinate to lexis" (Lewis, 1993). This view further adds that unanalyzed chunks, but not bare word forms, form the basis of the lexicon (Ellis, 2006). Lewis (1993) submits that emphasis be put upon developing the learner's competency in lexis, or their capability to understand and construct lexical phrases as unanalyzed, formulaic wholes, and that these exemplars be developed into raw data through which learners become aware of L2 structures, conventionally considered as grammar. He asserts that a central part of language teaching is "raising students' awareness of, and developing their ability to 'chunk' language successfully" (Lewis, 1993, p. vi). Therefore, although structural patterns are regarded as useful, lexis and lexical patterning are given prime importance. This represents a 'grammaticalized lexis' view of the language learning process (Lewis, 1993).

Several psycholinguistic, process-oriented reasons are posed for emphasizing lexis (e.g., Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, & Demecheleer, 2006; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992). For instance, students can productively create innovative sentences (or meanings), since lexical expressions are stored and reproduced as whole units, and this can reduce frustration and stimulate motivation or fluency under real-time conditions. Lexis also occurs in natural and expected societal situations, which makes it quite easier for students to memorize and use lexical phrases as productive tools for communicating, as opposed to separate words. Further, lexical constituents of chunks are often fully fixed and, in cases, can be analyzed in terms of regular grammatical rules and classified into patterns (Side, 1990), which helps learners develop grammatical knowledge of a language.

In other cases, many of such formulaic sequences sound more idiomatic and are inexplicable by regular 'sentence grammar' rules, nor by the lexical properties of the constituents. Practice and learning of such formulaicity can, nonetheless, help learners develop more 'native-like' proficiency (Boers et al., 2006). Further, according to Boers et al. (2006), lexis (or formulaicity), if 'correctly' committed to memory, can in turn enhance linguistic accuracy, because knowing prefabricated chunks constitutes 'zones of safety' where risk of 'erring' is minimal and only possible in between the formulaic sequences in the produced discourse. Finally, these unanalyzed chunks, which encode particular meanings, are even combined, yielding more grammatical complexity in the form of extended discourse (Taguchi, 2007). There thus seems to be a considerable association between a focus on lexis and the development of CAF, or in Housen and Kuiken's words (2009), the 'principal dimensions' of L2 performance and L2 proficiency.

Recent research on second or foreign language (L2) learning has shown that a focus on lexis can result in significant learning outcomes in terms of different aspects of the language. Taguchi (2007), for instance, evidenced L2 learners' creative construction of oral discourse after extensive practice on grammatical chunks. Lexis research has also

evidenced that mastery of L2 lexis or formulaicity can lead to more perceived speaking proficiency within learners (Boers et al., 2006; Mirzaei, Hashemian, & Azizi Farsani, 2016b). In spite of the extensive research on CAF measures, especially in relation to task performance (e.g., Fakhraee Faruji & Ghaemi 2017; Kuiken & Vedder, 2007; Robinson, 2011), little research is found in the literature that has tried to explore the link between a focus on lexis in language teaching and L2 learners' development of CAF measures. Researching the possible contribution of 'noticing lexis' (Lewis, 1993) to L2 CAF dimensions can be very useful. Despite the acknowledged importance of CAF to L2 performance, it is yet unclear how L2 teachers can greatly facilitate their acquisition by L2 students. If lexis has a role to play here, it may lend support to LA's original premise that lexis is not only a resource but a source. Furthermore, future lexis should attempt to bring to light what modalities (or lexis-based instructional frameworks), for instance, textual, audio, or audio-visual, are more facilitative and influential in focusing or noticing L2 lexis. This study was, therefore, planned as an attempt to address this gap in the CAF and lexis research.

Literature Review

A syllabus represents the content of a teaching course. It is related to *what* to be learned/taught. Conventionally, the syllabuses in language programs were grammar-based (Lewis, 1993). For decades, it has been typical for language teachers to look at grammar constituents as basic in their language classrooms. To them, language learning was meant understanding the grammatical patterns of a language. Recent research in language acquisition has proposed a different approach though, called LA, arguing for some middle-ground positions between the extremes (Zhao, 2009). When LA was introduced in 1993, it prompted intense debate. Many reviews appeared, and an enormous number of colleagues have written with queries, disagreements, support, and practical suggestions for taking the approach into the classroom. It is particularly gratifying that most of the comments from teachers working in regular language

classrooms have been positive. They showed how teachers were able to integrate lexical perceptions into their everyday teaching (Lewis, 2008).

According to Kawasaki (2008), LA is based on the view that the main building blocks of L2 teaching/learning are words and lexical phrases (not grammar, functions or other units of organization). It focuses on developing language learners' proficiency with lexis. In fact, it is based on the claim that an essential component of language acquisition is the ability to understand and make lexical items as unanalyzed units or chunks. Similar to Krashen's Natural Approach or the Communicative Approach, LA regards transmission of meaning at the center of language learning/teaching. This results in an emphasis on the primary transmitter of meaning, that is, vocabulary. The idea of a large vocabulary is actually extended from words to lexis, but the basic idea is that fluency is based on the acquisition of a large accumulation of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items, which are accessible as the basis for any linguistic creativity. Knowledge of grammar allows the productive re-combination of lexis in new and creative ways, but it cannot start to be helpful in that role till the language learner has an adequately large mental lexicon for which grammatical knowledge can be used (Lewis, 2008). Hameed (2002) argues that language consists of both traditional grammatical rules and definite multi-word prefabricated units. Teachers, applying the LA, will not analyze the target language in the class, but will tend to direct language learner's attention to these prefabricated units. He then points that language originates not from traditional grammar and vocabulary but from multi-word prefabricated chunks, or formulaicity.

Moreover, Lewis (2008) asserts that implementing LA in language classrooms does not mean a radical change, which can upset colleagues, parents and learners. On the contrary, if introduced with reflection and care, its introduction will be almost inconspicuous, leading to small changes in every lesson in such a way that the cumulative effect will be great. LA holds that language consists of exemplars or chunks which, when put together, result in innovative, coherent text. Four different basic

types of these chunks are identified, one of which simply represents single words while all the others consist of multi-word expressions.

Effective implementation of LA places great emphasis on noticing formulaicity, or the basic multi-word chunks of language. Accurate noticing means teachers need a set of organizing principles so that they can encourage learners to record selected language in carefully designed lexical notebooks after studying a text, or doing more complementary lexis-oriented exercises and activities. Some learners find fixed formats helpful, while others prefer a more conventional book. The key is that accurate recording (or writing) of new lexis aids noticing and maximizes the chance of input becoming intake (Lewis, 2008).

For so many decades, the notion 'lexical chunk' has attracted the attention of linguists and practitioners due to its practical or pedagogical implications. It represents a whole range of word units or a spectrum of lexical expressions and syntactic rules in terms of the traditional grammar-vocabulary distinction. Unanalyzed chunks (e.g., collocations and idiomatic expressions) are referred to in the literature in various ways, for instance, lexical phrases, multiword units, formulas, formulaic sequences, lexical chunks, prefabricated chunks, ready-made utterances, gambits, and lexicalize stems (e.g., Foster, 2001; Howarth, 1998; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992; Pawley & Syder, 1983; Wray, 2000, 2002). L2 practitioners have approached lexical constructions in both L1 and L2 learning contexts and realized that natural language contains a great variety of word-units which play a great part in the language learning process. In particular, in the 1990s, a series of articles and volumes on the lexis research and its implementation in L2 classrooms were published, which, as a consequence, put the notion in the spotlight of pedagogy (Xu, 2010).

Additionally, previous research indicates that lexical chunks can help learners in their L2 learning, since chunks contribute to the aspect of language fluency, accuracy, productiveness and cohesion to a great deal. Moreover, lexical chunks can stimulate L2 learners' motivation very much. Hence, investigating the functions of lexical chunks is pedagogically

helpful. On the one hand, it highlights the importance of lexical chunks in language learners' written and spoken language; on the other hand, it indicates the orientation of lexical chunks used in L2 teaching process (Zhoa, 2009). Furthermore, as Kawasaki (2008) points out, making language learners memorize lexical phrases (multi-word prefabricated chunks) will assist their fluent production of the language. The reason is that L1 users have a large stock of lexical chunks that is crucial for eloquent production. L1 users store vocabulary not just as individual words, but as parts of phrases and larger chunks, which can be recalled from memory as a unit, decreasing processing difficulties. Learning individual words will need much more time and effort, but learning chunks can facilitate automatic recall of stretches of language and unitary meanings (Wood, 2010).

A relatively small but growing body of research explores relationships between the formulaic sequences in university written and oral discourse and materials used in the teaching of EAP. In academic writing, for example, some evidence has emerged to show that formulaic sequences are at high frequency in the writing of authors in academic disciplines, but they are comparatively rare in the production of both regular students and EAP students in those disciplines (Wood, 2010). Moreover, Boers et al. (2006), in their study estimate the extent to which the use of formulaic sequences assists L2 learners advance as proficient L2 speakers. The results of their study suggest that helping L2 learners build a repertoire of formulaic sequences can contribute to improving their oral proficiency.

Formulaic sequences, stored and recalled by L2 speakers as chunks, certainly mitigate the cognitive load in language processing. As they reduce the time for the hearer to decode, many other interactional purposes are accomplished. They also lead to the native-like choice and native-like fluency and certainly bring a difference in achieving L2 proficiency (Wei & Ying, 2011). For instance, Dickinson (2012) examined the effects of teaching formulaic sequences to a group of Japanese EFL students on their improvement of academic oral presentations. The EFL participants were subjected to a set of presentation-specific formulaic sequences by means

of various consciousness raising tasks. They were trained to remember and employ the sequences they had learned in two sequential presentations. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis from the sequential presentations showed that the approach was useful for almost all of the EFL learners, regardless of their L2 proficiency. Amongst the lexis-oriented studies that have recently been done in Iranian EFL context, two are notable. Mirzaei et al. (2016a) designed the LexisBOARD software program to deliver vocabulary instruction to junior high school students with a focus on lexis. They report that engaging and experimenting with lexis scaffolded through computer affordances brought about vocabulary more gains for the lexis group on the posttests. Similarly, Mirzaei et al. (2016b) found that focus on formulaicity in IELTS speaking preparatory classes, both intensive and extensive, led to the lexis groups' further developed speaking performance as measured through administering dialogic and monologic tasks. In addition, dialogic tasks were more susceptible to formulaicity effects than monologic ones.

To round off this section, Frank et al. (2006) found that the use of formulaic sequences was peculiarly helpful to the perceptions of language learners' fluency. The evidence for its effective impact on learners' perceived accuracy was found to be less significant. Moreover, according to Zhoa (2009), by combining lexical chunks together, speakers can produce longer stretches of fluent language. Since the use of lexical chunks reduces the cognitive load of language processing, it allows speakers to use coherent, patterned pieces of discourse with no unnecessary hesitation or with little disfluency. Moreover, it enables learners to focus more on language content.

Therefore, it is justified to claim that lexical chunks can improve language learners' fluency to a great extent. Additionally, according to Fang (2013), research on speech fluency has shown that formulaic sequences can play an essential role in maintaining smoothness and speed of real-time speech. L2 learners can be subjected to patterns of most idiomatic ways of using formulaic sequences and move towards the development of their L2 speech fluency in real-life situations. In sum,

given the significant role of formulaic language in acquisition and production of an L2, it is considerably vital to teach formulaic sequences and facilitate their acquisition more directly in the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

As noted earlier, it seems interesting to probe if noticing or focusing on lexis in L2 classrooms can, in any sense, foster learners' development of CAF measures in their oral L2 productions. Additionally, this line of L2 research should go on to explore how a focus on lexis can be practically achieved or which modality (i.e., textual, audio, or audio-visual) will lend itself more effectively to this theoretical perspective. In brief, the present study sought to address this lacuna through the following research questions:

- Does lexis-based instruction have any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' oral CAF measures (as compared with the conventional grammar-based instruction)?
- Do different types of lexis-based instructional frameworks (i.e., using corpus-based concordances, textual input enhancement, and audio-visual input enhancement) have any differential effects on the development of EFL learners' oral CAF measures? Or, which modality is most effective in putting the 'focus on lexis' approach to practice?

Method

Participants

The participants were 54 undergraduate English Translation students who were both male (n=19) and female (n=35) aged 20 to 25. They were in their fourth year of EFL study and were selected from two universities in the southwest of Iran. At the time of collecting data, the participants had already studied English courses in their schools, middle and high-schools, as part of the national curriculum, with a special focus on the development of lexico-grammatical ability and reading skill. Meanwhile, their L1 was Persian. The experimental lexis group consisted of 27 students, and the

control non-lexis group included 27 participants. None had been to an English-speaking country. They were informed about the general purpose of the test and research. They were not told about the exact purpose of the study and were assured that the information collected would not affect their course scores. To assure the homogeneity among the participants' proficiency, a version of the test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL) with a reasonable reliability estimate ($\alpha = 0.89$) was used to screen the participants.

Instruments and Measures

The instruments comprised a TOEFL proficiency test, to make sure about the initial homogeneity of the participants regarding their general proficiency, as well as several speaking assessment tasks, to elicit the L2 learners' oral data and estimate their CAF measures. The TOEFL was a paper-based test, originally constructed and standardized by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 2003, comprising 90 multiple-choice items in two sections: structure and written expression (40 items) and reading comprehension (50 items). The reliability estimate of the TOEFL proficiency test was determined through Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ($\alpha = 0.89$) which, according to DeVellis (2003), would indicate an acceptable internal consistency value.

Furthermore, four assessment tasks were used as instruments to elicit the speaking data and track the changes in the participants' oral CAF measures. One assessment task was administered to experimental and control groups at pretest and posttest phases in order to assess their CAF measures. Four other assessment tasks were also employed with the experimental group, each task given after teaching through one type of lexis-based instructional framework for two sessions. The first assessment task required participants to talk about their traveling experience. Each learner spoke for approximately four to five minutes. With the students' permission, their voices were audio-recorded using an MP3 player. The collected data from these interviews were examined to answer the first research question of the current study. In the second task, that was a

picture-cued story (Appendix B), the participants of the study were given a six-frame picture-cued story about a boy and a girl going on a picnic where everything went wrong. The participants were given 30 seconds to look at the picture and then required to provide a description of the picture. In the third task, the students were asked to imagine that a friend or relative was going to make an important decision about his or her life. They were, then, asked to give him or her some advice or recommendations as what to do. In the fourth task, the participants were required to respond to three questions recorded on the test tape, each question being heard once. The participants were given 30 seconds to answer each of the questions.

Instructional Materials

The lexis-based instructional materials included the following. First, the printouts of computer-generated concordances of some frequently used words and lexical chunks were used as the basis to provide and practice language input. The lexical expressions were easy to understand and use and were in accordance with the learners' needs, which provided them with authentic language texts and concordance lines of lexical phrases and collocations. The concordance printouts were derived from a spoken corpus, CANCODE (Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English), with 5-million words in English. The corpus was made at the Department of English Studies, University of Nottingham, and was sponsored by Cambridge University Press. This corpus includes five million words of transcribed conversations. Different kinds of unanalyzed chunks obtained through manual searching of the CANCODE spoken corpus were used for teaching chunks to the learners. The perceptual salience of lexical chunks was made through CAPITALIZING, **bolding,** and underlining. Second, two authentic written short stories were given to the learners as the source of textual lexis enhancement in which the lexical chunks were bolded and underlined, and participants' attention was directed toward these chunks. The third type of materials, referred to as audio-visual captioned lexis, was in the form of an animation (named *Epic*)

with captions (and transcripts) highlighting and enhancing the lexical chunks to raise students' consciousness.

Procedure

As to different phases of data collection in this study, first, as noted earlier, a paper-based TOEFL proficiency test (ETS, 2003) was initially given to the undergraduate EFL students in both groups to assure that they were almost similar concerning their general language proficiency. Only two sections of the test (i.e., structure and written expression and reading comprehension) were administered for practicality reasons. Then, the two intact classes were randomly assigned to one experimental and one control groups (27 students each). Before the instruction, the participants were pretested on a speaking performance task in order to gain an account of their oral CAF measures.

In the next phase, the two instructional conditions (i.e., lexis-based and mainstream non-lexis instructions) of the study were implemented during the students' regular classes for six sessions. The lexis instruction was delivered through three different modalities or frameworks, namely, corpus-based concordances, textual lexis enhancement, and audio-visual captioned lexis. Every two consecutive sessions of instruction were devoted to one type of lexis-based instructional framework. In order to account for possible order effects in a repeated-measures design, the experimental class was divided into three intra-class groups of students (i.e., EG1, EG2, and EG3), with each lexis group receiving the lexis-based treatments in a different order (from the other lexis groups), in a counterbalanced manner.

In the first two sessions of the lexis instruction, the participants in the first intra-class lexis group (EG1) separately watched an animation with captions once and with a simultaneous transcript once more, both highlighting and enhancing the lexical chunks. The instructor (the researcher), then, drew their attention to chunks and allowed them to replay the more demanding stretches of discourse as many times as it was necessary. Simultaneously, the participants in the second intra-class lexis

group (EG2), quite distanced from the other groups, were provided with two written short stories. The instructor asked the participants to do reading-related activities, such as reading for comprehension, discussing the story-related elements in the group, and reading the text aloud, while at the same time focusing their attention on the lexical chunks that were bolded and underlined. As to the third group, different lexical chunks, found through the CANCODE spoken corpus, were printed and used for teaching the lexical chunks to the participants in the third lexis group (EG3) inside the class (see Appendix A). The perceptual salience of the lexical chunks was attained via different typographical techniques such as bolding, capitalizing, and underlining. For the subsequent sessions, the remaining types of lexis instructions were given to each group successively, keeping the counterbalanced manner of presentation. As noted, four speaking tasks were administered to the groups, each after every two sessions of employing a particular type of lexis instruction, and their CAF measures were obtained. After the instructional phase, the participants were post-tested in order to obtain their post-intervention oral production data.

Trajectories of oral CAF development were measured in the learners' audio-recorded spoken data to trace their language development. Specifically, for grammatical complexity estimates, T-unit complexity ratio i.e., the number of clauses for each T-unit, was employed. The minimal terminable unit, or T-unit, is defined by Hunt (1970), as "a main clause plus all subordinate clauses and non-clausal structures attached to or embedded in it" (p. 4). For grammatical accuracy, or error-free T-unit ratio, Iwashita, Brown, McNamara, and O'Hagan's (2008) second perspective, that is, specific types of errors, was employed. Accordingly, an error-free T-unit was defined as a T-unit free from any grammatical errors, that is, 'global accuracy'. Finally, for fluency, or the ease with which the participants retrieved and produced L2 in spoken mode, T-unit length i.e., the total numbers of words which are divided by total number of T-units, was measured (Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). In brief, three quantitative developmental measures, including T-unit

complexity ratio, error-free T-unit ratio, and T-unit length, were used. To ascertain the reliability of the CAF measures, the data were also scored by an expert, familiar with CAF measures. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients (adjusted-for-two-raters) were then obtained as estimates of the interrater consistency. The results were quite satisfactory, .916 for complexity, .925 for accuracy, and .931 for fluency.

Results

In order to address the first research question of the study and investigate whether there was any significant difference between the effects of lexis-based and traditional grammar-based instructions on Iranian EFL learners' oral CAF measures, descriptive statistics and relevant statistical analysis were carried out. Descriptive statistics of the CAF measures in both groups were first obtained to check normality of distributions on the pretest and posttest scores and to obtain general estimates of the oral CAF measures development in both groups.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of CAF Measures for the Groups' Pretests-Posttests

Variables	Group	Test	N	Max	Min	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Complexity	Experimental	pre	27	1.9	1.31	1.65	0.21	-0.37	-1.35
		post	27	1.99	1.64	1.9	0.11	-1.17	-0.86
	Control	pre	27	1.89	1.32	1.56	0.19	0.37	-1.29
		post	27	1.9	1.57	1.57	0.19	0.33	-1.31
Accuracy	Experimental	pre	27	0.93	0.62	0.79	0.08	0.33	-0.92
		post	27	1.15	0.89	0.97	0.07	1.21	0.99
	Control	pre	27	0.9	0.58	0.77	0.1	-0.4	-1.15
		post	27	0.92	0.59	0.78	0.1	-0.3	-1.06
Fluency	Experimental	pre	27	1.32	1.10	1.17	0.06	0.8	-0.55
		post	27	1.43	1.25	1.34	0.05	0.81	-1.17
	Control	pre	27	1.33	1.12	1.19	0.05	0.99	0.41
		post	27	1.32	1.12	1.19	0.06	0.86	-0.51

As shown in Table 1, the Kurtosis and Skewness values of the participants' oral CAF scores at the pretest and posttest phases were well within the acceptable normality range of ±1.5. Concerning the participants' oral CAF pretest scores, the mean scores of complexity were

1.65 and 1.56 for the experimental and control groups, respectively, 0.79, and 0.77 for accuracy, and 1.17 and 1.19 for fluency. The closeness of mean scores seemed to reveal no significant difference between the two groups in relation to oral CAF measures at the pretest phase. However, the posttest mean scores seemed to be rather different, which, if turned out to be significant, could be due to the influence of different instructions. The mean scores for complexity were 1.9 and 1.57 for the experimental and control group, respectively, 0.97 and 0.78 for accuracy, and 1.34 and 1.19 for fluency, respectively for both groups. These mean scores were submitted to further statistical analysis.

Then, a one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was employed in order to examine the statistical significance of the difference between the groups' posttest mean scores while, simultaneously, controlling for initial pretest differences. The independent variable was labeled as 'grouping' (e.g., experimental lexis-based and control non-lexis-based groups) in the analysis, and the dependent variables were EFL learners' posttest CAF scores on the speaking tasks. Learners' pretest CAF scores were included as the covariates in the analysis to control for preexisting lexical knowledge differences between the groups. To be specific, the MANCOVA checked whether the difference between the posttest mean scores of both groups on each CAF measure was statistically significant. As mentioned above, the MANCOVA test was employed because it could analyze group-mean differences on the posttests while simultaneously controlling for the pre-existing differences between both groups as measured through the pretests.

The results of MANCOVA in Table 2 demonstrated that the difference between the groups' post-instruction CAF scores was significant. Following Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), Wilks' Lambda was inspected, which was found to be .059, with a significant value of .000 ($p < .05$). Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between experimental and control groups for their post-instruction oral CAF measures.

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Table 2.

Multivariate Tests of the Differences between Both Groups

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	Pillai's Trace	.941	249.163	3.000	47.000	.000	.941
	Wilks' Lambda	.059	249.163	3.000	47.000	.000	.941
	Hotelling's Trace	15.904	249.163	3.000	47.000	.000	.941

Moreover, the value of partial eta squared (0.94) was high, showing that the variance in the dependent variables (posttests) was explainable by the instructional methods applied for the groups. In other words, the main difference between posttest mean scores of the groups was due to the use of lexis-based instruction or the experimental lexis group (since this group's CAF posttest means were higher than those of the non-lexis control group). That is to say, lexis-based instruction was considerably influential in learners' development of oral CAF measures. To further probe if all CAF measures were uniformly or differentially affected by the lexis instruction, in general, tests of Between-Subjects Effects were obtained, as part of the MANCOVA results, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Group	Complexity time 2	.934	1	.934	206.17	.000	.808
	Accuracy time 2	.393	1	.393	251.23	.000	.837
	Fluency time 2	.316	1	.316	286.11	.000	.854

As Table 3 indicates, the groups' posttest mean scores exhibited statistically significant effects for the lexis-based instruction on all the dependent CAF measures in comparison to the mainstream non-lexis instruction ($p < .017$, using a Bonferroni-adjusted alpha level). Moreover, the values of Partial Eta Squared, namely, 0.80, 0.83, and 0.85 for C2, A2, and F2, respectively, were considered as large (Cohen, 1988, pp. 284-7),

indicating that a high proportion of the observed variance in CAF measures can be attributed to the effects of lexis instruction.

Furthermore, descriptive statistics and relevant statistical analyses were carried out to answer the second research question of the study and to investigate whether different types of lexis-based instructional frameworks or lexis modalities, (i.e., using corpus-based concordances, textual lexis enhancement, and audio-visual captioned lexis) had any differential effects on the lexis group's development of oral CAF measures. Table 4 displays the descriptive results of the group's oral CAF measures at three time points after the use of a certain type of lexis-based instruction.

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics of the Lexis Groups' Oral CAF Measures

Variable	Lexis-based Instruction	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Accuracy	Audio-visual captioned lexis	27	.80	.99	.92	.06	-.37	-1.11
	Text-based lexis enhancement	27	.73	.95	.84	.07	.34	-.93
	Using concordances	27	.70	.92	.82	.07	-.60	-1.17
Complexity	Audio-visual captioned lexis	27	1.59	2.25	1.97	.17	-.40	.39
	Text-based lexis enhancement	27	1.40	2.20	1.84	.21	-.46	.41
	Using concordances	27	1.35	2.18	1.81	.20	-.39	.64
Fluency	Audio-visual captioned lexis	27	1.30	1.76	1.46	.10	1.13	1.14
	Text-based lexis enhancement	27	1.10	1.49	1.36	.09	-.71	1.05
	Using concordances	27	1.12	1.44	1.33	.08	-.68	.35

As evident from Table 4, the data were normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values well within a satisfactory range of ±1.5. Furthermore, the lexis group's mean scores for accuracy ranged from .81 (*SD* = .07) after using concordances to .92 (*SD* = 0.06) after using audio-visual captioned lexis. For complexity, the mean scores ranged from 1.80 (*SD* = -.3) after using concordances to 1.96 (*SD* = -.2) after using audio-visual input enhancement. Finally, the mean scores for fluency ranged from 1.33 (*SD* =.07) after using concordances to 1.45 (*SD* =.09) after using audio-visual input enhancement. It seems the lexis-based audio-visual captioned lexis yielded highest mean scores for the lexis group on all three CAF measures.

In order to statistically evaluate the significance of the difference among the learners' oral CAF mean scores across the different types of lexis-based instructional frameworks (over three time points), a repeated-measures MANOVA was employed. In the current study, the lexis learners' scores on oral complexity, accuracy, and fluency were treated as the dependent variables. There was a single within-subject independent variable with three levels (i.e., Time: Time 1, after receiving audio-visual captioned lexis, Time 2, after text-based lexis enhancement, and, Time 3, after concordance outputs). Firstly, the results of multivariate tests of significance are shown in Table 5 in order to check if any statistically significant differences existed among the lexis-based instructional methods on a linear combination of the dependent variables (i.e., learners oral CAF).

Table 5.

Multivariate Statistics of Lexis-Based Instructional Frameworks

Effect		Value	*F*	Hypothesis df	Error df	*Sig.*	Partial Eta Squared
Time instruction	Pillai's Trace	.952	69.979	6.000	21.00	.000	.95
	Wilks' Lambda	.048	69.979	6.000	21.00	.000	.95
	Hotelling's Trace	19.9	69.979	6.000	21.00	.000	.95

Table 5 shows that the obtained Wilks' Lambda value was .048, with a probability value of .000, $p < .05$; therefore, it was concluded that different lexis-based instructional frameworks had statistically significant differential effects on the lexis group's CAF measures. In order to see which type of lexis instruction resulted in most significant effects on each of the CAF measures, further follow-up (Bonferroni-adjusted) pairwise comparisons were conducted. The pairwise comparisons results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6.

Pairwise Comparisons of Three Types of Lexis-Based Instructions

Measure	Instructions (I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	*Sig*	95% Confidence Interval for Difference (a)	
						Upper Bound	Lower Bound
C	Audio-visual	Textual	.128*	.015	.000	.089	.167
	Audio-visual	Concordances	.163*	.011	.000	.135	.192
	Textual	Concordances	.036*	.013	.031	.003	.068
A	Audio-visual	Textual	.086*	.007	.000	.068	.105
	Audio-visual	Concordances	.103*	.008	.000	.083	.122
	Textual	Concordances	.016	.009	.283	-.008	.040
F	Audio-visual	Textual	.100*	.024	.001	.039	.161
	Audio-visual	Concordances	.124*	.023	.000	.067	.182
	Textual	Concordances	.024*	.005	.000	.012	.037

As Table 6 reveals, the significant differential effects of lexis-based instructional frameworks on the learners' oral CAF measures are shown under the Sig. column by values less than .05. Also, significant results are shown by a little asterisk in the Mean Difference column. It was thus evidenced that, in terms of oral complexity measure, there were significant differences between audio-visual captioned lexis and textual lexis

enhancement (MD = .128, $p < .05$), between audio-visual captioned lexis and using concordances (MD = .163, $p < .05$), and between textual input enhancement and using concordances (MD = .036, $p < .05$). In other words, audio-visual input enhancement mode resulted in most significant complexity gains, compared to the textual enhancement and, in turn, concordances.

Moreover, Table 6 shows that audio-visual captioned lexis again made considerable progress in terms of learners' oral accuracy scores when compared with the other two modes of lexis instructions (i.e., textual lexis enhancement, MD = .086, $p < .05$, and using concordances, MD = .103, $p < .05$). There was not any significant difference between textual input enhancement and using concordances modes regarding their effects on L2 learners' accuracy measure (MD = .016, $p > .05$). Finally, as for the differential effects of lexis instructions on L2 learners' oral fluency, there were differences between the audio-visual input enhancement and textual input enhancement (MD = .100, $p < .05$), between audio-visual input enhancement and using concordances (MD = .124, $p < .05$), and between textual input enhancement and using concordance (MD = .024, $p < .05$). To sum up, the use of lexis-based audio-visual input enhancement resulted in the most considerable progress in terms of L2 learners' oral CAF measures, with textual input enhancement being ranked second and using concordances third in their differential effects on the development of CAF measures.

Discussion

The current study was, firstly, an attempt to see whether lexis-based instruction has any significant effect on Iranian EFL learners' oral CAF measures (as compared to the conventional grammar-based instruction). Secondly, it sought to compare the differential effects of three different lexis-based instructional interventions in emphasizing L2 formulaicity (i.e., using corpus-based concordances, textual lexis enhancement, and audio-visual captioned lexis) on enhancing EFL learners' oral CAF.

The results related to the first research question revealed that EFL students who were in the experimental (lexis-based) group performed better than those students in the control (non-lexis) group in terms of their oral CAF measures. This finding, it can be argued, is theoretically in favor of adopting a 'grammaticalized lexis' view of the language learning process (Lewis, 1993) in L2 pedagogy. This lexis- or exemplar-based view of L2 learning thus indicates a 'greatly diminished' role for 'sentence grammar' which has for long been the underlying premise of mainstream language teaching approaches in EFL contexts, especially in Iran. Traditionally, the syntactic rule-governed view leaves nearly no room for the acquisition of concrete linguistic items and, instead, puts a premium merely on a 'core grammar' underlying any target language (Dörnyei, 2009). However, in a lexis view, the use and acquisition of concrete words and expressions, or language formulae, are quintessential and prime importance is attached to "grammaticalization processes" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 119) or "grammaticized linguistic constructions" (Tomasello, 2000, p. 162) developed through linguistic experience.

In particular, this finding revealed that L2 learners' development of oral sub-skills (i.e., CAF measures) was not impervious to lexis-based instructions. Previous studies have already reported similar findings. For instance, Mirzaei et al. (2016b) evidenced that focus on formulaicity in IELTS preparatory courses, both intensive and extensive types, significantly contributed to pre-IELTS candidates' speaking performance. They also found that dialogic speaking tasks were more susceptible to the application and use of lexis-based instruction than monologic tasks. In a similar vein, Taguchi (2008) witnessed that L2 learners approached through a lexis instructional framework more frequently produced a wider range of lexical chunks in their speaking outputs. Additionally, the chunks were also used as a reservoir to build upon and create more complexity.

The contribution of the lexis-based instruction to L2 learners' development of CAF evidenced in this study corroborated the premises other lexis-oriented SLA researchers posit in favor of emphasizing lexical chunks to foster language fluency, increase language accuracy, promote

innovative language production and direct language production (e.g., Lewis, 1997; Nattinger and DeCarrico, 1992; Pawley & Syder, 1983). Lewis, for instance, asserts that "fluency is based on the acquisition of a large store of fixed and semi-fixed prefabricated items" (Lewis, 1997, p. 15). Furthermore, Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992, p. 32) propose that "it is our ability to use lexical phrases that help us speak with fluency." Chunks and lexical units are stored and recalled as whole units, and they can readily be memorized and utilized without any need to make them up through word selection and grammatical rules (Pawley & Syder 1983, p. 13). Therefore, the character of lexical chunks lessens the load of language processing significantly and allows language learners to produce a patterned and fluent language. It can thus be hypothesized that the mind keeps repeated lexical units or formulaic chunks as integrated entities that are restored and processed more easily, compared with the word strings created by inserting lexical entries into syntactic systems (Schmitt, Grandage, & Adolphs, 2004). As noted by Mirzaei et al. (2016a), this ease of access to lexical chunks prepackaged in memory can bring about further fluency and precise cognitive processing of learners' language patterning.

Moreover, as to the accuracy, similar prior lexis research has revealed that the proper use of lexical chunks can form more precise and authentic language since a great portion of native speakers' language consisted of meaningful lexical chunks (Pawley & Syder 1983, p. 13). Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), for instance, regard the acquisition of formulaic speech central to language learning process since acquired routines, in turn, evolve directly into creative language. Tomasello (2003) envisions all this process, which in the long run contributes to more accuracy, in terms of three language acquisition processes, namely, 'imitative learning' and internalizing lexical chunks, 'finding patterns' or inducing syntactic constructions, and 'combining' various language construction creatively to make meaning. It is in the second stage onward where 'grammaticalization process' comes into play and guides the emergence of grammar (Dörnyei, 2009). Using the principal lexical forms, language learners then replace flexible slots in certain contexts. For instance,

Taguchi (2007) claimed that chunk learning (memorizing) augmented learners' sensitivity to discourse and, over time, served as a foundation for innovative discourse construction.

As to the second concern of the study, it was found that different lexis-based instructions had differential effects on L2 learners' CAF measures. Audio-visual captioned lexis had the most favorable effect and using concordances the least. Audio-visual, as noted earlier, integrated three modalities at the same time, namely, video (images), auditory (voice), and textual (captions highlighting the relevant lexis). It thus seems that activating combined modalities at the same time will bring about more learning outcomes, probably, due to the more associative nature of the memory traces left behind (Pressley, 1987). Enhancing selective parts of captions, as used in this study, seems compatible with Mirzaei, Meshgi, Akita, and Kawahara's (2017) finding that captioning a selected subset of words (synchronized with images) can be used as an effective aid in scaffolding the learning process leading to more independence than full captioning (or full-caption enhancing). Furthermore, enhancing certain (lexis) parts of captions results in more perceptual saliency, which, in turn, triggers cognitive processes implicated in L2 learning (Schmidt, 1995; Sharwood Smith, 1994; Swain, 2005). In this regard, Schmidt (1995) argues that "what learners notice in the input is what becomes intake for learning" (p. 20). Perhaps, this noticing effect can be complemented by tasks with the considerable mnemonic potential to cause further favorable outcomes (Boers et al., 2006).

Similar L2 research has recently shown that audio-visual language can facilitate the improvement of different linguistic skills, namely, written and oral production, written and oral comprehension, and vocabulary acquisition, as well as cultural awareness (Pavesi, 2012). Among the main benefits of audio-visual language with regard to L2 acquisition, Pavesi (2012) stresses the following issues: (1) it presents a great amount of linguistic features that are common to face-to-screen communication; (2) as it contains the spontaneous utterances similar to real language, its use can foster learner's acquisition of common conversation structures; (3) and

other aspects, such as "greater fluency and reduced vagueness, greater discourse immediacy, formulaicity, and predictability" (Pavesi, 2012, p.10). Further, audio-visual language, due to its usually well-rehearsed nature, exhibits more conceivable fluency and less vagueness, which may prime or channel the learner's mental and phonological mechanisms to assimilate or approximate comparable levels of fluent and meaning-bearing performance. In sum, interesting audio-visual content can lead to increased motivation to learn an L2 in learners (Honan, 2008; Graham, 2009), and since it does not require learners to participate in online production of the language, it can reduce learners' anxiety (Tschirner, 2001). It can thus be argued that audio-visual language, containing lexis-based optional and synchronized captioning, can be used as a useful medium of instruction for skill development.

Last but not least, despite such instruction-oriented changes evidenced, a word of caution is in order though, considering recent L2 research findings grounded in chaos-complexity theory. Alavi and Sadeghi (2017), for instance, adopting such an account to the development of CAF, found that there was no common pattern of CAF development among different learners with different proficiency or gender attributes. They further argue that the emergence of CAF had better be seen as a changing situated system in which language resources of individual learners could be transformed through use. Future L2 research should thus try to probe the notions from such an emergent, complexity outlook.

Conclusions

The present study investigated the differential impact of different types (or modes) of presenting lexis-based instructions on L2 learners' oral CAF measures. The statistical analysis revealed that lexis group who was taught using lexis-based instruction, in general, achieved higher CAF mean scores as compared to the control group who was taught using the mainstream non-lexis, mainly grammar-based instruction. It turned out that emphasizing L2 formulaicity in the form of enhancing or flooding unanalyzed lexical chunks in the input was helpful in facilitating L2

learners' development of oral CAF measures. Lexical chunks are fixed or semi-fixed, frequently used lexical phrases with functional meanings, which are stored and produced automatically as whole units in the process of language acquisition. Lexical chunks are fixed or semi-fixed lexical phrases which are regularly used and have functional meanings. They are stored and uttered automatically as whole units in the language acquisition process. Thus, chunks provide an easily retrievable form for language production and reduce language learner's pressure to decipher individual words. The present study points to the significance of lexical chunks in producing language. Also, it puts forward some pedagogical suggestions to L2 education. Adopting a lexis-based view of language acquisition and focusing on formulaicity, teachers can plan to help learners engage with both the relevant communicative intent and the lexical properties of the L2 input. This can be envisaged as a grammaticalization process whereby L2 learners, through experience with item-based constructions, can, in the long run, induce and in turn creatively combine syntactic constructions to make meaning (Dörnyei, 2009). All in all, lexical chunks seem to play an important role in L2 learners' language acquisition. On the whole, lexical chunks appear to be an important factor in L2 learners' language acquisition. They function as a key to gaining fluency, accuracy, complexity, and orientation of language production, which should be given adequate attention and priority in L2 pedagogy. Moreover, audio-visual programs plus lexis-oriented selective captioning are generally a great source of authentic language input, which simultaneously integrate several knowledge gaining modalities and can be useful in fostering L2 learners' oral CAF measures. In fact, most of the current audio-visual mass media platforms can be programmed and utilized to this effect in L2 classrooms.

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Appendix A:
A Printout of Computer-Generated Concordances from CANCODE for "Take":

Corpus-based sentences in which "Take" is used:

1.   …. ate anguish showed through in the vehemence of his manner.
"TAKE a gigantic knife and sweep it over the Loop", Wright…

2.   ….en raised his own. The patrol was stopping. Prevot came up **"TAKE that spot over there**", he whispered, pointing to a small….

3.   ….closed her eyes, stretched forth her arms, and said: **"TAKE my hand,** Louis e; I'm a stranger in paradise". Needless….

4.   …he bottles. Shall we take them all with us, or leave one"?
   a.   **"TAKE them**", I said. "If we left one we'd have to wipe it for…

5.   ….le fixed and questioning. He turned to George and Lolotte. **"TAKE your co bbler's shop somewhere else.** I want to talk to S…….

6.   …me the greatest possible service. By myself, I'll be fine".
"TAKE care of yourself then". "I will .... you, also .... don

7.   …nt, turned red in the face, shouted senselessly at Mercer, **"TAKE it out, you fool**! Take it out of me"! When Mercer looked…

8.   …..r in a very American gesture and dropped into Navy slang.
"TAKE off, fly-boy"! "Uh- sorry"! he muttered, and took off,….

9.   ….e parlor or social hall immediately after the service. **TAKE a picture** of the group of new members to be put in the …..

10.   …..nism, frequently a second type of cohesive failure may **also TAKE place.** T his is a chipping, dynamic type failure encount….

11.   of the fundamental limiting principles which we must **always TAKE into acco unt** in AM assignments and allocations- that si…..

12.   …..had done as he was told, hadn't he? Cap would find him **and TAKE care of him.** So choosing a good tree, he clambered …

13.   …..some others felt that we should march toward Lexington **and TAKE up new positions** ahead of the slow moving British colum…

14.   …..What is Prof. Diman's definition of civilization, **and TAKE the world thro ugh**, is its progress ever onward, or does …

15.   ….outine of their home life. "When you stand up in public **and TAKE vows to strive** to set an example before your children a….

16.   …it may be a tour de force, mais mon Dieu, can **anyone TAKE this music seri ously**"? The answer is, "Yes"! Certainly,

17.   ….a good idea last week, when his doctor had prescribed it.
"TAKE a full month", the doctor had said. "Lots of sun, lots….

18. for tuition, for clothes, for all the things you **apparently <u>TAKE</u> for granted.** N urses' training here doesn't cost anything…

19. …eak, the hall became silent. "I do not care if your **beliefs <u>TAKE</u> you along a path** of religion or a path of labor or a…

20. .….r are late for work and seldom absent. ## Actually, you **can <u>TAKE</u> no speci al credit** for this. It is the way you were taught.

Appendix B: First Speaking Task, Picture Story: