

The Impact of L1/L2-Based Explicit Output Task Instruction on Iranian EFL Learners' Semantic Prosody Learning¹

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Abstract

Most of the studies on semantic prosody have mainly focused on the recognition of positive, negative, or neutral load of the meaning inferred from the node and its co-occurrences from corpus-based perspectives. However, this study aimed at delving into the teaching and learning aspect of semantic prosodies within the classroom setting. To this end, 76 Iranian undergraduate university students majoring in English translation were randomly selected. Receptive Semantic Prosody Test (RSPT) was administered as a pre-test to assess the students' initial knowledge of the semantic prosodies. Then, the students were assigned to three groups: two experimental (L1-based and L2-based) and one control group. The experimental groups went through a seven-week instructional

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period and received explicit output task instruction on semantic prosodies for 30 minutes at the end of their regular class hour, while the control group was exposed to the same output tasks to complete based on the presented contextual clues only, and no such explicit instruction was provided to them. Finally, RSPT was administered again to see how effective the output task instruction had been with regard to the semantic prosody learning. The comparison of the two approaches to learning semantic prosody demonstrated that L1-based instruction was more effective, and EFL learners were generally more receptive to L1-based output task instruction. The study further implies that both L2 teachers and learners can ill afford to turn a blind eye to the important and undeniable role L1 use plays in learning L2 vocabularies in general and semantic prosodies in particular.

Keywords: Output task; Semantic prosody; Explicit instruction; L1-Based instruction; L2-Based instruction; EFL learners

Introduction

The pivotal role that vocabulary knowledge plays in the field of English language learning and teaching has prompted many practitioners (Folse, 2004; Joyce, 2015; Kang, 2015; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1999; Willis & Ohashi, 2012) in the field to look for effective strategies to encourage vocabulary learning. Keeping vocabulary notebooks, using mnemonic devices, providing word cards, and guessing the meaning from the context have been suggested as possible vocabulary learning strategies (Thornbury, 2002; Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012). Throughout the history of language teaching, teachers and materials developers have been looking for a practical way to teach vocabulary. Three approaches to teaching and learning vocabulary, including implicit vocabulary learning through extensive reading, independent strategy development (guessing from context), and explicit instruction, have been proposed (Hunt & Beglar, 2002; Teng, 2015). However, it seems that an integrated approach to vocabulary learning which combines all the above-mentioned approaches can be more beneficial to L2 language learners (Nassaji, 2003, 2004; Nassaji & Hu, 2012).

Context and learning vocabulary through context lies at the heart of all the above-mentioned attempts. One promising way to achieve this is through semantic prosody. Semantic prosody refers to a halo of meaning flowing between the node word and its habitual co-occurrences (Stewart, 2010); therefore, context is of paramount importance in learning semantic prosodies. According to Stewart (2010), one conspicuous feature of semantic prosody which distinguishes it from other similar phenomena like connotations is its close dependence upon the habitual context. Semantic prosody is “a form of meaning which is established through the proximity of a consistent series of collocates” (Louw, 2000, p. 57). Moreover, “both individual words and phrases can have semantic prosodies” (Schmitt & Carter, 2004, p. 7). However, “the primary function of semantic prosody is to express speaker/writer attitude or evaluation” (Louw, 2000, p. 58). Sinclair (1996a, pp. 87-88) also defines semantic prosody as:

A semantic prosody . . . is attitudinal, and on the pragmatic side of the semantics/pragmatics continuum. It is thus capable of a wide range of realization, because in pragmatic expressions the normal semantic values of the words are not necessarily relevant. But once noticed among the variety of expression, it is immediately clear that the semantic prosody has a leading role to play in the integration of an item with its surroundings. It expresses something close to the 'function' of an item—it shows how the rest of the item is to be interpreted functionally.

Semantic prosodies can be taught either explicitly or implicitly through different pedagogical tasks and form-focused instruction (de la Fuente, 2006; McGee, 2012), although explicit teaching of semantic prosodies has not earned its rightful place yet. Output-task (cloze task) can be regarded as an appropriate task to teach semantic prosody because of two main features. First, it provides adequate context for learners to infer the meaning; and second, since the primary focus of cloze task is on message content rather than form, it can be considered a suitable material for teaching semantic prosodies (Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Yenkimaleki, 2018). A number of corpus-based studies have been conducted on semantic prosodies (Bublitz, 1996; Louw, 1993; Partington, 2004; Sinclair, 1991; Stewart, 2010; Stubbs, 1995, 2001). The recognition of positive, negative, or neutral load of meaning inferred from the node (the main term) and its co-occurrences has been the primary focus of previous research. Nevertheless, few studies (e.g., Kim, 2008; Nassaji & Tian, 2010; Thornbury, 1997) have been carried out to investigate the role of output tasks on language learning. The impact of explicit output task (cloze task) instruction on semantic prosody learning has been investigated neither in L1 nor in L2.

The overall trend in vocabulary instruction in general and learning semantic prosodies in particular has also been overridden by the existence of the possibility of the utilization of learners' L1 (e.g., Cheng, 2013; Lee & Macaro, 2013). Therefore, drawing on an already-established means of vocabulary instruction and the newly-emerging trend in learning and teaching semantic prosodies, the present study is an attempt to compare and contrast the relative effectiveness of L1/L2-based explicit output task instruction on EFL learners' semantic prosody learning and conduct an experimental study to delve into the teaching and learning aspect of semantic prosodies.

Literature Review

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

Over the years, many researchers have shown an interest in the two strategies of teaching vocabulary, including incidental or intentional vocabulary learning (Kang, 2015; Nation, 2001; Thornbury, 2002; Willis & Ohashi, 2012). Since the early 1970s, teacher's explicit or direct instruction in L2 development has been found to effectively impact the amount of students' learning (Barcroft, 2009; Nassaji, 2003; Rupley, Blair & Nichols, 2009). Likewise, as Nation and Meara (2010) put it, implementing explicit instruction (intentional learning) may be an appropriate way to help learners acquire the first 3000 essential words. Fur-

thermore, it has been proven that explicit instruction plays a key role in teaching reading comprehension and phonetics. However, less attention has been paid to the explicit instruction of output tasks in learning L2 vocabulary. In the process of explicit vocabulary instruction, demonstration through realia (real objects), L1 translation, L2 definitions, and contextual clues can be utilized to teach words explicitly. Therefore, the pivotal role that explicit vocabulary instruction plays is much more evident in EFL contexts where learners' exposure to English is extremely limited and thus vocabulary cannot be acquired naturally (Nation & Meara, 2010; Rupley, et al. 2009).

For many years, there has been a great controversy about the utilization of either incidental or intentional vocabulary learning strategies in classroom contexts (e.g., Barcroft, 2009; Hulstijn, 2002). However, some researchers have questioned the usefulness of the mere application of incidental vocabulary learning (e.g., Nation 2001; Van Zeeland & Schmitt, 2012; Waring & Nation, 2004). They argued that implicit instruction alone falls short of providing L2 learners with the right opportunities to learn vocabularies within a limited classroom time. Instead, they suggested that more attention be placed on intentional (explicit) vocabulary learning. It is also argued that a combination of contextualized lexical items and explicit instruction is superior to incidental vocabulary learning (Barcroft, 2009).

L1 Role in Language Teaching

There has always been a consensus over maximizing second language use in the classroom (Ferguson, 2009). A number of reasons can be cited for L2 teachers' resistance to use L1 in the classroom. First, Krashen's (1985) hypothesis, in which exposing learners to comprehensible input was emphasized, deeply influenced the 20th-century teachers' education. Moreover, some scholars presumably found L1 presence more destructive than useful (Barcroft, 2009). Second, teachers might encounter a number of challenges if they do not possess an adequate knowledge of the learners' first language or if their language learners come from different L1 backgrounds. However, research has pointed to the small, but important role that L1 plays in conveying meaning and content (Nation, 2001). With regard to the "Balanced Approach" introduced by Nation (2003), teachers have to respect learners' L1 and avoid doing things that make English look superior to their L1. Butzcam (2003) also asserts that "successful learners capitalize on the vast amount of linguistic skills and world knowledge they have accumulated via the mother tongue" (p. 31).

Nation (2001) has pointed to a number of reasons for learners' L1 use in the classroom. First and foremost, when L2 learners all come from a shared L1 background, turning to L1 as a priority to give students directions and remove ambiguities is encouraged. Second, communicating in L1 can be less cognitively demanding on students as their affective filter is lowered and thus the negotiation of meaning is promoted. Finally, more reticent and reserved language learners with limited language proficiency can greatly benefit from L1 use in

their classes because they can easily resort to their L1 and, therefore, freely express themselves without any kind of embarrassment.

Semantic Prosody

Sinclair (1987, 1991) was the first to bring the concept of semantic prosody into existence and can be considered the founder of semantic prosody. “It was originally an idea of Sinclair’s in 1987, though he did not use the term as such when he first discussed it” (Stewart, 2010, p. 6). He worked on the terms ‘set in’ and ‘happen’ to find out the words that tended to co-occur with them and the striking grammatical features of the phrasal verb ‘set in’. He found out that both terms have unpleasant semantic prosody. These observations were remarkable since they were new and were supported by the replicable corpus data, which included noticeable instances of co-occurrences representing an unfavorable load of meaning in the respective contexts of both ‘set in’ and ‘happen’.

The concept of semantic prosody was initially introduced to the public by Louw (1993), who defined it as “the consistent aura of meaning with which a lexical item is imbued by its collocates” p. 157). The concept of semantic prosody can be approached from two different perspectives: synchronic and diachronic. From a synchronic point of view, semantic prosody spreads over a unit of meaning, while from a diachronic viewpoint, it is related to a procedure in which a form is stained by its collocates over a long course of time. On the one hand, some authors working in the realm of semantic prosody have adopted the synchronic view (e.g., Sinclair, 1996; Tognini & Bonelli, 2001), while some others take a diachronic view (e.g., Coffin & O’Halloran, 2006; Hunston, 2002; Louw, 1993; Tribble, 2000).

Louw’s work on “semantic prosody” was parallel to the discussions of Firth about prosody in phonological terms. Louw argued that an expression such as ‘symptomatic of’ makes the hearer/reader ready for the production of an undesirable term (e.g., parental paralysis, management inadequacies, and numerous disorders). He also claimed that the habitual environment of a word is capable of coloring it, so there is an inseparable relationship between a word and its habitual environment. Louw’s (2000) work made a distinction between semantic prosody and connotation. He described semantic prosody as a strongly collocational concept while he considered connotation more schematic in nature. To put it another way, he argued that semantic prosody is highly dependent on its habitual co-occurrences, while connotation is more a question of the associative meaning which occurs to everybody’s mind.

Bublitz (1996) gained insight from Louw’s work and referred to semantic prosody as a halo of meaning surrounding a word that can be negative, positive, or neutral. Bublitz asserted that meaning resides in several words not just in a single word. He was interested in Louw’s idea that any given word’s meaning has the potential to change prosodies. His work on reconsideration of some terms such as ‘happen’ and ‘commit’ is worthy of attention. An unpleasant meaning was attributed to such words and Bublitz reconsidered these words

and found that if 'happen' is used to have 'by-chance meaning' it does not have an unpleasant meaning anymore. The same also goes for 'commit'; if it is used for other meanings like 'commit someone/oneself to (something)', its unpleasant meaning is removed. His examples characterized as semantic prosody include 'cause, happen, commit, and somewhat'.

Stubbs (1995, 2001) is acknowledged as a person who has made a significant contribution to the field of semantic prosody studies. In his work in 2001, he switched from the term 'semantic prosody' to the term 'discourse prosody'. He asserted that discourse prosody could stretch to more than a unit of meaning and express speakers' attitudes. Since prosodies frequently express a reason for speakers' utterances, they can be identified as discourse units. Some examples added by him are 'accost, amid, amusement, backdrop, care, cause, commit, and provide'.

Partington (2004) was mainly concerned with the similarities and differences between connotation and semantic prosody. He showed an interest in the prosodies within the context of newspapers and political discourse. He further continued carrying out studies on the characteristics of a series of words called "happen words" such as 'set in, happen, come about, occur, take place', and "amplifying intensifiers" including 'absolutely, perfectly, entirely, completely, utterly'.

Whitsitt (2005) marked a turning point in semantic prosody studies. He pointed out that semantic prosody could be described in three distinctive ways: from a diachronic/synchronic perspective, from a pragmatic point of view, and from a connotative viewpoint. Hunston (2007) reiterated the point underscored by Whitsitt (2005) that semantic prosody can be investigated from various points of view.

Stewart (2010) argued that the majority of the assertions made about semantic prosody in the literature were mainly influenced by corpus data in general and concordance in particular. Concordance has an astounding visual impact because it is the only situation where a single word or expression can be found located in a linear order with texts all around it. In other words, the concordance is capable of gathering large amounts of texts neatly positioned and ready to be scrutinized. Consequently, it has the potential to not only supply corpus linguists with abundant amounts of text fragments, but also provide them with the chance to thoroughly examine those fragments (Stewart, 2010).

Some Relevant Studies

Vocabulary knowledge and the awareness of what best associates or properly co-occurs with a vocabulary item in a context can serve as a facilitative tool that will prevent communication breakdowns. The reverse will certainly add complexities to the communication event and act as an impediment to the overall interactional process. To shed more light on the above-mentioned interactional

process, some relevant studies on output tasks, L1-based instruction, and semantic prosody are presented respectively.

In an influential study, Nassaji and Tian (2010) probed into the effects of collaborative and individual output tasks (cloze tasks and editing tasks) on learning English phrasal verbs. The results revealed that collaborative pair work led to better task completion, but not necessarily a better learning of the target phrasal verbs. The study also found that the editing task was more effective in promoting learning and generating opportunities for form-focused interactions.

Shirzad, EslamiRasekh, and Dabaghi (2017) conducted a study on the effectiveness of input-output task and out-output task instruction on the vocabulary learning and retention of higher intermediate learners. The findings revealed that the simultaneous integration of both input-output and output-output instructional approaches to vocabulary learning would be more beneficial than the application of one instructional task at a time. The study had further implications for task design, task analysis, and task assessment.

Horst, White and Bell (2010) delved into the first and second language knowledge in the language classrooms. They concluded that providing language learners with L1-based instruction could act and serve as a cross-linguistic awareness tool to raise the metalinguistic awareness. The study further implied that such metalinguistic awareness should be given sufficient attention as it paves the way and provides the grounds for L2 learners to make L1/L2 comparisons.

Joyce (2015) compared and contrasted the relative effectiveness of various vocabulary learning strategies to convey the meaning of the unknown words. The results were indicative of the fact that translating vocabularies in L1 was more effective than other vocabulary learning strategies such as providing definitions in L2, utilizing real objects, learning vocabularies through contextual clues, and demonstration.

Bruen and Kelly (2014) delved into the teachers' and learners' attitudes with regard to the L1 application in the higher education milieu. The findings indicated that both the teachers and learners found L1 use quite beneficial and advocated its restricted and principled utilization specifically to lessen the cognitive overload of demanding and complex tasks and mitigate learners' anxiety in the classroom.

Zhang (2010) utilized the major corpus CLEC and the reference corpus BROWN to delve into the semantic prosody of COMMIT in Chinese EFL. The findings revealed that Chinese EFL students displayed the same semantic prosody compared to those of native speakers. However, many interlanguage and uncommon collocations were used by those learners which ultimately resulted in the disharmonious application of the semantic prosody and unnatural English usage. The study also discussed further implications of incorporating semantic prosody into ESL/EFL vocabulary teaching and learning.

Mansoori and Jafarpour (2014) investigated teaching the semantic prosody of English verbs via the data-driven learning (DDL) approach and its impact on EFL students' vocabulary selection and suitability. The experimental group received SP instruction through the DDL approach, whereas the control group was instructed traditionally. The Brown Corpus and British National Corpus (BNC) were used. The findings demonstrated that semantic prosody instruction through DDL significantly promoted EFL learners' vocabulary selection and suitability.

Fuqua (2014) examined various positive and negative connotations of specific words and their possible bearings on non-native English speaker (NNES) bilingual dictionaries and written works. The results provided new insights into the teaching of semantic prosody. The findings were indicative of the fact that if semantic prosodic words and phrases were not explicitly taught in EFL/ESL vocabulary classes, then they would certainly be inappropriately used by NNES.

Yenkimaleki (2018) probed into the impact of explicit vs. implicit prosody teaching on promoting listening comprehension skills by Persian-English interpreter trainees. All the participants were randomly assigned to three groups. Before embarking on the program, the participants took a pretest of listening comprehension. The first experimental group was implicitly taught English prosody through the use of recasts, while the second experimental group received explicit instruction on English prosody. The control group received no such treatment and just listened to authentic audio tracks and did listening comprehension exercises accordingly. The posttest findings revealed that explicit instruction of prosody significantly and positively affected trainees' developing listening comprehension skills.

Elahi and Rahbar (2018) investigated the effect of Iranian translator trainees' semantic prosody knowledge on the proper choice of equivalents in translation. First, a translation test accompanied by several near-synonym pairs with different SPs was administered among participants of different majors and with differing levels of language proficiency. The data were analyzed according to Sinclair's (1996) hypothesis of semantic prosody and Stubbs' (1995) model of semantic prosody categorization. The results implied that knowledge and awareness of the conditions of semantic prosody are necessary in order to enable the participants to properly choose the right equivalents in translation and to convey the intended meaning of the original text. The findings also indicated that translators' proficiency level and major of study could either positively or negatively impact the selection of the most suitable equivalents with regard to SP.

Looking at the literature, a number of scholars have brought interesting examples of semantic prosody to the field (e.g. Coffin & O'Halloran, 2006; Hunston, 2002, 2007; Partington, 2004; Tognini & Bonelli, 2001; Tribble, 2000; Zhang, 2009, 2010). All of the studies done so far have revolved around the issues such as differences between semantic prosodies and connotation, or have looked into the diachronic or synchronic nature of the semantic prosodies. However, this study aimed at investigating whether explicit instruction of the

output task (cloze task) has any impact on learning semantic prosodies. In other words, this study was an attempt to find out whether explicit instruction of output tasks in either source language or target language has any possible bearing on the EFL learners' semantic prosody learning. To achieve this objective, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Is L1-based explicit instruction of output tasks more effective than L2-based explicit instruction regarding EFL learners' semantic prosody learning?
2. Do learners in the experimental groups differ from those in the control group with regard to their output task performances on the semantic prosodies?

Methodology

Participants

Due to the administrative difficulties of randomization, convenience or availability sampling was utilized. Seventy-six female Iranian undergraduate university students majoring in English translation at Karaj Islamic Azad University were randomly selected. All of the participants were second-year university students majoring in English translation. To determine their language proficiency, the Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP) was administered. It was developed jointly in 2012 by the testing division of the University of Michigan English Language Institute and Cambridge Assessment English and rebranded to Michigan Language Assessment in 2018. The results of MTELP taken at the outset of the study revealed that the participants were at the higher intermediate level. There were no dropouts and all the participants completed the instructional course. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years and basic demographic features such as their L1 was common among them.

Instruments

Michigan Test of English Language Proficiency (MTELP)

The MTELP Series is designed to measure learner achievement and progress. It is appropriate for adult or young adult language learners and can be applied in various settings. The MTELP Series is accessible at three levels of proficiency: beginner, intermediate, and advanced. Test formats at each level enjoy various item types and content. Due to the researchers' time constraints and the administrative difficulties inherent in the implementation of the listening comprehension sections of the MTEL, the researchers did away with those parts. First, the grammar section, including seven grammar items, was administered. Each grammar item represented a printed statement or a brief conversational exchange between two interlocutors. Part of the statement or exchange had been removed and the participants had to choose the right answer from among four possible choices. Second, there were eight vocabulary items. The test-takers

had to choose the right answer from among four possible options. All the words included in the vocabulary section had been thoroughly extracted from a variety of corpora that provided detailed information on word frequencies. Finally, 15 multiple-choice reading comprehension questions had to be answered by the participants who were provided with three reading passages. The test took about 45 minutes.

Cloze texts

The researchers made use of eight reading comprehension texts accompanied by cloze tasks. These texts were adopted from two specific sources named *The ILI English Series: High Intermediate 2 and 3* (Student's Book), planned, compiled, and revised by the Iran Language Institute Research and Planning Department. Moreover, the researchers used the *Essential Teacher Knowledge* written by Harmer (2012) as a teacher guide to help them better put the output tasks into practice in the classroom setting. Since the results obtained from MTELP indicated that the participants were at the higher intermediate level, the researchers selected *The ILI English Series: High Intermediate 2 and 3* whose difficulty levels were determined in advance and well matched those of the participants.

Receptive Semantic Prosody Test (RSPT)

In order to measure the participants' initial knowledge of the semantic prosodies, a 40-item Receptive Semantic Prosody Test (RSPT) was administered. The 40-item Semantic Prosody Test was administered to all groups to measure EFL learners' knowledge of semantic prosodies. This test was constructed, validated, and used by Ahmadian, Yazdani and Darabi (2011). To gain the reliability coefficient, the Kuder-Richardson formula was used for the total scores and for the sub-tests separately. The internal reliability values found in the RSP (.82) and in the PSP (.61) were almost acceptable. However, considering the test as a whole, it was highly reliable (.84). As for the validity, based on the correlational indices, the correlation coefficients for the sub-tests (RSP and PSP) were .45 and .74. However, the correlation coefficient between RSP and total SPT was .92. These correlation values indicated that the variables correlated significantly and the SPT and its sub-tests were internally consistent (Ahmadian, et al., 2011). The researchers took advantage of the *RSPT* of the same test and relied on the already-established reliability indices that ensured the internal consistency of the items.

All the items of semantic prosody included in the test were selected from COBUILD Dictionary whose positive or negative conditions had already been predetermined. The 40-item RSPT was first used as a pre-test to assess the learners' initial knowledge of the semantic prosodies prior to the commencement of the study. It was also used as a post-test to explore the relative effectiveness of L1/L2-based output task explicit instruction on the learners' seman-

tic prosody learning. The multiple-choice items and the matching format were exploited for *RSPT*. The learners were not asked to produce semantic prosodies on their own; rather, they were required to make the most appropriate choice from among four possible options. The definitions of the target collocations were extracted from the *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary* (2006). An example of the multiple-choice receptive task taken from Ahmadian et al. (2011) is as follows:

They may.....with sanctions on other products if the bans are disregarded.

a. compensate b. redress c. retaliate d. none of these

As can be readily observed from the test sample, the fourth option is “none of these”. This option, which was the right answer in 10% of the items, was incorporated to lessen the guessing effect and enhance test discrimination and reliability (Jaen, 2007).

Output Tasks

Cloze tasks were used as unfocused output tasks in which EFL learners were not required to produce specific linguistic features. They were rather asked to first go through the presented texts and then fill in the blanks with appropriate semantic prosodies from among four possible options. The cloze tasks helped present the semantic prosodies within specified contexts. As an example, the following cloze task was presented along with its relevant semantic prosodies that were to be completed using the most appropriate one based on the provided contextual clues of the cloze tasks.

result, starts off, written off, outcome, happen **Chernobyl Damage Wider Than Previously Reported**

Details are finally emerging. On April 26, 1986, fires and explosion following an unauthorized experiment..... the worst in the history of nuclear power at the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, Ukraine. At least thirty-one people were in the itself, and radioactive material was released into the atmosphere. Approximately 135,000 were evacuated from the vicinity.

Data Collection Procedure

At the outset of the study, in order to determine the proficiency level of all the participants and to ensure their homogeneity, MTELP was administered. Then, the RSPT was administered as the pre-test to assess the students' initial knowledge of semantic prosodies. Next, all the participants were assigned to three groups: two experimental and one control group. The first experimental

group received explicit output task instruction on the semantic prosodies through L1-based instruction, while the second experimental group received the same instruction but in L2. In L1-based instruction, the instructor was not allowed to indulge in running the whole class using the learners' first language. Rather, the teacher (one of the researchers of this study) was mainly concerned with the logical and judicious use of L1 to clarify the existing ambiguities. EFL learners in the control group were required to complete the same output tasks based on the provided contexts without any explicit instruction on the semantic prosodies either in their L1 or in L2. The participants in the experimental groups went through a seven-week instructional period and received explicit output task instruction on semantic prosodies for 30 minutes at the end of their regular class hour. The participants in the control group were exposed to the same output tasks to complete based on the presented contextual clues only, and no such explicit instruction was provided. Finally, all the participants took the RSPT again to see how effective the output task instruction had been with regard to the semantic prosody learning and how differently the L2 learners in the experimental groups performed on the same output tasks in comparison with their counterparts in the control group.

Treatment

To better grasp the concept of semantic prosody, the students were provided with explicit elaborations on the distinctions made between two interrelated terms: collocation and semantic preference (Stubbs, 2009).

- 1) *Collocation* is the relation of co-occurrence between an obligatory core word or phrase (the node) and individual collocates: word tokens which are directly observable and countable in texts.
- 2) *Semantic preference* is the relation of co-occurrence between the phrasal unit and words from characteristic lexical fields. Recurrent collocates provide observable evidence of the characteristic topic of the surrounding text (e.g. typical subjects or objects of a verb).
- 3) *Semantic prosody* is the function of the whole extended unit. It is a generalization about the communicative purpose of the unit: the reason for choosing it (and is therefore related to the concept of illocutionary force) (pp. 124-125).

The explicit instruction on semantic prosodies included the following activities: The participants were vividly provided with semantic prosodies of the vocabulary items, their associated negative, neutral, and positive conditions, and some concrete examples presented within cloze tasks. For instance, the instructor explicitly explained to the learners in the experimental groups that *causing work* usually associated with bad news, while *providing work* commonly meant good news (Stubbs, 1995b). Therefore, they were told that the word *provide* suggested a positive prosody and primarily collocated with *facilities, information, services, aid, assistance, help, support, care, food, money, nourishment, protection, and security*.

In the same vein, all the participants in the experimental groups were explicitly told that all “the happen-like semantic group”: ‘i.e., *come about*, and *take place*, *set in*, *happen*, and *occur*’ displayed an unfavorable semantic prosody but with varying degrees of badness. *Set in* indicated the worst prosody, followed by *happen*, *occur*, and then *take place*. However, *Come about* did not suggest any particular proclivity or tendency. Furthermore, *happen* and *occur* were commonly applied to express uncertainty and formulate hypotheses, whereas *set in* and *take place* were more frequently used to express facts and definiteness (Partington, 2004). The Learners in the experimental groups were also explicitly presented with other concrete examples such as *bring about* and *cause*. They were told that *bring about* most frequently co-occurred with words like *peace* and *change* mostly in a positive sense, while *cause* and *incur* typically occurred with unfavorable events like *death*, *problem*, *damage*, *cancer*, and *pain* with *cause*, and *cost*, *wrath*, *debt*, *loses*, and *risk* with *incur* (Xiao & McEnery, 2006). Having presented the participants with such explicit information, the instructor also presented the semantic prosodies within various contexts so that the information would be more successfully retained and recalled.

Likewise, the L1-based group received the same consciousness-raising information through which they became much more cognizant of the underlying features of the semantic prosodies. However, whenever deemed necessary, the instructor resorted to the students’ L1 to remove the ambiguities and provided them with L1 equivalents of the semantic prosodies to further enable them to tell the differences between the two. For example, they were presented with some Persian equivalents of “the happen-like semantic group¹” and their probable differences with their L2 counterparts.

Data Analysis

The latest version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to analyze the collected data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. First, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality was used to verify the normality of the data. Based on the results, it was found that the data were not normally distributed, so the researchers had to resort to equivalents non-parametric tests. To answer the first research question, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test was conducted to explore the impact of L1- and L2-based explicit instruction of output task (cloze task) on EFL learners’ semantic prosody learning across the pre-test and post-test (within-group differences). Moreover, to answer the second research question, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was run to explore the impact of L2-based explicit instruction, L1-based explicit instruction, and traditional instruction of output task (cloze task) on EFL learners’ semantic prosody learning across the pre-test and post-test (between-group differences).

¹ رخ دادن، اتفاق افتادن، واقع شدن، به وقوع پیوستن، و روی دادن

Results

The present study was an attempt to see whether the explicit instruction of semantic prosodies through output tasks could be beneficial for Iranian EFL learners, and if so, which type of instruction (L2-based explicit instruction vs. L1-based explicit instruction) could be more advantageous for language learners.

Research Question # 1

The first research question of the study was designed to see whether the intended instruction had any positive impact on EFL learners' semantic prosody learning. At first, the assumption of normality of data had to be tested through Shapiro-Wilk test. This test was required to verify the homogeneity of the variances of the data sets.

Table 1.
Tests of Normality of the L1/ L2-Based Groups Pre-Tests

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
L2-based group (pre-test)	.167	24	.083	.936	24	.130
L1-based group (pre-test)	.147	24	.193	.916	24	.048

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As demonstrated in Table 1, the results of the normality tests were indicative of the fact that the mean of one of the groups differed significantly from that of the other at the $p < .05$ level. Therefore, non-parametric tests were utilized.

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics for L1/ L2-Based Groups

Groups	Tests	N	Percentiles		
			25 th	50 th (Median)	75 th
L2-based group	Pre-test	26	13.0000	15.0000	18.0000
	Post-test		17.7500	19.0000	24.0000
L1-based group	Pre-test	24	15.0000	17.0000	19.7500
	Post-test		25.2500	28.0000	30.7500

As Table 2 reveals, the participants in both groups benefited from the instruction, and their performances in the post-test were better than pre-test. To see whether this improvement from pre-test to post-test was statistically significant, two separate Wilcoxon Signed Rank Tests (Table 3) were run for the L2-based and L1-based groups.

Table 3.
The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test's Results for the L1/ L2-Based Groups

	L2-based group Post-test/Pre-test	L1-based group Post-test/Pre-test
Z	-4.479 ^a	-4.294 ^a
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000

a. Based on negative ranks.

As it is evident from Table 3, the result of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for the L2-based group revealed a statistically significant increase in the learners' semantic prosody learning, $z = -4.47$, $p < .05$, with a large effect size ($r = .61$). The median score on the L2-based explicit instruction increased from pre-test (Md = 15) to post-test (Md = 19). Table 3 shows that the Sig. value (.000) is less than .05, so the difference between the pre-test and post-test of the L2-based explicit instruction was statistically significant.

As with the L1-based group, the result of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test revealed a statistically significant increase in the learners' semantic prosody learning, $z = -4.29$, $p < .05$, with a large effect size ($r = .61$). The median score on the L1-based explicit instruction increased from pre-test (Md = 17) to post-test (Md = 28). Table 3 shows that the Sig. value (.000) is less than .05. Therefore, the pre-test and post-test of the L1-based explicit instruction significantly differed from each other.

Research Question # 2

The second research question of this study was intended to pinpoint the more effective instructional approach for EFL learners. Initially, the assumption of normality of the data had to be tested through the Shapiro-Wilk Test (Table 4). This test was also required to ensure the homogeneity of the variances.

Table 4.
Tests of Normality of the L2-Based, L1-Based, and Control Groups for the Pre-Tests

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
L2-based group (pre-test)	.167	24	.083	.936	24	.130
L1-based group (pre-test)	.147	24	.193	.916	24	.048
Control group (pre-test)	.115	24	.200*	.963	24	.511

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

* This is a lower bound of the true significance.

As displayed in Table 4, the results of the normality test demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level between the

means of one of the groups. In such cases, the use of non-parametric tests is recommended. In addition, to see whether the control and experimental groups were in equal conditions before receiving any treatment, the descriptive data of the study such as the number and median scores of the groups are presented.

Table 5.
Descriptive Statistics for the L2-Based, L1-Based, and Control Groups

Groups	Tests	N	Mean Rank	Median
L2-based group	Pre-test	26	30.48	15.00
	Post-test		30.42	19.00
L1-based group	Pre-test	24	40.94	17.00
	Post-test		60.81	28.00
Control group	Pre-test	26	44.27	18.00
	Post-test		25.98	19.00
Total		76		

Table 5 displays that the control group recorded a higher median score (Md = 18) than the other two experimental groups at the outset of the study. To explore whether this difference was statistically significant, the Kruskal-Wallis Test (Table 6) was conducted. The results of the test showed that there was no statistically significant difference in learners' semantic prosody knowledge across the three different groups (Gp1, n = 26, Md = 15: L2-based explicit instruction; Gp2, n = 24, Md = 17: L1-based explicit instruction; Gp3, n = 26, Md = 18: control group) prior to the instruction ($\chi^2 = (2, n = 76) = 5.53, p = .063$).

Table 6.
The Results of the Kruskal Wallis Test for the Pre-test and Post-test of the Three Groups

	Pre-test	Post-test
Chi-Square	5.539	36.494
Df	2	2
Asymp. Sig.	.063	.000

According to Table 6, the Sig. value is greater than .05 which shows that the difference among the three different groups was not significant, so they were at the same level of semantic prosody knowledge at the outset of the study.

To explore between-group differences after the instruction, the Kruskal-Wallis Test (Table 6) was conducted to see the impact of L2-based explicit instruction, L1-based explicit instruction, and traditional instruction of output task (cloze task) on EFL learners' semantic prosody learning. The results of the test revealed a statistically significant difference in learners' semantic prosody learning across the three different groups (Gp1, n = 26, Md = 19: L2-based explicit instruction; Gp2, n = 24, Md = 28: L1-based explicit instruction; Gp3, n = 26, Md = 19: control group) ($\chi^2 = (2, n = 76) = 36.49, p = .000$). The L1-based explicit instruction recorded a higher median score (Md = 28) than the other groups. Table 6 shows that the Sig. value is less than .05, implying that the dif-

ference among the three different groups was significant, so they were not at the same level of semantic prosody knowledge after the treatment. To compare the groups two by two and specify where the differences lay, the Tukey post-hoc test (Table 7) was run.

Table 7.
Multiple Comparisons of the L2-Based, L1-Based, and Control Groups' Means

(I) Groups (Post-test)	(J) Groups (Post-test)	Mean Differ- ence (I-J)	Std. Er- ror	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
L2-based group	L1-based group	-7.4103*	1.08131	.000	-10.0599	-4.7606
	Control group	1.1154	1.05946	.888	-1.4807	3.7115
L1-based group	L2-based group	7.4103*	1.08131	.000	4.7606	10.0599
	Control group	8.5256*	1.08131	.000	5.8760	11.1753
Control group	L2-based group	-1.1154	1.05946	.888	-3.7115	1.4807
	L1-based group	-8.5256*	1.08131	.000	-11.1753	-5.8760

Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 14.592.

The result of the Tukey post-hoc test revealed that L1-based explicit instruction significantly differed from L2-based explicit instruction and the control group. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the L2-based explicit instruction and the control group ($p = .88$).

Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate the impact of explicit instruction of an output task (cloze task) either in the source or in the target language on semantic prosody learning. More specifically, the main objective of this study was to compare the relative effectiveness of explicit L1-based and L2-based instruction of semantic prosodies. The results of this study indicated that, although explicit instruction mattered, L1 instruction was another leading and contributing factor that proved to be effective and had to be taken into consideration.

The overall results of this study, in line with a number of other studies (e.g. Burden, 2001; Butzkamm, 2003; Dujmovic 2007; Pakzadian 2012; Schweers, 1999; Tang, 2002), advocate the positive effects of L1-based instruction on language learning. As Dujmovic (2007) argues, the era of an English-only policy has nearly been over and recently an increasing number of researchers have a tendency to a more bilingual approach to teaching which could integrate the learners' first language as a learning tool.

The comparison of the two approaches to learning semantic prosodies, in this study, demonstrated that L1-based instruction was more effective, and the EFL learners were generally more receptive to L1-based output task instruction. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies that advocate the proper and judicious use of L1 in second language acquisition in general (e.g., Cheng, 2013; Grim, 2010; Horst et al., 2010; Lee & Macaro, 2013; Leeming, 2011; Macaro, 2009; Mart, 2013) and vocabulary learning in particular (Joyce, 2015; Sunderman & Kroll, 2006).

The results seemingly suggest that the very nature of L1-based instruction could have contributed to the effectiveness of the L1-based instruction. In the L1-based explicit output task instruction group, the learners were explicitly provided with the exact translations of the semantic prosodies. This, in turn, might have focused their attention on the cross-linguistic and metalinguistic features of the semantic prosodies directly. However, in the L2-based explicit output task instruction group, the learners were presented with the definitions of the semantic prosodies in the target language and were left on their own to induce and explore the meanings of the related words. This might have adversely impacted their grasp on the semantic prosodies and led to a poorer performance on the output task. Therefore, it could be argued that making judicious use of learners' L1 has enabled L2 learners to specify and identify the similarities and differences of the semantic prosodies in the two languages.

The results revealed that L1/L2-based experimental groups and the control group differed significantly in terms of their semantic prosody learning. Although L2-based experimental group differed slightly from the control group in semantic prosody learning, L1-based experimental group outperformed the other two groups significantly. More specifically, the results of the present study seem to suggest that principled and judicious exploitation of learners' L1 would lead to more successful vocabulary learning compared to other available alternatives such as giving L2 definitions or providing contextual clues. The findings of this study concur with those of previous studies on vocabulary learning, advocating the provision of L1 equivalents (e.g., Joyce, 2015; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Ramachandran & Rahim, 2004).

The main justification for the use of the learners' L1 was to expose them to the semantic features of the semantic prosodies both in L1 and L2 in order to enable them to be semantically aware of the differences and similarities of the semantic prosodies in two languages. This process helped the L2 learners to appropriately compare and contrast the features of their own language with those of the target language to gain mastery over the presented semantic prosodies. The findings of a study conducted by Horst et al. (2010) demonstrated that the learners were completely receptive to cross-linguistic awareness activities and such activities can be anchored in the process of language learning to address a wide variety of linguistic features. The L1 use also allowed the L2 learners to move more readily from the unfamiliar (newly-presented semantic prosodies within contextualized cloze tasks) to the familiar (explicit L1

equivalents of the same semantic prosodies) and provided them with the required analytic tool to enhance their semantic prosody learning.

Another possible explanation for the effectiveness of the explicit L1-based instruction of output tasks can be attributed to the fact that this seemingly appropriate application of L1 can act as an essential social, cognitive, and pedagogic tool (Stroch & Aldosari, 2010; Wang, 2014). The cognitive and linguistic demands of the contextualized semantic prosodies within output cloze tasks were certainly mitigated through L1 use in the class (Dressler & Kamil, 2006). Moreover, the L1 explicit instruction for the presented semantic prosodies and cloze tasks might have provided L2 learners with quite an opportunity to interact and negotiate the meanings of the intended semantic prosodies more successfully (Hawkins, 2015). L1 application must have been quite beneficial to both L2 teacher and learners from a pedagogic point of view as it led to better retention and learning of the semantic prosodies within the classroom setting.

Another rationale behind the relative effectiveness of L1 application in the language classroom has to do with affective factors. L2 language learners bring with them a number of psychological barriers to the learning situation that might impede or even block the learning process. Appropriate use of L1 in classrooms can serve as a mitigating factor to keep their anxiety in check and remove fears associated with learning a second language in general, and learning semantic prosodies within contextualized cloze tasks in particular (Cook, 2001; Kang, 2008; Meyer, 2008; Nazary, 2008). Accordingly, it can be argued that the occasional and reasonable L1 application in classroom settings can function as a facilitative tool, not only to enhance and expedite the language learning and teaching process, but also as a suitable means at the teachers' disposal to meet the psychological demands of the students whenever necessary (Brooks-Lewis, 2009; Bruen, & Kelly, 2014). As a result, L2 learners might feel less inhibited and be more open to learning semantic prosodies.

Yet another probable explanation for the advantage of the L1-based explicit output task group over other groups with regard to semantic prosody learning can be ascribed to the fact that L1 application in the classroom was quite congruent with their already-established identity and even further ameliorated and solidified it (Cook, 2001; Cummins et al., 2005; Manyak, 2004). This process urged and prompted more reserved and reticent L2 learners, particularly those with limited language proficiency, to be more actively and willingly engaged in learning the semantic prosodies, while also allowing the L2 learners to freely express their inner feelings and desires and provide the language teacher with appropriate feedback.

Conclusion

The results of the present study indicated that the L1-based output task explicit instruction of the semantic prosodies made significant improvements in the semantic prosody learning of the L1-based learners compared to the learners in the L2-based output task explicit instruction and the control group. The find-

ings demonstrated that L2 learners' first language can be applied in the most appropriate way to boost their grasp over L2 vocabularies in general and semantic prosodies in particular. First, it is of paramount importance to present the semantic prosodies in specific contexts rather than in isolation. Second, the use of output tasks whose main focus is on meaning rather than form facilitates the process of vocabulary learning. Third, providing L1-based explicit instruction really counts and reduces the ambiguities of the presented vocabularies and raises students' consciousness about them. Fourth, both L2 teachers and learners can ill afford to turn a blind eye to the important and undeniable role L1 use plays in learning L2 semantic prosodies. Finally, it has become increasingly evident that semantic prosody needs to be well-integrated into English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) vocabulary learning, reading, writing, and teaching.

The present study delimited itself to the cloze tasks as an output task to explicitly teach learners semantic prosodies. Other tasks might be advantageous to carry out pertinent research on SP. Conducting similar studies including larger samples is highly recommended as this would strengthen and boost the generalizability of the findings. Another possible suggestion for future research is to incorporate both sub-sets of the RSPT (receptive and productive) in the tests. The present study mainly focused on the receptive sub-set as it aimed at identifying, recognizing, and distinguishing semantic prosodies within the provided contexts rather than producing them. Finally, students of both sexes and with differing language proficiencies can be included for further research to account for the sex and proficiency effects as well.

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