The acquisition of English modality by Iranian EFL learners

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Introduction

Jespersen (1924) noted that one of the functions of the subjunctive is simply that of being subordinate, in that it is typically the mood used in subordinate clauses. It is, in fact, no coincidence that the term „subjunctive“ is a translation of the Classical Greek hypotaktiké which literally means subordinate. Indeed, in Latin, the subjunctive was increasingly used in subordinate sentences even where there seemed to be no notion of irrealis…” Palmer (ibidem) points out that “however, the subjunctive is also used in main clauses, and its uses there are rather better more simply explained than its uses in subordinate clauses…” In accordance with Palmer’s statement, I deal not only with the dependent but also with the non-dependent usages of the subjunctive.

According to Palmer (2001: 104) languages tend to exhibit either modal verbs or the typical mood indicative/subjunctive distinction; when they co-occur, it seems that these systems function at the expense of the other, e.g. the rise of the modal verbs in English was fostered by the simultaneous demise of the inflectional mood system.

Collentine (1995) concluded that “the most important barrier to learners’ benefiting from mood-selection instruction relates to their abilities to generate complex syntax” (p. 130), which is due to their inability to simultaneously make distinctions in the morphological changes in verb endings (indicative vs. subjunctive) and produce complex syntax.

This study will provide an overview of previous research on mood selection and subjunctive learning that will aid in understanding the problem at hand and provide insights to future research.

Students’ data from this study will be analyzed, presented and compared to previous research, including Collentine (1995), to provide further suggestions for facilitating the students’ development of mood selection in classroom instruction.

This study starts with the concepts of mood and modality. Mood is defined as “a grammatical category for verbs,” (Collentine, 1995, p. 123) that is used to reflect the speaker’s perception of the reality (which involves the indicative mood) or irreality (which involves the subjunctive
mood) of a situation (Koike & Klee, 2003). The mood of a verb form has also been referred to as the modality of the verb after it undergoes morphological or grammatical changes in the verb ending (Hualde, Olarrea & Escobar, 2001).

Modality, on the other hand, “is a semantic notion manifested in all parts of speech” (Collentine, 1995, p. 123). In addition to mood and modality, students’ native language (L1) can play a role in learning certain aspects of the second language (L2). When students make comparisons between their L1 and L2 they can make certain transfer errors. According to Stockwell, Bowen and Martin (1965) the contrastive hypothesis predicts that there is a relationship between the similarity of L1 vs. L2 structures and their ease of acquisition, i.e., the more similar the two structures are, the easier they are to learn, and structures that vary greatly between the two languages will be more difficult to acquire. This study indicates that students are more interested to produce the indicative than the subjunctive, as the indicative is the unmarked mood, and is therefore more easily acquired (Gragera, 2000).

It is rare in speech that foreign language (FL) learners of English properly select mood even after the considerable amount of time that courses customarily devote to its study (Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone 1987).

Development of mood selection abilities should consider two aspects of learners performance: morphological abilities and syntactic abilities. Although the indicative surfaces in all syntactic environments, the subjunctive ends to surface only in subordinate clauses (Terrell and Hooper 1974, Takagaki 1984). Palmer (1986) note that mood is only one of the various ways by which a language conveys modality.

Modality is a semantic notion, manifested in all parts-of-speech. Mood, on the other hand, is a grammatical category of verbs hence, the indicative and subjunctive moods.

Thankfully, Palmer (2001: 1–22), who draws on very broad scholarship, provides the modal community with an invaluable service by discussing basic concepts at the outset of his typological survey and proposing standardization of basic terms. Thus, for example, in place of the previously favoured practice of making a binary distinction between ‘non-modal’ and ‘modal’ or ‘factual’ and ‘non-factual’, Palmer (2001: 1) suggests that ‘realis’ or ‘irrealis’ are the more satisfactory terms since “they have the advantage that they are obviously technical, so that their use can avoid any possible connotations of the more familiar terms” (Palmer, 2001: 1). Elsewhere (Palmer, 2001: 7–8), he discusses the epistemic–deontic distinction in terms of
‘propositional’ and ‘event’ modality, yet uses both sets of terminology in tandem, thereby recognizing that the traditional terms are somehow irredeemably fixed in the modal pantheon. Mood and modal systems are “to a large extent” mutually exclusive, as exemplified by Modern English, where “the subjunctive mood has died out and the modal system has developed”. Much research has investigated the role of grammatical explanation or rule presentation in second language learning generally finding it beneficial (Alanen 1995, Carroll & Swain 1993, de Graaf 1997, Dekaser 1995, Ellis 1993, Nagata 1993, Nagata & Swisher 1995, Robinson 1996, 1997, Rosa & Leow 2004a, 2004b).

Recently, investigators (e.g., Cadierno 1995; VanPatten and Cadierno 1993) have presented evidence that Processing Instruction, an input-oriented approach to grammar instruction promoting the intake of grammatical properties, may be more effective than traditional, output-oriented approaches at facilitating the acquisition of grammar. An experiment comparing the two approaches with the subjunctive indicates that, while Processing Instruction is indeed effective at fostering learners’ subjunctive abilities, output-oriented instruction is equally effective in tasks where the subjunctive has communicative value. Terrell, Baycroft and Perrone (1987) note that, historically, the subjunctive has been one of the most challenging structures for learners to acquire.

Statement of problem
Given the substantial amount of time that FL curricula have traditionally dedicated to mood selection, there is surprisingly little FL research addressing questions related directly to the subjunctive. Lee (1987), one of the few to follow this line of investigation, has challenged the assumption that learners must study the subjunctive to be able to comprehend discourse in which it appears.

An investigation of the development of mood-selection abilities must consider two aspects of learners' performance. Naturally, one must examine learners’ morphological abilities, or the accuracy with which they produce the indicative and the subjunctive in obligatory contexts. It is also essential to consider learners' syntactic capabilities. Although the indicative surfaces in all syntactic environments, the subjunctive ends to surface only in subordinate clauses (Terrell and Hooper 1974, Takagaki 1984).
Significance of study

This study attempts to look at mood and modality both of which have to do with the expression of factuality and non factuality. The two main mood categories that will be observed in this study are the subjunctive and the indicative mood.

Due to the marked nature of the subjunctive mood it has been observed that students tend exhibit more difficulties producing the subjunctive mood than the indicative mood (Collentine, 1995; Floyd, 1983; Terrell, Baycroft, & Perrone, 1987).

Communicative value, cognitive load and frequency of input are relevant to the development of mood selection.


Farley (2001) acknowledges that Collentine (1998) also conducted a study testing the efficacy of Processing Instruction and output-oriented techniques for fostering subjunctive abilities.

Mood selection in English requires the ability to produce complex utterances (Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone, 1987).

Research questions

The present study will address the following research questions:

1. Do Iranian EFL learners learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures differently?
2. Does language proficiency affect Iranian EFL learners' learning of subjunctive non-subjunctive mood structures?
The subjunctive in English

The term subjunctive refers to a particular verb form. In Old English, special verb forms existed to communicate nonfacts e.g., wants, hopes, and hypothetical situations. The subjunctive is somewhat weak in Modern English. In many cases, the subjunctive is a form learned in school or through reading, so it is educated speakers who use it most.

The mood used to express irreality in English is called the subjunctive, which Givón (1994) defines as the weak assertion that a statement is true. The Subjunctive Mood is used to signal something that is not true or may not be true. According to Francis James (1986) the subjunctive mood is used to show a hope, a wish, or something that is not presently real, but rather is something that the speaker would like to fit his worldview and become real. James states that the Subjunctive Mood is used when the world does not fit to the desires of the speaker. González-Alvarez (2003) found that the usage of the subjunctive had fallen from over 70% in the 17th century to just over 22% in the 19th century in a corpora study of written language. The subjunctive is largely a subordinte clause phenomenon. Subordinate clauses are commonly devided into Nominal clauses (or argument clauses), Relative clauses, and Adverbial clauses.

Participants

The participants of this study were 50 Iranian male and female learners of English in some high Schools at khodabande in Zanjan province. All of the participants were native speakers of Persian. They were chosen through random sampling. Two schools were randomly selected. Of these one school belonged to females and one to males. three intact classes were randomly chosen in each school, one class representing each field of study, namely, science, mathematics, and humanities. Then through Oxford Placement Test, they were put in two groups, each comprising 26 and 24 members as intermediate and advanced plus ones. Based on the results of PET those students (N = 26) whose scores were equal to mean (62.80) and below it, were considered intermediate, and those whose scores were above the mean (N = 24) were named the advanced group (N = 24).

All of the participants were studying in the fourth grade of high school and They ranged from 18 - 21 in terms of age. Since they had already studied English for three years in high school.
they were assumed to have gained enough experience and background knowledge regarding subjunctive mood to be able to answer the questionnaires.

**Instruments**

**Oxford Placement Test (OPT)**

To place the participants in two distinctive groups, OPT was used. Based on the results of PET, those students \((N = 26)\) whose scores were equal to mean (62.80) and below it, were considered intermediate, and those whose scores were above the mean \((N = 24)\) were named the advanced group \((N = 24)\). This part of the examination contains 85 problems, numbered 1-85. There are 30 grammars, 25 vocabularies, and 30 reading comprehension problems. The examiner will not explain any test problem. If you don't understand how to do the problems, raise your hand, and a proctor will explain the examples to you. Do not spend too much time on any one problem. Each problem counts the same. If you do not know the answer to a problem, you may make a reasonable guess. Each problem had only one correct answer. Work fast but carefully. You have one hour (60 minutes) to answer all 75 problems. Here are examples of each kind of problem. In each example, the correct answer has been married with an asterisk (*). Do not write in this test booklet.

**Researcher-made Test**

To check the learning of the participants a researcher-made test was conducted. It has two versions: a 30 subjunctive type item version and a 30 non-subjunctive item for Iranian EFL learners. The questionnaire has been extensively checked for reliability and validated in multiple ways.

The test question items were structured to provide information regarding whether or not participants could learn the subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood differently. Distractor questions that prompted the indicative mood in coordination clauses were placed intermittently in the test so that the subjects would not guess the nature of the study.
Procedure

In order to achieve the aim of the study, the following procedures were followed. The written test and language experience questionnaire were provided to the students in the classroom where the students were handed out by the researcher at the beginning of the class. The research reviewed sample test questions and responses with students prior to the test (e.g., their participation was voluntary, that the test would not affect their grade in the class). Based on the mean scores, the students were divided into an intermediate and an advanced groups with the top 62.80 belonging to the advance group and equal or below 62.80 belonging to the intermediate group. The major objective of the study was to discover whether the mood type and language proficiency affect on the learning of English subjunctive mood or not. To this end the students were asked to respond the items of the questionnaire. They did not give their age, field of study. It is worth mentioning that the students participation was voluntary and they were told that their responses would be just used for research purposes and would not influence their scores. Hence, they were asked to respond to the items of the questionnaire correctly and in all their honesty.

PET Results

PET was administered to 50 Iranian EFL students to determine their English language proficiency level for the main study. The descriptive statistics, as shown in Table.1, reflects that the mean, median and mode of PET scores are 62.80, 60.00, and 47 respectively. These central parameters are close each other showing that the scores are normally dispersed around the mean. Additionally, Table.1 indicates that the PET scores have normal distribution since the ratios of skewness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors are not beyond the ranges of +/- 1.96. Table.1

*Descriptive Statistics for PET*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60.28</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.08</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>-1.160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the results of PET (Table.1 above), those students \((N = 26)\) whose scores were equal to mean \((62.80)\) and below it, were considered intermediate, and those whose scores were above the mean \((N = 24)\) were named the advanced group \((N = 24)\).

Figure 4.1 below displays the distribution of the PET scores on a normal curve.

![Figure 4.1 Distribution of PET scores](image)

**Analysis of Research Questions**

The aim of the first research question was to examine whether Iranian EFL learners learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures differently. And the second research question asked if language proficiency affects Iranian EFL learners’ learning of grammar knowledge. A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to answer the research questions of this study. Mood structure type was the within-subject factor, and language proficiency was considered as the between-subject factor. Table.2 displays the results of the descriptive statistics. Table.2 indicates that the mean score obtained on non-subjunctive mood structures \((\bar{x} = 47.58, SD = 12.69)\) is greatly higher than the subjunctive mood structures \((\bar{x} = 56.90, SD = 12.78)\). That means the non-subjunctive structures has been easier for the students to answer.
Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Comprehension of Subjunctive and Non-Subjunctive Mood Structures at Two Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood Structure type</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.46</td>
<td>4.571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59.63</td>
<td>5.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>47.58</td>
<td>12.699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Subjunctive</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45.54</td>
<td>4.235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>69.21</td>
<td>4.978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>56.90</td>
<td>12.786</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 below indicates that the assumption of homogeneity of covariance for performing ANOVA was met (Box’s M = 5.15, p > .05).

Table 3

Box’s Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box’s M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.152</td>
<td>1.027</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>530484.255</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of Levene's test as appeared in Table 4 revealed that the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated as well as the significance value exceeded than .05 for both sets of scores.

Table 4

Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mood Structure type</th>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjunctive</td>
<td>.631</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>.431</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RM one-way ANOVA was run to investigate whether mood type influence Iranian EFL learners' learning of grammar; the results of which are represented in Table.5. As evident in Table.5., Greenhouse-Geisser correction showed that the mean score differences on subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures are statistically significant ($F(1, 48) = 267.53, P < .01$).

Table 5

Test of Within Subjects Effects RM ANOVA for Subjunctive and Non-Subjunctive Mood Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Sphericity Assumed</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>172.80</td>
<td>267.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenhouse-Geisser</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>267.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huynh-Feldt</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>267.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-bound</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2172.80</td>
<td>267.532</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor Level Sphericity Assumed</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Greenhouse-Geisser</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huynh-Feldt</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower-bound</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>.197</td>
<td>.659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error(Factor)</td>
<td>Sphericity Assumed</td>
<td>389.84</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>8.122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greenhouse-Geisser</td>
<td>389.84</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>8.122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 below (multivariate tests) reflects that the partial eta square index is .84, which shows that 84 percent of the variance in the grammar learning scores is as a result of mood structure type; this is rather a large effect size (.848 > .138). The obtained results for Wilks’ Lambda ($F(1, 48) = 267.5, p < .01$) indicated that mood structure type (i.e., subjunctive non-subjunctive) influences the students’ learning of grammatical structures. As a result, the first null hypothesis that says Iranian EFL learners do not learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures differently is rejected and we claim that Iranian EFL learners learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures differently.

Also multivariate tests (Table 6) showed that the interaction effect of mood structure type and language proficiency was not significant ($F(1, 48) = .19, p > .05$)

Table 6

Multivariate Tests$^b$ RM ANOVA for Subjunctive and Non-Subjunctive Moods Structures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Hypothesis df</th>
<th>Error df</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pillai’s Trace</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td>267.5$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilks’ Lambda</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>267.5$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotelling’s Trace</td>
<td>5.574</td>
<td>267.5$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy’s Largest Root</td>
<td>5.574</td>
<td>267.5$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillai’s Trace</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.197$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilks’ Lambda</td>
<td>.996</td>
<td>.197$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Level</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.197$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy’s Largest Root</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.197$^a$</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>48.00</td>
<td>.659</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Exact statistic

b. Design: Intercept + Level

Within Subjects Design: Factor
The results of tests of between-subjects effects (Table 7) that were performed to check the second null hypothesis investigating the effect of English language proficiency (as the between-subjects factor) on learning of subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Partial Eta Squared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>277372.333</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>277372.333</td>
<td>7256.834</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level</td>
<td>13686.573</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13686.573</td>
<td>358.079</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1834.667</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>38.222</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tests of between-subjects effects (Table 7) showed that language proficiency effect was statistically significant ($F(1, 48) = 358.07, p < .01$, Eta square= .98) in learning subjunctive non-subjunctive mood structures. Accordingly, the second null hypothesis as language proficiency does not have any effect on Iranian EFL learners' learning of subjunctive non-subjunctive mood structures was rejected, and therefore with high degree of confidence we can claim that language proficiency affects Iranian EFL learners' learning of subjunctive non-subjunctive mood structures. We present a line chart to demonstrate the results more obviously. Figure 4.2 shows that the students at advanced level could answer the subjunctive structures ($\bar{X} = 59.63$), and non-subjunctive mood ($\bar{X} = 69.21$) structures better than the intermediate students on subjunctive ($\bar{X} = 36.46$), and non-subjunctive ($\bar{X} = 45.54$) structures.
The present study aimed at investigating the differences in the mood type learning of Iranian EFL learners based on language proficiency level.

Regarding the first research question concerning the differences in the mood type learning, results provide evidence that Iranian EFL learners learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood differently and mood type is important, that is non-subjunctive items are easier than subjunctive one.

RM one-way ANOVA was run to investigate whether mood type influence Iranian EFL learners' learning of grammar. The results represented in Table.5. As evident in Table.5., Greenhouse-Geisser correction showed that the mean score differences on subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures are statistically significant.

According to several researchers (Collentine, 1995; Floyd, 1983; Pereira, 1996; Terrell, Baycroft & Perrone, 1987) students’ learning of the subjunctive mood would benefit greatly if they were instructed in the use of complex syntax prior to having produced subjunctive forms in dependent clauses. when students have mastered complex syntax they will benefit from instruction regarding the subjunctive (Collentine, 1995; Terrell, Baycroft, & Perrone, 1987) and will be able to successfully produce sentences containing both complex syntax and appropriate subjunctive verb forms in dependent clauses.

Figure 4.2 Means on the two mood structure types at two levels
Numerous factors can be said to be important in influencing speakers’ choices about whether or not to employ the subjunctive. The nature of the subjunctive itself can affect speakers’ willingness to view it as a useful grammatical resource. Individual factors such as socioeconomic background can also be influential in establishing trends in subjunctive usage. It should be noted, however, that the deciding factor in speakers’ choices is generally the appropriateness of the chosen form to the given context.

González-Alvarez (2003) showed that the usage of the subjunctive had fallen from over 70% in the 17th century to just over 22% in the 19th century in a corpora study of written language. The first finding is consistent with studies carried out by Gragera, (2000) that support research that indicates that students are more prone to produce the non-subjunctive than the subjunctive, as the non-subjunctive is the unmarked mood, and is therefore more easily acquired.

The results also indicate that non-subjunctive is the most frequently used mood type. Markedness has also been studied and carried out to be a factor that affects the acquisition of the subjunctive mood (Gragera, 2000).

He uses the definition of markedness as provided by Greenburg (1966), which refers to those that are more frequent are less marked, while those that are less frequent are more marked.

With regard to the second research question, results indicated that language proficiency effect was statistically significant in learning subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures. Advanced EFL learners could learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood better than those learners that are at intermediate level.

Despite the significant amount of time that is typically dedicated to teaching the subjunctive in the classroom, seldom do intermediate learners of English properly select mood, especially in open-ended oral communicative tasks. The authors concluded that learners often learn rather than acquire the subjunctive.

Krashen (1978) proposed the learning/acquisition dichotomy explaining learning takes place in a formal context (i.e., formal instruction) and is a conscious approach to gaining knowledge of
a FL (i.e., studying after school for an exam, or a self-study program). Acquisition, on the other hand, takes place in a naturalistic context, and involves subconscious processing (Block, 2003). This finding is in line with the results of studies by Givon (1979, p. 223) that discussed The Developmental Stages Model, which gives a synopsis of the pre-syntactic and syntactic stages for measuring learners’ development in English: Floyd (1983) authored the Syntactic Deficiency Hypothesis, reporting that there is a direct relationship between the development syntax and subjunctive mood selection abilities. Based on Floyd’s (1983) Syntactic Deficiency Hypothesis Collentine (1995) conducted a study that examined mood selection abilities of intermediate level English students.

Summary of the main findings

This research intended to investigate learning subjunctive mood of Iranian EFL learners by suggesting two research questions.

The aim of the first research question was to examine whether Iranian EFL learners learn subjunctive and non-subjunctive mood structures differently. And the second research question asked if language proficiency affects Iranian EFL learners' learning of grammar knowledge. A repeated measures ANOVA was performed to answer the research questions of this study. Mood structure type was the within-subject factor, and language proficiency was considered as the between-subject factor. This research shows that the mean score obtained on non-subjunctive mood structures is greatly higher than the subjunctive mood structures. That means the non-subjunctive structures has been easier for the students to answer. Tests of between-subjects effects showed that language proficiency effect was statistically significant in learning subjunctive non-subjunctive mood structures. Therefore with high degree of confidence we can claim that language proficiency affects Iranian EFL learners' learning of subjunctive non-subjunctive mood structures.

Pedagogical implications

The implications of this research include the need to provide clear instruction regarding complex syntax structures to EFL students before modal differences are elicited, i.e., the nature of independent and dependent clauses, and how they are related by different modalities. Another pedagogical implication for this study is that teachers will teach language materials and subjunctive mood mutually and students will get used to practicing both of them. It is also suggested for material developers to develop and prepare materials based on the requirements of
every field of study. In general, this research also has implication in teaching, material development, testing and evaluation.

Suggestions for further research

Farther research can be conducted through other instruments including interviews, think aloud required to elicit more objective and comprehensive results. Further studies should be carried out on comparisons that can be made between learning of the subjunctive by those who study abroad and those who do not, to include the amount of time it takes those who do not study abroad to reach the same level of subjunctive learning as those who have studied abroad. Additional research is suggested on EFL learners that have received explicit complex syntax instruction, as suggested by (Collentine, 1995; Floyd, 1983; Pereira, 1996; Terrell, Baycroft, & Perrone, 1987), in order to determine the effectiveness of this proposed approach. Researchers should also study the syntactic and subjunctive development of EFL learners at more advanced levels to ascertain the time frame in which students learn the subjunctive in relation to learning complex syntax.

References


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