

The Study of the Metalinguistic Knowledge of English by Students in an Intensive and a Traditional Course

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Abstract

The goal of the current research was to study the relationship among learning contexts and, levels of metalinguistic knowledge of the Iranian intermediate EFL learners. This research explores the level of learners' metalinguistic knowledge in English in two different contexts (traditional and intensive courses). Participants included 44 intermediate students at Shoukoh Language Institute, Zanjan, Iran. The selection violated the randomization criterion, thus the quasi-experimental was taken for the current study. The instruments used for data collection were Nelson English Language Proficiency Test (NELPT) as a placement test which used to measure level of students prior to the experiment and, a metalinguistic knowledge English test (MKET) was also, administered at the beginning and ending the semester as pre and post-test to measure their metalinguistic knowledge. The data collected from the administration of the above mentioned two tests were submitted to different statistical analysis such as ANCOVA, one independent sample t-test and, one paired sample t-test. The results revealed that there was a significant distinction between two sets performance in the metalinguistic test. An intensive English course had an important helpful influence on MKE of the students. They enhanced their MKE in an intensive semester. As an implication of this study, the findings will motivate language teachers to focus on intensive semester because intensive instruction was found to be effective in improving the EFL learners' MKE. Further study is needed before the results of the research can be generalized.

Keywords: intensive context, metalinguistic knowledge, traditional context

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Research in the field of language achievement indicates that the urge of language proficiency has changed enormously. In the last decades, language proficiency was assessed merely as learners' structural accuracy or learners' knowledge of language structures with very little focus on how to utilize these language structures. However, when the notion of communicative competence emerged in the field of EFL/ESL settings, the focus shifted from the very narrow view of language proficiency to a broader range of language potentials, such as the awareness of a language syntax, terminology, phonology, and semantics (metalinguistic awareness).

One of the most significant current discussions in this research is that metalinguistic skills in the second/foreign language is often stimulated by classroom consideration to the official system of the foreign language. According to Malakoff (1999) metalinguistic knowledge is distinctive and productive language that is invisible without this knowledge. Metalinguistic knowledge is the learners' clear and precise awareness about the vocabulary, syntactic grammatical, morphological and phonological structures of the second language (Roehr, 2006). He also suggests that metalinguistic knowledge is an effective factor that helps improve language proficiency in a second language context. According to Berry (2005) without essential metalinguistic awareness such as present perfect, adjective, and noun, students will have problems in understanding details by educators and textbooks for such test things. Metalanguage needs defining and explaining itself to be assumed by the audience before it can be used to explain another language. In traditional language settings, students are frequently exposed to precise instruction and education where systematic description and explanation of different aspects of second language is permitted. This provides an opportunity for teachers and applied linguistics researchers to create the environment of the connection between foreign language ability and their foreign language metalinguistic awareness, or precise awareness about the second language (Roehr, 2006).

According to Nowrozi (2011) explicit awareness is equivalent to metalinguistic awareness and it is typically considered as the students' ability to describe the language and its structures such as phonemes, while implicit awareness is described as using these structures in written or spoken forms of language.

In spite of the above-mentioned research studies, far too little attention has been paid to the relationship among Iranian EFL learners' metalinguistic knowledge, and learning contexts. To fill this gap, based on the importance of metalinguistic awareness in second language education and instruction, the present research was going to explore the relationship among learning context and levels of metalinguistic knowledge of the Iranian intermediate EFL students because the findings of the research study would be beneficial to English teachers in Iranian educational contexts to do some other ways to improve learners' metalinguistic knowledge. In the current study, an alternative EFL setting is examined in which language learners will be involved in the learning process more intensively.

1.2 Importance of the Problem

One of the motivations for this experiment was that the researcher who is also an EFL instructor whose students complain about the length of the courses they take. One of the most prevalent questions that learners ask repeatedly is that how long this course will last. Sometimes they do not enroll in classes unless they are assured that they will gain mastery on the L2 in a short period of time. Although a shorter instructional period may be attractive to many learners but it may fail to provide sufficient practice time to considerably increase the level of language ability.

The advent of newer schools of thought in psychology and linguistics in common and in second language instruction in specific has urged the educators and the researchers to examine the most advantageous ways of acquiring a foreign language in the Iranian educational setting. Considering the concept of metalinguistic knowledge to the best knowledge of the researcher, very few studies, if any, were carried out in the past to investigate the possible relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and language learning context in Iranian educational setting. This study may be significant since it examines the metalinguistic knowledge of the learners in traditional and intensive setting. According to Freed, Segolowitz, & Dewey (2004) traditional setting does not significantly improve L2 learners' performance. They suggest that it would be more beneficial for L2 development if students were exposed to more hours of instruction per day.

1.3 Related Literature

According to Tarone (2007) there is experiential evidence to support the connection between community setting and foreign language achievement. It indicates that students' foreign language involvement and managing it in social contexts are generally facilitated, that linguistic and social setting has an effect on linguistic usage, practice and progress, etc. Students purposely confirm social characteristic through the foreign language in different social situations (Tarone, 2007, p. 837). Selinker & Douglas (1985) also suggest that adult second language students establish internal discourse domains that are derived from the particular forms and structure founded through their awareness of the social setting in which they find themselves. Form refinement may also be affected by context, as is evidenced by better development of phonetic and phonological abilities in study abroad contexts (Simoes, 1996; Stevens, 2001).

The focus of research in EFL learning contexts has naturally been on study intensive context and the second language classroom in a traditional context. Before discussing the previous studies, it is important to define the current operationalization of the two contexts addressed in the EFL setting. The foreign language classroom (FLC) is operationalized as the traditional classroom situation, where students are enrolled in an academic institute seeking a degree or certificate, not necessarily in a foreign language, but take formally instructed classes in a foreign language. These classes typically hold several times a week for an hour or a standard instructional period. According to Ginsburg & Miller (2000) at the United States Naval Academy for instance foreign language classes are taught pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, and grammar in the basic courses. Intermediate courses expand on the basics and move toward reading, writing, and communicative skills. Finally, advanced courses are taught exclusively in the second language and focus on literary and cultural aspects as well as history and current events of the countries where the language is spoken.

Intensive instruction (INI) is an intensive course dedicated to a certain foreign language where students study the language full time. This type of training typically involves four or more hours of teaching per day, and students are typically encouraged to participate in language learning outside of the classroom. According to Wodkowski (2003) intensive English programs, which is also named compacted courses, are the programs that a second language are thought to learners in a shorter time than usual. Recently, some scholars have disagreed about the efficiency of intensive program. Although some scholars such as Bédard & Thomas (2010), Grant (2001) have

stated hopeful results related to intensive programs, others (e.g., Nasiri & Shokrpour, 2012), have disagreed about the efficiency of the intensive programs and emphasized their weaknesses.

Advocate so intensive program can help to improve education process. In fact, Hong-Nam & Leavell (2006) maintain that intensive courses have been increased students essential and social involvement skills. Some studies also indicate that intensive courses can expand learners' obligation, inspiration and commitment, and students claim that intensive courses are interesting, effective, stimulating, inspiring, and pleasing than traditional courses (Jacques-Bilodea, 2010; Scott & Conrad, 1991). Intensive courses also can increase students' language awareness. Intensive instruction (INI); however, would find itself more in the middle. All of the contexts, FLC, SA, and INI have communicative elements and learning elements, and depending on the specific study context which may shift as to where they fall on a Batstone's (2002) continuum. This may mean that certain components of foreign language learning aptitude may play more important roles in one context or another. Dewey (2004) showed that scores between SA and INI learners of Japanese only differed on a self-assessment of reading ability, but not on procedures of knowledge and language awareness. Dewey (2008) showed that INI students outperformed SA and FLC students in producing words in complete sentences; INI students also showed a greater awareness of less common words than SA and FLC students and INI students showed overall similar performance to SA students in vocabulary acquisition.

One of the main studies conducted on intensive instruction belongs to Jacques-Bilodea (2010). She considered the long-period influence of intensive English courses on secondary school ESL students. She found that the intensive English courses are the effective program for English learners to increase their motivation and process of learning at school and out of it. Most of the learners felt that their spoken abilities were better than other learners who had not taken part in intensive courses. They also stated that they actually enjoyed the intensive English courses.

In addition, Van Scyoc & Gleason (1993) had the same study in microeconomics. Their search concluded that learners in intensive classes learned and taken at least as much knowledge as learners in the regular length classes. Furthermore, Petrowsky (1996) who also studied microeconomics course found that intensive classes did better than spring regular classes on test, which involved simple recall of data but inferior on tests which involved conception, presentation, and evaluation.

In the same vein, the result of Raymond's study (1995) showed that intensive English courses could have the great positive influence on learners' language awareness. Austin & Gustafson (2006) also studied about the probable distinctions between compressed and normal class-period courses. They discovered that compressed classes had more strong effects on students learning. Rifkin (2005) sought to find out if there was a difference in language gain in a traditional and an intensive context. In order to compare the two groups of students, he employed reading, writing, listening, grammar, and speaking tests and all students were required to take these tests at the end of the context. When comparing these two data sets, Rifkin observed that those with 500 or more hours of regular students' education just got an intermediate-high level of proficiency in all of the skill areas, whereas those with 450 hours of intensive instruction were able to reach advanced levels of proficiency. He states that the reason why the intensive students outperform the traditional students is the amount of exposure the intensive students had outside of the classroom. The traditional students had on average three to five hours of class instruction, whereas the intensive group had over 100 hours of interactions per week.

Rodrigo (2011) also contrasted a TS control group and a SA experimental group on grammar development. She looked at 21 students who were studying Spanish in a TS context in the U.S. and 18 students who were enrolled in a five-week SA course in Spain. To measure grammatical development, Rodrigo employed a pre and post-test that consisted of 64 questions including eight different grammatical structures. The learners were required to judge the grammaticality of the sentences using a Likert scale. She found that both groups significantly improved over the two different semesters. However, the results indicate that group was not a significant factor in determining grammatical development. Both groups improved their grammatical comprehension.

In another study, Raymond (1995) compared the learners' spoken and written skills in two different contexts. The learners had participated in a traditional and intensive English semester. He indicated that the learners from the intensive classes had better performance than the traditional learners in both spoken and written knowledge skills. Additionally, the learners who had taken part in intensive classes during their initial school years were talked at the end of their education during high school as Raymond studied the long-period result of the intensive second language classes. The achievement of 77% of the learners in carrying out an English discussion with the learners showed that the intensive courses had strong results. Furthermore, the promoters of intensive program believe that it can have the essential role in increasing the students basic abstract knowledge, facilitating

student-teacher relationship, developing their involvement abilities, improving dynamic learning, and creative teaching methods (Gaubatz, 2003).

As the review of the literature revealed, to date very little research, if any, has investigated the effect of traditional and intensive settings on Iranian EFL learners' language proficiency, or examined the effects of these two contexts on the development of metalinguistic knowledge. The current study proposes to contribute to fill these gaps in research by first examining the effects of an intensive English class and a traditional semester-long class on EFL learner's oral proficiency and their level of metalinguistic knowledge in their L2 and then looking at the relationship between learners' metalinguistic knowledge and oral proficiency.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to help narrow the existing gaps in current research, the present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Is there a significant difference between the metalinguistic knowledge of Iranian (MKI) exhibited by students enrolled in an intensive course (IS) and students enrolled in a traditional course (TS) at the end of the semester?
- 2) Does metalinguistic knowledge of English (MKE) improve over a semester in an intensive semester (IS) and a traditional semester (TS)?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

In order to answer to the above research questions, the following research null hypotheses were proposed:

H01: There is no significant difference between the metalinguistic knowledge of English (MKE) exhibited by students enrolled in an intensive course (IS) and students enrolled in a traditional course (TS) at the end of the semester.

H02: Metalinguistic knowledge of English (MKE) does not improve over a semester in an intensive semester (IS) and a traditional semester (TS).

2. Methodology

Quantitative method was followed to address the research questions. The design used in this research was a quasi-experimental one in that the participants were not randomly selected. Researcher used self-selection, in which the participants were assigned arbitrarily to one of the experimental or control groups.

2.1 Participants and Sampling Procedures

Prior to the instruction, the researcher got the consent forms, filled out by the participants and two instructors. All of them agreed to take part in the study and signed the consent forms. The institute had language classes in elementary, intermediate and advanced levels. In such doing, to ensure the homogeneity of the participants before the study, Nelson English Language Proficiency Test (Fowler & Coa, 1976) was administered. It was expected to select those whose scores would fall between one standard deviation (+1SD) above the mean and one standard deviation (-1SD) below the mean as the cut-off criterion. As the result, administering NELPT and based on the Cochran's formula, the sample size was calculated. The calculations ascertained that 40 subjects would represent the population as a whole. To obtain a higher degree of precision, the researcher took 44 EFL learners as the subjects of this study. Thus, 44 out of 95 Iranian EFL learners from six language classes in Shoukoh Language Institute, Zanjan, Iran were selected. Their age ranged between 15 to 22. In addition, participants' gender was not taken into account as a variable in this study. The proficiency level of these students was assessed as intermediate and according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) levels, they were classified as "Independent Users", who had a high degree of perception to understand the conversations, which contained the words used in familiar settings and could manage them in most of the situations. Those who were classified in the "Independent Users" Level could comprehend the major points of clear standard input on familiar problems often confronted in work, school, leisure time, etc., could manage most settings likely to arise while travelling in -places where the language was spoken, could create simple related text on subjects, which were familiar or of particular interest, and could explain occasions and experiences, dreams, desires hopes, and briefly gave reasons and explanations for ideas and plans. In addition, all of the participants were native Persian speakers and the only language learning experience for them was through the language institute.

2.2 Procedure

2.2.1 Pilot Study

As an integral element of research a pilot study was conducted before the main study since it is possible to detect

the unforeseeable weaknesses and instrument problems. Thus, the researcher conducted a pilot study. In the pilot study, the participants had the similar characteristics of the participants in the main study, and consisted of 20 Iranian EFL learners.

2.2.2 Main Study

The NELPT was administered among 95 language learners in the second semester in 2016 at English classes in Shoukoh language institute, Zanjan, Iran. All of the participants were supposed to take this placement test. The allotted time for this test was 100 minutes. Then, based on the results of the placement tests and Cochran's formula, 44 students were selected. After the homogeneity of the students was assured, they were divided into two equal groups (N=22). First group, that was the control group, enjoyed a traditional method of language education but the other group, the experimental group, was taught the same material in a more intensive setting. In the traditional setting students took part a 4-month term meeting twice a week. In the intensive setting the participant took part 6 days a week for two months. In both settings, each session lasted 90 minutes. Both groups were taught by the same teacher, using the same book. "*English Result intermediate*" was the course book used as the main material for study. It is a communication and task based book, which was taught in different language institutions and colleges around the world. The intermediate level book provides twelve units, all of them have skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and sub-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation). Extra grammatical details and exercises were also provided in back of the book and the workbook. To measure the students' metalinguistic knowledge, the teacher asked learners to explain grammatical rules in each lesson (Hu, 2002). If the learner was able to state a completely correct rule using the appropriate technical language, it would conclude that he has a good command of metalinguistic knowledge.

2.3 Instruments

The instruments applied in the study included a standard Nelson English Language Proficiency Test, to select the most homogeneous participants regarding their language proficiency. The rationale behind administering this questionnaire was to select the most homogeneous participants regarding their language proficiency. The participants whose scores were one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected for the study. In addition, using the KR21 ($(K / (K-1)) * (1-U * (K-U) / (K * V))$) formula, the internal consistency of the test was calculated and reported to be (0.76), which was fairly satisfactory. The NELPT consisted of three parts: listening comprehension, reading comprehension and grammatical structures. The test has 100 items. Listening section of the test consisted of 20 items in multiple-choice form followed by reading comprehension section consisting of four passages with 40 questions in multiple-choice form. The third section of the NELPT aimed at testing the grammatical knowledge of participants by giving 40 items in multiple-choice form. The participants were supposed to do the test in 100 minutes.

The other instrument was at test which was a metalinguistic knowledge pretest. The researcher developed and administered a metalinguistic knowledge test to be given to both control and experimental groups as pretest. This test adapted from Roehr (2008) consisted of three parts:

- a. Grammatical Categories & Functions (19 questions)
- b. English Error Identification (15 questions)
- c. Words in Sentences (30 questions)

This test reviewed by two language experts in order to ensure its validity. In addition, the reliability of pretest and posttest were calculated through KR21 and reported 0.81.

Another metalinguistic knowledge test as the posttest was designed and given at the end of the course. Again, the only difference between this test and the metalinguistic pretest was the item sequencing.

2.4 Design

The design used in this research was a quasi-experimental one in that the participants were not randomly selected. Researcher used self-selection, in which the students were assigned arbitrarily to one of the experimental or control groups. The quasi-experimental design is used when the researcher has both pre and posttests and experimental and control groups, but there is no random assignment of the subjects in this research. In this research, there were two groups an experimental group who worked in an intensive setting and a control group who worked in a traditional context. Iranian EFL learners' L2 proficiency was considered as the dependent variable and the two constructs, metalinguistic knowledge and learning contexts were viewed as independent variables.

2.5 Data Analysis

The data processed and analyzed through SPSS software. Concerning the first research question, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to see whether, there was a significant difference between the metalinguistic knowledge of English (MKE) exhibited by students enrolled in an intensive course (IC) and students enrolled in a traditional course (TC) at the end of the semester. To ensure that the obtained results were not due to preexistent differences, ANCOVA was conducted. ANCOVA is a technique, which fits between analysis of variance and regression analysis. However, the purpose which led us to choose the ANCOVA in this part of study is that it increases the precision of comparisons between groups by accounting to variation on important prognostic variables. In addition, to ensure the normal distribution of data One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov was run. Then, to answer the first research question, one independent sample t-test was conducted.

3. Results

In order to answer the research question, first of all, check their normality statistically, Kolmogorov-Smirnov was conducted for the tests.

Table 1. Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of NELPT

Scores		
N		95
Normal Parameters	Mean	79.5
	SD	6.44
Kolmogorov Smirnov Z	.787	
Asymp. Sig.(2-tailed)	.562	

As the table 1 shows the Sig. 2 tailed index 0.56 is much higher than $\alpha=0.05$. Therefore it can be concluded that the distribution of subjects' scores were normal.

Table 2. One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of Metalinguistic pre-tests

	Pre-test in Control Group	Pre-test in Experimental Group
N	22	22
Mean	78.5	78
SD	1.233	1.075
Kolmogorov Smirnov Z	.512	.499
Asymp. Sig.(2-tailed)	.198	.322

As shown in Table 2, the experimental group mean in Metalinguistic pre-test was 78 with the standard deviation of 1.075, while in the control group; a mean score was 78.5 with the standard deviation of 1.233. Initial comparing the pretest results revealed that there is no significance difference in terms of metalinguistic knowledge between two groups' performance. As the table 2 shows the Sig. 2 tailed index was much higher than $\alpha=0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of subjects' scores were normal.

Table 3. One sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of Metalinguistic post-tests

	Post-test in Control Group	Post-test in Experimental Group
N	22	22
Mean	78	82
SD	1.531	1.432
Kolmogorov Smirnov Z	.437	.489
Asymp. Sig.(2-tailed)	.247	.351

As shown in Table 3, the experimental group mean in Metalinguistic post-test was 82 with the standard deviation of 1.432, while in the control group; a mean score was 78 with the standard deviation of 1.531. Initial comparing the pretest results revealed that there is significance difference in terms of metalinguistic knowledge between two groups' performance. That is, the students in the experimental group had a better performance than the

control group. As the table 2 shows the sig. 2 tailed index was much higher than $\alpha=0.05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that the distribution of subjects' scores were normal.

Based on the data obtained in above tables (1-2-3), the data were statistically normal as well, since all the significant levels of the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov reported for the data were greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be stated that no assumption was violated and it was allowed to run the parametric test. After ensuring the normality of the data sets in order to control the gender variable, ANCOVA was run. Table 4 displays the estimated marginal means/standard errors before and after conducting the ANCOVA.

Table 4. ANCOVA results and descriptive statistics

	Scores			
	Observed Mean	Adjusted Mean	SD	N
Experimental	82	varies	1.432	22
Control	78	varies	1.531	22
Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Gender	1024.9	43	23.835	5.75*
Metalinguistic Test	2628.00	43	61.116	14.75*
SC×P	664.45	43	15.452	3.73*
Error	5878.8	33	178.12	

Note. $R^2 = .51$, Adj. $R^2 = .46$. * $P < .10$.

Thus, according to table 4, the results of ANCOVA indicated that the future results would not be generalized because of gender difference among the groups. Then, independent sample t-test was administered. Table 5 represents the results.

Table 5. Independent sample t-test results

Groups	N	Mean	SD	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
				F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
IC	22	82	1.432	1.705	0.000	0.158	43	0.000
TC	22	78	1.531			0.156	41	0.000

As it can be seen in table 5, mean of the experimental group who enrolled in an intensive course (IC) was 82, and the control group who enrolled in a traditional course (TC) at the end of the semester was 78 with the level of significance .000. Since the level of Sig was less than 0.05 set for the study ($p < 0.05$); thus, it was concluded that there was a significant difference between two groups' performance in the metalinguistic test, thereby answering the research question as well as rejecting the first null hypothesis.

In order to answer the second question, first, the normality of data set was calculated through *One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test* on both sets of scores. The results are provided in the above tables.

As it is shown in above tables, p-value for both sets of scores was higher than 0.05. Therefore, the scores were normally distributed and the parametric test of paired sample t-test could be appropriate to be conducted. Table 6 presents the results.

Table 6. Paired sample t-test of pre and post-test scores in EG

	M	SD	Std Error Mean	Paired Differences		T	df	sig
				%95 Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	upper			
Pretest Posttest	81.4	1.503	.307	-4.093	-2.824	-12.301	21	.000

According to table, there was a significant difference between the pre-test and posttest scores of the participants in the experimental group (sig= .000, $p < 0.05$). Based on the means of the two tests, it was concluded that there

was a statistically significant improvement in knowledge of English (MKE) post-test scores over a semester in intensive semester; therefore, the second null hypothesis of the study was rejected, as well.

4. Discussion

Regarding the first research question, the results revealed that there was a significant difference between two groups' performance in the metalinguistic posttest. An intensive group had a better scores rather than traditional group. That is to say, there was a significant difference between MKE exhibited by students enrolled in an intensive course (IS) and students enrolled in a traditional course (TS) at the end of the semester. This finding is consistent with the results of Raymond's study (1995). He indicated that intensive English courses could have the significant positive effect on language knowledge progress of the students.

That is to say, the participants in the IS had a better performance in contrast to their counterparts in the TS. Similarly, Austin & Gustafson (2006) studied the probable differences between compressed and normal semester-period courses by using a database of over 44,000 observations from different courses, and found out that compressed classes were more useful for the students. Other scholars (e.g., Berry, 2005) explained that knowledge and use of meta-language is likely to make the development of an L2 learner's MKE easier, that is, "an improved self-awareness and sensitivity to the forms and functions of language" which can lead to language development (Berry, 2005, p. 11).

Interestingly, in Iranian EFL setting, the context of teaching has a significant impact on such knowledge. As mentioned earlier, concerning the IS and TS in the current study, Henbery (1997) claimed that intensive classes impulse the students to proceed to new ideas before they have completely learned and revised the previous lessons. It should be noted here that these findings are contrary to Bateson's (1990), who maintained that students following traditional classes reached significantly higher grades than those that took part in intensive classes.

This difference can be explained by the participants who complained that intensive courses were more stressful with too much work and material.

To sum up, above finding hopefully motivate language teachers to use intensive instruction because the effectiveness of intensive instruction versus traditional instruction in improving the EFL learners' MKE was proved.

Concerning the second research question, it was concluded that there was a statistically significant improvement in MKE a semester in an intensive semester. These findings are consistent with the results of Hu's study (2002). She argued that metalinguistic knowledge played an essential role in learning. She also mentioned that learners with lacking or ineffective understanding and production procedures might have to rely on their metalinguistic awareness to learn definite aspects of language. Rifkin (2005) also sought to find out if there was a difference in language gain in a traditional and an intensive context. In order to compare the two groups of students he employed reading, writing, listening, grammar and speaking tests. When comparing these two data sets, Rifkin observed that those with 500 or more hours of TS instruction barely reached an intermediate-high level of proficiency in all of the skill areas, whereas those with 450 hours of IM instruction were able to reach advanced levels of performance. However, it needs to be added that there was difference between the present study and, Gallow's (2009) who showed that the students in the traditional two days per week classes have reached more than the students in the intensive classes. He stated that although many learners may prefer IS that minimize the time they have to spend in the campus, the IS programs is not helpful for learning. There are, however, some studies inconsistent with Gallow's study. Nagano (1995) explored IS programs had positive influence on the learners' conception and evaluation. He also showed positive influence of intensive classes on the learners' attitude toward English. It is value declaring that he conducted his study on one week intensive classes demanding the learners to concentrate the class several hours a week. Providing the class under his study had taken three or more months of seriously intensive teaching, the findings might have been changed. According to Spade & Lightbown (1994) young students in intensive classes had greater results than those taught over the school year.

These findings are in line with the findings of some studies (such as Daniel, 2000; Henbery, 1997; Grant, 2001; Jacques-Bilodea, 2010). Their studies showed that the intensive English course is a strong basis of inspiration for learners to continue learning English at school and at home on a long-period basis. A summary of instructor surveys found that faculty preferred intensive classes due to increased learners motivation and classroom communications (Daniel, 2000).

Fortunately, the findings of the current study indicated that in the IS courses could be of great assistance in

increasing metalinguistic knowledge. In sum IS program can enhance the Students' motivation, Obligation and engagement, and that students believe IS courses are more motivating, stimulating, helpful, interesting and enjoyable than traditional courses (Daniel, 2000; Jacques-Bilodea, 2010; Scott & Conrad). Indeed, IS courses can also lead to students' better concentration and attention (Daniel, 2000; Grant, 2001). Based on these studies, although EFL students enhance their general knowledge of English through traditional courses, their progress might be significantly increased in English IS.

There are three sorts of limitations to this study. The first one is due to the inability to control all the factors influencing learners' language proficiency and metalinguistic knowledge. The second one is related to the changes in participants' strategic behavior as a result of exposure to activities out of class other than intensive setting the participants may cover during a course in a 2-month for 6 days a week. The third limitation addresses the number of the participants of this study. In addition, the researcher had no opportunity to have access more male and female EFL learners, thus, only 44 students participated in the current study. Furthermore, it is assumed much more participants are needed to be involved in such studies to generalize the findings easily.

The study set two delimitations as follows: The participants were deliberately only Iranian intermediate adult EFL students. Thus, the research was done on this proficiency level only. In addition, this study focused on metalinguistic knowledge and language proficiency, and other aspects were not investigated.

In conclusion, the results of the current study showed promising outcomes for the similar intensive English courses. As the results clearly indicated, the IS at EFL contexts is a high-intensity program. The intensive courses utilized in the current study was proof that real achievements are gained in IS programs. It is also concluded that utilizing IS programs in Iranian EFL contexts might lead to enhancing metalinguistic knowledge of learners if IS courses are to be employed correctly in the English classes.

Based on the results of the current study, those EFL learners who instructed through intensive instruction were highly motivated. In view of that, it is suggested that language teachers use the intensive instructions to improve their learner's foreign language learning.

Additionally, if grammar benefits language learning, assisting learners to relate their MKE to language production (in the forms of oral production) makes learning grammatical structures easier. Finally, EFL instructors can utilize meta-language in a proper way to help EFL learners' link new knowledge of the language with already established materials.

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