Intercultural Rhetoric as Instructional Technique for Improving Iranian EFL Learners' Reading Comprehension: Effectiveness & Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Framed in schema theory, the present mixed method study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of two instructional techniques-L1 and Ethnography-in promoting knowledge of IRs and to improve Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' reading comprehension on one hand, and to identify the priority of the technique which contributed more to the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension, on the other. Finally, this study explored the challenges that the Iranian EFL learners face in the acquisition and application of the IR features in reading comprehension. The data for the study come from two sources: students' scores on two achievement tests of reading comprehension administered as pre- and post-tests, as well as the learners' journals kept during the experimental period. The results of the analyses of the quantitative data revealed that although teaching IR features through both ethnography and L1 was significantly effective in improving the development of the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension, the instructional technique 'ethnography' was more effective in promoting the learners' acquisition and application of the IRs, and hence their reading comprehension. In addition, the findings from the qualitative data obtained from the analysis of the learners' journals demonstrated that teaching IRs helped the learners' self-regulation in reading. These findings imply that teachers' awareness of IR instructional techniques for promoting reading comprehension should be raised, which would hopefully lead to the high quality teaching and its subsequent successful learning outcomes.

1. Introduction

Research on reading English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL) shows that there are some common issues shared by most EFL learners, among which are: lack of cultural background knowledge in the target culture and poor reading strategies such as verbatim or 'word by word' technique for understanding. Kashani, Nikoo and Bonyadi (2013) argue that these issues are so influential in the foreign language reading that, even after the readers recognize the meaning of each word in a text, they are not necessarily able to understand the whole meaning. As a result, it seems essential for the EFL learners to gain mastery of effective reading strategies.

Considering that learning to read in a foreign language is a social and cultural experience, therefore, the ability to read and comprehend texts in the target language can be facilitated if readers are taught to have a mastery of the cultural representation of the intercultural rhetorics through which the authors of the texts express themselves (Narimani, 2017; Wang, 2007). Accordingly, it can be postulated that choosing the right technique for teaching intercultural rhetoric of the text to EFL readers would be helpful in enabling them to be aware of the contrastive rhetoric of the text and hence grow in reading comprehension. However, although studies on the impact of text structure abound (Rapp

& Van Den Broek, 2005; Tarchi, 2009), most of them focus on the effects of intercultural rhetoric on readers or writers rather than on the ways in which it can be taught. In other words, the type of instructional technique for teaching intercultural rhetoric has effect on L2 reading comprehension has been rarely investigated. In particular, this study tries to compare the role of two instructional techniques – L1 and ethnography – in the teaching of the intercultural rhetoric towards promoting EFL readers' reading comprehension.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Culture Orientations and Reading Comprehension

In almost all cases, L2 students will have some difficulties framing assumptions presented in L2 texts when these texts make use of cultural assumptions that the L2 students do not share (Alptekin, 2006). Many researchers have recommended that text comprehension and the ability to get the true message of a text, which is encoded in the printed page by the writer, is reliant on cultural orientations of the texts (Ruthemsley, 2011; Sharp, 2010). In the meantime, each reader also brings an individualized package of personal experiences, beliefs, cultural training, and educational experiences to the reading pro-cess that are partially dependent on the values and attitudes of their culture toward reading and toward reading in an L2/FL. These mismatches in assumptions may cause L2 readers moving from one orientation to another to encounter some difficulties in reading texts for purposes that do not complement cultural assumptions.

Culture awareness seems to play an important role in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language. Teaching culture in EFL context should support the notion of intercultural communicative competence, rather than having unfair dominating comparisons of target culture and native culture. The foreign culture should reflect learners' own culture, being a conscious and purposeful process in which the tacit is made explicit. Teaching culture is considered as "aspect of values education" (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1993, p.4), considering the tolerance towards differences. According to Byram (1997), culture learning is seen as a comparative process of the learners' own culture with the target culture. This will not be done unless learners receive teacher assistance in making these shifts. The significant role of cultural background knowledge in reading comprehension is essential to schema theory (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983).

2.2 Background Knowledge and Schema Theory

Schema theory displays the process through which readers incorporate their background knowledge with the data present in the text to find out about the passage. Bartlett (1932), in one of the fundamental tenets of the schema theory, emphasized the role of background knowledge in comprehending the language. Moreover, schema theory asserts that a passage provides directions for readers on how to retrieve or reconstruct meaning from their own previously acquired knowledge. Hence, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) stated that the readers' comprehension depends on their ability to make connection between the information they get from the text and the pre-existing background knowledge. In the same vein, Anderson and Pearson (1988) maintained that "a reader's schemata, or the knowledge already stored in memory, contributes to the process of interpreting and internalizing new information" (p. 40), and Nunan (1999) stated that schema reconstructs past experience into mental frameworks which helps us make sense of new experience.

Oller (1995) argues that comprehension, regarding inference, is not confined to the activation of content and/or formal schemas. More significant than these two, is the third trait, called cultural schema, that is the logical embodiment of these two. By formal schema they refer to the background knowledge which is connected to the formal and rhetorical structure of different types of texts or genres. Alpetkin (2006) refers to the content schema as the readers' background knowledge of conceptual content of the text. According to Oller (1995), cultural schema "involves cultural familiarity and helps readers to reconstruct the story line through referring to more personally and culturally relevant scripts" (p. 278). Similarly, Littlemore (2003) claims that the way that the students use clues to interpret the context is affected by their cultural background knowledge. Hudson (2007) elaborates on the way background knowledge influences comprehension and explains that in the process of interacting with the text, the readers' mind searches for folders embracing corresponding data to make comprehension. This implies that the readers need to bring some knowledge to the text. In

addition, Ruthemsley (2011) maintains that cultural knowledge can help the reader to reconstruct the text leading to more personally and culturally relevant prints.

Recent studies support the claims and show that without having sufficient L2 cultural familiarity, the ESL/EFL readers are not able to realize the deep meaning of the texts. With respect to the findings, readers' cultural background modifies the type of information which is recalled. According to Celce-Murica (2001), teaching culture in L2 reading is beyond teaching lexis, idioms and collocations, rather culture, culture-specific connotations and word implication and phrase meaning also should be addressed.

2.3 Intercultural Rhetoric

The word *rhetoric* normally refers to how language is used to persuade (Sharp, 2010). It similarly shows how a writer thinks and what convincing methods he or she employs. Rhetoric is also a reflection of cultural, historical, and social effects. The reader or listener receives the communication across cultural influences (Starosta, 1999). Rhetoric is part of a comprehensive procedure in which people convey realities via a cultural medium and in which they attempt to make full sense of a spoken or written text.

Intercultural rhetoric, previously named *contrastive rhetoric*, comes from the work of Kaplan (1966) concerning the link between culture and language. He attempted to classify different rhetorical forms in the writing of various national, cultural, and language groups. Kaplan confirmed that one's mother tongue could impact one's thoughts and consequently writing forms. Accordingly, it was mentioned that the writing form of student's L1 (or rhetorical organization) would influence her writing form in his L2. According to Connor (2004), it has become obvious that the condition is much more multifaceted than Kaplan's (1966) study proposed and that there are several linguistic, social, and cultural features that influence L2 writing.

Recent studies have recognized new methods in discourse analysis (Hyland, 2003), genre analysis (Swales, 1990), and corpus linguistics and ethnography (Johansson, 1998). Sharp (2010) used a rational cloze design and quantitative and qualitative recall protocols to evaluate the reading comprehension of learners provided with four rhetorically different texts. Findings showed that the rhetoric of the learners' first language (Chinese) significantly affected their reading comprehension.

Narimani (2017) studied the effects of cross cultural background knowledge on Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension at low and advanced levels of language proficiency. He did the research in two steps: Treatment and evaluation in which 60 learners at low and advanced levels of language proficiency participated. According to the results of Paired sample t test, while low level learners did not show significant development on their reading comprehension, cross cultural background knowledge had significant effects on the learners' reading comprehension at higher levels of language proficiency.

Wornyo and Klu (2018) conducted a descriptive research in order to encourage L2 scholars to benefit from intercultural rhetoric pedagogy in language acculturation process and to improve the learners' language socialization. The researchers aimed to highlight the pedagogic role of intercultural rhetoric in paving the way for L2 learners to develop their intercultural competence. It was strongly argued that teaching learners intercultural rhetoric demands their awareness of how to provide real-life world for the learners in order to meet their intercultural needs within the learning process.

In another qualitative research, Liu and Du (2018) investigated the American students' expansion of focusing on intercultural rhetoric research to develop their writing skills. Specifically, the study took into account L2 writers' views about the relationship between writing and culture by being provided with conflicting ideas of rhetorical expectations. The American students' understanding of argument construction and evidence use in Chinese yìlùnwén writing was examined. The findings show that the American learners largely resisted the use of well-known stories in their yìlùnwén writing. It was also found that a story that was believed to be well known might not actually be well known to the participants. Therefore, the participants could not support the use of an argument in their writing. The understanding of intercultural rhetoric naturally had an impact on their writing ability.

The most important point that can be concluded from the reviewed literature is the lack of studying on the role of teaching IRs through different instruction techniques in improving EFL learners reading

comprehension ability and this is the gap that the researcher tries to fill in this study. Specifically, it looks at the effect of IR differences in text with readers whose first language is Persian. This demands the study of intercultural rhetoric although the topic has been studied on writing and writing processes (e.g., Connor, 2002; Hinds, 1987). Hence, this study can maneuver on this important topic by suggesting that intercultural rhetoric may also have an influence on cognitive processing in reading comprehension.

With this background, the study aimed to seek answers to the following research questions
1. Does teaching intercultural rhetoric through two types of instructional techniques (L1 & ethnography) result in any significant change in the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability?
2. Which one of the two types of instructional techniques (L1 & ethnography) is statistically more effective in the improvement of reading comprehension ability by Iranian EFL learners?
3. What are the perceived challenges in the Iranian EFL learners' acquisition and application of intercultural rhetoric in reading comprehension?

3. **Methodology**

3.1 Participants

The study focused on two separate groups of participants: 1) thirty participants who took part in the piloting phase of the researcher-made tests and 2) forty five participants who participated in the main study.

The participants of the main study were 45 adult learners, selected through simple random sampling from among the 200 student population of Safir Language Institute in Rasht, Iran. All the learners in the control and experimental groups were Iranian EFL learners who were between 20 to 25 years old. Since the researcher had the permission of conducting the study just in girls' branch, all of the learners are female who were taking courses in English at the upper intermediate (UI) level. The basis of choosing this group of participants was their already gained familiarity with the English language which was a pre-requisite for responding to the data elicitation instruments. The teacher in all three groups was identical, and she acted as the researcher as well. For the sake of ethical considerations, all participants signed an informed consent form in which they received every information about the objectives of the study.

3.2 Procedure

Having selected the sample, the researcher administered the Oxford Placement Test among 200 students of Safir Language institute in Rasht in order to homogenize the participants and make sure that they are at the right level. Then, as the first phase of this study, the most commonly sptted IRs in literature which were said to be helpful to learners in improving their reading comprehension were selected as the teaching points. These IRs were: 1) Linearity vs. circularity, 2) Deductive vs. inductive, 3) Topic sentences, 4) Introduction, body, conclusion vs. start-sustain-turn-sum, 5) Supporting ideas, 6) Mono-topic vs. multi-topic.

The participants were randomly assigned into three groups, each with 15 members. Two groups A and B acted as the experimental groups who received both instructional techniques in different orders during one term of study in order to learn IRs. The third group, also with 15 members, functioned as the control group which received no extra treatment, except the routine course book- based syllabus of the institute.

The classes were intensive which were held 3 times a week, two 90 sessions each day. Their course book was Touchstone Series and since each book is comprised of 12 units and they study 3 units each term, they finish a book in 4 terms. The participants were doing UI course. Accordingly, 45 learners were chosen as the members of the main sample for the present study. The participants were randomly assigned into three groups, as two experimental groups, group A and group B, and one control group. The experiment was conducted in 16 sessions during the regular class period in three successive weeks. The class was held 3 days a week on odd days at 9:45-1:00. Each session lasted 3 hours with a 15-minute break after each 90 minutes. The students were 15 girls aged between 20 and 25 who were attending the classes to improve their language skills they were all hardworking students who were interested in their class. All the tests and treatment sessions were conducted during six sessions per week.

In the first session, the pre-test was administered. The treatment started from the second session in both experimental groups. The students were also asked to keep a learning journal to record the challenges

they met throughout the whole process according to the template that they had been provided by the researcher at the beginning of the term.

In the second phase of the study, the experimental groups received instruction via two different techniques:

Group A: First, the participants received explicit instruction on three intercultural rhetoric in L1 during the first six sessions after pretest. They were told how rhetorical features in English are different from their language. The students took notes and tried to find the rhetorical features in different texts. Post-test 1 was administered in the eighth session to assess the usefulness of the instruction. During the next phase from the 9th to 15th sessions, the method of instruction to the students changed to ethnography where they were asked to search for three other rhetorical features in English texts, bring different examples to the class and share their ideas in groups and try to come to a conclusion the next sessions. Then the teacher gave necessary feedback.

Group B: the whole procedure in this group was the opposite form of Group A. They started with ethnography in the first phase and continued after the first post-test through L1.

Group C: in group C, the learners were not taught the rhetorical features and instead concentrated on the regular vocabulary teaching and reading activities.

In the last phase of the study, the participants of the three groups received post-test 2 in the16th session. They were not allowed to use dictionary or other resources during the tests.

3.3 Instrumentation

The following instruments were adopted in the study:

Oxford Placement Test (OPT)

Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was employed to homogenize the participants in terms of their level of proficiency, i.e. upper intermediate. The test was used to choose the 45 participants from among 200 learners at the level of UI. Based on the results of the OPT test, 45 UI students who scored between 40 to 47 out of 60 based on the given scale in the test were chosen as the UI students who formed the main sample for the present study.

Reading Comprehension Pre-Test and Post-Tests

All these three reading comprehension tests (one pretest and two posttests) were researcher-made and each of them consisted of two passages appropriate for the upper intermediate level. The passages were extracted from 'English in Common' (Saumell & Birchley, 2011) and 'American English File' (Oxenden, Latham-Koenig, & Seligson, 2008) (upper intermediate level) course books which are two common course books in Iran. The other factor that was considered by the researcher in order to choose the passages was that the possibility of adding the target IRs (elaborated in procedure section). The passages included IRs which were extracted from literature and were under the study in this research.

3.4 Data Analysis

As to the data analysis, quantitative measures included both descriptive and inferential statistics to measure and compare the impact of IR instruction through "using L1" vs. "ethnography" on the learners' improvement in reading comprehension. To do so, the learners' reading comprehension scores in pre- and post-tests were quantitatively analyzed through SPSS software (version 22). In order to answer the first two research questions, descriptive and inferential statistics were utilized, and to answer to the qualitative research question of the study (i.e. third one), the learners' daily journals were analyzed through content analysis. In the first phase of the analysis and in order to answer the RQ1 which addressed the effect of teaching IRs through L1 and ethnography on promoting the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension , the mean scores of pre-test and post-test1 and also the mean scores of post-test 1 and post-test 2 were compared through paired-sample t test. For the second research question of the study which aimed at looking into the differences in the effectiveness of using L1 and ethnography in teaching IRs , a one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was run. At first, the test was run among the means of pre-tests in three groups and the result showed no significant difference among the reading comprehension abilities of the participants of the three groups, then the comparison of the mean scores of post-test 1 and 2 of the three groups were utilized to answer the RQ2 which intended to check for the possible differences in their degree of effectiveness. As the order of using the instructional techniques was counter balanced in the two experimental groups, the observed difference could safely be assigned to the effectiveness of the technique and not

to the test effect of the prior instructional technique. Finally for the qualitative data, content analysis of the participants' journal was conducted in order to identify and categorize the challenges that the participants of this study encountered while acquiring and applying IRs in reading comprehension.

4. Results

4.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was done on 30 EFL learners to check the reliability of the pre-test, and the post-tests 1 & 2. These participants were similar to the participants of the main study concerning their level of proficiency, i.e. upper-intermediate level. The reliability of each test was estimated and presented below.

Reliability refers to how consistent the results from the test are, or how well the test is actually measuring what you want it to measure. Applying the KR-21 measure of internal consistency reliability formula, it was found that the reliability estimate was 0.75 .The scores for KR-21 range from 0 to 1, where 0 is no reliability and 1 is perfect reliability. The closer the score is to 1, the more reliable the test. In general, a score of above .5 is usually considered reasonable. Therefore, the obtained reliability index 0.75 is safely considered as acceptable (Farhady, Jafarpour, &Birjandi, 1994). Table 1 below shows the reliability of the pre-test.

Table 1: Reliability of the pre-test

N	Mean	SD	Variance	Reliability
30	19.60	4.55	40.30	0.75

In order to check the reliability of the post-test 1, the same participants taking part in the pilot study for the pre-test were given the post-test. . The reliability was estimated through KR-21 formula (r=0.79) highlighting a reasonable reliability coefficient. Reliability of the post-test 1 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability of the post-test 1

N	Mean	SD	Variance	Reliability
30	23.60	5.90	43.50	0.79

Regarding the consistency of the scores for the post-test 2, KR-21 formula was adopted to ensure the reliability of the second post-test, which was administered among the same participants. The reliability coefficient was estimated to be 0.81 highlighting a reasonable reliability coefficient. Table 3 shows the reliability of the post-test 2.

Table 3: Reliability of the post-test 2

N	Mean	SD	Variance	Reliability
30	26.33	6.90	46.50	0.81

First Research Question

The first research question of the study intended to look into the effect of two instructional techniques-L1 and Ethnography-for teaching IRs for promoting Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension. In doing so, quantitative measures were conducted. Initially, the test of normal distribution (see Table 4) was carried out.

Table 4: Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality

		Shapiro-Wilk		
	Group	Statistic	N	Sig.
Pretest	EG 1	.960	15	.701
	EG 2	.969	15	.885
	CG	.951	15	.646
Posttest 1	EG 1	.941	15	.400
	EG 2	.866	15	.091
	CG	.968	15	.891
Posttest 2	EG 1	.947	15	.479
	EG 2	.857	15	.070
	CG	.971	15	.917

The non-significant sig. values (> .05) in Table 4, the Shapiro-Wilk Table, indicate that the pattern of distribution of the scores was normal for the pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 in both the experimental and control groups. As the results indicated that the scores were normally distributed, the researcher was allowed to use parametric tests to analyze the data. In order to explore the effect of teaching IRs through both L1 and ethnography on the learners' reading comprehension ability, each experimental group was taken into account separately to find out any statistically significant changes in the learners' reading comprehension. Descriptive statistics for the first experimental group are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics for the first experimental group

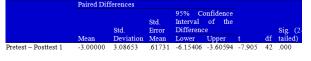|	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	14.3333	15	2.70801	.54160
Posttest 1	17.3333	15	3.40000	.68000
Posttest 2	22.1333	15	3.45205	.69041

The descriptive statistics in Table 5 demonstrates that the learners' reading comprehension ability improved from the pre-test (M= 14.33, SD= 2.70) to the post-test 1 (M= 17.33, SD= 3.40) and to the post-test 2 (M= 22.13, SD= 3.45). The descriptive statistics also indicated that the learners' reading comprehension ability is higher on the post-test 2 (M= 22.13, SD= 3.45) than on the post-test 1 (M= 17.33, SD= 3.40). Teaching IRs trough L1 resulted in improvement in the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability on the post-test 1. To inferentially compare the mean scores of the first experimental group, Paired-samples t-test statistics for the first

experimental group was run. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Paired-samples t-test statistics for the first experimental group

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest – Posttest 1	-3.00000	3.08653	.61731	-6.15406	-3.60594	-7.905	42	.000
Pretest – Posttest 2	-7.80000	3.51188	.70238	-6.84963	-3.95037	-7.688	42	.000
Posttest 1 – Posttest 2	-4.80000	1.44684	.28937	-1.11722	.07722	-1.797	42	.085

Table 6 shows a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test 1 (sig (2-tailed) = .000, t= -7.90, df= 42). The statistics also showed a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test 2 (sig (2-tailed) = .000, t= -7.68, df= 42). The statistics, moreover, showed significant improvement from the post-test 1 to the post-test 2 (sig (2-tailed)= .000, t= -1.79, df= 42). The mean difference equals -4.80 showing a significant effect size. Therefore, the Table indicates that teaching IRs through L1 resulted in significant improvement in the learners' reading comprehension ability on the post-test 1.

Similarly, in order to see how Iranian EFL learners could benefit from teaching IRs through ethnography to improve their reading comprehension ability, quantitative measures including descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted. Descriptive statistics for the second experimental group are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Descriptive statistics for the second experimental group

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	15.5000	15	2.70801	.54160
Posttest 1	20.2000	15	3.40000	.68000
Posttest 2	20.3000	15	3.45205	.69041

The descriptive statistics in Table 7 reveals that the learners' reading comprehension ability improved from the pre-test (M= 15.50, SD= 2.70) to the post-test 1 (M= 20.20, SD= 3.40) and very little to the post-test 2 (M= 20.30, SD= 3.45). The descriptive statistics also reported that the learners' reading comprehension ability on the post-test 2 (M= 20.30, SD= 3.45) is a little more than the post-test 1 (M= 20.20, SD= 3.40). Teaching IRs trough ethnography resulted in improvement in the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability on the pos-test 1. To inferentially compare the mean scores of the second experimental group, Paired-samples t-test statistics for the second experimental group is run. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Paired-samples t-test statistics for the second experimental group

| | Paired Differences | | | | | | | |
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest – Posttest 1	-4.70000	3.08653	.61731	-6.15406	-3.60594	-7.805	42	.000
Pretest – Posttest 2	-4.80000	3.51188	.70238	-6.84963	-3.95037	-7.788	42	.000
Posttest 1 – Posttest 2	-.10000	1.44684	.28937	-1.11722	.07722	-1.797	42	.004

Table 8 shows a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test 1 (sig (2-tailed) = .000, t= -7.80, df= 42). The paired samples statistics also showed a significant improvement from the pre-test to the post-test 2 (sig (2-tailed) = .000, t= -7.78, df= 42). Finally, the statistics indicated a negligible non-significant improvement from the post-test 1 to the post-test 2 (sig (2-tailed) = .084, t= -1.79, df= 42). The mean difference equals -.1 showing a non-significant effect size. Therefore, the Table indicates that teaching IRs through ethnography resulted in significant improvement in the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability on the post-test 1. In sum, it can be concluded that the types of instructional techniques (L1 and ethnography) resulted in significant changes in the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability.

Second Research Question

The second research question of the study aimed to look into the differences between the effects of L1 and ethnography on the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability Compare to that in the control group. To do so, the following quantitative measures were conducted.

First, test of normal distribution (see Table 9) was conducted to see if the scores of the learners in both experimental groups, i.e. EG 1 and EG 2 learners as well as the control group (CG) were distributed normally.

Table 9: Shapiro-Wilk tests of normality

| | Shapiro-Wilk | | |
	Group	Statistic	N	Sig.
Pretest	EG 1	.960	15	.701
	EG 2	.969	15	.885
	CG	.951	15	.646
Posttest 1	EG 1	.941	15	.400
	EG 2	.866	15	.091
	CG	.968	15	.891
Posttest 2	EG 1	.947	15	.479
	EG 2	.857	15	.070
	CG	.971	15	.917

The non-significant sig. values (> .05) in Table 4.6 indicates that the pattern of distribution of the scores was normal for the

pre-test, post-test 1, and post-test 2 of two experimental groups and the control group. Therefore, parametric tests could be used for analyzing the data. Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics for EG 1, EG 2, and control groups' participants.

Table 10: Descriptive statistics for the experimental and the control groups

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Minimum	Maximum
Pretest	EG 1	15	14.3333	2.66369	.68776	10.00	19.00
	EG 2	15	15.5000	2.75882	.87242	11.00	20.00
	CG	15	14.1667	2.08167	.60093	11.00	18.00
Posttest 1	EG 1	15	17.3333	2.87021	.74108	13.00	23.00
	EG 2	15	20.2000	4.18463	1.32330	12.00	25.00
	CG	15	14.7500	2.22077	.64108	11.00	19.00
Posttest 2	EG 1	15	22.1333	3.18179	.82154	15.00	25.00
	EG 2	15	20.3000	4.00139	1.26535	12.00	24.00
	CG	15	14.7500	2.30119	.66430	11.00	19.00

The descriptive statistics in Table 10 indicated that the reading comprehension mean scores of the EG 1 (M= 14.33, SD= 2.66) and EG 2 (M= 15.50, SD= 2.75) were almost similar to the control group (M= 14.16, SD= 2.08) in the pre-test. The mean scores of the three groups, therefore, showed that the learners' reading comprehension was similar in the pre-test. However, the reading comprehension mean scores of the participants on the post-test 1 showed an increase for the EG 2 (M= 20.20, SD= 4.18) and EG 1 (M= 17.33, SD= 2.87) in the experimental groups. A very little increase (M= 14.75, SD= 2.22) was also evident in the mean scores of the control group on the post-test 1. Therefore, the mean scores of the post-test 1 showed that the experimental groups outperformed the control group. Moreover, the two experimental groups were not similar in the in reading comprehension ability n the post-test 1. The reading comprehension mean scores of the Iranian EFL learners on the post-test 2 also showed increase for both EG 2 (M= 20.30, SD= 4.00) and EG 1 (M= 22.13, SD= 3.18) in the experimental groups. The mean scores (M= 14.75, SD= 2.30) of the learners in the control group showed that they performed similarly on the post-test 2. Therefore, the mean scores of the post-test 2 highlighted the outperformance of the experimental groups over the control group. However, EG 1 performed better than EG 2 in reading comprehension ability on the post-test 2, which highlighted that teaching IRs through ethnography could result in more improvements in reading comprehension ability of Iranian EFL learners in comparison with arming them with L1 instruction. In order to inferentially show that the experimental groups could benefit from teaching IRs though L1 and ethnography, one-way ANOVA was used.

To run this test, initially equality of variances has to be checked as in Table 11.

Table 11: Test of homogeneity of variances

	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Pretest	.416	2	42	.742
Posttest 1	1.259	2	42	.300
Posttest 2	1.052	2	42	.379

The homogeneity of the variances between the pre-test, the post-test 1 and the post-test 2 was examined through the Levene's test statistics (see Table 11). The sig. values shows .742, .300, and .379 for the pre-test, post-test 1, and the post-test 2, respectively. The values are greater than .05 and, therefore, acknowledging that the variances were equal.

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run to explore the difference between the three groups including two experimental groups and the control group. Table 12 shows the comparison between the groups on the pre-test.

Table 12: One-way ANOVA statistics for the pre-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.312	2	5.104	.739	.534
Within Groups	317.808	42	6.909		
Total	333.120	44			

Table 4.12 shows that there was not a significant difference in the pre-test scores of the groups: F (2, 42)= .739, sig.= .534, sig.> .05. The Table, therefore, showed that the reading comprehension of the participants were similar on the pre-test. Table 13 shows the comparison between the groups on the post-test 1.

Table 13: One-way ANOVA statistics for the post-test 1

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	302.244	2	100.748	9.926	.000
Within Groups	466.876	42	10.149		
Total	769.120	44			

The above Table demonstrates that there was a significant difference in the post-test 1 scores of the groups: F (2, 42)= 9.92, sig.= .000, sig.< .05. The Table, therefore, indicated that the reading comprehension of the learners were different on the post-test 1. To highlight the point of difference, post-hoc comparisons Tukey HSD test (Table 14) was used.

Table 14: Multiple Comparisons: Tukey HSD test for the post-test 1

(I) Group MF	(J) Group MF	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
EG 1	EG 2	-2.86667*	1.30061	.001	-4.3334	2.6001
	CG	2.58333*	1.23386	.002	1.2945	7.8722
EG 2	EG 1	2.86667	1.30061	.001	-2.6001	4.3334
	CG	5.45000*	1.36409	.000	1.8140	9.0860
CG	EG 1	-2.58333*	1.23386	.002	-7.8722	-1.2945
	EG 2	-5.45000*	1.36409	.000	-9.0860	-1.8140

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As the Tukey HSD test in Table 14 shows, there was a significant difference between the EG 1 and the control group (sig.= .002, mean difference= 2.58). There was also a significant difference between the EG 2 and the control group (sig.= .000, mean difference= 5.45). Moreover, there was also no significant difference between EG 1 and EG 2 on the post-test 1 of reading comprehension. The comparisons, therefore, showed that the experimental groups outperformed the control group on the post-test 1, and significant difference was found between the EG 1 and EG 2 on the post-test 1 (sig.= .001, mean difference= -2.58). Table 15 shows the comparison between the groups on the post-test 2.

Table 15: One-way ANOVA statistics for the post-test 2

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	349.314	2	116.438	11.089	.000
Within Groups	483.006	42	10.500		
Total	832.320	44			

The Table above shows that there was a significant difference in the post-test 2 scores of the groups: F (2, 42)=11.08, sig.= .000, sig.< .05. The Table, therefore, showed that the reading comprehension of the learners were different on the post-test 2. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey HSD test (Table 16) was checked to find where the difference rests.

Table 16: Multiple Comparisons: Tukey HSD test for the post-test 2

(I) Group MF	(J) Group MF	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
EG 1	EG 2	1.83333*	1.32288	.003	-3.6928	3.3595
	CG	7.38333*	1.25500	.000	2.0381	8.7285
EG 2	EG 1	-1.83333*	1.32288	.003	-3.3595	3.6928
	CG	5.55000*	1.38745	.000	1.8517	9.2483
CG	EG 1	-7.38333*	1.25500	.000	-8.7285	-2.0381
	EG 2	-5.55000*	1.38745	.000	-9.2483	-1.8517

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

As the Tukey HSD test in Table 4.16 shows, there was a significant difference between the experimental group 1 and the control group (sig.= .000, mean difference= 7.38). There was also a significant difference between the experimental 2 and the control group (sig.= .000, mean difference= 5.55). The comparisons, therefore, showed that the experimental groups outperformed the control group on the post-test 2. Moreover, significant difference was also found between the first and second experimental groups on the post-test 2 (sig.= .003, mean difference= -1.83,), which denoted that teaching IRs through ethnography was more effective than L1 instruction on the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability on the post-test 2. Therefore, findings confirm that teaching IRs through ethnography was statistically more effective than L1 on the second post-test. In other words, in the post-test 1, the second experimental group, who underwent teaching IR through ethnography performed better than the L1 group. And, in the second post-test, the first experimental group exposed to ethnography after L1 outperformed the second experimental group, who received teaching IR through L1 after ethnography in the second phase.

Third Research Question

The third research question of the study aimed at qualitatively figuring out the possible challenges the learners might undergo during the treatment sessions with respect to learning and applying intercultural rhetoric in reading comprehension. To do so, the students' journal writings were read and analyzed through content analysis, which requires coding and categorizing the data in order to interpretively go for textual analysis. To this end, three steps are suggested by Dornyei (2007):
1. Open coding of textual data and breaking them to chunks;
2. Axial coding of the data and trying to make associations between the categories found in the first step to create a reasonable categorization; and
3. Selective coding for identify the main categories.

It is also noteworthy that the students in the two experimental groups (n=30) wrote their journals during the treatment sessions when they were exposed to teaching IRs. As to the learners' journals, three above-mentioned stages of coding were done to discover the most repeated challenges regarding the acquisition and application of IRs in reading comprehension, including the four main categories of 1) unfamiliarity with IRs; 2) importance of vocabulary and grammar in reading; 3) self-regulation in reading through IRs; and 4) the effectiveness

of IRs in improving reading comprehension. The first two categories belonged to the learners' challenges in the beginning, while the reaming two categories highlighted the learners' perceptions after being exposed to IRs through L1 and ethnography. Thus, in the following, the four categories, in line with the related extracts of the learners' journal writings, were provided to uncover the participants' challenges in learning and applying IRs in reading. It is also noteworthy that the learners wrote their journals in English in their own structure because they were informed that grammar and spelling were not focused anymore to put them in comfortable situation in order to express their thoughts clearly.

1) Unfamiliarity with IRs

The learners' journal writings indicated that almost all of them (n=28) had no previous knowledge of IRs. In fact, it seems that teaching reading through IRs was completely new to them to improve their reading comprehension. This is quite clear in the learners' journal extract below:

Extract 1.

I don't know what we are learning these days. We haven't them before. It is completely new for me. I think it is interesting. The teacher says by learning these things we can be good at reading. I hope to learn them.

The extract above shows that the learner was unaware of the role IRs play in reading comprehension. It was a new thing she was going to learn, which might have been interesting for her. The learner was also optimistic in learning IRs since the teacher tried to initially give the learners a brief introduction of IRs. Being a new learning method made the learning process more enjoyable for the learner since it stimulated her sense of curiosity regarding the appropriate understanding of IRs. The next extract acknowledges the learners' lack of information about acquiring IRs.

Extract 2.

The teacher is talking about something. I think I hear about one of them before in one of our classes. But I really don't have anything about it. Maybe it is hard. The teacher says there are some ways to help us read better. So, it is helpful in reading. I hope to know them sooner. Now, I have nothing to say.

The extract reveals the learners' lack of familiarity with intercultural rhetoric although she might have seen some examples in the term before. However, she did not mention any IR features, which

denotes that she had no awareness of using IRs in reading comprehension. The point of interest for the learner is her eagerness to learn IRs although it might have been a difficult task to do for her. In fact, the teacher probably aims to bring about a sense of motivation among the learners to provide an appropriate learning atmosphere for the learners to consciously and eagerly acquire IRs and be able to apply them while reading.

2) Importance of vocabulary and grammar in reading

The learners' data showed that almost all participants (n=30) initially believed in the important role of vocabulary and grammar to get mastery over reading in English without any problem. It appears that they had no idea of the IR features to help them in their reading. In fact, participants of the present study initially believed that by knowing vocabulary and grammar, they could easily comprehend reading regardless of other important aspects of reading comprehension such as, reading strategies, structure of the text, etc. It seems that belief in vocabulary and grammar is related to their previous education at high schools in which students apparently have no chance of experiencing the real reading classes since vocabulary and meaning are extremely focused. Two students' journal extracts are provided here:

Extract 3.

"We need to know vocabulary and grammar for better reading."

Extract 4.

"I need to be familiar with vocabularies and spelling to read for comprehension in English. Meaning of vocabularies can help us to read carefully and easily."

The above extracts show that students' initial perceptions included their concentration on the constituents of language, i.e. vocabulary and grammar, which could help them in learning to read. It is noteworthy that learners, in the beginning, to a very large extent, held simplistic perception about reading comprehension by relying much on grammar and vocabulary. The next category acknowledges the positive role teaching intercultural rhetoric to help the learners forget their simplistic perceptions about reading and become independent readers by using IR features in reading a text.

3) Self-regulation in reading

In alignment with the learners' change in their viewpoints about reading, their journal writings showed that almost a large number of participants (n=26) believed that

they did not rely on their teachers at the end of the treatment sessions and they could read the text without teacher's help. In fact, it appears that by applying IR features in their reading exercises, the students felt more self-confident and they were able to self-regulate their reading process by benefiting from IRs in reading. The learners' self-confidence in reading by using IRs is highlighted in the following:

Extract 5.
"I learnt about inductive deductive types of texts when I am reading. I can do it alone. It is very interesting when you start reading and pay attention to the supporting ideas without the help of the teacher."

Extract 6.
"IR types help me to be less worried about the meaning of the words. It is a good feeling when you can use them yourself. For example, by understanding the topic sentence I can tell what is the general purpose of the text. I am free in reading now without the help of the teacher."

The learners in the experimental groups were optimistic toward reading since they were eager to acquire and apply IR features in reading and they learned how to use them and comprehend the text with less worry. Acquisition of IRs created a sort of independence in the learners' learning to read since they could individually manipulate the reading text and use the needed IRs in reading to gain final comprehension as smoothly as possible.

4) The effectiveness of IRs in improving reading comprehension

Regarding the participants' perceptions about the effect of classroom activities and IR features on their learning to read, all learners (n=30) pointed out in their journal writings that reading-based activities (e.g. acquisition of intercultural rhetorics) were very influential and useful by allowing the learners to feel improvement on their route of learning to read and to have a better sense of self-confidence while reading at the end of the treatment sessions in relation to the beginning, having no information abbot IR features for successful reading.

Concerning the usefulness of IRs, the following extracts of two of the students' journal writings are brought here:

Extract 7.
"About the IR features that I learnt, I can read faster. Now I pay attention to the principles and rules that I did not consider before, like taking a look at topic sentence and paying attention to supporting ideas."

Extract 8.
"IR types, such as topic sentence, supporting sentences, and looking the body of the text can help me read faster and comprehend a text better. We can share our ideas better than before."

The learners had a positive view about classroom activities and particularly IR features in that they were helpful in a way that students could share their ideas together in class. It seems that their perceptions about learning to read underwent some changes by learning new IR features with the help of which, as students wrote, they could read faster and more easily. They wrote about these features and their impact on the process of learning to read in a sense that IRs paved the way for them to read more easily than before. It is notable to add the learners initially believed that they were not aware of IR features and the role they play effectively in reading comprehension, while later under the influence of acquiring these features, they realized that by the help of them reading can be easier even without knowing the constituents of language, such as vocabulary and grammar.

To sum up the findings of the study resulted from the quantitative data analyses revealed the positive effect of teaching IRs through L1 and ethnography on the learners' improvement in reading. Although both L1 and ethnography groups were found to improve the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension ability, the ethnography group showed better results in the improvement of the learners' reading comprehension ability in comparison with the L1 group on the second post-test.

The findings of the study resulted from the qualitative data analyses demonstrated the learners' unfamiliarity with IRs in the beginning, while treatment sessions were able to bring about changes in their views by highlighting the effectiveness of applying IR features in helping them to read more appropriately. Moreover, although the learners relied heavily on the role of vocabulary and grammar in reading in the beginning, they changed their perceptions and put much more importance on the role IR features play in reading. Finally, the learners' journal writings showed that teaching IRs is helpful for the learners to be self-regulated readers since they themselves could benefit from using IRs while reading without the teacher's assistance.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study had three purposes: 1) to investigate examine the effectiveness of two instructional techniques- L1 and Ethnography-in promoting knowledge of IRs and to improve Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension; 2) to identify the priority of the technique which contributed more to the Iranian EFL learners' reading comprehension; 3) to explore the challenges that the Iranian EFL learners face in the acquisition and application of the IR features in reading comprehension.

The findings obtained through quantitative (paired sample t-test & ANOVA) and qualitative analyses of the data (content analysis) indicated that teaching IR features through both L1 and ethnography significantly affected the learners' reading comprehension ability, highlighting the fact that if learners are provided with IRs instruction either through L1 instruction or ethnography, they can significantly benefit from both in order to increase their reading comprehension. The findings of this study then can be insightful for both teachers and learners towards better and more effective teaching of reading comprejension. The findings are also indirectly in line with studies, such as Sharp (2010) or Narimani (2017) who recognized the role of intercultural rhetoric in language learning. Besides, the fact that learners were provided with their native language to be aware of the effect of IR features and how they can be recognized in the text was also of great help to the participants of the present study since they could smoothly follow the instruction and apply IR features while reading a passage, which finally resulted in their improvement in reading comprehension ability.

Moreover, the results of the present study were in line with those of Connor (2004) and Wang (2007), indicating that IR features can help the language learner to be familiar with the target structures of the target language and to improve his/her background knowledge. Findings also showed that by involving the learners in finding out the IR features in the passage, they could practice their self-independence in learning and be able to apply them while reading a text. In fact, making the learners as ethnographers seemed to help them to be active participants in the treatment sessions and try to have meaningful interaction with their peers as well as the teacher, which finally led to their improvement of reading comprehension ability.

Concerning the second research question of the study, it was found that the second experimental group receiving IR features through ethnography significantly benefitted from the treatment more than the first experimental group working on IR features through L1 on the first post-test. In addition, on the post-test 2, the first experimental group receiving ethnography in the second phase outperformed the learners in the second experimental group who received L1 instruction after ethnography. Therefore, it appears that being an ethnographer created a sense of motivation among the participants of the study to individually work on IR features and independently gather the required IR features in the English passages. The findings imply that giving the learners an appropriate chance to get involved in the reading classroom paved the way for them to actively participate in the classroom talk and share their opinions with the members of the classroom rather than solely being exposed to L1 instruction to acquire IR features, which probable made the learners less active and conscious about the significance of IR features in reading comprehension.

The third purpose of the study was to qualitatively go through the learners' perceived challenges in acquiring and learning IR features in reading comprehension. Data analysis revealed that although the learners were initially quite unfamiliar with the application of IR features in the beginning, they gained the ability of self-regulating their reading tasks after the treatment sessions, highlighting the fact that IR features are likely to be learned and applied in their improvement of reading comprehension. In fact, qualitative data confirmed the findings of quantitative analyses by acknowledging the role of IR features (Sharp, 2010) in the language learning process. However, despite the value of IR features for the learners, their acquisition and application in reading was demanding for the participants which is an evidence for what Narimani (2017) argued that appropriate instruction of IR features is required in the improvement of language skills.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the present study was done within the framework of schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1988) to justify the usefulness of instruction either through L1 or ethnography in assisting the learners' acquisition of IR features and hence improving their reading comprehension ability. Moreover, the

findings point to the fact that as the learners underwent teaching IRs through L1 and ethnography, their background knowledge was activated since they were experiencing a meaningful interaction in the classroom, which helped them to activate their schema of target IR features and successfully apply them in reading the passages. The noticeable part of the study can be the teacher's well-understanding of IRs features and how they should be applied as an instructional tool in order to help EFL learners improve their reading comprehension ability. Put it very simply, the teacher's knowledge of teaching reading comprehension through IRs might be convincing enough since the learners' positive performance has been found to be in alignment with the teacher's awareness of the provision of the instructional materials as effectively as possible.

Practical Implications

The findings of the study suggest the following productive and practical implications:

1. It is beneficial for teachers to be aware of teaching IRs through both L1 and ethnography, which may help them teach reading comprehension as effective as possible.

2. Learners can also benefit from IR instruction through L1 and ethnography to get rid of their reading difficulties since they are exposed to practice and repetition as well as consciously internalizing the structure of the passage.

3. In order to raise teachers' awareness in terms of teaching reading comprehension through using IR instruction, teacher education program should be held. It seems these programs may be beneficial for both novice and expert teachers to consciously go for teaching reading comprehension as effectively as possible and involving the learners' mentality to activate their background knowledge to be proficient readers.

4. Since institutes largely concentrate on the role of teaching language skills, such as reading comprehension, in the process of language learning, they should arm their teachers with enough instruction to make them familiar with IR features in both source and target language. Moreover, as reading comprehension seems to play a significant role in the learners' vocabulary learning affecting their speaking ability, which is another main concern of the learners, teachers can benefit from this strategy for effective teaching, leading to better learning.

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