Explicit vs. Contrastive-based Instruction of Formulaic Expressions in Developing EFL Learners’ Reading Ability

Gholam-Reza Abbasian
Imam Ali University & IAU
Sayyed Jalil Ehsanian
Ministry of Education

As an integrative component of textual structure, formulaic expressions (FEs) play a key role in communicating the message and comprehending the text. Furthermore, interlingually contrastive features of FEs add to their both significance and complexity of their instruction. Given these facts, this study was an attempt to explore a sound mechanism on how to teach FEs; whether an explicit or CA-based approach to FEs instruction could entail various achievements among EFL learners’ reading ability. To this end, three groups of Iranian EFL learners, identified as homogeneous based on Nelson Proficiency Test, were classified into one control and two experimental (i.e. explicit and CA-based instruction) ones. They were exposed to conventional, explicit and CA-based instructions of a set of selected FEs developed into and presented in the form of an instructional handout. Their Knowledge of reading was also tested based on a researcher-made diagnostic test prior to the experiment. Both quantitative and qualitative paradigms were employed to measure both the achievements and the extent of contrast between Persian and English languages in terms of FEs. The former analysis revealed significance difference among the groups in terms of

1 Corresponding author. E-mail: gabbasian@gmail.com
instruction type effectiveness; both explicit and CA-based instruction groups outperformed the control group; on the contrary, no statistically significant difference was revealed between the experimental groups. Additionally, the latter paradigm revealed differences and mismatches between Persian and English FEs in terms of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic parameters. The findings could be insightful for EFL instructors, learners, textbook writers, and syllabus designers to take into account issues like these in their pedagogical programs.
Keywords: Formulaic Expressions, Explicit Instruction, CA-based Instruction, Reading Ability

Different approaches, strategies, and skills have been suggested as to mastering reading skill. Lying on a continuum of instructions, they range from rendering a large portion of vocabulary, exploiting, “previewing and reading for main idea”, (Sharpe, 1989, p. 262), intensive and extensive reading skills (Chastain, 1988; Richards and Renandya, 2002), provision of pre-reading, schema-building tasks to predicting, skimming, and scanning strategies (Nunan, 2001). Besides, readers themselves may rely on various personal approaches such as bottom-up, text dependence, top-down approach, or schema dependence one to perceive and comprehend written passages (Nunan, 2001). From all these explicit-type instructions, it is inferred that teachers can help learners improve their reading comprehension ability and, consequently, develop themselves in learning a second or foreign language (SL/FL) (Richards & Platt, 1992). Researches adopt the effectiveness of explicit instruction in TESL/TEFL. In this respect, Karen, et al. (2007) suggest that “the explicit instruction is significantly better than the implicit (instruction) for the complex rule” (p.1), and it may lead to a long term effect for learners (Tode, 2007). It helps learners to perceive new items consciously and this conscious awareness, consequently, assists and notifies learners to take the square and produce accurate pieces of language (Richard and Schmidt, 2010).
Explicit type of instruction may take variety of forms. Among them Contrastive Analysis (CA) oriented approach, though may be charged for being traditional in essence, has proved pedagogically significant in certain areas. CA aims at juxtaposing two language systems to compare and contrast the extent of similarities and differences between them, claiming that it can predict the problematic issues the learner encounters while learning a SL/FL, and thereby most appropriate materials for teaching SL/FL can be developed (Keshavarz, 2008; Ziahosseiny, 2008).

Further to the mechanism of developing reading, subject of instruction being either language skills or components is of crucial importance. For example, formulaic language as an innovative domain in TEFL and TESL has been subject to research in the last decade. Wray (2002) emphasizes the importance of the formulaic language and the lexicon in speakers’ production and mentions that some formulaic sequences of language are present in normal conversations. Wood (2010) asserts a large portion of communicative acts deals with prefabricated chunks. These items are acquired and stored in long term memories. In addition, learners can retrieve these packages of chunks autonomously. Some others (Bulter, 2006; Charles, et al., 2009; Mey, 2009; Wray, 2008) discuss different advantages of formulaic language in a variety of perspectives. They assert that formulaic language helps learners reduce the processing load.

Studies on formulaic language (Birkenstein, et al., 2008; Hackson and Fernandez, 2008; Hall, 2009; Van Lancker & Rallon, 2004; Sadeghi, 2009; Wray, 2008) confirm the importance of teaching formulaic expressions and show that a great extent of any language consists of fixed or semi-fixed chunks and language packages. These chunks need to be fully taken into account since these pre-fabricated items let learners store language economically and develop autonomy in production.

The remaining controversial issue is the way formulaic expressions could be effectively rendered in pedagogical situations. Variety of solutions including form-focused, meaning focused, explicit, implicit, contrastive analysis (CA-based) and the
like has been experienced in the literature. Among many, CA-based and explicit instructions seem worthwhile to be investigated.

CA-based vs. Explicit Instructions

The main task of CA is to compare and contrast two languages to explore the rate of similarities and differences in terms of phoneme, morpheme, syntax, semantics, etc. Consequently, after studying the corpus, the findings are employed in pedagogical materials. The product of these processes shows that CA, in spite of its limitations in some cases, appears to be a significant tool for EFL learners to improve their learning career (Keshavaz, 2008; Yang, 1986; Ziahosseiny, 2008). Proponents of CAH state: “The main purpose of CA is to give a description of differences between languages to establish a linguistically motivated hierarchy of differences” (Ziahosseiny, 2008, p. 2). The modified version of CA, that is, Error Analysis (EA), still seems popular and dominant in pedagogy and serves as “the primary means of conducting research into L2 acquisition” (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2009, p. 52).

Yang (1986) states that in spite of some drawbacks of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH), it can be an effective tool for “teachers to gain useful insight to find out their students’ problems and students to better realize that their native language habits can be transferred to the new language system” (p.3).

CA claimed that learners transferred forms and meanings of their L1 while learning a foreign or second language. Lado (1957, p. 2 cited in Keshavarz, 2008, p. 5) states: “Individuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and distribution of the forms and meanings of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture, both productively when attempting to grasp and understand the language … as practiced by natives.” He maintains that “based on this assumption (as mentioned above), Structural linguists set out to identify areas of difficulty for second language learners and produce appropriate teaching materials to overcome these difficulties.” (ibid). Citing from Fries (1947, p. 9), Keshavarz (2008, p. 6) suggests that “the most effective materials (for foreign language teaching) are those that are (designed) based
upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with parallel description of the native language of the learner.” CA can help material developers to design appropriate materials, aids the learners to understand and learn how L1 differs from L2, assists the teacher to better understand weaknesses and strengths the learner may have while learning a second or foreign language (Corder, 1986; Ellis, 2009).

On the other side of the coin, we face explicit instruction. Semantically speaking, explicit means something clear-cut and direct which refers to visible and definite issues. But educationally speaking, the learner is most probably able to access, focus, understand and perceive the [target learning] points (Oxford, 2004; Richards and Schmidt, 2002). Moreover, instruction refers to pedagogical processes of any educational institution. It refers to a set of activities on the part of instructors and learners for fulfilling and approaching the pre-specified objectives (Richards and Schmidt, 2010). Instruction can also refer to “formal teaching that you are given in a particular skill or subject” (Longman, 2003, p. 844). Combining the two notions, Richards and Schmidt (2010) characterise explicit instruction as an approach which:

- clearly describes the goals of learning in terms of observable behaviour;
- describes the conditions under which the behaviour will be expected to occur; and
- States an acceptable standard of performance (the criterion). For example, one of the behavioural objectives for a conversation course might be: Given an oral request, the learner will say his or her name, address and telephone number to a native speaker of English.” (p.51)

Obviously, instructional mechanism should be compatible with the content or target of the instruction. So, necessity of awareness of the nature of formulaic expressions and respective research trend would be illuminating in the process of conducting this study.
Formulaic Expressions (FEs)

Sequences of words, phrases, or sentences such as ‘on time’, ‘make a mistake’, ‘look up’, ‘how do you do’, see you later’, etc. are called FEs (Wray, 2002). As an umbrella term, “FE includes these terms: idioms, collocations, preferred ways of saying things, routines, set phrases, rhymes and songs, prayers and proverbs” (Gardiff University, 2011, p.1), which cover a large portion of any language in the form of fabricated chunks.

Researchers believe that “these sequences of words are stored and retrieved as a unit from memory” (Richards and Schmidt, 2010, p. 229). These chunks (i.e. linguistic packages) are significant because they assist learners to develop their fluency and productivity (Hall, 2007, p.1). According to Istvan (2006, p.1) “Nonnative learners find learning FEs problematic since they may not know the conventions of the expressions.” EFL learners may commit syntactic and semantic errors due to collocation discrepancies between the L1 and L2. Van Lancker & Rallon (2004) conclude that FEs make up nearly 25% of the phrases in any language. Ellis (2005) found that native speakers used a very large range of FEs. Then, he claimed that language learners needed a significant portion of such expressions for developing their fluency. Importantly, learners can achieve skill and fluency in language learning by using chunks or fixed sequences. In fact, formulae assist learners to produce spontaneous speech. Therefore, the researchers assumed that the inclusion of formulaic language in EFL educational programs could probably be beneficial and effective in developing learners’ reading comprehension ability. They assert that teaching and learning lexical chunks, collocations, idioms (i.e. FEs) should be taken into account in classroom practices for many advantageous, influences, and functions such as:

- “Conserving processing resources, enhancing both fluency and idiomatically” (Richards and Schmidt, 2010, p. 229).
- “Providing learners with connotational meaning besides dictionary meaning” (Lee, 2008).
“Reminding the teacher and the learner to look up equivalent or semi-equivalent items in his or her own native language rather than to rely on the loan translation” (Hackson and Fernandez, 2008, p. 57).

“Helping the learner to store the string of lexical and chunk items in the mental lexicon as a single unit and retrieve them as a whole, too (Wray, 2002; cited in Hackson and Fernandez, 2008, p.2).

“Helping the learner to develop productivity” (Hall, 2007, p.1).

“Being the heart and soul of native-like use” (Wray, 2002, p.5).

Teaching FEs develop fluent speakers, writers or learners. The inclusion of formulaic language provides learners with an opportunity to improve their own language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Birkenstein, 2008; Hackson and Fernandez, 2008; Hall, 2007; Layboutt, 2009; Sefidvand and Vahdani, 2011; Wray, 2008).

In addition to the targeted mechanisms (i.e., CA- and FE-based instructions), reading skill as the target skill being developed in light of these mechanisms, has been subject to extensive research as well. Nunan (2001) found that “background knowledge was a more important factor than grammatical complexity in the ability of readers to comprehend cohesive relationships in the text” (p.260). His finding is compatible with the schema theory as well. Richards and Renandya (2002) have focussed on incorporation of extensive reading as a developmental tool.

Favouring the role of culture in developing reading skill, Chastain (1988) suggests that “a significant factor affecting comprehensibility in language classes is the lack of familiarity students may have with the foreign culture” (p. 233). Furthermore, lots of studies have been done on how to teach reading skill; all emanating from the significance of reading ability.

Contrary to the significance of the formulaic expressions in language skill acquisition, what seems rather crucial is the way they can be rendered explicitly or contrastively. Since this area has
not been thoroughly investigated in the literature and almost all EFL learners find formulae expressions difficult to internalize, the present paper sets out to investigate the impact of such expressions on EFL learners’ reading comprehension ability.

In this very line and to address the problem stated empirically, four research questions were formulated as follows:

1. Does explicit instruction of FEs have any significant effect on EFL learners’ reading comprehension?
2. Does contrastive instruction of FEs have any significant effect on EFL learners’ reading comprehension?
3. Are there any significant differences between explicit and contrastive instructions of FEs in developing EFL learners’ reading comprehension ability?
4. To what extent are English and Persian different in terms of FEs?

Method

Participants

Seventy four Iranian senior high school male EFL learners participated in the study. They were divided into one control group (n=22) and two experimental groups (i.e. Explicit Instruction Group (n=27) and CA Instruction Group (n=25).

Instrumentation

To conduct this study, the researchers employed the following multiple instruments and mechanisms:

Researcher-made Handouts of Explicit and Contrastive Types: Explicit and contrastive handouts had been planned before the experiment started. Whereas the explicit type handout was a collection of formulaic expressions extracted from the participants’ textbooks without any Persian equivalence, the CA-based type included the Persian equivalence of the FEs.

Tests

*Nelson Reading Proficiency Test* was administered to select three homogenous groups of participants.
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Researcher-made pre-test of reading ability was developed and administered to measure the reading achievement of the participants prior to the treatment.

Researcher-made post-test of reading ability, parallel to the pre-test, was designed and administered to probe the extent of effectiveness of the instructions.

Procedures

In order to conduct the experiment, the following steps were followed: First, Sampling was carried out by administering Nelson Proficiency Test and selecting homogeneous groups of participants. Second, the Researcher-made pre-test was administered in order to diagnose the participants’ current mastery of reading comprehension ability on the related textbook. Then, Treatment was launched targeting three groups of the participants classified into one control group receiving conventional instruction and two experimental groups one of which received explicit instruction and the other received contrastive instruction of FEs. To implement the treatment, the pre-planned handout of explicit instruction of FEs was distributed among the explicit instruction group. Besides their common instruction of reading, the participants received explicit instruction of the formulaic expressions for five weeks, twice a week. For example:

Teacher: When you get completely confused, it means you get mixed…..

Class: Mixed up

Meanwhile, every session, the errors were used to be recorded and collected for further analysis in an answer to research question No. 4.

-The pre-planned handout of contrastive instruction of formulaic expressions was distributed and taught among the group of contrastive instruction of FEs for five weeks, twice a week.

For example:

Teacher: If you practice some words over and over, they will stick in your mind. In Persian, you say that they will

………….
Students: مالکه ذهن میشود [malak-e zehn mishavad]

Finally, *Researcher-made post-test was administered following a* five-week instruction carried out in 10 sessions to probe the extent of the effectiveness of the instructions.

**Results**

*Overview*

The statistical analyses took the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research methods depending on the variable and research question types. Correlation coefficients estimation, ANOVA, Shefee test, and frequency analysis were the main procedures of data analysis.

*Preliminary Analyses*

In order to run any parametric test, four assumptions of independence, interval data, normality and homogeneity of variances should be met (Field, 2009). The first two assumptions of independence and interval data do not have any statistical test. The researcher should confirm that none of the subjects participates in more than one group and the dependent variables are measured on an interval scale. However, the latter two assumptions – normality and homogeneity of variances - require statistical test.

To investigate the normality of the data, the ratio of the skewedness over their respective standard errors should be within the ranges of +/- 1.96. As displayed in Table 1, the ratios of the skewedness and kurtosis over their respective standard errors are all within the above mentioned range (i.e. the present data enjoy normal distribution on all tests).
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Table 1

Normality Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GROUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Normality Statistic</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
<th>Normality Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>PRETEST</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POSTTEST</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NELSON</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIFEs*</td>
<td>PRETEST</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POSTTEST</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NELSON</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIFEs**</td>
<td>PRETEST</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>POSTTEST</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NELSON</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-0.41</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>-0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * means Contrastive Instruction of Formulaic Expressions; **stands for Explicit Instruction of Formulaic Expressions

The assumption of homogeneity of variances is discussed when reporting one-way ANOVA results, although in case this assumption is violated, one can reduce the significance level to .01 to compensate for the violation.

NELSON Test

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the three groups (i.e. control, explicit instruction of FEs and contrastive instruction of FEs) on the NELSON test in order to find out whether the groups were homogeneous. As displayed in Table 2, the mean scores for the control, EIFEs and CIFEs are 37.68, 43.28 and 41.19, respectively.
Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for NELSON*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NELSON</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37.68</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>35.02</td>
<td>40.34</td>
<td>28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43.28</td>
<td>13.06</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>37.89</td>
<td>48.67</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIFE</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41.19</td>
<td>10.14</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>37.17</td>
<td>45.20</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIFE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40.85</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>38.44</td>
<td>43.26</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 3, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is not met (Levene’s F = 6.68, P = .002 < .05). To compensate for the violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances, as suggested by Pallant (2005, pp. 234-259), the level of significance was reduced to .01.

Table 3

*Assumption of Homogeneity of Variances for NELSON*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.684</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that there are not any significant differences between the mean scores of the three groups on the NELSON test (F = 1.75 (2, 71), P = .181 > .01). Based on these results, it can be concluded that three groups enjoyed the same level of general proficiency knowledge prior to the administration of the treatments.

Table 4

*One-Way ANOVA NELSON Test by Groups*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>371.478</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>185.739</td>
<td>1.753</td>
<td>.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>7523.887</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>105.970</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7895.365</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrument Validation: Criterion Related Validity

The Pearson correlation coefficients between the NELSON test and pretest and posttest of reading comprehension were employed as validity indices of the latter two tests. As displayed in Table 5, the pretest of reading comprehension ($r = .47$, $P = .000 < .05$) and posttest of reading comprehension ($r = .46$, $P = .000 < .05$) both show significant correlations with the NELSON test; in other words, the pretest and posttest of reading comprehension enjoy acceptable indices of criterion related validity.

Table 5
Pearson Correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NELSON</th>
<th>PRETEST</th>
<th>POSTTEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>$0.479^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>$0.000$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>$74$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Reliability Indices

As displayed in Table 6, the K-R21 reliability indices for the pretest, posttest and NELSON test are .89, .93 and .95, respectively.

Table 6
K-R21 Reliability Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>K-R21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td>51.5553</td>
<td>201.833</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posttest</td>
<td>59.9792</td>
<td>304.688</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NELSON</td>
<td>40.8514</td>
<td>108.156</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pretest of Reading Comprehension

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the three groups (control, explicit instruction of FE’s and
contrastive instruction of FE’s) on the pretest of Reading Comprehension test in order to ascertain whether they were homogeneous in terms of reading comprehension ability prior to administration of the treatments to the experimental groups. As displayed in Table 7, the mean scores for the control, contrastive instruction of FEs (CIFE), and explicit instruction of FEs (EIFE) are 47.59, 55.54 and 51.10, respectively.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics Pretest of Reading Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Min. Bound</th>
<th>Max. Bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRETEST CONTROL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>47.59</td>
<td>8.29</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>43.91</td>
<td>51.26</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIFE</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>55.54</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>50.71</td>
<td>60.38</td>
<td>30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIFE</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>51.10</td>
<td>18.86</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>43.64</td>
<td>58.56</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>51.56</td>
<td>14.21</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>48.26</td>
<td>54.85</td>
<td>13.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 8, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is not met (Levene’s F = 12.47, P = .000 < .05). To compensate for the violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances, as suggested by Pallant (2005, pp. 234-259), the level of significance is reduced to .01.

Table 8
Assumption of Homogeneity of Variances for Pretest of Reading Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.474</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that there are not any significant differences among the mean scores of the three groups on the pretest of Reading Comprehension test (F = 1.90 (2, 71), P = .156 > .01). Based on these results, it can be concluded
that the three groups enjoyed the same level of reading comprehension ability, along with general language proficiency, prior to the administration of the treatments.

Table 9
One-Way ANOVA Pretest of Reading Comprehension Test by Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>750.084</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>375.042</td>
<td>1.904</td>
<td>.156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>13983.744</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>196.954</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14733.828</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Mean Scores on Pretest of Reading Comprehension Test

Analyses of the Post-test Results: Investigation of the Research Questions

A one-way ANOVA was run to compare the mean scores of the three groups (control, EIFE and CIFE) on the posttest of Reading Comprehension test in order to investigate the effect of the explicit and contrastive instruction of FEs to develop reading ability. As displayed in Table 10, the mean scores for the control, CIFE, and EIFE groups are, 48.33, 66.25 and 63.66, respectively.
Table 10
Descriptive Statistics Posttest of Reading Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTROL</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>48.33</td>
<td>13.79</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>42.22</td>
<td>26.66</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIFE</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66.25</td>
<td>18.38</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>58.66</td>
<td>40.00</td>
<td>86.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIFE</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>63.66</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>57.75</td>
<td>30.00</td>
<td>83.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>59.98</td>
<td>17.46</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>55.94</td>
<td>26.66</td>
<td>86.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As displayed in Table 11, the assumption of homogeneity of variances is met (Levene’s F = 3.05, P = .053 > .05).

Table 11
Assumption of Homogeneity of Variances for Posttest of Reading Comprehension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levene Statistic</th>
<th>df1</th>
<th>df2</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.055</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>.053</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of the one-way ANOVA indicate that there are significant differences among the mean scores of the three groups on the posttest of Reading Comprehension test (F = 8.59 (2, 71), P = .000 > .05).

Table 12
One-Way ANOVA Posttest of Reading Comprehension Test by Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>4335.065</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2167.532</td>
<td>8.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>17907.193</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>252.214</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22242.258</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the F-value of 8.59 indicates significant differences among the mean scores of the three groups on the posttest of reading comprehension, the post-hoc Scheffe’s tests should be run to compare the means two by two. Based on the results displayed in Table 12, it can be concluded that:

A: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the EIFE and control groups. The EIFE group with a mean score of 63.66 outperformed the control group on the posttest of reading comprehension (see table 10). Thus, the first null-hypothesis (i.e. explicit instruction of FE does not have any significant effect on EFL learners’ reading comprehension) is rejected.

B: There is a significant difference between the mean scores of the CIFE and control groups. The CIFE group with a mean score of 66.25 outperformed the control group on the posttest of reading comprehension (table 10). Thus, the second null-hypothesis (i.e. CIFE does not have any significant effect on EFL learners’ reading comprehension) is rejected.

C: There is not any significant difference between the mean scores of the CIFE and EIFE groups. Thus, the third null-hypothesis (i.e. there are not any significant differences between EIFE and CIFE instructions in developing EFL learners’ reading comprehension ability) could not be rejected (see table 10 and graph 2).
Quantitative Analysis: Research Question Four

In order to answer the research question four, a list of FEs was extracted from the participants’ textbooks including English Book 3 and Pre-university English Book. Then, the FEs were juxtaposed to explore the matches or mismatches interlingually. The list is given in Appendix B, which obviously reveals that these two languages vary semantically, syntactically and pragmatically.

Out of 91 (i.e. 60+31) cases of FEs, Persian and English vary in 31 cases, an indication of roughly 34 percent. The distinctive specifications are as follows:

I. Expressions may be structurally divergent. For example, ‘make plans: برنامه چیدن’ [barname chidan] ‘indicates that the English structure (Verb + Noun) does not match the Persian structure [noun+verb] (اسم +فعل) or the formulaic expression ‘be afraid of: ترسیدن از’ [tarsidan az] is different from that of Persian in terms of structure (be + adjective + preposition versus فعل + حرف اضافه) [ verb+pp].

II. Expressions may be semantically divergent, for example, ‘make a decision: تصمیم گرفتن’ [tasmim gereftan] rather than *یک تصمیم ساختن [tasmim saakhtan] or ‘take action: اقدام
Abbasian and Ehsanian

III. Expressions may be pragmatically divergent. For example, ‘How do you do?’ [az didar-e shoma khosvagtam] may have different interpretations for English and Persian speakers.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings indicate that explicit instruction of FEs plays a significant role in developing learners’ reading comprehension ability. They are in line with the studies supporting the effectiveness of explicit instruction (Andrew, 2007). In addition, the results revealed that formulaic instruction made the EFL participants outscore the control group, suggesting that teaching Formulaic expressions could be an effective pedagogical technique in enhancing reading comprehension competence.

Along the same line, some researchers (Butter, et al., 2006; Ellis, 2005; Mey, 2006; Wood, 2010; Wray, 2005) found that teaching and learning lexical chunks, collocations, idioms (i.e. FEs), had significant effects and functions on learners. But they did not investigate the effect of FEs instructions on EFL learners’ reading ability. In fact, most of them have been concerned with the effect of FEs on EFL learners’ fluency and productivity.

Additionally, CA-based instruction of FEs helps learners develop their reading comprehension ability significantly. CA-based instruction of FEs assists learners in perceiving L1 and L2 similarities and differences by comparing and contrasting the systems. Then, the achievements may be insightful for learners in enhancing and learning EFL reading materials. Therefore, the study confirms Ellis (2009) and Corder (1986) suggesting that teachers, learners, and researchers can take advantage of CA. However, the scope of this study (i.e. CA-based mechanism of FEs instruction) appears to be an innovative approach in teaching reading in the field of TEFL. Even though some researchers such as Ziahosseiny (2008) and Keshavarz (2008) have concerned themselves with contrastive analysis of English and Persian, they don’t fully support the argument of the current research.
Meanwhile, the findings are consistent with that of Manucheri (2005). She concludes that, for example, the Persian learner of English has problems while learning the verb forms such as ‘teach: دادن/ yaad dadan/ rather than * give learning’ or ‘learn: گرفتن/ yaad gereftan/ rather than *get learning’. She suggests that the teacher should provide ample opportunities for learners to realize the collocational nature of verb forms on CA-based study.

Meanwhile, this study reveals that the two mechanisms of explicit and CA-based instructions bring about roughly equal achievements. Even though the dual mechanism equality probably seems to be the unique achievement of this experiment, it supports the significance of explicit instruction of Richards and Schmidt (2002), confirming Ziahosseiny’s (2008) claim that “Contrastive analysis is largely associated with language teaching” (p.6).

Both the explicit and CA-based experiments reported in the literature (Ghadessy, 1977; Jafarpur, 1979; Keyvani, 1977; Yarmohammadi, 1967) aimed at providing learners, teachers, researchers with new insights to develop in their pedagogical programs. Along the same line, this study was an attempt to teach the most frequent formulaic expressions extracted from the participants’ textbook through two mechanisms of explicit and contrastive approaches. CA-based study on the extracted sample of FEs reveals that 34 percent of English and Persian formulae are different in terms of structures, semantics and pragmatics.

FEs are almost fixed or semi-fixed prefabricated chunks which play a significant role to develop learners’ fluency. In addition, formulae assist language users to acquire language (Lucker, 2004). In fact, learners store and retrieve these chunks wholly within a set of ready-made packages (Gardiff University, 2011). However, almost all EFL learners in different levels find idioms and collocations problematic. They often find such formulae difficult to internalize since syllabus designers do not include enough proportion of formulaic expressions- collocations and idioms- in EFL course books. EFL teachers might sometimes overlook teaching formulaic expressions at the expense of teaching isolated items. In addition, the study of formulaic language is in its infancy.
Conclusively, the findings assert roughly equal effectiveness of both EIFE and CIFE instructions on the participants’ reading comprehension ability and greater incompatibility between Persian and English in terms of FEs, which warrants the inclusion of CIFE instruction at the top of the priority list of candidate instructional mechanisms.

The Authors

**Gholam-Reza Abbasian**, born in Ahar, East Azerbaijan, Iran, is an assistant professor of TEFL at Imam Ali University & IAU. He has presented at (inter) national conferences and is the author & translator of about 15 books, publisher of scholarly articles and offers psycholinguistics, language testing, & syllabus design courses. He has received awards as top scholar and has been nominated as the most successful teacher for seven years. He is the internal manager of JOMM, reviewer of Sage, FLA and GJER journals and a member of editorial board of JSSIR.

**Sayeed Jalil Ehsanian**, holds an MA in TEFL and is an English teacher at the Iranian Ministry of Education and has been teaching English for fifteen years. His research interests are syllabus design and materials preparation.

References


www.cf.ac.uk/encap/research/networks/flarn/what
is/index.html.


**Appendices**

**Appendix A: Explicit Handout of FEs**

**Grade one at guidance school**

And you?
Notebook
What are they?

**Grade two at guidance school**

Excuse me.
Here you are.
Hurry up
Let’s………………..
On ( Tuesday)
Policeman
See you later
Sit down
Thanks God ……
You’re welcome.
What time………?

**Grade three at guidance school**

A little
Bookcase
Come back
Can I help you?
Free time
Good luck
Handwriting
How much …….?
Have a good time
Have breakfast
Have an accident
Have a break

Just fine
What is he/she?
What about you?
Feel fine/ well
How many……………..?
In the afternoon/ evening
Make ( tea , dinner……)
Put on
Say prayers
She is twelve
Stand up
There is /there are
What color…..?
Whose car …….?
A lot of
Be in time
Com from
Fifteen years old
Get ready
Go shopping
Have a headache
How many …….?
Have a test
Have a difficult life
Heavy traffic
Hard worker
How old…….?                                                                                     Ice- cream
In a hurry                                                                                         It may rain
I see                                                                                              Keep clean
Look like                                                                                         Not too bad
On the way                                                                                         Shopping center
Say hello to                                                                                       Sunrise
Take off                                                                                           The country
Turn on                                                                                             What’s the matter?
Wait for                                                                                           Wake up
What does he /she look like ?                                                                       With sth

Grade one at high school

Ask for                                                                                             A. D
Anything else…?                                                                                     A short time
All day long                                                                                         All over
A long time                                                                                         At the age of …. Be born
As …. As                                                                                           Be able to
Be afraid of                                                                                         Be good
Be away                                                                                             Could I …….?
Change into                                                                                         Daylight
Climb up/down                                                                                       Drop down
Do good                                                                                              First name
Far from                                                                                             Fly by
Find one’s way back home                                                                               Full of sth
For certain                                                                                         Get lost
Get late                                                                                             Get up
Get sick                                                                                             Grow up
Glad to meet you.                                                                                 Go away
Grow shorter                                                                                         Get milk
Good looking                                                                                         Have got
Have a cold                                                                                         How odd!
How far…….?                                                                                       How about this one?
Hometown                                                                                             Help yourself
In front of                                                                                         Just a moment
Last name                                                                                           Learn about sth
Look for                                                                                             Light brown
May I borrow…...?                                                                                 Make a noise
Not at all                                                                                           Never mind.
On time                                                                                              Nice to meet you.
Opposite of                                                                                           Once more
Ok, I’ll take it.                                                                                 On top of
Pay attention to                                                                                     Out of reach
Pay for
Peace be upon him.
Plenty of
Share of sth
Stand in line
Some more
Turn down
Turn off
Turn against
What size do you wear?
Who is it on the phone?

Grade two at high school
Against the law
All of a sudden
According to
Cassette player
Depend on
Disagree about
Feel sorry for
For a while
For no good reason
Get cold
Get into trouble
Go hungry
Go on a picnic
Go around
Have to
Hold one's breath
How is everything with you?
Language lab
Light up
Make a mistake
Mixed up
Most of the time
Pay attention
Pick up
Run along
Small talk
Soft drink
Take a breath
Take place
Toy gun
You're welcome.
Would you mind……..?
### Grade three at high school

At the end of | At the front
---|---
After a while | And so on
As soon as | Be afraid of
Be careful about | Be interested in
Be ashamed of | Be on time
By means of | Do best
Do silly things | Driving test
Far apart | First aid
Get away from | Go straight on
Hard working | Hear about
How do you do? | Ice-hockey
Instead of | In addition to
In other words | Insist on
Keep accounts | Long ago
Look after | Make up
On holidays | On your left
Over & over | Once a week / month
Responsible for | Play a part in
Pocket-sized | Right-hand side
Search for | Similar to
Slow down | Sorry about
Stick in one’s mind | Talk with/ to
Turn up | Take a test
Take part | Take sth away from
Track & field | Twice a week/ month
Up & down | Wind power
Worry about | What time is the film on?

### Grade four at high school/ pre-university

A large number of | As long as
As soon as possible | As well
As well as | Be aware of
Be concerned about | Be free of sth
Be made up of | Be robbed of sth
By oneself | Come in
Concentrate on | Do one’s part
Do research in sth | Get tired
Give a speech | Help out
In addition to | In public
In the front of | Keep up with sth
Make a decision | Make a difference
Make a speech | Make eye –contact
Make plans | Pass on
Appendix B: CA-based Handout of FEs

Grade one at guidance school

And you?
Fine, thanks.
Just fine
Notebook
What is he/she?
What are they?
What about you?

Grade two at guidance school

At the table
Excuse me.
Feel fine/ well
Here you are.
How many……………..?
Hurry up
In the afternoon/ evening
Let’s……………….
Make ( tea , dinner……)
On ( Tuesday)
Put on policeman
Say prayers
See you later
She is twelve
Sit down
Stand up
Thanks God ……
There is /there are
You’re welcome.
What color…..?
What time……?
Whose car ……..?

Grade three at guidance school

A little
A lot of
Bookcase
Be in time
Come back
Com from
Can I help you?
Fifteen years old
Free time
Get ready
Good luck
Go shopping
Handwriting
Have a headache
How much ……?
Have a good time
Have a test
Have breakfast
Have a difficult life
Have an accident
Heavy traffic
Have a break
Hard worker
How old………?
Ice- cream
In a hurry
It may rain
I see
Keep clean
Look like
Not too bad
On the way
Shopping center
Say hello to
Sunrise
Take off
The country
Turn on
What’s the matter?
Wait for
Wake up
What does he /she look like?
With sth

Grade one at high school
A piece of sth
Ask for
A. D
Anything else...?
A short time
All day long
All over
A long time
At the age of ....
As .... as
Be born
Be afraid of
Be able to
Be away
Be good
Change into
Could I .......?
Climb up/down
Daylight
Do good
Drop down
Far from
First name
Find one’s way back home
Fly by
For certain
Full of sth
Get late
Get lost
Get sick
Get up
Glad to meet you.
Grow up
Grow shorter
Go away
Good looking
Get milk
Have a cold
Have got
How far.......?
How odd!
Hometown
How about this one?

تُقَاضِا کردن برای
پس از میلاد مسیح
چه زیبا؟
زمان کوتاهی
تمام طول روز
سراس. تمام
زمان طولانی
در سن
بی میزان برای
مولد شدن
تمسین از
قادر بودن / توانا بودن
دور شدن
حب بودن
تبدیل شدن به
ایا می توانیم؟
پلا رفتن / پایین امن
روش ای روز / روز روش
کار نیک انجام دادن
به پایین انداخت
دور از
اسم کوچک
مسیر برگشت را یافتن
اطراف پرواز کردن
به طور بنفس
پر از چندی
بیرون شدن
گم شدن
بیمار شدن
برخاستن
از دیدارتان خوشحالی
بزرگ شدن (فراغ)
کوتاه شدن (روز)
دور شدن
خوش تب
شری کردن (دوشیزنی از گاو...)
سرما خوردن
داشتن
؟
چقدر فاصله
عجیب است!
زادگاه
این یکی چطور است
Abbasian and Ehsanian

Help yourself
In front of
Just a moment
Last name
Learn about sth
Light brown
Look for
Make a noise
May I borrow.....?
Never mind.
Not at all
Nice to meet you.
On time
Once more
Opposite of
On top of
Ok, I’ll take it.
Out of reach
Pay attention to
Pay for
Peace be upon him.
Piece of sth
Plenty of
Receive sb with open arms
Right now
Share of sth
Stand in line
Steam engine
Some more
Some day
Something else
Turn down
Turn off
Turn into
Turn against
Sitting room
Welcome sb warmly
What size do you wear?
Will you....?
Would you .......?
Who is it on the phone?
What fun it was!
Grade two at high school
Agree about/on
Against the law
A short while
All of a sudden
A foot wide/long
According to
Bad luck
Cassette player
Comment on/about
Depend on
Different from
Disagree about/on
Do right
Feel sorry for
Find out
For a while
For the fun of it
For no good reason
Get cold
Get out of sth
Get into trouble
Get mixed up
Go hungry
Go hic
Go on a picnic
Go on a trip
Go around
Give back
Have to
Hold one’s breath
How about this one?
How is everything with you?
Keep on
Language lab
Light bulb
Light up
Look like
Make a mistake
Merry –go–round
Mixed up
Mind one’s own business
Most of the time
Paper bag

موافق/وند در مورد/سر
بر خلاف قانون
ناعت زمان کوتاه
تاحال
به عرض/طول یک یا
طیق
بد شناسي
ضبط صوت
نظر دادن درباره/سر چیزی
واسته پودن
متفاوت پودن از
اختلاف داشتن سر/درباره ی چیزی
درست کردن
حساس تاسف کردن برای
پی بردن/فهمیدن
برای متنی
بی خاطر سرگرمی
بی خاطر دلی ناخوشایندی/بی معلمی
سرما خوردن
از چیزی ره/خلاص شدن
به درد سر افتادن/به مشکل بر خوردن
سر در چهار/گیچ شدن
گردن/سینه
به سکسکه افتادن
به تقیق به یاد کردن
به سفر کوته رفت
جرخین به دور
پس دادن
نظامی پیدا
نام خود را حبس کردن
این یک چطور است
کارو بار در بار
ادامه دادن
از مایه‌ها زبان
لامپ حیایی
روش خون/روشن شدن
شیمی پودن
اشتباه کردن
گردونه/چرخ و فلفک
قطعی/سر در گرم
تو لاب خود پودن
بیشتر مواقع
پالت کاغذی
**Abbasian and Ehsanian**

Pay attention

Put sth aside

Pick up

Run out of

Run along

Say goodbye

Small talk

Stay with

Soft drink

Take sth apart

Take a breath

Take a photograph

Take place

Transport system

Toy gun

You’re welcome.

Walk around

Would you mind………?

Write about

**Grade three at high school**

At the same time

At the end of

At the front

After a while

And so on

As soon as

Be afraid of

Be careful about

Be interested in

Be ashamed of

Be on time

By means of

Do best

Do silly things

Driving test

Far apart

First aid

Get away from

Go straight on

Hard working

Hear about

How do you do?

Ice-hockey

**Towhe Dahandah**

کنار گذاشتن چیزی

برداشتن

تمام کردن/ تمام شدن

در امتداد حرف کردن

خدااحافظ کردن

گم مختصر و دوسته

ماندن پیش/ نزد

نوشته بهدن الکل

اجزای چیزی را از هم باید کردن/ جدا کردن

نفس کشیدن

عکس‌داری کردن/ عکس اداختن

افق اتفاق‌های بر مکانی برگزار شدن

سپس حلم و تقل

تفنگ اسباب بازی

خواهش می کنم

در اطراف قدمی زدن

اگه برای زحمت نیست؟

دریاها (موضوع) نوشته

هم زمان

در انتهای/ در پایان

در خط مقدم (چیزهای جدگ)

برای لحظه ای

و غیره

به معرض ایجاد

ترس در

مواظب بودن

علاقمندی بودن به

خجالت کشیدن از/ اشترانده شدن از

سر وقت حاضر شدن/ بودن

با استفاده از/ به وسیله ی

نهایت سعی را انجام دادن

کارهای احمقانه انجام دادن/ خنگ باید در اوردن

ازمون راهنمایی و راهنگی

دور از هم

کمک های اولیه

دور کردن (کسی از چیزی)/ دور شدن

مستقیم ادامه مسیر دادن

سخت کوش

دریابه ی (چیزی) شنیدن

از اشتهای با شما خوشوقتم

هالیکی روزه یخ
Instead of
In addition to
In other words
Insist on
Keep accounts
Long ago
Look after
Make up
On holidays
On your left
Over & over
Once a week / month
Responsible for
Play a part in
Pocket-sized
Right- hand side
Search for
Similar to
Slow down
Sorry about
Stick in one's mind
Talk with/ to
Turn up
Take a test
Take part in
Take sb /sth away from
Track & field
Twice a week / month
Up & down
Wind power
Worry about
What time is the film on?
Grade four at high school/ pre-university
A large number of
As long as
As soon as possible
As well
As well as
Be aware of
Be concerned about
Be free of sth
Be made up of
Be robbed of sth

What time is the film on?
Grade four at high school/ pre-university
A large number of
As long as
As soon as possible
As well
As well as
Be aware of
Be concerned about
Be free of sth
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What time is the film on?
By oneself
Come in
Concentrate on
Do one’s part
Do research in sth
Get tired
Give a speech
In public
In front of
Keep up with sth/sb
Make a decision
Make a difference
Make a speech
Make eye–contact
Make plans
Pass on
Rely on
Run away
Stand away
So far
Take action
Take notes
Take sth seriously
Tell a joke
Whether ..... or
Weigh sth against sth
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