

Investigating the of Explicit Instruction of Apology Speech Act on Pragmatic Development of Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Learning a foreign language requires students to acquire both grammatical knowledge and socio-pragmatic rules of a language. Pragmatic competence as one of the most difficult aspects of language provides several challenges to L2 learners in the process of learning a foreign language. To overcome this problem, EFL teachers should find the most effective way of teaching pragmatic knowledge to their students. Accordingly, the present study investigated the effect of explicit teaching of apology speech act, as an aspect of pragmatic competence, on the Iranian EFL learners' appropriate use of the mentioned speech act. In so doing, a total of 73 EFL students at intermediate and advanced levels participated in a pre-posttest design research with experimental and control group. Data were collected using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The selection of apologetic situations in DCT was based on two variables of social status and social distance. The results revealed that explicit instruction was a facilitative tool that helped students use the proper apology strategies in different situations. Moreover, it was found that L2 proficiency had a significant influence on overall appropriateness of speech act production.

Keywords: Explicit instruction; Apology speech act; Pragmatic competence; Iranian EFL learners

1. Introduction

Communication is dynamic and context specific. It depends on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons and one's understanding of the situation and also on prior experience of the same kind (Savignon, 1983). The performance of a person is the interaction between competence (knowledge, ability for use), the competence of others, and the "cybernetic and emergent properties of events themselves" (Hymes, 1977, p. 283). According to Bachman's (1990, p. 87) model, "language competence" is divided into two components: "organizational competence" and "pragmatic competence".

Organizational competence comprises knowledge of linguistic units and the rules of ordering them to form a text. These abilities are of two types: 'grammatical competence' and discourse ('textual competence'). Pragmatic competence is divided into 'illocutionary competence' and 'sociolinguistic competence'. 'Illocutionary competence' is 'knowledge of communicative action and how to carry it out'. 'Sociolinguistic competence' consists of the ability to perform language functions in the ways that are appropriate to the context. Brock and Nagasaka (2005) also define pragmatic competence as a range of abilities in the use and interpretation of language in context; the ability to use language for different purposes such as greeting, requesting, informing, refusing, and so on.

As it is evident, knowledge of vocabulary and grammar of language is not enough for the speakers to be able to produce native like language functions. This become even more crucial when one tries to learn and speak in another language. They should acquire pragmatic competence and also be aware of differences between two cultures in addition to differences between two languages. Since intercultural communication is an inseparable part of daily life, it should be taken in to account that more than any aspect of language, speech acts are culture specific. According to Hymes (1962), speech behaviors are commonly influenced by culturally specific social constraints which help speakers 'what to say', 'to whom', and 'under what conditions'.

Since a language is not separate from its culture, L2 (second language) learners, regardless of their proficiency level, encounter a great challenge in communications inconsistent with L2 cultural norms. Thus, it is necessary to help learners to perform pragmatically correct language in intended situation is very significant in language teaching area. Moreover, it is also important that there should be material and resources that can be addressed by the teachers when

they are teaching pragmatic competence. Accordingly, pragmatic competence and the ability to adapt one's language to contextual demands are emphasized as an important skill to develop in English subject curriculum. Therefore, in English language pedagogy, teachers should try to foster language learners' pragmatic competence in the target language with an emphasis on one of the significant pragmatic features, *speech acts*, through adequate pedagogical practice (Takahashi, 1996).

As cited in Istifci and Kampusu (2009, p. 16), Schmidt and Richards (1980) define speech acts as "all the acts we perform through speaking, all the things we do when we speak and the interpretation and negotiation of speech acts are dependent on the discourse or context". In so doing, a speech act is an utterance that fulfills the purpose of communication, as speakers utilize a variety of speech acts, to obtain the communicative targets. Thus, knowing how speech acts are produced both in native and target language for EFL learners is of significant importance and speech acts can be thought of as "functions" of language, such as complaining, thanking, apologizing, requesting, refusing and inviting.

The speech act of apologizing is called for when the interlocutor's behavior violates social norms. So, when an action or utterance has caused some kinds of offense for persons, the act of apologizing is required to set things right (Eslami-Rasekh&Mardani 2010). The act of apologizing is a significant medium of "restoring" the relationship between interlocutors after the offense is committed (Leech, 1983). This speech act usually requires the presence of two participants, namely, the person who is apologizing and the person who expects an apology. They may have different social dispositions and power. Hence apologies may vary from highly apologetic to lowest apologetic depending on interlocutors. It is also a complicated and difficult speech act to learn in second language because an apology speech act carries with it dishonor and need for satisfaction on the part of the speaker. Therefore, it seems necessary for language teachers to raise the students' attention to the delicate rules dominating on apology speech act in order to enable them to employ apologetic strategies appropriately. This could be conducted in several fashions; one of them is explicit teaching. Accordingly, this study is going to investigate the effect of explicit teaching of apology speech act to Iranian EFL learners.

2. Review of the Related Literature

Pragmatic competence is a vague term, and covers a variety of different definitions; thus, it cannot be easily defined (Levinson, 1983). Pragmatics is "the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationship between sentences and contexts and situations in which they are used" (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1993, p. 284, cited in Muhsin Mohammed, 2012).

Yule (1996, p. 127) asserts that pragmatics is "the study of intended speaker meaning". Verschueren (1999, p. 1) believes that pragmatics is the "study of linguistic phenomena from the point of view of their usage properties and processes". Levinson (1983, p. 24) asserted that pragmatics is "the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the context in which they would be appropriate". Similarly, May (1993, p. 42) considers pragmatics as "the study of conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society". Jaszczolt (2002, p. 1) states that "pragmatics is the study of how hearers add contextual information to the semantic structure and how they draw inferences from what is said".

In language pedagogy, communicative competence is defined as the students' ability to "understand the essential points of what a native speaker says... in a real communicative situation" as well as "respond in such a way that the native speaker interpret to response with little or no effort and without errors that are so distracting that they interfere drastically with communication" (Terrell, 1977, p. 326, cited in Kramsch, 1996). Research show that instruction is advantageous in the area of pragmatics (Tateyama, 2001). Classroom provides a safe place for learners to learn and to try out new forms and patterns of communication and helps learners become familiar with the range of pragmatic devices and practices in the target language. So, they can take part entirely in the target language communication and to expand their perceptions of the language and speakers the language.

One of the inseparable part of pragmatic competence is proper application of speech acts. Oxford philosopher, John L. Austin presented speech act theory in 1962. Austin stated that there were only two types of utterances: performative vs. constatives. According to Austin (1962, p. 5) performative utterances do not "describe" or "report" or constate anything at all, are not 'true or false', and the uttering of the sentence is or is part of, the performing of an action, which again would not normally be explained as saying something. Performative utterance can be viewed as a "speech act" where "the uttering of the words is [...] the leading incident in the performance of an act, [...] the performance of which is also the object of the utterance" (Austin, 1962, p. 8). Searl (1975) systemized Austin's word and developed theory of speech act in his own fashion. He proposed a five-way classification of illocutionary acts including *Representatives, Directives, Commissives, Expressives, and Declarations*.

One of the expressive speech acts is apology which EFL learners find difficult to learn how to employ it appropriately. Different scholars define apologies in different ways: Olshtain and Cohen (1983) perceived apology as a social event and they believed that it will be performed when social norms are violated. Fraser (1981, p. 262) argues that apologizing is taking responsibility for the infringement and expressing regret "for the offense committed, through not necessarily for the act itself". Owen (1983) confines the meaning of apologizing to the expression of 'sorry' and 'I apologize'. According to Goffman (1967) an apology is one type of 'remedy'. Holmes (1995), with regard to gender differences in apologies, found both similarities and differences between males and females.

Speech act theory characterizes and classifies prototypical apology based on the felicity conditions for its realization that consists an apologetic performative verb and an expression of regret (Suszczyńska, 1999). Apology is also described in accordance with the function it may serve. For example, it can be considered as a remedial word used to remedy a real or virtual offense to maintain or restore social harmony (Goffman, 1971) or can be defined as a negative politeness strategy that denotes S's (speaker) "reluctance to impinge on H's (hearer) negative face" to save the hearer's face needs (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 187). Although, there is diversity in classification of apology, due to the diversity in definitions of apology which are the results of cross-cultural differences based on both inter language studies, a very common taxonomy was the basis of the cross-cultural speech act realization project (CCSARP), and it consists of seven strategies to perform apologies: using an illocutionary force indicating devices, taking on responsibility, explanation or account of what happened, offer to repair the offending act, promise of forbearance (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper 1989). These strategies can be used, according to authors, by themselves or in any combination or sequence. As a conclusion, there are many different classifications of apologies, but this speech act is culture specific and desired taxonomies should be applied to respective culture. Empirical studies on apology speech act ranges from proposing classification of apology speech act, and cross-cultural studies to teaching and using this speech act in EFL context. A quick review on some of these studies is provided below.

Afghary (2007) conducted a study on socio pragmatic study of apology speech act realization pattern in Persian. The research finding revealed that Persian apologies are as formulaic in pragmatic structure as other languages, and it can be concluded that IFID (illocutionary force indicating device) was the most frequent apology formula used in Persian and other languages studies, and also there is significant relationship between the frequency of intensifiers in different situations and the value assigned to the two social variables (distance, dominance).

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) conducted the study to outline the degree and type of use of apology strategies in Persian and to elaborate on the socio-cultural attitudes and values of this community. The result suggested the universality of apology strategies and the selection of apology strategies in this study reinforced the culture specific aspect of language use. Chamani and Zareipur (2010) conducted a study on the cross cultural study of apologies in British English and Persian. The result indicated that both English and Persian speakers used relatively the same set of apology strategies, yet with significantly different preferences.

Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) investigated the effect of teaching apology speech act with the focus on intensifying strategies. 60 students were participated in the study. They were homogenized and classified into an explicit apology strategy instruction. The analysis revealed that the subjects in explicit teaching group performed significantly better in terms of apology speech act, and also the results showed that learners who received explicit apology strategy instruction used intensifiers more appropriately than the other group. Another study conducted by Istifci and Kampusu, (2009) investigated the use of apology by EFL learners, with subject from two different levels of English proficiency. The data were gathered by discourse completion test comprising of eight apology situations. The results of the study revealed some similarities and differences between two groups. The L1 can be said to have an influence on their use of apologies, especially intermediate level subjects transfer native Turkish speaker norms into English.

2.1 Statement of the problem

As it is evident from the existing literature in the field of language teaching and learning, linguistic competence does not suffice to use a language appropriately. In fact, in order to have an effective communication, one should be aware of not only grammatical rule but also socio-pragmatic aspects of language. In fact this latter aspect of language is acquired through interaction in language context implicitly. But, this becomes complicated in EFL contexts where the classrooms are the only medium for language learning. Since classrooms' time are limited and are mostly restricted to teaching grammar and other major skills, this aspect of language is difficult to learn implicitly. On the other hand, there may be some controversies on the effectiveness of explicit teaching of pragmatic rules to the Students. Accordingly, the present study is going to examine the effect of explicit teaching of apology strategies as one aspect of language pragmatics to Iranian EFL learners. Thus, the current research aims to answer the following questions:

1. Is explicit instruction of apology speech act facilitative for L2 pragmatic development at different proficiency levels?
2. Is there any significant difference between Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic competence in terms of apology speech act at different levels of proficiency after receiving instruction?

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The main goal of this study was to examine the effect of explicit instruction on EFL learners' pragmatic skills development. Accordingly, a quantitative measure was employed. The quantitative method was based on pre-, post-test experimental, control group design (Robinson, 1981). This design was necessary to measure the dependent variable (pragmatic development of the students) as the consequence of independent variable (treatment program).

3.2 Participants

At the beginning of the term, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered and 73 female students of four EFL classes took part in this test. As a result, two of classes were at intermediate level and two were at advanced level. Each of the intermediate and advanced classes consisted of a range of 17-20 students which were assigned to control and experimental groups randomly. The participants were all native Persian speaking students. Their age ranged from 10 to 14 for intermediate groups and 14 to 18 for advanced groups.

3.3 Instruments

Oxford Placement Test. Oxford Placement Test 1 (OPT) (Allen, 2004) is a validated placement test published by Oxford University Press. It provides teachers an efficient tool to place students at the start of a course. To achieve the goals of this study, the OPT was used at the beginning of the term. As long as the students were studying English at intermediate and advance levels of the institute, the placement test was used to ensure level of proficiency.

DCT as Pre-test. At the onset of the study, a pretest, in terms of Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used. DCT is a kind of questionnaire which contains series of concisely defined situations used to elicit special speech acts (Varghese & Billmyer, 1996). DCT is considered as a relevant means of data collection at early stage of learning communicative functions of target language. By means of DCTS, researchers can gather information about the kinds of semantic formulas that students use to recognize different illocutionary acts (Ellis, 1994). The DCT used in the pre-test consisted of four apology scenarios and was used to assess the students' pre-existing knowledge on the course topic for further comparison with post-test. The students were asked to write desired speech acts (see Appendix A).

DCT as Post-test. At the end of the term a post-test in terms of DCTs comprising of 12 situations was administered to the participants of both experimental and control groups in order to measure the effect of treatment (see Appendix B).

3.4 Procedure of Data Collection

In conducting the current study three major steps were taken, pre-test, treatment program, and post test. In the first step, OPT was given to 77 students of four EFL classes of a private English institute (Alpha) in Ilam, Ilam province, Iran. According to the discriminations done by the institute, two of the classes were at intermediate level and two were at advanced level. The OPT was given to the students at the beginning of the term to ensure the students' level of proficiency. After analysis of the data obtained from OPT, four out of 77 participants were excluded from the study because their OPT scores did not match with the range of score that Oxford introduced for intermediate and advanced levels. Although, they were present in classrooms their results were ignored in statistical procedure of the study. Becoming sure about the students' proficiency levels, learners at intermediate and advanced levels were assigned to both control and experimental groups. Then, a pretest, in terms of DCTs, was assigned to measure the students' pragmatic competence in request speech act to certify comparability of groups prior to their treatment. The DCT included 4 situations, four apologetic situations; each situation was followed by a blank space in which students were asked to write their desired speech acts. Treatment group received instruction of the mentioned speech acts for half an hour; ten minutes for each of them, while control group did not received any treatment. Beside the 25 minutes of speech act instruction to the treatment groups, the regular instructions designed by the institute were performed for both treatment and control classes. All groups were taught by the same teacher. Control groups received normal instruction programmed by the institute, while experimental groups received extra instruction about how and when to use speech acts in the appropriate situations. All conditions of control and experimental groups were similar except for the treatment. At the end of the term, a post test similar to that of the pre-test was administered to both control and experimental groups to assess the probable changes in their strategy use. Then, the received data were coded and scored based on the scoring process cited in Farahian, Rezaee and Gholami (2012), "there were four aspects of appropriacy as rating and the analytic likert 5 for marking was employed". Therefore, scale of 5 indicates 'completely appropriate'; scale 4 refers to 'mostly appropriate', scale of 3 as 'generally appropriate'; scale of 2 means 'not very appropriate but acceptable'; scale 1 indicates 'not appropriate and not acceptable'. The appropriacy of the data was determined based on categorization of RESP formula proposed by Afghary (2007) which is illustrated in Figure 1.

After coding the data based on the models which are presented below, they were entered into SPSS (version 20) software to analyze them. To achieve the goals of the study, descriptive and inferential statistics were employed that will be presented in the next chapter at length.

	An Acknowledgement of responsibility		
Explicit Explicit self blame	Implicit		
	Lack of intent	Justifying the hearer	Statement of the offense
		Expressing self deficiency	Concern for the hearer

Figure 1. Categorization of RESP formula (Afghary, 2007)

4. Results

As mentioned earlier, goal of the present study was to explore the effect of explicit instruction of speech act of apology on Iranian EFL learners' performance of this speech act with regard to their proficiency levels. To achieve this goal, the data were analyzed and interpreted through descriptive and inferential statistics which are presented below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of pretest of control and experimental groups at intermediate level

Speech acts	scenarios	percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Control	Scenario 1	5.6	83.3	11.1	0	0	2.0556	.41618
	Scenario 2	66.7	33.3	0	0	0	1.3333	.48507
	Scenario 3	27.8	61.1	5.6	5.6	0	1.8889	.75840
	Scenario 4	77.8	22.2	0	0	0	1.2222	.42779
Experimental	Scenario 1	10.0	75.0	15.0	0	0	2.0500	.51042
	Scenario 2	65.0	35.0	0	0	0	1.3500	.48936
	Scenario 3	25.0	70.0	5.0	0	0	1.8000	.52315
	Scenario 4	80.0	20.0	0	0	0	1.2000	.41039

According to Table 1, in performing apology speech act by control group, the mean score for (scenario1) is 2.0556, for (scenario2) mean=1.3333, for (scenario3), mean=1.8889, for (scenario4), mean=1.2222. Performing this speech act by experimental group resulted in the mean that are 2.0500 for scenario 1, 1.3500 for scenario 2, 1.8000 for scenario 3, and 1.2000 for scenario 4. As it is evident, the differences in the means between control and experimental groups were not very much, though this should be detected by the means of inferential statistics. In the following table descriptive statistics of advanced level are presented.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of pretest of control and experimental groups at advanced level

Speech acts	scenarios	percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Control	Scenario 1	11.8	64.7	23.5	0	0	2.1176	.60025
	Scenario 2	47.1	35.3	5.9	11.8	0	1.8235	1.01460
	Scenario 3	11.8	76.5	11.8	0	0	2.0000	.50000
	Scenario 4	64.7	23.5	5.9	5.9	0	1.5294	.87447
Experimental	Scenario 1	5.6	55.6	22.2	16.7	0	2.5000	.85749
	Scenario 2	33.3	44.4	16.7	5.6	0	1.9444	.87260
	Scenario 3	11.1	61.1	27.8	0	0	2.1667	.61835
	Scenario 4	66.7	16.7	0	16.7	0	1.6667	1.13759

As it is evident from Table 2, the means for scenario 1, 2, 3, and 4 performed by control group at advanced level are 2.1176, 1.8235, 2.0000, and 1.5294, respectively. Performing this speech act by experimental group, means revealed to be 2.5000 for scenario 1, 1.9444 for scenario 2, 2.1667 for scenario 3, and 1.6667 for scenario 4. As it is evident, the differences in the means between control and experimental groups were not very much, though this should be detected by the means of inferential statistics.

Table 3. Independent sample T-test of pre-test of both control and experimental groups at intermediate level

		t-test for equality of means				t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	Equal variances assumed	Mean Differences	Std. Error Differences	95% confidence interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Intermediate		-.02500	.08268	-.19268	.14268	-.302	36	.764
Advanced		.15768	.20046	-.25015	.56551	.787	33	.437

As it can be seen, p values are higher than .05. For the intermediate level, it equals to .764 and for advanced level it equals to .437. So, no significant difference is observable in the pre-tests of control and experimental groups at both levels. Accordingly, both control and experimental groups had almost similar knowledge at the beginning of the term in the case of the mentioned speech acts.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of post test of control and experimental groups at intermediate levels

Speech acts	scenarios	percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Control at intermediate level	Scenario 1	16.7	72.2	11.1	0	0	1.9494	.53930
	Scenario 2	33.3	66.7	0	0	0	1.6667	.48507
	Scenario 3	11.1	83.3	5.6	0	0	1.9444	.41618
	Scenario 4	61.1	38.9	0	0	0	1.3889	.50163
Experimental at intermediate level	Scenario 1	5.0	15.0	60.0	10.0	10.0	3.0500	.94451
	Scenario 2	5.0	60.0	30.0	5.0	0	2.3500	.67082
	Scenario 3	0	35.0	45.0	20.0	0	2.8500	.74516
	Scenario 4	5.0	80.0	15.0	0	0	2.1000	.44721

As it is illustrated in the above table, the mean score of control group for scenario 1 is 1.9444, for scenario 2 is 1.6667, for scenario 3 is 1.9444, and for scenario 4 is 1.3889. In performing apology speech act by experimental group at the post test, the mean score for scenario 1 is 3.0500, for scenario 2 is 2.3500, for scenario 3 is 2.8500, and for scenario 4 is 2.1000.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of post test of control and experimental groups at advanced levels

Speech acts	scenarios	percentages					Mean	Std. Deviation
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Control at advanced level	Scenario 1	11.8	58.8	29.4	0	0	2.1765	.63593
	Scenario 2	29.4	64.7	5.9	0	0	1.7647	.56230
	Scenario 3	17.6	76.5	5.9	0	0	1.8824	.48507
	Scenario 4	47.1	52.9	0	0	0	1.5294	.51450
Experimental at advanced level	Scenario 1	0	22.2	55.6	16.7	5.6	3.8556	.80237
	Scenario 2	5.6	33.3	50.0	5.6	5.6	2.7222	.89479
	Scenario 3	0	27.8	50.0	22.2	0	2.9444	.72536
	Scenario 4	0	55.6	44.4	0	0	2.4444	.51131

In performing apology speech act as the post test by control group at advanced level, the mean score for scenario 1 is 2.1765, for scenario 2 is 1.7647, for scenario 3 is 1.8824, and for scenario 4 is 1.5294. In addition, for experimental group the mean score for scenario 1 is 3.8556, for scenario 2 is 2.7222, for scenario 3 is 2.9444, and for scenario 4 is 2.4444. In order to examine whether the differences in the means between control and experimental groups at pre and post tests are significant, inferential statistics were employed. The results are presented in the following tables.

Table 6. Comparison of post test of control and experimental groups at both levels

		t-test for equality of means				t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
		Mean Differences	Std. Error Differences	95% confidence interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
intermediate	Equal variances assumed	.85139	.11285	.62252	1.08026	7.544	36	.000
Advanced	Equal variances assumed	.86520	.09986	.6620	1.06835	8.66	33	.000

In this table post tests of control and experimental group were compared at both levels. The results showed that there were significant differences in performing apology speech act between experimental and control groups at both level because the obtained p values are lower than the accepted level at .05.

Table 7. Paired Samples Test of pre and post test of control and experimental groups at both levels

Groups		Mean	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Control Intermediate	Pre-post	-.11111	.28726	.06771	-.25396	.03174	-1.641	17	.119
Experimental intermediate	Pre-post	-.98750	.54697	.12231	-1.2434	-.7315	-8.074	19	.000
Control advanced	Pre-post	.02941	.44090	.10693	-.19728	.25610	.275	16	.787
Experiment advanced	Pre-post	-.72222	.52782	.12441	-.98470	-.4597	-5.805	17	.000

According to the results presented in table 7, there is no significant difference between the pre and post tests of control groups at both levels because sigs are higher than .05. On the other hand, significant differences are observable at $p=.000$ which show that experimental groups at both levels showed significant differences at the post test in comparison to the pre-tests. This implies that pragmatic knowledge of experimental groups improved in the case of performing apology strategies after treatment.

Table 8. Total comparison of both pre and post test of experimental groups across two proficiency levels.

		t-test for equality of means						
		Mean Differences	Std. Error Differences	95% confidence interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	.41597	.13743	.13725	.69468	3.027	36	.025
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	.29956	.11614	-.03665	.43577	1.71	36	.047

Table 8 shows that there is significant difference between both intermediate and advanced experimental groups in pretest and post test results. Also, the amount of mean differences were positive, so it can be said that students at advanced level the participants showed better performance in performing the mentioned speech acts in both pre and posttest. Therefore, it seems that proficiency level and grammatical competence affect pragmatic appropriateness.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the aim of the present study was to investigate the effect of explicit instruction of several strategies of apology speech act on Iranian EFL students' pragmatics competence in terms of appropriateness of performing apologetic acts. In so doing, a total of 73 EFL learners in both intermediate and advanced level participated in the study during 25 sessions of instruction. They were asked to answer DCTs as pretest and post test. The DCTs consisted of 4 apology situations, and at the end of the term post test (4 situations) were administered.

The pretests analysis of both levels indicated that both control and experimental groups had the same level of competence. To examine students' performance of apology speech act after treatment, the differences between pre and post tests were investigated at both levels. Analysis of post test outcomes showed some degree of differences compared with pretest, because experimental groups post tests' results showed higher frequency of correct answers. At the same time control groups' post test analysis did not show any meaningful difference in the performance of students, regarding apology speech act compared with pretest results. Moreover, comparison of pre and post test of experimental groups in both intermediate and advanced groups revealed that there were significant differences in pragmatic performances between students at intermediate experimental and advanced experimental groups at pre and post tests. Thus, it can be implied that proficiency level has significant effect on the students' pragmatic knowledge. Therefore, instruction is effective and results in learner pragmatic development in performing apology speech act. These findings are inline with Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) who investigated the effect of teaching apology speech act with focus on intensifying strategies on pragmatic development of EFL learners, the results revealed that learners who received explicit apology strategy instruction showed greater progress than the other group.

The findings suggest the necessity of incorporating consciousness-raising activities in the classroom, and this research indicates that explicit instruction of pragmatic knowledge is more beneficial to the realization of request. Also, the results of this study, with regard to the proficiency levels, revealed that pragmatic knowledge is teachable and it should be taught along with grammatical knowledge. In addition, Bardovi-Harlig (1996) stated that teaching pragmatic could be successful since mere observation and implicit learning would not result in appropriateness. This could signal a requirement for raising the awareness of Iranian EFL teachers to become more aware of social and cultural norms of the target language while they are teaching, and students should be taught how to perform different speech acts appropriately in different social situations with different social values. The results of the presents study can be useful for EFL teachers in that these findings acknowledge the teachers to equip the learners with the enough knowledge to make proper choices for adopting appropriate socio-culturally bound rules in L2 pragmatic production in order to not convey the unintended messages inadvertently.

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Appendix A

Pretest

1. You have borrowed your friend's notes and because of the rain yesterday Some of the notes have been wet and damaged. What would you say when you want to return the notes?
2. You have promised to deliver a lecture in class but due to a very bad cold you have not been able to even attend the class. What would you say to your professor the next session you attend the class?
3. You have been supposed to meet your close friend at the university library to exchange some books and you get there an hour later and find your friend still waiting for you at the library what would you say to your friend as you see her?
4. As you are talking to one of the university staff, you accidentally spill the cup of tea on his/her desk. What would you say?

Appendix B

Post test

1. You forget to get- together with your close friend. You call him to apologize. What would you say?
2. You completely forget a crucial meeting at the office with your boss. An hour latter you call him to apologize. What would you say?
3. Spending an evening at a friend's apartment, you accidentally break a small vase belonging to her. What would you say?
4. You accidentally bump in to someone at the shopping mall. What would you say?