

*The Journal of Teaching Language Skills (JTLS)*

4 (3), Fall 2012, Ser. 68/4

ISSN: 2008-8191. pp. 47-78

## **The Effects of Collaborative Translation Task on the Apology Speech Act Production of Iranian EFL Learners**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aims to investigate the relative effectiveness of different types of pragmatic instruction including two collaborative translation tasks and two structured input tasks with and without explicit pragmatic instruction on the production of apologetic utterances by low-intermediate EFL learners. One hundred and fifty university students in four experimental groups and one control group participated in pre-tests, post-tests and two month follow ups consisting of open-ended discourse completion tasks (OPDCT), mobile short message tasks (MSMT) and telephone conversation tasks (TCT). The results of the study indicated that pragmatic instruction may enhance interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). It was also found that the participants receiving explicit pragmatic instruction outperformed the implicit and control groups. Moreover, the two Collaborative Translation Task (CTT) groups showed better retention of pragmatic knowledge. It was concluded that collaborative translation may result in deeper processing of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge leading to more appropriate pragmatic production.

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Received: 06/05/2012      Accepted: 11/11/2012

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**Keywords:** pragmatic instruction, pragmalinguistic knowledge, sociopragmatic knowledge, apology speech act, collaborative translation

### 1. Introduction

Many Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) studies suggest that native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) have different comprehension and production of speech acts (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Schauer, 2006; Takahashi, 1996). Similarly, Schauer (2006) found that ESL learners were significantly more pragmatically competent than EFL learners. She concluded that amount and type of exposure could play a very important role in priming the learners' pragmatic awareness. Moreover, most of the research conducted in EFL settings indicates the inadequacy of textbooks and classroom conversations in teaching pragmatic knowledge (e.g. Alcon, 2005; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Gilmore, 2004). Consequently, it appears necessary to examine the conditions that influence how pragmatics can be learnt in different formal language learning contexts.

Once the major question in ILP was whether or not pragmatic knowledge is teachable. Many studies on the teachability of pragmatics confirm the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction (e.g. Alcon, 2005; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Rose, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Safont, 2005; Takahashi, 2001). These studies have benefited from different teaching methods; however, they share the same theoretical rationale that awareness-raising has the potential to sensitize learners to pragmatic options (Kondo, 2008). Meanwhile, other theoretical frameworks addressing language acquisition as a social practice have remained less examined.

In response to the paucity of research with the second perspective, the present study attempts to examine the effectiveness of Collaborative Translation Task (CTT) on EFL learners' pragmatic awareness and use in general and on their apologetic speech act production in particular. Attention to both collaboration and explicit pragmatic teaching can be an attempt to provide a sounder theoretical framework for the present study.

In addition, translation task, as a complex cross-linguistic activity, is expected to be effective in promoting EFL learners' pragmatic competence and their ability to understand the pragmatic contrasts between their native and target languages (House, 2008).

## **2. Background**

### **2.1 Theoretical framework**

Several theoretical frameworks can be used to account for L2 pragmatic development. Kasper and Rose (2002) classified them into two groups. The first group enjoys an intra-psychological orientation like cognitive processing models. The second group, with an inter-personal perspective, conceptualizes L2 learning as a social practice; sociocultural theory is a good example.

From among the cognitive processing models, Schmidt's (1995) Noticing Hypothesis is the most cited one to account for the effectiveness of the pragmatic instruction. Schmidt (1994) argued that without noticing, learning is impossible. Furthermore, Schmidt (1995) made a distinction between different levels of mental processing. He distinguished noticing as the "surface level phenomena and item learning" from understanding as "deeper level of abstraction related to meaning" (p. 29).

Gass and Selinker (2008) also support the weak version of the claim that selective attention is influential. They propose a five stage framework involved in conversion of input to output including apperceived input, comprehended input, intake, integration and output. Apperception, which is the first stage of input utilization, is defined as "a priming device that tells us which parameters to attend to in analyzing the second language data" (p. 482). The influential input filters of this stage are the frequency of input, affect, prior knowledge and attention. Attention at this stage allows the learner to notice the mismatch between his or her inter-language and the language produced by the speakers of the language. The second stage, comprehension, may occur in different stages ranging from comprehension of semantics to detailed structural

analysis. According to Gass and Selinker (2008), language learners "work" more to understand the properties of syntax and phonology and less to understand discourse, pragmatics and vocabulary (p. 485). The most influential factor of this stage, as they assert, is the learners' prior linguistic knowledge including the knowledge of their native language. Depending on the quality of analysis in the second stage, comprehended input can lead to grammar formation at the stage of intake. Integration, the next stage, refers to the development and storage of second language grammar. The last stage, output is the active part of the entire learning process when the grammar comes in to surface.

Sociocultural theory views pragmatic development with a different perspective. According to the theory, language development is entirely the result of social interaction, and language learners will only be able to develop to a higher level of knowledge if they have a supportive interactive environment. However, the necessary condition for learning is that the learner is potentially ready for the new task, or the new task must be in his/her zone of proximal development (ZPD). Lantolf (2000) explains that "the ZPD is not a physical place situated in time and space; rather it is a metaphor for observing and understanding how mediational means are appropriated and internalized" (p.16). According to this author, what someone can achieve with support from others and/or a cultural artifact is different from what he/she can achieve when acting alone. However, it is not that children simply copy the behavior; rather the children "transform what the experts offer them as they appropriate it". The key to this transformation is "imitation, which along with collaboration in the ZPD" is the cause of human development (Lantolf, 2000, p.18). Here imitation is considered more complex than pure copying, and it is believed to involve communicative activities.

Moreover, from a sociocultural theory of mind perspective, Swain (2000) proposes 'collaborative dialogue' indicating that "internal mental activity has its origins in external dialogic activity" (p. 113). In her earlier 'comprehensible output hypothesis', Swain hypothesized that learners' meaningful production of language- output- may promote noticing what

the learners need to know to express the meaning they want to convey. The central point is that "it was the act of attempting to produce language which focused the learner's attention on what he or she did not know, or knew imperfectly" (Swain, 2000, p. 100). Then language development seems to be the result of the learners' attempts to seek solutions to their linguistic difficulties. In this framework, language development is viewed as a cognitive activity. Later, she attempted to extend the concept of output to a 'socially-constructed cognitive tool'. Swain's 'collaborative dialogue' is, in fact, an attempt to show that language development can be the result of both cognitive and social activity. In other words, the learners' output, "in the form of collaborative dialogue, is used to mediate their understanding and solutions" (p. 102). Here linguistic problem-solving is achieved through social interaction as the learners participate and interact in problem-solving tasks. It is hypothesized that collaborative dialogue encourages the learners to reflect on the language form while their primary attention is on meaning negotiation.

The implication of the mentioned theories in ILP development is that pragmatic improvement requires noticing, assisted performance, interaction with more competent interlocutor and collaborative communicative practice. As such, first the teacher provides the learner with the target pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge and scaffolds him/her to produce correct forms. Later, during collaborative communicative practice the learner will learn to produce the target forms without external help.

## **2.2 Interventional studies**

Since the need for pragmatic instruction was felt, different interventional studies have been done based on different theoretical frameworks.

Most of the studies on the effect of different types of pragmatic instruction in EFL and ESL contexts usually focus on explicit and implicit types of instruction. The main distinction between the two approaches is that in explicit approach the learners are taught explicit meta-pragmatic information about the target language forms (Rose,

2005), but implicit approach involves providing feedback on language use while the primary attention is on meaning (Ellis, 2003).

House and Kasper (1981), for instance, compared the effects of explicit and implicit input, focusing on a variety of discourse markers and gambits. The learners of the explicit group received meta-pragmatic information, while the other group did not. The results of the study showed better performance for the explicit group. In another study, Rose and Ng (2001) examined the effects of instruction on English compliments and compliment responses with explicit, implicit and control groups. Three measures used in the study were a self-assessment questionnaire, a meta-pragmatic assessment questionnaire, and a discourse completion test (DCT). Both treatment groups performed better than the control group, but only the explicit group's responses were closer to those of the native speaker comparison group. In another study, Martinez-Flor and Fukuya (2005) indicated the advantage of both explicit and implicit instruction over no pragmatic instruction. They examined the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on learning head acts and downgraders in suggestions. During their study, the explicit group received meta-pragmatic information on suggestion for 12 hours, while the implicit group was exposed to pragmalinguistic input enhancement. The control group did not receive equivalent instruction. All the participants were engaged in e-mail and phone tasks as pre- and post-tests. The results of the study revealed that both implicit and explicit groups showed improvement in their production of pragmatically and linguistically appropriate suggestions. Another study was conducted by Ghobadi and Fahim (2009), investigating the relative effects of implicit and explicit approaches in pragmatic instruction. The data were collected by applying DCTs and four role plays. The results of the study indicated that instruction had an impressively positive effect on enhancing students' sociopragmatic awareness and reducing L1 pragmalinguistic transfer to L2.

Takahashi (2010) conducted a meta-analysis on 49 implicit and explicit interventional studies published in major academic journals and

books to find the possible factors contributing to pragmatic learning. The meta-analysis resulted in several conclusions. First, intervention has the potential to enhance pragmatic knowledge. Second, explicit intervention seems to be more effective, since some sociopragmatic aspects of pragmatic knowledge are difficult to notice without explicit instruction. Finally, some pragmalinguistic features may be attainable through implicit intervention.

In comparison to implicit/explicit instruction studies, few studies have employed the socio-cultural framework in pragmatic teaching (Dufon, 2008). Dufon (2008), for example, conducted a study to see how interactions between participants with different social roles such as teachers, students and classroom guests can provide the L2 learners with opportunities to develop their pragmatic abilities. The interactions of the teacher, students and classroom guest were video-recorded and analyzed in terms of the request strategies. The author concludes that in EFL contexts with minimum contact with instances of target pragmatic norms, collaborative interactions between the participants of different social roles are the necessary condition of ILP development.

### **2.3 Translation and pragmatic instruction**

The attention to pedagogical value of translation tasks in L2 acquisition can be justified with regard to several reasons. First, this option is available in most ESL and EFL contexts (Bruton, 2007). Second, the learners can use their previously learnt linguistic resources (Uzawa, 1996). Third, as mentioned by Swain and Lapkin (1995), during translation task the incidence of focus on form will be more than other tasks like dictogloss tasks. Finally, translation tasks help learners to approximate target language models by pinpointing the organizational variations of the two languages (Hyland, 2003).

Correspondingly, translation can be considered as an option for pragmatic awareness-raising and collaboration. Having such an attitude toward translation task, House (2008) asserts that "it is high time I believe that the dominance of monolingual practices in language teaching

is overcome, and contrastive, transactional techniques be adopted to enrich the repertoire of pragmatic teaching...and it is through translations that linguistic and cultural barriers can be overcome" (p.135). Her idea, as she mentions, lies in her own theory of translation, which is based on corpus linguistics, discourse and Hallidayan functional-contextualism. In other words, translations should involve both semantic and functional equivalence. She says, "Text and context of situation are not really separate; the context of situation in which the text unfolds is encapsulated in the text through an inextricable connection between the social environment and the functional organization of language" (p. 138).

No interventional study, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, has been conducted in the field to find the effectiveness of the collaborative translation task on EFL learners' pragmatic development. This study tries to fill such a gap in the literature.

#### **2.4 Apology studies**

Earlier studies on apology speech act focus on cross-cultural variation. One of the most comprehensive studies to date is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) of Blum-Kulka (1982). The study focused on apology and request variation in several languages including Spanish, English, French, German and Hebrew. The findings of the study indicated that there are some similarities of realization patterns of apologies across cultures along with some differences. It was also found that L2 learners tend to transfer L1 sociopragmatic strategies to L2 situations.

Focusing on apology speech acts in Persian, Afghari (2007) and Shariati and Chamani (2010) conducted ILP studies to see whether Persian apology speech acts are as formulaic as other previously studied languages like English. Both studies confirmed that Persian apology is as formulaic in pragmatic structures. Afghari's study also revealed that factors like social distance and social dominance have significant effects on the frequency of intensifiers in different situations. It also supported the view that there are some culture-specific aspects of language.



Although ILP studies of apology speech act like other pragmatic issues suggest the need for instructional intervention, less research compared to request speech act has addressed apology strategies (Afghari, 2007). In this line, Eslami Rasekh, Eslami Rasekh and Fatahi (2004) conducted a study to find the effect of explicit metapragmatic instruction consisting of teacher-fronted discussions, cooperative grouping, role plays and other pragmatically oriented tasks on advanced EFL learners' speech act comprehension. Apologizing was one of the speech acts selected for the study. The results of the study revealed that the learners' speech act comprehension improved significantly, and that explicit metapragmatic instruction may facilitate interlanguage pragmatic development. In another study on apology speech act, Eslami Rasekh and Eslami rasekh (2008) randomly assigned 52 advanced EFL learners to an experimental and a control group. Only participants of the experimental group received metapragmatic instruction on English apology scheme. Their improvement was determined based on the results of an eight item DCT and an error recognition test (ERT) during pre- and post-tests. The results indicated that the interventional group performed and recognized English apology speech act schemes significantly better than the control group. In another study, Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) focused on the effects of implicit instruction on the frequency of apology intensifying devices and came to the same conclusion that instruction can enhance the appropriateness of the use of intensifiers among the intermediate EFL learners. More recently, Salehi (2011) conducted a study with the aim of examining the effect of explicit and implicit teaching of the speech acts of apology and request with 40 university students. The implicit group learned English apologies by watching films containing situational apology; however, the explicit group was instructed by explicit metapragmatic knowledge of English apology. The results of the study showed the significant gain of both groups after treatment, but no significant difference was observed between the groups.

To sum up, the need for more inquiry in the field of pragmatic instruction is felt. First, few studies have examined the pragmatic

learning as a social practice on the sociocultural ground. In addition, the recent trend for reinstating translation as a component of language teaching (Cook, 2010; House, 2008) demands more research. Third, as the review of interventional studies reveals, most of the studies focused on pragmatic comprehension and production and did not consider the retention of the pragmatic knowledge over time. The collaborative translation task of the present study is, in fact, an attempt to find the effectiveness of a task informed by cognitive processing and sociocultural theories and the hypothesis that translation can be an effective tool for language learning in general and pragmatic learning in particular.

### 3. The Present Study

The present research is designed to elicit answers to the following questions:

- 1) What are the relative effects of different types of pragmatic instruction including collaborative translation task and structured input with and without explicit instruction on Iranian EFL learners' production of apology speech act?
- 2) Which method of pragmatic instruction leads to better retention of the pragmatic knowledge?

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 150 university students (male=30, female=120) majoring in English translation. The age range was from 20 to 27 years old. They were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study from the Islamic Azad Universities of Abadeh and Shiraz. Prior to the study, their proficiency level was confirmed as pre-intermediate via Cambridge IELTS 5. They formed five groups of the study and were randomly assigned to a control and four experimental groups.

### 3.2 Target structures

From among the apology frameworks, Afghari (2007) used a modified version of CCSARP by BlumKulka and House (1989) indicating head acts, adjuncts and intensifiers accompanied by their Persian equivalents. He also added some strategies used by Persian speakers to the Scheme. The final product of his study was used as the target structure in this study. The scheme was implemented for the explicit instruction and codification of the data. The main reason was that it provides a thorough comparative perspective for apology schemes of Persian and English.

The following examples depict the components and sub-components of the Persian and English apology scheme as presented by Afghari (2007, p.179):

1. An expression of an apology (use of IFID)  
e.g. I apologize.  
m'azerat mikham, poozesh mikham, o'zr mikham.
2. An acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP)  
e.g. It was my fault.  
Taqsir-e man bud.
3. An explanation or account of the situation (EXPL)  
e.g. I'm sorry, the bus was late.  
Motoasefam, otobus dir kard.
4. An offer of repair (REPR)  
e.g. I'll pay for the broken vase.  
Pule goldan-e shekasteh ro midam.
5. A promise of forbearance (FORB)  
e.g. This won't happen again.  
Dige tekrar nemishe.

The first item, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), refers to "formulaic, routinized expressions in which the speaker's apology is made explicit by using a performative verb such as (be) sorry, apologize, excuse, etc. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984 cited in Afghari, 2007, p. 179). The sub-formulas of IFID (Olshtain and Cohen's, 1983) with Persian equivalents (Afghari, 2007, p.179) are:

- A. An expression of regret, e.g. I'm sorry. (motoassefam.)
- B. An offer of apology, e.g. I apologize. (mazerat mikham.)
- C. Request for forgiveness, e.g. Forgive me. (bebakhshid.)

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CCSARP coding scheme of intensifiers are as follows:

- (a) Internal intensifiers (within direct or indirect apology formulas)
- (b) Supportive intensifiers (the use of multiple-strategies [or adjuncts])

He further lists (p. 180) a combination of CCSARP's internal intensifiers with his Persian hypothesized new formulas. The last two items are proposed to be the intensifiers used in Persian apology expressions.

- a. Intensifying adverbials  
e.g. I'm very sorry. (Kheili motoasefam.)
- b. Emotional expressions  
e.g. Oh God (Vay-Khoda.)
- c. Double intensifier  
e.g. I'm very very sorry. (Man kheili kheili motoasefam.)
- d. The word "Please"  
e.g. please, forgive me (Khahesh mikonam mano bebakhshid.)
- e. Hope for forgiveness  
e.g. I hope you'd forgive me. (Omidvaram mano bebakhshid.)
- f. Swearing  
e.g. I swear I forgot. (Quasam mikhoram yadam raft.)

Regarding the supportive acts, intensification is done via combining IFIDs with two or more other apology strategies (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983).

According to cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on apology acquisition, low-proficient EFL learners mostly start with a formulaic

stage, using formulaic structures such as ‘I’m sorry/ sorry’ (Trosborg, 1995). In a recent cross-sectional study, Chang (2010) found a difficulty hierarchy of linguistic features in apology schemes in which some linguistic structures were only observed in advanced learners. For example, learners of the first level only used IFID of expressing regret, and IFID of requesting forgiveness appeared in later levels. Similarly, adjuncts and intensifiers were observed more in later levels.

### **3.3 Instructional treatment**

Five groups in this study formed a control and four experimental groups receiving different instructional treatments during ten 45 minute sessions. Two instructional groups received the translation task to see the effects of CTTs on the development of pragmatic knowledge, while the other two received structured input with and without explicit pragmatic instruction.

A Collaborative Translation Task (CTT) is a kind of indirect consciousness-raising (C-R) task. In indirect C-R tasks “learners perform some operation on L2 data in order to reach an explicit understanding of some linguistic property or properties of the target language” (Takimoto, 2006, p.602). According to Ellis (2003), C-R tasks follow three steps:

1. isolation of the linguistic feature for focus attention,
2. explicit rule description,
3. intellectual effort to internalize the feature (p.163).

Correspondingly, in a CTT, learners are provided with either L1 or L2 data containing the target feature to translate to the other language in pairs or groups. Explicit rule is given, and the learners can count on the teacher’s collaboration. For example, in this study, learners were given short tracks of Persian or English films containing apology speech act to translate into English or Persian. The first CTT group (CTT1) translated short tracks of Persian films into English, while the second group (CCT2) translated short tracks of English films into Persian. Explicit pragmatic rules consisted of apology schemes and intensifiers of both languages. Learners collaborated with each other in pairs and with the teacher for translating the films. They were instructed to notice how the strategies

were used by different film characters with different relative statuses. Finally, each pair presented their translation to the class for further discussion and elaboration.

The third and fourth groups, named as explicit and implicit groups, received two different types of structured input. The explicit group learned English apology schemes and apology intensifiers and reviewed them in some short conversations including instances of English apology. The implicit group watched the English short tracks and was asked to jot down the apology structures. The control group, however, did not receive any apology structures and only participated in some topic-based conversation classes.

### **3.4 Testing instruments and procedures**

The first instrument used in the study was the standard proficiency test of Cambridge IELTS 5, widely recognized as a reliable means of assessing the language ability, published by Cambridge University Press (2006). Since the focus of the present study was on conversational speech acts, only listening and speaking modules were administered to the students. The IELTS band score between 4.5 and 5 represents low-intermediate proficiency.

In order to evaluate EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge, a series of tests including open-ended DCTs (OPDCT), telephone conversation tasks (TCT) and mobile phone short message tasks (MSMT) were used in a fixed order at the beginning of the study prior to the intervention, after treatment, and two months after the post-test.

The written OPDCTs used in the present study required informants to write their responses to specific scenarios. The scenarios were adopted from among the ones used in several similar studies including Afghari (2007), Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), Jebahi (2011) and Nureddeen (2008). The OPDCTs of the present study were composed of 15 situations mainly about what usually happens around the student life. The situational variables controlled in the tests were social distance (+/- D), power (+/-P) and degree of offence. In ten situations, the participants

apologized their university professors and staffs (+P/+D), and in five others they apologized their close friends and family members (-D/-P). The degree of offences for both situations was described as more serious than mild. The students were supposed to imagine themselves as the persons committing the offenses and write their language reaction to the situation. Since the focus of the study was on apology intensifiers, and it is hypothesized that there is a positive correlation between the number of intensifiers and situational variables of power and distance (Fehr & Gelfand, 2010), the five (-D/-P) were considered as distractors. In order to minimize the test order effect and test practice effect, three parallel OPDCT versions (A, B, C), counterbalanced for the order of presentation across the pre-tests, the post-tests and the delayed post-tests, were used in this study. The OPDCTs were piloted with a group of 30 volunteers similar to the target groups to ensure their accuracy and lack of ambiguity. It took them 35 to 45 minutes to complete the tasks, which means the tasks were not too long or boring. The following is an example of OPDCT:

You have borrowed your professor'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?

To compensate for DCTs' shortcoming in eliciting natural responses, one TCT, and two MSMTs were designed. During the telephone conversation task, the participants took part in conversations with the researchers' assistant who was a university professor and proficient English speaker. They were also asked to send short messages to their professors to perform the apology speech act. Similar to the OPDCTs, in TCTs and MSMTs the participants communicated with their professors and apologized for their imaginary wrongdoings such as not being prepared for the lectures or poor performance in midterm exams. The following are examples of a TCT and an MSMT:

- 1) You borrowed a CD from your professor and promised to return it soon, but you didn't. Send an SMS to your professor and apologize for it.
- 2) In the telephone conversation you will have in a few minutes, apologize to your professor, Dr. Alavi, for your poor performance in your mid-term exam and ask him/her to ignore the results of the mid-term exam.

### 3.5 Reliability

To find the inter-rater reliability of the OPDCT, MSMT and TCTs, 30% of the data were coded and graded by a second rater trained for this purpose and the reliability estimates turned out to be 0.99, 0.97, and 0.93 respectively and were significant at  $p < .0005$ . Internal consistency was also estimated for the three forms of the OPDCTs. Coefficient alpha estimates were 0.74, 0.94 and 0.92.

### 3.6 Validity

As the items of the three forms of the OPDCTs had been selected from several previously validated tests by controlling the factors of (+D/+P), it was expected that the new forms would also maintain high levels of construct validity. The results of factor analysis indicated that the test was uni-dimensional; meaning that all the items were tapping the same construct. Hence, the results provided support for the use of the OPDCTs as valid instruments to evaluate the participants' pragmalinguistic knowledge of apology speech act.

Concerning the validity of the other two instruments, MSMTs and TCTs, no statistical procedure could be utilized. However, the validity of the two tests could be taken for granted as first of all the tasks were very similar to those of OPDCTs. Second, the results of the three data collection instruments were very similar indicating that they were tapping the same trait.



### 3.7 Data analysis

The data of the OPDCTs, TCTs and MSMTs were codified and graded based on Afghari's (2007) apology scheme adopted from BlumKulka and House's (1989) by the researchers and their assistant who was trained for this purpose. The hypothesized grading ranged from one to seven as follows:

1. single IFID =1 point
2. each internal intensifier =1 point
3. each supportive intensifier or adjunct=1 point

Higher scores in (+D/+P) situations were supposed to indicate higher pragmalinguistic knowledge, since, as Farser (1891 cited in Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006) states, the necessary condition for an apology to be viewed as convincing is using a combination of two or more strategies.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Results of the open-ended discourse completion test

To check the homogeneity of the participants in terms of their pragmalinguistic knowledge of apology speech act in pre-intervention stage, one-way between groups analysis of variance was conducted, and the results confirmed statistically no significant difference between the groups,  $F(4,144) = 1.475$ ,  $p = .213$ . Also a mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance was conducted to measure the effect of five different interventions (CTTs, explicit and implicit instructions) on the participants' apology speech act, across the three time periods (pre-intervention, post-intervention and 2-month follow-up). Table 1 depicts the descriptive statistics of the results.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the OPDCT

	Grouping	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
pre test	control group	16.78	5.345	27
	CTT1	19.11	6.039	28
	CTT2	20.17	7.388	29
	Explicit Group	20.29	5.476	28
	Implicit Group	19.14	4.759	28

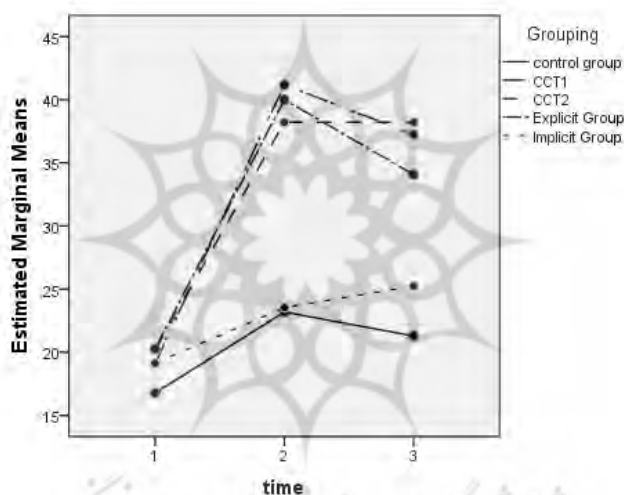
	Grouping	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
post test	Total	19.12	5.934	140
	control group	23.19	6.196	27
	CTT1	41.18	12.065	28
	CTT2	38.21	12.445	29
	Explicit Group	40.00	10.299	28
	Implicit Group	23.54	8.779	28
post test2	Total	33.33	12.957	140
	control group	21.30	7.400	27
	CTT1	37.25	10.929	28
	CTT2	38.21	10.848	29
	Explicit Group	34.07	11.307	28
	Implicit Group	25.25	5.549	28
	Total	31.34	11.550	140

Results of the analysis indicated a significant interaction between instruction type and time, Wilks Lambda=.664,  $F(4,135) = 7.605$ ,  $p < .0005$ , partial eta squared=.22. There was also a considerable main effect for time, Wilks Lambda= .343,  $F(4,135) = 128.14$ ,  $p < .0005$ , partial eta squared=.657. The main effect for the type of intervention was also significant,  $F(4,135)=36.724$ ,  $p < .0005$ , partial eta squared=.44, suggesting the significant difference in the effectiveness of the instruction types.

Consulting the interaction plot (Fig.1) revealed larger effects of instruction on CTTs and explicit groups; yet, it showed that time had only a moderating effect on treatments of CTT1 and explicit group. To find the closer distinction between groups, a series of one-way between-groups ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests were conducted on post and delayed-post tests. Post-hoc comparisons of post-tests revealed that the mean scores of the control ( $M=23.19$ ,  $SD=6.196$ ) and implicit group ( $M=23.54$ ,  $SD=8.779$ ) were significantly different from CTT1 ( $M=41.18$ ,  $SD=12.065$ ), CTT2 ( $M=38.21$ ,  $SD=12.445$ ) and the explicit group ( $M=40$ ,  $SD=10.299$ ). Similar results were obtained from post-hoc comparisons of delayed post-tests; the mean scores of control ( $M=21.30$ ,  $SD=7.4$ ) and implicit ( $M=25.25$ ,  $SD=5.549$ ) groups were significantly

smaller than CTT1 (M=37.25, SD=10.929), CTT2 (M=38.21, SD=10.848), and Explicit (M=34.07, SD=11.307) groups. Moreover, the results of one-way repeated measure and Bonferroni post hoc tests indicated no significant difference between the means of post-tests and delayed post-tests of CTT1, CTT2 and implicit groups. The mean of the delayed post-test of the explicit group, however, was significantly lower than its post-test.

Figure 1: Interaction Plot for OPDCT



#### 4.2 Results of the mobile short message task

The same statistical procedures were conducted on the results of mobile short message tasks. One-way between groups analysis of variance indicated that there was no significant difference between the means of the groups before the treatments started,  $F(4,145) = .929$ ,  $p = .449$ . Mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance was conducted on the results of the tests summarized in the following Table.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for SMS task

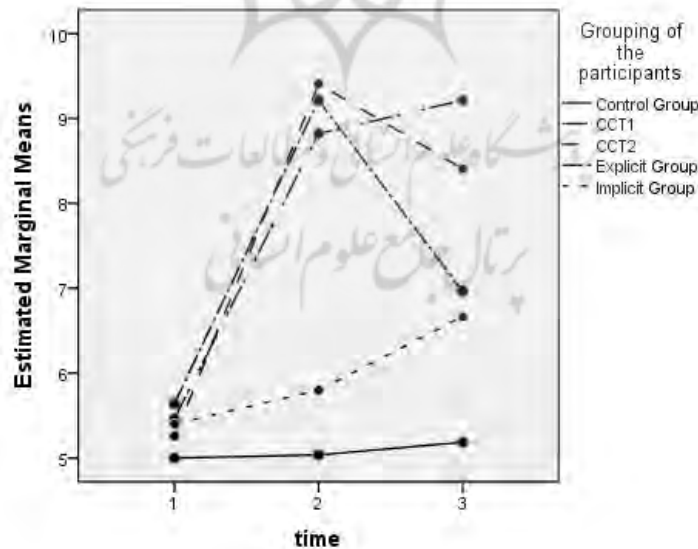
	Grouping of the participants	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest	Control Group	5.00	1.468	27
	CTT1	5.46	1.575	28
	CTT2	5.26	2.297	27
	Explicit Group	5.64	1.726	28
	Implicit Group	5.40	1.831	30
	Total	5.36	1.788	140
Post-test	Control Group	5.04	1.720	27
	CTT1	8.82	2.091	28
	CTT2	9.41	2.454	27
	Explicit Group	9.21	2.200	28
	Implicit Group	5.80	1.606	30
	Total	7.64	2.728	140
Post-test2	Control Group	5.19	1.594	27
	CTT1	9.21	2.079	28
	CTT2	8.41	2.099	27
	Explicit Group	6.96	2.151	28
	Implicit Group	6.67	2.006	30
	Total	7.29	2.415	140

There was a significant interaction between instruction type and time, Wilks Lambda=.603,  $F(4,135)=9.644$ ,  $p<.0005$ , partial eta squared=.22. There was also a substantial main effect for time, Wilks Lambda= .537,  $F(4,135)= 57.664$ ,  $p<.0005$ , partial eta squared=.463. The main effect comparing the five types of intervention was significant,  $F(4,135)=26.471$ ,  $p<.0005$ , partial eta squared=.44, suggesting the significant difference in the effectiveness of the instruction types.

Interaction plot of MSMTs (Fig.2) indicates larger effects of instruction on CTTs and explicit groups, moderating effect of time on treatments of CTT2 and negative effect of time on the intervention of explicit group. One-way between-groups ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests were conducted on post- and delayed post-tests. Similar to the results of OPDCTs, post-hoc comparisons of post-tests revealed that the mean scores of the control ( $M=5.04$ ,  $SD=1.72$ ) and implicit group

( $M=5.8$ ,  $SD=1.606$ ) were significantly different from CTT1 ( $M=8.82$ ,  $SD=2.091$ ), CTT2 ( $M=9.41$ ,  $SD=2.454$ ) and explicit group ( $M=9.21$ ,  $SD=2.2$ ). However, the results of delayed post-test indicated different results. The mean scores of the control ( $M=5.19$ ,  $SD=1.594$ ) were significantly smaller than those of other groups. The CTT1( $M=9.21$ ,  $SD=2.079$ ) showed significant improvement over explicit ( $M=6.96$ ,  $SD=2.151$ ) and implicit ( $M=6.67$ ,  $SD=2.006$ ) groups, but CTT2 ( $M=8.41$ ,  $SD=2.099$ ) was only significantly higher than the implicit group. There was also no significant difference between the means of explicit and implicit groups. One-way repeated measure ANOVA and Bonferroni post hoc tests revealed a significant difference between the means of post-test and delayed post-test of explicit group. It confirmed the significant negative impact of time on the group. Unlike the explicit group, CTT groups showed no significant difference between the means of post- and delayed post-tests.

Figure 2: Interaction plot for the MSMT



### 4.3 Results of the telephone conversation task

One-way ANOVA analysis showed no significant difference between the means of the pre-tests of telephone conversation tasks,  $F(4,136) = .378$ ,  $p = .824$ . Mixed between-within subjects analysis of variance was conducted on the results of the TCTs summarized in Table 3 below.

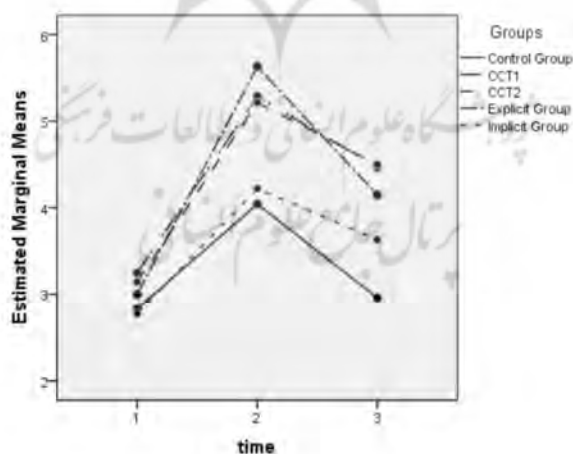
Table 3. Descriptive statistics for TCT

	Groups	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pre-tests	Control Group	2.83	1.551	24
	CTT1	3.25	1.531	28
	CTT2	3.14	1.239	28
	Explicit Group	3.00	.961	27
	Implicit Group	2.78	1.251	27
	Total	3.01	1.312	134
Post-tests	Control Group	4.04	1.268	24
	CTT1	5.29	1.410	28
	CTT2	5.21	1.371	28
	Explicit Group	5.63	1.445	27
	Implicit Group	4.22	1.476	27
	Total	4.90	1.511	134
Delayed Post-tets	Control Group	2.96	.908	24
	CTT1	4.46	1.710	28
	CTT2	4.50	1.478	28
	Explicit Group	4.15	1.406	27
	Implicit Group	3.63	1.925	27
	Total	3.97	1.617	134

Contrary to the previous tests, the results indicated no significant interaction between instruction type and time, Wilks Lambda=.902,  $F(4,129)=1.696$ ,  $p=.1$ , partial eta squared=.05. However, there was a significant main effect for time, Wilks Lambda= .470,  $F(4,129)=72.246$ ,  $p<.0005$ , partial eta squared=.53. The main effect comparing the five types of intervention was significant,  $F(4,129)=8.336$ ,  $p<.0005$ , partial eta squared=.205, suggesting the significant difference in the effectiveness of the instruction types.

Interaction plot of TCTs (Fig. 3) suggested more substantial effects of instruction in the CTTs and explicit groups compared to implicit and control groups. It also indicated the negative effect of time on all instruction types especially for the explicit group. One-way between groups ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey HSD tests revealed that the participants of CTT1 (M=5.29, SD=1.41), CTT2 (M=5.21, SD=1.371) and explicit (M=5.63, SD=1.445) groups significantly outperformed the control (M=4.04, SD=1.268) and implicit (M=4.22, SD=1.476) groups in post-tests. During delayed post-tests, however, the implicit group (M=3.63, SD=1.925) outperformed the controls (M=2.96, SD=.908). Explicit (M=4.15, SD=1.406), CTT1 (M=4.46, SD=1.71) and CTT2 (M=4.5, SD=1.478) had significantly higher means than the control and implicit groups. In addition, the results of one-way repeated measure ANOVA with Bonferroni post-hoc tests indicated that unlike explicit group, there was no significant difference between the means of post- and delayed post-tests of CTT1, CTT2 and implicit groups.

Figure 3: Interaction Plot for the TCT



## 5. Discussion

The overall results of the present study, in line with previous research (e.g. Alcon, 2005; Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Rose, 2005), suggest the effectiveness of intervention in developing pragmatic knowledge. However, the major purpose of the study was to investigate the relative effect of CTTs as innovative instructional techniques. Based on the idea that collaborative tasks facilitate interaction and language acquisition (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Swain, 2000) and that translation has the potential to raise pragmatic and cross-cultural awareness (House, 2008), two C-R tasks called CTTs were designed and used by the researchers to examine their effectiveness in both learning and retention of the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge of the EFL learners.

The first question addressed the relative effectiveness of different types of intervention on learning the target features. The results of the study indicated that like the explicit group, CTT groups outperformed implicit and control groups in post-tests, suggesting the effectiveness of the tasks on the development of pragmatic knowledge; yet, the results of post-tests did not show any improvement of CTTs over the explicit group. Supporting the findings of previous research (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; House & Kasper, 1981; Rose & Ng, 2001), the findings indicated that explicit pragmatic instruction may lead to higher levels of pragmatic knowledge. During the post-tests, the participants who received explicit instruction, namely the explicit, CTT1 and CTT2 groups, learnt and significantly used more pragmalinguistic devices than the implicit and control groups. There was no significant difference between the two CCT groups. Such results can be explained by Schmidt's (1995) noticing hypothesis indicating that noticing the L2 features of input is necessary for language development specially in EFL contexts. The target forms were made salient and the participants' awareness was raised leading to the higher pragmatic production. The lower scores of the implicit group may indicate that the pragmalinguistic structures were not salient enough to be perceived by the participants, or low-intermediate learners failed to recognize them.



Though three different methods of data collection were used in the study, similar trends were observed in the results of the post-tests advocating the primacy of pragmatic explicit instruction. However, since the tasks required different types of pragmatic production, written form for OPDCTs and MSMTs and spontaneous oral production for TCTs, smaller partial eta squares of TCTs suggested that TCTs were more demanding than written tasks.

To find more about the relative effectiveness of the intervention types in terms of the retention of pragmatic knowledge (the second research question), post hoc comparisons of the second post-tests were analyzed. The results revealed that unlike the explicit group, CTT groups tended to resist the effect of time on their pragmatic knowledge. The difference can be explained by referring to the distinction Schmidt (1995) makes between different levels of mental processing. He distinguishes noticing as the "surface level phenomena and item learning" from understanding as the "deeper level of abstraction related to meaning" (p. 29). In other words, as pointed out by Rosa and O'Neill (1999) and Takahashi (2005), higher levels of awareness correlate with higher levels of intake of target language forms.

The superiority of CTT groups over the explicit group in retaining their pragmatic knowledge can also be explained with reference to Leech (1983) and Takimoto (2007) indicating that teaching pragmatics should involve raising learners' awareness on the relationship between forms and meanings, forms and strategies for realizing speech intentions and social conditions for the use of the target structures. In other words and as proposed by Gass (1988), mere presentation of explicit and implicit language information does not guarantee the learners' success to convert input to output. Her five stage model of input processing also suggests that "it is an arduous task for the learner to (a) extract information from the input, (b) utilize it in forming a grammar, and (c) produce target language forms" (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 492). Needless to say, analysis at this level necessitates reflection on the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of the target language.

Moreover, encouraging the learners to find the relative saliency of the pragmatic forms by focusing on relevant features of input and sharing their findings with the peers and the teacher in collaborative tasks helps deeper processing of the connections between linguistic forms and pragmatic functions and develop their pragmatic competence (Gu, 2011).

Translation as hypothesized by House (2008) also proved to be potentially an appropriate option for awareness raising and collaboration. Collaborative translation tasks of the present study demanded focus on sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of both languages. When the learners felt they lacked the knowledge or their knowledge was imperfect, they used the 'collaborative dialogue' as mediation for their understanding and solutions (Swain, 2000). In other words, they had the chance to discuss the language problems with their peers and teachers. Therefore, better retention of CCT groups can be attributed to the learners' reflection on the forms discussed in collaborative interactions. The following table may indicate how interaction between the two factors led to variety of effectiveness of the tasks used in this study.

Table 4. Level of attention and instruction types of the groups

	Level of attention	Knowledge provided
1 CTT1	Deeper understanding	Sociopragmatics + Pragmalinguistics
2 CTT2	Deeper understanding	Sociopragmatics + Pragmalinguistics
3 Explicit Group	Understanding	Pragmalinguistics
4 Implicit Group	Noticing	Sociopragmatics
5 Control Group	None	None

In other words, translation of the contextualized pragmatic features involves deeper understanding of the relationship between linguistic forms and their intended functions (pragmalinguistic knowledge) as well as the cultural knowledge of social conditions determining appropriate choice of these linguistic forms (sociopragmatic knowledge). The CTTs not only provided the learners with both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, but also raised their awareness on them by focusing the participants' attention on how the characters of the films assessed the social context and used the due linguistic forms during collaborative interactions.

## **6. Conclusion**

In order to compensate for the EFL learners' lack of adequate exposure to authentic pragmatic aspect of language, the main focus of the present study was to introduce and evaluate the effect of more innovative and less investigated instructional techniques on EFL pragmatic development. Regarding the need for more principle-based approaches in language teaching, Collaborative Translation Task (CTT), recognized as a C-R task, was designed and used. The results of the study confirmed the effectiveness of the translation tasks, as suggested by House (2008) and Cook (2010), in developing and especially in retention of pragmatic knowledge. It was concluded that CTT was effective since it had the potential to make both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features salient and raise the learners' attention to them.

The findings of the study have some implications for EFL contexts. It can support the hypothesis that the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural technique of translation can be implemented to enhance EFL learners' collaboration and improve their understanding of target language forms and functions. If the translation task is utilized through authentic materials, it has the potential to enhance the learners' attention concerning the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of language which are not salient in most of the foreign language learning contexts.

In addition, as a response to the need for more on-line tests for measuring automatic processing skills (Takimoto, 2006), TCTs were designed and used in this study. Different results of TCTs showed its distinction from other written techniques of data collection. However, the field is still waiting for more authentic data collection instruments.

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