

# L2 Learner Interlanguage Pragmatic Development within ZPD Activated Proximal Context

Masoud Rahimi Domakani  
Setareh Felfelian

*Shahrekord University*

## **Abstract**

Recent models of pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer, 1996, 2010) have attracted SLA researchers' attention to the neglected area of L2 pragmatics, and this has in turn spawned a bulk of research on assessing or teaching second language pragmatics. As to the instructional pragmatics, the related research has attempted to adopt the currently-used instructional models, such as explicit instruction or task-based instruction, to teaching L2 pragmatics. Yet, further research (such as this study) seems necessary to explore the applicability of Vygotsky-inspired ZPD-based models of instruction to the teaching of L2 pragmatics in proximal contexts. This study focused on the ZPD-based proximal contexts of equal and unequal peer interactions in comparison to the traditional modes of teaching. The participants' performance was measured before and after the instruction using Discourse Completion Tasks. The results revealed that the ZPD-activated context facilitated and accelerated the student's interlanguage pragmatic development. It is worth mentioning that learners found pragmatic instruction in ZPD-activated context beneficial and valuable. All in all, the result indicates the important role of ZPD-activated context in students' interlanguage pragmatic development.

**Keywords:** *Pragmatic Competence, Interlanguage Pragmatic Development, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), ZPD Activated Proximal Context, ZPD-base models, Discourse Completion Test*

## **1. Introduction**

Over the past few decades, much more attention has been toward the communicative language teaching. Actually, there has been a slow change toward communicative model of language. In 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, constructivism came of age as a new school of thought in language acquisition (Brown, 2007, p. 15). Consequently the importance of sociocultural variables, cooperative learning, discovery learning and interlanguage variability has been presented in turn. Linguistic competence which was coined by Chomsky has been replaced by communicative competence proposed by Dell Hymes (1967, 1972 cited in Brown, 2007, p. 218). All in all, much more research has been conducted in the second language learning and teaching. In the late 1970s and early 1980, such research contributed to shift in fields from a linguistic structure-centered approach to a communicative approach (Widdowson, 1990 cited in Freeman, 2003, p.121). So many instructional methods were generated in order to meet the principles of communicative approach. However, there is still no consensus to how to teach communication. Because teaching language is not limited merely to teach

grammar and vocabularies, how to make students communicatively and pragmatically competent is assumed as an important issue in SLA nowadays. And with regard to ZPD, as it is also stated by Ohta (2005, p. 515 cited in Mirzae, Rahimi Domakani and Roshani, 2010) "future research should attempt to "bring the ZPD out from the shadows" and investigate what these sociocultural notions have to say regarding the development of learner discourse over time." And also with refer to what is mentioned by Mirzae, Rahimi Domakani and Roshani (2010):

Sociocultural tenets and concepts have almost been neglected in Iran, and most studies have focused on linguistic, cognitive, and affective aspects of SLA. Also, sociocultural studies to date have typically been mostly case studies concentrating on individual lexical or morphosyntactic features as defined in traditional descriptive grammars.

Thus, this study focused on the ZPD-based proximal contexts of equal and unequal peer interactions in comparison to the traditional modes of teaching. Actually the aim of this study is to find the effect of ZPD context, if any, on teaching pragmatics and scrutinize the learners' interlanguage pragmatics developments.

## 2. Background

Pragmatics, the particular branch of linguistic has come of age in 1970s as a reaction to Chomsky's (1965) theory in which grammar was supposed to be mastered separately from functions of language. Pragmatics is concerned with the meaning in use rather than meaning in abstract (Leech, 1983). Also Yule (1996) and Verschueren (1999) supposed Pragmatic as the study of both speaker meaning and contextual meaning. One of the best definitions of pragmatics was proposed by Crystal (1997). Pragmatics is defined as:

The study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the acts of communication. (p. 301)

In fact, the main concern of pragmatic is to be not only grammatically competent, but also communicatively. In other words, pragmatic competence needs to be fostered as well as grammatical competence for anyone wishing to master a target language. According to Kasper (2001 a), Competence is defined as the ability of language users in a special context to appropriately employ the resource of language. In order to appropriately communicate in target language, language users encounter with the need of using speech act. So to be sure, speech acts have been the focus of much research in the area of pragmatics.

The first well-known study of speech acts was conducted by Austin (1962), who has been regarded as the father of speech acts theory. Austin's famous assumption was that people not only say things, but do things while using language. Thus, Austin (1962) introduced his three-dimension classifications of utterances as follow:

- Locutionary acts which is the actual words uttered. It refers in fact to the act of saying something.
- Illocutionary act which means the force or intentions behind the words uttered.
- Perlocutionary act which is defined as the act itself or effect of the illocution on the hearer.

In addition, with regards to the second type of speech act, Austin (1962) presented another taxonomy included five types of illocutionary act. Verdictives which refers to giving of a warrant or judgment (i.e. acquit, convict, diagnostic). Exercitives that involves the use of power, right or authority (i.e. appoint, order, name). Commissive are those acts that require the assuming of commitment or the giving of promising (i.e. promise, agree, bet). Behabitives related to the adopting of an attitude (i.e. apologies, compliment, welcome), and as regards expositives, those acts that refer to clarifying of reasons, arguments and expatiating of views (i.e. deny, inform, concede). In addition, Searl (1969) used the new term propositional content and illocutionary force instead of the terms Austin referred to as locution and illocution. Searl (1969) presented a new taxonomy of five major categories classified according to the common functional characteristics. They are named as representatives, directives, expressive, commissives, and declarations (Searl, 1976, p.1-16). Representatives are defined as linguistics act in which the speaker's intention of performing the acts is to commit himself to the belief that the content of the utterance is true. Directives refer to the act in which speakers try to get the hearer commit himself to some future course of action. Commissives are those in which the speaker commits himself to some future course of action. The purpose of expressing the speaker's psychological state of mind about, attitude towards, some prior action or state pf affairs is regarded as expressive. And last but not least, the acts that need extralinguistic institutions for their performance is called declarations. Thomas (1995) cited that by taking into account the contextual and interactional factors, speech acts are interchangeable by no means. So it is recommended to study speech acts both in isolation and context. Since among speech acts, both request and apology are the most widespread types of speech acts used mostly even by novice, also because of the difficulty and importance of using these two types of speech acts for second language learners and according to a large number of studies conducted in these areas (Edmondson, 1981; Fraser, 1981; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Barnlund & Yoshiko, 1990 ; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Trosborg, 1995; Hill, 1997; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008 & Salazar, 2003), the present study tends to investigate the L2 pragmatic interlanguage development by employing these two types of speech acts, apology and request, as the subjects of language instruction.

In speech act community, people often try to deal with remedial actions in order to save face and eliminate the effect of offense they may commit (Brown & Levinson, 1987). But because of the cultural differences, for a second language learner it is arduous to use the appropriate linguistics forms of apology in the foreign context. So teaching the strategies of apology that is defined by Bergman and Kasper (1993, p. 82) as a "compensatory action to an offense in the doing of which the speaker was causally involved and which is costly to hearer" must be carefully carried out in language classes. According to the taxonomy of five major categories provided by Searl (1969), request is included within the group of directive speech acts. As it has the potential to be the most face-threatening speech acts that can threaten hearer's negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), the using of request by learners seems not to be easy. In other words, learners must be so cautious about making request and must try to avoid them being inspired as offense, rudeness and impoliteness. Trosborg (1995, p. 187) defines request as "an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that she or he wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the requester".

Regardless to the types of speech acts, learning speech acts in order to communicate in TL is affected by some conditions, the most important of which are namely appropriate inputs, opportunities for output and provision of feedback according to Kasper (2001a, p. 57) who pointed out it in this way:

Sustained focused input, both pragmatic and metapragmatic, collaborative practice activities, and metapragmatic reflection appear to provide learners with the input and practice they need for developing most aspects of their pragmatic abilities.

Input is defined (Gregg, 1986) as any language sample learners are exposed to. Input is definitely necessary for learners in the process of language acquisition. The types of input learners are exposed to are different in accordance with different setting. Pursuant to LoCastro (2003), in classroom three kinds of input is available for learners to be pragmatically competent: teacher, materials and feedback.

Another condition necessary to learn speech acts is providing learners with the opportunities for output. It is interpreted as pushing the learners into language production (Swain, 2005). In fact Swain (2005) argues that production must be taken into consideration as well as comprehension. LaCostro (2003) claims that to work collaboratively helps students to be more motivated, encouraged and stress-released. By active participation, learners can share their ideas, provide input for other learners, ask questions, correct one another, provide feedback, take risks and finally increase their self-confidences. Trosberg (1995) highlighted the role of role interaction and role play as excellent exercises to increase learner's output in purpose of enhancing the learners' communicative competence in FL classroom. so providing opportunities for learner to produce language can facilitate and accelerate the process of learning.

Apart from two conditions mentioned earlier, feedback as the third condition for SLA in general and pragmatics in particular has been drawn the attention of many scholars for the learning of speech acts recently. In many areas the effect of feedback on learning has been examined and in the related areas it has been investigated as well. Corrective feedback or in another term negative input is defined by Pica (1996) as the data or information a learner receive about what is not allowed in the TL. By means if negative feedback, learners reflect on their own productions and can benefit from them. According to Panova and Lyster (2002), Feedback is of two kinds, namely explicit and implicit. Whereas providing explicit feedback means overtly mentioning that an error has been occurred, implicit feedback is provided in other technique such as recast, clarification request or confirmation check. Feedback should be provided in both meaning and form. In a nutshell, pragmatics, speech acts and conditions necessary for learning speech acts has been so far explained. Accordingly, further research seems necessary to explore the applicability of Vygotsky-inspired ZPD-based models of instruction to the teaching of L2 pragmatics in proximal contexts. Presently, this study aims to explore the ZPD-based proximal contexts of equal and unequal peer interactions in comparison to the traditional modes of teaching. Therefore, before turning the attention to the procedure, the concept of ZPD must be truly clarified as well.

The sociocultural theory introduced by Vygotsky has undoubtedly exerted a great impact on learning and teaching in general and SLA in particular. In fact, sociocultural theory slues around the two separate but at the same time mixed topics of cognition and social environment. According to Vygotsky (1978), a large variety of tasks, value and demands are presented to and engage a child in a sociocultural setting. It is said that most of the time they are parents who initiate instruction to children and guide them how to do, what to do and what not to do. In the first steps, children are totally dependent on others who considered as cultural sources actualizing the instruction initially through language. In this time, children gain the cultural knowledge and value provided by others through interaction and contact with them. This step is called interpsychological plane, later on there is another plane named

as intrapsychological plane during which, children start assimilating and internalizing that knowledge adding his personal value to it as well. Vygotsky (1978) echoed that the transition is not merely a copy of knowledge provided by others, but instead, it is a transformation of knowledge gained through interactions with people into personal values. It is the same as a process occurred in the classroom for learners. They do not copy whatever teacher offered them; rather, they transform teachers' abilities through appropriation. As the learner can learn the things more profoundly and efficiently while being engaged with the tasks such as problem-solving and as meaning is factually acquired by interactions and cooperation with others, according to Ellis (2000), sociocultural theory assume that learning turns up not only through interaction, but also in interaction per se. With regards to the importance of cooperation and interaction of this theory and because of the significance value of predicting child's future for Vygotsky, He formulated ZPD as the most outstanding contributions of his sociocultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) found out that cognitive development is the result of dialectical process in which the learner become busy engaging in shared learning experiences and activities with someone else, mostly their parents, siblings and a peer. Through the activities, a learner gradually become mature enough to get the responsibility of problem solving from people he interacted with. Thus in the definition of ZPD, actual level of development refers to the level in which a child is able to do independently without guidance of other peoples whereas potential level of development is assumed as a level a child is not able to reach it without others' help. The two significant concepts in ZPD are instruction and development. According to Shayer (2002), Vygotsky argued that development should be turned out as the outcome of instruction. Mediation, a scientific term defined as assistance, aids and guidance provided by more capable people to a learner in order to enhance the learner's learning experience, was introduced by Vygotsky (1978) for the first time. In addition to the mediation, another term named scaffolding is derived from cognitive psychology and L1 research (Donato, 1994). It is referred to the assistance a capable or knowledgeable adult provide to the learner to do the task better and extend his knowledge to higher level of competence. With regards to the relevance and practicality of ZPD in SLA, Van Lier (1988) points that L2 teaching methodologies benefit from the issues concerned in L1 such as scaffolding and mediation. Moreover, with the advent of some approaches such as integrative teaching and task-based instruction, the application of scaffolding, mediation, collaboration and cooperation in classroom setting has entirely been observable.

### **3. Research Questions**

- 1) Do ZPD-activated proximal contexts have any effects on L2 learners' interlanguage pragmatic development in comparison to traditional instructional contexts?
- 2) Is there any significant difference between the interlanguage pragmatic development of the L2 learners interacting within the equal-peer ZPD-activated proximal context and the ILP development of the L2 learners interacting within the unequal-peer ZPD-activated proximal context?

### **4. Methodology**

#### *4.1 Participants*

Some 40 language learners studying English as a foreign language at two language classes in the University of Isfahan in Iran participated in this study. They were female adult. The ages of participants ranged from 18 to 20. All of them were native speakers of Persian. On the basis of performance on the placement test, they were grouped as intermediate. The

placement test consisted of a multiple-choice test of grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension.

#### *4.2 Instrument*

In this study, a multiple-choice discourse completion test (MDCT) which had a quite high reliability of 0.86 (Liu, 2006) was used (see Appendix A) as both pretest and posttest. It consisted of 24 items. Each item was a description of a situation that learners must choose the most appropriate answer in concordance with the situation.

#### *4.3 Procedure*

In this study, 40 intermediate learners were randomly assigned in to two groups, control and experimental, each included twenty learners. Learners were homogenous in terms of their proficiency but not in terms of their pragmatic knowledge. MDCT test used two times as pretest and posttest. MDCT as a pretest was intended to assess test takers' knowledge of two types of speech acts, request and apology of pragmatic knowledge. As such, it must be fairly capable of providing testers with a general picture of test takers' pragmatic competence. All the learners were pretested. After the administration of pretest, during the interval of four weeks between pretest and posttest, in one class in addition to the roles of teacher that were teaching speech act of apologies and request, warming-up to raise awareness, explicitly teaching of speech act sets and raising cross-cultural awareness, ZPD-base context considered as the treatment was set up each session to provide a ZPD context in which interaction, cooperation, scaffolding and mediation existed among learners, and in another class as usual the traditional methods in which a teacher was considered as the authority of the class and he was in charge of merely teaching speech acts to the learners in explicit ways was implemented. It is worth mentioning that actually the latter was a non ZPD-base context in which no practice, interaction and assistance among peers occurred. Indeed, it was a teacher-fronted class considered as a control group. When treatment was totally carried out in twelve sessions, posttest was administered for two classes and the results were compared to the pretests. In this step, running the SPSS, ANCOVA was used to compare the impact of two methods, taking before and after for each group. Apart from the experimental and control groups, ZPD activated class by itself consisted of groups of equal and unequal peer interaction. Each session, two learners either equal or unequal were paired to practice some tasks (Birjandi & Rezaei, 2010) similar to the items of MDCT. In fact, they played the roles in accordance to situations provided to them and employed appropriate speech acts strategies to complete the conversations of those situations. Then at the end of each session, one dyadic task was given to five equal and five unequal peer interaction groups, in which a more capable peer interacted with a less capable one. They were also given a multiple-choices reply, from which they should have firstly consulted together and then selected the best choices. Learners who chose the correct answer get the label 1 and those who were not able to choose the correct answer, were given label 0. All in all, during the treatment, the groups worked on six dyadic tasks. Afterward, the scores they obtained from each task were entered in to SPSS and Mann-Whitney U test were used in order to take the result.

## 5. Result

The data collection tools comprising the MDCT were administrated to participants and the results were inputted to some statistical procedure to arrive at answers to the research questions. The descriptive statistics of the administered test were tabulated in table 1. And the main ANCOVA result was presented in table 2. With regards to the first question of this study, a one-way between-groups analysis of Covariance was conducted to compare the effectiveness of two different interventions designed for this study. The independent variable was the type of intervention (ZPD method, non-ZPD method), and the dependent variable consisted of scores on the MDCT administered after the intervention was completed. Participants' scores on the pre-intervention administration of the MDCT were used as the covariate in this analysis. Preliminary checks were conducted to ensure that there were no violation of the assumption of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variance, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement of the covariance. After adjusting for pre-intervention scores, there was significant difference between the two intervention groups on post-intervention scores on MDCT,  $F(1, 37) = 21.73$ ,  $p = 0.00 < 0.05$ , partial eta square = 0.4. There was a strong relationship between the pre-intervention and post-intervention scores on the MDCT, as indicated by a partial eta square value of .47.

**Table 1.**  
**Descriptive Statistics of one-way ANCOVA**

Dependent Variable:post

group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
experimental	13.8500	2.13431	20
control	12.4000	2.47939	20
Total	13.1250	2.39858	40

**Table 2.**  
**Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Dependent Variable:post

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power <sup>b</sup>
Corrected Model	107.263 <sup>a</sup>	2	53.631	16.944	.000	.478	33.888	.999
Intercept	38.460	1	38.460	12.151	.001	.247	12.151	.924
pre	86.238	1	86.238	27.246	.000	.424	27.246	.999
group	68.803	1	68.803	21.737	.000	.370	21.737	.995
Error	117.112	37	3.165					
Total	7115.000	40						

Corrected	224.375	39					
Total							

a. R Squared = .478 (Adjusted R Squared = .450)

b. Computed using alpha = .05

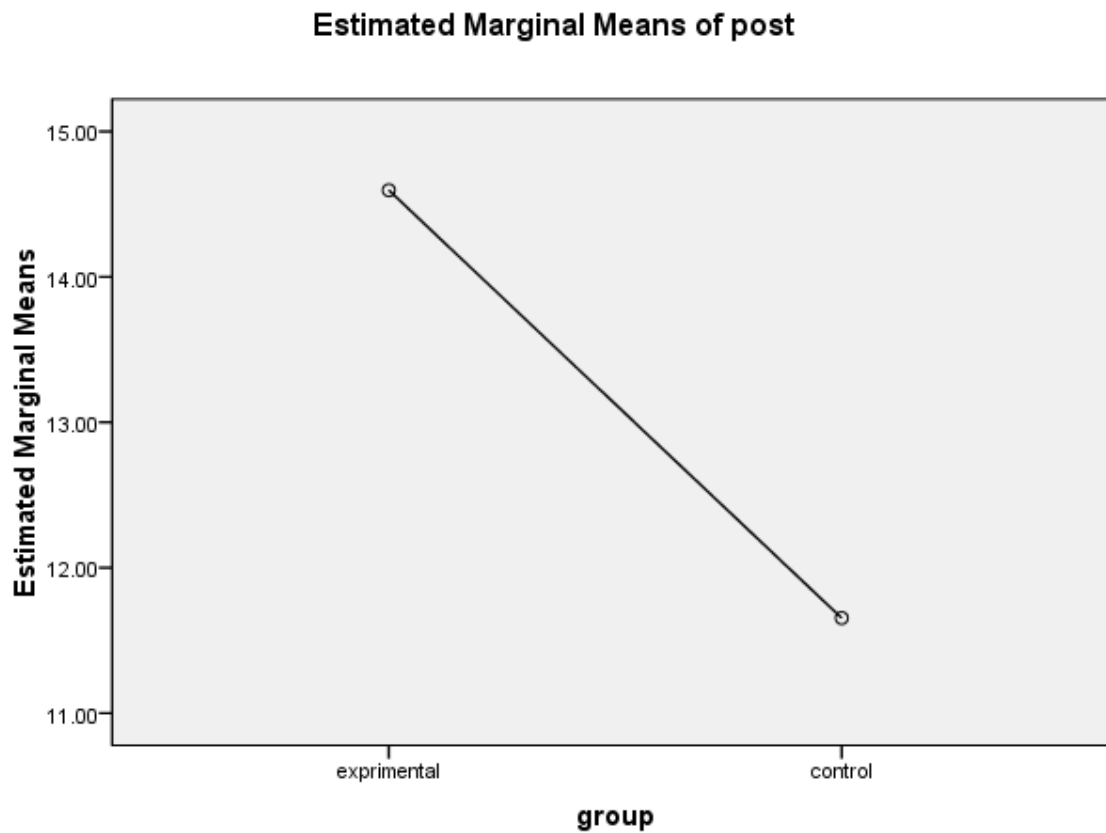


Fig. 1 Screen plot of the adjusted mean of MDCT

The result revealed that ZPD-activated proximal contexts have a great effect on L2 learners' interlanguage pragmatic development in comparison to traditional instructional contexts and there is a significant difference between the interlanguage pragmatic development of learner' in ZPD-activated proximal context group and those of others in non ZPD-activated proximal context group or teacher-fronted group.

With regard to the second question and the scores learners in equal and unequal groups obtained from six tasks they did in six sessions, Mann-Whitney *U* Test was used in order to compare the two groups in doing each task. The results were tabulated as follow:

**Table 3.**  
**Interpretation of output from Mann-Whitney U test**  
**The result of task 1.**



Ranks				
group		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
task1	equal	5	4.50	22.50
	unequal	5	6.50	32.50
Total		10		

Table 4.

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	task1
Mann-Whitney U	7.500
Wilcoxon W	22.500
Z	-1.225
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.221
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.310 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group

Table 5.  
Interpretation of output from Mann-Whitney U test  
The result of task 2.

Ranks				
group		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
task2	equal	5	4.50	22.50
	unequal	5	6.50	32.50
Total		10		

Table 6.

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	task2
Mann-Whitney U	7.500
Wilcoxon W	22.500
Z	-1.225
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.221
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.310 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group



**Table 7.**  
**Interpretation of output from Mann-Whitney U test**  
**The result of task 3.**

Ranks			
group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Task3 equal	5	3.50	17.50
unequal	5	7.50	37.50
Total	10		

**Table 8.**

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	task4
Mann-Whitney U	2.500
Wilcoxon W	17.500
Z	-2.449
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.014
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.032 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group

**Table 9.**  
**Interpretation of output from Mann-Whitney U test**  
**The result of task 4.**

Ranks			
group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Task4 equal	5	5.00	25.00
unequal	5	6.00	30.00
Total	10		

**Table 10**

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	task5
Mann-Whitney U	10.000
Wilcoxon W	25.000
Z	-1.000
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.317
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.690 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group

**Table 11.**  
**Interpretation of output from Mann-Whitney U test**  
**The result of task 5.**

Ranks				
	group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Task5	equal	5	4.50	22.50
	unequal	5	6.50	32.50
Total		10		

**Table 12.**

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	task3
Mann-Whitney U	7.500
Wilcoxon W	22.500
Z	-1.225
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.221
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.310 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group

**Table 13.**  
**Interpretation of output from Mann-Whitney U test**  
**The result of task 6.**

Ranks			
group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
task6 equal	5	5.00	25.00
unequal	5	6.00	30.00
Total	10		

**Table 14.**

Test Statistics <sup>b</sup>	
	task6
Mann-Whitney U	10.000
Wilcoxon W	25.000
Z	-.655
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.513
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.690 <sup>a</sup>

a. Not corrected for ties.

b. Grouping Variable: group

As it is shown, the results obtained from task 1, task 2, and task 5 which were reported in table 4, 6 and 12 were the same. A Mann-Whitney *U* test reveals no significant difference in the outcome of equal groups ( $n= 5$ ) and unequal groups ( $n= 5$ ),  $U= 7.500$ ,  $z= -1.225$ ,  $p=0.22 > 0.05$ .

Table 8 presents the results of task 3. A Mann-Whitney *U* test presents significant difference in the outcome of equal groups ( $n= 5$ ) and unequal groups ( $n= 5$ ),  $U= 2.500$ ,  $z= -2.44$ ,  $p= 0.014 < 0.05$ .

Table 10 shows the results of task 4. A Mann-Whitney *U* test reveals no significant difference in the outcome of equal groups ( $n= 5$ ) and unequal groups ( $n= 5$ ),  $U= 10.000$ ,  $z= -1.000$ ,  $p= 0.31 > 0.05$ .

Table 14 reveals the results of task 6. A Mann-Whitney *U* test shows no significant difference in the outcome of equal groups ( $n= 5$ ) and unequal groups ( $n= 5$ ),  $U= 10.000$ ,  $z= -0.655$ ,  $p= 0.51 > 0.05$ .

## 6. Discussion, Conclusion

Generally the result showed that whereas there was a significant difference between the interlanguage pragmatic developments of learners' who studying English in ZPD-activated proximal context and those of others studying in non ZPD-activated proximal context or let's say traditional method, there was no significant difference between the performance of equal and unequal groups doing tasks except in table 8 which showed a significant difference between the performance of equal groups and unequal groups. In this respect, the mean rank of unequal groups was reported 7.50 which was greater than the mean rank of equal groups.

Actually this study demonstrated that ZPD-activated proximal context had the great effect on EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic developments however no significant difference between EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic development of equal and unequal groups was revealed. Subsequently, interaction and scaffolding commonly exerted an impact on learners' interlanguage pragmatic development, either in form of interaction between more capable and less capable peer or interaction between same-level peers.

To summarize, allowing for the aforementioned results, the researcher came to the conclusion that all in all, ZPD-activated context facilitated and accelerated the student's interlanguage pragmatic development.

With regards to the implication, this study was conducted in order to demonstrate firstly the importance of neglected area, pragmatics, and secondly the impact of ZPD and consequently the interaction and scaffolding on EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic developments. This affair automatically results in advent of a new method of teaching in purpose of improving communication abilities and practical aspects of language which is nearly overlooked in most of the language classrooms. Thus, it is suggested that much more research needs to be conducted in order to figure out some novel methods to improve EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic development in different aspects. Also as this study was conducted in order to improve the comprehension ability of EFL learners in using speech acts strategies, further research can focus on production ability of EFL learners. Eventually, it is hoped that this study can pave the way for further research.

## Reference

- Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to do Things with Words*. London, Clarendon Press.
- Barnlund, D.C. & Yoshioka, M. 1990. Apologies: Japanese and American styles. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 14: 193-206.
- Bergman, M.L. & Kasper, G. 1993. Perception and performance in native and nonnative apology. In *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (eds.), 82-107. Oxford, OUP.
- Birjandi, P. & Rezaei, S. (2010). Developing a multiple-choice discourse completion test of interlanguage pragmatics for Iranian EFL learners. *ILI Language Teaching Journal (Special Issue: Proceedings of the First Conference on ELT in the Islamic World)*, 6 (1, 2), 43-58.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Use*. Cambridge, CUP.
- Crystal, D. 1997. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Languages*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Cambridge, CUP.
- Chomsky, N 1965. *Aspects of the theory of Syntax*. Cambridge MA, The MIT Press.
- Donato, R., 1994. Collective scaffolding in second language learning. In: Lantolf, J. P., ed. *Vygotskian approaches to second language research*. London: Ablex Publishing, 33-56
- Edmonton, W. 1981. On saying you're sorry. In *Conversational Routine*, F. Coulmas (eds.), 273-287. The Hague, Mouton.
- Ellis, R., 2000. Task-based research and language pedagogy. *Language Teaching Research*, 4(3), 193-220.
- Fraser, B. 1981. On apologizing. In *Conversational Routine*, F. Coulmas (eds.), 259-273. The Hague, Mouton.
- Freeman, D.L. 2033. *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. Oxford, OUP.
- Gregg, K.R. 1986. Reviewed work(s): The input hypothesis: Issues and implications by Stephen D. Krashen. *TESOL Quarterly* 20(1): 116-122
- Hill, T. 1997. The Development of Pragmatic Competence in an EFL Context. Dissertation, Temple University Japan.
- Kasper, G. 2001a. Classroom research on interlanguage pragmatics. In *Pragmatics in Language Teaching*, K.R. Rose and G. Kasper (eds.), 33-60. Cambridge, CUP.
- Leech, G. 1983. *Principles of pragmatics*. London, Longman.
- Liu, J. 2010. Assessing EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic knowledge. In *Reflections on English Language Teaching*, 5(1): 1-22.

- LoCastro, V. 2003. *An Introduction to Pragmatics: Social Action for Language Teachers*. Michigan MI, Michigan Press.
- Mirzaee, A., Rahimi Domakani, M., & Roshani, N. 2010. L2 Discourse Co-construction within the Learner's ZPD. *The Journal of Teaching Language Skills*,2(1).
- Octu, B. & Zeyrek, D 2008. Development of requests: A study on Turkish learners of English. In *Developing Contrastive Pragmatics: Interlanguage and Crosscultural Perspectives*, M. Puetz & J. Neff van Aertselaer (eds.), 265-300. Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter.
- Olshtain, E. & Cohen, A.D. 1983. Apology: A speech act set. In *Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition*. N. Wolfson & E. Judd (eds.), 18-35. Rowley MA, Newbury House.
- Pica, T. 1996. The essential role of negotiation in the communicative classroom. *Japan Association for Language Teaching Journal* 18:241-268
- Salazar, P. 2003. Pragmatic instruction in the EFL context. In *Pragmatic Competence and Foreign language Teaching*, A Martinez-Flor, E. Uso-Juan & A. Fernandez-Guerra (eds.), 233-246. Castello, Universitat Jaume I.
- Searl, J.R. 1969. *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge, CUP.
- Searl, J.R. 1976. The classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society* 5(1): 1-24.
- Shayer, M., 2002. Not just Piaget, not just Vygotsky, and certainly not Vygotsky as an alternative to Piaget. In: Shayer, M., ed. *Learning intelligence, cognitive acceleration across the curriculum from 5 to 15 years*. UK, Open University Press.
- Swain, M. (2005). The output hypothesis: Theory and research. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *The handbook of research in second language teaching and learning* 471-483. Mahwah, NJ, Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Thomas, J. 1995. *Meaning in Interaction. An Introduction to Pragmatics*. London, Longman.
- Trosborg, A. 1995. *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter.
- Van Lier, L. (1988). *The classroom and the language learner*. London: Longman
- Verschueren, J. 1999. *Understanding Pragmatics*. London, Arnold.
- Vygotsky, L.S., 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Yule, G. 1996. *Pragmatics*. Oxford, OUP.



## APPENDIX 1

*Please read each of the following situations. There are three responses following each situation. Please read the responses to each situation and decide which one is the **BEST** in this situation. Please put your answers on the ANSWER SHEET by blackening the corresponding letters.*

### **Situation 1:**

You are trying to study in your room and you hear loud music coming from another student's room down the hall. You don't know the student, but you decide to ask him to turn the music down.

- A. Excuse me, what's name of the music? Sounds good, I like it. But, oh, I'm sorry it is not the right time, I'm just doing some important work. Do you mind turning it down? Thanks so much. I wish I have another chance to listen to it, but not now.
- B. Hello! Would you like to turn down the music? Some people are now studying, and some are sleeping.
- C. Hey! I've got an exam tomorrow so would you mind turning the tunes down a little?

### **Situation 2:**

You are now shopping in a department store. You see a beautiful suit and want to see it. You ask the salesperson to show you the suit.

- A. Oh, sorry, could you pass that suit to me to have a look? I want to buy it.
- B. Lady, I'd like to have a look at that suit. Would you please do me a favor?
- C. Excuse me. Could you show me this suit please?

### **Situation 3:**

You are now discussing your assignment with your teacher. Your teacher speaks very fast. You do not follow what he is saying, so you want to ask your teacher to say it again.

- A. I think you are right. But if you can explain it more clearly in some details, I may understand it better.
- B. Sorry, teacher, can you repeat it?
- C. Excuse me. May I have your pardon?

**Situation 4:**

Your computer is down because of a virus. One of your teachers is very skillful in fixing computers. You know he has been very busy recently, but you still want to ask him to fix your computer.

- A. Sorry to bother you, but I've been having problems on my computer and was wondering if you could help me?
- B. Excuse me, Mr. Smith. My computer is down because of a virus, so I'm in need of your help. When will you be free these days?
- C. Good morning, Mr. Smith, I hear you are very skillful at fixing computers. So I hope you can help me. It is a little trouble; it won't take you much time, OK?

**Situation 5:**

You are a teacher. In class, the mobile phone of one of your students rings. You ask your student to turn off his mobile phone.

- A. I wish you can learn more things in my class, but if you disturb like this, it is hard for me to teach the class well, understand? So turn off your mobile phone, please.
- B. I don't appreciate mobiles ringing in my class, please make sure they are switched off for the duration of this class.
- C. I think you can stop it during the class. And remember this is the last time.

**Situation 6:**

You are watching a basketball game. A student you don't know comes and stands just in front of you blocking your view. You want ask the student not to block your view.

- A. Hi, so you are interested in basketball. So am I. Let me stand beside you and exchange opinions about the game.
- B. Sorry, you are blocking my view, would you please take another place?
- C. Hey, friend. You'd better move away or sit down.

**Situation 7:**

You are applying for a new job in a small company and want to make an appointment for an interview. You know the manager is very busy and only schedules interviews in the afternoon from one to four o'clock on Wednesday. However, you have to take the final-term exam this Wednesday. You want to schedule an interview on Thursday.

- A. I have an exam on Wednesday. Would it be possible to schedule the interview for sometime on Thursday?
- B. Sir, I'm glad to learn that your company offers a job. I like it very much, I don't know whether an interview on Thursday is suitable to you or not.
- C. Excuse me, sir. I wish it doesn't take much time for you to schedule an interview on Thursday. I want you to give me a chance because I really want to work in your company.

**Situation 8:**

You are the owner of a bookstore. Your shop clerk has worked for a year, and you have gotten to know him/her quite well. It is the beginning of the semester, and you are very busy selling and refunding textbooks all day. Today you have a plan to extend business hours by an hour, though you know the clerk has worked long hours in the past few days. You ask the clerk to stay after store hours.

- A. Tom, do you think you could do me a favor by working an extra hour for the next few days seeing we're so busy? I'll try and make it up to you later.
- B. Tom, because I've been very busy selling and refunding textbooks all day, I terribly expect you can stay after store hours.
- C. Tom, I need you to work a couple of extra hours today. You'll make more money!

**Situation 9:**

For the first time this semester, you are taking a mathematics course. You have had a hard time following lectures and understanding the textbook. A test is scheduled to be held next week. You notice that one student sitting next to you seems to have a good background knowledge of math, and is doing well. Since it is the beginning of the semester, you do not know him/her yet. You want to ask him/her to study together for the upcoming test.

- A. Hello, you look very kind, what's your name? Can we study together?
- B. Can you cooperate with me in the upcoming test? I need your help very much.
- C. I was wondering if we could possibly get together some time to study for the test.

**Situation 10:**

Something is wrong with your computer, but you have to finish some homework which is due tomorrow. Your roommate has a computer, but he is also writing a course paper on his

computer. His homework is due the day after tomorrow. You want to ask him to stop his work and let you use his computer to finish your homework first.

- A. Hi, Lucy, you know my homework is due tomorrow and my computer is down, give me a hand.
- B. Could I please use your computer for an hour? It won't take long!
- C. Can you use your computer after I finish my homework, please?

**Situation 11:**

You are writing your graduate thesis and need to interview the president of your university. The president was your teacher and you know him quite well. You know the president is very busy and has a very tight schedule. You still want to ask the president to spare one or two hours for your interview.

- A. Hello, Mr. president, since we know each other quite well, I want to make an appointment with you for my MA thesis.
- B. Mr. president, you seem to be very busy, but when will you be free? Can I help you? I think you had better have a rest. Can we have a talk?
- C. I'm currently writing my thesis and would like to interview you. Can you spare one or two hours of your time?

**Situation 12:**

You are the manager of a company. You are in a meeting with the other members of your company. You need to write some notes, but realize you do not have any paper. You turn to the person sitting next to you. You know the person very well.

- A. Have you got some extra paper?
- B. Sir, can you help me? Now I need your help, please lend me some paper.
- C. Sorry, I forgot to bring paper with me. And you know it is important for me to write something now. Would you give me a piece of paper? Thank you.

**Situation 13:**

You are a student. You forgot to do the assignment for your Human Resources course. When your teacher whom you have known for some years asks for your assignment, you apologize to your teacher.

- A. I'm sorry, but I forgot the deadline for the assignment. Can I bring it to you at the end of the day?
- B. Pardon me, sir, I forgot about that. Shall I do the assignment at once? So sorry! It's my fault!
- C. I've completed my assignment but forgot to bring it with me. I'll hand it in tomorrow.

**Situation 14:**

You are now in a bookstore. While you are looking for the books you want, you accidentally find a book that you have been looking for for a long time. You are so excited that you rush out of the bookstore with the book without paying it. When the shop assistant stops you, you realize that you forgot to pay for it. You apologize.

- A. Oh, I'm sorry! I was too happy! I like this book and have been looking for it for a long time.
- B. I'm very sorry that I forgot to pay the book because I was so excited. I've been looking for it for a long time. I hope you can forgive my behavior.
- C. Oh, I'm so sorry. I was so excited about finding this book that I have been looking for for ages that I just plain forgot to pay. I really am very sorry, how much do I owe you?

**Situation 15:**

You are a student. You are now rushing to the classroom as you are going to be late for the class. When you turn a corner, you accidentally bump into a student whom you do not know and the books he is carrying fall onto the ground. You stop, pick the books up, and apologize.

- A. Oops, sorry, my fault. I'm in such a hurry. Here let me help pick these up for you.
- B. I'm sorry, I will be late if I'm not in a hurry. I'll pay attention to this when I turn corner next time.
- C. Oh, I'm very sorry. I'm going to be late for my class, and if I'm late, I won't be allowed to enter the classroom. But I like this course very much. So, sorry again!

**Situation 16:**

A few days ago, you put one of your classmate's books into your bag without knowing it when you were in the classroom with him. You knew your classmate had been looking for it and felt very upset about losing the book, because he needed the book to prepare for an important exam. Yesterday, he took the exam, and did not seem to have done well. Today, when you look for a pen in your bag, you find the book in your bag. You give the book to your classmate and apologize.

- A. I'm sorry, I didn't know the book was in my bag. You haven't done well in the exam. I'm sorry.
- B. I didn't know why your book was in my bag and I apologize for the crazy thing I have done, so please forgive me.
- C. I don't know how to say this but somehow your book has ended up in my bag. I really am sorry for all the inconvenience I've caused you. I wish there was something I could do.

**Situation 17:**

You are now in the classroom. When you go out of the classroom, you accidentally knock over a cup on the desk and spill water over the books of a student whom you do not know. You apologize.

- A. I'm very sorry for my behavior, I was so careless to knock over your up and spilled water on your books. I didn't mean to do it. I do hope you can forgive me.
- B. I'm very sorry. It is a pity that you got the trouble because of my carelessness. Please forgive my fault. Thank you!
- C. Oh dear! I am sorry, I hope I haven't ruined your books. Let me mop it up.

**Situation 18:**

You are a cashier in a bookstore. One customer comes to you to pay for a book. The price of the book is \$12.8. The customer gives you a \$20 note, but you give only \$6.20 change back to the customer. The customer says he should get \$7.2 back. You realize the mistake, and apologize to the customer.

- A. It's my fault, I made such a mistake. But I didn't know it, I'm really sorry for that.
- B. Sorry, my mistake. Here you are sir. Here's the extra \$1 change. My apologies. Enjoy the rest of the day.
- C. Oh, sir. I'm awfully sorry. Please don't mind. Welcome to our bookstore again. And I'm looking forward to seeing you again.

**Situation 19:**

You are playing football on the playground with your classmate. You take a shot and the ball hits a teacher on the back of the head very hard. You go up to the teacher and apologize.

- A. Are you all right? I'm sorry I hit you!
- B. Dear teacher, I'm sorry for that! If you like, we hope you can play football with us.
- C. I'm very sorry for that. I didn't realize you were coming and didn't control the ball well. I do hope you can forgive my rudeness.

**Situation 20:**

You are a teacher. You promised your students to teach them a French song on Thursday afternoon. But you forgot. The students waited for you in the classroom for one hour. Today is Friday, now you are in the classroom and apologize to the students.

- A. I apologize to you for my absence yesterday. But I think I can do it better now, because I practiced it many times in the past day. Could you forgive me?
- B. Sorry to disappoint you, but I totally forgot about the French song I promised you. I'm really sorry, how about we schedule it for next Thursday ? And I promise I won't forget.
- C. I have wasted your time, I feel sorry about that. Could you give me a chance?

**Situation 21:**

Yesterday morning, you received a call from a company. The call was for one of your classmates, but he was out. The caller asked you to deliver a message telling him to go for a job interview at 2:00 in the afternoon. But you forgot. Today, you suddenly remember it and realize that your classmate has lost a chance because of your mistake. Now, you tell your classmate the message, he feels very upset, because he has been looking for a job for a long time. You apologize.

- A. Please accept my apology. Don't be upset.
- B. I'm really sorry about it, I know it's my fault.
- C. May be this was the worst message I had passed to a person. I'm so sorry.

**Situation 22:**

You want to study in the classroom. You push the door of the classroom very hard. A student whom you don't know is standing just behind the door reading a poster posted on the wall of the classroom. The door hits very hard on the student's forehead making it bleed. The student cries because it is very painful. You don't know the student. You apologize to him.

- A. Are you all right? Is it serious? I'm so sorry.
- B. I must apologize for my rudeness, I made you so painful, and you are bleeding.
- C. Oh, dear me. Please forgive my rudeness. I'll call for an ambulance right now. Please wait for a moment.

**Situation 23:**

You are applying for a job in a company. You go into the office to turn in your application form to the manager. You talk to the manager for a few minutes. When you move to give the manager your form, you accidentally knock over a vase on the desk and spill water over a pile of papers. You apologize to the manager.

- A. I'm sorry, but in China, it's symbol of good luck. I think I am lucky to have met you.
- B. I'm sorry for my carelessness, but I'm not a careless man.
- C. I'm sorry. Please let me help clean up.

**Situation 24:**

You have promised to play basketball with your classmates this afternoon. But because your music teacher prolonged her classes for about half an hour, you arrive late. You apologize to your classmates.

- A. I'm sorry I'm late.
- B. I'm sorry I'm late. I got out of music class late.
- C. I'm sorry to have come so late, but you should know, I like playing basketball as well as music, and the music teacher prolonged her classes for about half an hour.