The Effect of Collaborative Dialogue on EFL Learners' Noticing of Pragmatic Forms*

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Abstract

Interlanguage pragmatics has attracted considerable attention in recent years. One strand of interlanguage pragmatics research includes studies comparing the effectiveness of implicit versus explicit teaching on the development of pragmatics. Many studies, although inconclusively, have shown the superior effect of explicit teaching of pragmatics, but few have focused on finding ways to improve the implicit teaching of pragmatics. The present study attempted to unfold the effect of collaborative dialogue on the quality of implicit teaching of request (head act and preparator). To this end, 28 participants (19 to 33 years old, intermediate) majoring in English (freshman and junior) were divided into two groups. The experimental group (n=14) had the opportunity to complete the tasks collaboratively and the control group (n=14) were not provided with any specific pragmatic instruction. The instructional procedure included four successive sessions of teaching request in situations where the sociological parameters were systematically varied. For the purpose of data collection, the classes were audio-recorded and a pretest-posttest design for discourse completion task (DCT) was adopted. For the purpose of data analysis, target request head acts and preparators were scored and also the audio recordings of classes were transcribed and the process of learning during treatment was checked in detail. The findings indicated that the experimental group outperformed the control group in producing target preparators and head acts. And evidence of noticing the pragmatic forms namely *noticing unnoticed forms, noticing the gap, and negotiation of form* was observed during the collaborative task. This study suggests that teachers may need to provide learners with the opportunities for collaborative tasks along with input enhancement tasks in order to improve the pragmatic knowledge of the learners.

Introduction

Despite the fact that interlanguage pragmatics has recently received considerable attention in research studies, it has almost been neglected in the context of EFL classrooms, where opportunities for developing pragmatic knowledge is very limited (Nguyen, Pham and Pham, 2012). Due to the lack of instruction in pragmatic issues, EFL learners have been found to be more grammatically accurate than pragmatically appropriate (Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei 1998). On the social level, Thomas (1983) pointed out that although grammatical errors are unlikely to bring about any cultural misinterpretation, pragmatic idiosyncrasies may be reflected inappropriately in L2 users' interaction, indicating their lack of social graces. Thus developing pragmatic knowledge needs to be put at least on an equal footing as other domains of language. In this regard, many scholars (Jeon and Kaya, 2006; Rose and Ng Kwai-fun, 2001; Takimoto 2012; Taguchi and Kim, 2014) have focused their research efforts on proposing effective ways of teaching pragmatics. Among research studies focusing on interlanguage pragmatics development, some studies have addressed the comparison of implicit and explicit teaching of pragmatics (Jeon and Kaya, 2006; Rose and Ng Kwai-fun, 2001). Most of these studies have concluded that explicit teaching of pragmatics would lead to more favorable results than implicit teaching. This conclusion is not surprising since as Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) and Bouton (1994) mentioned, even in naturalistic context the development of pragmatic knowledge happens slowly. Thus it is not reasonable to expect EFL learners to acquire pragmatics of language simply by being exposed to L2 during limited time of the English class. In this line Kasper and Schmidt (1996) pointed out that form-function mapping and related contextual variables are not salient enough for the learners to notice naturally and therefore their attention must be directed in some ways. But it seems that although many studies have been conducted in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, a few studies have attempted to explore some ways to raise the quality of implicit teaching of pragmatics and find out techniques through which the teacher can best direct students' attention to pragmatic forms of language during implicit instruction. On the other

hand, based on Vygotsky's (1987) sociocultural theory, collaborative dialogue can provide a rich context for students to notice forms of language and it's the collaboration that is the origin for functions like noticing the gap, testing hypothesis and creating metapragmatic knowledge (Swain, 2000). As a result, the present study aims at examining the effect of collaborative dialogue on the quality of implicit teaching of pragmatics to see if this technique is influential in university students' noticing of pragmatic forms of language during a form comparison task.

Review of literature

From amongst the very many definitions of pragmatics put forward since Morris's (1938) ground-breaking deconstruction of semiosis, Crsytal's (1997) definition has been by far the most oft-quoted definition in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) (Rose and Kasper, 2001). He defines pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (p. 301). This is very similar to Leech's (1983) subdivision of general pragmatics into sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics. Pragmalinguistics, in his analytically useful division, comprises the lexico-grammatical resources for language functions, while sociopragmatics refers to one's evaluation of contextual factors that are consequential to one's pragmalinguistic options. These factors are peculiar to individual society's perceptions of speaker and/or listener social power (P), social distance (D) and the relative size of imposition (R) relative to the enactment of a communicative act (Kasper & Rose, 2001).

ILP studies have focused, among other things, on a variety of speech acts, from among which the speech act of request has attracted considerable attention because of its frequency, usefulness, inevitable necessity of use, and its face threatening nature. In addition, requesting being a structurally complex object, English L2 learners have been found to find it a challenging task to perform. The speech act of request

in English consists of three elemental segments (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). These segments include a) attention getter b) head act c) supportive moves. According to Faerch and Kasper (cited in Blum-Kulka & Olashtain 1984), in order to make a polite request one can manipulate the directness level of the request by using internal and external modifiers. Internal modifies are the linguistic items come within the head act for the purpose of mitigating the intensity of imposition. External modifiers, however, come in the immediate context of the head act (not within it) and try to modify the request. From amongst the external modifiers, this study has its focus on the preparators which are the supportive moves coming before the main head act by which the speaker tries to obtain a pre-commital by saying an utterance (Edmonson, 1981; Edmonson and House, 1981; House and Kasper, 1981, cited in Blum-Kulka&Olshtain 1984, p.205).

Many ILP studies have been conducted to examine different ways of improving learners' pragmatic ability regarding request, specially request head act and external modifiers (Hendriks, 2008; House and Kasper, 1981; Schauer, 2007). The fact that these studies indicate L2 language learners need to acquire pragmatic knowledge and ability for request head act and external modifiers stimulated this research study to focus primarily on request head act and external modifiers.

Among other studies that focused their attention on the improvement of pragmatic ability in L2 learners are Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) and Bouton (1994) which pointed out that ILP knowledge develops slowly even in naturalistic context. This obviously implies that L2 learners may well fail to acquire a robust body of pragmatic knowledge simply by being exposed to L2 language. Their attention must be in some way directed to form-function mapping and related contextual variables for these are not salient factors to be noticed naturally (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). However, from a Vygotskian perspective (1986, cited in Swain, 2000) it is through interaction that learners cognitive activities including noticing the gap, testing hypothesis, and creating metapragmatic knowledge are enacted. According to Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2011), collaborative

dialogue do not lead to language learning but it is the language learning in progress.

Researchers (Donato, 1994; LaPierre's, 1994; Swain, 1997) have claimed that in collaborative dialogue the focus of learners' attention is on the form of language and not just meaning. In fact, taking a sociocultural view of Vygotsky, it can be inferred that during collaborative dialogue not only do the learners notice the forms but also they construct the knowledge of language together, an event that Swain (1997) calls the *co-construction of knowledge*. In other words, knowledge is first shaped in the interaction among people and then is infused into the mind. This infusion of knowledge from outside world to the individual's mind is technically called *mediation*. Mediation in collaborative dialogue happens through learner-learner interaction. According to Guk and Kellogg (2007), it can provide a robust zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD is the distance between what could be done by the learners alone and what is needed to be done by the learner with the help of a person who can assist him/her. Close to the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a process that is called *scaffolding*. During the process of scaffolding the mediation of learners' development takes place by such means as tangible resources, gestures, learner play, learner-learner interaction and teacher intervention. Scaffolding has a reflexive flow between all the peers in one group, in that each learner has a role in scaffolding each of the group members in one group. Each learner mediates others within their zone of proximal development to overcome their problems and reach a level in which they are prepared for solving more complicated problems. Donato (1994) described this as where learners build a *collective scaffold* for each other. Thus "during the interaction, the speakers are at the same time individually novices and collectively experts, sources of new orientations for each other, and guides through this complex linguistic problem solving" (Donato 1994, p.46).

Collaborative dialogue in general has been researched with a focus on grammar and vocabulary domain of language (Kim, 2008; and Nassaji and Tian, 2010). In vocabulary domain of the language, Kim

(2008) concluded that the learners who did the task in pair performed significantly better than those who did the task individually in the posttest exams. In grammar, Nassaji and Tian (2010) indicated that completing the task collaboratively could create greater accuracy in learners than doing them in the individual task situation.

Although the effectiveness of collaborative dialogue in the development of L2 knowledge has been heavily emphasized in the literature (Lapkin, Swain, & Smith, 2002; Storch, 1998; Swain &Lapkin, 1998), few studies have examined the effect of collaborative dialogue on the development of interlanguage pragmatics. Among the few studies are studies conducted by Takimoto (2012) and Taguchi and Kim (2014). Takimoto (2012) examined the effect of metapragmatic discussion on learners' recognizing and producing English request downgraders. The result showed some advantages for the metapragmatic discussion including: additional metapragmatic gain, greater motivation and attendance to the target linguistic forms, functions and contextual features, and thereby more firmly established knowledge of pragmatics. Taguchi and Kim's (2014) study addressed the effect of collaborative dialogue on learners' interlanguage pragmatic development. The result of this study showed that the collaborative group demonstrated a better performance on the immediate posttest in producing request head acts than the individual group. Taguchi and Kim (2014) argued that during interaction, pragmalinguistic forms and contextual factors are constantly emphasized, negotiated and recycled for use (Taguchi and Kim, 2014, p.3). During collaborative dialogue, learners negotiate about the form, function and context of language use, in other words, together they co-construct pragmatic knowledge.

The effect of collaborative dialogue has been investigated mostly for grammar and vocabulary development or has been limited to the comparison between collaborative and individual tasks (Abadikhah & Harsini, 2014; Kim, 2008; Nassaji and Tian, 2010) but the effect of collaborative dialogue on learners' pragmatic learning has been investigated by few studies (Takimoto, 2012 and Kim and Taguchi,

2014). Besides, studies into improving learner pragmatic knowledge has been largely limited to the comparison of implicit and explicit knowledge (Jeon and Kaya, 2006; Rose and Connie Ng, 2001), most of which concluded that explicit teaching of pragmatics would lead to more favorable results than implicit teaching. Even some studies that took an input-based approach (Takahashi, 2001; Nguyen, Pham & Pham, 2012) showed a better effect of explicit teaching. But few studies have focused on the ways to improve implicit teaching of pragmatics through some intervention. However since the collaborative dialogue has indicated to be a rich source of noticing, the present research aims at conducting a study on the role of collaborative dialogue on learners' noticing of pragmatic forms during an implicit task activity, i.e., form comparison task.

Research questions

The present research tries to answer the following questions:

1. Can collaborative dialogue help learners notice pragmatic forms during form-comparison task activities?

2. How does collaborative dialogue help raise learners' conscious awareness of L2 pragmatic forms?

Methodology

The study was conducted in two intact university classrooms. The participants were twenty eight Iranian university learners majoring in English at a state university located in the Mazandaran province. They were freshman and junior learners. They had been exposed between 6 to 12 years to English in Iranian language institutes with no experience of being in an English-speaking country or any explicit instruction of pragmatics. The freshman class was assigned to the collaboration group, and the junior class was assigned to the control group. A TOEFL test of proficiency was administered and the average proficiency score of the participants was in the range of 263.45 to 308.61. The participants were divided into two groups of collaborative group (n=14), and control group (n=14).

Instructional target

The instructional target in this study is EFL learner's acquisition of request head acts (the core of the sequence by which the actual act of requesting is realized) and preparators (supportive moves by which the speaker prepares his or her hearer for the ensuing request). The sociopragmatic dimensions of request were operationalized using Brown and Levinson's (1987) contextual factors, power (P) (the social power of the recipient with respect to the social power of requester), distance (D)(the social distance of the speaker and the listener), and the degree of imposition (R)(the magnitude of the request). Based on these variables, we wrote different situations for which learners had to make requests

Procedure

This study was conducted during three weeks. The classes were held twice a week. In the first session, the learners took the TOEFL test in order for them to be homogenized in terms of proficiency level. In the second session, the learners took the pragmatic pretest and completed a warm-up collaborative task, respectively. Task treatment sessions were provided on the third to sixth session. At the end of session six, all learners took the immediate posttest.

Instructional treatment

For the purpose of instruction, two classes were chosen, one assigned to collaborative (C) group, and the other to control group. The learners were provided with as much time as they needed for doing the tasks. All the ILP instruction was given in learners' native language (Farsi) to avoid misunderstanding and loss of information. For the learners to better understand the procedure, a role play of how to do effective collaboration was performed. The learners were then asked to do a warm-up collaboration task to get themselves familiarized with the activity of collaboration with their group members. The treatment phase continued for four sessions. The sessions were held twice a week at a state university in Iran. The control group did not receive any pragmatic instruction.

On the first session (fill-the-blank, PDR-low session),the learners were provided with a multiple-turn DCT task characterized by low power (P), low social distance (D), and different sizes of imposition(R) (major and minor). The learners were asked to fill in the blanks. And the papers were collected after task completion.

On the second session (form-comparison PDR-low session), two versions of the same dialogue were handed to the learners, one of them was the dialogue that the learners had completed on the first session and the other one was the full dialogue containing the target request forms. They were subsequently asked to compare their answers in the previous session with the correct answers and note down the similarities and differences of each blank. The form-comparison technique has been used following Ghavamnia's (2014) study.

The aforementioned procedure was repeated for the next two sessions, this time with a dialogue which was characterized as PDR-high. Thus, the third session was named "fill-the-blank, PDR-high" and the fourth session was named "form-comparison, PDR-high". The control group did not receive any pragmatic instruction during the study. However, both a pre-test and a post-test were administered to this class like the experimental group. A pilot study had already been conducted to identify probable problems of the instruction, check the comprehensibility of the instruction, assessing the feasibility of the study and test the adequacy of research instrument. For the purpose of teaching, multiple-turn DCTs were provided to the learners. These DCTs were adapted from Ishihara (2010), Hudson et al. (1995), and a video clip from YouTube.

Table 1 Instructional tasks for each session

Session	Name	task
Session 1	Fill-in-the-blank (PDR low)	filling the multiple-turn DCT of a PDR-low dialogue

Session 2	Paper-comparison (PDR low)	comparing their filled papers with the sample paper
Session 3	Fill-in-the-blank (PDR high)	filling the multiple-turn DCT of a PDR-high dialogue
Session 4	Paper-comparison (PDR high)	comparing their filled paper with the sample paper

Data collection procedure

The present study adopted a mixed design for the purpose of data collection. For the purpose of quantitative data collection, a proficiency test of TOEFL and a pretest (pragmatic DCT pretest) and a posttest (pragmatic DCT posttest as pretest) were administered.

For the purpose of qualitative data collection, every learner was asked to record his/her voice while performing the collaborative task activities. The audio records of all the participants were collected and transcribed for analyses in terms of LREs. LREs refers to 'any part of a dialogue where the learners talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or correct themselves or others' (Swain and Lapkin, 1998, p. 326). Collaborative dialogues are operationalized as PREs (pragmatic related episodes) similar to Taghuchi and Kim's (2014) study because they were studying those LREs that targeted pragmatics of language. The classes were also video recorded for the purpose of triangulation.

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis

For the purpose of quantitative analysis learners' written requestive head acts and their accompanying preparators in the pretest and posttests were scored in terms of grammatical accuracy and pragmatic

appropriateness. The appropriateness of students' answers was checked based on students' understanding of the socio pragmatic factors (speaker and listener's social power (P), social distance (D) and the relative size of imposition (R)) and use of appropriate pragmalinguistic forms. Scoring of the papers was based on a scoring procedure adopted from Taghuchi and Kim (2014). For the purpose of consistent scoring of each situation, the following ranking was used:

Table 2 Pragmatic scoring system of DCTs

3 scores	H or P containing one of the target forms and also grammatically accurate
2 scores	H or P containing one of the target forms but not grammatically accurate
1 score	H or P not containing any of the target forms but grammatically accurate
0 score	H or P not containing any of the target forms and also not grammatically accurate

Note: H= head act, P= preparator.

Qualitative data analysis

For qualitative analysis, following Swain and Lapkin (1998), language-related episodes (LRE) can be used as units of analysis. The transcripts of learners' collaborative talk were analyzed for pragmatic related episodes (PRE) to see what had happened during collaborative talk of each group. The pretest and post-test of each group members were also analyzed qualitatively to check the progress of every member individually.

Results

Quantitative result

The descriptive statistics obtained from the pre-test and post-test scores of the learners regarding head act and preparator are presented here.

Table 3 Descriptive statistics of head act

	groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	collaborative	14	3.7857	1.62569	.43448
	control	14	3.1429	.94926	.25370
Post-test	collaborative	14	4.5000	1.40055	.37431
	control	14	3.1429	1.40642	.37588

As it is shown in Table 3, the mean score of learners' produced head acts in the two groups was different in that the collaborative group had scored a mean score of 3.78 in pretest and received the mean score of 4.50 in the posttest with a gain score of 0.72 while no progress was observed in the control group's posttest. In order to confirm this finding, two independent samples t-tests were conducted on pre-test and post-test scores, the result of which is presented in Table 4. The quantitative analysis shows that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in producing target head acts in the post-test (T=2.555, df=26; sig=.017).

Table 4 Comparing the means of the two groups

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Pre-test	Equal variances assumed	1.278	26	0.213	0.64286	0.50313
	Equal variances not assumed	1.278	20.942	0.215	0.64286	0.50313
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	2.558	26	0.017	1.35714	0.53047
	Equal variances not assumed	2.558	26.000	0.017	1.35714	0.53047

The result of the quantitative analysis shows that collaboration can help learners notice the form and use the triggered head acts in the post-test without any explicit intervention of the teacher.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics of preparator

	groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	collaborative	14	0.00	0.00
	control	14	0.00	0.00
Posttest	collaborative	14	1.37	2.11
	control	14	0.00	0.00

Table 5 shows the mean scores of the learners' produced preparators in the two groups across the tests, it is clear that the scores were different in that the collaborative group had a mean score of 0.00 in pretest and received the mean score of 1.37 in the posttest and had the gain score of 1.37. However, the control group had a mean score of 0.00 in pretest and received the same mean score (0.00) in the posttest again. Table 5 shows that collaboration can help learners notice the preparators and use them in the post-test without any explicit intervention of the teacher.

The quantitative results of this research indicate that collaborative dialogue could well direct learners' attention to the forms of language so that learners noticed the head act, preparator without explicit intervention of the teacher.

Qualitative result

For the purpose of answering the research questions (1. Can collaborative dialogue help learners notice pragmatic forms during form-comparison task activities? 2. How does collaborative dialogue

help raise learners' conscious awareness of L2 pragmatic forms?), the collaborative dialogues of the groups of learners were analyzed for PREs and the following findings were observed commonly in almost all of the collaborative groups during their collaborative talk. This observation indicates that regarding the first research question collaborative dialogue was beneficial in focusing learners' attention to pragmatic forms. In addition, regarding the second research question, the data of this study shows that collaborative dialogue may have created a situation in which the learners could have noticed the form in the following three ways:

- Noticing unnoticed forms or holes

- Noticing the gap

- Negotiation of form

These three events were perceived to be indicators of learners' noticing of the form and collective scaffolding of each other through their zone of proximal development.

Noticing unnoticed forms or holes:
This section will deal with following two issues: the "how and "what" of noticing. The result concerning the first issue showed that during learners' collaboration although some pragmatic forms were unnoticed by the learners, these unnoticed forms were brought to their attention by the help of other learners in the group. In other words, each group of learners could notice those forms that were beyond the capability of each of the learners alone and did not exist in the learners' current interlanguage. Thus, using Donato's (1994) interpretation, it could be claimed that noticing the forms transpired "collectively" during the collaborative dialogue. Each learner brings some new form to others' attention and since there were two or three learners in each group, the chances of noticing were doubled or tripled. Consider the following extract:

Extract 1

1. L1: s:::o the difference is tha:::t 'could you help me with that?

2. but the original one said (.) what did it said?

3. L2: °>if I could ask you to help me<°=

4. L3: → =I WAS WONDERING if I could ask you to help me, so the

5. structure is different.

L1: learner 1; L2: Learner 2; L3: Learner 3

In this extract, the learners are figuring out the similarities and differences between the two sentences: "*I was wondering if I could ask you to help me*" and "*could you help me with that*". In line one and three, the conventional form "*I was wondering*" had not been noticed by the L1and L2 as a difference between their own answer and the correct target form. But in line four this difference was perfectly brought to their attention by L3's intervention during the collaboration. This kind of noticing may well lead learners to learn some new pragmalinguistics.

The result concerning the second issue (what of noticing) showed that the aspects of forms that learners attended to included *lexical selection, steps of request,* and *the requestiveness of the situation* in the sample dialogue.

Lexical selection
Sometimes learners referred to the fact that the original paper was more polite by virtue of selecting better words like "*could*", "*would*", "*favor*", "*possibly*", and "wonder" that lacked in their answers. They also referred to the diversity of words in the original paper and the fact that they invariably used one single word like "*can*" in every blank. In contrast to the sample dialogue that used different expressions for each blank, the learners used the same word or expression over and over again. In fact, these were the occasions when learners noticed the hole in their pragmatic interlanguage during the collaborative dialogue. Learners referred to the fact that in order to show the politeness, the sample dialogue used much more polite words and expressions than

they did. As a result they concluded that the more polite words you use, the more polite your request will become.

Steps of request

During the comparison between the target pragmatic forms and their own written answers, those learners who had noticed the presence of preparators in the target forms became aware that there are some steps before giving the main request. The fact that many of the learners used preparartors in their post-tests showed that they became aware of this step without any explicit explanation of the teacher or memorizing the rules of making request.

Extract 2

1. L1: so first we say that first →e:::h without e::::h preparing the ground

2. (.)→we didn't say that we have a request. → We directly mentioned the main

3. request (.) → we didn't prepare the man=

4. L2:= look she said our sentence in the second blank.↑ We unintentionally did

5. not ask him a favor. Why? Because we didn't notice "how can I help you".

6. >We thought we have to give the request quickly<.

7. L1: yea:::::h. →we go to the exact point without any introduction.

In this extract the learners mentioned "*we did not prepare the ground*" in line one, "*we did not say that we have a request*" and, "*we directly mentioned the main request*" in line two, "*we thought we have to give the request quickly*" in line six. These learners noticed the presence of a preparator in the request and they well understood that there are some steps before giving their main request (head act) and the reason for bringing such a step is preparing the ground for the upcoming request. Thus not only did they learn the form (could I ask you a favor) but also they could infer the reason behind using such forms.

Requestiveness of the situation

For the learners who were not able to recognize the kind of speech act that they had to make, the requestiveness of the situation was pointed out many times by other learners. During the collaboration some learners repeatedly mentioned that "*now we should* **ask** *this*", "*we should* **ask** *something*", "*this line is for* **asking** *for help*", or "*it's better to* **ask** *for a booklet*". This could have implicitly reminded all their group members that this is a requestive situation. And also there were other learners that explicitly mentioned at the beginning of the collaboration that the situation is the requestive one by mentioning sentences like "*ok the situation is the request*" or "*we have to give a request*".

As it can be inferred from the findings, collaborative dialogue could well direct learners' attention to pragmatic forms of language in different ways of noticing the lexical selection, steps of request, and requestiveness of the situation. Thus it seems that compatibly with Vygotsky's (1986) point of view, the notion of noticing which Swain (1997) mentioned as one of functions of output, is realized at the heart of collaboration.

Noticing the gap

Noticing the gap during collaborative work happened when learners were not able to answer a blank or their answers were incorrect. Confronting with their peers' correct answers, they noticed the gap in their interlanguage pragmatics. Learners noticed that their own proposed answers were poor, not as regards the words or grammar but as to the pragmatics of English. In the other word, they actually could understand the demand of the situation to be more polite but they seemed not to have enough pragmalinguistic forms in their language repertoire to use in these situations. The "noticing of the gap" this time happened in terms of pragmatics. They could pin down this gap in their minds that whatever words and grammar that they knew in English was not enough to show the politeness of their talk and there were still so many rules to be learnt about the politeness. As an example look at the

following extract in which learners are confronted with the right form of the request by their peer.

Extract 3

1. L1: I thin:::k it's better to sa:::y two sessions ago I was

2. abse:::nt, e:::h and e:::h >I need your help<

3. L2: I think e:::h>it's better to say that< e::h you know (.) I was absent

4. for two last sessions and it made me so nervous and I really(.) my mind,

5. my mind is so busy for it=

6. L3: =but I, I think it's better to asks s.th, you know why? Because in

7. the answer Sami said sure, [go ahead]=

8. L1: =[go ahead]=

9. L3=I think it's better to say e::m → can I please ask you s.th? or (.)

10.   e::h could you please help me with something? I think like that. Ha?

11.   Isn't it better?

12.   L2: yes

In this extract the learners were trying to fill a blank that needed a preparator. As is obvious, L1's answer in line two and L2's answers in line four were substituted by L3's answer in line nine which was a kind of preparator and more close to the correct answer. Confronting with the pragmatically appropriate answer, both L1 and L2 understood that what they thought of as a proper answer was not actually the proper one. Thus they noticed the gap in their interlanguage pragmatics and the need to learn new expressions for being pragmatically more

appropriate. These learners could successfully use preparators in their post-tests. Thus it appears that they could learn this strategy successfully.

Negotiation of form

During collaboration when a problem came up that one or all of the learners did not know the answer they started negotiating and, as Swain (1997) mentioned, co-constructing the knowledge of the language. Each learner gave an answer and justified the answer. This negotiation happened through four events of *explicit explanation, giving hints, correction,* and *reasoning.*

Explicit explanation

In some cases, the more knowledgeable learner gave an explicit explanation to justify why he/she selected a certain form that she proposed. For example, some learners explicitly mentioned that "*would you mind*" is the only head act that takes "*no*" as its answer or the head acts containing the words like "could" or "would" are more polite than "can". This may lead less knowledgeable learners to establish a more proper bond between the context and pragmalinguistics that should be used in those contexts.

Giving hints

In those cases where explicit explanation did not happen, MKOs would make other learners become aware of a pragmatic item by giving a hint. For example, the MKO would give a little hint about the word "not" in the answer that it takes the question "*would you mind*" and passed easily from this part and did not spend too much time nor paid attention to its explanation. And with that transient hint other learners reacted with utterances like "oh! Yes, you're right" or "Aha". These affective markers like "Oh", "Ah" and "yea" are, as Donato and Lantalf (1990) pointed out, indicators of the learners' orientation and attention to the task. Giving hints might be an effective strategy to activate the passive knowledge in other learners' mind.

Correction

The learners' inappropriate answers to the blanks were corrected by the MKOs. As an example, look at the following extract:

Extract 4

1. L1: ((L1 reads from the paper)) Sonia starts talking to the passenger

2. standing next to her (.) so what do you think Sonia says?

3. L2: e:::h → excuse me, can you give me a favor?

4. L1: ah::a ↑

5. L3: yes.

6. L1: that's right >yeah<. But let's write, excus::e →me could you

7. do me a favor (.) a::nd then the passenger says (.) Sure, how can

8. help you.

In this extract the L2 whose inappropriate answer was corrected during previous sessions and was replaced by the expression "could you do me a favor" was starting to use this expression in this session. But instead, she used the sentence "can you give me a favor" inline three. But as it is obvious she was exposed to a far better form of her answer in line six where the L1 accepted her answer and made a better version of it by proposing "could you do me a favor". Thus it seems that the act of correction was not limited to one session but it was continuing across four sessions. Thus, not only did MKOs introduce better pragmatic forms to learners but they also helped learners during their process of learning by constant correction of newly learnt expressions. This could well lead to the establishment of a proper bond between situation and appropriate expressions.

To sum up, this section aimed to answer both research questions regarding the effect of collaborative dialogue on learners' noticing the pragmatic forms. The result concerning the first research question (*Can collaborative dialogue help learners notice pragmatic forms during the*

form-comparison task?) indicates that collaborative dialogues were successful in focusing learners' attention to pragmatic forms. The result concerning the second research question (*How does collaborative dialogue help raise learners' conscious awareness of L2 pragmatic dimension?*) shows that in searching for evidence of noticing the forms during collaborative dialogue the following events were found during qualitative analysis:

1. Learners collectively helped each other notice pragmatic forms that they could not notice on their own (or notice the hole in their pragmatic interlanguage).

2. Learners collectively helped each other notice the gaps in their interlanguage pragmatics.

3. Learners negotiated about the pragmatic forms and their functions.

Obviously these pieces of evidence are indicators of groups' autonomous attention to pragmatic forms without any direct intervention of the instructor and as a result of learners' noticing the pragmatic forms.

Discussion and conclusion

This study aimed at providing more insight into the effect of collaborative dialogue on the acquisition of pragmatic competence in the context of EFL classrooms. EFL classrooms in contrast to ESL is more or less the only resource for learner's exposure to L2 and since heavy emphasis of EFL instructors is mainly placed on the grammar and vocabulary of the L2, the pragmatics of L2 is largely marginalized if not totally neglected in EFL context. Thus due to the little teaching of pragmatics and learners' little chance of acquiring pragmatic knowledge in this environment, the EFL classroom context is a pragmatically impoverished environment for EFL learners.

For this reason, this study was motivated by the felt need that in EFL context pragmatics has to be brought into sharp focus. In particular, the effect of collaborative dialogue on the development of learners' pragmatic competence was examined with a focus on the

speech act of request. In order to measure the instructional effects on learners' production of request, learners' success in producing appropriate head act and preparators was quantitatively compared in pre-test, and posttest. Results showed that learners' collaboration increased the quality of requests they made after the treatment, whereas learners from the control group did not have any improvement in producing request. Qualitative analyses of the learners' process of learning during the treatment also showed that the learners who performed collaborative dialogue could successfully pay attention to the pragmatic forms of language.

The qualitative findings of this study presented the functions of collaborative dialogue that were observed in the data. These functions include *learners' noticing the unnoticed forms or the hole, learners' noticing the gap, and learners' negotiation of form during the collaborative dialogue*. These findings are in line with Swain, 1997, LaPierre, 1994, and Donato, 1994. Donato (1994) pointed out that during the process of collective scaffolding each learner has a part in scaffolding others in one group. Together learners will construct linguistic knowledge that is beyond the capacity of each of them individually. Donato (1994) stated that in collective scaffolding all learners together create the necessary support for the development of each of them. Swain (1997) suggested that during collaborative dialogue learners not only develop each other's "language use" per se but also extend each other's knowledge "about language". In this line the findings of this study shows that every learner has a role in making others attend to target head act and preparator and also notice his/her interlanguage pragmatics' gap regarding these two variables. As the findings showed during the process of collective scaffolding, all the learners in each group of this study supported each other by giving explicit explanation and hints, correcting each other's wrong answers, and negotiating the form. The learners explicitly corrected each other and explicitly learnt some pragmalinguistic from each other. This way they could improve each other's language use. There were also occasions when learners justified the presence of some pragmaliguistics

or made their group members notice the gap in their interlanguage pragmatics. Thus they could improve each other's knowledge about language.

As a result by having students doing the tasks collaboratively, EFL teachers can benefit from all students' role in directing each other's attention to the forms of language. In the other word, the teacher is not the only person who must take care of students' attention to form but every student has a share in bringing forms to others' attention.

Swain, 1997 following Vygotsky viewed the origin of output's functions in the dialogue between learners. Vygotsky argued that the source of human's cognitive activities is the collaborative dialogue. Swain (1997) also pointed out that during collaborative dialogue learners' attention goes to the language itself and they can jointly co-construct the language knowledge. In this regard the present study also found evidence of learners' noticing the gap in their interlanguage pragmatics. In addition, some evidence of knowledge co-construction was seen among the participants of this study when they tried to do reasoning, correct each other and explicitly explain a pragmatic form to each other. In doing so together they could attain the knowledge of request making that each of them alone could not. Thus letting the students do the tasks collaboratively, EFL teachers can provide this opportunity for the students to figure out many rules of language on their own by working together and co-constructing the knowledge of language.

The effect of collaborative dialogue on learners' development of grammar and vocabulary has been investigated by Kim (2008) and Nassaji and Tian (2010) and they all achieved encouraging results from the intervention of collaborative dialogue in their researches, in this regard this research can widen the borders of target instructional forms to interlanguage pragmatics and gives support to the positive effect of collaboration on learners' acquisition of head act and preparator as well as grammar and vocabulary.

Takimoto (2012) examined the effect of collaborative dialogue on learners' acquiring of English request downgrader. The results provided support for the positive effect of collaboration on learners' acquiring down-graders. Takimoto mentioned some advantages of collaborative dialogue like additional metapragmatic gain, more motivation and attendance to the target linguistic forms, functions and contextual features, and thereby more firmly established knowledge of pragmatics. In a similar vein our study also found evidence of learners' improvement in metapragmatic knowledge regarding English request head act and preparators during collaboration and the evidence to this finding is learners' explicit explanation, hinting and correction that they did during the collaboration. As a result the present study seems to widen the findings of the study conducted by Takimoto (2012) to further instructional targets like head act and external modifier.

Taguchi and Kim (2014) conducted a research on the effect of collaborative dialogue on learners' acquisition of request head act and modifiers. Their result indicated that collaboration had beneficial effects on acquiring request head act but they did not find any instructional effect on the improvement of request down-grader. Regarding the quantitative results the effect of collaboration on learners' acquisition of head act was in line with Taguchi and Kim's (2014) findings. Moreover regarding qualitative analysis of learners' talk during collaboration and individual talk Taguchi and Kim's proposition is that during the collaborative dialogue when learners are having a talk about pragmatic aspect of language, their talk is no more limited to the form of language but they talk about the form and its function and its related context. In this regard our study documented the same finding since having talk about pragmatic forms and function was actually seen in the present study's data when learners were negotiating the form. Thus not only can EFL teachers make use of collaborative dialogue as a technique for students' attention to forms of language but also they can use collaborative dialogue for implicit teaching of pragmatics of language.

Regarding implicit teaching of pragmatic knowledge, the findings of this study seems to demonstrate the effectiveness of implicit teaching of pragmatics accompanied by collaborative task, which seems to widen the findings obtained in previous studies that compared explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatics and found implicit teaching ineffective (House & Kasper, 1981; Joen and Kaya, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2012; Takahashi, 2001; and Tateyama et al., 1997). In this respect, our study suggests that in order to increase the effectiveness of implicit learning other instructional interventions should be examined. For example, it can be stated that in EFL classrooms the application of implicit teaching by making the input enhanced pragmatically or having learners collaborate on the task appears to help EFL learners notice the target forms of the instruction because collaborative dialogue seemed be able to help learners notice the form collectively and establish a form-function relationship between the pragmatic forms and their functions through negotiation of form during collaborative task.

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