# Implementing Peer-dynamic Assessment to Cultivate Iranian EFL Learners' Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence: A Mixed-methods Approach

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**Abstract**

Though dynamic assessment (DA) has gained strong theoretical and empirical support over the last decades, second language (L2) practitioners have blamed it for its applicability in large classes. To ameliorate this limitation, peer-dynamic assessment (peer-DA), rooted in the conceptualization of zone of proximal development (ZPD), can be introduced and practiced as an alternative approach. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the effects of peer-DA on cultivating Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners' interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) competence. Additionally, it was to disclose how peer-DA leads to improving the learners' ILP competence. To achieve these aims, a sample of 84 upper-intermediate EFL learners, including females was selected through a convenience sampling method at Iran Language Institute in Borujerd City, Iran. Then, a total of 37 EFL learners whose scores fell around the mean score were selected and randomly assigned to two groups, namely an experimental (n = 19) and a control (n = 18). Then, they went through a pre-test, interventions (lasting 16 one-hour sessions held two times a week), and a post-test. The experimental group's interactions were meticulously recorded. The collected data were analyzed through two independent samples t-tests, and the microgenetic development approach. Findings documented a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and control group concerning the gains of ILP competence on the post-test. Furthermore, the results of the microgenetic development analysis evidenced how the gradual, contingent prompts could lead to noticeable improvements in the learning of ILP features. These findings may have some pedagogical implications for different stakeholders.

*Keywords*: EFL learners; interlanguage pragmatic competence; microgenetic development approach; peer-dynamic assessment; zone of proximal development

## 1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the underlying concepts, attitudes, and practices in the second language (L2) assessment have changed, owing to the shifting relationship between instruction and assessment. According to Chapelle and Brindley (2002), in the 1970s, "assessment tended to take the form of proficiency testing, based on general ability constructs, which was largely

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unconnected to the curriculum" (p. 284). Nowadays, L2 practitioners are suggested to apply various assessment approaches and practices to consolidate L2 learners' learning. In line with this shifting trend, Dynamic assessment (DA) has been introduced and supported (Lantolf & Poehner, 2010). As a quite new approach to L2 assessment, DA is a kind of interactive assessment that emphasizes the integration of instruction and assessment to facilitate L2 learners' abilities which are in the process of the development (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 2005; Lantolf et al., 2020).

DA rests upon the zone of proximal development (ZPD) concept as one of the pillars of Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural theory (SCT) of learning. In Vygotsky's terms, ZPD is the gap between what an individual can do alone and what she/he can accomplish with aid or guidance from more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, from this viewpoint, ZPD was regarded as the distance between a learner's actual level of development and the next level of development which is attainable by receiving contingent, congruent mediations from teachers and capable peers (Haywood & Lidz 2007; Zarei & Rahmaty, 2021). Based on this concept, various approaches, including DA (Luria, 1961), Group-DA (Poehner, 2009), and peer-DA (Rezai et al., 2022) have been posed in the literature.

While DA tackles mainly dialogic interactions between a teacher and a learner to solve a learning problem, group-DA involves the whole group's ZPD rather than a single learner's ZPD (Lantolf et al., 2021). Poehner (2009) contends that Group-DA can empower group members to embark upon a task that they are not able to take over alone. In a sense, in Group-DA, teachers should offer mediation to L2 learners and they should direct any mediation to the whole group's lacks and needs (Poehner, 2009). When it comes to peer-DA, dialogic mediations are provided by peers (Rezai et al., 2022). Indeed, concerning L2 learners' current ZPD, the learner-learner interactions intend to heighten peers' performance by offering contingent and congruent mediations (Alemi et al., 2019). That is, instead of teachers, they are peers who scaffold each other to co-construct their intended knowledge and skills.

In the Iranian context, EFL learners' proficiency is primarily assessed in terms of language skills and language components. In fact, despite the undoubted significance of pragmatic competence (PC) in using language appropriately in communicative contexts, L2 practitioners have rarely attempted to develop PC tests or assign a separate part in language tests to measure it (Birjandi & Rezaei, 2010). One possible reason for this long-lasting negligence may lie in the fact that compared to grammatical or lexical competence, assessing EFL learners' PC is quite complex and demanding (Shauer, 2019). In addition, it has been argued that the instruction and assessment of PC are two separate areas that can rarely be integrated as a unified activity (Ohta, 2005; Shauer, 2019; Zarei & Khojasteh, 2020). Thus, as Rose and Kasper (2001) note, there has been a dearth of consensus over the best method to teach and assess PC.

Regarding the prominent significance of interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) competence for EFL learners and the lack of an appropriate approach to teach and assess it simultaneously, it seems that peer-DA can serve to fill up the lacuna. However, to the best knowledge of the researchers, no study has yet explored the effects of peer-DA on cultivating the ILP competence of Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners in a mixed-methods study. In response to this lacuna, the present study aimed to explore the effects of peer-DA on fostering Iranian EFL

learners' ILP competence. It is hoped that the findings of the present study can disclose if peer-DA is useful for Iranian upper-intermediate EFL learners to handle ILP features efficiently.

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1. Peer-Dynamic Assessment

As mentioned earlier, DA rests upon the tents of Vygotsky's (1978) SCT. According to SCT, mediated minds are constructed and developed out of social activities in line with the cultural values of a specific community (Ellis, 2012). In other words, Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning and development are thoroughly interwoven within their social and cultural contexts. To him, learning is primarily social rather than individual (Mitchell et al., 2013). Generally, Vygotskian SCT is based on two primary principles; first, learning is a social phenomenon rather than simply a cognitive or biological one; and second, the human learning processes are mediated processes. It posits that human learning is highly affected by cultural and social artifacts, activities, and concepts (Lantolf et al., 2021; Ratner, 2002). To put it simply, social interactions could pave the way for learners to transform concepts from inter-psychological (i.e., the social level) to intra-psychological (i.e., the individual level) (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). From this perspective, as Ohta (2001) notes, the congruent and contingent mediations aid L2 learners in displaying abilities that they could not show if performed independently. Thus, these mediations can considerably enhance L2 learners' achievement (Birjandi et al., 2013; Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Additionally, when peer-DA is at stake, the gradual, congruent mediations are provided by peers rather than teachers. As a point of fact, in the implementation of peer-DA, in contrast to DA, L2 learners can pair up to embark jointly upon a linguistic task. When one of the peers encounters a problem, other peers attempt to assist him/her and provide the required contingent and congruent mediations bound with the peer's ZPD (Rezai et al., 2022). In agreement with Vygotsky (1987), based on the peer's responses to the given mediations, it can be assured that the peers' abilities are in the process of forming. Therefore, it provides an excellent opportunity for peers and teachers to achieve a fuller picture of the fully-developed abilities and the abilities which are in the process of development.

### 2.2. Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence

As noted above, another variable in the present study is ILP competence. PC is defined as "the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in social interactions" (Taghuchi, 2011, p.1). ILP, as Kasper and Rose (2003) note, explores how non-native speakers understand and produce speech acts in an L2 and how L2 learners develop the capability to perceive and perform actions in an L2. ILP involves two key terms of interlanguage and pragmatics (Taguchi & Li, 2020). The term interlanguage, introduced by Selinker (1972), refers to an L2 learner's knowledge of the target language in all the developmental stages in the learning process. It preserves the characteristics of the two language systems and is not entirely identical to L1 or L2. It results in a unique linguistic system (Ellis, 2014). By referring to the word inter, some scholars (Nemser, 1971; Selinker, 1972) opine that interlanguage is metaphorically a halfway position between L1 and L2. The second key term of ILP is pragmatics, which deals with language in use and the contexts in which it is used. Indeed, it is the study of how context

contributes to meaning (Kasper & Rose, 2002). To put it another way, PC, according to Taghuchi (2008), is "the ability to perform language functions in a context" (p. 34).

Taghuchi (2011) stresses that two competences of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic constitute ILP. The former is simply described as the ability to apply linguistic elements to express the speech intentions, whereas the latter is considered as the social perception and the set of rules which underlie L2 users' interpretations and performance of communicative acts (Taguchi, 2011; Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

### 2.3. Related Empirical Studies in the Literature

A quick glance at the literature reveals that a mass of studies has been conducted to probe into the effectiveness of the different DA approaches on L2 learning. Due to space limitations, a few related studies are critically reviewed to lay the groundwork for the current study. Alavi et al. (2012) studied the impacts of G-DA on Iranian EFL learners' listening comprehension. Their findings disclosed that the collective scaffoldings were useful to improve the learners' listening comprehension. Besides, the results showed that both primary and secondary interactants could benefit from the interactions. In another study, Estaji and Farahanynia (2019) explored the effectiveness of the DA procedures, namely interventionist and interactionist in cultivating Iranian EFL learners' oral narrative performance and anxiety. The interventionist and interactionist groups filled out the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al., 1986) and took a narrative speaking test before and after the treatment. The findings evidenced that both groups' oral performance markedly developed, whereas their anxiety substantially decreased. Additionally, Bakhoda and Shabani (2017) investigated the efficiency of computerized-group dynamic assessment (C-G-DA) using tailor-made computer software to enhance L2 learners' reading comprehension. The results revealed the positive effect of C-G-DA on the learners' reading comprehension. Besides, Tabatabaee et al. (2018) explored the impacts of three types of assessment, namely interventionist dynamic assessment, cumulative G-DA assessment, and non-DA, on Iranian EFL learners' writing skills of narrative paragraphs. The findings disclosed that the cumulative G-DA was the most effective assessment in improving the grammatical accuracy of their narrative paragraphs. Additionally, Alavi and Taghizadeh (2014) examined the impacts of three types of explicit and implicit feedback based on DA procedures on improving Iranian male university learners' essay writing. Their findings confirmed the significant progress of the participants with different ZPDs in their essay writing at the end of the instruction. Further, to probe the effectiveness of G-DA in improving grammar knowledge, Davin (2011) studied the effectiveness of teachers' mediations through cumulative G-DA on solving elementary Spanish learners' grammatical problems. The results disclosed that as the learners with different ZPDs had different problems, each of them utilized a special treatment and mediation to correct their errors and to master the target structures. Finally, Rezai et al. (2022) explored the effects of online peer-DA on Iranian EFL learners' writing skills. They found that the participants' writing skills significantly improved at the end of the interventions. Further, the results showed that the participants earned positive attitudes toward online peer-DA to foster their writing skills.

Concerning ILP competence, in the Iranian EFL context, Merghati and Ahangari (2014) probed the effectiveness of DA in fostering EFL learners' ILP. In the study, the experimental group received DA-based instructions on the realm of pragmatics, whereas the control group worked on the same materials of pragmatics using translation and awareness raising. The results documented that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the post-test. Additionally, Moradian et al. (2019) explored the impacts of concurrent G-DA on EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge for the cases of requests and refusals. The experimental group received the instruction based on concurrent G-DA principles, i.e., contingent mediations, whereas the control group was offered direct feedback without considering their ZPDs. Their results revealed that the G-DA group showed better performance on the post-test than the control group. Likewise, Zangoei et al. (2019) investigated the effects of an interventionist computerized DA via web-based software, named Computerized Dynamic Assessment of Speech Acts, Routines, and Implicatures (CDASRI) on L2 pragmatic comprehension. They found that the computerized-DA instruction significantly improved the learners' pragmatic comprehension. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the learners' responsiveness to the mediations was quite different due to the learner's different ZPDs. Finally, Alavi et al. (2020) explored the effects of computerized-DA on the developing Iranian EFL learners' PC. They found that the experimental group out-performed the control group at the end of the instructions.

What can be implied from the above-reviewed studies is that to date, no study has explored the effects of peer-DA on improving Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence. Additionally, they have not used a mixed-methods design to provide a deep understanding of the effects of peer-DA on fostering Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence. Hence, the present study purported to disclose the effects of peer-DA on cultivating Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence quantitatively and qualitatively. To meet these goals, the following research questions were put forward:

1. Does peer-dynamic assessment lead to the enhancement of the Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence?
2. How does peer-dynamic assessment improve the Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence?

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Research Design

The current study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-methods design. That is, qualitative data were used to complement quantitative data (Creswell, 1998). The quantitative part entailed a true-experimental design, and the qualitative section included a microgenetic development approach (Creswell, 2017). In a sense, the researchers used both quantitative data and qualitative data to reach triangulation. According to Mackey and Gass (2016), triangulation provides valuable opportunities for researchers to delve systematically into the various dimensions of a phenomenon using different data. Thus, the present study employed a mixed-methods design to further our understanding of the effects of peer-DA on improving Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence quantitatively and qualitatively.

## 3.2. Setting and Participants

The present study was carried out at Iran Language Institute (ILI) in Burojerd City. The sample included a total of 37 upper-intermediate learners who were selected out of a population of 56 learners whose scores were one standard deviation (SD) above and below the mean (based on the participants' key English test (KET) test scores). The participants, then, were randomly assigned into two groups, namely the experimental group (n = 19) and the control group (n = 18). The participants were from different social classes, their ages ranged from 13 to 28, and were all females. Of particular note is that the participants willingly attended their English classes and they were learning English as a foreign language. Their classes were held twice a week over an eight-week semester; each session lasted two hours, during which all four language skills were practiced. It is worth noting that the participants signed written consent (in Persian) to participate in this study. The researchers stressed that their participation is voluntary and they can withdraw from the study as they wished. Additionally, the researchers assured the participants that their performance during the study would remain confidential and they kept them informed about the final findings. It should be noted that the first researcher who had a comprehensive understanding of the principles and procedures of peer-DA and had published some articles in this domain ran the treatments for both groups.

## 3.3. Instruments

The data collection instruments consisted of a Key English Test (KET), two multiple-choice ILP tests, and a pamphlet of conversations containing speech acts. To assure that the participants' were homogenized, parts 1 to 7 of KET, including 50 items were administered. Part one entailed five items in matching format; part two included five items in a three-option multiple-choice format in which the participants had to choose the correct choice to fill in the blank of a sentence; part three consisted of ten items in conversation format. In the first five items, the participants chose the correct choice from the given options concerning a given cue. In the last five items, the participants matched two columns that included two statements to make a conversation between two people. Part four comprised a passage followed by seven multiple-choice items. In part five, the learners read a cloze passage and completed the given blank by selecting the correct term from three choices; parts six and seven contained productive items. Part six which included five items provided the initial letter of the target word (or job) in the given blank. The participants were entailed to fill the gaps with the appropriate jobs considering the job descriptions provided. Part seven comprised ten gap-filling items. The participants were asked to fill in the given blanks in a postcard-only with one word using their own knowledge. The oral section of the test was discarded due to logistical limitations. KET has often been used in different EFL/ESL contexts around the world. Nonetheless, since only a sub-test of KET was used, the researchers assessed its reliability and validity. Concerning the reliability, they administered it to 25 EFL upper-intermediate learners. The results of the KR-21 formula yielded 0.79 which was considered acceptable for the purposes of the present study. In relation to the validity, the researchers invited two experienced EFL learners to check if KET enjoyed the required validity. They affirmed that it was sufficiently valid in terms of face and content.

The other instruments were two multiple-choice ILP tests, developed and validated by Tajedin and Malmir (2014). Indeed, the original ILP tests of the English speech act consisted of 35 items assigned into two tests, namely pre-test (n = 17) and post-test (n = 18) by the researchers (See Appendix). The ILP tests comprised the five most frequent speech acts of requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, and compliments. They involved situations ranging from very informal situations to very formal ones. Each test item entailed a particular speech act situation followed by three choices. The most appropriate choice contained all the pragmalinguistic/lexico-grammatical and sociopragmatic dimensions of the situational context. It should be noted that Tajedin and Malmir (2014) utilized several digital and printed resources to construct the ILP test. For example, they used conversational textbooks, such as Top-Notch, New Interchange, Passages, American Files, etc. Then, they first designed a 50-item ILP test. However, after measuring the reliability through Cronbach Alpha (0.75) and validity through the experts' judgment strategy (i.e., they invited two university professors in Applied Linguistics to evaluate the test in terms of face validity and content validity) in two pilot studies, 35 items were left. In sum, the final version of the tests which they developed included seven requests, nine apologies, eight refusals, seven compliments, and four complaint speech acts. Table 1 reports the type of the speech acts, their sequence order, and the number of items for each part of the ILP competence pre-test and the ILP competence post-test.

**Table 1**

*Number and Sequence of Speech Acts in the Two Tests*

| Speech act | Pre-test | Post-test |
|---|---|---|
| Request | 3 | 4 |
| Apology | 4 | 5 |
| Refusal | 4 | 4 |
| Compliment | 4 | 3 |
| Complaint | 2 | 2 |
| Total | 17 | 18 |

The other instrument was a pamphlet of English conversations embedding one or more speech acts. The conversations were carefully selected from the international conversation books which were the best seller in English language learning, such as New Interchange, Passages, Top-Notch, and Four Corners. The pamphlet entailing 48 conversations was printed and given out to all the participants.

*3.4. Data Collection Procedures*

Initially, the participants of the study were chosen through a convenience sampling method. Next, KET was administered to ensure that the participants were homogenized. The participants whose scores fell between +1 and -1 standard deviation (SD) away from the mean (M) were chosen for the main study. Afterward, the participants were randomly assigned to the experimental group (n=19) and the control group (n=18). Then, the pre-test was administered to measure the participants' ILP competence prior to the treatments. Next, the treatments were offered for the two groups. The experimental group received the treatment based on the

principles and procedures of peer-DA. First, the teacher discussed how the learners would be interacting with their peers and scaffolded each other with contingent and congruent mediations. The primary purpose was to help the learners to know how to offer graduated, dialogic, and contingent mediation to their peers. For this purpose, the teacher implemented the procedures practically three times in front of the classroom to assure that the learners had gained a comprehensive understanding of the peer-DA. Having assured that the participants had earned a correct understanding of the peer-DA, the treatment was started. At the beginning of each session, the teacher went through the conversations and provided the required information about the speech acts. Then, she directed the learners' attention to the speech acts embedded in the conversation. Having assured that the learners have learned a particular speech act by choosing and writing it on the whiteboard, she asked the learners to join their two-member groups to make a detailed conversation with it. By receiving and offering mediations, the participants tried to help each other use the speech acts appropriately. They attempted to jointly scaffold each other if there was a problem or mistake in using the speech acts. To put it precisely, they used Davin and Donato's (2013) framework (Table 2) interactively. That is, "by providing contingent and graduated support, called mediation, in the form of question, hints, and prompts" (Aljaaffreh & Lantolf, 1994, p. 6), the participants scaffolded their peers to co-construct the required ILP knowledge. They applied the prompts carefully as follows:

**Table 2**
*Mediations/Prompts Offered by Peers Adopted from Davin and Donato (2013)*

| Level of Explicitness | Mediation/Prompt |
|---|---|
| Prompt 1 | Pause with a skeptical look |
| Prompt 2 | Repetition of entire phrase by teacher |
| Prompt 3 | Repetition of the specific site of error |
| Prompt 4 | Forced choice option (i.e., when or where?) |
| Prompt 5 | Correct response and explanation provided |

As seen above, the gradual, contingent prompts were provided on a scale from the most implicit to the most explicit with the aim of assisting the learners to detect and rectify their ILP mistakes. Of particular note is that the teachers went around the classroom and monitored if the learners were appropriately implementing the principles and procedures of peer-DA. Audio-recorders recorded the interactions among the learners. It is worth of note that the treatment of the control group was offered based on a non-DA approach. In fact, when one of the learners produced an incorrect speech act, the teacher immediately provided the correct form. Each session lasted 60 minutes for sixteen sessions held twice a week. Having completed the treatments, the researchers measured the participants' gains in ILP on the post-test.

*3.5. Data Analysis Procedures*

Since the present study followed a mixed-methods design, the data analysis procedures were quantitative and qualitative. Using SPSS, version 22, the basic descriptive statistics, including M and SD, were calculated for both groups. Additionally, independent sample t-tests

were used to verify the difference between the control group's means and the experimental group's means on the pre-test and post-test.

Concerning the qualitative part, a microgenetic development approach was employed. As Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) note, the microgenetic development approach is used to observe changes by repeatedly studying a phenomenon. The episodes of the interactions among the learners were selected and analyzed microgenetically. In doing so, the researchers meticulously examined the interactions among the learners to see how they were working together to handle the speech acts. This analysis was of paramount significance because any documentation of development in the learners' ILP competence was impossible without it. In a sense, it disclosed how the peer-DA mediations let the learners co-shape and co-internalize the speech acts.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. *Quantitative Results*

The first research question explored if peer-DA assessment led to improving the Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence. To this end, the participants' scores on the ILP competence pretest and the ILP competence post-test for the control group and experimental groups were compared. However, before running an independent sample t-test, the researchers tested if its assumptions were not violated. The collected data were evaluated for the assumption of equal variances. Levene's test results ($F_{(2,35)} = 3.781$, $p > .05$) and ($F_{(2,35)} = 4.305$, $p > .05$) in the pre-test and post-test, respectively, showed that this assumption was met. Concerning the normality assumption, since the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed that the sig. values (0.25) were larger than the critical value (0.05), it was assured that the collected data were normally distributed. Hence, the researchers used the independent sample t-tests. Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the two groups on the *ILP competence* pre-test and the *ILP competence* post-test.

**Table 3**

*Results of Descriptive Statistics of ILP Competence Pre-test and ILP Competence Post-test across the Groups*

|  |  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental Group | Pre-test | 19 | 8.10 | 2.68 |
| Control Group |  | 18 | 7.39 | 2.00 |
| Experimental Group | Post-test | 19 | 14.80 | 3.03 |
| Control Group |  | 18 | 8.07 | 2.89 |

As reported in Table 3, there was a significant difference between the means of the experimental group on the ILP competence pre-test (M = 8.101, SD = 2.680) and ILP competence post-test (M = 14.802, SD = 3.031). In addition, the experimental group (M = 14.802, SD = 3.031) and control group (M = 8.071, SD = 2.892) have performed differently on the ILP competence post-test. The two independent-sample t-tests were used to see whether the observed differences between the groups were statistically significant. The results are reported in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Results of the Independent-samples T-tests on the ILP Pre-test and the ILP Post-test*

| | | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances of Means | | t-test for Equality | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference |
| Pragmatic Competence | Pre-test | Equal variances assumed | 3.78 | .201 | 2.84 | 35 | .09 | 0.71 |
| | | Equal variances not assumed | | | 2.84 | 32.45 | .10 | 0.71 |
| | Post-test | Equal variances assumed | 4.30 | .330 | 4.36 | 35 | .00 | 6.73 |
| | | Equal variances not assumed | | | 4.36 | 32.45 | .00 | 6.73 |

As presented in Table 4, concerning the observed t-value and the significance level on the ILP competence pre-test ($t_{(35)} = 2.84$, $p > .05$), it was safely concluded that there was no significant difference between the experimental group and control group on the ILP pre-test. However, regarding the observed t-value and the significance level on the post-test ($t_{(35)} = 4.36$, $p < .05$), it could be confirmed that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and control group in terms of gains in ILP competence.

*4.2. Qualitative Results*

The second research question investigated how peer-DA improved the Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence. In a sense, this research question aimed to track the learners' ILP competence changes during the instruction. Due to space limitations, just four episodes taken from the learners' interactions are microgenetically analyzed. Episode 1, which goes around a compliment, presents a sample of a conversation in which a learner generated an incorrect sentence in terms of pragmatic criteria, and thus, her peer scaffolded her to correct herself. The two participants are under the pseudonyms of Mina and Fatemeh.

*Episode 1*
1. *Mina:* Your new handbag is really nice, Fatemeh.
2. *Fatemeh:* It's your eyes which see it nice.
3. *Mina:* (Pause with a questioning look).                (Prompt 1)
4. *Fatemeh:* (Silence and thinking about the utterance).
5. *Mina:* Do you think that it is correct to answer my compliment in such a way in English? (Prompt 2)
6. *Fatemeh:* Well, my sentence is correct. Isn't it?
7. *Mina:* Is there any proper English expression to answer such a compliment?  (Prompt 3)

8. *Fatemeh:* Oh! I got it. We should say 'Thank you. I like it too' in English.

9. *Mina:* That's right. Well done.

10. *Fatemeh:* So, instead of saying 'It's your eyes which see them nice,' we must say 'I like it too. Thanks'.

11. *Mina:* Sure. Bravo

As seen above, Mina compliments the new handbag of Fatemeh. Fatemeh provides an utterance that is not a proper answer in English though it is appropriate in Persian in response to the compliment. Thus, Mina offers the first prompt by pausing to show that Fatemeh's utterance is not pragmatically appropriate. Here, Fatemeh remains silent, looks, and thinks about the utterance. Next, Mina moves on to the second prompt by asking if it is correct to answer her compliment in such a way in English. Then, Fatemeh asks if her sentence is not correct. This question shows that Fatemeh needs a more explicit prompt. Thus, Mina asks whether there is any proper English expression to answer such a compliment. Fatemeh can generate the appropriate statement by receiving the more explicit prompt. Next, Mina confirms the correct utterance and evaluates her attempt to solve the problem. Afterward, Fatemeh can explain the pragmatic point more explicitly to demonstrate that they have internalized the speech act.

In the next episode, the interaction between two peers involves a complaint speech act. A learner made an incorrect English expression regarding the pragmatic criteria while her peer scaffolded her to construct the correct speech act. The two participants are under the pseudonyms of Ladan and Bahar. Ladan is explaining an event to Bahar:

*Episode 2*

1. *Ladan:* I lost an important business contract yesterday because I stayed in traffic for an hour.

2. *Bahar:* (Pause with a questioning look).          (Prompt 1)

3. *Ladan:* (Silence and thinking about the problem). Well, my sentence is correct. Isn't it?

4. *Bahar:* Do you think there is any proper English expression to use instead of staying *in traffic*?        (Prompt 2)

5. *Ladan:* Uhm. Understood. I need to say 'stuck in traffic' in English?

6. *Bahar:* Ok… that's right. We can just say 'stuck in traffic'? There is any better structure for that? Nothing else?? (Prompt 3)

7. *Ladan:* Oh! I got it. That's better to say 'got stuck in traffic'.

8. *Bahar:* Well done. Bravo.

9. *Ladan:* So, instead of saying 'stayed in traffic', we must say 'got stuck in traffic'.

10. *Bahar:* True. Good job.

In this episode, Bahar provides some prompts to help Ladan replace her incorrect utterance with the correct speech act. In this conversation, Ladan's utterance is not appropriate. Bahar offers the first prompt by pausing along with a questioning look. This signals to Ladan that there is a problem with his utterance. He remains silent and thinks about the utterance. However, she cannot generate the proper utterance. Thus, Bahar moves on to the second prompt by asking the appropriate structure. Here, Ladan is capable of generating a better utterance.

Then, Bahar asks whether there is any proper utterance to convey such a meaning in English. With the help of this explicit prompt, Ladan can generate the intended speech act. Next, Bahar confirms and admires her endeavor to solve the problem. Finally, through an explicit explanation, Ladan shows that she has internalized the target pragmatic feature.

In the third episode, the interaction centers on the development of an apology speech act. In fact, a dialogic interaction is formed between two peers to co-construct the apology speech act. The learners involved in the episode are under the pseudonyms of Tina and Sara. Tina is talking and Sara interrupts her, leading to the following conversation:

### Episode 3

1. *Sara:* I want to say something.
2. *Tina:* (Pause with a questioning look).              (Prompt 1)
3. *Sara:* (Silence and thinking about the problem). I cut your words??
4. *Tina:* So, when you interrupt a person's talk, you should say what?      (Prompt 2)
5. *Sara:* Uhm. I should say, 'excuse me?'
6. *Tina:* You can just say 'excuse me'? Nothing else? (Prompt 3)
7. *Sara:* Aha. Got it. I need to say, 'I'm sorry to stop you?'
8. *Tina:* Well, that's right. Or, for example, you can say, 'I do apologize for interrupting you.' (Prompt 4)
9. *Sara:* Understood. Thank you. When we want to apologize in English, we should use structures like 'I'm sorry ….' and 'I do apologize…'.
10. *Tina:* True. Bravo.

In Episode 3, to aid Sara in learning how to handle the apology speech act, Tina provides four prompts. In the conversation, Tina's utterance is suddenly interrupted by Sara. With a pause followed by a questioning look, Tina catches Sara's attention that there is a problem with her action. However, since the first prompt cannot help Sara generate the proper utterance, Tina presents the second prompt by asking for the appropriate utterance. With the mediation provided in the second prompt, Sara can generate a better utterance. Since the utterance is not yet entirely acceptable, Tina gives the third prompt by asking whether there is any other way to convey such a meaning in English. In the next turn, Sara can produce the intended utterance. Along with the confirmation and appraise of Sara's endeavor, Tina offers the next prompt by giving an alternative utterance to conduct the intended speech act. Then, through an explicit explanation, Sara shows that she has internalized the intended pragmatic feature.

In the last episode, the interaction revolves around the development of a compliment speech act. Two peers work together to learn the appropriate compliment speech act. The peers engaged in the episode are under the pseudonyms of Baran and Fatima. It is at the end of the class that the following conversation occurs:

*Episode 4*

1. *Baran:* Don't be tired, Fatima.
2. *Fatima:* (Pause with a questioning look).          (Prompt 1)
3. *Baran:* (Silence and thinking about her utterance). Well, don't be tired, is it correct??
4. *Fatima:* In English when we want to say that meaning, we should say what?      (Prompt 2)
5. *Baran:* Uhm. We should say, ……..'
6. *Fatima:* You should say 'good job' or we should say  …….. ??? (Prompt 3)
7. *Baran:* Aha. Got it. We need to say, 'good job' and 'more power to you'.
8. *Fatima:* Bravo, that's correct. (Prompt 4)
9. *Baran:* Understood. Thank you. So, we can say that the appropriate structures for this meaning are different in English and Persian.
10. *Fatima:* Right. Bravo.


In episode 4, Fatima tries to help Baran learn the intended utterance which is pragmatically appropriate. For this purpose, she scaffolded her with four prompts. As Baran's utterance is not appropriate, Fatima offers the first prompt through a pause and a questioning look. Though Baran understood that there is a problem with her utterance, it is beyond her current PC yet, and accordingly, she cannot rectify it. In the following turn, Fatima offers a more explicit prompt, but it could not aid Baran to fill the gap in her PC. This pushes Fatima to present the next prompt by presetting a more explicit prompt (i.e., giving an example utterance). Upon receiving the prompt, Baran can give more example utterances to show that the intended speech act has come into her ZPD. In the succeeding prompt, Fatima approved Barn's utterance. Afterward, Baran gives a brief explicit explanation to demonstrate that she has internalized the target speech act. The interaction ends with the positive feedback ability given by Fatima.


## 5. Discussion

The results of the study disclosed that the Iranian EFL learners' ILP competence enhanced significantly after the mediations offered based on the principles and procedures of peer-DA. The results of the study, indeed, lend credence to the perspectives of Poehner (2009) and Lantolf and Poehner (2010), noting that the use of contingent and graduated mediation in DA approaches is so effective to aid L2 learners to reach their own ZPDs and identify the ways to fill in their learning lacks and needs. In essence, the usefulness of peer-DA in promoting the learners' ILP competence may substantiate this notion that the congruent and gradual mediations within the learners' ZPDs might have fostered their emergent abilities considerably (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014).

The findings of the study lend support to the results of the previous studies (Alavi & Taghizadeh, 2014; Ashraf et al., 2016; Ashtarian et al. 2018; Merghati & Ahangari, 2015; Rezaee & Ghanbarpoor, 2019; Rezai et al., 2022; Tabatabaee et al., 2018; Shrestha & Coffin, 2012), in which the positive effects of the implementation of DA approaches were found in improving L2 learners' achievements. For instance, the findings of the present study accord with those of Merghati and Ahangari (2015) and Tabatabaee et al. (2018), reporting that the group who was instructed via the DA procedures outperformed the groups who received other

kinds of assessment, i.e., interventionist or direct feedback. Likewise, the findings of the study are in agreement with Lantolf and Infante (2016), arguing that if L2 learners are equipped with suitable mediations targeted to their problems and needs, they can co-construct the intended knowledge and skills to perform a task efficiently. In fact, the results of the study are compatible with the main maxim of Vygotskian SCT, highlighting that learning is chiefly a social task, meaning that constant interactions of learners with each other assist them in attaining and internalizing language knowledge (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Further, in congruence with the present findings of the study, Moradian et al. (2019) found that concurrent G-DA created the conditions for EFL learners to construct pragmatic features like requests and refusals. The findings of the study are also in accordance with those of Shabani (2018), reporting that the learners' attempts to achieve a community of practice by helping each other detect their mistakes in producing pragmatic features, move forward correcting them, and reach autonomy. Learners' self-correction in the process of mediation, as Carter (2003) notes, might also pertain to their progress of awareness and sensitivity to different pragmatic language features.

Additionally, similar to Poehner and Infante (2016), the findings of the study can be explained from this sense that the dialogic mediations provided by peers could assist the learners to aptly embark upon the ILP features since the dialogic mediations were tailored to their needs and wants. In other words, the findings of the study may be justified by one of the cornerstones of SCT, highlighting that before learners can co-construct knowledge on the individual level, they need to build it on the social level via dialogic interactions with knowledgeable peers (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Additionally, the findings of the study may accord with Toughi's viewpoint based on which collaborative peer-peer interactions give learners unique opportunities to utilize targets that may not be accessible in teacher-learner interactions. Another line of discussion for the study's results may be ascribed to this view of Lantolf et al. (2021), who argue that when the learners encountered a problem, and their peers monitored their performance carefully, they were provided congruent and contingent mediations. This might have been a great help for them to reveal the abilities that have been fully formed and those that were still in the process of developing.

Besides, another possible explanation of the findings of the study may be ascribed to the diagnostic capabilities of peer-DA (Poehner et al., 2015, Rezai et al., 2022). It means that by receiving the contingent and graduated prompts from their peers, the learners might have diagnosed the L2 pragmatic features that were within their ZPDs and those that were beyond their ZPDs. In fact, as Poehner (2009) stresses, the learners might have had great opportunities to reflect upon the dialogic conversations and took advantage of the knowledge and skills constructed in their mutual interactions. Furthermore, the findings of the study may be theoretically justified based on the post-structuralism that language is fundamentally not static as it changes in different contexts and interactions. In essence, in an interactional context, as Pennycook (2001) asserts, meaning is constructed within discourses and regulated by all forms of semiotic activity, such as texts, images, and gestures. In addition, the findings of the study may corroborate with Mori's (2009) viewpoint that particular pragmatic features emanate from the "moment-by-moment unfolding of talk-in-interaction, in conjunction with other types of multimodal semiotic resources available for interactional participants" (p. 344). Furthermore,

the findings of the study may be explained with the emic approach, rested on conversation analysis (CA). Based on this approach, it may be argued that the participants might have co-constructed the actions sequentially in turn and have tried to take their turns to jointly fulfill the activity at hand (Taguchi, 2011).

## 6. Conclusion

As pointed out above, the present study followed a two-fold purpose. First, it aimed to probe the impact of peer-DA on improving Iranian EFL learners' PC. Second, it purported to uncover how peer-DA led to developing Iranian EFL learners' PC. The findings revealed a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group concerning the gains of ILP competence on the post-test. Also, the results of the microgenetic development analysis evidenced that the graduated, contingent prompts led to significant developments in the learners' ILP competence. In general, the results of the study revealed that if implemented properly in large classes, peer-DA predicated on offering the graduated, contingent mediations from an implicit to explicit way can significantly develop EFL learners' ILP competence.

In light of the findings of the study, some pedagogical implications for pertinent stakeholders are offered. As the results of the study showed, since peer-DA provided valuable opportunities for the integration of instruction and assessment, EFL teachers can practice it as a main pedagogical means to instruct ILP competence in large classes. However, it should be emphasized that they should sufficiently train their learners on the principles and procedures of peer-DA to know how to apply it effectively. Besides, in alignment with the findings of the study, L2 learners can benefit from peer-DA considering their learning contexts and purposes. By doing so, peer-DA can provide a less_threatening, enjoyable context in which they can freely display their true abilities and shape their emergent abilities. In fact, when an L2 learner cannot embark independently upon a specific task, he/she should not be frowned upon by teachers because that learner is not cognitively qualified. Instead, learning can be more conducive and promising by offering the mediations through peer-DA for the learners (Ohta, 2005). Likewise, the learners need to be aware of possible outcomes of selecting pragmatic features, although their selection of the pragmatic feature is based on their own learning goals (Judd, 1999). Moreover, L2 teacher educators can benefit from the findings of the study to make teachers aware of the necessity to assess L2 learners' needs and wants for their language study to consider their subjectivity in making pragmatic choices. Finally, the results of the study may bring about this implication for materials developers to integrate DA approaches such that the mediations and prompts be presented systematically.

Given the limitations imposed on the present study, some suggestions for further research are presented here. Since the participants of the present study were limited to EFL learners who were studying the English language in private institutes, to increase the generalizability of the present study's findings, further studies can be conducted across different contexts (e.g., elementary schools, high schools, and universities). Additionally, since this study focused on the effectiveness of peer-DA on improving ILP, further studies are needed to explore the effects of peer-DA on boosting L2 learners' discourse and strategic competence, language skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), and language components (e.g.,

pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary). Additionally, because the present study was cross-sectional, interested researchers can conduct a longitudinal study to uncover how peer-DA affects L2 learners' ILP competence over a period of time.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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## Appendix
### Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence Pre-test

Name:……………………………. Student No………………………….…

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 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 2**

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 when will you be free these days? It won't be long.

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 3**

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 4**

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 5**

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 6**

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, sir, would you please give me a piece of paper? Thank you.

**Situation 7**

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 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 ages that I just plain forgot pay. I really am very sorry, how much do I owe you?

**Situation 8**

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 9**

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 10**

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 11**

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.

**Situation 12**

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. The music teacher didn't keep her time well, so I'm late.

B. I'm sorry I'm late. I got out of music class late.

C. I'm sorry to be so late, but you should know, I like playing basketball as well as music.

**Situation 13**

Suppose you are late for an important class and the teacher is very punctual and principled. How would you express your apology in this situation?

The Teacher: This is the third time you're late for this class. Next time I won't let you in.

A. I understand. I won't be late again.

B. Sorry but the important thing is that I attend, right?

C. Things happen in life, sorry.

**Situation 14**

You are almost asleep in the class while the teacher is teaching. The teacher gets very angry when he sees you sleeping in the class. How do you express your apology?

The Teacher: Did you sleep well last night?

A. I'm sorry; I will try and not let it happen again.

B. I'm sorry, but I didn't sleep a wink last night.

C. Pardon me. I couldn't help it.

**Situation 15**

Your cell phone suddenly starts ringing loudly amid a very serious discussion in the class. How would you apologize to the teacher?

The Teacher to the class: It is very important to respect each other's (the phone rings) views.

A. I'm sorry! This is an important call. I'll just step out for a moment.

B. (Immediately silencing the phone, which should have been silenced or turned off before the class meeting, and speaking in a very low volume so as not to increase the interruption)—I'm sorry.

C. Oh, no! I meant to turn my phone off at the beginning of the class!

**Situation 16**

Suppose that the teacher is teaching and you are talking to your classmate. The teacher gets angry with you. How do you express your apology?

The Teacher: Don't you think it is impolite to speak while I'm teaching?!

A. I beg your pardon. I won't let it happen again.

B. OK OK…I guess you're right.

C Excuse me. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

**Situation 17**

You are not ready for the class and you can't answer the questions asked by the teacher. How do you apologize for not being ready for the class?

The teacher: I told you several times that you must be always ready for the class. Why didn't you study this chapter?

A. I'm terribly sorry. I did study the material, but I am having trouble understanding it.

B. I didn't have time to do the reading.

C I need to apologize and say that I had too much other work to do.

**Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence Post-test**

Name:……………………………. Student No……………………………….…

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. I wish I have another chance to listen to it, but not now.

B. Hello! 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 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 explain it more clearly, I may understand it better.

B. Sorry, teacher, can you repeat it?

C. Excuse me. May I have your pardon?

**Situation 3**

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 4**

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 some time on Thursday?

B. Sir, I'm glad to learn that your company offers a job. I like it very much, are you free on Thursday? I'm free on Thursday.

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 5**

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 6**

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 7**

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 8**

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 9**

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 10**

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?

B. Dear teacher, I'm football with us. I'm sorry I hit you! Sorry for that! If you like, we hope you can play

C. I didn't realize you were coming and didn't control the ball well. I do hope you can forgive my rudeness.

**Situation 11**

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. Maybe this was the worst message I had passed to a person. I'm so sorry.

**Situation 12**

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 13**

You have been asked to hand in your project, and the time is due. However, you have not prepared it, and you want to make an apology for that. How would you express your apology in this situation?

The Teacher: I told you that there won't be an extension. Why didn't you prepare your term project?

A. Sorry but I had too much other homework from my other projects to finish this one on time.

B. Well, I had some unexpected problems, so you should make an exception for me.

C. That's true. I'm sorry. I had some unexpected obstacles, but I understand that this is the policy.

**Situation 14**

Your teacher is giving a lecture on an important topic. You have a related question to that part of his lecture. How do you interrupt your teacher?

The Teacher: …constructivist views are very important for….. (interruption)

A. I don't understand what you are talking about.

B. Sorry but I really don't understand what you are saying!

C. I'm sorry to ask but could you explain a little more?

**Situation 15**

You have an appointment with your family doctor and you need to leave early in order to be on time for your appointment with the doctor. How do you express your apology to your teacher when you ask for an early leave?

You: ………………………………..because this appointment is very important for my health.

The Teacher: No problem. Just don't forget to ask your classmates about the pages we will cover next session.

A. Excuse me. I am wondering if it would be OK for me to leave the class early for a doctor's appointment…..

B. Excuse me! I have to leave now for a doctor's appointment.

C. I have to go now; please tell me whether I'll miss anything important.

**Situation 16**

You are daydreaming in the class and lose track of what the teacher has said. At once, he asks you a question about the topic under discussion. You are totally unaware of what has been going on in the class. How do you apologize?

The teacher: What are you thinking about? Are you following me?

A. Sorry; I wasn't listening to you. What did you say?

B. I'm really sorry I got sidetracked for a moment.

C. I was thinking of something else; I don't understand what you are saying.

**Situation 17**

You borrowed a book from your teacher but you accidentally spilled a cup of coffee all over it. You return it to the teacher. How do you apologize to him/her?

The Teacher: (very angry) I can't believe it. This was the only copy I had.

A. Sorry, it was an accident, chill out.

B. I am deeply sorry. Please allow me to replace the copy.

C. I'm desperately sorry but accidents happen, you know?

**Situation 18**

Suppose you have not understood what the teacher has just explained about "simple past tense". How do you ask for explanations about the structure of this tense?

A. Should I ask you a question?

B. How can I ask you a question?

C. Excuse me sir, may I ask you a question?