Research Article

The Effect of Dynamic and Non-Dynamic Assessment on Acquisition of Apology Speech Act among Iranian EFL Learners

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Abstract

The current study has aimed to explore the effect of dynamic and non-dynamic assessment on acquisition of apology speech act among Iranian EFL learners. One-hundred forty-three male and female intermediate Iranian learners, who were selected randomly, were assigned to high and low groups based on their score in OPT. Then, each group was divided into two DA and NDA groups randomly. Both groups participated in pretest and posttest, six treatment tests during fifteen sessions, also an instruction part about different apology strategies based on Olshatain and Cohen (1983). DA groups, the experimental ones, received different types of mediation in tests based on Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) scale and their ZPDs. NDA groups, the control ones, were assessed in traditional method. T-test was used to analyze the data, which revealed that DA group significantly outperformed NDA group. The main result of this study showed that dynamic assessment helps learners to improve their apology speech act acquisition. The findings of this study provide insights to assessment of pragmatics.

Keywords: dynamic assessment; apology speech act; non-dynamic assessment; zone of proximal development; sociocultural theory of mind

I. Introduction

With the Emergence of new approaches, methods and theories, language testing has been affected and moved away from psychometric and discrete-point testing to dynamic ways of assessment. According to Murphy (2011), Dynamic Assessment (DA) is an approach for understanding an individual learner during the assessment process. Its background lies in Socio-Cultural Theory of mind (SCT) originated from Vygotsky's (1986) ideas, a mixture of dialectal integration of instruction and assessment into a dynamic activity which requires being careful about the students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) during the assessment procedures which is achieved through the mediator's intervention by providing hints, prompts, and feedback (Pishghadam, Barabadi&MehriKamrood, 2011). While Non-Dynamic Assessment (NDA) is the

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traditional assessment in which the items are given to the examinee without any interventions, then the examiner gives the scores as the only provided feedback, so the change in the learner's level of ability is questionable (Sternberg &Grigorenko, 2002).

Previously, most of the tests analyzed statistically without paying attention to the process of teaching and learning. Although, it was important for language testers to rethink their assumptions about language testing in the process of teaching and learning, the scores were the only indicators of the students' performance (Pishghadam, et al., 2011).Yule (1996) defines speech acts as those actions, which are performed via utterances, and they are commonly given labels that are more specific. One of them is apology speech act which Garcia (1989, p.44) states that it is 'an explanation offered to a person affected by one's action that no offense was intended'.

Speech acts are one of the most functional parts in applied linguistics and the need for and use of apology as one of the speech acts is indispensable in our daily lives, and the correct use of apologies results in meaningful communication. Teaching speech acts enables EFL students to become aware of the sociolinguistic conventions of language use and cultural differences which constitutes appropriate use in English as opposed to their first sociolinguistic systems (Eslami-Rasekh&Mardani, 2010).

Lantolf (2000) explains that the ZPD is a metaphor to view and understand the amount of internalized meditational tools, rather than a physical place located in time and space. According to this author, the thing that a person can achieve with others' help and support is completely different from the thing that he/she can achieve alone. However, it is not that children simply copy the behavior; rather the children change something which is offered by expert to internalize it. The key to this change is imitation and collaboration in the ZPD which results in human development (Lantolf, 2000).

Butler (1999) investigated a six-year old child based on DA and intervention. She used a three-step-procedure which is:

1. Initial assessment of the child competence in selected areas by using a standardized instrument or an age appropriate task
2. Using the information in the first step to provide intervention on examiner-designed target tasks
3. Applying some kind of retest or task to see whether the learner is able to be used in the examiner's approach of learning

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There are some studies based on applying DA in Iran. In a recent study, Sadeghi and Khanahmadi (2011) assessed the feasibility of dynamic assessment used as an instructional adjunct in the development of Iranian EFL learners' grammar. In this study 60 intermediate EFL learners were chosen and every session during the treatment both the experimental and control groups took a grammar test in which the experimental group received mediation on test items. The results of their study demonstrated that dynamic assessment oriented instruction improved the learning of L2 grammar significantly.

Over the recent years, there has been a large diversity of studies on the speech act of apology. According to Demeter (2006), the greatest number of these studies looked at the way one apologizes in English, both with native and non-native speakers. Nonetheless, there are other studies that investigated the perception and production of apologies in different languages.Barron (2003) investigated a group of Irish (English L1) learners of German who spent an academic year in Germany as part of their degree program. She also found some aspects of the learners' language became more native-like but other aspects moved away from the L2 norm. Evidence of negative transfer was also apparent even after time abroad. Learners' pragma-linguistic competence appeared to increase as they were able to make more complex requests and use a wider range of strategies, including internal modification, than before their time abroad. However, their socio-pragmatic competence seemed to develop more slowly, as, although the students achieved some situational variation, it did not always correspond to the L2 norm.

Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) focused on the effects of implicit instruction on the frequency of apology intensifying devices and came to the same conclusion that instruction can enhance the appropriateness of the use of intensifiers among the intermediate EFL learners.In this line, Shariati and Chamani (2010) explored and categorized the range of strategies used to apologize in Persian. Persian speakers apologized through using the same strategies included in speech act set, while they used IFID with a request for forgiveness more than other strategies.More recently, Salehi (2011) conducted a study with the aim of examining the effect of explicit and implicit teaching of the speech acts of apology and request with 40 university students. The implicit group learned English apologies by watching films containing situational apology; however, the explicit group was instructed by explicit meta-pragmatic knowledge of English apology. The results of the study showed the significant gain of both groups after treatment, but no significant difference was observed between the groups.

As DA is one of the new areas in testing, there should be more attention on it. Unfortunately, after passing some years of evolution of DA in the world; Iranian English institutes are still using traditional assessment. While, there is no mediation between the teacher and learner which it decreases the learners' abilities in their future development. Moreover, it is clear that most

Iranian EFL learners have problems in using speech acts, especially apology. Therefore, the need to have a better instruction and assessment in Iranian context is vital.

Little research was found with regard to investigating the effects of the DA on speech acts. According to Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010), by using the same level of offence or mistake in the same social context Iranians tend to apologize more frequently than native speakers. Tajeddin, Alemi, and Pakzadian (2011) and Tajeddin and Moslehi (2011) worked on the application of DA in some aspects of applied linguistics; however, the effect of DA on pragmatics has not been cleared yet. Therefore, more studies need to be done to find out whether DA is effective in learning pragmatics or not. The purpose of the present study was twofold: to determine the effect of DA on learning apology speech act and to explore the different apology strategies used by Iranian EFL learners in DA and NDA groups. This study tries to shed some light on the area of pragmatics assessment. The findings of the present study will be used if any significant effects on the acquisition of apology speech act among Iranian learners.

Based on the problem introduced above, this study was designed to seek answers to the following questions:

RQ1. Does proficiency level make a difference between DA and NDA groups in terms of the acquisition of apology speech act among Iranian EFL learners?

RQ2. Is there any significant difference in using apology strategies between DA and NDA groups among Iranian EFL learners?

Based on these research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

$H_0$1. Proficiency level does not make a difference between DA and NDA groups in terms of the acquisition of apology speech act among Iranian EFL learners.

$H_0$2. There is no difference in using apology strategies between DA and NDA groups among Iranian EFL learners.

II. Methodology
A. Participants

The participants of this study were 120 intermediate male and female students of a Language Institute in Isfahan, Iran. The mean age of the sample was 26 years (SD=4.9), ranging from 18 to 40. The participants were selected randomly from non-English majors in B.A. Persian was their first language and English was their foreign language. Table I shows the characteristics of the

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participants of four groups. The participants were divided into two high and low groups based on their scores on OPT (+/- 2SD).

TABLEI
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Assessment Technique	Level	Gender (M:F)	Age Range	Mean Age	Number
DA	High	13:17	20-27	23.3	30
	Low	18:12	18-31	23.4	30
NDA	High	16:14	22-40	29.2	30
	Low	13:17	23-37	28.3	30

B. Instruments

The first instrument of this study was a 60-item Oxford Placement Test (OPT) used to measure proficiency level of the participants to have a homogeneous sample. OPT is among the most common and standardized proficiency tests worldwide and the researcher does not doubt its reliability and validity. At the beginning of the study, 143 learners participated on OPT and the scores were announced in percentage. After calculating the mean scores, those participants whose scores were 2 SD above the mean were classified as high group and those whose scores were 2 SD below the mean were classified as low group. 6 participants did not answer the questions or their scores had a great difference with others' scores, also 17 participants were absent in some treatment sessions. The scores of these 23 participants were deleted from the sample, but to satisfy ethical requirements, they were given the tests.

The second instrument of this study was a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). Cohen and Olshtain (1993) discussed the benefits and drawbacks of different instruments used in collecting data, emphasizing the fact that a combination of instruments is the ideal situation. Thus, the main instrument used for speech act production is, according to them, DCT. In the present study, two variables were controlled in the DCT situations design. They were using dynamic assessment strategies by teachers and using apology strategies by learners. DCT, in this study, consisted of some situations started with a description of the situation. The participants wrote the first thing (especially apologies) that had come into their mind. The situations in this study were according to the severity of the offense. There were 6 questions in DCT for both pretest and posttest which were taken from Istifci (2009) and there were 6 questions in DCT for six treatment sessions during the

course which were taken from Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), Liao and Bresnahan (1996), and Lorenzo-Dus (2001). Essentially, the DCT functions to create a scenario to which the participant must respond. Typically, there is an initial statement outlining the context within which a dialogue occurs. Next, the first line of the dialogue is presented, and the participant is then given an opportunity to respond in the way that she believes most appropriate.

C. Procedure

According to Haywood and Lidz (2007; as cited in Tajeddin&Tayebipour, 2012, p. 94), 'homogeneous grouping helps to minimize variability in work efficiency and resulting boredom and off-task behavior that can be expected when some individuals finish with a given part of the task well before others do'. So in order to make our sampling fairly homogeneous in terms of their level of proficiency, at the first session Oxford placement Test (OPT) was administered. Those whose scores were 2SD above the mean were classified as high group and those whose scores were 2SD below the mean were classified as low group. To do random selection of subjects, the students in each group (low/high) had a number from 1 to 60. Odd numbers were assigned to one group and were determined as non-dynamic assessment group (NDA group) and even numbers were assigned to other group and were determined as dynamic assessment group (DA group).

The classes were held three days a week for 15 sessions and each session was 90 minutes. At the second session for 20 minutes all students took a DCT about apology speech act with 6 questions as pretest, which were administered in the last session as posttest, too. After pretest, apology strategies, which were proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983, see appendix 1), were taught in thirty minutes. Both DA and NDA groups in their high and low level received the instruction on different types of apology strategies based on Olshtain and Cohen (1983) in different situations which were selected from problem solving sections of step forward boo series by the researcher.

On even sessions (4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14) and each time for 15 minutes all students read 6 short descriptions of a situation in English of a situation and wrote what they would say in the English language for each situation considering the apology strategies. The basis for NDA groups was just independent performance. But the teacher gave feedback, mediation, and hint to DA groups. Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) scale was adopted to provide mediation based on each learner's response. If the learner's response was correct, there was no mediation. But if the learner's response was incorrect, the teacher chose one of the 8 forms of Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) scale, which are as follows: 1. Teacher pauses 2. Teacher repeats the whole phrase questioningly 3. Teacher repeats just the error part of the sentence 4. Teacher asks a question, for

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example: what is wrong with this sentence? 5. Teacher points out the incorrect word 6. Teacher asks either…or… questions 7. Teacher identifies the correct answer and 8. Teacher explains why. As it is clear, the first form is the most implicit while the last one is the most explicit form in providing mediation for DA groups.

Because all of the learners in both DA and NDA groups prefer to use "I'm sorry" and "Excuse me" for all of the questions, therefore, the teacher asks them to use different types of apology strategies not just "an expression of apology". During assessment sessions, the teacher tried to use the best mediation for DA groups; however, most of the learners still use the "expression of an apology" to answer different questions in DCTs. Also the point which was clear between DA groups was their interest to follow dynamic assessment, because when the teacher did not check them to provide mediation, they asked for it.

Appendix 2 provides one excerpt of a learner's test to see different types of apology strategies based on every situation. One of the situations in the study for DA group is presented below:

" You forgot an important meeting with your boss. What do you say to him/her?"

> **Student:** Sorry.
>
> **Teacher:** Sorry? (the second form of mediation)
>
> **Student:** I'm sorry.
>
> **Teacher:** Isn't it better to give your reason? (the fourth form of mediation)
>
> (The student read the question again.)
>
> **Student:** Yes. I really forgot the meeting. It's my fault.
>
> **Student:** I'm sorry. I really forgot it. It's my fault.

D. Data Analysis

In order to see whether there were similarities or differences across the four groups, high and low levels in both DA and NDA, in the use of DA or apology strategies the quantitative analyses were conducted. To answer research questions, two types of analysis were carried out on the collected data. The scores which were obtained from OPT were analyzed by statistical software IBM SPSS version 22. The present data were interval in nature and none of the subjects participated in more than one group.

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Care must be taken in interpreting the results of the written DCT. The analysis of DCTs was done by the researcher and a colleague, who read the sentences and decided on type of apology strategy the students used based on apology strategies of Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and its effectiveness regarding that situation based on a 6-point Likert scale adopted from Taguchi (2006). The scale ranges from 0 to 5:

1. 0 shows no performance at all;

2. 1 shows very poor performance (very difficult expressions to understand);

3. 2 shows poor performance (difficult determination of correctness because of the interference from grammatical and sociolinguistic errors);

4. 3 shows fair performance (somewhat correct and appropriate sentences);

5. 4 shows good (mostly correct and appropriate expressions); and

6. 5 shows excellent performance (fully correct and appropriate expressions for the situation).

Then both raters scored one-third of the responses so that ratings could be compared to increase the level of consistency and reliability. The remaining two-thirds of the responses were scored individually. After comparing the item scores that were rated together, it was determined that the raters agreed on 88% of the items rated together.

In order to answer the first two research questions of this study descriptive statistics, including minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of DA and NDA groups both in high and low groups were calculated. For inferential statistics a paired sample t-test was employed to compare every two groups in their pre- and post-tests. The third research question focused on the frequency of every apology strategy and the figures showed the differences.

III.   Results and Analysis
A. *The Results of OPT*

The first instrument of this study was an OPT. It was administered at the first session and 143 learners participated in this test. Then, those learners whose scores were 2SD above the mean were classified as high group and those whose scores were 2SD below the mean were classified as low group. 23 participants were deleted from the sample because their scores had a great difference with others' scores or they were absent during some treatment sessions. To do random sampling of

subjects, the students in each group (low/high) had a number from 1 to 60. Odd numbers were assigned to NDA group and even numbers were assigned to DA group. Table II shows the results of OPT. the mean score of OPT was 57.24 (SD=21.69).

TABLE II
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF OPT

	N	Mean	SD
OPT	120	57.24	21.69

B. The Effect of DA on Different Proficiency Levels

The second research question was concerned with the difference between DA and NDA groups in different proficiency levels, four sub-questions had to be addressed:

1. Sub-question 1: the difference between high DA and NDA groups in the pretest
2. Sub-question 2: the difference between low DA and NDA groups in the pretest
3. Sub-question 3: the difference between high DA and NDA groups in the posttest
4. Sub-question 4: the difference between low DA and NDA groups in the posttest

The first sub-question wants to see whether there is a difference between high DA and NDA groups in the pretest or not. To answer this question the mean score of these two groups were compared. As table III shows the mean score of high DA group in the pretest was 66.21 (SD=10.67) ranging from 40 to 83.33. The mean score of high NDA group in the pretest was 64.64 (SD=6.31) ranging from 54.66 to 78.T value is .82 and df is 29. The mean difference in the two scores was 1.57 with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 2.32 to an upper bound of 5.47 (table VII). The learners in high DA and NDA groups did not have a significant difference in the pretest.

TABLE III
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF HIGH GROUPS IN PRETEST

	Assessment Technique	Level	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	DA	high	30	40.00	83.33	66.21	10.67
	NDA	high	30	54.66	78.00	64.64	6.31

The second sub-question is a way to see the difference between low DA and NDA in the pretest. Table IVshows the mean score of low DA was 36.44 (SD=6.88) ranging from 23.33 to 50.

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Also, the mean score of low NDA was 33.88 (SD=10.56) ranging from 8.66 to 48.66.As table VII shows, T value is 1.07 and df is 29. The mean difference in the two scores was 2.55 with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 2.29 to an upper bound of 7.4. The comparison of two groups shows that, there is no significant difference between them in the pretest.

TABLE IV
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LOW GROUPS IN PRETEST

	Assessment Technique	Level	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	DA	low	30	23.33	50.00	36.44	6.88
	NDA	low	30	8.66	48.66	33.88	10.56

The third sub-question wants to see whether there is a relationship between high DA and NDA groups in the posttest or not. Table V shows the mean score of high DA in posttest was 78.77 (SD=7.99) ranging from 60 to 93.33. The mean score of high NDA group in posttest was 64.64 (SD=6.31) ranging from 54.66 to 78.T value is 6.7 and df is 29. The mean difference in the two scores was 10.43 with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 7.25 to an upper bound of 13.6 (table VII). The comparison between these two groups shows high DA significantly outperformed high NDA group in the posttest.

TABLE V
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF HIGH GROUPS IN POSTTEST

	Assessment Technique	Level	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest	DA	high	30	60.00	93.33	78.77	7.99
	NDA	high	30	54.66	78.00	64.64	6.31

The fourth sub-question intended to explore whether there is a relationship between low DA and NDA groups in posttest or not. Table VI shows the mean score of low DA group was 56.1 (SD=9.51) ranging from 36.66 to 73.33. The mean score of low NDA group was 36.83 (SD=10.46) ranging from 16.66 to 54.66.As table VII shows, t-value is 6.83 and df is 29. The mean difference in the two scores was 19.27 with a 95 percent confidence interval stretching from a lower bound of 13.51 to an upper bound of 25.04. So the low DA group greatly outperformed low NDA group in the posttest.

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TABLE VI
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF LOW GROUPS IN POSTTEST

	Assessment Technique	Level	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Posttest	DA	low	30	36.66	73.33	56.10	9.51
	NDA	low	30	16.66	54.66	36.83	10.46

Table VII shows a paired sample t-tests for every pair of groups.

TABLE VII
PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST FOR DIFFERENT PROFICIENCY LEVELS IN PRE- AND POST-TEST

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest High DA – Pretest High NDA	1.57	10.44	1.9	2.32	5.47	.82	29	.00
Pair 2	Posttest High DA – Posttest High NDA	10.43	8.51	1.55	7.25	13.6	6.7	29	.00
Pair 3	Pretest Low DA – Pretest Low NDA	2.55	12.99	2.37	2.29	7.40	1.07	29	.06
Pair 4	Posttest Low DA – Posttest Low NDA	19.27	15.44	2.81	13.51	25.04	6.83	29	.00

As the second research question was concerned with the difference between DA and NDA groups in different proficiency levels, the results of the four sub-questions show that both high and low DA and NDA groups did not have a significant difference on the pretest but both high and low DA groups had a better performance than both high and low NDA groups in the posttest, so the results rejected the second null hypothesis. The major difference was related to the performance of low DA in pre- and post-test, which indicates that the application of DA had a real positive effect on this group. Furthermore, NDA groups had positive growth in their performances and the researcher believes teaching apology strategies to learners help them try different new strategies in different situations between DA and NDA groups among Iranian EFL learners.

C. The Effect of DA on Using Apology Strategies

As DCT was the second instrument of this study, it was used in treatment sessions for both DA and NDA groups, and for pre- and post-test. The analysis of DCTs which were written sentences was done by the researcher and a colleague who decided on the type of the apology based on a scale adopted from Taguchi (2006).

To answer the third research question a review on the previous chapters shows there are some different apology strategies, one of the most comprehensive ones is Olshtain and Cohen's (1983). And the researcher used these apology strategies as the instruction part after the pretest for both DA and NDA groups. During six treatment sessions the learners used different types of apology. Table VIII shows the number of apology strategies which were used by Iranian learners in both DA and NDA groups in pre- and post-test.

TABLE VIII
FREQUENCY ANDPERCENTAGEOFAPOLOGYSTRATEGIESINBOTHGROUPSINPRE-ANDPOST-TEST

Apology Strategy		DA				NDA			
		Pretest		Posttest		Pretest		Posttest	
		F*	P (%)*	F	P (%)	F	P (%)	F	P (%)
Expression of apology	An expression of regret	114	31.66	27	7.5	122	33.88	80	22.22
	An offer of apology	57	15.83	20	5.55	26	7.22	31	8.61
	A Request for forgiveness	154	42.77	102	28.33	163	45.27	109	30.27
Acknowledge of responsibility	Accepting the blame	0	0	36	10	0	0	15	4.16
	Expressing self-deficiency	0	0	43	11.94	0	0	21	5.83
	Expressing lack of intention	0	0	22	6.11	0	0	24	6.66
	Recognizing of deserving apology	0	0	31	8.61	0	0	22	6.11
An offer to repair		0	0	19	5.27	0	0	0	0
An explanation of the situation		35	9.72	43	11.94	49	13.61	58	16.11
A promise of forbearance		0	0	17	4.72	0	0	0	

F (=frequency), P (=percentage)

In the current study, request for forgiveness was the most usable apology strategy for both DA and NDA groups in pretest. Most of the apology strategies which both DA and NDA groups used were classified in the category of expression of apology. But after passing the instruction and six treatment sessions, the results of posttest indicated that the learners used those strategies which

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were not previously used. Additionally, a promise of forbearance was the least usable strategy in both DA and NDA groups in posttest. Figure.1shows the frequency of each of the apology strategies in pre- and post-test for DA group.
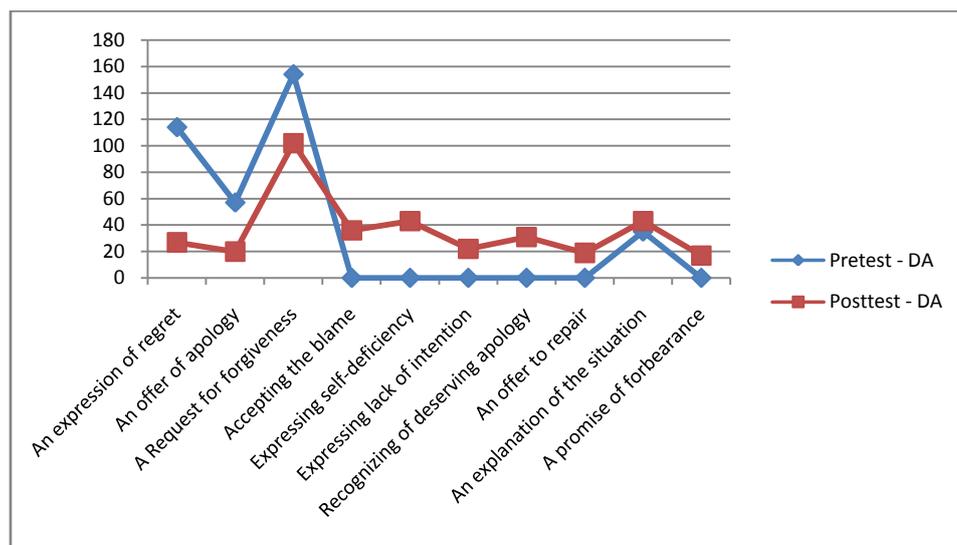

Figure.1. Apology strategies in pre- and post-test for DA group

Like the pretest, request for forgiveness was the most usable strategy in both groups in posttest. Figure.2 shows the frequency of each of the apology strategies in pre- and post-test for NDA group. However, the frequency of other strategies was greatly changed in comparison to pretest. Therefore, the answer to the second research question is positive and the third hypothesis is rejected. Difference between learners from pretest to posttest and the higher frequency of different apology strategies which were used by DA learners and their ability to overcome different situations show the positive effect of instruction and feedback during six treatment sessions for DA group.

IV.   Conclusions

This study was designed to find answers to two research questions:

The first question was to see the difference between DA and NDA groups in acquisition of apology speech act by Iranian EFL learners in different proficiency levels. The answer to this question was yes because significant difference was found on the performance of DA and NDA in their high and low groups from pretest to posttest and the reason was the appropriate types of feedback which DA groups received.The findings of Kozulin and Garb (2002) andLantolf and

Poehner (2011) can be considered generally positive toward this study with regard to application of DA in different proficiency levels.
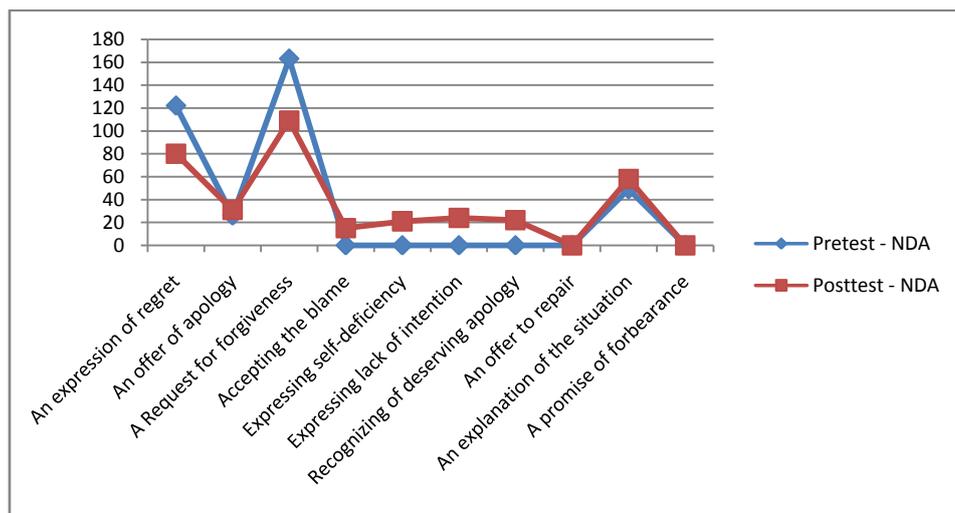

Figure.2. Apology strategies in pre- and post-test for NDA group

The second research question of this study to be under investigation was " Is there any significant difference in using apology strategies between DA and NDA groups among Iranian EFL learners?" The result of the present study is in line with the studies of Cohen and Olshtain (1983) andIstifci (2009).They claimed that EFL learners apologized through using an expression of apology more than other strategies. Moreover, no study has done to show the effect of DA on using different apology strategies. Generally, from the data in the current study, it can be stated that there is no significant difference between Iranian EFL learners in using apology strategies in DA and NDA groups in pretest. As about 90 percent of all apologies were used in both DA and NDA groups was categorized in expression of apology. But in the posttest, learners in both DA and NDA groups tend to use a variety of apology strategies. The findings of this study indicated that Iranian EFL learners did not prefer to use a promise of forbearance. One study which worked on the effect of DA on request and apology speech act was Tajeddin and Tayebipour's (2012). They found out that DA groups had a significant difference with NDA groups in using speech acts in different situations.

With regard to the DA, the following conclusions were reached:

The analysis of the results highlighted the advantages of application of DA over NDA in learners' performance. The first advantage is the development of learners' independent performance and their abilities as a result in mediation, which helps them in future. The second advantage is the

integration of instruction and assessment which provides opportunities for learners' development not only from past to present, but also into future based on each learner's ZPD. The third advantage is that DA does not focus on temporary effects of learning, but it tries to make permanent changes in the learners, which lead into their development.

The findings of the present study showed that proficiency level of learners and their similar scores did not predict a similar performance in all future tests. Generally, there are differences among learners based on their ZPDs, so giving the same feedback in a same test to learners in a same proficiency level does not result in the same performance. DA compares the present performance of each learner with his/her performance in the past and then makes inferences about each learner's improvement. So in DA, learning is individualized and each learner can move forward as much as his/her ZPD allows. As a result, if the correct feedback is provided for each learner, regardless the proficiency level, everyone can improve through DA.

This study also indicated that when more information and instruction were given to learners in DA and NDA groups, they tend to use a variety of apology strategies in posttest. However, in pretest they were familiar with a limited number of strategies, which were mostly in their books or the same strategies, which they used in Persian. This finding confirms the practical value of the EFL DA procedure, because it provides in-depth information about the different learning needs of the students. Iranian EFL learners' lack of knowledge about different apology strategies did not allow them to use a different number of apologies in pretest.

Based on the findings drawn from the results of the present study, the following key implications which may contribute to the application of DA in acquisition of apology speech act could be inferred: Theoretically, this study has offered some insights to understand Iranian EFL learners' responses in apology speech act based on the application of DA which indicated the more significant performance of DA groups. Practically, the study has offered a new point of view for testing the apology speech act by using DA and results of the present study might act as the baseline data for designing tests in EFL classrooms regarding different speech acts.

The explorative study lays a path uniting DA approach and acquisition of apology speech act, and establishes a solid basis for broadening the integration of DA into other teaching tasks and methods. As Pishghadam and Sharafadini (2011) indicate, English teaching books employed in Iran teach apology strategies directly and Iranians tend to use more implicit communication style, while there is a priority for direct and explicit communication in American culture; therefore, it is quite natural that Iranian EFL learners have difficulty in performing a native-like performance due to insufficiency of pedagogy. In addition, Iranian learners tend to use more implicit apology rather than explicit one because of their culture. So it is the thing which makes Iranian use of apology in

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English different from Americans'. Therefore, it should keep in mind that one of the limitations regarding speech act studies in Iran in related to English teaching books.

In order to progress within the field of DA, further research must be grounded in previous findings in the field. It would also be recommendable to carry out more research to study the effect of DA on different levels of language proficiency and to scrutinize the role of DA in different parts of foreign language learning. Highlights of the suggestions for further research include the following: The first suggestion is using speech acts in relation to DA. Given the findings from this study as well as evidence that instruction in speech act is valuable for students, further studies are certainly warranted. As speech acts are one of the important parts in learning one language, paying more attention to different kinds of speech act with regard to DA technique is very important.

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Appendix 1 - Apology Strategies

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) provide a classification of apology strategies into five main categories:

1. An expression of an apology. In this principle the speaker uses a number of expressions such as;
   a. An expression of regret, e.g. "I'm sorry"
   b. An offer of apology, e.g. "I apologize"
   c. A request for forgiveness, e.g. "Pardon me", "Excuse me"

2. Acknowledgement of responsibility. It is used when the offender recognizes his/her fault and he/she feels responsible for the offence. The recognition level consists of:

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a. Accepting the blame, e.g. "It's my fault"
b. Expressing self-deficiency, e.g. "I was confused", "I didn't see you", "I was thinking"
c. Expressing lack of intention, e.g. "I didn't mean to"
d. Recognizing of deserving apology, e.g. "You are right"

3. An offer to repair. It is something to do with physical injury or other damage resulting from the speaker's infraction, e.g. "I'll buy for the lost book", and "Would you be willing to reschedule the meeting?"

4. An explanation or account of the situation. The offence explains the situation that brings about him/her to do an indirect way of apologizing. For instance, "There was a terrible traffic jam", "The bus was delayed"

5. A promise of forbearance. The offender promise not to do the offense again, e.g. "It won't happen again".

Appendix 2 - Excerpt of a Learner's Test

1. A student is attempting to pay his housing bill, but there is a problem when he realizes that he doesn't have his student ID with him.
Woman: Hi, can I help you?
Student: Hi. I need to pay my summer housing bill—for my dorm room. There should be something due today?
Woman: Sure. Could I see your student ID, please?
Student: **I'm sorry. I forgot to bring it.**(Expression of regret + expressing self-deficiency)
2. You've been working in an advertising agency for some time now. The boss offers you a raise and promotion, but it involves moving to another, smaller, city. You don't want to move.
Today, the boss calls you into his office and says:
"I'd like you to consider an executive position in our new office. It's only about 3 hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position."
How would you refuse his request? **Excuse me. My mom is really sick and I have to take care of her.** (Request for forgiveness)
3. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.
Worker: As you know, I've been here a little over a year now, and I think you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but honestly, I really need an increase in pay.
You: **You're right but our budget is not a lot now, maybe in future.**(Recognizing of deserving apology)
Worker: Then I guess I'll have to look for another job.
4. You accidentally run into a well-dressed woman while in a department store. What do you say to her? **I didn't see you. It was my fault. Excuse me.** (Expressing self-deficiency + accepting the blame + request for forgiveness)

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5. You showed up an hour late for a meeting with all your colleagues. What do you do? **Excuse me. There was a traffic jam.**(**Request for forgiveness + explanation of situation**)
6. You borrowed your professor's book but have lost it. Your professor now needs the book back. What do you say to him/her? **I apologize because I've lost the book, but I'll buy another one.** (**Offer of apology + offer to repair**)

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