# A Comparative Study of Individual and Collaborative Oral Languaging for L2 Speech Act Production

**Marzieh Bagherkazemi***

*Islamic Azad University (South Tehran Branch), Iran*
*Department of English Language Teaching*

## Abstract

The role of languaging in second language acquisition (SLA) has been widely investigated since its postulation in the 1980s, though only a few studies have addressed languaging in speech act production as an aspect of second language (L2) pragmatic development. The present study was designed to compare the nature of languaging produced by 45 intermediate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners while completing five apology and five request written discourse completion tasks (WDCTs) individually (N=15) and collaboratively (in pairs) (N=30; 15 pairs). Following a two and a half-hour workshop, individual think-aloud protocols (totalling 304 minutes) and paired interactions (totalling 392 minutes) were transcribed. Subsequently, episodes of noticing, reflection and hypothesis testing, as the three main functions of languaging, were detected in the transcripts. They were coded by two coders based on a coding scheme specifically designed with reference to speech act production. The coded episodes were then subjected to qualitative comparisons. In general, the analyses revealed the greater potential of collaborative languaging to induce the noticing of more social context variables (SCVs) involved in performance. Collaborative languaging also nested comparative and more profound reflections, as well as successful output modifications following the greater number of hypothesis testing episodes it led to. The findings are discussed in light of the sociocultural notions of inter-psychological learning mechanisms involved in collaborative dialoguing.

**Keywords**: collaborative dialoguing; hypothesis testing; languaging; noticing; output; pragmatics; reflection; speech act.

* *m_bagherkazemi@azad.ac.ir*

## Introduction

Studies on the role of learners' individual and collaborative language productions in SLA gained momentum in the mid-1980s pioneered by Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis (COH) after more than a decade of majorly input-oriented SLA research. Before the postulation of the COH, studies on learner language were mainly intended to feedback into the input provided to the learners, and as such failed to recognize the ways in which such productions could assist the language learning process. Put forth in reaction to Krashen's (1985) Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, Swain's (1985) COH hinges on the significance of learners' attempts at language production for their language acquisition.

The essentiality of output production – later termed as "languaging" (Swain, 2006) following the subscription of COH to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory – for SLA lies in its potential to (a) facilitate noticing of L2 features, (b) induce metalinguistic reflections, and (c) lead to the generation and testing of language-related hypotheses. Based on the sociocultural account of language development, language is an essential tool which mediates and regulates the socially-situated process of language learning. This process involves learners' internalization of language knowledge co-constructed in the course of their interaction with physical artifacts and/or more capable others (Lantolf, 2011; Swain & Lapkin, 2001).

Languaging – whether individual as "private speech" or collaborative as "collaborative dialoguing" in sociocultural terms - has been mainly investigated in terms of its potential for language learning (e.g., Bao, 2019; Brooks, et al., 2010; Ishikawa, 2013, 2015; Ishikawa & Suzuki, 2016; Jia, 2015; Knouzi, Swain, Lapkin, & Brooks, 2010; Li, 2015; Liang, 2014; Moradian, Miri, & Hossein Nasab, 2017; Suzuki, 2009, 2012, 2017; Suzuki & Itagaki, 2009). Such research has primarily targeted grammar and writing, and fallen short of adequately addressing other language skills and components, though findings allude to the general effectiveness of languaging. An area ripe for research is the potential contribution of individual and collaborative languaging to the learning of L2 pragmatic features, speech acts included, in terms of Swain's (1985) postulated functions of learner output: noticing, metalinguistic reflection, and hypothesis testing.

Since the inclusion of discourse and sociolinguistic competencies in models of linguistic and communicative competence in the 1980s (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980), interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has been the focus of much SLA research, gaining momentum at the turn of the

21st century. Among all pragmatic features, speech acts have been targeted the most in such research (see Taguchi, 2011, 2015), owing to their cross-culturally and cross-linguistically variant realizations (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Instructional pragmatics, though mainly concerned with the implicit/explicit distinction, rooted in Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis as a cognitive take on SLA, in the first decade of ILP research, is now being increasingly studied within more interactionist theoretical frameworks (e.g., Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012). There is some research evidence as to the greater efficacy of collaborative output for the production of speech acts as indicated in WDCT performance; however, the nature of languaging learners engage in individually or in collaboration with peers in relation to the three hypothesized functions of L2 output, namely noticing, metalinguistic reflection and hypothesis testing, has not been qualitatively investigated. The present study was designed to shed light on differences between learners' individual and collaborative languaging while completing WDCTs in terms of their potential to enhance these three L2 output functions.

## Literature Review

### ILP Development and Speech Act Production

Pragmatics has been generally defined as the study of language in context (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). In SLA research, the study of learners' mastery of and control over L2 pragmatic features has been referred to as ILP (Kasper & Rose, 2001). Since its uptake at the turn of the 21st century, ILP research can be characterized by two consecutive foci. Earlier research was almost exclusively devoted to the investigation of cross-culturally and cross-linguistically different realizations of pragmatic features; speech acts being the most frequently targeted feature. The findings generally evidenced sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic differences in the way different languages' pragmatic features are verbalized as well as the dire consequences of breaching L2 pragmatic norms for the flow and success of communication. Studies of the sort fed into later research placing a premium on the teachability of pragmatic features (and the desirability of doing so) and subsequently sound instructional pragmatics approaches (Rose & Kasper, 2001; Taguchi, 2011, 2015).

Research into how best to teach L2 pragmatic features was in its early days largely reliant

on the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1993). In pragmatic terms, this hypothesis would translate into the explicit provision of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic norms of performing specific L2 pragmatic features, or otherwise having L2 learners induce them from relevant teacher-provided input. This accounts for the surge of studies investigating implicit and (inductive and deductive) explicit instructional approaches in separate and comparative designs, most of which substantiated the superiority of the latter (see Taguchi, 2011, 2015). It is less than 10 years since other theoretical frameworks have been brought to bear on the instruction of speech acts and other pragmatic features. Related studies have been conducted on the basis of several accounts of SLA, including VanPatten's (1996) Input Processing Theory and Processing Instruction (e.g., Takimoto, 2009, 2010), Skill Acquisition theories (e.g., Li, 2012), Swain's (1985) COH (e.g., Tajeddin & Bagherkazemi, 2014; Jernigan, 2007), and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (e.g., Khatib & Ahmadi Safa, 2011; Ohta, 2005; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012). The last approach to explaining SLA, to which COH also subscribed despite its postulated cognitive underpinnings in its early days, hinges on learners' own mediated language production for its acquisitional significance. According to Lantolf (2011), individual and collaborative language productions have the potential for mediating language acquisition and facilitating learners' self-regulated learning.

In the realm of ILP, studies on learners' output have fallen short of addressing its role in SLA, be it individual or collaborative either in separate or comparative designs, but rather as an outcome of instruction (Norouzian & Eslami, 2016). Moreover, those which have been carried out within an SCT framework have essentially addressed collaborative dialoguing, the major question being whether learners' interaction with expert L2 interactants (mainly native speakers) can help them move forward in their Zone of Proximal Development, as far as speech act performance is concerned (e.g., Niu, 2017; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2014). The potential of co-equal peers' scaffolding for ILP development was compared with that of expert/non-expert peers' scaffolding in Khatib & Ahmadi Safa's (2011) study. The results showed the greater benefits of the latter, but also the significant effect of the former on learners' speech act performance. The nature of languaging learners engaged in was not, however, investigated in this study. Within this SCT-grounded ILP research context, the present study was carried out to qualitatively compare the mediating role of learners' attempts at producing L2 speech acts (apologies and requests in the present study). Mediation was defined with reference to the functions attributed to languaging in

COH: noticing, reflection and hypothesis testing (see Procedure). The concept of languaging with its variants and status in SLA and language teaching research is sketched in the following section.

**Languaging in SLA Research**

By definition, the term "languaging" refers to "the process of meaning making and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Swain, 2006, p. 98). This definition resonates with the role assigned to language as a learning mediator in the sociocultural account of language development. Individual and collaborative languaging ("private speech" and "collaborative dialoguing," respectively, in sociocultural terms) is, according to Swain (1985, 2006), an indispensable aspect of the language learning process. Private speech is defined by Negueruela and Lantolf (2006, p. 86) as "the intentional use of overt self-directed speech to explain concepts to the self," whereas in collaborative dialoguing, "speakers are engaged in problem-solving and knowledge building" (Swain and Lapkin, 1998, p. 102). Languaging, whether individual or collaborative, can be either task-induced or teacher-imposed. In their review of studies into languaging and learner output, Niu and Li (2017) see the former as incidental and the latter as more conducive to learning.

Languaging could also be characterized in terms of its modality, as either oral or written. Studies on oral languaging have mainly targeted L2 learners' grammar development, while written languaging has been investigated in relation to corrective feedback and translations, in addition to grammar explanations. The short-term benefits of written languaging for grammar accuracy and writing quality is evidenced in Moradian et al.'s (2017) study of Iranian EFL learners, and its long-term benefits for writing and lexical and grammar accuracy in Jia's (2015) investigation with Chinese EFL learners. With regard to the quality of written languaging, Suzuki (2017) found both "languaging as noticing-only" and "languaging as noticing with reasons" beneficial for Chinese EFL learners' writing accuracy development. The results led him to assign languaging a mediating problem-solving role.

Relevant to the concerns of the present study, research in the former category (Brooks et al., 2010; Knouzi et al., 2010; Li, 2015) has uniformly demonstrated the efficacy of oral languaging for the learning of grammar and resolution of cognitive conflicts, though this effectiveness is

mediated by the amount and quality of languaging, learners' prior knowledge of the targeted feature, and their proficiency level in collaborative dyads/groups; however, studies addressing oral languaging (a) in relation to other language components, (b) vis-à-vis traditional approaches to grammar instruction in comparative designs, or (c) produced by individual learners or as joint attempts with the variety of pairing/grouping options are yet to be carried out. Against this backdrop, the present study extended languaging research to ILP development, and more specifically to EFL learners' individual and paired attempts at completing apology and request WDCTs.

## Methodology

The present study was carried out to investigate the nature of EFL learners' individual and collaborative languaging while trying to produce the two speech acts of apology and request in 10 WDCTs. This section provides an account of the participants, instruments and procedure.

### Participants

For the purpose of the present study, a total of 45 intermediate female EFL learners (between 19 and 23 years of age took part in the study. They were selected (from among an initial 58-member pool) through a convenience sampling procedure. They were all English language teaching (ELT) freshmen at Islamic Azad University (South Tehran Branch, Iran), had not resided in an English-speaking country, and belonged to four "Conversation" classes, as an obligatory course offered in the second semester of the study program. Following a workshop of two and a half hours (see Procedure), they were randomly assigned to two groups: an individual languaging group (ILG) and a collaborative or paired languaging group (CLG). The participants were homogenized in terms of their language proficiency and apology and request WDCT performance. These were controlled for as research has shown proficiency and initial knowledge of the learning target to determine the quantity and quality of languaging (see Jia, 2015).

**Instruments**

The study involved two main instruments: the Quick Placement Test (QPT) and a 16-item WDCT. First, the participants were homogenized in terms of their language proficiency through the paper-and-pen version of the Quick Placement Test (QPT). This step was taken to warrant between-group comparisons in terms of aspects of the quality and quantity of noticing, reflection and hypothesis testing episodes. QPT is a widely used proficiency test developed conjointly by Cambridge ESOL Examinations Syndicate and Oxford University Press. It comprises 60 recognition-type cloze reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar items in an ascending difficulty order, and its results can be reported along Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) levels from "beginner" to "very advanced." The test generally enjoys good validity and reliability (see Geranpayeh, 2003). In the present study, the participants scored between 36 and 45, and thus were designated as intermediate. The test took 35 minutes to complete, and a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of .86 showed the reliability of the scores.

Second, as languaging research has found learners' initial knowledge to play a role in the quantity and quality of languaging, the participants' apology and request production ability were homogenized across the two groups through a 16-item WDCT test. The WDCTs were selected from among existing ones (e.g., Zand Moghaddam, 2012) in a way to represent (a) various combinations of power, distance, and imposition (as the three SCVs) implicating in speech act performance and (b) situations familiar in university life involving professor-student, student-student and student-parent role relationships. WDCT responses were all rated by a native speaker and the researcher (with an inter-rater correlation coefficient of .91) along a 6-point Likert scale in the tradition of Taguchi (2006), based on such concerns as comprehensibility, grammatical and discoursal felicity, as well as appropriacy. Prior to assigning the participants to ILG and CLG and following the workshop (see Procedure), the WDCT was administered. After ensuring the normality of WDCT scores (with skewness (-.55) and kurtosis (-1.22) values over their standard error estimates (.44 and .85, respectively) falling within the range of $\pm$ 1.96), those scoring within the range of one standard deviation (.19) from the mean (3.07) were assigned as the main participants (N=45).

**Procedure**

The present study's implementation involved the following steps:

1. convenience sampling of the initial 58 participants;
2. administration of the QPT and the WDCT to control for general proficiency level as well as speech act production ability, and the inclusion of intermediate EFL learners scoring within one standard deviation from the mean of the WDCT scores (N=45);
3. offering a two and a half-hour workshop to all the 45 participants to (a) familiarize them with pragmatics, ILP, speech acts, and the three SCVs; (b) provide conversation-embedded apology and request samples produced by native speakers (five on apology and five on request) and analyze them based on these two speech acts' strategy sets; (c) model individual languaging (the instructor/researcher) and collaborative languaging (the instructor/researcher paired one of the workshop participants), drawing attention to the SCVs, politeness, and grammatical and discoursal appropriateness.
4. random assignment of the participants into ILG (N=15) and CLG (N=30), and random pairing of CLG participants as co-equals;
5. having ILG and CLG participants complete 10 WDCTs (five on apology and five on request) through individual and collaborative (paired) languaging as modeled in the last phase of the workshop, and record their own voices and interactions using their cell phones' voice recorder application; and
6. coding the recordings, analysis of the quantity (frequency in the present study) and quality of noticing, reflection and hypothesis testing episodes, and comparison of the two sets of episodes (see Data Analysis Results for the operational definitions and the coding scheme).

## Data Analysis Results

The present study involved a comparison of individual and collaborative languaging in terms of the frequency of occurrence and nature of episodes of noticing, reflection, and hypothesis testing they induce. Answering this question involved the analysis of (a) think-aloud protocols of fifteen participants in ILG and (b) paired interactions of thirty participants in CLG, while completing 10

WDCTs (five on the speech act of apology and 5 on the speech act of request). The think-aloud protocols and paired interactions were audiotaped and transcribed. Transcribed data were then subjected to qualitative analyses in terms of Swain's (1985) three postulated functions of learner output, i.e. noticing, hypothesis testing, and reflection. Upon an initial examination of the data, operational definitions of the three functions of languaging were adopted (and minimally adapted) from an earlier work by the researcher on learner output (Bagherkazemi, 2014), borrowing ideas from Jernigan (2007), Shehadeh (2002), Swain (1995, 2006), and Swain and Lapkin (1998). Languaging functions were defined as follows in the present study:

1. **Noticing:** (a) the first implicit or explicit mention of power/status, distance/familiarity and/or imposition under various rubrics, either before or after uttering the speech act, and (b) showing awareness of gaps in one's sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge due to failed attempts at producing the speech act in question, through either implicit admission (e.g., "How can I say it?") or explicit admission (e.g., "I don't know how to say it.") in individual languaging, and implicit or explicit request for information in collaborative languaging (e.g., A asks B, "I wonder if I can or I wonder if I could?");
2. **Reflection:** using language individually or collaboratively to contemplate the situation, politeness issues, the possible interaction/clash of the three SCVs with each other and with politeness (e.g., "I should be very polite in this situation."), as well as the appropriacy of certain speech act strategies and semantic formulae (e.g., "If I don't tell her the reason in my apology, she will get upset.");
3. **Hypothesis testing:** individual or collaborative trial-and-error episodes regarding conjectures about the correspondence of situation-specific SCVs and the expressed speech act strategies and semantic formula, based on either own internal feedback in individual languaging or external feedback provided by one's interlocutor in collaborative languaging, leading to output modifications. Table 1 shows the descriptive codes along with their descriptors.

Table 1

*Individual and Collaborative Languaging Coding Scheme* (reproduced from Bagherkazemi, 2014, p. 185)

| Languaging function | Descriptive code | Descriptor |
|---|---|---|
| Noticing | N1 | Learners notice one SCV. |
| | N2 | Learners notice two SCVs. |
| | N3 | Learners notice three SCVs. |
| | NKG | Learners notice sociopragmatic and/or pragmalinguistic knowledge gap. |
| Hypothesis testing | HT | Learners engage in trial-and-error episodes regarding sociopragmatic–pragmalinguistic mappings. |
| Reflection | R | Learners contemplate the situation, SCVs and/or politeness. |

*Note.* SCV= social context variable (power, distance, imposition).

After the development of the coding scheme, the data were coded twice: once by the researcher (Coder 1) and once by a 36 year-old female university instructor (Coder 2). Coder 2 held a Ph.D. in English Language Teaching, and had a 10-year teaching experience at different language schools and universities in Iran. In advance of coding, she was briefed on the three functions of languaging and their operational definitions for the purpose of the study as well as the coding scheme. Subsequently, the two coders' codings were compared for the purpose of locating and discussing the discrepancies. Instances of noticing, hypothesis testing, and reflection not detected by one of the coders (N=13), and those coded differently by the two coders (N=18) were discussed, and agreements reached. Ambiguity lay in instances of *noticing* contained in the learners' *reflections* over the situation, as in Example 1.

**Example 1:**

**Apology situation:** You are a teacher. You promised one of your students to bring him/her a book on Wednesday afternoon, but you forgot. The student waited for you at the door of your office for one hour. Today is Thursday, and the student comes to your office again; you apologize to him/her.

**Think-aloud protocol:** *I think it is students who should ask their teacher for help, so it's ok to ask for something for a second or third time as a student*. It doesn't matter much, so teachers do not usually feel ashamed in these situations. As the teacher, I would say, "Sorry I forgot it yesterday as I had a busy schedule this week, but you can have it now."

The coders agreed that the italicized section of the think-aloud protocol in Example 1 be taken as an instance of "reflection" over the situation, and the two underlined parts be counted as instances of *noticing* of "power" and "imposition," respectively. Table 2 presents the finalized frequency of occurrence of instances of noticing, reflection, and hypothesis testing detected in the data.

Table 2

*Frequencies of Noticing, Reflection, and Hypothesis Testing in Individual/Collaborative Languaging*

| Languaging function | | Frequency of occurrence | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Individual languaging | Collaborative languaging |
| Noticing | N1 | 72 | 24 |
| | N2 | 90 | 103 |
| | N3 | 3 | 54 |
| | NKG | 13 | 13 |
| Hypothesis testing(HT) | | 12 | 30 |
| Reflection (R) | | 78 | 80 |

*Note.* N1= Learners notice one SCV; N2= Learners notice 2 SCVs; N3= Learners notice 3 SCVs (where SCV= social context variables of power, distance, and imposition); NKG= Learners notice pragmatic knowledge gaps.

**Noticing in Individual and Collaborative Languaging**

A comparison of individual and collaborative languaging in terms of the SCVs indicated that a larger number of such variables were generally noticed for each situation in paired interactions than in individual languaging. Participants in ILG showed consciousness of those SCVs which seemed to have clearer implications for verbalizing the speech act: They made a mention of one or two SCVs in the majority of cases (N=162) but failed to notice all three SCVs together for more than three situations. In Example 1, the learner has implicitly referred to *power* and the *low imposition* involved in producing the speech act, i.e. the low face threat likely to incur on the student. Failure to notice one or more of the SCVs did in some cases mislead the ILG participants

in their choice of appropriate speech act strategies and semantic formula. In Example 2, the learner has failed to notice "distance," despite its being explicitly mentioned in the situation prompt, and this failure seems to have caused her to hesitate over the appropriate address term. Had she noticed this SCV, the choice would have been more easily made.

**Example 2:**

**Request situation:** You are doing your research project, and need to interview the president of your university. The president was your teacher, and you know him quite well. You know he is very busy and has a tight schedule. You still want to ask the president to spare one or two hours for your interview.

**Think-aloud protocol:** [reads the situation] So difficult, so tough! the president of the university, he is serious; so I should go and make a request … request in a very … very polite way, because he is in a position that is very … maybe …tough, although I know him well. On the other hand, I have no other way… I have to go. I must go because it is an important project. What can I say? How should I start "Mr. President," or should I use his name? … "Mr. Amini," for example, "I was wondering if you kindly gave me some time for an interview." I'm not sure if it is polite and formal enough.

On the other hand, participants in CLG noticed more than one SCV in the majority of cases; interactions in which two SCVs were noticed were paramount (N=103), and the sociopragmatic appropriacy of the speech act worded in most of such cases revealed the consideration of the SCV not referred to by either of the participants. In 54 situations, all three SCVs were mentioned, and these were mainly contributed to the interaction by both participants. Example 3 offers a case of the collaborative noticing of power, distance and imposition by Students A and B. While "position," i.e. *power*, is referred to in the first turn by Student A, the other two aspects of the situation, i.e. *imposition* and *distance*, are noticed and verbalized in a subsequent turn by Student B.

**Example 3:**

**Apology situation:** You are a teacher. You promised one of your students to bring him/her a book on Wednesday afternoon, but you forgot. The student waited for you at the door of your office for one hour. Today is Thursday, and the student comes to your office again; you apologize to him/her.

**Paired interaction:**

A. [reads the situation] Uhm, if I was the teacher, I would surely apologize, but not very formally or seriously, you know what I mean? it's because of the position, the teacher is the higher. Yeah?
B. Yeah.
A. So I wouldn't say that I'm sorry, I'm truly sorry, I forgot it. It's not ok to do so. What do you think?
B. Yes, you're right. You know her position is much higher.
A. Yes.
B. You know, they have some power against us, the teacher. She doesn't have to talk about the reason; students should accept it. It seems the student is not very… very close, … a normal relationship.
A. I think for the teacher, the apology shouldn't be that formal. It is enough to say, "Sorry, I forgot to bring it." That's ok. Enough for me. As a student, I would accept it. It's acceptable for me as a student.

Think-aloud protocols and paired interactions were also compared in terms of instances of noticing ILP knowledge gaps, i.e. gaps in one's knowledge of appropriate speech act strategies and semantic formulae. Learners in ILG explicitly admitted their lack of knowledge, as evident in the underlined part of the think-aloud protocol in Example 4. In this case, the learner tried to fill in the gap based on internal (i.e. own) feedback. Although she noticed power inequality, internal feedback (the underlined part) failed her in her choice of the right semantic formula. Failure to make the appropriate choice was also the case with the other twelve instances of knowledge gap noticing detected in individual languaging.

**Example 4:**

**Request situation:** You've been working in an advertising company for five years. Having worked hard for the company's benefits and received better salary offers from other companies, you think you can ask the boss for a pay rise or promotion. You make this request.

**Think-aloud protocol:** In this situation, I want my boss to increase my salary and give me a better position, but he might refuse this request because his power is certainly more than mine. I should be very careful and formal, and make my request in a way that he does not feel I don't respect him. I can use "I…uhm" but I think my… I don't know what to say…how to be formal and at the same time effective in this situation…. Maybe, I should… I should say "I'm… I have worked very hard for this company"… "I expect a pay rise or a promotion, Sir!" If I say "Will you give me a pay rise?" it would not work. I think making this request is hard because the boss is more powerful.

In collaborative languaging, on the other hand, the instances of noticing ILP knowledge gaps were realized by implicit and explicit requests for information from partners. The explicit request for information has been underlined in the paired interaction in Example 5. In this example, the learner made the right choice based on her partner's feedback.

**Example 5:**

**Apology situation:** You are a university professor. Standing in the university hall, you are talking to one of your students about a project. In the meantime, one other student, who is very happy to see you after about a year and whom you really like, comes forward and pulls out his hand to shake hands with you. You just greet him, but do not notice his hand. He seems to have taken offence. You apologize.

A. The first thing that I…I think is that I show in my face that I did not have any intention to upset him. And I think about how I can apologize. He is my old student. But I say, for example, "John, I'm so… so sorry, I was so busy with the other student that I failed to shake hands with you." I'm so sorry or I hope you forgive me? Which one is better or more appropriate?
B. What?

A. I'm so sorry or I hope you forgive me?
B. The first is better because I think. The second one is too formal and the teacher does not have to be ashamed. It was not intentional if I'm not mistaken.
A. So "I'm so sorry, I was so busy with the other student that I failed to shake hands with you." I agree … This is better if we consider the teacher's power, and maybe what has happened is not very important.

Overall, more SCVs were noticed by the collaborative languaging group. In addition, ILP knowledge gaps were not noticed in most cases, irrespective of the type of languaging; however, the few observed instances remained unresolved in individual languaging, but resolved through external feedback in collaborative languaging.

**Hypothesis Testing in Individual and Collaborative Languaging**

With respect to "hypothesis generation and testing," as one of the postulated learner output functions, there were 42 such episodes altogether: 12 in the individual and 30 in the collaborative languaging data. Hypothesis testing was defined as individual or collaborative trial-and-error postulations of various aspects of the situation (e.g., SCVs, SCVs' interactions, and SCV–politeness interaction) or appropriate speech act strategies and semantic formulae, induced by either internal or external feedback, leading to output modifications.

As for individual hypothesis testing episodes, learners drew on internal feedback in their output modifications. In Example 6, the learner modified her speech act strategies upon mulling over the consequence of performing the trialed speech act, as the underlined part of the think-aloud protocol shows. In fact, further reflection on the appropriacy and adequacy of her postulated speech act strategies seems to have pushed her to modify her output.

**Example 6:**

**Apology situation:** You borrowed a book from your classmate. While you were reading the book, you accidentally spilled some orange juice on the cover of the book. Now you return the book to your classmate and apologize.

**Think-aloud protocol:** In this situation [reads the situation], it's my fault … really … that I couldn't … keep her book, and it maybe … I should … I should buy a new book for him. "Sorry I'll buy a new one for you," and I'm not sure that in this situation he

forgives me for… she forgives me if I say this, but I … it's… it's her book, and I'm really sorry about what I did. I should say the decision is with her. I'll tell her I'll do everything that she decides, Yes. It's better. So I'll say "I'm really sorry about what I did. I don't know how it happened. Now, I'll do whatever you say, and I'm ready to buy a new book for you."

Regarding collaborative languaging, output modifications were induced solely by external feedback received from one's partner. In Example 7, Student A improved her first statement and received positive feedback from Student B.

**Example 7:**

**Request situation:** You are doing your research project, 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.

**Paired interaction:**

A. We can say uhm "Would you please spare one or two hours for our interview, for my interview?"
B. It's … I think it is not enough, I mean the way you are requesting "would you please" or "could you please." It's … it's the company president.
A. Ok... then… we may say "I was wondering if you could spare one or two hours for our interview."
B. Yeah, it's better…

In sum, collaborative hypothesis testing was more frequent, and was led by external feedback, rather than internal feedback.

**Reflection in Individual and Collaborative Languaging**

An inspection of the data brought to light several instances of reflection (see Table 2). Regarding individual languaging, 78 reflections over the sociopragmatic aspects of the situation mainly prior to wording the speech acts, but also after that, were detected. Such reflections were characterized

by the learner contemplating whether or not to perform the speech act, possible consequences of its performance, situation-specific SCVs and their interaction, and politeness and its interaction with SCVs. It is worth noting that of the 15 participants, 3 failed to reflect over the issues of politeness and formality, while the other 12 made an explicit mention of them, at least in one of the 10 situations each dealt with. The underlined part of Example 8 offers a case of reflection over the situation and its associated SCVs.

**Example 8:**

**Apology situation:** It is the first session of a new course at university. Upon entering the class, you bump into one of your new classmates who is standing at the door talking on the phone. How would you apologize?

**Think-aloud protocol:** I come across this situation that… the person that I should apologize to is of the same level and in the same class of… in the same class of society with me, so it wouldn't be that hard to make this apology, so I would… but I think I should be polite as always, so I would say to him "I'm sorry! I wasn't looking." I think this is enough. Nothing important has happened.

Concerning collaborative languaging, the 80 reflection episodes detected were mainly distributed over several turns, with either of the participants having ideas to contribute about the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects of the situation, not referred to by the other or pointed out in previous turns. In other words, "collaborative reflection" involved either initiating new ideas or providing greater depth to already postulated aspects of the situation by one's partner; this was where collaborative dialoging evolved. Comments followed by confirmation checks, i.e. checking whether or not the partner agreed, were common. In 5 cases, however, where interaction was minimal, reflections were almost totally spelled out by one of the partners, and the other either confirmed her ideas without any further comments or simply kept silent. Such cases were not counted as instances of "collaborative reflection." Example 9 is an excerpt of a paired interaction, illustrating collaborative reflection over the situation, politeness, and appropriate speech act strategies.

**Example 9:**

**Request situation:** You are doing your research project, 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.

**Paired interaction:**

A. [Reads the situation]
B. Oh, it is very difficult. You are so busy and we need two or three hours of his time.
A. Aha!
B. I think that we should be so polite.
A. Yes…
B. So thankful!
A. Yes, and we should insist on our request. Why…
B. We should or we shouldn't?
A. Yes, we should but because we need it. But you know it is maybe… it is not polite.
B. Yes, it is so difficult. I think that we should make our request for many times until he accepts.

Moreover, collaborative reflections led in some cases to the noticing of potentially important aspects of the situation not specified in the situation prompts, such as *gender* and *distance*. Another observation was "comparative reflection" incidents after discussing all the 5 speech act-specific situations. These occurred in 3 of the 15 paired interactions, one of which is presented in Example 10.

**Example 10:**

**Collaborative comparative reflection over request situations:**

A. And I think that it depends on the situation how we should express our request: For example when we encounter with the president, we should be very polite, and we should manage our speaking, but when we want to speak, for example, with our roommate, it is not necessary to be very formal. Because our roommate is someone that he is… he or she is like us, the company's president is a very important person, or our teacher, our teacher…

B. For example, the president is not that friendly with us, so we should be more polite probably, because it's an important person, and we don't have a friendly relationship.

The results of comparing individual and collaborative languaging in terms of their potential for enhancing noticing, reflection, and hypothesis testing can be summarized as follows:

1. Instances of noticing were frequent in both individual and collaborative languaging, though more SCVs were noticed for each noticing instance in the latter. With regard to noticing knowledge gaps, only paired participants managed to fill in the postulated gaps, rarity of such instances in both languaging types notwithstanding.
2. Hypothesis testing episodes were more frequent in collaborative languaging; they were induced by external feedback in collaborative languaging and by internal feedback in individual languaging. In addition, hypothesis testing in collaborative languaging was more clearly conducive to output improvements.
3. Collaborative reflections were more profound than individual reflections owing to the contribution of both participants; furthermore, comparative reflections characterized only collaborative languaging.

## Discussion

A comparison of think-aloud protocols of the individual languaging group (ILG) and paired interactions of the CLG in terms of Swain's (1985, 2006) postulated functions of learner output brought to light a number of differences. With regard to the noticing function of languaging, collaborative languaging led to the noticing of more SCVs for each situation prompt, compared with individual languaging. This observation was expected since "knowledge pooling," i.e. knowledge co-construction in a shared activity, induced by collaborative languaging is likely to lead to a more profound analysis of relevant aspects (pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic) of the situation, implicating in speech act performance. From a sociocultural perspective, "the co-construction of linguistic knowledge in dialogue is language learning in progress" (Swain & Lapkin, 1998, p. 321). It follows that while ILG probably developed an awareness of such issues as power, distance, and imposition based solely on their own resources, CLG had the additional opportunity of "scaffolded help" of a peer, in the sense of bringing to light critical sociopragmatic

features, otherwise passed unnoticed (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 197). Regarding "noticing the gap" (Schmidt & Frota; cited in Ellis, 2008), in the sense of recognizing a hole in one's pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, gap filling or output improvements following peer feedback or comments featured in collaborative, but not in individual, languaging. This could be justified with reference to the nature of teacher-imposed languaging as a task type. Shehadeh (1999) found one-way tasks superior to two-way tasks in terms of the creation of output modification opportunities. In the present study, however, improved versions of earlier output featured in collaborative languaging. Collaborative languaging was, in effect, two-way in terms of "interactants' relationship," and convergent and collaborative in terms of "task orientation" (Ellis, 2003). Two-way tasks can be said to have fulfilled the potential for effecting improved verbalizations of earlier speech acts in the present study; however, how they compare with one-way tasks in terms of inducing speech act modification opportunities stands in need of research.

With respect to reflection episodes, collaborative reflections proved to be more profound, probably as a result of the "dialogically constituted interpsychological mechanism" (Donato; cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 197). Collaborative reflections involved effective peer scaffolding, in the sense of initiating ideas regarding various social and linguistic aspects of speech act performance or building upon those already put forth by one's partner. In line with Ohta (2000, 2001), the observed difference between individual and collaborative languaging can be discussed in terms of such cognitive concepts as "selective attention" and "L2 processing capacity" (Long, 1996, p. 414). CLG probably brought together such resources effectively when engaged in dialogic collaboration regarding the pragmalinguistically and sociopragmatically appropriate production of the speech act in question. This unique opportunity, however, was not available to ILG. Instead, they had to rely on their own limited working memory and processing capacity, hence their less-than-perfect reflections. In addition to collaborative reflections, CLG engaged, on occasion, in "comparative reflections," though no such instances were observed for ILG. This finding can be explained in terms of Flavell's (1979) concept of "metacognitive experiences," defined as "any conscious cognitive or affective experiences that accompany or pertain to any intellectual enterprise" (p. 906). Comparative reflections featuring in paired interactions might be indicative of the participants' metacognitive experiences: conscious comparisons of sociopragmatic features of the situations and of the ways their idiosyncratic functional and contextual features could be

mapped onto pragmalinguistic forms. This, in turn, probably shows the greater metacognitive awareness-raising potential of collaborative languaging.

Finally, think-aloud protocols and paired interactions were compared in terms of hypothesis generation and testing episodes. Such instances were not only more frequent in collaborative languaging, but also more clearly leading to output improvements. The main reason for this finding could be the presence of external (peer) feedback, distinguishing the two languaging types. In Vygotskian terms, such feedback can be thought of as a scaffold, which can function to sustain motivation and interest during problem-solving (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). The obtained results concerning the greater potential of collaborative languaging for learner reflection and hypothesis testing is in accordance with Storch's (2005, 2007) finding that collaborative output leads to a higher number of language-related episodes, compared with individual output. The results might also explain Khatib and Ahmadi Safa's (2012) finding as to the significant effect of co-equals' scaffolding on their speech act production and its superiority over teacher-fronted ZPD-wise scaffolding.

## Conclusion and Implications

As the main foci of the present study, individual and collaborative languaging were found to differ in terms of their potential for pushing EFL learners to (a) notice the three situational variables of power, distance, and imposition, as well as own pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge gaps, (b) generate and test hypotheses regarding form–function–context mappings, and (c) reflect over various aspects of the situation implicating in speech act performance, including formality, politeness, and the interaction of these two factors with the three SCVs. While both individual and collaborative languaging can lead to noticing and reflection episodes, collaborative languaging tends to house a larger number of hypothesis testing episodes. In addition, collaborative noticing and collaborative and comparative reflection episodes tend to be more profound, owing to the availability of external (peer) feedback and to pragmatic knowledge pooling. Finally, collaborative hypothesis testing more clearly induces modification (improvement) of earlier output, and the noticed knowledge gaps can be better resolved in collaborative dialoging. According to Swain (2006), requiring learners to produce language in pairs or groups potentially yields collaborative

metalinguistic talk, in which they strive to thrive in the linguistic showcase. Individual production, on the other hand, does not come up to comparable standards.

Based on the findings of the present study, the socioculturalism-informed output hypothesis, which marries cognitive psychology and social practice theories, might have the potential to theoretically explain ILP development. This is despite the fact that in most related ILP studies, languaging has been referred to as a theoretical condition for speech act development alongside structured input, negative evidence, and meaning negotiation potentially engendered in interaction (Kasper, 2001; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010). That mere languaging, in the absence of explicit or implicit instruction, can aid learners in their endeavor to learn L2 pragmatic features has been evidenced in few studies (Khatib & Ahmadi Safa, 2012; Tajeddin & Bagherkazemi, 2014). These studies are generally in favor of collaborative dialoguing, and the present study's results partially explain the reason for this tendency; however, more studies addressing the nature of languaging from various angles including the significance of the nature of grouping (proficiency grouping; ILP expert peers or ILP co-equals; members' expressiveness and willingness to communicate), the language and modality of languaging (L1 or L2; oral or written), and learners' reference to mediating artifacts (dictionaries, the Net, etc.) are needed to draw a generalizable conclusion. Overall, it seems to be high time ILP practitioners disengaged themselves from the haunting dilemma of implicit or explicit pragmatic instruction and propelled their practices into a consideration for learners' own potential, including their individual and collaborative languaging.

## References

Bagherkazemi, M. (2014). *Interlanguage Pragmatic Development: Impacts of Individual Output, Collaborative Output, Input Enhancement, Metapragmatic Awareness Raising, and Pragmatic Learning Strategies* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.

Bao, G. (2019). Input and output tasks in EFL learners' vocabulary acquisition. *TESOL International Journal*, *14*(1).

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2001). Evaluating the empirical evidence: Grounds for instruction in pragmatics? In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 13-32). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brooks, L., Swain, M., Lapkin, S., & Knouzi, I. (2010). Mediating between scientific and spontaneous concepts through languaging. *Language Awareness, 19*(2), 89-110.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching. *Applied Linguistics*, *I*(1), 1-47. doi: 10.1093/applin/I.1.1

Ellis, R. (2003). *Task-based language learning and teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive development enquiry. *American Psychologist*, *34*(10), 906–911. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.34.10.906

Geranpayeh, A. (2003). A quick review of the English Quick Placement Test. *University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations Research Notes*, *12*, 8-10. Retrieved from http://www.uniss.it/documenti/lingue/what_is_the_QPT.pdf

Ishikawa, M. (2015). Metanotes (written languaging) in a translation task: do L2 proficiency and task outcome matter? *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 9*(2), 115-129.

Ishikawa, M., & Suzuki, W. (2016). The effect of written languaging on learning the hypothetical conditional in English. *System, 58*, 97-111.

Jernigan, J. E. (2007). *Instruction and developing second language pragmatic competence: An investigation into the efficacy of output* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest

Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3263885)

Jia, D. (2015). *An Experimental Study on the Effect of Written Languaging on English Writing Revision* (Unpublished master's thesis). Lanzhou University, Lanzhou.

Kasper, G. (2001). Classroom research on interlanguage pragmatics. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 33–60). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Khatib, M., & Ahmadi Safa, M. (2011). The effectiveness of ZPD-wise explicit/implicit expert peers and co-equals' scaffolding in ILP development. *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL), 14*(1), 49-75.

Knouzi, I., Swain, M., Lapkin, S., & Brooks, L. (2010). Self-scaffolding mediated by languaging: Microgenetic analysis of high and low performers. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 20*(1), 23-49.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. Harlow, UK: Longman.

Lantolf, J. (2011). The sociocultural approach to second language acquisition: Sociocultural Theory, second language acquisition, and artificial L2 development. In D. Atkinson (Ed.), *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition* (pp. 24-47). London / New York: Routledge.

Li, L. (2015). Effect of languaging on the acquisition of tense and aspect. *Papers on Education, 19*, 22-25.

Liang, Z. (2014). *Effect of Written Languaging on Second Language Writing* (Unpublished master's thesis). Xiangtan University, Xiangtan.

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 413–468). Waltham, MA: Academic Press.

Martínez-Flor, A., & Usó-Juan, E. (2010). Pragmatics and speech act performance. In A. Martínez-Flor & E. Usó-Juan (Eds.), *Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues* (pp. 3-20). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Mitchell, R., & Myles, F. (2004). *Second language learning theories* (2nd ed.). London: Hodder Arnold.

Moradian, M. R., Miri, M., & Hossein Nasab, M. (2017). Contribution of written languaging to enhancing the efficiency of written corrective feedback. *International Journal of Applied*

*Linguistics, 27*(2), 406-421. doi: 10.1111/ijal.12138

Negueruela, E., & Lantolf, J. (2006). Concept-based pedagogy and the acquisition of L2 Spanish. In R Salaberry & B.A. Lafford (Eds.), *The art of teaching Spanish: Second language acquisition from research to praxis* (pp. 79–102). Georgetown: Georgetown University Press.

Niu, R. (2017). The Mediation of EFL learners' interaction for word processing within collaborative output. *TESOL International Journal, 12* (2).

Niu, R., & Li, L. (2017). A review of studies on languaging and second language learning (2006-2017). *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 7*(12), 1222-1228. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0712.08.

Norouzian, R., & Eslami, Z. (2016). Critical perspectives on interlanguage pragmatic development: An agenda for research. *Issues in Applied Linguistics, 20*(1), 25-50.

Ohta, A. S. (2000). Rethinking interaction in SLA: Developmentally appropriate assistance in the zone of proximal development and the acquisition of L2 grammar. In J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 51–78). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ohta, A. S. (2001). *Second language acquisition processes in the classroom: Learning Japanese*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ohta, A. S. (2005). Interlanguage pragmatics in the zone of proximal development. *System*, *33*(3), 503–517. DOI: 10.1016/j.system.2005.06.001

Rose., K. R., & Kasper, G. (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schmidt, R. (1993). Consciousness, learning, and interlanguage pragmatics. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 21–42). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shehadeh, A. (1999). Non-native speakers' production of modified comprehensible output and second language learning. *Language Learning*, *49*(4), 627–675. doi: 10.1111/0023-8333.00104

Shehadeh, A. (2002). Comprehensible output, from occurrence to acquisition: An agenda for acquisitional research. *Language Learning*, *52*(3), 597–647. doi:10.1111/1467-9922.00196

Storch, N. (2005). Collaborative writing: Product, process, and students' reflections. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *14*(3), 153–173. doi: 10.1016/j.jslw.2005.05.002

Storch, N. (2007). Investigating the merits of pair work on a text editing task in ESL classes.

*Language Teaching Research*, *11*(2), 143–59. doi: 1177/1362168807074600

Suzuki, W. (2009). Improving Japanese u niversity students' second language writing accuracy: Effects of languaging. *Annual Review of English Language Education in Japan, 20*, 81-90.

Suzuki, W. (2012). Written languaging, direct correction, and second language writing revision. *Language Learning, 62*(4), 1110-1113.

Suzuki, W. (2017). The effect of quality of written languaging on second language learning. *Writing & Pedagogy, 8*(3), 461-482.

Suzuki, W., & Itagaki, N. (2009). Languaging in grammar exercises by Japanese EFL learners of differing proficiency. *System, 37*, 217-225.

Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In S. Gass & C. Madden (Eds.), *Input in second language acquisition* (pp. 235–253). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Swain, M. (2006). Languaging, agency and collaboration in advanced second language proficiency. In H. Byrnes (Ed.), *Advanced Language Learning: The contribution of Halliday and Vygotsky* (pp. 95–108). London: Continuum.

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1998). Interaction and second language learning: Two adolescent French immersion students working together. *The Modern Language Journal*, *82*(3), 320–337. DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.1998.tb01209.x

Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (2001). Focus on form through collaborative dialogue: Exploring task effects. In M. Bygate, P. Skehan & M. Swain (Eds.), *Researching pedagogic tasks: Second language learning, teaching and testing* (pp. 99–118). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Taguchi, N. (2006). Analysis of appropriateness in a speech act of request in L2 Spanish. *Pragmatics*, *16*(4), 513–533.

Taguchi, N. (2011). Teaching pragmatics: Trends and issues. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, *31*, 289–310. doi: 10.1017/S0267190511000018

Taguchi, N. (2015). Instructed pragmatics at a glance: Where instructional studies were, are and should be going? *Language Teaching*, 48, 1-50. DOI: 10.1017/S0261444814000263

Tajeddin, Z., & Bagherkazemi, M. (2014). Short-term and long-term impacts of individual and collaborative pragmatic output on speech act production, *Teaching English Language*,

8(1), 141-166.

Tajeddin, Z. & Tayebipour, F. (2012). The effect of dynamic assessment on EFL learners' acquisition of request and apology, *Journal of Teaching Language Skills*, 31(2), 87-118. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.22099/jtls.2012.499

Takimoto, M. (2009). The effects of input-based tasks on the development of learners' pragmatic proficiency. *Applied Linguistics, 30*, 1–25.

Takimoto, M. (2010). Evaluating the effects of task repetition on learners' recognition and production of second language pragmatic chunks. Paper presented at the International Conference of Malaysian English Language Teaching Association, Selangor, Malaysia.

VanPatten, B. (1996). *Input processing and grammar instruction in second language acquisition*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Zand Moghadam, A. (2012). *Pre-task, Post-task, and Acaffolded While-task Pragmatic Instruction: Effects on EFL Learners' Pragmatic Development* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran.