Interface between L2 learners' pragmatic performance, language proficiency, and individual/group ZPD

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Abstract
One of the theories accounting for pragmatic development of L2 learners is Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. This study investigated the development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence through the lens of an important concept of Vygotsky's theory, i.e. the zone of proximal development. The study was conducted to answer two questions. The first question was whether the amount of scaffolding provided to EFL learners would have any relationship with their proficiency level. The second question was focused on the investigation of the relationship between learners' individual ZPDs and the group ZPD. To this end, 20 EFL learners at low vs. high proficiency levels were selected and assigned randomly into two groups. Both groups received ZPD-sensitive instruction to produce the two speech acts of request and apology. The findings indicated no significant relationship between the proficiency level of the participants and the amount of scaffolding given for the production of the two speech acts. However, the findings revealed certain relationship between participants' individual ZPDs and their group ZPD. This study suggests that EFL learners' general language proficiency has little impact on the development of their pragmatic competence. Besides, based on the findings, scaffolding seems to have learner-specific effects, meaning that each learner may need a specific amount of scaffolding for his/her ZPD to grow despite being in the same group ZPD.

Keywords: Language proficiency, pragmatic competence, interlanguage pragmatics, individual ZPD, group ZPD

Introduction

One of the most important concepts in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of mind is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). As to the importance of ZPD, Karpov's argument (cited in Haywood & Lidz, 2007) is revealing: "nowhere in the field of human endeavors is Vygotsky's concept of zone of proximal development more relevant than in education" (p. 74). That is possibly why for Vygotsky (1978), ZPD-sensitive instruction is the only effective kind of instruction (Lantolf, 2005). According to Vygotsky (1978), ZPD "is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Modifying Vygotsky's (1978) definition, Ohta (2001) defines ZPD as the distance between an individual's actual level of development realized by the individual's independent linguistic production and his/her potential level of development realized through collaborated linguistic

production, i.e. language produced with the assistance of a peer or teacher.

A distinction is made between learners' zones of actual development (ZAD) and their zones of proximal development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky (1978), at ZAD, a learner is expected to perform independently of the others and with no help provided; however, at ZPD the learner is expected to perform beyond his/her actual zone of development if the learner is provided with scaffolding and if the scaffolding is timely and ZPD-sensitive. It follows that scaffolding should be neither too early nor too late. This timely scaffolding has been the essence of almost all ZPD-sensitive studies over the past decades or so despite the fact that some discrepancies may have been observed in the terminology of the studies conducted. In fact, the metaphor of "scaffolding" proposed by Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) seems to imply the same idea as ZPD-sensitive assistance. The point is that both refer to what Vygotsky (1978) meant by cognitive development in terms of which language used between parents (teachers) and children (learners) facilitates children's (learners') cognitive development because it mediates the interaction between the expert and the novice (Vygotsky, 1986; Wertch, 1979). Such mediations indicate that linearity of learning, including language learning, is nothing but a fallacy because learning is, according to Vygotsky (1978), by no means a static, unidirectional flow of knowledge from the more knowledgeable to the less knowledgeable. Rather, learning is a dynamic, dialogical flow in which not only learners but also teachers are involved in a game of give and take of knowledge. This study purported to explore the interface between the amount of scaffolding/assistance provided to EFL learners, their proficiency level, and individual/group ZPD.

Literature review

The timely assistance provided to learners is called "scaffolding" though other terms such as "collaborative dialogue" (Swain, 2000), and "instructional conversation" (Donato, 2000) have been proposed to refer to the same concept. It is believed that scaffolding is, to a great extent, responsible for language acquisition since "acquisition occurs *in* rather than *as a result of* interaction" (Artigal, cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 234). Two features of scaffolding may be worth noting here: The first is that scaffolding not only helps novice learners do the task collaboratively but also provides information that, when internalized, enables them to perform the task independently (Greenfield, 1984). Although Vygotsky's research was concerned mainly with the cognitive development of children, another feature is that scaffolding is applicable to all learning including child/adult and formal/informal learning on the one hand and symmetrical (novice-novice) and asymmetrical (expert-novice) groupings on the other (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; van Lier, 1996).

Scaffolding, according to Ellis (2008), is "an inter-psychological process through which learners internalize knowledge dialogically" (p.235). Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) argue that scaffolding is the way an expert helps a novice progress through a process. Wood et al. (1976) enumerate six functions of an expert scaffolding: (1) orienting the novice's attention to the process; (2) simplifying the situation in a way that the novice can handle the process; (3) helping the novice to achieve a specific goal thereby motivating her/him; (4) highlighting the most important features of the process; (5) monitoring the frustration of the novice in case of failure; and (6) providing the novice with models of required behavior.

The six functions of scaffolding can be placed on a continuum of the most implicit to the most explicit assistance to be provided to learners. Through scaffolding, the scaffolder may have learners' attention drawn to the process (implicit help) or show the required behavior (explicit help). These functions of scaffolding have been studied by SLA researchers in various forms of ZPD-sensitive instruction. Although these studies are few, especially when it comes to L2 teaching and learning, the following are among the ZPD-sensitive studies carried out so far: Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994), Nassaji and Swain (2000), Kozulin and Garb (2002), Poehner (2005), Ableeva (2010), Alavi, Kaivanpanah, and Shabani (2012), Mosleh (2011), and Tajeddin and his colleagues (Tajeddin, Alemi, & Pakzadian, 2011; Tajeddin & Tayebipour, 2012).

Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) conducted the first study to investigate a mediator's collaboration with learners on the basis of a regulatory scale which changed from most implicit to most explicit. Drawing on this study, Nassaji and Swain (2000) aimed to find out if ZPD-sensitive mediation could enhance performance or if any kind of mediation could sufficiently aid learners in moving beyond what they could do without any help. The results demonstrated that giving ZPD-sensitive mediation made learners less accurate when they produced the initial composition independently. However, they outperformed the non-ZPD learner on the final task owing to the mediation they received.

Kozulin and Garb (2002) conducted a similar study. The results of their study were clearly in favor of ZPD-sensitive instruction because it proved to be significantly effective in promoting learners' reading comprehension skill. In Poehner's (2005) study, the aim was to explore learners' oral

abilities. The participants were assigned an oral construction task on the basis of a number of narratives in French. According to Poehner (2005), the findings indicated that ZPD-sensitive instruction can be highly effective because it was helpful in understanding learners' abilities and language problems and promoting their oral skill. In another study, Ableeva (2010) examined the impact of ZPD-sensitive instruction on listening comprehension. She compared the results of a traditional listening test with her ZPD-sensitive instruction. The results indicated that ZPD-sensitive instruction illuminated the sources of poor performance and that, through interactions in the ZPD, not only learners' actual level but their potential level of development in listening ability was diagnosed. In the same vein, Alavi, Kaivanpanah, and Shabani (2012) tested the applicability of a ZPD-sensitive approach with a group of EFL learners in the context of listening comprehension. The analysis showed how scaffolding could pave the way for establishing distributed help among learners within the social space of the classroom.

In a study which focused on pragmatic ability, Mosleh (2011) compared ZPD-based instruction with output and input-based instruction of speech acts. Results of data analysis showed that the ZPD-sensitive group outperformed the output and input groups, while the output group outperformed the input group in the posttest DCTs. In another pragmatics-related study, Tajeddin and Tayebipour (2012) compared a ZPD-sensitive approach with a ZPD-insensitive approach. The findings showed that the groups in the ZPD-based approach significantly outperformed those in the ZPD-insensitive approach. The results did not show any interaction between proficiency and instruction, indicating that

instruction, rather than proficiency, had a significant effect on the performance of the learners. The findings supported the ZPD-sensitive approach and its applicability to L2 pragmatics instruction.

Against this backdrop, this study was carried out to answer the following questions:

1. Is EFL learners' language proficiency related to the amount of scaffolding they require for the production of the speech acts of request and apology?

2. Are EFL learners' individual ZPDs related to the ZDP of the group as a whole in the production of the speech acts of request and apology?

Method
Participants
In this study, a total of 20 participants were selected from among 80 male and female undergraduate university students whose major was Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). They were assigned randomly to two groups of ZPD-sensitive instruction. One group included low-proficiency EFL learners who were selected from first-semester students. The other group who consisted of high-proficiency EFL learners was selected from eighth-semester students. The mean age of the participants was 22. The participants spoke the same language, and none had studied the English language abroad. Attempts were made to select as homogeneous participants as possible in each group because, according to Haywood and Lidz (2007), homogeneous grouping decrease variability that can be expected if some learners finish with a given part of the task before others do.

Instruments
Two instruments were employed in this study: (1) a general proficiency test, and (2) a written discourse completion task. As for the former, Oxford Quick Placement Test (2003) was administered. The test consists of three parts: Part One (1-40) includes simple grammar and vocabulary items. Part Two (40-60) includes more difficult multiple-choice items and a cloze test. Part Three comprises a writing section where candidates are required to write a paragraph of 150-200 words. From the three parts, only the first was administered due to the nature of the test, which requires second and third parts to be administered only if the testees can correctly answer more than 35 items out of 40. The second instrument was a discourse completion task (DCT) on request and apology speech acts (Appendix A). It was compiled by drawing on Bergman and Kasper (1993), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), and Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The test consisted of 12 items, including 6 items on request and 6 items on apology. The items required the participants to read short descriptions of the situations and write what they would say in the English language for each situation considering the interlocutors' power and distance.

Treatment materials
Treatment materials consisted of 12 discourse completion task (DCT) items, including 6 items on request and 6 items on apology speech acts. To provide a ZPD-sensitive instruction, Lantolf and Poehner's (2011) scale was adopted (Appendix B). In this scale, 8 forms of mediation are provided to the learners depending on their responsiveness. If a learner's response is correct, the mediator gives no further mediation. However, if it is not correct and/or appropriate, the mediator moves one step further until the last step where the

learner is provided with explicit explanation. To run the treatment sessions, both groups held meetings of 30 minutes, 2 days a week and for a total of 6 weeks, i.e. 3 weeks for teaching request strategies and 3 weeks for teaching the strategies of apology in every-other-week order.

Data collection and analysis
The data for the study were collected using two tests: First, a general proficiency test, that is, Oxford Quick Placement Test that was given to the participants to ensure that the two groups were different concerning their levels of language proficiency. Second, a discourse completion test (DCT) that was given to them to find out the extent to which level of language proficiency of the participants had any relationship with the amount of scaffolding they needed to produce the speech acts of request and apology.

The rationale for giving the general proficiency test to both low and high proficiency learners was to make sure that there was a significant difference between the two groups before beginning the treatment sessions. The rational for giving the pragmatic test was to measure the relationship between language proficiency and pragmatic competence as the discourse completion test required the participants to read descriptions of some situations and write what they would actually say for each situation considering the interlocutors' power and distance. The data collected through the general proficiency test were analyzed using an independent samples-t-test, and the data collected through the discourse completion test were analyzed using Spearman rank-order correlation.

Results
In this part, the descriptive statistics of low- and high-proficiency participants'

performance on Oxford Placement Test (OPT) is reported. Then, the difference between the two is given using an independent samples t-test. As Table 1 indicates, the mean scores of high-proficiency learners and low-proficiency learners were 25.70 and 17.70, respectively.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of the language proficiency test

Min	Max	Mean	SD
High ZPD-sensitive			
6.00	37.00	25.70	6.25
Low ZPD-sensitive			
9.00	32.00	17.70	6.41
Total			
9.00	37.00	21.00	7.40

To investigate if there was any significant difference between the mean scores of high and low proficiency levels on the proficiency test, an independent samples *t*-test was run. The *t*-observed value was 2.567. This amount of *t*-value is greater than the critical value of 2.101 at 18 degrees of freedom. Based on these results, it can be concluded that there was a significant difference between high and low proficiency levels' mean scores on the proficiency test. Thus, the two groups do belonged to two different proficiency levels.

With respect to the research questions, the first research question was raised to explore if EFL learners' language proficiency was related to the amount of scaffolding they required for the production of speech acts of request and apology. To answer the question, Spearman rank-order correlation was employed. To this end, first, every individual learner's general proficiency score was rank-ordered (which was based on their linguistic proficiency), and then the amount of scaffolding they needed to

produce the appropriate speech acts was determined. In effect, two aspects of the question were addressed, as described below.

The first aspect dealt with the relationship between low-proficiency learners' general proficiency score rank and their scaffolding-getting rank while producing the speech acts of request and apology. Regarding the speech act of request, the result of Spearman rank-order correlation indicated that there was no significant relationship between proficiency score rank and scaffolding-getting rank of the low proficiency learners while producing request speech act (r=.59, p=.072). Moreover, the result showed that there was not any significant relationship between proficiency score rank and scaffolding-getting rank in low-proficiency learners to produce apology speech act (r=.14, p=.68).

The second aspect focused on the relationship between the high-proficiency learners' general proficiency score rank and their scaffolding-getting rank when producing the speech acts of request and apology. The result of Spearman rank-order correlation showed no significant relationship between high-proficiency learners' score rank and scaffolding-getting rank to produce the request speech act (r=-.067, p=.85). As to apology, the result indicated no significant relationship between high-proficiency learners' score rank and scaffolding-getting rank when producing the apology speech act (r=.043, p = .91).

The second research question was aimed at exploring the relationship between each learner's individual ZPD and the ZPD of the group as a whole in the production of the speech acts of request and apology. The first part of the question addressed the low proficiency group. Table 3 depicts the

relationship between individual ZPD and group ZPD in the low-proficiency learners by showing the amount of scaffolding given to each particular learner on the one hand and the group on the other. As Table 2 indicates, to produce the speech acts of apology and request, the low-proficiency learners received a certain amount of scaffolding from session 1 to session 6, i.e. 3 sessions to produce the speech act of apology and 3 sessions to produce the speech act of request.

As Table 2 shows, the amount of scaffolding required by the learners turned out to be of three types: decreasing, increasing, or unchanging. More specifically, the amount of scaffolding given to six learners, i.e. 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10 (60%), to produce the speech act of apology decreased. This means that these learners were in need of less scaffolding as they moved on from session 1 to session 3. This indicates that their ZPDs grew from session 1 to 3. On the other hand, three learners, i.e. learner 2, 3, and 8 (30%), did experience a need for an increasing amount of scaffolding, indicating that they were in need of more assistance as they moved on from session 1 to session 3. The interesting case was, however, learner #5 (10%), who required an unchanging amount of scaffolding from session 1 to session 3.

Similar results were obtained for the speech act of request. In other words, seven learners, i.e. learners 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 (70%), showed that they needed less amount of scaffolding, which is indicative of the growth of their ZPDs. However, three learners, i.e. 1, 2, and 3 (30%), experienced a need for an increasing amount of scaffolding which means that their ZPDs were not growing.

Table 2: Amount of scaffolding given to each low-proficiency learner and the whole group in sessions 1-3

Individual Learners	Se.1 Ap.	Se.1 Req.	Se.2 Ap.	Se.2 Req.	Se.3 Ap.	Se.3 Req.	Apology	Request
1	14	4	11	11	8	11	Decreasing	Increasing
2	3	5	2	2	6	14	Increasing	Increasing
3	7	4	9	5	8	8	Increasing	Increasing
4	8	12	6	4	2	2	Decreasing	Decreasing
5	0	9	0	0	0	0	Unchanging	Decreasing
6	4	13	1	8	0	0	Decreasing	Decreasing
7	5	3	1	0	1	3	Decreasing	Decreasing
8	3	5	15	0	5	2	Increasing	Decreasing
9	6	9	0	0	0	6	Decreasing	Decreasing
10	2	4	3	1	2	2	Decreasing	Decreasing
Group	52	68	48	33	32	48	Decreasing	Decreasing

Note: Se=Session; Ap=Apology; Req=Request

Table 3: Amount of scaffolding given to each high-proficiency learner and the whole group in sessions 1-3

Individual Learners	Se.1 Ap.	Se.1 Req.	Se.2 Ap.	Se.2 Req.	Se.3 Ap.	Se.3 Req.	Apology	Request
1	5	10	3	3	3	5	Decreasing	Decreasing
2	4	0	3	1	0	5	Decreasing	Increasing
3	3	0	0	0	3	2	Unchanging	Increasing
4	3	3	6	0	0	0	Decreasing	Decreasing
5	0	4	5	0	0	5	Unchanging	Increasing
6	0	2	5	0	3	3	Increasing	Increasing
7	1	4	8	6	1	6	Unchanging	Increasing
8	1	6	6	0	0	3	Decreasing	Decreasing
9	2	3	8	4	0	0	Decreasing	Decreasing
10	0	5	3	4	0	1	Unchanging	Decreasing
Group	19	37	49	18	10	30	Decreasing	Decreasing

Note: Se=Session; Ap=Apology; Req=Request

With respect to the individuals as a group, as Table 3 shows, the amount of scaffolding given to the group decreased since the data show a decreasing state from 52 mediations to 32 in the case of apology and from 68 mediations to 48 in the case of request from session 1 to session 3. Table 3 also shows the amount of scaffolding given to the whole group as well.

As Table 3 shows, to produce the speech act of apology, five learners, i.e. learners 1, 2, 4, 8, and 9 (50%), needed a decreasing amount of scaffolding as they went from session 1 to session 3, whereas for one learner, i.e. 6 (10%), there was a different process. Indeed, learner # 6 was in need of more scaffolding as she moved on. The amount of scaffolding needed by the other learners remained unchanged. Considering the speech act of request, five individuals, i.e. learners 1, 4, 8, 9, and 10 (50%), experienced a decreasing state which means that they were in need of less scaffolding because their ZPDs grew over time. However, five learners, i.e. 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 (50%), experienced an opposite trend because they required more scaffolding as they moved on.

As to the individual ZPD and group ZPD of high-proficiency learners, two cases were observed. If considered as individuals, the number of mediations they needed either decreased, increased, or remained unchanged. However, when considered as a group, the amount of scaffolding they were provided with was constantly decreasing. Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between individual ZPD and group ZPD because both individuals (70% in the case of low-proficiency learners and 50% in the case of high-proficiency learners) and groups (100% in the case of low-proficiency learners and 100% in the case of high-proficiency learners) changed in a similar fashion and learners in both levels required less scaffolding as they moved on. In other words, both individual ZPD and group ZPD seemed to have been growing, albeit asymmetrically. These results are indicative of some degree of relationship between individual ZPDs and group ZPD.

Discussion
The findings of this study showed that there was no relationship between EFL learners' language proficiency and pragmatic competence. The study substantiates the idea that linguistic proficiency per se should not be regarded as a prerequisite for pragmatic competence development as pragmatic performance cannot be predicted on the basis of learners' general linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, the findings showed that relying solely on learners' summative scores can be misleading, meaning that if one's ZPD is not taken into account, instruction may not make any sense because it is only within one's ZPD that assistance may be internalized. As Lantolf (2005) notes, for Vygotsky learning was nothing but assisted performance and development was the ability to regulate mental and social activity as a consequence of having appropriated, or internalized, that assistance. Hence, if learning is assisted performance, not only one's product of learning (one's final score) but also the process(s) of learning (one's ZPD) should matter since without the process of learning an incomprehensive picture of one's learning is drawn. Another point is that since learning is dynamic in nature, that is, the route and rate of learning may change from moment to moment, learners' ZPDs should be constantly re-measured. Therefore, the interrelationship between individual and group ZPDs should be considered in all phases of learning.

The findings of the present study also showed that whereas the ZPDs of some learners required more scaffolding to grow and that the scaffolding given to them was far beyond their competence, for some other learners, the amount of scaffolding did not change from session 1 to session 3. This may mean that the amount of scaffolding given either did not match the learner's proficiency level or was below it so that scaffolding was not informative, challenging, or motivating for the learner's ZPD to grow. In any account, the performance of some learners highlights the evolutionary trajectory of second/foreign language learning, including pragmatic development and underscores the fact that language learning is not necessarily a linear process to be predictable on the basis of learners' proficiency levels. That is possibly why they manifested so many irregularities and fluctuations. It follows that the findings of this study confirm irregularities observed in previous studies, such as the one conducted by Aljafreh and Lantolf (1994).

According to Lantolf (2005) learner development was not a smooth, linear process; instead it followed the type of irregular trajectory captured by Vygotsky's description of development as a revolutionary process. This showed up in either of two ways: from one tutorial session to the next a given learner required more instead of less explicit assistance to locate and correct an error; or a learner who produced the correct form for a particular feature (e.g., irregular past tense form, "took") for two or three compositions in a row, produced the form with regular past tense morphology (p. 338).

The same irregularities were observed in this study. While in the majority of cases learners required less scaffolding as they moved on from session 1 to session 3, in some other cases they required more scaffolding, indicating that their ZPDs were not growing. Still, in some other cases no change was observed, meaning that the learners' ZPDs were neither growing nor falling back but being at a state of stagnation.

The findings of this study are revealing in that, first and foremost, the study underscores the findings of Aljhafreh and Lantolf (1994), and by implication, suggests that ZPD-sensitive instruction should be an essential ingredient of any instruction aimed at developing learners' pragmatic competence. This is because ZPD-sensitive instruction takes aspects of the learners' social interactions into account based on the view that "acquisition occurs *in* rather than *as a result of* interaction" (Artigal, cited in Ellis, 2008, p.234). According to Donato (2000), since awareness of form and function is made possible through social interaction, "the theory [Vygotsky's sociocultural theory] adds greater clarity to the issue of modified interaction and the negotiation of meaning in classroom setting" (p. 46).

Nonetheless, a point that should be noted is that individual ZPDs are unique and every individual learner may be in need of a specific amount of scaffolding due to his/her learning background. In this respect, Donato (2000) points out that "learners bring to interactions their own personal histories replete with values, assumptions, beliefs, rights, duties and obligations" (p.46). These personal histories may be responsible for the irregularities observed in the present study. Another point is that individual and group ZPDs are related to each other, although their exact nature is far from clear.

While this study focused on individual vs. group ZPD, its findings is generally in line

with the other studies on scaffolding in language learning. For instance, Pishghadam and Ghadiri (2011) investigated the effects of symmetrical and asymmetrical scaffolding on reading comprehension. The results showed the positive impact of both types of scaffolding on reading comprehension. In another study, Abadikhah and Valipour (2014) paired each elementary learner with an advanced learner to form an expert-novice pair to work on the transcripts of their oral presentations. They found that the advanced learners used many scaffolding techniques to help the novice notice the linguistic gaps. Finally, the study conducted by Ahangari, Hejazi, and Razmjou (2014) is closely related to the present study. They had the experimental group undergo scaffolding. The findings showed that the need for scaffolding faded along the course due to the learners' progress.

Conclusion

This study pursued two purposes. The first was to explore the relationship between EFL learners' general proficiency and the amount of scaffolding they required to produce the speech acts of apology and request. In this regard, since no significant correlation was found between the two variables, it can be concluded that EFL learners' general language proficiency should not be a sound basis to predict their speech act production. Therefore, it would be misleading to predict one's pragmatic success solely on the basis of general proficiency on the grounds that a learner with a higher score in a general proficiency test may not necessarily make more progress in the acquisition of pragmatic competence. As seen from the findings, two learners with the same language proficiency scores performed differently while learning L2 pragmatics and turned out to represent two different proximal zones of development. The

conclusion one may draw is that a weak relationship exists between learners' language proficiency and the amount of scaffolding they require while learning L2 pragmatics. It is the sociocultural context of learning which determines a specific learner's process of pragmatic learning irrespective of how high or low the learner's general language proficiency may be. In this regard, Donato (2000) maintains that "learning unfolds in different ways under different circumstances. The circumstances include the specific concrete individuals each with their different histories, and signs they use, and the assistance they provide and are provided" (p.47).

The second purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between learners' individual ZPDs and the ZPD of the group. The results partially confirmed the relationship. Hence, there seems to be a relationship between the two variables, although their precise nature is still a matter of question. In this study, the majority of the individuals' ZPDs as well as the ZPD of the group grew from session 1 to session 3. However, there were some irregularities between the two types of ZPDs, i.e. individual ZPD vs. group ZPD, making it more difficult to make a claim with conviction. In effect, as groups, the learners did require less scaffolding as they got closer to the end of their treatment sessions whereas, as individuals, they manifested irregularities. The majority of them (60%) required less scaffolding as they went on with the instruction, some of them (30%) required more scaffolding, and some (10%) remained unchanged. This indicates individual variation in the route to pragmatic development. Besides, the patterns of individual ZDPs for the two speech acts manifested dissimilarities. This adds to the complexity of ZPD growth as it depends not only on individual variation but also the

type of speech act. The overall conclusion is that there is a relationship between the two ZPDs, although the extent to which the two ZPDs go together is uncertain. More research is needed to draw stronger conclusions about this relationship.

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Appendices

A: Treatment Materials: WDCT (Bergman & Kasper, 1993, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, and Cohen & Olshtain, 1981)

Directions: Please read the following situations. Imagine you are in these situations. What would you say in each situation?

1. Backing out of a parking place, you ran into the side of another car. It was clearly your fault. You dent in the side door slightly. What do you say to apologize?
2. You completely forget a crucial meeting at the office with your boss. An hour later you call him to apologize. The problem is that this is the second time you've forgotten such a meeting. What do you say to apologize?
3. You promised to return a textbook to your classmate within a day or two. You held onto it for almost two weeks. You see your classmate. She/he seems to be really upset about the book because he/she needed it to prepare for last week's class. What do you say to apologize?
4. You accidentally bump into a well-dressed lady at an elegant department store, causing her to spill her packages all over the floor. You hurt her leg too. What would you say?
5. You have forgotten to return the book you borrowed from your professor. On the staff corridor you come across your professor. What would you say?
6. You call from work to find out how things are at home and your kids reminds you that you forgot to take them shopping as you had promised. And it is the second time this happened. What would you say?
7. You are working on an assignment. Your good friend has a book which is quite helpful for this assignment. What would you say to get the book?
8. You are shopping in a department store. You see a beautiful scarf. What would you say to the salesperson to see it?
9. You are discussing your assignment with your professor. S/he speaks so fast that you do not follow what s/he is saying. What would you say to make him/her say it again?
10. You are watching a football game. Your sister comes and stands just in front of you. What would you say to make her not block your view?
11. You need to have an appointment with your professor to ask some questions about your term project. What would you say?
12. You are taking an English grammar course. A test is to be held next week. You learn that the student sitting next to you has good background knowledge of grammar. What do you say to ask him/her to study together for the upcoming test?

B: Scaffolding Scale (Lantolf & Poehner, 2011)

1. Pause
2. Repeat the whole phrase questioningly
3. Repeat just the part of the sentence with the error
4. Teacher points out that there is something wrong with the sentence. Alternatively, she can pose this as a question, "What is wrong with that sentence?"
5. Teacher points out the incorrect word
6. Teacher asks either/or question
7. Teacher identifies the correct answer
8. Teacher explains why