

## **The Effect of Receptive and Productive Sociolinguistic Awareness on Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Performance on Apology Discourse Completion Test**

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### **Abstract**

Although English major students should have a good command of English, the problem with Iranian learners is that they are not pragmatically well-informed speakers of English. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of pragmatic conscious raising on apology strategies among Iranian learners to see how it works. 33 females and 27 males were selected on a proficiency test. The sample was randomly divided into three groups, one control and two experimental groups. They received a 10 session treatment separately through exposure to receptive and productive sociolinguistic inputs. A pre-and a post-test were used to control the treatment effects. The data analysis and such statistical tests as ANOVA, Scheffe, and t-tests were used to compare the means. Results showed that both receptive and productive sociolinguistic awareness equally caused improvement in learners' performances and that in receptive groups females outperformed males, while in productive groups males outperformed females.

**Keywords:** Pragmatically well-informed speakers, Apology strategies, Receptive and productive sociolinguistic inputs.

## Introduction

Unlike structural linguistics, pragmatic trend relies more on accounting for variability as well as regularities of languages. The source of such variability in pragmatic approach is seen to stem from social variables. Indeed, pragmatic competence is the relationship between language users and context of communication (Van Dijk, 1997).

Thus, the main aim of the researcher in the current study is to investigate the effect of raising receptive and productive sociolinguistic awareness as an integral part of pragmatic competence among Iranian EFL learners to see how it affects their performance on "Discourse Completion Test" (DCT) for apology.

## Statements of Problems

English major students should not only have a good command of English grammar and vocabulary, but they should also be well-informed of the social variables concerning the speakers' communicative norms of English. However, as the pertinent literature shows that the main problem with the majority of Iranian EFL learners is that they are not pragmatically well-informed speakers of English. They have a Persian mindset in terms of which they not only speak but also write seemingly English, while they use English in Persian form, Penglish. So their language proficiency will not improve unless we teach them both receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions awareness to let them be aware of speaking norms and negotiating appropriately in terms of sociolinguistic variants and reacting differently with different people. Through several studies, up to now, researchers have strived to explore different aspects of discourse completion tasks. Indeed, the unique nature of the current study mainly emanates from the special attention given to the effect of receptive and productive sociolinguistic consciousness raising on the learners' performance in terms of apology DCT.

## Research Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Sociolinguistic conventions awareness has no effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' performance on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Receptive sociolinguistic conventions awareness does not improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' performance on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Productive sociolinguistic conventions awareness does not improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' performance on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant difference between receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions awareness raising among Iranian intermediate EFL learners' performance on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

**H<sub>05</sub>:** Gender has no effect on the performance of Iranian intermediate EFL productive group on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

**H<sub>06</sub>:** Gender has no effect on the performance of Iranian intermediate EFL receptive group on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

## Significance of Study

To be unbiased on the hypotheses, attempts were made to put them to test. If they prove the differences brought up in the research hypotheses, different instructional methods with various techniques and even distinct materials seem to be demanding on teachers to design

and implement. If so, the whole educational system should be sensitized to such issues and teachers have to be more conscious than others. In that sense, receptive and productive skills will improve if learners experience and have enough exposure to different language varieties in various social contexts, and if they produce appropriate language in appropriate situation.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction**

To give a background of this study, the historical trends in approaches to language and metalanguage issues as well as an overview of apology speech act are here provided both theoretically and operationally.

### **Theoretical Works**

#### **Apology**

Brown and Levinson (1987) viewed politeness theory in terms of the notion of 'the positive and negative faces' offered by Goffman (1963) as interference in the way people present themselves in social situations. Politeness theory is based on the hypothesis that many speech acts are naturally threatening to face because they sometimes do not support face wants of speakers or those of addressee. Some of the face threatening acts to speakers' positive face are apologies and confessions. Some of the face threatening acts to speakers' negative face are accepting a thank you, an apology or an offer.

#### **Language Awareness**

Skola (2008) holds that language awareness is usually related to cognitive psychology and thinking process in learning context; i.e. how knowledge is established and how thoughts are organized. Notwithstanding, Howkins (1984) maintains that foreign language classes should not be teacher-oriented. In effect, students should be stimulated to ask questions about language, how language functions and what roles it plays.

#### **Sociolinguistic Awareness**

Mackay (2005) claimed that there is a big gap between first and second language learners in sociolinguistic knowledge, regarding macro and micro levels of studying languages. While macro levels are language and society- language and variation, micro levels are language and culture and language and interaction. In the area of language and variation, sociolinguistic researches show how social factors influence choice of particular linguistic forms. In the area of language and culture, researchers study how particular cultures and communities use language. In the area of language and interaction, researchers study how specific social situations affect both verbal and nonverbal communication of participants (Mckay, 2005; Yu, 2006).

#### **Language and Gender**

Males and females have distinct manners of speaking because language, culture and society give different levels of power to both genders (Almazroui, 2009). These differences result from three generally accepted approaches to analyzing gendered speech which can be explained by the concept of deficit, dominance and difference (Cameron, 1980). Unlike Lakoff (1970 and Mellor (2010) who justify the gender-based difference in terms of dominance, Voegeli (2005) and Lakoff (1975) justify it in terms of deficit framework,

suggesting that woman's ways of speaking are deficient in comparison to men's regarding credibility or power.

## **Experimental Backgrounds**

### **Apology Strategies**

Wagner (2003) investigated apology strategies in speech community of Cuernavaca, Mexico. He found that illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) accounted for 47% of apologies, while explanations or accounts accounted for 23%. He also concluded that negative politeness markers accounted for 62%, whereas positive ones accounted for 38% of the apologies.

Rasekh and Mardani (2010) investigated the effect of teaching apology speech act within a focus of intensifying strategies. They concluded that explicit teaching of apology had significant effects on students' pragmatic awareness. Dadkhah, Rezaei and Soltani (2012) investigated different primary and secondary apology strategies used by Iranian EFL students. They concluded that both males and females had used statements of remorse strategy more than other strategies, males 30% and females 20%. But male respondents had used more manifestations of remorse.

Yao Chulin (2011) studied on gender differences in Chinese daily conversation. 70 apology strategies were collected. In this study males used 34 apologies (11 apologies to males, 23 apologies to females), while females used 36 apologies (9 strategies to males and 27 apologies to females).

### **Awareness Rising**

Takagaki (2005) holds that many university students are unaware that different nations like Britain, Nigeria, and United States speak unique varieties of English. They are ignorant of the issue that language variety exists in each country due to different regional and social dialects. They are also unaware of the language styles which are context sensitive. So he thought that students need to know American English and British English are only two of many varieties of English language found in countries in all over the world. They also need to know in each English speaking country, many other varieties of English are spoken.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants**

To commence the study, a total of 120 (male and female) English students studying at Islamic Azad University, Ahvaz Branch (IAUAB) as well as Ahvaz Payam-e-Noor University (APNU) were selected. 60 of participants were studying at APNU and the other 60 were studying at IAUAB. Most participants were going to be senior students, with different proficiency levels, who were selected randomly. Their ages ranged between 18 to 22.

### **Instruments**

The instruments used were a proficiency test (Fowler and Coe, 1976), a questionnaire 'Discourse Completion Test' (DCT) (Bataneh, 2005) and another researcher-made DCT test was designed and piloted. The proficiency test was used to homogenize the participants in the study. The second test (DCT) was used as a pretest to help us recognize the participants' previous status concerning their knowledge on speech act of apology. The third piloted test

was given to students to see the effects of treatments. In the third test, each question had to be answered in six different ways that were related to six different situations.

## Procedures

To tap the participants' homogeneity, the Nelson proficiency test (Fowler and Coe, 1976) was administered to 90 participants and 60 (33 female and 27 males) were selected as intermediate sample in terms of their scores falling  $1_{SD}$  above and below the mean. The sample was randomly divided into three groups, one control group and two experimental groups. Each group included equal members (11 females and 9 males). Then, the participants in the experimental and control groups sat for a pre-test (Batineh, 2005) to recognize the extent to which they were aware of the apology strategies. After that, one of the experimental groups received receptive sociolinguistic awareness by exposure to receptive sociolinguistic inputs, while the other experimental group received productive sociolinguistic awareness through exposure to productive sociolinguistic inputs (Just Married movie, directed by shown Levy). The reason for using this film was its authenticity and lack of access to English native speakers.

After 10 sessions of instruction, a post-test was administered to both experimental and control groups to tap their possible gains through treatment they had received. Each post-test contained ten receptive apology situations for receptive group and ten productive apology situations for productive group. The participants in these groups had to answer each question in six different situations. The exam papers were scored in term of grammar, lexical meaning and appropriacy. So each answer received three scores in terms of the above-stated criteria, and the average of the three was considered as their performance score on each item. Meanwhile, each paper was corrected by two raters. The inter-rater reliability was calculated to be 0.84. Then, the acquired results from the pre- and post-tests in the experimental and control groups were compared to see whether the consciousness raising in the receptive and productive sociolinguistic inputs had a significant effect on the sample performance on Apology Discourse Completion Task, and whether gender had effect on performances of both receptive and productive groups. Finally, the results obtained from the post tests in the two experimental groups were compared to see which type of input had a more significant effect on the Iranian EFL learners' performance on Apology Discourse Completion Test.

## Data Analysis and Results

### Introduction

The collected data were analyzed and the statistical results were explained in regard to the central purpose of the study to test the research hypotheses. To describe the data on the proficiency test (Fowler and Coe, 1976), the relevant descriptive data are presented in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1:** Descriptive statistics for experimental groups and control group for pre-test

Group	Max	Min	Std. Error	Variance	Standard Devition	Mean	N
Receptive 20	50.50	20.25	2.39	3.52	1.87	30.25	
Productive 20	50.20	20.00	11.22	3.35	1.83	30.20	

Control	50.25	20.25	21.99	3.50	1.87	30.00
20						

The descriptive statistics of experimental receptive and productive sub-groups and those of the control group in pre-test proved homogeneity of the sample. Table 4.2 shows the sample of 60 intermediate EFL learners from Islamic Azad University of Behbahan (14 males and 17 females) and Payam-e-Noor University of Ahvaz (13 males and 16 females).

**Table 4.2:** Performances of the three groups on pretest in terms of receptive and productive skill

Skill		Performance				Total		
		Receptive		Prouctive				
Sex		Male	Female	Male	Female			
Group	Exp	44.25	47.625	44,25	37.125		40	
		39.25	43.875	44.25	37.125			
		35.25	43.875	44.25	48			
		35.25	52.125	36	30,25			
		48	45	36	43.875			
		51	36.375	36.25	45			
		49.5	36.375	38.25	30.25			
		45.75	36.375	36.25	51			
		33	52.5	46.5	47.625			
			36.375		43.5			
			20.25		20.25			
		Con	33	20.25	48	23.25		20
			43.5	22.125	37.125	43.125		
			43.5	22.125	42	46.875		
48	39		46.125	45.75				
	39		37.125	45.75				
			34.5					
Total		13	16	11	9	60		

Indeed, independent variables were receptive and productive conventions awareness and dependant variable was performance on the pretest. To test the first hypotheses, Table 4.3 presents a general picture of the sample performances on the post-test regarding the three groups.

**Table 4.3:** Performances of the three groups on post-test

		Performance				Total
Skill		Receptive		Productive		
Sex		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Group	Exp.	54.875	47.25	54	52.5	40
		51.875	51.5	53	55.12	
		55.625	51.75	52.5	54	
		55.75	54.75	50.5	55.62	
		56.25	54.75	51.5	54.12	
		59	55	52.25	57.25	
		55.25	50	50.25	58.75	
		52.125	49	54.25	58.25	
		57.75	52.25	53.25	55.25	
			54		54	
		50.25		54.75		
	Con.	47.5	42.5	43.5	47.75	20
		46.75	41.5	44.75	46.75	
		47.75	44.25	42	47.87	
46.375		42.375	46	46.25		
		46.5	39	45		
			44			
Gross Total	60	13	16	14	17	60

Regarding the performance of the three groups on post-test, the control group although received no pragmatic treatment, they received the same tasks in form of two sub-groups, receptive group with 9 participants (4 males and 5 females) and productive group with 11 participants (5 males and 6 females). Descriptive statistics of the data related to performances of all three groups on post-test are presented in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4:** Descriptive statistics of the data related to performance of three groups on post test

Group	Max.	Min.	Std. Error	Variance	Std.	mean	N
Receptive	59.00	47.50	.66	8.82	2.97	53.45	20
Productive	58.75	50.25	.51	5.19	.28	54.05	20
Control	47.88	39.00	.55	6.10	2.47	44.91	20

To explore difference(s) between the three group means, a one way ANOVA (Table 4.5) was used. In this way, the study investigated the effects of sociolinguistic convention awareness on apology DCT test.

**Table 4.5:** Results of One-way ANOVA for performance of three groups on post-test

Sources of changes	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1044.95	2	522.47	77.69	.001
Within Groups	383.31	57	6.72		
Total	1428.26	59			

The data on the ANOVA test (Table 4.5) show that the difference between students' performances in DCT tests in terms of their treatments is significant ( $F=77.69$ ,  $P<0.001$ ). Then, the first hypothesis is rejected. A Scheffe test was also used to locate the exact difference between the means of the three groups involved in the research. The results of the Scheffe test are shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6:** Results of Scheffe test

Test (I)	Test (J)	Mean Difference(I-J)	Std. Error	Sig
Receptive Experimental	Productive Control	-.6	.82005	.76
		8.53	.82005	.001
Productive Experimental	Receptive Control	.6	.82005	.76
		9.13 (*)	.82005	.001
Control	Receptive Productive	-8.53 (*)	.82005	.001
		-9.13 (*)	.82005	.001

Table 4.6 shows that the awareness on receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions has positive effects on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' performances on the apology strategy DCT test. In a word, there is a significant difference between experimental receptive and control subgroups ( $P<0.001$ ) on the one hand and between the experimental productive and control subgroups ( $P<0.001$ ) on the other.

To put the second hypothesis into test, there were two groups, one experimental receptive group and one control receptive group. To compare the two groups' means, a matched *t-test* was used to analyze the data. The relevant data are in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7:** The data description of performance of these two groups (experimental receptive and control receptive group) on post-test

		Performance		Total	
Skill		Receptive			
Sex		Male	Female		
Group	Exp.	54.875	47.5		20
		51.875	51.5		
		55.625	51.75		
		55.75	54.75		
		56.25	54.75		
		59	55		
		55.125	50		
		52.125	49		
	Con.	57.75	52.25		
			54		
			50.25		
		47.5	42.5	9	
		46.75	41.5		
		47.75	44.25		
46.375	42.375				
	46.5				
Total	13	16	29		



To estimate the effect of receptive experimental and receptive control group on performance of intermediate EFL learners' on apology DCT tests, another matched *t-test* was used. The results of this *t-test* (Table 4.8) showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups ( $t=7.42$ ;  $P<.001$ ).

**Table 4.8:** Results of the matched *t-test* on performance of the two groups (both experimental and control receptive group) on post test

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig
Receptive Apology	Receptive Experimental Group	20	53.45	2.97	7.42	27	.001
	Receptive Control Group	9	45.05	2.42			

So, the third null hypothesis is also rejected. This proves that consciousness rising on the receptive sociolinguistic conventions has a significant effect on Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' performance on apology DCT tests.

To put the third hypothesis into test, the means of experimental productive group and that of control receptive group were compared, using a matched *t-test* to analyze the data. The relevant data descriptions are presented in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9:** The data description of performance of these two groups (both experimental and control productive group) on post-test

		Performance		Total
Skill		Productive		
Sex		Male	Female	
Group	Exp.		52.5	20
			54	
			55.125	
			54	
			52.5	
			55.625	
			50.5	
			54.125	
			51.5	
			57.25	
	52.25	58.75		
	50.25	58.25		
	54.25	55.25		
	53.25	54		
		54.75		
Group	Cont.		47.75	11
			43.5	
			46.75	
			44.75	
			47.875	
	42	46.25		
	46	45		
	39	44		
Total		14	17	31

The results of this *t*-test (Table 4. 10) proved that the experimental productive group outperformed the control productive group on the DCT tests. Besides, the difference between the two means was significant and the third hypothesis was also rejected at  $P < 0.001$ .

**Table 4.10:** Results of matched *t*-test on performance of the two groups (both experimental and control productive group) on post-test

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Std.	T	Df	Sig
Productive Apology	Productive Experimental Group	20	54.5	2.28	10.22	29	.001
	Productive Control Group	11	44.8	2.63			

The results showed that this difference between the subjects' performances on apology DCT was due to the treatments they had received. To put the fourth hypothesis to test, there were two experimental subgroups- productive and receptive ones. The data descriptions these two groups' performances on post-test appear in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11:** Data description of these two groups (both experimental receptive and productive groups) on post-test

		Performance				Total
Skill		Receptive		Productive		
Sex		Male	Female	Male	Female	
Group	Exp.	54.875	47.25	54	52.5	40
		51.875	51.5	53	55.125	
		55.625	51.75	52.5	54	
		55.75	54.75	50.5	55.625	
		56.25	54.75	51.5	54.125	
		59	55	52.25	57.25	
		55.25	50	50.25	58.75	
		52.125	49	54.25	58.25	
		57.75	52.25	53.25	55.25	
			54		54	
	50.25		54.75			
Total	40	9	11	9	11	40

To compare the two above-stated groups' means, a pair-wised *t*-test was used to analyze the data. The comparison of the performances of the two groups is shown in Table 4.12. These results showed that there was not a significant difference in the scores for the experimental receptive and productive groups ( $t: 7.42, p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 4.12:** The results paired-wised of t-test on performance of two groups (both experimental receptive and productive group) on post-test

Variable	Exp Groups	N	Mean	Std.	t	df	Sig
Apology	Receptive	20	53.45	2.97	-	38	.47
	Productive	20	54.05	2.28	.742		

To put the fifth hypothesis to test, a matched *t-test* was used to analyze the data on male's and female's performances in experimental receptive and productive subgroups. The performances of these groups on apology DCT tests are shown in terms gender variable in Table 4.13.

**Table 4.13:** Data description of these two groups (males and females in experimental productive group) on post-test

Performance			17	Total
Skill		Productive		20
Sex		Male	Female	
Group	Exp.	54	52.5	
		53	55.125	
		52.5	54	
		50.5	55.625	
		51.5	54.125	
		52.25	57.25	
		50.25	58.75	
		54.25	58.25	
		53025	55.25	
			54	
		54.75		
Total		9	11	20

Table 4.14 shows the gender-based performance of the experimental productive group (9 males and 11 females). To estimate the effect of gender variable on performance of experimental productive group on apology DCT, a *matched t-test* was used.

**Table 4.14:** Results of t-test in gender groups in experimental productive group on post-test

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Std.	t	df	Sig
Productive Apology	Female	11	51.88	2.54	-3.175	18	.005
	Male	19	55.35	2.31			

The data on the *t-test* (Table 4.14) showed a significant difference in the means for the experimental productive group of females and those of males ( $P < 0.001$ ). So the fifth hypothesis was rejected too. For the sixth hypothesis another *t-test* was applied to analyze the pertinent data. Data descriptions of these two groups performance are presented in Table 4.15.

**Table 4.15:** Data description of the two gender groups in experimental receptive group

		Performance		Total
Skill		Receptive		
Sex		Male	Female	
Group	Exp.	54.845	47.5	20
		51.845	51.5	
		55.625	51.75	
		55.75	54.75	
		56.25	54.75	
		59	55	
		55.125	50	
		52.125	49	
		57.75	52.25	
		50.25		
Total		9	11	20

To compare the performances of males and females in experimental receptive group (Table 4.15), a matched t-test was utilized to estimate the effect of gender on performance of receptive intermediate FEL learners' on apology DCT. The results of the t-test are shown in Table 4.16.

**Table 4.16:** Results of matched t-test on performance of two groups (males and females in experimental receptive group) on post-test

Variable	Groups	N	Mean	Std.	t	df	Sig
Receptive Apology	female	11	55.42	1.93	3.91	18	.001
	Male	9	52.38	1.42			

The data in Table (4.16) proved a significant difference between performance of these two groups (male and female) on DCT tests ( $P < 0.001$ ). Indeed, females performed better than males in receptive group. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis was also rejected.

## Discussion and Conclusions

### Discussion

Actually the comparison of scores relevant to experimental and control groups on the post-tests prove that awareness on receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions equally cause improvements in the sample's performances on apology DCT. Moreover, it showed that gender variable played a significant part in out-performances of both receptive and productive groups on apology DCT; in receptive group females performed better than males, but in productive group males performed better than females.

The results were discussed concerning the following six research hypotheses. To put the first hypothesis regarding the effect of sociolinguistic awareness on Iranian EFL learners' performances on DCT tests, the data analysis through ANOVA test (Table 4.5) showed a significant difference between learners' performance across the three groups, two experimental and one control group ( $P < 0.001$ ). So, the first null hypothesis was rejected and the difference might be attributed to the treatment applied to the experimental groups. Furthermore, the results of the Scheffe test (Table 4.6) located a significant difference

between the gross means of the experimental subgroups and those of the control group, while it showed no significant though a trivial difference between the means of the receptive and the productive subgroups of the experimental group.

To put to test the second hypothesis regarding the effect of the receptive sociolinguistic awareness on Iranian learners' performances on DCT test, the data analysis through a t-test (Table 4.8) proved a significant difference between the two receptive groups across experimental and control groups, ( $t=7.42$ ;  $P<0.001$ ). This difference can be attributed to the treatment given to the receptive experimental group.

To put to test the third hypothesis regarding the effect the productive sociolinguistic awareness on Iranian learners' performances on DCT test, the data analysis through t-test (Table 4.10) showed a significant difference between the two productive groups across experimental and control groups, ( $t=10.22$ ;  $P<0.001$ ). This difference can also be attributed to the treatment given to the productive experimental group.

To put the fourth hypothesis to test that neither receptive nor productive sociolinguistic awareness affects Iranian EFL learners performances on DCT test, a t-test was used (Table 4.12) and it showed that there was no significant difference between the performances of both experimental receptive and productive groups ( $t=7.42$ ;  $P>0.05$ ). Of course, there was a significant difference between the gross mean of experimental subgroups and the mean of the control group. In fact, receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions awareness improved learners' performances on apology DCT in the experimental groups equally.

These findings were supportive of the claim made by Chung Yu (2005) that in producing and receiving language one should be aware of both linguistic rules for accuracy and sociolinguistic rules for appropriacy in different situations. In fact, using appropriate strategies for talking or reacting appropriately requires one to be fully aware of the context of that situation and interlocutor's social status; otherwise, misunderstanding will arise.

To put the fifth hypothesis concerning the effect of gender variable on the performance of *the experimental productive group* to test, the relevant data (Table 4.14) showed a significant difference between males and females' performances on DCT test ( $T=3.17$ ;  $P<0.05$ ). That is, males performed better than females in the *productive group*. Although this finding is in line with Kafrani, Tehrani and Rezai (2012) who held that men apologize more than females, it is against Fahimi (2005) who proved that women apologize more than men.

To put the sixth hypothesis concerning the effect of gender variable on the performance of *the experimental receptive group* to test, the relevant data (Table 4.16) showed a significant difference between males and females' performances on DCT test, ( $T=3.91$ ;  $P<0.001$ ). That is, females performed better than males in the *receptive group*. So, it can be concluded that gender has positive effects on performances of both receptive and productive groups on apology DCT tests. This finding is in line with Simon and Nath's (2004) findings that males and females are different in many ways and with Yao Chulin's (2011) findings that women receive more apology than men. Of course, these differences in communication system of males and females are not under the effect of nature. Furthermore, Almazroui (2009) suggests language differences pop up under the influence of different social power levels which come from the relationship between language, culture and society.

## Conclusion

This paper has given an account for the effect of sociolinguistic conventions awareness and performances on apology DCT tests among Iranian EFL learners as one of the main concerns of sociolinguistic researches. Relevant literature shows that more attention has been paid to

productive aspect of sociolinguistic awareness, but this research has taken both productive and receptive aspects of sociolinguistic awareness.

Regarding the hypotheses posited in our study, the first three and the last two hypotheses were rejected, but the fourth one was verified. That is, the first three hypotheses purported that sociolinguistic conventions, in general, and receptive and productive sociolinguistic awareness, in particular, have no effect on the performance of EFL learners concerning apology DCT tests which were all rejected. Moreover, the last two hypotheses purporting that gender has no effect on performance of both experimental productive and receptive groups were also rejected.

However, the fourth hypothesis which was not rejected, although paradoxical views on the effect of gender on receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions awareness in connection with apology strategies have been raised in the relevant literature, from the findings of this research it can be concluded that gender leaves no difference concerning the receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions including apology strategies. Besides, this study revealed that it is not only the productive aspect of sociolinguistic awareness that is of significance, but it is both receptive and productive sociolinguistic conventions awareness which also have positive effects on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' on apology DCT test. It also revealed that gender has effects on performance of both receptive and productive groups on apology DCT test. In productive group, male students outperformed female students, while in receptive group females outperformed males.

## **Implications of the Study**

The findings help us infer that receptive and productive sociolinguistic awareness rising will improve Intermediate EFL learners' performance on apology DCT. Indeed, it proves the importance learner-oriented type of teaching which encourages learners to feel responsible for their learning. The role of the students changes from relatively passive to active and static to dynamic.

As this study tried to work on effect of different social factors on producing and receiving apology strategies in different situations, results of this study are applicable for second language teachers, second language students and syllabus designers.

## **Suggestions for Further Researches**

Due to both limitations and delimitations of the research, it is suggested that more researches replicate it in similar situations but to a broader scope to add to external validity of the findings of the present study.

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