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The Effect of Explicit and Implicit Instruction and Native  
Language Exposure for Advanced L2 Learners in  
Chinese Pragmatics: Apologies

Yu-Fang Liao

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### The Effect of Explicit and Implicit Instruction and Native Language Exposure for Advanced L2 Learners in Chinese Pragmatics: Apologies

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Pragmatics is part of communicative competence. In order to communicate successfully, pragmatic competence is of vital importance. Although pragmatics has played a significant role in L2 learners' communicative competence, pragmatics still has not been commonly taught in the classroom. The present research investigates the efficacy of instruction in pragmatics in the advanced Chinese language class has on the production and appropriate use of apology strategies, and examines the correlation between exposure in a Chinese Speaking Community (CSC) and pragmatics development. The subjects include 55 students in their third-year of college-level Chinese, divided into four classes at Brigham Young University. The study uses an experimental design in which the participants are assigned either to an explicit instruction group or an implicit instruction group. Participants in both groups also report their experience in a CSC. Results of this study show which as a whole improved their apology performance over the 8-week instruction, as rated by Chinese native speakers. Results reveal no significant difference between the explicit and implicit instruction groups, suggesting that explicit and implicit approaches were both effective methods in facilitating pragmatic competence. In addition, we also found no statistically significant difference between the CSC and Non-Chinese Speaking Community (NCSC) group in their pragmatic development. The findings of the present study indicate that pragmatic knowledge may emerge from classroom instruction, regardless of explicit or implicit instructional approaches; and living in a Chinese speaking communities do not necessary aid or accelerate the development of pragmatic competence.

*Keywords:* pragmatics, Chinese, L2, apology, advanced learners, abroad, explicit instruction, implicit instruction, appropriateness

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA), one of the most prominent and prestigious language research centers in the US, pragmatics is one important area in second language teaching and learning. Pragmatics involves “the appropriate use of language in conducting speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, complimenting, refusing, and thanking (“Why Should Speech Acts”, 2014).” Pragmatics, a seemingly ordinary form of communication for native speakers, is in fact difficult for second language learners to acquire. Regardless of the language, second language learners often encounter difficulty understanding the intended meaning conveyed by the speech act since it is heavily dependent on context. This study is motivated by encounters I have experienced with Second Language (L2) learners of Chinese who incorrectly use the Chinese routine expression ‘對不起 *duìbùqǐ*’ (*I am sorry*) to express embarrassment, or the speech act of apologizing.

During the 2012 Chinese STARTALK summer camp at Brigham Young University, I was introduced to a song sung by the British band *Transition* called, “對不起我的中文不好 *duì bù qǐ wǒ de zhōng wén bù hǎo*” (*I am sorry that my Chinese is not good*). The lyrics described three British gentlemen apologizing for not having decent Chinese. This song was very catchy, creative, and popular among L2 learners of Chinese. After paying close attention to the lyrics, I found the way in which they apologize in the lyrics to be pragmatically odd. This mistake illustrated a common pragmatic mistake L2 learners are prone to make: they tend to misuse or overuse “對不起 *duìbùqǐ*” as the universal expression for all circumstances when an apology is needed.

In fact, there are four apologizing expressions commonly used by native speakers of Chinese: 對不起 *duìbùqǐ*, 不好意思 *bùhǎoyìsī*, 道歉 *dàoqiàn*, 抱歉 *bàoqiàn* (*sorry, excuse me,*

*I apologize, and I am sorry*). Generally speaking, ‘對不起 *duìbùqǐ*’ is the apology for actions that show disrespect towards another, and is often used as a remedial word. ‘不好意思 *bùhǎoyìsī*’ is commonly used when the speaker turns down an invitation or refuse a request. ‘抱歉 *bàoqiàn*’ and ‘道歉 *dàoqiàn*’ are used to admit a mistake to another and acknowledge personal responsibility for the mistake. They are used in formal contexts (Ross & Ma, 2006). Learners of Chinese are typically unaware of those differences. For example, whenever I pointed out the errors my student made during some one-on-one tutoring, she responded with ‘對不起 *duìbùqǐ*’. I also observed that when one student tried to pass by another student to get to his seat, he said ‘對不起 *duìbùqǐ*’ to his fellow classmate. In addition to this error made by L2 learners, another common mistake I noticed is that L2 learners of Chinese tend to apologize when an apology is not expected. For example, in Chinese culture, people do not apologize for sneezing, coughing, burping or making other body noises. On the other hand, in US culture, an apology is expected when making those body noises; otherwise people will take those sounds as rude or inconsiderate. These examples suggest that the apologizing culture is different in Chinese and American society. When encountering situations where Chinese people don’t apologize, such as sneezing, language learners don’t have a model to show them how to apologize. Therefore L2 learners tend to apply ‘對不起 *duìbùqǐ*’ when they think they need to apologize.

On the other hand, in US culture, there is only one form of apology. Regardless of context, Americans say ‘I am sorry’ in oral discourse and ‘my apology’ in written discourse. Americans do not distinguish apology like the Chinese do, using different apology expressions in different contexts and situations. Therefore, there might be some L1 interference for US students.

Through daily contact with L2 learners of Chinese, I found that there was indeed a lack of pragmatics instruction and training in the Chinese classroom. Furthermore, L2 learners

frequently violated pragmatic rules and produced pragmatically inappropriate speech, despite proficiency level and linguistic background. The tendency to overuse the same routine, pragmatic expressions was the most common mistake made by L2 learners of Chinese, and indicates a lack of knowledge and understanding of Chinese pragmatics rules. As a result of such deviation from the native norm, L2 learners often encounter pragmatic failure when interacting with native speakers. The pragmatics breakdown also results from cultural difference. This phenomenon suggests that pragmatics mistakes exist among all L2 learners no matter their proficiency levels. In order to raise pragmatics awareness and competence, the field of pragmatics needs to be addressed and instructed in L2 classrooms.

Although pragmatics has gained greater attention in the field of second language teaching (Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Koike, 1989; Rose, 1994, 1999, 2005; Taguchi, 2011), evidence in present studies show that pragmatics is not commonly addressed and taught in the foreign language classroom(Thomas, 1983). To date, scant attention has been given to the effect of instruction on Chinese apologies as well as other fields of pragmatics, and only very limited materials for teaching the field of pragmatics to Chinese L2 learners are available. Additionally, I found that pragmatics plays a significant role in L2 learners' communicative competence. Without appropriate use of apology speech acts, learners may be mistakenly considered insincere or impolite when they do not intend to be so. This study's purpose is to remedy the fact that L2 learners tend to over-generalize '對不起 *duìbùqǐ*' as the one and only apology expression, and to investigate how instruction would affect the apologies of advanced learners of Chinese at the college level.

In this research, I find out the effect of explicit and implicit instruction in Chinese apology strategies. I also investigate whether length of stay in the target language community

plays an influential factor in learners' pragmatic development and accelerates their pragmatic gain compared to others who do not have the experience. The following are the research questions guiding this study:

### **Research Questions**

- Does instruction result in increased appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese?
- Do different instructional methods (explicit vs. implicit) result in different results of increased appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese?
- Does living in Chinese-speaking communities accelerate L2 learner's correct use of apologies in Chinese?

### **Hypothesis**

First, I hypothesize that if pragmatic rules have been made clear to advanced students, the results will show a significant improvement in making appropriate use of apologies in both explicit and implicit instruction. Second, I assume that participants in the explicit group will outperform the implicit group. Last, I also hypothesize that living in a Chinese-speaking community may contribute to the development of pragmatic awareness. However, I think there may not be a significant difference between the Chinese Speaking Community (CSC) and No or Limited Chinese Speaking Community (NCSC) groups, since most learners did not engage in formal language training and studying during their time in the community.

## Chapter 2: Review of Literature

### **Introduction**

This review of literature defines what pragmatics is and its role in second language learning. Next, the efficacy of instruction is examined. Explicit and implicit instructional approaches are compared and evaluated. Further, it summarizes some of the research on raising cultural awareness and the effect of living in the Chinese Speaking Community (CSC) on pragmatic development. Finally, this review presents different principles and strategies used in Chinese apology scenarios and explores the existing research on the difficulty encountered in L2 pragmatic instruction in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to investigate the efficacy of various instructional methods in pragmatics learning and investigate the relationship between living abroad and pragmatic gain.

### **What is pragmatics?**

Pragmatics is “the knowledge and skills needed to use and interpret the meanings, assumptions, and actions expressed by language in its socio-cultural context” (Shively, 2010, p106). Studying the field of pragmatics engages the learner in studying different types of discourse and participating in speech events of varying complexity and length (Taguchi, 2011; Kasper & Rose, 2001). Pragmatics competence involves the ability to manage a multifaceted interplay of language, language users, and context of interaction (Taguchi, 2011) as well as “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context” (Thomas, 1983, p. 23).

As per research, pragmatic awareness is one of the fundamental components of communication competency and L2 proficiency. According to Kasper (1997), “in order to communicate successfully in a target language, pragmatic competence in a second language (L2)

must be reasonably well developed” (p. 106). Grammatically perfect sentences do not necessarily represent the correct usage or expression of a language, and without considering the context and adapting to pragmatic rules in each language, these sentences may still be considered inaccurate or offensive despite the fact that no grammatical errors were present. Within linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence is essential in order to communicate successfully in an L2 environment. A lack of sociolinguistic understanding often results in cross-cultural misunderstanding and may affect interpersonal relationships (Chang, 2011; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985) or result in even more serious consequences for communication (Cruz, 2013).

Olshtain & Blum-Kulka (1985) emphasized the necessity for one to acquire both socio-cultural and grammatical ability in order to become a competent L2 user. However, unlike linguistic competence, pragmatics has been less commonly taught in language classes and has received very little attention (Thomas, 1983). Language teachers often neglect the importance of pragmatic rules due to many factors. Some of those issues happening in language classroom are addressed later.

One major reason that pragmatics competence is difficult to acquire is that the “appropriate use of language is intricately connected with cultural values, situation, interlocutors and other variables” (Kondo, 2008, p173). Even with excellent knowledge of the L2 grammar and lexicon, learners may still fail to convey pragmatically appropriate expressions (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Koike, 1989). Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, (1998) and Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, (1985) reported that grammatical competence does not necessarily reflect the same level of pragmatic competence. This finding can be generalized to include learners of Chinese. In Dew’s study (1994), he reminded educators to not lose sight of some important basic principles about teaching and learning Chinese. Dew noted that if students are skillfully taught from the

beginning, they are able to achieve correct pronunciation and produce complex sentences with accurate syntax. However, Chinese learners are still likely to encounter communication problems. Furthermore, Thomas (1983) pointed out the two types of pragmatic failures: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. The former is language-specific and the latter is culture-specific. When learners have not yet mastered the social rules for the language, regardless of how accurate their structural and linguistic knowledge is, L2 speakers could still be mistakenly understood as impolite, arrogant, and prideful due to their incapability to convey their real meaning or feeling by using appropriate social language (Thomas, 1983).

In fact, pragmatics addresses a fairly wide spectrum of factors; the method of apologizing varies according to context and external factors such as social power and distance. In order to use pragmatics appropriately and authentically, learners need to be able to identify variables such as social and contextual factors, because those variables greatly affect which routine expressions or strategies should be used when apologizing. This complexity makes teaching pragmatics a demanding and challenging task (Kondo, 2008, Taguchi, 2011). Therefore whether pragmatic competence is truly teachable is a popularly debated topic in the field (Kasper, 1997, Olshtain & Cohen 1990, Rose 2005).

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the pragmatic instruction given to EFL and ESL learners. So far, those studies have confirmed that teaching pragmatic features to second language learners positively affects their language competency (e.g. Kondo, 2008; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Rose 1994, 2005). In the following section I review some current empirical studies and discuss the results of their pragmatic instruction.

### **Should pragmatics be taught?**

Does pragmatic instruction promote learners' awareness of cultural differences and lead to proficiency gains? Some determined that instruction does not help, whereas others found instruction to be beneficial for language learners.

Early studies show that most aspects of pragmatics are amenable to instruction (Rose, 2005, Kondo, 2008). Olshtain & Cohen (1990) focused their pragmatic research on apology speech acts, investigating the effect of instruction. The study consisted of 18 Hebrew adult learners of English and used a group of natives as the baseline. The native baseline group was made up of eleven native English speakers who lived in Israel. The pre-test measured three speech acts: apologies, requests, and compliments. In between the pre- and post-tests, researchers conducted three twenty-minute classroom instruction sessions. The first lesson was devoted to teaching the difference in usage of two apology expressions: *excuse me* and *I am sorry*. Lesson two was designed to raise students' awareness of situational and social factors, and the use of intensifiers. The final lesson focused on contextual information, requiring learners to focus on appropriate strategy choices. Findings of this study showed that apology strategies such as types of intensification (*very, really, terribly, deeply*) and downgrading, subtle differences between strategy realization and consideration of situational features, are amenable to be taught in second language classrooms. Findings also indicated that once the residential awareness is established, learners are less inclined to commit pragmatic failures, and eventually speed up their approximation of native behavior. In line with this result, other researchers also echo the claim that instruction has a positive effect and leads to gains in learners' pragmatic competence (Alcón Soler, 2002, Cohen, 2008, Kondo, 2008).



In addition to Olshtain & Cohen (1990), Rose (2005) and Bardovi-Harlig (2001) are also among those who support pragmatic instruction in the classroom. For them, instruction is not only better than no instruction for pragmatic development, but also plays a key role in acquiring some aspects of L2 pragmatics. Moreover, Long (1983) said that instruction appears to be useful despite the level of language proficiency, age or environment. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) also found that when comparing tutored EFL students and those who are not tutored, tutored students are more sensitive to pragmatic infelicities. She further explained that the role of instruction is to help learners to put together their abstract thoughts into a clear and concrete rule or system.

On the other hand, some researchers suggest that there is no need for instruction in building pragmatic accuracy. Kasper (1997) and Kasper & Rose (2001) indicated that once learners obtain necessary linguistic knowledge, they will be able to perform speech acts without instruction. Kasper (1997) argued that adult learners can obtain a considerable amount of L2 pragmatics naturally since some pragmatic knowledge is universal, and some aspects of pragmatics may be transferred from the learner's first language (L1) successfully. Learners' native language and culture have an influence on their pragmatic knowledge and performance. Hence, Kasper (1997) and Kasper & Rose (2001) concluded that positive transfer can facilitate learners' understanding, and adult learners can gain pragmatic knowledge through transfer of the pragmatics rules from L1 to L2. Thus, there is no need for instruction since learners' background knowledge can facilitate the L2 pragmatic acquisition. However, they were also concerned that learners usually do not take advantage of the knowledge they already have, so their L1 knowledge cannot exert an influence.

Later Kasper and Rose (2001) proposed that the purpose of pragmatic instruction is to raise learners' L1 pragmatics awareness, and to encourage learners to use what they already know towards the target-language norm, rather than to teach new information.

Thomas's (1983) study on cross-cultural pragmatic failure contradicted the view of Kasper and Rose. In the study by Thomas, she revealed why pragmatics might fail between cultures. As reported by Thomas, not all expressions are always pragmatically interchangeable, and the inappropriate transfer between L1 and L2 is a frequent cause of pragmatic failure (Thomas, p. 36). Hence, she called attention to pragmatic transfer and failure and defined pragmatic failure as "an area of cross-cultural breakdown" (p. 22).

Kondo (2008) revealed evidences for pragmatic transfer from several excerpts between her participants. One example is from a Japanese student who participated in her study; the student said: "We don't say '*arigato*' much even in Japanese, so we can't say it in English" (p. 168). Kondo interpreted the discourse mark '*so*' used in the student's utterance. She noticed that the individual student marked the relationship between Japanese and English through transferring his knowledge from his native culture to apply in the English setting. This discovery confirms that some pragmatic features used by L2 participants are to be culture-specific.

Additionally, another issue for teaching pragmatics in the classroom is the students' acceptability (Alcón Soler, 2005). Generally speaking, during an instructional setting, students are more concerned about grammar and lexical issues rather than pragmatics for various reasons. One major reason appears to be that pragmatics is not tested on exams. Consequently, students on their own tend to ignore or do not focus on the pragmatic aspects. In order to draw learners' attention to pragmatics, Alcón Soler (2005) suggested that teachers should try to integrate both

grammatical and pragmatic aspects into the lesson plan. Pragmatics features should not be left until complete grammatical competence has been attained.

Despite these different opinions in the teachability of pragmatics, instruction is generally believed to be helpful to pragmatic development (Shively, 2010; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990). In the study of Olshtain & Cohen (1990), learners showed an increased use of apology strategies and intensifiers in the posttest.

It appears that instructed learners outperform their uninstructed peers (Rose, 2005). Bardovi-Harlig (2001) also found that without instruction, learners cannot attain sufficient ability in a range of pragmatic areas. Thomas (1983) agreed by saying that without explicit formalization, teachers should not expect students to attain pragmatic norms naturally. The instructional approach seems to increase learners' attention to the interactional demands of the task even in areas where no explicit instruction is provided (Taguchi, 2011).

### **Approaches to teaching pragmatics (Explicit vs. Implicit instruction)**

According to previous studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 2001; Halenko & Jones, 2011; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), it is apparent that learners who receive instruction in pragmatics perform and act better than those who do not. Assisted performance, in both explicit and implicit instructions in the EFL context, provides learners with adequate input and opportunities to practice. With explicit instruction, the teacher provides suggestions and explanations to the class whereas implicit instruction makes no overt reference to the rules (Alcón Soler, 2002; Schmidt, 1993). An explicit approach means the solving of problems consciously. When solving problems, the brain attempts to search related memory. Students learn well when they are required to learn from logical relationships rather than perceptual similarity (Schmidt, 1990). Normally, explicit instruction includes describing, explaining, and discussing a target form, and making

comparisons between L1 and L2 data (Salemi, Rabiee & Ketabi, 2012). Numerous researchers have investigated the effect of explicit and implicit instruction.

On the other hand, Dole (2000) defined implicit instruction by explaining teacher's role in an implicit instruction classroom.

Dole's (2000) study found the following:

Implicit instruction in general, places the teacher in the role of facilitator, rather than guide or expert. The teacher's role is to provide the rich context, which includes lots of books to read, time to read and write, and real purposes for reading and writing. (p. 59)

In addition to Dole's definition on implicit instruction, Hulstijn (2005) said implicit instruction happens when rules are presented, but not discussed, and learners are not asked to attend to rules during L2 tasks. Implicit teaching also refers to "the practice of deliberately leaving it to learners to discover or work out these things for themselves" (Cambourne, 1999, p. 126), or in other words, it is a learner-centered style of learning.

On the whole, implicit instruction has drawn less attention than explicit instruction in the language instruction and has a more vague definition. However, implicit instruction is different from simply exposure to input. One example of implicit instruction is found in Tateyama's (2001) study. In the explicit group, handouts and videos were used to illustrate and explain the different strategies to be used in different social context. The explicit group only watched the clip once, whereas the implicit group watched the same clip twice. The other difference between her explicit and implicit treatments is the students in the implicit group were prompted to pay attention to any formulaic pragmatic routines to avoid distraction by other interesting aspects of the video before watching the video (Tateyama, 2001, p. 204). Hence, implicit instruction also has instruction involved, but from using a less direct and more student-centered approach.

In this section I examine the empirical studies on the effects of explicit instruction and implicit instruction in the language classrooms. In the study of Nguyen, Pham, Pham (2012), the results suggested that explicit instruction tends to have a greater effect on learners' pragmatic development. Nguyen, Pham, Pham investigated the effect of explicit and implicit instruction on 69 English learners who were developing performance in criticism speech acts. A quasi-experimental, pre-test/post-test design with a control group was adopted in the study. After 10 weeks of treatments, results showed that learners all made a significant improvement after instruction, regardless of the instructional approach. However, when comparing solely between the post-tests, they found the superiority of the explicit group over the implicit group and control group.

In another study, Salemi, Rabiee & Ketabi (2012) found that explicit instruction had the advantage over implicit instruction. Salemi et al. concluded that participants in explicit groups outperformed implicit groups, by saying that it was due to the fact that students' attention was directed to specific features during explicit instruction. One other factor that influenced the result was the learners' learning preference and habits: students from certain cultures prefer to receive explicit feedback in regards to their performance. Thus, after a delayed post-test given after four weeks, they found that the effect of instruction almost fades away due to a lack of proper input during that time span and due to the students' habit of needing to be told what to do. Salemi et al. reported that L2 pragmatic instruction is necessary even for learners with high-level proficiency.

Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993) tried to find out what components of pragmatic competence become more native-like and what remain nonnative-like after instruction in a longitudinal study. The study created real learning experiences through real-life interactions. Participants learned proper suggestions and rejections through building their schedule with

academic advisors. Those meeting sessions between participants and academic advisors were taped for further analysis. First, an initiated advising session was conducted, and was later followed by subsequent sessions after 7 to 14 weeks. Participants were instructed in the appropriate way to negotiate including giving suggestions and rejections during the advising session. After the longitudinal study, improvement was found among participants. They learned to make better and more acceptable suggestions as well as when it was appropriate to reason or reject and when it was not. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford also found that the participants learned to reject more directly and explicitly, which was expected in the target culture. Hence, based on the evidence that participants improve over time through the explicit teaching from the advising session, Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford believed that explicit instruction is the key for a Non Native Speaker (NNS) to acquire the appropriate suggestion forms.

Schmidt (1993) also asserted that explicit instruction has its role in second language pragmatic instruction, for it is more efficient than attention to input that is solely based on “fallible native speaker intuition” (p. 36). Koike and Pearson (2005) found that both explicit and implicit approaches can be effective in enhancing students’ pragmatic competence. However, Koike and Person found that explicit instruction is more beneficial in developing students’ ‘conscious awareness of pragmatic norms.

Shively (2010) suggested that the type of approach to be used depends on the goal of the language teacher. When the goal is identified as developing conscious awareness of language patterns, Shively suggested that explicit instruction is the preferred approach (p. 108). For example, consider how children learn communicative competence. Children have usually been explicitly told the rules of pragmatics (Schmidt, 1993; Snow, Perlman, Gleason, and Hooshyar, 1990; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). Unlike their acquisition of syntax, semantics or other linguistic

rules, adults usually do not allow young children to construct their own rules when it comes to speaking politely and appropriately. Instead, adults usually take an initial role in teaching children to use appropriate politeness devices (Schmidt, 1993; Snow et.al, 1990). Clearly children acquire pragmatics rules through both input and explicit instruction. This is in line with what Schmidt (1993) claimed, that attention to explicit explanation of rules is necessary.

Schmidt (1993) further explained:

Explicit teacher-provided information about the pragmatics of the second language can also play a role in learning, provided that it is accurate and not based solely on fallible native speaker intuitions. Explicit teaching is often more efficient than attention to input for identifying the pragmalinguistic forms of the target language. (p. 20)

The difference between explicit and implicit is that “explicit approaches involve direct explanation of target pragmatic features followed by practice, while implicit approaches withhold explanation but provide input and practice opportunities where learners can develop implicit understanding of pragmatic forms and their uses” (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Implicit instruction, on the other hand, does not provide any metalinguistic explanation. Pragmatic ability is seen as a product of engaging learners in conversational interaction, in other words, pragmatic ability is acquired “simply in the course of doing it” (Schmidt, 1993, p. 1).

Tateyama (2001) believed that explicit teaching appears to be more effective than implicitly facilitating the acquisition of L2 pragmatics. However, when Tateyama compared the effectiveness of explicit and implicit instruction in teaching basic Japanese pragmatic routines to beginning Japanese learners at the University of Hawaii at Moana, the findings revealed no significant difference between these two instruction methods. She suggested that factors such as motivation and the amount of contact with native speakers outside of class made the difference.

For example, students in the implicit group reported to have spoken Japanese outside of class on a regular basis while the students in the explicit group did not.

The goal of explicit instruction is to help focus on the forms and meaning in the input (Schmidt 1990). Schmidt also believed that passive language learners, those who only wait and depend on involuntary attention processes and hope it will trigger automatic noticing, are likely to become slow and unsuccessful learners (p.24).

Andringa, de Glopper, & Hacquebord (2011) said that explicit instruction involves overt attention to the rules of the target language, whereas during implicit instruction, Hulstijn (2005) said rules are presented but not discussed and learners were not asked to attend to the rules during L2 tasks. In addition to the definition of Andringa et al., Hulstijn (2005) distinguished between these two types of instruction based on knowledge, learning, and process. Based on his descriptions, explicit and implicit knowledge differ in the extent that one is often associated with effortful process with aid of rules, and is often consciously studying with the intention to find regularities. In contrast, the latter is usually associated with automatic processing, without aid of rule, and automatically processing without the intention to study the rules (Hulstijn, p. 130-132). Overall, implicit instruction has been recognized as a less effective approach in developing pragmatic awareness as compared to an explicit approach.

Another factor which should be taken into consideration when teaching pragmatics strategies is culture, because a learner's ability to comprehend implied meanings is considered to be culture-specific (Rafieyan, Majid & Eng, 2013). For example, when deciding which apologetic performative verb to use, or which strategy or expression to apply, the judgment requires background information about the specific culture. Hence, culture becomes an



inseparable part of teaching pragmatics strategies. Without an understanding of the target culture, L2 learners cannot perform speech acts of apologies appropriately.

Overall, the majority of recent empirical studies suggest that explicit instruction tends to be more effective than implicit instruction in terms of learning outcomes in L2 pragmatics (Schmidt, 1993; Rose, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2000, Shively, 2012; Salemi, Rabiee & Ketabi, 2012 Cohen, 2008, Alcón Soler, 2002). As shown by the reporting of the positive delayed effect on post-tests, Alcón Soler (2007) claimed that explicit instruction may trigger a higher level of awareness and increased retention rate. Conversely, the implicit method may not be sufficient for learners to truly learn.

### **Understanding Culture**

Culture is an integral part of language learning. Culture also plays a significant role in acquiring pragmatic competence since pragmatics requires learners to understand meaning below the surface. Kondo (2008) explained that the relationship between culture and pragmatics as “intricately connected with cultural values, situation, interlocutors and other variables” (p. 173). With an understanding of culture, the process of teaching and learning pragmatics can be smoother because culture lays a solid foundation for any linguistic or cultural behaviors applicable in every situation.

Furthermore, culture is essential in order to teach appropriate speech act behavior. The purpose of teaching culture is not for learners to internalize a particular culture, but to encourage learners to acquire a more positive attitude and performance towards differences (Meier, 1997). Therefore, the goal for pragmatics teaching should focus on raising students’ cultural awareness and appropriateness (Thomas, 1983; Rose, 1999; Meier, 1997; Kondo, 2008).

In Meier’s (1997) study she clearly explained the definition of appropriateness:

Appropriateness is highly situation-dependent, and so contextual factors become of utmost importance.... What is perceived as formal context in one culture may be seen as informal in another. What is considered in one culture to be a normal amount of complimenting may seem excessive in another. What may be viewed as an accepted topic of phatic communication in one culture may be perceived negatively in another. (p. 24)

The above statement explains the reason why rote memorization is unlikely to help L2 learners to achieve target norms and enhance pragmatic ability. Teaching and understanding culture involves many variables such as learners' background, interlanguage, and target norms.

Schmidt (1993) also pointed out the importance of direct attention to relevant contextual features when acquiring second language pragmatics. The manner of apologizing varies according to context as well as external factors such as social power and distance. In order to be able to perform pragmatics appropriately and authentically, learners need to be able to identify those social and contextual variables since those factors make a major impact on speech acts in the Chinese language.

According to Shively (2010), "awareness-raising activities in pragmatic instruction can facilitate both the noticing of specific pragmatic features and the development of understanding larger patterns of pragmatic behavior, such as sociolinguistic and situational variation" (p. 109). Awareness can be raised through instruction or class discussion, as said by Kondo (2008). Along with the awareness approach, Kondo proposed that teachers can help raise learners' pragmatic awareness through "feeling, doing, thinking, understanding and using" phases. The main procedures of these five phases were first to ask students to learn to reflect and realize the pragmatic difference, then to analyze and discover their own performance. The goal at the end of these phases is that learners would be able to create speech through reflecting both on their L1

and L2 after their exposure and training. Through the awareness-raising approach, learners can become sensitive to culture and other variables involved in language use (Kondo, 2008, p. 173).

In addition to Kondo, Kasper (1997) explained the purpose of incorporating pragmatics into the language classroom. Kasper said that pragmatics rules and strategies are not taught with the purpose of teaching new information, but of helping learners become aware of “what they know already and encourage them to use their universal or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts” (p. 108).

Besides raising the cultural awareness of L2 learners, L2 speakers need to learn that other variables, such as the severity of the offense or the distance to the listeners, must be taken into consideration when apologizing. Teachers have the responsibility to clarify different types of strategies or rules to be used on different subjects and situations, since those rules were unlikely to be picked up by students themselves (Bourgerie, 1996). For example, in Chinese culture, apologizing to professors requires a different approach than apologizing to peers. In addition, some situations are more offensive in some cultures than in others, and may require more formal apologies. Cultural differences may lead learners to be unaware of the severity of the offense, causing them to encounter interpersonal challenges. Therefore, through instruction, learners can be taught to determine the relative severity of offenses in the target culture. Even within the same society, there are personal variables such as gender, age, level of education, and types of occupation to be considered (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

In Chinese culture, apologies usually occur when the speaker realizes that his/her action has threatened or is going to threaten the hearer’s face. Basically, in an apology, what the speaker does is expose his/her own face and in doing so tries to lessen the damage to the hearer’s face

(Park & Guan, 2009). Lower-status to higher-status apologies and higher-status to lower-status apologies also require different strategies.

‘Face’ therefore, is apparently an important cultural factor to understand if learners of Chinese want to use their apologizing strategies appropriately. Kondo (2008) indicated that “merely teaching formulaic phrases by rote or forcing learners to conform to target form is not likely to enhance pragmatic ability” (p. 173). It is not effective and realistic to have language learners remember all the formulaic phrases of apologizing expressions and strategies. Nevertheless, through instruction, students become aware of pragmatic similarities and differences between their native and target languages (Kondo, 2008). If students do not have the basic cultural background in mind, it will be difficult for them to acquire speech acts of apologies appropriately. Rafieyan, Majid & Eng (2013) said that “familiarity with the cultural features of the target language society and interest in learning those cultural features are the key factors to determine language learners’ level of pragmatic comprehension, and language learners’ interest to notice those cultural features plays an important role in their pragmatic development” (p. 125). Hence, there is a correlation between cultural awareness and pragmatic competence. Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei (1998) suggested that awareness raising (and noticing) activities need to be added on to pragmatic instruction in L2 classrooms (p. 256).

Pragmatics research investigates the ability of language users to produce or comprehend language in a particular context (Salemi, Rabiee, & Ketabi, 2012). It is more difficult for teachers to teach pragmatics in an L2 environment due to the lack of native input and environment as a model. Limited resources make it difficult for students to acquire pragmatic awareness when a language is taught in a foreign language setting. Nevertheless, pedagogical

intervention is beneficial for students; they can receive feedback that is not usually given by natives who may be afraid of causing someone to lose face (Shively, 2010).

### **Difficulty in incorporating pragmatics in a Foreign Language (FL) context**

Little attention has been paid to the area of incorporating pragmatics in a FL context due to some unique challenges existing in the FL setting (Rose, 1994). As pointed out by Rose (1999), there are several disadvantages of teaching languages where the language isn't spoken in the host community. These limitations include a lack of naturally occurring input, little or low availability of native speakers, and few opportunities for intercultural communications (Pearson, 2011; Alcón Soler, 2002; Rose, 1999; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998). Alcón Soler (2005) agrees with Rose. He says it is difficult for students to learn pragmatics on their own when there is a lack of naturally occurring input and feedback.

Kasper (2001) believed that learners in the English as a Second Language (ESL) environment have a more favorable learning situation than learners in the FL environment. The optimal learning experience is through the combination of experiences inside and outside of the classroom. Learners need both receptive skills and productive abilities in order to develop pragmatics competence. The traditional FL setting restricts the natural opportunities for practice and use of the language for real-life purposes.

In addition, Hadley (2001) identified four major challenges for language teachers in integrating culture into their classrooms: time, teacher knowledge, student attitude, and material. First, with limited time and a priority on grammar and vocabulary, the teacher feels they cannot afford to spare class period to teach culture, and teachers believe that students will eventually be exposed to culture later, after mastery of the basic language principles. Second, most teachers feel they are not competent in the topic of culture. Third, due to cultural topics not being

quantifiable as linguistic knowledge, and the differences that exist between the target culture and students' own culture, students often react negatively to learning cultural issues.

Christensen and Warnick (2002) added to Hadley's comment, pointing out that another issue in teaching culture in the language classroom is that "culture is treated as the fifth skill along with listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p. 10-11). They strongly believe that cultural context is integrally and inseparably connected with the other four skills, because culture is not only limited to art or history, but it also reflects natives' point of view and how natives use their grammar and language. Hence, "Cultural behavior is an essential part of speaking a foreign language in the target environment" (p. 16).

Due to the constraints in the FL setting, Rose (1994) proposed a conscious-raising approach and the use of authentic audiovisual input (Alcón Soler, 2005). Through the use of authentic videos in classroom, students were able to quickly realize "why people talk the way they do in any contexts" (p. 8). Watching authentic videos allows learners to access the rich and ample language that leads to communicative or analysis activities, which can help reinforce learners' pragmatic knowledge. Moreover, through authentic video and through students' observation, the video can serve as a model for language learners to emulate. In addition, "learners are quick to realize that all of us vary our speech according to (among other things) whom we are talking with, and where and when the interaction takes place" (p. 8). The purpose of a pragmatic consciousness-raising approach is first, to sensitize learners to context-based variations in language use; second, to help learners understand the role of these variables. Doing so can aid learners in recognizing that variation in a real situation. Because of the disadvantages presented, living in the target community is the other factor commonly taken into consideration when

evaluating pragmatic development. Consciousness-raising is an effective enhancement technique to develop students' competence (Alcón Soler, 2007).

### **The effect of environment**

Previous studies did not agree on the effect that length of stay in the target country has on pragmatics development. Some suggested length of residency is an important contribution to L2 pragmatics development (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Schmidt, 1993; Wu, Case & Wang, 2009). Some held a different point of view; researchers asserted that simple exposure to the environment is insufficient (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Iino, 2006) or that it takes a very long time to notice its effect (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985).

Previous researchers find that learners are more able to adjust their pragmatics strategies to native-like strategies if they have spent some time abroad. The study of Xu, Case, & Wang (2009) discovered the correlation between length of residency (LOR) and overall L2 proficiency which contributes to L2 pragmatics proficiency. 126 international students studying at a US university participated in this study. They were all ESL speakers, speaking 20 different languages. The participants included 64 undergraduate students with intermediate levels of English proficiency and 62 graduate students with advanced levels. The length of residency in the US for the intermediate-level participants ranged from three weeks to seven-and-a-half years, with a mean of 19.12 months. For advanced participants, their LOR in the US ranged from three weeks to ten years, with a mean of 26.01 months. The participants were divided into four groups: undergraduates with shorter LOR (equal to/less than one year), undergraduates with longer LOR (above one year), and graduates with a short LOR and graduates with longer LOR. The undergraduate group had a lower English proficiency than the graduate group. A questionnaire was given to participants in order to measure their pragmatic and grammatical competence. Each

participant was asked to judge the correctness and appropriateness of each written scenario. Participants answered 20 written scenario questions in Discourse Completion Test (DCT) format. Participants checked yes or no to indicate the correctness of the last utterance. If the answer was no, the participants were asked to rate the severity of the incorrectness on a Likert scale of six points from “not bad at all” to “very bad.” Each scenario presented a conversation which could occur in a school setting. Pragmatics competence on refusals, requests, apologies and suggestions were measured.

Results showed that participants with longer LOR outscored those with a shorter one. Also, the graduates group outperformed the undergraduate group in being able to detect errors. As a result, Xu et al. proposed that both LOR and overall L2 proficiency have a significant influence in L2 pragmatic competence; nevertheless, L2 proficiency still acts as a more prominent indicator than LOR.

On the other hand, Olshtain & Blum-Kulka’s (1985) study stands as a challenge to Xu et al.’s study. Olshtain & Blum-Kulka explained the influence an LOR has on the L2 pragmatic development and linguistic development of students. Olshtain & Blum-Kulka found that learners started to behave like natives from less than two years to more than ten years of stay in the target community; however, regardless of their native-like speech, grammatical deviance still existed. Hence, Olshtain & Blum-Kulka believed that length of stay, not grammatical competence, serves as an indicator of speech act competence. Learners may possibly reach native-like speech as a result of the length of stay in the target community (p. 321). Olshtain & Blum-Kulka recommended that future studies investigate the relationship between linguistic competence and social-cultural level of competence.



Other research done by Bardovi-Harlig (2001), Kasper (2001), and Halenko & Jones (2011) proposed that length of overseas exposure was one of the important factors to be considered when examining the L2 pragmatic growth. Regardless of length of time spent in the target community, L2 learners can benefit from a shorter length of stay and hence become target-like in their speech acts (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Lengthy stays in the target culture are required in terms of acquiring pragmatic rules.

In further support to these findings, Olshtain & Cohen (1990) proposed that the advantage for language learners to spend years within the target language community was that they would begin to act like natives and establish the residential awareness. This awareness can help L2 learners be less prone to commit pragmatic failure. Being in the environment where the target language was spoken, language learners have the advantage of being in the immersion environment (Pearson, 2011). Rose (2005) said that, although instruction has proven to be more effective than exposure, exposure alone appears to have some effect for learning pragmatics. Additionally, Rose (2005) proposed that if learners were exposed to an environment which offers plenty of chances for exposure to and meaningful use of the target language, they may acquire some pragmatics features without instruction. Therefore, he suggested that instructors do not need to teach each and every single pragmatics objective. Some aspects are still possible to acquire by the learners themselves through exposure to the target culture.

Other research that has commented on the positive effects on environment was that of Dewey & Clifford (2012). Their study focused on the speaking proficiency development of a group of advanced level Returned Missionaries (RMs). Returned missionaries normally spent sixteen to twenty-two months in an assigned country, where they have daily opportunities to speak the target language. Dewey & Clifford found that because RMs use the language in an

authentic communicative situation regularly while residing abroad for sixteen to twenty-two months, they usually outperformed those who didn't have the experience. The experience abroad played a key role in moving learners to high levels of proficiency and contributed to relatively high levels of fluency.

Despite these findings, Schmidt's (1993) 'Noticing Hypothesis' argued that simple exposure is not sufficient for pragmatic knowledge, because pragmatic rules are sometimes too vague for L2 learners (Schmidt, p. 36). The Noticing Hypothesis posited that it is necessary to notice the occurrence of input in order for input to become intake and for learning to take place (Schmidt, p. 27). However, pragmatic functions and relevant contextual factors are often not noticeable to learners and unlikely to be noticed even after prolonged exposure. Exposure alone does not account for gains in pragmatics ability. Pedagogical assistance from teachers was necessary to facilitate acquisition, to help learners clarify thoughts, and to prevent ambiguity. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) explained that the role of instruction here was to help learners encode their own thoughts and values into a clear and unambiguous message (p. 31).

According to Swain (1985) and Gass (1988), the distance between input and output are great. Although, learners will be able to receive extensive authentic input while abroad, those inputs are unlikely to automatically convert to output. Input itself is an insufficient condition for acquisition. In Swain's study, she finds that children in a French immersion program perform poorly in certain areas. Upon closer examination she notices the reason is due to the lack of opportunity to produce comprehensive output. As a result, the insufficiency of input and the lack of opportunity to produce comprehensible output may both contribute to the insignificant result of abroad experience. "Producing the target language may be the trigger that forces the learners to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her

intent” (Swain,1985, p. 49). Hence, previous studies explain why solely living in the target language community is insufficient for learners to pick up the rules.

Learners often do not notice pragmatics functions and relevant contextual factors, even after prolonged exposure. Exposure alone did not account for gains in pragmatics ability. Pedagogical assistance taken by teachers to facilitate acquisition was necessary in order to assist learners to clarify thoughts and avoid ambiguity. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) explained that the role of instruction here was to help learners’ encode their own thoughts and value into a clear and unambiguous message (p. 31).

Furthermore, there is still some inefficiency associated with being in the target community. Iino (2006) found that language and interaction were modified when Japanese hosts interacted with their American students due to the Japanese culture value of being polite. Due to the politeness and courtesy, learners often receive simplified and modified input from natives, and sometimes that input is pragmatically inappropriate.

Iino (2006) stated:

Both native speaker and non- native speaker need to be aware that the unconscious language use in contact situation tends to be deviant from that of native situation, and is largely motivated by the positive assumption (being nice) in homestay situation. (p. 171)

Just like Bardovi-Harlig (2001) believes, LOR is not the only element that contributed to learners’ comprehension. Besides target culture norms, Bardovi-Harlig identified another variable also affecting the learner while exposed to the target community: level of proficiency and grammatical competence. Those factors all served as impact factors that determined whether or not the learners would be able to acquire pragmatic knowledge and achieve a higher level of proficiency. As we all know, not all language learners achieve a higher level of proficiency right

after they come back from their abroad experience. There are still many variables affecting the impact of environment on language learners, and there is a need to inspect those factors.

Previous studies reveal that the influence of environment depends on the language proficiency. Kubler (2002) discovered the insufficiency of simple immersion and the need of organized training when abroad. According to Kubler, living in the target community is the least effective way to result in higher proficiency for learners at beginning levels. Additionally, residence in a Chinese-speaking community is still unlikely to help advanced learners achieve superior-level skills. He used the example of expatriates who possess little or no real proficiency in the language after many years of living in the foreign county. For Kubler, the key to achieving native-like proficiency is to have both elements: long-term immersion in the target culture while concurrently participating in a systematic and organized training program. Dew (1994) agreed with Kubler on the need of an intensive overseas study and emphasized just living abroad was different from receiving rigorous training for advanced learners. Living in a community that spoke the target language was insufficient for learners to achieve superior- to distinguished-level proficiency in Chinese.

Dew (1994) said:

“Intensive overseas study is essential for the attainment of high levels of Chinese language competence because that is the context in which (1) student can devote full effort to language study (2) the student can be exposed to the language in all of its varied use, active and passive; (3) and maximum use can be made of the powers to reinforcement among four skills” (p. 40 - 41).

Above all, I have learned that although environment is important, some still feel it is not sufficient for language learners who seek to achieve advanced to superior proficiency. Due to

various factors, length of stay in target language culture does not serve as an effective indicator of language gain. A combination of intensive instruction and training while learners are immersed in the target community is necessary.

### **Chinese Culture and Apologies**

As was well described by Kubler (2002), “In Chinese culture, there are tremendous differences in vocabulary and grammar between every colloquial language, as used by intimate friends chatting in a pub, and formal language, as used by educated Chinese in an academic lecture or political debate” (p. 109). Hence, in order for learners of Chinese to reach a higher level of proficiency or move towards a more native-like dialogue, learners must have the ability to adjust their speech depending on their interlocutor and location. More importantly, language learners should strive to reach the goal to have the Chinese feel comfortable with them when they speak in Chinese (Christensen & Warnick, 2006).

An apology is a face-threatening speech act that requires the speaker to admit responsibility for having done (or having failed to do) something that offended, harmed, or affected the hearer in some way (D’Orlando, 2006). Through apologizing, the speaker recognizes the fact that a violation of a social norm has been committed and admits to the fact that they are at least partially involved in its cause. Therefore apologies involve a loss of face for the speaker and support for the hearer. Face-threatening acts violate or fail to satisfy face needs (Park & Guan, 2009). Olshtain, & Blum-Kulka (1985) categorized the apology pattern rule as having “formulaic routines ‘*I’m sorry*’” and with an “open-ended variety of possible utterances” (p306). When comparing apologies across languages, Olshtain, & Blum-Kulka suggested learners pay attention to “the nature of the formulaic routine expression, as well as the relative role in the language use of the basic notion of apologizing” (p. 306).

Particularly in the Chinese language, there are several ways to apologize. For example, ‘*dàoqiàn*’ is particularly used as a formal apology; ‘*bàoqiàn*’ is a sincere way to apologize but slightly less formal. ‘*Duìbùqǐ*’ is used informally and colloquially used and ‘*bùhǎoyìsī*’ is used with feeling of embarrassment, and is used casually and informally (Avruch & Wang, 2005). Above are the most commonly used explicit apology expressions. Each of these expressions does not rely on contextual constraints; instead, they are more formulaic and routine expressions. Simply speaking, those expressions are the explicit, performative verbs which express an apology. They are similar to ‘*I am sorry*’ or ‘*excuse me*’.

In sum, there are several elements to be taken into careful consideration when evaluating L2 learners’ pragmatic proficiency. As Kasper (1997) said, “In order to communicate successfully in a target language, pragmatic competence in an L2 must be reasonably well developed.” Pragmatics plays a decisive role in L2 learners’ communicative competence.

Despite the complexity of pragmatics, in order to show politeness and modesty in speaking, the language learner must raise their pragmatic awareness. Based on previous studies (Avruch & Wang, 2005; Olshtain & Cohen 1990; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985), I feel that the speech act of apologizing is an item of interest when analyzing cultural differences across languages and therefore is suitable for researching learners’ L2 pragmatic gain and relating to the overall process of learning pragmatics.

## Chapter 3: Method and Procedures

### **Subjects**

The participants in this study consisted of four classes of 55 advanced learners of Chinese (87% Male, median age = 22 years old) at Brigham Young University. The participants were students in a university Chinese course who reported some or no experience residing in a Chinese-speaking community. The participants were enrolled in a Chinese 301 (first semester advanced Chinese) course for the Fall 2013 and Winter 2014 semesters. Students registered in this course must have successfully completed the prerequisite Chinese 202 courses (second semester intermediate Chinese). The class met 50 minutes a day, five days a week throughout the semester. Though students in this course had not been formally tested, those who had completed Chinese 202 were generally in the intermediate- high to mid-advanced range in the ACTFL oral proficiency interview scale.

Due to the instructional constraints, it was not possible to assign participants randomly to the explicit or implicit groups, thus it was necessary to work with the intact groups. There were two sections of the 301 course taught by the same instructor offered in the semester (fall semester of 2013); thus one section was designated as the explicit instruction group and the other as the implicit instruction group. The same procedure was repeated again in the following semester (winter semester of 2014) with the same instructor, level of participants, and method. In total, there were four classes who participated in the study. These classes are described in detail on page 33 of this paper. The total participants for two semesters (fall and winter) in the explicit group were 29, with 26 in the implicit group. The age of participants ranged from 20-27 years old. There were both male and female participants. There were 30 participants reported to have lived in a Chinese-speaking community for more than one year, and 25 participants reported

having less than one year or no experience living in a Chinese-speaking community. Their Length of Residence (LOR) in the Chinese-speaking community ranged from 0 weeks to 10 years, with a mean of 22.97 months. In order to properly investigate research question three—“Does living in a Chinese-speaking community accelerate an L2 learner’s correct use of apologies in Chinese?”—the participants were grouped based on their LOR and the different instruction methods.

Participants who had no exposure or spent less than one year in a Chinese-Speaking Community (CSC) were categorized as a ‘No or limited Chinese-Speaking Community (NCSC)’ group. Participants who have lived more than one year in a Chinese-speaking community were in the CSC group. Although the cutoff between CSC and NCSC groups was a year, in reality, no participants in the NCSC group had more than three months of experience in a Chinese-speaking community. Those who had limited experience spent one-and-a-half to three months in the Chinese-speaking community. The researcher was the teaching assistant for these courses. Participants were recruited during the formal instruction setting. Consent forms were distributed and collected during class after explaining the purpose of this study. Table 1 and 2 below describe the two research groups.

Table 1

Overview of participant’s distribution in the explicit and implicit groups during fall 2013 and winter 2014 semesters

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>CSC Group</b>	<b>NCSC Group</b>
Explicit Fall 2013	13	3	10	6
Explicit Winter 2014	11	2	6	7
<b>Explicit Total (29)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>
Implicit Fall 2013	6	0	3	3
Implicit Winter 2014	18	2	11	9
<b>Implicit Total (26)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>12</b>



Table 2

Overview of participants' groups distribution according to the instruction methods and abroad experiences

<b>ID</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Abroad</b>	<b>ID</b>	<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Abroad</b>
2	EXPLICIT	NCSC	1	IMPLICIT	NCSC
4	EXPLICIT	NCSC	18	IMPLICIT	NCSC
7	EXPLICIT	NCSC	19	IMPLICIT	NCSC
12	EXPLICIT	NCSC	25	IMPLICIT	NCSC
16	EXPLICIT	NCSC	26	IMPLICIT	NCSC
21	EXPLICIT	NCSC	27	IMPLICIT	NCSC
45	EXPLICIT	NCSC	32	IMPLICIT	NCSC
46	EXPLICIT	NCSC	34	IMPLICIT	NCSC
47	EXPLICIT	NCSC	35	IMPLICIT	NCSC
50	EXPLICIT	NCSC	38	IMPLICIT	NCSC
55	EXPLICIT	NCSC	40	IMPLICIT	NCSC
57	EXPLICIT	NCSC	43	IMPLICIT	NCSC
58	EXPLICIT	NCSC	20	IMPLICIT	CSC
3	EXPLICIT	CSC	22	IMPLICIT	CSC
5	EXPLICIT	CSC	23	IMPLICIT	CSC
6	EXPLICIT	CSC	28	IMPLICIT	CSC
8	EXPLICIT	CSC	29	IMPLICIT	CSC
9	EXPLICIT	CSC	30	IMPLICIT	CSC
10	EXPLICIT	CSC	31	IMPLICIT	CSC
11	EXPLICIT	CSC	33	IMPLICIT	CSC
13	EXPLICIT	CSC	36	IMPLICIT	CSC
14	EXPLICIT	CSC	37	IMPLICIT	CSC
15	EXPLICIT	CSC	39	IMPLICIT	CSC
48	EXPLICIT	CSC	41	IMPLICIT	CSC
49	EXPLICIT	CSC	42	IMPLICIT	CSC
51	EXPLICIT	CSC	44	IMPLICIT	CSC
52	EXPLICIT	CSC			
53	EXPLICIT	CSC			
54	EXPLICIT	CSC			

Note. EXPLICIT=Explicit group; IMPLICIT=Implicit group; CSC=Chinese-speaking community; NCSC=No or limited Chinese-speaking community.

## Procedure

The fifty-five advanced students of Chinese at Brigham Young University were divided into two groups: explicit and implicit groups. All the participants received either explicit or implicit instruction in the use of the Chinese pragmatic routine *duìbùqǐ, bùhǎoyìsī, dàoqiàn, bàoqiàn* (*sorry, excuse me, I apologize and I am sorry*) and related strategies which were commonly used for apologizing in Chinese culture.

The purpose of this study is to explore whether instruction results in increased appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese and whether the different teaching approaches, explicit or implicit instruction, have a different effect on advanced learners' pragmatic knowledge gain. Finally, I investigate if living in a Chinese-speaking community accelerates the L2 learner's correct use of apologies in Chinese.

This study employs an experimental design over an eight-week period; each explicit and implicit group was given four instruction treatments for a period of 20 minutes each. There were two sections of Chinese 301 classes that participated in the study during fall semester of 2013, one designated as the explicit instruction group and the other as the implicit instruction group. The same procedure was repeated in the winter semester of 2014. Therefore, we have two explicit instruction groups and two implicit instruction groups. The data was collected respectively from both semesters. After the data was collected, the results were combined from both semesters. This way, I had only one explicit and one implicit group at the end.

Moreover, in order to control class time as a threatening variable, during fall semester of 2013, the early morning section class was designated as the implicit instruction group and the late morning was the explicit instruction group. In winter semester of 2014, the explicit group met in the early morning section and the implicit group met in the late morning.

Both groups received four 20-minute sessions of explicit or implicit instruction about Chinese apologies. There were several types of activities included in each instruction session, such as explicit instruction by the instructor about Chinese apology realization, role-play activities to practice making apologies, group work activities to discuss the different apologizing expressions, and class discussion about ways to formulate apologies in Chinese. Additionally, the instructor incorporated authentic video to simulate the actual example of the target language and culture.

Prior to the explicit and implicit instruction, both groups were given a pre-test. The test instrument used was the Discourse Competition Task (DCT) which requires students to read a written description in English of a situation, and write down what they would say in that situation in Chinese. The DCT questions were all open-ended style.

Open-ended DCT was considered most appropriate for this study due to the foreign language environment, where it was hard to create a natural conversation scenario. Specific elicitation tasks were a feasible way to oversee learners' apology realization. The questions were written in English to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Students were asked not to consult a dictionary or any other resources during the test. The pre- and post-tests consisted of ten scenarios each. Participants were asked to write down what they would say under each circumstance. Below is a sample eliciting scenario from the DCT pre-test:

- A friend arranged to meet you in order to get some notes from you to study for an exam.

She waited for an hour but you didn't show up. She calls you with an angry tone.

Friend: You know, I waited for you for an hour yesterday.

What do you say to your friend?

You say:

A whole version of the DCT questions for pre-test is attached in Appendix A.

Table 3

Overview of instructional treatments in the explicit and implicit groups

	Topic	Explicit	Implicit
		Pre-Test + Background Survey	Pre-Test + Background Survey
<b>Treatment 1</b>	Four commonly used apology expressions in Chinese	Instructor explicitly explained concept; students created scenarios, performed; instructor provided feedback	Students were given a handout; sorted out rules with group members; created a role play and used it to teach each apology expression
<b>Treatment 2&amp;3</b>	Contextualized information with authentic video	Explicitly explained and discussed the video; students did role play; instructor provided feedback	Students watched the video and discussed with group members; did role play
<b>Treatment 4</b>	Apologizing strategy	Instructor provided explicit instruction; students judged given apology utterance	Students judged given apology utterance; talked about scoring experience and shared what learned during the process with peers
		Post-Test + Final Survey	Post-Test + Final Survey

As for the instructional treatments, the following are the thorough description.

For the explicit group, the first lesson was devoted to teaching the difference in usage of four commonly used apology expressions in Chinese: *對不起 duìbùqǐ*, *不好意思 bùhǎoyìsī*, *道歉 dàoqiàn*, *抱歉 bàoqiàn* (*sorry, excuse me, I apologize, and I am sorry*). The instructor taught Chinese apologetic expressions using explicit explanations and examples. Students were asked to create a scenario to demonstrate how to use this specific apology expression after the instruction. Three pairs of students were randomly chosen to perform apology realization in front of the class

after being assigned one of the apology expressions. The instructor provided feedback and answered questions raised by participants.

Lessons two and three focused on contextualized factors. The instructor used authentic video to simulate a real situation that required a formal apology in the target culture. According to Rose (1994), “the use of video represented an ideal medium for introducing pragmatic issues in the classroom, . . . it is most likely the closest learners will come to authentic language” (p. 7-8). The purpose for these treatment sessions was to raise participants’ awareness of situational and social factors through authentic videos. The instructor explicitly explained the situation and factors to be considered when formulating apology under the specific situation shown in the video clips. After instruction, students were asked to role play with a partner to formulate apologies to given situation. Class ended with randomly selected students performing before the entire class and the instructor addressed further concerns or questions.

The instructor began the final lesson by explicitly explaining the apologizing strategy commonly used in Chinese culture. Following the explanation, participants were given various utterances and judged whether the target utterance was appropriate or not by giving each individual utterance a score. Each scenario consisted of two to three written responses containing apology realization. Most responses required revision in order to become a proper apology in the given circumstance. Some responses required no alternation to showcase the native norm. Participants were asked to rewrite the “bad” written responses into more native-like apologies. During the activity, participants worked in pairs to identify errors, make corrections, and give a score to responses from five different scenarios chosen from the pre-test. Simple examples of “bad” and “good” sentences were both provided for the learners to test if participants would be able to recognize them.

On the other hand, the treatment for the implicit group was a parallel method to that of the explicit group. I followed Hulstijn (2005), Dole (2000), and Tateyama (2001)'s model and definition of implicit instruction to design an implicit treatment. Both explicit and implicit are covered by the same course curriculum. The significant difference between the explicit and implicit group is a thorough explanation was given to explicit instruction, while no explanation was given to implicit instruction.

The instructor introduced apology strategies and rules in a student-centered manner. Students were expected to learn the rules with a variety of examples, and from each other, without the teacher explicitly explaining the actual rule. In lesson one, students were given a handout with various examples. (Refer handout in Appendix E.) Students were asked to sort out apologizing rules between 對不起 *duìbùqǐ*, 不好意思 *bùhǎoyìsī*, 道歉 *dàoqiàn*, 抱歉 *bàoqiàn* (*sorry, excuse me, I apologize, and I am sorry*) with their group members. Throughout the discussion, students came up with their own examples and definitions of each apology expression. Afterwards, each group was in charge of demonstrating a role play of a specific apologizing expression in front of their classmates. Classmates were asked to give feedback on the apologies produced by the group. Lessons two & three focused on contextualized information. Authentic videos were used in these sessions. In contrast to the explicit group, students did not receive an explicit explanation of apology strategies. Students were put in groups and asked to work and discuss with their group members during the activities. Participants were encouraged to converse about why people talk or apologize the way they do in a given context. Participants were also asked to compare and contrast their culture and the Chinese culture with their group members. The participants role played their created Chinese apologies as if they were encountering the scenario showed in the video clip. Lesson four: Participants were asked to

score various apology examples with a partner. Students were given the same apology scenarios as the explicit group: five different scenarios chosen from pre-test. Each scenario consisted of two to three written responses containing an apology realization, and most responses required revision in order to be treated as a proper apology under given circumstances. Students worked in pairs to identify errors, made corrections accordingly, and gave a score. After completing the scoring and revision process, each group was asked to talk about their scoring experience, sharing what they learned from this exercise in a group discussion setting.

The difference in the treatments between the explicit and implicit instruction groups was that the implicit version, of course, had no clear and direct explanation of the apology rules. In other words, both explicit and implicit groups were exposed to the same video and material; only the instruction was delivered in a different method. The explicit instruction group was teacher-centered, and the implicit instruction was student-centered. The purpose of designing an implicit instruction group in this study was to determine whether progress in the use of apology speech acts occurs in the absence of explicit instruction. Students in the implicit group were asked to figure out the rules on their own, teach each other through role plays, answer each other's questions, and create their own schemas for understanding the rules. Through those activities students were in control of their learning. Despite the instructional method, all the treatments took place inside the classroom as part of a formal setting.

After all the treatments had been completed, a post-test was administered in class for twenty-five minutes. Pre-tests and post-tests were administered to both the explicit and implicit instruction groups before and after the 8-week treatment, respectively. The content and difficulty of the DCT administered to both groups as pre- and post-tests were equivalent but not identical. The post-test contained three identical questions from the pre-test, but seven other questions

were modified or rewritten to prevent memorization from the pre-test which might affect the test results. A sample of the DCT post-test questions can be found in Appendix B. Below is a sample eliciting scenario from the DCT post-test:

- You offended your colleague during a meeting. She cried and left the room. Your other colleague asks you to get her back because the meeting cannot continue without her.

What do you say to your colleague?

You say:

Both pre- and post- tests were graded by native raters on accuracy and authentic usage of apologies. Raters were trained to be familiar with the scoring standards and were asked to disregard grammatical errors. The answer to each question on the DCT was tallied for each test.

A background survey was given to participants of both groups to find out the participants' experience in the Chinese-speaking community and background information during the pre-test. Another final survey was distributed along with the post-test which was used to examine student attitudes toward the pragmatic instruction. The survey questions are attached in Appendix D.



## Chapter 4: Data Analysis

### **Data Analysis**

All pre- and post- tests completed by participants were entered into the computer and sent to native raters for scoring. Each participant was randomly assigned an ID number with the intention of protecting participants' identities and to make sure raters were not biased. The pre-test and post-test were score identically. Two raters analyzed test takers' performance on three dimensions: ability to produce the appropriate apology, usage of routine expressions, and amount of strategies used. Raters used a Likert scale from 0 to 5. This study focused on the learners' production of target apologies, regardless of the grammatical errors the output contained. The grading excluded consideration of grammatical errors as this was not the focus of the study.

Each participant had two sets of scores, from the pre-test and the post-test, respectively. The maximum score for each test was 100 (10 questions  $\times$  5 maximum points  $\times$  2 raters). The two sets of scores from the tests were compared to see if improvement occurred during the study. Raters were asked to judge the apology as if he/she was the person in the scenario receiving the apology. The two raters were trained to share the same grading standard. The raters were given grading guidelines (listed on next page) and written requirements in detail. They were also asked to read the response as if he/she were the one accepting the apology. If the final score was more than three points off from each other, a third rater would grade the question. This procedure ensured that the grades were objective and reliable. The learners' responses were analyzed based on the following criteria:

### **Scoring guideline**

**5 Native-like**

Perfectly appropriate and effective in the level of sincerity, politeness, and formality. It is an authentic, and native-like apology.

**4 Close to native**

The apologetic expression was used correctly and appropriately, however, the strategy was not adequate or appropriate, hence the apology is a little off from native-like.

**3 Inadequate or insufficient**

The apologetic expression used is off from native-like, and the user does not apply sufficient apologetic strategy, hence the apology is inadequate to fix the violation or damage that happened.

**2 Poor (Incorrect or insincere expression, did not apologize)**

The apologetic expression was incorrectly used which made the apology sound nonnative-like.

The user did not use any apology strategy which made the apology sound insincere and informal.

The response did not demonstrate remorse or regret.

**1 Very poor (Unacceptable)**

The apology is incomplete. The apology sounds rude or unacceptable for a native speaker.

**0 No response**

The user left the answer blank.

## Results

A total of 1100 responses constituted our production data (55 participants  $\times$  10 situations  $\times$  2 tests). To compare the groups, I used ANCOVA to test for differences in the dependent variable as well as growth (the difference between the post- and pre- scores). The pre-score was used as a covariate to adjust for preexisting differences in the subjects. The analysis aimed at testing the growth rate between different teaching methods and experience abroad after adjusting for the pre-score. In the ANCOVA test, the numerical variables and categorical variables both exist as predictors. The reason I found that an ANOVA test was not applicable for this study was because ANOVA only considers categorical predictor variables, but with an ANCOVA both numerical variables and categorical variables can be considered.

An ANCOVA test can control for varying pre-test scores. For example, one participant might only score 60, when another scored 70, but both achieved a post-score of 80. The ANCOVA enables better control for these types of variables so they do not appear to have the same rate of improvement.

Table 4 presents data on scores obtained by the two groups: the explicit and implicit instruction groups. The results indicate a significant difference in their pre- and post- test scores ( $p < 0.0001$ ). However, regardless of the treatment result there were no significant differences due to different treatments ( $p = 0.7367$ ) and experience abroad ( $p = 0.0603$ ). Only the P value for the effect of instruction was significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

Table 4

F value and P value for the three research questions through the ANCOVA test		
Effect	F value	P value
PRE	73.61	< 0.0001
GROUP	0.11	0.7367
ABROAD	3.61	0.0603

Note. PRE=Growth between Pre- and Post-test. GROUP=Growth between explicit and implicit instruction group. ABROAD=Growth between participants that have CSC and NCSC experience.

Table 5 presents the mean gain from the explicit and implicit instruction groups, as well as from CSC and NCSC groups. Explicit instruction and implicit instruction have a mean growth of 15.9592 and 15.2899, respectively. The CSC group had 13.6968 average growth, while the NCSC group had 17.5525. All the results were shown to be significant ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

Table 5

ANCOVA table comparison between instructional groups and abroad groups					
EFFECT	GROUP	ABROAD	MEAN	T Value	Pr> t
Method	EX		15.9594	11.69	<0.0001
Method	IM		15.2899	10.63	<0.0001
CMC		NO	13.6968	9.24	<0.0001
CMC		YES	17.5525	12.97	<0.0001

Note. EX=Explicit, IM=Implicit, CMC=Chinese-speaking community. Significant at the  $p < 0.05$  level.

Table 6 provides descriptive statistics for treatment groups on pre- and post-test performances; it represents the average gain and standard deviations, and maximum and minimum scores for both groups before and after the treatment.

Table 6

Performance compared between pre- and post- tests in terms of mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores

	N	MEAN	SD	MIN	MAX
Pre	55	67.782	11.077	29	86
Post	55	83.6	7.854	61	98

Note: N=Numbers of participants; MEAN= Mean score; SD=Standard deviations; MIN=Minimum score; MAX=Maximum score

## Data Analysis

In this section, I address each research question individually and discuss the following three factors: the effect of instruction, the effect of different instruction methods, and the effect of living in a Chinese-speaking community in the pragmatic gain for second language learners of Chinese.

### Question 1: Does instruction result in increased appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese?

The research question asked whether instruction affects learners' production of pragmatically appropriate apologies. The results showed significant improvement ( $p < 0.0001$ ) in the post-test over the pre-test after eight weeks of treatment. This result indicates that pragmatic instruction is beneficial for college (advanced) learners of Chinese. Figure 1 shows the significant growth between the pre- and post-tests.

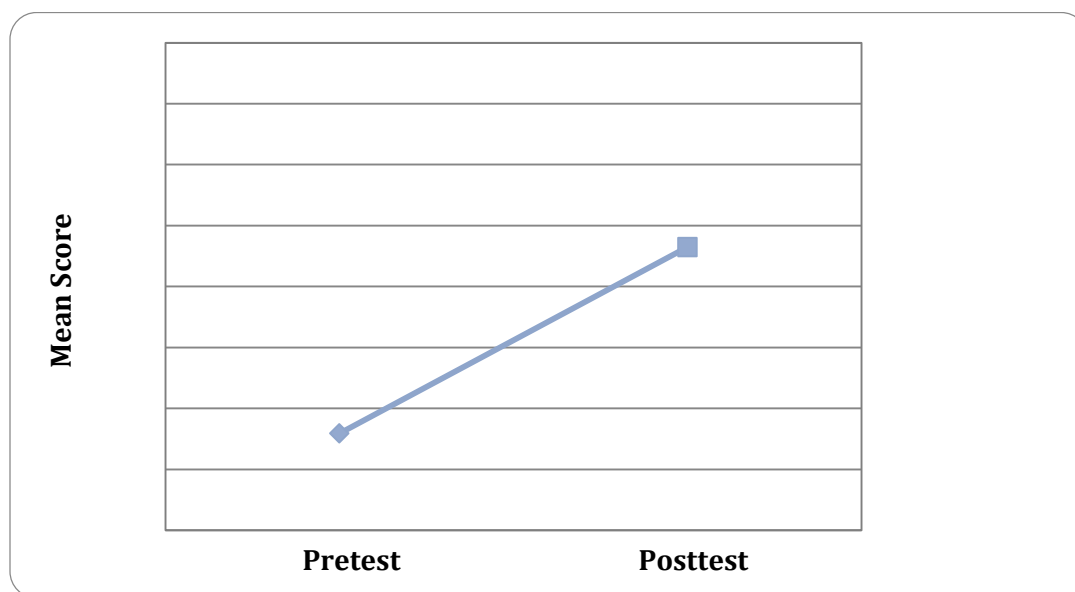


Figure 1. Gain between the pre- and post-tests

**Question 2: Do different instruction methods (explicit vs. implicit) result in more appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese?**

The ANCOVA test showed no significance ( $p > 0.05$ ) for overall pragmatic gains between explicit and implicit groups. This result indicates that different instructional methods do not make a noticeable difference in the appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese for participants. Learners benefited from both types of instruction. Whether it was a clearly outlined lesson or self-exploratory learning, the study found there was no more effective way of teaching apologies. Both explicit and implicit instruction contribute to the increased appropriate use of correct apologies in Chinese.

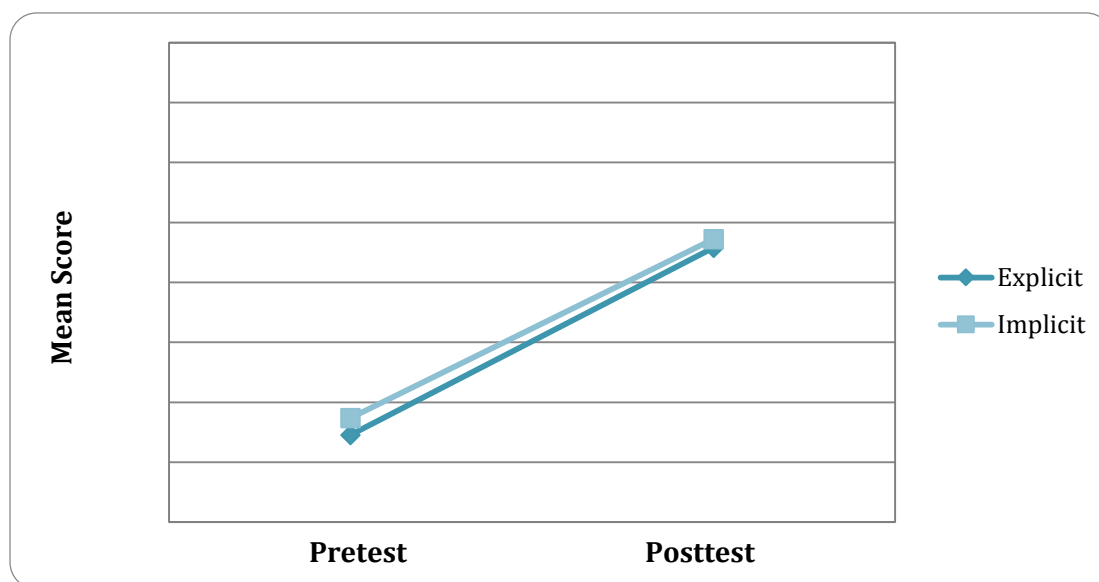


Figure 2. Gain between the pre- and post-tests in the explicit and implicit groups

**Question 3: Does living in a Chinese speaking community accelerate the L2 learner's correct use of apologies in Chinese?**

Consistent with the findings in current studies, learners' pragmatic competence did not show a significant improvement as a result of the period (more than one year) spent in the Chinese-speaking community. Living in Chinese-speaking communities does not accelerate L2

learners' correct use of Chinese apologies. This result suggests that there is not a positive correlation between the Chinese-speaking community experience and learners' pragmatic competence.

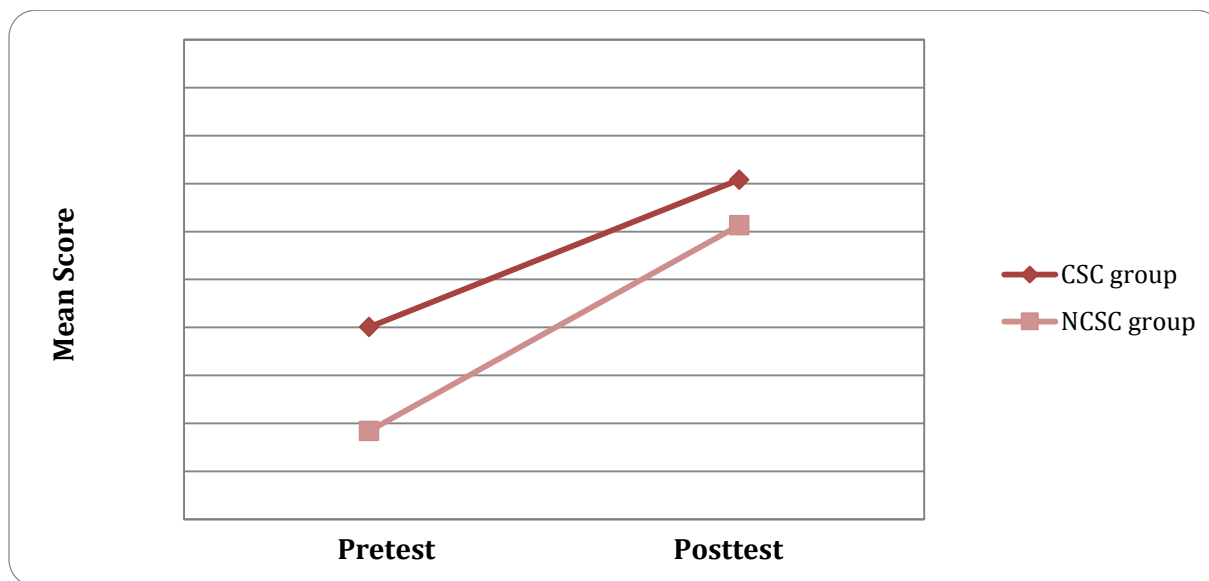


Figure 3. Gain between the pre- and post-tests in the CSC and NCSC groups

## Discussion

Investigating the development of pragmatics by means of a DCT completed by a group of fifty-five college learners of Chinese helped confirm the findings in the literature review. The results of this study show that instruction had an important effect on pragmatics gain regardless of the instruction method. In addition, the length of stay in a Chinese-speaking community did not play a significant role in pragmatic growth in third-year college students. This finding is consistent with Bourgerie's (1996) finding on the relationship between LOR and the acquisition of the Chinese Final Modal Particles (FPs). The intent of his study is to investigate if correct usage of FPs can simply be picked up by advanced learners of Chinese through residence abroad or learned in the classroom. Results show that no relationship exists between the correct use of FPs and the time spent in a Chinese environment. Hence, as the results suggest, simply expecting learners to pick up rules in an environment abroad is unrealistic and ineffective.

Moreover, our findings do not seem to confirm previous research on the advantage of explicit over implicit teaching of pragmatics. This study compared the use of explicit and implicit instruction in apology pragmatics routines in Chinese with the aim of determining the effectiveness of each. Results on the DCTs indicated no significant difference between the two groups. Explicit instruction appeared to be no more effective than implicit teaching in facilitating the acquisition of L2 pragmatics.

While the result did not indicate a significant improvement of pragmatic competence for either explicit or implicit groups, participants still made tremendous improvement after instruction. Instead of suggesting which instruction will lead to better performance than the other group, the finding confirms current studies on instruction for pragmatics in general. Hence, instruction proves effective in facilitating the increased appropriate use of correct apologies in



Chinese. In addition, I believe the reason why the result did not show a significant difference between methods of instruction was that in reality, the method of teaching pragmatics was not so vital, whereas whether students received instruction or not was the key factor.

However, percentage-wise, the explicit group still demonstrated slightly higher gains in pragmatic accuracy than the implicit group (15.959% vs. 15.259%, respectively). From a pedagogical standpoint, students benefit both from a teacher-centered and student-centered classroom. I might need to take into consideration that over half of our participants in both groups have lived in a Chinese-speaking community (55% and 53%, respectively). This may contribute to the difference. I assumed that the learning patterns and results of advanced learners with previous target community experience may vary from those of learners with lower proficiency and with no overseas experience.

As mentioned in Iino's (2006) research, the findings of native speakers of Japanese often simplified their output with nonnative speakers due to being overly polite. Since Japanese and Chinese share a very similar culture and value system, this finding is also potentially applicable to Chinese culture. I interpret the lack of improvement due to the nonnative-like output received by participants despite a lengthy stay in a Chinese-speaking community. It is hard for American learners to avoid modified interaction or simplified language when meeting with a native Chinese speaker. Therefore, inappropriate pragmatic utterances were usually treated as results of the learners' low proficiency and thus were more tolerated by natives.

Another finding of this study is that participants who lived in a Chinese-speaking community do not outperform those who never lived or only lived less than a year in a CSC. Dew (1994) believed that in order to attain a high level of Chinese proficiency, intensive overseas study is essential due to the advantage of an immersion environment and the practical

experience that can only be gained in this kind of setting. However Dew also emphasized the differences between “intensive overseas study” and just “living in a target community.” The key for a successful study abroad experience is dependent on students being enrolled in a structured language study program with knowledgeable teachers to assist students’ language learning. This is different from individuals whose goals were limited to know enough to “get around” in the language.

Another factor which might have influenced the result was the level of the participants. More than half of the participants in this study had at least two years of Chinese study or overseas experience in the Chinese-speaking community. Because advanced learners have less room for progress, it is natural to not see significant improvement. This also may have affected the results. This conclusion can be validated by looking at the 2012 ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, which are divided into the following levels: superior, advanced, intermediate, and novice. Except for the superior level, each of the other levels are subdivided into High, Mid, and Low. As one progresses to the higher levels of proficiency, the levels become broader; thus it is harder to progress from one level to the next with advanced and superior level students. On the other hand, a significant difference can easily be noticed in lower proficiency learners. Therefore proficiency levels might have influenced the effect of instruction on those advanced learners.

One other factor that might attribute to the lack of improvement in the CSC group is that learners might suffer from ‘pragmatic fossilization.’ Trillo (2002) said that pragmatic fossilization happens when “a non-native speaker systematically uses certain forms inappropriately at the pragmatic level of communication” (p.770). When language learner’s interlanguage deviates from native norm, and is not developing further, the learner is considered to be in the fossilization stage. In this study, participants in the CSC group lived in target

communities for at least one year, and thus they have more opportunity to apologize in Chinese than NCSC group. Once learners assume that they have learned the rule and stop seeking and identifying other apologizing strategies, they are very likely to encounter pragmatic fossilization.

The final survey helps us better understand the role that pragmatic instruction plays in the Chinese classroom, as well as the opinions of Chinese learners towards living abroad or in an immersion environment. According to our final survey, 33 out of 55 students (60%) reported having received instruction in Chinese apologies before this study, whereas a significant portion of students (22 out of 55 students, or 40%) reported never receiving any apology instruction. Considering that all learners in this study had at least a minimum of two years of Chinese learning experience, I can see that apology and pragmatic instruction was indeed neglected by Chinese teachers in their classrooms.

With regards to the relationship between living abroad and understanding Chinese culture and apology rules, most participants believed there is a positive correlation between experience abroad and acquisition. Seventy-six percent of students (42 out of 55) believed that living in a Chinese-speaking community was the best way to learn Chinese apologizing strategies. Only 18% disagree (10 out of 55) with the statement and 6% (3 out of 55) expressed they were not sure if it is better since they have never lived in a Chinese-speaking community. There is a misconception among learners of any language that living in the target speaking environment aids acquisition of apology strategies. Additionally, I also examined how the participants felt about their experience abroad and how it affected their acquisition of appropriate apologies. Among the 30 participants who reported to have lived in a Chinese-speaking community for more than a year, the majority of participants (29 out of 30) reported they felt this experience helped them gain an understanding of Chinese apologies. However, the results of the study contradicted the opinions

of the learners. I found those who reported the experience had helped them did not perform significantly better than those with less than a year or no experience living in a Chinese-speaking community. Therefore the key for students to be successful in their language study is not only to have an experience living in a target language environment, but also to ensure that their time spent in the community is productive. Besides personal variables affecting the different outcomes of this kind of experience, other prospects about living abroad should be further inspected.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

### **Pedagogical Implication**

If, indeed, understanding pragmatics is an important part of mastering Chinese, then what can teachers do to increase students' mastery of Chinese pragmatics? The following are some pedagogical implications that are suggested in this present study.

First, using awareness-raising tasks to help learners develop cultural awareness and competence is important. Pragmatics is heavily context-dependent; teachers cannot simply teach pragmatic rules or strategies and expect students to understand and use them appropriately. The target culture needs to be incorporated into language classes in order for students to fully understand appropriate communication. Although there are several approaches to teaching culture, in this study I find that awareness-raising strategies have a positive effect on students' comprehension and ultimate use of pragmatic strategies such as using apologies.

Next, it is essential to provide learners with authentic audiovisual input to help them have as much experience as possible observing native production of speech acts, since in Foreign Language communities there is a lack of naturally occurring output. Third, teachers must implement different instructional approaches depending on different learning styles and preferences. Given the diversity among language learners, teachers should be flexible in their teaching approaches. Educators have the responsibility to combine the best parts of both explicit and implicit instruction, finding a balance between the two instructional methods and keeping in mind that both explicit and implicit instruction are proven to be beneficial for students.

In this study I confirmed previous findings that students were unable to pick up appropriate apologies on their own even with experience living in a target language environment. However, the gains in both the explicit instruction group and implicit instruction group suggest

that instruction overall was effective in helping students producing appropriate apologies, regardless of the method. Especially for learners at higher proficiency levels, instruction can be an effective method with regard to building pragmatic competence within a short period of time. Therefore, pragmatics deserves more teaching and textual attention in the classroom. Teachers should not assume that students can learn these rules on their own or pick them up naturally.

I also suggest that teachers be flexible in incorporating different teaching methods and resources in their pragmatic instruction. Despite the debate between the advantages and disadvantages of explicit and implicit instruction, teachers should primarily respond to the learning needs of students. If students exhibit a lack of motivation, teachers can try implementing an implicit approach as it requires students to explore on their own. Just as there are three key elements for children to learn—choice, interest, and purpose (Dole, 2000)—language students need similar experiences so they are able to learn and want to learn. Explicit instruction is appropriate when students need clear instruction and direction from the teacher and have less tolerance for ambiguity.

Finally, the primary conclusion of this study is that students benefit from pragmatic instruction.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study**

In spite of the limited scope of this study, some of the findings might be useful for future research in the field of Chinese pragmatics. One limitation of this study was that the data was collected through written tests. Ideally, the data should be gathered through informal oral sources or natural interaction where apologies were likely to be found. However, this present study was designed to provide a convenient and effective way to compare the improvement of pragmatic usage. The data collected through DCT was helpful in assessing participants' pragmatic knowledge, but it did not reveal whether students can actually produce the sentence they wrote in DCT in a face-to-face interaction. In order to give a richer and more realistic picture of the pragmatic usage, it would be useful to conduct a longitudinal study to examine learners' use of apologies before and after time spent in the community through oral production.

Another way to follow-up would be to conduct a longitudinal study to examine the long-term effect of pragmatic instruction as well as look closely at learners' pragmatic development and analysis and modify teaching approaches accordingly. According to Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993), longitudinal studies of pragmatic development show how second language learners acquire pragmatics. Through longitudinal studies researchers will be able to identify issues in pragmatic development.

Third, the same study can be reproduced to explore the extent of instruction and experience abroad on lower-proficiency level students. The needs of lower- and advanced-level students are different so it will be beneficial to find out the result and apply the findings to the proper group.

Finally, most available materials or resources have been taught or written based on the intuition of the native teachers or textbook writers. However, the native intuition is not always

necessarily true and reliable (“Why Should Speech Acts,” 2014). Hence I suggest that more qualitative studies focus on Chinese speech acts in order to set up a creditable native standard and provide a more accurate reference for language educators and students. Researchers have to responsibly shift from an intuitive based resource to an empirical one. Moreover, a comparison between native and non-native speech acts could identify patterns of pragmatics failure or breakdown and add a valuable contribution to the field of Chinese second language education. I also suggest that teachers be flexible in incorporating different teaching methods and resources into pragmatic instruction. Despite the debate between the advantage and disadvantage of explicit and implicit instruction, teachers should primarily respond to the learning needs of students. If students exhibit a lack of motivation, teachers can try implementing an implicit approach as it requires students to explore on their own.



## Conclusion

Much research has been done on the effects of incorporating pragmatics in a foreign language classroom and the pragmatic development for L2 learners. In order to shed light on Chinese pragmatic acquisition with L2 learners of Chinese, the present study investigated how those advanced L2 Chinese learners' pragmatic behavior changed through instruction in the classroom and living in an environment where Chinese was spoken. The findings have contributed to our understanding of the role of instruction and experience abroad on the effect of pragmatics development for advanced-level learners of Chinese.

First, the present study has explored how instruction affects learner's pragmatic competence. Consistent with Kendo's (2008) findings, this study reinforced the evidence that pragmatics can be taught to L2 learners. Through instruction, learners became aware of "pragmatic similarities and differences between their native language and target language" (Kondo, p. 172). The results showed that participants who received instruction made significant improvement with more appropriate and authentic apologies, based on the comparison between immediate post-test and the pre-test. This research contributes to previous studies on the positive effect of pragmatic instruction on second language learning (Alcón Soler, 2002; Cohen, 2008; Kondo, 2008; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Rose, 2005 and Bardovi-Harlig 2001).

Secondly, the study attempted to explore the relationship between the nature of explicit and implicit instruction and their effect on pragmatic acquisition. Specifically I examined the possible effects of these two different types of instruction on developing pragmatic knowledge with L2 advanced learners. The comparison between explicit and implicit instruction showed that both types of instruction contribute to improvement, but no one method is better than the other. Based on these findings, I suggest that one approach is not inherently better or less

effective when teaching pragmatics strategies. I attribute the effectiveness of both types of instruction to the fact that during the treatment, learners were presented with contextually rich input and were required to pay attention to the input. Moreover, they were asked to produce output and to utilize knowledge gained through their self-reflection or instruction. This is consistent with Kondo's (2008) awareness-raising approach. In line with these results, I believe that language educators need to be innovative and flexible. It is important to understand that there is not one way to teach or one way to learn a foreign language.

Third, the result of this study revealed that living in a Chinese speaking community does not necessarily provide an advantage for advanced language learners with pragmatic development. The reason why living in a Chinese speaking community did not make a big difference is consistent with Schmidt's noticing theory (2001). This Noticing Hypothesis posited that it was necessary to notice the occurrence of input in order for input to become intake to allow learning to take place (Schmidt, 1993, p. 27). Drawing on Schmidt's theoretical framework, I agree with Schmidt that learner's noticing was a requirement for language development.

Furthermore, during the instructional period, learners were involved actively (explicit) or passively (implicit) in both the noticing stage and the storing new knowledge stage. This is in line with Schmidt's opinion on learning. As stated by Schmidt, learning requires awareness so that what learners noticed becomes intake for learning. Although through exposure in a Chinese-speaking community, learners were immersed in abundant input, but due to the distance (between input and output) mentioned by Swain (1985), learners were still unable to use the knowledge they acquired in real time.

Above all, language teachers should help students realize that living in a Chinese-speaking community will not necessarily sufficiently improve language proficiency; the key to

determining success is the decision of each learner. There is no guarantee. To be successful, learners need to open their mouths and not be afraid to communicate with natives while in the target community. Additionally, based on our results that instructional methods do not significantly affect the learning result, language teachers are encouraged to implement different instructional approaches to adapt to different learning styles and preferences.

In conclusion, a replication and extension of this study is needed. Although this study has some limitations—data was only collected through written tests, results only focused on advanced learners of Chinese, and only apologies were tested in the study—I hope that the findings can help language teachers know that pragmatics can and needs to be taught. Living in a target community does not guarantee a higher proficiency or understanding of social and cultural contexts for learners. Until more is known about how other levels of learners react to those variables, I suggest pragmatic instruction in the second language classroom at all levels.

Although this study is only focused on the effect of apologies instruction, it is my intention to bring other language teachers' attention to teaching pragmatics competence. Pragmatics competence includes but is not limited to the ability to request, give or accept compliments, refusing, or thanking appropriately.

The importance of understanding the field of pragmatics is not only for linguistic accuracy or to improve language proficiency; it is for creating harmonious interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, pragmatics competence becomes more important as proficiency increases. When learners have lower proficiency, people generally treat the inappropriate use of apologizing strategy as a result of low proficiency. However, for learners who have advanced proficiency, language is usually no longer only for survival purposes; instead, it is often associated with academic or professional purposes. In academic or professional settings, natives are less tolerant

of the incorrect use of pragmatic features, since etiquette and politeness are usually expected. The study shows that pragmatic competence is not an easy feature to master for second language learners. The ability to “tailor language to a variety of audiences by adapting their speech and register ways that are culturally authentic” (ACTFL Guideline, p. 4) is expected of the distinguished level of learner. From the above findings and evidences, I suggest that pragmatic competence should become an emphasis in all levels of the language classroom.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Pre-test

(To be completed by participants agreeing to participate in the study)

Pre-test

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put yourself in the following situations and assume that in each instance the speaker will, in fact, say something. Write down what you think would be said or reacted (**in CHINESE**, if you don't know the character, you can use pinyin), in the space provided. Make sure that you read the whole situation carefully before you respond. To the best of your ability, answer each of the following questions. Leave **no** question unanswered. If you are uncertain, then make as good as a guess you can,

1) You forgot to call your grandmother on her birthday. The next day you go to visit her.

What do you say to your grandmother?

---

2) A friend arranged to meet you in order to get some notes from you to study for an exam.

He/she waited for an hour but you didn't show up. He/she calls you.

Friend: You know, I waited for you for an hour yesterday.

What do you say to your friend?

---

3) You run into your elementary school teacher at the store. You start a conversation and you realize you don't remember her name. You want to ask what her name is.

What do you say to your elementary school teacher?

---

4) You need to get a signature from your boss very quickly, but he is on the phone. You are in a hurry and you need to interrupt.

What do you say to your boss?

---

5) You had a fight with your sibling. You realized it was your fault and you decide to apologize.

What do you say to your sibling?

---

6) You have to get off the bus at the next stop. You're sitting in the window seat and there is a person sitting next to you.

You want to get off, and what do you say to the passenger?

---

7) Someone invites you to go on a date, but you are not interested.

What do you say to the girl/boy?

---

8) A teacher has been very patiently providing help and advice to you, hoping to help you not to cheat anymore. You finally recognize it's your fault, and you decide to apologize and change your ways.

You go to the teacher's office, and what do you say to your teacher?

---

9) You are a waiter/waitress at a Chinese restaurant. It's your first day of work, and your first Chinese customer speaks too fast and you cannot understand what he is ordering. You need him to speak slower.

What do you say to the customer?

---

10) You are running to catch a bus. You unintentionally bump into an older woman causing her to drop some packages.

What do you say to the older woman?

---

**Appendix B: Post-test**

Post- test

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please put yourself in the following situations and assume that in each instance the speaker will, in fact, say something. Write down what you think would be said (**in CHINESE**, if you don't know the characters, you can use pinyin), in the space provided. Make sure that you read the whole situation carefully before you respond. To the best of your ability, answer each of the following questions. Leave **no** question unanswered.

1) You are in a middle of job interview with a Chinese company. However the interviewer speaks very fast and you cannot understand his question. You need him to speak slower.

What do you say to the interviewer?

---

2) You are a secretary. An important customer is calling for your boss but he went to lunch.

What do you say to the important customer?

---

3) A friend arranged to meet you in order to get some notes from you to study for an exam. She waited for an hour but you didn't show up. She calls you with an angry tone.

Friend: You know, I waited for you for an hour yesterday.

What do you say to your friend?

---

4) Your teacher has been very patiently providing help and advice to you, hoping to help you not to cheat anymore. You finally recognize it's your fault, and you decide to apologize and change your ways.

You go to the teacher's office, and what do you say to your teacher?

---

5) You are running to catch a bus. You unintentionally bump into an older woman causing her to fall.

What do you say to the older woman?

---

6) During a meeting, your boss is making an obvious mistake, and you found yourself disagreeing with his opinion. You decide to propose a different proposal but it will contradict his original proposal.

What do you say to your boss?

---

7) You had a fight with your girl/boyfriend. You realized it was your fault and you decide to apologize.

What do you say to your girl/boyfriend?

---

8) Your mother asked you to buy a soy sauce, instead you bought a BBQ sauce and you heard her yelling from the kitchen.

Your mother: This is not what I asked you to buy.

What do you say to your mother?

---

9) You offended your colleague during a meeting. She cried and left the room. Your other colleague asks you to get her back because the meeting cannot continue without her.

What do you say to your colleague?

---

10) You are representing your company to apologize to the public, because your product has been causing customer to become ill. In a press conference,

What do you say to the public?

---



## Appendix C: Background Language Questionnaire

### Background Language Questionnaire

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Did you speak Chinese in your home while you were growing up?**

- A. No
- B. Yes

**Have you lived in a foreign country where Chinese was spoken?**

- A. No
- B. Yes

If so, specify which country(s). \_\_\_\_\_

**Time spent in Chinese-speaking community,** \_\_\_\_\_ years, \_\_\_\_\_ months

In which professional field are you interested in working upon graduation? Circle all that apply

- a. Business
- b. Law
- c. Medicine
- d. Science
- e. Social science
- f. Humanities
- g. Government
- h. Non-profit
- i. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Majors(s) at BYU:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mother Tongue** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you speak any other languages?**

- A. No
- B. Yes, \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Final Survey

Final survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

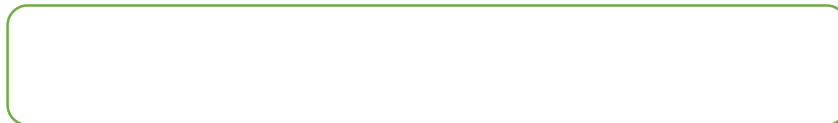
1. Have you received any instruction on Chinese apologies before this class? Yes / No
  
2. How helpful is the instruction for your knowledge gain on Chinese apologies?
  - Not helpful at all
  - Not helpful
  - Somewhat helpful
  - Very helpful
  
3. How important do you think the need is for apology instruction in the classroom?
  - Not important at all
  - Not important
  - Somewhat important
  - Very important
  - Why? \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Do you feel an appropriate use of Chinese apology strategies can be learned without classroom instruction? Yes / No
  
5. What are some of the benefits for you to learn appropriate Chinese apology strategies?
  
  
6. What are some new things you learned about Chinese culture this semester?
  
  
7. Have you lived in a Chinese speaking country?
  - No.
  - Yes, Where? \_\_\_\_\_ ; How Long? \_\_\_\_\_ year(s)  
\_\_\_\_\_ month(s)
  - ➔ Do you feel this overseas exposure helped you gain understanding of Chinese apologies? Yes / No

8. Chinese apologies need to be taught in the classroom.            Agree / Disagree
9. Living in a Chinese-speaking community is the best way to gain Chinese apologizing strategies.

Agree / Disagree

10. What did you learn from this class about Chinese apologies that you didn't know before?
11. Any comments or suggestions?

## Appendix E: Handout



### 道歉

- 为不适当或有危害的言行承认不是；承认使人委屈或对人无礼，同时表示遗憾。
- 例句: 因为迟到而向女主人道歉

### 抱歉

- 当面对别人表示歉意时，“抱歉”可以重叠为“抱歉抱歉”。
- “抱歉”充当谓语时，往往要带上程度副词。如：这是我的错，我非常抱歉。
- “抱歉”表示心中不安，觉得对不起；“道歉”表示向别人承认错误。如：昨天我喝酒喝多了，说了一些不礼貌的话，对此，我深感抱歉。/昨天我喝酒喝多了，说了一些不礼貌的话，现在我向你道歉。
- **基本解释:**
  - 心有愧疚不安,对不起别人
  - 请求原谅,对不起
- 很抱歉,我是不同意的
- **详细解释:** 心中不安，觉得对不起人。

### 对不起

- 日常会语中使用频率较高
- 用来向对方表示歉意的习用性礼貌语。
- 用于事后的道歉。当说话人感觉到自己的言语行为或动作行为可能会给对方带来伤害或有所妨碍，从而可能引起对方的不悦或不满时常用“对不起”来表示自己的不安和歉意。

### 不好意思

- 可用于程度较轻的道歉，但程度较重的道歉仍要用“对不起”和“抱歉”；也可用于自谦；
- 例句:沾你的光了，真不好意思，让你破费。
- 例句:实在不好意思，给您添麻烦了。
- 难以为情

- 目前，在 20 世纪 70 年代以后出生的人群中，表示歉意时，“不好意思”使用的频率较高。但是，必须指出的是，在正式的社交场合表达郑重的道歉，最好还是用“抱歉”“对不起”等。

組員名字:

在什么样的情况下, 你会用...

## 1. 道歉

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## 2. 抱歉

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## 3. 对不起

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## 4. 不好意思

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