Interlanguage Pragmatic Development
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Interlanguage Pragmatic Development
The Study Abroad Context

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In loving memory of my grandmothers
Waltraud and Wally

For my parents
Doris and Gisbert Schauer
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**Abbreviations**

AH learner  At home learner  
AHRB  Arts and Humanities Research Board  
ANOVA  Analysis of Variance  
CC  Conversational contract  
CCSARP  Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project  
CELE  Centre for English Language Education  
COPT  Cartoon Oral Production Task  
DCT  Discourse Completion Task  
EFL  English as a Foreign Language  
EFL learner  Learner in a country where English is a foreign language (e.g. China, France, Germany)  
ESL  English as a Second Language  
ESL learner  Learner in a country where English is an official language (e.g. Australia, Great Britain, United States of America)  
FFL  French as a Foreign Language  
FTA  Face threatening act  
IFA  Institut für Fremdsprachen und Auslandskunde bei der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg  
ILP  Interlanguage pragmatics  
JSL  Japanese as Second Language  
L1  First language  
L2  Second/foreign Language  
MCQ  Multiple choice questionnaire  
MET  Multimedia Elicitation Task  
NNS  Non-native speaker  
NS  Native speaker  
SA learner  Study Abroad learner  
SLA  Second Language Acquisition  
SSL  Spanish as a Second Language  
SSL learner  Learner in a country where Spanish is an official language
Although it may be surprising, the notion that a sustained sojourn in a foreign country may have a positive impact on foreign language learners’ communicative and cross-cultural competence is far from a recent one. Records show that when the German University of Greifswald was founded in 1456, nine Swedish and ten Danish native speakers were among the students that commenced their studies in this year (Fietz, 2004). While these early study abroad sojourns may also have been a result of the limited availability of higher educational institutions in the sojourners’ home countries, student numbers from Denmark at Greifswald did not decrease even after the University of Copenhagen was inaugurated in 1479 (Pinborg, 1981, in Fietz, 2004). This suggests that students perceived a longitudinal stay in the foreign language context to have more advantages than solely the transmission of academic knowledge.

The first organization that had the explicit aim of arranging language learners’ sojourns in a foreign country for the express purpose of improving their abilities and skills in their foreign language was founded several hundred years later in 1903. The Société d’échange international des enfants et de jeunes gens pour l’études des langues étrangères (society for the international exchange of children and teenagers for foreign language studies) can be regarded as a predecessor of the European Union’s Erasmus/Socrates Programmes and arranged the impressive number of 280 student exchanges in 1911 (Grote & Roloff, 1913).

After the first and second world war, the Deutsch-Französische Jugendwerk (Franco-German Youth Office) was established in 1963 to help revive and promote exchanges between German and French youths. In the following years, European governments began to recognize the potential advantages of exchanges and study abroad programmes for sojourners’ language skills, personal development and cross-cultural awareness. This development lead to the introduction of the European Erasmus³ programme, which has enabled 1.9 million students from 31 countries to study at a foreign university since it was founded in 1987 (European Commission Education and Training website). On the other side of the Atlantic, the Open Door Report from the US American Institute of International Education, a document which provides comprehensive data on the number of US American students studying abroad,
noted that study abroad sojourns had increased by 150 per cent since 1995/96 resulting in 223,534 students taking part in 2006/7. In addition to study abroad sojourns organized and supported by national or international organizations, British, American and Australian universities in particular have also seen a significant increase in the numbers of foreign students enrolling on their programmes in the last 20 years (Shattock, 2008).

From a second language acquisition (SLA) point of view, the impact of a sustained sojourn in the target country on foreign language learners’ communicative competence is of considerable interest, as study abroad participants receive a large amount of second language (L2) input and have to use their L2 in a wide variety of contexts and with a wide variety of interlocutors on a daily basis. Although some studies were conducted into the effect of study abroad on language learners before the mid-1990s (e.g. Lussier, Turner & Deshairs, 1993; Sawyer, 1992) interest in this field only began to increase significantly after the publication of Freed’s seminal collection of papers and the foundation of ‘Frontiers – The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad’ in 1995. However, even though the study abroad context has attracted the interest of many researchers in recent years (for an in-depth review of studies according to applied linguistic disciplines, see Churchill and DuFon 2006), relatively few investigations have examined the impact of longitudinal residence in the L2 environment on the development of language learners’ pragmatic competence (exceptions being, for example, Barron 2003, 2007; Bouton, 1994; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004; Matsumura 2003; Taguchi, 2008). This is not surprising, since developmental issues have long received comparatively little attention in studies examining language learners’ pragmatic skills in their L2 (Bardovi-Harlig 1999a; Kasper & Rose 2002).

The present study is situated in the field of interlanguage pragmatics – the acquisition, comprehension and production of contextually appropriate language by foreign or second language learners – and hopes to shed some light on how the pragmatic competence of German learners of English in the study abroad context develops over the period of one academic year. More specifically, the aim of this study is to investigate how the receptive and productive pragmatic competence of study abroad learners (hereafter SA learners) develops in the British L2 environment, and to investigate to which extent learners’ development concerning their awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities is interconnected. To obtain insights into the effect of the L2 context, the SA learners’ data were compared with those of British native speakers (henceforth NSs) and German learners of English in their home country Germany (hereafter AH learners). The study addresses the following research questions:

1. Does the study abroad context influence language learners’ awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities?
2. Does language learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness develop at the same time?
3. Do language learners and native speakers perceive one type of infelicity (grammatical/pragmatic) to be more serious than another?
4. Are study abroad learners aware of their own pragmatic development in the study abroad context?
5. Does the study abroad context affect language learners’ use of request strategies?
6. Does the study abroad context affect language learners’ use of internal request modifiers?
7. Does the study abroad context affect language learners’ use of external request modifiers?

The participants’ ability to identify contextually inappropriate and incorrect language use was examined with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) video-and-questionnaire instrument as well as semi-structured interviews that provided information on the participants’ decision making rationales. Data for the investigation of the participants’ productive pragmatic skills were collected with the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET), a data collection instrument that I specifically developed for the purpose of this study and which focuses on request utterances. Requests have been widely examined in second language acquisition research and interlanguage pragmatics (hereafter ILP) in the past, since they are ‘face-threatening, and therefore call for considerable linguistic expertise on the part of the learner [and] differ cross-linguistically’ (Ellis, 1994, p. 168). In addition, requests are one of the most frequently performed speech acts in everyday life and as a result can be observed by L2 learners in the study abroad environment in a variety of contexts. This makes them particularly interesting for a developmental investigation as they are utterances that learners cannot avoid making in the target language, in contrast to, for example, compliments, and which learners are also exposed to on a regular basis.

In the following, I will first provide an overview of theories, concepts, principles and studies that are of particular relevance for the present study in Chapter 2. Subsequent to this, I will discuss issues related to data collection methods in ILP research in Chapter 3. I will then introduce the participants of the investigation and explain the data collection methods and data coding frameworks in Chapter 4. The answers to research questions 1 to 4 on learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness will be presented and discussed in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, I will analyse and discuss the findings of the investigation concerning participants’ request strategy use that correspond to research question 5. The results regarding participants’ request modifier use that correspond to questions 6 and 7 will be discussed and evaluated in Chapters 7 (internal modification) and 8 (external modification). The findings of the
study will be summarized in the conclusion in Chapter 9, in which I will also
discuss theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications arising from
the investigation.

Notes

1 When the University of Greifswald was founded, the Federal Republic of Ger-
many did not exist. Instead, the area that is known as Germany today was
governed by kings, dukes and archbishops belonging to the Holy Roman Empire.
The language spoken in this area was German. At universities, however, Latin
was used, which enabled students to study at higher educational institutions
located in foreign environments.

2 Apart from the University of Greifswald, other European universities founded in
the late middle ages, such as Bologna, Paris and Oxford, also welcomed students
from other parts of Europe (Budke, 2003).

3 The Erasmus programme became part of the Socrates programme in 1995. In
2007, following a reorganization of the European Union’s programmes, Erasmus
became part of the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programme (British Council web-
site, European Commission Education and Training website). At the time of
writing, 90 per cent of European universities are members of the Erasmus pro-
gramme (European Union Publication on Erasmus success stories).

4 The acronym L2 will be used for both second and foreign language.

5 I decided to use the terms ‘study abroad learners’ in this study, as the terms
‘learners of English as a second language’ (ESL learners) and ‘learners of Eng-
lish as a foreign language’ (EFL learners) are somewhat fuzzy in the context of
the present investigation. This is because the study abroad group had all learned
English in the foreign language context Germany prior to the beginning of this
investigation. As a consequence, using the term ESL learners could potentially
be somewhat misleading. In addition, the German learners in England needed
to be distinguished from one of the control groups, the German learners of Eng-
lish in Germany, which meant that the term EFL learners would also have been
ambiguous. For this reason, the term ‘study abroad learners’ is used to refer to
the German participants attending a British university, while the German learn-
ers of English in Germany will be referred to as ‘at home learners’. (Confer
Coleman [2005] for a detailed explanation of terms used in study abroad
research.)

6 The acronym ‘AH’ stands for ‘at home’.
2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will review theories, concepts and studies that are relevant for the present investigation. I will begin by providing a theoretical background of pragmatics with a special focus on issues of importance for interlanguage pragmatics in Section 2.1. This will then be followed by a discussion of studies examining L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness in Section 2.2. In Section 2.3, I will address classification systems that have been used when analysing requests in interlanguage pragmatics and will also review several studies involving German and non-German learners of English that have examined language learners’ production of requests. This will be followed by a review of studies investigating the development of L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness in Section 2.4. Finally, I will provide an overview of ILP developmental studies that explore L2 learners’ production of requests and other pragmatic features.

2.1 Theoretical Background: Pragmatics

2.1.1 Defining pragmatics

Pragmatics is a relatively young linguistic discipline – compared to, for example, phonetics and syntax – which began to establish itself as an independent area of linguistic research only about 40 years ago. Linguistic pragmatics has its foundation in language philosophy and developed as a result of ideas concerning the functions and use of language by philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953: in Bach, 2004), Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975, 1976) and Grice (1968, 1975). The term pragmatics itself goes back to another philosopher, Peirce (1905), and his work on pragmatism. The first definition of pragmatics that is generally quoted was developed by Morris (1938), who defined pragmatics as ‘the study of the relation of signs to interpreters’ (p. 6). It has to be noted, however, that his definition was based on a semiotic view
of pragmatics and that subsequent definitions of linguistic pragmatics tend to use different terms and are often more detailed. I have included below three definitions that are now commonly used to describe pragmatics from a perspective that is also relevant for the present investigation:

Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (Crystal, 1985, p. 240)

Die linguistische Pragmatik (von griech. Prãgma, Handlung), ist die Lehre von den Kommunikationsprinzipien, nach denen sich Menschen richten, wenn sie in sozialen Zusammenhängen rational und effizient miteinander interagieren. Diesen Prinzipien folgen Sprecher/Schreiber, um Bedeutungen zu implizieren, die über die Satzbedeutung hinausgehen, und Hörer/Leser, um die im Kontext plausiblen Äusserungsbedeutungen aus der Menge der möglichen zu erschliessen. Beschrieben werden die sprachlichen Formen, Handlungsmuster, Implikations- und Interpretationsstrategien, die ein einvernehmliches Aushandeln der nicht gesagten, wohl aber gemeinten und verstandenen Bedeutungen ermöglichen. (Bublitz, 2001, p. 27)

Linguistic pragmatics (from Greek pragma, activity/deed) is the study of communication principles to which people adhere when they interact rationally and efficiently in social contexts. Speakers/writers follow these principles to imply additional meaning to a sentence, and hearer/readers follow these principles to infer the possible meaning of an utterance out of all available options in a given context. Pragmatics describes the linguistic forms, action patterns and strategies that are used to imply and interpret, which enable interlocutors to comprehend the intended, but not uttered meaning. (Bublitz, 2001, p. 27)

Pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society. (Mey, 2001, p. 6)

I have selected these definitions because together they provide a sound initial starting point for the present study. Crystal (1985) emphasizes that actual language use is important in pragmatics research and that pragmicians are interested in both the coding and decoding of utterances by speakers and hearers. Bublitz’s (2001) definition is very similar, but also includes the underlying notion that there are principles speakers adhere to when communicating effectively and rationally. Finally, Mey’s (2001) definition explicitly mentions the significant role society plays in pragmatics.

Many of the ideas behind these definitions are based on speech act theory (e.g. Austin 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975, 1976), the cooperative principle (e.g. Grice, 1975), conversational implicature (e.g. Grice, 1989) and politeness theory (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1978, 1987; Lakoff, 1973, 1977; Leech, 1983),
A Review of the Literature

the cornerstones of pragmatics theory, which I will describe in the following Sections 2.1.2–2.1.4. Following on from that, I will address the significance of culture for pragmatics research in Section 2.1.5, which will lead on to a discussion of interlanguage pragmatics, the subfield of pragmatics that the present study is situated in, in Section 2.1.6, and finally to a review of acquisitional theories in L2 pragmatics in Section 2.1.7.

2.1.2 Speech act theory

The foundations of speech act theory were laid by philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle. Although Wittgenstein (1953, cited in Bach, 2004) made an important contribution to the field of pragmatics by stating that language was a social activity and that ‘the meaning of a word is its use in the language’ (p. 463), it is Austin who is generally regarded as the father of pragmatics (Mott, 2003) and speech act theory (Mey, 2001). Austin’s (1962) theory was based on his belief that speakers do not merely use language to say things, but to do things and that thus utterances could be regarded as speech acts. Based on this notion he developed a system which distinguished three components of speech acts:

1. the locutionary act (the actual words that the speaker uses)
2. the illocutionary act (the intention or force behind the words)
3. the perlocutionary act (the effect the utterance has on the hearer).

For example, in the sentence ‘It’s cold in here!’ the locutionary act is simply the statement that the temperature in the room is rather low. The illocutionary act refers to what the speaker intended to achieve by making the utterance, in this case that the hearer closes the window or turns up the radiator. The perlocutionary effect of the utterance could then be observed if the hearer interprets the sentence as a request and remedies the situation the speaker commented on. Of the three speech act constituents, it is the illocutionary act which has received the most attention in pragmatics research. Closely associated with the notion of illocutionary acts is the concept of illocutionary force, ‘which is the communicative plan or design behind [a] speaker’s remark’ (Leech, 1983, p. 200).

Searle (1969, 1975, 1976), one of Austin’s students, developed speech act theory further after Austin’s untimely death in 1960 and pointed out that the illocutionary force of an utterance and the perlocutionary effect an utterance has on the hearer depends on the words and expressions that the speakers choose in their utterance. He noted that ‘the illocutionary point of requests is the same as that of commands: both are attempts to get hearers to do something. But the illocutionary forces are clearly different’ (1976, p. 3).
With regard to the illocutionary force of an utterance, Searle (1975, 1976) argued that polite sentences were frequently formulated without the explicit use of an illocutionary-force indicating device, such as the verb *request* in the sentence ‘I request you to pass me the salt’. Instead, speakers often employed other less direct ways to ask their interlocutor to perform the desired action, such as ‘Can you pass me the salt?’, which he proposed were more characteristic of actual language use than the direct alternatives, and which he termed *indirect speech acts*. This distinction between direct and indirect speech acts was also employed by Labov and Fanshel (1977) in their taxonomy of speech acts. They emphasized that indirect requests inquiring about the speakers’ ability to perform the desired action such as the above mentioned ‘Can you pass me the salt?’ were more conventional than direct ones. The aspect of conventionality in request utterances was subsequently further developed by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) and forms the basis of the request strategy type categorization scheme used in the present study.

A review of speech act theory would not be complete without a mention of the classification systems of speech act types. Although Austin had developed such a system, it is Searle’s that is most widely used (Barron, 2003). Searle (1976, p. 10) distinguishes five speech act classes:

- representatives (speakers commit themselves to something being true, for example, to boast or to deduce)
- directives (attempts by speakers to get hearers to do something, for example, to request or to beg)
- commissives (speakers commit themselves to some future course of action, for example, to promise or to threaten)
- expressives (speakers express their psychological state, for example, to thank or to apologize)
- declarations (speakers bring about correspondence between propositional content and the reality, for example, to christen or to appoint).

Even though both Austin’s and Searle’s classifications of speech act have been criticized for not being based on clear principles (Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Wierzbicka, 1991), their impact on the discipline should not be underestimated, as much research in the field has been conducted based on distinctions concerning the different aims of utterances (e.g. requests, expressions of gratitude, apologies, complaints).

### 2.1.3 The cooperative principle and conversational implicature

Also instrumental in the development of pragmatics as a discipline was the philosopher Grice, whose theories, together with those of Austin’s and
Searle’s, inspired much of the research conducted in pragmatics (Davies, 2007). Grice argues that generally conversations between two or more interlocutors are not just a number of disconnected utterances that are made without any reference to each other, but are instead ‘cooperative efforts’ for a specific purpose, such as the exchange of information. This assumption underlies his cooperative principle: ‘make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged’ (1975, p. 45). Grice then distinguished four subcategories or maxims of the cooperative principle:

- maxim of quantity (‘say as much as is required’)
- maxim of quality (‘try to make your contribution one that is true’)
- maxim of relation (‘be relevant’)
- maxim of manner (‘be brief and avoid ambiguity’).

In everyday conversation, however, the maxims of the cooperative principle are often flaunted, which is where Grice’s concept of conversational implicature comes in. If a speaker says something which does not seem to have any relation to their interlocutor’s preceding utterance, one or more maxims are flaunted. However, since the cooperative principle works at a somewhat deeper level, hearers will attempt to infer meaning from their interlocutor’s utterance. Levinson (1983, p. 102) gives the following example:

A: Where’s Bill?
B: There’s a yellow VW outside Sue’s house.

Interlocutor B’s utterance appears to be unrelated to the question asked by interlocutor A and at a literal level flaunts the maxims of relation and quantity. Yet according to Grice’s concept of conversational implicature, interlocutor A will still attach meaning to B’s utterance based on their shared contextual knowledge, that is, that Bill owns a yellow VW. The concept of conversational implicature can thus also be used to explain why interlocutors are able to decode conventionally indirect utterances such as ‘Can you pass me the salt?’ as a request to actually indirect pass the salt to the requester and not as a question about their physical ability to pass the salt.

Grice’s work which suggested that the meaning of an utterance is not always transparent without the appropriate contextual knowledge and that conversation is based on the cooperation of the interlocutors has made an important contribution to pragmatics (Leech, 1983). Although aspects of his work have been criticized, Levinson (1983) stated that ‘the notion of conversational implicature is one of the single most important ideas in pragmatics’ (p. 97).
2.1.4 Politeness theory

This section focuses on politeness theories that are of particular relevance for interlanguage pragmatics in a Western European/Anglo-American context and the present investigation. For a general overview of key issues in linguistic politeness see Eelen (2001), Fraser (1990) and Watts (2003). For politeness theories in Asian contexts see, for example, Chen (1993), Gu (1990), Ide (1982), Mao (1994) Pizziconi (2003) and Fukada and Asato (2004).

Like speech act theory, the cooperative principle and the concept of conversational implicature, politeness theory is generally regarded to be one of the cornerstones of pragmatics research. The question of what constitutes a polite utterance has been a focal point of pragmatic investigations since the late 1970s (Kasper, 1990). One of the first scholars who concentrated on linguistic politeness in a pragmatic sense was Lakoff (1973, 1977), who ‘could well be called the mother of modern politeness theory’ (Eelen, 2001, p. 2). She argued that ‘the pillars of our linguistic as well as non-linguistic interactions with each other’ are to ‘(1) make yourself clear and (2) be polite’ (1977, p. 86).

With regard to the first pillar, ‘make yourself clear’, her argument is influenced by Grice’s work and his maxims of the cooperative principle. Concerning the second pillar, ‘be polite’, she proposes three rules of politeness:

1. Formality: Don’t impose/remain aloof.
2. Hesitancy: Allow the addressee his options.
3. Equality or camaraderie: Act as though you and addressee were equal/make him feel good. (Lakoff, 1977, p. 88)

Other than Grice’s maxims of the cooperative principle, Lakoff’s rules of politeness are to some degree mutually exclusive. Thus, while the rule of formality involves addressing hearers by their last name and the V-form of you (in languages that make this V/t-form distinction), the rule of equality/camaraderie postulates using the interlocutors’ first name and the t-form of you.

Lakoff stresses that the appropriate rules of politeness have to be selected by the speaker depending on the contextual conditions of the conversation. Knowledge of contextual conditions was also a major factor in Grice’s cooperative principle and conversational implicature. However, while he concentrated more on contextual components such as shared background knowledge, Lakoff focuses on issues such as status differences between interlocutors, degree of familiarity between speaker and hearer, and the culture in which the utterance is made. She argues that these three factors3 are crucial in determining what constitutes a polite utterance or not. For example, in many western societies it would be regarded as impolite, if a lower status speaker addressed a higher status hearer by their first name when they had not previously been invited to do so by the higher status hearer.
The importance of factors such as status differences between the interlocutors and the relative power of the speaker and the hearer were also stressed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) in their investigation of linguistic politeness. In addition to the two aforementioned factors they included a further element in their study which then formed the third factor of their investigation of linguistic politeness, namely the degree of imposition involved in the utterance directed at the hearer. The interlocutors’ status and the degree of the imposition involved in the individual request will provide the basis for the four contextual conditions that will be explored in the chapters on the participants’ productive competence.

Brown and Levinson also introduced the distinction of interlocutors' positive and negative face in politeness research. The term face was based on Goffman’s (1967) notion of face as the ‘positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact’ (p. 5). Thus, face is ‘something that resides not within an individual, but rather within the flow of events in an encounter’ (Holtgrave, 2001, p. 39) and ‘something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 61). According to Brown and Levinson a person’s negative face then referred to a person’s ‘freedom of action and freedom from imposition’ and their positive face referred to a person’s desire that their desires are appreciated and approved by at least some other people (1987, p. 61).

Brown and Levinson suggested that it was to the mutual interest of interlocutors to maintain their respective faces and not to use language that would lead to the loss of face of either of the parties. They also considered some speech acts, such as requests, to be intrinsically impolite and therefore face-threatening, which lead them to label them face-threatening-acts (FTAs). Acts that fall into this category, such as complaints and refusals, have been one of the key research areas in interlanguage pragmatics. Brown and Levinson's concept of face is not regarded as uncontroversial in pragmatics research. Nevertheless, their ideas have inspired much research on politeness and pragmatics and helped to establish terminology, such as face, face-threat and face-loss, which has been useful for pragmatics as a discipline.

Another important contributor to politeness theory was Leech (1983) who developed his Politeness Principle as a component of his interpersonal rhetoric framework. The Politeness Principle contains six maxims (1983, p. 132):

1. Tact (Minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other)
2. Generosity (Minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self)
3. Approbation (Minimize dispraise of others; maximize praise of other)
4. Modesty (Minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self)
5. Agreement (Minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other)
6. Sympathy (Minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other).

Although Leech’s politeness principle has been also been criticized (see, for example, Bublitz, 2001 or Mey, 2001), his tact, approbation and sympathy maxims are helpful in explaining why speakers employ certain strategies and modifiers to formulate their request utterances. Also of particular relevance for the present investigation of learners’ productive pragmatic development in requests is Leech’s observation that indirect requests are regarded as more polite than direct requests in English, because they appear more tentative. He explained that the reason for this was that their illocutionary force is diminished and they provide the hearer with a higher degree of optionality.

Fraser’s (1990) view of politeness approaches the issue from a somewhat different angle. His conversational contract (cc) view of politeness is based on the belief that interlocutors are conscious of their rights and obligations which affects their communication with each other. With regard to the present investigation, this would mean that students are aware that professors have a higher status than they do in the institutional context, which in turn would normally result in students using a higher amount of deferential strategies towards their professors than vice versa. Although not specifically related to the academic context in Fraser’s article, he illustrates deferential behaviour as follows:

The sentence ‘Would you mind helping me today’, used to indirectly convey a request, is certainly more deferential than ‘Help me today’. The former conveys to hearers, if only symbolically, that they have a choice in deciding whether or not to comply, hence that they are more highly ‘appreciated’ in the estimation of the speaker. (Fraser, 1990, p. 233)

Importantly, he also argues that polite behaviour is the expected norm in conversation and that thus rational participants in a conversation are expected to adhere to the norms of the conversational contract (i.e. should behave according to their rights and obligations as an interlocutor based on the contextual conditions). This notion is significant for this study, as it points towards the potential problems students in the study abroad contexts may encounter. As SA learners generally are perceived as rational adults, the expectation that they would be able to act accordingly when communicating is not unjustified. However, what may not be taken into consideration by all interlocutors they may be encountering in the study abroad context is that they may not be fully aware that a) the pragmatic norms of their L2 can differ from their first language (L1) and/or that b) their pragmatic competence in the L2 is not yet fully developed. In the following section I will discuss the significance of culture for pragmatics research focusing on the study abroad context and will then address issues related to interlanguage pragmatics in Section 2.1.6 and 2.1.7.
2.1.5 Culture

Interlocutors’ familiarity with the pragmatic norms and rules of a particular language and culture is highly important for successful communication. This does not mean that speakers using a particular language automatically have to or may want to adhere to these norms at all times, but even if speakers wish to react in an impolite or inappropriate manner towards their interlocutors, they would still need to be aware of what actually constitutes appropriate behaviour in order to violate it. What is considered appropriate/polite or not by speakers of a particular language is closely related to their cultural norms. The following quotation by Gudykunst and Kim illustrates the relationship between culture and language well:

Gudykunst and Kim (2003) emphasize that culture always affects the way interlocutors communicate because competent speakers know what is acceptable and appropriate in a given context or not. They know this, because they have been socialized into a particular culture and have been made aware of the rules and expectations from an early age. In England for example, small children are frequently told to ‘mind their p’s and q’s’ (i.e. to remember to say please and thank you), while in Germany parents tend to prompt their children ‘Wie sagt man?’ (‘What do you say?’) in order for them to say ‘thank you’. However, because the process of L1 socialization starts at a very early age and is continuous, involving a large number of diverse rules (e.g. whispering in certain contexts, such as in church or at the theatre; addressing certain interlocutors by ‘Sir’, ‘Miss’ or ‘Dr’; apologizing for doing something wrong, such as stepping on someone’s foot), members of a particular culture tend not to think of these rules as being culture specific but often assume that these rules will be universally applicable.

A second definition by Kachru makes the link between pragmatics and culture even clearer:

By culture, I mean ‘the pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by
virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs’ (Thompson, 1990, p. 132). Culture is not static; it evolves as people conduct their daily lives. Nevertheless, culture also denotes a body of shared knowledge, that is, what people ‘must know in order to act as they do, make the things they make, and interpret their experience in the distinctive way they do’ (Quinn & Holland, 1987, p. 4). ‘Act’ in this sense includes verbal acts – whether in the spoken or in the written mode. The shared knowledge in verbal behavior refers to the familiar conventions followed in using language, which makes it easier for us to ‘interpret’ (5) or ‘make sense’ or one another’s utterances and actions. (Kachru, 1999, p. 77)

According to Kachru (1999), speakers and hearers of a particular language need to have access to some kind of shared knowledge to correctly encode and decode the meaning of spoken or written acts. Thus, if someone does not have access to this knowledge and is therefore unfamiliar with the norms of that particular language, it may be difficult for that person to express what they intend to communicate in a manner that enables their interlocutors to understand it in the way that it was intended. Wierzbicka (2003) provides a good example for an utterance that may be difficult to decode correctly for native speakers of English:

At a meeting of a Polish organization in Australia a distinguished Australian guest is introduced. Let us call her Mrs Vanessa Smith. One of the Polish hosts greets the visitor cordially and offers her a seat of honour with these words:

Mrs Vanessa! Please! Sit! Sit!

The word Mrs is used here as a substitute for the Polish word pani, which (unlike Mrs) can very well be combined with first names. What is more interesting about the phrasing of the offer is the use of the short imperative Sit!, which makes the utterance sound like a command, and in fact like a command addressed to a dog. (Wierzbicka, 2003, p. 27)

According to Wierzbicka (2003), Polish native speakers frequently use imperatives in contexts in which English native speakers would use more indirect forms. The example above shows that speakers presupposing that rules from their L1 also apply to their L2 may produce utterances that violate the norms of their second/foreign language. Likewise interlocutors, such as Mrs Smith, and other non-native speakers of Polish witnessing this incident, may not be familiar with Polish pragmatic norms and therefore interpret the utterance in a way that was not intended. (The use of one’s L1 pragmatic norms in one’s L2 is called pragmatic transfer and will be discussed in the Section 2.1.6 below.) This provides a glimpse of potential difficulties native speakers and non-native
speakers may encounter when communicating with each other. Language learners’ ability to produce and comprehend language appropriately is the focus of interlanguage pragmatics, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.1.6 Interlanguage pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is, as the name suggests, a subfield of both interlanguage studies, which belong to the domain of second language acquisition research, and pragmatics. ILP is a relatively young area in linguistics that originated from pragmatics theory and developments in L2 pedagogy and research in the 1970s. It uses pragmatic theories, principles and frameworks to examine how foreign/second language learners encode and decode meaning in their L2. ILP research is also heavily influenced by Hymes’s (1971, 1972) concept of communicative competence which triggered a development away from a more grammar-centred L2 pedagogy. Hymes argues that a speakers’ communicative competence consists of four types of linguistic knowledge which involve their ability to assess whether and to what extent an utterance is (1) formally possible, (2) feasible, (3) appropriate and (4) done and actually performed. His model of communicative competence as well as subsequent ones by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990) contributed to a shift in L2 pedagogy towards communicative language learning and teaching, which in turn resulted in an increased interest in pragmatic studies focusing on language learners in the mid 1980s.

The following definition by Kasper and Rose (2002) illustrates the interdisciplinarity or ‘hybrid’ nature (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 3) of interlanguage pragmatics as belonging both to pragmatics and SLA well:

As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how nonnative speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language. (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 5)

Kasper and Rose’s (2002) definition highlights two important aspects of interlanguage pragmatics research. First, it emphasizes that both production and comprehension are part of language learners’ pragmatic competence in their L2. Thus, second/foreign language learners do not only have to be able to produce utterances that are regarded as contextually appropriate by their target audience, they also have to be aware of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour in a variety of social situations in their L2. This shows the link between culture and pragmatic competence in a second/foreign language.
As learners of a particular L2 are always also native speakers of another language, they may think that certain norms, strategies and phrases that are used in their native language to achieve a certain purpose can also be employed in a translated form in their L2 to achieve the same purpose. Coulmas (1981) described this behaviour as transfer. According to Kasper (1992, 1998a) two types of transfer should be distinguished: positive transfer (where the pragmatic norms/forms/strategies of the L1 and L2 match and L1 knowledge can therefore be transferred to the L2) and negative transfer (where the pragmatic norms/forms/strategies of the L1 and L2 do not match and can therefore not be transferred to the L2). Since the notion of transfer is also central to the term interlanguage, it is not surprising that the concept of negative transfer in particular is frequently focused on interlanguage pragmatics research. I will also refer to it in my analysis and discussion when highlighting instances of possible L1 transfer.

The second part of Kasper and Rose’s definition of interlanguage pragmatics stresses that interlanguage pragmatics is also concerned with the development of pragmatic competence, which is the focus of the present study. In the next section, I will review theories that have been used to explain ILP development.

2.1.7 Acquisitional theories in L2 pragmatics

Although interlanguage pragmatics is a hybrid discipline situated at the intersection of pragmatics and second language acquisition research, ILP studies in the 1980s and most of the 1990s focused almost exclusively on comparing native speakers’ and language learners’ production and comprehension of speech acts. In fact, the number of developmental studies published in the first 20 years of ILP research was so small that Bardovi-Harlig concluded in 1999 that ‘not only was interlanguage pragmatics not fundamentally aquisitional, but it was, fundamentally not aquisitional’ (1999a, p. 679).

Due to the relative scarcity of developmental research in ILP in the early years of the discipline, it is not surprising that the two influential cognitive psychological models that addressed acquisition in interlanguage pragmatics were only published in the 1990s.

The first model is Schmidt’s (1990, 1993) noticing hypothesis. He argues that pragmatic strategies, such as how to end telephone conversations in a second language, for example, first have to be noticed by the learner before they can be processed, understood and finally appropriately implemented. Noticing in this context is defined as the ‘conscious registration of the occurrence of some event’, while understanding refers to ‘the recognition of some general principle, rule or pattern’ (Schmidt, 1995, p. 29). Schmidt also emphasizes the importance of motivation, acculturation and other affective factors on learners’ pragmatic development. He suggests that learners who are interested in
getting to know speakers of the target language and in establishing relationships with them may focus more on pragmatic norms conveyed through the L2 input than learners who are not motivated by affective factors.

The second cognitive psychological model that is frequently referred to in interlanguage pragmatics was developed by Bialystok (1991, 1993) and is closely related to children’s acquisition of pragmatic norms in their L1. Her model for linguistic processing divides the elements that are necessary for the analysis of linguistic systems into three levels of representation: conceptual, formal and symbolic. Conceptual representation is the first access stage to a new language. Although learners can convey their intentions at this level, they focus on ‘the intended meaning and not on the forms being selected to express that intention’ (Bialystok 1993: 51). Thus, learners do not have the ability to recognize that a specific form is functioning as a request. They are only able to make this connection in the next stage, formal representation. Symbolic representation then entails the learner’s ability to identify the formal-functional mapping of linguistic features in a request as well as the illocutionary function of these features.

Both models have been used in previous studies to explain how and why L2 learners acquire pragmatic norms/structures and forms. As Schmidt’s model places a somewhat higher emphasis on affective factors and acculturation, two factors that may help to explain the development of the learners in the present study, I will mainly refer to his model in this investigation.

2.2 Interlanguage Pragmatics: Pragmatic Awareness

In the literature, the terms pragmatic comprehension (e.g. Kasper, 1984; Taguchi, 2008; van Dijk, 1977), pragmatic awareness (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Garcia, 2004) and receptive pragmatic competence (e.g. Rinnert, Nogami & Iwai, 2006) have been used to refer to a hearer’s ability to correctly infer an interlocutor’s intended meaning. In one of the first papers on this issue, Van Dijk (1977) argues that to comprehend an illocutionary act correctly, interlocutors need to analyse the context in which the utterance is made. Kasper (1984, pp. 4–5, author’s italics) summarizes the five phases of the contextual analysis van Dijk proposes as follows:

- The identification of the general social context (formal/informal, public/private)
- The identification of the specific social context (e.g. opening a formal meeting, introducing somebody at a party)
- The identification of the relevant factors in the given context, for example, participants’ social status, their positional and situational roles, and their role relationship
The list shows that inferring the intended meaning of an utterance is a complex process. To be able to correctly interpret what is being said, hearers need to have a good understanding of the cultural and pragmatic norms of the specific language and context. For example, in an English university context a professor is regarded to be of higher status than an undergraduate student and the use of imperatives is not considered to be appropriate towards higher-status interlocutors in non-emergency contexts. Consequently, it would generally be considered inappropriate¹² if undergraduate students were to use an imperative to ask their professor for a favour in an office hour.

For L2 language learners, inferring the intended meaning of a particular utterance is particularly demanding, as they are still in the process of acquiring the pragmatic norms of their L2 and relevant cultural background knowledge, while also having to reconcile all of this with their existing L1 pragmatic norms and own cultural background. Thus, the more indirect and L2 culture specific a particular L2 utterance is and the less it overlaps with the pragmatic norms of the learners’ L1 and a similar L1 utterance, the more difficult it will be for L2 learners to infer the intended meaning correctly.

Thomas (1983) argues that as a result of pragmatic failure which she defines as ‘the inability to understand “what is meant by what is said”‘ (p. 91) communication may break down between interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds. She provides a variety of reasons for why utterances may be incorrectly inferred:

a. H[earer] perceives the force of S[peaker]’s utterance as stronger or weaker than S[peaker] intended s/he should perceive it;
b. H[earer] perceives as an order an utterance which S[peaker] intended s/he should perceive as a request;
c. H[earer] perceives S[peaker]’s utterance as ambivalent where S[peaker] intended no ambivalence;
d. S[peaker] expects H[earer] to be able to infer the force of his/her utterance, but is relying on a system of knowledge or beliefs which S[peaker] and H[earer] do not, in fact, share. For instance, S[peaker] says ‘Pigs might fly!’ to an H[earer] unaware that they do not, or S[peaker] says, ‘He’s madder than Keith Joseph’, to an H[earer] who believes Joseph to be perfectly sane.

(Thomas, 1983, p. 94)

Given that L2 learners need to be able to comprehend what is being said and how it is intended in order to communicate effectively and successfully in their
second/foreign language, it is somewhat surprising that pragmatic awareness has not been explored more extensively in ILP research. To date only a rather limited number of investigations have examined L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness. In the following, I will first review studies that focus on comparing L2 learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic awareness in Section 2.2.1. I will then concentrate on studies that address learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic and grammatical comprehension in Section 2.2.2.

2.2.1 Studies comparing learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic awareness

Studies focusing on a particular speech act

In one of the earliest studies in ILP awareness research, Carrell and Konneker (1981) employed a rank-ordering task to explore differences in native speakers and L2 learners’ judgements of politeness in requests. Their English as a second language (ESL) students represented a range of first languages, such as Spanish, Farsi and Arabic. Their task involved four sets of cards consisting of nine cards each, of which one card contained a brief description of a scenario, such as purchasing shoes in a shoe shop, and eight utterance cards that contained eight possible request strategies. The strategies ranged from conventionally indirect interrogative sentences containing past tense modals, to direct elliptical imperative sentences. The participants were supplied with the cards and were then asked to put them into a specific order according to the perceived politeness of the individual utterances. Tanaka and Kawade (1982), in a subsequent investigation also focusing on politeness in requests and employing a rank-ordering task, aimed to replicate Carrell and Konneker’s study. In contrast to Carrell and Konneker, they used only one set of cards and provided their participants with 12 request cards instead of 8. In addition, all of their ESL learners were native speakers of Japanese.

The results of the two studies were very similar. Both found a high correlation between the native and learner judgments of politeness in the request utterances, which they attributed to the effect of the learning environment. Interestingly, their data also showed that the L2 learner groups recognized more distinct levels within the request hierarchy than the native speakers, either seven and five (Carrell & Konneker, 1981) or seven and six (Tanaka & Kawade, 1982). Carrell and Konneker suggested that this ‘may be due to a kind of “over-sensitivity” to semantic/syntactic form distinctions’ (1981, p. 27).

Kitao (1990) also employed a rank-ordering task to compare how language learners and native speakers judged politeness in requests. His ESL learners in the target context and English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Japan were all native speakers of Japanese. In contrast to the two previous studies, Kitao used a questionnaire instead of cards to obtain his participants’
judgements on request strategies. On the questionnaire, his learners and
native speakers were asked to rate the politeness level of 61 requests on 10-part
scales ranging from very polite to very rude. Similar to Carrell and Konneker
(1981) and Tanaka and Kawade (1982), Kitao focused on direct and convention-
ally indirect requests, but also included a limited number of modifiers,
such as ‘please’ and ‘possibly’. While he found no significant differences in the
perception of politeness between his American native speakers and his two
Japanese learners groups, the ESL learners’ scores correlated more highly with
the native speaker scores than the EFL scores. Kitao attributed this result to
the ESL learners’ exposure to the L2 in the target context.

Not focusing on requests, but on advice utterances, Hinkel (1997) used
a multiple choice questionnaire (MCQ) to investigate which level of direct-
ness (direct/hedged/indirect) was considered appropriate by her Chinese
ESL learners and American English native speakers. The participants in her
study first read a written description of a scenario (e.g. advising a fellow stu-
dent on where to take their car for a repair) and then selected one of three
possible options representing a specific degree of directness, or opted out.
Hinkel’s results showed significant differences in the learners’ and native
speakers’ selection of appropriate utterances in the advice scenarios. Her
ESL learners perceived direct or hedged advice to be appropriate signifi-
cantly more frequently than the native speakers. The native speakers, in
contrast, most frequently considered indirect comments to be the appropri-
ate choice.

Thus, whereas Carrell and Konneker (1981), Tanaka and Kawade (1982) and
Kitao (1990) found no significant differences between learners’ and native
speakers’ perceptions of politeness in requests, Hinkel’s (1997) investigation
of advice utterances did show significant differences in the appropriacy per-
gection of the two groups. There are a number of possible explanations for
this. One reason for the different results could be the speech act investigated.
However, it seems unlikely that the speech act choice may have affected the
results because developmental awareness studies examining requests (e.g.
Cook & Liddicoat, 2002; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985) have shown significant
differences between L2 learner and native-speaker groups.

Another explanation could be that the rank-ordering tasks employed by
examined request utterances that were more distinctly different than the
finer advice nuances investigated by Hinkel (1997). The three former stud-
ies focused more on the broad distinction between direct and conventionally
indirect forms, whereas the latter study examined direct, indirect and hedged
forms. A further reason for the discrepancies could lie in the selection of the
participants. As studies investigating the development of pragmatic aware-
ness such as those by Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985), Bouton (1988, 1994),
Cook and Liddicoat (2002), Koike (1996), and Matsumura (2003) have shown,
results of learner groups can vary based on their length of stay in the target environment and their proficiency level.

Because only very limited information is provided on both issues in the rank-ordering tasks, the different findings might have been the result of possible differences in the participant groups that took part in the studies, such as a significantly greater amount of time spent in the target environment in the case of the rank-ordering groups.

Studies focusing on more general pragmatic issues

The studies discussed in the previous section investigated L2 learners’ and native speakers’ perceptions regarding a particular speech act. In this section, I will review two studies that address more general issues: L2 learners’ ability to understand conversational implicature (Bouton, 1988) and English learners’ awareness of pragmatic norms and perception of politeness in their L2 (Hinkel, 1996).

The aim of Bouton’s study was to examine whether the cultural and L1 backgrounds of learners of English would affect their ability to understand the implied meaning of an utterance in English. The ESL learners in his investigation, who had just commenced their study at an American university, represented six different groups (Germans, Japanese, Koreans, Mainland Chinese, Spanish/Portuguese, Taiwan Chinese). The instrument used in this study was a multiple choice questionnaire containing detailed descriptions of particular scenarios. Each scenario violated one of Grice’s maxims (e.g. Joan: ‘Do you have a lot of relatives?’ Fran: ‘Does a dog have fleas?’ 1988, p. 91) and was followed by four possible interpretations of the utterance, one literal, two distractors and the correct meaning.

Bouton’s findings showed that the results of all learner groups differed significantly from those of the American English native speakers. Thus, all of the L2 learners encountered difficulties when interpreting implied meaning. Interestingly, the statistical analysis also revealed significant differences between the learner groups, which indicates that L2 learners of different language backgrounds may experience difficulties in interpreting utterances in varying degrees. Bouton later conducted a second study on conversational implicature which had a developmental aspect and will therefore be discussed in Section 2.2.3.

Focusing on a variety of pragmatic norms, Hinkel (1996) employed a questionnaire to examine L2 learners’ awareness of politeness and appropriateness in their L2 host country. Her ESL learners were enrolled at an American university and spoke five different native languages: Arabic, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. Participants in this study were asked to rate a number of statements included in the questionnaire, such as ‘In the US, when you
need information, it is more appropriate to say “Tell me . . .” than “Could you/ Would you tell me . . .
”’ (1996, p. 57). Hinkel found that, although the individual L1 group scores for the questionnaire items tended to vary somewhat, her ESL learners generally were aware of the pragmatic norms of the L2. She suggests that a possible reason for this result could be a combination of language learners’ motivation to succeed in their L2 at a foreign university and their exposure to the target language in the L2 context.

The impact of exposure to the second language in the host environment could also explain why Bouton’s learners experienced difficulties when interpreting implied meaning. While Hinkel’s (1996) learners had lived in the United States for more than 2 years on average, Bouton’s learner participants had only recently moved to their host country. It could also be argued that identifying implied meaning based on the more abstract examples in Bouton’s multiple choice task is inherently more difficult than deciding whether it is necessary to apologize to a teacher after missing their class.

The review of studies comparing L2 learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic awareness has shown that while some studies reported significant differences between learners and native speakers (Bouton, 1988; Hinkel, 1997), others did not (Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Tanaka & Kawade, 1982; Kitao, 1990; Hinkel, 1996). Possible reasons for these different findings may be task difficulty, differences in learners’ proficiency levels and/or amount of exposure to the L2 in the target environment.

2.2.2 Studies comparing the interrelationship of L2 learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness

Only a very small number of studies have examined the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of L2 learners in an integrated paradigm. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) investigation is of particular importance for the present study, as I used their video-and-questionnaire instrument to examine participants’ awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities. In their study, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei investigated the recognition and rating of grammatical errors and pragmatic infelicities by ESL and EFL learners as well as teachers of English. Their participants first watched a video comprising 20 scenarios, some of which contained either grammatical or pragmatic errors (see 4.2.1 for a detailed description of the instrument), and were subsequently asked to evaluate the severity of the perceived problems in a questionnaire. The speech acts examined in this study were apologies, refusals, requests and suggestions.

The authors found that the ESL learners in the United States recognized a considerably higher number of pragmatic than grammatical errors, whereas
the EFL group in Hungary was more aware of grammatical violations than of pragmatic ones. The severity ratings for the two error types also indicated a difference in the participants’ perceptions across the two learning environments: The ESL and EFL students’ severity scores for pragmatic and grammatical errors were almost exactly the inverse of each other. ESL learners considered the pragmatic infelicities to be more serious, whereas EFL learners perceived the grammatical errors to be more salient.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) further subdivided their EFL and ESL samples according to the learners’ proficiency level. They found that members of the high-proficiency set in Hungary scored both the pragmatic and the grammatical items higher than the low-proficiency EFL participants. In the United States, the high-proficiency group perceived the pragmatic infelicities to be more severe than the low-proficiency group, but at the same time, they rated the grammatical errors less severely. In addition, the results showed that the ESL participants who had only recently arrived in the United States assigned lower severity scores to the pragmatic items than those ESL learners who had spent at least 3 months in the target environment prior to taking part in the research.

The findings of this study indicated that three factors play an important role in the learner’s linguistic awareness: the proficiency level, the learning environment, and the students’ access to authentic L2 input. Thus, the results supported both Bialystok’s (1991, 1993) processing model and Schmidt’s (1993, 1995) noticing hypothesis.

The Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) study admittedly had some limitations, the most salient of which was that the researchers had to assume that when the participants indicated that there was an infelicity in a scenario, they had in fact detected the one planted by the researchers rather than identifying a ‘false error’. Because the study was designed to assess a large number of participants in a questionnaire format using rating scales, it had no interview or error correction component.

Niezgoda and Röver (2001) replicated Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) study with EFL learners in the Czech Republic and ESL learners in Hawaii. They employed the same video and questionnaire that had been used in the original research design. In contrast to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s results, the EFL learners in their sample recognized a higher number of pragmatic infelicities than the ESL participants. The students in the Czech Republic also assigned higher severity ratings to both the pragmatic and grammatical violations than did the participants in the United States.

Contrary to the findings of the original study, Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) data therefore suggest that their EFL students were more aware of pragmatic infelicities than their ESL participants and also perceived them to be more serious than the learners in the United States did. One finding of their study, however, is in agreement with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) results:
Like the ESL learners in the original study, their ESL group also considered pragmatic errors more salient than grammatical violations.

A possible explanation for the somewhat surprising results of Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) study might lie in the sampling of the participants. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) examined relatively ‘average’ language learners in both the Hungarian and the American contexts. Niezgoda and Röver, on the other hand, intentionally concentrated on a highly select group of Czech students that had already passed a number of rigorous language examinations and were enrolled in an intensive English programme and compared them to ESL learners from a variety of backgrounds who were attending a language school in Hawaii.

2.3 Request Studies

Although a number of different speech acts and other pragmatic phenomena have been investigated in interlanguage pragmatics research in the past three decades, such as apologies (e.g. Kasper, 1981; Rintell & Mitchell 1989; Trostborg 1987, 1995), compliments (e.g. Billmeyer, 1990; Rose, 2000; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001), complaints (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Ellwood, 2008; House & Kasper, 1981; Kasper, 1981; Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993), and conversational implicature (e.g. Bouton 1988, 1994), requests remain one of the most frequently examined speech acts according to Kasper (1997a) and Hendriks (2008). Following House and Kasper (1987, p. 1252) requests will be defined as directives, with the following interactional characteristic: ‘S (speaker) wants H (hearer) to do p/p is at cost to H’ in the present investigation.

In the next section, I will first outline the reasons for studying requests in interlanguage pragmatics in Section 2.3.1, as this will help to explain why this particular speech act has attracted a large amount of attention in ILP research. I will then discuss influential request classification frameworks for request strategies and internal and external modifiers in Section 2.3.2. Subsequent to this, I will review the results of request studies focusing on German learners of English in Section 2.3.3 and discuss request studies involving non-German learners of English in Section 2.3.4. Developmental studies examining requests will be discussed in Section 2.5.2 and 2.5.3.

2.3.1 Reasons for studying requests in interlanguage pragmatics

Fraser’s description of the attributes of requests provides a number of reasons that explain why this particular speech act has attracted a large amount of interest:

Requests are very frequent in language use (far more frequent, for example, than apologizing or promising); requests are very important to the second
language learner; they have been researched in more detail than any other type of speech act; they permit a wide variety of strategies for their performance; and finally, they carry with them a good range of subtle implications involving politeness, deference, and mitigation. (1978, p. 6)

As Fraser notes, requests are frequently performed in everyday life. In contrast to other speech acts, such as complimenting or complaining, learners cannot avoid making requests during their stay in the study abroad context as they will need to ask for information (e.g. when finding accommodation or looking for clarification on a particular point in a seminar), for goods (e.g. in a cafeteria) and possibly also for favours (e.g. from a flatmate for help with moving into their lodgings). Since the desired aim of the request utterance can involve a very diverse number of actions or things, the illocutionary force of requests can also vary greatly. The very fact that requests can involve a high number of different desired actions and also varying degrees of illocutionary force certainly contributed to the interest in this speech act.

In addition, the pool of potential interlocutors that speakers may need to make a request to is also rather large and may range from equal status individuals (e.g. friends, flatmates) to higher status individuals (e.g. landlady, professor). Thus, speakers first of all need to correctly judge the social distance between themselves and their hearers and then decide which linguistic forms are appropriate in each individual context before deciding on the wording of the actual request. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989a, p. 11) refer to the ‘high social stakes involved for both interlocutors in the choice of linguistic options’ in that respect and also note that ‘requests are face-threatening by definition (Brown & Levinson, 1978): hearers can interpret requests as intrusive impingements on freedom of action, or even as a show in the exercise of power’.

Consequently, making a high imposition request to a higher status interlocutor can be a rather complex endeavour for L2 learners, as they will need to correctly assess the contextual conditions of the situation and then choose the appropriate linguistic forms to express their request. Even if L2 learners make the right judgements with regard to the context, selecting suitable linguistic forms to express themselves can be difficult for L2 learners because of their own cultural background and possible L1 transfer (Omar, 2006; Woodfield, 2008), and the range of forms that can be used to formulate a request.

All of the factors mentioned above (e.g. frequency of requests in everyday life; diversity of desired actions/things; variety of interlocutors; cross-cultural differences in linguistic forms for formulating requests) help to explain why a considerable amount of studies have focused on requests in interlanguage pragmatics research. Examining learners’ ability to use suitable linguistic forms in their L2 when making requests can provide insights into language learners’ pragmatic skills and their ability to express themselves appropriately
and sensitively in face threatening contexts in their L2. This is why the productive part of this study focuses on request utterances that differ with regard to the degree of imposition and status of the interlocutor.

2.3.2 Classification systems for requests in interlanguage pragmatics

Request strategies

Due to the high frequency with which requests are made by language learners and native speakers on a daily basis and the various contexts in which they can occur, it is not surprising that this speech act has not only received much attention in ILP research in the past three decades, but was also one of the speech acts that researchers in interlanguage pragmatics focused on when the discipline began to establish itself. In two of the earliest studies, House and Kasper (1981) and Kasper (1981) investigated requests by German learners of English and developed an eight-part classification scheme for request strategies. This scheme was based on previous work on request categorizations in speech act and politeness theory, such as Searle (1975, 1976), Ervin-Tripp (1976, 1977), Labov and Fanshel (1977), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983).

House and Kasper’s (House & Kasper, 1981; Kasper, 1981) original taxonomy for requests was later slightly modified by them as well as other researchers in subsequent papers (House & Kasper, 1987; House & Vollmer, 1988) and formed together with Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s research (Blum-Kulka 1982, 1987; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) the basis of the classification scheme that was used in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (1989b, henceforth CCSARP) led by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper. As their categorization system of request strategies has been frequently employed in ILP request research, the names of the individual strategies as well as corresponding examples are included below:

1. Mood derivable  
   Clean up that mess

2. Performative  
   I am asking you to clean up that mess

3. Hedged Performative  
   I would like to ask you to clean up that mess

4. Obligation Statement  
   You’ll have to clean up that mess

5. Want Statement  
   I really wish you’d clean up that mess

6. Suggestory Formula  
   How about cleaning up?

7. Query Preparatory  
   Could you clear up the kitchen, please?

8. Strong Hint  
   You have left the kitchen in a right mess

9. Mild Hint  
   I wanted to cook tonight

(slightly modified and abbreviated from Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 18)
Requests formulated according to strategies 1 to 5 are called *direct requests* in the CCSARP’s scheme, while requests employing strategies 6 and 7 are referred to as *conventionally indirect requests* and requests based on strategies 8 and 9 are classified as *non-conventionally indirect requests*. The three directness levels that are distinguished in the CCSARP manual also signify the length of the hearer’s inferential process to identify the utterance as a request (i.e. direct requests are usually identified as a request more quickly than non-conventionally indirect requests).

A second request strategy framework which has also had a considerable impact on studies examining L2 learners’ and native speakers’ request strategy use was developed by Trosborg (1995). As the coding system used in the present investigation is based on both the CCSARP and Trosborg’s taxonomies (see Chapter 4 for the coding scheme used in the present study), Trosborg’s framework (1995, p. 205) is also included here:

Cat. I Indirect request
Str. 1 Hints (mild) I have to be at the airport in half an hour.
        (strong) My car has broken down. Will you be using your car tonight?

Cat. II Conventionally indirect
(hearer-oriented conditions)
Str. 2 Ability Could you lend me your car?
Willingness Would you lend me your car?
Permission May I borrow your car?
Str. 3 Suggestory formulae How about lending me your car?

Cat. III Conventionally indirect
(speaker-based conditions)
Str. 4 Wishes I would like to borrow your car.
Str. 5 Desires/needs I want/need to borrow your car.

Cat. IV Direct requests
Str. 6 Obligation You must/have to lend me your car.
Str. 7 Performatives I would like to ask you to lend me your car.
        (hedged) I ask/require you to lend me your car.
        (unhedged)
Str. 8 Imperatives Lend me your car.
Elliptical phrases Your car (please).

Although Trosborg’s taxonomy is similar to that of the CCSARP in several respects (e.g. both include a directness scale – in the CCSARP from the most
to the least direct strategy and in Trosborg’s scheme from the least to the most
direct; the terms conventionally indirect and direct are used in both schemes),
there are also some differences. For example, the equivalent of the CCSARP
direct strategy want statements is classified as conventionally indirect and
divided into two separate categories (wishes and desires/needs) in Trosborg’s
scheme. This indicates that even though there may be some consensus on the
classification of several categories, there is no general agreement on a defin-
ite categorization system for request strategies. For the present investigation,
I therefore used a combination of both frameworks that seemed to represent
my data best.

**Request modification**

In addition to the individual request strategies that speakers can use to for-
mulate their requests, a considerable amount of research has also been con-
ducted on L2 learners’ ability to further modify the illocutionary force of the
utterance with *internal* and *external modifiers*. The CCSARP’s coding manual
contains a classification scheme for internal and external request modification
that was based on earlier work by the researchers involved in the project (e.g.
Kasper, 1981) and was also partly influenced by literature on speech acts and
politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson, 1978; Lakoff, 1973).

*Internal modifiers* are defined as linguistic and syntactic devices that modi-
fy the illocutionary force of the request, such as the *politeness marker* ‘please’
or the *downtoner* ‘maybe’. Internal modifiers can be further differentiated as
*upgraders*, which increase the illocutionary force of the request, and *downgrad-
ers*, which decrease the illocutionary force of the request. In contrast, *external
modifiers*, which are also called *supportive moves*, are defined as additional state-
ments which support the request proper. For instance, an explanation why the
desired action should be performed is called *grounder*.

Although the CCSARP coding scheme for internal and external request
modification has formed the basis of many subsequent studies on requests,
researchers such as Trosborg (1995) and Achiba (2003) modified the CCSARP
categories in some respects and/or added new modifier categories based on
their data. For example, Trosborg included three different types of syntactic
embedding in her taxonomy (*tentative* ‘I wonder if . . . ’; *appreciative* ‘I’d really
appreciate if . . . ’ and *subjective* ‘I think . . . ’) and Achiba devised the external
modifier *option giver* by the use of which ‘a speaker expresses explicitly that car-
rying out a request is left to the addressee’s own volition’ (2003, p. 152).

New additions to existing request modifications frameworks show that this
again is an area that is still developing. Due to the large number of different
internal and external modifiers that have been included in the various request
modification taxonomies, differences between the different frameworks cannot
be discussed here. However, the classification system that was used for the present study and that is based on the CCSARP coding system and Trosborg’s (1995) taxonomy, will be discussed in detail in Section 4.4 of the methodology chapter.

2.3.3 Request studies involving German learners of English

In this section I will review studies that have examined how German learners of English formulate requests in their L2. As my investigation focuses on the pragmatic development of learners without any pedagogic intervention, I have only included studies in this and the following sections that also did not primarily aim to establish whether certain teaching methods or teaching materials promote learners’ pragmatic ability regarding requests (see for example Alcon Soler, 2005; House 1996; Safont Jordà, 2003; Usó Juan & Martinez Flor, 2008 on the effect of instruction).

Kasper’s (1981) study is one of the first ILP investigations focusing on German learners of English. Data were elicited with role-play interactions involving English native speakers, German learners of English studying English at university, and German native speakers. Kasper found that although the query preparatory strategy was the most frequently used category for both learners and English native speakers, generally her German learners of English tended to prefer more direct strategies compared to the English native speakers. The results also showed that her learners used fewer internal modifiers than the English native speakers.

House and Kasper’s (1987) examination of requests by German and Danish learners of English and English native speakers is part of the CCSARP and used a discourse completion task (DCT) to collect data. The findings of this study were based on five request scenarios and showed that the query preparatory strategy was again the most frequently used strategy by all learner groups and the native speakers. In addition, both learner groups also displayed an awareness of contextual conditions of individual scenarios and tried to choose their strategies in accordance with the demands of the particular contexts. However, both learner groups also differed from the English native speakers by using higher directness levels in two situations and by using more supportive moves than the native speakers.

Regarding the latter, House and Kasper suggest that the overuse of external modifiers could be a sign of learners ‘being unsure of their linguistic and social competence’ in English and reacting ‘sensitively to face-threatening situations and thus overdo[ing] the hearer-supportive strategies’ (1987, p. 1283). The higher employment of external modifiers in requests by L2 learners in contrast to native speaker controls was also found in subsequent studies (e.g. Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Hassall, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Yu, 1999) and was termed ‘waffle phenomenon’ by Edmondson and House (1991).

In a subsequent study that was also part of the CCSARP, House (1989) examined the use of the internal modifier ‘please’ by German learners of English
and English native speakers. With the exception of one of the eight scenarios in which a higher number of learners employed the politeness marker ‘please’, differences in the employment of ‘please’ by the two groups were so small that had a statistical analysis been conducted, they would most likely not have been statistically significant.

Focusing on requests in written communication, Hutz (2006) investigated how German learners of English, German native speakers and native speakers of American English used requests in e-mails. He found that while there were no considerable differences between the German and American English native speaker groups, the German learners of English employed significantly fewer external modifiers than both native speaker groups. This is an interesting finding, as House and Kasper’s (1987) research had shown that their German learners of English used more external modifiers than the native speakers. Hutz provides a number of possible reasons that could explain why his learners used fewer supportive moves than the native speakers: a) time constraints, as some of his learners wrote the e-mails in their work environment, b) lack of linguistic means and c) lack of familiarity with English request patterns. An alternative explanation could be that due to the relative novelty of e-mails as a medium of communication, learners were unsure about the pragmatic conventions of making requests in their L2 in an e-mail, and thus used fewer supportive moves (cf. also Biesenbach-Lucas 2006 on pragmatic norms in e-mail communication).

With regard to learners’ and native speakers’ use of request strategies, Hutz (2006) found that nearly 90 per cent of his learners who wrote their e-mails in their work context used direct requests, whereas only 19.4 per cent of his English native speakers, 16.7 per cent of his German learners of English in a non-work context, and 9.2 per cent of his German native speakers employed them in their e-mails. Hutz notes that ‘this frequency of imperatives can largely be explained by the fact that the requests often involved urgency and immediate compliance’ and also adds that requests formulated with an imperative often included the internal modifier ‘please’ (2006, p. 223). This finding highlights the importance of the contextual conditions in which the data were collected and the possible effect certain variables such as lack of time can have on L2 learners’ choice of request strategies.

In a recent study comparing requests made by German learners of English, Japanese learners of English and British English native speakers, Woodfield (2008) employed written DCTs and verbal reports to collect data on participants’ use of request strategies and internal modifiers. All of her participants were postgraduate students at a British university. Woodfield found that all of her German learners of English and the majority of her Japanese learners of English mainly used the query preparatory strategy to formulate their requests. This finding thus supports the results of previous studies by House and Kasper (House, 1898; House & Kasper, 1987; Kasper 1981) and suggests
that Hutz’s findings may have been a result of the data collection technique employed.

Interestingly, two of Woodfield’s (2008) Japanese learners of English did not employ any query preparatory requests at all and instead only used direct strategies. Woodfield suggests that there may be a variety of reasons for this rather unexpected result, such as lack of practice in Japanese classrooms (see also LoCastro 1997), overgeneralization of directness in western languages (Tanaka, 1988) or L1 specific effects of the data collection instrument (Rose 1994).

Regarding her learners’ use of internal request modification, Woodfield found that her English native speakers and German learners employed modifiers in more than 50 per cent of their requests (69.23 per cent and 56.52 per cent respectively), while her Japanese learners of English only used them in 43.58 per cent. Thus, although both learner groups used fewer internal modifiers than the NSs, the data suggest that the native languages of the two groups may have affected their employment of request modifiers. The German learners of English came closer to the British English NS norm, probably because of similarities between the two languages. However, even though the German learners of English used more internal modifiers than the Japanese learners of English, the difference between the two percentage figures for the English NSs and the Germans indicates that the German learners would also need to increase their employment of internal modifiers in requests.

Concerning the three groups’ use of individual internal modifiers, Woodfield’s data clearly show that her NS group employed a wider variety of lexical and syntactic modifiers than either of her two learner groups. Of particular interest for the present study is that syntactic internal modifiers were used considerably less frequently by the learners than lexical ones, which suggests that syntactic modifiers may be acquired later than lexical internal modifiers. Differences in the use of the politeness marker were negligible between the NSs and the German learners of English, a finding which is similar to House’s (1989). However, the Japanese learners of English employed considerably fewer politeness markers than the other two groups. This result shows that not all learners of English know how and when to use ‘please’ – a request modifier that is generally considered to be rather easy to learn and use.

**Summary**

Based on the review of studies in this section, German learners of English are likely to do the following when formulating requests:

- display an awareness of contextual conditions (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987)
- mainly use query preparatory requests in non-e-mail communication (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Kasper, 1981; Woodfield, 2008)
• employ more direct strategies than English native speakers (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Hutz, 2006; Kasper, 1981)
• use more external modifiers than English native speakers in non-e-mail communication (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987)
• use fewer external modifiers than English native speakers in e-mail communication (e.g. Hutz, 2006)
• use fewer internal modifiers than English native speakers (e.g. Kasper, 1981; Woodfield, 2008).

The aim of this section was to highlight possible differences between the requests formulated by German learners of English and English native speakers. In the following section, I will review request studies that do not involve German learners of English and instead focus on a variety of different L1-L2 combinations to establish whether some of the findings above are also characteristic of the interlanguage of other language learner groups. Request studies that have a developmental focus will be reviewed in Sections 2.5.2 and 2.5.3.

2.3.4 Request studies involving non-German learners of English

In this section, I will provide a brief overview of request studies involving non-German learners of English to examine whether some of the interlanguage features established in the previous section for German learners of English are specific for this L1 group or are features that can be found in other learner populations as well. My review will follow a geographical journey from Western Europe over Africa to the Eastern parts of Asia. Although only a small number of studies could be included here due to space constraints, it is hoped that this review will help to provide a clearer picture of common problems L2 learners of English experience when formulating requests.

Spanish learners of English

Cenoz and Valencia (1996) investigated Spanish second language (SSL) and English foreign language (EFL) learners’ request performance and compared them with native speaker controls of the two languages. Their data were collected with a DCT. They found that both learner groups used different request strategies based on the context of the request scenarios and thus demonstrated an awareness of situational factors on their linguistic choices which had also been found in a previous study by House and Kasper (1987).

Like the German learners of English in House and Kasper’s (1987) study, the EFL learner in this study also employed more external modifiers than the native speakers, which suggests that this might be a typical characteristic
of interlanguage use for these three languages. The SSL learners, however, used fewer external modifiers than the native speaker participants. Cenoz and Valencia (1996) suggest that the SSL learners’ considerably lower proficiency level meant that they lacked the linguistic resources necessary to formulate longer utterances, thereby making the important point that learners with a low or intermediate proficiency in the L2 may sometimes not be able to perform in a pragmatically appropriate way due to linguistic constraints and not due to a lack of contextual sensitivity or awareness.

**African learners of English**

Kasanga (1998) explored the request performance of African learners of English. His data consisted of DCT data and field notes that were based on observations of interactions. He found that while the majority of the observed requests employed direct strategies, such as the explicit performative or the mood derivable, the most frequently used strategy in the elicited data was the query preparatory. Kasanga suggests that a possible explanation for this result may be that the learners preferred the more direct strategies that resembled strategies in their African L1s in interactions, while the learners who completed the DCT might have felt that they had to appear more ‘sophisticated’ (1998, p. 140) and therefore tended to use more indirect strategies. This could point towards a possible method effect suggested by Rose (1994) and Woodfield (2008) concerning the suitability of DCTs for Asian learners of English. Thus this finding also highlights the significance of selecting a data collection method that not only fits the research purpose but also the research participants.

**Chinese learners of English**

Yu (1999) analysed English requests made by Chinese ESL learners, which she compared with requests made by American English and Chinese native speakers. All of her data were gathered with DCTs. She found, similar to Kasper (1981) and House and Kasper (1987), that all groups used conventionally indirect requests with the highest frequency. The results also revealed that her learners employed more external modifiers than the Chinese or English native speaker participants, which is again in agreement with the findings of House and Kasper’s (1987) and also Cenoz and Valencia’s (1996).

**Japanese learners of English**

Focusing on Japanese learners, Tanaka (1988) investigated the use of requests by Japanese ESL learners and compared them with requests formulated by
Australian English native speakers. The data were elicited with role-plays. She found that her learner participants, similar to Woodfield’s (2008) Japanese learners of English, employed more direct request strategies than her control group which she attributed to the complexity and inherent difficulty of more indirect request utterances. Her data also revealed that her learners used more specific explanations for their requests, such as naming the places where they had looked for a book, than her native speakers.

Summary

The results of the studies reviewed in this section suggest that an overuse of external modifiers when formulating requests is a typical feature of interlanguage English that is not solely restricted to German learners of English. The query preparatory strategy or conventionally indirect requests in general appear to be frequently used and often favoured by learners of English and English native speakers. However, when learners of English do not employ conventionally indirect strategies they tend to prefer direct over indirect strategies, resulting in them employing higher directness levels than native speakers.

2.4 Studies Examining the Development of L2 Learners’ Pragmatic Awareness

Two types of developmental study are commonly distinguished in interlanguage pragmatics: those that are based on a longitudinal design and those that are based on a cross-sectional design. Longitudinal studies follow the progress of a particular group of learners over a certain period of time, whereas cross-sectional studies compare data collected from two distinct learner groups that differ according to their proficiency in the target language or the length of time spent in the L2 environment (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999b; Kasper & Rose, 2002). In the following I will first review studies that focus on individual speech acts (e.g. Cook & Liddicoat, 2002; Garcia, 2004; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985) in Section 2.4.1, and will then discuss investigations on assertiveness (e.g. Kerekes, 1992) and implied meaning (e.g. Bouton, 1994, Taguchi, 2005) in Section 2.4.2.

2.4.1 Studies focusing on speech acts

In a study that focused on requests and apologies, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) administered a pragmatic judgment test to native speakers and three groups of learners of Hebrew in Israel who varied according to their length
of residence in the target environment. Although Olshtain and Blum-Kulka’s study is not strictly cross-sectional, since, for instance, the amount of time spent in Israel differed from two to 10 years for members of group 2, whereas members of group 1 and 3 had spent less than 2 years and more than 10 years, respectively, in the target context, their findings provide some interesting insights into the temporal effect of a sojourn in the L2 context on learners’ pragmatic awareness. The instrument used contained eight scenarios, which were followed by six possible apologies or requests that could be made by the speaker. The participants were asked to assess the appropriateness of the six utterance options by rating them as ‘appropriate’, ‘more or less appropriate’, or ‘not appropriate in the particular context’.

The results revealed that the ratings of those learners who had lived in Israel for more than 10 years were similar to those of the native speakers, whereas there were significant differences between the scores of native speakers and learners who had spent less than two years in the L2 context. For example, learners who had spent more than 10 years in the target environment tended to accept more direct strategies, which was similar to the native-speaker participants, whereas learners with less than two years experience tended to reject those strategies. Based on their findings, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) noted that ‘changes over time of nonnatives’ response patterns reflect a process of approximation of target language norms’ (1985, p. 321).

In a study on Spanish as a foreign language, Koike (1996) examined the pragmatic development of learners of different proficiency levels from a cross-sectional perspective. Her learners were first-year, second-year, and advanced-level (either in their third or fourth year) students of Spanish. The participants were shown videotaped scenarios performed by a Spanish native speaker. Following each of the seven scenarios, the students were asked to formulate an appropriate answer to the speaker, identify the type of speech act, and describe the speaker’s mood. The latter was done with the help of a Likert scale that measured different levels of the speaker’s characteristics (e.g. strength/weakness, friendli-/unfriendliness). The statistical comparison of the three learner groups revealed that although the results of the first- and second-year learners were not significantly different, the advanced group’s results were significantly better than those of the two former groups. Based on her findings, Koike concluded that the comprehension of speech acts, such as suggestions, was difficult for beginner-level language learners, even when they were expressed in a similar way in the L1 and the L2.

Cook and Liddicoat (2002) employed a cross-sectional design in their study that compared high- and low-proficiency ESL learners’ pragmatic awareness of requests with that of Australian English native speakers. Their instrument was a multiple choice questionnaire that focused on direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect requests. Similar to Bouton’s (1988) MCQ, their questionnaire contained a description of the scenario including
one of the three aforementioned request types. This was followed by four possible interpretations of the request for each of the scenarios of which the participants were asked to select the one they thought appropriate.

Cook and Liddicoat’s (2002) statistical analysis of the request interpretations selected by the three participant groups revealed that there were significant differences in the interpretation of conventionally indirect and non-conventionally indirect requests between the native speakers and the learner groups of both proficiency levels, with the native speakers correctly identifying the meaning of requests with a higher frequency than the learners. In addition, low-proficiency learners also interpreted a significantly lower number of direct requests correctly than the native speakers, whereas there was no significant difference between the native speakers and the high-proficiency learners.

The results also showed significant differences in the correct identification of requests between the two learner groups. The high-proficiency learners correctly identified the meaning of conventionally and non-conventionally indirect requests with a significantly higher frequency than the low proficiency learners. This suggests that increasing proficiency levels might result in a greater ability to correctly interpret request utterances. Based on their findings, it seems that direct requests might be the first request strategy that learners become explicitly aware of, as there was no significant difference between the native speakers’ and high-proficiency learners’ interpretation of these request types.

Matsumura’s (2003, 2007) investigations of Japanese study abroad learners in Canada are one of the few longitudinal developmental studies in interlanguage pragmatics that include data that were elicited prior to, during and following L2 learners’ study abroad sojourn. The focus of both studies was learners’ perception of appropriateness in advice situations. The data for the former study were gathered in 3-month intervals, with the first data collection session taking place before the learners left Japan, followed by a second session about 1 month after their arrival in Canada, and a third session after they had spent 4 months in the target environment. The second study also includes data collected 1 month, 6 months and 1 year after the students’ return. Due to attrition over time, the number of learner participants in both studies differ considerably. While 137 Japanese learners of English took part in the 2003 investigation, only 15 learners took part in all sessions examined in the 2007 study. All learner responses were compared to native-speaker controls.

The instrument used by Matsumura in both studies was a judgment task similar to Olshtain and Blum-Kulka’s (1985) in which participants were presented with 12 advice scenarios and then asked to select the most appropriate advice utterance from a choice of four options for each scenario. In addition to the data elicited with this task, the researcher also provided the learners with a self-report questionnaire about their degree of exposure to the L2 in their daily life, obtained information on their proficiency levels from their TOEFL
scores, and conducted a group interview in the final data collection session one year after learners’ return to Japan.

The statistical analysis of the 2003 investigation showed that the amount of exposure to the target language was the one single factor in the study that determined the pragmatic development of the learners; that is, those learners who had a greater exposure to English displayed a greater amount of competence. The results further revealed that even the amount of exposure in the learners’ home country influenced their pragmatic development abroad, as those learners who had received a greater amount of exposure in Japan became more pragmatically competent early on in their time in Canada. Concerning the learners’ different proficiency levels in the L2, the study showed that proficiency on its own did not have a significant effect on the learners’ pragmatic development. Instead, the findings suggested that proficiency only had an indirect effect on pragmatic development when interlinked with exposure to the L2.

This means that those Japanese learners who reached higher levels of proficiency when they were in Japan sought more opportunities to be exposed to English in the target speech community, and as a consequence of greater exposure, they could become more pragmatically competent. (Matsumura, 2003, p. 485)

In his subsequent study, Matsumura (2007) focused primarily on L2 learners’ development following their study abroad sojourn. He found that his learners’ pragmatic competence concerning appropriate ways of giving advice towards equal and lower status interlocutors increased. However, his data also indicated a decrease in learners’ ability to select appropriate advice strategies in interactions with higher status interlocutors because of a higher numbers of learners deciding to opt out. Interestingly, the interview responses by the L2 learners revealed that their preference for the opting out strategy following their study abroad sojourn was not due to pragmatic regression, but instead a deliberate choice based on their reassessment of what constitutes appropriate language towards a higher status interlocutor. These changes in the learners’ perception of appropriate behaviour are explained by one of Matsumura’s Japanese learners of English as follows:

Before I left for Canada, I chose not to give advice in all items relating to a professor, because I didn’t know what to say. In Canada, I realized that unlike Japanese professors, Canadian professors were very friendly. They allowed me to address them on a first name basis. So I felt it was OK to talk to them the way I did to my roommates. (. . .) As time has gone by after returning to Japan, I have started to think that my way of talking to Canadian professors might have been wrong. You know, a professor is a professor. (Matsumura, 2007, pp. 179–180)
Matsumura also examined how his learners had succeeded in increasing their pragmatic competence in their FL context following their study abroad sojourn. He found that although his learners’ exposure to English in the university context was limited, they had all sought out opportunities to use their L2 skills in other contexts, for example, by staying in contact with their Canadian friends, teaching Japanese to foreign students or attending social gatherings frequented by English native speakers. Thus, as the results of his previous study had also indicated, a high amount of exposure to the target language is one of the key factors that helps language learners maintain and increase their pragmatic competence in their L2.

Also focusing on learners of English, but using a cross-sectional design, Garcia (2004) examined whether high proficiency learners were better at identifying the functions of speech acts than low proficiency learners. Her high proficiency learners were postgraduate students enrolled in Teaching English as a Second Language or Applied Linguistics courses, while her low proficiency learners were undergraduate students in an intensive English programme. Learners from both groups represented a variety of L1 backgrounds such as Arabic, Japanese, Korean and Spanish. Their data were contrasted with that of American English native speakers studying for a postgraduate degree. Garcia used a pragmatic listening comprehension task that was followed up by a multiple choice questionnaire and focused on four speech acts: requests, suggestions, corrections and offers. Participants first listened to five authentic dialogues and were then asked to identify the types of speech acts that were included in the dialogues.

Garcia (2004) found that the low proficiency learner group identified fewer speech acts correctly than the high proficiency group or the native speakers. Interestingly, however, the low proficiency group also had the largest standard deviation, which indicates that the low proficiency group was not as homogeneous as the other two groups. In addition, the native speaker group was outperformed by the high proficiency group in the identification of some speech acts, which suggests that some of the utterances were not unambiguous and should probably have been excluded from the investigation.

2.4.2 Studies focusing on linguistic assertiveness and implied meaning

Focusing on L2 learners’ and native speakers’ perceptions of assertiveness, Kerekes (1992) conducted a cross-sectional investigation involving low, intermediate and high proficiency learners of English. The L2 learners had been assigned to the proficiency groups based on their TOEFL scores and internal university tests. Although the learner groups represented 18 different nationalities, the majority of the students were from Asian backgrounds. The control
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A group consisted of mainly North American English native speakers also studying at the same university. Data for the study were gathered with a listening task consisting of 20 short two-turn dialogues in which participants were asked to rate the degree of assertiveness of an utterance on a 7-point Likert scale. The linguistic features that determined the level of assertiveness were, for example, the use of qualifiers/hedges and tag questions.

Kerekes (1992) found that the learners’ proficiency level influenced their assertiveness rating of qualifiers, as the least proficient group found qualifiers significantly more assertive than the high proficiency group and the native speakers. However, no differences were found in native speakers’ and learner groups’ assessment of tag questions. Thus, L2 learners’ level of proficiency seems to have affected their assessment of some of the linguistic features examined, but not all.

Again examining conversational implicature, Bouton (1994) readministered his multiple-choice questionnaire, which he had also used for his earlier study (Bouton, 1988; see review in Section 2.1.1), to a group of participants who had lived in the United States for 4.5 years and who had taken part in his original investigation. In addition, he also examined the comprehension of conversational implicature of another group of learners shortly after their arrival and after they had spent 17 months in the target environment. Because he compared the data of two groups of ESL learners at the beginning of their sojourn and at one specific point in time of their stay in the L2 environment, his research might be regarded as a combination of cross-sectional and longitudinal design.

Bouton (1994) found that the responses from both learner groups who had spent 17 months and 4.5 years in the target country differed from those of the native speakers in a number of scenarios. On a positive note, however, the results also indicated that the students’ ability to correctly identify the implied meaning of utterances had increased compared to the first data collection session shortly after their arrival in the United States. The results showed that the 17-month group significantly improved their understanding of conversational implicature, although they had not been able to master the types of implicature that they had difficulty with at the beginning of their stay. In contrast, those students who had spent 4.5 years in the target environment had improved their understanding of these implicature types. In addition, a comparison of the data of the 4.5 years group and that of the native speakers also no longer revealed any significant differences in the interpretation of the utterances for the majority of the scenarios. This suggests that the amount of time spent in the target environment positively correlates with language learners’ pragmatic awareness regarding conversational implicature.

Like Bouton, Taguchi (2005) also focused on L2 learners’ ability to understand implied meaning in her study. Her instrument was a computerized
listening task that examined her participants’ ability to comprehend indirect requests and refusals. Her Japanese EFL learners and American English native speakers first listened to a constructed conversation on a computer and then similar to Bouton’s study, selected one of four possible interpretations of the final utterance. However, while Bouton’s study had focused on violations of Grice’s maxims, Taguchi was interested in exploring L2 learners’ ability to comprehend more conventional implicatures (e.g. ‘Jane: Do we have time to go over my paper? Dr White: Oh, ah, do you mind if we talk about it tomorrow?’ p. 549) and less conventional implicatures (‘John: How was the wedding? I bet it was exciting. Mary: Well . . . the cake was OK.’ p. 549).

Her statistical analysis of the results showed that her learners were significantly better at comprehending the meanings of more conventional implicatures than less conventional implicatures. Her study is included here, as it also has a developmental dimension, since the EFL learners in Taguchi’s study were of different proficiency levels. Concerning the effect of higher proficiency levels on L2 learners’ pragmatic comprehension, she found a ‘moderate to moderately strong effect of proficiency on accuracy’ (2005, p. 553). Unfortunately, however, the results of the different proficiency groups are not reported extensively in her paper.

In her next study, Taguchi (2008) followed a longitudinal design and focused on the development of L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness in the study abroad context. She investigated the ability of learners of English to comprehend indirect meaning over a 4-months period. Her learners were native speakers of Japanese, who were enrolled on an intensive English programme that was mainly attended by Japanese students at an American higher education institution. Similar to her earlier study, Taguchi employed a computerized listening task designed to examine learners’ comprehension of indirect refusals and opinions. To obtain a better understanding of her learners’ proficiency levels and amount of exposure to English in the target environment, she also administered a lexical access test and a language contact survey (both adapted from Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). The data for the pragmatic listening task and the lexical access test were administered three times during the 4-months period in weeks 3, 8 and 19, whereas the language contact survey was only administered in the latter two sessions.

Taguchi (2008) found that from the first session on, her learners were better and quicker at understanding conventional, indirect refusals than less conventional, indirect opinions. The analysis of learners’ comprehension of indirect meaning over time showed only significant changes with regard to accuracy from Session 1 to Session 3 and only for indirect refusals. This suggests that indirect refusals are easier to identify than indirect opinions. The data also showed that learners became faster in the lexical access test from session to session, thus indicating that ability to comprehend implied meaning and the ability to make correct semantic judgements do not develop at the same speed. With regard to exposure to the L2, the results of the language contact survey
revealed that the amount of language contact differed considerably for the group with very large standard variations. This points towards the importance of individual learner differences in SLA research.

2.4.3 Summary

The results of the studies examining the development of L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness suggest that two factors play an important role in learners’ ability to comprehend utterances: the length of stay in the target environment and L2 learners’ proficiency level, although the latter was only a significant factor when combined with a high level of exposure in Matsumura’s (2003) study. The proficiency factor appears to provide evidence for Bialystok’s (1991, 1993) processing model, whereas the length of stay in the target environment seems to confirm Schmidt’s (1993, 1995) noticing hypothesis. Regarding the amount of exposure to the L2 in the study abroad context, the findings of Matsumura’s (2003) and Taguchi’s (2008) studies indicate that the amount of exposure to the L2 may differ from learner to learner based on their individual preferences regarding interpersonal interaction and probably also motivation to learn the L2. This suggests that individual learner differences can have a considerable impact on L2 learners’ progress in their second language. Finally, Matsumura’s (2007) investigation on L2 learners’ pragmatic development following their study abroad sojourns suggests that a high level of pragmatic competence can be maintained or even increased in the home context when learners reflect on their pragmatic choices and continue to seek out opportunities to be exposed to the target language.

2.5 Interlanguage Pragmatic Development: Production

In the following sections, I will first review ILP developmental studies in the study abroad context that do not focus on requests. I decided to include these investigations, as they provide valuable insights into the effect of the study abroad environment on L2 learners’ pragmatic development. Subsequent to the review of the non-request studies in Section 2.6.1, I will discuss developmental request studies that employed a cross-sectional design in Section 2.6.2 and will then review developmental request studies that followed a longitudinal design in Section 2.6.3. As mentioned previously, since the aim of my investigation is to examine the pragmatic development of L2 learners without specific L2 teaching interventions, my focus here will again be on studies that followed a similar design (for investigations that examine the effect of L2 teaching interventions, see, for example, Alcon Soler & Martinez Flor 2005; Cohen, 1998; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Kim & Hall, 2002; Martinez Flor, Uso Juan & Guerra 2003).
2.5.1 Developmental studies conducted during or after study abroad not focusing on requests

In this section I will review studies that provide insights into learners’ pragmatic development during or after their stay in the study abroad context. I will first discuss studies that explore L2 learners’ development over a long period (i.e. 10 months and more), then studies examining language learners’ pragmatic development in the study abroad environment over shorter periods (i.e. less than four months). This will be followed by a review of Felix-Brasdefer’s (2004) study that compared the pragmatic competence of L2 learners who lived in the target environment for different lengths of time.

Long-term studies

In one of the earliest studies focusing on the effect of the study abroad context on language learners’ pragmatic development, Sawyer (1992) examined the use of the Japanese sentence-final particle ne by adult second-language learners of Japanese (JSL). According to Sawyer the sentence-final particle ne that invites the agreement or confirmation of the listener occurs ‘extremely frequently, and because it is stressed and often followed by a pause, it is also relatively salient. Yet it is mastered by few learners of Japanese as a second language’ (1992, p. 85). Sawyer studied the pragmatic development of 11 beginner level learners over a period of 1 year. The data were gathered with elicited interviews that were conducted by Japanese native speakers. The data collection took place in 3-monthly intervals apart from the last data collection session, which took place six months after the third interview.

Sawyer (1991) found that the frequency with which ne was used in relation to the total word types increased steadily from interview to interview. However, although the learners made considerable gains in their employment of ne, they still underused it at the end of the observation period compared to the Japanese interviewers, who employed ne four times as frequently as the JSL learners. The data also showed that the individual learner participants’ pragmatic proficiency concerning the use of ne varied considerably. Based on the results, Sawyer divided the learners into three proficiency groups. Only one of his JSL learners was able to use ne in all interview responses and was therefore assigned to the high proficiency group. Three learners who individually employed ne 12–15 times in the data in at least three different contexts were allocated to the intermediate group, and seven participants who used ne five times or less in 0–3 different contexts were categorized as belonging to the least proficient group. Sawyer’s results show that even when learners live in the target environment for the same length of time, their gains in L2 pragmatic skills may differ considerably.

Barron’s studies (2003, 2007) are one of the few investigations available apart from Matsumura (2003), that include data collected from study abroad
learners while they were still in their home environment prior to their study abroad sojourn. In her publications, Barron analysed the pragmatic development of 33 Irish learners of German over a 14-months period, with the first data collection taking place in Ireland and the subsequent two taking place in Germany, one in the middle of the L2 learners’ stay and one towards the end of their sojourn. The learners’ data were elicited with a DCT and were compared with native speaker controls. As I will discuss her findings concerning requests in Section 2.5.3, I will focus on her results regarding upgraders in refusals here.

Barron (2003, 2007) found that during their sojourn in the target environment, her Irish learners of German tended to increase their employment of upgraders in initial refusals and became more native-like. Interestingly, however, this positive development only applied to situations involving strangers and not friends. She suggests that this may be the case because conversations between friends involve more ‘ad hoc utterances’ that make the use of upgraders ‘overly cognitively demanding for learners’ (2007, p. 159). Conversations between strangers, in contrast, tend to rely more on formulaic language which is easier to process.

Of particular interest to the present investigation is Barron’s finding that her learners’ preferences regarding individual upgrader types were similar to those of the German native speakers before their study abroad sojourn and did not change much over time, with both learners and native speakers mainly using intensifiers and time intensifiers in all of the scenarios. However, although both groups employed the same upgrader types, they showed differences in the their use of the actual lexical items; whereas the German native speakers preferred *viel* (‘many’) followed by *wirklich* and *sehr* (‘really’ and ‘very’), the learners mainly used *sehr* followed by *viel* and *ganz* (‘completely’) in all three of the data collection sessions. Thus, Barron’s studies indicate that the study abroad context can help to promote L2 learners’ use of certain pragmatic features in some contexts (e.g. use of upgraders in initial refusals with foreigners), although a 10-months sojourn in the target environment may not be sufficient for all L2 learners to consistently employ pragmatic features in a native-like manner in all contexts (e.g. use of upgraders with friends).

That a study abroad sojourn of 10-months may not improve all aspects of L2 learners’ pragmatic competence concerning a certain pragmatic feature was also noted by Warga and Schölmberger (2007), who examined apologetic utterances of seven Austrian learners of French in Canada. Data for their study was elicited with a DCT in 2-monthly intervals resulting in five data collection sessions. The L2 learners’ data were subsequently compared to native speaker controls. The researchers found that their learners mainly used the upgrader *très* (‘very’) throughout their stay, although this upgrader was employed with a very low frequency by the French native speakers, who predominantly used *vraiment* (‘really’).
Unfortunately, Warga and Schölmberger did not provide an analysis of the development of their individual learners. This would have been helpful, since the proficiency levels of their learners ranged from intermediate to advanced and also because some of their participants had never lived in a French speaking country before, whereas others had already spent 11 months in the target context. As the developmental studies reviewed here and in Section 2.4 have indicated, a sojourn of several months in the L2 environment can have a considerable impact on learners’ pragmatic competence and it would have been highly interesting to see how a previous sojourn may have impacted on L2 learners’ pragmatic development in the study abroad context.

**Short-term studies**

Focusing on the application of pragmatic norms in authentic interactions with academic members of staff, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) examined the use of suggestions by ten learners of English in academic advising sessions. The learners represented six different first languages (Arabic, Catalan/Spanish, Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, Japanese) and were enrolled in graduate programmes at a higher educational institution in the United States. In addition to the ESL learners, six graduate students who were native speakers of American English also participated in the study. The data were collected during advising sessions that took place within a period of 7 to 14 weeks from the initial session.

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) found that the learners’ pragmatic competence improved within a period of less than 4 months in the target environment. Whereas learners had used fewer suggestions than the native speakers at the beginning of their stay, which put them into a reactive position, they increased their use of suggestions considerably in later sessions. The researchers attributed this improvement to the high amount of explicit input provided by the advisor in the session, which showed the learners that a more active role was expected, and also to subsequent discussions with fellow students, which provided the learners with further insights.

However, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) also noted that although the learners increased their use of suggestions, they still displayed some non-native like use of aggravators and mitigators at the end of the observation period. Due to the rather private nature of academic advising sessions, learners generally cannot observe interactions between advisors and NS students in this context. Thus, following Schmidt’s noticing hypothesis it is rather difficult for them to obtain relevant input in these conditions. Similar to Warga and Schölmberger’s (2007) study, Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig did not provide developmental results for their individual participants. This is again regrettable, as it would have been interesting to see if and how the different L1s of their learners affected their pragmatic choices.
The in-depth analysis of the pragmatic development of one learner in the L2 context was the focus of Hassall’s (2006) diary study in which he analysed changes in his use of leave taking formulae in Indonesian during his 3-months sojourn in the target environment and also during previous sojourns in the Indonesia. In his investigation, Hassall primarily concentrated on his use of the strategy *permisi* (‘excuse me’) and the *dulu statement* (Hassall, 2006, p. 34), which indicates an interlocutor’s intention to take leave and contains the word *dulu* (‘for now, for the time being’). Hassall noted that prior to his sojourn, he sometimes used *permisi*, but never *dulu*. During the first 2 weeks of his 3-months stay, he used both *permisi* and *dulu*, although he was not sure about the pragmatic rules concerning their use. Following week 2 up to and including week 6, he only employed *permisi* as he considered it to be universally applicable and did not use *dulu* as he did not consider it suitable for many contexts. His use and views regarding the use of both formulae then changed drastically from week 7 onwards, when he started employing *dulu* much more frequently and used *permisi* considerably less frequently.

Hassall’s study is particularly interesting, as it indicates that pragmatic development may proceed in a non-linear fashion and that learners may decide to deliberately change their use of pragmatic features early on during their study abroad sojourn. As a consequence, even short sojourns of 3 months can result in changes in L2 learners’ pragmatic ability. However, as Cohen and Shively (2007) point out ‘leave taking may have been a relatively easy speech act to learn, in comparison to other acts such as complimenting’ (p. 192). Consequently, considerable development in the learners’ performance of more complex speech acts may only occur after a longer period of time in the study abroad context, which ties in with the results of studies examining the development of L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness (e.g. Bouton, 1994; Taguchi, 2008).

**Sojourns of different lengths**

Felix-Brasdefer’s (2004) investigation is one of very few studies that examine the effect of different lengths of sojourns in the L2 context on learners’ pragmatic abilities after the learners have returned to their home country. A group of 24 advanced learners of Spanish took part in his investigation. All of them had previously lived in a Spanish speaking country in South America and were assigned to four different groups based on their length of residence in the target context (group 1: 1–1.5 months; group 2: 3–5 months; group 3: 9–13 months; group 4: 18–30 months).

The researcher found that although some limited benefit of shorter study abroad sojourns could be observed...

[i]n general, the results of the present study consistently showed that the learners’ ability to negotiate a refusal (sequential organization) and their
ability to mitigate a refusal (lexical and syntactic mitigation) approximated NS levels (L1 Spanish) after 9 months of residence in the target community. (Felix-Brasdefer, 2004, pp. 634–635)

Similar to Hassal’s (2006) study, Felix-Brasdefer’s findings also indicate that pragmatic development in an L2 may follow a non-linear sequence, as his learners in group 2 and 3 were more verbose than the Spanish NSs, while members of group 4 were less verbose and approximated the NS norm. Felix-Brasdefer, however, also notes that although his learners who resided in the L2 country for 9 months or more produced refusals that generally resembled those produced by his Spanish native speaker controls in a variety of aspects, there were still instances in which even those learners deviated in their pragmatic choices from those of the native speakers (e.g. the content and form of two indirect apology strategies). This supports the findings of previous studies (e.g. Barron, 2003, 2007).

**Summary**

The review of non-request studies examining learners’ productive pragmatic development in the study abroad context suggests that changes in L2 learners’ pragmatic behaviour can occur relatively early and in a relatively short period of time (e.g. Hassall, 2006). These changes, however, may not result in a complete acquisition of the pragmatic norms under investigation and thus interlanguage specific behaviour may still remain (e.g. Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1993). A sojourn of 9 months or more in the study abroad country, in contrast, is likely to lead to a higher pragmatic competence in learners’ L2, especially concerning more complex pragmatic norms and strategies, although some interlanguage features may remain even after this period (e.g. Barron, 2003, 2007; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004).

### 2.5.2 Cross-sectional developmental studies focusing on requests

Similar to Section 2.3.4, my review of cross-sectional studies will again follow a geographical route from the first cross-sectional study involving Arabic learners of English in the United States (Scarcella, 1979) to Hill’s (1997) investigation of Japanese learners of English in Japan. This will be followed by a review of two cross-sectional studies examining L2 learners development in the Romance languages French (Warga, 2003, 2004) and Spanish (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008), which have been included as they show interesting similarities to English.

**Arabic learners of English**

Scarcella’s (1979) cross-sectional investigation of requests is one of the earliest developmental studies in interlanguage pragmatics. She compared requests
made by beginner and advanced level learners of English, who all shared Arabic as their L1, with those of American English native speakers. The data were elicited with three role-play situations. The results of the study showed that, similar to Tanaka’s (1988) and Woodfield’s (2008) Japanese learners, both of Scarcella’s learner groups used more direct strategies than her native speakers.

With regard to her participants’ use of internal and external modifiers, Scarcella suggests that some features such as the use of alerters (e.g. ‘Excuse me’) or politeness markers (e.g. ‘please’) emerge early in the L2 acquisitional process, whereas others such as the use of the inclusive ‘we’ or more informal language are indicative of a later stage in the learning process. Although there were marked differences between the requests made by beginner and advanced level learners of English, with the latter displaying more characteristics of native-like language use, Scarcella noted that ‘L2 performers are limited in both their range of politeness features and their capacity to vary their use according to the social context’ (1979, p. 286).

**Danish learners of English**

Nearly two decades after Scarcella’s (1979) study, Trosborg (1995) conducted a cross-sectional investigation in which she examined requests made by Danish EFL learners of three different proficiency levels. Participants in the intermediate group (group I) had studied English for 5–6 years, members of the lower level advanced group (group II) had studied English for 7–8 years and learners in the higher advanced level (group III) had undergone formal English language education for 10 years. In addition, a group of British English native speakers provided controls. As in Scarcella’s study, the data were elicited with role plays.

Trosborg’s analysis revealed that the three learner groups and the native speaker favoured conventionally indirect strategies, which is in agreement with previous non-developmental request studies (e.g. House & Kasper, 1981, 1987). Concerning the use of internal modifiers, the results showed that although group II used more downgraders than group I, thereby moving towards the NSs’ scores, members of group III used fewer downgraders than members of group II, which indicates that some request features, similar to features of other speech acts such as, for example, leave-taking (Hassall, 2006), may develop in a non-linear fashion. Regarding external modifiers, Trosborg (1995) found that these modifiers increased steadily from group I to group III, thereby indicating a linear development towards the native speakers’ use of external modifiers in Trosborg’s sample.

**Dutch learners of English**

Hendriks (2008) compared requests produced by Dutch school pupils, who had received 4–5 years of formal English tuition at school, with those made by
Dutch university students, who had received at least 6 years of English tuition at school and university. The L2 learner data were subsequently compared to data elicited from Dutch and English native speakers who were of a similar age as the L2 learners and attended either secondary school or university. The data collection instrument was a DCT.

Hendriks found that similar to previous studies (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1995), the majority of her learners and native speakers employed conventionally indirect request strategies. The analysis of external request modifiers revealed that although there were no significant differences between the two learner groups, the English native speakers employed significantly more syntactic downgraders than the L2 learners or the Dutch native speakers. This again suggests that syntactic downgraders may be acquired at a later stage than lexical/phrasal downgraders. Concerning lexical modifiers, both learner groups employed more politeness markers (75.8 per cent) than the English NSs (42.8 per cent) and the Dutch NSs (9.4 per cent). This indicates that the high frequency with which ‘please’ is used by the learners is not due to transfer from their L1, but may be a feature of Dutch learners’ interlanguage English.

**Turkish learners of English**

Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) examined request utterances made by Turkish lower intermediate and upper-intermediate learners of English and compared them to native speaker controls. Their learner data were collected with role-plays, while their American English data were elicited with DCTs. As the data elicitation methods for learners and native speakers are dissimilar, possible method effects on the participants’ utterances cannot be disregarded. In addition, the Turkish EFL learners were all undergraduate students with an age range from 17 to 20, whereas the American English native speakers were master and doctoral students between 25 to 46 years of age.

Otçu and Zeyrek found that similar to Trosborg’s (1995) and Hendrik’s (2008) results, the majority of their learners and native speakers employed conventionally indirect strategies. Concerning external modification, the researchers found that their lower-intermediate group used slightly more external modifiers than their upper-intermediate group, although the highest amount of external modifiers was employed by the native speakers. Thus, their findings do not support the presence of the waffle phenomenon in their data. Their analysis of internal modifiers showed that their upper-intermediate group used more lexical/phrasal downgraders than their lower-intermediate group, with the highest amount of lexical/phrasal downgraders again being used by the NSs. Their data therefore suggest a linear development towards the native speaker norm.
Compared to lexical/phrasal downgraders, syntactic downgraders were used considerably less frequently by the three participant groups. The highest number was employed by the native speakers, followed by the upper-intermediate and the lower-intermediate learners. This again shows a linear increase towards the native speaker norm. Their findings also indicate that syntactic downgraders may be acquired later than lexical downgraders, which was also suggested by Hendrik’s (2008) results.

**Chinese learners of English**

In an investigation focusing on Chinese learners of English, Rose (2000) studied young L2 learners in Hong Kong of different proficiency levels. His learner participants were three groups of primary school pupils attending different levels: participants in group P-2 attended primary level two with an average age of 7 years, participants in group P-4 attended year four with a average age of 9 years and participants in group P-6 attended grade six with an average age of 11 years. The data were elicited with a Cartoon Oral Production Task (COPT) containing ten request scenarios. In his analysis of requests, Rose found that the two higher proficiency groups used conventionally indirect requests with the highest frequency, with the highest level group employing conventionally indirect strategies most frequently. The lowest proficiency group in contrast preferred to not perform the request in the majority of cases.

Rose also examined the learners’ employment of external modifiers and found that their use increased from group P-2 to group P-6. Unfortunately, however, the data were not compared to native speaker controls and it is therefore not possible to assess whether English native speakers of a similar age would have used more modifiers or fewer modifiers than the L2 learners.

**Japanese learners of English**

Hill (1997) examined requests made by Japanese learners of English which represented three different proficiency levels: low, intermediate and advanced. The data for his investigation were elicited with a DCT containing eight high imposition requests. The learner data were subsequently compared to English controls. Hill found that similar to Tanaka’s (1988) and Woodfield’s (2008) Japanese learner participants, his learners also employed more direct strategies than the native speaker group. However, the use of direct strategies decreased considerably from the lowest to the highest proficiency group thereby showing development towards the native speaker norm and indicating that a high use of direct strategies may be typical for beginner level learners still struggling with the complexities of producing grammatically correct
utterances in their L2. Concerning his groups’ use of indirect request strategies, Hill’s results revealed that their use increased relative to L2 learners’ proficiency level, thus again showing development towards his native speakers’ use of indirect strategies.

Regarding external request modifers, Hill found that his learners again increased their employment of them relative to their proficiency level towards the native speaker scores. However, similar to Trosborg’s (1995) Danish EFL learners and Otçu and Zeyrek’s (2008) Turkish EFL learners, his learners used fewer external modifiers than his NS participants. This finding therefore does not support the presence of the waffle phenomenon and is in disagreement with previous request studies that had confirmed the existence of the waffle phenomenon (e.g. Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; House & Kasper, 1981, 1987).

The analysis of his learners’ employment of internal downgraders revealed a variety of developments such as a linear increase towards the native speaker scores (e.g. consultative device), a linear decrease towards the native speaker scores (e.g. politeness marker), as well as non-linear developments towards (e.g. understater) and away from the native speaker scores (e.g. adverbial intensifier). These findings suggest that both linear and non-linear developments may be typical for learners’ acquisition of pragmatic features.

A second cross-sectional study on Japanese learners of English was conducted by Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003), who examined requests made in role-plays by high and low proficiency learners. The researchers do not provide detailed general comments on the request strategies employed by their learner groups, but emphasized that one pervasive strategy used by both groups were the direct want statements that occurred very frequently in their data. Kobayashi and Rinnert suggest that the high amount of want statements is probably the result of the data elicitation method which leaves the learners little time to plan their utterances thus resulting in them using well-known and easier strategies. Alternatively, their learners’ preference for direct strategies could also be caused by other reasons that Woodfield (2008) suggested regarding her Japanese learners’ results (cf. 2.3.3). Concerning external modifiers, Kobayashi and Rinnert found that their use increased in relation to their learners’ proficiency level, which supports Hill’s (1997) findings. Regrettably, their data were not compared to that of a native speaker controls and it is therefore not clear whether the learners moved towards or away from English native speakers’ use of external modifiers.

Austrian learners of French

In contrast to the studies discussed so far, which all centred on L2 learners of English, Warga (2003, 2004) examined the requests produced by Austrian learners of French (FFL) in her cross-sectional investigations. Three different
learner groups, all of them students at an Austrian secondary school, took part in her research. The members of group I had studied French for 4 years, while the learners in groups II and III, had learned French for 5 and 6 years respectively. Their data were compared to that of French and Austrian German native speakers. The instruments used in her investigation were a DCT and role-plays.

The results showed that similar to Trosborg’s (1995) learner participants, Warga’s (2003, 2004) three learner groups employed conventionally indirect requests with the highest frequency. Although her learners tended to prefer conventionally indirect request strategies, her data also shows that her learner groups employed more direct strategies than the French native speakers. The development concerning direct strategies tended to be of a non-linear nature either away from or towards the native speakers’ use. Regarding her learners’ external modifier use, Warga found a steady increase from group I to group III. Like previous studies mentioned above (e.g. Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; House & Kasper, 1987), however, all three learner FFL groups used more external modifiers than the French native speakers, which supports Edmondson and House’s (1991) notion of the waffle phenomenon and is in disagreement with Trosborg’s (1995), Hill’s (1997) and Otçu and Zeyrek’s (2008) results. Concerning internal modifiers, Warga’s FFL of all three groups used fewer lexical/phrasal modifiers than syntactic ones, which is in disagreement with Hendrik’s (2008) and Otçu and Zeyrek’s (2008) studies.

American English learners of Spanish

Also investigating L2 learners’ request production in a Romance language, Felix-Brasdefer (2008) examined requests made in Spanish by American English university students representing three different proficiency levels. His beginner level learners were studying Spanish in their first year at university, while his intermediate learners and advanced learners were in their third and final year respectively. The data were collected with role-plays. His analysis showed that learners’ use of direct request strategies decreased significantly with rising proficiency levels (beginners: 84 per cent; intermediate: 36 per cent; advanced: 18.5 per cent). This finding is therefore in agreement with previous studies by Hill (1997) and Rose (2000). Concerning conventionally indirect requests Felix-Brasdefer’s data showed an inverse trend to the direct requests, as learners significantly increased their use of conventionally indirect strategies relative to higher proficiency in Spanish (beginners: 10 per cent; intermediate: 59 per cent; advanced: 78.5 per cent).

Regarding external modifiers, the results revealed that all three learner groups favoured the grounder, while the beginner level learners used somewhat fewer preparators than the intermediate or advanced learners. Regrettably, the learner data were not compared with native speaker controls, which could
have shown to what extent learners’ requests developed towards or away from requests produced by Spanish native speakers of a similar age range.

**Summary**

The review of cross-sectional studies focusing on L2 learners’ production of request utterances has shown the following:

- L2 learners with lower proficiency levels tend to use more direct strategies than native speakers (e.g. Rose, 2000; Scarcella, 1979).
- With increasing proficiency levels L2 learners tend to decrease their use of direct strategies and increase their use of conventionally indirect strategies (e.g. Felix-Brasdefer, 2008; Hill, 1997).
- L2 learners who have studied their second/foreign language for several years frequently use conventionally indirect strategies and thus display a behaviour similar to that of native speakers (e.g. Hendriks, 2008; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008; Trosborg, 1995).
- While some studies found that L2 learners’ use of external modifiers increased in a linear manner relative to the years learners had been studying the language (e.g. Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000; Trosborg, 1995; Warga, 2004), Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) found that their lower proficiency group employed more external modifiers than their higher proficiency group.
- Although Warga’s (2004) study confirmed the presence of the waffle phenomenon, the results of other studies revealed that the native speaker controls employed the highest amount of external modifiers (e.g. Hill, 1997; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008).
- Concerning internal modifiers, Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) found that their learners employed fewer syntactic than lexical/phrasal downgraders and Hendrik’s (2008) results showed that her NSs employed more syntactic downgraders than her learners which indicates that syntactic downgraders may be acquired later than lexical/phrasal ones.

This concludes the review of cross-sectional developmental studies focusing on requests. In the following section I will review longitudinal developmental studies that examined L2 learners’ request performance over time.

### 2.5.3 Longitudinal developmental studies focusing on requests

In this section, I will review four longitudinal developmental studies that explore L2 learners’ development in the target environment. Only one of the four studies (Barron, 2003) that I will discuss here addresses the pragmatic development of L2 learners in the study abroad context. This again shows the
relative scarcity of research in this particular area. Schmidt’s (1983) investigation followed the development of an adult learner of English in Hawaii, who relocated there for personal and business reasons. Schmidt’s and Barron’s study will be discussed first as they examined adult learners’ development that is also the focus of the present investigation. Following that I will review two studies examining the ILP development of child learners in Great Britain (Ellis, 1992) and Australia (Achiba, 2003) that provide further insights into acquisitional sequences in requests.

**Adult learners**

While Scarcella (1979) is one of the earliest cross-sectional examinations into the production of requests by L2 learners, Schmidt’s (1983) examination of a Japanese learners’ development over a 3-year period in the target context is one of the first longitudinal studies in the field. The participant in this case study was a male adult, Wes, who first visited Hawaii as a tourist in 1977, spent an increasing amount of time there in the following years, and achieved permanent resident status in 1981. During this period, Schmidt examined his use of requests in a number of situations by making field notes and analysing monologues recorded by the participant.

At the beginning of the observation period, Wes’s ability to communicate in English was only minimal, since he had not received formal English instruction in his home country Japan. He employed short requests mainly relying on the conventionally indirect permission strategy ‘Can I . . .?’ and the suggestory formula ‘Shall we . . .?’ The latter, however, was only used with the verb ‘go’ and thus was not yet employed as a formulaic expression. Wes also used non-conventionally indirect hints to achieve the desired outcome in an interaction, which he seemed to have transferred from this native language. His use of this strategy was not always effective, as some of his expressions seemed to have been transferred from Japanese, for example, prompting a person to move over by asking ‘You like this chair?’ As a consequence, his hints were often not comprehensible for his American interlocutors. Similar to Scarcella’s (1979) learners, Wes also used the politeness marker ‘please’ at this early stage.

By the end of the observation period, Wes used ‘shall we’ and ‘let’s’ formulas with a variety of different verbs for a wide range of requests. In addition, his utterances had become more elaborate. However, some pragmatic norms of his native language also continued to influence the way Wes expressed himself in his second language, as at times his speech tended to display more characteristics of Japanese norms than of American English ones. For example, he still tended to express his gratitude for a recently rendered service at the beginning of telephone conversations, which is not commonly done by English native speakers. Although, as Schmidt (1983) noted his ability to vary request
forms increased during the three years, he did not have complete control over the use of appropriate request forms in different situations and with different interlocutors, which is again similar to Scarcella’s (1979) findings.

The second longitudinal developmental study that examined adult L2 learners’ request utterances was conducted by Barron and published 20 years after Schmidt’s in 2003. The large gap between these two studies shows the scarcity of longitudinal developmental studies investigating adult learners’ requests in their L2 and indicates how underexplored the effect of the study abroad/target context on L2 learners’ pragmatic development is at the time of writing. Barron followed the pragmatic development of 33 Irish learners of German in her investigation of requests and other speech acts (see Section 2.6.1 for a review of her results concerning refusals). Her learner participants were university students who spent one year in a study-abroad programme in Germany.

The data were gathered at three distinct points, with the first collection taking place in the learners’ home country, the second collection occurring after the learners had spent 2 months in the target environment and the last collection taking place 7 months later at the end of their stay. In addition, data were also collected from English and German native speakers. The elicitation instruments used were production questionnaires and interviews. Focusing on internal modifiers in her analysis, Barron found that her learners increased their use of lexical/phrasal modifiers towards that of the German NSs during their stay. However, the results also revealed that this development did not always proceed in a linear fashion. Concerning syntactic modifiers, the findings did not indicate a marked development towards the native speaker norm. Thus, her results like Hendrik’s (2008) and Otçu and Zeyrek’s (2008) suggest that syntactic downgraders are likely to be learned later than lexical/phrasal downgraders.

**Child learners**

Ellis (1992) investigated the pragmatic development of two immigrant boys, aged 10 and 11, who were observed in a British English classroom context. Both boys, J and R, attended an English Language Unit which had the aim to promote ‘basic interpersonal communication skills in English’ and to develop ‘the proficiency to use English for studying school subjects’ (Ellis, 1992, pp. 7, 8). J could not speak English with the exception of ‘yes’ and ‘no’. He was able to understand simple instructions, though he relied on the context. J was literate in his native language Portuguese and knew the rules of speaking in a classroom context. R was neither able to understand nor to speak English and was not literate in his mother tongue Punjabi or Urdu.

Although both boys attended the same institution, they were not in the same class. Ellis visited their classrooms at regular intervals and studied their pragmatic development over a period of 4 school terms in J’s case and 6 school
terms in R’s case. He collected the data by sitting next to his participant and by noting down the requests uttered and the turn-taking sequences. In addition, he audio-taped a number of lessons, which he later transcribed.

When Ellis began his study, the majority of J’s requests already contained a verb, while all of R’s requests were initially verbless. By the end of the learners’ second term, however, both boys had begun to frequently use verbs and also objects. The majority of the requests made by the two learners during the observation period were direct. However, the number of conventionally indirect strategies increased considerably in the J’s third and R’s fourth term. This inverse development is in agreement with the findings of cross-sectional studies that also reported a decrease of direct strategies and an increase of conventionally indirect strategies relative to L2 learners’ proficiency levels (e.g. Felix-Brasdefer, 2008; Hill, 1997; Rose, 2000).

Not only did the number of conventionally indirect requests used by both J and R increase during the time they were observed, they also extended their productive repertoire of conventionally indirect strategy types and strategy-verb combinations from the formulaic permission strategy ‘Can I have . . .?’ to the ability strategy ‘Can you . . .?’ and the permission strategy with other verbs, such as ‘Can I take . . .?’. The latter variation of formula-verb combinations had also been noted by Schmidt (1983) concerning Wes’s expansion of the ‘Shall we . . .?’ formula.

Like Scarcella (1979) and Schmidt’s (1983) learners, Ellis’ learners also used the internal modifier ‘please’ from a very early stage, although both boys did not employ a high number of either internal or external modifiers. The results appear to suggest the presence of individual learner differences in the use of these modifier types, since R used significantly more than J. However, as the boys also displayed similarities in their acquisition of request formulas and preference for the politeness marker ‘please’, it appears that both general patterns as well as individual differences influenced the pragmatic development of both learners.

Similar to Ellis (1992), Achiba (2003) conducted a longitudinal study of a child L2 learner of English. The participant was her 7-year-old daughter, Yao, whom she observed over a period of 17 months during their stay in Australia. The data used for the study consists of recordings made of Yao at her home in Melbourne with a variety of interlocutors mainly during playtime. These recordings were supplemented by observational data noted in a diary. The data that were analysed for the study were taped in 5 to 6 week intervals.

During the first phase, Yao used direct strategies, such as imperatives ‘Colour in here’ or ‘Keep going’, or the suggestory formula ‘Let’s . . .’, as well as the conventionally indirect permission and ability strategies ‘Can I . . .?’ and ‘Can you . . .?’. During the second phase, the data reveal an increase in the use of conventionally indirect ability questions as well as of want statements. Yao
further expanded her repertoire of other strategies, such as the suggestory formula ‘Why don’t you . . .?’. In phase three, the learner increased her employment of obligation statements, such as ‘You have to . . .’, and further expanded her repertoire of conventionally indirect strategies, such as the willingness strategy, ‘Will you . . .?’. The final phase again saw an expansion of conventionally indirect strategies and also a high frequency use of past tense modals within them, such as ‘Could you . . .?’ or ‘Would you . . .?’. Thus, compared to Ellis’s (1992) child learners, Yao seems to have acquired considerably more request strategies during her stay in the target language environment.

A reason for this may be the fact that she did not attend a specialist school like Ellis’s learners and that her mother encouraged her to spend a large amount of time with English native speakers. This high level of exposure to native speakers and the resulting wealth of opportunities to observe and notice native speakers’ language use may have been responsible for her good progress in the acquisition of L2 pragmatic strategies and norms. An alternative explanation for Ellis’s (1992) and Achiba’s (2003) findings might be the different contexts in which the data were elicited. It is unlikely that the classroom context in which Ellis collected his data provided him with as many opportunities to observe his learners as Achiba who observed her daughter at home.

Regarding Yao’s development concerning request modification it is interesting to note that although she employed more internal and external modifiers than J and R overall, in the majority of cases her modifier use does not show a linear increase relative to her rising proficiency in her second language. Similar observations regarding non-linear developments were also made in cross-sectional studies by Trosborg (1995) and Hill (1997) and in longitudinal studies by Ellis (1992) and Barron (2003).

**Summary**

The review of longitudinal developmental studies focusing on learners’ ability to produce request utterances has revealed the following:

- Child L2 English learners in the target environment first use mainly direct strategies (Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992).
- Conventionally indirect strategies seem to be acquired later than direct strategies by child L2 English learners in the host environment (Achiba, 2003; Ellis, 1992).
- Individual learner differences seem to also affect child L2 learners’ pragmatic development (Ellis, 1992).
- Adult L2 learners in the host country may use non-conventionally indirect requests, but may not be able to use them according to the norms of the L2 (Schmidt, 1983).
L1 transfer may affect adult L2 learners’ production of requests (Schmidt, 1983).

Adult L2 learners may progress concerning their request use but may still diverge from NSs’ request performance after several months in the L2 context (Schmidt, 1983).

The politeness marker ‘please’ is used relatively early by L2 learners of English (Schmidt, 1983; Ellis, 1992).

L2 learners’ pragmatic skills may develop in a non-linear manner (Achiba, 2003).

This concludes the review of longitudinal request studies in the target environment. In the next section, I will discuss the implications of the review of developmental studies examining L2 learners’ productive pragmatic skills.

2.5.4 Implications

The studies discussed above have significantly contributed to our understanding of L2 learners’ productive pragmatic development. The number of developmental studies published in recent years also indicate that interest in this area of ILP is increasing and more research is being conducted on what L2 learners can do at various proficiency levels and on what effect a longitudinal sojourn in the L2 context may have on language learners’ pragmatic skills.

However, the review of the studies has also revealed that ILP development—and in particular learners’ pragmatic development in the study abroad context—still remains underexplored. This is particularly evident in the area of request studies, where only very few studies have investigated L2 learners’ pragmatic skills from a longitudinal perspective. As learners have to perform requests very frequently in an L2 environment, it is important that their developmental stages and potential transfer issues are explored to obtain better insights in what steps can be taken to help them communicate better in their L2. The present investigations hopes to help shed light on how German learners of English may develop in the L2 context and what effect a sustained sojourn in the study abroad context may have on their pragmatic abilities.

As the choice of data collection technique plays a highly important role in ILP research and also influenced the development of the MET, I will review data elicitation techniques employed in interlanguage pragmatics research in the following chapter.

Notes

1 Peirce (1905) defined pragmatism as the theory that a conception, that is, the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since
obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept, and there is absolutely nothing more in it. [original italics]

Semiotics is the study of linguistic and non-linguistic signs and symbols. One of the founding fathers of semiotics is the philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, whose pragmatic maxim influenced Morris's distinction of the components of semiotics as syntax (relationship between linguistic signs), semantics (relationships between linguistic signs and the entities they designate) and pragmatics (relationship of signs to interpreters).

Austin distinguished the following speech acts: verdictives (utterances giving a verdict, for example, to estimate or to reckon), exercitives (utterances that are used to exercise power, for example, to order or to advise), commissives (utterances that are used to promise or to commit the speaker to something, for example, to promise or to intend), behabives (utterances having to do with attitudes and social behaviour, for example, to apologize or to congratulate) and expositives (utterances that show how a speaker is using words, for example, to reply or to concede). Searle (1976) criticized Austin’s (1962) classification framework for speech acts which he considered to contain a number of flaws, such as not having resulted from clearly defined principles and displaying a high degree of heterogeneity in some of the categories. His major criticism, however, was that Austin’s categories did not in fact contain different illocutionary acts, but different English illocutionary verbs. This was also noted by Leech who summarized the problems of Austin’s classification under the term ‘Illocutionary-Verb fallacy’ (1983, p. 176).

Wierzbicka (2003) criticized that Grice’s categories were solely based on the English language and did not apply to other languages. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argued that adhering to the conversational maxims would result in unnatural speech. Concerning the latter point, Levinson (1983) and Thomas (1995) pointed out that Grice did not suggest that speakers always behaved according to all the maxims, but that people believed that certain rules of interaction were being adhered to in normal conversation.

These factors are also regarded as crucial components in Fraser’s (1990) and Fraser and Nolen’s (1981) notion of a conversational contract (CC) which is based on their view that interlocutors are aware of each others’ status, power, their relationship towards each other, their cultural expectations/rules, as well as other factors which play a significant role in the way the conversation is structured and which linguistic means are used to achieve the aim of the conversation.

Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) concept of positive and negative face has been criticized by scholars, such as Matsumoto (1988), Ide (1989), Mao (1994) and Bharuthram (2003) who argue that their theory of politeness does not apply to non-Western languages such as Japanese, Chinese and South African Indian English. However, recent studies on Japanese by Pizziconi (2003), Fukada and Asato (2004) have disagreed with this assessment and shown that Brown and
Levinson’s framework can be of use with Asian languages. See also Spencer-Oatey (2008) for a more recent face framework.

7 See also Wierzbicka (2008) for examples involving politeness in Russian.

8 The term ‘interlanguage’ was coined by Selinker (1972) and is generally understood to refer to ‘a transitional system reflecting the learner’s current L2 knowledge’ (Ellis, 1994, p. 16).

9 The development here refers to a move away from Chomsky’s (1965) distinction between linguistic competence and performance that focused on grammatical language use and was based on an ideal native speaker and towards more communicatively oriented L2 pedagogy. See also Savignon (2005) and Edmondson and House (2006) for a detailed description of this pedagogical shift.

10 The majority of the communicative competence models (i.e. Canale 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes 1971, 1972) do not explicitly refer to pragmatic competence in their models, but instead do so implicitly. Bachman (1990) is the first who uses the term pragmatic competence as a major component of his model.

11 Up until the early 1980s only very few studies had been published in interlanguage pragmatics (e.g. House, 1979, 1984; House & Kasper, 1981; Kasper, 1981, 1982).

12 To evaluate and assess how inappropriate the use of an imperative is in this particular context, listeners should also be aware of any mitigating circumstances, such as the imperative being used as an illustrative example of the student’s work on pragmatics.

13 In contrast to the studies discussed here so far, Hassall did not attend university courses during his stay in Indonesia. His sojourn was therefore not a study abroad sojourn according to a narrow definition that involves links with higher educational institutions. I decided to include his study, as his reason for staying in Indonesia was to improve his language and also because his study contains some very interesting findings regarding pragmatic changes over relatively short periods of time.

14 Similar to Hassall’s investigation, some of Felix-Brasdefer’s L2 learners had not attended university courses during their sojourn abroad. However, as this study provides insights into how long a sojourn in the target context needs to be to help learners’ develop their pragmatic skills, I decided to include it. Data for the study which examined refusals were elicited with role plays and verbal protocols and compared to native speaker controls.
Chapter 3

Data Collection Techniques in Interlanguage Pragmatics

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss various data collection techniques that have been used in interlanguage pragmatics research to investigate learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic awareness and their productive pragmatic skills. In Section 3.1, I will review data collection methods that have been used to examine participants’ pragmatic awareness. Data collection techniques employed to obtain insights into participants’ productive pragmatic skills will then be discussed in Section 3.2.

3.1 Data Elicitation Techniques in Awareness Studies

In the following, I will discuss three different types of data elicitation techniques that have been employed in ILP research to examine learners’ and native speakers’ pragmatic awareness. I will begin my review with diaries and verbal reports in Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 respectively. Subsequent to this I will discuss rank-ordering tasks in Section 3.1.3. This will be followed by a review of multiple choice questionnaires in Section 3.1.4 and multimedia instruments in Section 3.1.5.

3.1.1 Diaries

Diary studies allow participants to record their actions, thoughts, experiences and feelings either in written or oral form. Kasper and Röver (2005, p. 329; my emphasis) distinguish two types of diary studies:

the *self-study diary*, in which the diarist and the researcher are the same person and the *commissioned diary*, in which the researcher requests participants ( . . . ) to keep a journal that is then submitted to and analysed by the researcher.
Examples for the former are Cohen (1997) and Hassall (2006), while examples for the latter are DuFon (2006) and Crawshaw, Culpeper and Harrison (forthcoming). This data collection method enables researchers to examine both introspective processes as well as the participants’ recollection of their utterances in the L2 and therefore also provides insights into L2 learners’ productive pragmatic competence, which is one of the advantages of this method. Further benefits are that diaries can be used for longitudinal developmental studies and that the entries may expose phenomena that may be difficult to observe with other methods.

Disadvantages of this data collection technique include that it may be difficult to retain commissioned participants for a longer period of time and to ensure that the commissioned participants record their experiences, thoughts and actions in sufficient detail and in a truthful manner. While these disadvantages are unlikely to apply to self-study diaries, the very fact that these diaries are written by the researcher and therefore by professionals in the area of investigation can be a disadvantage, as ‘they [the researchers] constitute a highly specialized population and the insights from these studies cannot often be extended to other contexts’ (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 178).

3.1.2 Verbal protocols

Two types of verbal protocols, which are also referred to as ‘think aloud protocols’ in the literature, are commonly distinguished: concurrent verbal protocols, which are employed to obtain insights into learners’ thought processes while completing a research task (e.g. Woodfield, 2008), and retrospective verbal protocols that are elicited after the research task has been completed (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004). Although verbal protocols are primarily used to obtain insights into participants’ internal thought processes and consequently their pragmatic awareness, they are employed in conjunction with techniques that collect participants’ productive data. This combined method approach is one of the advantages of this data collection technique, as it provides researchers with deeper insights into learners’ pragmatic awareness as well as their productive skills.

Further advantages of verbal protocols are that they can provide researchers with information on what other possible answers the participants may have considered and what made them select their final choice. Thus employing self-reports can help to answer whether learners rejected certain options because of non-pragmatic considerations such as grammatical complexity of certain structures or because of specific pragmatic considerations.

The main disadvantage of concurrent verbal protocols is that as Kasper and Röver (2005, p. 329) point out they ‘may produce reactivity, that is, they may interfere with doing the task’. This potential problem does not arise with retrospective verbal protocols, where participants reflect on their choices after
they are reminded of their original answer often with the use of recordings. However, one of the disadvantages of retrospective verbal protocols is that participants need to give up additional time after the original task is completed in order to share their thoughts with the researchers. The semi-structured interviews employed in the present investigation into participants’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness also included a retrospective report element. This increased the length of the data collection sessions (see Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of the research methodology) and may have contributed to the attrition of participants in the longitudinal study.

3.1.3 Rank-ordering tasks

One of the earliest methods used to investigate participants’ pragmatic awareness were rank-ordering instruments which were employed in two formats. The first format involved the sorting of cards, while the second involved filling in a questionnaire. Card-sorting entails putting sets of cards in a sequence, most commonly into an order from least to most polite. Typically a set of cards consists of various utterances that can be used to achieve the same purpose (e.g. asking for something) but represent varying degrees of directness with which the speech act may be performed. The set is often accompanied by an additional card that briefly describes the situation in which the utterances might be made, such as purchasing shoes in a shoe shop (Carrell & Konneker, 1981). The participants are supplied with the cards and are then asked to put them into a specific order according to the participants’ assessment of politeness. Card-sorting was employed in two of the earliest studies into learners’ pragmatic awareness by Carrell and Konneker (1981) and Tanaka and Kawade (1982).

Card-sorting has two main advantages: first, it is a very inexpensive method and secondly, it can be administered relatively quickly which allows researchers to collect data from a large number of participants. However, the main limitation of this method is the extent to which contextual information can be provided on the cards, as the situational circumstances in which the utterances are to be evaluated can only be briefly summarized due to the size and number of the cards that participants have to spread out on a table. In addition, the different card sets need to be easily distinguishable (e.g. colour-coded), since otherwise the risk increases that individual cards are mixed up and learners become confused.

Rank-ordering tasks can also take the form of questionnaires as in Olshtain and Blum-Kulka’s (1985) and Kitao’s (1990) studies, in which participants were asked to rank order request and apology utterances. Instead of physically putting the utterances into a sequence, participants in these studies were asked to either score the appropriacy of the utterance on ten-part-scales ranging from very rude to very polite printed next to the utterances in questions (Kitao), or to assign them a score from one to three (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka). Questionnaire rank-ordering tasks share the same advantages as card-sorting
while allowing researchers to investigate a higher number of scenarios and to provide more detailed contextual information. However, as both are paper-based methods, the contextual information is restricted to this medium and cannot provide participants with audiovisual clues.

3.1.4 Multiple Choice Questionnaires

Another instrument that has been used in pragmatic awareness research is the Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ) which was, for example, employed by Bouton (1988, 1994), Hinkel (1997) and Cook and Liddicoat (2002). MCQs typically contain a number of scenarios which are followed by several sentences that are either interpretations of an utterance that is contained in the scenario’s description, or possible responses to the scenario. The advantage of the MCQ is that like rank-ordering questionnaires, this method is relatively inexpensive, can be administered quickly to a large number of participants and allows researchers to describe scenarios in detail.

However, although a greater amount of contextual information can be provided, participants only receive written instructions, which, even if they are very precise, rely on a high degree of imagination on the participants’ part, since they can neither hear nor see the conversation in its context. As a consequence, participants have to imagine the speakers’ tone and facial expressions, which might lead to different assessments of the scenarios based on the individual participants’ ideas of how an utterance was intended by the speaker, for example, as friendly teasing between friends or as an insult. It is therefore essential that contextual issues are addressed by the instrument. This can be done by providing detailed instructions that inform the participants that none of the interactions contain instances of friendly banter, for example. In recent years, computerized versions of multiple choice instruments (e.g. Taguchi’s computerized listening task, 2005, 2008) have been used to provide learners with audio input, thereby enabling participants to also make judgments based on the speakers’ prosody. This is a very encouraging development that shows how existing instruments can be modified to address their limitations.

3.1.5 Multimedia instruments

As the example of Taguchi’s computerized listening task (2005, 2008) above shows, advances in technology have lead to the development of new data collection instruments in ILP research. With the increasing availability of multimedia technology in the 1990s, instruments were designed by researchers that enabled them to provide their participants with audiovisual contextual information, thereby ensuring that the participants were indeed presented the interaction in the way the researchers had intended them to. Instruments developed
during these years were Koike’s (1996) and Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) combined video-and-questionnaire tasks. These video-and-questionnaire tasks consist of a video, which contains a number of different scenarios that were developed and filmed by the researchers, and a questionnaire. In the latter participants are asked to assess various issues of the interaction, for example, by rating on scales the severity of an inappropriate utterance (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei) or the friendliness/unfriendliness of the speaker (Koike).

Disadvantages of methods employing media such as video recordings are that they are more expensive to develop than card or paper based instruments, and that the researchers are more restricted in the eventual data collection locations, which have to contain the facilities needed for the instrument, such as a television set and a video recorder or a computer. However, compared to paper-based rank ordering tasks and MCQs, pragmatic awareness instruments using audiovisual media have the clear advantage that they provide participants with a higher degree of carefully controlled contextual information. Thus, they considerably decrease the probability that utterances might be assessed differently based on the individual participants’ imagination/perception of the scenario. Although participants may still interpret video-recorded situations in a slightly different way based on their own personal background and experiences, rich contextual information can limit the opportunities in which this might happen.

Based on the merits and shortcomings of the different instruments used in pragmatic awareness research, I decided to employ Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) video and questionnaire task for the following reasons:

- The video provides participants with detailed, carefully predetermined audiovisual information thereby allowing the participants to observe the speakers’ tone of voice and facial expressions.
- The interactions portrayed in the video are all based on situations my target participant group was likely to experience in their everyday life as young adults attending a university and thus follow Bonikowska’s (1988) call for basing instruments on situations that are familiar to the participants.
- The inclusion of both pragmatic and grammatical errors in the video-and-questionnaire task enabled me to not only examine which error type the participants are more aware of, but also which error type they perceive to be more serious. This meant that the effect of the study abroad and at home learning environment on participants’ error severity perception could also be investigated.
- The structure of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s instrument also allowed me to add an additional data collection method, semi-structured interviews including verbal report elements, which had not previously been employed in combination with the video-and-questionnaire task. This enabled me to also investigate whether learners and native speakers are conscious of their
rating behaviour, that is, whether they deliberately assigned one of the two error types, pragmatic or grammatical, higher severity scores.

3.2 Data Collection Methods in Production Studies

Data collection methods in production studies can be distinguished according to whether the data collected is naturally occurring or specifically elicited for the purpose of research. In Section 3.2.1, I will first discuss the observation of naturally occurring data. This will be followed by a review of elicited data collection techniques, such as production questionnaires in Section 3.2.2, elicited conversation and role-plays in Section 3.2.3 and finally multimedia instruments in Section 3.2.4.

3.2.1 Observation of naturally occurring data

Studies that examine naturally occurring data are based on the researchers’ observation of their participants’ productive pragmatic skills, which can be recorded in field notes and/or with audiovisual equipment. Researchers that employed this method were, for example, Schmidt (1983), Ellis (1992), Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990, 1993) and Achiba (2003). The obvious advantage of using naturally occurring data is that the L2 learner’s ability to communicate appropriately can be examined in real situations in the participants’ natural everyday environment. It would therefore seem to be the ideal data collection method. Yet very few studies in the field have actually employed this method (Kasper & Dahl, 1991).

There are a number of possible reasons why only a rather limited amount of research is based on the observation of authentic discourse in interlanguage pragmatics. One of the main disadvantages of relying on naturally occurring discourse is Labov’s (1972) observer’s paradox. Labov questioned whether it is in fact possible to observe ‘authentic’ interactions as the presence of the researcher or the recording equipment might have an effect of the participants’ discourse. In addition, it may not always be possible to easily gain access to institutional research sites (Kasper & Rose, 2002). This can limit the locations from which recordings of a particular participant can be obtained.

However, even if recording is permitted, data collected in the language learners’ natural environment can, according to Beebe (1992, cited by Beebe & Cummings, 1995), often be unsystematic since essential information, such as the interlocutors’ status, age, ethnicity and so on may not be reported or difficult to determine. Also, if researchers solely rely on field notes, these might
not be sufficiently accurate as Yuan (2001) points out. In addition, contextual variables such as different degrees of imposition in request studies, are also very difficult to examine in a structured way.

3.2.2 Production questionnaires

Various production questionnaires (see Kasper, 1998b, 2000 for an in-depth discussion of different types) have been used to gather participants’ written data in ILP research. These questionnaires, which are also often referred to as Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), typically contain a written description of a scenario and may also include the initial turn or turns of a conversation. This is then followed by a blank in which the participants write what they would say if they were in the situation. Some production questionnaires also contain the hearer’s response to the participants’ utterance called rejoinder\(^2\) (Johnston, Kasper & Ross, 1998) or a further blank for the participants to fill in the other interlocutors’ response (cf. Barron, 2003).

In contrast to the observation of naturally occurring data, production questionnaires are frequently used in interlanguage pragmatics research (Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Rose, 2002). They have achieved this popularity because they allow the researcher to control the context of the scenarios which the participants are asked to fill in, are inexpensive, easy to administer and make it possible to quickly gather a large amount of data. However, they also have several limitations. One of them concerns the suitability of certain scenarios for specific participant groups, for example, asking students to imagine being a businessperson asking for a pay rise (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999b). It is debatable if participants can provide answers that are representative of authentic speech in contexts they themselves are unfamiliar with, for example, if they have never held a particular position in their working life or have not experienced certain life events, such as becoming a parent, as they may not be aware of the language used in these circumstances.

A further limitation of production questionnaires concerns the differing degrees of contextual information provided in the scenario descriptions. Differences in these descriptions have been shown to influence the findings of DCT studies, with limited information resulting in less elaborate utterances (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000). In addition, a number of researchers have examined whether written production questionnaire data are similar to spoken data collected with other methods, such as role-plays and observation of naturally occurring talk. The results revealed that while many pragmatic speech act strategies occurred in both questionnaire and other data types, the learners’ strategy use was often more limited in the written data (e.g. Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Sasaki, 1998).
The results also showed that written responses tended to be shorter than oral ones (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989 in case of the learner participants; however, see Golato, 2003, who found more elaborate written than oral utterances) and that written data did not contain the repetitions, inversions and omissions, that can be observed in naturally occurring data (Yuan, 2001).

### 3.2.3 Elicited conversation and role-plays

Considering the advantages and disadvantages of the observation of naturally occurring data and written production questionnaires, the elicitation of oral discourse can be a good alternative data collection method, as it allows researchers to have a high level of control over the context and type of pragmatic phenomena they are intending to elicit, while also enabling them to study oral data. Two types of orally elicited data are typically distinguished, *elicited conversation* and *role-plays* (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Examples for the former category are studies by Billmyer (1990) and Sawyer (1992). In Billmyer’s study learners were asked to talk to native speaker participants and exchange compliments, while Sawyer’s learners were interviewed by native language instructors about specific issues, such as their weekend routine, to examine their use of sentence final particles in Japanese.

Although elicited conversations have the advantage of providing oral data, they do not allow researchers to investigate pragmatic phenomena, such as complaints or requests, in the same way as written production questionnaires. If the aim of the investigation is to determine which linguistic elements and formulae are employed by learners in different situational conditions and with different types of interlocutors, for example, those of equal or higher status, role-plays can be a very useful alternative. Two types of role-plays are commonly distinguished in ILP research: *closed* and *open role-plays*.

In *closed role-plays*, participants respond to a description of a situation, and, depending on the speech act or pragmatic phenomena under investigation, to an interactant’s standardized initiation. Studies following this design were, for example, Cohen and Olshtain (1981), Rintell and Mitchell (1989) and Warga (2004). In *open role-plays*, in contrast, participants are given details of the situation, such as the purpose of the interaction and their relationship to the other interlocutor, but the course and outcome of the interaction is not predetermined. Researchers employing this method were, for instance, Houck and Gass (1996) and House (1996). As mentioned above, the advantages of role-plays are that researchers predetermine the context and elicit oral data.

The disadvantages are, however, that ‘role plays can be quite taxing even for very fluent speakers because in absence of an external supporting context, role play participants have to create a context ongoingly’ (Kasper, 2000b, p. 17). A further limitation concerns the comparability of data that were elicited in
role-play interactions with human actors. Bardovi-Harlig (1999b) notes that interlocutors employed by researchers for the purpose of acting the parts of friends or teachers in interactions with the target participants, can get fatigued if they have to perform the same scenarios numerous times. In a similar vein, while professionally trained actors will be able to give highly comparable repeat performances, this might not be the case for laypeople whose attitude towards individual interlocutors might differ and whose feelings may therefore influence the way in which conversations develop. This could potentially result in very different conversations that may be difficult to compare.

3.2.4 Multimedia instruments

As had been the case with ILP data collection instruments for the elicitation of data on participants’ pragmatic awareness, advances in technology have also resulted in the use of these technologies for research purposes in ILP production studies. In the 1990s, Kuha designed the Computer-Assisted Interactive DCT (IDCT) which ‘combines the written questionnaire’s potential for controlling variables with some of the interactive aspects of role-plays’ (Kuha, 1997, p. 99). Her computer based instrument provided participants with a description of a situation and then asked them to key in their response. Based on keywords in the participant’s answer, the programme then generated an interlocutor’s reply, which again prompted the participant to continue the conversation.

Unfortunately, the IDCT did not allow participants to actually produce a spoken utterance. In addition, the description of the scenarios, as is the case in the majority of elicited production questionnaire studies, did not provide participants with audiovisual contextual information.

After having considered the advantages and disadvantages of the existing data collection methods in interlanguage pragmatics, I decided to develop my own instrument, the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET), which is computer based, shares similarities with role-plays and elicits oral data. The reasons for this were:

- Focusing on elicited data allowed me, in contrast to observing naturally occurring speech, to predetermine the contextual conditions that I aimed to investigate.
- By using a computer-based instrument, the participants could be provided with a high amount of audiovisual information, which made it easier for them to imagine being in the situation.
- The MET allowed participants to virtually ‘meet’ a variety of different interlocutors, without putting them in a stressful situation of having to converse with a number of different native speaker actors in role-plays.
- Since the instrument is computer-based, it ensures a high degree of comparability, as the situations and the tone of voice of the speaker are the same for each participant.
The MET allowed me to work independently, that is, without native speakers taking the part of actors in role plays, while still providing the participants with native speaker input. The fact that the MET allowed the repetition of the data elicitation procedure with exactly the same computerized contextual conditions of the scenarios made it an ideal choice for a developmental investigation. Like all data collection techniques, the MET also has limitations. Due to design restrictions, it was not possible to extend the participants’ production of a request to more than one turn. This means that turn taking behaviour could not be observed.

3.3 Summary

The review of the data collection techniques in interlanguage pragmatic awareness and production studies has revealed that a wide variety of data elicitation methods have been used in the discipline. The discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the different data collection methods has shown that multimedia instruments like Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) video-and-questionnaire instrument and the new Multimedia Elicitation Task have a number of advantages: They provide participants with rich contextual information that has been carefully predetermined by the researcher. In addition, these instruments offer a high degree of reliability due to their standardization and also allow non-native speaker researchers to work independently of native speakers, while still providing the participants with native speaker input. Based on these advantages the video-and-questionnaire task and the Multimedia Elicitation Task were chosen for the present investigation.

Notes

1 Since Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) instrument was used for the investigation of the participants’ awareness in the present study, it will be discussed in more detail in the Methodology Section 4.2.1.
2 The effects of the presence or absence of rejoinders in production studies have been examined by Rose (1992), Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993b) and Johnston et al. (1998). The results of these investigations suggest that different speech acts are affected in a different way by the inclusion of rejoinders.
3 Rose’s (2000) Cartoon Oral Production Task may also be regarded as a closed role-play. Instead of written instructions, he provided his young participants with cartoons depicting the scenarios and tape-recorded their utterances.
4 The MET will be discussed in detail in Section 4.2.3.
Chapter 4

Methodology

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used in the present study to answer the research questions. First, I will provide background information on the participants that took part in the investigation in Section 4.1. This will be followed by a description of the two data collection instruments and the interviews in Section 4.2. Subsequent to this, the procedure for the data collection will be outlined in Section 4.3. The chapter concludes with a description of the transcription techniques employed for the interviews and an overview of the coding categories used for the request strategies and modifiers in Section 4.4.

4.1 Participants

The present study examines two aspects of learners’ pragmatic development in the study abroad context, (a) the development of their pragmatic awareness and (b) the development of their productive pragmatic abilities. The former was investigated with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) video-and-questionnaire task as well as post hoc semi-structured interviews, while the latter was explored with the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET) that I had specifically designed for this study. A total of 71 participants took part in the present investigation. In addition to the 19 SA learners whose development in the study abroad context was examined, controls were provided by 22 British English native speakers and 30 AH learners.

The study was conducted over a period of 2 years, with the investigation into participants’ pragmatic awareness taking place in both years and the investigation of participants’ production of requests taking place in the second year only. Consequently, none of the SA learners who participated in the first year provided data for the productive part of the study in the second year, as those learners had already returned to their home country. Regarding the native speakers, 13 of the 20 participants who took part in the awareness investigation also participated in the investigation of participants’ request production.
Since the study focused on AH learners in their final year, none of the AH learners took part in both investigations.

All SA and AH learners who participated in this study were native speakers of German. I had decided to focus on German learners of English, as being German myself and having been educated in Germany, I am familiar with teaching strategies, methods of assessment, and curricula that are commonly used in this country, which would facilitate my understanding of the learners’ interview responses concerning their educational background. Another reason for choosing SA and AH learners with whom I shared an L1 was that this enabled me to conduct the interviews and explain questions about the instrument in the learners’ native language. I hoped that being able to communicate with me in their L1 would make it easier for the participants to ask questions about the video-and-questionnaire task and to freely and openly share their thoughts in the interviews with me.

In Section 4.1.1, I will introduce the participants that took part in the investigation of participants’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. Learners and native speakers that took part in the investigation focusing on participants’ production of requests will be introduced in Section 4.1.2.

### 4.1.1 Participants in the awareness study

#### SA learners

Sixteen German SA learners participated in this part of the study. At the beginning of the academic years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003, I contacted all German native speakers enrolled at the University of Nottingham by e-mail and invited them to take part in my research. To be eligible to participate in this study, SA learners had to meet three criteria: First, they had to have been brought up in a monolingual German environment in Germany. Secondly, the sojourn in Nottingham had to be their first long-term stay in an English speaking environment. Finally, they had to be enrolled at the University of Nottingham for the period of 1 academic year. Since only a very small number of students who met these criteria responded to the e-mail, an invitation letter was sent out to those that had not previously responded 2 weeks after the initial e-mail. Following attrition of participant numbers from about 30 to 16 due to a variety of circumstances (e.g. students returning to Germany earlier than planned or falling ill), seven German SA learners took part in 2001/2002 and nine in 2002/2003. Their data were subsequently merged for the present study. Table 4.1 contains background information on the individual SA learners that took part in the awareness study.

Eight of the SA participants were female and eight were male. Their mean age was 23 years. They came from various regions in Germany, both in the former eastern and western parts. Six of the SA participants in this awareness
study were reading a subject related to English language at their home university, while the remaining ten read a variety of different subjects ranging from Business Studies to Psychology. None of the group members had lived in an English speaking country prior to taking part in the research.

All the participants had received formal English language instruction in German primary and secondary schools for an average of 8 years. Two of the participants had attended special primary schools that had offered English classes, resulting in them receiving 11 years of formal English instruction. All other participants had first received English instruction in their secondary schools. Eight of the students had studied English for their *Leistungskurs* (equivalent to the British A-levels or US-American advanced placement courses) at their grammar schools, while the other half had specialized in other subjects. Nine of the 16 participants in this group also took part in the investigation of learners’ productive pragmatic development in the MET study. Regrettably, it was not possible to obtain standardized data on learners’ English proficiency, such as the IELTS or TOEFL test, as none of the learners had taken these tests.

**AH learners**

Seventeen German students studying in Germany took part in the video-and-questionnaire task and the subsequent interviews. All of them were in

<table>
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<th>Formal English education (years)</th>
<th>English <em>Leistungskurs</em> at school</th>
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*Note: *All names are pseudonyms.
their final year of a 3-year course in English translation studies at the *Institut für Fremdsprachen und Auslandskunde bei der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg* (Institute for Foreign Languages and Culture Studies at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg), henceforth IFA. I had decided to approach students of this particular higher education institution for two reasons: first, I was familiar with the curriculum, the teaching methods and the academic staff as I had graduated from it myself. Secondly, I was interested in finding out whether students of mixed proficiency levels who spend 1 year in an English-speaking context have a higher degree of pragmatic awareness at the end of their stay than professional language learners who study English in an intensive course in a typical foreign language context, such as at the IFA in Germany.

I contacted the IFA’s Head of the English Department in December 2001 and asked him for permission to conduct the study in January 2002, which he granted. I then explained that I needed a participant group of at least 16 learners who were of similar age to my SA participants. Based on these requirements, he selected one of his seminar groups for me and allowed me to attend one of his classes to meet the students.

One of the participants in this group was male and 16 were female. This uneven distribution is due to the popularity of the translation/interpretation degree among female students in Germany. The average age of this group was 24 years and was therefore similar to that of the SA learners. None of the AH participants had lived in an English speaking country prior to taking part in the research. Like the German SA participants in England, they had also learned English for an average of 8 years at German secondary schools. Ten of the students in this group had studied English for their *Leistungskurs* at school. In addition to English, all of the students in this group had also been studying another European language (French, Italian or Spanish) for 2.5 years prior to taking part in the research.

Members of this group attended 19 classes per week lasting 45 min each that were taught by American, British and Australian English native speakers as well as by German lecturers. The classes concentrated on different aspects of their English programme such as grammar, vocabulary, culture, or translation techniques. Although the main aim of this 3-year course was to provide students with the necessary means to work as translators, the curriculum also placed a considerable emphasis on the development of learners’ verbal skills. This meant that all students had to take 3 hours of oral classes per week for 3 years. Regrettably, however, the curriculum did not contain a specific pragmatic component, such as pragmatic awareness raising or the teaching of formulaic sequences for specific pragmatic routines (e.g. Alcon Soler, 2005; Martinez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001; Schauer & Adolfs, 2006; Tateyama, 2001) at the time of the data collection.
In contrast to degrees in English at many other universities or colleges in Germany that do not specialize in translation or interpreting, the 3-year course at this particular institution had a considerably higher number of seminars and lectures because vacation periods were significantly shorter than at most other higher education institutions. The vacation times were short to allow students to graduate after 3 years, which at the time the data was collected was still rather uncommon in Germany. Thus, as the AH learners in the present sample had a large amount of input and had studied two modern European languages for 2.5 years at the time the data were collected, they can be regarded as professional language learners.

Native speakers

Twenty British English native speakers participated in the study as controls. They were enrolled in various undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses at the same university as the SA learners. Four of the students in this sample were male and 16 female. Their average age was 22 years. The three participant groups that I have introduced so far provided data for the investigation into learners and native speakers’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. In the following section, I will introduce the participants that took part in the productive part of the present study.

4.1.2 Participants in the production study

SA learners

Nine German learners of English participated in the investigation of learners’ productive pragmatic development in the study abroad context. All of the students in this group also took part in the investigation of SA learners’ development of pragmatic awareness. The selection method and criteria was the same for all SA learners taking part in either or both the awareness and production study (see 4.1.1 for a detailed description). All members of this group were enrolled at the University of Nottingham for the period of 1 academic year. Four of them studied a subject related to English at their home institution, while the remaining five read various subjects, mainly in the Sciences or the Business School.

None of the participants in this group had lived in an English speaking environment prior to taking part in the research. Four of the learners were female and five male. Their mean age was 23 years. They had received formal English education in German schools for an average of 8 years and came from a variety of German states. Five of the participants in this group had studied English for their Leistungskurs at school. Table 4.2 contains background information on the individual SA learners that took part in the productive study.
Methodology

Like the AH participants that provided the controls in the investigation of learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness, all 13 members of this group were in their final year of a 3-year translation course at the IFA, when I collected their data in January 2003. They were selected and approached in the same way as the AH learner participants of the previous year, who had taken part in the awareness study. The AH group that participated in this part of the study was very similar to the AH group that provided data for the investigation of pragmatic awareness, as they were both taught according to the same curriculum, by the same faculty and had never lived in an English speaking environment before. Their average age was 24 years. Since the AH learner data collection for the two studies took place in two subsequent years, none of the AH learners participated in both investigations.

Although both AH groups had been selected based on the same method and criteria, the group of AH learners that provided data for the productive study differed from the group of AH learners that provided data for the awareness study in two respects: First, the number of AH learners in the productive study was smaller than that of those in the awareness study, 13 and 17 respectively. Secondly, although I specifically approached the 3 male students who were also in their final year at the IFA, they declined to take part in the research. As a result, all 13 learners in this group were female, whereas there had been 1 male participant in the AH group that provided the data for the awareness study.

### Table 4.2 Background information on SA learners that took part in the productive study

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<td>Hendrik</td>
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<td>yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All names are pseudonyms

**See note 2 at the end of this chapter.
Native speakers

Fifteen British English native speakers provided controls, of whom 13 had also taken part in the investigation of participants' pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The native speakers in this group were undergraduate or postgraduate students at the same university the Germans in England were enrolled at. Similar to the SA learners, the students in this group were studying a variety of subjects, mainly in the Arts and Sciences. Six of the participants were male and 9 female. Their average age was the same as that of the German SA learners in England, namely 23 years. This section concludes the introduction of the learner and native speaker participants that took part in the present investigation. The following section focuses on the research instruments and interview techniques used to elicit the data.

4.2 Instrument

4.2.1 Video-and-questionnaire task

The video-and-questionnaire task with which the data concerning the participants' pragmatic and grammatical awareness was elicited was developed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998). The video contained 20 scenarios featuring interactions that students are familiar with and experience on a regular basis in an educational context. They showed either Anna, a female student, or Peter, a male student, interacting with fellow students, teachers or members of staff. All conversations took place with same-sex interlocutors, which eliminated any cross-gender variables. Eight of the scenarios were pragmatically inappropriate but grammatically correct, eight were grammatically incorrect but pragmatically appropriate and four were appropriate and grammatical (controls).

The scenarios were arranged in a random sequence in four blocks of five with each block containing two scenarios featuring a pragmatic infelicity, two scenarios containing a grammatical violation and one control scenario. The 20 situations were based on actual observed interactions or data elicited with Discourse Completion Tasks (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1990, 1991, 1993; Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Hudson, Detmer & Brown, 1995) and included four different speech acts: apologies, refusals, requests and suggestions.

The accompanying questionnaire contained the targeted utterance for each scenario in bold and two questions next to it as Figure 4.1 illustrates.

The first question refers to the appropriateness/correctness of the targeted utterance. This question was answered by all participants, while the second question was only answered by those who thought that the targeted utterance was inappropriate/incorrect. If the participants thought that the utterance
Methodology

was problematic, they rated the severity of the perceived infelicity on a six-point-scale ranging from ‘not bad at all’ to ‘very bad’.

To aid the participants’ recollection of the individual scenarios during the interview, I included the sentence that immediately preceded the targeted utterance in the questionnaire and also indicated who the interlocutor was, for example, a teacher in scenario in Scenario 7. I further modified Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) questionnaire by translating the assessment section of the individual scenarios (i.e. the questions on the right hand side) into the L1 of the SA and AH learners, thereby following the original researchers’ methodology for learner questionnaires as they had also provided their Hungarian participants with questionnaires in their native language (see Appendix A for the English and German versions of the questionnaire). In keeping with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s study, the first block of scenarios and Scenario 20 were excluded from the data analysis in the present paper, the former because it was considered a warm-up phase, the latter because the mistake was not sufficiently unambiguous.

4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The post hoc semi-structured interview constituted an important addition to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) research methodology as it enabled me to find out whether the participants had actually identified the ‘correct’ error type in the scenarios and also provided me with insights into their decision
making rationales. Conducting one-to-one interviews that included elicited retrospective verbal protocols with the students after they had watched the video and assessed the scenarios on the questionnaire gave me the opportunity to hear what they had perceived to be the problem in the scenarios that they had scored as inappropriate/incorrect. To make the conversations as non-threatening as possible, they were conducted in the L1 of the participant. The scenarios were discussed in the order of the questionnaire and my input as interviewer was as limited as possible so as not to restrict or influence the participants (Gass & MacKey, 2000).

Since the interview had not been part of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) original research design, I conducted a pilot study with an English native speaking student at the University of Nottingham at the beginning of November 2001. The interview technique that I used in the pilot was based on the stimulated recall technique (Gass & Mackey, 2000). This technique is primarily employed by researchers interested in the cognitive aspects of language use to investigate the individual’s reaction to a task or scenario. The interview itself is intended to stimulate the recall of this reaction and thus restricts the researcher to a limited number of basic questions without allowing any follow-up questions concerning remarks made by the participant.

The participant in the pilot study and I both felt that this technique was too restrictive and did not allow us to venture into a more detailed discussion of specific features, for example, whether it would make a difference if the actors had been native speakers or not. Moreover, when I transcribed the pilot interview I realized that the conversation sometimes sounded very stilted and unnatural, as the technique only allows the researcher to respond to what has been said by back-channelling cues and non-responses. I therefore decided to modify the interview technique in a way that retained the verbal report element but also allowed me to ask further and more general questions and conduct the interviews as semi-structured interviews.

All subsequent interviews were conducted in the semi-structured format in which I stated how the participants had evaluated a scenario, for example, ‘You ticked the box marked “No” and then put the x in the middle of the scale. Can you tell me what you did not like in this scenario?’ and asked them to remedy the grammatical or pragmatic error that had caused them to rate the scenario as inappropriate/incorrect. I employed this question structure throughout the interview for the 20 scenarios.

If the participants made more general observations regarding pragmatics or their use of English, these were followed up as well to obtain a better understanding of participants’ perceptions of linguistic/pragmatic features in English. In addition, I also encouraged the SA learners to talk about other issues, such as changes in their perceptions of British people, common stereotypes, the amount of contact they had with English native speakers, preconceptions of the British way of life that they had had prior to coming to Britain
and the realities of life in England. I also asked them about their own assessment of their linguistic development and their own observations regarding the use of grammar and politeness by English native speakers.

### 4.2.3 The Multimedia Elicitation Task

Data for the investigation into the learners’ productive pragmatic ability were collected with the Multimedia Elicitation Task (MET) that I had specifically developed for the present study (see Appendix B for written instructions, images used and transcriptions of the audio cues). The MET is a 16-scenario multimedia instrument focusing on requests. It is computer-based and thus addresses one of the disadvantages of role-plays: the issue of standardization. As role plays involve the presence and participation of two interlocutors, most commonly a learner and a second person taking on different roles, it is important that researchers try to ensure that their data have indeed been collected under comparable circumstances without the interference of factors such as changes in the second person’s mood or tone of voice. The MET attempts to control for these factors by regulating the timing and the nature of the audiovisual input through a computerized presentation format. Thus, it is designed to provide equal conditions for every participant, while at the same time also providing rich audiovisual contextual information. A further feature of the MET is that it elicits oral rather than written data, which, according to Rintell and Mitchell (1989) and Yuan (2001), display more features of naturally occurring talk than written production questionnaires.

Participants are asked to sit down in front of a computer, receive audio and visual contextual information on a series of slides and formulate their requests which are recorded. Each MET scenario is preceded by an introductory slide (see Figure 4.2) that briefly tells the learners what to expect in the actual scenario (e.g. ‘Asking a professor to open a window’). After 10 seconds, the introductory slide switches to the actual scenario slide (Figure 4.3) that provides the participants with audiovisual information in the form of a photographic image depicting the situation as well as an audio description of the scenario.

#### Figure 4.2. Introductory Slide for Scenario 1
The introductory slides were included in the MET because I felt like Harada (1996) that it was important to allow the participants ‘to think about what they were going to say before the performance, since it would be common in a real life situation’ (p. 50), especially since requests are deliberate acts and not reactive utterances towards an interlocutor’s preceding turn that have to be produced without previous planning. In order to provide the SA learners and native speakers with an accessible and authentic context in the MET scenarios that was familiar to them, all pictures were taken with the help of staff and students of the University of Nottingham in numerous campus locations in summer 2002. To ensure that the audio input would be easily understood by all participants, it was provided by an English native speaker who had worked on a similar linguistic project before and had a clear pronunciation.

As discussed earlier, the MET concentrates on requests and tries to reflect the diversity of request interactions by investigating two different status and imposition conditions: The participants were asked to make four high imposition and four low imposition requests to equal status interlocutors (friends), as well as four high and four low imposition requests to higher status interlocutors (professors). Four of the scenarios were taken from existing questionnaires and modified for the present study: Scenario 1 and Scenario 7 from Kitao (1990), Scenario 11 from Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) and Scenario 12 from Kasanga (1998). The remaining 12 scenarios were developed by myself and follow Bonikowska’s (1988) and Bardovi-Harlig’s (1999b) call for considering the context of the participants. Thus, all of the scenarios depict situations students are likely to encounter during their time at an English university.

The eight requests that are directed at an equal status interlocutor and the eight requests towards a higher status interlocutor are based on the same request situations, but were modified to obtain contextually appropriate scenarios that are not too similar to each other. Thus, the high-imposition request

**Figure 4.3.** Actual scenario Slide for Scenario 1
‘asking someone to postpone a meeting’ is ranked as being high-imposition in the equal status scenario on the basis that the friend had to cancel another meeting to see the participant. The same level of imposition is achieved in the higher-status scenario by stating that the interlocutor is a visiting professor who is extremely busy. The scenarios were arranged in four blocks of four, each containing two high and two low imposition requests to equal and higher status interlocutors. The sequence of the four scenarios varies in each block and was determined randomly. Table 4.3 shows the distribution of the 16 scenarios with regard to the two variables.

To ensure that the scenarios were representative of typical students’ requests, they were checked by two English native speakers employed in the Centre for English Language Education (CELE) at the University of Nottingham. These two tutors were also asked to comment on the level of imposition, that is, whether they perceived the requests to be of high or of low imposition. One of them suggested slight changes in one scenario to emphasise the high level of imposition. The request scenario in question was subsequently modified accordingly.

The MET was piloted with five German native speakers of different proficiency levels in English in September and October 2002. Prior to taking part, the participants received an oral explanation of the Multimedia Elicitation Task. For the first participant, the transition from the introductory slide to the actual scenario slide was timed to 30 seconds for the sample scenario and further eight scenarios and 20 seconds for the remaining eight scenarios. The participant remarked that the transition time was too long and should be reduced. Thus the transition time was reduced to 20, 15 and 10 seconds for the second participant. The second participant commented that she preferred the 10 seconds transition timing and suggested an additional written explanation of the MET.

The slide transition was then timed to 10 seconds for the remaining three participants and additional written instructions were also provided to them. The three participants stated that they felt comfortable with the 10-seconds-transition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low imposition</th>
<th>High imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>equal status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 7 ‘speak louder’</td>
<td>Scenario 3 ‘fill out questionnaire’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 9 ‘open window’</td>
<td>Scenario 6 ‘postpone sth.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 12 ‘give directions’</td>
<td>Scenario 10 ‘borrow sth.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 14 ‘move away from door’</td>
<td>Scenario 15 ‘arrange meeting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>higher status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1 ‘open window’</td>
<td>Scenario 4 ‘borrow sth.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 2 ‘give directions’</td>
<td>Scenario 8 ‘arrange meeting’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 5 ‘move away from door’</td>
<td>Scenario 11 ‘fill out questionnaire’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 16 ‘speak louder’</td>
<td>Scenario 13 ‘postpone sth.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 Categorization of the 16 MET request scenarios according to the two variables ‘status’ and ‘imposition’
period and that the additional written instructions were useful as they helped to clarify matters further.

4.3 Procedure

4.3.1 Video-and-questionnaire task and semi-structured interview

Data for the investigation of the participants’ pragmatic awareness were collected at two locations: at the University of Nottingham (SA learners and native speakers) and at the IFA in Germany (AH learners). The SA learners and native speakers watched the video, completed the questionnaire and took part in the interview in one-to-one sessions with me. Due to limited technical resources, all AH learners watched the video and filled in the questionnaire in the same session. They were then interviewed by me in one-to-one sessions within 2 days of having watched the video. In case of those SA learners and native speakers that took part in both, the awareness and the production study, the MET was administered first, so as not to influence participants with utterances made by the actors in the video.

Prior to watching the video, I provided the participants with detailed instructions about the task in their L1. The same instructions were then repeated in English in the video and on the questionnaire cover sheet. Each of the scenarios was shown twice. The targeted utterance that the participants needed to evaluate was introduced by a flashing exclamation mark in the video and was also highlighted by an exclamation mark in the questionnaire. This sentence always constituted the last utterance in the scenario. The participants were asked to just watch and listen when they were first shown the scenario. After having watched it for the second time, they filled in the questionnaire.

The participants then initially indicated whether the targeted utterance was appropriate/correct by either ticking the box for ‘yes’ or for ‘no’. If they marked the box for ‘yes’, they then simply waited for the next scenario to begin. If, however, they ticked the box for ‘no’, they subsequently rated the severity of the problem on a six-point scale ranging from ‘not bad at all’ to ‘very bad’.

The interview took place after the participants had watched all 20 video scenarios and filled in the questionnaire. Each scenario was discussed according to the same structure. I first stated how the participants had marked the scenario and then either asked what they had perceived to be the problem or what they did not like about the target utterance in the case of those scenarios they had marked as inappropriate/incorrect. During the participants’ explanation I only made use of back-channelling cues, such as nodding and/or saying ‘okay’ as recommended by Bolton and Bronkhorst (1996), or employed clarifying questions to control the flow without indicating my own opinion on the different items.
When the reasons the participants gave for their decisions showed that they had detected two different kinds of problems, namely those due to either grammatical or pragmatic infelicities, I asked them about their general feelings regarding these two error types. (Pragmatic infelicities were discussed using the term ‘politeness’ errors because all participants were familiar with this term.) In addition, as mentioned in 4.2.3, I also encouraged the SA learners to tell me about issues related to their L2 development and to share their feelings and observations regarding British culture with me. As much as possible I tried to touch on these more general topics when the participant talked about a related issue so as not to break the flow of the conversation.

The length of the answers to the aforementioned questions varied from participant to participant. Some students expressed their opinions and shared their thoughts very freely and elaborated on a number of points, others were more reserved and only provided very short answers or preferred not to discuss various issues at all. In contrast to the high participant numbers in the original Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) study, which prevented one-to-one conversations with each participant, my participant group sizes allowed me to dedicate as much time to every individual student as they felt they needed to express their thoughts and opinions. In keeping with their individual differences regarding their willingness to share their views and experiences, the interview lengths ranged from 10 to 30 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed.

Data for the combined video-and-questionnaire task and interview were elicited from the SA learners in two sessions. The first session took place about 1 month after they had arrived in Britain, in late October, early November and the second session occurred shortly before they left in May. Due to the low participant numbers after the first year 2001/2002, the research was conducted a second time in 2002/2003 again in late October, early November and May of the following year. The data of the German students in Germany for this part of the study were gathered in January 2002 and the data of the English native speakers were collected either in 2002 or 2003.

4.3.2 Multimedia Elicitation Task

As in the combined video-and-questionnaire task and interview sessions, data for the Multimedia Elicitation Task were elicited in one-to-one sessions with the participants in the same locations as described in the previous section. Like the language learners and native speakers who participated in the study that focused on pragmatic and grammatical awareness, the participants that took part in the MET also received the task instructions in two ways, orally and in written form. They then watched and responded to a sample scenario
in which they were prompted to ask a friend for the time. The participants’ request utterances in this scenario were excluded from the subsequent analysis. After the participants had made their first request, I enquired if they had any questions about the instrument and adjusted the volume settings of the computer if they indicated that these were either too high or too low. The native speakers and learners then completed the 16 scenarios in the standardized, preset sequence. Each MET session lasted about 30 minutes depending on the individual participants’ talkativeness. The requests made by the participants were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed.

In contrast to the combined video-and-questionnaire task and interviews, the data for the MET were elicited not at two, but at three distinct points of the SA learners’ sojourn in the target environment: shortly after their arrival in Great Britain in late October, early November 2002, in the middle of their stay in February 2003 and shortly before their return to Germany in May 2003. Thus, the intervals between the sessions were roughly three months. Since the learners were asked to actively produce utterances based on situations that they were likely to experience in their everyday life at a British university, I had decided on this more frequent elicitation sequence as it would allow me to better detect when certain pragmatic features first occurred or ceased to occur, thereby helping to determine the salient periods for these features.

The AH group’s data were gathered in January 2003 and the English native speakers’ data were collected in spring and early summer 2003. In those sessions in which data for both studies were elicited, the participants always first completed the productive Multimedia Elicitation Task so as not to influence their utterances by the request scenarios of the video. Thus, in these combined sessions, participants took part in the video-and-questionnaire task and the interviews after they had completed the MET.

4.4 Data Analysis

4.4.1 Transcription of interviews and elicited requests

I used two different transcription techniques for the data obtained in the interviews, the transcription in keywords and the complete transcription of a participant’s comment. The participants’ answers to my questions concerning their evaluation of the scenarios were transcribed in keywords and not in complete sentences, for example, ‘I think that the person is impolite in this scenario. What she says is too short.’ was transcribed with the keywords: ‘impolite’, ‘too short’. These keywords were then used to determine whether the participants thought there was a grammatical or pragmatic error in the scenario and thus form the basis of the error recognition analysis in Section 5.1.
The complete transcription method was used when the participants made more general observations regarding their assessment of pragmatic and grammatical errors that were not based on a specific scenario or when the SA learners reflected on their own L2 development. Remarks made by the SA learners about personal experiences with English native speakers and views on the English language were also transcribed entirely, as these provided insights into the SA learners’ decision-making rationales. All interviews with the learners were translated and transcribed concurrently.

The participants’ requests that were elicited with the Multimedia Elicitation Task were also transcribed in their entirety. This included false starts, hesitators, repetitions and slips of the tongue.

4.4.2 Coding categories request strategies

The analysis of request strategies that were employed by the participants in the productive part of the study focuses on the degree of directness of the request’s head act, that is, the request’s utterance that contains the requestive verb. In the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper defined request strategies as ‘the obligatory choice of the level of directness by which the request is realized. By **directness** [original emphasis] is meant the degree to which the speakers’ illocutionary intent is apparent from the locution’ (1989a, p. 278). The directness(strategy categories of my classification scheme are based on Blum-Kulka (1989), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989a) and Trosborg (1995) and Van Mulken (1996) and have been slightly modified to better clarify the data in the present study. Based on the directness of the locutionary act, a request utterance can be assigned to one of three major categories (from most to least direct requests): direct requests, conventionally indirect requests and non-conventionally indirect requests, that is, hints. Table 4.4 provides a brief overview of the different request strategies which will be discussed in more detail below.

**Direct requests**

The speaker’s intent is very obvious and transparent in the direct request category, thus the length of the hearer’s inferential process needed for identifying the utterance is short (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b). Strategies in this category include: Imperatives, performatives, want statements and locution derivable. Imperatives are the most direct forms of requests, since they leave little room for misunderstanding and show that the speakers feel they are in a position of not having to persuade their interlocutor or state reasons, for example, ‘Hey, move out of the way’ (native speaker, Scenario 14) or ‘Speak up, please’ (SA learner, Scenario 7). As the latter example indicates, imperatives can be part
of a request utterance that also contains elements which downtone the force of the request, such as the politeness marker ‘please’.

Performatives are the second direct request strategy in my data and consist of two subcategories, unhedged performatives and hedged performatives. Unhedged performatives explicitly state the illocutionary force of the request by including a performative verb, for example, ‘I ask you to tell me the way to X’ (SA learner, Scenario 3) or ‘I’m asking you if you could give me some more, more advice where to search’ (SA learner, Scenario 4). The second example shows that unhedged performatives can be softened by past tense modals such as could. Like imperatives, unhedged performatives that are not modified by the inclusion of downtoning elements in the request utterance are generally regarded as impolite outside formal contexts in which they are commonly used, for example, the military.

Hedged performatives also contain a performativa verb, however, their illocutionary force is softened by a verb immediately preceding the performative verb, for example, ‘So I want to ask you if we could maybe arrange a meeting during the holidays’ (SA learner, Scenario 8) or ‘Sorry, I’ve difficulties in finding material for my essay, so I thought I could ask you to bring an article?’ (AH learner, Scenario 4). Both utterances show that speakers can reduce the illocutionary force of the request by employing past tense modals like could or downtoners such as maybe or possibly.

The next category of the direct request in my coding scheme, locution derivable requests,7 is defined in the CCSARP as utterances which ‘illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution’ (p. 279). In my data the majority of requests in this category are requests for directions, such as ‘Erm,

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Table 4.4  Overview of request strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct requests</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperatives</td>
<td>Tell me the way to X!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unhedged</td>
<td>I’m asking you to tell me the way to X.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hedged</td>
<td>I want to ask you the way to X.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want statements</td>
<td>I wish you’d tell me the way to X.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locution derivable</td>
<td>Where is X?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventionally Indirect requests</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suggestory formula</td>
<td>How about telling me the way to X?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability</td>
<td>Have you got time to tell me the way to X?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction</td>
<td>Is there any chance to tell me the way to X?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission</td>
<td>Could I ask you about the way to X?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness</td>
<td>Would you mind telling me the way to X?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability</td>
<td>Could you tell me the way to X?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Conventionally indirect requests</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hints</td>
<td>I have to meet someone in X.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
excuse me, Bob, where is the Portland Building?’ (SA learner, Scenario 12) or ‘Erm, which way is the Portland Building, please?’ (native speaker, Scenario 12).

By using want statements, the speakers explicitly state their desire, wish or need that the interlocutors carry out the requested action. The utterances in this category were classified as direct strategies in the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989a) and as conventionally indirect in Trosborg (1995). I categorized want statements as direct strategies and thus follow the CCSARP. Examples for this category are: ‘Erm, excuse me, I would like to enter, erm, the, the room?’ (SA learner, Scenario 5) or ‘I really like you to complete it if you could find the time.’ (native speaker, Scenario 11).

Conventionally indirect requests

Conventionally indirect requests contain, as their name indicates, a conventionalized linguistic element that is commonly used to make a request, but the inclusion of which makes the illocutionary force less transparent and therefore softens the impact of the request on the interlocutor. Consequently, the hearer needs to be aware that modal verbs such as ‘can’ are commonly employed in request utterances to trigger some kind of action on the hearer’s part and not just to enquire about the hearer’s ability to perform a certain task. Following Trosborg (1995) and Warga (2004), the subcategories of conventionally indirect requests used in this study are: Suggestory formula, availability, prediction, permission, willingness and ability.

Suggestory formulae can be realized through different structures, some of which may be specific to a certain language. What these structures have in common, however, is that the illocutionary intent of the request utterance is phrased as a suggestion. There is only one example for this strategy in my data, namely ‘I can’t come today. Let’s meet tomorrow.’ (AH learner, Scenario 6). Other suggestory formulae commonly used in English are ‘How about lending me some of your records?’ and ‘Why don’t you come with me?’ (Trosborg, 1995, p. 201; my emphasis).

Conventionally indirect requests in the availability category address the interlocutors’ possible other commitments by enquiring about their temporal availability. Examples found in the data are ‘So, erm, have you still, er, time before you fly to explain it to me maybe?’ (SA learner, Scenario 15) and ‘Have you got any time over the next two days to get together with me?’ (native speaker, Scenario 15). By choosing this strategy, speakers also show consideration towards their interlocutors, since they provide them with a possible reason to reject the request – lack of time.

Request utterances in the prediction category are frequently employed by speakers to distance themselves from the request by formulating the utterance in an impersonal way, for example, ‘Excuse me, is it possible to see you within the holidays?’ (SA learner, Scenario 8) or ‘Is there any chance that we
can meet another time?” (native speaker, Scenario 6). Requests in this category are often used by lower status interlocutors towards higher status interlocutors, as their content signals that the hearer is in a position to predict probabilities.

Utterances that employ permission draw the attention to the speakers themselves since they are the focus of the request, for example, ‘Erm, excuse me, sorry, could I get through, please?’ (SA learner, Scenario 5) and ‘Could I borrow those books that you are using, please?’ (native speaker, Scenario 10). The speakers soften the illocutionary force of the request by clearly conveying to the interlocutors that they are in the position of power to grant permission. As can be seen in the examples, the illocutionary force can be further reduced by including downtoning devices, such as the politeness marker.

By using conventionally indirect requests that focus on the interlocutor’s willingness, speakers indicate that they are aware that no obligation exists on the hearer’s part to carry out the desired act, for example, ‘Would you mind moving our meeting a bit?’ (SA learner, Scenario 6) and ‘Would you mind filling in a questionnaire for me?’ (native speaker, Scenario 11). In keeping with Trosborg’s (1995) coding scheme, request utterances in this category may also be embedded in expressions of appreciation, hope and so on, for example, ‘It would be great if you could bring them in tomorrow for me.’ (native speaker, Scenario 10).

Requests concentrating on the hearers’ ability address their mental or physical capacity to perform the action referred to in the utterance, for example, ‘Lucy, I’m sorry, could you please, erm, fill in, erm this questionnaire or complete it for me?’ (SA learner, Scenario 3) or ‘Neil, can you open the window for me please?’ (native speaker, Scenario 9). As the examples show the illocutionary force can again be decreased by the use of downtoning devices, such as politeness markers or past tense modals.

Non-conventionally indirect requests

Non-conventionally indirect requests constitute the least direct category of request utterances. Although they were originally divided into two subcategories, mild and strong hints, my coding scheme follows later studies on hints in requests (Achiba, 2003; Warga, 2004; Weizmann, 1993) and combines all the hints into one category. Examples found in the data include ‘Erm, guys? Sorry?’ (SA learner, Scenario 14) and ‘Excuse me’ (native speaker, Scenario 5). As hints are the least transparent forms of requests, they can take the interlocutor longer to decode than the more direct and obvious strategies, such as hedged performatives or locution derivable requests. Compared to direct and conventionally indirect requests, hints are also more likely to be misinterpreted or not recognized as a request.
4.4.3 Coding categories request modification

In the previous section I have introduced the request strategies that I have used in the present study to examine participants’ request utterances. The classification of these request strategies according to the different directness categories makes it possible to determine how the learners and native speakers decreased – if at all – the illocutionary force of their requests’ head acts. Apart from the selection of a particular request strategy, speakers can further decrease or increase the force of their requests by using *internal* and/or *external modifiers*. The categories of my classification scheme for internal and external modification are based on House and Kasper (1987), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989b) and Trosborg (1995).

Following the aforementioned frameworks, I distinguish two types of internal modifiers, *downgraders*, which are employed to soften the illocutionary force of the requests, and *upgraders*, which are used to increase the impact of the request. Modifiers belonging to the former type can further be subcategorized as *lexical* or *syntactic*. Table 4.5 contains descriptions and examples of the lexical downgraders that were found in the participants’ data, while Table 4.6 comprises definitions and examples of syntactic downgraders that were employed by the participants.

While the lexical downgrader categories in Table 4.5 tended to follow more the CCSARP’s (1989) framework, the following syntactic categories in Table 4.6 are based to a larger extent on Trosborg’s (1995) taxonomy. As a result of Trosborg’s introduction of the categories *tentative* and *appreciative embedding*, it has to be noted that instances included in my category of ‘conditional clause’ are more restricted than in the CCSARP coding manual. This means that conditional clauses that form part of embedded structures such as ‘I wonder if’ or ‘I would appreciate it very much if’ are not counted in the conditional clause category.

While Tables 4.5 and 4.6 contain descriptions of internal modifiers that were used to decrease the illocutionary force of a request, Table 4.7 provides definitions and examples of internal modifiers that were used by the participants in the present study to increase the illocutionary force of the request by emphasizing certain elements of their request utterances.

The second modifier category that I will be investigating in the current study is that of external modification. *External modifiers* are supporting statements that are used by speakers to persuade the hearer to carry out the desired act, while *internal modifiers* are lexical and syntactic devices that are employed by the speakers to modulate their request utterance (Trosborg, 1995). In addition to the external modifiers employed in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper’s (1989a) and Trosborg’s (1995) frameworks, I introduced and added three further external modifiers in this study, as none of the existing categories seemed to fit the modifiers used by my participants’ request which I categorized as *appreciator, smalltalk* and *considerator* (see Table 4.8 for detailed description).
### Table 4.5  Overview of internal modifiers: lexical downgraders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example* (group, learner initial, scenario/session)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downtoner</td>
<td>sentence adverbial that is used to reduce the force of the request</td>
<td>Could I <em>maybe</em> have some of them or could you bring a copy or something? (SA, G, 4/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness marker</td>
<td>employed by the speakers to bid for their interlocutors' cooperation</td>
<td>Could you open the window a little bit, <em>please</em>? (SA, F, 1/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>adverbial modifier that is employed to decrease the imposition of the request by underrepresenting the proposition of the request</td>
<td>Can you speak up <em>a bit</em>, <em>please</em>? (SA, A, 7/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Tense Modals</td>
<td>past tense forms such as <em>could</em> instead of <em>can</em> make the request appear more polite</td>
<td>Professor Jones, <em>could</em> you show me the direction to the Trent Building? (SA, C, 2/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative Device</td>
<td>used to consult the interlocutor's opinion on the proposition of the request</td>
<td>Erm, Lucy, <em>would you mind</em> filling in this questionnaire for me? (SA, C, 3/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>adverbial that is used by the speaker to make the request more vague</td>
<td>Is it possible if we can arrange a meeting during the holidays <em>somehow</em>? (SA, M, 8/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td>progressive form of verb that is used deliberately by the speaker</td>
<td>I was wondering if maybe you could give them to me tomorrow? (SA, H, 10/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marked Modality</td>
<td><em>might</em> and <em>may</em> make the request appear more tentative.</td>
<td>Excuse me, <em>may</em> I just pass? (SA, C, 5/2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* All examples are taken from participants’ requests made as a response to various MET scenarios.

### Table 4.6  Overview over internal modifiers: syntactic downgraders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example (group, learner initial, scenario/session)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Clause</td>
<td>employed by speakers to distance themselves from the request</td>
<td>I would like to ask, <em>if you could maybe</em> fill in the questionnaire? (SA, B, 11/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciative Embedding</td>
<td>used by the speakers to positively reinforce the request internally by stating their hopes and positive feelings</td>
<td>Excuse me, <em>it would be really nice</em> if you would fill out this, that questionnaire. (SA, I, 11/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tentative Embedding</td>
<td>employed by the speaker to make the utterance appear</td>
<td>Sorry, Lucy, erm, I really got problems with this questionnaire and <em>I</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
### Table 4.6  Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example (group, learner initial, scenario/session)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>less direct and to show hesitation</td>
<td>wondered if you might find some time to help me filling it in?</td>
<td>(SA, D, 3/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag question</td>
<td>used to downtone the impact of the request by appealing to the interlocutor’s consent</td>
<td>I don’t suppose you could point me in the direction of some suitable ones, could you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation</td>
<td>employed by speakers to downtone the force of the request by indicating their lowered expectations of the request being met</td>
<td>Phil, you couldn’t open the window for me, please?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.7  Overview over internal upgraders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example (group, learner initial, scenario/session)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>adverbial modifier that stresses specific elements of the request</td>
<td>I don’t feel like I could, erm, have a meeting with you now because I’ve got such a high fever and I really need to go to bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Intensifier</td>
<td>employed to emphasize the temporal aspect of the speakers’ request</td>
<td>Erm, hello, I’m sorry but I have a urgent appointment at my dentist. Can we meet tomorrow?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Intensifier + Intensifier</td>
<td>used to further heavily reinforce the urgency of the request</td>
<td>So, could you please, erm, give me some articles that you may have? It’s very urgent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expletive</td>
<td>used by the speakers to communicate their frustration with an element of the request</td>
<td>Erm, sorry, Owen, I can’t for the life of me understand this bloody postmodernism in art article. Could you, do you think you could explain it to me before you go home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overstater</td>
<td>exaggerated utterances that form part of the request and are employed by the speakers to communicate their need of the request being met</td>
<td>Um, I’m in desperate need of material for my essay. Would you be so kind as to collect some articles for me?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8 Overview of external modifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example (group, learner initial, scenario/session)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>linguistic device that is used to get the interlocutor’s attention;</td>
<td>Ee; excuse me; hello; Peter (various)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>precedes the Head</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparator</td>
<td>short utterance that intends to prepare the interlocutor for the request;</td>
<td>May I ask you a favour? (SA, F, 3/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can follow or substitute the Alerter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head</td>
<td>the actual request</td>
<td>Do you know where the Portland Building is? (SA, E, 12/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>provides an explanation for the request</td>
<td>Erm, unfortunately, I really don’t understand this topic here (SA, E, 15/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td>used to pre-empt the interlocutor’s potential objections</td>
<td>I know you are really busy but maybe you’ve got some minutes for me. (SA, B, 11/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition</td>
<td>employed to decrease the imposition of the request</td>
<td>I will return them immediately, the next day. (SA, B, 10/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimizer</td>
<td>employed to flatter the interlocutor and to put them into a positive mood</td>
<td>I think you are the perfect person to do it (SA, G, 3/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetener</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of</td>
<td>the requester offers the interlocutor a reward for fulfilling the request</td>
<td>I would fill in yours [the questionnaire] as well, if you need one, one day (SA, G, 3/3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smalltalka</td>
<td>short utterance at the beginning of the request that is intended to</td>
<td>Good to see you (SA, B, 12/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>establish a positive atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciatorb</td>
<td>usually employed at the end of the request to positively reinforce it</td>
<td>That would be very nice (SA, H, 6/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideratorc</td>
<td>employed at the end of the request; intends to show consideration towards</td>
<td>Only if you’ve got the time of course (SA, A, 15/2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the interlocutor’s situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:  

a Confer also Malinowski’s (1949) concept of ‘phatic communion’.  
b The appreciator is quite closely related to the internal modifier appreciative embedding, but is used external to the head act whereas appreciative embedding is used within the head act.  
c This category is similar to Achiba’s (2003) Option givers, which is, however, not defined for its location.

In this chapter, I have introduced the participants (in Section 4.2) and the data collection methods and procedures (in Sections 4.3 and 4.4). I have also described the transcription techniques that I employed and the coding categories that I used for the analysis of the request utterances. In Chapter 5, I will analyse and discuss the results of the investigation of learners’ and native
speakers’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The findings of the study examining participants’ productive pragmatic ability will be analysed and discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Notes

1 This meant that students who had taken part in previous student exchange programmes that lasted several weeks while they were at grammar school, or those that had worked as au pairs were excluded from the present study.

2 According to data gathered by the German Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Federal Employment Agency) for 2006, the percentage of women enrolled in translation/interpreting degrees programmes ranged from 58 to 76 per cent (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2006, p. 5).

3 As a result of the Bologna declaration of 1999 signed by 29 European countries including Germany, the German higher education sector is at the time of writing undergoing a significant change. The aim of the Bologna declaration is to ‘creat[e] convergence’ in European higher education, thus making it easier to compare degrees across countries. The introduction of new distinct undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications is a cornerstone of the declaration. As a consequence, many German universities are introducing Bachelor and Master degrees to meet the requirements of the declaration. Whereas it previously took students on average about 5–6 years to obtain their first degree in Germany (Egeln and Heine, 2006), the new Bachelor degrees will enable students to obtain their first qualification after three years, thus making the length of the translator/interpreter programme at the IFA college the norm rather than the exception.

4 Two complete versions of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

5 The written MET instructions can be found in Appendix B.

6 For an in-depth linguistic discussion of the term ‘Politeness’ as lay concept (‘Politeness 1’) and abstract academic term (‘Politeness 2’) see Eelen (2001) and Watts (2003).

7 Request utterances assigned to this category can differ somewhat from one classification scheme to another (cf. for example, Woodfield, 2008).
Chapter 5

Development of Pragmatic Awareness

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the investigation into participants’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The findings of the investigation into learners’ productive pragmatic abilities in requests will be analysed and discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. The data for the present chapter were elicited with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) video-and-questionnaire task and subsequent semi-structured interviews. In order to examine the development of the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of the study abroad learners, their data were collected twice: at the beginning of their stay and shortly before they returned home.

In the following, I will investigate the effect of the SA learners’ sojourn in study abroad context on the development of their pragmatic and grammatical awareness by comparing their error recognition scores (i.e. whether they correctly identified pragmatic and grammatical errors in scenarios that contained these infelicities) and their error rating scores (i.e. how they scored the errors on the scale), to that of the AH learners and English native speakers. The former will be analysed and discussed in Section 5.1 and the latter in Section 5.2. In Section 5.3, I will present the findings of the interview data concerning participants’ awareness of their own rating behaviour. The interview data that provide insights into the SA learners awareness of their own L2 development will then be discussed in Section 5.4.

5.1 Error Recognition

I conducted two different analyses of the participants’ mean error recognition scores. The first analysis corresponds to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) and Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) investigation and refers to the first question on the questionnaire, namely whether the individual scenario was appropriate/correct or not. Due to the large number of participants in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s study, it was not possible for the researchers to conduct post-hoc
interviews with their respondents (Dörnyei, personal communication, October, 2001). Therefore, their examination of the participants’ ability to detect a pragmatic or grammatical infelicity in the video-and-questionnaire task had to be solely based on assuming that if participants marked an error in a scenario containing a pragmatic or grammatical violation, they had in fact noticed the correct error type, that is, a pragmatic infelicity in a scenario that contained a pragmatic error.

As I was able to interview my participants about the nature of the error type in the individual scenarios, I was in a position to determine whether they had indeed detected the errors that had been planted in the scenarios. To distinguish the two investigations of the participants’ error recognition scores, the results that are exclusively based on the questionnaire data without any verification (and are in keeping with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s [1998] and Nięzgoda and Röver’s [2001] methodology) will henceforth be called *uncorrected results*, while the results that are based on the questionnaire and interview data will be referred to as *corrected results*.

### 5.1.1 Uncorrected error recognition

Table 5.1 displays the participants’ uncorrected mean error recognition results based on the participants’ response to the first question of whether they perceived a scenario to be appropriate/correct or not. Scores close to ‘0’ indicate that the participants thought that the scenarios did not contain an error and scores close to ‘1’ indicate that the participants thought that the scenarios contained an error.

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) show that the SA learners and the native speakers recognized significantly more errors in scenarios containing a pragmatic infelicity than the AH group in Germany. These results are schematically illustrated in Figure 5.1.

![Figure 5.1. Participants’ error recognition of pragmatic errors (uncorrected)](image-url)
Table 5.1  Participants’ error recognition (uncorrected)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Post hoc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatical</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controls</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
- Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
- SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
- AH: At home learners
- E: English native speakers
- * p< 0.05, ** p< 0.01, *** p< 0.001
- a t-test is one-tailed
- b The post hoc test Gabriel was used, ‘/’ indicates significant differences between the groups
As expected, the native speakers achieved the highest error recognition score with 0.97. The findings of the uncorrected participants’ error recognition scores for pragmatic items are in agreement with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) study in which the number of ESL students who detected an infelicity in a pragmatic scenario (84.6 per cent) was much higher than the number of corresponding EFL learners (61.9 per cent). In contrast, Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) ESL learners recognized fewer scenarios containing a pragmatic problem than their EFL learners, (57.08 per cent and 80.16 per cent respectively).

The result of the paired-sample t-test for the SA learners suggests that the SA learners did not increase their error recognition with regard to scenarios that contained a pragmatic infelicity. It has to be noted, however, that the t-test’s probability value is 0.065 and thus very close to the significance level of 0.05. According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), the result can therefore be regarded as a ‘trend’ since it only narrowly misses the cut-off point.

The participants’ scores of the scenarios that contain a grammatical infelicity, shown in Figure 5.2, again confirm Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) findings.

The data for the scenarios containing a grammatical violation reveal that the SA group detected significantly fewer errors in these items at the beginning of their stay in Great Britain (0.77) than the AH learners (0.98) and the native speakers (0.97). This result was expected since only six of the SA learners were enrolled in a subject related to English language at their home university, while all of the AH learners had received two hours of grammar instructions per week at their higher education institution for 2.5 years prior to taking part in the study.

It is therefore quite remarkable that at the end of their stay, the SA learners’ group score for the uncorrected grammatical scenarios had increased so dramatically that the results of the SA learners’ group were no longer statistically different from those of the AH learners and the native speakers.

![Figure 5.2. Participants’ error recognition of grammatical errors (uncorrected)](image-url)
A paired-sample t-test that compared the SA learners’ grammatical scores which were elicited shortly after the learners arrival in England and shortly before they returned home, confirmed that the score of the second data collection session was significantly higher than the one of the first session (see Table 5.1). Thus, the results of the uncorrected grammatical error recognition scores show an increase in the SA learners’ grammatical awareness from Session 1 to Session 2.

In order to investigate whether the participant scores for the scenarios containing a pragmatic and grammatical error were significantly different, I conducted four paired sample t-tests that are presented in Table 5.2.

The results show only significant differences in the awareness of grammatical and pragmatic infelicities for the AH learners who recognized considerably more grammatical than pragmatic errors, 0.98 and 0.71 respectively. This supports Håkansson and Norrby’s (2005, p. 156) finding that ‘a high level of grammatical competence does not necessarily presuppose a high level of pragmatics.’ Differences in the uncorrected error recognition scores for the SA group in Session 1 and Session 2, as well as for the native speaker participants were not significant.

The results of the analyses of variance for the control scenarios (i.e. those scenarios that contained neither a pragmatic nor a grammatical infelicity) further indicate that the learning environment has a considerable impact on the learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The AH group marked a significantly higher amount of errors in scenarios that did not contain an error of either type than the English native speakers and the SA learners in both, the first and the second data collection session (Session 1: F (2,50) = 9.508, p = 0.000; Session 2: F (2,50) = 12.879, p = 0.000). The SA learners’ scores for the control scenarios in Sessions 1 and 2 were not significantly different (t = 0.899, df = 15, p = 0.192).

### Table 5.2 Paired sample t-tests between pragmatic and grammatical errors (uncorrected data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pragmatic scenarios</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Grammatical scenarios</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>Pragmatic and grammatical errors</th>
<th>t*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>1.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>0.567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>-5.775***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>-0.192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
AH: At home learners
E: English native speakers

* p< .05, ** p< .01, *** p< .001;

* t-test is one-tailed
5.1.2 Corrected error recognition

The analysis so far has focused on the uncorrected error recognition scores, that is, the scores that are solely based on the questionnaire data, which I computed in order to contrast the results of my participants with those of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) and Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) ESL and EFL learners. Table 5.3 shows the ‘corrected’ results, that is, those results that also contain the participants’ explanations about which of the two error types, pragmatic or grammatical, they had detected in the individual scenarios. In this table ‘1’ is the good answer, therefore values close to ‘1’ show that a high number of participants identified the correct error type in scenarios containing an error or in the case of the four correct control scenarios marked that they did not contain an error.

The analysis of the corrected error recognition scores reveals that although the individual item type mean scores are lower than the uncorrected mean scores, which means that some of the students mistakenly thought that a pragmatic scenario contained a grammatical error and vice versa, the one way analyses of variance still show the same significant differences between the three groups. The SA learners in Session 1 (0.84) and Session 2 (0.95) and the native speakers (0.95) recognize significantly more pragmatic infelicities than the AH learners (0.61), as shown in Figure 5.3. This is an important result with regard to the validity of the data that solely relies on the questionnaire, as it indicates that small variations of the group scores do not change or obscure the overall picture that has emerged of how the three groups performed in relation to each other.

The results of the corrected error recognition analysis further reveal that the SA groups’ recognition score for pragmatic infelicities after about one month’s stay in England (0.84) is already significantly higher than the AH

![Figure 5.3. Participants’ pragmatic error recognition (corrected)](image-url)
### Table 5.3  Participants’ error recognition (corrected)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>t&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Post hoc&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatical</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controls</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:

Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
AH: At home learners
E: English native speakers
* p< .05, ** p< .01, *** p< .001
<sup>a</sup> t-test is one-tailed
<sup>b</sup> The post hoc test Gabriel was used, ‘/’ indicates significant differences between the groups
learners score (0.61) as shown by an independent t-test for both groups (t = 2.856, df = 31, p = 0.008). This is a surprising result considering that the members of the AH learner group are professional language learners who had studied English intensively for more than 2 years at a higher education institution and attended a high number of language classes per week. It may seem unlikely that the SA learners, of whom only six studied a subject related to English, would have achieved a similar or higher recognition score for the pragmatic errors if they had taken part in the study before coming to England. However, it has to be noted that these differences between the AH learners and the SA learners in Session 1 could have existed before the SA learners were exposed to the target language in the study abroad context because no test was administered to the SA learners prior to them leaving their home country.

The beneficial impact of prolonged exposure to the target language on learners’ pragmatic development is, however, shown by the findings of a paired-sample t-test that compared the SA group’s corrected pragmatic error recognition scores from the first data collection session (in October or early November) with those of the second session (in May of the following year). The results reveal that the SA learners detected significantly more pragmatic infelicities after 9 months in the study abroad context than after 1 month (0.95 and 0.84 respectively), a finding that the t-test of the uncorrected error recognition scores had already alluded to in the form of a tendency. Quite remarkably, the SA learners’ mean score for pragmatic violations in the second session was the same as the corresponding native speakers’ score. Therefore, the data suggest that after a 9-month stay in the English-speaking study abroad context, the SA learners have achieved a native-speaker-like awareness of pragmatic infelicities in simple, everyday interactions in an educational context as examined by the video-and-questionnaire task.

The findings of the uncorrected error recognition scores that compared the grammatical scores of the SA, AH learners and the native speakers are also supported by the analysis of the corrected scores. The results of the corrected grammatical analysis are schematically presented in Figure 5.4. The SA learners recognized significantly fewer grammatical infelicities in the first session than the AH learners or the English native speakers. At the end of the SA learners’ stay in Great Britain, however, they had increased their receptive grammatical awareness considerably so that the one way analysis of variance no longer revealed any significant differences between the three groups. This increase in their grammatical awareness is also corroborated by the results of a paired-sample t-test comparing the SA learners’ scores from Session 1 (0.69) and Session 2 (0.89) which shows that the difference in this group’s scores is significant (see Table 5.3).

As for the uncorrected error recognition scores, I conducted four paired-sample t-tests to examine whether the participant groups’ corrected error recognition scores for pragmatic and grammatical infelicities indicated a
significant difference in their ability to detect one error type over the other. The results are presented in Table 5.4.

The t-tests reveal that the differences in the error recognition scores are only significant for the AH learners. Members of this group detected significantly more grammatical than pragmatic infelicities, a result which corroborates the findings of the t-tests based on the uncorrected error recognition scores discussed above.

The analyses of the control scenarios conducted with two one-way ANOVAs yielded the same statistical results as the control scenario analyses that were based on the uncorrected results (Session 1: F (2,50) = 9.508, p = 0.000; Session 2: F (2,50) = 12.879, p = 0.000), since in both cases the participants had

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**Table 5.4** Paired sample t-tests between pragmatic and grammatical errors (corrected data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M Pragmatic scenarios</th>
<th>M Grammatical scenarios</th>
<th>Pragmatic and grammatical errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes:*

Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
AH: At home learners
E: English native speakers

* p< 0.05, ** p< 0.01, *** p< 0.001

* t-test is one-tailed
correctly identified that the scenarios did not contain an error of either type and had therefore ticked the box for ‘yes’ on the questionnaire.

The investigation of the participants’ ability to detect the pragmatic and grammatical infelicities that were tested by the video-and-questionnaire instrument has shown that both the uncorrected and corrected results corroborate Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) finding that a sustained sojourn in the L2 context promotes learners’ pragmatic awareness. Consequently, the results of the German SA, AH and English native speaker group comparisons do not support Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) study in which the Czech EFL learners outperformed the ESL learners regarding the recognition of pragmatic infelicities.

5.2 Error Ratings

5.2.1 Uncorrected error rating

The investigation of the SA learners’ error recognition scores in Section 5.1 has shown that SA learners’ ability to detect pragmatic and grammatical infelicities improved during their stay in the study abroad context. This section examines how the SA learners assessed the severity of the two error types in comparison to the native speakers and AH learners and whether their sojourn in England influenced their rating behaviour. To enable me to compare my results with those of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) original and Niezgoda and Röver’s (2001) follow-up study, I again first conducted an analysis of the data based only on the questionnaire responses, that is, the ‘uncorrected’ error mean rating scores. Table 5.5 refers to the participants’ scores on the six-part-scale ranging from ‘not bad at all’ to ‘very bad’, with the least severely rated error coded as ‘1’, and the most severely rated error as ‘6’. Participants who had not detected an error in a scenario that contained one were assigned a ‘0’.

Similarly to the results of the participants’ error recognition scores, one-way analyses of variance revealed significant differences in the groups’ error ratings. The AH learners’ mean score of the scenarios containing a pragmatic infelicity (2.72) was significantly lower than the scores of the SA group in Session 1 and Session 2, (3.67 and 4.25 respectively), and the native speakers’ score (3.59). Thus, the uncorrected error rating scores suggest that even shortly after their arrival in England, the SA learners perceived pragmatic violations to be significantly more serious than the AH learners in Germany and displayed a rating behaviour similar to that of the native speakers.

Similarly to the findings in 5.1.2 that showed that the SA learners already identified a significantly higher number of pragmatic infelicities about one month after their arrival in the study abroad context than the AH learners, this result could merely indicate that the SA learner group already had a
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>t*</th>
<th>Post hocb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>3.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatical</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controls</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
AH: At home learners
E: English native speakers
* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001
* t-test is one-tailed
b The post hoc test Gabriel was used, ‘/’ indicates significant differences between the groups
higher awareness of pragmatic issues before they even left Germany. While this explanation cannot be discounted, as no data were collected from the SA learners in Germany, I do not think that it is likely that the SA learners would have outperformed the professional language learners in the AH group before coming to England.

Instead, I would suggest that the SA learners’ score is the result of an initial leap in their pragmatic awareness that was triggered by the high amount of exposure to and use of the target language in the target environment during the learners’ first 4 weeks in England. A similar increase in pragmatic competence during the first month of learners’ stay in the second language context was also observed by Matsumura (2003). The first data collection session took place about 1 month after the participants had arrived in England, since times, dates, access to a computer and venues had to be negotiated. This month was a linguistically intense experience for members of the SA group in which they had a very high amount of contact with English native speakers as they had to arrange their accommodation, set up bank accounts, register with the university, select appropriate courses and attend lectures and seminars.

Consequently, the learners had not only been exposed to the target language by observing interactions around them or by being addressed, but were also forced to use English to communicate. A number of studies have indicated that a high amount of input (Bacon, 2002; Barron, 2003; Billmyer, 1990; Ellis 2002; House 1996; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985) and output (Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004; Swain 1993, 2000) positively influences language learners’ proficiency in their L2. The SA learner scores for the first session could be regarded as corroborating those findings. The learner and native speaker scores for scenarios containing a pragmatic error are schematically illustrated in Figure 5.5.

![Figure 5.5. Participants’ rating of pragmatic errors (uncorrected)](image-url)
The results of a paired-sample t-test comparing the SA participants’ uncorrected pragmatic error rating scores in Session 1 and Session 2 show that the SA learners assigned scenarios containing a pragmatic error significantly higher scores at the end of their stay than they did at the beginning. As even their initial score was higher than that of the native speakers, the further increase suggests some sort of ‘hypersensitivity’ towards pragmatic violations. A similar phenomenon was also found by Carrell and Konneker (1981) and Tanaka and Kawade (1982), whose learner participants distinguished more politeness levels than their native speaker counterparts.

The data indicate that the sojourn in the target environment has made the SA learners aware that native speakers perceive pragmatic errors to be more serious than grammatical ones. By recognizing this and assigning pragmatic scenarios high severity scores, the SA learners have shown that they have made considerable progress.

The analyses of variance for the uncorrected ratings of scenarios containing a grammatical infelicity also reveal significant differences between the participant groups. These results are schematically illustrated in Figure 5.6.

Similar to the scores for scenarios including a pragmatic error, the AH learners’ grammatical score (4.09) is significantly different from those of the SA learners in Session 1 (2.17) and Session 2 (2.20) as well as the native speakers’ (2.37). This means that while the AH learners perceived the scenarios containing a pragmatic infelicity to be less serious than the SA learners and the native speakers, they perceived scenarios containing a grammatical error to be more serious than the SA learners and native speakers. Table 5.6 displays the results of paired-sample t-tests comparing the uncorrected pragmatic and grammatical error scores of the participant groups.

The t-tests show significant differences in the individual groups’ assessment of the severity of errors in scenarios containing a grammatical and pragmatic
infelicity. The English native speakers and the SA learners in Session 1 and Session 2 assigned scenarios including a pragmatic violation significantly higher severity scores than those scenarios that contained grammatical infelicities. In contrast, the AH participants perceived the errors in scenarios containing grammatical violations to be more serious than those including a pragmatic infelicity.

These results are in complete agreement with Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) findings, which showed that their ESL learners in the United States perceived scenarios containing a pragmatic infelicity to be significantly more serious than scenarios containing a grammatical error. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s EFL group in Hungary also displayed the same rating behaviour as my AH group in Germany and assigned the grammatical scenarios (3.68) higher scores than the pragmatic ones (2.04), thus indicating an inverse error severity assessment based on the learning environment. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei have called this inverse rating behaviour of the ESL and EFL participants ‘mirror effect’ (Dörnyei, personal communication, April, 2003). This relationship is schematically represented in Figure 5.7.

Similarly to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) and my SA learners, Niezgoda and Röver’s ESL participants also rated the infelicities in the pragmatic scenarios (2.40) significantly higher than those in the grammatical ones (1.89). The uncorrected pragmatic (3.07) and grammatical (3.08) error recognition scores of their EFL learners, however, were not significantly different. Thus, the results of all three learner groups in the L2 context showed that they scored scenarios containing a pragmatic violation more severely than grammatical ones. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s and my findings further evidence an inverse severity assessment of the ESL/SA and EFL/AH groups based on their learning context. This supports Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s notion that a prolonged stay in the target environment primes the learners’ awareness of pragmatic infelicities. In an EFL environment,

Table 5.6  Paired sample t-tests between pragmatic and grammatical error recognition scores (uncorrected data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pragmatic scenarios</th>
<th>Grammatical scenarios</th>
<th>Pragmatic and grammatical errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>t'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>3.215**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>6.463***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>-3.368**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>3.741**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
AH: At home learners
E: English native speakers
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001
* t-test is one-tailed
the focus is on grammatical violations, whereas in an ESL environment, it is on pragmatic violations. This appears to be supported by Kasper’s (1982) assessment of the German educational system in which she noted that ‘formal correctness is given high priority in the German school context’ (p. 109). Whether the learner groups are conscious of their rating behaviour will be explored in section 5.3 in which the interview data regarding this question will be examined.

5.2.2 Corrected error rating scores

The results of the uncorrected mean error rating scores have shown that there were no significant differences in the SA learners’ and native speakers’ rating behaviour of scenarios containing pragmatic or grammatical infelicities. The AH learners, however, displayed an inverse severity assessment of the two scenario types. Table 5.7 presents the results of the corrected error rating scores. As in Table 5.5, the data presented in Table 5.7 also refer to the six-point rating scale in which the least serious error is coded as ‘1’ and the most serious error as ‘6’. In this table, however, only those errors are included that were correctly identified by the students in the subsequent interviews. Participants who detected and rated a ‘wrong’ error, for example, a pragmatic infelicity in a scenario containing a grammatical violation were assigned a ‘0’.

Similar to the results of the uncorrected error ratings, the participants show a statistically significant difference in their severity assessment of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities. Even after only about 1 month in England, the differences between the SA learners and the AH learners are already significant, which could perhaps be due to a leap in pragmatic awareness during the first few weeks for the SA learners’ stay in the L2 context as suggested
### Table 5.7 Participants' error ratings (corrected)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>t*</th>
<th>Post hoc&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA1</td>
<td>SA2</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatical</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:
- Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
  SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
  AH: At home learners
  E: English native speakers
- * p< 0.05, ** p< 0.01, *** p< 0.001
- * t-test is one-tailed
- <sup>b</sup> The post hoc test Gabriel was used, ‘/’ indicates significant differences between the groups
in Section 5.2.1. Regarding the pragmatic infelicities, the difference in the groups’ rating behaviour is even more pronounced after the SA learners have spent 1 academic year in the target environment. Figure 5.8 shows the groups’ ratings of pragmatic and grammatical errors.

The results of the one-way analyses of variance show that the SA learners and the English native speakers perceived pragmatic violations to be more severe than grammatical infelicities, while the AH learners perceived grammatical errors to be more severe than pragmatic ones. Thus, like the uncorrected error rating results, the corrected error rating scores support Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) finding of the mirror effect which refers to the inverse rating behaviour of the learners in the ESL and EFL context. Figure 5.9 shows the mirror effect for the uncorrected and corrected results of the German SA and AH participants.

The figure reveals that both – uncorrected and corrected – error rating scores of the SA and AH learners show that the SA learners perceived the pragmatic infelicities to be considerably more serious than the grammatical

![Figure 5.8](image1.png)  
**Figure 5.8.** Participants’ ratings of pragmatic and grammatical errors (corrected)

![Figure 5.9](image2.png)  
**Figure 5.9.** The mirror effect
errors, whereas the AH learners perceived the grammatical violations to be more severe than the pragmatic ones. To examine whether these differences in the participants’ rating behaviour were also statistically significant, I conducted four paired sample t-test for the individual groups’ error rating scores. The results are presented in Table 5.8.

The t-tests show that the differences in their rating behaviour were significant for all participant groups. This again corroborates the findings of the uncorrected error rating analysis in Section 5.2.1. The native speakers and SA learners in Session 1 and Session 2 considered the pragmatic infelicities to be significantly more serious than the grammatical errors. The AH learners, however, assigned the grammatical errors higher severity scores than the pragmatic ones.

The discussion of the participants’ uncorrected and corrected mean error rating scores has shown that even after about 4 weeks in the study abroad context, the SA learners display a similar rating behaviour as the English native speaker participants and perceive the pragmatic violations to be more severe than the grammatical ones. By the end of the SA learners’ stay in Great Britain, members of the study abroad group considered pragmatic infelicities to be even more serious than at the beginning of their sojourn in the L2 context. In the following sections I will discuss the participants’ interview data to examine whether they were aware of their rating behaviour and whether the SA group members were conscious of their own L2 development.

### 5.3 Participants’ Awareness of Own Rating Behaviour

In the first data collection session, which took place about 4 weeks after they had arrived in England, 11 of the 16 SA learners explicitly stated that they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M Pragmatic scenarios</th>
<th>M Grammatical scenarios</th>
<th>Pragmatic and grammatical errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA1 3.57</td>
<td>SA2 4.20</td>
<td>AH 2.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- Groups: SA1: Study abroad learners session 1
- SA2: Study abroad learners session 2
- AH: At home learners
- E: English native speakers
- *p< .05, **p< .01, ***p< .001
- * t-test is one-tailed
thought pragmatic errors, which they referred to as ‘politeness mistakes’, were more serious than grammatical infelicities. The remaining five chose not to comment on differences in the severity of pragmatic and grammatical violations or were more vague in their responses like Tamara and Peter, who each just concentrated on one part of the question.

I think being polite is important especially when you are talking to teachers, but it is also important to observe some politeness rules with friends. If you keep a friend waiting for half an hour and don’t apologize he might not be your friend for much longer. (Tamara, Session 1)

English is not my mother tongue and from my own experience as a non-native speaker I think that some grammar mistakes, like putting information into the plural, are not serious mistakes. (Peter, Session 1)

Instead of contrasting the two error types, Tamara and Peter only focused on one aspect of the question about how serious they perceived pragmatic and grammatical errors to be. Their decision, along with that of the three other SA learners’ whose responses were rather vague or who did not comment at all, can be interpreted in a variety of ways. Their reluctance to discuss this issue might indicate that they were not conscious of their own rating behaviour. They might not have thought about their feelings regarding these particular error types in a contrastive way before and therefore decided not to answer it directly. Another possible reason why they chose not to voice their opinion might be that they had only met me on that day, and although I had been in e-mail contact with the participants before, they simply might not yet have felt comfortable enough in my presence to open up more in the interview and share their views with me. Since the interview replies of the AH learners, who did not know me either before they took part in the study, also tended to be rather short, this possibility cannot be disregarded.

At the end of the SA participants’ stay in Britain, 15 of the 16 learners stated that they perceived pragmatic errors to be more serious than grammatical ones. Only one did not comment at that time. The following statements regarding pragmatic and grammatical infelicities were made by SA learners who commented on them in both sessions and give indications as to the reasons for their opinions. The first extract is from Eva’s first interview:

I think politeness mistakes are far more serious than grammar mistakes. You always make grammar mistakes, especially if you are not a native speaker of the language you are using. I believe that native speakers don’t regard grammar mistakes as serious, but if you make them you often think that they are terrible mistakes to make and believe they are far worse than they really are. So you constantly think about how to avoid these mistakes and how to say it correctly and then you still make the mistake in the end. The impression
is the important thing and quite a lot of what is communicated is actually communicated through body language and your face anyway. So this and choosing the appropriate words is far more important than, for example, saying something which is quite short and to the point, but which might be perceived as impolite, because it is so short and to the point and the words that you choose are rather harsh. (Eva, Session 1)

Eva’s interview data indicate that she is conscious of her rating score assessment that pragmatic infelicities are more serious than grammatical violations. Her explanation on why she feels this way suggests that her attitude is based on personal experiences. She has learned that even with carefully planning, grammatical errors cannot always be avoided and observes that while native speakers do not seem to pay much attention to these errors, learners tend to worry about them very much. Trying to use appropriate expressions and using polite body language is far more important to her. She is even more explicit about this after 9 months in the target environment:

I think politeness mistakes are worse than grammar mistakes. You can make grammar mistakes, but you can remedy a lot by being polite. Even if I make grammar mistakes, people will still be able to understand me and as long as I am polite, the communication flows nevertheless. I have experienced that English native speakers do not think that grammar mistakes are that bad. I think that exchange students who are learning the language have higher expectations than English native speakers and think they have to be perfect. (Eva, Session 2)

In her second interview, Eva’s responses are more definite and it is obvious that her opinion regarding the severity of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities is founded on personal experiences. She has observed that interlocutors not only possibly can but actually will be able to understand [her]’ when she makes a grammatical error and that they do not perceive them to be serious mistakes. Her final point regarding learners’ pursuit of perfection in the L2 is very interesting since one of the other learners, Andreas, made a similar comment about having to realize that the expectations pertaining to one’s skills in the L2 will not always be met:

Right at the beginning, I tried to make no mistakes but now I’m more relaxed and say to myself ‘well, just say what you want’. You are going to make a few mistakes and that’s something that you can’t avoid doing, but they [native speakers] will understand what you mean and it’s ok. And if you don’t make mistakes, you’ll say things that do not sound idiomatic and they will know that you are not a NS anyway. I lowered my expectations. (Andreas, Session 2)
Iris also perceived grammatical errors to be less serious than pragmatic violations in both the first and second data collection session:

I think politeness mistakes are more serious than grammar mistakes, because if I consider my own situation here at the university, if I go to a professor and add an ‘-ing’ where it doesn’t belong, he will still understand me, but he might regard it as impolite if I don’t say ‘please’ or ‘thank you’. So I think it is more of a problem if you violate politeness rules than grammar rules. (Iris, Session 1)

I think politeness mistakes are worse than grammar mistakes, because if you make a grammar mistake the meaning will still come across and the politeness will be there as well. But if the politeness is diminishing, then that’s something to do with the person’s character and not something to do with learning. So, that’s worse in my opinion. (Iris, Session 2)

Similarly to Eva, Iris also mentions that grammatical infelicities do not tend to obscure the content of the message and that native speakers will still be able to grasp the meaning of what was intended to be said. She makes a very important point in her second interview, namely that she believes that impolite or less polite utterances reflect on the speakers’ character and not on their status as language learners. Her comment corroborates the findings of a number of studies which have argued that pragmatic infelicities are often attributed to a speaker’s personality or behavioural flaws rather than their proficiency in the foreign language (Barron, 2003; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Harlow, 1990; Kasper, 1990; Thomas, 1983). Natalie approaches the issue from a rather unique perspective. While an undergraduate student in Germany, she supported herself by working as a German as a Foreign Language teacher. This enabled her to also draw and reflect on her own experiences as a language teacher when answering the question. She observed:

Grammar mistakes don’t bother me. I think violations of a society’s rules regarding polite behaviour are far more serious. I worked as a teacher of German as a foreign language in Germany and grammar mistakes simply occur when you learn a foreign language. But I also find it important to teach students how to behave without upsetting anyone because this causes negative reactions from other people and that is far worse. As a teacher for German as a foreign language, I find it crucial to tell students if they violate social norms. It is vital to tell them what to do differently and to make them aware that grammar is not the only important thing and that social rules are very important, too. (Natalie, Session 1)

Natalie’s response in the first interview does not only show that she is conscious of the different severity scores she awarded pragmatic and grammatical
errors, but that she is also aware that it is the rules of the individual society which determine whether something is regarded as polite or impolite. In addition, she makes a connection between committing politeness violations and upsetting the feelings of an interlocutor, a point which the other SA learners were not as explicit about. Her response suggests that she is aware of a connection between proficiency in foreign language and the ability to use appropriate expressions. Based on her experiences she is convinced that it is the teacher's responsibility to correct their students' pragmatic errors and to tell them how to conduct themselves in the target environment. In the second interview Natalie concentrates more on the proficiency level of the individual learner:

I think politeness mistakes are more serious than grammar mistakes. I think that the severity of a politeness mistake increases with the proficiency level of a language learner. If you are highly proficient in a foreign language, people expect you to be able to express yourself in the foreign language appropriately. (Natalie, Session 2)

The increasing expectations regarding the use of appropriate expressions in the second or foreign language were also expressed by one of the native speaker participants who supports Natalie's assessment. Her statement occurred as a result of her explanation why she had rated Scenario 10 as incorrect/inappropriate in which Anna asks another student to show her the way to the library by saying 'Tell me the way to the library':

It’s nasty. You should say ‘Can you tell me how to get to the library, please?’. It’s a politeness strategy. If someone said that to me, I’d give him the answer, because you are a nice person. But you walk away thinking ‘That was really horrible. Who do they think they are, ordering me around like that?’ If it was someone who didn’t have a very good grasp of the language, you could get away with that, because you know, it is just a bold, simple statement. If somebody had just come over from France last week and they were working from a phrase book, they would be alright with that. But anybody who knows how to speak a language properly, should know to at least say ‘please’ or ‘can you tell me how to get to the library’ rather than just ordering you. But you’d be inclined to give a bit more leeway to somebody who wasn’t a native speaker, but only if they were like brand new. If it was somebody like you [the interviewer] who speaks English pretty well, than you’d still be like ‘Well, that’s not very nice. That’s not very polite ordering me around a bit.’ I think anybody who said something like that is a bit impolite. Unless it was somebody you knew and they ran up to you and say ‘Hi. Tell me how to get to the library’ [participant says it in an out-of-breath way] and you could tell, they were in a terrible rush, then you’d just send them off and later on
you would say ‘Oh, god, what was wrong with you? Where were you going in such a hurry?’ But otherwise you can’t say it like that, it’s not polite. (Ashley, 20 years)

When I asked the native speaker group whether they would assess pragmatic infelicities differently depending on whether it was their interlocutor’s first or second language, 14 of the 20 group members stated that they thought pragmatic violations by L2 learners were less serious than those by fellow native speakers. Molly’s statement is representative of the majority of the native speakers’ views. Her response refers to Scenario 11 in which Peter does not apologize to his friend for being late. She explained that she would be very annoyed if a friend treated her like this and then went on to say:

If it were a non-native speaker I probably weren’t so annoyed, because in some languages or some cultures that wouldn’t be considered rude. If it were a non-native speaker than I would make a lot more allowances and you know think, different language, different culture. What strikes me as being extremely rude might not be at all rude for someone else so if it wasn’t a native speaker I’d be a lot more relaxed. (Molly, 20 years)

Her statement shows that she is aware of different cultural perceptions regarding politeness, similar to Natalie’s observation that the society determines what is regarded as polite or not. This also indicates that she and the other 13 native speakers consider different first languages as mitigating factors in intercultural communication. Of the remaining six native speakers, two were rather vague in their response, two chose not to comment and two stated that since politeness in a foreign language was taught at school, learners should use it: [Regarding politeness] ‘everyone gets taught – I can say “please” in loads of different languages, but I can’t say much else. So if you get taught the words to start with then I think you should use them’ (Dale, 25 years).

Concerning the general severity of pragmatic and grammatical errors, 16 of the 20 native speakers stated that they perceived pragmatic violations to be more serious than grammatical infelicities, which suggests that they were aware of their own rating behaviour. One of the native speakers did not comment on the two error types and three said that they felt the severity of a pragmatic or grammatical infelicity depended very much on the context and that they therefore could not generalize. The number of AH students who commented on their feelings pertaining to pragmatic and grammatical errors was quite small, only 8 out of 17 shared their views with me.

A reason for this might be that in contrast to the other SA learner participants who had been in e-mail contact with me prior to taking part in the research, or the members of the native speaker group who either knew me
socially or attended one of my classes, only two of the AH learners had met me before they took part in the study. Five of the eight learners who commented stated that they considered pragmatic infelicities to be more salient than grammatical ones, whereas three thought the inverse and perceived grammatical errors to be more serious. In comparison to the other participants’ replies the statements of the AH group members also tended to be very to the point without much – or in some cases any – additional explanations. The following opinions represent the two different views expressed by the Germans in Germany:

I think politeness mistakes are more serious than grammar mistakes. Grammar mistakes can happen if you are a language learner, but even language learners should know that politeness is important. (Hannah, 24 years)

Grammar mistakes are more serious then politeness mistakes. (Katrin, 24 years)

In the next section I will examine the SA learners’ observations pertaining to their own L2 development and investigate whether they became aware of cross-cultural differences during their stay in the target environment.

5.4 SA Learners’ Awareness of Their Own Pragmatic Development

In the final data collection session, shortly before their return home, I asked the SA learners how they assessed their own development in the L2. The members of the group differed in their willingness to share their observations regarding their own L2 development and their study abroad sojourn with me. Four chose not to comment on the issue. Of the remaining 12 learners, some were very open, commenting freely and elaborating on various points, whereas others were more restrained and only gave a very brief response. The replies of the former participants indicated that they were very conscious of their linguistic development. Only a small number of SA learners, however, referred to pragmatic issues in their response. This is not very surprising, since the question was deliberately referring to their language development so as not to influence their responses.

As a result, the learners predominantly focused on those elements of the language that they had been assessed on at school and were therefore familiar with, such as grammar, vocabulary and listening comprehension. All learners who commented on areas other than pragmatics reported gains in at least on one of these areas, although not all of them thought that they had increased their proficiency in the same area. For example, some felt
more competent in the use of grammar at the end of their stay, while others felt that their vocabulary had increased. Exposure to the target language in the study abroad context was also one of the issues that was raised by the SA learners regarding their L2 development. Ulrike’s experiences show how being exposed to naturally occurring talk and participating in interactions with native speakers in the study abroad context facilitated her L2 development:

Compared to when I first came here in September 2001, my comprehension has improved. I can now even understand people who come from South London or Manchester. I think this is because I met and became friends with English students in January. Before that, I only knew other exchange students and thought that my English was ok, as I understood the programmes I watched on TV and also understood everything during the lectures. But when you meet and make friends with English NSs, you suddenly learn many words like ‘bird’ and ‘bloke’ that you wouldn’t learn otherwise and this increases your comprehension. I had never heard the word ‘bloke’ before I met the English NSs. I am now able to follow conversations easily when we go out at night – as long as the music isn’t too loud. (Ulrike, Session 2)

That contact with native-speaking age peers of the learners’ L2 in the study abroad context can be beneficial for learners’ listening comprehension and acquisition of informal vocabulary is also supported by Viktoria’s reflections on her L2 development, which in addition also contain interesting observations regarding her construction of her self-image in the study abroad context:

I decided to come here for one academic year because I really wanted to learn the language properly and not just understand the terminology used in lectures, but also have conversations with English NSs in which you could show that you are a witty person. I think one of the saddest and most frustrating things when you start communicating in a foreign language is that you lose your personality because you cannot express yourself in the same way as you do in your native language. That was one of the hardest things for me at the beginning, not being able to show that I am a humorous person because I often didn’t understand them well enough or couldn’t express myself the way I wanted to. I am really glad that this is getting better now (. . .) At the beginning of the academic year, I had to use more basic vocabulary to express myself. Since I started spending more time with English NSs, however, my vocabulary increased and now I sometimes even speak English with other Germans because an English expression came to my mind. (Viktoria, Session 2)
Humour is a difficult subject for second language learners, since they not only have to decide whether a joke or humorous response is appropriate in a situation and have to have the necessary words at their disposal, they also have to correctly determine that what they consider to be funny will also be regarded as an appropriate topic for a humorous remark in the target community. Consequently, the ability to express humour involves a number of skills in the L2. Being able to partake in humorous conversations can also have a rapport building effect with native speakers (Davies, 2003).

Of the 12 SA learners who commented on their L2 development, only two explicitly focused on issues concerning politeness and pragmatics. Bernd and Natalie both concentrated on the use of polite language and commented on changes pertaining to their pragmatic awareness and their productive pragmatic skills.

I was quite surprised that the English are so polite. They use ‘thank you’ quite a lot and they hold the door open for you. So I think that’s very specific for English people. I’ve noticed that I’ve become more polite myself and I also acquired some polite phrases like ‘Cheers’ and ‘Beg your pardon’. You acquire everyday speech that you don’t learn at school. As I worked in the café on campus I had quite a lot of contact with English native speakers and learned quite a bit from them. I guess my development would have been different if I hadn’t had this job. (Bernd, Session 2)

I think I am less polite now than I was at the beginning of my stay here in England. When I first came here, I was very cautious and did not want to offend anyone by being impolite. I think that I tended to use expressions like ‘Would you be so kind’ back then, but now I believe that I know when you can be less polite or use different expressions. I listened to and watched English native speakers and that’s how I learned what to say and when. (Natalie, Session 2)

Bernd’s and Natalie’s comments indicate that both of them seem to have undergone the same learning process. First, they observed that their own output differed from that of the native speakers they encountered in their everyday life interactions in the study abroad context. Then, after having noticed the differences, they modified their own language use accordingly to adapt to the norms of the L2. Therefore, their behaviour seems to follow the process outlined by Schmidt (1993, 1995) in his noticing hypothesis. Like Ulrike and Viktoria, both learners also stated that interactions with or observations of native speakers were important for their learning process. That exposure to the target language through contact with native speakers can play a decisive role in learners’ L2 development has also been observed in previous research (Adolphs & Durow, 2004; Dörnyei, Durow & Zahran, 2004; Lussier, Turner & Desharnais, 1993; Yager, 1998).
All four learners (Ulrike, Viktoria, Andreas, Natalie) deliberately sought opportunities to expose themselves to the target language and thus displayed a behaviour similar to Matsumura’s (2003) students who were also able to improve their pragmatic competence during their sojourn in the L2 context. It therefore seems that exposure as well as the learners’ initiative or willingness to actively pursue opportunities for exposure might be decisive factors in the learners’ pragmatic development in the study abroad context.

5.5 Summary

The statistical analysis of the SA learners’ error recognition scores has shown that their awareness of pragmatic and grammatical violations increased significantly during their 9-month study abroad sojourn in England. The results are therefore in agreement with Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985), Bouton’s (1994), Matsumura’s (2003) and Hassall’s (2005) findings that learners’ pragmatic awareness improves during a prolonged sojourn in the target environment. A comparison of the SA group’s recognition scores with those of the AH participants and the English native speakers revealed that that the SA learners’ pragmatic error recognition score was significantly different from that of the AH learners but not from English native speakers in the first and second data collection session. This means that even after only about 4 weeks in the L2 context, the SA learners detected significantly more pragmatic infelicities than the AH learners.

After their 9-month stay in the study abroad context, the SA learners’ pragmatic error recognition scores had not only improved significantly, thus showing an increase in the SA learners’ pragmatic awareness, but had increased to exactly match the native speakers’ scores. This indicates that at the end of their sojourn, the SA learners have reached a native-like receptive pragmatic proficiency level pertaining to the simple, everyday interactions examined by the video-and-questionnaire task. It has to be emphasized, however, that the results cannot be automatically generalized to predicting the students’ pragmatic awareness regarding more complex and/or unfamiliar situations in different contexts, for example, their ability to correctly interpret implicature (Bouton, 1988, 1994).

A comparison of the SA learners’ grammar scores with those of the other two participant groups showed that their scores differed significantly from those of the native speakers and AH learners at the beginning of their stay. This was not surprising since the AH learners had received a minimum of 2 hours of university-level grammar instruction in the 2.5 years preceding the data collection. This finding also corroborates Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) notion that teaching in EFL contexts tends to focus on grammatical accuracy.
After 9 months in England, however, the SA learners’ ability to detect grammatical infelicities had improved so drastically that differences between the three groups’ scores were no longer significant.

The results of the participants’ error rating revealed that the scores of the SA learners and native speakers were significantly different from those of the AH learners in the first and second data collection sessions. While the SA learners and the native speakers considered pragmatic violations to be more serious than grammatical ones, the AH learners rated grammatical infelicities to be more severe than pragmatic ones. This inverse rating behaviour of the SA and AH learner groups based on the learning environment had first been observed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), who had termed this phenomenon ‘the mirror effect’ (Dörnyei, personal communication, April, 2003). Thus, the results corroborate Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s findings regarding ESL and EFL learners’ severity perception of the two error types.

A comparison of the SA learners’ error severity ratings shortly after their arrival and at the end of their stay showed that their pragmatic scores increased significantly from the first to the second data collection session. Since the SA scores were higher than those of the native speakers, the SA learners’ rating behaviour suggests hypersensitivity towards pragmatic violations, which Carrell and Konneker (1981) and Tanaka and Kawade (1982) also noticed in their learner groups. A comparison of the SA learners’ rating of grammatical infelicities in the two sessions revealed no significant changes.

The analysis of the SA learners’ interview responses regarding their severity assessment of the two error types has shown that the majority of them, 11 out of 16, perceived pragmatic violations to be more serious than grammatical ones in the first data collection session. Shortly before their return home, the number of SA learners who thought that pragmatic infelicities were more serious than grammatical infelicities increased to 15. This indicates that the majority of SA group members were aware of their rating behaviour from the first session on and all but one were conscious of it at the end of their stay.

When asked about their own L2 development in the study abroad context, 12 SA learners stated that they thought their L2 skills had improved during their stay. The majority of them, however, mainly referred to their vocabulary gains and improvements in their listening comprehension. Four learners explicitly talked about the positive impact that contact with native speakers had on their L2 development. Two of those also shared observations of a pragmatic nature and explained how they had become aware of the way native speakers interacted and as a result had either acquired new expressions or adjusted their language use to adapt to that in the target environment. Thus, the statements of these two SA learners seem to be congruent with Schmidt’s (1993, 1995) noticing hypothesis regarding the development of pragmatic awareness.
This chapter has provided the findings of the investigation into SA learners’
development of pragmatic awareness during their sojourn in the L2 environ-
ment. The following three chapters will investigate SA learners’ productive prag-
matic development by focusing on their use of request strategies (in Chapter 6)
and internal and external request modification (in Chapters 7 and 8).

Note

¹ The importance of being able to use humour for L2 learners’ self-image in the
study abroad context was also emphasized by Pellegrino Aveni’s (2005) SA par-
ticipants in Russia.
Chapter 6

Development of Pragmatic Production: Request Strategies

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on SA learners’ development of pragmatic awareness based on data elicited with the video-and-questionnaire task as well as post hoc interviews. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the results of the investigation into SA learners’ productive pragmatic development. Data for this study were collected with the Multimedia Elicitation Task. The present chapter examines the learners’ and native speakers’ use of request strategies.

My coding scheme for the examination of request strategies is based on previous taxonomies by Blum-Kulka (1989), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989a), Trosborg (1995) and Van Mulken (1996). Three major request categories will be distinguished: Direct requests, conventionally indirect requests and non-conventionally indirect requests. The two former categories can be further subdivided into individual strategy types: Imperatives, performatives, locution derivables, want statements (direct requests in declining order of directness) and suggestory formula, temporal availability, prediction, permission, willingness and ability (conventionally indirect requests regarded as equally indirect). The latter category, non-conventionally indirect requests, contains requests that are formulated as hints.

In the following, I will first investigate the initial occurrence of request strategies in the SA learners’ data in Section 6.1. This will be followed by an overview of the total number of request strategy types that were employed by the three participating groups in Section 6.2. Subsequent to this, I will analyse and discuss participants’ use of direct strategies in Section 6.3, learners’ and native speakers’ employment of conventionally indirect strategies in Section 6.4 and finally participants’ use of non-conventionally indirect requests in Section 6.5. The findings of this chapter will then be summarized in Section 6.6.

6.1 First Occurrence of Request Strategies

In the present study the term first occurrence is used to refer to the first use of a particular strategy type by an individual SA learner. Thus, in Figure 6.1 below,
the different sections of a SA learners’ column signify the number of strategy types that were first employed by the learners in a data collection session. For example, Eva used two different strategies in Session 1, then employed one new strategy that she had not used previously used in Session 1 in Session 2 and finally employed two additional strategies in Session 3 that she had not used in either Session 1 or Session 2 before. The individual strategies that were first used by the learners in the three data collection sessions are presented in Table 6.1. This section exclusively focuses on SA learners’ initial employment of a strategy in the data. The frequency with which the SA learners employed a particular request strategy type will be discussed in analysed in detail in the individual request strategy sections (i.e. in Sections 6.3–6.5).

**Table 6.1** SA learners’ first use of individual request strategies in the MET data

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<td>Hedged performative</td>
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<td>Suggestory formula</td>
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*Note: The individual letters of the alphabet in the horizontal line are the initials of the SA learners.*

**Figure 6.1.** First occurrence of request strategies in individual SA learners’ data
The results show that the average number of different strategy types employed by the SA learners in Session 1 was five. By using seven strategies Hendrik employed the highest number of strategies in the first session and Eva used the lowest with two. This was a somewhat surprising result, as Hendrik was a Business Studies student and Eva was enrolled in an English degree and thus the reverse finding would probably have been expected. However, while Hendrik appeared to be highly goal oriented concerning what he wanted to achieve during his study abroad sojourn and was also very interested in seeking out opportunities to communicate with fellow students, Eva seemed quieter and talked about how difficult she found it to adjust to life in the study abroad context in the interviews. Hendrik did not employ any new strategies in the subsequent data collection sessions, which was not unexpected in view of the high number of strategies that he used in Session 1. Eva, however, employed at least one previously not-used strategy in Session 2 and 3. This increase in strategy use coincided with her spending more time with English age peers and starting a relationship with one of them.

Apart from Hendrik only one other SA learner, Franziska, did not use any new strategies in the subsequent data elicitation sessions. Similar to Eva, Franziska had also experienced some difficulties settling in at the new university and country, although she appeared more confident and also more at ease with the language as she had had some American friends in Germany. In contrast to Eva, however, she did not make friends with English age peers.

Out of the seven SA learners that employed a request strategy in Session 2 or 3 that they had not already used in the first data collection session, four (Andreas, Bernd, Eva and Iris) were English honours degree students and one was studying a somewhat related subject (Greta – American Studies). It could therefore be suggested that another factor that influences learners’ initial use of new request strategies in the study abroad context may be whether they are studying the language of the country for their degree or not. Due to the limited number of SA learners in either category in the present sample, any findings in that respect would need to be considered tentative.

Concerning the individual strategy types that were used by the SA learners, the data show that the conventionally indirect strategy ability was the only strategy that was employed by all learners in the first data collection session. This is then followed by the conventionally indirect strategy prediction that was first used by seven of the SA learners in the first and one SA learner in the second data collection session. The initial occurrence of the other strategy types in the data collection sessions was more varied. For example, the direct strategy locution derivables was also used by a total of eight SA learners, but only five of them used this strategy in Session 1.

These results suggest that individual learner differences seem to play an important role in SA learners’ use of request strategies, as the number and
type of strategies first used in the three data collection sessions tended to vary from participant to participant.

### 6.2 Comparison of Groups’ Use of Request Strategies

The previous section concentrated on the initial occurrence of request strategies in the SA learners’ data. In this section, I will compare the employment of request strategy types by the SA learners with that of the AH learners and native speakers to examine similarities and differences in their request strategy use. This analysis is intended to provide a first broad picture of the individual groups’ preferences with regard to individual request strategy types. A detailed analysis and discussion of the three groups’ use of individual request strategies according to the variables status and imposition and also including examples of the data can be found in Sections 6.3–6.5. Figure 6.2 schematically presents the total participant numbers\(^1\) that used the individual request strategies in per cent.

The results show that the conventionally indirect strategy ability, which was employed by all SA learners in the first data collection session, is also the

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**Figure 6.2.** Comparison of groups’ request strategy use
only request strategy that was used by every AH learner and native speaker. This finding is in agreement with House and Kasper (1987), Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) and Woodfield (2008), who noted that this strategy seems to be a very routinized request form, and Warga (2004) who referred to it as the standard request form. Generally, the results reveal that request strategies belonging to the major category conventionally indirect requests were employed by the highest number of learners and native speakers. This finding showing the popularity of conventionally indirect requests supports previous research by Kasper (1981), House and Kasper (1987), Blum-Kulka and House (1989), Trosborg (1995), Hill (1997), Rose (2000), Hassall (2001), Hendriks (2008) and Woodfield (2008).

Locution derivables was the only direct strategy employed by more than 50 per cent of the SA learners and native speakers, whereas four conventionally indirect strategies (prediction, permission, willingness and ability) were used by more than 50 per cent of the SA learners and native speakers.

Not surprisingly, non-conventionally indirect requests were used by a higher number of native speakers than SA and AH learners, although the data also show that the SA learners employed them considerably more than the AH learners. This finding corroborates the results of Hill’s (1997) and Warga’s (2004) studies and is dissimilar to Trosborg’s (1995) results, who noted a nearly equal amount of non-conventionally indirect requests in the least proficient learners and her native speakers. A reason for this difference in learners’ and native speakers’ use of this strategy might be that for learners direct and conventionally indirect strategies may appear to be the ‘safer’ options, since the illocutionary force is stronger and more transparent in these request types. As a consequence, the ultimate aim of the utterance is therefore more likely to be correctly inferred by the interlocutor.

Overall, the results show that the SA learners used a much wider range of request strategies that is comparable to the range of strategies used by the native speakers. In contrast, the majority of learners in the AH group employed a considerably more limited range. Only two strategies, willingness and ability, were employed by more than 50 per cent of them. This is a somewhat worrying result, as the AH learners in the present study were training to be translators and had studied English intensively for more than two years prior to taking part in the research. At the same time, however, it is a positive result for the SA learners, as it suggests that the study abroad sojourn benefits learners’ pragmatic development in that it can help them to acquire a broader repertoire of request strategies.

The analysis and discussion of learners’ and native speakers’ request strategy use so far has only focused on the participants’ employment of request strategies, without explicitly taking the context of the request situation into consideration. In the following Sections (6.3–6.5), I will investigate participants’ use of individual request strategies according to the variables status (equal
status interlocutor/higher status interlocutor) and imposition (low/high), to explore any changes in strategy use by the SA participants during their stay in the study abroad context.

6.3 Direct Strategies

6.3.1 Imperatives

Imperatives are the most direct forms of a request. Thus, the illocutionary force behind the speaker’s utterance is very transparent and the aim of the request can be decoded quickly, leaving little to no room for misunderstanding on the hearer’s part.

Due to their high level of directness, imperatives are generally perceived to be rather impolite and are rarely used in everyday conversations (Levinson, 1983; Mey, 2001). They can, however, be regarded as appropriate in certain contexts, such as a) in interactions between higher status and lower status interlocutors, for example, teacher/pupil, colonel/sergeant, mother/child, b) in interactions in which the request carries a low degree of imposition between interlocutors with a high degree of familiarity such as siblings, or c) in cases of emergency (Bublitz, 2001; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Trosborg, 1995).

Based on the aforementioned acceptable conditions in which a request may be phrased as an imperative, I expected that the majority of these direct utterances would be employed by the participants in interactions with equal status interlocutors that involve a very limited imposition on the hearer. Learners’ and native speakers’ employment of this strategy in the MET is presented in Table 6.2.

As had been anticipated, all imperatives were used in equal status, low imposition request interactions. Using an imperative in a conversation with a higher status interlocutor or in a high imposition request directed at an equal status interlocutor would have violated the acceptable circumstances in which an imperative may be used, as has been set out by Rintell and Mitchell (1989), Trosborg (1995) and Bublitz (2001). This suggests that all participants were aware that the use of imperatives is generally only considered appropriate in a rather limited number of circumstances. The results further show that imperatives were not employed very frequently by either the SA or AH learners or the English native speakers.

The analysis of the SA learners’ data reveals that the four requests containing an imperative were made by only two participants, Bernd and Iris, as illustrated in Figure 6.3.

Iris used an imperative once in Session 1 and then employed the conventionally indirect strategy ability in both subsequent sessions in the same scenario.
Bernd employed two imperatives in Session 1 and only one in Session 2. He subsequently used the conventionally indirect strategy willingness and non-conventionally indirect hints. While Iris employed an imperative in a scenario, where none of the native speakers also used an imperative (Scenario 7), Bernd employed imperatives in scenarios in which at least one English native speaker also used them (Scenarios 9 and 14).

### Table 6.2 Use of imperatives according to status and imposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Low imposition, equal status</th>
<th>Low imposition, higher status</th>
<th>High imposition, equal status</th>
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<td>SA2</td>
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<td>SA3</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>AH</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers

1 The percentage figures refer to how often imperatives were used per scenario of a contextual condition. Therefore they were computed by dividing the number of instances that an imperative was employed in a contextual condition, for example, low imposition + equal status, by the four scenarios that constitute the condition x the participant number of this group, that is, for the SA learners employment of imperatives in Session 1: \( \frac{3}{4 \times 9} = 8\% \).

2 The raw data scores show the number of imperatives in each contextual condition. Thus, the highest raw data figure that could be achieved for each of the contextual conditions was 36 (SA learners), 52 (AH learners) and 60 (native speakers).

**Figure 6.3.** SA learners’ use of imperatives
With regard to SA learners’ development in the study abroad context, the results suggest that Iris appears to have become aware that imperatives do not seem to be favoured by native speaking age peers when asking fellow students to speak up and thus modified her request strategy use accordingly to the more standardized strategy ability. This change in strategy use can therefore be regarded as evidence of her increasing pragmatic skills in the L2. During his sojourn in the L2 context, Bernd also decreased his use of imperatives and began employing strategies that were used more frequently by native speakers and other SA learners. This also indicates that the contact he had with native speakers in the study abroad context had a positive impact on his pragmatic development (see also his own comments on this in Section 5.4).

The discussion so far has centred on the participants’ use of imperatives according to the variables status and imposition and SA learners’ development. I will conclude this section by providing examples of imperatives used by all three participant groups and by addressing very briefly how the illocutionary force of the imperative was softened by the participants. The following utterances are requests made by participants of all three groups which are representative of the data in this category:

**SA learners**

*Speak up, please.* (Iris, Session 1)
*Oh, come on, let me through.* (Bernd, Session 1)
*Micahel, open the window, please.* (Bernd, Session 2)

**AH learners**

*Hey, Mike, open the window?*
*Please, let me through.*

**Native speakers**

*Open the window, will ya?*
*Hey, move out the way.*

As the examples demonstrate, the majority of the request utterances that used an imperative contained a linguistic downtoning device, such as the politeness marker *please* or the tag *will ya*. Downtoners are used in conjunction with imperatives to soften the illocutionary force of the request (Labov & Fanshel, 1977). Some of the requests were also preceded by the interlocutor’s names or a form of greeting, which will be discussed in depth under the category
al ters in Chapter 8 on external request modification. The use of downtoners suggests that the participants were aware of the direct nature of imperatives and in the majority of the cases employed a limited amount of mitigating language to decrease the illocutionary force of the request. That this is commonly done was also observed by Lakoff who noted that imperatives are ‘the speech act type most often hedged, implicated, or otherwise got at indirectly’ (1977, p. 101).

6.3.2 Performatives

Performatives are classified as the second most direct request strategy in both the CCSARP’s (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b) and Trostberg’s (1995) coding scheme. As their name indicates, they contain a performative verb such as ask, request or command that explicitly names the intent of the utterance. Performatives can be further subcategorized as unhedged, for example, I ask you to fill out this questionnaire for me (SA learner, Hendrik, Session 1) and hedged performatives, for example, I would like to ask if you could, erm, complete this for me? (SA learner, Eva, Session 1). The former type is normally considered impolite outside specific contexts, such as the military, in which authoritative language is generally used. The latter is regarded as more polite since the hedge softens the illocutionary force of the request.

The results regarding the use of unhedged performatives presented in Table 6.3 and Figure 6.4 show that this strategy was used only twice by a member of the SA group, Hendrik. He employed two unhedged performatives in the first data collection session, one in a high imposition request with an equal status interlocutor and one in a high imposition request with a higher status

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers
Neither the AH learners nor the English native speakers used unhedged performatives in any of the scenarios.

While Hendrik used unhedged performatives in the first data collection session, he refrained from doing so in subsequent sessions, and instead resorted to conventionally indirect requests or hedged performatives that convey a lesser degree of illocutionary force. His change of strategies suggests that he realized that unhedged performatives are not appropriate in the scenarios examined by the MET and that he therefore softened the illocutionary force of his requests in the following sessions. This indicates a positive development with regard to his pragmatic skills in the L2 and is also in-line with Hill’s findings (1997) that with increasing pragmatic competence learners begin to disprefer unhedged performatives and use strategies with lower illocutionary force.

In contrast to unhedged performative requests, hedged performative utterances contain a mitigating verb which precedes the performative verb, thereby decreasing the force of the request. The results regarding the use of unhedged performatives, shown in Table 6.4, reveal differences in participants’ use of hedged compared to the previously discussed unhedged performatives. While unhedged performatives had only been employed twice by one member of the SA learner group, hedged performatives were used considerably more frequently by members of both learner groups. Significantly, hedged performatives were again not used by the English native speakers. This result is not entirely unexpected, however, as previous studies focusing on German native speakers learning an L2 (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Kasper, 1981; Warga, 2004) found that compared to English or French native speakers, the learners used a considerable higher amount of hedged performatives.

It is further interesting to note that with the exception of one request that was made by an AH learner in a low imposition, higher status scenario, all
other hedged performatives were employed in high imposition scenarios and there to a higher degree in interactions with higher status interlocutors than with equal status ones. This may appear to be surprising, since the conditions in which the hedged performatives were used by the learners should warrant a more tentative approach (and indeed the vast majority of request utterances made by both SA and AH group members in the high imposition scenarios are conventionally indirect in nature).

However, one possible explanation for this result could simply be transfer of learners’ L1 strategies to their L2. Kasper’s (1981) and Warga’s (2004) studies revealed that, in contrast to French and English, hedged performatives are frequently used in German and considered to be polite. This supports Fraser’s (1978) and Larina’s (2006) notion that the use of strategies that are considered to be appropriate in the same situation may differ in two languages, even if as Blum-Kulka (1982) points out both languages possess a similar range of possible request forms. An alternative explanation could be that the use of hedged performatives might simply be characteristic of L2 learners’ interlanguage, as Hill’s (1997) Japanese learners’ displayed a higher use of hedged performatives with increasing proficiency levels in English. While the second explanation for the SA and AH learners’ frequent use of hedged performatives cannot be disregarded, I think that negative transfer from the Germans’ L1 is the more likely reason, especially since literal translations of the requests made by the Germans would be considered polite in their native language.

Hedged performatives were not only used more frequently than unhedged performatives by members of the SA group, they were also employed by a higher number of SA learners, as illustrated in Figure 6.5. While unhedged performatives had only been used by Hendrik, hedged performatives were used by six members of the SA group (Andreas, Bernd, Eva, Greta, Hendrik

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers
This is an important result, as it shows that the use of unhedged performatives by German learners of English in the study abroad context is indeed a group phenomenon and not due to only a single person in the present investigation. However, the data also show quite clearly that one learner, Bernd, employed considerably more hedged performatives than any of the other SA learners who also used this strategy. This demonstrates the importance of conducting both, analyses of individual learners and groups, in developmental studies.

Regarding the possible effect of the study abroad context on SA learners’ use of this strategy, the data do not seem to indicate that the sojourn in the study abroad country leads to a marked decrease of SA learners’ use of hedged performatives. While Eva only employed one hedged performative in Session 1 and subsequently refrained from doing so in the following sessions, Bernd’s use of hedged performatives peaked in Session 2 and Greta and Hendrik employed slightly more hedged performatives in Session 3 than in the previous sessions. The persistent use of hedged performatives by some of the SA learners can perhaps be explained by the circumstances in which high imposition requests directed at a higher status interlocutor are normally made.

As these requests tend to be made in private one-to-one conversations with the higher status interlocutor, and not, for example, in front of a seminar group, it is very difficult for learners to observe native speaker students in this context and to obtain appropriate input. Thus, learners may simply resort back to L1 strategies that they would employ in a similar context in their native language. Consequently, SA learners’ employment of hedged performatives seems to confirm Schmidt’s (1990, 1993, 1995) noticing hypothesis, in that that pragmatic learning can only occur if learners are exposed to specific contexts and input and have the opportunity to notice which strategies/formulae are used by native speakers or not.
Below are representative examples of requests containing hedged performatives that were made by the SA and AH in the present study and show how the learners mitigated the illocutionary force of this direct strategy by also including internal and external modifiers.

**SA learners**

_Erm, excuse me, but I think I have some problems with my essay. I didn’t find anything in the library and so I would ask, I would like to ask you, if you have maybe some material for me and it’s, erm, very urgent, because, erm, the deadline is in one week and so it would be very nice if you have something._ (Bernd, Session 1)

_Erm, I’m doing this project on such and such and erm, I, for that it’s really vital that you fill in that questionnaire and I wanted to ask you if you could just complete it now, so erm, because it’s really a central part of this project and that would be really kind._ (Greta, Session 2)

_Er, good morning, Mr Finn. Er, I have a question. I know we had a meeting this afternoon, er, but actually I feel a little bit ill. I have a cold, I think and I got a headache and so, I want to ask you, is it maybe possible that we rearrange this appointment to another day when I feel a little bit better?_ (Hendrik Session 3)

**AH learners**

_So, erm, I have difficulties to find articles and I would like to ask you to bring me some, as urgent, it’s quite urgent actually._

_Excuse me, Professor, I know, erm, I have to do this essay and I couldn’t find any articles, so may I ask you to bring some for me?_  
_Sorry, professor, I would like to ask you if we could meet during the holidays if I have any problems with my essay._

As the examples indicate, learners always employed internal and/or external modifiers to mitigate the illocutionary force of this direct strategy. Modifiers that were commonly used include, for example, alerters, past tense modals, if clauses, appreciators (e.g. _that would be really kind_), downtoners (e.g. _maybe_), and grounders, (e.g. _I couldn’t find any articles_), that will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8 on internal and external request modification.

### 6.3.3 Locution derivables

Locution derivables are the third most direct strategy in the category of direct requests used in the present investigation. This strategy is, as Warga (2004) points out, very heterogeneous, since locution derivable requests only share
the characteristic that their ‘illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the locution’ (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b, p. 279). Probably due to their heterogeneous nature and differences in coding systems used by researchers, locution derivables, as defined by the CCSARP above, are only rarely focused on in the existing literature. Table 6.5 presents the participants’ use of locution derivable requests according to the situational variables status and imposition.

The results show clearly that the native speakers and both learner groups employed the majority of locution derivables in situations involving a low imposition request. This indicates that the learners and native speakers displayed a very similar pragmatic behaviour in their use of this strategy pertaining to the four contextual variables. Thus, they seem to have assessed the contextual conditions of the MET situations in the same way, which is a positive finding. The data further reveal that locution derivables were used slightly more frequently in low imposition requests directed at an equal status interlocutor and there exclusively in Scenario 12, which involves asking a friend for directions. However, while 67 per cent of the native speakers employed locution derivables in this scenario and 46 to 56 per cent of the SA learners used this strategy in any one of the three data collection sessions, only 23 per cent of the AH learners employed locution derivables in equal status, low imposition interactions.

A possible explanation for this finding could be that the SA participants are likely to have frequently observed and performed this particular request in the SA context, as many students tend to ask for directions at a large university such as the one the study was conducted at. Thus, the SA learners might have felt more confident to use a direct strategy in this situation than the AH learners who did not share the SA learners’ recent experience in that respect.

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers
The individual SA learners’ use of locution derivables in the three data collection sessions, presented in Figure 6.6, shows that eight of the nine learners employed this strategy at least once in one of the three data collection sessions. Thus, the data suggest that using locution derivables in the study abroad context seems to be typical for German learners of English as a whole and is not just restricted to one or two individuals. The results also clearly show that in contrast to hedged performatives, the number of locution derivables used by the individual group members is very similar, ranging from one to two per session.

As mentioned above, the majority of requests using this strategy were made in low imposition interactions. However, two learners, Andreas and Greta, also employed locution derivables in high imposition scenarios, where they were not generally used by the native speakers in this investigation. Andreas employed the locution derivable in the first session and subsequently resorted to the conventionally indirect ability strategy. This could be regarded as positive pragmatic development on his part. Greta, however, employed her locution derivable request in a high imposition scenario in Session 3, whereas she had previously used more appropriate conventionally indirect strategies in these scenarios. This shows that occasional slip-ups can still happen to language learners, even if they are otherwise performing quite well in their L2.

The following request utterances employing locution derivables are representative of the learners’ and native speakers’ data that were elicited with the MET.

**SA learners**

*Where is the Portland Building?* (Iris, Session 1)

*Excuse me, Professor Jones, erm, where is the Trent Building?* (Christoph, Session 2)

*Hey, excuse me, Peter, where is the Portland Building again?* (Franziska, Session 3)
AH learners

Professor Jones, how can I get to the Trent Building?
Erm, which way do I go to the Portland Building?

Native speakers

Excuse me, Professor Jones, what’s the easiest way to get to the Trent Building, please?
Hiya, whereabouts is the Portland Building? How can I get there from here?

As the examples above show, locution derivable requests used by the three participant groups are rather similar with regard to their structure. They tend to be rather short and do not contain many external or internal modifiers. Indeed, only the internal modifier alerter (e.g. excuse me, hiya, erm, Professor Jones, Peter) is frequently used by both learners and native speakers. This, however, is not unexpected as the low imposition of a request asking for directions combined with the information in the MET scenarios that the participants’ next seminar is taking place in the building they are enquiring about, means that it would be rather unusual to provide a very long and detailed request utterance. Even though, Iris’s request which is not mitigated in any way does seem more direct and forceful than the other examples. This suggests that even a very limited amount of modification can have a considerable impact on whether an utterance may be considered as somewhat inappropriate in a given context or not.

6.3.4 Want statements

Want statements is the least direct request strategy in the category direct requests in the present study. The illocutionary force of this strategy is, like in the other direct request strategy types, transparent to the interlocutor and can be easily inferred. Similar to imperatives and performatives, want statements are generally considered rather impolite in their unmitigated form, for example, I want to borrow your book (constructed). They can, however, also be regarded as appropriate and polite if their illocutionary force is softened by internal and external modifiers, for example, I would like to borrow your book please (constructed). Table 6.6 shows the participants’ use of want statements according to the two variables status and imposition.

The results show that compared to locution derivables and hedged performatives want statements were not very frequently used by either of the two learners groups. They were also only employed to a small extent by the native speaker group. The English native speaker participants in my study employed want statements in scenarios involving a high imposition request. The use of a direct strategy in these contextual conditions may seem surprising, but as
the examples below will show, it merely reveals that, as Warga (2004) has also noted, internal and external mitigation plays an important role in determining the appropriateness of request strategies.

In the learner data, want statements were used by three different learners: one member of the AH group and two members of the SA group. Due to the low number of want statements used and learners’ use of them in three different contextual conditions (low impositions/higher status, high imposition/equal status, high imposition/high status) there does not appear to be any common underlying factor regarding learners’ employment of this strategy in the present investigation. The use of want statements also does not seem to be affected by SA learners’ stay in the target environment as one member of the SA group used a want statement in the first data collection session, while the other

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
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SA3: SA learners session 3
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EE: English native speakers

**Figure 6.7.** SA learners’ use of want statements
employed a want statement in the final data collection session, as illustrated in Figure 6.7. The findings thus seem to support the results of House and Kasper’s (1987) and le Pair’s (1996) studies in which want statements was also one of the least employed request strategies by the learners and native speakers.

The following are examples of requests employing want statements that were made by the participants. As none of the SA learners used this strategy in the second data collection session, the SA learners’ examples below represent all of the want statements made by this group.

**SA learners**

_Erm, excuse me, I would like to enter, erm, the, the room?_ (Bernd, Session 1)

_Hi, erm, I’m doing this project and I need you to fill that in, this questionnaire, er, in for me because otherwise I can’t finish and it would be really nice if you could fill it in. It is a little bit lengthy, yeah, but I hope it would be fine._ (Greta, Session 3)

**AH learners**

_Hi, excuse me, I would like to get to the door, please._

_I’ll need someone to explain these things to me._

**English native speakers**

_I’m sorry to bother you, Professor Jones. Erm, I’ve got this, this questionnaire and I’m, I really like you to complete it if you could find the time._

_I’ve got this really important questionnaire. I’d really love it if you could fill it in for me._

The examples show that want statements were mainly formulated with either the verb ‘need’ or a structure containing some variation of ‘(would)like’/‘love’. It could be argued that the illocutionary force of requests containing ‘need’ differs to a certain degree from those containing ‘would like/love’ and that therefore these requests should not be assigned to the same category. Trosborg (1995), for example, used two subcategories ‘wishes’ and ‘desires/needs’ to address this. In the present investigation, I decided not to further differentiate want statements, as their infrequent use in the learner data did not seem to warrant such an approach.

As was the case in most of the other direct request strategies discussed in the previous subsections, the majority of want statements were mitigated with internal or external modifiers to mitigate the force of the request. Again alerters such as _excuse me, hi, erm_ were used and past tense modals and lexical items, for example, _would like_, were employed that decrease the illocutionary force of the request. This again shows the importance of evaluating the degree of
a request’s directness and illocutionary force not solely based on the strategy type used but in combination with mitigation devices.

6.4 Conventionally Indirect Requests

6.4.1 Suggestory formula

The discussion of individual request strategy types so far has concentrated on direct request strategies. The suggestory formula is the first conventionally indirect strategy that I will discuss in the present investigation. As the name indicates, this strategy contains linguistic elements that are mostly associated with suggestions, such as *How about . . .?* or *Why don’t you . . .?*. Compared to direct requests, the illocutionary force of the request is mitigated in utterances that employ the suggestory formula (Aijmer 1996). Table 6.7 presents the findings of participants’ use of this strategy type in the data.

The results show that that suggestory formulae were used by neither the native speakers nor the SA learners in the present investigation. The absence of suggestory formulae in the native speaker data is not entirely surprising, as Blum-Kulka (1989) and Trosborg (1995) had found in their investigations that suggestory formulae were only used very rarely by native speakers to formulate requests. While House and Kasper (1987) noted slightly more instances of native speakers’ use of this strategy in their study, the overall frequency with which suggestory formulae were used was rather small compared to other strategies. Thus, native speakers’ decision not to use this strategy in the MET is not out of line with previous research.

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
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E: English native speakers
Like the native speakers, the SA learners in this study also did not use this strategy type in any of the three data collection sessions. This supports the findings of previous studies by Kasanga (1998) and Warga (2004), whose learner groups also did not employ this strategy in any of their requests. House and Kasper (1987) and Trosborg (1995) noted a few instances of the use of this formula by their learner participants, while Achiba (2003) found a non-linear decreasing development in their use which is supported by Ellis’s (1992) results.

In my data, only one member of the AH learner group employed a suggestory formula and this only once, namely ‘I can’t come today. Let’s meet tomorrow.’ in Scenario 6, in which the participants are prompted to ask a friend to meet them on another day because they are not well. The use of the suggestory formula in the scenario involving the friend does not seem appropriate as the friend is very busy and even cancelled another meeting to see the participant, thus making it a high imposition scenario with an equal status interlocutor. Considering this context, the use of the suggestory formula seems rather too brusque in this scenario. This perception is further aided by the relative brevity of the utterance and the absence of mitigating external or internal modifiers. Thus, the employment of a suggestory formula by one of the AH learners does not indicate an advanced level of pragmatic competence compared to the other learners, but rather shows an instance of inappropriate language use.

This example also demonstrates the importance of examining the use of pragmatic strategies based on contextual variables, since otherwise increases in the employment of certain strategy types may be seen as indicative of pragmatic competence, whereas they may in fact be indicative of the exact opposite.

### 6.4.2 Availability

Requests using this conventionally indirect strategy focus on the interlocutor’s temporal availability. They therefore instantly provide the hearer with a possible excuse for not performing the desired act, namely lack of time. As Leech (1983) points out indirect requests such as the ones using availability ‘tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be’ (p. 108). The use of this strategy by the three learner groups according to the variables status and imposition is shown in Table 6.8.

The results reveal, that like imperatives and want statements, availability is not very frequently used by either the learners or the native speakers in this investigation. That learners and native speakers used this strategy relatively infrequently was also noted by Warga (2004) in her cross-sectional developmental study. The data further show that the learners and native speakers employed this strategy exclusively in high imposition scenarios, which indicates that both learner groups assessed the contextual conditions in which they would employ this strategy in a similar way as the native speakers. This
is a positive result. However, while both learner groups only used availability requests in equal status/high imposition scenarios, the native speaker group also employed this strategy in interactions with higher status interlocutors in the MET. Due to the very infrequent use of availability requests in situations involving a higher status interlocutor by the native speakers and the limited opportunities learners have to observe native speakers when making high imposition requests to professors, learners’ non-use of this strategy in this context is not very surprising. The individual SA learners’ employment of this strategy type is shown in Figure 6.8.

Table 6.8  Use of availability according to status and imposition

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers

Figure 6.8. SA learners’ use of availability

The examination of individual SA learners’ use of the availability strategy reveals that this strategy was employed by four different SA learners in either the first or the final data collection session. Interestingly, none of the SA learners used this strategy in the second data collection session. Instead, Daniel and
Hendrik who had employed availability in the first session resorted to one of the two strategy types that were used more frequently by the other SA group members and also the native speakers, ability and prediction. Regarding the impact of the SA context on learners’ use of this particular strategy, no effect appears to be discernible. The following utterances are representative of the learners’ and native speakers’ use of availability requests in scenarios involving a high imposition on the interlocutors’ part.

**SA learners**

*Er, excuse me Robert I have, er, some some difficulties with this concept and as I hear, er, you, er, you got this pretty good actually. Since you’re leaving in two days it’s maybe a little late for you, but if you find the time to meet me, maybe tomorrow or this afternoon, that would be very nice because then I could work during the holidays on my own if I get it.* (Hendrik, Session 1)

*Man, I really have no idea about this concept, er, you know it, don’t you? So, erm, have you still, er, time before you fly to explain it to me maybe?* (Daniel, Session 1)

*Hey Lucy do you have maybe a moment for, to fill in the questionnaire? That would be so cool, because I really need that. Yeah, I would fill in yours as well if you need one, one day.* (Greta, Session 3)

**AH learners**

*Um, sorry, I know you have a lot to do, but do you still have the time to fill in the questionnaire?*

*Erm, excuse me, but do you have some time before you fly home to explain me, to meet me and explain me the concept, to explain the concept to me?*

**Native speakers**

*Lucy, I know you’re busy, but do you have the time to finish this questionnaire for me?*

*Erm, there is a concept that I don’t understand in this. I don’t suppose you’ve got time before you fly home to just pop, quickly go through it with me, have you?*

The examples demonstrate that the majority of the participants who used availability requests further softened the illocutionary force of their utterances by also including mitigating internal and external modifiers such as disarms, for example, I know you are busy, downtoners, for example, maybe, and sweeteners, for example, you got this pretty good. The first example of the SA learners by Hendrik further shows that availability requests can also be embedded in an appreciative utterance by the speaker. The learners’ and
native speakers’ use of elements that decrease the illocutionary force of the request and their sole employment of this strategy type in scenarios involving high imposition requests indicate that the learners display a pragmatic use of the availability strategy that is very similar to that of the native speaker participants.

6.4.3 Prediction

Requests using the strategy prediction enquire about the interlocutors’ opinion on whether they perceive it to be possible that a certain act or state of affairs may be achieved in the near future, for example, the hearer’s prediction on whether he or she will not be too busy in the next days to meet the speaker. Since the focus is on the interlocutors’ prediction and not on themselves, which is also evidenced by the impersonal wording of the request, for example, ‘is it possible that . . .’ the illocutionary force of the request is softened and requests using this strategy are considered very polite (Van Mulken, 1996; Warga, 2004). Learners and native speakers’ employment of this strategy according to the variables status and imposition is presented in Table 6.9.

The results reveal that the majority of requests employing the strategy prediction were used in high imposition scenarios by all three participant groups. While none of the groups used this strategy in scenarios involving a low imposition request directed at an equal status interlocutor, SA learners and native speakers employed it in high imposition interactions involving a higher status interlocutor. However, compared to the scenarios including a high imposition request, prediction was used with a considerably lower frequency in situations containing a low imposition request by all groups.

Table 6.9 Use of prediction according to status and imposition

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers
The data show that the AH group used prediction as frequently in high imposition scenarios with equal status interlocutors as the native speakers. However, AH learners employed considerably fewer requests of this strategy type than the native speakers and SA learners in situations involving a high imposition request directed at a higher status interlocutor. Thus the results indicate that the two learner groups, the SA group to a larger extent than the AH one, display a similar use of the strategy prediction as the native speakers. This suggests that the learner and native speaker participants evaluate the contextual conditions in which the prediction strategy can be used in a similar way.

During their sojourn in the study abroad context, the SA learners’ employment of prediction in interactions with equal status interlocutors remained relatively low, whereas their use of this strategy in scenarios with higher status interlocutors remained higher, even though there were deviations in the second data collection session in both, high imposition equal status and high imposition higher status interactions. The analysis and discussion so far has centred on the groups’ use of prediction according to the contextual variable status and imposition. Figure 6.9 shows how frequently this strategy was used by the individual SA learners in the three data collection sessions.

The findings show that in contrast to the conventionally indirect strategy availability, which was only employed by four SA learners, prediction was used by all but one of the SA learners. Thus, the relative high frequency with which this strategy type was used by the SA learners is not the result of one or two individuals employing it, but instead is representative of the group’s use of prediction. Importantly, however, the results also show that just because the use of a certain strategy type seems to be typical for a specific learner group, not all learners necessarily employ the strategy in a similar manner. For example,

![Figure 6.9. SA learners’ use of prediction](image-url)

**Figure 6.9.** SA learners’ use of prediction
Andreas’, Daniel’s and Franziska’s use of prediction decreased over time, whereas Iris’s employment of this strategy increased slightly. This thus seems to indicate the presence of individual learner differences.

It is also interesting to note that four of the learners did not employ the strategy at all in Session 1 and that the two learners who used prediction in all three data collection sessions did employ the strategy less often in Session 2 than in either Session 1 or 3. While these results may seem somewhat unusual, similar sequences of slightly decreasing and increasing use of certain conventionally indirect request strategies were also observed by Ellis (1992) and Achiba (2003) in their longitudinal studies of L2 learners in the target environment. Consequently, these findings could be typical of learners’ pragmatic development in the L2 context.

The following requests made by the SA learners, AH learners and native speakers are representative of utterances employing the strategy prediction in the MET data.

**SA learners**

*Excuse me, Professor Jones, I know that we were supposed to have a meeting after this seminar, but unfortunately I’m I’m really pretty ill and I’m not feeling well. Would it be possible to postpone that?* (Franziska, Session 1)

*Do you think it will be possible to arrange a meeting because I can’t, I couldn’t understand this concept so far and I really need your help.* (Eva, Session 2)

*Hi John, I’m totally sorry, but I’ve got a terrible toothache and I have to meet the dentist and he only has time today, so I wondered if it’s possible to delay our meeting for tomorrow?* (Daniel, Session 3)

**AH learners**

*Um, hello Professor, I’m afraid I’m very sick at the moment and I cannot come this afternoon to meet you. Would it be possible for you to meet me on another day?*

*Oh, hello, Alex, I’m very sorry I can’t meet you today, because I have to go to the dentist, I’ve terrible toothache. Is it possible for you to meet me tomorrow?*

**Native speakers**

*Er, I was wondering would it be possible to schedule a meeting, er, in the next few weeks? I’m having some problems with the assignments.*

*I’m really, really sorry. I’m feeling dreadful today. Erm, I know you are visiting and I know you’re really busy but be able, would it be possible to reschedule our meeting for another day when I’m feeling a bit better? I just feel that I wouldn’t get the most out of it today. I feel so poorly.*
The examples show that the majority of the participants employed external and internal modifiers such as modal verbs and grounders, for example, *I've got a terrible tooth ache*, to justify their request. The combined use of upgraders and grounders in this strategy is particularly prevalent in Scenarios 6 and 13 in which the participants were prompted to ask a friend or professor to meet them at another date because they were ill. The data further reveal some instances of embedded use of prediction, for example, the SA learner Daniel’s example in the third data collection session, that soften the illocutionary force of the request and convey tentativeness thereby making the request appear even more polite (Trosborg, 1995). This again shows that the illocutionary force of conventionally indirect requests is frequently further mitigated by the three participant groups through the use of internal and external modifiers.

### 6.4.4 Permission

By using a request that is formulated as a question for permission, speakers indicate that they perceive their interlocutors to be in a more powerful position in the particular circumstances of the speech event. As Ervin-Tripp’s (1976) findings on L1 children interactions with interlocutors of different age groups has shown, the situational perception of higher power can apply to both higher status, as well as equal status hearers. The participants’ use of permission in the MET request scenarios according to the variables status and imposition is presented in Table 6.10.

The results show that in contrast to the strategies prediction and availability, requests asking an interlocutor for permission were used in all four contextual conditions by the native speakers and SA learners. Compared to the strategy prediction, permission was employed considerably less frequently by both learners groups in situations involving a high imposition request. With the exception of SA learners’ use of permission in low imposition/high status situations in Session 3, there are also notable differences in learners’ and native speakers’ use of this strategy with the native speakers employing permission more frequently than the learners. These findings are in-line with Hill (1997) and Warga (2004) who also observed marked differences in the employment of this strategy between their native speakers and learner participants. It could therefore be argued that learners’ limited use of permission is indicative of their interlanguage. A possible explanation for why learners employed permission less than native speakers might be that this is the only conventionally indirect strategy where the focus of the utterance is on the speakers, as they are the subject of the request.

Woodfield (2008) who compared requests strategies used by German and Japanese learners of English and English native speakers also found that speaker-oriented requests were used less frequently by her German learners
than by the native speakers. A possible reason for this may be that German learners might feel less comfortable with drawing attention to themselves and therefore prefer strategies that are either impersonal or are hearer-oriented. Although the hedged performative seems to be a clear exception to that, the learners’ very limited use of want statements and their preference for conventionally indirect strategies, such as prediction, willingness and ability also suggest that the learners in the present investigation generally seem to prefer non-speaker oriented request strategies.

With regard to SA learners’ use of permission according to the contextual variables, the data show that the SA learners employed permission less frequently in high imposition scenarios than low imposition ones during their stay. A possible reason for why the SA learners’ use of permission remained low or decreased in high imposition interactions might be that the very nature of high imposition requests makes them difficult to observe between two native speaker interlocutors as I mentioned in Section 6.3.2 with regard to hedged performatives. Following Schmidt’s hypothesis (1990, 1993, 1995) this would then mean that learners’ limited input of request strategies in high imposition interactions would result in limited opportunities for the learners to adapt their output.

That the absence or presence of relevant input may play an important role in SA learners’ pragmatic development in the study abroad context could also explain why the use of permission in low imposition interactions with higher status interlocutors increased steadily in the SA learner data. In contrast to high imposition interactions with professors, SA learners will have had ample opportunity to observe fellow students in low imposition situations. Thus, the increase in requests in this context may show a positive effect of the study abroad environment on learners’ pragmatic skills. Figure 6.10 presents individual SA learners’ use of the strategy permission in the three data collection sessions.

Table 6.10  Use of permission according to status and imposition

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
SA2: SA learners session 2
SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers
The results of individual SA learners’ employment of permission show that six of the nine learners used this strategy at least once during their sojourn in the L2 environment. Interestingly, the strategy was employed by all of the male participants at one point, but was only used by one female participant, Greta, in Session 1 and Session 2. Due to the small participant number in this group no general conclusions regarding gender preferences for certain request strategy types can be drawn. However, as gender differences in L2 learners’ pragmatic choices and development have been underexplored to date, these issues should be focused on in future studies.

The data of the SA learners in the present investigation further show that learners who employed permission in the first session also tended to use this strategy subsequently. This is an important finding, as it suggests that learners do not tend to employ strategies like permission and prediction randomly in the data collection sessions, but instead tend to employ them consistently but with variations regarding their overall frequency in the data collection sessions. Variations in frequency concerning the employment of individual request strategies in different observational periods were also noted by Achiba (2003) and thus may be typical for longitudinal pragmatic investigations. Representative examples of learners’ and native speakers’ use of the strategy permission in the MET scenarios are included below.

**SA learners**

*Erm, Lucy, may I borrow one of your books? I will return it to you tomorrow.*  
(Christoph, Session 1)

*Erm, excuse me? I just have to hand it in, may I pass?* (Daniel, Session 2)
Er, hi Lucy, er, I have a question to you, erm, I know you bought some books about the topic I’m writing my essay about and, er, these books are not in the library, so I’m wondering, could I maybe borrow them from you? So, is it possible for you to bring them in tomorrow? (Hendrik, Session 3)

AH learners

Erm, could I borrow your books and, if so, could you bring them in tomorrow?

Lucy, can I have the books you bought for your essay, because I’m writing an essay on the same topic, on a similar topic and it might help me a lot.

Native speakers

Excuse me, can I just get in to hand this in, please?

Er, Lucy, can I just borrow those books for one evening? Erm, I can’t find anything on this work still and I think they’d be really useful.

The examples show that even within the strategy permission further gradients of politeness are possible through the selection of the verb in the locution, namely can versus could or may (Trosborg, 1995). The use of the internal modifiers past tense modals (could) and marked modality (may) decrease the illocutionary force of the utterance slightly more than can and therefore have a similar effect as other internal modifiers that were employed by the participants in permission requests, such as, for example, politeness markers.

The data also reveal that there are some instances of combined strategy use, such as the example for the SA learners Hendrik’s third session and the first example of the AH learners above, which were also observed by Warga (2004). When categorizing the request utterances I coded the more salient one of the two (which in addition also preceded the other one) as indicating the request strategy and treated the second one as the minor element. For example, in the case of the requests above the more salient question is whether the hearers are willing to lend the speakers the book in the first place. Only if they agree to do that can both interlocutors begin to negotiate on when the books should be handed over.

Following Warga (2004), a second factor which influenced my coding of requests that contained more than one strategy was the consideration of what categorization would best represent the data. With regard to requests using permission, coding the strategies differently, that is, according to the minor strategy, would not have had an impact on the overall representation of the minor strategies, but would have suggested that the learners did not employ permission in certain scenarios where this clearly was the case. In
the present study, only the more salient of the two request strategy types is included in the calculations due to the relatively low number of combined strategy use in the data and in order to ensure a degree of transparency in the calculations.

6.4.5 Willingness

Requests that use the conventionally indirect strategy willingness are employed as ‘compliance-gaining strategies by conveying to the requestee that the requester does not take compliance for granted’ (Trosborg, 1995, p.199). The illocutionary force of this request type is therefore softened since the speakers make it explicit that they regard it to be their interlocutors’ decision whether or not to perform the desired act. The participants’ use of request strategies employing willingness according to the variables status and imposition is presented in Table 6.11.

The results show that the strategy willingness is the first conventionally indirect request strategy that was employed by the native speakers and both learner groups in all four contextual conditions examined by the MET. This suggests that willingness is perceived to be a more universally applicable strategy by the learner groups than any of the conventionally indirect strategies discussed so far. The data reveal that the native speakers used this strategy slightly more frequently in high imposition scenarios. The SA and AH learners also employed willingness more frequently in high imposition interactions, but also used them more often than the native speakers in low imposition interactions involving higher status interlocutors. Thus, it appears that the

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Notes:
Groups: SA1: SA learners session 1
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SA3: SA learners session 3
AH: AH learners
E: English native speakers
use of willingness by the participant groups seems to be influenced by situational variables. Whereas both, the higher status of their interlocutor and the higher degree of the imposition in the request seems to determine learners’ use of willingness, the native speakers’ use of this strategy seems to be determined more by the degree of imposition. However, as the effect of contextual variables on learners’ and native speakers’ request strategy use is still rather underexplored, further studies involving larger participants groups would be needed to explore the affect of status and imposition on participants’ request strategy choices in more detail.

With regard to the SA learners’ employment of willingness over time in the study abroad context no clear pattern can be observed. The SA learners only display a slight development towards the native speakers’ frequency concerning the use of willingness in high imposition/higher status scenarios. In the remaining three request conditions the SA learners use willingness more often than the native speakers. One reason for the frequency with which this strategy was employed by the SA and also AH learners could be learners’ preference for two request formulae, namely ‘Would you be so kind as to . . .’ which is more prevalent in the AH learners’ data and ‘Would you mind . . .’ which is more prevalent in the SA learners’ data.

That the fixed formula ‘Would you be so kind as to . . .’ is frequently used by German learners of English was also noted by House and Kasper (1987). They observed that their German learners of English employed this formula considerably more frequently than their Danish learners of English or English native speakers. Based on their participants’ interview responses pertaining to the use of the formula, House and Kasper suggested that it was overrepresented in English teaching materials used in Germany. Due to the number of different textbooks and textbook editions used in German grammar schools it is unfortunately not possible to determine whether the SA and AH learners in the present investigation might also have encountered a high number of willingness strategies using specific formulae in their secondary English education. The results concerning individual SA learners’ use of the strategy willingness are presented in Figure 6.11 below.

The findings reveal that the strategy willingness was used by eight of the nine SA learners and was used very frequently by five of those. This shows that the relatively high frequency with which this strategy was used by the SA learners in the present investigation is a group phenomenon and not due to one or two individual learners’ preference for this strategy. Importantly, the data reveal that SA learners’ employment of this strategy generally tended not to be a one-off event, but that instead learners who used this strategy in either Session 1 or Session 2 continued to do so subsequently. Interestingly, willingness is also the most popular strategy with the female SA learners of the all strategies examined so far. It has to be noted though that three of the male participants also used it rather frequently and differences in strategy use based on gender
therefore are not as pronounced as in the case of the strategy permission. Again, due to the limited participant number in the present SA learner sample any observations regarding gender need to be considered tentative.

The data further seem to indicate that learners’ employment of willingness is also influenced by individual learner differences. Although the majority of the SA learners already used this strategy in the first data collection session, Bernd first employed it in Session 2 and then increased his use of it slightly in Session 3 and Eva employed it for the first time in Session 3. The frequency with which willingness was used by those learners that first employed it in Session 1 varied and was generally non-linear. Based on the present results, it is not quite clear if the sojourn in the SA context may have had an impact on individual SA learners’ use of this strategy; although it could be argued that the sojourn in the L2 environment may have triggered Bernd and Eva’s first use of this strategy in Session 2 and 3 respectively. The requests using willingness below are representative samples of this strategy in the participants’ data:

**SA learners**

*Hi, did you understand that concept? Because I didn’t get it at all! And I have to write this exam. Would you mind explaining it? I mean we could have a dinner, or something together and you explain it to me? That would be so nice, I would get so lost in the exams.* (Greta, Session 1)

*Excuse me, Professor Duncan, would you mind filling in this questionnaire for me. It may take some time and I know you are busy but it is very important for me.* (Christoph, Session 2)

*Hey Lucy, excuse me, may I ask you a favour? We still have a couple of questionnaires to fill in for our project, would you mind filling one in? I know you have your own*
projects to do but, you know, we just have to help each other, otherwise we never com-
plete our stuff. (Franziska, Session 3)

**AH learners**

Um, Lucy, would you be so kind to complete this questionnaire for me, please?
Would you mind opening the window?

**Native speakers**

I know you’re really busy at the moment, but I’m running a project and we need some
people to answer some questionnaires and I feel that it would be really useful to get your
input in. Would you mind filling in a questionnaire for me?
I’m having real trouble finding, erm, any information for my essay. Would you mind
bringing in any articles? It’s quite urgent ‘cause I haven’t got much time left.

Similar to the majority of the other strategies discussed so far, the requests
made by the learners and native speakers show that the participants generally
tended to further soften the illocutionary force of their request utterances
by employing internal and external modifiers, such as the politeness marker,
please, the disarmer, for example, I know you are really busy but, and grounders,
for example, it is very important for me. The examples further show that the
use of modifiers is generally higher in high imposition scenarios than in low
imposition ones. The examples of the AH learners are also representative
of the fact that the AH learners requests tended to be shorter than those by the
SA learners, which suggests that the SA context has a positive effect on learn-
ers’ ability to mitigate their utterances with modifiers.

### 6.4.6 Ability

By using the strategy ability, the speakers refer to their interlocutors’ capacity
to perform the desired act. The hearers’ ability might concern two different
factors ‘1) the inherent capacities of the requestee, both physical and men-
tal, 2) the external circumstances related to time, place, etc. of the action’
(Trosborg, 1995, p. 198). The conventionally indirect strategy ability is often
regarded as a very standardized form for realizing requests (Bublitz, 2001).
The participants’ use of ability in the MET scenarios according to the variables
status and imposition is presented in Table 6.12.

The results show clearly that like the strategy willingness discussed in
Section 6.4.5 above, ability was used by all participant groups in all of the four
interlocutors regardless of the degree of imposition involved. Importantly, ability is also the most frequently used request strategy by the learners and native speakers in the present investigation. This finding is in agreement with le Pair (1996) and Warga (2004), whose learners and native speakers also used ability with the highest frequency of the request strategies, and in disagreement with Hill (1997) whose learners employed a higher number of requests focusing on their interlocutors’ willingness. As Hill’s learner participants’ native language was Japanese, while the participants in le Pair’s, Warga’s and my study are native speakers of either Germanic or Italic languages, the L1 background of the learners might be responsible for the different findings.

Based on learners’ and native speakers’ frequent use of ability in all four contextual conditions in this study, it seems that employing this strategy when formulating a request in English is likely to be a safe and unmarked option in a wide variety of circumstances. Thus, if learners of English in the English speaking study abroad context were to exclusively rely on this strategy in interactions involving requests, the likelihood that their request strategy use would be considered appropriate is probably very high.

Although ability was the most frequently employed conventionally indirect strategy type by all three participant groups, there are considerable differences regarding how often this request strategy was used by the three groups. The AH learners, for example, used ability in 75 per cent of situations with equal status interlocutors that involved a low imposition request, while the English native speakers only employed it in 40 per cent of this contextual condition. The frequency difference of these two groups for this strategy ranges from 6 per cent (higher status, high imposition) to 35 per cent (equal status, higher status).
low imposition). Not only does this show that ability was the AH groups’ preferred strategy by far. It also reveals that the AH learner group did not display a very high degree of overall request strategy variation.

This and the AH learners’ limited use of other strategies discussed in Section 6.2 suggests that overall their request strategy repertoire is more limited than the SA learners’. While this is a positive result in some respect – as it indicates that a sojourn in the SA context is beneficial for the development L2 learners’ pragmatic skills – it is also a somewhat disappointing result in another respect, since the AH learners were in their final year of an intensive translation programme and would be expected to be able to professionally engage with clients in a few months after taking part in this study. Although relying on the strategy ability is not likely to cause the AH participants any difficulties, a somewhat broader request strategy repertoire would seem advantageous for their profession.

With regard to the SA learners, the results reveal that by the end of their stay in the study abroad context the frequency with which they employed ability was similar to the native speakers’ in three of the four contextual conditions that were examined (low imposition requests directed at a higher status interlocutor and high imposition requests directed at equal and higher status interlocutors). This suggests that at the end of their stay the majority of the SA learners employed a wider variety of request strategies than the AH learners. The individual SA learners’ use of ability is illustrated in Figure 6.12 below.

The results reveal that the strategy ability was used by all SA learners and was also the only strategy that was used by all SA learners in all of the three data collection sessions. The latter is particularly noteworthy, as no other direct or conventionally indirect strategy was consistently employed by all SA group members in all data elicitation sessions. These results thus are in agreement with previous studies (e.g. Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008; Warga, 2004; Woodfield,
that had also found that this strategy was very frequently used. From a
developmental perspective, it needs to be noted that ability was also the only
strategy that was already employed by all SA learners in the first data collection
session. This and the consistent high frequency with which it was employed
not only by the SA learners and AH learners, but also by the native speakers
suggests that ability is the one core request strategy that all learners of English
should be able to perform and comprehend as early as possible in their L2
learning career.

The following requests are representative examples of the participants’ use
of the strategy ability in the present investigation:

**SA learners**

*Excuse me, can you tell me the way to the Trent Building, please? (Andreas, Session 1)*

Hey, excuse me, Peter, I got a big problem. I know that we were going to meet up now,
but the point is that I have a terrible toothache and the only appointment that I could
get with the dentist is right now. So I’m afraid I won’t make it. Could we meet up
tomorrow instead? I know this is not ideal and I know that you cancelled other meet-
ings, but I simply don’t know what to do. (Franziska, Session 2)

Er, hello, Miss Finn, for a project I’m doing in another course I need some professors to
fill in a questionnaire and, er, it would be very kind of you if you could do one of these
questionnaires. I know it’s pretty long but er, it’s very important for our coursework so,
it would be very kind of you if you could help us here. (Hendrik Session 3)

**AH learners**

Harry, I’m sorry, but I’ve got a bad toothache and I need to see my dentist. Could we
please meet tomorrow?

Could you please complete the questionnaire for me?

**Native speakers**

Hi, Lucy, erm, I know you are busy at the moment but could you spare five minutes,
to do, to complete this questionnaire for my work, please?

Er, excuse me, er, I need to complete an essay about this and I’m having a lot of trouble
finding some references in the library. Do you think you could bring in some relevant
articles, please?

The participants’ requests utterances show that the illocutionary force of a
request using the strategy ability is frequently mitigated by internal and exter-
nal modifiers such as politeness markers, *please*, grounders, for example,
the only appointment that I could get with the dentist is right now, and imposition minimizers, for example, could you spare five minutes. The data also reveal several instances of embedded strategy use, such as in the SA learner Hendrik’s request in the third session in which the question regarding the hearer’s ability is enclosed in an appreciative structure. The length of some of the request utterances further illustrates that the use of the relatively simple, standardized request strategy ability does not automatically translate into a short utterance and instead can be part of a longer explanation and reasoning surrounding the actual request. This concludes the analysis and discussion of the individual conventionally indirect request strategy types used in this investigation. In the next section, the focus will be on learners’ and native speakers’ use of non-conventionally indirect requests, that is, hints.

6.5 Non-conventionally Indirect Strategies

Non-conventionally indirect hints are the least direct request strategy type since they demand a high degree of inferential ability from the interlocutor. By using a hint for the realization of a request ‘the speaker intends to get the hearer to carry out some (implied) requested act in such a way that the recognition of his or her intention will not be grounded in the utterance meaning of the hint’ (Weizman, 1989, p. 71). The very fact that the desired action on the interlocutor’s part is only implied means that the illocutionary force of the request is low. Similar to the conventionally indirect strategies, requests in the form of hints give the hearer the opportunity to not perform the act, for example, by feigning to not have understood the request utterance as such. The participants’ use of hints according to the situational variables status and imposition is presented in Table 6.13.

The results show clearly that neither the native speakers nor the learners employed hints in scenarios that involved a high imposition request. Instead, the participants only used hints in situations which put a low imposition on their interlocutor. This finding is in agreement with Blum-Kulka and House (1989) and Weizman (1989, 1993) whose learner and native speaker participants also employed hints in situations involving a low degree of imposition, regardless of the level of familiarity and differences in status. Thus, participants’ use of hints seems to be influenced by their assessment of the situational variable imposition. That the learners’ and native speakers’ use of hints was restricted to low imposition scenarios is not surprising, as a higher degree of clarity combined with the use of internal and external modifiers, such as grounders, disarmers and sweeteners, would probably be preferred by interlocutors in the higher imposition situations investigated.

Regarding the frequency with which learners’ and native speakers’ used hints in the present study, the data show that neither the SA nor the AH
learners employed hints as frequently as the native speakers did. In low imposition request scenarios directed at an equal status interlocutor, the difference of 19 per cent between the native speakers’ and AH learners’ employment of hints is particularly noteworthy. A possible explanation for why hints are not used as much by learners could be that learners may be unsure about their ability to encode their intent in the L2 in a way that will be inferable by a member of a different speech community and culture. Thus, they might feel more at ease with using strategies such as the conventionally indirect ones which ensure that their communicative intent will be received and understood by their hearer. Figure 6.13 shows individual SA learners’ use of hints in the three data collection sessions in the study abroad context.
The results show that hints were used by five of the nine SA learners. Of those five, Iris is the only SA group member who consistently employed hints in all three data collection sessions. Andreas and Christoph, who used hints in the first and in Andreas’s case also second data collection section, subsequently employed the conventionally indirect strategies willingness, permission and ability instead. A possible explanation for why they resorted to conventionally indirect requests could be that some of the hints they used in the study abroad context may not have been decoded as requests by their interlocutors. If they had encountered problems in this respect, choosing a somewhat more direct strategy such as willingness or ability which is easier for the hearer to infer would have been a good solution.

While Andreas and Christoph discontinued their use of hints, Bernd and Daniel first employed them in the second and third data collection session respectively. Bernd even increased his use of this strategy slightly in the final data collection session. His employment of hints is particularly interesting, as he employed them in a scenario in Session 2 and 3 in which he had previously used an imperative. Since imperatives and hints are at the exact opposite ends of the directness scale used in this study, with imperatives being the most direct and hints the least direct strategy, this is a considerable change in strategy use for him and seems to be indicative of a positive development of his pragmatic abilities in the study abroad context. A possible reason for this development could be his contact to native speakers while working in a cafeteria on campus, which he himself mentioned as having a positive impact on his L2 development in Section 5.4.

Daniel used a hint in Scenario 14 (‘move away from the door’) in which he had previously employed the strategy permission. Both permission and hints are appropriate in this particular scenario and thus his use of a hint was not as significant as Bernd’s. Nevertheless, his employment of this non-conventionally indirect strategy suggests that he believes a hint to be sufficient for hearers to infer his intended meaning. This could be indicative of an increase in confidence in his L2 pragmatic abilities. Representative examples of the hints made by the native speakers and learners in the MET scenarios are included below.

**SA learners**

Excuse me. (Andreas, Session 1)

Excuse me? (Bernd, Session 2)

Sorry? (Iris, Session 3)

**AH learners**

Excuse me.

Sorry. Excuse me, please.
Native speakers

*Excuse me, please.*

*Er, sorry, I didn’t quite catch that.*

The examples illustrate that the majority of hints by all participants were made in Scenarios 5 and 14 in which either two professors or two students block the doorway of an office the participants needed to enter. The hints used in these situations were mainly based on the *excuse me* formula the equivalent of which is also used in the participants’ L1 German in similar situations. The examples also show that internal and external modifiers were not frequently used by the learners or native speakers. As hints are already the least indirect strategy type and were only used in low imposition scenarios, this finding was not unexpected. Indeed, the only modifier that was used by several learners and native speakers was the politeness marker *please.*

This section concludes the discussion and analysis of the individual request strategies employed by the learners and native speakers in the present study. In the following I will summarize the findings in Section 6.6 and will then analyse and discuss SA and AH learners’ and native speakers’ use of internal and external modifiers in Chapters 7 and 8.

### 6.6 Summary

This chapter began with an initial general analysis and discussion of the first occurrence of individual request strategy types in the SA learners’ data in Section 6.1. The results suggested that individual learner differences such as amount of contact with age peers and difficulties adjusting to the new environment seem to play a role in SA learners’ initial employment of specific strategy types, as the types and number of strategies used by the individual participants tended to vary somewhat from participant to participant. Generally, however, conventionally indirect strategies were used by a larger number of SA learners than direct or non-conventionally indirect ones. The data further showed that the conventionally indirect strategy ability was the only strategy that was employed by all SA learners in the first data collection session.

The comparison of the SA learners’, AH learners’ and native speakers’ use of individual request strategy types in Section 6.2 revealed that the conventionally indirect strategy ability was also the only strategy that was employed by all native speakers and AH learners. This supported findings of previous request studies (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008; Woodfield, 2008) that this strategy was a frequently used, standardized way of formulating a request. The data further show that, with the exception of the direct strategy locution
derivables, a higher number of SA learners, AH learners and native speakers employed conventionally indirect than direct request strategies. Overall, the results showed that the SA learners and native speakers used a much broader range of request strategies than the AH learners.

The discussion and analysis of direct request strategies in Section 6.3 revealed that the only direct request strategy type that was used relatively frequently by the native speakers and both learner groups was the aforementioned locution derivable that was employed when asking for directions. Imperatives were rarely used by learners and native speakers and only in equal status, low imposition scenarios. The two SA learners who employed imperatives in the first session either stopped doing so in the second or the third session and instead began to use more appropriate indirect strategies. This suggests that the study abroad environment had a positive impact on their pragmatic abilities.

That stopping to use a particular strategy can be indicative of increasing pragmatic competence in the L2 appears to also be evidenced by Hendrik, who stopped using unhedged performatives after the first data collection session and instead resorted to conventionally indirect strategies or hedged performatives. With regard to the latter, the data seems to suggest that the use of this strategy type in English by German native speakers may be a result of negative pragmatic transfer from the learners' native language, as none of the English native speakers employed this strategy. Want statements were also used very infrequently by the native speakers, but also by the AH and SA learners. Due to the extremely low number of want statements used by the SA learners, it is not possible to discern any impact of the study abroad context on learners' use of this strategy type.

Another strategy that was even less frequently used than want statements, was the conventionally indirect suggestory formula. Suggestory formula was employed in one situation by one of the AH learners. As the use of this strategy does not seem contextually appropriate in the context it was used in by the AH learner, the employment of this strategy does not indicate an advanced level of pragmatic competence on the AH learners' part compared to the other SA and AH learners, but rather shows the exact opposite. This example therefore demonstrates the importance of examining the use of pragmatic strategies based on contextual variables, since otherwise increases in the employment of certain strategy types may be seen as indicative of higher levels of pragmatic competence when this is not the case.

The next conventionally indirect strategy investigated, availability, was also not very frequently used by the native speakers and both learner groups. Although the employment of this strategy by learners and native speakers indicated that their assessment of the situational conditions in which this strategy could be used was similar, the data do not suggest that the study abroad sojourn affected SA learners’ use of this strategy. Similar to their use of availability,
native speakers and learners also generally tended to employ prediction in the same contexts. Compared to availability, prediction was employed considerably more frequently and more specifically in high imposition interactions. The frequency with which this strategy was used by SA learners and native speakers in high imposition scenarios is particularly notable as it is markedly different from that of the AH learners.

In contrast to the strategies prediction and availability, requests asking an interlocutor for permission were used in all four contextual conditions by the native speakers and SA learners. Permission tended to be used more frequently by the native speakers than the learners; a finding that is in line with previous studies (e.g. Hill, 1997; Warga, 2004). However, SA learners’ use of permission in low imposition interactions with higher status interlocutors increased steadily from Session 1 to Session 3, which could be indicative of a positive effect of the study abroad context on learners’ pragmatic skills.

Willingness was the first conventionally indirect request strategy that was employed by the native speakers and both learner groups in all four contextual conditions examined by the MET. This suggests that willingness is perceived to be a more universally applicable strategy by both learner groups than any of the conventionally indirect strategies discussed so far. The data further show that willingness was employed more frequently by both learner groups than by the native speakers in three of the four contextual conditions. A possible reason for this is SA and AH learners’ frequent use of ‘Would you be so kind as to . . .’ and ‘Would you mind . . .’ With regard to the SA learners’ employment of willingness over time in the study abroad context no clear pattern can be observed.

Like willingness, the conventionally indirect strategy ability was used by all participant groups in all of the four contextual conditions. Of all request strategy types investigated in this study, ability is the one that was used with the highest frequency by the native speakers and both learner groups. Although ability was the most frequently employed conventionally indirect strategy type by all three participant groups, there are considerable differences regarding how often this request strategy was used by the three groups. The AH learners, for example, used ability in 75 per cent of situations with equal status interlocutors that involved a low imposition request, while the English native speakers only employed it in 40 per cent of this contextual condition. This, and the AH learners’ limited use of other strategies discussed in Section 6.2 and above, suggests that overall their request strategy repertoire is more limited than the SA learners’. With regard to the SA learners, the results reveal that by the end of their stay in the study abroad context the frequency with which they employed ability was similar to the native speakers’ in three of the four contextual conditions that were examined.

The analysis of non-conventionally indirect hints in Section 6.5 revealed that this strategy was used more frequently by the native speakers than the learners.
A possible reason for this could be that learners may prefer strategies that are more easily inferable by the hearer to avoid misunderstandings and explanations. The results show clearly that neither the native speakers nor the learners employed hints in scenarios that involved a high imposition request, which indicates a shared evaluation of contexts in which the use of hints is appropriate. Concerning SA learners’ use of this strategy over time, Bernd’s employment of hints is particularly interesting, as he began to use them in a scenario in Session 2 and 3 in which he had previously used an imperative. As imperatives and hints are at the exact opposite ends of the directness scale, this is a considerable change in strategy use for him and seems to be indicative of a positive development of his pragmatic abilities in the study abroad context.

The majority of direct and conventionally indirect requests made by the learners and native speakers in the present investigation were softened with internal and external modifiers. Participants’ use of these modifiers according to the contextual conditions will be examined in detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

Notes

1 In the case of the SA learners this means that all SA learners that employed a particular strategy in any of the three data collection sessions were added up and then converted into per cent, that is, one SA learner employed a Want statement in Session 1 and one in Session 3, which means that 22 per cent of the SA learners used this strategy.

2 As I mentioned in Chapter 3, coding systems for requests tend to differ somewhat based on whether the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b), Trosborg (1995) or other taxonomies are followed. It is therefore possible that individual coding systems that use a combined taxonomy and data based approach, such as the present one, differ from other coding schemes.

3 The coding schemes for request categories devised by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) and by Trosborg (1995) differ with regard to this particular request strategy type. While Blum-Kulka et al. coded want statements as direct requests in the CCSARP, Trosborg assigned them to the conventionally indirect category. I have coded want statements as direct strategies and thus follow the CCSARP and also Warga’s (2004) coding system.

4 Interestingly, Woodfield’s Japanese learners of English employed more speaker-oriented strategies than her German learners of English, which she however attributes to the higher number of want statements used by her Japanese participants.
Chapter 7

Development of Pragmatic Production: Internal Request Modification

7.0 Introduction

The previous chapter investigated participants’ use of request strategies and showed that the learner and native speakers employed a variety of different strategies based on the situational conditions of the request scenario. The analysis of the participants’ request utterances also showed that they modulated the illocutionary force of the request not only by selecting a specific strategy type, but also by employing internal and external modifiers. That the use of these modifiers plays an important role in the overall impact of the request on the hearer has also been noted in a number of previous studies, for example, House and Kasper (1987), Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989a), Trosborg (1995), Hill (1997), Hassall (2001), Achiba (2003), Barron (2003) and Warga (2004). The present chapter focuses on participants’ use of internal modifiers, which can be further subcategorized as downgraders (i.e. modifiers that decrease the illocutionary force of a request) and upgraders (i.e. modifiers that increase the illocutionary force of a request). Participants’ employment of external modifiers will be examined in Chapter 8.

In this chapter, I will first analyse and discuss the initial occurrence of internal downgraders in individual SA learners’ data in Section 7.1. This will be followed by a comparison of the internal downgraders used by the two learner groups and the native speakers in Section 7.2. In Section 7.3, I will examine learners’ and native speakers’ use of internal downgraders according to the contextual variables status and imposition. The first occurrence of individual internal upgraders in the SA learners’ data will be analysed and discussed in Section 7.4. Subsequent to this, I will compare the groups’ use of internal upgraders in Section 7.5. This will be followed by the discussion and analysis of learners’ and native speakers’ use of upgraders according to the contextual conditions status and imposition in Section 7.6. I will then summarize the findings of this chapter in Section 7.7.
7.1 First Occurrence of Internal Downgraders in the SA Learners’ Data

Internal modifiers are linguistic or syntactic devices that are used by speakers to modulate the illocutionary force of their request. Internal modifiers that downgrade the force of the request utterance can be further subcategorized as lexical and syntactic downgraders. Lexical downgraders found in the participants’ data in this study include: downtoners, politeness markers, understaters, past tense modals, consultative device, marked modality hedge and aspect. Syntactic downgraders comprise: conditional clause, appreciative embedding, tentative embedding, tag question and negation. The latter two internal modifiers were, however, only used by the native speakers. Figure 7.1 and Table 7.1 illustrate the first occurrence of lexical and syntactic downgraders in the SA learners’ data.

The results suggest that a sustained sojourn in the study abroad context seems to have a positive effect on all learners in the SA group, as every one of them employed at least one internal modifier that they had not used in the initial data collection session in subsequent sessions. The data further indicate that all learners already employed at least four internal modifiers in the first data collection session and that on average the SA learners employed six different internal modifiers in Session 1. Concerning the individual downgrader types that were used by the SA learners, the results show that the lexical downgrader downtoner (e.g. ‘maybe’) was used by all SA learners in the first data collection session and that four other lexical downgraders (consultative device, politeness marker, understater, past tense modals) were already used by more than 78 per cent of the SA learners in the first data collection session.

The syntactic downgraders, in contrast, were used by fewer SA learners in the first session, but were then used by several SA learners in subsequent sessions. Thus, the findings suggest that learners may first acquire and use

![Figure 7.1. First occurrence of internal downgraders in the individual SA learners’ data](image-url)
lexical downgraders, before acquiring the more complex syntactic downgraders which would support Hendrik’s (2008) and Octu and Zeyrke’s (2008) findings.

The highest variety of different internal downgraders was employed by Hendrik, a Business student, who seemed very at-ease with communicating with interlocutors in a way that was friendly, goal-oriented and convincing.

The second highest variety of internal downgraders in the first session were employed by Franziska, a psychology student, and Eva, an English major, who each used seven different internal downgraders. Based on these findings it could perhaps be argued that studying a subject in which good communicative skills are important may prime learners to use a variety of different internal modifiers in their L2 relatively early on in their study abroad sojourn.

However, due to the small participant sample and the relatively small intra-group differences in SA learners’ internal downgrader data in the first data collection session, this possible influencing factor clearly needs to be considered tentative. Franziska and Eva employed one new internal downgrader each in Session 3, while Hendrik used two new internal downgraders in Session 2. This suggests that a relatively high variety of downgraders used in the initial data collection session does not automatically result in learners then adding the same number of new downgraders to their repertoire at the same time. The findings further suggest that the first use of strategies and internal modifiers may not be interrelated, as Eva used a limited number of request strategies in the first data collection session, but made more gains during her study abroad sojourn, while Franziska’s strategy repertoire remained restricted throughout her stay.

Table 7.1  Downgraders employed by the SA learners

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<td><strong>Syntactic downgraders</strong></td>
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*Note: The numbers 1, 2, 3 refer to the data elicitation sessions in which the particular downgraders were first used.*
Interestingly, three of the English honours students (Andreas, Bernd and Iris) employed six different internal downgraders in the first data collection session and employed one new internal downgrader each in Session 3. This suggests that with respect to the first occurrence of internal downgraders during a sojourn in the L2 context in the SA learner data, English honours students do not appear to make more and faster progress than students of other subjects. However, due to the small sample size, this notion clearly has to be considered tentative. The highest number of internal downgraders that were first used by learners (Daniel, Greta, Hendrik) in Session 2 or Session 3 was two. Interestingly, the three learners did not seem to share any specific characteristics; Hendrik was the learner who had used the most internal modifiers in the first session, whereas Daniel had employed the least at that time. One factor which might have facilitated the pragmatic development of these SA learners is the large amount of contact they had with English native speakers. Daniel was enrolled in a Masters programme which provided him with frequent contact with fellow native speaker students. Hendrik had joined a sports society to make friends and in addition had to collaborate with several native speakers for projects in his course. Greta spent more time with English native speakers prior to the final data collection session, as her German speaking friends had returned to their home universities after one semester abroad.

Thus the large amount of contact of these four learners with native speakers, which would have resulted in an equally large amount of input and therefore opportunities for them to notice internal downgraders, appears to support Schmidt’s (1990, 1993) noticing hypothesis. However, a large amount of contact does not necessarily result in learners noticing and producing exactly the same modifier at the same time. As the discussion of external modifiers in Chapter 8 will show, Andreas and Bernd, who had frequent contact with native speakers and only employed one additional internal downgrader in a subsequent session, used considerably more external modifiers in Sessions 2 and 3 than Daniel, Greta and Hendrik.

Therefore, L2 learners‘ development of pragmatic skills in an uncontrolled environment, such as the study abroad context, will probably be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the learners‘ willingness and motivation to communicate with native speakers, the situations and contexts the learners find themselves in, the type and frequency of the input they receive and further factors to do with individual learner differences, such as their individual language learning histories, their aptitude and their use of learning strategies.

7.2 Comparison of Groups‘ Use of Downgraders

The previous section focused on the first occurrence of downgraders in the SA learners‘ data. In this section, I will compare what types of downgraders
were employed by the learners and native speakers. Figure 7.2 shows how many members of the participant groups employed the different lexical and syntactic downgraders in the 16 MET scenarios. Due to the different group sizes the data are presented in per cent.

The data show that the politeness marker ‘please’ and past tense modals are the downgraders that are used by all members of the three participant groups. This is not unexpected, since these lexical downgraders are not difficult to incorporate into a sentence and are taught very early in the language classroom. Even beginner level learners frequently use the politeness marker (Scarcella, 1979; Schmidt, 1983; however, see Woodfield, 2008, for differing findings). The results further reveal that those lexical downgraders that were used by more than eighty per cent of the SA learners (downtoner, politeness marker, understater, past tense modals, consultative device) were also employed by more than 80 per cent of the native speakers, with the lowest percentage being

![Figure 7.2. Downgrader use by the three participant groups in per cent](image-url)
87 and the highest 100. This suggests that these internal modifiers are indeed commonly used in requests of the type tested by the MET.

It should be noted, though, that interestingly, marked modality (i.e. ‘may’ or ‘might’) was exclusively used by the SA and AH learners and hedge (e.g. ‘somehow’) was only employed by one SA learner and again none of the native speakers. As the discussion of participants’ use of internal downgraders according to the variables status and imposition in Section 7.3 will show, hedge and marked modality were only employed in situations involving a high imposition interlocutor or high imposition request. Thus, an explanation for this result may be that SA learners tried to show a high degree of deference to their professors, probably similar to the one they would show to professors in their home country, and also tried to display a deferential attitude to equal status interlocutors who could do them a considerable favour. Aspect, which in contrast to hedge and marked modality was employed by more native speakers than SA learners, was also only used in high imposition scenarios by the SA learners.

Concerning the effect of the study abroad sojourn on learners’ pragmatic choices and skills, the data show no considerable differences in SA and AH learners’ use of three lexical downgraders (politeness marker, understater, past tense modals). However, the consultative device is used by more SA learners and native speakers, 89 and 87 per cent respectively, than AH learners, of whom only 62 per cent employed this particular downgrader. Particularly surprising in this respect is also that the downtoner was used by a very small percentage of AH learners, namely 31, compared to 100 per cent of the SA learners and 93 per cent of the native speakers. As the downtoner was the only downgrader that was employed by all SA learners in the first data collection session, this result could suggest that the SA context has an impact on learners’ acquisition and use of this modifier in the early weeks of their sojourn. In contrast, other internal lexical downgrader, such as the understater or past tense modals can also be easily acquired in the AH context.

Since there are hardly any developmental studies available in interlanguage pragmatics – let alone longitudinal ones – focusing on English that provide an in-depth analysis of the internal modifiers investigated in the present study, no other longitudinal data seem to be available that could help to shed some light on whether the above mentioned temporal effect on certain modifiers has also been observed before. However, Trosborg’s (1995) and Hill’s (1997) cross-sectional investigations show that the downtoner was used considerably less frequently by their EFL learners than their native speaker participants, while other internal modifiers such as the politeness marker were used more frequently. Thus it seems that the use of the downtoners may indeed by affected by the learning environment.

The effect of the learning environment on learners’ employment of modifiers also seems to be evidenced in the SA and AH learners’ use of syntactic downgraders. These downgraders are used by a distinctly smaller number of
AH learners than SA learners and native speakers. For example, conditional clauses are used by 78 per cent of the SA learners and 67 per cent of the native speakers, but only by 31 per cent of the AH learners. Since syntactic downgraders also saw the highest amount of increase of internal downgraders in the SA learners’ data, it seems that a prolonged exposure to the target language in the L2 context can help to facilitate the acquisition of these internal modifier types. This is further supported by the fact that none of the learners used the two syntactic downgraders tag question and negation that were employed by 20 and 7 per cent of the native speakers respectively.

Thus, based on the first occurrence of internal downgraders in the SA learners’ data and the number of participants using a certain modifier type in the comparison of the three groups, it appears that lexical downgraders are acquired earlier by a larger number of learners and can also be acquired in an AH context. In contrast, the acquisition and use of syntactic downgraders seem to be facilitated by exposure to the L2 in the study abroad context. However, since not all SA and AH learner participants employed the same internal modifiers in their data collection sessions, individual learner differences appear to also play a significant role in the learners’ employment of lexical and syntactic downgraders.

7.3 Comparison of Groups’ Use of Downgraders According to Contextual Variables

The discussion of the learners’ and native speakers’ use of internal downgraders centred on a general comparison of the individual downgrader types in Section 7.2. In this section, I will examine participants’ use of lexical and syntactic downgraders according to the contextual conditions status and imposition. I will analyse participants’ employment of internal downgraders in low imposition scenarios in Section 7.3.1 and then examine participants’ use of downgraders in high imposition scenarios in Section 7.3.2.

7.3.1 Use of downgraders in low imposition interactions

Table 7.2 presents the three groups’ internal downgrader use in low imposition scenarios. For the analyses according to contextual variables, the instances with which the different internal downgraders were employed by the participant groups were divided by the individual participant numbers of the group. This was done to achieve comparability of the data sets as the group sizes varied. For example, the use of politeness markers in higher status, low imposition scenarios by the SA group in Session 3 was calculated in the following way: 21 instances of politeness marker use by SA group members in the four higher status, low imposition scenarios in Session 3 divided by 9 group
members = score 2.33. Thus, the higher the score for a particular modifier, the higher the number of instances with which the modifier was used by group members in that particular contextual condition.

While the SA learners and AH learners employed lexical downgraders in the same scenario types as the native speakers in the majority of the cases, none of the learners used a syntactic downgrader that was employed by the native speakers in low imposition, higher status requests. This is an interesting finding, as it indicates that although more than 60 per cent of the SA learners employed the syntactic downgraders conditional clauses or appreciative embedding, none of these participants found it necessary to modulate their low imposition requests in such a way. Instead, learners of both groups softened their requests by using a higher amount of certain lexical downgraders than the native speakers, such as politeness markers and past tense modals.

One possible explanation for learners’ preference for lexical downgraders over syntactic downgraders in low imposition scenarios might be that syntactic downgraders are inherently more complex than lexical ones, compare, for example, ‘it would be great if you could . . .’ versus ‘please’ or ‘maybe’, and that learners might refrain from using these more difficult syntactic structures when they do not find them absolutely necessary to achieve their aims. Another possible explanation could be that the learners simply favoured

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**Table 7.2** Downgraders in low imposition interactions according to variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Equal status, low imposition</th>
<th>Higher status, low imposition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexical downgraders</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtoner</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness marker</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understater</td>
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<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense modals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative device</td>
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<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marked modality</td>
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<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Syntactic downgraders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditional clause</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciative embedding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tentative embedding</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag question</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Groups: S1, S2, S3: SA Learners Session 1, 2, 3
AH: AH learners
EE: English native speakers
shorter, more succinct utterances in low imposition requests that took up less time, made their desired aim clear and were also appropriate in the different contexts.

Concerning the effect of the study abroad context on learners’ use of specific internal downgraders in low imposition scenarios, the data show that SA learners’ use of past tense modals in low imposition interactions involving equal status interlocutors decreased towards the native speakers’ from Session 1 to Session 2. SA learners’ use of politeness markers in higher status, low imposition scenarios increased and was consistently higher than the native speakers’. Generally, SA learners’ employment of internal downgraders in low imposition requests remained rather stable during their study abroad sojourn.

Although the SA learners employed certain internal downgraders with different frequencies than the native speaker participants, the differences in the use of these internal modifiers are mostly not as distinct as the differences between the AH learners and the native speakers. This means that the difference between the SA learners’ and native speakers’ frequency scores is generally smaller than the difference between the AH learners’ and native speakers’ frequency scores in low imposition requests.

Strikingly, none of the AH learners employed a downtoner in equal status, low imposition requests, while the SA used them with a similar frequency as the native speakers in most sessions. The AH learners also employed considerably more politeness markers and past tense modals in both equal and higher status low imposition scenarios than the native speakers. The investigation of participants’ use of internal downgraders in high imposition scenarios will further show that the AH learners also employed politeness markers and past tense modals with a higher frequency than the native speakers in these contexts. While past tense modals do not seem to have been focused on in depth in ILP research of requests so far, previous studies have also found that learners in foreign language contexts often used more politeness markers than the native speakers (e.g. Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House, 1989; House & Kasper, 1987).

Faerch and Kasper (1989) observed that this overuse of politeness markers coincided with an underuse of downtoners in their study. The data of my AH learners in both low and high imposition request scenarios corroborate this finding. This thus suggests that a sojourn in the study abroad environment has a positive effect on learners’ pragmatic abilities, as SA learners’ use of downtoners was generally similar to that of the native speakers and they also relied less on the politeness marker. As SA learners’ use of many of the internal downgraders in low imposition scenarios remained rather stable over time, the first intense weeks of the SA learners’ stay in the study abroad context before the initial data collection session may have provided fruitful learning opportunities for the SA learners.
7.3.2 Use of downgraders in high imposition interactions

While there were distinct differences in the native speakers and learners’ use of lexical and syntactic downgraders in low imposition scenarios, the same is not the case in high imposition situations as Table 7.3 illustrates below. In scenarios that put a high imposition on the interlocutor, the SA learners and to a slightly lesser degree also the AH learners, employed a range of both lexical and syntactic downgraders that was similar to those used by the native speaker participants. The data show that with the exception of one instance of conditional clause use, the AH learners did not use any other syntactic downgraders in high imposition requests directed at equal status interlocutors, but did employ some syntactic downgraders in high imposition scenarios with a higher status interlocutor. In contrast, the SA learners and native speakers used the same syntactic downgraders in both equal and high status situations involving a high imposition request, with the exception of tag questions.

Regarding the SA learners’ use of lexical and syntactic downgraders over time, the data reveal instances of non-linear development regarding the groups’ use of individual downgraders, such as their employment of past tense modals in higher status, high imposition situations, and instances of linear

Table 7.3 Downgraders in high imposition interactions according to variables

<table>
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<th>Equal status, high imposition</th>
<th>Higher status, high imposition</th>
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<tr>
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<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lexical downgraders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Downtoner</td>
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<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness marker</td>
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<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understater</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past tense modals</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative device</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marked modality</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspect</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Syntactic downgraders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditional clause</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciative embedding</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tentative embedding</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tag question</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Groups: SA1, SA2, SA3: SA Learners session 1, 2, 3
AH: AH learners
EE: English native speakers
development, such as the group’s use of the consultative device in equal status, high imposition interactions. These findings corroborate previous research by Achiba (2003) and Barron (2003) who also found instances of both, linear and non-linear development in their L2 learners’ data.

Interestingly, the SA learners did not employ any understaters in high imposition requests in the second sessions. A similar gap pertaining to the use of internal modifiers was also observed by Ellis (1992). Consequently, the absence of this particular internal modifier in high imposition requests might, like the instances of linear and non-linear development discussed above, simply be indicative of the SA learners’ learning process in the target language. The analysis of the participants’ use of internal modifiers has so far concentrated on their employment of downgraders. In the following section, I will investigate the learners’ and native speakers’ use of modifiers that increase the impact of the request utterance, the upgraders.

### 7.4 First Occurrence of Upgraders in SA Learners’ Data

While downgraders are used by the speaker to soften the force of the request, upgraders are used by the requester to increase the impact of an utterance on the interlocutor. In contrast to lexical and syntactic downgraders, the number of upgraders that are commonly distinguished is rather small (cf. Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a; Trosborg, 1995). This is probably also one of the reasons why only very few studies have focused on upgraders in the past. Figure 7.3 and Table 7.4 show the first occurrence of internal upgraders in the SA learners’ requests that were elicited with the MET.

The data show that the intensifier was employed by all SA learners in the first data collection session. This is not unexpected since Trosborg (1995) and Hill (1997) also found instances of this particular modifier being used in their learner data. Hill’s findings also suggest that the intensifier was the only

![Figure 7.3. First occurrence of upgraders in SA learners’ data](image-url)
upgrader employed by his learner participants. The second upgrader type investigated is a combination of both intensifier and time intensifier, which I decided to analyse as a separate category, as the combined use of intensifier and time intensifier increases the illocutionary force of a request more drastically than employing a single upgrader on its own. The time intensifier + intensifier was used by six SA learners in the first data collection session and by a further two in Session 2 for the first time. Both learners, who only employed the time intensifier + intensifier in the second session, did not use the sole time intensifier in any of the three data elicitation sessions.

The results further reveal that the time intensifier on its own was used considerably fewer SA learners than the time intensifier + intensifier. The latter intensifier was only employed by three participants, two of whom first used it in the second data collection session. This indicates that the SA learners would tend to emphasize the urgency of their request rather forcefully by using a combined upgrader if they decided to mention a temporal aspect at all. The data also reveal that the two other upgraders investigated, expletives and overstater, were only used by one SA learner each in Session 1 and 3 respectively, thereby making them the least employed upgraders in the present investigation. This indicates that the use of these strategies seems to depend more on an individual learners’ preferences and style.

The findings thus show that upgraders which intensify part of a request utterance or stress the urgency of the request are used by the majority of SA learners and are generally also used relatively early on during their study abroad sojourn. A possible explanation for why the sole time intensifier was only used by a relatively small number of SA learners could be that some learners may still find it difficult to deal with very intricate issues in request modification. Alternatively, learners might believe that only by heavily emphasizing the urgency of a matter will interlocutors be persuaded to help them achieve their aims.

### 7.5 Comparison of Groups’ Use of Upgraders

The discussion of upgraders so far has concentrated on the occurrence of the different upgrader types in the SA learners’ data. In the following, I will
compare the employment of internal upgraders by the members of the three participant groups. The three groups’ use of internal upgraders is illustrated in Figure 7.4.

The data show that the intensifier indeed seems to be the most commonly employed upgrader, as 93 per cent of the native speaker and 85 per cent of the AH learners also used it in their requests. Strikingly, the upgrader time intensifier + intensifier was employed by a significantly higher number of learners than native speakers. Only 7 per cent of the native speakers used this upgrader, while it was employed by 23 per cent of the AH learners and 87 per cent of the SA learners. It should be noted, however, that the higher number of learners using this particular modifier did not automatically translate into a considerably higher use of this upgrader as Tables 7.5 and 7.6 in the following section will show. Time intensifiers were employed by a rather similar number of SA learners and native speakers, 33 and 27 per cent respectively, but were only used by 8 per cent of the AH learners. Thus in both groups the number of learners that employed the sole time intensifier was lower than the native speakers’, while a higher number of participants in both learner groups employed the time intensifier + intensifier than in the native speaker group. This finding may point towards learners’ difficulty to increase the force of their request utterance without becoming too forceful.

The data further show that expletives were only used by one SA learner and not by any of the AH learners or native speakers. This suggests that the use of this particular upgrader may be more related to an individual’s personal style and preferences than to general language use in the scenarios investigated. In contrast, overstaters, which also had only been used by one SA learner, were employed by members of the AH learner and native speaker groups, albeit by a
very small number. The limited use of expletives and overstaters was not unexpected, as neither Trosborg (1995) nor Hill (1997) found instances of these upgraders in their studies.

7.6 Comparison of Groups’ Use of Upgraders According to Contextual Variables

The investigation of learners’ and native speakers’ use of upgraders has so far centred on a general analysis and discussion concerning the groups’ use of the individual upgrader types in the present study. In this section I will analyse learners and native speakers use of upgraders according to the contextual conditions status and imposition. Table 7.5 presents the groups’ employment of upgraders in low imposition scenarios, whereas Table 7.6 shows the participants’ employment of upgraders in high imposition scenarios.

Table 7.5 Upgraders in low imposition scenarios according to variables

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Equal status, low imposition</th>
<th>Higher status, low imposition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifier</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time intensifier + intensifier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intensifier</td>
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<td>Time intensifier</td>
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<td>Expletive</td>
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<td>Overstater</td>
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Notes:
Groups: S1, S2, S3: SA Learners session 1, 2, 3
AH: AH learners
EE: English native speakers

Table 7.6 Upgraders in high imposition scenarios according to variables

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<th>Equal status, high imposition</th>
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<td>S1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intensifier</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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<td>Time intensifier + intensifier</td>
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<td>Overstater</td>
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Notes:
Groups: S1, S2, S3: SA Learners session 1, 2, 3
AH: AH learners
EE: English native speakers
The data show that the three participant groups used considerably fewer upgraders than downgraders in their requests, which corroborates Trosborg’s (1995) and Hill’s (1997) findings. Of the five upgraders investigated, the intensifier was used most frequently by the learners and native speakers. Thus, it was not merely the only upgrader that was employed by the majority of learners and native speakers, but also the only upgrader that was used by all three groups in high and low imposition requests. Although the intensifier was used by the SA learners and native speakers in all four contextual conditions – the AH learners did not employ intensifiers in low imposition interactions with higher status interlocutors – the data show clearly that intensifiers were used considerably more frequently in high rather than low imposition requests.

This finding is in line with the overall finding that learners and native speakers used a wider variety and higher number of upgraders in high imposition scenarios, a result which is similar to the groups’ use of internal downgraders. For example, time intensifier + intensifier and time intensifier were exclusively used in high imposition interactions by the learners and also by all but one of the native speakers. Expletives were used rather consistently by one of the SA learners, but he restricted his use of this upgrader to interactions involving equal status interlocutors, thus also displaying an awareness of contextual conditions in which the use of this particular upgrader would be perceived as more permissible.

Regarding the SA learners’ use of upgraders over time, the data reveal that SA learners’ employment of intensifiers tended to vary somewhat from session to session. The most interesting finding in that respect is perhaps that their use of intensifiers increased steadily from Session 1 to Session 3 in equal status, high imposition interactions, while at the same time their use of intensifiers decreased in higher status, high imposition interactions. As the use of the time intensifier + intensifier also decreased from the first to the last session in scenarios involving a higher status interlocutor, a possible explanation might be that the SA learners simply decreased their employment of upgraders in high imposition requests with the exception of intensifiers.

This section concludes the analysis and discussion of upgraders in the present investigation. In the following section I will summarize the findings of this chapter and will then discuss learners’ and native speakers’ use of external modifiers in Chapter 8.

7.7 Summary

The present chapter focused on learners’ and native speakers’ employment of internal downgraders and upgraders. In Section 7.1, I analysed the first occurrence of individual internal downgraders in the SA learners’ data. The findings showed that all SA learners employed at least one downgrader that they
had not already used in the first data collection in the subsequent data collection sessions. The results further revealed that lexical downgraders were used by a larger number of SA learners early on, while syntactic downgraders were employed by a considerably smaller number of SA participants in the first data collection session, but were then used by several SA learners in subsequent sessions. Thus, the findings suggest that learners may first acquire and use lexical downgraders, before acquiring the more complex syntactic downgraders. The results further indicated that an individual learners’ ILP development may be affected by a combination of factors and that individual learner differences play an important role in that respect.

The analysis of the three groups’ downgrader use in Section 7.2 showed that politeness markers and past tense modals were the only downgraders that were employed by all members of the three groups. The results further indicated that the SA learners have a broader repertoire of downgraders than the AH learners, with the percentage scores of the SA learners frequently being close to that of the native speakers. A particularly interesting finding was that the downtoner was used by a very small percentage of AH learners, namely 31, compared to 100 per cent of the SA learners and 93 per cent of the native speakers. Since the downtoner was the only downgrader that was employed by all SA learners in the first data collection session, this finding suggests that the study abroad context may influence learners’ acquisition and use of this modifier in the early weeks of their sojourn. Compared to lexical downgraders, syntactic downgraders were used by fewer participants. The small number of AH learners who employed syntactic downgraders was notable and could suggest that the acquisition and use of syntactic downgraders may be facilitated by exposure to the L2 in the study abroad context.

The investigation of the groups’ use of internal downgraders according to the contextual conditions status and imposition in Section 7.3 revealed that both learner groups almost exclusively employed syntactic downgraders in high imposition interactions, while the native speakers also used syntactic downgraders in low imposition scenarios. One possible explanation for learners’ preference for lexical downgraders over syntactic downgraders in low imposition scenarios might be that syntactic downgraders are inherently more complex than lexical ones, and that learners might refrain from using these more difficult syntactic structures when they do not find them absolutely necessary to achieve their goal. Concerning the possible effect of the SA context on learners’ use of downgraders, the data show that the SA learners employed a broader range of strategies than the AH learners in equal status, high imposition scenarios and also employed more downgraders throughout.

The analysis of the initial occurrence of internal upgraders in the SA learners’ data in Section 7.4 showed that the intensifier was the only upgrader that was employed by all SA group members in the first data collection session. The results further showed that the combined upgrader time intensifier + intensifier
was used by a larger number of learners than the upgrader time intensifier on its own. This indicates that the SA learners would tend to emphasize the urgency of their request rather forcefully by using a combined upgrader if they decided to mention a temporal aspect at all. The other upgraders examined, expletive and overstater, were only employed by one SA learner each.

The comparison of the groups’ upgrader use in Section 7.5 revealed that the intensifier was also employed by more than 80 per cent of the native speakers and AH learners. The results further showed that the upgrader time intensifier + intensifier was employed by a significantly higher number of learners than native speakers. This finding may point towards learners’ difficulty to increase the force of their request utterance without becoming too forceful. While overstaters were employed by a small number of native speakers and AH learners, expletives were only used by one SA learner.

The investigation of learners’ and native speakers’ use of internal upgraders according to the contextual conditions status and imposition in Section 7.6 showed that the participants used fewer upgraders than downgraders in their requests. Of the five upgraders investigated, the intensifier was used most frequently by the learners and native speakers. Thus, it was not only the only upgrader that was employed by the majority of learners and native speakers, but also the only upgrader that was used by all three groups in high and low imposition requests. Generally, learners and native speakers used a wider variety and higher number of upgraders in high imposition scenarios, a result which is similar to the groups’ use of internal downgraders.

This concludes the analysis and discussion of SA learners, AH learners and native speakers’ employment of internal downgraders and upgraders in the present investigation. In Chapter 8, I will examine the participants’ use of external request modifiers.
Chapter 8

Development of Pragmatic Production: External Request Modification

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will first analyse and discuss the initial occurrence of external modifiers in individual SA learners’ data in Section 8.1. This will be followed by a comparison of the external modifiers used by the two learner groups and the native speakers in Section 8.2. In Section 8.3 I will analyse and discuss learners’ and native speakers’ use of external modifiers according to the contextual variables status and imposition. The findings of this chapter will then be summarized in Section 8.4.

8.1 First Occurrence of External Modifiers in the SA Learners’ Data

External modifiers, which are also called supportive moves (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989b), are additional statements that are made by speakers to support the head act, that is, the core of the request utterance containing the requestive verb(s) which determine the directness level of the request. External modifiers can either precede the head act or follow it and are employed to make the request ‘plausible and justifiable to the person who is to perform it’ (Trosborg, 1995, p. 215). Figure 8.1 schematically illustrates the first occurrence of the external modifiers categories found in the SA learners’ data, while Table 8.1 presents the first occurrence of individual external modifiers in the SA learners’ data.

The most striking difference between the first occurrence of internal downgraders and external modifiers in the present data is that while all learners seemed to have increased their repertoire of internal downgrader by at least one during their sojourn in the target context, only four of the nine learners (Andreas, Bernd, Daniel and Franziska) employed an external modifier in Session 2 or 3 that they had not previously used in Session 1. The highest number of new external modifiers were used by two English honours students,
Andreas and Bernd, in the second data collection session. This finding could suggest that their university studies had primed them, more than non-English honours students, to notice external modifiers. It should be noted though that neither of the other two English majors, Iris and Eva, appeared to have increased their external modifiers repertoire during their stay. Thus, the data again suggest that prior second language studies at a higher educational level in the foreign language home country do not generally translate into a more rapid increase of request modifiers during the stay in the L2 context.

A possible explanation for the large number of new external modifiers employed by Andreas and Bernd in subsequent sessions could be their very frequent contact with English native speakers. Although Eva had met her English boyfriend during her stay in the L2 context, her exposure to other English native speakers seemed to be more limited than that of Andreas, who had an English speaking housemate and also often interacted with other

**Table 8.1 External modifiers employed by the SA learners**

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<tr>
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<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
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<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Alerters</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Preparators</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Grounders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disarmers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciators</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Sweeteners</td>
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<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promise of reward</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smalltalk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Considerator</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
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*Note:* The numbers 1, 2, 3 refer to the data elicitation sessions in which the particular modifiers were first used.

**Figure 8.1.** External modifiers used by the SA learners
native speakers, or Bernd, who stated in the interview that he had contact with many different native speakers as customers or colleagues as a result of his job in a café on campus. The question that arises of course is why the other learners who also had a high degree of exposure, such as Hendrik, did not develop in a similar manner. A possible explanation could be that although learners may have been exposed to the similar amounts of L2 input in the study abroad context, the type of input itself will have differed to a certain extent and thus L2 learners may have been exposed to strategies and modifiers to different degrees.

The data of the SA learners further show that generally fewer external modifiers than internal modifiers were employed by the learners in the first data collection session. This is in line with the results of Achiba’s (2003) longitudinal investigation, who observed that her learner tended to acquire internal modifiers before external modifiers in the L2 context and also used more internal modifiers than external modifiers. It could therefore be argued that these findings provide evidence for temporal patterning in that the learners tended to already have a broader repertoire of internal modifiers in the first data collection, which they then subsequently were all able to increase during their sojourn, while their repertoire of external modifiers was more limited and also only saw gains in the case of four learners.

Concerning the individual external request modifiers types that were used by the SA learners, the data reveal that two external modifiers, alerters (e.g. ‘Professor Jones, . . .’ Hendrik, Session 1, Scenario 1) and grounders (e.g. ‘I couldn’t find any articles on my essay.’ Christoph, Session 1, Scenario 4), were first used by all SA learners in the initial data collection session. This finding is not unexpected as, together with the head act (e.g. ‘Is it maybe possible that we meet tomorrow instead of today?’ Daniel, Session 1, Scenario 6), these external modifiers might be regarded as very basic constituents of a request, since the alerter is employed by the speaker to obtain their interlocutors’ attention, while the grounder is used to provide an explanation for the request being made.

The data further show that two external modifiers, smalltalk (e.g. ‘. . . good to meet you here.’ Andreas, Session 2, Scenario 2) and considerator (e.g. ‘I hope you don’t mind.’ Bernd, Session 2, Scenario 6), were first used by the SA learners in the second or third data collection session. This suggests that SA learners’ use of two external modifiers seems to be influenced by the learners’ exposure to the L2 in the study abroad environment, as none of the SA learners had used either of the two external modifiers in the first data collection session. Since smalltalk is a category that was first introduced for the present study, no previous data are available on this external modifier which might confirm the notion that the learners’ use of this modifier and exposure to the L2 in the study abroad context are connected. However, in Achiba’s (2003) study, her learner also first used the option giver (an external modifier introduced
by Achiba that is very similar to the considerator) after she had been exposed to the L2 for a number of months. Thus, there seems to be evidence for temporal patterning concerning certain external modifiers. In addition, individual learner differences also seem to play an important role in SA learners’ use of external modifiers, as not all used the same modifiers in the same sessions.

8.2 Comparison of Groups’ Use of External Modifiers

So far the discussion has concentrated on the SA learners’ first use of external modifiers. In the following, I will compare the SA learners’ employment of external modifiers with that of the AH learners and native speakers. Figure 8.2 schematically illustrates how many members of the three participant groups used the different external modifiers in the MET scenarios.

The data show that the external modifiers alerter and grounder were used by all learner and native speaker participants. This again seems to indicate, as has been suggested above, that these external modifiers constitute core elements of request utterances. Due to different coding categories and different emphases in other request studies, alerters have rarely been examined separately and not as part of a bigger entity, such as of external modifiers, in

![Figure 8.2](image-url)

**Figure 8.2.** External modifier use by the three participant groups in per cent
the past. It is, therefore, difficult to determine whether alerters are generally used by a high number of learners. In one of the few studies focusing on alerters, Warga (2004), however, did find that learners tend to use alerters even at a relatively early stage. The prevalence of grounders in requests, on the other hand, has often been observed in the past, for example, Kasper (1981) and House and Kasper (1987). Based on the CCSARP data, Faerch and Kasper (1989, p. 239) noted that ‘the grounder stands out as the single most frequent external modifier.’

Overall, the results suggest that members of the SA and native speaker group tended to have a much broader repertoire of external modifiers than the AH learners. For example, while the disarmer was employed by 89 per cent of the SA learners and 87 per cent of the native speakers, it was only used by 46 per cent of the AH learners. Similarly, the preparator was used by 67 per cent of the SA learners and 47 per cent of the native speakers, but again was only employed by 16 per cent of the AH learners. None of the AH learners employed either the imposition minimizer (used by 40 per cent of the native speakers and 89 per cent of the SA learners) or the considerator (employed by 20 per cent of the native speakers and 22 per cent of the SA learners).

This suggests that staying in the L2 context may be beneficial with regard to language learners’ external modifier repertoire. That time spent in the target community may influence the use of certain external modifiers seems to be demonstrated most clearly by the considerator. This external modifier was first employed in the second data collection session by the SA learners, but not used by any of the AH learners. This suggests that exposure to the L2 may influence language learners’ acquisition and use of this and possibly also other external modifiers.

### 8.3 Comparison of Groups’ Use of External Modifiers According to Contextual Variables

The investigation of the external modifiers so far has revealed differences in the participant numbers employing certain external modifiers. In this section, I will compare and discuss the groups’ use of external modifiers according to the variables status and imposition. Learners’ and native speakers’ use of external modifiers in low imposition scenarios will be analysed in Section 8.3.1, while the groups’ use of external modifiers in high imposition scenarios will be examined in Section 8.3.2.

#### 8.3.1 Use of external modifiers in low imposition interactions

Table 8.2 reveals how frequently the different external modifiers were used in interactions that involved a low imposition request. For the analyses according
to contextual variables, the instances with which the different external modifiers were employed by the participant groups were divided by the individual participant numbers of the group. This was done to achieve comparability of the data sets since the group sizes varied. For example, the use of alerters in equal status, low impositions scenarios by the SA group in Session 1 was calculated in the following way: 31 instances of alerter use by SA group members in Session 1 in low imposition interactions divided by 9 group members = score 3.44. Thus, the higher the score for a particular modifier, the higher the number of instances with which the modifier was used by group members.

The use of external modifiers in low imposition interactions shows that the learners and native speakers only employ four different external modifiers in these scenarios, namely the alerter, the preparator, the grounder and smalltalk. This indicates a shared assessment by the learners and native speakers regarding low imposition scenarios, as none of the members of these groups found it necessary to employ an external modifier that flatters the interlocutor or offers some kind of compensation for the desired act. The figures reveal that the participants mainly employed alerters and grounders, while the instances of smalltalk and preparator use are considerably more limited. The SA learners’ results show both instances of slight increases in the use of external modifiers (e.g. grounders in low imposition interactions with higher status interlocutors), as well as slight non-linear variations over time (e.g. alerters in low imposition equal status scenarios). Similar observations regarding the employment of external modifiers during a learner’s sojourn in the target environment were also made by Achiba (2003).

### Table 8.2 External modifiers in low imposition interactions according to variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal status, low imposition</th>
<th>Higher status, low imposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparator</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciator</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sweetener</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smalltalk</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of reward</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

Groups: S1, S2, S3: SA Learners session 1, 2, 3  
AH: AH learners  
NS: English native speakers
The data further reveal that the SA learners tended to employ more external modifiers in low imposition interactions in all three sessions than the native speakers. Although this result may seem surprising, it is in line with findings of many previous studies (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Cenoz & Valencia, 1996; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; House 1989; House & Kasper, 1987, Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2003; Yu, 1999) that showed that L2 learner groups used more external modifiers than their native speaker controls. Edmondson and House (1991) coined the term ‘waffle phenomenon’ to describe this higher employment of external modifiers by language learners. Warga (2004) also observed a rise in the use of external modifiers in correlation with increasing proficiency levels away from the native speaker norm in her learner data. She suggests that a possible explanation for her finding might be influences from her learners’ L1 German, since her data showed that Austrian native speakers of German employed a noticeably higher amount of external modifiers than her French native speakers.

In contrast to the SA Learners, the AH learners used fewer external modifiers than the native speakers, with the exception of grounders in low imposition, equal status scenarios. A possible reason for this result may be that the AH learners were more concerned with producing grammatically correct utterances than the SA learners and, therefore, produced less elaborate requests than the other two groups. A similar focus on grammatical correctness by AH learners was also found by Lafford (2004), who attributed this finding to the type of interlocutor with whom the learner communicates in the AH or SA context. She suggests that SA learners quickly realize that it is more important to convey their message to their interlocutors outside the classroom in a fluent and polite manner, than to pay more attention to the grammatical correctness of their utterance, which the learners would do inside the classroom in conversations with their teachers. This notion is also supported by the findings of the investigation into SA learners’ and AH learners’ pragmatic awareness in Chapter 5.

8.3.2 Use of external modifiers in high imposition interactions

Table 8.3 reveals how frequently the different external modifiers were used by the participant groups in interactions that involved a high imposition request.

The data show that, in contrast to the low imposition scenarios, the three participant groups used a considerably larger variety of external modifiers in situations involving a high imposition request. Both learners and native speakers employed disarmers, appreciators, sweeteners, imposition minimizers, considerators and promise of reward exclusively in high imposition interactions. This suggests that, similar to the scenarios involving a low imposition request, the three groups demonstrate a shared assessment of the usefulness
of certain external modifier types that might be beneficial in persuading the interlocutor to perform the desired act.

As was the case in the low imposition scenarios, the SA learners’ data show both instances of linear increases and decreases in the employment of external modifiers over time (e.g. linear increase: disarmer in high imposition interactions with higher status interlocutors, linear decrease: appreciator in high imposition interactions with equal status interlocutors), as well as non-linear developments (e.g. the use of sweeteners in equal status, high imposition scenarios). These findings are again similar to those by Achiba (2003). As had also been observed in low imposition interactions, the SA learners again tended to employ more external modifiers than native speakers, thus lending further support to the aforementioned ‘waffle phenomenon’.

Compared to the SA learners and the English native speakers, the AH learners again used fewer external modifiers, with the exception of alerters. A possible explanation for this might be the learning contexts of the SA and AH learners. Because they were living in the study abroad context, the SA learners were forced to communicate in their L2 in their everyday life to achieve a wide variety of different aims, such as gaining information or socialising. The AH learners, in contrast, had never lived in an L2 environment before and, thus, may have made requests that resembled those expected in the seminars they attended. Interactions in seminars, either with fellow students or the lecturer, that are intended to provide AH learners with opportunities to use their L2 are often artificial in that learners tend to make many utterances in order to learn certain linguistic features and not to achieve a desired goal. The AH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>External modifiers in high imposition interactions according to variables</th>
<th>Equal status, high imposition</th>
<th>Higher status, high imposition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerter</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparator</td>
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<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounder</td>
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<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarmer</td>
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<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciator</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetener</td>
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<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition minimizer</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smalltalk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Considerator</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of reward</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Groups: S1, S2, S3: SA Learners session 1, 2, 3
AH: AH learners
NS: English native speakers
language learning environment may also only provide learners with limited opportunities to produce a variety of different requests. In addition, if all AH learners share the same L1 and this L1 is also understood by their lecturers, as is the case in the present sample, learners can always switch back to their L1 when they want to talk about a particularly sensitive issue or make a high imposition request. Thus, the lower use of external modifiers by the AH learners could simply indicate that they lack the real-life experience of having to solely rely on their L2 to achieve desired outcomes.

8.4 Summary

This chapter began with an initial analysis and discussion of the first occurrence of individual external modifiers in the SA learners’ data in Section 8.1. The data showed that the SA learners tended to use fewer external modifiers than internal modifiers in the first data elicitation session. The results further revealed that only four of the nine SA learners employed an external modifier that they had not previously used in Session 1 in the subsequent sessions. This could suggest that internal modifiers are easier to acquire than external ones. Regarding individual external modifier types, the data showed that only alerters and grounders were used by all SA learners in the initial data collection session, while smalltalk and considerators were exclusively used in later sessions by the SA participants. This indicates that SA learners’ use of the latter two external modifiers seems to be influenced by the learners’ exposure to the L2 in the study abroad environment. Based on the findings of this section, SA learners’ use of specific external modifiers seems to be influenced by individual learner differences and temporal patterning with regard to certain modifiers (e.g. the considerator).

Section 8.2 focused on a general comparison of individual external modifier use by the three participant groups. The results revealed that again alerters and grounders were used by all learner and native speaker participants, suggesting that these external modifiers are the core elements of request utterances. The data showed that overall members of the SA and native speaker group tended to have a much broader repertoire of external modifiers than the AH learners. That a study abroad sojourn can affect L2 learners’ use of certain external modifiers is demonstrated most clearly by the considerator. This external modifier was first employed in the second data collection session by the SA learners, but not used by any of the AH learners. This suggests that studying abroad may be beneficial with regard to language learners’ external modifier repertoire.

Learners’ and native speakers’ use of external modifiers according to the variables status and imposition was examined in Section 8.3. The results revealed differences in the groups’ use of external modifiers in low and high
imposition request interactions. Learners and native speakers only employed four different external modifiers (alerters, preparators, grounders, smalltalk) in low imposition scenarios, whereas all three groups used a considerably larger variety of external modifiers in situations involving a high imposition request. This suggests that both learner groups and the native speaker assessed the situational conditions in which specific external modifiers can/should be used in a similar way.

Concerning the SA learners’ use of external modifiers over time, the data reveal instances of both linear and non-linear developments. The findings further show that while the SA learners tended to use more external modifiers than the native speakers, the AH learners tended to use fewer. Possible explanations for the latter result may be SA learners’ preoccupation with grammatical correctness rather than pragmatic concerns and/or their lack of real-life communicative experiences in the L2 outside the EFL classroom. This concludes the analysis and discussion of external modifiers. In the following chapter I will summarize the findings of the present study.
Chapter 9
Summary and Conclusion

9.0 Introduction

The aim of the present investigation was to examine how the receptive and productive pragmatic competence of study abroad learners develops in the British L2 target environment, and to explore to which extent learners’ development concerning their awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities is interconnected. I will provide a summary of the findings of the study in Section 9.1, in which I will refer back to the research questions set out in the introduction. In Section 9.2, I will address the limitations of the present investigation. Theoretical, methodological and pedagogical and implications will then be discussed in Section 9.3.

9.1 Summary of Findings

The results of the present study will be discussed in two sections. In Section 9.1.1, I will provide answers to the research questions addressing issues related to L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness. I will then summarize the results of the investigation into SA learners’ productive pragmatic development in Section 9.1.2.

9.1.1 Findings related to SA learners’ pragmatic awareness

Does the study abroad context influence language learners’ awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities?

The statistical analyses of participants’ error recognition scores have shown that the SA learners’ awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities increased significantly during their 9-month sojourn at a British university. This finding therefore corroborates the results of previous studies by Bouton (1994), Matsumura (2003) and Hassall (2005) that had also concluded that a prolonged sojourn in the target language environment helps to improve L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness. A comparison of the group’s recognition scores
revealed that the SA learners and the native speakers recognized significantly more pragmatic infelicities than the AH learners. The difference in error recognition scores for pragmatic infelicities was already significant in the SA learners’ first data collection session, which means that even after only about 4 weeks in the L2 context, the SA learners detected significantly more pragmatic infelicities than the AH learners.

After their 9-month stay in the study abroad context, the SA learners’ pragmatic error recognition scores had not only improved significantly, thus showing an increase in the SA learners’ pragmatic awareness, but had increased to exactly match the native speakers’ scores. This indicates that at the end of their sojourn, the SA learners had reached a native-like receptive proficiency level pertaining to the simple, everyday interactions examined by the video-and-questionnaire task. It has to be noted, however, that the results cannot be generalized to predicting the students’ pragmatic awareness regarding more complex and/or unfamiliar situations in different contexts.

A comparison of the participants’ ability to detect grammatical errors showed that the AH learners and native speakers noticed significantly more grammatical infelicities than the SA learners in the first data collection session. The good performance of the AH learners was not unexpected, as the AH learners had received a minimum of 2 hours of university-level grammar instruction in the 2.5 years preceding the data collection. However, after 9 months in England, the SA learners’ ability to detect grammatical infelicities had improved so drastically that differences between the three groups’ scores were no longer significant.

**Does language learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness develop at the same time?**

The results of the present investigation have shown that the professional language learners in the AH context, who were studying English to become translators and/or interpreters, were less aware of pragmatic than grammatical infelicities. Thus, it seems that L2 learners’ grammatical awareness will probably develop earlier than their pragmatic awareness in typical foreign language contexts, such as Germany, where learners’ input is often limited to the language classroom. As Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) noted, instruction in EFL environments tends to focus on grammatical correctness and it appears that this focus has not changed since Kasper observed in 1982 that ‘formal correctness is given high priority in the German school context’ (p. 109).

While L2 learners’ grammatical awareness seems to develop earlier in typical EFL contexts, ESL contexts like Great Britain seem to promote both, L2 learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The SA learners’ good recognition scores for pragmatic errors in the first data collection session could
potentially indicate that the first few weeks of the SA learners’ sojourn in the target country lead to a leap in L2 learners’ pragmatic awareness. However, as no data were elicited from the SA participants before they left their home country, further studies that include a pre-sojourn data collection are needed to determine whether this leap does indeed take place or not.

**Do language learners and native speakers perceive one type of infelicity (grammatical/pragmatic) to be more serious than another?**

The analysis of the data has shown that the SA learners considered pragmatic infelicities to be more serious than grammatical errors. It is important to note that they already considered pragmatic infelicities to be worse than grammatical ones in the first data collection session and that they perceived pragmatic errors to be even more serious at the end of their stay than at the beginning. This indicates that a study abroad sojourn in the L2 environment affects L2 learners’ perceptions concerning the seriousness of pragmatic infelicities. Like the SA learners, the native speakers also considered pragmatic errors to be much more serious than grammatical ones. The AH learner group, in contrast, perceived grammatical infelicities to be worse than grammatical ones. The statistical analysis showed that the severity rating scores of the SA learners and native speakers were significantly different from those of the AH learners in the first and second data collection sessions. These findings support the results of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) investigation, who had also observed an inverse rating behaviour of their learner participant groups concerning the severity of pragmatic and grammatical errors, which they called ‘the mirror effect’ and which was also found in the present investigation.

**Are study abroad learners aware of their own pragmatic development in the study abroad context?**

The members of the group differed in their willingness to share their observations regarding their own L2 development and their study abroad sojourn with me. Four of the participants chose not to comment on the issue. Of the remaining 12 SA learners, only two learners explicitly talked about pragmatic issues. They explained how they had become aware of the way native speakers interacted and as a result had either acquired new expressions or adjusted their language use to adapt to that in the target environment. Thus, the statements of these two SA learners seem to be congruent with Schmidt’s (1993, 1995) noticing hypothesis regarding the development of pragmatic awareness.
9.1.2 Findings related to SA learners’ productive pragmatic skills

*Does the study abroad context affect language learners’ use of request strategies?*

The effect of the SA context on L2 learners’ use of request strategies is not as obvious as the effect on L2 learners’ pragmatic and grammatical awareness. This is probably due to the rather high proficiency level of the learner participants in the present study. The most striking developments with regard to SA learners’ request strategy use appear to be on an individual level, highlighting the importance of individual learner differences. The two SA learners Bernd and Iris who employed imperatives in the first data collection session either stopped doing so in the second or the third session, and then began to use more appropriate indirect strategies instead. That stopping to use a particular strategy can be indicative of increasing pragmatic competence in the L2 appears to also be evidenced by Hendrik, who stopped using unhedged performatives after the first data collection session and instead resorted to conventionally indirect strategies or hedged performatives. The data also showed, however, that SA learners not only developed by no longer using somewhat inappropriate strategies, but also by beginning to use new strategies in certain contexts. Bernd’s employment of hints is particularly interesting in that respect, as he began to use hints in a scenario in Sessions 2 and 3 in which he had previously used an imperative. As imperatives and hints are at the exact opposite ends of the directness scale, this is a considerable change in strategy use for him and seems to be indicative of a positive development of his pragmatic abilities in the study abroad context. Thus the choices of the SA learners to use or not use particular strategies in certain situations suggest that the study abroad environment had a positive impact on their pragmatic abilities.

On a more general point, of all request strategy types investigated in this study, ability is the one that was used with the highest frequency by the native speakers and both learner groups. This supported findings of previous request studies (e.g. House & Kasper, 1987; Otçu & Zeyrek, 2008; Woodfield, 2008). Although ability was the most frequently employed conventionally indirect strategy type by all three participant groups, there are considerable differences regarding how often this request strategy was used by the three groups. The AH learners, for example, used ability in 75 per cent of situations with equal status interlocutors that involved a low imposition request, while the English native speakers only employed it in 40 per cent of this contextual condition. This and the AH learners’ limited use of other strategies suggests that overall their request strategy repertoire is more limited than the SA learners’. With regard to the SA learners, the results reveal that by the end of their stay in the study abroad context, the frequency with which they employed ability was similar to the native speakers’ in three of the four contextual conditions that were examined.
**Does the study abroad context affect language learners’ use of internal request modifiers?**

The results revealed that all SA learners used at least one downgrader that they had not previously used in the first data collection in the subsequent data collection sessions. The data further showed that lexical downgraders were used by a larger number of SA learners early on, while syntactic downgraders were employed by a considerably smaller number of SA participants in the first data collection session, but were then used by several SA learners in subsequent sessions. Thus, the findings suggest that learners may first acquire and use lexical downgraders, before acquiring the more complex syntactic downgraders. This is in line with Hendrik’s (2008), Otçu and Zeyrek’s (2008) and Woodfield’s (2008) results who also noted that their learners of English used more lexical than syntactic downgraders and in disagreement with Warga’s (2004) finding who reported that her learners of French used more syntactic than lexical downgraders. A possible explanation for these differing results may lie in the L2 the learners were using, English and French.

The results further indicated that the SA learners had a broader repertoire of downgraders than the AH learners, as the percentage scores of the SA learners were often close to those of the native speakers. A particularly interesting finding was that the downtoner was used by a very small percentage of AH learners, namely 31, compared to 100 per cent of the SA learners and 93 per cent of the native speakers. Since the downtoner was the only downgrader that was employed by all SA learners in the first data collection session, this finding suggests that the study abroad context may influence learners’ acquisition and use of this modifier in the early weeks of their sojourn.

The analysis of the initial occurrence of internal upgraders in the SA learners’ data showed that the intensifier was the only upgrader that was employed by all SA group members in the first data collection session. The comparison of the groups’ upgrader use revealed that the intensifier was also employed by more than 80 per cent of the native speakers and AH learners. This indicates that this upgrader is indeed frequently used and also suggests that it can be acquired in both foreign language and target language contexts. The results further showed that the upgrader time intensifier + intensifier was employed by a significantly higher number of SA and AH learners than as native speakers. This finding may point towards learners’ difficulty to increase the force of their request utterance without becoming too forceful.

**Does the study abroad context affect language learners’ use of external request modifiers?**

The data revealed that the SA learners tended to use fewer external modifiers than internal modifiers in the first data elicitation session. The analysis of the
results further showed that only four of the nine SA learners employed an external modifier that they had not previously used in the initial data collection session in the subsequent sessions. This may suggest that internal modifiers are easier to acquire than external ones. Concerning individual external modifier types, the data showed that only alerters and grounders were used by all SA learners in the initial data collection session. As the comparison of the groups’ use of external modifiers revealed that these two modifiers were also employed by all AH learners and all native speakers in the present investigation, alerters and grounders could be regarded as the core elements of request utterances. With regard to individual external modifier repertoires, the data showed that members of the SA and native speaker group tended to have a much broader repertoire of external modifiers than the AH learners.

That a study abroad sojourn can have a positive effect on L2 learners’ use of certain external modifiers is demonstrated most clearly by the considerator. This external modifier was first employed in the second data collection session by the SA learners, but not used by any of the AH learners. Thus, while individual learner differences may play an important role in L2 learners’ pragmatic development, there are also indications for temporal patterning.

### 9.2 Limitations

There are several limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged and addressed. The first limitation concerns the number of participants. Due to the combined video-and-questionnaire and interview approach and the focus on German native speakers for both learner groups, the number of participants in the receptive part of the study is considerably smaller than that of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) original research. However, since the findings of the investigation into the learners’ and native speakers’ linguistic awareness corroborated the results of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s study, the lower amount of data does not seem to have influenced the overall results. A larger participant number in the productive part of the study could have helped to establish the role of individual learner differences and temporal patterning more clearly. Regrettably it seems that attracting a higher number of participants for a study that involves a long-term commitment will probably always be difficult.

A second limitation involves the use of elicited data in the investigation of learners’ productive pragmatic skills. It has to be noted that elicited data in general cannot reflect fully how participants would react in real-life request situations. Such data can, however, provide indications of the linguistic means the informants have at their disposal to negotiate these situations. Nevertheless, it has to be pointed out that the examination of the learners’ productive competence concentrated exclusively on requests and could therefore not provide
indications of the learners' pragmatic proficiency with regard to other aspects of their pragmatic competence, such as their ability to refuse or thank their interlocutors appropriately, for example.

A third limitation concerns the combination of different data collection techniques in the present investigation. Although a variety of methods were used to collect data from the participants and interviews including verbal protocol elements were conducted with all learners and native speakers following the video and questionnaire task, it was not possible to conduct additional interviews on learners' MET responses due to time constraints. The reason for that was that about one hour was needed to complete the MET, the video-and questionnaire task and the subsequent interviews. Adding a further element to the same session or asking participants to attend more than three data collection sessions in 9 months did not seem viable, as participants took part voluntarily and might not have attended subsequent sessions, if the sessions had lasted one and a half hours or longer, or if they had been asked to attend more than three sessions.

A fourth limitation of the present study is that no data could be gathered from the SA participants prior to their study abroad sojourn. Pre-sojourn data collections would have helped to establish to what extent the first few weeks in the study abroad environment affect L2 learners' pragmatic skills and whether the large amount of initial input students are exposed to when commencing their studies in Great Britain results in an initial leap of SA learners' pragmatic competence.

9.3 Implications

In the following, I will discuss implications arising from the present investigation. I will first focus on theoretical issues related to the coding of requests in Section 9.3.1. Subsequent to this, I will address methodological issues in Section 9.3.2. This will be followed by a discussion of pedagogical issues in Section 9.3.3.

9.3.1 Theoretical implications

As I outlined in Chapter 2, studies on requests in interlanguage pragmatics have mainly employed the CCSARP coding scheme by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Trosborg’s (1995) coding scheme or a combination of the two. Both schemes have made a highly significant contribution to the field, which is shown by the fact that they have been used so frequently in ILP studies over the last two decades. However, the CCSARP’s framework in particular has also been criticized for being based on data elicited by written production questionnaires (Van Mulken, 1996). Because of this, the coding scheme may not provide a
comprehensive list of categories for typical request features that can be found either in naturally occurring speech or elicited spoken data. The introduction of the new modifier ‘option giver’ in Achiba’s (2003) study that was based on naturally occurring spoken data suggests that additional categories may have to be added to better represent participants’ output.

When analysing the data of the present investigation, I noticed that certain sections of participants’ utterances could not be coded according to the existing frameworks and therefore added the three external modifiers ‘appreciator’, ‘considerator’ and ‘smalltalk’ to my coding scheme to better reflect what the participants were saying in order to convince their interlocutors to do something for them. Developing a comprehensive request strategy and modification framework that is based on oral data and covers the many possible ways of formulating and supporting a request in a variety of languages is of course a major endeavour and a great challenge. However, the benefits of expanding the request coding schemes could make it worth it, as more comprehensive coding schemes would provide us with further insights into what successful language users do to achieve their aims and what L2 learners need to be taught.

9.3.2 Methodological implications

The present research has shown the advantages of combining multimedia instruments with interviews in pragmatics research. Both multimedia instruments, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) video-and-questionnaire task and the newly developed MET, have three essential advantages for researchers compared to other data elicitation methods that are commonly used in interlanguage pragmatics research. First, they provide participants with a high amount of audiovisual contextual information, thereby making it easier for the participants to grasp and evaluate the context. Secondly, they provide researchers with a highly reliable and standardized data elicitation method that enables them to subject their participants to exactly the same situational conditions without any variations. Finally, they enable researchers to work independently of other people, such as actors in role-plays, and to use native speaker input, such as the audio data in the MET, even if they themselves are not native speakers of that language. It is hoped that these advantages of using data collection instruments based on information technology will lead to a higher use of available technologies in pragmatics research and thus to the development of new, further improved instruments.

Although these new instruments have a number of advantages, the present investigation has also shown the benefits of combining multimedia technology with traditional techniques, such as the interview. The interviews enabled me to obtain further insights into participants’ decision making rationales and their more general thoughts on pragmatic issues. These conversations were
very valuable, because they showed to what extent learners and native speakers were conscious of their rating behaviour or not. The interviews also revealed how participants really felt about pragmatic or grammatical errors and that Thomas (1983) was right to argue that committing a pragmatic infelicity tends to reflect badly on the speaker’s character.

While the potential consequences of pragmatic infelicities are widely commented on in the ILP literature, only very few investigations have examined the impact of these infelicities on hearers by asking hearers to share their thoughts and feelings upon hearing the utterance. More of these investigations are needed, because they show how important it is for language learners to have certain pragmatic skills and thereby make it easier to argue the case for including pragmatic elements into language curricula, especially in EFL contexts, where learners and teachers do not normally experience the consequences of pragmatic infelicities as frequently as learners and teachers in the ESL context.

The results of the investigation of learners’ productive pragmatic development have shown that not all SA learners first use the same strategy or modifier in the same data collection session. This supports Matsumura’s (2003, 2007) finding that individual learner differences and SA learners’ experiences in the target environment influence learners’ development. To help establish what impact individual learner differences (e.g. motivation, proficiency, personality) and other factors, such as number of native speaker contact hours and positive/negative experiences in the SA context, have on SA learners’ pragmatic development, further studies are needed that include instruments that address these issues.

Instruments that could be added to pragmatic investigations are Freed et al.’s (2004) language contact profile survey, questionnaires on language learners’ motivation (e.g. Gardner, 2004; cf. also Dörnyei, 2001 for further questionnaires), and learner diaries. The latter in particular could provide very rich data about differences in L2 learners’ development, but also require a considerable time commitment on the learners’ part. As participant attrition is always a problem in longitudinal studies relying on volunteer participants, the individual research instruments would need to be carefully combined so as not to place too high a demand on the participants.

9.3.3 Pedagogical Implications

The current investigation has shown that a sojourn in the L2 context has benefited SA learners’ pragmatic competence in their L2. This is a positive result for the large number of students deciding to study at a foreign university. The findings of the present study also revealed that the SA learners’ awareness of pragmatic infelicities surpassed that of the AH participants and that
the SA participants tended to have a broader request strategy and modifier repertoire at the end of their stay than the AH participants. This in itself is not a complete surprise because previous research such as House (1996), and most notably the original study for which the elicitation instrument was developed, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), has reached similar conclusions regarding the effect of the ESL and EFL learning context. With regard to the AH learners in the present study, the results foreshadow that these students will graduate with a sound knowledge of grammar but will be less aware of pragmatic problems than their SA counterparts. They may also find it more difficult to formulate requests in a more nuanced manner than the SA learners.

This is disappointing because it seems clear that an insufficient recognition of pragmatic issues in foreign language curricula results in a marked linguistic disadvantage on the part of the AH participants whose L2 input is primarily restricted to what the curriculum offers. House (2003) listed a number of reasons that were commonly used in arguments as to why pragmatics does not need to be taught. The question, of course, is whether the AH learners who want to build their careers on their skills in a foreign language and expect to receive a high standard education in their country would agree with those arguments. Focusing on grammatical correctness in school teaching is undoubtedly essential, but studies like the present one demonstrate that language learners are also in need of instruction on L2 pragmatics.

When introducing pragmatics to experienced ESL/EFL teachers on my language teaching methodology course at Lancaster, it is often clear that the majority of language teachers attending the course have not come across pragmatics before and are much more used to thinking about L2 proficiency in terms of the four skills, listening, reading, speaking and writing. This shows that the absence of instruction on pragmatic issues in language classrooms may not be a deliberate decision by language teachers, but may simply be the result of curricula at teacher training institutions that do not include pragmatics at all. While this clearly is very worrying, it is encouraging to see that once made aware of pragmatics, teachers on the language methodology course often enquire about how pragmatic issues can be included in their individual teaching contexts.

In the recent years, a number of researchers have suggested various ways to teach pragmatics to L2 learners, such as awareness raising techniques (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Crandall & Basturkmen, 2004; Kasper, 1997a, 1997b; Meier, 1997), the use of video film material (e.g. Alcon Soler, 2005; Martinez Flor, 2007; Rose, 1997, 1999), multi-method approaches (Judd, 1999; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2003), the use of information provided by previous participants of exchanges programmes in the form of diaries (Du Fon, 2003), the combined use of corpus and DCT data (Schauer & Adolphs, 2006) and the participation in telecollaboration programmes in which foreign learner groups are paired up and exchange pragmatic information (e.g. Belz & Kinginger, 2002; Vyatkina & Belz, 2006).
While not all suggested approaches and methods may be feasible for language teachers and curriculum developers in their particular teaching contexts, it should be possible to include at least some form of pragmatic instruction in all teaching contexts. Ignoring pragmatic concerns in language teaching comes at a price, especially for language learners in EFL contexts, and can leave them at a disadvantage to other L2 learners who have received pragmatic instruction or have spent time in the L2 target environment. It should therefore be in the best interest of all teachers, curriculum designers and education authorities to incorporate pragmatic instruction into their curricula.
Appendices

Appendix A

Awareness Study Questionnaires

A1 English version

*Scenes from School * Questionnaire * 2003*

Thank you for helping us with our research. In the video you are going to see Anna and Peter talking to classmates and teachers. Their English will sometimes be correct but sometimes there will be a problem. Your job is to decide how well Anna and Peter use English in different conversations. You will see every conversation twice. The first time, just watch and listen. The second time, there will be an exclamation mark (!) before the part we want you to evaluate. When the conversation ends, decidewhether you think there is a mistake or not and mark your answer sheet.

Let’s look at an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John: <em>Good morning, Anna.</em></th>
<th>Was the last part appropriate / correct?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>! Anna: <em>Good night, John.</em></td>
<td>Yes ☐ No ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

Not bad ____________________________ Very bad __________

at all ____________________________

Anna’s answer obviously is not good. So in the example on your answer sheet put an ‘X’ in the box marked ‘No’. After this, you decide how big the mistake is. Put an ‘X’ somewhere on the line between ‘not bad at all’ and ‘very bad’. 
For a small mistake mark the second or third slot; for a serious mistake mark the last slot.

Remember: This is not a test; we are interested in what you think.
If you have a question, please ask now and we’ll stop the video.

1. Teacher: Peter, could you check the bus times for us on the way home tonight?

   ! No, I can’t tonight. Sorry.

   Was the last part appropriate / correct?
   
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

   Not bad   Very

   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

   at all  bad

2. Classmate: Peter, would you like to come over to my house tonight?

   ! I’m sorry, I just can’t. I’m very tired. I couldn’t sleep on last night.

   Was the last part appropriate / correct?
   
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

   Not bad   Very

   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

   at all  bad

3. Dinnerlady: May I help you?

   ! Would you be so kind as to give me a sandwich and a yoghurt please?

   Was the last part appropriate / correct?
   
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

   Not bad   Very

   _______ _______ _______ _______ _______

   at all  bad
4. Classmate: I’ve got to go to the library

! Oh, if you are going to the library, can you please return my books too?

Was the last part appropriate / correct?

<p>| | |</p>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

Not bad | Very bad
---|---
___:___:___:___:___:___:___

at all | bad
---|---

5. Teacher: Well, I think that’s all I can help you with at the moment.

! Oh, that’s great. Thank you so much for all the informations.

Was the last part appropriate / correct?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

Not bad | Very bad
---|---
___:___:___:___:___:___:___

at all | bad
---|---

6. [Anna knocks over some books in her teacher's office]

! Oh no! I'm really sorry! Let me help you pick them up.

Was the last part appropriate / correct?

<p>| | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

Not bad | Very bad
---|---
___:___:___:___:___:___:___

at all | bad
---|---

7. Teacher: Anna, it's your turn to give your talk.

! I can't do it today but I will do it next week.

Was the last part appropriate / correct?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

Not bad | Very bad
---|---
___:___:___:___:___:___:___

at all | bad
---|---

8. Dinnerlady: Would you like some cream in your coffee?

   ! Yes, I would like.

   Was the last part appropriate / correct?
   
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?
   
   Not bad ___:___:___:___:___:___: Very bad
   at all ___:___:___:___:___:___:

9. Classmate: Anna, do you have the book I gave you last week?

   ! Oh, I'm really sorry but I was in a rush this morning and I didn't bring it today.

   Was the last part appropriate / correct?
   
   [ ] Yes  [ ] No

   If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?
   
   Not bad ___:___:___:___:___:___: Very bad
   at all ___:___:___:___:___:___:

10. Student: Hi.

    ! Tell me how to get to the library.

    Was the last part appropriate / correct?
    
    [ ] Yes  [ ] No

    If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?
    
    Not bad ___:___:___:___:___:___: Very bad
    at all ___:___:___:___:___:___:

11. Classmate: Weren't we supposed to meet at 4?

    ! I couldn't come earlier. And anyway, we don't have to hurry anywhere.

    Was the last part appropriate / correct?
    
    [ ] Yes  [ ] No

    If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?
    
    Not bad ___:___:___:___:___:___: Very bad
    at all ___:___:___:___:___:___:
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Classmate: What shall we do?</td>
<td>Was the last part appropriate / correct?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Let’s go to the snack bar.</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not bad ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Teacher: Could you come back later?</td>
<td>Was the last part appropriate / correct?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Ok, I’ll be here tomorrow morning at 8.</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not bad ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ bad</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Teacher: Yes?</td>
<td>Was the last part appropriate / correct?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Could I possibly borrow this book for the weekend if you not need it?</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not bad ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ bad</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Teacher: Peter, we need to talk about the class party soon.</td>
<td>Was the last part appropriate / correct?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Yeah, if tomorrow is good for you, I could come in any time you say.</td>
<td>☐ Yes ☐ No</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not bad ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ at all ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ bad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Conversation</td>
<td>Was the last part appropriate / correct?</td>
<td>If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Teacher: Yes, come in.</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Hello. My name is Anna Kovacs. If you don’t mind I would like you to fill this in for me</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Classmate: Anna, would you like to come over this afternoon?</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! I’m sorry, I’d really like to come but I have a difficult history test tomorrow.</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>[Anna asks another student]</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Excuse me, could you tell me where is the library?</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Teacher: Anna, have you brought back the book I gave you yesterday?</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Select Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>! Oh, I’m very sorry, I completely forgot. Can I giving it to you tomorrow?</td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="off" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="on" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /> <img src="off" alt="Not bad/Very bad" /></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. Classmate: No, I have already prepared for tomorrow’s classes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Yes  □ No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Was the last part appropriate / correct?

If there was a problem, how bad do you think it was?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not bad</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong><strong><strong>:</strong></strong>_:</strong><em><strong>:</strong></em><strong>:</strong>_<strong>:</strong>__:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at all</td>
<td>bad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A2 German version

Scenes from School * Questionnaire * 2001

Thank you for helping us with our research. In the video you are going to see Anna and Peter talking to classmates and teachers. Their English will sometimes be correct but sometimes there will be a problem. Your job is to decide how well Anna and Peter use English in different conversations. You will see every conversation twice. The first time, just watch and listen. The second time, there will be an exclamation mark (!) before the part we want you to evaluate. When the conversation ends, decide whether you think there is a mistake or not and mark your answer sheet.

Let’s look at an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ Ja  □ Nein</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gar nicht</th>
<th>Sehr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong><strong><strong>:</strong></strong>_:</strong><em><strong>:</strong></em><strong>:</strong>_<strong>:</strong>__:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>schlimm</td>
<td>schlimm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anna’s answer is obviously not good. So in the example on your answer sheet put an ‘X’ in the box marked ‘Nein’: After this, you decide how big the mistake is. Put an ‘X’ somewhere on the line between ‘gar nicht schlimm’ and ‘sehr schlimm’. For a small mistake mark the second or third slot; for a serious mistake mark the last slot.

Remember: This is not a test, we are interested in what you think.

If you have a question, please ask now and we’ll stop the video.
1. Teacher: Peter, could you check the bus times for us on the way home tonight?

   ! No, I can't tonight. Sorry.

2. Classmate: Peter, would you like to come over to my house tonight?

   ! I'm sorry, I just can't. I'm very tired. I couldn't sleep on last night.

3. Dinnerlady: May I help you?

   ! Would you be so kind as to give me a sandwich and a yoghurt please?

4. Classmate: I've got to go to the library to return my books.

   ! Oh, if you are going to the library, can you please return my book too?
5. Teacher: Well, I think that's all I can help you with at the moment. ! Oh, that's great. Thank you so much for all the informations.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐

Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm schlimm

6. [Anna knocks over some books in her teacher's office] ! Oh no! I'm really sorry! Let me help you pick them up.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐

Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm schlimm

7. Teacher: Anna, it's your turn to give your talk. ! I can't do it today but I will do it next week.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐

Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm schlimm


War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐

Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm schlimm
9. Classmate: Anna, do you have the book I gave you last week?

! Oh, I'm really sorry but I was in a rush this morning and I didn't bring it today.

10. Student: Hi.

! Tell me how to get to the library.

11. Classmate: Were we supposed to meet at 4?

! I couldn't come earlier. And anyway, we don't have to hurry anywhere.

12. Classmate: What shall we do?

! Let's go to the snack bar.
13. Teacher: Could you come back later?

! Ok, I'll be here tomorrow morning at 8.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐
Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht ☐ Sehr ☐

schlimm ☐ schlimm ☐

14. Teacher: Yes?

! Could I possibly borrow this book for the weekend if you not need it?

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐
Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht ☐ Sehr ☐

schlimm ☐ schlimm ☐

15. Teacher: Peter, we need to talk about the class party soon.

! Yeah, if tomorrow is good for you, I could come any time you say.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐
Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht ☐ Sehr ☐

schlimm ☐ schlimm ☐

16. Teacher: Yes, come in.

! Hello. My name is Anna Kovacs. If you don't mind I would like you to fill this in for me.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

☐ ☐
Ja Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht ☐ Sehr ☐

schlimm ☐ schlimm ☐
17. Classmate: Anna, would you like to come over this afternoon?

! I'm sorry, I'd really like to come but I have a difficult history test tomorrow.

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

Ja  Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht  Sehr

schlimm  schlimm

18. [Anna asks another student]

! Excuse me, could you tell me where is the library?

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

Ja  Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm  schlimm

19. Teacher: Anna, have you brought back the book I gave you yesterday?

! Oh, I'm very sorry, I completely forgot. Can I giving it to you tomorrow?

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

Ja  Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm  schlimm

20. Classmate: No, I have already prepared for tomorrow's classes?

Then I say we go to the cinema. OK?

War der letzte Teil angemessen / korrekt?

Ja  Nein

Falls es ein Problem gab, wie schlimm war es deiner Ansicht nach?

Gar nicht Sehr

schlimm  schlimm
Appendix B

MET Scenarios

B1  Written instructions (English version)

Thank you very much for participating in my research. In the following you will see 16 scenarios and a sample scenario. Each scenario is introduced by a slide that contains a short description of the following scenario. After 10 seconds you will see another slide containing a photo depicting the scenario. At the same time you will hear a detailed description of the scenario. At the end of each description, the speaker says ‘You say’. Please say what you would say in this situation. In two scenarios, the name of the person you are talking to is mentioned. If you want to address the other persons by their names, feel free to think of a name for them.

B2  Written instructions (German version)

A) Asking a friend for the time

You are having coffee with a friend before your seminar. You want to check whether you have to leave soon, when you realize that you don’t have your watch with you. You ask your friend for the time.

You say:
(1) Asking a professor to open a window

You are attending a seminar. It is a very sunny day and the classroom is hot. The professor is standing near the window. You ask him to open it.

You say:
Scenario 2

Slide 1

(2) Asking a professor for directions to the Trent Building

Slide 2

You are in the corridor of your department. Your next seminar is taking place in the Trent Building, but you don’t know where the Trent Building is. One of your professors, Professor Jones, is walking down the corridor towards you. You ask him for directions to the Trent Building. You say:
You have to ask a student to complete a questionnaire for one of your projects. You decide to ask Lucy, a friend of yours. You know that she is very busy with her own projects at the moment, but you feel that she is the best person for your assignment. At the end of the seminar, you turn to her and ask her to complete the questionnaire for you.

You say:
You are having difficulties finding articles and books for one of your essays. You hardly found anything in the library and fear that you will not be able to write the essay. Your professor, who gave you the essay topic and who is a specialist in this area, is conducting a seminar. After the seminar is over, you go up to her and ask her to bring in some articles for you. You also tell her that it is urgent.

You say:
You have to hand in an essay to the secretary. The secretary’s office is closing soon and you are already running late. When you get to her office, two professors are standing in front of it. You ask them to let you through.
You say:

(5) Asking two professors to step aside
Scenario 6

Slide 1

(6) Asking a friend to meet you on another day

Slide 2

You arranged to meet a friend of yours at 4 p.m. to help you with your essay. However, on the morning of your meeting, you wake up with a terrible toothache and the dentist can only see you at 4 p.m. Your friend has cancelled another meeting to see you this afternoon and is very busy, because he has to hand in his essays soon. You wait for him after his seminar and ask him to meet you tomorrow instead.

You say:
You and some of your friends are having a snack in the cafeteria. One of your friends is telling you something about new university regulations for your course. But you cannot hear her very well, as it is quite noisy. You ask her to speak louder.

You say:
Scenario 8

Slide 1

(8) Asking a professor for a meeting during the holidays

Slide 2

You are in your professor’s office. It is the last day before the university holidays. You are staying in Nottingham during the holidays to finish your essays. You are having difficulties with your topic and fear that you will need some more help. You ask your professor for a meeting during the holidays.

You say:
You are attending a seminar. The sun is shining into the classroom and it is very hot. A friend of yours is sitting next to the window. You turn to your friend and ask him to open it.

You say:
You are having difficulties finding articles and books for one of your essays. You hardly found anything in the library and fear that you will not be able to write the essay. A friend of yours is in the middle of writing an essay on a similar topic and has bought several books on this topic. The library does not have these books. You and your friend are standing in the corridor of your department. You turn to her and ask her to lend you the books and bring them in for you the next day.

You say:
(11) Asking a professor to complete a questionnaire

You are running a project for which you would like your professor to complete a lengthy questionnaire. She is a very busy person, but the questionnaire is essential for your project. At the end of class, you go up to the professor’s desk and ask her to complete the questionnaire for you. You say:
You are standing in front of the library. Your next seminar is taking place in the Portland Building, but you don’t know where the Portland Building is. A friend of yours is walking towards you. You ask him for directions to the Portland Building.

You say:
You arranged a meeting with a visiting professor, who is always very busy. On the morning of the meeting you wake up with a fever and a terrible cold. You attend his seminar, but feel too ill to meet him afterwards. You go to him during a short break and ask him for another appointment. You say:
Scenario 14

Slide 1

(14) Asking friends to step aside

Slide 2

You have an appointment with a professor. When you arrive at her door, two of your friends are looking at her timetable and are blocking the door. You ask them to move aside.

You say:
It is the last day before the university holidays. You are staying in Nottingham during the holidays to prepare for your exams, but you are having difficulties with one of the concepts that is essential for the exams. Your friend understands the concept, but is flying home in two days and is quite busy. You turn to him after the seminar is over and ask him to meet you and explain the concept to you.

You say:

**Slide 2**

*(15) Asking a friend to meet you and explain a concept*
You are attending a seminar. The professor is explaining a new concept, but you cannot hear her very well. You ask her to speak louder.

You say:
References


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Urbana-Champaign: Division of English as an International Language, Intensive English Institute University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


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