BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

“Pragmatic Instruction on complaints for EFL pre-service teachers through movie clips and pragmatic awareness-raising activities”

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Languages for the degree of

Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés (MEI)

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Puebla, Pue. January 2024

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January 2024

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ACKNOWLEDMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Michael T. Witten for his willingness to help me during the development of this research paper by granting me permission to work with his two Pragmatics class groups and showing the best interest to collaborate in the intervention. I am also grateful to the Consejo Nacional de Humanidades, Ciencia y Técnologia (CONAHCYT) for providing scholarships to students like me that could not afford to pursue a master's degree on their own.

THANK YOU.

DEDICATION

This one is for me.

ABSTRACT

Learning English as a foreign language is already a challenge for language students due to the lack of L2 exposure outside the language classroom, especially the scarce pragmatic input there may be. Such disadvantage affects the development of pragmatic competence which "is generally neglected in the classroom" (Tello Rueda, 2006). To balance this, EFL teachers, who are commonly non-native English speakers, rely on pragmatic information provided by language learning textbooks. However, textbooks may also include "unspecific, insufficient, or insufficiently interpreted" pragmatic information (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, p. 25). As a result, pragmatic instruction on particular speech acts has been used to enhance EFL learners in learning and developing pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, the two aspects of pragmatic competence, as these are apparently challenging to EFL learners (O'Keeffe et al., 2011).

The present study explores the teachability of pragmatics on the speech act of complaining using clips from the movies Hidden Figures, Marriage Story, Lady Bird, and The Devil wears Prada, as well as five pragmatic awareness-raising activities proposed by Hilliard (2017). 20 pre-service EFL teachers equally divided into a control group and an experimental group were part of this research. The experimental group received pragmatic instruction on American English complaints strategies spanned in six 90-minute sessions over one month. Both groups answered a web-based discourse completion test (DCT) containing eight differentiated situations before and after the pragmatic instruction. Results were compared to determine the influence of explicit pragmatic instruction.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

No matter the language, humans employ **speech acts**, "acts done in the process of speaking" (Sadock, 2006, p. 53), to communicate and do something through language (e.g., request, invite, complaint) verbally (using words) or nonverbally (using gestures, body movements, facial expressions, etc.) (Buck and VanLear, 2002). Across cultures, speech acts are realized differently as they are culture- and context-bound. Pragmatically competent students possess the knowledge of what strategies can be used to realize certain intentions and the effective language constructions for performing those intentions, also called **pragmalinguistic knowledge**, as well as the knowledge of what conditions influence the way language is used in a given setting known as **sociopragmatic knowledge** (Takimoto, 2014). For instance, Mexicans typically insist multiple times to make the other person accept an offer to be served more food, whereas Americans will easily take a "no" for an answer. In Japanese, greetings are diverse according to the relations of power and distance the interlocutors have with each other, therefore, you are not expected to say *"Konnichiwa"* (hello in Japanese) to a friend because it is considered too formal, or simply greeting a stranger in the street is a no-no in that culture. Being aware of such cultural differences allows second language (L2) learners to have successful conversational interactions in the L2; otherwise, L2 learners will resort to feeble strategies to express themselves.

It is called **pragmatic transfer** when L2 learners try to perform any speech act in the L2 but employ strategies typical of their L1 to attain a particular language function (Beebe et al., 1990). Although using L1 strategies to realize L2 speech acts may lead to positive pragmatic transfer, if the L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features are similar to those

of the L1, there is still a risk of negative pragmatic transfer in which the L1 and L2 conventions are different. Failing to effectively perform certain speech acts (e.g., thanking) may not represent an important issue for the conversation, however, there are **face-threatening acts** (FTAs) that can cause conflicts, such as **complaints**.

Complaints are produced as a reaction to an unfavorable event affecting the complainer (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993; Traverso, 2009), which may conflict with the social relationships between the interactants (Moon, 2001). To avoid this, L2 learners need to learn the pragmatic knowledge to perform complaints adequately regarding what the target culture defines as **politeness**. However, this becomes a challenge for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners because they are not immersed in an English-speaking environment, hence, the pragmatic input they are exposed to is insufficient (Röver, 2005). To help L2 learners develop their pragmatic competence as proficiently as their other language competencies, EFL teachers need to include pragmatic awareness-raising activities in their classes. Cohen (2016) states that "the role of teachers cannot be underestimated since pragmatics can be challenging for learners to acquire on their own" (p. 562).

The present study explores the teachability of pragmatics to develop Mexican undergraduate EFL learners' pragmatic competence in the realization of the speech act of complaints. Instruction on complaint strategies in English can be carried out through various awareness-raising activities (see Hilliard, 2017) such as discussing speech acts (Limberg, 2015), comparing L1 and L2 complaints (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005), and watching film clips (Zsuzsanna, 2016) to develop EFL learners' **pragmatic competence**. This paper is an experimental design research following a mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative). An experimental design focuses on observing the possible effect(s) or outcome(s) on a dependent variable (e.g., developing L2 pragmatic awareness) resulting from the intentional

manipulation of one or more independent variables (e.g., pragmatics instruction) (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014)

1.2 Significance of the study

Notwithstanding it is important to teach how to form words, what they sound like, and how to construct sentences, none of that guarantees that students will communicate effectively in the L2. Hence, taking pragmatics as a fundamental element in teaching an L2 becomes critical. When EFL learners produce grammatically correct sentences in English, but they are not appropriate to the contexts of the interactions, it is a failure of communication which may lead to misunderstandings. Thus, students need to develop their pragmatic competence in the L2, which is defined as "the ability to use language appropriately in a social context" (Taguchi, 2009, p. 1; see also Barron, 2003, p. 10; Ifantidou, 2014, p. 125; Hedge, 2000, p. 48; Harley et al, 1990, p. 14). Consequently, it is a must to incorporate teaching with a focus on developing students' abilities to communicate effectively in the L2 (Hilliard, 2017).

Teaching EFL learners the cultural and pragmatic differences between their L1 and L2 may enhance their pragmatic awareness and competence development. The significance of this study is to shed some light on how effective pragmatic awareness instruction can be for developing pragmatic competence in English for Mexican EFL pre-service teachers.

1.3 Context

This study was carried out in a public university located in Puebla, Puebla, Mexico. More specifically, at the Faculty of Languages of the *Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla* (BUAP). Participants were enrolled in a Pragmatics and Semantics class which is part

of the curriculum of the English Language Teaching (ELT) program. This class teaches theories in the field of pragmatics and semantics such as the speech act theory. More detailed information about the research context can be found in Chapter 3. This study implemented activities and materials to teach the pragmatic features involved in the production of American English complaints in specific L2 social settings.

The complaint strategies of two groups of pre-service teachers were compared: a control group and an experimental/treatment group. Both groups have similar characteristics to make the data collection procedures and analysis reliable.

1.4 Rationale

The speech act of complaints has been broadly studied in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. Various studies compare the complaints strategies used by native and non-native speakers of English with those of other languages such as Arabic (Rashidi, 2017), Turkish (Deveci, 2010), Indonesian (Kaharuddin, 2020; Wijayanto et al., 2017), Japanese (Baba, 2010; Spees, 1994), Russian (Kozlova, 2004), and Tai (Thongtong & Srioutai, 2019). Also, there are several studies concerning teaching pragmatics in the ESL/EFL classroom which focus on consciousness-raising activities (Siegel et al., 2019; Yang and Zhu, 2016), web-based pragmatics instruction (Furniss, 2016; Yang, 2017), teacher professional development (Vellenga, 2011), intercultural communicative competence (Limberg, 2015), EFL teachers' experiences (Cohen, 2016), pragmatic formulas instruction (Zavialova, 2017), cultural differences analysis (Solodka and Perea, 2018), and English as an International Language (EIL) (Sánchez-Hernández and Martínez-Flor, 2022).

An interesting paper by Padilla-Cruz (2015) presents some activities and materials that can be used to teach important aspects such as behavior, pragmalinguistic and

sociopragmatic features, and strategies entailed in the production of complaints in English. He suggests that oral activities such as role-plays, presenting situations with (un)censurable facts, videos showing offenses/misbehavior; and written activities like contextualized gapped sentences, discourse completion tests, descriptions of thoughts and contextual assumptions, and analysis of documents, can help to check students' awareness of pragmalinguistic resources and sociopragmatics components influencing the realization of complaints. Padilla-Cruz mentions that it is important to consider the appropriate production of complaints to generate rapport between the interlocutors, especially by using indirect complaints.

Zsuzsanna (2016) conducted a study on the utility of films to facilitate the pragmatic competence development of German as a foreign language (GFL) of undergraduate learners. In this research, the participants' performance of pragmatic functions was compared through the effectiveness of textbook activities to tasks using a show called *Die Rosenheim-Cops: Das mysteriöse Geräusch* to raise pragmatic awareness and develop the GFL learners' pragmatic competence. Whereas textbooks lack realistic, accurate, and contextualized language (Martínez-Flor, 2008), films offer "a contextualised view of language and real-life speech, as well as for illustrating different social realities and non-verbal aspects of communication" (Gesuato et al., 2015, 87). Kambara (2011) mentions that students can use film clips to analyze selected scenes' verbal and non-verbal language and then imitate them. She also argues that although the language in films is scripted it still highly approximates to natives' usage of language.

This research paper provides information on the effectiveness of film clips, discussions, and comparisons of L1 and L2 cultural differences to develop Mexican undergraduate EFL learners' pragmatic competence in the realization of American English complaints. The participants considered for this study are doing their university studies in

English language teaching (ELT) at the Faculty of Languages BUAP in Puebla, Mexico by the time this research is being conducted. Additionally, the present study may also highlight the importance of incorporating teaching pragmatics in the curriculum of this bachelor's degree program.

1.5 Aims of the research

This study intends to explore various aspects of the production of complaints in English by pre-service teachers. First, it is necessary to identify what complaint strategies Mexican undergraduate ELT students use based on their language proficiency level. Second, students are taught the complaint strategies repertoire in American English through pragmatic awareness-raising activities such as film clips, discussions, and comparisons. Finally, the aim of this study is to identify if the participants demonstrate an improvement in the realization of complaints in the L2 after the pragmatic instruction. As a result, this analysis explores the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction to develop the students' pragmatic competence.

1.6 Research Questions

To explore the effectiveness of explicit instruction on the speech act of complaining through varied pragmatic awareness-raising activities in the development of Mexican pre-service EFL teachers at the Faculty of Languages BUAP, the following research questions will be addressed:

1) What complaint strategies does the experimental group (EG) use to perform the speech act of complaint in English? What about the control group (CG)?

2) How different are the EG's responses to the CG's?

3) To what extent does the pragmatic awareness instruction influence the EG's realization of American English complaints compared to the CG?

1.7 Chapter conclusion

The current chapter provided an introduction and overview of the underlying concepts of teaching pragmatics in the ESL/EFL classroom. It presents previous research on the speech act of complaints and teaching pragmatics. Also, it provides the relevance of researching pragmatic awareness instruction and its effects on L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Finally, the research questions for the study were addressed. Now, this paper will continue as follows. Chapter 2 presents definitions and critical discussions of the key concepts for this study. Chapter 3 describes the participants, the methodological procedures and the instruments used to teach pragmatics, as well as to collect and analyze the data. Chapter 4 shows the results of the participants' realization of complaints before and after the pragmatic awareness instruction. Finally, chapter 5 presents the conclusions, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research. The following chapter presents the theoretical framework that supports the present research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter critically discusses the theoretical concepts underpinning this study. First, general concepts such as language, first language acquisition, second and foreign language learning, and language teaching in second/foreign language settings need to be addressed as there are important aspects to be considered. Second, within the specificity of the present research, it is crucial to learn and understand the concepts of pragmatics, the teachability of pragmatics, pragmatic competence, interlanguage, interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, pragmatic awareness, face, politeness, felicity conditions, IFIDs, speech acts and their classification, and complaints. Third, a review of the use of film clips to raise pragmatic awareness is also provided.

2.1 Language

The most distinctive feature of human nature is language as it allows us to communicate with each other in ways that no other living creature can. Berwick and Chomsky (2017) call this the faculty of language or species-specific ability. Language is a rather complex phenomenon to define because it is not tangible and only how it is performed can be observed (Mel'čuk and Beck, 2016). From such observations, it has been noted that language is composed of minimal units or small parts (e.g., phonemes, morphemes) which can be combined to create larger units (e.g., words, sentences) (Hazen, 2015). In general terms, language is a communication system of orderly components whose meanings are arbitrarily defined by a community (Edwards, 2009). This indicates that language is a social tool to create meaning and share with others what resides in people's minds. First and foremost, "the fundamental function of every language system is to link meaning and

expression— to provide verbal expression for thought and feeling and for that expression to be comprehensible to others" (Finegan, 2015, p. 5). Hence, language is the mean of communication. To communicate speakers do more than build sentences, they (un)consciously make linguistic choices based on situational components (e.g., where they are, to whom they are speaking, etc.). Finegan (2015) points out that besides meaning and expression, context is the 'third face' of language which determines the production and interpretation of utterances.

Now that there is a better idea of what language is, the question of how humans come to know about a language and use it to communicate and express innumerable thoughts is necessary to ask and answer. To answer this question, factors such as age and context influencing the way language becomes part of a person's life need to be considered as they regulate, to some extent, how the processes of language acquisition and learning manifest.

2.2 First language acquisition

The acquisition of language is an innate capacity in humans (Yule, 2020; Akmajian et al., 2010), as there are biological and cognitive predispositions to produce and comprehend the sounds of human languages (Fromkin et al., 2018). Humans are born with a "universal grammar" (Chomsky, 1969) that allows us to 'pick up' the structures of the language we receive input from, which triggers the acquisition process (Ellis, 1997). This explains why babies do not start talking a language immediately but require some time and a lot of input to communicate at a basic level and even more to master it. Meisel (2011) explains that "children acquiring a language develop it naturally, they need not be taught the necessary knowledge and the skills required to use it" (p. 2). Thus, the process of acquisition is an unconscious one (Gass & Selinker, 2008), one that "requires meaningful interaction in the

target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances but with the messages they are conveying and understanding" (Krashen, 1981, p. 1). Children acquire language and know how to use it; however, they are not aware of the processes of constructing language units (e.g., a sentence), so they simply do it.

Acquiring language plays an important role in a child's development. It is not a matter of just communicating thoughts and feelings, but also making social relationships with others (Fletcher & Garman, 1986). As it has been mentioned, language is a social tool, hence, acquiring a language permits children to interact with others and fulfill their social needs. Overall, language acquisition is a process that apparently only happens during childhood, henceforth, after this stage knowing about other languages entails a different process: learning.

2.3 Second and Foreign language learning

Second language learning takes place after the acquisition of a first language (or more in the case of bilingual or multilingual environments), which happens at the earliest stages of childhood (Brown & Miller, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2013). Rebuschat and Williams (2012) state that "infants' environment is considerably richer in linguistic and non-linguistic cues" and "[children] are able to make extensive use of these cues when acquiring language" (p. 1). However, for adults the story is different. Inevitably, learning a second language is a conscious process since it requires formal instruction in schools where linguistic structure presentation and error correction are traditional teaching methods (Krashen & Seliger, 1975). As a result, having already a 'programmed' language in our brains poses a challenge and leads L2 learners to make mistakes that they would not make if they were natives of the L2

(Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Thus, L2 learners may not be as effective language users of L2 as native speakers are.

Another important characteristic of second language learning involves the setting and usage frequency of the language being learned. Second language learning takes place in native contexts where L2 learners have plenty of opportunities to receive L2 input and use the L2 they are learning. The setting where the language learning process unfolds is crucial for the development of the language skills and competences a learner can build up. A foreign language is "a language that is spoken as a native language and that is not used in the country where it is being studied as the mean of instruction or as an official language" (Gonzalez, 2015, p. 6). In other words, a foreign language is only used for specific situations or contexts (e.g., in school) but is not essential outside those settings because the community where it is learned does not use it for most of its daily activities. According to Muñoz (2006), foreign language learning limits learners' exposure to the language they are learning, as well as the possibility to learn adequately (see also VanPatten & Lee, 1990). To compensate for the lack of exposure to the target language (TL), learners resort to the classroom, an artificial or formal environment (Krashen, 1981), as a space to practice the TL as if it were a native context (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Consequently, language teachers in non-native contexts, who are commonly non-native speakers of the language they teach, need to be sufficiently qualified to help students in their language-learning process (Derenowski, 2012). Notwithstanding the contexts of second and foreign language learning are different, these follow essentially the same learning processes (Ellis, 1997).

2.4 Language teaching in second/foreign language settings

Across the decades, different language teaching methods have been created to tackle particular aspects of language based on historically changing learners' needs and "changes in theories of the nature of language and of language learning" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 1). In the language teaching field, experts conceptualize, construct, and establish methods for the way language teaching must be carried out (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Of course, there have been always different opinions and assumptions resulting in a wide variety of language teaching methods. Each one of them with a definite emphasis, strengths, and weaknesses. Such broad method choices have raised the apparently-impossible-to-answer question of what method is the best as one method can be adequate for certain contexts but inadequate in others (Doff, 2018; Prahbu, 1990).

The most well-known and traditional methods such as the grammar-translation method, the direct method, and the audiolingual method focus on specific language skills (e.g., speaking) or components of language (e.g., vocabulary). Although these emphases help students to become proficient in particular aspects of the language, this circumstance may lead to unbalanced language development. For example, the audiolingual method emphasizes speaking skills (pronunciation, accent, intonation, and rhythm) and teaches grammar inductively to make students effective communicators (Jain & Patel, 2008). However, other skills such as writing, and reading are omitted. As a result, students will have great pronunciation and language fluency but will fail to write in the L2, or their reading comprehension may be insufficient. Similarly, other methods present deficiencies in language development in a holistic way and take grammar as a central component in learning any language – following a structural approach.

Approaches to teaching languages are considered equally important. An approach is a specific theory of what language is and how it is learned as the foundation for teaching practices and procedures (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). For Jain and Patel (2008), there are two main approaches: the structural approach and the communicative approach. On the one hand, the structural approach, as described above, focuses on the patterns and structures of the language taught prioritizing speaking skills followed by reading and writing. Notwithstanding this approach involving more than one language skill, some important features of language are still commonly overlooked. On the other hand, the communicative approach perceives language "as a function rather than as a form" (Doff, 2018, p. 9). It seeks to develop the use of appropriate, coherent, cohesive, correct, and effective language, termed by Canale and Swain (1980) as communicative competence, to enable students to use language to communicate. The communicative approach approximates what language is and how it works as it entails contextual features that are equally relevant in the production and comprehension of language. Overall, teaching students to construct grammatically correct sentences does not guarantee that these will be appropriate to a given context as there are cultural and contextual conventions and norms/rules that determine the effectiveness of an utterance.

2.5 Teachability of pragmatics

To help English as a Foreign language (EFL) learners communicate effectively in the L2, pragmatics must be acknowledged and included in language instruction as the shaping component of language use. Pragmatics is an area of study of language that is relatively new compared to other areas such as morphology or syntax. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics studies the meaning of utterance subject to the speaker's intention, the context involved, and

the distance between the interlocutors. Hence, the meaning of an utterance is context-bound; meaning that cannot be found in dictionaries (Birner, 2013) as it varies depending on variations of the contextual features (who utters it, to whom, when, where).

From a pragmatic perspective, society determines the premises under which language use is shaped (Mey, 2001). That is to say, language users communicate with others based on social, contextual, and cultural rules and conventions established by society. Nonetheless, Cohen (2010) points out that such norms and conventions do not represent fixed language use but rather preferable utterances. Thus, there is no such thing as 'correctness' in language, instead, the discussion of language use in pragmatics is about 'appropriateness'. Therefore, language users need to know what can(not) be said verbally and non-verbally considering the degrees of politeness, directness, and formality agreed upon by the L2 community (Cohen, 2010). For all these reasons, teaching students to use contextually appropriate language becomes crucial to making competent language users, especially EFL learners who "may have little access to target-language input and even less opportunity for productive L2 use outside the classroom" (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 4). Of course, pragmatics instruction in the ESL/EFL classroom does not have to be about what pragmatics is and what it studies, but rather, it must focus on the knowledge and skills learners need to develop so they can communicate effectively in L2 contexts. One extensively studied aspect of pragmatics is the production of speech acts. Teaching ESL/EFL learners to produce native-like speech acts in the L2 can be a great way to develop their pragmatic competence.

2.6 Pragmatic competence in EFL learners

Pragmatic competence has its foundation in communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) which resulted from Hymes' (1972) discussion of what at the time the theories

of language development were centered on linguistic competence (grammatical competence). Over time, pragmatic competence has become a popular area of study in foreign language learning/teaching as it studies L2 learners' issues in second language learning. Taguchi (2012) defines pragmatic competence as "the ability to perform language functions" and "the knowledge of socially appropriate language use" (p. 1). Thus, pragmatic competence is "the user's ability to communicate appropriately in different sociocultural contexts" (Ifantidou, 2014, p. 38).

Within pragmatic competence, L2 learners need to have pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge to make contextually appropriate linguistic choices. Pragmalinguistic knowledge provides an understanding of what conventional linguistic forms are available in any language to perform language functions (e.g., complaints) (Félix-Brasdefer, 2019), whereas sociopragmatic knowledge let us know what linguistic forms are culturally and contextually appropriate in a particular setting (Leech, 1983). Without these two types of knowledge, L2 learners may fail to communicate successfully in the L2 due to the use of unconventional linguistic forms to perform L2 communicative acts (pragmalinguistic failure) and/or being unable to process the contextual information to make appropriate linguistic choices (sociopragmatic failure).

The development of pragmatic competence in the L2, or pragmatic ability (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010, Perkins, 2007; Kasper & Rose, 2001), constitutes an essential ability for communication (Takamiya & Ishihara, 2013) and implies that only learning the vocabulary (lexis), structures (grammar), sounds (phonetics and phonology), words/phrases (syntax), and literal meaning of words (semantics) is simply insufficient (Félix-Brasdefer, 2019) to communicate effectively in the L2. Therefore, possessing linguistic competence

(organizational; grammar, vocabulary, etc.) is halfway to becoming competent in the L2 as pragmatic competence is equally important in learning English.

As the selection of our linguistics choices "relies very heavily on conversational, culturally appropriate, and socially acceptable ways of interacting" (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2001, p. 20), language learner must develop their L2 pragmatic competence adequately (Kasper, 1997). In the case of English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, developing pragmatic competence is a crucial component of their language learning process if they intend to have a native-like language use of the L2, especially since they do not have the linguistic opportunities to acquire the pragmatic knowledge naturally in an English-speaking context.

2.7 Interlanguage

For English as a Foreign language (EFL) learners, reaching nativelikeness may be challenging due to the development of an interlanguage. Interlanguage (IL) is conceived as a separate language developed by non-native speakers, especially adults. Selinker (1972) developed the IL hypothesis based on observing the differences in language acquisition between children and adults. Interlanguage approximates the L2 (See Nemser, 1971) but lacks certain characteristics that hold it back from being the L2. Tarone (2006) exerts that the interlanguage is influenced by the L2 and the L1, but the structures, patterns, and strategies used by the non-native speaker do not match either of the two linguistic systems. That is to say, IL is "an intermediate stage between a learner's L1 and L2, in which s/he uses rules from both linguistic systems in order to produce sentences in L2" (Muñoz Luna, 2010, p. 61). In this regard, Bialystok and Sharwood (1985) argue that non-native speakers' speech is

irregular in comparison to natives, as the former "[construct] their own grammatical systems" (Fauzi, 2021, p. 286).

Non-native speakers' interlanguage can be evidenced in all aspects of L2 production and comprehension including pragmatic competence, known as interlanguage pragmatics.

2.8 Interlanguage pragmatics

Non-native speakers' realization of language functions (e.g., complaining) of the L2 is influenced by their interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Interlanguage pragmatics "is concerned with the ways in which nonnatives do things with words in a second language" (Blum-Kulka & Sheffer, 1993, p. 196), especially dealing with nonnatives' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). In addition, Barron (2003) mentions that ILP investigates L2 learners' language in use and pragmatic knowledge acquisition. Non-native speakers' pragmatic competence is researched within this subfield of interlanguage. ILP research intends to find what differs nonnatives' realization of L2 actions from the natives and what influences their language production. Schauer (2009) points out that ILP seeks to figure out how nonnatives understand and construct utterances to convey meaning in the L2.

Considering this in the teaching field, EFL learners' pragmatic competence needs to be addressed by incorporating materials and activities that give learners the necessary pragmatic knowledge of the L2 to be pragmatically competent users and avoid pragmatic missteps.

2.9 Pragmatic transfer

L2 learners commonly encounter difficulties to express or communicate effectively due to the lack of knowledge of the L2 and resort to transferring L1 resources to do so. According to Félix-Brasdefer (2019), L2 learners may transfer any kind of L1 knowledge (e.g., vocabulary, sounds) to the L2 to convey meaning, as they may use translated forms of L1 norms, strategies, and phrases to the L2 thinking that these attain the same purposes in both languages (Schauer, 2009). This phenomenon is called pragmatic transfer. Pragmatic transfer is "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of the L2 pragmatic information" (Kasper, 1992, p. 207). In other words, pragmatic transfer results from a limited understanding of how the L2 works at its different levels (grammar, social norms, etc.) and seeks ways to convey L2 meaning by using what serves the same function in the L1. This is potentially risky when the L1 pragmatic features (norms, forms, strategies) are distinct from the L2, and transferring them leads to negative pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1992). However, there may be some pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features that L1 and L2 have in common and can lead to positive pragmatic transfer (Li, 2018). Despite this, it is important to provide L2 learners with the necessary pragmatic knowledge of the L2 so they avoid pragmatic failure due to transferring L1 pragmatic features to communicate in the L2 as a such phenomenon can cause misunderstandings or unsuccessful communication.

2.10 Raising pragmatic awareness

Due to the scarce natural L2 pragmatic input EFL learners are exposed to in classrooms, language instruction must pursue to raise learners' pragmatic awareness as part of their pragmatic competence development in the L2. Ifantidou (2014) defines pragmatic

awareness, also known as meta-pragmatic awareness (see Safont-Jordà, 2003; Cummings, 2013; McConachy & Liddicoat, 2022), as "the ability to identify ("notice") and comment on ("reflect", "acknowledge") how public communication is handled (is it appropriate or not? and why so)" (p. 49). Pragmatically aware L2 learners are capable of identifying what, how, to whom, and why linguistics forms work in specific social contexts, so they are conscious of what to say.

For language instruction in non-native contexts, the development of pragmatic awareness in L2 learners becomes a challenge. LoCastro (2012) states that teachers who are non-native speakers of the language they teach, have an insufficient proficiency level, and/or exposure to the L2 pragmatic knowledge may feel helpless in enhancing their students' pragmatic awareness. Therefore, FL teachers need to be pragmatically competent in the L2 to help their students to be competent too. Of course, it is not a requirement to be a native speaker of the language to teach it, however, being linguistically and pragmatically competent is a must alongside other language and teaching competences and skills. One way of raising L2 learners' pragmatic awareness is through the implementation of tasks in which L1 and L2 linguistic and pragmatic features are compared. Felix-Brasdefer (2019) suggests that using examples of polite and impolite utterances can help students to be conscious of the pragmatic features of the L1 and L2. Overall, the aim of using teaching methods, approaches, techniques, or materials with the integration of pragmatics is to raise students' awareness of other linguistic systems' sociocultural features to develop their pragmatic competence.

2.11 (In)politeness and rudeness

One of the pragmatic features L2 learners need to be aware of when communicating or interacting in the L2 is the concept of politeness. For this paper, politeness is taken in its

general sense as comprising both linguistic politeness and behavior politeness. Politeness is "to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with" (Leech, 2014, p. 3). Lakoff and Sachiko (2005) mention that politeness implies being considerate to others by knowing the societal norms and conventional standards and following them. This is particularly relevant as politeness is a social phenomenon present in all cultures (Leech, 2014), however, what is perceived as polite language or behavior varies from culture to culture. Indeed, Félix-Brasdefer (2008) points out that politeness "is conditioned by the sociocultural norms dictated by the members of a society who negotiate their intentions by means of verbal and non-verbal actions" (p. 7). For instance, such norms determine what linguistic forms are expected to be used when a child talks to their mother or a person to a stranger, as there may be important differences in the relations of power and distance. In other words, many cultures assign higher/lower social status to a person in regard to their age, gender, or social roles. These factors rule language and behavior usage for polite and harmonious interaction. Being polite in the L2 may allow students to protect their self-image and to communicate successfully, otherwise, they can be perceived as impolite.

A person who does not follow the sociocultural norms and conventions of a given culture is said to be impolite. Impoliteness refers to "behavior that is face-aggravating in a particular context" (Locher and Bousfield, 2008, p. 3). Similarly, Terkourafi (2008) argues that impoliteness entails using non-conventionalized expressions in accordance with the context of the conversation, which may unintentionally attack the listener's face. In this sense, intention plays an important distinctive role in using specific expressions/phrases when communicating as this aspect distinguishes between impoliteness and rudeness. Kienpointner (2008) defines rudeness as "non-cooperative or competitive communicative behavior which

destabilises the personal relationships of the interacting individuals… creates or maintains an emotional atmosphere of mutual irreverence and antipathy, which primarily serves egocentric interests…" (p. 259). Committing impolite or rude behavior can lead L2 learners to pragmatic missteps or misunderstandings putting at risk the conversation, but most importantly, their face. Thus, implementing politeness in language instruction becomes imperative as an element of teaching pragmatics in the EFL classroom since politeness is not innate in language acquisition/learning but a skill that needs to be learned (Watts, 2003).

2.12 Face

In any social interaction, both speaker(s) and listener(s) present a face or 'mask' (Locher, 2004) particular to a given situation that shows "notions such as reputation, prestige, and self-esteem" (Culpeper, 2011, p. 24). Goffman (1967) proposes and defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (p. 5). Face refers to a person's self-perception which changes according to the situation and is protected or affected by the linguistic and behavioral choices made as the conversation unfolds. Thus, it is through their linguistic choices and behavior that interactants demonstrate that they pay attention to their own face either to protect it (saving face) or damage it (losing face). For instance, in the U.S., a student who calls his professor by her first name and not by an appropriate address form such as Miss or Mrs. may damage his face due to (un)intentional impolite language/behavior.

Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguish between positive face and negative face which respond to two wants. Positive face refers to the want "to be liked, involved, and included in the category of being the "right" kind of person", whereas negative face is the

want “to remain undisturbed, not imposed upon, in one’s actions” (LoCastro, 2012, p. 137). Hence, the concept of face is relevant to develop L2 learners’ pragmatic competence as this also may help them to understand better how linguistic actions work in the L2.

2.13 Face-threatening Acts (FTAs)

Although it may seem simple to protect one’s self-image/face by following the socio-cultural premises in the L2, it is not that simple in reality. There are some language functions (e.g., complaining) that may represent a threat to the interactants’ faces (positive or negative faces) known as face-threatening acts (FTAs), due to their nature (Brown & Levinson, 1987). However, realizing these acts do not necessarily mean the interactants’ faces will be damaged as there are strategies that can help to mitigate the possible negative effects of performing an FTA (Yule, 1996). As a person’s face is a fragile feature, it is important to be knowledgeable of how we, speakers, can protect our face and others’ to maintain harmonious social interactions.

2.14 Speech acts

In a conversation, the meaning of a proposition goes beyond its literal meaning (semantics), and it rather implies the performance of speech acts – “acts done in the process of speaking” (Sadock, 2006, p. 53). A speech act is “the minimal unit of linguistic communication” (Searle, 1969, 16), and it reflects what a speaker wants to do through words (e.g., request, thank, complain). For example, in the proposition *this movie is boring* the speaker may not intend to merely describe how entertaining the movie is for her, but she may want the person next to her (boyfriend, brother) to change the channel. If the intention of the proposition is to describe the movie, then its meaning is semantic or literal. However, if the

intention is to change the channel to another tv show, then the meaning is non-literal and refers to a speech act (complaint) that requires some type of knowledge (such as contextual and background knowledge) to interpret it successfully.

Undoubtedly, the realization of speech acts reflects culture. By simply observing how people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds produce the same speech act, one can notice differences determined by cultural conventions. Inevitably, L2 learners do not have this type of knowledge and need to be instructed on it to be sufficiently competent, otherwise, they may struggle to realize speech acts accurately, especially those actions which represent a threat to people's faces.

2.14.1 Classification of speech acts

Austin (1962) and Searle (1976) have two well-known classifications of speech acts. On the one hand, Austin's classification indicates that performing a speech act involves the performance of three acts at once (Birner, 2013; Yule, 1996): locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. A locutionary act is "an act of saying something in the full normal sense" (Pandey, 2008, p. 109), in order words, it is the act of constructing speech (Sadock, 2006) or "uttering a sentence with sense and reference" (Collavin, 2011, p. 380) whose meaning is a semantic one. Contrarily, an illocutionary act goes beyond what is said and implies an intention, or a communicative purpose (Flores-Salgado, 2011), which the speaker desires to achieve by the performance of a language function (speech act). Then, a perlocutionary act has to do with the effect caused in the listener/hearer by the performance of an illocution. Perlocutions can be intentional or unintentional (Brown & Miller, 2019) and may result in unexpected consequences since what is achieved depends on the hearer's

interpretation of the utterance (Sadock, 2006). In brief, an utterance construes the act of speaking (locution), the act of intending (illocution), and the reaction to action (perlocution).

On the other hand, Searle (1976) further developed Austin's classification and proposed five categories for illocutionary acts. Searle developed this classification as he noticed that certain speech acts have similar general purposes even though their structures are different. These five categories are the following:

- Representatives are acts in which the speaker states his/her belief that the propositional content of the utterance is true (e.g., concluding, describing, advising, certifying, admitting, and agreeing).
- Directives are those acts in which the speaker expresses his/her desire to get the addressee to do something (e.g., requesting, ordering, suggesting, forbidding, begging).
- Commissives are acts in which the speaker commit himself/herself to do some future action (e.g., promising, swearing, offering).
- Expressives are acts where the speaker expresses his/her psychological state in relation to a particular state or affairs (e.g., congratulating, thanking, condoling, greeting)
- Declarations are acts that have a correspondence between the propositional content and the world. They have the faculty to change the world (e.g., blessing, firing, arresting, marrying)

(Flores-Salgado, 2011, pp. 10-11)

Austin's and Searle's taxonomies of speech acts have led to countless research papers concerning the performance of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, as they serve as a basis to study the realization of language functions.

Another approach to classifying speech acts is based on a structural perspective from which there are direct and indirect speech acts. A direct speech act is when a linguistic form

(structure/grammar) is linked to an intended communicative purpose and its semantic meaning matches with what is wanted to be expressed. For example, “a direct speech act would relate a declarative structure to a statement”, not to a question or a command (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 9). In contrast, if structure and function do not match and so the relationship between the two is indirect, it is an indirect speech act (Yule, 1996). Look at the examples below:

(a) I don’t like spaghetti.

(b) Why did you make spaghetti?

Example (a) is a direct speech act as the structure (declarative) matches its function (statement), different from (b) where the structure (interrogative) is not a simple request, but more an indirect way to let the hearer know about his dislike for spaghetti.

2.15 IFIDs

In a conversation, speakers realize varied speech acts and speech act sets. Hearers employ different ‘devices’ to identify what language function is being performed in order to hold the conversation. These devices are known as illocutionary force indicating devices or IFIDs. Searle (1969, p. 69) identifies “word order, stress, intonation contour, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and performative verbs” as IFIDs in the English language. For instance, some propositions contain a performative verb (Vp) which aids to recognize the speech act performed as it makes it evident/explicit. In *‘I promise to call you tomorrow’*, the verb ‘promise’ explicitly indicates that the intended meaning or communicative purpose is the speech act of promising. Nevertheless, performative verbs are not always used (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985), but instead, “[speakers] sometimes describe the speech act being performed” (Yule, 1996, p. 49). Then, hearers need to be aware of IFIDs to successfully

comprehend the speaker's intentions and carry out communication. Of course, the success of the conversation does not rely on the hearer, but the speaker also needs to be conscious of the contextual conditions to produce appropriate and effective speech acts.

2.16 Felicity conditions

Felicity conditions refer to the conditions that need to be met in order to produce contextually appropriate speech acts. That is to say, within a given context there are conditions that determine whether the realization of a speech act is adequate to the context. If that is the case, then the production of the speech act, whatever that is, is perceived as felicitous. Otherwise, producing a speech act that does not meet the felicity conditions of the situation is considered infelicitous. Searle (1969) classifies felicity conditions into:

- preparatory (the real word pre-requisites to each illocutionary act),
- propositional content (the content of sentences), and
- sincerity conditions (the requisite that beliefs, feelings and intentions must be appropriate to each kind of action)"

(Flores-Salgado, 2011, p. 10)

These conditions serve to make the illocutionary force or intention of the utterance noticeable to the speaker, so they identify the intended meaning (Yule, 1996). For example, a child commanding their parents for more candy would be considered an infelicitous act as the child does not have the social power to order people of higher social status (parents, older siblings, etc.) than them to do something. Instead, a felicitous act is a child making a request for more candy if they use conventional linguistic forms regarding the relations of power, distance, and contextual elements of a given situation.

2.17 The Speech Act of Complaints

The speech act of complaints is "an expression of dissatisfaction addressed by an individual A to an individual B concerning behaviors that A feels on the part of B is unsatisfactory" (Laforest, 2002, p. 1596). The speaker (S) can express their disapproval or dissatisfaction directly or indirectly (Monzoni, 2009; Boxer, 1993; Trosborg, 1995) by addressing the hearer (H) as the responsible for the violation committed (direct complaint), or other people who did not commit the offense (indirect complaint) (Kaharuddin & Hasyim, 2020). According to Olshtain and Weinbach (1993, p. 108) a complaint is displayed when the following four preconditions are met from the speaker's perspective:

> 1. H performs a socially unacceptable act (SUA) that is contrary to a social code of behavioral norms shared by S and H.
> 2. S perceives the SUA as having unfavorable consequences of herself, and/or for the general public.
> 3. The verbal expression of S relates post facto directly or indirectly to the SUA, thus having the illocutionary force of censure.
> 4. S perceives the SUA as: (a) freeing S (at least partially) from the implicit understanding of a social cooperative relationship with H; S therefore chooses to express her frustration or annoyance, [...]

The speech act of complaint is considered a face-threatening act (FTA) since it attacks the hearer or complainee's both positive and negative face. Murphy & Neu (1996) explain that complaints are such a volatile act even for native speakers who commonly think about how to realize complaints beforehand performing them. In the case of EFL learners or non-

native speakers, being aware of the linguistic forms for complaining appropriately is critical to saving face as much as possible.

2.18 Raising pragmatic awareness: Film clips

Teaching pragmatics, especially speech acts, is challenging in the EFL classroom due to how much language instruction relies on textbooks' pragmatic input. Bardovi-Harlig (2001, p. 25) asserts that "textbooks cannot be counted on as a reliable source of pragmatic input for classroom language learners" because the pragmatic information on language use, they provide can be unspecific, insufficient, or insufficiently interpreted (O´Keeffe et al., 2011). Thus, teachers need to adapt materials or look for other sources that include pragmatic content more effectively (Ishihara, 2010) such as film clips. Donaghy (2019, p. 7) points out that "film exposes students to the language of everyday conversation and the natural flow of speech" by displaying authentic interactive language (functional language, and colloquial and idiomatic expressions). Similarly, Stempleski (1992) mentions that video clips allow students to experience language use in legitimate settings. Films show plenty of visual information (e.g., gestures and facial expressions) (Kambara, 2011) and interactional features (e.g., accent, dialects) (Heidari et al., 2020).

Using film clips in the EFL classroom can be both entertaining and educational if used adequately alongside tasks and activities about the films. Film clips can also enhance students listening and speaking skills, by identifying and practicing sounds and phonological phenomena such as assimilations; vocabulary, by jotting down new words/phrases; reading skills, when using subtitles; and intercultural competence, by paying attention to traditions, customs, beliefs, values, and attitudes of the target language (Donaghy, 2019). Of course, teaching pragmatics in the language classroom also requires learning the linguistic forms.

Without the knowledge of constructing language (organizational knowledge; grammar), learners will be unable to produce culturally appropriate utterances (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3. 1 Introduction

This chapter presents detailed information about important components of this study. First, a description of the research design and research context are included. Second, the participants' profile is presented. Third, the instrument for collecting data, the instructional material used in the intervention, and the procedures followed in analyzing the data gathered are addressed. Finally, a brief conclusion of the chapter is provided.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted an experimental design. An experimental design focuses on observing the possible effect(s) or outcome(s) on a dependent variable (e.g., developing L2 pragmatic awareness) resulting from the intentional manipulation of one or more independent variables (e.g., pragmatics instruction) (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014). In addition, Bell (2009) mentions that experimental design research allows researchers to analyze the relationship between dependent and independent variables with precision and little ambiguity. In this type of research, the researcher intervenes with the participants (Creswell, 2013; Reichardt, 2004) by creating a situation in which the variables are controlled as an attempt to explain how the subjects are influenced in comparison to those who do not take part in the intervention (treatment and control groups, respectively). Similarly, Zubair (2023) points out that an experimental design constitutes two groups of participants:

- Experimental Group- It undergoes treatment, program, or intervention of interest.

- Control Group- A predetermined set of diverse circumstances is placed on the individuals chosen for the experiment during the manipulation procedure. The collection of different circumstances is known as the independent variable, experimental variable, or treatment variable. (p. 2)

Moreover, the intervention's possible outcome(s) may be regulated and anticipated as the researcher has control over certain variables of interest. However, such control is limited as "human subjects are often aware of, actively interpret, and react to what is happening in an experiment" (Cash et al., 2016, p. 6). Hence, the participants' expected responses to the experiment in question may be exaggerated and biased, leading to invalidity and unreliability. To avoid this, the variables being controlled and participants undertaking the intervention need to be carefully handled.

There are different types of experimental research designs. The present study follows a pretest-posttest design. Pretest-posttest design can demonstrate a factual relationship between the dependent and the independent variables since the presence or absence of the independent variable in the comparing groups indicates the effect of the experiment. Hence, administering a pretest before the intervention provides referencing data to compare with that gathered in the posttest to determine any difference between the groups under study (Bonate, 2000). Due to the nature of this research, mixed methods research was chosen as it combines important features from both quantitative and qualitative research such as consistency, fidelity, verifiability, and meaningfulness (Brown, 2014). Therefore, the data analysis for this paper consists of transcriptions which then are analyzed statistically (what and how frequently certain complaint strategies are used) and descriptively (how different the control and treatment groups' responses are).

3.3 Research context

This research was carried out in the Faculty of Languages of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP). This public Mexican university offers a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching (Licenciaura en Enseñanza del Inglés, LEI; by its initials in Spanish). The LEI program aims to train qualified future English language teachers with knowledge of literature, teaching material design, culture, and history, to name a few school subjects, as well as a B2 language proficiency level in English or higher according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Therefore, LEI students take five English language courses/classes (Target language I, II, III, IV, and V) and other "complementary" subjects (phonetics and phonology, semantics and pragmatics, academic reading and writing) to enrich and improve their language proficiency. Each Target Language class represents a different proficiency level starting from A2, as freshmen are required to possess that level prior to entry to the program, to B2. Level I and II indicate a basic level of the language, levels III and IV are intermediate, and V is an upper-intermediate level.

It is important to emphasize that this is an English as a foreign language (EFL) context and that the Faculty of Language BUAP mostly comprises non-native English-speaking teachers. Therefore, LEI students experience a limited number of opportunities to communicate in the L2 and are exposed to scarce L2 pragmatic input inside and outside the language classroom.

3.4 Participants

Two groups of participants were used in this study: a treatment/experimental group (EG) and a control group (CG). The participants involved were part of actual Pragmatics classes in the LEI curriculum. These groups were selected as both were taught by the same professor and took place on the same days (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) one after the other (10:30 AM-12:00 PM and 12:00 PM-1:30 PM), which would facilitate the pace of the course and intervention content, as well as the administration of the pretest and posttest. Also, the professor, who is a middle-aged man and a native English speaker, helped in the intervention by providing reliable pragmatic input and cultural explanations for some activities implemented. The treatment group had twenty-eight students (22 female, 5 male, and 1 non-binary) between ages 19 and 24. As the present study analyzes Mexican Spanish and Mexican pre-service teachers, two female students were discarded as one was an exchange student from Colombia and another one was a Mexican-American student. However, due to the ethics of the bachelor's program, they still were part of the intervention, but their responses to the tests were not considered. The control group was the 12:00 PM-1:30 PM class which had 25 students (21 female and 4 male) aged 19-29. The professor had full control of the class (as he normally would) and assured that students did not receive any kind of pragmatic instruction for the speech act of complaining.

Notwithstanding both groups had more than 20 students, few of them answered the pretest and posttest adequately. In fact, some students who answered the pretest did not complete the posttest, hence, they were discarded. For this reason, only 10 students (6 female, 3 male, and 1 non-binary) aged 19-23 were considered in the experimental group and 10 students (7 female and 3 male) aged 20-29 were for the control group. The students' genders

were asked for demographic purposes only and will not be considered for comparing their responses gender-wise as this study is not gender-oriented.

3.5 Instruments

As the purpose of the present study was to compare the complaint strategies used in English by Mexican pre-service English language teachers, the data collection instrument was a web-based oral Discourse Completion Test (DCT). DCT is a set of

> "scripted dialogs that represent socially differentiated situations. Each dialog is preceded by a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, and the social distance between the participants and their status relative to each other, followed by an incomplete dialog".
>
> (Blum-Kulka, 1989, pp. 13-14)

Then, test takers are asked to complete the dialog according to what they would utter in that specific situation as in real-life talk. Because DCT simulates real-life situations, test takers' responses may be unauthentic and reflect an approximation to non-artificial dialogs, therefore, such elicited responses are unnatural (Golato, 2003). Despite this, DCT brings important benefits to pragmatics research. Félix-Brasdefer (2008) states that DCT grants researchers quick large-scale data collection, analysis of the most frequently used strategies for the realization of a specific speech act, and regulation of contextual variables (e.g., social status, power). This instrument type falls into the computer-based test (CBT) methods category. A computer-based test (CBT) "refers to delivering assessment with computers as an alternative to using the pen-and-paper method. Such a test can be conducted online using the internet or a computer-aided facility" (Malguri, 2020). Roever (2013) indicates that web-

based/online CBT can be accessed anywhere around the world and collect test data immediately which is stored at a primary site. He also mentions that CBT can provide contextualized tasks through audio-visual aids which "strongly contributes to meaning and engagement of construct-relevant knowledge in test takers" (p. 217). Additionally, CBT may be more flexibly administered, reduce printing and shipping costs (e.g., by online administration), and enhance test security (Jiao & Lissitz, 2012; Parshall et al., 2012).

The test administered in this research consisted of eight briefly described real-life situations with distinct degrees of social power (P) and distance (D) relations (see Table 1) accompanied by illustrations (see Figure 1) to help participants understand the contexts clearly. Also, go to Appendix 1 for the detailed description and the illustrations used for each situation.

Table 1. Power-distance relations of DCT situations

Situation	Power (P +/-)	Distance (D +/-)
1: Complaining to a server	+	+
2: Complaining to a younger sibling	+	-
3: Requesting a ride home		
4: Complaining to the boss	-	+
5: Complaining to a parent (mother)	-	-
6: Refusing an invitation		
7: Complaining to a partner (boyfriend/girlfriend)	=	-
8: Complaining to a school teammate	=	+

Power refers to the socially hierarchical position a person holds in relation to others and specific given contexts (higher +, equal =, or lower -). In that sense, a person such as a teacher has a higher power over students, an equal power when interacting with fellow teachers, or a lower power in comparison to the school principal. Distance relates to the degree of familiarity people possess with each other, that is, the type of relationship people

have with others (close - or distant +). Therefore, the combination of these two contextual variables results in six differentiated power-distance situations. In order to keep participants alert and avoid the overuse of specific complaint strategies, two "distracting" situations (3 and 6) calling for different speech acts were included.

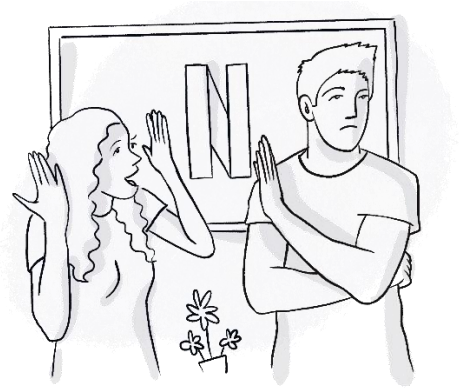

Figure 1. Example of illustrations on the DCT

The test was created on an online platform called *Zoho Forms*, which included all the aforementioned components and directions for the test takers to follow and complete the instrument correctly (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Instructions included on the DCT

After reading the instructions, participants clicked on “Next” to continue to the first situation. In each situation, test takers were provided with a brief version of the instructions with smaller lettering on top of the webpage (to avoid going back to the instruction section), and a written description of the situation accompanied by a contextualizing illustration. Also, the link to a voice recorder website (https://online-voice-recorder.com/) was included since the instrument platform did not provide this feature. To use the online voice recorder, test takers had to grant permission to the site to use their microphone only. Then, they had to click on the red circular icon to start recording and click again on it to stop recording (see Figure 3). Once the recording was stopped, the website allowed speakers to edit the length of the audio, however, this was not necessary nor asked to. After that, participants had to click on “save” to download the audio file on their computers to later rename it according to the situation the response belonged to (e.g., situation 1, s1) (see Figure 4).

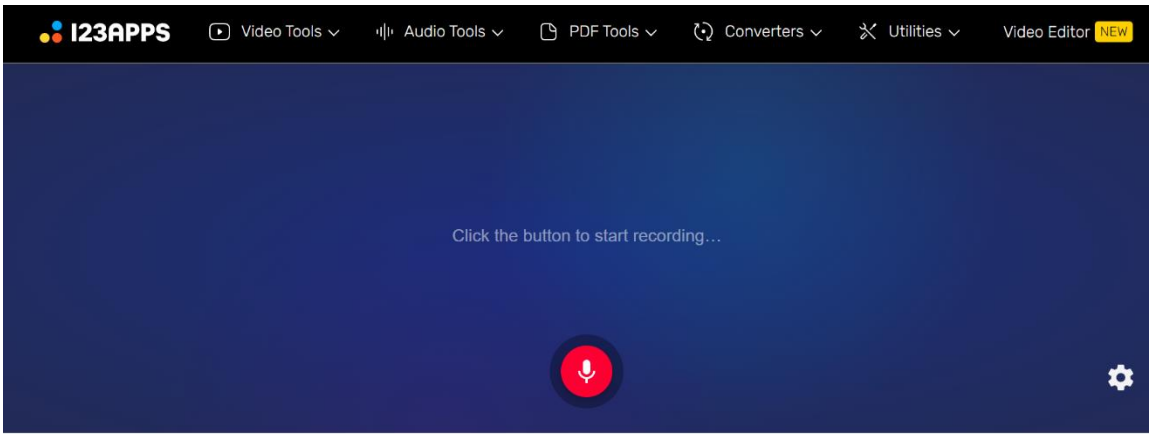

Figure 3. Online voice recorder website

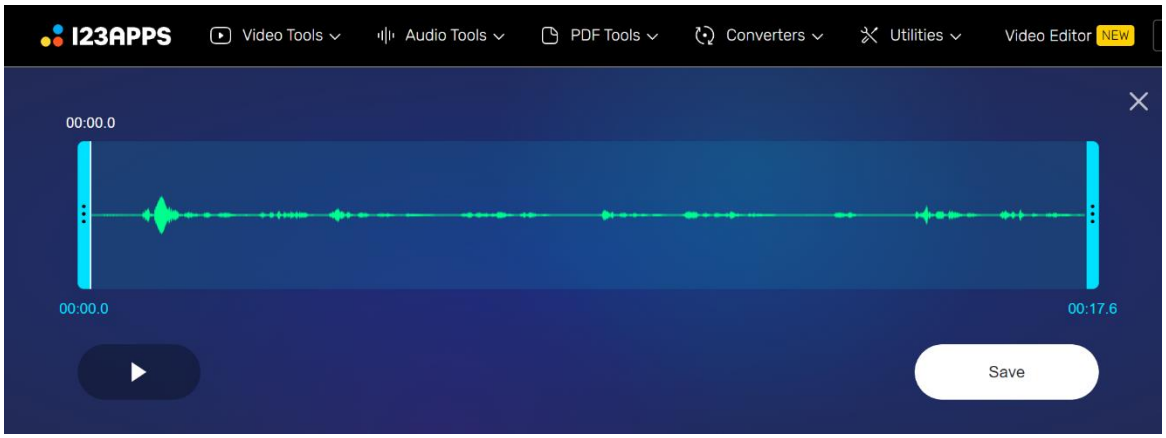

Figure 4. Online voice recorder website (saving file step)

Once the file was downloaded and renamed, participants had to attach the file on the platform by clicking on “Choose file” (see Figure 5). An “open file” window would pop up to select the file of the relative situation. When the file was attached, participants could continue with the following situation. They have to repeat these steps until completing all eight situations.

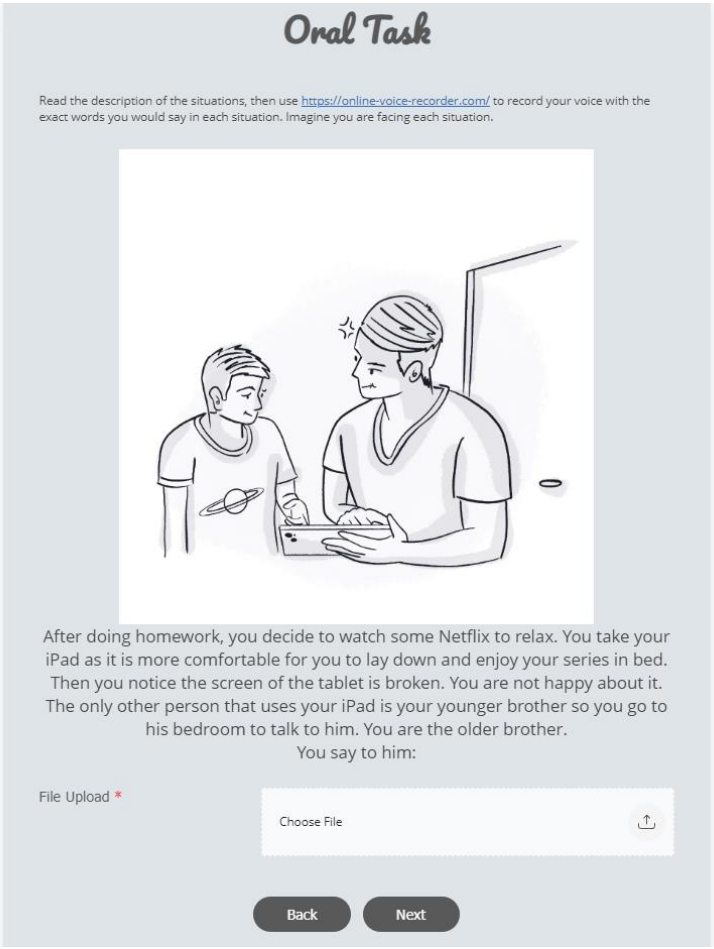

Figure 5. Example of a situation viewed on the DCT

Finally, test takers would see a thank you page with the option to submit all their responses (see Figure 6). As soon as they clicked on "submit", all the data was stored online with no opportunity to unsubmit or make changes. The researcher was the only one who had access to see, delete, and download the data gathered.

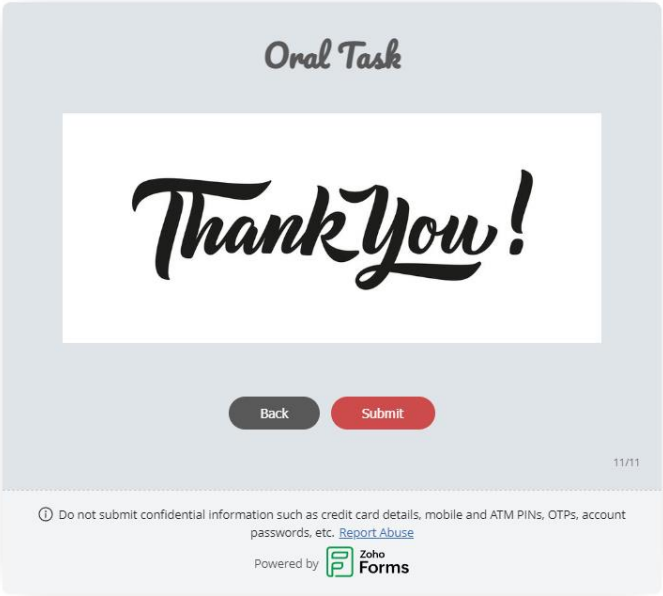

Figure 6. Responses submitting section on the DCT

This DCT was administered asynchronously as a result of time and facility issues. Participants were asked to complete both the pretest and posttest as extra credit assignments because there were no computing facilities available at the faculty, hence, it was convenient that test takers answered the test at their homes within a two-week period due to other homework and exams load.

3.6 Instructional Material

The intervention was a 9-hour pragmatics awareness-raising instruction focused on the speech act of complaining in English for pre-service Mexican EFL teachers. There were six sessions (one hour and a half each) in which the teacher in charge of the group, only the treatment group participated in this phase, and the researcher explicitly instructed students in a Pragmatics class to identify, analyze, compare, and use the components of American English complaints. Considering that there was a computer with Internet access and a 50-inches TV in the classroom where the intervention took place, three types of activities and

materials were specially designed and adopted to raise the students' pragmatics awareness of American English complaints: 1) movie clips, 2) in-class activities, and 3) online matching exercises. These activities and materials are described as follows.

3.6.1 Movie clips

In order to enhance the students' pragmatics awareness, 10 carefully selected clips from the American drama movies *Hidden Figures*, *Lady Bird*, *Marriage Story*, and *The Devil Wears Prada* were shown in class as audiovisual material that portrayed distinct complaint strategies (Trosborg, 1995) and power-distance relations between interlocutors. Movie clips are particularly significant for the pragmatic competence development in an L2 as they feature authentic language (Fouad Rashid & Özge, 2022), which textbooks may fail to provide (Heidari et al., 2020). These movie clips were between 50 seconds and 3 minutes long and included subtitles in English to facilitate comprehension of the conversations and situations (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Example of a movie clip showing a complaint

After watching a movie clip, students were told to analyze what happened in the scene considering its contextual components such as the location, the power-distance relation, the degree of directness, and the complaint strategy used. Additionally, attention was drawn to other non-verbal information (e.g., gestures, facial expressions) to notice what the complaint may have caused to the hearers in the scene (e.g., dissatisfaction). Then, follow-up activities were provided for further analysis of the complaints.

3.6.2 In-class activities

Along with the movie clips, 5 follow-up activities were implemented in the form of worksheets that involved varied tasks proposed by Hilliard (2017) such as discussions of the speech act of complaining, comparisons of complaints in the L1 to English, developing pragmalinguistics through grammar and vocabulary instruction, presenting L2 strategies for complaining, and analyzing and repairing pragmatic errors (see Appendix 2). A brief description of how each activity was completed in class is included below.

3.6.2.1 Discussion of speech act

A PowerPoint presentation including questions about the speech act of complaining was shown to the class. The researcher asked students each question and left the floor to any student that wanted to answer. As the questions were not theory related and were more focused on personal experiences and points of view, students participated actively. However, when students were asked about how different L1 complaints are from L2, they seemed unsure. Discussing cultural differences between the L1 and the L2 can help students raise

their pragmatic awareness of both languages (Limberg, 2015) and avoid using linguistic forms in the L1 to perform L2 speech acts (Hilliard, 2017).

3.6.2.2 Comparing L1 and L2 complaints

The students completed a worksheet in which they had to realize Spanish complaints in 4 distinct situations and then translate them into English, as Elsami-Rasehk (2005) proposes. This activity allowed the researcher to exemplify why using L1 linguistic forms and socio-cultural knowledge to communicate in the L2 may be problematic. Especial attention was drawn to those responses that were not appropriate to a specific situation due to negative transfer and more discussion on the differences was held.

3.6.2.3 Developing pragmalinguistics through grammar and vocabulary instruction

Hilliard (2017) states that one reason for committing mistakes when realizing L2 speech acts may be due to not knowing what linguistic forms are available in the L2 to communicate appropriately. Hence, students need to be provided with pragmalinguistic knowledge. To accomplish this, the students were given a worksheet with a list of grammar, vocabulary, and expressions that can be used to realize socially appropriate English complaints. As a result, "students will feel more confident complaining in their second language once they have the appropriate pragmalinguistic knowledge to complete the speech act" (Hilliard, 2017, p. 9).

3.6.2.4 Presenting L2 strategies for complaining

Complaining may take four steps that soften the face-threatening nature of this speech act. The students were presented with these four steps (greeting, complaint, explanation, request) and examples of each case. Then, the students completed a complaint set by identifying and rewriting the given phrases according to each step. Finally, the students have to create their own complaint set regarding a given situation. They have to write adequate phrases for each step. The final product (a complaint) would put into practice what the students had learned so far in the intervention.

3.6.2.5 Analyzing and repairing pragmatic errors

As part of testing the students' pragmatic awareness and competence development in the intervention, the students analyzed a written conversation and corrected pragmatic errors in it. The conversation presented was a teacher-student conversation in which the student's intention is to complain about a low grade. However, the student fails to perform the complaint appropriately. Once the students identified what the pragmatic errors in the conversation are, they discussed them and shared with the class what would be more appropriate to say in that situation. Additionally, the researcher introduced the differences between complaints and critics (see Table 2), as these two speech acts tend to be commonly confused by non-native speakers.

Table 2. Complaints vs Criticism (Deveci, 2015)

Complaints	Criticism
• Use of the pronoun 'we' to indicate that both parties share the blame, and as a way of negotiating the problem.	• Use of second person + modal 'should' that indicates that the speaker is in a position to dictate the behavior of the listener.

• Use of questioning to ask for advice, for permission to explain oneself, and to get the listener to reconsider or discuss the problem. • Depersonalization of the problem to transfer blame from the interlocutor to the problem. • Use of mitigators to soften the complaint (e.g., kind of, perhaps, somehow). • Acceptance of partial responsibility for the problem.	• Personalization of the problem, placing the blame on the hearer. • Refusal to accept responsibility for the problem.

Although the intervention and research itself are focused on complaints, it was considered imperative to provide students with information and frequent reminders on criticism as an attempt to reduce the probability of students performing this speech act instead of complaints.

3.6.3 Matching exercises

Four interactive matching exercises were created with the *Hot Potato* software to teach students more theoretical information related to the speech act of complaining (see Appendix 3). Ishihara (2010) states that "technology makes this exercise highly kinesthetic and interactive, allowing immediate feedback" (p. 251) as students get a score once they submit their answers and have the opportunity to correct those which are incorrect. Teaching this type of content is particularly convenient as the subjects of the study are majoring in English language teaching, otherwise, such information may be confusing or irrelevant to "conventional" language students (e.g., immigrants), that is to say, not related to language teaching. Each matching exercise included varied information and was used in class in the following order. The first one provided what Cohen and Olshtain (1983) called the semantic formula of the speech act set of complaints. With this, students were instructed that a

complaint (e.g., I have been waiting for 4 hours) may be preceded by an explanation of purpose (e.g., Hello, I've been notified that my flight was canceled) and followed by a justification (e.g., I need to be in Madrid tomorrow morning) and a candidate's solution (e.g., Can you put me on the next flight?). The second was designed to match the eight complaint strategies in American English proposed by Trosborg (1995) with their definitions. This exercise was used to make students aware of what strategies can be performed in English. The third matching exercise complemented the previous one by providing the eight complaint strategies and examples of these. This was useful to understand better how a complaint varies depending on the strategy used. Finally, the fourth exercise required students to match examples of complaints according to the degree of directness or strategy proposed by Trosborg, being 1 the most indirect and 8 the most direct). The matching exercises 1 and 4 were answered in class collectively, whereas exercises 2 and 3 were printed so students could complete the tasks individually or in pairs. The latter allowed students to compare their answers and discuss them briefly.

Students were actively encouraged and willing to participate in the activities to share their opinions, points of view, and experiences when realizing the speech act of complaining. It is important to mention that the intervention sessions were not video recorded or photographed for evidence as such data (e.g., students' reactions/participation) was not the focus of interest for this research, hence, it would have been unnecessary to collect.

3.7 Data analysis

All data gathered and stored on the *Zoho Forms* platform was downloaded and ordered in individual folders per participant labeled with their names and then organized according to the group they belonged to (experimental group or control group) and test

answered (pretest or posttest). A total of 240 voice recordings were transcribed onto Excel worksheets (see Appendix 4) to identify and analyze the semantic formulas used by both groups of participants to realize the speech act of complaining. Cohen (1996) defines semantic formula as "a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy; any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question" (cited in Lingyun, 2015, p. 101). The analysis followed an adapted taxonomy that incorporated the eight complaint strategies, and the directive acts of complaints proposed by Trosborg (1995), the alerters categories by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and the speech act of criticism (Deveci, 2015) (see Table 3).

Table 3. Semantic formulas in American English complaints

Alerters	Examples
Title/Role	Professor, waiter
Surname	Johnson
First name	Nick, Judith
Nickname	Judy
Endearment term	Honey
Offensive term	Stupid cow
Pronoun	You
Attention getter	Hey, excuse me, listen
Complaint strategies	
1 **Hint**: the complainer does not mention the complainable in the proposition.	There was nothing wrong with my car yesterday.
2 Expression of disapproval. **Annoyance**: the complainer explicitly asserts a deplorable state of affairs.	There's a horrible dent in my car.
3 Expression of disapproval. **Consequences**: the complainer explicitly expresses the ill consequences resulting from an offense.	Oh, damn it. I'll lose my insurance bonus now.
4 **Indirect accusation**: the complainer asks the hearer questions about the situation or asserts that the hearer was in some way connected with the offense.	You borrowed my car last night, didn't you?
5 **Direct accusation**: the complainer directly accuses the complainee of having committed the offense.	Did you happen to bump into my car?

6	**Modified blame**: the complainer expresses modified disapproval of an action for which the accused is responsible, or he/she states a preference for an approach not taken by the accused.	You should take more care with other people's cars.
7	**Explicit blame (action/behavior)**: the complainer explicitly states that an action for which the accused is held responsible is bad.	I can't believe you took my car without my permission and dented it.
8	**Explicit blame (person)**: the complainer explicitly states what is implicit at all other levels, namely, that he/she finds the accused a non-responsible social member.	Oh no, not again! You are really thoughtless.
Directive acts in complaints		
	Threat/Warning	If you don't tell me the truth, I'll tell Mom what you did.
	Request for forbearance	Please, don't do it again.
Criticism		

All 240 responses were coded by the researcher and only 10% (24 responses) were compared to the coding done by a colleague. Both codings were discussed to reduce bias in the data analysis process. A "1" was marked on the worksheets when a specific semantic formula/strategy was used. Then, all the 1s were summed to see the total of times (frequency) that strategy was employed in a specific situation. The total for each strategy was put into tables per situation including the strategies used by both the control (CG) and experimental groups (EG) in the pretest and posttest. These tables are described quantitative and qualitatively in Chapter IV of this study.

There were cases in which the speech act of complaining was not performed and instead, other speech acts were completed. In this situation, these responses were taken as "failures" as it was not possible to analyze them under the taxonomy mentioned above. Similarly, other participants preferred not to provide any answers. This type of response was considered as "opting out". Opting out may result from 1) important contextual aspects or 2) linguistic and/or familiarity limitations (Rose & Ono, 1995; Rose, 2000). Whether

participants failed to perform a complaint, opted out, or perform the speech act of criticism, these responses were counted too to determine their frequency as well and were taken as **inadequacies** in the analysis described in Chapter IV.

3.8 Conclusions

This chapter presented detailed descriptions of the research design and context, the participants' characteristics, the data collection instrument, the pragmatic awareness-raising materials used in the experiment, and the data analysis procedures. The next chapter will deal with the research findings.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the Mexican pre-service EFL teachers' complaints are presented, analyzed, and compared based on 1) the alerters, 2) the semantic steps, 3) the complaint strategies, 4) the directive acts of complaining, and 5) the inadequacies observed. Also, a complementary analysis of the length of the participants' responses is included (see Table 11). The information below is presented in tables corresponding to each situation given in the pretest and the posttest. Hence, the analysis focuses on one situation at a time in order to observe the strategies employed in each setting by both the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG). The numbers shown in the tables refer to the number of participants who used a particular strategy. The participants' responses may contain multiple strategies. Additionally, some participants' responses are shown to exemplify relevant and interesting aspects of their complaints (e.g., wording choices) or cases of particular strategies used (e.g., modified blame). To keep confidentiality, each student (S) was given a number (e.g., 3) and coded on whether they belong to the control group (CG) or the experimental group (EG), and whether the response given as an example is taken from the pretest (Pr) or the posttest (Pst). Hence, the responses for the pretest of a particular student are labeled as CGS3Pr, for example. Moreover, each example is numbered to facilitate the identification of each in the analysis. All data gathered is included in Tables 4-10.

4.2 Complaining to a server (P+, D+)

Situation 1 elicited participants to complain to a server at a restaurant because there is some onion in the burger ordered although it was asked not to add that particular ingredient. The participants must pretend they dislike onions, which is unpleasant. The relation of power

is higher for the complainer and the degree of familiarity between both interlocutors (server and complainer) is distant as they do not know each other. The strategies used by the participants are pointed out in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Complaint strategies used in situation 1

	Control group (CG) (n=10)		Experimental group (EG) (n=10)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Alerters				
Title/Role	1	-	1	2
Greeting	1	2	1	4
Apology expression	1	4	2	3
Attention getter	9	5	7	5
Semantic steps				
Explanation of purpose	-	-	-	3
Complaint	10	10	10	10
Justification	10	10	7	8
Request for solution	10	7	8	7
Complaint strategies				
Hints	-	-	1	-
Annoyance	9	9	8	8
Direct accusation	1	1	1	3
Modified blame	-	-	-	1
Directive acts of complaining				
Threat/Warning	-	-	2	2
Request for forbearance	1	2	1	-
Inadequacy				
Criticism	-	-	1	-

4.2.1 Alerters

The alerters used in situation 1 were title/role, greetings, apology expressions, and attention-getters. Attention-getters were the most frequent alerters used by both groups, whereas “title/role” was the least. In the control group, “attention-getters” was used by 9 students in the pretest and by 5 in the posttest. Similarly, the experimental group used

"attention-getters" more frequently in the pretest (7) and in the posttest (5). The number of EG students who used alerters increased from the pretest (11) to the posttest (14). Also, EG students' alerters were more varied in the posttest than in the pretest similar to the CG. "Excuse me" was the attention-getter used in all of the cases. Look at the examples below.

(1) Excuse me, I order my burger without onions and when I bit into it had onions. Is there any way to fix this? (CGS5Pr)

(2) Hi, excuse me. Uhm… I ordered a burger with no onion, but I can taste onion in it. So, would it be possible to have this burger remade with no onion, please? (EGS9Pst)

As can be observed in the examples above, "excuse me" was used at the beginning of the response to catch the hearer's attention. However, example (4) shows that some students used more than one alerter such as greetings, or title/role (see example 3).

(3) Excuse me, sir. But I wanted my burger without onion and this burger has onion. So, please… could you give me another burger without the onion or just refund me the money with the onion added, please. (CGS9Pr)

Other students used apology expressions such as "I'm sorry/Sorry" instead of "excuse me". This is an interesting strategy as it seems that some students were concerned with making their complaints and causing trouble to the server. Look at example (4).

(4) I'm sorry, I ordered a burger without onion and it seems that you brought me a burger with onions. Do you think it's possible that you could bring me another burger or could you just take off the onion, please? (CGS2Pr)

4.2.2 Semantic steps

A few EG students (3) provided an explanation of purpose before making their complaints in the posttest, whereas the majority (17) directly stated their complaints in both the pretest and posttest. Also, all CG students justified their complaints in both tests, but 3 EG students skipped that strategy in the pretest and 2 did so in the posttest. Then, interestingly, 3 CG students omitted to ask for a solution in the posttest, while 2 EG students did similarly in the pretest and then only 2 in the posttest. These students preferred to resort

to other strategies instead (see example ?). Look at the examples below that illustrate these cases.

(5) Excuse me, I think there is a mistake with my order because I order my burger without onions and this burger has them. (CGS5Pst)

(6) Excuse me, I ordered my burger with no onion, but there's onion on it. So, could you please bring another one? Thank you. (EGS4Pr)

In example 5, CGS5 gave an "explanation of purpose" in order to let the server know that they would make a complaint about what they ordered. This semantic step prepares the hearer for what the conversation will be about so he/she can take a particular stance. Then, example 6 demonstrates one of the most used justifications by the participants in both groups. By justifying themselves, the complainer indicates he/she is entitled to complain.

4.2.3 Complaint strategies

There were four complaint strategies that both groups preferred to use: hints, annoyance, direct accusation, and modified blame. The majority of CG students (9) and EG students (8) used annoyance in the pretest and posttest. Direct accusations were performed to a lesser degree and then hints, and modified blame were the least frequent. Look at the examples below of each strategy.

(7) OK, so this is not the hamburger that I asked for, so a recommendation for you is, is that you have to pay attention to the orders of your customers; in other case, you're going to have problems with them. (EGS10Pr)

(8) Oh, excuse me, but I ordered my hamburger with no onion and there's onion on it. So, could you change it, please? (CGS3Pr)

(9) Sorry, I think you got the wrong order. It was without onion. (CGS8Pst)

(10) Excuse me, I ordered a burger without onion and you brought me one with it. So, you should take more care with other people's orders. (EGS7Pst)

Example (7) first includes a hint which does not explicitly mentions the complainable and only indicates there is a problem with the order. Only 1 EG student used this strategy in the pretest. Second, EGS10 also used the complaint strategy of modified blame, which is the sixth strategy and one of the most direct, in the same response. The use of multiple strategies to complain was a common choice. Example (8) illustrates the use of annoyance with the structure "there is + complainable". This strategy only indicates what the problem/offense is and depersonalizes the complainable (the responsibility does not fall on any of the interlocutors). The strategy of annoyance can also be found in examples (1), (2), (3), (5), and (6). In example (9), the student employed a direct accusation for which he/she makes the server responsible for the offense by using the pronoun "you". This makes the complaint more direct. Similarly, example (10) directly blames the server for the unfavorable situation and expresses a preferable course of action. Only 1 EG student used this strategy in the posttest.

4.2.4 Directive acts of complaining

On the one hand, the control group (CG) only produced requests for forbearance in the pretest (1) and the posttest (2). Look at example (11):

(11) Excuse me, I ordered a burger without any onions and I just bit one. I would like for you to bring me another burger. Please, make sure doesn't have onions this time. (CGS2Pst)

With this, the student lets the hearer know that he/she does not want the offense to be committed again. The use of "please" allows the speaker to save face and increase the chances of obtaining a positive outcome. Only 1 EG student also used this directive act in the pretest. On the other hand, the experimental group (EG) used threats/warnings more.

(12) I'm sorry but the menu... I ordered... I said I didn't want any onions. Now, that I've tried it I tasted the onion. You have to change it because I checked all my hamburger… it has a lot of onion. If you don't change it, I won't pay. (EGS5Pst)

Contrary to requests for forbearance, example (12) shows a more direct and somehow aggressive tone. As the speaker uttered "you have to change it", the tone of the conversation turned into a more hostile attitude, and then when the speaker said "if you don't change it,…", he/she is conditioning the server to a possible negative outcome (not paying for the order) for what the complainer makes the server responsible for. This act can jeopardize the complainer's face. Only 2 EG students used this act in the pretest and the posttest.

4.3.5 Inadequacy

There was only one case of criticism in the pretest done by the experimental group. As criticism is a different speech act that threatens both interlocutors' faces to a higher degree, criticizing is taken as an inadequacy in this study. Look at example (13):

(13) Excuse me for calling you, is that what happens… I told you that I didn't want onion in my hamburger, but, well, it shows that you are new working here. For that reason, I will forgive you, but for the next time that it can, I want you to pay close attention... to write that I'm going to ask you to it because if not I'm going to report that you don't do things well. (EGS5Pr)

By saying “it shows that you are new working here”, the speaker refers to the server’s lack of expertise in taking orders and/or customer service for what the complainer is unsure about. This type of utterance may lead to losing face and a negative outcome for the overall situation.

Overall, Table 4 indicates subtle but important changes in the participants’ responses. While the CG had no changes in the complaint strategies used and only noticeable differences in the variety of alerters, after the intervention, the EG used more varied alerters and slightly fewer directive acts, became slightly more direct in their complaints, and avoid criticism.

4.3 Complaining to a younger sibling (P+, D-)

For situation 2, the power-distance relation changes significantly as participants had to complain to a person to whom they are close (brother) and possess a higher social status (older brother/sister). The complainable is a broken screen of the older brother’s tablet (the participant) which is frequently used by his/her younger brother. This contextual information made participants from both groups use other strategies and expressions that correspond to the proximity between the interlocutors. Table 5 indicates the strategies used in this setting.

Table 5. Complaint strategies used in situation 2

	Control group (CG) (n=10)		Experimental group (EG) (n=10)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Alerters				
Title/Role	3	4	2	2
First name	-	-	1	1
Greeting	-	-	-	1
Attention getter	7	6	4	5
Semantic steps				
Explanation of purpose	1	2	-	2

Complaint	10	10	10	9
Justification	6	4	2	3
Request for solution	2	2	1	3
Complaint strategies				
Hints	-	1	-	-
Annoyance	8	6	2	3
Consequence	-	-	2	2
Indirect accusation	3	5	4	3
Direct accusation	5	4	6	3
Modified blame	2	1	4	2
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	-	2	-	4
Directive acts of complaining				
Threat/Warning	2	2	3	2
Inadequacy				
Opt out	-	-	-	1

4.3.1 Alerters

Both the control group and the experimental group used attention-getters and title/role to a higher frequency than first name and greetings. The CG used more attention-getters in the pretest (7) and the posttest (6) than the EG (4 and 5, respectively). Similarly, the CG used more title/role (3 and 4) than the EG (2 in both tests). First name was only used by one EG student in both tests and greetings by one EG student in the posttest. Look at the examples below for each case.

(14) Hey, brother. I noticed that my iPad has a broken screen. Did you break it? I'm not scolding you. I just want to know the true. (CGS5Pr)

(15) Elliot, did you use the iPad? (EGS8Pr)

(16) Hello brother! What are you doing? I want to tell you something. You always use my tablet without asking my permission. And now, when I get home I see that it is a miracle that you're not using my tablet since it turns out that you broke the screen. What did you do with my tablet? Tell me the truth or why did you throw it away. If you don't tell me the truth, I won't help you with your homework. (EGSS5Pst)

In example (14), the attention-getter “Hey” is present which was the most used expression, and the title/role form “brother” was also common in the participants’ responses. Then, the two cases of first name were produced by EGS8 (see example 15). In both tests, this student uttered the name “Elliot” which may be a made-up name or somebody he/she knows. Similar to example (14), example (16) includes two alerters together. However, example (16) has a greeting form (Hello) instead of an attention-getter along with a title/role.

4.3.2 Semantic steps

In the case of the semantic steps, both groups used fewer explanations of purpose, justifications, and requests for solution than in situation 1. One CG student used explanation of purpose in the pretest, while two CG students and two EG students did in the posttest. See the example below.

(17) I need to talk with you. There's a problem with the iPad. The screen is broken. And you know you're the only person that uses the iPad apart from me. So, I assume that you broke the screen. This is serious and we need to fix it. (CGS3Pr)

In the example above, the student lets the hearer (the younger brother) know why he/she is in the younger brother’s bedroom (I need to talk to you) and what he/she wants to discuss with him by saying “There’s a problem with the iPad”. The following examples demonstrate cases of justifications and candidates’ solutions.

(18) Hey! Did you break my iPad earlier? 'cause its screen is broken and the only person who could grab it is only you, so please tell me the truth. (EGS1Pr)

(19) Hey! What happened with my iPad? You need to be more careful. Now, you have to send it to repair the screen. (CGS1Pr)

The phrase “the only person who could grab it is only you” in example (18) serves as a justification for what the speaker is complaining about. By saying this, the complainer is somewhat increasing the degree of directness of the complaint as the complainee may be the only possible responsible for the offense. In example (19), the student did not use a question form to request a solution, in fact, he/she used a statement that seems more demanding. Finally, all CG students performed complaints in both tests, whereas all EG students did so in the pretest, but one did not in the posttest. This will be discussed further in the inadequacies found in situation 2 (Go to 4.3.5).

4.2.3 Complaint strategies

The most frequent complaint strategies used by both CG and EG in the pretest and the posttest were annoyance (19 responses included it), direct accusations (18), and indirect accusations (15). The less frequent were hints (1) and consequences (4). Other strategies such as modified blame (9) and explicit blame (action/behavior) (6) were employed to a lower frequency. Look at the examples below and notice the differences in directness.

(20) Hey, did you take my tablet and you broke the screen? Because you're the only one person who take it to watch and do your games. So, tell me the truth or I'll tell Mom that you broke it and you have to pay it. (CGS9Pst)

(21) Oh my god! I don't know what you did but we will surely be punished by Mom and Dad. (EGS7Pst)

(22) Brother, please don't take my things if I am not at home. Now my iPad is broken and we cannot longer use it. You must be careful and wait for me and to authorize you to take it. (EGS6Pst)

It can be identified the use of indirect and direct accusations in example (20). Asking the complainee "Did you take my tablet…?" allows the complainer to see if the complainee is somehow connected to the offense (the broken tablet). However, the younger brother is then immediately held responsible for the complainable by saying "…you broke the screen?". The use of multiple complaint strategies was quite common in Situation 2. Indeed, example (22) contains four different strategies. EGS6 used the annoyance strategy by uttering "Now my iPad is broken" followed by "…we cannot longer use it" which is a consequence resulting from the offense (breaking the iPad). Additionally, this student employed modified blame with the phrase "You must be careful" as he/she expected the complainee to take a preferable course of action and then said "wait for me […] to authorize you to take it". The latter is considered an explicit blame for the complainee's action/behavior as he, the younger brother, took the tablet without prior notification to or permission of the owner. Such action/behavior is perceived as inappropriate to the complainer. Another case for the strategy of consequence is example (21) which shows the use of the modal verb "will" to indicate future consequences, contrary to example (22) in which the consequence is expressed in the present indicating the affectation is being done at the moment.

4.2.4 Directive acts of complaining

Threats/warning was the only directive act used by both groups. CG students used this act twice in the pretest and the posttest, while the EG used it 3 and 2 times, respectively. Situation 2 had the highest number of times this directive act was employed (9 times in total). This may be due to the power-distance relation of the context. Observe the example below.

(23) Hey! Did you take my tablet? Because the screen is broken. And you're the only one who take my tablet to watch the serie. Please, tell me the truth or I'll tell Mom that you used my tablet and you broke it. (CGS9Pr)

When producing a threat/warning, students tended to use the figure of a higher authority, especially a parent, to make the complainee aware or even afraid of the possible consequences for which he/she is held responsible (see example 20, too). Another case is example (16) in which the student threatens the complainee with stopping to help with future homework. The production of threats/warnings was reduced in one from the pretest to the posttest after the intervention.

4.3.5 Inadequacy

Interestingly, there was a case of opting out in the posttest answered by one EG student. Look at the student's response below.

(24) Elliot,… [long pause]… really? (EGS8Pst)

In the 11 seconds that the student's response lasts, he/she uttered two words only with a long pause in between. It is assumed that the students did not have any technical difficulties to record his/her response as the sound of a distant siren can be perceived. Hence, this response was intentional. The reason for this may be to move forward faster in the completion of the test or the lack of ideas to respond. This is the only case of opting out of all the data analyzed.

Table 5 shows minor changes that may be considered a drawback for the intervention as the case of opt-out aforementioned described. By comparing both the control group and the experimental group, it can be observed that the CG presented similar changes to the EG

such as the use of the explicit blame (action/behavior) strategy in the posttest or a "better" performance in the tests as all the CG students produced complaints.

4.4 Complaining to the boss (P-, D+)

For situation 4, the participants took a lower social status position (P-) as they acted as an employee at a company/store and had to complain to their boss about being late to close the store which affects the complainer as he/she has the closing shift. Since this is an employee-boss relationship, the distance between the interlocutors is higher (D+). Hence, the use of a different register is expected in this type of context. Observe Table 6 for details.

Table 6. Complaint strategies used in situation 4

	Control group (CG) (n=10)		Experimental group (EG) (n=10)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Alerters				
Title/Role	6	7	5	5
First name	-	-	-	1
Greeting	2	2	4	5
Apology expression	2	-	1	2
Attention getter	3	7	7	5
Semantic steps				
Explanation of purpose	5	7	7	7
Complaint	7	6	10	10
Justification	5	4	5	5
Request for solution	6	6	7	6
Complaint strategies				
Hints	1	-	1	2
Annoyance	2	1	4	3
Consequence	5	4	5	7
Direct accusation	5	5	6	3
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	-	-	-	1
Directive acts of complaining				
Threat/Warning	-	-	2	2
Request for forbearance	-	-	3	3
Inadequacy				

Failure	3	4	-	-

4.4.1 Alerters

In the 40 responses analyzed for situation 4, title/role (23) and attention-getter (22) were the two most frequent alerters found in both groups and tests. Greeting (13) was also used at a lesser frequency. Apology expression (5) and first name (1) were the least recurrent alerters. Comparing the CG's and the EG's production of alerters, it can be observed that the CG students preferred title/role (13) and attention-getter (10) more, similarly to the EG (10 and 12, respectively). Also, the CG frequently used greetings (9) at the beginning of their responses. Look at the examples below.

(25) Excuse me, boss. I would like to speak with you about a situation relate to the closing of the store. I ha[ve] had problems because we close very late. It would have be possible for me to close early and therefore it would not be a problem if you were late[?] (EGS6Pr)

(26) Hi, boss. Can I talk to you? I have noticed that lately you have been arriving later than my checkout time to close the store. Is there any way that we can resolve this situation? (CGS5Pst)

(27) Sorry, I know you have a very busy day, but could you try to arrive earlier, please? My shift ends at 9 and I've been going out later than I sh… *audio ends* (CGS8Pr)

(28) Hello, Mr. Matt. I'd like to talk to you. You see, I have an issue that's been stressing me out. I've been going out late for days out of my turn, my schedule, because I have to close until you get here and it's taking me longer than it should, okay? which clearly causes a problem for me because makes me to get home later and I have so many things to do. So, I'd be really greatful if you could come here early or at the right time so I can go and do my thing that I have to do. I really appreciate if you do that, especially because... I have many activities... and take me too much time to do it if you come here later. So, I'd really appreciate it. (EGS3Pst)

Instances of title/role can be identified in examples (25) and (26) with the address form "boss". Other responses used "sir" instead. These were the most common. Then,

greetings such as “Hi/Hello” were also constant (see examples 26 and 28). Less frequently found were cases of salutations like “Good evening/night”. One of the most interesting findings in the analysis of the participants’ responses was those utterances that included apology expressions as in example (27). In example (27), the student expressed apology as he/she intended to save face prior to what he/she was about to say (complaint) because the boss may feel the employee’s interruption to their activities offensive. Example (28) shows the only occurrence of first name in situation 4. Interestingly, the students used the name “Matt” to refer to the boss, however, he/she used the form “Mr.” too. Such construction is ungrammatical as “Mr.” is typically followed by a surname (Mr. Thompson, for example). The phenomenon of verbosity present in example (28), which was also identified in several responses, will be discussed in Chapter V.

4.4.2 Semantic steps

In comparison to situations 1 and 2, students from both groups employed semantic steps more frequently. In the case of explanation of purpose, the CG and the EG produced this step with almost the same frequency in the pretest (5/7) and the posttest (7). Request for solutions were slightly more used by the EG (13) than the CG (12), similarly to justifications (10 and 9, respectively). The most significant different between both groups in the use of semantic steps is related to the realization of complaints. The CG presented 3 cases of failure in the pretest and 4 in the posttest, whereas all EG students performed complaints in both tests. This is further explained in the inadequacies of situation 4 (Go to 4.4.5). Observe the examples below.

(29) Uhm… Hi. I'd like to you about an issue… uhm… that I have… uhm… it's about my check-out. And, well as you know, I have to leave… uhm… 9 PM here, and the past two weeks I have been tolerating your arrival before the store close and I don't think my checkout has been respected since I have... uhm... things to do at home after this job. So, I don't know, how could we fix this problem? (EGS1Pr)

(30) Excuse me, boss. I would like to speak with you about a situation relate to the closing of the store. I ha[ve] had problems because we close very late. It would have be possible for me to close early and therefore it would not be a problem if you were late[?] (EGS6Pr)

The three semantic steps explanation of purpose, justification, and request for solution are observed in example (29). When the student said "I'd like [to talk] to you about… […] … my check-out", he/she let the complainee know what the conversation would be about. Then, a justification he/she provided was having other activities after his/her shift. This was the most recurrent justification provided in both groups and tests. Finally, the student request the complainee for discussing the issue and finding a solution. Other students asked for closing the store earlier as example (30) above shows.

4.4.3 Complaint strategies

Consequence (21) and direct accusation (19) were the most frequent complaint strategies followed by annoyance (10). The least frequent were hints (4) and explicit blame (action/behavior) (1). The CG opted for direct accusations (10), whereas the EG opted for consequences (12). In fact, the EG used fewer direct accusations in the posttest (3) than in the pretest (6) and increased the use of consequences from the pretest (5) to the posttest (7). Hence, it can be mentioned that the EG preferred more indirect complaint strategies after the intervention except for one student in the posttest who performed the explicit blame (action/behavior) strategy. Look at the examples below.

(31) Excuse me, can I talk to you? I was wondering if we can talk about your delays because they are having a huge impact on my performance at home. (EGS2Pr)

(32) Hi, boss. Can I talk to you? I have noticed that lately you have been arriving later than my checkout time to close the store. Is there any way that we can resolve this situation? (CGS5Pr)

(33) Excuse me, sir. I don't like your unpunctuality because I have other things to do after work, so the next time be on time or I will resign. (EGS7Pst)

In example (31), the underlined phrase refers to a present consequence affecting the complainer. Those students who produced the consequence strategy commonly referred to affectations on their personal life, especially time-wise or performance. Then, example (32) shows a case of direct accusation as the complainer explicitly holds the boss responsible for the complainable (waiting for the boss after the end of the shift). In fact, most students directly accused the boss of being late in varied forms when they used this strategy. Example (33) is the only response in situation 4 that included the strategy of explicit blame (action/behavior). By uttering "I don't like your unpunctuality", the student states a complainee's behavior trait (unpunctuality) as unfavorable.

4.4.4 Directive acts of complaining

A relevant finding in situation 4 was that none of the CG students performed directive acts in either the pretest or the posttest. Contrarily, there were two instances of threat/warning in the pretest and the posttest, as well as three responses with requests for forbearance in both tests. Such contrast between the CG and the EG cannot be attributed to the intervention as the exact same number of occurrences is found before and after the experiment. Look at the examples below.

(34) Hello, sorry to bother you… uhm… but I've noticed that for the past two weeks you've been arriving late to close the store at the end of my shift… and this has been causing me to get home later than usual and has been affecting my sleep schedule... uh due to other commitments. So, I was just wondering if you could, you know, be more punctual in the future. (EGS9Pst)

In example (34), the student asked the complainee to consider how being late affected him/her so he would stop doing that. Indeed, those students who used requests for forbearance provided the consequences of the offense or justifications for why they needed to close the store on time. In the case of threat/warning strategy, the four responses that included it used threats for quitting their job if the issue was not resolved in a favorable way for them (leaving work once their shift was over). An example for threat/warning can be seen in example (33).

4.4.5 Inadequacy

Opposite to what happened in the previous section, the CG was the only one that had cases of failure in the pretest (3) and the posttest (4). In these responses, it was found that students opted for realizing the requests instead of complaints (see examples 35 and 36). Look at the examples below.

(35) Excuse me, sir. I was wondering if there's a chance that when I finish my duties at work I can also retire on time… uh… because I also have to do my assignments from college and to finish my housework. (CGS6Pr)

(36) Hey, boss. Can I have a word with you? You think someone else could stay and wait for you to close the store[?]. I still have things to do as soon as I get home and I don't have time. (CGS2Pst)

All the seven responses that counted as failures are requests for leaving work on time (as in example 35) or getting someone else to wait for the boss and close the store (example 36). Any of these responses were perceived as complaints as they did not state a complainable such as the boss being late. They only gave justifications like having pending activities after work that served to support their petitions. As it was mentioned before, the EG did not fail in realizing complaints.

The most relevant differences between the control group and the experimental group observed in Table 6 are the production of directive acts of complaining and cases of failure found. Although the directive acts may not be related to the experiment, the lack of failure in the EG may be the result of the constant content of complaints reviewed in this group.

4.5 Complaining to your mother (P-, D-)

Situation 5 elicited participants to complain to their mothers because they cleaned the house, which is owned/rented by the complainer, and moved their belongings without prior notification, especially because the mother is a guest. Although this situation may be favorable for some contexts, students had to pretend their mothers' actions were somewhat offensive as they knew exactly where they left their stuff, and changes in their house may cause other inconveniences. Since the relationship between the interlocutors is closer (D-) and the complainer has a lower social power (P-) than the complainee, responses were produced differently. Table 7 provides further details on the strategies used by both the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG).

Table 7. Complaint strategies used in situation 5

	Control group (CG) (n=10)		Experimental group (EG) (n=10)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Alerters				
Title/Role	7	6	5	8
Greeting	1	-	1	4
Apology expression	-	-	1	-
Attention getter	1	2	3	2
Semantic steps				
Explanation of purpose	-	-	-	1
Complaint	10	9	9	9
Justification	8	6	5	3
Complaint strategies				
Hints	1	1	2	-
Annoyance	3	2	5	4
Consequence	3	-	5	4
Indirect accusation	-	1	1	-
Direct accusation	2	1	2	1
Modified blame	4	6	1	2
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	-	1	1	-
Explicit blame (person)	-	-	-	1
Directive acts of complaining				
Request for forbearance	4	3	3	6
Inadequacy				
Opt out	-	-	1	-
Failure	-	1	-	1

4.5.1 Alerters

The most used alerter in situation 5 was title/role (26) by both groups in the pretest and posttest. The CG reduced in one the frequency of title/role in the posttest, whereas the EG increased from 5 to 8 cases of this type of alerter. Similarly, the use of greetings went up in the EG from the pretest (1) to the posttest (4), whereas the CG only used it in the pretest (1). Conversely, the CG had one case more of an attention-getter in the posttest (2) than the pretest (1). However, the EG decreased by 1 from the pretest (3) to the posttest (2). The least frequent alerter was apology expression with one case in the pretest done by the EG. Observe the examples below.

(37) Hey, Mom! I appreciate that you wanted to help me out by cleaning up, but I'm not comfortable with someone moving my things around without my knowledge or permission. I know my place might not look very organized to you, but I actually have a system for where I keep things. And I have... I always know where to find them. I understand that you were trying to be helpful, but, in the future, please let me know before you clean up my place. Thank you for understanding. (CGS10Pr)

Example (37) provides cases of both an attention-getter and a title/role. “Hey” was the preferred attention-getter while “Mom” was the form that all students used when opting for title/role. The exclamation mark indicates a higher tone of voice when the student uttered these two words, however, it is rather a joyful tone than a distress tone.

4.5.2 Semantic steps

The most recurrent semantic step was justification (22) in both groups and tests. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between both groups. The CG (14) used this step more than the EG (8) in total. Moreover, there was a reduction of justifications from the pretest (8) to the posttest (6) in the CG, similar to the EG (5 to 3, respectively). As for other semantic steps, the least used was explanation of purpose with one case in the posttest of the EG. Interestingly, students did not ask for solutions in situation 5. This may be due to who the complainee is (mother) as it shows that sons/daughters typically may not have the power to request solutions from their parents. Look at the examples below.

(38) Uhm… I thank you for the favor, but in my house I have an order of where are my things and now I have to identify where you put everything. (EGS6Pr)

As example (38) shows, students typically used the it-is-my-house or I-know-where-everything-is arguments to justify why cleaning the house without permission is perceived as an offense. By observing example (38), it can be identified that the student expressed gratitude/appreciation for what his/her mother did (cleaning). Showing gratitude/appreciation was, in fact, commonly found in the students' responses. Out of the 40 responses analyzed in situation 5, there were 24 occurrences of thanking.

4.5.3 Complaint strategies

Counting the control group's and the experimental group's performance of complaint strategies, annoyance (14) was the most used followed by modified blame (13) and consequence (12) by both groups in the two tests. Other strategies such as direct accusation (6) and hint (4) were used at a significantly lower frequency. The least recurrent strategies were indirect accusation (2), explicit blame (action/behavior) (2), and explicit blame (person) (1). Comparing the results of the CG and the EG in both tests, it is found that the CG preferably produced modified blame (10) while the EG opted for annoyance (9) and consequence (9). Now, EG students decreased or abstained from the use of all complaint strategies in the posttest, except modified blame which increased in one. It was in the EG's posttest that the only case of explicit blame (person) was identified. Look at the examples below.

(39) Mom, thank you for everything you did, <u>but at least you would have warned me that you would clean my room</u>, and <u>now my room is messy</u>. Very still know where my things are. So, for the other one you have to tell me for… before cleaning my room, please. (EGS5Pst)

(40) Thank you for [unintelligible] everything, Mom. But you would have left it as it was. I knew where everything was accommodated and now I have to look for everything. (CGS1Pr)

(41) Hi Mom, how are you? Oh no, not again! Mom, you really are a compulsive cleaner. (EGS7Pst)

In examples (39) and (40), the students produced preferable courses of action (modified blame) by stating that they should have been notified before the cleaning was done or simply not have done it. These two were the common phrases students used for modified blame. As can be observed in the examples above, students tended to perform more than one complaint strategy in situation 5. In example (39) there is a case of annoyance as the student uttered "now my room is messy" which indicates a deplorable state of affairs. Then, in example (40), a consequence is expressed with the phrase "now I have to look for everything" proving a negative result due to the complainee's action. The only case of explicit blame (person) is shown in example (41). With this strategy, the complainer stated in the most direct way that the complainee is perceived as a non-responsible person since she committed an offense that the complainer found offputting.

4.5.4 Directive acts of complaining

The CG and the EG opted for requests for forbearance only. Whereas the control group had one less case of this act in the posttest (3) compared to the pretest (4), the experimental group had an increase from the pretest (3) to the posttest (6). Look at example (42).

(42) Mom, I appreciate that you want to help me out but I don't feel comfortable with you cleaning up my place without my permission. I understand that you mean well

but my living space is very personal to me and I have my own way of organizing things. It's important to me that I have control over my belongings and how they are arranged. I hope that you can respect that. In the future, please let me know before you make any changes to my living space. Thank you for understanding. (CGS10Pst)

The student's response shown in example (42) is a clear example of request for forbearance as he/she uses the phrase "in the future…" expecting the complainee to not commit the complainable again. Interestingly, based on the utterance, the student may have found not being notified more offensive than the cleaning itself. For that reason, the complainer focused on requesting notification if the complainee intends to clean again in the future.

4.5.5 Inadequacy

Some interesting findings in situation 5 were the cases of inadequacies identified. There was one case of opting out by an EG student in the pretest, and two cases of failure in the posttest, one by the CG and one by the EG. In the case of opting out, the student did not attach any recording to situation 5 in the pretest. The reasons may be varied but none is clear. Look at the examples of failure below.

(43) Oh, Hi Mom. Can we talk? Well, first of all, I don't want to sound unsrespectful but I have to say this. I DIDN'T like the way that you organize my bedroom so, please Mom, can you DON'T do it the next time? (EGS2Pst)

(44) Mom, I really appreciate the fact that you cleaned my apartment, but you didn't have to. You come to visit me. I promise to have it cleaner next time, so you will not have to do it. (CGS5Pst)

Analyzing both responses, it can be concluded that neither of them realized the speech act of complaining according to the data analysis procedures adapted for this study (explained in Chapter III). In example (43), the student focused his/her response on expressing dislike for what the mother did. He/She produced some phrases that are part of the data analysis of this study such as alerters and requests for forbearance. Nonetheless, these are not enough to complete a complaint. More notoriously, example (44) shows cases for appreciation/gratitude and centralizes on the speech act of promising instead.

Considering that the first four complaint strategies (hints, annoyance, consequence, and indirect accusation) are the most indirect strategies while direct accusation, modified blame, explicit blame (action/behavior), and explicit blame (person) are the most direct, table 7 indicates that the CG group preferred more direct strategies in both tests, contrary to the EG that performed more indirect strategies in the pretest and the posttest.

4.6 Complaining to a partner (boyfriend/girlfriend) (P=, D-)

Different from the previous situations, situation 7 made students complain to equal peers (P=) in terms of social status. Students had to complain to their partners (boyfriend or girlfriend) (D-) about watching an episode of their favorite series especially since they had agreed not to watch the series without the other. Under this contextual information, participants opted for particular strategies as Table 7 below demonstrates.

Table 8. Complaint strategies used in situation 7

	Control group (CG) (n=10)		Experimental group (EG) (n=10)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Alerters				

Endearment term	2	2	2	2
Attention getter	6	3	3	2
Semantic steps				
Explanation of purpose	-	1	-	-
Complaint	10	8	9	9
Justification	9	5	7	3
Request for solution	1	-	1	-
Complaint strategies				
Hints	-	-	-	2
Annoyance	-	-	1	1
Consequence	-	-	2	1
Indirect accusation	1	-	1	-
Direct accusation	8	6	7	5
Modified blame	3	3	1	1
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	3	1	-	2
Explicit blame (person)	1	1	1	1
Directive acts of complaining				
Threat/Warning	-	1	1	2
Request for forbearance	-	1	-	1
Inadequacy				
Failure	-	2	1	1
Criticism	-	1	-	-

4.6.1 Alerters

Only endearment term and attention-getter were used by both CG and EG. On the one hand, the endearment term alerter had no changes as it was used in the same frequency by both groups in the pretest (2) and the posttest (2). On the other hand, the CG produced more attention-getters (6) in the pretest (6) than the EG (3). However, in the posttest, the CG (3) had a reduction of the 50% in the use of this alerter. Similarly, the EG decreased the number of cases from the pretest (3) to the posttest (2), but to a lower degree. The examples below present the linguistic choices for alerters participants used.

(45) Hey, honey. Guess what. Today I discovered something very awful. And it's something about you. You are such a traitor. We agreed not to watch something new about our favorite serie. If you or me we're not together and you… you take an advantage of it. And you saw two... two more... episodes. What a shame! (CGS7Pr)

Example (45) shows both an endearment term (Honey) and an attention-getter (Hey). This is the only example that used both alerters together. As endearment terms, students used "Honey" and "Babe/baby". There was only one case of "Love". Then, in the case of attention-getters, "Hey" was the preferred word.

4.6.2 Semantics steps

Justification (24) was the favored semantic step by both groups in the two tests with an important difference compared to explanation of purpose (1) and request for solution (1). The reason for such contrast may be due to the context itself. As the power-distance relation is equal and close, students could have considered it more appropriate to complain and give justifications directly. Interestingly, the CG and the EG used fewer justifications in the posttest than in the pretest (9 to 5, and 7 to 3, respectively). Look at the example below.

(46) No, it can't be! We had a deal. You promised… you promised that you won't watch the next episode without me. Oh no, man! I'm so sad now. (EGS2Pst)

All students who gave justifications used the argument that both the complainer and the complainee had agreed on watching every episode of the series together, hence, violating this agreement is an offense. Such use of this argument can be observed in example (46). For this reason, the student reminded the complainee of the promise he/she made.

4.6.3 Complaint strategies

In situation 7, CG and EG students favored more direct complaint strategies such as direct accusation, modified blame, explicit blame (action/behavior), and explicit blame

(person) over indirect strategies (hint, annoyance, consequence, and indirect accusation). In total, in both tests and groups, there were 8 cases of direct strategies, whereas 44 cases of direct strategies were identified. Comparing the CG and the EG, the CG did not use indirect strategies in the two tests, except for indirect accusation that one case was found in the pretest. Conversely, the EG did used indirect strategies in the pretest and posttest. Direct accusation was the most recurrent complaint strategy by both the CG and the EG. Look at the examples below.

(47) Why do you watch an episode of the show without me? We're supposed to be watching it together. (CGS8Pr)

(48) Hey! What's wrong with you? I thought we were going to watch all the episodes together. That was a really [unintelligible]. You could have at least told me you're going to watch it. (CGS2Pr)

(49) Oh my goodness, you promised and you failed. We had a deal, so now you're a liar. Get out of here! (EGS2Pr)

Whether it was a statement or a question (as in example 47), those students who uttered direct accusations let the complainee know that they had committed an offense because they did not keep their promise of not watching the series as in example 46. In fact, they provided justifications by saying the complainee had given their word. Then, example (48), the student said “What’s wrong with you?” which explicitly blames the complainee for an action or behavior perceived as offensive. Also, the student expressed a preferable course of action that falls into the modified blame strategy. Finally, a case of explicit blame (person) is shown in example (49). A statement such as “you’re a liar” represents that the complainee is a non-responsible person. In other words, the complainee is an untruthful, unreliable person.

4.6.4 Directive acts of complaining

There was an increase in the production of threat/warning and request for forbearance from the pretest to the posttest by both groups. The CG increased from cero to one both directive acts. In the same fashion, the EG went up one case of threat in the pretest (1) to the posttest (2) as well as request for forbearance (0 to 1, respectively). Look at the examples below.

(50) You must respect our agreement to watch our series together because then [unintelligible] respect the agreement. I'll continue to watching on my own. (EGS6Pst)

(51) What!? Did you just watch a episode? But why? We agree that we're not gonna watch any video or any episode without the other one. What would you do that? Right. Look, the problem is that you have looked this episode without me. The problem is that you don't respect the agreement that we made. So, I would like to... in the future, you respect the agreement that we have, so... we could spend this time together because, you know, both of us are working, have different things to do from college, and this is the only time that we can spend time together doing an activity that we both enjoy. So, yeah, that's.... that's what I mean like... really having fun each other with spending time together. So, please don't do it again, please. (CGS4Pst)

Out of the four cases of threat/warning, three involved the complainer watching the series without the complainee in an act of revenge (example 50). The other case was one student saying “I’m gonna kill you” which can be interpreted as a figurative threat referring to the degree of anger the complainer had at the moment. Example (51) shows a request for forbearance at the end of the response. This strategy was uncommon. Example (51) also demonstrates a case of verbosity which, as it was mentioned before, will be discussed in Chapter V.

4.6.5 Inadequacy

The CG had two cases of failure in the posttest while the EG had one in the pretest and the posttest. Both cases of failure in the EG were produced by the same student (S8) whereas the cases in the CG were uttered for different students. Another inadequacy found was an only case of criticism by a CG student in the posttest. Observe the examples below.

(52) Honey, I found that you watched the next episode of our serie. So, would you like to rewatch it with me or I could watch it and then we can continue? (CGS6Pst)

(53) Hey, babe. What are you doing? Uhm… I see what are you doing. And that's not correct 'cause we had an agreement and you broke. You don't *giggles*… <u>you don't mind nothing</u>. You are the worst person I've ever met. I have to say just that. (CGS7Pst)

Although the student in example (52) uttered “I found that you watched the next episode of our serie” this cannot be taken as a complaint because the participant never expressed either explicitly or implicitly that such action was offensive. Then, he/she asks his/her partner if they would like to rewatch the episode or let the student catch up with the episode and then continue watching the series without any problem. Also, the student used a

friendly tone at all times which was not the case in any of the cases of complaints. In example (53), the complainer used direct strategies such as explicit blame (person) by saying "you're the worst person I've ever met" but before that he/she criticized the complainee because he/she considered that the complainee is mindless of his/her partner or actions which may affect the relationship or others.

4.7 Complaining to a classmate (P=, D+)

Similar to the previous situation, situation 8 consisted of an interaction between two people with the same social power (P=) as the complainer acted the character of a student complaining to a fellow teammate who did not send their part of a school project, they all agreed to send on a specific day. Plus, the complainee did not respond to text messages or phone calls his/her teammates sent him to reach him/her. Such actions worsened the situation. The distance between the interlocutors is higher (D+) because they are not friends, just classmates. Details on the participants' responses in this setting are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Complaint strategies used in situation 8

	Control group (CG) (n=10)		Experimental group (EG) (n=10)	
	Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
Alerters				
Title/Role	-	1	-	1
Greeting	1	-	2	5
Endearment term	-	-	-	1
Apology expression	3	2	1	2
Attention getter	4	3	3	1
Semantic steps				
Explanation of purpose	2	1	1	2
Complaint	10	10	9	10
Justification	6	5	3	3
Request for solution	3	-	-	-

Complaint strategies				
Hints	1	2	-	1
Annoyance	1	-	2	4
Consequence	4	1	4	3
Indirect accusation	1	-	-	-
Direct accusation	7	9	9	7
Modified blame	1	2	2	3
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	-	-	2	1
Directive acts of complaining				
Threat/Warning	1	1	-	-
Request for forbearance	-	1	1	-
Inadequacy				
Failure	-	-	1	-
Criticism	1	1	-	-

4.7.1 Alerters

In the pretest, attention-getter was the preferred alerter by the CG (4) and the EG (3). Then, in the posttest, the CG kept using attention-getters (3) more, whereas the EG favored greetings (5). Those students who used attention-getters and/or greetings favored expressions such as “Hey” and “Hello/Hi”. In the case of other alerters, apology expression appeared less in the CG’s posttest while the EG had a slight increase from the pretest (1) to the posttest (2). The least used alerter was endearment term with one case in the EG’s posttest.

4.7.2 Semantic steps

Justification was the most used semantic step. The CG’ produced the highest number of cases of justification in the pretest (6) and the posttest (5) compared to the EG which had the same frequency (3) in both tests. Explanation of purpose was another consistent semantic step in both tests, however, the CG had a reduction from the pretest (2) to the posttest (1), whereas the EG suffered the opposite effect. The least frequent step was candidate’s solution with three cases in the CG’s pretest.

(54) I'm sorry I have to say this but you're off the team. And I consider you must be responsible and take the commitment to choose the task and the teamwork. (EGS1Pst)

(55) Uhm… I'm sorry but if you didn't remember we all had agreed that our specific tasks needed to be sent on Friday night and you didn't send anything. You didn't answer my messages, not even my calls. So, again, I'm sorry but you're not part of this team anymore. (CGS3Pst)

In example (54), the student used a phrase composed of an apology expression plus a statement that allowed the complainer to signal what the conversation was going to be about. Although the beginning of the response may be already direct and off-putting for the complainee, such a statement was not the focus of what the students wanted to communicate but the complaint he/she followed to give. Then, example (55) used the underlined phrase as a justification which was a fact and the reason why the complainee committed an offense. The justifications given in this situation were commonly centered on the agreement the team had and how much the team waited for their part or tried to contact him/her.

4.7.3 Complaint strategies

In the pretest and the posttest, the CG and the EG favored the use of direct accusations (32) by a significant difference among the strategies of consequence (12), modified blame (8), annoyance (7), hints (4), explicit blame (action/behavior) (3), and indirect accusation (1). From another perspective, both groups opted for more direct strategies (direct accusation, modified blame, and explicit blame) over indirect strategies (hint, annoyance, consequence, indirect accusation) overall, especially by the EG. Indeed, the EG did not realize hints whereas the CG had three cases of this strategy. Plus, explicit blame (action/behavior) was

detected only in the EG's pretest (2) and the posttest (2). Look at the examples below for reference.

(56) Hi, how are you? Uhm, I think we all agreed to send our part of the project because we had to hand it in today, but you didn't do it. And your part is the only part missing, and we want to know what happened to you because you didn't say anything. We texted you, we called you, and you didn't answer. And our project is... isn't complete because of you, basically *giggles* and... uhm... what happened. You could tell us something like "I'm sorry, guys. I have a... medical appointment", "Sorry, guys. I have... I am busy. Can you please help me?" or something like that, but you didn't say anything. And your part is still missing, and we need to hand in the project, so... what happened? What are we gonna do? We're a team and if... if we don't hand in the project, you are not gonna hand in the project. WE are not gonna hand in the project, so I hope you... you do have your part because I don't know what we're going to do if you don't have it. So, I... I hope you're have your part or [unintelligible] (EGS4Pst)

(57) Your action is unfair. We might lost the assignment grade. (EGS7Pst)

There are multiple complaint strategies in example (56) such as annoyance ("your part [of the work] is the only part missing" and "our project isn't complete"), consequence ("we are not gonna hand in the project"), direct accusation ("you didn't do it", "you didn't say anything", "you didn't answer", and "because of you"), and modified blame ("you could tell us something"). Producing more than one strategy was common as example (57) shows too. The phrase "your action is unfair" was taken as explicit blame as it emphasized on the complainable. Then, the student produced a consequence with the modal verb "might" which shows probability. As in other cases, the complaint strategy of consequence is not always constructed with "will" as there are varied forms of expressing negative outcomes due to other people's actions/behaviors.

4.7.4 Directive acts of complaining

Threat/warning and request for forbearance were the two directive acts that were found in a few responses. The CG had one case of threat in the pretest and the posttest, whereas the EG had cero cases. Then, request for forbearance only appeared in the CG's posttest and the EG's pretest. Examples of these acts are presented as follows.

(58) Where were you? We were waiting for your part of the project but you didn't answer. We called you, we sent you a lot of messages. You know this pr… this project is very important. If we don't put that part, we are going to talk to the teacher because this is a serious business. We need to have this project done by tomorrow. (CGS9Pst)

(59) Look, I totally understand if you had other assignments or some other things to do, but this assignment is important as well. I mean, we're a team, and basically, we depend on each other. So, I don't think that is correct that you just disappear and then show up like nothing happened when I think you know that you haven't sent your information that is the only information missing on the work. So, I'm just asking you to be a little bit more responsible because that could affect ALL of us, not only you. All of us. So, please try to be more respo... *audio ends*

Both cases of threat were produced by the same student. This student used the argument of reporting the situation to the teacher in order to protect themselves (the students who completed the task and the complainer) and evidence the complainee for his/her actions (example 58). Then, example (59) included an interesting request for forbearance. Compared to previous cases of forbearance in other situations, example (59) did not include expressions such as "Don't do it again", instead the complainer requested the complainee to make an effort in changing his/her behavior towards future assignments.

4.7.5 Inadequacy

Interestingly, there was one case of failure in both the EG's pretest and posttest contrary to the CG which had none. In the opposite way, the CG was the only group with cases of criticism in the pretest (1) and the posttest (1), whereas cero cases were found in the EG. Look at the examples below.

(60) Hello… Hello, it's me again. Ugh, I don't know what happened to you this… this week or I don't know what is going on with you but please send you part, okay? If you need help tell me because it's… ugh… so exhausted to think about… we don't complete the work, okay? And this project is going to be for the next week, so please tell me that you're fine and if you need help tell us because feel so... ugh... horrible to think that the project is not complete. So, please answer, okay? And please send yours... your part. Ugh... I hope you're well but please help me to help you, okay? Fine. Bye. (EGS3Pr)

(61) Well, looks like someone decided to take an extended vacation from all project. With this, I assume you don't mind. Any reason why you disappeared and didn't send your work on time? (CGS8Pst)

The response shown in example (60) failed to realize the speech act of complaining because the students never expressed that the actions of the teammate who did not send his part of the project were perceived as offensive. In fact, the participant offered to help him/her and used a rather friendly tone. The reason for this may lie in how the participant understood the situation. Based on his/her response, the participant pretended to send a voice message and implicitly expressed there was still time to complete the project. All the other responses analyzed in situation 8 were given as the project deadline was about to or had expired. For example (61), the student criticized the complainee's actions in a sarcastic tone which might have made the complainer lose face.

4.8 Length of students' responses

The number of words in the 240 responses collected was counted to observe and identify the length of the student's answers in each situation and compare them to other students in the same group, the other group, and the pretest (Pr) and the posttest (Pst). This brief analysis focuses on those responses that had the greatest number of words (highlighted in yellow) in comparison to the range of number of words the majority of answers have. The range of words in each situation and test is determined by the response with the lowest number of words and the sixth response, no matter the difference between the two. For example, in the pretest of situation 1 the range is 16-23 words. In this sense, 6 of 10 students, which each group has, is considered the majority for this analysis. All the information is presented in Tables 10 and 11 for the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG), respectively.

Table 10. Number of words in CG's responses

Control group (CG)	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 4		Situation 5		Situation 7		Situation 8	
	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst
S1	20	23	22	26	32	32	28	19	14	17	18	25
S2	40	32	35	25	48	40	32	26	32	18	50	26
S3	22	20	47	33	58	76	101	89	24	34	47	50
S4	30	40	57	61	142	165	133	127	92	135	121	156
S5	23	23	26	32	49	35	47	37	16	20	46	43
S6	16	27	17	26	40	35	25	21	15	31	27	40
S7	59	37	66	37	93	93	58	67	56	45	88	91
S8	19	12	11	30	31	33	25	43	18	29	35	32
S9	37	27	42	45	109	119	66	57	102	54	99	64
S10	22	53	51	81	113	122	88	91	85	130	124	161
Total:	288	294	374	396	715	750	603	577	454	513	655	688
AWS	28.8	29.4	37.4	39.6	71.5	75	60.3	57.7	45.4	51.3	65.5	68.8

AWS = Average words per student

As can be observed in Table 10, there are 33 responses that significantly passed the range of words per test and situation. Most of these extensive responses were produced by

S4 (10) and S10 (10). S7 (7) also produced nearly the same number of lengthy responses. Two other students provided similar responses less frequently (S3 and S9). Moreover, the situations with the most number of words used per student in both tests are situations 4 and 8. All these answers are determined to be extensive as they commonly contained multiple phrases for a particular strategy (e.g., justification), and evidence of hesitation and/or struggle to construct their ideas. Observe the example below.

(62) Alright, so we finished it up with all the things that we have to do. Uhm… I wanted to talk to you if it possible because you've been arriving late here to the time that we agreed to close the store, and this causing me problems because, you know, I have housework to do at my home because I have to help my mom with this stuff at home. And even that, I have to do my homework from the college. I'm getting more projects and it's gonna... it's getting difficult for me to... to do it to the time that we're closing the store so, I would REALLY, REALLY appreciate that if we could close the store at 9 that... This is like the hour that we agreed, so I don't know if there would be like... the possibility to really close at that time to me to get to my home on time and do all my duties that I have to do. (CGS4Pr – situation 4)

Example (62) perfectly illustrates the tendency of using various justifications or more than one phrase of a particular strategy such as candidate's solution. These factors made these responses to be extensive and, in some cases, repetitive because one justification was expressed several times with different linguistic choices (e.g., verb tense, word order, etc.).

In the EG, lengthy responses happened in a slightly fewer number (29 in total) but were produced by a higher number of students (8) compared to the control group (5). Table 11 shows more detailed information about the EG' responses in terms of the amount of words used.

Table 11. Number of words in EG's responses

Experimental group (EG)	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 4		Situation 5		Situation 7		Situation 8	
	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst	Pr	Pst
S1	31	26	29	24	77	49	34	46	29	15	61	30
S2	15	50	17	67	29	50	29	43	21	28	40	51
S3	46	38	92	53	98	134	97	96	94	97	115	139
S4	23	25	35	44	100	131	124	164	135	152	104	193
S5	75	48	43	81	79	75	40	50	26	57	46	73
S6	20	36	32	38	51	44	30	39	26	22	15	35
S7	22	25	68	19	59	28	0	16	27	10	40	10
S8	38	21	6	2	114	93	42	45	17	32	65	36
S9	33	32	19	23	94	69	24	63	28	51	56	70
S10	40	46	43	58	75	78	74	64	45	23	41	45
Total:	343	347	384	409	776	751	494	626	448	487	583	682
AWS	34.3	34.7	38.4	40.9	77.6	75.1	49.4	62.6	44.8	48.7	58.3	68.2

AWS = Average words per student

There were 8 students who gave extensive responses. The students with the most number of this type of answer were S3 (9) and S4 (8). The other 6 students uttered three extensive responses (S5 and S10), two (S2 and S8), and one (S7 and S9). Similar to the CG, situations 4 and 8 had the responses with the highest number of words per student. An interesting case can be observed in the pretest of situation 5. The 0 corresponds to the only case of opting out found in the entire study. Observe the example below.

(63) Hi, how are you? Uhm, I think we all agreed to send our part of the project because we had to hand it in today, but you didn't do it. And your part, is the only part missing, and we want to know what happened to you because you didn't say anything. We texted you, we called you, and you didn't answer. And our project is... isn't complete because of you, basically *giggles* and... uhm... what happened. You could tell us something like "I'm sorry, guys. I have a... medical appointment", "Sorry, guys. I have... I am busy. Can you please help me?" or something like that, but you didn't say anything. And your part is still missing, and we need to hand in the project, so... what happened? What are we gonna do? We're a team and if... if we don't hand in the project, you are not gonna hand in the project. WE are not gonna hand in the project, so I hope you... you do have your part because I don't know what we're going to do if you don't have it. So, I... I hope you're have your part or [unintelligible]. (EGS4Pst – situation 8)

The example above includes various complaint strategies and justifications, as well as distinct phrases of a particular justification. Such repetition made the response long and redundant. Also, there is evidence of hesitation when using filler forms such as “uhm” and repeating words (“if… if”, “I… I”). The production of extensive responses like the ones shown before may be caused by the nature of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as there is no other interacting person, hence, there is no chance to be interrupted.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the analysis of a total of 240 responses in terms of the alerters, semantic steps, complaint strategies, directive acts of complaining, inadequacies, and the number of words used. Also, relevant responses were provided as examples of specific strategies or characteristics such as word choice or phenomena. The students’ responses in each of the six different situations were compared according to other students within the same group and the other group (control group and experimental group), as well as between the pretest and the posttest. Chapter V presents the final conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion based on the findings of this study and some implications identified in the explicit pragmatic instruction on complaints for Mexican pre-service EFL teachers at a public university (BUAP) in central Mexico. Moreover, results and conclusions from other studies in pragmatic instruction are drawn and presented to compare with this research paper in order to determine the limitations of the present study and some aspects to consider in further research on this field of study. Also, this section provides answers to the research questions stated in Chapter I of this study.

1) What complaint strategies does the experimental group (EG) use to perform the speech act of complaint in English? What about the control group (CG)?
2) How different are the EG's responses to the CG's?
3) To what extent does the pragmatic awareness instruction influence the EG's realization of American English complaints compared to the CG?

5.2 Complaint strategies preferences

Focusing on the eight complaint strategies proposed by Trosborg (1995) in which 1 is the most indirect strategy a speaker can use to express dissatisfaction and 8 is the most direct strategy, it can be considered that the first four strategies are indirect strategies while the other four are direct (see Figure 8). Based on this spectrum of (in)directness of

complaints, conclusions for this study are drawn on the preferences of both the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG) for complaining in six differentiated situations.

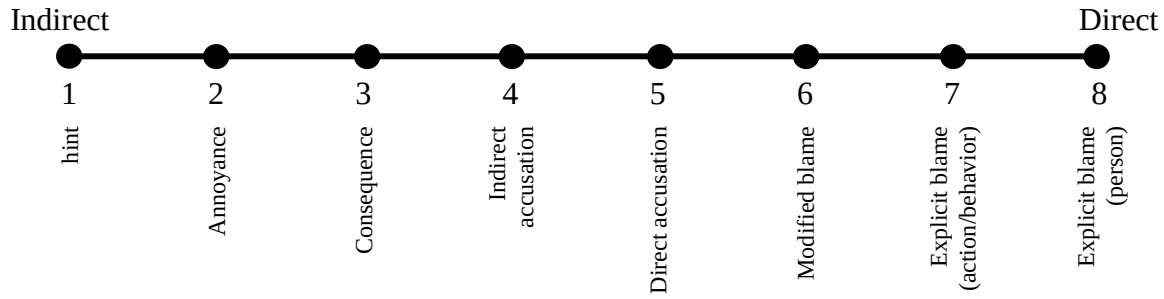

Figure 8. (In)directness of complaint strategies by Trosborg (1995)

In the pretest and posttest, the EG produced more direct complaint strategies (direct accusation, modified blame, etc.) when the position of power was higher (P+) with closeness (D-) (situation 2) and equal power (P=) no matter how close the interlocutors were (situations 7 and 8). The preferred strategy to directly complain was direct accusation. In situations 4 and 5, where the complainer had a lower power status (P-), students opted for more indirect strategies, especially consequence. Conversely, Rashidi (2017) found that Saudi EFL speakers and American English native speakers did not have important differences in the performance of complaints in contexts with equal power and close and high distance as they preferred to use hints, requests for repair, and annoyance. Such contrasting results may indicate evidence of negative pragmatic transfer in this study. Interestingly, the CG had similar results in situation 2 to Rashidi's findings. The CG students focused more on expressing their annoyance about the complainable as it was the strategy with the highest frequency. As for situation 5, there was an opposite result to the EG. In this situation, the CG produced more direct strategies, especially modified blame. Such preference may be due to who the complainee is (mother). Students emphasized their desire to be notified beforehand

of doing anything without permission or simply not doing it as such actions are inappropriate and somehow offensive. In situation 4, the production of direct and indirect strategies was the same in the posttest. Nonetheless, considering the pretest it can be observed that more indirect strategies were used by the CG.

The use of indirect strategies when complaining to someone in a higher position (mother, boss) is identified as a way to "save face" and avoid conflict or misinterpretation. This statement is supported by the various students' responses that employed expressions of apology (I'm sorry), appreciation (Thank you for…/I appreciate…), and justification of the complainee (I know you are busy) as a way to mitigate responsibility for the offense committed. These linguistic choices demonstrate awareness of the other person's face and seek to protect their own in order to increase the probability of attaining a positive outcome (e.g., solution, forbearance). Similarly, complaining to a stranger no matter the power position a speaker holds reflects respect for them in Mexican culture. This is observable in situation 1 as participants realized annoyance more frequently notwithstanding they possessed more power over the server (complainee). Such a result may be influenced by L1 pragmatic knowledge and generational differences. Differently, Kaharuddin and Hasym (2020) identified that native speakers of English produced more explicit complaints and direct accusations when the offender was a stranger.

As previously discussed, direct strategies imply a greater risk of losing face as the complainer explicitly accuses or blames the offender for a given unconformity. Decock and Depraetere (2018) argue that Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy of complaints considers the degree of face threat as part of their explicitness/implicitness criteria for evaluating how direct or indirect complaints can be in American culture. In fact, in all cases in which direct strategies were used in this study the pronoun "you" and/or a complainable-referencing noun were

included in the responses. Although students also held a higher status in situation 1, the distance between the complainer and complainee was higher (D+), leading to more indirect strategies (hint, annoyance, etc.). Variations in distance (D) indicate that lower distance (D-) between interlocutors sets a familiar environment in which they can communicate their emotions more "freely" and say things straightforwardly, while higher distance (D+) tends to unfold more indirect ways of communicating dissatisfaction, except for strangers.

5.3 Complaint strategy differences

Counting the number of different complaint strategies and directive acts (threat/warning, request for forbearance) used in both tests in all situations by the CG and the EG, it can be concluded that the EG used more varied strategies than the CG. Plus, while the CG's variety of strategies was reduced in two from the pretest to the posttest, the EG increased in one strategy in the posttest. Additionally, the CG had more inadequacies than the EG. Analyzing the overall performance in both tests, the CG had 10 cases of failure while the EG had less than half of that (4), similar to criticism which the CG had 3 and the EG only one. In more detail, the CG slightly increased their criticism from the pretest to the posttest, whereas the EG had the opposite effect after the intervention. Then, opting out was only found in the EG with 2 cases. Besides all this, there were little differences between the CG's and the EG's production of complaints.

Now, let's talk about the similarities between both groups' responses. One of the most noticeable features of the students' responses in both groups was the language inability of some students to express their ideas grammatically correctly. It can be observed in the examples provided in the data analysis in Chapter IV that there were grammar errors with verb tense conjugation, prepositions, word order, prefixes, or suffixes, etc. It is evident that

when students struggled to communicate, they used fillers such as “Mmm”, “Uhm”, and “Ehm” to take some time and think about what they would say next. Also, repeating words (I told you I…I) can serve the same purpose. The use of fillers or repetition of words is not bad, however, overusing them may denote difficulty to express or overthinking. Also, mispronunciation was another evidence of language inability. This was particularly common and hard in the transcription process. Some students’ enunciation and pronunciation may have affected the accuracy and clarity of their responses resulting in unintelligible bits of their responses, especially when the incomprehensible parts apparently contained imperative information to complete a complaint. Notwithstanding the factors aforementioned that may have influenced miscommunication, these are part of language production. And, as it was noticed in the analysis, the cases of failure were perceived to be the result of comprehension issues. That is to say, the students did not understand the description of the situation.

5.4 The influence of pragmatic awareness instruction

In order to determine the extent to which the pragmatic raising-awareness instruction influenced the experimental group’s realization of English complaints the results of both groups in the pretest need to be compared first. Dividing the complaint strategies into direct and indirect strategies, both CG and EG had similar tendencies. They both produced indirect complaint strategies to a higher frequency in situations 1, 4, and 5; and more direct strategies in situations 7 and 8. The only setting in which they had opposite results was situation 2. Another important observation is that the CG had a difference of 1 strategy in situation 5 (indirect 7 – direct 6) and situation 8 (indirect 7 – direct 8) while the EG had more significant differences. Now, looking at the results in the posttest, there are more contrarieties. The EG and the CG had opposite results in situations 2 (CG: indirect – EG: direct) and 5 (CG: direct

– EG: indirect). Also, in situation 4 the CG had the same number of direct (5) and indirect (5) strategies, while the EG had significantly more indirect. Then, it can be identified that the students already had a preference for indirect strategies in situations 1, 4, and 5, and for direct strategies in situations 2, 7, and 8 in the pretest. Such preferred types of strategies remained the same in the posttest.

Based on the brief comparison above, it can be determined that pragmatic instruction had little or null influence on the production of English complaints in the EG. The only possible tracks of evidence of such influence can be seen in situation 1 where students used a bit more direct strategies, in situation 4 where there were a slight reduction of direct strategies and a slight increase of indirect ones in the posttest, situation 5 presented fewer indirect strategies in the posttest, and situation 8 where there were a bit more indirect strategies and less direct ones compared to the pretest. However, these small differences are insufficient to demonstrate a significant influence of the pragmatic instruction on the participants' English complaints.

5.5 Limitations of the study

This study has some limitations that need to be stated. First, this study consisted of a 9-hour pragmatic instruction which compared to similar studies can be considered limited or insufficient to provide students with the necessary time to learn and practice all the related content of a particular speech act. Second, as the participants answered both pretest and posttest as extra assignments, the data collection procedure took longer than expected as students were given more than a week to complete the DCTs, hence, the reliability of the data collected may have been jeopardized, especially if participants prepared their answers before recording. Another difficulty was during the pragmatic instruction. The six 90-minute

sessions were scheduled with the consent of the teacher in charge one week prior to the intervention, however, one session was postponed due to the permission granted by the university (BUAP) to attend the Women's Day protest that would take place on March 8th. Also, the professor in charge could not arrive at class on two occasions because of emergencies. This situation caused some students not attend to class or were less participative as the professor was absent. Finally, pragmatic instruction was based on theory and pragmatic teaching techniques/methods proposed by other researchers, however, no one specifically trained in pragmatic instruction was in charge of the intervention.

5.6 Suggestions for further research

Little research has been conducted on the speech act of complaints in Spanish, let alone in Mexico. Hence, it would be interesting and important to deeply explore the sociocultural and contextual variables that determine the use of specific linguistic forms to perform varied Mexican Spanish speech acts. This type of information may serve as a database to compare speech acts realizations in the Mexican Spanish context to other languages and cultures so positive or negative pragmatic transfer may be identified. Another aspect that needs more exploration is the amount of L2 pragmatic instruction needed to gain meaningful knowledge and pragmatic competence. Studies with different amounts of instruction spanned at varied lengths have been conducted and yet the relation between pragmatic development and time of instruction seems to be unclear (Li, 2013). Lastly, researching more on how distinct audiovisual materials (e.g., TV series, movies, talk shows, etc.) may help EFL learners to learn L2 pragmatics should be explored more. Especially because each possesses particular features that may influence the way speech acts are realized.

5.7 Implications

I believe this study can shed some light on the type of materials, resources, and activities that can be incorporated into the language classroom to teach EFL students what linguistic forms are available in the L2 to produce complaints (pragmalinguistic knowledge) and under what contexts such language choices are appropriate (sociopragmatic knowledge). Additionally, this study also provides evidence of the approximate minimum time that explicit pragmatic instruction requires to attain meaningful results as some similar studies on pragmatic instruction have implemented 20 minutes in one session (Salazar-Campillo, 2003), 20 hours over one month (Halenko & Flores-Salgado, 2021), and 24 hours during an academic semester (12 weeks) (Fouad Rashid & Özge, 2022). Finally, I would raise awareness of the importance of pragmatic instruction training for not just developing and extending EFL teachers' teaching skills and knowledge but also their own L2 pragmatic competence.

5.8 Conclusions

Based on the results of this present study, I can conclude that pragmatic instruction on complaints, and I dare to say, in any other speech act, is an ambitious and time-consuming effort to teach EFL learners how to communicate appropriately in the target language. Although the use of appealing materials such as movie clips or similar audiovisual resources may engage students in the language learning process and enhance the opportunities to be exposed to L2 pragmatic input, this teaching method is not easy to incorporate in the language classroom. The reason for this statement is that first of all, the place where the language instruction takes place needs to have technological facilities (television, Internet connection,

or computer) in order to do the tasks described in this study. Generally speaking, I believe that there must be other more efficient ways of helping language students to learn what to say, how to say it, where to say it, and when to say it. In the case of non-native pre-service English teachers, the development of their pragmatic competence is fundamental during and after their academic formation. Unfortunately, and it has been mentioned in this and other studies, English coursebooks fail to provide reliable, natural, and updated pragmatic information. Hence, non-native English teachers need to become resourceful and autonomous in their own pragmatic competence development.

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APPENDIX 1

Situations used in the Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs)
(pretest and posttest)

Situation 1

You are at a restaurant and order a burger with no onion because you don't like it. Your food arrives and you proceed to eat, then you taste onion with the first bite. You check and notice there is onion in your burger. You call for the server. The server comes to your table.
You say:

Situation 2

After doing homework, you decide to watch some Netflix to relax. You take your iPad as it is more comfortable for you to lay down and enjoy your series in bed. Then you notice the screen of the tablet is broken. You are not happy about it. The only other person that uses your iPad is your younger brother so you go to his bedroom to talk to him. You are the older brother.
You say to him:

Situation 3

You are at your best friend's house visiting him/her. Time passed by and it is quite late at night and you don't have a car to get home. You ask your friend for a ride home.
You say:

Situation 4

You work at a clothing store from 1:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. You have to wait for your boss to close the store at the end of your shift. For the past two weeks, your boss has arrived late. This causes you to get home later than usual and makes you go to sleep even later due to housework and assignments from college. One night, your boss arrives late again, and you decide to speak out.
You say:

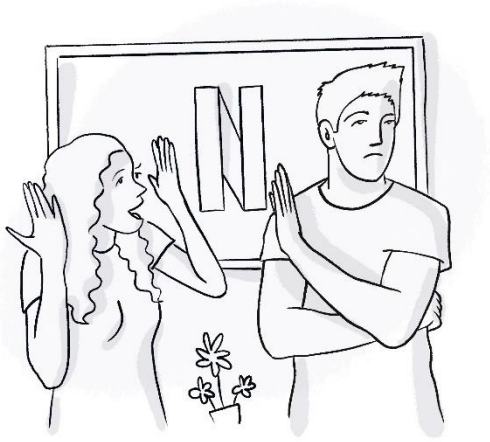
Situation 5

You are not a very organized person but always remember where to find your things in your house. You live alone and one day your mother comes to visit. While you are away, she decides to clean up your place without letting you know. When you get home your mother tells you what she did. You don't like this.
You say to her:

Situation 6

You are really good at sports and perform greatly in P.E. The football coach invites you to become part of the football team, but you are not interested in playing in a competitive way for now due to other interests you have.
You say:

Situation 7



You and your boyfriend/girlfriend always watch their favorite series together and agreed not to watch any episodes without the other. One day, you discover s/he watched an episode without you.
You say:

Situation 8

You are working with two other classmates on a school project. You all agree to assign specific tasks and send their part of the work to you on Friday night to put it all together. One of your teammates does not send you their work and does not answer your text messages/calls. The next day, she answers back. You are upset.
You say to her:

APPENDIX 2

Pragmatic raising-awareness activities (Hilliard, 2017)

Activity 1

Discussion Questions for Complaining (adapted from Hilliard, 2017)
1. What is a complaint? What are some situations in which you might complain to someone? 2. What do people say to complain in Mexican Spanish? How is it different from what people say to express a complaint in American English? 3. Is it common to complain about bad service in Mexico? Is it common to complain to a parent, teacher/professor, or boss? Why or why not? 4. Would you complain differently to a friend, a stranger, a server, or a parent? Why or why not? 5. How (in)direct are complaints in Spanish? What about in English? If there is a difference, why?

Activity 2

Comparing complaints in the L1 to English		
Instructions: Imagine you are complaining to someone in your first language. Write down what you would say for four situations in the chart below, and then translate them directly to English without changing anything. How does the English version sound?		
	Your first language	**English**
Situation 1: You got a low grade in your French language class. You think it is unfair. Complain to the professor.		
Situation 2: You are waiting for your best friend at the movies. You agreed to meet at 5 PM. It is 5:30 PM. You call him/her to complain.		
Situation 3: You are staying at a hotel. You wanted to take a shower but noticed there is no hot water. You call reception to complain.		

Situation 4: You told something very personal to your younger sibling. You discover s/he told your mother about it. You complain to your sibling.		

Activity 3

Presenting L2 strategies for complaining
Part 1 Imagine your neighbor is having a loud party, and it is getting late. You need to sleep and wake up early tomorrow. How would you complain to your neighbor? In English, there are four basic steps for complaining, as shown in this example: Step 1. Greeting: "Hi, I'm your next-door neighbor." Step 2. Complaint: "It's pretty loud." Step 3. Explanation: "I have to work tomorrow" Step 4. Request: "And I was wondering if you could, maybe, tone it down just a little and not be so quite loud."
Part 2 Now imagine you want to complain to a server at a restaurant. Can you put the following phrases in order to make a complaint? "Can you take it back?" "I don't think you have the right order for me." "Um, excuse me." "I'm a vegetarian, but you brought me a burger." Step 1. Greeting: _____. Step 2. Complaint: _____. Step 3. Explanation: _____. Step 4. Request: _____.
Part 3 Now make your own complaint. Imagine that you share an apartment with another student. S/he often leaves the dishes in the sink unclean. This bothers you. Complain to your roommate.

Step 1. Greeting: _____. Step 2. Complaint: _____. Step 3. Explanation: _____. Step 4. Request: _____.

Activity 4

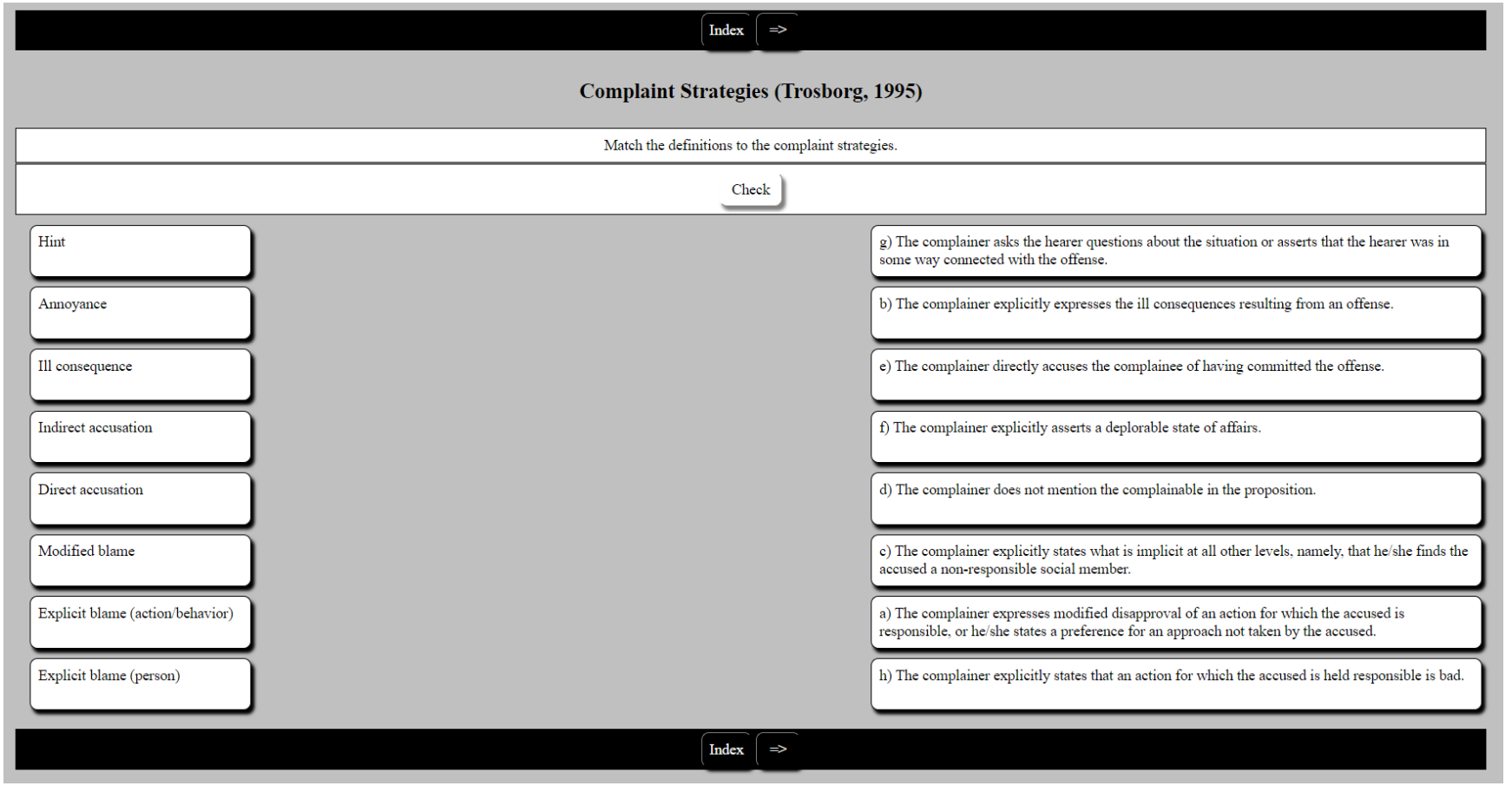
Analyzing and repairing pragmatic errors.
Instructions: Your friend goes to complain to his French language teacher about his grade, but the teacher gets upset with him. Look at what your friend said below. How would you change his complaint, so the teacher does not get upset? Why should he say things differently?
Student: I want to talk about my grade. **Teacher:** Okay, what seems to be the problem? **Student:** It's not fair. Everyone in the class got an A except me. It's not fair. You gave me a low grade. Is there something wrong with me? Why do you hate me? **Teacher:** I'm not treating you unfairly. You don't attend my class regularly, and you didn't do very well on the last test. That's why your grade is low. **Student:** I have an American friend, and he always helps me. So, I'm 100 percent sure that my answers are correct. So don't tell me they're wrong or something, because I'm sure. **Teacher:** I'm sorry, but we went over the answers to the test in class. Your answers were not correct. If you want, we can go over the answers again and I can explain them to you. **Student:** No, I don't want to go over the test. I'm gonna go to the office and complain about you. I will wait till tomorrow. If nothing changes, I'm gonna go to the office and complain. I don't want to do that, but…

Activity 5 - **Developing pragmalinguistics through grammar and vocabulary instruction.**

Step 1: Saying you have a complaint 1. Excuse me, but I'd like to make a complaint… 2. I'm sorry to bother you, but I think there's something wrong with… 3. I'm sorry to have to say this, but there's a slight problem with… 4. Excuse me, but there appears/ seems to be a problem with… (Adapted from: www.teach-this.com/images/resources/complaining-and-apologizinguseful-language.pdf)
Step 2: Stating the problem **Complaints can be statements reacting to a negative behavior, attitude, or habit.** Examples: 1. My students don't turn in their homework on time. 2. Children spend too much time playing video games. **Complaints can also be statements reacting to a condition.** Examples: 1. The office is too hot. 2. This city has too much air pollution. 3. Rent is too expensive in this neighborhood. (Adapted from: www.teach-this.com/images/resources/complaints-apologies-andrequests.pdf)
Step 3: Making a request **Request usually follow a complaint. Use "please", "I would be grateful", or "I would appreciate it" to make a request more polite.** Examples: 1. Could/Can you please … [turn in your homework at the beginning of class]? 2. I would be grateful if you could/would … [come to class on time]. 3. I would appreciate it if you could/would … [clean up your room]. ***Must* and/or *insist* make a request stronger:** 1 . You must … [turn in your homework at the beginning of class]. 2. I must insist that you … [come to class on time]. (Adapted from: www.teach-this.com/images/resources/complaints-apologies-andrequests.pdf)
Practice: Make a complaint for the following situation: You're eating at a restaurant, but the service has been slow, the server brought the wrong order, and the silverware is dirty. Use the vocabulary above to complain to the server and make a request.

APPENDIX 3

Interactive matching exercises (created on Hot Potato)



Index =>

Complaint Strategies (Trosborg, 1995)

Match the definitions to the complaint strategies.

Check

Hint	g) The complainer asks the hearer questions about the situation or asserts that the hearer was in some way connected with the offense.
Annoyance	b) The complainer explicitly expresses the ill consequences resulting from an offense.
Ill consequence	e) The complainer directly accuses the complainee of having committed the offense.
Indirect accusation	f) The complainer explicitly asserts a deplorable state of affairs.
Direct accusation	d) The complainer does not mention the complainable in the proposition.
Modified blame	c) The complainer explicitly states what is implicit at all other levels, namely, that he/she finds the accused a non-responsible social member.
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	a) The complainer expresses modified disapproval of an action for which the accused is responsible, or he/she states a preference for an approach not taken by the accused.
Explicit blame (person)	h) The complainer explicitly states that an action for which the accused is held responsible is bad.

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Complaint Strategies (Trosborg, 1995)

Match the utterance examples with the complaint strategies.

Check

Hint	h) Oh, damn it, I'll lose my insurance bonus now.
Annoyance	a) Oh no, not again! You really are thoughtless.
Ill consequence	c) There was nothing wrong with my car yesterday.
Indirect accusation	f) Did you happen to bump into my car?
Direct accusation	b) I can't believe you took my car without my permission and dented it.
Modified blame	d) You borrowed my car last night, didn't you?
Explicit blame (action/behavior)	e) You should take more care with other people's cars.
Explicit blame (person)	g) There's a horrible dent in my car.

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Complaint speech act set (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983)

Match the components of the speech act set of complaining to the correct example sentences.

Check

Explanation of purpose	Hello, uh I've just been notified that my flight was canceled and…
Complaint	Can you put me on the next flight?
Justification	I need to be in Madrid tomorrow morning. I have an important business meeting.
Candidate's solution	I really hope it is not. First, you told me there was a delay and I have been waiting for 4 hours. You can't do this.

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(In)directness in complaints (Trosborg, 1995)

Order the complaints according to the degree of directness (where 1 is the most indirect complaint and 8 is the most direct complaint).

Check

1	g) Did you wear my blouse by any chance?
2	d)There's a stain on my blouse.
3	b) You are really mean.
4	f) Odd, my blouse was perfectly clean last night.
5	h) Terrible, this stain won't ever come off.
6	a) You've stained my blouse.
7	e) I think it's mean that you just take my things.
8	c) You shouldn't have taken my blouse without asking my permission.

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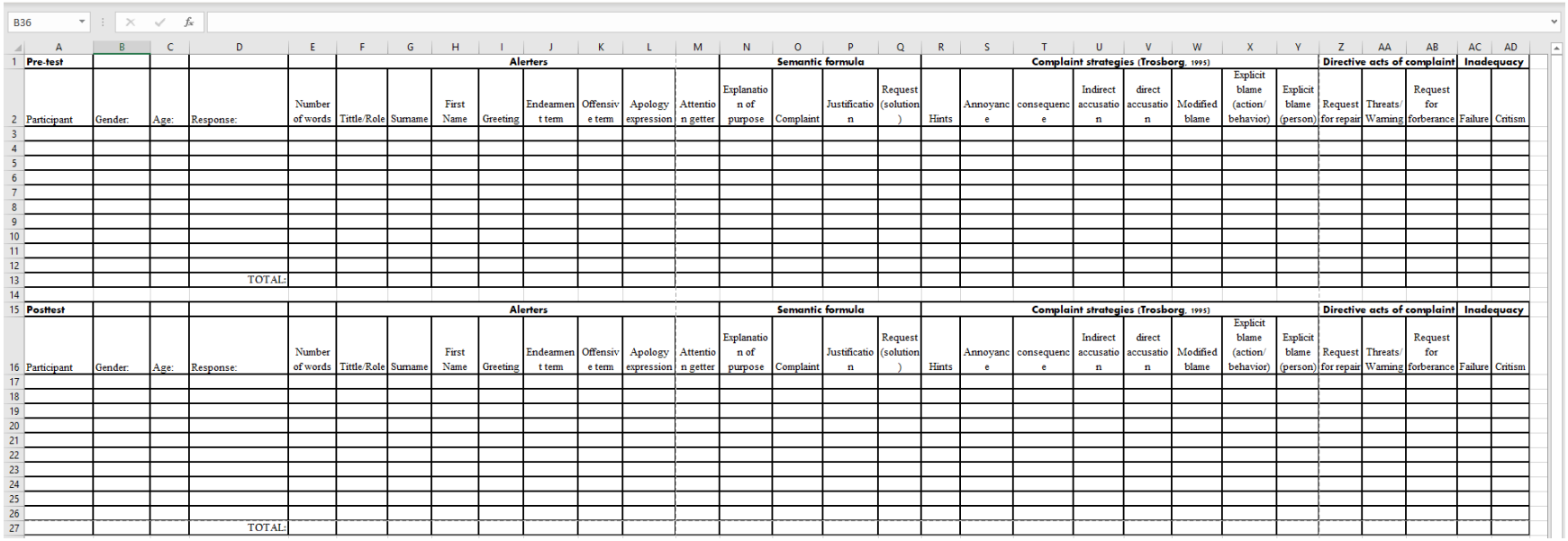
APPENDIX 4

Example of Excel worksheet used in the data analysis



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC	AD
1	**Pre-test**					**Alerters**								**Semantic formula**				**Complaint strategies (Trosborg, 1995)**								**Directive acts of complaint**			**Inadequacy**	
2	Participant	Gender:	Age:	Response:	Number of words	Tittle/Role	Surname	First Name	Greeting	Endearment term	Offensive term	Apology expression	Attention getter	Explanation of purpose	Complaint	Justification	Request (solution)	Hints	Annoyance	consequence	Indirect accusation	direct accusation	Modified blame	Explicit blame (action/ behavior)	Explicit blame (person)	Request for repair	Threats/ Warning	Request for forberance	Failure	Critism
3																														
4																														
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8																														
9																														
10																														
11																														
12																														
13				TOTAL:																										
14																														
15	**Posttest**					**Alerters**								**Semantic formula**				**Complaint strategies (Trosborg, 1995)**								**Directive acts of complaint**			**Inadequacy**	
16	Participant	Gender:	Age:	Response:	Number of words	Tittle/Role	Surname	First Name	Greeting	Endearment term	Offensive term	Apology expression	Attention getter	Explanation of purpose	Complaint	Justification	Request (solution)	Hints	Annoyance	consequence	Indirect accusation	direct accusation	Modified blame	Explicit blame (action/ behavior)	Explicit blame (person)	Request for repair	Threats/ Warning	Request for forberance	Failure	Critism
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