



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

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**FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

**COMPLIMENT RESPONDING IN L2 LEARNERS OF  
SPANISH: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY ON OVERSEAS  
EXCHANGE STUDENTS**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEGREE OF:  
**MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

BY:  
ESMERALDA ARREDONDO CAMÍN

THESIS DIRECTOR:  
DRA. ELIZABETH SALGADO FLORES



PUEBLA, PUE.

OCTOBER 2019





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This Thesis has been read by the members of the Thesis Committee of

ESMERALDA ARREDONDO CAMÍN

And is considered worthy of approval in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
for the degree of

MAESTRÍA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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Dra. Elizabeth Flores Salgado

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first is a cursive signature, likely "Michael T. Witten". The second is a more stylized signature, likely "Teresa A. Castañera Benitez".

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2019

## DEDICATION

This work is wholeheartedly dedicated to my parents, who have been a source of inspiration and gave me strength during difficult times, who also continually provided me their moral, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and financial support.

To my Mother, Luisa Verónica Camín Cardín, who has been my rock, guardian angel, and best friend. Thank you for raising me so to become an independent, self-sufficient and brave woman. Thank you, *Má!*

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*“Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.  
Keep interested in your own career, however  
humble; it is a real possession in the changing  
fortunes of time.”*

Max Ehrmann (1872-1945)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Introduction to the problem

Learning a new language not only involves learning a different linguistic code and the ability to effectively communicate in the target language (TL), but also requires the capability to interact appropriately with the TL community's (TLC) culture and social environment. Thus, special attention has been paid into the exchange and assimilation of culture and social behavior during the learning and teaching of a foreign or second language. In this sense, Ortega (2009) highlights that it is important to pay attention to the second language (L2) setting for a better understanding of L2 as learners' behavior may show affective and socio-psychological alterations due to an outcome of the second language acquisition (SLA).

In addressing SLA in this study, Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is considered in order to assess the pragmatic competence. ILP is defined as "the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2)" (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993). Thus, in order for an L2 learner to effectively navigate with members of the TLC or living within the TLC, he or she must possess a pragmatic competence of the L2 community. Chomsky (1980) identified two types of abilities regarding the capability to acquire language. One concerned with the grammatical competences, which refers to the ability of utilizing the form and meaning of a language for communication. The other corresponds to the pragmatic competences, which is the ability "to use knowledge along with the conceptual system to achieve certain ends or purposes" (p.7) or, in other words, how linguistic codes are put into action while interacting with other members of a particular language community.

However, when language learners immerse into the TLC, the fact of being exposed to the host community for a long period of time does not guarantee a strong interaction with members of the TLC (Krashen, 1976, cited in Schmidt, 1983). The above author highlights that active involvement by the learner into the TLC enhances language proficiency rather than by mere exposure. Nevertheless, previous research has shown that possessing high language proficiency in an L2 is not directly linked with possessing high level of pragmatic

competence of the L2 (Bardovi-Harlig 199:686, cited in Bella 2012). Additionally, variables such as length of residence (LoR) and intensity of interaction play an important role in the development of the pragmatic competence of the TLC since it has been shown that the frequency of interaction may affect positively or negatively in the acquisition of pragmalinguistic features (Bella, 2011; Bella, 2012).

Pragmalinguistic competence is defined by Cenzo (2007, cited in Chang 2011) as “the ability to use linguistic elements to perform speech acts”, in other words, how to use the language depending on a specific situation within a particular context, taking into consideration the participants involved in the interaction. Some speech acts such as apologizing, promising, greeting or complimenting can be elicited differently. The reason is the structures, functions, and uses can vary depending on the speaker’s culture and gender (Dunham, 1992). This study focuses on the speech act of compliments and more specifically on the compliment responding (CRs). Compliments are the speech act which, according to Searle’s classification (1976), are considered to be expressive since they state what the speaker feels. Moreover, when a speaker gives a compliment there is a CRs, i.e. how the listener reacts and responds to the compliment. These CRs can be classified into superstrategies such as accepting, returning, deflecting/evade, and rejecting (Chen, 2010).

## 1.2.Purpose of the study

The present project intends to analyze the pragmalinguistic competence in CRs on L2 learners of Spanish during their stay in Mexico as well as to evaluate the development of this pragmatic competence considering the variables of LoR and intensity of interaction. These students were enrolled in Spanish language classes; which implies that they received formal instruction regarding the Spanish language. Participants in this study lived in México for at least 10 months without interruption.

Thus, this study is focused on the following research questions:

Which were the most common CRs strategies that L2 learners employed the most?

To what degree intensity of interaction and length of residence influence the development of pragmatic competence of L2 learners of Spanish?

### 1.3. Methodology

The present study corresponds to a longitudinal study because it intends to analyze (1) the pragmalinguistic competence development in CRs of L2 learners of Spanish during their one or two semesters stay in Mexico and (2) how the length of residence and intensity of interaction enables or disables them to acquire similar CRs from the members of the TLC. According to Lavrakas (2008), a longitudinal study is based on the assessment of a particular performance, behavior, or attitude of the participants' subject of study. This research is characterized by a follow-up of the participants over a period of time with spaced time points to collect the data. In contrast to the cross-sectional research design, longitudinal research design allows to present change and growth in an outcome variable and aids predicting the long-term changes of the selected outcome variable (Lavrakas, *ibid*). In this sense, the outcome variable that is analyzed is the CRs and the pragmatic competence development during the stay of the L2 learners in Mexico.

The instruments considered for the research were a background questionnaire, four role-play situations and verbal reports. The background questionnaire had the purpose of obtaining descriptive information about the participants such as age, L1, length of stay in Mexico, and so forth. The role-play activities consisted on giving a compliment in different situations (professor-student, boss-employee, friend-friend, etc.) to the participant. After the role-play activity a verbal report is conducted with the purpose of obtain the participant's perceptions or reasons of why he/she decided to use a particular CRs. This procedure aids to have an insight on the selection of CRs from the participant's perspective.

### 1.4. Significance of the study

This project intends to contribute to the field of SLA in addressing the pragmatic challenges involved when learning an L2 (Spanish in this case). Currently, special attention has been paid to the language-performance issues since it has been argued that even though L2 learners may be proficient in a L2 linguistically speaking, they may be deficient in the L2 pragmatic competence. It has been identified that teaching pragmatics explicitly in a language classroom can help to avoid misunderstandings between nonnative speakers (NNSs) and native speakers (NSs) of a particular language, therefore, avoiding any chance

of a pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983). Moreover, currently in Mexico the project RECREA (2017) intends to improve and raise awareness in the teaching practice in order to provide high quality learning experiences for students. This study contributes to issues related to the communicative competences that are required when learning a foreign language. This way, cultural and pragmatic issues may be addressed in order to develop effective teaching and learning strategies according to Mexico's educational context.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2. 1. Introduction

This section discusses the literature review regarding the main concepts of this study. It addresses following topics: communicative competence, pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics, length of residence, politeness, theory of speech acts and compliment responses. The first part focuses on the concept of communicative competence according to the authors who had contributed to the construction of this concept. The second part addresses the concepts of pragmatics, pragmatic competence, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The third part explains the meaning of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) followed by the relevance of length of residence (LoR) and intensity of interaction in ILP studies. The fourth section addresses politeness and the fifth section the theory of speech act. The sixth section discusses the speech act of compliments and compliment responses, which is the focus of this study. Also, it mentions the studies that had been carried out previously. Finally, a general conclusion is provided about the literature review.

### 2. 2. Communicative competence (Hymes, Canale and Swain, Bachman)

#### 2. 2. 1. Dell Hymes

Dell Hymes (1966) coined the term of communicative competence as a response to Chomsky's (1965) claim that competence exclusively referred the grammatical knowledge of a language, whereas performance was the actual use of a language. The term of communicative competence refers to the knowledge a speaker has about syntax, morphology and phonology of a language and the social knowledge about how and when to use it according to particular context and situation. This term has become an important referent in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) since it addresses sociocultural aspects of a second or foreign language. The sociocultural aspects of a particular

community embody a linguistic reality that may vary cross-culturally (Hymes, *ibid*), and thus to perform linguistically appropriate it requires the capability of acquiring sociocultural content of a particular community. In other words, to comprehend how language is used according to a specific situation, people, and behaviors or actions.

In linguistic theory, language is viewed from two perspectives (1) the linguistic competence and (2) the linguistic performance (Hymes, 1972). The linguistic competence according to Hymes (*ibid*) is the “knowledge of language structure” (54 p.), that is, the grammatical knowledge of syntax, morphology and phonology. Furthermore, it is through linguistic competence that speakers are able to both produce and understand infinite kinds of messages, written or spoken, that are conformed by words, phrases or sentences. The linguistic performance is the one in charge of “the processes of encoding and decoding” (55 p.) these messages so the meanings or intentions within them are understood by interlocutors. In this sense, to use language successfully there are rules of social use and without them the grammatical rules would be useless (Hymes, *ibid*).

### 2. 2. 2. Canale and Swain

Canale and Swain (1980) identify the grammatical and communicative approaches for second language teaching (SLT). The grammatical approach refers to the grammatical forms such as the phonological and morphological forms as well as the syntactic patterns and lexical items. This approach focuses on how these linguistic elements are combined in order to create grammatical sentences. The communicative approach focuses on the basis of communicative functions, which can be apologizing, describing, inviting, promising, complimenting, etc. Nevertheless, to avoid confusion between communicative competence and communicative performance, the above authors clarify that communicative performance refers to the “realization of these competencies and their interaction in the actual production and comprehension of utterances” (p. 6). Canale (1983) explains that communicative competence considers both knowledge and skill when performing in actual communication.

Moreover, Canale and Swain (*ibid*) define communicative competence in a similar sense as Hymes (1972), which refers to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence (rules of grammar) and sociolinguistic competence (rules of



language use). Thus, they consider the communicative approach as to be an integrative one in the field of SLT. This approach integrates three competences which are the grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and the strategic competence. Later on, Canale (1983) integrates the discourse competence. The grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of lexical items, morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and phonology. The sociolinguistic competence refers to the sociocultural rules of use and rules of discourse; these rules are helpful when comprehending utterances that contain social meaning or are context dependent. The strategic competence takes into consideration the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies and these can be classified into two: (1) the ones that relate to grammatical competence (the ability of paraphrasing to make a message clearer to the interlocutor) and (2) the ones that relate to the sociolinguistic competence (considering social status when addressing people). Finally, discourse competence refers to cohesion and coherence. In other words, the ability of combining grammatical forms and meanings in order to elicit unified spoken or written text in various genres, i.e. reflective essay, scientific report, etc.

### 2. 2. 3. Bachman / Bachman and Palmer

Bachman (1990) mentions that communicative competence is the capacity of implementing and using both the knowledge of a language and the competence in a language. In this sense, he argues about the importance of context besides the appropriate sentence construction when communicating. Consequently, the context governs the communicative situation because it takes into account an individual's discourse (spoken or written) and the sociolinguistic situation, which determines the nature of a particular discourse and, therefore, the form and function of the discourse. Moreover, Bachman (ibid) identifies communicative language ability (CLA) as the actual implementation or execution of the knowledge or competence of a language in an appropriate and contextualized form in order to fulfill a communicative function.

On the other hand, the above author proposes a framework for the concept of language competence and describes it as being built upon two language competencies, which are organizational competence and pragmatic competence. These two competencies are subdivided into what are called abilities. The organizational competence comprehends the abilities of grammatical competence (vocabulary, morphology, syntax and

phonology/graphology) and textual competence (cohesion and rhetorical organization). The pragmatic competence comprehends the abilities of illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. An illocutionary act consists in performing a communicative function (requesting, apologizing, complimenting, demanding, etc.) with a particular intention from the speaker's position. Thus, the illocutionary competence is the ability to elicit a text (written or spoken) with an illocutionary force and to interpret this illocutionary force appropriately. Bachman (ibid) describes four macro-functions, which are based on Halliday (1973) with respect to the illocutionary competence. These macro-functions are the ideational (expressing meaning in terms of our experience of the real world), the manipulative (affecting the world around us), the heuristic (increasing our knowledge of the world around us), and the imaginative (enabling us to create or modify our own environment). The sociolinguistic competence refers to the sensitivity regarding the various features of the specific language context that determines the communicative performance. This competence helps us to perform language functions according to a particular context. These sensitivities are classified into sensitivity in dialect or language variety (depending on geographic regions), differences in register (lectures, written expositions, language in a soccer match, etc.), sensitivity to naturalness (closeness to a native-like language behavior) to and the ability to comprehend and interpret cultural references and figures of speech.

### 2. 3. Pragmatic competence (Pragmatics – pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics)

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that has been largely defined by various authors. Levinson (1983) considers that pragmatics is concerned with

“detailed inferences about the nature of the assumptions participants are making, and the purposes for which utterances are being used. In order to participate in ordinary language usage, one must be able to make such calculations, both in production and in interpretation” (p.53)

Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms” (p.4) and explains that its focus is the meaning that a speaker or writer communicates as well as the listener and reader's interpretation of that meaning imbedded in the message. Crystal (1997) defines pragmatics as

‘the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication.’ (p. 301)

This definition considers that the act of communication is a joint activity, i.e. language has a crucial role in the social interaction (Clark, 1996). It highlights the force and impact of an illocutionary act (speaker’s meaning) as well as the outcome in a perlocutionary act (listener’s meaning). Also, Kasper (1997) defines pragmatics as “the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context” (par. 1). As communicative action, the author explains that it does not only refer to speech acts (requesting, greeting, apologizing, etc.), but to turn-taking (participation in conversation), engagement in various types of discourse, and following the interaction in complex speech events.

However, other scholars acknowledge the lack of clarity and widely acceptance of a specific term, therefore considering that a unifying definition of pragmatics is far from reaching. (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Roever, 2012). Moreover, since pragmatics analyzes aspects of context which are encoded in the structure of language, it is multidisciplinary, i.e. it crosses boundaries with other fields such as semantics, sociolinguistics and extralinguistic context. It deals with meaning (semantics) in a particular context with the extralinguistic features involved in the communicative situation (sociolinguistics).

Though pragmatics can be approached from different research fields, it has become of great interest in the field of SLA and Foreign Language Acquisition (FLA). It was introduced due to the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1966) and later on it was a derivation of these previous ideas until it became the concept of pragmatic competence. In Bachman’s (1990) model of language competence, the pragmatic competence is an important component because it takes into consideration the ability of interpreting and performing illocutionary acts as well as to consider the sociolinguistic features in order to decide an appropriate and suitable illocutionary act. Rose (1999) defines pragmatic competence as the ability of using and selecting appropriate linguistic resources (pragmalinguistics) to carry out actions contextually (sociopragmatics) (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983).

Moreover, Leech (1983) explains that pragmatics can be addressed from two different views and along with Thomas (1983) they proposed the subdivisions of (1) pragmalinguistics and (2) sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistic studies are language-specific, which means it focuses more on the linguistic aspect of pragmatics, i.e. selecting specific language resources to elicit a particular illocution. Kasper (1997) explains that such linguistic resources can be the degree of directness or indirectness in the speech, routines, among many other linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts. Thus, Cenzo (2007) explains that the pragmalinguistic competence refers to the ability of utilizing linguistic elements to perform speech acts. Sociopragmatic studies, on the other hand, are culture-specific and they address pragmatics from the Sociology point of view, in Leech's (ibid) words "the sociological interface of pragmatics" (p.10). This means that there are differences among speech communities regarding the interlocutors' communicative performance as far as social distance and social power, rights and obligations and the degree of imposition depending on each communicative act (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989). Furthermore, sociopragmatic competence refers to the ability to "vary speech-act strategies according to the situational or social variables in the act of communication" (Harlow, 1990, p.1).

#### 2. 4. Interlanguage pragmatics

ILP has been defined as "the study of nonnative speakers' (NNSs) use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in an L2" (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.3). ILP is an interdisciplinary field that has been addressed from different theoretical, analytical and methodological perspectives (Félix-Brasdefer, 2017). It lies between the field of pragmatics and the study of SLA. SLA focuses on how L2 learners learn the linguistic system of an L2 with, in many cases, limited exposure to the target language (TL). The linguistic system refers to the phonology, vocabulary, morphology, semantics and syntax of the TL. ILP analyzes how NNSs of the TL use its linguistic system. Moreover, Bardovi-Harlig (2013) defines pragmatics as the study of "how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (p.68) and introduces the concept of "L2 pragmatics", which she defines as how learners "know how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (p.68). Thus, ILP focuses on the learning process of the L2 pragmatics of one or more learners in various learning settings and/or learning circumstances. However, some scholars claim that most ILP studies have not been

developmental, but rather a comparison between NNSs' pramalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge differs from native speakers (NSs) (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996).

Félix-Bradefer (2017) explains that ILP's main goals are the production and comprehension of pragmatic meaning in an L2. This production and comprehension refers to speech acts, deixis, reference, speech act sequences (written and spoken), conversational interaction, implicature, discourse management, politeness and impoliteness, and sociolinguistic aspects of the use of language (regional variation, register, etc.). The domains or research areas of ILP are pragmatic comprehension, production of linguistic action, development of pragmatic competence, pragmatic transfer and communicative effect (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993). Pragmatic comprehension studies focus on the learner's attribution of illocutionary force and perception of politeness, such as the directness or indirectness of speech acts. Production of linguistic action refers to the accessibility learners have to acquire strategies for linguistic action as NSs have, and thus, demonstrate sensitivity in their strategy choice based on the contextual features. Development of pragmatic competence focuses on the process of acquiring the L2 pragmatics, rather than the merely comprehension and production. Pragmatic transfer refers to the influence that a L2 learner has from their native language (L1) and culture (C1) on their ILP pragmatic knowledge and performance of the L2. Communicative effect refers to the deviations that occur from NNSs when using the TL. In some cases, a higher L2 proficiency can avoid misunderstandings regarding grammatical or phonological issues, however, it exist the possibility of pragmatic failure at the pramalinguistic and sociopragmatic level (Thomas, 1983). Moreover, in ILP studies the most common are cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). Cross-sectional studies investigate the state of affairs in a particular population at a certain point in time (Bethlehem, 1999 cited in Zheng, 2015). Moreover, the populations need to share features such as being enrolled in the same language program, but they differ in the language levels so that these groups can be compared later. On the other hand, longitudinal studies follow the process of language acquisition of an individual(s) during a period of time (Crystal, 1997).

## 2. 5. Politeness

### 2.5.1 Concept of face

The term *face* was coined by Goffman (1955) and he defined it as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p.213). The author explains that individuals are constantly exposed and engaged in social encounters with other individuals in which they act out in a line. The term line refers to the “pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (p. 213).

However, the concept of face has been defined by several authors addressing different perspectives. Brown and Levinson (1978) define face as a social feature of a speaker that can be lost, maintained or reinforced during a linguistic interaction. Scollon and Scollon (2001) say that in sociological and sociolinguistic studies, face is defined as “the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event” (p.45). LoCastro (2003), on the other hand, refers to face as “a technical term to denote the public self-image all human beings wish to maintain” (p.110). Social interactions with other individuals compromise the face to emotional reactions, i.e. how one individual projects himself/herself emotionally and how his/hers expectations are recognized and acknowledged by other(s). These emotional reactions can be how genuine, rude or shy one is projected to projecting social aspects such as letting the other one know to what kind of social group one belongs to and this can be determined by the type of lexis that a speaker uses, how he or she uses politeness in the speech, and so forth.

### 2.5.2. Face and politeness

In every social interaction there are internal and external factors that govern and determine the type of linguistic interaction that will take place between interlocutors. Some of these factors can be social distance, gender, power, and so on. Brown and Levinson’s theory explains that every language interaction can be a potential face-threatening act (FTA). FTA is when the speaker says something that threatens the other individual’s face, i.e. what it has been said represents a threat to the expectations and self-image of the other. To safeguard the other’s face, the above authors mention that there are two kinds of politeness when performing a speech act, which are the positive and negative politeness.

Positive politeness demonstrates solidarity towards the addressee's face and, at the same moment, makes him or her feel that their wants are considered important. On the other hand negative politeness carries out the same function (signal positive politeness), but this type of politeness represents a greater degree of social distance between interlocutors, therefore the speaker's avoids to disturb the hearer as little as possible.

When enacting an FTA, Brown and Levinson claim the use of three macro strategies, which are (1) do the act on-record (baldly or with redressive action), (2) do the act off-record and (3) do not do the act. To do the act on-record or baldly means speaking directly without considering to save the other's face. Redressive action is attempting to lessen the force of a speech act, and this can be done with positive or negative politeness. To do the act off-record is characterized by the use of hints or indirectness. Lastly, do not doing the act is when saying something represents a great risk, therefore the speaker decides to not say anything.

Brown and Levinson's theory has been the subject of debate because the conception of positive and negative politeness has been proved to differ among different societies. In this light, Bravo (1999, cited in Flores-Salgado and Castineira-Benitez, 2018) defines face as "an empty, general and relative concept that has the advantage that it can be fulfilled within the framework of a particular community" (p.82). In this sense, the concept of face has the flexibility of being adapted according to the sociocultural features that each community has. Moreover, Bravo (2008) mentions that the positive or negative feature of face in politeness may vary because of sociocultural factors that are not able to be transferred to other contexts. The author explains that the notion of face refers to the conception that a group of interlocutors have regarding interpersonal relations as well as to allow to observe interactions dynamically. Moreover, Curcó (2007, 2014) explains that Brown and Levinson's notion of negative face is not applicable to Mexican society because Mexican society is similar to other social groups in which the group face has more weight than the individual face. Consequently, Mexicans work carefully on the positive face of the speaker.

In general, Félix-Brasdefer (2009) follows Scollon and Scollon (2001) ideas and he identifies that values such as respect and trust characterize the sociocultural face of

Mexicans because Mexicans constantly negotiate the face in every communicative event. On one hand, respect is not related to defending one's speaker's ground, but instead to portray formality and consideration towards the other. On the other hand, trust is manifested through openness so interlocutors can express their intentions unreservedly and directly. However, the author claims there may be different regional conceptions regarding respect and trust. In Michoacán, trust is portrayed with directness and no effort of mitigating a request (Farr, 2000 cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2009). In Veracruz, there are two communicative codes which are the code of respect and code of trust. Respect is related to formality, consideration and distance or respect towards the hearer, whereas trust represents familiarity or expressing oneself freely both when in communication and in action (Covarrubias, 2002 cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2009). In Chiapas, respect is viewed in two ways (1) privacy in respecting the rights of the others and (2) reservation with the purpose of avoiding conflict (Brown, 1990 cited in Félix-Brasdefer, 2009). Generally, studies carried out in Mexico conclude that respect, trust, social distance and (im)politeness seem to weigh in on the conception of politeness and face.

Considering the above, it is important to highlight that much of the studies that analyze pragmatic competence focus in politeness through the production of speech acts. Politeness and speech acts happen at the same moment during a communicative event between interlocutors. This is why it is important to understand how these two are linked in the development of pragmatic competence in an L2.

## 2. 6. Speech acts

To have a better understanding of speech acts, it is important to explain the difference between a constative and a performative utterance (Austin, 1962). A constative utterance expresses the states of affairs and it is context independent, i.e. it is declarative and descriptive. For example, the utterance 'the sky is blue' is true or 'the sky is brown' is false. A performative utterance is the expression or utterance that is used to perform an act and it has a communicative function. For example, 'you should get a jacket because it is cold'. Here, the utterance is performing the act of giving a suggestion or an advice and, in other words, it is the speech acts of advising. Speech acts have intentions within each performative, this means that they attempt to achieve a particular purpose. The level of success that a speech act may have is determined by the felicity conditions (Austin, *ibid*).



The felicity conditions is a term used to refer to the ideal conditions and criteria so that a speech act reaches its intended objective.

Austin (ibid) classified the performatives into three types of acts: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. The locutionary act refers to act of creating and uttering a sentence, in other words is the basic act of producing an utterance. The illocutionary acts are utterances that portray a conventional force. The performative is within the utterance, e.g. ‘can you pass me the milk?’. And thirdly, the perlocutionary acts are the outcomes of illocutionary acts, i.e. the listener passed the milk to the speaker (previous example). Locutionary acts and illocutionary acts are speaker-based and perlocutionary acts are hearer-based.

Considering the above, Searle (1969) mentions that the unit of linguistic communication is a speech act, which is the act of producing symbols, words or sentences in a linguistic performance. Speech acts are divided by Searle (1979) into five categories, which are assertives, directives, commissives, expressives and declaratives. Assertives’ purpose is to validate if what the speaker’s proposition is true or false. Directives attempt the hearer to do something as a result of what the speaker says. Commissives commit the speaker to a future course of action. Expressives expose a psychological state about something. Lastly, declaratives are statements that are performed while being uttered. Furthermore, Searle and Vanderveken (1985) listed the English verbs that can be related to each illocutionary act category (table 1).

**Table 1.** Source: Searle and Vanderveken (1985).

	<b>Function</b>	<b>English performative verbs</b>	<b>Example</b>
Assertives	To confirm if an utterance is true or false.	Assert, claim, affirm, state, deny, disclaim, assure, argue, rebut, inform, notify, remind, object, predict, report, retrodict, suggest, insist, conjecture, hypothesize, guess, swear, testify, admit, confess, accuse, blame, criticize, praise, complain, boast, and lament.	“He confessed the crime.”
Directives	To make the addressee accomplish an	Direct, request, ask, urge, tell, require, demand, command, order, forbid, prohibit, enjoin, permit, suggest, insist, warn,	“I need the report by 3:00 p.m.”

	action.	advise, recommend, beg, supplicate, entreat, beseech, implore, and pray.	
Commissives	To commit to a future course of action.	Commit, promise, threaten, vow, pledge, accept, consent, refuse, offer, bid, assure, guarantee, warrant, contract, covenant, and bet.	“I promise this will never happen again.”
Expressives	To express an emotion.	Apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, lament, protest, deplore, boast, compliment, praise, welcome, and greet.	“I’m sorry.”
Declarations	To perform an act while uttering.	Declare, resign, adjourn, appoint, nominate, repudiate, bless, curse, excommunicate, consecrate, christen, abbreviate, name, and call.	“I now pronounce you husband and wife.”

Moreover, speech acts are divided into direct and indirect speech acts. Yule (1996) defines a direct speech act as “the direct relationship between a structure and a function” (p.54), e.g. ‘open the door’ (an assertion expressed in a declarative form). An indirect speech act is the opposite, when there is no match between the structure and the function, e.g. ‘It’s hot in here’ (an assertion expressed indirectly to perform probably a request of opening the window). Subsequently, this study intends to analyze compliment responses which belong to expressive speech acts and the degree of directness or indirectness in which participants respond to compliments.

## 2. 7. Length of residence or intensity of interaction

There is a common conception in the field of foreign or second language acquisition and ILP regarding studying abroad. This conception is related to the benefits of being immersed in the TLC and improving or developing their L2 language skills more rapidly and efficiently, in comparison to studying the language in their home country (Brecht et al., 1995; Yager, 1998). This way, Bella (2011) mentions that length of residence in the TLC is considered an important variable in aiding learners to improve and develop their pragmatic competence and performance. Consequently, this study refers to LoR as the indefinite or definite period of time an individual or group of people spend in a foreign country and intensity of interaction as the frequency of interaction that an individual has with native people from the foreign country.

Various studies had been carried out that investigate the acquisition of the pragmatic competence while being in a foreign country. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) analyzed the directness and politeness of requests and apologies in Hebrew and English. In this study, authors analyzed the type of strategies, internal modifications (linguistic and syntactic devices that modify the impact of a speech act), and external modifications (supporting statements used to carry out a desired speech act). The authors found significant differences only in the third analysis (external modification); thus they added a fourth analysis which involved the proportion of external modification by level of proficiency and length of stay. In this sense, the authors suggest that learners show an approximation to native behavior during their time immersed in the TLC.

Bouton (1994) analyzed the acquisition and awareness of implicatures on NNS, who were international students at an American university, when having little or no direct instruction. The study lasted 4 and half years and reported that learners improved in their awareness of implicatures; however, the author stresses they did not reach the native-like level. Nevertheless, Matsumura (2001) studied the pragmatic development of Japanese L2 learners of English when offering advice. Participants were divided into three groups: (1) 97 Japanese exchange students (studying in Vancouver), (2) 102 peers studying in Japan and (3) 111 NS of English (university students from Vancouver) and LoR of the exchange Japanese students was for 8 months. Results were compared among the three groups and they revealed that the exchange students group developed their pragmatic performance more effectively than the local group. However, the author highlights that because of being immerse in the TC, individuals have more chances to find themselves in real social contexts in which inherently they will be able to acquire more target sociocultural rules and therefore develop their pragmatic competence. Though this may be similar to most ILP studies analyzing the impact of LoR, Matsumura (ibid) mentions this influence will only be positive as long as the subjects are willing to be exposed to the TC.

In another study, Félix-Brasdefer (2004) analyzed the influence of LoR on L2 learners' ability to negotiate and mitigate a refusal in Spanish. In his study there were 24 participants, who were American university students. These participants had an advanced level of Spanish and had previously lived in a Spanish-speaking country. The length of

residence ranged from 1 month to 30 months. The author selected the American Latin Spanish variety in the sample. Results showed that learners who had spent more time immersed in the TC attempted to negotiate and mitigate refusals with the use of lexical and syntactic items, as well as refusals that demonstrated solidarity and indirectness which it approximates to American Latin Spanish language norms. Moreover, Cheng (2005) investigated how Chinese learners of English expressed gratitude according to length of speech and the use of strategies. The author also examined the influence of LoR in the pragmatic development of expressing gratitude. She reported that LoR had a positive effect in the learners' pragmatic development.

Schauer (2007) examined the pragmatic development of nine German university students, who spent a year studying at a university in England. The study's aims were to analyze the L2 learners' ability to soften the illocutionary force of requests by utilizing various external modifiers. Results were compared to two groups (1) 13 German students learning English in Germany and (2) 15 NSs of English from the same university in England. The comparison revealed that some of the external modifiers that the exchange students used were close and significantly similar to the ones elicited by the NSs group. The author concludes that being in the L2 environment may be beneficial as to the learner's external modifier repertoire.

Cohen and Shively (2007) evaluate the impact of language- and culture-learning strategies intervention on study-abroad students, focusing on their acquisition of request and apologies. There were 86 participants, who spent a semester abroad in a Spanish- or a French-speaking country. The results indicated that, overall, students improved their request and apology performance during their one semester stay. Furthermore, in a similar study, Cohen and Shively (2008) analyzed the requests and apologies of 67 U.S. American exchange students. These students spent one semester in a Spanish-speaking country. A pre- and post-test was carried out to collect the data. NSs of Spanish rated the appropriateness of the students' requests and apologies. The findings reported that students improved their pragmatic performance regarding requests and apologies during their one semester stay.

Bardovi-Harligh and Bastos (2011) analyzed the recognition and production of conventional expressions in English language of 122 L2 learners and results were compared to NSs language production. The authors explored the variables of LoR and intensity of interaction and the results revealed that intensity of interaction is a variable that helps to develop positively the L2 pragmatic competence, whereas LoR did not show significant effect on both recognition and production. Similarly, Bella (2011, 2012) investigated in one study the politeness strategies and mitigation devices in refusals used by L2 learners of Greek, and in another study, she analyzed the external and internal modification devices of L2 learners of Greek when making requests. In both of the studies, the author analyzed the variable of LoR and intensity of interaction and participants were divided into two groups (1) with extended LoR but limited opportunities for social interaction and (2) with less extended LoR but more opportunities for social interaction. The results of both of the studies showed that intensity of interaction is a more decisive factor than LoR and participants, who had more opportunities to interact presented a much more native-like behavior.

In general, LoR had been subject of debate, which is the reason why studies over time started to pay close attention to intensity of interaction. Just like recent studies, the present project aims to evaluate the impact of both variables (LoR and intensity of interaction) in L2 learners' pragmatic competence development as well.

#### 2. 8. Compliment responses (definition, relevant studies)

Complimenting is an expressive speech act, which means that it shows how the speaker appreciates his or her surroundings from his or her own reality. In addition, compliments also cover an important function which is establishing solidarity between two interlocutors. It helps to open conversations and to make meaningful social exchanges happen (Ishihara, 2003). Nonetheless, it may be considered a difficult speech act as well because if it is done wrongly or not appropriately to the target culture, it may create embarrassment or be considered an offense. In other words, it can become in a highly FTA. However, the structure of complimenting is considered to be of an adjacency pair operation because it consists of a compliment and a compliment response (CRs) (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Pomerantz, 1978).

The speech act of compliment(s) and CRs has been much analyzed, especially in the English language. The focus of analysis in this study is CRs in Mexican Spanish as an L2. However, few studies had been carried out in the acquisition of CRs pragmatic development in other languages, more specifically in Spanish in the Mexican language variation. Thus, some of the relevant studies regarding CRs will be mentioned and briefly explained.

Many CRs studies had been analyzed with Pomerantz (1978) framework in which she proposes three strategies such as accepting the compliment, rejecting the compliment or mitigating the compliment. These three strategies have substrategies as well. When accepting a compliment, one can agree, thank, return the compliment or accept it. When rejecting a compliment, one can express disagreement or simply express it in silence. And, when mitigating a compliment, one can deflect the comment or confirm the compliment. Valdés and Pino (1981) analyzed CRs of Mexican-American bilinguals based on Pomerantz' framework. They compared the strategies from the bilingual group with the ones elicited by two groups of monolingual speakers of American English and Latin American Spanish. Results revealed that none of the groups employed similar strategies; however, it suggests that bilinguals have a wider CRs strategies repertoire because of the code switching.

In another study, Holmes and Brown (1987) identified that Malaysian students in New Zealand encountered challenges when accepting compliments and often responded with disagreement, which is common in Malay culture. Furthermore, Holmes (1988) explored differences in complimenting behavior between New Zealand men and women. In general, the author found that women tend to use compliments more often with each other than men. Also, women pay more attention to complimenting appearances, whereas men pay more attention to possessions. Social status was an important variable since it influenced the compliment decisions as well, i.e. women with higher status were more likely to receive compliments compared to men that it suggested it may be taken as a FTA.

A quasi-longitudinal study on English CRs produced by Chinese speakers was carried out by Chen (1993, 2010). In these studies, the author compared CRs strategies from American English speakers and Chinese speakers learning English. The first part of

the study (Chen, 1993) pointed out that Chinese speakers tended to reject compliments instead of accepting them such as American English speakers. However, in the second part of the study (Chen and Yang, 2010) the author claims that Chinese speakers were found to accept compliments more than in the past. It is important to highlight that this study was not carried out with the same participants, but with the same conditions and procedures.

Very few studies had been carried out regarding CRs and Mexican Spanish language variation. However, Flores (2014) analyzed the relationship of CRs with attitudes and values as well as the type of politeness that were used by Mexican university students. Results showed that speakers tend to accept a compliment, instead of rejecting or mitigating it. Also, the author suggests there is an intimacy degree between participants and the kind of strategy they select to respond a compliment. This study provides insight as Mexican society deals with CRs in Spanish language. Moreover, Félix-Brasdefer and Hasler-Barker (2014) investigated the effects of learning context and the production of compliments between two types of Spanish L2 learners groups. One was a study abroad (SA) group and the second was a group of learners at home (AH). The SA group stayed in Mexico for 8 weeks. The data was collected with a pretest and a posttest and results were compared to NSs data. The results in this study revealed that there were positive effects in the SA's compliment production strategies as well as compliment adjectives. This suggests, again, that exposure to the TC enhances pragmatic development regarding speech acts.

## 2.9. Conclusions

CRs have been a widely analyzed speech act in the field of English as a second or foreign language (ESL/EFL). However, few studies had been carried out in both, other languages than English as an L1 or in the acquisition of another language(s) than English as an L2 or foreign language. The purpose of the present study is to analyze the impact of LoR and intensity of interaction in the pragmatic development of Spanish L2 learners when producing CRs. Though CRs have been widely analyzed especially in the field of English language, few studies had been carried out in Mexican Spanish language variation. This study contributes to the politeness strategies of the Mexican social group. Moreover, Mexico tends to be one of the most demanded option for Spanish L2 learners (Cohen and Shively, 2008), who want to be immersed in a Spanish-speaking country while learning the

language. As reviewed before, Mexican society's politeness rules vary greatly with the ones proposed by Brown and Levinson, which are suggested to be more Anglo-Saxon oriented. This is why the study is pertinent to the SLA and ILP because it provides a follow-up of Spanish L2 learners during their stay in Mexico and their development regarding CRs. Also, LoR or intensity of interaction will determine the positive or negative pragmatic development of the participants.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodological framework of the study. In this section further description is provided regarding the location in which the study took place, the participants' profile, language instructors' profile, the four different instruments that were used, the piloting procedure and the data analysis.

#### 3.2. Location

This study was carried out in the Language Center that is part of the Spanish as a Foreign Language Coordination within the Faculty of Languages in a public university in the central part of Mexico. This university receives overseas exchange students annually and they are placed in the different departments based on the degree or major that these students are currently studying. Apart from taking their regular classes, they have to take Spanish classes at the language center of this university.

There are three professors who teach the Spanish classes and there are 5 different groups, from beginner to intermediate-advanced Spanish classes. Students take Spanish classes three times a week for two hours each session. In total, they receive six hours of formal language instruction per week. Apart from covering class content, in which students practice the four linguistic skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), students also participate in cultural activities such as building "ofrendas" for the Day of the Death which is considered to be an important holiday in Mexico.

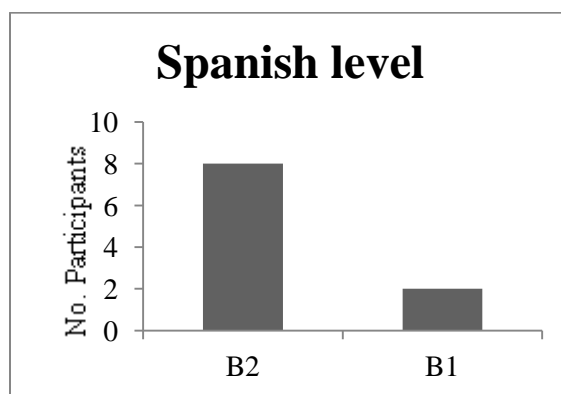


### 3.3. Participants

For the present study, all international exchange students, who were enrolled in Spanish lessons at a university in Central Mexico, were invited to participate in this longitudinal study. There were two types of exchange students groups: (1) those that stayed one semester and (2) those that stayed for two semesters. Thus, to identify both groups, group A belongs to the participants who stayed one semester and group B those who stayed two semesters. In total, 10 students agreed to participate in the study: five students who stayed two semesters and five students who stayed one semester. Four students were males and six were females. Also, all students signed a letter of consent in which they agreed to participate in this study.

At the beginning of the Spanish courses, participants had to complete a computer-based placement test which assessed grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening comprehension and written production. Furthermore, after finishing this first section of the test, participants had an oral interview to assess their oral production. The test is based on the Common European Framework and according to the participants' results, they were placed according to the Spanish level class that they belong to.

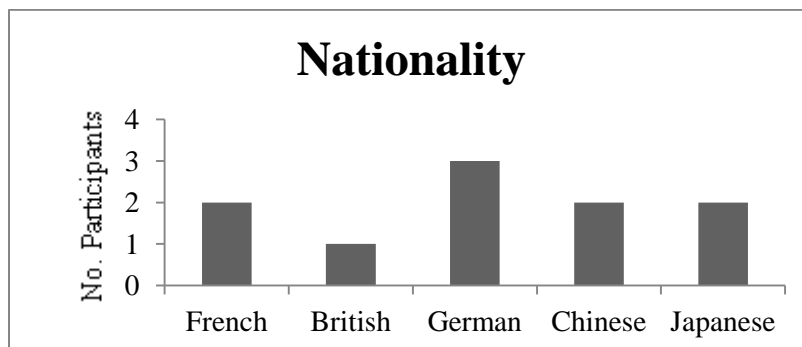
**Figure 1.** Participants' Spanish



As can be seen in figure 1 eight participants had a B2 Spanish level at the beginning of the study and four participants had a B1 Spanish level according to the placement test results. This means that the participants' level was at least a basic intermediate to an advanced intermediate.

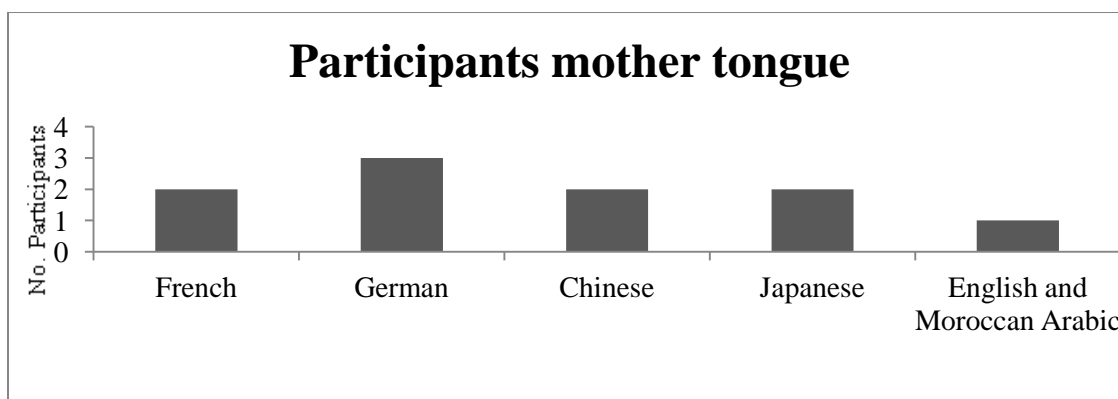
The participants' nationalities were varied and figure 2 shows the nationalities of each of the participants. Three participants were German, two were French, two were Japanese, two were Chinese and one was British. This type of variety may influence in the pragmatic competence because each nationality has a different culture and, therefore, a different pragmatic knowledge.

**Figure 2.** Participants' nationalities.



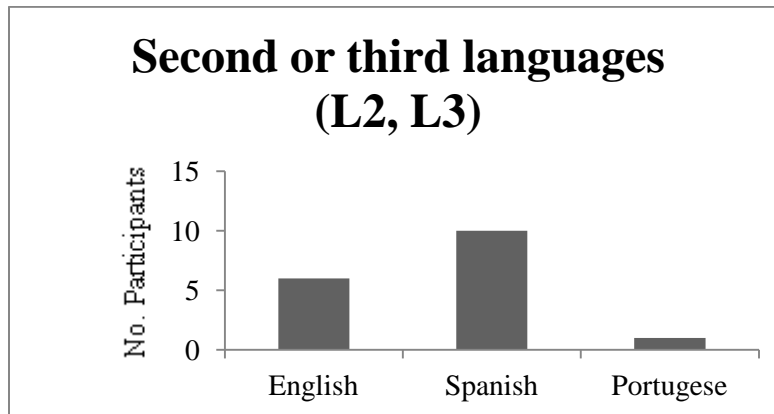
Furthermore, participants were asked what was their mother tongue and what other languages they spoke (L2 and L3). Figure 3 shows the participants' mother tongue (French, German, Chinese, Japanese, English and Arabic Moroccan). Only one of the participants would considered himself a bilingual person. He explained that he grew up learning both languages (English and Moroccan Arabic) so he considered both languages as mother tongue.

**Figure 3.** Participants mother tongue.



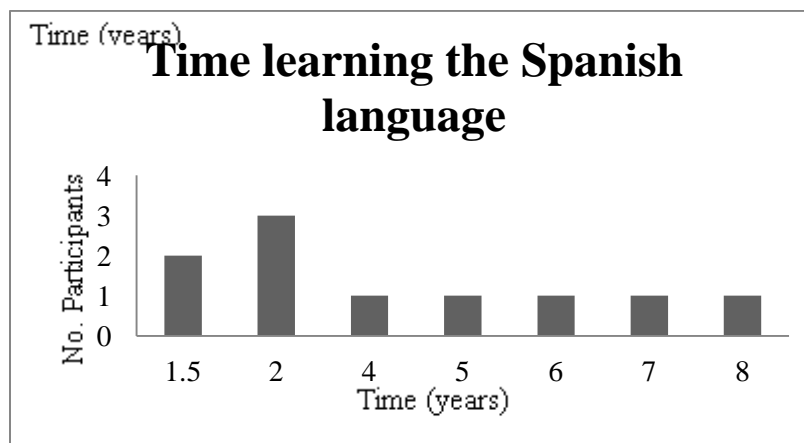
Moreover, in figure 4 the participants' additional languages are displayed, being Spanish the L2 of all of the participants followed by English and only one participant who spoke Portuguese as a L3.

**Figure 4.** Participants' additional languages.



Additionally, participants reported for how long they have been studying the Spanish language as figure 5 shows. The length of time they have been learning Spanish ranges from 8 years the most to 1.5 years the least.

**Figure 5.** Participants length of time learning .the Spanish language.



Also, participants reported if they had visited any Spanish-speaking country, which one or ones, and the reason of their visit (figure 6, 7 and 8).

**Figure 6.** Percentage of participants that had visited a Spanish-speaking country.

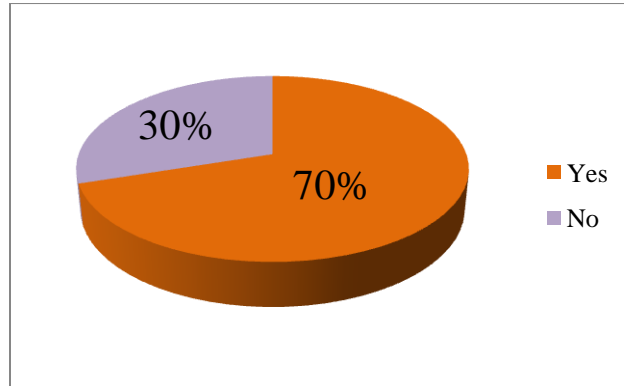


Figure 6 shows the number of participants who had visited other Spanish-speaking countries before their stay in Mexico, hence, 7 out of 10 responded that they had.

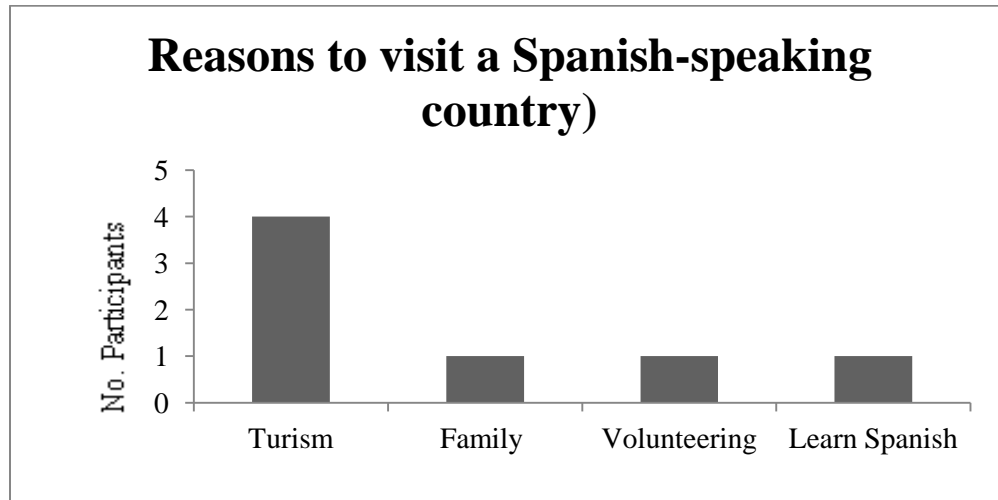
As table 2 shows, out of the 7 participants who had visited another Spanish-speaking countries, the most frequent option is Spain and the other options are Peru, Bolivia and Cuba. The LoR ranged from 1 week to 44 weeks.

**Table 2.** Number of participants travelling to other Spanish-speaking countries and the LoR.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Length of residence (LoR) (weeks)</b>
4	Spain	1 – 6
1	Peru	4
1	Bolivia	44
1	Cuba	4

Figure 7 shows the reasons participants gave for visiting the Spanish-speaking countries and the main reason was due to tourism. The other reasons they reported were visiting family members, volunteering and learning Spanish.

**Figure 7.** Reasons for visiting a Spanish-speaking



#### 3.4. Language instructors

Two language instructors, who taught the Spanish classes to the participants, were interviewed in order to obtain pedagogical insight regarding the formal language instruction that the participants received during their stay. The interview was a semi-structured interview which explored the use of and types of materials, teaching methodology, extra resources (videos, readings, movies, etc.) and cultural activities they utilize in the language classroom. For the purpose of identifying both language instructors, they were labeled as instructor A and instructor B. Both of the instructors were females and Mexicans. Instructor A holds a B. A. degree in Modern Languages, a M.A. degree in Applied Linguistics and she is currently a PhD candidate in Language Sciences. She has taught Spanish for 5 years and apart from being a Spanish instructor, she is the coordinator of the Spanish Department for foreigners at the university. Instructor B holds a B. A. degree in Language Teaching/Foreign Languages and a M.A. degree in Education Sciences. Apart from teaching English for 25 years, she mentioned she has been teaching Spanish for 6 years.

In order to obtain insight regarding the formal language instruction that the participants received during their stay, a brief semi-structured interview was conducted with the two language instructors who taught the Spanish classes to the participants. The interview consisted on exploring if the instructors additionally to the formal linguistic instruction which includes the development of the four linguistic skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), they explained sociocultural factors of the Mexican society with the purpose of helping the participants to navigate more effectively in the TLC. Additionally, the interview addressed topics such as the language program, materials and resources and teaching methodologies.

### 3.5. Methodological framework

This is a longitudinal study; hence, the study had a duration of eight months. The data was collected at the beginning of the study, at the middle and at the end. The participants arrived to Mexico in August of 2018 and the first data collection took place in September 2018, the second in November-December of 2018 and the third one in April-May 2019. From the group of participants that only stayed one semester only in two occasions the data was collected due to time constraints. The group that stayed till May of 2019 there was more time in between each session, therefore, it was possible to collect data in three occasions during their stay.

It is important to highlight that leaving time in between each session was needed in order to analyze the participant's pragmatic competence progress more clearly and to be able to contrast each of the times that the data was collected as well as to evaluate their capability to get or not immersed in the TLC.

### 3.6. Instruments

To collect the data, three instruments were used: a background questionnaire, a role-play activity and a verbal report. In this section each of the instruments are described and explained how they were applied.

#### 3.6.1. Background questionnaire

The background questionnaire aimed to collect descriptive information about the participants and it was handed out to the participants only one time at the beginning of the

study. The participants were given enough time to respond the questionnaire. This questionnaire apart from asking the age, gender and nationality, it also asked the following questions: a) Spanish language level, b) additional languages, c) length of stay in Mexico, d) length of time learning Spanish, e) first time in a Spanish-speaking country and if the response was ‘yes’, f) mention which Spanish-speaking countries.

### 3.6.2. Role-play

The role-play instrument consisted of four daily basis situations in which they were asked to respond a compliment according to the given situation. These four situations evaluated the variables of gender, power, and social distance. Thus, each situation combined different variables (e.g. –power –distance, +power +distance, +power –distance, -power + distance) so to assess all four possible combinations. In table 3, each situation is briefly described as well as the type of appraisal, the object or quality, the variables and a short example. Regarding the gender variable, genders were assigned according to the participants in the interaction. Thus, a male colleague helped out to carry out two interactions so there could be a male + male and a male + female interactions in the study. The complete role-play instrument can be found in the appendix section.

**Table 3.** Role-play situations brief description.

Situation	Appraisal	Object/Quality	Variables (power and distance)	Example
1) A classmate, who does not talk to the participant very much, gives a compliment to another classmate on his/her outfit.	Appearance	Outfit	-Power +Distance	“Marie, your dress is so pretty.”
2) The participant’s mom or father gives her/him a compliment on his/her grade in the Spanish class.	Ability	Grade	+Power -Distance	“Son, you are a great student.”
3) A professor gives a compliment on the	Ability	Class presentation	+Power +Distance	“You did an excellent

participant's presentation in class.				presentation.”
4) The participant invited a colleague to his/her place. The colleague compliments his/her place.	Personal belongings	Apartment/House	-Power -Distance	“Your house is so pretty.”

### 3.6.3. Verbal report

The verbal report instrument consisted on asking the participants after each role-play situation why they decided to respond the way they did and explore the insight of their responses. This way, the participants had the opportunity to explain their responses and if according to them it was appropriate to respond that way in the given situation. This research method seems to help to reveal cognitive and psycholinguistic aspects that embody a particular performance (Kormos, 1998).

### 3.7. Piloting

In order to select the four definitive role-play situations, ten role-play situations were piloted with NSs (Mexicans) so to assess which of the ten situations were more common and potentially less confusing for the participants. Additionally, when piloting the situations some of them apparently could be taken as a FTA by Mexicans.

**Table 4.** Piloted role-play situations.

Situation	Type of appraisal	Description	Power and distance
1	Clothing and appearance	Imagine that you ran across an acquaintance that you have not seen in some time. After talking for a while, he/she tells you: “You look good. You look different than the last time I saw you”.	-Power -Distance
2		Imagine that you changed your hair style and when you get to your work, your boss notices it and he/she tells you: “I like your new hair style. I think it goes with your personality”.	+Power +Distance



3		Imagine that you are in a clothing shop and one of the employees likes your jacket and he/she tells you: “Nice jacket. I like it very much”.	-Power +Distance
4		Imagine that today you have to give a presentation in your Spanish class. Your teacher asked you to dress formally to present. You ran across a classmate, who you do not talk very often, and he/she tells you: “I like your outfit. You look nice”.	-Power +Distance
5		Imagine that you got an A as a final grade in your Spanish class and you tell your parents. They congratulate you and say: “Congratulations. You are a brilliant”.	+Power -Distance
6	Accomplishments	Imagine that today you are making your presentation which is part of your final assignment of the semester. Your professor tells you after you present: “Nice presentation. You did a great a job”.	+Power +Distance
7		Imagine that you are in an exchange program and you are living with a host family. You decide to cook a special dinner for the hospitality that they had given to you. They love the food and they tell you: “Dinner was delicious. You are a great cooker”.	+Power -Distance
8	Personal belongings	Imagine that you invite a friend from work to have dinner at your place. He/she arrives and he/she tells you: “I love your home. It’s so pretty”.	-Power -Distance
9		Imagine that you arrive to a mall and you park your car. When you are getting out of the car, a person that is walking by tells you: “I like your car”.	-Power +Distance
10	Personality	Imagine that you are talking with a friend about the Spanish exam you have the following day. Your friend is having problems studying for the exam and he/she asks for your help to study. You accept and spend the whole day studying with him/her. Once you finish, your friend tells you: “You helped me a lot. You are a great friend.	-Power -Distance

In table 4, it can be shown the ten piloted role-play situations. As previously mentioned, some of the situations were considered a high FTA when being piloted. For example, situation one was not very clear for NSs. They seemed to have a hard time

considering that compliment as a genuine one since they argued that with that compliment it made it look as if they looked terrible in the past. Another unusual situation and that was not common for NSs was situation number 9. In Mexico, talking with strangers is not a very common practice; hence, NSs were hesitant to respond to a stranger especially if the compliment was referring to a material possession. Then, some of them argued that since in Mexico there are high rates of insecurity, it can be taken as a bad sign.

Therefore, considering the above factors, situation number 4, 5, 6 and 8 were selected as the definitive situations. These four situations seemed to be usual situations with less possibility of being FTA. Furthermore, the type of appraisal that were evaluated were appearance and clothing, accomplishments and personal belongings.

### 3.8. Data analysis

To analyze the data, two instruments were used: (1) a NSs rating scale and (2) Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols (1996) CRs taxonomy. The first instrument consisted of a scale in which NSs rated the participants' CRs according to the appropriateness. The second consisted of classifying the participants' according to the CRs taxonomy. Further description is provided in the following sections.

#### 3.8.1 NSs rating scale

The NSs rating scale was designed based on previous studies (Cohen and Shively, 2007, 2008). This rating scale was piloted with NSs as well in order to assess the reliability of the instrument. The rating scale assess the participants' CRs in a 1-4 Likert scale, in which value 1= totally inappropriate, 2= less appropriate, 3= appropriate and 4= totally appropriate. The participants' CRs were classified according to each situation, that is, all the CRs from situation 1 were grouped into one NSs rating scale. This had the purpose to select the NSs raters carefully according to each type of situation. For example, CRs in situation 2, which is parents complimenting their son/daughter, was handed out to two NSs who are mothers. In total, eight NSs raters evaluated the participants' CRs, i.e. two raters per situation. The NSs rating scale can be found in the appendix section.

Moreover, all the data was processed with the SPSS program and the NSs rating scale pretest was evaluated according to the Pearson correlation coefficient of interrater

reliability in order to have consistency in the numbers that each evaluator assigned to each of the participants' CRs. Thus, the values of each of the situations are the following ones: situation 1 (.85), situation 2 (.81), situation 3 (.85) and situation 4 (.83).

The NSs rating scale is designed by classification, that is, all the CRs of the participants were classified according to each situational category. For example, NSs rating scale 1 belongs to the situation of compliment from a classmate, NSs rating scale 2 belongs to the situation of compliment from his or her parents, and so forth. This NSs rating scale was given to NSs to assess the proximity of the participants' CRs to one of a NSs. In this sense, the purpose is to analyze how the participants' CRs were socioculturally suitable and how they were approved by the NSs.

### 3.8.2. CRs taxonomy

The data was analyzed linguistically based on Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols (1996) CRs taxonomy. All the participants' CRs were classified according to the taxonomy's criteria. Table 5 shows four criteria which are accept, mitigate, reject, and no response. In the criteria of 'accept' there are four options of accepting a compliment and producing a CRs; these are (1) appreciation token, (2) agreeing utterance, (3) compliment return and (4) acceptance + formula. The criteria of 'mitigate' has two options of how to mitigate in a CRs. These are (1) deflecting or qualifying comment and (2) reassurance or repetition request. Table 4 provides examples for each of the criteria so to clarify how each of them can be elicited as CRs.

**Table 5.** Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols (1996) CRs

Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols (1996) CRs taxonomy	
Strategy	Example
<b>1) Accept</b>	
Appreciation Token	A: That shirt looks good on you. B: Thank you.
Agreeing Utterance	A: I like your bag. B: I like it as well.
Compliment Return	A: You look great today. B: You look nice as well.

Acceptance + Formula	
<b>2) Mitigate</b>	
Deflecting or Qualifying Comment	A: That's a nice car you have there. B: It is an old car.
Reassurance or Repetition Request	A: You are really good at math. B: Do you think so?
<b>3) Reject</b>	A: You're the best player of the team. B: Don't say that.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the study considering the data collected with the role-play sessions, NSs rating scale results and the analysis of CRs using Nelson, Al-Batal and Echols (1996) taxonomy.

### 4.2. RQ1: Which were the most common CRs strategies that L2 learners employed the most?

In total, 10 participants produced 100 CRs in this study. Group A (one semester stay) produced 40 CRs and group B (two semesters stay) produced 80 CRs. The data in Group A was collected in two sessions; at the beginning and end of the semester. There was not a third data collection session because the time between the pre and post test was too short, hence it was considered that there would not be major differences in the data among the mid test and post test. However, Group B did completed the three sessions in total. A pre test in September 2018, a mid test in November 2018 and a post test in April 2019 before the participants left the country. Below, table 6 shows the distribution of the CRs strategies that were employed by the participants in group A in the first (September 2018) and last data collection (November 2018). The data was compared with the CRs strategies employed by NSs by using the same role-play instrument. Ten Mexican undergraduate students volunteered to participate in this study and they were enrolled in the same university where the study took place. The role-play session took place only one time at the end of the study (April 2019).

**Table 6.** Distribution of CRs strategies preferred by NNSs (group A) and NSs.

CRs strategies	NNS		NS
	September 2018	November 2018	April 2019
<i>Acceptance</i>			
Appreciation token	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	8 (20%)
Agreeing utterance	1 (5%)	7 (35%)	3 (7.5%)
Compliment return	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	2 (5%)
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>8 (40%)</b>	<b>12 (60%)</b>	<b>13 (32.5%)</b>
<i>Mitigate</i>			
Deflecting or qualifying comment	11 (55%)	7 (35%)	26 (65%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	1 (5%)	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>11 (55%)</b>	<b>8 (40%)</b>	<b>26 (65%)</b>
<i>Reject</i>			
Disagreeing utterance	1 (5%)	0	1 (2.5%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1 (15%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1 (2.5%)</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>20 (100%)</b>	<b>20 (100%)</b>	<b>40 (100%)</b>

Table 6 shows that group A in the first data collection preferred the most deflecting or qualifying comment by 55%, followed by compliment return (20%), appreciation token (15%) and agreeing utterance (5%) and disagreeing utterance (5). In this first stage, deflecting or qualifying comment was the most preferred strategy by both NNSs and NSs. Below, two deflecting or qualifying comment strategy examples are provided.

(1) Um. Thank you very much, Mom. Um. I don't know, maybe it was not that hard. (1A NNS<sup>1</sup>; S2<sup>2</sup>; SEP 2018<sup>3</sup>)

[Ehm. Muchas gracias, Mamá. Ehm. No sé, quizás no era tan difícil.]

(2) Thank you. I did what I could. (7 NS<sup>4</sup>; S2; APR 2019)

[Gracias. Hice lo que pude.]

Group A used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most in the first data (SEP 2018) collection in comparison to the last data collection (NOV 18). Additionally, NNSs participants mitigated compliments that praised abilities as well as Mexican participants by showing modesty in the response and undermining the effort in

<sup>1</sup> Participants in both groups are numbered 1 to 5 so to be identified. However, a letter A and B is added to identify them

<sup>2</sup> This code stands for the situations used in the role-play activities, i.e. situation 1, situation 2, situation 3 and situation 4.

<sup>3</sup> Date of the data collection.

<sup>4</sup> Mexican NSs participants were numbered 1 to 10 as well so to be easily identified.

accomplishing a goal. As it is shown in table 6, Mexican participants tend to deflect and qualify so to mitigate the illocution of a compliment.

Yet, the percentages of preference in the other strategies varied from each other (NNSs and NSs) and although the percentage of preference for the deflecting or qualifying comment decreased by 20%, it still remained to be in the one of the most frequently employed by the participants. In the second and last data collection of group A, NNSs participants preferred the agreeing utterance and deflecting or qualifying comment the most by 35%. Below two examples of the agreeing utterance strategy are provided.

(3) Thank you very much. Why do you think that? I like it as well. (3A NNS; S1; NOV 2018)

[Muchas gracias, ¿por qué crees eso? A mí también me gusta ((risa)).]

(4) Thank you. I think I chose it well for today's presentation. (1 NS; S1; APR 2019)

[Gracias. Creo que la escogí bien para la presentación de hoy.]

As previously mentioned, in this last data collection NNSs participants preferred the agreeing utterance strategy the most as well as the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy. Even though the agreeing utterance strategy was not one of the most preferred ones by Mexican NSs, it was in the third position of preference. However, when Mexican NSs use this strategy it would be generally used when the compliment refers to a possession rather than a person's ability. Furthermore, based on the percentages of use in group B, the first data collection (September 2018) approximates the most to the NSs participants as to the frequency of use and preference of the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy. Even though the frequency of use of the other CRs strategies differs from the NSs data collection, NNSs employed the same CRs strategies as the NSs.

Table 7 shows the distribution of the CRs strategies that were employed by the participants in group B in the first (September 2018) and last data collection (April 2019). These results were compared with the CRs strategies employed by NSs as well.

**Table 7.** Distribution of CRs strategies preferred by NNSs (group B) and NSs.

CRs strategies	NNS		NS
	September 2018	April 2019	April 2019
<i>Acceptance</i>			
Appreciation token	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	8 (20%)
Agreeing utterance	3 (15%)	0	3 (7.5%)
Compliment return	5 (25%)	1 (5%)	2 (5%)
Acceptance + Formula	1 (5%)	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>13 (65%)</b>	<b>11 (55%)</b>	<b>13 (32.5%)</b>
<i>Mitigate</i>			
Deflecting or qualifying comment	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	26 (65%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>7 (35%)</b>	<b>9 (45%)</b>	<b>26 (65%)</b>
<i>Reject</i>			
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	1 (2.5%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1 (2.5%)</b>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>20 (100%)</b>	<b>20 (100%)</b>	<b>40 (100%)</b>

In table 7, group B's CRs strategies varied from the first data collection to the last data collection. In the first data collection (SEP 2018) NNSs participants employed the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most by 35% of preference, followed by strategies of compliment return (25%), appreciation token (20%), agreeing utterance (15%) and acceptance + formula (5%). Below examples of the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy are provided.

(5) Oh. Thank you. It is because you teach well. Yes. (2B NNS; S3; SEP 2018)

[Ah. Gracias, es porque tú enseñas bien. Sí.]

(6) Thank you very much, professor. And yes, I hope I can improve more than what I did today. (5 NS; S3; APR 2019)

[Muchas gracias, profesora. Y sí, espero mejorar más de lo que hice hoy.]

As previously mentioned, in this study when the praise was based on a person's ability, both NNSs and Mexican NSs tended to mitigate and deviate the compliment by employing the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy. It seemed that the complimentee was aware of the complimenter's face and avoided giving CRs that could threaten the complimenter's face. On the other hand, in the last data collection the percentages of

preference varied from the first data collection. The most preferred strategy by NNSs participants was appreciation token by 50%, followed by deflecting or qualifying comment (45%) and compliment return (5%). Below, two examples of the appreciation token are provided.

(7) Thank you very much. (3B NNS; S4; APR 2019)

[Muchas gracias.]

(8) Thank you. (4 NS; S4; APR 2019)

[Gracias.]

Even though the appreciation token strategy was not the most preferred one by Mexican NSs, it was the subsequent one. This strategy can be used as a simple and practical way to respond to a compliment that either refers to a material possession or a person's ability. Generally speaking, in Mexican context most of the compliments tend to be appreciated as a way to safeguard the complimenter's face.

This last data collection in group B shows differences between the strategies employed by NNSs and NSs participants. NNSs preferred to recognize the status of the compliment the most instead of deviating it as NSs did. Moreover, this group in particular seems that in the first data collection had similar CRs strategies preferences to those employed by NSs. Nevertheless, the percentages of use in the strategies varied one from another, being deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most preferred one by both, NNSs and NSs participants.

On the other hand, table 8 shows the percentages of preference per situation by both group A and the Mexican NSs participants. These values and percentages correspond to the CRs collected during the month of September 2018 (group A) and April 2019 (Mexican NSs participants).



**Table 8.** Group A distribution of the CRs strategies in September, 2018 and Mexican NSs in April, 2019.

	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs
<i>Acceptance</i>								
Appreciation token	0	2 (20%)	0	2 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (20%)	1 (10%)
Agreeing utterance	0	1 (10%)	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	2 (20%)
Compliment return	3 (60%)	2 (20%)	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)	0
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	3 (60%)	5 (50%)	1 (20%)	2 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (10%)	2 (40%)	3 (30%)
<i>Mitigate</i>								
Deflecting or qualifying comment	2 (40%)	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	8 (80%)	3 (60%)	9 (90%)	3 (60%)	4 (40%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (20%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	2 (40%)	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	8 (80%)	3 (60%)	9 (90%)	3 (60%)	6 (60%)
<i>Reject</i>								
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	1 (10%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	0	0	1 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand total</b>	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

As table 8 shows in situation 1, NNSs in group A preferred the compliment return strategy the most followed by the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy whereas Mexican NSs 50% (n=5) of the participants used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most. In situation 2, the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy accounted by 60% (n=3) of use by NNSs while Mexican NSs accounted by 80% (n=8) for the same CRs strategy. Then in situation 3, NNSs used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most as well by 60% (n=3). Mexican NSs employed the same strategy as well by 90% (n=9) of preference. Lastly, in situation 4 most of the NNSs used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy by 60% (n=3) of preference and Mexican NSs used the same strategy as well by 40% (n=4) of preference. In general, it seems that in the first data

collection, NNSs already presented similar preferences in regards to the CRs strategy that would be employed by Mexican NSs in situations 2 and 3.

Table 9 shows the distribution of CRs strategies employed by NNSs in group A in the last data collection (November 2018) and Mexican NSs participants (April 2019).

**Table 9.** Group A distribution of the CRs strategies in November, 2018 and Mexican NSs in April, 2019.

	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs
<i>Acceptance</i>								
Appreciation token	1 (20%)	2 (20%)	0	2 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (10%)	1 (20%)	1 (10%)
Agreeing utterance	2 (40%)	1 (10%)	2 (40%)	0	2 (40%)	0	1 (20%)	2 (20%)
Compliment return	1 (20%)	2 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	4 (80%)	5 (50%)	2 (40%)	2 (20%)	4 (80%)	1 (10%)	2 (40%)	3 (30%)
<i>Mitigate</i>								
Deflecting or qualifying comment	1 (20%)	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	8 (80%)	0	9 (90%)	3 (60%)	4 (40%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)	0	0	2 (20%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	1 (20%)	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	8 (80%)	1 (20%)	9 (90%)	3 (60%)	6 (60%)
<i>Reject</i>								
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (10%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand total</b>	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

As it can be shown in table 9, in situation 1 NNSs preferred the agreeing utterance the most accounted by 40% (n=2) while Mexican NSs tended to use the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most accounted by 50% (n=5). In situation 2, NNSs used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy by 60% (n=3) of preference and Mexican NSs also preferred the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy by 80% (n=8) of preference. In situation 3, NNSs employed the appreciation token and agreeing utterance

strategies by 40% (n=2) of preference while Mexican NSs preferred the deflecting or qualifying comment by 90% (n=9) of preference. Last, in situation 4, both the NNSs and Mexican NSs preferred the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most; NNSs preference of use accounted by 60% (n=3) and Mexican NSs accounted by 40% (n=4). Though in this study it would be expected to see some similarities in this last data collection between group A and the Mexican NSs choice of CRs strategies, NNSs only showed similarities in the CRs strategies used in situation 2 and 4.

Below, table 10 shows the distribution of CRs strategies used by group B in the first data collection (September 2018) and Mexican NSs (April 2019).

**Table 10.** Group B distribution of the CRs strategies in September, 2018 and Mexican NSs in April, 2019.

	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs
<i>Acceptance</i>								
Appreciation token	1 (20%)	2 (20%)	1 (20%)	2 (20%)	0	1 (10%)	2 (40%)	1 (10%)
Agreeing utterance		1 (10%)	1 (20%)	0	1 (20%)	0	1 (20%)	2 (20%)
Compliment return	4 (80%)	2 (20%)	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)	0
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (20%)	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	5 (100%)	5 (50%)	2 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (20%)	1 (10%)	5 (100%)	3 (30%)
<i>Mitigate</i>								
Deflecting or qualifying comment	0	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	8 (80%)	4 (80%)	9 (90%)	0	4 (40%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (20%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	0	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	8 (80%)	4 (80%)	9 (90%)	0	6 (60%)
<i>Reject</i>								
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (10%)
<b>Subtotal</b>			0					0
<b>Grand total</b>	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

As table 10 shows NNSs in situation 1 used the compliment return strategy the most by 80% (n=4) of preference and Mexican NSs used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most by 50% (n=5) of preference. In situation 2, NNSs used the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy by 60% (n=3) of preference and NSs by 80% (n=8); both groups preferred the same strategy the most. Similarly in situation 3, both NNSs and Mexican NSs used the deflecting of qualifying comment strategy the most. NNSs preference accounted by 80% (n=4) and Mexican NSs by 90% (n=9). Finally, in situation 4 NNSs preferred the appreciation token strategy by 40% (n=2) of preference while Mexican NSs used the deflecting and qualifying comment strategy by 40% (n=4). Considering the data above, group B preferred the same CRs strategy as Mexican NSs in situations 2 and 3. In this sense, it seems that participants were aware of the roles in both of these situations and the variables of power and distance.

Finally, table 11 shows the distribution of CRs strategies used by group B and Mexican NSs in the last data collection (April 2019).

**Table 11.** Group B distribution of the CRs strategies in April, 2019 and Mexican NSs in April, 2019.

	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs	NNSs	NSs
<i>Acceptance</i>								
Appreciation token	2 (40%)	2 (20%)	3 (60%)	2 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (10%)	3 (60%)	1 (10%)
Agreeing utterance	0	1 (10%)	0	0	0	0	0	2 (20%)
Compliment return	1 (20%)	2 (20%)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	3 (60%)	5 (50%)	3 (60%)	2 (20%)	2 (40%)	1 (10%)	3 (60%)	3 (30%)
<i>Mitigate</i>								
Deflecting or qualifying comment	2 (40%)	5 (50%)	2 (40%)	8 (80%)	3 (60%)	9 (90%)	2 (40%)	4 (40%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (20%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	2 (40%)	5 (50%)	2 (40%)	8 (80%)	3 (60%)	9 (90%)	2 (40%)	6 (60%)
<i>Reject</i>								
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (10%)

<b>Subtotal</b>			0					
<b>Grand total</b>	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)	5 (100%)	10 (100%)

As table 11 shows, in situation 1 NNSs used the appreciation token and deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most by 40% (n=2) each and Mexican NSs the deflecting or qualifying comment by 50% (n=5). In situation 2, NNSs used the appreciation token strategy the most by 60% (n=3) and NSs the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy by 80% (n=8). In situation 3, both NNSs and Mexican NSs preferred the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most. NNSs preference accounted by 60% (n=3) and Mexican NSs by 90% (n=9). Last, in situation 4, NNSs preferred the appreciation token strategy by 60 % (n=3) of preference while Mexican NSs employed the deflecting or qualifying comment the most by 40% (n=4). This last data collection showed that participants in group B chose different CRs strategies than those employed by Mexican NSs. Both, NNSs and Mexican NSs only coincide in the selection of the CRs strategy in situation 3 by employing the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy.

#### 4.2.1. Acceptance

Table 12 and 13 show the total distribution of the preferred CRs strategies, i.e. for group A it includes the data collected in September 2018 and November 2018 and for group B it includes the data collected in September 2018, November 2018 and April 2019. As table 12 and 13 show NNSs group A and B preferred the acceptance category by 50% and 58.3%, respectively, while NSs preference accounted by 27.5% (see table 14). This was the second most preferred category among the three different groups of participants.

**Table 12.** Total distribution of the CRs strategies preferred by NNSs group A.

CRs strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 4	Grand total
<i>Acceptance</i>					
Appreciation token	1 (10%)	0	4 (40%)	2 (40%)	7(17.5%)
Agreeing utterance	2 (20%)	3 (30%)	2 (20%)	0	7(17.5%)
Compliment return	4 (40%)	0	0	2 (20%)	6 (15%)
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	7 (70%)	3	6	4 (%)	20 (50%)
<i>Mitigate</i>					
Deflecting or qualifying comment	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	3 (%)	6 (%)	18 (45%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	1 (%)	0	1 (2.5%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	3 (30%)	6 (60%)	4 (%)	6 (%)	19 (47.5%)
<i>Reject</i>					
Disagreeing utterance	0	1 (10%)	0	0	1 (2.5%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	0	1 (10%)	0	0	1 (2.5%)
<b>Grand total</b>	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	<b>40 (100%)</b>

**Table 13.** Total distribution of the CRs strategies preferred by NNSs group B.

CRs strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 4	Grand total
<i>Acceptance</i>					
Appreciation token	4 (26.6%)	5 (33.3%)	3 (20%)	7 (46.6%)	19 (31.6%)
Agreeing utterance	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.6%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.5%)	7 (11.6%)
Compliment return	6 (40%)	0	0	2 (13.5%)	8 (13.3%)
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	1 (6.6%)	1 (1.6%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	12 (80%)	6 (40%)	5 (33.3%)	12 (80%)	35 (58.3%)
<i>Mitigate</i>					
Deflecting or qualifying comment	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	10 (66.6%)	3 (20%)	25 (41.6%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	10 (66.6%)	3 (20%)	25 (41.6%)
<i>Reject</i>					
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand total</b>	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	15 (100%)	<b>60 (100%)</b>

**Table 14.** Total Distribution of the CRs strategies preferred by NSs.

CRs strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation 3	Situation 4	Grand total
<i>Acceptance</i>					
Appreciation token	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	8 (20%)
Agreeing utterance	1 (10%)	0	0	2 (20%)	3 (7.5%)
Compliment return	2 (20%)	0	0	0	2 (5%)
Acceptance + Formula	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	5 (50%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	3 (30%)	11 (27.5%)
<i>Mitigate</i>					
Deflecting or qualifying comment	5 (50%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	4 (40%)	26 (65%)
Reassurance or repetition request	0	0	0	2 (20%)	2 (5%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	5 (50%)	8 (80%)	9 (90%)	6 (60%)	28 (70%)
<i>Reject</i>					
Disagreeing utterance	0	0	0	1 (10%)	1 (2.5%)
<b>Subtotal</b>	0	0	0	0	1 (2.5%)
<b>Grand total</b>	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	10 (100%)	<b>40 (100%)</b>

**Appreciation token.** This is the most frequently used strategy of this category by NNSs and NSs. This type of response identifies the status of the compliment, e.g. ‘thank you’ and ‘thank you very much’. Group A preference of appreciation tokens in their CRs accounted by 17.5%, group B by 31.6% and NSs by 20%.

(9) Gracias. (3BNNS; S1; NOV 2018)

[Thank you]

(10) Ah, gracias. (7NS; S1; APR 2019)

[Oh. Thank you]

**Agreeing utterance.** These types of responses are structured by accepting the compliment and providing an utterance that suits semantically to the compliment. This response was preferred by group A by 17.5%, group B by 11.6% and NSs by 7.5%.

(11) Pues, también, gracias. Y estoy muy orgullosa de mi trabajo y veo que mis esfuerzos logran. (3BNNS; S2; SEP 2018)

[Well, also, thank you. And, I am very proud of my work and I can see that my efforts achieve it.]

- (12) Gracias. Creo que la escogí bien para la presentación de hoy. (1NS; S1; APR 2019)  
[Thank you. I think I chose it well for today's presentation.]

**Compliment return.** This response requires an acceptance of the given compliment and a praise for the speaker or sender, i.e. who emits the compliment. This strategy can strengthen a bond between the speaker and addressee since it promotes equality between the subjects. This category was preferred by group A for 15%, group B for 13.3% and 5% by NSs.

- (13) Ay, muchas gracias. Tú también. (1BNNS; S1; APR 2019)  
[Oh. Thank you very much. You too.]
- (14) Ah, muchas gracias. Igualmente. (5NS; S1; APR 2019)  
[Oh. Thank you very much, likewise.]

**Acceptance + Formula.** This type of response utilizes a formulaic utterance when accepting a compliment, e.g. 'mi casa es tu casa', 'a la orden', 'cuando gustes', etc. These formulaic utterances carry out a social function when being produced. These responses can be found in Syrian Arabic language and Spanish (Nelson et al., 1996; Flores-Salgado and Witten, 2019). This response was only used by NNSs and was not found in NSs responses. This category accounted for 1.6% by group B.

- (15) Ay, muchas gracias. Pues, mi casa es tu casa. Puedes venir cuando quieras relajarte. Bueno, está un poco sucio, pero siéntate por ahí y charlamos un poquito. (4BNNS; S4; NOV 2018)  
[Oh. Thank you very much. Well, my house is your house. You can come whenever you want to relax. Well, it is a little dirty, but sit wherever you want and we can chat a little bit.]

#### 4.2.2. Mitigate

When a compliment is mitigated, it can be done by non-accepting it and non-rejecting it. Usually, compliments can be mitigated by deflecting, questioning or ignoring the



compliments. The preference of this category accounted by 47.5% (group A), by 58.3% (group B) and by 70% (Mexican NSs).

**Deflecting or qualifying comment.** This type of response tended to be the most preferred one by both NNSs and NSs. The purpose of this strategy is to deviate the attention by adding information or downgrading the force of the compliment. This category accounted for 45% by group A, 41.6% by group B and 65% by Mexican NSs.

(16) ¡Gracias, mamá! Pero, bueno. Hice algunos errores y tengo que mejorar, pero sí. Bueno, estoy muy feliz de esto, pero sigo trabajando. (NNSs; NOV 2018)

[Thank you, mother! But, well. I made some mistakes and I need to improve, but yes. Well, I am very happy, though I keep working.]

(17) Ay, gracias. Lo compré anteayer. (NSs; APR 2019)

[Oh. Thank you. I bought it yesterday.]

**Reassurance or repetition request.** This category aims to question the genuine intention of the compliment by reassuring the actual compliment. Consequently, the addressee may face difficulties when interpreting the given compliment. The preference of this strategy accounted for 2.5% by group A and 5% by NSs.

(18) Muchas gracias. Y... Bueno, voy a preguntar. ¿No le parece que puedo mejorar en esta cosa? O mi pronunciación, ¿está bien así? O, ¿qué puedo mejorar? (NNSs; NOV 2018)

[Thank you very much. And... Well, I am going to ask. Don't you think I can improve in another aspect? Or my pronunciation is O.K. like that? Or, what can I improve?]

#### 4.2.3. Rejections

**Disagreeing utterance.** These responses happen when the addressee disagrees with the compliment given by the sender. When using this strategy the addressee has the opportunity to avoid self-praise by rejecting and disagreeing with the compliment. This category accounted for 10% by group A and 2.5% by Mexican NSs; group B did not use this strategy.

(19) ¡Ay, no me digas eso, mamá! (2ANNS; S2; SEP 2018)

[Oh! Don't say that, mother!]

(20) ((risas)) Ay, ¿cómo crees? (8NS; S4; APR 2019)

[ ((laugh)) Oh, why you think that?]

4.3. RQ2: To what degree intensity of interaction and length of residence influence the development of pragmatic competence of L2 learners of Spanish?

This research question attempts to address the development of the participants' pragmatic competence considering the variables of intensity of interaction and LoR. In order to do this, participants reported in each of the role-play sessions the time they had spent interacting with NSs when not being in their weekly Spanish lessons. The ranges of options were: 1) Never, 2) 1-2 hours per week, 3) 3-5 hours per week and 4) 6 or more hours per week. Additionally, the participants' CRs were rated by two NSs raters considering the degree of appropriateness according to each of the given situations. The rating scale assess the participants' CRs in a 1-4 Likert scale, in which value 1= totally inappropriate, 2= less appropriate, 3= appropriate and 4= totally appropriate. Thus, the total value that a participant could achieve was 32 points; each evaluation total value was 16 points.

The purpose is to analyze relationship between the degree of interaction reported by the participants and the results that participants obtained in the NSs rating scale. Based in previous studies, it may be assumed that a high level of interaction with NSs could influence positively in the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harligh and Bastos, 2011; Bella, 2011, 2012). Table 10 shows group A's values of the interaction with NSs and the total value that was assigned to each participant based on the NSs raters evaluations.

**Table 15.** Group A (one semester stay) values for social interaction besides the Spanish classes and NSs rating scale.

Participants Code	September 2018		November 2018	
	Social interaction (h/week)	NSs rating scale*	Social interaction (h/week)	NSs rating scale*
ECRs	>6 **	25	>6	23
NCRs	3 to 5	27	1 to 2	22
KCRs	3 to 5	23	>6	26
DCRs	>6	21	>6	25
FCRs	>6	27	>6	28

\*Out of the total value 32.

\*\* More than six hours.

$$\bar{X} = 24.8$$

$$\sigma = 2.1$$

As can be seen in table 15, the results showed a direct relationship between the amount of interaction and the values obtained in the NSs rating scale. The participants who reported to interact with NSs >3 (more than three hours per week) demonstrated a positive development from the first data collection (Sep-18) to the second data collection (Nov-18). However, results vary because as it can be shown there are some cases in which the hours of interaction with NSs were the same in the first and second data collection but the results decreased in the second NSs rating scale. On the other hand, other participants reported in the first data collection a limited time of interaction but they increased the time of interaction in the second data collection, therefore, their results increased in the NSs rating scale. Furthermore, the mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) and standard deviation ( $\sigma$ ) were calculated in order to compare the final results of each of the groups and analyze the development taking into consideration the variable of LoR. In this case, group A's  $\bar{X}=24.8$  and  $\sigma= 2.1$ .

Table 16 shows the values of group B's interaction with NSs (outside the Spanish classroom) and the total value that was assigned to each participant considering the NSs raters evaluations. Nevertheless, due to the length of time group B stayed in Mexico, three data collection sessions took place. This table shows the results from the three data

collection sessions: (1) September, 2018, (2) November, 2018 and (3) April, 2019. Similarly to the previous table, participants in group B who interacted actively with NSs (>3) showed a positive development in their values during the three sessions. Moreover, low numbers tend to be highly related to an interaction below 2 hours per week with NSs. Additionally, in this case, group B's  $\bar{X}$ =24.8 and  $\sigma$ = 2.1 in the final data collection.

**Table 16.** Group B (two semesters stay) values for social interaction besides the Spanish classes and NSs rating scale.

Participants Code	September 2018		November 2018		April 2019	
	Social interaction (h/week)	NSs rating scale*	Social interaction (h/week)	NSs rating scale*	Social interaction (h/week)	NSs rating scale*
YuCRs	1 to 2	21	1 to 2	20	3 to 5	25
FuCRs	>6 **	19	1 to 2	18	>6	22
CCRs	>6	23	>6	24	>6	27
ACRs	3 to 5	25	3 to 5	26	3 to 5	28
YCRs	3 to 5	25	3 to 5	28	3 to 5	21

\*Out of the total value 32.

\*\* More than six hours.

$\bar{X} = 24.6$   
 $\sigma = 2.7$

In this sense, both groups showed that 3 to more hours of interaction with NSs per week can help to develop the pragmalinguistic competence positively based on the results participants obtained in the NSs rating scale. In the cases in which the participants had an active interaction (>3) and their NSs rating scale values decreased in the second or third evaluation, a detailed analysis was carried out to analyze the reason of this decrease. A possible explanation to this could be that in the role-play situations in which the participants obtain a low value, there was a pragmatic transfer from the participant's L1. This pragmatic transfer can be explained with the previous research question which addresses the CR's strategies employed by NNSs and compared to the ones employed by Mexican NSs.

Regarding the LoR, group A's mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) was 24.8 and the deviation standard ( $\sigma$ ) was 2.1. As for group B's mean ( $\bar{X}$ ) was 24.6 and the deviation standard ( $\sigma$ ) was 2.7. In this study, these values suggest that the LoR from group A and group B did not influence greatly in the acquisition of the L2 pragmalinguistic competence since the difference in both means and deviation standard are not significant.

#### 4.3.1. NSs rating scale (raters' comments)

In this section some of the comments that were expressed by the raters (NSs) are presented along with the value assigned to the CRs and the CRs that both of the raters evaluated. The CRs were selected according to the values. In this sense, the CRs that were evaluated with the same value are the ones that are presented in the following tables.

Table 17 shows the values that were assigned by raters to the NNSs from group A in the first data collection and last data collection. There were two Mexican NSs raters per each situation. Below an example of a CRs is provided based on the values given by the raters.

**Table 17.** The NSs rating scale values of group A in the first and last data collection.

SEPTEMBER 2018								
	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
Participants code	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B
ECRs	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	3
NCRs	3	2	4	4	4	4	2	4
KCRs	4	3	3	2	3	3	2	4
DCRs	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	4
FCRs	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3
NOVEMBER 2018								
	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
Participants code	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B
ECRs	4	3	2	2	2	4	2	4
NCRs	2	2	3	4	3	2	3	4

KCRs	4	3	2	4	3	4	2	4
DCRs	4	2	4	4	3	2	2	4
FCRs	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	3

Values. 4= totally appropriate; 3= appropriate; 2= less appropriate and 1= totally inappropriate.

(21) Well, um. Maybe thank you and I am proud because I learned a lot in the past and that is why you pass and learn a lot. (DCRs; S2; SEP2018)

[Pues, ehm. Tal vez gracias y estoy orgulloso porque aprende mucho en el pasado y pore so es que pasas y aprendes mucho.]

In this example, both of the raters assigned 2 points to this CR and argued that expressing doubt and also eliciting the ‘Pues, ehm. Tal vez...’, which denotes doubt, could be taken as something that could be omitted by the complimentee. Another example of a CR is provided below.

(22) Oh. Thank you very much. Glad you like it. I also like your outfit. (FCRs; S1; SEP 2018)

[Oh, muchas gracias. Me alegro mucho que te gusta y también me gusta tu ropa.]

On the contrary, this CR was evaluated by both of the raters with 4 points. Rater A commented that it was very common that women return the compliment so to build a certain level of empathy between the interlocutors. In this same vein, rater B argued that the response sounded very natural.

In the last data collection of group A there were some variations as for the NSs rating scale, however, there were some positive results. Below an example is provided.

(23) Oh. Thank you, Dad ((laugh)). Thank you, Mom. I am also very happy. I study hard that is why, so I think it is very good and I am going to party today. It’s OK, right? ((laugh)). (DCRs; S2; NOV 18)

[Oh. Gracias, papa (((risa))). Gracias, mama. También soy muy feliz, estudio mucho por eso. Entonces, creo que es muy bueno y voy a fiestar hoy. Está bien, ¿no? ((risa))]

This participant's CR was previously mentioned and in the first data both of the raters assigned 2 points to his first CR. In this last data collection his value increased to 4 points by both of the raters. The raters commented that the response was witty and one of the raters expressed that it was a very common response in Mexico when the son/daughter ask for something when he/she got good grades at school. On the other hand, there were some participants whose values decreased in the last data collection. An example is provided below.

(24) Oh. Thank you very much. It is because in presentations we have to dress appropriately. That is why. A professor told me that if we did not dress well when presenting, we will lose points in our grades. (NCRs; S1; NOV 2018)

[Ah, muchas gracias. Es que en las presentaciones necesitan presentarnos bien... Por eso, un profesor me dijo que si no nos presentamos bien para las presentaciones, nos faltan puntuaciones en las calificaciones.]

In this response, both of the raters assigned 2 points to the participant's CR. One of the raters argued that the response sounded a too elaborated and redundant and the other rater mentioned that the response had a lot of explanation. Thus, in this sense it seems that sometimes it can be taken as inappropriate in Mexican contexts to provide too much information.

Table 18 shows the values assigned by the raters to group B. As group A, this table reports the values obtained in the first and data collection of the participants in group B, i.e. September 2018 and April 2019. In the first data collection there were participants who obtained high and low values. Below an example is provided that was assigned a low value.

Table 18. The NSs rating scale values of group B in the first and last data collection.

SEPTEMBER 2018								
	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
Participants code	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B
YuCRs	4	4	2	2	2	1	3	3
FuCRs	1	1	3	2	3	4	2	3
CCRs	4	4	4	3	2	2	2	2
ACRs	4	3	2	2	4	4	2	4
YCRs	4	3	3	2	3	4	3	3
APRIL 2019								
	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation 3		Situation 4	
Participants code	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B	Rater A	Rater B
YuCRs	4	4	2	2	4	4	3	2
FuCRs	3	3	4	2	2	1	3	4
CCRs	4	4	3	3	2	4	3	4
ACRs	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	4
YCRs	2	2	2	3	4	4	2	2

Values. 4= totally appropriate; 3= appropriate; 2= less appropriate and 1= totally inappropriate.

(25) Thanks. I mean, thank you very much, but I also feel a little shy because my house is very intimate. (CCRs; S4; SEP 2018)

[Gracias. Digo muchas gracias, pero también voy a sentirme como un poco tímida porque la casa es algo muy íntimo.]

In this CR, both raters assigned 2 points. On one hand, one rater expressed that the use of ‘thank you very much’ was an exaggeration and on the other hand, the other rater expressed that feeling shy because of considering your house as a very intimate space while for Mexicans being able to invite people over to your place is a synonym of trust and friendship towards the guest. As for the high values obtained in this first data collection, below an example is provide.



- (26) Um. Thanks. I also think your dress is very... Pretty. (YuCRs; S1; SEP 2018)  
[Ehm. Gracias. Yo también pienso que tu vestido es muy... Bonito.]

Both of the raters assigned 4 points to the above CR and considered that it was a good response to a compliment. They argued that it was very similar to the Mexican context and that most of the time when Mexicans receive a compliment, they return the compliment. Similarly to group A, in the last data collection some of the participants in group B increased their values and others decreased their values as to the raters evaluations. Below an example is provided of a CR that obtained a low value in the last data collection.

- (27) Thank you, but I think this is very normal for a student. Yes. (YuCRs; S2; APR 2019)  
[Gracias, pero creo que esto es muy normal para un estudiante. Sí.]

The above CR was assigned 2 points by both of the raters. The raters expressed that a Mexican student would express a response in which he/she stated that it is normal for a student. In this sense, the compliment was about getting good grades at school. Thus, the raters commented that Mexicans tend to magnify their accomplishment so probably by just accepting the compliment that would have been enough. On the other hand, a CRs that obtain a high value is provided below.

- (28) Thank you very much. I will keep working hard. (YCRs; S3; APR2019)  
[Muchas gracias. Voy a seguir esforzándome.]

As for the above CRs, the raters' comments expressed that it was an appropriate response and also a very common one. One of the raters did mention that it was a politically correct response considering that the context was an academic one.

#### 4.3.2. Spanish language instructors' perceptions

In this study the Spanish language instructors were considered with the purpose of obtaining further information regarding the formal language instruction and how each of the instructors addressed issues related to interaction with NSs while being immersed in the TLC. Both of the Spanish language instructors taught Spanish classes to the participants during their stay in Mexico. Two interviews were carried out and they were semi-structure.

Each interview addressed topics such as the use of and types of materials, teaching methodology, extra resources (videos, readings, movies, etc.) and cultural activities they utilize in the language classroom. As previously mentioned, both instructors were labeled as instructor A and instructor B.

Regarding sociocultural aspects and the use of materials, instructor A expressed that it is very common that students come to class with questions so in this sense she explains all these cultural aspects in class. Instructor A expresses:

*I like to explain them about cultural aspects and how the topics we review on the book about activities or holidays have a lot to do with the influence of history and religion in Mexico and Latin America.*

On the other hand, Instructor B explained that the materials she uses are either too European or too local of Mexico so she uses extra resources from the Internet such as videos and other types of materials to complement. Moreover, she highlighted the importance of guiding the students when using the materials and she stated:

*In reality you have to guide them [students], help them and complement [the information], but mostly, compare it. You present them a topic of Mexico and you ask them 'how is it like in your country?'. Then, you explain them 'here in Mexico we celebrate the Day of the Death, and you? Do you have a similar holiday? And if so, how is it done in your country?'. So, as long as you focus everything towards intercultural exchanges it will work well. If not, then it will not work.*

As for the experiences that participants had while interacting with NSs, instructor A expresses that there are few cases in which her students had had a bad experience because of the lack of pragmatic competence. In this sense, she shared:

*Many of the students here interact with Mexicans during their stay, but the majority of the Mexicans accept the mistakes that they [participants] make and, actually, they guide them [Mexicans] and there is no sort of friction because of this same Mexican mental frame of 'they are foreigners, we have to help them, we need to*

*support them. They do not speak Spanish well'. Therefore, I believe that foreigners have an advantage.*

Instructor B, in this sense, explained that she tries to advise the students on what type of activities will they see during a particular holiday and how people will behave. She argues that this is her way of introducing them to Mexican customs. She set an example regarding the Independence Day in Mexico:

*So I show them a video and I tell them: 'Tomorrow you are going to yell' and they [students] ask me: 'to yell? Why are we going to yell?'. Then, I explain them: 'this is what you are going to see and when you hear the president or whoever that comes out and say 'Viva Mexico', what are you going to say? 'Viva', but not 'viva', but 'Viva!' and to every single thing that is mentioned you will repeat 'Viva! Viva! Viva!'. Do you want to fit in? This is what you are going to say and this is why you are going to say it, and then you explain them the reason behind it.*

Lastly, in regard to how to refer to people depending on the context, i.e. social distance, power and gender, both instructors include it in their classes. Though they both expressed that none of the materials address these aspects of interaction, they both either explain it to the students or use role-play activities as practice. For example, instructor A includes role-plays especially with beginner students. She explains that more advanced students tend to be more aware of these variables when interacting with NSs. Instructor A mentioned:

*For example, we change roles and say: 'now you are the professor and you have to ask him/her a favor' and then we all switch roles. For example, one is the professor, the other one is your neighbor, the other one is your father and the other is your best friend, Then, that same request the student has to make it according to the type of person he/she is interacting with.*

Along the same line, Instructor B addresses these aspects by explaining the students that every language has registers and thus, they need to be put into practice when interacting with other speakers. She tells an example that happened in class to illustrate her point:

*A couple of weeks ago, students were presenting about a touristic place that were of their interest either here in Mexico or in their home countries. So one of the Chinese students said 'Well, I will show you Tolantongo, which is a place that is very **chingón** [cool] and so I liked it a lot because of this, and that...'. Obviously I let him finish. When the activity was over, I told him: 'Your presentation was very good, well done and very **chingona** [cool]. However, that word you can use it with your friends, but not in a formal context. I can accept that word, but hoping you will not say it again, but I will explain you when you can use it and when you should not use it. He took it in a very natural way since he did not know because evidently that difference between registers is difficult and challenging for them, but it is important that we explain them about it.*

Overall, participants in this study in addition to having formal language instruction, both of the instructors are aware of the needs of the participants as when interacting with NSs during their stay. They consider important to address, explain and raise awareness in the students about the cultural factors that they need to take into consideration when attempting to interact and blend in with the members of TLC. However, information about the TLC culture is not enough to provide L2 learners with the appropriate tools and skills to deal with the sociolinguistics and pragmalinguistics features of the TLC. Thus, this also shows how little relevance is given to the explicit instruction of pragmatics in the language classroom as to syllabus, materials and methodology. Generally, formal language instruction is based on the linguistic development, i.e. the development of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). However, there is little attention in regards to the development of the L2 pragmatic competence of NNSs. In this sense, Halinko (2011) suggests that explicit instruction of pragmatics enhances the pragmatic development as well as highlights that when L2 learners are immersed in the TLC, the context alone is not enough to influence positively the development of the pragmatic competence.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1. Introduction

In this section, the findings and conclusions are discussed. Also, this chapter provides the study contributions, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research.

### 5.2. Conclusions

This study intended to analyze the influence of the variables of intensity of interaction and LoR in the pragmalinguistic competence of Spanish L2 learners when producing CRs. Additionally, these CRs produced by the participants were classified according to the CRs taxonomy of Nelson et al. (1996) and were compared to those produced by Mexican NSs CRs.

The data collected revealed that apparently a relationship between the intensity of interaction and the development of the pragmalinguistic competence exists when producing CRs regardless of the LoR. Participants who reported to have from three to more hours of interaction with Mexican NSs showed positive values in the NSs rating scale. Most of the participants in both groups obtained more than 20 points value in the NSs rating scale in the pretest. The participants who either increased the hours to six to more hours of interaction or remained at three to five hours showed an increase in their values in their following evaluations with the NSs rating scale. On the other hand, participants who decreased the amount of hours of interaction to less than three hours showed a decrease in their values in the following evaluation with the NSs rating scale. Furthermore, the mean in the final NSs rating scale values of group A ( $\bar{X} = 24.8$ ) and group B ( $\bar{X} = 24.6$ ) were not significantly different. Thus, it seems that the variable of LoR may not influence as much as the variable of intensity of interaction.

Moreover, there were two participants who reported six to more hours of interaction, however, their values in the NSs rating scale (1) decreased in the following evaluation and (2) reported a lower than 20 points value in the NSs rating scale. These two cases were analyzed in detail and it was found that the two NSs raters had given the participants a low value to the participant CRs. The CRs that participants had given in the role-play situation did not match with the expectations of how a Mexican participant may

response. Thus, it seems that the NNSs participants' response had a transfer from their L1. Below, an example is provided.

- (1) Gracias. Y es como “yo sé, yo sé”. ( 1ANNS; S2; NOV 2018)  
[Thank you. And it is like ‘I know, I know’.]

This response corresponded to the role-play situation two in which the participants received a compliment about being a brilliant student. In this case, raters did not consider this response as an appropriate response for Mexican society. One of the raters commented that the response seemed vain. This lends support to other studies in which apparently Mexican speakers tended to avoid self-praise by deviating compliments. This is because Mexicans give more weight to the group face and thus, working carefully on the positive face of the speaker (Curcó 2007, 2014; Flores-Salgado and Witten, 2019). Consequently, this is why a possible explanation to the participant's retrogression is a pragmatic transfer from their mother tongue.

As for the CRs strategies used by NNSs and NSs, both groups showed similarities as to the preferred strategies. In the role-play situation one NNSs and NSs used the same CRs strategies; however the percentages of use differed. Similarly, in the role-play situation two and three the majority of participants, both NSs and NNSs decided to use the deflecting or qualifying comment strategy the most to deviate the compliment. This apparently shows that NNSs and NSs have a similar conception of the variables of power and distance, i.e. participants knew the hierarchies and respected the roles in the role-play situations. However, in the role-play situation 4 the preferred CRs strategies varied a little bit more than in the situation one; however, NNSs and NSs used the deflecting and qualifying comment strategy the most as well. It can be concluded then, that apparently the Spanish L2 learners from this work experienced a positive development of the pragmalinguistic competence when producing CRs due to the intensity of interaction while being immersed in the TLC. Moreover, participants showed similar CRs to those produced by Mexican speakers.

### 5.3. Study contributions

This study contributes to the field of SLA and ILP by showing the progress of L2 learners while being immersed in the TLC learning the L2. Even though the sample was small, it also contributes to possible similarities when producing CRs among subjects from different sociocultural background. Overall, L2 learners from this study showed a competent level of the pragmalinguistic competence in Mexican Spanish language when producing CRs in the pretest. Before the pretest, most of the participants had been in the TLC for at least one month and a half. However, throughout the study the participants demonstrated differences in their pragmalinguistic competence during the time they spent immersed in the TLC.

### 5.4. Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

This section discusses the general limitations that were encountered when this study was carried out. It explains what needs to be taken into consideration for further research as well some improvements that can be done regarding the questionnaire instrument.

#### 5.4.1 General limitations

The results analyzed in this study cannot be generalized due to the limited data collection, small sample size and lack of statistical analysis. Also, this study can be improved by piloting the role-play situations with NSs of the participants' L1 with the purpose of testing how suitable the situations are to the L2 participants. Some L2 learning from this study seemed troubled with the role-play situation four in which their colleagues visited their homes so perhaps for some of them it is not a familiar custom.

#### 5.4.2. Instrument limitation

A follow-up questionnaire was handed in to the participants throughout the study in every role-play session. The purpose of this questionnaire was to maintain a track on the participants' degree of interaction and involvement with both, NSs of Mexico and the sociocultural aspects of the Mexican society during their stay in Mexico. The questions were the follow ones: a) if they were living with a Mexican family, b) how often they hang out with Mexican friends or classmates, c) how much time they considered they talk with NSs while not being in Spanish class, d) how much time they speak Spanish with other international students, d) how often they watch Mexican T.V., e) how often they listen to

Mexican radio stations, f) when going to the movies in Mexico, do they watch movies with subtitles or dubbed to Spanish, g) how often they go out with other international students, h) how often they communicate with their family and friends from their country.

Moreover, after participants responded the first questionnaire in the first data collection, three more questions were added to it because of their relevance and appropriateness. The questions that were included were: a) do you rent with Mexican roommates, b) when you watch Netflix in Mexico, do you watch Mexican movies or shows and c) how often do you go out to cafes and restaurants with your Mexican friends. Since they are university students, they tend to rent with other university students who were mostly Mexicans. Also, nowadays it seems that Netflix has replaced the television and it was the participants' choice of watching movies or shows, this is why this had to be asked in the questionnaire. Through Netflix participants have access to lots of Mexican shows and movies, which can also provide valuable pragmatic competence of the culture.

However, the questionnaire was not statistically validated and hence, when attempting to analyze the data that was obtained through the questionnaire the degree of reliability was negative in most of the items of the questionnaire. In other words, the collected data cannot be analyzed because it lacks of reliability. Notwithstanding, one of the items of the questionnaire addressed the time of interaction that participants had with NSs per week and according to the above mentioned reliability analysis of the questionnaire, this item can be considered reliable by .610 with the Pearson correlation coefficient of interrater reliability. Consequently, this item was used to measure the degree of interaction that each participant had with NSs per week and thus, was reported in the results chapter in section 4.3. Thus, the participants' pragmatic development was explained and described by considering both the data that this item displayed (time of interaction) and the evaluation with the NSs rating scale.

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