



UNIVERSITAT DE  
BARCELONA

Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and  
English Studies

**M.A. Thesis**

**“Really? Thanks, I got it at the mall”: How EFL Learners  
Perceive Compliment Responses and the Role of  
Proficiency**

*Athenea Botey Riaza*

**Supervisor: Dr. Júlia Barón**

**Academic year: 2021-2022**





UNIVERSITAT DE  
BARCELONA

Facultat de Filologia i Comunicació  
Dept. Llengües i Lit. Modernes i Estudis Anglesos

Gran Via de les Corts Catalanes, 585  
08007 Barcelona, SPAIN  
Tel. +34 934 035 686  
Fax +34 933 171 249

**Màster Oficial en Lingüística Aplicada  
i Adquisició de Llengües en Contextos Multilingües  
LAALCM**

.....Júlia Barón Parés..... com a supervisor/a del  
treball (Tesina de Màster) presentat com a requeriment per a l'avaluació de l'assignatura  
**Projecte de Recerca en Lingüística Aplicada**

presentat per l'alumne/a: .....**Athenea Botey Riaza**.....

amb el títol de: "Really? Thanks, I got it at the mall": How EFL Learners  
Perceive Compliment Responses and the Role of Proficiency

certifico que he llegit el treball i l'aprovo perquè pugui ser presentat per a la seva  
defensa pública.

I perquè consti i tingui els efectes oportuns signo aquest certificat en

Barcelona, a .....5..... de .....setembre ..... de 2022

.....

**Dra. Júlia Barón**

**Official MA programme in  
Applied Linguistics and Language Acquisition in Multilingual Contexts  
(LAALCM)**

**Universitat de Barcelona**

***Non-Plagiarism Statement***

This form must be completed, dated and signed and must be included at the beginning of every copy of the MA Thesis you submit for assessment.

<i>Name and surnames:</i>	Athenea Botey Riaza
<i>MA Thesis title:</i>	“Really? Thanks, I got it at the mall”: How EFL Learners Perceive Compliment Responses and the Role of Proficiency
<i>Supervisor:</i>	Dr. Júlia Barón

**I HEREBY DECLARE THAT:**

- This MA Thesis that I am submitting for assessment is entirely my own work and I have written it completely by myself.
- I have not previously submitted this work or any version of it for assessment in any other programme or institution.
- I have not used any other sources or resources than the ones mentioned.
- I have identified and included the source of all facts, ideas, opinions and viewpoints of others through in-text referencing and the relevant sources are all included in the list of references at the end of my work. Direct quotations from books, journal articles, internet sources or any other source whatsoever are acknowledged and the sources cited are identified in the list of references.

I understand that plagiarism and copying are serious offences. In case of proof that this MA Thesis fails to comply with this declaration, either as negligence or as a deliberate act, I understand that the examiner has the right to exclude me from the assessment act and consequently all research activities conducted for this course will be declared null and the MA Thesis will not be presented for public defense, thus obtaining the lowest qualification.

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> September 2022

**Signature:**



## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to my family, friends and partner for their unending love and support as well as to all participants in the study, the high school teachers Àlvar Garcia and Eva Mayol, who very kindly donated their time and help, Gina for lending her time and native speaker perspective, Dr Mora for letting me pester him with questions on statistics, Dr Miralpeix for her advice on dealing with vocabulary sizes, all professors at the MA for infusing me with motivation and inspiration and, finally, I am truly thankful to my supervisor Dr Barón for her excellent feedback, patience and support throughout.

## **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the interface between proficiency and second language (L2) pragmatics by focusing on the pragmatic awareness of the speech act of compliment responses (CRs). The research centred around a teenage population of Spanish learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Their perceptive pragmatic knowledge was tested via a pragmatic awareness video elicitation task (PAVET) where they had to rate the appropriateness of 15 CRs from 1 (inappropriate) to 6 (very appropriate). Subjects were divided into high and low proficiency groups according to their vocabulary sizes to see in what ways their responses to the task differed. Their ratings were then compared to a native speaker (NS) benchmark to obtain a sameness score and results indicate a moderate inverse correlation between proficiency level and near-nativeness. Findings suggest the first language (L1) plays an important role in pragmatic awareness and that proficiency alone is not a determinative factor in order to acquire pragmatic knowledge as there are several other factors that can influence pragmatic development.

## **Table of contents**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>p.1</b>
<b>2. LITEARURE REVIEW</b>	<b>p.2</b>
<b>2.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics</b>	<b>p.2</b>
<b>2.2. Proficiency and Pragmatics</b>	<b>p.2</b>
<b>2.3. Compliment Responses (CRs)</b>	<b>p.6</b>
2.3.1. Definition and types of CRs in English	p.6
2.3.2. ILP studies in CRs	p.8
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>p.10</b>
<b>3.1. Participants</b>	<b>p.10</b>
<b>3.2. Instruments</b>	<b>p.11</b>
3.2.1. Background Questionnaire	p.11
3.2.2. V_YesNo v1.0	p.11
3.2.3. Pragmatic Awareness Video Elicitation Task (PAVET)	p.12
3.2.4. Interviews	p.14
<b>3.3. Procedure</b>	<b>p.14</b>
<b>3.4. Data Analysis</b>	<b>p.15</b>
<b>4. RESULTS</b>	<b>p.16</b>
<b>4.1.RQ1</b>	<b>p.16</b>
<b>4.2.RQ2</b>	<b>p.24</b>
<b>5. DISCUSSION</b>	<b>p.25</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>p.29</b>
<b>7. REFERENCES</b>	<b>p.31</b>
<b>8. APPENDIX</b>	<b>p.35</b>
<b>8.1. Interviews</b>	<b>p.35</b>
<b>8.2. PAVET</b>	<b>p.43</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Even though it is unavoidable that some diversity of opinion exists among native speakers (NSs) of any language when it comes to their view of the degree of appropriateness of a given speech act, there are certain unwritten rules in each society that are generally accepted as appropriate. It is less clear, however, in what ways do learners of a particular second language (L2) perceive these acts when living in a foreign language (FL) context. Is their perception of appropriateness influenced by their first language (L1) pragmatic knowledge? Does it become more similar to the perception of NSs the more proficient they get? The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between proficiency level and pragmatic awareness in teenage English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners with L1 Spanish/Catalan<sup>1</sup>. Research on this interface between language and pragmatics has yielded results that point to the correlation of learners' proficiency level and pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998; Cook and Liddicoat, 2002; Schauer, 2006;) and the correlation of grammatical and pragmatic development (Hoffman-Hicks, 1992; Håkanson and Norrby, 2005; Celaya and Barón, 2015) as well as the complete opposite (Doğançay-Aktuna and Kamisli, 1997; Niezgodá and Röver, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Matsumura, 2003; Martín-Marchante, 2021). Most of these studies have focused on requests, and therefore it seems convenient to investigate how this relationship works when it comes to other speech acts. This is why the present study will revolve around compliment responses (CRs). This mixed methods study will combine quantitative data collected through questionnaires and qualitative data from the interviews conducted with a small sample of participants.

In the first place, the review of the literature in the field of L2 pragmatics will be presented, followed by two research questions. In this brief overview the topics of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), proficiency and pragmatics and CRs and their taxonomies are touched on. In the next section, the methodology used will be explained as well as the design of the tool used to test participants. In the fourth section of the paper, the statistical results will be analysed in an attempt to answer the two research questions. Part five constitutes the discussion of the findings and the last section will be devoted to the concluding remarks.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the context of Catalonia, Spain, most students in their final years of high school are considered balanced bilinguals. Their L1 will be referred to as Spanish/Catalan throughout the paper.



## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics**

One of the widely cited definitions of pragmatics is from Crystal (1997, p. 301), according to which it is “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2020, p. 45). It is also “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and understand language in context” (Thomas, 1983, p. 94). Therefore, pragmatic competence is the capacity of communicating in a way that adheres to societal and cultural constraints of a particular language or situation. It is comprised of two components: sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics (Leech, 1983). Pragmalinguistics refers to the knowledge of the linguistic resources used “to convey illocution” (Wijayanto, 2014 p. 100) and sociopragmatics is understood as knowing when to make use of the pragmalinguistic resources depending on the situational context variables. The field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), in effect, focuses on how L2 learners and L2 users comprehend, acquire, use and develop the knowledge of “how-to-say-what-to-whom-when” in their second or foreign language (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 68).

The study at hand can be situated in the interface of the development of proficiency or grammar and lexicon with pragmatics and will lightly touch on the effect of environment (FL, in this case) on pragmatic development as well, both areas which Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig made reference to when calling for the development of the ILP field in 2013 and qualified as: “promising areas for further research” (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 69).

### **2.2. Proficiency and Pragmatics**

NSs and L2 users and learners often have pragmatic skills that are quite diverse. Research has found that “grammatical development does not guarantee a corresponding level of pragmatic development” (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1998, p. 234). In fact, when compared to

NSs, L2 learners with an advanced level of L2 grammar may exhibit a variety of levels when it comes to pragmatics, including important imbalances between these two kinds of knowledge. In regards to this relationship between pragmatics and interlanguage development, some researchers have focused on trying to determine if it is grammar or pragmatics that develops first in L2 learners. On the one hand, findings point to the possibility that pragmatics can be learnt without need of many linguistic resources, be it through the L1 or universal pragmatic knowledge (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Félix-Brasdefer's findings support the primacy of pragmatics and "suggest that sociopragmatic knowledge seems to precede grammatical competence" (2007, p.280).

On the other hand, other studies have found evidence that grammar precedes the development of pragmatics. In her study involving French FL learners, Hoffman-Hicks (1992) found the learners who excelled in the grammar tasks also did well in the pragmatics tasks. She came to the conclusion that "linguistic competence is necessary for pragmatic competence, but that it is not sufficient for it" (1992, p. 77). It follows then that the higher the grammatical competence the higher the pragmatic competence of the learners. She also emphasized the essential need for using new ways of comparing and measuring these two kinds of data. (Hoffman-Hicks, 1992).

Concurrently, other researchers have endeavoured in a search for "explaining how the emergent systems interact, (...) and how growth in one leads to expanded expression in the other" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p.79). Schauer (2006), for instance believed the two competences develop in a parallel manner. Whilst Håkanson and Norrby (2005), in their study with Swedish FL learners, observed how the learners' pragmatic competence evolved as their morpho-syntactic processability improved. In the more recent publication investigating the development of requests by Celaya and Barón (2015) they concluded that "grammatical and pragmatic competence seem to develop together" (p. 21).

As research has shown, some L2 users are able to be pragmatically appropriate with the help of some basic grammar, vocabulary and use of intonation (as mentioned in Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000), cited by Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, p. 79). Whilst other highly proficient learners are not for the most part competent or incompetent pragmatically but rather display a wide variety of degrees of competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996), findings which point to pragmatic competence and language proficiency being separate systems.

In the research by Doğançay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1997) they observed how learners with an advanced language proficiency did not succeed in using it with appropriateness, due to the L1 influence, suggesting that language is not always learnt alongside pragmatic competence. Similar results were obtained in the subsequent Martín-Marchante's investigation, where not only a correlation between grammatical and pragmatic competence was not confirmed but the grammar and the pragmatic competence sections of the test analysed in the study revealed an inverse correlation "that is, if a student is good at grammar, it can be inferred that he/she is not so much at pragmatics" (Martín-Marchante, 2021, p. 30). Indeed, given that non-verbal language represents a large percentage of the overall communicative message (Mehrabian, 2017), one of the possible explanations for this could be that just as in Tibuset al. (2013) and Sato et al., (2019), on occasions where L2 users have limited language skills, they rely on non-verbal information such as audio-visual input. Nevertheless, as it is underlined in Sánchez-Hernández and Alcón-Soler (2019) "the non-linear and variable nature of L2 pragmatic development" should always be taken into account, especially when doing research with teenagers (p. 55).

The above studies were dealing with productive pragmatic data, but when speaking of learners' perceptive pragmatic knowledge the body of research is smaller (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998; Niezgodá and Röver, 2001; Cook and Liddicoat, 2002; Matsumura, 2003; Schauer, 2006). For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study explored this interrelationship in Italian and Hungarian EFL settings and in the US as an English as a Second Language (ESL) context looking at how pragmatic violations and grammatical errors were perceived. To do this a "contextualized judgement task in an audiovisual format" (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's, 1998, p. 244) with 20 scenarios was employed. These scenarios with speech acts such as apologies, refusals, suggestions and requests could include errors of a grammatical or pragmatic nature which the ESL and EFL students had to rate. The researchers found both EFL students rated grammatical errors lower than pragmatic ones whilst ESL learners were more inclined to rate pragmatic errors as more serious, leading them to associate language development "with the increase of pragmatic/grammatical awareness in exactly the opposite direction depending on the instructional environment" (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, p. 251, 1998). Students with a higher proficiency regardless of the environment viewed pragmatic violations as more severe than grammatical errors. This study on learners' judgement of violations was replicated by Niezgodá and Röver (2001) with an added

training period where EFL and ESL students were taught how to distinguish between pragmatic and grammatical errors. In opposition to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), it was the EFL participants who seemed more aware of both grammatical and pragmatic violations and rated them more severely than the ESL group. Overall low-proficiency students found more grammatical and pragmatic errors than their high-proficiency counterparts. As Kasper points out:

“the findings from both studies strongly suggest that pragmatic and grammatical awareness are largely independent. What they do not, and did not intend to examine is how awareness, measured by (grammatical) acceptability and (pragmatic) appropriateness judgements, is related to learners’ ability to express pragmatic meaning and use grammatical forms in spoken (and written) discourse” (Kasper, 2001, p. 505).

Pragmatic awareness and proficiency were also explored by Cook and Liddicoat (2002) who compared high and low ESL proficiency groups with Australian NSs. Their results showed no significant difference between the request interpretations of high-proficient learners and NSs, reinforcing the idea that the more proficient in the L2 the more pragmatically close to NSs. Similar results were found in Schauer’s (2006) replication of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) which included post hoc interviews and revealed a correlation between pragmatic awareness and proficiency level. The tendency was for ESL learners to rate pragmatic errors more strictly and for EFL participants to pay less attention to those errors as students receive limited NS input, interact only with teachers on most occasions and their instruction is quite exam-centred (Schauer, 2006), even though it has been found that regardless of age or proficiency pragmatics can be taught in the FL class (Myrset, 2022). Conversely, Matsumura (2003) is an example of a pragmatic awareness acquisitional study that showed that proficiency alone was not a significant factor in pragmatic development unless combined with great exposure to the Target Language (TL).

The focus of the present study lies in perceptive knowledge in a FL context and it follows that this research is placed in the framework of awareness, particularly in reference to the Noticing Hypothesis laid out by Schmidt (1995). For pragmatics in particular Schmidt

distinguished *noticing*, the “conscious registration of the occurrence of some event” (p. 29), from *understanding*, “the recognition of a general rule in the presence of context variables such as distance, power and imposition” (Schmidt, 1995, p. 30). Unlike the ESL environment wherein learners have ample exposure and thus increased opportunities for noticing, the EFL environment renders learners more prompt to being influenced by their L1 as shown in Takahashi and Beebe (1987) where they found transfer took place both in the EFL and ESL contexts, but the L1 gained a specially strong influence in the EFL context in particular. Additionally, Cheng (2011) revealed that the strategies to respond to compliments used by Chinese L2 speakers of English differed greatly from those employed by NSs of English and demonstrated this was due in great part to the learners’ L1 culture. As well as being influenced by the L1, pragmatic competence can be affected by a wide range of factors as it is a “multi-aspected ability with significant differences observed among component competences in learner performance, namely among pragmatic awareness, metapragmatic awareness, and metalinguistic competence” (Ifantidou and Tzanne, 2012, p. 68). In this study the focus will be on learners of English in a FL context, factor that could have a great influence on the level of awareness<sup>2</sup>, as previous research has shown EFL learners are often more aware of grammatical prescriptiveness than of pragmatic appropriateness (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, 1998).

### **2.3.Compliment Responses (CRs)**

#### **2.3.1. Definition and types of CRs in English**

There is little known research on pragmatic awareness carried out with compliment responses (CRs), the present study will focus on this not-so-often-examined speech act. Compliment responses are a double-edged sword with a positive and affective act on one side and a face-threatening act on the other as described by Holmes (1986). Responding to the apparently simple speech act of a compliment creates a dispute between the politeness maxim of agreement and that of modesty (Maíz-Arévalo, 2012, Leech, 1983, Pomerantz, 1978). Pomerantz (1978) observed the in-between nature of most CRs, which

---

<sup>2</sup> In this study pragmatic awareness will be treated as a synonym of perceptive pragmatic knowledge (as opposed to productive knowledge).

could be placed somewhere between an acceptance and a rejection. The author adds that CRs are mainly constrained by supportive action on one hand and self-praise avoidance on the other. It has also been described as an act of solidarity in return to a compliment (Herbert, 1990) that serves to maintain “the solidarity of interpersonal relationships and the harmony of social interaction” (Heideari et. al. 2009, p.19 as cited in Morales, 2012, p. 48).

Among NSs of English the general tendency to respond to a compliment is to say ‘thank you’ (Herbert, 1990, p. 207). Evading the compliment comes second (Pomerantz 1978), followed by rejecting the compliment which “is the least favoured option since it entails disagreeing with the interlocutor and might be perceived by some as rude or inappropriate” (Maíz-Arévalo, 2012, p. 164).

There are various taxonomies of CRs (e.g.: Knapp et al., 1984; Holmes, 1995; Herbert, 1998; Golato, 2002). In this study a combination of the two oft-quoted categorisations by Holmes (1995) and Herbert (1998) was employed. Holmes’ (1995) proposal consists of 12 CRs which she divides into three main types: accepting, rejecting and evading. The one proposed by Herbert (1998) classifies a total of 12 CRs into strategies of acceptance, deflection and self-praise avoidance [see table below for subtypes and examples].

Type of compliment response	Holmes (1995)	Herbert (1998)
Acceptance	Appreciation/agreement token (e.g.: <i>Yes, thanks</i> )	Appreciation token (e.g.: <i>Thank you</i> )
	Agreeing utterance (e.g.: <i>I think it’s lovely too</i> )	Comment acceptance-single (e.g.: <i>Yeah, it is my favorite, too</i> )
	Downgrading utterance (e.g.: <i>It’s not too bad, is it?</i> )	Scale down (e.g.: <i>It is really quite old</i> )
	Returning the compliment (e.g.: <i>You’re looking good too</i> )	Return (e.g.: <i>So’s yours</i> )
		Praise upgrade (e.g.: <i>Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn’t it?</i> )
Rejection / deflection	Disagreeing utterance (e.g.: <i>I’m afraid I don’t like it much</i> )	Disagreement (e.g.: <i>I hate it</i> )
	Question accuracy	Question (e.g.: <i>Do you really think so?</i> )

	(e.g.: <i>Is beautiful the right word?</i> )	
	Challenge sincerity (e.g.: <i>You don't really mean that</i> )	
		Qualification (e.g.: <i>It's alright, but Len's is nicer</i> )
Evasion / self-praise avoidance	Shift credit (e.g.: <i>My mother knitted it</i> )	Reassignment (e.g.: <i>My brother gave it to me; it really knitted itself</i> )
	Informative comment (e.g.: <i>I bought it at the Vibrant Knits place</i> )	Comment history (e.g.: <i>I bought i(t) for the trip to Arizona</i> )
	Ignore (e.g.: <i>It's time we're leaving, isn't it?</i> )	No acknowledgement (e.g.: <i>topic shift or no response</i> )
	Legitimate evasion (e.g.: <i>Sure, sure, now let's talk about serious things, shall we?</i> )	
	Request reassurance (e.g.: <i>Do you really think so?</i> )	
		Request interpretation (e.g.: <i>You want to borrow this one, too?</i> )

Figure 1. *Classification and examples from Maíz-Arévalo (2012) and Rahmayani (2020).*

In summary, the two categorisations of CRs used in the present research are Holmes' (1995) and Herbert's (1998) and they have many similarities in the classification of CRs. Nonetheless there are a number of subtypes they do not have in common. In the acceptance strategies, for instance, Herbert (1998) adds the subtype *praise upgrade* and in the rejection strategies, Holmes (1995) adds *challenge sincerity* and Herbert (1998) *qualification*. Whilst in evasion Holmes (1995) recognised two strategies (*legitimate evasion* and *request reassurance*) not present in Herbert (1998), who in turn added the subtype *request interpretation*. Taking into account this categorization, the following section will place the present research within the ILP studies that have focused on CRs.

### 2.3.2. ILP studies in CRs

The majority of studies regarding CRs are contrastive studies of the use and types of CRs in different languages with NSs (Holmes, 1986; Golato, 2002; Maíz-Arévalo, 2012, 2013;

Siebold, 2006; Choi, 2008; Mack and Sykes, 2009; Ramajo-Cuesta, 2012; Mir and Cots, 2017). Comparative research on CRs across languages has shown that Peninsular Spanish speakers (like the participants of the present study) use the acceptance strategy more often than German speakers (Siebold, 2006), and as much as Korean speakers (Choi, 2008) and Mexican Spanish speakers (Mack and Sykes, 2009), but not as much as English speakers (Maíz-Arévalo, 2012). In Ramajo-Cuesta (2012) both Spanish and Lebanese preferred accepting but the former chose mitigating strategies more often. Moreover, use of compliments by Peninsular Spanish speakers was found to be less frequent compared to American English users in Mir and Cots (2017): “the answers reveal that 62% of English informants ‘often’ use compliments as compared to only 25% in Spanish” (p. 137). And they add that “The lack of frequency of compliments in Peninsular Spanish (...) may trigger a diminished confidence level in how to respond” (p. 140).

Additionally, a number of researchers have investigated the teachability of this speech act. Billmyer (1990) found the group that received training outperformed the control group and the study by Ishihara (2003) supported the effectiveness of explicit instruction on the development of learners’ pragmatic competence using CRs. Teaching was also found to increase learners’ pragmatic awareness of the compliment-response interaction structure (Huth, 2006). Wen and Jun (2017) too followed the acquisition of CRs in EFL Chinese learners and noticed those who had received explicit instruction produced more varied CRs. The effectiveness of pragmatic consciousness-raising and corpus-based instruction was also found in the more recent Alsuhaibani (2022) as well as in Zhang (2021) by using a combination of computer-mediated-communication and data-driven instruction. Furthermore, in the recently published study by Czerwionka and Dickerson (2022) CRs were found to not be salient enough for EFL learners, accentuating the need for instruction.

Fewer investigations, including the present study, aim to compare the productive or receptive knowledge of CRs among NSs and NNSs of a language (Roever, 2011; Hulstijn’s, 2012; Chan, 2021). For instance, a study with Thai EFL participants found a “correlation between proficiency levels and CR strategies in English in such a way that high-proficiency learners’ CR patterns are more like those occurring in the native speakers’ corpus, i.e. more target-like, compared to the strategies used by learners with low proficiency”, who transferred their L1 pragmatic knowledge into their CRs



(Phoocharoensil, 2012, p. 285). Tran (2007) also observed that Vietnamese learners of EFL resorted to pragmatic transfer from the L1.

Given the somewhat inconclusive, varied and still scarce findings regarding the role language proficiency plays in pragmatic competence and awareness, this study is an attempt to explore this research gap with a teenage population and a speech act that has not been explored enough in relationship to proficiency operationalized via vocabulary size (Meara and Miralpeix, 2014; Miralpeix and Muñoz, 2018). In order to investigate the interrelationship between pragmatic awareness and language proficiency, this study will seek to answer the following research questions while adhering to a mixed methods approach:

RQ1: Do high and low proficiency learners differ in their pragmatic perception of compliment responses?

RQ2: Is the degree of sameness<sup>3</sup> to native speakers' responses in the PAVET (*judgement task*) explained by the learners' proficiency level?

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The participants of the present study were a total of 72, of which 8 were NSs of English (3 females, 4 males and 1 non-binary) and 64 were EFL learners (40 females, 22 males and 2 non-binary) with Spanish and Catalan as their L1s. The latter were students at a public high school in Catalonia, Spain, aged 16 to 18 years ( $M = 16.69$ ) who started learning English between the ages of 3 and 8 years ( $M = 5.54$ ). Half of the subjects attended extracurricular lessons of English. Over half of the participants had never been to an English-speaking country (55%) and the rest of the students (45%) had been to one for a maximum of three weeks. Participants were divided into two groups: Group 1

---

<sup>3</sup> The sameness score was calculated using the NS mean responses. For details see RQ2 in the results section.

comprising students with lower proficiency levels (with vocabulary sizes that ranged from 2.6K to 4.8K words) and Group 2 those with higher levels of proficiency (with vocabulary sizes that ranged from 4.9K to 7.5K words)<sup>4</sup>. The control group was composed of NS raters with Irish or British nationality (N = 8) of similar characteristics to the participants in terms of age ( $M = 19.5$ ,  $Max = 22$ ,  $Min = 17$ ) and intellectual profile, rendering them a comparable baseline according to Hulstijn (2012).

### **3.2. Instruments**

#### *3.2.1. Background Questionnaire*

Students were asked to complete a short survey to collect information on their L1s and L2s<sup>5</sup>, age at testing, gender, age of onset for English, whether they attended extracurricular English lessons, how often they watched series in English, and finally if they had lived in or visited an English-speaking country for a period of 3 weeks or more. In this way, those participants who stayed abroad for more than 3 weeks, who were assumed to have had more exposure to the pragmatics and culture of NSs of English, were discerned from the group of FL learners who had had minimal face-to-face contact with NSs of English and who constitute the focus of this study.

#### *3.2.2. V\_YesNo v1.0*

To operationalize proficiency, this investigation used the V\_YesNo v1.0 vocabulary size test designed by Paul Meara and Imma Miralpeix (2014) as it covers a range of 10,000 words and has an approximate duration of 10 minutes. The maximum score is 10,000 words and scores under 2,500 are not reliable. This tool was chosen as a measure of receptive vocabulary size which has been found to be a good indicator of general L2 proficiency (Miralpeix and Muñoz, 2018).

---

<sup>4</sup> Vocabulary test retrieved from: [https://www.lognostics.co.uk/tools/V\\_YesNo/V\\_YesNo.htm](https://www.lognostics.co.uk/tools/V_YesNo/V_YesNo.htm)

<sup>5</sup> L2 is used as an umbrella term to refer to foreign languages as well as second languages.

### 3.2.3. Pragmatic Awareness Video Elicitation Task (PAVET)

The choice of using a Pragmatic Awareness Video Elicitation Task (PAVET) was driven by the advantages of collecting large amounts of data simultaneously and of having control over variables such as age and the range of possible responses, making it easier to analyse the data statistically, compensating for its limitations (Roever, 2011; Golato, 2003). The contextualised judgement task consisted of 15 questions: 5 per CR type (acceptance, evasion and rejection). So as to avoid any inconsistency in the statistic outcome the evasion sub-type *request interpretation* was omitted, and the rejection sub-type *disagreement* was included twice, making the number of questions per type balanced. The instances of compliment responses were in audio-visual format to provide a richer situational context than the use of a written scenario as the only means of description as in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), Niezgoda and Röver (2001) and Schauer (2006). The items in the form of authentic scripted audio-visual input were reviewed by a NS from the US to make sure they matched the definitions of the subtypes in the taxonomies used (Herbert, 1998; Holmes, 1995). The video excerpts were embedded in the questionnaire adding an adaptivity component so that (1) each student could watch them as many times as they needed in order to understand the situations and answer the questions properly, (2) so that each student could complete it at their own pace as opposed to doing it as a whole class activity, and (3) because the length of the clips was short (they range from 10 seconds to 1 minute long) watching it as a whole group meant that if they were not paying attention at the precise moment it was being projected the answers would just be guesses and would therefore not reflect their actual ability to perceive if a response is appropriate or not. Captions were used in all clips to make the most of multimodality and to cater to all levels of proficiency and listening comprehension skills [see appendix 2 for complete questionnaire].

3. Watch the following clip: The man and woman are husband and wife. They are getting ready for a small celebration.



3. Rate the man's response to the compliment about his tie \*

1      2      3      4      5      6

Not appropriate                                          Very appropriate

Figure 2. Example of the question format.

The scale used to rate the CRs was adapted from a scale for teacher raters designed by Gilabert and Barón (2018). For the purpose of this study, it was adapted for learner users, it was made speech-act specific (CR) and the Likert-scale was shortened to range from 1 (= inappropriate) to 6 (= very appropriate). This scale was validated again through the piloting. Even though the term “appropriateness” is a cognate of Spanish, during piloting students interpreted the word as “age-appropriate” (such as when used for film ratings). Therefore, during data collection the scale was referred to as “politeness scale”, to avoid any confusion for EFL students. The test included the following items<sup>1</sup>, with different degrees of +/- Distance [D] and +/- Power [P]:

- **PAVET1: Acceptance – downgrading utterance:** The boy and the girl are classmates at school but he is a new student. [+D] [-P]
- **PAVET2: Acceptance – returning the compliment:** The woman is a regular customer at the restaurant. The man is the owner of the restaurant and they are friends. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET3: Acceptance – praise upgrade\*:** The man and woman are husband and wife. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET4: Acceptance – appreciation/agreement token:** The woman who receives the compliment is the grandmother of the boy’s girlfriend. [+D] [+P]
- **PAVET5: Acceptance – agreeing utterance:** The woman is a pastry chef at a bakery and the mother and daughter are customers. [+D] [-P]

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the rest of the paper items will be referred to with the shortened form: A (for acceptance), E (for evasion) and R (for rejection) + question number (e.g.: A1 = acceptance question 1).

- **PAVET6: Evasion – legitimate evasion:** A guest at the hotel is admiring how the musician plays the harp. [+D] [+P]
- **PAVET7: Evasion – informative comment:** They are mother and daughter but do not see each other very often. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET8: Evasion – ignore:** The grandfather is complimented on his granddaughter by his friends at the golf club. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET9: Evasion – request reassurance:** The girls are classmates and friends. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET10: Evasion – shift credit:** The woman and the man are friends. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET11: Rejection – qualification\*:** The women are mother and daughter. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET12: Rejection – challenge sincerity:** The two girls are classmates. [+D] [-P]
- **PAVET13: Rejection – question accuracy:** The girl is looking at some pictures of her mother. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET14: Rejection – disagreeing utterance:** The woman and the man are friends. [-D] [-P]
- **PAVET15: Rejection – disagreeing utterance:** The man and the woman are a couple. [-D] [-P]

\* The acceptance subtype *praise upgrade* and the rejection subtype *qualification* belong to Herbert's (1998) taxonomy. The rest are taken from Holmes (1995).

#### 3.2.4. Interviews

The quantitative data was complemented with four brief semi-structured interviews to get insights into how students reached decisions when rating CRs. They were conducted in the students' preferred language and sought to find out how they would react in their L1 in the situations exemplified by the videos in the PAVET, as well as how important or useful they perceived this kind of reflection [see appendix 1 for excerpts and summary translation].

### 3.3. Procedure

The materials used (except V\_YesNo v1.0) were piloted with students in the same high school aged 14 and 15 years (N = 3) a week prior to the first testing time. Data was collected in 4 sessions (one per intact group) in the course of two weeks. Each session lasted about 50 minutes. All learners followed the same sequence. Firstly, they were assigned a code (which they could access on their virtual campus). After brief instructions explicitly stating some words were non-words and that they were supposed to select only words they knew the meaning of and not those they recognised, they completed the V\_YesNo v1.0 test using their own laptops. Following this, the researcher described the

following task, introducing first the appropriateness scale, after which they rated a sample clip together with each intact group as a whole. Students then proceeded to answer the background questionnaire and complete the PAVET (Pragmatic Awareness Video Elicitation Task), using their earphones and laptops individually. During said completion of the task, testees could consult the politeness scale which was projected on the white board of their classroom. Qualitative interviews to students (N = 4; 3 female and 1 male) were conducted two weeks after the activity. Consent forms signed by the parents were collected for all featured participants.

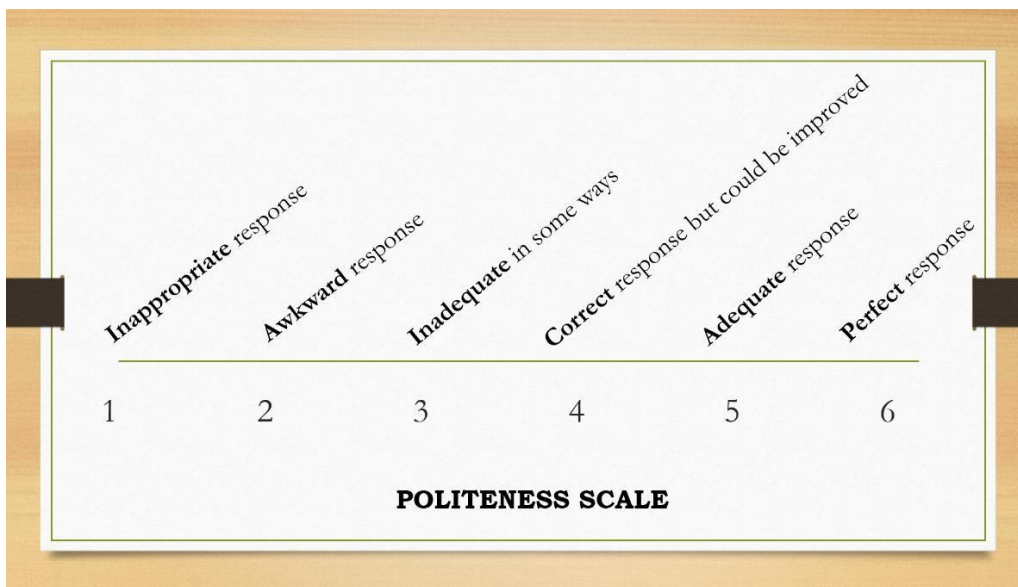


Figure 3. Slide shown to students whilst they completed the PAVET.

### 3.4. Data Analysis

In regards to the analysis of the subjects' pragmatic awareness through the PAVET, it is important to point out that the majority of the collected data was scale data. The items that the students rated in the PAVET were reviewed by a NS from the US to make sure they corresponded to the descriptions of the subtypes in the classifications by Herbert (1998) and Holmes (1995). Descriptive and inferential statistics of the data were calculated using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Normality of distribution was not found for RQ1 and therefore the data were submitted to a nonparametric test. For RQ2 the distribution of the variables was normal ( $p > .05$ ) so a parametric test was used. The rest of the data consisted of the answers to the background questionnaire and the interviews to four participants. The focus of the interviews was to find out how subjects came to decisions when rating CRs and how they would react in their L1. Comments about CRs

that groups had rated significantly differently were deemed relevant and were included in the results section to complement the statistical analysis.

#### 4. RESULTS

In order to explore the relationship between proficiency and degree of pragmatic awareness in CRs the collected data was submitted to statistical analysis via IBM SPSS Statistics 27. The Cronbach internal consistency coefficient of the PAVET scale was questionable,  $\alpha = .610$ ,  $M = 50.94$ ,  $SD = 6.50$ ,  $N = 15$ . In the following analysis of the data, the Likert-scale responses that ranged from 1 to 6 originally were reduced to range from 1 to 3. The purpose of this transformation was to simplify and be able to find patterns in the data, which otherwise showed too much variability, especially as the NS responses were to be used as a benchmark for NNS responses in the second research question.

##### **RQ1: Do high and low proficiency learners differ in their pragmatic perception of compliment responses?**

In the first place, a K-cluster analysis was run to classify the participants into groups of high and low proficiency. This resulted in a group with lower proficiency clustered around the 3,905 vocabulary size with 34 subjects and a group with higher proficiency clustered around the 5,919 vocabulary size with 30 participants. The means of the two groups were then compared by computing several Mann-Whitney U tests, due to the lack of normality of distribution. The results [see figures 4 and 5] yielded no statistically significant differences between the groups except in their answers for items A4, E6, E10, R11 and R12. The fourth acceptance situation affirmed the significant difference between the high ( $M = 1.3$ ,  $Mdn = 1$ ,  $n = 30$ ) and low ( $M = 1.62$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ ,  $n = 34$ ) group responses,  $U = 358.5$ ,  $z = -2.349$ ,  $p = 0.019$ , which approached a moderate effect size<sup>6</sup>,  $r = 0.293$ . In this video excerpt, a woman in purple greets her daughter, granddaughter and her granddaughter's partner, who compliments the house. The grandmother is civil but cold in her reaction to the compliment, which was classified as an *appreciation token*:

---

<sup>6</sup> The effect sizes of the Mann-Whitney U t-test were interpreted according to Cohen (1988), by which .1 is described as small, .3 as moderate and values larger than .5 as large.

Dean: “Your house is great. It’s huge. I’ve never seen a house this huge before.”

Emily: “Well thank you. So few people bother to notice the hugeness of the house anymore.”

(Sherman-Palladino et al., 2001, S2 E1, 26.30)

Low-proficiency students rated this reaction as being more appropriate. Conversely, the high proficiency group in general gave low ratings to this CR. According to the interviewees, whose ratings for this question were in the lower range, they perceived the situation as “tense” and the speaker as “unfriendly” as they could clearly see the grandmother did not approve of her granddaughter’s partner who had given her the compliment. Another student described the conversation as *passive-aggressive*: “Maybe what they were saying content-wise was not wrong but you could notice everything was very forced.” The interviewee who rated the CR a bit higher mentioned that he thought “the mother was rude but maybe the lady was like that already”.

In the sixth evasion situation the high proficiency group presented a significantly lower rating ( $M = 1.1$ ,  $Mdn = 1$ ,  $n = 30$ ) compared to the low proficiency group ( $M = 1.47$ ,  $Mdn = 1$ ,  $n = 34$ ),  $U = 334.5$ ,  $z = -3.023$ ,  $p = 0.003$ , with a moderate effect size,  $r = 0.378$ . In this clip a guest at a hotel admires the music of a harp player who is an employee in said hotel and who answers with a *legitimate evasion*: “Yeah, well, tell it to the tip jar” (Sherman-Palladino et al., 2000, S1 E1, 9.00). The students with larger vocabulary sizes, it seems, perceived the CR as inappropriate and those with smaller ones produced more varied ratings. According to one of the interviewees who rated the lowest possible score, “the response is very rude because it is very impolite to receive a compliment and say ‘pay’”. In her L1 she would maybe joke about being paid but she would not say it so curtly: “The way she says it makes you not want to pay,” she adds.

The Mann-Whitney U test revealed that ratings for evasion situation number ten were significantly lower in the high proficiency group ( $M = 1.87$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ ,  $n = 30$ ) compared to the low proficiency group ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ ,  $n = 34$ ),  $U = 379$ ,  $z = -2.096$ ,  $p = 0.036$ , with a small effect size,  $r = 0.262$ . The scene in question featured a woman who sees her friend’s flat for the first time and compliments him on the curtains. His reaction is to evade and *shift the credit* “Yeah, yeah, Rachel picked them out” (Sherman-Palladino et



al., 2000, S1, E19, 24.10). The informants that gave a low rating thought it was “not bad but instead of saying thank you he responds something that separates the compliment from him” and “answering that someone else chose the curtains instead of saying thank you is random and blunt”. They added that the situation reflected “the tension of the characters who were friends because it was her first time in his apartment”<sup>7</sup>. On the other side of the appropriateness spectrum, one of the learners interviewed thought the complimentee was being appropriate, displaying a difference in pragmatic perception.

In rejection situation eleven, the high proficiency group presented a significantly lower rating ( $M = 1.53$ ,  $Mdn = 1.5$ ,  $n = 30$ ) compared to the low proficiency group ( $M = 1.85$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ ,  $n = 34$ ),  $U = 365.5$ ,  $z = -2.23$ ,  $p = 0.026$ , with a small effect size,  $r = 0.278$ . The scene shows a daughter calling on her mother and giving her a compliment on the house, which the receiver rejects with the *qualification*: “It hasn’t changed” (Sherman-Palladino et al., 2000, S1, E1, 19.00). This time those students with a higher level rated the CR as more inappropriate than those students who had a lower level. One of the interviewees commented that “judging by the way they talk to each other they do not seem to be mother and daughter”. The overall treatment of the daughter by the mother’s part was negatively viewed: “it’s like she is a nuisance and she [the mother] is not excited or happy to see her daughter”. The questioned student described her reaction as rude and unenthusiastic.

Rejection situation number twelve, showed a significantly lower score for the more proficient ( $M = 1.87$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ ,  $n = 30$ ) in contrast with the less proficient learners’ responses ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $Mdn = 2$ ,  $n = 34$ ),  $U = 342$ ,  $z = -2.421$ ,  $p = 0.015$ , which had a moderate effect size,  $r = 0.302$ . In this situation a young teenager is getting ready for a date and she is reassured about her physical appearance by her friend. However, she *challenges* her friend’s *sincerity* as follows:

Rory: “You look amazing.”

Paris: “Really? You’re not just saying that?”

Rory: “I swear to God”

Paris: “Are you Atheist?”

Rory: “Excuse me?”

---

<sup>7</sup> Students were informed of this detail in the context of the question in the PAVET.

Paris: “Because that affects the whole validity of your swearing to God.”

(Sherman-Palladino et al., 2000, S1, E18, 26.26)

In fact, in the interviews two of the learners mentioned that the answer is “normal” between friends: “in a relationship of friends they often say I don’t know if this suits me...”. One of them would even ask a friend if they are sure about the compliment and they are not saying it only due to their friendship. Other opinions given by a learner who gave a low score included that “the fact that she asks if she believes in God is very random,” but on second thought she imagines a middle score would have been a better choice taking into account that “the complimentee was nervous for her date and she needed to know if she was pretty”. According to another subject, if they said ‘I swear’ in the L1, the response would not be to question it. She would find that strange, she reported.

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	p
A1	489	954	-0.345	0.73
A2	427	892	-1.249	0.212
A3	437.5	1032.5	-1.176	0.239
A4	358.5	823.5	-2.349	0.019*
A5	475	940	-0.538	0.591
E6	334.5	799.5	-3.023	0.003*
E7	507.5	1102.5	-0.037	0.97
E8	509.5	1104.5	-0.008	0.994
E9	468.5	933.5	-0.631	0.528
E10	379	844	-2.096	0.036*
R11	365.5	830.5	-2.23	0.026*
R12	342	807	-2.421	0.015*
R13	508.5	1103.5	-0.026	0.979
R14	502	967	-0.123	0.902
R15	480.5	945.5	-0.464	0.643

Figure 4. Non-parametric t-test with proficiency as a grouping variable.

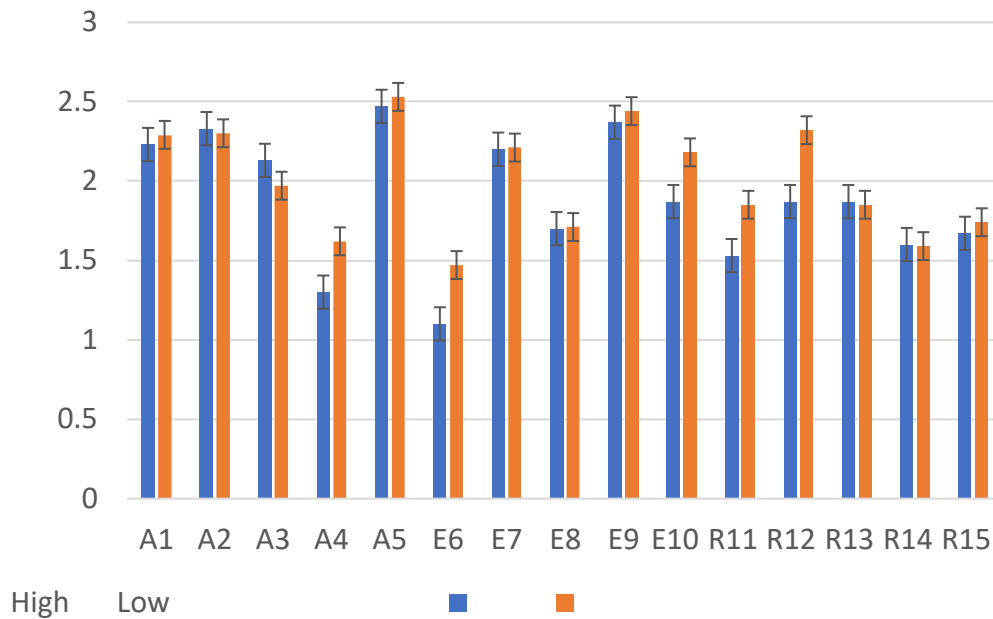


Figure 5. Comparative bar graph for High and Low mean ratings.

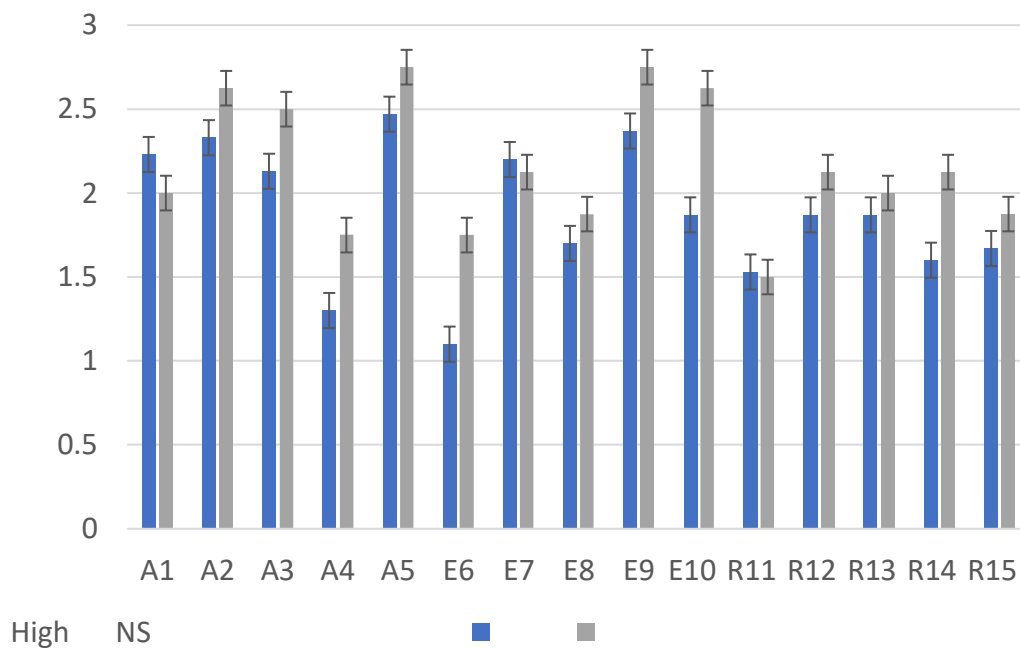


Figure 6. Bar graph comparing High and NS mean ratings.

As well as the t-test comparing learners with a higher or lower level of English language proficiency, the means for the NS control group were computed and introduced into bar graphs to visually represent the differences between groups. As seen in figure 6, NS rated 80% of items higher than the advanced level students. Items E6 and E10 presented the biggest differences in ratings between the advanced and NS groups.

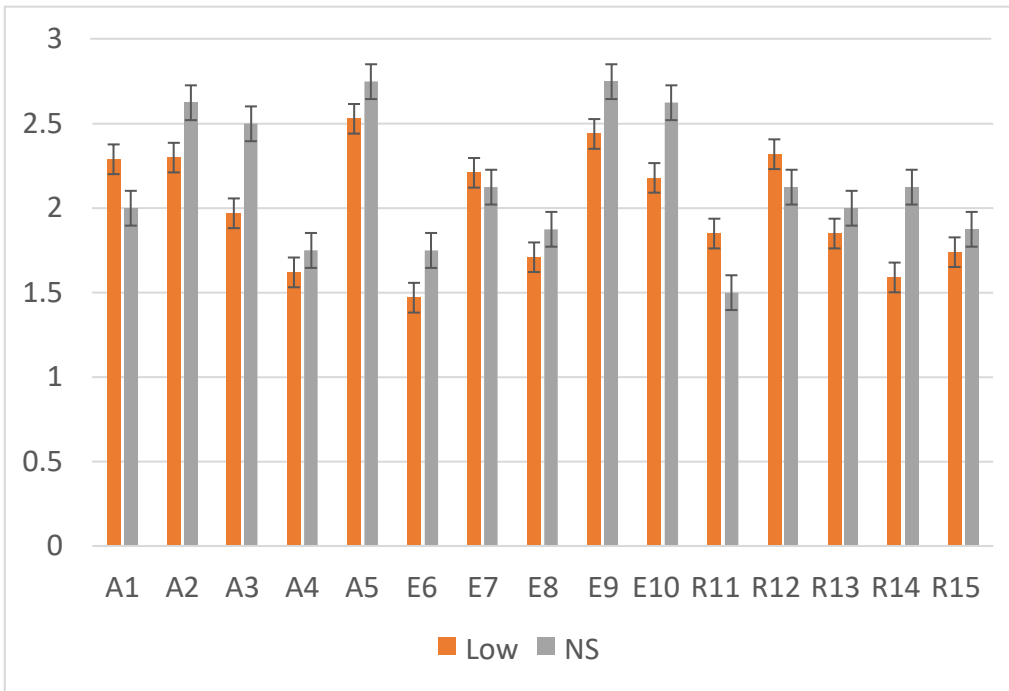


Figure 7. Bar graph comparing Low and NS mean ratings.

In addition, the control group also presented higher ratings in 73.33% of items in contrast to the beginner level group, as can be observed in figure 7. The largest differences in ratings were those for situations A3 and R15. Overall, the items where the EFL learners' scores differed the most from the NS scores were A2, A3, E9, E10 and R14 [see figures 8 and 9].

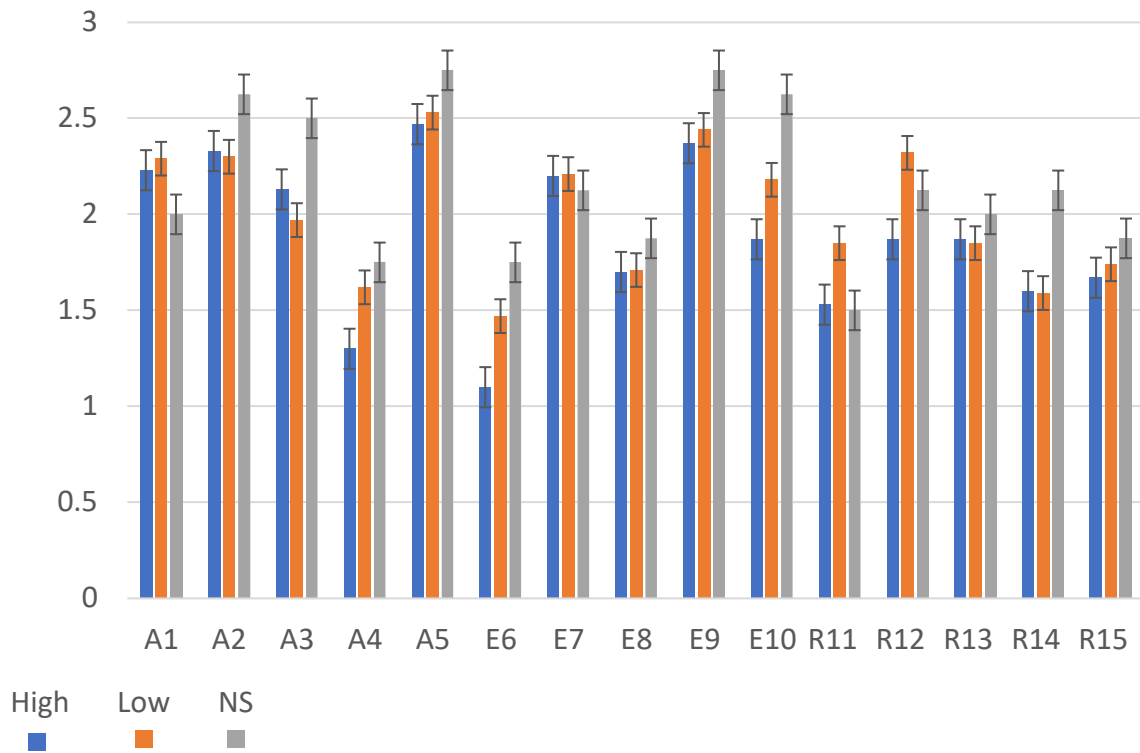


Figure 8. Bar graph by proficiency.

*Statistics Report*

	Proficiency								
	High			Low			NS		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>
A1	2.23	.568	2.00	2.29	.462	2.00	2.00	.535	2.00
A2	2.33	.606	2.00	2.50	.663	3.00	2.63	.518	3.00
A3	2.13	.681	2.00	1.97	.460	2.00	2.50	.535	2.50
A4	1.30	.466	1.00	1.62	.551	2.00	1.75	.463	2.00
A5	2.47	.629	3.00	2.53	.662	3.00	2.75	.463	3.00
E6	1.10	.305	1.00	1.47	.563	1.00	1.75	.886	1.50
E7	2.20	.714	2.00	2.21	.641	2.00	2.13	.835	2.00
E8	1.70	.596	2.00	1.71	.629	2.00	1.88	.835	2.00
E9	2.37	.556	2.00	2.44	.613	2.50	2.75	.463	3.00
E10	1.87	.571	2.00	2.18	.576	2.00	2.63	.518	3.00

R11	1.53	.571	1.50	1.85	.558	2.00	1.50	.756	1.00
R12	1.87	.730	2.00	2.32	.727	2.00	2.13	.641	2.00
R13	1.87	.571	2.00	1.85	.436	2.00	2.00	.535	2.00
R14	1.60	.621	2.00	1.59	.500	2.00	2.13	.641	2.00
R15	1.67	.547	2.00	1.74	.567	2.00	1.88	.641	2.00

Figure 9. Descriptive statistics with the mean ratings of each CR per proficiency group.

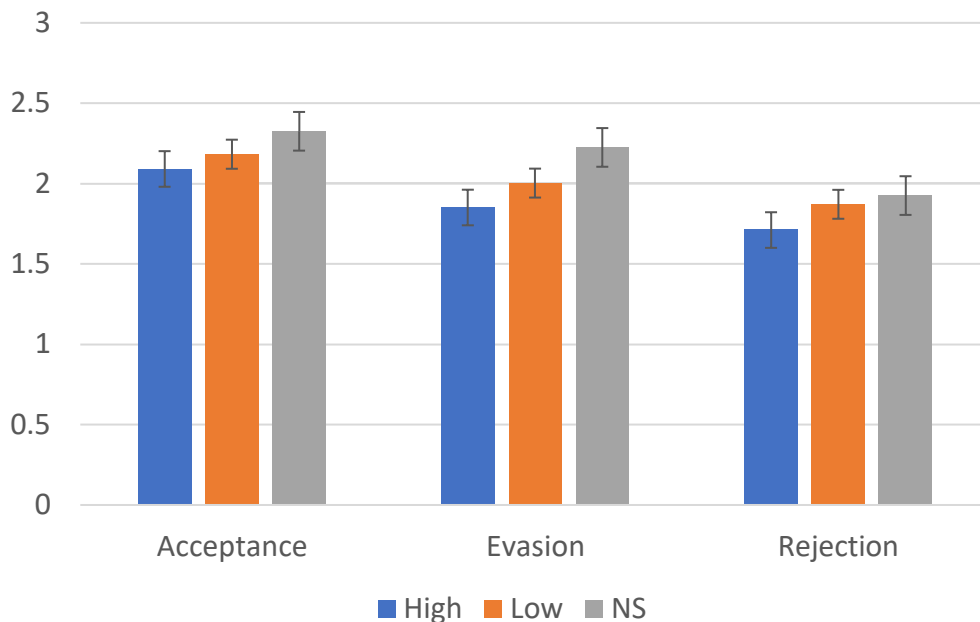


Figure 10. Mean ratings per CR type.

Overall, the rejection compliment response types were rated as the least appropriate by all three groups, followed by the evasion CR types [see figure 10]. CRs under the acceptance type werethe ones that received higher ratings on average. More specifically, it is the low proficiency group that produced more similar ratings to the NS baseline and not the highproficiency students. As observed before, the NS control group rated most items higher, perceiving them as more appropriate than both the high and low proficiency groups.

In answer to the first research question, the high and low proficiency groups of EFL learners differ in their perception of appropriateness of CRs in 33.33% of the items in the PAVET, but give similar ratings to the other 66.66% of the items. It can be said that

according to their proficiency level EFL learners differ but not to a great extent.

**RQ2: Is the degree of sameness to native speakers’ responses in the PAVET explained by the learners’ proficiency level?**

For the purpose of measuring the extent to which the perception of CRs by second language learners in this study is similar to that of the NS control group, NS raters were submitted to an inter-rater reliability test. The resulting Cronbach’s Alpha was moderately strong ( $\alpha = .736$ ) and the intra-class correlation coefficient average measure was acceptable:  $.701, p = <.001$ . Furthermore, a ‘sameness score’ was computed for each participant using the NS group item means as a benchmark. This score was calculated as follows: In the reduced scale (1 to 3), if the difference between the participant’s and the NS score was of 2 points then 1 point was awarded. If the difference was of 1 point, then 2 points were awarded and if they had given the same answer as that of the NS baseline then 3 points were added. This process was repeated for each of the 15 items and then added up resulting in an individual ‘sameness score’.

*Correlations*

		Vocabulary Size	Sameness
Vocabulary Size	Pearson Correlation	-	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	64	
Sameness	Pearson Correlation	-.362**	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	64	64

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Figure 11.* Pearson correlation.

Both variables underwent the Shapiro-Wilk normality test and presented a normal distribution: Vocabulary size with  $p = .210, M = 4849.37$  and Sameness with  $p = .093, M = 36.69$ . A Pearson correlation showed sameness scores do not correlate positively with proficiency level [see figure 11]. In fact, a significant moderate negative correlation was found,  $r(62) = -.362, p = .003$ . This means to a certain extent learners with lower proficiency levels approximated themselves significantly to the NS baseline for the

perception of CRs. Responding to the second research question, it can be said that the degree of sameness to NSs when it comes to CR perception of appropriateness is related to proficiency level only to some extent, as there are various factors that can affect EFL learners' pragmatic perception (Kasper and Rose, 2002). The different factors that could have caused this effect will be touched on in the following section.

## 5. DISCUSSION

As it has been observed in the results of the first research question, in the majority (66.66%) of items in the PAVET there is no significant difference in the answers given by the high and low proficiency groups. However, significant differences were found in the ratings for five situations. In all five cases advanced learners gave lower mean ratings than the less proficient learners. In the fourth question where the acceptance strategy *appreciation token* was used, less advanced learners probably gave higher ratings because the distance between the literal and the intended meaning of the CR employed was quite large (see section 4, page 14 for quotation). Conversely, the difference in power between the complimenter and complimentee could have affected the responses of the high proficiency group. In evasion strategy *legitimate evasion*, higher level students produced very low ratings, indicating that they understood the inappropriateness of the CR, whilst their classmates maybe were not fully aware of what was going on or the term 'tip jar', resulting in mixed ratings. In the case of evasion type *shift credit*, maybe these differing ratings stem from a lack of context information, as students did not know who the character of Rachel was or what the circumstances of the friendship between the three characters were. Those who gave a higher rating to this PAVET were probably inclined to think it was not rude to evade the compliment when it comes from a friend. When it comes to rejection type *qualification*, the diversity of answers could be coming from the fact that this CR could be interpreted both as being passive-aggressive or being modest, and the latter is what the lower-level students did. Finally, in the *challenge sincerity* excerpt, this particular example of rejection is uncommonly phrased, which is possibly why the high proficiency group gave it lower ratings, but it is also a situation with no distance or power differences which could have led the low proficiency group to view it as an appropriate reaction in the realm of friendship. Overall, the acceptance strategies received higher ratings on the part of all three groups, which is congruous with the NS of English trend observed in Herbert (1990).



That said, the fact remains that there were no significant differences found between the EFL groups in the responses for 10 out of 15 questions. It is possible that students in this study were heavily influenced by their L1 culture, one of the major factors to affect ESL learners in Cheng (2011) and EFL participants in Takahashi and Beebe (1987), and Tran (2007). Moreover, as outlined in Mir and Cots (2017), the less frequent use of compliments in Peninsular Spanish could signify a lower level of confidence when it comes to responding to a compliment. In this sense, it is possible that students could have been lacking in L1 pragmatic knowledge to deal with compliments and that the reduced knowledge they had from their L1 was transferred to interpret the appropriateness of the CRs in each situation in the L2. These results suggest that the influence of language proficiency in the pragmatic perception of CRs is not great and that the L1 still plays an important role in pragmatic awareness regardless of the level.

Regarding the second research question, it is important to take into account that the present study does not share the same characteristics in terms of the operationalisation of proficiency and pragmatics, as proficiency was equated to vocabulary size and pragmatics was only tested in terms of awareness. The present findings do not support the statement that high proficiency learners would make similar choices to NSs, bringing them closer to the TL, which Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), Cook and Liddicoat's (2002) and Schauer's (2006), studies seemed to point to. Whereas, studies like Matsumura (2003) and Niezgodá and Röver (2001) had reported that advanced learners did not match NS responses most of the time, much as the present results, suggesting that sociopragmatic awareness is not acquired alongside the grammatical aspects of the language in the process of acquisition for EFL participants. Some studies that focused on production also concluded that pragmatic competence and linguistic competence are independent (Kasper and Rose, 2002; Doğançay-Aktuna and Kamisli, 1997; Martín-Marchante, 2021; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007). On the other hand, productive pragmatics has been found to correlate with aspects of language proficiency (Hoffman-Hicks, 1992; Håkanson and Norrby, 2005; Celaya and Barón, 2015; Phoocharoensil, 2012).

In line with these results and the mixed findings in the field regarding the relationship between pragmatics and proficiency, the negative correlation between the two variables of sameness and proficiency is not strong but it is significant. Interlanguage pragmatic competence can receive influence from a variety of factors ranging from sociocultural values and conventions to personal opinions, experience and position in society (Kasper

and Rose, 2002; Ifantidou and Tzanne, 2012). This leads one to question whether factors such as the L1, the personality, and the limited contact with the culture of the FL played a part in each students' perception of CRs. In this section, some of the possible explanations for the significant moderate negative correlation between sameness to NSs and vocabulary size will be discussed.

Firstly, students with lower proficiency could have given similar ratings to the NSs merely as a result of their individual differences (IDs). They could be more empathetic as a personal quality, for instance. Very often "in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics research, individual variation is submerged in the aggregate" even though the influence of IDs is unmeasurable (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 10). As it happens, "people do not just register cross-cultural differences, they have opinions (often critical ones) about them" (Kasper and Rose, 2002, p. 275). These opinions coupled with age, gender, motivation, and identity have been found to affect L2 pragmatic development (Kasper and Rose, 2002). One of the issues of the age of the participants is that teenagers may still not be fully pragmatically aware in their L1. Moreover, as Sánchez-Hernández and Alcón-Soler (2019) emphasize, pragmatic development in an L2 is of a variable and non-linear nature, which could explain why the results paint a mid-stage picture wherein due to individual differences some students are at a more advanced stage in language proficiency than pragmatic awareness and vice versa.

Secondly, this inverse relationship could be the result of a strategy to pay attention to non-verbal language, compensating for their limited language skills. Compared to more proficient learners, these less proficient learners of EFL could have developed more advanced visuo-spatial comprehension strategies to compensate for their lack of language resources, thus relying on non-verbal language such as facial expressions, hand gestures, posture, implicit attitudes and tone of voice, which according to the well-known 7-38-55 model constitutes a considerable percentage of the average oral message (Mehrabian, 2017, pp. 7-12). In fact, in an experiment by Tibus et al. (2013, p. 329) involving audio-visual input it was found that pictorial information can compensate for missing verbal information and coherence breaks on a local level but not globally. Having said that, it is likely that those low proficiency learners who obtained higher sameness scores used inference processes to rate the situations in the PAVET. In a study on communication strategies, Sato and colleagues found "non-verbal strategies were also used as a coping

strategy when students had some difficulty coming up with an appropriate English word or expression” (Sato et al. 2019, p. 27). It could be plausible then that the learners in the lower proficiency group in the present study resorted to using their non-verbal receptive strategies with aid of the audio-visual input.

Another reason this could be explained by is the fact that traditional EFL lessons, such as the ones received by this study’s participants in their high school, are very much grammar- and language-oriented. Proficiency itself seems not an indicator of pragmatic awareness or knowledge. Even if it is essential in language-in-use, the definition of proficiency in many contexts (such as in education) does not include pragmatic knowledge. After all those who obtained higher English language proficiency scores were probably encouraged to focus on language and grammar throughout their learning trajectories. It is also a common practice to focus on exam preparation, particularly for 17-year-olds that prepare for *Selectivitat*<sup>8</sup>. A similar situation was encountered by Schauer (2006) in her study where she observed students’ “access to native-speaker input is mostly limited to classroom interactions with higher status teachers and where the examination requirements of secondary or higher education institutions predominantly concentrate on grammatical correctness, participants tend to focus more on grammar rather than pragmatics” (Schauer, 2006, p. 309).

Last but not least it is imperative to point out that there is a need for pragmatic instruction in the classroom. As mentioned above, pragmatic knowledge and awareness are not included in the construct of proficiency, except in a superficial way when it comes to writing skills. It is important to take into account that students received no training, as part of the experiment, nor prior to it, as part of the high school curricula. When it comes to CRs, and possibly other speech acts, students’ pragmatic awareness and thus their potential ability to acquire pragmatic knowledge seem to not be heavily influenced by the state of their language development. Thereby the aforementioned findings support one of Myrset’s (2022) conclusions: “there is no reason to delay pragmatics instruction until the learners are older and more proficient” (p. 73). In a recent study involving American English L2 learners of Spanish, the researchers observed that even after study abroad CRs in the L2 were not salient enough (Czerwionka and Dickerson, 2022). Again, this points

---

<sup>8</sup> Peninsular Spanish entry-level university exams.

to a need for fostering awareness in the classroom. All in all, according to the findings the role of proficiency is not determinative in the learners' pragmatic awareness of CRs, as it is possible that many other factors could have infused their choices.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This study attempted to explore the interface between proficiency and pragmatic awareness given the lack of consensus in the ILP field. It focused on CRs, and compared NSs perceptions to those of EFL learners. Lastly, it was centred on teenage participants, an underexplored group.

Before reaching a final conclusion, it is important to note some of the limitations of this investigation. Indeed, one of the aspects that could be improved is to include a wider variety of situations with + distance and + power differences, as in 13 of the questions the interactions were between classmates, friends or family members. Another limitation would be the fact that the compliment-compliment response exchanges were scripted and not naturally occurring data. The reason for opting for scripted data from a TV series is because of resource and time constraints. An added aspect to take into consideration is that “the SLA framework traditionally views ‘near-native competence’ as the ultimate goal” (Chan, 2021, p. 4). Even though the group of L2 English learners and the group of NSs in this study were as similar as possible in age and socio-economic background (as recommended in Hulstijn's (2012) article), using a NS benchmark has its drawbacks and even the notion of “native speaker” has been characterized of problematic (Roever, 2011, p. 474).

In answer to this study's research questions, a modest percentage of difference was found between high- and low-proficiency learners' perception of appropriateness in CRs, possibly due to the influence of their shared L1 (Spanish/Catalan). When these two proficiency groups' responses were compared to NSs' perceptions, a moderate negative correlation was found. This indicates that a considerable number of learners with lower language proficiency had a similar perception to NSs of CRs, possibly due to factors including: IDs, the non-linearity of pragmatic development, the use of compensatory non-verbal strategies, the fact that traditional EFL lessons are grammar- and exam-oriented and thus the lack of pragmatic instruction and awareness in the EFL classroom. In

conclusion, results seem to point to the independent nature of pragmatic development and L2 language proficiency, in agreement with Félix-Brasdefer (2007).

As for the pedagogical implications of these findings, they have shown that proficiency and knowledge of the language alone is not sufficient for learners to acquire EFL pragmatic awareness. Thus, it is highly recommended to introduce pragmatic instruction and exposure to audio-visual material that is scripted in a natural-sounding way. Similar ratings between lower-level learners and NSs seem to indicate audio-visual input featuring NSs or proficient users can be a valid way to introduce or teach CRs and possibly other speech acts to EFL learners. As part of future research in the ILP field it would be interesting to see what is the nature of the relationship between pragmatic awareness and proficiency level in adult learners with fully developed L1 pragmatic skills and if the relationship changes with productive knowledge as well.

Total number of words: 9677

## 7. REFERENCES

Alsuhaibani, Z. (2022). Developing EFL students' pragmatic competence: The case of compliment responses. *Language Teaching Research*, 26(5), 847–866. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820913539>

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1996). Pragmatics and Language Teaching: Bringing Pragmatics and Pedagogy Together. In B. Lawrence (Ed.), *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series, Volume 7*, (pp. 21-39). <https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:61144189>

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Do Language Learners Recognize Pragmatic Violations? Pragmatic versus Grammatical Awareness in Instructed L2 Learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(2), 233–262. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587583>

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2013). Developing L2 Pragmatics. *Language Learning*, 63(1), 68-86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00738.x>

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2020). A view from L2 pragmatics. *Pedagogical linguistics*, 1(1), 44-65. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pl.19013.bar>

Celaya, M. & Barón, J. (2015). The interface between grammar and pragmatics in EFL measurement and development. *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3(2), 181-203. <https://doi.org/10.1515/eujal-2014-0027>

Chan, J. Y. H. (2021). Bridging the gap between ELF and L2 learners' use of communication strategies: Rethinking current L2 assessment and teaching practices, *System*, 101, 102609-102623. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102609>

Cheng, D. (2011). New insights on compliment responses: A comparison between native English speakers and Chinese L2 speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43 (8), 2204-2214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.02.003>

Cohen, J.W. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd edn). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Cook, M., & Liddicoat, A. J. (2002). The development of comprehension in interlanguage pragmatics: The case of request strategies in English. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, 25(1), 19–39. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ara1.25.1.02coo>

Crystal, D. (1997). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Czerwionka, L., & Dickerson, S. (2022). Spanish and English compliment responses in discourse. *Second language pragmatic development in study abroad contexts*, 7(1), 88-115. <https://doi.org/10.1075/sar.21004.cze>

Doğançay-Aktuna, S., & Kamisli, S. (1997). Pragmatic transfer in interlanguage development: A case study of advanced EFL learners. *ITL – International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 117, 151-173. <https://doi.org/10.1075/itl.117-118.07akt>

Félix-Brasdefer, J. (2007). Pragmatic development in the Spanish as a FL classroom: A cross-sectional study of learner requests. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4, 253-286. <https://doi.org/10.1515/IP.2007.013>

Gilbert, R. & Barón, J. (2018). Independently measuring cognitive complexity in task design for interlanguage pragmatics development. In N. Taguchi, & J. Kim (Eds.), *Task-Based Approaches to Teaching and Assessing Pragmatics* (pp. 160–190). JohnBenjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/tblt.10.07gil>

Golato, A. (2002). German compliment responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34(5), 547-571. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(01\)00040-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(01)00040-6)

Golato, A. (2003). Studying compliment responses: A comparison of DCTs and recordings of naturally occurring talk. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(1), 90-121. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/applin/24.1.90>

Håkansson, G., & Norrby, C. (2005). Grammar and pragmatics: Swedish as a foreign language. *EUROSLA Yearbook*, 5, 137-161. <https://doi.org/10.1075/eurosla.5.08hak>

Herbert, R.K. (1990). Sex-based differences in compliment behavior. *Language in Society*, 19, 201 - 224. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500014378>

Hoffman-Hicks, S. (1992). Linguistic and Pragmatic Competence: Their Relationship in the Overall Competence of the Language Learner. *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, 3, 66–80. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED395522.pdf>

Holmes, J. (1986). Compliments and Compliment Responses in New Zealand English. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 28(4), 485–508. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30028355>

Hulstijn, J. (2012). The construct of language proficiency in the study of bilingualism from a cognitive perspective. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 15(2), 422-433. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728911000678>

Huth, T. (2006). Negotiating structure and culture: L2 learners' realization of L2 compliment-response sequences in talk-in-interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(12), 2025–2050. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.04.010>

Ifantidou, E., & Tzanne, A. (2012). Levels of pragmatic competence in an EFL academic context: A tool for assessment. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 9(1), 47-70. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2012-0003>

Ishihara, N. (2003). Formal instruction on the speech act of giving and responding to compliments. Proceedings of the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics, (pp. 62-78).

Kasper, G. (2001). Four perspectives on L2 pragmatic development. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(4), 502–530. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/22.4.502>

Kasper, & Rose, K. R. (2002). Introduction to Second Language Pragmatic Development. *Language Learning*, 52(1), (pp. 1–11). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.2002.tb00022.x>

Kasper, & Rose, K. R. (2002). Individual Differences in L2 Pragmatic Development. *Language Learning*, 52(1), (pp. 275–303). <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.2002.tb00029.x>

Knapp, M. L., Hopper, R., & Bell, R. A. (1984). Compliments: A descriptive taxonomy. *Journal of Communication*, 34(4), 12-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1984.tb02185.x>

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman.

Maíz-Arévalo, C. (2013). “Just click ‘Like’”: Computer-mediated responses to Spanish compliments. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 51, 47-67. 10.1016/j.pragma.2013.03.003.

Matsumura, S. (2003). Modelling the relationship among interlanguage pragmatic development, L2 proficiency, and exposure to L2. *Applied Linguistics*, 24(4), 465–491

Maíz-Arévalo, C. (2012). At a Loss for Words or How to Respond to Compliments: A Contrastive Analysis of Compliment Response in English and Spanish. In L. Fernández, M. Hernández, R. Gómez, M. Padilla, M. Mejías & M. Relinque (Eds.), *New Perspectives on (Im)politeness and Interpersonal Communication* (pp. 157-173). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Martín-Marchante, B. (2021). Relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence in EFL of Spanish learners through a computer adaptive test. *Research in Education and Learning Innovation Archives*, 26,18-34. <https://doi.org/10.7203/realia.26.17694>

Mehrabian, A. (2017). *Nonverbal Communication*. Routledge.

Miralpeix, I., & Muñoz, C. (2018). Receptive vocabulary size and its relationship to EFL language skills. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 56(1), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2017-0016>

Mir, M., & Cots, J.M. (2017). Beyond saying thanks. Compliment responses in American English and Peninsular Spanish, *Languages in Contrast*, 17(1), 128-150. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lic.17.1.06mir>

Morales, R. (2012). Compliment Responses across Gender in Philippine Context. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 18(1), 47-60. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267722171\\_Ccompliment\\_Responses\\_across\\_Gender\\_in\\_Philippine\\_Context](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267722171_Ccompliment_Responses_across_Gender_in_Philippine_Context)



Myrset, A. (2022). 'You could win Masterchef with this soup. Can I get some more?' Request production and the impact of instruction on young EFL learners. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 192, 56-76. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2022.02.010>

Niezgoda, K., & Röver, C. (2001). Pragmatic and grammatical awareness: A function of the learning environment? In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* (pp. 63-79). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524797.008>

Phoocharoensil, S. (2012). L2 English Compliment Responses: An Investigation of Pragmatic Transfer. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 1(6), 276-287. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7575/ijalel.v.1n.6p.276>

Pomerantz, A. (1978). Compliment Responses: Notes on the Cooperation of Multiple Constraints. In J. Schenkein (Ed.), *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction* (pp. 79-112). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-623550-0.50010-0>

Rahmayani, F. (2020). Cross Cultural Pragmatics: Compliment Response Strategy Used on the British and Indonesian Talk show. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 8(2), 384-397. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v8i2.1541>

Roever, C. (2011). Testing of Second Language Pragmatics: Past and Future. *Language Testing*, 28, 463-481. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532210394633>

Sánchez-Hernández, A & Alcón-Soler, E. (2019). Pragmatic gains in the study abroad context: Learners' experiences and recognition of pragmatic routines. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 146, 54-71. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.08.006>

Sato, T., Yujobo, Y., Okada, T. and Ogane, E. (2019). Communication strategies employed by low-proficiency users: Possibilities for ELF-informed pedagogy. *Journal of English as a Lingua Franca*, 8(1), 9-35. <https://doi-org.sire.ub.edu/10.1515/jelf-2019-2003>

Schauer, G. A. (2006). Pragmatic awareness in ESL and EFL contexts: Contrast and development. *Language Learning*, 56(2), 269-318. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0023-8333.2006.00348.x>

Schmidt, R. (1995). Consciousness and Foreign Language Learning: A Tutorial on the Role of Attention and Awareness in Learning. In R. Schmidt, *Attention and Awareness in Foreign Language Learning*, 9, (pp. 1-64).

Sherman-Palladino, A. (Writer and Producer), Palladino, D. (Writer) and Myerson, A (Director) (2000 - 2007). *Gilmore Girls* [Television series]. Burbank, CA, The Warner Brothers Television Network.

Takahashi, T., & Beebe, L. M. (1987). The Development of Pragmatic Competence by Japanese Learners of English. *JALT Journal*, 8, 131-155. <https://jalt-publications.org/files/pdf-article/jj-8.2-art3.pdf>

Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure, *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2), 91–112, <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/4.2.91>

Tibus, M., Heier, A., & Schwan, S. (2013). Do Films Make You Learn? Inference Processes in Expository Film Comprehension. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105(2), 329-340. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030818>

Tran, G. Q. (2007). The Nature of Pragmatic and Discourse Transfer in Compliment Responses in Cross-Cultural Interaction. *Linguistics Journal*, 2(3), 167-205.

Wen, Z. & Jun, D. (2017). The Effects of Explicit Metapragmatic Instruction on Chinese English Language Learners' Acquisition of Compliment Responses. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 40(2), 167-180. <https://doi.org/10.1515/cjal-2017-0010>

Wijayanto, A. (2014). Variability of refusal in L2: Evidence of L1 pragmalinguistic transfer and learner's idiosyncratic usage. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 26. 99-119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12081>

Zhang, Y. (2021). Combining computer-mediated communication with data- driven instruction: EFL learners' pragmatic development of compliment responses, *System*, 103, 102624- 102639. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2021.102624>

## 8. APPENDIX

### 8.1. Interviews

#### Interview to 16-year-old students

**Researcher:** Vale, QARA13 al primer vídeo li vas donar un 3 i no sé si us en recordeu de la taula... també us la puc tornar a ensenyar.

**QARA13:** Jo crec que me'n recordo.

**R:** L'1 era que no era apropiat i el 6 que estava perfecte.

**QARA13:** Sí, sí, sí.

**R:** Llavors no sé si te'n recordes del primer vídeo.

[rewatches video]

**QARA13:** Perquè vaig posar un 3? Doncs no ho sé. Perquè l'home... és una mica *random* que tu estiguis llegint tan tranquil i que t'estigui observant i que després et pari pel carrer dient tal. Doncs no sé, em va semblar una mica *raro* i potser com ho deia, una mica inapropiat. No es coneixien entre ells saps? Que li digui tot això doncs de cop em va sobtar.

**R:** Llavors doncs el 3? Faig 2 i 2 eh? En el 3 li vas donar un altre 3.

[rewatches video]

**QARA13:** Doncs ho vaig veure com una mica exagerat, una mica no sé, com falsa i per això vaig posar un 3.

**R:** I la resposta d'ell?

**QARA13:** Doncs no sé, com una mica sobrat.

**R:** Vale... Tu al 4 vas posar un 1?

[rewatches video]

**HEJE27:** Sí, perquè és tot molt tens i està molt antipàtica la dona, tot i que l'hagi convidat i no sé. És com que el convida i llavors es fa com la *borde* perquè com és un noi suposo que no, no vol que estigui amb la seva neta o el que sigui.

**R:** Sí, i al número 5 li vas posar un 3.

[rewatches video]

**HEJE27:** No sé, crec que estava entre el 3 i el 4 perquè no sé, no ho trobava tampoc tan *d'esto* que digui 'ho portem fent 102 anys'. És com no sabia si ho deia des del to de *xula* o de *bueno* d'experiència, que al final té experiència, llavors no ho sé.

**R:** Ah està bé, està bé... *Vale*, doncs ara fem el 9 i el 10. Al 9 li vas posar un 4, avia'm.

[rewatches video]

**QARA13:** Jo vaig posar un 4 perquè no sé si li estava dient perquè, perquè com és la seva amiga o *algo* i perquè li queda bé o per si ho estava dient de veritat. Llavors per si ho estava dient de mentida, per jo que sé anar a la festa i, llavors, per això ho vaig posar, perquè potser li estava dient 'sí et queda bé' però en realitat potser no li quedava bé o *algo*.

**R:** *Vale*, llavors no estaves segur. I si tu estiguessis en aquesta situació, o sigui, en el teu dia a dia, no cal que sigui en anglès, i li preguntes a algú com et queda i et diu que perfecte com reacciones?

**QARA13:** No sé, si em diuen per exemple que et queda molt molt perfecte, perfecte doncs potser m'amoïnaria perquè dic 'potser no ho està dient del tot de veritat'. Si diu 'bé, et queda bé', *tipo* més informal, doncs potser, no sé, quan diguin menys en el sentit de si fan un número allà *buah* et queda *tope de bé* no sé què doncs potser diria '*bueno* potser m'està mentint', però si et diu 'bé et queda molt bé', així normal, doncs, doncs diria '*vale*, perfecte'.

**R:** Bueno, vale. Bé, doncs...

[rewatches video]

**R:** Li vas posar un...

**QARA13:** ...5, em sembla. No sé, em va... es que no sé el context de la sèrie tampoc. Però no sé, com la vaig veure, doncs vaig dir '*bueno* està sent educada'. Ha entrat a la casa, està asseguda allà i està fent un, un.. li està dient que la casa està bé, que les cortines estan bé. No sé si ho diu en aquest sentit, jo ho vaig entendre així.

**R:** Sí, són amics i és el primer cop que va a casa seva i llavors...

**QARA13:** Si és el primer cop, doncs té sentit que estiguis allà dient 'ai que bonica està la casa' crec.

**R:** Llavors sí, si tu fossis el noi i et diguessin que bonica la teva casa com ho diries, o sigui com respondries?

**QARA13:** *Buah* no sé.. gràcies o no sé, diria que gràcies.

**R:** *Okay*, i ara fem les altres dues.. la 6 i la 10. Ah *bueno*, la 10 és la mateixa.

**HEJE27:** Vaja, un 2. [laughter] *Bueno*, és bàsicament perquè tinc més context de la sèrie, suposo i, llavors, ja sé com, perquè diu lo de que aquella dona ho va triar. No sé i també és com que la forma en que respon... Si et diuen 'què maques les teves cortines' i dius, no sé, en comptes de gràcies dius si 'la meva mare les va triar' és com molt *random*. Podries dir gràcies i ja està. Ho trobava com també molt tens, perquè, o sigui, són amics i mai ha estat a casa seva i és una mica estrany i ademés que t'estan com dient 'què maca la casa' i tu estàs com *borde*, llavors per això.

**R:** *Vale*, molt bé. I el 6 no l'hem vist, no?

**HEJE27:** No.

[rewatches video]

**HEJE27:** He ficat un 1, no?

**R:** Sí.

**HEJE27:** Està molt lleig perquè diu 'què bé toques això' i diu '*vale, bueno paga*'. És una forma molt maleducada.

**R:** Clar, si tu, en català si t'ho diguessin, no? 'Tu toques molt bé'.

**HEJE27:** Clar potser faria una brometa de que em paguin o *algo* així però *en plan* no dir-ho de forma tan *borde* i tan seca. Perquè al final sí, està treballant i tal, però no sé, ho diu de forma molt... que ja se't passen les ganes de pagar-la.

**R:** Clar, clar, clar. Molt bé, doncs fem la 13 i la 14.

[rewatches video]

**R:** O sigui, com reacciona la mare, eh?

**QARA13:** Que vaig posar jo?

**R:** Un 4.

**QARA13:** *Bueno, tipo*, jo la veig com que està nerviosa o *algo*, o com que està *tipo* a veure com queda, no? Què és una foto, no?

**R:** Sí.

**QARA13:** Està nerviosa i ho entenc, perquè... *tipo* quan estàs nerviosa doncs no dius a vegades el que vols dir, però tampoc ho veig tan lleig com ho diu, saps? Se la veu preocupada per veure com queda o com era. Per això diu 'com em veig?' i allò que m'has dit és bó?' Se la veu preocupada. Em va semblar bé.

**R:** *Vale* i *bueno* com respondries tu?

**QARA13:** Semblant, o sigui depèn de amb quina persona em comparin, saps? O sigui, clar, jo en aquest no sabia qui era aquesta amb la que la està comparant, per això no sé si és bo és dolent, saps?

**R:** Clar, però un famós diguem, una persona important?

**QARA13:** Doncs no em faria res. I és mare i filla, no? en aquest cas? Doncs hi ha confiança.

**R:** Aha, molt bé.

[rewatches video]

**HEJE27:** Saps que és? Com lo de matrimoni, on es fiquen a sota.

**R:** Exacte, doncs com reacciona ell?

**QARA13:** No sé, una mica exagerat ho vaig veure. *Tipo* que esta fent un drama i no sé si ella està reaccionant *tipo* aquest hauria d'haver fet la feina que li vaig dir o no, saps? És important però no sé.

**R:** *Okay* i ara els que ens queden.

[rewatches video]

**HEJE27:** Sí, a veure, es que de la forma que parlen no semblen mare i filla. Quan arriba i li diu que la va a veure sembla més com, *tipo* no molesta però *en plan* que li és igual i al revés, que és com un pes a sobre i se li fa pesat... que il·lusionada que és el que hauria de ser. Perquè al final que et vingui a visitar la teva filla hauries d'estar contenta. I *bueno* els següents comentaris també és com que segueixen això de estar *borde* i desil·lusionada.

**R:** Clar, quan li diu que la casa...

**HEJE27:** ...està igual. Si, no sé...

**R:** Si a tu et diuen que la casa està molt maca, què diries?

**HEJE27:** Home, doncs gràcies, però no diria que està igual.

**R:** Molt bé. Doncs el 12.

[rewatches video]

**HEJE27:** És com moltes coses.

**R:** Tu li vas posar un 2 a com reacciona la rossa.

**HEJE27:** Què baix, mare meva! Eh doncs li està dient que està guapa, o sigui que li queda bé i li diu 'm'ho jures? Sí', i diu que si creu en Déu. No sé és com molt *random* la veritat. Llavors no sé, és una mica inapropiat, però ho entenc també i al final potser hauria d'haver posat un 3 perquè es veu que està nerviosa perquè se'n va a una cita o *algo*, llavors, clar, necessita saber que està guapa.

**R:** Clar, perquè si tu estiguessis anant a una cita i et diuen que...

**HEJE27:** A mi si em diuen 't'ho juro' jo m'ho crec no li preguntaria si creu en Déu o no. És molt *raro* això.

**QARA13:** Jo diria que canviaria ara algunes preguntes. *Tipo* que pujaria algunes i algunes les baixaria de les que hem fet.

**R:** Clar, es que també depèn del context... Bueno doncs llavors us volia preguntar que com d'útil us ha semblat l'activitat? O sigui per aprendre a veure si els *compliment responses* són apropiats o no... que us sembla?

**HEJE27:** Jo crec que *tipo* que està molt ben triada la sèrie perquè hi ha com molta ironia i tal, sempre que es diuen coses i no sé, és com que a vegades també jo quan mirava els vídeos a vegades deia 'mira aquesta és apropiada o no?'. Perquè o sigui al final potser jo li dic *algo* al QARA13 i em respon amb una broma i jo m'ho prenc bé. Una altra persona li respon amb una broma i s'ho pren malament. Llavors, també, o sigui, trobo bastant interessant això de que depenent de qui t'ho diu o de qui està rebent el comentari, doncs, reaccionarà d'una forma o una altra. Llavors, clar, és com que és bastant subjectiu això de si és apropiat o no el que es diu i tal. Llavors, no sé, ho vaig trobar bastant útil.

**R:** *Vale*, i a tu que et va semblar?

**QARA13:** Útil, a mi, *tipo*, jo ho vaig veure bastant bé, *tipo*, i a sobre que era, *tipo*, en anglès que, *tipo*, jo per exemple les series que miro quasi mai les miro en anglès però no sé, em va agradar per veure com es pot amb la veu doncs saber si ho diu amb ironia o si ho diu en veritat, saps? Perquè una cosa és que estigui doblada i una cosa és que sigui real. Sí que potser, clar, si no saps el context de la cosa et costa *pillar-ho* una miqueta...

**R:** Clar, doncs faltava més context, allò és *fallo* meu ja. [laughs]

**QARA13:** Però em va semblar bé.

**R:** Llavors, per exemple, a classe creieu que és més important fer gramàtica, vocabulari o també voldríeu fer coses més com del dia a dia de l'ús de l'anglès i aquestes coses, no sé, com ho veieu?

**HEJE27:** Jo crec que ho hauríem de... això que has dit, la gramàtica i tal al final són bastant fonamentals per tenir els bàsics però després, per exemple, de *speaking* o de *listening* o tenir una conversa amb algú hi ha molta gent a la classe que potser no pot. Que potser escriure pot fer-ho però, llavors, establir una conversa en anglès no es pot. I l'altre dia vam fer un debat i parlàvem quatre i és perquè hi ha gent que, doncs, potser no té... potser té bones notes a anglès però després a nivell de parlar o escoltar doncs no se li dona tan bé. Llavors, per exemple mirar series o alguna pel·lícula amb subtítols jo crec que pot ajudar molt i si ho féssim a classe jo crec que estaria bastant bé. Perquè jo per exemple, feia anglès però vaig fer ja el canvi totalment de passar una mica de nivell i parlar-lo millor i tal quan vaig començar a mirar series subtítolades en anglès.

**R:** Clar, és molt diferent el llibre que parlar amb algú.

**QARA13:** Clar, jo per exemple tinc la sort de que en el lloc on treballo doncs he de parlar anglès amb qui treballo i va molt bé perquè ho vas practicant i practicant i al final com el cervell ja el tens entrenat... Vull dir ara en aquest moment he de parlar anglès i sé com fer-ho, saps? I a la pregunta de que si hauríem de fer més vocabulari o gramàtica.. O sigui crec que és important la gramàtica perquè al final és el que t'ajuda a

fer les frases però també crec que no li donem tanta importància als instituts o a les escoles el saber parlar o dir les coses o com es diu i crec que li hauríem de donar també molta importància a la part del *speaking* o el *listening* per exemple.

### Summary Translation

QARA13

**A1: 3** – As the characters did not know each other student QARA13 mentioned the compliment was not appropriate and it surprised him.

**A3: 3** – Viewed the response as exaggerated or as a brag.

**E9: 4** – Student QARA13 chose a 4 because he did not know if the compliment was sincere or not. In the L1 he would be worried if he received the same compliment (looking perfect as opposed to good) as he would question its sincerity.

**E10: 5** – He thinks the complimenter is being polite. In the L1 his response would be a simple thank you.

**R13: 4** – He interprets the mother as nervous and understands the reaction as when one is nervous maybe things do not come out like one would like to, but as she is worried about the way she looks in the picture he does not see it as ugly. The reaction is (questioning the compliment) because she is worried. He was not sure if the comparison in the compliment with Nancy Reagan was good or bad as he did not know who they were referring to. He also mentioned in the mother-daughter relationship there is trust.

**R14: 2** – He thinks the guy's reaction is exaggerated, dramatic, and maybe it was important but not so much.

**COMMENTS:** He would change some scores after taking a second look. He found the activity useful. He does not watch movies in English usually and likes seeing how the voice was ironic or serious and these details that are missed in the dubbed version. If you do not know the context it is harder to understand the situation. He thinks grammar is important because it is what helps you create sentences but also thinks knowing how to talk or how to say things is not given enough importance in schools and high schools. He also thinks more importance should be given to speaking and listening.

HEJE27

**A4: 1** – She thinks it is a very tense situation and the speaker is unfriendly because according to her the grandmother does not want her granddaughter to be with the boy who gives her the compliment.

**A5: 3** – Student HEJE27 chose a 3 because she was unsure whether it was a brag or that the pastry chef was just experienced.

**E6: 1** - She thinks the response is very rude because it is very impolite to receive a compliment and say 'pay'. In her L1 she would maybe joke about being paid but she would not say it in such a curt way. The way she says it makes you not want to pay.

**E10: 2** – She thinks answering that someone else chose the curtains instead of saying thank you is “random” and rude and the situation is tense as the characters were friends but she had never been to his apartment.

**R11: 1** – She thinks judging by the way they talk to each other they do not seem mother and daughter. The overall treatment of the daughter by the mother is like she is a nuisance and is not excited or happy to see her daughter, as she should be. Her reaction is rude and disillusioned. In her place she would say thank you but not that “[the house] hasn’t changed”.

**R12: 2** – The fact that she asks if she believes in God is very ‘random’. On second thought she imagines a score of 3 would have been better taking into account that the complimentee was nervous for her date and she needed to know if she was pretty. In her L1 if they said ‘I swear’ the response would not be to question it, it is strange to her.

**COMMENTS:** She believes the series is well chosen as there is irony and jokes and it makes you reflect on whether CRs are appropriate or not. She points out a response to a compliment is very personal (one could answer with a joke and the other could take it well but another person maybe would not). She finds interesting the fact that depending on who says the compliment and who is receiving it they will react in one way or another, so it is quite subjective whether it is appropriate or not. She found the activity quite useful. She thinks grammar is quite fundamental to have the basics of a language, but so are speaking or listening as there are a lot of people in the classroom who cannot establish a conversation with someone in English. People maybe have good marks but at the level of speaking or listening they are not that skilled. So, watching series or a film with subtitles could help very much in her opinion: “If we did it in class I think it would be quite good because when I started watching series in English with subtitles that is when I started to talk better in English.”

### Interview to 17-year-old students

**Researcher:** Llavors vas posar un 1 a com reaccionava l'àvia, no?

**LOMO72:** Si, no sé. És com una conversa així, molt *pasivo-agresiva*, llavors era com que es notava molt forçat. O sigui, que potser el que estaven dient com a contingut no dèia res malament però es notava molt forçat tot.

**R:** *Vale*, molt bé. I si a tu et fessin un compliment sobre la teva casa com reaccionaries? En català, eh?

**LOMO72:** Diria que ‘gràcies’. [laughs]

**R:** I l'altra que és la 5 vas posar un 2.  
[rewatches video]

**LOMO72:** *Vale, a ver*, realment no està malament perquè és una resposta si hi ha una relació que es coneixen o *algo*, doncs lo normal seria gràcies i no li respon el *cumplido* com hauria de ser.

**R:** *Vale*, ara anem a veure quins vas posar tu. Ah, mira, són els mateixos. En el 5 hi vas posar un 3.

**FOGO67:** Jo vaig posar un 3 perquè, o sigui, em va semblar una miqueta així com agressiu. Però vaig pensar el mateix que ella, que si tenien així una relació que tampoc sonava tant *borde*. I per això vaig posar un 3.

**R:** *Vale, vale*. O sigui millorable però bé. I en el 4 que és el de la mare...

**FOGO67:** Un 2 he posat, no? Bueno em va semblar *borde* però no sé. Crec que també

és com que la senyora ja és així. Llavors pues vaig pensar ‘*bueno és borde* però és així ja’. [laughs]

**R:** *Vale*, doncs que diries?

**FOGO67:** Si m’ho diguessin a mi, ‘moltes gràcies’. *En plan* a mi m’agradaria.

**R:** Llavors al número 7 vas posar un 3.

[rewatches video]

**LOMO72:** No està malament però sembla com si li està retraient *algo*. *En plan* ‘no veniu’.

**R:** I després tenim el 10 on vas posar un 2.

**LOMO72:** Si es que no està malament i en totes podries dir gràcies i ja està i és com que et responen *algo* que no... ‘les va triar ella, no te a veure amb mi’.

**R:** O sigui, tu diries gràcies també en aquesta situació?

**LOMO72:** Sí.

**R:** Llavors els que vas posar tu...

[rewatches video]

**FOGO67:** *Bueno* es el mateix que ha dit ella en veritat. Que *en plan* si ho llegíssim potser no semblaria així agressiu però entonat com ho ha fet ella, doncs, sí que ho està fent així com retraient-les que mai la van a veure.

**R:** I en la seva situació que diries? Si et diguessin ‘és molt *fancy*’?

**FOGO67:** Jo diria ‘ja’. [laughs]

[rewatches video]

**FOGO67:** Sí, a veure, jo vaig posar que ho va dir bé perquè està com defensant la seva neta. I no sé, els comentaris dels altres eren com inapropiats i ell va respondre com jo hagués respost segurament. Per això vaig posar *en plan* 5. Perquè vaig trobar bé que ell ho respongués tan sec en aquesta situació.

**R:** Clar, es que depèn de la situació. Doncs ara toca el 12 i tu també tens el 12. Tu vas posar un 2 i tu un 4.

[rewatches video]

**LOMO72:** *A ver*, és que és una relació d’amigues i és normal la resposta. Però si ho penses objectivament, doncs, si et diu que estàs molt guapa li dius ‘merci’ i no ‘no’ [laughs]. Però que és normal que sigui així en realitat.

**FOGO67:** Jo perquè ho vaig trobar bé en una relació d’amigues és *en plan* ‘ai, no sé si em queda bé’ saps? Però ho vaig trobar bé, sí.

**R:** Llavors, clar vosaltres quan us proveu alguna cosa nova i li pregunteu a una amiga, com reaccioneu?

**FOGO67:** Clar, jo dic ‘segur que sí em queda bé?’, *en plan* no m’ho digueu perquè som amigues.

**LOMO72:** Sí, realment jo tindria aquesta reacció també segurament.

**R:** *Vale*, doncs tu tens la 15 i tu també. Li vas posar un 2 i tu un 1. O sigui, quasi igual.

[rewatches video]

**FOGO67:** A veure, jo ho vaig posar així perquè realment ella és *súper borde*. *En plan* molt agressiva, per això vaig posar l’1.

**R:** O sigui, et va semblar molt tallant.

**LOMO72:** Encara que després respongués que ella creu que no li quedava bé, li podria dir com ‘gràcies’ i després ja... però crec que no. Però com reaccionava a que li ha dit que estava molt *mona*, doncs, com a mínim un ‘merci’ i a mi no m’ha agradat.

**R:** No ha dit ‘merci’ ni res, clar...

**LOMO72:** Es que és *súper* tallant de cop i li ha fet un *cumplido*. Encara que a ella no li agradi com li quedava, no sé...

**R:** O sigui, vosaltres haguéssiu reaccionat diferent?



**LOMO72 and FOGO67:** Sí.

**FOGO67:** O sigui, potser si jo no considerava que quedava bé, doncs, li diria ‘*bueno* merci, si tu creus’ però no directament així.

**R:** Doncs, ja hem acabat els vídeos però us volia preguntar alguna cosa més. Llavors, creieu que és útil fer aquestes activitats de veure vídeos i veure com parlen l’anglès a les pel·lícules o creieu que és més important fer gramàtica, vocabulari?

**FOGO67:** A veure, jo crec que a la vida real el que s’utilitza és l’*speaking* i *en plan* tu a la vida real no estaràs *en plan*, està parlant a una persona nativa a veure la *grammar*, saps? Llavors, crec que el *listening* es una de les parts que potser s’oblida més però és de les més importants.

**LOMO72:** Sí, a més és molt important controlar la gramàtica però fer *listenings* així, no només per la part de *listening*, sinó de la part que entens la cultura, entens tot això, però a més fer *listenings* així amb series i amb vídeos de situacions quotidianes és més interessant que escoltar un *listening* que és la ràdio de no sé on... que són coses que no tenen molt de sentit. I aquí aprens més les relacions quotidianes i, no sé, com vocabulari...

**FOGO67:** Sí, expressions que utilitza la gent el dia a dia.

**LOMO72:** Sí, com es relacionen, la cultura és diferent al final.

**FOGO67:** Però les expressions de classe no.

**LOMO72:** I això de la vida quotidiana ho aprens escoltant series o anant allà...

**R:** Vosaltres veieu series en anglès?

**LOMO72:** Sí.

**FOGO67:** Jo YouTube.

**R:** Que bé! I llavors us va semblar útil?

**FOGO67:** Va estar bé.

**LOMO72:** És una activitat, així, més dinàmica, més entretinguda que estar amb un *listening* [laughs]. A mi em va agradar.

**FOGO67:** Sí, a mi també.

**R:** I vosaltres a la vostra vida real us trobeu en situacions on heu d’utilitzar l’anglès amb algú nadiu? I allà veieu la utilitat d’això?

**LOMO72:** *Bueno*, aquí també és això, no hi ha quasi ningú amb qui parlar anglès. Però, clar, a la que et trobis o si vas a qualsevol lloc on no sàpigues l’idioma segurament també el faràs servir, i si vas a un lloc on parlen anglès segur. I això és molt útil perquè potser no tens ni idea del idioma però amb l’anglès t’entendràs a molts llocs.

**FOGO67:** Sí, sí.

## Summary Translation

LOMO72

**A4: 1** – She chose 1 because the conversation is ‘passive-aggressive’ and it seemed forced. Maybe what they were saying content-wise was not wrong but you could notice everything was very forced. In the L1 she would say a simple ‘thank you’.

**A5: 2** – Actually it is not a wrong response if they have a relationship where they know each other somewhat but the common thing would be to say ‘thank you’. She believes the lady does not answer the compliment as she should.

**E7: 3** – It is not a bad reaction but it seems like the mother is making reference to the fact that her daughter does not come that often.

**E10: 2** – It is not bad but instead of saying ‘thank you’ he responds something that separates the compliment from him. She would say ‘thank you’ in the L1.

**R12: 2** – It is a relationship of friends and actually the answer is normal she thinks. But she would say ‘thank you’ instead.

**R15: 2** – Even though the woman thought the outfit did not look good she could have said ‘thank you’ at least and then downgrade. In her opinion she did not like the response. It was cutting and he was complimenting her.

**COMMENTS:** It is very important to know grammar but doing listenings not only because of the part of listening but also all of the part through which you understand the culture. Viewing videos like these from series with daily situations is more interesting than listening to a listening about the radio. In this way you can learn about daily relationships and interactions, and the culture that is different. This activity was more dynamic and entertaining than doing a listening and having to answer comprehension questions. English is useful for travelling for instance even if you do not go to an English-speaking country.

FOGO67

**A4: 2** – She thought the mother was rude but thinks maybe the lady is like that already. In her place she would say ‘thank you very much’.

**A5: 3** – She gave a 3 because it seemed like an aggressive response but that if they new each other better then it would not be so rude.

**E7: 2** – If we read it it would not seem aggressive but her intonation made it sound like she was ticking them off for not coming very often. In her place she would agree with the compliment.

**E8: 5** – She thinks the reaction was good because the grandfather was defending her granddaughter and the comments of the other men were inappropriate. He answered the way she would have answered.

**R12: 4** – She found the answer okay. In a relationship of friends they often say ‘I don’t know if this suits me’. She would ask friends if they are sure about the compliment and they are not saying it only because of their friendship.

**R15: 1** – She found the reaction of the woman curt and aggressive. She would have said ‘well, thank you, if you think so...’.

**COMMENTS:** She thinks in real life speaking skills are the ones used and when talking to a native speaker one will not be focusing on grammar. Listening is one of the parts that maybe is more often forgotten but one of the most important ones. With the videos of series you can learn daily expressions, that in the textbooks are outdated. She watches YouTube in English. She liked the activity and found it useful for travelling as well.

## 8.2.PAVET