

Pragmatic Competence of Complaints in L2 Spanish

The Effects of Proficiency Level on Production

by

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ABSTRACT

This investigation's goal was to add to the small body of research on pragmalinguistic acquisition of L2 Spanish. Specifically, it centered on the production of complaints in Spanish. Data was collected via a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) of a complaint-provoking situation presented in a website voiceboard to two non-native speaker (NNS) students groups of different proficiency levels and to a native speaker (NS) control group. The lower proficiency group was comprised of 11 NNS enrolled in a 200 level beginning/intermediate Spanish grammar class and the advanced proficiency group of 11 NNS enrolled in a 400 level advanced Spanish conversation and composition class. Neither group contained any participants who had studied abroad or lived in a Spanish-speaking country for more than 3 months. The control group consisted of 10 NSs of Spanish who were all natives or current residents of Northern Mexico. Data from the DCT was categorized into strategies which were organized into Head Acts and Supporting Moves, Deference and Solidarity Politeness systems, according to the frameworks of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and Scollon and Scollon (1983), respectively. The results of the analysis revealed that all three groups of participants have overarching similarities in the use of multiple Head Acts, some used several times throughout a response, to realize a complaint and used some Supporting Moves to mitigate these Head Acts. The lower proficiency group diverged from the advanced proficiency group and NS control group in that lower proficiency students not only used a fewer total strategies and strategy types, but also preferred Head Acts and Supporting Moves that expressed discomfort or dislike over strategies that expressed criticism, or requested a solution from the listener, these being the primary strategies preferred by the advanced proficiency and control group participants. It was also found that the percentage of Supporting Moves decreased with the raise in proficiency level, also. After a discussion of the results,

pedagogical implications are given based on these results to help students notice and acquire pragmalinguistically appropriate responses to complaint-provoking situations.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. C. Richard Seiberg and Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Morningstar.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The instruction of pragmatics in the second language (L2) classroom is slowly gaining popularity but second or foreign language instruction that is grammatically-based, whether in an implicit or explicit manner, still prevails as the method more often emphasized in the classroom. Yet L2 students must acquire a pragmatic competence in the target language along, with grammatical competence, so that they can communicate appropriately in an authentic environment and avoid cultural communication problems. This study will investigate the pragmatic competence of students at two proficiency levels, beginning and advanced, and how they compared to a native speaker group from Northern Mexico.

After reviewing theoretical frameworks of Bachman (1997) of Communicative Language Ability and Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and Scollon and Scollon (1983), this study will focus on the acquisition of pragmalinguistic ability over the span of beginning to advanced undergraduate Spanish courses at a large university in the Southwestern United States. Specifically, this study will investigate the pragmalinguistic ability of the production of direct complaints by L2 learners of Spanish, thereby discovering whether L2 education purely in class, that is, L2 learning not supplemented by a study abroad experience, is sufficient to help students to complain appropriately and with accuracy in Spanish. It is important to mention that the absence of study abroad experiences in the design of this investigation is not intended to downplay the importance of the study abroad experience in a students' learning process. Data from participants with study abroad experience was eliminated from the analyses so as to allow for a more in depth study of the in-class acquisition experience. This will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Statement of the Problem

Second language instruction from a pragmatics-based approach has been gaining in popularity over the recent years; however instruction is still largely centered around teaching grammatical concepts, like tense, syntax, morphology, and vocabulary.

Vocabulary instruction and grammatical instruction are integrated together to aid students in producing comprehensible output (Swain, 1985) and they may be taught within various contexts of the L2 culture or in those familiar to the students, but students still produce output that may not be truly effective in a second language setting when communicating with native speakers. Furthermore the main goals that L2 instruction aim for is to understand the target language's grammatical system and vocabulary and its culture and use this knowledge to communicate with native speakers. Native speakers may comprehend what L2 students are saying, but the full affect of the communication will not be received by either native speakers or L2 speakers. In addition lack of pragmatic instruction leaves students unaware of cultural norms, expectations, or social values, all of which hold crucial roles in the formation and use of a country or region's dialect of the L2. Student could unknowingly offend a native speaker without this knowledge or could be offended by the native speaker by misunderstanding the target language and culture, in turn creating inaccurate stereotypes of the target culture that would continue to affect their language acquisition (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Lo Castro, 1998).

As Wolfram & Schilling-Estes (2006) say, "the choice of how to say something may depend on who is talking to whom and under what social circumstances" (p. 93) so in addition to the necessity to acquire the grammatical forms and vocabulary that can equip them to communicate about various objects, events, and ideas, one could say it is more vital in language instruction to aid students in equipping them with the tools necessary for avoiding pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983) that could result from

nervousness, confusion, and misunderstanding due to a lack of pragmalinguistic knowledge of the target language and culture.

An occurrence in any language that could have the potential to cause this pragmalinguistic failure is complaining. Complaining is considered a face-threatening act by Brown and Levinson (1987) in that “S (speaker) has a negative evaluation of some aspect of H’s (hearer) positive face” (p. 66). The face-threat means there is a confrontation between the speaker and the hearer that needs to be resolved in order to return to a comfortable and non-threatening encounter between the two parties. Whether acting as the complainer or the receiver of the complaint in the interaction, then, students can have difficulty in realizing these face-threatening acts because of the confrontation and the stress it puts on their grammatical and pragmatic competencies (Krashen, 1985).

This reason presents a need to study complaining in many languages, especially in Spanish, considering that it is the foreign language most studied in the United States (Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2010) so that the findings can then be imparted to instructors and students of Spanish, hopefully equipping them with the necessary pragmalinguistic knowledge to complain to someone and understand complaints directed towards them. The speech act of complaining has been studied in several languages, including English (Boxer, 1993a, 1993b, 1996; Cohen, A. & Olshtain, E., 1993; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Niezgodna & Rover, 2001), German (House, J. & Kasper, G., 1981), Chinese (Arent, R. 1996) and Japanese (Inoue, J. 1982), French (LaForest, 2008), and Italian (Monzoni, 2009) but very little has been studied on complaints in Spanish. Only a few studies exist that have investigated this speech act in interactions of native speaker populations across various regions of the Spanish-speaking world or in those of L2 speakers of Spanish. One of the best known studies of complaints in Spanish was by Bolivar (2002), in which complaints made by Venezuelan women in two situations

differing in level of familiarity were investigated. Giddens (1981) qualitatively studied complaints made by Mexican men and women, Salazar (2006) studied complaints made by Peruvian men and women, and Curcó and De Fina (2002) analyzed responses to complaints within a larger variety of other common speech acts, like requests and apologies, in the Mexican and Peninsular Spanish dialects. Kurišćák (2006) studied complaints of L2 Spanish students, yet like Curcó and De Fina, did not solely study complaints but also studied L2 Spanish students' production of requests.

Purpose of this Study

The aim of this study is discover if, upon reaching an advanced level of proficiency in Spanish, students have the necessary pragmalinguistic abilities to produce a complaint in Spanish. The goal is to contribute valuable information to L2 Spanish instruction methodology and curricula, so that they can be further developed in their instruction of pragmatics and elevate students' linguistic and cultural knowledge of Spanish-speaking countries' society, norms, and communication style. This investigation consists of results from a cross-sectional study in which native-English speaking L2 Spanish students of two different proficiency levels and a control group of native-Spanish speakers responded in writing to an open Discourse Completion Test (DCT) that aimed to elicit a complaint from participants. Results are analyzed using Blum-Kulka's, et al. (1989) framework of Head Acts and Supporting Moves and Scollon & Scollon's (1983) Solidarity and Deference Politeness systems. A review of the theoretical framework and of literature on L2 instruction and acquisition theory and methodology and on previous research on complaints in L1 and L2 pragmatics are presented as a base of this study, followed by the presentation of data with results, discussion, and its pedagogical implications.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Speech Acts.

In this study, the frameworks of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and Scollon and Scollon (1983) are used to analyze the speech acts produced by learners and native speakers, however, before explaining this framework, it is important to discuss the idea of speech acts and where it initially came from.

Austin (1975) was the first researcher to coin the term speech act and stated that language wasn't simply a tool used to say something or describe something, but to accomplish a task, to actually do something. He divided communication into three parts: the *locutionary act*, the *illocutionary act*, and the *prelocutionary act*. The locutionary act is the actual words that the speaker says, the illocutionary act and the prelocutionary act as the effects of the words intended by the speaker and the effects received by the listener, respectively. Searle (1976) later broke down Austin's (1975) description of speech by dividing illocutionary acts based on their functions in a conversation. First, Searle (1976) defined all illocutionary acts as "the basic unit of human linguistic communication". Austin's (1975) illocutionary act was then divided into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives.

The framework developed by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) classifies speech act strategies as *Head Acts* or *Supporting Moves*. In their study of requests, Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) defined Head Acts as the "the minimal unit[s] which can realize a request; [they are] the core of the request sequence" (p.275 – 276). Supporting Moves were defined as the "units external to the request, which modify its impact by either aggravating... or mitigating... its force" (p. 275 – 276). Even though these

classifications of Head Act and Supporting Moves were developed for their study on requests, in this study they will be applied to the realization of complaints, especially direct complaints to service providers as were studied in this investigation since speakers will request or demand some form of solution or cooperation from the service provider as part of their complaint. This will be discussed further with the analysis and discussion of the data of the present investigation.

Within Blum-Kulka's, et al. (1989) framework, Head Act strategies can be further divided into *Solidarity* and *Deference Politeness* systems which were developed by Scollon and Scollon (1983). Solidarity Politeness strategies demonstrate camaraderie by the speaker between him/her and the interlocutor while Deference politeness strategies demonstrate the respect and formality the speaker has towards the listener and their interaction.

Bachman's (1997) Model of Communicative Language Ability.

Bachman's (1997) explanation of Communicative Language Ability was found to be the most relevant to this study since pragmatics of L2 learners is addressed within this framework, distinguishing it from other L2 language acquisition frameworks. In Bachman's model of Communicative Language Ability, *language competence* and *knowledge structures (knowledge of the world)* combine to create their *strategic competence*. As part of their strategic competence, learners execute their linguistic intentions through communication strategies, which then work with their *psychophysiological mechanisms* (the way their mental processes affect their bodily processes) to affect how they approach and deal with the situational context.

The language competence portion of Communicative Language Ability (Bachman, 1997) is comprised of *pragmatic competence* and *organizational competence*. Pragmatic competence is further divided into *illocutionary competence* and

sociolinguistic competence. Figure 1 below shows the design of Bachman's Communicative Language Ability (1997). Figure 2 shows the division of the language competence of Bachman's Communicative Language Ability (1997). Illocutionary competence includes learners' abilities to negotiate meaning and to use appropriate forms to realize their speech intention. The sociolinguistic component of pragmatic competence focuses on knowledge of linguistic social norms. Learners must be sensitive to different dialects or sociolects of the language and any specific cultural aspects that could affect how their speech intentions are perceived in the target L2 community. The speech acts as defined by Austin (1975), Searle (1976), the Head Acts and Supporting Moves of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), and the Deference and Solidarity Politeness systems of Scollon and Scollon (1983) all fit into this portion of Bachmann's (1997) theory.

Figure 1
Bachman's Communicative Language Ability (1997): Components of communicative language ability in communicative use.

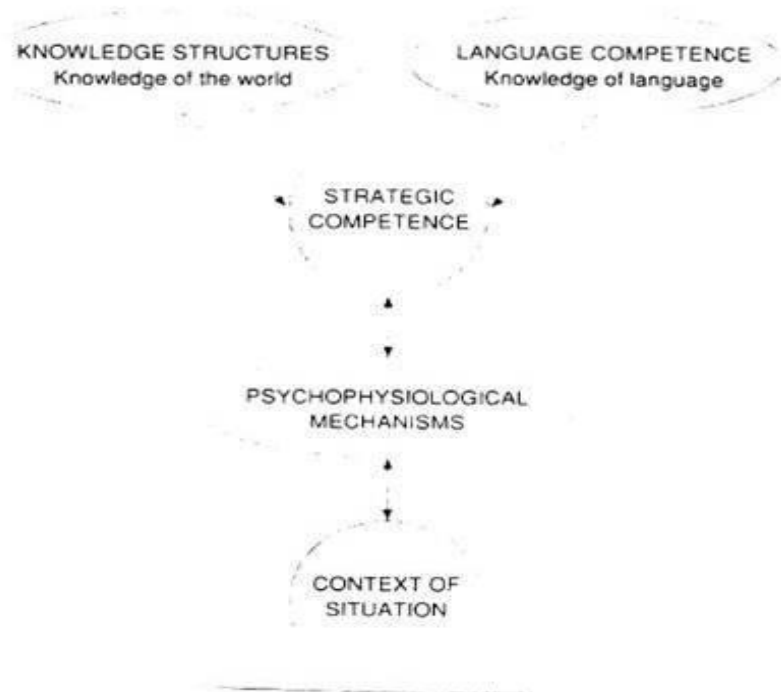
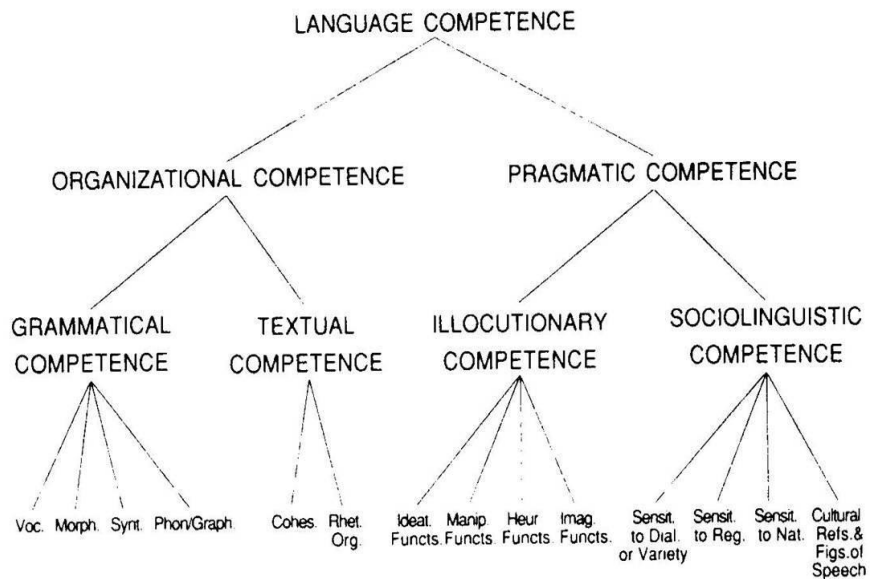


Figure 2
 Bachman's Communicative Language Ability (1997): Components of language competence.



The second component of Bachman's (1997) language competence is *organizational competence*, or the competence of the formal aspects of language. It is subdivided into *grammatical competence* and *textual or discourse competence*. Grammatical competence looks at just that, the grammar, or the finite rules of language, including its syntax, morphology, pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary. Textual or discourse competence describes the learners' ability to create cohesion in form and thought by combining their ideas into discourse and expressing ideas about the relationships in a text. It also includes their ability to use linguistic devices of cohesion, like pronouns and conjunctions.

The combination of Bachmann's (1997) framework and the previously mentioned speech act frameworks of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and Scollon and Scollon (1983) was found to be the most appropriate for this investigation as promoting instruction of all parts of the second language, from grammar to culture and it affects on pragmatics is sought as a goal in this investigation. Students not only need to learn to

identify different components of the target language but also need to learn how and when to use these different components.

Literature Review

The Speech Act of Complaints

The speech act of complaints can be divided into two very distinct categories: *indirect complaints* and *direct complaints*. Even though both are considered complaints, Boxer (1993b) noted that each type is used for very different purposes in (English) communication. Indirect complaints, also known as “gripes,” by Boxer’s (1991) definition, are speech acts in which the interlocutor is not held responsible for the speaker’s complaint because the responsible party is either the speaker himself, or an institution (human or non-human object) that is not present. These indirect complaints, studied in English, were found to build solidarity between the speaker and the interlocutor and are often used as introductions to conversations (Boxer, 1991; 1993). On the contrary, the interlocutor is held responsible for the speaker’s direct complaint. These direct complaints, unlike their indirect counterparts, are face threatening and are more marked than indirect complaints (Boxer, 1993b; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Salazar, 2006).

Complaints have not been studied extensively in any language, but there are several investigations of (direct and indirect) complaints in English. Boxer (1991; 1993a; 1993b; 1996) is known for her study of indirect complaints. By observing natural conversation in a native English-speaking Jewish community in the northeast United States, Boxer found that indirect complaints were used to build solidarity, especially between women. The use of indirect complaints in conversations has not been studied extensively within the context of L2 learners but could be an interesting point of research in the future. Currently only Boxer (1993b) has investigated the use and instruction of

using indirect complaints in conversation for Japanese L2 speakers of English when interacting with native English speaking peers. In conclusion to her study, Boxer (1993b) found that the Japanese learners of English as a Second Language did not respond to the indirect complaints made by their native English speaking interlocutors and concluded that by not learning to recognize these indirect complaints as a solidarity building strategy, were missing out on conversation opportunities with the native speakers. Indirect complaints, as shown by her study, can be very important for L2 learners to learn, however, these indirect complaints are not as imposing to the speaker or listener as direct complaints can be and so direct complaints hold the potential to be more difficult for L2 speakers to appropriately produce and to understand. Although not studied in depth, they have been studied in the L2 context. Several related studies on direct complaints in a second language are detailed below.

Murphy and Neu (1996) studied the direct complaints of Korean L2 English speakers in an American university setting. Using an oral discourse completion test, students were presented a task in which they were asked to respond to a professor who had given them a grade on a paper that the students felt was unfair. After their complaints were recorded, the complaints were judged for appropriateness and acceptability by native English speaking students at the same university. The results of Murphy and Neu's (1996) study showed that the Korean students exhibited transference from their native language; as a result their complaints were more direct and face threatening in that blame and criticism was put more upon the interlocutor than what was considered typical of English complaints by the American native English-speaking students.

Several grammatical and linguistic characteristics were found in the complaints made by the native English-speaking students and they can be generalized to complaints

made by native English speakers in general. Emphasis on personal involvement was shifted off of the speaker and interlocutor to a general “we” subject or to the problem itself. Conditional statements using “could” or “would” were used in addition to asking questions to show politeness to the interlocutor and soften the threat on their face. Mitigating phrases like “just,” “a little,” or “maybe,” among others were also very common. Student judges considered the complaints made by the Korean students to be aggressive, critical, and a violation of the social distance and power between a professor and a student. These student judges, however, were not trained in analyzing speech and it is possible that they allowed their opinions to be affected by the Korean students’ accent and grammatical errors. The authenticity of the Korean students’ complaints is questionable also. All students recorded their complaints after reading a DCT prompt and did not have an interlocutor with whom to interact, thus giving their speech a forced and unnatural feeling.

As was concluded by Boxer’s (1993a; 1996) studies of English complaints, women complain (especially indirectly) more than men. Wolfe and Powell (2006), however, found that in student work groups (conversing in English), women and men complained equally. Three student work groups working on writing assignments (students in each group were linked by a shared major, each group having a different major) consisted of three students each. Each group was comprised of men and women. The groups met several times to work on their projects. From the beginning of the project, each group was recorded for thirty minutes and then again for thirty minutes at the end of their project. No significant difference was found between the number of complaints made by the men and the women of the groups. After transcribing the two thirty minute sessions, Wolfe and Powell (2006) organized the complaints into categories that expressed the functions of the complaints. The number of complaints did not show

gender differences, however the functions of the complaints did in fact show differences between men and women. The men in the student groups used complaints more to express superiority and to make excuses. Women were found to use complaints more to draw attention to occurrences in which something was not correct as a way to indirectly request reparation. We can gather important information about gender differences from this information, but it is limited to the informal academic setting of the group meetings. In addition, all students were familiar with their peers before they began the projects, so inferences on complaints made to strangers or in formal situations cannot be made from the data.

In Spanish complaints remain one of the speech acts still in need of being further researched as there is an overall lack of data on indirect or direct complaints in Spanish. A few studies have investigated complaints within a larger study field that included other speech acts and even fewer researchers have investigated only Spanish complaints. Curcó and De Fina (2002) studied responses to requests, disagreements, and complaints in Mexican Spanish and Peninsular Spanish. Specifically, they looked at the judgments of politeness, social distance, and imposition in the responses to each speech act.

In Curcó and De Fina's (2002) study, Mexican and Peninsular Spanish participants were presented with twelve written situations and several responses to each one. Each response had a variety of mitigators, imperative grammatical structures, and diminutives. Participants rated the level of each response's politeness, distance, and imposition on a five-point scale. According to the questionnaire, the use of diminutives and the imperative form had opposite considerations for the two groups. Mexican participants viewed diminutives and deference markers as more polite but Spaniards interpreted them as ironic and negative. The same was found for the imperative grammatical structures in that Spaniards considered their use to be polite and acceptable

and Mexican participants considered them less polite. In spite of these results that demonstrate the distinctness of Mexican and Peninsular Spanish cultures and pragmatics, the questionnaire and five-point rating scale limited the participants' ratings, and did not allow participants space for their own responses. In addition, the results are only significant for the *responses* to complaints. Complaints themselves were not rated according to Mexican or Spanish social norms in Curcó and De Fina's (2002) study.

Three studies have been found that have investigated direct complaints in Spanish. Bolívar (2002) studied the direct complaints of Venezuelan women and compared their complaints in familiar and public situations in which social distance was an independent variable. Fifty Venezuelan women between the ages of 25 and 39 responded to two written DCTs that varied in social distance and familiarity with the other party. The first DCT presented a situation with little social distance; a friend who borrowed their car did not fill the gas tank upon returning it as promised. The second DCT explained a situation that showed greater social distance by involving a stranger: upon returning to their house, they discover another woman who was allowing her dog to relieve itself on their lawn. In the familiar frame, women expressed their complaints through the use of warnings, personal evaluations of the interlocutor, and demands for explanations, among several other speech acts. In the unfamiliar frame, the participants again used a variety of speech acts, but mostly used alerters, requests for a repair of the offense, and gave instructions to the interlocutor on how they should act. The results of both DCTs show that the use of the formal and informal imperative form was found to form complaints, as previously mentioned from Curcó and De Fina's (2002) results. Bolívar (2002) also found that the subjunctive, questions, and exclamations were used when her participants made their complaints to the friend or the stranger. Bolívar (2002)

collected the complaints using written DCTs, allowing for large amounts of data to be collected, but by doing so sacrificed a natural conversation setting.

Giddens (1981) qualitatively studied complaints made by Mexican men and women. Without statistics being provided for her research, Giddens (1981) ranked the frequency of strategies of Mexican men and women as such: the strategy of Remedy was the most frequent, followed by Act Statement, Opener, Justification of the Speaker, Valuation, Justification of the Addressee, Threat, Orientation, and Closing. She concluded that there was a difference in frequency of strategies based on men and women, but as mentioned no statistical evidence of these differences were provided.

In her unpublished thesis, Salazar (2006) studied the complaints made by 20 Peruvian native Spanish speakers (10 males and 10 females) in two role play contexts. Both role play contexts dealt with the same (female) interlocutor who played the role of a university librarian. In each role play, a large fee for overdue books (books that had not even been borrowed by the speaker) had been wrongfully charged to the speaker's library account and no more books could be borrowed until the fine was paid. The difference between the two role plays came in the social status of the speaker. In the first role play, the speaker played a university student. In the second role play, the speaker played a university professor. Salazar (2006) compared differences between gender, formal and informal situations, and social status, otherwise known as power relation studied in the difference between complaints made by a student and a professor. After analyzing these differences, she then applied the findings to the five steps of teaching a speech act that have been established by Cohen and Olshtain (1991) in order to supplement the growing field of pragmatic instruction with much needed studies of complaints.

Overall Salazar (2006) found that Peruvian speakers, men and women, preferred to use a wide variety of Head Act strategies that expressed Solidarity Politeness in formal

and familiar situations as it allowed them to establish common ground with their interlocutor and then make more direct complaints. It was also found that the Peruvian participants used strategies more than once for each of their responses, which showed that the realization of complaining as a speech act is a complex one that cannot be realized simply in one statement. Speakers also used a high amount of mitigators, the majority being Grounders.

Salazar's (2006) study was very thorough, however there still were some limitations to the study, including the need to study differences of socioeconomic status, age differences, naturally occurring data to study the most authentic complaints instead of "responses that are idealized versions of complaints that actually take place" (p.106). Another important limitation was that the study's scope limited the data only to the complaints made and not to the responses made to the complaints. Naturally occurring complaints most commonly occur in multiple steps and the interlocutor's responses then combine with the situation at hand and thus affect the speaker's completion of the complaint.

There are some interesting studies of complaints in other languages. In French, Laforest (2008) studied family situations in which third-party complaints were made to a witness while the responsible party was still present. Laforest (2008) recorded ten hours of natural conversation between one Montreal family. It was found that the complaint against the responsible family member was strengthened because the witness affiliated with the speaker's opinion and complaint. Laforest's (2008) study contained indirect and direct complaints, but only studied those complaints made to the witness (those that were indirectly addressed to the guilty party, who was present to listen). In Italian, Monzoni (2009) studied the use of questions in the speech act of complaining. From ten hours of recorded phone calls from an ambulance call and dispatch center in northern Italy, it was

found that customers who called with a complaint used questions to introduce and make complaints about the ambulance center's services. Based on the data, Monzoni (2009) hypothesized that the customers used the questions as a way to talk about the complaint without directly blaming a particular person. Most importantly, Monzoni (2009) found that the questions were framed in such a way that they elicited yes/no responses or only the information that customers were looking for. In other words, these questions allowed the customers to manipulate the conversation in order to receive the answers and information they wanted and expected in regards to the services errors without having to more directly threaten the face of the ambulance center employee.

Studies on L2 Pragmatic Competence

Several studies have explored the presence and development of pragmatic competence in the L2 (some in combination with the L2 grammatical competence). Most of these studies have focused on English as a second or foreign language or on eastern languages; there is not an over abundance of studies on pragmatic competence in general or in the pragmatic competence of specific speech acts. Pragmatic competence, pragmalinguistic competence, and both of these for specific speech acts must be researched more in order to allow L2 instruction to continue growing towards the direction of teaching "real life" language that is whole and authentic, allowing students to connect the competencies, pragmatic and grammatical, they have acquired of the L2 with the pragmatics they are familiar with of the L1 and adjust to the culture and pragmatics of the L2.

Cohen and Olshtain (1993) conducted a descriptive study in which fifteen EFL students interacted with the same interlocutor in six role plays divided into three dyads while being videotaped. The 15 participants were L2 or L3 speakers of English and were either native speakers of Hebrew or L2 speakers of Hebrew with near-native fluency

(these participants had a variety of languages as their L1). The six role plays dealt with three different speech acts with relatively high levels of imposition: apologies, complaints, and requests. Each set of two role plays with the same interlocutor were videotaped and were later played back for the participants. The researchers asked them to explain and comment on their performance, what they were thinking at the time of the role play, including if they were planning and assessing the situation and the language devices (pragmatic and grammatical) necessary for it before speaking, and what language they were thinking in to do this. The students were also asked how often they paid attention to grammar and pronunciation while carrying out the tasks. The researchers found that 49% of the participants did plan and assess before beginning their responses. Of this 49%, students planned and assessed in three different combinations of English and Hebrew. Forty-one percent thought of grammar while conducting the role play, which mostly occurred during the situation with the highest imposition (the request to someone of higher social status). Only 22% of the students thought about pronunciation while speaking. From their reflections of the video tape, three production styles were revealed. Students were considered *metacognizers* if they used strategies of monitoring their language use and grammar during the role play. They were classified as *avoiders* if they used strategies of message omission and lexical avoidance when they were challenged in their language abilities. Students were classified into a third category of *pragmatists* if they tended to make linguistic choices on-the-spot, or if they simplified their linguistic statement or approximated it to something more related so as to avoid linguistic failure, even if it did not fulfill their original linguistic intention.

Cohen and Olshtain (1993) concluded their study with pedagogical implications based on their observations of the students. They noted that teachers must take time to consider students' processing in the overall difficulty of a communicative task before

choosing activities and before assessing them. They suggested that teachers use discussion and scaffolding of helpful strategies and difficult situations so that students will learn ways to make their way out of a situation before reaching linguistic failure.

The authors did note limitations to their studies. Because the role plays were semi-oral (the students read the situation before beginning the role play and the interlocutor also read the situation aloud to them), it is possible that the role plays were not as natural as possible. Some students reported that some of the situations were unfamiliar to them and this could have had an effect on the naturalness of the role plays also since they would be unsure as to how to respond. The order of the role plays and video reviews may have had a stressful and fatiguing effect on the students and the internal validity of the study. The first of six role plays, the apology, was the most stressful because the students had to compensate for the infraction they had caused. Complaints and then request-evoking situations, the request situation being the one with the highest imposition and social distance, followed the apologies. Students' awareness and use of correct grammar and pronunciation in the second and third role plays could have improved because these topics were discussed immediately following the first set of two role plays. Thus, even though the students said they thought about grammar and pronunciation the most during the third role play because it had the highest imposition, we cannot be sure if their awareness increased naturally or by the earlier discussions. The authors failed to mention how the study was limited in its generalizability to other second language learners. Of the fifteen students, some of them spoke three languages and others spoke two, with Hebrew and English being acquired in different orders for each student. Cohen and Olshtain's (1993) subject sample did not represent one consistent group nor were the results for the L3 speakers and the L2 speakers analyzed

separately. This lack of validity in the subject sample means that the results of the investigation cannot be accurately generalized to second language learners.

A judgment test conducted in another study looked not at students' performance but that of actors in various scenarios. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) studied L2 English students' and teachers' awareness of grammatical and pragmatic errors and how both groups' proficiency levels influenced their awareness and consideration of appropriateness. They also tested the effect that residency in the target language culture had on the students' awareness. A group of 370 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students (secondary school students and students from non-credit English courses) in Hungary, a group of 173 English as a Second Language (ESL) students living in the U.S. and attending a U.S. university, and the teachers from each of these groups (25 Hungarian teachers and 28 teachers from the United States) were shown a video of 18 scenarios of two nonnative yet high-performing speakers of English, Peter and Anna, interacting with their same-gender peers in a university setting that would be familiar to the participants. The researchers also used a small secondary group of participants from Italy in order to test the effect of residency on EFL learners of a language from a different L1 than Hungarian.

Each scenario in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study focused on one of four main speech acts: a request, an apology, a suggestion, or a refusal. The 18 scenarios were divided into 3 groups of correctness and appropriateness: 8 scenarios were pragmatically appropriate but grammatically incorrect, 8 were grammatically correct but pragmatically inappropriate, and 4 scenarios had no grammatical or pragmatic violations (two of the situations were eliminated before conducting the study). The scenarios were evenly divided into two groups and stratified random samples were created with the scenarios for each group. Participants watched each scenario twice, the second time

marking their grammatical and pragmatic judgments on the questionnaire. These judgments consisted first of stating whether the statement was inappropriate or appropriate and then of a judgment of appropriateness of the target statement in the scenario by use of a rating scale. If they marked that the statements was inappropriate, they judged it in the second question, which rated the gravity of the offense (from “Not bad at all” to “Very bad”). The judgments for each group were compared using qualitative statistical analysis.

The results of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) study revealed that EFL and ESL students and teachers had opposite patterns of grammatical and pragmatic judgment. The EFL students, that is, those students residing in Hungary or in Italy, rated the sentences containing grammar errors as more offensive than those containing pragmatic errors. The ESL students, those residing on the U.S. university campus, showed the opposite trend: the pragmatic violations were considered more important than the grammatical errors. The variation in the scores of each group were significant; the EFL learners’ lowest grammatical judgment score was still higher than the highest grammatical judgment score of the ESL learners and the same pattern, but inverted, was found for ESL learners’ pragmatic judgments of appropriateness. The teachers differed from their students in the recognition of the errors. EFL and ESL teachers recognized all grammatical and pragmatic errors (students were not able to detect every single error) even though they judged them with differing levels of gravity.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) were very thorough in their experiment. It is noted, however, that their study could have been improved with the use of a grammatical and pragmatic judgment test that asked more specific information and also required output in that participants would have needed to not only detect and judge the error, but also correct it. More speech acts could have been included in the video scenarios to

represent true communication more effectively along with mixed-gender interaction between native speaking actors and nonnative actors.

A replication of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study was conducted by Niezgoda and Rover (2001) with differing results that showed the impact of EFL learners' characteristics and motivation and their relation to the learning environment. The same judgment test of grammatical and pragmatic appropriateness was used with a group of ESL students in an English language school in Hawaii (N=48 with mixed nationalities and average stay in the U.S. of 4.7 months) and a group of Czech EFL students (N=124) that were studying to be ESL teachers in their country. The EFL group of Czech students differed from Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) EFL group in that they received up to 20 hours of contact with the English language per week including conversing with friends and teachers only in English. The authors' ESL group also differed from the original study's group. The original ESL students of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study were in an intensive language program at Indiana University. Niezgoda and Rover's (2001) group of ESL students were not in a university setting and the program was not as formal as the ESL program at Indiana University. This private program in Hawaii hosted students that were there to study for a variety of reasons, including business, career or education enhancement, or just the simple enjoyment of combining a vacation with learning English.

Contrary to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) findings, Niezgoda and Rover's (2001) EFL group of Czech students recognized more grammatical and pragmatic errors than the ESL students and rated these errors more severely. When each group was divided into low proficiency and high proficiency students, the low proficiency students of both groups showed awareness of more pragmatic errors than the high proficiency students, who in contrast recognized more grammatical violations. Both

groups of high proficiency students also rated the grammatical violations more severely than the low proficiency students. Niezgodna and Rover (2001) argued that these results showed that it is important to take learner motivation and personal characteristics into consideration along with the learning environment. They especially noted that the way that the EFL learners attend to input should be taken into account.

Although these results were significant, Niezgodna and Rover's (2001) study still had some limitations that threatened its validity and generalizability. The educational settings of the scenarios on the video task were a problematic issue in the study. The EFL students, who were in traditional classes and a school setting, may have been more familiar with this situational context and possibly were able to be more aware and more easily judge the violations than the ESL students. This also raises the possibility that the students' competence was limited to only the educational setting and could have lowered when asked to perform tasks outside of this domain. No pretest information or posttest information was available. Just as methodology and production data were a limitation to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study, so too was the lack of information on methodology and that of output data for Niezgodna and Rover's (2001) investigation. The authors also made note of the need for longitudinal studies of the development of grammatical and pragmatic competencies since this study and the original study by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) were only cross-sectional.

Perhaps the investigation that has influenced this thesis study the most is a dissertation on the interlanguage pragmatics of L2 Spanish learners and how situational and learner variables influenced students' responses, including choosing what type of strategy they used to respond (Kuriščák, 2006). Many investigations of L2 pragmatics or interlanguage pragmatics have various instruments, including role plays, DCTs, and questionnaires, to study one or a few specific speech acts of L2 learners. The instruments

asking participants to produce output have been created in such a way to elicit specific speech acts that researchers have wanted to study. Few studies, especially for L2 pragmatics, have created “open” instruments that allow students to respond as they choose so as to investigate a) which speech acts were most commonly produced, b) why students chose to produce particular speech acts instead of others, c) who of the students produced these speech act strategies while others chose a different strategy to accomplish the same task, and d) what influenced students to respond the way they did (e.g. proficiency level, personality traits, study abroad experience, judgments of the situation or interlocutor’s age, status, gender, etc.). Kuriščák (2006) created a questionnaire which included 12 DCT situations of varying levels of imposition and formality which “were constructed so as to present the potential for conflict without being either very easy (such as asking for the time) or extremely hard (such as asking someone to donate a kidney or to join a church)” (p. 134), and also varied in the gender and social status of the interlocutors described in the DCT situation prompts. Following each of the DCT situations was a series of questions regarding the difficulty of creating a response to it (based on knowledge of Spanish and of personality traits) and to judge the level of politeness and appropriateness for the participants’ own responses. Following this series of 12 scenarios were personality and L2 experiences questionnaires that sought information (yes/no or lykert scale formats) on personal feelings, background information on experience in the U.S. and abroad with Spanish. Finally, a grammar knowledge test was administered as the last section of the questionnaire. This questionnaire was completed by 273 non-native speaking (NNS) students of intermediate (300 level) and advanced (400 level) Spanish classes at a large U.S. university, including students who had studied abroad.

Kuriščák (2006) found that the students' level of proficiency had the largest impact on their responses. Other facts that influenced their responses included their personality traits, like emotional stability and level of extraversion, and source of motivation (instrument motivation or intrinsic). Students with higher proficiency levels and who scored higher on the extraversion scale and also on a Social Desirability Response Scale (SDRS) produced more supportive moves, especially mitigators and also produced more responses in the form of requests versus complaints. Students who produced more complaints than requests either scored lower on the proficiency scale and/or scored lower on the SDRS, implying that these students cared less of how others accepted them or if they imposed upon others with their wants and opinions. Kuriščák (2006) classified requests using the CCSARP coding manual created by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and any responses that did not seem to be "primarily a request for something (change, object, favor, etc. [my explanation])" (p. 103), were coded as complaint responses. She defined complaints as those responses which "seemed to be primarily an expression of displeasure over something" (p. 103), therefore being more speaker-oriented in that only his or her feelings or perspective were being communicated by the speaker.

From her participants' data, Kuriščák (2006) made several conclusions. Students with higher proficiency level perhaps produced more requests than complaints because requests required more advanced linguistic knowledge and formulations. Students with high proficiency levels and/or higher levels of extraversion also produced more speech-act modifying devices (upgraders, downgraders, mitigators, or aggravators) either because they had more vocabulary and grammar knowledge to do so or because they, being more outgoing, naturally were just more talkative. These students also considered the scenarios significantly less difficult to respond to compared to those students who

scored lower on the proficiency scale. It is important to note that many of these students who scored higher of the proficiency scale also were more likely to have studied abroad, so their considerations of difficulty of the scenario and their use of modifiers does not clearly come from only one source; more studies in a longitudinal format with pre- and post-test data would be needed to confirm these findings. Students with lower proficiency scores and/or with higher scores of neuroticism (i.e. emotional instability, shyness, moodiness, etc.) scored situations as having higher imposition and rated their responses overall as more difficult to create appropriately. This lead Kuriščák (2006) to imply that, if lower proficiency students were forming more complaints that requests, complaints were “linguistically less demanding” and “more within their range of ability than requests” (p. 166). These correlations, however, were not concrete and Kuriščák concluded that although very intriguing, the connection between lower proficiency and use of complaint strategy would need to be furthered researched to find if the usage pattern came more from lack of pragmalinguistic knowledge or from choice for these students.

Limitations that were listed for the study were the use of a (written) DCT questionnaire to gather data, that the study was cross-sectional instead of longitudinal, and that the participant group was imbalanced with a majority of 300-level students due to the fact that not many instructors of 400-level classes volunteered their students to participate in the study. Although the DCT has been used in many of the other related investigations mentioned by Kuriščák (2006) and in this investigation (Bolívar, 2002; Murphy & Neu, 1996) for its consistency and convenience, the DCT instrument in Kuriščák’s (2006) data could not account for the effect of turn-taking, gestures, collection of truly spontaneously produced data that is not over contemplated before going onto paper, unlike data collected via audio- or video-recorded role plays or naturally occurring

data. It should also be mentioned that Kuriščák did not compare NNS students' data to Spanish native speaker (NS) data, yet this can be explained by the fact that her central concern of research was the effects of learner and situational variables on their L2 interlanguage pragmatics. However native speaker data in reference to imposition level of the situations' social distance, social status and gender of the interlocutor would have complimented and strengthened the data. Overall, the investigation and findings of Kuriščák (2006) have aided this study not only by contributing perspectives on past research on L1 and L2 pragmatics of complaints but also by contributing valuable in-depth information that can help to explain students' interlanguage pragmatics and support the results of the current data.

Justification of study

Second language learners will never learn a language in the same way that a native speaker learns their first language. The simple fact that they are learning a second language indicates that they will naturally, instinctually make comparisons and create hypotheses according to the schema they already have from their first language's grammar and pragmatics. Equal attention needs to be paid to grammar and pragmatics for second language learners so that they can make the comparisons necessary to acquire the L2. These comparisons and hypotheses help the students; therefore, attention to comparisons of grammatical rules and pragmatic norms should not be neglected. This investigation will explore whether the communicative- methodology based classroom helps to students' acquisition of pragmatic appropriateness of high imposition speech acts like complaints.

As shown by the small quantity of studies on the interlanguage and L2 pragmatic competencies of learners, this investigation will contribute valuable information to the field of Second Language Acquisition by testing the effectiveness of pragmatic

instruction in the classroom. The results of this study suggest pedagogical implications for the classroom, and aid students in increasing the proficiency of their second language. In addition to these contributions, this investigation will also contribute knowledge about directs complaints in Spanish not only to the fields of language acquisition but also of sociolinguistics, thus helping to expand knowledge regarding the nature of the realization of this speech act in Spanish.

Research question

The research question of this study applies to the pragmalinguistic competence in varying levels of Spanish proficiency:

1. Does a difference in language proficiency level (beginning and advanced) have an effect on the pragmalinguistic competence that students reflect in their production of complaints in Spanish?

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter reviews the participants, how they were selected, the methods used for collecting data, and how it was analyzed. A description of subjects begins the chapter, followed by descriptions of the instruments used for collecting the demographic information and language data, the procedures followed to collect it, and how the participants' data was analyzed.

Subjects

Originally three groups of approximately 30 students each, totaling ninety, were recruited for this investigation. One group of approximately 30 native speakers was also recruited as a control group and is described after the groups of student participants. The three student groups were comprised only of students all of which were enrolled in Spanish classes at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe, Arizona. The participants for this study were enrolled in one of three different Spanish classes: SPA 202 (Intermediate Spanish), SPA 314 (Spanish Conversation and Composition), or SPA 412 (Advanced Conversation/Composition) and two classes, or sections, of each course were selected. Both sections of each course were taught by the same instructor. These three courses were chosen so as to demonstrate differences and changes in proficiency levels from the beginning courses, intermediate courses, and the final or advanced courses in the Spanish undergraduate program at ASU. Due to the time constraints and the scope of this investigation, the student participants from the SPA 314 classes were eliminated from the study, and the students from the SPA 202 and SPA 412 sections remained to show differences in proficiency level of introductory and advanced level students. It is also important to mention here that any students from these Spanish courses that had studied abroad for three months or more were eliminated. The differences between

students who learn only “at home” in the United States compared to a combination of traditional classes and study abroad programs is not able to be addressed in this investigation given its scope, although it is a distinction that would be of much interest to study in the future. Gender differences also were not addressed in this study so each group was comprised of different ratios of male and female participants.

Some more detail about the two student participant groups and the native speaker group is given below.

SPA 202 student participants.

The course SPA 202, Intermediate Spanish, is the last course in the lower division courses of the ASU Undergraduate Spanish program. The SPA 202 courses are often comprised of a mixture of students of different majors and they also have various purposes for learning Spanish. Many B.A. degrees require four semesters of a foreign language for graduation, so SPA 202 courses have students taking the course to fulfill general education requirements. This course also can host students in the beginning stages of pursuing of Spanish major or minor, including freshman students who tested into SPA 202 directly from high school. Overall, SPA 202 courses can have a wide range of students with a wide range of abilities.

The course is instructed from a communicative approach yet still focuses on the essential grammatical concepts that students need to know in order to converse with native speakers about various topics and to express their ideas and opinions in spoken or written form. These courses are most often taught by a graduate Teaching Associate.

The group of SPA 202 participants for this investigation was from two sections of SPA 202, both taught by a graduate Teaching Associate who had been teaching Spanish classes at ASU for two years prior to data collection. The teaching associate was

also a native of Northern Mexico but had lived in the Phoenix, Arizona area for approximately the last ten years.

Twenty-four SPA 202 students from the two sections completed the demographic questionnaire and completed some of the tasks in the instrument. However, eight participants did not complete the particular task used studied in this investigation. In addition, four more participants were eliminated because they had listed that they spoke Spanish with family members at home. They had listed English as their native and first language; however the use of Spanish at home eluded that they may have had a better or different knowledge and proficiency of Spanish than non-native speaking students who were the aim of this study. One other student was eliminated because she had studied abroad for one year in Chile and had lived there with a host family. Along the same reasoning for eliminating the students who spoke Spanish in the home, students who had studied abroad for extended periods of time were not desired for this investigation as it would have influenced their proficiency level more than students who had only learned Spanish while in the United States. This left 11 SPA 202 participants for the investigation.

SPA 412 student participants.

Unlike SPA 202, the course SPA 412, Advanced Conversation and Composition, comprised mostly of Spanish majors or minors as it is not a requirement for students majoring or minoring in programs other than Spanish and it is one of the higher courses of the Upper division of Spanish courses. The course most often is taken in the fourth year of study in the Undergraduate Spanish program at ASU but sometimes is taken earlier if a student with high proficiency levels is able to test directly into upper division courses.

The course does have a communicate approach to instruction, however designing and composing well-written, detailed compositions of various genres (argumentative essays, persuasive essays, etc.) and oral presentation are focused on more than in the SPA 202 course.

The participants from the two sections of the SPA 412 courses that were used in this study were also taught by the same instructor who was also a graduate Teaching Associate in the Spanish (Doctorate) program at ASU. She was not a native speaker or native resident of a Spanish-speaking country but had spent prolonged amounts of time in Spanish speaking countries during her years of study and had been teaching undergraduate courses in the Spanish department of ASU for more than four years.

Twenty-eight SPA 412 students participated by completing the demographic questionnaire and the tasks in the instrument. As can be assumed, students who have studied abroad are much more common in upper division courses, especially SPA 412. Also, students who are native speakers of Spanish or heritage speakers (those who have grown up hearing Spanish with their family and speaking it sometimes but do not consider it their native language) and students who are non-native speakers of Spanish are combined into the same classes. In lower division and beginning upper division courses, these two groups of students enroll in separate courses; native-speaking students and heritage learners of Spanish enroll in Spanish courses specifically designed for their knowledge of Spanish. Due to this fact, 17 students in total were eliminated from the study because they either had studied abroad for three months or more in a Spanish speaking country or were native speakers of Spanish. Included in this group of 17 students also was one student who was a native speaker of Portuguese and who was born in Brazil since it was hypothesized that the participant's knowledge of Portuguese, a romance language very similar in vocabulary and grammatical structure, would have too

greatly influenced the data in comparison to other SPA 412 students (who were all native speakers of English). A few of the remaining group of 11 participants had traveled abroad to various countries for vacation reasons or for study, internship, or work purposes, but for less than three months and not for Spanish-language learning purposes.

Native speaker participant group.

A group of 20 native speakers was recruited in order to create a control group against which the two student groups' data would be compared. This group had a mixture of students enrolled in ASU Spanish course SPA 315 (Spanish Conversation and Composition for Bilinguals), ASU graduate students enrolled in the Spanish M.A. and Spanish Ph.D. programs who were from Northern Mexico, and non-student Northern Mexico residents currently living there, employed in upper-level office positions at an international engine factory branch in Northern Mexico. The students from the SPA 315 class were eliminated after demographic questionnaires were collected as it was discovered that most had been born in the U.S. and Spanish was not listed as their native language, causing them to be considered bilingual or heritage speakers instead of native speakers. This eliminated 11 participants from the study and 10 native speakers (5 native-speaking ASU graduate students and 5 employees of the engine plant in Northern Mexico) remained in the study.

Instruments and Tasks

The instrument used for data collection was a website comprised of a series of webpages of online oral and written activities, each with an open Discourse Completion Task (DCT). A demographic questionnaire was also used to gather data, as previously mentioned, to help in creating consistent participant groups.

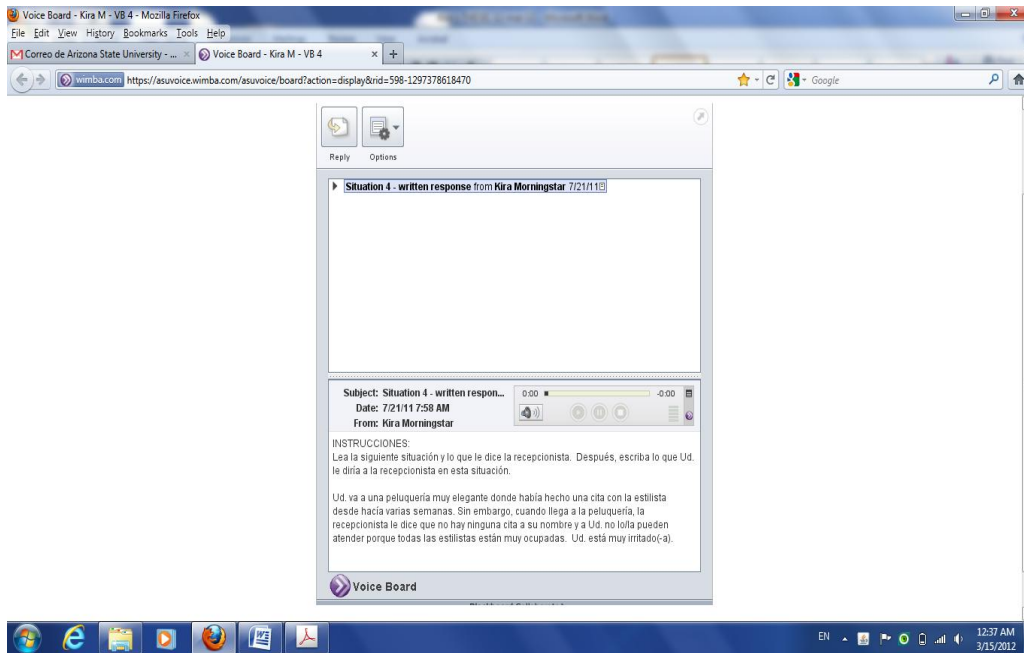
The website instrument had a total of four activities and four DCTs and these were divided into two groups: the first group of two DCTs required only responses

produced orally (oral DCTs) while the second group of two DCTs required only written responses (written DCTs). In all of the DCT tasks, students were presented with a complaint-provoking situation which they completed with their responses. Both groups of two DCTs were further divided according to the level of formality and familiarity expressed in the situation described in each task. Each group had a DCT that described a situation between the participant and a friend (familiar or informal situation) and a situation between the participant and a service provider (unfamiliar or formal situation).

Each webpage was embedded with a wimba voice board that presented the DCT situation in written form (see figure 1 below). Wimba voiceboards accept orally recorded responses or written responses, so students were able to use the same tool for all four activities, creating a more stream-lined instrument and helping to eliminate confusion or mishaps with technology.

As mentioned, the instrument contained oral and written DCTs that would elicit responses for familiar and formal situations with the idea of collecting both types of data so as to bring more detail, accuracy, and insight of students' pragmalinguistic competency to the investigation, but oral data will be saved for future research and only written data from the formal/unfamiliar situation (the fourth situation and fourth webpage) will be investigated in this study due to its scope. The effect of proficiency level on students' pragmalinguistic ability was the most important focus of this study, so participants' responses to the written formal situation is the only data that was analyzed in this study. Below (Figure 3) is the written formal situation that was presented to all participants. This was the last webpage of the total of seven pages they went through in the website:

Figure 3
Webpage display of Voiceboard with written formal Discourse Completion Task (DCT).



Just above the voiceboard, a picture of a busy salon was displayed to help students activate schema and to become familiar with the situation. The photo displayed is shown below (Figure 4):

Figure 4
Photo of busy salon presented in webpage with voiceboard with written formal discourse completion task.



The situation in the DCT of the fourth Wimba Voiceboard in the sixth webpage was this:

INSTRUCCIONES:

Lea la siguiente situación y lo que le dice la recepcionista. Después, escriba lo que Ud. le diría a la recepcionista en esta situación.

Ud. va a una peluquería muy elegante donde había hecho una cita con la estilista desde hacía varias semanas. Sin embargo, cuando llega a la peluquería, la recepcionista le dice que no hay ninguna cita a su nombre y a Ud. no lo/la pueden atender porque todas las estilistas están muy ocupadas. Ud. está muy irritado(-a).

In English, the situation and instructions were:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the following situation and what the receptionist says to you. Afterwards, write what you would say to the receptionist in this situation.

You go to a very elegant hair salon where you had made an appointment con the stylist several weeks ago. However, when you arrive at the hair salon, the receptionist tells you that there isn't any appointment in your name and no one can take you at this time because all of the stylists are very busy. You are very irritated.

Procedures

Before collecting any data from the demographic questionnaire or DCTs, I visited each class of students and explained my investigation to students, requesting their voluntary participation in the investigation. I sent an email to the native speaker (non undergraduate student) participants to request their voluntary participation.

This was a cross-sectional study and data for each group was collected mid-semester for all students. Data for each group was collected on a separate day in the Learning Support Service computer laboratory in the Language building at Arizona State University. Each class of participants came to the language laboratory during their class time on their scheduled day and spent the whole class period in the laboratory. While in the laboratory, the students first completed the demographic questionnaire (in printed form) and then proceeded to completing the activities on the website with the DCTs. The first page of the website contained a welcome message and the second page contained an instructional video for opening the Wimba Voiceboards, for recording or writing their responses, submitting them, and then moving on to the next activity. All participants were also given written instructions that were the same as those in the video. Students were given up to 50 minutes to complete the demographic questionnaire and activities in the website, however most finished in approximately 35 minutes.

The native speaker group submitted their responses in two ways. The students from the SPA 315 ASU (all of which who were eliminated, as previously mentioned) submitted their data in the same way as the student participants from the SPA 202 and SPA 412 groups. The other native speaker participants (the non-undergraduate student participants) submitted their written responses to the formal/unfamiliar written DCT in email form. No oral data was collected from the native speaker participants that were not students of SPA 315.

Data Analysis and Scoring

To analyze the data pertaining to the students' pragmalinguistic competence, the data from the formal/unfamiliar written DCT was transcribed, coded, and analyzed using as a base the strategies created by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989). Data was labeled and coded into strategies and then further classified into Head Acts and Supporting Moves

categories of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989). Within the Head Acts category, data was further categorized into Deference Politeness strategies and Solidarity Politeness strategies (Scollon & Scollon, 1983). A table listing the strategies, the number of occurrences in each group, and the percentages of occurrences compared to the total amount of strategies for each group was created.

The results of the analysis of the pragmatic strategies produced by the participants in the two student participant groups and the native speaker group were compared side-by-side for Situation 4 (written and formal/unfamiliar) to show any influence that the degree of proficiency had on pragmalinguistic production in Spanish. The table and these results are discussed in the next chapter and a discussion of these findings and how they compare or contrast with previous research, and pedagogical implications that can be gained from the results are discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As previously stated, one research question was addressed in this study and applied to the pragmalinguistic competence in differing levels of Spanish language proficiency:

1. Does a difference in language proficiency level (beginning and advanced) have an effect on the pragmalinguistic competence that students reflect in their production of complaints in Spanish?

It was hypothesized that the results of the cross-sectional Discourse Completion Task (DCTs) would confirm that students in the advanced proficiency level SPA 412 group would produce more pragmalinguistically appropriate complaints in Spanish in written mode and more closely compare to the native speaker (NS) participant group than the student participants in the lower level proficiency SPA 202 group.

A variety of speech act strategies were used by both the SPA 202 group and the SPA 412 group and also by the NS group. Combining heads acts and supporting moves, there was a total of 14 different strategies that occurred in one group, two groups, or in all three. The SPA 202 group used a slightly lesser range of strategies (9 types of strategies in total) and amount of strategies than the SPA 412 and NS groups, which only differed by two strategies: the SPA 412 group used 14 different strategies (a total of 79 strategies) and the NS group used 12 different types of strategies (a total of 77 strategies). The SPA 202 group used a total of 44 strategies overall. The 9 types of strategies were shared by the NS group, yet it is unsure if these strategies would also be used by American English speakers in the same situation. American English native speaker data would need to be collected in order to make this sort of comparison and research this hypothesis more in depth. The similarities, differences between the SPA 202 group, the SPA 412 group, and

the NS group and the significance of these similarities and differences will be discussed more in depth following definitions and descriptions of each strategy.

Strategies

All participants used a range of strategies, most of them being Head Acts. Only two types of Supporting Moves were used by either of the student participant groups or the NS participant group. Below follows a discussion of the strategies used by the groups and examples of each one. The strategies descriptions are organized according to Head Acts and Supporting Moves theoretical framework of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and the Solidarity and Deference Politeness systems of Scollon & Scollon (1983). The strategy in discussion is bolded within the response. The participant's group is listed by course title, SPA 202 or SPA 412, or by native speaker, NS, with the participant's number following their group title, for example, SPA 202-11, SPA 412-12, or NS-22. Following the definitions of the strategies, all strategies are presented in a quantitative table so readers may get a broader picture of the situation and the pragmalinguistics of each group.

Head Acts.

Of the fourteen different types of strategies utilized by the participants, twelve of these strategies were Head Acts. Below, the strategies that expressed solidarity politeness are defined and described first and are then followed by the strategy that expressed deference politeness. After describing the twelve Head Acts, the two Supporting Moves, both mitigating strategies, will be defined and described in the same manner as the Head Acts.

Head Acts expressing Solidarity Politeness.

1. *Expressing disbelief/confusion.*

Many students from both the SPA 202 and SPA 412 group began their response with an expression of disbelief/confusion in the form of either an exclamation, a question, or a statement in order to show their surprise at the receptionist's response (to some interpreted as a refusal of service) or to convey that there was a problem in the situation.

Example:

SPA412-20: Lo siento, **pero no puedo entender**. Tengo la confirmación que usted me mandó por email hasta varias semanas pasadas.

Translation: I'm sorry, **but I can't understand**. I have the confirmation that you sent me via email several weeks ago.

2. *Expressing criticism/accusation.*

To show their annoyance and their dissatisfaction with the business (including the employees), part of the complaint for many of the participants was an expression of criticism/accusation. These ranged from a criticism of the salon's business organization to personal accusation against the receptionist.

Example:

SPA 202-26: Yo quier hablar con su jefe ahora. Yo estoy veyendo este peluqueri'a. Yo haci'a cada semana. **No me gusta Ud.** porque Ud. no ayudame. **Ud. no tiene cuidada y no es responsablemente.** Este compania no va a recibir mi servicio en el futuro.

Translation: I want to speak with your boss now. I am coming to this hair salon. I did every week. **I don't like you** because you don't help me. **You don't care**

and are not responsible. This company is not going to receive my service in the future.

3. *Expressing discomfort/dislike.*

Like the expression of disbelief/confusion, some participants showed their annoyance and surprise of the situation with a statement of discomfort or dislike. These statements, unlike the expressions of criticism/accusation, centered on the affect the situation had on the speaker personally and on how it made them feel.

Example:

SPA 202-11: Mi pelo es un desastre!! Y yo llamo este peluquería y dígame que haber una appointmente para mi a las once de la mañana. Y ahora, no tiene? Es muy desordenada y **no me gusta Ud. servicio. Estoy muy furio** porque me favorito estilista está aquí.

Translation: My hair is a disaster! And I call this hair salon and you tell me that there is an appointment for me at eleven in the morning. And now, you don't have? This is very disorganized and **I don't like you service. I am furious** because my favorite stylist is here.

4. *Expressing disagreement.*

Due to the fact that the receptionist in the DCT situation replies to the customer that they in fact do not have an appointment as he/she had thought, some participants used an expression of disagreement as part of the way they realized their complaint to confirm to the receptionist that there was some incorrect information and/or a misunderstanding that would need to be resolved.

Example:

SPA 412-23: **Es impossible.** Este no podría ser. Hice una cita por hoy hasta tres semanas, y ahora no la tengo? Necesito que alguien corte mi pelo hoy. No me importa cual estilista, solamente que mi pelo esta cortado antes de las seis de la noche cuando tengo una cita con mi novia.

Translation: **That is impossible.** This can't be. I made an appointment for today three weeks ago, and now I don't have it? I need someone to cut my hair today. I don't care which stylist, only that my hair is cut before 6:00 pm when I have a date with my girlfriend.

5. *Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution.*

Participants used the strategy of Requesting or Demanding cooperation/solution to seek resolve to the situation. Participants' requests and demands were either directed towards the receptionist or were directed towards a third party with more authority over the situation than the receptionist, a boss or their hair stylist.

Example:

SPA 412-29: ?De verás? Hace una mes que hice la reservación y ?no la tienes?
Pues, yo quisiera hablar con tú jefe y le voy a decir que no debes trabajar aquí. Que disfrute a vivir en la calle porque no puedas pagar tus cuentas. **Traigámelo ahorita.** Gracias para nada.

Translation: Really? A month ago I made the reservation and you don't have it?
Well, I would like to speak with your boss and I'm going to tell him that you shouldn't work here. I hope you enjoy living on the street because you can't pay your bills. **Take me to him now.** Thanks for nothing.

6. *Expressing need/desire.*

As a way to emphasize the problem the situation had created and to express more urgency to their complaint, participants told the receptionist that they needed to see their stylist or wanted an appointment.

Example:

SPA 202-19: Ay, que malo. He atendido esta peluquería desde soy niño. Este esta muy irritando. **Necesito una estilista ahora.** Pueda ayudarme, por favor?

Translation: Oh, how bad. I have attended this hair salon since I was a child.

This is very irritating. **I need a stylist now.** Can you help me, please?

7. *Suggesting cooperation/solution.*

Some participants, as a more indirect way to express resolve of the situation or in addition to requesting/demanding cooperation/solution gave ideas to the receptionist on how the problem could be (and how they wanted it to be) resolved.

Example:

SPA 412-11: No es posible que yo no tengo una cita con la estilista. Yo llamé a este peluquería tres días pasados y yo tuvé una cita. **A mi me gusta que tu puedes encontrar una tiempo hoy cuando hay espacio para una cita para me.** Estoy muy irritado que hay una problema y yo deseo que esta problema no ocurrar muchas. Por favor ayudame y hace tiempo para una cita.

Translation: It's not possible that I don't have an appointment with the stylist. I called this hair salon three days ago and I had an appointment. **I would like you to find me a time today when there is space for an appointment for me.** I'm

irritated that there is a problem and I wish that this problem doesn't occur much more. Please help me and make time for an appointment.

8. *Expressing lack of sympathy.*

Some participants used an expression of lack of sympathy to emphasize the role the receptionist and the other employees had on resolving the situation for the customer so to provide them the service they were expecting.

Example:

SPA 412-12: Esta es inaceptable. He venido a esta peluquería por tres años como un cliente fiel, y ahora no te importa que has tomado mi dinero. **No me interesa que todas las estilistas están ocupadas.** Una de ellas debe ayudarme porque Uds. no quieren pedir a la mejor cliente que tienen.

Translation: This is unacceptable. I have come to this hair salón for three years as a faithful client, and now you don't care that you've taken my money. **I don't care that all the stylists are busy.** One of them must help me because you don't want to lose the best client you have.

9. *Threatening retaliation/promising retaliation.*

Many of the SPA 412 and NS participants threatened retaliation or expressed what they would do if the problem was not resolved. The threats expressed by the participants most often dealt with the loss of clients and threatening loss of money and/or the hair salon's reputation.

Example:

SPA 412-34: Estoy muy enojada. He esperado por muchas semanas para este cita y no quiero esperar mas para mi pelo. No me importa que Uds. no tienen mi

nombre en su computador porque yo se que lo tengo. Tengo una cita y llame mucho tiempo pasado para hacerlo. Uds. necesitan hacer algo para mi hoy **porque nunca regresar si no hacen nada.**

Translation: I'm very angry. I have waited many weeks for this appointment and I don't want to wait more for my hair. I don't care that you don't have my name in your computer because I know that I have it. I have an appointment and I called much time passed to make it. You all need to do something for me today **because never to return if you don't do something.**

10. Thanking.

A very few participants closed their complaint with an expression of thanks.

Example:

SPA412-34: Hola, quisiera hablarte de lo irritada que estoy. Hice una cita para poder venir y ser atendida. No quiero crear ningún problema, pero es importante que sepas como me siento. Por favor, si no arreglas la situación, te digo que no pienso regresar. Es necesario que estés consciente de esta situación. Será bueno para tu negocio si me escuchas. **Gracias por tu atención.**

Translation: Hello, I would like to speak to you about how irritated I am. I made an appointment to be able to come and be attended to. I don't want to create any problems, but it's important that you know how I feel. Please, if you don't fix this situation, I tell you that I don't plan to return. It's necessary that you are aware of this situation. It will be good for your business if you listen to me.

Thank you for your attention.

11. Expressing sarcasm.

A few participants used sarcasm to express their displeasure with the situation. The sarcasm was either directed towards the receptionist personally or towards the general way the problem was handled by the business.

Example:

SPA 412-29: ¿De verás? Hace una mes que hice la reservación y ¿no la tienes?

Pues, yo quisiera hablar con tú jefe y le voy a decir que no debes trabajar aquí.

Que disfrute a vivir en la calle porque no puedas pagar tus cuentas.

Traigámelo ahorita. **Gracias para nada.**

Translation: Really? A month ago I made the reservation and you don't have it?

Well, I would like to speak with your boss and I'm going to tell him that you shouldn't work here. **I hope you enjoy living on the street because you can't pay your bills.** Take me to him now. **Thanks for nothing.**

Head Act expressing Deference Politeness.

1. Apologizing.

As a way to ensure cooperation from the receptionist and soften their complaint, one participant apologized for their attitude and their expressions of displeasure.

Example:

SPA 412-38: Que profesional! Bueno, ya había hecho una cita con una mujer aquí, que se llama Julie, creo. Necesitas hablar con Julie sobre mi cita. Fue de hoy, el 17 de octubre a las dos de la tarde. Y ahora no hay cita. Bueno, no miento. Puedes darme la cita más pronto aquí? No es tan ocupado hoy en su peluquería. **Lo siento por mi actitud**, pero espero que Uds. vayan a arreglar la situación para mí.

Translation: How professional! Well, I had made an appointment with a woman here, that's named Julie, I believe. I need to speak with Julie about my appointment. Can you give me the appointment sooner here? It's not so busy in your hair salong. **I'm sorry for my attitude**, but I hope that you all are going to fix the situation for me.

Supporting Moves.

As mentioned earlier, out of the total of 14 strategy types, only two of these strategies were categorized as Supporting Moves and both were Mitigators. Below the two mitigating Supporting Moves, Providing information and Grounder, are defined and described below with examples.

Mitigators.

1. Providing information.

To show proof or evidence participants provided facts about the appointment. These referred to previous phone calls that confirmed the reservation or to their responsibilities in scheduling the appointment, to third parties that had confirmed the appointment for them (another receptionist or stylist, for example), or to their loyalty as a customer.

Example:

SPA 202-15: **Habia hecho reservaciones semana pasado.** Hoy esta solamente hoy puedo llegar en antes mi hermana boda. Puede encuentre alguien por favor?

Translation: **I had made reservations the past week.** Today is the only today I can arrive in before my sister wedding. Can you find someone please?

2. *Grounder.*

Participants emphasized their complaint by giving reasons for the necessity of the appointment or as a way to express urgency so the problem could be resolved quickly.

Example:

SPA 412-20: Lo siento, pero no puedo entender. Tengo la confirmación que usted me mandó por email hasta varias semanas pasadas. Hacía la reservación el 22 de septiembre, casi un mes pasado. ¿Cuándo es la próxima cita con mi estilista Julia? Pero todavía es una problema **porque estoy muy ocupada cada día y necesito tener la cita esta semana porque tengo un evento importante en tres días.** ¿Cómo puede ayudarme Ud.?

Translation: I'm sorry, but I can't understand. I have a confirmation that you sent me via email several weeks past. I made the reservation the 22 of September, almost a month ago. When is the next appointment with my stylist Julia? But still it is a problem **because I am busy every day and I need to have the appointment this week because have an important event in three days.** How can you help me?

Results

Table 1 below shows the distribution of strategies after they have been categorized as Head Acts or Supporting Moves for each participant group, SPA 202 (beginning proficiency level), SPA 412 (advanced proficiency level), and NS (native speaker control group) and also shows the total number of strategies overall for each group. As can be seen, the overall majority of strategies used by all three participant groups were Head Acts. The proportion of Head Acts in each group was relatively equal,

each group using approximately two-thirds (average of 63%) of their strategies categorized as Head Acts (SPA 202 59%; SPA 412 66%; and NS 64%) and an average of 37% were categorized as Supporting Moves. The number of total strategies for SPA 412 and NS groups was significantly higher (79 and 77, respectively) than the SPA 202 group (44 total strategies). For the SPA 202 participant group, even though the number of total strategies used as Head Acts and the number of total strategies overall were significantly smaller than the other two groups, the percentages of Head Acts and Supporting Moves were similar to the percentages of the SPA 412 and NS groups. For all three participant groups, almost all of the strategies were part of the Solidarity Politeness category compared to one and only Deference Politeness strategy, Apologizing, which was used by only two of the three groups. These and other differences will be further discussed in the following section. Each of the three groups will be highlighted separately. The baseline data from the NS control is presented first, followed by discussions of the two student participant groups in which each will be compared to the NS group's data. These discussions will be followed by a comparison of beginning level and advanced proficiency level production as represented by the SPA 202 and SPA 412 student participant groups.

Table 1
 Categorization of strategies types used as Head Acts and Supporting Moves for Complaining, by proficiency level group and control group.

		SPA 202 N=11		SPA 412 N=11		NS N=10	
Head Acts		n	%	n	%	n	%
Solidarity Politeness Strategies							
1.	Expressing disbelief/confusion	2	5%	6	8%	6	8%
2.	Expressing criticism/accusation	4	9%	6	8%	15	19%
3.	Expressing discomfort/dislike	8	18%	5	6%	3	4%

4.	Expressing disagreement	3	7%	1	1%	0	0%
5.	Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution	5	11%	11	14%	14	18%
6.	Expressing need/desire	2	5%	2	3%	0	0%
7.	Suggesting cooperation/solution	0	0%	7	9%	2	3%
8.	Expressing lack of sympathy	0	0%	2	3%	4	5%
9.	Threatening retaliation/ Promising retaliation	2	5%	6	8%	2	3%
10.	Thanking	0	0%	1	1%	1	1%
11.	Expressing sarcasm	0	0%	3	4%	1	1%
Total # of Solidarity Politeness Strategies		26	59%	50	63%	48	62%
Deference Politeness Strategies							
12.	Apologizing	0	0%	2	3%	1	1%
Total # of Deference Politeness Strategies		0	0%	2	3%	1	1%
Total # of Head Acts		26	59%	52	66%	49	64%
Supporting Moves							
Mitigators							
13.	Providing Information	13	30%	18	23%	15	19%
14.	Grounder	5	11%	9	11%	13	17%
Total # of Mitigators		18	41%	27	34%	28	36%
Aggravators		0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total # of Aggravators		0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total # of Supporting Moves		18	41%	27	34%	28	36%
Total # of Strategies		44	100%	79	100%	77	100%

Native speaker control group.

Table 1.1 shows that overall the 10 native speakers (NSs) from Northern Mexico preferred to use a variety of Head Acts to realize their complaint and preferred to supplement this variety with Supporting Moves. The Supporting Moves were limited to only two types, Providing Information and Grounder, and in total number used (28 total, or 36%) compared to Head Acts (49 total, 64%). Both Providing Information and Grounder strategies were used almost equally, their percentage of use only varying by 2%

(19% and 17%, respectively). These findings reflect similar results to what Salazar (2006) found in the complaints made by Peruvian men and women in oral role play situations that simulated familiar and formal social distance scenarios. The Peruvians speakers, however, used a wider variety of Head Acts (approximately 25 compared to 12 for this DCT situation) than the NS participants of this study's control group. The size of this study's control group (N=10) and the fact that a DCT was used instead of an oral role play as Salazar (2006) used can aid in explaining the smaller variety of Head Acts. The NSs of this study perhaps would have also used a larger variety of strategies if the instrument had been an oral role play. Félix-Brasdefer (2003) found this difference to be true in a comparison of oral role play and written DCT response data from NS of Spanish from Mexico, L2 speakers of Spanish and from NS of English.

The participants of this control group did prefer a smaller variety of Head Acts, however, they did link together several Head Acts to realize and strengthen their complaints, as did the Peruvian participants of Salazar's (2006) study. The Head Acts used, listed from greatest frequency to least, were: Expressing criticism/accusation (19%), Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution (18%) (these two have the highest frequency of occurrences), Expressing disbelief/confusion (8%), Expressing lack of sympathy (5%), Expressing discomfort/dislike (4%), Suggesting cooperation/retaliation (3%), and Threatening retaliation/promising retaliation (3%). Expressing need/desire (0%) and Expressing disagreement (0%), although used by participants in both of the student groups, were not used at all by the NS participants of the control group.

The majority of the Head Acts occurred throughout participants' responses, many times in an alternating pattern. Two Head Acts, Expressing disbelief/confusion and Expressing discomfort/dislike, were not included in this alternating pattern and were used exclusively to introduce the series of other Head Acts used for the rest of the complaint.

Participants used these strategies to establish that there was a misunderstanding between the information shared with them by the receptionist and what they knew as the correct information. Instead of immediately beginning their complaint with a stronger strategy like expression of criticism/accusation or a threat of retaliation, by expressing disbelief/confusion or expressing dislike their complaint was introduced in a more gradual manner that would not have been received so abruptly.

Complaining is a complex speech act that is realized through a variety of strategies, also known as a speech act set, as Salazar (2006) found in the Peruvian data. This was also found to be the case for the NS control group; participants did not use Expressing criticism/accusation, Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution, and some of the other Head Acts once, but instead used an alternating pattern Head Acts (for example, an Expressing criticism/accusation strategy followed by a Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution, followed by another Expressing criticism/accusation strategy, as so forth). By alternating or “sandwiching” their Head Acts strategies in this fashion, participants were able to point out faults of the salon and thus establish themselves as the faultless and, more importantly, dominant party in the interaction before requesting a solution. Therefore, we could predict that this would create a situation in which the receptionist would feel more obligated and be more likely to fulfill the request and resolve the problem of the obviously displeased customer.

The participants of the control group clearly preferred to use two Head Acts more than any of the other Head Acts: Expressing criticism/accusation and Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution. Eight of the ten control group participants used the “sandwiched” combination of Expressing criticism/accusation and Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution. The other two participants did not use the Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution strategy at all and instead used the

Expressing criticism/accusation strategy in combination with some of the other lesser used Heads Acts, like Expressing disbelief/confusion and Expressing lack of sympathy. We can infer that these two participants still were requesting repair of the situation even though they did not explicitly request, demand, or suggest cooperation or a solution because they could have felt that their dissatisfaction would be enough for the business to understand that the situation needed to be resolved and that the customer to be appeased.

Used equally as much as Expressing criticism/accusation and Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution were the two types of Supporting Moves, Providing information (19%) and Grounder (17%). Male participants used more Providing information strategies than female participants in order to justify their complaint with facts and to promote themselves as loyal and long-time customers. These gender-based differences, however, were not studied in depth for the native speaker participant group nor for the two student participant groups in this investigation and so would need to be further investigated in a future study.

Below, the two student participant groups are compared with the native speaker participant group. To close the presentation of the results, the two student participant groups are then compared with each other before all results are discussed in light of previous studies and literature reviewed for this study.

SPA 202 student participant group.

The 11 SPA 202 student participants used a total of 44 strategies. Twenty-six of these 44 strategies were Head Acts (59%) and 18 were Supporting Moves (41%). The patterns of distribution of Head Acts and Supporting Moves is similar to the proportions demonstrated in the NS control group (64% Head Acts and 36% Supporting Moves) and they did prefer to use more Head Acts than Supporting Moves, however each participant used fewer types of Head Acts. In order from most preferred to least, the Head Act

strategies used by the SPA 202 student participants were: Expressing discomfort/dislike (18%), Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution (11%), Expressing criticism/accusation (9%), Expressing disagreement (7%), and Expressing disbelief/confusion, Expressing need/desire, and Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation all were represented 5% of total strategies used. Strategies of Suggesting cooperation/solution, Expressing lack of sympathy, Thanking, and Expressing sarcasm (all 0%) were not used at all by any of the SPA 202 student participants.

Participants used several different Head Acts together to realize the complaint; eight of the eleven participants used two or more Heads Acts however there was not a consistent pattern of order of Head Acts. The three participants that did not use multiple Head Acts used several Supporting Moves to strengthen their Head Act strategy. It is interesting to note that all three of these participants had the same pattern of strategies: all three introduced their complaint with one or two Providing information strategies and finished their complaint with an Expressing discomfort/dislike Head Act.

Participants favored the use of Providing Information to Grounders by more than double (30% to 11%, respectively). Even though both the Providing Information strategies and the Grounders were used to strengthen the complaint, participants were able to present more facts about the confirmation of the appointment and about their own customer loyalty more so with Providing Information strategies than with Grounders. Many of the Providing Information strategies were formulated from information that was already present in the DCT prompt also, so it can be inferred that the SPA 202 participants, those with the beginning level proficiency of the three groups, created output in the form of Providing Information strategies more easily from the DCT prompt than they were able to independently produce new output in the form of Grounders.

The word count and sentence constructions used by the SPA 202 participants were simple and short, and the majority of their strategies were speaker oriented. These characteristics can lead to the inference that their proficiency level limited them in variety of morphological form and strategy choice. However the percentages of Head Acts and Supporting Moves do demonstrate similar distribution of strategies for an overall complaint similar to the distribution of the NS control group. This is discussed further in the following section.

Comparison of SPA 202 group and NS control group.

The SPA 202 student participant group used seven different types of Head Acts. In comparison, the NS control group used a wider variety of Heads Acts; their 10 different types, including one Deference Politeness strategy of Apologizing, which respects the feeling of listener (the receptionist). The SPA 202 did not use any Deference Politeness strategies.

As was stated in the previous section, the Head Act strategy Expressing discomfort/dislike was the Head Act strategy most used by the SPA 202 participants (18%). This Head Act strategy was also used by the NS control group, however the percentage of this strategy for the control group was much lower (NS 4% compared to SPA 202 18%) as the NS control group preferred Expressing criticism/accusation (19%) and Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution (18%) more than Expressing discomfort/dislike. In addition, Expressing discomfort/dislike was used as a central Head Act strategy within the series of Head Acts used to realize the complaint by 8 of the 11 participants in the SPA 202 group. The NS control group did have a series of Head Acts that were used in an alternating or “sandwiched” fashion, however Expressing discomfort/dislike was not part of these series for them. NS participants only used it as an introductory Head Act at the very beginning of their complaint sequence.

In regards to Supporting Moves, both the SPA 202 group and the NS control group preferred to use more Head Acts than Supporting Moves to complain. The percentages of Supporting Moves were similar for both groups (41% of total strategies for SPA 202 group and 36% for the NS control group). The differences in this area of the responses came in the number of each strategy used as Supporting Moves. SPA 202 participants preferred to use more than double the amount of Providing information strategies than Grounders (30% and 11%, respectively) while the control group preferred almost equal amounts of Providing Information and Grounder strategies (19% and 17%, respectively).

Due to the much higher proficiency level of the NS control group they had more verbose and complex Head Act and Supporting Moves strategies than the SPA 202 group. The variety of morphological forms, strategy choice, and speaker or listener-oriented sentences was larger, also, since they were not limited in output by their proficiency level.

SPA 412 student participant group.

The SPA 412 student participants used a total of 79 strategies and of all the groups used the widest range of strategy types (14 strategy types, Head Acts and Supporting Moves counted together). Fifty-two of these strategies were Head Acts, which were of twelve different types. This group used 27 Supporting Moves strategies (34%) and, like the NS control group and the SPA 202 student participant group, only had two types of Supporting Moves: Providing Information (23%, 18 strategies) and Grounder (11%, 9 strategies). The SPA 412 participants had the widest range of strategy types of the three groups. This, however, did not lead to large percentages of occurrence of one particular strategy in the Head Act or Supporting Moves categories. The highest

percentage of strategy occurrence overall was for Providing Information (23% of total strategies). In the Head Act category the most used strategies were Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution (14%) and Suggesting cooperation/solution (9%). Expressing disbelief/confusion, Expressing criticism/accusation, and Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation were used moderately and each represented 8% of the total strategies. Following these were strategies of Expressing discomfort/dislike (6%), Expressing sarcasm (4%), Expressing need/desire (3%), Expressing lack of sympathy (3%), Apologizing (3%), Expressing disagreement (1%), and finally Thanking (1%). In the Supporting Moves category, as was mentioned Providing Information had 23% of the overall strategies. Grouders represented 11% of the overall strategies.

Participants used combinations of Head Acts to realize the request and, like the NS control group, alternated these Head Acts however the patterns were not as distinct as they were in the NS control group. Supporting Moves were interwoven throughout their responses and in fact were more so than in the NS control group. One pattern that was noted was the use of the combination of Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution and Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation that was used to close the complaint. This combination helped to increase the occurrence of the Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation strategy, which participants used to express their power and entitlement as the customer in the situation outcome: if they did not receive satisfactory repair of the problem with a immediate service, reduced price, or rescheduled appointment, the participant would leave and not return their business to the salon. This demonstration of power and entitlement through threatening was used before and/or after Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution strategies. They did not specifically complain only with these retaliation strategies but used them as part of a speech act set to enforce their request for repair made through the Requesting/Demanding

cooperation/solution and complaint made through Expressing criticism/accusation strategies, amongst others. There was not as high of an occurrence of Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation strategy in the NS control group data, and this will be further discussed in the comparison section below.

The occurrence of the Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation strategy was higher in the SPA 412 data, yet with this raise in this strategy it appears that the occurrence of Expressing criticism/accusation was lowered. Both of these two strategies carried a similar effect in placing guilt on the employee/business for their lack of service and in helping the speaker establish dominance in the conversation by placing the initiative for repair in the hands of the receptionist, but slight differences can be implied in the message of each and ought to be highlighted. First, Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation was just that, a threat. In other words, in this hypothetical situation, student participants did not communicate that they *are leaving* but that they *would leave if* the situation was not repaired. This could have left more pressure on the receptionist to repair the situation immediately, knowing that her customer was waiting for a solution and consequences had been openly communicated. This use of Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation could also be interpreted as less direct and face threatening than the Expressing criticism/accusation strategies that were directed towards the receptionist personally and her abilities in her position at the salon.

Also important to note is that Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation was a strategy that expressed more speaker-oriented action than Expressing criticism/accusation strategies. Instead of only highlighting the negative qualities of the salon's performance, organization, or of the receptionist herself, SPA 412 participants took a proactive stance, made a decision, and communicated it to show how they would handle the situation before the receptionist would have been able to present them her solution. It is possible

that they NS control group participants also had created a solution on their own but did not openly communicate it with the receptionist, instead waiting to hear her solution first. In the future, it a post-DCT questionnaire would need to be employed to find if this were in fact true.

Another way that the SPA 412 participants established their dominance in the situation was through the use of Providing Information. With these strategies, they stated facts about when they had reserved the appointment and justified themselves as loyal customers, thus releasing themselves from responsibility of the situation, gaining dominance over it, and waiting for the response of the receptionist. The NS control group participants also used Providing information strategies to express their power as responsible customers in the complaint yet seemed to prefer an equal use of Grounders and Providing information strategies where as the SPA 412 participant showed more favor towards the use of presenting facts in the Providing Information strategies.

Comparison of SPA 412 group and NS control group.

A few points of comparison have already been highlighted between the SPA 412 student participant group and the NS control group, including the use of Threatening retaliation/Promising retaliation in place of Expressing criticism/accusation and the favored use of Providing information strategies compared to a more equal use of Providing information and Grounder strategies by the NS control group. Outside of strategy use was the use of formal and informal pronouns by the two groups. The SPA 412 participants showed a preference for the informal “tú” pronoun and morphological endings of the second person singular whereas the control group showed a preference for the “usted” form, or third person singular pronouns and morphological endings, which showed more respect and distance between the speaker and receptionist. Seven of the 11 SPA 412 participants used the informal pronouns and related verb endings in comparison

to only two of the 10 control group participants, both of whom were women. The SPA 412 participants who did not use the singular “usted” form or the informal “tú” form instead used the third person plural “ustedes” forms to refer to all the business employees instead of speaking directly to the receptionist, thus avoiding direct threats and criticism that would personally offend the receptionist. One participant avoided the use of second or third person pronouns altogether by keeping his entire response speaker-oriented and only using pronouns and morphological endings in the first person singular. Overall the eleven SPA 412 participants showed good control of the formal and familiar pronouns and morphological endings. Two participants did show some lack of control of this demonstration of social distance and varied between using the “usted” form and the “tú” form within their response. This lack of control is not uncommon to L2 Spanish speakers whose native language is English as English does not demonstrate social distance differences in morphological endings of pronouns and verbs. Although it can be a concept easy to understand, a speakers’ performance may not demonstrate their full understanding of the concept, as Chomsky theorized (Chomsky, 1965). There was no variance of this type in the NS control group.

Comparisons of SPA 202 and SPA 412 student participant groups.

Some differences between the SPA 202 and SPA 412 student participant groups can be made due to the heightened proficiency level of the SPA 412 group. All of the SPA 412 participants had longer responses that contained more strategies per response. The SPA 412 participants’ responses also contained strategies that each had a longer word count, contained more relative clauses, and demonstrated better control of verbal tense, mood, and syntax.

As was mentioned above in the comparison of the SPA 412 and NS control group data, the SPA 412 participants used the informal/familiar pronouns and related

morphological endings more than the NS control group. One participant also avoided the use of formal or informal morphological endings and pronouns by using only the first person singular “yo” forms. The SPA 202 participant group in contrast did not use the second person singular “tú” forms at all in their responses. Four of the SPA 202 participants did, however, seem to express avoidance of accusations the first person singular “yo” pronouns and endings instead of the second or third person forms. The other seven participants used the third person singular “usted” morphological forms and pronouns in speaking with the receptionist. None of the NS control group participants used the first person singular formations and thus did not express avoidance this way; the majority of NS participants used the third person singular “usted” formations. The NS group did however demonstrate some avoidance of directly threatening the face of the receptionist by using the third person plural formation “ustedes” (to refer to all employees of the hair salon as a whole) solely or in combination with the third person singular formations. As was mentioned in the previous comparison section of SPA 412 and NS control group data, the two NS participants (both happened to be female) used the second person singular “tú” formations in their complaint, directly addressing and thus directly criticizing and blaming the receptionist for the root of their complaint.

SPA 202 student participants may have relied on the first person singular more along with the third person singular form for two reasons: the first person singular is one of the first forms that students learn to communicate with from textbooks and in Spanish classes (Plazas, 2008). This could explain their higher use of speaker-oriented strategies like Expressing discomfort/dislike. They could have been favoring and mimicking the use of “usted” form due to its use in the DCT prompt. The formations that they read in the prompt may have led them to imply that the conversation was to be maintained completely in the third person singular form even though the use of pronouns was

actually left to their decision and the used was only used to direct the instructions to them.

Grammatical differences aside, the SPA 202 group had a total of 44 strategies overall compared to the SPA 412 group that had 79 strategies total. In the Head Acts category, SPA 412 had 52 strategies, which was double of the SPA 202's 26 Head Act strategies. In the category of Supporting Moves, however, the increase was still present but not as steep. SPA 202 participants used 18 Supporting Move strategies and the SPA 412 participants used 27 strategies. Interestingly both groups favored Providing information significantly more than Grounders and both had Grounders as 11% of their total strategies (5 strategies of the 44 for the SPA 202 group and 9 of the 79 strategies of the SPA 412 group). The difference between the Providing information preference compared to the Grounders was not as large in the SPA 412 group as it was in the SPA 202. SPA 412 participants used double the Providing information strategies (23% compared to Grounders at 11%) whereas the SPA 202 participants' percentage of Providing information (30%) was almost triple to that of their use of Grounders (11%).

While the SPA 412 reflected similar tendencies of Head Act strategy choice to that of the NS control group, especially with preference for Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution strategies, the SPA 202 group differed from the SPA 412 and NS groups by favoring the use of the Expressing discomfort/dislike strategy. This strategy was only used moderately by the SPA 412 group and the NS group.

From these comparisons we can infer that the SPA 202 student participants were more comfortable expressing speaker-oriented strategies based on their own feelings and perceptions of the situation in contrast to slightly more complex criticism/accusation strategies or requesting/demanding strategies. SPA 412 participants were more

comfortable with a variety of strategies and mimicked more closely in amount and type of speech acts that data of the NS control group.

Summary of Results

To summarize the results of this investigation, it was found that SPA 202 students (those with beginning proficiency) used fewer strategies per response and had fewer types of strategies compared to the SPA 412 participant group and the NS control group. All three groups' percentages of Head Acts and Supporting moves were similar; all groups used an average of 63% of their total strategies as Head Acts and an average of 37% as Supporting Moves. The SPA 202 participants favored the use of the strategy Expressing discomfort/dislike which was used more as an introductory strategy by the SPA 412 and NS participants. All three groups used the Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution strategy; however, the percentage of use increased with the level of proficiency: the SPA 412 and NS groups utilized the strategy more than in the SPA 202 group which only used it moderately.

Contrary to this Head Act strategy's increase, the percentages of the Supporting Moves strategy Providing information decreased with the rise of proficiency level. The percentage of Grounders remained the same for both student groups (11%), yet raised to 19% in the NS control group.

All participant groups were found to use a series of Head Acts throughout their responses, which illustrated the complexity of the speech act set. They needed to not only express their displeasure but also establish dominance and entitlement in the situation as the customer. The pattern of this use of multiple and alternating Head Acts became clearer with a raise in proficiency level in the SPA 412 group; however the clearest alternating patterns were demonstrated in the control group data.

Discussion of Results

This study sought to discover if a raise in proficiency level changed the realization of complaints to a service provider made by beginning and advanced proficiency students at a large university in the southwestern United States. Responses were collected via a written Discourse Completion Task. Participants' responses were compared with data from a control group of 10 native speakers from Northern Mexico. Blum-Kulka's, et al. (1989) and Scollon and Scollon's (1983) frameworks of categorizing speech act strategies in Head Acts, Supporting Moves, and Deference and Solidarity Politeness systems, respectively, were used to analyze the 14 different strategy types that were used by the three groups.

This study had one research question that it sought to answer:

1. Does a difference in language proficiency level (beginning and advanced) have an effect on the pragmalinguistic competence that students reflect in their production of complaints in Spanish?

It was found that overall the participant groups had tendencies of using repeated series of Head Acts to realize the complaint, which they also supplemented with Supporting Moves. The variety of strategies and the total number of strategies did increase with proficiency level as also did the variety of pragmalinguistic features that demonstrated the formal or informal perspective that speakers used in addressing the receptionist. The variety of morphological endings at times, however, showed a lack of control that was not demonstrated in the control group data. These differences and more detailed comparisons and contrasts are discussed below taking into account the findings of previous research conducted on this and related topics.

Discussion.

Research in L2 pragmatics, L2 interlanguage pragmatics, and the pragmatics instruction is a growing area of research in the field of Second Language Acquisition that is aiming to strengthen students' L2 abilities so that they can effectively communicate their own ideas and understand those of other cultures. Various speech acts have been studied within the context of L2 pragmatics and pragmatics-based instruction in order to meet these needs of SLA; some studied in Spanish have been requests (Kuriščák, 2006), invitations (García, 1996), refusals (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003), and advice (Koike & Pearson, 2005; Mwinyelle, 2006). Complaints remain some of the least studied speech acts in Spanish (Kuriščák, 2006; Salazar, 2006). In fact, based on the knowledge of the researcher, while several studies exist on L2 complaints in other languages, like ESL (Boxer, 1993b; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Trenchs, 1995), Dutch (Trosborg, 1995), German (Geluykens & Kraft, 2003), and Japanese (Inoue, 1982), only one investigation has sought to study the complaints made by students of L2 Spanish (Kuriščák, 2006) and so the field is left with a great need to be filled with more data to assist instructors and learners with the tools necessary for appropriately accomplishing this face-threatening and imposing speech act (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Searle, 1976).

Most closely related to this present study of L2 complaints was the investigation conducted by Kuriščák (2006) in which data was collected through the use of a questionnaire containing 12 DCT scenarios and an assessment of personality traits and proficiency level. Kuriščák did not create DCT situations that prompted the elicitation of a specific speech act, but instead created a DCT centered on a potentially uncomfortable situation, which allowed the intermediate and advanced level L2 Spanish students of varying backgrounds and influences (including study abroad experiences) to write responses they felt fitting for the situation. She then employed the measures of

proficiency level and personality traits (e.g. extrovert personality, self-confidence, emotional stability, motivation, and social desirability, amongst others) from the questionnaire to determine what factors were more likely to influence students to respond with requests (for change, object, favor) or complaints, and to use mitigating devices. Overall Kuriščák (2006) found the largest influence came from students' proficiency level: students who rated higher on the proficiency scale (those enrolled in the 400-level Spanish courses) produced longer responses and used more requests than complaints. The lower proficiency students showed reverse results and used more complaints than requests. The present study supports these findings, taking into account that Kuriščák (2006) categorized complaints as "primarily an expression of displeasure over something" (p. 114). Participants in the SPA 202 student group, those with lower proficiency level, made more Expressions of discomfort/dislike than any other Head Act strategy (18%). So, when Kuriščák's (2006) definitions of complaint and request are applied to the data, these SPA 202 student participants also made more complaints than requests. They also favored the use of the Expressing discomfort/dislike strategy in comparison to the higher proficiency SPA 412 student group that used Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution more than any other Head Act (14%), including Expressing discomfort/dislike. This high use of Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution by the SPA 412 corresponds to Kuriščák's (2006) data from the higher proficiency participants that requested changes and repair of the situation more than complaining about it.

The L2 Spanish students' data of this study does support Kuriščák's (2006) findings, yet it is important to note that her study did not collect or analyze data from a native speaker group. This study had data collected from 10 native speakers and as a result we are able to make valuable comparisons and more precisely hone instruction to

help students communicate effectively with native speakers. The NS control group in this study showed some similarities with the higher proficiency SPA 412 group and Kuriščák's (2006) higher proficiency students in their use of the Requesting/Demanding cooperation/solution strategy but it did differ from the L2 Spanish students' responses due to their high use of the Expressing criticism/accusation strategy. Kuriščák (2006) did not categorize any responses as criticisms or accusations, so it cannot be concretely concluded that similar strategies were not present at all in her data.

Kuriščák (2006) also found that higher proficiency levels were linked to responses with more mitigating devices. This finding, however, was not what the data of this present investigation demonstrated. Although the lower proficiency (SPA 202) and higher proficiency (SPA 412) student participant groups and the NS control group had relatively similar percentages of Supporting Moves, the lower proficiency group had the highest percentage of Supporting Moves, specifically Providing Information strategy. This strategy in particular was approximately one third of their total strategies. Kuriščák (2006) speculates that students' higher proficiency level influenced their production of Supporting Moves in that these students had acquired more language devices to for responding to the situations and so were able to respond with more detail and support their ideas more easily. In her study, students who scored higher in proficiency also ranked these 12 DCT situations as less difficult to respond to (in overall difficulty and lexical difficulty) which could have attributed to their longer responses. Feeling more confident and at ease with their artillery of linguistic devices and their control of Spanish grammatical competence, they were able to write more complex responses.

Data from this study's SPA 202 students showed they used more Supporting Moves than the higher proficiency SPA 412 students. We can infer that these Supporting Moves were their way of claiming dominance and power in the situation because they

were more limited in their range of vocabulary and grammatical structures which could have prevented them from forming a wider range of Head Act strategies. It can also be speculated that the SPA 202 students used the Providing information strategy more than other groups because they were able to generate information directly based on the description of situation (in Spanish). After reading the situation description, they were able to use (we could even venture to say copy) some of the words or phrases that presented contextual facts from the DCT in their response. Although this does show that they comprehended the situation and instructions of the DCT, it should be noted that their production might have been more accurately measured if the situation were to have been described in English; participants would have shown perhaps more truly their abilities through independently-produced responses without sacrificing comprehension or validity.

Participants in this study did not rank the difficulty of these situations or the level of imposition they caused them to feel, so we cannot say if the same relationship between rank of difficulty and level of proficiency was found for these participants as it was for the participants in Kuriščák's (2006) dissertation study. A post-DCT questionnaire that included questions in regards to difficulty would aid in further applying the data's results to Kuriščák's (2006) results.

It was a positive and encouraging outcome that complaint realizations became more reflective of NS responses with the raise in proficiency level in the SPA 412 group, especially without the influence of study abroad. This is by no means to say that study abroad is not important or necessary because the truth is all the contrary: study abroad experiences are an essential part of L2 acquisition, not only for the linguistic and pragmalinguistic information that students acquire through observation, application, and experience, but also for the cultural experiences that broaden their perspectives of the world and future opportunities. What is encouraging from these results is that L2

classroom input and instruction in the form of implicit and/or explicit pragmatic instruction, combined with similarities that exist between complaints in L1 American English and L1 Spanish and their related cultural values, do have results and do enable students to make more pragmatically appropriate complaints. In other words, students may be more easily prepared to understand and produce complaints in a study abroad situation before leaving their native country.

Within this section it is worth discussing the DCT as the instrument of choice. Félix-Brasdefer (2003) points out that while role plays may show more development of politeness, and can be a closer reflection of natural conversation and discourse features, DCT instruments can be used to show researchers the most commonly used strategies of a speech act. DCTs are also, of course, the more time-effective of these two, which lends to its continued use in SLA and sociolinguistics. The goals and time constraints of the research at hand, then, will help to determine what instrument is most suited for the study. Salazar (2006), who used role play instruments, wanted to not only find what strategies her Peruvian male and female participants used to complaint, but also how social distance and status affected their production. She found the complaints were realized over several turns with the interlocutor. Kuriščák's (2006) goal was to find what personal characteristics and situational characteristics influenced L2 Spanish students' production in high imposition situations. Her questionnaire data, including the DCT data, not only gave insight into these characteristics and the weight they carry but also showed what strategies are more common in these situations. Undoubtedly both instruments are valuable to research in pragmatic competence and teaching pragmatics, including that of complaints and more investigations should be conducted using both instruments in order to reach a more comprehensive and detailed body of research.

In this master's thesis study, the goal was to uncover what differences proficiency level made on complaint production within a cross-sectional sample of participants. Responses from all participants, including the control group, may have been influenced by the use of the open DCT in that responses a) were not realized over a multi-turn interaction with an interlocutor and b) were composed in written form in a language learning computer laboratory and not in front of a person that would have (hypothetically) received the complaint from the participant, thus lowering the imposing effect that a true complaint might have on the receiver of the complaint and lowering the tension and affects making the complaint could have had on the affective filter (Krashen, 1985) of participants. As Salazar (2006) found, complaints are complex speech act sets that are realized over a series of turns taken between the speaker and interlocutor in a situation. More research with complaint-eliciting role plays would need to be conducted to prove this for L2 Spanish students. As to the knowledge of the researcher no investigations on complaints in L2 Spanish have used role plays but rather DCT tasks (Kuriščák, 2006). Writing responses in the DCT does allow students more processing time, allowing researchers to see more of participants' true competence of a language. These responses may only ideally reflect what they would say instead of truly reflecting what they would say in a situation like this.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Study

This study sought to add to the body of research of pragmatic competence and interlanguage pragmatics in L2 Spanish, specifically in researching the acquisition of complaints. Previous literature on speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Searle, 1975), L2 competence (Bachman, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Canale and Swain, 1985; Niezgodna & Rover, 2002) and speech acts in L1 and L2 pragmatics in various languages were reviewed including speech acts like requests (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Curcó & De Fina, 2002; Kuriščák, 2006), apologies (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993), advice (Baca, 2011; Mwinyelle, 2005), invitations (García, 1996), refusals (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003) and complaints (Bolivar, 2002; Boxer, 1993a, 1993b, 1996; Kuriščák, 2006; Murphy & Neu, 1996; Salazar, 2006). Data from two L2 Spanish student groups and one NS control group was then presented and discussed in regards to the research question that sought to answer if a difference in proficiency level (beginning vs. advanced) would affect students' production of direct complaints in Spanish. In this chapter, conclusions will be presented to the discussion of the data. After presenting a summary of the study's findings and discussion, pedagogical implications will be presented in regards to how this study can improve L2 Spanish curricula and its need for pragmatic instruction. Specifically, the five step instruction plan designed by Olshtain & Cohen (1991) will be discussed in relation to direct complaints. Finally, future research and limitations of this study will conclude this chapter.

Through analyzing data collected via a open written DCT instrument given to 11 beginning level Spanish L2 students, 11 advanced proficiency Spanish L2 students, and 10 native speakers from Northern Mexico, it was found that L2 students and NSs realize

direct complaints through the employment of a variety of Head Acts that tend to be repeated throughout their responses and are also supplemented by Supporting Moves. Lower proficiency L2 Spanish students preferred to use more speaker-oriented strategies that communicated their discomfort/dislike of the situation and used more Supporting Moves than the higher proficiency L2 Spanish students. It was speculated that the lower level proficiency students used these Supporting Moves more due to the fact that they were not proficient enough to produce more pragmalinguistically complex or longer strategies but had abilities more fitted to stating facts about how the situation affected them, possibly mimicking information from the situational details that were listed in the DCT prompt.

Advanced proficiency L2 Spanish learners of the SPA 412 participant group reflected similarities of data described in investigations of native Spanish speakers (Bolívar, 2002; Curcó & de Fina, 2002; Giddens, 1981; Salazar, 2006) and reflected similarities with some of the speech act patterns of other L2 Spanish speakers investigated in Kuriščák (2006). Their proficiency level did indeed have an effect on production of complaints, the speech acts strategies used to realize them, and the complexity of (written) direct complaints. Higher proficiency level students (SPA 412 participant group) elicited complaints reflective of those produced by native Spanish speakers of Northern Mexico (the control group) in response length, the types of strategies they employed, and the quantities of strategies. Lower level proficiency students elicited complaints that had similar proportions of Head Acts and Supporting Moves to the advanced proficiency group and the NSs, yet differed in types of Head Act strategies utilized to complain. Native speakers and advanced proficiency students preferred to use more Head Act strategies than Supporting Moves to blame, criticize or accuse the interlocutor for the incident and to request or demand cooperation or a solution

from the business. They also used these strategies in a repeating pattern that allowed them to establish dominance in the conversation and manipulate it for the result they desired. Lower proficiency students in the SPA 202 group preferred to use Head Act strategies of Expressing discomfort/dislike and Supporting Moves strategies like Providing information to express how the situation had negatively affected them personally. Lower proficiency students did not claim dominance by requesting repair as much as the higher proficiency students, but instead used a higher amount of Providing information Supporting Moves strategies to state facts about the situation and the responsibilities they had fulfilled as a loyal customer.

The discussion concluded that classroom instruction is helpful to students in acquiring the appropriate strategies for direct complaints and understanding them in Spanish. Other sources of input and experience, like study abroad, are of course highly valuable to the L2 Spanish student and can help them to further perfect their pragmatic competence of direct complaints in Spanish, but contextualized classroom instruction along with similarities that exist between North American and Northern Mexican cultural values surrounding direct complaints in service encounters aid students' in their acquisition.

Pedagogical Implications

Speech acts and strategies necessary for students to acquire, like complaints, are acquired through contextualized classroom instruction already existing in L2 Spanish curricula as the data and previous research have shown. However, we cannot rest solely on this resource to give students the appropriate tools necessary for complaining in Spanish. Complaints and responding to complaints should be highlighted implicitly and explicitly to students in all levels of Spanish courses and several studies have proposed methods of doing this (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Olshtain & Cohen, 1991; Sykes, J., n.d.).

Olshtain and Cohen's (1991) five step method of teaching a speech act should be adapted in classrooms for instructing on complaints (Salazar, 2006). The five steps of this model lead students from noticing what speech acts they use in their own language and why they use them, how these link with their L2 interlanguage and compare to speech acts used by NS of the target language, to finally creating and performing role plays of their own and then discussing them based on instructor's feedback. The five steps of Olshtain and Cohen's (1991) method are: 1) *Diagnostic assessment in class*, 2) *Model dialogue*, 3) *Evaluation of situation in model dialogue*, 4) *Role play activity*, and 5) *Feedback and discussion*. The data of the present study and data from other DCT responses from other L2 Spanish students (Kuriščák, 2006) have shown that requests (for repairs) are also used in complaint-provoking situations, or in other words those that do not favor the desires or needs of the speaker. Students would also benefit from being taught how to use requests in combination with complaint strategies to respond to these high imposition situations. In addition to incorporating the five-step model of Olshtain & Cohen (1991), interactive pragmatics activities including audio and video recordings and games like those used in the CARLA website, *Dancing with Words* (Sykes, n.d.), can supplement the classroom lessons and help students to gain valuable insight from native-speaker produced input. The following paragraphs demonstrate how Olshtain and Cohen's (1991) five-step method could be applied to instruction of direct complaints in the L2 classroom.

In the first step of their method, the diagnostic assessment, Olshtain and Cohen (1991) seek to activate the students' schema of speech acts in their own language (Siskin & Spinelle, 1987) and also "establish [for instructors] the students' level of awareness of speech acts in general and of the particular speech act to be taught" so that lesson objectives and plans can be accurately designed (p. 161). Instructors could first show students a complaint-containing clip from a commercial or movie without sound or a

comic strip to first assess if students are aware of that a complaint speech act is being communicated between two speakers and then ask students to give their ideas of how the situation concludes. This could be done for students' awareness of the complaints (and related speech acts) in their L1 and L2. García (1993) suggests introducing the targeted speech act with several small dialogues that students would complete by choosing responses they deemed appropriate.

After assessing students' existing knowledge and activating schemata of the complaints, Olshtain and Cohen's (1991) next steps (numbers two and three) are to present students with model (target language) dialogues that can assess their listening comprehension skills and then evaluate the situations presented in them. These should be model dialogues taken from authentic sources like target language movies, news programs, television shows, and in the most ideal scenarios naturally occurring recorded conversations. To evaluate these situations, various activities including pre- and post-listening activities can help students to evaluate the situations (García, 1993). These activities should include questions pertaining to the speech acts in the L2 and also to conversational routines in students' L1, similar to what Siskin & Spinelli (1987) propose can be used in the initial stage of introducing the speech act. For learners who are more visual, instructors can ask students demonstrate their comprehension by including drawings of parts of the conversation. Also, a table or graphic organizer with a time line and/or columns titled with various categories like complainer, complaine, initial problem, solutions, conversation's outcome, key words & phrases, turn-taking, etc. could also be created for students' L1 and L2. They could then fill the table in with their observations as they listened to the conversation. This would not only allow them to visually organize the facts of the conversation but see development of the complaint

situation from problem to resolution in the L2 situation and make further comparisons or contrasts with it and similar situations in the L1.

Students then begin to apply what they have been learning in the fourth step of Olshtain and Cohen's (1991) method: role play activities. This stage allows them to put into practice the strategies and conversational devices they have observed from the previous stages. It also, more importantly, allows them to put these into use while under the pressure of unexpected situations and responses that would more closely mimic real life situations (Di Pietro, 1987). Instructors can create complaint-provoking situations and design the intentions of each role to clash slightly so as to provoke more conversational turns in the students' role play. If we based a role play off of the situation described in the DCT instrument of this study for example, one student would receive a description of a client who desperately needs a haircut and specifically made this appointment at this particular hair salon because their favorite stylist works there. The other student could receive a description of the receptionist that tells them that, in addition to having a very busy and overall bad day, they have been given strict orders from their boss to not change the schedule at all.

Students would be divided into groups for the role play activities and given time to prepare and plan with their group, rehearse their role plays, and receive some advice from their instructor before they would perform the role plays in front of their classmates.

To close the five-step method, students would engage in a discussion of the role plays and receive feedback (pragmatic and pragmalinguistic in nature) from their instructor and their classmates. Discussions of the outcomes, how they differed with students' expectations, and students' feelings while acting out the complaint situations would also be included in this step (Di Pietro, 1987; García, 1993; Olshtain & Cohen, 1991). The goal of this stage would be to help students internalize the strategies useful

for these complaint situations and not only connect them with their already existing L2 pragmatic and linguistic knowledge, but also connect it with their L1 and interlanguage, making progress towards higher levels of proficiency in their L2 competence and L2 speaker identity. This stage could perhaps be considered the most important of the five in Olshain & Cohen's (1991) method because of the awareness created for students. García (1993) supports this necessity of building students' awareness of how their L1 and L2 linguistic and pragmatic competence influence their L2 communication and their awareness of variance in sociocultural expectations; "this awareness and understanding will contribute to comprehend other cultures and their people, and to communicate with them appropriately and effectively" (p. 276).

Limitations

Measures were taken to prevent threats to internal and external validity yet there were still some limitations that must be mentioned so that they can be evaded in the future. As with many experiments that take place in the university setting, the time of the class offerings and the lack of control for the gender and age of participants were limitations to the investigation. The significance of the data also is limited in that this study had a cross-sectional design whose results intended to mimic what developments would occur in students' L2 pragmalinguistic acquisition *if* they had been followed through their whole series of Spanish courses from beginning to end. Thus a more meaningful investigation would be longitudinal instead of cross-sectional in nature.

Similar to limitations found in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), the information about instructors of the participants' Spanish classes, including their methodology, experience and native language in this study limited the generalizability of the results to other classrooms, languages, and speech acts. The student participant groups, SPA 202 and SPA 412, had different instructors. Although both were Teaching

Associates in the Spanish program, one had been teaching Spanish courses for approximately two years longer but was not a native speaker. The other TA on the other hand was a native speaker, but of the two was the less experienced Teaching Associate.

It can be assumed that most of the participants were familiar with complaints in English, but there could have been a limitation if any participants were unfamiliar with the situations of the DCT tasks. The researcher did aim to create a situation that would be familiar and generalizable to everyone, whether it had happened to participants in the same type of business place or not. Still, it is possible that some participants may have never experienced a similar situation and thus their responses might have been less natural.

One of the main limitations to this study is the use of a Discourse Completion Task as the instrument for data collection. DCTs have been criticized for not eliciting natural data because they lack a more natural, interpersonal environment that a role play or naturally occurring data offer due to their inclusion of the interlocutor, turn-taking, and development of discourse features (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003). The data that participants elicit in a DCT may be more concise than it might be in a role-play or real-life situation (Billmyer & Varghese, 2000; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003) and as Sykes (2009) found in her L2 Spanish pragmatics study which used DCTs as the pre-test and post-test instruments, participants may have a larger pragmalinguistic competence than what they produce on written DCTs. This could be considered an advantage of DCTs even though they do not show in detail patterns produced in spontaneous role play or natural conversation. However, DCTs are consistent and effective within a short amount of time and for the scope and size of a master's thesis study, they are adequate instruments. They also can create a useful pool of baseline data from which to build future studies.

Perhaps one of the most important limitations to note is the absence of post-DCT participant feedback. In other words, an opinion questionnaire in which participants would have expressed their feelings and reactions to the situations, similar to the questionnaire that followed each of the 12 DCT scenarios presented in Kuriščák's (2006) instrument, would have added very significant data to the complaints elicited by all participant groups. This qualitative information could have also later been modified to use in lesson plans in the L2 classroom. If the researcher conducts further studies on complaints in L1 and/or L2 pragmatics, this type of questionnaire will certainly be included in the instruments.

Future Research

The scope of this investigation limits the analysis to only studying the influence of proficiency level on pragmalinguistic competency and production. Besides the independent variable of proficiency level, other independent variables of modality (oral vs. written production), formality or familiarity, and social distance expressed in the situations in the DCTs, and the affect of the interlocutor's gender could be analyzed in future research. Comparing production in both modes could reveal some significant results regarding differences in students' comprehension and performance abilities. This comparison could also reveal some very interesting data in regards to if, when, and how students self-correct in their production while composing responses in written and/or oral DCTs and role plays.

Gender differences between male participants and female participants should be studied for non-native speakers (NNS), native speakers (NS), and the affect of the interlocutor's gender (Salazar, 2006) to discover differences between complaints made by males and complaints made by females. This would not only be limited to the complaints

elicited, but should also study the responses to complaints, as Curc6 and de Fina (2002) studied in their questionnaires to Peninsular and Mexican native Spanish speakers.

Future research should without questions collect more data of direct and indirect complaints by NS speakers to compare with L2 Spanish students' complaints. This future research should not be limited to simply productions of complaints, complaint responses, and the smaller details of each. Replications of Bardovi-Harlig and D6rnyei's (1998) study (modified to include complaints in the instruments) and Kuriř66k's (2006) study would also greatly benefit this future research. Pragmatic and grammatical judgements of correctness and appropriateness of complaints and requests, amongst other strategies used in situations with potential conflict found from these replications would contribute valuable results to studies of L2 complaints and the development of related L2 curricula.

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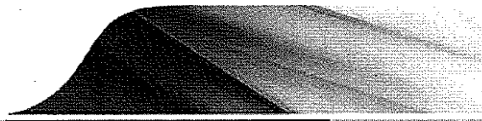
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APPENDIX A
IRB APPROVAL



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To: Barbara Lafford
UCENT

for **From:** Mark Roosa, Chair *SR*
Soc Beh IRB

Date: 10/10/2011

Committee Action: Exemption Granted

IRB Action Date: 10/10/2011

IRB Protocol #: 1109006924

Study Title: Complaining in Spanish: L2 students' realization of formal and informal Spanish complaints

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(1) (2).

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX B
INSTRUMENTS

Demographic Questionnaire

Student Background information

1. Gender: male / female
2. Age: _____
3. Country of birth:

4. What is your native language?
 - a. English
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Other

5. What language(s) are spoken at home and with whom do you speak them?
 - a. English; with _____
 - b. Spanish; with _____
 - c. Other
_____; with

6. In what language(s) did you receive the majority of your pre-college education?
 - a. English
 - b. Other

If you received education in more than one language, what is the approximate number of years that you received education in each of the languages?

- _____
-
7. Have you ever been to a Spanish-speaking region for the purpose of studying Spanish?
 - a. Yes
 - i. Please specify place, dates (m/yy – m/yy):

 - b. No
 - c. Describe your living situation during that time (e.g., lived with a host family, other Spanish-speaking students, Americans, other) _____
 8. Other than the experience mentioned in Question 7, have you ever lived/worked in a situation where you were exposed to a language other than English?
 - a. Yes
 - i. Please specify place, dates (m/yy - m/yy):

 - ii. What was the purpose for living/working there?

- b. No
- c. Describe your living situation during that time (e.g., lived with a host family, other Spanish-speaking students, Americans, other)_____

9. How would you rate your abilities in English and Spanish (and any others) languages?

- a. Use these ratings to fill in the boxes: 1) Poor; 2) Good; 3) Very good; 4) Native-like 5) Native

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	Number of yrs. of study
Language					
English					
Spanish					
Other _____					

10. In each of the education levels listed below, did you study Spanish during your time in each? If yes, for how long (list number of years with the smallest unit being one semester)?

- a. Elementary school:
 - i. No
 - ii. Yes: _____
- b. Junior High (Middle) school (grades 6 – 8):
 - i. No
 - ii. Yes: _____
- c. Senior High school (grades 9 – 12):
 - i. No
 - ii. Yes: _____
- d. University / college (If you attended more than one institution, listed total amount of time you studied Spanish from all institutions together):
 - i. No
 - ii. Yes: _____
- e. Other (Please specify) _____:
 - i. No
 - ii. Yes: _____

11. What year are you in school?

- a. Freshman
- b. Sophomore
- c. Junior
- d. Senior
- e. Graduate student

f. Other

12. What is your major?

13. Please list any Spanish courses that you have taken prior to this semester and including the present semester.

14. Prior to this semester, did you participate in any activities (personal or school-related) that involved Spanish? If so, what are they and for how long and how often did you participate in these activities (i.e. watching/reading Spanish media, participating in Hispanic cultural clubs, etc.)?

DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASK (DCT) SITUATION PROMPTS IN WEBSITE

Situación 1 (oral response)

INSTRUCCIONES:

Lea la siguiente situación y lo que le dice su amiga. Después, grabe lo que Ud. le diría a su amiga en esta situación.

Su mejor amiga, Ana, y Ud. están almorzando en un café. Ha pasado mucho tiempo desde la última vez que se vieron y Uds. tienen mucho que platicar. Mientras Uds. están hablando, Ana recibe una llamada en su celular y se pone a hablar y reír durante mucho tiempo, ella incluso le da la espalda. Después de un largo rato, Ana cuelga el teléfono y vuelve a conversar con Ud. pero Ud. está muy irritado(-a) y quiere decirle algo.

English Translation:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the following situation and what your friend says to you. Afterwards, record what you would say to your friend in this situation.

Your best friend, Ana, and you are eating lunch in a café. Quite a bit of time has passed since the last time you saw each other and you have a lot to chat about. While the two of you are talking, Ana receives a call on her cell phone and starts talking and laughing for a substantial amount of time, she even turns her back to you. After a long time, Ana hangs up the phone and returns to your conversation, but you're very irritated and you want to say something to her.

Situación 2 (oral response)

INSTRUCCIONES:

Lea la siguiente situación y lo que le dice el gerente del restaurante. Después, grabe lo que Ud. le diría al gerente en esta situación.

Ud. va a un restaurante elegante con una amiga. Ud. ya había hecho reservaciones para Uds. dos. Sin embargo, cuando llega el restaurante está lleno y el gerente le dice que no pueden sentarse porque no hay ninguna mesa disponible. Ud. está muy irritado(-a).

English Translation:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the following situation and what the restaurant manager says to you. Afterwards, record what you would say to him in this situation.

You go to an elegant restaurant with a friend. You already have made reservations for the two of you. However, when you arrive, the restaurant is full and the manager tells you and you and your friend can't be seated because there aren't any available tables. You are very irritated.

Situación 3 (written response)

INSTRUCCIONES:

Lea la siguiente situación y lo que le dice su amiga. Después, escribe lo que Ud. le diría a su amiga en esta situación.

Ud. y su mejor amiga, Paula, están cenando en un restaurante. Ha pasado mucho en sus vidas con sus familias y sus trabajos desde la última vez que se vieron y ahora tienen

mucho que platicar. Mientras Ud. le cuenta a Paula lo que ha pasado en su vida y en su familia, el(la) ex – novio(-a) de Ud. viene a la mesa y empieza a hablar con Paula, sin disculparse ni saludarlo/la a Ud. Paula y su ex – novio(-a) hablan por más de media hora de cosas que no tienen nada que ver con la relación entre Ud. y Paula ni con la conversación que tenían Uds. en el restaurante. Ellos no lo/la incluyen a Ud. en su conversación y lo/la ignoran completamente. Ud. espera a que su ex – novio(-a) se vaya. Después de que él/ella se va, Paula vuelve a platicar con Ud. Ud. está irritado(-a).

English Translation:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the following situation and what your friend says to you. Afterwards, write what you would say to your friend in this situation.

You are your best friend, Paula, are having dinner in a restaurant. Quite a lot has happened in your lives, your families, and your jobs since the last time you saw each other and now you have a lot to catch up on. While you tell Paula what has happened in your life and in your family, your ex-boyfriend (or ex-girlfriend) comes to the table to talk to Paula, without excusing the interruption or greeting you. Paula y your ex-boyfriend (ex-girlfriend) talk for more than a half hour about things that have nothing to do with the relationship between you and Paula or with the conversation between you and Paula in the restaurant now. They don't include you in the conversation and they ignore you completely. You wait until your ex-boyfriend (ex-girlfriend) leaves. After he/she leaves, Paula starts chatting with you again. You are irritated.

Situación 4 (written response)

INSTRUCCIONES:

Lea la siguiente situación y lo que le dice la recepcionista. . Después, escribe lo que Ud. le diría a la recepcionista en esta situación.

Ud. va a una peluquería muy elegante donde había hecho una cita con la estilista desde hacía varias semanas. Sin embargo, cuando llega a la peluquería, la recepcionista le dice que no hay ninguna cita a su nombre y a Ud. no lo/la pueden atender porque todas las estilistas están muy ocupadas. Ud. está muy irritado(-a).

English Translation:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the following situation and what the receptionist says to you. Afterwards, write what you would say to your friend in this situation.

You go to a very elegant hair salon where you had made an appointment con the stylist several weeks ago. However, when you arrive at the hair salon, the receptionist tells you that there isn't any appointment in your name and no one can take you at this time because all of the stylists are very busy. You are very irritated.

