

Teaching, Learning and Investigating Pragmatics

Teaching, Learning and Investigating Pragmatics:

*Principles, Methods
and Practices*

Edited by

Sara Gesuato, Francesca Bianchi
and Winnie Cheng

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Teaching, Learning and Investigating Pragmatics:
Principles, Methods and Practices

Edited by Sara Gesuato, Francesca Bianchi and Winnie Cheng

This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2015 by Sara Gesuato, Francesca Bianchi, Winnie Cheng
and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without
the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-7719-0
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7719-0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Sara Gesuato, Francesca Bianchi and Winnie Cheng	
Introduction	1
Francesca Bianchi	
Part I: Principles, Methods and Practices in Pragmatics and Pragmatics-Focused Pedagogy	
Section 1. Teaching and Learning	
Chapter One.....	13
Teachers' Perceptions of Email Requests: Insights for Teaching Pragmatics in Study Abroad Contexts Eva Alcón-Soler	
Chapter Two	33
"Teacher! You Need to Give Me Back my Homework:" Assessing Students' Needs for a Pragmatics Curriculum in an Academic ESL Program Patricia Frenz-Belkin	
Chapter Three	57
Pragmatic Competence, Length of Residence, Amount of Contact and Intensity of Interaction Zohreh R. Eslami and Soojin Ahn	
Chapter Four	85
Comparing Textbooks and TV Series as Sources of Pragmatic Input for Learners of Italian as a Second Language: The Case of Compliments and Invitations Elena Nuzzo	

Chapter Five	109
Teaching L2 Pragmatics: From an Empirical Study to Recommendations for Pedagogical Practice	
Phyllisienne Gauci	

Section 2. Testing and Assessing

Chapter Six	135
Designing Instructional Effect Studies for L2 Pragmatics: A Guide for Teachers and Researchers	
Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig	

Chapter Seven.....	165
“You Have No Choice:” Pragmatic Considerations in Current Language Test Instruments	
Richard Chapman	

Chapter Eight.....	185
DCTs versus Naturally Occurring Data in the Realization of Disagreement by Non-Native Speakers of English	
Carmen Maíz-Arévalo	

Chapter Nine.....	207
The Use of Corpora to Identify the Pragmatic Knowledge Associated with Different Levels of Language Proficiency	
María Luisa Carrió-Pastor and Miguel Casas Gómez	

Part II: Principles, Methods and Practices in Specific Areas of Pragmatic Competence

Section 3: Conversation

Chapter Ten	231
An Interaction-Focused Pedagogy based on Conversation Analysis for Developing L2 Pragmatic Competence	
Anna Filipi and Anne-Marie Barraja-Rohan	

Chapter Eleven	253
Topic Management and Interactional Competence in Spanish L2 Conversation	
Marta García García	

Chapter Twelve	275
Peer and Teacher Feedback in Improving Pragmatic Conversation Skills	
William Collins	

Chapter Thirteen	297
Towards a Pedagogical Framework to Develop the Listenership	
of Japanese EFL/ESL Learners	
Pino Cutrone	

Section 4: Speech Acts

Chapter Fourteen	323
Criteria for the Identification of Moves: The Case of Written Offers	
Sara Gesuato	

Chapter Fifteen	363
“Thanks a Bunch:” Cross-Cultural Comparison of the Speech Act	
of Thanking	
Winnie Cheng and Andy Seto	

Chapter Sixteen	387
The Variability of Compliment Responses: Italian and German Data	
Marina Castagneto and Miriam Ravetto	

Chapter Seventeen	415
Universality and Relativity in Cross-Cultural Pragmatics:	
Requests and Apologies in English and Italian	
Loredana Pozzuoli	

Section 5: Aspects of Grammar

Chapter Eighteen	441
The Acquisition of Emotional Competence in L2 Learners of Italian	
through Specific Instructional Training	
Anna De Marco and Emanuela Paone	

Chapter Nineteen	469
<i>Denn, eigentlich, überhaupt</i> : Three “Pragmatic Particles” in German	
Marion Weerning	

Chapter Twenty	495
Instructional Advantages of a Pragmatic Account of Mood Distribution in Spanish Complements	
Patxi Laskurian-Ibarluzea	
Chapter Twenty One.....	519
Conversational Implicatures in the Croatian EFL Classroom	
Ana Werkmann Horvat and Ana Kevdeš	
Chapter Twenty Two.....	547
Some – and Possibly All – Adults Compute Scalar Implicatures	
Yhara M. Formisano	

PREFACE

SARA GESUATO, FRANCESCA BIANCHI
AND WINNIE CHENG

From 17 to 20 June, 2013, the Department of Linguistics and Literary Studies at the University of Padua, Italy hosted “Pragmatics on the go: teaching and learning about pragmatics – principles, methods and practices,” an international conference on applied pragmatics. The idea for such a conference emerged gradually in the minds of the two convenors, Sara Gesuato (University of Padua, Italy) and Francesca Bianchi (University of Salento, Italy) as a result of their experience as researchers and lecturers in EFL, as well as in discussions with colleagues – in Italy and around the world – involved in language teaching and cross-linguistic/cultural communication. It appeared that scholars and lecturers felt the urgent need to address scientific and pedagogic issues at the intersection between pragmatics and applied linguistics. It was equally clear, though, that such concerns were not adequately dealt with in teaching materials, scholarly publications, teacher training programs, workshops or refresher courses. The “Pragmatics on the go” conference provided a forum for focusing attention on these issues in a practical and systematic way.

The conference brought together over 50 participants from 17 countries – linguists, teachers and other practitioners active in pragmatics and related disciplinary fields, such as sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, language education, and communication studies. The large turnout of the academic event was due not only to the presence of three internationally renowned guest speakers – Eva Alcón-Soler (Jaume I University, Spain), Winnie Cheng (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China), and Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig (Indiana University, USA) – but also to the participants’ strong interest in discussing proposals for fostering the learning of linguistic pragmatics in second/foreign language education and for laying out clear practices in applied pragmatics.

The conference participants shared their experiences on how to implement the teaching of pragmatic phenomena in the language learning context with regard to several target languages. A variety of domains of investigation were covered (developmental pragmatics, computer-mediated communication, conversation analysis, intercultural competence, bilingualism, interpreting and emotional competence) and a number of topics were addressed (humour, verbal abuse, verb mood choice, discourse markers, academic discourse, deductive vs. inductive instruction, textbook writing, syllabus design and needs analysis).

The conference convenors felt that all the commitment and dedication experienced at the conference and especially the rich and diverse contributions offered should be accessible to the wider scientific-professional community. It was thought that the natural next step would thus be to compile a publication with the most significant conference contributions. Most of the conference participants enthusiastically answered the call to contribute an essay and one of the guest speakers, Winnie Cheng, generously agreed to take on the task of being a co-editor of the volume together with the conference convenors.

Putting together this volume has required a lot of patient and meticulous work on behalf of all the people involved in their various capacities: everyone's contribution is gratefully acknowledged. The papers in the volume testify to the commitment of practitioners in applied pragmatics to pursue such key goals as better understanding and accounting for linguistic behaviour; developing and field-testing teaching strategies; designing syllabi that make theoretical principles relevant and useful to language learners, and directly applicable to their interactional needs; and sharing materials, suggestions and research findings. We hope that this book may contribute to enabling the reader to achieve their own professional goals in linguistic pragmatics too.

INTRODUCTION

FRANCESCA BIANCHI

The present volume aims to shed new light on pragmatic issues of relevance to applied linguistics, and in particular to language teaching and learning. To this aim, it brings together a number of academics, language specialists, and teachers working in a variety of contexts. We trust that the result can be of concrete use to applied linguists, PhD students in communication studies, language teachers, teacher trainers, examiners, materials developers, and experts in transcultural communication alike.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 deals with issues of pragmatics and pragmatics-focused pedagogy, that is, the principles, methods and practices of its teaching and learning (Section 1), and the testing and assessing of pragmatic competence (Section 2). Part 2 focuses on specific areas of pragmatic competence, namely conversation (Section 3), speech acts (Section 4), and the functional use of aspects of grammar (Section 5).

Section 1 investigates and discusses the factors, contexts, and inputs that facilitate or hamper the learning of pragmatic norms and habits.

In Chapter 1, Eva Alcón Soler focuses on the influence of a study-abroad period on international teenage students' performance of email requests. The author analyses international students' requests before and after three months of stay in the UK, and compares the post-study-abroad data to data from British English students. She also considers teachers' assessment of those e-mails, concluding that, despite some decrease in the use of direct strategies and some gains in accuracy at the end of the study-abroad period, the performance of international students does not approximate target language pragmatic norms, and that their e-mail requests are still generally inappropriate. This leads the author to recommend incorporating pragmatic instruction during study-abroad periods.

Chapters 2 and 3 also focus on pragmatic acquisition in an L2 context, with specific attention to contextual factors such as length of residence and amount and type of language contact with native speakers. In Chapter 2,

Patricia Frenz-Belkin analyses the performance of a group of (predominantly) Spanish-speaking immigrant students living in the United States, in a variety of scenarios. The author finds that schooling in the target language or time of residence in the target culture do not appear to have an impact on immigrants ability to produce appropriate utterances or to correctly evaluate the appropriateness of given utterances in face-threatening situations. This is especially true when the scenario is unfamiliar, such as an academic setting characterized by power imbalance between the interlocutors. In Chapter 3, Zohreh R. Eslami and Soojin Ahn analyse length of residence in the target community, too, alongside amount and type of language contact with native speakers. Their data on the performance of Korean advanced ESL learners when producing compliments and compliment responses show that learners with more frequent opportunities for interactive use of language develop their pragmatic competence significantly better than those with fewer opportunities for interaction. At the same time, the findings suggest that simple exposure to language is unlikely to be sufficient for the acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge and that diverse opportunities for interaction with other native and non-native English language users should be provided to learners.

In Chapter 4, Elena Nuzzo compares and assesses two different sources of pragmatic input for foreign language learners, namely Italian-language textbooks and TV series. This author observes that the latter offer a wider and richer variety of examples of compliments and invitations, a finding in keeping with similar studies on other languages.

Finally, in Chapter 5, Phyllisienne Gauci explores the potential of explicit and implicit teaching of Italian pragmatics in a foreign language context, focusing on requests and complaints from film extracts and other audiovisual material. The author compares the results of an explicit teaching experimental group, an implicit teaching experimental group, and a control group, and finds that both experimental groups performed better than the control group – merely exposed to the target language – in terms of production, as well as of awareness, and regardless of the teaching approach. Finally, the author notices that the positive effects of the instructional treatment are not always retained in the long-term and that results may be highly influenced by the testing instrument used.

Section 2 addresses questions such as how to assess pragmatics acquisition, what is that tests assess, and which features should be assessed. This section opens with an essay by Kathleen Bardovi-Harlig, a practical guide for the development of research designs for studying the

effect of instruction on the development of L2 pragmatics in both host and foreign environments. This guide illustrates standard practices as they apply to pragmatics research and takes into account factors related uniquely to pragmatics.

In Chapter 7, Richard Chapman analyses the testing material and practice of the *Cambridge Proficiency: English* examination and observes that this test, like many other similar ones, requires candidates to share the presuppositions of the testing organisation. Such presuppositions are so strongly imbued in the system that Cambridge exam writers and testers fail to notice ambiguous items, or regard as equivalent forms which are actually different in terms of illocutionary force or markedness. The author thus argues that this type of tests do not test real communicative competence, but rather the competence of the student to comply with previously acquired meta-rules as to how to approach the exam.

In Chapter 8, Carmen Maíz-Arévalo compares naturally occurring online data produced on an asynchronous forum to DCT data produced by the same participants. This author shows that DCT data might mislead the researcher into rather simplistic views of non-native speakers' performance.

Finally, in Chapter 9, María Luisa Carrió-Pastor and Miguel Casas Gómez use learner corpus data to identify the use of hedges by learners of Spanish at different stages of second language learning. They also advocate the use of corpora for the creation of a list of the hedges associated with the different levels of second language learning, as a way to assist teachers and learners in the improvement of pragmatic competence in written discourse.

Section 3 focuses on the analysis of conversational features and provides suggestions for developing conversation skills.

In Chapter 10, Anna Filipi and Anne-Marie Barraja-Rohan show how non-native speakers have difficulties in initiating repair, producing appropriate responses, and closing conversations. From these observations they proceed to illustrate a pedagogical approach to teaching conversation skills which is based on four stages. The authors report on how this approach has been successfully used in teaching L2 students, and how it can serve as a valid model for training teachers of second languages.

In Chapter 11, Marta García García examines how Spanish L2 learners confront the issue of topic management and, more specifically, how they solve conflicts in cooperative topic closures.

In Chapter 12, William Collins discusses and compares the impact of teacher- and peer-feedback in helping learners to develop conversation skills, with particular attention to backchanneling, active listening, and the

use of intonation to signal emotional involvement and empathy. The study, conducted with Japanese advanced learners of English in Japan, analyses data from conversation recordings, student transcriptions of the conversations, teacher feedback comments or student feedback comments, and student surveys concerning improvements in motivation and self-confidence. The author also investigates the students' ability to recognize gaps in listener participation in recorded conversations and to suggest suitable responses to speakers' turns. The results suggest that both receiving and offering feedback has a positive impact on the students' conversation skills.

Finally, in Chapter 13, Pino Cutrone outlines a pedagogical framework for teaching and assessing backchannel skills. His framework develops from a detailed analysis of the literature on backchanneling, and considering variables such as: types and functions of backchannels; frequency; discourse contexts favouring backchannels; and conversational involvement.

Section 4 offers insights into a rich variety of speech acts including offers, thanks, compliment responses, requests, and apologies.

In Chapter 14, Sara Gesuato examines how interactants maximize their chances of interactional success when they realize offers in writing. After providing a definition of the act of offering and reviewing the literature on this type of speech act, the author contributes instantiations and a classification of the component moves of offers. She also proposes a move structure analysis of written offers and highlights the pros and cons of the research method applied to this study.

In Chapter 15, Winnie Cheng and Andy Seto apply corpus linguistics analytical methods to highlight and compare the linguistic and pragmatic realizations of the speech act of thanking in four spoken English corpora representing respectively general English in the UK, Hong Kong English, and English in academic settings. The identification of the most frequent thanking expressions and their collocational and colligational patterns reveals a much greater variety of forms in the general usage of English by native speakers of English in a national corpus, compared to the other corpora.

Chapter 16 by Marina Castagneto and Miriam Ravetto compares and contrasts Italian and German native speakers' reactions to compliments and provide evidence to the variability of this type of speech act according to a range of variables, including geographical area, gender, topic, and illocutionary force. Specific attention is devoted to a discussion of how

Italian appears to be undergoing a phase of change in the pragmatics of compliment responses.

Finally, Chapter 17 by Loredana Pozzuoli analyses apology and request strategies employed by Italian learners of English. The author compares them to those employed by English native speakers in the same situational contexts. This essay aims to establish the extent to which learners approximate the norms of native speakers and transfer Italian apology and request patterns into their L2.

Section 5 opens with a contribution by Anna De Marco and Emanuela Paone on the decoding and encoding processes of emotional speech in L2 learners of Italian with a typologically distant mother tongue, Indonesian. This authors present the results of a pragmatic teaching approach aimed at encouraging awareness of the prosodic aspects of speech. The study shows that both the identification and the production of vocal emotions is affected by cultural features. Furthermore, it suggests that pragmatics plays an important role in social interactions involving emotional issues.

Chapter 19 deals with the pragmatic value of three German particles with a very vague lexical meaning, and whose function consists in managing the interaction between speaker and listener. For a clearer understanding of the meanings of these particles, Marion Weerning provides exemplifications from German novels and their translations into Italian, a language which does not possess lexico-pragmatical equivalents of these words. Finally, the author critically examines how German textbooks used in Italian schools treat these three particles and proposes some new, more effective strategies for teaching their meanings and usages.

Chapter 20 by Patxi Laskurian-Ibarluzea focuses on mood in Spanish and the way it is generally treated in teaching materials. The author suggests that “it is the meaning of a matrix [clause] in a given communicative context, rather than simply the meaning of a predicate, that licenses speakers to assert the propositional content of a complement” (p. 515). The author, thus, outlines a speaker-based pragmatic theory of mood in Spanish which can account for and predict mood choice by the speaker, depending on the discourse situation, and which represents a valid pedagogical tool for teaching mood selection in Spanish complements to students of Spanish as a second or foreign language.

Finally, this section ends with two chapters on implicature. In Chapter 21, Ana Werkmann Horvat and Ana Kevdeš explore the use of active learning strategies for teaching conversational implicatures to Croatian learners of English. This essay reports the results of a student-centred instruction procedure focusing on conversational implicatures. It discusses

them in the light of the students' responses during a workshop and in a subsequent survey about the value of conversational implicatures instruction and about their overall awareness of the importance of acquiring pragmatic competencies.

To conclude, in Chapter 22, Yhara M. Formisano investigates scalar implicature comprehension in English and Italian L1 and L2 students. The author reports two experiments aimed at testing whether adults in L1 and L2 interpret the quantifier *some* logically or pragmatically. Her results show that L1 as well as L2 speakers never give a logical interpretation of *some*. Non-target like answers are a consequence of the subject's conjuring up of alternative realities or misinterpretation of an item. Moreover, the results show that pragmatic competence is not higher in L2 than in L1.

Given the broad range of topics covered, the volume lends itself to multiple reading paths, synthesized into five lists below. Thus, depending on their interests, readers may want to read about specific speech acts (List 1), conversational features at large (List 2), specific learning or teaching contexts, or media (List 3), precise types of data or data collection methods (List 4), or various languages (List 5), as specified below.

List 1: Speech acts

- Compliments (Chapter 3)
- Compliment responses (Chapters 16, and 20)
- Complaints (Chapter 4)
- Thanks (Chapter 15)
- Invitations (Chapter 3)
- Requests (Chapters 1, 4, and 17)
- Questions (Chapter 19)
- Offers (Chapter 14)
- Apologies (Chapter 17)
- Disagreements (Chapter 8)

List 2: Conversational features

- Backchannelling (Chapters 12, and 13)
- Conversational strategies (Chapters 10, and 11)
- Mitigation and hedging (Chapters 1, 4, and 9)
- Implicature (Chapters 21, and 22)
- Mood (Chapter 20)
- Stance (Chapters 9, and 19)
- Emotions (Chapter 18)

List 3: Specific contexts

- Electronic interaction (Chapters 1, and 8)
- L2 contexts (Chapters 1, 2, 5, 10, and 18)
- FL contexts (Chapters 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21, and 19)
- Native speaker's performance (Chapters 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 22)
- Non-native speakers' performance (Chapters 8, 17, 18, 19, 21, and 22)
- Explicit instructional treatment vs. implicit teaching or no teaching (Chapters 9, 18, and 21)

List 4: Data and data collection methods

- DCTs (Chapters 4, 5, 8, 17)
- Role play (Chapter 4)
- (Un/solicited) free writing or conversations and naturally occurring data (Chapters 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 16)
- Reference corpora (Chapter 4)
- Other types of data collection (Chapters 2, and 12)
- Textbooks and other set material (Chapters 3, 7, and 19)
- TV material (Chapter 3)

List 5: Languages

- English (Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 21, and 22)
- Italian (Chapters 3, 4, 10, 16, 17, 18, and 22)
- Spanish (Chapters 11, and 20)
- German (Chapters 16, and 19)

We are confident that any reader interested in applied pragmatics will find relevant topics covered and issues explored throughout the book.

PART I

PRINCIPLES, METHODS AND PRACTICES IN PRAGMATICS AND PRAGMATICS- FOCUSED PEDAGOGY

SECTION 1

TEACHING AND LEARNING

CHAPTER ONE

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EMAIL REQUESTS: INSIGHTS FOR TEACHING PRAGMATICS IN STUDY ABROAD CONTEXTS

EVA ALCÓN

1. Introduction

1.1 Background research

Second language pragmatic research has frequently dealt with speech act performance. Among the different speech acts, requests have aroused a lot of interest in the field, and performance of requests has been examined by means of elicited data such as role-plays, discourse completion tests, or multimedia tasks. More recently, email communication has proved to be a context for collecting requests in a natural environment, providing us with information on how language is used in a widely accepted medium of interaction. In the context of virtual communication, the degree of directness and appropriateness of email requests has been addressed in a number of different studies. For instance, Chen (2001) examined differences between Taiwanese and American students in relation to requests for an appointment, requests for a recommendation letter and requests for special consideration. The author reported differences in the amount of lexical and syntactic modification employed by Taiwanese and American graduate students, while both groups favoured query-preparatory strategies. In a similar vein, Biesenbach-Lucas (2006, 2007) used emails that students sent to the researcher to examine the degrees of directness and indirectness in three types of requests (requests for an appointment, for feedback and for an extension of deadlines). Results of this study showed that both native and non-native speakers used direct requests for appointment and feedback, while there was a tendency to use

conventional indirect requests when asking for an extension of deadline, thereby suggesting that the level of imposition of the request may influence the degree of directness of the request.

Moreover, studies by Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), and Pan (2012) have dealt with the performance and perception of email requests. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) analysed email requests produced by native and non-native speakers of English and how they were evaluated by faculty members. Findings of their study revealed that learners did not employ mitigation devices, emphasised students' needs and lacked status-congruent language. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) examined email requests sent by Greek Cypriot university students to faculty over a period of several semesters. The author analysed the degree of directness, mitigation and forms of address, reporting that students' emails presented a high frequency of direct strategies, an absence of lexical mitigators, and inappropriate forms of address. The author also reported that such emails were perceived as impolite and were thus capable of causing pragmatic failure. Finally, Pan's (2012) study examined internal and external modifiers in email requests produced by Chinese learners and compared them with those produced by American participants. Similar findings to previous studies on email requests were found, reporting that L2 users relied mainly on external modifiers and did not often use syntactic modifiers.

In line with the above contrastive studies, Alcón-Soler (2013a) examined the use of request strategies and mitigation devices produced by International Baccalaureate students – British English speakers (BES) and International English speakers (IES) – during student-initiated email communication. Findings of the study show IES's greater preference for direct strategies and external mitigators in comparison to BES, while no differences are found in the use of lexical and syntactic modifiers. Taking into account these findings, it was hypothesised that, besides lack of pragmalinguistic knowledge, participants' perception of social distance from the interlocutor and perception of request imposition may explain students' preference for direct requests. To further explore this tentative hypothesis, the author (2013b) analysed whether the use of internal and external request mitigators were influenced by participants' judgements of the degree of request imposition and social distance with the email recipient. Results of the study show that participants do not frequently rely on mitigators, but whenever they perceive the need to mitigate the request, pragmatic variation is observed between BES and IES. Thus, when the request is perceived as demanding, BES activate their pragmalinguistic

knowledge and use a wider range of internal modifiers (both lexical and syntactic). In contrast, IES seem to lack the pragmalinguistic knowledge needed to soften the request. Finally, although teenagers do not perceive their relationship with their learning mentor as one of + social distance, both BES and IES show variation in their choice of form of address.

Given that, as suggested by Crystal (1997), pragmatics deals with language use and its effects on participants in the act of communication, the present study, as a follow up to Alcón (2013a, 2013b), deals with how teachers perceive student-initiated email requests. More specifically, we will examine teachers' perceptions of email requests in a context of insensitive exposure to the language, such as study abroad (SA). One of the factors that have been examined in relation to pragmatic learning is the environment. Bardovi-Harlig's (2013) suggestion to look at learners' interaction with the environment may explain the interest in exploring pragmatic learning in environments involving intensive exposure to language, such as SA. Previous cross-sectional studies have shown that SA is insufficient for pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei 1998; Barron 2003; Matsumara 2003; Shauer 2009; Bella 2011; Taguchi 2011a, 2013; Vilar-Beltrán 2014; Félix-Brasdefer 2015). Besides, studies such as the one reported by Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) point out that variables such as level of proficiency or intensity of interaction make a difference when we look at pragmatic learning in SA contexts. These studies also report individual variation in pragmatic gains.

Following the interest in pragmatic learning in SA contexts, and previous studies on performance of L2 email requests, the present study explores whether a short period of SA influences students' performance and teachers' perceptions of email requests. To date, the population of the studies conducted on learning requests during study abroad has been university students, with the exception of Achiba (2003), who studied her 7-year-old daughter, and Ellis's (1992) study of two early adolescents. The present study deals with a different population: late adolescent learners in SA experiences. In adolescence there is an increasing use of both synchronous and asynchronous communication, and this affords the researcher the possibility to collect authentic language in an environment participants are familiar with. The following questions guided the study:

RQ1: Do students differ in their performance of email requests after a short period of SA?

RQ2: Does a short period of SA make a difference in teachers' perceptions of email requests?

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

A total of 60 teenagers studying in three different state schools in the south of England were randomly selected from those who filled in the consent form to participate in the study and gave permission for the emails they sent to their mentors to be examined for research purposes. All participants were sixteen years old and were following the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. Moreover, whether they were British English Speakers (BES) or International English Speakers (IES) was taken into consideration to form two participant groups: 30 BES and 30 IES. Since one of the BES moved to Australia four weeks after starting the IB programme, 29 BES and 30 IES finally took part in the study. The BES email requests were used as baseline data to examine differences between BES and IES (see Alcón 2013a; 2013b). IES' performance of email requests was the focus of the present study. The IES were all Europeans who were studying in the UK for one academic year. Their level of English language proficiency was upper intermediate, as established by the standardised Quick Oxford Placement test (UCLES 2001), equivalent to Common European Framework level B2. In addition, six British teachers, who were mentors of the IB students, also participated in the study by forwarding to the researcher the email messages of those students who had previously agreed to have their email messages examined for research purposes.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

For the present study we examined the emails that IES students sent to their learning mentors at two different times: September and December 2011. Thus, 150 email requests performed by IES were analysed in terms of level of directness and amount of mitigation at two different times: At Time 1 when participants arrived in the country (September, 2011) and at Time 2 after three months of SA (December, 2011). Considering the classification suggested by Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) and modified by Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) and Félix-Brasdefer (2012), the presence of direct strategies (imperative, performative, want statement, need statement, direct question, like/appreciate statement, expectation statement), conventionally indirect strategies (query preparatory, ability/willingness/ permission), and non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints) were used to examine frequency of request strategies (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Request strategies in student-initiated email requests

Directness Level	Request strategies	Examples
Direct	Imperative	<i>Send attachment again</i>
	Performative	<i>I am asking you information about...</i>
	Want statements	<i>I want to confirm the day of the meeting</i>
	Need statements	<i>I need to talk to you</i>
	Direct questions	<i>Where can I find the book?</i>
	Like/appreciate statements	<i>I'd like to have a meeting with you</i>
	Expectation statements	<i>...I hope you can contact me no later than Friday</i>
Conventionally indirect	Query preparatory (ability/willingness)	<i>Can I borrow your book at the end of this week?</i>
Non-conventional indirectness	Hints	<i>There seems to have been a problem with the web lately and I am not sure about your last deadline</i>

In addition, following previous classifications on requests (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1995; Hassall 2012; Achiba 2003; Woodfield 2012; and Woodfield and Economidou-Kogetsidis 2010), the researcher examined the presence of internal and external modifiers (see Table 2 for examples of internal modifiers, and Table 3 for examples of external modifiers).

TABLE 2. Lexical and syntactic modification devices in student-initiated email requests

Type	Sub-type	Examples
Lexical	Please	Please, find attached a document with changes
	Openers (do you think...; would you mind...; is it all right...)	It is all right if I pop in Tuesday after lunch?
	Softeners (downtoners-possibly, perhaps, just, maybe...; understaters-just, a little, a minute...; hedges- kind of...)	Could you just let me know by the end of the term? I'd possibly need some feedback before the English class.
	Intensifiers (really, I'm sure...)	I really need your help with that project.
	Subjectivisers	I suppose I could hand in the paper next week
Syntactic	Conditional structures	Could you please tell me when the deadline for the assignment is?
	Tense	Is it all right if I booked for the performance later in the week?
	Aspect	I was wondering if what I sent for the geography paper was ok
	Negation of preparatory condition	I don't suppose there is any choice...
	Multiple syntactic modification	I was wondering whether you could send doc III in word

TABLE 3. External modification devices in student-initiated email requests

Type	Sub-type	Examples
External modification	Preparators	I really need to talk to you, Could we meet...?
	Grounders	I have to go to the dentist tomorrow at 12.00. Could I write to you if...?
	Disarmers	I hate bothering you again, but could you confirm...?
	Expanders	I would like to know about assignment 4 because I missed your class today (I was sick). Could you please explain what I have to do?
	Promises	Could I do it next week? I promise this will not happen again.
	Imposition minimisers	I would like to see you before the Assembly, just for five minutes
	Apologies	I'm very sorry, but I need to answer some questions...
	Preparators	I really need to talk to you, Could we meet...?
	Grounders	I have to go to the dentist tomorrow at 12.00. Could I write to you if...?

Finally, to examine teachers' perception of students' email requests, immediately after receiving the email, the British mentors were asked to evaluate their students' emails as regards accuracy and appropriateness on a 5-point Likert scale. At the same time they were asked to explain their choice (see example 1).

(1) Example of data collection on perception:

Please read the following emails and choose the options that best represent your opinion. We are interested in your personal opinion, so your answers can never be wrong.

Subject:

Date: Thu, 22 Sep 2011 16: 52:20 +0200

Hi (name of the mentor) I would like to have a meeting with you next week. If you can before Wednesday, what do you think?

Thank you (Name of the student)

This email is grammatically correct

1. not at all 2. a little 3. so-so 4. quite correct 5. completely correct

Please explain your choice

This email is appropriate

1. not at all 2. a little 3. so-so 4. quite appropriate 5. completely appropriate

Please explain your choice

A chi-square test of independence was used to establish statistically significant differences between frequency of request head acts and mitigators used by IES before and after the SA experience. A t-test was used to compare teachers' perception of accuracy and appropriateness of IES before and after a short period of SA.

3. Results and discussions

As illustrated in Table 4, IES resort to the use of direct strategies more frequently at the beginning of the SA than after three months of intensive exposure to email communication, the difference being statistically significant. In addition, analysis of the data shows a general tendency towards the use of query (*Can we discuss my project for next term on Monday?*) as a conventionally indirect strategy. Finally, the use of hints is practically absent in our data base. Findings related to strategies used by IES during a short period of SA indicate changes in the use of direct strategies, but not in the use of conventionally indirect strategies. Since the use of conventionally indirect strategies in L1 and L2 has also been reported in previous studies (House and Kasper 1987; Trosborg 1995;