

Pedagogical Intervention and the Development of Pragmatic Competence in Learning Spanish as a Foreign Language

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Using a quasi-experimental design, this study investigated the extent to which pedagogical intervention facilitated the development of pragmatic competence of fifth-semester learners of Spanish as a foreign language when performing refusals. The design included 2 learner groups. Pragmatic development was observed during 1 semester. The learner data were compared to data from L1 English and L1 Spanish. The experimental group was exposed to explicit instruction on refusals. Posttest 1 results showed that the experimental group changed from a preference for direct to indirect refusals, whereas the control group did not. Higher frequency and a wider variety of indirect strategies were also observed. Posttest 2 results showed that most pragmatic features highlighted during the treatment were retained.

There is a fair amount of classroom-based research in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) that addresses the issue of whether implicit or explicit instruction in pragmatics facilitates the development of learners' pragmatic competence with respect to understanding and performing communicative action in a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL) context. Communicative action comprises not only speech acts such as complaining, apologizing, or refusing, but also dynamic participation in conversation, engaging in different types of oral or written discourse, and maintaining interaction in complex speech events. Yet, unlike most research in ILP that has focused on language use among uninstructed learners at various proficiency levels (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996), recent research has examined the learning component of ILP, focusing on the effects of pedagogical intervention on pragmatic development in L2 or FL contexts (Alcón Soler, 2005; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Martínez-Flor, 2006; Pearson, 2006; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Tello Rueda, 2004).

Pragmatic development has been analyzed in observational and interventional research. Observational research analyzes how certain learning targets (e.g., requests, routines) in pragmatics develop over time when traditional input is provided in the classroom (Cohen, 1997; Ellis, 1992) or when input comes from the host environment in a wide variety of natural settings (Achiba, 2003; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Bardovi-Harlig & Salsbury, 2004). In these cases, learners in the SL and FL contexts improved certain aspects of their pragmatic competence over time to some degree by means of implicit or incidental learning (House, 1996). On the other hand, interventional research requires the implementation of an explicit treatment in the classroom by which learning takes place explicitly in different

ways (Rose & Kasper, 2001). According to DeKeyser, explicit learning “occurs with concurrent awareness of what is being learned. This implies [...] that some sort of rule is being thought about during the learning process,” whereas implicit learning “occurs without concurrent awareness of what is being learned, through memorization instances, recastings, inferencing of rules without awareness, or both” (1995, p. 380).

Interventional research in ILP often includes a treatment in a teacher-fronted format, with an instructor explaining metapragmatic information about the targeted features. Metapragmatic information centers on the form-function relationship between the targeted pragmatic features and highlights the pragmatic functions of grammatical information in different social contexts. In general, although research in ILP has examined the effectiveness of a learning target in different languages in both SL and FL contexts (cf. Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Rose, 2005), the issue of pragmatic development that results from pedagogical intervention has been only addressed in a few studies in Spanish as a FL (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2008a; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Overfield, 1996; Pearson, 2001).

The objective of the current study is to examine the extent to which pedagogical intervention can facilitate the development of pragmatic competence when fifth-semester learners of Spanish as a FL perform the speech act of refusing in formal and informal situations. In particular, this study investigates whether the explicit instruction of metapragmatic information can improve learners’ ability to negotiate a resolution within role-play interactions between learners and native speakers (NSs). To this end, the current investigation focuses on L2 pragmatic production in order to determine whether instruction influences learners’ ability to refuse according to the sociocultural norms of the target culture. In the current study, the data used during the pedagogical intervention, and the Spanish baseline data were taken from a Spanish variety spoken in central Mexico.

INTERVENTIONAL RESEARCH

Interventional studies in ILP have examined the effects of instruction, explicit or implicit, over time on developing some aspect of pragmatic competence among learners at various proficiency levels (beginning, intermediate, advanced), in diverse learning contexts (FL, L2), with different L1 and L2, and employing pre/posttest designs accompanied by pedagogical intervention. These studies have investigated the effects of instruction in diverse speech acts such as apologies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990); apologies, refusals, and requests (Overfield, 1996); compliments (Billmyer, 1990; Rose & Ng, 2001); apologies, commands, expressions of gratitude, and polite requests (Pearson, 2001); refusals (King & Silver, 1993), refusals and complaints (Morrow, 1995); requests (Alcón Soler, 2005; Takahashi, 2001), and suggestions (Koike & Pearson, 2005). Other studies have investigated the effects of instruction focusing on pragmatic fluency (House, 1996), pragmatic routines (Tateyama,

2001; Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay, & Thananart, 1997; Wildner-Basset, 1986, 1994), mitigation (Fukuya & Clark, 2001), discourse markers and interactional rules (House & Kasper, 1981; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Yoshimi, 2001), markers of sociolinguistic competence (Lyster, 1994), and politeness markers in requests, directing talk, and seeking agreement and disagreement (LoCastro, 1997). Finally, a few studies examined the effects of instruction in the comprehension of implicature in L2 and FL contexts (Bouton, 1994; Kubota, 1995). Of these studies, although few have examined the effects of instruction among learners of Spanish in a FL context (e.g., Koike & Pearson, 2005; Overfield, 1996; Pearson, 2001, 2006), no study has examined the role of explicit instruction in refusals at the discourse level in learner-NS interactions.

Despite the interactive nature of refusals and their prominence in everyday communication, few studies in ILP have analyzed the effects of instruction using refusals as a learning target. Refusals are complex speech acts that require not only negotiation, but also “face-saving maneuvers to accommodate the noncompliant nature of the act” (Gass & Houck, 1999, p. 2). Of the studies conducted in this area, methodological considerations limit the generalizability of results. For example, King and Silver (1993) examined the effects of instruction with six ESL intermediate learners during the realization of refusals to requests and invitations using a DCT instrument and telephone interviews. The study employed a pretest/posttest design and included an experimental ($N = 3$) and a control group ($N = 3$). Only the experimental group received pedagogical intervention which lasted one class period of 70 minutes. Results from the DCT and telephone interviews showed little effect of instruction on the immediate posttest. Using a pretest/posttest design and a delayed posttest, Morrow (1995) examined the effects of instruction on the realization of complaints and refusals among 20 intermediate ESL learners. The instructional component, one session of three-and-a-half hours, included the use of model dialogs, prescribed speech-act formulae, and various performance activities such as role-plays and games. Oral data were collected by means of semi-structured role-play tasks in which learners were prompted to perform complaints and refusals with peer interlocutors. The holistic scores that were assigned to their production revealed significant improvement from the pretest to the posttest in learners’ levels of clarity and politeness. There were, however, no significant differences between the posttest and delayed posttest data (collected six months after the instructional treatment). Thus, over time it appears that learners made little progress in the use of the targeted features. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the lack of a control group makes the results of this study difficult to interpret.

Overfield (1996) examined the effects of explicit instruction during the realization of apologies, requests, and refusals among fourth-semester learners of Spanish as a FL using a quasi-experimental two-group design. During the two-week instructional treatment, students were exposed to the content of the targeted speech acts by means of video- and audio-taped conversations, teacher talk, and written dialogue. Although no significant changes were found in the use of apol-

ogy and request strategies after the treatment for both the experimental and control groups, learners in both groups showed a decrease in the use of direct refusals (e.g., *I can't*) and a preference for indirect strategies (e.g., reasons/explanations, alternatives, apology).

With respect to the studies that examined the effects of instruction among learners of Spanish as a FL, it should be noted that the type of instrument employed to collect the data produced different task effects. Overfield (1996) employed a DCT questionnaire for collecting both pre/posttest refusal data, whereas Pearson's (2001, 2006) posttests were collected orally but lacked face-to-face interaction with an interlocutor, that is, learners read a situational description and were asked to record their answers orally on audiotape. Using a methodological design similar to that of the 2001 study, Pearson (2006) found little effect of instruction in the realization of requests among second-semester learners of Spanish. Furthermore, the request features investigated were not observed in her data one semester later. Finally, Koike and Pearson (2005) employed the following tests to measure the effects of instruction and feedback: (a) a multiple-choice section in which learners chose the most appropriate turns in a dialogue with suggestions (recognition); and, (b) an open-ended task that required learners to write the turns of a dialogue (written production). To further study the effectiveness of pragmatic instruction in a FL setting, other methods should be used to examine refusals at the discourse level in learner-NS interactions.

Many of the studies described above tested Schmidt's (1990, 1993, 1995, 2001) noticing hypothesis, under which "attention is necessary in order to understand virtually every aspect of second language acquisition" (2001, p. 3). According to this hypothesis, attention to input is a necessary condition for any learning at all, and that what must be attended to is not input in general, but whatever features of the input play a role in the system to be learned. For the learning of pragmatics in a second language, attention to linguistic forms, functional meanings, and the relevant contextual features is required (Schmidt, 1993, p. 35).

Noticing refers to the registering of new information in the input and may be facilitated by means of input flood, different instructional techniques, or various types of input enhancement such as underlining, putting words in bold, or color-coding. According to Sharwood Smith, input enhancement "would simply make more salient certain correct forms in the input" (1993, p. 177). Overall, the role of explicit instruction in the studies above was to direct the learners' attention to relevant features of the input and to help them gain insights into mappings of linguistic form, meaning, and context (Schmidt, 1995, 2001).

Based on the limitations observed in the aforementioned research regarding the effects of explicit instruction on pragmatic development, the current study was guided by the following research questions:

In NS-learner role-play interactions, do the linguistic strategies employed by learners to perform a refusal in formal and informal situations show effects of

instruction on posttest role-plays one week after instruction? If so, do they approximate to NS norms?

In NS-learner role-play interactions, do the linguistic strategies employed by learners to perform a refusal in formal and informal situations show effects of instruction on delayed posttest role-plays one month after instruction? If so, do they approximate to NS norms?

In the current study, approximation to NS norms refers to whether learners who are exposed to the treatment improve their L2 pragmatic ability to use refusal strategies and approximate to the behavior of native speakers (NSs) of the target culture. However, it should be noted that not all Spanish-speaking cultures perform refusals in the same way. Due to the pragmatic variation observed in the sociocultural norms in different varieties of the Spanish-speaking world (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008b; Márquez Reiter & Placencia, 2004, 2005; Placencia & García, 2007), the current study has made an effort to compare learner behavior to the NS norms of one variety of Mexican Spanish in central Mexico with respect to the use of direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals in comparable situations. In addition to Mexican Spanish, the literature on refusals in other varieties will also be addressed (García, 1992, 1999).

METHOD

Participants

The current study adopted a quasi-experimental two-group design that included one experimental group (L2 Spanish), one control group (L2 Spanish), and baseline data from Spanish and English L1 speakers. Before agreeing to participate in the study, all participants read and signed a consent form expressing their willingness to participate. Learners filled out a background questionnaire regarding their L1, Spanish proficiency level, major and minor, frequency of contact with Spanish, preference of Spanish variety, age, number of years studying Spanish, and length of stay in the target community, if applicable. Both learner groups were taking a fifth-semester Spanish class at the university level whose focus was on grammar and composition.¹

Experimental Group

The experimental group consisted of one fifth-semester class of Spanish at a public university in the United States that was comprised of 23 students. The class was taught by the researcher, a NS of Mexican Spanish. Although all 23 learners participated in the pretest, 4 students dropped the class at the beginning of the semester and were excluded from the study. In addition, the data of two learners who were heritage speakers were also excluded. Finally, one student who did not attend the session when the pedagogical intervention was provided was also excluded from the study. Thus, the current study consisted of 16 English speakers (12 females and 4 males) who were learners of Spanish as a FL (mean age = 25.5

years). All learners participated in the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest, and all were exposed to the treatment described below. Eight of these learners were Spanish majors and eight were minors. Only five students had studied abroad as exchange students, all for fewer than three months. The mean number of years studying Spanish as a FL was 5.06 years.

Control Group

The control group consisted of a different fifth-semester class of 22 learners of Spanish as a FL at a public university in the United States. The class was taught by a different instructor, a female NS of Chilean Spanish. Although all students in the class participated in the study, six were excluded for the following reasons: five students did not have English as their native language and one did not complete the posttest. Thus, the control group consisted of 16 English speakers (13 females and 3 males) who were learners of Spanish as a FL (mean age = 22 years), and all participated in pre- and posttests. These learners were not exposed to the treatment materials in class, that is, they did not receive the pedagogical intervention that featured the metapragmatic information (i.e., explicit instruction of refusals) that learners in the experimental group received. The rationale for including a control group in the study is “to allow the investigator to assess whether post-treatment effects observed in the experimental group(s) are in fact the result of the treatment” (Rose & Kasper, 2001, p. 57). Most importantly, as observed by Kasper and Rose, if research is conducted without a control group the results may be less conclusive “because there is always the possibility that any observed effects might not have resulted from the treatment(s)” (2002, p. 270).

According to L2 acquisition research, one common criterion to identify level of proficiency is enrollment in language courses or institutional status (Thomas, 1994). It should be noted that although no proficiency test was used to measure the learners’ proficiency level in the experimental and control groups, all learners were enrolled in a fifth-semester (third year) Spanish grammar and composition class, used the same textbook (*Repase y escribe* by Canteli Dominicis & Reynolds, 2003), and had either taken two years of Spanish at the university level or had placed into this course. Since explicit information regarding the speech act of refusals was not included in this textbook nor included on the class syllabus, it was assumed that both groups lacked control of the pragmatic feature under investigation, namely, how to refuse according to L1 Spanish norms. The fifth-semester learners at this particular university are considered to be at the intermediate proficiency level.²

Baseline Data

In addition to the L2 Spanish data, L1 Spanish and English baseline data were employed to compare the approximation of the refusals produced by learners to those produced by NSs of Spanish and to determine possible transfer from their first language, English. The L1 Spanish data for the current study, collected at a public university in central Mexico, included data from 16 male NSs of Mexican

Spanish. The L1 English data were collected from the same 16 L2 Spanish learners who comprised the experimental group. Using the same learners to collect both the L1 and L2 data increases the degree of validity (Sasaki, 1998), as it will be more evident whether L1 transfer has influenced L2 production and whether changes in pragmatic behavior occur as a result of the pedagogical intervention.

Instrument for Data Collection

The data for the present investigation were collected using open-ended role-plays. To obtain natural speech act performance, Wolfson (1981) pointed out that data should be gathered “through [direct] observation and participation in a great variety of spontaneously occurring speech situations” (p. 9). Other researchers (Cohen, 1998; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003a; Kasper, 2000; Kasper & Dahl, 1991), however, note some disadvantages with respect to gathering naturalistic data. According to the observations of these researchers, the following issues might pose problems for the present study if the data were collected in natural contexts: (a) proficiency level may be difficult to control for both learner groups; (b) the data may not yield sufficient quantities of the pragmatic feature under study; and (c) difficulty in analyzing pragmatic transfer, where a range of data sets (i.e., L1 Spanish, L1 English, and learner data) need to be compared. For the present study, a role-play instrument was selected because of the following three advantages mentioned in Scarcella (1979): (a) it enables the researcher to obtain complete conversational interactions, that is, data include openings and closings of conversations; (b) it allows the researcher to exert some degree of control over the conversation; and (c) it reflects a consciousness of the appropriateness of language use.

For the present study, six role-play situations were employed in the task, including four refusals and two distracters (one complaint and one compliment). Due to space constraints, the four refusal situations employed in this study are briefly described below, followed by the mean number of words for each situation. (Two sample role-plays are provided in Appendix A: refusing a professor’s advice to take a class [advisor, + Power, + Distance] and refusing a friend’s invitation to a birthday party [birthday, - Power, - Distance].) Each role-play description that participants read included contextual information about the setting, the participants, age of interlocutors, speech act, and the power and distance relationship between the interlocutors (Cohen, 2004).

A student refuses a professor’s suggestion to take an extra class.

(advisor, 133 words) (+ Power, + Distance)

An employee declines an invitation from a boss to a farewell party.

(farewell, 131 words) (+ Power, + Distance)

A student declines an invitation to a friend’s birthday party.

(birthday, 148 words) (- Power, - Distance)

A diligent student refuses to lend his notes to a classmate with whom he rarely interacts.

(notes, 150 words) (- Power, + Distance)

During the role-play session, each participant interacted with two different interviewers at different times: a university instructor in Spanish literature, who was a NS of Spanish, for both situations of formal status (farewell, advisor), and a college student, also a Spanish native speaker, for the situations of informal status (birthday, notes). Role-play interactions were conducted in Spanish for the L1 and L2 Spanish groups, and in English for the L1 English group by two NSs of English, a student and a professor. In the first two situations a student refuses a person of higher status (a professor or a boss, respectively) and the relationship between them is distant (+D) and hierarchical (+P). In the third situation, a student refuses a friend's invitation to a birthday party. As specified in the role-play scenario, the relationship between the interlocutors in this situation is close, as the students knew each other well and had previously gone out together. Finally, in the fourth situation a student refuses to lend his notes to a classmate with whom he rarely interacts. Here the role-play description indicates that the students were classmates (-P), but did not interact socially with one another outside of class (+D). Thus, while the conceptualization of social distance varies across cultures and among researchers (Fraser, 1990; Spencer-Oatey, 1996), this variable is used in the present study as follows: Distance is understood in terms of the degree of familiarity, close (- Distance) or distant (+ Distance), between two interlocutors of equal status (university students) as specified in the role-play scenarios. Power, on the other hand, refers to the "vertical disparity between the participants in a hierarchical structure" (Scollon & Scollon, 2001, p. 52).

Finally, although the level of imposition is a variable that may affect participants' strategy choice (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 2001), the description of the role-plays that guided the participants' interaction did not specifically mention this variable. However, the description of the social distance (+/- D) and power (+/- P) in each scenario may have had an effect on the level of imposition of the refusal; that is, from the contextual description given in each scenario (+/- P, +/-D), the participants inferred the weight of imposition required for each refusal situation.

PROCEDURES

Pretest

To eliminate any possible pretest effects on the instructional treatment, the pretest was administered one month prior to the treatment, approximately one month after the semester began. During the pretest phase, learners in both groups were asked to role-play the four situations described above. In two of the situations (birthday, notes) they interacted with a person of equal status (college student) and in the remaining two (advisor, farewell), with a person of unequal status (professor). One week after the pretest data were collected, the treatment materials and pedagogical intervention described below were conducted.

Treatment, Pedagogical Intervention, and Follow-Up Practice

The treatment and pedagogical intervention, administered in Spanish by the researcher, were offered during one entire class session that lasted 75 minutes. An additional 75-minute session was conducted the next time the class met to carry out follow-up communicative practice.

Treatment

The treatment consisted of a cross-cultural comparison segment, where the experimental and control groups participated. A handout including a description of the treatment was provided to participants on the same day that was administered. This treatment was based on the procedures employed by King and Silver (1993) and Takahashi (2001). Specifically, learners in both groups were provided with pragmatic input composed of refusal responses given by NSs of Mexican Spanish (central Mexico) and American English in four refusal situations, two informal (where interlocutors held an equal status) and two formal (where interlocutors held an unequal status). Learners were shown refusal responses produced by both male and female NSs of English and Spanish, and they were asked to read the refusal segments that correspond to their own gender. Learners were instructed to work with another classmate to compare the refusal responses in each situation, to discuss similarities and differences in refusals in English and Spanish, to focus on the strategies used, the degree of (in)directness, the degree of politeness, and the use of *tú* (*you* informal) and *usted* (*you* formal) forms in the Spanish data. Most importantly, learners were asked to examine the information used throughout the entire refusal interaction and discuss it with a classmate.

Pedagogical Intervention

The pedagogical intervention consisted of a metapragmatic instruction segment, where only the experimental group was involved. The content of the metapragmatic instruction was prepared according to the principles presented in Rose and Kasper (2001) in that “the targeted pragmatic feature is described, explained, or discussed [...]. Metapragmatic *instruction* is often combined with metapragmatic discussion, requiring active student participation in a teacher-fronted format or small groups” (p. 53). The same refusal responses discussed during the treatment were shown in a PowerPoint presentation. To direct learners’ attention to the targeted refusal features and to make them salient, the input was manipulated following the procedures described in Sharwood Smith (1993). To maximize the noticing effect of the targeted features in the PowerPoint presentation, the following forms were enhanced in the refusal responses:

Internal modifications to the refusal, such as mitigators were color-coded (e.g., mental state predicates: *creo/pienso que* [*I believe/think that*]; conditional: *podría ir* [*I might be able to go*]; adverbs: *quizá/a lo mejor* [*maybe/perhaps*]; impersonal forms: *no se puede* [*it’s not possible*]).

The strategies used in a refusal response (direct and indirect refusals and

adjuncts to refusals, some of which are presented in Appendix B) were capitalized and set in brackets. During the PowerPoint presentation, learners were taught the pragmatic functions of the conditional to express politeness in Spanish (Chodorowska-Pilch, 2004), the imperfect to express mitigation in Spanish (Haverkate, 1994), the subjunctive to express hesitancy and doubt, impersonal constructions to produce a distancing effect (Haverkate, 1994), the social functions of *usted* (*you* formal) in situations of higher status, and politeness strategies used in refusals (indirect refusals, adjuncts to refusals). In particular, learners were told that indirect strategies were commonly used to negotiate and to end a refusal interaction politely.

Follow-Up Practice

During the second 75-minute session, which was held two days after the session where treatment and intervention were administered, learners of the experimental and control groups were given refusal situations and were asked to role play them with another classmate. Learners of the experimental group role-played various refusal situations in front of the class and were instructed to focus on the strategies used to initiate, negotiate, and end a refusal interaction. After the in-class role-play interactions, the teacher and the students critiqued the interactions and commented on whether they had been carried out following the pragmalinguistic information observed in the cross-cultural comparison segment and according to the information provided during the explicit teaching of refusals. Conversely, the learners in the control group simply role-played the situations and received no feedback. Overall, the purpose of this activity for the experimental group was to raise learners' awareness of cross-cultural differences and of the linguistic strategies and grammatical information employed to perform a refusal in formal and informal situations in Spanish.

Posttest 1 and Posttest 2 (Delayed)

For the learners in the experimental group, posttest 1 was conducted one week after the treatment/intervention, and posttest 2 (delayed) was carried out one month after the treatment/intervention, at the end of the semester, to examine retention of the targeted features over time. Due to academic and time restrictions, role-play data for the control group were collected twice: at the beginning (pretest) and towards the end of the semester (posttest) during the same times of the data collection for the experimental group. These three measures (pretest, posttest 1, and posttest 2) were conducted in the format of role-plays by using the same situations each time.³

DATA ANALYSIS

The 448 role-play interactions (experimental group [pretest, posttest 1, and posttest 2: 192]; control group [pretest and posttest: 128]; L1 Spanish: 64; L1 English: 64) were collected and recorded on tapes. The data were transcribed ac-

ording to a modified version of Jefferson's (1986) transcription conventions (see Appendix C for the transcription notations used in transcribing the data). Then, the transcribed data were coded according to an adapted version of the classification of refusal strategies presented in Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). The classification included direct and indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusals (17 strategies). Unlike direct refusals that were expressed by means of a blunt *no* or an expression of negative ability (e.g., *I can't*), indirect refusals included 11 strategies in which the illocutionary force of a refusal was expressed indirectly and whose meaning was inferred by the hearer in each situation. The strategies used as adjuncts to refusals included five strategies: an expression of agreement, positive opinion, empathy, gratitude, or willingness (see Appendix B for the classification of refusal strategies used in the present study and examples of each strategy). For practical reasons, the results are presented for each general category: direct and indirect strategies, and adjuncts to refusals. Reference is made as well to the analysis of frequent individual strategies in each group.

The strategies that occurred throughout the refusal interaction were examined as head acts and supportive moves (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). Although the refusal head act expresses the illocutionary force of the refusal, the strategies used as supportive moves either preceded or followed the main refusal head act and were often used to initiate, emphasize, justify, mitigate, or conclude a refusal response. Each refusal interaction consisted of at least one episode (e.g., invitation-response), and in the case of the L1 and L2 Spanish data, multiple episodes were often observed (e.g., insistence-response). Furthermore, to address the issue of inter-coder reliability with respect to the classification of strategies, the data were coded by the researcher and subsequently verified by a NS of Spanish who was trained to code and analyze speech act data. In cases where a discrepancy was detected by the NS coder, the researcher and the coder discussed the coding and arrived at an agreement. Overall, the coders agreed on the coding of strategies for 95% of the data.

Finally, a statistical analysis of the data was conducted using version 14.0 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequency of refusal strategies on the three measures, namely, pretest, posttest 1, and posttest 2 (delayed posttest). The statistical tests employed to examine the data included repeated measures analyses of variance (ANOVA), followed by post-hoc comparisons (*t*-tests) when significant differences were observed. The *t*-tests were performed with Bonferroni corrections to adjust for inflated alphas. The selection of and rationale for the statistical tests used in the current study were based on statistical principles employed in the behavioral sciences (Howell, 1999).

RESULTS

This section presents the results for the two research questions of this study. The first one addressed the extent to which pedagogical intervention facilitated the development of pragmatic competence when learners performed refusals within formal and informal situations one week after the treatment (posttest 1). The second one examined the retention of the refusal strategies one month later (posttest 2). After responding both research questions, three refusal interactions between one learner and a NS of Spanish are analyzed sequentially, prior to instruction (pretest) and following it (posttest 1 and posttest 2).

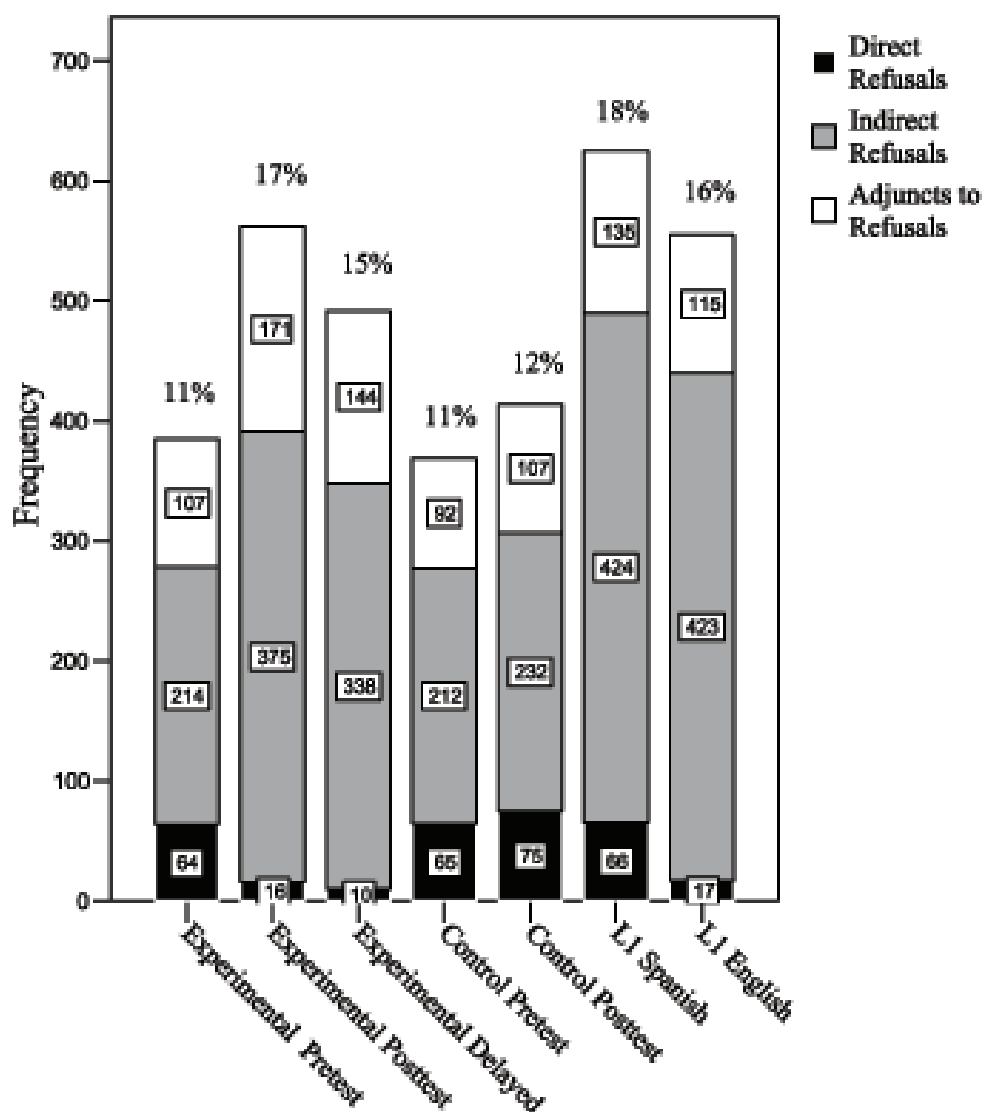
Linguistic Strategies Used in Refusal Interactions Prior to and After Instruction

Figure 1 displays the overall frequency of linguistic strategies to perform a refusal used by all the groups of participants of the study (experimental, control, L1 Spanish, and L1 English group) on pre- and posttests, and across the four refusal interactions. Table 1 shows the numeric results and percentages for these strategies. Linguistic strategies included direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals (see Appendix B for examples of each strategy).

Figure 1. Overall Frequency of Linguistic Strategies Used across four Refusal Situations (Advisor, Farewell, Notes, Birthday) in each Group and in each Measure (pre-, post-, delayed posttests). Includes Direct and Indirect Strategies and Adjuncts to Refusals.

($N = 64$ [16 per group]; $n = 3,402$).

Figure 1.



N = Number of participants

n = Total number of strategies

Table 1: Frequency of Linguistic Strategies to Perform Refusals Used by Each Group of Participants in Each Measure Across Role-Play Situations of Refusal

Group of participants/ measure	Linguistic strategies used across role-play situations of refusal			
	Direct refusal	Indirect refusal	Adjuncts to refusal	Total # of strategies
	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	<i>f</i> (%)	
Experimental/pretest	64 (17%)	214 (55%)	107 (28%)	385
Experimental/posttest 1	16 (3%)	375 (67%)	171 (30%)	562
Experimental/posttest 2	10 (2%)	338 (69%)	144 (29%)	492
Control pretest	65 (18%)	212 (57%)	92 (25%)	369
Control posttest	75 (18%)	232 (56%)	107 (26%)	414
L1 Spanish	66 (10.6%)	424 (67.82%)	135 (21.6%)	625
L1 English	17 (3%)	423 (76%)	115 (21%)	555
Total	313 (9%)	2,218 (65%)	871 (26%)	3,402

Note. $N = 64$ (16 per group); $n = 3,402$

N = Number of participants

n = Total number of strategies

The four groups of participants produced a combined total of 3,402 strategies, including direct and indirect strategies and adjuncts to refusals in both formal and informal situations on all measures. As shown in Figure 1 and Table 1, the L1 Spanish group produced the highest number of strategies of all groups, representing 18% ($n = 625$) of the entire corpus, whereas the L1 English group produced 16% ($n = 555$) in all four situations. While both groups of NSs showed a similar preference for indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals, differences were noted in the use of direct refusals. Among the L1 English speakers, the preference for direct refusals was similar and low across the four situations ($n = 17$ [3%]), whereas the preference for directness in the L1 Spanish group was higher ($n = 66$ [10.6%]). For both groups of NSs, indirectness was the preferred strategy for expressing a refusal followed by adjuncts to refusals. Direct refusals were the least frequently employed.

As seen in Figure 1 and Table 1, with respect to the experimental group, the highest frequency of strategy use was noted on posttest 1 ($n = 562$ [17%]), followed by the posttest 2 with a slight decrease ($n = 492$ [15%]), and the lowest frequency was seen on the pretest ($n = 385$ [11%]). In contrast, no major differences were found in the control group: a slightly higher frequency of strategies obtained on posttest 1 ($n = 414$ [12%]) as compared to the pretest ($n = 369$ [11%]) whose frequency paralleled that of the experimental pretest. In general, these results show that among the learners in the experimental group the preference for indirectness and adjuncts to refusals increased as a result of the treatment and their production approximated the behavior of NSs of Spanish, whereas the control posttest data did not show evidence of a noticeable change. An additional change was observed in the decrease of direct refusals on both experimental posttests, but not for the control group. Finally, with respect to retention of the targeted forms, although the frequency of strategy use in the experimental group decreased slightly on posttest 2, it seems that the preference for indirectness and adjuncts to refusals held constant one month after instruction.

Use of Direct Strategies Prior to and After Instruction

As shown in the examples in Appendix B, direct refusals were realized by means of a flat *no* or a negation of a proposition (e.g., *no puedo venir a la fiesta* [*I can't come to the party*]). Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations of direct strategy use for each measure across the four situations for all groups.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Direct Strategy Use across Role-Play Situations of Refusal in Each Group and Measure

	Role-play situations of refusal							
	Advisor		Farewell		Notes		Birthday	
Group of participants/ measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental/ pretest	.75	.58	1.1	.62	.88	.81	1.25	.93
Experimental/ posttest 1	.06	.25	.31	.60	.19	.40	.44	.51
Experimental/ posttest 2	.19	.40	.13	.34	.19	.40	.13	.34
Control pretest	.81	.75	1.44	.96	.69	.70	1.13	.89
Control post- test	1.0	1.16	1.75	.93	.75	.93	1.19	.66
L1 Spanish	.13	.34	1.69	1.78	.56	.81	1.75	1.84
L1 English	.19	.54	.25	.58	.19	.54	.44	.51

Note. $N = 64$; $n = 313$

N = Number of participants
 n = Total number of strategies
 M = Mean
 SD = Standard Deviation

As the means in Table 2 show, among the L1 Spanish speakers the preference for direct refusals varied according to the situation. In particular, a higher preference for directness was noted when refusing an invitation from a boss (farewell) or a friend (birthday), and a lower preference for directness was shown in the advisor and the notes situations where a higher degree of social distance was perceived. Conversely, for the L1 English group the preference for direct refusals was infrequent in three situations (advisor, farewell, notes), and slightly higher in the birthday situation. Overall, among NSs of Spanish, the preference for direct refusals appears to be influenced by the type of situation, specifically when declining an invitation from a person of equal or higher status. The high levels of directness observed in the situations of farewell and birthday (L1 Spanish) were the result of an insistence on the part of the person extending the invitation. This finding coincides with previous research that has shown that an insistence represents a sociocultural expectation among NSs of Spanish (cf. Félix-Brasdefer, 2003b, 2008b; García, 1992, 1999). As a result, a higher number of direct refusals occurred in the second stage when refusing an invitation.

Due to the low means of direct refusals observed on the posttest measures (see means in Table 2), no statistical tests were conducted. However, it is important to consider the changes observed in the means across measures. As shown in Table 1, among the experimental group there was a change from high levels of directness (pretest) to a decrease in the use of direct refusals (posttest 1) in each situation. With regard to retention, the means on posttest 2 for each situation indicate that a preference for lower levels of directness held constant four weeks later. Furthermore, the pretest data of both the experimental and control groups revealed a high number of direct refusals, with the majority being used as head acts (e.g., *no puedo* [*I can't*]; *no quiero* [*I don't want to*]) across the interaction. The experimental and control pretest means shown in Table 2 are comparable for each situation, which shows that before the treatment both groups behaved similarly. However, when the posttest means of the experimental and control groups were compared, major differences were noted, with the experimental group using lower indices of directness in each situation. For the control group, although slightly higher means were observed on the posttest for direct refusals, a *t*-test revealed no significant differences between the pre- and posttest measures (see means and standard deviations in Table 2).

Use of Indirect Strategies Prior to and After Instruction

The inventory of indirect strategies employed to perform a refusal included 11 different strategies (see Appendix B for strategies and examples). Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations for these strategies used across the refusal in-

teractions in each situation by each group and for each measure.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Indirect Strategy Use across Role-Play Situations of Refusal in Each Group and Measure

Group of participants/ measure	Role-play situations of refusal							
	Advisor		Farewell		Notes		Birthday	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental/ pretest	2.56	1.71	3.19	1.33	3.63	1.75	4.0	1.59
Experimental/ posttest 1	5.25	2.17	4.38	2.34	7.31	4.98	6.50	3.27
Experimental/ posttest 2	4.06	1.73	5.81	2.40	5.81	3.47	5.44	2.73
Control pretest	2.69	1.58	3.13	1.26	3.50	1.59	3.94	1.61
Control post- test	2.69	1.30	4.06	1.88	3.69	1.66	4.06	2.32
L1 Spanish	7.06	4.49	6.25	2.41	5.63	2.53	7.56	3.16
L1 English	6.06	2.02	6.13	3.61	6.38	3.30	7.88	2.85

Note. $N = 64$; $n = 2,218$

N = Number of participants

n = Total number of strategies

M = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

As seen in Table 3, both groups of NSs showed varying degrees of preference for indirectness across the situations. For the L1 Spanish group, higher levels of indirectness were noted when refusing a professor's suggestion (advisor) and when declining an invitation from a friend (birthday), and a lower degree of indirectness was seen when refusing a classmate to lend notes (notes) and when declining an invitation from a boss (farewell). As for the L1 English group, no major situational variation was seen in three of the four situations (advisor, farewell, notes). However, similar to the L1 Spanish group, the L1 English group displayed the greatest preference for indirectness when declining an invitation from a friend (birthday).

To determine whether the instructional treatment had a positive effect on the

use of indirect strategies by the experimental group, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to examine the variance in mean strategy use across the three measures. The results of this analysis revealed significant differences for each situation, as presented below:

Advisor: $F(1, 15) = 12.69, p < .05$

Farewell: $F(1, 15) = 8.70, p < .05$

Notes: $F(1, 15) = 8.88, p < .05$

Birthday: $F(1, 15) = 5.54, p < .05$

Posttests 1 and 2 display a higher frequency and a wider variety of indirect strategies than those observed on the pretest (see means and standard deviations in Table 3). Afterwards, *t*-tests were performed with Bonferroni corrections to adjust for inflated alphas. With respect to the retention of indirect strategies one month after instruction (experimental group only), a comparison of the means for posttests 1 and 2 revealed significant differences in both formal situations: advisor ($t[15] = 2.54, p < .02$) and farewell ($t[15] = -3.44, p < .004$). On the other hand, for both informal situations (notes, birthday), higher levels of indirectness were seen in posttest 1 than in the delayed posttest, however, the difference was not significant. Thus, a preference for indirectness held constant towards the end of the semester for these informal situations.

To support the claim that the improved pragmatic ability observed in the experimental group was the result of the treatment, the means of indirect strategies used by the experimental and control groups were compared for each situation. To examine these effects, a series of *t* tests were performed with Bonferroni corrections to adjust for inflated alphas. The results of an independent samples *t*-test that compared the means obtained on the pretests by the experimental and control groups revealed no significant differences in any of the four situations (see means and standard deviations for indirect strategies in Table 3). This result shows that prior to instruction both groups displayed a similar preference for indirectness. On the other hand, when the means obtained by the experimental and control groups for indirect strategy use were compared on the posttest, significant differences were observed in three situations, as demonstrated below:

Advisor: $t[15] = 4.27, p < .000$

Notes: $t[15] = 2.76, p < .01$

Birthday: $t[15] = 2.43, p < .02$

Although the mean in the farewell situation was slightly higher on posttest 1 of the experimental group ($M = 4.38$) than on the posttest of the control group ($M = 4.06$), the difference was not significant.

Overall, the means in Tables 2 and 3 show that, as a result of instruction, learners in the experimental group displayed an approximation to NS Spanish

norms in the use of indirect refusals. In particular, a greater and a wider variety of indirect strategies was found in each situation. Also, as high levels of directness decreased after the treatment, the preference for indirectness increased. For the control group, however, the preference for directness increased for each situation on the posttest.

Use of Adjuncts to Refusals Prior to and After Instruction

Adjuncts to refusals included expressions of positive opinion, willingness, gratitude, agreement, and empathy (see Appendix B for examples of these strategies). Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for the strategies used as adjuncts to refusals in each situation, by each group, and for each measure.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Strategies Used as Adjuncts to Refusals across Role-Play Situations of Refusal in Each Group and Measure

	Role-play situations of refusal							
	Advisor		Farewell		Notes		Birthday	
Group of participants/measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experimental/pretest	1.63	1.20	1.87	1.09	.94	.85	2.25	1.34
Experimental/posttest 1	2.63	1.26	3.63	2.28	1.44	.63	3.00	1.51
Experimental/posttest 2	2.06	1.44	2.25	1.34	1.88	1.50	2.81	2.04
Control pretest	1.31	1.35	1.56	1.50	.81	.83	2.06	1.24
Control posttest	1.81	1.05	2.00	1.37	.81	1.17	2.06	.93
L1 Spanish	2.31	1.96	3.69	2.21	1.00	.63	1.44	1.32
L1 English	.88	.96	3.69	2.07	1.00	.97	2.13	1.31

Note. $N = 64$; $n = 871$

N = Number of participants

n = Total number of strategies

M = Mean

SD = Standard Deviation

As shown in Table 4, both groups of NSs used adjuncts to refusals with varying preference across the situations. On the one hand, members of the L1 Spanish group showed a greater preference for these strategies in situations where they held a status lower than their interlocutor, and the relationship with him/her was distant and hierarchical (advisor, farewell). On the other hand, the L1 English group displayed a greater preference for adjuncts to refusals when declining an invitation

from a boss (farewell) and refusing an invitation from a friend (birthday).

To determine whether the instructional treatment had a positive effect on the performance of the experimental group, a repeated-measures ANOVA was employed to examine the variance in mean strategy use across the three measures. The results of this analysis revealed significant differences in only one situation: Farewell ($F(1, 15) = 7.43, p < .05$). In the advisor situation, they approached significance ($F(1, 15) = 3.12, p < .06$). This finding shows that only in formal situations (+Power, +Distance) did learners significantly improve the use of adjuncts to refusals, which carries a positive politeness orientation (see means and standard deviations in Table 4). Afterwards, t -tests were performed with Bonferroni corrections to adjust for inflated alphas. With respect to the retention of adjuncts to refusals one month after instruction, a comparison of the means of posttests 1 and 2 of the experimental group revealed no significant differences for three situations (advisor, notes, birthday). This indicates that a preference for expressions used to protect the hearer's positive face held constant towards the end of the semester.

To sustain the claim that the improved pragmatic behavior noted in the experimental group was the result of the treatment, the means of adjuncts to refusals were compared in each situation between the experimental and control groups. The results of an independent samples t -test that compared the means of the pretests of the experimental and control groups revealed no significant differences in the use of adjuncts to refusals in any of the four situations (see means and standard deviations in Table 4), showing that prior to instruction both groups displayed similar pragmatic behavior. Conversely, when the means for refusal adjuncts obtained by the experimental and control groups were compared on the posttest, significant differences were observed in two situations (farewell = $t[15] = 2.45, p < .02$; birthday = $t[15] = 2.12, p < .04$). This finding shows that when declining an invitation in Spanish from a person of equal (birthday) or higher (farewell) status, learners who received instruction (experimental group) employed a significantly higher number of expressions of positive politeness (positive opinion, willingness) to preface or to end a refusal than learners in the control group who used these expressions infrequently.

Sequential Analysis of Refusal Interactions Prior to and After Instruction

To illustrate the sequential distribution and content of the linguistic strategies used during the negotiation of a refusal prior to and after instruction, three complete interactions are sequentially analyzed below. The same learner from the experimental group participated in these interactions, which took place respectively during the pretest, posttest 1 and posttest 2.⁴

Example (1) shows an interaction between a university professor and a student during the pretest phase prior to instruction:

(1) Pre-test, advisor: L2 Spanish, male learner #6 (P: professor; S: student)

- 1 P: Hola, ¿cómo estás, Elliot?
Hi, how are you, Elliot?
- 2 S: Estoy bien
I'm fine
- 3 P: Bien, estaba viendo la lista de clases y quería sugerirte
4 que tomes la clase de composición en español. Sería una
5 buena continuación a la clase de español 310. ¿No te parece?
*Good, I was looking at the list of classes and I wanted to suggest that you
take the composition class in Spanish. It would be a good continuation of
Spanish 310. Don't you think?*
- 6 S: Sí, quiero tomar la clase, pero tengo demasiado clases,
7 otras clases en mi horario, entonces no puedo, pero quiero
*Yes, I want to take the class, but I have too many classes, other classes in
my schedule, so I can't, but I want to*
- 8 P: Bueno, piénsalo, si cambias de idea, vienes a verme después
Well, think about it, if you change your mind, come see me later
- 9 S: Vale
Okay

In the pretest interaction in (1), the opening sequence (greetings) is realized in the first two turns (lines 1-2), followed by the professor's suggestion to take the class in the following turn (lines 3-5). The refusal response is introduced in the fourth turn (lines 6-7) and is prefaced by a partial agreement (*sí* [yes]), an expression of willingness (*quiero tomar la clase* [I want to take the class]), and a justification (lines 6-7). The refusal head act is realized by means of a direct refusal (*entonces no puedo* [so I can't]) followed by an additional expression of willingness (*pero quiero* [but I want to]) to close the sequence. It should be noted that the expression of willingness is realized in the present tense without any internal modification, and is used to introduce and close the refusal response abruptly. In the closing sequence, the professor asks the student to think about the possibility of taking the class (line 8) and the learner closes the refusal interaction hastily with a brief expression of agreement (*vale* [okay]) in line 9, without any intention of further negotiation.

The effects of explicit instruction are shown in example (2) from the same learner. This instance was taken from posttest 1, one week after instruction:

(2) Posttest 1, advisor: L2 Spanish, male learner #6 (P: professor; S: student)

- 1 P: Hola, Elliot, ¿cómo estás?
Hi, Elliot, how are you?
- 2 S: Bien
Fine
- 3 P: Bien, qué bueno. Mira, estaba viendo la lista de clases
4 ((three lines of transcript omitted))
y quería sugerirte que tomes la clase de composición.

- 5 Te ayudaría a mejorar la gramática y vocabulario en español
Good, that's great! Listen, I was looking at the list of classes,
 ((three lines of transcript omitted))
and I wanted to suggest that you take the composition class. It would help you improve your grammar and vocabulary in Spanish
- 6 S: Uh, ¿esa clase es muy difícil?
Uh, is that class very hard?
- 7 P: No es difícil. Es un poco de trabajo porque hay que escribir mucho,
 8 pero te va a ayudar a mejorar tu composición y la organización
 9 de tus ideas, saber más vocabulario al nivel de la escritura
It's not hard. It's a little bit of work because you have to write a lot, but it will help you improve your writing and the organization of your ideas, know more vocabulary at the writing level
- 10 S: Pues, lo que pasa es mi horario está, está lleno de clases difíciles
 11 y quiero tomar un clase de, un clase más de español,
 12 pero en este momento, yo no sé porque me voy a hacer tan ah,
 13 clases de negocios y otros clases y, yo no sé,
 14 si quieres ayudarme durante el semestre,
 15 es posible, pero no sé
Well, the thing is that my schedule is, it's full of hard classes, and I want to take a class on, another Spanish class, but right now, I don't know because I am going to take a lot ah, business classes and other classes and, I don't know, if you-INFORMAL want to help me during the semester maybe, but I don't know
- 16 P: Bueno, ah, yo te lo dejo a tu consideración
 ((two lines of transcript omitted))
 17 Sería excelente mejorar tu habilidad escrita. Por eso pensé en ti
Well, uh, I will leave it up to you
 ((two lines of transcript omitted))
It'd be great to improve your writing skill. That's why I thought of you
- 18 S: Sí, ah me voy a pensarlo y luego le digo
Okay, um I'll think about it and let you-FORMAL know later
- 19 P: Bien. Luego me avisas cuando pienses algo más
Fine, let me know later once you've thought about it a little more

The interaction in (2) starts with an opening sequence (greetings, lines 1-2) and is followed by the professor's advice (lines 3, 4, 5). Unlike the interaction in example (1) in which the learner refuses directly in one turn (line 6-7), the learner's strategic response in (2) is to delay the refusal indirectly by means of asking the professor for additional information, which also promotes negotiation of the refusal (line 6). As a response to the professor's reaction (lines 7-9), the learner provides in a different turn an indirect response including reasons and hesitations (lines 10-13). The learner ends his response with an ambiguous suggestion, indirectly asking for the professor's advice. At lines 14 and 15, the student closes his turn with a conditional response and at the same time avoids a direct refusal (e.g., *no sé [I don't know]*). As a response to the professor's indirect insistence to reconsider the suggestion of taking the class (lines 16, 17), the learner closes the refusal sequence

in a final turn and postpones the refusal indirectly and politely (line 18). His turn is followed by the professor's acceptance of the student's postponement (line 19).

Finally, the interaction in example (3) below shows the response of the same learner in the same situation during posttest 2 (delayed), one month after instruction.

(3) Posttest 2 (delayed), advisor: L2 Spanish, male learner #6 (P: professor; S: student)

- 1 P: Elliot, estaba viendo la lista de materias para el próximo semestre
 2 y quería sugerirte la posibilidad de tomar la clase de composición
 3 en español. No sé qué piensas
Elliot, I was looking at the list of classes for next semester and I wanted to suggest to you the possibility of taking the Spanish composition class, I don't know what you think
- 4 S: Uh, quisiera tomarlo, pero uh, en mi horario, es,
 5 tengo un montón de clases y no creo que tengo um, espacio
 6 para ese clase de composiciones,
 7 posible el año, el próximo año es posible, pero no sé
Uh, I'd like to take it, but um, in my schedule, is, I have a ton of classes and I don't think I have um room for that composition class, possibly the year, next year it's possible, but I don't know
- 8 P: Bueno, pues es tu decisión. Yo te decía esto porque te interesa
 9 el español y esa clase sería una excelente continuación
Well, anyway it's your decision. I was telling you this because you are interested in Spanish and that class would be an excellent continuation
- 10 S: Me encanta aprender español, pero lo que pasa es, es que es,
 11 es un poco bastante este semestre porque tengo mucho clases,
 12 sí, ya tengo muchos clases, sí, y no sé
I love learning Spanish, but the thing is, is that it is, it's a bit too much this semester because I have a lot of classes, yes, I already have many classes, yes, and I don't know
- 13 P: Bueno=
Well
- 14 S: =No creo es posible
I don't think it's posible
- 15 P: Bueno, pues piénsalo. Es tu decisión
Well, think it over. It's your decision
- 16 S: Bueno
Okay

In the delayed posttest interaction in (3), after the professor makes the suggestion of taking an extra class (lines 1-3), the learner prefaces his refusal with an expression of willingness that is internally modified by the imperfect subjunctive (line 4). This preface is followed by reasons (lines 4-6) and the learner ends the turn with an ambiguous alternative and an indefinite reply (line 7). After the professor's indirect insistence (lines 8-9), the learner's next refusal response is introduced by an expression of positive opinion (line 10). This refusal is also followed by reasons

(lines 10-11), and the refusal response ends in line 12 with a partial agreement and an indefinite reply that expresses insecurity on the part of the learner (*sí, y no sé* [yes, and I don't know]). Finally, in the sixth turn (line 14), the learner ends the interaction with a mitigated refusal using a mental state predicate to soften the rejection (*no creo es posible* [*I don't think it's possible*]). This refusal is followed by the terminal exchange (lines 15, 16).

Overall, as a result of explicit instruction, the refusal sequences in examples (2) and (3) are delayed and expressed by a series of indirect refusals across multiple turns. In contrast, the refusal in (1), prior to instruction, seems unmitigated with no attempts to further negotiate a resolution. Furthermore, it should be noted that the learners' ability to negotiate a resolution was partially due to the frequent attempts on the part of the NS to bring the nonnative speaker back on track in the conversation. Thus, it seems that the NSs viewed the nonnative speakers as co-participants during the negotiation of meaning across discourse.

DISCUSSION

The finding that the refusal strategies (direct, indirect, adjuncts to refusals) produced by learners of the control group (not exposed to the instructional treatment) during the pretest and posttest differed significantly from those strategies performed by the students of the experimental group is consistent with observational research in ILP (Rose & Kasper, 2001). This research has shown that the production of learners who do not receive instruction in pragmatics deviates significantly from the behavior of NSs in different areas of pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose, 2005). In fact, when two uninstructed ESL learners showed slow progress in pragmatic development, Ellis (1992) concluded that “[i]t may be necessary to create such a need artificially and perhaps, also, to draw learners' conscious attention to the way in which language is used to encode social meaning” (p. 21). Thus, the results of the present study suggest that while implicit or incidental learning of pragmatics may be possible (Billmyer, 1990; House, 1996), “consciously paying attention to the relevant features in the input and attempting to analyze their significance in terms of deeper generalizations are both highly facilitative” (Schmidt, 1993, p. 35).

In this study, research question 1 investigated the extent to which pedagogical intervention may facilitate the learning of refusal strategies by fifth-semester learners of Spanish as a FL one week after explicit instruction. One clear change from the pretest to posttest 1 in the experimental group was a decrease in the use of inappropriate direct refusals in all four situations. According to Kasper (1997), bluntness (lack of mitigation) is a compensatory strategy and represents modality reduction. The results of the present study demonstrate that bluntness is an interlanguage phenomenon that was often employed by uninstructed learners (experimental pretest and control pre/posttests) to end an interaction abruptly. Most importantly, whenever the communicative task exceeds the speaker's L2 competence, the

most common coping phenomenon is simplification. Furthermore, it was found that after learners were exposed to the instructional treatment, their performance displayed an increase in the frequency of various indirect strategies across turns including reason/explanation, mitigated refusals, indefinite reply, postponement, alternative, and request for information. In addition, the content of these strategies was more elaborate and contained evidence of internal modification to soften direct refusals, for example, the use of the conditional or imperfect to express politeness in Spanish (Chodorowska-Pilch, 2004; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004a, 2004b; Haverkate, 1994). In this respect, Félix-Brasdefer (2008a) found that learners who received metapragmatic instruction in the use of internal modification (e.g., the conditional, the imperfect, the subjunctive, mental state predicates, tag questions) across refusal interactions outperformed learners who were not exposed to the instructional treatment.

Research question 2 investigated whether the production of refusal strategies by learners in the experimental group showed retention of these strategies on the delayed posttest role-plays four weeks after the treatment (posttest 2). For the most part, the use of refusal strategies observed on the delayed posttest held constant and paralleled the frequency and content of the targeted features noted in the posttest 1 data (one week after instruction). Although the means for indirect strategy use showed a slight decrease on the delayed posttest in all four situations, it is unknown whether these means would keep declining over time or whether they would eventually level off. In a different study, Pearson (2006) found little effect of instruction on the production of directives among second-semester learners of Spanish as a FL. The lack of significant instructional effects in Pearson's study may be due to the limited time spent on the administration of the treatment (polite requests, softeners) and a lack of a follow-up session to recycle the pragmatic information provided during the treatment. In the current study, however, pedagogical intervention (metapragmatic instruction of refusal responses + pragmatic instruction) was followed by an extra class where learners practiced role-plays and further discussed the pragmatic and grammatical functions of refusal responses in the classroom.

The issue of whether pragmatic development is maintained or changes over time is still controversial in the limited literature on ILP that has employed a delayed posttest. In a study of intermediate ESL learners, Morrow (1995) reported no significant differences between the posttest and the delayed posttest in the use of politeness strategies after six months. However, because no control group was used, it is impossible to know whether the retention of the targeted pragmatic features reflected the information acquired as a result of the treatment, or whether the learning context of these learners influenced their pragmatic development. The importance of delayed posttests in pedagogical interventional research has been highlighted by Kasper and Rose: “[D]elayed posttests should be a standard design feature in interventional research because without their use it is not possible to determine whether the gains that students made through instruction are durable”

(2002, p. 272).

The current study used a combination of techniques to analyze the effect of explicit teaching on the speech act of refusals. Although it may be argued that each segment used in the treatment may produce different instructional effects, for the present study, the results from the experimental posttests 1 and 2 seem to suggest that the effect of instruction may have been the result of a combination of both the cross-cultural comparison segment and exposure to metapragmatic instruction, followed by communicative practice. For the current investigation, a combination of both techniques to analyze the effects of explicit teaching of refusals was utilized because it has been demonstrated that a combination of explicit and implicit techniques has more instructional efficacy than one single technique (Martínez-Flor, 2006). However, future research should tease these two variables apart to investigate whether each technique used in this study would produce different learning outcomes.

Finally, the NS data analyzed in this study lend support to existing literature in that dispreferred responses such as refusals occur as second pair parts in conversation, are delayed across turns, and are used to negotiate a resolution (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003b; Gass & Houck, 1999; Herrero Moreno, 2002; Pomerantz, 1984). Regarding NS Spanish norms, García examined refusals to invitations in Peruvian (1992) and Venezuelan (1999) Spanish, and found that refusal responses are realized in stages: invitation-response and insistence-response(s). In García's studies the strategies used by her NSs are similar to the ones analyzed in this study. Most importantly, García (1992, 1999) showed that an insistence represents a sociocultural expectation among NSs of Peruvian and Venezuelan Spanish, and Félix-Brasdefer (2003a, 2008b) found a similar pattern in other varieties of Latin American Spanish. This behavior, however, differs from U.S. English refusals to invitations, as an insistence is not often considered a sociocultural expectation in the U.S. context (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003a, 2008c). Overall, the refusal information provided in the treatment and the results obtained on the posttests of the experimental group showed an approximation to NS Spanish norms.

LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Due to attrition factors and institutional restrictions, the present study employed only 16 fifth-semester learners of Spanish as a FL, including 12 females and 4 males (experimental group) and 13 females and 3 males (control group), and the pragmatic development of these learners was studied over one semester. Due to the dominance of female learners, these results are mostly representative of female speech. It should be noted that the NSs in the L1 Spanish group were Mexican male speakers. Inclusion of female NSs would have allowed the researcher to compare the female learner along gender lines. One study that examined Peruvian female and male refusals found that females were more verbose in their responses than

males (García, 1999). However, in the current study, the female and male learner data did not show noticeable gender differences. Moreover, in the current study no attention was given to individual differences such as motivation and its relationship to proficiency level as a result of implicit instruction (Takahashi, 2005). This line of research is left open for future examination. Finally, the results from posttest 2, collected four weeks after instruction, should be interpreted with caution. Ideally, to observe retention of the pragmatic features, a delayed posttest should be carried out six months or longer after instruction using a control group to observe post-treatment effects. For the present study, it was not possible to carry out a second delayed posttest after the semester ended because most students had graduated.

In addition, although there are different varieties of Spanish in Latin America and Spain, the Spanish baseline data used as the target language was from central Mexico. The refusal data presented in the treatment, the researcher, and both interlocutors during the role-play situations were representative of this variety. Despite the pragmatic variation observed among different varieties of Spanish (cf., Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b; Márquez Reiter & Placencia, 2004, 2005; Placencia & García, 2007), Mexican Spanish was the variety that was used to compare approximation of the learner data to L1 Spanish norms. Thus, the NS norm adopted in this study included only one variety of Spanish, which represents a limitation that seems difficult to overcome.

Consonant with pragmatics research in instructed language learning (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose, 2005), the findings of this study suggest the following implications for teaching pragmatics in the classroom. Language teachers should make an effort to raise the learners' pragmatic awareness through various classroom activities, such as the use of videos that feature different speech acts, role-play situations carried out between NSs, or cross-cultural analysis of certain aspects of pragmatics in the target language. Furthermore, an attempt should be made to sensitize learners to context-based variation and language use in the classroom to discuss issues such as politeness, indirectness, and distance in both the native and target language (Rose, 1994).

Given that the results of this study show that learners can benefit from instruction, it is important for teacher educators to consider complementing their FL teaching with a pragmatics component. While many textbooks lack this information, there are several current resources available on the internet that can be used in the classroom for this purpose. For example, using tools of conversation analysis, Félix-Brasdefer (2006) provides a pedagogical model for teaching the negotiation of refusals in Spanish as a FL. The model includes research-based pedagogical recommendations for teacher educators, samples of on-line refusal interactions, and other speech acts from NSs of Spanish and English that can be accessed directly from a website in the classroom. Further, there are other resources developed for teaching pragmatics such as the on-line lesson plans in Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) addressed to EFL and ESL learners (<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/engteaching/pragmatics.htm>). An additional resource for teaching pragmatics in

the FL classroom developed by Cohen and Ishihara (2004) includes self-access, web-based materials such as strategies for learning speech acts in Japanese (<http://www.iles.umn.edu/IntrotoSpeechActs>).

CONCLUSION

This study was designed to address the important issue of pragmatic development as a result of pedagogical intervention by means of metapragmatic instruction on refusal strategies among fifth-semester learners of Spanish as a FL. The results of the current study are consistent with previous research that found that without some form of instruction various aspects of pragmatic competence do not develop sufficiently (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Rose, 2005; Rose & Kasper, 2001). In general, it is hoped that the results of the present investigation will provide teacher educators with insights and learning opportunities to improve the development of pragmatic competence in L2 and FL contexts. In particular, it is hoped that the need to raise pragmatic awareness in the classroom has been highlighted. Lastly, as researchers and teacher educators, we need to further our attempts to measure various aspects of L2 pragmatic competence when assessing speaking proficiency in a L2 and incorporate a rigorous component for assessing L2 pragmatic production.

NOTES

¹ The textbook employed in the course in which both learner groups were enrolled was *Repase y escriba* (Canteli Dominicus & Reynolds, 2003), which features a selection of literary readings in Spanish followed by grammatical explanations and vocabulary review, among other things. The grammar instruction provided in the text includes minimal information on the use of specific grammatical structures commonly used to carry out various speech acts such as refusals, requests, or apologies. For example, these grammatical explanations include the use of the conditional form to express politeness as well as lexical forms that are often utilized to initiate or to mitigate the negative effects of disagreements (e.g., *digo* 'I mean').

² In general, when intact classes are chosen for research purposes, it is difficult to control for individual student variables such as gender, length of study abroad, and the extent of their contact with the target language. Although this may pose a problem for internal validity, the non-random assignment of participants to groups is a standard practice in interventional pragmatics research (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Further, with regard to the comparability in ability level between the experimental and the control groups, the fact that students in both groups were at a similar level of instruction does not tell us that they were comparable in terms of knowledge and skill in Spanish. Although the learners in each group showed different learning and acquisitional profiles, research in ILP relies on classroom research that utilizes intact classes at similar levels of proficiency (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

³ Due to the fact that the same refusal situations were used across the three measures, it is likely that some practice effects may have occurred between these tests during the same refusal situations.

⁴ The learner's data that will be presented in what follows was chosen because it was considered to be representative of the experimental group. It illustrates the noticeable change in the learner's pragmatic ability as a result of the instructional treatment. The data exemplify the first role-play interaction (a student refuses a professor's suggestion to take an extra class) and it was chosen to illustrate a situation to which all learners were exposed.

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APPENDIX A

Sample role-plays of refusals

Refusal to an advisor's suggestion to take a class (+ Power, + Distance)

Imagine that you are in (Spanish-speaking country of your preference). You are a first semester senior at the (University of Spanish-speaking country) and since pre-registration is next week, you are planning your schedule for your final semester. You have already put together a tentative schedule, but you need to get your advisor's approval. Although you took one course with this professor during your freshman year, you haven't had any contact with him other than in advising sessions once a semester. You made an appointment for him to review your schedule and you go to his office for the meeting. In preparation for your meeting, your advisor has been reviewing your transcript and during the course of the conversation, he suggests that you take an additional course in Spanish, but you don't want to.

Refusal to a friend's invitation to attend a birthday party (- Power, - Distance)

Imagine that you are in (Spanish-speaking country of your preference). You are walking across campus when you run into a good friend of yours whom you haven't seen for about a month. You and he have been studying in the same program at the university for three years, and have studied and written papers together in the past, but you don't have any classes together this semester since you have been doing an internship off-campus. He invites you to his 21st birthday party at his house next Friday night at 8:00 p.m. He tells you that a group of mutual friends that you both used to hang out with and whom you haven't seen since the semester started will also be there. You know that this would be a good opportunity to see everyone again and to celebrate this special occasion with him. Unfortunately you cannot make it.

APPENDIX B

Classification of refusal strategies

(adapted from Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990)

I. Direct refusals		
Flat <i>no</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Negation of a proposition	<i>No puedo venir a la fiesta</i>	<i>I can't come to the party</i>
II. Indirect refusals		
1. Mitigated refusal	<i>Creo que no es posible</i> <i>No podría asistir</i> <i>No se puede</i>	<i>I don't think it's possible</i> <i>I wouldn't be able to attend</i> <i>It's not possible</i>

2. Reasons/ explanations	<i>Tengo planes/Tengo un compromiso</i>	<i>I have plans/I have a commit- ment</i>
3. Indefinite reply	<i>No sé si tendré tiempo Voy a tratar de estar ahí, pero no te prometo nada</i>	<i>I don't know if I'll have time I'll try to be there, but I can't promise you anything</i>
4. Regret/ apology	<i>Discúlpame Lo siento mucho</i>	<i>Forgive me I'm really sorry</i>
5. Alternative	<i>¿Por qué no salimos a comer la próxima semana?</i>	<i>Why don't we go out for din- ner next week?</i>
6. Postpone- ment	<i>Prefiero tomar esta clase el próximo semestre Voy a pensarlo</i>	<i>I'd rather take this class next semester I'll think about it</i>
7. Repetition	<i>¿El lunes a las 2:00 p.m.?</i>	<i>Monday at 2:00 p.m.?</i>
8. Request for information	<i>¿A qué hora es la fiesta?</i>	<i>What time is the party?</i>
9. Set condi- tion for future or past accep- tance	<i>Si tengo que tomar la clase después, pues la tomo Si me hubiera dicho antes, habría aceptado</i>	<i>If I have to take the class later, I'll take it then If you had told me earlier, I would have accepted</i>
10. Clarifica- tion request	<i>¿Dijo composición en español?</i>	<i>Did you say Spanish composi- tion?</i>
11. Wish	<i>Ojalá pudiera quedarme</i>	<i>I wish I could stay</i>
III. Adjuncts to refusals		
1. Positive Opinion	<i>¡Felicidades por su as- censo. Me da mucho gusto!</i>	<i>Congratulations on your pro- motion. I'm very glad!</i>
2. Willingness	<i>Me encantaría, pero...</i>	<i>I'd love to, but...</i>
3. Gratitude	<i>Gracias por la invitación</i>	<i>Thanks for the invitation</i>
4. Agreement	<i>Sí, de acuerdo, pero...</i>	<i>Yes, I agree, but...</i>
5. Empathy	<i>Entiendo que está en un aprieto, pero...</i>	<i>I understand you are in a bind, but...</i>

APPENDIX C

Transcription notations

According to Jefferson (1986), the transcription notations used were

A. Contiguous utterances

- = Placed when there is no interval between adjacent utterances and the second utterance is linked immediately to the first

B. Intervals

- () Time in seconds is indicated within parentheses
Placed within an utterance mark intervals or pauses in the stream of talk
- Marks a short untimed pause within an utterance

C. Characteristics of speech delivery

- : Marks a lengthened syllable or an extension of a sound
- ::: Mark prolongation of a sound or syllable
- . Marks falling intonation
- , Marks continuing intonation
- ? Marks rising intonation

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