

THE EMERGENCE OF PRAGMATIC SOFTENERS IN SPANISH
BY INSTRUCTED LEARNERS OF SPANISH
IN THE STUDY ABROAD AND
IMMERSION CONTEXTS

by

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ABSTRACT

THE EMERGENCE OF PRAGMATIC SOFTENERS IN SPANISH
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IMMERSION CONTEXTS

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This dissertation explores and expands the term *pragmatic softening* as produced and perceived by L2 learners of Spanish. The learners included 36 intermediate-level learners studying in a U.S.-based immersion academy and those studying in a study-abroad context in Merida, Mexico. Preliminary evidence from these learners indicates that pragmatic softeners are rightly included in Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory as a marginal member of the PAST category that is acquired after the more central member—the *deictic past*—has been acquired. Additionally, it is argued that the term *pragmatic softening* itself needs to be fleshed out so that it, too, is divided into its subcomponents just as the *deictic past* is broken down. Based on the data in this study, it is also suggested that among these subcomponents would exist some sort of an acquisitional sequence of the seven PAST pragmatic softeners, since they are acquired at different rates and times.

This dissertation also explores whether grammatical competency and prescriptive knowledge (as measured by production of the conditional and past subjunctive) had any bearing on the production of pragmatic softeners. It is determined that the students who answered prescriptive knowledge questions correctly were more likely to also produce pragmatic softeners.

Some clear trends are observed in learner perception of pragmatic softener appropriateness, as well. Some of these trends, however, are not congruent with native speaker evaluations.

Finally, the question of whether language-learning context shaped pragmatic softener acquisition is addressed. It is determined that the immersion students were more likely to fluctuate in their production of and attitude towards pragmatic softeners than the study abroad group. The immersion group was also more likely to use other mitigating devices on the oral task.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, I address the acquisition of pragmatics in Spanish as a second language (L2). Specifically, this dissertation explores the acquisition of pragmatic softeners by instructed learners of Spanish in two distinct language-learning environments—a U.S.-based immersion academy and a study abroad program. I am expressly interested in acquisition as it relates to production and appropriateness perception of pragmatic softeners.

In this chapter, I present the problem, the background, the rationale, the research questions, and the expectations of the study. I conclude the chapter with an overview of how the rest of the dissertation is structured.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In 1996, Anderson and Shirai offered an intriguing account for pragmatic softener acquisition. The theory is often referred to as the *Aspect Hypothesis*. Utilizing the Prototype Theory (Rosch 1975; Rosch 1978; Taylor 1989), Anderson and Shirai suggest that when L2 learners acquire a category of language, they acquire the central (or prototypical) members first and then gradually extend the scope of their learning to the marginal members of the category. They further claim the PAST as such a category, with the prototypical member being the *deictic past* and a marginal member being the ‘counterfactual or pragmatic softener’. This follows Taylor (1989), who states that the PAST is a “polysemous category consisting of three functional components: past tense proper, unreality or counterfactuality, and pragmatic softening” (Salaberry 2000: 72)¹.

¹ The use of the term “PAST” here is meant as a semantic or conceptual category, which often has morpho-syntactic instantiations. “Past tense proper” refers specifically to verbal inflectional information.

According to Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory, before a counterfactual or pragmatic softener can be acquired, the *deictic past*—a more prototypical member of PAST—must first be acquired. The most prototypical member of the *deictic past* is considered by Taylor (1989) to be one reflecting the “completion in the immediate past of a punctual event [*achievement*], the consequences of which are perceptually salient at the moment of speaking” (p. 243). The achievement verb being the most prototypical member of the deictic past is a view supported by the research of many others in the field (Sachs 1983; Anderson and Shirai 1996, among others).

As a point of clarification, the verb type *achievement* is one of four types of *lexical aspect* (achievement, accomplishment, activity, state) that can be traced back to philosopher Zeno Vendler (1957). Lexical aspect is also known as *situational aspect*, *inherent aspect*, and *aktionsart*. This type of aspect is different than grammatical aspect (perfective and imperfective) because it deals with the inherent semantic properties of a verb. Vendler proposed that some verbs—such as *fall*, *die*, *drop*, and *slip*—have a clear endpoint and are non-durative. He coined these *achievement verbs*. These contrast with *accomplishment verbs*—such as *make*—which have a clear endpoint but are also durative in nature. Similarly, *activity verbs*—such as *run* and *play the guitar*—are durative but do not have a clear endpoint. Lastly, *state verbs*—such as *believe*, *think*, and *like*—have no duration and no clear endpoint.

Anderson and Shirai (1996), having proposed that achievement verbs are the most prototypically PAST verbs, tie this to their acquisition theory. This theory—the *Aspect Hypothesis*—relies heavily on Vendler's lexical aspect definitions and consists of the following four components:

- a) Learners will initially restrict past or perfective marking to achievement and accomplishment verbs (those with an inherent end point) and later gradually extend the marking to activities and then states, with states being the last category to be marked consistently.
- b) In languages with an imperfective marker (such as Spanish), imperfective past appears much later than perfective past and then is initially restricted to states and activity predicates, then extended to accomplishments, and finally to achievements.
- c) Progressive marking is initially restricted to activity predicates, and then extended to accomplishments and achievements.
- d) Progressive marking is not incorrectly overextended to states.

Anderson and Shirai 1996: 559

According to components *a* and *b* of the Aspect Hypothesis, perfective marking will be acquired in the following order (achievement → accomplishment → activity → state), while imperfective marking will be acquired in the exact opposite order (state → activity → accomplishment → achievement) at a later point in the developmental process. Thus, under the prototype account, Spanish achievement verbs marked with the perfective grammatical aspect (for example, *llegué* 'I arrived') are much more prototypical than are achievement verbs marked with the imperfective (for example, *llegaba* 'I was arriving').

After Anderson and Shirai (1996) spell out the Aspect Hypothesis, they go on to claim that a learner must acquire the *deictic past* in its entirety before the learner can acquire more marginal members such as pragmatic softeners that use the past in a less prototypical way. They theorize the following:

deictic past (achievement → accomplishment → activity → state → habitual or iterative past²) →
counterfactual or pragmatic softener

Anderson and Shirai's (1996) structure of the category of PAST is based on English data, such as a question that contains the pragmatic softener *could*, as in "Could you pass the salt?" Anderson and Shirai (1996) assume that the modal *could* carries past tense and that the past tense usage creates pragmatic softening. Since English does not possess imperfective marking in the past tense, the past structure above is assuming that the *deictic past* includes only perfective markings. Since Spanish **does** contain imperfective past markings, we need to modify the past structure to accommodate this fact. We can do so by delving deeper into the exact sequence of

²²In this account, the fifth component of the *deictic past* is habitual or iterative past. Anderson and Shirai (1996) explain this component stating, "*Iterative* is used for repeated actions on a single occasion, *habitual* for repeated situations over an extended period of time" (p. 557). Thus, the sentence, "He is coughing" would be considered iterative since it is the same achievement verb occurring multiple times in a single occasion. There is semantic, morphological, and frequency evidence that this type of use should be separated from typical achievement verb acquisition and should be considered a more marginal member (Anderson 1993; Bickerton 1981; Dowty 1979).

acquisition of perfective and imperfective morphology, as seen in Figure 1.1 below.

Stage	Emergence and development of morphology
Stage 1	Use of present morphology (or noninflected forms) for tense/aspect reference
Stage 2	Perfective morphology emerges in achievements.
Stage 3	Imperfective morphology emerges in states.
Stage 4	Perfective morphology spreads to achievement predicates and imperfective spreads to activities.
Stage 5	Imperfective morphology spreads to accomplishments.
Stage 6	Perfective morphology spreads to activities.
Stage 7	Imperfective morphology spreads to achievements.
Stage 8	Perfective morphology spreads to states.

Figure 1.1 Emergence of perfective and imperfective morphology according to the Aspect Hypothesis (Anderson 1991)

Many scholars have attempted to test this developmental sequence in L2 settings. Comajoan (2005:33) concisely summarizes the work that has been done to date, saying:

Influenced by the works of Anderson and Bardovi-Harlig, researchers studied the acquisition of past morphology in U.S. university tutored environment for languages other than English, mostly Spanish (Camps 2000, 2002; Hasbún 1995; Ramsay 1990; Salaberry, 2000) and French (Bergström 1995; Kaplan 1987; Salaberry 1998). A few other studies also investigated L2 acquisition of verbal morphology in other tutored environments: Martínez-Baztán (1994) and Cadierno (2000) investigated the topic from the perspective of Dutch and Danish university learners of Spanish, and Shirai and Kurono (1998) studied the AH in the L2 acquisition of Japanese.

The common pattern of the L2 Spanish acquisition studies was that learners initially used present morphology for past context. At a later stage, preterite morphology emerged in telic predicates (accomplishments and achievements), imperfect morphology was almost nonexistent, and when imperfect morphology emerged it did so in state and activity predicates (Ramsay 1990; Hasbún 1995).

Given that these stages are corroborated by several empirical studies, we can re-structure the PAST prototypical structure proposed by Anderson and Shirai (1996) as follows:

deictic past (accomplishments-perfective → states-imperfective → achievement-perfective → activities-imperfective → accomplishments-imperfective → activities-perfective → achievements-imperfective → states-perfective³) → **counterfactual or pragmatic softening**

³The English sequence includes the habitual or iterative past as one of the marginal members of the deictic past. Since not as much work has been done on the habitual or iterative past in Spanish as it relates to the Aspect Hypothesis, I will not be including it in the sequence.

It is important to note that pragmatic softening is slightly different than counterfactual softening, as seen in examples 1 and 2 below (Anderson and Shirai 1996).

1) *Could you help me with this project?*

2) Speaker 1: *Can you help me with this project?*

Speaker 2: *If I had enough time, I would do it.*

In example 1, the speaker is softening the request by using the conditional *could*. By using this verb instead of the present-tense verb *can*, the speaker is actually creating some distance between himself and his request. This is pragmatic softening—the use of a different tensed verb to mitigate a speech act. Speaker 2 in example 2, on the other hand, is also mitigating but in a different way. He is avoiding directly saying ‘no’ to the request that has been made of him. Instead, he chooses to make a statement that is counterfactual in nature. The fact is that for Speaker 2 to help Speaker 1 with the project, he would need time. By saying something contrary to the truth (i.e. that he doesn’t have time), he is actually softening his refusal. In Anderson and Shirai (1996) both of these types of softening—pragmatic and counterfactual—would be the most marginal members of the PAST prototype. Although counterfactual softening is certainly related to the topic at hand, the focus of this paper is limited to pragmatic softeners only. Thus, this study operates from the following sequence (which, unlike the sequence above, does not mention counterfactual softening):

deictic past (accomplishments-perfective → states-imperfective → achievement-perfective → activities-imperfective → accomplishments-imperfective → activities-perfective → achievements-imperfective → states-perfective) → **pragmatic softening**

This sequence is henceforth called the Spanish Past Category Sequence (SPCS).

The bulk of the research that has been conducted previously on the Aspect Hypothesis has focused on the earlier stages of the sequence—not on the pragmatic softening aspect (Ramsay, 1990; Hasbún, 1995; Camps, 2000, 2002; Salaberry, 2000). To date, I have not found

any research that focuses on the Aspect Hypothesis as it relates to the acquisition of pragmatic softening. While this theory seems palatable, there are no empirical studies to support it. In fact, Bardovi-Harlig (1999) says of the Anderson and Shirai (1996:696) prototypical PAST, “[This] sequence remains to be tested in its later stages, and points to a good place to start an investigation”. So, this dissertation aims to do just that—to ascertain how this developmental sequence (and, specifically, the claim that pragmatic softening is a marginal member of the PAST prototype) plays out with real language learners. This problem is approached by way of a longitudinal study.

1.2 Background

To find out how the SPCS plays out with real language learners, I first lay out what is meant by the term *pragmatic softener* and which specific softeners are of interest to this study. J.R. Taylor (1989:149-54) describes a pragmatic softener as a “marker of ‘tact’” which “has been conventionalized in the meanings of the past tense modals”. The fact that in the SPCS pragmatic softeners are paired with the *deictic past* is no coincidence. The mitigating or “tactful” nature of softeners is largely tied to deixis. According to the SPCS it is necessary for L2 Spanish learners to acquire the *deictic past* before they can acquire pragmatic softening. This *deictic past* (albeit quite diverse in the grammatical and lexical aspect categories that it encompasses) follows Levinson’s (1983) definition of PAST: an utterance which points to an instance that was completed prior to coding time (CT). Since pragmatic softeners are not pointing to an utterance that was completed prior to CT, they can be assumed to be not part of the *deictic past*. Bardovi-Harlig (1998:695) explains this process by stating that “acquisitionally, we cannot expect pragmatic extension of tense-mood-aspect forms until the core deictic meaning has been acquired”. This is, in fact, the very problem with pragmatic softeners. Unlike prototypical past-tense verbs, they use past tense morphology to point to an action that, as of CT, has yet to be completed. They are still PAST because of their morphology, but they are not *deictic past* because they do not refer to an action completed prior to CT. These softeners involve the speaker moving away from the prototypical member of the past category—the *deictic past*—to a

more complex usage in which the speaker—by using past tense morphology—adds distance between himself and the deictic center. Taylor (1989:153) says that “by using the past tense, the speaker can as it were distance himself from the speech act that he is performing”.

Consider the following utterances in Spanish:

3) Quiero decirte algo.
I-want-PRS to-tell-you something
'I want to tell you something'

PST: Past Tense PRS: Present Tense IMP: Imperfective Aspect SUBJ: Subjunctive Mood

4) Quería decirte algo.
I-want-PST:IMP to-tell you something
'I wanted to tell you something'

5) Quisiera decirte algo.
I-want-PST:IMP:SUBJ to-tell-you something
'I would like to tell you something [+PAST].'

In utterance 3, the speaker chooses a present tense verb that points to a present tense action. In doing this, he is remaining close to his deictic center, which is the CT of the utterance. On the space-time continuum, the tense used in the utterance would be very close in time to the action pointed to, as seen in Figure 1.2.

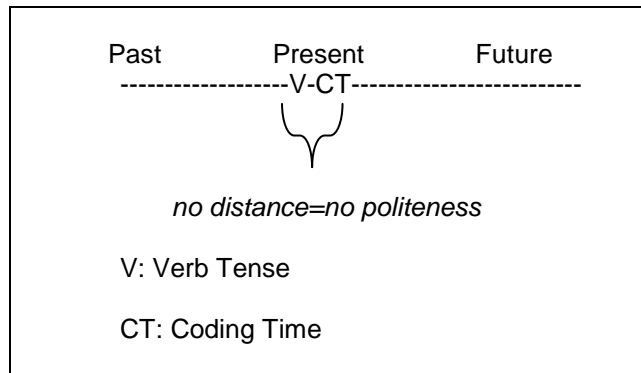


Figure 1.2: Space-time continuum for utterance 3

In utterance 4, however, the meaning of the speaker is more ambiguous. While one interpretation could be that the speaker wanted to communicate with the interlocutor in the past but now has changed his mind, another interpretation is that the speaker is using the past tense verb *quería* to indicate a present desire to talk with the interlocutor. That is, he is saying that he *wanted* to tell

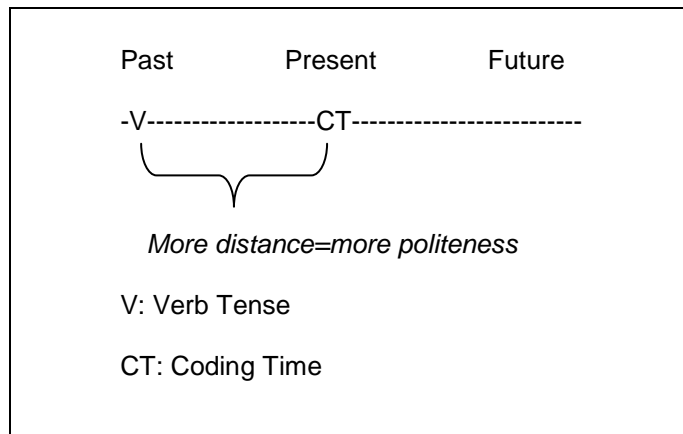


Figure 1.4 Space-time continuum for utterance 5

Spanish linguist Henk Haverkate explains why an imperfect (past) subjunctive verb creates a more intense softening (and therefore is more polite) than a past tense verb alone:

From a cognitive point of view, the strategic effect produced by the use of the imperfect subjunctive can be explained in terms of a two-fold metaphorical process. Firstly, a polite interpretation is suggested on account of the fact that the subjunctive reflects, in a figurative sense, the distance between the real world existing at coding time and the virtual world referred to by the propositional content of the speech act. Secondly, the preterite tense of the subjunctive expresses a temporal distance between the present, which includes the moment of speaking, and the past, which is the domain of reference expressed by the paradigm. Both types of distance, now, create a strategic two-dimensional space which may be filled by a non-cooperative reaction by the hearer without the speaker losing face. (Haverkate 2002: 39)

Having now established what pragmatic softening is, I will next identify which specific softeners are of interest to this study. As mentioned above in Taylor's (1989:149-54) definition of pragmatic softeners, softeners "[have] been conventionalized in the meanings of the past tense modals". In Spanish, instances of pragmatic softening of past tense modals are confined to three verbs, *querer* 'to want', *poder* 'to be able to', and *deber* 'to ought to' (Haverkate 2002). Unlike English, each of these modals has both a conditional and a past subjunctive use that is pragmatic in nature. So, in essence, there are two ways in Spanish to say each of the English words *could*, *would*, and *should*. *Poder* ('could') can be translated both as the conditional *podría* and the past

subjunctive *pudiera*. *Deber* ('should') can be translated both as the conditional *debería* and the past subjunctive *debiera*. *Querer* ('would') can be translated both as the conditional *querría* and the past subjunctive *quisiera*.

Querer is unique in that it has a third option for softening in addition to the imperfect subjunctive and the conditional. An example of this type of usage is given in sentence 6 below. In this example, we see that the imperfect indicative for the verb *querer* can also function as a pragmatic softener. On the other hand, the imperfect indicative of *poder* and *deber* do not result in any mitigation, as seen in sentences 7 and 8.

6) Quería hablar contigo.
I-was-wanting to-talk to-you
Imp. Indic.
 (imperfect indicative usage pragmatically felicitous)

7) #¿Podías pasarme la sal?
you-could to-pass-me the salt
Imp. Indic
 (imperfect indicative usage not pragmatically felicitous)

8)# Debías pasarme la sal.
you-should to-pass-me the salt
Imp. Indic.
 (imperfect indicative usage not pragmatically felicitous)

While the imperfect indicative of *querer* can be used for pragmatic softening, it does not offer the same degree of mitigation that the conditional or the past subjunctive does. An adapted diagram from Haverkate (2002) below illustrates the increasing mitigation involved.

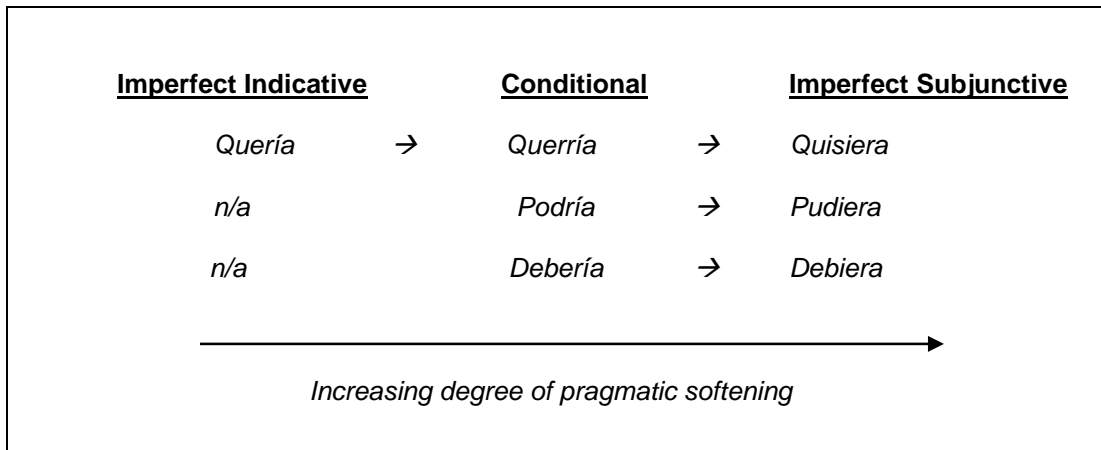


Figure 1.5 Degree of mitigation of Spanish pragmatic softeners

As can be seen in Figure 1.5, the imperfect subjunctive has the highest degree of mitigation. The conditional has the next highest. The imperfect indicative (which only applies to *querer*) has the lowest degree of mitigation. The very fact that each of these softeners has varying degrees of mitigation has apparent sociolinguistic implications. For example, the imperfect subjunctive (because of its high degree of mitigation) likely is reserved only for people and situations with whom the interlocutor wants to show extreme politeness whereas the imperfect indicative is likely used more in everyday situations with more casual interlocutors.

It is important to point out that these seven softeners are not the only options for pragmatic softening in Spanish. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) as well as House and Kasper (1981) found that the past progressive could also be used as for pragmatic softening in Spanish. Yet, Bardovi-Harlig argues that past progressive pragmatic softeners are a marginal member of the PROGRESSIVE prototype, not the PAST prototype (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). Thus, this investigation is limited to the seven PAST modal softeners mentioned above: *quería*, *querría*, *quisiera*, *podría*, *pudiera*, *debería*, and *debiera*.

The fact that these pragmatic softeners are modals and are linked to the PAST prototype is potentially problematic given that some scholars believe that modals are tenseless and cannot be inflected for PAST (Abusch 1997; Kratzer 1981; Kratzer 1991; Stowell 2004; Hacquard 2007; Leonard et. al. 2007). According to these scholars, there would be no difference in pastness

between the lexical pairs *can/could* and *will/would*. This would also nullify the arguments above in which it is claimed that pragmatic softening is a direct result of using past tense modals. While this line of argumentation is intriguing, it has little bearing on the research at hand. This is because the Spanish equivalents of *can/could*, *will/would*, and *should* are really not “modals” at all, since by definition modals are verb forms that are not inflected. Take, for example, the Spanish verb *poder* ‘to be able to’ compared to a more traditional verb *hablar* ‘to speak’. The two verbs are able to be inflected for with regular morphology for tense, aspect, person, and number in exactly the same way (see Figure 1.6 below). The only difference is that *hablar* is a main verb while *poder* is an auxiliary that collocates with an infinitive verb.

	Present Sing/Plural		Future Sing/Plural		Imperfect Sing/Plural		Preterite Sing/Plural	
1 st Person	hablo puedo	hablamos podemos	hablaré podré	hablaremos podremos	hablaba podía	hablábamos podíamos	hablé pude	hablamos pudimos
2 nd Person	hablas puedes	habláis podéis	hablarás podrás	hablaréis podréis	hablabas podías	hablabais podíais	hablaste pudiste	hablasteis pudisteis
3 rd Person	habla puede	hablan pueden	hablará podrá	hablarán podrán	hablaba podía	hablaban podían	habló pudo	hablaron pudieron
	Present Subj. Sing/Plural		Past Subj. Sing/Plural		Conditional Sing/Plural			
1 st Person	hable pueda	hablemos podamos	hablara pudiera	habláramos pudiéramos	hablaría podría	hablaríamos podríamos		
2 nd Person	hables puedas	habléis podáis	hablaras pudieras	hablarais pudierais	hablarías podrías	hablaríais podrías		
3 rd Person	hable pueda	hablen puedan	hablara pudiera	hablaran pudieran	hablaría podr	hablarían podrían		

Figure 1.6 Conjugation of *hablar* and *poder*

In fact, Stockwell et. al. (2001) claim that *poder*, *querer*, and *deber* have almost nothing in common with their English counterparts *could*, *would*, and *should*, respectively:

It is not infrequent to find *poder*, *querer*, and *deber* labeled in Spanish texts as modal auxiliaries, or pseudo-modals, or the like. But they share almost none of

the modal characteristics of English: they have full paradigms for person, number, tense, and aspect; they accept objects like other transitive verbs; they allow the secondary modifications of other verbs; in short, they are simply verbs which happen to carry lexical meanings that overlap with the meanings of English modals. (Stockwell et. al. 2001: 165)

Thus, this study operates from the belief that Spanish *poder*, *querer*, and *deber* are verbs that can be inflected for past tense. In order to avoid a misunderstanding regarding whether English *could*, *would*, and *should* are past-modals, the glossing conventions in this document are altered and include a [±PAST] to indicate semantic pastness instead of relying on the lexical item (i.e. can/could; will/would) to denote the non-past/past distinction.

Having defined what is meant by *pragmatic softener* and outlining which specific softeners are of interest to this study, the rationale behind the study is now addressed.

1.3 Rationale

In this section, I discuss the reasons why I elected to study Spanish pragmatic softeners in relation to L2 learners of Spanish, why I focus on learners in either an immersion or study abroad context, and why I want to examine both learner production and appropriateness evaluations of pragmatic softeners.

1.3.1 Why pragmatic softeners?

Pragmatic softeners fit under the umbrella of pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence is so necessary to second-language acquisition that failure to acquire it can have dramatic consequences. While an interlocutor would likely perceive grammatical errors as simply attributable to the learners' non-native status, pragmatic failures "are not easily recognizable by interlocutors who may judge the speaker as being impolite or uncooperative or attribute the pragmatic errors to the speaker's personality" (Cenoz 2007). These types of errors are especially devastating to advanced learners, as native speakers attribute "any deviation from conventional usage to personality issues rather than to language use" (Barron 2003: 2). These types of assumptions can lead to complete communication breakdown. They can also result in highly negative experiences for the non-native speaker. Kasper (1990:193) pointed out that "non-native speakers suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating politeness norms, thereby forfeiting

their claims to being treated as social equals”. It is therefore important to find out how and when pragmatic softeners are acquired in order to help the non-native speaker avoid being perceived as impolite and/or uncooperative.

Additionally, these pragmatic softeners are commonly used among native Spanish speakers for mitigation of requests and advice. Of the five native speakers surveyed for this study, all five recognized the need for mitigation and frequently produced pragmatic softeners to make requests and to offer advice (See Chapter 4, Section 4.4 for more on native speaker production.) Other research has also confirmed the use of softeners by native speakers, (Carduner 1998; Pinto and Raschio 2007), as is discussed in detail in Chapter 2, Section 2.1. However, much of the research that included these softeners has had the production of speech acts as its focus (Delgado 1994; Garcia 1996; Koike 1996; Margalef-Boada 1994; and Valdés and Pinto 1981 among others) and not the individual softeners themselves. In fact, I am unable to find a study that specifically concerns itself with pragmatic softeners alone that does not broaden the study to include the speech act in which softeners are used. These speech act studies typically use deductive reasoning—that the findings that apply to the speech act as a whole also apply to the verbs that comprise that speech act. This study, on the other hand, has a more inductive approach—looking at individual verbs (and, specifically, their use as pragmatic softeners) in hopes that this knowledge can broaden our understanding of speech act and pragmatic acquisition.

1.3.2 Why immersion and study abroad contexts?

As mentioned above, the pragmatic softeners of interest to this study are largely associated with the speech acts of requesting and giving advice—two extremely common linguistic scenarios, especially for learners who are using Spanish in “real-world” circumstances. They are also speech acts that are largely face-threatening (Brown and Levison 1987), thereby necessitating pragmatic competency to negotiate the act. Unfortunately, A Spanish speaker in a classroom setting does not have many opportunities to make requests or give advice in Spanish. Nor does the classroom setting lend itself to much interaction with or observation of native

speakers performing these speech acts. By utilizing immersion and study abroad students, there is an increased likelihood that the students are 1) being exposed to pragmatic softeners and 2) having opportunities to produce softeners themselves. By tracking the students during their stay abroad and in the immersion academy, it can also be determined if time spent in a language-intense environment has any bearing on how and when pragmatic softeners are acquired.

1.3.3 Why learner production and appropriateness evaluations?

Since not much work has been done previously on pragmatic softening in Spanish, it stands to reason that this study would involve the production of these forms. After all, acquisition of these forms expressly implies that the learners are capable of producing them in felicitous contexts. In comparable speech act studies, we also see a focus on the production of the acts by learners (Barron 2001; Delgado 1994; Garcia 1996; Koike 1996; Margalef-Boada 1994; and Valdés and Pinto 1981). Yet, Rodriguez (2001:6), who specifically addressed the perception of appropriate requests in Spanish, adeptly points out that “it may be possible that by understanding L2 learners’ perception of requests, better production studies and a better understanding of learners’ request systems in general will follow”. It logically follows, then, that understanding L2 learners’ perception of pragmatic softeners might also help inform production studies in the future. For this reason, in this study I make use of both learner production information and appropriateness evaluations.

1.4 Research Questions

Five research questions underlie this study.

Question 1: How do pragmatic softeners fit into the acquisition of the PAST prototype?

The first question involves the relationship between pragmatic softeners and the PAST prototype. As mentioned above, no empirical evidence exists to corroborate the hypothesis that pragmatic softeners are the most marginal member of the PAST prototype and that the *deictic past* must be acquired prior to pragmatic softeners. This question attempts to verify whether pragmatic softening has been rightly included in this acquisition sequence.

Question 2: When and how do learners exhibit productive use of pragmatic softeners? Or, what mitigating devices are implemented instead of softeners?

The second research question specifically addresses the production of pragmatic softeners by L2 learners of Spanish. This question seeks to uncover the point at which a learner exhibits productive use of a softener. It also asks exactly how this production takes place. For example, of the seven softeners of interest to this study, do we observe that certain softeners are produced earlier or more frequently than others? Or, do they all appear to be acquired at the same time? If they are not acquired simultaneously, is the difference in acquisition attributable to the verb itself (*querer, deber, poder*), the conditional/subjunctive complexity, or some other factor? In the cases where softeners are not produced, can we detect other devices that might be implemented instead of softeners that would still achieve a mitigating effect?

Question 3: How does conditional and past subjunctive prescriptive knowledge shape pragmatic softener acquisition?

The third research question takes into account the fact that not all softeners are created equally. Only one softener—*quería*—relies solely on a past tense construction. The remaining six softeners have an added degree of complexity in addition to the past tense either through the conditional or the past subjunctive. Three softeners—*querría, debería, podría*—rely on a conditional conjugation. The other three softeners—*quisiera, debiera, pudiera*—rely on a past subjunctive conjugation. It stands to reason that learners would need a working knowledge of the conditional and past subjunctive before they could produce a softener that contains these forms therein. Through this research question, I attempt to uncover the role that this prescriptive knowledge has on pragmatic softener acquisition—specifically, if there is any correlation between the two. I also ask the following: Is prescriptive knowledge a necessary precondition for producing pragmatic softeners? If not, have certain forms become conventionalized to the point that they can be produced without a mastery of the conditional or past subjunctive constructs?

Question 4: What trends can be observed in learner perception of appropriateness in pragmatic softener usage?

The fourth question addresses the issue of appropriateness evaluations of pragmatic softeners by L2 learners of Spanish. Through this question, I hope to discover how trends in perceptions of appropriateness correspond to observed trends in production. I also want to identify the degree to which the student perceptions of appropriateness are target-like as compared to native speaker perceptions. Do learners perceive certain softeners as appropriate in some contexts but not in others? If so, are these intuitions similar to those demonstrated by native speakers?

Question 5: How does the language-learning environment shape the acquisition of pragmatic softeners?

The final question involves the relationship between the learning environment and pragmatic development as evidenced by the production and/or appropriateness evaluations of pragmatic softeners. Does either group exhibit change in its production or appropriateness perceptions during their stay in the language-intense environment? Does one group demonstrate a more target-like production and appropriateness evaluation of softeners?

1.5 Expectations

In this study I anticipate finding that the empirical evidence verifies that pragmatic softeners can be considered marginal members of the PAST prototype and that *deictic past* acquisition is a necessary precondition for pragmatic softener acquisition. However, I believe that we will also find that the current conception of the prototype is lacking in its ability to accurately describe how and when pragmatic softeners are acquired. For instance, I expect to find that the seven softeners are not all acquired simultaneously but that some softeners will be present earlier than others in L2 interlanguage. I also believe we will find that prescriptive knowledge to play an important role in pragmatic softener production. I do anticipate that both the study abroad and immersion groups will produce softeners given the fact that they are all instructed learners who have completed at least the equivalent of four years/semesters of classroom instruction in

Spanish. Since pragmatic softeners are typically introduced to students by their fourth year/semester of instruction, the assumption is that they could have previously been exposed to the concept. Nevertheless, it is expected that learners will not be fully aware of all seven softeners and that their scores will differ from the native-speaker baseline. Since both groups are immersed in the Spanish language, I believe that they both will show progress over time. Yet, I expect the study abroad group to be closer to the native-speaker baseline (both in production and appropriateness evaluations) after their time abroad than will the students who are learning in the context of the U.S.-based immersion academy. This expectation is due to the fact that the study abroad students are more likely to have richer input and more interaction with native speakers than the immersion students.

1.6 Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter presented the problem, background, rationale, and research questions for the study. The rest of the dissertation is comprised of seven more chapters, with topics as follows.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant theoretical background, scholarly works, and research studies that pertain to the topics of this dissertation. The chapter begins with a discussion of interlanguage pragmatics and the importance of pragmatic competence in language learning. The specific research that pertains to interlanguage pragmatics—specifically those studies that have focused on speech acts—is examined. An overview on the very few studies that have contained work on pragmatic softening follows. Next is an overview of research that has dealt specifically with the Aspect Hypothesis. The final section of Chapter 2 supplies an overview of the body of knowledge in existence about study abroad and immersion-program research.

Chapter 3 details the research methods used in this study. First, an overview of the research procedures is presented. A description of the participants, both learners and native speakers, follows. The creation and implementation of each of the three sections of the questionnaire is then explained. Next is a detailed report of the oral task and its design. I then describe the approval processes associated with the various Institutional Review Boards involved

in the research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research methods and a discussion of which research questions are addressed in each part of the methodology.

In Chapter 4, I present the results regarding the production of pragmatic softeners in the questionnaire, specifically in Part B of the questionnaire which attempts to elicit the seven pragmatic softeners of interest to this study. The chapter begins with a review of the results of the questionnaire items that specifically dealt with pragmatic softeners. These results are then examined through various lenses. First, it is determined whether any changes occurred over time. Next, I examine whether the language-learning context affected the production of pragmatic softeners on the questionnaire. Lastly, the data is compared to a native speaker baseline.

In Chapter 5, the production of pragmatic softeners is examined again, but this time in the context of the oral task instead of the questionnaire. The chapter begins with an outline of the oral task results, which examines both the pragmatic softeners and the other mitigating strategies utilized by the participants. The role the interlocutor played in the oral task is then discussed, including whether more mitigation was seen with the non-peer interlocutor. In the next section, it is determined whether any changes occurred over time. Then, I again examine how the language-learning context affected the production of pragmatic softeners on the oral task. The discussion is then rounded out with a comparison of learner data to native speaker data.

In Chapter 6, I turn to the question of the perception of appropriateness of pragmatic softeners, as determined by Part C of the questionnaire. The appropriateness evaluation results are examined first. Time and language-learning context are then examined as potential variables for influencing appropriateness evaluations. Finally, the learner data is compared to the native speaker baseline.

Chapter 7 specifically addresses the PAST prototype acquisition and pragmatic softener production. The chapter begins by looking at the results of the cloze test—Part A of the questionnaire. I then consider how the variables of time and language-learning context influenced the PAST prototype findings.

In Chapter 8, the question of whether prescriptive knowledge had any influence on the production of pragmatic softeners is considered. I look at the items from the questionnaire that specifically dealt with prescriptive knowledge—those from the “real-world” statements and those from the cloze test. It is also determined if any trends in the responses could be noted through the lens of language-learning context.

Chapter 9 addresses each of the research questions through a discussion that takes all of the results from Chapters 4-8 into account. This discussion begins with an argument in favor of the Anderson and Shirai (1996) PAST prototype. It is suggested that this prototype needs to be expanded in light of the information acquired in this study about pragmatic softeners use by L2 Spanish learners. Prescriptive knowledge as a necessary component for pragmatic softener acquisition is then ruled out. I also make predictions as to why some of the appropriateness evaluations were not target-like. The discussion ends with some observations about the role (or lack thereof) the language learning environment played in the study. This chapter also includes a description of study generalizability, limitations, future areas of research, and recommendations for those on the “front lines” of L2 instruction and curriculum design.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of the relevant theoretical background, scholarly works, and research studies that pertain to the topics of interest in this dissertation. The chapter begins in Section 2.1 with a discussion of interlanguage pragmatics and the importance of pragmatic competence in language learning. The specific research that pertains to interlanguage pragmatics is then examined—particularly those studies that have focused on speech acts. An overview on the very few studies that have contained work on pragmatic softening follows. In Section 2.2, an overview of research that has dealt specifically with the Aspect Hypothesis is provided. The final section of this chapter, Section 2.3, gives an overview of the body of knowledge in existence about study abroad and immersion-program research.

2.1 Interlanguage Pragmatics

2.1.1 Pragmatics

According to Levinson (2002:11948), “pragmatics is the study of the relationship between the structure of language and its usage in context, and, along with semantics, forms part of the general theory of meaning. Within the theory of meaning, pragmatics is especially concerned with implicit meaning, with inference and the unsaid, and with the way in which language structure trades on this background of the presumed and the inferred”. More simply stated, pragmatics focuses on the relationship between linguistic meaning and context. Context drives and determines how an utterance is produced by the speaker and interpreted by the interlocutor. Throughout this study, it is assumed that the felicity of an utterance is context-dependent. This means that while an utterance might be completely appropriate in one situation, it might be inappropriate in another (Lakoff 1973).

The felicitousness of an utterance is often determined by the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Brown and Levinson (1978) set forth in their politeness theory that the level of politeness used in a given situation is largely determined by the social dimensions of *power* and *distance*. *Power* refers to the relative power differential in between the speaker and hearer. For example, a boss or other authoritative figure would have high power compared to his/her subordinate. *Distance* refers to the social distance between the speaker and hearer. A conversation with a stranger would have higher distance than would a conversation with a friend. A third social dimension—*solidarity*—was proposed by Brown and Gilman (1960:258). *Solidarity* is a “scale of perceived like-mindedness” between the speaker and the hearer. A conversation would be high in solidarity if it were between two peers or two other individuals that perceived each other as being very similar and like-minded. Every speaker must take into account the combination of these social dimensions—power, distance, and solidarity—that are at play in the conversation and vary his or her linguistic strategy accordingly.

If speakers do not take these factors into account, they run the risk of threatening the “face” of the hearer. *Face*, according to Brown and Levinson (1978), is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself”. Goffman (1967) proposed that two types of face exist—*positive face* and *negative face*. *Positive face* is the desire to be accepted by others; *negative face* is the desire not to offend others. When people are involved in a conversation, they run the risk of threatening the interlocutor’s face, or, to commit a face-threatening act (FTA). For example, a request might be face-threatening (eg. *Give me that paper*) because the act of requesting could potentially offend the hearer. Thus, to minimize the FTA, speakers must modify—or mitigate—their speech by using appropriate forms of politeness (ex. *Could you give me that paper?*). Pragmatic softeners represent one such way to accomplish this modification.

2.1.2 Pragmatic Competence

As a second-language learner, knowing which form to use in which context can be a highly challenging, but necessary, skill to master. This is why so much of the recent second-

language acquisition research has focused on pragmatic competence. Pragmatic knowledge is no longer considered an afterthought of language learning. Instead, in an L2 it is deemed necessary and critical to overall linguistic competence.

Pragmatic competence is defined as “the ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act” (Kasper 1997). In this definition, “communicative act” is used in the place of what traditionally has been called the “speech act”. Several pragmaticists have argued in favor of the “communicative act” nomenclature (Kasper 1997; Bachman 1990) because the term “communicative” can be used to encompass both spoken and written communication, while “speech” is limited to spoken communication only. Despite which term is preferred, scholars are united in their belief that pragmatic competence encompasses both comprehension and production. They also agree that this competence is highly necessary for non-native speakers to acquire.

Kasper (1997a) argues, “Pragmatic ability in a second or foreign language is part of a nonnative speakers (NNS) communicative competence and therefore has to be located in a model of communicative ability.” She cites Bachman’s (1990: 87ff) hierarchy of competencies, which places pragmatic competence as a necessary component for language competence (see Figure 2.1).

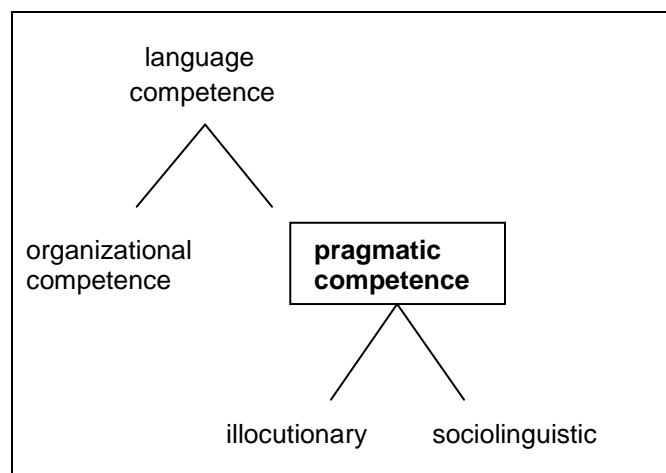


Figure 2.1 Bachman’s (1990) hierarchy of competencies

This hierarchy also indicates that sub-competencies exist which together comprise pragmatic competence as a whole. These competencies are illocutionary (being able to produce and use a communicative act effectively) and sociolinguistic (being able to produce a communicative act contextually). By placing pragmatic competence in this model of communicative competency, it is noted that “pragmatic competence is not a piece of knowledge additional to the learners’ existing grammatical knowledge, but is an organic part of the learners’ communicative competence” (Edwards and Csizér 2004). In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 1, pragmatic competence is so necessary to second-language acquisition that failure to acquire it can lead to complete communication breakdown. Pragmatic failures “are not easily recognizable by interlocutors” and may cause the interlocutor to “judge the speaker as being impolite or uncooperative” (Cenoz 2007). Pragmatic errors are especially devastating to advanced learners who—because of their advanced grammatical skills—are expected to have a similar level of pragmatic competence. While a native speaker might give a lower-level learner some slack because of their obvious grammatical deficiencies, native speakers typically perceive pragmatic errors of advanced speakers to be attributable to the learner’s personality and not to his or her non-native speaker status (Barron 2003).

For these reasons, pragmatic competence **must** be part of the second-language learning process. Yet, just because it desperately needs to be acquired does not necessarily mean that pragmatic competence **can** be acquired. Many studies of late have focused on how pragmatic competence is acquired or whether it can be acquired at all. Much attention therein has been given to the question of whether pragmatic competence can be taught (cf. Tateyama et al. 1997; Kasper and Rose 2001; Martinez-Flor et al. 2003). Kasper and Rose (2001) suggest that while explicit instruction has a positive effect on L2 learners developing pragmatic competence, the best results emanate from students having opportunities to practice what they have learned. Researchers tend to agree that the best place for pragmatic competence to be acquired is in the target culture (Barron 2003; Cenoz 2007). Barron (2003:2) states that this phenomenon is due to

the “accessibility of authentic pragmatic input in the target speech community and to the potentially extensive opportunities for use of the target language”. However, since very few studies focus on the developmental nature of pragmatic competence, it is unknown to what extent pragmatic competence develops during a non-native speaker’s stay in the target culture. Indeed, Cenoz (2007:128) reports that even “highly educated second language users” do not feel confident in their language use and that “these feelings of incompleteness have also been confirmed by researchers working on the age factor who consistently report that second-language learners do not achieve native competence unless they arrived to the host country at a very early age”. Thus, while pragmatic competence can be acquired to some extent, it seems unlikely that most learners will ever achieve native pragmatic competence.

One major issue that is commonly noted by scholars is that while pragmatic competence is necessary for effective communication, competence in the pragmatic arena largely depends on grammatical competence (Bardovi-Harlig 1999).

Take, for example, the following Spanish sentence:

1) **Debiera** llamar a un abogado. (*You should call a lawyer.*)

This sample sentence utilizes the pragmatic softener *debiera* and would be used only in a very formal (perhaps written) context. While using this sentence correctly in context would hinge on pragmatic competence (i.e. realizing that extreme politeness was needed in this context), the accurate execution of this sentence is also largely dependent on the learner’s grammatical knowledge of the concepts of past, imperfect, and subjunctive. Certainly, the necessity of grammatical competence is an issue that pragmatics researchers are aware of—yet many researchers do not address this component until very late in their study. For example, Bardovi-Harlig (1999) suggests that grammatical competence is most often addressed in the discussion section of an interlanguage pragmatic study, after the study has already been completed. When grammatical competence is mentioned, it is usually referenced as “vague grammatical shortcomings” which could have perhaps caused the results to be different than expected. For

this reason, this study includes a research question that specifically addresses grammatical competence. This research question (see Research Question 3 in Chapter 1) asks whether conditional and past subjunctive prescriptive knowledge shape pragmatic softener acquisition. In this way, it is assumed from the start that some grammatical competence is necessary to demonstrate pragmatic competence and attempt to determine how the two interface in the instance of pragmatic softeners.

2.1.3 Interlanguage and the Comparative Fallacy

Despite the fact that it is unlikely that a learner will ever show complete target-like pragmatic competence, the academic community is still puzzled (and often shocked) by the general lack of pragmatic competence even in advanced language learners. The research trend has been to focus on the *negative*—what is lacking from L2 pragmatic interlanguage—instead of focusing on the *positive*—what is developing within the learners' interlanguage as they move toward pragmatic competence.

Interlanguage is defined as an emerging linguistic system that is developed by a learner of a second language (or L2) who is lacking in complete proficiency and, therefore, is only approximating the target language. The interlanguage of an L2 learner preserves some features of the speaker's first language (or L1) when the learner communicates in the target language (or L2). Interlanguage is also characterized by the L2 learner creating linguistic innovations that are not present in either the speaker's L1 or the target language. The theory of interlanguage was proposed by Selinker (1972). Selinker noted that a language learner often attempts to communicate in ways that are not consistent with a native speaker's approach to the same linguistic situation. Learners thus create their own language—or *interlanguage*—to use for communicative purposes. Since Selinker (1972), interlanguage studies have become quite prevalent in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) scholarship (Krashen 1997; Long 1983; Pica 1983; Swain 1984, and many others). In these studies, researchers attempt to understand and define interlanguage as a system in its own right, which is complex, but predictable.

While interlanguage has been widely considered on a syntactic and phonological level, pragmaticists have also taken an interest in interlanguage, resulting in a substantial amount of research aimed specifically at interlanguage pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig 1999; Blum-Kulka and Kasper 1993; Kasper 1996). Past interlanguage pragmatic studies have focused on language use as compared to native speakers (Kasper 1996; Kasper and Rose 1999, 2002). These types of studies typically concluded that L2 learners were woefully lacking as compared to native speakers when pragmatic competence was concerned. Bardovi-Harlig (1999) asserted that previous interlanguage pragmatics studies were more akin to a “cross-cultural” study than an interlanguage study. This critique meant to highlight the fact that interlanguage pragmatic studies were simply comparing and contrasting two “cultures”—learners and native speakers. She argued that this style goes against the very grain of interlanguage by drawing attention to learner deficiencies instead of the positive aspects of the learners’ emerging pragmatic system. Kasper and Schmidt (1996:149) similarly argued that “most studies in interlanguage pragmatics have focused on second language use rather than second language learning.” Thus, as a result of these critiques more recent studies have had a shift in focus to studying the developmental processes leading to pragmatic competence.

So, the question then arises as to whether native speakers should be included in an interlanguage pragmatics study, given the fact that native-speaker comparison goes against the very nature of interlanguage. According to the comparative fallacy (Bley-Vroman 1983; Kasper 1997b), when L2 learner performance is compared with that of native speakers, the non-native speakers are always going to be seen as deficient. Yet Year (2004) argues that not every inclusion of native speakers in empirical studies will result in the comparative fallacy. Instead, she cites Lakshmanan and Selinker’s (2001) three methodological solutions to avoiding the comparative fallacy:

Firstly, learners’ data should be collected by the analyst so that learners’ intentions can be accurately retrieved and interpreted in the data analyses. Secondly, L2 studies of spontaneous speech so far rarely carry out a systematic comparison of the language learners’ speech samples with the performance of

native speakers in similar or corresponding speech situations. It is essential to see whether or not a hypothesized difference between the IL grammar and the target language grammar is really observed in the performance data. Thirdly, a concept of acquisition other than accuracy can be used (e.g., emergence). That is to say, another possible method for making serious progress in the investigation of IL is to examine when specific linguistic features emerge. (Year 2004: 6)

In this project, it is important to collect native speaker data to ascertain how common it is for native Spanish speakers to select certain paths for pragmatic softening, especially since I, as the analyst, do not have native-speaker intuitions about the Spanish language. Thus, native speakers are included in this study. However, I sought to avoid the comparative fallacy by heeding Lakshmanan and Selinker's (2001) advice:

- 1) I was the primary analyst
- 2) I asked the NS and NNS to perform the exact same communicative task
- 3) I did not compare for the purpose of determining accuracy (or deficiency) but to see what specific features emerged that were similar to NS speech.

In doing so, a native speaker baseline is established but this information is used to highlight what is developing within the learners' interlanguage as they move toward pragmatic competence instead of focusing on what is lacking from L2 pragmatic interlanguage.

2.1.4 Measuring Acquisition

As previously mentioned, interlanguage pragmatics involves language-in-context. Pragmatic competence requires the speaker to negotiate highly nuanced parts of language. Unlike many other grammatical and phonological aspects of language, it is more common in pragmatics that there is no one "right" answer that the speaker can simply memorize and then employ. This is indeed the case with pragmatic softeners. These softeners are entirely speaker-selected, meaning that the speaker can opt to use the form or opt not to based on his or her perception of the linguistic situation. If the speaker is in a situation where he finds himself communicating with a high-power, high-distance interlocutor, he may select a pragmatic softener to convey politeness or mitigate a face-threatening act. Or, he may use some other type of mitigator other than a pragmatic softener. Production of softeners will vary person-to-person, as each one will perceive the context through his or her worldview. That is, while one person might

perceive a conversation with a professor as being a high-power, high-distance situation, others might perceive it as lacking in power and distance. It all depends on the speaker's unique perspective.

Given the relative nature of pragmatic-softener production, we must ask ourselves how we can attempt to measure the acquisition of such an elusive form. Unfortunately, this is a very challenging task. Often scholars use Brown's criterion for acquisition (Brown 1973), which measures acquisition as 90% of correct uses in obligatory contexts. The problem with this type of criterion is that pragmatic softeners are by definition non-obligatory. There is no circumstance in which a speaker must use the construction. The flip-side of this is troublesome, too, because we cannot assume that non-use equates to non-acquisition. A learner could potentially have acquired this concept but not select it in a particular conversation. Thus, I am not able to definitively assert that the construction is acquired or not acquired. Instead, I will only be able to point to evidence of acquisition. The inability to capture acquisition is actually quite fitting for this type of study since the goal is to look at the **emergence** of language and not at **acquisition** per se. Acquisition focuses too much on what is lacking, whereas emergence highlights what is present in L2 interlanguage.

2.1.5 Speech Acts, Mitigation, Syntactic Downgraders

The most common framework of analysis for interlanguage pragmatics is via speech act theory. Indeed, there is a large body of literature that specifically deals with the acquisition of speech acts. The speech acts studied include requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, suggestions, greetings, compliments, and many others (for an overview, see Rodriguez 2001). Much of the research has focused on speech act production by an L2 learner. However, the research focus does appear to be shifting towards studies of speech act perception in addition to production (Cohen and Olshtain 1994). The most common research methods for speech act research are observation, role play, discourse completion, and acceptability checks. Indeed, three out of four of these are utilized in the methodology employed in this dissertation.

While pragmatic softeners can be used to mitigate a variety of speech acts, they are most commonly used with what Searle (1976) calls *directives*. A directive involves a speaker desiring that an addressee(s) do something in the future. The speaker uses a directive—a type which includes advice, questions, suggestions, commands, requests, etc.—to let the hearer know of his or her desire. Because directives involve a speaker *directing* a hearer towards an action, they are potentially face-threatening. Thus, a variety of mitigators, or softeners, can be used to lessen the illocutionary force of the directive. Danet (1980:525) defines mitigation as “rhetorical devices, which soften the impact of some unpleasant aspect of an utterance on the speaker or the hearer”. Fraser 1980: 344 puts his own spin on this definition by saying that mitigation is used “to ease the anticipated unwelcome effect.” He explains the relationship between mitigation and speech acts as follows:

I will begin by saying what mitigation is not: it is not a type of speech act. To mitigate is not to perform some particular illocutionary act such as requesting, promising, or apologizing. Nor is it to perform a so-called perlocutionary act (having an associated perlocutionary effect) such as annoying, surprising or persuading. It is, however, closely related to these two aspects of language use.
(Fraser 1980: 341)

Fraser (1980:345) presents a list a non-comprehensive list of mitigators. He states that “the first, and certainly the most obvious, is to perform the speech act indirectly.” Koike (1989) developed this idea even further by placing Spanish request forms on a continuum of illocutionary force—from most polite to least polite. She labeled informal commands, such as *habla* (‘speak’) as the least polite, most direct request form and requests such as *¿Puede hablar?* (‘Can you speak?’) as one of the most polite, least direct request forms.

Other researchers such as House and Kasper (1981) and Caffi (1999) also have attempted to expand and refine the list of mitigators, which have in some circles also been coined *downgraders*. Trosborg (1995:209) differentiates between *lexical downgraders* and *syntactic downgraders*. Among the lexical downgraders are politeness markers—such as the word *please*; downtoners—such as *just*, *simply*, *perhaps*, and *rather*; hedges—such as *sort of* and *kind of*; and hesitators—such as *well* and *you see*. Syntactic downgraders, on the other hand, are devices

that have “the ability to distance the request from reality”. He explains syntactic downgraders as employing a shift away from the deictic center of the speaker in order to create a perceived distance between the speaker and the request. (For a more complete explanation of how this shift works, see Chapter 1, section 1.2). Trosborg (1995) lists several syntactic devices that can be used for syntactic downgrading. These include:

- 1) a question form (*Can you pass me the butter?*)
- 2) a tag question on the end of a statement (*Shut the door for me, will you?*)
- 3) a conditional clause (*I would like to discuss this further if you have a minute.*)
- 4) an embedded clause (*I thought I might swing by your house later.*)
- 5) a modal (*Might you like a piece of candy?*)
- 6) an ing-form (*I was wondering if you could help me.*)
- 7) a past tense form (*Could you pass me the butter?*)

This last item on the list—past tense—is the type that is of interest to this study. While I am choosing to use the nomenclature provided by Anderson and Shirai (1996)—*pragmatic softening*—this same phenomenon is referred to by Trosborg (1995) as a past tense syntactic downgrader.

Trosborg also tested out her theories in an empirical study that included speech act production of native speakers of Danish (L1) learning English (L2), native English speakers, and native Danish speakers. What she found was that in the case of downgraders in general (both lexical and syntactic), the native speakers were much more likely to use them than the learners. She further subdivided her results and discovered that the learners were actually more likely to use syntactic downgraders than lexical downgraders (Trosborg 1995). She accounts for this fact by saying:

A highly routinized device is likely to be learned more easily than a device which has to be more creatively formulated, which would explain why syntactic downgraders appear earlier than lexical/phrasal downgraders. Syntactic downgraders form part of request strategy to a much higher degree than lexical downgraders (c.f. the use of the past tense, question form, and hypothetical clauses in conventionally indirect requests, e.g. *would you/could you/I wonder if you could do X*). In contrast, lexical/phrasal downgraders are generally optional to the request structure. (Trosborg 1995: 429)

One notable exception to this, though, is in the overuse by learners of the lexical item *please*. House and Kasper (1987) found that German L2 students often overindulged in the word *please*, using it even more often than native speakers themselves do. The reason for this, they speculated, is that textbooks often use this word too much and that the word is easily extraposed to the sentence in languages such as English, Spanish, and German (Trosberg 1995).

Researchers have also uncovered some notable findings specifically regarding past tense syntactic downgraders (i.e. pragmatic softeners). Anderson and Cole (2001) studied Japanese learners of English who participated in 10-month long home-stays in New Zealand and Canada. Before their time abroad, “the students had a tendency to use downgraders such as the politeness marker ‘please’ somewhat indiscriminately” (p. 1). However, after their time abroad, the students were much more likely to use syntactic downgraders—especially past tense forms—instead of relying solely on *please*. Additionally, students were more likely to use a downgrader with a teacher (i.e. a high-distance, high-power interlocutor) than they were prior to their stay abroad.

Pinto and Raschio (2007) examined syntactic downgraders used by native Spanish speakers, native English speakers, and heritage speakers of Spanish. They found that the native English speakers were more likely to use syntactic downgraders than native Spanish speakers. They also observed that heritage speakers were more likely to use multiple downgrading in the same utterance, which Pinto and Raschio attribute to the merging of English behavior into Spanish. The use of multiple downgraders, according to Blum-Kulka et. al., is quite common in English, thereby creating an “accumulated effect of deferential politeness” (Pinto and Raschio 1989:62). Pinto and Raschio (2007) demonstrate multiple downgraders in the following two sample sentences from their heritage-speaker data:

(2) *quisiera* ver si me *podieras* dar las notas de ayer... [sic]

'I wanted to see if you could give me the notes from yesterday...'

(3) **Quería** saber si me **harías el favor** de prestarme tus notas... [sic]

'I wanted to know if you would do me the favor of lending me your notes ...'

(Pinto and Raschio 2007: 148-149)

In sentence two, the speaker uses the pragmatic softener *quisiera* as a syntactic downgrader and then also uses the past subjunctive *podieras*, which is a second syntactic downgrader. In sentence three, the speaker uses the past subjunctive *quería* with a second syntactic downgrader—*hacer el favor*. Multiple downgrading as exemplified here has also been reported in other L2 Spanish studies (Pinto 2002; Pinto 2005).

Pinto (2005) found that L2 Spanish learners were unlikely to use the conditional until they reached the “G4” stage—which, although the exact amount of instruction or skill level represented by this classification is unknown—is presumed to be a more advanced language-learner. Pinto also noted that the learners were even less likely to use the past subjunctive as a pragmatic softener—even in the G4 stage. This phenomenon has also been reported by Carduner (1998). These results follow Koike (1989) who observed that students in their first semester of Spanish used less polite forms than those they had been exposed to in their classroom experience—using mostly commands softened with *por favor* and other basic assertions (e.g. *Quiero/Necesito*).

Carduner (1998) sent out questionnaires to both native Spanish speakers from a variety of Spanish-speaking countries that were studying at U.S. colleges and universities as well as L2 learners of intermediate and advanced college-level Spanish. He found that, in regards to past tense syntactic downgraders, L2 learners were not as likely to use either the conditional or past subjunctive as the native speakers. When the L2 learners did use the past subjunctive, they used it only for the verb *poder*. Carduner did report, though, that some evidence existed that learners attempted to consciously alter their syntax to make their requests more polite. Yet, they did not do so as much as they did

when communicating in English. Especially noteworthy is the fact that the students often used the conditional for downgrading at least two times as much in English as they did in Spanish. Carduner (1998:161) reports that learners “either do not think these modifications are necessary in Spanish, or, more likely, the learners are not linguistically competent enough to make the modifications and at the same time handle the other linguistic demands placed on them when forming requests.”

Carduner (1998) also reported that the native speakers largely favored the conditional over the past subjunctive. However, it should be noted that the scenarios in his questionnaire were varied in terms of the power differential between the speaker and hearer. Some involved no power difference at all. The only scenarios that contained a power differential involved a supervisor and a subordinate. No scenarios contained a distance differential, so this may account for the native speakers’ opting for the conditional instead of the past subjunctive.

Having now summarized the relevant interlanguage pragmatic literature, I now turn the discussion to the Aspect Hypothesis.

2.2 Aspect Hypothesis

Recall that pragmatic softening (or, using the nomenclature from the previous section, *past tense syntactic downgrading*) is theorized to be a marginal member of the PAST category—as per the Aspect Hypothesis. In the following section, the literature available on the Aspect Hypothesis is surveyed. As mentioned in Chapter 1, much research has been done on this hypothesis; most of it has dealt with the earlier stages of acquisition. The Aspect Hypothesis for second-language learning was largely born out of previous research on how children acquire lexical and grammatical aspect in their L1. The results were so provocative that the researchers began to wonder how similar issues might play out with a second-language learner. The pioneers in this area were Roger Anderson, of the University of California, Los Angeles, and a group of his

students, including A. Housen, C.C.Huang, R.E. Robison, and Y. Shirai. The latter was the co-author of Anderson and Shirai (1996), upon which I base the SPCS that is used in this study.

Recall from Chapter 1 that the Aspect Hypothesis is based largely on lexical, or inherent, aspect. This aspect is different from grammatical aspect in that instead of being morphological in nature, the aspect is derived solely from the inherent semantic properties of the verb itself. That is, it is entirely lexical in nature. The Aspect Hypothesis predicts that the lexical aspect of a verb will actually influence the morphological ending produced by a language learner. For example, a beginning language learner is more likely to use a past marking on an achievement verb (a verb with a clear endpoint that is non-durative—such as *fall*, *die*, *drop*, and *slip*) than a stative verb (a verb with no duration and no clear endpoint—such as *believe*, *think*, and *like*). This is because an achievement verb is seen as more prototypically PAST than a stative verb. As learners become more proficient, the past markings extend to less prototypically PAST verb types such as activities and statives. The spread of the perfective past, as put forth in the Aspect Hypothesis, has been verified empirically in a number of languages, including English, Catalan, French, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish (for a complete list, see Bardovi-Harlig 2000: 228).

In the case of Spanish, this language has an imperfective marker as well as a perfective marker. The Aspect Hypothesis contends that, in these types of language, learners will acquire the imperfective marking after the perfective marking and when they do, they are most likely to use the imperfective marker on stative verbs first, followed by activities, accomplishments, and achievements in that order (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). Spanish researchers such as Hasbún (1995), Cadierno (2000), and García and Van-Putte (1988) as well as researchers in other languages have all empirically verified this portion of the Aspect Hypothesis, as well. None of these studies nor the perfective past studies, however, go on to test the often overlooked portion of the Aspect Hypothesis that deals with pragmatic softeners.

Despite the fact that the pragmatic softener part of the Aspect Hypothesis remains to be tested, a study such as this one can still benefit, borrow from, and build upon the research

methodologies that have been employed in other Aspect Hypothesis studies. When the Aspect Hypothesis was still in its infancy, the tendency was to rely on individual speakers for data. This quickly drew criticism, with many saying that individual data was too idiosyncratic and unreliable (Miesel 1987). Since then, most of the studies have moved toward incorporating a larger number of language learners. Bardovi-Harlig says of this phenomenon:

. . . no doubt in response to prevailing research designs in other areas of second language acquisition research, studies of second language tense and aspect began to investigate larger groups of learners, incorporate learners from different levels of proficiency, and expand to include tutored as well as untutored learners in an attempt to determine whether early observations were marginal studies or characteristic of emergent systems. (Bardovi-Harlig 2000:198)

As Bardovi-Harlig (2000) mentions, the size of the subject pool was not the only thing that changed. While previous research had largely focused on untutored learners—that is, learners who had not had any previous formal classroom training--present-day research encompasses several types of instructed learners. These include at-home learners in a traditional classroom situation (for example, the Spanish researchers Hasbun (1995) and Salaberry (1999), as well as learners in a study-abroad context. The study-abroad context has been largely confined to studies of English and Japanese (Bardovi-Harlig 2000).

Most Aspect Hypothesis studies utilize some sort of elicitation procedure. While many have relied on oral tasks such as a personal narrative or an oral retelling of a narrative, more recent research has used written cloze tests (Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds 1995; Bergstrom 1995; Collins 1997, 1999). The benefit of the cloze test over an oral task is that, while the tokens provided in an oral task largely depend on the speaker, the cloze test can regulate how many and what type of tokens are elicited. If left up to the speaker, the results would likely contain too many of one aspectual class and not enough of another. A cloze test allows the researcher to determine how many tokens of each aspectual class will be present in the data.

In addition to the cloze test, another common theme among Aspect Hypothesis methodology is the use of silent films (Bardovi-Harlig 1995, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig and Bergstrom 1996; Chafe 1980; Collins 1999; Hasbun 1995; Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Salaberry 1998; among

others). Many of these studies have used *Modern Times* by Charlie Chaplin, although other films have been used, as well, such as *The Pear Story*, *The Tin Toy*, *The Thief of Baghdad*, and *The Pink Panther* (Bardovi-Harlig 2000). There are several benefits to using a silent film:

- 1) They contain easily identifiable actions.
- 2) They contain change of scenes, which can be helpful in establishing which actions are in the foreground and which are in the background.
- 3) Because many of them were produced in the early twentieth century, it is less likely that current students have been exposed to them previously. This means that they cannot rely on prior knowledge or experience to complete the task.

Typically, the methodology would include having the students watch the film at least once (Hasbún 1995 argues that the students need to see the film twice to remember everything that occurred) and then having the student either retell orally or in writing what happened in the film.

In terms of the specific methodology used in Aspect Hypothesis studies that dealt with L2 learners of Spanish, Bardovi-Harlig (1999) provides an excellent summary of empirical studies, which includes information such as the number of participants, the L1 of the learners, the type of learners (foreign-language or second-language, and the design implemented. Her table is re-cast below with some modifications.

Table 2.1 Bardovi-Harlig's (1999) summary of empirical studies (condensed)

Target Language	Author	L1	Number of Participants	Instruction	Design
Spanish	Ramsay (1990)	English	30	SFL, some contact	cross-sectional, oral retell of picture book
Spanish	Martínez-Baztan (1994)	Dutch	15	SFL	advanced learners, 2 compositions per learner
Spanish	Hasbún (1995)	English	80	SFL	cross-sectional, written narratives (film retell)
Spanish	Lafford (1996)	English	13	SFL	cross-sectional, oral narratives (film retell)

Table 2.1—*continued*

Spanish	Liskin-Gasparro (1997)	English	8	SFL	advanced learners, oral narratives (film retell), retrospection
Spanish	Salaberry (1997)	English	16	SFL	cross-sectional, oral narratives (film retell), grammar test, cloze test, and editing task
Spanish	Salaberry (1999)	English	20	SFL	cross-sectional, oral narratives (film retells), 2 samples, 2 months apart
Spanish	Cadierno (2000)	Danish	10	8 SFL, plus 6-18 months residence in TL countries, 2 SSL in host country	advanced learners, 1st year university composition class; oral semi-structured interview; written narratives

From this table, we can see that the majority of studies that had Spanish as its target language have also had English as the students' L1. The number of participants ranges anywhere between 8 students and 80 students, with the median number of participants being 15.5. Many of the studies use a cross-sectional design instead of a longitudinal design, meaning that they are looking at a cross-section of learners at one time instead of tracking the same group of students over a period of time. Almost all of the studies involved at-home learners in a Spanish as a foreign language classroom. Only a couple of studies utilized students who were studying in the target language or host country. Although not included in the table, the majority of the studies also analyzed the data using the Vendler categories—stative, activity, achievement, and accomplishment.

The fact that the studies used the Vendler categories brings up another important aspect of data analysis: how to determine a verb's lexical category. After researchers gather all of their data—whether it be via a cloze test, a film retell, or an interview, they need to be able to systematically sort each of the tokens into one of the four lexical aspect categories. Bardovi-Harlig (2000) admits that when Aspect Hypothesis studies were first starting out, the methods by which researchers determined which token belonged to which category were vague at best. Therefore, researchers such as Shirai (1991) and Robison (1990, 1993, 1995) began developing diagnostic tests that could be used to disambiguate the process. Shirai (1991) developed one such test that has become accepted among scholars. This test was meant for determining lexical aspect categories for English verbs, but was later adopted by Salaberry (1999) for Spanish. Salaberry's test includes the following (taken from Bardovi-Harlig 2000: 220-221):

Step 1: State or nonstate

Does it have a habitual interpretation in simple present?

If no → state (e.g. *I love you*)

If yes → Nonstate (e.g. *I eat bread*) → Go to step 2

Step 2: Activity or nonactivity

Does 'X is V-ing entail 'X has V-ed' without an iterative/habitual meaning? In other words, if you stop in the middle of V-ing, have you done the act of V?

If yes → activity (e.g. run)

If no → nonactivity (e.g. run a mile) → Go to step 3

Step 3: Accomplishment or Achievement

If test (a) does not work, apply test (b) and possible (c).

(a) If X V-ed in Y time (e.g. 10 minutes), then "X was Ving during that time."

If yes → Accomplishment (e.g. *He painted a picture*)

If not → Achievement (e.g. *He noticed a picture*)

(b) Is there ambiguity with almost?

If yes → Accomplishment (e.g. *He almost painted a picture* has two readings: he almost started to paint a picture/he almost finished painting a picture)

If no → Achievement (e.g. *He almost noticed a picture* has only one reading)
(c) “X will VP in Y time (e.g. 10 minutes)” → X will VP after Y time

If no → Accomplishment (e.g. *He will paint a picture in an hour* is different than *He will paint a picture after an hour*, because the former can mean that he will spend an hour painting a picture, but the latter does not.)

If yes → Achievement (e.g. *He will start singing in two minutes* can only have one reading, which is the same as *He will start singing after two minutes*, with no other reading possible.)

Salaberry’s test is used in Chapter 8 to determine the lexical category of verbs included in the cloze test used in this study.

In summary, the Aspect Hypothesis has a long and rich legacy of empirical studies which verify the accuracy of the hypothesis set forth by Anderson and Shirai (1996). In this dissertation, I add to that legacy by utilizing the methodology and analysis procedures that have become widely accepted in Aspect Hypothesis scholarship. Even though this study is delving into uncharted territory, staying close to the Aspect Hypothesis traditions provides a firm foundation on which to build.

I turn now to another rich legacy—that of study abroad and immersion research.

2.3 Study Abroad and Immersion Research

2.3.1 Study Abroad Research

Over the past decade, studying abroad opportunities have increased in number. According to a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, almost 241,800 American students went abroad in the 2006 academic year. This number is more than double the amount of students who studied abroad ten years earlier in 1996 (Fischer 2008). While the trend seems to be moving toward less traditional study abroad destinations, Spanish-speaking countries still top

the list of the most popular study abroad locations. In the 2007-2008 academic year, Spain was the third most popular destination, with over 24,000 American students traveling there. Mexico was the seventh most popular spot. It had 9,461 American students on its soil, a number that was actually down by 5% from the previous year's statistics. Of the top 20 destinations, six were Spanish-speaking countries (See Table 2.2 below). So, clearly many American students are traveling abroad—and many are finding themselves in Spanish-speaking countries.

Table 2.2 Top 20 destinations for American study abroad students in 2006-2007

Rank	Destination	Total # of Students
1	United Kingdom	32,705
2	Italy	27,831
3	Spain	24,005
4	France	17,233
5	China	11,064
6	Australia	10,747
7	Mexico	9,461
8	Germany	7,355
9	Ireland	5,785
10	Costa Rica	5,383
11	Japan	5,012
12	Argentina	3,617
13	Greece	3,417
14	South Africa	3,216
15	Czech Republic	3,145
16	Chile	2,824
17	Ecuador	2,813
18	Austria	2,810
19	New Zealand	2,718
20	India	2,627

Along with this increasing popularity in studying abroad, there has also been a spike in study abroad research within the last two decades. Churchill and DuFon (2006) give a comprehensive overview of the work that has been done to date in study abroad research. They note that the majority of the research has focused on language acquisition—specifically the forms and skills that are acquired while abroad. This research has encompassed a wide variety of topics—including literacy, listening, speaking, pronunciation, grammar, and pragmatics. Among pragmatics research in a study abroad context, Churchill and DuFon (2006) note that the topics have varied—from terms of address to register to speech acts. As has been the case with much

interlanguage pragmatics research of late, speech acts are largely the focus of study abroad pragmatics research. They also mention that questionnaires have been the most common instrument used for data collection in these studies, although “other methods of data collection have been employed including OPI role plays (Owen 2002), learner journals (DuFon 2000) and notebook data (Churchill 2002)” (Churchill and DuFon 2002:12).

Part of the reason that researchers gravitate toward study abroad research is due to the fact that the study abroad context is so potentially rich for language learners. After all, the classroom offers limited opportunities to observe and interact with native speakers and to use classroom instruction in real-world scenarios. By traveling abroad, the students are exposed to a unique opportunity in which they can live, interact, and practice language in a context full of native speakers. Unfortunately, students do not always take advantage of this opportunity. Hassall (2008:32) notes that “learners during study abroad often do not interact much with native speakers—often much less than they intended to before departing.” Even when learners participate in home-stays, studies have shown that student interaction with the family largely depends on the student and host family’s attitude toward the situation. Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2002) suggest that students who have strong ties to home spend more time communicating with family and friends in the U.S. than interacting with the host family. They also noted that often the host family can vary in terms of the quantity and quality of interactions that they have with the students. If the host mother sees herself as mainly a landlord, she does not interact with the student nearly as much as she does if she sees herself in a surrogate mother role during the home-stay (Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart 2002).

Wilkinson (2000) astutely points out that sometimes study abroad students make a conscious choice to “opt-out” of opportunities to interact with native speakers. Instead, the students choose to interact mainly among themselves—and typically do so in their native language, not the target language. This is not due to a lack of motivation. Instead, the learners use their native language because “the benefits of being able to express their feelings freely

outweighed the potential costs of not achieving personal and programmatic goals” (Wilkinson 2000:39). So, the ultimate success of the study abroad experience is attributable to many variables—including personality, attitude, program structure, and learner motivation. Just because students find themselves in a rich cultural and linguistic context does not mean that they are taking full advantage of that opportunity.

Nevertheless, many research studies have found that students do improve in their linguistic and pragmatic abilities while abroad (Collentine 2004; Lopez Ortega 2003; Torres 2003; Isabelli 2002; Kinginger and Farrell 2004; Barron 2003; Owen 2002). In terms of pragmatic gains, Hoffman-Hicks (2000) found that learners became more target-like in greeting and leave-taking. Barron (2003) found that appropriate requests were easier to acquire than offers and refusals of offers. Other studies have shown that the frequency of colloquial words increased greatly during the learners’ stay abroad (Dewaele and Regan 2001; Kinginger and Farrell 2004). Kinginger and Farrell (2004) also found that learners did take significant steps forward in using the address terms of *tu/vous* in French. Nearly all of these studies, though, noted that despite obvious improvement, the students’ pragmatic competence on the whole remained non-target-like.

All the same, the students **do** show pragmatic improvement—even if it is accomplished through “baby steps”. Even when the students stayed abroad just a few weeks, studies have shown that learners can improve in their pragmatic abilities (Campbell 1996; Matsumura 2001). This evidence raises the question to be asked: How does length of stay influence the amount of knowledge and ability the learner gains while abroad? Is there an optimal amount of time that the program should be in order to assure learner improvement? There is some evidence that length of stay correlates with amount of improvement. Hoffman-Hicks’ (2000) study indicates that learners of French approximate near native-like leave-taking expressions by the end of a year-long stay abroad. Fraser (2002:23) found that students studying German in a year-long program outperformed a group in a semester-long program. Nevertheless, Churchill and DuFon (2006:26) observe that research on “the effect of program length is relatively scarce.” They tentatively,

conclude, however, that “a) even short programs can lead to gains, b) longer programs have the potential to benefit learners more—particularly in the areas of pragmatics, pronunciation and fluency, and c) at best, learner development only approaches native-like norms.”

2.3.2 Immersion Research

Because study abroad students do show improvement (albeit minimal in some cases), a related question arises as to how this improvement compares to learner gains in other contexts. Thus, there is what Churchill and DuFon (2006) calls a “renewed interest” in studies that compare the study abroad context to another—usually an at-home classroom context or an immersion context. Among these two contexts, the at-home context is by far the more popular to pair study abroad learners against. Yet, there does seem to be a growing interest in immersion research (Freed et. al 2004). The primary difference between the study abroad context and the U.S.-based immersion context is that the study abroad students are immersed in the target language and culture, whereas immersion students are generally only immersed in the language.

Cenoz (2007) believes that there should be marked differences between learners immersed in the target culture and learners who are not learning in the target community. Among the issues with learning outside of the target culture are:

- 1) The learner is usually closely identified with his/her own language and culture. In this situation it may seem unnatural to adapt to the sociocultural rules of another culture which is seen as remote.
- 2) The model of pragmatic competence offered in other contexts by native speakers is only shown indirectly.
- 3) The interaction with native speakers in natural contexts is very limited and in some cases there is no interaction at all. This situation implies that there is no feedback for the student and no communicative need. (Cenoz 2007:132)

So, the cards seem to be stacked against the immersion students. Yet, Freed et. al. (2004) indicates that perhaps these issues can be compensated for in the immersion context—resulting in even greater gains by these students than by those in a study abroad context. Freed and her associates found that while both the study abroad and the immersion students in their study showed gains in oral fluency and oral proficiency, the immersion students actually showed the most improvement. They concluded that “it is not the learning context *per se* which determines

language gain, but rather the nature and intensity of contact within that context” (Churchill and DuFon 2006: 5).

Unfortunately, only a small number of studies exist that specifically address the gains made by students studying in a domestic immersion program (Breiner-Sanders et. al. 1999; Buzash 1994; Dewey 2002; Liskin-Gasparro 1998; McKee 1983; Freed et. al. 2004). Freed et. al. (2004: 276) notes this body of research is beginning to ask questions “as to what the nature of the SA context actually is and how the purported ‘immersion’ in the native speech community abroad compares to the intensity of the language learning experience in an intensive domestic immersion program.” Many of the above studies did find that domestic immersion resulted in learner gain—although Freed et. al (2004) is the only one that actually has both immersion and study-abroad students as his subjects. The rest focus only on the immersion context. Most of these studies involve speaking skills (Breiner-Sanders, et. al. 1999; McKee 1983; Freed et. al. 2004), while others look at reading and listening skills, as well (Dewey 2002; Buzash 1994). To my knowledge, no study exists that addresses pragmatic gain in an immersion environment. Clearly, the door is wide open for interlanguage research—and specifically, interlanguage pragmatics research—in this language-learning context.

Because of the poverty of research in this context, we can only speculate as to how interlanguage pragmatics might play out in an immersion program. One common feature of immersion programs is that the school is generally largely comprised of non-native speakers with very little access to native speaker input. Liskin-Gasparro (1998), who studied the very prestigious and well-known Middlebury immersion program, noted that this feature of the immersion program was of concern to the participants:

Indeed, as the summer progressed, various participants became cognizant of the limitations inherent in the Spanish School environment. As mentioned above, Rachel worried that she would pick up incorrect language from her fellow students. Joseph, always aware that his accent was distinctly nonnative, was concerned about the input he was getting from an environment composed largely of North Americans. (Liskin-Gasparro 1998:172)

The students are concerned that the lack of native speaker input and the abundance of non-native speaker input will adversely affect their language learning—that being in the target community ultimately would be more advantageous. Indeed, there is certainly something to be said for native-speaker input—especially in regard to pragmatics. Yet, as was mentioned previously, the bulk of study-abroad research indicates that just because a student is exposed to the target culture does not necessarily entail high quantity and quality of native-speaker interaction. In fact, in a recent study entitled “‘No, they won't 'just sound like each other': NNS-NNS negotiated interaction and attention to phonological form on targeted L2 pronunciation tasks”, Sicola (2008) observed that a non-native speaker's (NNS) exposure to another NNS can actually push the speakers towards a more target-like pronunciation even though neither of the interlocutors is a native speaker. Given these results, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that target-like pragmatic competence might be possible via NNS-NNS conversations, as well.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed the relevant theoretical background, scholarly works, and research studies that pertain to the topics in this dissertation. The chapter began in Section 2.1 with a discussion of interlanguage pragmatics and the importance of pragmatic competence in language learning. I examined the specific research that pertains to interlanguage pragmatics—specifically those studies that have focused on mitigation. It was determined that much of the work done on pragmatic softeners was actually conducted under the umbrella term, *syntactic downgraders*. In Section 2.2, an overview of research is provided that dealt specifically with the Aspect Hypothesis. The various types of methodologies that have been used in these studies was also explored. I concluded the chapter with Section 2.3, which gave an overview of the body of knowledge in existence about study abroad and immersion-program research. It was found that the study abroad context is seen as ripe environment for the refining of pragmatic competence—even though native-speaker competence an unlikely goal. While advances have been made in study abroad research, the door to immersion research (especially as it relates to interlanguage

pragmatics) is still wide open. Not much is known about how pragmatic competence is shaped in an immersion setting.

In the next chapter, I explain the methodology employed in my own research on pragmatic competence acquisition in immersion and study-abroad settings.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

To approach the research questions, two groups of learners were studied in common language-learning settings: 1) a group that is participating in a U.S.-based immersion program and 2) a group that is participating in a study abroad program in Mexico. Both of these groups have had comparable previous classroom Spanish experience. Both groups were in their respective language-learning environments for three weeks total. Although their stays were relatively short, I treated the research as a longitudinal study by collecting data at the beginning, middle, and end of the stays. During the groups' three-week programs, the subjects completed a biographical information sheet, a set of oral tasks, and a set of questionnaires. A follow-up questionnaire was sent to the students three months after they returned home. The goal of this data collection was to determine not only how the subjects develop sociopragmatically throughout their stay but also how the two groups' progress compared with each other.

In the following sections, I identify the types of subjects studied and the methods used to elicit data from them. Information about the role the Institutional Review Board played in the data-gathering process is discussed. This chapter ends with a summary of how each facet of the methodology correlates to the research questions laid out in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects of my study were students who had previous classroom experience in Spanish and were studying in a three-week language-intense program, either in a study abroad context or a U.S.-based immersion context. These two groups were selected because they represent two common venues in which Spanish learners have the opportunity to put classroom

knowledge into practice. The goal was to see if the subjects show any sociopragmatic development during these “extra-curricular” programs. (By “extra-curricular”, I mean that these programs are outside the norm of traditional classroom learning.) For both groups, I excluded anyone who had extensive “native-speaker” contact during his or her childhood, meaning that the person grew up with a parent or guardian who spoke Spanish in the home. This ensured that I was studying true Spanish learners whose previous experiences with Spanish were limited to classroom settings.

3.2.1 Immersion Group

The first group consisted of 22 students at the Virginia Department of Education Summer Spanish Immersion Academy, called the “Spanish Academy” for short. This annual Academy is sponsored by the Virginia Department of Education in collaboration with all Virginia high school language departments. Each Virginia high school may nominate up to two students who have excelled in Spanish language learning. The students must complete an application, an essay in Spanish, and a series of oral tests to be selected to attend the Spanish Academy. The purpose of the Academy is to bring together the best and brightest of high-school students who have been exclusively classroom-taught in Spanish. The majority of the students have completed their junior year in high school, although some mature sophomores are allowed to participate. Everyone who participates in the program must have at least 3 years of classroom Spanish experience, though many have more. The Academy does not permit students who have had extensive Spanish language backgrounds, which includes having lived abroad in a Spanish-speaking country for an extended period of time and/or having grown up with Spanish-speaking parents in the home.

Among all of the applicants, 60 students were invited to attend the 2008 Spanish Academy. Twenty-two of the 60 students agreed to take part in my study. The dates of the 2008 Academy were June 20 to July 13, 2008. The immersion experience took place in Richmond, Virginia on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). On the first day of the Academy, the students made a pledge to speak only Spanish throughout their three-week stay.

The students were permitted an hour of English letter-writing time each day. Other than letter-writing time, the reading, speaking, singing, or exposure to English in any way was strictly prohibited. If students did not abide by these rules, they were sent home and could not complete the program. As a note, this English-only pledge and subsequent restrictions were requirements of the Virginia Department of Education, not requirements of my particular study. Yet, in order to work with these students, I also had to agree to abide by these rules. This turned out to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, this group was extremely attractive to study because of the intense language environment in which they were learning and communicating in Spanish. On the other hand, all of my interaction with the subjects had to be in Spanish—including all oral instructions and written communication such as the questionnaires. This restriction ended up being a limitation of the study, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

While the Academy's own admission policies certainly helped in ensuring the subjects in this group were similar in background and skill level, I wanted to independently verify that the subject pool was relatively uniform. To gather this information, I asked that the students fill out a biographical information sheet, which can be found in Appendix A. This sheet asked basic questions regarding the subjects' gender, age, grade in school, previous Spanish classroom experience, and previous non-classroom Spanish experience. From these sheets, I was able to determine that the group consisted of the following:

- 1) Age range from 16-17 years old⁴
- 2) Number of Females: 14 Number of Males: 8
- 3) Average years of Spanish experience: 4 years of high-school Spanish
- 4) Most students rarely used Spanish outside of a school context.
- 5) Not one student had a native Spanish-speaker parent.
- 6) Very few students had ever traveled to a Spanish-speaking country. Of those that did, only one student had stayed more than 10 days.

Based on these findings, I can solidly assert that these subjects were a largely homogeneous group in terms of demographics and past experiences. No one subject had too little or too much

⁴ For participants who were minors, parental consent was also obtained.

experience compared to the others so as to skew the data.

I met with the immersion group three times throughout their stay at the Academy. Each time we met, the students filled out a questionnaire and participated in an oral activity. Our first meeting was very early in their stay—about three days after they arrived. Although it would have been more ideal to test the students before any immersion time elapsed, I am considering the data collected at this first encounter to be “pre-test” information (i.e. information about what the student already knew before the immersion experience). The second time I met with the students was in the middle of the three-week stay. The final time I met with the students was at the very end of their stay—about two days before they returned home. The data collected at this session was considered “post-test” information (i.e. information about what the student learned during the immersion experience). I sent an additional follow-up questionnaire to the students approximately three months after they returned home. This fourth questionnaire was used to determine if any additional changes occurred after the immersion experience had ended.

Even though the fourth questionnaire was sent out after the students had returned home and were no longer bound to their Spanish-only oath, I still used a Spanish-only questionnaire so that it would be consistent with the previous three the students had completed. I emailed the students the questionnaires and asked that they return them by a particular date. When that date arrived, I sent out a second reminder email to those who had still not returned the questionnaire. About a week after the reminder email, I sent a hard copy of the questionnaire via regular mail and asked that they be returned. Overall, it took about a month to collect the fourth questionnaire from all the students.

Due to illnesses, unexplained absences, and non-returned fourth questionnaires, I was not able to collect 22 complete sets of data. Fortunately, when students were unable to attend a meeting, I was usually able to send questionnaires for the students to fill out in their rooms. So, even though not all students were able to complete all three oral tasks, most students were still able to complete all the questionnaires. In total, I was able to collect 18 sets of complete data with

all oral tasks and questionnaires finished. I was able to collect 22 copies of Questionnaires A and B, 20 copies of Questionnaire C, and 19 copies of Questionnaire D.

3.2.2 Study Abroad Group

The second group consisted of 14 college-aged students. These students were also involved in a three-week language intense program—only this program took place in Mérida, Mexico. The subjects in this study abroad group were all college students from the Associated Colleges of the Twin Cities consortium, which includes the following colleges and universities: Augsburg College, Hamline University, Macalester College, The College of St. Catherine, and the University of St. Thomas. These schools are joined together in consortium to provide cooperative programs and services for their respective students, faculty, and administrators. Included among these cooperative programs are study abroad opportunities. The particular program to which my subjects belonged was a January Term study abroad trip led by Dr. Juli Kroll of the Spanish department of St. Thomas University. The trip was from January 2-24, 2009. Students participating in the trip received one three-hour, junior-level Spanish course credit.

I chose a group studying in Mexico because pragmatic softeners are still commonly used in this country, unlike other countries such as Spain where such words are considered too formal and outdated (McManness, Personal Communication). Mexican Spanish is also often considered a more “standard” variety than the Spanish spoken in other countries, such as European-influenced countries (Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay) or Caribbean/coastal countries such as Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (Lipski 2008). The Spanish spoken in Mérida, which is located in the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico, does have an indigenous influence from the Mayan civilization. However, the Mayan influence in the language is largely lexical and phonological and likely did not influence the production of pragmatic softeners (Mackenzie 2009).

To be eligible for the trip, the students must have completed at least four semesters of Spanish and have a 3.0 GPA overall. The guidelines for admission did not take into account any time the student spent studying Spanish in high school. For this reason, I again distributed the

biographical information sheet (see Appendix A) to ensure that the students were similar in background and experience both to each other and to the immersion group. I did not include any student who reported to have taken less than 3 semesters of college Spanish AND had no prior Spanish classroom experience. This constraint was because I wanted to keep the experience level similar to that of the immersion group. Since none of the students in the immersion group had completed less than 3 years of high school Spanish (which is equivalent to 3 semesters of college Spanish), this constraint ensured that all of the members of the two research groups had achieved a similar, minimal level of classroom experience.

From the biographical sheets, I was also able to determine that the group consisted of the following:

- 1) Age range from 19-24 years old
- 2) Number of Females: 13 Number of Males: 1
- 3) Average years of Spanish experience: 4 years of high-school Spanish **and**
4 semesters of college-level Spanish
- 4) Most students rarely used Spanish outside of a school context.
- 5) No students had a native Spanish-speaker parent.
- 6) Twelve of the 14 students had previously traveled to a Spanish-speaking country. Some even reported having stayed anywhere from 2 weeks to 3 months there. However, the majority reported using Spanish only 1-2 hours per day during their previous travels abroad.

Based on these findings, I can again assert that these subjects were a largely homogeneous group in terms of demographics and past experiences. On paper, the study abroad students appear to be at an unfair advantage against the immersion students because of having had more classroom instruction and more experience abroad. However, since the biographical information sheets were filled out at the first session, I actually had a chance to observe the study abroad students' oral tasks in person and look over their questionnaires before I ever looked at the biographical information sheets. Based on what I had observed during the first session, I was shocked to see how much classroom instruction and previous experiences abroad these students had. Based on their performance at the time, I predicted that their having been exposed to significantly more classroom instruction was not going to put them at an advantage. (My initial

inclinations were correct. As will be discussed further in Chapter 8, the immersion group (who only had about half the classroom instruction as the college-students) outperformed the college-students on almost every task.)

The study abroad participants were compensated for their participation in the study by receiving a \$5 gift card after each of the three data-gathering meetings abroad. These gift cards were meant to act as an incentive for the students to participate in the study without being too large of an amount to be coercive. Unlike the immersion group, who were minors with an adult guardian ensuring that they arrived at the meetings and completed all tasks, the members of the study abroad groups were college-aged adults. This is not a demographic often known for reliability. While the immersion students were confined to certain areas and a defined schedule, the study abroad students had much more freedom during their time abroad. The small monetary compensation was meant to increase the likelihood that the students would show up for scheduled meetings and turn in their questionnaires in a timely manner.

I met with the study abroad group three times throughout their stay in Mérida, Mexico. Each time we met, the students filled out a questionnaire and participated in an oral activity. Our first meeting was very early in their stay—about three days after the students arrived. I timed this meeting so that it would be consistent with the timing of the immersion group “pre-test”. The second time I met with the students was in the middle of the three-week stay. The final time I met with the students was at the very end of their stay—about three days before they returned home. This final meeting was also arranged so that the timeline would match up with the immersion group timeline. (I saw those students two days before they returned home.) I used the data collected at this session as a “post-test” to measure what had been learned while the students were abroad. Additionally, I sent the fourth questionnaire to the students approximately three months after they returned home. This fourth questionnaire was used as a follow-up. I followed the same procedures as mentioned above in emailing this fourth questionnaire. Again, it took about a month to collect this final questionnaire from all of the students.

Fortunately, I did not encounter the problem of illnesses, unexplained absences, and non-returned questionnaires as I did with the immersion group. Thus, I was able to collect 14 sets of complete data, including all three oral tasks and all three questionnaires, pre-test to post-test. I also collected data for 11 out of 14 follow-up questionnaires, which were mailed out three months after the study abroad experience ended.

3.2.3 Differences Between Groups

It is crucial to point out that the main differences between the study abroad group and the immersion group are 1) the amount of time during a typical day that Spanish is spoken by the student and 2) the quantity, quality, and type of interaction the student has with native speakers. Because the immersion group had to commit to speak/read/write only Spanish for 21 days, it is likely that the students used more Spanish utterances in any given day than the participants in the study abroad. This is because the participants in the study abroad group have the option to speak/read/write in English, if they so desire. Additionally, since the members of the study abroad group are likely to be traveling abroad with other English speakers, it is more likely that they did choose to use some English.

The second difference between the study abroad group and the immersion group is the quantity and variety of interaction that the students have with native speakers. Because the immersion group was exposed to only a limited number of native speakers (of the 12-member staff, about three were native speakers) during their experience, they were likely to have less overall interaction with native speakers compared to the study abroad group. Additionally, the structured schedule of the immersion program limited the types of interactions the students could have with native speakers. For example, on a typical day a student in a study-abroad context might interact with a variety of native speakers in a grocery store, a mass-transit system, a lecture hall, a restaurant, and a travel agency. A student in the immersion group on a typical day would likely interact only with the same three native speakers—and only in an instructional setting.

My original plan was to verify that these differences existed by having two volunteers

from each group wear a voice recorder for one day. During that day, all spoken utterances would have been recorded and later analyzed for 1) amount of Spanish spoken and 2) variety and type of interaction with native speakers. Unfortunately, because of privacy concerns that were raised by the leaders of both the study abroad and immersion groups, I was unable to collect this data. Thus, I am only able to verify that these differences existed by my own observations when I was with both groups. What I observed was that, indeed, the immersion group did tend to speak a lot more Spanish than the study abroad group. Even though the leader of the study abroad group encouraged the students to speak Spanish to each other, I overheard quite a bit of English spoken—even as I was conducting the research sessions with the students. I very rarely overheard the students speaking Spanish to each other. They often tried to speak in English with me—even though I continued to answer back in Spanish. While I would still classify the study abroad group as being “language intense”, the fact that the students **could** opt out of Spanish and default to English resulted in less total time of their using spoken and written Spanish.

I also observed the two groups’ interactions with native speakers. What I found was that, in fact, the study abroad group did have more direct interaction with native speaker in a broader variety of contexts. Since the immersion group only had three native speakers to interact with during their stay, they definitely were limited in the quantity of interactions that they had with native speakers. Some students hardly communicated at all with the three native speakers. Others communicated more freely with the native speakers. Yet, these interactions tended to be very brief and narrow in scope. While I did observe the students interacting with native speakers outside of a classroom setting, these encounters typically involved the native speaker giving instructions to a group or participating in a question/answer dialogue. Even though the immersion group experienced a wider range of interaction types than I was expecting, these interactions still were relatively minimal compared to the study abroad group. The study abroad group had the benefit of participating in home-stays, meaning that the students lived and ate meals with a native speaker family. This automatically widened the range of interaction types, since the home-stays

allowed for students to participate in non-structured domestic linguistic scenarios with native speakers. They also had the opportunity to observe interaction between native speakers in a natural setting. Additionally, the students had opportunities to interact with and observe native speakers within the community where they stayed. Many had to ride the bus to school in the morning. The students also took many “field trips” in which a native speaker acted as their tour guide. During their free time, students were able to interact with native speakers at restaurants. In addition to all of these types of interactions, the students also attended classes taught exclusively by native-speaker teachers.

Thus, from these observations, we can conclude that some very real differences exist between the two groups in regard to 1) the amount of time during a typical day that Spanish is spoken by the student and 2) the quantity, quality, and type of interaction the student has with native speakers. Any differences in the data between the two groups might be attributable to these factors.

3.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaires used in the study (which can be found in their entirety in Appendix B) were divided into three distinct sections. The first section was a cloze test in which the students were given a narrative with infinitive verbs. The students were asked to change the verbs to past tense. The second section of the questionnaire involved excerpts from naturally occurring written and spoken Spanish statements. The student was again asked to conjugate the infinitive verbs. However their responses did not have to be limited to the past tense, as was the case with the cloze test. In the last section, the students were given a scenario to consider. They read through various reactions to the scenario and evaluated the appropriateness of each reaction.

While these questionnaires were developed based on methodology in previous studies (Salaberry 1999; Bardovi-Harlig 1995, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig and Bergstrom 1996; Bergstrom 1995, 1997; Collins 1999; Hasbun 1995; Liskin-Gasparro 1997), they were not pre-existing. Instead, I created the questionnaires to fit the needs of this study. Since they were untested for

validity and reliability, I asked a small group of six native speakers and Spanish learners to “pilot” the questionnaires for me. This pilot study was largely informal. It involved my sending the questionnaires to the participants and asking for a reaction to the content. I asked them how user-friendly they thought the questionnaire was, if the instructions were clear, and whether the tasks were difficult to complete. I made changes based on the feedback I received. I then circulated the questionnaires to my committee members—Dr. Laurel Stvan, Dr. Mark Ouelette, and Dr. Karol Hardin for additional comments. Each member was most helpful in making suggestions to improve the questionnaire’s overall usability and understandability. In the following sections, I specifically explain the resulting content of the final questionnaire.

3.3.1 Part A: Cloze Test

The first part (Part A) of the questionnaires utilizes the commonly used cloze test format.

<p>La historia siguiente es de la película de Charlie Chaplin que acabamos de mirar. Cambie los verbos en paréntesis al TIEMPO PASADO.</p> <p>Charlie Chaplin _____(preparar) el desayuno en la cocina. En seguida, él _____(encontrar) una gallina y la _____(poner) en la sartén. Charlie Chaplin _____(esperar) hasta que la gallina _____(poner) el huevo. Por fin, el huevo _____(llegar). Mientras que el huevo _____(llegar), Charlie Chaplin _____(colocar) el pan en la mesa. Después, Charlie _____(empezar) a preparar el café. Él _____(añadir) mucho azúcar a una de las tazas. _____(haber) una vaca afuera. Charlie _____(usar) la vaca para añadir la leche al café. Charlie _____(mezclar) el café y _____(llevar) la vaca adentro de la casa. Mientras que el hombre _____(entrar) la cocina, Charlie _____(echar) el café. Charlie _____(estar) orgulloso porque _____(ser) muy creativo cuando _____(estar) preparando el desayuno.</p>
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Figure 3.1 Part A of the first questionnaire

This format was selected to accomplish several research goals. As previously mentioned, I am interested in determining empirically whether the acquisition of the PAST prototype—and

specifically the *deictic past*—plays a role in the acquisition of past pragmatic softeners. Thus, I needed an avenue to determine the students' understanding of the *deictic past*. A narrative was given to the students to complete. They were asked to read the narrative and change the given infinitive verbs to the past tense—either the imperfect or preterite. The narrative centered on a Charlie Chaplin movie clip that the students had just finished watching. This clip was also used for the oral task. Linking the narrative to the movie gave the students a context for the story and a sense of which actions were in the background and which actions were in the foreground. The verbs included in the narrative were selected to represent each of the four lexical aspect categories: achievement, activity, accomplishment, and state. The purpose of the task was to determine whether students had reached the final stages of acquisition, as evidenced by use of accomplishments-imperfective, activities-perfective, achievements-imperfective, and states-perfective. As mentioned in Chapter 2, previous research in the Aspect Hypothesis has set a precedent for using a cloze test format to measure the acquisition of such forms (Salaberry 1999).

After collecting the data from the two groups, I applied the data to a chart similar to Table 3.1 below, adapted from Salaberry (1999). For each round of questionnaires analyzed, I determined what percentage of the total number of verbs used were achievement, activity, accomplishment, and state. I further broke down the verbs by morphology (preterite, imperfect, etc.). What I expected to find was that as the latter PAST categories emerged (i.e. preterite activities, imperfect achievements, and preterite states), pragmatic softeners would also emerge. As a note, pragmatic softeners are not addressed in Part A of the questionnaire. This part is focused only on measuring the students' progress in acquiring the *deictic past*.

Table 3.1 Salaberry (1999) lexical aspect chart

Group	Form	Achievement %	Activity %	Accomplishment %	State %
Group A: 1 st Questionnaire	Preterite Imperfect Present Other				
Group A: 2 nd Questionnaire	Preterite Imperfect Present Other				
Group A: 3 rd Questionnaire	Preterite Imperfect Present Other				
Group A: Post-Test	Preterite Imperfect Present Other				

In addition to measuring student progress in acquiring the *deictic past*, the cloze test portion of the questionnaire also addresses another important issue in pragmatic softener acquisition--that of prescriptive instances of the target forms that also exist in Spanish grammar. In which a speaker **must** select the conditional or the past subjunctive. These are not instances of pragmatic softening, but they involve the same knowledge that would be required to produce a grammatical past pragmatic softener. Since pragmatic softeners are speaker-selected, we cannot assume that their non-presence equates to non-acquisition. In contrast, these prescriptive instances would indicate non-acquisition if not consistently present. Their acquisition is evidence of grammatical competence. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is important to investigate from the

outset of a study what role grammatical competence plays in pragmatic competence. Thus, it would be helpful to have a sense of whether these forms are produced by the learner when necessary—thereby measuring the learner’s grammatical competence. For this reason, in each of the four questionnaires, I built into the cloze test at least one verb that must be conjugated as either conditional or past subjunctive in order to be grammatical. I did not alert the students to this fact, as I wanted to see how many would know to conjugate the verb correctly.

3.3.2 Part B: Real-World Statements

Part B of the questionnaire changes focus and deals with pragmatic softeners. In this section, subjects were presented with real-life utterances that utilized the verbs *poder*, *querer*, and *deber*. After they were given a brief statement of context about who uttered the statement to whom and in what type of situation it was spoken or written, students were asked to conjugate the verbs as they believe they were originally spoken or written. Out of the five statements, three of them contained a pragmatic softener in their original context and thus could be appropriately used, although not necessary, in those statements. Two of the statements are similar to the hidden prescriptive element mentioned in the section above about the cloze test. These statements include verbs (in this case, *poder*, *deber*, or *querer*) that must be conjugated as either conditional or past subjunctive in order to be grammatical. Again, the goal here is to determine whether the subjects are able to produce a prescriptive instance of these verb types. My expectation is that they could produce these forms in a prescriptive context before they would produce them in a speaker-selected context such as pragmatic softening. The example below (Figure 3.2) shows five sentences to which the students are asked to respond. Sentences 3 and 4 must necessarily be conjugated as *pudieras* and *quisiera* respectively. Sentence 3 must be conjugated as such because of the *no estaba seguro* (‘I wasn’t sure’) at the beginning of the sentence. This is a triggering phrase for the past subjunctive. Likewise, Sentence 4 utilizes a type of “If...Then...” construction which also requires the use of the past subjunctive. So, in this questionnaire, sentences 1, 2, and 5 are opportunities for the student to produce a pragmatic

softener. Sentences 3 and 4 are opportunities to demonstrate an understanding of grammatical usage of these forms in prescriptive contexts.

<p>Cambie los verbos en paréntesis. Use la forma del verbo que piensa que fue usada cuando era dicha/escrita originalmente.</p> <p>1) (<i>Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión</i>) “En primer lugar yo _____(querer) decirles que me parece que hay algunas conclusiones incorrectas.”</p> <p>2) (<i>Escrito en un documento del gobierno</i>) “¿Ha sufrido un accidente de coche? _____ (deber) llamar a un abogado.”</p> <p>3) (<i>Dicho en un programa de la televisión</i>) “No estaba seguro que tú _____(poder) asistir a la reunión.”</p> <p>4) (<i>Escrito en un periódico</i>) Si ella _____(querer) hacerlo, podría ser médico.</p> <p>5) (<i>Dicho en una conversación: un estudiante está hablando con el decano de la universidad</i>) “Disculpe, ¿ _____(poder) hablar con usted por unos minutos?”</p>
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Figure 3.2: Part B of the first questionnaire

3.3.3 Part C: Appropriateness Evaluation

The final section of the questionnaire also addresses pragmatic softeners. However, in this case, unlike the elicitation task in Part B above, the students are actually presented with the softeners and asked to evaluate the appropriateness of their usage in various circumstances. For example, in Figure 3.3 below, the students are asked to imagine a scenario. The student and his/her mom are out shopping when a woman emerges from the dressing room wearing an ugly skirt that fits the woman poorly. The woman asks the student if he/she thinks that she should buy the dress or keep looking. The student then is given a variety of responses to choose from and asked to rate the appropriateness of each response—from not appropriate to very appropriate. The option is available for the students to select number three if they don't know how to answer. Among the responses are the target forms that I am researching (imperfect, conditional, and past subjunctive). Also included are other common responses, including a command form “No compre esta falda” (*Don't buy this skirt*), a present tense verb “Debe comprar esta falda” (*You should buy this skirt*), and an op-out phrase that uses the conditional “Yo compraría otra falda” (*I would buy*

another skirt). Each questionnaire's Part C consists of three scenarios and subsequent reactions to evaluate appropriateness. Each of the three scenarios utilizes each of the three verbs I am interested in (*poder, querer, deber*). The results from Part C were compiled and quantified according to how students evaluated the appropriateness of each response. This section is quite revealing of not only what the students know about pragmatic softeners in general but of which situations they deem their use most appropriate.

6) Tu mamá quiere unos pantalones nuevos. Decides ir de compras con ella. Mientras que ella prueba los pantalones, otra mujer aparece del probador. La mujer lleva una falda horrible. Ella te pregunta, "¿Debo comprar esta falda o buscar otra?"					
¿Cuán apropiadas son las respuestas siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.					
1= no apropiado, 2= un poco apropiado, 3= no sé, 4= bastante apropiado, 5= muy apropiado					
a) "No compre esta falda."	1	2	3	4	5
b) "Debe buscar otra falda que le quede mejor."	1	2	3	4	5
c) "Cómprala. ¡Qué bonita es!"	1	2	3	4	5
d) "Yo buscaría otra falda."	1	2	3	4	5
e) "Debiera buscar otra falda que le quede mejor."	1	2	3	4	5
f) "Debería buscar otra falda que le quede mejor."	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 3.3 Part C of the first questionnaire⁵

3.4 Oral Task

For both groups, I asked that they perform an additional task beyond the questionnaire. This assignment was an elicitation task that used a silent movie as its medium. Many Aspect Hypothesis researchers have chosen to use this method, with many utilizing the Charlie Chaplin film *Modern Times* (Bardovi-Harlig 1995, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig and Bergstrom 1996; Bergstrom 1995, 1997; Collins 1999; Hasbun 1995; Liskin-Gasparro 1997; Salaberry 1999). Charlie Chaplin clips were preferable for several reasons. First, it was unlikely that the students would have had prior knowledge of the specifics of these movies, given their historical nature. Since they date

⁵ On the questionnaire, all instructions are given as formal commands. To be consistent, the questionnaire would typically have continued with the use of the formal in the scenarios. However, given the students' skill level and the fact that all communication with the students had to be entirely in Spanish, I elected to use the familiar form in the scenarios in Part C. This choice, while not ideal, helped to ensure that the students understood the task at hand.

back to the early 1900s, these story lines are not likely to be ones that the students had been previously exposed to. Second, the Charlie Chaplin films are silent films with music in the background. This aspect of the films was particularly desirable in this study because of the “No English” policy instituted by the Academy governing the immersion group. Even if the movies had been translated into Spanish, it was still helpful to have a movie clip without any language at all so that the student’s responses were not influenced by what was said in the clip. The lack of language forced the students to interpret what they were seeing and rely on their own perception. Lastly, the Charlie Chaplin clips were preferable for this study because they portray a series of easily definable actions and events. This was helpful for both the oral task and the cloze test portion of the questionnaire. In the oral tasks, it gave the students a clear sense of what occurred so that they could give instructions on how to reenact the scenario. In the cloze test portion of the questionnaire (which makes use of a fill-in-the-blank narrative involving the clip), the easily identifiable actions of the clip naturally translated into a cloze task in which verbs were the focus.

Given the long-standing history of using these clips in linguistics research plus the added benefits described above, I chose to use three different Charlie Chaplin clips shown to the subjects three different times, respectively, during their immersion/study abroad experience. The clip excerpts shown to the students were no more than three minutes long each. These clips included the following titles with a short description following:

- 1) *Sunnyside* (1919) -- Charlie Chaplin plays the role of a farm boy who is making breakfast with very unusual methods.
- 2) *The Vagabond* (1916) – Charlie Chaplin makes another unconventional breakfast for a woman. Meanwhile, the woman has become enamored with another man while on a search for fresh water to drink with their breakfast.
- 3) *The Kid* (1921) – Charlie Chaplin encounters a baby and decides to take him in and care for him. Since he has never cared for a small child, he finagles some unusual implements to feed and care for the baby.

These clips were chosen because they were brief, easily understandable, and limited the physical “slapstick” comedy that is often prevalent in Chaplin films. The lack of physical comedy was especially important because one of the participants who would reenact the scene as part of the

oral task was playing the role of a low-solidarity, high-power, high-distance interlocutor. To have used a clip that would cause this person to participate in physical comedy would have been counterproductive in establishing her as an authority figure.

Although it was not used for an oral task, a fourth clip was used in conjunction with the follow-up questionnaire that was emailed to the students three months after they returned home. This clip was from *Modern Times* (1936) and was presented to the subjects as a YouTube link. The duration of this clip was a little under two minutes.

Before viewing the oral task clips, each student was given a “vocabulary sheet” that contained a picture of some items pertinent to the clip they were about to see and corresponding Spanish words underneath. This was done for several reasons. First, the clips contained vocabulary that the students might not have been exposed to previously (for example, ‘to milk a cow’, ‘a rope’, ‘a diaper’, etc.) Since the immersion group could not ask for an English-Spanish translation of these words, pictures were given instead to make sure there was no confusion about how to say these words in Spanish. Additionally, since the focus of the study was not on vocabulary recall or circumlocution, the vocabulary lists ensured that the students had sufficient information about the clip (and the vocabulary involved) so that the focus of the task would be on verb selection only. The vocabulary sheets can be found in their entirety in Appendix C. Below is an excerpt from the *Sunnyside* vocabulary sheet.



Figure 3.4 Excerpt from *Sunnyside* vocabulary sheet

After viewing the clip, I asked all of the subjects to begin work on that day’s questionnaire. Then, I called the students one at a time into a separate room that was filled with props associated with

the clip they had just viewed. For example, in the *Sunnyside* task, the students had a stuffed cow, a stuffed chicken, fake eggs, a frying pan, and various other items that were used in the scene. As with the vocabulary sheets, these props were given so that the focus would remain on the verbs in the task. Having to describe imaginary objects and “play pretend” could have possibly derailed the exercise and taken the focus off of the instruction-giving.

On entering the room, each subject was asked to give another student instructions as to how to reenact the scene. The students were not given any additional guidance about how to accomplish the task other than simply to “give instructions.” I did not limit their use of commands, but I did not specifically instruct the students to “give commands” either. I left it up to the students as to how they would choose to go about giving instructions. As the instructions were given, the peer actor literally “acted out” the scene according to the instructions that were given. This scenario was meant to elicit a large amount of requests and advice, the communicative acts where past-tense pragmatic softening might occur.

During the first meeting with the immersion students, I did not give a time limit in which the students needed to conduct the instruction-giving portion. The result was that the study ran long, the staff of the Academy intervened, and three students were not able to complete the oral task because they had to leave for dinner. In order to avoid this scenario at the subsequent meetings, the students were given a two-minute time limit. They were instructed that regardless of whether or not they were finished, they needed to stop when the timer indicated that two minutes had passed. This two-minute limit was enforced in the second and third meetings with the immersion group and all three meetings with the study abroad group. Although this made the first set of data inconsistent with the rest, I believed it was better to be able to collect data from all participants and to standardize the amount of data I was getting from each student. For example, in various cases during the first session, one student would only give 30 seconds of data while another would give 10 minutes. Enforcing a time limit meant that I had a more consistent data set.

During the task, the students held a Sony ICD UX80 digital voice recorder (recording in

LP mode) so as to record the interaction. These recordings have all been transcribed and are talked about further in Chapter 5. Because the hearer in the first part of this task is a fellow student—a peer—this person likely represents an interlocutor who is high in solidarity, low in distance, and low in power. Thus, in order to provide a contrast, I brought in a confederate who would represent a person low in solidarity, high in distance, and high in power. For both groups, the person representing low solidarity and high power was Kathy Ames. a friend of the researcher’s who lives in the Richmond area. She is a woman in her fifties and is fluent in Spanish (although not a native speaker). Her college degree is in Spanish and she has spent much time abroad, especially in Spain. She is pictured below in Figure 3.5. She was presented to the students as “Doctora Puentes,” with the hope that a Spanish-sounding surname would help further influence the students to believe she was a person of native-speaker status. The students were told that “Doctora Puentes” was a Spanish professor at an unnamed university who had taken some very precious time out of her schedule to meet with the students. Kathy was asked to act somewhat “aloof” and not exceptionally friendly with the students. The overarching goal here was to set up a scenario in which the students would feel compelled to produce pragmatic softeners due to the perceived distance and power differential with the interlocutor.



Figure 3.5 Kathy Ames, (a.k.a Dra. Puentes)

Once the students finished the instruction-giving task with their peer, they were asked to go into an adjoining room to repeat the exact same task with “Doctora Puentes”. The adjoining room contained the exact same set of props as were used with their peer. Again, the students were told to “give instructions” on how to reenact the video clip. During the task, as well, the students held

an audio recording device so as to record this interaction. These tapes were later transcribed.

3.5 Native Speakers

To establish a native-speaker baseline, I also chose to include some native Spanish speakers in the study from Mexico. Although some later immigrated to the United States and/or learned English, they all had in common that Spanish was their only native language and that they were all educated in this language. I sent out about 40 questionnaires and received only five back. (The questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix B, was somewhat lengthy. This may have been a contributing factor in why more native speakers did not participate.) The questionnaire that these five native speakers filled out was similar to the questionnaires filled out by the two learner groups, including items lifted directly from the real-world statements section and the appropriateness evaluations section of the learner questionnaires. The native speakers were given the same instructions as the learners for each of these sections.

The native speaker questionnaire differed from the learner questionnaires in three important ways. First, the native speakers only filled out one questionnaire in one sitting instead of four questionnaires over a time period of four months. Since the native speakers were not acquiring language as the learners were, there was no need to see how their responses changed over time. Since there was also no need for them to fill out four separate questionnaires items from each of the questionnaires were combined into one comprehensive questionnaire, which was completed by the native speakers in one sitting.

The second way the native-speaker questionnaire differed was in the absence of the cloze test. The purpose of the cloze test section of the learner questionnaire was solely to determine if the students had acquired the latter stages of the *deictic past*. Since the native speakers are presumed to have already acquired the *deictic past* in childhood, having them fill out the cloze test portion of the questionnaire would have been unnecessary. Thus, the native-speaker questionnaire does not include a cloze test.

The final way the native speaker questionnaire differed from the learner questionnaires was in the inclusion of an additional task. This task was meant to replace the oral task that the learners completed during the study. Because of logistical reasons, it would have been almost impossible for the native speakers to participate in an oral task similar to the one completed by the learners. First, logistics were a problem given that the native speaker participants were currently living all over the United States and Mexico. Gathering all of these people in one central location would have been nearly impossible. Second, even if I could have worked things out logistically, the native speakers ranged in age and background. In order to create a scenario similar to that created for the learners, the native speakers would have needed to first give instructions to a peer. It is unknown whether the native speakers would have perceived each other as peers—given the wide age range and socioeconomic backgrounds of the participants. Likewise, if I had asked the native speakers to then give instructions to Doctora Puentes, a Spanish professor at an unnamed university, it is unlikely that the native speakers would have seen this interlocutor in the same perspective that the learners did. For a young, Spanish learner, a Spanish professor at a university would be seen as an interlocutor with higher power and distance. Yet, the native speakers might not have perceived a Spanish professor in the same light and, consequently, might not have seen the need to be polite with her.

Given that 1) the goal of the oral task was to determine how native speakers would give instructions to a peer and to a non-peer and 2) it was not guaranteed that the scenario used with the learners would have provided this same contrast, I chose to include a revised version of the oral task on the questionnaire. In this section, I asked the native speakers to watch a YouTube clip of a Charlie Chaplin film. I then asked them to imagine that they have been asked to give oral instructions to a peer on how to reenact the scene. They were informed that the peer had all of the “props” necessary to act out the scene. The native speakers were then asked to write out the oral instructions that they would give to their peer. They are also asked to write out the oral instructions that they would give if they were talking with someone with whom they needed to be

very polite. By presenting the task in this way, I ensured that the native speakers were overtly aware that the interlocutors differed and that the native speakers needed to vary their speech accordingly. This contrast provided data that was comparable to the data collected from the learners in the oral task.

3.6 Institutional Review Board

Because this study involved the use of human subjects, it was necessary to submit a research protocol to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. This body protects the rights and welfare of human research subjects. In order to comply with the IRB, I submitted three separate protocols to the IRB of the University of Texas at Arlington—one for the immersion group, one for the study abroad group, and one for the native speaker group. The Immersion Group protocol was titled “Language Learning and Politeness” and was approved on April 29, 2008 under protocol number 2008.029s. The Study Abroad protocol was titled “Language Learning and Politeness in a Study Abroad Context” was approved on October 16, 2008 under protocol number 2008.662s. The Native Speaker protocol was titled “Language Learning and Politeness: Native Speaker Perspective” and was approved on April 14, 2009 under the protocol number 2009.01356. These approval forms can be found in Appendix D.

Because I was collaborating with other institutions, there was some concern about the engagement of their respective Institutional Review Boards, as well. I’d like to address these issues here and how they were resolved so that no confusion exists as to why they were or were not involved in the study. With the immersion group, the IRB’s that potentially would have been involved were those of the Department of Education and the Virginia Commonwealth University. The Department of Education was approached about the research and agreed that as long as their employees were not involved in the research in any way, there was no need to acquire consent from their board. The role that Virginia Commonwealth University played in the research was a little more complex. While I did use their facilities to conduct the research, they were most concerned about the involvement of the Academy staff in the research since the staff members

were paid through VCU and were considered VCU employees for the summer. After I agreed that I would not use the staff in any way in the study and would have only students as subjects, the VCU IRB, as represented by Rosemary Kelso, Director of the Office of Research Subjects Protection, claimed “non-engagement” in the study and said consent was not necessary from their board. Documentation of this communication is included in Appendix E.

In regard to the study abroad groups, the potential IRBs that needed to be involved included each of the colleges represented in the group, including Augsburg College, Hamline University, Macalester College, The College of St. Catherine, and the University of St. Thomas. I inquired to the University of St. Thomas, which was acting as the host university for the study-abroad trip. The university explained that consent from their IRB would suffice for all the students since the trip was being organized through a representative of its organization. I applied to its IRB under the title “Language Learning and Politeness in a Study Abroad Context” and was approved on January 1, 2009 under the protocol number B08-077-2. (See Appendix E.)

3.7 Summary of Methodology

In Table 3.2 below provides a summary of the two tasks involved in the study: the questionnaires and the oral task. This table explains the goal, the participants, the, and the research questions that are associated with each task.

Table 3.2 Summary of methodology

	<u>Questionnaires</u>			<u>Oral Task</u>
	<u>Part A: Cloze Test</u>	<u>Part B: Real-World Scenarios</u>	<u>Part C: Appropriateness Evaluations</u>	
Goal:	To determine which parts of the PAST category have been already acquired AND To determine the presence of grammatical usage of the conditional and past subjunctive in prescriptive situations	To determine if learners will produce pragmatic softeners when presented with real-life situations where they were used AND To determine the presence of grammatical usage of the conditional and past subjunctive in prescriptive situations	To determine in what types of situations learners will deem pragmatic softener usage appropriate	To determine if the students can use pragmatic softening felicitously in conversation
Participants:	Immersion and Study Abroad Group			
Frequency:	3 questionnaires spaced evenly throughout stay; 1 follow-up questionnaire emailed three months after the subjects return home			3 movie viewings spaced evenly throughout stay
Research Question Addressed:	Question 1: How do pragmatic softeners fit into the acquisition of the PAST prototype?	Question 2: When and how do learners exhibit productive use of pragmatic softeners? AND Question 3: How does conditional and past subjunctive acquisition shape pragmatic softener acquisition?	Question 4: What trends can be observed in learner perception of appropriateness in pragmatic softener usage?	Question 2: When and how do learners exhibit productive use of pragmatic softeners? Or, what do they use in the place of softeners?

In the following table, I also summarize the subjects who participated in the research study: the study abroad group and the immersion group. I outline the size and composition of the group, the age of the subjects, the classroom level of Spanish accomplished, the main differences between

the two groups, and the research question addressed by the inclusion of these two groups in the study.

Table 3.3 Summary of research participants

	<u>Study Abroad Group</u>	<u>Immersion Group</u>
Dates Studied:	June 20, 2008 – July 13, 2008	January 2, 2009 – January 24, 2009
Length of stay:	3 weeks	3 weeks
Age Range:	16-17 years old	19-24 years old
Average time spent in classroom Spanish prior to trip:	4 years of high school Spanish and 4 semesters of college Spanish	4 years of high school Spanish
Access to native speakers during stay:	Stay in native speaker homes; have meals with native speakers; have freedom to roam around the city; native speaker tour guides, native speaker teachers	Only 3 native speakers in the whole Academy; no contact with outside world
Amount of Spanish spoken during stay:	Some Spanish spoken while abroad; Students have option to “opt-out” and communicate in English with each other and with friends/family back home	Spanish spoken 24/7; Any exposure to written or spoken English is strictly prohibited
Research Question Addressed:	Question 5: How does the language learning environment shape the acquisition of pragmatic softeners?	

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS: PRODUCTION OF PRAGMATIC SOFTENERS IN QUESTIONNAIRE

Chapters 4 through 7 of this dissertation detail the results of the study. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the production of pragmatic softeners both on the questionnaire and in the oral task. Chapter 6 looks at the results of the appropriateness evaluations of pragmatic softeners. Chapter 7 has as its focus how the PAST prototype and the pragmatic softener production interface. Chapter 8 examines whether prescriptive knowledge shaped pragmatic softener production. The focus of these chapters is mainly to present the collected data in an organized fashion. I will reserve for Chapter 9 the pertinent commentary, discussion, and speculation as to why certain responses and trends in the data are seen.

In this chapter, I look specifically at the production of pragmatic softeners in the questionnaire. In Section 4.1, I report the major findings from Part B of the questionnaire, the portion of the questionnaire in which I gave the students five “real-world” statements. In Sections 4.2 and 4.3, I consider two different factors that potentially influenced the data: time and context. Section 4.5 compares the student data to the native speaker baseline. The chapter is brought to a close by way of a chapter summary in Section 4.6.

4.1 Questionnaire Results of “Real-World Statements”

When looking at the three questionnaire items, the general trends in responses are of interest. Specifically, I am looking to see if pragmatic softeners were even produced by the students. And, if they were used, I will look at which ones were used and at what frequency. In the cases where pragmatic softeners were not used, I will examine what was used instead.

4.1.1 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test

Questionnaire A was given to the students at the beginning of the language immersion/study abroad experience. The information gathered therein is used as a type of pre-test to determine what knowledge/skills the students came into the study already possessing. Given this, the pre-test results indicate that at least some of the students arrived at the study being already familiar with the concept of pragmatic softeners. This is evidenced by the fact that a wide range of softeners were produced in the pre-test responses. I break down the responses by question below.

4.1.1.1 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test: Question 1

Question 1 of Part B of the pre-test had as its focus the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

1) (*Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión*) “En primer lugar yo _____ (querer) decirles que me parece que hay algunas conclusiones incorrectas.”

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, on this item 11 students (31%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 11 students, 7 (64%) chose to use *quería*⁶, 3 (27%) chose *quisiera*, and 1 (9%) used *querría*. Of the 25 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 25 (100%) preferred the present indicative *quiero* ('I want') in the statement.

4.1.1.2 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test: Question 2

Question 2 of Part B of the pre-test had as its focus the verb *deber*. Pre-test responses indicate the students were initially not as favorable toward *deber* used as a pragmatic softener.

The question was as follows:

2) (*Escrito en un documento del gobierno*) “¿Ha sufrido un accidente de coche? _____ (deber) llamar a un abogado.”

⁶ Two students actually chose *quise* and *quiso*, which is a preterit conjugation of *querer*. This is likely a transfer issue, since English does not have two past tense options. Because these students chose a past tense version of *querer* (even though it wasn't the imperfect *quería*), I am assuming that their intent was to use a past pragmatic softener of *querer*. I have therefore included these answers.

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, on this item 3 students (8%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 3 students, all 3 (100%) selected *debería* as their pragmatic softener of choice. No student opted to use the more polite softener *debiera*. Of the 33 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 30 (91%) preferred the present indicative *debe* ('you should) in the statement. Three (9%) students chose to use the highly uncommon command form of *deber*, '*deba*'.

4.1.1.3 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test: Question 3

The third and final question of this type (which actually corresponds to Question 5 on Questionnaire A, Part B) had as its focus the verb *poder*. Pre-test responses indicate the students were more likely to use *poder* as a pragmatic softener than either of the other two verbs. The question was as follows:

5) (*Dicho en una conversación: un estudiante está hablando con el decano de la universidad*) "Disculpe, ¿ _____(poder) hablar con usted por unos minutos?"

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 12 students (33%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 12 students, all 12 (100%) selected *podría* as their pragmatic softener of choice. No student opted to use the more polite softener *podiera*. Of the 24 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, all 24 (100%) preferred the present indicative *puedo* ('I can') in the statement.

4.1.1.4 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test: Summary

In summary, even on the pre-test, some clear trends emerge in the production of pragmatic softeners. The results indicate that the students had been previously exposed to pragmatic softeners—more than likely through classroom instruction. *Poder* and *querer* pragmatic softeners were much more frequently produced than *deber*, which trailed far behind these two. In general, the students seemed to favor the conditional pragmatic softeners (*podría*, *debería*) over the past subjunctive softeners. *Querer* was an exception, though. In this questionnaire, *quería*

(the imperfect of *querer*) far outnumbered both the past subjunctive and the conditional counterparts, *quisiera* and *querría*. Of the seven pragmatic softeners included in this study, five of them were included among the responses. The two that were not used were the most polite forms of *poder* and *deber*—*pudiera* and *debiera* respectively. For those students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, the most typical response was simply the present indicative. The table below summarizes the frequency with which each pragmatic softener was used.

Table 4.1 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire A

Poder N=12 33%	Pudiera	N=0	0%
	Podría	N=12	100%
Deber N=3 8%	Debiera	N=0	0%
	Debería	N=3	100%
Querer N=11 31%	Quisiera	N=3	27%
	Querría	N=1	9%
	Quería	N=7	64%

4.1.2 Questionnaire B

Questionnaire B was given to the students at the mid-point of the language immersion/study abroad experience. The information gathered therein is used to determine what knowledge/skills the students have acquired during the first half of their time in a language-intense environment. Given that there are some changes between the pre-test and Questionnaire B, it is safe to say that some type of learning is occurring. I break down the responses by question below.

4.1.2.1 Questionnaire B: Question 1

Question 1 of Part B of Questionnaire B had as its focus the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

- 1) (*Dicho en una entrevista formal con Fidel Castro*) “Comandante, yo _____(querer) preguntarle sobre un aspecto.”

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 20 students (56%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 20 students, 5 (25%) chose *quería*, 7 (35%) chose *quisiera*, and 8 (40%) used *querría*. Of the 16 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, all 16 (100%) preferred the present indicative *quiero* ('I want') in the statement.

4.1.2.2 Questionnaire B: Question 2

Question 2 of Part B of Questionnaire B had as its focus the verb *deber*. Students remained cautious in their usage of *deber* as a pragmatic softener. The question was as follows:

2) (*Dicho por un candidato de una elección*) "(Yo) _____(deber) estar feliz por todo lo que estoy haciendo, pero realmente estoy infeliz por que estamos perdiendo."

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 8 students (22%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 8 students, seven (88%) selected *debería* as their pragmatic softener of choice. One student (12%) opted to use the more polite softener *debiera*.

Of the 28 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 28 (100%) preferred the present indicative *debo* ('I should') in the statement. No students chose to use the highly uncommon command form of *deber*, '*deba*', as occurred in the pre-test.

4.1.2.3 Questionnaire B: Question 3

The third question of this type had as its focus the verb *poder*. The question was as follows:

3) (*Dicho en una conversación de teléfono*)

Pierre: Servicio de clientes, buenas tardes.

Lee: Hola. ¿(Yo) _____(poder) hablar con el Señor Pierre, por favor?

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 13 students (36%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 13 students, all 13 (100%) selected *podría* as their pragmatic softener of choice. No student opted to use the more polite softener *podiera*. Of the 23 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 22 (96%) preferred the present indicative *puedo* ('I

can') in the statement. One student (4%) used the incorrect response '*pueda*', which is assumed to be some sort of command or could perhaps be a wrong use of the subjunctive.

4.1.2.4 Questionnaire B: Question 4

Questionnaire B actually had a fourth question taken from a real-world scenario in which a pragmatic softener was used. This was posed as Question 5 on Part B, and had as its focus the verb *deber*. (Hence, this questionnaire had two statements that dealt with *deber* as a pragmatic softener. The inclusion of this extra statement was largely unintentional, especially since it deviates from the original, pre-test questionnaire design. However, its inclusion did not alter the integrity of the questionnaire in any way and does provide some intriguing comparative data.) On this second question, students were even more cautious in their usage of *deber* as a pragmatic softener than they were in Question 2 of this same questionnaire. The question was as follows:

5) (*Dicho en un cuarto de charla en la Red—la respuesta de un blog*)
“Tú _____(deber) estar feliz de que tu corazón no está endurecido y triste.”

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, only 2 students (5%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 2 students, both (100%) selected *debería* as their pragmatic softener of choice. Of the 34 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 33 (97%) preferred the present indicative *debes* ('you should'). One student (3%) did choose to use the form of *deber*, '*deba*', as also occurred in the pre-test.

4.1.2.5 Questionnaire B: Summary

In summary, the Questionnaire B results indicate that the students continued to be familiar and productive with pragmatic softeners. *Querer* as a pragmatic softener was more frequently produced than *poder*, with *deber* still trailing behind the other two in frequency. In general, the students once again favored the conditional pragmatic softeners (*podría*, *debería*, and *querría*) over the past subjunctive softeners. However, students seemed to be fairly open to the use of *quisiera* and *quería*. Of the seven pragmatic softeners included in this study, six of

them were included among the responses. The one that was still not used was *podiera*. For those students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, the most typical response was once more the present indicative. The table below summarizes the frequency with which each pragmatic softener was used.

Table 4.2 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire B

Poder N=13 36%			
	Pudiera	N=0	0%
	Podría	N=13	100%
Deber₁ N=8 22%			
	Debiera	N=1	12%
	Debería	N=7	88%
Deber₂ N=2 5%			
	Debiera	N=0	0%
	Debería	N=2	100%
Querer N=20 56%			
	Quisiera	N=7	35%
	Querría	N=8	40%
	Quería	N=5	25%

4.1.3 Questionnaire C: Post-Test

Questionnaire C was given to the students at the end of their language immersion/study abroad experience as a post-test. The information gathered therein is used to determine what knowledge/skills have been acquired by the students during their time in a language-intense environment. Given that there are some changes between the pre-test and the post-test, learning is definitively occurring. The significance of these changes will be discussed later in this chapter. Below, I break down the responses by question.

4.1.3.1 Questionnaire C: Post-Test: Question 1

Question 1 of Part B of Questionnaire C had as its focus the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

1) (*Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión*) “Señor, ¿ _____(querer) usted hacer un breve resumen de lo que ocurrió?”

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, only 34 completed Questionnaire C. Eighteen of the 34 students (53%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 18 students, 1 (5%) chose to use *quería*, 6 (33%) chose to use *quisiera*, and 11 (61%) used *querría*. Of the 16 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, all 16 (100%) preferred the present indicative *quiere* ('you (formal) want') in the statement.

4.1.3.2 Questionnaire C: Post-test: Question 2

The second question of this type had as its focus the verb *poder*. The question was:

2) (*Dicho en un cuarto de charla sobre computadores*) “¿Me _____ (poder) ayudar, por favor? Acabo de comprar este programa de computadora que me recomendaron y no funciona.”

Out of the 34 students who completed Questionnaire C, 12 students (35%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 12 students, all 12 (100%) selected *podría* as their pragmatic softener of choice. No student opted to use the more polite softener *podiera*. This means that *podiera* was never produced on any of the three questionnaires filled out during the language intense experience. Of the 22 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, all 22 (100%) preferred the present indicative *puede(s)* ('you can') in the statement

4.1.3.3 Questionnaire C: Post-test: Question 3

The third question of Part B of the Questionnaire C (which in actuality was Question 4 on the questionnaire) had as its focus the verb *deber*. Students continued to remain cautious in their usage of *deber* as a pragmatic softener. The question was as follows:

4) (*Dicho en un cuarto de charla en la Red—la respuesta a una pregunta sobre pastillas de dieta*) “Hay productos que pueden ayudar en cierto momento, pero tu _____ (deber) tener claro el contenido de la pastilla y su función.”

Out of the 34 students who completed Questionnaire C, only 4 students (12%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 4 students, all four (100%) selected *debería* as their pragmatic softener of choice. No student opted to use the more polite softener *debiera*. Of the 30

students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 29 (97%) preferred the present indicative *debes* ('you should'). One student (3%) chose to use the highly uncommon command form of *deber*, '*debas*', as also occurred in the pre-test and Questionnaire B.

4.1.3.4 Questionnaire C: Post-test: Summary

In summary, the Questionnaire C results indicate that the students continued to be productive with pragmatic softeners. The trend of *querer* as a pragmatic softener being more frequently produced than *poder* continued. *Deber* also continued to trail far behind the other two. The students also continued to favor the conditional pragmatic softeners (*podría*, *debería*, and *querría*) over the past subjunctive softeners. *Quería*, which had previously been quite popular, was produced by only 1 student in Questionnaire C. Of the seven pragmatic softeners included in this study, five of them were among the responses given. The two that were not used were *pudiera* and *quisiera*. In fact, *pudiera* was never produced at all pre-test through post-test. *Quisiera*, which was present in Questionnaire B, was not present at all in on the post-test.

For those students who did not opt to produce a pragmatic softener, we again see the trend of responding with the present indicative. The table below summarizes the frequency with which each pragmatic softener was used.

Table 4.3 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire C

Poder N=12 35%	Pudiera	N=0	0%
	Podría	N=12	100%
Deber N=4 12%	Debiera	N=0	0%
	Debería	N=4	100%
Querer N=18 53%	Quisiera	N=6	33%
	Querría	N=11	61%
	Quería	N=1	5%

4.1.4 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up

Questionnaire D was sent to the students approximately 3 months after their language immersion/study abroad experience ended. The information gathered therein is used to

determine what knowledge/skills the students have been acquired/lost during their time since the language-intense environment. I break down the responses by question below.

4.1.4.1 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up: Question 1

Question 1 of Part B of the Questionnaire D had as its focus the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

1) (*Escrito en una carta al gerente de un hotel*) "Estimados Señores, (yo) _____(querer) dar mis comentarios de mi experiencia en su hotel."

Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, only 30 completed questionnaire D. Of these 30 students, 20 (67%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 20 students, 10 (50%) chose to use *quisiera* or (the Spain counterpart) *quisiese* and 6 (30%) used *querría*. Four students (20%) chose *quería*. Of the 10 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, all 10 (100%) preferred the present indicative *quiero* ('I want') in the statement.

4.1.4.2 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up: Question 2

The second question of this type had as its focus the verb *poder*. The question was as follows:

2) (*Dicho en una tienda de ropa a una empleada*) "¿Me _____(poder) ayudar, por favor? Busco una falda roja de talla 8."

Out of the 30 students who returned Questionnaire D, 14 students (47%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 14 students, 10 students (71%) selected *podría* as their pragmatic softener of choice. Four students (29%) opted to use the more polite softener *pudiera*. This was the first (and only) instance that *pudiera* was produced on the questionnaire. It is interesting to note that the only time it appeared was after the students had returned home from their language-intense experience. Of the 16 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 13 (81%) preferred the present indicative *puede* ('you can') in the statement. One student (6%)

responded with *podía* ('you could'), which is an imperfect indicative verb but not considered a pragmatic softener. Two students (13%) responded with *pueda(s)*, the present-tense subjunctive.

4.1.4.3 Questionnaire D: Follow Up: Question 3

The third question of Part B of Questionnaire D (which in actuality was Question 4 on the questionnaire) had as its focus the verb *deber*. Students continued to remain cautious in their usage of *deber* as a pragmatic softener. The question was as follows:

4) (*Dicho por un farmacéutico al paciente*) "Usted _____ (deber) tomar dos pastillas inmediatamente."

Out of the 30 students who returned Questionnaire D, only 7 students (23%) responded with some type of pragmatic softener. Of these 7 students, six (86%) selected *debería* as their pragmatic softener of choice. One student (14%) opted to use the more polite softener *debiera*.

Of the 23 students who did not produce a pragmatic softener, 22 (96%) preferred the present indicative *debe* ('you should') in the statement. One student (4%) responded with *deba*, the present-tense subjunctive of *deber*.

4.1.4.4 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up: Summary

To summarize, the Questionnaire D results indicate that the students continued to produce pragmatic softeners even after they returned home from the language-intense environment. In fact, in some cases, they were even more productive on this questionnaire than they were on the questionnaires filled out during the study abroad/immersion experience. *Querer* as a pragmatic softener was still more frequently produced than *poder*, with *deber* continuing to trail far behind the other two. The conditional pragmatic softeners *podría* and *debería* remain more frequently produced than their past subjunctive softener counterparts. However, the conditional pragmatic softener *querría* lost favor with the students, being replaced instead by *quisiera*. *Quería* also continues to have a low showing, with only four students (20%) responding with this form. Recall that *quería* was the most popular *querer* form on the pre-test. Of the seven pragmatic softeners included in this study, all seven of them were among the responses given.

Pudiera finally emerged among the responses with 4 students opting for this form. Until this point, this form had been absent from all questionnaire responses.

For those students who did not opt to produce a pragmatic softener, the trend of responding with the present indicative is evident. The table below summarizes the frequency with which each pragmatic softener was used.

Table 4.4 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire D

Poder N=14 47%	Pudiera	N=4	29%
	Podría	N=10	71%
Deber N=7 23%	Debiera	N=1	14%
	Debería	N=6	86%
Querer N=20 67%	Quisiera	N=10	50%
	Querría	N=6	30%
	Quería	N=4	20%
Poder N=14 47%	Pudiera	N=8	57%
	Podría	N=6	43%
Deber N=7 23%	Debiera	N=1	14%
	Debería	N=6	86%
Querer N=20 67%	Quisiera	N=10	50%
	Querría	N=6	30%
	Quería	N=4	20%

4.2 Time as a Factor

In the following section, I take a closer look at the following changes that occurred with time:

- Changes that occurred during the immersion experience between the pre-test and post-test
- Changes that occurred between the end of the immersion experience and the follow-up questionnaire three months later

The data that is presented in this section is the same that was presented in Section 4.1. Whereas Section 4.1 simply presented the facts of which pragmatic softeners were produced when and in what quantity, this section will recast this data through a comparative lens.

4.2.1 Changes Between Pre-Test and Post-Test


4.2.1.1 Changes Organized by Verb-Type

Table 4.5 below breaks down the data by verb (*poder*, *deber*, and *querer*) as produced in the pre-test, Questionnaire B, and the post-test. For the verb *poder*, time does not seem to be playing an integral role in production. Twelve students opted for a *poder* pragmatic softener in the pre-test. In Questionnaire B, this number only increases by one response. Likewise, the post-test also had thirteen responders. So, in general no change is seen here.

Similarly, *deber* pragmatic softeners do not seem to be influenced by time. The pre-test and post-test had three and four responses, respectively. An interesting spike occurs at Questionnaire B, where eight students (22%) respond with a *deber* softener. This number is still relatively low, though, and is curbed by the fact that the second *deber* question in Questionnaire B yielded only two *deber* softeners. These low numbers indicate that time does not seem to have much of an influence on *deber* either.

We do see some change in the *querer* softeners, however. While the pre-test results only yielded 11 instances of a *querer* softener, the number of softeners in Questionnaire B was almost twice this number (20). This trend does not continue, though, as the number levels off at 56% for both Questionnaire B and the Post-Test. This spike between the pre-test and Questionnaire B may indicate that acquisition is occurring during the first half of the students' time in the language-intensive environment.

Table 4.5 Comparative look at pragmatic softeners used pre-test through post-test (broken down by verb)

Pre-Test	Quest. B		Post-test
			
Poder N=12 33%	Poder N=13 36%		Poder N=13 36%
Deber N=3 8%	Deber ₁ N=8 22%	Deber ₂ N=2 5%	Deber N=4 12%
Querer N=11 31%	Querer N=20 56%		Querer N=18 53%

If, indeed, some type of acquisition were occurring with the *querer* verbs in between the pre-test and Questionnaire B, we would expect that the students who opted for a *querer* softener in Questionnaire B would also opt for one in the post-test. Hence, the student would consistently recognize a situation where a *querer* softener would be used and, therefore, produce one in such contexts.

So, to see if this is the case, I present below in Table 4.6 the responses given in each of the three questionnaires by only those participants who selected a *querer* softener. Of interest to us are those who did not select a softener in the pre-test but did produce one in questionnaire B. This is the pool of students who potentially “acquired” something during the first half of their immersion experience/stay abroad. In the chart below, every student who used a *querer* softener in the pre-test (denoted by the use of the color blue) also produced a softener either in Questionnaire B, the post-test, or both. So, these students are already proficient with *querer* softeners.

We do see an interesting trend, though, among participants 5, 8, 9, 21, 31, 34, and 36 (those marked in green on the chart). These students did not use a *querer* softener in the pre-test, but did consistently use a softener in Questionnaire B and the post-test. These seven

students are potentially acquiring knowledge of when a *querer* softener should be used in a pragmatic context.

Table 4.6 Responses of students who used a *querer* softener in the pre- to post-test

Participant #	Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-Test
2	quería	querría	quiere
5	quiero	quería	querría
6	quisiera	quisiera	quisiera
7	quisiera	quisiera	quisiera
8	quiero	querrería	querrería
9	quiero	quisiera	quisiera
10	quiero	quisiera	quiere
11	querría	querría	quiere
12	quiero	quiero	querría
13	quiero	querría	quiero
15	quisó	querría	--
16	quería	quiero	querría
17	quiero	querería	quiere
18	quería	quería	quisiera
19	quiero	quiero	querría
20	quiero	quiero	querría
21	quise	quisiera	quisiera
22	quisiera	quisiera	quisiera
31	quiero	querría	querría
34	quiero	querría	querría
36	quiero	quería	querría
37	quiero	quería	quieres
38	quería	quisiera	querría
40	quiero	quiero	querría
41	quería	quería	quería

If acquisition is occurring, we would expect that these same seven students would also use a *querer* softener in Questionnaire D, as well. In fact, this is exactly the case. Although we do not have information for Participant 5, all but one of the other participants who were flagged in Table 4.6 as possibly acquiring pragmatic softener knowledge did consistently use a *querer* softener in Questionnaire D. This information is listed below in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Responses of students (including Questionnaire D responses) who show evidence of acquisition

Participant #	Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-Test	Follow-Up
5	quiero	quería	querría	n/a
8	quiero	querría	querría	querría
9	quiero	quisiera	quisiera	quisiera
21	quise	quisiera	quisiera	quisiera
31	quiero	querría	querría	querría
34	quiero	querría	querría	quiero
36	quiero	quería	querría	querría

So, to summarize, it appears that not much change occurred over time in regards to overall production of *deber* or *poder* softeners. Yet, there is evidence to suggest that some students acquired knowledge regarding *querer* softeners in between the pre-test and Questionnaire B. These students continued to consistently produce *querer* softeners in both the post-test and the follow-up.

4.2.1.2 Changes Organized by Individual Softener

Having analyzed the changes that occurred in each verb type (*querer*, *deber*, *poder*), I next break down each of these verbs into the seven individual softeners. The purpose here is to examine if student perception and production of individual softeners changed over time. Table 4.8 below compares the pragmatic softener responses given in each of the three questionnaires (pre-test through post-test). From this table, we can conclude the following:

1. ***Pudiera***—No changes were observed over time. None of the students responded with this answer on any of the three questionnaires.
2. ***Podría***—No significant changes were observed over time. Consistently 12 or 13 students responded with this form on each questionnaire.
3. ***Debiera***—No significant changes were observed over time. Only one student responded with this form on Questionnaire B. In the other two questionnaires, no students gave this response.

4. **Debería**—There appears to be a very slight change in responses over time. While only 3 students (8%) responded with this form in the pre-test and only 4 (12%) responded in the post-test, there was a slight increase in responses on the mid-point questionnaire—Questionnaire B. On this questionnaire, 9 students (25%) responded with this form. This swell in response on Questionnaire B is more than likely not attributable to acquisition since this higher number is not present on the post-test. It may be indicative of some type of interlanguage emergence, though.
5. **Quisiera**—Here, we also see a slight change in responses over time. In the pre-test, only 3 (8%) students respond with this form. On Questionnaire B and the post-test, 7 (19%) and 6 (18%) students respond, respectively. These numbers indicate an increasing preference for this form over time.
6. **Querría**—There is even more of an increasing preference over time for this form. While only 1 student (3%) uses *querría* in the pre-test, 8 (22%) use it in Questionnaire B and 11 (32%) use it in the post-test.
7. **Quería**—Conversely, there is a decreasing preference over time for this form. While 7 students (19%) use this form on the pre-test, only 5 (14%) use it on Questionnaire B. By the post-test, only 1 student (3%) produces this form.

Table 4.8 Comparative look at pragmatic softeners used pre-test through post-test (broken down by pragmatic softener)

Pre-Test			Questionnaire B			Post-Test		
Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%
Podría	N=12	33%	Podría	N=13	36%	Podría	N=12	35%
Debiera	N=0	0%	Debiera	N=1	3%	Debiera	N=0	0%
Debería	N=3	8%	Debería	N=9	25%	Debería	N=4	12%
Quisiera	N=3	8%	Quisiera	N=7	19%	Quisiera	N=6	18%
Querría	N=1	3%	Querría	N=8	22%	Querría	N=11	32%
Quería	N=7	19%	Quería	N=5	14%	Quería	N=1	3%

As seen in the table, the only significant changes observed over time for the individual softeners are changes regarding which *querer* verb the students find preferable. While *quería* starts out strong in the pre-test, by the post-test students don't tend to favor this softener. *Quisiera* and *querría*, which are both less preferred in the pre-test, are both very preferred in the post-test.


Quisiera only increases by 10 percentage points, while *querría* increases by almost 30. This extreme preference for *querría* is worth noting, considering that it is not a commonly used form by native speakers (see Section 4.4 for a complete comparison to native speaker data).

4.2.2 Changes Between Post-Test and Follow-Up

4.2.2.1 Changes Organized by Verb Type

Table 4.9 below breaks down the data by verb (*poder*, *deber*, and *querer*) as produced in the post-test and the follow-up Questionnaire. For the verb *poder*, we had already seen that time did not seem to be playing an integral role from the pre-test to the post-test. We do see a slight increase here from the post-test. The *deber* pragmatic softeners continue to hold steady in the follow-up questionnaire. Only a handful of students produce this form, indicating that time is not playing an integral role. Just as we saw change in the *querer* verbs from the pre-test to the post-test, we also see change between the post-test and the follow-up questionnaire. While there had been a leveling-off between Questionnaire B and the follow-up, the follow-up actually shows another spike in frequency—jumping from 53% to 67%. This may indicate that acquisition has occurred among another subgroup of students in the study.

Table 4.9 Comparative look at pragmatic softeners used post-test through follow-up (broken down by verb)

Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-test	Follow-Up
<i>Time</i> 			
Poder N=12 33%	Poder N=13 36%	Poder N=13 36%	Poder N=14 47%
Deber N=3 8%	Deber ¹ N=8 22%	Deber N=4 12%	Deber N=7 23%
	Deber ² N=2 5%		
Querer N=11 31%	Querer N=20 56%	Querer N=18 53%	Querer N=20 67%

To verify that acquisition is occurring, we expect to *querer* softeners produced by students who had not used them in any of the three previous questionnaires. In Table 4.9 above, I listed every participant who had used a *querer* softener in either the pre-test, Questionnaire B, or the post-test. We can conclude, then, that the participants not present on the list are those who did not use a *querer* softener on any of the three questionnaires. If acquisition was truly occurring in between the post-test and the follow-up, we would expect that at least some of these students would have used a *querer* softener for the first time in Questionnaire D.

In Table 4.10, I list each of these participants' responses to Questionnaire C and D. As is expected, 5 of the 10 students (50%) do use a *querer* softener on Questionnaire D. (Two of the 10 (20%) students did not complete Questionnaire D, so it remains unknown whether they would have used a softener.) This increase in production by those who previously were non-productive provides evidence that acquisition may be occurring. Unfortunately, since the follow-up questionnaire was the final questionnaire in the study, we don't know if these same students would have used a *querer* softener on subsequent questionnaires.

Table 4.10 Responses of students (including Questionnaire D responses) who show evidence of acquisition

Participant #	Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-Test	Follow-Up
1	quiero	quiero	quiere	quisiera
3	quiero	quiero	quiere	quiero
4	quiero	quiero	quiere	quisiera
30	quiero	quiero	quiere	quería
32	quiero	quiero	quiere	quiero
33	quiero	quiero	quiere	quiero
35	quiero	quiero	quiere	quise ⁷
39	quiero	quiero	quiere	querría
42	quiero	quiero	quiere	no information available
43	quiero	quiero	quiere	no information available

⁷ Even though the student produced *quise* instead of *quería*, the student did use a past tense verb, so I counted this one as if it were a pragmatic softener.

In summary, it appears that not much change occurred in the follow-up questionnaire in regards to overall production of *deber* or *poder* softeners. Yet, there is evidence to suggest that some students acquired knowledge regarding *querer* softeners in between the post-test and Questionnaire D.

4.2.2.2 Changes Organized by Individual Softener

Now that we have analyzed the changes that occurred in each verb type (*querer*, *deber*, *poder*), I would like to break down each of these verbs into the seven individual softeners. The purpose here is to examine if student perception and production of individual softeners changed in between the post-test and the follow-up. We also want to examine how these results match up to the results from the pre-test to the post-test time frame. Table 4.11 below compares the pragmatic softener responses given in each of the three questionnaires (pre-test through the follow-up). Below I list the major observations for each softener.

1. ***Pudiera***—Not only is this response given for the first time in the study, 13% of the 30 students answered with this form. Of the 14 students who used a *poder* softener 29% responded with *pudiera* in the follow-up.
2. ***Podría***—No significant changes were observed in the follow-up. Consistently 30-35% of students responded with this form on each questionnaire.
3. ***Debiera***—No significant changes were observed in the follow-up. Only one student responded with this form on Questionnaire D. This is only one more student than used this form in the post-test.
4. ***Debería***—No significant changes were observed in the follow-up. While the percentage does increase slightly, it does not increase above the percentages produced on previous questionnaires.
5. ***Quisiera***—The trend of increasing popularity of this form that was observed previously continues in the follow-up questionnaire. *Quisiera* continues to gain momentum as a preferred answer with 33% of students responding with this form compared to the 18% that responded on the post-test.

6. **Querría**—While *querría* showed the most increase in frequency out of any of the softeners from the pre-test to the post-test, the follow-up results indicate that this trend has not continued. Instead, there is a drop in frequency by 12% from the post-test results. This form is considerably less preferred in the follow-up than *quisiera*.
7. **Quería**—The trend of decreasing popularity of *quería* has also continued in the follow-up. While the percentage does increase slightly from the post-test, it does not increase above the percentages produced on previous questionnaires—and, in fact, remains much lower than the percentage produced on the pre-test.

Table 4.11 Comparative look at pragmatic softeners used post-test through follow-up (broken down by pragmatic softener)

Pre-Test			Questionnaire B			Post-Test			Follow-Up		
Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=4	13%
Podría	N=12	33%	Podría	N=13	36%	Podría	N=12	35%	Podría	N=10	33%
Debiera	N=0	0%	Debiera	N=1	3%	Debiera	N=0	0%	Debiera	N=1	3%
Debería	N=3	8%	Debería	N=9	25%	Debería	N=4	12%	Debería	N=6	20%
Quisiera	N=3	8%	Quisiera	N=7	19%	Quisiera	N=6	18%	Quisiera	N=10	33%
Querría	N=1	3%	Querría	N=8	22%	Querría	N=11	32%	Querría	N=6	20%
Quería	N=7	19%	Quería	N=5	14%	Quería	N=1	3%	Quería	N=4	13%

So, we have several notable observations about changes occurring from the post-test to the follow-up. Two trends that were present in the pre-test through post-test continue to intensify. *Quisiera*, which was slowly increasing in use, shows a major jump in usage on the follow-up—from 18% to 33%. *Quería*, which has been steadily declining, shows a slight increase in frequency, although it still is produced much less frequently than it was at the beginning of the study. We also see a couple of new trends in the follow-up questionnaire. *Querría*, which seemed to be growing by leaps and bounds from the pre-test to the post-test, suddenly declines again—from 32% to 20%. Also, *pudiera*, which had not even been produced in any of the previous questionnaires suddenly appears and is used by 13% of the population.

4.3 Context as a Factor

Heretofore, I have been conducting my analysis by looking only at the participant group as a whole. In this section, I will analyze the data in light of the context in which the students were

learning, i.e. study abroad context or U.S.-based immersion context. I am primarily interested in whether there were there any notable differences between the study abroad group and the immersion group. And, if so, to what those differences could be attributable. In Section 4.3.1, I will address the pre-test results for each group to determine what differences were already in existence at the beginning of the study. Section 4.3.2 will look at Questionnaire B. Section 4.3.3 will address the post-test. Section 4.3.4 will address differences in the follow-up questionnaire. In Section 4.3.5, I will look at changes over time among the two groups. I will end with a summary in Section 4.3.6.

4.3.1 Pre-Test Results Divided by Group

Even though these two particular groups were selected because of their similarity in background and previous amount of classroom experience with Spanish, it is clear by the pre-test results that the groups are not identical in skill level or in their attitude towards and production of pragmatic softeners. As can be seen in Table 4.12, the immersion students clearly came in with a better grasp of pragmatic softeners. Of the 26 softeners produced on the pre-test, 19 of them (73%) were produced by an immersion student. Of the 12 *poder* softeners produced, 10 (83%) were from an immersion student. Of the 11 *querer* softeners produced, 9 (81%) were from an immersion student. Moreover, the immersion students showed a wider distribution in their selection of *querer* softeners, with *quisiera*, *quería*, and *querría* all being represented. In contrast, the study abroad group showed little variety in their answers, using only the softener *quería* (and only 2 students using it, at that). These results are surprising, considering that the study abroad students are not only older but have had more classroom instruction than the immersion students.

The only place where the study abroad group excels is in the production of *deber* softeners. While no immersion students opted to use a *deber* softener, three of the study abroad students do produce the conditional form, *debería*.

Table 4.12 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire A; Subdivided by group

Poder N=12 33%	Immersion, N=10, 83%	Pudiera N=0 Podría N=10
	Study Abroad, N=2, 17%	Pudiera N=0 Podría N=2
Deber N=3 8%	Immersion, N=0, 0%	Debiera N=0 Debería N=0
	Study Abroad, N=3, 100%	Debiera N=0 Debería N=3
Querer N=11 31%	Immersion, N=9, 81%	Quisiera N=3 Querría N=1 Quería N=5
	Study Abroad, N=2, 19%	Quisiera N=0 Querría N=0 Quería N=2

So, clearly the two groups are entering into the study with different “starting points” in reference to pragmatic softeners. The immersion students are more comfortable using *querer* and *poder* softeners, while the study abroad students are more comfortable using *deber*. Also, the immersion group in general is much more proficient in their use of softeners.

4.3.2 Questionnaire B Results Divided by Group

Having established a baseline for the difference between these two groups at the beginning, we will now turn our attention to the mid-point questionnaire—Questionnaire B. As can be seen in Table 4.13, the immersion students continue to be more likely to produce softeners than the study abroad group. Of the 41 softeners produced on the mid-point questionnaire, 26 of them (63%) were produced by an immersion student. Of the 13 *poder* softeners produced, 10 (83%) were from an immersion student. Of the 20 *querer* softeners produced, 14 (70%) were from an immersion student. However, the immersion students were not the only ones on this questionnaire to show a wide distribution in their selection of *querer* softeners. Both groups had *quisiera*, *quería*, and *querría* represented among their responses.

We again see that the study abroad group excels in the use of *deber* softeners. While only two immersion students opted to use a *deber* softener, eight of the study abroad students produced the conditional form, *debería*.

Table 4.13 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire B; Subdivided by group

Poder N=13 36%	Immersion, N=10, 77%	Pudiera	N=0
		Podría	N=10
	Study Abroad, N=3, 23%	Pudiera	N=0
		Podría	N=3
Deber N=10 28%	Immersion, N=2, 20%	Debiera	N=1
		Debería	N=1
	Study Abroad, N=8, 80%	Debiera	N=0
		Debería	N=8
Querer N=20 56%	Immersion, N=14, 70%	Quisiera	N=6
		Querría	N=6
		Quería	N=2
	Study Abroad, N=6, 30%	Quisiera	N=1
		Querría	N=2
		Quería	N=3

Again, the immersion students are more comfortable using *querer* and *poder* softeners, while the study abroad students are more comfortable using *deber*. The immersion group in general is much more proficient in their use of softeners, although not quite to the degree that they were in the pre-test.

4.3.3 Post-Test Results Divided by Group

Now, I look at the results of the post-test divided by group. As can be seen in Table 4.14, the immersion students continue to be more likely to produce softeners than the study abroad group. Of the 34 softeners produced on the post-test, 22 of them (65%) were produced by an immersion student. Of the 12 *poder* softeners produced, 10 (83%) were from an immersion student. Of the 18 *querer* softeners produced, 12 (66%) were from an immersion student. Despite their lower frequency of responses, the study abroad group did show a much wider distribution of

answers. The immersion group only used four of the seven softeners, while the study abroad group produced six of the seven.

We continue to see that the study abroad group is much more likely to use *deber* softeners. While no immersion students opted to use a *deber* softener, three of the study abroad students produced the conditional form, *debería* and one selected *debiera*.

Table 4.14 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire C; Subdivided by group

Poder N=12 35%	Immersion N=10 83%	Pudiera	N=0
	Study Abroad N=2 17%	Podría	N=10
Deber N=4 12%	Immersion N=0 0%	Debiera	N=0
	Study Abroad N=4 100%	Debería	N=0
Querer N=18 53%	Immersion N=12 67%	Debiera	N=1
	Study Abroad N=6 33%	Debería	N=3
	Immersion N=12 67%	Quisiera	N=6
	Study Abroad N=6 33%	Querría	N=6
		Quería	N=0
		Quisiera	N=0
		Querría	N=5
		Quería	N=1

4.3.4 Follow-Up Results Divided by Group

We will now turn our attention to the results of the follow-up questionnaire divided by group. The results are presented in Table 4.15 below. Of the 41 softeners produced on the post-test, 28 of them (68%) were produced by an immersion student. Of the 14 *poder* softeners produced, 10 (71%) were from an immersion student. Of the 20 *querer* softeners produced, 14 (70%) were from an immersion student. The immersion group used 4 of the 7 softeners, while the study abroad group also produced 4 of the 7.

One interesting difference between the groups is the fact that no study abroad student produces a past subjunctive softener (*debiera*, *quisiera*, *debiera*). Yet, the immersion students are

very prolific in their use of these forms. In fact, the past subjunctive softeners comprise the majority of the immersion students' pragmatic softener responses. Not only is this a change from previous questionnaires, it is a significant difference between the two groups' usage of softeners in the follow-up.

We do continue to see that the study abroad group is somewhat more likely to use *deber* softeners. Four immersion students (21%) and 3 of the study abroad students (27%) opted to use a *deber* softener. However, it was the immersion students who showed more variety in the softeners—with one student using *debiera* and the other three producing the conditional form *debería*. The study abroad students only produced *debería*.

Table 4.15 Breakdown of pragmatic softeners used in Questionnaire D; Subdivided by group

Poder N=14 34%	Immersion N=10 71%	Pudiera	N=4
		Podría	N=6
	Study Abroad N=4 29%	Pudiera	N=0
		Podría	N=4
Deber N=7 17%	Immersion N=4 57%	Debiera	N=1
		Debería	N=3
	Study Abroad N=3 43%	Debiera	N=0
		Debería	N=3
Querer N=20 49%	Immersion N=14 70%	Quisiera	N=10
		Querría	N=4
		Quería	N=0
	Study Abroad N=6 30%	Quisiera	N=0
		Querría	N=2
		Quería	N=4

4.3.5 Changes Over Time Among the Two Groups

Having presented the data through the lens of context, I now want to bring the element of time back into the mix. Thus, in this section, I ask what differences can be seen between the two groups as they each develop over time. Using the information in Table 4.16, we can examine how

each group's production of softeners by verb-type changes over time. For the *poder* softeners, both the immersion group and the study abroad group remain fairly consistent in their production. No significant change appears to be occurring with that verb for either group. Likewise, the immersion group remains fairly consistent in their production of *deber* softeners, too, with the exception of the four students who opt to use a *deber* softener on the follow-up. The study abroad students also remain fairly consistent over time with the *deber* softeners. The only interesting thing to note is that 43% of the study abroad students used a softener on Questionnaire B for *deber*¹, accounting almost entirely for the spike in frequency of *deber* softeners in Questionnaire B that was mentioned previously. The students' treatment of *querer* is very intriguing. As mentioned previously, there was some evidence of acquisition of *querer* softeners between the pre-test and Questionnaire B. The acquisition at this stage appears to be evenly distributed between the two groups—with the study abroad group gaining 4 additional softeners and the immersion group gaining 5 softeners. The acquisition between the post-test and the follow-up is not so evenly distributed, with 2 softeners being gained by the immersion group and no softeners being gained by the immersion group.

Table 4.16 Comparative look at pragmatic softeners used by immersion group and study abroad group (broken down by verb)

Immersion				Study Abroad			
Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-Test	Follow-Up	Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post- Test	Follow-Up
Poder N=10 45%	Poder N=10 45%	Poder N=10 50%	Poder N=10 53%	Poder N=2 14%	Poder N=3 21%	Poder N=2 14%	Poder N=4 36%
Deber N=0 0%	Deber ¹ N=2 9%	Deber N=0 0%	Deber N=4 21%	Deber N=3 21%	Deber ¹ N=6 43%	Deber N=4 29%	Deber N=3 27%
	Deber ² N=0 0%				Deber ² N=2 14%		
Querer N=9 41%	Querer N=14 64%	Querer N=12 60%	Querer N=14 74%	Querer N=2 14%	Querer N=6 43%	Querer N=6 43%	Querer N=6 54%

*Note: The percentage is the % of students from that group who used a softener. So, immersion student percentages are based on 22 total students on Questionnaires A and B, 20 students on Questionnaire C, and 19 students on Questionnaire D. Study abroad percentages are based on 14 total students on Questionnaires A, B, and C; 11 total students on Questionnaire D.

The numbers represented in Table 4.16 indicate that, in respect to the questionnaire, the two groups are so far developing in a similar manner over time. We will now in Table 4.17 further break down these verbs into their individual softeners to see if the two groups are also in sync with one another on that level, too.

Table 4.17 Comparative look at pragmatic softeners used by immersion group and study abroad group (broken down by pragmatic softener)

Immersion											
Pre-Test			Questionnaire B			Post-Test			Follow-Up		
Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=4	21%
Podría	N=10	45%	Podría	N=10	45%	Podría	N=10	50%	Podría	N=6	32%
Debiera	N=0	0%	Debiera	N=1	5%	Debiera	N=0	0%	Debiera	N=1	5%
Debería	N=0	0%	Debería	N=1	5%	Debería	N=0	0%	Debería	N=3	16%
Quisiera	N=3	14%	Quisiera	N=6	27%	Quisiera	N=1	5%	Quisiera	N=10	53%
Querría	N=1	5%	Querría	N=6	27%	Querría	N=5	25%	Querría	N=4	21%
Quería	N=5	23%	Quería	N=2	9%	Quería	N=0	0%	Quería	N=0	0%
Study Abroad											
Pre-Test			Questionnaire B			Post-Test			Follow-Up		
Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%	Pudiera	N=0	0%
Podría	N=2	14%	Podría	N=3	21%	Podría	N=2	14%	Podría	N=4	36%
Debiera	N=0	0%	Debiera	N=0	3%	Debiera	N=1	0%	Debiera	N=0	0%
Debería	N=3	21%	Debería	N=8	57%	Debería	N=3	21%	Debería	N=3	27%
Quisiera	N=0	0%	Quisiera	N=1	7%	Quisiera	N=1	7%	Quisiera	N=0	0%
Querría	N=0	0%	Querría	N=2	14%	Querría	N=2	14%	Querría	N=2	18%
Quería	N=2	14%	Quería	N=3	21%	Quería	N=3	21%	Quería	N=4	36%

*Note: The percentage is the % of students from that group who used a softener. So, immersion student percentages are based on 22 total students on Questionnaires A and B, 20 students on Questionnaire C, and 19 students on Questionnaire D. Study abroad percentages are based on 14 total students on Questionnaires A, B, and C; 11 total students on Questionnaire D.

Below I list the major observations for each softener. (Information taken from Table 4.19)

1. **Pudiera**: Neither study abroad (SA) nor immersion (IM) use this form in the first three questionnaires. The only time this form is produced is in Questionnaire D when four IM students use it.
2. **Podría**—The SA group shows a slight increase in frequency on the follow-up. The IM group has no change until Questionnaire D. In Questionnaire D, there is a decrease of 4 softeners. This is probably due to the fact that these 4 students chose to use *pudiera* instead.

3. **Debiera**—No significant changes were observed over time for either the SA or the IM group.
4. **Debería**—The SA and IM groups both consistently prefer this form over *debiera*. While the SA group is more likely to use this form, the both groups show little change over time, especially during the first three questionnaires. The follow-up results indicate that a few IM students have become more comfortable using this form toward the end of the study.
5. **Quisiera**—The IM students start out preferring this form over *querría*. In Questionnaire B, this form remains frequent but drops off in Questionnaire C. By the follow-up, *quisiera* is the overwhelming favoring among IM students again. On the contrary, SA students avoid this form throughout all four questionnaires.
6. **Querría**—Hardly any IM student uses this form on the pre-test. There is a spike in frequency on Questionnaire B, which gradually tapers off in Questionnaires C and D. The SA students remain consistent in their mostly non-use of this form.
7. **Quería**—The IM students began the pre-test with this form as the most popular among the *querer* forms. It loses popularity in Questionnaire B and is non-existent in Questionnaires C and D. On the other hand, the SA students remain consistent in their usage of this form and, actually, show a slight increase over time. *Quería* is the most frequent *querer* form used by the SA students and remains so throughout all four questionnaires.

4.3.6 Summary of Context as a Factor

In Part B of the questionnaire, some definite trends can be seen for both the study abroad group and the immersion group. In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 we will see that these trends are also present in the cloze test and appropriateness evaluations as well as the oral task. Most notable is that the IM students are entering into the study with much stronger responses than the SA participants. The IM students overwhelmingly produce more pragmatic softeners. The only place where the SA students excel is in their use of *deber* softeners. They consistently use these softeners from the pre-test to the follow-up questionnaire. The IM students are more reluctant to use these forms.

When we look at the softeners on a verb-level, it appears that the two groups are developing in a similar manner over time. Both seem to be very consistent in their use of *poder* and *deber* over time. The changes that are occurring in *querer* softeners (especially between the pre-test and Questionnaire B) appear to be occurring in both groups at similar rates.

However, when I further tease apart these verbs into the seven individual softeners, we can see that some key differences exist between the two groups, especially within the three forms of *querer*. While *quisiera* is the overwhelming favorite for the IM students, the SA students do not tend to prefer this form. The IM students fluctuate in their usage of *querría*—going from 5% to 25% between Questionnaires A and B and then gradually tapering off in frequency in Questionnaires C and D. Meanwhile, the SA students remain largely uninterested in using this form either. *Quería* is consistently the most frequent form for the SA students. The IM students show more fluctuation in their production of this form. While they began like the SA students with using it most frequently in Questionnaire A, they then quickly decreased its production in Questionnaire B and did not produce it at all in Questionnaires C or D.

4.4 Native Speaker Comparison

As was mentioned in the methodology chapter, several native speakers from Mexico were asked to complete a questionnaire to determine how their answers compared to those of the students. The questionnaire given to the native speakers (which can be found in Appendix B) contained a section identical to the “real-world” section of the student questionnaire. In this section, the native speakers were asked to read the “real-world” scenarios and conjugate the verb as they felt it was conjugated when the statement was originally said or written. Despite the fact that the contexts were somewhat “dehydrated” (that is, the amount of information about who was speaking to whom in what context was limited), the native speakers were very prone to use pragmatic softeners. Out of 50 possible softeners that could have been produced by the five native speakers, 27 softeners were produced, or 54%. Out of the 444 possible softeners that could have been produced by the 36 students, 144 were produced, or 32%. So, these numbers

indicate that—despite the dehydrated context—the native speakers were not only able to identify when a pragmatic softener would likely be used, they were more likely to do so than the Spanish learners. Looking specifically at the softeners produced, the native speakers were much more likely to produce the past subjunctive softeners instead of the conditional softeners. Of the 27 softeners produced by the native speakers, 18 of them (67%) were past subjunctive softeners. These included 4 instances of *pudiera*, 8 instances of *quisiera*, and 6 instances of *debiera*. Of the 9 other softeners produced, all 9 were conditional softeners. There were 4 instances of *podría* and 5 instances of *debería*. There was no instance where any native speaker used *quería* or *querría*.

The native speaker production in the “real-world” scenarios differed from the learners in several significant ways. First, while the learners were more likely to produce conditional softeners in these contexts, the native speakers were more likely to produce past subjunctive softeners. As noted above, towards the end of the study (after their experiences abroad or in the immersion program) the learners were more likely to use past subjunctive softeners. This means that, in respect to past subjunctive pragmatic softener production, the learners become more native-like after their stay in the language-intense environment. Second, while the learners were very likely to produce the conditional form *querría*, the native speakers avoided this form altogether. By the end of the study, the learners had stopped using the form as much, indicating again that they are moving toward a native-like production of this form. Third, there is a difference in the production of *quería*. While the native speakers did not produce this form at all, the students actually were fairly fond of this form at the beginning of the study. However, between the pre-test and follow-up, the students showed a net decrease in the production of this form, thus becoming more native-like in respect to *quería* production throughout the study.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data that included the production of pragmatic softeners on the learner questionnaires. In Section 4.1, I gave an overview of the responses for the pragmatic softener questions. Section 4.2 was a concentrated look at what changes occurred in responses over time. Section 4.3 examined the differences in responses from the study abroad group and the immersion group. I rounded out the discussion in Section 4.4 by comparing the learner data to the native speaker baseline. Below, I provide a list of the major “takeaway” from this part of the data analysis.

- Some students did spontaneously produce pragmatic softeners in the questionnaire. In fact, on one item on Questionnaire B, as many as 56% of the students spontaneously produced a pragmatic softener. All seven of the pragmatic softeners were spontaneously produced by students at some point throughout the questionnaires.
- Among those softeners that were produced, there was a clear preference for all three of the *querer* softeners and also for *podría*. While the *deber* softeners were used, they were produced markedly less than the others.
- Not much change occurred over time in regards to overall production of *deber* or *poder* softeners. Yet, there is some evidence of acquisition of *querer* softeners in between the pre-test and Questionnaire B. The students who showed evidence of acquisition continued to consistently produce *querer* softeners in both the post-test and the follow-up.
- Among those softeners that show change over time, the most movement is in the *querer* verbs. While *quería* starts out strong in the pre-test, by the follow-up questionnaire students don't tend to favor this softener. *Quisiera* and *querría*, which are both less preferred in the pre-test, are both preferred by the post-test. But, the students tended to

back away from *querría* in the follow-up. *Quisiera* continues to gain momentum in the follow-up, becoming the most preferred pragmatic softener of the seven.

- *Pudiera*, which was non-existent in Questionnaires A, B and C, suddenly appears in 13% of the responses in the follow-up questionnaire.
- In general, the Immersion students enter into the study with much stronger responses than the SA participants. They overwhelmingly produce more pragmatic softeners, as well.
- The Study Abroad students are more likely to produce *deber* softeners. They consistently use these softeners from the pre-test to the follow-up questionnaire. The Immersion students are more reluctant to use these forms.
- By the follow-up, the Immersion students show a definite preference for past subjunctive softeners, with the majority of their softeners falling into this category. the Study Abroad students, on the other hand, were extremely unlikely to produce a past subjunctive softener and tended to produce conditional softeners instead.
- The Study Abroad and Immersion Groups are especially different in their production of *querer* verbs over time.
 - While *quisiera* is the overwhelming favorite for the IM students, the SA students do not tend to prefer this form.
 - The IM students fluctuate in their usage of *querría*—going from 5% to 25% between Questionnaires A and B and then gradually tapering off in frequency in Questionnaires C and D. Meanwhile, the IM students remain largely uninterested in using this form either.

- *Quería* is consistently the most frequent form for the SA students. The IM students show more fluctuation in their production of this form. While they began like the SA students with using it most frequently in Questionnaire A, they then quickly decreased its production in Questionnaire B and did not produce it at all in Questionnaires C or D.
- When native speakers were asked to respond to the “real-world” scenarios, they produced 19 out of 30 possible softeners, or 63%. The majority of these softeners were past subjunctive softeners—*quisiera*, *debiera*, and *pudiera*. *Querría* and *quería* were not produced at all by the native speakers. The fact that the follow-up questionnaire taken by the students indicates a decrease in *quería* and *querría* production as well as an increase in past subjunctive pragmatic softener production indicates that the students’ production has become more target-like at the end of their language-intense experience.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS: (NON-) PRODUCTION OF PRAGMATIC SOFTENERS IN ORAL TASK

In the following chapter, I present the findings from the film reenactment oral task. Recall that this task involved the students watching a Charlie Chaplin film clip and then giving instructions on how to recreate the scene. The instructions were audio recorded and then transcribed. Students were asked to give instructions both to a peer and to Kathy Ames, an older adult whom the students believed to be a college professor named Doctora Puentes. Kathy was asked to act somewhat aloof and emotionally distant from the students in order to create a linguistic scenario in which there was a high power and distance differential. The goal was that this differential would be enough to prompt the students to use a softening device and, hopefully, one of the pragmatic softeners of interest to this study. Since this outcome was not guaranteed, I examine the data both for pragmatic softeners and for other indicators of politeness (i.e. use of *por favor*, use of *usted* vs. *tú*, use of commands vs. non-commands, etc.)

In Section 5.1, I present the general trends in verb choice in the oral task. I look to see if pragmatic softeners were used; where they were used, I describe their distribution. In the cases where they were not used, I examine what else students used to express politeness. In Section 5.2, I look at how the interlocutor influenced the verbs used. Specifically, I determine if at any of the three data collections there was any difference in verb choice when talking with a peer versus talking with Dra. Puentes. In Section 5.3, I examine the data through the lens of time to see if there was any change in verb choice over time. In Section 5.4, I look at the data to see if there were any notable differences between the study abroad group and the immersion group. If

differences do exist, I examine to what these could be attributable. Lastly, in Section 5.5, I compare the learner behavior to that of the native speaker participants. I conclude this chapter with a summary of the oral task findings.

5.1 Trends in Verb Choice

5.1.1 *Pragmatic Softeners*

Upon examination of the transcripts, I found that only two of the 36 students produced a pragmatic softener in the oral task. The softeners were *podría* and *debería* produced by Participants 22 and 31, respectively. Neither of these participants had much in common ethnographically. Participant 22 was a 17-year old male at the immersion academy who had completed 4 years of high school Spanish. Participant 31 was a 21-year old female in the study abroad group who had completed 5 years of high-school Spanish and four semesters of college Spanish. She had also spent three months studying in a Spanish-speaking country prior to this particular study abroad trip. So, these two students do not share much commonality in regard to amount of classroom instruction, prior experience abroad, or gender.

Participant 22's transcripts are seen below in examples 1 and 2 below. What is interesting about Participant 22's usage of *podría* is that he uses it both with his peer and while talking to Dra. Puentes. Example 1 below is Participant 22's conversation with his peer on my third visit to the immersion academy. Example 2 is the transcript of the participant's conversation with Dra. Puentes at this same visit. In both conversations, we notice that the student not only uses *podría* in several instances throughout the conversation, but that he also uses a sentence-final *por favor* at the end of a *podría* request. In addition, when the student does not use a *podría* request, he uses an affirmative command instead.

1) *Toma el bebé. Siéntate en la silla. Da juguetes al bebé. Ahora, ¿podrías poner el bebé en el columpio, por favor? Da la cafetera al bebé como una botella. Ahora mientras el bebé está en el columpio, ¿Podrías hacer pañales con eso? Sí. Y corta...cortan...cortamos como así. Dobla como pañales. Gracias.*

2) Primero, ¿**podría** tomar el bebé? Siéntese en la silla. Trate de usar los juguetes. ¿**Podría** poner el bebé en el columpio, **por favor**? ¿Y entonces **podría** dar el bebé la cafetera? ¿**Podría** hacer pañales, por favor? Corte y doble el papel. Gracias.

Despite the similarities between the two conversations, though, some important differences exist. First, the student uses *podría* more frequently when talking with Dra. Puentes—4 instances—compared to the two instances from the peer conversation. The student is also showing mitigation in his choice of *tú* or *usted*. Consistently, the student uses the *tú* form of the softener (*podrías*) with the peer while using the *usted* form of the softener (*podría*) when talking with Dra. Puentes. Thus, while we observe that the student saw a need to mitigate in both conversations, he shows increased mitigation when talking with Dra. Puentes. This is evident both in his use of *usted* as well as his more frequent production of *podría*.

Because Participant 22 was the final participant of the immersion group, he unfortunately was not able to perform the oral task on the first visit to the academy. On that particular day, the study ran long and the students had to leave for another activity before some of the participants had the chance to complete the oral task. So, we cannot compare the above data to how the student performed on the first visit.

We do have data from the second visit, though. Upon further investigation of those transcripts, we find that the student performed in exactly the same manner on that second recording. He used *podría* requests again in both conversations, but with much higher frequency when talking with Dra. Puentes. When he did not produce a pragmatic softener, he simply used the command form. He also consistently used *tú* with the peer and *usted* with Dra. Puentes. The only difference in this conversation is that he also used one solidarity-building utterance with his peer that was not a command: *Necesitamos platos, por favor* ('We need plates, please'). So, in general, we do not see time affecting this particular participant's responses. The strategies that he chose on the second visit were the exact same ones that he opted for on the third visit.

The trends seen here are similar to those seen in Participant 31's responses with *debería*. Below in examples 3 and 4 are the transcripts of the third visit oral task for Participant

31. Example 3 is the transcript from the peer conversation. Example 4 is the transcript from the Dra. Puentes conversation. First, we note that this student also used the pragmatic softener—in this case, *debería*—with both the peer and with Dra. Puentes. Similar to Participant 22’s production above, the softener is used much more frequently in the Dra. Puentes transcript than in the peer transcript—five instances and one instance, respectively. Likewise, this student also uses the *tú* form of this softener (*deberías*) in the peer conversation and the *usted* form in the conversation with Dra. Puentes.

3) *Primero, debes dar el bebé unas cosas sobre la mesa para terminar llorar. Pero eso no funciona. Y por eso debes poner el bebé en el columpio. Y debes dar el bebé la cafetera para funcionar como una botella. También, **deberías** doblar la manta. Y después de doblar la manta, debes cortar la manta para crear el pañal para el bebé.*

4) *Primero, usted **debería** intentar distraer el bebé con las cosas sobre la mesa como la manta y tijeras para que el termina llorar. Pero eso no funciona. Por eso, **debería** poner el bebé en el columpio. Y también **debería** dar el bebé una cafetera para servir como una botella para que el puede tomar. Bien. Y después, **debería** doblar la manta. Y después de doblar la manta, **debería** cortar la manta con tijeras para crear el pañal. Y creo que es todo. Perfecto. Gracias.*

The only difference is that this student did not choose to use commands in either of the conversations. Instead, when talking with the peer, Participant 31 selected the construction *debes + verb* in the sentences where she did not use *debería*. When talking with Dra. Puentes, the only verb produced by the student was *debería*, so there was not alternate form used in that conversation.

So, again with this participant, there is an intentional mitigation in both conversations, but to a much higher extent when speaking with Dra. Puentes. When we investigate how this student performed in the first and second visit, we see that her strategy did not change much over time. In general, she used *debes + verb* with the peer and *debería* with Dra. Puentes. The only significant differences in these two previous visits are:

1. The student used the *tú* form with Dra. Puentes on both the first and second visit. It wasn’t until the final visit that she used the *usted* form.
2. The student did not use the pragmatic softener *debería* in the peer conversation on the first two visits. It was only in the third visit that she used this form with her peer.

Thus, while the use of the pragmatic softener itself does not change much over time, we do see a slight increase in mitigation over time due to the change in register—*tú* to *usted*.

Both Participants 22 and 31 provide excellent examples of how these students perceive and use pragmatic softeners in an oral task with different interlocutors. However, the question still remains as to why the other 34 participants in the study did not produce a pragmatic softener, especially since so many produced a softener in the questionnaire, as discussed in Chapter 4. Of course, it is always possible that the students did not perceive the scenario as necessitating a softener. It is also possible that the students simply had too many other things to attend to in the oral task to be able to produce a softener. In the written task, they had plenty of time to think through their answers. The oral task required more rapid processing and quick production of forms. In the next section, we will examine what types of verb types the students did select in lieu of softeners in order to determine why there is a shortage of softeners among the oral task responses.

5.1.2 Non-Pragmatic Softeners

In the oral task, the students were asked to give instructions to a peer and to a Spanish professor on how to reenact a film clip. When I explained to the students what I wanted them to do, I did not put any limitations on how they were to go about giving instructions. Some interpreted the task to mean that they were supposed to give commands to the interlocutor. Several students asked me for clarification—specifically, if they were supposed to use the command form. I responded to these students that they needed to give instructions however they best saw fit.

When this dissertation was in the proposal stage, I had several conversations with committee members about whether I should restrict the use of commands. The fear was that students would automatically “default” to the command form when they were asked to give instructions and that the result would be transcripts full of only commands. I decided, though, to take the risk and put no restrictions on the students’ answers with the hope that this would give

me a better understanding of what is actually used when pragmatic softeners are not selected. I was very pleased when I looked through the transcripts and saw that the students did not simply fill up the pages with command after command. As it turned out, the students used a variety of strategies to give instructions. While commands were by far the most frequently used device, the students also interspersed other forms into the conversation, as well. This variety of forms indicates that the students did attempt to mitigate in ways other than by using pragmatic softeners.

Table 5.1 below is a complete list of the devices used in the oral task. The list is divided between the devices used in the peer conversations and the devices used with Dra. Puentes. Clearly, there is a lot of overlap between the two groups. I investigate this distinction further in Section 5.2. The current point is simply to note what types of devices were used other than commands.

Table 5.1 List of verbs used in the oral task

Device Used with Peer	Device used with Dra. Puentes
Debería	Debería
Debes	Debe(s)
---	Es buena idea
Es necesario	Es necesario
Gracias	Gracias
Hay que	Hay que
Infinitive	Infinitive
Necesitamos +V	Necesitamos +V
Necesitas + N	Necesita(s) + N
Necesitas + V	Necesita(s) + V
Past indicative	Past indicative
Podemos	Podemos
Podrías	Podría
Present indicative	Present indicative
Puede Ud.	Puede Ud.
Puedes	Puedes
----	Quiere
Quiero que	Quiero que
Sentence Initial Por Favor	Sentence Initial Por Favor
Sentence-Final Por Favor	Sentence-Final Por Favor
----	Sentence-Internal Por Favor
Tienes que	Tiene(s) que
Tú Command	Tú Command
Ud. Command	Ud. Command
----	Vamos a
Vas a	Vas a

One of the most interesting things to notice about these lists is that all three of the verbs of interest to this study are represented—*querer*, *deber*, and *poder*. While the past subjunctive forms of these verbs were only used by two students (as mentioned above), many of the students used these verbs in other ways.

For example, with the verb *poder*, the students use the present indicative version of this verb in the forms *podemos*, *puede*, and *puedes*. In examples 5, 6, and 7 below, sample sentences from the transcripts are shown where each of these forms was used. In examples 5 and 6, *puedes* and *puede* is used in a request very similar to that made by Participant 22 in examples 1 and 2 above. However, instead of using a pragmatic softener, these students have simply used the present indicative of *poder*. This makes sense in light of the data seen in the questionnaire, in which the present indicative of *poder* was the predominately preferred alternate response to the pragmatic softener *podría*.

- 5) *Y ahora, ¿puedes traer este vaso a la vaca?* ('And now, can you bring this cup to the cow?')
Participant 2, Session 1, Dra. Puentes
- 6) *¿Puede poner el azúcar en la taza?* ('Can you put the sugar in the cup?')
Participant 35, Session 3, Peer

Example 7 is only slightly different than the previous two. Instead of using *poder* as a request, the student uses it simply in a statement of fact or, perhaps, as a suggestion.

- 7) *Ahora podemos comer.* ('Now we can eat.')

Participant 32, Session 3, Dra. Puentes

A similar trend exists with the verb *deber*. Although its pragmatic softener form is only used by one student, many students instead select the present indicative form *debe(s)*. In example 8 below, the student gives instructions to Dra. Puentes by using this form. This form again is very expected in light of the data from the questionnaire in which this form was extremely preferred by the students.

- 8) *Primeramente, debes capturar la gallina y ponerla en la sartén.* ('First, you should capture the chicken and put it in the frying pan.')

Participant 7, Session 1, Dra. Puentes

Although we don't see the verb *querer* used nearly as frequently as *poder* or *deber* in the oral task, we do see some students selecting its present indicative form as well. Sentences 9 and 10 below are excerpts from the transcripts where the forms *quiero que* and *quiere* are used. In sentence 9, the student makes a speaker-centered petition, 'I want you to come'. On the other hand, in sentence 10, the student uses a more direct, hearer-directed request in which she tells Dra. Puentes, 'You want to cook'.

9) *Y, por favor, quiero que Ud. venga a la mesa grande para poner azúcar.* ('And, please, I want you to come to the big table in order to place the sugar.')

Participant 9, Session 1, Dra. Puentes

10) *Quieres...o quiere cocinar los huevos.* ('You want...or...you (formal) want to cook the eggs')

Participant 20, Session 2, Dra. Puentes

So, while we do see the verbs *querer*, *deber*, and *poder* used by the students, they are typically produced as a present indicative form of the verb but used as a request, very similar to the way a pragmatic softener would be used. These results mesh with our previous observations from the questionnaire in which we saw that those students who opted not to use a softener typically preferred the present indicative.

However, these are not the only verbs that the students select in the oral task. Some alternative forms are also used. Many of these forms are "distancing" forms which allow the student to make a request without doing so in a direct manner. For example, in sentences 11 through 14 below, the phrases *hay que*, *es necesario*, *es buena idea*, and *tiene que* are all used as mitigators.

11) *Hay que llevarle al columpio y poner el bebé allá.* ('There is a need to carry the baby to the swing and place the baby there.')

Participant 20, Session 3, Dra. Puentes

12) *Después de este, es necesario esperar para un huevo de la gallina.* ('After this, it is necessary to wait for a chicken's egg'.)

Participant 13, Session 1, Peer

13) *Probablemente es buena idea tener...* ('Probably it's a good idea to have...')

Participant 12, Session 2, Dra. Puentes

14) *Tienes que romper el huevo en la sartén.* ('You have to break the egg in the frying pan')
Participant 14, Session 1, Peer

Each of these forms indicates that the students have other verbal mitigating devices in their "arsenal" that can be used in place of pragmatic softeners.

Interestingly, we also see the verb *necesitar* used as a common device. Many of the students used this form to give instructions. In sentence 15 below, we observe a participant using this form interchangeably with *tú* commands.

15) *Para empezar, necesita tomar los huevos. Abre los huevos. Pon los huevos dentro de la sartén. Ahora necesita tomar la camisa y necesitas poner encima de la mesa.*

('To begin, you need to take the eggs. Open the eggs. Put the eggs in the frying pan. Now, you need to take the shirt and you need to put it on top of the table.')

Participant 18, Session 2, Dra. Puentes

Likewise, in the example below, another participant alternates between *necesitar* + *verb* and *tú* commands:

16) *Primera, necesita tomar el...la gallina y ponla en la sartén. Y necesita esperar hasta que el sartén crea un huevo. Y entonces toma la gallina de la sartén.*

('First, you need to take the chicken and put it in the frying pan. And you need to wait until the pan creates an egg. And then, take the chicken to the pan.')

Participant 11, Session 1, Dra. Puentes

We even see Participant 31 using this form in Session 2 as the only non-pragmatic softener form that she used in the conversation.

16) *Sólo necesitas esperar a la mujer.* ('You only need to wait for the woman.')

Participant 31, Session 2, Dra. Puentes

In the next section, we will discuss whether these forms were being used as mitigating forces or not. For now, we can conclude simply that this form was used frequently as an alternative to commands.

Returning to the list of devices used in the oral task, we also saw a great deal of infinitive verbs, present indicative for verbs other than *poder*, *deber*, *querer*, and *necesitar*, and a lot of past tense verbs. These forms tended to be produced when students were struggling with the

task at hand. They are more than likely the result of either misunderstanding the task or not being at a proficiency level to be able to produce commands or other mitigating devices.

For example, Participant 15 consistently used past tense verbs in his oral task. It was more like he was doing a simple re-telling of the story as opposed to giving instructions. When he was reminded that the task was to give instructions on how to reenact the film clip, he would momentarily produce other forms and then revert back to past tense verbs. This indicated that he did not understand and/or did not feel comfortable producing commands or other types of requests.

Similarly, Participant 17 consistently used present tense verbs in his oral task. However, he was not using the verbs that the other students typically used in the present tense—*poder*, *deber*, *querer*, or *necesitar*. Instead, it was almost as if he was doing a re-telling of the story, as well, only changing the verbs to present tense instead of past. This strategy seemed to be less about mitigation and more about simply not understanding the task.

Many students—especially those using commands exclusively—used infinitive verbs. While infinitive verbs can be used as commands in certain contexts, these are typically found on signs and other written contexts and are not commonly spoken. This fact paired with the fact that most of the students using infinitives were obviously struggling with the task indicates that the use of the infinitive was due to lack of proficiency. Additionally, we never saw the infinitive used as the primary linguistic device used. When the student did produce an infinitive, there were typically only one or two instances of it. Take, for example, sentence 17 below:

17) *Hola. Primero, ponga el bebé en el columpio y cubre con la manta. Y después, llena la botella con la cafetera. Y darle al bebé. Sí. Después, ponga el pañal y córtalos. Sí. Y después dóblalos. Bien. Y pienso que es todo. Gracias.*

'Hi. First, put the baby en the swing and cover with the blanket. Then, fill the bottle with the coffee carafe. And to give it to the baby. Later, put the diaper and cut them. And later, fold them. Good. And I think that's all. Thanks.'

Participant 35, Session 3, Dra. Puentes

In this transcript, Participant 35 uses all commands except for *darle*, which was used in the infinitive form. She switches back and forth throughout the conversation between *tú*

commands and *usted* commands. The instructions that she gives do not make much sense—with many of the wrong words being selected. Thus, it is unlikely that the infinitive form here was intentionally used. It was just the “default” for not being able to correctly produce the device she wanted.

Finally, we do see the students utilizing some non-verbal elements, as well. These are the lexical items *por favor* and *gracias*. In general, the students used *por favor* at the beginning of the sentence. I did see one instance of a sentence-final *por favor* and one instance of a sentence-internal *por favor*. More often than not, we saw *por favor* at the beginning of a sentence collocating with a command. These instances were often at the beginning of the conversation, as is the case for sentences 18 and 20 below.

18) *Por favor, toma el bebé y con dos manos llévalo.* ('Please, take the baby and, with two hands, carry it.')

Participant 21, Session 3, Peer

19) *Por favor, ponga el bebé en el columpio.* ('Please, put the baby in the swing.')

Participant 6, Session 3, Peer

20) *Por favor, toma el bebé en tus brazos.* ('Please, take the baby in your arms.')

Participant 21, Session 3, Dra. Puentes

Gracias was used significantly less than *por favor*. However, when it was used, it was always with a command and often with *por favor*, too. In sentences 21-24 below, *gracias* is consistently used with commands. In 23 and 24 below, it collocates with *por favor*.

21) *Saque el azúcar y ponga uno de los...de los azúcares en la taza a la izquierda y muchos en la taza allá...muchos...más...más....gracias.* ('Take out the sugar and put one of the sugars in the left cup and many in the cup there... many...more...more ...thank you.')

Participant 4, Session 1, Dra. Puentes

22) *Después, toque los huevos con el martillo para romperlos. Gracias.* ('Later, touch the eggs with the hammer and break them. Thank you.')

Participant 32, Session 2, Dra. Puentes

23) *Por favor, pone el cubo en el suelo para hacer una mesa. Gracias.* ('Please, put the pail on the floor in order to make the table. Thank you.')

Participant 21, Session 2, Dra. Puentes

24) *Y, por favor, ordeña la vaca en la primera taza. Sí. Y después la otra taza. Gracias.* ('And, please, milk the cow en the first glass. Yes. And later, the other glass. Thank you.')

Participant 10, Session 1, Peer

So, what we can conclude from these sample sentences is that *por favor* and *gracias* are possibly being used as mitigating devices. However, they seem to only be used with commands. That means that it was unlikely for another mitigating device to be used with either of these lexical mitigators.

5.2 The Interlocutor as a Factor

Now that the verb forms that were produced in the oral task have been identified, let us look specifically at the role that the interlocutor played in terms of which form was produced. We already saw some preliminary evidence from the two participants that did produce pragmatic softeners that there was an attempt to mitigate more with Dra. Puentes than with their peer. Upon further examination of the transcripts, we find that the students can be grouped into three categories based on how they spoke to their peer versus how they spoke to Dra. Puentes. These three categories are as follows:

- a) Those who exhibited no change when talking with Dra. Puentes
- b) Those who exhibited change only in register (*tú* vs. *Ud.*) when talking with Dra. Puentes
- c) Those who exhibited change in both verb choice and register

First, we examine those students who exhibited no change when talking with Dra. Puentes. The results from this group of students are surprising since great measures were taken to ensure that a power and distance differential existed between the student and Dra. Puentes. I commented to the students that Dra. Puentes had gone out of her way to be with us and that “we should show her the respect that she deserves”. I can’t help but wonder why this group of students performed the same with the peer as they did with Dra. Puentes. Did they simply not believe that the situation warranted a language change? Or, were these students perhaps not proficient enough to attend to the fact that their interlocutor needed to be addressed in a special way?

If we take a look at the transcript below, we see that Participant 42 was one of the students who did not exhibit any change when talking with Dra. Puentes. Even though the

transcript from the first visit is the only one provided here, further examination of the transcripts from the other two visits reveals that this student actually remained in this category throughout the entire study. Example 25 is this same participant's peer conversation from the first visit. She starts out using the Ud. command *saque* but self-corrects to the tú command *saca*. This indicates that the student is being intentional about the register she is using. However, as she continues giving instructions, it becomes clear that she is not very proficient with commands. The next command that she uses, *pone*, should actually be the correct form *pon*. The next command, *saca*, is a *tú* command but the following one, *cocine*, is an *usted* command. Later, she uses the infinitive form of *revolver*, catches her mistake, and then conjugates the verb without following the o-> ue stem change rule resulting in *revolve* instead of the correct command, *revuelve*.

When the student goes in to speak with Dra. Puentes, she continues to use *pone* instead of *pon*. The rest of the verbs are conjugated as correct *tú* commands—even *revuelve*, which was previously incorrect. However, the fact that the student struggled so much in the peer conversation may be an indicator as to why she makes no attempts to alter her speech when talking with Dra. Puentes. She may have been attending to grammatical accuracy to the point that she could not attend to register or mitigation. So, lack of proficiency is likely key here.

25) *Oh sí. Ok. Saque...saca la gallina. Y pone en la sartén. Y hay un huevo en la sartén. Saca el huevo y cocine en el sartén. Y ahora como se dice...to pour? No sé. Pone café en la taza con mucho, mucho azúcar. Mucho, mucho. Y revolver los huevos...no...revolve los huevos. Ok. Tira el cordón y después ordeña la vaca en la taza. Y ahora usa la cuchara en la taza y azúcar.*

Participant 42, Session 1, Peer conversation

26) *Pona...no... pone el pan a la mesa. Saca el gallina y pone en la sartén. Después, saca la huevos la gallina y cocine en la sartén. Revuelve los huevos. En la taza, hay café. Y pone mucho azúcar en la taza. Y usa la cuchara en la café. Tira el cordón y ordeña la vaca en la taza con café. Y es todo.*

Participant 42, Session 1, Dra. Puentes conversation

If we take a look at another student's transcript—Participant 10—we find that proficiency may not be the only issue at play, though. In example 27, this student properly executes the majority of commands. She even uses an *hay que* expression towards the end of the conversation and a sentence-initial *por favor* several times. However, this student goes on in

example 28 to give Dra. Puentes almost the exact same set of instructions—all with properly executed *tú* commands, an *hay que* expression, and a sentence-initial *por favor*. This data is more complicated to understand and suggests that perhaps the student's proficiency was not the only contributing factor to her lack of change when talking with Dra. Puentes.

27) *Entonces, primero **toma** el sartén pero **pon** la gallina y el huevo en la sartén. Si. **Espero** un momento. **Toma** la gallina. ¡**Mira!** Hay huevo. Si, por favor. Y **por favor, rómpela** en la sartén. Entonces, a la mesa. **Toma** un cubito de azúcar (solamente uno) **ponlos** en ese. Todos los demás van en eso...en la taza. Después, **hay que** traer la vaca. Si. Y, por favor, **ordeña** la vaca en la primera taza. Si. Y después la otra taza. Gracias. Y olvidé el pan pero está bien. Es todo.*

Participant 10, Session 1, Peer Conversation

28) *Oh, ok. **Por favor, ve** a la....a la sartén y **toma** la gallina y **pon** la gallina en la sartén. Y después (???) a la mesa y **pon** poquito de azúcar en esta taza y un en la otra. Y mucha en la otra. Y todo en esa taza. Sí después **trae** la vaca. Y **tráela** al lado de la mesa. ¡Sí! Y **toma** su leche y **ponlo** en la taza. Sí la primer taza. Sí (risa) y la otra taza también. O, ¡Sí! También **hay que tomar** la gallina de la sartén. Y o ¡**mira!** Hay un huevo. Y es... O! O! También **rompe** la...el huevo al lado. ¡Sí, Sí! Está bien. Gracias.*

Participant 10, Session 1, Dra. Puentes Conversation

Yet, this same student in session 3 does show a register change when talking with Dra. Puentes—thus representing category “B” of students mentioned above: those who exhibited change only in register (*tú* vs. *Ud.*) when talking with Dra. Puentes. Example 29 below are transcripts from the third session. Participant 10 again utilizes a sentence-initial *por favor* when talking to her peer. She then correctly executes 10 *tú* commands. In example 30, this same student correctly executes the same commands with the only difference being that they are now inflected for *usted* instead of *tú*. The student also uses *por favor* sentence-initially four times as compared to the one used with her peer interlocutor. So, even though the student does not show a change in proficiency between sessions 1 and 3, she is clearly attending to the power and distance differential between her and her interlocutor more in session 3 than in session 1.

29) ***Por favor, entra** de tu izquierda con el bebé. **Siéntate** en la silla. **Intenta** a entretener el bebé con los juguetes. **Pon** el bebé en el columpio. **Dale** lo leche. **Regresa** a la silla. **Toma** un pañal y **dóblalo**. **Toma** otro pañal y **córtalo**. Olvidé la manta...pero está bien.*

Participant 10, Session 3, Peer Conversation

30) *Ok .Primero **por favor tome** el bebé y **siéntese** en la silla y **trate** de entretener el bebé con los juguetes...juguetes. Y no funciona. Y o, no, también **por favor ponga** la manta debajo del bebé. Y. Sí. Otra vez con el juguete. Sí. Y **por favor ponga** el bebé en el columpio y **délo** la*

*cafetera como botella. Sí. Y **siéntese** en la silla y **por favor doble** una manta. Sí. Y después **córtelo** en dos triángulos por la mitad. Sí. Sí. Y ese es todo.*

Participant 10, Session 3, Dra. Puentes Conversation

When looking at the transcripts, it is clear that many students who exhibit a change in register when talking with Dra. Puentes. Most of these students exclusively use commands and simply use a *tú* command when speaking with their peer and an *usted* command when speaking with Dra. Puentes. However, there is one student who goes beyond commands in his verb choices yet still only exhibits a change in register. In example 31, the student is giving instructions to his peer. He goes beyond simple commands and uses the constructions *deber + verb* and *necesitar +ver*. So, clearly this student is more comfortable with other forms besides commands. Yet, in example 32, he uses the exact same verb choices with Dra. Puentes. The only thing he changes is the register—using the *usted* forms instead of *tú*. This indicates that the student believed that verb choice was less important for mitigation than register.

31) **Debes** tomar el cubo y darlo a una mujer. **Necesitas** el martillo para romper los huevos en la sartén. Ahora, **debes** sacar la camisa de leñador. **Ponlo** encima del barril. **Necesitas** doblar las mangas en cuadros. **Sácate** los tazones. **Ponlo** en el barril. Eso es todo.

Participant 4, Session 2, Peer Conversation

32) **Primero, debe** dar el cubo a la mujer. **Necesita** el martillo y los huevos. **Debe** usar el martillo para romper los huevos. Ahora **debe** usar la camisa allá para cubrir la mesa o quizás el barril. **Ponga** las mangas encima del resto de la camisa. Después, **ponga** los tazones y platos encima de. Ahora estabas terminado.

Participant 4, Session 2, Dra. Puentes Conversation

Of course, we also need to look at the third category of response—those who exhibited change both in verb choice and in register. If we look back to the Table 5.1, we notice that there were hardly any verbs and/or linguistic devices that were used **only** in peer conversations or **only** in Dra. Puentes conversations. Almost all the devices listed appeared with both interlocutors. This indicates that no device was deemed by all the students as only appropriate for a peer conversation or only appropriate for a non-peer conversation. So, to understand what types of mitigation are occurring, we need to look at these devices in terms of frequency in an individual conversation.

For example, Participant 2 in Session 3 used only *tú* commands with her peer interlocutor. Yet, in the non-peer conversation, she used a variety of devices, including *usted* commands, *necesita(s)* and a sentence initial *por favor*. Thus, she not only showed a change in register, but also a change in verb selection. Participant 12 in Session 2 used *tú* commands, *debes*, and *tienes que* in her peer conversation. Yet, with Dra. Puentes, she used *usted* commands, *es necesario* and *es buena idea* expressions. Participant 32 in Visit 1 used *deber + verb* and *poder + verb* in her peer instructions. Yet, for her non-peer conversation, she chose to use *usted* commands and *gracias*.

These three examples—Participants 2, 12, and 32—demonstrate that students did change their verb choice based on their interlocutor. However, we cannot extrapolate this data to say that the students in general felt that certain verb choices were better for talking with a peer and others were better when talking to a non-peer. Even those students who did change their verb choice based on their interlocutor do not do so in a way consistent with other students. That is to say, no real patterns seem to be emerging.

This data indicates that perhaps at least some of the students were aware that some type of mitigation needed to occur (and perhaps even that verb choice was a way to accomplish this), but that they had different perceptions on how to best execute this.

5.3 Time as a Factor

Time did not play much of a role in the student responses on the oral task. As a general rule, whatever strategies a student selected to use in Session 1 were generally the same strategies that they used throughout the entire study. In Table 5.2 below, I have listed some of the participants in the study and their verb choices throughout the three studies as they interacted with their peers. The number in parentheses indicates how many instances of that verb choice occurred in the transcript from that particular visit.

For example, Participants 3 tended to use the same set of devices throughout all three studies—*tienes que*, *puedes*, and the *tú* command. The only device that was not repeated

elsewhere by the student was *necesitas* in Session 2, which is highlighted in yellow. Likewise, the rest of the devices that were not used more than once have been highlighted in yellow. As can be seen, these devices were typically low in frequency (used 2 or less times in the session) and involved the verbs *poder*, *deber*, *necesitar*, *tener que*, and the word *por favor*. The fact that these are not consistently present over time may indicate that the students are “working out” within themselves how and when these devices should be used.

Table 5.2 Linguistic devices used over time; Peer conversations

	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Participant 3	Tienes que (4) Tú CMD (1) Puedes (1)	Tienes que (3) Puedes (1) Necesitas (1)	Tú CMD (3) Puedes (4) Tienes que (1)
Participant 4	Tú CMD (4) Debes (1) Necesitas (1) Tienes que (1)	Debes (2) Necesitas (2) Tú CMD (3)	Puedes (1) Tú CMD (6)
Participant 5	Tú CMD (11) Sentence Initial Por Favor (2)	Debes (1) Tú CMD (7)	Tú CMD
Participant 8	Tú CMD (6) Tienes que (1)	Tú CMD	Tú CMD (6)
Participant 12	Present indicative Past indicative	Debes (1) Tienes que (2) Tú CMD (4)	Tienes que (4) Tú CMD (5)
Participant 13	Ud. CMD (3) Sentence Final Por Favor (2) Es necesario (1)	Es necesario (3) Puedes (1) Ud. CMD (1)	Puede Ud. (1) Ud. CMD (5)
Participant 16	Tú CMD	Tú CMD	Tú CMD (5) Necesitas (2)
Participant 18	Debe (1) Necesitas (2) Tú CMD (6)	Necesitas (3) Tú CMD (3)	Tú CMD (3)
Participant 19	Tú CMD	Tú CMD	Necesitas (1) Tú CMD (3) Ud. CMD (1)
Participant 30	Tú CMD (3) Ud. CMD (3)	Tú CMD (3) Ud. CMD (3)	Ud. CMD (2) Tú CMD (3)
Participant 33	Tú CMD (12) Ud. CMD (1)	Tú CMD (10)	Tú CMD
Participant 34	Ud. CMD (8) Tú CMD (4)	Tú CMD (7) Ud. CMD (1)	Tú CMD (7) Ud. CMD (3)
Participant 35	puede (1) Ud. CMD (3) Tú CMD (3) necesita (1)	Tú CMD (2) Ud. CMD (2)	Tú CMD (2) Ud. CMD (1)
Participant 39	Ud. CMD	Ud. CMD (5)	Ud. CMD (1) Tú CMD (3)

Table 5.2—continued

Participant 41	Ud. CMD (3) Tú CMD (4)	Tú CMD	Tú CMD
Participant 42	Tú CMD	Tú CMD (2) Ud. CMD (1)	Tú CMD

If we take a look at the devices used with the non-peer interlocutor over time, we observe a similar trend. (Since this is only for illustrative purposes, I only list the first four participants of the immersion group and and last four participants of the study abroad group.) Here, we find again that the students typically use the same devices over time. Just a few are only used once and many of these are the same as we saw in the peer conversations—*necesitar*, *tener que*, *deber*, *por favor*.

Table 5.3 Linguistic devices used over time; Non-peer conversations

	Visit 1	Visit 2	Visit 3
Participant 1	Tú CMD Ud. CMD Debes Tienes que	Debes (3) Tú CMD (2)	Tú CMD Ud. CMD
Participant 2	Puedes Tienes que	Tú CMD (4) Tienes que (1) Vamos a (1)	Ud. CMD Necesita(s) Sentence Initial Por Favor Tú CMD
Participant 3	Puedes Necesitas Tiene(s) que Ud. CMD	Tú CMD	Tú CMD Puedes
Participant 4	Ud. CMD Necesita(s) Gracias	Debe Ud. CMD Necesita + N	Sentence Initial Por Favor Ud. CMD Necesita
Participant 40	Ud. CMD (3) Tú CMD (2)	Ud. CMD (6) Tú CMD (1) Es necesario (1)	Ud. CMD (3) Tú CMD (2)
Participant 41	Tú CMD	Tú CMD	Tú CMD
Participant 42	Tú CMD	Tú CMD (6) Ud. CMD (1)	Tú CMD
Participant 43	Ud. CMD	Tú CMD	Ud. CMD

Recall that even those who used pragmatic softeners started using them in Session 1 and used them all the way through to Session 3. So, time does not seem to be playing a significant role in the oral task. Likewise, we do not see a lot of evidence of acquisition in the oral task.

5.4 Context as a Factor

We do see a significant difference between the responses of the study abroad group and those of the immersion group. The immersion group shows a much broader distribution of devices used than the study abroad group. For example, the study abroad group generally used commands in all three sessions. Despite being given the exact same instructions for the oral task as the immersion group, they rarely used any other linguistic device. The only devices used by the study abroad group other than the commands are: *debe(s)*, *debería(s)*, *es necesario*, *gracias*, *necesita(s)*, *puedes(s)*, sentence initial *por favor*, and *tienes que*. Three of these devices were by the same participant—Participant 31, who produced the pragmatic softener *debería*. If she were not included in the list, the study abroad group would have only produced 5 forms other than the commands. Additionally, these five forms were only produced by a handful of students—with many study abroad students never producing any form but a command.

The immersion students, on the other hand, used a wide variety of forms throughout the study. Very few students only stuck to using commands. Most used a combination of several different forms in each session. They also tended to execute the verbs that they did use in a more successful way. While not necessarily of interest to this study, I did note that the immersion group was more likely to pronounce lexical items correctly, conjugate verbs with stem-changes, and recognize and produce forms that have irregular conjugations.

This again reinforces what I have previously asserted in Chapter 4—that the immersion students came into the study with a higher proficiency than the study abroad students despite the fact that the study abroad students have had almost twice as much previous classroom instruction. Unfortunately, we do not see any evidence that the actual study abroad or immersion environment had any bearing on the results. Instead, the differences that were evident in the pre-test remain the same through the post-test. So, even though the immersion group outperformed the study abroad group on the oral task, these results are not attributable to the language-learning environment.

5.5 Native Speaker Comparison

As was mentioned in Chapter 3, I asked several native Spanish speakers from Mexico to perform a variation of the oral task. Because of logistical reasons, I was not able to conduct the oral task *orally*, per se. Instead, the native speakers were asked to view a Charlie Chaplin clip called *The Kid*, which was the same clip used with the learner subjects in the post-test. The native speakers were then asked to imagine that they were in a room with all of the props necessary to recreate the scene. Then, they were asked to imagine that they needed to give a friend instructions on how to reenact the scene with the friend playing the role of Charlie Chaplin. The subjects were asked to write down how they would give orally-spoken directions to the “actor”. The subjects were also asked how they would give the same oral instructions if they were attempting to be very polite. So, the instructions the native speakers gave were actually written accounts of how the subject imagined he or she would perform if speaking aloud instead of spontaneous oral instructions. (Recall that spontaneously-spoken instruction was the method used with the learner subjects.) Also, the methodology differed in that the native speakers were overtly asked to be polite instead of simply being put into a situation where it was presumed that they would be polite without being given any overt instructions to do so.

Upon examination of the data, it was determined that the native speakers were no more likely to use pragmatic softeners in this task than were the Spanish learners. Some significant findings were present, though. First, all three of the native speakers made a point to change from *tú* to *usted* when attempting to be more polite. In fact, this was the only change that four of the five native speakers made in the politeness-scenario, indicating that the native speakers felt that changing register was the first (and, in some cases, only) step in indicating politeness. While many students attempted to do this, as well, it was not as universal with them. Second, the native speakers were not as likely to give commands as the students were. For the students, commands were the default construction for instruction-giving. For the native speakers, it was more likely for them to use the present-tense instead of commands. Below are the instructions given by one of

the native speakers to the peer actor. Note the verbs in italics. Of the seven verbs used, six are simply present tense verbs. Only one (*pónlo*) is a command.

NS1: *Tienes que* cuidar y entretener al bebé, *pónlo* en la hamaca y *le das* de tomar leche con la tetera, después *cortas* la manta y con ella *haces* unos pañales, *mueves* la boca y lo *haces* reír.

This trend of using present-tense verbs in lieu of commands is present in the other two native speakers' instructions, as well. If we look at this same speaker's instructions for the politeness scenario, we notice more noteworthy trends:

NS1: *Debe* cuidar y entretener al bebé, lo *pondrá* en la hamaca y le *dará* de tomar leche con la tetera, después *cortará* la manta y con ella *hará* unos pañales. *Podría* mover la boca para hacerlo reír.

In this scenario, the speaker does utilize one pragmatic softener—*podría*. Yet, instead of using present-tense verbs for the rest of the instructions, she uses the future tense for the majority of the verbs. This is intriguing because—despite the lack of pragmatic softeners—we do see this speaker using verb tense to indicate politeness. So, a change in verb tense is considered by this native speaker as one way to show politeness through speech. She just happened to use the future instead of the past for all but *podría*. This data helps to confirm that the instruction-giving scenario was an instance where softening might occur. The fact that very few students chose to use verb tense as a mitigator may indicate that a gap may exist in their pragmatic abilities.

Another interesting thing occurring in these instructions is the use of the present-tense verb *debe* ('you should'). This was a form that was also frequently used when the students were giving instructions in the politeness scenario. The fact that the pragmatic softener counterparts *debería* or *debiera* were not selected by the native speaker may indicate that they were not deemed necessary for this situation—despite concurrently believing that *podría* is necessary. This reflects a general trend seen both in the native speakers and the students in which *poder* pragmatic softeners are more commonly used than *deber*.

5.6 Summary

Summarizing the results of the oral task is a very complex task. Not as many clear patterns emerge in the oral task as in the questionnaire. Of course, this is largely due to the fact that, unlike the questionnaire, the oral task had an almost infinite possibility of results. Spontaneous speech is not easy to organize and quantify. The conversations that were recorded—although restricted to a very narrow topic and scope—were as individual as the people producing them. It is very difficult to assess what patterns of acquisition exist, if any. However, despite the irregular and difficult results, I did observe the following:

- Only two pragmatic softeners were used in the oral task—one by an immersion student and the other by a study abroad student. The immersion student used *podría*; the study abroad student used *debería*. Both students used these forms at all three sessions, so they were clearly already acquired before the study began. We can observe an intentional mitigation in the students' conversations with the peer and with the non-peer, but to a much higher extent when speaking with the non-peer.
- For the 34 students that did not use pragmatic softeners in the oral task, the primary question that remains is whether they used some other device instead of softeners. I found that, similar to the questionnaire, the preferred forms were the present indicative of *poder*, *deber*, and *querer*. At least 50% of the verbs used were commands. We also saw other verbal constructions such as *es necesario*, *es buena idea*, *tener que*, *hay que*, and *necesitar + verb*. The lexical softeners *por favor* and *gracias* were also present among the responses. What is still largely unknown is whether the students were using any of these forms as mitigating devices.
- Despite the fact that the scenario was developed to maximize the power and distance differential between the speaker and Dra. Puentes and to minimize the power and distance between the speaker and the peer, many students did not demonstrate any

change in production based on the interlocutor. Some students did show a change in register when speaking to Dra. Puentes (i.e. they used *usted* forms instead of *tú*). Some students showed both a change in register and a change in verb choice. But, those who demonstrated a change in verb choice did so in a very non-systematic way—with no apparent rhyme or reason to why they selected one device over another. So, at least a few of the students were aware that some type of mitigation needed to occur (and perhaps even that verb choice was a way to accomplish this), but they had different perceptions on how to best execute this.

- Interestingly, time did not play much of a role in the student responses on the oral task. In fact, as a general rule, whatever strategies a student selected to use in Session 1 were generally the same strategies that they used throughout the entire study. Some devices did appear and disappear as time progressed. These devices were typically low in frequency (used 2 or less times in the session by the student) and involved the verbs *poder*, *deber*, *necesitar*, *tener que*, and the word *por favor*. The fact that these are not consistently present over time may indicate that the students are “working out” within themselves how and when these devices should be used.
- We do see a significant difference between the responses of the study abroad group and those of the immersion group. The immersion group shows a much broader distribution of devices used than the study abroad group. Despite being given the exact same instructions for the oral task as the immersion group, the study abroad group largely used commands only. The immersion students, on the other hand, used a wide variety of forms throughout the study. Very few students only stuck to using commands. Most used a combination of several different forms in each session. They also tended to execute the verbs that they did use in a more successful way.

- While not necessarily of interest to this study, I also noticed that the immersion group was more likely to pronounce lexical items correctly, conjugate verbs with stem-changes, and recognize and produce forms that have irregular conjugations. This supports my previous conjecture that the immersion students came into the study more proficient despite the fact they previously had at least 50% less class instruction.
- When we compare the results of the oral task with those of native speakers, we find that some native speakers found register to be of primary importance when showing politeness. One of our native speaker informants used a pragmatic softener to show politeness. This same informant also used the future tense for politeness. This indicates that changing verb tenses is an important pragmatic skill utilized by native Spanish speakers. The fact that not many students attempted to use this device may indicate an area for growth in their pragmatic competency.

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS: PERCEPTION OF APPROPRIATENESS OF PRAGMATIC SOFTENERS

In this chapter, I address the results of the appropriateness evaluations from Part C of the questionnaire. (Please see Appendix B for the complete set of questionnaires.) The purpose of this section of the questionnaire was to tease out whether the students recognize the effects of pragmatic softeners. That is, do the students understand that a pragmatic softener has a mitigating effect and that some softeners mitigate more than others? In this task, the student was given three distinct scenarios to react to—one with *poder* responses, one with *querer* responses, and one with *deber* responses. These scenarios were contrived and not taken from real-world data. However, the scenarios were intended to describe a sociolinguistic environment in which a pragmatic softener might be used. The students were presented with the softeners (as well as other possible responses) and were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of their usage, given the circumstances described. The students rated the appropriateness based on a likert scale from 1 to 5. Students were asked to select number three if they were not sure how to answer. Although these instructions were clearly written out on the questionnaire itself, the same instructions were re-iterated verbally to the students every time they filled out a questionnaire to make sure that they remembered that they were to circle number three if they were unsure of the answer.

The likert scale from the questionnaire is shown below in both English and Spanish:

1= no apropiado	1= not appropriate
2= un poco apropiado	2= a little appropriate
3= no sé	3= I don't know
4= bastante apropiado	4= rather appropriate
5= muy apropiado	5= very appropriate

It is important to note that this was the first (and only) part of the questionnaire where the students were given a softener to react to. This was also the first place on the questionnaire (and the only time in the session) where the students every saw any of the seven target forms of interest to this study. This design was purposeful, so that information from other parts of the questionnaire wouldn't influence the students' answers.

In Section 6.1, I present the data for each of the four questionnaires. In Section 6.2, I recast this data looking specifically at how answers developed and changed over time. In Section 6.3, I will compare the performance of the study abroad students to that of the immersion students. Section 6.4 compares learner responses to native-speaker responses.

6.1 Responses: Appropriateness

As I looked through the responses given in Part C of the questionnaire, my initial inclination was to calculate the mean score for each item on the questionnaire. While these calculations were helpful in getting a general feel for how the students had responded—especially if they responded either very favorably or very unfavorably toward an item—the mean was ultimately not sufficient. Because the likert scale was set up with the middle number—three—being an opt-out answer (i.e. “I don't know”), I did not know how to interpret items whose average answer was three. I had no way of knowing by the mean if a three average meant that the majority of the students did not know how to answer and therefore had simply marked three, or, if the average of three was due to the fact that the students were torn between two polar opposites—with many students answering with a one, for example, and many also answering with a five. This was the inherent problem with using the mean score; I could not differentiate between the students' not knowing versus their being in disagreement with one another.

So, I decided that I would also calculate the mode for each item on the questionnaire. By doing this additional calculation, I was able to clarify which of these two scenarios seemed more likely—confusion or disagreement. When the mean and mode were very similar (for example, both were around 3.0), I could assume that the 3.0 average meant that students were mostly

responding with “I don’t know”. But, if the mean and mode were very different (for example, the mean was 3.0 but the mode was 5), I knew that there must have been quite a bit of disagreement among the students. If that many students had answered with a 5 and the mean was still 3, I could assume that there must be a good number of students who also answered the opposite—with 1’s and 2’s.

In the rare case that both the mean and the mode did not buy me enough information to really understand how the students were responding, I then resorted to doing a more detailed inventory of the answers, listing each response and the number of participants who selected that response.

6.1.1 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test

6.1.1.1 Deber

The first question for Part C of Questionnaire A focused on the verb *deber*. The scenario involved the student shopping for pants with his mother when an unknown woman approaches the student and asks for advice about purchasing a skirt that, in reality, is quite hideous. The student is presented with seven responses and asked to rate their appropriateness. Two of the seven use pragmatic softeners. Those two responses are as follows:

e) “*Debiera* buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.”

f) “*Debería* buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.”

Obviously, the only difference between the two responses is the use of *debiera* versus *debería*. Given the students’ feedback for these two statements, it is clear that a difference exists in how students perceive the appropriateness of each of these two forms in this scenario.

For *debiera*, the students were pretty unsure of how appropriate this form would be. The mean of all the responses was 2.6 and the mode was 3. These numbers indicate a general confusion of how appropriate this form is, if not a slight dislike of it.

On the other hand, *debería* is viewed much more favorably by the students and is seen as appropriate form for this scenario. The mean response was 3.7 and the mode was 4. In fact,

24 of the 36 students responded with a 4 or 5. This means students tended to think of this form as appropriate. So, in between these two pragmatic softeners, *debería* is the preferred response.

Of course, there were four other options presented to the students. While these options did not contain pragmatic softeners, they did utilize other common responses such as commands, the present indicative *debe*, and a conditional statement. Responses to these items may provide us with clues on what students prefer to use other than pragmatic softeners.

The first alternate response was simply a command, “No compre esta falda” (*Don’t buy this dress*). The mean response for this option was 2.5 and the mode was 2. So, in general students thought a negative command was not very appropriate.

But what about an affirmative command? The third response in the *deber* question used a positive command: “Cómprela. ¡Qué bonita es!” (*Buy it. It’s so cute!*). Of course, we have to keep in mind that, given the context, this would be considered a lie since the students were told the skirt was hideous. The mean for this answer was 2.1 and the mode was 1. These numbers indicate that the students believed that an affirmative command was also not appropriate for the situation.

Another alternative option presented in this question was the present indicative *debe*. The response read: “Debe buscar otra falda que le quede mejor” (*You should look for another skirt that fits you better*). This form of *deber* is not considered a pragmatic softener but obviously utilizes the same verb. Students felt favorable toward this option, giving it a mean score of 3.5 and a mode of 5. The mode score indicates that “very appropriate” was the most popular answer for this item. The mean score tells us that that assessment was not unanimous. Table 6.1 allows us to take a closer look at the exact scores to find out why this discrepancy between the mean and mode exists.

Table 6.1 Breakdown of responses for *debe* in Questionnaire A

Response	# of Students
1: Not Appropriate	7
2: Somewhat Appropriate	3
3: I Don't Know	2
4: Rather Appropriate	11
5: Very Appropriate	13

This table shows that 24 of the 36 students rated *debe* as either very appropriate (5) or rather appropriate (4). So, even though the mean score was 3.5, the mode score is actually more telling—the majority of students felt that this answer was appropriate.

The final form presented was simply a statement utilizing the conditional: “Yo buscaría otra falda” (*I would look for another skirt*). Students generally felt that this response was “rather appropriate”, responding with a mean score of 3.8 and a 4 for the mode.

6.1.1.2 Poder

The second question for Part C of the pre-test focused on the verb *poder*. The scenario involved the student being lost in a Latin American city and needing directions. The student approaches a man dressed in a business suit who appears to be very preoccupied. The student looks around for someone else to help but, not seeing any other options, decides to ask the man for help. The student is presented with seven possible utterances and asked to rate their appropriateness. Only one of the seven uses a pragmatic softener. That response is as follows:

a) “¿Pudiera ayudarme? Estoy perdido.”⁸

The students actually reacted very similarly to *pudiera* as they did in the previous question with *debería*. The mean score was 3.5 and the mode was 5. Twenty-two out of 36 students found this form to be “rather appropriate” or “very appropriate”.

Just as we saw in the *deber* question, we also had some alternative responses that didn't involve pragmatic softeners. Again, the students were given an affirmative command. This one

⁸ The fact that *pudiera* is the only pragmatic softener represented in this question is due to an oversight on my part when I created the questionnaire. Ideally, *podría* would have been among the options, too.

read: “Ayúdeme. Estoy perdido” (*Help me. I’m lost*). The students felt very strongly that this was not an appropriate utterance, giving it a mean score of 1.8 and a mode of 1.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *puede*. The response read: “¿Puede ayudarme? Estoy perdido” (*Can you help me? I’m lost*). This form of *poder* is not considered a pragmatic softener but utilizes the same verb. Similar to the *debe* option mentioned in the last question, the students felt favorable toward this option (actually even more so), giving it a mean score of 4.4 and a mode of 5.

The final two alternative answers were simply a statement and a question, respectively. In the first, the utterance was “Necesito direcciones” (*I need directions*). The students generally felt that this statement was somewhat inappropriate for the scenario, giving it a mean score of 2.6 with a mode of 2. The second—a question—was “¿Sabe dónde está la calle Colón?” (*Do you know where Columbus Street is?*). This was generally considered to be an appropriate utterance, with a 4.4 mean score and a mode of 4.

6.1.1.3 *Querer*

The final question for Part C of the pre-test focused on the verb *querer*. The scenario involved the student writing a letter to the president of his/her university. The president is hand-selecting a group of students to travel to South America on an exclusive study abroad experience. The student is presented with four possible letters to the president and asked to rate their appropriateness. Three of the four incorporate a pragmatic softener. Those letters are:

b) “Estimado Señor,
Quisiera ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

c) “Estimado Señor,
Quería añadir mi nombre a la lista de participantes en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

d) “Estimado Señor,
Querría ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

Again, the main difference between the three responses is the use of *quisiera*, *quería*, and

querría. The way the students reacted to these three softeners indicates that there is a clear distinction in how students perceive the appropriateness of each of these three forms in this scenario.

For *quisiera*, the students were pretty unsure of how appropriate this form would be. The mean of all the responses was 3.2 and the mode was 3. These numbers indicate that students overall are not sure what to do with this form.

Querría has a mean score similar to *quisiera*—a score of 3.4. However, the mode in this case was 4 instead of 3. This mode indicates that quite a few students felt this form was appropriate. In fact, 21 out of 36 responded with a 4 or 5, so the majority of students felt it was appropriate. The lower mean value, though, indicates that students were not in total agreement about the appropriateness—that enough students responded with 1, 2, or 3 so as to pull the mean value down to 3.4.

For the final pragmatic softener, *quería*, there is even more evidence of disagreement about appropriateness. The mean value for this item was 2.9. The mode was 4. Since 4 (“rather appropriate”) was the most common answer, we know that quite a few students felt that this form was appropriate for this scenario. However, for the mean to be so much lower than the mode, quite a few students also felt the opposite—that this form was not appropriate. Table 6.2 shows the breakdown of responses:

Table 6.2 Breakdown of responses for *quería* in Questionnaire A

Response	# of Students
1: Not Appropriate	8
2: Somewhat Appropriate	9
3: I Don't Know	3
4: Rather Appropriate	11
5: Very Appropriate	5

From this table, we observe that 16 students felt that this form was either rather appropriate or very appropriate. But, 17 students felt that it was either not appropriate or somewhat appropriate. This would explain why the mode is 4 but the mean is significantly lower at 2.9. Clearly, there is not much agreement among the students as to how appropriate *quería* is in this context.

So, of the three pragmatic softeners represented in this section, *querría* is the most favored. A lot of disagreement exists with *quería*—some favor it, some don't. And, the students generally don't know what to do with *quisiera*.

The last option in this section was simply for the verb *quiero* ('I want'). The option was:

a) "Estimado Señor,
Quiero ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?"

Students reacted very similarly to this form as they did to the pragmatic softeners. The mean response was a 3.1 and the mode was 4. Almost half the students believe this form is rather or very appropriate. But, the other half either didn't know or marked that it was not appropriate.

6.1.1.4 Summary

Among the pragmatic softeners, there is a lot of confusion and disagreement in Questionnaire A. *Debiera* and *quisiera* both had a mode answer of 3. It is clear that students generally do not know what to do with these two softeners. *Pudiera*, on the other hand, is considered an appropriate form by 61% of the students. Unfortunately, we do not have information from this questionnaire on *podría*. *Querría* fared well, with the majority of students believing it to be appropriate. Likewise, two thirds of the students believe *debería* to be rather or very appropriate. A lot of disagreement surrounded *quería*, with about half giving it a 4 or 5 and the other half answering with a 1 or 2.

The most popular non-pragmatic softener was the presented indicative. This matches up with the data both from the elicitation portion of the questionnaire as well as the oral task. In both, the present indicative was largely favored as an alternative to pragmatic softening.

6.1.2 Questionnaire B

We can turn now to the results from Questionnaire B to determine how they compared to the pre-test results.

6.1.2.1 *Deber*

The first question for Part C of Questionnaire B focused on the verb *deber*. The scenario involved the student being asked for advice by a classmate that he doesn't know very well. The classmate is doing poorly in school and is considering quitting his part-time job to free up time to study. He asks the student what he thinks he should do. Two of the six responses use pragmatic softeners. Those two responses are as follows:

e) "*Debieras* abandonar el trabajo y fijarte en los estudios."

f) "*Deberías* abandonar el trabajo y fijarte en los estudios."

The students' reactions to these options indicates that there is a clear difference in how students perceive the appropriateness of each of these two forms in this scenario.

For *debiera*, the students were again fairly unsure of how appropriate this form would be. The mean of all the responses was 2.9 and the mode was 3. These numbers indicate continued confusion of the appropriateness of this form.

For *debería*, there is an interesting change in thinking from the first questionnaire. While *debería* is viewed much more favorably by the students as being an appropriate form for the scenario in Questionnaire A, the students are united in their dislike of this form in Questionnaire B. The mean response was 2.8 and the mode was 1. So, neither of the pragmatic softeners was a preferred response to the scenario. This change is largely unexpected. As we saw in Chapters 4 and 5, *debería* was consistently produced more than *debiera*. For the students to suddenly disapprove of this form does not "fit" with the other data collected.

There were four other options presented to the students, as well. The first alternate response was simply a command, "Abandona el trabajo." (*Quit your job.*). The mean response for this option was 1.9 and the mode was 1. So, students thought the command response was fairly inappropriate.

Another command response was given as an option, but this one was a little softer in approach and allowed for negative politeness: “Haz lo que piensas que sería lo mejor” (‘Do what you think is best’). Students liked this option the best, giving it a 4.3 mean and a 5 mode.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *debe*. The response read: “Debes abandonar el trabajo” (‘*You should quit your job*’). This form of *deber* is not considered a pragmatic softener but obviously utilizes the same verb. About half the students felt favorable toward this option, giving it a mean score of 3.2 and a mode of 4. The mode score indicates that “rather appropriate” was the most popular answer for this item. The mean score tells us that that assessment was not unanimous.

The final form presented was simply a statement utilizing the conditional: “Yo abandonaría el trabajo” (‘*I would quit the job*’). Students generally felt that this response was “rather appropriate”, responding with a mean score of 3.7 and a 4 for the mode.

6.1.2.2 Poder

The second question for Part C of Questionnaire B focused on the verb *poder*. The scenario involved the student being invited to a special dinner at the President’s house while studying abroad in Mexico. During the dinner, the student must directly ask the President to pass the butter. The student is presented with six possible ways to ask the governor for the butter. The students are then asked to rate the appropriateness of each option. Two of the six options utilize a pragmatic softener. These options are as follows:

a) “¿*Pudiera* pasarme la mantequilla?”

f) “¿*Podría* pasarme la mantequilla?”

The students reacted very similarly to *pudiera* as they did in the previous questionnaire. The mean score was 3.3 and the mode was 5. Eighteen out of 36 students (50%) found this form to be “rather appropriate” or “very appropriate”. This means that the other 50% either didn’t know or answered with a 1 or 2. This indicates a lack of agreement about this form.

No disagreement existed for *podría*, though. With a mean score of 4.1 and a mode of 5, 29 out of 36 students agreed that this form was rather or very appropriate for the context. So, evidently, *podría* is the clear favorite among the two softeners. This is not too surprising since it fits nicely with the production data that was presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Four alternative responses that didn't involve pragmatic softeners. Again, the students were given an affirmative command only this time with a *por favor* on the end. This one read: "Páseme la mantequilla, por favor" ('Pass me the butter, please'). In spite of the *por favor*, the students still responded that this was not an appropriate utterance, giving it a mean score of 2.7 and a mode of 1.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *puede*. The response read "¿Puede pasarme la mantequilla?" ('Can you pass the butter?'). The students generally responded favorably toward this option, giving it a mean score of 4.1 and a mode of 4.

The final two alternative answers were simply a statement and a question, respectively. In the first, the utterance was "Necesito la mantequilla" ('I need the butter'). The students generally felt that this statement was inappropriate for the scenario, giving it a mean score of 1.3 with a mode of 1. The second—a question—was "¿Me pasa la mantequilla?" ('Will you pass me the butter?'). Unfortunately, there was a typo on the questionnaire and *pasa* became *pase*. Since "¿Me pase la mantequilla?" is an ungrammatical question, I must disregard the answers since the results from it are not valid.

6.1.2.3 *Querer*

The final question for Part C of Questionnaire B focused on the verb *querer*. The scenario involved the student attending a party at the home of his dad's boss, whom the student has never met. The student's father warns him that he must be on his best behavior at the party—that his dad's job depends on it. At one point during the part, the boss is serving ice cream and asks the student if he would prefer chocolate or vanilla. The student is presented with five possible

responses and is asked to rate their appropriateness. Three of the five incorporate a pragmatic softener. Those responses are:

b) “*Quisiera* un helado de chocolate.”

c) “*Quería* un helado de chocolate.”

d) “*Querría* un helado de chocolate.”

Again, the only difference between the three responses is the use of *quisiera*, *quería*, and *querría*.

For *quisiera*, the students continued to be unsure of how appropriate this form would be. The mean of all the responses was 2.9 and the mode was 3. These numbers indicate that students overall are not sure what to do with this form.

Querría has a mean score similar to *quisiera*—a score of 3.3. However, the mode in this case was 4 instead of 3. This mode indicates that quite a few students felt this form was appropriate. In fact, 19 out of 36 responded with a 4 or 5, so the majority of students felt it was appropriate. The lower mean value, though, indicates that students were not in total agreement about the appropriateness—that enough students responded with 1, 2, or 3 so as to pull the mean value down to 3.3. These results are very similar to what we saw in the pre-test, so the students still disagree on the appropriateness of this form.

For the final pragmatic softener, *quería*, there is a clear disapproval by the students. This is intriguing since the responses were less decisive in the previous questionnaire. The mean value for this item was 2.1. The mode was 1.

So, of the three pragmatic softeners represented in this section, none of the three is emerging as a clear favorite. While *querría* did have the highest mean and mode scores, many students indicated by their scores that they didn't think this form was very appropriate.

The other two options in this section were simply for the verb *quiero* ('I want'). One response contained a sentence-final *por favor*, the other did not. The options were:

a) “*Quiero* un helado de chocolate.”

e) “Quiero un helado de chocolate, por favor.”

While students reacted unfavorably to the first option, giving it a mean score of 1.3 and a mode of 1, they were very enthusiastic about the *quiero...por favor* construction. The mean response was a 3.8. The mode response was 4. Twenty-five of the 36 students (70%) said that this form was either rather or very appropriate. So, this final option was deemed the most appropriate of the five—even more appropriate than any of the pragmatic softeners.

6.1.2.4 Summary

While we saw a lot of confusion and disagreement in Questionnaire A towards the pragmatic softeners, we begin to see in Questionnaire B more distinct trends. The confusion did carry over from Questionnaire A to *debiera* and *quisiera*. Again, both had a mode answer of 3. It is clear that students still do not know what to do with these two softeners. *Pudiera* also joins the ranks of uncertainty in this questionnaire. While it did have a mode of 5, its mean score of 3.3 indicates that much disagreement exists as to how appropriate this form is. *Querría* also show indicators of disagreement—with only 50% answering with a 4 or 5 compared to the 61% on the pre-test. On the other hand, a clear favorite is emerging in *podría* with a mean of 4.1 and a mode of 5. We also see an apparent disapproval of both *debería* and *quería* in this questionnaire.

6.1.3 Questionnaire C: Post-Test

In the next section, we will consider the results from the post-test.

6.1.3.1 Deber

The first question for Part C of the post-test focused on the verb *deber*. The scenario involved the student being asked to participate in a special committee that has been appointed by the President of the United States. This committee is made up of young people. One of the tasks of being on the committee involves writing a letter to the President giving advice on what he should do about rising gas prices. The students are asked to react to six letters. Two of the six letters use a pragmatic softener. Those two responses are as follows:

e) “*Debiera* bajar el precio de gasolina.”

f) “*Debería* bajar el precio de gasolina.”

Once again for *debiera*, the students were unsure of how appropriate this form would be. The mean of all the responses was 3.1 and the mode was 3. These numbers indicate continued confusion on how appropriate this form is and when it should be used.

For *debería*, there is an interesting change in thinking from the first and second questionnaire. Here, we see a mean score of 3.4 and a mode of 3. The students aren't sure what to think of this form in this context.

We can now turn to the four other options presented to the students.

The first alternate response was simply a command, “Baje el precio de gasolina” (*Lower the price of gasoline*). The mean response for this option was 1.9 and the mode was 1. These are the exact same results from the previous questionnaire. So, students continue to believe the command response is fairly inappropriate.

Another command response was given as an option, but this one was a little softer in approach: “Haga lo que piensa es lo mejor” (*Do what you think is best*). Students tended to dislike this option, too, giving it a 2.9 mean and a 2 mode response. This is quite a change from the previous questionnaire, where this response was highly favored.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *debe*. The response read: “Debe bajar el precio de gasolina” (*You should lower the price of gasoline*). About half the students felt favorable toward this option, giving it a mean score of 3.4 and a mode of 4. The mode score indicates that “rather appropriate” was the most popular answer for this item. The mean score tells us that that assessment was not unanimous.

The final form presented was simply a statement utilizing the conditional: “Yo bajaría el precio de gasolina” (*I would lower the price of gasoline*). Students generally felt that this response was “rather appropriate”, responding with a mean score of 3.6 and a 4 for the mode.

6.1.3.2 Poder

The second question for Part C of the post-test focused on the verb *poder*. The scenario involved the student needing to make a phone call to the director of an agency where the student wants to get a job. The student is asked what they would say when the receptionist answered the phone. The students are then asked to rate the appropriateness of six options. Two of these utilize a pragmatic softener. These options are as follows:

a) “¿*Pudiera* pasarme a la directora?”

f) “¿*Podría* pasarme a la directora?”

The students actually reacted very similarly to *pudiera* as they did in the previous questionnaires. The mean score was 3.3 and the mode was 4. Nineteen out of 34 students (56%) found this form to be “rather appropriate” or “very appropriate”. This means that the rest either didn’t know or answered with a 1 or 2. This indicates a continued lack of agreement about this form.

No disagreement existed for *podría*, though. With a mean score of 4.2 and a mode of 5 (just as in Questionnaire B), 29 out of 36 students agreed that this form was rather or very appropriate for the context. Hence, *podría* remains the universal favorite among the two softeners.

The students also responded to four alternative responses that didn’t involve pragmatic softeners. The students were given an affirmative command with sentence-final *por favor* on the end. This one read: “Páseme a la directora, por favor” (*‘Put me through to the director, please’*). The response was that this was overall not a very appropriate utterance, giving it a mean score of 2.9 and a mode of 2.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *puede*. The response read “¿*Puede* pasarme a la directora?” (*‘Can you put me through to the director?’*). The students generally responded favorably toward this option, giving it a mean score of 4.0 and a mode of 4.

The final two alternative answers were simply a statement and a question, respectively. In the first, the utterance was: “Necesito hablar con la directora” (*I need to talk with the director*). The students generally felt that this statement was inappropriate for the scenario, giving it a mean score of 1.3 and a mode of 1. The second—a question—was “¿Me pasa a la directora?” (*Will you put me through the director?*). Unfortunately, there was a typo on this questionnaire, as well, and *pasa* became *pase*. Since “¿Me pase a la directora?” is an ungrammatical question, I must disregard the answers since the results from it are not valid.

6.1.3.3 *Querer*

The final question for Part C of the post-test focused on the verb *querer*. The scenario involved the student being in a room full of university professors. The student needs to make an urgent and important announcement. The student is asked to read through a list of various ways that he might get the group’s attention. The student is then asked to rate the appropriateness of these options. Three of the five incorporate a pragmatic softener. Those are:

- b) “Disculpen. *Quisiera* hacer un anuncio importante.”
- c) “Disculpen. *Quería* hacer un anuncio importante.”
- d) “Disculpen. *Querría* hacer un anuncio importante.”

For *quisiera*, the students finally selected something other than “I don’t know” as they had in the previous two questionnaires. Instead, they gave a mean score of 3.4 and mode of 5. Over half of the students answered with rather or very appropriate. These numbers indicate that students are beginning to be more aware of what to do with this form.

Querría, which the students previously disagreed on, has moved more into the “I don’t know” category—with a mean score of 3.3 and mode of 3. The numbers show, though, that about half of the students still are marking this form as a 4 or 5.

For the final pragmatic softener, *quería*, we again see a clear disapproval by the students. The mean value for this item was 2.6. The mode was 1.

So, of the three pragmatic softeners represented in this section, *quisiera* is emerging as a preferred response and *quería* is maintaining its status as a dispreferred response. The students are still sorting out how they feel about *querría*.

The other two options in this section were simply for the verb *quiero* ('I want'). One response contained a sentence-final *por favor*, the other did not. The options were:

- a) "Disculpen. Quiero hacer un anuncio importante."
- e) "Disculpen. Quiero hacer un anuncio importante, por favor."

While students reacted mostly unfavorably to the first option, giving it a mean score of 2.7 and a mode of 2, they were again very warm towards the *quiero...por favor* construction. The mean response was a 3.9. The mode response was 4. Twenty-six of the 34 students (77%) said that this form was either rather or very appropriate. So, this construction was again deemed the most appropriate of the five.

6.1.3.4 Summary

For the *deber* softeners, there is a continuing confusion among the students as to the appropriateness of the form *debiera*. While *debería* has previously been deemed largely appropriate on Questionnaire A and largely inappropriate on Questionnaire B, the responses for Questionnaire C mostly point towards confusion over this form. We continue to see disagreement among the students for the form *podiera*, as well. *Podría*, however, remains a favored response among the students, with 29 of 36 students rating it either rather appropriate or very appropriate. *Quisiera*, which had largely been answered on previous questionnaires with "I don't know", moves into a new position on the post-test with the majority of students agreeing that the form is either rather appropriate or very appropriate. *Quería* continues to be met with overwhelming disapproval. *Querría* has also moved positions—from a once-favored form to a general uncertainty about its appropriateness.

6.1.4 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up

Having now presented the results of the appropriateness evaluations from pre-test through post-test, We can now turn the discussion to the results from the follow-up questionnaire—completed by the students about three months after they returned home.

6.1.4.1 *Deber*

The first question for Part C of Questionnaire D focused on the verb *deber*. The scenario involved the student pretending that he is a doctor needing to write a letter to a patient. The patient has some irregular results and needs to consult with a specialist. The student is given five possible ways to recommend that the patient see a specialist. The student is asked to rate the appropriateness of the options. Two of the five use a pragmatic softener. Those as follows:

d) “*Debiera* visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.”

e) “*Debería* visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.”

Debiera, which the students have previously been unsure about, continues to be problematic with the students. The mean of all the responses was 3.1 and the mode was also 3.

For *debería*, we observe a continuation of the results from Questionnaire C. There was a mean score of 3.3 and a mode of 4. The students seem to be questioning the appropriateness of a form that they previously found to be fairly appropriate.

Now, I look at the four other options presented to the students. The first alternate response was the command, “*Vaya* a una especialista inmediatamente” (‘*Go to a specialist immediately*’). The mean response for this option was 2.7 and the mode was 4. These are higher results than those in the previous questionnaire. A closer look reveals that while 11 students thought the response was “rather” or “very” appropriate, 15 students marked either this option as a 1 or 2. This would account for the high mode but the low mean. There seems to be some tension as to whether this response is actually appropriate or not.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *debe*. The response read: “*Debe* visitar a una especialista inmediatamente” (‘*You should visit a specialist*’).

immediately). All but six students felt favorable toward this option, giving it a mean score of 4.0 and a mode of 4. This was by far the most preferred of the options.

The final form presented was simply a statement utilizing the conditional: “Yo visitaría a una especialista inmediatamente” (*I would go to a specialist immediately*). Students generally felt that this response was appropriate, responding with a mean score of 3.4 and a 4 for the mode.

6.1.4.2 Poder

The first question for Part C of Questionnaire D focused on the verb *poder*. The scenario involved the student getting lost abroad and needing to call his professor to get help. Since the student doesn't have any money, he will need to ask someone to lend him some pesos. The only person around is a grumpy, old man. The students are given five possible ways to ask the man for money. Two of the five use a pragmatic softener. Those are as follows:

a) “¿*Pudiera* prestarme unos pesos? Necesito hacer una llamada urgente.”

e) “¿*Podría* prestarme unos pesos? Necesito hacer una llamada urgente”

The students actually reacted much more favorably to *pudiera* as they had in the previous questionnaires. The mean score was 4.0 and the mode was 4. All but six students found this form to be “rather appropriate” or “very appropriate”.

They also responded very favorably to *podría* with a mean score of 4.0 and a mode of 5. This is the first time on any questionnaire that we have seen both softener options be so preferred.

The students also responded to three alternative responses that didn't involve pragmatic softeners. The students were given an affirmative command that read: “Présteme unos pesos. Necesito hacer una llamada urgente” (*Lend me some pesos. I need to make an urgent call*) The response was that this was not an appropriate request at all, giving it a mean score of 1.3 and a mode of 1.

Another alternative option presented in this question was a present indicative *puede*. The response read “¿Puede prestarme unos pesos? Necesito hacer una llamada urgente” (*Can you lend me some pesos? I need to make an urgent call*). The students generally responded favorably toward this option, giving it a mean score of 3.9 and a mode of 4. Even though these are high marks, it is important to note that both the pragmatic softeners scored even higher.

The final alternative answer was simply a statement: “Necesito unos pesos. Tengo que hacer una llamada urgente” (*I need some pesos. I have to make an urgent call*). The students generally felt that this statement was inappropriate for the scenario, giving it a mean score of 1.9 with a mode of 2.

6.1.4.3 *Querer*

The final question for Part C of Questionnaire D focused on the verb *querer*. The scenario involved the student being on the verge of getting married and not having heard back from many of the invitees, including the president of her fiancée’s company. Because it is so urgent that they have an exact head-count, the student writes a letter to the president asking if he has received the invitation and will be able to attend. Three of the four letter options incorporate a pragmatic softener. Those are:

- b) “Estimado Señor, *Quisiera* saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.”
- c) “Estimado Señor, *Quería* saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.”
- d) “Estimado Señor, *Querría* saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.”

The students gave very high marks for *quisiera*—the highest out of all four questionnaires. The mean was 4.1 and the mode was 5.

Querría, which the students previously disagreed on, also showed the highest marks yet, with a mean score of 3.8 and a mode score of 4.

For the final pragmatic softener, *quería*, we don’t see the clear disapproval that we have in previous questionnaires. Instead, there is a bit of disagreement as to how appropriate this form is. The mean value for this item was 2.8. The mode was 4.

So, of the three pragmatic softeners represented in this section, *quisiera* and *querría* strongly emerge as preferred responses and *quería* moves from a clear dispreferred response to a state of confusion.

The last option in this section simply involved the verb *quiero* ('I want'). It was: "Estimado Señor, Quiero saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda" (*'Dear sir, I want to know if you can attend our wedding'*). Students reacted mostly unfavorably to this option, giving it a mean score of 2.1 and a mode of 2.

6.1.4.4 Summary

In this final follow-up questionnaire, the students embrace the pragmatic softeners more than previously. *Quisiera*, *querría*, *podiera*, *podría*, and *debiera* have all become preferred responses. While *quería* and *debería* both had a mean score around 3 on this questionnaire, these previously dispreferred responses did have a mode score of 4—indicating a growing acceptance of these forms, as well.

6.2 Time as a Factor

As has been hinted at in Section 6.1, time plays a significant role in student perception of appropriateness of certain pragmatic softeners. In the following section, I will examine the specific impact that time has on appropriateness perception. I will also compare these trends to the trends that were observed in Chapters 4 and 5.

One aspect of appropriateness evaluations that makes a time analysis more difficult is the variation among the scenarios. For example, the *poder* question from Questionnaire A had to do with asking a stranger for directions. The comparable question in Questionnaire B involved the student asking for the governor of Mexico to pass the butter. Questionnaire C involves the student in a phone conversation with a receptionist. While each of these three situations would likely involve some degree of politeness, some scenarios might be perceived as necessitating more mitigation than others. Thus, if a change in appropriateness perception is observed over time toward a certain softener, the change could mean that the students are in fact changing their

perceptions over time. But, the change could also stem from the fact that the students believed a softener to be less appropriate *for that given context*. Thus, comparing the data to what we observed in Chapters 4 and 5, as well as to the native speaker baseline, will be crucial. In the places where production observations and appropriateness observations align, we can assume that time is influencing the responses. Where production observations and appropriateness observations are at odds, we can assume that context is influencing the responses more than time.

I will divide the following section into two parts:

- Changes that occurred during the immersion experience between the pre-test and post-test
- Changes that occurred between the end of the immersion experience and the follow-up questionnaire three months later

Within these two categories, I will discuss how these changes compare to those observed in the oral task and in the “real world” statements from the questionnaire.


6.2.1 Changes that occurred throughout the immersion experience

Table 6.3 below breaks down the data by verb (*poder*, *deber*, and *querer*) as produced in the pre-test, Questionnaire B, and the post-test. The table lists each verb and its corresponding data. “High” represents the percentage of responses that were either 4s or 5s. “Low” represents the percentage of responses that were either 1s or 2s. “I don’t know” represents the percentage of responses that were marked as a 3. Between the pre-test and post-test, the student attitudes towards *poder* pragmatic softeners remain fairly consistent. However, while the responses in the pre-test and post-test are similar, the Questionnaire B responses do show some change. The percentage of “high” responses dips down to 42%, the percentage of low responses goes up to 33% and the percentage of “I don’t know” also increases slightly. By the post-test, though, these levels have all returned to near where they were at the pre-test.

Similarly, *deber* pragmatic softeners attitudes also remain fairly consistent between the pre-test and post-test. We again see this strange change at Questionnaire B. The “high” percentage dips down to 35%, the “low” increases to 46%, and the “I don’t know” percentage actually decreases slightly. But, again, by the post-test, the percentages are almost identical to the pre-test.

There are very similar changes in the *querer* softeners, too. While the pre-test results and post-test results are very similar, the Questionnaire B results show some variation. The “high” percentage decreases and the “low” percentage decreases. The “I don’t know” percentage increases and then levels off at the post-test.

Table 6.3 Comparative look at appropriateness of pragmatic softeners (pre-test through post-test broken down by verb)

Pre-test	Quest. B	Post-test
		
Poder High=61% Low=22% Don't know=17%	Poder High=42% Low=33% Don't know=25%	Poder High=68% Low=21% Don't know=12%
Deber High=44% Low=30% Don't know=26%	Deber High=35% Low=46% Don't know=19%	Deber High=44% Low=25% Don't know=31%
Querer High=46% Low=34% Don't know=19%	Querer High=33% Low=43% Don't know=24%	Querer High=41% Low=37% Don't know=23%

To illustrate how consistent this pattern is, I have created several line maps that show the change occurring in all three verbs on Questionnaire B.

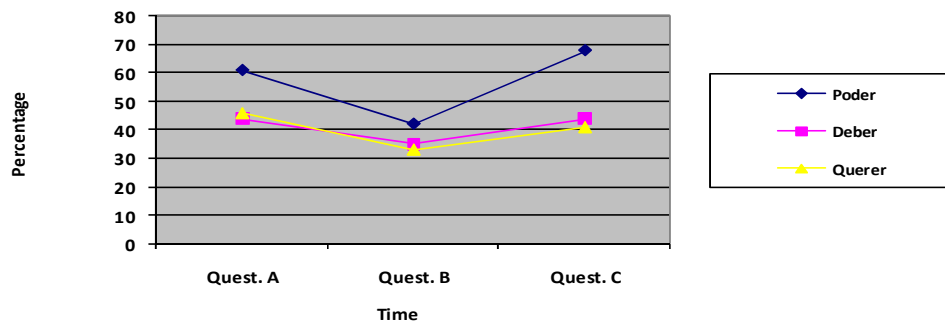


Figure 6.1 "High" percentages from pre-test to post-test

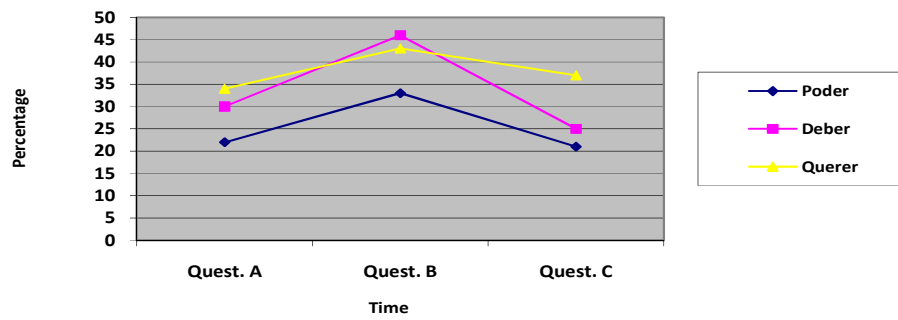


Figure 6.2 "Low" percentages from pre-test to post-test

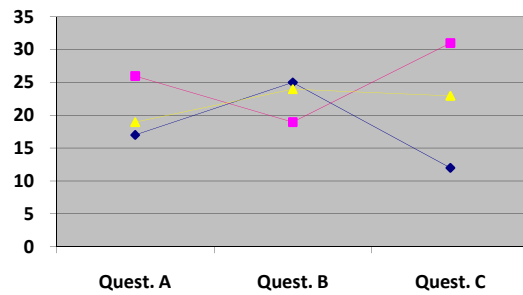


Figure 6.3 "I don't know" percentages from pre-test to post-test

It is clear from these figures above that the responses are following a trend that seems to extend to all three verbs. What is not clear is why this trend would be occurring.

If we take a look back at the trends that we observed in Chapters 4 and 5, we notice that there was not much change over time with the verbs *poder* or *deber*. So, the fact that the pre-test and post-test appropriateness evaluations results are similar would be in keeping with what we observed elsewhere. However, the production trends also indicated that the responses remained consistent throughout (with no significant changes on Questionnaire B), which clearly is not the case here. With the verb *querer*, we did see a significant change in production between the first and second questionnaires. However, unlike the changes seen here, those changes did not “disappear” in the post-test.

So, if we can't attribute this pattern to time, can we attribute it to context? Is it possible that the scenarios in Questionnaire B were perceived by the students as somehow being less “ripe” for softening than those in the pre-test or post-test? The scenarios in question are as follows:

- 1) Giving advice to an acquaintance about whether to quit a part-time job
- 2) Petitioning the governor of Mexico to pass the butter at the dinner table
- 3) Telling a dad's boss that you would like chocolate ice cream instead of vanilla

At first, it seems unlikely that context played much of a role. After all, an acquaintance, the governor of Mexico, and a boss are all interlocutors that would likely trigger some kind of mitigation. They are also very similar to the interlocutors presented in the other questionnaires, which included the President of the U.S., a grumpy stranger, the President of a fiancée's company, a receptionist, a group of university professors, etc. All include a high differential of power and distance in the relationship. Despite the similarity in interlocutors, it is possible that the students saw these scenarios as more “every day” and therefore not necessitating much mitigation.

It seems more likely, though, that the appropriateness evaluations have fallen victim to judgment fatigue. Judgment fatigue, or syntactic satiation, is similar to the phenomenon that occurs when a person repeats a word over and over until it starts sounding strange to the speaker. Likewise, in judgment fatigue, the subject is being inundated with so many similar sentences that they became less certain of their evaluations of those sentences. Their responses become less confident and less reliable. This phenomenon is also believed to be temporary in nature, which would explain why the students' appropriateness evaluations return to pre-test levels on the post-test (Stromswold, 1995?).

Keeping in mind that judgment fatigue may be factoring in to the appropriateness evaluations, We can take a closer look at the way each of the seven pragmatic softeners developed over time. In Table 6.4 below, I have broken down each of the three verbs into the seven pragmatic softener subcomponents.

Table 6.4 Comparative look at appropriateness of pragmatic softeners (pre-test through post-test broken down by pragmatic softener)


Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-test
		
<p>Pudiera High=61% Low=22% Don't know=17%</p> <p>Podría No information available</p>	<p>Pudiera High=50% Low=31% Don't know=19%</p> <p>Podría High=81% Low=14% Don't know=6%</p>	<p>Pudiera High=56% Low=32% Don't know=12%</p> <p>Podría High=79% Low=9% Don't know=12%</p>
<p>Debiera High=22% Low=39% Don't know=39%</p> <p>Debería High=67% Low=19% Don't know=14%</p>	<p>Debiera High=33% Low=42% Don't know=25%</p> <p>Debería High=36% Low=50% Don't know=14%</p>	<p>Debiera High=38% Low=26% Don't know=35%</p> <p>Debería High=50% Low=24% Don't know=26%</p>

Table 6.4—continued

<p>Quisiera High=36% Low=28% Don't know=36%</p>	<p>Quisiera High=33% Low=36% Don't know=31%</p>	<p>Quisiera High=52% Low=24% Don't know=24%</p>
<p>Querría High=58% Low=28% Don't know=14%</p>	<p>Querría High=53% Low=28% Don't know=19%</p>	<p>Querría High=50% Low=21% Don't know=30%</p>
<p>Quería High=44% Low=47% Don't know=8%</p>	<p>Quería High=14% Low=64% Don't know=22%</p>	<p>Quería High=21% Low=65% Don't know=15%</p>

Below, I list all of the pertinent changes that can be observed:

- 1) **Pudiera**—This form shows a pattern similar to the one observed above. The “high” answers decrease in Questionnaire B but return to pre-test levels on Questionnaire C. The “low” percentage also increases between the pre-test and Questionnaire B but levels off at the post-test. This pattern is likely due to judgment fatigue.
- 2) **Podría**—No significant changes can be seen in this form over time.
- 3) **Debiera**—This form shows significant change, especially in the “high” percentages. The pre-test “high” percentage was 22%. Questionnaire B was 33%. The post-test was 38%. We also see the “low” percentages decreasing. So, overall this form is being perceived as more appropriate over time.
- 4) **Debería**—This form starts out in the pre-test as a highly preferred response, then quickly changes to a highly dispreferred response in Questionnaire B. At the post-test, though, it is back to being a preferred response again. However, the post-test shows that 25% of the students answered “I don’t know” compared to the 14% in the pre-test and Questionnaire B. It is likely that this form was also adversely affected by judgment fatigue.
- 5) **Quisiera**—While no significant changes can be observed between the pre-test and Questionnaire B, we do see a significant increase (19%) in those who answered “high” on the post-test.

6) **Querría**—The most interesting change that we observe with this form is the increasing number of students responding with “I don’t know” as time goes on. In the pre-test, only 14% responded with “I don’t know” while 30% were not sure in the post-test.

7) **Quería**—We see a significant change in time both in the “high” and “low” responses. While 44% answered “high” in the pre-test, only 14% and 21% responded so in Questionnaire B and the post-test respectively. Likewise, 47% answered with a “low” appropriateness value on the pre-test. That number quickly increased, though, with 64-65% responding this way on the subsequent two questionnaires. So, the overall result is that *quería* is deemed less appropriate over time.

So, the changes occurring over time on the level of the individual softener on the whole do not seem to match the pattern of change we saw on the verb level. In fact, *pudiera* and *debería* were the only softeners that demonstrated the judgment fatigue pattern illustrated in Figure 6.1 and 6.2 above. Most of the other softeners either showed a) no significant change over time or b) a clear pattern of change that extended from pre-test to post-test.

We can compare the changes observed here to those observed in Chapters 4 and 5. In general, we see a lot of the same trends over time as we observed in pragmatic softener production. In the appropriateness evaluation part of the questionnaire we saw *quería* starting out as being ranked “very appropriate” and quickly becoming a dispreferred answer. This is the exact same pattern we saw in the production part of the questionnaire. *Quisiera* also follows similar patterns in production and appropriateness evaluations—being less preferred in the pre-test and becoming more preferred by the post-test. No significant changes were seen over time for *podría* either in production or in appropriateness evaluations, but this form is highly preferred on both arenas.

Interestingly, *pudiera*—which was not ever produced on the pre-test through post-test—is deemed highly appropriate of all three questionnaires. Likewise, *debería*, which was rarely produced, also shows an increasing preference over time with the appropriateness evaluations.


While *debería* showed a slight swell in production on Questionnaire B, it simultaneously showed a large decrease in acceptability on the appropriateness evaluations of Questionnaire C. So, in this case, what is happening in production and what is happening in appropriateness evaluations are at odds with each other. In the same way, the *querría* responses are also conflicting. While *querría* grows in popularity in production over time, the appropriateness evaluations indicate that students are increasingly unsure about this form. This may indicate that the context of the scenario is influencing students' perceptions on appropriateness.

6.2.2 Changes that occurred between the post-test and the follow-up

When we consider the changes that occurred between the immersion experience and the follow-up questionnaire, we see some significant trends in responses. In Table 6.5 below, I have broken down each of the three verbs into the seven pragmatic softener subcomponents. What is intriguing about this table is that if we look at the high scores at the post-test and those at the follow-up, we actually see an increasing preference for each of the seven softeners. The only softener that did not show an increasing preference from the post-test was *podría*, which received high scores from 79% of students on the post-test and only 77% on the follow-up. This difference is so insignificant it is hardly worth noting. On the other hand, the remaining six softeners show an increasing preference on the follow-up. Many of these differences are significant. For example, the “high” score for *podiera* increased by 24% between the post-test and the follow-up. The “high” score for *quisiera* increased by 18%. Thus, we can observe that the follow-up questionnaire indicates that in the three months following the students' immersion or study abroad experience, they became more favorable toward pragmatic softeners in general—especially the past subjunctive softeners. In some cases, such as *debería* and *quería*, these increases only caused the numbers to return to their pre-test levels. In other cases, such as with the past subjunctive softeners—*quisiera*, *debiera*, and *podiera*, the net gains from pre-test to follow-up are quite large. While it is unknown what factors might be influencing the students' favorability toward past

subjunctive softeners, the students' increasing preference for them throughout the study is a trend also observed in Chapter 4.

Table 6.5 Comparative look at appropriateness of pragmatic softeners
(pre-test through follow-up broken down by pragmatic softener)

Pre-Test	Quest. B	Post-test	Follow-up
			
<p>Pudiera High=61% Low=22% Don't know=17%</p> <p>Podría No information available</p>	<p>Pudiera High=50% Low=31% Don't know=19%</p> <p>Podría High=81% Low=14% Don't know=6%</p>	<p>Pudiera High=56% Low=32% Don't know=12%</p> <p>Podría High=79% Low=9% Don't know=12%</p>	<p>Pudiera High=80% Low=7% Don't know=13%</p> <p>Podría High=77% Low=13% Don't know=10%</p>
<p>Debiera High=22% Low=39% Don't know=39%</p> <p>Debería High=67% Low=19% Don't know=14%</p>	<p>Debiera High=33% Low=42% Don't know=25%</p> <p>Debería High=36% Low=50% Don't know=14%</p>	<p>Debiera High=38% Low=26% Don't know=35%</p> <p>Debería High=50% Low=24% Don't know=26%</p>	<p>Debiera High=43% Low=33% Don't know=23%</p> <p>Debería High=52% Low=24% Don't know=24%</p>
<p>Quisiera High=36% Low=28% Don't know=36%</p> <p>Querría High=58% Low=28% Don't know=14%</p> <p>Quería High=44% Low=47% Don't know=8%</p>	<p>Quisiera High=33% Low=36% Don't know=31%</p> <p>Querría High=53% Low=28% Don't know=19%</p> <p>Quería High=14% Low=64% Don't know=22%</p>	<p>Quisiera High=52% Low=24% Don't know=24%</p> <p>Querría High=50% Low=21% Don't know=30%</p> <p>Quería High=21% Low=65% Don't know=15%</p>	<p>Quisiera High=70% Low=10% Don't know=20%</p> <p>Querría High=63% Low=13% Don't know=23%</p> <p>Quería High=40% Low=40% Don't know=20%</p>

6.3 Context as a Factor

While major differences have been noted between the study abroad group and the immersion group in Parts A and B of the questionnaire, less variation is evident in Part C. Yet, some crucial differences exist between the two groups. In this section, I will analyze the data in light of the context in which the students were learning—study-abroad context and the U.S.-based immersion context. In Section 6.3.1, I address the pre-test results for each group to determine what differences were already in existence at the beginning of the study. Section 6.3.2 looks at Questionnaire B. Section 6.3.3 will address the post-test. Section 6.3.4 speaks to the differences in the follow-up questionnaire. In Section 6.3.5, I look at changes over time among the two groups.

6.3.1 *Pre-test*

The major thing to note about the pre-test results from the appropriateness evaluations is the high similarity of answers among the two groups. Unlike the production data where the pre-test results showed a large gap in skill between the two groups, the answers from the appropriateness evaluations indicate that the groups are entering into the study with more similarities than differences. This means that the playing field, so to speak, is more level on this task. Differences seen among the over time will be less attributable to differences in background and previous instruction and more attributable to the context in which they are interacting with the language.

Table 6.6 below lists the pre-test data for both the IM and SA students with the major observations about each pragmatic softener. The students are very similar in their treatment of *pudiera*, *quisiera*, and *querría*. Neither group seems very inclined toward *debiera*, although the majority of the SA students answered with “I don’t know”, while the majority of the IM students answered with a low score (1 or 2). Both groups tended to prefer *debería*. However, the SA group was more unanimous in their preference, with 86% of the students responding with a high score (4 or 5). While still a majority, only 55% of the IM students answered with a high score. The most

notable difference between the two groups was in their treatment of *quería*. One hundred percent of the IM group answered with either a low score or an “I don’t know”. The SA group was more divided among their answers, with 43% answering with a low score, 36% answering with a high score, and 21% answering with “I don’t know”.

Table 6.6 Pre-test, Part C, Answers subdivided by context

Softener	Immersion	Study Abroad	Observation
Debiera	L = 50% H = 18% IDK=32%	L =21% H = 29 IDK=50%	Majority of SA answered with IDK; Majority of IM answered with L
Debería	L = 32% H = 55% IDK=14%	L = 0% H = 86% IDK=14%	SA students more unanimous in their preference for <i>debería</i>
Pudiera	L =27% H = 60% IDK=14%	L = 14% H = 64% IDK=21%	Very similar
Podría	No data available	No data available	n/a
Quisiera	L = 27% H = 31% IDK=41%	L = 29% H = 29% IDK=42%	Very similar
Quería	L = 50% H = 0% IDK=50%	L = 43% H = 36% IDK=21%	No IM student answered with H; 36% of SA answered with H
Querría	L = 27% H = 64% IDK=9%	L = 29% H = 50% IDK=21%	Very similar

*L=Percentage of students answering with 1 or 2;
H= Percentage of students answering with 4 or 5;
IDK=Percentage of students answering with 3 (“I don’t know”)*

6.3.2 Questionnaire B

In Questionnaire B, we begin to see some important differences emerging among the two groups. Since the pre-test responses were so similar, we can assume that the differences in responses are attributable toward the language-intense context the students have been exposed to between the pre-test and Questionnaire B. Refer to Table 6.7 below.

The forms for which the students answer similarly in Questionnaire B were *podría* and *pudiera*. On *debería*, both groups have a higher low score percentage than high score percentage. However, the study abroad students seem to be more sure of themselves, with no student responding with “I don’t know”. Yet, with *querría*, the IM group was actually more certain

with only 9% responding with “I don’t know”. In general, though, the majority of both groups of students responded favorably to *querría*. For *debiera*, the IM students tend to disprefer this form more than the SA group. 46% of the IM group answered with a low score while only 36% of the SA group did. Likewise, the SA students tend to prefer this form more than the IM group. While only 27% of the IM group answered with a high score, 43% of the SA group did. The starkest contrasts are with the forms *quisiera* and *quería*. 86% of SA students answered with a low score or an “I don’t know” for *quisiera*. Yet, 45% of the IM students responded with a 4 or 5 on this item. So, apparently the IM students prefer *quisiera* more than the SA students. However, with *quería*, the IM students were unanimous in their dislike of this form—with 82% answering with a 1 or 2. The SA students were more divided, with the most students answering with “I don’t know”.

Table 6.7 Questionnaire B, Part C, Answers subdivided by context

Softener	Immersion	Study Abroad	Observation
Debiera	L = 46% H = 27% IDK=27%	L =36% H = 43% IDK=21%	IM tend to disprefer this form more than SA; SA tends to prefer this form more than IM
Debería	L = 45% H = 32% IDK=23%	L = 57% H = 43% IDK=0%	Both groups have higher L percentage than H; No SA student answered with IDK
Pudiera	L =36% H = 50% IDK=14%	L = 21% H = 50% IDK=29%	Very similar
Podría	L = 14% H = 82% IDK=5%	L = 14% H = 79% IDK=7%	Very similar
Quisiera	L = 32% H = 45% IDK=23%	L = 43% H = 14% IDK=43%	86% of SA students answer with L or IDK; 45% of IM answered with H
Quería	L = 82% H = 9% IDK=9%	L = 36% H = 21% IDK=43%	IM students very unanimous in their dislike of this form; SA students mostly unsure
Querría	L = 36% H = 55% IDK=9%	L = 14% H = 50% IDK=36%	SA students more unsure of this form than IM; similar H values

*L=Percentage of students answering with 1 or 2;
H= Percentage of students answering with 4 or 5;
IDK=Percentage of students answering with 3 (“I don’t know”)*

6.3.3 Post-test

The post-test results again indicate differences in perception of appropriateness between these two groups. In this questionnaire, the only form that had similar results for both groups was *quisiera*. One of the trends emerging here is that both groups respond similarly to a form, yet one of the groups is more extreme in their response. For example, both groups show a preference for *podría*. Yet, 95% of IM students responded with a high score while only 57% of SA chose a 4 or 5 for their answer. So, the tendency to see *podría* as appropriate is present in both groups—but to a higher extent with the IM students. In the same way, the IM students were largely unanimous in their dislike of *quería*, with 75% responding with a low score. While the majority of the SA group also responded with a low score (50%), the IM group was again more extreme in their responses. So, the IM group is responding with greater preference for *podría* and greater dislike for *quería*. The SA group concurs with these assessments, but in less extreme percentages.

In the case of *podiera*, the SA group actually has the more extreme score, with 64% of the group responding with a high score. While the majority (50%) of the IM group also rated this item with a 4 or 5, we do see almost as many of the IM students (40%) responding with a low score. The same goes for *debería*. While 71% of SA students gave this form a 4 or a 5, only 35% of the IM group gave this form a high score. Instead, the most common response among the IM group for *debería* was “I don’t know”.

For *querría*, both groups responded with 50% of students choosing a 4 or 5 score. But, of the students who did not respond with a 4 or 5, the SA students seem slightly more baffled by this form, with 36% responding with “I don’t know”. Only 25% of the IM students responded with a 3.

So, in general, we observe a trend in the post-test towards polarization of answers. The SA group highly prefers *podiera* and *debería*. The IM group highly prefers *podría* and is united in their dislike of *quería*. While the other group tends to concur with these results, they aren’t doing so to the same extent.

Table 6.8 Post-test, Part C, Answers subdivided by context

Softener	Immersion	Study Abroad	Observation
Debiera	L = 30% H = 35% IDK=35%	L =21% H = 43% IDK=36%	IM tend to disprefer this form more than SA; SA tends to prefer this form more than IM
Debería	L = 25% H = 35% IDK=40%	L = 21% H = 71% IDK=7%	SA group united in their preference of this form; IM more unsure
Pudiera	L =40% H = 50% IDK=10%	L = 21% H = 64% IDK=14%	Majority of SA students prefer this form; IM students fairly divided
Podría	L = 0% H = 95% IDK=5%	L = 21% H = 57% IDK=21%	IM group united in their extreme preference for this form; Majority of SA prefer this form but not to same extent
Quisiera	L = 20% H = 55% IDK=25%	L = 31% H = 46% IDK=23%	Very similar
Quería	L = 75% H = 15% IDK=10%	L = 50% H = 29% IDK=21%	IM students very unanimous in their dislike of this form; SA students dislike but not to same extreme
Querría	L = 25% H = 50% IDK=25%	L = 14% H = 50% IDK=36%	SA students more unsure of this form than IM; similar H values

*L=Percentage of students answering with 1 or 2;
H= Percentage of students answering with 4 or 5;
IDK=Percentage of students answering with 3 ('I don't know')*

6.3.4 Follow-Up

The follow-up results again indicate differences in perception of appropriateness between these two groups. In this questionnaire, no form had results that were similar for both groups. One of the trends that we saw in the previous questionnaire was that of both groups responding similarly to a form, with one of the groups being more extreme in their response. This is also the case in the follow-up questionnaire. For example, both groups show a preference for *podría*. Yet, 90% of IM students responded with a high score while only 54% of SA chose a 4 or 5 for their answer. So, the tendency to see *podría* as appropriate is present in both groups—but to a higher extent with the IM students. In the case of *pudiera*, the SA group actually has the more extreme score, with 100% of the group responding with a high score, while only 84% of the IM group rated

this item with a 4 or 5. The same goes for *querría*. While 73% of SA students gave this form a 4 or a 5, only 58% of the IM group gave this form a high score.

The students' treatment of *quisiera* is very curious. While 90% of the IM group prefers this form, only 36% of the SA students marked it as preferred. Instead, the prevalent answer for them was "I don't know". In the cases of *debiera*, *debería*, and *quería*, the IM students actually became more favorable toward these forms in the follow-up. While neither of these forms is preferred by the majority of IM students, they are less dispreferred than they have been in previous questionnaires. So, in general, the IM students tend to be marking all seven softeners more preferred than previously. Likewise, with two exceptions, the SA students are also responding more favorably to the pragmatic softeners than in previous questionnaires. The two exceptions to this are *debiera* and *quisiera*, which actually received lower marks than on previous questionnaires.

Another notable difference here is that the immersion students seem to be "leading the pack" in the movement toward increasing preference of past subjunctive softeners. As was mentioned above, the changes over time indicate that the students find past subjunctive softeners significantly more preferable on the follow-up than they do on the pre-test. When we look at the breakdown in Table 6.9, we find that it is actually the IM students who are finding the past subjunctive softeners more desirable.

Table 6.9 Follow-up, Part C, Answers subdivided by context

Softener	Immersion		Study Abroad	Observation	
Debiera	L = 21%	H = 45%	IDK=53%	L =54% H = 27% IDK=18%	IM students prefer or are unsure; SA students largely dislike this form
Debería	L = 28%	H = 39%	IDK=33%	L = 18% H = 73% IDK=9%	SA group united in their preference for this form; IM students fairly divided
Pudiera	L =5%	H = 84%	IDK=11%	L =0% H = 100% IDK=0%	SA students unanimous in their preference for this form; IM students also highly prefer
Podría	L = 5%	H = 90%	IDK=5%	L = 27% H = 54% IDK=18%	Majority of both groups prefer this form; IM group to higher extent
Quisiera	L = 5%	H = 90%	IDK=5%	L = 18% H = 36% IDK=45%	IM students united in their preference for this form; SA students more uncertain
Quería	L = 37%	H = 32%	IDK=32%	L = 45% H = 54% IDK=0%	Uncertainty in both groups
Querría	L = 16%	H = 58%	IDK=26%	L = 9% H = 73 % IDK=18%	The majority of students from both groups prefer this form; SA shows a stronger preference

*L=Percentage of students answering with 1 or 2;
H= Percentage of students answering with 4 or 5;
IDK=Percentage of students answering with 3 ("I don't know")*

6.3.5 Changes Over Time

Overall, there is not much difference in how the study abroad group and the immersion group perform over time on appropriateness evaluations. The only notable difference is the fact that it appears the study abroad group is mostly responsible for the judgment fatigue fluctuations we saw in Questionnaire B that were mentioned in Section 6.2 above. In this section, we noted that the trend in Questionnaire B was for the percentage of low responses to increase and the percentage of high responses to decrease, indicating a somewhat pessimistic view of softeners across the board. What was most peculiar about this trend is that the post-test responses tended to return to levels similar to what they were in the pre-test. By looking at the breakdown of responses below by context, instances that follow this trend are highlighted in yellow below in Table 6.10. For example, the SA students responded to *debiera* with 21% low on the pre-test, 36% low on Questionnaire B, and 21% again on the post-test. The immersion group, on the other hand, shows a steady decrease of low scores over time—from 50% to 46% to 30% respectively. For *podiera*, the study abroad students respond with 64% high on the pre-test, 50% on Questionnaire B, and 64% again on the post-test. While the immersion student answers also followed this pattern on some items (c.f. *debería* (high), *quería* (low), and *querría* (low)), the study abroad group does so much more frequently. This unequal distribution of answers does not support my previous proposal that perhaps the context of the questions themselves had a bearing on the pessimistic answers (i.e. that the linguistic scenarios of giving advice to an acquaintance, petitioning the governor of Mexico, or talking with your dad's boss were somehow less "ripe" for softening). The questionnaire was the same for both sets of students, yet the differences are largely attributable to the study abroad students only. This is further evidence that the strange patterns in Questionnaire B are likely due to judgment fatigue and not the scenarios themselves.

Table 6.10 Pre-test through post-test, Part C, Answers subdivided by context

	Pre-Test		Questionnaire B		Post-test	
	IM	SA	IM	SA	IM	SA
Debiera	L = 50% H = 18% IDK=32%	L =21% H = 29% IDK=50%	L = 46% H = 27% IDK=27%	L =36% H = 43% IDK=21%	L = 30% H = 35% IDK=35%	L =21% H = 43% IDK=36%
Debería	L = 32% H = 55% IDK=14%	L = 0% H = 86% IDK=14%	L = 45% H = 32% IDK=23%	L = 57% H = 43% IDK=0%	L = 25% H = 35% IDK=40%	L = 21% H = 71% IDK=7%
Pudiera	L =27% H = 60% IDK=14%	L = 14% H = 64% IDK=21%	L =36% H = 50% IDK=14%	L = 21% H = 50% IDK=29%	L =40% H = 50% IDK=10%	L = 21% H = 64% IDK=14%
Podría	No data available	No data available	L = 14% H = 82% IDK=5%	L = 14% H = 79% IDK=7%	L = 0% H = 95% IDK=5%	L = 21% H = 57% IDK=21%
Quisiera	L = 27% H = 31% IDK=41%	L = 29% H = 29% IDK=42%	L = 32% H = 45% IDK=23%	L = 43% H = 14% IDK=43%	L = 20% H = 55% IDK=25%	L = 31% H = 46% IDK=23%
Quería	L = 50% H = 0% IDK=50%	L = 43% H = 36% IDK=21%	L = 82% H = 9% IDK=9%	L = 36% H = 21% IDK=43%	L = 75% H = 15% IDK=10%	L = 50% H = 29% IDK=21%
Querría	L = 27% H = 64% IDK=9%	L = 29% H = 50% IDK=21%	L = 36% H = 55% IDK=9%	L = 14% H = 50% IDK=36%	L = 25% H = 50% IDK=25%	L = 14% H = 50% IDK=36%

6.4 Native Speaker Comparison

Unfortunately, the native speaker appropriateness evaluations did not produce very conclusive results. First, the low sample size (n=5) was problematic. However, these small numbers were not as problematic in either the “real world” scenarios section (see Chapter 4) or on the oral task (see Chapter 5) because the results in those areas were largely consistent. Conversely, in the appropriateness evaluations, the results did not indicate much unity of thought.

In most cases, the native speakers disagreed with each other about how appropriate each form was for each scenario. In fact, the native speakers were much more likely to agree on the (in)appropriateness of the forms that were not pragmatic softeners. For example, in the scenario involving eating dinner at the President of Mexico's house, the native speakers were very unified in their belief that *Necesito la mantequilla* ('I need the butter') and *Pásame la mantequilla*. ('Pass me the butter') were both highly inappropriate for the situation. Yet, in that same scenario, the pragmatic softener option *¿Pudiera pasarme la mantequilla?* ('Could you pass me the butter?') was anything but unanimous. Two native speakers ranked it as "highly appropriate". Another ranked it as "not appropriate". The other two ranked it as "a little appropriate." This lack of unity in responses was extremely common for all of the responses containing a pragmatic softener. In fact, only two of ten pragmatic softeners reflected a unified response. Upon closer examination of the data, we find that this lack of cohesiveness is not just attributable to one informant. All five native speakers disagree with the others at about the same frequency. This indicates that the task of evaluating appropriateness of pragmatic softeners is highly subjective and subject to personal interpretation. For learners of Spanish, this means that mastering such a skill will require a high degree of pragmatic finesse.

Consider Table 6.11 below. If we look at the first instance of *pudiera* on the questionnaire and the second instance, we notice that even the individual native speakers change their attitude toward the softener depending on the scenario. For example, the first instance of *pudiera* is from the scenario where the speaker is lost and needs directions. The speakers are asked to rate the appropriateness of *¿Pudiera ayudarme? Estoy perdido*. ('Could you help me? I'm lost). Native Speaker 1 (NS1) rated this response as a 5, or "highly appropriate". Yet, in the second scenario involving *pudiera* (the one mentioned above where the subject asks the President of Mexico to pass the butter), NS1 finds that *pudiera* response to be only "a little appropriate". Yet, on that same question, NS3 believes both instances of *pudiera* to be "highly appropriate". These types of fluctuations in responses even among the same speaker are common. This indicates that not

only do the speakers disagree with each other on how appropriate certain forms are, they also show more sensitivity to the scenarios themselves.

Table 6.11 Native speaker appropriateness evaluation responses for pragmatic softeners

	debiera	debería	pudiera	quisiera	quería	querría	pudiera	podría	debiera	debería
NS1	4	2	5	4	4	4	2	2	4	5
NS2	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	5	4	1
NS3	5	5	5	1	2	4	5	1	3	4
NS4	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5
NS5	2	5	2	5	2	2	2	4	2	4

It is important to note the native speakers' treatment of *quería* and *querría*. Neither of these forms were produced by the native speakers in the “real-world” scenario section or on the oral task. Their absence could lead us to believe that these forms are not seen as appropriate by native speakers. Yet, NS1 and NS4 both rank these forms as “rather appropriate”, giving them a similar rating as *quisiera*. NS2 ranks them both as “not appropriate” whatsoever. However, NS2 also ranks *quisiera* the same way. NS3 ranks *quería* as “a little appropriate” and *querría* as “rather appropriate”. NS5 ranks both as only “a little appropriate.” What these results point to is the fact that there are some situations where both *quería* and *querría* are deemed appropriate by some native speakers, even if they are not as frequently produced as the other softeners.

6.5 Summary

In Chapter 6, I concentrated on the student responses given for the appropriateness evaluation portion of the questionnaire, which appeared as Part C on the questionnaire. In Section 6.1, I gave an overview of all of the responses given on all four questionnaires. In Section 6.2, I recast this data looking specifically at how answers developed and changed over time. In 6.3, I compared the performance of the study abroad students to that of the immersion students. Below, I list the major take-away from each of these sections:

- We see some of the same trends in appropriateness evaluations that we saw in production of pragmatic softeners both on the oral task and on the questionnaire. These trends are:
 - *Quería* starting out as being ranked “very appropriate” and quickly becoming a dispreferred answer
 - *Quisiera* being less preferred in the pre-test and becoming more preferred by the post-test.
 - *Podría* being a highly favored/produced form
- We also see some significant differences between production and the appropriateness evaluations. These are:
 - While *querría* grows in popularity over time in production, the appropriateness evaluations indicate that students are increasingly unsure about this form.
 - While *debería* showed a slight swell in production in production on Questionnaire B, it simultaneously showed a large decrease in acceptability per the appropriateness evaluations.
- Interestingly, *podiera*—which was not ever produced on the pre- through the post-test—is deemed highly appropriate on all three questionnaires. Likewise, *debiera*, which was rarely produced by the students, also shows an increasing preference in the appropriateness evaluations. This reflects a more general trend in the appropriateness evaluations in which students began the study feeling very unsure about how appropriate the past subjunctive softeners (*podiera*, *debiera*, *quisiera*) would be in conversation but by the end of the study mostly responded that these forms were highly appropriate.
- A similar trend can be seen with the conditional softeners (*querría* and *debería*). Students entered the study feeling that these forms were largely appropriate but by the end of the study responded with more doubt about these forms. So, the students are becoming more confident in the past subjunctive forms and less confident in the conditional forms.

The major exception to this is *podría*, which the students consistently rate as highly appropriate.

- The Study Abroad and Immersion groups show much similarity among answers in the pre-test. This is actually the only place in the entire study where the Immersion group and Study Abroad group start out on equal footing. In Questionnaire B, we observe differences among their answers as they try to sort out how they feel about the various softeners. By the post-test, there is a similarity in trends, but typically one group is more extreme than the other. (For example, both groups show a preference for *podría*. But, 95% of IM students responded with a high score while only 57% of SA responded likewise.)
- I observed a strange trend over time in the appropriateness evaluations where the students responded with answers very similar in the pre-test and post-test but became overall very pessimistic towards softeners on Questionnaire B. Upon further investigation, we found that it was largely the study abroad students who were answering in this way. I ruled out differences in the scenarios themselves as being the reason for this trend. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that this trend is simply evidence of judgment fatigue.
- The native speakers had less unified responses to the appropriateness evaluations than did the students. They showed the least amount of cohesiveness when evaluating the pragmatic softeners. The speakers not only disagreed with each other on how appropriate certain forms are, they also show more sensitivity to the scenarios themselves (i.e. they didn't consistently mark certain forms a certain way). This indicates that the task of evaluating appropriateness of pragmatic softeners is highly subjective and subject to personal interpretation. For learners of Spanish, this means that mastering such a skill will require a high degree of pragmatic acuity.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS: PAST PRODUCTION AND PRAGMATIC SOFTENERS

In Chapters 4 through 7, I examined the learners' understanding of pragmatic softening both in production and in appropriateness evaluations. From this data, we can conclude that learners do use these forms and that they have well-defined attitudes and patterns of production. In this chapter I turn to the question of whether these interlanguage patterns can and should be placed on the acquisition sequence set forth by Anderson and Shirai (1996) in the Aspect Hypothesis. To answer this question, I examine the responses from the cloze test on the questionnaire—which was presented to the students as Part A. The purpose of this section of the questionnaire was to determine the students' understanding of the *deictic past*. I pair the students' production of the *deictic past* against the students' production of pragmatic softeners to see how the two inform each other. The cloze test consisted of a narrative that was given to the students to complete. They were asked to read the narrative and change the given infinitive verbs to the past tense—either the imperfect or preterit. The narrative centered on a Charlie Chaplin movie clip that the students had just finished watching, which was also intended for the oral task. The instructions to the students were as follows:

La historia siguiente es de la película de Charlie Chaplin que acabamos de mirar. Por favor, cambie los verbos en paréntesis al TIEMPO PASADO (PRETERITO O IMPERFECTO)
The following story is from the Charlie Chaplin film clip that we just watched. Please change the verbs in parenthesis to the PAST TENSE (PRETERIT or IMPERFECT).

The verbs included in the narrative were carefully selected to represent each of the four lexical-aspect categories: achievement, activity, accomplishment, and state. Hidden among the narrative were opportunities for the students to once again demonstrate their prescriptive knowledge of the conditional and past subjunctive. At least one verb in every narrative should have been

conjugated for past and for mood (conditional or subjunctive). I consider the answers to these prescriptive-knowledge questions in Chapter 8.

In the following chapter, I examine both the responses given in the narrative task. Section 7.1 is devoted entirely to the responses given in the narrative as they relate to lexical and grammatical aspect. Within this section, I pair the information gleaned from the cloze test with the observations previously discussed in Chapters 4 through 7. In Section 7.2, I examine whether time shaped the responses in any way. In Section 7.3, I subdivide the results into the two groups that comprised the study—the immersion group and the study-abroad group. I then determine if any significant differences exist between the two groups' performance on the cloze test.

7.1 Cloze Test Results

The verbs discussed in the following section are examined under two sets of lenses—grammatical aspect and lexical aspect. Grammatical aspect is represented by the preterit/imperfect dichotomy. I determine if a verb is preterit or imperfect simply by looking at the inflectional morphemes on the end of the verb. Verbs ending with *-aba* or *-ía* are imperfect verbs. Verbs ending in *-ó* or *-ió* are classified as preterit.

Classifying the lexical aspect of the verbs is more challenging since lexical aspect deals with the inherent meaning of the word and not simply its morphemes. As I mentioned previously in Chapter 2, I am using a diagnostic test developed by Salaberry (1999) to determine the lexical aspect of the Spanish verbs presented in the cloze test. Thus, in the sections below, the assessments that I have made on what type of lexical aspect a verb possesses have been born out of this diagnostic test. (See p. 43 in Chapter 2 for the complete diagnostic test.)

7.1.1 Responses broken down by questionnaire

7.1.1.1 Pre-test

In the pre-test, the students were asked to conjugate the following verbs to past tense: *Añadir, Colocar, Echar, Empezar, Encontrar, Entrar, Esperar, Estar, Estar, Haber, Llegar, Llegar,*

Llevar, Mezclar, Poner, Preparar, and Usar. Of these verbs, seven were achievement, four were activity, three were stative, and three were accomplishment. Their classifications are listed below.

Table 7.1 Pre-test, Part A, Verbs classified by lexical aspect

Achievement	Activity	State	Accomplishment
Añadir (<i>to add</i>) Colocar (<i>to place</i>) Empezar (<i>to start</i>) Encontrar (<i>to find</i>) Entrar (<i>to enter</i>) Llegar (<i>to arrive</i>) Llegar (<i>to arrive</i>)	Usar (<i>to use</i>) Mezclar (<i>to mix</i>) Llevar (<i>to carry</i>) Esperar (<i>to wait</i>)	Estar (<i>to be</i>) Estar (<i>to be</i>) Haber (<i>to have</i>)	Echar (<i>to throw</i>) Poner (<i>to set the table</i>) Preparar (<i>to prepare</i>)

Of these, there were 12 verbs that the majority of the students conjugated as preterit verbs. For the remaining five verbs, over half of the students conjugated them as imperfect verbs. (See the shaded boxes in Table 7.2 below.) Only two verbs (*mezclar* and *usar*) were conjugated the same way by all 36 students. If we take a closer look at this table, we see that the students largely favor the preterit for accomplishment verbs and activity verbs. They largely favor the imperfect for state verbs. The only place where there is a mixture of preferences is on the achievement verbs. While most of the achievement verbs do seem to be conjugated in the preterit, *entrar* and *llegar* actually had a majority of the students conjugate them as imperfect verbs. This is mostly to be expected with just one exception—the activity verbs. Recall the Spanish Past Category Sequence that I posited in Chapter 1:

deictic past (accomplishments-perfective → states-imperfective → achievement-perfective → activities-imperfective → accomplishments-imperfective → activities-perfective → achievements-imperfective → states-perfective) → **pragmatic softening**

It is expected that accomplishment verbs would be largely perfective (preterit), as this is the earliest stage of the acquisition of the deictic past. We would also expect the stative verbs to be largely imperfective since this is the second stage of acquisition. This is, in fact, the case. The fact that the majority of students went with a preterite conjugation for achievement verbs is also

not surprising, as this is the third stage of acquisition. According to the next stage of acquisition, we would expect to see most of the activity verbs to be conjugated as imperfective. Yet, just the opposite is occurring. The activity verbs are by-and-large conjugated as imperfect instead of preterit. This is an intriguing anomaly to the acquisition schema.

Table 7.2 Pre-test, Part A, Responses divided by grammatical aspect

		Preterit	Imperfect
Achievement	Añadir	94%	6%
	Colocar	83%	17%
	Empezar	94%	6%
	Encontrar	97%	3%
	Entrar	25%	75%
	Llegar	97%	3%
	Llegar	22%	78%
Activity	Llevar	97%	3%
	Mezclar	100%	0%
	Usar	100%	0%
	Esperar	53%	47%
State	Estar	25%	75%
	Estar	17%	81% ⁹
	Haber	19%	81%

⁹ The remaining 3% of answers were not in past tense.

Table 7.2—*continued*

Accomplish.	Poner	97%	3%
	Preparar	58%	42%
	Echar	78%	22%

We can look at these verbs on a more global level. Table 7.3 below lists each lexical category and the percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs therein. Again, these numbers align with the observations from above. The students seem to be largely in-sync with the acquisition schema with the exception of the activity verbs. In fact, we find that not only are the majority of students conjugating activity verbs in the preterit, that lexical category has the highest percentage of preterit verbs –88%!

According to Anderson and Shirai’s (1996) theory, we would expect to see a correlation between the final stages of acquisition and the use of pragmatic softeners. Below, I have highlighted in grey the corresponding percentage for each of the three final stages of acquisition. Obviously, the activity-perfective is already quite high. Achievement-imperfective and state-perfective both also have a decent showing. We want to watch these particular numbers over the subsequent questionnaires to see how they develop.

Table 7.3 Pre-test, Part A, Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category

	Preterit	Imperfect	Other
Achievement	73%	27%	0%
Activity	88%	12%	0%
Accomplishment	78%	22%	0%
State	20%	79.99%	.01%

Already some preliminary evidence exists that Anderson and Shirai’s theory has validity. We know from our observations of pragmatic softener production that the students used pragmatic

softeners on the pre-test. If Anderson and Shirai's theory holds true, the students who used pragmatic softeners on the pre-test and those who used achievement-imperfective and state-perfective (the last stages of the *deictic past*) on the cloze test should be one and the same.

In Table 7.3, 27% of the verbs used were achievement-imperfective verbs. Upon investigation of the data, we see that the participant numbers of those students who produced these forms were: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, and 43. These numbers represent 30 of the 36 students. This means that 83% of the students used at least one achievement-imperfective verb! In addition, nine students (3, 6, 8, 14, 20, 21, 22, 37, and 39), or 25%, used three or more achievement-imperfective verbs. These high numbers indicate that it is highly probable that the majority of the students have already reached the next-to-last stage of deictic past acquisition.

According to Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory, the students must first acquire the deictic past before they can acquire pragmatic softeners. This theory is supported by the data here. The participant numbers of those who produced pragmatic softeners on the pre-test were: 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 16, 18, 20, 22, 31, 35, 38, 39, and 41. Of these 17 students, only one of them (2) produced a softener without also producing an achievement-imperfective verb. This extremely high correlation between the two (94%) lends evidence to the Anderson and Shirai (1996) theory.

The results of the stative-perfective verbs were less clear. The participant numbers of those who used the stative-perfective in the pre-test were: 2, 9, 12, 17, 18, 30, 33, 34, 35, 37, 39, 40, and 42. Only five of these students (2, 9, 18, 35, and 39) also used a pragmatic softener. This is only 38%. However, despite the lower percentage of those who use produce a stative-perfective and a pragmatic softener, the fact that some students did use both confirms the theory. Since pragmatic softener usage is optional, we cannot assume that non-use means non-acquisition. Thus, the fact that 38% did use both supports the theory that stative-perfective must be acquired before pragmatic softeners.

What is problematic with the stative-perfective results that lends evidence against the theory is the students who produced a pragmatic softener but did not produce a stative-perfective. In this case, 12 students (1, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 20, 22, 31, 38, and 41) produced a pragmatic softener but not a stative-perfective. So, 71% of the students who produced a softener did not produce a stative-perfective. These numbers contradict the idea that a stative-perfective must be acquired first.

However, if we combine the final two stages of the Spanish Past Category Sequence—the stative-perfective results **and** the achievement-imperfective results, we see that every student who used a pragmatic softener also used either one or both of the late-stage deictic past verbs—the stative-perfective or the achievement-imperfective. Although the individual facts of the stative-perfective verbs contradict the theory, overall, this is fairly conclusive evidence that the theory is viable. We can move now to the other questionnaires and see if the data there also follows suit.

7.1.1.2 Questionnaire B

In Questionnaire B, the students were asked to conjugate the following verbs to past tense: *Colocar*, *Continuar*, *Decidir*, *Decir*, *Encontrar*, *Esperar*, *Estar*, *Estar*, *Hablar*, *Poner*, *Preparar*, *Romper*, *Salir*, *Tirar*, and *Usar*. Of these verbs, four were achievement, five were activity, two were stative, and four were accomplishment. Their classifications are listed below.

Table 7.4 Questionnaire B, Part A, Verbs classified by lexical aspect

Achievement	Activity	State	Accomplishment
<i>Colocar (to place)</i> <i>Encontrar (to find)</i> <i>Salir (to leave)</i> <i>Tirar (to throw)</i>	<i>Continuar (to continue)</i> <i>Usar (to use)</i> <i>Hablar (to talk)</i> <i>Esperar (to wait)</i> <i>Decir (to say)</i>	<i>Estar (to be)</i> <i>Estar (to be)</i>	<i>Decidir (to decide)</i> <i>Poner (to set the table)</i> <i>Preparar (to prepare)</i> <i>Romper (to break)</i>

Of these, there were 10 verbs that the majority of the students conjugated as preterit verbs. For the remaining five verbs, over half of the students conjugated them as imperfect verbs. (See the

shaded boxes in Table 7.5 below.) Only three verbs (*tirar*, *romper*, and *decir*) were conjugated the same way by all 36 students.

If we take a closer look at this table, we see that the students largely favor the preterit for accomplishment verbs and achievement verbs. They largely favor the imperfect for state verbs. The only place where there is a mixture of preferences is on the activity verbs. Only two of the activity verbs were conjugated by the majority in the preterit. The other three had a majority of the students conjugate them as imperfect verbs. This is exactly what we would expect according to the Spanish Past Category Sequence. We would expect that accomplishment verbs would be largely perfective (preterit), as this is the earliest stage of the acquisition of the deictic past. We would also expect the stative verbs to be largely imperfective since this is the second stage of acquisition. The fact that the majority of students went with a preterit conjugation for achievement verbs is also not surprising, as this is the third stage of acquisition. The fourth stage of deictic acquisition is activities-imperfective. Since we do see three out of five activity verbs being conjugated as imperfective, this is also in keeping with the acquisition theory.

Table 7.5 Questionnaire B, Part A, Responses divided by grammatical aspect

		Preterit	Imperfect
Achievement	Colocar	92%	8%
	Encontrar	78%	22%
	Salir	97%	3%
	Tirar	100%	0%
Activity	Continuar	25%	75%
	Hablar	6%	94%
	Decir	100%	0%

Table 7.5—continued

	Esperar	36%	64%
	Usar	89%	11%
State	Estar	22%	78%
	Estar	11%	89%
Accomplish.	Poner	78%	22%
	Preparar	53%	47%
	Decidir	97%	3%
	Romper	100%	0%

But, what is happening in the later stages of acquisition? Table 7.6 below lists each lexical category and the percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs therein. Again, these numbers align with the observations from above. The students seem to be largely in-sync with the acquisition schema. We also expect to see a correlation between the final stages of acquisition and use of pragmatic softeners. Below, I have highlighted in grey the corresponding percentage for each of the three final stages of acquisition. In this case, the activity-perfective is high (51%). Achievement-imperfective only has an 8% showing and state-perfective has 17%.

Table 7.6 Questionnaire B, Part A, Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category

	Preterit	Imperfect	Other
Achievement	92%	8%	0%
Activity	51%	49%	0%
Accomplishment	82%	18%	0%
State	17%	83%	0%

In Table 7.6 8% of the verbs used were achievement-imperfective verbs. Upon investigation of the data, we see that the participant numbers of those students were 7, 14, 20, 21, 30, 35, 38, 40, and 43. These numbers represent 9 of the 36 students, or 25%. These numbers are not nearly as high as the pre-test, which may indicate that the narrative itself was largely geared toward a preterit interpretation of these verbs.

Nevertheless, we would expect that those who did use the achievement-imperfect verb would more than likely also be producing pragmatic softeners. The participant numbers of those using pragmatic softeners in Questionnaire B were: #1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, and 41. This is 26 of the 36 students, or 72%. Yet, despite such a high number of students using pragmatic softeners, we find that 24 of the 26 students (92%) who produced a softener were not on the list of the students who used achievement-imperfective verbs. This means that the students were possibly producing a pragmatic softener without also producing an achievement-perfective—thus contradicting the acquisition sequence set forth in Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory.

If achievement-imperfective must be acquired before pragmatic softeners, then why do we observe so many students producing softeners without producing achievement-imperfective? Does this mean the theory is wrong? We must consider this data in light of what we saw in the pre-test, though, where 83% of the students used an achievement-imperfective. Even though the students did not necessarily use the achievement-imperfective on Questionnaire B, many of them did use it on the pre-test. The fact that students used the achievement-imperfective here less than in the pre-test is likely due to the narrative itself. The students were almost unanimous in their usage of *colocar*, *salir*, and *tirar* in the preterit. This means that the narrative may have set these verbs up for a preterit interpretation.

So, perhaps we can justify this apparent breach of the theory by pointing back to the many students who used an achievement-imperfective in the pre-test. We can look at the data from the stative-perfectives to see what light it can shed. After all, significantly less students used

a stative-perfective on the pre-test. The participant numbers of those who used the stative-perfective in the Questionnaire B were: 3, 12, 13, 18, 30, 33, 35, 37, and 40. Only three of these students (13, 18, and 37) also used a pragmatic softener. This is only 33%. Yet, the fact that the other 66% of the students did not use a pragmatic softener is not necessarily problematic for the theory.

Consider Figure 7.1 below. These are the potential combinations of responses. If the student uses stative-perfective but does not use a pragmatic softener, this combination is not problematic for the theory since pragmatic softener production is speaker-selected. Non-use does not necessarily mean non-acquisition. In the second scenario, the student does not use stative-perfective OR a pragmatic softener. This is also not problematic for the theory because if the stative-perfective hasn't been acquired, we wouldn't expect to see a pragmatic softener. The third scenario (student uses stative perfective AND a pragmatic softener) is also compatible with the theory. The only combination that is problematic for the theory is when the student uses a pragmatic softener but does not show evidence of acquisition of the stative-perfective.

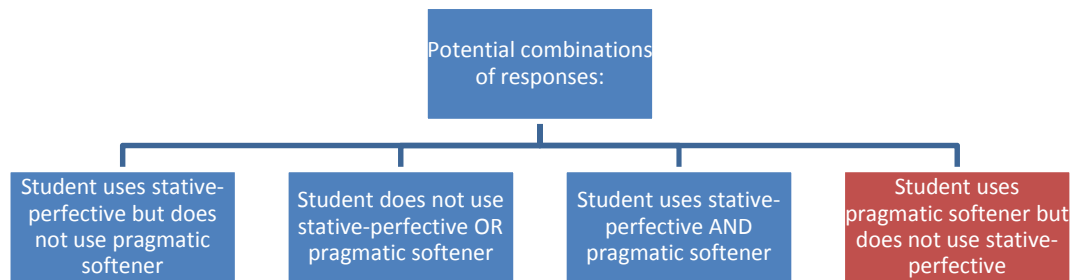


Figure 7.1 Potential combination of responses in Part A and B in the questionnaires

What is problematic and lends evidence against the theory is the students who produced a pragmatic softener but did not produce a stative-perfective. In Questionnaire B, we have 26 students responding with a pragmatic softener but only 3 of the 26 (12%) used a stative-

perfective verb. Even if we combine the students who either used a stative-perfective OR used an achievement-perfective, we still see 18 of 26 students producing a softener without also producing a stative-perfective or achievement-imperfective. The fact that 69% of the students using softeners do not produce these prerequisite forms contradicts both 1) the evidence for the theory that we saw in the pre-test and 2) the Spanish Past Category Sequence in general.

We must return to the pre-test to decide why we are seeing these results in Questionnaire B. Of the 18 students who produced a softener in Questionnaire B but no prerequisite form, all 26 of them produced either an achievement-imperfective or a stative-perfective on the pre-test. So, even though the students did not produce the prerequisite form **on this particular questionnaire**, they did use it previously. This indicates that the prerequisite forms were already acquired, and thus the pragmatic softener usage is not occurring out of sequence.

7.1.1.3 Post-Test

In the post-test (Questionnaire C), the students were asked to conjugate the following verbs to past tense: *Cortar, Crear, Cuidar, Darse cuenta de, Decidir, Doblar, Encontrar, Estar, Haber, Llorar, Recoger, Saber, Seguir, and Sentarse*. Of these verbs, four were achievement, four were activity, three were stative, and three were accomplishment. Their classifications are listed below in 7.7.

Table 7.7 Post-test, Part A, Verbs classified by lexical aspect

Achievement	Activity	State	Accomplishment
Darse cuenta de (to realize) Encontrar (to find) Recoger (to gather) Sentarse (to sit down)	Seguir (to continue) Cortar (to cut) Doblar (to fold) Llorar (to cry)	Estar (to be) Saber (to know) Haber (to have)	Decidir (to decide) Crear (to create) Cuidar (to care for)

Of these, there were six verbs that the majority of the students conjugated as preterit verbs. For the remaining eight verbs, over half of the students conjugated them as imperfect verbs. (See the shaded boxes in Table 7.8 below.) No verbs were conjugated the same way by all 36 students.

If we take a closer look at this table, we see much more variety among the answers. The students continue to largely favor the imperfect for state verbs. But, we see a mixture of preferences with the activity verbs, the accomplishment verbs, and achievement verbs.

This is exactly what we would expect as the students become more proficient in the deictic past. They veer away from the “routine” of the earlier stages of acquisition and begin to get more comfortable with the later stages—activities-imperfective, accomplishments-imperfective, activities-perfective, achievements-imperfective, and states-perfective.

Table 7.8 Post-test, Part A, Responses divided by grammatical aspect

		Preterit	Imperfect
Achievement	Darse cuenta	88%	12%
	Encontrar	97%	3%
	Recoger	6%	94%
	Sentarse	59%	41%
Activity	Seguir	26%	74%
	Cortar	6%	94%
	Doblar	94%	6%
	Llorar	18%	82%
State	Estar	6%	94%
	Saber	18%	82%
	Haber	24%	74% ¹⁰

¹⁰ The remaining 3% of answers were not in the past tense

Table 7.8—*continued*

Accomplish.	Cuidar	35%	62% ¹¹
	Crear	91%	9%
	Decidir	97%	3%

Table 7.9 below lists each lexical category and the percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs therein. Again, these numbers align with the observations from above. The students seem to be largely in-sync with the acquisition schema and showing more competence in the later stages of deictic past acquisition.

We again expect to see a correlation between the final stages of acquisition and use of pragmatic softeners. Once more, I have highlighted in grey the corresponding percentage for each of the three final stages of acquisition. In this case, the activity-perfective is high (58%). Achievement-imperfective has a 37% showing and state-perfective has 16%.

Table 7.9 Post-test, Part A, Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category

	Preterit	Imperfect	Other
Achievement	63%	37%	0%
Activity	58%	42%	0%
Accomplishment	75%	25%	0%
State	16%	84%	0%

In Table 7.9 37% of the verbs used were achievement-imperfective verbs. Upon investigation of the data, we discover that the participant numbers of those students were: 3, 5, 6, 8, 17, 20, 22, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 40, 42, and 43. These numbers represent 15 of the 34 students, or 44%. This number is still not nearly as high as the pre-test, but is higher than Questionnaire B.

¹¹ The remaining 3% of answers were not in the past tense

We would expect that those who did use the achievement-imperfect verb might also produce pragmatic softeners. The participant numbers of those using pragmatic softeners in Questionnaire C were: 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 34, 36, 39, 40, and 41. This is 20 of the 36 students, or 72%. Yet, despite such a high number of students using pragmatic softeners, only seven students of the 15 that used achievement-imperfective verbs also used pragmatic softeners. Again, the problem here is not the students that used an achievement-imperfective but did not use a softener. The potential problem is the number of students that used softeners that did not produce an achievement-imperfective verb, as mentioned in Figure 7.1.

Let us now consider the results of the stative-perfective verbs. The participant numbers of those who used the stative-perfective in the post-test were: 1, 2, 12, 16, 20, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 41, 42, and 43. This is 14 of 34 students, or 41%. Eight of these students (1, 12, 16, 20, 21, 31, 40, and 41.) also used a pragmatic softener, or 61%.

So, if we look at the statistics from both the stative-perfective and the achievement-imperfective, we see that quite a large percentage did use these forms, 41% and 44%, respectively. Many of them went on to use a pragmatic softener. What's even more telling is that only six students (4, 7, 9, 19, 34, and 39) that used a pragmatic softener did not use either the achievement-imperfective or a stative-perfective verb. What's more, if we return to Questionnaires A and B, we find that five of those 6 students did previously use either the achievement-imperfective and the stative-perfective (or both). The only student who used a pragmatic softener without also using a prerequisite form is #19. While that amount is not entirely insignificant, it is outweighed by the large amount of evidence that Anderson and Shirai's theory (1996) has validity—that the students must first acquire the deictic past before they can produce pragmatic softeners.

7.1.1.4 Follow-Up

Given the evidence seen in the pre-test through post-test, we would expect for the follow-up questionnaire to again confirm Anderson and Shirai's theory. In the follow-up questionnaire (Questionnaire D), the students were asked to conjugate the following verbs to past tense: *sentarse, beber, mirar, sonreir, empezar, probar, hacer, estar, ladrar, pensar, ser, decidir, hacer, saber, pasar, tragar, tomar, and leer*. Of these seventeen verbs, three were achievement, eight were activity, four were stative, and two were accomplishment. Their classifications are listed below in Table 7.10.

Table 7.10 Follow-up, Part A, Verbs classified by lexical aspect

Achievement	Activity	State	Accomplishment
<i>Empezar (to start)</i> <i>Tragar (to swallow)</i> <i>Sentarse (to sit down)</i>	<i>Sonreir (to smile)</i> <i>Mirar (to look)</i> <i>Beber (to drink)</i> <i>Probar (to try)</i> <i>Ladrar (to bark)</i> <i>Leer (to read)</i> <i>Hacer (to make)</i> <i>Hacer (to make)</i>	<i>Estar (to be)</i> <i>Saber (to know)</i> <i>Pensar (to have)</i> <i>Ser (to be)</i>	<i>Decidir (to decide)</i> <i>Tomar (to take)</i>

There were 15 verbs that the majority of the students conjugated as preterit verbs. Only three verbs were conjugated by the majority of students as imperfect verbs. (See the shaded boxes in Table 7.11 below.) No verb was conjugated the same way by all 30 students.

If we take a closer look at this table, we see some variety among the answers. The students have largely favored the imperfect for state verbs in the previous questionnaires and continue to do so in the follow-up questionnaire. We also see the majority of students answering both accomplishments and achievements with the preterit. Activity verbs also are largely conjugated with the preterit.

Table 7.11 Follow-up, Part A, Responses divided by grammatical aspect

		Preterit	Imperfect
Achievement	Empezar	68%	32%
	Tragar	80%	20%
	Sentarse	66%	33%
Activity	Sonreir	90%	10%
	Mirar	60%	40%
	Beber	63%	37%
	Probar	87%	13%
	Ladrar	90%	10%
	Hacer	77% ¹²	20%
	Hacer	74% ¹³	23%
	Leer	77%	23%
State	Estar	7%	93%
	Saber	23%	77%
	Pensar	47%	53%
	Ser	33% ¹⁴	57%
Accoom.	Tomar	79%	20%
	Decidir	97%	3%

Table 7.12 below lists each lexical category and the percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs therein. Most notable is the surge in both activity-perfective and stative-perfective. We

¹² One student answered with the present tense, thus the total does not add up to 100%

¹³ One student answered with the present tense, thus the total does not add up to 100%

¹⁴ Three students answered with present tense verbs, thus the total does not add up to 100%

again expect to see a correlation between the final stages of acquisition and use of pragmatic softeners. I have highlighted in grey the corresponding percentage for each of the three final stages of acquisition. In this case, the activity-perfective is high (77%). Achievement-imperfective has a 28% showing and state-perfective has 30%.

Table 7.12 Follow-up, Part A, Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category

	Preterit	Imperfect	Other
Achievement	72%	28%	0%
Activity	77.99%	22%	.01%
Accomplishment	92%	8%	0%
State	29.97%	70%	.03%

In Table 7.12, 28% of the verbs used were achievement-imperfective verbs. Upon investigation of the data, we find that the participant numbers of those students were 1, 3, 6, 9, 16, 17, 19, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, and 40. These numbers represent 18 of the 30 students, or 60%.

Now, we can check to see if these students also were those who used pragmatic softeners in the follow-up. The participant numbers of those producing pragmatic softeners in Questionnaire D were: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 30, 31, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, and 41. This is 24 of the 30 students, or 80%. So, if we compare these numbers to those who produced an achievement-imperfective verb, we find that 16 of the 24 students (67%) went on to produce a pragmatic softener.

Now, consider the results of the stative-perfective verbs. The participant numbers of those who used the stative-perfective in the follow-up were: 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, and 41. This is 22 of 30 students, or 73%. Seventeen of these students (1, 2, 7, 9, 12, 13, 17, 18, 20, 22, 30, 33, 35, 36, 38, 39, and 41) also used a pragmatic softener, or 72%.

If we look at the statistics from both the stative-perfective and the achievement-imperfective, we see that quite a large percentage did use these forms, 72% and 60%, respectively. Many of them went on to use a pragmatic softener. What's even more telling is that there were only two students (4 and 8) that used a pragmatic softener that did not use either the achievement-imperfective or a stative-perfective verb. What's more is that these three students DID use one of these forms in at least two of the previous questionnaires. So, their non-use of these forms is not necessarily tied to non-acquisition since they have shown previously that they know and understand when to use these forms. Thus, we can positively assert that the cloze test portion of the questionnaire has provided evidence that the Spanish Past Category Sequence is an accurate depiction of acquisition.

7.2 Time as a Factor

7.2.1 Changes that occurred throughout the immersion experience

In the following section, we re-visit the responses given in the cloze test part of the questionnaire, looking at them through the lens of time. The question at hand is whether there is any evidence of learning or acquisition throughout the immersion/study abroad experience. Observe 7.13 below. In this table, we see the percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category for the pre-test, Questionnaire B, and the post-test.

Table 7.13 Pre-test through post-test, Part A,
Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category

	Pre-test			Quest. B			Post-Test		
	Pret	Imperfect	Other	Pret	Imperfect	Other	Pret	Imperfect	Other
Achieve	73%	27%	0%	92%	8%	0%	63%	37%	0%
Activity	88%	12%	0%	51%	49%	0%	58%	42%	0%
Accomp	78%	22%	0%	82%	18%	0%	75%	25%	0%
State	20%	79%	1%	17%	83%	0%	16%	84%	0%

For the achievement verbs, we notice that the majority of student answers are with the preterit on all three questionnaires. By the high percentages in the preterit, we can tell that the students have a good grasp on achievement-perfectives. But, what about achievement-imperfective? The total amount of achievement-perfectives starts at 27%, drops to 8%, and then increases dramatically to 37%. Is this evidence of learning?

If we take a closer look at the pre-test amount of 27%, we see that this number represents the percentage of all of the achievement verbs that were imperfective. If we break this number down into individual verbs (see Table 7.14 below), we see that this number is really only stemming from two verbs—*entrar* and *llegar*. On those two verbs 75% and 78% of students responded with an achievement-imperfective, respectively. This indicates that at least 75% of the students entered into the study already capable of producing an achievement-imperfective. More than likely, the fluctuation between the pre-test and Questionnaire B is a by-product of differences between the narratives (i.e. the narrative itself had less opportunities to produce achievement-imperfective).

The increase to 37% on the post-test, though, may be a sign of acquisition. In Table 7.14 below, we see that on the verb *recoger*, 94% of the students responded with the imperfect form. Since the highest percentage of responses on the pre-test was 78%, this may indicate that some acquisition is occurring for students. In order for this to be true, this would mean that some

students who had previously not used the achievement-imperfective would have used it on the post-test.

Table 7.14 Achievement verb responses on the pre-test and post-test

		Pre-Test		Post-Test			
		Preterit	Imperfect			Preterit	Imperfect
Achievement	Añadir	94%	6%	Achievement	Darse cuenta	88%	12%
	Colocar	83%	17%		Encontrar	97%	3%
	Empezar	94%	6%		Recoger	6%	94%
	Encontrar	97%	3%		Sentarse	59%	41%
	Entrar	25%	75%				
	Llegar	97%	3%				
	Llegar	22%	78%				

If we take a look at the individual student responses, we see that five participants did not use an achievement-imperfective on either the pre-test or Questionnaire B. These student numbers are 1, 2, 18, 34, and 42. However, when we look at the post-test results, we find that four of these five did not use an achievement-imperfective on the post-test either. So, it seems that those who entered into the study using the achievement-imperfective continued to use it. Those who did not use it on the pre-test continued in their non-use through the post-test. The fluctuations in numbers over time are more than likely attributable to variations between the narratives.

Returning to Table 7.13 above, we now look at the activity verbs over time. We notice that the majority of students responded with the preterit on the pre-test, Questionnaire B, and the post-test. However, some variation can be seen in the activity-imperfective numbers. The

percentage starts low at 12%, jumps to 49% in Questionnaire B, and remains high (42%) on the post-test. Could this be evidence of acquisition?

More than likely, it's not. According to the Spanish Past Category Sequence, activity-perfective is one of the last stages of the deictic past to be acquired. Activity-imperfective—where we are seeing the fluctuation—should actually have been acquired much earlier. When we look closer at the individual activity verbs, we see that the students use both activity-imperfective and activity-perfective proficiently. On the post-test, 94% of the students responding the *doblar* (an activity verb) in the preterit form. On the same questionnaire, 94% of the students respond to *cortar* (another activity verb) in the imperfective form. Again, the fluctuation between the questionnaires is likely just a consequence of differences in the narratives.

In Table 7.13 above, we see that accomplishment verbs yield almost the same results on every questionnaire. Around 80% of the accomplishment verbs that students produce are preterit. The other 20% is imperfect. So, time does not appear to be influencing those verbs either.

Lastly, we can look at the stative verbs. We also see very little change over time with the stative verbs. On all three questionnaires, around 80% of the stative verbs that students produce are imperfect. The other 20% are in the preterit.

It is significant that we saw little change over time in respect to the student responses. These results indicate that the majority of students came into the study already having acquired all the subcomponents of the deictic past. They can proficiently use each of these subcomponents. According to the theory, then, these students are ripe candidates for using pragmatic softeners. Given the large amount of pragmatic softeners that we observed in Part B of the questionnaire, Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory continues to be confirmed.

7.2.2 Changes that occurred between the end of the immersion experience and the follow-up

In this section, we observe changes that occurred between the end of the immersion experience the follow-up questionnaire. In 7.15 below, we observe that not much changes between the post-test and the follow-up for achievement, activity, and accomplishment verbs. The

numbers continue to fluctuate somewhat, but again this fluctuation is more than likely due to slight difference between the narratives themselves.

The only fluctuation worth noting is the increase in stative-perfective verbs. Since this is the final stage of deictic past acquisition, it is possible that this increase is due to some of the less advanced students finally acquiring this form. Upon further investigation, we see that 13 students (36%) never used a stative-perfective in the pre-test, Questionnaire B, or the post-test. The students were #s 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 19, 22, 32, 36, and 38. On the follow-up, though, seven of these students (1, 7, 10, 11, 32, 36, and 38) did use a stative-perfective. This may indicate some acquisition has occurred for these particular students. It would also account for the slight rise in frequency for stative-perfective verbs between the post-test and the follow-up.

Table 7.15 Post-test through follow-up, Part A, Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category

	Pre-test			Quest. B			Post-Test			Follow-Up		
	P	I	O	P	I	O	P	I	O	P	I	O
Ach	73%	27%	0%	92%	8%	0%	63%	37%	0%	72%	28%	0%
Act	88%	12%	0%	51%	49%	0%	58%	42%	0%	77.99%	22%	.01%
Acc	78%	22%	0%	82%	18%	0%	75%	25%	0%	92%	8%	0%
State	20%	79%	1%	17%	83%	0%	16%	84%	0%	29.97%	70%	.03%

7.3 Context as a Factor

To round out the analysis of the cloze test, I take a look at the performance by the study abroad students compared to the immersion students.

In the pre-test, we see that both groups of students are beginning the study with comparable responses. Although the immersion group is slightly more likely to use achievement-imperfective verbs, both groups perform similarly on the achievement verbs. Likewise, the groups perform at almost the exact same level on the accomplishment verbs. The groups' responses to

the stative verbs are also comparable, with the exception of the higher percentage of state-perfective on the second *estar* (29%). However, this difference is balanced out by the fact that the immersion group had a higher percentage of state-perfective on *haber* (41%). So, over all, the groups' performance on statives is equal.

The only real difference that can be observed is in the activity verbs on the verb *esperar*. The groups performed exactly opposite to each other. While 64% of the immersion group answered with the preterit form, 64% of the study-abroad group responded with the imperfect form. With the other activity verbs, though, the groups were in sync, preferring the preterit over the imperfect. Thus, the pre-test indicates that no significant differences existed between the study-abroad group and the immersion group.

Table 7.16 Pre-test, Part A responses divided by grammatical aspect; Subdivided by context

		Immersion		Study Abroad	
		Preterit	Imperfect	Preterit	Imperfect
Achievement	Añadir	100%	0%	86%	14%
	Colocar	73%	27%	100%	0%
	Empezar	100%	0%	86%	14%
	Encontrar	95%	5%	100%	0%
	Entrar	19%	81%	26%	64%
	Llegar	95%	5%	100%	0%
	Llegar	41%	59%	26%	64%
Activity	Llevar	100%	0%	93%	7%
	Mezclar	100%	0%	100%	0%
	Usar	100%	0%	100%	0%
	Esperar	64%	26%	26%	64%

Table 7.16—continued

State	Estar	41%	59%	43%	57%
	Estar	9%	91%	29% ¹⁵	64%
	Haber	41%	59%	29%	71%
Accomplish.	Poner	95%	5%	100%	0%
	Preparar	59%	41%	57%	43%
	Echar	73%	27%	86%	14%

Now that we know that the groups are starting on similar playing fields, let us examine the rest of the verbs by category instead of by individual verb. In Table 7.17 below, the Questionnaire B results show that once again the groups are nearly aligned in every category except the activity verbs. The immersion group responded with 60% of the activity verbs conjugated as preterit. The study-abroad group answered with 76% of the activity verbs conjugated as imperfect. This represents a distinct difference in thinking about whether the activity verbs should be imperfect or preterit. By the post-test, though, this difference has almost been entirely eradicated, with the groups meeting near the middle. The immersion group responded with 55%; the study-abroad group with 60%. In fact, the post-test results for all four categories show no differences worth noting.

¹⁵ Remaining 7% was neither preterit nor imperfect

Table 7.17 Pre-test through post-test, Part A, Percentage of preterit and imperfect verbs in each lexical category; Subdivided by context

	Pre-Test						Questionnaire B						Post-Test					
	Immersion			Study Abroad			Immersion			Study Abroad			Immersion			Study Abroad		
	P	I	O	P	I	O	P	I	O	P	I	O	P	I	O	P	I	O
Ach	71 %	29 %	0 %	78 %	22 %	0 %	94 %	6 %	0 %	88 %	12 %	0 %	57 %	43 %	0 %	66 %	34 %	0 %
Act	91 %	9 %	0 %	82 %	18 %	0 %	60 %	40 %	0 %	24 %	76 %	0 %	55 %	45 %	0 %	60 %	40 %	0 %
Acc	76 %	24 %	0 %	81 %	19 %	0 %	89 %	11 %	0 %	71 %	29 %	0 %	69 %	31 %	0 %	78 %	22 %	0 %
Sta	12 %	88 %	0 %	34 %	64 %	2 %	14 %	86 %	0 %	21 %	79 %	2 %	24 %	76 %	0 %	10 %	88 %	2 %

For the activity verbs of Questionnaire B to be the only significant difference to be observed between the groups again verifies that not only did the groups enter the study on the same level, they remained on that level throughout the study. This actually makes the results of Part B more intriguing, since the immersion group tended to outperform the study-abroad group in producing pragmatic softeners. But, as is evident in this section, those differences in pragmatic softener production are not attributable to a difference in the groups' knowledge of the PAST category or in their production of PAST category verbs.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In Chapter 7, I concentrated on the question of whether any empirical evidence exists for placing pragmatic softeners on acquisitional sequence provided by Anderson and Shirai (1996) as part of the Aspect Hypothesis. To determine this, I examined the data from Part A of the questionnaire—the cloze test. Section 7.1 of this chapter looked at the responses given in the narrative. Within this section, I not only laid out the data, but also compared the information gleaned from the cloze tests with the observations previously made about the production of

pragmatic softeners. I found preliminary evidence that pragmatic softeners are sequentially acquired after the *deictic past*. In Section 7.2, I examined whether time shaped the responses in any way and discovered that, ultimately, it did not. In Section 7.3, I subdivided the results into the two groups that comprised the study—the immersion group and the study-abroad group. I then determined that no significant differences existed between the two groups' performance on Part A of the questionnaire. I summarize the major “take-away” from this section below:

- Even on the pre-test, there is evidence that the students have already acquired the late stages of the deictic past. In fact, 83% of the students used at least one achievement-imperfective verb on the pre-test. Thirty-three percent of students used a stative-imperfective verb on the pre-test. By the post-test, 64% of students have used a stative-imperfective verb on a questionnaire.
- Many of the students who used an achievement-imperfective or stative-perfective verb on Part A of the questionnaire also produced a pragmatic softener in Part B of the questionnaire. Conversely, the number of students who used a pragmatic softener without producing a stative-perfective or achievement-imperfective was relatively low. This supports Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory that the deictic past (the final stages being achievement-imperfective and stative-perfective) must be acquired before the students can acquire pragmatic softeners.
- The only evidence that contradicts the theory is the fact that a few students who did produce a softener did not produce an achievement-imperfective or a stative-perfective. This number is low compared to the overwhelming evidence in favor of the theory. When this occurs in the later questionnaires, we find that even though the student did not produce an achievement-imperfective or state-perfective on the specific questionnaire under consideration, they often did produce these forms on previous questionnaires.
- In regards to changes over time, we saw little change in the student responses. These results indicate that the majority of students came into the study already having acquired

all the subcomponents of the deictic past. They could already proficiently use each of these subcomponents. According to the theory, then, these students are ripe candidates for using pragmatic softeners. Given the large amount of pragmatic softeners that we observed in Part B of the questionnaire, Anderson and Shirai's (1996) theory is re-affirmed.

- No significant differences could be observed between the study-abroad group and the immersion group, either. This not only verifies that the groups entered the study on the same level, but they also remained on similar levels throughout the study. This actually makes the results of Part B more intriguing, since the immersion group tended to outperform the study-abroad group in producing pragmatic softeners. But, we must attribute those differences to something other than the groups' knowledge of the PAST category or the production of PAST category verbs.

CHAPTER 8

RESULTS: PRESCRIPTIVE KNOWLEDGE AND SOFTENER PRODUCTION

In this chapter, I examine the question of whether prescriptive knowledge had any bearing on pragmatic softener production. As mentioned previously, pragmatic competence is often largely dependent on grammatical competence—although the extent to which this is true is still rather vague. However, it stands to reason that students would need to have a working knowledge of the conditional and the past subjunctive in order to produce pragmatic softeners—as these forms are largely dependent on that grammatical knowledge. Unfortunately, measuring a student’s prescriptive knowledge is a very complex task. Sometimes a speaker possesses the knowledge of the prescriptively grammatical rule, but does not produce language consistent with that rule. (Consider, for example, the prescriptive rules in English of when to use *who* and *whom*. While educated English speakers would likely be able to explain the contexts in which the use of *whom* is prescriptively correct, not many will actually apply the rule in spoken discourse.) That is to say, production alone is not likely to give the researcher a comprehensive understanding of a subject’s prescriptive knowledge. Thus, since this chapter does focus solely on production, I will not attempt to make any definitive claims about prescriptive knowledge. Instead, I treat the following chapter as a test case for how one might go about capturing one aspect of a subject’s prescriptive knowledge (i.e. production). At the end of the chapter, I evaluate the effectiveness of this method and suggest alternative ways of tackling this issue.

To focus on production of prescriptive knowledge, I included in the questionnaire some hidden opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of the conditional and past subjunctive. These questionnaire items were meant to elicit one of these two forms. The way that I structured the items meant that the use of the conditional or past subjunctive was obligatory.

The answer was “wrong” without its inclusion. (Again, by “wrong”, I mean that it is prescriptively wrong according to the way a textbook would present the material¹⁶.) In the following sections, I lay out the data from these questionnaire items and, in doing so, determine whether pragmatic softener production is correlated with correct execution of prescriptive knowledge questions.

8.1 Prescriptive Knowledge: “Real-World” Statements

8.1.1 Responses: “Real-World” Statements

In the following section, I present the data from the two questions in Part B of the questionnaires that deal with prescriptive usage. These items are meant to elicit the seven pragmatic softeners that are of interest to the study, but not in their pragmatic usage. While the statements described in the sections above were utterances in which a speaker might select to use a pragmatic softener, the non-presence of a softener did not render the statement ungrammatical. The students had a choice of whether or not they believed the statement needed to be mitigated in some way. While the statements that are presented in the following section deal with the same seven words (*quería, querría, quisiera, podría, pudiera, debería, debiera*), their usage in these statements is obligatory (i.e. non-usage makes the sentence ungrammatical). The goal here is to determine how accuracy in an obligatory context correlates with the production of pragmatic softeners in a non-obligatory context (see Research Question 3 in Chapter 1). I specifically attend to this question in Section 8.1.2. Below, I lay the groundwork for this discussion by laying out the raw data.

8.1.1.1 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test

The pre-test results are somewhat disappointing due to the low level of accuracy for the prescriptive knowledge statements. While most textbooks cover the conditional and past subjunctive before or during the fourth year of instruction, it is unknown whether these particular

¹⁶ For a sample of how a textbook would present this material, see Chapters 12, 13, and 17 of Knorre et. al 2008 (*Puntos de Partida, 8th edition*).

students have had such classroom exposure. The low level of production indicates that many of these students have yet to master these topics even if they have been exposed to the forms in the classroom previously.

8.1.1.1.1 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test: Question 1

The first question of this type in Part B of the pre-test (which in actuality appeared as Question 3) had as its focus the past subjunctive of the verb *poder*. The question was as follows:

3) (*Dicho en un programa de la televisión*) “No estaba seguro que tú _____(poder) asistir a la reunión.”

Because the sentence starts with a phrase that expresses doubt using an imperfect verb (*No estaba seguro*, ‘I wasn’t sure’), the following verb *poder* necessarily must be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only correct answers for this item are *pudieras* and (its Spain counterpart) *pudieses*. Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 12 students (33%) responded with *pudieras* or *pudieses*. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 31, and 37.

Of the 24 students who did not produce the correct answer, the distribution of their incorrect answers was as follows:

Puedes	n=4	17%
Podías	n=7	29%
Podrías	n=6	25%
Puedas	n=4	17%
Pudiste	n=2	8%
Podió	n=1	4%

Clearly, among those who answered incorrectly, there was not much consistency in their wrong answers. These results suggest that at least two thirds of the group had not yet mastered these types of constructions.

8.1.1.1.2 Questionnaire A: Pre-Test: Question 2

The second question of this type in Part B of the pre-test (which in actuality appeared as Question 4) had as its focus the past subjunctive of the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

4) (*Escrito en un periódico*) Si ella _____(querer) hacerlo, podría ser médico.

Because the sentence starts with an *if* clause followed by a conditional verb, the verb *querer* must necessarily be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only correct answers are *quisiera* and (its Spain counterpart) *quisiese*. Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 16 students (44%) responded with a correct answer. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 31, 39 and 41.

This means that only 9 participants (7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, and 31) answered both items correctly. These 9 students represent 25% of the total group. Conversely, 75% of the students answered incorrectly on at least one of these two questions. Seventeen of the 36 students (47%) answered incorrectly on both. These numbers indicate a lack of acquisition of prescriptive knowledge by a large portion of the subject pool.

Of the 20 students who did not produce the correct answer on the second question, the distribution of their incorrect answers was as follows:

Quiere	n=5	25%
Quería	n=6	30%
Querería	n=2	10%
Querría	n=2	10%
Ha querido	n=1	5%
Quiso	n=1	5%
Quiera	n=3	15%

8.1.1.2 Questionnaire B

The results of the two questions that tested prescriptive knowledge in Part B of the mid-point questionnaire, Questionnaire B, follow.

8.1.1.2.1 Questionnaire B: Question 1

The first question of this type in Part B of Questionnaire B (which in actuality appeared as Question 4) had as its focus the past subjunctive of the verb *poder*. The question was as follows:

4) (*Escrito en un correo electrónico*) Estaba triste que ella no _____(poder) venir a nuestra fiesta.

Because the sentence starts with a phrase that expresses an emotion and uses an imperfect verb (*Estaba triste*, 'I was sad'), the following verb *poder* necessarily must be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only correct answers are *podiera* and (its Spain counterpart) *podiese*. Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 12 students (33%) responded with *podieras* or *podieses*. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 31, 32, 40, and 43.

Of the 24 students who did not produce the correct answer, the distribution of their incorrect answers was as follows:

Puede	n=4	17%
Podía	n=8	33%
Podría	n=3	13%
Pueda	n=1	4%
Pudo	n=6	25%
Puso	n=2	8%

It is interesting to note that the majority of those students who answered incorrectly (58%) either answered with the past tense verb *podía* or *pudo*. The “hang up” in getting the correct answer appears to be remembering to put the verb in the subjunctive mood—not remembering to put in past tense.

8.1.1.2.2 Questionnaire B: Question 2

The second question of this type in Part B of Questionnaire B (which appeared as Question 6 in the questionnaire) again dealt with the verb *poder*. The question was as follows:

6) (*Escrito en un libro de niños*) “¡Yo viajaría a la luna mañana si _____(poder)!”

Because the sentence contains an *if* clause preceded by a conditional verb, the verb *poder* must necessarily be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only correct answers are *podiera* and *podiese*. Out of the 36 students who participated in the study, 18 students (50%) responded with a correct answer. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32 and 40.

In this questionnaire, ten participants (7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 20, 22, 31, 32, and 40) answered both items correctly. These 10 students represent 28% of the total group. Conversely, 72% of the students answered incorrectly on at least one of these two questions. Sixteen of the 36 students (44%) answered incorrectly on both. These numbers are very similar to those from the pre-test and indicate that not much acquisition has occurred in this area. Of the ten who answered both items correctly on this questionnaire, seven of them also answered both items correctly on the pre-test. So, it would appear that those who came in with the prescriptive knowledge are those who continue to answer accurately. Those who did not begin the study producing correct forms continue to produce incorrect forms.

Of the 18 students who did not produce the correct answer on the second question, the distribution of their incorrect answers was as follows:

Puede	n=2	11%
Pueda	n=2	11%
Podría	n=12	67%
Podía	n=2	11%

It is interesting to note that the highly preferred incorrect answer was *podría*, one of the softeners included in this study. It is encouraging to see the students choose this form. Even though it is incorrect in this particular construction, it indicates that the students are familiar with the form and have a sense that it means something similar to the correct answer, *podiera*.

8.1.1.3 Questionnaire C: Post-Test

Following are the results of the two questions that tested prescriptive knowledge in Part B of the post-test questionnaire, Questionnaire C.

8.1.1.3.1 Questionnaire C: Post-Test: Question 1

The first question of this type in Part B of Questionnaire C (which in actuality appeared as Question 3) had as its focus the past subjunctive of the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

3) (*Escrito en una carta*) Dudaba que (tú) _____ (querer) viajar en avión.

Because the sentence starts with a phrase that expresses doubt and uses an imperfect verb (*Dudaba*, 'I doubted'), the following verb *querer* must necessarily be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only correct answers are *quisiera* and *quisiese*. Out of the 34 students who returned Questionnaire C, thirteen students (38%) responded with a correct answer. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 31, 32, and 41.

Of the 21 students who did not produce the correct answer, the distribution of their incorrect answers was as follows:

Quieres	n=9	43%
Quieres	n=5	24%
Querías	n=1	5%
Querías	n=2	10%
Querías	n=3	14%
Quisiste	n=1	5%

Unlike Questionnaire B, where the road block in getting the correct answer seemed to be remembering to put the verb in the subjunctive mood, these responses indicate that the majority of students forgot to use the past tense when answering this question.

8.1.1.3.2 Questionnaire C: Post-Test: Question 2

The second question of this type in Part B of the post-test (which appeared as Question 5 in the questionnaire) again dealt with the verb *poder*. The question was:

5) (*Escrito en un libro*) "Si fueras con nosotros, _____(poder) ver a tu hermano.

Because the sentence begins with an *if* clause that contains the past subjunctive verb *fueras*, the verb *poder* must necessarily be in the conditional. Hence, the only correct answer is *podrías*. Out of the 34 students who answered Questionnaire C, 22 students (65%) responded with a correct answer. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 32, 35, 39 and 41.

In this questionnaire, twelve participants (#7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 32, and 41) answered both items correctly. These 12 students represent 35% of the total group. Conversely,

65% of the students answered incorrectly on at least one of these two questions. Eleven of the 36 students (32%) answered incorrectly on both. These numbers are only slightly better than those from the pre-test and Questionnaire B.

Of the 12 who answered both items correctly on this questionnaire, 6 of them also answered both items correctly on the pre-test and Questionnaire B. Another 3 of these 12 answered two of the three questionnaires completely correctly. This repetition among successful individuals again indicates that those who came in with the prescriptive knowledge are those who continued to answer accurately. Those who didn't begin the study producing correct forms continued to produce incorrect forms.

Thus, we cannot claim that we are seeing any acquisition of prescriptive knowledge occurring during the students' stay in the language-intense environment. This doesn't mean that this information is completely wasted, though. Having now targeted those students that have a good grasp on prescriptive knowledge, we can ascertain if this knowledge (or lack thereof) had any bearing on the production of pragmatic softeners. This question is addressed in Section 8.2.

8.1.1.4 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up

Following are the results of the two questions that tested prescriptive knowledge in Part B of the follow-up questionnaire, Questionnaire D.

8.1.1.4.1 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up: Question 1

The first question of this type in Part B of Questionnaire D (which in actuality appeared as Question 3) had as its focus the past subjunctive of the verb *querer*. The question was as follows:

3) (*Escrito en una carta electrónica*) "Yo estaba triste que (tú) no _____(querer) visitarnos durante las vacaciones."

Because the sentence starts with a phrase that expresses an emotion using an imperfect verb (*Estaba triste*, 'I was sad'), the following verb *querer* must necessarily be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only correct answers are *quisiera* and (its Spain counterpart) *quisiese*.

Out of the 30 students who returned Questionnaire D, only four students (13%) answered correctly. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 11, 16, 22, and 31.

Of the 26 students who did not produce the correct answer, the distribution of their incorrect answers was as follows:

Quieres	n=3	12%
Quiero	n=1	4%
Querrías	n=4	15%
Querías	n=10	38%
Quiso	n=1	4%
Quieras	n=7	27%

We again see a tendency by these students to recognize that the verb either a) needs to be past tense or b) needs to be in the subjunctive mood. The “hang up” in getting the correct answer is remembering to do both.

8.1.1.4.2 Questionnaire D: Follow-Up: Question 2

The second question of this type in Part B of Questionnaire D (which appeared as Question 5 in the questionnaire) dealt with the verb *poder*. The question was:

5) (*Dicho de un amigo al otro*) “Si quisieras acompañarme, nosotros _____(poder) cenar juntos.”

Because the sentence begins with an *if* clause that contains the past subjunctive verb *quisieras*, the verb *poder* must necessarily be in the conditional. Hence, the only correct answer is *podríamos*. Out of the 30 students who answered Questionnaire D, 16 students (53%) responded with a correct answer. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 31, 32, 35 and 39.

In this questionnaire, only three participants (#11, 16, and 31) answered both items correctly. These three students represent 10% of the total group. Conversely, 90% of the students answered incorrectly on at least one of these two questions. 13 of the 30 students (43%) answered incorrectly on both. While the percentage of students getting both answers incorrect remains consistent with previous questionnaires, the number of students answering correctly on

both significantly dropped on this follow-up questionnaire. This could perhaps be indicative that some attrition has occurred in the months following the immersion/study abroad experience.

Of the three students who answered both items correctly on this questionnaire, all three students answered almost all of the items correctly on the other questionnaires. This repetition among successful individuals again indicates that those who came in with the prescriptive knowledge are those who continue to answer accurately. Those who didn't begin the study producing correct forms continue to produce incorrect forms.

Given this information, we now turn to the question of whether possessing this prescriptive knowledge has any influence on the production of pragmatic softeners.

8.1.2 Discussion: "Real-World" Statements

In this section, I return to my third research question: How does conditional and past subjunctive acquisition shape pragmatic softener acquisition? Specifically, I want to know if there is any correlation between accuracy of prescriptive knowledge questions and pragmatic softener usage (i.e. If the student correctly answered the prescriptive questions, were they more likely to use a pragmatic softener in the non-prescriptive items?). Having presented all of the pragmatic softener responses in Chapter 4 and all of the prescriptive knowledge responses in the above section, I now recast the data through the lens of prescriptive knowledge.

As I mentioned in Section 8.1.2.3.2 above, six students answered all of the prescriptive knowledge questions correctly in Part B of Questionnaires A, B and C. These students are both productive and accurate in their use of conditional and past subjunctive verbs in their required contexts. These six participants are numbers 7, 9, 11, 12, 20, and 22. In addition to these six, I would also like to take into consideration three other students who, although their scores were not perfect on all three questionnaires, they answered two of the three questionnaires with 100% accuracy. These students were participants 16, 31 and 32.

If, indeed, some kind of relationship exists between prescriptive knowledge of the conditional and past subjunctive forms and pragmatic softeners, we would expect that these nine students'

responses to the pragmatic softener items in Part B of the questionnaire to reflect this. We would expect that if these students can recognize when these words should be prescriptively, that they should also be able to recognize when they might be used in a speaker-selected context. Below, I examine whether the data reflects this expectation.

In the chart below, I list the responses for each of the nine students on Questionnaires A, B, and C. Since Questionnaire D was not data collected during the study abroad/immersion experience, I consider it separately. In Table 8.1, I highlight in yellow every instance where the student selected a pragmatic softener. In total, these nine students opted to use a pragmatic softener 35 times out of a potential 90 times, or 39% of the time.

Table 8.1 Pragmatic softener responses of the nine exceptional students

#	QA:1	QA:2	QA:3	QB:1	QB:2	QB:3	QB:4	QC:1	QC:2	QC:3
7	quisiera	debe	podría	quisiera	debo	podría	debes	quisiera	podría	debes
9	quiero	debe	podría	quisiera	debo	podría	debes	quisiera	puedes	debes
11	querría	debe	puedo	querría	debo	puedo	debes	quiere	puedes	debes
12	quiero	debo	puedo	quiero	debo	puedo	debes	querría	podría	debes
16	quería	debe	podría	quiero	debo	podría	debes	querría	puede	debes
20	quiero	debe	podría	quiero	debo	puedo	debes	querría	podrías	debes
22	quisiera	debe	podría	quisiera	debo	podría	debes	quisiera	podrías	debes
31	quiero	deberías	puedo	querría	debería	puedo	debes	querría	podrías	deberías
32	quiero	deba	puedo	quiero	debería	puedo	debes	quiere	puede	n/a

It is difficult to interpret whether this number is high or low without having something to compare it to. Thus, in Table 8.2 below, I list the responses of nine students who consistently answered incorrectly on the prescriptive knowledge questions. Seven of the nine answered every prescriptive knowledge question wrong. These participant's numbers are 10, 30, 33, 34, 36, 38, and 42. Two more students were selected for this pool (1 and 13) because they only answered one prescriptive knowledge question correctly, indicating that they, too, are lacking in prescriptive knowledge mastery. In total, these students produced 18 softeners out of a potential 90, or 20%. This is exactly half of the amount of softeners produced by the exceptional students, thus lending evidence to the fact that perhaps a relationship does exist between prescriptive knowledge and pragmatic softener production.

Table 8.2 Pragmatic softener responses of the nine other students

#	QA:1	QA:2	QA:3	QB:1	QB:2	QB:3	QB:4	QC:1	QC:2	QC:3
1	quiero	debe	podría	quiero	debería	podría	debes	quiere	podrían	debes
10	quiero	debe	puedo	quisiera	debería	puedo	debes	quiere	pueden	debes
13	quiero	debe	puedo	querría	debo	puedo	debes	quiero	puedes	debes
30	quiero	debe	puedo	quiero	debo	puedo	debes	quiere	puedes	debes
33	quiero	debe	puede	quiero	debo	puedo	debes	quiere	puedes	debes
34	quiero	debe	puede	querría	debo	puedo	debes	querría	puedes	debes
36	quiero	debe	puedo	quería	debo	puedo	debes	querría	puedes	deberías
38	quería	deba	puedo	quisiera	debería	puedo	debería	querría	puedes	deberías
42	quiere	debe	puede	quiero	debo	puedo	debes	quiero	puedo	debes

It is also interesting to note that the exceptional students never once produce *pudiera* as a pragmatic softener, even though they correctly use this word multiple times when answering the prescriptive knowledge questions. This is different from their treatment of *quisiera*, which the students use often both in the prescriptive knowledge questions and the pragmatic softener questions. In fact, as I mentioned previously, *pudiera* was never once used in Questionnaires A, B, or C as a pragmatic softener. Yet, these exceptional nine students obviously feel comfortable using it in prescriptive instances. So, the problem is not that they don't know the word. The problem is that they don't produce it in a pragmatic softener context. This is a very curious treatment of *pudiera*, which I return to in Chapter 6 when we discuss student attitudes towards appropriateness of pragmatic softeners.

It is difficult to take Questionnaire D into account because the “Nine Exceptional Students” did not perform as exceptionally in this follow-up questionnaire. As mentioned in Section 8.1.2.4.2 above, this decrease in correct answers may be due to attrition that has occurred in the months between the end of the immersion/study abroad experience and the filling out of Questionnaire D. Of the nine exceptional students, only three (33%) of the students answered both prescriptive knowledge questions in Questionnaire D correctly. Each of the remaining six exceptional students did answer one of the two prescriptive knowledge questions correctly—just not both.

8.1.3 Context: “Real-World” Statements

Finally, we can turn our attention to the differences between the two groups involved in the study—the study-abroad group and the immersion group. As was the trend in pragmatic softener production, we once again see the immersion group outperforming the study abroad

group. Let us start with the results from the pre-test. As mentioned previously, the first question dealing with prescriptive knowledge on the pre-test was question 3. Twelve students responded correctly to this question. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 20, 21, 22, 31, and 37. Recall that participants with numbers 1 through 22 were in the immersion group. Participants with numbers 30 through 44 were in the study abroad group. This means that of the 12 who responded correctly, 10 (83%) were from the immersion group.

The study abroad group didn't fare much better on the second prescriptive knowledge question (Question 4 on the questionnaire). The participant numbers of those who responded correctly to that question were 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 31, 39 and 41. This means that of the 16 who responded correctly, 13 (82%) were from the immersion group.

Of the 9 participants (#7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 20, 21, 22, and 31) who answered both items correctly, only 1 was from the study abroad group. These numbers suggest that not only were the immersion students entering into the study producing more pragmatic softeners, they also were more advanced in prescriptive knowledge, as well.

Now, we can examine the differences between the groups in prescriptive knowledge on Questionnaire B. As mentioned previously, the first question dealing with prescriptive knowledge on Questionnaire B was Question 4. Twelve students responded correctly to this question. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 20, 22, 31, 32, 40, and 43. Of the 12 who responded correctly, 8 (75%) were from the immersion group.

The study abroad group didn't fare any better on the second prescriptive knowledge question in this questionnaire, either (Question 5 on the questionnaire). On this question, 18 students answered correctly. Their participant numbers were 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 31, 32 and 40. This means that of the 18 who responded correctly, 15 (83%) were from the immersion group.

On Questionnaire B, ten participants (7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 20, 22, 31, 32 and 40) answered both items correctly. Seventy percent were from the immersion group.

This trend continued into the post-test. As mentioned previously, the first question dealing with prescriptive knowledge on Questionnaire C was Question 3. Thirteen students responded correctly to this question. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 31, 32, and 41. This means that of the 13 who responded correctly, 10 (77%) were from the immersion group.

The study abroad group continued to struggle on the second prescriptive knowledge question in this questionnaire (#5). On this question, 22 students answered correctly. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 32, 35, 39 and 41. This means that of the 22 who responded correctly, 18 (81%) were from the immersion group.

In this questionnaire, twelve participants (7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 32, and 41) answered both items correctly. All but one (92%) were from the immersion group. Thus, even at the post-test, the immersion students appear to have a much better grasp on the conditional and past subjunctive than the study abroad students.

Finally, we turn to Questionnaire D—the follow-up. The first question dealing with prescriptive knowledge on Questionnaire D was Question 3. Only 4 students responded correctly to this question. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were 11, 16, 22, and 31. This means that of the 4 who responded correctly, 3 (75%) were from the immersion group and 1 (25%) was from the study abroad group.

The second prescriptive knowledge question in this questionnaire was question 5. On this question, 16 students answered correctly. The participant numbers of those who responded correctly were: 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 31, 32, 35, and 39. This means that of the 16 students who responded correctly, 12 (75%) were from the immersion group and 4 (25%) were from the study abroad group.

In this questionnaire, 3 participants (11, 16, and 31) answered both items correctly. All but 1 (33%) were from the immersion group.

So, clearly the study abroad group was not as productive in the past subjunctive and conditional as was the immersion group.

8.2 Prescriptive Knowledge: Cloze Test

The following section examines the prescriptive knowledge items that were present in the cloze test. This data is paired against what is already known about pragmatic softener production. I also compare the results of the cloze test to the results of the “real-world” statements that were presented above.

8.2.1 Responses: Cloze Test

Two opportunities existed in the cloze test for the students to once again demonstrate their prescriptive knowledge of the past subjunctive and conditional. These two opportunities were in Questionnaire B and Questionnaire C.

The prescriptive knowledge item in Questionnaire B was as follows:

Charlie no _____(estar) seguro de lo que _____(deber) hacer con las mangas de la camisa.

Because this sentence begins with an expression of uncertainty—*no estar seguro* (‘to be unsure’), the following verb *deber* must necessarily be in the subjunctive. Since the students are asked to change all verbs to past tense, the correct answer would be *debiera*. Only 3 of 36 students (8%) answered correctly. These students’ numbers were 11, 19, and 32. One student did use the conditional instead of the past subjunctive. The remaining 32 students simply used the past indicative.

Collectively, the three students who answered correctly produced 2 out of a possible 12 softeners. This is 17%. From the 33 students that did not answer correctly, 40 out of a possible 132 softeners were produced. This is 30%. This means that the students who did not answer correctly on the prescriptive knowledge question were more likely to produce a pragmatic softener. These results are contrary to what was seen in Section 8.1 above.

The results were more positive in the other prescriptive knowledge question hidden in the cloze test of Questionnaire C. The prescriptive knowledge item in Questionnaire C was in the sentence of the narrative that said

Charlie Chaplin no _____(saber) qué hacer para que el bebé _____(terminar) de llorar.

In this sentence, the students had the opportunity to use the past subjunctive of *terminar* in the second blank. This is because *para que* is an adverbial conjunction that should always be followed by the subjunctive.

In this case, 12 of the 36 students (33%) recognized the opportunity and answered correctly with *terminara* (or, in one case, the Spain equivalent *terminase*). These students were 7, 9, 12, 13, 16, 19, 20, 32, 38, 41, 42, and 43. The remaining 24 students simply used the past indicative.

Of the 12 students who answered correctly, 15 softeners out of a possible 36 were produced. This is 42%. The 24 students that did not answer correctly produced 20 out of a possible 66 softeners. This is 31% and is about 11% lower than the percentage of those who did answer correctly. These results are more in line with the findings in Section 8.1.

8.2.2 Discussion: Cloze Test

While the results from Questionnaire B's cloze test do not indicate a relationship between prescriptive knowledge and pragmatic softener production, the results from Questionnaire C's cloze test do. Furthermore, the results from Questionnaire C lend support to the findings from the "real world" statements in Section 8.1—that students who answer the prescriptive knowledge questions correctly are more likely to produce pragmatic softeners. So, evidently, some relationship does exist. However, we cannot project these findings to a broader claim about the role of grammatical competence in pragmatic softener acquisition.

As mentioned previously, measuring prescriptive knowledge and/or grammatical competence cannot be attained by simply eliciting a handful of verbs, as was done in this

questionnaire. A more comprehensive approach that could be used in further research on grammatical competency as it relates to the past subjunctive and conditional might include 1) asking the students to explain what they know about these two constructions (i.e. when/how they are used), 2) using real rather than constructed samples, 3) providing some discussion of how grammaticality might vary across regional or other dialects, and 4) defining the parameters of grammatical competency and prescriptive knowledge.

Defining the parameters of grammatical competency was especially problematic as I attempted to categorize some of the responses to the cloze test and the “real world” statements. Consider, for example, that each of the prescriptive knowledge questions relied heavily on the student recognizing the “trigger phrases” (*para que*, *no estoy seguro*, *si* clauses, emotions, etc.) that prompt the subjunctive or conditional. So, not only am I assuming that grammatical competency is dependent upon being able to form the past subjunctive or conditional, I’m also assuming that recognizing the trigger phrases is a component of prescriptive knowledge of these forms. These assumptions became further convoluted as I examined a sentence from the cloze test in which several students wrongfully used the past subjunctive. The sentence was:

Charlie _____(estar) orgulloso porque _____(ser) muy creativo cuando _____(estar) preparando el desayuno.

Because it contained the “trigger phrase” *estar orgulloso* (to be proud), the following verb *ser* could potentially be conjugated in the subjunctive. However, this rule would only apply if *que* (“that”) was connecting the two phrases. Because the clauses are linked with *porque* (“because”), the verb *ser* actually needs an indicative construction. So, in this case, if I were to penalize those students who used the past subjunctive, we might say, then, that measuring grammatical competency includes a third layer—recognizing the implications of using *que* and *porque*—in addition to 1) forming the verb and, 2) recognizing the trigger. While each of these things could certainly be placed under the umbrella of prescriptive knowledge of the past subjunctive and conditional, we must ask ourselves how much of this knowledge is necessary for a student to have the grammatical competency required to produce a pragmatic softener. This would be a

good starting point for a future study. Certainly, the test case contained in this chapter does not address this issue nearly enough to make any conclusive statement.

Furthermore, in defining grammatical competency and prescriptive knowledge, we must also consider how constructions are used by real speakers. While textbooks offer a set of prescriptive knowledge to the student, encounters with native speakers might not reinforce that knowledge. In fact, in the native speaker questionnaires that I circulated, I included one of the “prescriptive knowledge” items that was also presented to the students in Questionnaire B. The item was:

(*Escrito en un correo electrónico*) Estaba triste que ella no _____(poder)
venir a nuestra fiesta.

Because the sentence starts with a phrase that expresses an emotion and uses an imperfect verb (*Estaba triste*, ‘I was sad’), textbooks tell us that the following verb *poder* necessarily must be in the imperfect (past) subjunctive. Hence, the only “correct” answers are *puédiera* and (its Spain counterpart) *puéiese*. Yet, out of the five native speakers in the study, only one actually produced this response. Three of the five produced *pudo*, the preterit (past) of *poder*, and one produced *podrá*, the future of *poder*. This discrepancy between textbooks and actual usage by native speakers presents a real problem in defining prescriptive knowledge. That is to say, should we measure prescriptive knowledge by how much of the textbook students can regurgitate or by how native-like their responses are? And, if we assume that being native-like is the ultimate goal, then why do we see a positive correlation between students who have absorbed textbook knowledge and those who produce pragmatic softeners? Unfortunately, these types of questions are beyond the scope of this test case, yet are very crucial to being able to address the extent to which prescriptive knowledge shapes pragmatic softener production.

8.3 Chapter Summary

In Chapter 8, I considered the question of whether prescriptive knowledge in any way shaped pragmatic softener production. While the discussion therein raised more questions than it answered, I was able to conclude the following:

- Some students clearly entered into the study with prescriptive knowledge of conditional and past subjunctive verbs. Those who showed evidence of this knowledge at the pre-test continued to answer correctly on the subsequent questionnaires. Those who demonstrated very little knowledge on the pre-test continued to answer incorrectly on subsequent questionnaires. Very little change in the data was seen, indicating that not much acquisition of these skills took place during their study abroad/immersion experience.
- The results from Part B of the questionnaire (the “real world” statements) indicate that those students who were productive with the conditional and past subjunctive in prescriptive circumstances were more likely to spontaneously produce pragmatic softeners. In fact, these students were twice as likely to produce a softener as students who did not answer any of the prescriptive knowledge items correctly. On the other hand, the students that did not answer the prescriptive knowledge items correctly did produce pragmatic softeners. This is likely evidence that 1) these students did possess prescriptive knowledge about the past subjunctive and conditional, and 2) the questionnaire was not capable of fully capturing that knowledge.
- In general, the IM students enter into the study with much stronger responses than the SA participants. Throughout the study, they overwhelmingly produce more pragmatic softeners and answer many more of the prescriptive knowledge questions correctly.
- Of the two items in the cloze test, one of the items affirmed the findings from the “real world” statements—that a correlation does exist between accurate production on

prescriptive knowledge questions and production of pragmatic softeners. However, the second item revealed no such correlation.

- Given the clear relationship between answers the prescriptive knowledge questions correctly and the production of pragmatic softeners, we can assume that grammatical competency is playing a role in pragmatic softener production. However, future studies are needed to help define that role. These studies will need to consider more fully the definition of prescriptive knowledge and the methodologies needed to capture that knowledge.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I discuss the results of the research and make recommendations for future research. In Section 9.1, I address the major conclusions of the study, speaking to each of the research questions to determine how effectively each question has been answered and what questions still remain. In Section 9.2, the generalizability of the study is discussed. Section 9.3 addresses the limitations, including design flaws and technical errors that influenced the outcome of the study. In Section 9.4, potential avenues of research are explored. I conclude this chapter with a list of recommendations for those who work on the “front-lines” of second language learning—teachers, curriculum designers, and study abroad/immersion-program coordinators—who could benefit from the knowledge gained through this work.

9.1 Discussion

9.1.1 Research Question 1: PAST prototype acquisition

The first research question that I set out to answer in this study was: How do pragmatic softeners fit into the acquisition of the PAST prototype? This question was derived from a theory put forth by Anderson and Shirai (1996) that pragmatic softeners are actually the final stage of acquisition for the PAST prototype—i.e. that students must first acquire the *deictic past* (where the past morphology points to past events) before they can acquire pragmatic softeners (where the past morphology points to the present and/or future events). Bardovi-Harlig (1999) says of the Anderson and Shirai (1996) prototypical *past* and its assertions about pragmatic softeners that “[the] sequence remains to be tested in its later stages, and points to a good place to start an investigation” (p. 696). To my knowledge, no other study has attempted to empirically verify

whether the *deictic past* is indeed acquired before pragmatic softeners. While this study cannot be considered the “final word” on the accuracy of this sequence, I did find evidence that the theory is likely correct—that the deictic past must first be acquired before pragmatic softeners can be acquired. As mentioned in Chapter 7, even on the pre-test we find evidence that the students have already acquired the late stages of the deictic past. In fact, 83% of the students used at least one achievement-imperfective verb on the pre-test. Thirty-three percent of students used a stative-imperfective verb on the pre-test. By the post-test, 64% of students have used a stative-imperfective verb. Many of the students who used an achievement-imperfective or stative-perfective verb on the cloze test part of the questionnaire also produced a pragmatic softener in the questionnaire. Conversely, the number of students who used a pragmatic softener without producing a stative-perfective or achievement-imperfective verb was relatively low. This supports Anderson and Shirai’s (1996) theory that the deictic past (with the final stages being achievement-imperfective and stative-perfective) must be acquired before the students can acquire pragmatic softeners.

The only evidence that contradicts the theory is the fact that a few students did produce a softener but did not produce an achievement-imperfective or a stative-perfective verb. This number is low compared to the overwhelming evidence in favor of the theory. When this occurs in the later questionnaires, we find that even though students do not produce an achievement-imperfective or state-perfective on the specific questionnaire under consideration, they often did produce these forms on previous questionnaires.

This unfortunately means that I did not get to see acquisition in action. Since the majority of these students entered the study already producing the late stages of the deictic past AND producing pragmatic softeners, I was not able to observe the acquisition of either part of the PAST prototype. They were both already largely acquired. So, my vantage point of the acquisition of the PAST prototype was more from the end looking backward instead of from the beginning

and/or middle looking forward. Yet, even from this point of view, there is evidence that the sequencing that Anderson and Shirai (1996) proposed is accurate.

Given the evidence above, it can be assumed that pragmatic softening does belong in the PAST prototype and that its acquisition is linked to the *deictic past*. Yet, other questions still remain. Recall the Spanish Past Category Sequence that I posited in Chapter 1:

deictic past (accomplishments-perfective → states-imperfective → achievement-perfective
→ activities-imperfective → accomplishments-imperfective → activities-perfective →
achievements-imperfective → states-perfective) → **pragmatic softening**

In this sequence, most of the emphasis is on the earlier stages. The *deictic past* is broken down into its various subcomponents—giving us a clear idea as to what is meant by the term *deictic past* (i.e. deictic past involves different types of lexical and grammatical aspect that are acquired in a certain order). The emphasis on this part of the theory is not surprising, given that the majority of the research about this theory has concentrated on grammatical and lexical aspect (Hasbún (1995), Cadierno (2000), and García and Van-Putte (1988), among others). Thus, it follows that much more is known about the acquisition of the deictic past—specifically, how and in what order it is acquired.

Yet now that we have established that pragmatic softening does likely belong in this acquisition sequence, we must turn our attention to the latter part of this theory. Compared to *deictic past*, the term *pragmatic softening* is exceedingly vague. The fact that this term has no subcomponents whatsoever points to the fact that this part of the theory is underdeveloped. In the following section, I discuss when and how learners exhibited productive use of pragmatic softeners. From this information, I distill a possible explanation of how *pragmatic softening* can be broken down into its subcomponents, building upon the Spanish Past Category Sequence.

9.1.2 Research Question 2A: Pragmatic Softener Production and Acquisition

The second research question that I sought to answer was when and how learners exhibit productive use of pragmatic softeners. This question was pertinent both in Part B of the questionnaire and in the oral task. Of the two, students were much more productive in the questionnaire than they were in the oral task. One possibility of why this occurred is that the students simply did not believe the oral task warranted the use of a pragmatic softener. On one hand, this seems likely. Most of the students had already completed the questionnaire before they participated in the oral task. This meant that they had just had all seven pragmatic softeners presented to them multiple times, so they would have been fresh on the students' minds. The students were also aware that the study was about politeness and were explicitly told to show respect to Dra. Puentes. The fact that they had all of this information and still did not produce a softener in the oral task may indicate that the students did not feel softeners were appropriate for the task at hand. Yet, another possibility is that the students knew that they needed to be polite and yet, in the "heat of the moment", the students had so many other things to attend to (verb selection, *tú* vs *usted*, new vocabulary, etc.) that they did not think to produce softeners. Furthermore, the fact that two students did produce softeners during the oral task indicates that not everyone believed softeners to be inappropriate for the situations. It is possible that this lack of softeners on the oral task is simply because the students had more time to reflect on the forms (and less to attend to) when filling out the questionnaire. They could think the situation through carefully and decide which form was most likely used in the sentence provided. The very fact that the oral task was *oral* meant that the students needed to think more quickly and produce forms without having as much opportunity to process the situation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Carduner (1998:161) found similar results among the L2 learners of Spanish in his study and attributed these results to the fact that "the learners are not linguistically competent enough to make the modifications and at the same time handle the other linguistic demands placed on them when forming requests".

Despite the differences in frequency of production between the questionnaire and the oral task, in terms of *when* learners exhibit productive use of pragmatic softeners, there is a lot of similarity. In fact, these learners exhibited productive use of pragmatic softeners even in the first session. The two students who used pragmatic softeners on the oral task did so at the first session and at all subsequent sessions. On the questionnaires, we also saw softeners being used from the beginning. Twenty-six softeners (out of a potential 108) were used on the pre-test. While this percentage is relative low, it still indicates that at least some students entered the study already familiar with these softeners. Interestingly, this number only rises slightly throughout the students stay—with only 33% of softeners produced in the post-test. However, the fact that it does rise indicates that perhaps some acquisition is occurring. On examining the data in Chapter 4, we did see some evidence of acquisition over time on the questionnaire. In particular, this acquisition is seen in the *querer* verbs between the pre-test and Questionnaire B. What we find is that these seven students do not use a *querer* softener on the first questionnaire, but consistently use one on all subsequent questionnaires. So, perhaps these students did not enter into the study having already acquired the *querer* softeners, but picked them up during their time abroad or in the immersion academy. We do not see much evidence of acquisition in the oral task or in the *poder/deber* softeners.

The fact that *querer* softeners show some fluctuation while the others do not indicates that the softener acquisition occurs unevenly. While all seven of the pragmatic softeners were spontaneously produced by students at least once throughout the questionnaires, each softener was produced at a very different frequency. Some were wildly popular, while other were hardly used at all. Among those that were highly infrequent were the forms *pudiera*, *debiera*, and *debería*. *Pudiera* was actually never produced throughout the students' stay abroad or at the immersion academy. On the follow-up, however, 21% of the students used this form. This may indicate that the form was not being reinforced in their study abroad/immersion situations but that perhaps they were introduced to the form after they returned home to more classroom instruction.

Debiera was produced only twice during the entire study—once in Questionnaire B and once in the follow-up. This low frequency also indicates that this form was not being modeled or reinforced in the language-intense environment. Interestingly, when the form was used, it was produced by two immersion academy students. Despite being more frequent than *debería*, *debería* was not produced very often either—only 19 out of a possible 125 times.

This brings up an interesting point about *deber* softeners in general. Of the three verbs, *deber* was by far the least produced. Not only was it rarely produced, it showed no real change in production over the course of the study, indicating that instead of the students simply dispreferring this form, the majority of students may not have ever acquired it. This would go along with the data from Part C of the questionnaire, in which the students were largely baffled by *debería* and *debiera* and frequently marked “I don’t know” as their response to these forms. As mentioned in the section above, we need to tease apart the Spanish Past Category Sequence. Just as the *deictic past* was broken down into smaller subcomponents of acquisition, the term *Pragmatic Softening* also needs to be broken down into its subcomponents. Based on the frequency data above, we could posit that the final stages of acquisition of pragmatic softeners include the following:

Pragmatic Softening (debería→pudiera→debiera)

If these three forms are some of the last acquired, then it would fair to say that *podría* must be one of the first acquired. No other individual softener was produced to the extent of *podría*, nor was any form deemed more appropriate in the appropriateness evaluations. It is curious, though, that *podría* would be so popular (and presumably acquired early) while its other *poder* counterpart, *pudiera*, is one of the very last to be acquired. Thus, we can adapt the definition of pragmatic softener to be the following:

Pragmatic Softening (podría→debería→pudiera→debiera)

What is still missing from this equation is the *querer* softeners. Unlike the *poder* and *deber* verbs which do not show much change over time, we do see quite a bit of change in the *querer*

verbs. This means that we are likely witnessing acquisition of these forms during the study. It is difficult to determine exactly what is occurring with these forms, though, as each one follows a different path. *Quería*, for example, began in the pre-test as the most popular of the three forms but then quickly fell out of favor. By the post-test, only 1 student produced this form. On the follow-up, no student produced this form. *Querría* shows more a bell-curve over time. While only 1 person produced this form on the pre-test, 11 students produced it on the post-test. But, this number dropped off in the follow-up with only 4 students producing it. That is, it shows a swell in production and then quickly backs down. *Quisiera*, on the other hand, also starts off with a weak showing in the pre-test. It also shows an increase over time (although not quite as steep as *querría*). By the follow-up, *quisiera* is the most preferred of the three *querer* softeners. Given this information, I think it is safe to assume that the *querer* softeners are all acquired after *podría*, given that none of them show a frequency as high as that form. It is also likely that they are acquired before *debería*, as we observe all of them (albeit at different points during the study) reach higher frequencies of production than *debería* does. The results, though, of what order the individual forms might be acquired are inconclusive. We might be able to posit that *quería* and *querría* are acquired first since they have higher frequencies than *quisiera* early on in the study. But, this would not account for why students backed away from these forms in the latter part of the study. I make no conjecture about the exact order by which these forms are acquired. Instead, I have placed all three forms in between *podría* and *debería* on the acquisition sequence in a bracket to indicate that the uncertainty of the precise order. Further studies might be able to clarify this part of the sequence. In sum, I am positing that the final stage of the Spanish Past Category Sequence should be broken down as follows:

**Pragmatic Softening (podría→ { querría
quería
quisiera } →debería→pudiera→debiera)**

This would mean that the Spanish Past Category Sequence would be restructured to look like this:

deictic past (accomplishments-perfective → states-imperfective → achievement-perfective → activities-imperfective → accomplishments-imperfective → activities-perfective → achievements-imperfective → states-perfective) → **Pragmatic Softening (podría→**

querría } → **debería→pudiera→debiera)**
quería }
quisiera }

More empirical evidence is needed to verify that this is the exact sequencing of acquisition. Nevertheless, my desire is that this attempt to “break down” pragmatic softener acquisition into its subcomponents can be a starting point for others interested in the acquisition of these forms.

Another interesting thing to note about this conjecture and about my general observations of the production of pragmatic softeners is that the conditional verbs appear to be preferred by the students over the past subjunctive. This is apparently an attitude that the students enter the study with, as even the pre-test indicates a clear preference for the conditional softeners over the past subjunctive softeners. For *deber* and *poder*, this preference remains strong all the way through the follow-up. Interestingly, the two softeners used in the oral task were also conditional—*podría* and *debería*. No past subjunctive softener was produced in the oral task. So, we can assume one of two things. First, we could infer that something in the students’ background (likely the classroom instruction and/or curriculum) has caused them to prefer these forms over the past subjunctive. The second thing that we can infer is that neither of these forms is being reinforced in the immersion program or in the study abroad experience.

On the other hand, the *querer* verbs do show a change in production. The fact that *querría* and *quisiera* increase in production over time indicates that these forms are being reinforced in the linguistic environment. If we take a closer look, we see that these forms are actually much more prevalent in the immersion group than the study abroad group. Because the

immersion students are mainly interacting only with each other during their stay, it would be expected that linguistic forms introduced to this group would be more likely to be reinforced. This may be the case with *querría*. Only a few students use the form at the beginning of the stay, but the tight-knit linguistic community without outside influence helps to reinforce this form. When the students leave the academy, though, they may realize that the form they were using is not desirable, hence the drop in production of *querría* on the follow-up. On the other hand, *quisiera* shows a similar trend among the immersion students—with just a few students using it on the pre-test and then, due to reinforcement in the linguistic community, a gradual increase in production as the time at the immersion academy lengthens. The only difference here is that we actually see even more of an increase in production after the students return home. It could be that once the students left the academy, the form was further reinforced in other settings and, hence, even more students produced the form.

9.1.3 Research Question 2B: Alternatives to Pragmatic Softener Production

The last thing I observed about pragmatic softener production has to do with the forms that were produced in the place of a softener. These alternate forms can inform us about whether students use other devices for mitigation. In this case, the questionnaire did not provide us with much information. Across the board, students used the present indicative (*debes, puedes, quieres*) when they opted not to use a pragmatic softener. Of course, on the questionnaire, the students were much more limited in the verbs and other devices that they could use. They were simply asked to conjugate a verb in the way they thought it was used when the sentence was said/written originally. The oral task, however, provided an almost limitless opportunity for students to show how they could mitigate without making use of pragmatic softeners. Some of the devices were to be expected and included the use of *por favor* with a command or the use of *usted* instead of *tú*. But, some (possible) mitigation with the verb choices was also observed.

Recall that, according to Koike (1989), request forms can be placed on a pragmatic continuum in terms of illocutionary force, or the force with which the intended proposition is to be

understood by the hearer. Koike illustrates by way of a figure the idea of a pragmatic continuum of politeness using some common ways of requesting in Spanish and English. I have copied this information in Figure 9.1 below.

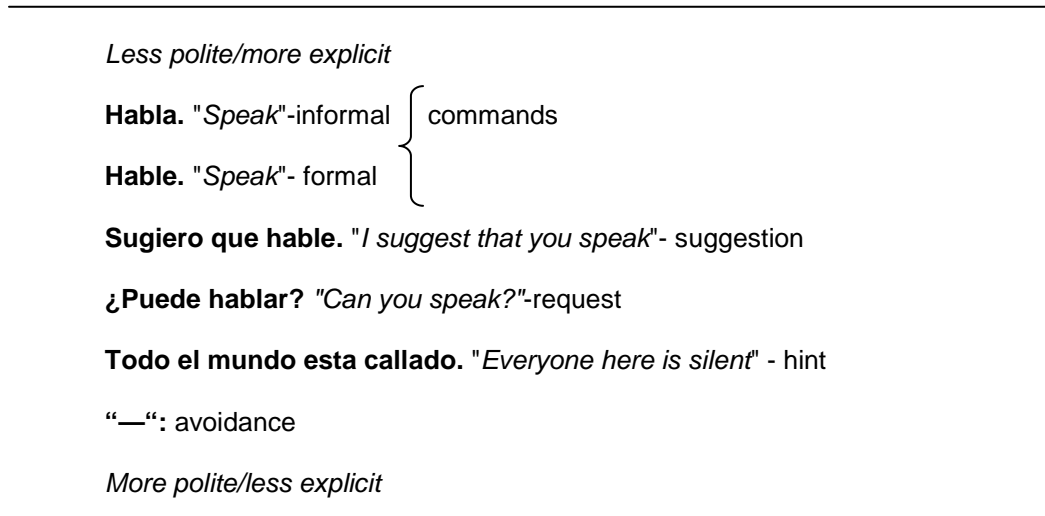


Figure 9.1 Some Spanish request forms according to a scale of politeness;
From Koike (1989:280)

According to this continuum, informal commands are considered the least polite and most explicit form. So, we can assume that any other request form would be considered to have a mitigating effect to some degree. If we look at the forms used by the students in the oral task, we find that the most common form other than the informal command was the formal command. This indicates that the students were at least attempting some degree of mitigation. Yet, we saw many other forms used that were not pragmatic softeners but were also not commands. Many students produce the forms *poder + verb*, which is the same as the “request” that Koike has on her continuum. We also saw the forms *deber + verb*, *necesitar*, *tener que*, *hay que*, *es necesario*, and *quiero que*. Even though they do not all fall neatly into one of Koike’s categories, the use of these forms (and not simply the informal command) indicates an attempt at mitigation on the part of the student. So, even though the seven pragmatic softeners of interest to this study were not produced very frequently in the oral task, other attempts were displayed to mitigate the

illocutionary force by using other verb forms.

What is strange, though, is that this mitigation does not seem to be exclusively directed towards the [+power, +distance] interlocutor. In fact, in many cases the students are using these mitigating strategies almost as much or more with their peer interlocutor than they are with Dra. Puentes. Let us consider only the immersion students, because they were much more likely to use these mitigating forms in general. We see, for example, with the constructions *debe(s) + verb* that throughout the study this construction was used 13 times with a peer interlocutor and 17 times with the non-peer interlocutor. So, the students use this form slightly more with the non-peer interlocutor. Likewise, the construction *querer + verb* is used 12 times with the peer interlocutor and 14 times with the non-peer. Yet, when we look at the construction *poder + verb*, we actually see this construction used more frequently with the peer than the non-peer—32 times versus 29 times. These numbers do not indicate any significant difference between the frequencies of verbs used to mitigate with the non-peer than those used with the peer interlocutor.

Even though increased mitigation cannot be seen in verb choice, we do see some evidence that the students are attempting to be more polite with the non-peer interlocutor. This appears through the students' use of *por favor* and *gracias*. While the students did tend to use these forms with both the peer interlocutor and the non-peer, they were used much more frequently with the non-peer. For *por favor*, the students used this form 21 times with their peers but 43 times when talking with Dra. Puentes. Similarly, *gracias* was used five times with the peer but 29 times with the non-peer.

Another revealing thing that the students did was use the pronoun *usted* with Dra. Puentes and *tú* with their peers. I have previously mentioned that the students did tend to mitigate their instructions by using the *tú* or *usted* form of commands, requests, etc. While they didn't always do so with 100% accuracy, it was clear that the attempt (at least among the immersion students) was to use the more polite form of the verb with Dra. Puentes. Being a pro-drop

language, Spanish typically does not need the pronoun to accompany the verb for the speaker to understand if the verb form is a *tú* or *usted* since the verb morphology already has this information encoded in it. Yet, the students in their instructions made a point of using these pronouns, more than likely to emphasize that they were trying to be formal (in the case of *usted*) with Dra. Puentes and familiar (in the case of *tú*) with their peers.

Some might argue that producing an overt subject in a *pro*-drop language is simply transference from the L1 and not indicative of mitigation—since English always requires an overt subject. However, the evidence indicates that these pronouns were used intentionally. The immersion students used an overt *usted* pronoun 21 times while talking with Dra. Puentes. Though they sometimes used the *usted* morphology (more than likely mistakenly) when talking with their peers, they reserved the overt pronoun *usted* only for Dra. Puentes. For the study abroad students (who used mitigating forms far less frequently and were very “hit or miss” in terms of using *usted/tú* verb morphology), there was only one instance in the entire study where a student used the overt pronoun *usted* with Dra. Puentes. Even more telling is the fact that this one instance was uttered by Participant 31, the only study abroad student who demonstrated a clear intent to mitigate by using the pragmatic softener, *debería*. Clearly, in this case, a correlation exists between production of mitigating forms and production of overt pronouns.

So, what we can glean from this is that, following Koike (1989), students did use mitigating verb forms to make their requests. Unfortunately, the verb frequency information does not indicate that the students attempted to mitigate more with their non-peer interlocutor. One might assume, then, that the students were trying to be polite but did not see any need to vary the degree of politeness with their [+power, +distance] interlocutor. However, this does not appear to be the case. Instead, the students show increased mitigation with Dra. Puentes by their more frequent use of *por favor*, *gracias*, and *usted*. This would once again rule out any previous speculation that the students did not produce pragmatic softeners in the oral task because they did not see a need to be polite with their [+power, +distance] interlocutor. Instead, what we may

be observing here is that students are showing politeness in non-syntactic ways.

9.1.4 Research Question 3: Pragmatic Softener Production and Prescriptive Knowledge of Past Subjunctive and Conditional

In the previous two sections, I have argued that it does seem likely that the PAST prototype acquisition is an accurate and appropriate depiction of how pragmatic softeners are acquired. I have also put forth a suggestion on how we can break down the acquisition of pragmatic softeners into its subcomponents. Yet, knowing that certain components are necessary for acquisition does not mean that they are also sufficient. That is, other factors besides acquisition of the deictic past may also be at play. The third research question of interest to this study involved how conditional and past subjunctive acquisition shaped pragmatic softener acquisition. The idea here is that the Spanish pragmatic softeners are more than just past tense verbs—they are past tense verbs in the conditional or past subjunctive mood. Thus, it stands to reason that students would need to have a working knowledge of the past subjunctive and conditional before they could produce pragmatic softeners. This skill was tested both in Part A (cloze test) and Part B (the “real-world” statements) of the questionnaire. While the responses in Part B did show a correlation between prescriptive knowledge and pragmatic softener acquisition, the results of Part A were less conclusive. Yet, neither the Part A nor the Part B results indicated that acquisition of the past subjunctive and/or the conditional was a necessary precondition for producing pragmatic softeners.

We can first consider the results from Part B. Given the results of the prescriptive knowledge questions in Part B, it was apparent that some students entered into the study with prescriptive knowledge of conditional and past subjunctive verbs. Those who demonstrated this knowledge at the pretest continued to answer correctly on the subsequent questionnaires. Conversely, those who demonstrated very little knowledge on the pretest continued to answer incorrectly on subsequent questionnaires. Very little change in the data was seen, indicating that not much acquisition of these skills took place during their study abroad/immersion experience.

As I mentioned in Section 7.2, six students answered all of the prescriptive knowledge questions correctly in Part B of Questionnaires A, B and C. These six participants are 7, 9, 11, 12, 20, and 22. In addition to these six, I also took into consideration three other students who, although their scores were not perfect on all three questionnaires, they answered two of the three questionnaires with 100% accuracy. These students were participants #16, 31 and 32.

I coined these students the “nine exceptional students” and further examined their responses. I compared these responses to nine students who consistently answered incorrectly on the prescriptive knowledge questions. Seven of the nine answered every prescriptive knowledge question wrong. These participants’ numbers are 10, 30, 33, 34, 36, 38, and 42. Two more students were selected for this pool (1 and 13) because they only answered one prescriptive knowledge question correctly. In total, these students produced 18 softeners out of a potential 90, or 20%. The exceptional students opted to use a pragmatic softener 35 times out of a potential 90 times, or 39% of the time. (What’s more, the only two students who produced a pragmatic softener in the oral task were also among the “nine exceptional students”.) This means that the exceptional students were almost twice as likely to produce a pragmatic softener, thus lending evidence to the fact that perhaps a relationship does exist between prescriptive knowledge and pragmatic softener production.

Furthermore, the exceptional students are also more likely to use a past subjunctive softener. While the conditional softeners were preferred by both groups over past subjunctive softeners, the exceptional students were twice more likely to produce a past subjunctive softener. Eight out of the 35 softeners produced by the exceptional students were past subjunctive softeners (23%), while only two of the 18 (11%) softeners produced by the non-exceptional students were past subjunctive.

So, the facts clearly point to a relationship between prescriptive knowledge and pragmatic softener production. The evidence does not suggest, however, that prescriptive knowledge is a precondition for acquisition. That is to say, it does not appear that the students

need to be productive with the past subjunctive and conditional before they can produce pragmatic softeners. If it were a necessary precondition, how could we explain the 13 softeners produced by students who did not even answer one prescriptive knowledge question correctly? Yet, it seems counterintuitive that students would produce these forms in non-obligatory contexts but disregard them in obligatory contexts. Since pragmatic acquisition is often defined by "initial reliance on a few unanalyzed routines that are later decomposed and available for productive use" (Kasper and Schmidt 1996:159), perhaps we can speculate that these students are simply relying on unanalyzed routines that they have memorized and do not necessarily reflect productive use.

Even more troubling than these facts, though, are the results from Part A of the questionnaire—the cloze test. In that section, the students were also asked to conjugate verbs in prescriptive contexts. Unlike in Part B, though, very few students answered these questions correctly. In fact, no student answered every question correctly on all three questionnaires. Of those that did answer the prescriptive knowledge questions correctly, they were not any more likely to use a pragmatic softener than those who did not answer correctly. In fact, on the pre-test, only three students answered correctly. If we take a look at how these students responded in Part B of the questionnaire, we find that they collectively produced 2 out of 12 possible softeners. This is only 17%. The 33 students that did not answer correctly produced 27 out of a possible 87 softeners. This is 31%—a higher percentage than those that did answer correctly. So, not only was there no correlation between the two, those who didn't answer correctly were *more likely* to produce pragmatic softeners! This is very troubling and provides more evidence that production of the past subjunctive and/or conditional is not a necessary precondition for producing pragmatic softeners. Responses to subsequent questionnaires were not as dramatic but continued to indicate that producing past subjunctive and/or conditional verbs was not a prerequisite for pragmatic softener production.

9.1.5 Research Question 4: Appropriateness

The fourth research question addressed in this study involved the trends in learner perception of appropriateness in pragmatic softener usage. Part C of the questionnaire—the appropriateness evaluations section— was specifically designed to address this question. Recall that in this section, the students were given scenarios where a softener might be used and were asked to rate the level of appropriateness of various responses to the scenario. While the previous research questions were interested in the acquisition and production of softeners, this question is primarily aimed at observing learner perceptions of softeners. For these I was not attempting to elicit a softener from the student; the softeners are simply presented to the student and the student was asked to react. By presenting the forms to the students and asking for an evaluation of appropriateness, we are able to “get inside their heads” a little and look for clues as to why we have observed certain trends in production on the oral task and on other parts of the questionnaire. Of utmost importance is the fact that we observed some of the same trends in Part C of the questionnaire that we saw in Part B of the questionnaire. These trends are:

- *Podría* being a highly favored/produced form
- *Quisiera* being less preferred in the pre-test and becoming more preferred by the post-test
- *Quería* starting out as being ranked “very appropriate” and quickly becoming a dispreferred answer

The fact that *podría* is seen as a highly appropriate form (in one case, 95% of the students said that this form was “very appropriate) supports my previous claim that *podría* must be one of the first pragmatic softeners to be acquired. It is by far the most favored and most frequently produced softener in the study. We might even see an over-production of this form, given the fact that native speakers were actually more likely to use *podiera* than *podría*.

Both in production and in appropriateness ratings, the students indicate that *quisiera* is less preferred at the beginning and more preferred by the post-test. This is also a move toward a more

target-like view of *quisiera*. The native speaker respondents were also highly productive of this form.

However, the results of *quería* are an anomaly. Both the immersion and the study abroad groups showed a very clear preference for this answer in the beginning of the study and a very clear dislike of this form by the end of the study. Something has caused a drastic and abrupt change in attitude towards this form. One rationale might be that the students, having been exposed to intense language-situations, realized throughout their stay that this form is not acceptable to native speakers. However, this is likely not the case, since our native-speaker informants responded quite positively to this form. In fact, in a similar study conducted by J. César Félix-Brasdefer about Mexican Spanish requests, the researcher also attempted to establish linguistic scenarios that involved [+power, +distance] interlocutors. *Quería* was a highly common mitigating form used by his native-speaker subjects (Félix-Brasdefer, 2005). So, more than likely the students are not encountering any negative feedback from native speakers toward these forms.

One other possibility about what is happening with *quería* is that the form is simply so low frequency that the students are interpreting the fact that they do not hear/see it very often as meaning that the form is not appropriate in certain contexts. Yet, this argument does not make very much sense, as *quería* as a pragmatic softener is not any lower in frequency than are the other pragmatic softeners. The fact that we don't see a clear distaste for other softeners indicates that something else is going on with *quería*.

In fact, what makes this phenomenon even more perplexing is the fact that these students frequently use an almost identical construction in their L1. While we might expect *pudiera*, *quisiera*, and *debiera* to be more difficult to acquire or use felicitously because comparable forms don't exist in English, we would not expect this of *quería*. Consider the following contrived English examples:

- 1) I want to speak with you for a moment.

2) I wanted/was wanting to speak with you for a moment.

In utterance 1, the speaker uses a present tense verb to indicate his or her desire to speak to the interlocutor. Yet utterance 2 can also be used to indicate a present desire to speak to the interlocutor and, in fact, is a more polite way to do so. Sentence 2, despite using a past-tense verb, does not mean that the speaker had a desire to speak to the interlocutor in the past but now no longer has that desire. Instead, that past-tense verb is used simply to create a temporal space between the speaker and his request—thereby rendering it more polite.

This is exactly what is occurring in Spanish when *quería* is used as a pragmatic softener. So, the fact that the students would disprefer it is strange. In all likelihood, though, the student does not make the connection that the *quería* concept is something that they already know to be true about the relationship between verb-tense changes and politeness in their native language. In that case, perhaps a *can-could* type contrast is more overtly understood in the L1 than a *want-wanted* contrast and, therefore, more easily transferrable to the L2. This might explain why *quería* (which utilizes the *want-wanted* contrast) is largely dispreferred but *podría* (which utilizes the *can-could* contrast) is largely preferred. More research needs to be done to determine what role L1 transfer is playing in learner perceptions of pragmatic softeners.

While the aforementioned trends were consistent throughout the study, there were also some observations from Part C that were at odds with trends observed in Part B. These trends were as follows:

- While *querría* grows in popularity on Part B over time, Part C indicates that students are increasingly unsure about this form.
- While *debería* showed a slight swell in production on Part B of Questionnaire B, it also showed a large decrease in acceptability in Part C of Questionnaire C.

As mentioned previously, *querría* is actually much more prevalent in the immersion group than in the study abroad group. Only a few students use the form at the beginning of the stay, but the tight-knit linguistic community without outside influence helps to reinforce this form. Thus, the fact that *querría* grows in popularity is more of an anomaly. The fact that the students in Part C

remain largely unsure about this form is a more reliable litmus test for determining how students perceive this form. This attitude coincides with the native speaker respondents, who do not produce this form frequently and show varying responses in its appropriateness.

A similar trend can be seen with the conditional softener *debería*. Students entered the study believing that this form was largely appropriate (and being productive with this form) but by the end of the study responded with more doubt about these forms. So, the students are becoming more confident in the past subjunctive forms and less confident in the conditional forms. This indicates the students are becoming more target-like, as the native speakers also were more productive with past subjunctive softeners than conditional softeners.

Interestingly, *podiera*—which was not ever produced in Part B on the pre-test through post-test—is deemed highly appropriate on Part C of all three questionnaires. Likewise, *debiera*, which was rarely produced in Part B, also show up as an increasing preference in Part C. This reflects a more general trend of Part C in which students began the study feeling very unsure about how appropriate the past subjunctive softeners (*podiera*, *debiera*, *quisiera*) would be in conversation but by the end of the study mostly responded that these forms were highly appropriate. This trend matches up nicely with my theory that past subjunctive softeners are acquired later than conditional softeners.

The fact that *podiera* is consistently marked as “highly appropriate” on all the questionnaires yet is not produced until the follow-up questionnaire is worth looking at. Specifically, this causes us to question why the majority of students would be favorable toward the form from the beginning yet none would use the form during their stay abroad or at the immersion academy. One would think a favorable attitude toward a softener would result in the production of that softener. What's even more perplexing is that many of the “nine exceptional students” mentioned in the prescriptive-knowledge section produced *podiera* in its obligatory contexts. So, not only do the students feel positively toward the form, they even produce it in prescriptive circumstances.

This may be evidence of a time lag that occurs between student awareness of how/when a form is used and the moment they actually start using it.

It is difficult to say whether the students' intuitions about appropriate evaluations are becoming more target-like as the study progresses, mostly because the native speakers' evaluations themselves are so non-cohesive. Nevertheless, it is evident that the students are attempting to sort out their attitudes towards the forms. The fact that the student answers are even more unified toward the end of the study than the native speaker responses may indicate that the students may have "latched on" to certain forms but need to fine-tune their understanding of when and how these forms are used.

9.1.6 Research Question 5: Immersion and Study Abroad Contexts

The final research question of the study asked whether the language-learning context itself (i.e. study abroad or immersion) has any bearing on the acquisition of pragmatic softeners. Certainly, as I have mentioned numerous times before, there are clear differences between the two groups. But, we must ascertain whether these differences were present when the study started. Indeed, we find that they were. The immersion students, despite having almost half of the classroom instruction time of the study abroad group, showed from the beginning to be on a higher level. Even on the pre-test, this group was more likely to produce pragmatic softeners, more likely to answer prescriptive knowledge questions correctly, and more likely to use mitigating forms in the oral task. So, these differences are really not attributable to the language-learning context (immersion or study abroad) since they were present before the students entered into that context. That is to say, if the students from the immersion group had been in a study abroad context instead, they still would have produced pragmatic softeners, used mitigating forms, etc. and generally outperformed the other group.

Obviously, it would have been better for the two groups to be more similar in proficiency and skill level. The fact that the amount of classroom instruction did not seem to be a significant factor in the abilities of these students is rather surprising and stirs up a lot of unanswered questions. I

would recommend that future studies use a different barometer for proficiency besides the amount of classroom instruction. Nevertheless, we must approach the question of how context shaped pragmatic softener acquisition with the knowledge that the two groups, albeit unintentionally so, are not entering into the study with comparable abilities.

That being said, we can still determine whether the two groups, given their own unique starting points, demonstrated any changes over time that might be attributable to the language-learning context itself. Unfortunately, we did not see much change in production over time for either group. The study abroad group started out being largely non-productive of pragmatic softeners and remained that way throughout the study. The immersion group started out producing pragmatic softeners and continued to produce them throughout the study. The frequency with which each group produced individual softeners was largely static throughout the study, as well. For example, on every questionnaire, 10 of the 22 immersion students produced a *poder* softener—usually *podría*. At the same time, on all four questionnaires, two or three study abroad students used a *poder* softener. So, the immersion students produce more softeners than the study abroad students—but do not show any real change over time.

The only place that showed any real variability was with the immersion students on *querría* and *quería*. While the study abroad students' production of these forms remained low and stable, the immersion students showed a change over time in how they used these forms. In essence, they do a “flip-flop” in production. They start out producing *quería* frequently and *querría* very infrequently. About halfway through the study, they become very productive with *querría* and completely stop producing *quería* at all. By the end of the study, neither of the forms is very frequent. What's even more intriguing about this trend is that the native speakers did not produce either of these forms at all. So, in regards to *querría*, why would increased time at the academy cause a shift **away** from a target-like response and then back **towards** them once the students leave the academy?

One reason, which I have mentioned previously, is the fact that the immersion academy students have little contact with the outside world. They are a tight-knit linguistic community without outside influence. This is the perfect storm for certain forms to be reinforced—even if they are not necessarily forms that native speakers would use. So, one thought is that *querría*, although not as common among native speakers, is being reinforced in this largely non-native speaker community and that *quería* is not. This would explain the sudden drop in *querría* on the follow-up (given after the students have left the tight-knit linguistic community).

Despite the gap in proficiency between the study abroad group and the immersion group, the groups did not differ at all in their treatment of past tense verbs in the cloze test. Both groups appeared to have mastered the final stages of the deictic past. The immersion students were no more likely to produce the latter stages—stative-imperfective or achievement-perfective—than the study abroad students. And, once again, we saw little change over time in this area.

To summarize, the role that the context played in this study is very difficult to discern. In many cases, the context did not seem to have any effect at all. In other cases, such as the changes in perception and production towards *quería* and *querría*, we see that while the study abroad students show hardly any change whatsoever, the immersion students actually move away from target-like forms. This phenomenon seems to confirm the fears of the Middlebury College students in Chapter 2—that somehow the immersion environment actually makes their Spanish less native-like in some ways. Or, we could spin this a different way—saying that at least the immersion group demonstrates change at all, indicating that some learning is occurring. After all, the immersion group does go on in the follow-up questionnaire to become more target-like—even more target-like than the study abroad group. The study abroad group, on the other hand, seems to be operating outside of their context—with no indication of change whatsoever. So, even though the immersion group temporarily moves away from target norms, perhaps the fact that they moved at all indicates that their language-learning context was more conducive to acquiring pragmatic competence.

9.2 Generalizability

Now that the above conclusions regarding the research have been reached, the question of generalizability still remains. While we have definitely observed specific trends in production and changes in attitude towards these softeners, can these results be extended from the sample population to the population at large? By this, I mean, is it possible to take what we saw about immersion academy students and apply this knowledge to all immersion students? Is it possible to assert that since these study abroad students showed certain patterns of behavior that, therefore, all study abroad students will show the same patterns? In order to answer these questions, we must look at both the number and composition of the 36 students who participated in the study. While the sample size was relatively low (14 in the study abroad group and 22 in the immersion group), this sample size is actually quite comparable to other studies of this nature—both in Aspect Hypothesis research (Carduner 1998; Pinto 2005; House and Kasper 1997) and interlanguage pragmatics research (Cadierno 2000; Salaberry 1999; Lafford 1996). The real question at play is whether a larger sample size would have “bought” me any more information about the nature of these forms. In all, 36 students were sufficient to observe the patterns of production and the trends in changes of attitude. More students would likely have confirmed the patterns and trends detected from this smaller group of participants. So, the number of participants is not likely to affect the generalizability of the study.

But, what about the composition of the groups? How representative of the general population were they? One advantage of the groups that I chose was that the members that comprised the groups were not all from the same school or instructor. In fact, the immersion students each represented a different Virginia high-school altogether and, therefore, a completely different group of instructors. Since these students each had previously attended at least four years of high-school Spanish, we can assume that the twenty-two students represented (conservatively conjecturing) at least sixty different Spanish instructors and probably many more. So, these students are not simply representing one school, one instructor, or one teaching style. On the

other hand, each of these students is being educated in the Virginia public-school system, which means that despite being from different schools and being educated by different instructors, these students likely did have some continuity in their backgrounds. Certainly, we would expect that all Virginia public high schools have to achieve specific standards of learning and likely utilize similar curriculum in their classrooms. So, the immersion students are probably more representative of Virginia high school Spanish students than, say, Texas or California students who are learning Spanish. Additionally, we must remember that the immersion students were chosen to attend the academy because they were exceptional language-learning students. So, the students are most representative of exceptional language learners in the Virginia public-school system. It would be difficult to generalize beyond that point.

The study abroad group is probably more representative of average-ability college students who choose to study abroad. While the 14 study abroad participants represent only five colleges in the Northwest part of the United States, most of these students had classroom Spanish instruction in high school, as well. Since each of these students represented not only their college but their high school as well, we can safely assume that no two students share the same instructional background. Like the immersion students, they represent a variety of teachers and teaching styles. While it is unknown exactly where each of these students attended high school, it is unlikely that they are all representing the same state's foreign- language program, as the immersion students were. Additionally, these students are not necessarily representative of exceptional language learners. While the students did need a 2.8 GPA to attend the study abroad program, this application process was not nearly as rigorous as that required to be in the immersion program. So, these students are most representative of average-to-above-average-ability language learners studying in the Northwest. It would be difficult to generalize much beyond that because we do not know how college students in other areas of the U.S. would compare.

Given the composition of these groups and the populations that they represent, it is fair to say that the results of this study can be generalized but only to a certain extent. Data from other regions of the country and from other student ability levels is needed for the results to be generalizable to the entire population of high-school and college-aged Spanish language-learners.

9.3 Limitations

In addition to the limitations on the generalizability of the study, some other limitations to the study exist, as well. These limitations are due to built-in constraints in the methodology, questionnaire design flaws, unforeseen problems in data collection, and the general exploratory nature of the research. I begin with the methodology constraints. One of the most difficult constraints of the methodology was the fact that I only could communicate with the students and conduct the research in Spanish, which is not these students' native language. Of course, this constraint was a requirement to be able to work with the immersion students. Those who coordinate the immersion academy are so committed to 100% immersion that the students cannot be exposed to English at any time during their stay. Since the study was conducted during their stay at the academy, English instructions and questionnaires were strictly prohibited. Each time I gave the students a questionnaire, I was unsure whether they even understood the instructions on how to complete it. I tried to reiterate orally how the questionnaire was organized and how to fill it out. I also invited the students to ask questions if they were unsure. However, I never could be totally sure that the students understood, for example, that number "3" on the likert scale meant "I don't know". So, when analyzing the questionnaires, I had to keep in mind that the students' responses could have been the result of a misunderstanding of the instructions of the questionnaire.

But, not only were the instructions on the questionnaire in Spanish, the actual items that the students were responding to were also in Spanish. This also was a disadvantage to the study, because I did not know if the students always understood the vocabulary used in each item of the

questionnaire. For example, in Part B, the student might be presented with an item such as example 1 below.

1) (*Dicho en una conversación: un estudiante está hablando con el decano de la universidad*) “Disculpe, ¿ _____(poder) hablar con usted por unos minutos?”

The student is asked to conjugate the verb *poder* to the form that he/she believes was used when this sentence was originally spoken. It is crucial that the student understand the part in italics that says ‘*Said in a conversation: a student is talking with the dean of the university*’. If the students did not understand the word *decano*, for example, and assumed it to mean something other than *dean* (a person the students would want to be polite to), the degree of mitigation used when they conjugated *poder* would be affected. So, the fact that the questionnaire items were in the students’ non-native language could have negatively influenced the results of the study. Obviously, I tried to design the questionnaire with this limitation in mind and attempted to use easy-to-understand Spanish vocabulary. The students were also given explicit instructions to ask questions if they were unsure of the meaning of a word. But, even then, the definition of the word also had to be given in Spanish. So, although attempts to mitigate the effects of this limitation were made, it likely did have some influence on the results of the study.

I was similarly limited on the oral task. The students were told in Spanish what they were supposed to do in the film reenactment and how to go about doing it. While an innate power and distance differential existed between the students and Dra. Puentes simply because of the age-difference, unfamiliarity, and aloof body language on the part of Dra. Puentes, I tried to exaggerate this differential by explaining to the students that Dra. Puentes was a busy Spanish professor who had given her precious time to help with the study, so consequentially they needed to show her the respect she deserved. But, the fact that this information was relayed to the students in their non-native language meant that it could have been “lost in translation,” so to speak. Actually, it is apparent in the transcripts that many students were confused about what to do when they interacted with Dra. Puentes. Many asked her at the outset, “What am I supposed

to do, again?" This confusion likely would not have occurred if we had not been limited in our use of English. And, more than likely, the fact that the instructions to the oral task were given in Spanish did influence the results of the study.

However, it is important to note that the study abroad students, although they were not bound to a "Spanish-only" pledge, also received the questionnaires and instructions in Spanish. In this way, both groups were equally disadvantaged. It would have been very difficult to compare data if the study abroad group had received the instructions and questionnaires in English, but the immersion group had been given everything in Spanish. It would have been nearly impossible to sort out which differences were the result of the instructions being in English and which differences were the result of the language-learning context itself. So, to even the playing field, both groups had the same constraints built into the methodology. Thus, while the "Spanish-only" restriction likely did influence the results of the study, the results from the two groups can be paired against each other without any group having the upper hand.

Another limitation of the study was design flaws that were in the questionnaires themselves. Since the questionnaire used was created specifically for this study, it did not have the advantage of having been used (and therefore "tested out") before. Although I did run a pilot study in which native speakers and non-native speakers completed the questionnaires and gave feedback for improvement, a few minor flaws and inconsistencies still made it through to the versions used in the study. A few of these errors could have resulted in a misinterpretation of the question being asked (see *Appendix B: Comparison Questionnaire* for a full list). In order to ensure that these errors did not influence the study negatively, I asked a group of 14 fourth-semester Spanish students at the University of Texas at Arlington to fill out a questionnaire. Half of the students (n=7) received the original questions with typos. The other half (n=7) received a corrected version. The difference between means was calculated for these two groups and a t-test was run. The t-test determined that only one item had a statistically significant difference. This item was in the appropriateness evaluations scenario that involved the students writing the

President of their University to ask if they could participate in a study abroad trip. The response “Estimado Señor, Quiero ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?” had a statistically significant difference between the means of the two groups. This response was one of a total of four for that scenario and was the only one of the four identified as problematic. Furthermore, the response did not contain a pragmatic softener. Thus with the exception of this one item, the t-test results indicate that the questionnaire was valid despite the typographical errors. While none of these issues was crucial to the study, the errors were significant enough that they would need to be changed if the questionnaire were to be used in other research. For that reason, the questionnaires that appear in Appendix B are corrected versions.

Despite the statistics results, I was concerned enough about one typo that appeared in both Questionnaires B and C that I chose to not include the results of that question in the study. This typo occurred in the *poder* question of Part C. In both cases, the item read *me pase* instead of *me pasa*. While this item involved a non-pragmatic softener and therefore was not crucial to the study, this construction is fairly common in native-speaker production. Because the students were reacting to an ungrammatical form, I could not use the information they provided on how appropriate they thought the form was. So, the study is limited in that I cannot provide results on how appropriate the students rate this alternate form.

The second issue with the questionnaire was a problem with consistency of the prescriptive-knowledge questions in Part B of the questionnaire. These items were meant to collect data on how students react to a prescriptive-knowledge question in which the past subjunctive or conditional is the correct answer. I limited these items to the verbs *poder*, *deber*, and *querer*. The limitation here was that the Questionnaires A and B did not contain any questions in which the conditional was the correct answer. This means that until the post-test we do not have any information on prescriptive knowledge of the conditional. Thus, while we can make fairly accurate assessments of what type of past subjunctive prescriptive knowledge the

students came into and left the study with, we cannot make the same assessments for the conditional. An additional consideration here is that *deber* was never included in these prescriptive knowledge questions. So, what we observe about prescriptive knowledge from Part B of the questionnaire is representative only of the verbs *poder* and *querer*.

Recall that Part A of the questionnaire also contained some hidden opportunities for the students to produce past subjunctive and conditional verbs. In this case, the opportunities were only those whose correct answers were the past subjunctive. While this is not necessarily a design flaw, once again it limits the opportunities that students have to demonstrate their knowledge of the conditional. In general, the past subjunctive was over-represented in the prescriptive knowledge questions. In a subsequent study using this questionnaire, I would encourage the researcher to create more of a balance in the prescriptive-knowledge questions.

Another limitation to the study involved unforeseen problems in data collection. While no study is immune to these types of issues, the outcome of the study is ultimately affected by them. The first unforeseen problem was student absences. While I was fortunate enough to have no absences in the study-abroad group, at least one student from the immersion group was absent at each data collection. This meant that I was unable to get full sets of data from these students—especially on the oral task. This limited my ability to make claims about how students progressed over time, since there were holes in the data.

Similarly, I was influenced by time constraints. Since this research design was entirely original, I was unsure how long it would take to run all of the students through the various components of the session. On my first session at the immersion academy, we ran over the time allotted and several students left without completing the oral task. This included Participant 22, who was one of the two students who produced a pragmatic softener in the oral task. So, these time constraints limited my ability to collect data that could have been crucial to the study.

Participant 31, the other student who produced a pragmatic softener in the oral task, also fell victim to an unforeseen problem: equipment malfunctions. A couple of times throughout the

study, the voice recorder did not record the oral task correctly or at all. Unfortunately, this type of issue occurred in Session 1 while Participant 31 was talking with her peer. So, this type of equipment failure also limited my ability to collect data that could have been crucial to the study.

The last unforeseen problem was the rate of return on the follow-up questionnaires. I had the distinct advantage of being physically present with the students as they completed the first three questionnaires. That meant that (excluding the students who were absent) I was able to personally collect each questionnaire from the students. Because the follow-up questionnaire was mailed to the students, I did not have as much control over how many were returned to me. Compared to most other studies involving a mailed questionnaire, I had an extremely high rate of return—86%. However, those that did not return the questionnaire limited my analysis because I again did not have a complete set of questionnaires, and therefore a complete acquisition profile, for that particular student.

Finally, my study was limited by the nature of the study itself. Not much work has been done previously on the acquisition of Spanish pragmatic softeners. Thus, this study was largely exploratory in nature. Going into the study, I was not sure what kind of data I was going to find. I did not have the advantage of past research to judge how to go about collecting the information I sought. While I was able to borrow ideas from other researchers who had studied the past category acquisition, I was ultimately limited by methods that I chose—especially in the film reenactment of the oral task. Since only two students produced a pragmatic softener in that task, it seems likely that it was not the most efficient way of collecting pragmatic softener data from learners. The data that I did collect is ultimately useful because it shows student mitigation strategies other than pragmatic softeners. But, if the goal is to create a sociolinguistic scenario in which students produce pragmatic softeners, that goal was not achieved by the oral task.

In the same way, the exploratory nature of the study combined with the fact that pragmatic softeners are extremely difficult to elicit also limited certain aspects of the questionnaire. For example, in Part C of the questionnaire, the students were asked to react to a

certain sociolinguistic scenario and to rate the appropriateness of certain responses. This seemed like a logical way to assess student attitudes towards pragmatic softeners. However, once I was able to analyze the data, I realized that I had no way of determining if the student deemed a softener (in)appropriate because the softener itself was generally problematic to the student or because the softener was (in)appropriate for that particular sociolinguistic scenario. If I had been able to use previous research as a launching pad, I might have realized before the study was completed that this would be a potential problem with the methodology chosen. Hopefully, though, bringing these limitations to light will provide insight for others who want to do work in this area.

9.4 Avenues of Research

Fortunately for those who do want to do more work in this area, there is much more work to be done. There are many avenues of research that can (and hopefully will) be born out of this study. The first avenue that a researcher might pursue would be a similar study but one where the students are in the language-intense environment for a longer period of time. Undoubtedly, three weeks—however intense—is a very brief amount of time. The results of this study indicate that it may be too short of a time for any real acquisition to occur. The fact that we really did not see any significant changes over time in several parts of the questionnaire and the oral task would lead us to believe that perhaps these softeners take more time to develop and be refined. Clearly, this study did indicate that students have awareness of pragmatic softeners and fairly specific attitudes toward the softeners. These attitudes even changed over the course of a few weeks. Yet, many of them were not in sync with a native speaker's intuition or production. Perhaps the three week time (or the study itself) was enough to get them thinking about these forms, but the limited time didn't allow for them to sort out exactly how they are used. This could be why more native-like production and attitudes appeared in the follow-up questionnaire—given three months after the students returned home. How would these results change if the student were in a study abroad or immersion context for a few months or even a year? Would this give

them enough time and experience to work out any doubts they have about when to use these forms? Would their intuitions and production become more like that of a native speaker? This would be a great follow-up inquiry to pair against the findings in this study.

Another interesting avenue of research would be to repeat this study with learners who all are exceptional language-learners. One of the most surprising aspects of this study was that, despite similar experiences and amounts of previous exposure to classroom instruction, the younger, relatively less-experienced immersion academy students outperformed the study abroad students. Not only were they more prone to use pragmatic softeners, more likely to answer prescriptive knowledge questions correctly, and more adept at using a variety of forms in the oral task, they also excelled in other areas not related to the study. For example, the immersion students were much more likely to pronounce vocabulary correctly, use a wide assortment of words, and be able to accurately execute complex verb conjugations. The study abroad students simply were not on the same level as the immersion students. This is not necessarily attributable to the language-intense context. Even on the pre-test, these students were outperforming the study abroad students. So, despite their age and their much longer exposure to classroom instruction, the study abroad students were actually at a disadvantage from the start. One possibility is that Virginia students were top students while the study abroad students were only average to above-average. Perhaps the results of the study would have been different if the study abroad students had also been the “top” students of their language departments rather than simply being Spanish majors. It would be intriguing to conduct a similar study using only the top 10% of college students from language departments around the country. This might provide us with students of similar caliber to the immersion-academy participants. Alternatively, use of a standardized placement test by all participants might give a more accurate assessment than relying on the number of class hours they had taken.

The fact that the immersion students are so proficient given their limited exposure to classroom Spanish raises a key question: what is going **right** with these students to make them

such optimal language learners? Are they simply exposed to such quality instructors and instruction in the classroom that their four years of high-school Spanish would be equivalent to the four years plus four to eight semesters of instruction received by the study abroad students? Or, does the fact that they are rated “top” students at their schools mean that they simply acquire things faster and more fully? Perhaps the individuals of this group of “top” students all possess certain personality characteristics (Motivation? Tenacity? Attentiveness?) that prime them for successful language learning. Hopefully the Virginia Department of Education will allow other researchers to continue to work with their students so that we can determine what makes their students so successful.

Another area that needs to be explored is the Spanish Past Category Sequence. As far as I know, this is the first study to empirically verify the theory set forth by Anderson and Shirai (1996) that the deictic past must be acquired prior to the acquisition of pragmatic softeners. Yet, most of the students in the study apparently had already acquired the deictic past—even the late stages such as stative-imperfective and achievement-perfective verbs. While it was evident that students did not use pragmatic softeners without also demonstrating knowledge of the late stages of the deictic past, it would have been helpful to see this acquisition sequence in action. These students, in essence, were too advanced to actually show this acquisition taking place. Now that we have preliminary evidence that the theory is correct in regard to pragmatic softeners, I believe the door is wide open for other researchers to define exactly how and when this acquisition takes place. This type of research would likely involve a less proficient learner over a longer period of time.

Without a doubt, much work remains to be done in the area of pragmatic acquisition in Spanish. Even out of such a narrow study like this one that only focused on seven pragmatic softeners there are many opportunities for more research.

9.5 Recommendations

I would like to conclude this chapter by offering some practical solutions for how people on the “front lines” of language learning—teachers, program coordinators, curriculum designers, and even students—can benefit from the findings of this study. First, I recommend that the classroom curriculum be clearer about how and when these softeners are used. As we saw in the data, the students tended to favor *podría* but almost entirely ignore its very similar (albeit more polite) counterpart *podiera*. Both are acceptable forms of mitigation. Yet, the students back away from the more polite version, *podiera*. I think we see this because the classroom instruction that the students have been previously exposed to is confusing, at best. When students learn the conditional, they learn that *podría*, *querría*, and *debería* translate to *could*, *would*, and *should*. The conditional taps into the students’ innate L1 knowledge. Therefore, the students can intuit that there is a clear difference, for example, between “I want a cookie” and “I would like a cookie.” However, we cannot rely only on intuition for complete mastery of this concept because the past subjunctive (*podiera*, *quisiera*, *debiera*) also translate to *could*, *would*, and *should*. This can lead to confusion on the part of the learner—confusion that we clearly see in the results of this study. The problem is that the difference between these forms needs to be made explicit for these students. Consider the following excerpt from a common Spanish textbook, *Puntos de Partida: An Invitation to Spanish* (1989) by Marty Knorre:

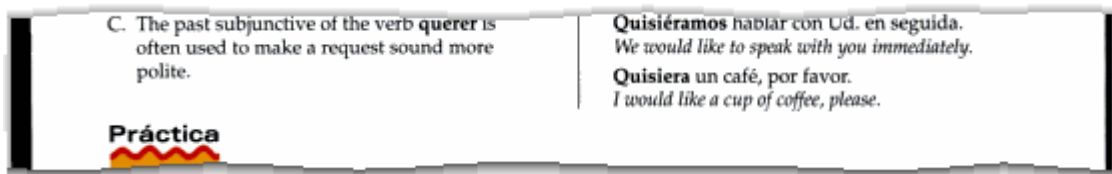


Figure 9.2 Spanish textbook excerpt

What we see here is three-fold: 1) a statement of fact stating that the past subjunctive can be used to increase the politeness of a request; 2) Some Spanish examples of this type of usage; 3)

an English translation of these examples. There is an assumption made by the presenter that the student will recognize the English translation as being a polite utterance. I would argue that most students would not read the sentence “We would like to speak with you immediately” and identify it as polite because they have nothing to compare it to. On the other hand, the utterance “I would like a cup of coffee, please” is more likely to be identified as polite. However, this identification is because of the non-essential word *please*, not because of the use of the verb choice, which is the focus of this construction. So, neither of these examples are very explanatory as to how these verb forms can be used and what to what degree they mitigate the sentence. They also do not address the conditional’s mitigating properties at all. An uncomplicated way to clear up the confusion for students is to provide them with contrasting sentences and an accompanying politeness scale. Take, for example, Figure 9.3 below, which could be used in place of the example above.

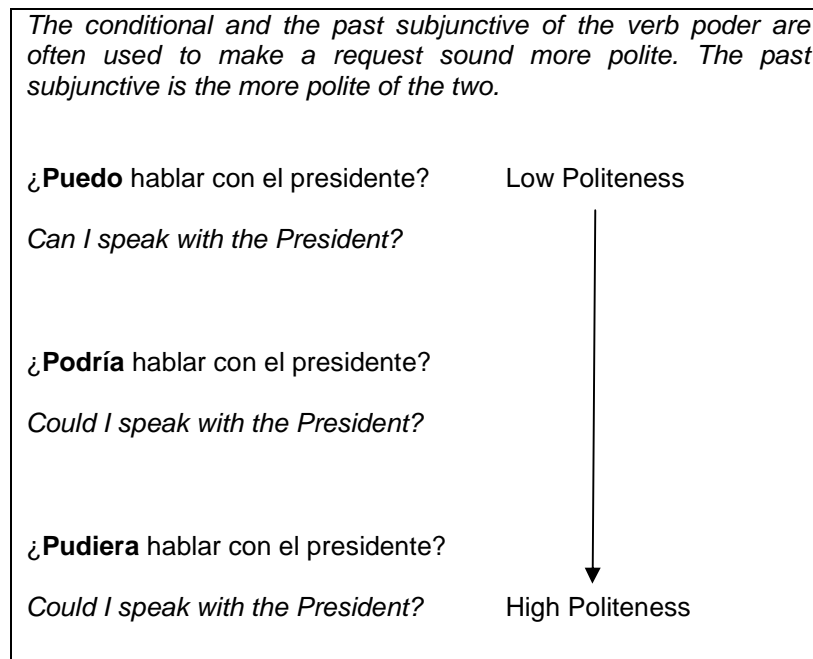


Figure 9.3 Suggested changes to Spanish textbook

By providing the students with simple contrasting examples that do not have “distracters” such as *por favor* in them, the students can clearly differentiate that the change in verb is what is

causing the mitigation and that, while the conditional and past subjunctive do have the same translation, the past subjunctive version is the more polite of the two. Classroom instructors could build on the curriculum by providing lesson plans in which they present the students with real-life scenarios in which they would need to choose which of these forms would be most appropriate.

Additionally, it would be helpful if textbooks and/or lesson plans were able to make explicit the *want-wanted* contrast that is the crux of understanding how *quería* is used for politeness. As mentioned above, students do not seem to identify this type of construction as something that they do in their L1 and, therefore, do not transfer it to the L2. To maximize the students' understanding of this concept, both teachers and textbooks alike must make "the covert overt." In other words, we must take implicit knowledge that the students possess about their L1 and make this knowledge explicit so that it can be applied to the L2. The best way to do this would simply be to give the students examples in English of instances when *wanted* or *was wanting* is used to mitigate a request and then provide comparable examples in Spanish. It is likely that a brief explanation paired with relevant examples would be all that is necessary for the students to realize how and why *quería* can be used in polite contexts.

9.6 Concluding Remarks

So, hopefully, a change in the way these forms are presented in the curriculum will help the students to have a better grasp of the differences between them. While it would seem that the study abroad students would have been able to observe these forms being used during their encounters with native speakers, the data from this study indicates that being abroad provided these students with no additional clarity on how these forms are used. One thing that I noticed about the particular group of students I worked with was that their trip was not largely focused on language. Despite the fact that the students were using the language in their home-stay context and in their daily classroom activities, more emphasis was placed on culture rather than language. The projects that the students largely focused on involved cultural aspects of the study abroad experience—what taboos existed in the society, what customs were different, etc. While

Spanish was the medium through which these issues were being discussed, the goal was not to examine and observe the language-in-context nearly as much as it was to study the culture. My recommendation to those leading a study abroad group is that they be intentional about encouraging the students to observe how the language is used in the Spanish-speaking country where the students are visiting. For example, the program coordinator could ask students to spend 20 minutes at an ice-cream shop writing down how each customer places his/her order. Or, the students could be asked to keep a diary of how the servers in every restaurant where they eat address their clients. Even in the home stay experience, the students could be on the look-out for examples of mitigation and pragmatic softening. The assumption may be that because the students are in a Spanish-speaking country, that they would be attending to these types of matters anyway. However, the evidence from this study indicates that students may need extra guidance in this area and activities that force them to attend to how the language is being used.

This dissertation sought to explore and expand pragmatic softening as produced and perceived by L2 learners of Spanish. Preliminary evidence was found that empirically verified that pragmatic softeners are rightly included in Anderson and Shirai (1996) as a marginal member of the PAST category which is acquired after the more central member—the *deictic past*—has been acquired. Additionally, it was argued that the term *pragmatic softening* itself needs to be fleshed out so that it, too, is divided into its subcomponents. Based on the data in this study, it was also suggested that perhaps among these subcomponents would exist some sort of an acquisitional sequence of the seven pragmatic softeners since they are acquired at different rates and times. This dissertation also found that production on prescriptive knowledge items that dealt with the conditional and past subjunctive were not necessary preconditions for production of pragmatic softeners. However, it was determined that the students who answered prescriptive knowledge questions were more likely to produce pragmatic softeners. Some clear trends were observed in learner perception of pragmatic softener appropriateness, as well. Some of these trends were not congruent with native speaker evaluations. Finally, the question of whether language-learning

context shaped pragmatic softener acquisition was addressed. It was found that the immersion students were more likely to fluctuate in their production of and attitude towards pragmatic softeners than the study abroad group. The immersion group was also more likely to use other mitigating devices on the oral task.

APPENDIX A

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SHEET

Información biográfica¹⁷

Número de participante _____

1) ¿Cuánta experiencia académica con español has completado? Pon un círculo alrededor del nivel más avanzado que has completado.

Escuela secundaria	1 año	2 años	3 años	4 años	5 años
Universidad	1 semestres	2 semestres	3 semestres	4 semestres	
	5 semestres	6 semestres	7 semestres	8+ semestres	

2) ¿Has viajado a un país hispanohablante?

Sí No

Si tu respuesta es Sí:

¿Qué países visitaste?: _____

¿Por cuanto tiempo en total?: _____

¿Cuántas horas al día usaste el español para comunicarte con otros, en forma hablada o escrita?

0 1-2 3-5 6 o más

3) ¿Tenías contacto regular en español cuando eras niño?

a) en la casa y en la escuela b) sólo en la casa c) sólo en la escuela d) ni en la casa ni en la escuela

4) ¿Son tus padres hablantes nativos de español?

Sí

¹⁷ While I typically would have elected to use the formal register on a biographical information sheet, I was ultimately concerned with the students' ability to read and understand the question being asked, since the form was not in their native language. Thus, for clarity's sake, I chose to make the entire biographical sheet familiar instead of formal.

Madre y Padre

Madre (sólo)

Padre (sólo)

No

5) En una escala de 1 a 5, ¿cómo describirías tus habilidades en el idioma español?

(Bajo) 1 2 3 4 5 (Alto)

6) ¿Con quién conversas en español fuera de la clase/la escuela?

Madre

Amigos

Padre

Colegas en el trabajo

Abuelos

Otro _____

Hermanos

7) ¿Has estudiado otro idioma además del inglés y español?

No

Sí _____ (**¿Cuál(es)?**)

8) ¿Cuántos años tienes?

9) ¿Eres varón (niño) o mujer (niña)?

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRES

Cuestionario A

Número de participante = _____

Parte A

La historia siguiente es de la película de Charlie Chaplin que acabamos de mirar. Cambie los verbos en paréntesis al TIEMPO PASADO.

Charlie Chaplin _____(preparar) el desayuno en la cocina. En seguida, él _____(encontrar) una gallina y la _____(poner) en la sartén. Charlie Chaplin _____(esperar) hasta que la gallina _____(poner) el huevo. Por fin, el huevo _____(llegar). Mientras que el huevo _____(llegar), Charlie Chaplin _____(colocar) el pan en la mesa. Después, Charlie _____(empezar) a preparar el café. Él _____(añadir) mucho azúcar a una de las tazas. _____(haber) una vaca afuera. Charlie _____(usar) la vaca para añadir la leche al café. Charlie _____(mezclar) el café y _____(llevar) la vaca adentro de la casa. Mientras que el hombre _____(entrar) la cocina, Charlie _____(echar) el café. Charlie _____(estar) orgulloso porque _____(ser) muy creativo cuando _____(estar) preparando el desayuno.

Parte B

Cambie los verbos en paréntesis. Use la forma del verbo que piensa que fue usada cuando era dicha/escrita originalmente.

- 1) *(Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión)* “En primer lugar yo _____(querer) decirles que me parece que hay algunas conclusiones incorrectas.”
- 2) *(Escrito en un documento del gobierno)* “¿Ha sufrido un accidente de coche? _____(deber) llamar a un abogado.”
- 3) *(Dicho en un programa de la televisión)* “No estaba seguro que tú _____(poder) asistir a la reunión.”

4) (*Escrito en un periódico*) Si ella _____(querer) hacerlo, podría ser médico.

5) (*Dicho en una conversación: un estudiante está hablando con el decano de la universidad*) “Disculpe, ¿ _____(poder) hablar con usted por unos minutos?”

Parte C

6) Tu mamá quiere unos pantalones nuevos. Decides ir de compras con ella. Mientras que ella se prueba los pantalones, otra mujer aparece del probador. La mujer lleva una falda horrible. Ella te pregunta, “¿Debo comprar esta falda o buscar otra?”

¿Cuán apropiadas son las respuestas siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) “No compre esta falda.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) “Debe buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) “Cómprala. ¡Qué bonita es!” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) “Yo buscaría otra falda.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) “Debiera buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) “Debería buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7) Estás perdido en una ciudad latinoamericana. Necesitas direcciones. Decides pedir ayuda de un hombre vestido de un traje de negocio. Parece que él está muy ocupado, pero no hay otra persona para ayudarte.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) “¿Pudiera ayudarme? Estoy perdido.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) “Necesito direcciones.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) “Ayúdeme. Estoy perdido.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) “¿Sabe dónde está la calle Colón?” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) “¿Puede ayudarme? Estoy perdido.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8) Tienes que escribir una carta al presidente de la universidad donde estudias. Le pides la oportunidad de ir en un viaje exclusivo a Sudamérica. El presidente personalmente escoge a los participantes.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las cartas siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

- 1= no apropiado;**
2= un poco apropiado
3= no sé
4= bastante apropiado
5= muy apropiado

a) “Estimado Señor,
 Quiero ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

b) “Estimado Señor,
 Quisiera ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

c) “Estimado Señor,
 Quería añadir mi nombre a la lista de participantes en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

d) “Estimado Señor,
 Querría ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

Cuestionario B

Número de participante = _____

Parte A

La historia siguiente es de la película de Charlie Chaplin que acabamos de mirar. Por favor, cambie los verbos en paréntesis al TIEMPO PASADO.

Charlie Chaplin y una mujer _____(estar) al lado de una carreta cubierta. Charlie le _____(decir) a la mujer que necesitaba conseguir agua. Ella _____(salir) con un cubo. Chaplin _____(preparar) el desayuno. Él _____(romper) los huevos con un martillo. Después, _____(tirar) las cáscaras al césped. Mientras tanto, la mujer _____(encontrar) un pintor. Mientras que el pintor y la mujer _____(hablar), Charlie Chaplin _____(poner) la mesa. Él _____(usar) una camisa de leñador en vez de un mantel. Charlie no _____(estar) seguro de lo que _____(deber) hacer con las mangas de la camisa. Por fin, _____(decidir) ponerlas en montones. La mujer _____(continuar) hablando con el pintor. Charlie _____(colocar) el desayuno en la mesa y _____(esperar) hasta que la mujer _____(regresar).

Parte B

Cambie los verbos en paréntesis. Use la forma del verbo que piensa que fue usada cuando era dicha/escrita originalmente.

1) *(Dicho en una entrevista formal con Fidel Castro)* “Comandante, yo _____(querer) preguntarle sobre un aspecto.”

2) *(Dicho por un candidato de una elección)* “(Yo) _____(deber) estar feliz por todo lo que estoy haciendo, pero realmente estoy infeliz por que estamos perdiendo.”

3) *(Dicho en una conversación de teléfono)*

Pierre: Servicio de clientes, buenas tardes.

Lee: Hola. ¿(Yo)_____ (poder) hablar con el Señor Pierre, por favor?

4) *(Escrito en un correo electrónico)* Estaba triste porque ella no _____ (poder) venir a nuestra fiesta.

5) *(Dicho en un cuarto de charla en la Red—la respuesta de un blog)*

“Tú _____ (deber) estar feliz de que tu corazón no está endurecido y triste.”

6) *(Escrito en un libro de niños)* “¡Yo viajaría a la luna mañana si _____ (poder)!”

Parte C

7) Un compañero de clase a quien no conoces muy bien habla contigo en clase sobre un problema que tiene. Él está sacando muy malas notas en clase. Te dice que quiere abandonar su trabajo de medio tiempo para dedicar más tiempo a los estudios.

¿Cuán apropiados son los consejos siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

a) “Abandona el trabajo.” 1 2 3 4 5

b) “Debes abandonar el trabajo.” 1 2 3 4 5

c) “Haz lo que piensas que sería lo mejor.” 1 2 3 4 5

d) “Yo abandonaría el trabajo.” 1 2 3 4 5

e) “Deberías abandonar el trabajo y fijarte en los estudios.” 1 2 3 4 5

f) “Deberías abandonar el trabajo y fijarte en los estudios.” 1 2 3 4 5

8) Estás invitado a cenar con el Presidente de México mientras que estudias en el extranjero. Durante la cena, te das cuenta de que necesitas la mantequilla. ¿Cómo le pides al Presidente que pase la mantequilla?

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “¿Podiera pasarme la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Necesito la mantequilla.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Páseme la mantequilla, por favor.” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “¿Me pasa la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “¿Puede pasarme la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5
- f) “¿Podría pasarme la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5

9) Asistes a una fiesta con tu familia. La fiesta tiene lugar en la casa del jefe de tu papá. Nunca has conocido al jefe. Tu papá te dice que es muy importante que seas cortés con su jefe ya que la seguridad de su trabajo depende en eso. Durante la fiesta, el jefe sirve helado de chocolate y también de vainilla. Quieres pedirle un helado de chocolate.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado;

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “Quiero un helado de chocolate.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Quisiera un helado de chocolate.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Quería un helado de chocolate.” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “Querría un helado de chocolate” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “Quiero un helado de chocolate, por favor.” 1 2 3 4 5

Cuestionario C

Número de participante = _____

Parte A

La historia siguiente es de la película de Charlie Chaplin que acabamos de mirar. Cambie los verbos en paréntesis al TIEMPO PASADO (pretérito o imperfecto).

Charlie Chaplin _____ (encontrar) un bebé huérfano abandonado en la calle. Él _____ (decidir) regresar a su casa con el bebé. Se _____ (sentar) en una silla mientras que el bebé _____ (llorar). Charlie Chaplin no _____ (saber) qué hacer para que el bebé _____ (terminar) de llorar. Él _____ (recoger) una cosas en la mesa para distraer al bebé, pero el bebé _____ (seguir) llorando. Mientras tanto, la mamá del bebé _____ (estar) llena de angustia porque se _____ (dar) cuenta de lo que _____ (haber) hecho. Charlie _____ (cuidar) al niño. Aún _____ (crear) una botella de una cafetera. Después, _____ (cortar) toallas y las _____ (doblar) en triángulos para formar pañales.

Parte B

Cambie los verbos en paréntesis. Use la forma del verbo que piensa que fue usada cuando era dicha/escrita originalmente.

- 1) *(Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión)* “Señor, ¿ _____ (querer) usted hacer un breve resumen de lo que ocurrió?”
- 2) *(Dicho en un cuarto de charla sobre computadores)* “¿Me _____ (poder) ayudar, por favor? Acabo de comprar este programa de computadora que me recomendaron y no funciona.”
- 3) *(Escrito en una carta)* Dudaba que (tú) _____ (querer) viajar en avión.
- 4) *(Dicho en un cuarto de charla en la Red—la respuesta a una pregunta sobre pastillas de dieta)* “Hay productos que pueden ayudar en cierto momento, pero tu

_____ (deber) tener claro el contenido de la pastilla y su función.”

5) (*Escrito en un libro*) “Si fueras con nosotros, _____ (poder) ver a tu hermano.

Parte C

7) Imagina que el Presidente de los Estados Unidos te ha elegido a participar en una oportunidad especial. El Presidente ha solicitado un grupo de ciudadanos para proveer su perspectiva sobre lo que ocurre en el país. Tú representas a los jóvenes de los Estados Unidos. El Presidente quiere que tú escribas una carta con consejos sobre lo que él debe hacer con respecto a la crisis de los precios altos de gasolina.

¿Cuán apropiadas son los consejos siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “Baje el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Debe bajar el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Haga lo que piensa es lo mejor” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “Yo bajaría el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “Debiera bajar el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- f) “Debería bajar el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5

8) Tienes que hacer una llamada a la directora de una agencia donde quieres trabajar. ¿Qué le dices a la recepcionista cuando contesta el teléfono?

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “¿Podiera pasarme a la directora?” 1 2 3 4 5

- b) “Necesito hablar con la directora.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Pásame a la directora, por favor.” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “¿Me pasa a la directora?” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “¿Puede pasarme a la directora?” 1 2 3 4 5
- f) “¿Podría pasarme a la directora?” 1 2 3 4 5

9) Estás en una sala llena de profesores de la universidad. Tienes que hacer un anuncio importante y urgente. ¿Qué dices para llamarles la atención?

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “Disculpen. Quiero hacer un anuncio importante.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Disculpen. Quisiera hacer un anuncio importante.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Disculpen. Quería hacer un anuncio importante.” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “Disculpen. Querría hacer un anuncio importante.” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “Disculpen. Quiero hacer un anuncio importante, por favor.” 1 2 3 4 5

Cuestionario D

Número de participante = _____

Parte A

Vaya al sitio (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mYtNMDFyXQ&feature=related>) y mire la película breve de Charlie Chaplin. Entonces, lea la historia siguiente. Cambie los verbos en paréntesis al TIEMPO PASADO (pretérito o imperfecto).

Charlie Chaplin _____ (sentarse) al lado de una mujer. Los dos _____ (beber) una taza de café. La mujer _____ (mirar) a Charlie muy sospechosamente. Charlie _____ (sonreír) nerviosamente. Cuando Charlie _____ (empezar) a beber su café, _____ (tragar) la cuchara. La mujer _____ (probar) su café. Después de unos minutos, el estómago de la mujer le _____ (hacer) ruido. Ella _____ (estar) muy avergonzada. Debido al ruido, su perro _____ (ladrar). Charlie _____ (pensar) que ese evento _____ (ser) extraño, pero _____ (decidir) seguir bebiendo su propio café. Irónicamente, el estómago de Charlie también _____ (hacer) ruido. Ni Charlie ni la mujer no _____ (saber) lo que les _____ (pasar) a ellos. Al fin de la película, la mujer _____ (tomar) unas pastillas y Charlie _____ (leer) el periódico.

Parte B

Cambie los verbos en paréntesis. Use la forma del verbo que piensa que fue usada cuando lo dijeron/escribieron originalmente.

1) (*Escrito en una carta al gerente de un hotel*) “Estimados Señores, (yo) _____ (querer) dar mis comentarios de mi experiencia en su hotel.”

2) (*Dicho en una tienda de ropa a una empleada*) “¿Me _____ (poder) ayudar, por favor? Busco una falda roja de talla 8.”

3) (*Escrito en una carta electrónica*) “Yo estaba triste porque (tú) no _____(querer) visitarnos durante las vacaciones.”

4) (*Dicho por un farmacéutico al paciente*) “Usted _____(deber) tomar dos pastillas inmediatamente.”

5) (*Dicho de un amigo al otro*) “Si quisieras acompañarme, nosotros _____(poder) cenar juntos.”

Parte C

7) Tú eres médico. Necesitas escribir una carta importante a un paciente. Este paciente tiene unos resultados irregulares y necesita ir a otro médico que es especialista.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las recomendaciones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

a) “Vaya a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5

b) “Debe visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5

c) “Yo visitaría a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5

d) “Debiera visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5

e) “Debería visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5

8) Mientras que visitas a México con tu clase de español, te pierdes. No sabes ni dónde estás ni cómo vas a regresar al hotel. Tienes el número del teléfono celular de tu profesor pero no tienes ningún dinero para hacer la llamada. Decides pedir prestado unos pesos de un hombre desconocido que parece estar de muy mal humor.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “¿Podiera prestarme unos pesos? Necesito hacer una llamada urgente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Necesito unos pesos. Tengo que hacer una llamada urgente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Présteme unos pesos. Necesito hacer una llamada urgente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “¿Puede prestarme unos pesos? Necesito hacer una llamada urgente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “¿Podría prestarme unos pesos? Necesito hacer una llamada urgente.” 1 2 3 4 5

9) Te vas a casar con el hombre/la mujer de tus sueños. Desafortunadamente, la mayoría de los invitados todavía no han respondidos a la invitación, incluso el presidente de la compañía donde trabaja tu prometido/prometida. Es urgente saber cuántas personas van a asistir a la boda. Decides escribir una carta para averiguar si el presidente y su familia asistirán a la boda.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “Estimado Señor, Quiero saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Estimado Señor, Quisiera saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Estimado Señor, Quería saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “Estimado Señor, Querría saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5

Cuestionario (Native Speaker)

Parte A

Cambie los verbos en paréntesis. Use la forma del verbo que piensa que fue usada cuando era dicha/escrita originalmente.

1) *(Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión)* “En primer lugar yo _____ (querer) decirles que me parece que hay algunas conclusiones incorrectas.”

2) *(Escrito en un documento del gobierno)* “¿Ha sufrido un accidente de coche? _____(deber) llamar a un abogado.”

3) *(Dicho en una conversación: un estudiante está hablando con el decano de la universidad)*“Disculpe, ¿ _____(poder) hablar con usted por unos minutos?”

4) *(Dicho en una entrevista formal con Fidel Castro)* “Comandante, yo _____(querer) preguntarle sobre un aspecto.”

5) *(Dicho por un candidato de una elección)* “(Yo) _____(deber) estar feliz por todo lo que estoy haciendo, pero realmente estoy infeliz por que estamos perdiendo.”

6) *(Dicho en una conversación de teléfono)*

Pierre: Servicio de clientes, buenas tardes.

Lee: Hola. ¿(Yo)_____ (poder) hablar con el Señor Pierre, por favor?

7) *(Escrito en un correo electrónico)* Estaba triste porque ella no _____(poder) venir a nuestra fiesta.

8) *(Dicho en un cuarto de charla en la Red—la respuesta de un blog)*

“Tú _____(deber) estar feliz de que tu corazón no está endurecido y triste.”

9) *(Dicho en una entrevista formal en la televisión)* “Señor, ¿ _____(querer) usted hacer un breve resumen de lo que ocurrió?”

10) *(Dicho en un cuarto de charla sobre computadoras)* “¿Me _____(poder) ayudar, por favor? Acabo de comprar este programa de computadora que me recomendaron y no funciona.”

11) *(Dicho en un cuarto de charla en la Red—la respuesta de una pregunta sobre pastillas de dieta)* “Hay productos que pueden ayudar en cierto momento, pero tu _____(deber) tener claro el contenido de la pastilla y su función.”

Parte B

12) Tu mamá quiere unos pantalones nuevos. Decides ir de compras con ella. Mientras que ella se prueba los pantalones, otra mujer aparece del probador. La mujer lleva una falda horrible. Ella te pregunta, “¿Debo comprar esta falda o buscar otra?”

¿Cuán apropiadas son las respuestas siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) “No compre esta falda.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) “Debe buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) “Cómprala. ¡Qué bonita es!” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) “Yo buscaría otra falda.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) “Debiera buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) “Debería buscar otra falda que le quede mejor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

13) Estás perdido en una ciudad latinoamericana. Necesitas direcciones. Decides pedir ayuda a un hombre vestido de un traje de negocio. Parece que él está muy ocupado, pero no hay otra persona para ayudarte.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) “¿Pudiera ayudarme? Estoy perdido.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) “Necesito direcciones.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) “Ayúdeme. Estoy perdido.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) “¿Sabe dónde está la calle Colón?” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) “¿Puede ayudarme? Estoy perdido.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

14) Tienes que escribir una carta al presidente de la universidad dónde estudias. Le pides la oportunidad de ir en un viaje exclusivo a Sudamérica. El presidente personalmente escoge los participantes.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las cartas siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “Estimado Señor,
Quiero ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

- b) “Estimado Señor,
Quisiera ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

c) “Estimado Señor,
Quería añadir mi nombre a la lista de participantes en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

d) “Estimado Señor,
Querría ser participante en el viaje a Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

15) Estás invitado a cenar con el Presidente de México mientras que estudias en el extranjero. Durante la cena, te das cuenta de que necesitas la mantequilla. ¿Cómo le pides al Presidente que pase la mantequilla?

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) “¿Pudiera pasarme la mantequilla?” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) “Necesito la mantequilla.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) “Páseme la mantequilla, por favor.” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) “¿Me pasa la mantequilla?” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) “¿Puede pasarme la mantequilla?” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) “¿Podría pasarme la mantequilla?” | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

16) Imagínate que el Presidente de los Estados Unidos te ha elegido a participar en una oportunidad especial. El Presidente ha solicitado un grupo de ciudadanos para proveer su perspectiva de cosas que ocurren en el país. Tú representas los jóvenes de los Estados Unidos. El Presidente quiere que tú escribas una carta con consejos de lo que él debe hacer sobre la crisis de los precios altos de gasolina.

¿Cuán apropiados son los consejos siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “Baje el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Debe bajar el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Haga lo que piensa es lo mejor” 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “Yo bajaría el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “Debiera bajar el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5
- f) “Debería bajar el precio de gasolina.” 1 2 3 4 5

Parte C

Vaya al sitio siguiente y mire una película breve de Charlie Chaplin:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mYtNMDfyXQ&feature=related>

Ahora, imagine que usted necesita explicarle a otra persona cómo recrear la escena que acaba de observar. Estas personas no han visto la película de Charlie Chaplin. Ellos sólo saben lo que deben hacer por sus instrucciones. Los "actores" tienen frente a ellos todos los objetos que necesitan para desempeñar la escena (el pan, el pollo, los huevos, etc.).

El primer actor es un amigo suyo. ¿Qué instrucciones orales le daría usted a él / ella para recrear la escena?

El segundo actor es alguien con quien quiere ser muy cortés. ¿Qué instrucciones orales le daría usted a esta persona para recrear la escena?

Cuestionario (Comparison Version)

****Reader's Note:** Part C of the original version of the questionnaires contained errors and typos that were overlooked when the questionnaires were originally given to the subjects. In a follow-up study, I asked another group of students to fill-out the questionnaires. Half of these students were given a corrected copy of the questionnaire. The other half was given the original version that contained errors. It was determined that no statistical difference existed in the responses between the two groups. Below, the wording in **red** indicates the original wording on the questionnaire. The wording in **blue** is from the corrected copy. ******

Please read through the scenarios below. After reading the scenario, consider the potential responses. Rate each response according to how appropriate you believe it to be for the situation. Please note that you can circle number 3 if you are unsure of the answer. You may select the same number more than once.

1) Asistes a una fiesta con tu familia. La fiesta tiene lugar en la casa del jefe de tu papá. Nunca has conocido al jefe. Tu papá te dice que es muy importante ser cortés a su jefe, que la seguridad de su trabajo **lo depende**¹⁸ (=depende de eso). Durante la fiesta, el jefe sirve helado **chocolate y vainilla** (=de chocolate y también de vainilla). Quieres pedirle un helado **chocolate** (=de chocolate).

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

- 1= no apropiado;**
2= un poco apropiado
3= no sé
4= bastante apropiado
5= muy apropiado

- a) “Quiero un helado **chocolate** (=de chocolate).” 1 2 3 4 5
b) “Quisiera un helado **chocolate** (=de chocolate).” 1 2 3 4 5
c) “Quería un helado **chocolate** (=de chocolate).” 1 2 3 4 5
d) “Querría un helado **chocolate** (=de chocolate)” 1 2 3 4 5
e) “Quiero un helado **chocolate** (=de chocolate), por favor.” 1 2 3 4 5

2) Tú eres médico. Necesitas escribir una carta importante a un paciente. Este paciente tiene unos resultados irregulares y necesita ir a otro médico que es especialista.

¹⁸ While these changes did not necessarily affect the overall meaning of the question, the corrections made in this scenario make the phrase structure more native-like.

¿Cuán apropiadas son los¹⁹ (=las) recomendaciones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

- 1= no apropiado**
- 2= un poco apropiado**
- 3= no sé**
- 4= bastante apropiado**
- 5= muy apropiado**

- a) “Vaya a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- b) “Debe visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- c) “Yo visitaría a una especialista inmediatamente 1 2 3 4 5
- d) “Debería visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5
- e) “Debería visitar a una especialista inmediatamente.” 1 2 3 4 5

3) Tienes que escribir una carta al presidente de la universidad dónde estudias. Le pides la oportunidad de ir en un viaje exclusivo al²⁰ (=a) Sudamérica. El presidente personalmente escoge los participantes.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las cartas siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

- 1= no apropiado;**
- 2= un poco apropiado**
- 3= no sé**
- 4= bastante apropiado**
- 5= muy apropiado**

a) “Estimado Señor,
Quiero ser participante en el viaje al (=a) Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

b) “Estimado Señor,
Quisiera ser participante en el viaje al (=a) Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

¹⁹ This correction was necessary due to the gender disagreement between the masculine determiner “los” and the feminine noun “recomendaciones”. This typo did not likely affect the overall meaning of the question.

²⁰ The determiner “el” (represented in the contraction “al”) was unnecessary here, although it’s presence did not likely influence the meaning.

1 2 3 4 5

c) “Estimado Señor,
Quería añadir mi nombre a la lista de participantes en el viaje **al** (=a) Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

d) “Estimado Señor,
Querría ser participante en el viaje **al** (=a) Sudamérica. ¿Me considerará para la posición?”

1 2 3 4 5

4) Te vas a casar con el hombre/la mujer de tus sueños. **Afortunadamente**²¹ (=desafortunadamente), la mayoría de los invitados todavía no han respondidos a la invitación, incluso el presidente de la compañía donde trabaja tu prometido/prometida. Es urgente saber cuántas personas van a asistir la boda. Decides escribir una carta para averiguar si el presidente y su familia asistirán **la**²² (=a la) boda.

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado;

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

a) “Estimado Señor, Quiero saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5

b) “Estimado Señor, Quisiera saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5

c) “Estimado Señor, Quería saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda..” 1 2 3 4 5

d) “Estimado Señor, Querría saber si van a poder asistir a nuestra boda.” 1 2 3 4 5

²¹ Using “afortunadamente” instead of “desafortunadamente” results in a meaning-based error. “Afortunadamente” means “fortunately”, “desafortunadamente” means “unfortunately”. However, the t-test results indicate that this meaning change did not significantly affect the results. (See Chapter 9 for more details.)

²² The “a” was unintentionally left out in this sentence. It is unlikely that this type of error influenced the meaning of the sentence.

5) **Fuiste**²³ (=estás) invitado a cenar con el **governador**²⁴ (=Presidente) de México mientras que estudias en el extranjero. Durante la cena, te das cuenta de que necesitas la mantequilla. ¿Cómo le pides al **governador** (=Presidente) que pase la mantequilla?

¿Cuán apropiadas son las peticiones siguientes? Ponga un círculo alrededor del número correspondiente. Se puede escoger el mismo número más de una vez.

1= no apropiado;

2= un poco apropiado

3= no sé

4= bastante apropiado

5= muy apropiado

- a) “¿Podiera pasarme la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5
b) “Necesito la mantequilla.” 1 2 3 4 5
c) “Páseme la mantequilla, por favor.” 1 2 3 4 5
d) “¿Me **pase**²⁵ (=pasa) la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5
e) “¿Puede pasarme la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5
f) “¿Podría pasarme la mantequilla?” 1 2 3 4 5

²³ Since all of the other verbs in the questionnaire are present-tense, it makes more sense for this one to also be in the present tense. This is not likely to create a difference in meaning.

²⁴ “Presidente” needed to be used instead of “governador” since the scenario is talking about the head of the country, not the head of a state. Since both of these are high, political offices, it is unlikely that the different word choice changed the students’ perception on how appropriate the responses were.

²⁵ This is the only error in the questionnaire that directly affected the verb in the response (which was the focus of this exercise). For that reason, despite the fact that the statistics showed no significant difference between the responses of those who read this as *pasa* and those who read it as *pase*, I did not include the answers to this question in the results of the study. (See Chapter 9 for more information).

APPENDIX C

VOCABULARY SHEETS

Vocabulary Sheet 1



el pan



la taza



la sartén



ordeñar la vaca



la gallina



tirar el cordón



los huevos



terrón(es)
o
azúcar



la cuchara



revolver

Vocabulary Sheet 2



el césped



la cáscara del huevo



la sartén



la carreta cubierta



el barril



el martillo



los huevos



la camisa de leñador



la manga



el cubo

Vocabulary Sheet 3



colupio



doblar



tijeras



la manta



la cafetera



la botella



el pañal



cortar

APPENDIX D

UTA IRB DOCUMENTAION



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

AT ARLINGTON

Office of Research Administration

Box 19 86

2615 L. E. Bruce St., 5th Floor JRI

Arlington, Texas

76019-6188

1 8 732.3723

1 8 737.1111

<http://www.ira.utexas.edu>

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www.ira.utexas.edu

April 29, 2008

Catharine Welch
Isabel Sivas, Ph.D.
Linguistics & TESOL
Box 19559

RE: Expedited Approval of Protocol

TITLE: *Language Learning and Politeness*

IRB No.: 08.0296

The University of Texas Arlington Institutional Review Board (UTA IRB) has determined that this research is eligible for expedited review in accordance with Title 45 CFR 46.110(a)-(b)(1), 63 FR 60364 and 63 FR 60353, categories (6)(7).

The IRB Chairman (or designee) approved the protocol effective April 29, 2008. IRB approval for the research shall continue until April 28, 2009. In order for the research to continue beyond the first year, Continuation Review must be completed within the month preceding the date of expiration indicated above. A reminder notice will be forwarded to the attention of the Principal Investigator (PI) at that time.

The approved subject sample size is 60.

Important Note: The IRB approved and stamped informed consent document (ICD), showing the approval and expiration date of the article must be used when prospectively enrolling volunteer participants into the study. The use of a copy of any consent form on which the IRB-stamped approval and expiration dates are not visible, or are replaced by typescript or handwriting is prohibited. The signed consent forms must be securely maintained on the UT Arlington campus for the duration of the study plus three years. The complete study record is subject to inspection and/or audit during this time period by entities including but not limited to the UT Arlington IRB, Regulatory Services staff, OUIRP and by study sponsors (if the study is funded).

Please be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to this office within 24 hours. In addition, pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b)(4)(ii), investigators are required to, "promptly report to the IRB any proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes to approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject."

All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented *Human Subjects Training* or *CITI Training* on file with this office.

If applicable, approval by the appropriate authority at a collaborating facility is required prior to subject enrollment. If the collaborating facility is engaged in the research, an OHRP approved Federalwide Assurance (FWA) may be required for the facility (prior to their participation in research-related activities). To determine whether the collaborating facility is engaged in research, go to: <http://www.fhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/assurances/assurances.htm>

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Jan Parker by calling (817) 272-0867.

Sincerely,

Judy Wilson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
UT Arlington IRB Vice-Chair

Encel (if applicable):
Consent Form(s)
Questionnaire(s) or Survey(s)
Recruitment Advertisement
Project Summary



INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Cathanna M. (Katie) Welch
TITLE OF PROJECT: Language Learning and Politeness

You are being asked to participate in the research project "Language Learning and Politeness". This document, entitled "Informed Consent" will explain about being a research subject in the study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The purpose(s) of this research study is/are as follows:

The purpose of my research is to understand the manner in which Spanish learners acquire polite conversation in Spanish.

DURATION: Your participation in this study will take approximately one hour. You will be one of approximately 60 people who will take part in this research, which is being conducted during the weeks of June 21 - July 13, 2008. You will be assigned three fifteen-minute time slots throughout the study during which time you will fill out a brief questionnaire, watch a short movie clip, and then explain to two different people how to react to the clip.

PROCEDURES: The procedures, which will involve you as a research subject, include

At three different times during the study, you will be requested to complete a brief questionnaire that asks you questions about yourself. This questionnaire will also ask you to react to various scenarios you might encounter in a Spanish-speaking country. You will then watch a brief movie clip. After watching the clip, you will be asked to give instructions to another person on how to react to the scenario. The instructions that you give will be audio recorded. Lastly, you will give instructions to a second person. These instructions will also be audio recorded.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: As a participant in this study, you will receive no direct benefits.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES / TREATMENTS: If you decide not to participate in this study, you are free to leave.

APR 29 2008

APPROVED BY THE UTA - IRB
The IRB approval for this consent document will expire on

Last Revised 11/29/07
Page 1 of 3

APR 28 2008

..... Subject Initials

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Cathanna (Katie) Welch
TITLE OF PROJECT: Language Acquisition and Politeness

CONFIDENTIALITY: Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in 405 Hammond Hall at UTA for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA IRB, the FDA (if applicable), and personnel particular to this research (individual or department) have access to the study records. Your (e.g., student, medical) records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

FINANCIAL COSTS: You will pay nothing to participate in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION: You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Katie Welch at 817-944-3777 or Dr. Laurel Shinn, Associate Professor, at 817-272-3624. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 817-272-1235 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits (or treatment) to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Katie Welch, whose phone number is 817-944-3777, and whose e-mail address is mskato@utdallas.edu. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been and will continue to be given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator.

You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

Please check ONLY one of the following boxes and sign / date this form.

[] By checking this box and signing immediately below, you agree to participate in the study described above, but you want your identity to be kept confidential in all publicly available reports of the research.

Signature of Volunteer Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) Date

Last Revised 11/29/07
Page 2 of 3

..... Subject Initials

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Cathanna (Katie) Welch
TITLE OF PROJECT: Language Acquisition and Politeness

Signature of Witness (if applicable) Date

[] By checking this box, and signing below, you agree to participate in the study described above and you want to be explicitly named as a research participant in all publicly available reports of the research. In the research, your name will be listed as you have indicated here.

(please print clearly)

Signature of Volunteer Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) Date

Signature of Witness (if applicable) Date

Cathanna M. Welch
Signature of the Principal Investigator Date

APR 29 2008

APPROVED BY THE UTA - IRB
The IRB approval for this consent document will expire on


APR 28 2008

Last Revised 11/29/07
Page 3 of 3

..... Subject Initials

APR 29 2008
APPROVED BY THE UTA - IRB
The IRB approval for this consent document will expire on

APR 28 2008


**THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS
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October 17, 2008

Catherine Welch
Laurel Stvan, PhD
Linguistics
The University of Texas at Arlington
Box 19559

RE: Expedited Approval of Protocol
TITLE: *Language Learning and Politeness in a Study Abroad Context*
IRB No.: 2008.662s

The University of Texas Arlington Institutional Review Board (UTA IRB) has determined that this research is eligible for expedited review in accordance with Title 45 CFR 46.110(a)-(b)(1), 63 FR 60364 and 63 FR 60353, category 6(7).

The IRB Chairman (or designee) approved the protocol effective October 16, 2008. IRB approval for the research shall continue until October 15, 2009. In order for the research to continue beyond the first year, Continuation Review must be completed within the month preceding the date of expiration indicated above. A reminder notice will be forwarded to the attention of the Principal Investigator (PI) at that time.

The approved subject sample size is 45

Important Note: The IRB approved and stamped informed consent document (ICD), showing the approval and expiration date of the article must be used when prospectively enrolling volunteer participants into the study. The use of a copy of any consent form on which the IRB-stamped approval and expiration dates are not visible, or are replaced by typescript or handwriting is prohibited. The signed consent forms must be securely maintained on the UT Arlington campus for the duration of the study plus three years. The complete study record is subject to inspection and/or audit during this time period by entities including but not limited to the UT Arlington IRB, Regulatory Services staff, OHRP and by study sponsors (if the study is funded).

Please be advised that as the principal investigator, you are required to report local adverse (unanticipated) events to this office within 24 hours. In addition, pursuant to Title 45 CFR 46.103(b) (4) (iii), investigators are required to, "promptly report to the IRB any proposed changes in the research activity, and to ensure that such changes in approved research, during the period for which IRB approval has already been given, are **not initiated without prior IRB review and approval** except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject."

B/A/Pho666

All investigators and key personnel identified in the protocol must have documented *Human Subjects Training or CITI Training* on file with this office.

If applicable, approval by the appropriate authority at a collaborating facility is required prior to subject enrollment. If the collaborating facility is engaged in the research, an OHRP approved Federawide Assurance (FWA) may be required for the facility (prior to their participation in research-related activities). To determine whether the collaborating facility is engaged in research, go to: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/assurance/engage.htm>

The UT Arlington Office of Research Administration Regulatory Services appreciates your continuing commitment to the protection of human research subjects. Should you have questions or require further assistance, please contact Philip Olshe by calling (817) 272-3723.

Sincerely,

Patricia G. Turpin, PhD, RN, NEA-BC
Associate Clinical Professor
UT Arlington IRB Chair

Encel (if applicable):
Consent Form(s)
Questionnaire(s) or Survey(s)
Project Summary



INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Catherine M. (Katie) Welch
TITLE OF PROJECT: Language Learning and Politeness in a Study Abroad Context

You are being asked to participate in the research project "Language Learning and Politeness". This document, entitled "Informed Consent" will explain about being a research subject in the study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The purpose(s) of this research study is/are as follows:

The purpose of my research is to understand the manner in which Spanish learners acquire polite conversation in Spanish.

DURATION: During your time abroad, the Principal Investigator will be meeting with you three times—once early in the trip, once late in the trip, and once in the middle of the trip.

During these three visits, you will be asked to fill out three questionnaires that ask you about yourself and your experiences. You will also be asked to react to some scenarios that you might encounter abroad. The questions will be written in Spanish; you will be asked to respond in Spanish.

During these visits, you will also be asked to watch a short Charlie Chaplin movie clip (approximately 4 minutes). You will then be asked to give instructions twice on how to react to the scene in the Chaplin clip. This instruction-giving will be audio recorded and transcribed. Your identity will remain anonymous in the transcript.

About three months after you return from studying abroad, you will receive one final questionnaire via email to fill out and return to the Principal Investigator.

The total amount of your time dedicated to this project will be less than four hours.

PROCEDURES: The procedures, which will involve you as a research subject, include:

At three different times during your stay abroad, you will be requested to complete a brief questionnaire that asks you questions about yourself. This questionnaire will also ask you to react to various scenarios you might encounter in a Spanish-speaking country. The questionnaire will be written in Spanish; you will be asked to answer in Spanish.

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Catherine (Katie) Welch
TITLE OF PROJECT: Language Acquisition and Politeness

and whose e-mail address is mrskatiewelch@gmail.com. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make you change your mind about staying in the study.

By signing below, you confirm that you have read or had this document read to you. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. You have been and will continue to be given the chance to ask questions and to discuss your participation with the investigator.

You freely and voluntarily choose to be in this research project.

Please check only one of the following boxes and sign / date this form.

By checking this box and signing immediately below, you agree to participate in the study described above, but you want your identity to kept confidential in all publicly-available reports of the research.
Signature of Volunteer _____ Date: _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) _____ Date: _____
Signature of Witness (if applicable) _____ Date: _____

By checking this box, and signing below, you agree to participate in the study described above and you want to be explicitly named as a research participant in all publicly available reports of the research. In the research, your name will be listed as you have indicated here:
(please print clearly) _____
Signature of Volunteer _____ Date: _____
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if applicable) _____ Date: _____
Signature of Witness (if applicable) _____ Date: _____
Signature of the Principal Investigator _____ Date: _____

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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Catherine (Katie) Welch
TITLE OF PROJECT: Language Acquisition and Politeness

You will also meet with the Principal Investigator three times during your stay abroad—once early in your stay, once in the middle, and once toward the end. During these meetings, you will watch a brief movie clip. After watching the clip, you will be asked to give instructions to another person on how to react to the scenario. The instructions that you give will be audio recorded. Lastly, you will give instructions to a second person. These instructions will also be audio recorded.

The Principal Investigator will transcribe the audio files. The transcriptions will be completely anonymous. If you inadvertently reveal any personal identifying information (such as your name, age, hometown, etc.), this information will not be transcribed. The original audio files will remain locked in a cabinet in 410 Hammond Hall at the University of Texas at Arlington for the duration of the study. When the study is completed, these files will be destroyed.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this study.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS: As a participant in this study, you will receive no direct benefits.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES / TREATMENTS: If you decide not to participate in this study, you are free to leave.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in 403 Hammond Hall at UTA for at least three (3) years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the UTA IRB, the FDA (if applicable), and personnel particular to this research (individual or department) have access to the study records. Your (e.g., student, medical) records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

FINANCIAL COSTS: You will pay nothing to participate in this study.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION: You will three \$5 gift cards for your participation in this study. This compensation will be given at each of the three visits with the Principal Investigator during your time abroad.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Katie Welch at 817-944-3777 or Dr. Laurel Stvan, Associate Professor, at 817-272-2234. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 817-272-1236 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Participation in this research experiment is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or quit at any time. If you quit or refuse to participate, the benefits (or treatment) to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Katie Welch, whose phone number is 817-944-3777.

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APPENDIX E

NON-UTA IRB DOCUMENTAION

Spanish Governor's Academy 2008 - Research

Rosemary H Kelso/HSC/VCU <rhkelso@vcu.edu>
To: mrskatiewelch@gmail.com

Thu, Jun 12, 2008 at 12:22 PM

Katie

Based upon the information provided regarding your research project entitled "Language Learning and Politeness," we believe that VCU will not be engaged in your research project if the following conditions are met:

1 - The research activities are not scheduled during the time that students will otherwise be participating in academic activities. It will not be a problem if the research activities are scheduled before classes in the morning, during lunch breaks, or after classes at the end of the day. I also understand that students will have a 1.5 hour free period in the afternoon. Scheduling research activities during this time will be fine.

2 - The Director of the Spanish Academy does not schedule individual students for their participation in the research activities or assist in organizing students that will participate. It will not be a problem for: (a) the Director to inform you of blocks of time available for scheduling with students, (b) you to inform the Director when individual students are scheduled, and (c) a member of the Academy staff to accompany the student for security purposes. Academy staff should not participate in the research activities.

3 - Teachers in the Academy do not wear audio recording devices during classes and other public activities.

If VCU is not engaged in the research project, then VCU IRB approval is not required.

Please let me know if you need additional information. If have provided this same information to Helen Small with the Virginia Department of Education and Paul Dvorak with the VCU School of World Studies and Governor's Foreign Lanugage Academies.

Regards,
- Rosemary

Rosemary H. Kelso, MSW
Director
Office of Research Subjects Protection
Virginia Commonwealth University
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 114
(804) 828-0131

IRB# B08-077-2

Institutional Review Board <irb@stthomas.edu>

Thu, Jan 8, 2009 at 2:38 PM

To: Katie Welch <mrskatiewelch@gmail.com>

Cc: "stvan@uta.edu" <stvan@uta.edu>

January 1, 2008

Dear Katie:

We have received your revised documents. Your IRB proposal IRB# B08-077-2, "Language Learning and Politeness in a Study Abroad Context" has been approved. You may now go ahead with your study.

Please note that under IRB policy, principal investigators are required to report to the IRB for further review (a) in the event that changes in the research protocol increase the risks to the rights/welfare of the participants involved in the study, or (b) should any adverse episode occur (e.g., actual harm, breach of confidentiality) involving human participants. Also, should your research continue for a period of more than one year from the original approval date, you will need to file a continuing approval form with the committee.

Good luck and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne Chalkley
Professor of Psychology
Chair, UST Institutional Review Board

IRB question

Katie Welch <mrskatiewelch@gmail.com>
To: jsschmitt@stkate.edu

Thu, Nov 6, 2008 at 2:54 PM

Dr. Schmitt,

My name is Katie Welch. I am a PhD student in the department of linguistics at the University of Texas at Arlington. I am trying to determine if I need to submit an application to your IRB. Right now, plans are in the works for me to conduct research on a study abroad group traveling to Merida, Mexico in January 2009. This is a J-Term opportunity offered through the Associated College of the Twin Cities consortium. A St. Thomas faculty member, Dr. Juli Kroll, will be leading the group of 20 students. Some of the students are from St. Catherines.

I have already submitted and received approval from my own institution's IRB. I have also submitted a protocol to the IRB at the University of St. Thomas and am awaiting approval. My question is: do I also need to submit an application to your school since some of your students are involved in the study? Or is an approval from the St. Thomas IRB sufficient for all the consortium schools represented?

Thanks you so much for your help in this matter,

Katie Welch

jsschmitt@stkate.edu <jsschmitt@stkate.edu>
To: Katie Welch <mrskatiewelch@gmail.com>

Fri, Nov 7, 2008 at 1:45 PM

Hi Katie - thanks for checking in. It is a grey area, but it seems that this is a St. Thomas class that our students have chosen to attend over J-term, as is commonly done among our campuses. I think the St. Thomas IRB approval will be sufficient to cover our students, just as our IRB approval would protect any St. Thomas students taking a class on our campus.

So no need to submit to our IRB. However, if there should be some extra funds available to send me to Mexico in January, I would be happy to oversee the ethical treatment of our students (-:
(FYI, we just had our first snow here last night)

Good luck,

John Schmitt, PT, PhD
Associate Professor and Chair, Institutional Review Board
Doctor of Physical Therapy Program
The College of St. Catherine
601 25th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55454
Phone: 651.690.7739
Fax: 651.690.7876

Soon to be St. Catherine University, as of June 1, 2009

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