The Grammar-Pragmatics Interface in Learners of German:

Insights into the Acquisition of Speech Act Modification

Inaugural-Dissertation

zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades
der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität zu Köln
im Fach Deutsche Philologie

vorgelegt von

Christina Maria Rath

geb. am 30.04.1989
in Ludwigsburg

Köln, 11.09.2023

Es handelt sich bei diesem Text um eine von der Philosophischen Fakultät der Universität zu Köln angenommene Dissertation.

ERSTGUTACHTERIN: Prof. Dr. Petra Schumacher
ZWEITGUTACHTERIN: Prof. Dr. Christiane M. Bongartz
DRITTGUTACHTERIN: Prof. Dr. Anne Barron
TAG DER DEFENSIO: 20. Dezember 2023

Abbreviations

CCSARP	Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CP	Cooperative Principle
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
FTA	Face-threatening Act
G1	Group 1 Elementary Learners
G2	Group 2 Lower Intermediate Learners
GNS	German Native Speaker
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LAT	Language Assessment Test
LU	Lesson Unit
PPT	Pragmatic Perception Task
SLA	Second Language Acquisition

Acknowledgements

A long-term project like this would not have been possible to complete without the invaluable help and support from a wide array of people, to whom I extend my deepest gratitude. At the forefront of my acknowledgments are my esteemed supervisors: Petra Schumacher, Christiane Bongartz (both University of Cologne, Germany) and Anne Barron (Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany). Their commitment to sharing their expertise, dedicating their time, and offering constructive feedback and encouragement has been instrumental in shaping the trajectory of this endeavor. Without their dedication, this project would not have reached its current form.

A special note of appreciation goes to Petra Schumacher, my primary supervisor, whose presence and guidance have been a constant throughout this journey. Your brilliance, enthusiasm, research fervor and unwavering support have been pivotal to my progress and this research, *thank you*!

Within *Team Schumacher*, my colleagues and friends have been an essential part of my experience. Through intellectual exchanges, camaraderie, and moral support, our interactions have cultivated an environment of continuous learning and growth that is truly invaluable.

Heartfelt gratitude is extended to the a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne, which provided not only a perfect working environment but also invaluable financial support and scholarly opportunities that have facilitated my academic journey. Beyond the academic gains, it is the friendships forged during my time at a.r.t.e.s. that have truly enriched this experience. To Eva, Lena J., Lena S., Leonie, and Mareike – your encouragement, understanding, and motivation mean the world to me. Your presence has been an immeasurable source of inspiration and support, *thank you*!

I would like to thank my family who supported me throughout the entire process of this study, and in particular my parents – your constant love, strength, and encouragement have been invaluable, *thank you*!

The completion of this research owes its gratitude to *all* the participants who voluntarily contributed to this study, providing a substantial and comprehensive dataset. However, my most profound appreciation is reserved for my learner informants. Many of you spent extensive hours with me in the XLinC Lab, entrusting me with your time and even your children. Despite family commitments, language courses, and work obligations, you generously supported this study. Beyond sharing your language data, you opened up and shared your life stories – narratives of escape, hardship, discrimination, and hope. Your stories have left an indelible mark, and I am forever indebted to your generosity. As you embark on this new chapter, may the people in your newfound home embrace you with open hearts. Remember that you are not alone – there are people who care and are here to support you.

This book is dedicated to the two *loves of my life*: My best friend Anna and my partner Omi.

I couldn't have done it without you.

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Greetings, I am pleased to see that we are
different. May we together become greater
than the sum of both of us.

(Leonard Nimoy)

1 Introduction

Several years ago, while working as a German language instructor for adult migrants at the elementary level, a participant who had missed the previous session approached me and requested the worksheet from that specific class, saying:

(1) Frau Rath, gib mir das Arbeitsblatt bitte. Ich brauche das.
(Ms. Rath, give me the worksheet please. I need it.)

For a moment, I found myself surprised and, to be honest, slightly offended, as I had anticipated a request more in line with:

(2) Frau Rath, könnten Sie mir bitte das Arbeitsblatt der letzten Sitzung geben? Ich war krank.
(Ms. Rath, could you please give me the worksheet from the last session? I was sick.)

Upon further reflection, I came to realize that, despite my role as both a language educator and a researcher in the field of second language acquisition, I had misjudged the situation. The German language learner had neither been disrespectful nor impolite. Drawing upon the limited linguistic resources at her current language proficiency level, she added *bitte / please* to increase the politeness of her request and she even provided me with a reason for her imposition – "*I need the worksheet*." What set her request apart from what I might have potentially anticipated from a German native speaker is the absence of, or divergent use of, internal and external modification devices.

Generally, speakers employ modification devices to vary the politeness potential as well as the assertiveness of their speech acts. Speech acts can be modified externally, via external downgraders before or after the main act (e.g., thanking the addressee after stating a request or giving the reason behind a complaint) and internally, through an addition of mitigating strategies. The individual types of internal modifiers are either lexical / phrasal downgraders (e.g., the politeness marker *bitte* / *please*) or syntactic downgraders (e.g., past tense, subjunctives, or forms of embedding). Speakers frequently resort to either one or a mix of these types of downgraders when performing social actions which may represent a threat to an interlocutor's expectations regarding self-image. Example (2), for instance, serves as a good illustration of how German speakers combine an interrogative structure with the lexical downgrader *bitte / please* and a

subjunctive downgrader, i.e., the subjunctive form *könnten / could* in order to tone down a face-threatening act. If we reconsider example (1) against this backdrop, what insights does it provide? First and foremost, it underscores the distinct nature of pragmatic infelicities displayed by second language (henceforth L2) learners, highlighting that their deviations, such as the omission of syntactic downgraders, are less readily discernible as 'errors' to native speakers, especially when contrasted with grammatical mistakes. This nuance subsequently leads to these pragmatic deviations often being construed as personality or behavioral flaws rather than being attributed to the learners' proficiency in the second language (cf. Thomas 1983; Barron 2003; Schauer 2009).

1.1 Research objectives

These issues are precisely those which have been discussed in the field of *Interlanguage Pragmatics* (henceforth ILP), a discipline concerned with "the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge" (Kasper & Rose 1999: 81). As the name suggests, ILP is a subfield of both interlanguage studies, which are part of the domain of second language acquisition research, and pragmatics. Research in ILP has demonstrated that even though becoming pragmatically competent is such an essential task of L2 acquisition, it usually proves to be quite complex. It entails, inter alia, both productive and receptive competences, such as the ability to understand and produce speech acts effectively, by choosing from the range of linguistic resources available in a language in accordance with the social-cultural context in which the interaction takes place (cf. Barron 2003: 10).

This means that second language learners need to acquire knowledge of principles relating grammatical forms not only to each other but also to their secondary pragmatic meanings and functions. Surprisingly, in scientific investigations pertaining to this topic, the focus primarily centers on pragmatic development, often relegating the importance of grammatical competence to a mere footnote or even overlooking it entirely.[1] Just consider, however, the

[1] Following Bardovi-Harlig's (1999) definition, the term grammar or grammatical as it is used in the present study "encompasses anything having to do with a linguistic grammar, including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, or the lexicon of the developing language" (Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 686; see also Timpe Laughlin et al 2015: 18; Kasper & Rose 2002: 160).

presupposition of grammatical competence that lies behind pragmalinguistic forms such as *syntactic downgraders*, as evidenced by examples (3) and (4):

(3) Anna, ich *wollte* fragen, *ob* du mir vielleicht beim Umzug helfen *könntest?*
(Anna, I *wanted* to ask *whether* you *could* possibly help me move*?*)

(4) Diese dauerhaften Überstunden sind *nicht* in Ordnung, *wenn* ich für diese nicht *bezahlt werde*.
(These permanent extra hours are *not* okay *if* I don't *get payed*.)

In examples (3) and (4), the speaker draws on knowledge of modals, verbal morphology such as past tense, subjunctive, and passives as well as on syntactic knowledge of question formation, negation and embedding to tone down the potentially impositive or aggressive nature of a request and a direct complaint.

Taking this perspective into account, let us now once again revisit example (1) and explore possible reasons behind the absence of syntactic downgrading in the learner's request. Several potential explanations seem plausible: Firstly, the necessary grammatical structures and forms may not yet be present in the learner's interlanguage. Secondly, although the learner may possess knowledge of the pertinent grammatical forms, their application to modify illocutionary force might be absent. In this context, the secondary *pragmatic* meanings might still elude the learner's grasp, underscoring the significance of pragmatic perception. On the other hand, she could also be employing an avoidance strategy (e.g., due to a lack of confidence or insufficiently developed control of processing). Another possibility could be, thirdly, that the learner knows the grammatical structures and is conscious of their pragmatic functions but intentionally chooses not to employ them as a form of pragmatic resistance. These are, however, only scenarios of what might happen during L2 acquisition, whether for instance having the grammatical resources that form the basis of certain pragmalinguistic forms demonstrates a communicative advantage is unclear.

So, what do we actually know about the relation between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence in L2 acquisition? In fact, very little. Perhaps surprising given the large body of literature in the fields of interlanguage grammar and interlanguage pragmatics, only few researchers so far have made the link between pragmatics and the interlanguage system in their research (see for

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Accordingly, I will refer to formal linguistic knowledge, including morphosyntax, semantics, lexis, and phonology summarily as grammar and distinguish among the different components as necessary.

example Celaya & Barón 2015; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Martí-Arnándiz 2008; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000; Takahashi 2017). This is the reason why to date no agreement has been reached on how and to what extent pragmatic and grammatical competence are interrelated in L2 acquisition. Specifically, it is not yet clear whether a particular level of development in grammar is a necessary condition for progress in the other component, i.e., pragmatics, or whether the components develop independently.

It is my belief that examining the grammar-pragmatics interface from a developmental perspective will give us a better understanding of interlanguage pragmatics at all stages and has important (practical) application to L2 research and teaching (see also Bardovi-Harlig 1999, 2003, 2010, 2013a; Kasper 2001; Kasper & Rose 2002; Norouzian & Eslami 2016; Schauer 2013; Takahashi 2017). Specifically, research should examine how particular pragmalinguistic features emerge in relation to particular grammatical structures. Given the limited number of developmental studies that have thus far examined the presence or absence of pragmalinguistic forms in learners' interlanguage, an independent analysis of L2 grammar and pragmatics would aid in identifying potential stages of acquisition. Notably, this approach would reveal how knowledge of those grammatical features that form the basis of pragmalinguistic forms mediates the pace and pattern of their acquisition (cf. Taguchi 2010: 354). As such, my intention is not to dismiss the primary focus on pragmatics within the field of ILP, but rather to augment it by considering L2 grammatical development as well.

To address these research desiderata and to contribute to existing literature, I will focus on grammatical forms which have pragmalinguistic meaning, or, as Kasper puts it, forms which "have a double life as symbols and indexicals" (2001: 510) as they are particularly suitable as objects of inquiry. This requirement is met by syntactic downgraders, making them the central focus of my study. Concurrently, I investigate German learners' competence in employing alternative modification categories, including lexical/phrasal downgraders and external downgraders. Recognizing the significant contributions of both internal and external downgrading devices to the overall pragmatic meaning of an utterance, it becomes evident that a thorough examination of syntactic downgraders necessitates an acknowledgment of their interplay with lexical/phrasal downgraders and external downgraders. Consequently, this study adopts a

multifaceted approach, enabling a comprehensive exploration of these three variations of speech act modification, both as distinct entities and in their interconnected dynamics. This approach will significantly contribute to enhancing the domain of interlanguage pragmatics since, compared to the wealth of research on speech act strategies, there is only a small, though growing body of empirical studies which examine the internal and/or external modification of speech acts (e.g., Alcón Soler et al. 2005; Barron 2003, 2007; Economidou-Kogetsidis & Woodfield 2012; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Hassall 2001, 2012; Hill 1997; Iwasaki 2013; Schauer 2007, 2009).

This limitation is also related to the fact that the scope of empirical studies within ILP has been relatively confined. What is known about the L2 acquisition of modification devices is largely based upon studies that investigate the prototypical speech act in ILP – the request.[2] In the realm of speech act research, other types such as refusals, corrections, and notably complaints, have comparatively received less scholarly attention, regardless of the theoretical framework being examined. This paucity of research signifies a gap in the existing literature that warrants exploration. Equally important is the fact that the unique characteristics inherent in acts like complaints and their communicative functions render them particularly relevant for language learners: Since being able to express dissatisfaction appropriately and in a socially acceptable manner can improve social relationships and is essential for gaining redress, it is a competence imperative for those learners who need to navigate successfully in the L2 context. Although studies on request modification have been documented in various ILP inquiries, a more comprehensive analysis and exploration of potential interdependencies with grammatical development remain to be thoroughly examined. Hence, the present study commences by focusing on request modification as the foundational point of departure. The direct complaint, another face-threatening speech act that necessitates the speaker's engagement in mitigation strategies is further included as a focus of inquiry in order to allow for a systematic assessment of modification devices across speech acts.

In this context, it is noteworthy that existing studies investigating L2 learners' pragmatic development have primarily focused on the realm of the pragmatic sub-

[2] The reader is referred to Economidou-Kogetisidis & Woodfield (2012) for a volume that presents a wide collection of studies on L2 request modification.

competence *production*. Consequently, and in spite of the prevailing consensus within ILP literature that pragmatic competence encompasses both productive and receptive skills, only a limited number of studies have integrated both dimensions into their methodologies (see for exceptions Bardovi-Harlig 2009; Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos 2011; Schauer 2009; Taguchi 2012). Yet, for a comprehensive investigation into the grammar-pragmatics interface, the inclusion of *pragmatic perception* is imperative. While production studies show good evidence of (under)use of syntactic downgraders, they are not fully suited to investigate why learners do not produce these forms, or why acquiring appropriate modifiers in certain speech acts may pose a challenge. Knowledge of the grammatical feature that makes up a particular syntactic downgrader is but one part of knowing a syntactic downgrader; knowledge of the social meaning of a pragmalinguistic form as well as knowledge of the context in which it occurs is equally important. The current study therefore seeks to ascertain the extent to which the perception of the mitigating function of modifiers in requests and complaints influences pragmatic production. In other words, it aims to investigate the potential relationship between the pragmatic sub-competencies, exploring whether perception precedes production.

The final point I now turn to concerns the investigation (or lack thereof) of specific learner groups in ILP studies. Acquisitional ILP studies often exhibit an imbalance in learner representation, with a notable focus on higher-level learners possessing intermediate to advanced linguistic proficiency in the L2. In contrast, lower-level learners tend to be less frequently investigated (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 1999; Kasper & Rose 2002). This imbalance can be attributed, on the one hand, to the predominant use of elicitation tasks in ILP studies, which tend to favor advanced learners. On the other hand, the 'easy access' to undergraduate and graduate students at universities, who typically serve as learner informants, contributes to this trend (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 680). In order to successfully pursue the approach described above, we must, however, turn to beginner level learners whose L2 grammar and pragmatics are still in the early stages of development (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2003: 29; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012: 164).

Moreover, given that the largest body of acquisitional studies has been conducted in the context of tertiary education or study abroad, knowledge on the learning trajectories of (non-student) immigrants as well as the effect of varying

learning environments on L2 acquisition should be advanced, too.[3] Just consider the scenario illustrated in example (1). Avoiding such forms of intercultural misunderstanding is important for all kinds of L2 learners. It is, however, of particular relevance to those of them who are at increased risk for racial-cultural discrimination.

One such group, largely overlooked in previous research, are L2 learners who were forced to resettle abroad and who, in the long run, want to become active members within the local society. The scale of individuals compelled to flee due to war, conflicts, and persecution has reached an unprecedented level globally. As of the end of 2022, the count stood at 108.4 million people forced to seek refuge worldwide, and this figure continues to rise. For many of them, learning the language of their destination is an essential part of their journey – independent of whether they are awaiting relocation in a transition country or have settled in their final destination (cf. UNO Flüchtlingshilfe Deutschland für den UNHCR). Among the crises of our time, the protests that escalated into civil war in Syria in 2011 stand out prominently. This conflict has resulted in one of the most significant humanitarian and refugee crises. Over 5.6 million people have fled Syria since then, and of these, 834.000 Syrians have sought refuge in Germany starting from 2011 (cf. Mediendienst Integration, as at August 2022). Since 2014, Syrians have thus constituted the largest refugee population in Germany and for these newcomers, the consequences of using pragmatically inappropriate utterances can be substantial. Instances of pragmatic failure can propagate misconceptions and stereotypes about refugees in general and about (Syrian) Arabic learners of German in particular, and increasingly so at a time of rising ethnic nationalism in Europe and other parts of the world. Given this context, it is evident that there is a pressing demand for research on the L2 pragmatic development of adolescents and adults with refugee backgrounds. This is particularly critical since the acquisition of the target language plays a pivotal role in facilitating social integration, participation, and employment pathways (cf. Gereke & Nijhawan 2019: 93; Sengupta & Blessinger 2019: 8).

[3] See, for example, Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos (2011); Barron (2003, 2006, 2007); Cohen & Shively (2007); DuFon & Churchill (2006); Kinginger (2008, 2013); Matsumura (2007); Ren (2014, 2015, 2018); Sanz & Morales-Front (2018); Schauer (2007, 2009, 2010); Shiri (2015); Shively (2011); Shively & Cohen (2008); Taguchi (2011); Trentman (2013) for ILP research in study-abroad contexts.

The current study endeavors to bridge this research gap by examining the L2 pragmatic development of Syrian Arabic refugee-background learners with low proficiency who are residing in Germany. This distinctive focus positions the study as a pioneering effort in terms of its contextual backdrop, the profile of the learner participants, and the specific language pairing (i.e., Syrian Arabic and German). This research is therefore expected to offer substantial contributions to theories encompassing both second language acquisition and interlanguage pragmatics.

Transitioning to the broader context, this investigation aims to meet the obvious need for research on the grammar-pragmatics interface while concurrently offering new insights into a learner group that has been largely underrepresented in previous research. Specifically, it concerns a cross-sectional study in which the development of the L2 pragmatic and grammatic competence of a group of adult Syrian Arabic learners of German is being investigated. A total of 152 subjects constitutes the study sample on which the data analysis is based: 60 Syrian learners of German as well as 92 German native speakers participated in the study. The learner informants are divided into two categories: elementary and lower intermediate learners. All of them have participated in an Integration Course and were selected from two different levels: 'Basic Users' at level A2 and 'Independent Users' at level B1, as outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). While situated within the field of interlanguage pragmatics, the present study further draws from various disciplines including second language acquisition, speech act theory, and im/politeness theories. A primary focus lies in the research's adoption of a speech-act based approach, centering on how learners produce and perceive modification devices within the context of requests and complaints. The program of research thereby also integrates the study of L2 grammatical development with the study of the acquisition of two pragmatic sub-competencies, i.e., pragmatic production and pragmatic perception.

In order to provide a reliable view of both grammatical and pragmatic development, a multimethod approach is being adopted which capitalizes on the different potential of four data collection methods: a learner questionnaire, a language assessment test, a discourse completion task and a pragmatic perception task. By analyzing the development of the grammatical forms relevant for

pragmatic production and perception, it will be attempted to shed light on the relation of grammar and pragmatics during different acquisitional stages. Based on the limitations of interlanguage pragmatics and second language acquisition research discussed above, the present study aims at answering three research questions:

1. How do L2 learners use and develop internal and external modification in requests and complaints?
2. How are syntactic downgraders in a second language related to the particular grammatical knowledge implicated in their use?
3. To which extent is the learners' development concerning the perception and production of syntactic downgraders interconnected?

In the upcoming chapters, the native speaker and learner data is presented exactly as it appeared in the test instruments. This means that orthographical and grammatical errors are maintained without correction, and any original emphasis is faithfully retained. As pragmatic productions sometimes encompass multiple sentences, for the sake of readability and due to space limitations, only the relevant features related to the discussion are provided. Additionally, all data will be cited in German, the original language, and an English translation provided by the researcher will be included. However, errors present in the German data are not translated unless explicitly stated otherwise. Lastly, each quoted request or complaint realization will be accompanied by details about the corresponding situation and the informant who produced the specific utterance, following the code-name system outlined in § 4.1.1.3 and § 4.1.2.

1.2 Outline

This thesis is structured as follows: *Chapters 2* and *3* lay out the theoretical dimensions of this research. In *Chapter 2*, emphasis is on the theoretical background of the study including (interlanguage) pragmatic issues, speech act theory and im/politeness theories. This provides the basis for the description of the two speech acts chosen as well as their modification. *Chapter 3* theorizes the object of pragmatic learning by providing an in-depth review of existing research on acquisitional pragmatics in general and its connection to the grammar-

pragmatics interface in particular. At the end of *Chapter 3*, the hypotheses guiding the subsequent experiments are formulated, based on the predictions derived from the theories and research findings under consideration. *Chapter 4* provides the methodological background. Starting out with information on the choice of informants and the forced migration context, a detailed account is given of the present cross-sectional empirical study, including the four main test methods, i.e., the learner questionnaire, the language assessment test, the discourse completion task, and the pragmatic perception task. The chapter concludes with a description of the data collection process and a discussion of data analyses. Afterward, the present project reports its results in *Chapters 5* to *7*. In *Chapter 5,* the study investigates the crucial role of grammatical knowledge in the L2 development of syntactic downgrading. Moving forward, *Chapter 6* focuses on the occurrence of lexical/phrasal and external downgraders in the speech act data, offering a comprehensive examination of these modification devices. Subsequently, *Chapter 7* presents the findings of the pragmatic perception task, specifically focusing on learners' receptive abilities regarding syntactic modification in German request and complaint speech acts. The results are discussed on the basis of previous research findings, with the interplay of grammatical knowledge, pragmatic production and pragmatic perception in mind. Finally, *Chapter 8* draws upon the entire thesis, typing up the various theoretical and empirical strands in order to summarize the major findings and underline the contribution this research makes to existing knowledge.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter reviews the theoretical underpinnings of the present study. It first provides an overview of the field of pragmatics, including the historical development of pragmatic competence conceptualization as well as the branch of pragmatic research relevant for the present study: interlanguage pragmatics. The section on interlanguage pragmatics begins by defining the research area and is followed by a selective account of the main concepts covered in the field, such as pragmatic production and perception, types of pragmatic failure and pragmatic resistance. Apart from interlanguage pragmatics, speech act theory combined with notions of politeness forms the basis of the descriptive framework utilized as an instrument for the analysis of L2 learners' pragmatic development. A detailed overview as well as evaluation of relevant speech act and (im)politeness theories is therefore provided. The remainder of the chapter presents the object of pragmatic learning relevant for this study. This section starts by outlining the two speech acts to be investigated, i.e., requests and complaints. Then, it describes internal and external modification devices frequently employed in the production of the afore-mentioned speech acts. Particular attention is paid to how speakers deploy grammar and syntax as resources to construct syntactic downgraders.

2.1 Defining the pragmatics of interlanguage pragmatics

Pragmatics, one of the most vibrant and rapidly growing branches of linguistics, focuses on how meaning is shaped and inferred during social interaction between human beings. In particular, focus is on the interrelation of linguistic forms, the producers and interpreters of these forms, as well as on the socio-cultural context in which the interaction takes place (cf. Kecskes 2013: 23). Hence, the choice of a linguistic element is bound by several contextual factors such as the setting and the interlocutors' social relationships, added to which are norms of interaction and cultural appropriateness. Linguistic options are further shaped by epistemic states as well as the speaker's agency, i.e., the type of *self* a speaker wants to project and by the expectation of the utterance's impact on the addressee. These elements are reiterated in Crystal (1997), whose perspective on pragmatics provides a good starting point for the present investigation:

> [T]he study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.
>
> (Crystal 1997: 301)

Crystal's (1997) reference to choices and constraints mirrors a relevant distinction proposed by Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983). They identify two complementary areas of study within pragmatics: Pragmalinguistics, the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic form and sociopragmatics, which covers the relationship between linguistic action and social structure. More precisely, pragmalinguistics captures the knowledge about and performance of the linguistic resources available for delivering speech acts and interpersonal meanings (cf. Martínez Flor & Usó-Juan 2010: 6; Timpe Laughlin et al. 2015: 6). Thus, it tends to be language specific and is closely interrelated with grammatical knowledge in that it encompasses linguistic forms and their respective functions, such as pragmatic strategies and the large range of linguistic forms for realizing or modifying speech acts. Typical examples for grammatical systems of prime pragmalinguistic importance are modals and honorific systems. However, as most aspects of language are actually pragmalinguistic resources, Bardovi-Harlig further adds "verbal morphology (tense, aspect, mood, person, and number), nominal morphology including person and number, embedding, lexicon, and phonology including prosody" (2013a: 78) as examples. Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, refers to "knowledge about and performance consistent with the social norms in specific situations in a given society, as well as familiarity with assessments of (im)politeness and variables of social power and social distance" (Félix-Brasdefer 2017: 419). Take as an example the speech act direct complaint. For a start, language users must be able to identify which speech act is required in a particular situation. That is, they must recognize a particular context as a setting for a complaint to be able to employ complaining expressions (rather than apologies). In the case of requests, speakers must perceive its imposition as minor or the need for action as pressing in order to employ upgrading expressions. Consequently, sociopragmatic knowledge creates contexts for the use of language functions (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2019: 50). Altogether, characteristics such as the topic of a given situation, social status and social distance, situational and contextual factors (e.g., knowledge of mutual rights and obligations), taboos, and conversational practices need to be taken into account (cf. Kasper et al. 2005: 317).

Finally, I would like to point out that the theoretical approaches relevant for the present study can be taken to be branches of what Huang calls "macro-pragmatics – the study of the use of language in all aspects" (2013: 141). Current topics of inquiry in macro-pragmatics can roughly be divided into two groups: cognitively oriented and socially and/or culturally oriented.[4] This study is situated in the field of interlanguage pragmatics which falls under both areas. Consequently, cognitive (e.g., developmental pragmatics) as well as sociocultural aspects (e.g., politeness) are considered for this research.

2.1.1 Pragmatic competence

The purpose of the present study is to investigate the effect of an increase in grammatical knowledge on the development of L2 pragmatic competence. A definition of the term *pragmatic competence* is therefore needed to facilitate the selection of suitable indicants. Initially, research in this area was triggered by the heightened interest in communicative competence in the field of linguistics so that this section first introduces the broader notion, of which pragmatic competence is a sub-concept. Following this, an overview of subsequent approaches to pragmatic competence in interaction and in intercultural communication is given.

Pragmatic competence was highly influenced by Hymes's (1972) model of communicative competence as well as subsequent ones by Canale & Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990)[5]. Developed as a counter concept to Chomsky's (1965) notion of linguistic competence, the emergence of communicative competence typifies the shift in the research over time from the study of the language system in isolation to the study of language in use. Communicative competence refers to a language user's potential to perform communicative behaviors successfully in terms of both effectiveness (i.e., goal achievement) and appropriateness (i.e., acceptability in relation to context) (cf. Vorwerg 2015: 299). Based on these concepts, pragmatic competence is presumed to be the knowledge of form-function-context mappings, i.e., knowledge of which linguistic forms to use for what pragmatic function in what social context (cf. Taguchi 2019: 3). This approach is reminiscent of Leech's (1983: 100) and

[4] For a discussion of the two groups, i.e., cognitively oriented pragmatics and socially/culturally oriented pragmatics see Huang (2013, 2017).
[5] It was, however, not until Bachman (1990) that pragmatic competence was explicitly included in a model as a main component of communicative competence.

Thomas's (1983: 99) division of pragmatics into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Timpe Laughlin et al. (2015) describe these two layers of pragmatic competence as follows:

> [T]his binary, psycholinguistic structure of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics positions pragmatic competence on a continuum with grammar at the one end and sociology at the other, which makes pragmatic competence an adaptive process mediated by the linguistic resources of an individual as well as the modalities, constraints, and sociocultural conventions of a given language use situation.
>
> (Timpe Laughlin et al. 2015: 6)

One defining feature of these early models of communicative competence is their individualistic view. As a psycholinguistic ability, pragmatic competence is said to exist within individuals as a stable trait, independent from context (cf. Taguchi 2017: 154). In later research, pragmatic competence was incorporated into broader conceptual frameworks that put the focus on dyadic and dialogic aspects of communication. One noteworthy alternative to the traditional models is interactional competence (see for example Young 2011). Here, language knowledge and ability are viewed as locally situated and jointly constructed among participants in discourse. Moving away from the one-to-one correspondence among form, function, and context, it is now proposed that these associations are not stable within individual speakers. Instead, they shift constantly, depending on the characteristics of the dynamic social context such as the speakers' attitudes, affect or directions of discourse. Taguchi therefore states that the "ability to adapt to dynamic interaction and achieve a communicative act collaboratively with others is a fundamental aspect of pragmatic competence" (2019: 3).

More recently, our understanding of pragmatic competence in social interaction has further been expanded by the field of intercultural communication, which studies intercultural interaction as a cultural practice (cf. Kecskes 2012). The focus is on interlocutors who have different first languages and who usually represent more than one culture but participate in the dynamic process of communication by use of a common language. As summarized by Taguchi "[r]ecent research on lingua franca communication has revealed that participants constantly negotiate interactional norms, standards of politeness and directness, communication styles, and cultural conventions as interactions unfold" (2017:

156). Generally, studies in intercultural pragmatics pursue a less idealized approach to communication. While the decisive role of cooperation, politeness, and context for the course of communication is not denied, equal importance is given to factors such as trial-and-error, language-based aggression, or egocentrism (cf. Kecskes 2012: 612). In addition, Kecskes (2010) introduced the socio-cognitive approach as a theoretical foundation in intercultural pragmatics. This approach reconciles the cognitive-philosophical perspective which states that intention pre-exists in a speaker's mind before actual production, with the sociocultural-interactional perspective which views intention as being jointly constructed by interlocutors. Language users thus rely on their own culturally specific norms and expectations but negotiate and re-define these L1 norms when seeking common ground during interaction. Over time, a speaker's prior norms develop into new, hybrid norms, creating a "third culture that combines elements of each of the speakers' L1 cultures in novel ways" (Kecskes 2013: 13). Kasper & Blum-Kulka (1993) discuss a similar phenomenon in their intercultural style hypothesis. Their findings show that speakers competent in two or more languages may rely on an intercultural style of speaking that is both related to and distinct from the styles prevalent in the two (or more) substrata. Taguchi (2019) transfers these tenets of intercultural pragmatics to L2 pragmatics in the following way:

> Learners draw on their own knowledge of form-function-context associations from their L1 (or other prior experiences), but their individual-level knowledge transforms to shared knowledge with new standards of politeness, directness, and conventions emerging from interaction.
>
> (Taguchi 2019: 3)

Therefore, a critical aspect of pragmatic competence is the learners' willingness, motivation, and ability to suspend L1 norms, assume L2 socio-cultural beliefs and norms and seek mutual standards (cf. Kecskes 2013: 64). This is reminiscent of yet another quite recent contribution to the understanding of pragmatic competence – *learner agency*, which is "a self-defining capacity that works with volition to bring about a certain effect on or change to one's behavior" (Taguchi 2019: 4). According to this definition, L2 learners are regarded as social beings with their own personal principles, such as values, belief systems or perceptions of the home and target culture. They fall back on these principles when making

linguistic choices, even when these choices diverge from the norms practiced in the target community. This is why it is critical to take the learners' desired social identity as well as its impact on pragmatic choices into consideration when investigating L2 pragmatic competence (cf. Gomez-Laich 2016; Ishihara 2019a, 2019b; Ishihara & Tarone 2009; Kim 2014; LoCastro 2001). Summing up, our understanding of what it means to be pragmatically competent has evolved over time. Conforming with Taguchi, pragmatic competence is a multi-dimensional and multilayered construct in which several knowledge and skill areas are involved:

1. linguistic and sociocultural knowledge of what forms to use in what context;
2. interactional abilities to use the knowledge in a flexible, adaptive manner corresponding to changing context; and
3. agency to make an informed decision on whether or not to implement the knowledge in the community.

(Taguchi 2019: 4)

A number of points should be mentioned in relation to this definition. The present study concentrates exclusively on the perspective of the speaker to the detriment of their speech act performance in collaboration with recipients. The focus is on the range of linguistic resources available to L2 learners, their ability to evaluate contextual information and select appropriate resources accordingly – based on an informed decision of whether or not to employ these knowledge resources in the target language context. Consequently, this study investigates the first and third aspect of pragmatic competence and the working definition adopted for the present purpose takes pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence as well as agency in the realization of speech acts as its focus.

2.1.2 Interlanguage pragmatics

The study of pragmatics in and between different cultures has been approached from a number of perspectives. Central to the present investigation is the field of *interlanguage pragmatics* (ILP), in which the developmental stages of L2 learners in acquiring the pragmatics of the respective target language are explored. Research in this area uses a wide variety of investigative tools and draws on diverse theoretical approaches while mainly concentrating on the investigation of

speech acts and linguistic politeness, and to a lesser extent, conversational structure und conversational implicature (cf. Alcón-Soler & Martínez Flor 2008b).

The majority of research in the field of ILP has centered on the acquisition of second languages in adults. In this context, the term *second language* (L2) serves as an umbrella term encompassing later-learned languages (second, third, and so on), i.e., languages acquired after the first language(s) (L1). Contrary to foreign language learning, adult L2 learning refers to the process of acquiring a language within a sociocultural setting where the language plays important social and institutional functions, provided exposure to the L2 started in adulthood.[6] It is worth noting that this notion encompasses diverse learning environments, ranging from formal and systematic settings (e.g., a formal classroom setting) to informal and non-tutored situations (e.g., through informal contact in a naturalistic setting). This also includes hybrid forms that blend formal and informal learning approaches (cf. Miao 2015: 360; Mitchell & Myles 2004: 5-6).

This section provides an overview of central topics in ILP. It begins by defining the research area *interlanguage pragmatics*, followed by a selective account of relevant concepts covered in the field, including the distinction between pragmatic production and pragmatic perception, types of pragmatic failure, pragmatic transfer, overgeneralization, and pragmatic resistance. Last, the appropriateness of a native speaker norm in ILP studies is discussed.

Interlanguage is a classic term in the field of second-language acquisition (henceforth SLA). First coined by Selinker (1972) to refer to "a transitional system reflecting the learner's current L2 knowledge" (Ellis 1994: 16), it found a place in the domain of pragmatics in the 1990s. ILP thus lies at the interface of SLA research and pragmatics, and both disciplines complement each other in defining the principles and objectives of the field (cf. Ren 2015: 20; Schauer 2009: 15). While SLA provides theoretical frameworks and empirical methods to examine acquisitional processes, pragmatics, inter alia, serves as the subject and goal for L2 learning. The "hybrid" nature of ILP (Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993a: 3) becomes apparent in the following definition by Kasper and Rose:

[6] Unlike noted otherwise, this study will not propose distinctions regarding the order in which the language is learned (e.g., second vs. third, or fourth). A distinction is, however, made between second and foreign language learning. The latter refers to the learning of another language in a classroom context in an environment where the target language is not a common language of the community, e.g., learning German while living in Syria.

> As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how nonnative speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language.
>
> (Kasper & Rose 2002: 5)

Underlying this definition are two basic points. First, it emphasizes the need to investigate learners' acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence, which is the focus of the present study. ILP originally emerged from the field of cross-cultural pragmatics which provides systematic comparisons of different cultures by studying aspects of language use. The pioneer study called *Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project* (henceforth CCSARP) is the most well-known research project in cross-cultural pragmatics (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b). Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) investigated the cross-cultural and intralingual variation of patterns of request and apology realizations under different contextual settings and across a wide range of languages and cultures. Since then, the CCSARP project has informed several later studies within cross-cultural pragmatics and ILP research. Consequently, ILP studies in the 1980s and 1990s still showed a preference for learners' use of pragmatic knowledge over questions of development. However, since several ILP researchers called for more acquisitional research (Bardovi-Harlig 1999, 2013a; Ellis 1994; Kasper & Rose 2002; Kasper & Schmidt 1996), there have been significant advances in the field, resulting in a growing body of research that investigates changes within as well as influences on the L2 pragmatics system.

Second, Kasper & Rose (2002) define pragmatic competence as consisting of two sub-competencies, i.e., productive pragmatic competence and receptive pragmatic competence. The latter includes both pragmatic comprehension and perception (cf. Ren 2015, 2018; Tada 2005). In line with Ren "[p]ragmatic comprehension refers to the ability to comprehend meaning as intended […] while pragmatic perception refers to the ability to judge the appropriateness of utterances in the particular context" (2015: 20). The present study focuses on the second aspect of receptive pragmatic competence by investigating the learners' perception of modified request and complaint realizations in a range of contexts. This involves the recognition of pragmalinguistic forms, their pragmatic force as well as their contextual requirements. Hence, to detect correct form-context

mappings, learners draw on linguistic knowledge, conventions of language use and sociocultural norms of interaction (cf. Taguchi 2012: 35–36). In addition, interlocutors need to take the context into account in which an utterance is made. Based on Van Dijk's (1977) work, Kasper (1984) classifies the five phases of a contextual analysis as follows:

- The identification of the *general* social context (formal/informal, public/private)
- The identification of the *specific* social context (e.g. opening a formal meeting, introducing somebody at a party)
- The identification of the *relevant* factors in the given context, for example, participants' social status, their positional and situational roles, and their role relationship
- The identification of *conventions* (social norms) pertaining to the given context
- The identification of the *overall ongoing action* and the sequence of acts preceding the speech act under comprehension

(Kasper 1984: 4-5, original emphasis)

The second sub-competence, the production of pragmatic functions, requires knowledge of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, in conjunction with the processing capacity to articulate this knowledge in online production, as well as agency to make an informed decision on whether or not to implement the knowledge in the host community (cf. Taguchi 2012: 42). More specifically, productive pragmatic competence "refers to the ability to vary one's language uses appropriately according to the context to achieve a specific purpose" (Ren 2018: 120). In order to produce contextually appropriate and effective utterances, learners need to master both knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a target language, and knowledge of which particular forms are likely to be the most successful in a given situation. In addition, Taguchi (2012: 42) and Timpe (2013: 78) highlight the relevance of precise linguistic processing in the production of pragmatic functions. To ensure that the meaning encoded is understood correctly, speakers need to pay attention to grammatical forms, such as lexical and morphosyntactic features. Pragmatic production therefore requires a greater processing load than perception, in which case it may be sufficient to infer the overall meaning without necessarily analyzing linguistic features explicitly (cf. Taguchi 2012: 42). As learners need to have at least basic linguistic resources to encode pragmatic functions, Taguchi (2012: 42) argues that grammatical

knowledge must play a mediating role in pragmatic development. Whether L2 learners can retrieve grammatical and pragmatic knowledge in online communication is typically investigated by production tasks in ILP. In this study, pragmatic production is thus operationalized as L2 learners' written production performance in realizing the speech acts request and complaint, as a response to stimuli presented in a questionnaire.

L2 learners' speech act production is a major research interest in ILP. Research has so far concentrated predominantly on differences in pragmatic production between learners and native speakers of a language. As reported by Bardovi-Harlig (1999), the main areas of divergence are the choice of speech acts (e.g., do L1 and L2 speakers produce the same speech act in a particular situation?), the choice of a semantic formula and its propositional content, as well as the actual strategies and linguistic forms produced. In this regard, the question arises as to what the implications of these differences in pragmatic production are for L2 learners. In order to answer this question, one first needs to keep in mind that, as far as language use by L2 learners is concerned, pragmatic and grammatical competence show fundamental differences. Grammatical competence, i.e., mastery of the linguistic code of the given language system, can be acquired systematically by L2 learners. Grammar must be adhered to (at least to some extent) to get the message across; it is about correctness. In contrast, pragmatic competence is concerned with appropriateness. Accordingly, if L2 learners violate pragmatic rules, this may result in misinterpretation of linguistic behavior and pragmatic failure or, in Kecskes's words: "If grammar is bad, the utterance may not convey the right message or any message while if pragmatics is bad, the utterance will usually convey the wrong message" (2015: 3). The notion of *pragmatic failure*, an important concept in ILP used to explain misunderstandings which occur in learner communication, is outlined in the following. Moreover, there appear to be different sources of learner/native speaker differences recognized in the ILP literature. Among them, *pragmatic transfer* at the formal level and learners' perception of contextual factors seem to explain some of the differences. Two other important concepts in explaining divergent language use by L2 leaners are *pragmatic overgeneralization* and *pragmatic resistance*. Each of these are briefly addressed in turn.

Pragmatic failure: what exactly happens?

Pragmatic failure occurs when addressees perceive the illocutionary force of an utterance as other than intended by the speaker (cf. Walkinshaw 2009). In a second language such problems can arise from *pragmalinguistic failure*, i.e., the inappropriate use of apparently synonymous linguistic structures (cf. Thomas 1983). Another cause is *sociopragmatic failure* which captures misunderstandings that occur due to culturally different perceptions of the social context, for example, "what constitutes an imposition and the evaluation of power relationships in a given context" (Archer et al. 2012: 112). Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failures may result in misunderstandings, or at worst, breakdowns in communication (cf. Walkinshaw 2009). As they are often not recognized as such, they are likely to be imputed to language learners' personal deficiencies and cultural upbringings. This, in turn, has the potential to exacerbate stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination against the learner group in question (cf. House 2000; Boxer 2002).

Pragmatic transfer. There are different sources of pragmatic failure recognized in the literature, among them, pragmatic transfer. In general terms, transfer is described as follows:

> The term transfer is generally used to refer to the systematic influences of existing knowledge on the acquisition of new knowledge. People usually approach a new problem or situation with an existing *mental set*: a frame of mind involving an existing disposition to think of a problem or a situation in a particular way.
>
> (Zegarac & Pennington 2008: 142, original emphasis)

These mental sets are to a large extent determined by culture-specific knowledge so that the communication of interactants from various cultural backgrounds may be (unknowingly to them) influenced by their different mental sets (cf. Zegarac & Pennington 2008: 142). Undoubtedly, it is a demanding task for L2 learners who are still in the process of acquiring the pragmatic norms of the target language, to perceive and produce what is considered as appropriate linguistic behavior in different L2 social contexts. This is why they (to varying degrees) make decisions about an utterance's appropriateness based on their already available pragmatic knowledge. Thus, when applied to ILP, transfer is defined as "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2

on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (Kasper 1992: 207). Kasper (1992) proposes a framework for the analysis of pragmatic transfer which differentiates between *positive* and *negative pragmatic transfer*. Positive transfer occurs "when learners' production of a pragmatic feature is the same (structurally, functionally, distributionally) as a feature used by target language speakers in the same context and when this feature is paralleled by a feature in learners' L1" (Kasper 1998: 193). In contrast, negative transfer occurs "when a pragmatic feature in the interlanguage is (structurally, functionally, distributionally) the same as in L1 but different from L2" (Kasper 1998: 194). This can be illustrated by the following example: Being insistent after an offer or after the addressee's refusal of an offer represents a sociocultural expectation in Syria whereas the same behavior is perceived as an imposition and may therefore be viewed as inappropriate in Germany. Thus, when Syrian Arabic speakers transfer this communicative behavior to German, they mistakenly generalize from their L1 pragmatic knowledge to a communicative situation in the L2. Negative pragmatic transfer is also evident in the use of address terms such as *mein Chef / my boss*, *mein Arzt / my doctor* or *meine Schwester / my sister* by Syrian Arabic learners of German. In Arabic, kinship terms and titles are frequently employed to express both respect and intimacy, their use in German, on the other hand, is unusual and may cause irritation. Generally, evidence for positive pragmatic transfer is less obvious, whereas negative pragmatic transfer results in imperfect pragmatic competence in L2. This, in turn, may (but does not necessarily) lead to pragmatic failure (cf. Zegarac & Pennington 2008: 144). As in the examples above, transfer takes place at both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic level. In the case of pragmalinguistic transfer, learners transport linguistic devices or strategies from their L1 into their interlanguage (cf. Kasper 1992: 209). The reason is their perception that the illocutionary force or politeness value assigned to this particular linguistic material is the same in the L2 (cf. Kasper 1992: 209). For instance, both positive and negative pragmalinguistic transfer has been found for pragmatic routines, syntactic and lexical modifiers, and speech act realization strategies (e.g. Barron 2003; Eisenstein & Bodman 1993; Félix-Brasdefer 2015; Takahashi 1996; Trosborg 1995). According to Schauer (2009), the process of pragmatic perception becomes more difficult "the more indirect and L2 culture specific a particular L2 utterance is and the less it overlaps with the pragmatic

norms of the learners' L1 and a similar L1 utterance" (2009: 18). In addition, language users' perception of contextual variables may result in positive or negative sociopragmatic transfer. In this case, transfer concerns the projection of first-language based knowledge of context-internal and context-external factors onto second language contexts (cf. Maeshiba et al. 1996). Typically affected are L2 learners' evaluations of social contexts, the appropriateness of speech acts (e.g., does unpunctuality justify a direct complaint in German?), and the overall politeness style (e.g., Barron 2003; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Takahashi & Beebe 1993). Although the distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer is useful, it is not always clear-cut. Kasper points out that "the fuzzy edges between the two pragmatic domains will be noticeable" (1992: 210). Besides, it seems that the influence exerted by language learners' L1 is somehow selective and shows variation across individual learners (cf. VanPatten & Williams 2015: 11). Apart from pragmatic transfer, learning effects such as overgeneralization have been reported to result in differences from the target language norm. Sources of pragmatic overgeneralization are briefly discussed in the following.

Pragmatic overgeneralization. The distinctiveness of learners' interlanguage does in part result from overgeneralization, a process central to the development of interlanguage knowledge (cf. Selinker 1972). Barron defines pragmatic overgeneralization as "the ineffective generalisation of the interlanguage system" (2003: 40) and states that it stems from three main sources: a strategy of least effort, a need for explicitness and, meta-linguistic motives. For L2 learners, adopting a strategy of least effort entails the selection of linguistic devices which are largely automated and can therefore be produced easily (cf. Kasper 1981). In many cases, these devices are syntactically uncomplicated expressions which are semantically transparent. This point is illustrated by the frequent use of the politeness marker *bitte / please* in L2 request realizations, irrespective of social context. Another common example is given by Kasper (1981) who cites the overgeneralization of speech acts with over-explicit propositions which are syntactically easy to produce. In addition, learners may employ "playing-it-safe" strategies in order to cope with feelings of anxiety, self-consciousness and insecurity when communicating in an L2 (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 245). These are linguistic forms and structures that are characterized by clarity and

explicitness. Efforts to play-it-safe can be exemplified by L2 learners' tendency to overuse direct speech act strategies (e.g., using imperative constructions for requests) or an excessive use of additional moves (e.g. Edmondson & House 1991; Faerch & Kasper 1989). Another reason for overgeneralization may be found in L2 learners' metalinguistic motives, i.e., the perception that a particular form is target-like. For instance, Blum-Kulka (1991) explains how participants in her study, who were L2 learners of Hebrew, chose inappropriately high levels of directness, due to an incorrect overgeneralization of Israelis' alleged preference for direct speech act strategies.

Pragmatic resistance: When in Rome, do as the Romans do? Analyzing multi-linguals' pragmatic production exclusively through a cognitive lens (e.g., by focusing on pragmatic transfer and overgeneralization) leads to a static characterization of L2 learners as either convergent or divergent. They may, however, also consciously reject L2 pragmatic conventions. In the case of adolescent and adult learners, pragmatic knowledge is acquired systematically, and pragmatic attitudes are developed by choice. This option is not available for L2 grammar, so that these learners may have more control over their pragmatic than their grammatical development (cf. Kecskés & Papp 2000). Accordingly, Ishihara defines pragmatic resistance as "L2 users' *deliberate* divergence from perceived pragmatic norms and language uses they are aware of and linguistically capable of producing" (2019a: 165, original emphasis). Pragmatic resistance does, however, not simply occur in situations in which L1 and L2 pragmatic norms differ but in cases in which the latter are perceived to be incompatible with learners' oftentimes culturally hybrid subjectivities (cf. Ishihara 2019b: 621).

With the social turn in applied linguistics, the fields of SLA and ILP have been enriched by research on *identity*, *investment*, and *agency* (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002). From this standpoint, *identity* is closely related to L2 learning and use and beyond that it is viewed as multi-faceted, continuously changing and socially constructed (cf. Block 2003; Norton 2000). In addition, it is intertwined with Norton's (1997) theoretical notion of *investment*. Norton (2000) states that learners anticipate a positive outcome when they invest in their L2, i.e., an enhancement of their cultural capital by means of a range of symbolic and material resources associated with social power. As conversing in an L2 not only

serves the purpose of information transfer but also involves the constant (re)organization and co-construction of learners' identities and social relationships, "investment in the target language equates to investment in a learner's own identity" (Kim 2014: 93). What is more, learners exercise *agency*, that is the "dynamically negotiated capacity to act, assume new identities, or resist certain positionings actively and purposefully" (Ishihara 2019a: 163). For instance, Al-Issa's (2003) investigation of refusal realizations by Jordanian learners of English demonstrates that even though the learner group was aware of the relevant American-English speech act norms they intentionally evaded them and opted for L1 Arabic values instead. Semi-structured interviews revealed that it was not seen as desirable by the study participants to emulate L2 values in this case. Along the same lines, a range of ILP studies show that L2 learners exercise their agency by choosing to conform to or resist native speaker norms with the aim of preserving and/or asserting their own cultural/social identity and their position in relation to others (e.g. Barron 2003; Hassall 2004; Ishihara & Tarone 2009; Kim 2014; LoCastro 2001). Rather than being just passive recipients of (typically idealized) behaviors of monolingual native speakers, L2 learners intentionally co-construct and re-shape target language practices. As the data indicate, they do not necessarily choose allegiance to either the L1 or L2 norm but instead actively create translingual interactional styles and thereby also discursively negotiate their own bi- or multicultural identities (cf. Kim 2014: 99). This multilingual agency is sometimes referred to as a form of hybridity because it is enacted in a *third space* in which two or more languages are interdependent without, however, being categorized as separate systems (cf. Bhabha 1994; Ishihara 2019a; Kramsch 2009). Taguchi (2017) goes one step further by advocating a re-thinking in L2 pragmatics towards the concept of the global citizen:

> [I]n today's multilingual society, the goal of language learning is not to become a native speaker, but to become an intercultural speaker who is linguistically and interculturally competent – a person who is sensitive to other cultures and aware of his/her own cultural position to mediate across linguistic and cultural boundaries.
>
> (Taguchi 2017: 157)

The native speaker ideal

In view of the finding that pragmatic resistance is an integral part of L2 acquisition, the question arises as to what extent the 'L2 pragmatic *norm*' is an appropriate option for language learners.[7] Cook, in this context, strongly advocates that learners "should be considered as speakers in their own right, not as approximations to monolingual native speakers" (1999: 185). Recent investigations within the realms of ILP and psycholinguistics have amplified the questioning of the native speaker concept since the term is oftentimes not clearly defined and/or inconsistently conceptualized. Factors, such as socio-economic status, age, gender, ethnicity, education, geographical area, in addition to context of acquisition, are often differentially conflated (cf. Ren 2015: 25; Cheng et al. 2021). Equally important in this regard are studies which focus on intralingual pragmatic variations among native speakers, thereby challenging the assumption of homogenous L1 informants (e.g. Barron & Schneider 2009; Schneider & Barron 2008). Moreover, excluding potential study informants based on binary/essentialist conceptualizations of *nativeness* "upholds deficit perspectives toward multilingualism and non-hegemonic modes of language acquisition" (Cheng et al. 2021: 1).

Apart from that, interlanguage phenomena such as pragmatic transfer or overgeneralization do not necessarily result in pragmatic failure. In fact, interlanguage forms are sometimes exploited purposefully, as they have positive connotations (e.g., they may be perceived as cute or flirtatious) or may, at least, ensure that L2 learners are not judged according to native speaker standards (cf. Barron 2003: 76). What should moreover be taken into account is that native speakers may find L2 learners' total convergence with L2 pragmatic norms presumptuous and/or intrusive and therefore feel threatened by the learners' apparent claim to membership of the L2 society/culture (cf. House & Kasper 2000; Kasper 1998; Zegarac & Pennington 2008). A related point to consider is that native speakers may unconsciously misconstrue L2 learners' pragmatic productions, i.e., a learner's performance may be interpreted differently from that of a native speaker. For instance, by analyzing answers to unwelcome questions in L2 Indonesian, Hassall (2004) demonstrates that perceptions of convergence are

[7] In ILP research, *L2 norm* refers to the norms in the second language, i.e., the target language that a learner is acquiring.

influenced by expectations concerning the speaker's status as a *foreigner*. As a possible outcome (and contrary to the learners' actual pragmatic performance), their convergence with native norms may be perceived as smaller (cf. Hassall 2004: 1001). Considering the afore-mentioned points, it can be concluded that the "difference = deficit' hypothesis" (House & Kasper 2000: 104) which has long been a maxim adhered to in ILP research, must be dismissed when analyzing L2 data.

In the present study, the learners' pragmatic language use is compared to an empirically established L2 point of reference, as the native speaker data provides a necessary baseline regarding the range and types of syntactic modifiers used in German. However, care was taken to address the afore-mentioned points of criticism. For the purposes at hand, the term *German native speaker* is defined as follows: A native speaker has acquired German from naturalistic exposure, in early childhood and in an authentic social context/speech community and self-identifies as a *native speaker of German*. A native speaker has further lived most of their life in a context in which German is the majority language, so that language use is characterized by continued exposure and usage (e.g., daily contact) (cf. Cheng et al. 2021). Additionally, to avoid a deficiency model, Barron's (2003) proposal for a descriptive and non-evaluative approach to interlanguage data is followed (cf. Barron 2003: 77-78). Hence, focus is put on the evolving developmental process rather than measuring the success and/or failure of L2 productions at one proficiency level. Apart from this, the extent of approximation to native-speaker norms is not unequivocally equated with degree of success in language learning.

2.2 Speech act theory

Speech act theory revolves around the notion that "*by* saying something we do something" (Austin 1962: 109; original emphasis). We perform speech acts when we offer a greeting, request, complaint, apology, invitation, or refusal. Even though these acts are central to communicative life, they only became a topic of investigation (at least in the English-speaking world), in the middle of the twentieth century. Since then, speech act theory has remained one of the foundation stones of pragmatics. What is more, it plays a central role in ILP where, predominantly, a speech act approach is followed to determine the

pragmatic competence of L2 learners. In this study, I draw from Austin and Searle's development of speech act theory, include contributions from newer approaches as well as from disciplines like conversation and discourse analysis, and apply this to the examination of two speech acts, i.e., requests and complaints. Given the widespread interest in speech act theory and the accompanying multitude of literature on the subject, this section cannot review all the relevant work within the philosophy of language and linguistics. Rather, an outline of the traditional theory (Austin/Searle) is given in § 2.2.1 as well as a summary of the different positions that have been taken on the issues crucial for the present study. While a speech act approach has great merits, its shortcomings are equally well known. § 2.2.2 points out some of the general problems that the study of language based on the notion of speech act entails. Particular attention is paid to disciplines doing research on empirical data. § 2.2.3 concludes with a critical survey of existing approaches to speech acts and makes concrete suggestions on how to advance the current practice. My aim is to show that speech act theory is indeed suitable as a theoretical foundation for the present study.

2.2.1 Speech acts: doing things with words

The basis for speech act theory was laid by the language philosopher John Austin. Initially intended as an argument against the truth-conditional semantic theory prevalent at the time, Austin paved the way for a theory which, through the work of his student John Searle, led to a reorientation in linguistics research towards meaning in use. In a series of lectures delivered at Harvard in 1955, and later published as the monograph *How to do things with words* (1962), Austin demonstrates that every utterance constitutes the performance of an act. Thus, speakers do not merely use language to describe phenomena in the real world but also actively to do things or to perform actions as well. More specifically, a distinction is made between three types of act that co-occur in an utterance:

- The *locutionary act*, i.e., what is said, the physical act of producing an utterance with a certain meaning and reference,
- The *illocutionary act*, i.e., what is intended, the act that is performed by the speaker in issuing an utterance, e.g., the act of requesting, complaining or apologizing,

- The *perlocutionary act*, i.e., what is actually achieved, the effect brought about by the utterance on the actions, thoughts, and beliefs of hearers (which may or may not be intended).

Of these three speech act constituents, the illocutionary act which expresses the force of the utterance became the central issue in speech act theory. In fact, the terms speech act and illocutionary act are often used interchangeably, and I also follow this convention here.

The terminology introduced by Austin occupies a central role in what was then to become the study of speech acts. His work has been influentially systematized by his student, the language philosopher John Searle. From that point on, priority is given by Searle to the role of speakers in communication and illocutionary acts become identified with the performance of speaker intention(s). Moreover, Searle states that "speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behavior" (1969: 16). Accordingly, the successful performance of an illocutionary act is achieved when speakers meet certain conditions, termed felicity conditions, which are claimed to hold across all speech acts (cf. Searle 1969: 62–64). These include: *propositional content conditions*, which specify the kind of meaning expressed by a proposition (e.g., the act of requesting has a future reference); *preparatory conditions*, which specify the prerequisite conditions for the performance of the speech act (e.g., knowledge that addresses are able to perform a requested action); *sincerity conditions*, which determine appropriate subjective states (e.g., speakers have to be sincere about the speech act performed) and *essential conditions*, which specify what the speech act must conventionally *count as* (e.g., a request is classified as an attempt to get addresses to perform an action).

Searle's analysis of felicity conditions is closely linked to the production of a system for speech act categorization. He differentiates between five classes of speech acts, based on their fit with the world, psychological state, and their illocutionary point (cf. Searle 1976: 10):

- *Representatives (or assertives)*: Speakers express the belief that the propositional content of the utterance is true, e.g., to state, to boast or to deduce.

- *Commissives*: Speakers commit themselves to do some future act, e.g., to promise or to threaten.
- *Directives*: Speakers attempt to get the hearers to do something, e.g., to request, to forbid or to entreat.
- *Expressives*: Speakers express a psychological state to some prior action or state of affairs, e.g., to apologize, to thank or to complain.
- *Declarations*: Speakers change the state of the world in an immediate way by uttering something while relying on special institutional backgrounds, e.g., to christen or to sentence someone.

In addition, performative verbs like 'to promise' or 'to bet' together with other illocutionary force indicating devices such as grammatical mood, word order, stress, intonation contour, adverbs, particles, or punctuation aid addresses in assigning illocutionary force to an utterance (cf. Searle 1969). Be that as it may, the question of how many speech act-types exist is an ongoing debate. Since Austin developed the first typology of speech acts (cf. 1962: 151–163), many other classificatory schemes have been advanced. Of all of these, Searle's (1976) taxonomy is the most widely accepted one, and is also frequently used in ILP investigations (e.g., Ren 2015; Schauer 2009).

Another approach with which to identify different types of speech acts is by considering whether they are direct or indirect. Put simply, speakers say what they mean in direct speech acts, whereas indirect speech acts denote acts in which speakers mean more than what they say (cf. Searle et al. 1980: viii). Searle (1975) proposes that the three major sentence types (i.e., declarative, imperative, and interrogative) represent mutually exclusive forms conventionally associated with a certain illocutionary force. It follows that the term direct speech act is used in the case of a conventional relationship between sentence type and illocutionary force, e.g., a command (or, relatedly, a request) is canonically associated with the imperative sentence form (cf. Birner 2013: 192). To account for cases in which there is no transparent relationship between linguistic form and function, Searle (1975) explores the idea of indirect speech acts. He argues that one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another. For instance, in an utterance such as *Kannst du mir beim Umzug helfen? / Can you help me move?* a speaker realizes two speech acts, namely the direct one, which is a question

concerning the hearer's ability to help and an indirect one which is a request for help. Searle (1975) posits a number of inferential steps by which interlocutors infer the intended meaning of such utterances by using as a framework Grice's Conversational Implicature (1975), coupled with shared background information. In this account, indirect speech acts are systematically related to the direct speech act's felicity conditions. For instance, the intended meaning of *can you help me move?* can be inferred because it has a systematic relationship with one of the felicity conditions of requests, i.e., the addressee's ability to carry out the action demanded. This does not, however, explain why speakers in so many cases prefer to depart from the direct expression of the relevant speech act. One essential factor quite commonly referred to in the literature is interpersonal considerations, so that politeness is a key motivating factor for the use of indirectness (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987; Culpeper & Archer 2008: 54). The complex interaction of indirectness and politeness has not surfaced in the above discussion of indirect speech acts, and I prefer to defer it to § 2.3.

2.2.2 Critiques of speech act theory

The work of Austin and Searle has become the basis for a whole body of research into speech acts. However, applying the assumptions made by the theories to natural and elicited language data leads to certain difficulties. Speech act theory has therefore received strong criticism in particular by disciplines concerned with the empirical study of natural language use, such as conversation analysis, cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatics. The discussion in this section is organized around those points of criticism relevant for the present study, as well as proposals about how speech act analysis can be elaborated on without rejecting its basic notions. The main points of critique addressed in the following are speech act theory's universal presumption, the speech act types and Searle's handling of indirect speech acts, the sentence as the unit of analysis and the focus on speakers to the detriment of the addressees' role in the meaning-making process.

Speech act theory's universal presumption

Speech act theory assumes not only an ideal use of speech acts but is also largely based on isolated examples taken predominantly from English. Searle's (1976) classificatory scheme is therefore likely to reflect an ethnocentric Western bias because it does not take the multiplicity and complexity of language use across

different speech communities into account. Instead, it is assumed that the illocutionary force of a speech act remains consistent while its actual form varies across different languages. There is, however, limited evidence for universal language functions, as different cultures make use of different sets of speech functions. For instance, Jucker & Taavitsainen give the example of an apology in Japanese which may not only be dissimilar from the corresponding realization in English, "but it may be a significantly different social act" (2000: 69).

Searle's taxonomy of speech act types

Searle's felicity conditions and the related taxonomy of speech act types provide a useful starting point for outlining distinctive features that contribute to the constitution of particular speech acts, such as requests and complaints. However, by employing such a "higher-order grouping of types" (Levinson 2017: 206), aspects of actual language use cannot be treated properly in classical speech act theory. This is due in part to the fact that speech acts "have fuzzy boundaries and often seem to overlap with other speech acts" (Archer et al. 2012: 40). An utterance such as *the kitchen is a mess* may be employed as a statement, a complaint, or a request (to clean the kitchen) as well as being deliberately ambiguous between the three interpretations. As illocutionary ambiguity is a frequent built-in feature of speech acts, a distinction in clear-cut categories as predetermined by Searle's rules is of limited use (cf. Levinson 1983: 280–281). Following a somewhat different approach, Taavitsainen & Jucker (2008) define speech acts as fuzzy concepts which are characterized by a great deal of variation. They state that "[t]he fuzziness of speech acts requires a prototype approach; individual instances vary in their degree of conformity to their prototypical manifestations and sometimes the group identity is only vague" (Taavitsainen & Jucker 2008: 6). Some support for such a view is offered by Sickinger (2019) and Culpeper & Archer (2008). The latter take as an example the speech act command, which can easily blur into requests, which in turn may merge into suggestions, advice or offers. Hence, speech acts should be defined broadly because some members of a conceptual category may be more central than others. One good place to start is to determine the distinctive, obligatory defining criteria for a speech act which can be based on Searle's felicity conditions, amongst other things (e.g., contextual and interpersonal beliefs or perlocutionary effects) (cf.

Culpeper & Archer 2008: 47). This can be illustrated briefly by the speech act *direct complaint*. Complaints contain the speaker's attribution of responsibility for a feeling of dissatisfaction to a hearer who is held accountable for the deviant behavior (cf. Olshtain & Weinbach 1993: 108; Searle 1969: 67). While some complaint realizations can be positioned at the center of this class, others such as criticisms, disagreements, or reproaches move progressively further from the prototype. The links between these forms, however, show a clear family resemblance so that they should be categorized accordingly (cf. Jucker & Taavitsainen 2000: 74). Consequently, Searle's classificatory scheme is neither exhaustive nor a valid tool in itself for describing the complexities of authentic interactions because it does not leave room for the multifunctional nature of illocutionary acts (cf. Flöck 2016: 14; Sbisà 2009: 242).

(In)direct speech acts

One major drawback of Searle's approach to indirect speech acts is the assumption of a default interpretation for the three basic sentence types. In arguing against analyses of this kind, Kissine (2013b: 192) demonstrates that a one-to-one correspondence between sentence types and illocutionary act types is not tenable. In fact, the basic sentence types declarative, imperative, and interrogative correspond to several possible illocutionary acts. Take as an example the imperative, which according to Kissine (2013a) cannot bi-univocally be associated with the directive force. He gives evidence, both for non-directive imperatives (e.g., good wishes: *Sleep well*.) as well as for directive speech acts which are performed via non-imperative sentences (e.g., *I want you to clean the kitchen*) (cf. Kissine 2013a: 102).[8] What is more, findings from typological research show that many languages do not have distinctively imperative morphosyntactic forms (cf. König & Siemund 2007). Coupling illocutionary forces with sentence-types is thus not viable cross-linguistically. Instead, what can be found in the grammar of a language are general distinctions of sentence types, semantic mood, or illocutionary potential, rather than speech act distinctions (cf. König & Siemund 2007: 322).

[8] See Kissine (2012) for additional arguments against incorporating illocutionary forces within sentence meaning.

Moreover, in the psycholinguistic literature the plausibility of the Searlean hypothesis that inferencing is the only route has been questioned.[9] For instance, it has been claimed that understanding indirect speech acts is possible without necessarily computing their meanings by inference from a literal meaning (cf. Bach & Harnish 1979; Culpeper & Archer 2008; Kissine 2013a; Morgan 1978). One prominent view is Morgan's (1978) short-circuited implicature account. He takes as an example the widely used linguistic form for requests *'Can you'* (e.g., help me move) and argues that in this case little inferencing on part of the addressees is required. Such indirect means are used on a regular basis, so that their directive interpretation is largely automatic, i.e., they have been conventionalized. Due to this conventionalization process, addresses need not go through the derivation of the literal speech act (i.e., the question about the addressee's ability to help with the moving). Instead, they can automatically derive the secondary speech act, in this case, the request (see also Bach & Harnish 1979). It is therefore possible to add 'please' to utterances such as *can you help me move?* which, if taken as a question, would create grammatical difficulties (cf. Culpeper & Archer 2008: 53; Kissine 2012: 182). In this study, such conventionalized forms are termed *conventionally indirect* and are to be differentiated from so-called hints, i.e., *non-conventionally indirect* forms which rely on inferential calculations. That said, other scholars emphasize the general importance of social context in speech act interpretation. They maintain that in order to account for the inferencing related to indirect speech acts, contextual and interpersonal information such as the power asymmetry between speakers must be included (cf. Gibbs 1979; Holtgraves 1994; Leech 1983, 2014). As explained by Holdcroft (1994: 360–361), "the inferential process tries to corroborate the most likely hypothesis given the background assumptions, including crucially the conversational goals of the participants". As an example, he uses indirect requests in which case the recognition that the speakers are of a high status may be sufficient enough to prime a directive interpretation, circumventing any Gricean inferencing (cf. Holdcroft 1994: 360–361). The limitation that key social information is missing from Searle's account is offset in this study by including as well as controlling for key contextual factors in the methods employed.

[9] For a critical discussion of Grice's (1975) inferential mechanism and for a discussion of an alternative approach, called the *Direct Perception Model*, in which no attribution of complex Gricean intentions is required, refer to Kissine (2013a), Chapter 3.

Speech acts in isolation

In traditional speech act theory, the focus is on invented examples which are mostly restricted to the limit of the sentence level and which do not include context information. Speech acts in conversation, however, are not created or understood as one-sentence units in isolation. Conversational linguists such as Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) observed that in order to identify the functions performed by speech acts, one must not only analyze individual utterances but also consider their placement and sequential order in conversation. In this way, they were able to show that speech acts rely on the context in which they occur. The notion of *context* refers both to the global context (e.g., Is the act part of the opening or closing section of an exchange?) and to the position a speech act occupies within an interactional sequence (e.g., Is the act initiatory or responsive?) (cf. Meier et al. 2019: 10–11).[10] Additional supra-sentential aspects of illocutionary acts are (dis)preferred responses, repair or turn-taking which also includes the temporal structuring of turns (e.g., pauses, delays, perturbations, and overlaps) (e.g. Kasper 2006; Schegloff & Sacks 1973). The relevance of conversational aspects of illocutions was also verified by studies conducted in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Study participants do not rely on single utterances but instead employ speech acts in combination with various types of pre- and post-sequences and other speech act types. This is also the case when participants are asked to provide elicited, written versions of speech acts (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989c; Walker 2013). Typical examples are attention-seeking devices, pre-invitations (e.g., preparator *Do you have any plans for the weekend?*) or external modifiers used to mitigate or substantiate speech acts that have potentiality for causing social disruption. Complaints are a good case in point: They are typically modified externally and in addition, they are prefaced and/or followed by additional speech acts. For instance, a direct complaint may be made up of an accusation *You prescribed a wrong medication* in combination with a threat *If that happens again, I'll write you a bad review online* and/or a request for forbearance *Be more careful next time*. Consequently, speech act theory has rightly been accused of not being able to account for functions performed by utterances in actual conversation (cf. Archer et al. 2012: 40).

[10] For further discussion of the relevance of context in speech act analysis, refer to Archer et al. (2012), Culpeper et al. (2018), Félix-Brasdefer (2019), Levinson (1983, 2017) and Walker (2013).

Speaker-centered meaning in communication

In Searlian analysis (1983), illocutionary meaning is seen as static and contingent on the individual speaker's inner mental state, while the importance of the addressee's uptake and their participation in the meaning-making process is disregarded. This primary orientation towards speaker-meaning presents an analytical limitation because results obtained from conversation analysis demonstrate how interlocutors negotiate speech acts over multiple turns and thereby jointly construct them. In these cases, an utterance's illocutionary force is the outcome of a cooperative negotiation between speakers and hearers, which is something speech act theory cannot account for (cf. Kasper 2009; König & Siemund 2007: 277; Taguchi & Roever 2017: 155). Moreover, models of interactional competence demonstrate that speech acts are made up of both linguistic signals and nonlinguistic forms such as gestures, gaze, intonation or pauses (cf. Walker 2013: 455). In speaker-hearer exchanges, these nonlinguistic features may even replace conventional forms to convey speech act intentions. Speech act theory thus neglects both interactional aspects of language and the coparticipants' role in communication and, in addition largely ignores other fundamental aspects such as paralinguistic and non-verbal features of language (see also Kasper 2006: 297; Kohl 2019: 108–109; Liedtke 2019: 79).

Furthermore, the central role played by the speaker in Searle's theory is directly linked to the idea of speech acts as encapsulating speaker intentions. More specifically, Searle (1969) argues that illocutionary acts are a category of a speaker's intentions conveyed by means of linguistic forms. Here, intention is taken as a resource for analysis, which is problematic as it does not take into account that utterances alone do not reveal speaker meaning. Consequently, analysts must hypothesize about a speaker's intention in order to determine illocutionary force, which in turn may result in misinterpretation or potential analyst bias (cf. Kohl 2019). Kasper (2006) therefore notes the importance of a discursive approach to speech acts in interaction, i.e., basing the analysis on the sequential positioning of speech acts. It seems, however, inconsequential to avoid reference to intentions and intentionality altogether. The main reason is that forms of intentional goal-directedness can be assumed to be central to human behavior and concomitantly, also to communication (cf. Kohl 2019: 109). Thus, to facilitate an appropriate description of speech acts in natural and empirical language data, a

perspective should be chosen that conceptualizes communication as an interactive process and a joint achievement, while also allowing for a theoretical and analytical recourse to the concept of intention(s).[11]

2.2.3 Concluding remarks on speech act approaches in L2 pragmatics

The criticism levelled at Austin's and Searle's work demonstrates that traditional speech act theory cannot properly account for the multi-functionality and complexity of speech acts in interaction. In this respect, conversational approaches can have significant advantages over speech act theory. It would, however, be counterproductive to establish a general research method for the study of language in use without taking into consideration the specific research question at hand. Put differently, while conversation analysis may be the most appropriate approach for the study of actual language use, it is not the most effective for all research questions. This section examines in what way the theoretical and empirical stance on the critical areas introduced above is of relevance to the present study, especially with regards to research on the grammar-pragmatics interface. It is thereby reflected upon as to whether speech act theory is indeed suitable as a theoretical foundation for the present study.

This study addresses one specific aspect of L2 pragmatics that serves to illustrate how grammatical and pragmatic competence play together, namely the acquisition of syntactic downgraders. These devices will be exemplified through speech acts co-extensive with a single sentence or rather turn.[12] In this respect, conversation analysis and speech act theory differ in certain aspects of their application to the data. Whereas the analysis of conversational sequences is not a necessary requirement, the sentence-oriented approach of speech act theory in fact

[11] In this regard, Kecskes's (2010) socio-cognitive approach (SCA) provides a possible solution. The SCA reconciles the cognitive-philosophical perspective which considers intention as a prerequisite to communication with a socio-cognitive approach which makes it possible to capture intention as being emergent and co-constructed. Hence, Kecskes maintains the Searlian understanding of intention (see Searle 1983) while simultaneously expanding the notion to highlight its dynamic and non-summative, emergent nature. It is thereby acknowledged that intention is not necessarily an a priori phenomenon but is oftentimes generated and changed by the interlocutors during the communicative process: "[I]ntention is considered a dynamically changing phenomenon that is the main organizing force in the communicative process. Intention is not only private, individual, pre-planned and a precursor to action; it is also emerging and social" Kecskés (2010: 60). In brief, the SCA conceptualizes intention as both pre-existing in a speaker's mind as well as being an interactive, post facto resource to be used by interactants.

[12] While modification devices can be realized both punctually (i.e., through a device occurring in or coextensive with a single utterance) and sequentially (i.e., through a cluster of devices occurring along a conversational sequence), syntactic downgraders, a particular form of modification, are realized within a single utterance, the so-called head act. This issue is addressed in § 2.4.2.2.1.

proves to be beneficial for this research question. Aside from that, by determining syntactic downgraders as the object of inquiry, the focus is set on conventional associations of linguistic forms and social actions.[13] In this regard, a conversational approach which treats "all interactional conduct as indexical" (Kasper 2006: 296), i.e., examining the function of each interactional feature at the moment of its production, is not purposeful. Instead, it is argued that speech act theory can more readily explain the motivations which underly the wider use of these conventional forms.

Moreover, syntactic modification presupposes knowledge of target language speech acts at both the grammatical/lexical levels and the pragmatic level. In order to determine in how far both cognitive competencies (i.e., grammar and pragmatics) interact at different acquisitional stages, this study concentrates on participants' pragmatic knowledge of the essential elements of speech act realization. More specifically, the focus is on the competence of L2 learners while, their ability for joint, real-life performance takes a backseat.[14] It was therefore decided to conduct this study by means of a written questionnaire format. Request and complaint realizations are collected in isolation from the discursive context and the speaker's perspective is considered exclusively to the detriment of their speech act performance in collaboration with recipients. There are a couple of points to note about this approach. In the foregoing, it has been shown that utterances are typically multifunctional: for instance *the kitchen is a mess* can be interpreted as a statement, a complaint, or a request according to the context. It can prove difficult to assign illocutionary force to such isolated utterances: that is, without analyzing an utterance's position in a conversational sequence and the addressees' responses. This, however, does not pose a problem for data analysis in the present study. As the participants are beginner level learners, they were asked explicitly to produce requests and complaints so that the classification of utterance functions was rendered unnecessary. Put differently, the

[13] Syntactic downgraders such as interrogative structures and subjunctive forms (e.g., *Könntest du …? / Could you …?*) are highly conventionalized means to perform and modify requests.

[14] There is a solid rationale for this approach: The cognitive demands of face-to-face interaction often conceal developments in pragmatic knowledge, whereas L2 learners in this study are provided with an experimental set-up that ensures knowledge display. For this reason, the decision was made to use written questionnaires instead of following an interactive approach to data collection. This goes hand in hand with a focus on how utterances are constructed by speakers rather than taking an evaluative hearer's perspective (i.e., the interpretation and assessment of utterances). For more information on the data collection instruments employed in this study, see § 4.

speakers' pragmatic intention is prespecified by the questionnaire task so that the researcher simply needs to record how that intention is mapped onto a particular linguistic format in each item. Using this kind of task also entails that nonlinguistic forms are not relevant for the data, which (although taking the spoken form) are written.

In light of this, I argue that speech act theory, while rightfully criticized for its inadequacies with regards to the study of actual language use, can be employed successfully in this study as an utterance analysis tool with which to investigate the grammar-pragmatics interface in second language acquisition. Speech act theory's disregard for the importance of speaker-hearer relations in communication is a well-known shortcoming (cf. § 2.2.2), but I believe that both perspectives on speech acts are necessary in empirical research. Thus, while it is indisputable that speech acts are interactionally created, they should also be considered from the point of view of individual speakers, in particular L2 learners. In this regard, speech act theory's sentence-based, speaker-oriented mode of analysis allows one to properly grasp the participants' explicit knowledge of L2 normative speech act expressions. It is thereby ensured that the connection between grammatical forms and language functions in specific contexts can be established. Moreover, speech act theory enjoys continued prominence in ILP. The studies that have been carried out successfully in this area provide support for the usefulness of the speech act as a conceptual unit in empirical analysis (e.g. Barron 2003; Ren 2015; Schauer 2009). At the same time, a speech act approach ensures comparability of findings and enables the continuation of previous ILP research. It may be concluded that the speech act perspective is well-suited to the present purposes.

Summing up, I draw from Austin and Searle's development of speech act theory and apply it to the analysis of L2 speech acts. First, Searle's taxonomy is taken as a basis for the investigation of request and complaint realizations. Where necessary, the scheme is modified to suit the speech acts investigated and to allow for a prototype-based structure for speech act categories in the present study. This represents an empirical extension of Searle's original taxonomy by allowing for the fact that the participants' production data vary in their degree of conformity to prototypical speech acts. In addition, the study adopts key concepts of conversation analysis and ILP by including common interactional features such as

openings, preparators and external modifiers in the analysis. Other variables included pertain to the social nature of requests and complaints. Thus, social context variables are varied to account for the importance of factors such as social distance and dominance in determining the type and range of syntactic modifiers chosen in a particular utterance. Moreover, speech act theory combined with notions of politeness form the basis for the descriptive framework utilized as an instrument for analyzing L2 learners' pragmatic production and perception of speech act modification.

2.3 Facework and politeness

Politeness as an area of research has a special status because it sits midway between lay and academic concerns. In lay terms politeness points to socially appropriate speech and behavior that takes into consideration the feelings and expectations of co-participants in interaction. This attention to feelings is captured by folk notions both for polite as well as contrasting behaviors, such as manners, tact, etiquette, rapport, rudeness, social gaffes, or insults. What these notions indicate is the pervasiveness of the varying forms of (im)politeness as well as their situational and cultural framing (cf. Brown 2015: 384). As a technical term in linguistic pragmatics, politeness refers to a more intricate concept than the lay notions cited above. It is often considered to be "an intrinsic aspect of social interaction, crucial to the construction and maintenance of social relationships […] and hence bearing on human cooperation" (Brown 2015: 385). Along the same lines, Kasper describes linguistic politeness as encompassing "ways in which the relational function in linguistic action is expressed" (1994: 3206). Yet despite the widespread interest in such issues, theorists have not gravitated towards a common conceptual framework. This section selectively reviews the literature on politeness and puts a focus on those theories that are of relevance for the present investigation. § 2.3.1 introduces first wave politeness research on the basis of Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which inspired a vast amount of empirical research and remains the predominant framework for the analysis of linguistic politeness in ILP to date. This is followed by a critical assessment of the theoretical tenets of politeness theory and its applicability to empirical data in § 2.3.2. Major new developments in the field are discussed in § 2.3.3, in which I provide a selective account of the most influential theoretical and

methodological models of second wave politeness research. Finally, § 2.3.4 proposes as a theoretical framework a compromise between first and second wave approaches to best capture practices of the production and perception of politeness in the present study.

2.3.1 First wave politeness research: Brown & Levinson's politeness theory

The scientific study of politeness as a linguistic phenomenon began in the 1970s with a paper by Lakoff (1973) and a subsequent publication by Leech (1983). Both are proponents of the conversational-maxim view, meaning that they use Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle (henceforth CP) to understand linguistic politeness. According to Grice, interlocutors tend to collaborate with each other during the meaning making process by following the maxims set out by the CP: Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner. Politeness comes into existence if one or more of these maxims are flouted intentionally, or put differently, when speakers use language in strategic ways with the intention to trigger polite inferences. This operation of politeness implies that orienting one's language use to interlocutors' concerns constitutes a deviation from the direct expression of Gricean communicative intentions.

Although Brown & Levinson (1987) take over the Gricean worldview, they choose a more sociological perspective on politeness by putting *face work* at the core of their theory. The face-saving view of politeness is based on the assumption that all competent language users are endowed with two essential attributes: face and rationality. Rationality provides language users with the ability to reason from ends to means, i.e., to extrapolate from communicative goals to those linguistic means that will in turn help achieve these goals (cf. Brown 2015: 388). The notion of face was originally proposed by Goffman (1972) who provides the following definition:

> The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for [themselves] by the line others assume [they have] taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes […].
>
> (Goffman 1972: 5, original emphasis)

This is echoed in Brown & Levinson's scheme and here, the working assumption is that a speaker's public self-image is always potentially at risk, so that during

interaction, face "can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61). As the maintenance of one's own face depends on the maintenance of the addressee's face, preserving each other's face is in the mutual interest of all interlocutors. The notion of face further includes positive and negative aspects. Negative face refers to the basic human need for autonomy and self-determination, that is "freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61). This is complemented by positive face, which concerns the human desire for solidarity and closeness, namely being approved of, accepted, liked, and validated by others.

Furthermore, facework overlaps with speech acts so that Brown & Levinson's approach is speech-act based. This is not surprising, given that when we *do* things with language, we inevitably impact our interlocutors as well as ourselves. Thus, in a next step, Brown & Levinson capitalize on the notion of face by claiming that certain speech acts, including requests and complaints, are intrinsically face-threatening acts (henceforth FTA). By employing these kinds of speech acts in conversation, either the positive or negative face of the speaker and/or hearer is threatened. To avoid or at least reduce face-threat, interlocutors engage in face-management. To this end, they have five super-strategies and a range of sub-strategies at their disposal, here presented in order of increasing politeness and decreasing directness (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987: 68–71):

1. *Do the FTA without redressive action, baldly.*

   Strategies are characterized by clarity and directness and identified as following Grice's maxims of cooperation. A common example are imperative sentences for directives (e.g., *Putz die Küche! / Clean the kitchen!*).

2. *Do the FTA with redressive action, positive politeness*

   Positive politeness strategies orient towards satisfying the addressee's positive face by emphasizing closeness and solidarity. For instance, in-group identity markers, jokes, signaling optimism or agreement belong to this category (e.g., *Sei ein Schatz und putz die Küche. / Be a dear and clean the kitchen*.).

3. Do the FTA with redressive action, negative politeness

   Negative politeness strategies center on the addressee's needs to not be imposed upon, i.e., they are mostly avoidance-based. This is achieved by assuring that the addressee's negative face wants are recognized, respected and that the speaker intends to, only minimally, interfere with their freedom of

action. Typically, speakers add apologies and explanations for transgressing, softening modifiers or impersonalizing mechanisms (e.g., *Ich weiß du hast nicht viel Zeit, aber könntest du die Küche putzen? / I know you haven't got a lot of time, but could you clean the kitchen?*).

4. *Do the FTA off record*

   Speakers shield themselves from negative consequences associated with an FTA by keeping their intentions ambiguous, i.e., disguising the exact nature of the illocutionary force (e.g., hints: *Die Küche ist unordentlich. / The kitchen is in a mess*.).

5. *Don't do the FTA*

   The speech act in question is considered too face-threatening and therefore not realized.

To summarize, the above strategies are ordered along an *estimation of face risk* scale, or as explained by Brown, "[f]or low levels of FTA threat, bald on-record or positive politeness is most appropriate and cost-effective; for higher levels, negative politeness is required; for the highest threats, indirectness is the safe option" (Brown 2015: 388). Thus, Brown & Levinson (1987) propose a direct relationship between increasing indirectness and increasing politeness. Generally, speakers choose from these strategies in accordance with the weightiness of the speech act, i.e., the degree of face-threat involved. Following Brown & Levinson (1987: 76–82) this can be calculated by adding up the values of three independent social variables which subsume all other relevant factors:

- The *social distance* between speaker and hearer, i.e., degree of social closeness based, amongst other things, on an assessment of the frequency of interaction,
- The *relative power* of the speaker as compared to the hearer, which is based on material and metaphysical control, e.g., to what extent is the speaker able to impose their will on the hearer,
- The *absolute ranking of impositions in the particular culture*, which can be determined in proportion to the expenditure of services and goods (including the provision of time and information).

According to Brown & Levinson (1987), the three sociological variables as well as the concept of face and the linguistic politeness strategies (as noted above) are of universal applicability. Their theory thus explicitly advocates a universalistic

perspective which is based on an analysis of similarities in the construction of polite utterances across three different languages and cultures (i.e., English, Tamil and Tzeltal). In brief, Brown & Levinson justify the assumption that universal principles underlie linguistic politeness by pointing out that in these unrelated languages "despite the rich cultural elaborations, the core ideas have a striking familiarity" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 13). Variations between cultures are accounted for in terms of local adjustments to and local construals of these universal principles. For instance, the variable *social distance* may be weight differently in Germany and Syria, resulting in a culture-specific assessment of the relative degree of face-threat involved – which, in turn, may influence strategy choice in a single situation (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987: 243–253). To this day, Brown & Levinson's face-saving view has enormous importance for politeness theorizing. By providing a set of analytical tools for studying linguistic politeness, the theory has stimulated a large amount of intra-, inter-, and cross-cultural research, as well as extensive criticism from many directions, to which I now turn.

2.3.2 Criticisms of Brown & Levinson's model

As Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory has become the framework through which a great deal of empirical work in different languages has been done, this research provides a valuable resource for the evaluation of the theory's general claims.[15] Let us first look at the issue of universality in politeness. Many scholars have questioned whether Brown & Levinson's concept of face is a valid way of conceptualizing the universal foundation of politeness. Particularly, the construal of face as individual wants has been criticized with regards to interaction in non-Western contexts. As identified by Matsumoto (1988), polite utterances in Japan are used as an expression of speakers' acknowledgement of their place in society rather than functioning as a form of strategic conflict avoidance. Thus, it seems that particularly in more collectivist cultures, politeness is an interpersonal concept in addition to giving expression to individual concerns. Along the same lines, the higher valuation of negative face wants (i.e., a need for freedom from imposition) and therewith, the favoritism of negative politeness strategies has been refuted. Altogether, the empirical evidence shows that Brown

[15] Brown & Levinson (1987) define face-threatening acts in terms of speech acts. Accordingly, the criticisms addressed to and the limitations attending speech act theory, as outlined in § 2.2.2, also concern this politeness model.

& Levinson's individualist orientation is a reflection of Anglo-Saxon culture and not a universal feature of language (cf. Gu 1990; Ide 1989, 1993; Matsumoto 1988; Nwoye 1992; Sifianou 2011; Wierzbicka 2003).

In a separate line of criticism, it is the universal link between indirectness and politeness that has been found wanting. Whereas Brown & Levinson propose a direct relationship between increasing indirectness and increasing politeness, scholars such as Upadhyay (2013) show that languages exploit different means for marking the relative politeness of speech acts. Directness level is just one linguistic dimension that affects politeness aside from others such as modification devices, intonation contour, or body language.[16] Moreover, Blum-Kulka (1987, 1989) amongst others, challenges the claim that the use of Brown & Levinson's off-record strategies results in higher degrees of politeness. Her basic argument is that, at least for requests, speakers of several languages perceive conventional indirectness as most polite. Based on these findings, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989c) argue that conventionally indirect strategies constitute a trade-off between the indirectness necessary to be polite and not overloading addressees with inferential work. In contrast, off-record strategies such as hints not only increase "the interpretive demands on the hearer" (Blum-Kulka 1987: 133) but can also make speakers sound manipulative or deceptive. Besides, one cannot, of course, presuppose that choices of directness will carry the same meanings for members of different cultures (cf. Ogiermann 2009; Walker 2013).

Challenges to the universality of the politeness model also extend to Brown & Levinson's claims regarding the sociological variables power, social distance, and imposition. Empirical evidence suggests that by simply adding up the values, one neither captures the extra-linguistic context of a speech act nor always determines the face-threat involved in a situation (cf. Culpeper et al. 2018: 51; Terkourafi 2012: 634–635). For instance, speakers not always assess one variable independently of the other(s). This can be seen in Holtgraves & Yang's (1990) study in which they found a connection between power and distance for American and Korean speakers: whenever participants differed in power, distance was of little relevance.[17] Another reason is that variables which are not subsumed under

[16] Added to which is the fact that positive and negative politeness strategies are not as distinct as claimed by the theory since they can be combined in interaction.

[17] For an overview of cross-cultural studies that discuss the relationship between sociological variables and speech act realization see Economidou-Kogetsidis (2010).

the ‘original three’ have been found to also influence politeness judgements. Other predictors of variance are for example gender, affect, formality, or the presence of a third party (cf. Culpeper et al. 2018: 50; Terkourafi 2012: 635). Moreover, the proposed direct relationship between the increasing weight of contextual factors and increasing politeness has been refuted by Wolfson (1986). She puts forth a bulge theory for which she studied the behavior of middle-class speakers of American English and in addition drew on research findings by colleagues. According to bulge theory, “the two extremes of social distance -- minimum and maximum -- seem to call forth very similar behavior, while relationships which are more toward the center show marked differences” (Wolfson 1986: 74). Interestingly, the levels of politeness invested in interactions with intimates and strangers are lower than the ones for those who occupy the middle range of the social spectrum, such as status-equal friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. According to Wolfson’s (1986) theory, this is due to the relative certainty of the relationships at the two extremes of social distance (i.e., strangers vs. intimates), whereas the instability of relationships with acquaintances necessitates the investment of higher levels of politeness.

Last, it is up to discussion whether the scope of phenomena investigated under the umbrella term *politeness* should be broad or narrow. By defining politeness as a strategic orientation to potential face threats, Brown & Levinson take a narrow view to politeness. However, in addition to politeness, there are many more motivations that guide human behavior: Language users are constantly faced with situations in which politeness may be subsumed to other, more pressing demands and interactional goals (e.g., task-oriented, urgent, or confrontational interactions). Besides, there are more reasons for using indirectness in language than politeness; just think about humor, irony, or rhetorical force (cf. Brown 2015: 391). Therefore, many scholars nowadays favor a broader view which defines politeness to be an “orientation to the social-relationship dimension of *every* interaction, with attention to face taken to be an omnipresent necessity” (Brown 2015: 391, original emphasis). With this in mind, the next section reviews second wave approaches to politeness that consider the whole continuum – from utmost politeness right up to neutral levels of politeness, rudeness and forms of intentional face attack.

2.3.3 Second wave approaches to politeness

Second wave politeness research, also known as the *discursive turn* within the field, gained momentum in the 2000s. Discursive politeness work and relational approaches to politeness became highly influential and, even though one cannot speak of a unified category, there are many common denominators of second wave research theories.[18] In this section, I give an overview of the characteristics shared by the variety of second wave approaches to politeness. Their starting point is the insight that universalistic politeness theories are based on invented utterances and that, by using such examples, these models presuppose that effects on addressees are predictable. Proponents of second wave research, on the other hand, view politeness as "a situated evaluation, rather than behaviour *per se* and [it] is to be located at the discoursal level" (Sifianou & Blitvich 2017: 578, original emphasis). Their adoption of a discourse focus (and therewith the rejection of speech act theory) led to an understanding of politeness as being co-constructed and contested in longer stretches of discourse, oftentimes in idiosyncratic ways, and coming into existence through the addressee's evaluation (see for example Eelen 2001; Kádár 2017; Mills 2003; Watts 2003). It follows from this argumentation that politeness is not inherent in particular linguistic forms or strategies, but instead "it is a matter of the participants' evaluation of particular forms as (im)polite in context" (Culpeper 2012: 417). As a dynamic construct, politeness necessitates in-depth analysis of naturally occurring data.

Another development within the field is the rise of approaches to impoliteness or rudeness. Whereas impoliteness plays a minor role in first wave approaches, probably due to a view of conversation that upholds harmonious aspects of social relations, the analysis of offensive language is by now an integral part of the field. To be more precise, the trend in second wave research goes to theorizing impoliteness in its own terms rather than merely discussing it in relation to politeness (cf. Mills 2003).[19] This is a valuable corrective, since there are many occasions (e.g., interpersonal conflict, military training, politics) when speakers openly attack rather than support their addressees' face. In such

[18] Readers are referred to Locher & Watts (2005), Spencer-Oatey (2000) and Terkourafi (2002) for relational and frame-based approaches to politeness and impoliteness.
[19] For scholarly work that explores impoliteness see Bousfield (2008), Bousfield & Locher (2008), Culpeper (1996), (2005) and Kienpointner (1997).

instances, impoliteness does not always constitute inappropriate communicative behavior: instead both supportive and aggressive facework can be considered politic by interlocutors, i.e., appropriate to the ongoing social interaction (cf. Eelen 2001; Kienpointner 1997; Mills 2003). The scope of politeness theory has therefore been extended to encompass the entire continuum of linguistic behaviors from politeness to impoliteness and verbal aggression. Researchers in this field now increasingly use the label im/politeness when referring to politeness phenomena in general (cf. Terkourafi 2012: 620).

A key feature of all this work is a distinction introduced by discursive approaches, namely between first- and second-order politeness. First-order politeness or politeness$_1$ refers to "commonsense notions of politeness" (Watts 2003: 9), that is, the conception of politeness by lay members of a community; added to which are their judgements about whether a particular behavior is polite considering the norms of the sociocultural or speech community. In contrast, second-order politeness or politeness$_2$ is the scientific account of what might constitute politeness. It refers to an abstract, theoretical construct within a theory of politeness (cf. Watts et al. 2005). Most second wave research leans towards politeness$_1$. When approached in this way, politeness cannot be defined in advance but can only be understood from the perspective of the interactants themselves (cf. Culpeper 2012: 397). As explained by Culpeper & Hardaker "the focus is on how the lay-person's (or member's own) conception of im/politeness is revealed in their discourse, and not on how the lay-person's discourse fits a conception devised by academics" (2017: 207, my supplement). Apart from the centrality of the interlocutors' perspective, context is of relevance in first order approaches. In her analysis of impoliteness, Mills (2003) combines Bourdieu's *habitus* with the notion of *communities of practice*. She thereby puts focus on language practices and styles developed by groups of people when engaged in common tasks:

> It is thus important not to analyse impoliteness in a decontexualised way, focusing only on what takes place in an interaction, as it is a negotiation or a testing out of what are perceived to be community-of-practice norms, and a discussion of those norms with others.
>
> (Mills 2003: 139)

The task of discursive researchers is then to identify those elements in naturally occurring speech which are receptive to a polite interpretation and assess them against community-of-practice norms. It is, however, acknowledged that the status

of these elements as actual instances of polite behavior remains debatable. Admittedly, this is because there is no method that allows one to directly access participants' perception during interaction, so that the researchers' interpretation might not coincide with that of the participants themselves (cf. Locher & Watts 2005). Overall, most second wave models of politeness are not concerned with identifying regularities of linguistic usage outside the interactional moment, so that claims to universality and generalization are not tenable (cf. Locher & Watts 2005: 16; Sifianou & Blitvich 2017: 578). In the next section, I discuss the issue of whether politeness is best analyzed in this study as a dynamic and interactive social practice (i.e., politeness$_1$) or as a normative system of predictive rules (i.e., politeness$_2$).

2.3.4 Critical assessment and application of politeness models in this study

While the second wave of politeness research has in many ways been a valuable corrective of universalistic models, it does not provide any alternative framework that allows us to examine politeness on a macro-level. To understand the reasons for this, it is necessary to briefly recapitulate the fundamental tenets of second wave approaches:

- *Im/politeness*, i.e., approaches to social interaction which account for both politeness and impoliteness,
- *Laypersons' usage of politeness terms*, i.e., approaches which explore lay understandings of politeness and base evaluations of politeness solely on hearers' subjective perceptions and,
- *Lack of generalization*, i.e., approaches which reject empirical norms as an analytical tool and do not make any predictions about politeness behaviors.

One major drawback of approaching politeness in this way is that these theories cannot be applied to the contrastive study of politeness phenomena in different languages and cultures. This entails that it is impossible to spot similarities and differences between speech communities and uncover (divergent) patterns of polite language use. Restricting the possibility of establishing global trends, in turn, has significant consequences for the endeavor to learn and teach politeness in L2 classrooms. In the second language context, predictions concerning polite behavior are of prime importance so as to avoid being unintentionally rude in a

second language. Ultimately, by avoiding generalizations about linguistic form, any attempts of theorizing about politeness are cancelled out. In her assessment of politeness$_1$ approaches, Terkourafi (2005) comes to the following conclusion:

> [A]n a priori denial of the possibility of prediction amounts to denying the possibility of theorizing about politeness at any level (even at the level of participants' folk theories about politeness). What we are then left with are minute descriptions of individual encounters, but these do not in any way add up to an explanatory theory of the phenomena under study.
>
> (Terkourafi 2005: 245)

A major limitation with an extreme politeness$_1$ stance is also that it falls short of explaining regularities of linguistic usage which have, in fact, been uncovered empirically in naturally occurring and elicited speech (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989c; Terkourafi 2005, 2012). While it is certainly true that politeness is not inherent in linguistic structures, quantitative approaches of cross-cultural and interlanguage research nevertheless demonstrate "that there is a great degree of consensus among members of a culture, allowing for predictions to be made on the appropriateness of particular structures in a given context" (Ogiermann 2009: 211). Languages have at their disposal a range of expressions and grammatical constructions which are conventionally associated with culture-specific meanings and politeness functions, i.e., they carry "politeness default values" (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 643). Another serious weakness with second wave approaches is that they point out the importance of normative assumptions for the situated evaluation of politeness behavior but avoid any form of generalization concerning these norms. In concrete terms, this means that these theories offer no analytical tools to capture them. Consequently, Terkourafi (2012) draws the conclusion that "these approaches have yet to spell out the content of these normative assumptions, or, more to the point, propose an empirical way of verifying their existence." (2012: 633). Overall, it can be stated that it is difficult to apply second wave approaches to empirical research, given their abstract nature and their aversion to generalizations about politeness. Relevant as these debates may be, operational categories and descriptive tools are needed in order to analyze naturally occurring conversational data.

To recapitulate, several definitions and frameworks for politeness analysis compete in the field. Where does this leave us? For a start, it should be noted that second wave models provide a great deal of explanatory power in the analysis of

im/politeness behavior. This, however, does not preclude discernible tendencies in polite language use and it also does not invalidate pragmatic models that capture the production and perception of politeness on the macro-level. Consequently, for the present purpose, I intend to find a compromise between first and second wave approaches. While some of the tools of traditional politeness theories, that is speech act terminology and face-related terms, are included in this study, the proposal that politeness is a property inherent in linguistic expressions is rejected. This approach is therefore different from Brown & Levinson's (1987) theory in which linguistic forms are regarded as realizations of specific politeness strategies. This resulted in applications of politeness theory in subsequent empirical work which showed a tendency to treat the occurrence of particular linguistic strategies as straightforward evidence of politeness (cf. Culpeper et al. 2018: 48).[20] In contrast, it is acknowledged that linguistic devices cannot be associated directly with politeness, without taking the communicative and cultural context into account. Let me elaborate: The unit of analysis selected for the present study are syntactic downgraders which are commonly employed in German to convey politeness, i.e., to prevent or reduce potential face threats. However, these specific linguistic forms are not inherently polite but are merely open to interpretation as such. This is to say that a judgement of politeness cannot be determined solely by usage of syntactic downgraders as, for instance, they may be coupled with contextual clues to suggest a lack of sincere polite attitude or intention (e.g., irony or mock politeness). Thus, no claim is made to the effect that syntactic downgraders have stable polite meanings or that they are polite in all contexts of use (see also Culpeper & Hardaker 2017: 211). In order to successfully analyze the production and perception of syntactic downgraders, I take into account the context-of-utterance. Put differently, I presuppose that syntactic downgraders have stable meanings in <u>particular</u> social situations and therefore advocate the integration of pragmalinguistic aspects of politeness in

[20] Other critics have challenged Brown & Levinson's (1987) model for being too reliant on analysis at the utterance level which limits its applicability to naturally occurring data. In addition, it is not always possible to assess Brown & Levinson's social variables in naturally occurring interactions which in turn, complicates the task of reliably coding levels of politeness in a concrete situation (cf. Brown 2015: 392). This criticism, however, does not pose a problem for the present study which takes the sentence as the unit of analysis and in addition, specifies the values for social distance and social dominance for each item in advance.

conjunction with sociopragmatic dimensions.[21] This argumentation follows Terkourafi (2012) and Culpeper (2012) who discuss regularities between linguistic forms and their contexts of use:

> [W]hen faced with a particular arrangement of extra-linguistic features that included the speaker's and the hearer's age, gender and social class, the relationship between them and the setting of the exchange, speakers tended to opt time and again for the same linguistic realization of a particular act, rather than innovate.
> (Terkourafi 2012: 635)

> Pragmatic choices are not made in a vacuum but in the light of repeated experience of social situations (and their associated norms) which may lead one to expect certain kinds of interaction to happen, to be able to hypothesise what others' expectations are and to know how to meet them. And once interaction has started we monitor how participants are constructing and orienting to politeness and adjust our pragmatic choices accordingly. (Culpeper 2012: 397)

> Linguistic politeness refers to linguistic or behavioural forms that are (conventionally) associated with contexts in which politeness attitudes are activated […]. It involves the use of expressions that are both contextually appropriate and positively evaluated by the target. (Culpeper 2012: 429)

Along these lines, it is argued in this study that the co-occurrence of syntactic downgraders and particular contexts can create perceptions of politeness. It follows from this that it is worth pursuing empirical regularities by means of a quantitative method. With regard to second wave approaches to politeness, two more points should be mentioned. Even though I fully support the claim that interpersonal interaction encompasses both politeness and impoliteness, this study primarily focuses on the analysis of syntactic downgraders in relation to politeness, making an in-depth examination of impoliteness unnecessary for the main research objectives. The same applies to the inclusion of the perspective of hearers, which due to the particular focus on the grammar-pragmatics interface is of minor importance in the present investigation.

The discussion thus far has focused on the link between linguistic devices and contexts in which politeness attitudes are triggered, whereas the relevance of the notion face for the present study has yet to be elaborated on. Brown & Levinson's face-concept has been challenged for not representing the plurality of culture-

[21] The sociopragmatic parameters controlled for in the present study are social dominance and social distance.

specific understandings of this notion. This, however, does not invalidate its applicability to language data by German and Syrian Arabic speakers. A number of studies have already successfully accommodated German data, thereby showing that Brown & Levinson's concept of face is valid for the study of L1 and L2 German (see for example Barron 2003; Ogiermann 2009). It is more difficult to make the case for Arabic, as to date relatively little is known about politeness behavior and the notion of face in Arabic dialects. In this regard, Shammas's (2013) investigation of politeness in American English and Arabic[22] is an important case in point. By quoting common Arabic idioms such as "They preserved the water of our face" (i.e., an indication of face-saving) or "He blackened our face" (i.e., an indication of face-threat), Shammas demonstrates that *face* and *face-saving strategies* are prevalent in lay notions of polite language use (cf. Shammas 2013: 136; see also Jammal 2011). Moreover, despite the attested problems with dichotomies such as positive and negative politeness strategies and relatedly between positive and negative politeness cultures, Shammas (2013) maintains the positive-negative distinction for the analysis of Arabic. He does, however, challenge Brown & Levinson's assumption that a culture's negative or positive politeness orientation is simply the outcome of matters of face. Additional social values such as tradition, honor, family as a collective unit and religion also strongly influence polite language use in the Arab world (see also Al-Samarra'i 2019; Samarah 2015). These result in higher levels of cooperation and social accord, i.e., a more pronounced tendency towards resorting to positive politeness in Arabic as compared to the American English data (cf. Shammas 2013: 142). While the limitations of politeness theory regarding the prominence of the notion of face at the expense of other social values must be kept in mind, Shammas states that "the main concept of politeness and face needs […] provide[s] a useful framework" (2013: 136).[23] Consequently, the concept of face and the positive-negative distinction with respect to a speaker's intentional meaning is adopted in this study.

[22] Arabic-speaking respondents were mainly from the Fertile Crescent. i.e., Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Kuwait, and Iraq.

[23] One way to refine Brown & Levinson's theory is to assume a broader conceptualization of *face* which includes collective and relational aspects. A case in point is Spencer-Oatey's (2008) approach. She advocates a close connection between face and speakers' self-concept which is composed of "self as an individual (individual identity), self as a group member (group or collective identity) and self in relationship with others (relational identity)" (Spencer-Oatey 2008: 14).

2.4 Requests and complaints: gaining compliance politely and efficiently

The speech acts which were chosen for the present study are requests and complaints. § 2.4.1 starts out by giving the reasons for the choice of these particular illocutionary acts. Following this, I focus on each speech act in turn and briefly describe both from a speech act theoretical perspective. § 2.4.1.1 deals with the nature of the speech act request. It briefly outlines realization patterns for request strategies and perspectives. Next, I offer an overview of the speech act complaining in § 2.4.1.2. Finally, § 2.4.2 presents ways of modifying requests and complaints. § 2.4.2.1 – § 2.4.2.2.2 introduce forms of internal modification, while § 2.4.2.3 deals with ways of supporting the chosen speech acts externally, i.e., by use of external downgrading devices.

2.4.1 Investigated speech acts

The speech acts selected for the present investigation had to fulfill specific requirements. First, to ease the data collection process and come up with a valid measure of pragmatic development in the L2, production and perception tasks need to be realistic and to depict common situations in the participants' lives. It must be guaranteed that L2 learners not only encounter the speech acts on a regular basis but also have the opportunity to produce them in the target speech community. Thus, requests and complaints were chosen because of their importance in L2 classroom discourse as well as in everyday and working life communication (cf. Reynolds 2003; Martínez Flor & Usó-Juan 2010). Second, if a speaker is able to request or complain about something successfully, the likelihood that their interactional purpose will succeed is higher. This is of prime importance for L2 learners living in the target language context due to the central role played by requests and complaints in interpersonal relationships. Take for example complaints: being able to express dissatisfaction appropriately and in a socially acceptable manner can improve private and working relationships because it puts an end to annoying behavior. Likewise, a successful complaint about bad service can result in changes of products and credits. Third, the illocutions are interesting to investigate in terms of the kinds and extent of politeness and face-management utilized. Performing requests and complaints usually involves a face-threatening act, i.e., their realization poses the risk of losing face on both parts (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987). This is particularly true

for complaints which are designed to cause offense. To lessen the negative impact these speech acts are likely to have on addressees and to avoid conflict, interlocutors frequently resort to modification devices, including syntactic downgraders (cf. Trosborg 1995: 412–414). Moreover, it is anticipated that variations in the application of modification devices in requests and complaints will emerge, so that the comparison of both speech acts can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the L2 acquisition of speech act modifiers. Overall, the speech acts therefore allow for a systematic investigation of the usage as well as the development of syntactic modification devices in L2 production/perception. Fourth, ILP research shows cross-cultural differences in strategy selection and use of modification for requests and complaints (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989c; Decock & Spiessens 2017). As the speech acts not only demand pragmalinguistic knowledge but also awareness of social rules, they are likely to pose a challenge for L2 learners of German (cf. Trosborg 1995: 147; Yian 2008: 8–9). It is worth mentioning that ILP research suggests that it is very difficult, even for advanced learners of German, to become proficient in the production of direct complaints. According to Trosborg (1995), L2 learners struggle with the effective succession of strategies in complaining and are not able to use mitigating devices convincingly. Furthermore, they show less persistency than native speakers when complaining; in particular, if addressees show resistance to the complaint, they give up too easily (cf. Deveci 2015). The risk of using requests and complaints inappropriately and being conceived as rude, offensive, or demanding is high, so that it is indispensable that language learners master these acts. I believe that explicit instruction about speech acts in general, and requests and complaints in particular, would improve interpersonal communication in L2 contexts and in multicultural societies in general. Last, while a great deal of research in ILP has been carried out on requests, less attention has so far been paid to complaints.[24] Consequently, it is imperative to add to available research in ILP and SLA concerning the L2 acquisition of German requests and investigate the acquisition of complaints and their modification in L2 German.

[24] Readers are referred to Barron (2000, 2003, 2007), Faerch & Kasper (1989) and House & Kasper (1981, 1987) for studies on the L2 acquisition of German requests.

2.4.1.1 The speech act request: how to ask for something politely

Requests are frequently performed in daily interaction. Interlocutors use them to receive and exchange objects, services, or information and to jointly accomplish tasks. Beyond this, they are one of the best-studied speech acts in such diverse research areas as cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics, politeness theory or conversation analysis (see for example Alcón Soler 2008; Drew 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis & Woodfield 2012; Flöck 2016; Warga 2004). In Searle's taxonomy of illocutionary acts, requests are part of the category of directives and defined as "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (1976: 11). Searle (1969) states that requests can be described in terms of their felicity conditions, as listed in Table 1:

Table 1. Felicity conditions for requests

	Directives (Request)
Propositional content	Future act *A* of *H*.
Preparatory	1. *H* is able to do *A*. *S* believes *H* is able to do *A*.
	2. It is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* will do *A* in the normal course of events of his own accord.
Sincerity	*S* wants *H* to do *A*.
Essential	Counts as an attempt to get *H* to do *A*.

(Searle 1969: 66)

Searle further elaborates on the differing degree of strength that a request's illocutionary point can entail: "[T]hey may be very modest 'attempts' as when I invite you to do it or suggest that you do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it" (Searle 1976: 11). As a consequence, distinguishing requests from other impositive speech acts such as suggestions, giving advice or warnings can at times be challenging. According to Trosborg (1995: 188) the features "benefit to the speaker" and "cost to the hearer" are decisive in identifying requests, as the act to be performed in a request is usually in the interest of the speaker and at the cost of the hearer. In contrast, suggestions can be defined as being equally beneficial to the speaker and hearer. There is, however, no clear divide between the afore-mentioned illocutions, as a request may also be phrased as a suggestion if the speaker intends to diminish the degree of imposition. To account for the fact that participants' production data varies in their degree of conformity to prototypical requests, an approach to classification is

followed that assumes fuzzy boundaries between speech act classes. Thus, in the present study, the speech act request is taken to comprise attempts of varying degrees by the speaker to get the hearer to do an act *X* which is primarily beneficial for the speaker.

Searle's (1969) analysis of requests places special focus on the speaker's intention to make the hearer perform the requested action. Speech acts, however, are not communicatively autonomous units but must rather be analyzed as part of a dialogic framework. A social activity such as a request occurs minimally in a pair: The speaker produces the first part by uttering the request, and the hearer responds with a second part (cf. Taleghani-Nikazm 2006; Taleghani-Nikazm & Huth 2010). Requests are therefore described as "initiative directives" (Cho 2005: 71, my translation). Another aspect of this is that requests function as *pre-events* because the requester states their desire that a future act be performed by the requestee. This act can either take place immediately or at a later point in time (cf. Edmondson & House 1981).[25] Finally, requests can refer to non-verbal actions such as requests for goods or services or involve verbal actions, i.e., requests for information (cf. Hassall 1999). The focus in the present study will be on requests for non-verbal goods in the immediate or near future.

In requiring a future effort, requests impose predominantly on the addressee and have therefore been classified as face-threatening acts in Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. By trying to exercise power over the requestee's intentional behavior, the requester imposes on their freedom of will and threatens their negative face-wants. Concurrently, the requester takes the risk of losing face themselves, by exposing a need, or in a situation in which the requestee refuses to comply with the demanded action (cf. Trosborg 1995). On the other hand, requests can also be used as a positive politeness strategy. By uttering a request, the speaker may give expression to a feeling of closeness and intimacy. The implication may be paraphrased as '*I feel close enough to you to ask you to do something*' (cf. Sifianou 1992). In such a case, the trustworthiness and reliability of the hearer is acknowledged. Another essential point concerning face-management in requests manifests itself in the use of indirectness. Speakers commonly resort to indirect request strategies to give the impression that the

[25] A person who complains about an offensive act can decide to produce a *request for repair* following the actual complaint. In this case, the request is a *post-event* as it indicates a compensatory action for deviant behavior that happened before.

hearer's own decision concerning the acceptance or refusal of the requested action is the central concern. The speaker thereby shows that compliance is not taken for granted. In contrast, an increase in directness reduces the ease with which a request can be rejected and the requester's anticipation of compliance increases (cf. Trosborg 1995: 206). In addition, the impositive effect of requests can be manipulated by choosing from a variety of perspectives. Let us first turn to the issue of (in)directness strategies.

How to request: directness levels

As early as 1981, House & Kasper (1981) and Kasper (1981) developed a classification scheme for request strategies based on their analysis of English requests produced by German learners. Research in speech act and politeness theory formed the foundation for this categorization.[26] A slightly modified version of House and Kasper's work together with research done by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) finally led to the classification scheme used in the CCSARP (1989a). Many of the analytical categories proposed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a) have been found to occur in authentic conversational data which makes it a good candidate for the analysis of the production data collected by use of a discourse completion task in the present study. Moreover, since its introduction, the majority of request studies in ILP employ the CCSARP coding scheme so that it has been empirically validated repeatedly (e.g. Barron 2003; Meyer 2007; Schauer 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2010).[27] In order to achieve comparability with existing ILP studies on requests, the categories employed in this study are those developed for the CCSARP. It became, however, apparent during data analysis that certain sections of participants' utterances had not yet been included in the existing framework. In order to develop a comprehensive request strategy framework for German that is based on elicited data, existing strategy descriptions were partly adapted and when necessary, new sub-categories were added.

[26] See for example Searle (1975), Ervin-Tripp (1976), Labov & Fanshel (1977), Brown & Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983).

[27] Another frequently used coding scheme in ILP was developed by Trosborg (1995). While also drawing on the CCSARP coding manual, her classification scheme is based on four main strategies and eight levels of directness. In contrast to the afore-mentioned manual, she further distinguishes between speaker- and hearer-based conditions in conventionally indirect request strategies.

The point of departure is the finding that a request act can be conveyed by a variety of different linguistic forms and is composed of two main parts: the request proper (i.e., the head act) and peripheral elements which mitigate or aggravate the force of the request. The head act is the minimal unit of a sequence which realizes the act independently of other elements and shows variation with regard to (a) strategy type and (b) perspective (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989c: 17). Concerning strategy type, the initial CCSARP analytical framework started from a universalistic premise, namely that request strategies in different languages display three major levels of directness: direct requests, conventionally indirect requests, and non-conventionally indirect requests. Within this context, *directness* is defined as the degree to which a speaker's illocutionary intent is evident from the locution (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a: 278). While the claims made for universality by pragmatic theories have been refuted (cf. § 2.2.2, § 2.3.2), the linguistic validity of the three proposed super-strategies for German has been demonstrated by research in ILP (e.g. Barron 2003). Accordingly, the scheme consists of three super-strategies and nine sub-strategies, ranging from mood derivables at the most direct end of the directness scale to hints at the most indirect end of the scale (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 46–47). Table 2 gives an overview of the head act request strategies employed in the present study.[28]

Table 2. Head act request strategies employed in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
I Direct requests		
Mood derivable	The grammatical mood of the verb indicates the illocutionary force as a request (e.g., imperatives, infinite forms, elliptical sentence structures).	Putz die Küche. (Clean the kitchen.)
Explicit performative	The illocutionary force is explicitly named by using a particular illocutionary verb.	Ich bitte dich, die Küche zu putzen. (I'm asking you to please clean the kitchen.)
Hedged performative	The illocutionary force is explicitly named but modified by hedging expressions (e.g., modal verbs or verbs expressing intention).	Ich möchte dich darum bitten, die Küche zu putzen. (I would like to ask you to clean the kitchen.)

[28] A fourth option not mentioned in the CCSARP coding manual is opting out of the act altogether. This option is not included in the present study. Instead, items were pretested to ensure that the situations are reliable in eliciting the investigated speech acts (cf. § 4.2.3.2).

Obligation statement (*hearer-oriented*)	Utterances which state the obligation of the hearer (or a third person) to carry out the act. The focus is exclusively on the hearer. The requester can choose from two options: a) Express necessity, b) State or question the requested act.	a) Du musst die Küche putzen. (You must clean the kitchen.) b) Du putzt jetzt die Küche. / Putzt du die Küche? (You will clean the kitchen right now. / Will you clean the kitchen?)
Want statement (*speaker-oriented*)	The utterance indicates the speaker's wish, hope, need or expectation that an act denoted in the proposition is carried out. The speaker's own desires are made the focal point of the request. Requesters can choose from three options: a) Express need, b) Express expectation, c) Express a wish, hope or desire.	a) Ich brauche Hilfe beim Putzen. (I need help with cleaning.) b) Ich erwarte, dass du die Küche putzt. (I expect you to clean the kitchen.) c) Ich möchte, dass du die Küche putzt. (I want you to clean the kitchen.)
II Conventionally indirect requests		
Suggestory formula	The illocutionary force is expressed indirectly as a suggestion to do X.	Lass uns mal die Küche putzen. (Let's clean the kitchen sometime.)
Query preparatory	Reference is made to a preparatory condition of a request, i.e., a) ability, b)-d) willingness or e)-g) possibility. The sub-strategies used by German speakers vary in their degree of conventionalization. They are listed randomly and do not differ in level of directness: a) Reference to hearer's ability, b) Reference to hearer's wishes (no fixed form), c) Routine *macht es dir was aus* (*do you mind*), d) Routine *wärst du so lieb* (*would you be so kind*), e) Reference to hearer's volition, f) Routine *ist es möglich* / *gibt es die Möglichkeit* (*is it possible*).	a) Kannst du die Küche putzen? (Can you clean the kitchen?) b) Ist es für dich in Ordnung, die Küche zu putzen? (Is it alright with you to clean the kitchen?) c) Macht es dir etwas aus, die Küche zu putzen? (Do you mind cleaning the kitchen?) d) Wärst du so lieb die Küche zu putzen? (Would you be so kind and clean the kitchen?) e) Würdest du die Küche putzen? (Would you clean the kitchen?) f) Ist es möglich, dass du die Küche putzt? (Is it possible for you to clean the kitchen?)
III Non-conventionally indirect requests		
Hint	Hints refer partially to relevant elements of the intended illocutionary and/or propositional act. Requesters can choose from three options: a) Give reasons for request without specifying desired action, b) Ask questions which are linked to request at hand, c) Leave out reference to desired act and hearer as intended agent altogether.	a) Ich kann so nicht kochen. (I can't cook like that.) b) Ich hatte letzte Woche geputzt, oder? (I cleaned last week, didn't I?) c) Ähm, Entschuldigung? (Erm, sorry?)

The category *direct requests* includes five sub-strategies, i.e., mood derivables, explicit performatives, hedged performatives, obligation statements and want statements. Direct requests are realized by forms syntactically marked as such, so that a speaker's intent is obvious (e.g., imperatives). Another option is cases in which the illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic properties of

the locution. Considering the sub-strategies obligation statement and want statement, a couple of points should be elaborated on. First, the notion of (in)directness as defined in the CCSARP differs from the sense intended for it by Searle. According to Searle (1975), obligation statements (e.g, *Du musst die Küche putzen / You must clean the kitchen*) and want statements (e.g., *Ich brauche Hilfe beim Putzen / I need help with cleaning*) would be considered indirect requests, as they show a mismatch between sentence-type and speech act. That is, Searle (1975) postulates a one-to-one link between a direct request and the imperative mood (for a critical discussion of Searle's standpoint see § 2.2.2). However, in this study, I follow Kissine (2013a) in assuming that illocutionary forces are not determined by the basic sentence-types but instead stem from contextual interpretations of locutionary acts. According to Kissine, "[a] speech act is indirect if, and only if, its content differs from that of the content of the corresponding locutionary act […]. The criterion for directness is thus identity of content between the locutionary and the illocutionary act" (2013a: 115). Going back to obligation and want statements, if for instance '*Du musst die Küche putzen / You must clean the kitchen'* is interpreted as a request to clean the kitchen, this request is direct because its content is identical to that of the corresponding locutionary act (cf. Kissine 2013a: 116). Moreover, to facilitate data analysis in the present study it was found necessary to differentiate more clearly between obligation and want statements. As obligation statements are realized from the viewpoint of the hearer by stating their obligation to carry out the act, they are defined as hearer-oriented strategies in this study (e.g., *Du machst X* / *You do X*).[29] In contrast, want statements emphasize the speaker's perspective by giving expression to their desires or feelings vis á vis the fact that the hearer do *X* (e.g.., *Ich möchte X / I want X*). Want statements are therefore defined as speaker-oriented strategies, and in addition, they were complemented with identifiable linguistic structures and formulae produced by the current study participants in order to accommodate L1/L2 German data.

The second super-strategy, conventionally indirect requests, includes suggestory formulae and query preparatory strategies. Cross-linguistically, these strategies are the most frequently used type (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 47). They

[29] In the CCSARP, the term locution derivable is used for obligation statements. In the present study, it was decided on "obligation statement" (Blum-Kulka 1987: 133) as it represents a more accurate description of the strategy type in question.

perform the act by reference to essential preconditions for the performance of the request, such as the addressee's availability or willingness. Another option is to enquire about the addressee's cooperativeness in general (cf. Trosborg 1995: 201). Even though both strategy-types are conventionalized in German, pragmatic force is still negotiable with regard to requestive or literal interpretation (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 46–47). To elaborate, speakers can potentially deny, and hearers can ignore the requestive intent. In the case of query preparatories, it has been found that participants in this study systematically choose from a range of linguistic options which, to a certain degree, are routinized (e.g., fixed forms such *Wärst du so lieb …? / Would you be so kind …?*). Realization patterns commonly used by German speakers have been added to the framework accordingly.

In the case of nonconventional indirect requests, i.e., the most indirect super-strategy, the illocutionary force cannot be derived directly from the locution. As hinting strategies are not conventionalized, they require more inferencing activity by the hearer to deduce the speaker's requestive intent. In some cases, hints refer partially to the objects or elements needed for the performance of the act and/or the hearer as the intended agent may be mentioned (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 46–47). It is, however, also possible for speakers to leave out reference to the desired action and addressee altogether; in this case, requests are only interpretable by context. Based on the nonconventional indirect requests produced by the study participants, three frequently used forms were identified for the German data and added to the sub-strategy (i.e., giving reasons, asking questions and no reference at all). Whereas the CCSARP scheme proposes two sub-strategy types for hints (i.e., strong hints and mild hints), the present study conflates these categories into one (see also Flöck 2016: 103). This is due, on the one hand, to the low occurrence of mild hints in the data which does not justify a more fine-grained analysis. On the other hand, distinguishing features for the two categories are rather vague and subjective (e.g., relevance of context factors cannot be operationalized objectively) which made allocation of strategies unnecessarily difficult. Therefore, the present study differentiates between eight instead of nine sub-strategies.

Requests – from which point of view?

Apart from strategy selection, choice of perspective is another source of variation regarding the illocutionary force of a request. In requesting the implementation of

an act *X* by the hearer, speakers can realize a request from the viewpoint of the hearer, the speaker, both participants, a third party[30], or they can deliberately avoid any explicit mentioning of the agents (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b; Culpeper & Archer 2008). This amounts to the following five request perspectives:

a) Hearer-oriented, i.e., the emphasis is on the role of the hearer (e.g., *Kannst du die Küche putzen? / Can you clean the kitchen?*),
b) Speaker-oriented, i.e., the emphasis is on the role of the speaker (e.g., *Ich bitte dich, die Küche zu putzen. / I am asking you to clean the kitchen*.),
c) Speaker- and hearer-oriented, i.e., an inclusive strategy (e.g., *Können wir die Küche putzen? / Can we clean the kitchen?*),
d) Third party-oriented, i.e., emphasis is on a person other than the addressee (e.g., *Tom muss die Küche putzen. / Tom needs to clean the kitchen.*),
e) Impersonal, i.e., use of neutral agents such as *man / one*, *jemand / somebody* or passivization (e.g., *Die Küche muss geputzt werden. / The kitchen needs to be cleaned*.).

Selection of a request perspective influences social meaning. As requests are face-threatening acts, an avoidance of addressing the hearer directly can reduce the request's level of imposition and therefore seems to be the preferred option in conventionally indirect requests across different language groups (cf. Schauer 2009 for German and English). A speaker-oriented perspective may nevertheless also be employed to soften a request's negative impact. For instance, the request form *Kann ich mitfahren? / Can I get a ride?* is only a request for permission in appearance, as it implies an action on the part of the addressee. True permission requests, however, signal that the addressee is in a position of power over the speaker as their wishes are at the mercy of the hearer's approval. Thus, imitating the social implications of permission requests in asking for an act *X* is another way of reducing the request's level of coerciveness (cf. Blum-Kulka 1989: 60). Even though speakers can choose freely from the five alternatives, not all request perspectives are always available for the same request strategy type. Generally, imperative structures are hearer-oriented, declarative sentences show a tendency

[30] The third party-oriented perspective was identified in the German data set and therefore added by the researcher.

to be speaker-oriented and interrogative constructions without a modal verb are usually hearer-oriented.

2.4.1.2 The speech act complaint: how to put somebody right in a polite way

In their everyday lives, interlocutors complain about anything they might find unfavorable in some way. Speakers complain about circumstances caused by themselves (e.g., *I can't believe how horribly I did in that test*) and even about situations that have no person or thing responsible (e.g., *I'm so tired of this rain*). In addition, they can address dissatisfaction directly to someone whom they hold responsible for an offense; this offense can either concern themselves or someone else (e.g., *I'm so mad that you did that* vs. *I can't believe that you did that to Nick*). Last, interlocutors frequently complain about other individuals (present or non-present) to third parties (e.g., *I'm so mad that Sue did that*.) (cf. Hartley 1998: 16–17). The speech act complaint has been studied in ILP, conversation analysis and ethnolinguistics by researchers such as Boxer (1993, 2010), D'Amico-Reisner (1983), Decock & Depraetere (2018), Decock & Spiessens (2017), Geluykens & Kraft (2016), Laforest (2002, 2009), Meinl (2010), Olshtain & Weinbach (1987, 1993) and Trosborg (1995).[31] In these studies, *complaint* is an umbrella term that covers the range of the above-mentioned speech behaviors. Most clearly, one can differentiate between *direct complaints* and *indirect complaints* (cf. Boxer 1993). Along the same lines, Laforest (2009: 2452) groups acts of blaming someone/something into two broad categories:

(a) A tells B that B acted badly;
(b) A tells B that C (generally absent) acted badly.

Category (a), that is direct complaints, involves the complainant and the addressed complainee, who is the target of the complaint. Complaints in this category give rise to a direct confrontation (cf. Boxer 2010). In contrast, indirect complaints (i.e., category (b)) most frequently express a speaker's dissatisfaction about a third party that is either co-present or not present at all, so that the person held

[31] Over the last 25 years, research on complaints has seen an accumulation of studies investigating languages other than English, including Chinese, Danish, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Russian or Vietnamese. See for example Chen et al. (2011), Trosborg (1995), Ouellette (2001), Olshtain & Cohen (1990), Monzoni (2008, 2009), Shea (2003), Eslami-Rasekh et al. (2004), Kozlova (2004) or Tran (2002).

responsible for the offense is not confronted directly (cf. Boxer 1993: 24).[32] In this study, focus is on direct complaints to a hearer who is in some way held responsible for the offense.

Complaints can be hard to capture in interactions because in contrast to speech acts such as requests or apologies, complaints do not have a predetermined form (cf. Chen et al. 2011: 257–258; Laforest 2002: 1597; Pillet-Shore 2015: 1). Besides, when in context, complaints are difficult to distinguish from related acts such as disagreement, criticism, reprimands, insults, or reproaches which are likely to appear at the same time and elicit comparable reactions. Direct complaints are part of Searle's category *expressives* which includes speech acts that express the speaker's psychological state of mind regarding a prior action or situation (cf. Searle 1976: 12). For instance, when complaining speakers express their dissatisfaction about the matter specified in the proposition (i.e., the complainable). Even though Searle (1969) did not explicitly formulate felicity conditions for complaints, they can be derived from the rules stated for other expressive acts such as apologies (see Table 3).

Table 3. Felicity conditions for complaints

	Expressives (Complaint)
Propositional content	Past act *A* by *H*.
Preparatory	*A* is bad for *S* and *S* believes *A* is bad for *S*.
Sincerity	*S* is genuinely dissatisfied with *A* or offended by *A*.
Essential	Counts as an expression of dissatisfaction or annoyance. Sincerity and essential rules overlap.

(based on Searle 1969: 67)

Based on Searle's (1969: 67) felicity conditions for expressives[33] and the definition developed by Olshtain & Weinbach (1993: 108), a complaint is defined as follows:

[32] For more information on indirect complaints, see for example Drew (1998), Boxer (2010), Ouellette (2001) or Pillet-Shore (2015).

[33] The Searlian category expressives and, particularly the claim that expressives express a speaker's psychological state of mind has been challenged in linguistic pragmatics. According to authors such as Kissine (2013a), Finkbeiner (2019), Liedtke (2016) or Rolf (1997) the essential rule is too vague to distinguish expressives from other speech act types. Contrary to Searle's (1969) assumption, Rolf (1997: 218) and Staffeldt (2009) argue that the illocutionary point of an expressive is "Einfluss auf die emotionale Gesamtlage von H zu nehmen" (to influence the

> In the speech act of complaining, the speaker (S) expresses [sincere] displeasure or annoyance – censure – as a reaction to a past or ongoing action, the consequences of which are perceived by S as affecting her unfavorably. This complaint is usually addressed to the hearer (H) whom the S holds, at least partially, responsible for the offensive action.
>
> (Olshtain & Weinbach 1993: 108, my supplement)

To paint a clear picture of which illocutions are coded as complaints in this study, a brief elaboration on the factors involved in the realization of the speech act is necessary. In the case of complaints, a speaker attributes responsibility for a sincere feeling of dissatisfaction to the hearer (directly or indirectly) who may either be solely responsible for the deviant behavior or act as a representative for an organization, institution, or the like. Complaints can be an immediate verbal reaction to a troublesome state, or they may be realized after more implicit attempts of resolving the trouble have failed (cf. Emerson & Messenger 1977: 127). In an interactional sequence, complaints are a *post-event* as the speaker reacts to former behavior on the part of the hearer. Speech acts are usually differentiated according to their discourse function. In the case of complaints, however, a strict separation does not seem to be useful, as they can equally be placed in initiative and responsive position in discourse (cf. Kasper 1981: 96). The trigger for a complaint (i.e., "a past or ongoing action") is an unsatisfactory behavior that violates social norms and concurrently disappoints the speaker's expectations regarding their relationship with the addressee (cf. Laforest 2002: 1596). Hence, the disconfirmation of expectancies is a precondition for the realization of a complaint. Furthermore, the size of the perceived discrepancy (expectations vs. outcomes) is decisive for the amount of annoyance experienced, and associated therewith, likelihood of complaining (cf. Kowalski 1996: 189). For the purposes of the present study, the expression of displeasure or censure is accepted when a speaker verbalizes their disapproval of a violation. It is thereby allowed for a prototype-based structure for direct complaints in which some category members are more central than others. In this case, complaining may

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hearer's emotional situation) (Staffeldt 2009: 74). This is justified by reference to the range of speech acts categorized as expressives which typically affect the personal relation between speaker and addressee, or put differently, expressives are all about social relationships. Following a somewhat different approach, Kissine (2013b) proposes a broader definition and assumes that "the class of expressive speech acts encompasses the speech acts that express any mental state whatsoever (and that have an empty direction of fit)" (Kissine 2013b: 184). Which approach ultimately proves successful matters little for my purposes.

overlap with acts such as accusing or criticizing, which due to their clear family resemblance are categorized accordingly.

By complaining, a speaker transforms an initially privately experienced personal trouble into openly recognized interpersonal conflict (cf. Drew & Holt 1988: 399; Schegloff 2005: 450–451). Why would a speaker risk their position with respect to the hearer? As identified by Kowalski (1996: 185), complaints can serve interpersonal and intrapsychic functions. Interpersonal complaints are realized with the purpose of bringing about change. A speaker may want the addressee to feel shame and regret; their ultimate goals can be to (1) get others to engage in desired behaviors, (2) change other's behaviors or (3) change an aversive situation. Similar results were obtained in the present study. In the pretests conducted for the complaint items, participants predominantly decided to complain whenever adverse consequences such as a fine, high expenses or a personal disadvantage (e.g., working overtime) could potentially be averted. In these cases, the assessment that the (economic) utility is high was decisive. On the contrary, complaints used to change the speaker's internal state serve intrapsychic functions such as making one feel better. In this case, speakers vent their frustrations and dissatisfactions to release hostile feelings (cf. Kowalski 1996: 185). Of course, both functions can be pursued simultaneously. A speaker's decision to carry out a complaint is influenced by two more factors. First, prospective complainers take the situational context into account and evaluate the possibility of repair. Depending on this assessment, speakers decide on the most effective route for remedy to occur. Of importance here are the content and the affect accompanying a complaint. As the former can be verifiable or non-verifiable, the degree to which the claims made can be supported by objective evidence is highly relevant for a complaint's outcome. In contrast to requests, in which case a speaker typically considers people's needs and feelings, a complainer may, at times, put stronger focus on their own feelings which are in conflict with those of the addressee. Depending on contextual parameters, they may therefore feel less of a need to be considerate and instead concentrate on achieving personal goals. However, to the extent that the affect of a complaint is derogatory and negative, it becomes less likely that a hearer responds with an agreement or repair (cf. Kowalski 1996: 190). In addition to maximizing the rewards to be gained, speakers therefore try to minimize the costs associated with

complaining. To avoid negative social consequences, complainers systematically consider face wants (cf. Olshtain & Weinbach 1987: 196).

Trosborg (1995: 146) describes direct complaints as intrinsically impolite acts that can almost only be realized with the risk of disturbing social harmony and/or creating offence – i.e., complaining comes at a high social price. Complaints primarily threaten the positive face of the addressee, although the speaker's positive face is also at risk. To elaborate, by using a complaint, a speaker shows their negative attitude towards the hearer and passes moral judgment. Consequently, direct complaints threaten the hearer's positive face wants as the complainer indicates (at least potentially) that they hold the interlocutor responsible for the violation of social norms. If complainers decide to add a request for repair, they additionally threaten the hearer's negative face wants of being free from imposition (cf. Chen at al. 2011: 255). At the same time, a complainer threatens their own positive face by exposing intimate feelings. They may consequently be seen in a negative light, for instance as a whiny person who complains too easily or too often. Furthermore, they are vulnerable to the addressee's reaction, who may have no interest in showing empathy for the allegations, and hence, can deny responsibility. Addressees commonly react by counterattacking (e.g., complaining back) as an effort to alter the negative implications of a complaint and save face. A possible outcome of a direct complaint is therefore a heated exchange in which both interlocutors fight to regain their social standing (cf. Edmondson & House 1981: 145). To prevent this from happening, speakers engage in face-management which manifests itself in the use of indirectness and, associated therewith, choice of complaint perspective. The following section provides an overview of complaint strategies and perspectives found in and employed for the analysis of the present data sets.

How to complain: directness levels

Prototypically, complaints are realized as statements, but this one characteristic does not differentiate complaints from other indicative sentence forms. Besides, there are no other possible indicators of abusive force (e.g., particular modal verbs) or conventionalized strategies. As complaints do not have a predetermined form, a directness scale for complaining must be based on a semantic scale which expresses the severity of the offense (cf. Trosborg 1995: 314). Accordingly, by

choosing a level of directness, speakers are able to vary the conflict potential of a complaint. Even though direct complaints have not received as much attention as requests in ILP studies, available evidence points to the need for indirectness (e.g., House & Kasper 1981; Olshtain & Weinbach 1987, 1993; Trosborg 1995). While direct request strategies can be an appropriate option depending on the contextual setting, direct complaint strategies (i.e., bald on record) are seldom if ever an acceptable choice. A widely used classification scheme for complaint strategies was developed by Olshtain & Weinbach (1987, 1993), based on data by L1 and L2 speakers of Hebrew. Olshtain & Weinbach (1987: 199–202) evaluated the severity of a complaint by use of a directness scale and defined five major categories that make up the "speech act set" of complaining. A speech act set comprises individual semantic formulae that form a complete speech act when produced together (e.g., for complaints: disapproval + warning). The underlying idea is that more than one speech act may be necessary to achieve the communicative purpose desired (cf. Tanck 2002: 2). Olshtain & Weinbach's (1987: 199–201) five categories are (1) below the level of reproach, (2) disapproval, (3) complaint, (4) accusation and warning and, (5) threat. In this coding scheme, requests and threats are analyzed as part of the speech act set of complaining. However, complaints and requests or threats cannot be used interchangeably. The latter are used as a supplement to a complaint realization with the intention of pursuing further goals and/or upgrading the negative impact on the hearer. Furthermore, their occurrence is highly situation-dependent, as demonstrated by requests for repair which are only produced in situations which could be potentially repaired. Thus, directives and threats will not be coded as complaint strategies in this study but are treated as additional acts.

The classification scheme employed instead is taken from Trosborg (1995). All head act strategy-types have been taken over from her original coding scheme; however, some of the sub-categories were supplemented by semantic formulae and linguistic devices to account for strategies occurring in German (e.g., the sub-strategy *modified blame* is a case in point, see Table 4). Also, more definite distinctive features were added to the sub-strategy classifications in order to facilitate the coding process. Trosborg (1995) uses the criteria *propositional*

content, *complainer* and *complainee* to establish the scale of directness and five factors which determine the directness level of a complaint[34]:

1. The complainable content is or is not expressed directly in the proposition.
2. The complainer expresses her/his negative evaluation of the propositional content implicitly or explicitly.
3. The person responsible for the offensive action is named implicitly or explicitly.
4. The complainer expresses her/his negative evaluation of the hearer's deviant behavior implicitly or explicitly.
5. The complainer expresses her/his negative evaluation of the complainee as a person implicitly or explicitly.

(Trosborg 1995: 314)

Based on these factors, Trosborg (1995: 314–319) sets up four super-strategies and eight sub-strategies which are arranged from the sub-strategy *explicit condemnation of the accused as a person* at the most direct end of the directness scale to *hints* at the most indirect end of the scale.[35] Table 4 gives an overview of the head act complaint strategies employed in the present study.

Table 4. Head act complaint strategies employed in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
I Blaming		
Explicit condemnation of the accused as a person	The speaker explicitly condemns the hearer as a non-responsible social member (e.g., by using personal insults).	Du bist scheiße. (You suck.)
Explicit condemnation of the accused's action	The speaker explicitly evaluates the addressee's behavior as bad.	Es ist nicht in Ordnung / Ich bin sauer, dass du mein Waschmittel genommen hast. (It's not okay / I'm mad that you took my laundry detergent.)

[34] The terms *directness* and *indirectness* are used to designate differences at the linguistic level (i.e., how is the complaint formulated?) as well as politeness effects. Consequently, it has to be acknowledged that the notion of (in)directness with regard to complaint strategy types is ambiguous in the sense that it is based on two principles, namely on the degree of explicitness or implicitness (of the proposition and illocutionary force expressed) and on the face-threat involved (i.e., a perlocutionary effect). For a complaint taxonomy that intends to entangle both understandings of (in)directness, see Decock & Depraetere (2018).

[35] Unfortunately, so far, no politeness ratings have been undertaken which could show the extent to which the established scale of directness interacts with a politeness scale for complaints in German. Also, the validity across different cultures has not been investigated empirically.

Modified blame	The blame levelled at the addressee is modified. The speaker can choose from four options that share the same level of directness: a) *Alternative approach*: The speaker states that an alternative approach not taken by the hearer would have been preferred, b) *Rules*: The speaker quotes a general rule, c) *No right*: The speaker states that they are no longer willing to accept the addressee's misbehavior and/or the consequences thereof, d) *Irony*: Irony is less negative than a literal, direct confrontation.	a) Hättest du nicht Bescheid sagen können? (Couldn't you have told me?) b) Als mein Mitbewohner solltest du das wissen. (As my roommate you should know that.) c) Du kannst nicht einfach mein Waschmittel nehmen. (You can't just take my laundry detergent.) d) Ich kann nicht waschen, echt nett von dir! (I can't do laundry, really nice of you!)
II Accusations		
Direct accusation	The speaker explicitly accuses the hearer of having committed the offence. Two options are available: a) Reference to hearer and offensive act (e.g., *You did X / Why did you do X?*), b) Reference to consequences resulting from the offensive act (e.g., …*because of you*).	a) Du hast mein Waschmittel genommen. (You took my laundry detergent.) b) Wegen dir gibt es kein Waschmittel mehr. (Because of you, there is no laundry detergent left.)
Indirect accusation	The speaker implies that the hearer is guilty of the offence by a) asserting that they were in some way connected with it or b) by asking a question about it. Questions are less direct than assertions as they offer the hearer a chance to explain what happened.	a) Hier wurde gerade Wäsche gewaschen. Ich denke, dass mein Waschmittel deshalb leer ist. (Laundry was just done here. I think that's why my laundry detergent is used up.) b) Hast du mein Waschmittel genommen? (Did you take my laundry detergent?)
III Expressions of annoyance or disapproval		
Ill consequences	The speaker refers to the bad consequences but avoids mentioning the hearer as being guilty of the cause.	Ich habe keine saubere Kleidung für die Arbeit. (I don't have any clean clothes for work.)
Annoyance	The speaker explicitly asserts a complainable event, i.e., what exactly the problem in a given situation is. The hearer is not mentioned.	Ich möchte waschen, aber das Waschmittel ist leer. (I want to do the laundry, but the laundry detergent is used up.)
IV No explicit reproach		
Hints	Hints contain no or only partial reference to the offensive event and the hearer's involvement in it. Possible hinting-strategies are: a) Asking questions linked to the complainable, b) Taking measures as a result of the offensive behavior, c) Referring to one's needs and/or repeating a request that has been denied before.	a) Wie soll ich jetzt waschen? (How am I supposed to do laundry now?) b) Ich ziehe aus. (I'm moving out.) c) Wir müssen reden. (We need to talk.)

To recapitulate, Trosborg (1995: 314–319) determines four super-strategies.[36] Category I strategies are acts of blaming, i.e., a speaker assigns the responsibility for the complainable to the hearer. It is thereby assumed that the latter is guilty of the offence which can be expressed by varying degrees of explicitness. By condemning the hearer and/or their former behavior, the hearer themselves are degraded and lowered in the speaker's esteem. This contrasts with category II sub-strategies. In this case, a speaker who uses an accusation wants to determine the person who is responsible for the offensive action without, however, imposing sanctions or harshly condemning the hearer. Trosborg (1995) differentiates between two levels of directness. In a *direct accusation*, the speaker explicitly accuses the hearer as having committed the offence, whereas in an *indirect accusation* the speaker attempts to commit the hearer to the complainable event. To achieve this goal, speakers commonly ask for information about a specific situation or assert that the hearer can in some way be linked to the offence. Category III sub-strategies are even more indirect as they avoid mentioning the hearer altogether. Instead, the speaker expresses their dissatisfaction, annoyance or disapproval of an unsatisfactory behavior or event knowingly caused by the hearer but not referred to as such. Last, a speaker who wishes to avoid conflict and minimize face-threat uses a category IV strategy, i.e., a hint. In this strategy type, neither the offensive event nor the hearer's fault are named. In other words, the complainer does not state directly that something is wrong and also does not secure repair of the offensive act. Nevertheless, in making an assertion in the presence of the addressee, a speaker can imply their knowledge of an offence and the addressee's involvement in it. This strategy may be used to prepare for more direct strategies.

Complaining – from which point of view?

Choice of perspective in complaints has two opposite functions. A chosen perspective can either downtone the negative impact a complaint is likely to have on the accused or serve as a means of provoking confrontation. In many cases, the preference for a perspective in complaints goes hand in hand with a selected

[36] One option not included as a part of the complaining strategy selection is opting out of the act completely, i.e., either not realizing the complaint at all or using non-verbal communication. For instance, a speaker might decide not to complain to a hearer who is terribly late but instead just leave the meeting point without notice (cf. Meyer 2007: 114). This option is, however, not included in the present study. Instead, items were pretested to ensure that the situations are reliable in eliciting the investigated speech act in writing (see § 4.3.2.3).

directness strategy. A case in point are Category I complaints, i.e., acts of blaming which explicitly address the complainee as the target of the face-threatening act. By contrast, speakers can also decide if they want to emphasize their own position in the complainable event instead. In this case, a complainer stresses their role as the agent and takes responsibility for issuing the blame leveled at the hearer. Two additional options are the use of an inclusive strategy and minimizing or even avoiding reference to the addressee's involvement altogether (cf. Trosborg 1995). When speakers choose an inclusive strategy, they either refer to both themselves and a possibly undefined set of people (e.g., *we as members of staff*), or they refer to themselves and the hearer. In the first case, they downplay their role as complainer by including other people in the share of responsibility for the reprimand. In the second case, the intent is to indicate that both parties, i.e., speaker and hearer, share the blame. Generally, when speakers produce a direct complaint, they are mostly aware of the person responsible for the offensive action. However, for strategic and/or face-saving reasons it can be most efficient to avoid a direct accusation (cf. Trosborg 1995). Linguistic choices for nonspecific reference to the complainee are agentless passives and constructions with neutral agents. Alternatively, speakers can exclusively focus on the undesired circumstances. By depersonalizing the offensive act, blame is transferred from the hearer to the problem (cf. Murphy & Neu 1996: 204). The classification scheme employed in the present study corresponds closely to the one developed for the coding of request perspective (cf. 2.4.1.1). This amounts to the following four complaint perspectives:

a) Hearer-oriented, i.e., emphasis is on the role of the hearer who is established as the agent of the complainable (e.g., *Dein Verhalten ist unmöglich. / Your behavior is ridiculous.*),
b) Speaker-oriented, i.e., emphasis is on the role of the speaker who takes responsibility for issuing the blame levelled at the hearer (e.g., *Ich toleriere dieses Verhalten nicht. / I will not tolerate this behavior*.),
c) Speaker- and hearer-oriented, i.e., an inclusive strategy (e.g., *Wir können so nicht weitermachen. / We can't keep doing this*),
d) Impersonal, i.e., use of agentless passives, neutral agents, generalizations, or utterances in which the undesired state of affairs is solely focused on (e.g., *Man*

sollte so ein Verhalten nicht tolerieren. / One shouldn't tolerate this kind of behavior.).

2.4.2 Speech act modification

In § 2.4.1.1 and § 2.4.1.2, I have introduced a range of request and complaint strategies and perspectives in German, but these are by no means the only ways in which the grammatical forms as well as the politeness potential and the assertiveness of these speech acts can be varied. Requests and complaints are both bound to occur in specific face-threatening situations in a particular linguistic community. Consequently, there is a need for an efficient way with which these potentially face-damaging interactions can be dealt with while undergoing a minimum of risk. The solution, I propose, are internal and external modification devices which increase the complexity of a speech act realization.[37] Let us take as an example the requests in (5) and (6) which are clearly direct requests, by choice of the strategy *mood derivable*:

(5) Komm her.
(Come here.)
(6) Komm doch bitte mal her, ja.
(Please come here, will you.)

(House & Kasper 1981: 166)

In (5) and (6), while the selected strategy type stays the same, the speaker varies the force of their requests by using modification devices. As these are optional elements, they can be added to as well as subtracted from the head act or general speech event without changing the illocutionary function of the speech act, i.e., as a directive (cf. Leech 2014: 160). In this way, even though both requests are identical in terms of proposition, illocution, and directness strategy, depending on the respective context, they represent a different politeness potential due to the kind and number of modification devices present in utterance (6). Caffi (2013) gives the following reasons for interlocutors to employ modification:

> Speakers mitigate out of uncertainty, caution or consideration. Mitigation is pervasive in speech, as speakers do not commit themselves more than is strictly necessary. Far from being limited to a matter of politeness, mitigation captures rationally grounded behavior mainly aimed at avoiding unnecessary risks, responsibilities and conflicts. Mitigation is a

[37] In this study, I use the terms *modification* and *modification devices*, which are also referred to as *mitigation* (cf. Hartley 1998; Caffi 2013) or *modality markers* (cf. House & Kasper 1981; Trosborg 1995) in the ILP literature.

bridging category between different paradigms: it is a cognitive, a relational and an emotive category.

(Caffi 2013: 277)

I go still further in arguing that the ability to use modification devices in face-threatening acts is a precondition to engage in appropriate and effective interpersonal interaction. Let me elaborate: On the one hand, speakers employ modifiers as realizations of specific politeness strategies and, on the other hand, they employ them in a tactically clever way, that is with the intention of most efficiently achieving (communicative) goals. Thus, analyzing request and complaint head acts in combination with modification devices, i.e., analyzing them as part of a greater macro-structure helps exemplify the interactional goals of language users and the strategies and arguments chosen to best achieve these intended goals.

In face-threatening contexts, modifiers often mitigate or soften the negative impact of a speech act, thereby making it more palatable to the addressee. These modifiers have a downgrading function and are therefore referred to as *downgraders*. In the opposite case, modifiers are termed *upgraders*, as they are employed to intensify or strengthen the meaning associated with a strategy (cf. Schauer 2009: 89). This, in turn, can result in aggravating the directive force or attack involved in a request or complaint. The primary focus of the current study lies in the examination of downgrading devices, with an intentional exclusion of upgraders. Moreover, request and complaint modifiers can be positioned internally or externally. Coding categories in the present study are therefore subdivided into *internal modifiers*, which are syntactically included in the same utterance as the head act, and *external modifiers*, which are additional elements that stand external to a request or complaint proper, i.e., they either precede or follow the head act. In addition to the afore-mentioned modifiers, participants make use of *alerters* which initiate request and complaint realizations and are also taken up in this coding scheme. A wide range of internal and external modification devices for requests have already been identified in the CCSARP. Coding schemes for complaint modifiers have been further developed by Trosborg (1995) and Meyer (2007). A number of categories established by these authors is also used in the present study and further complemented with new strategies which emerge from the analysis of the L1/L2 German data sets. From

the ensuing examples in this section, it is seen that requests and complaints can contain a number of different internal and external modifiers, together with a wide range of (in)direct strategies, which can result in growing elaboration and variation in ways of requesting and complaining. I have grouped this section into three broad sub-sections. The first part introduces alerters, which are devices a speaker uses at the beginning of a speech act realization to capture the addressee's attention (cf. § 2.4.2.1). The second part looks at internal modification in general (cf. § 2.4.2.2) before turning to the individual types of internal modifiers, namely syntactic downgraders (cf. § 2.4.2.2.1) and lexical/phrasal downgraders (cf. § 2.4.2.2.2). The third and final part is labelled external modification. This section first provides a general account of external downgraders and, following this, discusses the functions of external downgrading devices in request and complaint realizations (cf. § 2.4.2.3).

2.4.2.1 Alerters

An alerter is an opening element which is pre-posed to a request or complaint in order to alert the addressee's attention to the ensuing speech act. It initiates a request or complaint by marking the beginning of a new speech activity, which may be related to a previous topic and/or signal a transition from one exchange to another. At its most basic function, a speaker employs an alerter such as a *short greeting* (e.g., *hey* or *hi*) or an *excuse* (e.g., *Entschuldigung / excuse me*) to address the recipient directly and to get their attention (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). One can roughly differentiate between three categories, i.e., *(pro)nominal address terms*, *interaction starters* as well as *conversational openings and closings.* Table 5 gives an overview of the alerters employed in the present study.

Table 5. Alerters employed in requests and complaints in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
(Pro)nominal address terms		
Title/role	German honorifics or title in combination with a surname	Frau Doktor (female doctor), Herr Wagner (Mr. Wagner)
Salutation	Expressions of affection or respect	Liebe(r), sehr geehrte(r) Frau Roth (dear Ms. Roth)
Surname	Without title	Meier
First name		Judith, Tom
Nickname	Names that claim camaraderie and diminutive forms	*Lisi* or *Lischen* for Lisa
Endearment terms	Terms that signal some degree of intimacy, closeness, or express affection	Liebling (darling), meine Süße (my sweet girl)
Familiarizers	Informal language use (i.e., slang terms) typically restricted to a particular context or group of people	Jung(e), Alter, Kollege (buddy), Bruder (bro)
Offensive term		Arschloch (asshole)
Pronoun	Pronominal address term, i.e., pronouns used for familiar and polite forms of address in German	Du, Sie (you)
Interaction starters		
Marker	Markers initiate an exchange or signal a transition from one exchange to another	ach (well), also (well), alles klar (alright), oh, wow, okay so
Attention-getter[38]	Short greetings or excuses used to attract a listener's attention	Sag mal (tell me), Moment (one moment), halt (stop), hör mal (listen), Entschuldigung (excuse me), hey (hey)
Conversation openings and closings		
Greetings	Includes formulaic greetings, questions about one's well-being and compliments	Hallo (hello), guten Abend (good evening), wie geht's? (how are you?), was gibts Neues? (what's new?)
Self-introductions	Information given on the speaker's name and/or position and specifications of the interlocutors' relationship.	Hallo, ich bin die Nachbarin von unten. (Hello, I'm the downstairs neighbor.)
Close	Rituals for parting	Tschüss, ciao (bye), auf Wiedersehen (goodbye), mach's gut (take care)

[38] The function of *attention-getters* is highly context-dependent and assigning short greetings or excuses unambiguously to the correct category can at times be difficult. As the speaker acknowledges an intrusion into the addressee's personal space, excuses may have a mitigating effect and in part function as a gesture of politeness. They must nevertheless be differentiated from apology formulas as well as strategic and ritualized expressions of regret which are employed to tone down a face-threatening act (see *disarmers* and *apologizing* in § 2.4.2.3). Moreover, short greetings may also function as *conversation openings*, so that in order to assign them to the correct category, their placement and sequential order in conversation as well as contextual factors need to be taken into account.

2.4.2.2 Internal modification

Of particular interest to the present study is the fact that the appropriate use of modification is one aspect of pragmatic proficiency that reflects not only the participants' ability to adapt language to social situation but also their knowledge concerning grammar and vocabulary. Just think about the grammatical knowledge of rules pertaining to syntax, morphology and lexis presupposed in the production and perception of an internally modified request such as (7):

(7) Ich *wollte* fragen, *ob* du mir *vielleicht* beim Umzug helfen *könntest*?
(I *wanted* to ask *whether* you *could maybe* help me moving?)

When defining and categorizing internal modifiers in the present study, the subdivision in different categories is based, in large part, on grammatical and syntactic considerations rather than paying attention to more interactional and contextual factors. While it is acknowledged that structural differences in internal modifiers do not necessarily reflect functional ones, I nevertheless use the formal criterion as a primary point of reference. This is due to the focus on the grammar-pragmatics interface in the present study which necessitates the investigation of grammatical and syntactical structures as the starting point for a fine-tuned analysis of the potentially conjoined development of L2 pragmatics and grammar. Furthermore, as this procedure for analysis is pursued in the majority of ILP studies, adopting it for the present purpose also ensures comparability of results. As regards internal modifiers, there is therefore differentiation between so-called *lexical/phrasal* and *syntactic devices*. These occur turn-internally as part of the request or complaint proper so that their employment is often related to the underlying strategy chosen. In the case of *internal downgraders*, an important function is marking for politeness (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 243).[39] This function is related to the speaker's adaptability, i.e., their ability to orient towards different contexts, tasks and communication partners and employ internal downgraders accordingly. For instance, the employment of these forms is

[39] However, internal downgraders are not co-extensive with politeness. A speaker who employs these forms may nevertheless be perceived as impolite as, for instance, their use may be coupled with contextual clues to suggest a lack of sincere polite attitude or intention (e.g., irony or mock politeness), or conversely, a non-modifying speaker may nevertheless leave a very polite impression (cf. Caffi 2013: 265). Put differently, a judgement of politeness cannot be determined solely by usage of internal downgraders because it is not directly connected to linguistic choices. What needs to be taken into consideration instead is a given linguistic choice in a given language in a given context. Thus, politeness is one among the possible effects of internal downgraders which is to some extent calculable but not guaranteed (cf. Caffi 2013: 265). See also § 2.3.4.

particularly important in communicative exchanges for interactional purposes (as compared to interactions for transactional purposes) which have, amongst other things, the main goal of making and maintaining relationships (cf. Barron 2003).

Moreover, what all internal modifiers unites is that they carry no autonomous propositional meaning and do not occupy turns in their own right. Accordingly, no response by an addressee is required. In fact, it is very likely that L1 speakers employ internal modification devices with little conscious attention because the propositional development of the discourse is not affected by them. When confronted with a request or complaint that lacks sufficient internal modification, addressees' reactions nevertheless frequently show that they have particular expectations for internal politeness markers, even though these might operate below the level of conscious awareness (cf. Faerch & Kasper 1989: 243). The next section provides a detailed description of syntactic downgraders found and analyzed in the present project. Following this, attention then turns to the lexical and phrasal downgraders employed in the present study.

2.4.2.2.1 Syntactic downgraders

Sifianou writes that "every language affords its speakers a variety of grammatical possibilities they can choose from to avoid or mitigate the impact of a possible face threat" (1992: 99). Along the same lines, Givón explains the use of interrogatives, modals, or subjunctive forms in face-threatening acts with their effect, i.e., making these speech acts "less direct, less forceful, less authoritarian, more polite" (1993: 268). Below, we will see how speakers draw on knowledge of modals and tense as well as on syntactic knowledge of negation or forms of embedding in the production and perception of syntactic downgraders. Importantly, this mitigating function is not inherent in the grammatical meaning of linguistic structures; instead it concerns pragmatic meaning, which derives from the interplay of structure and context. Put differently, it is the regular co-occurrence of particular linguistic structures/forms and particular types of contexts that creates the perception of politeness (cf. Terkourafi 2001). Thus, depending on contextual factors, the employment of particular syntactic and morphological choices in the head act, called *syntactic downgraders*, mitigates the

impositive or aggressive force of a speech act.[40] For instance, as a direct complaint is a highly face-threatening act, the use of syntactic downgraders represents an important means of diminishing any negative effect caused by the illocution on the addressee. One quick remark, however, should be made regarding complaint modification. So far, ILP data suggests that compared to the use of these downgrading devices in request realizations, syntactic downgraders are used with a lower frequency in complaints (cf. Trosborg 1995: 412–413). A possible explanation is the less routinized form taken by complaints. In contrast, syntactic modification devices can quite simply be added to the pragmatic routine patterns extensively used in request realizations (cf. Barron 2003). Barron (2003) provides the following example:

> [S]yntactic modification can be easily added to utterances such as "*Kannst Du x?*" (Can you x?) as in "*Könntest Du x?*" (Could you x?) (conditional) or "*Kannst Du nicht x?*" (Can you not x?) (negation) or "*Ich wollte fragen, ob Du x kannst?*" (I wanted to ask if you can x?) (conditional clause).
>
> (Barron 2003: 145, original emphasis)

Generally, syntactic downgraders and their mitigation function are not only part of the structural properties of a given language but the ways in which they are put to use are also specific for each language.[41] The coding categories employed in this analysis were those developed for the CCSARP (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989a: 281-283). However, *interrogatives* which are coded as syntactic downgraders (when used optionally) by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989a: 281) are not included in the present analysis of modification devices. It is believed that in many cases the use of the interrogative is a logical consequence of the choice of head act strategy, or, put differently, strategy type and interrogative forms may not be independent variables, e.g., query preparatory strategies are typically realized by use of interrogatives (cf. Flöck 2016: 106).[42] Further syntactic downgraders were,

[40] Note, however, that the term *syntactic downgrader* is not well-chosen as, in addition to syntactic structures, the category also includes features of verbal morphology (e.g., tense). This being said, I nevertheless take over the name *syntactic downgrader* from former cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics studies to facilitate comparability of results.

[41] Accordingly, categories that are not used in German as syntactic downgraders (e.g., *aspect*) have been excluded.

[42] Generally, the variable sentence type is treated as a separate analytical category in this study (see also Flöck 2016: 105). Accordingly, head act realizations are further analyzed for sentence types, i.e., *declarative*, *interrogative*, or *imperative* which are presumed to be a precondition for the occurrence of syntactic downgraders in L2 German. In addition, German modal auxiliaries occur frequently in requestive and complaining behavior as they are a prominent feature of many

however, observed empirically in the present data sets and analyzed with the aim of seeking to establish regularities of co-occurrence between linguistic expressions and types of contexts, i.e., the various request and complaint scenarios developed for the present study. Based on this analysis, five syntactic downgraders have been added to the coding scheme. Table 6 gives an overview of the syntactic downgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study.

Table 6. Syntactic downgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study

Strategy	**Description**	**Example**
Subjunctive II	Only optional subjunctive forms are coded as downgraders, i.e., indicative forms must be acceptable in the context.	*Könntest* du für mich einspringen? (*Could* you stand in for me?) (Switch shifts, 30GERMAS)
Past tense	Past tense forms (i.e., mostly preterite forms) are coded as downgrading only if they are used with present time reference.	Ich *wollte* fragen, ob du evtl. am Samstag für mich einspringen könntest? (I *wanted* to ask you if you could possibly stand in for me?) (Switch shifts, 10GERFEM) *Fand* ich absolut nicht okay von dir mich so hängen zu lassen. (I absolutely *didn't* think that it's okay of you to let me down like that.) (Oral presentation, 29GERMAS)
Negation	In requests, negation is coded as downgrading only if it can be substituted by an affirmative form without changing the semantic meaning of the utterance (see example *a*). In complaints, negation is coded as downgrading in negative polar questions (see example *b*) and in negated phrases that express the speaker's evaluation of the addressee's behavior (see example *c*).	a) Gibt es *keine* Möglichkeit, dass sich früher darum gekümmert wird? (Is there *no* chance that it can be taken care of sooner?) (Broken pipe, 5GERFEM) b) Gibt es *nicht* eine bessere Lösung als mich unbezahlt Überstunden machen zu lassen? (*Isn't* there a better solution than having me work overtime without pay?) (Overtime, 36GERMAS) c) Ich finde es *nicht* okay, dass du dich nun so verhältst. (I *don't* think it's okay that you are behaving like this now.) (Notes, 14GERFEM)
Embedding		
dass-subordinate clause*	Main clause and one (or more) subordinate clause(s) which are joined by the subordinating conjunction *dass / that*.	[I]ch würde mir wünschen, *dass* das nicht so als selbstverständlich abgetan wird. (I wish *that* it wasn't taken for granted.) (Overtime, 29GERMAS)
aber-subordinate clause*	Main clause and one (or more) subordinate clause(s) which are joined by the subordinating conjunction *aber / but*.	Ich weiß, es ist kurzfristig, *aber* könntest du vielleicht auf meine Katze aufpassen? (I know it's short notice *but* could you maybe look after my cat?) (Cat, 43GERFEM)

routine formulae. This syntactic class of verb forms includes examples such *as dürfen / may, können / can, mögen / to like, müssen / must, sollen / ought,should* and *wollen / want.* The choice of a modal in a request or complaint is also coded separately, and no distinction is made between deontic, epistemic, and other uses inside this category.

Conditional clause	Conditions are usually introduced by *wenn / if;* alternatively *falls / in case* or *sofern / provided that* may be used. It is differentiated between two conditions: a) Real conditions: indicative is used in the case of probable events and conditions, b) Unlikely conditions: subjunctive II is used in cases which are felt to be less likely or are less certain.	a) Diese dauerhaften Überstunden sind nicht in Ordnung, *wenn* ich für diese nicht bezahlt werde. (These permanent extra hours are not okay *if* I don't get paid for them.) (Overtime, 21GERMAS) b) Das wäre super, *wenn* du das übernehmen könntest. (That would be great *if* you could cover for me.) (Switch shifts, 31GERMAS)
Indirect question*	The indirect interrogative clause is introduced by the subordinate conjunction *ob / whether, if.*	Ich wollte dich fragen, *ob* es dir was ausmachen würde, Mio zu füttern? (I wanted to ask *whether* you'd mind feeding Mio?) (Cat, 10GERFEM)
Agent avoider		
Passive*	Use of passive voice allows speakers to avoid specifying the agent of an action.	Diese dauerhaften Überstunden sind nicht in Ordnung, wenn ich für diese nicht *bezahlt werde*. (These permanent extra hours are not okay if I don't *get paid* for them.) (Overtime, 21GERMAS)
Indefinite pronoun*	Impersonal constructions which employ *man / one* or *jemand / somebody, someone* as a neutral agent.	Kann *man* denn da nichts machen? (Isn't there anything *one* can do?) (Burst pipe, 17GERFEM)

* Modifiers with an asterisk are newly introduced for the purposes of the present study and are not found in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989a) coding scheme. In addition, further options have been added to the category *negation of a preparatory condition*. In order to include the full range of options, only the term *negation* will be used in this study.

When performing delicate social actions such as requests or complaints, speakers use syntactic downgraders to manage affiliative and remedial work (i.e., face work), so that the most basic motivation for employment is marking for politeness. One common denominator of such syntactic downgraders as *subjunctive mood* and *past tense* is their ability to distance a request or complaint from reality. In the case of requesting behavior, by shifting away from the deictic center of the speaker (on temporal and personal dimensions), the speaker reduces their expectations concerning the fulfillment of the desired act (cf. Trosborg 1995: 209-210). To put it in concrete terms, by utilizing for example subjunctive forms, the speaker marks a request as hypothetical. This increases the optionality offered to the hearer and, in turn, the effort it takes to refuse is lowered. Also, in the case of an actual refusal, the speaker does not lose face so easily. Thus, by indicating greater tentativeness, the face-wants of both interlocutors are accounted for. In the same way, a speaker can remove themselves metaphorically from the ensuing face-threatening act by using a past tense form in the main clause of a request or complaint (cf. Hartley 1998: 75; Held 1995: 296). Let us take as an example a

complaint realization. As the use of past tense forms suggests "temporal distancing" (Leech 2014: 169) from the immediate present reality, the complaint becomes less accusatory and the speaker's annoyance is toned down. Therefore, past tense forms are typically employed when the addressee's actions are criticized explicitly (e.g., *es war nicht in Ordnung von dir, dass X / it wasn't okay that X*). Another syntactic device used to grant the addressee greater optionality is *negation* (cf. Leech 2014: 166). In requests, the speaker applies negation to "express negative expectations about the hearer's compliance" (Flöck 2016: 109), i.e., they imply that the hearer's willingness to comply is not taken for granted. It can be argued that adopting *negative interrogatives* in complaints is progressively more impolite and threatening than the use of negation in requests. This is due to the fact that the use of negative polar questions in German implies that the speaker expects the answer to be (or believes the answer should be) *doch / yes*, meaning that the speaker presupposes an affirmative response (cf. Held 1995: 298). However, as using interrogative sentences displays a higher degree of optionality by default, the utterance is nevertheless more deferential towards the addressee than an assertion. In addition, a complainer may evaluate the addressee's behavior negatively. Instead of, however, producing utterances such as *Ich finde X schlecht (oder schlimm) / I think X is bad (or terrible)*, participants in the present study prefer negated phrases such as *Ich finde X nicht gut / I think X is not good*.[43] The latter is less offensive as it tones down the blame levelled at the addressee.

Other syntactic downgrading options include forms of embedding, i.e., embedding the requestive or complaining clause in a sub-ordinate position. For instance, in the case of *indirect questions* and *dass-subordinate clauses*, the main clause has an introductory function that prepares the addressee for an upcoming request or complaint while at the same time mitigating its impositive/aggressive force. Likewise, *aber-subordinate clauses* name the actual request or complaint while the main clause conveys the speaker's attitude towards the speech act (e.g., tentativeness, hope, delight, or awareness of an imposition). To illustrate, in the main clause of a complaint either an apology formula may be employed (e.g., *Es tut mir leid, aber ... / I am sorry, but ...*) or the speaker uses phrases that show good will and/or add an element of enthusiasm (e.g., *Ich mag diesen Job, aber ... / I like this job, but ...*). A third option used in requests is indicating the awareness

[43] Routine patterns of the type *X ist nicht in Ordnung / X is not all right* are also common.

of an imposition (e.g., *Ich weiß, es ist kurzfristig, aber .../ I know it's short notice but*...). Thus, requests and complaints are frequently mitigated to a greater extent by making them syntactically more complex, i.e., embedding them within another clause. However, these embedded structures differ from the afore-mentioned syntactic downgraders in that the structure per se does not convey politeness and/or modify the head act. Instead, lexical and phrasal options employed as part of an embedded structure fulfill the afore-mentioned politeness functions.

When issues of face are at play, one can also resort to *conditional clauses* in which case the validity of the main clause depends on the existence of certain circumstances, namely a condition given in the dependent clause. According to Ford, it can be argued that interlocutors treat "their content as provisional, less than certain; an alternative is always implicitly acknowledged" (1997: 389). Using this downgrader in requests and complaints therefore implies a certain degree of hypotheticality and optionality. Moreover, Taleghani-Nikazm's (2006) findings show that German speakers utilize conditional clauses in contingent requests to refer to some conditionality upon compliance. More specifically, the speaker illustrates that the addressee's compliance is contingent upon their ability and desire to cooperate as well as upon particular circumstances which need to be given (cf. Taleghani-Nikazm 2006: 36-43). Accordingly, the speaker also employs this downgrading device to express their affiliation with the addressee by demonstrating that they have sympathy for their circumstances. In a nutshell, producing conditional clauses in requests and complaints can reduce the risk of confrontation and helps to successfully manage positive interpersonal relationships.

Last, agent avoiders are syntactic devices whose employment allows the speaker to avoid mentioning either themselves or the addressee as an agent. The categories involved are agentless *passives* and constructions with neutral agents as subjects such as *indefinite pronouns* (i.e., no [+definite] and no [+specific] reference) (cf. Hartley 1998: 76; House & Kasper 1981: 168). It is worth noting that modal verbs often occur in passive or related constructions (e.g., *das muss gemacht werden / that must be done*). By fulfilling a speaker's need to express distance and formality (i.e., by creating a sense of distance between speaker and utterance as well as between speaker and addressee), passive and impersonalizing constructions are generally analyzed as "serv[ing] basic politeness ends" (Brown

& Levinson 1987: 274; see also Lakoff 1973: 299). In the case of requests, the speaker resorts to the passive voice because it shifts responsibility off the subject and furthermore, it emphasizes the desired action, rather than the person who is supposed to perform it (cf. Stocker 2012: 169). As a result, by omitting mentioning of the hearer, the proposition is kept purposefully vague and the potentially intrusive effect is modulated. A complainer might similarly adopt agent avoiders to evade both revealing themselves (i.e., as the attacker) and leaving out mention of the perpetrator of the offensive act. This is necessary in situations in which the addressee has not yet been found guilty, or when the intent is to avoid a direct attack. In the latter case, blame is oftentimes transferred from the addressee to the problem, with face redress as an underlying reason. In the majority of cases, speakers resort to syntactic downgraders to lessen a request's negative impact and to avoid a direct confrontation when complaining. Moreover, they typically use a combination of the above forms. Lexical and phrasal downgraders and upgrader may co-occur as well.

2.4.2.2.2 Lexical and phrasal downgraders

Apart from syntactic downgraders, lexical and phrasal modifiers are further optional additions realized as part of the core move. They soften the negative impact on the hearer through lexical and phrasal choices, and can occur in turn-initial, turn-internal as well as in turn-final positions (cf. Trosborg 1995: 212–214).[44] In requests, lexical and phrasal downgraders function as realizations of specific politeness strategies, that is face-saving strategies. Compared to requests, the use of lexical downgraders is less distinctive in complaints. Complaints are nevertheless oftentimes lexically softened to minimize the negative impact on the hearer as well as to relieve tension. In this section, I provide an overview of the forms and functions of lexical and phrasal downgraders found in requests and complaints.

Lexical and phrasal downgraders are employed with two main goals that may also interact, namely diminish negative effects caused by the face-threatening act (i.e., showing addressees that they are valued and respected and, as far as possible,

[44] Lexically expressed internal modifiers can further be subdivided into lexical and phrasal downgraders and upgraders. Upgraders, however, are not the subject of the present investigation, although they appear to a limited extent in the pragmatic perception task (cf. § 4.2.4). For the reader's reference, an overview of the internal upgraders identified in German native speakers' and L2 learners' request and complaint realizations is provided in Appendix 10, Table A10-1.

creating a harmonious mood) and gain compliance as well as increase the likelihood of cooperative behavior. The coding system for lexical and phrasal downgraders in the present study is based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b). Table 7 gives an overview of the forms employed in requests and complaints in the present study.

Table 7. Lexical/phrasal downgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
Subjectivizer	Elements by which the speaker expresses their subjective opinion on the situation referred to in the proposition (e.g., *ich fürchte (nicht) / I'm afraid (not), ich nehme (nicht) an / I suppose (not)*).	*Ich glaube* Sie haben sich verrechnet. (*I believe* you've miscalculated.) (Bakery, 7GERFEM)
Understater	Adverbial modifiers by which the situation given in the proposition is underrepresented (e.g., *ein bisschen / a little bit, ein wenig / a little, eine Sekunde / one second*).	Ich bin *ein bisschen* unzufrieden mit der Situation. (I'm *a little* unhappy with the situation.) (Overtime, 38GERFEM)
Hedge	Adverbials by which a precise propositional specification is avoided (e.g., *irgendwie / somehow, eigentlich / actually, ziemlich / quite*).	Könntest du *irgendwie* einmal am Tag nach der Katze sehen? (Could you *somehow* look after the cat once a day?) (Cat, 27GERMAS)
Downtoner	Sentential or propositional modifiers, e.g., modal particles, which signal the possibility of non-compliance, express the speaker's uncertainty towards the proposition or decrease the negative repercussions for the addressee (e.g., *vielleicht / maybe, einfach / just, mal / for once, nicht gerade / not exactly, halt / simply, wohl / probably*).	Sie haben da *wohl* einen Fehler gemacht. (You've *probably* made a mistake.) (Rash, 18GERFEM)
Politeness marker	Markers that signal politeness (e.g., bitte / please, sei so lieb / be a dear).	Lisa kannst du *bitte* die Küche aufräumen. (Lisa can you *please* tidy up the kitchen.) (Dirty kitchen, 13GERMAS)
Hesitator	Deliberately showing signs of hesitation before or during the production of a speech act (e.g., *äh / er, ähm / erm*).	*Ähm* Lisa, ich kriege gleich Besuch und wir wollten kochen. (*Erm* Lisa, I'm having someone over in a moment and we want to cook.) (Dirty kitchen., 27GERMAS)
Cajoler	Conventionalized speech items added to speech acts to establish, increase or restore harmony between interlocutors (e.g., *weißt du / you know, verstehst du / you see*).	So kann das nicht weitergehen, *verstehen Sie*? (This can't go on, *you know*?) (Overtime, 17GERFEM)
Consultative device	Elements which involve the hearer directly while realizing a speech act (e.g., *glaubst du / do you think, meinst du / do you think, geht das / is that possible*).	*Meinst du*, du kannst mir vielleicht beim Umzug helfen? (*Do you think* you can maybe help me move?) (Move, 40GERMAS)

Appealer	Elements which elicit a hearer signal of consent. They stand syntactically in final position and are often realized as tags (e.g., *ne / right, ja / okay, oder / right*).	Man kann doch vorher fragen, *oder*? (One can ask beforehand, *right*?) (Cooking ingredients, 27GERMAS)

How do lexical and phrasal downgraders increase the politeness potential of face-threatening acts? First, the speaker may orient towards the speech act's content by toning down some aspects either of the demanded act (i.e., in the case of requests) or the complainable event and/or the addressee's involvement in it (i.e., in the case of complaints). Such content-oriented downgraders fulfill the purpose of avoiding a precise propositional specification. For example, if a complainer uses a *subjectivizer* und thereby explicitly marks their disapproval of a violation as a personal evaluation, its assertive force is lowered (cf. Hartley 1998). The same effect is achieved by *understaters* which minimize or underspecify certain features of a desired act in a request (e.g., time and effort) or under-represent the circumstances denoted in the complainable. In addition, by adding *hedges* and *downtoners*[45] a speaker expresses uncertainty towards the situation given in the proposition. For instance, in the case of requests, speakers may be intentionally vague about the addressee's willingness to cooperate, so as to signal the possibility of non-compliance (e.g., downtoner *vielleicht / maybe*). The result is not only a reduction of the imposition placed on the addressee, but face-threat is also decreased on the part of the speaker if the request is refused. As these downgraders express tentativeness, they are also used in complaint realizations to reduce their potential impact on the hearer. This is exemplified by the modal particle *wohl / probably* by which a speaker can signal insecurity regarding the validity of information given in the complaint head act. The utterance is thus marked as an assumption which allows the addressee the opportunity to refute it.

In addition, a speaker can decrease the face-threat involved for the hearer by choosing from a range of lexical and phrasal downgraders with a relationship orientation. As the name suggests, these downgraders predominantly fulfil interpersonal functions, such as establishing and maintaining positive and harmonious relationships. Typically, a speaker chooses *politeness markers* to express deference, or *hesitators* to signal their concerns about imposing on or

[45] In addition to their content-orientation, *downtoners* can also influence the interpersonal relationship of the interlocutors and consequently show both a content- as well as a relationship-orientation.

attacking the hearer. The intended effect is to evoke the hearer's sympathy, plead for cooperative behavior and foster compliance (cf. Barron 2003: 358). In order to involve the hearer directly, speakers may further produce *cajolers*, *consultative devices* or *appealers*. House & Kasper for instance informally gloss the significance of *cajolers* such as *weißt du? / you know?* as "please be in agreement with me" (1981: 168). Speakers typically use a combination of the above forms, and syntactic downgraders may co-occur as well.

2.4.2.3 External modification

External modifiers, also called *supportive moves*[46] (e.g., Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b; Hong 1998; Meyer 2007; Ogiermann 2009), are additional elements that stand external to a request or complaint proper and can either precede or follow the head act (cf. Schauer 2009: 28). In contrast to lexical and syntactic forms, external modifiers are oftentimes realized as optional clauses, i.e., they are longer and more explicit. Generally, they are transparent modification devices because they have their own propositional content and illocution, so that in this case, a functional typology is proposed. Moreover, as external modifiers prepare for or support the head act, selecting appropriate external modifiers requires conscious planning decisions on the part of the speaker (cf. Fearch & Kasper 1989: 244).[47] Based on the analysis of these moves in the present data sets, I commit myself to the claim that their use plays a crucial part in the actual fulfillment of the requested act or acceptance of the accusation expressed in a complaint. The coding scheme for external downgraders is based on the work by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) and Trosborg (1995). In addition, new categories have been added to account for modifiers occurring in the L1/L2 German data sets. Table 8 gives an overview of the external downgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study.

[46] Leech (2014) differentiates between external modifiers and supportive moves and uses the label supportive moves only in cases where "the head act is preceded or followed by a separate 'move' or speech act with its own illocutionary force" (2014:175). Based on Faerch & Kasper's (1989) approach who generally refer to "external request modification by means of supportive moves" (1989: 237) I will, however, treat external modifiers and supportive moves as a single category and refer to them as *external modification devices*.

[47] External modifiers can be further subcategorized as downgraders and upgraders. Since this study focuses solely on external downgraders, external upgraders are not introduced independently. However, given that external downgrading and upgrading strategies in requests and complaints are often utilized together and share main functions, readers can find a comprehensive overview of the external upgraders employed in the present study's requests and complaints within Appendix 10, specifically in Table A10-2.

Table 8. External downgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
External downgraders employed in requests and complaints		
Preparator	The speaker indicates the possibility of the occurrence of a speech act in which case they prepare the addressee for the ensuing speech act. Four options are available: a) Preparing the content, b) Preparing the speech act, c) Checking on availability, d) Getting a precommitment.	a) Ich hab‘ dir doch erzählt, dass ich Samstag umziehe. (I told you that I’m going to move on Saturday.) (Move, 8GERFEM) b) Hey Lena, ich brauche mal deine Hilfe. (Hey Lena, I need your help.) (Cat, 45GERFEM) c) Hättest du eventuell am Samstag Zeit? (Have you possibly got time on Saturday?) (Switch shifts, 13GERMAS) d) Kann ich dich um einen Gefallen bitten? (Can I ask you a favor?) (Cat, 30GERMAS)
Grounder	The speaker provides reasons and justifications for a speech act.	Tom, ich gebe dir immer meine Notizen und unterstütze dich, wenn du mal fehlst. (Tom, I always lend you my notes and support you when you miss the class.) (Notes, 14GERFEM)
Disarmer	The speaker employs preliminary phrases, which are supposed to eliminate any potential objections raised by the addressee in advance.	*Ich weiß, es ist kurzfristig*, aber könntest du vielleicht auf meine Katze aufpassen? (*I know it’s short notice* but could you maybe take care of my cat?) (Cat, 43GERFEM) *Ich will nicht Ihre Kompetenz in Frage stellen*, aber haben Sie sich eventuell vertan? (*I don’t want to question your competence,* but have you perhaps made a mistake?) (Rash, 20GERFEM)
Apologizing*	The speaker expresses the fact that they feel bad about producing a request or complaint.	*Tut mir leid, nicht böse gemeint*, aber ich sehe nicht ein, warum ich das immer aufräumen soll. (*I’m sorry, no offence*, but I don’t see why I should always tidy that up.) (Dirty kitchen, 9GERFEM)
External downgraders employed exclusively in requests		
Sweetener	The speaker uses elements or utterances that flatter the hearer and provide a positive mood (e.g., tokens of appreciation, gratitude or compliments).	Ich […] dachte, *weil ihr euch so gut versteht und ich Dir vertraue*, könntest du dich vielleicht um XY kümmern? (I […] thought that, *because you get along so well and I trust you*, could you maybe take care of XY?) (Cat, 44GERFEM)
Compensation*	The speaker uses positive remarks or expressions of gratitude and support. In the case of a wrongdoing on part of the addressee, the speaker can state that they assume a mistake.	*Ich find’s cool, dass du gerne kochst*, aber könntest du deinen Kram danach wegräumen. (*I think it’s cool that you like to cook* but could be please clear away your stuff after.) (Dirty kitchen, 25GERMAS) Entschuldigung, aber ich glaube Sie haben sich vertan. (Excuse me, but I believe you’ve made a mistake.) (Kiosk, 10GERFEM)
Imposition minimizer	The speaker can reduce the imposition placed on the hearer.	Dauert auch wirklich nicht lange. (It really doesn’t take long.) (Cat, 33GERMAS)

Humorous supplement*	The speaker can decrease the illocutionary force by using humorous supplements.	Da fehlen aber noch fünf. *Netter Versuch ;)* (There are still five missing. *Nice try ;)*) (Kiosk, 26SGERMAS)
Promise of reward	The speaker offers a service in return, sometimes in the form of idiomatic expressions (e.g., *Du hast was gut bei mir! / I owe you one!*).	Der nächste Kaffee geht dann wieder auf mich! (The next coffee is on me again!) (Cat, 4GERFEM)
External downgraders employed exclusively in complaints		
Providing evidence	The speaker provides evidence for the complainable by putting forward arguments concerning their innocence or the addressee's guilt.	Frau Schröder, im Internet habe ich gelesen, dass man das Medikament nur 2x/ Tag nehmen darf. (Ms. Schröder, I read on the internet that one is only allowed to take the medication twice a day.) (Rash, 17GERFEM)
Convincing*	The speaker employs tactical moves to convince the addressee of a behavioral change.	Ich habe sie dir immer geliehen. *Jetzt könntest du dich mal revanchieren*. (Ich always lent them to you. *Now you could return the favor*.) (Notes, 24GERFEM)
Reservations*	The speaker expresses feelings of doubt or lack of understanding by asking for missing information, an explanation or voicing their concern.	Warum kann ich deine Notizen nicht ausleihen? (Why can't I borrow your notes?) (Notes, 16GERMAS) Das verstehe ich nicht, Tom. (I don't get it, Tom.) (Notes, 28GERMAS)
Conciliatory expressions*	The speaker uses minimizing expressions with regard to the complainable, expressions of concern or the speaker states that they can relate to the addressee.	Warst du krank oder hast du verschlafen? *Alles verständlich,* aber du musst mich informieren, das ist respektlos von dir. (Have you been sick or did you oversleep? *All understandable*, but you need to inform me, it is disrespectful of you.) (Oral presentation, G2M_555256)

* Modifiers with an asterisk are newly introduced for the purpose of the present study and are not found in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) and Trosborg's (1995) coding scheme.

External modification is a pragmatic tool which speakers use to achieve a variety of goals, two of which I elaborate on in more detail in the following: First, a speaker employs external modifiers to vary the intensity of their face-threatening acts and to determine the perception of politeness. The speaker thereby aims at protecting both themselves and their addressee against the kinds of interactional risks always involved when requesting or complaining. Thus, the communicative goal is maintaining a good relationship with the addressee and the focus is on *appropriateness* conceptualized as "actions of the communicators [that] fit the expectations and demands of the situation" (Lustig & Koester 2005: 65). For instance, by providing relevant background information in the form of a *grounder*, a speaker's demand or accusation become more acceptable. In addition, by using *disarmers* or *apologizing strategies*, the speaker conveys their concern that an act

might be too face-threatening and expresses how bad they feel about causing an inconvenience or conflict (cf. Meinl 2010: 89).[48] In the case of requests, speakers may also make amends for the impositive force exerted on the addressee by adding *compensation strategies* such as positive remarks or expressions of gratitude. Besides, if the addressee has failed to abide by a promise or former agreement, the speaker can underrepresent the seriousness of the offence, or claim that it was an accident to avoid friction (e.g., *das muss ein Versehen sein / that must be an oversight*). Comparably, the force of a complaint can be varied by *reservations* and *conciliatory expressions* which soften the circumstances under which the violation was committed and serve as a means of restoring harmony. Last, by adding *sweeteners*, *compensation*, *humorous supplements* or *tokens of appreciation* to a request, the speaker gets the addressee emotionally invested (e.g., by flattering or humoring them). On the one hand, this reduces the potential threat to the social relationship, and on the other hand, it is easier to convince the addressee of compliance.

The preceding external modifiers are used with the intention to avoid or remedy violations of any type, i.e., they are gestures of politeness. However, in some cases, overriding or altering face-concerns may have positive outcomes. A case in point is rationally grounded behavior aimed at achieving a particular (communicative) goal (cf. Vorwerg 2015). This takes me to the second point. Apart from interpersonal and politeness considerations, a speaker is concerned with the achievement of desired outcomes; the focus here is on effectiveness (cf. Wiseman 2003). In the case of requests and complaints, the speaker modifies speech acts externally to influence the subsequent (communicative) behavior of conversational partners. Thus, for the present purposes, the ability to produce effective external modification devices can be equated with a speaker's powers of persuasion. Put differently, a requestee needs to be persuaded to perform the desired act(ion). This outcome may be achieved by adding external modifiers which make a request "plausible and justifiable to the person who is to perform it" (Trosborg 1995: 215). At first, however, a speaker may use *preparators* to explore the addressee's availability or willingness and secure a pre-commitment before realizing the actual head act. Following this, common persuasive devices are

[48] Apart from their interpersonal function, *disarmers* are also highly efficient modification devices because they remove any potential objection the addressee might rise upon being confronted with a request or complaint in advance to secure cooperation.

imposition minimizers or *promises of reward* with which a speaker intends to offset the addressee's reluctance to co-operate. This outcome is achieved by either minimizing the cost involved in granting the request or by compensating for the imposition by offering a service in return. In a nutshell, "[m]ost external modifiers are means by which the speaker tries to elicit the addressee's co-operation to support the actual request" (Sifianou 1992: 182).

In contrast, external modifiers added to complaints must justify an accusation and/or the condemnation of the addressee's behavior. Complainers therefore substantiate their accusation (i.e., prove the addressee's guilt) and stress the severity of the offence so that external modifiers are realized with the aim of preventing hearers from overturning or rejecting complaints (cf. Trosborg 1995: 329-330). By *providing evidence*, a speaker may put forward arguments concerning both their innocence and/or the addressee's guilt. For instance, they may quote the law, a contract or ask for a third opinion to prove their point. The speaker can also employ tactical moves, termed *convincing*, to persuade the addressee of a change in mindset (e.g., *Die Reparatur kann nicht warten, ich habe Kinder. / The repairs can't wait, I have kids*.). These external modifiers are routinely realized as strategic means to enforce the addressee's admission of guilt.

In sum, both communicative goals, i.e., appropriateness and effectiveness are integral to successful requestive and complaint behavior, and may be pursued simultaneously in communication (cf. Vorwerg 2015: 297). For instance, *grounders* perform remedial work in requests by conveying to the hearer, why it is necessary to impose on them. In addition, their employment is strategic and goal-oriented, as giving supportive reasons for an imposition helps secure the addressee's cooperation (cf. Trosborg 1995: 218). Thus, in line with Caffi "[b]oth an instrumental dimension, related to interactional effectiveness, and a relational dimension, related to identity-building, are at work in mitigation processes" (2013: 265).

3 Second language pragmatics: from theory to research

> Within interlanguage pragmatics research, the study of grammatical development is not only about form, it is about how form develops in contexts and the choice among alternatives that new forms present to learners. It is about acquisition of pragmatics.
>
> (Bardovi-Harlig 2003: 29)

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for the analysis of phenomena at the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 German. To meet this objective, the chapter spans a wide range of topics, including:

1. an exploration of theoretical approaches that seek to answer what mechanisms drive L2 pragmatic development,
2. a review of existing SLA and ILP studies which examine the challenges faced by learners during L2 acquisition considering the relation between pragmatic and grammatical competence at different acquisitional stages,
3. a synthesis of empirical ILP studies which shed light on grammar and/or proficiency effects for the L2 acquisition of modification devices in requests and complaints, and
4. an evaluation of the current state of research concerning the degree of relationship among pragmatic perception and production.

The chapter starts out with an overview of mainstream theoretical foundations for L2 pragmatics research. First, § 3.1.1 gives an outline of two cognitive-psychological perspectives on L2 pragmatic development (Bialystok 1993; Schmidt 1993). This is followed by theoretical approaches that offer explanations of different aspects of the potentially twinned development of grammar and pragmatics: § 3.1.2 introduces the Complexification Hypothesis (Meisel et al. 1981) and § 3.1.3 provides an account of the theoretical underpinnings of the Interface Hypothesis (Sorace 2003; Sorace & Filiaci 2006). In view of the lack of conclusive findings on the role of grammatical knowledge in pragmatic development, the remainder of this chapter is devoted to an extensive literature review which incorporates research with learners from a range of proficiency levels and from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (cf. § 3.2). In § 3.2.1,

key sources related to research into as well as debates on the grammar-pragmatics interface in ILP will be evaluated and synthesized. Next, § 3.2.2 reviews research on L2 request and complaint production with a focus on modification, and § 3.2.3 looks at some recent studies that have followed more focused lines of inquiry into the development of receptive pragmatic competence in relation to productive pragmatic competence. Recapitulating the previous sections, § 3.3 then forms the basis for the hypotheses of this study by bringing together the existing empirical results and theoretical approaches.

3.1 Theoretical approaches to L2 pragmatic acquisition

Even though the fields of SLA and ILP have been remarkably active in recent decades, they have not yet arrived at a unified theoretical account of how second languages are learned. Progress in SLA theorizing has been made especially in the areas where most attention and effort has been directed to date, namely the acquisition of second language grammar, traditionally consisting of morphology and syntax (see Mitchell & Myles 2004 for an overview). In contrast, much of the research on L2 pragmatic development has been largely descriptive rather than theory guided. In fact, as the actual learning *process* oftentimes remains untheorized (contrary to the learning *object*), theoretical agendas that place the modelling of L2 learners' developing pragmatics at the center are scarce (cf. Kasper 2009: 260). A case in point is the lack of second language theorizing and the associated lack of systematic investigations concerning the grammar/pragmatics division of labor in adult L2 learners. When reviewing current ILP research which offers observations on both pragmatics and grammar, the following way of proceeding is frequently identified: Researchers acknowledge that speakers deploy grammar as a resource to construct and thereby accomplish the performance and modification of various speech acts. However, the implication that proficiency level (which in many cases is incorrectly conceptualized as an indicator of L2 grammatical competence) may not allow L2 learners to effectively perform appropriate language functions, or to comprehend the interlocutor's intended message is only mentioned as a side note (see for example Thomas 1983: 94). The focus is, thus, very rarely on the possibly conjoined L2 development of pragmatics and grammar. What is needed in ILP research are explicit theoretical models that can be fruitfully engaged to account

for the acquisition of pragmatic competence and in addition allow for an illustration of the mediating role of grammatical knowledge in pragmatic development. As ILP research is however currently at a stage where descriptive accounts of the grammar-pragmatics divide are still scarce, this study is not conducted from an explicitly theoretical perspective. Rather, a "research-then-theory" (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991: 224) approach is pursued in the sense that the theories reviewed in the following are consulted so as to classify and analyze the present data sets. I believe that by combining these attempts to explain L2 pragmatic acquisition, they provide a broader and more in-depth view of the acquisition process.

3.1.1 Cognitive approaches to interlanguage pragmatic development

According to Kasper & Rose, cognitive-processing theories with their "long and enormously prolific research tradition, theoretical rigor, and methodological sophistication […] are well suited to examine important aspects of interlanguage pragmatic learning" (2002: 60). The cognitive hypotheses which predominantly underly research on L2 pragmatics are Schmidt's (1993, 1995a, 2001, 2010) *Noticing Hypothesis* and Bialystok's (1993, 1994) *Two-Dimensional Model of L2 proficiency development*. Whereas Schmidt examines cognitive processes, i.e., the role of conscious awareness in the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence, Bialystok addresses issues related to knowledge representation by exploring the learning task in the pragmatic domain of adult L2 learners as opposed to child L1 acquirers. Since Schmidt's and Bialystok's theoretical proposals address two different stages of the L2 learning process, the models "are not in competition but rather complement each other" (Kasper & Rose 2002: 22; see also Kasper 2001, 2009). Therefore, both models can be applied to this study's examination of Syrian Arabic learners' development of L2 pragmatics. Each of these are briefly addressed in turn.

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis

Theoretical underpinnings. The Noticing Hypothesis refers to the initial phase of input processing in L2 acquisition and discusses the attentional conditions which are required for *input* to become *intake*. In this context, the term intake refers to a subset of input which has been processed sufficiently for it to be incorporated into the learner's interlanguage (cf. Philp 2015: 45). Schmidt (1993) predicts that

linguistic forms, their pragmalinguistic functions and sociopragmatic constraints must be *noticed*, i.e., they must be brought into focal *attention*, in order for them to be converted into intake. Global alertness to L2 input is, however, insufficient. Instead, the learners' attention must be directed towards specific learning objects. Schmidt (1995b) further draws a distinction between *noticing* and *understanding*. Whereas noticing is defined as "the conscious registration of the occurrence of some event" (Schmidt 1995b: 29), understanding refers to a higher level of awareness which also entails generalizations across instances. In particular, understanding involves "the recognition of some general principle, rule, or pattern. Noticing refers to surface-level phenomena and item learning, while understanding refers to deeper level(s) of abstraction related to (semantic, syntactic, or communicative) meaning, system learning" (Schmidt 1995: 29). Applied to this study's focus area, Schmidt's distinction works as follows: Being aware during an exchange that an interlocutor says something like *Ich wollte fragen, ob du mir beim Umzug helfen könntest? / I wanted to ask whether you could help me move?* is a matter of noticing. Linking the linguistic forms used with their strategic employment (e.g., with the interlocutor's intent to ask for help politely) and further discerning their co-occurrence with contextual elements (e.g., social distance, power, level of imposition) is a matter of understanding. An additional aspect stressed by Schmidt (1993, 2001) is the relevance of learner-internal factors such as motivation, aptitude, current L2 knowledge or processing ability with regard to his hypothesis. A case in point are learners who are highly motivated in establishing relationships with target language speakers. These learners may put stronger focus on the pragmatic features conveyed through L2 input (see also Norton 2000; Siegal 1996; Takahashi 2012a).

Empirical evidence. Initially, Schmidt (1993) proposed that noticing is a necessary and sufficient condition for L2 learning to occur. After this proposal had been challenged by ILP and SLA scholars (e.g., Gass 1997; Tomlin & Villa 1994), he acknowledged the possibility of pragmatic learning without attention (e.g., forms of implicit and incidental learning) and modified his former view to the weaker claim that more noticing leads to more learning. Empirical evidence supports this weaker claim; a case in point is Barron's (2003) longitudinal study in the study abroad context. She recruited Irish learners of German and

investigated their production of reoffers, i.e., the reiteration of a particular initiative offer within an offer sequence. Such reoffers are more common in Irish English than in German (cf. Barron 2003: 127). Accordingly, the learners' levels of reoffering in offer-refusal exchanges prior to the year abroad were significantly higher than those by German native speaker controls. As, however, the study abroad context provided learners with the necessary input to notice differences in offer-refusal and offer-exchange structures between Irish English and German, this led to a development towards target language use (see Schauer 2009 for additional support). Besides, studies which explicitly tested the Noticing Hypothesis, including research on L2 pragmatics teaching, provide evidence for Schmidt's assumption that high levels of attention drawing activities are more effective for L2 learning than mere input exposure (e.g., DuFon 1999; Alcón Soler 2005; Yuan & Zhang 2018; for reviews see Norris & Ortega 2000; Taguchi & Roever 2017). Recent research further suggests that certain individual differences facilitate learners' allocation of attention to pragmatic features. Takahashi (2012a, 2013, 2017) finds that the motivation and listening proficiency of Japanese learners of English predicts their pragmatic perception of target request head acts.[49] Particularly interesting in this regard is that while pragmatic perception led to the acquisition of structurally simple forms (e.g., internal modifiers), more complex structures such as bi-clausal patterns were not learned (cf. Takahashi 2013). It thus stands to reason that linguistic complexity might influence the effects of noticing on learning and that "learners' insufficient grammatical knowledge might affect their awareness of the target forms and consequently their learning of them" (Taguchi 2017: 88). Taken together, these studies not only demonstrate the Noticing Hypothesis's potential as a foundation of L2 learning, but also illustrate how individual differences in motivation or proficiency contribute to L2 learners' attentional allocation to pragmatic features. Moreover, the extent to which linguistic cues are noticed further depends on learner-external factors such as the complexity, frequency, or saliency of forms, as well as instructional treatments (cf. Gass 1997; Philp 2015; Schmidt 2001; Takahashi 2013).

[49] Pragmatic awareness was operationalized as *noticing* + *subjective interest*.

Bialystok's Two-Dimensional Model

Theoretical underpinnings. Bialystok's (1993, 1994) cognitively oriented Two-Dimensional Model addresses issues related to knowledge representation by exploring the learning task in the pragmatic domain of adult L2 learners as opposed to child L1 acquirers. She starts out by positing that language development involves two cognitive processing components which are called *analysis of knowledge* and *control of processing*. Analysis of knowledge concerns the degree to which learners analyze their implicit knowledge of a domain so that it becomes explicit (cf. Bialystok 2011: 50). The model differentiates between three stages or levels of representation, ranging from implicit to most explicit: During the first access stage to a new language, i.e., *conceptual representation*, learners can convey their intentions; however, they focus on "the intended meaning and not on the forms being selected to express that intention" (Bialystok 1993: 51). For instance, they are unable to recognize that a particular linguistic form/structure functions as a request. The ability to make this connection forms part of the next stage, *formal representation*. When learners have reached the third stage called *symbolic representation*, they are then able to identify the relation between a pragmatic intention and the forms employed to achieve that intention (cf. Bialystok 1993: 51). Control of processing, on the other hand, concerns the processes involved in *accurate selection* and *coordination* of linguistic knowledge. Added to this are the cognitive procedures for *efficient access* to this knowledge to support performance (cf. Bialystok 1994: 160; Li 2019: 114). To illustrate, the selection issue concerns a learner's ability to identify a specific linguistic form among alternatives, as an appropriate option to express the intended pragmatic function in a particular context (e.g., using subjunctive forms of modal verbs in German request making). Similarly, it refers to a learner's ability to come up with the appropriate interpretation of an utterance in context, among competing interpretations (e.g., interpreting non-conventional request strategies as such) (cf. Bialystok 1993). The access issue, on the other hand, describes the efficient retrieval and display of pragmatic information which adds to fluent performance (cf. Li 2019: 115). In sum, as their analysis of knowledge and processing ability develop and the learners' knowledge becomes more explicit, they are more capable of executing their intentions and in directing their performance under time pressure (cf. Bialystok 1994: 160-161).

When applied to L2 pragmatic development, the Two-Dimensional Model has several implications: First and foremost, Bialystok (1993, 1994) posits that the learning task differs for child L1 and adult L2 acquirers. The primary concern for children is analysis of knowledge, so that the development of analytic representations of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge takes priority over the development of control strategies. In contrast, the task of forming analytic representations of pragmatic knowledge has to a large extent already been completed by adult L2 learners. Even though the complexity of pragmatic and sociolinguistic categories as well as the attendant linguistic forms for which L2 learners must establish new representations should not be underestimated, unlike child L1 acquirers, adults have the advantage of being able to rely on a rich foundation of available L1 pragmatic knowledge (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002: 22). According to this line of argument, adults' primary learning task is to gain control over the selection of already existent representations (cf. Bialystok 1993: 48).

Empirical evidence. Although ILP studies which adopt the Two-Dimensional Model as the *a priori* framework remain limited, empirical evidence supports the developmental pathways outlined by Bialystok. The claim of the importance of gaining control of L2 knowledge has been validated by observations about adult learners' speech production and conversational participation skills. In studies by Hassall (1997), House (1996), Kasper (1981, 1984) and Tada (2005), L2 learners stand out because of involuntary disruptions in their flow of speech and/or their performance of incoherent responses in speech act sequences. The researchers explain the difficulties experienced by their informants with respect to the temporal and prosodic structuring of turns at talk or conversational responses with reference to insufficiently developed control of processing. A related point to consider is based on Kasper & Rose's (2002) synopsis of ILP data which indicates that learners reduce their processing load in speech act production by designing their utterances in line with a "pragmatic priority list" (2002: 27). According to this list, propositional and illocutionary goals are most central, whereas interpersonal concerns such as politeness markings are categorized as less relevant. Kasper & Rose summarize their results as follows:

> Internal modification through grammaticalized material requires a highly developed control of processing. Before learners have reached the necessary levels of control, they select fewer politeness markers, and the politeness markers they do choose demand less attention to produce.
>
> (Kasper & Rose 2002: 26-27)

Evidence for the model's second prediction comes from ILP studies which identify L2 learners' reliance on L1 pragmatic knowledge. For instance, findings by Koike (1989) validate the claim that pragmatic representation has to some extent already been achieved for adult L2 learners. Participants in her study are beginner level learners of Spanish who do not acquire L2 pragmatic competence along a continuum from simple to complex structures. Instead, they are often "guided to produce more polite forms from their L1 notions of politeness" (Koike 1989: 286). The contention that the development of processing capacity takes precedence over the acquisition of new representations has nevertheless been called into question: A range of empirical studies emphasize the frequent occurrence of negative transfer in L2 production as well as learners' difficulties with mitigating resources, L2 specific routines and formulae (e.g., Barron 2003; Hassall 2001, 2006, 2012). These results indicate that the acquisition of new L2-specific pragmatic knowledge may be more challenging for learners than assumed by the Two-Dimensional Model.

3.1.2 Complexification Hypothesis

Theoretical underpinnings. Research which investigates sequences of L2 pragmatic acquisition is still scarce. Cohen (1996), for instance, asks whether "adults go through developmental sequences in their acquisition of speech act ability in the same way as they have been found to do in the acquisition of morphemes and syntactic structures such as negation" (1996: 263). When tackling the question of whether the relative structural complexity of L2 pragmatic features affects the path by which learners acquire L2 pragmatics, ILP researchers frequently turn to Meisel et al.'s (1981) Complexification Hypothesis. Initially put forward to explain developments in interlanguage grammar, the hypothesis holds that key-parts of L2 grammar, such as German word order rules emerge in a fixed acquisitional order. That is to say that learners' development follows a common route, even though the speed or rate at which individual learners travel along this

route may vary (cf. Meisel 2015: 169; Mitchell & Myles 2004: 16). According to Meisel et al. (1981) and Clahsen et al. (1983), this order of acquisition depends upon the structural complexity and the processing demands involved. Hence, grammatical structures which require a high degree of processing capacity are acquired late, whereas those that only require a minimum of processing capacity are acquired early on. A case in point is the observation that syntactically complex structures, that are more cognitively demanding, are usually acquired later than simpler structures which require lesser processing costs. Even though the Complexification Hypothesis was developed to explain L2 acquisition of syntactic forms, it has been found to also play a role in the acquisition of pragmatic functions. As stated by Hassall (1997), "while grammatical competence is not in itself sufficient for pragmatic competence […], it is likely to greatly constrain the development of pragmatic competence, such that the 'complexification hypothesis' will have considerable explanatory power for ILP acquisition as well" (Hassall 1997: 286-287). The proposed link between grammatical and pragmatic development may thus confine L2 learners' ability to produce pragmatic functions. Particularly affected would be those pragmalinguistic forms which are connected to grammatical suppliers, such as syntactic downgraders.

Empirical evidence. The Complexification Hypothesis is supported by a continuously growing research basis both in the areas of SLA and ILP (see for example Barron 2003, 2007; Hassall 2012; Nguyen 2008; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000; Trosborg 1995). For instance, longitudinal research by Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig (2000) on the expression of modality confirms that complex grammaticalized expressions (e.g., *could, would*) emerge later in interlanguage productions than lexical forms such as *maybe* or *think*. Another example commonly put forward is Kasper & Rose's (2002) framework of global L2 request development. After surveying longitudinal and cross-sectional research on beginner-level learners' request production (e.g., Achiba 2003; Ellis 1992; Schmidt 1983), they propose a five-stage process: Learners gradually transition from a pre-grammaticalized and routinized production-stage, in which they have a very limited range of pragmalinguistic forms at their disposal towards overgeneralization into a phase in which they expand their pragmalinguistic repertoire by adding new form-function mappings. As part of this gradual expansion, learners begin to use language creatively and modify the force of their

utterances which, in turn, allows them to encode requests in ways appropriate to the socio-cultural and linguistic conventions of a given language use context (for additional evidence and pragmatic phenomena other than requests see Al-Gahtani & Roever 2012; Bardovi-Harlig 2009; Chang 2010; Shively 2011; Taguchi 2012). In view of the increasing complexity hypothesized in these stages, Kasper & Rose (2002) highlight a strong interconnection between grammatical and pragmatic development, since grammatical limitations may pose restrictions on learners' pragmatic performance. Barron (2003) and Trosborg (1995) conduct studies that lend further support to the applicability of the Complexification Hypothesis. Their finding is that L2 learners first need to master speech act strategies before being able to add internal modification devices (cf. Barron 2007: 132; Trosborg 1995: 430). In the opinion of Trosborg "these findings point towards a developmental pattern according to which the inclusion of modification increases with increasing mastery of head acts" (1995: 430). With regard to internal modification, Barron's (2003) and Trosborg's (1995) learner informants acquire syntactic structures in order of complexity, i.e., learners' preferences in the area of syntactic downgrading move from syntactically simple structures to those which demand high levels of grammatical competence. Overall, the afore-mentioned studies all add evidence to the hypothesis of a strong interconnection between grammatical and pragmatic development in so far that the relative structural complexity of L2 pragmatic features seems to affect the path by which learners acquire L2 pragmatics.

3.1.3 The Interface Hypothesis in adult second language acquisition

Theoretical underpinnings. While reference is very rarely made to linguistic interfaces in ILP research, they constitute an area of considerable current interest in the fields of language loss, first, second and bilingual language acquisition as well as linguistic theory (e.g., Avrutin 1999; Burkhardt 2005; Jackendoff 2002; Ramchand & Reiss 2007; Sorace & Filiaci 2006). Most researchers working on acquisition at the interfaces do not strictly advocate one particular version of interface design but rather invoke their common ground (cf. Rothman & Slabakova 2011: 570). Generally, the underlying idea is a modular language architecture, according to which a language user's linguistic competence and performance is viewed as cognitive faculties which consist of semi-autonomous

modules of grammar (i.e., syntax, semantics, morphology, phonology). Bos et al. (2004) elaborate on the modular approach by stating the following:

> Acquisition is not just a matter of acquiring the (various modules of the) language system and the lexicon, but also the ability to use that knowledge in perception and production, to learn pragmatic principles, i.e., acquisition is also a matter of acquiring the interaction between modules.
>
> (Bos et al. 2004: 101)

In this framework, interfaces are conceptualized as connections, or rather as spaces where mapping takes place. Linguistic processes which occur between different modules are therefore called *interface processes* (cf. Jackendoff 2002; Slabakova & Ivanov 2011). For instance, at the syntax-semantics interface, units of the linguistic level syntax are mapped onto and translated into another level, namely semantics. Whereas interfaces between different modules of grammar (e.g., syntax/semantics) are called *internal* (as only formal properties of the grammar are implicated), *external interfaces* exist between an internal component of the grammar, and an external component, such as pragmatics or discourse information. Tsimpli & Sorace (2006) argue the following:

> [T]he distinction between the two interfaces is based on the assumption that the syntax-discourse interface is a 'higher' level of language use, integrating properties of language and pragmatic processing, whereas syntax-semantics involves formal properties of the language system alone.
>
> (Tsimpli & Sorace 2006: 653)

To give an idea, the syntax-discourse interface involves pragmatic conditions that determine appropriateness in context. The notion of internal or external interface thus refers to linguistic structures and the domain that defines the conditions of their grammaticality and/or felicity (cf. Sorace 2011). All things considered, language learners need to acquire linguistic phenomena pertaining to interfaces, i.e., they need to acquire knowledge of a respective structure and of the mapping conditions operating within interface components. The same applies to the processing principles which take effect during the real-time integration of information coming from different domains (cf. Sorace 2011: 9-12).

Linguistic interfaces have a prominent status in child language acquisition because taking units of one module and mapping them onto units in another module is a more complex operation than intra-modular processes, and is hence

more difficult to acquire (cf. Avrutin 1999; Slabakova & Ivanov 2011: 637; Slabakova 2013: 500). However, when more than one language is involved, the chances of mismatches rise exponentially, which further complicates successful L2 acquisition (cf. Sorace & Serratrice 2009). Given this background, the Interface Hypothesis which has been advanced by Sorace (2003) and Sorace & Filiaci (2006) proposes that difficulties experienced by L2 learners can be explained in terms of problems with integrating linguistic phenomena relevant to certain interfaces. Based on investigations of the end-state knowledge of near-native L2 learners, the early version of the Interface Hypothesis maintains that properties at linguistic interfaces may be more vulnerable to such phenomena as variability, optionality, transfer, or fossilization than intra-module properties (cf. Sorace 2003). Subsequent research, however, demonstrates that not all interfaces appear to be equally unstable, i.e., external interfaces result in greater difficulties than internal ones where only formal properties of the grammar are implicated (e.g., White 2011a; Slabakova 2013; Tsimpli & Sorace 2006). Sorace, for instance, identifies that "[r]esearch on bilingual development points in particular to the interface between syntax and pragmatics as a locus of optionality and instability" (2011: 7).

In an updated version of the Interface Hypothesis, Sorace & Serratrice (2009) and Sorace (2011) therefore argue for a principled distinction between internal and external interfaces; the prime example for the latter being the syntax-discourse/pragmatics interface. The assumption is that even though L2 learners are able to acquire syntactic and pragmatic conditions, the integration of both conditions will remain less than optimally efficient and will be cause for optionality (cf. Sorace 2011: 26; White 2009: 54-55). Besides, external interfaces seem to be particularly vulnerable to cross-linguistic influence. For instance, how topic and focus are realized in a learner's L1 will influence interlanguage representation, which in turn may lead to the overuse of overt subjects and subject-verb word order, problems with the realization of specificity or the inappropriate use of scrambling, amongst other things (cf. White 2009: 56). Apart from cross-linguistic influence in representations (and/or parsing strategies), processing limitations as well as the L2 input received may affect the learnability of external interface structures (cf. Sorace & Serratrice 2009: 200-202).

Empirical evidence. Seminal SLA research findings show that L2 speakers are less efficient than monolingual speakers when it comes to integrating information from different domains in real-time language use (cf. Sorace 2011: 20). In addition, substantial evidence has been found for the vulnerability of language learners' morphosyntax in domains in which it is regulated by pragmatic factors (e.g., Belletti et al. 2007; Roberts et al. 2008; Sorace & Filiaci 2006; Tsimpli & Sorace 2006). For instance, Tsimpli & Sorace (2006) observe that although L2 learners of Greek acquire syntax-semantics structures unproblematically, syntax-pragmatics interface structures cause them sustained difficulties (e.g., the distribution of subject pronouns). These findings point quite consistently to second language-problems associated with external interface phenomena, i.e., involving a relationship between syntax and pragmatics, discourse, or information structure. Inappropriate usage or errors concerning phenomena relating to the syntax-discourse interface (e.g., topic and focus) have also been reported for other contexts of language acquisition and loss, including L1 acquirers, lower proficiency L2 learners, simultaneous bilingual acquirers, heritage language acquires or cases of L1 attrition (e.g., Hertel 2003; Montrul 2004; Schaeffer 2000; Serratrice et al. 2004; Tsimpli et al. 2004). Converging results from these different domains suggest vulnerability of morpho-syntactic constructions whose distribution is governed by a discourse-pragmatic interface; and this holds both for the actual course of L2 acquisition as well as for a near-native steady state (see also White 2011b: 110; Lardiere 2011: 51-52).[50] However, researchers such as Rothman & Slabakova (2011) advocate a clear(er) differentiation between the syntax-discourse and syntax-pragmatics interface. They reserve the latter notion, under which they categorize speech acts, for the interface where meaning that is based on knowledge of the world and 'universal' pragmatic categories, or principles is calculated. With regard to acquisition at this interface, they conclude that it "is not very likely to present much difficulty to [learners], unless some computations with added cognitive complexity are involved" (Rothman &

[50] The Interface Hypothesis has, however, not been without criticism. Rothman & Slabakova (2011) emphasize that beyond anaphora resolution and pronominal subject distribution, very few properties of external interfaces as well as very few language pairings have actually been examined in interface research so far. According to their argument, once an appropriate number of relevant properties in a wide range of languages is examined, the hypothesized vulnerability of the syntax-discourse interface might no longer prove to be different from any other interface (cf. Rothman & Slabakova 2011: 575).

Slabakova 2011: 571). As has already been pointed out in § 3.1.1, ILP research indicates that the acquisition of L2-specific pragmatic knowledge may be more challenging than assumed by Rothman & Slabakova (2011). In particular, this seems to be the case when learners carry out morphosyntax-pragmatics mappings, as when producing or perceiving internal speech act modification in the target language. Based on this outline of key theories in ILP and SLA, the next section is devoted to a review of research on the interplay of grammatical and pragmatic competence in adult L2 acquisition.

3.2 The grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 acquisition

It was Kasper & Schmidt (1996) who addressed developmental issues in ILP and who in turn advocated for a shift from traditional comparative research to the investigation of acquisitional aspects. As, however, most developmental research in ILP isolated pragmatics from other components of the language system, the initial research agenda was reiterated by Bardovi-Harlig (1999), who in addition, emphasized the need to investigate the relationship between pragmatics and grammar from a developmental perspective, i.e., either longitudinally or cross-sectionally (see also Bardovi-Harlig 2010, 2013a; Kasper & Rose 2002). In particular, she recommended the in-depth study of related grammatical and pragmalinguistic subsystems, with observation periods starting at the beginning stages of L2 acquisition. More than 20 years later, what is the state of research concerning the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 acquisition?

While in recent years the number of studies which address phenomena at the grammar-pragmatics interface as their central research question has somewhat increased, this is nevertheless few and far between, compared to research conducted in other areas of ILP (see for exceptions Celaya & Barón 2015; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Martí-Arnándiz 2008; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000; Takahashi 2017). Instead, there is a continuous trend in research to focus on each component separately rather than to examine the relationship of pragmatic and grammatical development. To illustrate, a typical ILP study compares L2 learners' performance of a particular speech act or pragmalinguistic feature with the performance of a native speaker control group and simply relates the results to a general measure of proficiency (e.g., standardized proficiency tests, course level or indirect measures such as length of residence and/or formal study) which is

presumed to be an indicator of grammatical competence. Taken together, results from such studies suggest that pragmatic competence may not develop hand in hand with grammatical ability. Instead, the two abilities may follow separate trajectories toward their full development. This assumption derives from the consistent finding that learners at advanced stages of L2 acquisition frequently fail to achieve native pragmatic competence. That is, they often perform rather poorly in terms of stylistic range and grasp of pragmatic requirements (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1990, 1993; House 1996; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka 1985) which has led Bardovi-Harlig to conclude that "high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee concomitant high levels of pragmatic competence" (Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 686). Generally, empirical evidence demonstrates that the range of success in the area of pragmatics among L2 learners with a high level of grammatical proficiency is quite wide (cf. Kecskes 2006). This finding should, however, come as no surprise. One contributing factor to such variation is the learning environment, since it is typically assumed that the L2 context provides more opportunities for obtaining pragmatic input then the foreign language context. Consequently, the pragmatic competence of (even advanced) foreign language learners may lag somewhat behind (cf. House 1996; Röver 1996; Takahashi & Beebe 1987). On a more general note, a failure to express pragmatic intent may be due to a lack of understanding with regard to L2 linguistic conventions as well as the sociocultural norms underlying them. Furthermore, a crucial difference between L2 pragmatic and grammatical development is that learners have more control over the former. Whereas they can adopt pragmatic features or attitudes by choice, they usually do not have this option when learning grammar. This entails the fact that learners may at times be reluctant to accept certain L2 pragmatic norms because, like L1 speakers, they make choices related to their own preferences for identity performance (cf. § 2.1.2).

At this point, we can draw the interim conclusion that L2 grammatical competence is not a sufficient condition for L2 pragmatic competence; but does this finding rule out the possibility that a threshold level of grammatical ability is a prerequisite for L2 pragmatic development? It certainly does not (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 1999, 2003, 2013a). In fact, some researchers themselves have pointed out that by narrowing the scope of their studies to more proficient learners, their goal is to limit informants' pragmatic failures attributable to a lack of L2 linguistic and

grammatical proficiency (e.g., Shaeffer 2018: 76). Not only does the focus on highly proficient learners in traditional ILP research provide us thus with no information on the developmental process by which learners arrive at an interlanguage pragmatics system, but according to Takahashi it even "supported the contention that grammar and pragmatics are separate and autonomous subsystems of communicative competence, without recognizing the interface between them" (2017: 88). The situation is exacerbated by the prevailing conceptualization of pragmatic ability as an autonomous component of the language system which does not "tell us how a *particular* pragmalinguistic feature is related to the *particular* grammatical knowledge implicated in its use" (Kasper 2001: 506, original emphasis). It is, however, precisely this question that guides the present investigation.

So far, it can be maintained that much uncertainty exists about the comparative development over time of learners' pragmatics and grammar. In particular, this applies to the ways in which pragmalinguistic forms such as syntactic downgraders are connected in practice to their grammatical suppliers, and whether a learner's level of grammatical competence can constrict or facilitate their capacity to produce these forms. At the same time, grammatical competence may also limit the value of pragmatic input to learners. Thus, learners who have not yet achieved control over a grammatical feature that makes up a particular syntactic downgrader, may not be ready to extent the use of this form to a mitigating device in incoming data. ILP researchers have, however, not treated the question of how learners acquire the pragmatic meanings of grammatical and lexical materials in much detail. Some research suggests that pragmatic perception may precede production, even though little is known about the impact of learners' receptive knowledge on the development of their pragmatic performance (see for example Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Koike 1996; Takahashi 1996; Timpe-Laughlin 2017). What is especially not yet clear is whether production is limited by perception or whether it can proceed without it. In view of the lack of conclusive findings, § 3.2.1 seeks to explore the grammar-pragmatics interface in adult L2 acquisition by offering an overview of those studies which, so far, have dealt directly with the comparative development of L2 learners' pragmatics and grammar over time. This is followed by a review of developmental research on L2 request and complaint production with a focus on modification in § 3.2.2. Finally,

§ 3.2.3 looks at some recent studies that have followed more focused lines of inquiry into L2 learners' emergent receptive pragmatic competence and its impact on their interlanguage productions.

3.2.1 The relationship between grammar and pragmatics in adult second language acquisition: What do we know?

Kasper & Rose's (2002) review of research literature on the relationship of interlanguage pragmatics and grammar is of paramount importance for the present study. By putting together evidence on different acquisitional periods, they are able to illustrate that L2 learners face different learning tasks with respect to the relation between pragmatic and grammatical competence depending on their developmental stage. The authors differentiate roughly between early and later acquisitional stages, and associated with this identify two developmental sequences, namely *pragmatics precedes grammar*, and *grammar precedes pragmatics*:

> [E]arly learners have acquired the L2 grammatical means to express already existing pragmatic categories, whereas later learners have to tease out the pragmatic meanings to which their now available L2 grammatical knowledge can be put.
>
> (Kasper & Rose 2002: 190)

What follows is a brief look at the two acquisitional directions from pragmatics to grammar and reversely, from grammar to pragmatics. The argumentative approach is based in parts on Kasper & Rose's publication (see Kasper & Rose 2002, Chapter 5) but is updated by including state-of-the-art research, additional empirical evidence, and new lines of reasoning.

3.2.1.1 Time-course of acquisition: pragmatics first or grammar first?

Pragmatics precedes grammar

Under the heading *pragmatics precedes grammar*, Kasper & Rose (2002) discuss studies of L2 learners' early acquisitional stages during which they employ pragmatic functions, without however having acquired the grammatical forms necessary for realizing these functions. This is in accordance with the consensus among ILP researchers that adult learners with lower proficiency already have pragmatic categories even though at times they may lack the grammatical

repertoire to express them (cf. Ahrenholz 2000; Eisenstein & Bodman 1993; Geyer 2007a, 2007b; Koike 1989; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000; Schmidt 1983; Walters 1980[51]). Put differently, adult language learners come equipped with pragmatic competence from their L1, which allows them to transfer certain norms and strategies to the target language (cf. Schauer 2013: 2; see also § 3.2.1 on Bialystok's 1993, 1994 Two-Dimensional Model). It goes without question that adults still need to acquire a wide range of L2-specific pragmatic representations, yet at the beginning stages of L2 acquisition they are able to draw on a basis of prior pragmatic knowledge. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are findings by research conducted under a functional-linguistic framework. According to this approach, non-tutored beginner level learners' initial participation in the target language community relies on a *pragmatic mode* in which learners perform actions in a pre-grammaticalized fashion by relying on the context in conjunction with the little L2 grammatical knowledge available to them (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002: 167-174). An illustration of the pragmatic mode can be found in longitudinal research on untutored adult second language acquisition in the European context (e.g., Projekt Modalität von Lernervarietäten im Längsschnitt (P-MoLL), see Dittmar & Ahrenholz 1995; Dittmar 2012). For instance, Ahrenholz (2000) explores how learners of German are able to accomplish communicative tasks such as requesting, for which at the time of data collection they still lack grammatical knowledge. His informants produce verbless request realizations or requests which include formulaic, uninflected verb forms and rely heavily on the situational and discourse context to get their message across. Further support for this finding is provided by Félix-Brasdefer (2007), who investigates the development of requests in face-to-face interactions from the beginning of foreign language instruction to advanced levels of proficiency. He finds that American low-proficiency learners of Spanish are able to perform L2 requests by falling back on pragmatic knowledge which can be transferred from their L1. Félix-Brasdefer concludes that "grammatical competence develops gradually and adjusts to the existing pragmatic competence" (2007: 280). Another researcher who presents data which support the claim that pragmatic functions

[51] Walters's (1980) study does not involve lower proficiency adult learners. Instead, he investigates children's and adolescents' interlanguage speech act behavior in L2 English and demonstrates that while his participants choose appropriate politeness levels, they produce grammatically incorrect forms, false starts, and self-corrections. He argues that encoding pragmatic goals is given preference over grammatical specification (cf. Walters 1980: 341-342).

appear prior to the associated grammatical repertoire in early interlanguage is Geyer (2007a, 2007b). In an examination of the acquisition of qualifying segments of talk in L2 Japanese, she observes that English learners with lower proficiency employ self-qualification. The forms are, however, somewhat non-native-like, i.e., qualification either without or with inappropriate contrastive expressions due to the learners' limited grammatical repertoire (cf. Geyer 2007a). Likewise, Koike (1989) finds that her American beginner level learners of Spanish are aware of the target language pragmatic norms for requests, even though their limited grammatical knowledge hinders them from realizing appropriate requests in Spanish. Instead, learners produce forms of less politeness and greater illocutionary force for the sake of expediency and simplicity, namely imperatives in combination with a politeness marker. From these findings, Koike concludes:

> [S]ince the grammatical competence cannot develop as quickly as the already present pragmatic concepts require, the pragmatic concepts are expressed in ways conforming to the level of grammatical complexity acquired. For this reason, the pragmatic information may be added peripherally to the early-acquired basic command form through lexical options (e.g., imperative + *por favor* [please])
>
> (Koike 1989: 286)

In essence, this position argues for the primacy of pragmatics at the beginning stages of L2 acquisition. The research evidence cited demonstrates that L2 learners are able to express certain pragmatic categories from early on, even though the (mostly non-target-like) manner in which beginners express pragmatic intent needs to be distinguished from the linguistic forms by which it is typically conveyed in target language performance.

Grammar precedes pragmatics

Let us now turn to the other body of research findings that demonstrate how "learners have the grammar but do not use it in pragmatically effective ways" (Kasper & Rose 2002: 187). As previously mentioned, the developmental order *grammar precedes pragmatics* is characteristic of adult learners at later stages of L2 acquisition. For these learners, the main learning task is to discover the pragmatic meanings to which the various grammatical devices in the L2 can be put. The underlying assumption here is that learners have acquired a broad

knowledge of L2 grammatical features and mostly deploy these in their primary functions, for instance conveying temporal relationships such as pointing backwards in time by marking verbs for past tense (or preterite). Following this, learners need to work out the various pragmatic, i.e., secondary meanings that preterite forms have in addition to their primary meanings, e.g., using them as modification devices in German.[52] This task is further complicated by partially divergent sociopragmatic uses in the L2 which affect the contextual distribution of the pragmalinguistic forms in question (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002: 174-185). Research seems to indicate that this process evolves not only differently for different grammatical forms and their secondary meanings but also depends on a complex conglomeration of learner-internal and -external factors. Hence, Kasper & Rose (2002) differentiate between three sub-categories for the developmental order *grammar precedes pragmatics*:

a. Grammatical knowledge does not enable pragmalinguistic use;

b. Grammatical knowledge enables non-target-like pragmalinguistic use; and

c. Grammatical and pragmalinguistic knowledge enable non-target-like sociopragmatic use.

(Kasper & Rose 2002: 175, 180, 182)

Both option (b) and (c) are best explained with an example: Starting with sub-category (b), Takahashi & Beebe (1987) illustrate how grammatical knowledge enables non-target-like pragmalinguistic use. They find that high-intermediate and advanced learners of English transfer refusal strategies from their L1 Japanese to English which diverge from target practice. An example for negative transfer in the learner data is the literally translated philosophical statement *Things with shapes eventually break* which learners add to their refusals (cf. Takahashi & Beebe 1987: 145). Thus, knowledge of relevant grammatical forms and their pragmalinguistic functions in this case leads learners to produce speech act

[52] As part of a form-oriented approach, Andersen & Shirai (1996) propose the following acquisitional sequence for past morphology: Learners start out with the core meaning of the deictic past, then add to it the function as a marker of habitual or iterative past and finally they acquire the function as a pragmatic softener (cf. Andersen & Shirai 1996: 557). Regarding the spread of the simple past, this implies that L2 learners first need to acquire core deictic meanings of the past tense before these forms are used with their secondary, i.e., pragmatic functions. For further research on tense-aspect-modality acquisition in second languages see also Bardovi-Harlig & Comajoan (2008), Bardovi-Harlig (2017) and Howard & Leclercq (2017a); (2017b).

strategies that are not conventionalized in the target language. Contrary to sub-category (b), learners in the third grammar-precedes-pragmatics scenario successfully create form-function mappings in the L2; however, their pragmatic productions are characterized by inappropriate sociopragmatic application. A common example are forms of overuse in which case learners generalize L2 pragmalinguistic strategies to a range of contexts in which that behavior is not appropriate (e.g., Hill 1997, Meyer 2007).

Generally, of the three sub-categories, option (a) most clearly addresses the crucial role played by grammar in L2 pragmatics. In fact, it seems reasonable to presume that in cases in which grammatical knowledge does not enable pragmalinguistic use, the L2 acquisition of grammar may initially take precedence over that of pragmalinguistic functions. Consequently, option (a) forms one of the pillars of the present investigation and is discussed in greater detail in the following. To recapitulate, the first sub-category comprises L2 learners who have knowledge of certain grammatical forms but do not use them to convey pragmatic intent. For instance, in a detailed examination of the development of lexical and grammatical expressions of modality in beginner level learners of English with different L1s, Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2001) trace the emergence of modal expressions over a one-year period. They detect a developmental sequence for modal expressions, with *maybe* and *think* preceding *can*, *will*, *would* and *could* (see § 3.2.2 on Meisel et al.'s Complexification Hypothesis, 1981). Modal forms help reduce the force of potentially face-threatening utterances (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2003: 34); however, even though their informants display knowledge of English modals such as *would* and *could* when used as grammatical items, they do not adopt these forms to modify their oppositional talk during oral interviews. Instead, learners tend to resort to lexical expressions of modality such as *think* and *maybe* which are unambiguous in expressing modality and provide clear evidence of distancing in disagreements in which the perceived face threat is very high. This leads Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig to conclude that "[e]ven learners with grammaticalized expressions of modality rely heavily on lexical forms to mark their pragmatic intent" (2000: 73).

Additional evidence for learners underutilizing the pragmatic potential of available grammatical knowledge comes from Rost-Roth's (1999b) detailed examination of the acquisition of modal particles in L2 German. During an

observation period of four years, she tracks how the Italian informant Franca acquires lexical items which primarily function as adverbs and conjunctions in German but in addition are also frequently employed with modal meanings. For example, during the fourth and fifth month of residence in Germany, Franca starts using forms such as *auch / also*, *mal / once*, *ja / yes* or *vielleicht / maybe* with primary, i.e., non-modal functions. The emergence of these forms as modal particles begins, however, only many months later (e.g., 11th month: *auch / also*; 18th month: *mal / once* and *vielleicht / maybe*; 31st month: *ja / yes*; cf. Rost-Roth 1999b: 174). The learning progressions observed in Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig's (2000, 2001) and Rost-Roth's (1999b) studies are mirrored to some extent in Kärkkäinen's (1992) cross-sectional investigation of epistemic expressions as adopted by Finnish low and high-proficiency learners of English. While the lower-proficiency group predominantly resorts to parentheticals (e.g., *I think*, *I know*) to modify their speech acts, the higher-proficiency group increasingly uses modal adverbs and modal verbs, albeit less frequently than the native speaker control group. In light of these findings, Kärkkäinen (1992) argues that some types of epistemic devices are more difficult to acquire for L2 learners because their function as markers of speaker-attitude is more implicit. In these cases, learners "may find it best to play safe and resort to devices that are quite explicit and predictable as to their interactive effect: explicitly subjective parentheticals, such as *I think*" (Kärkkäinen 1992: 213; original emphasis). Accordingly, the Finnish learners start out with extra-clausal, explicit, and routinized expressions for speech act modification before they proceed to syntactically integrated, routinized, and implicit expressions (see also Kasper & Rose 2002: 176; Geyer 2007a: 361). Finally, research by Hill (1997) and Takahashi (1996, 2012b) on L2 acquisition of syntactic downgraders in requests is interesting in this regard. Hill (1997) sets out to determine the production of requests by Japanese learners of English at three proficiency levels. It is apparent from Hill's data that while Japanese informants have mastered the progressive as a grammaticalized aspectual category in English, they do not use it as a syntactic downgrader in requests. This is in stark contrast to the English control-group who resorts to the progressive as a modification device in nearly 50 percent of all cases (e.g., *I was wondering if* …). Takahashi's (1996, 2012b) research on transferability and input enhancement of request strategies adds further evidence to this. She reports how

in both studies, advanced Japanese learners of English reject bi-clausal sentences such as *I was wondering if you could VP* or *Would it be possible for you to VP* and select mono-clausal structures instead (e.g., *would/could you (please) VP*). This is surprising, given the fact that learners are familiar with embedding structures in English as they have received instructional input beforehand. Takahashi comes to the conclusion that even though the grammaticalized forms are available to the Japanese learners, they are still unfamiliar with their pragmalinguistic functions. Notably, they lack the knowledge that by deploying forms of embedding, requests can be mitigated to a greater extent (cf. Takahashi 2012b: 173). Overall, these results indicate that availability of linguistic forms in interlanguage grammar does not necessarily translate to concurrent pragmalinguistic use. Moreover, there is ample evidence from different learner populations showing how the function directly related to the grammatical meaning of a feature is acquired before its secondary meaning and with it its more pragmatic use (see also Dittmar & Terborg 1991 and Walkinshaw 2009).

Concluding remarks on Kasper & Rose's (2002) acquisitional directions

The majority of ILP studies substantiate Kasper & Rose's (2002) claim that the primacy of either pragmatics or grammar depends on the acquisitional stage reached by L2 learners. Nonetheless, their argumentation is not without limitations: First, the rather rough division into two acquisitional sequences, i.e., *earlier and later stages of acquisition*, requires further clarification. Take as an example Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig's (2000, 2001) informants. At the start of the longitudinal study, they are categorized as beginner level learners and then spend one year in the L2 context during which their data is collected. Even though the emergence of modal expressions in their interlanguage data presents evidence for a developmental stage during which grammar precedes pragmatics, it is questionable whether their learning experience is representative of later, (i.e., advanced) stages of L2 acquisition. What is missing is the clarification of how intermediate learners fit in the two categories *pragmatics precedes grammar* and *grammar precedes pragmatics*. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the studies cited so far do not provide evidence for periods of transition and overlaps. Research on the development of grammar in pragmatics should, however, explain "how the emergent systems interact, and how one supports the other" (Bardovi-

Harlig 2013b: 79). Second, while the afore-mentioned studies indicate that L2 learners' grammatical and pragmatic competence do not necessarily increase hand in hand, they do not look at other factors which may accelerate the development of one or both of the competencies (cf. Niezgoda & Röver 2012; Schauer 2013). For instance, of the studies which report the primacy of grammar, most investigate learners in the foreign-language context or learners who have not yet lived in the target language context for an extended period of time (e.g., Hill 1997; Kärkkäinen 1992). Commenting on the question of whether the learning environment might shape developmental trajectories of L2 learners, Schauer states that "the learning context may play an important role in the development of learners' pragmatic and grammatical competence" (2013: 4). Third, a classification based on acquisitional patterns offers some plausible clues as to what may account for difficulties experienced at the grammar-pragmatics interface. However, far more information is needed on the learners' grammatical knowledge, or at least a precise measure of L2 proficiency (as in the majority of cases grammatical knowledge is not explicitly tested), if we are to draw any convincing conclusions about the complex interplay of grammar and pragmatics in adult L2 acquisition. In the next section, I therefore review those studies which have so far explicitly investigated the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 acquisition.

3.2.1.2 Grammar, pragmatics and how they interact in adult L2 acquisition

This section focuses on current ILP research that strongly implies the critical role of grammar for pragmatics. Håkansson & Norrby (2005), for example, compare the development of pragmatic and grammatical competence in intermediate and advanced Australian learners of Swedish. The informants' grammatical competence is determined by means of translation tasks and essays; in addition, two gap-fill tasks are used to assess pragmatic competence. By focusing on learners' morphosyntactic and turn-taking abilities, Håkansson & Norrby (2005) are able to show that learners whose grammatical competence is restricted to lower levels struggle with the contextualization of their utterances in a pragmatically appropriate way. This leads them to conclude that "there is a relation between grammar and pragmatics in so far that a low command of grammar also restricts the learner's pragmatic ability" (Håkansson & Norrby

2005: 156). Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig's (2000) study on the acquisition of modality has already been introduced above. In a review of this data, Bardovi-Harlig (2003) compares the pragmatic performance of two study participants called Mousa and Marta, who both demonstrate pragmatic awareness (i.e., awareness of the need for mitigation) but differ in level of grammatical proficiency achieved. While Marta only has limited grammatical resources, Mousa's interlanguage productions show greater grammatical and linguistic development which in turn, leads to his pragmatic realizations being more target-like. Based on her findings, Bardovi-Harlig argues that "Mousas's corpus demonstrates the communicative advantage of having the resources to mitigate conventionally" (2003: 39). A similar pattern seems to emerge in a study by Martí-Arnándiz (2008) who investigates grammar effects in the production of request modification by Spanish learners of English at three grammatical competence levels (i.e., beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners). She administers a Quick Placement Test as well as a Discourse Completion Task and finds that the effect of high grammar levels is positively correlated with the production of internal modifiers (an exception being the downtoner) and some forms of external modification, in particular disarmers. Advanced learners double beginners' production of internal modifiers and the effect of grammar level is most pronounced for forms of internal modification that involve complex grammatical structures (i.e., *I was wondering if …*, *Would you mind …*, *Do you think …*, cf. Martí-Arnándiz's 2008: 176). Similarly, when compared to structurally less complex external modifiers (e.g., preparators or promises of reward), higher grammatical competence has a more significant effect on the production of disarmers which require knowledge of subordinate clause structures (e.g., *I know you don't get on well with cats but, as an exception*, *could you look at them, please?* cf. Martí-Arnándiz's 2008: 178). This leads Martí-Arnándiz to conclude that "grammatical competence or a threshold of proficiency level is a necessary condition to produce those kinds of modification devices which demand a good command of complex syntactic structures (e.g., openers or disamers)" (2008: 182).

At this point, a brief digression into research on pragmatic intervention might be beneficial since it lends further empirical support to Martí-Arnándiz's (2008) finding. Codina-Espurz (2008) examines whether any specific threshold level of

grammatical knowledge may be considered a prerequisite for intervention on request modification. Participants are Catalan-Spanish learners of English, subdivided into two experimental groups with different levels of language proficiency (i.e., beginner, and upper intermediate learners) who received the same type of pedagogical intervention, and one control group which did not receive any type of treatment. Codina-Espurz (2008) finds that pedagogical intervention in the use of modification devices does not appear to have an effect for the beginner group; it is, however, beneficial when the proficiency level of the learners surpasses the threshold level. As stated by the researcher, this result indicates that the beginner learners do not have the necessary grammatical knowledge to take advantage of explicit instruction on modification, so that a certain degree of grammatical competence may be necessary for pragmatic development (cf. Codina-Espurz 2008: 240-241; see also Safont Jordà 2003; Takahashi 2010).

Returning to non-interventional studies, research by Hoffman-Hicks' (1992) illustrates that with higher levels of grammatical competence, L2 learners are increasingly able to produce and perceive appropriate speech acts. Study participants are American high intermediate and advanced learners of French who complete a multiple-choice task, a role-play and a DCT. Hoffman-Hicks' results substantiate the finding that a certain level of grammatical competence must be attained before learners are able to convey pragmatic intent with socio-cultural appropriateness. In addition, she explains increases in learners' L2 pragmatic performance and perception with higher levels of grammatical competence attained. Like Hoffman-Hicks, Celaya & Barón (2015) associate higher achievements in L2 pragmatics with an increase in learners' grammatical competence. They analyze how Spanish/Catalan learners of English develop their grammatical and pragmatic competence from beginner to advanced levels. The focus is on the development of grammar items, e.g., formulaic language, modal verbs, and grammatical complexity as measured by a seven-point grammar scale in relation to the production of requests in a role-play task. As the learners become more grammatically competent, they produce more elaborate and pragmatically appropriate utterances, especially with regard to the use of modal verbs. Overall, the researchers report an increase in the use of internal and external modification (cf. Celaya & Barón 2015: 196). Given these developmental patterns, Celaya &

Barón deduce that "as the learner becomes more grammatically competent, he/she produces not only more grammatical structures but also more pragmatically appropriate utterances" (2015: 196).

Fordyce & Fukazawa (2004) similarly analyze the relationship between pragmatic and grammatical competence, but in addition include the variable time spent in the target language context to their experimental setup. Their analysis centers on the production of syntactic and lexical downgraders in requests by Japanese learners of English who are asked to complete eight DCT items. Based on the structure CELT test, informants are then divided into low-, medium- and high-level learners according to their grammatical competence; the time spent in an English-speaking country was requested separately. They find that both grammatical competence and length of time spent abroad are positive indicators for the development of syntactic and lexical downgraders**.** The high competence group outperforms the low competence group with respect to the use of interrogatives, past tense, conditionals, and modals; the greatest increase is evident for the employment of the past tense. The data also show a steady increase in the use of lexical downgraders with improved grammatical competence. Interestingly enough, the effect of both variables, i.e., grammatical competence and time spent abroad appears to be similar for syntactic downgraders, whereas in the case of lexical elements, time spent abroad is more influential than grammatical competence.

Turning finally to the relationship among pragmatics, grammar, and proficiency, Youn (2014) compares the syntactic complexity of pragmatic productions by L2 learners of English with mixed L1s. The informants first complete four written pragmatic assessment tasks (e.g., writing a recommendation letter request e-mail to a professor). These are then scored by trained raters based on task-dependent analytical rating criteria for pragmatics, whereas the grammar is assessed with respect to three types of syntactic complexity measures, namely global, phrasal-level, and subordination complexity (cf. Youn 2014: 270). Next, learner participants are categorized into three proficiency levels according to their TOEFL scores or course level, i.e., low-intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced proficiency learners. In addition, participants are regrouped into three different pragmatic competence levels based on their performance in the pragmatic assessment tasks, independent of their proficiency levels. Youn's

analysis shows that the learners do not possess concomitant written pragmatic competence according to their proficiency levels. More specifically, seven learners (18 %) rank lower on their pragmatic performance than their proficiency levels, whereas six learners (15 %) show pragmatic performance that is superior to their proficiency levels. These results indicate that L2 proficiency alone does not guarantee equivalent written pragmatic performance. Second, Youn observes that pragmatic production is more highly correlated with level of grammatical competence (measured as syntactic complexity) than with proficiency level. This is apparent from the performance of the pragmatically advanced learners, who due to their knowledge of a greater variety of grammatical resources produce longer utterances, more complex subclausal structures at the phrasal level, and more subordination. This includes, for example, increases in the use of modal verbs, past tense forms, and progressive aspect forms (e.g., compare *I will take the course* [five words, one clause] vs. *I am thinking of taking the course* [seven words, one clause]). Following Youn (2014), these results underline the crucial role played by grammar and especially syntactically complex structures in expressing pragmatic intent.

Summing up, the review of studies focusing explicitly on the relationship between grammar and pragmatics in ILP revealed the following: While it is acknowledged that grammatical development cannot guarantee concomitant pragmatic development, Håkansson & Norrby's (2005), Hoffman-Hicks' (1992), Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig's (2000), Bardovi-Harlig's (2003) and Martí-Arnándiz's (2008) data indicate that a threshold level of grammatical competence may be a prerequisite for the employment of certain pragmalinguistic forms. Moreover, as increased grammatical knowledge provides L2 learners with a wider repertoire of linguistic resources for the realization of pragmalinguistic forms, grammatical development generally seems to be facilitative of pragmatic expression (cf. Celaya & Barón 2015; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Hoffman-Hicks 1992; Martí-Arnándiz 2008; Youn 2014).

3.2.2 Research on L2 request and complaint production with a focus on modification

With the exception of a few early studies in the field of ILP (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Levenston 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989; House 1989), it is not until relatively

recently that the number of empirical studies on speech act modification has begun to increase substantially.[53] Studies so far have covered a wide range of modification patterns by L2 learners; this is especially true for interlanguage request modification (e.g., Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis & Woodfield 2012). There is, however, a general lack of developmental research on direct complaints and even those studies which include the speech act in their analysis rarely focus on its modification (see for some exceptions Hong & Shih 2013; Hong 2015; Li & Raja Suleiman 2017; Meyer 2007; Trosborg 1995; Yuan & Zhang 2018). Hardly any research has so far been conducted on the stages of pragmatic development that low proficiency learners (i.e., CEFR[54] A1 & A2) go through, while no previous study (to my knowledge) has been carried out in the case of Syrian Arabic learners of German and their performance with regard to request and complaint modification.

Keeping these limitations in mind, what follows is a selection of studies that investigate the production and acquisition of request and complaint modification longitudinally, cross-sectionally or comparatively. Thus, even though the present study takes a developmental focus, reference to some comparative research will be made. This is mainly due to the fact that much of the research on complaint modification consists of comparative studies. Furthermore, where they exist, I review the main results of studies which offer insight into lower proficiency learners' performance and those which investigate learners who are either L1 speakers of Arabic or learners who acquire German as an L2. Although these studies provide some insight into the development of request and complaint modification, it is important to note that the majority have focused on more advanced learners than the ones who participated in the present investigation. Equally important is that the findings should be interpreted in light of the elicitation instruments used, as these might have potentially influenced research

[53] The body of work on speech act modification in ILP is extensive, and it would be overambitious to discuss it here. See for example Alcón Soler et al. (2005); Al-Gahtani & Alkahtani (2012); Ali & Woodfield (2017); Barron (2003, 2007); Codina-Espurz (2008); Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009, 2012, 2013); Flöck (2016); Hassall (2001, 2012); Iwasaki (2013); Li (2012); Lin (2009); Martínez Flor & Usó-Juan (2010); Najafabadi & Paramasivam (2012); Nguyen & Le Ho (2014); Schauer (2007, 2009).

[54] CEFR is short for Common European Framework of Reference for Languages scales. It is a guideline which is used to describe the proficiency level of learners of second/foreign languages across Europe and, increasingly, in other countries. The CEFR organizes language proficiency in six sub-levels, A1 to C2, which can be regrouped into three broad levels, i.e., basic user, independent user, and proficient user.

outcomes. Consequently, the results of these studies must be interpreted with caution.

This section is structured as follows: Before discussing the L2 development of modification devices in more detail, I briefly sketch the major findings for the speech acts under investigation. A closer look at developmental sequences, especially with respect to the production of strategy types is of particular importance for this research since the occurrence of internal modification is often closely associated with the directness strategy chosen (e.g., subjunctive forms of modal verbs in the query preparatory strategy type). As numerous longitudinal and cross-sectionals studies have taken requests as their focus, my discussion of prominent findings on L2 acquisitional patterns in § 3.2.2.1 begins with an overview of research on the directive speech act before I move on to the more limited data base on complaints. This is followed by three broad subsections on the development of speech act modification. § 3.2.2.2 is concerned with four longitudinal studies on request and complaint modification. § 3.2.2.3 then reviews some of the main results of comparative and cross-sectional studies on the subject, and finally I conclude this section with a brief digression on pragmatic routines in § 3.2.2.4.

3.2.2.1 Main findings from previous research: requests and complaints

In line with Barron & Warga's (2007) overview of central ILP findings, the following acquisitional order has been discovered for the speech act request: At the early stages of L2 acquisition, learners have access only to a limited range of request strategies. They typically start out with direct requests, meaning that they initially tend to choose higher directness levels than native speakers. To provide an idea, a request strategy frequently employed by beginners is the imperative in combination with the politeness marker (e.g., Bella 2012; Hill 1997). In addition, Al-Gahtani & Roever (2012), Bella (2012) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012) find that their low-proficiency learners predominantly resort to speaker-oriented want statements. This is illustrated by the following examples taken from Bella's (2012) Greek learners:

(8) Παρακαλώ θέλω χρόνο για την εργασία περισσότερο […]
(Please I want more time for the assignment […])

(9) Θέλω να πληρώσεις εσύ παρακαλώ πολύ […]
(I want you to pay please [very much] […])

(adapted from Bella 2012: 1929)

Learners with lower proficiency levels also overuse these direct strategies regardless of the social context, i.e., they do not adapt the directness levels chosen when speaking to addressees with different power relationships (cf. Al-Gahtani & Roever 2012; Bella 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Pearson 2006). The striking preference for directness can to some extent be explained by the fact that these strategy types usually consist of fewer words and require less complex morphosyntax (cf. Timpe-Laughlin 2017: 119). However, as proficiency increases, so does the appropriateness and diversity of learners' use of request strategies. When a wider range of strategies becomes available, learners progressively select (conventionally) indirect strategy types, to the detriment of the presence of direct requests. In this way, L2 productions become more target-like (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer 2008; Hill 1997; Kasper 1995; Meyer 2007; Rose 2000).[55] Subsequent to this emerges the use of internal and external modification devices (cf. Barron 2003; Barron & Warga 2007; Kasper & Rose 2002). Whether internal or external modification develops first is, however, still debated. Relative to these features of pragmalinguistic competence, sociopragmatic competence seems to develop slowly, and this is especially true for learners in the foreign language context (cf. Barron 2003; Meyer 2007; Trosborg 1995).

When compared to requests, it is suggested that L2 competence in complaints may develop slower. Trosborg (1995) investigates request, complaint, and apology realizations among three groups of Danish learners of English, and finds that the speech act of complaining is an extremely difficult act to master. Based on her findings, Trosborg argues that complaints are more complex to realize than requests and apologies, and this is even true for advanced learners.[56] Moreover,

[55] For a corroboration of these findings in children's L2 pragmatic development of requests, see Achiba (2003), Ellis (1992) and Rose (2000).

[56] A possible reason for the greater complexity of complaint strategies may be their ad-hoc nature. To elaborate, in comparison to the formulaic nature of many requesting strategies, it is claimed in the literature that complaints are typically realized by the use of ad-hoc formulations. In addition, they lack explicit and syntactically simple downgraders, such as the politeness marker *bitte/please* in requests. Difficulties experienced by learners may also stem from their language class experience, as they typically report a lower degree of familiarity with complaints than with requests. For further empirical support for the finding that learners' level of L2 pragmatic competence may differ according to the speech act under analysis, see Barron (2003), Koike (1989) and Tada (2005).

due to the difficulties that Trosborg's informants experience in producing complaint head act strategies, internal and external modification occurs later for complaints than for requests. As for strategy types, Trosborg (1995), Hilliard (2017), Hong & Shih (2013), Meyer (2007), Murphy & Neu (1996) and Tanck (2002) gather information on the directness levels preferred by their study participants who are all L2 learners of English. Their data sets reveal that learners overuse direct strategies (e.g., accusations) in contrast to native speakers, who prefer more indirect strategies such as expressions of annoyance or disapproval. Similar results are reported by Kraft & Geluykens (2002) and Shaeffer (2018) for German and American learners of French. Besides, Trosborg (1995) and Shaeffer (2018) observe that their informants are unable to adapt directness levels to the different role constellations included in the items. Shaeffer's (2018) informants, for example, produce direct complaints irrespective of such factors as social distance, social power, and severity of offense, whereas the Danish learners in Trosborg's (1995) study disregard the inclusion of the variable *(higher) dominance*, which is the one predictor of indirect strategies in native speakers. Accordingly, when it comes to L2 complaint production, advances in the area of pragmalinguistic competence are not always accompanied by sociopragmatic competence, thus echoing the acquisitional patterns found for requests (cf. Hong 2015). Taken together, research on the development of the two speech acts appears to suggest that they follow a similar path, albeit with a time lag between the occurrence of request and complaint modification. However, further research is necessary to come to any clear conclusions.

3.2.2.2 Longitudinal research on L2 request and complaint modification

In what follows, I review four longitudinal studies, namely investigations by Barron (2003), Schauer (2004, 2009) and Meyer (2007) on the pragmatic development of requests in the study abroad context as well as one complaint study situated in the foreign language context by Yuan & Zhang (2018). Unfortunately, of the four studies addressing L2 requests, none obtain standardized data on learners' L2 grammatical competence and proficiency level (e.g., the IELTS or TOEFL test), but reference will be made to indirect measures such as length of formal study.

Barron (2003) investigates the L2 development of advanced Irish learners of

German over ten months spent in the target language context. Prior to their sojourn in Germany, learner informants received between seven and eight years of formal instruction in German and are judged to be advanced learners based on their subjective evaluations of their German proficiency level as well as on the extent of their exposure to German. L2 productions of three speech acts, i.e., requests, offers and refusals of offers, are elicited on three occasions with the use of written (free) discourse completion tasks. Looking at requests, Barron reports low levels of syntactic downgrading in the learner datasets and changes in the frequency of use prior to and following the year abroad are overall comparatively small. For instance, learners do not make any use of negation. Compared to syntactic downgraders, the levels for lexical/phrasal downgraders appear to be higher at the first data collection session – even though the lexical modifiers actually produced by the learners reveal an important source of disparity: Learners overuse the politeness marker *bitte / please* and underuse downtoners.

Let us focus first on the politeness marker. Prior to the year abroad, the marker is not only overrepresented in all request items, but it is also used in final positions in learners' L2 requests. The following example illustrates how the addition of *bitte* might result in overly direct requests when placed extra-sententially:

(10) Notes, A5F: Gestern war ich nicht im Seminar und ich bekam keine Aufzeichnungen. konnte ich deine Aufzeichnungen haben bitte?
(Notes, A5F, translation: I wasn't in the department yesterday and I didn't get any notes. Could I have your notes, please?)

(adapted from Barron 2003: 226)

Contrary to this, *bitte* is always embedded in German native speaker productions. However, with time spent in the L2 context, the use of embedded *bitte* increases so that learners move towards target language use. As for downtoners, their levels with requests are considerably lower than those of the German control group prior to the year abroad and developments towards native speaker scores are rather slow, i.e., they only occur at the end of the study abroad period. The most likely explanation for differences observed in the use of lexical downgrader types is that adding *bitte / please* to a head act (especially when positioned externally) does not necessitate knowledge of complex syntactic structures, whereas properly positioning downtoners in an utterance calls for higher syntactic complexity (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig 1999; Hassall 2001; Hill 1997; Martí-Arnándiz 2008). Taken

together, Barron's analysis shows that there is a substantial L2-like development in learners' selection of lexical/phrasal downgraders, as decreases in learners' preference for the politeness marker are accompanied by an increase in their use of downtoners. Barron attributes these changes in her data to "improvements in learners' control of processing" (Barron 2003: 213) in line with the Complexification Hypothesis. According to this line of argumentation, structurally simple features such as the politeness marker require a lower cognitive processing load and therefore become automatized prior to structurally more complex features such as downtoners and syntactic forms of modification.

This outcome corresponds with the results of a longitudinal study by Schauer (2009) involving two groups of advanced German learners of English, namely study abroad students and stay at home learners. All learner informants have received formal English language instruction for an average of eight years. Data are collected by use of a multimedia elicitation task in which the informants are asked to produce requests in a range of settings. Compared to Barron (2003), the use of internal modifiers is more target-like right from the beginning of the study, with exceptions being the syntactic downgraders aspect, negation, and tag question. The patterns of internal modification observed in Barron's study are, however, mirrored to some extent in Schauer (2009). Compared to lexical downgraders, syntactic downgraders are generally used by fewer participants. As there is ample evidence from different learner populations corroborating this finding (e.g., Hendriks 2008; Otcu & Zeyrek 2008; Woodfield 2006), Schauer proposes that some types of internal modification may appear developmentally earlier than others. In particular, she assumes that lexical/phrasal downgraders are acquired and used first, before more complex syntactic modifiers appear in interlanguage productions. Interesting in this regard is her comparison of learners' use of downgrading devices according to contextual variables. Schauer finds that all learners prefer lexical downgraders over syntactic ones in low imposition scenarios, which is in contrast to English native speaker behavior. Schauer explains this outcome with the fact that syntactic downgraders are inherently more complex than lexical ones and therefore "learners refrain from using these more difficult syntactic structures when they do not find them absolutely necessary to achieve their aims" (Schauer 2009: 173). Last, the learning context arises as a key variable in Schauer's study. Learners in the L2 context have a broader repertoire

of modifiers than the stay-at-home learners and their frequency of use is closer to that of the English control group. They also expand their repertoire of syntactic downgraders with the time spent in Britain, so that the acquisition and use of syntactic modifiers seems to be facilitated by exposure to the target language in the study abroad context (cf. Schauer 2009: 172). The results further show that the foreign language learners underuse external modifiers, whereas the second language learners use more external modification than do the native speakers. This finding lends support to the *waffle phenomenon*, a term coined by Edmondson & House (1991) to describe higher employment rates of external modifiers by language learners in the target language context. The over-reliance on external moves is an interlanguage tendency which is frequently reported of the intermediate/advanced (rather than the beginning) phase of learners' pragmatic development.[57] In fact, the tendency towards verbosity and overelaboration may be due to two conflicting language learning experiences: On the one hand, intermediate and advanced learners may intend to 'show off' their newly acquired linguistic abilities. At the same time, they may still feel insecure about certain areas of target language use and therefore experience a need for clarity and a concern for sounding adequately polite. This may result in learners' applying a playing-it-safe strategy, i.e., they add more explicit, longer, and repetitive external modifiers to ensure that they get their message across (cf. Schauer 2009; Warga 2004).

The third longitudinal study on L2 request performance to be reviewed in this section was conducted by Meyer (2007). She examines the pragmatic development of adolescent German learners of English over 11 months spent in the United States as part of a school exchange program. Before their departure, the informants have received English lessons at secondary schools in Germany for a period of four to six years. Pragmatic productions of requests, complaints and apologies are elicited at three data collection points by use of an open DCT. Meyer does not analyze the range and frequency of internal modifiers in complaints but with respect to the speech act request she presents the following findings: First, she records low levels of conditional clauses and consultative

[57] Readers are referred to Al-Ali & Alawneh (2010), Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008, 2009, 2012), Faerch & Kasper (1989), Hassall (2001, 2012) and Kasper (1981) for studies which suggest that intermediate learners tend to provide more external modification devices than native speakers.

devices in the data. The learners thus underuse two syntactically demanding modifiers that are frequently adopted by the American informants. Even though the learners increasingly resort to consultative devices with time spent in the target language context, their selection often results in overt grammatical errors. To provide an idea, compare the American English native speaker (i.e., AE-NS) productions in (11) and (12) to the learner productions elicited at the first (L1) and third (L3) data gathering in (13) – (15):

(11) Would you mind if I just paid this Coke real quickly (AE-NS)
(12) Would you mind if I went in front of you? (AE-NS)
(13) * It would be so nice of you when I can pay for my can of coke before you pay. (L1)
(14) * You mind if you let me go first? (L3)
(15) Would you mind to let me in front of you? (L3)

(adapted from Meyer 2007: 144-145, 157)

Second, learner informants overgeneralize three internal downgraders to a range of situations, regardless of the addressee involved; namely the subjunctive, the politeness marker *please* and the downtoner *just* (e.g., "Ray, *just* one thing before you come in *just* move the car", Meyer 2007: 153). According to Meyer, this 'one-fits-all' approach points to a perception in the subjects of the wider use of these modifiers in English. A metalinguistic motive underlying this development is for example the learners' perception that the downtoner *just* is 'typically English'. Hence, the learners do not yet have the sociopragmatic knowledge to assess in which situations these pragmalinguistic forms are appropriate and effective. Going over Meyer's findings, I believe that in addition to the learners' metalinguistic motives, another explanation is likely for the low levels of conditional clauses and consultative devices in combination with an overuse of the subjunctive, the politeness marker and the downtoner in the interlanguage productions: Adding *please* or *just* to a head act or employing conventionally indirect requests of the type *Could you do X?* does not necessarily imply knowledge of elaborate syntactic structures whereas the use of conditional clauses and consultative devices necessitates more planning capacity on the syntactic level. Hence, the pattern of use for internal request modification found in Meyer's study may characterize a developmental stage during which the learners still lack

the grammatical means and/or confidence to use more sophisticated modifier types – combined with their perception that including certain pragmalinguistic features such as the downtoner *just* in their productions will give them a 'native-like flair'.

Turning to complaint modification, Yuan & Zhang (2018) provide a longitudinal account of the expressive speech act as produced by Chinese learners of English. Data are collected twice over two academic years with the use of the TOEFL test, a DCT and delayed retrospective verbal reports. Between data collection points, participants received regular classroom instruction on the acquisition of basic English skills, so that learners progressed from low intermediate proficiency to intermediate proficiency during the two years under investigation. Overall, Yuan & Zhang's findings show significant increases in the use of internal and external modification devices with direct complaints. For instance, learners use significantly more lexical/phrasal and syntactic downgraders and upgraders in the second data collection session. When asked to compare productions of these devices during both sessions, one learner comments on the increase of internal downgrading in the following way:

> Student 5: As I read through the Phase 1 response, I cannot help smiling when reading some lines. I am sure at that time I wanted to express something, but I could only use 'please'. I guess in some cases, your complaints should be strong. Well, you have no words or chunks at hand.
>
> (adapted from Yuan & Zhang 2018: 79)

It is apparent from this comment that even though the learner is aware of a need to downgrade direct complaints, at the time of the first data collection she was not yet equipped with the necessary grammatical and pragmalinguistic knowledge and vocabulary to express herself as intended (see also Gallaher 2014). This resulted in a heavy reliance on the politeness marker *please*, which is easily acquired and used relative to other lexical and syntactic downgrading devices (cf. Yuan & Zhang 2018: 79). In terms of external modification, Yuan & Zhang (2018) report that the participants in the second data collection session use more external modifiers than in the first one. This also includes increases in the use of appealers, which reflects a certain degree of change in learners' pragmatic perception and correspondingly their sociopragmatic competence, as seen in this retrospective interview:

> Student 3: English is sometimes troublesome. I rarely heard people say the Chinese […] 'Could you please give me a glass of water?', but "could you please…" is often used in English. As a freshmen [sic.], I just thought it was just wordy. You are too polite if you say like that. But now, I don't think it's a simple language problem; you need to be kind, showing good to people around…
>
> (adapted from Yuan & Zhang 2018: 80)

Overall, Yuan & Zhang (2018) propose that increases in English proficiency as well as a certain degree of explicit pragmatic instruction may have contributed to learners' development of complaint modification.

3.2.2.3 Cross-sectional and comparative studies on L2 request and complaint modification

I would like to begin this overview of single-moment studies on request and complaint modification by reviewing the limited research that has so far been conducted on low proficiency learners in relation to their interlanguage pragmatic productions. An instructive example in this regard is Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012), who takes a comparative focus and uses oral role-plays to examine the frequency and pattern of internal and external request modification in low proficiency Greek-Cypriot learners of English. The informants have level A2 in English according to the CEFR for languages scales. Economidou-Kogetsidis finds that when compared to native speakers, learner informants significantly underuse internal modification (both syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders) and show a significant preference for external rather than internal modifiers, especially grounders. A microanalysis of internal downgrader types further demonstrates that learners make no use of lexical/phrasal devices expect for the politeness marker and the consultative device. As for syntactic downgrading, learners significantly underuse conditional structures and conditional clauses and do not deploy tense, aspect, interrogative, and negation. In addition, learners choose significantly fewer combinations of internal modification as compared to the native speaker control group (see Woodfield 2012 for a similar finding). A close examination of learners' oral performance in this regard reveals grammatical and syntactic errors along with a lack of fluency and problems with the retrieval of appropriate vocabulary (see § 3.1.1 on Bialystok's Two-Dimensional Model). Hence, pragmatic aspects that are tied to L2 grammatical proficiency are problematic for the beginner learners. Based on these results, Economidou-

Kogetsidis argues that unlike external modification, internal modification seems to be particularly sensitive to level of proficiency and may not be part of low proficiency learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012: 189).[58] In contrast, external forms of modification may be acquired more easily by L2 learners as they tend to be syntactically less demanding and pragmalinguistically less complex.[59] This is because external moves usually involve the construction of a new (and oftentimes syntactically simple) clause, whereas inserting lexical and syntactic downgraders into a bare head act increases the complexity of the pragmalinguistic structure. At the same time, external modifiers are "more explicit in their intended politeness function" since they carry autonomous propositional meaning (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012: 172). Consequently, learners may feel their chances at getting an intended politeness message across to be greater when falling back upon explicit, external moves. Taken together, Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2012) results suggest that contrary to external modifiers, internal modification devices that call for (more) complex syntactic/grammatical knowledge may not be part of low proficiency learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire.

Additional evidence for this finding comes from Göy et al. (2012) and Hill (1997). In a cross-sectional investigation, Göy et al. (2012) examine the internal modification development for requests in Turkish learners of English. Participants are beginner and upper intermediate learners, based on their results in the Middle East Technical University English Proficiency Exam. In terms of internal downgrading, Göy et al. find that with the exception of one situation, the beginners do not use any syntactic downgraders in the items tested and instead rely exclusively on the politeness marker *please*. Whereas the restricted range of syntactic modifiers at beginner level increases only slowly in both complexity and frequency at intermediate levels, intermediate learners make use of a wide range of lexical modifiers. This finding lends further support to Schauer's (2009) contention that lexical/phrasal downgraders are acquired and used first, before more complex syntactic modifiers appear in interlanguage productions. Another cross-sectional study that investigates low-proficiency learners is Hill (1997). He

[58] Readers are referred to Bardovi-Harlig (1999, 2003), Hassall (2001, 2012), Koike (1989), Trosborg (1995) and Woodfield (2006) for further support.

[59] For additional studies corroborating the finding that L2 learners tend to opt for external rather than internal modification to soften their speech act realizations see Faerch & Kasper (1989), Hassall (2001, 2012) and Pan (2012).

examines the request performance of Japanese learners of English at three proficiency levels (i.e., low, intermediate, and advanced) by carrying out a cloze test and a DCT. In accordance with Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012) and Göy et al. (2012), Hill (1997) demonstrates that internal modification appears to be particularly sensitive to level of proficiency. In particular, he finds that low proficiency learners do not resort to syntactic downgraders such as the continuous aspect, even though the English controls consider this to be the single most important syntactic modifier. Instead, they rely heavily on direct structures containing the politeness marker *please*. Altogether, Hill's subjects produce fewer internal and external modifiers than the native speaker control group, even though their number increases relative to learners' proficiency level.

The results by Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2012), Göy et al.'s (2012) and Hill's (1997) research on low proficiency learners accord with previously presented observations by Kasper & Rose (2002) on the development of grammar and pragmatics during early stages of L2 acquisition (see § 3.2.1.1). To recapitulate, even though adult learners with lower proficiency already have pragmatic categories, they may lack the grammatical repertoire to express them. Accordingly, the studies reviewed above report their beginner level learners to refrain from employing complex syntactical downgraders and instead frequently add pragmatic information to request head acts through lexical options and external modifiers. Apart from that, the results by Hill (1997) and Göy et al. (2012) provide important insights into developmental patterns of modification, as not only beginners but also intermediate L2 learners use significantly fewer syntactic downgraders than do native speakers. In what follows, I therefore address previous research that investigates acquisitional stages in intermediate and advanced learners.

Hassall (2012), for example, examines how lower to upper intermediate Australian learners of Indonesian modify requests during interactive roleplays.[60] The results obtained from his study illustrate that learner informants prefer external over internal forms of modification and generally, underuse internal modifiers when compared to Indonesians. Besides that, the native speaker control group employs internal modifiers in combination, whereas L2 requests lack such multiple marking. Looking at external modifiers, L2 productions are largely

[60] No standardized test of language proficiency was undertaken in Hassall (2012).

restricted to grounders and show a tendency for the inclusion of redundant and/or overexplicit information which results in excessive support. A note worth making at this point is that by now, multiple ILP studies have reported learners' preference for the grounder (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Hassall 2001, 2012; Otcu & Zeyrek 2008). Hassall argues in a previous study that learners employ this downgrader early on and with high frequency "due to the fact that offering explanations and/or justifications for a request simply involves the construction of a new, often syntactically simple clause without the requirement of any knowledge of idiomatic (i.e., native-like) use" (Hassall 2001: 274). Providing explanations for an intrusive act also opens up an empathetic attitude on part of the interlocutor and is therefore inherently the "psychologically most plausible" (House & Kasper 1987: 1281) means of supporting a request. Overall, Hassall (2012) sums up his results by speculating that "the twin features of scant internal modification and abundant external modifiers are likely to characterise second language speech acts" (2012: 203). Additional evidence for this pattern in intermediate learners' pragmatic productions comes from Bella (2012) and Ali & Woodfield (2017). Bella (2012) investigates the request performance of L2 learners of Greek from various L1 backgrounds as measured by a DCT. She recruits learner participants from three different proficiency levels, i.e., lower intermediate, intermediate, and advanced, based on the results of a placement test which follows the guidelines of the CEFR. According to Bella, lower intermediate learners most frequently choose direct request strategies in combination with the politeness marker. In addition, they display the lowest frequency in the use of syntactic downgraders. Conditional clauses emerge for the first time in intermediate learners' performance and continue to be the most preferred means of syntactic modification in the advanced learners' performance. However, neither negation nor the present indicative, which are used frequently by Greek native speakers, appear in the learner data irrespective of proficiency level (cf. Bella 2012: 1934-1935). In total, the lower intermediate learners hardly employ any internal or external modification devices, while intermediate proficiency learners use the highest number of external modification devices, followed by advanced learners. In this way, the L2 learners gradually approximate target language behavior. Summing up, Bella detects a movement from directness to conventional

indirectness and a more extended repertoire of both external and internal modification devices in line with increases with proficiency.[61] Similarly, Ali & Woodfield (2017) identify an effect of proficiency level on the range of modifiers employed by L2 learners. They investigate developmental patterns in the requestive behavior of Syrian learners of English at three proficiency levels, i.e., elementary, intermediate, and advanced. The learners' proficiency level is assessed by use of a Quick Placement Test and a written DCT is employed to collect request production data. Ali & Woodfield's learners tend to opt for external rather than internal modification to soften their requests; the external modifier grounder is used most frequently by all learners. Concomitantly, the researchers find that internal modification is underrepresented overall in the learner data, so that even advanced learners have a more restricted range of such devices when compared to native speakers (see also Félix-Brasdefer 2012). Moreover, in contrast to native speaker productions, learners of all levels display a preference for lexical/phrasal modifiers over syntactic forms of modification. This result suggests that syntactic downgraders may be acquired later than lexical/phrasal ones and confirms previous findings by Barron (2003) and Schauer (2009) for Syrian Arabic learners. The reported acquisitional pattern also mirrors the findings by Kärkkäinen (1992), Rost-Roth (1999b) and Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2001) who observe that even though their learner participants have acquired the grammatical suppliers for certain pragmalinguistic forms, they rely heavily on lexical forms to mark their pragmatic intent (cf. § 3.2.1.1). The lexical downgrader most frequently employed in Ali & Woodfield (2017) is the politeness marker *please* which is again in opposition to native speakers who instead resort to the consultative device as the most preferred lexical downgrader. Turning to syntactic modification, the data indicate that learners significantly underuse the tense and aspect categories; in addition, there is a total absence of the modifier negation from learners' requests at all proficiency levels. With increases in proficiency, the researchers report, however, a slow linear increase for all other types of syntactic downgrading towards native speaker scores.[62] Overall, Ali &

[61] Turn to Al Masaeed (2017) and Kobayashi & Rinnert (2003) for cross-sectional studies that confirm the relationship between proficiency level and the range and frequency of request modification, as described by Bella (2012).

[62] Additional evidence from Arabic-speaking learner populations that supports Ali & Woodfield's (2017) findings has been provided by Al-Ali & Alawneh (2010) and Dendenne (2014). In a comparative study, Al-Ali & Alawneh (2010) examine modification devices in request productions

Woodfield detect a significant change in the production of internal and external modifiers in line with the learners' developing proficiency and argue that both linear and non-linear developments may be typical for Syrian Arabic learners' acquisition of English request modification (see also Barron 2003; Schauer 2009). The first developmental pattern identified is a linear decrease towards the native speaker norm: as proficiency increases, the informants decreasingly use politeness markers. Next, Ali & Woodfield find that learners increasingly rely on a range of lexical/phrasal downgraders (i.e., subjectivisers, consultative devices, downtoners, understaters) and external modifiers (i.e., alterters, grounders, preparators); in this case, the frequency of usage thus shows a linear increase towards the native speaker rate. Two more developmental patterns are detected, namely a non-linear development towards the native speaker norm for appealers and expanders (i.e., a U or bell shape pattern in the use of these modifiers across groups) as well as a non-linear developmental pattern (i.e., a bell shape curve) which diverges from native speaker usage in the case of imposition minimizers. Previous empirical evidence supports the finding that both linear and non-linear developments may be typical for learners' acquisition of pragmatic features, as shown in studies by Barron (2003), Hill (1997) and Schauer (2009).

In the following, let us turn to an overview of what is known of the stages through which L2 learners move in the development of their complaint modification. Trosborg's (1995) cross-sectional investigation into Danish learners' production of complaints, requests and apologies in English has already been introduced above. Data are elicited by means of role play material from learners with three different proficiency levels (i.e., Group 1: 5-6 years of study, Group 2: 7-8 years of study, Group 3: 10 years of study). The results point to a shortcoming in learners with regard to the use of both internal modifiers (i.e., downgraders and upgraders) and external modifiers in complaints. Moreover, increases in the use of both modification types are observed mainly across groups 2 and 3, which indicates later mastery of these devices in connection with

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by Jordanian learners of American English with the use of a DCT. Overall, the researchers find that Jordanian learners prefer both lexical/phrasal and external forms of modification over syntactic ones. Most frequently employed are the grounder and the politeness marker *please*. Dendenne's (2014) learner informants are Algerian learners of English with low and high proficiency levels who had been studying English as a foreign language on average for seven vs. eleven years. Like Al-Ali & Alawneh (2010), Dendenne reports an overindulgence in the use of lexical downgraders and external modifiers (notably the politeness marker and grounders) and an underuse of syntactic downgraders.

complaints compared to requests. Learning struggles are particularly apparent for those external modifiers which are added for the sole purpose of expressing politeness (i.e., preparators, sweeteners, disarmers), while the L2 learners manage to provide grounders and refer to established contracts/agreements, to some degree.[63] Li & Raja Suleiman (2017) also present findings from a cross-sectional study that focuses explicitly on developmental patterns in internal and external complaint modification. Included are Chinese learners of English with low, intermediate, and high levels of L2 proficiency. To elicit pragmatic productions, the participants complete a Free DCT while their English proficiency level is measured by performance in the Test for English Majors-4 (TEM-4) of China. Li & Raja Suleiman find that L2 learners significantly underuse internal modification devices in complaint production but overuse external modifiers at all levels (especially preparators). This outcome corresponds with the results of afore-mentioned studies on request modification (see for example Ali & Woodfield 2017; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Hassall 2012). In particular, the learners operate with a more restricted range of syntactic and lexical downgraders when compared to the English control group, as there is no occurrence of past tense modal verb forms, aspect, and consultative devices in the learner data. The learners also tend to employ more internal upgraders than downgraders, which does not mirror native speaker use. Overall, the researchers report a medium correlation between complaint production and L2 proficiency: it is found that gains in L2 proficiency are related to more target-like complaint performance, namely an increase in the use of internal downgrading devices and a decrease in the use of internal upgraders (see also Hong 2015; Hong & Shih 2013). Murphy & Neu's (1996) study confirms the low frequency of internal modification in L2 complaint production. Their analysis of Korean learners of English reveals that while learners are able to produce certain external moves in an oral DCT (i.e., grounders and requests for repair), they underuse lexical/phrasal and syntactic downgraders such as passives, impersonal constructions, interrogatives, and subjunctive forms which are frequently utilized by native speakers to mitigate

[63] See also Hong (2015) for qualitative differences between native speaker and learner employment of external modification in complaints.

their complaint realizations.[64]

Moving on to external complaint modification, results by Olshtain & Weinbach (1993) and Tanck (2002) are consistent with Li & Raja Suleiman's (2017) finding that L2 learners generally overuse these modifiers. Olshtain & Weinbach (1993) collect complaint productions by intermediate and advanced learners of Hebrew via responses to a DCT. They find that length of utterance as well as number of external modifiers in complaint realizations is always higher for learners than for the native speaker control group. Learners thus tend to be verbose. Similarly, Tanck (2002) reports high proficiency learners of English to overuse external modifiers with complaints, which results in DCT responses that are longer than those by English native speakers. Instructive in this regard are the findings of a contrastive study of L1 and L2 French by Kraft & Geluykens (2002). They obtain complaint data through a written DCT by German university students who are acquiring French as a foreign language.[65] The researchers observe that the learner participants significantly overuse direct complaint strategies and external modification devices, especially expanders. When compared to native speakers, a closer analysis of the data reveals, however, that learners overuse external downgraders but underuse external upgrading devices. Kraft & Geluykens explain this finding with reference to learners' awareness "of the fact that their strategies might be problematic, and attempt to compensate for potential linguistic shortcomings by using repetitions and variations on strategies" (Kraft & Geluykens 2002: 235). In other words, learners make up for the potentially face-threatening effect achieved by their choice of directness level and their lack of internal downgrading by putting extra effort into the external mitigation of complaints. Overuse of external strategies in interlanguage complaint productions might therefore also function as a form of compensation.

3.2.2.4 A brief digression: pragmatic routines

Even though beginner level learners only make infrequent use of internal modification, of the types of internal elements available, some syntactic downgraders have been shown to appear early on in the interlanguage, e.g.,

[64] As the coding categories employed by Murphy & Neu (1996) differ from the ones developed for the present study and the researchers do not provide explicit information on learners' proficiency levels, these findings should be interpreted with caution.
[65] No information on learners' proficiency level is provided by Kraft & Geluykens (2002).

subjunctive forms of modal verbs such as *könntest du / could you* (cf. House & Kasper 1987; Meyer 2007; Trosborg 1995). One line of argument in the ILP literature is that this might be due to the high frequency of these forms in pragmatic routines. Consequently, I outline the topic of pragmatic routines in this section and address its relevance regarding this research.[66]

The term pragmatic routine refers to recurrent stretches of speech or fixed expressions which are used for specific pragmatic purposes (cf. Coulmas 1981: 2-3). An overview of all relevant characteristics was given by Myles et al. (1998) who developed a list of criteria for the identification of pragmatic routines in learner data. Their criteria are the following:

1. at least two morphemes in length;
2. phonologically coherent, that is fluently articulated, nonhesitant;
3. used repeatedly and always in the same form;
4. situationally dependent;
5. community-wide in use.[67]

(Myles et al. 1998: 325)

Typical examples are greetings, thanking or apologizing, i.e., speech acts used for ritualized or ceremonious functions, such as *How are you?* or *Thank you* (cf. Archer et al. 2012: 44; House 1996: 226). Apart from ritualized expressions, many more speech acts, including requests and complaints, are conventionally linked to form. Examples (16) – (19) represent a selection of some of the recurring speech patterns found in L1 German complaint and request production in the present data sets. Relevant structures are indicated in bold:

(16) Overtime, 18GERFEM:

So geht das nicht, […] das kann ich nicht mehr leisten.
(**You cannot do that**, […] I cannot do that anymore.)

[66] Note that pragmatics and areas of applied linguistics refer to what in this study is termed a *pragmatic routine* under a variety of labels, e.g., formulae, formulaic units, conversational routines, or conventional expressions.

[67] With regard to community-wide use, Conklin & Schmitt (2008) state that between one third and one half of language consists of such sequences, which L1 speakers constantly fall back on in both spoken and written everyday language. As routines typically occur in highly predictable situations, one of their distinctive features is their social aspect (see also Coulmas 1981: 4; Terkourafi 2002: 196).

(17) Heating, 44GERFEM:

Frau Kowalska, **es kann nicht sein, dass** ich die Reparaturkosten übernehmen muss.
(Ms. Kowalska, **it is not acceptable that** I have to cover the repair costs.)

(18) Cat, 14GERFEM:

Wärst Du so lieb und würdest meine Katze in der Zeit füttern?
(**Would you be a dear and** feed my cat during that time?)

(19) Cat, 2GERFEM:

[…] und **ich wollte dich fragen, ob** du dich um Teddy kümmern könntest?
([…] and **I wanted to ask you if** you could take care of Teddy?)

Definitions typically differentiate between two main linguistic forms: (a) entirely fixed stretches of speech, e.g., *Pass auf dich auf. / Look after yourself* and (b) patterns with one or more open slots, e.g., *Könntest du … / Could you …*, *Ich wollte fragen, ob … / I wanted to ask if/whether …* (cf. House 1996: 226). As indicated by examples (16) – (19), the second type is commonly associated with the speech acts request and complaint.

With respect to the present study, there is, however, an unresolved issue; namely the question of to what extent L2 learners' developing interlanguage grammar (i.e., the morphosyntactic foundation on which pragmatic routines are built) is involved in the acquisition of pragmatic routines. Put differently, can changes in the use of syntactic downgraders which form parts of routinized stretches (e.g., subjunctive forms, negation, or past tense) be attributed to developments in interlanguage grammar? To answer this question, let us first look at psycholinguistic approaches to pragmatic routines in second language acquisition. For instance, an illustration of the relevant psycholinguistic functions performed by pragmatic routines is given by House (1996) who argued that mastery of routines frees L2 learners from planning processes and the need to produce creative stretches of speech. According to this view, pragmatic routines function as a communicative strategy that compensates for a lack of automatic processing ability while simultaneously allowing for fluency in production (cf. Myles et al. 1998: 327). This is related to psycholinguistic definitions which generally include the notion of a memorized, multi-morphemic unit, which in turn is recalled as whole during the process of language production (see for example Coulmas 1981; Myles et al. 1998; Wray 2000). Pragmatic routines are thereby contrasted with utterances which are in turn created from individual items based

on linguistic rules. On a related note, Krashen et al. described pragmatic routines in L2 productions as "whole utterances that are unusually error-free and show no transitional stages of development or systematic order of acquisition" (Krashen et al. 1982: 232-233). Following these psycholinguistic claims, pragmatic routines are defined as rote-learned or imitated chunks which are not derived from grammatical rules. Herein might lie one of the reasons why the production of routines has in many cases not been considered as part of the grammatical system in ILP studies. What can be inferred instead is that, while pragmatic routines may facilitate the acquisition of L2 grammar (e.g., by unpacking routines and using their parts productively when generating new utterances), their use per se does not imply knowledge of the grammatical forms involved. If this is the case, a fine-tuned analysis of the conjoined development of pragmatics and grammar on the basis of those syntactic downgraders which are systematically employed as part of pragmatic routines cannot succeed.

This early psycholinguistic view, however, can be refuted by turning to results obtained from more recent ILP studies on the perception and production of pragmatic routines. For a start, it has been demonstrated that, due to their interlanguage grammars, learners' attempts at using pragmatic routines may result in linguistically simplified or even incorrect forms. Bardovi-Harlig (2009) cites interlanguage forms such as *Sorry for lating* or *Sorry about my late* which are produced by learners instead of the correct target language form *Sorry I'm late* (see also Eisenstein & Bodman 1986: 175). Similarly, Barron (2003) and Meyer (2007) report how their learner participants experience lexical and syntactic problems when utilizing certain pragmatic routines in the L2. Examples by Barron (2003) include learners' incorrect use of *Mir ist egal* rather than *Es ist mir egal / I don't care*, as well as grammatical difficulties encountered in the production of *Das ist (sehr) nett von Dir/Ihnen / That's (very) kind of you.* Rather than employing the impersonal form, learners transfer the direct form *Du bist/Sie sind sehr nett / You're very kind* from their L1 (cf. Barron 2003: 193; 198). Meyer's (2007) learners instead struggle with the routinized structure *Would you mind if X*, the production of which results in overt grammatical errors such as *You mind if you X*. Taken together, these findings refute Krashen et al. (1982) who, amongst others, described pragmatic routines in L2 productions to be "unusually error-free" and showing "no transitional stages" (Krashen et al. 1982: 232-233) and

used this as an argument to substantiate the premature claim that routines do not depend on grammatical development. Contrary to this, Kasper & Blum-Kulka observe that "one area where insufficient control of pragmalinguistic knowledge is particularly obvious is that of pragmatic routines" (1993b: 9). It should also be added that Barron's (2003) results support a positive correlation between a prolonged stay in the target speech community and development of routines: with time spent in Germany, the learners' lexical and syntactic problems decrease, so that routines increasingly take a target-like form. Moreover, in a review of Nattinger & DeCarrico's (1992) study, Kasper (1995) illustrates how a common request form such as modal + you + VP, e.g., *could you do X?*, shows interlanguage development towards more complex structures of the type modal + you (mind/kindly/etc.) + VP, e.g., *would you mind doing X*? Finally, studies by Bardovi-Harlig (2010, 2013b, 2019), Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos (2011) and Taguchi (2011) demonstrate that proficiency significantly influences L2 learners' processing time of routines and their ability to differentiate between authentic and modified pragmatic routines. In addition, they report proficiency effects for the number of routines used as well as for improvements with regard to the production of morpho-syntactically well-formed realizations.

Summing up, when employed by L2 learners, pragmatic routines are often not error-free, and they seem to follow a developmental pattern from simple grammatical (or even ungrammatical) constructions to more complex forms. Overall, these results indicate that pragmatic routines certainly function as an indicator of interlanguage grammatical development (see also Bardovi-Harlig 2013b). Therefore, the collection of L2 data on syntactic modifiers is suitable for the study of the relationship between pragmatics and grammar. As, however, learners' attempts at using pragmatic routines do not guarantee their grammatical production, attempted and full realizations are reported on separately in the present study.

3.2.3 Research on the development of L2 receptive pragmatic competence

While production studies show good evidence of (under)use of syntactic downgraders, they are not suited to investigate why learners do not produce these forms, or why acquiring appropriate modifiers in requests and complaints may pose a challenge. As has been demonstrated above, aspects of pragmatics that are

closely related to grammatical proficiency are problematic for learners without the prerequisite knowledge of L2 grammar. To that end, production studies which also investigate learners' grammatical development, are informative in that they provide a reliable index of the availability of those grammatical resources in learners' interlanguage which are necessary for pragmatic performance. However, knowledge of the grammatical feature that makes up a particular syntactic downgrader is but one part of knowing a syntactic downgrader; knowledge of the social meaning of a pragmalinguistic form as well as knowledge of the context in which it occurs is equally important. Thus, only when learners have acquired a wider range of grammatical forms and their secondary pragmatic functions, can they begin to deliberately select modification devices according to the demands of the social situation. The following questions, which fall within the scope of pragmatic perception, are of relevance in this regard, namely (a) whether learners actually have the pragmalinguistic knowledge that certain grammatical forms function as syntactic downgraders in German, (b) whether they know that a request or complaint in German can be mitigated to a greater extent by adding syntactic downgraders, and (c) whether they are able to detect correct form-context mappings. Most importantly, if learners increasingly perceive pragmatic input appropriately, does that drive changes in production during the acquisition of L2 pragmatics?

To recapitulate, pragmatic perception, also at times referred to as *meta-pragmatic awareness* in the ILP literature, refers to "the ability to judge the appropriateness of utterances in the particular context" (Ren 2015: 20). Hence, it involves the recognition of pragmalinguistic forms, their pragmatic force as well as their contextual requirements (cf. § 2.1.2). As pragmatic perception is "a crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use" (Verschueren 2000: 439), accounts that rest on the availability of receptive pragmatic competence are particularly promising in exploring different rates of development in grammar and pragmatics in L2 learners. Even though there is consensus in ILP literature that pragmatic competence involves both productive and receptive competence, so far, perception studies are still relatively uncommon in L2 pragmatics research, let alone studies that have incorporated both constructs in their instruments. To make matters worse, studies which focus on pragmatic perception typically investigate various targets elicited by different task types and

research designs and measure the outcome in different ways, so that comparing results across studies can be challenging (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos 2011; Ren 2015). Since only few studies have examined the development of L2 learners' receptive pragmatic competence, I combine reviewing longitudinal and cross-sectional studies in the following, and start by exploring how the learning context shapes developmental trajectories of individual L2 learners.

The role of the learning context in the development of pragmatic perception

This section discusses the role of the environment in the development of pragmatic perception. In particular, the focus is on studies which compare the benefits of second and foreign language contexts for L2 pragmatic development. Whereas the latter term refers to the learning of a new language in a classroom context in an environment where the target language is not a common language of the community (e.g., learning German while living in Syria), in a second language situation, learners are exposed to the target language outside of the classroom in a variety of settings (e.g., learning German in Germany).

Kitao (1990) finds the learning environment to be a decisive factor with respect to the appropriate perception of request strategies and modifiers (e.g., *please, possibly*) by L2 learners. His informants are native speakers of Japanese who acquire English either as a second or foreign language and have intermediate or advanced proficiency in the target language. In comparing the groups across contexts, Kitao is able to show that learners in the target language context approximate native speaker perceptions more closely than the foreign language learners. The learning context also arises as a key variable as far as L2 pragmatic development is concerned in a study by Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei (1998). They compare the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of intermediate level learners of English in the second language context (i.e., Hungary and Italy) and the foreign language context (i.e., United States). In order to shed light on the differential effects of setting on the perception of L2 grammar and pragmatics, they use a video-and-questionnaire task. The learners are presented with apology, refusal, request, or suggestion scenarios which either contain grammatical errors, pragmatic infelicities, or no errors at all (i.e., controls). Pragmatic and grammatical awareness are operationalized as informants' scores on an error recognition and severity rating task. Typical grammatical errors in the items are

double marking of the past (e.g., *I didn't brought it*) or a zero object (e.g., *yes I would like*), whereas examples for the pragmatic infelicities examined are missing apologies or asking for directions with an imperative (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998: 240). Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei's (1998) study was replicated by Schauer (2006a, 2006b, 2009) and Niezgoda & Röver (2012) who use the same date collection instrument with different learner populations. Niezgoda & Röver (2012) examine advanced English foreign language learners in the Czech Republic and advanced German learners who acquire English in Hawaii, whereas Schauer (2006a, 2006b, 2009) compares advanced German learners of English in Germany and in Britain. Together these studies provide evidence to suggest that the learning context plays a central role in the development of L2 learners' pragmatic and grammatical awareness. Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei's (1998) and Schauer's (2006a, 2006b, 2009) learners in the second language context (i.e., United States and Britain) identify significantly more pragmatic infelicities than learners in Hungary, Italy, and Germany. Interestingly enough, the latter group of learners shows reverse results, i.e., they recognize more grammatical errors than pragmatic infelicities. Both studies indicate that for language learners, the foreign language context promotes grammatical awareness, whereas the second language context promotes pragmatic awareness. A possible input-based explanation for this is that learners in the second language context have more opportunities in their everyday life to notice target pragmatic features. In contrast, foreign language learners' exposure to target language input is mostly restricted to the language classroom, in which strong focus is typically put on explicit grammar instruction (cf. Niezgoda & Röver 2012: 67; Schauer 2013: 4; see also § 3.2.1 on Schmidt's 1993 Noticing Hypothesis). Divergent results are, however, reported for the participants in Niezgoda & Röver's (2012) study. Their foreign language learners outperform the learner group in the United States at error identification for both grammatical and pragmatic items. A possible explanation for the difference in findings might lie in the sampling of the informants. Niezgoda & Röver's Czech high proficiency learners are enrolled in an intensive English foreign language teacher program and therefore receive a high amount of L2 input on a regular basis. Accordingly, the learners "differed radically from Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's EFL [English foreign language] population in that they represented a highly select sample" (Niezgoda & Röver 2012: 70). In addition to

general perception of error types, it is examined whether the learner groups rate pragmatic and grammatical errors differently. The underlying construct that explains learners' awareness is defined as their "perceptions of the importance of grammatical errors relative to pragmatic errors" (Niezgoda & Röver 2012: 69). In all three studies, the severity ratings assigned to both error types show a difference in the learners' perception across the two learning environments. Learners acquiring English in the target language context assess pragmatic infelicities to be more severe than their counterparts who perceive the grammatical errors as more serious.[68]

Degree of relationship among proficiency, individual learner characteristics and pragmatic perception

Schauer (2009) also collects data from her subjects over an extended period of time, so that she is able to monitor the development of learners' receptive pragmatic competence. Her statistical analyses of informants' error recognition scores illustrate that for the learners in the L2 context, the awareness of both grammatical and pragmatic infelicities increases significantly during their sojourn. This result corroborates previous research by Bouton (1994) and Matsumura (2003), who demonstrate how a prolonged stay in the L2 context helps to improve L2 learners' pragmatic perceptions. Schauer also looks at proficiency effects and reports that "proficiency level only had an indirect effect on pragmatic development when interlinked with exposure to the L2" (2006a: 281). This finding is consistent with the outcome of a longitudinal study by Matsumura (2003) who focuses on the perception of appropriateness in advice situations by Japanese learners of English in relation to their proficiency level and amount of exposure to English. The instrument used to elicit pragmatic perceptions is a judgement task; in addition, the researcher relies on self-report questionnaires and TOEFL scores. Matsumura's statistical analysis shows that the amount of exposure to the target language is the one single factor determining the pragmatic development of the learners, i.e., learners who report greater exposure to the target language also display higher levels of pragmatic competence. With regard to

[68] Contrary to Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei's (1998) and Schauer's (2006a, 2006b, 2009) study outcomes, Niezgoda & Röver's (2001) foreign language learners do not rate either pragmatic or grammatical errors to be significantly more serious than the other. Learners in the second language context do, however, perceive the pragmatic infelicities to be more serious than the grammatical errors, which is in agreement with Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei's and Schauer's findings.

learners' proficiency level, it is found that proficiency alone does not have a significant effect on the development of learners' pragmatic perception. It does, however, have an indirect effect when interlinked with exposure to the target language. Following Matsumura, the results indicate "that those Japanese learners who reached higher levels of proficiency when they were in Japan sought more opportunity to be exposed to English in the target speech community, and as a consequence of greater exposure, they could become more pragmatically competent" (2003: 485). Tada (2005) presents results of a cross-sectional investigation on the L2 acquisition of requests, refusals and apologies that correspond with Matsumura's findings (2003). Tada infers that as his Japanese learners develop greater proficiency, they also develop their pragmatic competence. However, pragmatic production develops in a more linear fashion with proficiency whereas perception develops more independently. Tada explains these results with reference to L1 transfer and the participants' mistaken beliefs about higher directness levels in American English which result in divergent perception ratings (cf. Tada 2005: 156-157). In addition, the relationship between learners' pragmatic production and perception is only moderately strong. Longitudinal investigations by Shively (2011) and Hassall (2013, 2015) support Matsumura's (2003) and Tada's (2005) finding that L2 proficiency is not necessarily a prime factor in predicting learner's L2 receptive pragmatic competence. Instead, both studies find individual learner characteristics such as amount of exposure, intrinsic motivation, identity development, L1 transfer, formal instruction, and corrective feedback to be more correlated with learners' development of L2 receptive competence. Likewise, a series of experiments developed by Takahashi to investigate awareness at the pragmalinguistic level by focusing on Japanese learners' perception of English bi-clausal request forms, shows that a combination of relatively high listening competence and learners' intrinsic motivation seems to provide favorable conditions for pragmatic perception (cf. Takahashi 2005, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2015).

However, when focusing on research that speaks to the issue of the relationship between general language proficiency and pragmatic perception, there is also empirical evidence to suggest that L2 learners' receptive pragmatic ability progresses concurrently with their L2 proficiency. Those studies which demonstrate that learners' pragmatic perception improves with increasing

proficiency typically investigate beginner or intermediate level learners and isolate grammar as a strong constraint on L2 pragmatic development (cf. Takahashi 2017). For instance, Cook (2001) examines the extent to which English lower intermediate learners of Japanese are able to judge pragmatic features (particularly degree of politeness) in a listening comprehension task. She demonstrates that with increases in proficiency, learner informants are more successful at recognizing an inappropriate speech style in the target language. Similarly, Walkinshaw (2009) suggests that an increase in his Japanese learners of English linguistic proficiency may have enabled them to notice the pragmatic appropriateness of disagreement utterances in their input. According to his argumentation, the intermediate level learners initially still consciously process lexical and grammatical items and only after these items are automatized are cognitive processes freed up so that more complex pragmalinguistic features in the L2 can be processed.

Pragmatic production and perception – are they interrelated?

Another issue which has been addressed in a seminal publication by Kasper & Rose (2002) is the speculation that pragmatic perception and production may constitute two distinct dimensions in L2 pragmatic development based on the finding that "learner's [sic.] pragmatic knowledge may not be accurately represented in their production" (2002: 134). Confirmatory evidence for this claim comes from Hong & Shih (2013), who explore the production and perception of direct complaints by Taiwanese learners of English at two proficiency levels, i.e., low and high proficiency learners. Learners' proficiency level is determined by their performance in the TOEFL paper-based practice test, pragmatic data is elicited with the use of a DCT and a multiple-choice task. Hong & Shih (2013) find a connection between proficiency and directness level in complaint production, such that lower proficiency learners overuse direct complaint realizations as compared to both higher proficiency learners and native speakers. The same learner participants prefer, however, indirect complaint realizations in comparable situations in the perception task, so that in this case their complaint behavior is close to that by the native speaker controls. Hong & Shih (2013) explain the discrepancy between production and perception data with reference to learners' limited L2 grammatical competence, which may hinder them from

producing indirect, i.e., syntactically more complex complaint strategies. While this study provides snapshots of developmental processes at the early stages of L2 acquisition, two longitudinal studies in the study abroad context investigate pragmatic perceptions by high proficiency learners. Barron (2003) probes the development of receptive pragmatic competence of advanced Irish learners of German by use of retrospective interviews. Even though she does not focus explicitly on the L2 development of pragmatic perception but instead uses the interview findings primarily as a means to analyze learners' pragmatic productions, her data corroborate Kasper & Rose's (2002) speculation. Given L2 offer-refusal exchange structures, she finds that the "level of awareness of cross-cultural differences was actually higher than the production data suggests" (Barron 2003: 165). Specifically, this means that while the informants' perception of German pragmatic norms increases during their sojourn in the target language context, to some extent they keep on following Irish norms in the production of offer-refusal exchanges. Barron's finding corresponds with the results of Kinginger & Farrell (2004) who assess the development of intermediate and advanced American learners' metapragmatic awareness of the T/V system in French during a study abroad experience. They analyze data of eight case studies, including pre- and post-scores on a standardized proficiency test and a Language Awareness Interview as well as narrative journals, interviews, and field notes. Kinginger & Farrell observe that participation in target language practices helps to improve informants' perception of address form use, as indicated by changes in pronoun choice and in rationale. Pragmatic production data does, however, not necessarily constitute an accurate representation of learners' L2 pragmatic knowledge. The case in point is the interview data of the informant who, due to identity reasons, is least willing to accommodate native-like employment of *tu*, even though he actually possesses a profound understanding of the French T/V system. Kinginger & Farrell argue that the learner's resistance to native-speaker pragmatic norms in this case is "based on in-depth awareness of those norms, of the social constructs they represent, and of the range of acceptable choices within them, [and] may in fact be indicative of advanced knowledge of French" (2004: 38).

Taken together, these results suggest that learners' receptive pragmatic competence may not be portrayed accurately in their language use for two main

reasons: First, pragmatic production generally requires a greater processing load than perception. Thus, the former poses more difficulty for learners than perception such that inadequate L2 knowledge may restrict them from realizing the exact utterances they would like to express (cf. Hong & Shih 2013). Second, Barron's (2003) and Kinginger & Farrell's (2004) research on learners with intermediate and advanced proficiency levels indicates that speech act production may present these learners with other challenges than pragmatic perception: Production of pragmatic functions not only requires knowledge of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, in conjunction with the processing capacity to articulate this knowledge in online production but also learners' agency to make an informed decision on whether or not to implement that knowledge in the host community (cf. Taguchi 2012: 42).

Is production limited by perception?

Let us finally turn to an argument that has been advanced in ILP research and that is of prime importance to the present investigation, namely that pragmatic perception may precede production, at least in some cases (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Koike 1996; Takahashi 1996; Timpe-Laughlin 2017). For instance, Kasper & Schmidt postulate that "[i]t seems likely that acquisition of some aspects of ILP (such as the production of appropriate formulae in the L2 that are not translation equivalents of L1 formulae) must depend on their presence in input and comprehension in interaction" (1996: 163). An illustration of this is provided by Koike (1996) who finds that her American learners of Spanish do not recognize that negative questions in Spanish can function as suggestions. However, without being able to detect correct form-function mappings, even syntactically advanced learners do not produce such suggestions themselves. Moreover, the proposal that the recognition of pragmatic phenomena is a prerequisite for their employment is partly based on a series of studies conducted by Bardovi-Harlig on conventional expressions as a pragmalinguistic resource (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig 2009; Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos 2011; Bardovi-Harlig & Vellenga 2012; Bardovi-Harlig et al. 2015). Among them, Bardovi-Harlig (2009) aims to investigate whether low production rates of certain conventional expressions are due to learners' lack of familiarity with these expressions. Informants are learners of English with mixed-language backgrounds from four

proficiency levels, ranging from low-intermediate to low-advanced levels. With the use of an aural recognition task and an oral production task, she examines the relationship between perception and production of conventionalized expressions (e.g., *I'm just looking, Nice to meet you, Would you mind…?*) and identifies four different patterns of routine development for L2 learners at all proficiency levels (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2009: 773):

a. high recognition with high production leading to target-like use,
b. low recognition with low production,
c. recognition with increasing production across levels,
d. high recognition with high production leading to overgeneralization.

As for those cases in which recognition and production rates are not parallel, Bardovi-Harlig comments that of "2,716 reports by learners that an expression had been heard, 1,458 (54 %) did not result in corresponding production of the expression in an appropriate context; in contrast, of 165 reports of not having heard an expression, only 12 (7 %) resulted in a corresponding production" (2009: 774). Bardovi-Harlig's data thus seem to indicate that recognition of pragmalinguistic features is a prerequisite for their production. They also suggest, however, that pragmatic perception is not a sufficient condition, as additional factors such as overuse of familiar expressions, level of development and sociopragmatic knowledge might impact development. Instructive in this regard are the findings by Takahashi (2017) who investigates the effects of the variable grammatical knowledge on the pragmalinguistic awareness[69] and oral production of bi-clausal request forms (e.g., *I would appreciate it if you would/could VP*). Informants are Japanese advanced-level learners of English who completed a grammar questionnaire, a video-DCT and a video-dictation task. Takahashi (2017) finds that learners with sound grammatical knowledge are more likely to detect the target forms fully. She further differentiates between Provision and Non-Provision learners, i.e., learners with similar grammatical competence and detection rates but different learning outcomes. Whereas Provision learners are able to produce bi-clausal request forms in the post-test, Non-Provision learners are not. Takahashi (2017) suggests that the latter learner-group might differ in

[69] Within the framework of Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis, Takahashi defines the notion of *awareness* as the conscious detection of targets and subsequent subjective experience, i.e., learners' interest in the target forms.

their depth of processing and explains the obtained findings with reference to the critical role of grammatical knowledge in an accurate form-function analysis of complex forms during input processing: "Non-Provision learners' full detection could have essentially manifested surface-level noticing […] rather than awareness at the level of understanding" (2017: 107; see § 3.2.1 on Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis, 1993). Overall, these results indicate that the perception of pragmatic forms can be regarded as an essential, intermediate step for learners to integrate the range of knowledge bases necessary for successful form-function mappings in both the decoding and encoding of meaning.

Development of L2 receptive pragmatic competence: concluding remarks

Although the number of ILP studies that explicitly investigate the development of receptive pragmatic competence is still quite limited, the studies reviewed above support a role for perception in the acquisition of L2 pragmatics. They also suggest that at times, pragmatic perception may precede production, or put differently, that perception of pragmalinguistic features may be facilitative of pragmatic development (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2018; Timpe-Laughlin 2017). Higher receptive pragmatic competence does, however, not necessarily translate (immediately) into appropriate pragmatic productions. Thus, studies investigating both L2 pragmatic perception and production confirm higher levels of pragmatic knowledge in learners than may at times be apparent from their production data. In addition, L2 proficiency seems to affect the development of learners' receptive pragmatic competence only indirectly, "insofar as it is necessary to notice and understand specific pragmatic phenomena" (Timpe-Laughlin 2017: 114). Finally, learning environment emerged as a powerful variable in the development of pragmatic competence and research further identified a range of individual characteristics such as amount of exposure, intrinsic motivation, corrective feedback or L1 transfer as contributing factors in the development of L2 receptive pragmatic competence.

3.3 Bringing grammar and pragmatics back together: the case of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints

As I have already indicated in the Introduction, the present research aims at answering three research questions regarding the production of request and complaint modification (notably syntactic downgraders) in relation to learners' developing grammatical and receptive pragmatic competence. Based on the theoretical perspectives on L2 pragmatic development outlined in § 3.1 and the synthesis of previous research findings pertaining to the effect of grammatical competence (or alternatively proficiency level) on the development of pragmalinguistic forms in § 3.2, I conclude this chapter with a summary of those findings that are most central to the present investigation. This, in turn, forms the basis for the hypotheses to be tested by the current research as well as the exploratory research question concerning learners' receptive pragmatic competence which I elaborate on at the end of this section.

At this point, it is safe to say that grammatical knowledge is of central importance to L2 pragmatic development. While it is acknowledged that grammatical development cannot guarantee concomitant pragmatic development, Håkansson & Norrby's (2005), Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig's (2000), Bardovi-Harlig's (2003) and Martí-Arnándiz's (2008) studies indicate that a threshold level of grammatical competence (i.e., CEFR B1) may be a necessary condition to produce those pragmalinguistic forms that demand a good command of complex morphology and syntactic structures. Hence, internal modification devices that call for more complex grammatical knowledge may not be part of low proficiency learners' (i.e., CEFR A1 & A2) pragmalinguistic repertoire (cf. Bella 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Göy et al. 2012; Hill 1997). The effect of low grammatical proficiency on the employment of internal modification is particularly pronounced for syntactic downgraders, as seen for instance in the absence of tense and aspect categories, and negation in interlanguage productions (cf. Ali & Woodfield 2017; Barron 2003; Trosborg 1995; Schauer 2009; Woodfield 2012). The literature review was instructive in this regard, as it brought out the mediating role of grammatical knowledge in L2 pragmatic development more clearly: Empirical evidence suggests that beginner and intermediate learners first develop L2 grammatical knowledge that forms the basis of pragmalinguistic knowledge. That is to say that the function directly related to the grammatical

meaning of a modification device is oftentimes acquired before its secondary, pragmatic meaning (cf. Hill 1997; Kärkkäinen 1992; Rost-Roth 1999b; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 2001; Takahashi 1996, 2012b). The availability of linguistic forms in interlanguage grammar does, however, not immediately (or even necessarily) translate to concurrent pragmalinguistic use, which in turn gives rise to the question about those mechanisms which drive the development from stage to stage. In this respect, previous research on receptive pragmatic competence indicates that perception may precede production. To elaborate, there is evidence to suggest that at times, the recognition of certain pragmalinguistic features is an essential, intermediate step for learners to produce these forms (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2009, 2018; Takahashi 2017; Timpe-Laughlin 2017). The proposition that receptive pragmatic competence may be facilitative of overall pragmatic development also entails that Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis has considerable explanatory power for interlanguage pragmatic acquisition (cf. § 3.1.1).

Furthermore, the majority of the empirical studies demonstrate that the use of internal modification devices is not only particularly sensitive to level of (grammatical) proficiency but that it is also rather slow in developing. Even beyond the early stages of L2 acquisition, studies point to differences between L2 learners and native speakers in terms of frequency and range of internal modifiers used, with both syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders being overall underrepresented in the learner request and complaint data (e.g., Ali & Woodfield 2017; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009, 2012; Göy et al. 2012; Li & Raja Suleiman 2017; Murphy & Neu 1996; Trosborg 1995). Added to this is a lack of multiple marking in head act realizations by L2 learners (e.g., Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Woodfield 2012; Hassall 2001, 2012). Thus, even though the learners are able to acquire grammatical and pragmatic conditions in accordance with the claims made by the Interface Hypothesis (cf. Sorace 2003; Sorace & Filiaci 2006), the integration of both conditions remains less than optimally efficient. Finally, there is also the finding that internal modification occurs later for complaints than for requests, due to learner difficulties with mastery of complaint head act strategies (cf. Trosborg 1995).

Even though L2 learners seldom reach native speaker scores (cf. Trosborg 1987, 1995; Warga 2004), increasing grammatical knowledge nevertheless

provides them with a wider repertoire of linguistic resources for the realization of both internal and external modification. Much of the current literature therefore suggests that the production and perception of speech act modification at the beginning and intermediate stages of L2 acquisition increases in line both with grammatical competence and overall L2 proficiency (cf. Ali & Woodfield 2017; Barron 2007; Bella 2012; Celaya & Barón 2015; Cook 2001; Fordyce & Fukuzawa 2004; Hoffman-Hicks 1992; Hong 2015; Martí-Arnándiz 2008; Takahashi 2017; Walkinshaw 2009; Yuan & Zhang 2018; Youn 2014). The evidence presented in previous sections further highlights affordances of the given learning environments: Time spent in the target language context is another positive indicator for the development of speech act modification (cf. Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Schauer 2009); in addition, it generally promotes pragmatic awareness (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Niezgoda & Röver 2012; Schauer 2006a, 2006b, 2009).

As for developmental sequences in the production of speech act modifiers, previous research has demonstrated that pragmatic concepts are expressed in ways conforming to the level of grammatical complexity acquired. Beginner level learners start out with extra-clausal explicit expressions before they proceed to syntactically integrated and implicit expressions for speech act modification. This is illustrated by two developmental trends in the learner data: First, learners tend to opt for external rather than internal modification to soften their request and complaints (cf. Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Dendenne 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Schauer 2009). Noteworthy in this respect is the use of the grounder. This modifier is among the first to be picked up by learners and is then the most frequently employed external downgrader in interlanguage productions (e.g., Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Dendenne 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009, 2012). With regard to this first path taken by L2 learners, it has been suggested that external modification devices might be acquired more easily than internal ones, since they tend to be syntactically less demanding and pragmalinguistically less complex. It was additionally argued that learners initially rely more strongly on external modifiers due to the explicit politeness function that such moves carry (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Faerch & Kasper 1989).

Turning to the second developmental trend, beginner and intermediate learners prefer lexical/phrasal forms of modification over syntactic modification. During the early stages of L2 acquisition, learners mainly rely on the politeness marker to mitigate direct request and complaint realizations before they start to employ more complex forms of lexical and syntactic downgrading (cf. Ali & Woodfield 2017; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Hill 1997; Yuan & Zhang 2018). Consequently, it has been speculated that syntactic downgraders may be acquired later than lexical/phrasal ones (cf. Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Göy et al. 2012; Hendriks 2008; Otcu & Zeyrek 2008; Woodfield 2006, 2012). Recall that syntactic downgraders demand more complex grammatical/syntactic knowledge than lexical downgraders. Along the lines of the Complexification Hypothesis, it can thus be argued that "learners' preferences move from syntactically easy-to-use structures to those which demand a higher level of grammatical competence" (Barron 2003: 213). As beginner and intermediate level learners have not yet reached a sufficient level of pragmalinguistic competence in relation to the use of syntactic structures, they may be overburdened with inserting syntactic downgraders. Instead, they appear to concentrate on realizing the basic head act strategy and adding only simple lexical downgraders. In addition, it was suggested that compared to lexical/phrasal downgraders, the function of syntactic downgraders as markers of politeness is more implicit. There is thus a chance that learners may still be unfamiliar with the pragmalinguistic function of some syntactic downgraders or remain uncertain about their sociopragmatic appropriateness (cf. Geyer 2007a; Hill 1997; Kärkkäinen 1992; Meyer 2007; Takahashi 1996, 2012b). In either case, learners may prefer to play safe and employ lexical modifiers that are not only grammatically simpler but also semantically more explicit, i.e., more predictable as to their interactive effect.

Cutting across the findings from studies on request and complaint modification, it was suggested that the extent to which beginner and intermediate learners deploy these devices appropriately depends on their grammatical proficiency as well as on their ability to successfully perceive L2 speech conventions, i.e., their sociopragmatic knowledge, their automatization of the retrieval process (cf. § 3.1.1 on Bialystok's 1993, 1994 Two-Dimensional Model), and their investment in and willingness to actually employ socio-pragmatically

appropriate realizations. However, despite the substantiation of original propositions by Kasper & Rose (2002) and the new insight gained by the increasing body of research on the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 acquisition, we are still only beginning to understand how L2 pragmatics learning unfolds. Hence, the L2 acquisition of syntactic downgraders in relation to learners' grammatical knowledge needs to be investigated in more detail, so as to provide a more comprehensive picture of L2 pragmatic acquisition. Given the afore-mentioned findings, the predictions for the present study are the following:

1. A threshold level of grammatical competence is necessary to produce syntactic downgraders.
2. A gain in grammatical competence (in the predetermined grammatical areas) will result in an approximation to target language use with regard to the production of syntactic downgraders.
3. The learners' use of syntactic downgraders in complaints will increase in an L2-like direction later than for requests.
4. Both elementary and lower intermediate learners will prefer lexical/phrasal downgraders over syntactic forms of modification.
5. Both elementary and lower intermediate learners will prefer external modifiers over syntactic forms of modification.[70]

In light of the theoretical discussion in § 3.2.3, and given the exploratory nature of the second part of the present study, the following research question, rather than hypothesis, guides the investigation of Syrian Arabic learners' receptive pragmatic competence:

6. To which extent is the learners' development concerning the perception and production of syntactic downgraders interconnected?

In the following, we turn our attention to the methodology that has been explicitly devised to address both the afore-mentioned hypothesis and the open research question.

[70] In addition to these five main hypotheses, two supplementary hypotheses are introduced to evaluate the sociopragmatic pre-conditions relevant to the research questions at hand. These hypotheses require careful consideration during the examination of the main hypotheses of the study, as they have the potential to impact the results obtained. For further details, refer to section § 5.1.2.

4 Research design and methodology

As indicated in the Introduction (§ 1), the present research aims at answering three research questions regarding the perception and production of request and complaint modification (notably syntactic downgraders) in relation to learners' developing grammatical competence. This chapter presents the methodology employed in the present study to investigate the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 German. A total of 152 subjects constituted the study sample on which the data analysis is based: 60 Syrian learners of German as well as 92 German native speakers participated in the study by responding to pragmatic and grammar tasks delivered through three interlinked data-gathering instruments. First, the informants chosen (§ 4.1), and the multi-method approach adopted (§ 4.2) are detailed. Following this, the procedure for the data collection is outlined in detail (§ 4.3).

4.1 Informants

The present developmental study is based on a cross-sectional design in which three groups of informants participated, i.e., two subsets of the learner population as well as native speakers of German. Syrian Arabic native speaker controls were not included in the study since the research questions do not necessitate the examination of L1 transfer effects. Section § 4.1.1 first introduces the learner informants who participated in the present investigation and then comments on central factors that might influence L2 acquisition in the forced migration context. This is followed by a comprehensive account of the native speaker informants in § 4.1.2.

4.1.1 Adult refugee-background learners

Adolescents and adults with refugee backgrounds are among the least representative populations studied for generalizing about interlanguage pragmatic development. SLA and ILP researchers instead draw their learner participants primarily from WEIRD samples, i.e., "Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic" groups, such as college or university students (Henrich et al. 2010: 61). Apart from the risk that an overreliance on WEIRD samples may lead to biased or incomplete knowledge of L2 learning, little is known about how refugees' L2 pathways compare to those of other immigrants and language learner

groups respectively. Theoretically, the study of refugees' L2 acquisition shares some common ground with international migration. This comparison, however, falls short because research must also account for these learners' unique learning contexts and histories of mobility. Refugee-background learners have a certain societal and local positioning in the target language community which entails that the occasions afforded them for engagement as participants in interaction differ from those for immigrants. Added to this is the heterogeneity of (Syrian) refugees with regard to their educational and socio-economic background, language learning history and traumatic experiences fleeing their home country. All these factors in conjunction with individual characteristics can affect learners' investment in the destination language and mediate pragmatic development.

Even though the present study does not attempt to investigate the effects of (individual) refugee characteristics on L2 acquisition, I briefly comment on a range of refugee-background learner attributes below. My intention thereby is to provide the reader with the necessary theoretical understanding of factors influencing L2 acquisition in the forced migration context. I have grouped this section into three broad sub-sections. The first part § 4.1.1.1 is concerned with factors that influence L2 learning of Syrian refugees. § 4.1.1.2 introduces 'The German integration course'. This section provides an outline of the integration course system in Germany, which functioned as a reference point for participant selection and the development of the research instruments to be introduced in § 4.2. The final sub-section § 4.1.1.3 provides detailed background information on the learner participants that took part in the present study.

4.1.1.1 The forced migration context: determinants of refugees' L2 acquisition

Compared to learner populations who migrate primarily for labor-market or educational reasons, refugees arrive under different, and often difficult and traumatic, circumstances. As stated by the UNHCR, a refugee is unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR 1951: 14). Scheible & Rother (2017) and van Tubergen (2010) find that adults with refugee backgrounds demonstrate the same increase in host-country language skills as family or labor migrants after

completing a compulsory language course. Thus, adult refugee-background learners become as proficient in the destination language as other learner populations. Nonetheless, to fully understand refugees' pathways to the L2, research also needs to evaluate how additional factors specific to the forced migration context may impact the language learning process.

One highly relevant external factor is the *language learning context*. It has become commonplace in ILP to acknowledge that in the case of L2 acquisition, the sociocultural environment as well as the specific setting in which learning takes place directly affects the learning process and certain learning achievements.[71] In particular, it determines the type of learning, the resources which are available to learners, the speed of learning, the learning objectives set, and learners' motivation levels (cf. Miao 2015: 364). However, the common division between *natural* and *educational contexts* for the acquisition of a second language becomes blurred in the case of adults with refugee backgrounds who reside in Germany. Different from L2 acquisition in a natural context, refugee newcomers are required to attend an official language and orientation course called *Integration Course* which is a school-like system of classes in German and about Germany. Accordingly, L2 learning takes place in a formal classroom setting with a standardized curriculum, so that learners experience German as a subject matter, i.e., "as consisting of rules and principles which are to be attended to, rather than as a social entity" (Barron & Warga 2007: 117). At the same time, as many refugees endure a long waiting period before they are able to access professional German language courses, their acquisition of German also takes place outside the classroom where they can integrate more within the new society. It therefore needs pointing out that before as well as during the attendance of a language course, many refugee newcomers acquire German in the natural environment. Due to natural exposure in daily communication, these learners have access to authentic input, opportunities to observe and practice community norms of interaction, encounter variation in styles and communicative situations, and experience real-life consequences of their pragmatic behavior (cf. Miao 2015: 364; Taguchi 2015: 4). As such, L2 acquisition by the learner informants in the

[71] ILP research emphasizes the centrality of context in language development (e.g., Taguchi 2019: 6). Accordingly, a substantial number of empirical studies has investigated the role of learning context while acquiring sociocultural language use; see Kasper & Rose (2002), for a review.

present study can neither be described as clearly natural or educational, and using context as a categorical label is not productive in this regard.

Having considered the language learning setting, additional aspects of the forced migration context now need to be taken into account. Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash (2020) identify SLA-pertinent difficulties that 45 Syrian refugees faced in nine host countries, one of them Germany.[72] Even though Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash find that the difficulties experienced during L2 acquisition vary according to the language and the country, they all fall within the following six categories: linguistic, social, psychological, economic, personal, and temporal (cf. Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash 2020: 379). Of these six categories, the first three are of particular importance in the German context. Al Masri & Abu Ayyash's (2020) research shows that the main hindrances to SLA are *linguistic-related* factors, i.e., learners experience difficulties with regards to German "pronunciation, word formation and length, grammar, vocabulary, and the gap between the standard language and the dialect" (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash 2020: 379).

The second difficulty experienced is *social*, as Germans reportedly refuse to be in contact with the refugees' communities.[73] This lack of social interaction is enhanced by the demographic distribution of refugees either in camps or compounds which "makes it difficult for them to be in contact with the citizens and to acquire their languages" (Al Masri & Abu-Ayyash 2020: 380). Studies by Aumüller et al. (2015), Baier et al. (2020), Schröder et al. (2018), Tissot & Croisier (2020) and van Tubergen (2010) present ample evidence suggesting that prolonged stays at these facilities affect language learning during the introduction phase in resettled refugees. Amongst other things, this is due to a lack of privacy in refugee compounds. Residents do not have access to quiet, private spaces and therefore lack opportunities for preparation and follow-up of course contents and self-study.

Third, Al Masri & Abu Ayyash (2020: 380) associate SLA-pertinent difficulties such as speed of L2 acquisition with *psychological distress*. Study

[72] For additional information on the linguistic integration of adolescents and adults with refugee backgrounds see Al Masri & Abu Ayyash (2020), Beacco et al. (2017), Block (2003, 2007), Elmeroth (2010), Guo & Lange (2015), Horsman (2013), Hou & Beiser (2006), Karipek (2017), Kleinmann (1982), Korntheuer et al. (2018), Natarajan (2019), Rose (2014), Shapiro et al. (2018), Steel et al. (2002) and Störl (2019).

[73] This effect is reinforced by a lack of necessity to acquire the destination language, due to the strong presence of Arabic in asylum countries such as Germany (cf. Al Masri & Abu Ayyash 2020: 379).

participants reportedly experience trauma, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression in the host country Germany. In agreement with Al Masri & Abu Ayyash's findings, studies in public health and psychology present ample evidence for high levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD in refugee populations.[74] Nicholl & Thompson (2004) report that while the prevalence of post-traumatic stress symptoms ranges widely among different populations, research indicates that figures as high as 30 % are not atypical for adult refugees. Their study participants experienced PTSD symptoms which directly affect learning ability and cognitive function, such as headaches, poor concentration, or loss of memory. Added to this are other stressors such as unresolved issues of family reunion (cf. Baier et al. 2020; Beaton et al. 2018; Gambaro et al. 2018). In the host community, such ongoing stressors and pre-settlement traumas may be mutually reinforcing (cf. Gordon 2011). To sum up the above, refugees may face serious hardships in acquiring an L2 in the new host country due to social isolation, changes in culture as well as psychological disturbances and trauma which interact with the language acquisition process.

4.1.1.2 The German integration course

All learner participants in the present study attended a mandatory integration course in Cologne, Germany. Each course is a combination of a *German language course* and an *orientation course*, the aim of which is to equip migrants with the necessary language skills to cope with everyday life in Germany. Attendees learn German up to level B1 of the CEFR by completing 700 to 1000 lesson units (henceforth LU), depending on the orientation of the course (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015e).

Part 1: The language course

The language course takes up a total of 600 LU, i.e., six sections each consisting of 100 lesson hours. It provides general language instruction together with central aspects of everyday life in Germany, such as work and careers, basic and further training, shopping/trade/consumption, housing, raising children, leisure time and

[74] For further discussions of the effect of mental health conditions on the L2 acquisition in refugees, refer to Baier et al. (2020), Brücker et al. (2016a,b), Jaranson et al. (2004), McDonald (2000), Mollica et al. (1987), Nationale Akademie der Wissenschaften Leopoldina (2018), Pudelko & Ghulam (2019), Söndergaard & Theorell (2004), Stevens (2001) and Westermeyer et al. (2007).

social interaction, media, and media use as well as health and hygiene. The participants are required to take an assessment test, based on which they are then assigned to a specific language course module. A period of 18 to 24 months is indicated as the usual language course duration, but in fact the timeline for attendance varies. Adult refugee-background learners often interrupt their courses due to relocation, a change of course provider, prolonged illness, pregnancy, or lack of childcare (cf. Homrighausen & Saif 2021). In some cases, it takes learners up to three years to complete the integration course.

After completion of the language course, the learners take the final examination *German language test for immigrants* (DTZ).[75] If they are successful, they receive a certificate that certifies their German language skills at either level A2 or B1 according to the CEFR. Learners who meet the A2 certification requirements are *Basic Users*. Such learners can communicate in simple and routine tasks which require a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. They are also able to understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (cf. Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg: 24). Learners who have managed to build up a skill level B1 intermediate are termed *Independent Users*. They can understand the main points of clear standard input on matters with which they are familiar (e.g., in a work or school context) whilst also being able to handle basic communicative situations when living in a German-speaking environment. In addition, they can describe experiences and events, give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans, and start producing simple connected texts on familiar topics (cf. Kaufmann 2016; Language Policy Division, Council of Europe, Strasbourg). For learners to attain language level A2 or B1 in the DTZ, they need to achieve the relevant level in the *Speaking* part of the examination and in at least one of the other two parts of the test, i.e., *Hearing and Reading* or *Writing*.[76] Language course attendees who do not pass the test at level B1 can attend either a *Refresher Course* or the course *German for professional purposes*.

[75] The DTZ content is based on the core curriculum for integration courses developed by the Goethe-Institute to ensure that exercises in the examination are consistently aimed at immigrants' communication needs (see Kaufmann 2016 for information on the core curriculum). For test objectives, test description, and practice tests see Goethe-Institut & telc (2009), telc (2009) and Perlmann-Balme et al. (2009).

[76] This regulation ensures that course attendees learning an additional alphabet will also be able to demonstrate at least an overall language level of A2, even though they will usually not yet have reached level B1 by the end of the course.

In this case, they repeat a maximum of 300 lesson units and retake the final test (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015e, 2015d).

Part 2: The orientation course

The orientation course follows the language course and takes 100 lesson hours to complete. Course contents include the German legal system, history and culture of Germany, forms of community life and societal values in Germany (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2017). The final stage of the orientation course consists of the *Life in Germany* (LiD) test. Attendees who have passed both the *German language test for immigrants* and the *Life in Germany* test receive the *Integration Course Certificate*. Table 9 provides an overview of the content and stages of the integration course procedure:

Table 9. The German integration course

	Module	LU	Level (CEFR)
Basic language course with 300 LU à 45 min	Basic module 1	100	A1.1
	Basic module 2	200	A1.2
	Basic module 3	300	A2.1
Follow-up language course with 300 LU	Follow-up module 4	400	A2.2
	Follow-up module 5	500	B1.1
	Follow-up module 6	600	B1.2
Final test for the language course (A2-B1)			
Refresher course (*if required*)		100	
		200	
		300	
Retake final test for the language course (A2-B1)			
Orientation course (100 LU)	Module 7	700/1000	
Final test for the orientation course (LiD)			
Integration Course Certificate			

Special types of integration courses

In addition to the *general integration course*, language course providers offer special integration courses depending on the situation of the newcomers who wish to attend the classes:

1. The *literacy course* is aimed at L2 learners who never had the opportunity of learning to read and write in their L1(s).
2. The *course for students learning an additional alphabet* targets newcomers who have learned to read and write in a non-Roman alphabet but who are not familiar with the Roman alphabet (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015b).
3. The *course for parents* is directed at parents who, in addition to language instruction, wish to receive an introduction to the structure of the German education system and to learn about the opportunities available for their children in Germany.
4. The *course for women* is taught by a female teacher and attended by women only. Apart from language instruction, the focus is on special advisory programs that might be of relevance to women, mothers, and families in general (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015c).
5. The *course for young adults* can be attended by L2 learners who are not yet 26 years old and who wish to gain input on schooling and training as well as work life and career opportunities in Germany. Attendees are encouraged to come into direct contact with educational institutions and workplaces during a practical stage (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015a).
6. The *intensive course* is for rapid learners who are capable of reaching the B1 level within 400 hours of language instruction and 30 hours of the orientation course (cf. Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge 2015f).

4.1.1.3 Learner informants

L2 informants in the present study were adult refugee-background learners who fled to Germany from the ongoing war in Syria in the late 2010s. The target population in this study included beginner and intermediate level learners of German who attended an integration course on a full-time basis. Accordingly, all informants had followed the same centralized curriculum. The selection of the sample was carried out in cooperation with language course providers in Cologne.

Informants were selected from five integration course sub-types, i.e., the general *integration course*, the *course for young adults*, the *course for women/parents*, the *refresher course*, and the *course for professional purposes*. Learners' attending either a *literacy course* or a *course for students learning an additional alphabet* were excluded from the study, since their reading and writing abilities might not yet have matched their pragmatic abilities. In total, 60 Syrian Arabic native speakers provided the interlanguage data for the present study who at the time of data collection attended one of the five course types in Cologne.

The initial selection of this group was made based on their language course level, i.e., attendance of either an A2, B1 or in a few cases a B2 language course. As learners were placed in a German language class by a proficiency in-house exam, I took the participants' level in the integration course program as a first rough indicator of L2 proficiency. In addition, I collected self-reported information about their CEFR scores in the Learner Questionnaire I. Attendees of B2 language courses were only included in the study if they had completed the B1 integration course less than two weeks ago. An observation of the language levels attained by the learner participants at the time of reporting showed that almost 70 % in the elementary group had passed the DTZ, the telc language exam or a comparable language test at level A2 of CEFR. 93 % of participants in the lower intermediate group had reached language level B1 in the DTZ. Because some learners had not yet taken a final language test at the time of data collection, it was not possible to make a statement about the language level attained in 20 % of the cases. However, the figures only represent a snapshot, as the informants had completed courses of varying lengths and with interruptions at the time of the data collection: some were attending the *refresher course* or the follow-up *course for professional purposes*, while others were attending the integration course for the first time.

Since the main aim of this study was to address pragmatic development across different grammar competence levels, a more reliable assessment method – a Language Assessment Test – was used to ensure that elementary and intermediate learners were clearly different with regard to the presence or absence of the target pragmalinguistic forms in their systems (see § 4.2.2 for information on the test and the ranking criteria). After administering and analyzing the learners' results in the Language Assessment Test, two groups were selected

(independent of their proficiency levels) to represent the two grammar levels investigated in this study as follows: Elementary (n = 30) and Lower Intermediate (n = 30).[77] Learner group sizes are in line with Kasper & Dahl's assessment that "30 subjects per undivided sample" (1991: 226) are a sufficient sample number for most purposes in research on interlanguage speech act realization (see also Dörnyei & Csizér 2012: 82). In the following, the L2 learners are described based on information obtained from the Learner Questionnaires I & II (see § 4.2.1 for questionnaire design). As and when relevant, I examine the two groups consisting of elementary and lower intermediate learners separately.

All sixty participants in the elementary and lower intermediate groups were born in Syria and none of them had ever lived in a German-speaking country before. The sample included female and male adult refugees between 19 and 35 years of age, and they had been in Germany on average for two to six years at the time of data collection in October and November 2019. The mean duration of stay for informants in both groups was four years.[78] A summary profile of the learner participants is provided in Table 10.

Table 10. Profile of L2 learners

	Elementary learners	**Lower intermediate learners**
Number of participants	30	30
Gender	20 female, 10 male	14 female, 16 male
Age range	21-35	19-35
Mean age	29	27
Duration of stay (range)	2-6 years	2-6 years
Duration of stay (mean)	4 years	4 years

[77] When the final sample size was set, a decent margin was left to provide for unforeseen or unplanned circumstances: In total, data from 70 Syrian Arabic newcomers were selected, ten of whom were disqualified due to incomplete questionnaire responses, very low grammar levels (i.e., less than 23.8 points in the LAT, see § 4.2.2) or a clear misunderstanding of the discourse completion task. Moreover, it was found that L2 proficiency is not necessarily a prime factor in predicting learners' L2 grammatical competence. 10 % of the learner participants in the elementary group had already reached level B1 in German, whereas 3.3 % of participants in the lower intermediate group still attended an A2 language course.

[78] Ordering adult L2 learners according to the variable *length of interaction* is not very informative, especially when compared to *intensity of interaction*. Consequently, the variable *duration of stay* is defined broadly in the present investigation.

83 % of the learner informants were monolingual Syrian Arabic speaking adults. In addition, the sample included ten bilinguals who had been exposed to Arabic and either Turkish or Kurdish from birth. All Syrian participants reported that Standard Arabic was taught in school. In addition, 62 % had learned one or more additional language either through formal school education or everyday encounters. The second languages acquired by the participants included: English (50 %), Turkish (25 %), French (7 %), Persian (7 %), Kurdish (5 %), Italian (2 %), Aramaic (2 %) and Polish (2 %). None of the informants had, however, any prior knowledge of German before fleeing their home country. The level of education in the learner group ranged from graduate study to a pre-secondary education level: 17 % of the participants had a university degree and 48 % had completed their upper secondary education after 12 years of schooling. In the latter group, 28 % had obtained a secondary school certificate qualifying them for admission to higher education and 20 % had received preparatory vocational education or attended a technical school. Due to the ongoing war situation in their country of origin, 35 % of the learner informants had dropped out of school after approximately nine years of schooling. These learners had reached a pre-secondary education level.[79] Furthermore, 40 % of the sample had taken up a profession in their home country before they were forcibly displaced. Overall, no relevant differences were apparent between men and women in the areas of previous education and professional experience.

For the L2 acquisition of German it was found that all of the informants had had between one and five years of formal education in German. The mean number of years of German language instruction was two years for the elementary learners and three years for the lower intermediate learners. The distribution of both participant groups in terms of their integration course entrance date is displayed in Figure 1. The majority of learners in the lower intermediate group started the integration course at an earlier date than the elementary learners.

[79] The age of these participants during the data collection, namely 19 years and above can be explained by the length of their migration journey, which may have taken years in some cases.

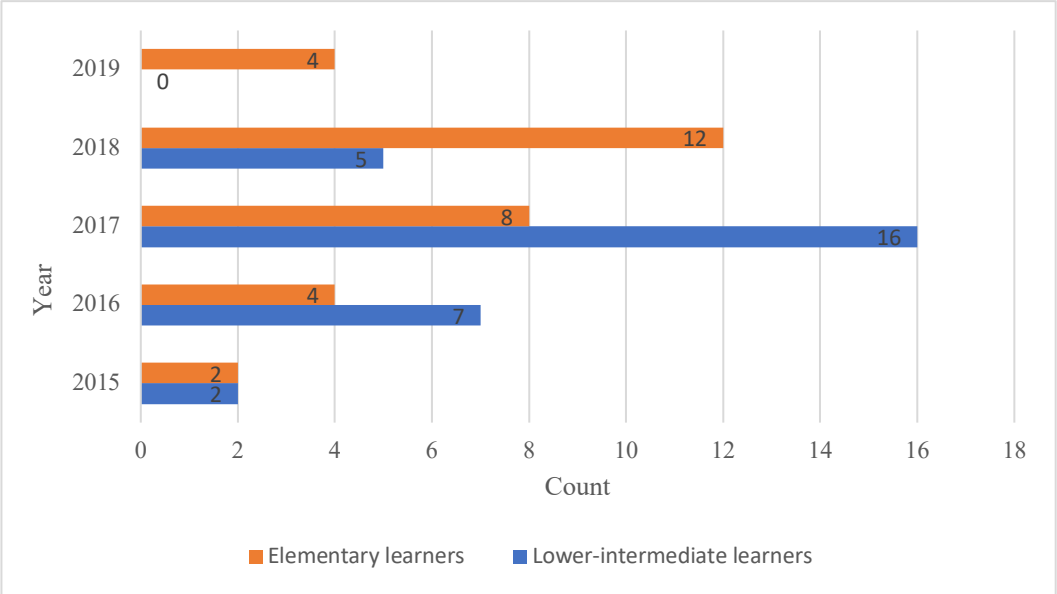

Figure 1. Date of integration course entrance

As has been mentioned in § 4.1.1.1, adults with refugee background often endure long waiting periods before they are able to enroll in a German integration course, as a result of lengthy and cumbersome migration and admission processes. Figures 2 and 3 provide an indication of how long it took until the study participants had the opportunity to attend an integration course in Germany. While 40 % joined a course within the first year of their arrival, for 47 % of the informants there was a period of at least one to three years between entering Germany and beginning their language course. In addition, eight learners from the sample (13 %) could not initially enroll in an integration course due to child-care commitments or an illness; for these informants it took between three and four and a half years before they started acquiring German in an educational setting. As illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, for some of these learners, L2 acquisition of German thus began prior to their language course attendance through exposure, learning by doing or self-study.

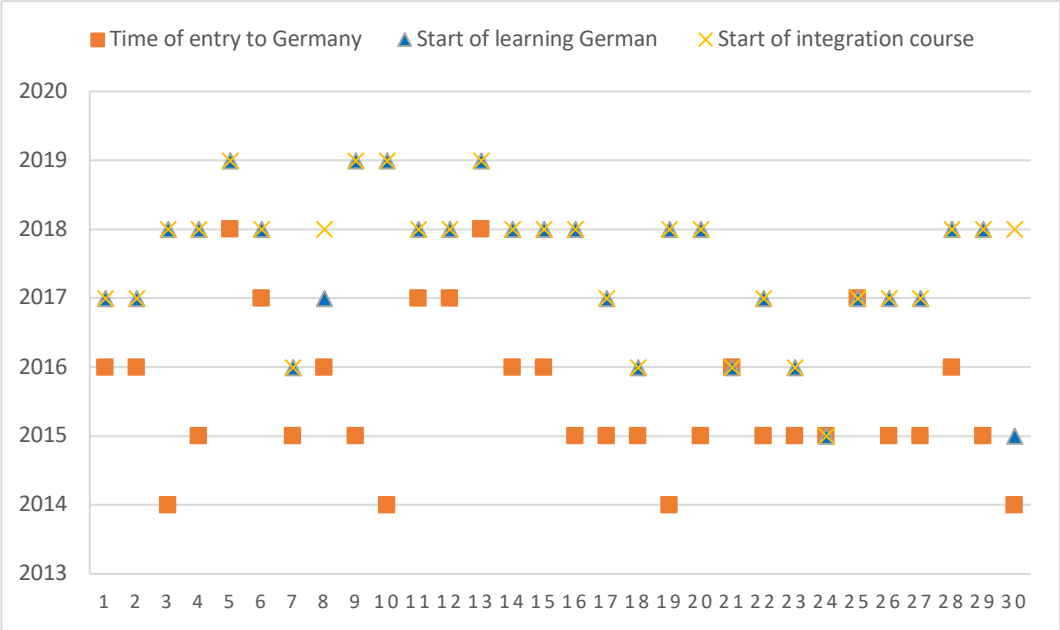

Figure 2. Distribution of elementary learners according to their time of entry to Germany, start date of learning German and enrolment in the integration course

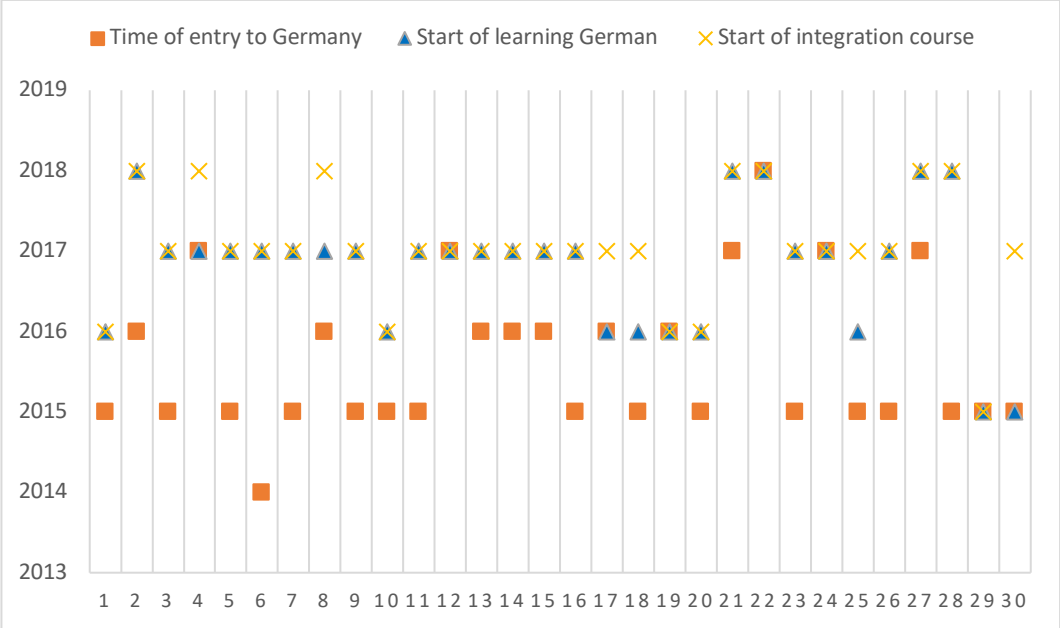

Figure 3. Distribution of lower intermediate learners according to their time of entry to Germany, start date of learning German and enrollment in the integration course

A related point to consider is the learners' reported language contact. The participants had the opportunity to speak German in the context of educational institutions or in contact situations with the host society. 50 % of learners in the elementary group and 73 % of learners in the lower intermediate group reported

being in touch with Germans outside of the language course. Table 11 shows the amount of time these learners spent on a weekly basis in establishing social contact with native speakers of the target language.

Table 11. Average time spent in contact with target speech community (in %)[80]

	Elementary learners	Lower intermediate learners
More than 7 hrs. a week	40	22.7
3-7 hrs. per week	20	27.3
1-3 hrs. per week	6.7	27.3
1hr. or less per week	33.3	22.7

Table 12. Average estimated time participants spent speaking German/ Arabic/English in Germany (in %)

	Elementary learners	Lower intermediate learners
German to German NS	13.5	26.1
German to learners of German	20.7	19.3
Arabic to Arabic NS	57.3	50.3
Other languages	8.9	4.4

Table 12 compares the elementary and lower intermediate learners' rough estimation of the amount of time they spent speaking German, Arabic, or other languages such as English with either native speakers or language learners in Germany. For both learner groups, time speaking Arabic was higher than speaking German to either native speakers or learners of German. Given the difficulties of establishing social contact with native speakers of German and the fact that there is usually little contact with the target society in the private setting (see § 4.1.1.1), the elementary learners' everyday multilingual practice was predominantly influenced by their L1 Arabic, whereas on average, for lower intermediate learners, the time speaking Arabic and German was approximately equal. Another determinant of learners' L2 proficiency is the amount of their exposure to the media and to written texts such as newspapers or literature. The extent to which the informants made use of these opportunities in their free time is displayed in Table 13 and Table 14. The data indicate that participants in the lower intermediate group had a higher exposure to the target language than

[80] The set of questions reproduced in Tables 13-20 is based on a post-year abroad questionnaire format developed by Barron (2003: 325-327).

elementary learners – due to longer time periods invested in listening to the radio, watching television, or reading analogue and digital written texts.

Table 13. Average estimated time participants spent reading German books/newspapers/magazines/websites/emails in their free-time (in %)

	Elementary learners	**Lower intermediate learners**
More than 7 hrs. a week	10	16.7
Between 3 and 7 hrs. a week	16.7	23.3
Between 1 and 3 hrs. a week	26.7	46.7
One hour or less a week	30	10
Never	16.7	3.3

Table 14. Average estimated time participants spent listening to German radio/ television/music in their free time (in %)

	Elementary learners	**Lower intermediate learners**
More than 7 hrs. a week	13.3	23.3
Between 3 and 7 hrs. a week	13.3	33.3
Between 1 and 3 hrs. a week	33.3	33.3
One hour or less a week	16.7	10
Never	23.3	0

Last, the study participants were asked to fill in the *Learner questionnaire 2: Language & Culture* to tap into their awareness of cultural differences in levels of directness and politeness between German and Syrian Arabic. According to the data, more than half of elementary and lower intermediate learners perceived Germans to be just as polite as Syrians (Table 15). They noticed, however, differences between L1 and L2 norms with regards to directness levels. As shown in Table 16, almost 80 % of the learners in both groups assessed Germans as more direct than Syrians. Yet, there is less agreement among participants regarding their evaluation of these differences (Table 17) and the self-assessment of their own directness levels in German (Table 18). The results shown in Tables 17 and 18 illustrate how these perceptions differ not only across groups but also across individuals; thus, demonstrating the relevance of individual learner differences such as personality, aptitude, or motivation in L2 acquisition. Apart from their awareness of differences between L1 and L2 norms, the participants were asked if they, as L2 learners of German, regard it necessary to adopt the (in)direct ways of

Germans. The L2 learners exercised their agency by choosing to conform to or resist native speaker norms in almost equal shares. Notably, 50 % of elementary and 53 % of lower intermediate learners felt the need to conform to L2 conventions, whereas 50 % of elementary and 47 % of lower intermediate learners (despite having noticed cultural differences in the areas of politeness and directness) preferred to deviate from these L2 tendencies. These results demonstrate that the elementary and lower intermediate learners were not only aware of such differences between Syrian Arabic and German norms but were also aware of their own adherence to or divergence from L2 conventions.

Table 15. Perception of politeness levels in German and Syrian Arabic (in %)

Germans are …	**Elementary learners**	**Lower intermediate learners**
A lot more polite than Syrians	16.7	26.7
A little more polite than Syrians	23.3	13.3
Just as polite as Syrians	60	53.3
A little less polite than Syrians	0	6.7
A lot less polite than Syrians	0	0

Table 16. Perception of directness levels in German and Syrian Arabic (in %)

Germans are …	**Elementary learners**	**Lower intermediate learners**
A lot more direct than Syrians	40	33.3
A little more direct than Syrians	40	43.3
Just as direct/indirect as Syrians	20	23.3
A little less direct than Syrians	0	0
A lot less direct than Syrians	0	0

Table 17. Learners' evaluation of differences in directness (in %)

	Elementary learners	**Lower intermediate learners**
Positive	43.3	60
With indifference	3.3	3.3
Negative	0	3.3
It depends	53.3	33.3

Table 18. Self-assessment of directness levels in German (in %)

	Elementary learners	Lower intermediate learners
I am more direct when I speak German	36.7	23.3
I am less direct when I speak German	3.3	0
I am just as direct/indirect speaking Germans as Arabic	40	50
I do not notice any difference	20	26.7

Code-names

A system of code-names was developed to protect the identity of L2 learners. 'G1' and 'G2' denote learner Group 1 – *elementary learners* and Group 2 – *lower intermediate learners*, 'F' indicates female, 'M' male. In addition to these initials, learners were further provided with a random number. So, for example, the informant G1M_475346 is a male elementary learner, whereas G2F_666333 is a female intermediate learner.

4.1.2 Native speaker informants

In the present study, the learners' pragmatic language use is compared to an empirically established L2 target. This native speaker data serves as a baseline regarding the range and types of modification devices used in German. It is, however, viewed as only suggestive of a native 'standard', and not as a rigorous benchmark (cf. Roever et al. 2014: 56-57; Shively & Cohen 2008: 77–78; Tanck 2002: 4). Here and in the following sections, the term *native speaker (of German)* is defined as follows: A native speaker has acquired German from natural exposure, in early childhood and in an authentic social context/speech community and self-identifies as a *native speaker of German*. A native speaker has further lived most of their life in a context in which German is the majority language, so that language use is characterized by continued exposure and usage (e.g., daily contact) (cf. Cheng et al. 2021; § 2.1.2).

Data was provided by 92 German native speakers (henceforth GNS) from the University of Cologne in Germany. All participants were undergraduate students of various degrees, ranging from Linguistics to German Studies or Education. These participants acted as a reference group so that ideally, the control group and the learner group would have resembled each other as closely as possible. In the

case of adult learners with refugee backgrounds this requirement was, however, hard to meet. After some consideration, it was thus decided to include university students as the native speaker participants in the present study for the following reasons: First, the broadly uniform group of students as participants guaranteed a large degree of homogeneity and second, they were comparable to the learner sample with regard to age, level of income and living situation/conditions (e.g., shared living spaces). Third, some of the learner participants were either university students in Syria and/or were planning on becoming university students in Germany in the near future. Two control groups are to be differentiated in the present study: *Control Group 1* (n=46) completed the Discourse Completion Task and *Control Group 2* (n=46) completed the Pragmatic Perception Task. Each is addressed in turn.

Control Group 1 – Discourse completion task

A sample of 46 students provided the production data (23 women, 23 men). The average age was 25 years (age range: 19-30 years). Two of the 46 participants were native speakers of an additional language to German (i.e., English, and Polish), while all other participants were monolingual speakers of German. They were all enrolled as full-time students at the University of Cologne at the time of the study and they completed the discourse completion task during allotted time slots in their seminars.

Control Group 2 – Pragmatic perception task

In addition, a further group of 46 German participants provided the native speaker data for the pragmatic perception task. They were similar in age, education, and sex to the informants in Control Group 1, in that they were undergraduate students at the University of Cologne who were aged between 19 and 33 years (mean age: 25 years; 23 women, 23 men). It would have been desirable to have had one group of native speakers provide both the production and perception data. This was, however, not feasible as the production data elicited formed the basis for the development of the pragmatic perception task and therefore had to be collected in advance. The collection of the perception data took place in the Experimental Linguistics in Cologne (XLinC) lab of the Institute of German Language and Literature I at the University of Cologne.

Code-names

As was the case with the learner informants, a system of code-names was developed to protect the identity of the German native speakers. Participants were provided with a random number, followed by 'GER' used to denote German, followed by either 'MAS' or 'FEM' which indicates masculine or feminine. So, for example, the informant 25GERMAS is a male native speaker of German, whereas 19GERFEM is a female native speaker of German.

4.2 Research instruments

The present study used a cross-sectional design to investigate the grammar-pragmatics interface in adult L2 acquisition. In particular, the aim was to explore in depth the role of grammatical knowledge in L2 pragmatic development by examining how elementary and lower intermediate Syrian-Arabic learners of German acquire syntactic modification devices in requests and complaints. In addition, this study viewed pragmatic competence as a multifaceted construct and intended to establish developmental patterns among two subconstructs of pragmatic competence. The procedure followed therefore consisted of three essential steps, the combination of which set it apart from earlier research:

Step 1: Grammatical forms that are necessary for speech act modification in German (e.g., the *past tense*) were identified based on an analysis of native speaker data.

Step 2: Next, it was tested whether pragmalinguistic forms such as the *past tense* had already been acquired as a grammatical category by the learner informants. Based on their grammatical proficiency levels, the learners were then divided into two groups, namely elementary and lower intermediate learners.

Stage 3: Following this, it was investigated how the learners' use of grammatical forms such as the *past tense* developed as pragmatic modifiers. For instance, whether – in alignment with a rise in grammatical competence – the learners started detecting and producing the preterit form 'Ich *wollte* fragen, ob …' (I *wanted* to ask whether …) in requests.

One challenge in this research was to construct instruments that collect data on L2 grammatical competence, pragmatic production, and pragmatic perception via a single elicitation by use of precisely coordinated and comparable tasks. To meet this requirement, a multimethod approach was adopted which capitalized on the potential of three data collection methods: a language assessment test, a discourse completion task, and a pragmatic perception task. Each of these provided a unique perspective on the phenomena under investigation: the language assessment test assessed grammatical knowledge of those pragmalinguistic forms necessary for syntactic downgrading, the discourse completion task tested the learners' actual use, i.e., written as spoken production of these pragmalinguistic forms in a range of contexts and the pragmatic perception task tested the learners' noticing of these forms in minimal pairs of the former DCT items. These primary data sources were supplemented by three supporting instruments which had the subsidiary functions of either developing the instruments for the primary data collection (i.e., the assessment questionnaire) or helping with the selection of participants and interpretation of the primary data (i.e., learner and cultural differences questionnaires). An overview of the five main data collection instruments used in the present study and a preparatory instrument, i.e., the assessment questionnaire is provided in Table 19.

Table 19. Data collection instruments and data types in the present study

Data collection instrument	Type of data elicited
1. Learner questionnaire 1: Language skills	Factual / self-assessment data
2. Learner questionnaire 2: Language & Culture	Self-assessment data / metapragmatic data
3. Language assessment test	Grammatical data
4. Discourse completion task	Production data (requests and complaints)
5. Pragmatic perception task	Perception data (requests and complaints)
6. Assessment questionnaire	Metapragmatic data

Before I move on to a detailed description of the main data collection instruments in § 4.2.1 – 4.2.4, a rationale for selecting a cross-sectional design in the present study is provided in the following. When faced with the choice between a longitudinal and cross-sectional approach, I eventually decided on a study design with which L2 informants' grammatical and pragmatic development could be tracked, while avoiding changes in the composition of samples due to loss of

participants over time. During the selection of the study sample, I learned that most of the adult refugee-background learners worked in lower-paid and more precarious roles and lacked appropriate infrastructure such as housing and language classes that offer childcare. Due to ongoing integration challenges in Cologne/Germany, the relocation of larger numbers of participants over the period of a longitudinal investigation seemed likely. Apart from this, it was important for the researcher to realistically reimburse the learner participants for the time spent during the study participation. Thus, to avoid a high attrition rate in the present study whilst being able to provide financial rewards despite limited resources, a cross-sectional design was chosen which involved only one contact with the study population.

Notwithstanding the benefits that this design provided for the present study, certain limitations remain. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the data, this research does not allow for direct observation of developmental patterns over time. The same holds true for pragmatic learning in situ. This does not, however, imply that cross-sectional studies in ILP have not proven fruitful in illuminating aspects of interlanguage pragmatic development. Quite the contrary – by accounting for differences between learner groups from an interlanguage pragmatics perspective, change can be revealed at an aggregate level (cf. Rose 2000; Kasper & Rose 2002; Taguchi 2011; Al-Gahtani 2017). The present study thus offers insights into pragmatic development, as observed across two cross-sections, by extrapolating from differences in the areas of pragmatic production and perception. In what follows, the chapter begins with a presentation of the test methods used in this study. For each instrument, this includes a detailed description of item development, and an account of the development and refinement of the instrument by way of pre-testing. The chapter also provides a description of the pilot test before outlining the procedure of data collection. In § 4.2.1, the supporting instruments *Learner Questionnaires I & II* which helped with the selection of learner informants and interpretation of the primary data are addressed first.

4.2.1 Learner Questionnaires I & II

The Language Questionnaire was split into two separate questionnaires, i.e., Learner Questionnaire 1: *Language skills* and Learner Questionnaire 2: *Language & Culture* to ensure that participants were not alerted to the study's objective. The main function of both questionnaires was to collect (bio)data about the adult refugee-background learners that may be relevant to interpreting the findings of the study. In addition, background information from the respondents was used to gather information concerning their relative homogeneity. Learner participants were to react to both written instruments either by writing out answers or by selecting from among response alternatives. As elementary and lower intermediate learners generally have an imperfect control of the L2, giving questionnaires in the respondents' L1 can have a positive effect on the quality of the obtained data (cf. Dörnyei & Csizér 2012: 79; Wagner 2010: 34). Hence, to address potential language and literacy issues, the questionnaires were translated by an independent translator to Arabic (cf. Appendix 1-4). Both questionnaires were based on an established instrument developed by Barron (2003). Since her measures were developed for Irish learners of German who studied abroad, some of the items were changed so that they were more suitable to the forced migration context. All items were piloted for the specific learner population in this study (see § 4.2.5 for additional information on piloting). Apart from Learner Questionnaires I & II, three main data collection instruments were employed in the present study, the first of which, i.e., the Language Assessment Test is introduced in the next section.

4.2.2 Assessing grammatical ability: Language Assessment Test

The Language Assessment Test (henceforth LAT) was required to achieve two main goals in the present study: First, the LAT provided an independent analysis of learners' knowledge of specific grammatical subsystems. This data was needed to determine whether test-takers have the grammatical forms that allow them to make form-use associations. Second, the LAT was designed to distinguish learners who are at or above a particular mastery level of grammatical ability from those who are below it, in order to classify them as either elementary or lower intermediate learners. The stages of test design are outlined in the following. Here the steps of test development, pretesting issues and test analysis are detailed first

(cf. § 4.2.2.1). Following this, the main test characteristics of the LAT and the kinds of test tasks and items used to measure L2 grammatical knowledge are addressed in detail (cf. § 4.2.2.2).

4.2.2.1 Test development

If we wish to make inferences about grammatical ability on the basis of a language assessment test, it is a prerequisite to define what we mean by *grammar*, before attempting to specify components of grammatical knowledge for measurement purposes. The theoretical conceptualization of grammatical knowledge that formed the basis of the LAT is understood to consist of grammatical forms together with their literal and intended meanings at the sentential and supra-sentential levels. Both grammatical form and meaning are available to be accessed in language use (cf. Purpura 2004: 61, 74). In accordance with this conceptualization, L2 learners can make mistakes that relate to morphosyntactic form and/or morphosyntactic meaning, i.e., situations where a learner might know the form, but be unclear about the meaning and/or does not differentiate between the different types of meanings that grammatical forms encode. For this reason, grammatical forms were not treated as isolated linguistic features of language ability in the present study but were also assessed in relation to grammatical meaning (cf. Purpura 2004: 46).

Accordingly, the present investigation necessitated an instrument which tests both learners' knowledge of morphosyntactic structures and meanings. Over and above, the instrument had to measure specific grammatical knowledge rather than general grammatical knowledge since the investigation focused exclusively on those grammatical forms relevant for the realization of syntactic downgraders. What was needed was ergo a definition of the construct *ability to use specified grammatical structures accurately* which includes a list of the structures to be tested. In consideration of these requirements, those grammatical subsystems that have pragmalinguistic meaning in German had to first be identified.

A native speaker study of request and complaint modification was compiled to establish baseline intra-cultural norms for German (see § 4.1.2 for information on participants and § 4.2.3 for detailed information on the discourse completion task). The target pragmalinguistic forms found in the pragmatic productions of 46 native speaker informants were analyzed in terms of their grammatical suppliers.

Based on these results, it was decided to test a list of 13 grammatical features, all of which are crucial determinants for successful and appropriate realization of syntactic downgraders. The selected structures were use of negation, past tense, subjunctive, impersonal constructions (passives and indefinite pronouns) and forms of embedding (*dass*- and *aber*-clauses, indirect questions, and conditional clauses). Modal auxiliaries, a prominent feature of many request and complaint routine formulae were included in the LAT as well. The modal verbs tested in the LAT are *dürfen / may*, *können / can*, *mögen / to like*, *müssen / must*, *sollen / ought, should* and *wollen / want.* In addition, learners' knowledge of the basic sentence types (i.e., declarative, interrogative, and imperative) was tested, since their mastery is regarded as a precondition for occurrence of syntactic downgraders in head acts (cf. Trosborg 1995). An overview of the 13 grammatical forms is provided in Table 20. Table 20 also specifies at which integration course level (i.e., A1, A2, B1) each grammatical feature is taught. This specification is based on an analysis of nine textbooks that have been approved for use in German integration courses.[81]

Table 20. Categorization of grammatical suppliers in syntactic downgraders

Grammatical form	Integration course level	Example (taken from GNS DCT data)
Sentence types		
Declarative	A1	Der Rohrbruch muss sofort repariert werden. (The burst pipe needs to be repaired immediately.) (Burst pipe, 3GERMAS)
Interrogative	A1	Könntest du dich um meine Katze kümmern? (Could you take care of my cat?) (Cat, 23GERFEM)
Imperative	A1	Räum die blöde Küche auf! (Tidy up the stupid kitchen!) (Dirty kitchen, 38GERFEM)
Embedding		
aber-clause (*but*-clause)	A1	Ich will nicht Ihre Kompetenz in Frage stellen, *aber* haben Sie sich eventuell vertan? (I don't want to question your competence, *but* have you perhaps made a mistake?) (Rash, 20GERFEM)
dass-clause (*that*-clause)	A2	Ich glaube nicht, *dass* ich auf Dauer so viele Überstunden machen kann. (I don't think *that* I can work so many extra hours in the long run.) (Overtime, 9GERFEM) Wäre es möglich, *dass* du meine Katze fütterst? (Would it be possible *that* you feed my cat?) (Cat, 1GERFEM)

[81] The following textbooks have been consulted: Braun et al. (2016a, 2016b); Lemcke et al. (2013); Kaufmann et al. (2014); Böschel et al. (2010); Böschel et al. (2011); Böschel & Dusemund-Brackhahn (2012a, 2012b); Buscha et al. (2010). For a complete list of approved textbooks see Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2022).

Indirect question	A2 – B1	Ich wollte dich fragen, *ob* es dir was ausmachen würde, Mio zu füttern? (I wanted to ask *whether* you'd mind feeding Mio?) (Cat, 10GERFEM)
Conditional clause	A2 – B1	Diese dauerhaften Überstunden sind nicht in Ordnung, *wenn* ich für diese nicht bezahlt werde. (These permanent extra hours are not okay *if* I don't get paid for them.) (Overtime, 21GERMAS) Würde es dir etwas ausmachen, *wenn* du eventuell für 8 Tage meine Katze versorgen würdest? (Would you mind possibly taking care of my cat for 8 days?) (Cat, 5GERFEM)
Impersonal constructions		
Passive	A2 – B1	Ich erwarte, dass der Schaden umgehend *behoben wird*. (I expect the damage *to be repaired* immediately.) (Burst pipe, 16GERMAS) Der Rohrbruch *muss* sofort *repariert werden*. (The burst pipe *needs to be repaired* immediately.) (Burst pipe, 3GERMAS)
Indefinite pronoun (*man / one jemand / somebody*)	A2 – B1	Bin so 8 Tage weg und *jemand* müsste so lange meine Katze füttern. (Will be away for about 8 days and *someone* would need to feed my cat for that time.) (Cat, 18GERFEM) Diese Anhäufungen von Arbeit kann *man* nicht in der vorgesehenen Zeit schaffen. (This accumulation of work *one* cannot manage in the allotted time.) (Overtime, 4GERFEM)
Additional forms		
Negation	A1	Ich finde es *nicht* in Ordnung, dass ich den Schaden selbst bezahlen soll. (I *don't* think it is okay that I am supposed to pay for the damage myself.) (Heating, 8GERFEM) Gibt es *keine* Möglichkeit, dass sich früher darum gekümmert wird? (Is there *no* chance that it can be taken care of sooner?) (Broken pipe, 5GERFEM)
Past tense	A2	Ich *wollte* dich fragen, ob du dich um Teddy kümmern könntest? (I *wanted* to ask you whether you could take care of Teddy?) (Cat, 2GERFEM) Das *war* echt unmöglich von dir. (That *was* really inappropriate of you.) (Oral presentation, 2GERFEM)
Subjunctive	A2 – B1	*Würdest* du das für mich machen? (*Would* you do that for me?) (Cat, 2GERFEM) *Hättest* du Zeit & Lust? (*Would* you have the time & *would* you like to?) (Cat, 7GERFEM) Als Ärztin *sollten* Sie sowas doch wissen. (As a doctor you *should* know this kind of thing.) (Rash, 7GERFEM)
Modal verbs	A2 – B1	Ich *wollte* dich fragen, ob du dich um Teddy kümmern *könntest*? (I *wanted* to ask you whether you *could* take care of Teddy?) (Cat, 2GERFEM) Der Rohrbruch *muss* sofort repariert werden. (The burst pipe *needs* to be repaired immediately.) (Burst pipe, 3GERMAS)
Combinations of the above	A1 – B1	Diese dauerhaften Überstunden sind *nicht* in Ordnung, *wenn* ich für diese nicht *bezahlt werde*. (These permanent extra hours are *not* okay *if* I don't *get paid* for them.) (Overtime, 21GERMAS) Gibt es *keine* Möglichkeit, dass sich früher darum *gekümmert wird*? (Is there *no* chance that it will be taken care of sooner?) (Broken pipe, 5GERFEM)

The next task to be undertaken was to find a standardized and reliable large-scale language assessment test that was compatible with the present study's testing needs. An analysis of the most widely taken tests for German as a second language revealed test designs that favor assessing language performance in terms of independent and integrated skills, thus, eliminating the grammar/structure section. To illustrate this, these tests measure skill categories such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing but do not include sections that focus explicitly and exclusively on grammatical knowledge and ability. The same holds true for proficiency tests and comprehensive examinations administered by German institutions. Somewhat different from the former test types, *placement tests* often measure general language ability, knowledge of grammar (especially syntax and morphology) and semantics (i.e., vocabulary).[82] The German placement tests examined were suitable in the general area of language ability measured. None of them, however, contained a complete sample of the thirteen grammatical structures and skills specified in the afore-mentioned analysis. Considering that the test tasks analyzed during the systematic review were either irrelevant for, or not fully representative of the domain of content to be assessed, it can be concluded that none of the above-named assessment types were adequate for the present study. Under these circumstances, it was preferable to design, develop, evaluate, and administer a new language assessment test.

After test construction of the LAT was complete, a pretest was run with 15 native speakers of German (12 women, 3 men) who ranged from 26 to 32 years old, the average age being 28 years.[83] All informants were PhD students at the Graduate School for the Humanities Cologne and they participated in the test during a research class. Respondents were told explicitly that the pretest is a practice run, and in addition to completing the LAT they were asked to take a couple of questions into consideration. These questions mainly related to clarity of rubrics, examples, and items, as well as to the exclusion of topical knowledge and bias from the test constructs (e.g., in terms of culture, gender, age, etc.). Participants answered all items without consulting the key, as if taking the test. The aim was to identify items where there is more than one possible correct

[82] Placement tests are typically given to language learners who enter an educational institution to determine their proficiency in a second language for the purpose of assignment to an appropriate course level.
[83] The reader is referred to § 4.2.5 for information on the pilot testing program.

answer, unclear or badly phrased options, implausible distractors or distractors which stand out due to word length or part of speech, and generally items which are difficult or unclear (cf. Alderson et al. 1995). After completion of the questionnaire, a group discussion followed where respondents were given the opportunity to explain reactions to instructions, item types, question forms, wording, and order. In addition, they were asked to provide further suggestions. Where required, improvements were made, and revised items retested. The final form of the Language Assessment Test is presented in the next section, § 4.2.2.2.

4.2.2.2 Collecting data on grammatical competence: the LAT

The LAT is a three-level grammar test that has been carefully designed to measure a precise combination of grammatical competencies over the CEFR levels A1, A2 and B1. The constructs to be measured follow the grammar learning progression in licensed German as a foreign language textbooks so that test tasks become progressively more difficult, starting with items that test grammatical ability at level A1 and moving on to language use tasks from levels A2 and B1 (for an overview of grammatical forms in reference to language-level standards see Table 20).[84] Learners were explicitly requested to omit those items that test unknown grammatical forms in order to eliminate guessing as much as possible. Upon completion of the test, it was then possible to assess learners' skills for each of the separate grammar areas being tested.

For the actual test construction, it was decided to follow the model of assessment tests that have demonstrated to be valid for similar purposes and which are appropriate for the target population. More specifically, test tasks in the LAT were modelled on a selection of task-types from L2 placement tests, one of these being the centralized placement test for German integration courses (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees).[85] In addition, existing grammar exercises and exam preparation materials from textbooks that were licensed for use in

[84] The test reflects to some extent the integration course syllabus content, in the form of teaching and learning objectives or targets. The following textbooks have been consulted: Braun et al. (2016a), (2016b); Lemcke et al. (2013); Kaufmann et al. (2014); Böschel et al. (2010); Böschel et al. (2011); Böschel & Dusemund-Brackhahn (2012a), (2012b); Buscha et al. (2010). For a complete list of approved textbooks for German integration courses see Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (2022).

[85] The *centralized placement test for German integration courses* by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is not publicly available. Access to a printout version of the test was provided by the *Volkshochschule Köln / adult education center Cologne*.

integration courses provided the templates for developing the actual test tasks.[86] These materials were further consulted in the search for suitable text topics and common language use tasks to diversify item types. Overall, tasks were taken from the "language instruction domain" (Bachman & Palmer 1996: 44). It was believed that by following the model of widely recognized tests which have been developed specifically for learners who resemble the study participants, the latter would be familiar with the test form and task characteristics. The intent was to reduce the effect of test- and task-specific knowledge on participants' overall grammar scores, as low proficiency L2 learners might experience cognitive overload when needing to respond to novel test formats.

Moreover, even though the study participants had expertise in relatively diverse areas of topical knowledge, it was not possible to predict whether any areas of topical knowledge were shared by all test-takers (cf. Bachman & Palmer 1996). Consequently, topical knowledge was excluded from the test constructs in an effort to guarantee fairness in testing.[87] Another point considered was that instruments which are written in the target language are sensitive to overall proficiency effects. Those learners who have higher proficiency levels in German will be able to interpret written language better and therefore respond nonrandomly (cf. Carrell 1991; Kasper & Schmidt 1996).[88] A couple of steps were therefore taken to counteract proficiency-based effects: first, general instructions for the LAT were presented in the test-takers' native language Arabic. For each new task, more specific instructions were then provided in the test and each new set of items was preceded by an example (cf. Alderson et al. 1995; Bachman & Palmer 1996; Drackert 2015). Second, as the aim was to make inferences exclusively about learners' knowledge of specific grammatical forms, the processing required in LAT tasks should only involve a very narrow range of

[86] Materials consulted are EB Zürich (2017); Ernst Klett Sprachen (2015); Fandrych & Tallowitz (2016: 169); Haubfleisch (2013); Hueber Verlag (2009, 2010); Moritz (2016); Penning (2010) and Rusch & Schmitz (2007: 52).

[87] Particularly ruled out were topics such as cultural or local customs which may disadvantage adult learners with refugee backgrounds. The same applies for topics which may offend or distress the current group of test-takers, such as war, death, politics, or religious beliefs, to name just a few (cf. Association of language testers in Europe (ALTE) 2011; Bachman & Palmer 1996).

[88] The Learner Questionnaire 1 (*Language skills*) was administered to ensure a high level of uniformity with regard to test-takers' reading ability: All study participants had reached a high reading comprehension competency in their native language Arabic and in at least one more language that uses the Latin script, i.e., mostly English. Consequently, an extra assessment of participants' L2 reading abilities was not required for the given test or for the tests described in the following.

areas of general language knowledge. The entire text of the LAT (i.e., both rubrics and items) thus fell within the A1 and A2 list of lexis and structures for German integration courses. Generally, the language used in the rubrics was simpler than that in the items themselves, always designed with the least proficient test-taker in mind (for A1, A2 and B1 lists see Glaboniat et al. 2013; Hennemann et al. 2015; Perlmann-Balme & Kiefer 2022). Where relevant, Arabic translations of certain words and phrases were provided in brackets. Considering that test-takers were not expected to have any special background knowledge and that the LAT tasks were matched with their L2 proficiency levels, all score-based inferences are limited to grammatical knowledge.

Adult learners' knowledge of L2 grammar might be inferred from their ability to construct grammatically appropriate sentences in speech and writing, to supply a grammatically accurate word or phrase in a paragraph or dialogue, or to select a grammatically correct answer from a range of options on a multiple-choice test, amongst other things (cf. Purpura 2004: 4). This being said, the choice of item and task types depends on the actual type of grammatical knowledge being assessed. For the given test, this included the measurement of study participants' *explicit* knowledge of a fixed set of morphosyntactic forms and meaning. Within this frame of reference, *explicit grammatical knowledge* is understood to refer to "conscious knowledge about a language (rules, conventions of use, [meanings]) that learners can often verbalize. Accessing this knowledge is slow because it requires controlled processing" (Storch 2010: 206). Accordingly, performance, such as the co-construction of meaning in interaction was excluded from testing. The LAT instead measured learners' ability to apply forms in contexts where fluent and spontaneous language use was not required and where time could be taken to figure out the answers (cf. Purpura 2004: 45). The intent was to prevent low proficiency learners' grammatical ability from being significantly impacted by both the contextual and the interpretative demands of *live* interaction. Inferences from the LAT results were then taken to determine to what degree learners had mastered the chosen grammar points. They did not, however,

necessarily indicate whether learners were able to employ the same forms automatically in spontaneous speech (cf. Purpura 2004: 45).[89]

The LAT contained a 63-item section on grammar. Items were further bundled into ten grammatical test tasks which were designed to elicit scorable grammatical performance within the target language use domain (cf. Appendix 5). A general description of the LAT is provided in Table 21.

Table 21. General description of LAT

General description	
Timing	No time constraints were given
No. of parts	There are three parts. Part 1 tests grammatical forms at level A1 Part 2 tests grammatical forms at level A2 Part 3 tests grammatical forms at level B1
No. of questions **No. of items**	10 63
Total marks **Rating 1** **Rating 2**	73 marks 52 – 73 marks (learner group II: lower intermediate, mean 61 / median 62) 24 – 51 marks (learner group I: elementary, mean 43 / median 42)
Task types	Matching task Cued gap-filling task 4-option multiple choice Ordering Task
Answer format	Selected and limited production responses: Test-takers indicate their answer by ticking a box, marking matching pairs, or writing a word or a single sentence on the answer-sheet
Marks	Questions carry either one or two mark(s)

[89] The assessment of learners' *explicit* grammatical knowledge did not pose a problem for the present research since speech act data was also elicited in the written modality by use of an instrument which measured offline (pragmatic) knowledge in a non-interactive format.

Table 22. LAT format: description of test parts

Format			No. of Qs.	Test focus	Marks
A1	No. 1	A **matching task** involving single sentences	5	**Grammatical meaning** - Interrogative sentences	5
A1	No. 2	A **cued gap-filling task** involving single sentences	4	**Grammatical form** - Word order of negated declarative and interrogative sentences - Choice of negator (*kein / no, nicht / no, not*) (*2 marks per item*)	8
A1	No. 3	A **four-option multiple choice task** involving single sentences	10	**Grammatical form & meaning** - Word order of declarative sentences - Word order and meaning of imperative sentences - Meaning of negation - Responding to negative questions	10
A1	No. 4	An **ordering task** which requires placing elements from a finite set in a correct order	5	**Grammatical form** - Word order of interrogative sentences	5
A2	No. 5	An **ordering task** which requires placing elements from a finite set in a correct order	4	**Grammatical form** - Word order of subordinate clauses (*dass*-clause, *aber*-clause, indirect question, conditional clause)	4
A2	No. 6	A **four-option multiple choice task** involving a single text; 61 words[90]	4	**Grammatical form & meaning** - Preterite tense form - Meaning of modal verbs	4
A2	No. 7	A **four-option multiple choice task** involving single sentences	13	**Grammatical form & meaning** - Form and meaning of modal verbs in the present tense (*2 marks per item*) - Meaning, verb structure and word order in passives (*1 mark per item*) - Meaning of indefinite pronouns and subjunctives (*1 mark per item*)	19
A2	No. 8	A **four-option multiple choice task** involving two texts; 137 words	10	**Grammatical meaning** - *dass*-clause, *aber*-clause, indirect question, conditional clause - passives - subjunctive forms of *mögen / want* and *können / can* - preterite forms of *wollen / want* and *haben / have*	10

[90] Items in test tasks 6, 8, and 10 have a strong focus on grammatical meaning. Here, multiple-choice items were presented in context, as "[t]he presentation of context will often reduce the possibilities of ambiguity" (Alderson et al. 1995: 48). The intent is to avoid study participants getting an item wrong although they are capable of the grammatical knowledge required.

B1	No. 9	A **four-option multiple choice task** involving single sentences	2	**Grammatical form** - Passive voice with modals	2
B1	No. 10	A **four-option multiple choice task** involving one text; 61 words	6	**Grammatical form & meaning** Form and meaning of: - Subjunctive verb forms - Unreal condition in present tense (conditional cause + subjunctive)	6

For item construction, it was taken into account that not all assessment procedures may accommodate all test-takers in the same way. It follows that the task types chosen for testing grammatical ability may themselves affect the learners' score, which is commonly referred to as the *method effect* (cf. Alderson et al. 1995: 44-45). One objective in the LAT was therefore to increase the chances that the test is not biased towards one particular method or one particular sort of learner. In order to reduce the method effect's influence as much as possible, four different task types were included in the LAT, i.e., *matching tasks*, *cued gap-filling tasks*, *four-option multiple choice tasks* (including either single sentences or short texts) and *ordering tasks*.[91] Whenever feasible, items were used that cover some desired grammatical ability, and then another item testing the same ability by use of a different task type was included in the LAT (cf. Alderson et al. 1995: 44-45). Furthermore, multiple-choice or matching tasks in the LAT always offered four or more response options to minimize the probability of study participants reaching a higher performance threshold by guessing as a test strategy. An overview of task types and grammatical areas tested is provided in Table 22. Table 22 further specifies for which structures morphosyntactic form and meaning were tested individually or in an integrated fashion. Items testing grammatical meaning allowed for inferences to be drawn with respect to learners' ability to recognize forms that convey meaning. Regarding the distribution of items according to sections, it was decided to follow Bachman & Palmer's (1996) approach, who state that "[d]ifferent types of test tasks may be appropriate for different areas of language ability for a given test purpose or group of test-takers, and these tasks may vary in their efficiency in terms of adequately measuring the specific area" (1996: 187). For this reason, there was not a one-to-one relationship between the

[91] As the target language use domain to which I wish to generalize is instructional and the task selection derives mainly from the L2 classroom, selected-response tasks of grammatical form (e.g., multiple-choice tasks) and limited production tasks (e.g., gap-filling activities) are not lacking in authenticity.

number of tasks and items in each of the three LAT sections. As can be seen in Table 22, although all 13 grammatical structures are of equal importance for the given study, there were more tasks and items in part 1 (A1) and part 2 (A2) than in part 3 (B1). On the one hand, this reflects the perception of the test developer that grammar tasks from level B1 are relatively more difficult for the intended test-takers (cf. Association of language testers in Europe (ALTE) 2011). On the other hand, the distribution is of course also largely due to the alignment with the integration course syllabus.

In terms of scoring, the following guidelines were established: testing included grammatical form and grammatical meaning, so that both areas were scored separately on the LAT. A maximum of 73 marks could be earned. For each item, one point was awarded to each correct answer, and no points for incorrect answers. There were two exceptions to this: Items in task number 2 tested for both choice of correct negator and correct word order. Items in task number 7 tested for both correct form and meaning of modal auxiliaries. Since we had two criteria for correctness, two right/wrong scores were assigned for each item, so that credit for full or partial mastery of the feature could be given. Moreover, the LAT is a closed-ended questionnaire, which means that all possible answers were determined by the researcher and provided to the participants. Consequently, no weight was given to features such as spelling, punctuation, and formatting. Once the LAT had been marked, it was possible to calculate, for each participant, a score, either to arrive at a total for each section, a total for the whole test, or both. Furthermore, since the LAT followed a criterion-referenced approach, the learners' performance was evaluated with respect to a fixed, absolute standard (cf. Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) 2011; Green 2014; Tremblay 2011). The LAT thus reported results in terms of two levels, i.e., either elementary or lower intermediate learner level (see Table 22 for marks and ratings). In order to establish links between adult refugee-background learners' test performances, interpretations of those performances, and the decisions made as a result, a *standard setting* was introduced which was based on the L2 data taken from two pilot studies (see § 4.2.5 for information on pilot testing).

4.2.3 Pragmatics assessment I: Discourse Completion Task

This section begins with a selective account of the methods available for data collection in speech act research and their evaluation regarding the measurement of pragmatic competence. For the present purposes, pragmatic competence was understood as underlying knowledge of form-function-context mappings which is reflected by the size of the learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire and their ability to assess contextual parameters' impact on linguistic choice (cf. Taguchi 2018; § 2.1.1). Accordingly, a pragmatic production task was needed which helped in developing an understanding of the range of modification devices available to L2 learners, their ability to evaluate changing contexts and select appropriate resources accordingly. The focus was on a frequency-based, utterance-level analysis of the speech acts request and complaint. This data was then used to consider the impact of grammatical knowledge in the choice of modification devices from an acquisitional perspective. Given the focus of interest on pragmatic production data on the level of the speech act, the available options of data-collection methods could roughly be subdivided into (a) naturalistic recordings and (b) two instruments that elicit simulated data under controlled conditions, i.e., role plays and production questionnaires.[92] Of these possibilities, a production questionnaire, namely the written discourse completion task (henceforth DCT) was chosen for the present study. The aim of § 4.2.3.1 is to provide, through selective reference to some of the data types used in ILP research, a brief account of the theoretical (and practical) basis from which the present methodological choice derived. The remainder of § 4.2.3.2 is devoted to an overview of the writing and pretesting of the test items, and § 4.2.3.3 provides an outline of the DCT designed for the present study. Last, § 4.2.3.4 comments on the coding categories applied.

4.2.3.1 Data collection methods in speech act production

Intuitively, the use of naturally occurring speech act data seems to be most promising for studying the development of L2 pragmatics. Authentic data range

[92] The methods commonly utilized to collect data for experimental purposes in ILP research have been well documented, for review papers and chapters see Kasper (2000); Kasper & Dahl (1991); Kasper & Rose 2002; Bardovi-Harlig & Shin (2014); Culpeper et al. (2018); Brown (2012); Félix-Brasdefer (2010); Koike & Félix-Brasdefer (2012); Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker (2017); Martínez-Flor & Ester Usó-Juan (2011); Roever (2011), (2013); Cohen (2014); Alcón Soler & Martínez Flor (2008a); Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013) and Taguchi (2018).

from everyday conversations, institutional talk (e.g., student-professor interaction), computer-mediated communication (e.g., e-mails and interactions in virtual environments) to published texts (cf. Nguyen 2019). However, a major challenge faced when studying language in naturally occurring contexts is to find ways of documenting authentic instances of speech acts that involve high degrees of face-threat. For instance, when investigating direct complaints, the use of naturalistic data may result in an immense amount of analysis that yields only a few examples of the particular act under study (cf. Hartley 1998: 19; Félix-Brasdefer 2010; Taguchi 2018). Not to forget that if language is studied in naturally occurring situations, there is little experimental control. It may then be difficult to account for the wide range of factors that are potentially influencing the learners' use of German, such as age, social background, language course(s) attended, L2 proficiency level and most importantly, the L2 grammatical competence level of the speakers (cf. Hartley 1998; Barodvi-Harlig 2013a; Golato 2017). Apart from this, spontaneous verbal interaction data does not allow for the repetition of the data collection procedure within the same contextual conditions, i.e., without any variations (cf. Taguchi 2018). Comparability of data sets across groups is, however, of major importance in this investigation. Due to a lack of research in the area of complaint modification, the native speaker data is needed in the present study as a baseline regarding the range and types of syntactic modifiers used in German. Equally important, adult refugee-background learners' pragmatic knowledge needs to be examined across two grammatical proficiency levels so as to explore the role of grammatical knowledge in L2 pragmatic development in depth. As the afore-mentioned points are decisive for the success of the current research, the use of naturally occurring speech act data was decided against.

An alternative approach to data collection that was subsequently considered for the present investigation is the role play, i.e., a simulation of a social encounter. A role play is performed by two or more speakers and elicited through a short scenario description which typically includes information about the setting, the starting point of the conversation and speaker characteristics (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002; Bardovi-Harlig 2013; Nguyen 2019). When compared to naturally occurring speech data, the use of role plays as a data collection instrument leads to the loss of real-world consequences and authenticity, but it

retains the other characteristics of interaction (cf. Golato 2003; Salazar-Campillo 2008; Al-Gahtani & Roever 2012; Roever et al. 2014). Kasper & Dahl argue that role plays "represent oral production, full operation of the turn-taking mechanism, impromptu planning decisions contingent on interlocutor input, and hence negotiation of global and local goals, including negotiation of meaning" (1991: 228). Due to the complexity and spontaneity of live interactions, factors such as stress, (time-)pressure or the experience of cognitive overload may, however, result in problems of access during role-plays. In fact, novice learners may end up producing pragmatically inappropriate utterances in spite of them having the relevant declarative knowledge. This is of particular relevance when investigating the speech act of a complaint which does not have a predetermined, conventionalized form and which is therefore cognitively more demanding than a request. Moreover, beginners regularly fall back on non-verbal actions (e.g., gesture, facial expressions, posture) to convey warmth, empathy, and politeness during face-to-face interactions that are considered taxing. In this process, complex forms of modification such as syntactic downgraders may be replaced by such nonlinguistic forms. In order to prevent developments in pragmatic knowledge being concealed during dynamic interaction (e.g., replacing them with nonverbal actions or prosodic resources that convey pragmatic meanings), it was decided to adopt speech act theory's sentence-based and speaker-oriented mode of analysis for the present study (cf. § 2.2.3). From this follows that learners' online knowledge and their ability for joint, real-life performance – as tested in role-plays – took a backseat in the present study. Instead, participants were given the chance to pre-plan their actions and their speech act realizations were subsequently collected in isolation from the discursive context. The rationale for this decision was to provide beginner level learners with an experimental set-up that ensured knowledge display.

After having weighed up the benefits and shortcomings of the data collection methods discussed so far, it was decided to employ a DCT, which has proven particularly useful for the study of speech act and (im)politeness phenomena in cross-cultural and interlanguage contexts. In fact, the DCT is still the most frequently employed method in ILP research, used to collect pragmatic production data among native speakers and language learners alike (cf. Nguyen 2019). This is because it allows for the elicitation of large amounts of fully comparable speech

act data under controlled conditions. In doing so, data is collected with the aim of measuring both offline pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge in a non-interactive format (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2010, 2016; Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker 2017). DCTs are typically administered in paper-and-pencil or computer format and consist of short situational descriptions which are designed to elicit a particular speech act in the written modality (cf. Kasper & Dahl 1991; Kasper & Rose 2002; Félix-Brasdefer 2010). The example below shows a DCT prompt from the CCSARP, i.e., one of the early studies that used a written DCT instrument in speech act research:

(1) *At the university*
Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith's notes.
Ann: _____
Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.
(Blum-Kulka et al. 1989b: 14)

The scenario description provides information about the setting, topic, and goal of the interaction and further adds information about the interlocutors, such as their social distance and dominance relation, thereby allowing for controlled variation of such contextual factors. The length of situational descriptions varies across studies, with longer ones providing more contextualization but shorter ones having the advantage of being easier to process for L2 learners (cf. Billmyer & Varghese 2000; Ogiermann 2018). Informants are then asked to imagine the scenario described and react to it by writing down a verbal response, i.e., what they believe they would *say* in the situation at hand. There is no added time pressure, so that informants are given sufficient time to access relevant pragmatic information from memory and to pre-plan their verbal response accordingly (cf. Kasper 2000; Ellis 2004).

Studies by Wigglesworth (1997), Mehnert (1998), Yuan & Ellis (2003) and Salazar-Campillo (2008) suggest that planning time reduces the anxiety of face-to-face encounters in the target language so that the quality of learners' pragmatic output is positively influenced. Salazar-Campillo (2008) for instance finds that L2 learners use almost twice as many modification devices in a DCT task when compared to the same role play task, due to the fact that study participants have ample time to reflect on their production. Working with a DCT thus allows the

researcher to assess the learners' pragmatic knowledge more directly, as the instrument exerts less pressure on learners' linguistic systems or cognitive processing. Moreover, since DCTs can be designed to elicit numerous occurrences of any speech act across a multitude of situations, they allow for the documentation of "a wide range of semantic formulae by which a given speech act can be implemented" (Ogiermann 2018: 292). This is, of course, of relevance for the study of pragmatic productions by learner groups (such as Syrian Arabic refugee-background learners of German) that have not been investigated thoroughly in ILP research or when studying under-researched speech acts such as direct complaints which have not been described properly in German. Equally important, the inclusion of socio-contextually varied situations in DCTs ensures the display of a wider repertoire of lexical and syntactic mitigations (cf. Taguchi & Roever 2017). Since different situational dynamics necessitate different ways of requesting and complaining, learners need to style shift from one context to another. More specifically, they "need to move away from the overreliance on one form expressing an illocutionary force by expanding their linguistic repertoire to include multiple forms at their disposal so [that] they can express meaning in different nuances across situations" (Taguchi 2018: 19).[93] Finally, the discourse completion task allows the researcher to collect comparable speech act data: Since the same items can be completed by all groups of informants, i.e., native speakers, elementary and intermediate level learners of German, the data is comparable across (inter)language and L2 grammatical proficiency levels (cf. Kraft & Geluykens 2002: 232; Eisenstein & Bodman 1986; Ogiermann 2018). As the most-commonly employed instrument for collecting speech-act production data, the DCT subsequently allows for a comparison with both native speaker and learner data from numerous other request and complaint studies.

Irrespective of the many advantages that the DCT offers, there are also a number of methodological downsides of which it is important to be aware and, if necessary, to take account of in the analysis: First of all, it is often argued that a shift away from ethnographic data in cross-sectional studies and concomitantly the turn towards use of discourse completion tasks entails that "even those informants categorized as beginners or of low proficiency are not true beginners

[93] With regard to the research question at hand, this is a clear advantage that DCTs have over role-plays: Role plays usually include less situations than DCTs since interacting with the same partner in one setting numerous times might produce a practice effect (cf. Taguchi 2018; Nguyen 2019).

since a certain level of proficiency is required to complete such tasks as production questionnaires [or] multiple choice questionnaires" (Barron 2003: 29; see also Kasper & Rose 1999: 87). On a related note, Bardovi-Harlig & Shin (2014: 37) advocate for the use of oral data in ILP studies when working with low proficiency learners. According to their line of argumentation, written questionnaires are more likely to miss certain aspects of spoken language, such as (un)filled pauses or the use of hesitation markers (see also Vilar-Beltrán 2008: 134; Schauer 2009: 175-176). Yuan (2001) adds repetitions, inversions, and omissions to the list of internal modifiers that can be observed more frequently in naturally occurring data.

While it is acknowledged that the somewhat less complex data elicited by written instruments may present a limitation in cases where research focuses particularly on the study of interaction, it was by no means a negative factor for the present investigation. In fact, the exclusion of typical features of spoken language such as pauses or hesitation markers allowed for a targeted investigation of those forms of internal modification that stand at the center of the present research, namely syntactic downgraders. With regard to the first point of criticism, i.e., the exclusion of novice learners from written elicitation instruments, it can be stated that the current DCT was specifically designed to ensure comprehension and active participation on the part of low proficiency learners and to counteract the effects of written prompts on learner informants. The present study thus managed the balancing act between using a written elicitation instrument and including 'true' beginner or elementary learner informants whose overall L2 competence corresponded roughly to the A2 level.

As has already been hinted at above, ILP studies demonstrate that completing a written task such as a DCT involves different cognitive processes than speaking (cf. Cohen & Olshtain 1994). It requires participants to "recall pragmatic information from memory and report rather than use it" (Barron 2003: 85). Consequently, one of the main criticisms of discourse completion tasks is that informants' responses to DCT items do not necessarily reflect what they would *actually say* if they found themselves in the chosen scenarios. Instead, they rather represent what informants *think* they would say (cf. Beebe & Cummings 1996; Golato 2003; Roever 2008; Schneider 2011; Roever et al. 2014). A related point to consider comes from Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker who state that DCTs

"measure what the participants *know*, rather than how they *use* their ability to interact with an interlocutor" (2017: 29, emphasis in the original). When compared to naturally occurring speech act data, DCT data may differ with regard to the actual wording used, the range of formulae and strategies as well as the length of the response or the number of turns used, the depth of emotion (affecting tone, content and form of linguistic performance) and the actual rate of occurrence of a particular speech act (cf. Bodman & Eisenstein 19881; Beebe & Cummings 1996; Hassall 1997; Golato 2003, 2017; Walkinshaw 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2013). Importantly, this finding does not necessarily invalidate DCT data for the present purposes. While not comparable to real-life realizations, Kasper & Rose (2002) point out that DCTs can nevertheless provide pertinent information regarding learners' pragmalinguistic and metapragmatic knowledge on the specific pragmatic feature under investigation. For instance, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2013) finds that naturally occurring requests and DCT request data display similar trends in terms of directness and internal modification, thus indicating that "*to a certain extent*, the WDCT requests represent an approximation to the naturally occurring requests" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2013: 33, emphasis in the original). Kasper hence recommends the choice of a DCT when the objective of the investigation is "to inform the speakers' pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategic and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategies and linguistic choices are appropriate" (2000: 329). Schneider (2011) further adds that it is by "abstracting away the uncontrollable accidentalities and often inaccessible idiosyncrasies of actual performance" that the data become maximally comparable (2011: 30). Given that the aim of the present study was to elicit participants' knowledge of normative speech act expressions, in particular their explicit pragmatic knowledge of the essential elements of syntactic downgrading in accordance with changing social parameters, the DCT as a non-interactive elicitation technique was suitable for the present research. Whether the learner informants would use the exact same expressions once they found themselves in the described scenarios is not crucial as long as they judge their responses as socially and culturally appropriate (cf. Ogiermann 2018: 233). Consequently, elicitation of explicit knowledge of pragmatic issues (the main interest in this

study) rather than of authentic face-to-face interactions was facilitated.

Summing up, it was decided to employ a DCT because it is the one instrument that best measures the intended hypothetical construct, namely learners' pragmatic competence with regard to the appropriate use of syntactic downgrading in requests and complaints. As my interest lay in pragmatic development, the DCT allowed for the comparability of speech act performance across learners, controlling variables that are known to influence pragmatic learning, such as the level of grammatical proficiency. From this follows that the DCT ensured the appropriate interpretation and consistency of the results. It should however be taken into account that the decision to focus on knowledge rather than performance of speech act modifiers limits the range of conclusions that can be drawn from the results for adult refugee-background learners' actual language use in real-life interactions.

4.2.3.2 Test development

Developing the DCT involved the writing, pretesting, and revising of the test items in paper-and-pencil format, shooting the pictures and piloting the final items to be used with the study participants (see § 4.2.5 for piloting testing). As comparable scenarios were used for both the production and perception study, most of the test development stages also involved the drawing up of items for the pragmatic perception task, which was developed subsequently (cf. § 4.2.4). In what follows, I first outline some relevant steps taken in item writing and then review how the results of pretesting have been applied to the further test development.

Test development

One of the most central steps in developing both pragmatic production and perception studies is to come up with realistic and familiar scenarios. Participants' responses are more likely to be an accurate representation of their speech behavior if the hypothetical scenarios are easy for them to imagine. Equally important, L2 learners who have not experienced certain interactive scenarios are more inclined to guess at a response or to opt out altogether, rather than producing a speech act

based on previous experience (cf. Nickels 2006; Walkinshaw 2009).[94] In order to determine situations that adult refugee-background learners are likely to experience in Germany, five Syrian Arabic native speakers as well as two integration course teachers were consulted. They matched the study participants with regard to their distribution of age and gender. The informants were asked to report on typical everyday situations in which the target group either realizes a direct complaint or a request in Germany. Following this, cross-cultural differences were discussed for each scenario so as to ensure that the same situation elicits a complaint or request in both Germany and Syria (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989c; Wolfson et al. 1989). Having gathered this input, I then analyzed the 'Framework Curriculum for Integration Courses – German as a Second Language' (Kaufmann 2016) and identified all learning objectives that include requests and complaints, as well as the situations in which learners are supposed to be able to use them. Typical situations in which refugee newcomers make use of the chosen speech acts include for example the German language course, living and professional situations, rental matters, or doctor's appointments. Items for the present study were then written down based on the outcome of the afore-mentioned measures. In creating the situations, the sociopragmatic variables *social distance* and *social dominance* included in the items were considered. For each request and complaint item, four possible scenarios were created within the social parameters to increase the likelihood of identifying appropriate items.

Pre-testing the discourse completion task

Pretesting the request and complaint items involved two tests, *Pretest DCT I* and *Pretest DCT II* which were administered consecutively. The sample consisted of 48 monolingual speakers of German, 36 of whom were recruited for the first and 12 for the second round of pretesting. Gender was balanced in both tests, the average age being 27 years. At the time of data collection, all participants were enrolled as full-time Bachelor, Master, or PhD students at the University of Cologne and they filled in the questionnaire during allotted time slots in their seminars.

[94] Not to mention the fact that gathering data on interactions that have no real-life relevance for the learner group in question seems to be a pointless endeavor.

DCT Pretest I consisted of a series of short written request and complaint items based on everyday situations and a situation assessment questionnaire. The purpose of the pretest was threefold: 1) to check whether DCT items are reliable in eliciting the required speech acts and a wide range of syntactic modifiers, 2) to test the degree of authenticity and frequency of occurrence of the particular situations, and 3) to assess the values for the sociopragmatic variables distance and dominance. The design and question format of *DCT Pretest I* was based on a previous study by Barron (2003). The entire sample completed the first part of *DCT Pretest I* which was made up as follows: 24 request and 24 complaint items were presented in a randomized sequence followed by the prompt *Du sagst / You say.* The participants' task was to write what they would say in each scenario. A second option provided for them was to opt out of the act altogether, in which case they were requested to give reasons for their choice. Each scenario was then followed by closed questions regarding the values for either authenticity and frequency, social distance, or social dominance. To keep the evaluations as specific to each scenario as possible, the questions contained explicit reference to the interlocutor's name (e.g., *Wie gut kennst du Herrn Huber? / How well do you know Mr. Huber?*). To avoid any confusion about the terminology, the term social dominance was replaced by the more familiar *Status / status*, and a short and simple explanation of all terms was provided at the beginning of the questionnaire. Since judgement tasks in 2) and 3) were both repetitive and demanding, factors such as fatigue, exhaustion or boredom were taken into consideration when designing *DCT Pretest I.* In the interest of reducing the participants' workload, the German native speaker sample was split into three equal groups with 12 participants each. Each of these groups completed one of three versions of the situation assessment questionnaire:

1. Group 1 assessed the degree of *realism* and the *frequency* of every situation on a 4-point scale.
2. Group 2 assessed the feature of *familiarity* in every situation on a 5-point scale.
3. Group 3 assessed the *dominance relation* between all interlocutors on a 5-point scale.

For the situation assessment questionnaire, word scales were taken from Barron (2003: 340) which clearly indicated what each category represents. Thus, instead

of being requested to choose from a scale of 1-5, the word scale provided a list of scored categories for the participants to select from (e.g., *überhaupt nicht / not at all*, *nicht gut / not well*, *mittelmäßig / fairly well*, *gut / well*, *sehr gut / very well*). Mean values for each scale, i.e., realism & frequency, social distance, and social dominance are presented in Appendix 8. After administration of *DCT Pretest I* was completed, pretest data were analyzed with emphasis on the three core areas of interest, as indicated above.

Pretest evaluation

Pretesting the 48 request and complaint items allowed for the gathering of information regarding participant performance on each new item. As a first step, I checked for items which performed unexpectedly within the candidate population, i.e., items in which participants either did not use the required speech act or in which they decided to opt out altogether. It was found that the choice of opting out was more pronounced in complaint than in request items. In examining the reasons that the participants gave for opting out of performing a complaint, three socio-contextual factors were identified (see Hartley 1998 and Kowalski 2003 for similar findings). The participants chose to opt out in larger numbers:

1. if the addressee had markedly higher social power,
2. if the offence was not perceived to be severe enough to risk a preestablished relationship,
3. if there was no possibility of repair, even though respondents felt that damage had been done.

Subsequently, all request and complaint realizations were coded for directness strategy and modification devices used. This formed the basis for a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the use of syntactic downgrading in all items. Those scenarios which reliably ensured the use of a wide range of syntactic downgraders were marked.

Another challenge faced when developing the request and complaint items was that situations had to be realistic, familiar, and accessible to both groups of informants; in this particular case adult refugee-background learners and university students who speak German as their first language. Since the item descriptions were largely based on input regarding typical scenarios in which the

learner informants use requests or complaints in Germany, results from *DCT Pretest I* were also used to identify situations which would be specific to the forced migration context. Pre- and pilot-testing demonstrated that the scenarios presented in the final version of the DCT and PPT were plausible to both German and Syrian Arabic native speakers (cf. § 4.2.5; Appendix 8-1 – 8-4). Last, *DCT Pretest I* was administered to determine whether the sociopragmatic variables *social distance* and *social dominance* were perceived and rated by German native speakers as intended. In request and complaint items, social distance – understood as the familiarity between speaker and addressee – had one level, i.e., all interlocutors were acquaintances. While this set level for degree of familiarity was confirmed by the data, the pattern of mean values for the factor social dominance ran contrary to the researcher's expectations (cf. A8-5, A8-6). During the stage of item development, it was decided to include two levels for social dominance in the test design: first, the speaker (S) had a lower social status than the addressee (A) (S<A), and second, the speaker (S) and the addressee (A) were of equal status (S=A). A third level of social dominance, i.e., items in which the speaker (S) had a higher social status than the addressee (A) (S>A) was initially not included in the study design. Since the learners attended a full-time language course during the data collection, they were not expected to regularly take on superordinate positions in the classroom, rental, or workplace situations in which they provide speech acts downward in rank. The intent here was to keep as closely as possible to the role enactment principle and to ensure that learners only perform in scenarios that they are familiar with. However, an analysis of the pretest data revealed that the researcher's assessment of the speaker's status in complaint items was not confirmed by the native speaker raters. In scenarios in which a severe offence had been committed by the addressee and in which the speaker therefore had every right to complain, a contextual shift in interpersonal authority and status was observed: The informants rated the speaker's social status as equal (i.e., S=A) in what the researcher expected to be (S<A) items and as higher (i.e., S>A) in (S=A) items. This assessment pattern was also detected in interactions in which role-relationships were clearly definable on the socio-institutional level, such as student and teacher or employee and superior (see also Blum-Kulka & House 1989; Trosborg 1995). As has already been indicated above, an analysis of *DCT Pretest I* further revealed that in those items in which the speaker's status

was actually assessed as lower than their addressee's, the participants tended to fall back on non-face-threatening speech acts or to remain silent, i.e., they opted out altogether. Based on the results obtained from *DCT Pretest I*, it was decided to include the two conditions (S=A) and (S>A) in the present study to guarantee that items are reliable in eliciting the required speech acts (cf. A8-7, A8-8). In addition, items that did not allow for the observation of syntactic downgrading or that resulted in opting out were either re-worked or excluded from the study. In total, changes and improvements were made to 11 request and complaint items which were then retested in *DCT Pretest II*. After taking into account the findings of both *DCT Pretest I* and *II*, the most appropriate items were selected for the production and perception study. The next section § 4.2.3.3 provides a synopsis of the final form of the discourse completion task designed for the present study.

4.2.3.3 Collecting pragmatic production data: the DCT

The DCT employed in the present study was designed as an untimed photo-enhanced open discourse completion task without a rejoinder (see Appendix 6 for written instructions, item descriptions and images used). Figure 4 illustrates the specific scenario used in item 1 *Cat*, providing a visual representation of the DCT items' structure.

In particular, pragmatic production was assessed with an 18-item test consisting of three types of items: 12 hypothetical scenarios evoked contexts in which the appropriate reaction was either a request or a complaint; 6 additional items functioned as fillers. In the former situations, the respective speech act to be elicited was kept constant, while the values for social context variables were varied. With consideration for the particular learner group in question, a decision was taken to focus only on the two socio-contextual variables *social distance* and *social dominance* (cf. § 2.3.1).[95] Adding more variables would have led to too many different combinations, and consequently, too many DCT items, which might have had a potentially negative effect on the quality and the completeness of the responses (cf. Roever 2010).

[95] Even though the factors degree of imposition (requests) and severity of offense (complaints) were kept constant across scenarios, there is some unavoidable variation since these dimensions were not explicitly tested in the situation assessment scale of DCT Pretest I and II.

Figure 4. Actual scenario page for DCT item 1 *Cat*

Hence, the choice fell on two context-internal parameters which trigger specific pragmalinguistic conventions, namely the use of syntactic downgraders, and therefore maximize the linguistic and functional variation to be elicited from each informant: The first variable, *social distance* (SD) is understood as the familiarity between speaker and hearer, based (amongst other things) on an assessment of the frequency of interaction. This factor was held constant: speakers were always *acquaintances* (= SD), meaning that they knew each other quite well, yet they were not particularly close friends. The decision to investigate exchanges between acquaintances was based on Wolfson's *bulge theory* (1986), according to which the levels of politeness invested in interactions with intimates and strangers are lower than for those who occupy the middle range of the social spectrum, such as status-equal friends, colleagues, and acquaintances (cf. § 2.3.2).[96] The second factor was *social dominance*. In line with Brown & Gilman (1972), *social*

[96] It was decided not to include close friends or family members as addressees since learner informants typically use their L1 Arabic in these interactions.

dominance is defined as power of control: "One person may be said to have power over another in the degree that [she /] he is able to control the behaviour of the other. Meaning, that the person has authority or the legitimate right to exert influence" (Brown & Gilman 1972: 255). Given the importance of the dominance relation in determining the degrees of politeness chosen, social dominance had two levels: the speaker (S) had higher social power than the addressee (A) (S > A), or speaker (S) and addressee (A) were power equal (S = A). Each combination of these variables was represented by three DCT items, i.e., six items per speech act and twelve items in total. The questionnaire was further designed in such a way that the gender of the request and complaint receiver was controlled and distributed equally across situations and participants. In addition, the age range of the addressees was varied across all items. Table 23 shows the variable combinations used in this study, alongside a brief description of the situations corresponding to each combination:

Table 23. Categorization of DCT items according to the two socio-contextual variables social distance and social dominance

	Requests	**Complaints**
S=A, =SD[a]	Situation 1 '*Cat*': You ask your neighbor to take care of your cat while you are travelling.	Situation 7 '*Overtime*': You complain to your employer about working overtime.
S=A, =SD	Situation 2 '*Switch shifts*': You ask your co-worker to switch shifts with you.	Situation 8 '*Notes*': You complain to your classmate for not lending his notes.
S=A, =SD	Situation 3 '*Move*': You ask an acquaintance to help you move.	Situation 9 '*Heating*': You complain to your landlady about an unjustified accusation.
S>A, =SD[b]	Situation 4 '*Dirty kitchen*': You ask your roommate to clean the kitchen.	Situation 10 '*Rash*': You complain to your doctor about a prescription.
S>A, =SD	Situation 5 '*Burst pipe*': You ask your landlord to speed up a repairing job.	Situation 11 '*Oral presentation*': You complain to your classmate for missing your shared oral presentation.
S>A, =SD	Situation 6 '*Bakery*': You ask the salesman to give you the correct change.	Situation 12 '*Cooking ingredients*': You complain to your roommate for taking your food without asking.

[a] Speaker (S) and addressee (A) are power equal. They are acquaintances (= SD).
[b] Speaker (S) has higher social power than addressee (A). They are acquaintances (=SD).

Added to the twelve experimental items were six filler items which elicited language functions other than requests and complaints, such as *saying goodbye* or *asking for directions*. All filler items were based on an analysis of familiar

everyday expressions and elementary language functions taught at level A1 in the Integration Course. These served as distractors to avoid a priming effect, so that informants did not use the same form throughout their production of these speech acts. Request, complaint, and filler items were administered in a randomized order to the participants.

Beyond this, the present DCT was designed in a way which enabled beginner level learners to participate successfully. Working with lower-level learners meant that some modifications to the standard elicitation practices had to be made so as to make the DCT more accessible and to counteract the effects of written prompts on novice learners. While all initial instructions were given in the participants' first language to ensure comprehension of the task (i.e., Arabic in the case of the learner participants), a different approach was chosen for the scenario descriptions. Since the production task was to be completed in German and language switching may have had an effect on learners' responses, scenario descriptions were written in German. It was further taken into account that in items in which advanced German grammar or vocabulary is used, it is difficult to distinguish whether learners' response patterns are due to their pragmatic interpretation, or simply due to lexico-grammatical deficiencies. To lessen the intervening effects of the afore-mentioned factors, the entire text of the scenarios fell within the *Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer A2-B1* list of the target grammar and vocabulary for German language learners at level A2 (cf. Perlmann-Balme et al. 2009). Words which could not be simplified were clarified by glossing, i.e., adding the Arabic translation of the word in question. Participants were addressed in the informal and more familiar second person *du / you* in all situational descriptions and they were always asked to be themselves and also to perform as they think they would do under the same circumstances (cf. Schauer 2006b).

Apart from this, the structure and progression were identical for all scenarios so as to improve clarity and understanding for the beginner and intermediate level learners. The participants first read the title which clearly stated the setting (e.g., *Im Sprachkurs / In the language course*). In the interests of accessing a wide range of pragmatic functions, data was collected from eight different social settings, understood as "the contextualized place of a situation within a social location" (Nickels 2006: 256): in the language course, at work, in your own apartment, in the neighborhood, at a friend's apartment, in a shop, at the

landlady's / landlord's and at a doctor's office. Below the title, a photograph was added which depicts the location and the conversational partner in the upcoming exchange.[97] The photographic pictures "provide interlocutors with sufficient and detailed information regarding the context of interaction, so that learners may recognize them as real scenarios and social locations in everyday life" (Martínez-Flor & Usó Juan 2011: 60). Beside increasing the naturalness of the instrument, photographs make it easier for learners to grasp and evaluate the situation described (cf. Kuha 1992; Yamashita 2008; Schauer 2009; Bardovi-Harlig 1999, 2009). The photo was followed by the situational description, a response prompt, and a blank space for the informant to complete with the speech act under study. A decision was made to prespecify the speaker's pragmatic intent in the response prompt. The participant's communicative goal was thus explicitly stated and the prompts for requests and complaints read:

a. Prompt in request item: *Bitte [Name] darum! / Request [name] to do it!*
b. Prompt in complaint item: *Beschwere dich bei [Name]! / Complain to [name]!*

This admittedly rather artificial feature was included in the DCT to aid the beginner level learners to identify the interpersonal demand in each item (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1993). This was especially important in complaint situations, since items aiming to elicit a rather 'unpleasant' response need more explicit instructions (cf. Ogiermann 2018: 237). Moreover, as learners were already familiar with similar instructions from their German textbooks, the prompt was added to allow for maximum output. Complementary to this, the option to opt-out (i.e., not saying anything and/or responding exclusively with body language) was excluded from the questionnaire, as all items were pretested to ensure that the scenarios are reliable in eliciting the required speech acts.

With regard to situational descriptions, the following decisions were made: All situations depicted scenarios that were familiar to both groups of participants, i.e., German native speakers and German language learners (cf. Appendix 8-1 – 8-4). In addition, previous research in ILP was taken into account that demonstrates how the degrees of information provided about the context and interpersonal

[97] The majority of the photographs included in the DCT were taken by the researcher herself and the people depicted have given her exclusive rights to use the content. For the additional photographs, a standard license was bought from iStock which equally gives the researcher the right to use this content; these photographs are marked accordingly (see Appendix 6).

relationship of interlocutors have a direct effect on the data elicited (cf. Billmyer & Varghese 2000; Félix-Brasdefer 2010). Since DCT items with insufficient contextualization result in less elaborate responses, care was taken to provide not only detailed but also explicit information about the general setting and the role relationship between the interlocutors. Furthermore, the internal structure of items was identical for all scenarios in order to measure L2 pragmatic development in comparable conditions: The situational descriptions were made up of six sentences; the mean word count in request items was 70.5 words and 85.3 words in complaint items. Differences in word count were due to varying complexity levels in scenario descriptions: The explanation of the trigger for a complaint tended to be more complex – and thus more extensive – than the motivation for a request. The addressee was introduced by name within the first two sentences (e.g., *Deine Vermieterin heißt Frau Kowalska und du kennst sie gut. / Your landlady is called Mrs. Kowalska and you know her well*.). In all of these scenarios, the level of familiarity between the interlocutors was explicitly stated by use of a phrase such as: *du kennst X gut / you know X well*. In the following four sentences, the necessary context for the realization of the respective speech act was provided. In the case of a request, sentence number five or six contained explicit mention of the need for the request, e.g*., Du willst, dass Leyla die Küche putzt. / You want Leyla to clean the kitchen*. Last, for a complaint, the specification of the offense committed as well as the participant's annoyance was provided in sentence number five or six, e.g., *Du ärgerst dich sehr über deine Vermieterin und willst mit ihr sprechen. / You are very upset with your landlady and want to talk to her*. All 18 DCT situations employed in the present study were developed by the researcher herself and are to be found in Appendix 6.

4.2.3.4 The coding scheme

The coding scheme employed in the present study is based on the request and complaint (modification) strategies established by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) and Trosborg (1995). It was further informed by numerous other research projects examining the selected speech acts (e.g., Meyer 2007) and the present data sets. Consequently, new categories were added to the pre-existing models in an effort to include so far 'unknown' strategy types and modifiers identified in the elicited L1 and L2 German data. For a comprehensive account of the present coding

scheme, the reader is referred to § 2.4, with § 2.4.1.1 to § 2.4.1.2 introducing request and complaint strategy types, and § 2.4.2.1 to § 2.4.2.3 offering a state-of-the-art overview of what we know about the diverse internal and external modification devices found in both speech acts. Apart from the afore-mentioned coding scheme, additional guidelines were developed to enable reliable coding of *syntactic downgraders* as used by elementary and lower intermediate learners. Syntactic downgraders that were identified in the learner data were coded as belonging to one of three categories:

1. **Category 1:** There are no grammatical errors.
2. **Category 2:** There are minor grammatical errors, which are hardly noticeable or there are a few major grammatical errors, but they do not interfere with understanding.
3. **Category 3:** There are many major grammatical errors that cause misunderstanding to a point where expressions are incomprehensible due to a fragmental nature of excessive grammatical mistakes.

Grammatical forms belonging to category 3 were excluded from the present study. For syntactic downgraders in category 1 and 2, additional coding guidelines were developed: The analysis of the learner data showed many instances of phonetic spelling, meaning that learners wrote out German words according to how they speak the letters and syllables. Illustrative examples from the data are *Felar* instead of *Fehler / mistake*, *nich* for *nicht / not* or *wann* for w*enn / if.* When coding learner data, such obvious spelling mistakes were ignored and the downgrader in question was classified as belonging to category 1. For instance, (20) is a request realization by an elementary learner in which he used a conditional clause but wrote *wann* instead *of wenn / if*. As per the guidelines, this grammatical form was coded as a syntactic downgrader in Category 1. However, in cases in which (a) syntactic modifiers were not conjugated or declined correctly, in cases in which (b) the wrong form of a modifier was chosen (e.g., *nicht / not* instead of *kein / no*) or (c) if there were errors in sentence structure, the form in question was coded as belonging to Category 2. In examples (21) and (22), learners used the subjunctive form of the modal *können / can* and a passive construction but made minor grammatical errors. As these errors did not interfere with understanding, the syntactic downgraders were placed into Category 2.

(20) Move, G1M_309123

Ich möchte am Samstag in meine Wohnung umzehen kannst du mir helfen **wann** du zeit hast
(I want to move to my flat on Saturday can you help me **if** you have the time)

(21) Cat, G1F_884224

Konntest du jeden Tag nur 3 mal Essen für meine Katze bringen.
(**Could** you feed my cat only 3 times a day.)

(22) Overtime, G2F_891240

ich habe oft Überstunden gemacht und diese Überstunden **werd** nicht bezahlt und jetzt bekomme ich sehr viele neue Aufgaben und ich müss jetzt wieder Überstunden machen.
(I have worked overtime often and this overtime **is** not paid and now I am getting many new tasks and now I have to overtime again.)

Inter-rater reliability

In order to establish inter-rater reliability in this study, the coding of 50 % of the responses to the DCT (i.e., both native speaker and learner responses) was performed by two independent raters: the researcher, a German native speaker, and a research assistant who was trained to code requests and complaints. The researcher first coded all DCT responses and then randomly selected 50 % of the data from each group for the research assistant to code. To ensure consistency between raters, the inter-rater reliability was examined by Kappa statistics. Following Mackey & Gass (2005: 242-245), percentages over 90 % are ideal and Cohen's Kappa over .80 is excellent. The Kappa statistics for the present data set was 0.859, indicating that the results obtained are reliable. In cases of discrepancy in coding (mostly due to simple coding mistakes), the equivocal response was negotiated until an agreement was reached.

4.2.4 Pragmatics Assessment II: Pragmatic Perception Task

Pragmatic perception, also at times referred to as meta-pragmatic awareness in ILP literature, refers to "the ability to judge the appropriateness of utterances in the particular context" (Ren 2015: 20; Woodfield 2014). Hence, it involves the recognition of pragmalinguistic forms, their pragmatic force as well as their contextual requirements (cf. § 2.1.2). As pragmatic perception is "a crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of language in use" (Verschueren 2000: 439), accounts that rest on the availability of receptive pragmatic competence are particularly promising in exploring different rates of development in grammar and

pragmatics in L2 learners. The aim of the present study was thus to investigate whether learners can relate the syntactic downgraders used by native speakers in requests and complaints to their strategic deployment in the service of politeness and recognize their co-occurrence with elements of context such as social distance and social dominance. In order to monitor the development of learners' receptive pragmatic competence, experimental pragmatic perception data was collected with the use of a multiple-choice paper-and-pencil questionnaire, the so-called *pragmatic perception task* (henceforth PPT). Comparable to a grammatic judgment task (as known from SLA research), a pragmatic appropriateness judgment task accesses the learners' underlying system without requiring production on their part. Instead, the PPT asked learners to assess the appropriateness of pre-existing linguistic realizations in various contexts (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Shin 2014). Several steps were involved in determining the format as well as the specifications of the targets and distractors for the PPT before the final design was decided upon. This process is described in § 4.2.4.1. Following this, § 4.2.4.2 outlines the method used for the main test with the final form of the pragmatic perception task.

4.2.4.1 Test development

For an utterance to be pragmatically successful, it involves two types of judgment. First, the pragmalinguistic assessment of the pragmatic force of a linguistic realization, and second, a sociopragmatic assessment concerning the effect of social and situational parameters. Hence, an instrument was needed that allowed for the assessment of the appropriateness of language use relative to the context of interaction (cf. Thomas 1983; Liu 2006; Ren 2018; Nguyen 2019). To achieve this aim and reliably test the learners' perception of the form-to-function relationships of syntactic downgraders, a contextualized pragmatic judgment task was designed, presented in the format of a multiple-choice questionnaire. In order to provide the reader with an understanding of the design of the perception instrument, Figure 5 presents the actual scenario used in PPT item 1 *Plants*. In contrast to pragmatic awareness instruments such as concurrent or retrospective verbal protocols, the selected approach ensured the examination of learners' perception of the target items; a pragmatic domain which informants might not refer to in less controlled instruments (cf. Takahashi 2005).

1. Im Sprachkurs

Du sitzt im Sprachkurs neben Alan. Ihr verabredet[1] euch manchmal zum Kaffeetrinken und ihr kennt euch gut. Du fährst am Freitag nach Berlin, weil du deinen Bruder besuchen willst. Du bleibst 14 Tage in Berlin, aber du hast viele Pflanzen in deiner Wohnung. Du willst, dass Alan deine Pflanzen gießt, wenn du in Berlin bist. Du triffst Alan heute im Sprachkurs.

[1] sich verabreden: يتواعد
[2] sich kümmern um: يعتني بـ

Du bittest Alan darum: (تطلب من آلان)

a) Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmern[2] könntest?

b) Dürfte ich dich fragen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmerst[2]?

c) Kümmer[2] dich bitte um meine Pflanzen.

d) Kümmer[2] dich doch um meine Pflanzen.

Figure 5. Actual scenario page for PPT item 1 *Plants*

The PPT was developed in five steps which will each be introduced in the following:

a. Identifying and constructing the test scenarios
b. Testing the scenarios through a production task
c. Selecting the targeted responses for the perception task
d. Pretesting the PPT
e. Piloting the PPT[98]

[98] For information on the pilot study, see § 4.2.5.

A. Identifying and constructing the test scenarios

The PPT was created to be part of a larger battery of pragmatic assessment. To recapitulate, the present research tested both learners' receptive appropriateness judgments and their productive ability to produce situationally appropriate and conventional language (cf. 4.2.3). In order to tackle the question of whether receptive and productive pragmatic competence are related in the same group of learners, two instruments were needed that enabled a direct comparison of learners' response behavior in both the production and perception tasks by creating comparable item pairs. As mentioned in § 4.2.3.2, the test development stages for the DCT also involved the drawing up of items for the pragmatic perception task (see § 4.2.3.2). This allowed me to match all DCT and PPT items in terms of their key variables, namely social distance, and social dominance, setting, situational characteristics as well as addressee characteristics such as gender and age. The PPT and DCT were also parallel based on their design features: The number of items representing each speech act in the PPT remained unchanged and the manner in which items were selected for inclusion into the perception test was the same. Following these guidelines ensured that all items used in the PPT were realistic, familiar, and accessible to both groups of informants, i.e., German and Syrian Arabic native speakers (cf. A8-1 – A8-4). While it would have been possible to provide the same assessment measures to the informants in the production and perception study, it was decided against using identical scenarios. Both questionnaires were completed back-to-back within one day, so that remembering prior responses to the DCT might have possibly influenced the participants' response behavior in the PPT. Even though the items were not necessarily identical, the situations in which the requests and complaints occurred in the two data sets were comparable. Compare, for instance, the synopsis of the first request item in the production and perception task (cf. Figure 4 and 5):

- **DCT Situation 1 '*Cat*'**: You ask your neighbor to take care of your cat while you are travelling.
- **PPT Situation 1 '*Plants*'**: You ask your classmate to water your plants while you are travelling.

In both items, speaker and addressee are acquaintances and they are power equal

(i.e., =SD, S=A). Apart from the interlocutors' role relationship, other relevant context-internal factors such as their rights and obligations, and the degree of imposition involved in the request are comparable.[99] Tables 24 and 25 introduce the six request and six complaint items developed for the perception task and highlight their similarities with the 12 DCT items.

Table 24. Categorization of DCT and PPT request items according to the two socio-contextual variables social distance and social dominance

	DCT Requests	**PPT Requests**
S=A, =SD[a]	Situation 1 '*Cat*': You ask your neighbor to take care of your cat while you are travelling.	Situation 1 '*Plants*': You ask your classmate to water your plants while you are travelling.
S=A, =SD	Situation 2 '*Switch shifts*': You ask your co-worker to switch shifts with you.	Situation 2 '*Noisy neighbor*': You ask your neighbor to turn the music down.
S=A, =SD	Situation 3 '*Move*': You ask an acquaintance to help you move.	Situation 3 '*Insurance*': You ask an acquaintance for information on an insurance policy.
S>A, =SD[b]	Situation 4 '*Dirty kitchen*': You ask your roommate to clean the kitchen.	Situation 4 '*Dirty bathroom*': You ask your roommate to clean the bathroom.
S>A, =SD	Situation 5 '*Burst pipe*': You ask your landlord to speed up a repairing job.	Situation 5 '*Broken shower*': You ask your landlord to speed up a repairing job.
S>A, =SD	Situation 6 '*Bakery*': You ask the salesman to give you the correct change.	Situation 6 '*Kiosk*': You ask the salesman to give you the correct change.

[a] Speaker (S) and addressee (A) are power equal. They are acquaintances (= SD).
[b] Speaker (S) has higher social power than addressee (A). They are acquaintances (=SD).

Table 25. Categorization of DCT and PPT complaint items according to the two socio-contextual variables social distance and social dominance

	DCT Complaints	**PPT Complaints**
S=A, =SD[a]	Situation 7 '*Overtime*': You complain to your employer about working overtime.	Situation 7 '*Vacation*': You complain to your employer about cancelling your vacation.
S=A, =SD	Situation 8 '*Notes*': You complain to your classmate for not lending his notes.	Situation 8 '*Restaurant*': You complain to an acquaintance about his inconsiderate behavior.
S=A, =SD	Situation 9 '*Heating*': You complain to your landlady about an unjustified accusation.	Situation 9 'Rent increase': You complain to your landlady about an illegal rent increase.
S>A, =SD[b]	Situation 10 '*Rash*': You complain to your doctor about an overmedication.	Situation 10 '*Dentist*': You complain to your dentist about a dental treatment.

[99] The assessment of the socio-contextual variables *social distance* and *social dominance* for all PPT items is to be found in Appendix 8 (cf. A8-5 – A8-8).

S>A, =SD	Situation 11 '*Oral presentation*': You complain to your classmate for missing your shared oral presentation.	Situation 11 '*Library*': You complain to your classmate for not showing up to study dates.
S>A, =SD	Situation 12 '*Cooking ingredients*': You complain to your roommate for taking your food without asking.	Situation 12 '*Laundry detergent*': You complain to your roommate for emptying your laundry detergent.

[a] Speaker (S) and addressee (A) are power equal. They are acquaintances (= SD).
[b] Speaker (S) has higher social power than addressee (A). They are acquaintances (=SD).

B. Testing the PPT scenarios through a preliminary production task

This study operationalized pragmatic perception as learners' correct identification of PPT response options. The test therefore necessitated a clear scoring benchmark, and here, a native speaker norm is the most defensible benchmark for a test oriented towards the second language setting (cf. Roever et al. 2014a). Consequently, a preliminary study was carried out with 40 monolingual German native speakers based on whose data answers and distractors for the individual PPT items were constructed. A digital questionnaire version was created on the web-based survey tool Qualtrics and native speakers were recruited via the online research platform Prolific. Accessing participants via an online platform allowed me to take regional variation into account by reaching out to native speakers from all over Germany. Participants were included between the ages of 19 and 33 years (mean age: 29 years) with 50 % identified as women and 50 % as men. All participants had a university entrance qualification. The subjects for the preliminary study did not participate in the main study but were judged to be comparable to the main study subjects in terms of age, gender, and academic background. Exactly as in a discourse completion task, participants were asked to imagine the scenario described and react to it by writing down a verbal response, i.e., what they believe they would *say* in the situation at hand. In the next step of test development, this production data served to identify the actual request and complaint strategies as well as internal modifiers used by German native speakers in the twelve request and complaint scenarios.

C. Selecting the target responses for the task

Every scenario description in the PPT provided informants with four response options, including (a) the pragmatically most appropriate response and (b-d) three distractors. All 'correct' answers, i.e., the utterances deemed most appropriate, were based on German native speaker data elicited during the preliminary

production task, as described above. The production data was coded and analyzed, so that for each item the major trends in strategy and syntactic downgrader use could be determined. The same approach was followed for the DCT data to ensure that only those syntactic modifiers were included in the study that were frequently used in both the DCT and PPT items by German native speakers. Based on these analyses, I was able to come up with a selection of pragmalinguistic features which manifested contextualized form-function mappings and were suitable as learners' attentional targets in complaint and request productions. The most appropriate answer options always reflected these targets or rather trends in use. In the following, the guidelines specified for the construction of the target and the compromises made are addressed.

Since syntactic downgraders are realized within the head act – a single utterance – the four response options given in the PPT items were each co-extensive with a single sentence. Accordingly, external modification devices and additional speech acts were excluded from the perception task responses. Moreover, it was initially planned to keep the directness strategy constant and only vary the use of syntactic downgraders to control for the influence of the directness strategy chosen. However, the data analysis revealed that the use of strategy type and syntactic downgrader(s) were closely related, meaning that the occurrence of syntactic downgraders depended to a large extent on the type of directness strategy chosen. Thus, some syntactic downgraders occurred only in certain strategy types and the strategies with the highest use were not necessarily used in combination with all types of syntactic downgraders. A decision was therefore taken to cover different directness strategies in the PPT, so as to test as many syntactic downgrader types as possible and to make items sound natural by reproducing the variation seen in native speaker data. Taking PPT item 1 *Plants* as an illustrative example (see below and refer to Figure 5 for visual representation), the response options can be differentiated in terms of their underlying strategies. Specifically, options a) and b) employ a query preparatory strategy, while options c) and d) utilize a mood derivable.[100]

[100] In a few instances, it was also necessary to modify a response or to create a composite version of the most frequently used strategy type and internal downgrader(s) in order to come up with a PPT response which best represented the full continuum of native speaker productions.

PPT item 1 *Plants*

a) Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmern könntest?
(*I wanted to ask you whether you could take care of my plants?*)
b) Dürfte ich dich fragen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmerst?
(*May I ask if it would be possible for you to take care of my plants?*)
c) Kümmer dich bitte um meine Pflanzen.
(*Please take care of my plants*.)
d) Kümmer dich doch um meine Pflanzen.
(*Take care of my plants, will you?*)

For each speech act, I tested the learners' ability to judge the appropriateness of a variety of syntactic modifiers in context: For requests, participants' detection of the downgraders *subjunctive* (i.e., the subjunctive form of the modal verb *können / can*) and *negation* in query preparatory strategies was tested in items 3 and 5. Added to this were the responses in items 1 and 2 which were made up of the modal *wollen / want* in *the past tense*, an *indirect question* and the *subjunctive* form of the modal *können / can*. For the speech act of complaining, the perception of three types of embedded structures, i.e., *aber-clauses*, *dass-clauses* and *conditional clauses* was tested in items 7, 8 and 12. In addition, the syntactic modifier *negation* was included in items 8 and 11. There was, however, a risk that the study informants simply recognize the most frequently used (and taught) syntactic downgraders – for instance the *subjunctive* – and tick answers accordingly without being able to judge their contextual requirements correctly. In an effort to counteract this possibility and to test the learners' receptive sociopragmatic competence, two pragmatically appropriate response options for each speech act were included in the PPT that did not require a syntactic downgrader. In these instances, syntactic downgraders were built into one of the distractors. Since situations in which the speaker had higher status than the addressee often resulted in lower numbers of (syntactic) downgrading devices, three of the four *syntactically-non-modified* responses were taken from the [S>A, =SD] condition. Let us start with the requests. The pragmatically most appropriate answers in request items 4 *Dirty bathroom* and 6 *Kiosk* were made up of a mood derivable and hint strategy respectively, and did not include any syntactic downgrading devices. Instead, native speakers employed the lexical downgraders *politeness marker*, *downtoner* and *subjectivizer* in these scenarios. To demonstrate, consider the response options from PPT item 4: *Dirty bathroom* (see below).

PPT item 4 *Dirty bathroom*

a) Putz heute bitte mal das Badezimmer.
(*Please clean the bathroom today, okay?*)
b) Dürfte ich dich fragen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du heute das Badezimmer putzt?
(*May I ask if it would be possible for you to clean the bathroom today?*)
c) Putz sofort das Badezimmer.
(*Clean the bathroom immediately*.)
d) Putz sofort das scheiß Badezimmer.
(*Clean the damn bathroom immediately*.)

The appropriate complaint realizations in items 9 *Rent increase* and *10 Dentist* were both indirect accusations composed of impersonal instructions. No use of either syntactic or lexical downgraders was made by the majority of German native speakers in these situations (cf. PPT item 9 *Rent increase* below).

PPT item 9 *Rent increase*

a) Die Mieterhöhung ist laut Gesetz noch nicht erlaubt.
(*According to the law, the rent increase is not yet allowed*.)
b) 50 Euro, das ist viel Geld.
(*50 euros, that's a lot of money*.)
c) Sie dürfen die Miete nicht erhöhen.
(*You are not allowed to increase the rent*.)
d) Ich finde es nicht in Ordnung, dass Sie die Miete erhöhen.
(*I don't think it's okay that you are increasing the rent*.)

The inclusion of *syntactically-non-modified* requests and complaints allowed the researcher to test whether learners fall back on syntactically more complex realizations in these items and thus choose distractors which incorporate syntactic modifiers instead of the pragmatically appropriate response option. An overview of the pragmalinguistic features tested in the perception study is given in Table 26 (cf. also Appendix 7 for situational descriptions and response options). As is apparent from the syntactic modifiers listed in Table 26, the researcher was not able to include all nine syntactic downgraders in the PPT items. Care was, however, taken to incorporate *tense categories* and *negation* since the effect of low grammatical proficiency on pragmatic employment is particularly pronounced for these syntactic downgraders (cf. § 3.2.2; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Barron 2003; Trosborg 1995; Schauer 2009; Woodfield 2012).

Table 26. Most typical native speaker responses in DCT and PPT items

	DCT & PPT request items	**Strategy type + internal downgrader(s) used by GNS**
S=A, =SD[a]	Items 1 '*Cat*' '*Plants*'	*[Ich [wollte] fragen, [ob] du X [könntest]?] / [I [wanted] to ask [whether] you [could] X?]* [query preparatory] + [past tense] [indirect question] [subjunctive]
S=A, =SD	Items 2 '*Switch shifts*' '*Noisy neighbor*'	*[Ich [wollte] fragen, [ob] du X [könntest]?] / [I [wanted] to ask [whether] you [could] X?]* [query preparatory] + [past tense] [indirect question] [subjunctive]
S=A, =SD	Items 3 '*Move*' '*Insurance*'	*[[Könntest] du X?] / [[Could] you X?]* [query preparatory] + [subjunctive]
S>A, = SD	Items 4 '*Dirty kitchen*' '*Dirty bathroom*'	*[Mach [bitte] [mal] X] / [[Come on], [please] do X]* [mood derivable] + [politeness marker] [downtoner]
S>A, =SD[b]	Items 5 '*Burst pipe*' '*Broken shower*'	*[[Könntest] du [nicht] X?] / [[Could] you [not] X?]* [query preparatory] + [subjunctive] [negation]
S>A, =SD	Items 6 '*Bakery*' '*Kiosk*'	*[[Ich glaube] X] / [[I believe] X]* [hint] + [subjectivizer]
	DCT & PPT complaint items	**Strategy type + internal downgrader(s) used by GNS**
S=A, =SD	Items 7 '*Overtime*' '*Vacation*'	*[[Entschuldigen Sie], [aber] X] / [[Excuse me], but X]* [direct accusation] [embedding (*aber*-clause)]
S=A, =SD	Items 8 'Notes' '*Restaurant*'	*[Ich finde es [nicht] X, [dass] …] / [I [don't] find it X [that] …]* [explicit condemnation of the accused's action] + [negation] [embedding (*dass*-clause)]
S=A, =SD	Items 9 '*Heating*' '*Rent increase*'	*[[X] ist nicht erlaubt] / [[X] is not allowed]* [indirect accusation]
S>A, =SD	Items 10 '*Rash*' '*Dentist*'	*[[X] ist schiefgelaufen] / [[X] went wrong]* [indirect accusation]
S>A, =SD	Items 11 'P*resentation*' '*Library*'	*[Ich finde das [nicht] X] / [I [don't] find it X]* [explicit condemnation of the accused's action] + [negation]
S>A, = SD	Items 12 '*Cooking ingredients*' '*Laundry detergent*'	*[Du darfst X gern benutzen, [aber] X, [wenn] X] / [You are welcome to use X, [but] X, [when] X]* [accusation] + [embedding (*aber*-clause)] [embedding (conditional clause)]

[a] Speaker (S) and addressee (A) are power equal. They are acquaintances (= SD).
[b] Speaker (S) has higher social power than addressee (A). They are acquaintances (=SD).

Following the writing of targets, I studied the common trends reported in the ILP literature regarding L2 learners' request and complaint production across languages. My intention was to determine relevant criteria for distractor construction (cf. Hudson et al. 1995). The most prominent findings for requests were:

1. Beginner and lower intermediate learners prefer lexical/phrasal downgraders over syntactic forms of modification (cf. § 3.2.2).
2. Beginner and lower intermediate learners mainly rely on the politeness marker *bitte / please* to mitigate mood derivables (i.e., imperatives) before they start to employ more complex forms of lexical downgrading, such as understaters and downtoners or syntactic downgraders (cf. 3.2.2).

Based on the developmental sequences identified in the literature review, three alternatives were created for each request item:

- **Distractor 1**: *too indirect* – query preparatory + syntactically overcomplex
- **Distractor 2:** *too direct I* – imperative + politeness marker
- **Distractor 3:** *too direct II* – imperative + downtoner / understater

Distractors 2 and 3 were modelled on the most frequent interlanguage productions, as reported above. Distractor 2 used an *imperative* that was mitigated by the *politeness marker*, i.e., the one lexical downgrader routinely overused by beginner level learners. Similarly, Distractor 3 made use of an imperative structure but included lexical downgraders that were acquired later than *bitte / please*, namely *understaters* and *downtoners*. Consequently, Distractors 2 and 3 mimicked developmental sequences in the production of request modifiers, as found in the learner data.[101] My intention was to test whether learners perceive the structures which they themselves produce predominantly as most appropriate in the perception task. The third alternative, Distractor 1 was a syntactically overcomplex form. In this case, the query preparatory strategy was employed in combination with an overuse of syntactic downgraders. Thus, a higher number of syntactic downgraders was inserted here than in the target response option; the result of which was a highly indirect and overcomplex request realization. The intent was to investigate whether the learners systematically associate politeness

[101] There is one exception to this rule. The appropriate response option in item 4 *Dirty Bathroom* is a mood derivable strategy modified by the politeness marker. In order to realize two *too direct distractors* in item 4, the imperative structure was combined with internal upgraders, i.e., a *time intensifier* in Distractor 3 and a *time intensifier* coupled with an *expletive* in Distractor 4. The choice fell on intensifiers, since these upgraders are used quite frequently by L2 learners (cf. Schauer 2009, see also Appendix 10, Table A10-1).

and appropriateness with syntactic downgraders – true to the motto *the more, the better*, and therefore prefer structurally highly complex requests in the perception task. For illustration, Table 27 provides an analysis of the four response options provided in PPT item 1 *Plants*. For specific details and examples see Appendix 7.

Table 27. Analysis of four response options provided in PPT item 1 *Plants*

PPT Item 1 *Plants*	**Original.** Du sitzt im Sprachkurs neben Alan. Ihr verabredet euch manchmal zum Kaffeetrinken und ihr kennt euch gut. Du fährst am Freitag nach Berlin, weil du deinen Bruder besuchen willst. Du bleibst 14 Tage in Berlin, aber du hast viele Pflanzen in deiner Wohnung. Du willst, dass Alan deine Pflanzen gießt, wenn du in Berlin bist. Du triffst Alan heute im Sprachkurs. Du bittest Alan darum: **Translation.** You sit next to Alan in the language course. You arrange to meet for coffee sometimes and you know each other quite well. You are travelling to Berlin on Friday because you want to visit your brother. You stay in Berlin for 14 days, but you have many plants in your flat. You want Alan to water your plants while you are in Berlin. You meet Alan today in the language course. You ask Alan for it:
Pragmatically most appropriate response	*[Ich [wollte] dich fragen, [ob] du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmern [könntest]?] / [I [wanted] to ask [whether] you [could] take care of my plants?]* [query preparatory] + [past tense] [indirect question] [subjunctive]
Distractor 1 *Too indirect*	*[[Dürfte] ich dich fragen, [ob] es möglich [wäre], [dass] du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmerst?] / [[May] I ask you [whether] it [would] be possible [that] you take care of my plants?]* [query preparatory] + [subjunctive] [indirect question] [subjunctive] [dass-clause]
Distractor 2 *Too direct I*	*[Kümmer dich [bitte] um meine Pflanzen.] / [Take care of my plants [please]]* [mood derivable] + [politeness marker]
Distractor 3 *Too direct II*	*[Kümmer dich [doch] um meine Pflanzen.] / [Take care of my plants, [will you*]] [mood derivable] + [downtoner]

Designing the distractors for the PPT complaint items proved to be more difficult since there is a lack of developmental research on direct complaints. Even those studies which include the speech act in their analysis rarely focus on its modification (cf. 3.2.2). Nevertheless, the following results were obtained from the systematic cross-lingual literature review:

1. Beginner and lower intermediate learners overuse direct complaint strategies when compared to native speakers, who prefer more indirect strategies such as expressions of annoyance or disapproval (cf. 3.2.2).
2. Beginner and lower intermediate learners' use of internal modification devices in complaints increases in an L2-like direction later than for requests, due to learner difficulties with mastery of complaint head act strategies (cf. 3.2.2.).

Since there are no convincing studies on internal complaint modification, it was not possible to predict the occurrence of certain internal downgrader types in beginner level learners' complaint head acts. What might be inferred from finding (1) though, is that if learners start producing internal modifiers in complaints at later stages of L2 development, they might also have greater difficulty in recognizing them in a perception study. A decision was therefore made to exclude syntactic and lexical downgraders from the three distractors and instead to focus on learners' perception of syntactic downgraders in the most appropriate response option. In addition, it was expected that beginner level learners prefer very explicit, direct complaint realizations to get their message across. Based on these points, an overall framework was established, and distractors were created which fit to the overall system developed for request items and thus allowed for all distractor types to be parallel. The only difference was that the design for complaints mainly concentrated on basic head act strategies and did not systematically vary the use of internal downgraders. Three alternatives were created for each complaint item:

- **Distractor 1**: *too indirect* – hint + change of perspective (*if possible*)
- **Distractor 2:** *too direct I* – appropriate response option minus syntactic modifiers
- **Distractor 3:** *too direct II* – explicit condemnation (action / person)

Distractors 1 – 3 were variations of the most appropriate response option. For Distractor 1, the most indirect strategy type was chosen, i.e., a hint which was further downtoned by a change in perspective. To elaborate, if the appropriate complaint realization was either hearer- or speaker-oriented, the perspective in Distractor 1 was changed to a speaker-oriented or impersonal perspective respectively. Distractor 2 was more direct than the appropriate response option and either omitted the syntactic downgraders used for the appropriate answer in items 7, 8, 11 and 12 or replaced them by internal upgraders. Since the most appropriate responses in items 9 and 10 did not include a syntactic downgrader to

test learners' receptive sociopragmatic competence (as discussed above), the change in directness was here achieved by a change in complaint strategy level.[102] Last, Distractor 3 used the most direct complaint strategies, i.e., either explicit condemnation of the action or person. In PPT items 8 and 11, native speakers already produced the second most direct complaint strategies, namely explicit condemnations of the accused's action (cf. Appendix 7). Apart from a rise in directness by use of the most direct strategy type, the internal upgrader *intensifier* (i.e., *du bist echt ein Idiot / you really are an idiot*) was additionally inserted in these items, to mark differences in directness level more explicitly. An analysis of the four response options given in PPT item 7 *Vacation* is provided in Table 28 for exemplary purposes. For specific details and additional examples see Appendix 7.

Table 28. Analysis of four response options provided in PPT item 7 *Vacation*

PPT Item 7 *Vacation*	**Original.** Du hast einen Nebenjob. Dein Chef heißt Herr Popescu und du kennst ihn gut. Herr Popescu hat dir vor einer Woche erlaubt, dass du zwei Wochen Urlaub nehmen kannst. Heute sagt Herr Popescu plötzlich, dass du doch keinen Urlaub nehmen kannst. Du bist sauer, weil du schon Pläne mit deinen Freunden gemacht hast und ein Zugticket und Hotel gebucht hast. Du ärgerst dich sehr über Herrn Popescu und willst deshalb mit ihm sprechen. Du beschwerst dich bei Herrn Popescu: **Translation.** You have a part-time job. Your boss is called Mr. Popescu and you know him quite well. One week ago, Mr. Popescu permitted you a two-week vacation. Today, Mr. Popescu suddenly says that you cannot take the vacation after all. You are angry because you have already made plans with your friends and booked a train ticket and hotel. You are annoyed with Mr. Popescu and therefore you want to talk to him. You complain to Mr. Popescu:
Pragmatically most appropriate response	*[Entschuldigen Sie, [aber] Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt.] / [Excuse me, [but] you have already permitted the vacation.]* [direct accusation] [embedding (*aber*-clause)] [hearer perspective]
Distractor 1 *Too indirect*	*[Ich arbeite sehr viel.] / [I work a lot.]* [hint]
Distractor 2 *Too direct I*	*[Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt.] / [You have already permitted the vacation]* [direct accusation] [~~embedding (*aber*-clause)~~]

[102] In order to test whether learners are aware of the mitigating function of syntactic modifiers, items 9 and 10 necessitated the inclusion of syntactic downgraders in at least one response option. In both items the syntactic downgrader *dass-clause* was therefore built into Distractor 3.

Distractor 3 *Too direct II*	*[Das geht so nicht, Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt.] / [That's really not on, you have already permitted the vacation.]* [explicit condemnation of the accused's action]

D. Pretesting the PPT

Following the creation of target reactions and distractors, the next step in the test development involved checking the most appropriate answer option in the PPT against the intuitions of German native speakers (cf. Lee & McChesney 2000). However, a word of caution is needed first: Native speakers show a variability with regard to sociopragmatic norms, and what is more, they vary in their use of linguistic strategies and forms in realizing speech acts such as requests and complaints (cf. Roever et al. 2014). Thus, even if one validates the most appropriate response option from the perspectives of German native speakers, the possibility remains that other pragmatically appropriate options are available. This having been said, a high agreement rate of native speakers' intuitions about the pragmalinguistic appropriateness nevertheless suggests that the answer options provided in the PPT are valid for German native speakers. Ergo, a pretest was carried out to guarantee that the *most appropriate response option* is clearly favored by German native speakers and more generally, to ensure the content validity of the test items (cf. Tada 2005). In total, perception judgment data was collected from 48 monolingual speakers of German. The group consisted of 26 female and 22 male subjects aged 19 to 33 years with a mean age of 25 years. All of the participants had a university entrance qualification, the highest education level was an undergraduate degree (i.e., BA, BSc or other). Participant recruitment took place via the online research platform Prolific. A digital version of the PPT was created on the web-based survey tool Qualtrics. As with the preliminary production data, the use of an online platform allowed for the collection of perception data from participants all over Germany and it could therefore consider native speaker intuitions from various dialect regions. During the different stages of test development, I went through several iterations of item revisions with German native speakers to achieve satisfactory native-speaker agreement. For the PPT pretest, I accepted a 75 % native speaker agreement in the target response as sufficient. An overview of the frequency with which pretest participants chose the target response options in the PPT is provided in Table 29.

Table 29. Frequency at which appropriate response option in PPT is chosen by GNSs (in %)

PPT requests: correct response by item	**GNS**
Situation 1 '*Plants*': *Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmern könntest? / I wanted to ask whether you could take care of my plants?*	77.08
Situation 2 '*Noisy neighbor*': *Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du die Musik leiser machen könntest? / I wanted to ask you whether you could turn down the music?*	85.42
Situation 3 '*Insurance*': *Könntest du mir das noch mal einfacher erklären? / Could you explain that to me again in simpler terms?*	93.75
Situation 4 '*Dirty bathroom*': *Putz heute bitte mal das Badezimmer. / Please clean the bathroom today.*	91.67
Situation 5 '*Broken shower*': *Könnten Sie den Handwerker nicht früher bestellen? / Couldn't you arrange for the plumber sooner?*	81.25
Situation 6 '*Kiosk*': *Ich glaube, es fehlen noch 5€. / I believe 5€ are still missing.*	97.92
PPT complaints: correct response by item	**GNS**
Situation 7 '*Vacation*': *Entschuldigen Sie, aber Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt. / Sorry, but you already gave me the permission for the vacation.*	77.08
Situation 8 '*Restaurant*': *Ich finde es nicht so cool, dass du die ganze Zeit am Handy bist. / I don't appreciate that you are on the phone the entire time.*	91.67
Situation 9 'Rent increase': *Die Mieterhöhung ist laut Gesetz noch nicht erlaubt. / According to the law, the rent increase is not yet allowed.*	77.08
Situation 10 '*Dentist*': *Bei der letzten Behandlung ist etwas schiefgelaufen. / Something went wrong during the last procedure.*	93.75
Situation 11 '*Library*': *Wir waren heute verabredet, ich finde das echt nicht in Ordnung. / We had decided to meet today, I think that's really not okay.*	77.08
Situation 12 '*Laundry detergent*': *Du darfst gerne das Waschmittel benutzen, aber dann kauf auch neues, wenn du es leer machst. / You are welcome to use the laundry detergent, but buy a new one, when you empty it.*	81.25

As seen in Table 29, the German native speakers achieved a 77 % or above accuracy rate in all 12 items.

4.2.4.2 Collecting perception judgment data: the PPT

The present research involved the design and construction of an assessment instrument developed to measure the participants' receptive knowledge of syntactic downgraders as described in § 4.2.4.1. The final form of the pragmatic perception task is a multiple-choice completion task which was presented in the written form and supplemented by visual input.[103] I measured the selection of the target response option, so that pragmatic perception in the present study was operationalized as informants' scores on the PPT. The perception task was

[103] See Appendix 7 for written instructions, item descriptions and images used. See Yamashita (1996) and Timpe (2013) for additional perception studies working with multiple-choice completion tasks.

analogous to the DCT with respect to the layout as well as the items themselves, which were closely coordinated in both instruments. The individual tasks were untimed and they encouraged the learners to deliberate carefully before making a judgement. Similar to the DCT, the PPT did not target participants' online pragmatic perception, yet their offline, explicit knowledge during their judgment of the appropriateness of request and complaint realizations in context (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2012; Ren 2015). In line with Kasper & Dahl, the intent of the perception study was therefore to probe learners' attitudinal values assigned to "generic speech act realization strategies, since these can be assumed to be cognitively represented as prototypical realization patterns" (Kasper & Dahl 1991: 219). This was achieved by asking participants to judge the appropriateness of target language sentences in 18 items: 12 of these were experimental request and complaint items, added to which were 6 filler items. All 18 PPT situations employed in the present study were developed by the researcher herself and are to be found in Appendix 7.

Since sociopragmatic variables are relevant resources in informing participants of which linguistic options are most appropriate for conveying intentions, two variables were built into the perception study (cf. Rylander et al. 2013). Coordinated with the DCT items, *social distance* occupied one level, i.e., all interlocutors were acquaintances, whereas the variable *social dominance* occupied two levels: the speaker (S) had either higher social power than the addressee (A) (S > A), or speaker (S) and addressee (A) were power equal (S = A). Each combination of these variables was represented by three PPT items, i.e., six items per speech act and twelve items in total. Table 30 illustrates the variable combinations used in this study, alongside a brief description of the situations corresponding to each combination. Apart from degree of familiarity and speaker status, all DCT and PPT items were further matched in terms of their key variables, namely setting, situational characteristics as well as addressee characteristics such as gender and age.

Table 30. Categorization of PPT items according to the two socio-contextual variables social distance and social dominance

	Requests	**Complaints**
S=A, =SD[a]	Situation 1 '*Plants*': You ask your classmate to water your plants while you are travelling.	Situation 7 '*Vacation*': You complain to your employer about cancelling your vacation.
S=A, =SD	Situation 2 '*Noisy neighbor*': You ask your neighbor to turn the music down.	Situation 8 '*Restaurant*': You complain to an acquaintance about his inconsiderate behavior.
S=A, =SD	Situation 3 '*Insurance*': You ask an acquaintance for information on an insurance policy.	Situation 9 '*Rent increase*': You complain to your landlady about an illegal rent increase.
S>A, =SD[b]	Situation 4 '*Dirty bathroom*': You ask your roommate to clean the bathroom.	Situation 10 '*Dentist*': You complain to your dentist about a dental treatment.
S>A, =SD	Situation 5 '*Broken shower*': You ask your landlord to speed up a repairing job.	Situation 11 '*Library*': You complain to your classmate for not showing up to study dates.
S>A, =SD	Situation 6 '*Kiosk*': You ask the salesman to give you the correct change.	Situation 12 '*Laundry detergent*': You complain to your roommate for emptying your laundry detergent.

[a] Speaker (S) and addressee (A) are power equal. They are acquaintances (= SD).
[b] Speaker (S) has higher social power than addressee (A). They are acquaintances (=SD).

Added to the 12 experimental items introduced in Table 30 were six fillers which elicited language functions other than requests and complaints, such as *asking for the time* or *inviting a friend over*. The filler items were based on an analysis of familiar everyday expressions and elementary language functions taught at level A1 in the Integration Course. They served as distractors to avoid a priming effect, i.e., to prevent informants from choosing the same response option(s) throughout the perception task. In addition, some filler items contained *nonsense*-answers to identify individuals who did not answer the perception questions thoughtfully and therefore had to be removed from the study. All test-takers responded to the same request, complaint, and filler items but in one of two random order forms in which the items were randomly sequenced.

Having established the general test design, the following paragraph now discusses characteristics of the item design. Figure 6 presents the actual scenario used in PPT item 7 *Vacation* (refer to Figure 5 for a request item).

Figure 6. Actual scenario page for PPT item 7 *Vacation*

Structure and progression of the scenario descriptions were identical for all items: The participants first read the title which provided information about the setting (e.g., *Auf der Arbeit / At work*). Below the title, a photograph was added which depicted the location and the conversational partner in the upcoming exchange.[104] Photographs taken in Germany were provided to increase the naturalness of the instrument in addition to supporting learners in imagining the situations vividly and evaluating the encounters described. The actual text prompt was placed after the picture, and here care was taken to include only scenarios that were realistic, familiar, and accessible to German and Syrian Arabic informants alike (cf. A8-1 –

[104] Many of the photographs included in the PPT were taken by the researcher herself and the people depicted have given her exclusive rights to use the content. For the additional photographs, a standard license was bought from iStock which equally gives the researcher the right to use this content; these photographs are marked accordingly (cf. Appendix 7).

A8-4). The internal structure of the text prompt was identical for all items: The situational descriptions were made up of six sentences and their length was kept relatively similar for each speech act to control their impacts on short-term memory (cf. Taguchi 2012). Request items consisted of 65 – 79 words, with an average of 71 words. The word count in complaint items ranged from 75 – 88 with a mean of 80 words (see § 4.2.3.2 for detailed information). Finally, the scenario description was followed by an explicit response prompt addressing the test-taker (e.g., *Du beschwerst dich bei [Name] / You complain to [name]*) and potential response options. The format was a standard multiple-choice design of four answer options, one target answer and three less appropriate distractors per item. All answers were grammatically complete utterances and varied only with regards to their pragmatic appropriateness in context. For each scenario, the informants were asked to put themselves in the situation at hand and to circle the one answer among the four options that they thought was the most appropriate in the given context. The target item, i.e., the pragmatically most appropriate response was based on the native speaker responses collected as part of the preliminary study. In particular, the target was a written form of the most common native speaker utterance and it included the pragmalinguistic forms (e.g., formulas, phrases, strategy type and internal modification) deemed appropriate for satisfying the sociopragmatic requirements of the situation. In contrast, the distractors were modelled on interlanguage requests and complaints which differed from native speaker productions. The criteria for distractor choice were detailed above (cf. § 4.2.4.1). For distractor construction care was taken that within a move there were no stark differences in meaning that might have biased study participants against a choice (cf. Hudson et al. 1995; Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010; Dörnyei & Csizér 2012). In addition, the amount of information included, the phrasing and level of specificity used, and the length of the distractor in comparison to the target response were considered.

Equally important were the choices made with regards to language(s) and language levels included in the test items, as a lack of grammatical competence in the L2 may limit the value of the pragmatic input to learner informants. The initial instructions as well as an explanation by means of a sample item were given in participants' first language (i.e., Arabic in the case of the learner participants) to ensure comprehension of the perception task. Following this, the entire text of the

scenarios and the response options was drawn from the *Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer A2-B1* list of the target grammar and vocabulary for German language learners at level A2 (cf. Perlmann-Balme et al. 2009). Words which could not be simplified were clarified by glossing. In cases in which an Arabic translation was given for a word or phrase in the target response, translations were also provided in the distractors to avoid that the appropriate answer stood out. In addition, participants were addressed in the informal and more familiar second person *du / you* in all situational descriptions and they were always asked to be themselves and choose request and complaint responses that reflect what they thought they would do under the same circumstances (cf. Schauer 2006b).

The intent of the PPT was thereby to understand if and how the range of items for each assessment separates the different populations of test-takers. In terms of differences between learner groups, it was expected that the informant factor *grammatical proficiency level* has an impact on the scores, with intermediate level learners scoring higher than elementary learners. At a simpler level, German native speakers are expected to score higher than learners since "they presumably have both, a proficiency and an exposure advantage" (Roever et al. 2014: 69). Informants' responses from the PPT were converted to an Excel spreadsheet file, and converted to a binary format, with 1 representing appropriate responses and 0 representing less appropriate responses. The scores obtained from the test were then added to create the overall PPT score, with a maximum possible score of 12 (excluding filler items). In addition, the responses were further categorized into four levels: 1 (appropriate response), 2 (too indirect), 3 (too direct I), and 4 (too direct II). The distribution of these response options was subsequently analyzed based on the speech act and learner group.

Summing up, the PPT is an indirect way of assessing pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge via pragmatic perception. The focus was not on-line perception of politeness forms in context but relatively permanent states of pragmatic knowledge. Notwithstanding the benefits this type of assessment may provide, certain limitations remain. The decision to focus on knowledge rather than performance of speech act modifiers limits the range of conclusions that can be drawn from the results for adult refugee-background learners' actual language use in real-world settings. For instance, written judgment questionnaires are only able to capture linguistic features – such as strategy types, semantic formulae, or

modifiers – and leave it to the study participants to *imagine* paralinguistic features like tone of voice or nonverbal actions. In response to this, Roever (2011) compares the search for a reliable multiple-choice assessment tool which is capable of measuring actual real-life production and perception of pragmalinguistic forms under differing sociopragmatic conditions to the search for the "holy grail" of pragmatic assessment (2011: 570). Until such an instrument is created and validated, the current pragmatic perception task appears promising for assessing learners' receptive skills in recognizing pragmalinguistic form-to-function relationships.

4.2.5 Pilot testing

Two pilot studies were conducted to improve upon the study design prior to the performance of the full-scale research project. In order to choose a representative sample of the larger survey group, the target group was defined in terms of the characteristics depicted in Table 31.

Table 31. Criteria for subject selection in pilot study

Criteria	
Age	18-35 years
Gender	Male and female participants
Geographic location	Resident in Cologne
Educational background	Mixed
First language	Dialects of Arabic (preferably: Syrian Arabic)
German language level	German level A2 and B1 according to the CEFR
Type of language course(s) taken	Integration Course

First, a *pre-pilot test* was run with international students engaged in a study abroad experience in Cologne, since it proved difficult to pull participants directly from the actual target group. Ten students took part in the pre-pilot test who were enrolled in two different levels of German language classes at university, from A2 (elementary German) to B1 (intermediate German). The learners ranged in age from 21 to 26 years (mean 23 years) and represented six language backgrounds (Spanish: 4, Ukrainian: 2, Brazilian Portuguese: 1, Russian: 1, Polish: 1, American English: 1). The number of participants was balanced across levels with one male and four female learners in each level. Pre-piloting of the five instruments revealed that certain rubrics contained potentially complex

vocabulary and grammar. While completing the questionnaires, the elementary learners therefore repeatedly switched to English to ask for clarification on the instructions. To counteract this problem, it was decided to not only improve the clarity of the rubrics but to translate the initial instructions in the data collection instruments to Arabic. In addition, it was found imperative that all questionnaire tasks be explained succinctly and clearly to the participants. Thus, a three-step plan for explanation was devised: (1) main instructions are given in learners' L1 Arabic (2) demonstration, (3) participant practice with either a request or complaint situation (see also Walkinshaw 2009: 114–116).

As the first sample was not representative of the final test population, a pilot study was compiled for the revised data collection instruments. This pilot test was run in a university seminar room over five sessions. Participants were eleven native speakers of Arabic who at the time of data collection attended a German integration course in Cologne at either level A2 or B1 (level A2: six learners; level B1: five learners). The learners selected represented four language backgrounds, i.e., two Syrian Arabic, four Iraqi Arabic, three Moroccan Arabic and two Egyptian Arabic native speakers. In total, there were two males and nine females who ranged in age from 18 to 35, the average age being 28 years. Even though the participants' educational level has no direct relevance to the overall study, it impacts learners' ability to read and comprehend the written language. Accordingly, learners with diverse educational backgrounds were included. Informants who participated in the pre-pilot and actual pilot study had to face two tasks: First, they filled in all five data collection methods (i.e., Learner Questionnaire 1&2, DCT, LAT, PPT) to check whether the instruments were working as intended. Second, they were trained to color-code vocabulary, grammatical structures, rubrics, and task types whose meaning was not clear. All informants were interviewed individually after completing each questionnaire to solicit additional feedback. During the process, potential problem areas and deficiencies in the research design were identified so that improvements could be made where necessary. Piloting of the discourse completion and pragmatic perception tasks provided the following insight: Two DCT items were slightly ambiguous and therefore not reliable in eliciting the required speech act. These items were identified and revised. Apart from this, pilot-testing confirmed that elementary and intermediate learners evaluated all DCT and PPT items as

depicting realistic and frequent situations. According to the participants, the inclusion of photographs made situations feel more realistic, less test-like, and helped with their mental representation of the different encounters. The participants further stated that working on the production and perception items was enjoyable as both instruments test communicative behavior that learners need in their everyday life in Germany. The same feedback was given by the learner participants who took part in the main study.

Piloting of the LAT further provided information on the performance of individual items and tasks, whether the LAT was at the right level for the L2 learners who took it and whether items contributed to measuring the same constructs. Another critical step of piloting was to check the initial decisions about scoring. This was done by collecting learners' scores for individual tasks, for individual parts, and for the LAT as a whole. All scores were analyzed and interpreted to determine the level of difficulty of individual parts, the reliability of the test as a whole and whether the LAT is providing the information it was designed to provide, i.e., clearly distinguishing test-takers who are at or above a particular mastery level of grammatical ability from those who are below it. Regarding test reliability, it was demonstrated that the scores obtained on three testing dates (i.e., either pre-piloting, piloting, or final data collection) grouped learners from A2 and B1 language courses in essentially the same way. As scores are consistent in all testing-formats, the LAT can be considered reliable for making such classification decisions (cf. Bachman & Palmer 1996: 20). Equally important, the small-scale studies were a necessary step in becoming familiar with the procedures during data collection and in testing the actual research workflow. This also included getting a feel for the study participants' needs (e.g., for additional support or a short break) and rehearsing the administration procedures (cf. Alderson et al. 1995: 103; Dörnyei et al. 2012: 79-80). Processing times for each individual task (depending on the language level A2 or B1) were recorded. Due to the high number of methods employed, participants quickly became fatigued in both pilot tests, and this affected the quality and quantity of information provided in the questionnaires. To solve this problem, a schedule for the execution of the experiment was developed which defined amongst other things a set order for the questionnaires as well as fixed times for breaks during the data collection process. During these breaks, snacks and drinks were provided.

4.3 Data collection

The data collection took place over a period of three months, i.e., from October to December 2019. All learner informants were tested individually in the Experimental Linguistics Lab of the Institute of German Language and Literature I at the University of Cologne (XLinC Lab). They were renumerated for their participation and an on-site childcare facility for children as well food and drink were provided. The sessions started with a standardized explanation of directions: All rubrics and instructions were given in participants' L1 Arabic. Thus, each task was first read by the L2 learner and then discussed together with the researcher. This was followed by a warm-up task, using materials that were similar to the experimental task. Experimental items were introduced only if L2 learners demonstrated adequate understanding of the procedure. In addition, it was decided to conceal the precise nature of the language area being tested from L2 participants. The objective was to elicit L2 responses that reflect natural behavior rather than what the participants think they should say in the situations at hand. As questions regarding cultural differences as well as differences in directness and politeness levels between Arabic and German might have alerted participants to the study's objective, Language Questionnaire 2 was administered last. As shown in Figure 7, all five test methods were conducted back-to-back on the same day, in a set order.

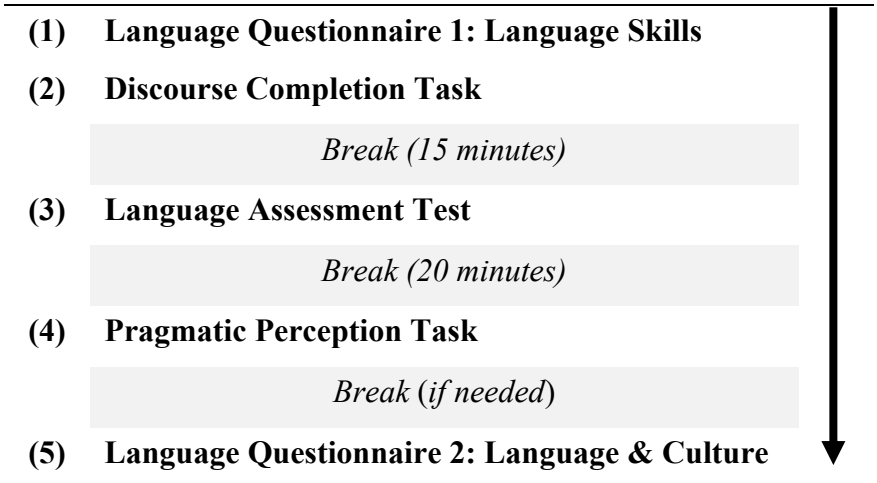

Figure 7. Data collection timeline

The length of time that was needed to complete the questionnaires differed for elementary and lower intermediate learners. The former needed on average 4 hours to complete the five instruments (including breaks); lower intermediate

learners in contrast spent on average 3 hours on the same tasks. The exhaustion and boredom factor therefore had to be taken into consideration. For instance, the DCT (a repetitive and demanding task) was followed by a 15-minute-break and next, the LAT which made use of different item and task types to balance the afore-mentioned effects. Besides, as L2 learners took part in both the production and perception study, the DCT was administered first, so as not to expose the informants to the native speaker German request and complaint behavior in the PPT (i.e., grammar, lexicon, strategy type and modification).[105] All test-takers, i.e., German native speakers and learners responded to the same items but in one of two random order forms for each test. The questionnaire return rate was 100 percent.

Obtaining informed consent from L2 learners

A primary concern for data collection in the present study was to ensure that participants are adequately informed about the research and their rights as participants. The learner informants in the present study are amongst the world's most vulnerable groups of people.[106] Loss, theft, abuse, or misuse of sensitive information may pose serious threats to their residence status in Germany (especially if refugee status has not yet been recognized formally) and may even result in threats to safety emanating from their home country. All measures necessary were thus taken to first ensure the safety of the participants and second to fully inform them about how their personal data is kept and what happens to it. In accordance with the guidelines for informed consent, L2 learners received a participant information sheet and a written informed consent document before participating in the study (cf. Mackey & Gass 2005: 27; World Medical Association 2013; WMA General Assembly 2013). Both documents were translated into the learners' native language Arabic, so as to ensure participant comprehension. The participants were then given the opportunity to pose

[105] Exposure to German speech act realizations could influence the validity of modifiers produced by the L2 learners since they might memorize some of the native speaker speech act behavior and carry it over to their own request and complaint production in the DCT (cf. Yamashita 1996; Shaeffer 2018).

[106] Immigrant and refugee populations have been reported to fear the (intentional or inadvertent) disclosure of sensitive information to the authorities. Neufeld et al. noted that "in Middle Eastern immigrant populations, individuals were distrustful of research and of the university, which they associated with the government" (2001: 586). According to the UN Refugee Agency, for refugees "these threats are aggravated by the refugee's own vulnerability as an uprooted foreigner, usually with few material resources, often without documentation, who does not enjoy the protection of his or her own Government" (UNHCR 1993).

questions to the researcher and to discuss their concerns in person. Consequently, learners were aware that their participation is purely voluntary and could be terminated at any time. They were also aware that their data was recorded in a pseudonymized manner, and that the location of and access to records is safeguarded in order to guarantee confidentiality and subject anonymity. These precautions were necessary so as to increase participation numbers, to guarantee that participants felt confident in answering questions in Learner Questionnaires 1 & 2 truthfully and most importantly, to obtain informed consent.

4.4 Procedures of data analysis

This study used a written discourse completion task to examine the extent and the way in which elementary and lower intermediate learners of German mitigated their requests and complaints. The dimensions examined were internal and external modification, in addition to request and complaint strategies. The analysis was restricted to modification devices with a downgrading function since *upgraders* were beyond the scope of the quantitative and qualitative analysis in the present study. This means that three types of modifiers were included in the analysis: syntactic downgraders, lexical/phrasal downgraders and external downgraders. I examined the use of these modification devices without the type of request or complaint strategy being held constant. Even though Faerch & Kasper argue that in investigating the mitigating function of internal and external modification "it is methodologically requisite to operate from a given strategy type as an independent variable" (1989: 222), the majority of ILP studies on request and complaint modification have assessed modifiers irrespective of strategy. With the intention to better compare findings with previous ILP research, the present study followed the same practice. After identifying the head acts and modification devices and classifying them based on the coding scheme used in the present study (see § 4.2.3.4), the data was submitted to the IBM SPSS Statistics software (version 28). The choice of statistical tests used in the present study was based on principles commonly employed in both behavioral and social sciences (cf. Cohen 1992; Toutenburg & Heumann 2008; Stone 2010; Rasch et al. 2010; Akremi et al. 2011; Janssen & Laatz 2017). To address the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted on the use of request and complaint strategy types, as well as internal and external downgrading

modification. The quantitative analysis of the collected data took two forms: (1) descriptive statistics (frequency analysis and mean analysis), which were conducted to identify the proportion and percentage of strategy types and modifiers used by the learners and the control group, and (2) inferential statistics (paired t-test, one-way ANOVA, chi-square test of independence), which were used to examine whether there were statistically significant differences among the learners and GNS with regard to the amount of internal and external modifiers employed. Throughout the analysis, I established continuous connections between the pragmatic productions of the learners and their performance results in the language assessment test. In order to complement the quantitative approach, a qualitative analysis was conducted to further investigate each hypothesis. This allowed for the identification of any potential qualitative similarities or differences between learners at the early and mid-level stages of grammatical proficiency in terms of the nature of the request and complaint head act strategies and the modification devices employed. In addition, the analysis compared the learners' use of request and complaint modification strategies to those of German native speakers, using baseline data as a point of reference. This enabled the investigation of whether learners were converging towards or diverging from the modification patterns of German native speakers. However, it is important to note that divergences from baseline data did not necessarily indicate pragmatic failure on the part of the learners. Instead, instances where learners' L2 productions encompassed some potential for pragmatic failure were discussed separately.

In the following three chapters, I will present and discuss the results of the present project. I will first investigate the study's three primary hypotheses in § 5, all of which are centered around the pivotal role of grammatical knowledge in the development of syntactic downgrading. Subsequently, § 6 explores the occurrence of lexical/phrasal and external downgraders in the speech act data, providing a thorough examination of these modification devices. Finally, § 7 presents the findings of the pragmatic perception task, which specifically examined learners' receptive abilities regarding syntactic modification in German request and complaint speech acts.

5 Investigating the relationship of grammatical and pragmatic development: Findings from the DCT

The primary objective of the present study was to examine the influence of enhanced grammatical knowledge on the progression of L2 pragmatic competence, specifically focusing on the manifestation of syntactic speech act modification. To that end, this chapter presents and discusses the empirical findings of the study, focusing on the development of learners' grammatical proficiency and pragmatic production. The research hypotheses outlined in § 3 serve as a guiding framework for organizing the presentation of results and facilitating the subsequent discussion.

The current chapter is structured as follows: In § 5.2, I examine three predictions regarding the role of grammatical knowledge in pragmatic development, with a specific focus on the occurrence of syntactic modification. Prior to the detailed analysis of the learners' pragmalinguistic development it is, however, pertinent to discuss the central preconditions for the main hypotheses in the next section, § 5.1. This involves an examination of learners' grammatical competence, utilizing an evaluation of the language assessment test results as a foundational component for investigating the grammar-pragmatics interface (§ 5.1.1). This is followed by a comprehensive evaluation of the sociopragmatic parameters built into the DCT items, and their influence on the variation of directness levels and modification devices in the GNS and learner data (§ 5.1.2). During the analysis, when graphs are provided for illustrative purposes, the corresponding figures can also be found in Appendix 9, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the data. When utilizing tables, the present analysis refers to the two learner groups as G1 (i.e., group 1, elementary learners) and G2 (i.e., group 2, lower intermediate learners). The control group is denoted by the abbreviation GNS (German native speakers).

5.1 Prerequisites for hypotheses evaluation

5.1.1 Assessing grammatical competence in the L2: An analysis of LAT results

The LAT measured the study participants' explicit knowledge of 13 grammatical features, all of which are crucial determinants for successful and appropriate realization of syntactic downgraders in German. Following this, learners were distinguished who were at or above a particular mastery level of grammatical ability from those who were below. Based on these results, the L2 learners were divided into two groups, i.e., elementary and lower intermediate learners (see § 4.2.2.2 for rating criteria). The elementary learners achieved an average score of 42.9 out of 73 (58.77 %), while the lower intermediate learners achieved an average score of 61.87 out of 73 (84.66 %). These results indicate that the lower intermediate level learners outperformed the beginners on the grammar test, with an average score that was 26 percentage points higher. The highest score achieved was 71 (97.26 %), while the lowest score was 25 (34.25 %). A two-sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean score on the 13 grammatical items tested between the elementary learners and lower intermediate learners. The results revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($t(59) = -5.2767$, $p < 0.0001$), indicating that the mean score for the beginners was significantly lower than the mean score for lower intermediate learners. Assumptions for the t-test were assessed and met, including normality of the data and homogeneity of variances. These findings provide support for a higher level of overall grammatical proficiency in the lower intermediate learner group.

Subsequently, a two-sample t-test was employed to compare the mean percentage scores of elementary and lower intermediate learners in relation to the nine grammatical forms that are most relevant in the production of syntactic downgraders. The forms analyzed were *dass*-clauses, *aber*-clauses, indirect questions, conditional clauses, subjunctive II, past tense, negation, passive voice, and indefinite pronouns. The results are summarized in the following table, which also includes the percentage of correct responses for the three basic sentence types and modal verbs.

Table 32. LAT scores: comparison of mean percentage scores for elementary and lower intermediate learners using independent samples t-test[a]

Criteria	G1	G2	t-value	p-value
Declarative	70.8	97.5		
Interrogative	90.3	97		
Imperative	50	75.8		
Modal verbs	79.7	92.8		
Indirect question	28.3	85	-9.36	1.49e-6
Conditional clause	52.2	85.6	-5.508	2.24e-15
Aber-clause	60	90	-5.42	1.07e-7
Dass-clause	66.7	96.7	-6.41	2.27e-15
Subjunctive II	31.3	70.3	-8.7907	2.28e-16
Past tense	48.3	86.7	-9.57	2.03e-11
Negation	64	83.3	-2.141	2.25e-9
Passive	27.8	61.7	-5.0152	6.38e-12
Indefinite pronouns	41.7	93.3	-21.93	2.28e-16

[a] Scores below the threshold (75 %) are highlighted in gray.

In all cases, the p-values were less than 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups. The results presented in Table 32 show that lower intermediate learners demonstrated overall superior performance across all tested grammar areas in comparison to elementary learners. Specifically, the average score for lower intermediate learners was significantly higher than that of the elementary group throughout all the evaluated categories. These findings suggest that the lower intermediate learners possessed a greater competence in the range of grammatical concepts and structures tested in the LAT which, in turn, form the grammatical basis for syntactic modifiers in German. In the following section, the influence of sociopragmatic parameters on the collected DCT data is examined.

5.1.2 Exploring the influence of sociopragmatic parameters in the current data sets

This study focuses on the pragmalinguistic component of pragmatic competence by analyzing the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 German. However, pragmatic competence is not solely shaped by linguistic resources but also by social norms, power relations, and cultural values in communication. The binary perspective of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics positions pragmatic

competence as a process that depends on an individual's linguistic abilities and the specific communicative context (cf. Timpe Laughlin et al. 2015). It is unrealistic to investigate pragmalinguistics without accounting for sociopragmatic factors, as the use of pragmalinguistic features can vary depending on social and cultural variables. In fact, excluding sociopragmatic parameters when examining pragmalinguistics may result in incomplete or inaccurate results. In the context of the present study, these parameters refer mainly to the factor *social dominance* and its effect on the use and acquisition of speech act modifiers by Syrian Arabic learners of German. Specifically, the focus was on how informants varied their speech acts (strategies and modifiers) across two socio-pragmatically different situations: (1) speaker and addressee are power-equal, or (2) the speaker has higher social power than the addressee. These sociopragmatic preconditions are crucial factors that must be considered when testing the main hypotheses of the study, as they might impact the results obtained. According to previous studies by Blum-Kulka & Juliane House (1989), Trosborg (1995), Barron (2003) and Tada (2005), the following outcomes were anticipated for this dataset:

I. In Condition 1 (S=A) for requests and complaints, participants are expected to use more conventionally indirect strategy types compared to Condition 2 (S>A).

II. In Condition 1 (S=A) for requests and complaints, participants are anticipated to use more downgrading modification devices compared to Condition 2 (S>A).

In the following, I will determine these sociopragmatic preconditions of the data before testing the main hypotheses of the current study. The prediction is divided into two parts: I. the choice of strategy and II. the use of modification based on situational variation. First, the outcomes regarding the GNS will be discussed, followed by the results for elementary and lower intermediate learners.

5.1.2.1 Results

I. Strategy choice

The analysis of Figure 8 confirms the first part of the hypothesis for GNS: in Condition 1 (S=A), the GNS utilized more conventionally indirect strategies than in Condition 2 (S>A), for both requests and complaints (see also Table A9-1,

Appendix 9). Interestingly, a main difference between the two speech acts becomes evident here, with complaints exhibiting much higher levels of directness in comparison to requests, regardless of whether in Condition 1 or 2.[107]

Figure 8. Strategy use by GNS in twelve DCT items (in %)

Taken together, the results for GNS indicate that the use of conventionally indirect strategies was higher in Condition 1 than in Condition 2. A paired samples t-test was conducted to confirm this finding for requests, which revealed that the mean number of indirect strategy types used in Condition 1 was significantly greater than in Condition 2 ($t = 6.684$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 46$). The same

[107] Apart from these overall differences in directness levels, another notable finding is the higher occurrence of hints in Condition 2 for requests. The reason for this lies in item 6 *Bakery* in which GNS showed a tendency to use hints such as *Da fehlen noch 5 Euro / You're still missing 5 euros* or *Ich glaube Sie haben sich vertan / I think you might have made a mistake*, which was an atypical strategy choice when compared to the other request items. Hints are excluded from the present analysis of indirectness strategies, since researchers such as Blum-Kulka (1987, 1989) amongst others contest the notion that non-conventional indirectness can be equated with an increase in politeness. Rather, hints can amplify the addressee's cognitive load and even convey manipulative or deceptive intentions. The analysis therefore focuses on conventional indirectness which balances politeness with reducing listener inference work and is typically perceived as more polite, especially in requests.

test was repeated for complaints, where it was found that the use of the number of indirect strategy types in Condition 1 for complaints among native speakers is significantly different (greater) on average than the number of indirect strategy types in Condition 2 for complaints ($t = 6.716$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 46$). A summary of the results of the statistical analysis is provided in Table 33. The statistics demonstrate that GNS tend to employ a greater number of conventionally indirect strategies in both requests and complaints when interacting with interlocutors who hold equal power, as opposed to situations in which they have a higher social status than the addressee.

Table 33. Indirect strategies in requests and complaints among GNS: Condition 1 vs. 2 – t-test results (in means)

	Mean indirect strategy types for requests	**Mean indirect strategy types for complaints**
Condition 1 (S=A)	2.80	1.30
Condition 2 (S>A)	1.67	0.41
Difference between conditions	1.130	0.900
t-value	6.684	6.716
p-value	<0.001	0.000

In the following, the learners' strategy choices in relation to the sociopragmatic variable of *social dominance* will be examined. Figure 9 displays the utilization of direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect request and complaint strategies among elementary learners (G1) and lower intermediate learners (G2) in percentages (see also Table A9-2, Appendix 9). The results show that both groups of learners used a higher percentage of conventionally indirect strategies in Condition 1 (S=A) as compared to Condition 2 (S>A). Overall, however, the differences between the two conditions were less pronounced than those observed in the case of GNS.

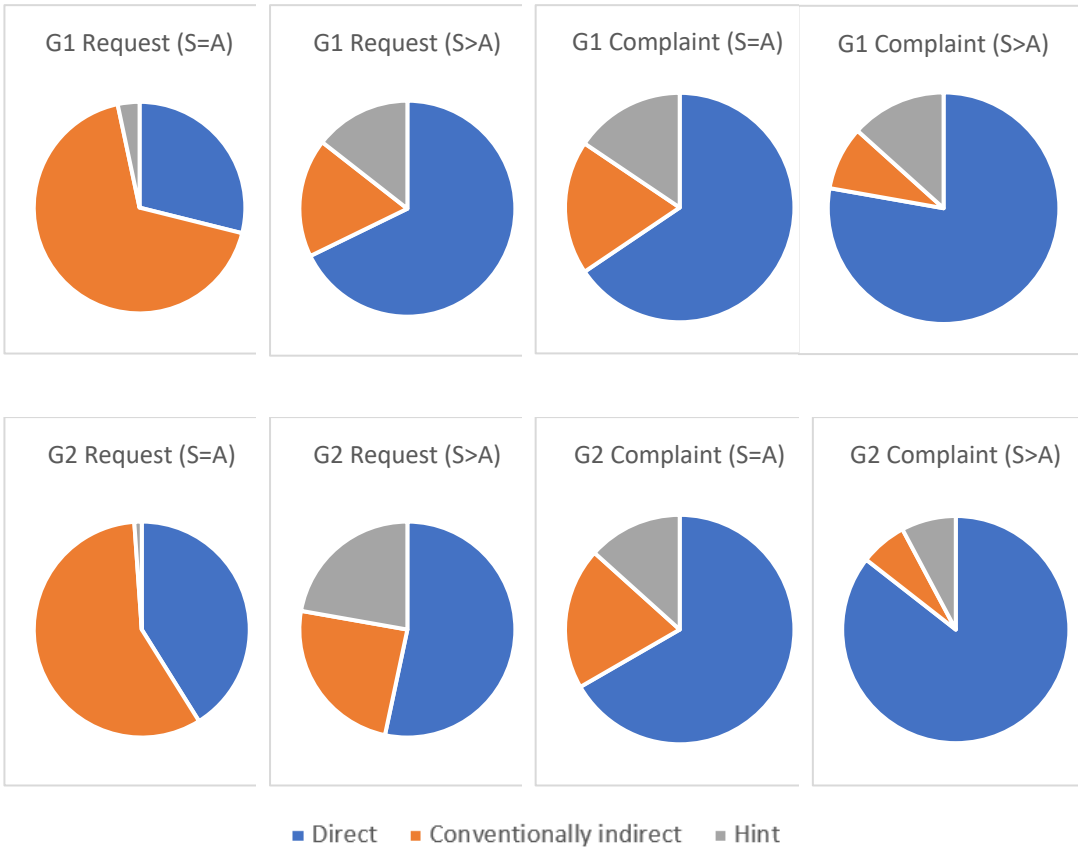

Figure 9. Head act strategy use by L2 learners in requests and complaints (in %)

Correspondingly, the statistical analysis yielded mixed results. First, the analysis focused on the variable of social dominance and its impact on strategy use in requests by elementary learners. The t-test results indicate that the use of indirect strategies for requests in Condition 1 was significantly higher than in Condition 2 among the elementary group ($t = 5.682$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 30$). In contrast, the results for complaint strategies suggest no significant difference in the use of conventionally indirect strategy types between the two conditions ($t = 1.471$, $p = 0.152$, $n = 30$) even though the results show evidence that, on average, elementary learners used more indirect complaint strategies in Condition 1 compared to Condition 2. Furthermore, the analysis found that, on average, lower intermediate learners used more indirect strategies in requests in Condition 1 than in Condition 2. A paired sample t-test showed that this difference between the means of the two conditions was significant ($t = 2.260$, $p = 0.029$, $n = 30$). Similarly, a paired sample t-test indicated a significant difference between the means of the two conditions for complaint strategies, with intermediate learners using more indirect complaint strategies in Condition 1 ($t = 2.570$, $p = 0.016$, $n = 30$). Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that elementary level learners used

significantly more indirect request strategies in Condition 1 compared to Condition 2, while there was no significant difference in the use of complaint strategies between the two conditions. In contrast, the hypothesis was confirmed for intermediate level learners, since there was a significant difference both in the use of indirect request and complaint strategies between the two conditions, with intermediate learners using more conventionally indirect strategies in Condition 1.

II. Use of modification

Subsequently, the study aimed to examine the combined use of internal (lexical and syntactic downgraders) and external downgraders in requests and complaints among informants in two different sociopragmatic conditions. To do so, the frequency and mean number of internal and external downgraders used in each condition were calculated and compared by using t-tests for dependent samples. The results of the paired samples t-test in Table 34 show that native speakers used significantly more downgraders in Condition 1 for requests as compared with Condition 2 ($t = 3.460$, $p = 0.001$, $n = 46$), indicating a higher level of indirectness in the former. Moreover, the analysis of complaint modification also found significant differences between the two conditions, with GNS employing more downgraders in Condition 2 compared to Condition 1 ($t = -4.873$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 46$). The observed pattern of downgrader use in complaints by GNS is unexpected, as it reveals that a greater number of downgraders were employed in instances where the speaker had a higher social status than the addressee.

Table 34. Downgraders in requests and complaints among GNS: Condition 1 vs. 2 – t-test results (in means)

	Mean downgrader use for requests	**Mean downgrader use for complaints**
Condition 1 (S=A)	9.70	5.35
Condition 2 (S>A)	7.87	7.43
Difference between conditions	1.826	-2.087
t-value	3.460	-4.873
p-value	0.001	0.000

The use of downgrading modifiers in requests and complaints was compared between two conditions for both elementary and intermediate level learners. Table 35 displays the results. For elementary learners, there was no significant

difference in the use of downgraders in requests or complaints between the two conditions (t_request = 0.937, p_request = 0.356, n = 30; t_complaint = -0.360, p_complaint = 0.721, n = 30). In contrast, for intermediate learners, there was a significant difference in the use of downgraders in requests between the two conditions, with more downgraders used in Condition 1 (t = 2.379, p = 0.020, n = 30). This suggests that intermediate learners, compared to beginners, are approaching the situational variability of modification use by GNS. However, this only holds true for requests, as the use of downgraders in complaints did not show a significant difference between the two conditions for intermediate learners (t = -0.463, p = 0.647, n = 30).

Table 35. Mean scores for downgraders in Condition 1 and 2 by group – t-test results

	Condition 1 Mean	Condition 2 Mean	Mean difference	t-value	p-value
Requests					
G1	6.97	6.47	0.500	0.937	0.356
G2	8.40	7.00	1.400	2.379	0.020
GNS	9.70	7.87	1.826	3.460	0.001
Complaints					
G1	5.10	5.33	-0.233	-0.360	0.721
G2	6.20	6.43	-0.233	-0.463	0.647
GNS	5.35	7.43	-2.087	-4.873	0.000

Strikingly, a closer look at the use of each of the three downgrading types reveals that the higher use of downgraders in Condition 1 for requests was mainly due to the German native speakers' higher use of syntactic downgraders in this condition (see Table 36). In contrast, both lexical and external downgraders were almost equally employed in both conditions. This pattern was to some extent reflected in the learner data, with lower intermediate learners showing a similar distribution to the GNS by using higher numbers of syntactic downgraders in Condition 1 (45.56 %) than in Condition 2 (26.67 %). Nevertheless, in general, both elementary and lower intermediate learners tended to underuse syntactic and lexical downgraders yet overused external downgraders in Condition 1 and 2 requests when compared to the GNS.

Table 36. Frequency of downgrader types used across conditions (in %)

		Request (S=A)	Request (S>A)	Complaint (S=A)	Complaint (S>A)
Syntactic downgraders	**G1**	21.11	23.33	14.44	22.22
	G2	45.56	26.67	48.89	37.78
	GNS	78.26	50.27	41.30	57.25
Lexical downgraders	**G1**	34.44	33.33	5.56	11.11
	G2	30	37.79	8.89	8.89
	GNS	45.56	48.55	16.67	21.74
External downgraders	**G1**	87.78	87.78	75.56	77.78
	G2	96.67	93.33	77.78	81.11
	GNS	82.61	80.43	65.22	77.54

In analyzing the complaint data, we once again observe that GNS displayed the most pronounced pattern of mitigation according to situational variation for syntactic downgraders. However, unlike in the case of requests, GNS used all three types of downgrading more frequently in Condition 2 than in Condition 1. It is notable that elementary learners used more downgrading in Condition 2 than in Condition 1, even though they still underused all types of downgrading compared to GNS. Last, lower intermediate learners showed even greater divergence from the GNS target in terms of adapting their downgrader use to situational variation.

5.1.2.2 Discussion

The analysis has confirmed the prediction that the lower the relative dominance of the requester or complainer relative to the addressee, the more conventional indirectness GNS employ in their speech acts. Similarly, the statistics demonstrated that lower intermediate learners tended to employ a greater number of conventionally indirect strategies in both requests and complaints when interacting with interlocutors who hold equal power, as opposed to situations in which they had a higher social status than the addressee. These findings suggest that intermediate learners possess an awareness of the influence of sociopragmatic factors in the L2 and have also acquired a repertoire of directness strategies to select from. In contrast, although the beginners demonstrated significant differences in the use of request strategies in the two conditions, they did not show such differences in the use of complaint strategies. Hence, it can be inferred that intermediate learners have made greater progress in developing their

sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic skills, particularly in terms of adjusting their head act strategy use to suit different social contexts. Returning to the data from the elementary learners, although not statistically significant, the differences in mean values for complaint directness levels suggest that the learners may be becoming more attuned to the shifting power dynamics, even if they have not yet systematically adjusted their complaint strategies to match the varying sociopragmatic demands of the different situations. This could be attributed to the fact that these informants who are in the early stages of L2 acquisition are explicitly taught conventionally indirect request strategies such as *Kannst du X / Can you do X* in language classes, while the equivalent strategies for complaints are not part of the curriculum.[108] Due to the absence of corresponding strategies in learners' interlanguage, elementary learners may rely on (a) direct speech act strategies or (b) hints to convey their message, prioritizing either 'getting their message across' (a) or avoiding direct confrontation (b) over adapting their complaint strategies to the sociopragmatic demands of the situation.

In addition, the study offered valuable insight into the use of downgrading modification devices among German native speakers in situational variations. In particular, it was found that GNS employ significantly more downgraders, i.e., syntactic downgraders in status-equal request situations than in status-higher encounters. This can be explained by the fact that requests are attempts by the speaker to persuade the hearer to perform an act that primarily benefits the speaker, with the crucial factor being that the act is typically at the cost of the hearer (cf. § 2.4.1.1). Situations in which the requester has higher social power than the addressee generally result in a greater likelihood of compliance with the requested action. However, in situations where the speaker lacks higher social status than the addressee, the requester must balance the potential negative impact on the addressee's freedom of will with the risk of threatening their negative face-wants, thus necessitating the use of more indirectness and modification devices. While the use of downgraders in requests supported the hypothesis, the results were the opposite in complaints. More specifically, I found that GNS deployed fewer downgraders in complaint situations where both parties had equal status,

[108] The following integration course textbooks were analyzed: Braun et al. (2016a); Lemcke et al. (2013); Kaufmann et al. (2014); Böschel et al. (2010); Böschel et al. (2011); Böschel & Dusemund-Brackhahn (2012a, 2012b); Buscha et al. (2010).

but more downgraders when the speaker had higher social power. *What might account for this discrepancy?*

Let us start with a brief recap of the basics of complaining. A speaker's decision to express a complaint is influenced by two factors: situational context and the possibility of repair. After evaluating these factors, speakers decide on the most effective route for achieving a remedy, which can result in either interpersonal or intrapsychic complaints. Interpersonal complaints are used to bring about change, with the ultimate goal of getting others to engage in desired behaviors, changing others' behaviors, or changing an aversive situation. In contrast, intrapsychic complaints serve the purpose of changing the speaker's internal state, such as by venting frustrations and releasing hostile feelings (cf. Kowalski 1996: 185; § 2.4.1.2). It goes without saying that these functions of complaints are not mutually exclusive and that they can coexist in a given situation. Upon conducting a re-analysis of the DCT scenarios, it was discovered that in items 7-9 falling under Condition 1 (S=A), complaints mainly served interpersonal functions. More specifically, participants made complaints with the intention of potentially averting adverse consequences, such as incurring high expenses or facing personal disadvantages. For instance, in item 7 *Overtime*, where an employee complains about having to work overtime, the employer may cease to ask for overtime after being confronted with the direct complaint.[109] In contrast to requests, where speakers typically take into consideration the needs and feelings of others, a complainer in such a scenario (i.e., where the complainable can still be remedied) may place stronger emphasis on their own feelings, which may be in conflict with those of the addressee. Depending on contextual parameters, the complainer may thus feel less of a need to be considerate and instead focus on achieving personal goals, e.g., not having to work overtime anymore. Consequently, the most effective route for remedy to occur may involve presenting the complaint as harshly as possible, in order to convince the addressee to change the behavior that led to the complaint in the first place. In contrast, a high frequency of downgraders in complaints aimed at remedying a situation may weaken the impact of the message, potentially

[109] Similarly, in item 8 *Notes*, where a classmate complains about a peer not lending notes, the classmate in question may change their mind after being confronted with a direct complaint and lend the notes after all. Likewise, in item 9 *Heating*, the landlady may agree to pay for the heating repairs after being confronted with the tenant's direct complaint.

diminishing the likelihood of achieving the desired result. This finding emphasizes the relevance of second wave im/politeness approaches for the analysis of speech act modification. By using lower numbers of downgrading devices in Condition 1, the three complaint scenarios present occasions where speakers put a stronger focus on openly attacking rather than supporting their addressees' face (cf. § 2.4.2). In such instances, higher directness levels do not always constitute inappropriate communicative behavior; instead, both supportive and aggressive facework can be considered politic by interlocutors, i.e., appropriate to the ongoing social interaction (cf. § 2.4.2).

When examining DCT items 10-12 (Condition 2, S>A), it was found that in these scenarios the complainable event has already occurred, and the chances of making amends were limited. For instance, in item 10 *Rash*, the doctor has already administered the medication incorrectly, the classmate in item 11 *Oral presentation* has already missed the shared presentation and the flatmate in item 12 *Cooking ingredients* has already eaten the much-needed ingredients. In these scenarios, the complainer therefore does not anticipate immediate remedies or solutions, as the offensive event has already taken place, and the addressee cannot change it anymore. Instead, complaining in such cases mainly serves intrapsychic functions, such as making the complainer feel better by giving vent to their anger.[110] However, to the extent that the effect of a complaint is derogatory and negative, there is a risk of threatening both the addressee's positive face and their own. It thereby becomes less likely for speaker and addressee to keep up a positive relationship. In addition to maximizing the rewards to be gained (i.e., venting hostile or negative feelings), speakers therefore try to minimize the costs associated with complaining. To achieve this, speakers may use indirectness and select greater numbers of downgraders to manage face. This finding highlights the role of downgraders in managing face-threatening acts and in maintaining positive social interactions in situations where the chances of making amends were limited. To summarize, it seems that the factor *possibility of repair* (or the lack thereof) had a stronger impact on complaint modification than did social dominance. This means that in situations where a complaint had the potential to

[110] As has been mentioned above, complaining can serve both intrapsychic and interpersonal functions concurrently. In items such as 10-12, the complainer may intend not only to express their dissatisfaction, but also to prevent the addressee from repeating the offensive behavior in the future. However, the distinguishing feature of this set of items is that the addressee is unable to immediately or directly remedy the situation.

result in a desired outcome or remedy, speakers were more likely to focus on achieving that outcome and less concerned with managing interpersonal dynamics and power relations by using downgraders.

In contrast, it was found that when an immediate remedy was no longer an option, GNS participants instead placed a stronger emphasis on maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. This was achieved through a higher use of downgraders, which served to mitigate the potentially negative impact of the complaint on both the speaker's and the addressee's face. Ultimately, the findings suggest that it may be the potential for repair that drives the speaker's amount of downgrading devices to be used in a direct complaint. Such results are consistent with the idea that mitigation is a cognitive, relational, and emotive category that captures rationally grounded behavior aimed at avoiding unnecessary risks, responsibilities, and conflicts, and that it is pervasive in speech beyond mere politeness considerations (cf. Caffi 2013).

Before proceeding with the analysis of the learner data, it is important to emphasize the significance of syntactic modification, which has played a central role in the use of mitigation strategies in Condition 1 (requests) and Condition 2 (complaints), depending on the speech act. A closer examination of the data revealed that syntactic downgrading was particularly responsive to the two manifestations of the socio-contextual factor *social dominance*. This highlights the heightened importance of syntactic downgraders, as compared to lexical and external downgraders in adapting linguistic expressions to align with social power dynamics. This finding contributes to our understanding of how language users strategically employ syntactic downgraders to navigate social interactions and underscores the relevance of syntactic modifications in managing politeness and power dynamics in request and complaint exchanges. Moreover, this underscores the critical role of grammatical knowledge (especially syntax) in the implementation of mitigation strategies in discourse, particularly in situations where the speaker wants to soften the force of their speech act.

In the final part of this section, I will discuss the learners' use of downgraders in relation to situational variations. For elementary learners, there was no significant difference in the use of downgraders for either requests or complaints. However, for intermediate learners, there was a significant difference in the use of downgraders in requests between the two conditions, indicating that they were

approaching the situational variability of GNS modification use by employing higher numbers of syntactic downgraders in status-equal requests. This was not observed in complaints, where there was no significant difference between the two conditions for intermediate learners. While the results suggest that intermediate learners were more sensitive to situational variation in the use of request modification than elementary learners, overall, both the learner groups were not yet able to systematically vary their use of downgrading devices in accordance with sociopragmatic parameters. Even though the analysis of learners' directness strategies suggests that they were aware of the changing weight of power, they did not yet appear to be proficient enough to use the necessary amount and type of downgrading accordingly. Apart from proficiency effects, the slow development in the modification and sociopragmatic awareness of the elementary lower intermediate learners could also be attributed to a possible lack of negative evidence in their educational setting where, to some extent, the learners are taught to use request modifiers and, to a lesser extent, complaint modifiers. Although the present study did not investigate this issue, it could be equally crucial as prolonged exposure to native speakers in the target culture, as is also suggested by Barron (2003: 244-245) and Göy et al. (2012: 79). Overall, the findings suggest that intermediate learners' increasing grammatical competence positively influenced their pragmalinguistic competence, particularly in the use of syntactic downgraders. However, there is still room for improvement in learners' ability to adapt their downgrader use to situational variation. These findings align with previous research conducted by Barron (2003), Meyer (2007) and Trosborg (1995) who similarly find that relative to features of pragmalinguistic competence, sociopragmatic competence seems to develop slowly.

5.2 Predictions for the role of grammatical knowledge in pragmatic development

In the previous section, it was established that both elementary and lower intermediate learners lack sociopragmatic competence in systematically varying their use of downgrading devices in accordance with situational variation. This section explores the relationship between learners' grammatical competence and their pragmalinguistic competence, with a focus on the use and development of syntactic downgraders in L2 German. The analysis begins with a comparison of

the syntactic downgrader use among the three participant groups in § 5.2.1, followed by the presentation of results for the three research hypotheses in § 5.2.2, § 5.2.3, and § 5.2.4.

5.2.1 Comparing syntactic downgrader use in requests and complaints across three informant groups

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the mean use of syntactic downgraders by elementary learners, lower intermediate learners and GNS in requests and complaints; the results of which are presented in Table 37.

Table 37. Syntactic downgrader use by participant in requests and complaints (in means)

	N	Requests	Complaints	Total	SD	F-value	p-value
G1 mean (count)	30	1.5 (46)	1.3 (39)	2.8 (85)	1.981	93.272	<0.001
G2 mean (count)	30	3.2 (95)	3.5 (106)	6.7 (201)	3.022		
GNS mean (count)	46	6.5 (298)	4.5 (206)	11 (504)	4.572		

The results indicate a significant main effect of group ($F(2,103)= 160.238$, $p < 0.001$). Post-hoc tests using Bonferroni correction show that elementary learners (mean = 2.8) used significantly fewer syntactic downgraders than intermediate learners (mean = 6.7, $p < 0.001$) and GNS (mean = 10.869, $p < 0.001$) in requests and complaints. Furthermore, intermediate learners used significantly fewer syntactic downgraders than GNS in both speech acts ($p < 0.001$). In total, the analysis demonstrates that German native speakers employed a higher frequency of syntactic downgraders compared to L2 learners and that, similarly, intermediate learners showed a greater usage of syntactic downgraders in comparison to their elementary counterparts.

In the next two sections, the analysis centers on the two learner groups individually, that is the elementary learners (§ 5.2.2) and the lower intermediate learners (§ 5.2.3). The elementary learner data will be closely examined regarding the (non-)occurrence of syntactic modification. Subsequently, the focus will shift to investigating the developmental progress of lower intermediate learners in terms of employing syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints.

5.2.2 Unveiling the threshold: insight from elementary learners

Studies by Håkansson & Norrby (2005), Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig (2000), Bardovi-Harlig (2003) and Martí-Arnándiz (2008) indicate that a threshold level of grammatical competence (i.e., CEFR B1) may be a necessary condition to produce those pragmalinguistic forms that demand a good command of complex morphology and syntactic structures. Since the effect of low grammatical proficiency on the employment of internal modification is particularly pronounced for syntactic downgraders, it was predicted that syntactic downgrading may not be part of the present elementary learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire (cf. Bella 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Göy et al. 2012; Hill 1997). This section aims to explore Hypothesis 1, which states the following:

Hypothesis 1. A threshold level of grammatical competence, defined as lower intermediate grammatical competence (i.e., mean score in LAT: 61.8 points, including two standard variations) is necessary to produce syntactic downgraders.

5.2.2.1 Results

According to the data displayed in Table 37 above, the mean number of syntactic downgraders by elementary learners in the present study was found to be 2.8 (SD = 1.96) in the twelve DCT items, with 1.5 syntactic downgraders used in request head acts and 1.3 in complaint head acts. Elementary learners' use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints was, however, lower than the levels employed by the control group in all 12 DCT situations. A German native speaker informant used on average 11.15 (SD = 4.21) syntactic downgraders; 6.5 in request items and 4.5 in complaint items.

Findings in Table 38 provide additional evidence that the novice learners resorted to forms of syntactic downgrading in requests and complaints, albeit with considerably lower frequency than GNS. Another aspect of this is that learners utilized fewer combinations of the modifiers. Specifically, they employed one syntactic downgrading device in 22 % of their requests and 18 % of their complaints, while only 2 % and 3 % respectively included two or more syntactic downgraders.

Table 38. Requests and complaints containing 1+ syntactic downgrader (in %)

	Requests		Complaints	
	1 syntactic downgrader	**2+ syntactic downgraders**	**1 syntactic downgrader**	**2+ syntactic downgraders**
G1 % (count)	22.22 (40)	2.22 (4)	18.33 (33)	2.78 (5)
GNS % (count)	64.49 (178)	27.54 (76)	49.28 (136)	19.2 (53)

Further differences were also found with regard to the types of syntactic downgrading devices employed by the elementary learners in request and complaint head acts. In the following, the focus shall be on requests first, before moving to complaints subsequently.

Elementary learners' use of syntactic downgraders in requests

Table 39 presents a comprehensive summary of the distribution of the types of syntactic downgraders found in elementary learners' request realizations and compares these percentages to those of German native speakers. The elementary learners most frequently used subjunctive forms with 17.8 % and one form of embedding, i.e., *dass*-clauses with 2.8 % in request head acts. Utilization rates for all remaining types of syntactic downgrading were, however, exceedingly low, ranging from 0.6 % to 1.1 %. Overall, the learners operated with a more restricted range of devices and certain syntactic downgraders (i.e., negation and indirect questions) were altogether absent in the learner request data.

Table 39. Proportion of requests containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)[a]

	G1	**GNS**
***Dass*-clause**	2.8	9.1
***Aber*-clause**	0.6	6.9
Indirect question	0	8.7
Conditional clause	1.1	7.3
Negation	0	4.4
Past tense	1.1	8.3
Subjunctive	17.8	50
Passive	1.1	3.3
Indefinite pronoun	0.6	1.8
Zero marking	77.78	35.51

[a] Values exceeding 100 % can be attributed to the frequent occurrence of double marking.

As has been shown in the LAT analysis, *dass*-clauses were among the grammatical forms in which elementary learners displayed the highest level of proficiency, achieving a success rate of 66.7 % (cf. § 5.1). This high level of grammatical competence appears to manifest in learners' production of request head acts, as evidenced by the examples provided in (23) and (24).

(23) Switch shifts, G1M_139620

[…] und ich bitte dich **dass** du in diesem Tag mit mir Tauschen kannst.
(and I ask you if you can switch shifts with me on that day.)

(24) Broken pipe, G1F_854213

Können Sie mir sagen, **dass** der Rohrbruch sofort repariert wirt.
(Can you tell me that the broken pipe will be repaired immediately?)

(25) Broken pipe, 21GERMAS

Herr Müller, wäre es möglich, **dass** der Handwerker bereits heute kommt?
(Mr. Müller, would it be possible that the craftsman comes today?)

(26) Cat, 4GERFEM

Hey Lena, bestünde die Möglichkeit, **dass** du dich während ich in Frankfurt bin um meine Katze kümmerst.
(Hey Lena, would it be possible that you take care of my cat while I am in Frankfurt?)

Differences in grammatical competence levels between novice learners and GNS became, however, apparent in the strategies chosen by the two groups to preface their *dass*-clauses: Whereas elementary learners used routinized and syntactically simple strategies such as questions referring to the addressee's ability or explicit performatives (i.e., *können Sie X / can you X*, *ich bitte dich / I ask you*), GNS employed more elaborate introductory phrases that exhibited a greater degree of syntactic complexity to prepare the addressee for the upcoming request (e.g., asking for the possibility of compliance and mitigating the utterance by use of subjunctive forms; see 25 & 26).[111]

Next, the comparatively high frequency of *subjunctives* in the learner data necessitates further investigation, since the subjunctive mood was among the forms that received the lowest percentage of correct answers from the elementary learners in the LAT (i.e., 31.3 %). A closer look at the data revealed that

[111] Embedded structures generally differ from other syntactic downgraders in the present data sets in that the structure does not per se convey politeness and/or modify the head act. Instead, lexical and phrasal options employed as part of an embedded structure fulfill the afore-mentioned politeness functions.

elementary learners' subjunctive usage was almost entirely limited to two forms, i.e., the subjunctive forms of the modal verbs *können / can* and *mögen / want*. Together these forms accounted for 75 % of the subjunctive forms utilized by elementary learners. Table 40 compares the proportion of requests with subjunctive forms of *können* and *mögen* for elementary learners and GNS. While levels for subjunctive *können* remained below the L2 norm (27.9 %), the learners clearly overused the modal *mögen / want* in the subjunctive.

Table 40. Proportion of requests with subjunctive forms of *können* and *mögen* (in %)

	N	**Subjunctive modal *können / can***	**Subjunctive modal *mögen / want***
G1 % (count)	30	8.3 (15)	6.67 (12)
GNS % (count)	46	27.9 (77)	0.72 (2)

A breakdown of the individual subjunctive forms tested in the LAT is informative in this regard. Table 41 presents the percentage frequency with which seven subjunctive forms have been correctly chosen by elementary learners in the LAT. While the subjunctive form of *können* was used correctly by 28.33 % of elementary learners (and is therefore numerically in the middle range), subjunctive *mögen* was the form already best mastered by the informants with 66.67 %. This might explain the learners' strong reliance on this syntactic downgrader in their request mitigation.

Table 41. LAT scores for individual subjunctive forms (in %)

	müssen[a] (müsste)	**sein (wäre)**	**haben (hätte)**	**können (könnte)**	**sollen (sollte)**	**werden (würde)**	**mögen (möchte)**
G1	16.67	18.33	26.67	28.33	30	38.33	66.67

[a] must, be, have, can, should, will/become, like

The examples in (27) and (28) illustrate how the elementary learners typically used *können* with hearer-oriented conventionally indirect requests. These L2 productions already exhibited a high degree of similarity to their GNS counterparts (as shown in example 29), despite obvious grammatical difficulties.

(27) Switch shifts, G1F_854213

Könnst du am Samstag mein arbeiten Arbeitet?
(Could you work for me on Saturday?)

(28) Burst pipe, G1M_362522

Könnten Sie bitte repariern sofot machen?
(Could you please fix that right now?)

(29) Switch shifts, 22GERFEM

Sag mal, **könntest** du am Samstag meine Schicht übernehmen?
(Hey, could you cover my shift on Saturday?)

However, when it came to the use of the modal *mögen / want* in the subjunctive, elementary learners clearly diverged from the L2 norm by using *mögen* exclusively with speaker-oriented want statements (see 30 & 31), a form that only appeared two times in the GNS data and was part of more elaborate and syntactically more complex sentence structures (see the hedged performative in example 32). In this case, the learners' L2 grammatical knowledge of the modal *mögen* enabled a non-target-like pragmalinguistic use (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002).

(30) Burst pipe, G1F_700345

bitte ich **möchte** die Handwerker sofort schicken
(please I would like the craftsman to be send immediately)

(31) Move, G1M_101129

am Samstag ich muss nach eine neue Wohnung umziehen und ich **möchte** mit dir helfen
(on Saturday I have to move to a new flat and I would like you to help me)

(32) Burst pipe, 26GERFEM

Ich **möchte** Sie darum bitten, das sofort zu veranlassen oder mir eine geeignete Unterkunft zur Verfügung zu stellen.
(I would like to ask you to arrange that immediately or to provide me with a suitable accommodation.)

Beside the better grammatical proficiency observed in the two forms (as indicated by their higher values in the LAT), it seems likely that the subjunctive forms of *können* and *mögen* are taught early on in the integration course, thus prompting learners to employ them as syntactic modifiers in the initial phases of their L2 acquisition.

Conversely, the effect of low grammatical proficiency, as reported in the LAT, appears to have a particularly notable impact on the remaining types of syntactic downgraders, whose production rates in requests were observed to be

exceedingly low, ranging from 0.6 % to 1.1 %. As previously discussed, passives and indirect questions were among the grammatical forms in the LAT in which elementary learners displayed the lowest level of proficiency, achieving a success rate of 27.8 % and 28.3 % respectively. Examples (33) and (34) illustrate elementary learners' initial attempts at using the routinized phrase *ich wollte fragen, ob / I wanted to ask whether*, which includes the syntactic downgrader indirect question in addition to the past tense form *wollte / wanted*. While the past tense modal was already employed successfully by the two learners, it seems that their level of grammatical proficiency in the L2 did not yet allow them to form the more complex syntactic structure, i.e., the indirect question. Instead, they produced the grammatically incorrect construction *Ich frage von dir* which literally translates to *Ich ask of/from you*.

(33) Bakery, G1M_345674

I **wollte** fragen von dir 5 € zurück geben, weil ich dir 10 € gebe.
(I wanted to ask you to give back 5 € because I gave you 10 €.)

(34) Move, G1M_345674

Ich habe neue Wohnung und **wollte** fragen von dir helfen.
(I have a new apartment and wanted to ask you for help.)

Similar grammatical issues are evident in examples (35) – (38), where elementary learners demonstrated efforts to employ conditional clauses, passives or indefinite pronouns yet exhibited difficulties with respect to sentence structure, inflection, or pronoun form.

(35) Move, G1M_309123

kannst du mir helfen **wann** du **hättst** zeit.
(Can you help me if you have the time.)

(36) Move, G1F_717774

du sollen mir helfen, **wenn** sie Zeit hast.
(You should help me if you have the time)

(37) Burst pipe, G1F_856792

Mussen sofort **repariert wird**, weil ganze Fußboden nass und stinken ist.
(It must be repaired immediately because the entire floor is wet and smells bad.)

(38) Move, G1F_854213

am Samstag ich ein neue Wohnung zeihen und ich brauche **einmand [=jemand]** helfen di Umzugskartons und tragen.
(On Saturday, I am moving into a new apartment, and I need someone to help me carry the moving boxes.)

Elementary learners' use of syntactic downgraders in complaints

Let us now move on to the types of syntactic downgraders employed by the elementary learners in complaints. Table 42 displays the distribution of the various types of downgrading devices observed in the learners' complaint head acts and presents a comparison of these percentages with those observed in the GNS data. The elementary learners most frequently used negation with 8.9 %, subjunctives with 3.9 % and two forms of embedding, i.e., *dass*- and *aber*-clauses with 3.3 % and 2.8 %. As was the case with requests, utilization rates for all remaining types of syntactic downgrading were exceedingly low, ranging from 0.6 % to 1.1 %. Compared to GNS, the elementary learners once again displayed a relatively limited repertoire of syntactic downgraders in their complaint expressions, with certain types (such as past tense and indirect questions) being entirely absent from their linguistic productions.

Table 42. Proportion of complaints containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)[a]

	G1	**GNS**
***Dass*-clause**	3.3	24.6
***Aber*-clause**	2.8	7.6
Indirect question	0	0
Conditional clause	1.1	5.4
Negation	8.9	9.8
Past tense	0	4
Subjunctive	3.9	9.1
Passive	0.6	4
Indefinite pronoun	1.1	7.3
Zero marking	81.67	50.72

[a] Values exceeding 100 % can be attributed to the frequent occurrence of double marking involving different syntactic downgrader types.

Upon initial observation, the elevated occurrence of *negation* as a modifier in elementary learners' complaint expressions (8.9 %), in comparison to their request expressions (0 %), is noteworthy. In addition, a substantial discrepancy is evident between the frequency of subjunctive constructions in complaint head acts, as opposed to requests, with the former exhibiting a markedly lower percentage (3.9 % vs. 17.8 %). For a comprehensive overview of the distribution of each type of syntactic downgrading in both request and complaint contexts, please refer to Table 43.

Table 43. Proportion of requests and complaints containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)

	***Dass*-clause**	***Aber*-clause**	**Indirect question**	**Conditional clause**	**Neg.**	**Past tense**	**Sub-junctive**	**Pas-sive**	**Indef. pronoun**
G1 RE	2.8	0.6	0	1.1	0	1.1	17.8	1.1	0.6
G1 CO	3.3	2.8	0	1.1	8.9	0	3.9	0.6	1.1

G1 RE = elementary learners, Requests; G1 CO = elementary learners, Complaints

After scrutinizing the complaint data more closely, it became evident that the learners solely employed negation in the form of *negative evaluation*, examples of which can be seen in (39) to (41) for learners, and in (42) – (44) for GNS.[112] Before examining the data for the L2 learners, let us first focus on the data for the group of German native speakers. When the GNS used negative evaluations in complaints, they followed two strategies: They either varied the negated adjectives in accordance with the context (*not okay, not cool*, etc.) or they fell back on the highly formalized construction *X ist nicht in Ordnung / X is not okay* (see 42 – 44). In contrast, elementary learners exhibited a more restricted range of negative constructions, since they only negated the two adjectives *gut / good* and *gerecht / fair* – irrespective of the specific context.[113] Their ability to vary the use

[112] To reiterate, instead of producing utterances such as *Ich finde X schlecht (oder schlimm) / I think X is bad (or terrible)*, the participants in the present study prefer negated phrases such as *Ich finde X nicht gut / I think X is not good*. The latter is considered to be less offensive as it tones down the blame levelled at the addressee.

[113] While the novice learners were already familiar with *gut / good*, the adjective *ungerecht / unfair* appeared in the situational descriptions and was subsequently copied by the learners. Despite the Arabic translation provided, many learners misunderstood *ungerecht / unfair* as *gerecht / fair* and then, unknowingly, resorted to a double negation (i.e., *nicht ungerecht*, see example 41). They intended, however, to use nicht *gerecht / nicht fair*, as inquiries after learners' completion of the DCT have shown.

of negative evaluation thus seemed to be restricted by lexicon size and word frequency effects.

(39) Notes, G1M_362522

Ich fend das **nicht** gut und nicht deinen Kolegn helfen
(I don't think that's good, and you're not helping your colleague.)

(40) Notes, G1F_274914

Das ist **nicht** gut zwischen die freunden.
(That's not good between friends.)

(41) Overtime, G1M_245510

Das ist **nicht** ungerecht [= gerecht].
(That's not fair.)

(42) Oral presentation, 14GERFEM

Jacob, das war echt **nicht** okay, dass Du mich am Dienstag im Stich gelassen hast.
(Jacob, it was really not okay that you left me hanging on Tuesday.)

(43) Notes, 15GERFEM

Finde ich jetzt **nicht** so cool, dass du mir deine Notizen nicht geben willst!
(I don't think it's cool that you're not willing to give me your notes!)

(44) Rash, 16GERMAS

Frau Schulz, dieses Vorgehen ist **nicht** in Ordnung.
(Mrs. Schulz, this behavior is not acceptable.)

This does, however, beg the question of whether the elementary learners used negation consciously as a syntactic downgrader or whether they simply used it because they lacked the appropriate vocabulary to express their intended meaning, which would be something along the lines of *schlecht / bad*. After revisiting the request and complaint data, it was found that the learners frequently employed the term *schlecht / bad* to either justify their requests or to intensify their complaints. This is demonstrated in examples (45) to (47).

(45) Burst pipe, G1F_782349

Konnen Sie Bitt rufen ein reparieteren waill das Rohrucht habe stinken und das sehr **schlecht**.
(Can you please call a handyman because there is a pipe burst, it stinks, and this is really bad.)

(46) Cooking ingredients, G1M_111222

das finde von dir sehr **schlecht**. musst du erstmal fragen.
(I think that's very bad of you. You have to ask first.)

(47) Oral presentation, G1F_274914

das ist seher **schlecht**. Ich bin sauer von dich. Ich suche andre Partnerarbeit.
(That is very bad. I am angry with you. I will look for another partner to work with.)

Comparing examples (40) and (47), we see how the same learner varied her use of *nicht gut / not good* and *sehr schlecht / very bad* depending on the situational context, thereby demonstrating that she was aware of the communicative effect that the syntactic downgrader negation can have. Since there is still hope that the complaint in the *Notes* item will result in a change of the addressee's behavior, the learner mitigated the blame directed at the interactant by using *nicht gut* instead of *(sehr) schlecht*. The question, however, remains as to why the same learners did not use negation as a syntactic modifier in requests. Looking into the GNS request data, one finds that the downgrader was used here exclusively in the form *negative interrogatives*. Therefore, a contrast in the utilization of the syntactic downgrader negation can be observed in requests and complaints. The examples for request head acts in (48) and (49) serve to illustrate this point.

(48) Burst pipe, 5GERFEM

Gibt es **keine** Möglichkeit, dass sich früher darum gekümmert wird?
(Is there no way to take care of it earlier?)

(49) Burst pipe, 20GERFEM

Bitte! Könnte der Handwerker **nicht** früher kommen?
(Please! Couldn't the craftsman come earlier?)

While the use of negative evaluations in complaints still requires the speaker to use the appropriate syntax and semantics, it is considered less complex than *negated questions* due to the absence of the interrogative structure. Besides, negative interrogatives often require speakers to use a higher level of language proficiency, as they may involve more nuanced meanings as well as subtle distinctions in meaning. This difference in grammatical complexity is also evident in the elementary learners' varying results for negated declaratives and interrogatives in the LAT (see Table 44).

Table 44. LAT scores for negation (in %)

	Sentential negation (grammatical accuracy & meaning)	Particular negation (grammatical accuracy & meaning)
G1	70	46.67

Apart from negation, there is another noticeable difference in learner behavior between requests and complaints. As mentioned above, elementary learners used subjunctive forms in 3.9 % of their complaints, which is less frequent than their use of subjunctives in requests, which in turn accounts for 17.8 % of their language production in this context. As exemplified in examples (50) and (51) taken from the complaint data, the elementary learners relied exclusively on the subjunctive mood of *mögen / want*, a form which was only used once by the GNS.

(50) Overtime, G1F_733529

Deshalb ärgere ich mich sehr und **möchte** ich mit Ihnen sprechen, weil ich die Situation ungerecht finde.
(Therefore, I am very upset and would like to speak with you because I find the situation unfair.)

(51) Cooking ingredients, G1F_847911

Bitte **möchtest** du Essen bitte kochst du allein!
(If you would like to eat, then please cook by yourself!)

The overuse of the subjunctive form of the verb *mögen* has already been reported for requests and has been related to the elementary learners' high level of grammatical competence in using this form (cf. Table 41). This being said, in the case of requests, this subjunctive was used in addition to the subjunctive form of the verb *können*. The latter provides a readily accessible alternative for downgrading requests, particularly in the form of the highly pre-patterned structure *könntest du X / could you do X*. The reason for the relatively lower frequency of the subjunctive mood in L2 complaints can thus be attributed to the absence of a comparable, commonly used syntactic downgrader that is taught early on in language classes and that is easy to employ for complaints.

Following the use of negation and subjunctive mood, *aber*-clauses and *dass*-clauses were found to be the most frequently employed syntactic downgraders in complaints. Moreover, with 60 % and 66.7 % in the LAT, the two embedded structures were among those grammatical forms that had already been mastered to a comparably high degree by the elementary learners. As *dass*-clauses have

already been discussed for requests, the present discussion will focus solely on *aber*-clauses. Both elementary learners and GNS most typically chose *aber*-clauses in combination with disarmers (examples 52 – 54) and apologizing strategies (examples 55 – 56).

(52) Cooking ingredients, G1F_733529

ich bin nich Trauich, dass du gegeesen meinem Essem, **aber** sagst mir nich.
(I am not upset that you ate my food, but I am disappointed that you did not let me know.)

(53) Rash, G1M_309123

Nicht immer was gebt im Intreinet ist auch richtig, **aber** velicht du hat Falsch gesagt?
(Not everything on the internet is accurate, but perhaps you misspoke?)

(54) Overtime, 33GERMAS

Herr Macke, ich arbeite wirklich gerne hier und habe auch kein Problem mit zusätzlichen Aufgaben, **aber** es kann nicht sein, dass ich ständig Überstunden machen muss.
(Mr. Macke, I really enjoy working here and don't mind taking on additional tasks, but it can't be that I constantly have to work overtime.)

(55) Oral presentation, G1F_721543

Tut mit leid, sage ich das **aber** du hast nicht gut machen.
(I'm sorry to say this, but that wasn't good of you.)

(56) Oral presentation, 10GERFEM

Boah es tut mir voll Leid, dass ich dich jetzt hier damit überfallen muss, **aber** ich bin echt sauer wegen letzter Woche.
(I am sorry to have to bring this up now and catch you off guard, but I am really upset about what happened last week.)

Comparing the pragmatic productions by elementary learners and GNS, it becomes apparent that both groups employed similar argumentative approaches and/or tactical strategies in terms of content. The differences were, however, evident in the higher syntactic complexity levels found in GNS complaints in (54) and (56). Added to this is the fact that the learners encountered challenges with regard to the grammatical accuracy of their main and subordinate clause structures (see 52, 53 and 55). Taken together, the findings for *dass*- and *aber*-clauses in requests and complaints suggest that the learners whose grammatical competence level is restricted to lower levels find it difficult to introduce their utterances in a syntactically and at the same time pragmatically appropriate way. Difficulties

with complex syntactic structures were also evident in the learners' beginning use of conditional clauses and passives in complaints, as seen in (57) and (58).

(57) Oral presentation, G1M_345674

Wenn kannst du nicht kommen, schreibst du von mir.
(If you can't come, then text me.)

(58) Overtime, G1F_856792

Ich möchte mich Ihnen sprechen, weil ich diese Überstunden **werden nicht bezahlt**.
(I would like to speak to you because the overtime hours are not being paid.)

Taken together, it can be stated that the L2 productions in (52) – (58) provide illustrative examples of the grammatical difficulties learners experience at the beginning stages of L2 acquisition in employing these complex syntactic structures in complaints.

5.2.2.2 Discussion

This section has explored the use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints by elementary level learners of German, based on the hypothesis that such structurally complex downgrading devices may only be produced by learners who have reached a threshold level of grammatical competence (i.e., at least a lower intermediate level of grammatical competence in LAT). The data presented indicate that the novice learners made initial attempts to employ syntactic modifiers in their L2 productions. These findings provide evidence that syntactic downgraders were present in the speech acts of elementary learners, albeit with a markedly lower frequency compared to GNS. To gain a deeper understanding of the beginners' downgrading behavior, it is important to recall that the mitigating function of syntactic downgraders is not inherent in the grammatical meaning of linguistic structures. Instead, it concerns pragmatic meaning, which derives from the interplay of structure and context. Syntactic downgraders are nevertheless built upon specific grammatical forms and structures, and the current data suggest that a certain level of mastery of these grammatical forms is required for them to effectively function as syntactic downgraders.

In particular, the production data obtained from the elementary learners revealed that they only employed syntactic downgraders that had been correctly mastered and used frequently in the language assessment test. These included

subjunctive forms of *können* and *mögen*, *dass*- and *aber*-clauses, as well as negation in the form of negative evaluation. However, it is important to acknowledge that despite using these forms, the learners still encountered grammatical difficulties, indicating their overall limited proficiency in L2 grammar. Furthermore, the learners' higher grammatical competence level in subjunctive *mögen* led to a pragmalinguistic use that deviated from the target-like usage. More specifically, the learners tended to overgeneralize this subjunctive form in various situations, irrespective of the addressee involved. In contrast, when elementary learners encountered considerable challenges with grammatical forms in the LAT, it restricted their usage of these forms as downgrading devices in the DCT. A striking example of this limitation is the absence of syntactic downgraders involving negation in the form of negative interrogatives and indirect questions in the pragmatic productions of the elementary learners. The former finding is in line with previous research in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, as substantiated by studies conducted by Barron (2003), Schauer (2009), Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012), Bella (2012), and Ali & Woodfield (2017). These studies have consistently reported the lack of the syntactic downgrader negation in learner requests, indicating a recurring pattern in ILP research. Up to this point, it can be concluded that grammatical proficiency affects the type and amount of syntactic downgrading employed and recurring difficulties with complex sentence structures uphold the assumption that syntactic downgraders may be a challenging aspect of L2 acquisition for learners with a restricted command of L2 grammar – or vice versa, that the mastery of a grammatical form/structure may have positive effects on its use as a syntactic downgrader. These findings align with previous research conducted by Håkansson & Norrby (2005), Bardovi-Harlig (2003), Martí-Arnándiz (2008), Celaya & Barón (2015) who have reported similar observations in their studies. Furthermore, the data suggests that the effective utilization of syntactic downgraders by elementary level learners is not solely dependent on reaching a general threshold level of grammatical competence. Rather, it is more closely tied to their proficiency in specific grammatical forms and structures, namely the underlying forms on which syntactic downgraders are based.

Moving forward, I will comment on two additional factors that influenced the occurrence of syntactic modification in the present data sets. The first factor at

play is the impact of teaching-induced effects. The integration course plays a crucial role in introducing and explicitly instructing learners on the subjunctive forms of *können* and *mögen*, emphasizing their function in mitigating requests, amongst other speech acts. This early instruction likely encouraged the present learners to employ these forms as syntactic modifiers during their initial phases of L2 acquisition. The second factor involves the variation in the use of syntactic modifiers based on the type of speech act. In requests, learners employed subjunctives and *dass*-clauses, whereas in complaints, negation, subjunctives, *dass*-clauses, and *aber*-clauses were utilized. It is worth noting that in complaints, learners only used the subjunctive form of *mögen*, whereas in requests, they combined this subjunctive form with the subjunctive form of *können*. The phrase *könntest du X/ could you do X* provides a readily available and routinized option for downgrading requests. However, the relatively lower frequency of subjunctives in complaints can be attributed to the absence of a comparable, commonly taught syntactic downgrader that is readily applied in complaint situations. Thus, differences in occurrence suggest that the use of syntactic downgraders is not solely determined by the grammatical competence of the learners but that it is also influenced by situational factors such as the type of speech act being performed or the effect(s) of language teaching.

So far, the findings of the study indicate that elementary learners must reach a certain threshold level of competence in the investigated grammatical forms in order to effectively use them as syntactic downgraders. However, the hypothesis proposing the limited ability of elementary learners to employ syntactic modification was not confirmed, as they demonstrated some degree of proficiency in using syntactic downgraders, albeit to a more limited extent than GNS. This raises the question of why the beginners in this study were able to employ syntactic modification, while other comparable studies have yielded contrasting results (see for example Safont Jordà 2003; Codina-Espurz 2008; Takahashi 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012).

How can we account for this discrepancy? First and foremost, it is important to acknowledge that the terms *threshold level* and *beginner* or *elementary learner* lack precise operational definitions in the context of most ILP studies. Consequently, drawing direct comparisons between studies becomes a complex task, as the classification of language and/or grammatical proficiency levels and

the criteria for determining the onset of syntactic modification vary across research designs.[114] Nevertheless, the lack of precise operational definitions in the field cannot be the sole contributing factor. It is more plausible that in this case, the language learning context played a significant role in shaping the observed results. In the realm of interlanguage pragmatics, it is widely recognized that the sociocultural environment and the specific learning context have a direct impact on the learning process and specific learning outcomes in L2 acquisition (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002; Schauer 2009; Taguchi 2015; Loewen & Sato 2017). The conventional distinction between natural and educational contexts for acquiring L2 German becomes, however, less clear-cut in the case of the present informants, i.e., adult learners with a refugee background. These learners engaged in language learning both within the integration course which represents a formal classroom setting with a standardized curriculum, and outside the classroom through natural exposure in daily interactions with native German speakers. This is further corroborated by the learners' self-reported language contact, with 50 % of the elementary learners indicating regular interactions with Germans outside of the language course (see § 4.1.1.3, Tables 13 & 14). This dual exposure is likely to have positively impacted the pragmatic competence of these elementary learners. They not only received instruction with a strong emphasis on grammar but also had access to authentic language input, opportunities to observe and practice community norms of interaction, and experience real-life consequences of their pragmatic behavior (cf. Miao 2015; Taguchi 2015). These claims are consistent with Fordyce & Fukazawa's (2004) study on internal modification in requests, which highlighted that both grammatical competence and the duration of time spent in the L2 context positively contribute to the development of syntactic downgraders.

[114] Moreover, upon revisiting the findings of the afore-mentioned studies, it becomes apparent that Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012) for instance reported a significant underuse of syntactic downgraders, such as conditional structures and conditional clauses, apart from the complete absence of tense, aspect, interrogative, and negation forms, among her learner informants. This led her to conclude that syntactic downgraders may not be part of low proficiency learners' pragmatic repertoire. However, it should be noted that conditional structures and conditional clauses were indeed part of the repertoire of her learner informants, albeit they were underutilized in their pragmatic productions. Therefore, it is crucial to consider that generally, the findings may be subject to the influence of reporting traditions and varying interpretations within the field, leading to potential variations in the reported frequency and utilization of syntactic downgraders among low proficiency learners.

Last, it is important to consider the motivational levels of the learners, although they were not explicitly assessed in this study. In contrast to foreign language learners or exchange students who are typically the focus of ILP studies, adult learners with a refugee background occupy a distinct position in terms of their living and language learning circumstances. One key distinction is their long-term stay in the L2 context, setting them apart from other learner groups. Through personal conversations with the informants, the researcher perceived their motivation to be significantly high. This was especially evident among those informants who had children residing in Germany, since they expressed a strong desire to acquire proficient German skills as quickly as possible for the sake of their children's well-being. The finding that the present informants exhibited a higher level of proficiency in employing syntactic downgraders than what is commonly observed in similar contexts might thus be attributed, in part, to their high motivation to acquire the German language, engage in social interactions, and successfully integrate into the host community. Overall, this analysis highlights the complexity of syntactic downgrading in L2 acquisition, and emphasizes the need for a multifaceted approach that takes into account various linguistic, contextual, and individual factors when investigating the production and usage of syntactic downgraders by learners at lower grammatical proficiency levels.

5.2.3 Understanding the impact of grammatical proficiency on L2 pragmatic development: insight from lower intermediate learners

The current literature on L2 pragmatic development emphasizes the importance of grammatical knowledge in expanding learners' (pragma)linguistic resources for producing syntactic downgraders. Previous research conducted by Ali & Woodfield (2017), Barron (2007), Bella (2012), Celaya & Barón (2015), Cook (2001), Fordyce & Fukazawa (2004), Hoffman-Hicks (1992), Hong (2015), Martí-Arnándiz (2008), Takahashi (2017), Walkinshaw (2009), Yuan & Zhang (2018), and Youn (2014) support this claim. Building on these findings, the current study hypothesized that learners' use of syntactic downgraders would increase in accordance with their grammatical competence during the early and intermediate stages of L2 acquisition. To examine this hypothesis, the study compared the pragmatic and grammatical development of elementary and lower

intermediate learners of German, with a focus on whether the higher level of grammatical proficiency in the lower intermediate group would result in more target-like pragmatic realizations. To put it concisely, the study predicted that lower intermediate learners would perform better than elementary learners in terms of both the quantity of syntactic downgraders used, as well as the variety of downgrader types employed. This would enable them to approach the GNS norm more closely. Hypothesis 2 is stated as follows:

Hypothesis 2. A gain in grammatical competence (in the predetermined grammatical areas) will result in an approximation to target language use with regard to the production of syntactic downgraders.

5.2.3.1 Results

An analysis of the pragmatic production data revealed a significant difference in the total use of syntactic downgraders between elementary and intermediate learners. Table 45 presents the mean values for syntactic modifier use in the DCT for both learner groups. These findings indicate that the difference in the use of syntactic downgraders is statistically significant, with intermediate learners demonstrating a higher overall use of syntactic downgraders in the DCT compared to elementary learners.

Table 45. Syntactic downgrader use by learner in DCT (in means)

	N	Total	SD	t-value (df)	p-value
G1 mean (count)	30	2.8 (85)	1.883	-4,814 (41.147)	0.000
G2 mean (count)	30	6.7 (201)	4.018		

Figure 10 provides a more detailed breakdown of the nine subcategories of syntactic downgraders and their mean frequency of usage by elementary and lower intermediate learners, as well as GNS (see also Table A9-3, Appendix 9). The results reveal a clear quantitative increase in syntactic modification among intermediate learners compared to beginners. With the exception of negation, intermediate learners outperformed beginners in all nine subcategories of syntactic downgraders and systematically approached the average frequency of

usage by GNS. Notably, the intermediate learners even exceeded GNS in terms of frequency of usage of conditional clauses. These findings indicate that, overall, the lower intermediate learners demonstrated a greater ability to use a variety of syntactic downgraders in their pragmatic productions, as compared with beginners.

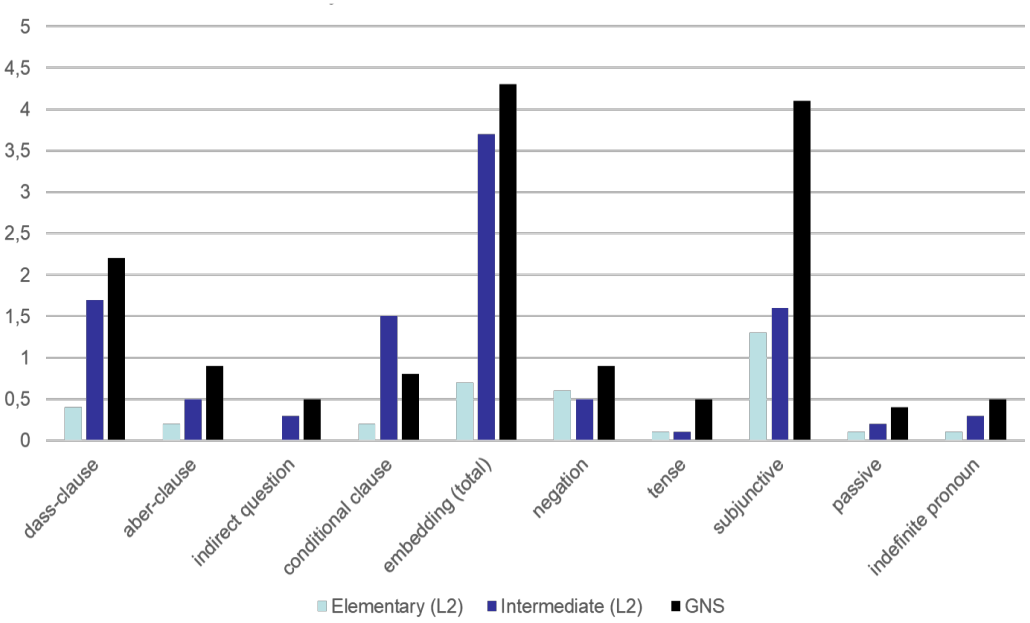

Figure 10. Mean number of syntactic downgraders used per participant

Since this observation alone does not provide insight into the distribution of syntactic modification across the two speech acts examined, the use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints was analyzed subsequently. § 5.2.1 already reported on the results of a one-way ANOVA which was conducted to compare the mean use of syntactic downgraders by the three informant groups in requests and complaints and demonstrated that German native speakers employed a significantly higher frequency of syntactic downgraders compared with L2 learners, and that, similarly, intermediate learners showed a significantly greater usage of syntactic downgraders in comparison to their elementary counterparts. More specifically, the intermediate learners exhibited twice as much production of syntactic downgraders as compared with the elementary learners in both types of speech acts. On average, the elementary learners utilized 1.5 syntactic downgraders in requests and 1.3 in complaints, whereas the intermediate learners used 3.2 and 3.57 syntactic downgraders respectively in the same speech acts (see

also Table A9-3, Appendix 9). This trend observed in the learner data is crucial because it indicates a clear developmental progress towards the L2 norm, despite the fact that the frequency levels of intermediate learners still remained below the L2 target.

In addition, the intermediate learners demonstrated a higher level of syntactic complexity in request and complaint head acts compared to elementary learners. This was accomplished by utilizing a greater number of combinations of syntactic downgrading devices, as shown in Table 46.

Table 46. Proportion of speech acts containing 1+ syntactic downgrader (in %)

	Requests		**Complaints**	
	1 syntactic downgrader	**2+ syntactic downgraders**	**1 syntactic downgrader**	**2+ syntactic downgraders**
G1 % (count)	22.22 (40)	2.22 (4)	18.33 (33)	2.78 (5)
G2 % (count)	36.11 (65)	12.78 (23)	43.33 (78)	13.33 (24)
GNS % (count)	64.49 (178)	27.54 (76)	49.28 (136)	19.2 (53)

Notably, intermediate learners employed two or more syntactic downgraders in 12.78 % of their requests and 13.33 % of their complaints, whereas elementary learners only utilized 2+ syntactic downgraders in 2.22 % of their requests and 2.78 % of their complaints. Once again, this finding suggests that intermediate learners are progressing towards the GNS norm by demonstrating increased syntactic flexibility and proficiency in the use of these downgraders. From a developmental perspective, the increase in the number and complexity levels of syntactic downgraders in both requests and complaints among intermediate learners can be interpreted as a developmental pattern, reflective of their advancing grammatical competence.

The progressive acquisition of grammatical forms and its impact on pragmatic productions

So far, the analysis centered on two distinct stages of L2 grammatical development, based on which it was shown that elementary and lower intermediate learners exhibit different pragmatic performances. As has been discussed above, these findings suggest a relationship between grammatical

knowledge and the development of L2 learners' pragmalinguistic resources. Beyond this, the present study aimed to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the *gradual* acquisition of the grammatical forms tested and its influence on pragmatic productions. For instance, since half of the subjects were beginners, it was possible to look for the onset of a grammatical structure in the data (early acquisition), followed by developmental stages characterized by emerging use, improvement, and mastery (total acquisition stage). Thus, to investigate the role of grammatical knowledge in the development of L2 learners' pragmatic abilities further, a comprehensive re-analysis was performed on the results obtained from all 60 learner participants in the LAT. The initial results were recalculated based on the percentage of incorrect (0 %), partially correct (1-50 %), and partially to fully correct (51 – 100 %) responses for each grammar task. This approach allowed for the identification of three distinct levels of grammatical competence, namely low, moderate, and high, for each grammatical area under investigation. In a next step, the LAT results were compared with the findings of the DCT to examine the influence of grammatical proficiency in a specific form on its usage as a syntactic downgrader. In order to explore the relationship between the two categorical variables LAT score (0 %, 1-50 %, 51 – 100 %) and use of syntactic downgraders (yes or no) in the DCT items, I conducted a chi-square test of independence, the results of which indicate a significant association between the two variables ($\chi^2 = 7.44$, df = 2, p = 0.024). To further explore this relationship, I calculated the Cramer's V coefficient, which is a measure of effect size for chi-square tests. The Cramer's V value was 0.34, which indicates a moderate effect size. For a summary of the results in table format, please refer to Table 47. In sum, the analysis suggests that there is a significant and moderate relationship between LAT score and use of syntactic downgraders. Specifically, the higher the LAT score, the more likely the learners are to use syntactic downgraders in the DCT.

Table 47. Relationship between LAT scores and overall use of syntactic down-graders

Syntactic downgraders	Percentage of LAT	Yes	No	Total	Chi-Square	df	p-value
Syntactic downgraders	Low (0 %)	6	62	68	7.44	2	0.024
	Mid (1-50 %)	38	118	156			
	High (51-100 %)	122	194	316			
Total		166	374	540			

In addition to assessing the mere occurrence or absence of syntactic modification, the analysis also encompassed the extent to which these downgrader types were used in the DCT without any grammatical errors, with minor to major grammatical errors, or not at all. The findings of this analysis are summarized in Table 48.

Table 48. Relationship between grammatical competence and syntactic downgrader use: LAT scores vs. DCT data (in %)

	Form used as syntactic downgrader (*no grammatical errors*)	Form used as syntactic downgrader (*minor to major grammatical errors*)	Form not used as syntactic downgrader
Low (0 %)	8.82	0	91.18
Mid (1-50 %)	19.23	5.13	75.64
High (51-100 %)	35.13	3.48	61.39

Table 48 indicates that an increase in grammatical competence was associated with a greater frequency of syntactic downgrader use, coupled with a decreasing incidence of grammatical errors in such use. More specifically, the analysis revealed that learners who had successfully acquired a grammatical form, as indicated by LAT scores of up to 100 %, tended to use it more frequently as a syntactic downgrader in the DCT. However, the mere presence of linguistic forms in the present learners' interlanguage grammar did not necessarily guarantee concurrent or immediate use in pragmalinguistic contexts. To illustrate this, it was observed that a large proportion of cases (61.4 %) in which the participants had achieved high levels of grammatical competence (i.e., scoring between 51-100 % on the forms tested) did not translate to the use of these forms as syntactic downgraders in the request and complaint data. Even though these results

demonstrate that the acquisition of grammatical knowledge did not necessarily ensure concurrent development of pragmatic skills, increased grammatical knowledge did provide the learners with a wider repertoire of linguistic resources for the realization of syntactic downgraders. At the time of data collection, more than a third of the participants (38.6 %) were already utilizing this grammatical knowledge to expand their use of syntactic modification.

Another finding is particularly noteworthy: 8.8 % of learners who had not yet acquired a grammatical form utilized it as a syntactic downgrader in their DCT productions, with a striking absence of grammatical errors in their use. In order to shed light on this phenomenon, the relevant request and complaint responses from four elementary and one intermediate learner(s) were identified and analyzed. To illustrate my observations, I will provide examples of how these five learners used the subjunctive form of *können / can* as a syntactic downgrader in the DCT, despite being unable to use it in the LAT. One such learner was G1F_362522, an elementary-level learner whose modified requests are illustrated in (59) and (60). These two examples are representative of the pragmatic productions within this group.

(59) Burst pipe, G1F_362522

Könnten Sie bitte repariern sofot machen.
(Could you please make the repair immediately?)

(60) Cat, G1F_362522

Könnten Sie bitte in meine Küatze kömmeren.
(Could you please take care of my cat?)

As becomes clear from the two request head acts, the learner adhered to the same highly routinized structure in both examples, i.e., *Könnten Sie bitte X / Could you please X*?. In combination with the LAT results, the correct use of this form which has high frequency in German makes it seem likely that the *subjunctive* in (59) and (60) is part of an unanalyzed chunk, either taught in a language class or picked up from other German speakers.[115] While the use of the subjunctive in this case does not necessarily reflect the informants' creative use of grammar, other pragmatic productions from the learner data paint a different picture (examples 61 – 63). While the elementary learners in examples (61), (62) and (63) have

[115] An analysis of the five learners' perception data demonstrated that they successfully identified subjunctive *können* in the PPT items.

demonstrated moderate grammatical competence for subjunctive forms, scoring 20 %, 30 % and 40 % respectively in the LAT, the intermediate learner in example (64) has shown high competence with a score of 60 %. In addition, the intermediate learner in example (65) has reached the final acquisition stage, scoring 100 % on the subjunctive forms tested.

(61) Cat, G1F_854213

Bitte **könnst** du meine Katze Essen giben.
(Please could you feed my cat.)

(62) Switch shifts, G1F_884224

Könntest Sie Schicht arbeit übernommen in diesem Woche?
(Could you take over my shift this week?)

(63) Cat, G1M_232162

Könntest du bitte meine Katze Essen geben.
(Could you please give food to my cat?)

(64) Cat, G2F_150203

Also ich muss morgen nach Frankfurt fahren zu meine Schwester und meine Frage ist, ob du auf meine Katze aufbassen **könnte** und auch Essen gieben.
(So, I have to go to Frankfurt tomorrow to visit my sister and my question is, could you take care of my cat and also feed her?)

(65) Cat, G2M_735525

Hi Lena, weißt du dass ich meine Schwester die im Frankfurt lebt schon lange nicht gesehen habe, deswegen wollte ich dir fragen ob du meine Katze füttern **köntest** wenn ich nach Frankfurt fahren würde.
(Hi Lena, did you know that I haven't seen my sister who lives in Frankfurt for a long time? That's why I wanted to ask if you could feed my cat if I were to go to Frankfurt.)

Not only do these results provide a clear differentiation between the various levels of subjunctive mastery exhibited by elementary and intermediate learners in the LAT, but they also demonstrate how changes in the use of the syntactic downgrader *subjunctive* as part of a routinized stretch can be attributed to changes in interlanguage grammar. For instance, the attempts in (61) and (62) to use subjunctive *können* in requests illustrate the grammatical difficulties that the elementary learners encountered in producing this syntactic downgrader. For these learners, such morpho-syntactic challenges are likely attributable to the low level of development in their interlanguage grammars. However, as the learners' grammatical competence increased, the morpho-syntactic errors started to

decrease, resulting in a subjunctive form increasingly resembling the target language (see 63). The development from moderate to high levels of grammatical competence in examples (64) – (65) provides further evidence of interlanguage development, specifically towards more complex structures such as *ich wollte fragen, ob du X könntest / I wanted to ask whether you could X?*, from the commonly used request form *könntest du (bitte) X? / could you (please) X?*.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints, a detailed analysis will be presented in the following. This analysis will be broken down by sub-categories, examining the specific syntactic downgraders employed and their corresponding frequencies of usage. By delving into these details, we can uncover valuable insights into the pragmatic development of the present learners and gain a comprehensive view of how syntactic downgraders are utilized in different (speech act) contexts.

Learners' and German native speakers' use of syntactic downgraders in requests

Before turning to the analysis of the learner data, it is necessary to provide an overview of the syntactic downgrader usage by the German native speakers (GNS). Figure 11 and Table 49 depict the quantitative distribution of syntactic downgraders utilized by GNS in requests.

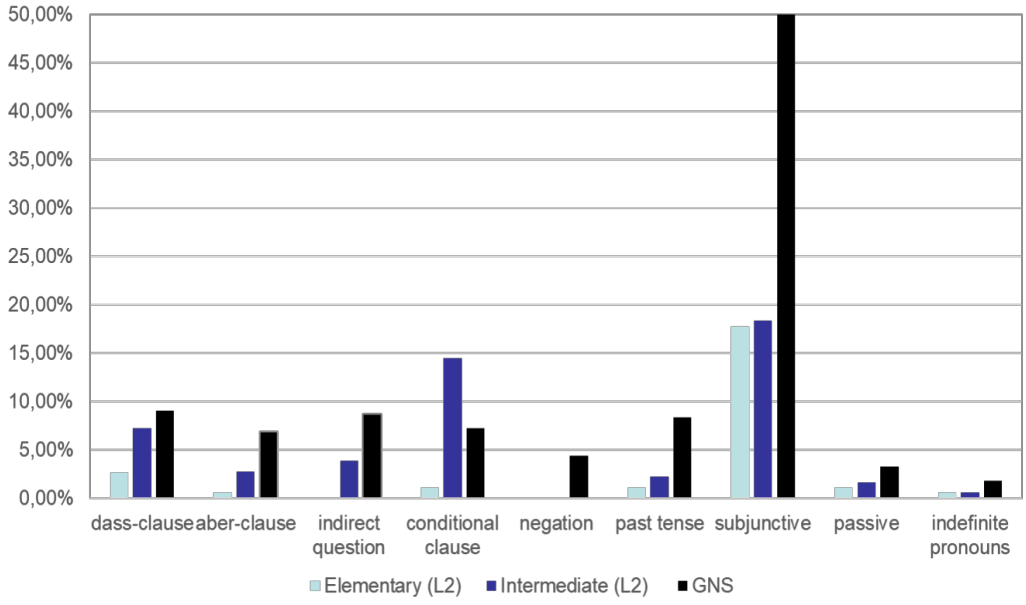

Figure 11. Proportion of requests containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)

Table 49. Proportion of requests containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)[a]

	G1 (N=30)	G2 (N=30)	GNS (N=46)
***dass*-clause**	2.8	7.2	9.1
***aber*-clause**	0.6	2.8	6.9
Indirect question	0	3.9	8.7
Conditional clause	1.1	14.4	7.3
Embedding (total)	4.4	28.3	32
Negation	0	0	4.4
Past tense	1.1	2.2	8.3
Subjunctive	17.8	18.3	50
Passive	1.1	1.7	3.3
Indefinite pronoun	0.6	0.6	1.8
Zero marking	77.78	63.89	35.51

[a] Values exceeding 100 % can be attributed to the frequent occurrence of double marking involving different syntactic downgrader types.

Figure 11 and Table 49 reveal that half of GNSs' directives were modified through subjunctives, followed numerically by embedding (32 %), and tense (8.3 %). The remaining categories of syntactic downgraders, i.e., negation, passives, and indefinite pronouns were used with relatively lower frequency, constituting 4.4 %, 3.3 %, and 1.8 % of total usage, respectively. Looking at the data for the lower intermediate learners, an interesting trend emerges with regard to the nine modification types. While the production rates for all four types of embedding have more than doubled compared to beginners, the values for negation, past tense, subjunctive, passives, and indefinite pronouns remain relatively constant. To further investigate this pattern, it is necessary to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the data and to examine the specific learner realizations.

Let us start with the four types of embedded structures. Although the beginners had already achieved good results in the LAT for *aber*- and *dass*-clauses, it is in these areas that the intermediate learners performed best with 90 % respectively 96.7 %. Analogously, an increase in the employment of both *aber*- and *dass*-clauses as syntactic downgraders is discernible among the lower

intermediate learners, although to varying degrees. A mere 2.8 % of their requests featured a syntactic modification with an *aber*-clause. While this proportion is lower to the 6.9 % observed among the GNS, it is nevertheless indicative of developmental progress, particularly when considering that elementary learners had only incorporated *aber*-clauses in 0.6 % of their request head acts. Both the learner and control group used *aber*-clauses with similar argumentative strategies, including imposition minimizers, compensation, disarmers, and apologies (examples of which are provided in 66 and 67). However, there was a notable tendency for GNS to rely more heavily on complex sentences with two dependent clauses, such as *Hey Du, wenn du keine Zeit oder Lust hast ist das voll ok, aber könntest du mir vielleicht beim Umzug helfen?*[116], a level of complexity that was not yet found in the learner data. In order to adequately evaluate the use of *dass*-clauses by intermediate learners in the ensuing analysis, it is necessary to first briefly recapitulate the results for the beginners. The former analysis of elementary learners' usage of *dass*-clauses has shown that they resorted to simple syntactic strategies, such as using direct want statements like *ich möchte, dass / I would like that*. A subsequent comparison of elementary and GNS productions revealed differences that were primarily syntactic, since the latter were generally considered more complex (e.g., *wäre es möglich, dass / would it be possible that*). The intermediate learners have not yet reached the same level of proficiency as native speakers in terms of the complexity and type of introductory strategies utilized. A noticeable shift in the data was, however, observed towards using less direct introductory phrases and a greater variety of options, as highlighted by the underlined examples (68) – (70).

(66) Bakery, G2F_255255

Herr Wagner es tut mir leid also vielleicht haben Sie es nicht gemerkt **aber** habe ich Ihnen 10 Euro gegeben!
(Mr. Wagner I'm sorry, but maybe you didn't realize it, but I gave you 10 euros!)

(67) Bakery, G2M_540045

Entschuldiegung Herr Wagner, ich kann nicht gut richnen **aber** vieleischt gibt es flasch zurückgeben.
(Excuse me, Mr. Wagner, I'm not good at math, but maybe you gave me the wrong change.)

[116] English translation: Hey, if you don't have the time or inclination, that's totally fine, but could you possibly help me with the move?

(68) Cat, G2M_833668

Lena kann ich dir bitten **dass** du auf Minen Katze kummer?
(Lena, can I ask you that you take care of my cat?)

(69) Switch shifts, G2M_843312

[…] und ich hoffe **dass**, in ordnung für dich, wenn wir nächte woche unsre Schict tauchen
([…] and I hope that it's okay with you if we exchange our shifts next week.)

(70) Dirty kitchen, G2F_456321

Ich finde, dass ganz gut und nett ist, wenn man nach kochen muss aufräumen.
(I think that it's good and nice to clean up after cooking.)

L2 development is also apparent for indirect questions, as evidenced by the intermediate learners who incorporated such structures to mitigate 3.9 % of their request head acts. Notably, the elementary learners had not yet demonstrated the use of such structures, underscoring the developmental progress achieved by the intermediate group. When reviewing the GNS data, we find that they almost exclusively employed this embedded structure (8.7 %) in conjunction with the past tense of *wollen / want* (8.3 %). This also means that the 8.3 % of requests modified by past tense among the GNS only featured the modal verb *wollte(n) / wanted*, with no other past tense verbs being utilized as syntactic downgraders. The example provided in (71) illustrates this pragmatic routine.

(71) Cat, 6GERFEM

Hey, ich **wollte** dich noch kurz fragen, **ob** du vielleicht meine Katze füttern könntest für die acht Tage?
(Hey, I just wanted to ask you real quick if you could maybe feed my cat for the eight days?)

Based on this finding, the use of indirect questions and past tense constructions was also investigated in tandem for the intermediate learners. First, a comparison of LAT results for elementary and intermediate learners in both grammatical domains demonstrated comparable learning progress (i.e., indirect questions: 28.3 % vs. 85 %; past tense: 48.3 % vs. 86.7 %). However, when looking at the frequency with which both forms were employed as syntactic downgraders in the DCT, we find that the use of the syntactic downgrader *wollte(n)* (past tense) by intermediate learners, at 2.2 %, fell slightly below the usage of indirect questions at 3.9 %.

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(72) Cat, G2M_735525

[…] deswegen **wollte** ich dir fragen **ob** du meine Katze füttern köntest.
([…] that's why I wanted to ask you if you could feed my cat.)

(73) Cat, G2F_150203

[…] und meine Frage ist, **ob** du auf meine Katze aufbassen könnte und auch Essen gieben.
([…] and my question is, whether you could take care of my cat and also feed her.)

(74) Switch shifts, G2F_439201

Ich möchte Ihnen Fragen, **ob** Sie mit mir am Samstag die Schicht tauschen können.
(I would like to ask you if you could swap shifts with me on Saturday?)

When examining the request head act in (72), it becomes apparent that G2M_735525 started to incorporate the pragmatic routine *Ich wollte fragen, ob / I wanted to ask whether*, albeit with minor grammatical mistakes. Other intermediate learners in (73) and (74) instead fell back on related phrases such as *meine Frage ist, ob / my question is whether*, possibly due to limited exposure to the routine and/or incomplete mastery of the past tense form. This explains the slight differences in the frequencies with which indirect questions and past tense forms were used in the data of the intermediate learners. While there is still room for further development towards achieving native-like proficiency, the increases in the use of indirect questions in combination with past tense forms suggests that the intermediate learners made significant strides in their ability to incorporate complex structures into their request productions, thereby expanding their pragmatic competence.

So far, the developments reported in the use of syntactic downgrading indicate a clear progression towards the target language norm. However, a different perspective emerges when examining the implementation of conditional clauses by intermediate learners. The learners differed from the control group by exhibiting a greater tendency to employ conditional clauses in their requests. More specifically, their requests were modified by conditional clauses at a rate of 14.4 %, which was twice the rate observed in native speakers (7.3 %).

(75) Move, 35GERMAS

Ich würde mich sehr freuen, **wenn** du auch dabei bist!
(I would be very happy if you were also there!)

(76) Cat, G2M_768891

Das daut 8 Tage, **wenn** du Zeit hast, kannst du bitte mein Katze füteren.
(This will take 8 days, if you have time, can you please feed my cat.)

(77) Switch shifts, G2M_398076

Peter, **wenn** möglich und du Zeit hast, kannst du bitte für mich Samstag arbeiten, statt nächste Woche Freitag für dich arbeiten.
(Peter, if possible and you have time, could you please work for me on Saturday instead of working for yourself next week on Friday?)

(78) Cat, G2M_555256

Es wäre sehr nett von dir, **wenn** du dich um meine Katze kümmert.
(It would be very kind of you if you took care of my cat.)

As depicted in (76), (77) and (78), the intermediate learners resorted to three recurrent patterns, namely expressing pre-conditions using *if you have time* and *if it is possible*, or starting the head act with *It would be very kind of you if*, followed by the condition (e.g., taking care of the cat). Notably, the frequent preposing of the conditional clause, as evidenced in examples (76) and (77), was not observed in the GNS data (see example 75). In summary, the study thus far has examined how the grammaticalization of *dass*-clauses, *aber*-clauses, indirect questions, and conditional clauses relates to their use as syntactic modifiers in the data of lower intermediate learners. The results indicate that a high level of grammatical competence in the domain of embedding is associated with a growing pragmatic command of the four structures under investigation. Moreover, the positive impact of increasing grammatical competence appears to be particularly pronounced for complex sentence structures, as compared to other forms of syntactic downgrading.

Apart from forms of embedding, intermediate level learners most frequently modified their requests by use of the subjunctive mood. It is, however, noteworthy that the increase in the use of subjunctives from elementary learners (17.8 %) to intermediate learners (18.3 %) is so minimal that it cannot be regarded as development. Moreover, despite notable growth in grammatical competence, as documented in the LAT, intermediate learners' usage of subjunctives remained at 18.3 %, which is significantly lower than the GNS who modified 50 % of their

requests with subjunctives. Subsequently, a detailed analysis will be conducted to elucidate the factors contributing to the plateau observed in the L2 data. First, an examination of the subjunctive constructions employed by the GNS reveals a near equal distribution of 50 % modal verbs and 50 % full verbs, consisting of lexical and auxiliary verbs. Moreover, the subjunctive form *können / can* accounted for 91.67 % of the total modals employed by this group, while the remaining proportion comprises of the subjunctive forms of *mögen / like*, *wollen / want* and *müssen / must*. Examples (79) – (83) portray the diverse range of subjunctive forms that GNS utilized in their request data.

(79) Cat, 4GERFEM

Hey Lena, **bestünde** die Möglichkeit, dass du dich während ich in Frankfurt bin um meine Katze kümmerst.
(Hi Lena, would it be possible for you to take care of my cat while I am in Frankfurt?)

(80) Switch shifts, 13GERMAS

Mir ist etwas dazwischengekommen und ich **würde** gerne mit Dir die Schicht **tauschen**.
(Something has come up, and I would like to swap shifts with you.)

(81) Move, 21GERMAS

Ich **bräuchte** Hilfe bei meinem Umzug.
(I would need help with my move.)

(82) Burst pipe, 9GERFEM

Ehrlich gesagt **wäre** es mir lieber, wenn der Handwerker früher kommen **könnte**.
(To be honest, I would prefer if the handyman could come earlier.)

(83) Bakery, 6GERFEM

Ich **müsste** 7.50 € zurückbekommen.
(I should get 7.50 € back.)

If we take a closer look at the percentage distribution of the verbs used in the subjunctive form, as shown in Table 50, it becomes evident that the use of subjunctives by GNS is almost exclusively composed of the modal verb *können* and full verbs.

Table 50. Percentage distribution of modal and full verbs in the subjunctive (requests)

	N	können	mögen	wollen	sollen	müssen	Full verbs (non-modal)
G1 % (count)	30	41.67 (15)	33.33 (12)	0 (0)	5.56 (2)	2.78 (1)	16.67 (6)
G2 % (count)	30	28.95 (11)	18.42 (7)	0 (0)	13.16 (5)	0 (0)	39.47 (15)
GNS % (count)	46	47.83 (77)	1.24 (2)	0.62 (1)	0 (0)	2.48 (4)	47.83 (77)

Prima facie, the results of the intermediate learners appear difficult to interpret, since we can observe both approximations towards and divergences away from the L2 norm. At the most salient level, the findings suggest a discernible decline in the frequency of employing the subjunctive forms of *können / can* and *mögen / like* among intermediate learners. The reduction in the frequency of subjunctive forms of *mögen / like* allowed intermediate learners to approach the native speaker norm, as beginners had markedly overused this subjunctive. In contrast, the reduction in the use of subjunctive forms of *können / can* resulted in a lower frequency in comparison to native speakers. *What factors could account for these observations, given that the elementary learners exhibited the highest frequency of usage for this form?*

The changes in values seem to be related to the fact that intermediate learners started to expand their use of other subjunctive forms, namely the modal *sollen / should* and auxiliary verbs. It is plausible that the intermediate group's increase in grammatical competence in the areas of interest (in comparison to learners' performance at the beginner level) facilitated their effective execution of these language functions (see Table 51). This is likely due to their expanded repertoire of available subjunctive forms to draw upon at this stage.

Table 51. LAT scores for individual subjunctive forms (in %)

	sein (wäre)	werden (würde)	haben (hätte)	können (könnte)	sollen (sollte)	müssen (müsste)	mögen (möchte)
G1	18.33	38.33	26.67	28.33	30	16.67	66.67
G2	73.33	73.33	66.67	58.33	63.33	80	100

While the expansion of subjunctive *sollen* resulted in an overuse when compared to the control group, the substantial increase in the use of auxiliary verbs represents an important step towards the target, resulting in enhanced pragmatic competence in the L2. Notably, the intermediate level learners exhibited a considerable increase in their use of subjunctive full verbs, more than double the score of elementary learners. The modified requests provided in examples (84) – (87) illustrate this expanded use of various subjunctive forms by the intermediate learners.

(84) Switch shifts, G2F_894521

Wenn möglig ist, **würde** ich gern deine Schicht übernehmen.
(If it's possible, I would like to take over your shift.)

(85) Cat, G2M_848939

Wäre es möglich, wenn du meine Katze fütern für sieben Tagen.
(Would it be possible for you to feed my cat for seven days.)

(86) Cat, G2M_221154

Liebe Lena, ich fahre am Freitag nach Frankfurt und bleibe dort 8 tagen, **könntest** du vielleicht meine Katze Pflegen?
(Hi Lena, I'm going to Frankfurt on Friday and will stay there for 8 days, could you possibly take care of my cat?)

(87) Bakery, G2F_150203

oh, Herrn Wagner Sie **sollten** mir 7,50 Euro zurückgeben.
(Oh, Mr. Wagner, you should give me back 7.50 euros.)

GNS utilized three additional syntactic downgraders to modify their request head acts: passive constructions, indefinite pronouns, and negation. Based on the data analysis of the control group, it is evident that the remaining syntactic downgraders were predominantly utilized in item 5 *Burst pipe* (see examples 88–90). Furthermore, GNS participants frequently employed these forms in combination with each other. For instance, example (88) demonstrates the use of a passive construction and negation in a single request head act.

(88) Burst pipe, 5GERFEM

Gibt es **keine** Möglichkeit, dass sich früher darum **gekümmert wird**?
(Isn't there any possibility of taking care of it earlier?)

(89) Burst pipe, 27GERMAS

Ginge es **nich** eventuell etwas schneller?
(Wouldn't it be possible to make it a bit faster?)

(90) Burst pipe, 17GERFEM

Kann **man** denn da nichts machen?
(Is there really nothing that can be done about it?)

In a similar manner to the pragmatic productions by GNS participants, intermediate learners adopted passive constructions solely in item 5 *Burst pipe*, but to a lesser extent than the control group. Overall, they employed these forms in only 1.3 % of their requests. There are two possible reasons for the limited use of passive constructions by intermediate learners. On the one hand, as evidenced by the grammatical difficulties observed in examples (91) and (92), passive constructions posed the greatest grammatical challenge to the intermediate learners in the grammar test (i.e., success rate of 61.7 %). It can therefore be inferred that intermediate learners have not yet developed the grammatical competence necessary to use passive constructions in their pragmatic productions, and hence their limited use of this syntactic downgrader. On the other hand, the fact that the GNS modified only 3.3 % of their requests with passive constructions raises the question of whether intermediate learners have sufficient exposure to this syntactic downgrader in the target language context. Thus, it is unclear to what extent passive constructions are frequently used and perceived as syntactic modifications in requests, which may further hinder the learners' ability to utilize this form effectively.

(91) Burst pipe, G2M_833668

Ich bitte ihnen sofort dass die Wohnung **repariert wird**.
(I request you that the apartment be repaired immediately.)

(92) Burst pipe, G2F_432000

Ich habe eine Bitte an Sie darum, dass der Rohrbruch in meiner Wohnung wie schnell so möglich **reparieren wird**.
(I have a request for you that the burst pipe in my apartment be repaired as soon as possible.)

(93) Dirty kitchen, G2F_456321

Ich finde, dass ganz gut und nett ist, wann **man** nach kochen muss aufräumen.
(I think it's good and nice to clean up after cooking.)

Moreover, the intermediate learners had a low utilization rate of indefinite pronouns (0.6 %), despite an impressive learning gain (41.7 % to 93.3 %) in the LAT. An example can be found in (93). As with their beginner counterparts, they also did not use negation in the form of negated questions in their request head acts. Even though the LAT results in Table 52 indicate an improvement in grammatical knowledge regarding both types of negation, this did not translate to the use of negated interrogatives in the DCT. Hence, for both indefinite pronouns and negation, the lack of grammatical competence cannot be pinpointed as the decisive factor. It is hoped that the perception data analysis will shed light on the possibility that intermediate learners have yet to discern the mitigating function of certain pragmalinguistic forms in German requests.

Table 52. LAT scores for negation (in %)

	Sentential negation (grammatical accuracy & meaning)	**Particular negation (grammatical accuracy & meaning)**
G1	70	46.67
G2	94.29	68.33

Learners' and German native speakers' use of syntactic downgraders in complaints

In order to examine the use of syntactic downgraders in complaints, data from elementary learners, lower intermediate learners and the control group were analyzed. Table 53 and Figure 12 demonstrate the percentage of complaints in which a specific type of syntactic downgrader was used by each informant group.

Starting with the syntactic downgrader use by GNS, the results reveal that embedded structures (*dass*-clauses: 24.6 %, *aber*-clauses: 7.6 %, conditional clauses: 5.4 %) were the most commonly used syntactic downgraders, accounting for 37.7 % of complaints. Thus, the high relevance of embedding as a form of mitigation in face-threatening acts is once again highlighted in the German data set. Negation (9.8 %), subjunctives (9.1 %), and indefinite pronouns (7.3 %) were also frequently employed in GNS complaints. In addition to the afore-mentioned syntactic downgraders, participants utilized past tense forms and passive constructions to modify 4 % of complaints each.

Table 53. Proportion of complaints containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)[a]

	G1 (N=30)	G2 (N=30)	GNS (N=46)
***dass*-clause**	3.3	19.4	24.6
***aber*-clause**	2.8	6.1	7.6
Conditional clause	1.1	5.6	5.4
Embedding (total)[117]	7.2	31.7	37.7
Negation	8.9	7.8	9.8
Past tense	0	5	4
Subjunctive	3.9	6.7	9.1
Passive	0.6	2.2	4
Indefinite pronoun	1.1	4.4	7.3
Zero marking	81.67	56.67	50.72

[a]Values exceeding 100 % can be attributed to the frequent occurrence of double marking involving different syntactic downgrader types.

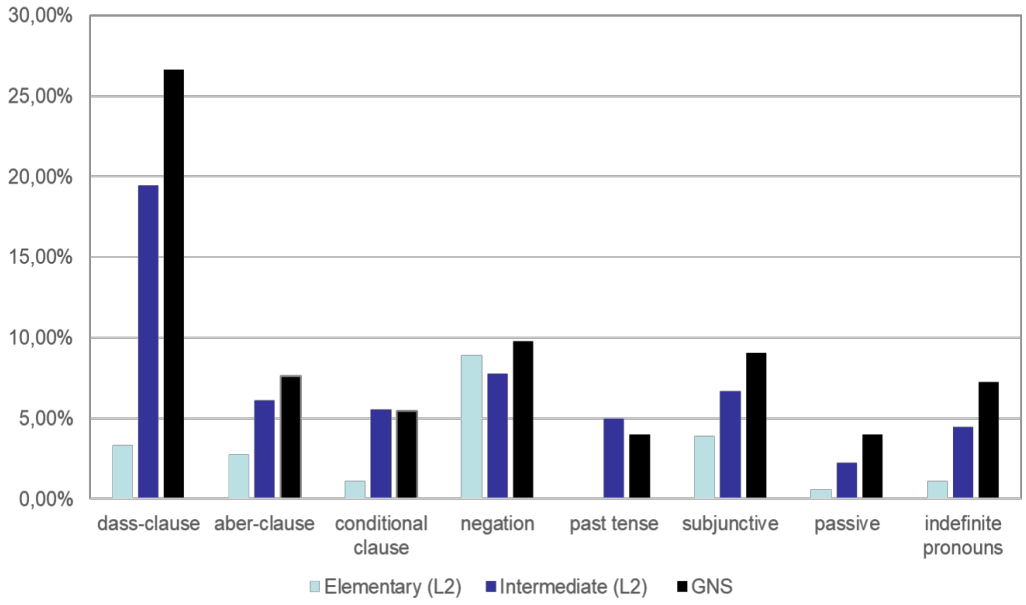

Figure 12. Proportion of complaints containing each type of syntactic downgrader (in %)

[117] Indirect questions were not employed as syntactic downgraders in this speech act and are therefore not included in the analysis.

In the following, I will focus on the complaint modification of elementary and lower intermediate learners. As depicted in Figure 12, it was found that grammatical competence was a positive indicator for the production of syntactic downgraders in complaints. More specifically, by comparing the pragmatic productions from learners with elementary and intermediate grammatical competence in the areas of interest, I observed a steady increase in the use of syntactic downgraders. In particular, the analysis of the data revealed that, aside from negation, the lower intermediate learners demonstrated a more advanced command of the pragmalinguistic forms, including embedding, past tense, subjunctives, passives, and indefinite pronouns, as compared with their elementary-level counterparts. Comparatively, intermediate learners exhibited a slight overuse of conditional clauses and past tense forms in contrast to native speakers; however, the differences were found to be negligible.

This section will begin with an analysis of the three forms of embedding. Overall, the most substantial increase for a syntactic downgrader from beginners to intermediate level learners was found for *dass*-clauses, from 3.3 % to 19.4 % of complaints modified. This finding is particularly noteworthy as it closely approaches the usage rate of *dass*-clauses among the GNS control group, which was observed to be 24.6 %. Based on the analysis of the GNS data, it has been discovered that the control group exhibited a preference for three distinct structural patterns that were frequently observed preceding their use of *dass*-clauses: First, the use of *subjective evaluations* served to lower the assertive force of the complaint (examples 94 & 95), whereas *providing evidence* helped to substantiate the accusation and prevented hearers from rejecting the complaint (examples 98 & 99). Third, the control group frequently resorted to the common German routine *Es kann nicht sein, dass / I cannot be that*, as seen in examples (96) & (97).

(94) Overtime, 36GERMAS

> In der letzten Zeit hab ich aber das Gefühl, **dass** ich super viele Überstunden gemacht und viele Aufgaben übernommen hab.
> (Lately, I have the feeling that I have been working a lot of overtime and taking on a lot of tasks.)

(95) Notes, 15GERFEM

Finde ich jetzt nicht so cool, **dass** du mir deine Notizen nicht geben willst!
(I don't think it's cool that you don't want to give me your notes!)

(96) Notes, 4GERFEM

Tom, es kann echt nicht sein, **dass** ich dir immer ausgeholfen habe und du mir in keinster weise entgegenkommst.
(Tom, it cannot be that I have always helped you out and you do not reciprocate in any way..)

(97) Heating, 40GERMAS

Es kann nicht sein, **dass** Sie verlangen, dass ich das bezahle.
(It cannot be [= it is not acceptable] that you demand that I pay for it.)

(98) Heating, 42GERMAS

Sie wissen genau, **dass** ich immer ordnungsgemäß mit den Dingen umgehe und dass es kein Selbstverschulden ist.
(You are well aware that I always handle things properly and that this is not my fault.)

(99) Rash, 31GERMAS

Ein Bekannter von mir hat das auch mal genommen und erzählt, **dass** er wisse, man darf das nur zweimal pro Tag nehmen.
(A friend of mine has also taken it and told me that he knows you can only take it twice a day.)

In terms of pragmatic competence in complaint modification by use of *dass*-clauses, the lower intermediate learners exhibited a significant improvement over the elementary learners. While the beginners had only employed the strategy of *providing evidence*, the lower intermediate learners added *subjective evaluations* to their repertoire and, beyond this, showed a greater diversity in their argumentative strategies and higher complexity levels in their syntactic structures. Only the pragmatic routine of *Es kann nicht sein, dass* did not occur in their productions, most likely due to a lack of familiarity with the routinized phrase. Examples (100) and (101) illustrate the use of *dass*-clauses in conjunction with subjective evaluations, while examples (102) and (103) demonstrate the use of providing evidence. Altogether, these findings also document how intermediate level learners started to employ various linguistic devices to achieve their argumentative goals in complaint interactions.

(100) Notes, G2M_843312

Tom … langsam krege ich das gefül **dass**, du immer mich aus genuzt hast.
(Tom … I am starting to get the feeling that you have been taking advantage of me all along.)

(101) Overtime, G2M_540045

Ich denke, genral, **dass** es überall ungerecht ist wenn man viele Überstunden machen musste und werden nicht bezahlt.
(I believe that, in general, it is unfair everywhere when one has to work many overtime hours and does not get paid for it.)

(102) Heating, G2M_800900

In unserem Antrag steht, **dass** wenn das Heizung kaputt geht dann mussen Sie es reparieren.
(In our contract it states that if the heating breaks down, then you are responsible for repairing it.)

(103) Oral presentation, G2F_255255

Jakob du wusstest schon, **dass** wir unsere Vortrag Präsentieren mussten!
(Jakob, you knew that we had to give our presentation)

Next, we will concentrate on the analysis of the two additional types of embedding. The previous analysis of *aber*-clauses and conditional clauses in the complaint productions of elementary learners has revealed that these structures were still used infrequently (2.8 % and 1.1 %, respectively), and were associated with significant grammatical challenges, which often led to less successful introductory phrases. When examining the data of the intermediate level learners, there is a considerable increase in the use of these structures (6.1 % of complaints modified with *aber*-clauses, and 5.6 % modified with conditional clauses). In addition, intermediate level learners demonstrated a rise in syntactic complexity levels, even though grammatical difficulties continued to be evident in the learner data. Examples (104) – (105) for *aber*-clauses and (106) – (107) for conditional clauses indicate this development towards the L2 target, as seen in the number of embedded clauses, types of conjunctions used, and length of embedded structures.

(104) Rash, G2M_735525

Liebe Frau Schröder, ich habe große respeckt für Sie, **aber** dass bedeutet nicht dass Sie mir falsch behandlen, und ich darüber nicht sagen!
(Dear Mrs. Schröder, I have great respect for you, but that does not mean that you can mistreat me and I will not speak up about it!)

(105) Overtime, G2F_442931

> Entschuldigen sie, ich liebe meinen job, **aber** ich kann nicht mehr Arbeite
> (Excuse me, I love my job, but I can't work anymore.)

(106) Overtime, G2M_843312

> Sie wißen schon dass ich Überstunden machen muss, **wenn** ich die Aufaben Heute erledigin muss, und das mach ich nicht gerne **wenn** alles amsonst ist.
> (You know that if I have to complete the tasks today, I have to work overtime, and I don't like doing that if I'm not getting paid for it.)

(107) Heating, G2M_743221

> Frau Kowalska, bevor ich diese Wohnung miten, habe ich mit Ihnen gesaget **wenn** eine Probleme in diese Wohnung gibt müssen Sie rebariren.
> (Mrs. Kowalska, before I rented this apartment, I told you that if there were any problems in the apartment, you would have to fix them.)

The results for embedded structures in the speech act of complaining suggest that increases in grammatical competence levels further enhanced the intermediate learners' ability to produce more complex and accurate pragmalinguistic structures. While there were still minor to major grammatical errors present, the learners nevertheless demonstrated increased levels of syntactic complexity in the types of embedding employed, which is an important aspect of developing pragmatic competence in the target language.

Contrary to the notable increase in various forms of embedding, intermediate level learners displayed a slightly reduced usage of negation in complaints compared to elementary learners, which also deviated marginally from the pattern exhibited by the GNS. Despite this, the intermediate learners' use of negation in 7.8 % of their complaints is still relatively close to the control group, who mitigated 9.8 % of their complaints using negation. The previous complaint data analysis revealed that beginners and GNS mainly used *negative evaluation* in their complaints. While GNS varied the negated adjectives in accordance with the context or they fell back on routines, the elementary learners had a limited range of negative constructions and only negated two adjectives, *good* and *fair*, which suggested restricted lexical ability. In addition to negative evaluations, the GNS also employed *negative interrogatives* in their complaints (exemplified in 108 & 109), albeit to a much lesser degree.

(108) Notes, 25GERMAS

Findest du das **nicht** ein bisschen mies?
(Don‘t you think that‘s a bit lousy?)

(109) Oral presentation, 38GERFEM

Hör mal Jacob hättest du **nicht** mal schreiben können?
(Listen Jacob, couldn’t you have texted me?)

In analyzing the use of negation by the lower intermediate learners it becomes apparent that they not only began to differentiate their negative evaluations in a more nuanced manner by deploying a range of negated adjectives (e.g., example 110) but they also started to employ the German routines *X ist nicht in Ordnung* and *X ist nicht okay*, both of which translate to *X is not okay* (examples 111 & 112). As in the findings from the request data, intermediate learners did, however, not make use of negative interrogatives.

(110) Oral presentation, G2F_23757

Wir sollten das zosammen machen aber was du gemacht hast finde ich überhaupt **nicht schön**.
(We should do this together, but what you have done, I find not nice at all.)

(111) Heating, G2M_277677

frau Kuwalska, Ich habe die Heizung nicht kaputt gemacht, und Das ist **nicht in ordgnug.**
(Mrs. Kowalska, I didn’t break the heating and that’s not okay.)

(112) Rash, G2M_800900

Sie haben mir eine flache recept geschrieben, dass ist gar **nicht ok**.
(You gave me the wrong prescription, that’s not okay.)

Similar to negative evaluation, we observe a diversification of forms in subjunctives when examining the data of intermediate learners. Whereas elementary learners exclusively relied on the subjunctive mood of *mögen / want*, intermediate learners expanded their grammatical abilities to include several other subjunctive forms (for LAT results see Table 41). At the same time, they also began to use these forms infrequently as syntactic downgraders in their complaint productions, as exemplified in instances (113) – (116).

(113) Rash, G2M_768891

Frau Schröder, hiermit **möchte** ich mich über das Medikament beschwerden, die mir letzte Woche gegeben.
(Mrs. Schröder, I would like to complain about the medication that was given to me last week.)

(114) Overtime, G2M_800900

Ich **würde** sagen eingettich, dass ich nicht Überstunden Arbeite kann.
(I would actually say that I cannot work overtime.)

(115) Heating, G2M_735525

Das ist aber nicht wahr, die Heizung war schon kaputt, und Sie **sollten** für das reparieren bezahlen.
(That's not true, the heating was already broken, and you should pay for the repair.)

(116) Oral presentation, G2M_800900

du **könntest** midestens mir bescheid geben.
(You could at least let me know.)

Overall, it was found that intermediate learners still relied too heavily on the subjunctive mood of *mögen / want* compared to the GNS. However, the learners showed initial attempts to expand on their use of subjunctive forms and thus move towards target language realizations. For example, the GNS frequently used the phrase *Du hättest mir auch mal Bescheid geben können / You could have let me know* in item 11 *Oral Presentation*. While the learners could not replicate this exact phrasing due to its grammatical complexity, we can see in example (116) how one learner (G2M_800900) made an effort to approach the target language formulation.

A noteworthy increase in pragmatic competence can also be observed for the syntactic downgrader *past tense*. While elementary learners did not use this modifier at all in their complaint productions, intermediate learners mitigated 5 % of their complaints using past tense, which was even slightly higher than the values of the GNS (4 %). GNS typically employed past tense forms when the addressee's actions were criticized explicitly (see examples 117 & 118). Since the use of past tense forms suggests "temporal distancing" (Leech 2014: 169) from the immediate present reality, the complaint becomes less accusatory and the speaker's annoyance is toned down.

(117) Oral presentation, 29GERMAS

Fand ich absolut nicht okay von dir mich so hängen zu lassen.
(I really didn't appreciate you leaving me hanging like that.)

(118) Cooking ingredients, 10GERFEM

Heute **war** ich aber echt sauer muss ich sagen.
(Today, I must say, I was really angry.)

(119) Notes, G2F_461123

Aber jetzt **warst** du unhöflich, weil du mir deine Notizen nicht gegeben hast.
(But now you were rude because you didn't give me your notes.)

(120) Notes, G2M_221154

Dein Verhalten **war** einfach so scheiße, du verdienst meine Gesellschaft nicht.
(Your behavior was simply so awful, you don't deserve my company.)

(121) Rash, G2F_23757

[…] aber leider ich **war** nicht zufriden mit das Midikamit.
([…] but unfortunately, I was not satisfied with the medication.)

In the same way, the lower intermediate learners removed themselves metaphorically from the ensuing face-threatening acts by use of the past tense form *war(st) / was, were* (see examples 119 – 121). Although the intermediate learners thereby demonstrated improvement in their use of the syntactic downgrader, they only utilized this one specific form. Conversely, the GNS employed a more diverse range of past tense verbs as downgraders, suggesting potential for further advancement in the intermediate learners' pragmatic productions.

In the last section of this analysis, we will focus on the use of indefinite pronouns and passive constructions. While indefinite pronouns were not frequently found in requests, we can see how the lower intermediate learners approached the usage numbers of GNS (7.3 %) by modifying 4.4 % of their complaint head acts by use of an indefinite pronoun. The following four examples provide an impression of the native and learner-specific inclusion of *man / one* in complaint head acts, which is the one indefinite pronoun that was used exclusively by both groups.

(122) Rash, 28GERMAS

Nimmt **man** diese Tabletten nicht nur maximal 2x am Tag ein?
(Aren't these pills only supposed to be taken a maximum of 2 times a day?)

(123) Oral presentation, 12GERMAS

Wie kann **man** so egoistisch sein, und mich alleine vortragen lassen ohne mir bescheid zu geben.
(How can someone be so selfish and leave me to present alone without giving me a heads-up.)

(124) Overtime, G2M_400399

Man kann das nur machen einmal im Leben, zweimal, aber nicht immer.
(One can only do it once in a lifetime, twice at most, but not repeatedly.)

(125) Rash, G2M_540045

Ich habe ein Ausschlag im Gesicht, dass war für mich schuckiert und ich habe im Internet gelesen, dass **mann** null zwei mal pro Tag darf, es ist rechtig oder?
(I have a rash on my face, which was shocking for me, and I read online that you can only take it twice a day, is that correct?)

Last, both the GNS and learner participants utilized passive constructions predominantly in item 7 *Overtime*. However, similar to the findings for requests, the intermediate learners generally showed limited use of passive as a syntactic downgrader (2.2 %). In addition, the examples presented in (126) and (127) disclose the grammatical challenges all of the learners faced when adopting passive constructions.

(126) Overtime, G2F_891240

Guten Tag Herr Macken, ich habe ein kleines Problem. ich habe oft Überstunden gemacht und diese Überstunden **werd nicht bezahlt.**
(Good day, Mr. Macken. I have a small issue. I have worked overtime frequently, but these extra hours are not being paid.)

(127) Overtime, G2F_150203

Ich bekomme von Ihnen viel Aufgaben und arbeite ich oft Überstunden und es **werde nicht bezahlt**.
(I have been given a lot of tasks by you, and I often have to work overtime, but it is not being paid.)

Based on the analysis, it appears that the intermediate learners struggled with using passive constructions as a syntactic downgrader, both in requests and complaints, thereby highlighting a specific pragmalinguistic structure where the learners may need additional time in developing their grammatical and pragmatic skills. The upcoming discussion section now revolves around the synthesis and

interpretation of the current findings in conjunction with previous research.

5.2.3.2 Discussion

This section of the study involved a comparison of the pragmatic and grammatical development of two distinct levels of German language learners, namely the elementary and lower intermediate groups. The hypothesis posited that learners with a higher level of grammatical competence, as measured in the LAT, would also demonstrate more target-like pragmatic realizations. In particular, it was predicted that lower intermediate learners would outperform their elementary counterparts both in terms of the quantity and variety of syntactic downgraders employed, ultimately allowing them to approximate the L2 target. This hypothesis was confirmed, as the study found that lower intermediate learners demonstrated more target-like pragmatic realizations as compared to the elementary group. They showed a significantly greater use of syntactic downgraders and higher levels of syntactic complexity in their request and complaint head acts. Beyond this, the current study provided a more in-depth insight into the progressive acquisition of the examined grammatical forms and its impact on pragmatic productions. The findings revealed a significant association between LAT scores and the utilization of syntactic downgraders in the DCT. To elaborate, higher LAT scores were indicative of an increased probability of employing the respective syntactic downgraders in the DCT. These findings are in line with previous studies, including Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2001), Bardovi-Harlig (2003), Dittmar & Terborg (1991), and Walkinshaw (2009), which have suggested that L2 learners first develop grammatical knowledge that forms the basis of pragmalinguistic knowledge. However, the mere presence of linguistic forms in the learners' interlanguage grammar did not necessarily guarantee concurrent or immediate use in pragmalinguistic contexts. More specifically, a significant proportion of participants who demonstrated grammatical proficiency in these forms did not utilize them as syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints. This aligns closely with the findings presented by Kasper & Rose (2002) who examined different stages of L2 acquisition and highlighted the distinct learning tasks faced by learners in relation to the interplay between pragmatic and grammatical competence, depending on their developmental stage. The current study's intermediate learners correspond to Kasper and Rose's second

developmental stage, which pertains to adult learners in the later stages of L2 acquisition. In this stage, grammar takes precedence over pragmatics. The primary learning task for these learners is to uncover the pragmatic meanings associated with the various grammatical devices in the L2. The underlying assumption is that the learners have already acquired a solid understanding of L2 grammatical features and predominantly use them for their primary functions. Subsequently, the learners need to explore the diverse pragmatic, i.e., secondary meanings that grammatical forms can convey, such as their usage as modification devices in German. The present study is informative in that it suggests a reevaluation of the categorization proposed by Kasper & Rose (2002), since the present lower intermediate learners have not yet reached advanced stages of L2 acquisition. On the contrary, it appears that the developmental sequence of grammar preceding pragmatics occurs at an intermediate stage of L2 acquisition, as indicated by these findings. Since the perception study is expected to provide valuable insight on the transitional phase that bridges the acquisition of grammatical forms and their utilization as pragmalinguistic markers, at this point in the discussion, the in-depth exploration of this particular topic will be deferred to the corresponding section.

Despite the absence of an automatic link between the acquisition of grammatical knowledge and the simultaneous development of pragmatic skills, it is noteworthy that learners did benefit from an expanded repertoire of grammatical resources for expressing syntactic downgraders. These findings further corroborate the conclusions drawn by previous researchers, including Celaya & Barón (2015), Fordyce & Fukazawa (2004), Hoffman-Hicks (1992), Martí-Arnándiz (2008), and Youn (2014), who have observed that grammatical development generally facilitates the expression of pragmalinguistic elements.[118] Conversely, grammatical forms that were not yet fully mastered due to their heightened complexity were also rarely employed as syntactic downgraders, reflecting learners' limited proficiency in these specific structures.

The Complexification Hypothesis proposed by Meisel et al. (1981) in combination with Bialystok's (1993, 1994) Two-Dimensional Model provide a valuable framework for understanding the documented acquisition of syntactic downgrading. The Complexification Hypothesis suggests that the acquisitional

[118] The reader is encouraged to also consult Ali & Woodfield (2017), Barron (2007), Bella (2012), Cook (2001), Hong (2015), Takahashi (2017), Walkinshaw (2009) and Yuan & Zhang (2018) for comparable findings on the impact of L2 grammar level in the context of speech act modification.

order of L2 forms is influenced by their structural complexity and the cognitive processing demands involved. According to this hypothesis, syntactically complex structures such as passives or negative interrogatives, which require higher cognitive processing capacity, are typically acquired at a later stage compared to simpler structures that involve minimal processing demands (e.g., forms of embedding). Moreover, Bialystok emphasizes that one of the major challenges for learners in acquiring L2 pragmatic competence is gaining control over processing. The current study supports this notion, since with increases in grammatical competence and with more processing capacity freed, intermediate learners became better equipped to handle the cognitive demands associated with the use of syntactic downgraders. These developments in procedural knowledge were evident in the higher frequency of syntactic modifiers employed by intermediate learners, as well as the increased complexity of the syntactic downgraders chosen to mitigate requests and complaints. However, it is important to note that even with the advancement in grammatical competence, the overall usage of syntactic downgraders remained considerably lower than that of the control group, suggesting that the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge may not be as straightforward as Bialystok assumes.

Furthermore, I discussed the progressive acquisition of grammatical forms using the example of the subjunctive form of the verb *können*. While not all learners had fully acquired this specific grammatical form, a small proportion of them demonstrated its use in their pragmatic productions, potentially as an unanalyzed chunk acquired through language instruction. In addition, the pragmatic productions of those learners were examined who had displayed moderate to high grammatical competence in using subjunctive *können*, as assessed by the LAT. Both groups of learners employed the highly routinized request structure *Könntest du X/ Could you do X*, which served as a basis for assessing their usage of the syntactic downgrader. First, the analysis allowed for a clear differentiation between the different levels of subjunctive mastery exhibited by elementary and intermediate learners in the LAT. More explicitly, the varying levels of grammatical proficiency were reflected in the learners' pragmatic use of this syntactic downgrader, highlighting the connection between grammatical competence and pragmatic production.

Second, the findings shed light on the influence of interlanguage grammar on

the usage of the subjunctive downgrader within routinized stretches. As learners' grammatical competence increased, their employment of the downgrader underwent changes, reflecting their evolving interlanguage grammars. Notably, learners with higher levels of grammatical competence progressed towards employing more complex structures, exemplified by expressions like *ich wollte fragen, ob du X könntest/ I wanted to ask whether you could X*. These findings challenge the claims made by Krashen et al. (1982), who argued that pragmatic routines in L2 productions are "unusually error-free" and undergo "no transitional stages" (Krashen et al. 1982: 232-233). In contrast, my study demonstrates that changes in the usage of subjunctive downgraders, which are part of routinized stretches, can be attributed to the development of interlanguage grammar. The analysis therefore provides valuable insight into the relationship between the acquisition of syntactic downgraders and the level of grammatical competence in L2 learners. While the results indicate that a higher level of grammatical proficiency is associated with an increased use of syntactic modification and a progression towards more complex forms, the findings also demonstrate that there is not one but multiple paths to the successful acquisition and usage of these structures. Since all informants in the present study, whether elementary or lower intermediate learners, attended an integration course with the same prescribed curriculum and teaching materials, it is highly probable that they were all exposed to the same language instruction, including the teaching of routinized structures such as *Könnten Sie X? / Could you X?*. Irrespective of the latter, the analysis revealed diverse learning trajectories, underscoring the variation in language learning abilities, strategies, and outcomes across individual learners. These findings highlight the complex interplay between various factors, such as individual differences, input, grammatical competence, and the learning environment. Consequently, they emphasize the significance of interindividual learner differences in the development of pragmatic skills in a second language (cf. Ehrman et al. 2003; Dörnyei 2005, 2006; Block 2007; Kuriscak 2010; Kung & Kung 2011; Takahashi 2019).

The data analysis further yielded new insight into the use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints by intermediate level learners. First, it was found that the positive impact of increasing grammatical competence was particularly pronounced for forms of embedding. Furthermore, improvements in

grammatical ability resulted in a wider repertoire of subjunctive forms, past tense forms and negative evaluations in learners' interlanguage. Interestingly, negation and indefinite pronouns were more commonly used in complaints than in requests, suggesting that factors beyond grammar, such as the specific speech act being performed, also play a role in their use. Last, passive constructions posed the greatest grammatical challenge to intermediate learners, which could explain their limited use of this syntactic downgrader in their pragmatic productions. In the subsequent part, I will concentrate on a detailed examination of three distinct types of syntactic downgraders, notably subjunctives, negation, and forms of embedding. This discussion will be carried out within the framework of addressing the hypothesis and research questions posited in this study.

Subjunctives in particular play a crucial role in mitigating requests and complaints, as observed consistently in both the GNS and learner data. However, the progression from elementary to intermediate learners in terms of subjunctive usage was not as substantial as anticipated, despite improved LAT scores for the intermediate group. Equally important to note, the findings indicated a nuanced relationship between the intermediate learners' use of subjunctive forms in requests and the L2 target. While there was a noticeable decrease in the frequency of subjunctive forms of *können / can* and *mögen / like* among intermediate learners, allowing them to align closer to the native speaker norm for subjunctive forms of *mögen*, the use of subjunctive forms of *können* was less frequent as compared to GNS. This suggests that the intermediate learners' development in subjunctive usage was multifaceted, with both convergence and divergence from the target language norm. These findings support the conclusion drawn by Ali & Woodfield (2017) with regard to the L2 acquisition of speech act modification, suggesting that both linear and non-linear developmental patterns may be observed. It is noteworthy that Ali and Woodfield's study involved Syrian Arabic learners of English, indicating the relevance of their findings across different L2 contexts. Another significant aspect of the intermediate learners' progress was the diversification of subjunctive forms. Intermediate learners demonstrated an expansion of their repertoire by incorporating new subjunctive forms, particularly the modal verb *sollen / should* and auxiliary verbs. While there was an overuse of subjunctive *sollen* when compared to the control group, the substantial increase in the use of auxiliary verbs represented a notable step towards attaining the target

language norm. Similar observations were made with respect to the use of subjunctive forms in complaints. Intermediate learners displayed a more diverse repertoire of subjunctive constructions beyond the subjunctive form of *mögen / like*, showcasing their growing ability in employing various grammatical structures to modify and mitigate speech acts.

The progression observed in the learners' use of subjunctives aligns with Kasper & Rose's (2002) framework of global L2 development, which applies not only to requests but also to complaints. According to Kasper & Rose, there is a five-stage process that can be observed, and elements of this process are also evident in the current dataset for subjunctives. At the elementary stage, the learners primarily relied on routinized productions, often utilizing the verbs *können / can* or *mögen / like* as default options. During this stage, they had a limited range of pragmalinguistic forms at their disposal. As they progressed, there was a tendency towards overgeneralization, resulting in the overuse of the subjunctive form *mögen* in various contexts. However, this phase marked a crucial transition point, where they expanded their pragmalinguistic repertoire by incorporating new form-function mappings. As the learners gradually expanded their range of linguistic resources, they began to employ language more creatively and modified the force of their request and complaint utterances more appropriately. The learners' progression in the use of subjunctives therefore reflects a developmental pattern consistent with Kasper & Rose's framework, highlighting the gradual acquisition and refinement of pragmalinguistic skills. Parallel to the findings regarding subjunctive usage, the complaint data of intermediate learners also demonstrated a diversification of forms in expressing negative evaluations, encompassing the use of pragmatic routines and other linguistic structures. It is nevertheless worth noting that the utilization of negation in the form of negative interrogatives remained absent in both the request and complaint data of lower intermediate learners. The reader is referred to the previous discussion in which this specific finding was analyzed in greater detail, particularly in relation to Hypothesis 1 (cf. 5.2.2.2).

Let us now turn to lower intermediate learners' increased utilization of *dass*- and *aber*-clauses, indirect questions, and conditional clauses. The analysis of embedded structures revealed a clear progression towards more complex and accurate pragmalinguistic constructions as the learners' grammatical competence

levels advanced. Despite the presence of some grammatical errors, the intermediate learners demonstrated heightened syntactic complexity in employing various types of embedding. The results therefore highlight the association between a high level of grammatical competence in embedding and an enhanced pragmatic command of the investigated structures. Moreover, the positive impact of increasing grammatical competence appears to be particularly pronounced for forms of embedding as compared to other forms of syntactic downgrading. This finding aligns with Martí-Arnándiz's (2008) research on request modification, where she observes a significant impact of L2 grammar level on those forms of internal modification that involve complex subclausal structures at the phrasal and sentence level. Thus, both studies converge in indicating that the development of grammatical proficiency plays a crucial role in the production of subordinate structures. To explain the greater impact of L2 grammar on the utilization of embedded structures (when compared to other forms of syntactic downgrading), we need to shift our focus to understanding how forms of embedding operate. In the case of indirect questions and *dass*-subordinate clauses, the main clause serves as an introductory element that prepares the recipient for an upcoming request or complaint while also mitigating its impositive or aggressive nature. Similarly, *aber*-subordinate clauses function to express the actual request or complaint, while the main clause conveys the speaker's attitude towards the speech act, such as tentativeness, hope, delight, or acknowledgment of imposition. For instance, in a complaint, the main clause may feature an apology formula (e.g., *Es tut mir leid, aber... / I am sorry, but...*) or phrases that demonstrate goodwill and enthusiasm (e.g., *Ich mag diesen Job, aber... / I like this job, but...*). Another option in requests is to express awareness of imposing on the recipient (e.g., *Ich weiß, es ist kurzfristig, aber... / I know it's short notice, but...*). Consequently, requests and complaints often exhibit a higher degree of mitigation through the utilization of syntactically more complex structures, namely embedding them within another clause. It is nevertheless important to note that these embedded structures diverge from other syntactic downgraders in their inability to directly convey politeness or to modify the head act. Rather, it is through the choice of specific lexical and phrasal elements within the embedded structure that the desired politeness functions are achieved. Put differently, unlike other syntactic modifiers in which case the mitigating function arises from the interplay of structure and context, this

added layer of pragmatic meaning is more readily discernible in the case of embedded structures. Consequently, an increase in L2 grammatical competence specifically related to the investigated embedded structures might have a more direct impact on the utilization of these forms as syntactic downgraders. These findings regarding the use of embedding demonstrate a clear progression towards the target language norm.

There is, however, one notable exception to this pattern. A contrasting perspective arises when examining the implementation of conditional clauses by intermediate learners. These learners, in contrast to the control group, showed a greater inclination to utilize conditional clauses in both their requests and complaints. In addition, it is worth noting that the intermediate learners exhibited a distinct pattern of preposing conditional clauses especially in their requests, a phenomenon that was not observed in the data from the control group. It seems likely that this pattern of language use may be a teaching-induced effect, given that a review of grammar exercises in authorized teaching materials for integration courses revealed that the majority of these exercises feature the conditional clause positioned at the beginning. Moreover, it is plausible that due to the relevance of the topic of conditional clauses in grammar sessions, intermediate learners were attempting to showcase their newly acquired pragmalinguistic abilities, i.e., 'what they can already do in the L2' by overusing this form of embedding in their request and complaint head acts. Further research is, however, required to elucidate the underlying reasons for this phenomenon and to determine its generalizability.

Overall, the findings of this study provide support for the Interface Hypothesis in adult second language acquisition, suggesting that L2 learners can acquire both syntactic and pragmatic conditions. However, their integration of these two domains is often less efficient and shows optionality. These findings align with previous research by Sorace & Serratrice (2009), White (2009), and Sorace (2011), which also emphasize the challenges faced in achieving optimal integration between syntax and pragmatics in L2 acquisition. Furthermore, the present findings suggest that the acquisition of L2-specific pragmatic knowledge may be more challenging than initially assumed by Rothman & Slabakova (2011). More exactly, when learners engage in morphosyntax-pragmatics mappings, such as producing syntactic speech act modifications in the target language, difficulties

in achieving accurate and consistent integration between the two domains become more apparent. In addition to the challenges posed by the interface between syntax and pragmatics in L2 acquisition for elementary and intermediate learners, the present study also revealed a positive influence of learners' proficiency in L2 grammar on their utilization of syntactic downgraders in speech acts. These results suggest that as learners develop a stronger grasp of the relevant L2 grammatical features, they become more capable of effectively employing syntactic downgraders in their speech acts. The findings therefore provide further evidence for the significance of grammatical knowledge in the development of L2 learners' pragmalinguistic resources, as demonstrated in previous research in the field. In addition, the significance of individual learner differences in the development of L2 pragmatic skills and the potential impacts of teaching practices were underscored. The following section now turns to a more in-depth comparison of the two chosen speech acts.

5.2.4 A comparative analysis of syntactic downgrader acquisition in L2 complaints and requests: temporal trajectories and developmental patterns

ILP research on the development of requests and complaints in L2 acquisition suggests that they follow a similar trajectory, albeit with internal complaint modification lagging behind request modification (cf. Trosborg 1995). This finding is based on the observation that internal modification is often closely linked to the directness strategy chosen, such as the use of subjunctive forms of modal verbs in the query preparatory strategy. Existing research suggests that, unlike requests, there are no well-established 'go-to-strategies' for complaints that are taught early on in language courses. This lack of routinized complaint strategies can pose a challenge for learners, who may struggle to develop appropriate complaint strategies and resort to overusing direct forms of complaints (cf. Trosborg 1995; Murphy & Neu 1996; Tanck 2002; Meyer 2007; Hong & Shih 2013; Hilliard 2017). This, in turn, affects the use of internal modification devices, potentially leading to a delayed occurrence of syntactic downgraders in complaints compared to requests. Based on these observations, Hypothesis 3 was formulated, positing the following prediction:

Hypothesis 3. The learners' use of syntactic downgraders in complaints will increase in an L2-like direction later than for requests.

In order to compare the temporal development of syntactic downgraders in the two speech acts, it is important to first consider the relative difficulty that learners face in using strategy types in a speech act. Two issues are therefore addressed in the following. The first relates to the possibility that learners' level of L2 pragmatic competence may differ according to the speech act strategies under analysis; the second concerns sequences of acquisition of syntactic downgrader types. Let us start with the findings for the directness levels of strategies used in requests and complaints.

5.2.4.1 Results

Figure 13 illustrates the utilization of eight request strategies by elementary learners, intermediate learners, and GNS, as a percentage distribution (see also Table A9-5, Appendix 9). The findings suggest that GNS primarily employed conventionally indirect requests through *query preparatory strategies* (62.3 %), followed by the use of *want statements* (14.1 %), and *hints* (11.6 %).[119] Both elementary and intermediate learners used direct strategy types more frequently than the GNS group, which was accompanied by a lower utilization rate of conventionally indirect requests.

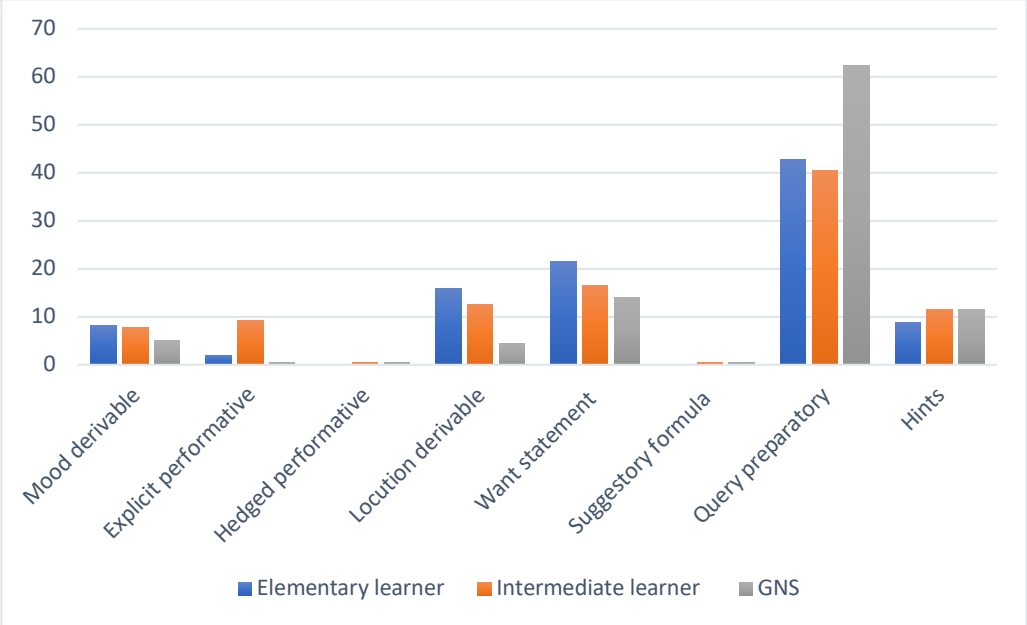

Figure 13. Frequency of request strategies used (in %)

[119] The relatively high occurrence of hints can be attributed to their frequent use in item 6 *Bakery*, where GNS predominantly employed a non-conventionally indirect request strategy, exemplified by the utterance *Ähm, Enschuldigung, aber da fehlen noch 5 € / Um, excuse me, but there are still 5 € missing* (Item 6 Bakery, 8GERFEM).

In order to gain insight into learner behavior in terms of strategy selection and to understand the reasons for such behavior, the following section provides a concise overview of the request head act productions at beginner level. In particular, I will provide a brief analysis of three direct strategies commonly overused by elementary learners, namely *mood derivables*, *locution derivables*, and *want statements* (see examples 128, 129 & 130).[120]

(128) Burst pipe, G1F_267742

Bitte Herr Turan schnell helfen.
(Please, Mr. Turan, help quickly.)

(129) Burst pipe, G1F_884224

musst du mir einen Termin bei Handwerker machen.
(You need to arrange an appointment with the handyman for me.)

(130) Cat, G1F_856792

Ich will mit dir meine Katze kümmern und futtern.
(I want you to take care of my cat and feed her.)

Example (128) demonstrates the elementary learners' production of a mood derivable, using an imperative along with an external *bitte / please* marker. Although this observation is in line with common ILP findings which suggest that learners tend to begin with using imperatives along with politeness markers (e.g., Bella 2012; Hill 1997), it is worth noting that other strategies such as locution derivables (16.1 %) and want statements (21.7 %) were actually utilized more frequently by elementary learners (compared to a frequency of 8.3 % for mood derivables). An examination of Table 54 provides insight into the relationship between learners' preference for want statements and locution derivables and their grammatical competence levels.

Table 54. LAT scores (in %)

Criteria	G1	G2
Declarative	70.8	97.5
Interrogative	90.3	97
Imperative	50	75.8

[120] In addition, lower intermediate learners employed explicit performatives with a high frequency, exceeding both elementary learners and the control group of native speakers. The following example is provided for illustrative purposes: *Guten Tag Herr Turan, **ich bitte Sie** der Rohrbruch schnell zu reparieren / Hello Mr. Turan, **I request you** to fix the broken pipe quickly* (Item 5 Burst pipe, G2F_439201). _

By examining the learners' scores on the LAT for the three basic sentence types, it becomes evident that imperative structures posed the most difficulty. This observation is corroborated by the data from the DCT, which consistently demonstrates the grammatical challenges encountered by both groups of learners in producing imperative constructions (see example 128). This suggests that the informants' level of grammatical competence for the three basic sentence types in German played a pivotal role in shaping their pragmatic productions: Of the request strategies utilized, the interrogative query preparatory was the most frequently employed, followed by three declarative-based strategies, i.e., want statements, locution derivables, and hints. Notably, the direct strategies employed by the beginners, following the patterns of *Ich will X / I want X* or *Du musst X / You must X* (129 and 130), utilized syntactically simple structures. This is in line with the fact that declarative structures, basic modals, and infinitives are among the earliest structures taught in a language course. Thus, in requests, the beginners relied on those simple structures that were easily accessible to them. However, it should be noted that the overuse of such direct forms, particularly when used with a speaker-perspective (i.e., *I want X*) without any further form of internal modification, may come across as blunt and even impolite. Nevertheless, upon analyzing the overall distribution of strategy types among the more advanced group, i.e., the intermediate level learners, it becomes evident that they approached GNS in almost all areas.

Let us now turn our attention to the analysis of the complaint strategy use by elementary and lower intermediate learners, as well as by GNS, with the latter group being the focus of our initial investigation. Figure 14 provides a visual representation of the frequencies of the different complaint strategy types utilized by the informants (see also Table A9-6, Appendix 9). First, it is notable that GNS employed a higher proportion of direct (71.4 %) as opposed to indirect strategy types in their complaints, in comparison to the requests data. In fact, conventionally indirect strategies only accounted for approximately 24 % of GNS complaints. Upon closer inspection of the direct strategy types, it becomes clear that no single strategy dominated to the same extent as was observed in the request data. Overall, modified blame, annoyance and explicit condemnation (action) were utilized most frequently, with proportions of 26.1 %, 20.7 % and 20.3 %, respectively.

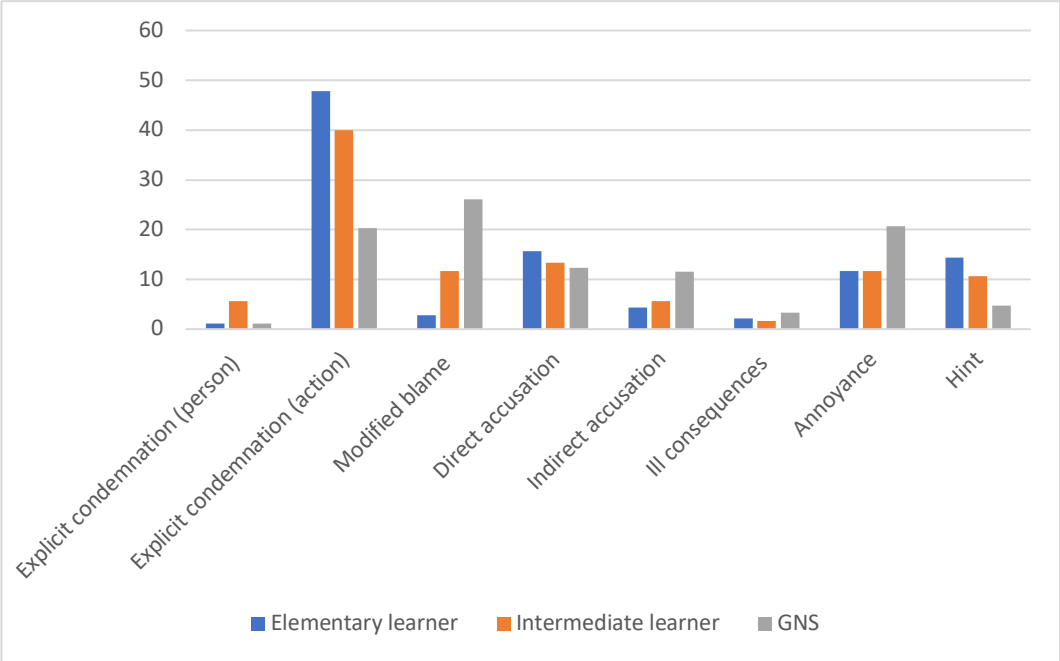

Figure 14. Frequency of complaint strategies used (in %)

While there are no formalized structures associated with the indirect annoyance strategy, the direct strategies of modified blame in examples (131) – (133) and explicit condemnation in (134) – (135) very prominently exhibited routinized patterns in the GNS data:

(131) Overtime, 33GERMAS

[…] aber **es kann nicht sein, dass** ich ständig Überstunden machen muss.
([...] but it can't be that I have to work overtime all the time.)

(132) Heating, 39GERMAS

Ich sehe es nicht ein für einen Schaden aufzukommen, den ich nicht verursacht habe.
(I don't see why I should pay for damage that I didn't cause.)

(133) Cooking ingredients, 2GERFEM

Julia, **das geht** so **nicht**.
(Julia, this is not acceptable.)

(134) Oral presentation, 11GERFEM

Ich finde das wirklich **nicht in Ordnung**!
(I really don't think this is okay!)

(135) Cooking ingredients, 1GERFEM

> Mir fehlen gerade wirklich viele Dinge für das Essen mit meinen Freunden und **das ist** echt **NICHT in Ordnung**.
> (I am currently missing a lot of things for the meal with my friends and that is really NOT okay.)

These realizations consist of recurrent stretches of speech that are consistently used in a fixed form with the specific intention of complaining. Per definition, this qualifies them as pragmatic routines (see for example Coulmas 1981: 2-3; House 1996: 226; Myles et al. 1998: 325). In particular, the routines utilized by GNS in complaints are patterns with one or more open slots, commonly associated with direct complaints:

a) Es kann nicht sein, dass X … / It cannot be that X…
   Wie kann es sein, dass X … / How can it be that X …
b) Ich sehe es nicht ein, dass X … / I don't see why X …
   X sehe ich nicht ein … / I can't see why X …
c) Das geht [so, gar] nicht … / That's not acceptable [at all] …
d) X ist nicht in Ordnung … / X is not okay …
   Ich finde X [gar, echt, überhaupt] nicht in Ordnung … / I don't find X [at all, really] okay …

This result effectively challenges the commonly held notion in the field of ILP research and one of the underlying assumptions of the present hypothesis, which suggests that there are no pragmatic routines and standardized strategies for making direct complaints. On the contrary, in fact, almost 50 % of the native speaker complaint head acts were made up of exactly such pragmatic routines. Building on these findings, we will now examine the complaint strategies employed by the learner informants in this study.

The analysis revealed that all learners in the study tended to underuse modified blame and annoyance strategies, while overusing explicit condemnation (action) and hints, which are respectively the second most direct and the most indirect strategy types. Despite these differences, the intermediate level L2 learners demonstrated a trend towards approaching the frequency of use observed among GNS across most strategy types, similar to their use of (in)directness strategies in requests. Nevertheless, the finding that elementary and lower intermediate learners tended to overuse both very direct and very indirect

complaint strategies is particularly noteworthy and deserves further discussion. Examples (136) – (139) provide instances of explicit condemnations (action) produced by learners at the elementary and intermediate levels. They mainly resorted to using two patterns, namely *X is not [good, okay, etc.]* or expressing emotions, such as *I am annoyed*, indicating their unfamiliarity with the pragmatic routines commonly employed by the GNS. However, when comparing examples (136) and (137) with (138) and (139), we observe an elaboration in the content of the complaints, as well as an increase in grammatical complexity levels, as the learners progressed from beginner to intermediate levels of complaint production.

(136) Oral presentation, G1F_854213

ich finde es nicht gut, weil bist du nicht da.
(I don't think it's good because you're not there.)

(137) Rash, G1F_774421

Hallo Frau Schröder, Ich bin ärgere sehr über sie.
(Hello Mrs. Schröder, I am annoyed with you.)

(138) Overtime, G2M_800900

Hi Dr. Ich will nur sagen dass Sie mir nicht so gut behandeln, Sie haben mir eine flache recept geschrieben, dass ist gar nicht ok.
(Hi Dr. I just want to say that you don't treat me very well, you wrote me a wrong prescription, which is not okay.)

(139) Notes, G2M_555256

Hiii Tom obwohl ich immer geholfen habe machst du jetzt mit mir so, ich bin sehr sauer!
(Hiii Tom, even though I have always helped you, you're doing this to me now, I'm very angry.)

The ensuing examples (140) – (143) display hints formulated by learners at the elementary and lower intermediate levels. When examining the complaint head acts in (140) and (141), it appears that elementary learners resorted to hinting strategies when they faced (linguistic) challenges in expressing their complaints. In such cases, they simply repeated the trigger or reason for their complaint or used a clarification question (see examples 140 & 141). In contrast, the hints realized by intermediate learners in examples (142) and (143) represent a significant step in their development, as they demonstrate a deliberate and skillful use of hints as an indirect complaint strategy (e.g., the use of irony in 142).

(140) Heating, G1F_798200

ich habe ein Pomlen mit Heizung, das ist kaput.
(I have a problem with the heating, it's broken.)

(141) Oral presentation, G1M_477301

warum heute nicht gegommen?
(Why didn't you come today?)

(142) Notes, G2M_400399

ich danke dir und ich mache zu mit diese Thema mit dir.
(I thank you and will end this topic with you.)

(143) Heating, G2M_281002

Frau Kawalska, du kennst mich gut, dass ich nie lügen kann.
(Mrs. Kawalska, you know me well enough to know that I could never lie.)

So, why did the learner informants overuse explicit condemnations and hints? The answer seems to lie at two ends of a continuum. On one hand, the learners may have been 'over-direct' due to their communicative need to make themselves understood. Since explicit condemnations are per definition 'explicit', they allow learners to effectively convey their message concerning the complainable. On the other hand, when learners face discomfort or linguistic challenges during complaint production, they tend to resort to hints as a type of avoidance strategy. The use of hints may thus be a coping mechanism for learners who are overwhelmed by the task of producing a complaint in the L2.[121]

In sum, it was observed that elementary and lower intermediate learners deviated from the target-like strategy use in requests and complaints. Yet, for both speech acts, lower intermediate learners demonstrated increases in their pragmatic competence by aligning their pragmatic productions more closely with those of GNS. Comparing the individual types of strategies in both speech acts did not, however, provide precise information regarding a possible time-delayed development in either speech act. Consequently, the primary question has yet to be addressed: *In which of the two speech acts did learners demonstrate greater*

[121] In this context, it becomes apparent that instruction on those pragmatic routines commonly employed in complaints, especially during the initial stages of L2 acquisition, would benefit L2 learners of German in developing their pragmatic competences. This would not only assist them in increasing their utilization of the GNS-preferred modified blame strategy and decreasing their use of hints but also in reducing the 'bluntness' found at times in their explicit condemnations. All in all, the present finding has relevant pedagogical implications for German language teaching, as it suggests that German complaint routines could be introduced early in the instructional process, in a similar manner to the teaching of request strategies.

difficulties in using appropriate strategy types or put differently, in which speech act did learners develop their ability to choose appropriate strategy directness levels sooner, in which later?

So far, we have seen that both requests and complaints can be realized through the use of eight distinct types of strategies, which are characterized by varying levels of directness. These strategies can be further classified into three super-strategies based on their degree of directness: direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect.[122] Table 55 presents a summary of the utilization of the three super-strategies in the two speech acts of requests and complaints by the different informant groups.

Table 55. Strategy use in requests and complaints across informants (in %)

	Requests % (count)			**Complaints % (count)**		
	G1	G2	GNS	G1	G2	GNS
Direct strategies	48.3 (87)	47.2 (85)	25.4 (70)	71.7 (129)	76.1 (137)	71.4 (197)
Conventionally indirect strategies	42.8 (77)	41.1 (74)	63 (174)	13.9 (25)	13.3 (24)	23.9 (66)
Non-conventionally indirect strategies	8.9 (16)	11.7 (21)	11.6 (32)	14.4 (26)	10.6 (19)	4.7 (13)

When comparing the average percentage distributions of the three super-strategies for elementary and lower intermediate learners in both speech acts with those of the control group of native speakers, a greater similarity was observed in the speech act of complaining. More exactly, the percentages of direct and conventionally indirect strategies were found to be closer to those of GNS in the complaints, while the percentages of hints were closer to those of GNS in the requests. However, overall, the data of the elementary and lower intermediate learners were found to be closer to that of the control group in the complaint items. Since these results suggest that in complaint head acts, the choice of

[122] **Request strategies:** Direct strategies (*mood derivable, explicit performative, hedged performative, locution derivable, wanted statement*), conventionally indirect strategies (*suggestory formula, query preparatory*), non-conventionally indirect strategies (*hint*). **Complaint strategies:** Direct strategies (*explicit condemnation person, explicit condemnation action, modified blame, direct accusation, indirect accusation*), conventionally indirect strategies (*ill consequences, annoyance*), non-conventionally indirect strategies (*hint*). A summary of this classification can be found in Table A9-7, Appendix 9 for a comprehensive overview.

directness level is more consistent among the three informant groups than in the request head acts, the preconditions for the current hypothesis cannot be confirmed. In addition, the assumption that the speech act of complaining cannot be realized through routinized patterns has been refuted for German. In the following section, we will turn to the question of whether there is a discrepancy in the temporal occurrence of syntactic modification between requests and complaints within the datasets.

The use of syntactic modification in requests and complaints

Figure 15 provides an analysis of the use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints by the three participant groups. Initial observations indicate that, overall, beginners tended to employ syntactic modifications more frequently in requests than in complaints, with a modest difference of 4 % (7 forms) between the two speech acts. However, this finding may not be substantial enough to draw firm conclusions. In addition, the trend seems to be reversed among intermediate level learners, who used more syntactic modifications in complaints than in requests, thereby approaching the native-speaker norm in complaints more closely.

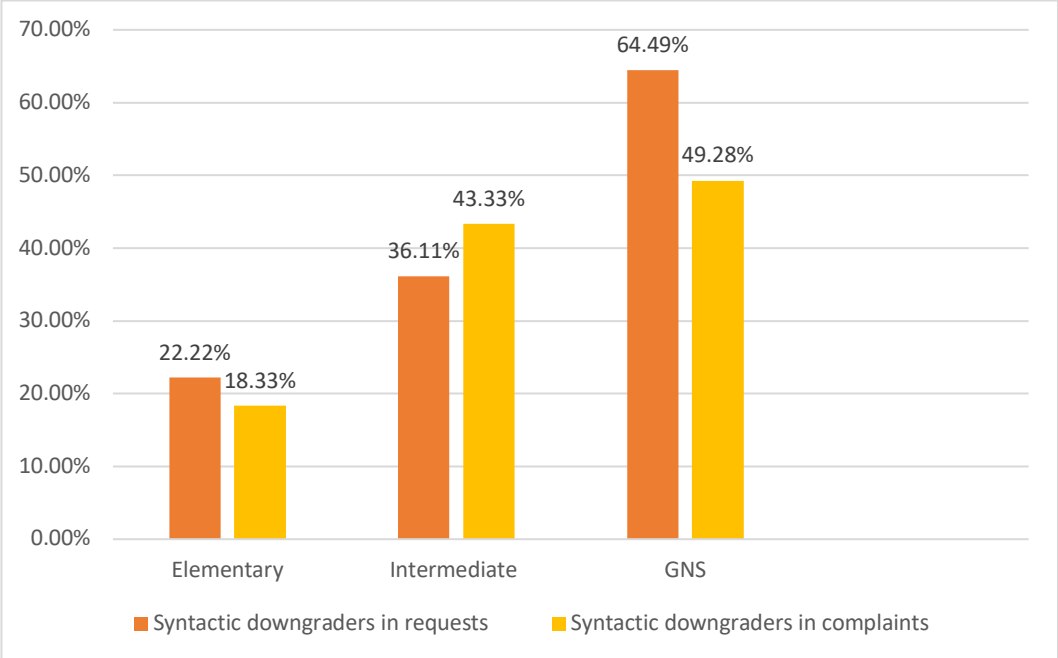

Figure 15. Proportion of requests and complaints containing syntactic downgraders (in %)

In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the underlying pattern, it is necessary to examine the distribution of the individual types of syntactic modification in both speech acts.

Table 56. Syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints: variations across learner groups (in %)

	REQUEST G1	COMPLAINT G1	REQUEST G2	COMPLAINT G2
***dass*-clause**	2.8	3.3	7.2	19.4
***aber*-clause**	0.6	2.8	2.8	6.1
Indirect question[123]	0	0	3.9	0
Conditional clause	1.1	1.1	14.4	5.6
Embedding (total)	4.4	7.2	28.3	31.7
Negation	0	8.9	0	7.8
Past tense	1.1	0	2.2	5
Subjunctive	17.8	3.9	18.3	6.7
Passive	1.1	0.6	1.7	2.2
Indefinite pronoun	0.6	1.1	0.6	4.4
Zero marking	77.78	81.67	63.89	56.67

The comparison in Table 56 reveals that the higher use of syntactic modification in requests by beginners is attributable to the use of one syntactic downgrader, namely, the *subjunctive*. The high frequency of subjunctive mood used in requests can mainly be ascribed to the conventional use of *können / can* and the overuse of the modal verb *mögen / want*. This overuse led to a deviation from the native speaker norm and was addressed in detail in Hypothesis 1 (cf. 5.2.2.1). At the elementary level, learners utilized the remaining syntactic downgraders more frequently in complaints than in requests.[124] This trend was further reinforced in intermediate level learners, who exhibited a higher frequency of all syntactic

[123] The analysis of indirect questions is omitted here, as they are not employed by either the GNS or the learners in complaints.

[124] Other exceptions are past tense and passive forms, but due to their low frequency of occurrence, these differences are of little consequence.

downgraders in complaints compared to requests. Exceptions to this pattern were conditional clauses (5.6 %) and subjunctives (6.7 %). However, the lower use of both forms in complaints as compared to their numbers in requests can be evaluated as a developmental trend, since the learners thereby approximated the GNS norm more closely (conditional clauses: 5.4 %, subjunctives: 9.1 %). Besides, when compared to GNS, the learners overused conditional clauses in requests which represents another notable deviation from the L2 target. In considering all of the factors, the analysis of the learners' use of syntactic downgrading in their expressions of requests and complaints revealed that the use of syntactic downgraders in complaints developed more closely to the native speaker norm before the use of syntactic downgraders in requests. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was found to be unsupported by the data, suggesting that L2 pragmatic competence in complaints develops earlier than in requests. What are the underlying reasons for this developmental discrepancy?

The learner informants showed a relatively stronger performance in using embedding in complaints, with a noticeable increase in the use of both *dass*- and *aber*-clauses as compared to their use in requests. This finding could be attributed to the fact that complaints are typically expressed in declarative sentences, where the insertion of a subordinate clause is less syntactically complex. In contrast, requests can be formulated in either declarative or interrogative structures, leading to a more balanced distribution of both sentence types in both speech acts. For a detailed analysis of the sentence types used by both GNS and learner informants in the head acts of requests and complaints, please refer to Table 57.

Table 57. Sentence types as used by informants in request and complaint head acts (in %)

Sentence type	G1 % (count)	G2 % (count)	GNS % (count)
Requests			
Declarative	46.11 (83)	50.6 (91)	28.6 (79)
Interrogative	45.6 (82)	42.22 (76)	66.3 (183)
Imperative	7.8 (14)	7.2 (13)	5.1 (14)
Complaints			
Declarative	84.4 (152)	90 (162)	89.9 (248)
Interrogative	15 (27)	9.44 (17)	8.7 (24)
Imperative	0.6 (1)	0.56 (1)	1.5 (4)

More specifically, this means that learners might be more comfortable and have greater proficiency in using complex subclauses in declarative than in interrogative sentences. This interpretation is supported by the finding that learners tended to overuse conditional clauses in their request speech acts to inquire about preconditions (e.g., *wenn es möglich wäre / if it were possible; wenn du Zeit hättest / if you had time*), while GNS informants used interrogatives combined with embedded structures in such cases (e.g., *Wäre es möglich, dass... / Would it be possible that...*). Another syntactic downgrader that differs considerably in its use between requests and complaints is negation. It has been previously noted that the use of negation in complaints in the form of negative evaluation is grammatically easier to realize than negative interrogatives in requests, which in turn leads to the difference in use. Therefore, both embedded structures and negation serve as syntactic downgraders which display discernible variations in their application across speech acts, which are then shaped by the grammatical proficiency of the learners. The effect of grammatical competence level on learners' pragmatic production is also reflected in intermediate learners' use of subjunctives, in that an increase in grammatical competence resulted in a more diverse use of subjunctives forms in both speech acts. Last, differences in the use of past tense in requests and complaints can be explained by the fact that in the latter, speakers do not have to rely on a pre-established pattern. To elaborate on this, learners need to be aware of the pragmatic routine *Ich wollte fragen, ob / I wanted to ask whether* in requests in order to employ the downgrader successfully, whereas the use of past tense in complaints exhibits greater flexibility in form. In the following, we will synthesize these results along with the preceding on in the discussion section and examine them in light of current research.

5.2.4.2 Discussion

In the present analysis, the temporal development of syntactic downgraders was examined by comparing their use in two speech acts. The basis of the hypothesis stems from Trosborg's (1995) research on the L2 development of requests and complaints which presented indications of a shared trajectory, although with a temporal discrepancy between the occurrence of modifications in the communicative acts. In particular, Trosborg (1995) posited that the development

of L2 competence in complaints lagged behind that of requests, with a particular emphasis on the slower progression in syntactic modification within the domain of complaints. The present analysis of elementary and lower intermediate learners' use of syntactic downgrading in requests and complaints points, however, to a higher and earlier level of competence in L2 complaints, indicating a developmental advantage for the latter. In light of this, Trosborg's prediction can be seen as subject to scrutiny.

In the first part of the analysis, the relative difficulty that the learners faced in using the strategy types in each of the two speech acts was investigated. It was found that the learner informants showed greater competence in choosing appropriate complaint strategies than request strategies, and that many complaint head acts were realized through routinized structures. I will revisit this topic at a later stage in the discussion. In the second part of the analysis, it was once again found that the learners' competence in complaining appeared to be higher than for requesting judged on the basis of their use of syntactic downgraders. Put differently, the use of syntactic modification was more target-like in complaints than in requests at an earlier stage, as is evidenced by the data. As a result, it can be inferred that L2 competence in complaints develops prior to that for requests.

However, the usefulness of comparing the temporal development of both speech acts may be called into question. Rather than solely determining which speech act is mastered earlier, the focus should be on comprehending the interplay between grammar and pragmatic competence in the second language, and how this affects the modification of requests and complaints. Coming back to the findings of the present analysis, it can be suggested that the learners' developmental lead in the use of syntactic downgraders in complaints over requests may be attributed to a number of factors: The analysis revealed that while both requests and complaints employ the same syntactic downgrader types, they are implemented differently and often in a routinized manner depending on the specific speech act. Take as an example the conventionalized use of past tense in requests, in which case extra inferencing capacity on the part of the learners might be necessary to discover the form's mitigating function in the target language. This in turn may lead to developmental delays. The findings further indicate that syntactic downgraders employed in complaints may exhibit lower grammatical complexity, as exemplified by the utilization of negative evaluations compared to

negative interrogatives in requests. While intermediate level learners have demonstrated heightened grammatical competence in negation within declarative sentences, resulting in a greater frequency of the syntactic downgrader in complaints, their lower proficiency in negated interrogatives and, furthermore, their presumed unfamiliarity with the politeness function associated with these negated forms contributes to the limited use of negation in requests.

The results further suggest that certain syntactic downgraders commonly used in both speech acts may be more easily integrated into declarative sentences, contributing to their higher frequency and earlier appearance in complaints. More specifically, it has been shown that the learner informants exhibited a relatively higher proficiency in utilizing embedding in complaints, displaying a noticeable increase in the use of both *dass*- and *aber*-clauses compared to their occurrence in requests. It seems very likely that the distribution of declarative and interrogative structures in complaints and requests, respectively, may have played a role in this time-delayed development. Since complaints are commonly conveyed through declarative sentences, they allow for the inclusion of subordinate clauses with less syntactic complexity. In contrast, requests can be expressed in either declarative or interrogative structures, resulting in a more balanced distribution of sentence types within the realm of this speech act. This indicates that learners demonstrate higher proficiency in using complex subclauses within declarative sentences for embedding in complaints, without necessitating a substantial cognitive processing load, as opposed to utilizing embedding in interrogative structures. This observation, in turn, suggests that the acquisition of syntactic downgraders may follow a sequence of increasing complexity. Accordingly, this study found additional evidence to support Meisel et al.'s (1981) Complexification Hypothesis. When applying the principles of the hypothesis, based on Meisel et al. (1981) and Clahsen et al. (1983) to the acquisition of syntactic modification, the following can be observed: The order of acquisition for syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints is determined by the structural complexity and processing demands involved. Pragmalinguistic features that entail higher processing capacity are typically acquired at a later stage, while those that require minimal processing capacity are acquired earlier. A notable example is the tendency for syntactically complex structures such as complex subclauses in interrogative structures, which impose greater cognitive demands, to be acquired

later compared to simpler structures with lower processing costs. The findings further align with Bialystok's Two-Dimensional Model (1993, 1994) by indicating that learners reduced their processing load in request and complaint modification. Specifically, the learners in the present study selected fewer syntactic downgraders, and those they chose demanded less attention to produce, since they had not yet reached the necessary level of control. Taking all the preceding results into account, it appears that there may be variations in the use of syntactic modifications in requests and complaints across different grammatical and pragmatic proficiency levels. To specify, lower intermediate learners seemed to display a shift towards more complex syntactic structures in complaint production due to the fact that certain grammatical structures in complaints such as the wider use of declaratives (as compared to requests) enabled them to insert syntactic downgraders more easily. Overall, these results provide valuable insight into the role of L2 grammatical competence in speech act realization and suggest that syntactic downgrader use is not arbitrary but rather reflects the underlying linguistic and pragmatic demands of the speech act under study.

Last, I will revisit two findings regarding strategy types in requests and complaints, as these results contribute novel insight and shed light on existing research. Let us commence with the examination of complaint head act strategies. The current hypothesis builds on the frequently referenced assumption within the research community that, unlike requests, there is a lack of routinized strategies for conveying complaints (cf. Trosborg 1995; Murphy & Neu 1996; Tanck 2002; Meyer 2007; Hong & Shih 2013; Hilliard 2017). Due to the absence of well-established patterns, learners may encounter challenges in developing appropriate complaint strategies, which, in turn, can hinder their ability to incorporate syntactic downgraders effectively into their head act realizations. Although this prediction has already been disproven concerning the use of syntactic modification, there remains an additional finding that warrants closer examination, especially when focusing on strategy types employed in complaints. The previously held assumption that the speech act of complaining cannot be carried out using routinized patterns has been effectively challenged and disconfirmed within the German context, as indicated by the findings from the current dataset. More specifically, the analysis of the collected data in this study has revealed that nearly 50 % of the complaint head acts by GNS were made up of

four distinct routinized stretches of speech. This finding highlights the prominent presence of routinized patterns in the complaint data gathered from native speakers, akin to the well-established structures commonly observed in request strategies.

The second notable finding under discussion pertains to the employment of strategy types in the request data. It was found that both elementary and intermediate learners used direct strategy types more frequently than the GNS group. In this regard, common ILP findings suggest that L2 learners tend to begin with using imperatives along with politeness markers (e.g., Bella 2012, Hill 1997). The current data, however, painted a different picture. On review of the distribution of direct strategy types in the learner data, it was found that mood derivables were only employed in 8.3 % of request head acts, whereas locution derivables (16.1 %) and want statements (21.7 %) were actually utilized more frequently by elementary learners. An examination of learners' scores on the LAT for the three basic sentence types revealed that imperative structures posed the most difficulty for elementary learners. This suggests that the informants' level of grammatical competence for the three basic sentence types in German played a pivotal role in shaping their pragmatic productions: Of the request strategies utilized, the interrogative query preparatory was the most frequently employed, followed by three declarative-based strategies: want statements, locution derivables, and hints. The inclination of low-proficiency learners towards speaker-oriented want statements has been documented by previous studies, including Al-Gahtani & Roever (2012), Bella (2012), and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2012). In line with these findings, the beginner learners in the present study also frequently employed direct strategies, utilizing patterns such as *Ich will X / I want X* or *Du musst X / You must X*. Consequently, in the context of requests, the beginners relied on syntactically simple strategies that were readily accessible to them. Taken together, this observation underscores the fact that the positive impact of advancing grammatical competence is not only crucial in facilitating the application of syntactic modification but that is also exerts a substantial influence on the choice of strategy types employed.

6 Forecasting the use of lexical and external downgraders: An analysis of predicted frequencies

In addition to the use of syntactic downgraders, speakers of German also utilize lexical/phrasal and external downgraders to mitigate face-threatening acts like requests and complaints. The literature review conducted in § 3 revealed that L2 learners express pragmatic concepts based on their level of acquired grammatical complexity. One key finding was that beginner and intermediate learners tend to prefer using lexical/phrasal forms of modification over syntactic modification when mitigating direct requests and complaints (cf. Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Göy et al. 2012; Hendriks 2008; Otcu & Zeyrek 2008; Woodfield 2006, 2012). It is argued that this is because syntactic downgraders require a higher level of grammatical/syntactic knowledge than lexical downgraders, and their function as markers of politeness is more implicit. Learners may still be unfamiliar with the pragmalinguistic function of some syntactic downgraders or uncertain about their sociopragmatic appropriateness, which leads them to prefer using lexical modifiers that are grammatically simpler and semantically more explicit. Another finding was that beginner learners tend to use external rather than internal modification to soften their speech acts, and in particular, learners use more external than syntactic downgraders (cf. Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Dendenne 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Schauer 2009). It has been suggested that external modification devices are acquired more easily, and learners initially rely on them due to their explicit politeness function. Based on the reviewed literature, the following hypotheses were developed for the present study:

Hypothesis 4. Both elementary and lower intermediate learners will prefer lexical/phrasal downgraders over syntactic forms of modification.

Hypothesis 5. Both elementary and lower intermediate learners will prefer external downgraders over syntactic forms of modification.

In light of the above, the present study will investigate the use of lexical/phrasal downgraders (§ 6.1) and external downgraders (§ 6.2) in mitigating face-threatening acts by L2 learners at two different levels of grammatical competence. Before proceeding, however, an analysis of the GNS speech act behavior must be

conducted as a baseline for the investigation. A tabular overview can be found in Table 58, summarizing the key findings from the analysis of GNS request and complaint modification. The results provided in Table 58 for GNS productions demonstrate that external downgraders are the most commonly employed, followed by syntactic downgraders, and finally lexical/phrasal downgraders. Although differences in the frequency of individual types of downgraders may be evident, the same frequency distributions are visible for both requests and complaints in the control group data. In other words, the overall pattern of downgrader use is similar for both speech acts.

Table 58. Frequency of 3 downgrader types in GNS requests and complaints (in %)[a]

	Requests % (count)	**Complaints % (count)**
Syntactic downgraders	64.49 (178)	49.28 (136)
Lexical/phrasal downgraders	47.10 (130)	19.20 (53)
External downgraders	81.52 (225)	71.38 (197)

[a] Values exceeding 100 % can be attributed to the frequent occurrence of double marking involving both internal and external modification types.

In the following, we will focus on the modification behavior of the two learner groups, starting with the use of lexical modification.

6.1 Results: Lexical/phrasal downgraders

Hypothesis 4. Both elementary and lower intermediate learners will prefer lexical/phrasal downgraders over syntactic forms of modification.

Requests. Turning our attention to the request data, Figure 16 reveals that elementary learners employed more lexical downgraders (33.89 %) than syntactic downgraders (22.22 %) in their request head acts. The intermediate level learners, on the other hand, caught up with the use of syntactic downgraders and even surpassed the use of lexical/phrasal downgraders. The differences between the two types are, however, minimal (36.11 % vs. 33.39 %). Even though there is a shift in the use of downgraders from elementary to intermediate level, with syntactic downgraders becoming more prominent, a subsequent t-test for dependent samples could not find a significant difference between the frequency

of use values (see Table A9-8, Appendix 9). In particular, the mean number of lexical downgraders was not significantly different from the mean number of syntactic downgraders for the beginner group (t = 1.694, p = 0.101, n = 30). The same result was obtained for the intermediate learners (t = -1.992, p = 0.056, n = 30).

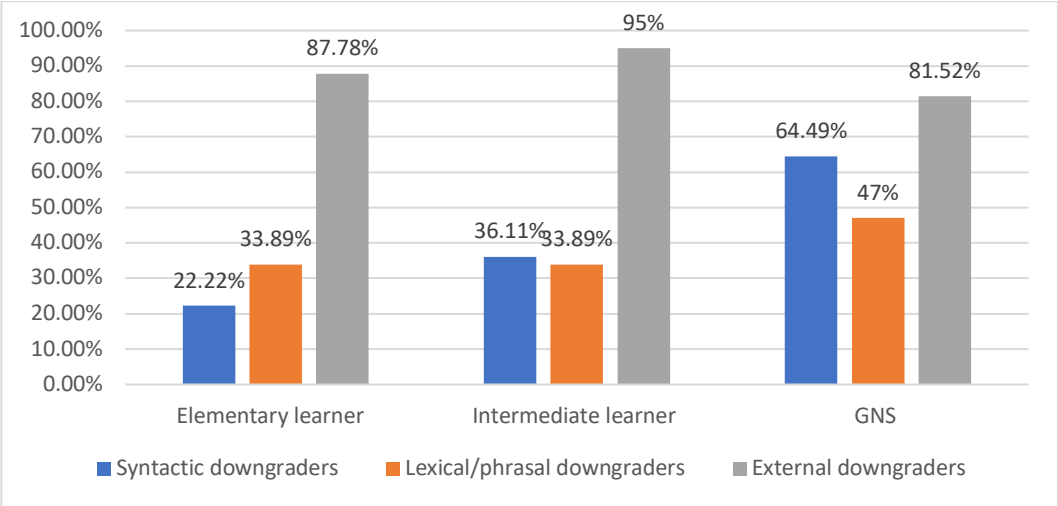

Figure 16. Proportion of requests containing syntactic, lexical and external downgrading (in %)

This finding refutes the first part of the hypothesis for both learner groups in the case of requests. Further analysis of the usage of individual syntactic downgrader types appears necessary so as to gain a more detailed understanding. The analysis of the use of lexical downgraders in requests, as presented in Figure 17, indicates that GNS exhibited a preference for the use of downtoners, accounting for 24 % of their total use, followed by politeness markers at 14 % (see also Table A9-9, Appendix 9). In addition, understaters were used at a frequency of 7 % and subjectivizers at 4 % in their request heads. The remaining types of lexical downgraders were used to a lesser extent, ranging from 0.4 % to 2.2 % in frequency. On comparing the data between the control group and the learner groups, it was observed that both the elementary and lower intermediate learners exhibited an underuse of subjectivizers, understaters, hedges, downtoners, hesitators, and consultative devices. Moreover, both learner groups overused the politeness marker *bitte / please* (G1: 32.3 %, G2: 25 %, GNS: 14 %). However, there is evidence of an L2-like development in the intermediate learners' selection of lexical/phrasal downgraders, as seen in a decrease in the use of politeness

markers, accompanied by an increase in the use of downtoners (G1: 0.6 %, G2: 7.2 %, GNS: 24 %).

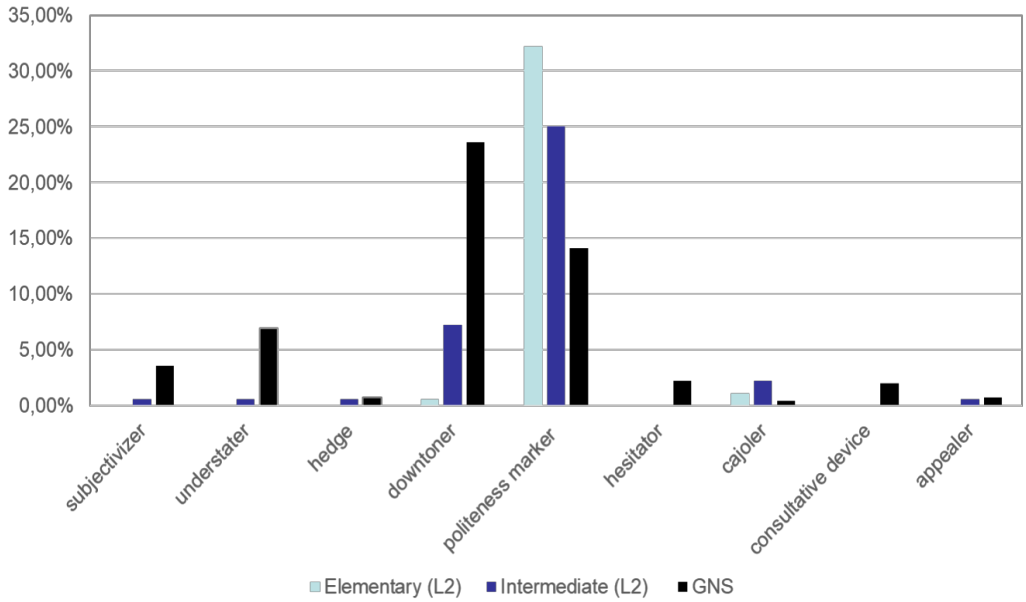

Figure 17. Proportion of requests containing each type of lexical downgrader (in %)

Let us now examine the beginners' lexical downgrader use in more detail. The informants employed a limited range of lexical downgraders in their requests. More specifically, the majority of their requests were accompanied by the politeness marker *bitte / please* (32.2 %), with only small percentages of cajolers (1.1 %) and downtoners (0.6 %) being used. These findings suggest that elementary learners heavily relied on the use of *bitte / please* as their primary means of lexical downgrading in request realizations (see examples 146-148). In contrast, the examples presented in (144) and (145) illustrate the limited use of downtoners and cajolers by the beginners.

(144) Cat, G1F_723440

Vielleicht kannst du meine Katze kümmeren kann.
(Maybe you can take care of my cat.)

(145) Move, G1F_884224

Weißt du, habe ich eine neue Wohnung in Köln gefunden.
(Do you know/you know, I have found a new apartment in Cologne.)

(146) Move, G1F_798200

Bitte ich brauch ein Hilfe.
(Please I need help.)

(147) Move, G1M_139620

kannsst du **Bitte** mir helfen beim Umzug.
(Can you please help me with the move?)

(148) Cat, G1F_368686

Pass auf sie auf **bitte**.
(Take care of her please.)

It is worth noting that the downtoner, cajoler and politeness marker are pre-posed in the first three examples, meaning that they precede the head act and are not syntactically integrated. The same applies to *bitte / please* in example (148) which is positioned after the head act. Conversely, these downgrader types are typically embedded and/or grammatically integrated in the control group data, even when positioned in initial position. The most likely explanation for this employment of lexical downgraders by the beginners is that adding the forms to a head act, especially when positioned externally, does not necessitate knowledge of complex syntactic structures, whereas properly positioning a modifier in an utterance calls for higher syntactic complexity levels. This can also be seen in example (147), where the elementary learner's insertion of *bitte / please* within the request head act resulted in an ungrammatical sentence. Hence, these observations could be attributed to the learners' limited grammatical competence, as they might not yet have acquired the necessary grammatical structures to use these downgraders in a linguistically integrated way. Moreover, the examples above may be an indication of the learners' reliance on lexical means to achieve their pragmatic goals (i.e., to soften the request), rather than relying on their grammatical competence to construct more complex sentences with the same pragmatic effect. In order to provide further support for this finding, the positioning of the politeness marker across all request head acts was analyzed for the learners and the control group.

Table 59. Position of politeness marker in request head acts (in %)

	N	Initial % (count/total)	Embedded % (count/total)	Final % (count/total)
G1	30	44.07 (26/59)	45.76 (27/59)	13.56 (8/59)
G2	30	38.78 (17/45)	57.78 (26/45)	6.67 (3/45)
GNS	46	10.53 (4/38)	84.21 (32/38)	5.26 (2/38)

Up to this point, it can be noted that elementary learners in the present study overused the politeness marker in requests and seem to have placed it in different positions compared to the GNS. Table 59 offers a more comprehensive analysis. The results indicate that beginners positioned *bitte / please* either before or within the head act and in approximately 14 % of cases, after the head act. As this point in the analysis appears to be particularly relevant, it is deemed appropriate to briefly discuss the results of the lower intermediate learners as well. The lower intermediate learners showed a reduction in the overall use of the politeness marker as compared to the beginners, and approached the L2 target in this regard. With increasing grammatical competence, they also embedded the marker more frequently within the head act (G1: 45.76 % vs. G2: 57.78 %) and reduced its use outside the head act. While syntactically integrated forms still contained grammatical errors, the increasing grammatical competence of the learners was reflected in more pragmatically competent realizations, which often sounded more natural and closer to German language use, even in cases of pre- and post-positioning of the politeness marker (e.g., Dirty kitchen, G2M_800900: *Bitte spühl mal deine gescher / Please wash your dishes*).

Overall, these findings highlight the fact that all of the learners tended to rely excessively on the politeness marker to achieve their pragmatic objectives. Moreover, despite showing progress in their interlanguage productions, the intermediate level learners continued to exhibit a not yet fully developed awareness of the appropriate usage and positioning of this downgrader.

If we now examine the entire usage of lexical/phrasal modification by the intermediate learners in Figure 17 more closely, we find that these learners demonstrated a slight rise in the use of new lexical downgrader types, including subjectivizers, understaters, hedges, and appealers, each accounting for 0.6 % of request modification, and a decrease in the use of *bitte / please* (25 %), although still overused when compared to the native speakers (14 %). They also increased their use of downtoners (7.2 %), thereby approaching L1 usage, and increased

their use of cajolers (2.2 %). Hesitators and consultative devices were not employed by these learners. What stands out, however, is that overall, there was no increase in the usage of lexical downgraders from the elementary to lower intermediate level; in other words, the frequency of lexical downgrading remained constant (G1: 33.89 %, G2: 33.89 %). In contrast, the use of syntactic downgraders rose from the lower to the higher grammatical competence level (G1: 22.22 %, G2: 36.11 %), resulting in a more balanced employment of both syntactic and lexical modifiers. This suggests a shift in the learners' preference for downgrading strategies as they progressed to a higher level of grammatical proficiency in the L2. Consequently, the following question arises: *If enhanced grammatical proficiency is associated with an upsurge in the deployment of syntactic downgraders by intermediate learners, why does a similar trend not hold true for lexical downgraders?*

In order to provide a thorough answer to the previous question, we will proceed by conducting a detailed examination of the specific usage of the subtypes of lexical downgraders employed by intermediate learners in their requests. However, before elaborating on the actual analysis, it is important to note that GNS tended to rely on only four forms of lexical modifiers and rarely used other lexical downgrader types. What is particularly intriguing is that these four forms were also the most commonly used in complaints, with the exception of the politeness marker. These forms include downtoners (requests: 24 %, complaints: 9.4 %), subjectivizers (requests: 4 %, complaints: 4.4 %), understaters (requests: 7 %, complaints: 4.9 %), and the politeness marker (requests: 14 %, complaints: 0.4 %). For the purpose of this analysis, we will therefore focus on intermediate learners' employment of these central forms, namely downtoners, subjectivizers, and understaters, as the analysis of the politeness marker has already been addressed in the previous step.

Among the requests made by intermediate learners, 7.2 % contained a downtoner, while only 0.6 % of requests made by beginners included this type of modifier. Figure 18 illustrates the distribution of different downtoner types among the three participant groups.

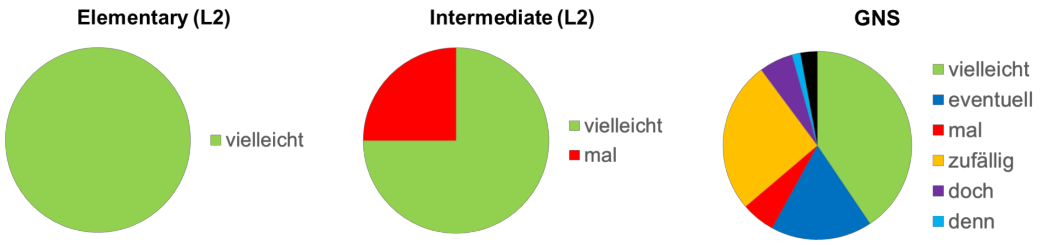

Figure 18. Proportion of types of downtoners used in requests (in %)

As depicted in Figure 18, it can be observed that the control group made use of six distinct downtoner types with varying frequency: *vielleicht / perhaps*, *eventuell/ possibly*, *mal / once*, *zufällig / possibly*, *doch / after all*, and *denn / because*.[125] The examples (149) – (154) demonstrate the GNS employment of these forms. In contrast, elementary learners relied solely on the use of the downtoner *vielleicht*, while intermediate learners began to use *mal* more frequently in addition to *vielleicht*. In the following sections, I will discuss each downtoner type in greater detail.

(149) Switch shifts, 27GERMAS

Sag mal, könntest du **vielleicht** meine Schicht am Samstag übernehmen.
(Hey, could you possibly cover my shift on Saturday?)

(150) Burst pipe, 40GERMAS

Gibt es nicht **eventuell** eine schnellere Lösung?
(Isn't there possibly a faster solution?)

(151) Move, 2GERFEM

Hey, ich wollte **mal** fragen, ob du mir am Samstag ein bisschen beim Umzug helfen kannst?
(Hey, I wanted to ask if you can help me a bit with the move on Saturday?)

(152) Switch shifts, 33GERMAS

Sag mal Peter, kannst du **zufällig** am Wochenende meine Schicht übernehmen?
(Hey Peter, might you be able to take over my shift this weekend?)

[125] The meaning of German modal particles is highly context-dependent, which poses a challenge for their translation into English. Due to their complex and multifaceted nature, it is difficult to provide an accurate translation that captures their full range of meanings in all contexts. Therefore, the translations presented in this analysis should be understood as approximate and subject to variation based on the specific context in which the modal particle is used.

(153) Dirty kitchen, 7GERMAN

Lisa, ich weiß ja, dass Du gerne kochst aber räume **doch** bitte deine Sachen mal weg.
(Lisa, I know that you like cooking, but simply put away your things please.)

(154) Burst pipe, 17GERFEM

Kann man **denn** da nichts machen?
(Is there really nothing that can be done there?)

The downtoner *vielleicht / maybe* was found to be the most frequently used downtoner by all three informant groups, likely due to its early introduction in language courses and its semantically clear and unambiguous meaning. GNS always used *vielleicht* embedded inside the head act, while intermediate learners tended to place it in initial position, preceding the head act (e.g., Switch shifts, G2F_891240: ***weilleicht*** *du kannst am Samstag die Arbeit fertig machen wenn du nichts haben / **maybe** you can finish the work on Saturday if you don't have anything else*). The observed pattern was akin to the use of the downgrader *bitte*, where the earlier analysis has already revealed the challenges encountered by learners in properly integrating the marker into the head act's syntax. *Eventuell* and *zufällig* were not used at all in the learner data, suggesting that the learners were not yet familiar with these vocabulary items. Furthermore, the intermediate learner data provides evidence of the incipient use of *mal*. Specifically, examples (155) and (156) illustrate how these learners utilized *mal* in conjunction with the politeness marker and imperatives, thus mitigating very direct request realizations. However, when it came to conventionally indirect requests and the usage of *mal* in combination with other lexical downgraders, as was common among the GNS, this form was not yet employed by the learners.

(155) Dirty kitchen, G2M_800900

Bitte spühl **mal** deine gescher
(Please wash your dishes.)

(156) Burst pipe, G2M_127459

Bitte versuchen Sie **mal**, ein Handwerker schnelle wie möglich zu uns schicken.
(Please try to send a handyman to us as quickly as possible.)

Last, the modal particles *doch* and *denn* were only found in the GNS data. Both forms are used in colloquial German. They do not, however, contribute an

obvious meaning to an utterance when employed as a modifier (cf. examples 153 and 154).[126] Instead, they convey various emotional nuances, such as the speaker's attitude, emphasis, or intent, so that their precise usage can be difficult to grasp for learners. Since they are highly variable in meaning, it comes as no surprise that neither the elementary nor the intermediate level learners have mastered the use of these downtoners.[127]

In the next section of this request analysis, our attention shifts toward the usage of understaters, a form that was observed in 7 % of requests made by GNS, but only in 0.6 % of intermediate learners' head acts. Typical examples of understaters utilized by GNS can be seen in (157) and (158):

(157) Move, 2GERFEM

> Hey, ich wollte mal fragen ob du mir am Samstag **ein bisschen** beim Umzug helfen kannst?
> (Hey, I wanted to ask if you can help me a little with the move on Saturday?)

(158) Move, 41GERMAS

> Ich ziehe um und könnte **etwas** Hilfe gebrauchen.
> (I'm moving and could use some help.)

When we examine the distribution of the different types of understaters in the next step, we find that intermediate learners only used one form, namely *etwas / a little*. In contrast, GNS used the forms *ein bisschen / a bit*, *ein paar / a few*, *etwas / a little*, *kurz / short*, and *ein wenig / a little less* to understate the size of a request. Their exact distribution can be found in Figure 19.

[126] For further insight into expressive meaning, see Gutzmann (2019) and Trotzke & Villalba (2021).

[127] Just as with downtoners, the hedges *eigentlich / actually* and *irgendwie / somehow* (as used by the GNS) serve a comparable communicative function and their exact usage and meaning can vary depending on the context. The high degree of variability in their usage and meaning can pose a challenge for L2 learners, which is once again reflected in the low usage of these forms by lower intermediate learners (0.6 %).

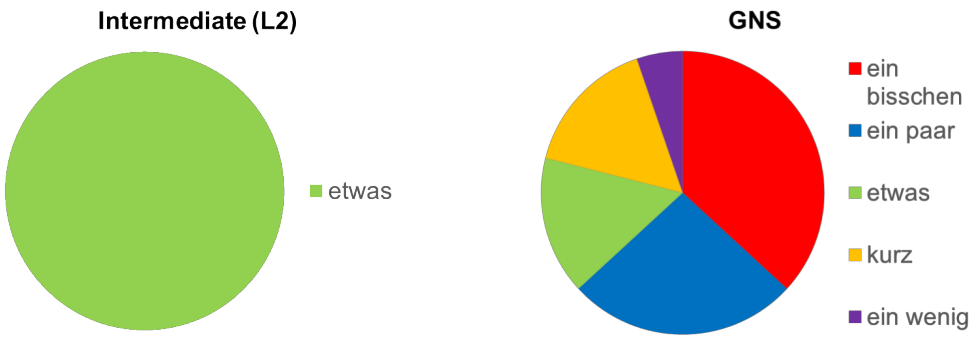

Figure 19. Proportion of types of understaters used in requests (in %)

At first glance, it is surprising that using understaters to reduce the size of a request seems so straightforward, in particular because their meaning is semantically clear and unambiguous (unlike modal articles), and yet intermediate level learners did not utilize these forms effectively in their requests. Moreover, the lexical forms used as understaters in the GNS data were already familiar to learners at both proficiency levels. A comprehensive re-analysis of the L2 data in this regard revealed that learners were acquainted with the quantifiers in question and employed them in their request productions, albeit not as lexical downgraders in the request head act. Notably, while elementary level learners still used the forms very sparingly, the lower intermediate learners employed quantifiers frequently, and therefore should have been able to use them as understaters in their request head acts.

An analysis of the examples provided by the GNS in (157) and (158) may aid in understanding the underlying factors contributing to the under-use of the lexical downgrader in L2 request productions. In (157) and (158), the quantifiers function as downgraders by reducing the size or magnitude of the request. They indicate that the speaker is asking for a smaller or more limited amount or degree of help with the moving, rendering the request less demanding or imposing. The very nature of understaters, which is to reduce the force or size of a request, could be the underlying issue. As these forms are intended to understate the degree of imposition on the interlocutor, they may be perceived as less direct or assertive, leading to potential misunderstandings in the communication process. This is particularly relevant in the context of the beginner and lower intermediate learners who have limited proficiency in German and who require more explicit language to convey their intended meaning. Therefore, while understaters can be an effective politeness strategy, they may not always be appropriate or effective in

achieving the desired communicative goal, especially for less experienced L2 learners.

Similar findings were observed for the use of the lexical downgrader subjectivizer, which was employed in 4 % of the GNS requests. The data revealed that the control group predominantly employed subjectivizers in item 6 *Bakery* as introductory phrases for brief request realizations, such as *Ich glaube Sie haben sich vertan / I believe you have made a mistake* (see also example 159). In contrast, subjectivizers were only found in 0.6 % of request head acts produced by intermediate level learners. It was, however, observed that both elementary and intermediate level learners frequently utilized *Ich glaube / I think* as part of external modification, either preceding or following the request head act. Examples (159) – (161) illustrate the use of the subjectivizer by a GNS and two learners in item 6.

(159) Bakery, 7GERFEM

> **Head act:** ***Ich glaube*** *Sie haben sich verrechnet.*
> (I think you have miscalculated.)

(160) Bakery, G1M_232162

> **Alerter:** Bitte Herrn Wagner. **Compensation: Ich glaube**, es gibt ein fehler. **Grounder:** ich habe dich 10 € gegeben und du hast mich 2,50 € zurück gegeben, weil du mich 7,50 € zurück geben sollst. **Head act:** *Könnten Sie Bitte mein richtige Ruckgeld geben.*
> (**Alerter:** Excuse me, Mr. Wagner. **Compensation:** I believe there is a mistake. **Grounder:** I gave you 10€ and you gave me back 2.50€, but you should give me back 7.50€. **Head act:** *Could you please give me the correct change*.)

(161) Bakery, G2F_721543

> **Alerter:** Enculdigung Herr Wagner, **Grounder:** ich habe einen 10 Euro gegeben, **Head act:** *und muss deshalb 7,50 Euro gezurückt, nicht 2,50 Euro*. **Compensation: Ich glaube** du hast vergesen.
> (**Alerter:** Excuse me, Mr. Wagner, **Grounder:** I gave you a 10 Euro bill, **Head act:** *so I should receive 7.50 Euro back, not 2.50 Euro*. **Compensation:** I believe you may have forgotten.)

On closer examination of the learner data in (160) and (161), it becomes evident that learners produced longer request realizations as compared to the GNS, who primarily employed a short hint along with a subjectivizer. This indicates the latter's ability to convey their intended message succinctly (cf. example 159). In contrast, the learners used more direct request strategies in combination with more extensive external modification and as a consequence thereof, they positioned

their subjectivizers outside of the main head act. As has been reported for understaters above, the explicitness observed in the learners' request productions may be attributed to their need to ensure mutual understanding with the addressee. This may manifest as a desire not only to provide a detailed rationale for the request but also to extensively prepare or introduce the request verbally. Such behavior may be ascribed to the learners' lower proficiency level, which may lead to a lack of confidence in their ability to convey the intended message effectively. In sum, there appears to be a discrepancy between the deployment of syntactic and lexical downgraders by intermediate learners, as enhanced grammatical proficiency is associated with an increase in the use of syntactic downgraders but not in the case of lexical downgraders. The data analysis revealed several possible reasons for this. For a start, the learners possessed a smaller repertoire of lexical downgraders in comparison to native speakers. Certain forms such as *eventuell / perhaps* may not have been part of their vocabulary, and they had not yet fully grasped the nuanced meaning levels of modal particles. Moreover, when faced with the need to convey their messages clearly, learners tended to sacrifice the use of understaters and subjectivizers in favor of explicitness. In the following section, we will shift our focus to the analysis of lexical modification in complaints.

Complaints. The analysis of lexical downgrading in complaints yields slightly divergent results as compared to requests. As illustrated in Figure 20, the GNS exhibited a clear preference for syntactic downgraders (49.28 %) over lexical downgraders (19 %). Contrary to the initial hypothesis, neither elementary nor intermediate learners employed more lexical downgraders than syntactic downgraders. More specifically, while beginners used syntactic downgraders to modify complaints almost twice as often as lexical downgraders (18.33 % vs. 8.33 %), intermediate level learners relied on syntactic downgraders more heavily, modifying complaints in this way four times more often (43.33 %) than through lexical downgrading (8.89 %). The data suggests that there is no evidence of a preference for lexical downgraders over syntactic ones among elementary and lower intermediate learners. In addition, these learners do not appear to be moving closer to the target language use in terms of their lexical modification patterns.

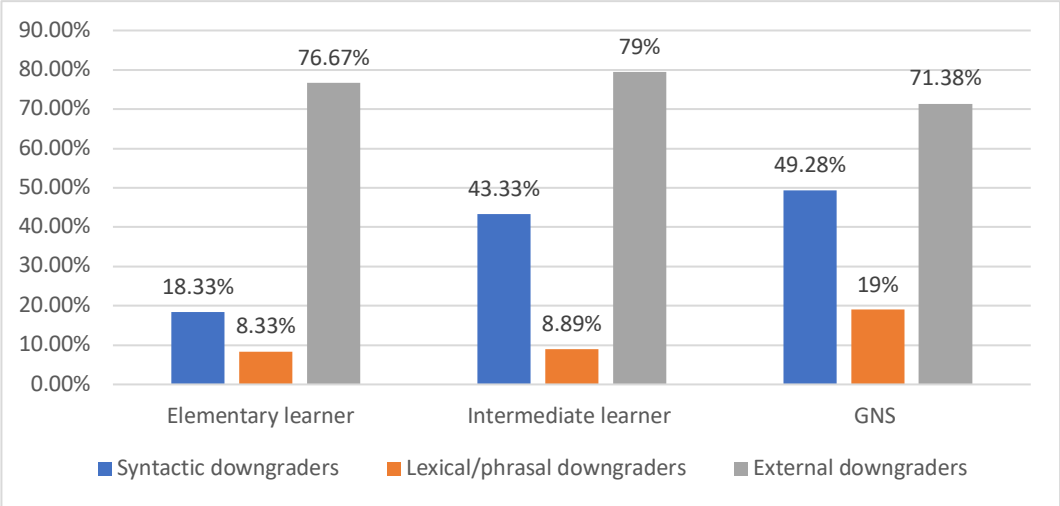

Figure 20. Proportion of complaints containing syntactic, lexical and external downgrading (in %)

A subsequent t-test for dependent samples demonstrated that for the elementary learner group, the use of the number of lexical downgraders in complaints is not significantly different on average from the number of syntactic downgraders in complaints ($t = -1.895$, $p = 0.068$, $n = 30$). In contrast, the t-test for the intermediate level data found that the use of the number of lexical downgraders in complaints is significantly different on average from the number of syntactic downgraders in complaints ($t = -7.040$, $p = 0.000$, $n = 30$). To be more precise, the number of syntactic downgraders in complaints is on average higher in the intermediate group than the number of lexical downgraders in complaints (for a tabular summary, please refer to Table A9-10, Appendix 9). The data thus reveal that, consistent with the previous findings for requests, there was an increase in the use of syntactic downgraders in complaints as L2 grammatical proficiency improved. As the usage of these downgraders increased, intermediate learners moved closer to the native speaker target in terms of their pragmatic competence. However, this trend did not hold true for lexical downgrading devices. More specifically, the proportion of requests and complaints containing syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders was re-examined, revealing that the use of lexical downgrading devices remained stagnant for both elementary and lower intermediate learners. The absence of a proportional increase in the deployment of lexical downgrading devices alongside the increase in syntactic downgraders, among intermediate learners suggests that the acquisition and use of lexical

downgrading devices is not exclusively dependent on the mastery of L2 grammar. The results are presented in Table 60.

Table 60. Proportion of speech acts containing syntactic and lexical downgraders (in %)

	G1	G2	GNS
Requests			
Syntactic downgraders	22.22	36.11	64.49
Lexical downgraders	33.89	33.89	47.10
Complaints			
Syntactic downgraders	18.33	43.44	49.28
Lexical downgraders	8.33	8.89	19.20

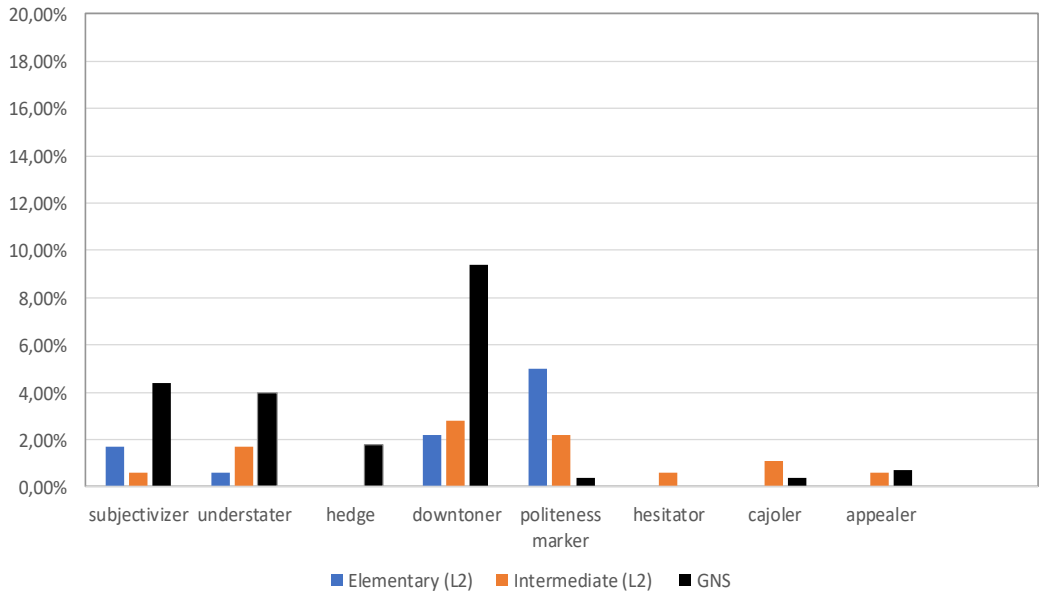

Figure 21. Proportion of complaints containing each type of lexical downgrader (in %)

To better contextualize these preliminary findings, let us examine in detail the use of lexical downgraders in complaints. Figure 21 provides an overview of the different types of lexical downgraders identified in the present study (see also Table A9-11, Appendix 9). It was found that the use of downgrading devices varied across grammatical proficiency levels, with intermediate learners and GNS

using a wider range of devices than beginner-level learners. The analysis further revealed that GNS used downtoners as the most frequent type of downgrading device (9.4 %), followed by subjectivizers (4.4 %), understaters (3.9 %), and hedges (1.8 %). In contrast, the beginners predominantly used politeness markers (5 %), downtoners (2.2 %), subjectivizers (1.7 %), and understaters (0.6 %). Among lower intermediate learners, downtoners (2.8 %), politeness markers (2.2 %), and understaters (1.7 %) were the most frequently used types of downgrading devices. They also used cajolers (1.1 %), subjectivizers, hesitators, and appealers with 0.6 %. It is worth noting that none of the three groups included consultative devices in their complaints. Similarly, the learners did not use hedges.

The subsequent analysis will begin by examining the learners' use of politeness markers in complaints, followed by a comprehensive investigation of how the informants utilized downtoners, subjectivizers, understaters, and hedges. While the GNS participants, with the exception of a single case, did not employ politeness markers when complaining, the marker was somewhat prevalent in the learner data with 5 % for elementary and 2.2 % for lower intermediate learners. Thus, while the use of the politeness marker in complaints was not a dominant feature of the learners' discourse, it was still present in a noticeable proportion of their head acts, especially when compared to the frequency with which other lexical downgraders were chosen. Consequently, the question arises as to why there is such an atypical use of *bitte / please* in complaints among the learners, and this will be explored in more detail. Examples (162) – (165) showcase the use of the politeness marker in complaints by L2 learners, featuring two examples for each level of grammatical proficiency.

(162) Heating, G1M_362522

bitte ist kalt. und das ist deine arbeit nicht meine **bitte**. **bitte bitte**.
(Please, it's cold. And that's your job, not mine please. please, please.)

(163) Heating, G1F_700345

das kam plötslich **bitte** Verstähe das ist ungerecht.
(That came/happened suddenly, please understand that it's unfair.)

(164) Heating, G2M_555256

> Hallo Frau Kowalska, Ich habe die Heizung nicht kaputt gemacht, und **bitte** in dem Mittvertrag steht, dass du die Schäden reparieren musst. vom ende ich zahle gar kein cent.
> (Hello Mrs. Kowalska, I didn't break the heater, and please in the lease agreement it says that you have to repair damages. I won't pay a single cent.)

(165) Overtime, G2F_439201

> Ich mag meine Arbeit sehr, aber **Bitte** ich kann nicht Mehr arbeiten das ist zu viel für mich.
> (I really enjoy my work, but please, I cannot work anymore, it's too much for me.)

In typical request situations, politeness markers are employed to express deference. However, in these four complaint realizations, the marker seems to serve a different pragmatic function. The wording used by the learners suggests an (at times almost desperate) appeal for sympathy, which evokes a pleading tone. Specifically, *bitte/please* is used here as a means with which to implore the addressee to comprehend the complainant's situation and to therefore take necessary action, such as taking responsibility for or repairing the offensive event. At the same time, it appears that the L2 learners are resorting to the politeness marker due to a lack of alternative downgrading options. The overuse of the politeness marker observed in requests seems to manifest in these complaint realizations as well. In consequence, it can be inferred that the elementary and lower intermediate learners appear to have a strong initial need for lexically unambiguous and syntactically simple downgrading options so as to modify their face-threatening acts.

Following the use of the politeness marker, the learners predominantly employed downtoners for their complaints. The findings in this regard align with the pattern observed in requests, whereby the control group used a greater frequency of downtoners overall. Furthermore, the GNS relied on a wider range of downtoners compared to the learner groups. Figure 22 presents the eight downtoners employed by the GNS which included *vielleicht / perhaps*, *leider / unfortunately*, *gerade / just*, *mal / once*, *wohl / probably*, *scheinbar / apparent*, *ruhig / really*, and *schon / already*. Of this diverse set of downtoners, elementary learners only utilized *vielleicht / perhaps* and *leider / unfortunately*, while intermediate learners relied solely on the latter form.

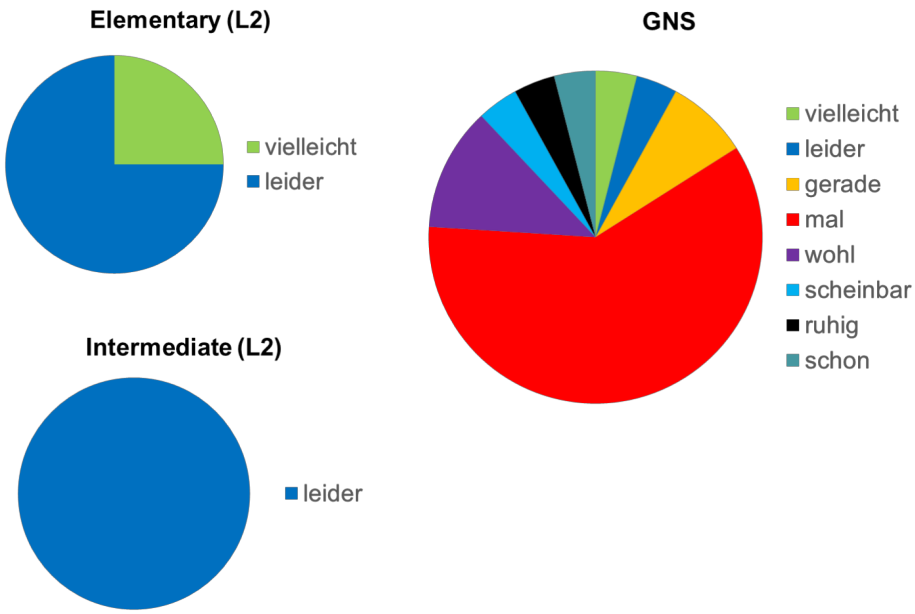

Figure 22. Proportion of types of downtoners used in complaints (in %)

GNS tended to employ *mal* as their preferred downtoner to mitigate complaints lexically (see Figure 22). The examples (166) – (170) illustrate the contextual dependence and multifaceted nuances of the modal particle *mal* in the GNS data, making it difficult for language learners to grasp its full range of meaning. This is particularly evidenced by the fact that the varied connotations of *mal* cannot be easily conveyed through translation in most cases.

(166) Notes, 20GERFEM

Das nenn ich **mal** Gerechtigkeit …
(Now that's what I call justice...)

(167) Notes, 26GERFEM

Ich setze mich dann heute **mal** woanders hin
(I'll go sit somewhere else today.)

(168) Oral presentation, 39GERMAS

Hättest ja wenigstens **mal** absagen können.
(You could have at least canceled.)

(169) Oral presentation, 25GERMAS

Meld' dich **mal** einfach gar nicht!
(Don't even bother getting in touch!)

(170) Oral presentation, 34GERMAS

> Ich gehe jetzt einfach **mal** davon aus, dass du einen guten Grund hattest, dass du mich gestern hast hängen gelassen, oder?
> (I'm just going to assume now that you had a good reason for leaving me hanging yesterday, right?)

For instance, in example (167) the speaker employs a hint that carries a strong passive-aggressive undertone (*Ich setze mich dann heute mal woanders hin*). By adding *mal*, the speaker provides herself with some leeway, indicating that her decision to maintain physical distance is not absolute. This use of *mal* thus serves to mitigate the statement and make it less confrontational, allowing for the possibility of changing her mind or being open to alternative options in the future. In contrast, examples (168) (*Hättest ja wenigstens mal absagen können*) and (169) (*Meld' dich mal einfach gar nicht*) both convey a strong sense of frustration or annoyance on the part of the speaker. However, the use of *mal* in these complaints serves to soften the tone and convey the speaker's suggestion in a less harsh manner, while still expressing their annoyance. These observations can also explain the differences in the use of *mal* by the intermediate learners in requests and complaints. While *mal* is often used with the more explicit meaning that the requester dispenses with temporal precision (i.e., being less precise or specific about the timing of fulfilling the request), its meanings and variations in complaints are more diverse, making it more challenging for learners to acquire. When examining the use of the remaining downtoner types, it becomes clear that many of them, such as *wohl*, *gerade*, *ruhig*, and *schon*, similarly serve to convey subtle nuances of meaning and tone that can vary greatly depending on the context in which they are used.[128] One interesting contrast to note is that while the GNS tended to employ a wide range of downtoners, including those characterized by their complexity and the subtlety of their meaning, L2 learners mainly relied on the more straightforward downtoners *vielleicht* and *leider*, with *leider* being overused in comparison to the GNS. Examples (171) – (173) exhibit how the learners incorporated *leider* in their complaint head acts.

[128] For example, in the complaint head act *Finde ich nicht gerade cool von dir / I don't find it cool of you* (Notes, 13GERMAS), the use of *gerade* mitigates the potential confrontational tone of the statement. In *Du hättest mir ruhig mal Bescheid sagen können/ You could have let me know.* (Oral presentation, 22GERFEM), the use of *ruhig* conveys a sense of suggestion rather than open criticism. It should also be noted that the control group often combined different lexical downtoners in their complaint head acts, which can further affect the overall meaning and tone conveyed.

(171) Rash, G1F_444555

> du hat mir gesag ich muss ein Medikament viermal pro Tag nehmen aber **leid** du hast mir falsch geben
> (You told me I have to take a medication four times a day, but unfortunately you gave it to me incorrectly.)

(172) Rash, G1F_723440

> **leider** diese tabelten hat mich sehr schlecht
> (Unfortunately, these pills are making me feel very unwell.)

(173) Rash, G2F_23757

> Ich war letzte Woche bei Ihnen und Sie haben mir ein Midekament gegebt, aber **leider** ich war nicht zufriden mit das Midikamit.
> (I was here last week and you gave me a medication, but unfortunately, I was not satisfied with it.)

The distribution of downtoner types in the learner and control group data suggests that beginner and lower intermediate learners may have a tendency to rely on a smaller set of downtoners that have a semantically more straightforward and frequently used mitigating function, perhaps due to the difficulty of acquiring the nuanced linguistic features of German modal particles. Moreover, the analysis of the complaint data revealed that both learner groups demonstrated an underuse of subjectivizers and understaters when compared to the GNS. For instance, while the learners primarily used the two subjectivizers *ich glaube / I believe* and *ich denke / I think*, the GNS displayed a wider range of phrases, including *ich glaube / I believe* (41.67 %), *ich weiß, verstehe nicht / I don't know, understand* (25 %), *ich denke / I think* (16.67 %), *ich finde / I find* (8.33 %), and *ich habe das Gefühl / I have a feeling* (8.33 %). Apart from the limited selection of forms, the learners struggled with the grammatically correct integration of subjectivizers into the sentence structure, as evidenced in example (174).

(174) Rash, G1F_856792

> **Ich glaube** habe Sie ein Fehler, und ich bin unzufrieden, weil ich Allergie habe.
> (I think you made a mistake, and I'm unhappy because I have an allergy.)

In the context of requests, it was found that even though learners are capable of producing understaters, they may avoid adding understaters to face-threatening acts out of a need to *over*- rather than *under*state in order to make themselves understood. The complaint data revealed a similar pattern, as both elementary and

lower intermediate learners exhibited an underuse of the downgraders in comparison to the GNS. Nevertheless, a slight increase in the usage of understaters was observed among lower intermediate learners, as evidenced by complaint productions such as the following example: *Hallo Dr. Schröder, ich bin noch mall bei Ihnen, weil ich **ein bisschen** unzufrieden bin / Hello Dr. Schröder, I am here again because I am **a little bit** dissatisfied* (Rash, G2F_800901). Finally, examples (175) and (176) serve to illustrate the use of hedges to mitigate complaints in the German native speaker data:

(175) Notes, 44GERFEM

Ich finde das **irgendwie** nicht korrekt von dir.
(I somehow find that not correct of you.)

(176) Cooking ingredients, 9GERFEM

Ich hab nie was gesagt, ich bin ja nicht so, das passt dann schon, aber normalerweise fragt man ja **eigentlich**.
(I never said anything, I'm not like that, it's okay, but usually one would ask.)

The learners did not use hedges in their complaints. As demonstrated previously, the lack of use of hedges in L2 complaint production may be attributed to the need for clarity (versus *irgendwie / somehow*) as well as the persistent difficulties that learners experienced with modal particles such as *eigentlich / actually*.

The analysis of the complaint productions has once again highlighted various possible reasons for the absence of an increase in lexical/phrasal downgrading in the learner data. One factor that may have contributed to this finding is the lack of a simple and versatile lexical politeness device in complaints, similar to the use of *bitte / please* in requests. Even though the politeness maker was actually present in the complaints of L2 learners, its use was comparatively limited. Furthermore, the difficulties in utilizing modal particles (downtoners) and hedges are also evident in complaints, as these forms are highly dependent on context and have diverse meanings, making their mastery challenging. Last, the findings suggest a communicative need for clarity and explicitness on the part of L2 learners, leading to the underuse of understaters and subjectivizers, similar to what was observed in requests. In the upcoming section, our attention will now be directed towards examining the second part of the hypothesis, which concerns the use of external modification in requests and complaints.

6.2 Results: External downgraders

Hypothesis 5. Both elementary and lower intermediate learners will prefer external modifiers over syntactic forms of modification.

The findings for a comparison of downgrader use in requests and complaints by elementary learners, lower intermediate learners and the control group are presented in Table 61 (cf. Figures 16 & 20). It becomes evident that the distribution of individual downgrader types confirms the proposed hypothesis. The GNS exhibited a greater tendency toward employing external downgrading as opposed to syntactic modification and lexical modification in both requests and complaints. In contrast, elementary and intermediate learners utilized external downgraders to an even greater extent than the GNS across both speech acts, indicating a preference for external rather than internal modification. Notably, the more grammatically advanced learners were, the more they relied on external modification.

Table 61. Proportion of requests and complaints containing three downgrader types (in %)

	Syntactic downgraders	Lexical/phrasal downgraders	External downgraders
Requests			
G1	22.22	33.89	87.78
G2	36.11	33.89	95
GNS	64.49	47	81.52
Complaints			
G1	18.33	8.33	76.67
G2	43.33	8.89	79.44
GNS	49.28	19	71.38

Since this study aimed to investigate whether the use of external modification is significantly greater than the use of syntactic modification in two speech acts among elementary and lower intermediate learners, a two-sample t-test for independent samples was conducted. The results showed a significant difference between the mean use of external and syntactic downgrading in requests for both elementary ($t = 4.123$, $p = 0.00015$, $n = 30$) and lower intermediate learners ($t = 13.88$, $p < 0.0001$, $n = 30$). More specifically, the use of external modification in requests was found to be significantly greater than the use of syntactic modification. The same was observed for complaints, where both learner groups used significantly more external modification than syntactic modification ($t_G1 =$

8.61, p_G1 < 0.001, n_G1 = 30; t_G2 = 6.08, p_G2 = 0.00007, n_G2 = 30). These findings suggest that external modification is a prevalent strategy among learners of German in the beginning and intermediate stages of L2 grammatical proficiency when engaging in requests and complaints.

Next, I addressed whether the two groups of learners demonstrated a higher frequency of using 2+ external downgraders in their requests and complaints as compared to German native speakers. The results presented in Table 62 indicate that both elementary and lower intermediate learners displayed a higher prevalence of using combinations of external downgraders in their speech acts in comparison to the control group. This tendency was particularly pronounced among the lower intermediate learners and was more prominent in requests than complaints, where the values were generally closer together.

Table 62. Proportion of speech acts containing 1+ external downgrader (in %)

	G1 **% (count)**	**G2** **% (count)**	**GNS** **% (count)**
Requests			
1 external downgrader	87.8 (158)	95 (171)	81.5 (225)
2+ external downgraders	51.7 (93)	56.7 (102)	34.8 (96)
Complaints			
1 external downgrader	76.7 (138)	79.4 (143)	71.4 (197)
2+ external downgraders	39.4 (71)	44.4 (80)	34.8 (96)

In the context of the current hypothesis which proposed that learners prefer external modification over syntactic modification, the statistical analysis conducted on the dataset confirmed this claim. However, it should be noted that the GNS also showed a considerable preference for external modification in their requests and complaints, as indicated by Table 61. This raises the question of whether the learners were simply emulating the behavior of the GNS or whether their use of external modification significantly exceeded that of the control group. Consequently, the present study further aimed to investigate whether there is a difference in the use of external modification in requests and complaints between elementary and intermediate language learners and native speakers of the language. A two-sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean values of external modification in requests and complaints between the two groups.

Bonferroni correction was applied to adjust for multiple comparisons. The outcomes are reported in Table 63.

Table 63. Comparison of mean number of external downgraders in complaints: results of t-test

		Mean	Mean difference	SD	t-value	p-value
G1	Number of external downgraders in requests	9.8	2.09	2.91	3.34	0.0013
GNS	Number of external downgraders in requests	7.71				
G2	Number of external downgraders in requests	10.3	2.59	2.95	4.8	0.0002
GNS	Number of external downgraders in requests	7.71				
G1	Number of external downgraders in complaints	8.4	1.32	4.67	1.44	0.16
GNS	Number of external downgraders in complaints	7.089				
G2	Number of external downgraders in complaints	8.53	1.444	4.077	2.16	0.0906
GNS	Number of external downgraders in complaints	7.089				

The results of the t-test for requests indicated that the differences between the two groups are statistically significant at the conventional level of 0.05. More specifically, the elementary and intermediate learners use external modification significantly more often than the native speakers in their requests. However, the t-test for complaints showed that the p-values of 0.16 and 0.0906 did not provide enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that the observed differences in the use of external modification in complaints between language learners and native speakers may have occurred due to chance. Although elementary and lower intermediate learners had a slightly higher mean value for external modification in complaints, suggesting that there is a trend towards learners using more external modification in complaints than native speakers, the difference was not large enough to be statistically significant. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the learners overuse external modification in complaints based on

this data alone. In order to understand the underlying reasons for the high usage of external downgraders in requests among the learner groups, and in order to investigate the reported trend in external complaint modification more comprehensively, we will now turn to an analysis of the individual subtypes of downgraders, first in requests and then in complaints.

Requests. Figure 23 displays the distribution of external downgraders used in requests among the three participant groups (see also Table A9-12, Appendix 9). The data reveal that the GNS group predominantly employed grounders (72.10 %), followed by preparators (22.1 %), promises of reward (7.25 %), as well as imposition minimizers and compensation (each 5.07 %). The elementary and lower intermediate learner data exhibited a nearly identical pattern, with learners utilizing grounders (G1: 78.89 %, G2: 83.89 %) and preparators (G1: 37.22 %, G2: 31.67 %) as their most frequently used external downgraders, while using imposition minimizers, compensation, and promises of reward more frequently compared to the remaining forms.

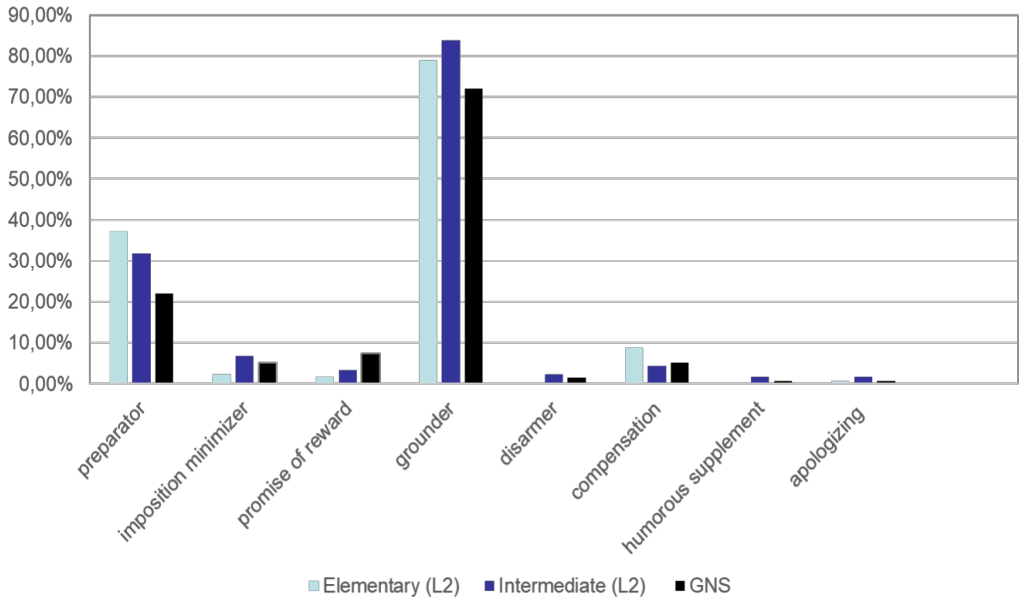

Figure 23. Proportion of requests containing each type of external downgrader (in %)

The higher number of external downgraders found in the L2 request data can be attributed, to a large extent, to the overuse of grounders and preparators by

elementary and lower intermediate level learners. On the other hand, the increases in the use of promises of reward, sweeteners, disarmers, humorous supplements, and apologizing from the beginning to the intermediate stages represent a move toward the L2 norm. Similarly, the decrease in the use of compensations by intermediate level learners also indicates a convergence toward the target language use.

To gain a better understanding of the reasons for the overuse of external modifications by the L2 learners compared to the GNS, and the further rise in usage with increasing grammatical proficiency, I will conduct a detailed analysis of the deployment of preparators, grounders and compensation in the following sections, and then turn my attention to the less frequently used downgraders. My initial focus will be on those external downgraders that are used to prepare the addressee for an upcoming request. Table 64 indicates that both elementary and lower intermediate learners 'over-prepared' their requests when compared to GNS. However, we can see a slight decrease of preparator usage for the learners at the mid-level stage of grammatical competence, indicating a development towards the L2 target.

Before we take a closer look at the distribution of the four subtypes, it should be reiterated that preparators are used by speakers to signal to the addressee that a request is imminent, thereby preparing them for the upcoming speech act. There are four options for the use of preparators: Preparing the content of the request, preparing the speech act itself, checking on the addressee's availability to fulfill the request, or obtaining a precommitment from the addressee. Based on the data presented in Table 64, there is a similar frequency of usage of the *availability-preparator* between the learner groups and the GNS.[129] Apart from this sub-type, both elementary and lower intermediate level learners overused the preparators *content* and *speech act*, with elementary level learners additionally overusing *precommitment.* An analysis of those forms that were used more frequently by the learner groups will be conducted below to understand why the learners tended to overprepare their requests with these specific subtypes.

[129] A typical use of the availability-preparator in both the GNS and learner data sets is the following: *Samira, hast du velleicht am Samstag Zeit? ich ziehe um, und brauche dein Unterstutzung bitte / Samira, do you maybe have time on Saturday? I'm moving and I need your help, please* (Move, G2M_843312).

Table 64. Proportion of requests containing preparators (in %)

	G1 % (count)	G2 % (count)	GNS % (count)
Preparator – content	15 (27)	11.67 (21)	5.07 (14)
Preparator – speech act	12.22 (22)	13.33 (24)	9.78 (27)
Preparator – availability	2.78 (5)	2.22 (4)	3.99 (11)
Preparator – precommitment	7.22 (13)	4.44 (8)	3.26 (9)
Preparator – total	37.22 (67)	31.67 (57)	22.1 (61)

Let us begin with the content-preparator. The examples presented in (177) – (180) are extracted from item 3 *Move*. Given that the interlocutors in all DCT items are familiar with each other and interact on a regular basis, it can be assumed that the addressee in item 3 *Move* is aware of the speaker's upcoming move. Therefore, GNS in examples (178) and (179) use concise content-preparators such as *Saturday is the moving day,* with the speaker in example (179) even acknowledging that the addressee knows of the move, using the phrase *wie du weißt / as you know*. In contrast, the elementary learner in example (177) employed two consecutive preparators, in which she referred to shared knowledge, i.e., information already known to the interlocutor. This results in an extended, somewhat redundant preparatory phase before moving on to the actual request.

(177) Move, G1F_884224

> **Alerter:** Hallo Samira, wie geht es dir. **Preparator 1:** Weißt du, habe ich eine neue Wohnung in Köln gefunden. **Preparator 2:** am Samstag muss ich umziehen nach neue meine wohnung. **Grounder:** ich bin allein in Köln, alle meine Familie nicht da. **Head act:** *Konntest du mir helfen?* **Grounder:** Ich kann nicht viele umzugskartons und möbel tragen. **Promise of reward:** nachdem meine wohnung konnen wir essen ins Resteurant gehen.
> (**Alerter:** Hi Samira, how are you? **Preparator 1:** You know, I found a new apartment in Cologne. **Preparator 2:** On Saturday, I have to move to my new apartment. **Grounder:** I'm alone in Cologne, all my family members are not here. **Head act:** *Could you help me?* **Grounder:** I can't carry all the moving boxes and furniture (by myself). **Promise of reward:** After we're done with the move, we can go eat at a restaurant.)

(178) Move, 20GERFEM

> **Preparator 1:** Samstag steht ja der Umzug an. **Head act:** *Könntest Du mir diesmal ein bisschen unter die Arme greifen?* **Grounder:** Das wird so eine Schlepperei, das schaff ich nicht alleine.
> (**Preparator 1:** Saturday is the moving day. **Head act:** *Could you lend me a hand this time?* **Grounder:** It's going to be such a hassle, I can't do it alone.)

(179) Move, 10GERFEM

> **Preparator 1:** Ich ziehe am Samstag ja wie du weißt um und **Head act:** *wollte fragen ob du mir ein bisschen helfen kannst?* **Grounder:** Allein krieg ich das echt nur schwer hin **Promise of reward:** und dafür lade ich dich gern bald mal zum Essen ein oder so
> (**Preparator 1:** As you know, I'm moving to a new apartment on Saturday **Head act:** *and wanted to ask whether you can help me out a bit?* **Grounder:** I can't do it alone **Promise of reward**: and for that, I'd be happy to treat you to dinner or something soon.)

(180) Move, G2F_150203

> **Alerter:** Samira **Preparator 1:** wie du weißt, dass ich am Samstag umziehen muss. **Head act:** *Ich möchte bitte deine Hilfe*, **Grounder:** weil ich viele Umzugskartons habe, ich kann alleine nicht schffen. **Imposition minimizer:** Natürlich frage ich nur wenn du Zeit hast, um mir zu Hilfen.
> (**Alerter:** Samira **Preparator 1**: as you know, I'm moving on Saturday. **Head act:** *I would like to ask for your help* **Grounder:** because I have many moving boxes, I can't manage it alone. **Imposition minimizer:** Of course, I'm only asking if you have time to help me.)

Examining the DCT data consistently reveals a learner behavior where requests were over-prepared through the inclusion of shared knowledge, i.e., repeating known facts between the two speakers throughout the test. Moreover, a close comparison of learners' content-preparators with the written matching DCT cues demonstrates the tendency of L2 learners to include information form the written prompts in their responses. Another case in point is the use of content-preparators in item 5 *Burst pipe* by an elementary learner, who provided a summary of the situation before uttering her request: **Preparator 1:** *ich komme Ihnen wegen meine Wohnung.* **Preparator 2:** *die Rohrbruch in meim Wohnung kapot geworden* (G2F_723440).[130] Her behavior, as observed, indicates a tendency to include excessive information, which may reflect her lack of confidence in conveying the message effectively without providing additional context.

Furthermore, the data demonstrates that early-stage learners encountered difficulties in conveying relevant preparatory details in a succinct manner. Instead, they tended to split information into separate simple sentences. This is evident in the examples from item 3 *Move* and item 5 *Burst pipe*, where the beginners employed two separate preparators to convey the necessary information, rather than combining them into a single cohesive preparatory

[130] **English translation.** Preparator 1: *I'm contacting you about my apartment*. Preparator 2: *There is a burst pipe in my apartment*.

statement. Lower intermediate learners still exhibited a higher tendency to overuse content-preparators as compared to native speakers (11.67 % versus 5.07 %). However, there were clear indications of improvement in their external request modification, as demonstrated in example (180). The intermediate learner not only presented the relevant information in a more compact manner, but also acknowledged the shared background knowledge with the addressee. Greater grammatical competence in the L2 is likely a contributing factor to the improvement observed in the intermediate learners' use of external downgraders. More specifically, with increases in their grammatical proficiency, intermediate level learners were better able to use more complex sentence structures and to convey information more efficiently, which led in turn to a slight reduction in the overuse of content-preparators. In contrast to the trend of over-preparing requests with context information, the use of preparators in item 6 *Bakery* stands out as a notable exception, as they serve a distinct purpose. The greater use of content-preparators in this item can be attributed to the learners' emphasis on the relational level, where they establish their prior acquaintance with the addressee. In particular, they highlighted their pre-existing relationship, *I come to buy bread every Saturday morning*, before addressing the seller's mistake (see examples 181 and 182). This is in contrast to the GNS, who did not use any content-preparators in item 6 *Bakery* but instead responded immediately to the situation.

(181) Bakery, G1F_444555

> **Preparator 1:** Ich komme ieden Samstagmorgen Brot zu kaufen. **Preparator 2:** immer ich kaufe das Brot neur 2,50 Euro.
> (**Preparator 1:** I come to buy bread every Saturday morning. **Preparator 2:** I always buy the bread for only 2.50 euros.)

(182) Bakery, G1F_884224

> **Preparator 1:** du weißt ich komme jeden Tag bei dir und kauft ein Brot, und heute ich bin in die Bäckerei gekommen und gekauft auch […]
> (**Preparator 1:** You know I come to you every day to buy bread, and today I went to the bakery and also bought [...])

These findings imply that learners in item 6 *Bakery* tended to establish a relational connection with the addressee first before addressing the primary purpose of communication, i.e., requesting to give the correct change, by using more content-preparators. This is in contrast to the GNS who used a task-oriented approach and

responded immediately to the situation (e.g., 2GERFEM: *Ach, Sie haben da noch 5 Euro vergessen / Oh, you forgot 5 euros there*).

Having examined the learners' overuse of *content*-preparators in the previous section, we now turn our attention to the second and fourth subtypes of preparators, specifically those used to *prepare the speech act* and *precommitment*, respectively. Figure 24 displays the distribution of nine *speech act preparators* in the request data, as utilized by the three informant groups. It was found that elementary and lower intermediate learners relied heavily on the formulation *Ich brauche deine Hilfe / I need your help*, at rates of 31.82 % and 33.33 %, respectively, whereas the GNS employed this phrasing in only 11 % of their requests. Both learner groups further utilized the preparator *Ich möchte X / I would like X*, which was not observed in the GNS data. In addition, only elementary learners used *Ich habe ein Problem / I have a problem*. On the other hand, the control group opted more frequently for routine formula such as *Gut, dass ich dich treffe / Good that I run into you* at 29.63 % and *Ich habe eine Frage / I have a question* at 33 %. Overall, it appears that the learners tended to rely on more direct, self-needs-oriented (i.e., *ich möchte / ich brauche*) realizations, while the GNS favored less direct, slightly more cautious, and routinized speech act preparators.

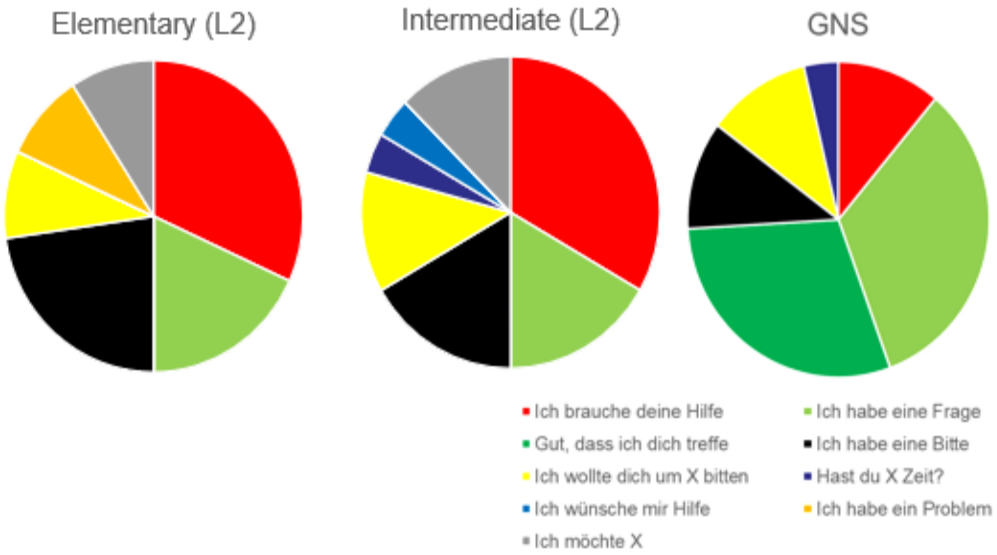

Figure 24. Proportion of speech act preparators used in requests (in %)

The elementary learners' lack of access to routinized patterns is also apparent in their use of precommitment-indicators. The beginners not only utilized this preparator twice as frequently as the GNS when making requests, but also relied

solely on one form, specifically *Kannst du mir helfen? / Can you help me?* (cf. example 183). In contrast, the GNS prepared their requests with the use of the routine *Kannst du mir einen Gefallen tun? / Can you do me a favor?*. The appearance of this routine among intermediate level learners suggests a progression towards the target language, as shown in examples (184) and (185). Furthermore, it is worth noting that intermediate level learners used the precommitment-indicator less frequently than elementary learners, approaching the frequency of use seen in the control group (G1: 7.22 %, G2: 4.44 %, GNS: 3.26 %).

(183) Switch shifts, G1F_444555

> **Alterter:** Hallo Peter, wie get es dir. **Preparator:** Kannst du bitte mir helfen **Grounder:** ich kannn nicht diese Woche Arbeite. **Head act:** *kannst du diese woche Arbeiten wir tauschen die Stunden*. **Token of appreciation:** wenn du sag Ja, ich freud mich
> (**Alterter:** Hello Peter, how are you doing? **Preparator:** Can you please help me? **Grounder:** I can't work this week. **Head act:** *Can you work this week, let's swap the hours*. **Token of appreciation:** If you say yes, I'll be happy.)

(184) Switch shifts, G2F_134459

> **Alerter:** Hallo Peter, wie geht es dir? **Preparator:** Kannst du einen Gefallen für mich machen? **Grounder 1:** Am Samstag bekomme ich Besuch von meinem Freunden, **Grounder 2:** ich liebe sie sehr, deswegen **Head act:** *könnten wir die Schicht am Samstag tauschen*.
> (**Alerter:** Hi Peter, how are you doing? **Preparator:** Can you do me a favor? **Grounder 1:** I'm having a visit from my friends on Saturday. **Grounder 2:** I really care about them, so **Head act:** *could we switch shifts on Saturday?*)

(185) Switch shifts, 23GERFEM

> **Alerter:** Hey Peter! **Preparator:** Kannst du mir einen riesen Gefallen tun? **Grounder:** Ich bekomm am Wochenende Besuch von guten Freunden. **Head act:** *Würdest du meine Samstagsschicht übernehmen?*
> (**Alerter:** Hey Peter! **Preparator:** Can you do me a huge favor? **Grounder:** I'm having some good friends visiting me this weekend. **Head act:** *Would you be willing to take over my Saturday shift?*)

The final aspect I would like to examine is the use of preparators in a consecutive fashion. Figure 25 displays the use of 1+ preparators for each informant group. Notably, at the elementary level, 21.67 % of requests were modified with the use of two preparators, while only 12 % of GNS requests were double-modified.

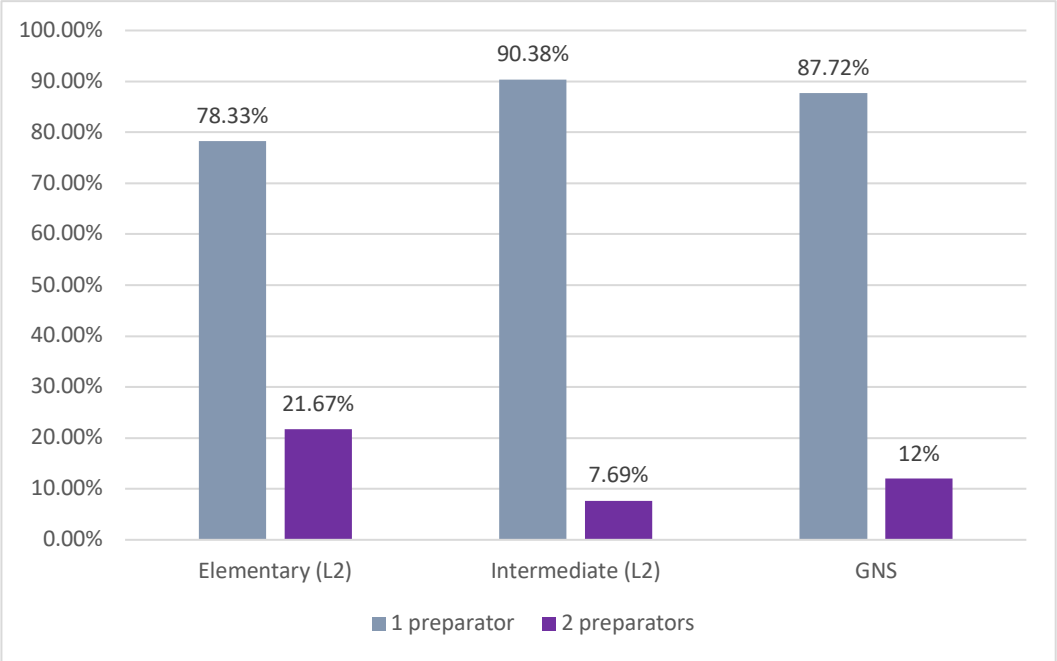

Figure 25. Proportion of requests containing 1+ preparator(s) (in %)

The previous analysis of learners' preparator use has revealed their tendency to present related information in fragmented, short sentences, which could be attributed to their limited grammatical competence in constructing more complex sentences (cf. example 177). Similarly, examples (187) and (188) illustrate elementary learners' inclination to overuse preparators.

(186) Cat, 24GERFEM

Alerter: Hallo Lena, **Preparator 1:** gut, dass ich dich treffe! **Preparator 2:** Ich wollte dich um einen kleinen Gefallen bitten. […] **Head act:** *Könntest du für eine Woche Mauzi füttern?*
(**Alerter:** Hello Lena, **Preparator 1:** Good to see you! **Preparator 2:** I wanted to ask you for a small favor. […] **Head act:** *Could you feed Mauzi for a week?*)

(187) Cat, G1F_368686

Alerter: Hallo Liebe Lena **Preparator 1:** Ich brauche deine Hilfe **Preparator 2:** kannst du mir helfen? […] **Head act:** *Pass auf sie auf bitte*.
(**Alerter:** Hello dear Lena, **Preparator 1:** I need your help. **Preparator 2:** Can you help me? [...] **Head act:** *Please take care of her*.)

(188) Switch shift, G1F_700345

Preparator 1: kannst du mir helfen bitte. **Preparator 2:** Ich brauche Hilfen am Samstag. […] **Head act:** *bitte kannst du am Samstag arbeiten vertiter [=vertreten]*.
(Preparator 1: Can you help me please. **Preparator 2:** I need help on Saturday. **[...] Head act:** *Please can you cover my shift on Saturday*.**)**

Whereas the double use of preparators by GNS involves choosing two modifiers that build on each other in terms of content, as seen in example (186), the elementary learners exhibited redundancy in their use of consecutive preparators by rephrasing and presenting the same preparatory information twice, e.g., Preparator 1 *Ich brauche deine Hilfe* Preparator 2: *kannst du mir helfen?* (cf. example 187). These results indicate that the learners, especially at the beginner level, faced challenges in effectively expressing preparator-related information while maintaining a high degree of clarity and precision in their pragmatic output. This was shown by their tendency to employ over-explicitness as a means of ensuring complete comprehension by their interlocutors.

In the next part of this analysis, we will examine the employment of grounders in the requests of elementary and lower intermediate level learners. While the GNSs modified 72.10 % of their requests externally by implementing a grounder, elementary level learners evinced a higher rate of 78.89 %, with the intermediate level learners registering an even greater proportion of 83.89 %. Similar results can be observed for the multiple use of grounders, as demonstrated in Table 65, suggesting that elementary and lower intermediate learners relied heavily on the use of grounders to modify their requests. The participants employed up to four grounders in their requests, with the most pronounced differences between the learners and the control group being observed in the use of two grounders. More specifically, while GNS employed two grounders in 7.97 % of their requests, the elementary learners did so in 20 %, and intermediate level learners in 25 %, highlighting the trend towards increased use of grounders among intermediate level learners.

Table 65. Proportion of requests containing 1+ grounder(s) (in %)

	G1 **% (count)**	**G2** **% (count)**	**GNS** **% (count)**
1 grounder	53.89 (97)	56.11 (101)	62.68 (173)
2 grounders	20 (36)	25 (45)	7.97 (22)
3 grounders	3.89 (7)	2.78 (5)	1.09 (3)
4 grounders	0.56 (1)	0 (0)	0.36 (1)
Overall	78.89 (142)	83.89 (151)	72.10 (199)

The present analysis aims to shed light on the factors contributing to the observed overuse of grounders in requests among L2 learners, particularly in cases where

learners employed two grounders in succession. As has already been reported for preparators, a plausible explanation for this phenomenon can be attributed to the learners' incomplete mastery of complex sentence structures. In addition, learners may lack familiarity with relevant German routines needed for the efficient external mitigation of requests. The following section will provide a detailed examination of these two factors. On review of the grounder usage in item 1 *Cat*, it was observed that the GNS either articulated a succinct and straightforward sentence that conveyed all the relevant details regarding the time, location, purpose, and reason for their actions (cf. example 189), or that they went in the other direction and employed a less precise approach which relied on their common ground with the interlocutor (cf. example 190). In contrast, the learners divided the same information presented in example (189) in two or three separate statements, as evidenced by examples (191) and (192).

(189) Cat, 14GERFEM

> **Grounder:** Ich fahre am Freitag für acht Tage zu meiner Schwester nach Frankfurt.
> (**Grounder:** I'm going to visit my sister in Frankfurt on Friday for eight days.)

(190) Cat, 22GERFEM

> **Grounder:** Ich fahre am Freitag zu meiner Schwester.
> (**Grounder:** I am going to my sister's place on Friday)

(191) Cat, G1M_362522

> **Alerter:** Hallo Lena, **Grounder 1:** ich fahre am Freitag nach Frankfurt, weil ich meine Schwester besuchen will. **Grounder 2:** Ich bleibe acht Tage in Frankfurt.
> (**Alerter:** Hello Lena, **Grounder 1:** I'm driving to Frankfurt on Friday because I want to visit my sister. **Grounder 2:** I'm staying in Frankfurt for eight days.)

(192) Cat, G1M_232162

> **Grounder 1:** Ich fahre am Freitag nach Frankfurt. **Grounder 2:** Ich möchte gerne meine Schwester besuchen. **Grounder 3:** Ich will für acht Tage im Frankfurt bleiben.
> (**Grounder 1:** I am going to Frankfurt on Friday. **Grounder 2:** I would like to visit my sister. **Grounder 3:** I want to stay in Frankfurt for eight days.)

The learners' inclination to present explanatory information about the requested action in separate grounders is evident across all request items. This phenomenon can be attributed to several factors, including a limited command of grammar, resulting in some difficulty in constructing complex sentences. Moreover, the

learners may have prioritized clarity over conciseness, recognizing that a less precise style could have led to misunderstandings or important information being overlooked. They therefore opted to break up their statements into smaller, more digestible units so as to ensure that each idea is accurately conveyed and comprehended by the addressee. Apart from this, the more frequent and extensive use of multiple grounders in the learner data appears to be associated with the absence of pragmatic routines. For instance, in item 3 *Move*, the GNS employed familiar routines to succinctly express the reason(s) for their request in one sentence, as demonstrated in examples (193) and (194). Conversely, elementary and lower intermediate learners had to resort to using two or three grounders to provide a comparable justification, as illustrated in examples (195) and (196).

(193) Move, 16GERMAS

Grounder: Ich bräuchte noch ein paar helfende Hände.
(**Grounder:** I could use some help.)

(194) Move, 8GERFEM

Grounder: Ich könnte echt noch ne‘ helfende Hand gebrauchen.
(**Grounder:** I could really use an extra helping hand.)

(195) Move, G1M_111222

Grounder 1: und Ich habe viele umzugskartons und möbel. **Head Act:** *kannst du mir helfen* **Grounder 2:** weil ich noch nicht viele Leute in Köln kenn. **Grounder 3:** und ich schaffe das nicht alleine.
(**Grounder 1:** I have a lot of moving boxes and furniture. **Head Act:** *Can you help me?* **Grounder 2:** Because I don't know many people in Cologne. **Grounder 3:** And I can’t do it alone.)

(196) Move, G2F_439201

Head act: *können Sie mehr helfen* […] **Grounder 1:** eigentlich ich kenn nicht viele Leute in Köln. **Grounder 2:** ich kann nicht allein schaffen.
(**Head act:** *Can you help me?* **Grounder 1:** Actually, I don’t know many people in Cologne. **Grounder 2:** I can’t do it alone.)

Further differences were observed in the way requests were justified, particularly in item 5 *Burst pipe*. While the GNS primarily referred to the intolerable living conditions and possible damage to the furnishings (see example 197), the learners justified their requests by citing a lack of acquaintances in Germany (and hence, a lack of accommodation options) as well as the danger to their children (cf. examples 198, 199). This highlights both the learners’ different life situations and also confirms the feedback from the pilot study, which noted that all situations

were realistic and relevant to informants' everyday life and were thus answered accordingly.

(197) Burst pipe, 20GERFEM

> **Grounder 1:** Ich kann mir nicht vorstellen, hier drei Tage länger unter diesen Umständen zu bleiben. **Grounder 2:** Schauen Sie sich mal an, wie es hier aussieht (Fotos zeigen) und es stinkt so. **Grounder 3:** Vor allem greift das mein Parkett total an.
> (**Grounder 1:** I cannot imagine staying here for three more days under these circumstances. **Grounder 2:** Just take a look at how it looks here (showing photos) and it stinks so bad. **Grounder 3:** Especially, it's ruining my parquet floor.)

(198) Burst pipe, G2M_398076

> **Grounder 1:** weil ich nicht schlafen kann und ich habe keine beknter [= Bekannte] in diesem Land. **Grounder 2:** Leider kann ich nicht in Momint andre Wohnung amzihen.
> (**Grounder 1:** Because I can't sleep and I don't have any acquaintances in this country. **Grounder 2:** Unfortunately, I can't move to another apartment at the moment.)

(199) Move, G2M_127459

> **Grounder 1:** ich kann werklich nicht so lange warten, tuten Sie mir leid. **Grounder 2:** Meine Wohnung ist fast ganz nass und stinkt. **Grounder 3:** Ich habe eine Tochter, die nur 3 Jahre alt ist, deswegen kann ich das nicht ertragen und axeptieren.
> (**Grounder 1:** I really can't wait that long, I'm sorry. **Grounder 2:** My apartment is almost entirely wet and smells bad. **Grounder 3:** I have a three-year-old daughter, so I can't bear or accept this.)

Item 5 *Burst pipe* is unique among the request situations in that the GNS group used more external modification than the learner groups (G1: 70 %, G2: 86.67 %, 95.65 %). This can be attributed to the fact that this situation required a repeated request. The speaker had already asked for a previous handyman appointment, which was declined, and they are now asking again. In order to make these request realizations as effective as possible, the control group used more grounding and provided so many reasons for their request that it became difficult to refuse. In order to summarize the previous analysis of the use of preparators and grounders, let us once again compare a beginner request and a GNS request in item 3 *Move*. This comparison will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the observed patterns in L2 pragmatic and grammatical development.

(200) Move, G1F_884224

> **Alerter:** Hallo Samira, wie geht es dir. **Preparator 1:** Weißt du, habe ich eine neue Wohnung in Köln gefunden. **Preparator 2:** am Samstag muss ich umziehen nach neue meine wohnung. **Grounder:** ich bin allein in Köln, alle meine Familie nicht da. **Head act:** *Konntest du mir helfen?* **Grounder:** Ich kann nicht viele umzugskartons und möbel tragen. **Promise of reward:** nachdem meine wohnung konnen wir essen ins Resteurant gehen.
> (**Alerter:** Hi Samira, how are you? **Preparator 1:** You know, I found a new apartment in Cologne. **Preparator 2:** On Saturday, I have to move to my new apartment. **Grounder:** I'm alone in Cologne, all my family members are not here. **Head act:** *Could you help me?* **Grounder:** I can't carry all the moving boxes and furniture (by myself). **Promise of reward:** After we're done with the move, we can go eat at a restaurant.) [55 words]

(201) Move, 31GERMAS

> **Alerter:** Hey Samira, **Preparator:** ich ziehe ja am Samstag um, **Head act:** *hast du Zeit*. **Pointing out urgency:** Es ist echt wichtig, **Grounder:** ich brauche noch ein paar helfende Hände. **Promise of reward:** Es gibt Bier und Pizza.
> (**Alerter:** Hey Samira, **Preparator:** I am moving on Saturday, **Head act:** *Do you have time?* **Pointing out urgency:** It's really important, **Grounder:** I still need a few helpers. **Promise of reward:** There will be beer and pizza.) [28 words]

On closer examination of the data, it becomes evident that both informants adopted a similar argumentative approach. The initial alerter is followed by a preparator, introducing the relevant topic of discussion, and subsequently, a grounder presents a justification for the request, which is finally concluded with a promise of reward. The actual head act request is embedded within these external elements. However, notable differences are observed in terms of the (over)use of external modification by the elementary learner. More specifically, the learner first repeated already available contextual information in the preparator and second, presented this information in two separate sentences. This could imply that the learner was grammatically less proficient in constructing more complex sentence structures and preferred to break down her request into syntactically simpler, shorter sentences. Moreover, due to limited familiarity with suitable routinized phrases for grounding, the learner provided additional elaboration in the form of two grounders. This resulted in a longer and more convoluted request compared to the native speaker production. Specifically, the learner request in (200) contains 55 words, which is longer than the native speaker request in (201) that has a word count of only 28. Taken together, this suggests that learners tended to over-explain and provide excessive information, while the GNS

participants oftentimes conveyed the same message more efficiently. In this context, I would also like to highlight the overuse of the external downgrader compensation by beginner learners, resulting in nearly double the number of modified requests compared to the GNS. Conversely, the use of this modification type by the intermediate learners was similar to that of the control group (G1: 8.89 %, G2: 4.44 %, GNS: 5.07 %). Examples (202) – (204) serve as illustrations of the characteristic employment of the compensation strategy by all three informant groups, conjoined with an *aber*-clause. Notably, both elementary and lower intermediate learners exhibited marked grammatical difficulties in their subordinated clause constructions.

(202) Dirty kitchen, 25GERMAS

> **Alerter:** Hey Lisa, **Compensation:** ich find's cool, dass du häufig kochst, **Head act:** *aber könntest du deinen Kram danach wegräumen*.
> (**Alerter:** Hey Lisa, **Compensation:** I think it's cool that you cook frequently. **Head act:** *but could you clean up your mess afterwards?*)

(203) Dirty kitchen, G1F_700345

> **Compensation:** Ich weiss du bist sehr nett und gut kuchen **Head act:** *aber mussen wir die Küche putzen und auf dem Tisch räumen auf.*
> (**Compensation:** I know that you are very kind and cook well, **Head act:** *but we need to clean the kitchen and clear the table.*)

(204) Bakery, G2M_555256

> **Compensation:** Endlich Wochenende, war anstrengende Woche bestimmt, **Head act:** *aber müsst du noch ein paar Stunden kontzentriren*
> (**Compensation:** Finally, it's the weekend, and it was surely an exhausting week, **Head act:** *but you still need to concentrate for a few more hours*.)

Which factors may have contributed to the frequent overuse of compensation strategies by elementary learners? On further analysis of learner realizations, such as those in item 6 *Bakery*, it becomes clear that in this situation, compensation was deliberately employed by elementary learners to emphasize the assumption of a mishap on the part of the seller (see examples 205-208). This, in turn, can be seen as supporting the notion of a positive politeness strategy, which seeks to maintain and enhance social relationships through expressions of empathy and concern for the interlocutor's face.

(205) Bakery, G1F_782349

Ich glaube sie Houte bissen moüde.
(I believe you are a bit tired today.)

(206) Bakery, G1F_700345

Herr Wagner du bist heute falsche fuß aufgestanden.
(Mr. Wagner, you got up on the wrong side of the bed today.)

(207) Bakery, G1F_854213

Ich glaube hast du nich gut gesehn
(I think you didn't see well.)

(208) Bakery, G1M_245510

Guten Tag Herr Wagner, hier ist ein klein fehler. […] ich kenn Sie sehr gut. Ich weis bestemmt, dass ein fehler ist.
(Good day, Mr. Wagner. Here is a small mistake. [...] I know you very well. I'm certain it's a mistake.)

Two factors can account for the observed use of compensation strategies by elementary level learners. First, it reflects their heightened sensitivity to the potential negative impact of their requests on their interlocutors and their stronger focus on building positive relationships. This aligns with previous findings regarding learners' use of content-preparators. Second, the overuse of compensation can also be attributed to the limited range of external downgrading devices available to elementary learners compared to more advanced learners. As a result, the beginners were more likely to rely on social strategies to compensate for their lack of L2 pragmatic competence. Taken together, these findings suggest that the overuse of compensation in this learner group served as a compensatory device that facilitated the establishment of positive relationships between conversation partners.

Overall, a positive development can be observed in the use of external modification by the learner informants, especially when looking at the progression from elementary to intermediate level productions. In particular, the more advanced learners exhibited an increase in the use of imposition minimizers, disarmers, humorous supplements, apologizing, and promised rewards. Let us begin our analysis with apologizing strategies. Notably, among beginners, the use of apologies in requests was not observed.[131] Therefore, the appearance of this

[131] Specifically, 0.56 % of elementary learners' requests were modified externally by way of apologizing.

external downgrader in the intermediate learner data signifies the early stages of L2 acquisition in this particular pragmatic domain. In the case of the native speaker realizations, a pattern emerged where participants combined the apologizing strategy with an *aber*-clause (cf. example 209). Differing from this, the lower intermediate learners mainly positioned this downgrader outside the head act. For instance, in both example (210) and (211), the downgrader was expressed as a standalone apology strategy, following the request head act. This indicates that lower intermediate learners may have encountered grammatical challenges in appropriately incorporating external downgraders such as apologizing into their head acts.

(209) Burst pipe, 4GERFEM

> **Tut mir leid** Herr Müller, aber können Sie das bitte direkte erledigen lassen?
> (I'm sorry, Mr. Müller, but could you please take care of this directly?)

(210) Burst pipe, G2F_894521

> Herr Turan, Sie müssen der Rohrbruch heute reparien, denn ich habe klein Kind Zuhause und kann nicht warten. **Es tut mir leid**.
> (Mr. Turan, you need to fix the pipe break today because I have a young child at home and can't wait. I'm sorry.)

(211) Burst pipe, G2F_127459

> Herr Turan, ich kann werklich nicht so lange warten, **tuten Sie mir leid**.
> (Mr. Turan, I really can't wait that long, I'm sorry.)

Furthermore, the intermediate level learners employed the strategy of promising rewards to modify their request productions, as seen in examples (212) and (213).

(212) Switch shifts, G2M_221154

> **Alerter:** Peter mein Freund **Head act:** *kannst du mein Schicht am Samstag übernehmen,* **Pointing out urgency:** es ist ganz notwendig, **Promise of reward:** ich kann dafür dein Schicht am Donnerstag übernehmen.
> (**Alerter:** Peter my friend. **Head act:** *Can you take my shift on Saturday*, **Pointing out urgency:** It's absolutely necessary, **Promise of reward:** I can take your shift on Thursday in return.)

(213) Move, G2M_843312

> **Alerter:** Samira, **Preparator:** hast du velleicht am Samstag Zeit? **Head act:** *ich ziehe um, und brauche dein Unterstutzung bitte*. **Grounder:** ich kenne nich viel Leute in Köln, **Promise of reward:** am Samstag Abend wenn wir fertig sind, lade ich dich zum essen ein.
> (**Alerter:** Samira, Preparator: Do you happen to have time on Saturday? **Head act:** *I am moving and I need your help, please.* **Grounder:** I don't know many

people in Cologne. **Promise of reward:** Once we're done on Saturday evening, I'll treat you to dinner.)

A comparison of the grounders used by learners and the GNS has already highlighted a distinction in their content, which is also reflected in the employment of promises of reward in item 3 *Move*, as exemplified in (213). Whereas the GNS tended to offer pizza and beer as an incentive for assisting with the move, the intermediate learners opted to invite their helpers to dinner instead (cf. example 213).[132] This pattern was consistently observed across this item. Once again, this comparison highlights how learners may differ from native speakers in their choice of linguistic resources to achieve their communicative goal. As a concluding remark, examples in (214) – (216) demonstrate the growing use of imposition minimizers, humorous supplements, and disarmers by intermediate level learners. These examples not only indicate a clear progression towards the L2 target but also highlight the learners' increasing ability to effectively modify their requests externally. Note also that the use of humorous supplements and disarmers emerged for the first time in the intermediate learner data.

(214) Move, G2M_127459

Head act: *wenn du Zeit hast komm zu mir.* **Imposition minimizer:** Ja ich habe viele Kartons aber sie sind nicht zu schwer […] und natürlich hole ich ab.
(**Head act:** *If you have time, come to my place.* **Imposition minimizer:** Yes, I have many boxes, but they are not too heavy [...] and of course, I'll pick you up.)

(215) Bakery, G2F_800901

Head act: *Weil ich 10 Euro gegeben habe, und du nur weniger zurück gibt.* **Humorous supplement:** Ich habe nicht mehr Geld Herr Wagner, du nimmst alles :) Spaß!
(**Head act:** *Because I gave you 10 euros, and you gave me back loo little money*. **Humorous supplement:** I don't have any more money, Mr. Wagner, you take everything :) Just kidding!)

[132] For instance: *Ich werde für Snacks und Bier sorgen und wir können im Anschluss Pizza bestellen / I will provide snacks and beer, and afterwards we can order pizza* (Move, 23GERFEM).

(216) Switch Shifts, G2M_281002

> **Alerter:** Hay Peter, **Grounder:** Am Samstag habe ich einen Besucher mein best freund. **Grounder:** Aber Ich soll da auch Arbeiten. **Disarmer:** Ich Max gefragt, ob er am Samstag meine Schicht übernimmt. er kann leider nicht. **Head act:** *Kannst du bitte meine Schicht übernehmen*
> **(Alerter:** Hey Peter, **Grounder 1:** On Saturday, I have a visitor, my best friend. **Grounder 2:** But I am also supposed to work that day. **Disarmer:** I asked Max if he can cover my shift on Saturday, but unfortunately he can't. **Head act:** *Can you please cover my shift?*)

To recapitulate, the observed frequency of external downgraders in L2 request data is largely due to the excessive use of grounders and preparators by beginner level learners. A thorough analysis of the request data revealed a tendency among learners to over-prepare their requests by including shared knowledge and directly borrowing cues from written DCT prompts. The data also suggests that early-stage learners struggled to effectively convey relevant preparatory or grounder details in a concise manner, often resorting to splitting information into separate simple sentences. While intermediate level learners still overused grounders and preparators for the reasons mentioned earlier, they also expanded their range of external moves as their grammatical proficiency increased. This led to a general increase in the overall use of external modification, as new types of downgraders were employed. Moving forward, the next section will encompass an analysis of the individual subtypes of external downgraders employed in complaints.

Complaints. At the beginning of this section, it was reported that based on an analysis of the DCT complaint data, all three informant groups exhibited a distinct inclination towards the use of external rather than internal downgrading devices. Furthermore, when compared to the control group, elementary and lower intermediate learners demonstrated a tendency towards overuse of external modifications, albeit with insignificant differences between them. A notable difference was, however, observed between intermediate level learners and GNS in terms of their use of external downgrader combinations in complaints. Intermediate level learners employed a higher percentage of 2+ downgraders per speech act (44.4 %) compared to GNS (34.8 %). To further investigate the use of external downgrading devices, this analysis will examine the frequency of each subtype in both learner and GNS complaints. The results are presented in Figure 26 (see also Table A9-13, Appendix 9).

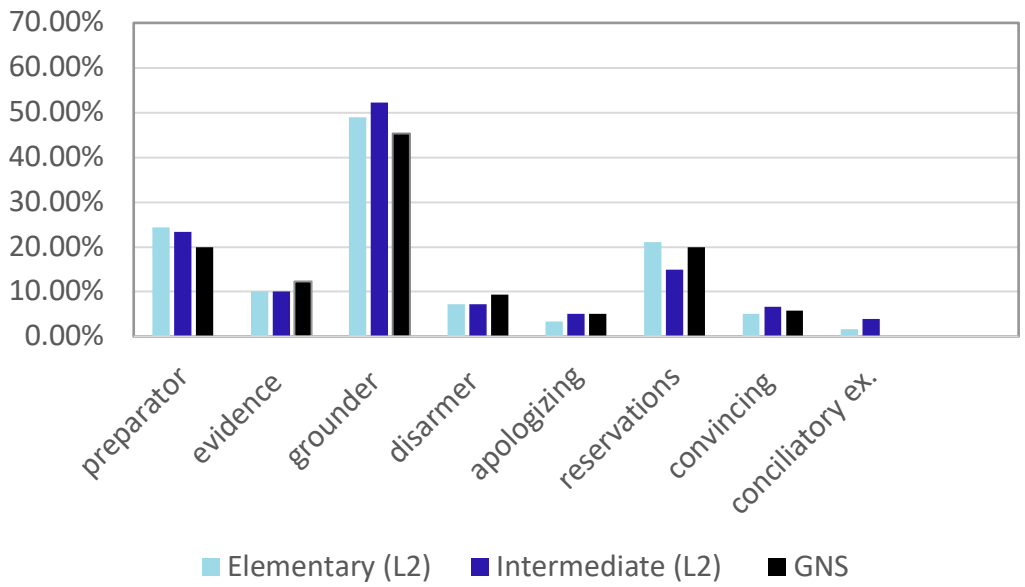

Figure 26. Proportion of complaints containing each type of external downgrader (in %)

The control group predominantly used grounders (45.29 %), reservations (19.93 %), preparators (16.67 %), providing evidence (12.32 %), disarmers (9.42 %), and to a similar extent, convincing and apologizing (5.8 % and 5.07 %, respectively) as external downgraders. Conciliatory expressions were not employed by the GNS. It is noteworthy that the distribution of individual downgrader types in complaints was more evenly balanced as compared to the requests. Apart from the prominent use of grounders, all other forms were present at about 5-20 % in the complaints. Moving on to the learner data, it is evident that the frequencies of the eight downgrader types used by the learners were generally very similar to those of the GNS, with only preparators, grounders, and conciliatory expressions showing a slightly higher frequency of usage by the learners. In light of this, the subsequent analysis will initially focus on these three specific subtypes of external downgrading, prior to addressing the remaining downgrading types.

Beginning with our analysis of external modification, we will first examine the use of preparators in learner and GNS complaints. Due to the different communicative functions of complaints as compared to requests, only the first two types of preparators, namely preparing the content and preparing the speech act, are typically used in complaints. While the percentages of complaint modification when using preparators were overall not far apart for the learners and the GNS, there were notable differences when looking at the exact distribution of the two

subtypes. Specifically, Table 66 reveals that only about 4 % of GNS complaints contained a content-preparator, while learners exhibited this subtype in approximately 18 % of their complaints. Conversely, the learner data only showed about half as many complaints modified by speech act-preparators as compared to the GNS data.

Table 66. Proportion of complaints containing each type of preparator (in %)

	G1 **% (count)**	**G2** **% (count)**	**GNS** **% (count)**
Preparing the content	17.78 (32)	17.22 (31)	3.62 (10)
Preparing the speech act	6.67 (12)	6.11 (11)	13.04 (36)

The use of content-preparators in complaint items varied greatly between the control group and the learners. GNS only employed the content-preparator in item 10 *Rash*, as they had not seen the addressee, a doctor, in a week and needed to establish the context. For instance, they might prepare their upcoming request by using an utterance such as *Ich habe Ihre Anweisung zur Einnahme des Medikaments befolgt und es viermal täglich eingenommen / I followed your instructions for taking the medication and took it four times a day* (9GERFEM). On the contrary, the learner cohorts employed the preparator in every complaint item and frequently reiterated contextual details that were already familiar to the recipient. Consistent with this use of preparators in complaint utterances, the previous section has reported that learners tended to exhibit a similar inclination towards redundancy and a lack of economy in their use of preparators when making requests. When voicing complaints, however, the learner informants even went as far as to repeat previous conversations with the addressee to establish the context of their complaints. Moreover, learners demonstrated a tendency to include content from written prompts into their supportive moves. Taking item 9 *Heating* as an example, the two elementary learners in (217) and (218) provided a detailed summary of a previous conversation with the landlady to lead into the actual complaint.

(217) Heating, G1F_721543

> **Alerter:** Frau Kowalska. **Preparator 1:** Die Heizung in meine wohnung ist kaputt. **Providing evidence:** Ich weiße, dass die vermiterin raparieren und bezahlen. **Preparator 2:** Sie hat gesagt ich die heizung kaputt gemacht und muss ich Reparatur und bezahlen. **Head act:** *ich finde das ungerecht*. **Grounder:** ich bin studiren und ich habe keine arbeit deshalb habe ich keine viele Geld. **Grounder:** auch ich nicht die Heizung kaputt gemacht.
> (**Alerter:** Mrs. Kowalska. **Preparator 1:** The heater in my apartment is broken. **Providing evidence:** I know that the landlord is supposed to repair it and pay for it. **Preparator 2:** You said that I broke the heating and I have to pay for the repair. **Head act:** *I think that's unfair*. **Grounder:** I am studying and I don't have a job, so I don't have a lot of money. **Grounder:** Also, I didn't break the heating.)

(218) Heating, G1F_717774

> **Alerter:** Hallo Frau Kowalska. **Preparator:** Ich habe gesagt Die Heizung kaputt und Sie Vermieteri Schäden reparieren, abe sie haben gesagt Ich habe die Heizung kaputt gemacht und Ich muss das Reparatur bezahlen. **Head act:** *aber das ist ungerecht* **Grounder**: weil habe ich das nicht gemacht **Providing evidence:** und sie weißen dass die Vermieterin Schäden reparieren und selbst bezahlen muss.
> (**Alerter:** Hello Mrs. Kowalska. **Preparator:** I said the heating is broken and you as the landlady have to repair it and pay for the damages, but you said I broke the heating and I have to pay for the repair. **Head act:** But that's unfair. **Grounder:** Because I didn't break it. **Providing evidence:** And you know that the landlady has to repair the damages and pay for them.)

In both realizations, the use of preparators is immediately preceded by the head act *das ist ungerecht / that is unfair.* The observed patterns in the use of preparators are noteworthy in two respects. First, the frequent occurrence of preparators immediately followed by the head *das ist ungerecht / that is unfair* suggests that learners may have had difficulties with the argumentative structure of direct complaints. Rather than providing a clear and concise statement of their complaint, they tended to provide a description or repetition of the situation, followed by the assertion that 'they find it unfair'. In contrast, many GNS in item 9 *Heating* immediately began with the head act, using direct complaints like *Solche Unterstellungen lasse ich mir nicht gefallen / I won't tolerate such allegation*s (4GERFEM) or *Ich sehe es nicht ein für einen Schaden aufzukommen, den ich nicht verursacht habe / I don't see why I should pay for damage that I didn't cause* (39GERMAS). This lack of argumentation in the elementary learner data may reflect a difficulty in organizing and presenting complex ideas in a concise and coherent manner in the target language. It could also suggest a lack of familiarity with the genre of direct complaints in German. Second, the DCT

prompt in item 9 *Heating*, which reads ***Du findest das ungerecht**, denn du hast die Heizung nicht kaputtgemacht / **You find it unfair** because you did not break the heater*, indicates that elementary learners copied the provided complaint phrase verbatim, possibly due to a lack of other phrase options. Despite the fact that the ways in which complaint head acts were realized expanded from elementary to lower intermediate levels, an overuse of content-preparators was still observed in the more advanced learner group, as evidenced by examples (219) and (220).

(219) Notes, G2F_150203

> **Alerter:** Hallo Tom, **Aggressive interrogative:** was ist mit dir los. **Preparator:** ich habe dich gefragt, ob ich deine Notizen leihen kann, weil ich letzt Woche krank war aber du hast negativ geantwortet **Head act:** *und schade, dass du vergessen hast, wie ich dir immer geholfen habe*.
> (**Alerter:** Hello Tom. **Aggressive interrogative:** What's wrong with you? **Preparator:** I asked you if I could borrow your notes because I was sick last week, but you responded negatively **Head act:** *and it's too bad you forgot how I always helped you*.)

(220) Oral presentation, G2F_432000

> **Alerter:** Hallo Jacob, **Preparator 1:** du weißt, dass wir gestern einen Vortrag gehatet. **Preparator 2:** Und du hast mir gesagt, dass du mit mir die Aufgaben geteilt willst. **Grounder:** Du bist gestern nicht gekommen und mendinstens keinen Beischeid bei mir gebeben. **Head act:** *Du bist untreue Mensch*. **Grounder:** Ich habe den Vortrag ganz schlecht wegen dir gemacht. **Consequences:** Ich vertraue dir nie wieder.
> (**Alerter:** Hello Jacob, **Preparator 1:** You know we had a presentation yesterday. **Preparator 2:** And you told me that you wanted to share the tasks with me. **Grounder:** You didn't show up yesterday and didn't even give me a notice. **Head act:** *You are an unfaithful person*. **Grounder:** I did the presentation very poorly because of you. **Consequences:** I will never trust you again.)

Contrary to content-preparators, both beginner and intermediate learners used speech act-preparators less frequently than did the native speaker control group. The GNS employed this preparator type to signal potentially unpleasant conversation topics and prepare the interlocutors accordingly, as evidenced by examples (221), (223), and (225). In comparison, beginner and intermediate learners in examples (222) and (224) tended to employ more direct and at times brusque approaches. Although there is no increase in the use of speech act preparators by the intermediate learners as compared to the beginner group, positive developments are observed in terms of content. For instance, example

(226) showcases the intermediate learner's adeptness in incorporating the routinized phrase *Arbeit ist Arbeit / work is work* into their speech act preparator.

(221) Heating, 10GERFEM

Ich würde gerne nochmal mit Ihnen die Sache mit der Heizung besprechen.
(I would like to discuss the issue with the heater with you again.)

(222) Heating, G1F_884224

Hallo Frau Kowalska. Du weißt habe ich ein Problem.
(Hi Mrs. Kowalska. You know that I have a problem.)

(223) Cooking ingredients, 4GERFEM

Meine Liebe, das Thema Essen ist ein ernstes Thema.
(My dear, the topic of food is a serious matter.)

(224) Cooking ingredients, G1M_245510

Julia hast ein probleme schön gemacht.
(Julia, you have created quite a mess for us.)

(225) Overtime, 39GERMAS

Herr Macke, ich muss ihnen mal etwas beichten.
(Mr. Macke, I have to confess something to you.)

(226) Overtime, G2M_555256

Hallo Herr Macke, wir kennen gut aber wie du weißt, Arbeit ist Arbeit.
(Hello Mr. Macke, we may know each other well, but as you know, work is work.)

The lower frequency of use of speech act preparators in complaints by the learner groups can likely be attributed to the difficulty these informants experienced in constructing a coherent argumentative structure for their complaints, as indicated by previous findings.

In the following, our attention turns to the assessment of grounders. An analysis of Table 67 reveals that there is a notable consistency in the use of grounders across the learner groups and the control group, with the exception of the intermediate learners who exhibited a slightly higher frequency of this external downgrader. In addition, the beginner learners displayed a higher occurrence of double usage of grounders per complaint as compared to the control group (G1: 9.44 % versus GNS: 5.43 %).

Table 67. Proportion of complaints containing 1+ grounders (in %)

	G1	G2	GNS
1 grounder	39.44	45	39.86
2 grounders	9.44	6.67	5.43
3 grounders	0	0.56	0
Grounder – total	48.89	52.22	45.29

When comparing the GNS realization in (227) with those of the L2 learners in (228) and (229), it is initially noticeable that both argued very similarly, i.e., they justified their complaints with the same reasons. This observation holds true for all complaint items. However, as previously observed in the case of requests, the GNS more often provided less information which was, however, sufficient for the communicative purpose, e.g., only stating *My friends are coming over* in item 12 *Cooking ingredients* instead of *My friends are coming, we were planning to cook, it's Sunday, and the shops are closed on Sundays*. The latter behavior resulted in a higher number of grounders among intermediate learners, as well as in a higher frequency of double grounders by the beginner learners, as the learners on the one hand listed more (or usually *all*) reasons and on the other hand often packaged this information in short, consecutive sentences.

(227) Cooking ingredients, 4GERFEM

Grounder: Julia, ich hab' heute Freunde eingeladen.
(Julia, I invited friends over for today.)

(228) Cooking ingredients, G1M_245510

Grounder 1: hast du mein essen ohne mich zu fragen gegessen und meine frunden zu mir heute kommen. **Grounder 2:** dann heute ist Sonntag, deshalb kann ich nicht einkaufen.
(**Grounder 1:** You ate my food without asking me and my friends are coming over today. **Grounder 2:** also, today is Sunday, so I can't go shopping.)

(229) Cooking ingredients, G2M_848939

Grounder 1: es wird heute zu mir einen Freund bekommen, was kann ich für ihn kochen, obwohl heute Sonntag ist. **Grounder 2:** ich kann nicht einkaufen gehen.
(**Grounder 1:** I will have a friend over today, what can I cook for him even though today is Sunday. **Grounder 2:** I cannot go shopping.)

Apart from preparators and grounders, the use of conciliatory expressions is of interest. Intermediate learners were increasingly employing these expressions,

whereas the GNS, on the other hand, never used them (G1: 1.67 %, G2: 3.89 %, GNS: 0 %). Conciliatory expressions function as a means of repairing social harmony. They can be formulated as minimizing expressions with regard to the complainable, as demonstrated in example (230), expressions of concern as seen in example (231), or statements of identification with the addressee, as seen in example (232).

(230) Cooking ingredients, G1M_309123

aber keine GroPlem [=Problem] Ich kanfe mit Türkich laden essen. und sie essen mit.
(But no problem, I will buy food at the Turkish store and you can eat with me.)

(231) Oral presentation, G2M_768891

was ist mir dir passirt. Ich hofe, dass bei dir alls in Ordnung.
(What happened to you? I hope everything is alright with you.)

(232) Oral presentation, G2M_555256

warst du krank oder hast du vergeschalfen. alles verstanden, aber du musst mich informieren.
(Have you been sick or overslept? I understand everything, but you need to inform me.)

The use of conciliatory expressions is particularly evident in item 12 *Cooking ingredients*, where the roommate had eaten the speaker's groceries that were needed for a dinner invitation. In this scenario, the learner informants addressed the issue of their roommate's lack of communication. They did, however, struggle with expressing their discontent about their food being consumed. Sociocultural norms affecting complaint behavior may be evident here, as the complaint head act was often followed by a *Oh Kein Problem aber bitte fragst du mich nishte mal / Oh, no problem, but next time please ask me* (G1F_774421) type of conciliatory expression. Moreover, during several personal conversations conducted after completing the DCT, the learner informants reported facing challenges while realizing a complaint in this particular item due to their Syrian cultural background, where sharing food is regarded as a central aspect of their customs.

The remaining part of this analysis will now shift its focus towards the examination of external downgrading devices that were not excessively utilized by learners yet which played a crucial role in mitigating or strategically managing their complaint expressions. The analysis will commence with an investigation

into the employment of disarmers, apologizing, and reservations. The prevalence of disarmers in 9.42 % of native speaker complaints underscores their significant role in modifying the speech act in the German data set. Examples (233) and (234) demonstrate the use of disarmers in item 7 *Overtime* and item 10 *Rash* by two control participants. The purpose of the disarmer in both cases was to mitigate the potential negative impact of the following complaint or criticism.

(233) Overtime, 20GERFEM

> **Disarmer:** Ich hoffe, ich bringe mich in kein schlechtes Licht bei Ihnen, wenn ich das jetzt anspreche. **Grounder:** Aber mir fällt schon seit einer Weile auf, dass die Aufgaben immer mehr werden, wodurch ich immer Überstunden machen muss.
> (**Disarmer:** I hope I won't come across in a negative way by bringing this up, **Grounder:** but I've noticed for a while now that the workload has been increasing, which has resulted in me having to work overtime.)

(234) Rash, 14GERFEM

> **Alerter:** Frau Schröder, **Disarmer:** ich bin sonst sehr zufrieden mit Ihnen gewesen, immer. **Head act:** *Allerdings kann es nicht sein, dass Sie sich über die Anweisungen zum Medikament hinaussetzen und ich deshalb einen derartigen Ausschlag bekommen habe*.
> (**Alerter:** Mrs. Schröder, **Disarmer:** I have been very satisfied with your work so far, always. **Head act:** *However, it cannot be that you disregard the instructions for the medication and as a result, I have developed such a rash*.)

Similarly, by using disarmers, both elementary and lower intermediate learners attempted to maintain a positive relationship with the addressee while still addressing the problem at hand. Even though there was no significant increase in the use of disarmers from the elementary to the lower intermediate level, there was evidence of increased proficiency in the use of these strategies as learners progressed from one grammatical competence level to the next. For instance, while the elementary learner in (235) simply copied a phrase from the DCT prompt (*Ich mag die Arbeit / I like the job*), the examples in (236) and (237) demonstrate that intermediate level learners were able to develop their own disarmer strategies and to adapt them effectively to the situational context. This suggests a growing ability to use language strategically in order to achieve 'complaining goals'. Furthermore, the study also discovered that intermediate level learners had developed greater competency in using apology strategies, despite facing challenges with grammar. This is evident in the examples provided in (238) and (239).

(235) Overtime, G1M_362522

Alerter: Hallo Herr Macke, **Disarmer:** ich mage die Arbeit, **Grounder:** aber ich habe oft Überstunde.
(**Alerter:** Hello Mr. Macke, **Disarmer:** I like the work, **Grounder:** but I often have overtime.)

(236) Overtime, G2F_23757

Alerter: Lieber Herr Macke, **Disarmer:** wie Sie wessen ich mache meine Arbeit immer sehr gerne und ich bin sehr zufrieden mit meinem Arbeit. **Convincing:** Aber ich habe ein familie muss ich mein Zeit für meine familie auch geben.
(**Alerter:** Dear Mr. Macke, **Disarmer:** As you know, I always enjoy doing my work and I am very satisfied with it. **Convincing:** However, I have a family and I need to give my time to them as well.)

(237) Rash, G2M_735525

Alerter: Liebe Frau Schröder, **Disarmer:** ich habe große respeckt für Sie, aber dass bedeutet nicht dass Sie mir falsch behandlen, und ich darüber nicht sagen!
(**Alerter:** Dear Mrs. Schröder, **Disarmer:** I have great respect for you, but that does not mean you can mistreat me and I will not speak up about it!)

(238) Overtime, G1F_717774

Head act: das ist ungerecht, Ich kann nich so weiter machen. **Apologizing:** Es tut mein lied.
(**Head act:** this is unfair, I cannot go on like this. **Apologizing:** I am sorry.)

(239) Overtime, G2M_843312

Apologizing: Sorry **Alerter:** Herr Macke! **Head act:** die Überstunden wurden nicht bezahlt.
(**Apologizing:** Sorry **Alerter:** Mr. Macke! **Head act:** The overtime was not paid.)

So far, the analysis of external downgrading devices has identified several instances, indicating that the current learner informants tended to prioritize a relationship orientation when communicating. This is also reflected in their use of reservations in complaints. While the GNS typically used reservations to express feelings of doubt or lack of understanding by asking for missing information or an explanation, the learners more frequently expressed their concern for the addressee or their disappointment in the interpersonal relationship.[133] More

[133] For example, in item 10 *Rash*, the GNS used reservations to ask for clarification, such as *Entschuldigen Sie, aber kann es sein, dass ich Sie beim letzten Mal falsch verstanden habe? / Excuse me, but is it possible that I misunderstood you the last time?* (Rash, 35GERMAS).

specifically, the learners typically employed reservations about either expressing their worry for the addressee, as in (242), or about voicing their concern about the relationship with the addressee as in (240) and (241), rather than solely focusing on the complainable issue at hand.

(240) Notes, G2M_221154

Alerter: Tom, **Reservation:** wieso machst du sowas mit mir?
(**Alerter:** Tom, **Reservation:** why are you doing this to me?)

(241) Notes, G2M_127459

Reservation 1: ich kann das nicht verstehen, und habe das überhaupt nicht erwarte! **Reservation 2:** das schockiert mich.
(**Apologizing:** I cannot understand this, and I did not expect this, **Head act:** I am shocked.)

(242) Oral presentation, G2F_442931

Reservation 1: Wo bist du? **Reservation 2:** Sind Sie gesund? **Reservation 3:** Warum kommt nicht in die Schule?
(Reservation 1: Where were you? **Reservation 2:** Are you healthy? **Reservation 3:** Why didn't you come to class?)

While reservations, apologizing and disarmers mainly serve a politeness function, there are two more external modifiers, namely providing evidence and convincing, that are employed in complaints to justify an accusation or condemnation of the interlocutor's behavior. The skillful use of these modifiers is highly relevant since they can prevent the addressee from dismissing or rejecting the direct complaint. Consequently, these modifiers can determine the outcome of a complaint exchange. Elementary and lower intermediate learners employed convincing in approximately 5-7 % of their complaints, while using providing evidence to support up to 10 % of their speech acts. Examples (243) – (246) demonstrate the use of both supportive moves by elementary and lower intermediate learners.

(243) Heating, G1F_721543

Providing evidence: Ich weiße, dass die vermiterin raparieren und bezahlen.
(I know that the landlady has to repair and pay for it.)

(244) Heating, G2M_221154

Providing evidence: In unser Übergabeprotokoll steht dass die Heizung nicht in eine gute Zustand ist, sie ist mit der Zeit spontan kaputt gegangen.
(The handover protocol states that the heating system is not in good condition and it broke down spontaneously over time.)

(245) Overtime, G1F_368686

Convincing: Ich bin sehr müde.
(**Convincing:** I am very tired)

(246) Overtime, G2M_400399

Convincing 1: Meine Zeit ist zu eng, ich arbeite mehr Stunden um meine Leben verbessere. **Convincing 2:** Man kann das machen einmal im Leben, zweimal, aber nicht immer.
(**Convincing 1:** My time is too short, I work more hours to improve my life.
Convincing 2: One can do it once in a lifetime, twice, but not always.)

In contrast to the beginner-level expressions, the intermediate level learners in (244) and (246) exhibited a greater ability to detach from the constraints of the given item information, and based on their knowledge of the German context, were able to construct more compelling arguments against their addressee. In terms of external modifications, learners overall demonstrated greater conformity with the target language when producing complaints, in comparison with their use of such devices in the context of requests. However, preparatory and grounding devices were still found to be overused in the complaint speech acts. Notably, the elementary learner data revealed a tendency to include content from written prompts into external moves and to provide more contextual information packaged into shorter, consecutive preparators and grounders. This was also related to learners' difficulties in initiating and building direct complaints in the L2, which may reflect their unfamiliarity with complaint genre conventions. Last, the preference for external modification over indirect modification in complaints was further driven by strategic considerations since external moves were also employed to maximize the effectiveness of a complaint.

6.3 Discussion: evaluating downgrader preference in L2 learners

This section investigated the claim that beginner and lower intermediate learners prefer lexical/phrasal downgraders and external modifiers over syntactic forms of modification. Subsequently, I will first discuss the results for internal modification and then move on to the findings concerning external modification. The initial hypothesis that beginner and lower intermediate learners favor lexical or phrasal downgraders over syntactic forms of modification has been found to be

unsupported for requests and complaints. This observation underscores the relatively lower frequency of lexical modification devices in the German language for the two types of speech acts being examined (especially for direct complaints), given that even the GNS tended to favor syntactic modifications over lexical ones. More specifically, in both requests and complaints, the control group exhibited a preference for external downgraders over syntactic downgraders, and syntactic downgraders over lexical downgraders. On examination of the L2 development of lower intermediate learners, it was found that these learners began to prioritize syntactic downgraders over lexical downgraders in a similar manner, moving towards the patterns observed in the GNS data. Notably, this tendency is statistically significant for complaints. Yet, these intermediate learners did not move closer to the target language use in terms of their lexical modification patterns. Instead, the use of lexical downgrading devices remained stagnant for both elementary and lower intermediate learners. On the one hand, this suggests a shift in the learners' preference for downgrading strategies as they progressed to a higher level of grammatical proficiency in the L2. On the other hand, the absence of a proportional increase in the deployment of lexical downgrading devices, alongside the increase in syntactic downgraders among intermediate learners would imply that the acquisition and use of lexical downgraders is not solely contingent on a mastery of L2 grammar.

The forthcoming discussion will examine the factors contributing to the lack of growth in lexical downgraders within the learner data. By synthesizing the findings, this analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding and then situate them within the broader context of current SLA and ILP research.

Starting with the control data, the analysis yielded results showing that GNS primarily relied on a set of four lexical modifiers in requests and complaints and showed infrequent use of the remaining types. These forms encompassed downtoners, subjectivizers, understaters, and the politeness marker, with varying frequencies observed in requests and complaints. Of these four lexical/phrasal downgraders, downtoners emerged as the predominant type of downgrading device employed by GNS in both speech acts. Transitioning to the findings from the elementary and intermediate learner data, the analysis revealed specific trends in their utilization of lexical modifiers in requests and complaints. Apart from the prevalent overuse of the politeness marker among elementary and lower

intermediate learners, the utilization of other lexical downgrading options was significantly lower in comparison to GNS. The intermediate learners nonetheless displayed signs of L2-like development in their selection of lexical and phrasal downgraders, characterized by a reduction in the reliance on politeness markers and a simultaneous increase in the use of downtoners. The results pertaining to the selection of politeness markers and downtoners among intermediate learners show a strong correspondence with the outcomes documented in Barron's (2003) longitudinal study on L2 learners of German, as well as the cross-sectional research undertaken by Ali & Woodfield (2017) on Syrian Arabic learners of English.

Building on these findings, it becomes evident that a comprehensive understanding and proficient use of appropriate downtoners is essential for effectively mitigating the speech acts of requests and complaints. GNS employed a broader spectrum and greater variety of downtoners as compared to the learner participants who significantly underutilized downtoners in both speech acts. This outcome was partly attributed to the absence of certain downtoners, such as *eventuell / possibly* and *zufällig / accidentally* in the learners' lexical repertoire. Even more significant is the fact that a substantial proportion of the downtoners utilized in the GNS data set were modal particles. Research in the field of interlanguage pragmatics and second language acquisition has consistently shown that German discourse particles pose significant difficulties for L2 learners of German, highlighting challenges at the lexicon-pragmatics interface (cf. Weydt 1981; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1995; Rost-Roth 1999a, 1999b; Hogeweg et al. 2016; Trotzke et al. 2020). Research studies, including Faerch & Kasper (1989), indicate that the use of downtoners tends to be more prevalent among advanced second language learners. For example, intermediate Danish learners of German and English, as observed in Faerch & Kasper's study, employed fewer downtoners compared to native speakers of German and English. Similarly, Trosborg (1995) found that Danish learners of English, regardless of their level of competence, demonstrated limited usage of downtoners in expressing requests. Trotzke et al. (2020) postulate that what makes modal particles notoriously hard for L2 learners to acquire is their pragmatic meaning, i.e., "learners have significant problems in choosing which German particle can be used in what type of speech act, and which discourse contexts are appropriate for using the

individual particles" (Trotzke et al. 2020: 197). Taking a broader perspective, acquiring modal particles in German can pose a challenge for L2 learners due to a multitude of factors. They play a crucial role in expressing subtle nuances of meaning, speaker attitude, and interpersonal relationships. As they often carry context-specific connotations, they can be challenging for learners to grasp without a deep understanding of L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic norms (cf. Rost-Roth 1999a, 1999b). The datasets analyzed in this study revealed, for instance, that modal particles in requests and complaints served multiple functions, including emphasizing, expressing certainty, doubt, im/politeness, and conveying speaker attitudes such as reservation, annoyance, or approval. Grasping the subtle distinctions between various modal particles and their appropriate usage thus presents a complex task for L2 learners. Besides, modal particles are used idiomatically in German, meaning that their meanings and functions cannot always be directly translated into other languages (cf. Hogeweg et al. 2016; Trotzke et al. 2020). This makes it difficult for learners to rely solely on their L1 knowledge, and requires them to develop a new linguistic awareness and sensitivity to the unique functions and meanings of modal particles in German. In addition, modal particles are often closely linked to the pronunciation and intonation patterns in spoken German (cf. Kwon 2005). Learners need to attend to the subtle changes in pitch, stress, and rhythm that accompany the use of modal particles to accurately perceive their intended meanings. Achieving proficiency in modal particles in German therefore necessitates a comprehensive understanding of their cultural and linguistic significance, extensive exposure to authentic language use, dedicated practice, and a willingness to navigate the intricate interplay of these factors. Given the circumstances, the fact that discourse particles have been regarded "a blind spot in L2 teaching contexts" (Trotzke et al. 2020: 200; see also Möllering 2001) does little to facilitate the acquisition of these pragmalinguistic elements.

Shifting our focus back to the learner data, an analysis of their request and complaint productions revealed the utilization of three specific downtoners: *vielleicht/perhaps*, *leider/unfortunately*, and the modal particle *mal/once*. Among these downtoners, *vielleicht* and *leider* functioned as adverbs with semantically transparent and unequivocal meanings, which may account for their early occurrence in the interlanguage productions of both learner groups. It is important

to note that the learners exclusively used the modal particle *mal* in their requests, where it fulfilled a distinct and quite explicit mitigating function. Conversely, when examining complaints, the employment of *mal* displayed a greater range of variations in meaning, posing a more intricate challenge for learners in terms of perception, comprehension, and mastery. The distribution of downtoner types in the data from the beginner and lower intermediate learners, as well as the control group, indicates a pattern where the former groups tended to utilize a narrower range of downtoners. The selected downtoners had a semantically simpler and therefore also more evident mitigating function, possibly reflecting the challenges associated with acquiring the nuanced meaning and various pragmatic applications of German modal particles.

A study conducted by Fordyce & Fukazawa (2004), which explored the acquisition of syntactic and lexical downgraders in relation to grammatical competence and time spent abroad, bears particular relevance to the present context. Notably, the impact of both variables, namely grammatical competence and time spent abroad, exhibits a similar pattern with respect to syntactic downgraders. However, in the case of lexical elements, the influence of time spent abroad surpasses that of grammatical competence. The findings of the current study further support this trend, as learners demonstrated significant progress in syntactic modification as their grammatical competence improved, while the use of lexical modification showed limited growth. This suggests that factors such as exposure to target language input and immersion in the target language context may exert a more significant influence on the acquisition of downtoners compared to grammatical competence alone. These findings align further with the results of Barron's (2003) longitudinal study, who reported a gradual rise in the use of downtoners among L2 learners over time spent in the target language context.

Apart from downtoners, the German native speakers demonstrated a preference for understaters and subjectivizers. However, when modifying their request and complaint utterances, elementary and lower intermediate learners displayed a notably lower use of these two downgrader types. More specifically, it was observed that learners placed greater emphasis on conveying their messages with maximum clarity, leading them to prioritize explicitness over the incorporation of understaters and subjectivizers. This finding implies a communicative necessity for L2 learners to ensure unambiguous understanding,

which likely motivated their tendency to employ more direct and at times, explicit language choices.

Let us finally move to the examination of the politeness marker, which concludes our exploration of lexical downgraders. The analysis of its usage in requests revealed an interesting trend among elementary learners. They relied heavily on the excessive use of *bitte / please* as their main form of lexical downgrading, consistent with previous studies on beginner level learners (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Göy et al. 2012). In contrast, the lower intermediate learners reduced their utilization of the politeness marker as compared to beginners, indicating a progression towards the L2 target in terms of mitigation strategies. This observation aligns with Barron's (2003) research on L2 German requests which documented similar patterns of politeness marker usage among her participants. What is even more striking is that both learner groups demonstrated the use of the politeness marker in their complaint head acts, as is revealed in the present study. This stands in contrast to the behavior observed in the control group. The findings indicate that learners over-relied on the politeness marker in complaints as a result of having a limited array of alternative downgrading options at their disposal. In particular, the speech act of complaining seems to lack a syntactically simple, lexically explicit, and versatile lexical politeness device, akin to the use of *bitte / please* in requests. Hence, the pragmatic overgeneralization in this case stems from a strategy of least effort. By employing the politeness marker in complaints, the learners fell back on a pragmalinguistic device that was largely automated and could therefore be produced easily (cf. Kasper 1981; Barron 2003). The overreliance on the politeness marker observed in requests was thus also apparent in these instances of complaint realizations. These results mirror the findings from Yuan & Zhang's (2018) longitudinal investigation into L2 complaint modification. The complaint data of their low intermediate learners of English were characterized by a heavy reliance on the politeness marker *please*. When prompted to provide feedback on their complaint productions from a session conducted at a considerable earlier point in time, one learner offered their reflections on the usage of the politeness marker in the following manner:

Student 5: As I read through the Phase 1 response, I cannot help smiling when reading

some lines. I am sure that I wanted to express something, but I could only use 'please'. […] Well, you have no words or chunks at hand.

(adapted from Yuan & Zhang 2018: 79)

Similar limitations in (pragma)linguistic proficiency have been observed among the learners in the present study. It is, however, important to mention that despite the overuse of the politeness marker in the learners' complaint data, its usage was found to be lower than in the request data. This sheds light on the relatively limited utilization of lexical and phrasal downgraders in learners' complaints as compared to their use in requests, providing an explanation for this distinction. It should further be highlighted that, in the present study, the politeness marker, as well as downtoners, cajolers, and subjectivizers, consistently appeared as pre- or postposed elements in request and complaint head acts. Similar findings regarding the use of politeness markers in L2 German requests were reported by Barron (2003). In contrast, the control group data revealed that these types of downgraders were commonly embedded, i.e., integrated into the grammatical structure of the utterance. It is probable that elementary learners favored the external placement of lexical downgraders in their speech acts, as it does not necessitate knowledge of complex syntactic structures. Consequently, as the grammatical competence of intermediate learners progressed, they increasingly started to incorporate politeness markers within the main speech act. However, despite demonstrating progress in their interlanguage productions, the intermediate learners still showed a lack of fully developed awareness with regard to the appropriate usage and positioning of lexical downgraders.

Up to this point, the present study has established that the impact of increasing grammatical competence on the use of syntactic modification is positive across many domains, whereas other areas of L2 proficiency, such as the lexicon-pragmatics interface are more relevant for the deployment of lexical modification. What distinguishes the GNS data from the learner data is the frequent use of those lexical downgraders, which are known to be subtle, context-dependent, and potentially ambiguous in meaning. Whereas certain syntactic downgraders may be more readily accessible to learners due to their rule-based nature, lexical downgraders, in particular modal particles may require more exposure to and familiarity with the target language to be used effectively. In this regard, the overreliance on the politeness marker also suggested a limited range of

alternative downgrading options and a lack of flexibility in learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire. Apart from the fact that the GNS more frequently employed syntactic downgraders in both speech acts, making the relevance of lexical modifications in German relatively diminished, it is the dearth of modifiers such as downtoners which accounts for the stagnation in the employment of lexical modifications from the beginning to lower intermediate proficiency levels.

Moving forward, we direct our discussion towards the realm of external modification, as is outlined in the second part of the hypothesis. In this case, the present analysis supported the prediction that elementary and lower intermediate learners have a preference for external modification over syntactic modification. The statistical analysis conducted on the dataset provided evidence in favor of this claim. Both elementary and intermediate learners demonstrated a greater inclination toward using external downgrading rather than syntactic and lexical modification in their requests and complaints. Interestingly, the more grammatically advanced the learners were, the more they relied on external modification as a means of downgrading. Compared to the control group, both learner groups exhibited a higher frequency of using combinations of external downgraders in their speech acts. Furthermore, in comparison to the GNS group, the learners showed a significant overuse of external downgraders in requests and displayed a slight inclination towards employing more external modification in complaints. This reliance on external moves aligns with previous research findings, which frequently report this interlanguage tendency (e.g., Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009, 2012). Overall, the findings suggest that the learners consistently employed external modification as a pragmatic strategy to enhance politeness, mitigate their requests and complaints, and to effectively persuade their interlocutors. In the following, we will examine the reasons behind these findings.

To understand why beginner and lower intermediate learners employed external modification to such a high degree in the provided data sets, the distribution of different sub-types of downgraders in requests and complaints was examined within both the control group and the learner groups. While the frequency of various external downgraders varied depending on the speech act in the GNS data, two specific downgraders, namely *grounders* and *preparators*, consistently appeared with high frequency in both requests and complaints. It is

noteworthy that not only did the learners use these two external downgraders most frequently, but that they also overused them as compared to the native speakers. This indicates that the learners relied heavily on grounders and preparators as modifiers in their speech acts, as well as on *compensation* in requests and *conciliatory expressions* in complaints. These four types of external downgraders will be the focal point of our further discussion. By analyzing their usage patterns, we can gain insight into the factors contributing to the learners' high employment of external modification as well as the implications for their pragmatic development.

On examining the preparator, it became evident that both beginner and lower intermediate learners exhibited a tendency to 'over-prepare' their requests and complaints as compared to the control group. An analysis of the DCT data uncovered a distinct pattern in learner behavior, wherein requests and complaints were characterized by the inclusion of shared knowledge and repetition of known facts between interlocutors throughout the test. Notably, when expressing complaints, the learners went as far as recalling previous conversations with the addressee so as to establish the complaint's context, following a 'she said, he said' approach. Consequently, this resulted in an elongated and somewhat redundant preparatory phase before transitioning to the actual request or complaint. Edmondson & House (1991) introduced the term "waffle phenomenon" precisely so as to describe this kind of increased usage of external modifiers by L2 learners in the target language context. Furthermore, the learners demonstrated a propensity to integrate content from written prompts into their supportive moves. The observation that L2 learners are strongly influenced by the content of written DCT items in supporting their speech acts gains further support from studies by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986), Hassall (2001, 2012) and Billmyer & Varghese (2000) and Otcu & Zeyrek (2008). The findings of those authors indicate that L2 learners incorporate content from the written stimuli into their supportive moves. Moreover, they demonstrate that the usage of external downgrading increases when the written prompts provide a higher amount of contextual information. The frequent overuse of external modifiers by L2 learners, as commonly assumed in ILP research, may thus be attributed, at least partially, to the use of the written DCT as a data collection instrument. This led Martí-Arnándiz (2008) to conclude that "role plays and other oral data elicitation methods seem likelier to have

fostered the resort to internal modification subtypes like hesitators, while written discourse completion tests […] might have resulted in longer answers (i.e., verbosity) full of external modifiers" (2008: 165-166).

In addition, it is worth noting that the present learner informants encountered challenges in effectively conveying relevant preparatory details concisely. Instead, they tended to separate information into simple sentences, thereby increasing the frequency of multiple preparatory statements in their speech acts. This phenomenon was attributed to their limited grammatical competence in constructing more syntactically complex sentences. In certain instances within the DCT items, the heightened use of preparatory statements was also associated with learners placing a greater emphasis on the relational aspect of their interaction with the addressee. Consequently, this led to more extensive and prolonged preparatory statements.

I would like to highlight that in addition to the afore-mentioned points, there is an additional finding that specifically pertains to complaints. Notably, the learners showed a consistent overuse of preparators followed by the head act *das ist ungerecht / that is unfair*. The frequent occurrence of preparators immediately preceding the assertion of unfairness suggests that the learners may have faced challenges in constructing the argumentative structure of direct complaints. Instead of providing a direct and concise statement of their complaint, they tended to rely on preparators to describe or reiterate the complaint situation before expressing their dissatisfaction. This indicates a potential difficulty in formulating complaints in a clear and structured manner. By including preparators, the learners aimed to provide additional details and context surrounding their complaints, possibly in an attempt to justify their dissatisfaction. However, this approach often led to longer and less focused preparatory phases before addressing the core complaint. These findings indicate that elementary and lower intermediate learners may have lacked familiarity with the genre conventions and requirements of direct complaints in the German language. Consequently, they experienced challenges in structuring and expressing their complaints concisely and coherently.

In addition to the overuse of preparators, both elementary and lower intermediate learners demonstrated a tendency to excessively employ grounders in their requests and complaints, often incorporating multiple grounders within a

single speech act. The preference for the grounder among L2 learners stands out as one of the most consistently reported findings in the research on interlanguage pragmatics. Numerous studies, such as those conducted by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008, 2009) and Hassall (2001, 2012), have documented this phenomenon. Unlike the learner behavior of employing multiple grounders, the GNS displayed a more concise and direct approach, conveying the most relevant reasons for their requests or complaints in a single sentence, often by utilizing established pragmatic routines. Similar to the findings regarding preparators, elementary and lower intermediate learners presented an increased amount of grounder-related information as compared to the native speaker group, and they often did so by utilizing separate statements. The learners' inclination to provide excessive information, particularly with respect to the reasons for their speech acts, may reflect their prioritization of clarity over conciseness. They recognized the significance of avoiding misunderstandings and ensuring the accurate transmission of their ideas to the addressee. Along the same lines, the learners' inclination to provide ample supportive moves, particularly through the overuse of grounders, has been attributed to a playing-it-safe strategy, as is explained in the research literature (cf. Edmonson & House 1991; Warga 2004; Schauer 2009). This is also related to the fact that offering explanations for an intrusive act not only provides a rationale for the interlocutor but that is also elicits an empathetic response, making it the "psychologically most plausible" approach to supporting requests or complaints (House & Kasper 1987: 1281).

Returning to the present learner data, their grounding-behavior can further be attributed to their limited grammatical proficiency, which presented challenges in constructing syntactically complex sentences. The learners' difficulty in organizing and integrating multiple pieces of information into a single sentence led them to rely on separate statements for grounding. This indicates that their L2 grammatical skills may still be developing, resulting in a preference for structuring their speech acts in a more simplified and segmented manner. These observations reiterate the significant role that grammar, particularly syntactically complex structures, plays in effectively conveying pragmatic intent. What further reinforces these findings is the fact that elementary and lower intermediate learners exhibited a lack of familiarity with suitable routine phrases for grounding, which typically enables concise and precise expression. Consequently, in the

absence of appropriate routines in their interlanguage, learners resorted to providing additional elaboration through multiple grounders, resulting in longer and more repetitive requests when compared to native speaker production. This observation calls into question the contention of Bialystok's (1993, 1994) Two-Dimensional Model that the development of processing capacity takes precedence over the acquisition of new representations. The difficulties the learners had in successfully using routine formulae indicate that the acquisition of new L2-specific pragmatic knowledge may be more challenging for learners than assumed by the Two-Dimensional Model.

As a third point of discussion, I would like to highlight the notable overuse of two more external downgraders, namely compensation by elementary learners in requests and conciliatory expressions by intermediate learners in complaints. Both of these downgraders can be seen as reflecting a positive politeness strategy, aimed at maintaining and enhancing social relationships by expressing empathy and concern for the interlocutor's face. This observed pattern of employing compensation strategies and conciliatory expressions can be attributed to several factors. First, it indicates the learners' heightened awareness of the potential negative impact their requests and complaints may have on their interlocutors, and their strong emphasis on fostering positive relationships. In addition, the influence of L1 sociocultural norms may have also played a role in shaping their request and complaint behavior. Overall, it was found that the learner informants tended to prioritize a relationship orientation when complaining or requesting, whereas GNS focused more on the content of the exchange. These findings provide support to Shammas's (2013) argument which challenges the assumption that a culture's orientation towards negative or positive politeness is solely determined by matters of face. In the Arab world, polite language use is strongly influenced by additional social values such as tradition, honor, family as a collective unit, and religion. These factors contribute to a greater tendency towards employing positive politeness strategies in Arabic (cf. Shammas 2013: 142). Consequently, the learners' external downgrading behavior may to some extent reflect the influence of L1 sociocultural norms, shaping their request and complaint behavior in line with the emphasis on positive politeness in their linguistic and cultural background. Further research is, however, necessary to provide evidence of possible transfer behavior on the part of the learners.

Last, I will now consider how to incorporate the preceding findings into the current research landscape. In the field of interlanguage pragmatics, the overuse of external modification by learners has commonly been attributed to a compensation strategy for their limited use of internal modification, particularly syntactic downgraders. According to this argument, L2 learners may lack the grammatical proficiency to employ syntactic downgraders, and thus resort to the excessive use of external modification devices to make up for the deficit. *How do the current data relate to this argumentation?*

To start with, the findings discussed so far provide evidence that the elementary learners produced syntactic and lexical downgraders in both requests and complaints, albeit with a significantly lower frequency than GNS. Moreover, it has been shown that elementary learners significantly overused external downgraders in requests, and further demonstrated a tendency to employ slightly more external modification in complaints, as compared to GNS. Through an analysis of the data, it can be concluded that at the elementary stage of language development, head acts that were not sufficiently mitigated internally were often augmented with extensive and frequent external moves to reinforce their communicative intent. This finding suggests that beginner learners relied more heavily on external modification to explicitly convey their intended meaning, as well as to alleviate any potential interpersonal concerns present in their request and complaint head acts, which may in turn be insufficiently mitigated by internal modification. Based on this finding, it appears reasonable to expect that with higher levels of grammatical competence and the resulting increase in syntactic modification, intermediate learners would rely less heavily on external modification, thus moving closer towards the target use. The empirical data, however, did not confirm this expectation: The learners demonstrated an increasing reliance on both syntactic and external modification as they gained greater grammatical proficiency. Admittedly, the augmentation in external modification was less pronounced than that of its syntactic counterpart. The reason for the relatively minor increase in the use of external modification may be due to the fact that learners at the elementary level had already relied heavily on supportive moves, whereas there was greater potential for improvement in the use of syntactic modification from the beginner to intermediate level. While intermediate level learners still overused grounders and preparators for the reasons

mentioned earlier, they also expanded their range of external moves as their grammatical proficiency increased. This led to a general increase in the overall use of external modification, as new types of downgraders were added.

The persistent tendency towards verbosity and overelaboration observed among lower intermediate learners has been attributed to the interplay of two conflicting language learning experiences (cf. Schauer 2009; Warga 2004): While the learners may have the intention to showcase their newly acquired pragmalinguistic abilities, they might still harbor insecurities with regard to certain aspects of target language usage. This, in turn may lead to a desire for clarity and a concern to maintain an adequate level of politeness. Consequently, learners may adopt a playing-it-safe strategy, as mentioned above, by incorporating excessive supportive moves, i.e., additional preparators and grounders to ensure effective communication and message delivery. The integration of newly acquired external downgrader types further contributes to their pragmatic repertoire and, not to forget that the influence of L1 sociocultural norms may contribute to the adoption of additional communication strategies, such as relationship-oriented external downgraders. It is, however, important to interpret these findings considering the elicitation instrument used, as it may have potentially favored the frequent use of external modification.

7 Learner perception of syntactic modification in German request and complaint speech acts: Insight from the PPT

Building on the investigation of pragmatic production, the second part of this study shifted the focus towards pragmatic perception. The aim was to explore possible links between learners' proficiency in producing syntactic downgraders and their ability to detect these pragmalinguistic features in the target language. Unlike the previous section, the latter part of this investigation was not guided by any specific hypotheses, but by an open research question: *To what extent are learners' abilities to perceive and produce syntactic downgraders related?*

This chapter presents the findings from this investigation and provides insight into the role of pragmatic perception in the L2 acquisition of speech act modification. In contrast to the analyses presented in § 5 and § 6, § 7 will not include a comparison of the three participant groups. The target responses used in the PPT items were derived from GNS data and underwent thorough pretesting (cf. 4.1.2). As a result, the following analysis concentrates exclusively on the two learner groups. To recap, the format of the PPT was a standard multiple-choice design of four answer options, with one pragmatically appropriate answer and three distractors per item. In the case of requests, Distractor 1 was a syntactically overcomplex form. For this purpose, the query preparatory strategy was employed in combination with an overuse of syntactic downgraders. Distractors 2 and 3 were overly direct as compared to the target response. Distractor 2 used an imperative that was mitigated by the politeness marker. Similarly, Distractor 3 made use of an imperative structure but included the lexical downgraders understaters and downtoners. In the case of complaints, Distractors 1-3 were designed as variations of the most appropriate response option. Distractor 1 employed the most indirect strategy type, incorporating a hint that was further attenuated by a change in perspective. Distractor 2, on the other hand, adopted a more direct approach than the appropriate response option, either omitting the syntactic downgraders or replacing them with internal upgraders. Distractor 3 encompassed the most direct complaint strategies, explicitly condemning the action or person involved.

As the request and complaint items were minimally different in structure, the results for both speech acts will be presented sequentially in the next section, starting with requests. The analysis proceeds according to the following four steps:

a) **The general response behavior of elementary and lower intermediate learners:** The aim was to investigate whether learners can relate the syntactic downgraders used by native speakers in requests and complaints to their strategic deployment in the service of politeness. In addition, I aimed to understand if (and how) the range of items in each assessment separates the populations of test-takers.
b) **The response behavior of learners in relation to sociopragmatic parameters:** The aim was to investigate whether learners can recognize the co-occurrence of syntactic downgraders with elements of context such as social dominance.
c) **The response behavior with regard to individual syntactic downgraders:** The aim was to investigate whether there is a discernible order of acquisition for individual syntactic downgraders, or put differently, whether there is a clear *order of perception* for these pragmalinguistic elements among learners.
d) **Investigating the extent of interconnection between the perception and production of syntactic modification during L2 development in learners:** More specifically, whether recognizing appropriate syntactic downgraders in the PPT leads to producing these downgraders in comparable DCT situations, and whether non-recognition of appropriate syntactic downgraders in the PPT results in their non-production in comparable DCT situations.

7.1 Results

Requests. Figure 27 demonstrates the general response behavior of elementary and lower intermediate learners for the six request items in the PPT.

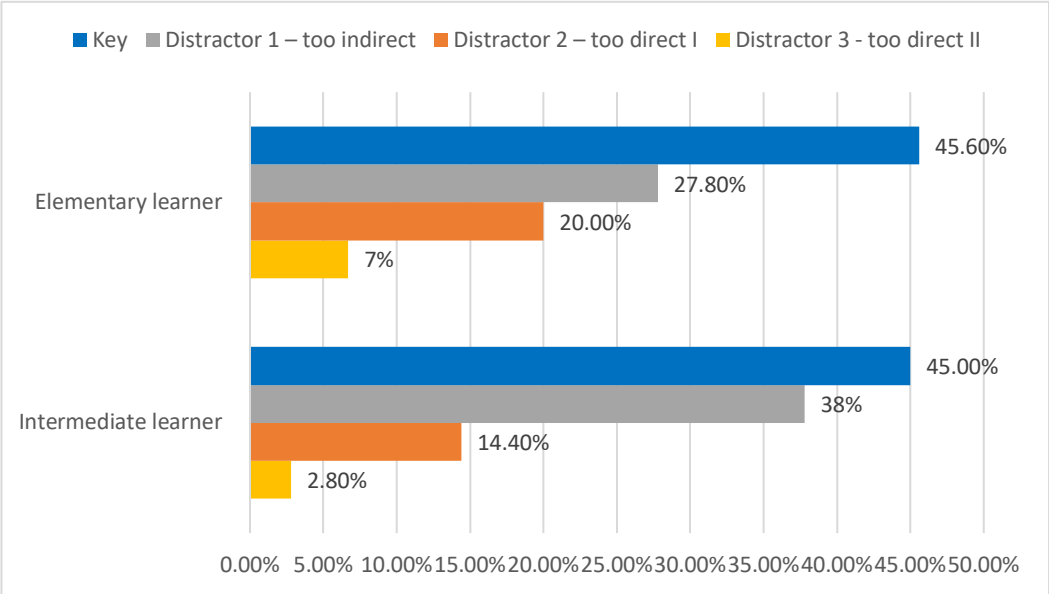

Figure 27. Response patterns of learners in the PPT for request items (in %)

In the elementary learner group, the results indicate that 45 % of the participants chose the pragmatically most appropriate response, while 27.8 % opted for the syntactically overcomplex form (Distractor 1). On the other hand, 26.7 % of the beginner level learners chose a direct request realization. Among the learners who opted for Distractor 2 and 3, the imperative mitigated by use of the politeness marker was preferred by 20 % of the participants compared to 6.7 %, who chose a head act modified with either a downtoner or understater. At first glance, the results for the intermediate level group seem to indicate that these learners performed at a similar level as the elementary learners in terms of pragmatic perceptual competence, with 45 % of this group selecting the most appropriate answer option. However, further analysis reveals a shift in lower intermediate learners' response behavior. In particular, a decrease in the selection of direct request realizations was observed, with only 14.4 % of learners choosing Distractor 2 and a mere 2.8 % selecting Distractor 3. This change in answer behavior can be attributed to a higher proportion of participants in this group (38 %) selecting Distractor 1, i.e., the highly indirect and syntactically overcomplex request realization. These findings imply that there was a developmental

progression in the lower intermediate learners' pragmatic perceptual competence, with a preference for more syntactically mitigated request realizations as learners became more grammatically advanced. In addition, the results suggest that learners may have had a higher level of awareness and familiarity with the use of politeness markers as compared to downtoners and understaters as a means of mitigating requests, as substantiated by the greater percentage of learners who chose Distractor 2 over Distractor 3. Subsequently, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed to examine the association between group membership (elementary learners versus lower intermediate learners) and responses to the six PPT request items. The results revealed no statistically significant differences (all $p > 0.05$) in the responses between the two learner groups for the request items. These findings suggest that learners' group membership, which reflects their grammatical competence level in the L2, did not exert a significant influence on their pragmatic perceptions with regard to syntactic request modification.

The ensuing analysis centered on examining the learners' response behavior in relation to sociopragmatic parameters. In order to test learners' receptive sociopragmatic competence, i.e., to test whether learners were able to judge the contextual requirements of syntactic downgraders, two pragmatically appropriate response options for requests were included in the PPT that did not require a syntactic downgrader (cf. 4.2.4). This concerns the targets in items 4 *Dirty Bathroom* and 6 *Kiosk* from Condition 2 (S>A), in which case syntactic downgraders were built into Distractor 1. Tables 68 and 69 illustrate the response behavior of elementary and lower intermediate learners for each request item in the DCT.

Table 68. Response patterns of elementary learners for individual request items in the PPT (in %)

	Condition 1 (S=A) 2 (S>A)	**Target – too indirect**	**Distractor 1 – too indirect**	**Distractor 2 – too direct I**	**Distractor 3 – too direct II**
		% (count)	**% (count)**	**% (count)**	**% (count)**
Item 1	1	60 (18)	16.67 (5)	13.33 (4)	10 (3)
Item 2	1	36.67 (11)	26.67 (8)	26.67 (8)	10 (3)
Item 3	1	56.67 (17)	20 (6)	16.67 (5)	6.67 (2)
Item 4	2	40 (12)	43.33 (13)	13.33 (4)	3.33 (1)
Item 5	2	26.67 (8)	40 (12)	23.33 (7)	10 (3)
Item 6	2	53.33 (16)	20 (6)	26.67 (8)	0 (0)

Table 69. Response patterns of intermediate learners for individual request items in the PPT (in %)

	Condition 1 (S=A) 2 (S>A)	Target – too indirect	Distractor 1 – too indirect	Distractor 2 – too direct I	Distractor 3 – too direct II
		% (count)	% (count)	% (count)	% (count)
Item 1	1	53.33 (16)	40 (12)	6.67 (2)	0 (0)
Item 2	1	26.67 (8)	50 (15)	13.33 (4)	10 (3)
Item 3	1	50 (15)	40 (12)	10 (3)	0 (0)
Item 4	2	50 (15)	50 (15)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Item 5	2	23.33 (7)	36.67 (11)	33.33 (10)	6.67 (2)
Item 6	2	66.67 (20)	10 (3)	23.33 (7)	0 (0)

Focusing on the results of the elementary learners first, it is evident that they demonstrated equal rates of selecting the target response in items 4 and 6 (46.67 %) as compared to the syntactically modified targets in items 1,2,3 and 5 (45 %), suggesting a certain level of ability in recognizing the use of syntactic downgraders in requests in conjunction with the contextual factor social dominance. There were, however, discernible differences in learner behavior for PPT items 4 and 6. In item 4, elementary learners chose the target response and Distractor 1 with similar frequency, whereas in item 6, a more marked preference for the pragmatically appropriate response was observed, with 53.33 % of learners choosing it, compared to 20 % for Distractor 1. The disparity can be attributed to the varying levels of directness within the target responses for the two items, as seen in item 4 *Dirty bathroom* and item 6 *Kiosk* below.

Item 4 *Dirty bathroom*

a) Putz heute bitte mal das Badezimmer.
(Please clean the bathroom today.)
b) Dürfte ich dich fragen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du heute das Badezimmer putzt?
(May I ask you if it would be possible for you to clean the bathroom today?)
c) Putz sofort das Badezimmer.
(Clean the bathroom immediately.)
d) Putz sofort das scheiß Badezimmer.
(Clean the damn bathroom right now.)

Item 6 *Kiosk*

a) Ich glaube, es fehlen noch 5€.
(I believe there are still 5€ missing.)
b) Würden Sie mir noch 5€ zurückgeben?
(Would you give me back 5€?)
c) Geben Sie mir bitte noch 5€ zurück.
(Give me back 5€, please.)
d) Geben Sie mir mal noch 5€ zurück.
(Give me back 5€.)

The target in item 4 *Dirty bathroom* uses a mood derivable strategy in combination with a politeness marker and downtoner, rendering it more direct compared to Distractor 1. On the other hand, the target request head act in item 6 *Kiosk* is non-conventionally indirect, which leads to a higher level of indirectness compared to Distractor 1. The increased level of directness in the item 4 target likely elicited a higher tendency to choose Distractor 1, i.e., a conventionally indirect and syntactically over-modified request. Conversely, for item 6, those learners who did not choose the most indirect option, i.e., the *hint* in the target, more frequently opted for a more direct and more explicit option with Distractor 2 instead, i.e., a mood derivable + politeness marker. The findings suggest that elementary level learners demonstrated a degree of awareness regarding the impact of directness levels and syntactic modification on potential politeness perceptions in the L2, although their selection of (syntactically modified) responses may not always align with the sociopragmatic context.

An analysis of the response behavior of intermediate level learners reveals similar findings to those of the beginner-level group. Notably, intermediate learners selected the target response even more frequently than beginners in items 4 and 6, with slightly lower numbers for the target response in items 1, 2, 3, and 5. The latter finding can be explained by a greater tendency on part of the intermediate learners to choose Distractor 1 in status-equal items, i.e., items 1-3 from Condition 1. While Distractor 1 is selected with similar frequencies in Condition 2 item number 5 *Broken shower*, the change in social status finds expression in the selection of the more direct Distractor 2 by 33.33 % of intermediate learners. Last, the variations in response patterns between item 4 *Dirty bathroom* and item 6 *Kiosk*, previously examined in the context of beginner learners, were similarly observed in the dataset of intermediate learners and exhibited a more pronounced effect in this group.

On revisiting the frequency data in Tables 68 and 69, concerning the selection of the target response in the six request items by elementary and lower intermediate learners, a noteworthy pattern emerged in item 5 *Broken shower*. In contrast to the other items, both elementary learners (26.67 %) and intermediate learners (23.33 %) exhibited a markedly lower frequency of selecting the pragmatically most appropriate response. Having already demonstrated that the influence of varying sociopragmatic parameters does not play a significant role in this case, there must be other reasons for the lower recognition rates. The target in this scenario involves a query preparatory strategy, modified by the use of a subjunctive and negation: *Könnten Sie den Handwerker nicht früher bestellen? Couldn't you schedule the handyman earlier?* Since both the use of the strategy type and the subjunctive posed no difficulties for the learners in other PPT items, it is likely that both elementary and lower intermediate learners were not familiar with the pragmatic function of the syntactic downgrader *negation* and hence, that they resorted to alternative response options. Therefore, the question arises as to whether there is an observable order of acquisition for the individual syntactic downgraders examined in the request items of the PPT.

Table 70 displays the frequency at which specific syntactic downgraders and their pragmatic force in requests were recognized by the learners and thus selected in the PPT. Notably, intermediate learners exhibited a lower performance rate as compared to elementary learners across all types of syntactic downgraders. This can be attributed to their tendency to choose the syntactically over-complex Distractor type 1 more frequently. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the percentages presented in Table 70 do not capture the full spectrum of learner response behavior. In fact, it is plausible that a larger number of learners have identified the examined downgrader types, considering that the syntactic downgraders, including subjunctives, indirect questions, and past tense, are also present in Distractor 1. Notwithstanding the limitations, the values presented in Table 70 can provide valuable insights into the receptive competence of the learner informants, allowing us to discern certain tendencies in the perception of syntactic downgraders among learners in the early and mid-level stages of grammatical competence.

Table 70. Learners' perception of syntactic downgraders in target request items in PPT (in %)

		G1	G2
Item 1 & 2	Past tense modal *wollte* + indirect question	48.3	40
Item 3	Subjunctive *könntest*	56.7	50
Item 5	Negation	26.7	23.3
Item 4 & 6	Lexical downgraders: politeness marker + subjectivizer	46.7	58.3

The results in Table 70 reveal the following sequence: The perception of the downgrader *negation* remains a relatively rare occurrence for both learner groups (G1: 26.7 %, G2: 23.3 %). This is followed by the combination of the past tense form *wollte* with indirect questions, which is chosen more frequently (G1: 48.3 %, G2: 40 %). Lexical downgraders, such as *bitte / please* or *ich glaube / I believe*, similarly demonstrate a moderate level of recognition (G1: 46.7 %, G2: 58.3 %). Finally, the subjunctive form of the modal verb *können / can* emerges as the most frequently selected syntactic downgrader with percentages ranging from 50 % to 56.7 %.

Subsequently, an investigation was conducted to ascertain whether the learners' ability to recognize the syntactic downgraders *past tense + indirect question*, *subjunctive*, and *negation*, in the PPT, corresponded to their utilization of these forms during comparable DCT scenarios. An analysis of the occurrence of these specific syntactic downgrader types in both the DCT and PPT was thus undertaken across all 60 learner datasets, the results of which are presented in Table 71. The analysis provides several key findings. First, it demonstrates a clear pattern which indicates that pragmatic perception precedes pragmatic production in the examined cases. For instance, consider the syntactic downgraders *past tense + indirect question* and *subjunctive*. In the case of *past tense + indirect question*, a large proportion of elementary learners (66.7 %) recognized and selected this form in the PPT task. However, only a small fraction of learners (3.3 %) actually employed this form in the DCT, indicating a disparity between perception and production. A similar trend is observed for the downgrader *subjunctive*, whereby a considerable number of elementary learners (43.3 %) chose the form in the PPT, yet only a modest percentage (13.3 %) modified their requests with subjunctive *können* in the DCT.

Table 71. Comparison of perception and production rates of syntactic downgraders in requests: PPT and DCT analysis (in %)

	G1	G2
Past tense modal *wollte* + indirect question		
Absent in both PPT and DCT	30	30
Absent in PPT, present in DCT	0	6.7
Present in PPT, absent in DCT	66.7	60
Present in both PPT and DCT	3.3	3.3
Subjunctive modal *könntest*		
Absent in both PPT and DCT	36.7	40
Absent in PPT, present in DCT	6.7	10
Present in PPT, absent in DCT	43.3	36.7
Present in both PPT and DCT	13.3	13.3
Negation		
Absent in both PPT and DCT	73.3	76.7
Present in PPT, absent in DCT	26.7	23.3

Notably, the syntactic downgrader *negation* is not yet employed in the DCT by both the elementary and intermediate level learners. It is nevertheless noteworthy that a substantial portion of learners (G1: 26.7 %, G2: 23.3 %) already demonstrated recognition of negation in its pragmatic function. At the same time, it is important to note that there were instances in which the learners demonstrated pragmatic productions of certain syntactic downgraders in the DCT, despite not selecting them in the PPT. More specifically, 6.7 % of elementary learners (2 learners) and 10 % of intermediate learners (3 learners) used the subjunctive modal *könntest* as a downgrading device in the DCT, despite not choosing it in the PPT. Similarly, 6.7 % of intermediate learners (2 learners) employed the combination of *past tense* + *indirect question* in their request productions, indicating a potential discrepancy between their perception and production of these forms. Upon reevaluating the perception data of these seven elementary and lower intermediate learners, it was observed that they consistently resorted to Distractor 1, which involved syntactically overcomplex request realizations in all relevant PPT items. This suggests that these learners possessed a heightened awareness of the pragmatic function of these syntactic modifiers, although they may have overgeneralized them and not yet have fully grasped their sociocultural

dependence. It can therefore be concluded that even in these cases, pragmatic perception preceded pragmatic production.

There is an additional observation that warrants closer examination. It pertains to the relatively low perception rate for negation in the PPT, ranging from 23.3 % to 26.7 %. This rate was notably lower when compared to the perception rates of 36.7 % to 43.3 % for subjunctive and 60 % to 66.7 % for past tense + indirect question. These findings indicate differences in the complexity levels of different syntactic downgraders, both in terms of pragmatic perception and production. In particular, the higher syntactic complexity of the past tense + indirect question downgrader may have contributed to its delayed production when compared to the subjunctive modal *können*, even though the learners also demonstrated a relatively high perception rate for the former. Second, the nuanced understanding of the syntactic downgrader negation requires learners to not only recognize the presence of negation but also to understand its effect on the overall politeness and persuasive power of the request. Besides, negated questions can pose a greater cognitive challenge for learners due to their syntactic complexity and the need to process both the negation and interrogative elements simultaneously. Thus, compared to the other syntactic downgraders tested, learners might struggle more with recognizing the pragmatic implications of negation. In addition, it should be noted that the instructional focus in language learning materials and classroom settings may vary with regard to the attention given to different syntactic downgraders. This variation in exposure and instruction can potentially impact learners' familiarity and proficiency in recognizing and producing specific forms, such as subjunctive and negation. Learners who have received less emphasis or practice on these particular syntactic features may find them more challenging to understand and employ accurately. In the following, we will proceed with an analysis of the perception data regarding the speech act of complaint.

Complaints. Figure 28 provides an overview of the general response patterns observed among elementary and lower intermediate learners for the six complaint items in the PPT.

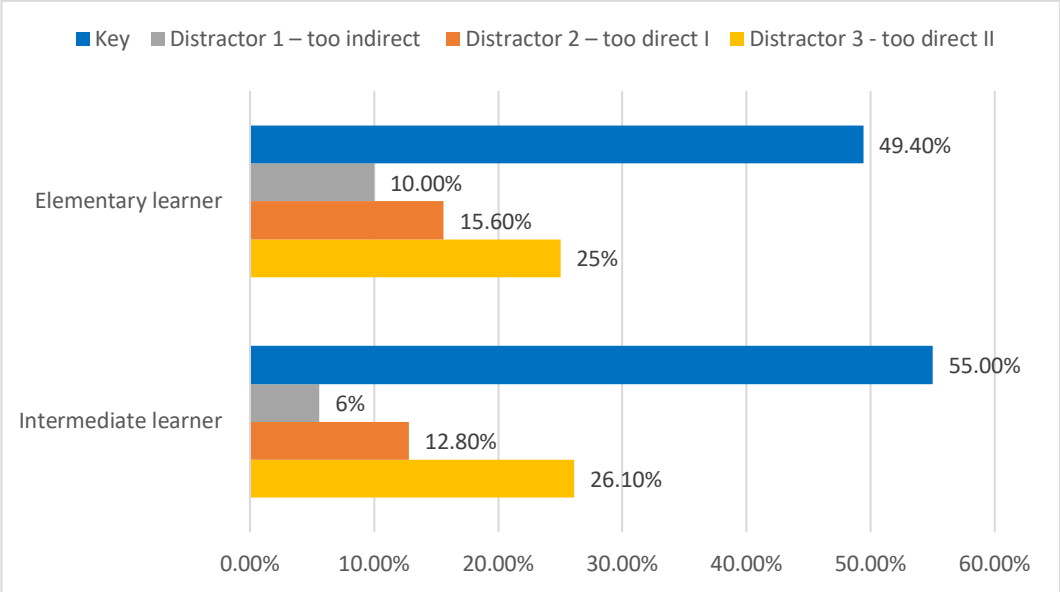

Figure 28. Response patterns of learners in the PPT for six complaint items (in %)

The analysis reveals notable similarities in the response patterns of elementary and lower intermediate learners in complaint scenarios. Roughly 50 % of learners from both grammatical proficiency groups demonstrated their ability to select the most pragmatically appropriate response, with the advanced learners (G2: 55 %) showing a slightly superior performance compared to the elementary learners (G1: 49.40 %). In contrast to requests, the selection rate of Distractor 1 in complaints was not only the lowest overall but also further decreased as the learners' grammatical competence increased (G1: 10 %, G2: 6 %). These response variations can be attributed to the modified structure of the PPT for complaints, where Distractor 1 did not employ additional syntactic downgraders but instead relied on hinting strategies. Furthermore, less than half of the participants opted for a direct complaint realization. Interestingly, when informants opted for higher levels of directness, they tended to choose the most explicit strategy types, such as explicit condemnation of the action or person, as evidenced by the higher values for Distractor 3 compared to Distractor 2. In order to examine the association between group membership (elementary learners versus lower intermediate learners) and responses to the six PPT complaint items, the Mann-Whitney U test

was employed to analyze the data. As for the request items, the results revealed no statistically significant differences (all $p > 0.05$) in the responses between the two learner groups for the complaint items. This suggests that the learners' group membership, reflecting their grammatical competence level in the L2, did not significantly influence their pragmatic perceptions concerning syntactic complaint modification.

For the purpose of assessing learners' receptive sociopragmatic competence and their ability to discern the contextual requirements of syntactic downgraders, two pragmatically appropriate response options for complaints were included in the PPT that did not necessitate the use of a syntactic downgrader. More specifically, this pertains to the targets in item 9 *Rent increase* (Condition 1, S=A) and item 10 *Dentist* (Condition 2, S>A). In both items, syntactic downgraders were incorporated into Distractor 3. Tables 72 and 73 provide an overview of the response patterns exhibited by elementary and lower intermediate learners for each complaint item in the DCT.

Table 72. Response patterns of elementary learners for individual complaint items in the PPT (in %)

	Condition 1 (S=A) 2 (S>A)	**Target response – too indirect**	**Distractor 1 – too indirect**	**Distractor 2 – too direct I**	**Distractor 3 – too direct II**
		% (count)	**% (count)**	**% (count)**	**% (count)**
Item 7	1	60 (18)	13.33 (4)	13.33 (4)	13.33 (4)
Item 8	1	66.67 (20)	3.33 (1)	20 (6)	10 (3)
Item 9	1	23.33 (7)	13.33 (4)	3.33 (1)	60 (18)
Item 10	2	10 (3)	3.33 (1)	36.67 (11)	50 (15)
Item 11	2	66.67 (20)	13.33 (4)	16.67 (5)	3.33 (1)
Item 12	2	70 (21)	13.33 (4)	3.33 (1)	13.33 (4)

Table 73. Response patterns of intermediate learners in the PPT for individual complaint items in the PPT (in %)

	Condition 1 (S=A) 2 (S>A)	Target response – too indirect % (count)	Distractor 1 – too indirect % (count)	Distractor 2 – too direct I % (count)	Distractor 3 – too direct II % (count)
Item 7	1	80 (24)	0 (0)	3.33 (1)	16.67 (5)
Item 8	1	63.33 (19)	6.67 (2)	23.33 (7)	6.67 (2)
Item 9	1	20 (6)	0 (0)	6.67 (2)	73.33 (22)
Item 10	2	16.67 (5)	3.33 (1)	23.33 (7)	56.67 (17)
Item 11	2	73.33 (22)	13.33 (4)	10 (3)	3.33 (1)
Item 12	2	76.67 (23)	13.33 (4)	10 (3)	0 (0)

When examining the response behavior of both learner groups in item 9 *Rent increase* and 10 *Dentist* compared to the remaining four items, a notable discrepancy emerges in their ability to select responses based on the contextual requirements of syntactic downgraders. While the learners demonstrated a relatively high correct response rate ranging from 65.83 % to 73.33 % for items 7, 8, 11, and 12, their recognition of pragmatically appropriate but syntactically unmodified complaint head acts in items 9 and 10 was notably lower, with only 16.67 % of elementary learners and 18.33 % of lower intermediate learners exhibiting such perceptions. These findings suggest a challenge for elementary and lower intermediate learners in accurately perceiving syntactic downgraders in contextually appropriate manners during complaint scenarios. Which factors contribute to these poor performance rates?

It is noticeable that both learner groups exhibited a preference for selecting Distractor 3, *Ich finde es nicht in Ordnung, dass Sie die Miete erhöhen / I find it not acceptable that you are increasing the rent* with a range of 60-73.33 % in item 9 *Rent increase*, as well as Distractor 3, *Ich finde es nicht in Ordnung, dass Sie bei der letzten Behandlung einen Fehler gemacht haben / I find it not acceptable that you made a mistake during the last treatment* with a range of 50-56.67 % in item 10 *Dentist*.[134] Despite the fact that both item 9 and item 10 presented Distractor 3 as a more direct complaint strategy, it also incorporated two syntactic downgraders, i.e., the combination of negative evaluation + *dass*-clause. More specifically, this means that the majority of learner informants in item 9 and 10

[134] On reflection, these findings provide an explanation for the elevated frequencies observed for Distractor 3 in Figure 28.

opted for the syntactically modified complaint. These findings suggest that both elementary and lower intermediate learners in this study exhibited an inclination to overestimate the significance of syntactic modifications in conveying politeness in target language complaints, thereby demonstrating an overgeneralization of the pragmatic function of syntactic downgraders across diverse contexts with varying socio-contextual variables. Based on this finding, which highlights the frequent selection of Distractor 3 in item 9 and 10 by both elementary and lower intermediate learners, it was deemed justifiable to incorporate this response option into the analysis of the perception frequencies of individual syntactic downgraders in the PPT.

The response patterns exhibited by the elementary and lower intermediate learners are presented in Table 74 for further examination. On closer inspection of the results, it becomes evident that the presence of a clear and distinct acquisition sequence, as observed in the case of requests, was not as prominent in the context of complaints. In fact, the perception rates for syntactic modification in complaints were already relatively higher at the beginner level, particularly for forms of embedding, and exhibited further improvement with the learners' advancing grammatical competence. This phenomenon may be attributed to the lexically unambiguous meaning of the three syntactic downgraders investigated within the scope of complaint modification. Overall, the selected modifiers, namely negation in the form of negative evaluation, *aber*- and *dass*-clauses, were detected by the elementary and lower intermediate learners at rates ranging from 55 % to 78.3 % in the PPT.

Table 74. Learners' perception of syntactic downgraders in complaint items in PPT (in %)

		G1	**G2**
Item 7 & 12	*aber*-clause	65	78.3
Item 8 & 11	Negation	66.7	68.3
Item 9 & 10	Negation + *dass*-clause	55	65
Item 9 & 10	No syntactic downgrader	16.7	18.3

Finally, the study explored the extent to which there is an interplay between the learners' development in perceiving and producing syntactic downgraders in complaints. Accordingly, a thorough investigation was carried out to determine

whether the learners' ability to recognize the syntactic downgraders, including *negation*, *aber*-clauses, and negation + *dass*-clauses, in the PPT aligned with their usage of these forms in comparable DCT scenarios. To examine this interconnection, an analysis was performed on the occurrence of these specific syntactic downgrader types in both the DCT and PPT across all 60 learner datasets. The findings of this analysis are presented in Table 75.

Table 75. Comparison of perception and production rates of syntactic downgraders in complaints: PPT and DCT analysis (in %)

	G1	**G2**
***Aber*-clause**		
Absent in both PPT and DCT	16.7	6.7
Absent in PPT, present in DCT	0	0
Present in PPT, absent in DCT	70	63.3
Present in both PPT and DCT	13.3	30
Negation		
Absent in both PPT and DCT	3.3	10
Absent in PPT, present in DCT	0	0
Present in PPT, absent in DCT	43.3	33.3
Present in both PPT and DCT	53.3	56.7
Negation + *dass*-clause		
Absent in both PPT and DCT	20	6.7
Absent in PPT, present in DCT	6.7	6.7
Present in PPT, absent in DCT	63.3	30
Present in both PPT and DCT	10	56.7

The analysis presented in Table 75 demonstrates that, in L2 complaints, pragmatic perception of syntactic downgraders preceded their pragmatic production. More specifically, the syntactic downgraders *aber*-clause and negation were absent in the DCT learner data if they were not correctly perceived and selected in the PPT. In the case of negation + *dass*-clause, only 6.7 % of each learner group (i.e., two learners per group) employed these forms for their complaint modification, despite not selecting them in the PPT. Moreover, a large proportion of elementary and lower intermediate learners detected the three syntactic downgraders in the perception task but did not use them yet as part of their pragmatic productions, once again highlighting the temporal precedence of perception over production.

Despite the lack of statistical significance revealed by the earlier tests, the data analysis further suggests a positive relationship between the learners' level of L2 grammatical competence and the occurrence of syntactic downgrading in both the PPT and DCT data. Among the elementary learners, only 10 % selected *aber*-clauses in both the PPT and DCT, whereas this proportion rose to 30 % among intermediate learners. Similarly, for negation + *dass*-clauses a remarkable increase was observed, with 56.7 % of intermediate learners choosing this form in both the PPT and DCT, compared with only 10 % of elementary learners. Although the increase in the usage of negation was not as substantial, elementary learners already displayed relatively high values (G1: 53.3 %, G2: 56.7 %). The data further illustrates the influence of the complexity of each pragmalinguistic form on the rate of acquisition for both pragmatic perception and production. Notably, more than half (53.3 %) of elementary learners demonstrated the ability to recognize and produce negative evaluations as syntactic downgraders, indicating an early proficiency in this aspect. Conversely, while the two forms of embedding, i.e., *dass*- and *aber*-clauses were selected correctly in the PPT at an early stage, their pragmatic production exhibited a delayed pattern, with increasing production rates only observed among lower intermediate learners. These findings underscore the nuanced relationship between the complexity of syntactic downgrading devices and the developmental trajectory of learners' pragmatic receptive and productive competence.

7.2 Discussion

The previous section examined the receptive competence of learners at the elementary and lower intermediate level in order to establish potential correlations between their proficiency in producing syntactic downgraders and their ability to recognize these pragmalinguistic features in the target language. In the following analysis, I will discuss the results for both requests and complaints in conjunction, where feasible.

Let us begin by reviewing the response patterns exhibited by the learners in the pragmatic perception task. It was found that approximately 50 % of informants from both grammatical proficiency levels demonstrated a discernible competence in selecting the most pragmatically appropriate response for both request and complaint scenarios. In those cases in which the learners opted for

more direct request realizations, the results indicate a higher level of awareness and familiarity among learners with regard to the use of politeness markers for mitigating requests, and in contrast to downtoners and understaters. This is supported by the greater percentage of learners who chose Distractor 2 over Distractor 3, suggesting a preference for employing politeness markers as a pragmatic strategy in their request production. At this point, we can draw a parallel to the findings from the DCT analysis, which examined the L2 pragmatic productions of the learners. While the control group frequently employed downtoners and understaters in their request modification, both learner groups not only displayed a strong inclination towards politeness markers over downtoners and understaters but also significantly underutilized the latter two lexical downgraders. In the existing research literature, the frequent occurrence of overusing politeness markers and underusing downtoners in interlanguage pragmatics has been attributed to differences in the usage of these lexical downgraders (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 1999; Hassall 2001; Hill 1997; Martí-Arnándiz 2008). Adding *bitte/please* to a head act, particularly when placed externally, does not require knowledge of complex syntactic structures. However, accurately positioning downtoners within an utterance necessitates a higher level of syntactic complexity. While I do not aim to contradict this proposition, the current findings suggest the existence of perceptual differences even before the possibility of production arises. It is plausible that the delayed occurrence of downtoners in interlanguage production is not solely attributed to their heightened grammatical complexity, but also to the challenges the learners encounter in perceiving and comprehending the intricate and multifaceted meanings of modal particles, as discussed in § 6.1 and § 6.3.

Moreover, on closer examination of the group behavior in the PPT request items, a shift was observed from the elementary group to the lower intermediate group where, in contrast to 28 % of elementary learners, 38 % of lower intermediate learners opted for the distractor, which demonstrated an overuse of syntactic downgraders. A similar trend was observed in the complaint items. Within those items where the target response did not involve any syntactic modification, the majority of learner informants deviated and opted for the syntactically modified complaint instead. This trend was even more pronounced among the intermediate learners compared to the elementary learners.

Accordingly, there was a developmental progression in the lower intermediate learners' pragmatic perceptual competence, with a preference for more syntactically mitigated request and complaint realizations as learners became more grammatically advanced. This implies that the higher level of grammatical proficiency may have facilitated the intermediate learners' perception of these pragmalinguistic forms. Furthermore, it is worth noting that learners who opted for the syntactically overcomplex forms may have *over*emphasized and therewith *over*generalized the relevance of syntactic modification at that particular stage of their learning. A considerable number of the present learner informants thus displayed a tendency to overestimate the role of syntactic modifications in expressing politeness in target language requests and complaints.

This also entailed an overgeneralization of the pragmatic function of syntactic downgraders across diverse contexts with different socio-contextual variables. In particular, it was observed that elementary and intermediate level learners demonstrated a certain level of ability in recognizing the use of syntactic downgraders in requests, in conjunction with the contextual factor *social dominance*. However, their selection of responses did not consistently align with the sociopragmatic context. This tendency was even more pronounced in the case of complaints, as the findings indicated a challenge for elementary and lower intermediate learners in accurately perceiving and utilizing syntactic downgraders in contextually appropriate ways during complaint scenarios. These findings are largely consistent with the earlier analysis of DCT data in terms of the alignment of syntactic modification with sociopragmatic parameters (cf. § 5.1.2). Whereas the elementary learners showed no significant difference in the use of downgraders for requests or complaints, the intermediate learners demonstrated a significant difference in modifier usage for requests, indicating their progression towards adapting to situational variability and employing more syntactic downgraders in status-equal requests. This was not observed in complaints, where there was no significant difference between the two conditions for intermediate learners.

Taken together, both DCT and PPT results revealed that intermediate learners showed a higher level of receptive and productive competence regarding situational variation in request modification, compared to elementary learners. However, when it came to complaint modification, both learner groups

demonstrated a similar level of limited sensitivity to sociopragmatic parameters – in L2 production *and* perception. Furthermore, it is important to note that neither learner group demonstrated a consistent ability to systematically adjust their use of syntactic downgrading devices according to socio-contextual parameters, indicating a need for further development in their receptive and productive sociopragmatic competence. These findings corroborate the conclusions drawn by Trosborg (1995), Barron (2003), and Meyer (2007), who detect a slow development of sociopragmatic competence in relation to the relative features of pragmalinguistic competence.

Returning to the analysis of the PPT data, a discernible sequence emerged concerning learners' accurate perception of the individual syntactic downgraders investigated in the request items. The findings indicated the following acquisition pattern:

- Negation (negative interrogative) < past tense *wollen* + indirect question < politeness marker / subjectivizer < subjunctive *können*

The perception of the downgrader negation was found to be relatively infrequent for both learner groups. It was followed by the combination of the past tense form *wollte* with indirect questions, which was chosen more frequently. Lexical downgraders, such as *bitte/please* or *ich glaube/I believe* showed a moderate level of recognition. Finally, the subjunctive form of the modal verb *können/can* emerged as the most commonly selected syntactic downgrader, with percentages ranging from 50 % to 56.7 %. On closer examination of the complaint results, it became apparent that the presence of a clear and distinct acquisition sequence, as observed in the case of requests, was not as pronounced in the context of complaints. In fact, the perception rates for syntactic modification in complaints were already relatively higher at the beginner level, particularly for forms of embedding, and showed further improvement as the learners' grammatical competence advanced. This phenomenon can be attributed to the unambiguous lexical meaning of the three investigated syntactic downgraders within the scope of complaint modification. Overall, the selected modifiers, namely negation in the form of negative evaluation, *aber*- and *dass*-clauses, were detected by the elementary and lower intermediate learners at rates ranging from 55 % to 78.3 %

in the PPT. Based on these findings, the analysis of the perception data revealed a noteworthy pattern with regard to the pragmatic perception and production of syntactic downgraders in L2 requests and complaints. It was found that the learners demonstrated a higher level of recognition and selection of syntactic downgraders in the PPT task as compared to their actual usage in the DCT. In other words, the learners were more proficient in identifying appropriate syntactic downgraders for a given pragmatic context than in employing them effectively in their own speech acts. As noted above, approximately 50 % of elementary learners demonstrated the ability to identify the pragmatically most appropriate response option in the PPT, although this did not necessarily translate into their use of the corresponding syntactic downgraders in the DCT. These findings are consistent with arguments put forth by Bialystok (1993, 1994), Kasper & Rose (2002) and Hong & Shih (2013), suggesting that adult learners with lower proficiency may possess pragmatic categories but that they lack the necessary grammatical repertoire to express them. Moreover, it should be noted that instances where a syntactic downgrader was absent in the PPT but present in the DCT were rare and mostly attributed to intermediate learners' preference for syntactically over-modified head acts. Thus, without being able to detect correct form-function mappings, even the grammatically more advanced intermediate group did not produce the syntactic downgraders in question, indicating that the recognition of pragmalinguistic features is a prerequisite for their production. However, it is worth noting that according to Bardovi-Harlig (2009), perception alone is not a sufficient condition for pragmatic development. Other factors such as the overuse of familiar expressions, level of development, and sociopragmatic knowledge may also impact on the learners' pragmatic competence. Nonetheless, when the learners did correctly recognize syntactic downgraders in the PPT, there was a higher likelihood of employing them in the DCT.

Overall, these findings suggest that the learners' pragmatic perception of syntactic downgraders preceded their pragmatic production, or put differently, the perception of the pragmalinguistic forms may have been facilitative of pragmatic development, indicating a developmental process in their pragmatic competence. The present investigation therefore adds further evidence to studies such as Bardovi-Harlig (2009, 2018), Takahashi (2017) and Timpe-Laughlin (2017) who propose that recognition of certain pragmalinguistic features is an essential,

intermediate step for learners to produce these forms. My claim that receptive pragmatic competence may be facilitative of overall pragmatic development also entails that Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis has considerable explanatory power for interlanguage pragmatic acquisition. Schmidt (1993, 2001) predicts that increased awareness and attention to specific linguistic features, as observed in the data, can contribute to the incorporation of those features into learners' interlanguage, leading to enhanced learning and intake, and consequently, to improved production.

There are two more observations that merit further discussion. First, the statistical analysis conducted on the PPT data indicates that learners' group membership, reflecting their grammatical competence level in the L2, did not have a substantial impact on their pragmatic perceptions of syntactic request and complaint modification. While the production of syntactic downgraders appears to be closely linked to learners' grammatical proficiency levels, it is suggested that the perception of these forms may be more strongly influenced by other factors, such as the duration of exposure to the L2 context. The current study thereby aligns with the growing body of research, suggesting that factors such as exposure to the target language and the learning context play a more crucial role in the development of pragmatic perception (cf. Kitao 1990; Bouton 1994; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Matsumura 2003; and Schauer 2006a, 2006b, 2009). Notably, Schauer (2006a, 2006b) investigates the interplay between proficiency level and exposure to the L2, demonstrating that the indirect effect of proficiency on pragmatic development is mediated by the amount of exposure to the target language. Similarly, Matsumura's (2003) longitudinal study highlights that those learners with greater exposure to the target language exhibit higher levels of receptive pragmatic competence. Matsumura further finds that proficiency level alone does not have a significant impact on learners' pragmatic perception; its influence only becomes evident when considered in conjunction with exposure to the target language. The findings from the present study, as well as the supporting evidence from previous research, lead to the conclusion that L2 proficiency and, specifically, L2 grammatical competence alone do not solely determine learners' L2 receptive pragmatic competence (see also Tada 2005; Shively 2011; Hassall 2013, 2015).

It should, however, be acknowledged that some studies have shown an improvement in the learners' pragmatic perception as their proficiency increases. These studies often focus on beginner or intermediate level learners and isolate grammar as a strong constraint on L2 pragmatic development (cf. Cook 2001; Walkinshaw 2009; Takahashi 2017). How can these findings be reconciled?

Let us take another look at the findings from the perception task. On revisiting the results for the downgrader *negation*, it becomes evident that the PPT data highlights the significance of both grammatical and pragmatic complexity in the acquisition of pragmatic perception and production. More specifically, the perception rate of negation in requests was notably lower when compared to the perception rates for subjunctive and for past tense + indirect question. The nuanced understanding of the syntactic downgrader negation requires learners to not only recognize the presence of negation but also to understand its effect on the overall politeness and persuasive power of the request. Besides, negated questions can pose a greater cognitive challenge for learners due to their syntactic complexity and the need to process both the negation and interrogative elements simultaneously. On analyzing the LAT data, it became evident that both elementary and lower intermediate learners exhibited relatively low scores in the domain of negative interrogatives. Since the present learners had not yet achieved control over the grammatical form that makes up the downgrader negation, they may not have been ready to extent the use of this form to a mitigating device in incoming data. This suggests that the learners may have faced greater challenges in recognizing the pragmatic implications of negation as compared to other syntactic downgraders examined in the study. Hence, it can be inferred that L2 grammatical competence exerts an indirect influence on the development of learners' receptive pragmatic competence, particularly in terms of their ability to perceive and comprehend those kinds of modification devices that demand a good command of morphosyntax.[135] This indirect impact is particularly evident among learners at the elementary or intermediate level, as suggested by Cook (2001), Walkinshaw (2009), and Takahashi (2017). Furthermore, given their limited familiarity with the pragmatic function of negation and potential grammatical challenges, both elementary and intermediate level learners did not utilize the

[135] The extent to which linguistic cues are noticed further depends on learner-external factors such as the complexity, frequency, or saliency of forms, as well as instructional treatments (cf. Gass 1997; Philp 2015; Schmidt 2001; Takahashi 2013).

syntactic downgrader in the DCT (see also Taguchi 2017). By examining two learner populations, this study therefore offers compelling evidence that the function directly related to the grammatical meaning of a feature is required before its secondary meaning and with it its more pragmatic use (see also Dittmar & Terborg 1991). This being said, it should be mentioned that the higher syntactic complexity of the past tense + indirect question downgrader may have contributed to its delayed production in the DCT, despite the learners demonstrating relatively high perception rates.

Considering the entirety of the perception findings, the present study provides valuable insight into the intricate process of acquiring syntactic downgraders in the L2 context. The findings reveal that the learners demonstrated an awareness of the pragmatic function of these syntactic modifiers prior to their production. However, they tended to overgeneralize the function and usage of these modifiers and they lacked full understanding of their sociocultural nuances. These results emphasize the importance of distinguishing between pragmatic perception and production abilities, as learners may display different levels of proficiency in these aspects of pragmatic language use. A comprehensive understanding of L2 acquisition therefore necessitates the examination of both pragmatic perception and production. Overall, the findings highlight the nuanced relationship between the pragmalinguistic complexity of syntactic downgraders, and the developmental path of learners' pragmatic receptive and productive competence.

8 General discussion

This study dealt with the question of how an increase in grammatical knowledge impacts the progression of L2 pragmatic competence among low proficiency learners of German with a refugee background. Given that a complete answer to this wider question would surpass the scope of the current work, I narrowed my focus to three specific pragmalinguistic forms within two speech acts: syntactic downgraders (the primary focus), as well as lexical/phrasal and external downgraders in requests and complaints. In order to comprehensively explore this area within interlanguage pragmatics, I drew from Austin and Searle's development of speech act theory, included contributions from newer approaches as well as from disciplines like conversation and discourse analysis, added a focus on im/politeness theories, and applied this to the examination of the selected speech acts. Moreover, considering the multifaceted nature of pragmatic competence, this study examined both pragmatic perception *and* production of request and complaint modification to identify developmental patterns within these two subconstructs of pragmatic competence.

I based the present developmental study on a cross-sectional design in which three groups of informants participated: Syrian Arabic elementary and lower intermediate learners as well as native speakers of German. The study further adopted a multimethod approach which capitalized on the potential of three interlinked data collection instruments: a language assessment test, a discourse completion task, and a pragmatic perception task. Each of these perspectives provided distinct insights into the phenomena under investigation, allowing me to approach the grammar-pragmatics interface from multiple angles. Moreover, these instruments were specifically designed to answer the three guiding research questions of this work:

(1) How are syntactic downgraders in a second language related to the particular grammatical knowledge implicated in their use?
(2) How do L2 learners use and develop internal and external modification in requests and complaints?
(3) To which extent is the learners' development concerning the perception and production of syntactic downgraders interconnected?

This concluding chapter provides concise answers to these questions through a comprehensive review of the experimental findings. As this summary focuses on the findings pertinent to addressing the above research inquiries, the discussion of the effects of sociopragmatic parameters on the informants' speech act modification will not be reiterated here (for the detailed exploration of these findings, refer to § 5.1.2).

This chapter is structured as follows: In § 8.1, an overview is given of the major findings of the present study. First, § 8.1.1 provides a summary of the outcomes regarding the L2 development of syntactic downgraders. Subsequently, these findings are contextualized by comparing them with the LAT outcomes and earlier experimental results related to the grammar-pragmatics interface. Next, § 8.1.2 discusses how elementary and lower intermediate learners in the present study used and developed internal and external downgrading modification within the context of requests and complaints. In § 8.1.3, the focus shifts to the significance of pragmatic perception in the acquisition of syntactic downgraders among L2 learners. This section also examines the degree of interconnection between learners' progress in perceiving and producing these downgrading devices. By bringing all of the afore-mentioned findings together, § 8.2 serves as a synthesis of the experimental outcomes while also providing an in-depth analysis of their implications for the development of L2 pragmatic competence. Building upon this synthesis, § 8.2.1 then formulates a theoretical model for L2 syntactic downgrader acquisition. Finally, § 8.3 indicates desiderata for future research.

8.1 Summary of findings from the cross-sectional study

8.1.1 The grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 German: a study of syntactic downgraders

This section addresses the question of how pragmalinguistic forms such as syntactic downgraders are connected to their grammatical suppliers. More specifically, it brings together findings related to the following four sub-questions:

I. Is achieving a threshold level of grammatical competence a prerequisite for the employment of syntactic downgraders among the elementary learners examined?

II. Does an elementary or intermediate learner's level of grammatical competence constrain or facilitate their ability to produce syntactic downgraders?

III. Does the relative structural complexity of individual syntactic downgraders affect the path by which learners acquire these pragmalinguistic forms?

IV. Can changes in the use of syntactic downgraders which form parts of routinized stretches be attributed to developments in interlanguage grammar?

In order to effectively respond to these questions, the results of two methods, namely the language assessment test and the discourse completion task, were evaluated and correlated. The LAT assessed participants' explicit knowledge of essential grammatical features relevant to the use of syntactic downgraders in German. This evaluation categorized learners into elementary and lower intermediate groups, revealing that intermediate learners possessed a significantly greater competence in the range of grammatical concepts and structures tested. A subsequent analysis of the DCT results among the native speaker and learner participants revealed a significant main effect of group in syntactic downgrader use for requests and complaints: First, GNS displayed a greater utilization of syntactic downgraders compared to the L2 learners. Second, intermediate learners exhibited a significantly higher frequency of syntactic downgraders than elementary learners, showing a clear quantitative increase in modification. Notably, intermediate learners outperformed beginners in all tested syntactic downgrader subcategories except negative interrogatives, approaching the average usage frequency of GNS. It follows, that learners with a higher level of grammatical competence, as measured in the LAT, demonstrated more target-like pragmatic realizations. With this overview in mind, we can now shift our attention to the first research question.

I. Is achieving a threshold level of grammatical competence a prerequisite for the employment of syntactic downgraders among the elementary learners examined?

The production data from the elementary learners reveals that they utilized syntactic downgraders only when they had begun to master the grammatical structures underlying these forms, as demonstrated by their performance in the

LAT. This suggests that the successful use of syntactic downgraders by elementary learners is not solely dependent on achieving a *general* threshold of grammatical competence. Instead, it appears to be more closely connected to their proficiency in *specific* grammatical forms and structures, particularly those forming the foundation of syntactic downgraders. Furthermore, variations in usage indicate that, in addition to grammatical competence, the use of syntactic downgraders is also influenced by situational factors, like the particular speech act being performed.

In addition, the current study examined why the beginners in this investigation were able to utilize syntactic modification, in contrast to the divergent results observed in comparable studies (e.g., Safont Jordà 2003; Codina-Espurz 2008; Takahashi 2010; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012). To address this question, the analysis revisited the unique characteristics of the learner group, specifically adult refugee-background learners, and the learning context involving forced migration. The participants in this study engaged in L2 acquisition through both formal channels within the integration course, characterized by a standardized curriculum and classroom setting, and informally outside the classroom through interactions with GNS. Besides exposure to authentic language input, the integration course explicitly taught certain syntactic downgraders (e.g., the subjunctive form of *können*), underscoring their role in softening requests and other speech acts. This dual exposure likely played a role in enhancing the pragmatic competence of these elementary learners, which in turn contributed to their early implementation of syntactic modification in their language production (cf. Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Schauer 2006a, 2006b, 2009; see also § 3.2.1 on Schmidt's 1993 Noticing Hypothesis). Moreover, the higher proficiency demonstrated by the beginners in using syntactic downgraders, surpassing typical patterns among L2 learners, can be partly attributed to their strong motivation to learn German and integrate socially.

II. Does an elementary or intermediate learner's level of grammatical competence constrain or facilitate their ability to produce syntactic downgraders?

This study has conclusively illustrated that the level of grammatical competence among L2 learners can significantly impact their ability to produce syntactic

downgraders. The current data thus strongly indicate the necessity of achieving a certain level of grammatical mastery of the underlying structures of syntactic downgraders in order to effectively employ them for their secondary, pragmatic function(s).

The statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between higher LAT scores and increased usage of syntactic downgraders in the DCT among learners. Study participants who had successfully acquired a grammatical form, as indicated by LAT scores of up to 100 %, tended to use it more frequently as a syntactic downgrader in the DCT, coupled with a decreasing incidence of grammatical errors in such use. Conversely, grammatical forms that were not yet fully mastered due to their heightened complexity were also rarely employed as syntactic downgraders, reflecting learners' limited proficiency in these specific structures. Let us illustrate these findings with an example from the data. The elementary learners' restricted use of negative interrogatives and indirect questions in this study demonstrates how lower grammatical competence can impede the production of syntactic downgraders. For instance, in the case of indirect questions, elementary learners attempted the embedded structure with the past tense form *wollte / wanted*, as in the routinized phrase *ich wollte fragen, ob / I wanted to ask whether*. Their grammatical competence in the target language was, however, insufficient to construct the more intricate syntactic form combining indirect questions with past tense. This led to the production of grammatically erroneous constructions such as *Ich frage von dir*, which literally translates to *I ask of/from you*. In contrast, the LAT data of the lower intermediate learners indicates a significant increase in proficiency in the areas of indirect questions and past tense forms. Hence, with improved grammatical competence, lower intermediate learners began integrating the syntactic downgrader combination into their request head acts.

Moreover, while the increase in grammatical competence among the intermediate level learners had a positive impact on the production of all nine syntactic downgraders considered, the effect was particularly pronounced in the case of embedded structures. This is consistent with Martí-Arnándiz's (2008) research on request modification, which also highlights the significant impact of proficiency in L2 grammar on those forms of internal modification that involve complex subclausal structures at the phrasal and sentence level. The distinction

has been made that in embedded structures, the pragmatic layer is more readily discernible in contrast to other forms of syntactic downgrading such as subjunctives or past tense. This is attributed to the fact that the mitigation function of embedded structures is independent of the interplay between structure and context, instead relying on the main clause as an introductory element. Consequently, an elevated L2 grammatical competence, particularly concerning these forms of embedding, may exert a more immediate influence on their utilization as syntactic downgraders, unlike with other syntactic downgraders, where the process involves an intermediary step of pragmatic perception.

Overall, the presented findings are in line with previous studies, including Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig (2000, 2001), Bardovi-Harlig (2003), Dittmar & Terborg (1991), and Walkinshaw (2009), which have suggested that L2 learners first develop grammatical knowledge that forms the basis of pragmalinguistic knowledge. However, the mere presence of certain linguistic forms in the learners' interlanguage grammar did not automatically result in their immediate or simultaneous utilization within pragmalinguistic contexts. Notably, a substantial portion of participants who exhibited grammatical proficiency in these forms did not employ them as syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints. While these findings highlight that the acquisition of grammatical knowledge did not inherently guarantee simultaneous pragmatic skill development, enhanced grammatical knowledge did expand the learners' range of linguistic resources for expressing syntactic downgraders (see also Håkansson & Norrby 2005; Bardovi-Harlig 2003; Martí-Arnándiz 2008; Celaya & Barón 2015). At the time of data collection, more than a third of the participants were already utilizing this grammatical knowledge to expand their use of syntactic modification. Hence, it can be concluded that grammatical proficiency affects the type and amount of syntactic downgrading employed. Persistent difficulties with complex pragmalinguistic forms in the data uphold the assumption that syntactic downgraders are a challenging aspect of L2 acquisition for learners with limited grammar skills – or vice versa, that the mastery of a grammatical structure positively impacts its utilization as a syntactic downgrader.

III. Does the relative structural complexity of individual syntactic downgraders affect the path by which learners acquire these pragma-linguistic forms?

The present study has found that syntactically complex downgraders such as passives or negative interrogatives, which require higher cognitive processing capacity, are typically acquired at a later stage compared to simpler structures that involve minimal processing demands, such as forms of embedding.

Using the syntactic downgrader negation as an example, the data analysis showed that elementary and lower intermediate learners employed negation more often as a syntactic modifier in complaints than in requests. This divergence arose because in complaints they primarily used negation for negative evaluation, a structure that is less complex than the negated interrogatives often used by GNS in requests. This difference in complexity is also mirrored in the learners' performance both in the LAT and the PPT, implying that acquiring negative evaluations, i.e., negation used in declaratives precedes the acquisition of negated interrogatives due to lower grammatical and pragmatic complexity levels.

This finding further suggests that certain syntactic downgraders commonly used in both speech acts may be more easily integrated into declarative sentences, contributing to their higher frequency and earlier appearance in complaints. This, in turn, would also imply that the acquisitional sequence is influenced not only by the structural complexity of the syntactic downgrader type itself but also by the underlying speech act strategy. Specifically, it has been shown that the present learner informants exhibited a relatively higher proficiency in utilizing embedding in complaints, displaying a noticeable increase in the use of both *dass*- and *aber*-clauses compared to their occurrence in requests. This trend was attributed to the fact that complaints are typically conveyed through declarative sentences, allowing for the inclusion of subordinate clauses with lower syntactic complexity. In contrast, requests can be expressed in both declarative and interrogative structures, leading to a more balanced distribution of sentence types. This indicates that learners are more adept at utilizing complex subclauses in declarative sentences, suggesting a potential sequence of increasing complexity in the acquisition of syntactic downgraders.

The Complexification Hypothesis, as proposed by Meisel et al. (1981) in conjunction with Bialystok's Two-Dimensional Model (1993, 1994) provides a

valuable framework for comprehending the documented acquisition of syntactic downgrading in requests and complaints. This order of acquisition is influenced by the structural complexity and processing demands of the respective downgraders, with forms requiring higher processing capacity generally being acquired later, while those with minimal cognitive demands are acquired earlier. This further aligns with Bialystok's Two-Dimensional Model, as the study shows how learners strategically reduce their processing load when modifying requests and complaints. More specifically, learners in the study employed fewer syntactic downgraders, opting for those that demand less cognitive effort to produce, likely due to their yet-to-attain mastery of higher control levels.

IV. Can changes in the use of syntactic downgraders which form parts of routinized stretches be attributed to developments in interlanguage grammar?

The early psycholinguistic view that pragmatic routines in L2 productions are "unusually error-free" and undergo "no transitional stages" (Krashen et al. 1982: 232-233) has been refuted in this study. Instead, the current datasets demonstrate that changes in the usage of syntactic downgraders, which are part of routinized stretches, can be attributed to the development of interlanguage grammar.

The present study discussed the progressive acquisition of pragmatic routines, i.e., recurrent stretches of speech or fixed expressions, using the example of the subjunctive form of the verb *können / can*. Varied learning trajectories were thereby identified, showcasing the significance of interindividual learner differences in the development of L2 pragmatic skills: First, not all learner informants had acquired the grammatical form in question (the subjunctive form of *können*), as indicated by their LAT results. While most of the learners in the 'non-acquirers' group did not incorporate the subjunctive downgrader *können* in their DCT responses, a minority demonstrated its usage in their pragmatic output, possibly having acquired it as an unanalyzed chunk through language instruction. Second, learners who demonstrated moderate to high grammatical competence in using subjunctive *können*, as assessed by the LAT, employed the routinized request structure *Könntest du X / Could you do X*. Notably, this DCT analysis facilitated a clear distinction between the subjunctive mastery levels displayed by elementary and intermediate learners in the LAT. Their attempts at utilizing the

syntactic downgrader ranged from linguistically simplified or grammatically incorrect forms to adept and grammatically accurate usage of the subjunctive *können*, depending on their grammatical proficiency. Furthermore, learners with higher levels of grammatical competence progressed towards employing more complex structures, exemplified by expressions like *Ich wollte fragen, ob du X könntest / I wanted to ask whether you could X* (see also Nattinger & DeCarrico 1992; Kasper 1995).

In summary, when used by L2 learners, pragmatic routines frequently exhibit grammatical errors and appear to conform to a developmental progression, evolving from basic or even ungrammatical structures to more complex forms. These findings therefore underscore that pragmatic routines effectively serve as markers of interlanguage grammatical development.

8.1.2 Developmental patterns in request and complaint modification

Apart from syntactic downgraders, speakers of German employ lexical/phrasal and external downgraders to mitigate face-threatening acts like requests and complaints. An analysis of the distribution of internal and external modification within the data sets of the control group demonstrated that GNS showed a hierarchical preference for external downgraders over syntactic downgraders, and syntactic downgraders over lexical downgraders, i.e., *external downgraders > syntactic downgraders > lexical downgraders*. This pattern is consistent across both speech acts.

This section reviews how the present elementary and lower intermediate learners used and developed internal and external modification in requests and complaints. The analysis was conducted based on the hypothesis that the learner data would display two developmental trends: First, the learner informants were expected to exhibit a preference for external over internal downgraders to mitigate their request and complaint production. Second, beginner and intermediate learners were expected to prefer lexical/phrasal forms of modification over syntactic modification. This inclination towards external downgraders and subsequently lexical/phrasal downgraders is thought to stem from their comparatively lower syntactic demands and reduced pragmalinguistic complexity, alongside the explicit politeness function associated with such moves (cf. Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Dendenne 2014; Economidou-

Kogetsidis 2012; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004; Göy et al. 2012; Hendriks 2008; Hill 1997; Schauer 2009; Yuan & Zhang 2018).

The data analysis revealed the presence of a developmental sequence in the usage of speech act modifiers by elementary and lower intermediate learners, yet this sequence deviated in certain aspects from the anticipated pattern: First, both grammatical proficiency groups displayed a preference for external modifiers over internal ones. Second, as learners' grammatical competence progressed from the elementary to the intermediate level, the pragmatic data showed a transition from a fairly balanced ratio between syntactic and lexical modification to a preference for syntactic downgraders over lexical ones, echoing the GNS pattern. To precisely summarize the research outcomes, my present emphasis lies on the following three questions:

V. What contributes to the current elementary and lower intermediate learners' inclination towards using external downgrading over internal downgrading?
VI. What factors contribute to the significant underuse of lexical/phrasal downgraders in the current learner data?
VII. What implications arise from learners' overall downgrader use in L2 German?

V. What contributes to the current elementary and lower intermediate learners' inclination towards using external downgrading over internal downgrading?

Consistent with previous research, the statistical analysis of the present data indicates that elementary and lower intermediate learners have a greater inclination towards using external downgrading in request and complaints compared to syntactic and lexical modifiers (cf. Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009, 2012). The more advanced the learners became in terms of grammar, the more they leaned on external modification as a means of downgrading. Moreover, when compared to the control group, both learner cohorts exhibited a significant overuse of external downgraders in requests, while the tendency to employ more external downgrading in complaints was observed, although it was not statistically

significant. In addition, the learner participants displayed a higher frequency of using combinations of external downgraders in their speech acts.

These findings can largely be attributed to the significant overuse of preparators and grounders in the learner datasets, along with the overuse of compensation by elementary learners in requests and conciliatory expressions by intermediate learners in complaints.[136] The (over)use of the latter two downgraders signifies a positive politeness approach, focusing on the strengthening of social interactions, a pattern less evident in the GNS data and potentially stemming from participants' L1 sociocultural norms (cf. Shammas 2013). Moreover, the analysis of preparator and grounder use by GNS revealed that they typically conveyed the most relevant preparatory information or the reasons for their requests and complaints in a single sentence, often by utilizing established pragmatic routines. In contrast, beginners and intermediate learners encountered challenges in effectively organizing and integrating multiple pieces of information into a single complex sentence. As a result, they often resorted to using several simple sentences, contributing to the increased occurrence of multiple preparatory or grounding statements in their speech acts. Apart from learners' lack of access to relevant pragmatic routines, this communicative behavior was attributed to their limited grammatical proficiency in constructing more syntactically complex sentences.

In addition, the grounding and preparatory behavior of the learners also exhibited distinct content variations compared to the GNS. This encompassed referencing shared knowledge, reiterating facts, and even recalling prior conversations already familiar to the recipient. The inclination to provide excessive information reflects learners' prioritization of clarity over conciseness, aiming to prevent misunderstandings and ensure precise communication (cf. Edmonson & House 1991; Warga 2004; Schauer 2009). Regarding complaints, it was also argued that the learners' tendency to extensively reiterate the complaint situation before expressing dissatisfaction might result from their limited understanding of the specific genre conventions and expectations for direct complaints in German. Moreover, since the learners at times incorporated content and even phrasing directly from the written DCT prompts into their request and

[136] For additional studies documenting the prevalence of the grounder preference among L2 learners, refer to works such as Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008, 2009) and Hassall (2001, 2012).

complaint expressions, the overuse of external modification could also be partially attributed to a method effect (cf. Martí-Arnándiz 2008).

VI. What factors contribute to the significant underuse of lexical/phrasal downgraders in the current learner data?

Upon initial analysis of the learner data, it became evident that neither group employed lexical/phrasal downgraders more frequently than syntactic downgraders. While elementary learners exhibited a relatively balanced usage of the two downgrader types, lower intermediate learners started prioritizing syntactic downgraders over lexical ones, mirroring patterns observed in the GNS data. The lack of a proportional growth in lexical downgrading use, alongside the increase in syntactic downgraders among intermediate learners, suggests that mastering L2 grammar is not the sole factor influencing the acquisition and usage of lexical downgraders.

To better understand the absence of a significant increase in the use of lexical downgraders, let us recapitulate the key findings of this study. GNS primarily utilized four types of lexical downgraders: downtoners, subjectivizers, understaters and the politeness marker. Among these, downtoners emerged as the prevalent downgrading device employed by GNS in both speech acts. In contrast, the analysis of the learner data revealed that they predominantly used (and *over*used) *bitte / please* as their primary form of lexical downgrading in requests and complaints, consistent with previous research on elementary and intermediate learners' use of the politeness marker (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Göy et al. 2012). Of particular interest in this context is the deployment of the marker in complaints, a mitigating behavior that the GNS did not exhibit. Since direct complaints lack a syntactically simple, lexically explicit, and versatile lexical/phrasal politeness device similar to the use of *bitte / please* in requests, it has been argued that learners transferred their use of the latter to complaints, following a strategy of least effort. In this regard, the overreliance on the politeness marker also demonstrates a limited range of alternative downgrading options and a lack of flexibility in learners' pragmalinguistic repertoire.

This becomes evident in the production of the additional lexical/phrasal downgrader options, where learners consistently exhibited a lower frequency of usage compared to the GNS. Notably, in the case of understaters and

subjectivizers, this *under*-use can be attributed to learners' emphasis on clear communication, prioritizing explicitness over the incorporation of downplaying devices. On the other hand, the *under*-use of downtoners by elementary and lower intermediate learners can be partly attributed to the absence of certain adverbs in learners' lexical repertoire (e.g., *eventuell / possibly*). Even more significant is the fact that a substantial proportion of the downtoners utilized by the GNS were modal particles. The learners did not only employ a narrower range of these modal particles, but they also only selected those forms that had a semantically simpler and therefore more evident mitigating function, possibly reflecting the challenges associated with acquiring the nuanced meaning and various pragmatic applications of German modal particles. This finding suggests that, unlike syntactic downgraders and their connection to the grammar-pragmatics interface, other facets of L2 proficiency, particularly the lexicon-pragmatics interface, exert a more notable influence on the acquisition of lexical modification. On top of that, it reinforces the existing body of research in the fields of ILP and SLA, which consistently demonstrates the difficulties that discourse particles pose for L2 learners of German (cf. Weydt 1981; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1995; Rost-Roth 1999a,b; Hogeweg et al. 2016; Trotzke et al. 2020). Another important finding relates to how the learner participants positioned the mentioned lexical downgrader types. Among elementary learners, there was a clear tendency to place lexical downgraders either before or after the head act, potentially to avoid the need for complex syntactic structures (cf. Barron 2003). As intermediate learners' grammatical proficiency improved, they gradually incorporated these markers more often into the core speech act. Nevertheless, even with these advancements, intermediate learners continued to exhibit a limited awareness regarding the accurate usage and positioning of lexical/phrasal downgraders.

VII. What implications arise from learners' overall downgrader use in L2 German?

The overuse of external downgraders by L2 learners is often explained as a compensatory strategy for their limited employment of internal modification, specifically syntactic downgraders (e.g., Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Ali & Woodfield 2017; Dendenne 2014; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Schauer 2009). According to this argument, beginner level learners start out with extra-clausal

explicit moves before they proceed to syntactically integrated and implicit expressions for speech act modification. The current data analysis provides supporting evidence for this explanatory approach within the beginner learner data. During this elementary stage of language development, insufficiently mitigated head acts were frequently complemented by extensive external modification to compensate for the absence of internal politeness indicators. Additional factors further played a role in this phenomenon, such as a communicative need for (over-)explicitness and limited grammatical competence, amongst other things. However, contrary to what one might infer from this explanatory framework, the over-use of external downgrading did not decrease with learners' advancements in L2 grammatical competence and the associated increase in the use of syntactic downgraders. Instead, the intermediate learners in the present study demonstrated an increasing reliance on both syntactic *and* external downgraders in their request and complaint modification. This development is linked to the fact that intermediate learners expanded their range of external moves as their grammatical proficiency increased, even though they continued to overuse grounders and preparators for the reasons previously discussed. Moreover, it is imperative to interpret these findings while considering the impact of the employed elicitation instrument.

In addition, I would like to reiterate that the L2 preference for external over internal downgraders is thought to stem from their explicit politeness function as well as their comparatively lower syntactic requirements and reduced pragmalinguistic complexity (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Göy et al. 2012; Hill 1997). It has to be emphasized, though, that a significant contributor to the overuse of external downgraders in the present study, even in the intermediate level group, is the learners' restricted grammatical proficiency in constructing syntactically complex and thus more 'content-rich' sentences. This finding once again highlights the essential role of grammatical knowledge, particularly syntax, not only in using syntactic downgraders but also in effectively employing external modifiers to mitigate potentially face-threatening speech acts.

Finally, let us shift our attention to the experimental evidence concerning internal modification and the question of how the preference for syntactic over lexical modification arises among the intermediate learners. One possible explanation is that certain syntactic downgraders might be more accessible to

learners due to their rule-based nature, whereas the effective use of lexical downgraders, especially modal particles, could necessitate greater exposure and familiarity with the target language. This suggests that factors such as time spent immersed in the target language context may exert a more significant influence on the acquisition of lexical downgraders compared to grammatical competence alone (cf. Barron 2003; Fordyce & Fukazawa 2004). Nonetheless, this study also reveals grammatical challenges, particularly evident in learners' tendency to add the few lexical downgraders they produce before or after the head act, rather than integrating them syntactically as observed in the GNS data.

Taken together, the above findings highlight the significance of investigating a broader range of target languages to gain a holistic understanding of L2 pragmatic development. This exploration is crucial since the recurring finding of the primacy of lexical downgraders over syntactic downgraders may be more closely tied to the predominantly studied second languages in the field, i.e., mostly English, rather than reflecting a 'natural' order of acquisition.

8.1.3 Acquiring syntactic downgraders: the dynamics of perception and production

Building on the investigation of pragmatic production, the present study also examined the receptive competence of learners at the elementary and lower intermediate level. The aim was to establish potential correlations between their proficiency in producing internal downgraders and their ability to recognize these pragmalinguistic features in the target language. I present the results below by addressing three questions:

VIII. Can elementary and lower intermediate learners relate the syntactic downgraders used by GNS in requests and complaints to their strategic employment in the service of politeness?

IX. How are pragmatic perception and production interrelated in elementary and lower intermediate learners of German?

X. Does the learner's level of grammatical competence affect their ability to detect syntactic downgraders?

VIII. Can elementary and lower intermediate learners relate the syntactic downgraders used by GNS in requests and complaints to their strategic employment in the service of politeness?

The analysis of learner response patterns in the PPT revealed that around 50 % of participants from both levels of grammatical proficiency demonstrated the ability to detect and consequently select the pragmatically most appropriate response for the request and complaint scenarios. An analysis of the request items disclosed a sequence in learners' accurate perception of syntactic downgraders. The observed pattern of acquisition, listed from relatively infrequent recognition (*negative interrogative*) to the most commonly selected syntactic downgrader (subjunctive *können / can*), is as follows:

> Negation (negative interrogative) < past tense *wollen* + indirect question < politeness marker / subjectivizer < subjunctive *können*

In contrast, the presence of a clear and distinct acquisition sequence, as observed in the case of requests, was not as pronounced in the context of complaints. In fact, the perception rates for the syntactic modifiers tested in complaints, i.e., negative evaluation, *aber*- and *dass*-clauses were already relatively higher at the beginner level, particularly for forms of embedding, and showed further improvement as the learners' grammatical competence advanced. This phenomenon can be attributed to the unambiguous lexical meaning of the three investigated syntactic downgraders within the scope of complaint modification.

The PPT findings unveil an early stage of L2 acquisition, showcasing learners' emerging ability to associate syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints with their use in enhancing politeness. In fact, the percentage of 50 % could potentially be even higher due to a learner response behavior that becomes more pronounced with increasing grammatical proficiency. A substantial proportion of elementary learners and, notably, a greater number of intermediate learners exhibited a tendency to select the syntactically *over*modified distractor. While higher grammatical proficiency likely aided intermediate learners in detecting these pragmalinguistic forms, it is also notable that the learners who favored syntactically overcomplex forms might have overemphasized and overgeneralized the importance of syntactic modification at their current learning

stage. This also entailed an overgeneralization of the pragmatic role of syntactic downgraders across varied contexts with differing socio-contextual variables.

IX. How are pragmatic perception and production interrelated in elementary and lower intermediate learners of German?

As noted above, approximately 50 % of elementary and lower intermediate learners demonstrated the ability to identify the pragmatically most appropriate response option in the PPT. However, this did not necessarily translate into their use of the corresponding syntactic downgraders in the DCT. In other words, learners were more proficient in identifying appropriate syntactic downgraders for a given pragmatic context than in employing them effectively in their own speech acts. Moreover, it should be noted that instances where a syntactic downgrader was absent in the PPT but present in the DCT were rare and mostly attributed to intermediate learners' preference for syntactically overmodified head acts. Thus, without being able to detect correct form-function mappings, even the grammatically more advanced intermediate group did not produce the syntactic downgraders in question, indicating that the recognition of pragmalinguistic features is a prerequisite for their production.

A similar trend emerged with lexical/phrasal downgraders. PPT results reveal learners' higher awareness and familiarity in employing politeness markers to soften requests compared to downtoners. Analyzing the participants' production data, a clear preference for politeness markers becomes apparent, accompanied by an underuse of downtoners for request modification. This suggests that the downtoner delay in interlanguage production is probably associated with learners encountering challenges in noticing and comprehending the nuanced meanings of modal particles. In addition, the PPT data highlight an overgeneralization of the pragmatic politeness function of syntactic downgraders across various socio-contextual contexts. In the domain of requests, learners' response choices occasionally departed from sociopragmatic norms, a divergence that was notably more pronounced within complaints. These PPT findings correspond with the DCT analysis, in that learners exhibited a higher level of productive competence in situational variation for request modification compared to complaint modification.

When all these findings are considered collectively, they suggest that the perception of syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders by elementary and lower intermediate learners precedes their production. In other words, the perception of the tested pragmalinguistic forms, also including their sociopragmatic distribution, may have played a pivotal role in facilitating their pragmatic production, suggesting a developmental trajectory in pragmatic competence. The assertion that receptive pragmatic competence aids overall pragmatic development aligns with Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis. As Schmidt (1993, 2001) predicts, increased awareness and attention to specific linguistic features, as demonstrated in the data, can contribute to incorporating these features into learners' interlanguage, leading to improved learning, intake, and subsequently, enhanced production. Overall, the present study strengthens existing research by Bardovi-Harlig (2009, 2018), Takahashi (2017), and Timpe-Laughlin (2017), who similarly argue that recognition of certain pragmalinguistic features is an essential step for learners before producing them.

X. Does L2 learner's level of grammatical competence affect their ability to detect syntactic downgraders?

The statistical analysis of the perception data indicates that learners' group membership, which mirrors their L2 grammatical proficiency level, did not exert a significant influence on their pragmatic perception of syntactic request and complaint modification. Although the production of syntactic downgraders has been shown to correlate with learners' grammatical proficiency levels, the perception of these forms may be influenced more by other factors such as exposure duration to the L2 context. These findings align with research highlighting the pivotal role of target language exposure and learning context in pragmatic perception (cf. Kitao 1990; Bouton 1994; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Matsumura 2003; Schauer 2006a, 2006b, 2009). Consequently, it can be inferred that L2 proficiency, and particularly L2 grammatical competence alone, do not solely determine learners' receptive pragmatic competence (cf. Tada 2005; Shively 2011; Hassall 2013, 2015).

However, what has been shown for the present data set is that L2 grammatical competence can exert an indirect influence on the development of learners' receptive pragmatic competence, particularly in terms of their ability to notice

those kinds of modification devices that demand a good command of morphosyntax. As proposed by Cook (2001), Walkinshaw (2009), and Takahashi (2017), and corroborated by the present data, this indirect impact is particularly pronounced among learners in the initial stages, such as the complete beginner, elementary or lower intermediate levels of L2 acquisition. This is evident in the analysis of the syntactic downgrader *negation,* where the perception rate in requests was notably lower compared to *subjunctive* and *past tense + indirect question*. Negated questions can present a greater cognitive challenge for L2 learners due to their syntactic complexity and the necessity to process both the negation and interrogative elements simultaneously. Correspondingly, examination of the LAT data unveiled relatively low scores among both elementary and lower intermediate learners for negative interrogatives. Given that the current learners had not yet gained mastery over the grammatical structure constituting the downgrader negation, they might not have been ready to extend the use of this form as a mitigating device in incoming data. This implies that learners could have encountered more difficulty in grasping the pragmatic implications of negative interrogatives in contrast to other examined syntactic downgraders. Moreover, due to their limited familiarity with the pragmatic role of negation and potential grammatical challenges, learners at both elementary and intermediate levels were not able to employ this syntactic downgrader in the DCT (cf. Barron 2003; Schauer 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2012; Bella 2012; Ali & Woodfield 2017). The upcoming section (§ 8.2) explores the implications of these findings as well as those discussed earlier on our current understanding of the development of L2 pragmatic competence.

8.2 Implications for the development of L2 pragmatic competence

In line with the Interface Hypothesis in adult second language acquisition, the present study's results indicate that L2 learners can acquire both syntactic and pragmatic aspects. However, their integration of these two domains is often less efficient and shows optionality, consistent with earlier research by Sorace & Serratrice (2009), White (2009), and Sorace (2011). Particularly, when the current adult refugee-background learners engaged in morphosyntax-pragmatics mappings, such as producing syntactic speech act modifications in the target language, difficulties in achieving accurate and consistent integration between the

two domains became apparent. At the same time, a positive correlation between L2 learners' grammatical proficiency and their use of syntactic downgraders in requests and complaints was uncovered. By focusing on novice learners of German, this study was thus able to provide valuable insight into the developmental trajectory that leads to an interlanguage pragmatics system.

Beyond that, the current study offers a more profound understanding of the progressive acquisition of the examined grammatical forms and its impact on pragmatic productions. As demonstrated in the stages of syntactic downgrader acquisition, encompassing (1) pre-grammaticalized and routinized production, (2) overgeneralization, and (3) expansion of the pragmalinguistic repertoire, a significant interrelation exists between grammatical and pragmatic development in so far that grammatical constraints can limit learners' pragmatic performance, while heightened grammatical competence positively correlates with improved L2 pragmatic performance. However, while L2 learners initially develop grammatical knowledge as a foundation for pragmalinguistic knowledge, the presence of new forms in their interlanguage grammar does not necessarily ensure their concurrent use in pragmatic contexts. The alignment with Kasper & Rose's (2002) findings is evident (cf. § 3.2.1), as they investigated different stages of L2 acquisition and emphasized the specific learning tasks tied to the interplay between pragmatic and grammatical competence at various developmental levels. Notably, the lower intermediate learners in this study correspond to Kasper and Rose's second developmental stage, which encompasses adult learners in the *later phases* of L2 acquisition. The primary learning task for learners at this stage is to notice and comprehend the pragmatic meanings associated with the various grammatical devices in the L2. The present study is informative in that it suggests a reevaluation of the categorization proposed by Kasper & Rose (2002), since the present lower intermediate learners have not yet reached advanced stages of L2 acquisition. On the contrary, it seems that this developmental sequence takes place as early as the transition from the elementary to the intermediate stage, as evidenced by the positive results in the perception study.

Considering the broader findings of this study, it can be proposed that the proficient production of syntactic downgraders by elementary and lower intermediate learners hinges on several factors. These include their grammatical proficiency, their skillful perception of L2 speech norms, the automatization of the

retrieval processes, and their investment in and willingness to actually employ socio-pragmatically appropriate realizations. Based on the new insights gained by the current research on the grammar-pragmatics interface in the L2 acquisition of German, the next section § 8.2.1 endeavors to formulate a theoretical model that accounts for the acquisition of pragmatic competence and in addition allows for an illustration of the mediating role of grammatical knowledge in pragmatic development.

8.2.1 A theoretical model for L2 pragmatic competence acquisition: the case of syntactic downgraders

The current findings lead to the formulation of a model which identifies sequential stages of L2 pragmatic development and visualizes them in the format depicted in Figure 29. Crucially, this model was developed for the second language context and pertains to developmental stages among elementary and lower intermediate learners regarding the L2 acquisition of syntactic downgraders.

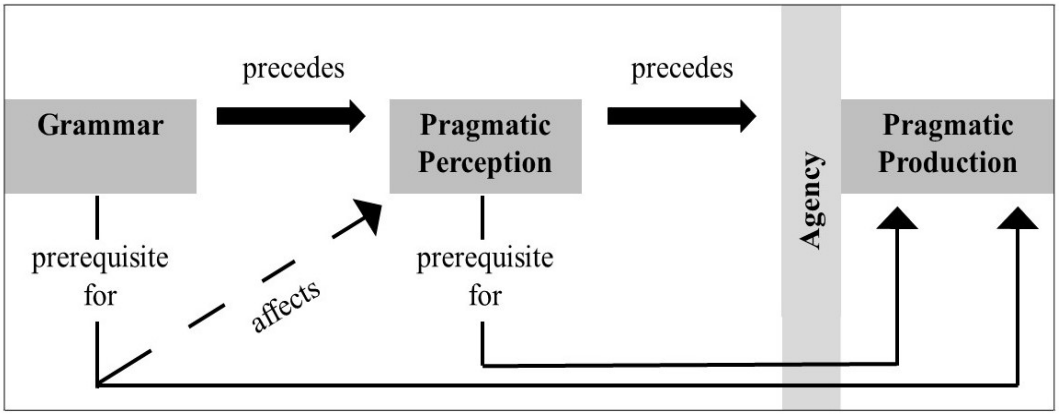

Figure 29. Developmental model for L2 syntactic downgrader acquisition

To provide a clearer picture of the outlined processes, I first focus on the following four stages of development:

a. Grammar precedes pragmatic production,
b. Pragmatic perception preces pragmatic production,
c. Grammar precedes pragmatic perception,
d. Agency and processing capacity in production.

a. Grammar precedes pragmatic production. For learners at the elementary and lower intermediate levels, employing syntactic downgraders relies on attaining a

foundational grasp of the underlying grammatical structures, enabling them to utilize these forms for their secondary pragmatic functions. As learners' grammatical competence increases, their utilization of syntactic downgraders becomes more refined, leading to a reduction in grammatical errors associated with their usage. Consequently, *grammar precedes pragmatic production* in so far that L2 learners first develop grammatical (and lexical) knowledge that forms the basis of pragmalinguistic knowledge (cf. Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig 2003; Dittmar & Terborg 1991; Walkinshaw 2009). However, possessing knowledge of the grammatical forms does not automatically result in their employment as syntactic downgraders. This leads us to our next point *pragmatic perception precedes pragmatic production*.

b. Pragmatic perception preces pragmatic production. It is essential for elementary and lower intermediate learners to acquire not only the grammatical and lexical aspects but also the pragmatic meanings of pragmalinguistic forms. The capacity to recognize and comprehend pragmalinguistic features in L2 acquisition therefore initially takes precedence over the ability to proficiently produce them. In the context of syntactic downgraders, learners need to first understand their pragmatic nuances before they can effectively incorporate them into their speech acts. The perception of pragmalinguistic features is hence a prerequisite for their production and vice versa, a failure to express pragmatic intent may be due to a lack of noticing and/or comprehending with regard to L2 pragmalinguistic conventions as well as the sociocultural norms underlying them, implying an underdeveloped competence in pragmatic perception.

c. Grammar precedes pragmatic perception. As illustrated in the model, grammatical competence is not an absolute prerequisite for pragmatic perception. Nevertheless, it can have an indirect impact on the development of receptive pragmatic skills among novice learners. This influence is particularly notable when beginner learners need to identify pragmalinguistic forms that involve intricate morphosyntactic structures, as typically seen in syntactic downgraders. In cases, in which learners have not yet gained mastery over the grammatical structure constituting a syntactic downgrader, they might not be able to extend the use of this form to a mitigating device in incoming data. This limitation

underscores the significance of substantial L2 grammatical knowledge, encompassing vocabulary, morphology, phonology, and syntax. Without this foundation, learners might struggle not only to comprehend the interlocutor's intended message but also to recognize the pragmatic nuances linked to specific syntactic downgraders. Thus, while it was found that pragmatic perception is partially independent of the acquisition of L2 grammatical competence, it still cannot proceed without it.

d. Agency and processing capacity in production. However, having developed the requisite grammatical competence and the ability to accurately recognize and assess a pragmalinguistic form does not automatically lead to its immediate use in pragmatic production. To provide a more detailed explanation of this finding and incorporate it into the model accordingly, we need to focus on the second pragmatic sub-competence: the production of pragmatic functions. Pragmatic production requires knowledge of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, in conjunction with the processing capacity to articulate this knowledge in online production, as well as agency to make an informed decision on whether or not to implement the knowledge in the host community (cf. Taguchi 2012).

In the following, I will briefly address the areas of L2 processing capacity and learner agency. First, it is important to consider the processing capacity of L2 learners, a concept that denotes their cognitive ability to rapidly and accurately retrieve linguistic structures and effectively apply them in real-time communication. For elementary and lower intermediate learners, if this capacity has not been sufficiently developed, they may struggle to employ syntactic downgraders in their spontaneous interactions (refer to § 3.1.1 on Bialystok's 1993, 1994 Two-Dimensional Model). Second, a fundamental distinction between L2 pragmatic and grammatical development lies in the greater degree of *learner agency* in the former, as illustrated in the model. Learner agency is understood as "a self-defining capacity that works with volition to bring about a certain effect on or change to one's behavior" (Taguchi 2019: 4). While learners can consciously adopt pragmatic features or attitudes, they often lack this flexibility when acquiring grammar. This dynamic implies that learners might occasionally resist embracing certain L2 pragmatic norms, as their choices can be influenced by personal preferences for identity expression, akin to native speakers (cf. § 2.1.2).

Therefore, a critical aspect of L2 pragmatic competence is the learners' agency to make an informed decision on whether or not to implement pragmalinguistic forms such as syntactic downgraders in their L2 productions. Since learner agency was not investigated in this study, the reader is deferred to the outlook section for further information on this aspect.

Concluding remarks

At this point, I would like to conclude by reiterating the centrality of grammar in L2 pragmatics. In particular, learners require grammar at two junctures during L2 pragmatic development. First, to a certain extent, grammar takes precedence over pragmatic perception, enabling the recognition of grammatical/pragmalinguistic forms in the input in the first place. Second, grammar is requisite following the perception of a grammatical form and comprehension of its pragmatic function, enabling learners to proficiently produce the form. This, of course, is closely linked with the augmentation of sociopragmatic competence, allowing learners to effectively discern the appropriate contexts and occasions for employing the downgrader.

In sum, the acquisition of syntactic downgraders provides an ideal illustration of the interplay of grammar and pragmatics in the context of adult L2 acquisition. Alongside elementary and intermediate learners, a review of the relevant research literature underscores that even advanced L2 learners encounter challenges in employing syntactic modifications (cf. Woodfield 2012; Göy et al. 2012; Félix-Brasdefer 2012; Pan 2012). This investigation of the grammar-pragmatics interface thus offers an opportunity to examine how learners approach the general issue of connecting linguistic form and meaning throughout L2 acquisition. The processes and principles that guide learners along the general developmental route for syntactic downgraders should also be available to them in other areas of the linguistic system. Thus, this study serves as a foundation for other studies undertaking the investigation of L2 pragmatic development against a background of learners' grammatical development.

8.3 Future perspectives

The preceding subsections underscore specific theoretical areas of interest requiring further investigation, while also raising questions for potential future experiments. As I proceed to highlight research steps that have been missing or are intended to follow the current study, the limitations of this study naturally come to the fore. While this section openly addresses these limitations, it refrains from revisiting methodological constraints and additional conceptual limitations that have been discussed earlier (e.g., on-line vs. off-line measures). For a thorough understanding of these aspects, readers are referred to the respective sections (cf. § 2.2.2, § 2.2.3, § 4.2.3).

The research focus on the grammar-pragmatics interface in L2 acquisition, as evidenced in this study, remains a key area of interest within interlanguage pragmatics. The significance of such research, particularly for second languages other than English, is underlined by the compelling results presented here. In the future, however, research endeavors should expand their scope to include additional speech acts that display notable levels of modification. In addition, these investigations should cover a range of communicative acts, building on this study's convincing illustration of the benefits derived from comparing results across different types of speech acts.

The present study further demonstrates that the inclusion of learner participants from varied backgrounds, including non-WEIRD samples, is vital for SLA and ILP research (cf. Henrich et al. 2010: 61). Integrating diverse learners into developmental studies is not just ethically important, but it also enriches our understanding of L2 acquisition processes, providing findings that are comprehensive, robust, and applicable to real-world language learning contexts. Furthermore, upon reviewing the SLA and ILP literature that centers on Arabic as either a native or learner language, I noticed a prevailing bias towards male participants (e.g., Abdul Sattar et al. 2009; Alrefai 2012; Al-Gahtani & Roever 2014b; Al-Gahtani 2017). Given that the learner group examined in this study includes an equal representation of both males and females, this dataset provides an advantageous platform for forthcoming studies to investigate potential gender effects on the utilization of speech act modification.

Upcoming research should be modeled after the methodological approach of this study. Nevertheless, it is advised that these research endeavors consider the

constraints of the current investigation, which I now comment on in more detail. This study primarily focused on the L2 development of syntactic modification in request and complaint head acts, while also investigating the interaction of this type of downgrader with lexical/phrasal and external downgraders. However, the data analysis itself was more comprehensive, leading to results that have not been included in this work due to the specific focus and scope of this study. First, the data examination revealed that both the GNS and the learner groups deliberately employed syntactic and lexical/phrasal downgraders within their external modification. This suggests that internal modification extends beyond the head act to encompass supportive moves as well. To holistically capture the developmental trajectory of internal modification, this extended usage should be included in future analyses.

Second, the analysis of the GNS and learner data sets has shown that aggravating language use in the form of internal and external upgraders is routinely employed in German requests and complaints. In particular, upgraders make up almost 30 % of all modifiers, underscoring their essential role in both requesting and complaining behavior (cf. Appendix 10, Tables A10-1 & A10-2). Moreover, an examination of the patterns of co-occurrence between downgraders and upgraders has revealed that speakers often employ these two types of modifiers together, highlighting their interaction. With such significant figures, concentrating solely on downgraders in the examination of requests and complaints inevitably provides an incomplete representation of these speech acts. Furthermore, this finding illustrates that face-threatening language is not only utilized in explicitly impolite utterances but is also routinely employed as a strategic tool to accomplish communicative goals in the context of requests and complaints. This aligns with recent approaches to im/politeness (cf. § 2.3.3, § 2.3.4) which emphasize the necessity of examining impolite language use alongside the expression of politeness to arrive at a thorough and comprehensive understanding of speech act phenomena.

Third, future studies on the grammar-pragmatics interface modeled after the present approach need to include an investigation of *learner agency*. Limiting the analysis of L2 learners' pragmatic production solely to a cognitive perspective results in a static characterization of these participants as either converging to or diverging from an L2 norm. They may, however, also consciously reject L2

pragmatic conventions. As part of *Learner Questionnaire II: Cultural Differences*, the present learner participants were asked whether they find it necessary to adopt the tendency towards directness/indirectness in the target language in situations where they perceive differences in politeness between Germans and Syrians. Interestingly, 50 % of elementary learners and 53.33 % of lower intermediate learners responded affirmatively, while 50 % of elementary learners and 46.67 % of lower intermediate learners answered negatively, thus forming two distinct groups. Similar to this finding, by now a multitude of studies show that L2 learners exercise their agency by choosing to conform to or resist native speaker norms with the aim of preserving and/or asserting their own cultural and social identity as well as their position in relation to others (e.g. Barron 2003; Hassall 2004; Ishihara & Tarone 2009; Kim 2014; LoCastro 2001). Therefore, a comprehensive investigation of the grammar-pragmatics interface should encompass not only the examination of L2 grammar and pragmatics but also consider the influence of learner agency.

The next point I want to make concerns the overgeneralization of the relevance of syntactic downgraders in the perception study. The PPT findings provide valuable insight on the transitional phase that bridges the acquisition of grammatical forms and their utilization as pragmalinguistic markers. In particular, the PPT findings reveal that learners demonstrated an awareness of the pragmatic function of these syntactic modifiers prior to their production. However, they tended to overgeneralize the function and application of these modifiers by favoring syntactically overcomplex forms as the most appropriate choice, irrespective of context. This tendency was more pronounced among the lower intermediate learners than the elementary learners and prompts the following questions: *How does this overemphasis on syntactic modification affect the production data of upper intermediate and advanced learners, who demonstrate a stronger command of L2 grammar? Does this perception translate into production?* Notably, in her longitudinal study on the L2 acquisition of advanced Irish learners of German, Barron highlights the "[o]vergeneralization of syntactic complexity [...] in the requesting data" (Barron 2003: 240). Such findings of syntactic downgrader overuse in advanced learners' pragmatic production highlight the necessity to explore whether the strong emphasis on syntactic downgraders observed in the perception data corresponds to learners' production

data, subsequent to acquiring the requisite grammatical resources. This might potentially represent another developmental stage in learners' L2 pragmatic progression during which they overestimate the importance of syntactic downgraders and therefore overuse them, before gradually achieving a balance as their exposure to target language input increases. This prediction warrants thorough exploration in future studies.

Last, I wish to address practical implications for language classroom instruction and for L2 pedagogy. Compared to research on instructional methods, facilitative interventions, and input enhancements, researchers have investigated L2 pragmatic learning progressions that might inform L2 instruction to a lesser degree. However, the current findings could be employed in designing learning experiences aligned with the natural progression of second language development.

In addition to the challenges posed by the interface between grammar and pragmatics in L2 acquisition for elementary and intermediate learners, the present study also revealed a positive influence of learners' proficiency in L2 grammar on their utilization of syntactic downgraders in speech acts. These findings suggest that as learners develop a stronger grasp of L2 grammar, they become more capable of effectively employing syntactic downgraders in their communicative interactions. The identification of this positive impact highlights the importance of focusing on L2 grammar instruction alongside pragmatic development. By enhancing learners' proficiency in L2 grammar, educators can potentially facilitate their ability to navigate the interface between grammar and pragmatics more successfully. Subsequent research focused on integrating grammar instruction with pragmatic language learning could provide valuable insights that inform instructional approaches and strategies, ultimately facilitating effective language use in real-world contexts.

It is my hope that the findings from research studies like the present help create a balance between embracing linguistic and cultural diversity while aiding adolescents and adults with refugee backgrounds to learn the language of their host country.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Learner Questionnaire I: *Language Skills* (German version)

Fragebogen 1: Sprachkenntnisse

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

Teilnehmerinformation für die Bearbeitung des Fragebogens

Fragebogen zur Erfassung von Sprachkenntnissen

Methode und Ablauf

Bevor die tatsächliche Studie beginnt, möchte ich dich bitten, einige Angaben zu deiner Person zu machen. Diese Angaben helfen mir eine homogene Probandenstichprobe zu gewährleisten. In diesem Fragebogen geht es um deine generellen Sprachkenntnisse und deinen Gebrauch der deutschen Sprache im Alltag. Es ist kein Test, deshalb gibt es keine „richtigen" oder „falschen" Antworten. Es ist aber wichtig, dass du ehrliche Angaben machst. In den meisten Fällen musst du eine Antwortmöglichkeit ankreuzen oder kurze schriftliche Informationen geben. Eine konkrete Instruktion findest du auf dem Fragebogen.

Vertraulichkeit der Daten und Datenschutz

Selbstverständlich wird der Schutz deiner Daten jederzeit gewährleistet. Sämtliche hier gemachten Angaben unterliegen strenger Vertraulichkeit. Deine Daten werden nicht an Dritte weitergegeben und nur anonymisiert für wissenschaftliche Zwecke genutzt. Ausführliche Informationen zur Erhebung, Anonymisierung/Pseudonymisierung, Speicherung und Auswertung deiner Personen- beziehungsweise Experimentaldaten kannst du der Teilnehmereinwilligung entnehmen.

I. Zur Person

Bitte gib folgende Daten zu deiner Person an:

Geschlecht: ☐ Männlich ☐ Weiblich

Geburtsjahr: Alter:

Geburtsort: Staatsangehörigkeit:

Staatsangehörigkeit des Vaters: Staatsangehörigkeit der Mutter:

Was ist dein höchster erreichter Bildungsabschluss?

Hast du einen Beruf erlernt? ☐ Ja ☐ Nein

Wenn ja, welchen Beruf hast du erlernt?

Wann bist du nach Deutschland gekommen? Monat: Jahr:

II. Sprachkenntnisse

Bitte beantworte im Folgenden Fragen zu deinen Sprachkenntnissen.

1. Was ist deine Muttersprache? (Falls du zweisprachig/mehrsprachig aufgewachsen bist, bitte gib auch die weiteren Sprachen an.)

2. Hast du außer Deutsch noch weitere Fremdsprachen gelernt? ☐ Ja ☐ Nein

Wenn ja, bitte vervollständige die folgenden Tabellen:

Gib in der ersten Tabelle die weiteren Fremdsprachen an und bewerte deine Kenntnisse in diesen Sprachen, indem du ein Kreuz in einer Spalte setzt.

Sprache	Sehr gute Kenntnisse	Gute Kenntnisse	Mittlere Kenntnisse	Geringe Kenntnisse	Sehr geringe Kenntnisse

2.2 Bitte schreibe nun auf, wie lange du die Fremdsprachen gelernt hast (z.B. 2 Jahre). Gib im Anschluss an, ob du die Sprachen lesen und schreibst kannst. Hier reicht als Antwort „ja“ oder „nein“.

Sprache	Dauer des Sprachunterrichts	Lesefähigkeit (ja/nein)	Schreibfähigkeit (ja/nein)

3. Seit wann lernst du Deutsch (Monat, Jahr)? Monat: Jahr:

4. Hast du bereits vor deiner Ankunft in Deutschland Deutsch gelernt? (Es sollte sich hierbei um eine Bildungseinrichtung handeln, z.B. Schule, Sprachschule, Universität, etc.)

☐ Ja ☐ Nein

Wenn ja, bitte vervollständige die folgende Tabelle:

Ort (Stadt, Land)	Art des Sprachkurses (z.B. Schulunterricht)	Länge des Sprachkurses (von Monat/Jahr bis Monat/Jahr)	Stundenanzahl pro Woche	Fokus des Sprachkurses (z.B. Schreiben, Lesen, Sprechen, Grammatik, Übersetzung, etc.)
Beispiel: ***Damaskus, Syrien***	Goethe-Institut	April 2015 bis Dezember 2015	4 Stunden	Grammatik und Sprechen

5. Hast du seit deiner Ankunft in Deutschland einen Sprachkurs bzw. Sprachkurse besucht?

☐ Ja ☐ Nein

Wenn ja, bitte vervollständige die folgende Tabelle:

Art des Sprachkurses (z.B. Jugend-integrationskurs)	Beginn des Sprachkurses (Monat/Jahr)	Ende des Sprachkurses (Monat/Jahr)	Stundenanzahl pro Woche	Lehrwerk	Abschluss-prüfung
Beispiel: ***Integrationskurs***	August 2018	April 2020	20 Stunden	Aussichten A2	Deutsch-Test für Zuwanderer

6. Wenn du Ergebnisse von deutschen Sprachprüfungen (z.B. TELC Deutsch, TestDaF, Goethe Zertifikat, etc.) hast, bitte notiere diese Ergebnisse in der Tabelle:

Sprachprüfung	Ergebnis

Im Folgenden geht es um deinen Gebrauch des Deutschen im Alltag. Bitte denke dafür an die letzten Wochen zurück und beantworte die Fragen, indem du die passende Antwort ankreuzt.

7. Hast du außerhalb des Sprachkurses Kontakt zu Deutschen? ☐ Ja ☐ Nein

Wenn ja, wie viel Kontakt hast du mit diesen Deutschen?

☐ Mehr als 7 Stunden pro Woche

☐ Zwischen 3 und 7 Stunden pro Woche

☐ Zwischen 1 und 3 Stunden pro Woche

☐ 1 Stunde oder weniger pro Woche

8. Bitte gib möglichst genau in Prozentzahlen an, wie viel Zeit du in Deutschland mit den folgenden Aktivitäten verbringst:

Beispiel: (a) 15% (b) 25% (c) 50% (d) 10%

(a) Deutsch mit deutschen Muttersprachlern sprechen: .....%

(b) Deutsch mit Nicht-Muttersprachlern des Deutschen sprechen: .....%

(c) Arabisch mit arabischen Muttersprachlern sprechen: .....%

(d) Andere Sprachen (z.B. Englisch) mit (Nicht-)Muttersprachlern des Deutschen sprechen: .....%

9. Wie häufig liest du im Durchschnitt deutsche Bücher/ Zeitungen/ Zeitschriften/ E-Mails/ Internetseiten in deiner Freizeit?

☐ Mehr als 7 Stunden pro Woche

☐ Zwischen 3 und 7 Stunden pro Woche

☐ Zwischen 1 und 3 Stunden pro Woche

☐ 1 Stunde oder weniger pro Woche

☐ Nie

10. Wie häufig hörst du im Durchschnitt deutsche(s) Radio/ Fernsehen/ Musik in deiner Freizeit?

☐ Mehr als 7 Stunden pro Woche

☐ Zwischen 3 und 7 Stunden pro Woche

☐ Zwischen 1 und 3 Stunden pro Woche

☐ 1 Stunde oder weniger pro Woche

☐ Nie

11. Wie viel weißt du über Deutschland (z.B. das Land, aktuelle Themen, Geschichte)?

☐ Sehr viel ☐ Viel ☐ Ein wenig ☐ Sehr wenig ☐ Nichts

Appendix 2. Learner Questionnaire I: *Language Skills* (Arabic version)

استبيان 1: المعارف اللغوية

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

معلومات المشاركين من أجل معالجة الاستبيان

استبيان لتسجيل المعارف اللغوية

المنهج والخطة

وقبل بداية الدراسة الفعلية أرغب في أن أطلب منك الإفصاح عن بعض البيانات الشخصية لك. فهذه البيانات تساعدني في ضمان القيام بعينة عشوائية متجانسة. ويتعلق الأمر في هذا الاستبيان بالمعارف اللغوية العامة لديك واستخدامك للغة الألمانية في حياتك اليومية. وهذا ليس إختباراً، أي أنه لا توجد إجابات "صحيحة" وأخرى "خاطئة". لكن من المهم أن تذكر بيانات صادقة. وفي أغلب الأحوال يجب عليك اختيار إجابة واحدة أو ذكر معلومات كتابية قصيرة. يوجد في الاستبيان توجيهاً واضحاً بهذا الخصوص.

سرية البيانات وحماية البيانات

بالطبع نضمن لك حماية بياناتك في كل وقت. فجميع البيانات التي تُذكر هنا تخضع لسرية صارمة. ولن يتم إرسال بياناتك لطرف آخر، ولن تُستخدم إلا لأغراض علمية دون إفصاح عن هوية صاحبها. يمكنك الحصول على معلومات بالتفصيل عن جمع ومنع تتبع/منع متابعة وحفظ وتقييم البيانات المتعلقة بشخصك أو بيانات التجربة من تصريح الموافقة على المشاركة.

1. عن الشخص

نرجو ذكر البيانات التالية عن شخصك:

الجنس: ☐ ذكر ☐ أنثى

عام الميلاد:

العمر:

محل الميلاد: الجنسية:

جنسية الأب: جنسية الأم:

ما هو أعلى مؤهل تعليمي حصلت عليه؟

هل تعلمت مهنة؟ ☐ نعم ☐ لا

إن كان نعم، ما هي المهنة التي تعلمتها؟

متى جئت إلى ألمانيا؟ الشهر: العام:

2. المعارف اللغوية

نرجو الإجابة فيما يلي على الأسئلة عن معارفك اللغوية.

1. ما هي لغتك الأم؟ (إذا كنت قد نشأت ثنائي اللغة/ متعدد اللغات فنرجو منك ذكر اللغات الأخرى لديك.)

2. هل تعلمت غير الألمانية لغات أجنبية أخرى؟ ☐ نعم ☐ لا

إن كان نعم، نرجو استكمال الجداول التالية:

اذكر في الجدول الأول اللغات الأجنبية الأخرى وقم بتقييم معارفك في هذه اللغات، وذلك بوضع علامة زائد (x) في الخانة.

اللغة	معارف جيدة جداً	معارف جيدة	معارف متوسطة	معارف قليلة	معارف قليلة جداً

2.2 نرجو أن تدون الآن المدة التي تعلمت فيها اللغات الأجنبية (مثلاً عامين). بعدها اذكر ما إن كان بإمكانك القراءة والكتابة بهذه اللغات. تكفي هنا الإجابة بكلمة "نعم" أو "لا".

اللغة	مدة درس اللغة	القدرة على القراءة (نعم/لا)	القدرة على الكتابة (نعم/لا)

3. منذ متى تتعلم الألمانية (شهر، عام)؟ شهر: عام:

4. هل تعلمت اللغة الألمانية قبل وصولك إلى ألمانيا؟ (المقصود هنا في مؤسسة تعليمية، مثل المدرسة، مدرسة اللغات، الجامعة، الخ)

☐ نعم ☐ لا

إن كان نعم، نرجو استكمال الجدول التالي:

المكان (المدينة، الدولة)	نوع دورة اللغة (مثل الدروس بالمدرسة)	مدة دورة اللغة (من شهر/ عام حتى شهر/ عام)	عدد الحصص في الأسبوع	محور دورة اللغة (مثل الكتابة، القراءة، المحادثة، القواعد، الترجمة، الخ)
مثال: دمشق، سوريا	معهد جوته	من أبريل 2015 حتى ديسمبر 2015	4 ساعات	القواعد والمحادثة

5. هل زرت منذ وصولك إلى ألمانيا دورة لغة أو دورات لغة؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا

إن كان نعم، نرجو استكمال الجدول التالي:

نوع دورة اللغة (مثل دورة الإندماج للشباب)	بداية دورة اللغة (شهر/ عام)	نهاية دورة اللغة (شهر/ عام)	عدد الحصص في الأسبوع	الكتاب التعليمي	الامتحان النهائي
مثال: دورة الإندماج	أغسطس 2018	أبريل 2020	20 ساعة	Aussichten A2	إختبار اللغة الألمانية للمهاجرين

6. إذا كنت قد حصلت على نتائج إمتحانات اللغة الألمانية (مثل TELC Deutsch أو TestDaF أو Goethe Zertifikat الخ)، فنرجو منك تدوين هذه النتائج في الجدول:

إمتحان اللغة	النتيجة

يتعلق الأمر فيما يلي باستخدامك للغة الألمانية في حياتك اليومية. للقيام بهذا نرجو إعادة التفكير في الأسابيع الأخيرة والإجابة على الأسئلة بوضع علامة أمام الإجابة المناسبة.

7. هل تتواصل مع ألمان خارج دورة اللغة؟ ☐ نعم ☐ لا

إن كان نعم، فكم مدة التواصل مع هؤلاء الألمان؟

☐ أكثر من 7 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ بين 3 و 7 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ بين 1 و 3 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ 1 ساعة أو أقل في الأسبوع

8. اذكر على وجه الدقة قدر الإمكان النسبة المئوية للوقت الذي تقضيه في هذه النشاطات في ألمانيا:

مثال: (أ) 15% (ب) 25% (ج) 50% (د) 10%

(أ) تحدث اللغة الألمانية مع متحدثيها الأم من الألمان: .....%

(ب) تحدث اللغة الألمانية مع أجانب يتحدثون الألمانية: .....%

(ج) تحدث اللغة العربية مع متحدثيها الأم من العرب: .....%

(د) تحدث لغات أخرى (مثل الانجليزية) مع ألمان أو أجانب يتحدثون الألمانية: .....%

9. ما هي نسبة قراءتك في المتوسط باللغة الألمانية لكتب / صحف / مجلات / رسائل بريد إلكتروني / صفحات إنترنت في وقت فراغك؟

☐ أكثر من 7 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ بين 3 و 7 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ بين 1 و 3 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ 1 ساعة أو أقل في الأسبوع

☐ أبداً

10. ما هي نسبة استماعك في المتوسط للراديو / التلفاز / الموسيقى باللغة الألمانية في وقت فراغك؟

☐ أكثر من 7 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ بين 3 و 7 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ بين 1 و 3 ساعات في الأسبوع

☐ 1 ساعة أو أقل في الأسبوع

☐ أبداً

11. ما هي حدود معارفك عن ألمانيا (مثل البلد، الموضوعات الحالية، التاريخ)؟

☐ كثير جداً ☐ كثير ☐ قليل ☐ قليل جداً ☐ لا شيء

Appendix 3. Learner Questionnaire II: *Cultural Differences* (German version)

Fragebogen 5: Kulturelle Unterschiede

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

Das Ziel der folgenden Fragen besteht darin, generelle Wahrnehmungen abzufragen. Daher beziehen sich die Fragen auf „Deutsche“ und „Syrer“, obwohl es sich hierbei natürlich um Verallgemeinerungen handelt.

1. Hältst du Deutsche für:

☐ Sehr viel höflicher als Syrer

☐ Ein bisschen höflicher als Syrer

☐ Genauso höflich wie Syrer

☐ Ein bisschen weniger höflich als Syrer

☐ Sehr viel weniger höflich als Syrer

2. Findest du, dass Deutsche generell:

☐ Sehr viel direkter als Syrer sind

☐ Ein bisschen direkter als Syrer sind

☐ Genauso direkt/indirekt wie Syrer sind

☐ Ein bisschen weniger direkt als Syrer sind

☐ Sehr viel weniger direkt als Syrer sind

3. Wenn du Unterschiede in der Direktheit wahrnimmst, wie bewertest du diese Unterschiede?

☐ Positiv

☐ Ist mir gleichgültig

☐ Negativ

☐ Je nach Situation unterschiedlich

3.1 Bitte kommentiere deine Antwort kurz:

1

4. Welche der Aussagen trifft generell auf dich zu?

☐ Ich bin direkter, wenn ich Deutsch spreche

☐ Ich bin weniger direkt, wenn ich Deutsch spreche

☐ Ich bin genauso direkt / indirekt im Deutschen wie im Arabischen

☐ Ich bemerke keinen Unterschied

5. Wenn du Unterschiede in der Höflichkeit von Deutschen und Syrern wahrnimmst, findest du es notwendig, die direkte / indirekte Art der Deutschen zu übernehmen, wenn du Deutsch sprichst?

☐ Ja ☐ Nein

5.1 Bitte kommentiere deine Antwort kurz.

6. Wenn du Deutsch mit Deutschen sprichst, hebst du manchmal bewusst deine syrische Nationalität / nicht-deutsche Nationalität hervor?

☐ Ja ☐ Nein

6.1 Wenn ja, bitte erkläre wann und warum.

Appendix 4. Learner Questionnaire II: *Cultural Differences* (Arabic version)

استبيان 5: الفروق الثقافية

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

الهدف من الأسئلة التالية هو الاستعلام عن الملاحظات العامة. لهذا تستند الأسئلة إلى "ألمان" و "سوريون" بالرغم من أن في هذا تعميم بالطبع.

1. هل ترى أن الألمانَ:

☐ مهذبون أكثر من السوريين بكثير جدًا

☐ مهذبون بعض الشيء أكثر من السوريين

☐ مهذبون مثل السوريين تمامًا

☐ مهذبون بدرجة أقل بعض الشيء من السوريين

☐ مهذبون أقل من السوريين بكثير جدًا

2. هل ترى أن الألمان بشكل عام:

☐ صُرحاء أكثر من السوريين بكثير جدًا

☐ صُرحاء بعض الشيء أكثر من السوريين

☐ صُرحاء/غير صُرحاء مثل السوريين تمامًا

☐ صُرحاء بعض الشيء أقل من السوريين

☐ صُرحاء أقل من السوريين بكثير جدًا

3. إن كنت تلاحظ فروقًا في الصراحة، فكيف تُقيم هذه الفروق؟

☐ بشكل إيجابي

☐ الأمر سواء بالنسبة لي

☐ بشكل سلبي

☐ مختلف حسب الموقف

3.1 نرجو التعليق باختصار على إجابتك:

1

4. أي من المقولات التالية تنطبقُ عليك بشكل عام؟

☐ أكون أكثر صراحة عندما أتحدث اللغة الألمانية

☐ أكون أقل صراحة عندما أتحدث اللغة الألمانية

☐ أنا على نفس القدر من الصراحة/عدم الصراحة سواء تحدثت بالألمانية أو العربية

☐ لا ألاحظ أي فرق

5. إن كنت تلاحظُ فروقًا في التهذب بين الألمان والسوريين، فهل ترى أنه من الضروري أن تستلهم الطريقة الصريحة / غير الصريحة للألمان عندما تتحدث باللغة الألمانية؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا

5.1 نرجو التعليق باختصار على إجابتك.

6. عندما تتحدث اللغة الألمانية مع اللمان، فعل تؤكد في بعض الأحيان على جنسيتك السورية / جنسيتك غير الألمانية؟

☐ نعم ☐ لا

6.1 إن كانت الإجابة نعم، فنرجو أن توضح متى ولماذا يحدث هذا.

Appendix 5. Language Assessment Test (Arabic and German versions)

Fragebogen 3: Einstufungstest A1 - B1

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

Anleitung

Mit diesem Einstufungstest möchte ich deine Grammatikkenntnisse des Deutschen beurteilen.

- Lies die Anweisung zu jeder Aufgabe genau durch und schau dir das Beispiel an. Wenn du die Aufgabe nicht verstehst, frag bitte nach.

Der Test ist auf deinen Deutschkurs abgestimmt. Er beginnt mit einfachen Fragen und wird von Frage zu Frage schwieriger. Auch wenn du nur über geringe Vorkenntnisse verfügst, solltest du den Test in jedem Fall – so gut es geht – bearbeiten. Die Aufgaben sind unterteilt in die Level A1, A2 und B1.

Wenn du eine Frage nicht beantworten kannst oder eine Aufgabe für dich zu schwierig ist, lass sie offen. Bitte rate nicht bei der Beantwortung der Fragen, denn Raten verfälscht das Ergebnis.

استبيان 3: اختبار تحديد المستوى A1 – B1

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

دليل استرشادي

من خلال اختبار تحديد المستوى هذا أرغب في تقييم معارفك بقواعد اللغة الألمانية.

- اقرأ التعليمات الخاصة بكل واجب بدقة وانظر إلى المثال المذكور. إن لم تفهم الواجب فنرجو منك الاستفسار عنه.

الاختبار متوافق مع دورة اللغة الألمانية الخاصة بك. ويبدأ الاختبار بأسئلة بسيطة ويصبح من سؤال لآخر أكثر صعوبة. وحتى إن لم يتوفر لديك إلا القليل من المعارف الأولية فينبغي عليك أداء الامتحان على أي حال – بقدر المُستطاع. والواجبات مُقسمة إلى المستويات A1 و A2 و B1.

إن لم تتمكن من الإجابة على سؤال ما أو رأيت أنه شديد الصعوبة بالنسبة لك فنرجو أن تتركه دون إجابة. نرجو عدم التخمين خلال إجابة الأسئلة، لأن التخمين يؤدي إلى تزييف النتيجة.

Aufgabe 1: Fragen und Antworten

Welche Antwort passt? Ordne zu. Einige Antworten bleiben übrig. (تتبقى بعض الإجابات.)

BEISPIEL: 0. Ist das deine Deutschlehrerin? [E] 1. Wer ist das? [ ] 2. Ist Köln in Österreich? [ ] 3. Was ist das? [ ] 4. Kommt Karolina aus Deutschland? [ ] 5. Warum kommt Karim nicht zur Party? [ ]	A Nein, aus der Schweiz. B Das ist Frau Müller. C Ja, er kommt nicht. D Ja, sie ist Polin. E ~~Nein, meine Englischlehrerin.~~ F Das ist ein Radiergummi. G Er hat keine Zeit. H Österreich ist in Europa. I Nein, in Deutschland.

Aufgabe 2: Verneinung (نفيٌ)

Schreibe die verneinten Sätze mit *nicht* oder *kein/keine*.

BEISPIEL: Herr Schulz steht um 7 Uhr auf.

Herr Schulz steht *nicht* um 7 Uhr auf.

6. Ich habe eine Schwester.

_____

7. Das ist ein Restaurant.

_____

8. Giulia wohnt in Frankfurt.

_____

9. Gehst du in den Park?

_____

Aufgabe 3: Kurze Gespräche

Bitte kreuze an: a), b), c) oder d). Nur eine Antwort ist richtig.

BEISPIEL:
○ Chiara _____Italienerin.
a) sind
b) seid
X c) ist
d) bin

10. ○ Was machen Sie gern?
● _____ . Und Sie?
a) Gern ich reise
b) Reise ich gern
c) Reise gern ich
d) Ich reise gern

11. ○ Entschuldigung. Wo ist der Bahnhof?
● Das ist ganz einfach. _____ rechts und dann geradeaus.
○ Vielen Dank!
a) Gehen hier
b) Gehen Sie hier
c) Gehst du hier
d) Ich gehe hier

12. ○ Telefonieren wir?
● Ja, ich _____.
a) am Nachmittag dich anrufe
b) anrufe dich am Nachmittag
c) rufe dich am Nachmittag an
d) rufe an dich am Nachmittag

13. ○ Schmeckt dir der Salat nicht?
● _____, der Salat schmeckt gut.
a) Doch
b) Ja
c) Nein
d) Immer

14. ○ Ich habe Halsschmerzen.
● _____ einen Tee mit Honig. Das hilft!
○ Ja, das mache ich!
a) Trinken
b) Trinke ich
c) Trink
d) Trinkst du

15. ○ Wie ist deine Arbeit?
● Ich mag meinen Job. Er macht mir Spaß und _____.
a) ist gut die Bezahlung
b) die Bezahlung ist gut
c) gut die Bezahlung ist
d) ist die Bezahlung gut

16. ○ Was macht ihr am Wochenende?
● Wir _____ am Samstag _____.
a) wollen … Fußball spielen
b) spielen … Fußball wollen
c) Fußball … spielen wollen
d) Fußball … wollen spielen

17. ○ Lisa, es ist spät. _____!
● Ja, Mama!
a) Steh jetzt auf
b) Aufsteh jetzt
c) Aufstehst du jetzt
d) Steh du jetzt auf

18. ○ Guten Tag, verkaufen Sie Bananen?
● Nein, wir haben _____ Bananen.
a) die
b) gelbe
c) keine
d) viele

19. ○ Ich verstehe Sie nicht. _____!
● Okay!
a) Sprechen bitte langsam
b) Bitte sprechen langsam
c) Sie sprechen bitte langsam
d) Sprechen Sie bitte langsam

Aufgabe 4: Was fragen die Leute?

Bilde Fragen. Beginne mit dem unterstrichenen Satzteil.

BEISPIEL:

Lisa: *Sind Sie zum ersten Mal in Berlin?*

sind • zum ersten Mal • Sie • in Berlin • ?

20. Zeynep:

wohnst • in Köln • du • ?

21. Peter:

findest • wie • meine neue Hose • du • ?

22. Amir:

kaufst • ein • heute • du • ?

23. Maria:

willst • gehen • du • auf das Fest • ?

24. Felix:

möchten • trinken • was • Sie • ?

Aufgabe 5: Der Deutschkurs

Wie heißen die Sätze? Notiere die richtige Reihenfolge.

BEISPIEL:
Miriam
A dafür mehr lernen muss
B besser Deutsch können
C auch wenn ich
D ich möchte gern

Ich möchte gern besser Deutsch können, auch wenn ich dafür mehr lernen muss.

D B C A

25. Rami
A dass Deutsch
B findest du
C eine schwierige Sprache
D ist?

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

26. Elif
A aber die Hausaufgaben
B lerne ich am besten
C am Vormittag
D mache ich am Abend

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

27. Sofia
A beginnt
B ob der Deutschkurs
C um 9 Uhr oder um 10 Uhr
D ich weiß nicht

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

28. Mehmet
A musst du
B die Deutschlehrerin fragen
C nicht verstehst
D wenn du etwas

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Aufgabe 6: Was war am letzten Wochenende? Herr Sadi erzählt.

Kreuze die richtige Verbform an: a), b), c) oder d). Nur eine Antwort ist richtig.

BEISPIEL:	0	a) wollen	b) wollte	~~c)~~ wollten	d) wollt

Letzte Woche Samstag **(0)**_____ wir lange schlafen. Aber wir **(29)**_____ nicht ausschlafen, weil die Nachbarn so laut waren. Am Samstagmorgen hatten wir Hunger. Ich **(30)**_____ in der Bäckerei frische Brötchen holen, aber die Straße war gesperrt. Man **(31)**_____ nicht weiterfahren. Deshalb bin ich wieder nach Hause gefahren und meine Frau hat gesagt: „Was hast du gemacht? Du **(32)**_____ doch Brötchen kaufen!"

29	a) konnten	b) konnte	c) können	d) kann
30	a) will	b) wollte	c) wollt	d) willst
31	a) dürfte	b) durfte	c) darf	d) dürft
32	a) sollt	b) soll	c) solltest	d) sollest

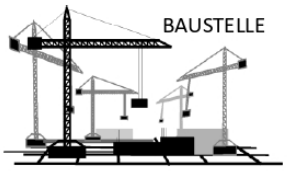
Aufgabe 7: Kurze Gespräche

Bitte kreuze an: a), b), c) oder d). Nur eine Antwort ist richtig.

BEISPIEL:
○ Frau Müller, Sie _____hier stoppen.
~~a)~~ müssen
b) musst
c) kann
d) können

33. ○ Was ist deine Lieblingsfarbe?
● Ich _____ Gelb besonders gern, weil es so hell und freundlich ist.
a) wolle
b) will
c) möge
d) mag

34. ○ Vor unserem Haus ist eine große Baustelle. Hier _____ gerade eine neue U-Bahn-Station gebaut.
a) hat
b) ist
c) wird
d) soll



35. ○ Hi Silvia, gestern hat _____ für dich angerufen. Ich habe den Namen leider nicht verstanden.
a) nichts
b) niemand
c) jemand
d) etwas

36. ○ Ich wohne in einer kleinen Wohnung, aber ich _____ gern in einem großen Haus _____.
a) würde ... wohnen
b) würde ... gewohnt
c) habe ... wohnen
d) wäre ... gewohnt

37. ○ Was hat der Arzt gesagt?
● Ich _____ mehr Sport machen und weniger essen.
a) will
b) sollt
c) soll
d) willst

38. ○ Rauchen verboten! Hier _____ man nicht rauchen.

a) müssen
b) darf
c) dürfen
d) muss

39. ○ Warum bist du immer so müde?
● Wir _____ jeden Morgen um fünf Uhr von unseren Kindern _____.
a) wird … gewecken[1]
b) haben … geweckt[1]
c) werden … geweckt[1]
d) sind … gewecken[1]
[1] *jemanden wecken* = إيقاظ شخص ما

40. ○ Entschuldigung, ich warte jetzt schon seit zwei Stunden. Warum muss _____hier immer so lange warten?
● Das kann ich Ihnen auch nicht erklären. Das ist eben so.
a) man
b) er
c) sie
d) jemand

41. ○ Was wünschst du dir?
● Ich _____ gern reich[1] und ich _____ gern viele Kinder.
a) bin … habe
b) würde … müsste
c) möchte … würde
d) wäre …hätte
[1] *reich* = غني

42. ○ Was wünscht ihr euch?
● Wir _____ im Sommer nach Italien fahren.
a) will
b) dürfen
c) dürft
d) wollen

43. ○ Ich _____am Montag leider nicht mitkommen, denn ich habe keine Zeit. Aber wir _____ uns am Mittwoch treffen!
a) will … wollt
b) könne …. konnten
c) kann … können
d) wollte … können

44. ○ Wo ist dein Fahrrad?
● Ich habe dir doch gesagt,_____ _____.
a) dass wird es heute repariert
b) dass es heute repariert wird
c) dass heute wird es repariert
d) dass repariert es heute wird

45. ○ **Handys ausmachen**
● In der Deutschprüfung _____ du dein Handy ausmachen.
a) musst
b) muss
c) kann
d) kannst

Aufgabe 8: Die Einladung

Bitte kreuze an: a), b), c) oder d). Nur eine Antwort ist richtig.

BEISPIEL:	**0**	a) Liebe	b) Sehr geehrte	c) Verehrte	d) Lieber

[0]_____Lucia,

ich **[46]**_____ dich und deinen Mann zu meiner Geburtstagsfeier am 07.07. ab 20 Uhr in Hamburg, Frankenstraße 77, einladen. Ich freue mich sehr, **[47]**_____ ihr kommen könnt!

Fahrt ihr mit dem Zug? Dann werdet ihr am Bahnhof **[48]**_____.

Viele Grüße

Andreas

Lieber Andreas,

toll, **[49]** _____ du uns zu deiner Geburtstagsfeier einlädst[1] ([1]*einladen* = يدعو)! Letzte Woche **[50]**_____ich dich eigentlich anrufen und fragen, **[51]**_____ du schon Pläne für deinen Geburtstag hast. **[52]**_____ ich war krank und habe es vergessen. Ich **[53]**_____ eine Grippe, jetzt geht es mir aber wieder gut!
[54]_____ es für dich in Ordnung ist, wollen wir gern schon am Morgen anreisen. Wir waren noch nie in Hamburg und möchten die Stadt endlich kennenlernen. Wir würden gern ins Museum gehen und wir **[55]**_____ eine Stadtrundfahrt machen.

Hast du Lust? Ruf mich doch bald an.

Viele Grüße

Lucia

46	a) muss	b) möchte	c) könnte	d) soll
47	a) wenn	b) ob	c) denn	d) wann
48	a) geholt ab[1]	b) abholen[1]	c) abholt[1]	d) abgeholt[1]
49	a) dass	b) weil	c) doch	d) ob
50	a) will	b) wollte	c) wollen	d) willst
51	a) wenn	b) dass	c) ob	d) weil
52	a) aber	b) weil	c) wenn	d) dass
53	a) habe	b) hast	c) hatte	d) hätte
54	a) ob	b) wann	c) dass	d) wenn
55	a) gekonnt	b) könnten	c) konnten	d) können

[1] *jemanden abholen* = يجلبُ شخصًا

Aufgabe 9: Kurze Gespräche

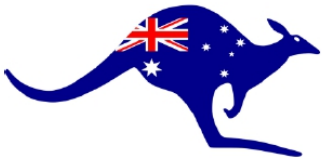
Bitte kreuze an: a), b), c) oder d). Nur eine Antwort ist richtig.

BEISPIEL:
○ Paolo _____ Italiener.
a) sind
b) seid
~~c)~~ ist
d) bin

56. ○ Kann ich etwas essen?
● Nein, leider nicht. Das Essen _____ noch _____.
a) muss … werden gekocht
b) muss … gekocht werden
c) gekocht werden … muss
d) werden …. kochen müssen

57. ○ Ist es richtig, dass die Rechnung _____?
a) kann mit Kreditkarte bezahlt werden?
b) wird mit Kreditkarte bezahlen können?
c) mit Kreditkarte bezahlt werden kann?
d) mit Kreditkarte bezahlt kann werden?

Aufgabe 10: Ratschläge für die Reise nach Australien



Welche Wörter passen hier? Schreibe die Lösungen in den Lückentext. Einige Wörter bleiben übrig. (تتبقى بعض الكلمات.)

BEISPIEL:
○ Was **[0]**__*würdest*__du machen, wenn du bald nach Australien fliegen würdest?

● Zuerst würde ich einen guten Reiseführer (دليل سفر) kaufen.

○ Du **[58]**_____ auch im Internet recherchieren (يبحث)!
Wenn ich du wäre, **[59]**_____ ich Sydney und Melbourne besuchen.

● Ach, wenn ich doch mehr Geld und weniger Arbeit **[60]**_____ !

○ Ja, das **[61]**_____ schön! Wenn wir nicht so viel arbeiten **[62]**_____ , **[63]**_____ wir die Reise zusammen machen.

a) habe
b) hätte
c) ist
d) konnten
e) könnten
f) müssten
g) sollst
h) solltest
i) wäre
j) werde
k) wollen
l) würde
~~m) würdest~~

Appendix 6. Discourse Completion Task (German and Arabic versions)

Fragebogen 2: Fragebogenstudie

Bitte schreibe deinen persönlichen Code auf: _____

Anleitung

In diesem Fragebogen werden verschiedene Alltagssituationen beschrieben. Eine Fotografie bildet zusätzlich jede beschriebene Alltagssituation ab. Schwierige Vokabeln sind durch eine Zahl[1/2/3/4] markiert und werden ins Arabische übersetzt. Bitte bearbeite die Situationen folgendermaßen:

Lies die Texte aufmerksam durch und schreib auf, was **du** persönlich in der jeweiligen Situation **sagen** würdest. Vervollständige die Situationen auf so authentische Art und Weise wie möglich. Denk auch immer darüber nach, mit wem du gerade sprichst (z.B. mit einem Freund oder mit deiner Chefin). Schreib so viel, wie du für nötig hältst.

Beispiel

In deiner Wohnung

Dein Mitbewohner[1] heißt Sebastian und du kennst ihn gut[2]. Sebastian leiht[3] sich oft dein Fahrrad aus[3]. Du gehst heute zum Fahrradständer[4] und siehst, dass Sebastian sich wieder dein Fahrrad geliehen und es kaputt gemacht hat. Er hat dir nichts gesagt und du ärgerst dich wirklich sehr. Du findest sein Verhalten nicht in Ordnung und du willst ihm das sagen. Du triffst ihn am Abend in der Wohnung.

[1] der Mitbewohner: شريكُ السكن

[2] jemanden gut kennen: معرفة شخص بشكل جيد

[3] sich etwas ausleihen: اقتراض شيء

[4] der Fahrradständer: مكان انتظار الدراجات

Beschwere dich bei Sebastian! **(تقدم بالشكوى إلى زيباستيان!)**

Weißt du, ich bin echt sauer. Ich wollte heute Morgen mein Fahrrad benutzen und habe gesehen, dass es total kaputt war. Warum hast du nichts gesagt? Das ist echt scheiße.

استبيان 2: دراسة استبيانية

Bitte schreibe deine Nummer auf: _____

دليل استرشادي

تُشرح في هذا الاستبيان مواقف مختلفة من الحياة اليومية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك يرافق كل موقف من مواقف الحياة المذكور تصويرٌ فوتوغرافي. يتم تحديد الكلمات الصعبة بالعدد [4/3/2/1] وتُترجم إلى اللغة العربية. نرجو معالجة المواقف كما يلي:

اقرأ النصوص بعناية وقم بتدوين ما تود أن تقوله أنت بشكل شخصي في كل موقف على حدة. استكمل المواقف بشكل حقيقي قدر المُستطاع. فكر دائمًا بشكل جيد في مَن تتحدث معه الآن (على سبيل المثال مع صديق أو مع رئيستك بالعمل). اكتب القدر الذي تراه ضروريًا.

مثال

In deiner Wohnung

Dein Mitbewohner[1] heißt Sebastian und du kennst ihn gut[2]. Sebastian leiht[3] sich oft dein Fahrrad aus[3]. Du gehst heute zum Fahrradständer[4] und siehst, dass Sebastian sich wieder dein Fahrrad geliehen und es kaputt gemacht hat. Er hat dir nichts gesagt und du ärgerst dich wirklich sehr. Du findest sein Verhalten nicht in Ordnung und du willst ihm das sagen. Du triffst ihn am Abend in der Wohnung.

[1]der Mitbewohner: شريكُ السكن

[2]jemanden gut kennen: معرفة شخص بشكل جيد

[3]sich etwas ausleihen: اقتراض شيء

[4]der Fahrradständer: مكان انتظار الدراجات

Beschwere dich bei Sebastian! (تقدم بالشكوى إلى زيباستيان!)

Weißt du, ich bin echt sauer. Ich wollte heute Morgen mein Fahrrad benutzen und habe gesehen, dass es total kaputt war. Warum hast du nichts gesagt? Das ist echt scheiße.

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1. In deinem Haus

Deine Nachbarin heißt Lena. Ihr verabredet[1] euch manchmal zum Kaffeetrinken und ihr kennt euch gut. Du fährst am Freitag nach Frankfurt, weil du deine Schwester besuchen willst. Du bleibst acht Tage in Frankfurt, aber du hast eine Katze. Du willst, dass Lena deiner Katze Essen gibt, wenn du in Frankfurt bist. Du triffst Lena heute im Haus.

[1] sich verabreden: يتواعد

Bitte Lena darum! ***(اطلب من لينا!)***

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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2. Auf der Arbeit

Du hast seit drei Monaten einen Nebenjob[1]. Dein Kollege heißt Peter und ihr kennt euch gut[2]. Du hast vor zwei Wochen kurzfristig[3] Peters Schicht übernommen[4]. Du musst diese Woche am Samstag arbeiten, aber du bekommst Besuch[5] von sehr guten Freunden. Deshalb willst du die Schicht[6] am Samstag mit Peter tauschen[6]. Du gehst in der Pause zu Peter.

[1] der Nebenjob: العمل الجانبي
[2] jemanden gut kennen: يعرف شخص جيدًا
[3] kurzfristig: على المدى القصير
[4] die Schicht übernehmen: يتبنى وجهة النظر
[5] Besuch bekommen: يتلقى زيارة
[6] die Schicht tauschen: يتبادل وجهة النظر

Bitte Peter darum! *(اطلب من بيتر!)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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3. Bei einer Freundin

Du hast Samira vor drei Monaten kennengelernt und du bist heute bei ihr zu Besuch. Ihr kennt euch gut und du hilfst ihr oft bei Arbeiten in ihrer Wohnung. Du ziehst[1] am Samstag in eine neue Wohnung[1]. Du hast viele Umzugskartons[2] und Möbel, deshalb brauchst du Hilfe beim Tragen[3]. Du kennst noch nicht viele Leute in Köln und allein schaffst[4] du es nicht. Deshalb willst du, dass Samira dir beim Umzug[5] hilft.

[1] in eine neue Wohnung ziehen: ينتقل إلى شقة جديدة
[2] die Umzugskartons: كرتونات تعبئة الأدوات عند الانتقال من المسكن
[3] tragen: يحمل
[4] schaffen: ينجز
[5] der Umzug: الانتقال من المسكن

Bitte Samira darum! ***(اطلب من سميرة!)***

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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4. In der Wohnung

Du hast seit drei Monaten eine Mitbewohnerin[1]. Sie heißt Leyla und ihr kennt euch gut. Leyla kocht oft, aber sie räumt[2] nie die Küche auf[2]. Du bekommst heute Besuch von deinen Freunden und ihr wollt zusammen kochen. Die Küche ist wieder sehr schmutzig[3] und auf dem Tisch stehen viele Töpfe und Teller. Du willst, dass Leyla die Küche putzt.

[1] die Mitbewohnerin: شريكة السكن
[2] aufräumen: يُرتب
[3] schmutzig: مُتسخ

Bitte Leyla darum! ***(اطلب من ليلى!)***

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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5. Bei deinem Vermieter[1]

Du hast einen Termin mit deinem Vermieter[1]. Dein Vermieter[1] heißt Herr Turan und du kennst ihn gut. Du hast einen Rohrbruch[2] in der Wohnung, deshalb stinkt[3] deine Wohnung und der ganze Fußboden[4] ist nass. In deinem Mietvertrag[5] steht, dass der Vermieter[1] das reparieren muss. Herr Turan sagt, dass in drei Tagen ein Handwerker zu dir nach Hause kommt. Du willst aber, dass der Rohrbruch[2] sofort repariert wird.

[1] der Vermieter:شريك السكن
[2] der Rohrbruch: إنكسار الأنبوب/الماسورة
[3] stinken: يصدر رائحة عفنة
[4] der Fußboden: الأرضيات
[5] der Mietvertrag: عقد الإيجار

Bitte Herrn Turan darum! ***(***اطلب من السيد توران!***)***

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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6. In der Bäckerei

Es ist Samstagmorgen und du gehst in die Bäckerei, weil du Brot kaufen möchtest. Du kennst den Verkäufer, Herrn Wagner, gut, denn du kaufst jede Woche in der Bäckerei ein. Du nimmst ein Brot für 2,50 Euro und gibst Herrn Wagner einen 10-Euro-Schein. Herr Wagner nimmt dein Geld und gibt dir 2,50 Euro zurück. Du hast ihm aber 10 Euro gegeben und musst deshalb 7,50 Euro zurückbekommen. Du willst, dass Herr Wagner dir das richtige Rückgeld[1] gibt.

[1] das Rückgeld: باقي الحساب

Bitte Herrn Wagner darum! ***(اطلب من السيد فاجنر!)***

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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7. Auf der Arbeit

Du hast einen Nebenjob[1]. Dein Chef heißt Herr Macke und du kennst ihn gut. Du magst die Arbeit, aber du musst oft Überstunden[2] machen und diese Überstunden[2] werden nicht bezahlt. Du bist gerade in Herrn Mackes Büro und er gibt dir wieder[3] sehr viele neue Aufgaben[4]. Du weißt, dass du jetzt wieder[3] Überstunden[2] machen musst und das ärgert dich sehr. Du willst mit Herrn Macke sprechen, denn du findest die Situation ungerecht[5].

[1] der Nebenjob: العمل الجانبي
[2] die Überstunden: الساعات الإضافية
[3] wieder: مرة أخرى
[4] die Aufgaben: الواجبات
[5] ungerecht: غير عادل

Beschwere dich bei Herrn Macke! *(قدم شكوى لدى السيد ماكه!)*

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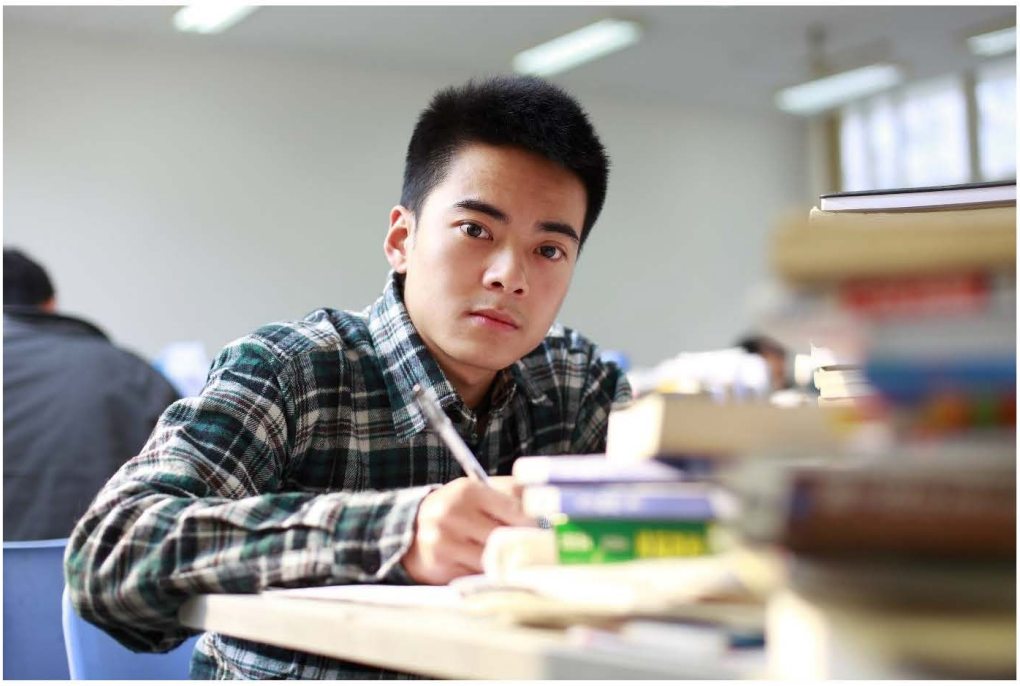
8. Im Sprachkurs



Du sitzt im Sprachkurs neben Tom und du kennst ihn gut. Du leihst[1] Tom immer deine Notizen, wenn er nicht zum Kurs kommen kann. Du warst letzte Woche nicht im Sprachkurs, weil du krank warst. Heute bist du das erste Mal wieder im Kurs und du möchtest dir Toms Notizen leihen[1]. Tom sagt, dass er seine Notizen braucht und sie dir nicht geben kann. Du ärgerst dich sehr über Tom und bist sauer[2], denn du hast ihm immer geholfen.

[1] leihen: يقرض
[3] sauer: غضبان

Beschwere dich bei Tom! ***(قدم شكوى إلى السيد توم!)***

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9. Bei deiner Vermieterin[1]

Du hast heute einen Termin mit deiner Vermieterin[1]. Deine Vermieterin heißt Frau Kowalska und du kennst sie gut. Die Heizung[2] in deiner Wohnung ist kaputt und du weißt, dass die Vermieterin[1] Schäden reparieren und selbst bezahlen muss[3]. Frau Kowalska sagt, dass du die Heizung[2] kaputt gemacht hast und die Reparatur bezahlen musst. Du findest das ungerecht[4], denn du hast die Heizung[2] nicht kaputtgemacht. Du ärgerst dich sehr über deine Vermieterin[1] und willst mit ihr sprechen.

[1] die Vermieterin: المُؤجرة
[2] die Heizung: التدفئة
[3] du weißt, dass die Vermieterin Schäden reparieren und selbst bezahlen muss:
أنت تعلم أن المُؤجرة يجب عليها إصلاح الأعطال ودفع ثمن هذا بنفسها
[4] ungerecht: غير عادل

Beschwere dich bei Frau Kowalska! (قدم شكوى إلى السيدة كوفالسكا!***)***

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10. Beim Arzt

Deine Ärztin heißt Frau Dr. Schröder und du kennst sie gut. Frau Schröder hat dir vor einer Woche gesagt, dass du ein Medikament[1] viermal pro Tag nehmen musst. Du hast einen Ausschlag im Gesicht[2] bekommen und dieser Ausschlag[2] tut[3] sehr weh[3]. Im Internet steht, dass man das Medikament[1] nur zweimal pro Tag nehmen darf, weil man sonst[4] einen Ausschlag[2] bekommen kann. Du hast heute wieder einen Termin bei Frau Schröder und du ärgerst dich sehr über sie. Du bist unzufrieden mit der Behandlung[5] und du willst mit Frau Schröder sprechen.

[1] das Medikament: الدواء
[2] der Ausschlag (im Gesicht): الطفح الجلدي (في الوجه)
[3] wehtun: يؤلم
[4] sonst: آخر
[5] unzufrieden mit der Behandlung sein: غير راضٍ عن العلاج

Beschwere dich bei Frau Schröder! (تقدم بشكوى إلى السيدة شرودر! ***)***

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11. Im Sprachkurs

Ihr müsst im Sprachkurs einen Vortrag halten[1], deshalb macht ihr eine Partnerarbeit[2]. Du kennst deinen Partner Jacob gut[3] und ihr verteilt die Aufgaben[4]. Am Dienstag ist der Vortrag, aber Jacob ist nicht da und er hat dir keine Nachricht geschrieben. Dein Vortrag ist schlecht, denn Jacobs Teil[5] des Vortrags fehlt. Du findest es nicht gut, dass Jacob nicht gekommen ist und bist sauer[6] auf ihn. Am Mittwoch ist Jacob wieder im Sprachkurs und du ärgerst dich immer noch.

[1] einen Vortrag halten: يلتزم بعقد
[2] die Partnerarbeit: عمل المشاركة
[3] jemanden gut kennen: يعرف شخص جيدًا
[4] die Aufgaben verteilen: يوزع الواجبات
[5] der Teil: الجزء
[6] sauer: غضبان

Beschwere dich bei Jacob! (قدم شكوى إلى ياكوب!***)***

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12. In der Wohnung

Deine Mitbewohnerin[1] heißt Julia und du kennst sie gut. Julia ist eine nette Mitbewohnerin[1], aber sie isst oft dein Essen, ohne dich zu fragen[2]. Heute willst du für deine Freunde kochen, aber Julia hat wieder einfach dein Essen gegessen. Es ist Sonntag, deshalb kannst du heute nicht einkaufen gehen. Du bist sauer[3] auf Julia, denn du hast nicht genug Lebensmittel[4] für das Essen mit deinen Freunden. Du ärgerst dich sehr, deshalb willst du mit Julia in der Küche sprechen.

[1] die Mitbewohnerin: شريكة السكن
[2] ohne dich zu fragen: يسأل من غيرك
[3] sauer: غضبان
[4] nicht genug Lebensmittel: المواد الغذائية غير كافية

Beschwere dich bei Julia! (قدم شكوى إلى يوليا! ***)***

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13. In deiner Wohnung

Du hast heute Geburtstag. Deshalb hast du deine Freunde zum Essen eingeladen. Jetzt kommt ein Freund von dir, er heißt Alexej. Du kennst Alexej seit vier Monaten und du magst ihn gern. Alexej hat dir ein Geschenk gekauft. Du freust[1] dich sehr über das Geschenk und du willst dich bedanken.

[1] sich freuen: يفرح

Bedank dich bei Alexej! (تقدم بالشكر إلى ألكسي!***)***

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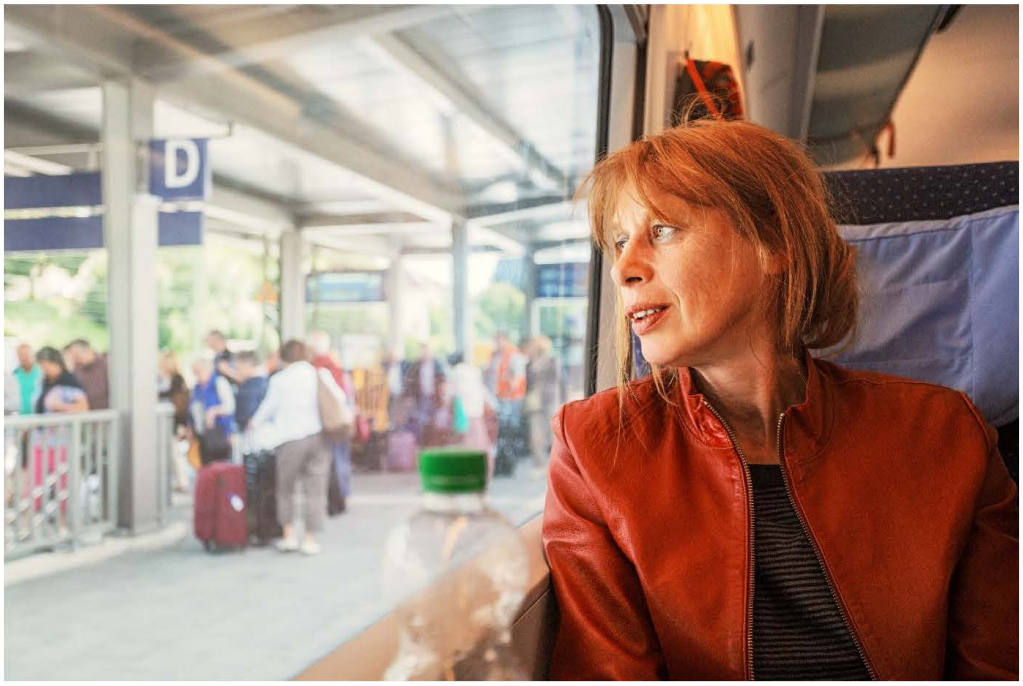
14. Im Zug



Du fährst heute mit dem Zug nach Essen. Gegenüber von dir sitzt eine ältere Frau. Sie sieht dich an und dann spricht sie über das Wetter. Die Frau ist sehr freundlich und ihr unterhaltet[1] euch 30 Minuten lang. Die nächste Haltestelle ist Essen Hauptbahnhof und du musst aussteigen. Du willst dich von der Frau verabschieden[2].

[1] sich unterhalten: يتسامر
[2] sich verabschieden: يودع

Verabschiede dich von der Frau! ***(قم بتوديع المرأة!)***

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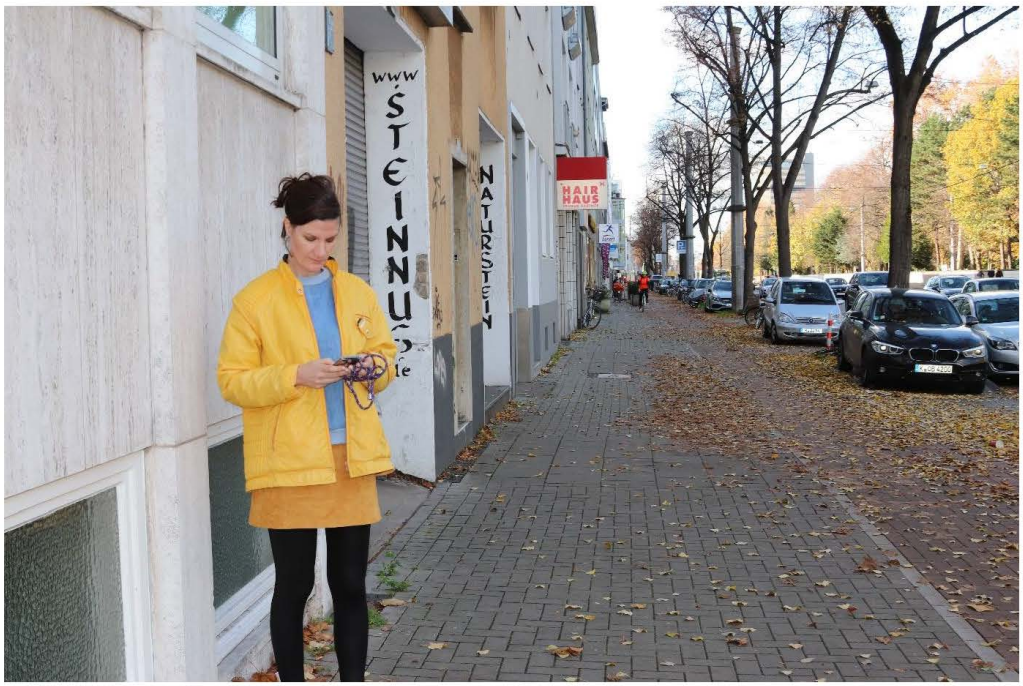
15. In Hamburg



Du machst einen Ausflug nach Hamburg. In Hamburg machst du eine Stadttour und gehst in ein Museum. Du fährst heute um 20 Uhr mit dem Zug wieder nach Köln. Dein Zug fährt vom Hauptbahnhof ab, aber du weißt nicht, wo der Hauptbahnhof ist. Eine Frau steht in deiner Nähe. Du gehst zu der Frau, denn du willst sie nach dem Weg zum Hauptbahnhof fragen.

Frag die Frau! ***(اسأل المرأة!)***

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16. Im Park

Es ist Samstagnachmittag. Du gehst im Park spazieren. Plötzlich triffst du eine Freundin im Park. Sie heißt Francesca und du kennst sie gut. Sie sagt: „Hey, wie geht es dir?“ Du willst Francesca antworten.

Beantworte Francescas Frage! *(أجب عن سؤال فرانسيسكا!)*

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17. Auf dem Markt

Es ist Samstag und du fährst zum Markt. Du gehst über den Markt und siehst dir das Obst an. Du möchtest Bananen und Äpfel kaufen. Du siehst sehr schöne Bananen bei einem Verkäufer. Du willst nach dem Preis der Bananen fragen. Deshalb gehst du zu dem Verkäufer.

Frag den Verkäufer! ***(اسأل البائع!)***

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18. Im Sprachkurs

Du gehst am Montag in deinen Sprachkurs. Mateusz ist auch in deinem Kurs. Du kennst Mateusz gut, denn er sitzt im Sprachkurs neben dir. Mateusz hat einen Kuchen mit Kerzen[1]. Er hat heute Geburtstag und ist 24 Jahre alt geworden. Du willst Mateusz zum Geburtstag gratulieren und du gehst zu ihm.

[1] die Kerze: شمعة

Gratuliere Mateusz zum Geburtstag! *(هنيء ماتويز بمناسبة عيد ميلاده!)*

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Appendix 7. Pragmatic Perception Task (German and Arabic versions)

Fragebogen 4: Multiple-Choice Aufgabe

Bitte schreibe deinen persönlichen Code auf: _____

Anleitung

In diesem Fragebogen werden verschiedene Alltagssituationen beschrieben. Für jeden Text stehen vier Antwortmöglichkeiten zur Auswahl. Eine Fotografie bildet zusätzlich jede beschriebene Alltagssituation ab. Schwierige Vokabeln sind durch eine Zahl[1/2/3/4] markiert und werden ins Arabische übersetzt. Bitte bearbeite die Situationen folgendermaßen:
Lies jeden Text und die jeweils vier Antwortmöglichkeiten aufmerksam durch. Wähle im Anschluss die Antwort aus, die in dem jeweiligen Kontext am besten passt. Kreuz diese Antwort an. Denk auch immer darüber nach, mit wem du gerade sprichst (z.B. mit einem Freund oder mit deiner Chefin). **Bei deiner Auswahl geht es nicht um "richtig" oder "falsch", vielmehr sind wir an deiner spontanen Beurteilung interessiert.**

Beispiel

Auf der Arbeit

Du hast einen Nebenjob[1]. Deine Chefin heißt Frau Mertens und du kennst sie gut[2]. Frau Mertens wird am Wochenende 50 Jahre alt. Sie möchte am Samstag eine große Geburtstagsparty feiern und sie lädt dich ein. Deine Eltern besuchen dich aber am Wochenende. Ihr habt schon Pläne gemacht, deshalb kannst du nicht zur Party gehen.

[1] der Nebenjob: العمل الجانبي

[2] jemanden gut kennen: معرفة شخص بشكل جيد

Du lehnst die Einladung ab: **(ترفض الدعوة)**

a) Wenn ich Zeit hätte, würde ich kommen.
b) Ich kann nicht zur Party kommen.
c) Ich habe am Samstag keine Zeit, tut mir leid.
☒ d) Es tut mir wirklich leid, aber meine Eltern kommen am Wochenende zu Besuch.

Welche Antwortmöglichkeit passt am besten in diesem Kontext?

Lösung: Bei diesem Beispiel wählen die meisten Personen die Option (d) als die angemessenste Antwort.

استبيان 4: واجب الاختيار من متعدد

Bitte schreibe deinen persönlichen Code auf: _____

دليل استرشادي

تُشرح في هذا الاستبيان مواقف مختلفة من الحياة اليومية. هناك أربعة أجوبة مُحتملة في كل نص. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك يرافق كل موقف من مواقف الحياة المذكور تصويرٌ فوتوغرافي. يتم تحديد الكلمات الصعبة بالعدد [4/3/2/1] وتُترجم إلى اللغة العربية. نرجو معالجة المواقف كما يلي:

اقرأ كل نص والأجوبة المُحتملة له بعناية. اختر بعدها الإجابة التي تتوافق بأفضل ما يمكن مع السياق المقصود. ضع علامة أمام هذه الإجابة. فكر دائمًا بشكل جيد في مَن تتحدث معه الآن (على سبيل المثال مع صديق أو مع رئيستك بالعمل). لا يتعلق الأمر في عملية الاختيار بكون الإجابة "صحيحة" او "خاطئة"، لكننا مهتمون بشكل أساسي بمدى تقييمك التلقائي للأجوبة.

مثال

Auf der Arbeit

Du hast einen Nebenjob[1]. Deine Chefin heißt Frau Mertens und du kennst sie gut[2]. Frau Mertens wird am Wochenende 50 Jahre alt. Sie möchte am Samstag eine große Geburtstagsparty feiern und sie lädt dich ein. Deine Eltern besuchen dich aber am Wochenende. Ihr habt schon Pläne gemacht, deshalb kannst du nicht zur Party gehen.

[1]der Nebenjob: العمل الجانبي

[2]jemanden gut kennen: معرفة شخص بشكل جيد

Du lehnst die Einladung ab **(ترفض الدعوة):**

a) Wenn ich Zeit hätte, würde ich kommen.
b) Ich kann nicht zur Party kommen.
c) Ich habe am Samstag keine Zeit, tut mir leid.
X) Es tut mir wirklich leid, aber meine Eltern kommen am Wochenende zu Besuch.

ما هي أفضل إجابة مُحتملة تتوافق في هذا السياق؟

الحل: في هذا المثال يختار أغلب الأشخاص الاختيار رقم (d) باعتباره الإجابة المناسبة.

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1. Im Sprachkurs

Du sitzt im Sprachkurs neben Alan. Ihr verabredet[1] euch manchmal zum Kaffeetrinken und ihr kennt euch gut. Du fährst am Freitag nach Berlin, weil du deinen Bruder besuchen willst. Du bleibst 14 Tage in Berlin, aber du hast viele Pflanzen in deiner Wohnung. Du willst, dass Alan deine Pflanzen gießt, wenn du in Berlin bist. Du triffst Alan heute im Sprachkurs.

[1] sich verabreden: يتواعد
[2] sich kümmern um: يعتني بـ

Du bittest Alan darum: (تطلب من آلان)

a) Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmern[2] könntest?

b) Dürfte ich dich fragen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du dich um meine Pflanzen kümmerst[2]?

c) Kümmer[2] dich bitte um meine Pflanzen.

d) Kümmer[2] dich doch um meine Pflanzen.

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2. In deinem Haus

Deine Nachbarin[1] heißt Karolina und sie wohnt in der Wohnung neben dir. Ihr verabredet euch manchmal zum Kochen und ihr kennt euch gut. Karolina hört am Abend oft laut Musik und hat viele Gäste[2]. Du musst morgen sehr früh aufstehen und du möchtest jetzt schlafen. Es ist 24 Uhr, aber Karolina hört wieder sehr laut Musik. Du willst, dass sie die Musik leiser macht und du klingelst an ihrer Tür.

[1] die Nachbarin: الجارة
[2] die Gäste: الضيوف

Du bittest Karolina darum: (تطلب من كارولينا)

a) Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du die Musik leiser machen könntest?

b) Ich würde gern wissen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du die Musik leiser machst?

b) Mach bitte die Musik leiser.

c) Mach die Musik ein bisschen leiser.

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3. In deiner Wohnung

Heute besucht dich eine neue Freundin in deiner Wohnung. Sie heißt Wanja und du hast sie vor zwei Monaten kennengelernt[1]. Ihr kennt euch gut. Du möchtest bald eine neue Versicherung abschließen[2] und Wanja gibt dir gerade Tipps. Aber Wanja spricht sehr schnell und sie benutzt viele Fachbegriffe[3]. Du hast nicht alles verstanden und du willst, dass Wanja es mit anderen Worten wiederholt.

[1] jemanden kennenlernen: يتعرف على شخص ما
[2] eine Versicherung abschließen: يُبرم تأمينًا
[3] die Fachbegriffe: المصطلحات المتخصصة

Du bittest Wanja darum: (تطلب من وانيا)

a) Könntest du mir das noch mal einfacher erklären?

b) Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du mir das noch mal einfacher erklären könntest?

b) Erklär das bitte einfacher.

c) Erklär das etwas einfacher.

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4. In der Wohnung

Du hast seit drei Monaten eine Mitbewohnerin. Sie heißt Leonie und ihr kennt euch gut. Ihr habt einen Putzplan[1] und Leonie muss diese Woche das Badezimmer putzen. Das Badezimmer ist sehr schmutzig[2], denn Leonie hat wieder nicht geputzt. Du bekommst heute Besuch von Freunden, deshalb soll das Badezimmer sauber sein. Du willst, dass Leonie jetzt das Badezimmer putzt.

[1] der Putzplan: جدول التنظيف
[2] schmutzig: مُتسخ

Du bittest Leonie darum: (تطلب من ليوني)

a) Putz heute bitte mal das Badezimmer.

b) Dürfte ich dich fragen, ob es möglich wäre, dass du heute das Badezimmer putzt?

c) Putz sofort das Badezimmer.

d) Putz sofort das scheiß Badezimmer.

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5. Bei deinem Vermieter

Du hast einen Termin mit deinem Vermieter. Dein Vermieter heißt Herr Schneider und du kennst ihn gut. Deine Dusche ist kaputt, denn es kommt nur kaltes Wasser. Du weißt, dass der Vermieter das reparieren lassen muss. Herr Schneider sagt, dass in sieben Tagen ein Handwerker zu dir nach Hause kommt. Du willst aber, dass die Dusche sofort repariert wird.

[1]jemanden bestellen: يطلب شخصًا ما

Du bittest Herrn Schneider darum: (تطلب من السيد شنايدر)

a) Könnten Sie den Handwerker nicht früher bestellen[1]?

b) Wäre es für Sie in Ordnung, wenn Sie den Handwerker früher bestellen[1] würden?

c) Bestellen[1] Sie den Handwerker bitte früher.

d) Bestellen[1] Sie den Handwerker ein bisschen früher.

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6. Im Kiosk

Du gehst in den Kiosk, weil du eine Cola kaufen möchtest. Du kennst den Verkäufer gut, denn du kaufst oft in dem Kiosk ein. Du nimmst eine Flasche Cola für 1,50 Euro und gibst dem Verkäufer einen 10-Euro-Schein. Der Verkäufer nimmt dein Geld und gibt dir 3,50 Euro zurück. Du hast ihm aber 10 Euro gegeben und musst deshalb 8,50 Euro zurückbekommen. Du willst, dass der Verkäufer dir das richtige Rückgeld[1] gibt.

[1] das Rückgeld: باقي النقود

Du bittest den Verkäufer darum: (تطلب من البائع)

a) Ich glaube, es fehlen noch 5€.

b) Würden Sie mir noch 5€ zurückgeben?

c) Geben Sie mir bitte noch 5€ zurück.

d) Geben Sie mir mal noch 5€ zurück.

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7. Auf der Arbeit

Du hast einen Nebenjob. Dein Chef heißt Herr Popescu und du kennst ihn gut. Herr Popescu hat dir vor einer Woche erlaubt, dass du zwei Wochen Urlaub nehmen kannst. Heute sagt Herr Popescu plötzlich[1], dass du doch keinen Urlaub nehmen kannst. Du bist sauer[2], weil du schon Pläne mit deinen Freunden gemacht hast und ein Zugticket und Hotel gebucht hast. Du ärgerst dich sehr über Herrn Popescu und willst deshalb mit ihm sprechen.

[1] plötzlich:فجأة
[2] sauer: غضبان

Du beschwerst dich bei Herrn Popescu: (تقدم شكوى إلى السيد بوسيكو)

a) Entschuldigen Sie, aber Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt.

b) Ich arbeite sehr viel.

c) Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt.

d) Das geht so nicht, Sie haben mir den Urlaub schon erlaubt.

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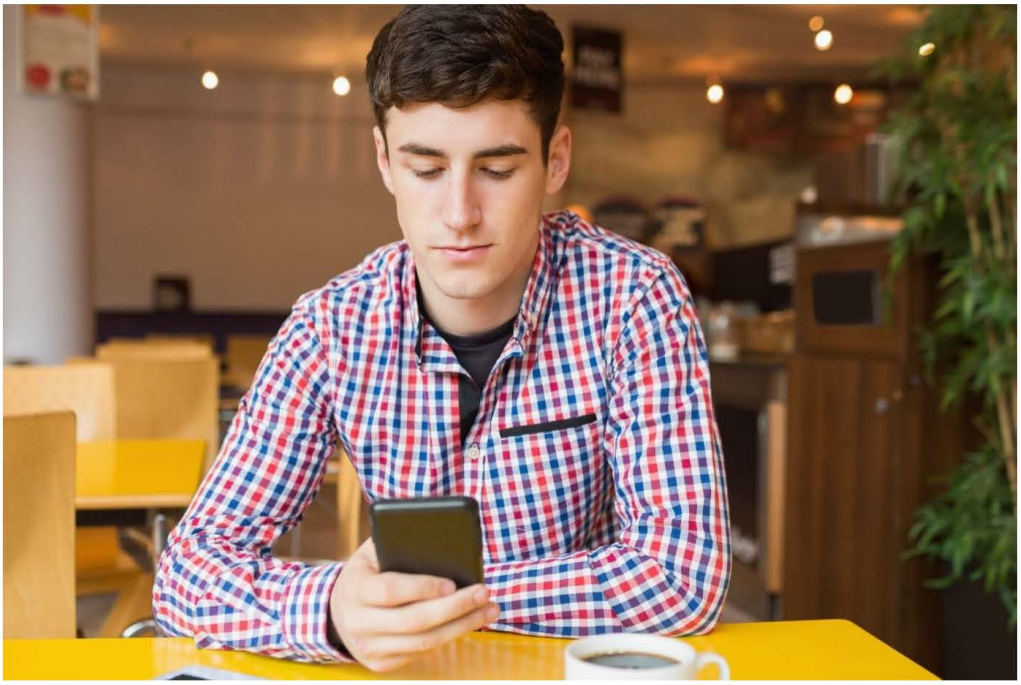
8. Im Restaurant



Du bist mit einem Freund im Restaurant. Du hast Camilo vor zwei Monaten kennengelernt und ihr kennt euch gut. Du willst mit Camilo sprechen, aber er schaut immer wieder auf sein Handy. Er schreibt Nachrichten oder ist bei Facebook. Du findest das blöd[1], weil du dich unterhalten[2] möchtest und Camilo dir nicht zuhört. Du ärgerst dich über Camilo und du willst ihm das sagen.

[1] blöd: سيء
[2] sich unterhalten: يتسامر

Du beschwerst dich bei Camilo: (تتقدم بشكوى إلى كاميلو)

a) Ich finde es nicht so cool, dass du die ganze Zeit am Handy bist.

b) Ich muss jetzt gehen.

c) Es geht gar nicht, dass du die ganze Zeit am Handy bist.

d) Du bist echt ein Idiot, weil du die ganze Zeit am Handy bist.

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9. Bei deiner Vermieterin

Du hast heute einen Termin mit deiner Vermieterin. Deine Vermieterin heißt Frau Huber und du kennst sie gut. Frau Huber möchte, dass du ab dem nächsten Monat 50 Euro mehr Miete[1] bezahlst. Du wohnst seit vier Monaten in deiner Wohnung und du weißt, dass man die Miete[1] erst nach 15 Monaten erhöhen[1] darf[2]. Du bist mit der Mieterhöhung[3] nicht einverstanden[4], denn es ist nicht erlaubt[5]. Du ärgerst dich sehr über deine Vermieterin und du willst deshalb mit ihr sprechen.

[1] die Miete (erhöhen):قيمة الإيجار (يرفع)
[2] du weißt, dass man die Miete erst nach 15 Monaten erhöhen darf:
أنت تعرف أنه لا يجوز رفع قيمة الإيجار إلا بعد مرور 15 شهرًا
[3] die Mieterhöhung: رفع قيمة الإيجار
[4] nicht einverstanden sein: لا يوافق
[5] nicht erlaubt sein: لا يجوز
[6] laut Gesetz: حسب القانون

Du beschwerst dich bei Frau Huber: (تقدم شكوى إلى السيدة هوبر)

a) Die Mieterhöhung[3] ist laut Gesetz[6] noch nicht erlaubt.

b) 50 Euro, das ist viel Geld.

c) Sie dürfen die Miete nicht erhöhen[1].

d) Ich finde es nicht in Ordnung, dass Sie die Miete erhöhen[1].

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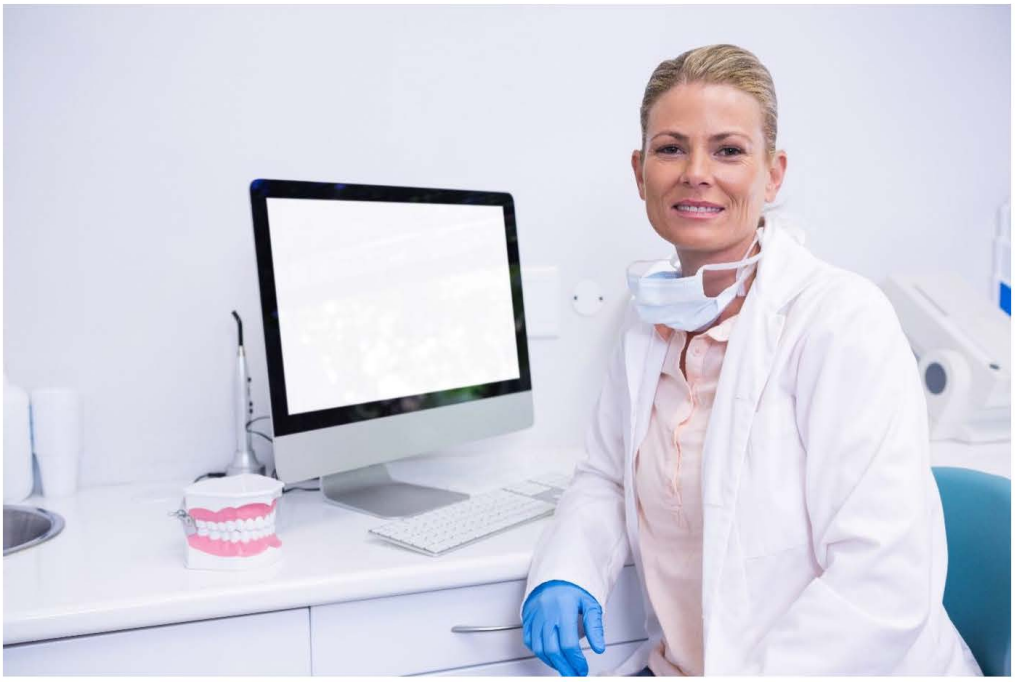
10. Bei deiner Zahnärztin



Deine Zahnärztin heißt Frau Gruber und du kennst sie gut. Frau Gruber hat dir vor einer Woche eine neue Zahnfüllung[1] gemacht. Du hast seit der Behandlung[2] starke Zahnschmerzen. Du hast heute wieder einen Termin mit Frau Gruber. Du ärgerst dich sehr über sie, denn der Zahn tut erst seit ihrer Behandlung weh. Du bist unzufrieden[3] mit der Behandlung[2] und du willst deshalb mit Frau Gruber sprechen.

[1] die Zahnfüllung: حشو الأسنان
[2] die Behandlung: المعالجة
[3] unzufrieden: غير راضٍ
[4] schieflaufen: يفشل
[5] einen Fehler machen: يرتكب خطأ

Du beschwerst dich bei Frau Gruber: (تقدم شكوى إلى السيدة جوبر)

a) Bei der letzten Behandlung ist etwas schiefgelaufen[4].

b) Die letzte Behandlung war vor einer Woche.

c) Sie haben bei der letzten Behandlung einen Fehler gemacht[5].

d) Ich finde es nicht in Ordnung, dass Sie bei der letzten Behandlung einen Fehler gemacht haben[5].

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11. Vor der Bibliothek

Gabriel geht in deinen Sprachkurs und du kennst ihn gut. Ihr seid heute um 14 Uhr verabredet[1], weil ihr in der Bibliothek für die nächste Prüfung lernen wollt. Du bist pünktlich um 14 Uhr vor der Bibliothek, aber Gabriel kommt nicht. Bei eurem letzten Treffen ist er auch einfach nicht gekommen. Du bist sauer[2], weil Gabriel eure Treffen nicht wichtig sind und du so viel Zeit verlierst[3]. Du ärgerst dich sehr über Gabriel und du rufst ihn deshalb an.

[1] verabredet sein: يتواعد
[2] sauer: غضبان
[3] Zeit verlieren: يضيع الوقت

Du beschwerst dich bei Gabriel: (تتقدم بشكوى إلى جابرييل)

a) Wir waren heute verabredet[1], ich finde das echt nicht in Ordnung.

b) Ich lerne heute in der Bibliothek.

c) Wir waren heute verabredet[1], ich finde das richtig scheiße von dir.

d) Wir waren heute verabredet[1], du bist echt ein Idiot.

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12. In der Wohnung

Deine Mitbewohnerin heißt Sophia und du kennst sie gut. Sophia ist eine nette Mitbewohnerin, aber sie nimmt oft dein Waschmittel[1] ohne dich zu fragen[2]. Du musst heute Wäsche waschen, denn du hast keine saubere Kleidung. Aber Sophia hat wieder dein Waschmittel genommen und es ist leer[3]. Es ist Sonntag, deshalb kannst du heute kein neues Waschmittel kaufen. Du ärgerst dich sehr über Sophia und du willst deshalb mir ihr sprechen.

[1] das Waschmittel: مسحوق الغسيل
[2] ohne dich zu fragen: يسأل من غيرك
[3] leer: فارغ

Du beschwerst dich bei Sophia: (تتقدم بشكوى إلى صوفيا)

a) Du darfst gerne das Waschmittel benutzen, aber dann kauf auch neues, wenn du es leer[3] machst.

b) Mein Waschmittel ist leer[3] und ich habe keine saubere Kleidung mehr.

c) Wegen dir ist mein Waschmittel leer[3] und ich habe keine saubere Kleidung mehr.

d) Wegen dir ist schon wieder mein Waschmittel leer[3] und ich finde das richtig scheiße von dir.

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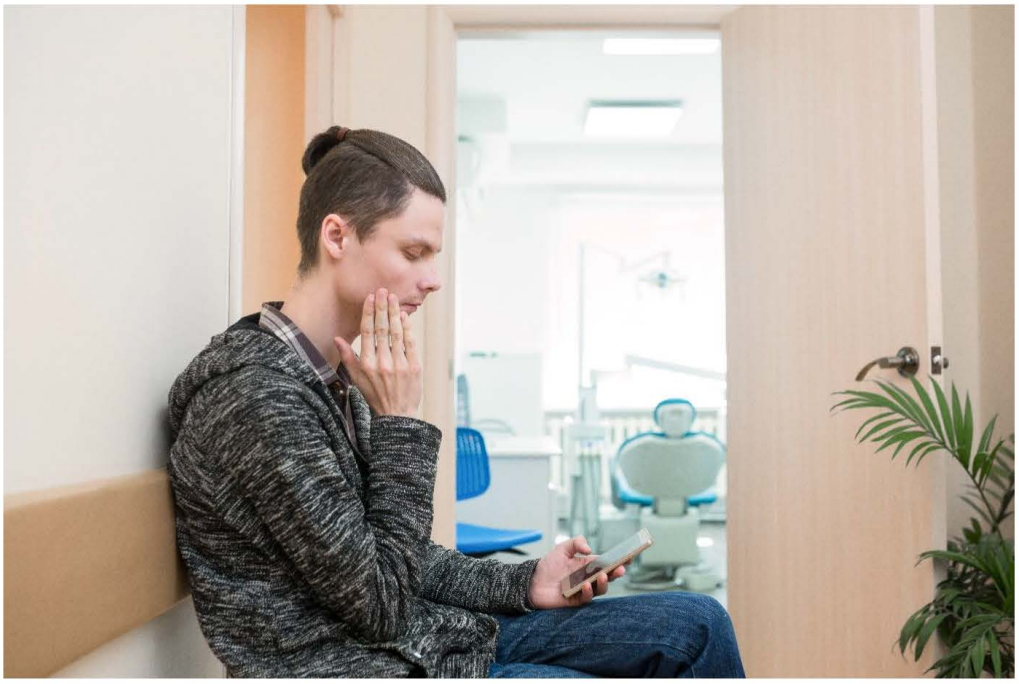
13. Im Wartezimmer



Du hast heute um 13 Uhr einen Termin beim Zahnarzt. Du bist pünktlich und setzt dich in das Wartezimmer[1]. Du musst sehr lange warten, aber du weißt nicht, wie viel Uhr es ist. Dein Handy-Akku[2] ist leer und du hast keine Armbanduhr[3]. Neben dir sitzt ein junger Mann. Du willst den Mann nach der Uhrzeit fragen.

[1] das Wartezimmer: غرفة الانتظار
[2] der Handy-Akku: بطارية الهاتف المحمول
[3] die Armbanduhr:ساعة اليد

Du fragst den Mann: (تسألُ الرجل)

a) Können Sie mir sagen, wie viel Uhr es ist?

b) Wäre es möglich, dass Sie mir sagen, wie viel Uhr es ist?

c) Wie viel Uhr ist es?

d) Sagen Sie mir bitte die Uhrzeit.

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14. In der Stadt

Es ist Samstag und du bist in der Stadt. Plötzlich triffst du einen Freund. Der Freund heißt Pedro und du kennst ihn gut. Pedro macht heute Abend eine Party in seiner Wohnung. Er fragt: „Kannst du auch kommen?“ Du hast heute Zeit und du möchtest gern auf die Party gehen.

Du sagst: (أنت تقولُ)

a) Klar, ich komme gerne.

b) Ich würde sehr gerne kommen.

c) Warum nicht, ich habe keine Pläne.

d) Ich fahre gerne Fahrrad.

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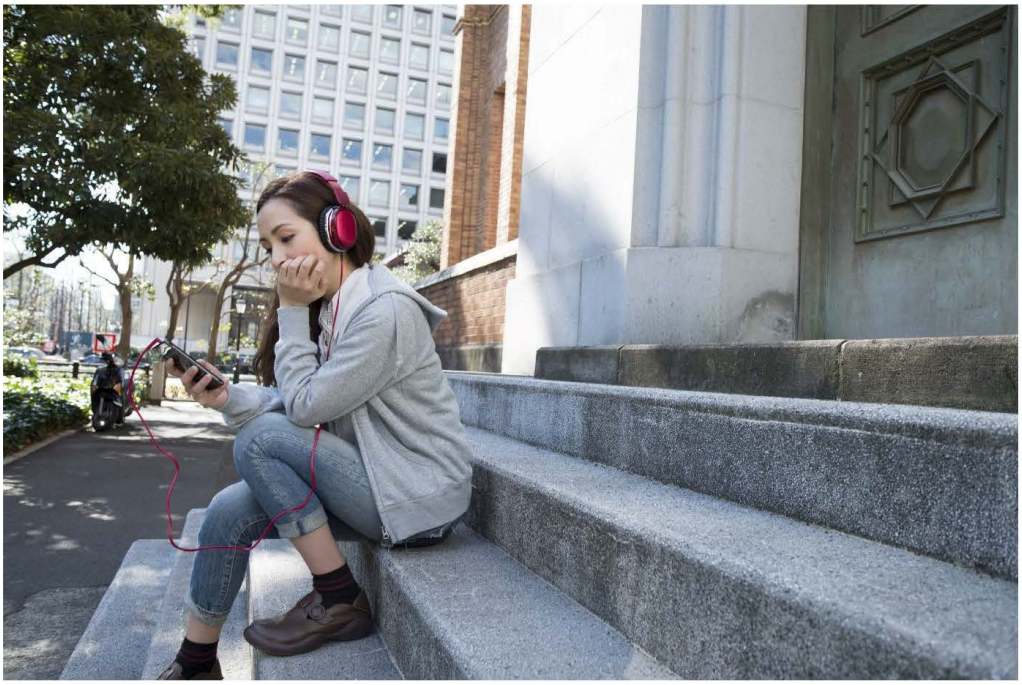
15. Vor dem Museum



Du möchtest heute ins Museum gehen. Du bist mit einer Freundin vor dem Museum verabredet[1]. Die Freundin heißt Anna und ihr trefft euch oft am Wochenende. Du fährst mit der U-Bahn, aber es gibt einen Unfall und die U-Bahn fährt nicht weiter. Deshalb kommst du zu spät zum Museum und Anna hat 30 Minuten auf dich gewartet. Du willst dich jetzt bei Anna entschuldigen.

[1] verabredet sein: يتواعد

Du entschuldigst dich bei Anna: (تعتذرُ لأنا)

a) Es tut mir so leid, dass ich zu spät bin.

b) Entschuldige bitte, dass ich zu spät bin.

c) Die U-Bahn ist nicht weitergefahren.

d) Sorry, dass ich zu spät bin.

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16. Im Supermarkt

Es ist Donnerstagabend. Du bist gerade im Supermarkt, weil du Lebensmittel kaufen möchtest. Plötzlich triffst du eine Freundin. Die Freundin heißt Selma und du kennst sie gut. Du triffst dich heute Abend mit Freunden, denn ihr wollt zusammen kochen. Du willst Selma auch zum Kochen heute Abend einladen.

Du lädst Selma ein: (تدعو سلمى)

a) Hast du Lust, heute Abend mit uns zu kochen?

b) Es wäre schön, wenn du heute Abend mit uns kochen würdest.

c) Wir kochen heute Abend zusammen.

d) Koch bitte heute Abend mit uns.

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17. Im Geschäft[1]

Es ist Samstagnachmittag. Du bist in einem Geschäft[1], weil du dir neue Kleidung kaufen möchtest. Du suchst eine neue Hose. Ein Verkäufer kommt zu dir. Er sagt: „Kann ich Ihnen helfen?“ Du möchtest keine Hilfe haben und du willst das dem Verkäufer sagen.

[1] das Geschäft: المتجر

Du sagst: (أنت تقولُ)

a) Nein danke, ich schaue mich nur um.

b) Nein danke, ich brauche keine Hilfe.

c) Ich brauche keine Hilfe.

d) Nein danke.

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18. Auf der Party

Heute ist Samstag und du gehst auf eine Party. Die Party ist bei deiner Freundin Sabine. Du kennst Sabine gut und ihr trefft euch oft. Sabine hat eine neue Frisur[1]. Ihre Haare sehen toll aus und du willst ihr das sagen. Du gehst zu Sabine.

[1] die Frisur: الحلاقة

Du machst Sabine ein Kompliment: (تقدم إطراء إلى زابينه)

a) Deine neue Frisur sieht echt gut aus.

b) Schöne Frisur!

c) Warst du beim Friseur?

d) Ich esse gern Spaghetti.

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Appendix 8. Situation Assessment Questionnaire

Tables A8–1 and A8–2. Assessment of realism of situations in the DCT and PPT

Question asked: *Findest du es schwierig, dir diese Situation vorzustellen? / Do you find this situation difficult to imagine?*

Answers: 1 = Ja / Yes, 2 = Nein / No

(i.e., 1 = unrealistic situation, 2 = realistic situation)

Table A8-1. DCT and PPT request situations – Assessment of realism (in means)

DCT Requests	GNS	PPT Requests	GNS
Cat	2	Plants	2
Switch shifts	2	Noisy neighbor	2
Move	2	Insurance	2
Dirty kitchen	2	Dirty bathroom	2
Burst pipe	2	Broken shower	2
Bakery	2	Kiosk	2
AVERAGE	2		2

Table A8-2. DCT and PPT complaint situations – Assessment of realism (in means)

DCT Complaints	GNS	PPT Complaints	GNS
Overtime	2	Vacation	2
Notes	2	Mobile	2
Heating	2	Rent increase	2
Rash	2	Dentist	2
Oral presentation	2	Library	2
Cooking ingredients	2	Laundry detergent	2
AVERAGE	2		2

Tables A8–3 and A8–4. Assessment of frequency of occurrence of situations in the DCT and PPT

Question asked: *Wie würdest du diese Situation beschreiben? / How would you describe the situation?*

Answers: 1 = alltäglich / an everyday occurrence, 2 = kommt relative häufig vor / relatively common, 3 = kommt selten vor / seldom, 4 = kommt nie vor / would never happen

Table A8-3. DCT and PPT request situations – Assessment of frequency of occurrence (in means)

DCT Requests	**GNS**	**PPT Requests**	**GNS**
Cat	2.23	Plants	1.84
Switch shifts	2.35	Noisy neighbor	1.83
Move	2.42	Insurance	2.42
Dirty kitchen	1.83	Dirty bathroom	1.9
Burst pipe	2.4	Broken shower	2.39
Bakery	2.1	Kiosk	2.1
AVERAGE	2.22		2.08

Table A8-4. DCT and PPT complaint situations – Assessment of frequency of occurrence (in means)

DCT Complaints	**GNS**	**PPT Complaints**	**GNS**
Overtime	1.82	Vacation	2.39
Notes	2.4	Mobile	1.7
Heating	2.32	Rent increase	2.1
Rash	2.42	Dentist	2.17
Oral presentation	1.9	Library	2.28
Cooking ingredients	1.83	Laundry detergent	1.9
AVERAGE	2.12		2.09

Tables A8–5 and A8–6. Assessment of social distance in the DCT and PPT

Question asked: *Wie gut kennst du [Name]? / How well do you know [name]?*

Answers: 1 = überhaupt nicht / not at all, 2 = nicht gut / not well, 3 = mittelmäßig / fairly well, 4 = gut / well, 5 = sehr gut / very well

Table A8-5. DCT and PPT request situations – Assessment of social distance from speaker's point of view (in means)

DCT Requests	**GNS**	**PPT Requests**	**GNS**
Cat	4	Plants	3.87
Switch shifts	3.67	Noisy neighbor	3.74
Move	3.67	Insurance	3.33
Dirty kitchen	3.75	Dirty bathroom	3.6
Burst pipe	3.2	Broken shower	3.2
Bakery	3.17	Kiosk	3.67
AVERAGE	3.58		3.57

Table A8-6. DCT and PPT complaint situations – Assessment of social distance from speaker's point of view (in means)

DCT Complaints	**GNS**	**PPT Complaints**	**GNS**
Overtime	3.58	Vacation	3.3
Notes	3.75	Mobile	3.5
Heating	3.7	Rent increase	3.3
Rash	3.6	Dentist	3.5
Oral presentation	3.9	Library	3.67
Cooking ingredients	4.1	Laundry detergent	3.75
AVERAGE	3.77		3.5

Tables A8–7 and A8–8. Assessment of social dominance in the DCT and PPT

Question asked: *Wie würdest du deinen Status gegenüber dem von [Name] beschreiben? / How would you describe your status compared to [name] status?*

Answers: 1 = höher / higher, 2 = etwas höher / a little higher, 3 = gleich / same, 4 = etwas niedriger / a little lower, 5 = niedriger / lower

Table A8-7. DCT and PPT request situations – Assessment of social dominance from speaker's point of view (in means)

DCT Requests	**GNS**	**PPT Requests**	**GNS**
Cat	3.4	Plants	3.3
Switch shifts	3.08	Noisy neighbor	2.9
Move	2.92	Insurance	3.33
AVERAGE	3.13		3.18
Dirty kitchen	2.3	Dirty bathroom	2.2
Burst pipe	2.25	Broken shower	2.25
Bakery	2.33	Kiosk	2.2
AVERAGE	2.29		2.22

Table A8-8. DCT and PPT complaint situations – Assessment of social dominance from speaker's point of view (in means)

DCT Complaints	**GNS**	**PPT Complaints**	**GNS**
Overtime	3.17	Vacation	3
Notes	2.78	Mobile	2.8
Heating	2.67	Rent increase	2.67
AVERAGE	2.87		2.82
Rash	2.3	Dentist	2.33
Oral presentation	1.8	Library	2.33
Cooking ingredients	2.1	Laundry detergent	2.1
AVERAGE	2.07		2.25

Appendix 9. Additional tables

Table A9-1. Strategy use by GNS in 12 DCT items (in %)

	Requests (S=A)	Requests (S>A)	Complaints (S=A)	Complaints (S>A)
Direct	6.52	44.2	57.25	78.26
Conventionally indirect	93.48	32.61	37.68	14.14
Non-conventionally indirect (*hint*)	0	23.19	5.07	4.35

Table A9-2. Strategy use in requests and complaints per group (in %)

		Request (S=A)	Request (S>A)	Complaint (S=A)	Complaint (S>A)
Direct	**G1**	28.89	66.67	65.56	77.78
	G2	41.11	53.33	66.67	85.56
	GNS	6.52	44.2	57.25	78.26
Conven-	**G1**	67.78	17.78	18.89	8.89
tionally	**G2**	57.78	24.44	20	6.67
indirect	**GNS**	93.48	32.61	37.68	14.14
Hint	**G1**	3.33	15.56	15.56	13.33
	G2	1.11	22.22	13.33	7.78
	GNS	0	23.19	5.07	4.35

Table A9-3. Number of syntactic downgraders used per participant (in means)

	***Dass*-clause**	***Aber*-clause**	**Indirect question**	**Cond. clause**	**Neg.**	**Past tense**	**Sub-junctive**	**Pas-sive**	**Indef. pro-noun**
G1	0.37	0.2	0	0.17	0.57	0.07	1.27	0.1	0.1
G2	1.7	0.53	0.27	1.53	0.47	0.13	1.57	0.23	0.3
GNS	2.17	0.87	0.52	0.76	0.85	0.5	4.09	0.43	0.52

Table A9-4. Syntactic downgrader use by participants in twelve items (in means)

	N	Requests	SD	t-value (df)	p-value
G1 mean (count)	30	1.5 (46)	1.526	-3.091 (48)	.003
G2 mean (count)	30	3.2 (95)	2.460		
		Complaints	**SD**	**t-value (df)**	**p-value**
G1 mean (count)	30	1.3 (39)	1.088	-4.780 (40.796)	.000
G2 mean (count)	30	3.57 (106)	2.369		

Table A9-5. Strategy use in requests (in %)

	G1 % (count)	G2 % (count)	GNS % (count)
Mood derivable	8.3 (15)	7.8 (14)	5.1 (14)
Explicit performative	2.2 (4)	9.4 (17)	0.7 (2)
Hedged performative	0 (0)	0.6 (1)	0.7 (2)
Locution derivable	16.1 (29)	12.8 (23)	4.7 (13)
Want statement	21.7 (39)	16.7 (30)	14.1 (39)
Suggestory formula	0 (0)	0.6 (1)	0.7 (2)
Query preparatory	42.8 (77)	40.6 (73)	62.3 (172)
Hint	8.9 (16)	11.7 (21)	11.6 (32)

Table A9-6. Strategy use in complaints (in %)

	G1 % (count)	G2 % (count)	GNS % (count)
Explicit condemnation (person)	1.1 (2)	5.6 (10)	1.1 (3)
Explicit condemnation (action)	47.8 (86)	40 (72)	20.3 (56)
Modified blame	2.8 (5)	11.7 (21)	26.1 (72)
Direct accusation	15.6 (28)	13.3 (24)	12.3 (34)
Indirect accusation	4.4 (8)	5.6 (10)	11.6 (32)
Ill consequences	2.2 (4)	1.7 (3)	3.3 (9)
Annoyance	11.7 (21)	11.7 (21)	20.7 (57)
Hint	14.4 (26)	10.6 (19)	4.7 (13)

Table A9-7. Classification of strategy types according to super-strategies

	Request strategies (ranging from direct to indirect)	Complaint strategies (ranging from direct to indirect)
Direct strategies	Mood derivable	Explicit condemnation (*person*)
	Explicit performative	Explicit condemnation (action)
	Hedged performative	Modified blame
	Locution derivable	Direct accusation
	Want statement	Indirect accusation
Conventionally indirect strategies	Suggestory formula	Ill consequences
	Query preparatory	Annoyance
Non-conventionally indirect strategies	Hint	Hint

Table A9-8. Comparison of mean number of lexical and syntactic modifications in requests: results of t-test

		Mean	Mean difference	SD	t-value	p-value
G1	Number of lexical downgraders in requests	2.17	0.67	2.155	1.694	0.101
	Number of syntactic downgraders in requests	1.50				
G2	Number of lexical downgraders in requests	2.17	-0.967	2.659	-1.992	0.056
	Number of syntactic downgraders in requests	3.13				

Table A9-9. Proportion of requests containing each type of lexical downgrader (in %)

	G1	G2	GNS
Subjectivizer	0	0.6	4
Understater	0	0.6	7
Hedge	0	0.6	0.7
Downtoner	0.6	7.2	24
Politeness marker	32.2	25	14
Hesitator	0	0	2.2
Cajoler	1.1	2.2	0.4
Consultative device	0	0	1.8
Appealer	0	0.6	0.7

Table A9-10. Comparison of mean number of lexical and syntactic modifications in complaints: results of t-test

		Mean	Mean difference	SD	t-value	p-value
G1	Number of lexical downgraders in complaints	0.70	-0.600	1.734	-1.895	0.068
	Number of syntactic downgraders in complaints	1.30				
G2	Number of lexical downgraders in complaints	0.57	-3.000	2.334	-7.040	0.000
	Number of syntactic downgraders in complaints	3.57				

Table A9-11. Proportion of complaints containing each type of lexical downgrader (in %)

	G1	G2	GNS
Subjectivizer	1.7	0.6	4.4
Understater	0.6	1.7	3.9
Hedge	0	0	1.8
Downtoner	2.2	2.8	9.4
Politeness marker	5	2.2	0.4
Hesitator	0	0.6	0
Cajoler	0	1.1	0.4
Consultative device	0	0	0
Appealer	0	0.6	0.7

Table A9-12. Proportion of requests containing each type of external downgrader (in %)

	G1	G2	GNS
Preparator	37.22	31.67	22.1
Imposition minimizer	2.22	6.67	5.07
Promise of reward	1.67	3.33	7.25
Sweetener	0	0.56	0.36
Grounder	78.89	83.89	72.10
Disarmer	0	2.22	1.45
Compensation	8.89	4.44	5.07
Humorous supplement	0	1.67	0.72
Apologizing	0.56	1.67	2.17

Table A9-13. Proportion of complaints containing each type of external downgrader (in %)

	G1	G2	GNS
Preparators	24.44	23.33	16.67
Providing evidence	10	10	12.32
Grounder	48.89	52.22	45.29
Disarmer	7.22	7.22	9.42
Apologizing	3.33	5	5.07
Reservations	21.11	15	19.93
Convincing	5	6.67	5.8
Conciliatory expressions	1.67	3.89	0

Appendix 10. Internal and external upgraders observed in the present study

Table A10-1. Lexical upgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
Lexical upgraders employed in requests and complaints		
Intensifier	Particular adverbials and adjectives that intensify parts of a proposition of a speech act by either expressing a positive or negative attitude (e.g., *sehr / very, absolut / absolutely, überhaupt (nicht) / (not) at all, massiv / massively, so / so, endlich / at last, schrecklich / terrible*).	Ich würde mich *sehr* freuen, wenn du auch dabei bist. (I'd be *very* happy if you were there too.) (Move, 25GERMAS) Das ist *vollkommener* Quatsch! (That's *total* nonsense.) (Heating, 19GERFEM)
Lexical uptoner	Marked lexical choices (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives) that give an element of the proposition a negative or positive connotation thereby revealing a personal attitude.	Findest du das nicht ein bisschen *mies*? (Don't you think that's a bit *rotten*?) (Notes, 25GERMAS) *Wir zwei Hübschen* räumen jetzt die Küche auf. (*Us two lovelies* are tidying up the kitchen now.) (Dirty kitchen, 35GERMAS)
Expletive	Obscene exclamatory words or phrases that do not contribute to the propositional meaning of an utterance but intensify its emotional force.	Räum die *blöde* Küche auf! (Tidy up the *stupid* kitchen!) (Dirty kitchen, 38GERFEM)
Lexical upgraders exclusively employed in requests		
Time intensifier	Adverbial modifiers that shift the focus on the temporal aspect of the speech act (e.g., *jetzt / now, sofort / at once, unverzüglich / immediately, schnell / quick*)	Der Rohrbruch muss *sofort* repariert werden. (The burst pipe must be repaired *right now*.) (Burst pipe, 3GERMAS)
Lexical upgraders exclusively employed in complaints		
Intensifying modal particles*	German modal particles employed with an upgrading function (e.g., *etwa / intensification, einfach / it is as it is, schon / emphasis and/or exasperation, doch / impatience, halt / unpleasant fact must be accepted, ja / as you should already know*).	Tom das kann *doch* nicht sein. (Tom this can't be happening.) (*impatient and annoyed undertone*) (Notes, 45GERFEM) Ich finde es *halt* langsam echt dreist. (I think it's *just* brash.) (Cooking ingredients, 27GERMAS) Das wird dir *ja* wohl nicht wehtun. (This *surely* won't hurt you.) (Notes, 22GERFEM)
Commitment upgraders	Sentence modifiers expressing the speaker's commitment to elements in the proposition (e.g., *sicher / surely, auf jeden Fall / definitely, echt, wirklich / genuinely, ehrlich gesagt / to be honest, du weißt (genau) / you know (exactly), wie du siehst / as you can see*).	Das fällt *auf jeden Fall* in Ihren Zuständigkeitsbereich. (This falls *definitely* into your area of responsibility.) (Heating, 12GERMAS) *Ganz ehrlich* Tom, das finde ich gerade richtig ätzend von dir. (*Honestly*, Tom, I think that's lousy of you.) (Notes, 10GERFEM)

Alternative approach*	Adverbs and phrases used to inform the addressee about behavior on their part that would have been preferred (e.g., *wenigstens, zumindest / at least, (noch) nicht mal / not even*)	Ich finde, als Ärztin sollten Sie mich *zumindest* über die Risiken aufklären. (I think as a doctor you should *at least* inform me about the risks.) (Rash, 33GERMAS)
Repetitive offence*	Adverbials and phrases signifying a repetitive offence (e.g., *(schon) wieder / (once) again, immer / always, ständig / constantly, überall / everywhere, jedes Mal / every time*).	Wieso hast du *schon wieder* mein Essen gegessen? (Why have you eaten my food *again*?) (Cooking ingredients, 37GERMAS)

* This coding scheme is broadly based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989b) and Trosborg (1995) although other categories, such as those by Meyer (2007) as well as new forms based on the present data sets were also taken into account. Modifiers with an asterisk are newly introduced for the purpose of the present study and cannot be found in Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989b), Meyer's (2007) and Trosborg's (1995) coding scheme. The category name *repetitive offence* is my translation of the German equivalent developed by Meyer (2007: 166).

Table A10-2. External upgraders employed in requests and complaints in the present study

Strategy	Description	Example
External upgraders employed in requests and complaints		
Expander	The speech act is repeated literally or by paraphrase.	Ich wollte dich fragen, ob du dich um Teddy kümmern könntest? (head act) Er braucht nur morgens und abends sein Katzenfutter. […] *Würdest du das für mich machen?* (I wanted to ask you whether you could take care of Teddy? (head act) He only needs his cat food in the morning and in the evening. *Would you do that for me?*) (Cat, 2GERFEM)
External upgraders employed exclusively in requests		
Token of appreciation*	The speaker stresses their appreciation and gratitude for a potential granting of the request.	Ich wäre dir sehr dankbar! (I would be most grateful.) (Cat, 11GERFEM)
Pointing out urgency*	The speaker emphasizes the urgency or relevance of the requested act.	Es ist ein Notfall, der heute noch repariert werden müsste. (It's an emergency that must be repaired this very day.) (Burst pipe, 17GERFEM)
Returning the favor*	The speaker stresses the fact that the addressee owes them a favor or explicitly calls in that favor.	*Du schuldest mir doch noch einen*, kannst du diesen Samstag meine Schicht übernehmen? (*You still owe me one*, can you cover my shift on Saturday?) (Switch shifts, 2GERFEM)
Moralizing	The speaker refers to sets of moral maxims or widely accepted norms of positive behavior.	Wenn du kochst, musst du danach auch aufräumen. (If you cook, you have to tidy up afterwards.) (Dirty kitchen, 3GERMAS)
Reprimanding*	The speaker uses criticizing statements and/or questions, the addressee may be openly attacked.	Lisa, langsam geht mir das echt auf den Sack! (Lisa, this is beginning to really get on my nerves.) (Dirty kitchen, 23GERFEM)
External upgraders employed exclusively in complaints		
Aggravating the offence	The speaker chooses from three strategies to aggravate the offence: a) Stressing the reason(s) for the severity of the offence, b) Repeating expressions of dis-approval or annoyance, c) Speculating about reasons for the offence or predicting further inappropriate behavior on part of the addressee.	a) Wie du weißt, leihe ich dir IMMER meine Notizen und nun bitte ich DICH ein einziges Mal darum. (As you know, I ALWAYS lend you my notes and now I'm asking YOU one time.) (Notes, 10GERFEM) b) Wenn du meine Notizen brauchst, dann gebe ich [sie] dir immer. Ich habe immer mit dir geholfen. (When you need my notes, I always give them to you. I have always helped you.) (Notes, G2M_544682) c) was möchten Sie? möchten Sie mich umzieg, ich habe kein Problem. (What do you want? Do you want me to move? I don't have a problem.) (Heating, G1M_232162)

Repeated action	The speaker refers to repeated violations of social norms and disappointed expectations.	Das ist nun schon das 100 mal und du hältst dich einfach nicht daran! (This is the one hundredth time by now and you simply don't play by the rules!) (Cooking ingredients, 44GERFEM)
Lack of consideration	The speaker focuses on their disappointed expectations regarding their interpersonal relationship with the addressee.	Ich war Ihnen immer ein guter Mieter und nun werfen Sie mir so etwas vor. (I've always been a good tenant to you and now you're accusing me of such a thing.) (Heating, 32GERMAS)
Preference for an alternative approach* (*external*)	The speaker informs the addressee about behavior on their part that would have been preferred.	Wenn, dann sag wenigstens Bescheid, damit ich wenigstens nicht an'm Sonntag blöd da stehe. (At least let me know, so that at least I don't look like an idiot on a Sunday.) (Cooking ingredients, 33GERMAS)
Non-acceptance*	The speaker refuses to accept the addressee's claim and/or demands (e.g., *Das geht (so) nicht / That's not on, Das kann (doch) nicht sein / That's (simply) not possible*).	Frau Schulz, das werde ich so nicht akzeptieren. (Ms. Schulz, I won't accept it like that.) (Heating, 14GERFEM)
Consequences*	The speaker states that the addressee's offence will not be without consequences.	Ich vertraue dir nie wieder. (I will never trust you again.) (Oral presentation, G2F_432000)
Emotional exclamation*	Exclamations can either introduce the act or syntactically be placed in final position (e.g., *man / man, oh nee / oh no, und? / and?*).	*Boah Jacob*, wo zur Hölle warst du bitte? (*Boah Jacob*, where the hell were you, please?) (Oral presentation, 43GERFEM)
Aggressive interrogatives*	Aggressive interrogatives either precede or follow the head act. The speaker chooses from three option: a) Conventionalized prepatterned questions (e.g., *Ist das dein Ernst? / Are you serious?*, *Lebst du noch? / Are you still alive?*), b) Asking questions about the addressee's attack or accusation that gave rise to the complaint. c) Asking questions about the consequences of the addressee's misconduct.	a) Ach, du bist auch hier? (I see, you're here as well?) (Oral presentation, 2GERFEM) b) Wie soll ich denn bitte die Heizung kaputt gemacht haben? (How am I supposed to have damaged the heating?) (Heating, 6GERFEM) c) Wie soll ich denn jetzt für meine Freunde kochen? (How am I supposed to cook for my friends now?) (Cooking ingredients, 44GERFEM)
Ironic expressions of recognition*	Expressions of recognition with an ironic reading that are positioned external to the head act (e.g., *danke / thanks, toll, schön / great*).	Vortrag war richtig mies, *danke fürs Kommen*! (Presentation went really bad, *thanks for coming*!) (Oral presentation, 25GERMAS)

* This scheme for external upgraders is a conflation of upgrading strategies proposed by Meyer (2007) and Trosborg (1995). Modifiers with an asterisk are newly introduced for the purpose of the present study and are not found in Meyer's (2007) and Trosborg's (1995) coding scheme. In Blum-Kulka et al.'s coding scheme, the category *expander* is referred to by the name "repetition of request" (1989b: 286) and categorized as an internal upgrader.