

# Pragmatic Competence and Intercultural Communication

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**TRADITIONS AND TRANSITIONS**

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# Description of the project

- The role of explicit instruction in developing pragmatic competence of Macedonian learners of English and German
- Aim: investigation of pragmatic competence of Macedonian learners of English and German with the aim of identifying those linguistic units that need to be addressed by instruction
- requests, apologies and **complaints**

# Participants and instruments

- Macedonian learners of English – students at Goce Delcev University, Stip
- Native speakers of American English – students at Arizona State University
- DCT – five tasks for each speech act
- Role plays
- Retrospective interviews (MLE)

# Focus of analysis

- Strategies
- Internal modification
- External modification

# Strategies of complaining

Figure 1 Total number of strategies

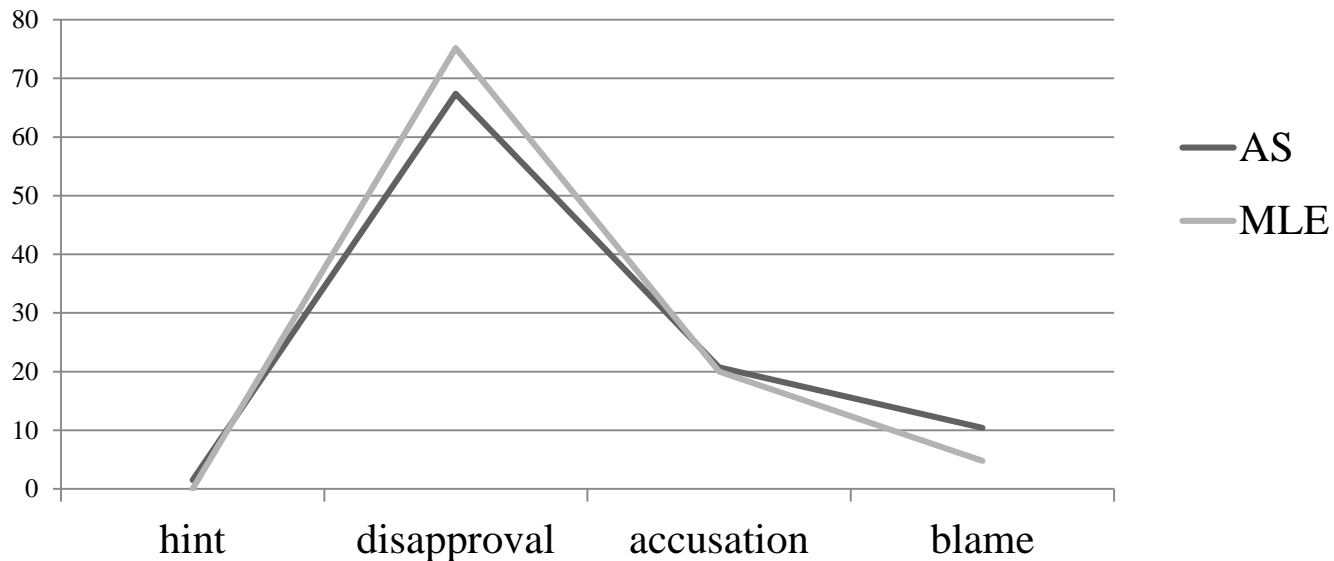


Figure 2 Unfair grade

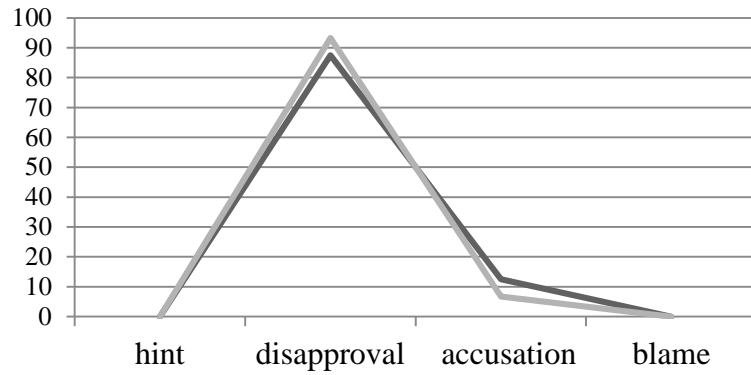


Figure 3 Cut-in line

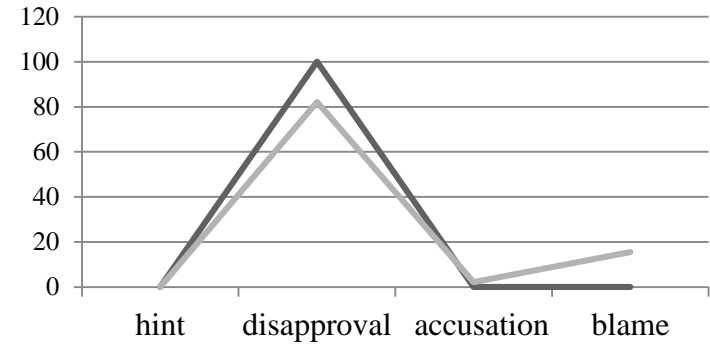


Figure 4 Late pick-up

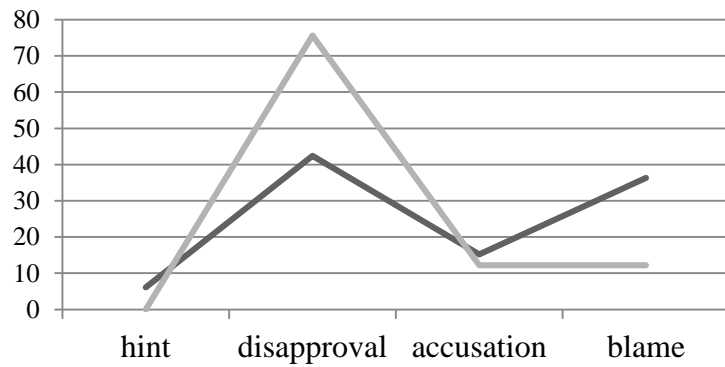
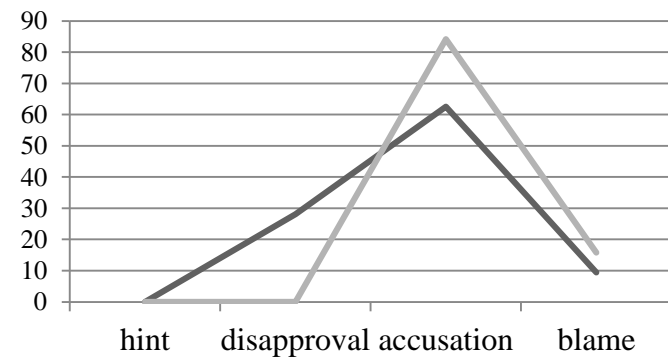


Figure 5 Damaged car



# Content of complaints

- **Late pick-up**

**AS:** sarcasm, insulting words (*incompetent, unreliable, dumb ass, asshole, dam*), idiomatic expressions (*what the hell, what the heck, dude*)

**MLE:** reconciliation (*Five minutes is not a big deal; You're a little late, but it doesn't matter. We'll be on time*)

**Complaint perspective:** *I'm really gonna be late* vs. *We're gonna be late*

- Damaged car

*What was the problem? Is everything OK?*

*Do you have car accident? Are you OK? Because you left the car and didn't say anything.*



# Modification of complaints

1. Rare embedding (*I just wanted to ask if; I was wondering if; I would like to ask*); wrong expressions for embedding; avoidance of *we better*.
2. Rare use of past tense, hypothetical constructions and weak modal verbs (*I thought; I wanted to talk to you; I think there may have been a mistake on my grade; I think there might be a mistake*)

### 3. Avoidance of negative constructions

*I don't think I deserve this grade/ I really think I deserve a higher mark*

*I'm not sure why I got this grade / I'm really sure that I deserve a higher grade.*

- Requests with *want*, *need* and *I'd like to*.

AS			MLE		
want	need	I'd like to	want	need	I'd like to
17%	66%	17%	52%	9%	39%

- Use of strong modal verbs: *should*, *have to*, *must* и *can't*.

## 5. Lexical modification

- **modal adverbs:** *perhaps, maybe, possibly* (Do you think you could possibly turn down the volume a bit? Hey, I have this huge test tomorrow I'm trying to study for. Could you maybe keep it down?);
- **hedges:** *kind of, sort of, somehow, in a way* (You're kind of too noisy; Would you mind turning the music down and keeping it somewhat quiet?);
- **expressing uncertainty:** *I (don't) feel, I guess, I suppose, It seems, I don't know, I mean, try* (Do you guys think you could keep it down a bit. I don't think it's fair for you to cut in. I feel like I deserve a better grade);

- ***I think***

MLE - *I think there must be some mistake; I really think that I should have a higher mark.*

- *Professor I really think I deserve a higher mark for this final. I`ve studied so hard and I`m pretty sure I do not have that much mistakes*

AS - *I thought you were coming at 8.30*

- *I think there may have been a mistake on my grade;*

- *I think there might be a mistake.*

- *Do you guys think you could keep it down a bit?*

- *I don't think it's fair for you to cut in.*

# External modification

## **Apologies**

*Sorry for interrupting you, I am very sorry to disturb you, I'm really sorry to bother you*

*Excuse me и I'm sorry*

**Other supportive moves - grounds**

## **Terms of address**

- *sir (I`m sorry sir, but we are all waiting for tickets),*
- *Mr/Mrs (Mr./Mrs. can you turn down the music?) + no surname.*
- *Professor + no surname (Professor, I`m sorry to interrupt)*
- *neighbor (Excuse me, neighbour, would you mind being more quiet).*

## Role plays - Strategy use

- Generally data collection methods do not influence learner's production to the extent that context does.
- Tendency to use the same strategies in both DCT responses and role plays for the same scenario. Unfair grade - higher percentage of accusations in the role plays (36% and 25%).



- This shifts the complaint perspective to the hearer, i.e. the professor.

- More you-perspective in role plays.

*I looked through the test and I think you didn't mark all my ... right ... right answer, right answers ... err ...*

- More grounders in DCTs because they have more time to think about what to say and how to say it.
- More language transfer in role plays.

# Internal modification

- There was not much internal modification in either the DCT or the role play responses
- The distribution of downgraders and upgraders was influenced by the context rather than by the type of instrument.
- There are some instances when the instrument may contribute to the frequency of a certain strategy or linguistic means. Such is the case with the use of modal verbs and subjectivisers. Generally, the use of modal verbs shows higher frequency in the Noisy party responses, and within this scenario more in the role plays. Also, subjectivisers are significantly more frequent in the Unfair grade responses, and within it, they are more frequent in the role plays.

- In DCTs learners plan the utterance, in role plays they don't have time.
- The use of the modal verb *could* in DCT responses and its non-use (Unfair grade) or rare use (Noisy party) in role plays.
- DCTs show what learners know theoretically; role plays what linguistic means they can use spontaneously.

- Role plays are more similar to face-to-face communication in which speakers go over several turns before getting to their point
- *Just*, which is highly conversational, was found only in role plays.
- In DCTs learners say what they think they should/would like to say, but in real life they may say something different (the case with the use of threats in DCTs).
- The responses in role plays are longer.

# Retrospective interview

- Students' perception of the situation:
  - more informal in natural situation both with friends and professors
  - more polite

- Problems with structuring the complaint
  - too fast, they didn't have time to think,
  - start one thing and run out of words or had problems how to structure their thoughts
- They plan the content but not how to say it

# Conclusion

- Linking empirical research with practice: evidence based approach to language teaching
- Introduction of local needs in the language curriculum
- Shifting the focus from language examinations to communication