Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:

The case of **thanking** by native and non-native speakers of Greek

ATHANASIA GKOUMA

NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN
UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

nasiagkouma@phil.uoa.gr

MARIA ANDRIA

NATIONAL AND KAPODISTRIAN
UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

mandria@phil.uoa.gr

GEORGE MIKROS

HAMAD BIN KHALIFA
UNIVERSITY

gmikros@hbku.edu.qa

The aim of the current preliminary study is to explore the speech act of thanking in formal communicative contexts. More specifically, it investigates the possible differences in the expression of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek. Participants were thirty-one (N=31) learners of Greek as a Second Language (L2) at five different proficiency levels (from A2 to C2) enrolled in a summer intensive course of Greek in Athens, Greece. In addition, a group of native speakers of Greek (N=30) was recruited as a baseline. Oral data were elicited through a series of open role plays which represented three formal communicative situations with different social parameters. A retrospective verbal protocol was also used with the L2 learner group. The analyses focused on the type and the amount of strategies used by the two groups. Results showed a difference in the type and number of strategies that these two groups employed. Findings also seem to indicate that social setting and direction of imposition were crucial factors for the performance of thanking by both groups. L2 learners' performance was also affected by their familiarity with each situation.

Σκοπός Σκοπός της παρούσας προκαταρκτικής έρευνας είναι η διερεύνηση της γλωσσικής πράξης της ευχαριστίας σε επίσημα επικοινωνιακά περιβάλλοντα. Συγκεκριμένα, εξετάζονται οι πιθανές διαφορές στην έκφραση της ευχαριστίας από φυσικούς και μη φυσικούς ομιλητές της Ελληνικής. Οι συμμετέχοντες ήταν, αρχικά, 31 μαθητές της Ελληνικής ως δεύτερης γλώσσας (Γ2) ενταγμένοι σε πέντε διαφορετικά επίπεδα γλωσσομάθειας (από Α2 ως Γ2) και εγγεγραμμένοι σε ένα εντατικό θερινό πρόγραμμα ελληνικών στην Ελλάδα. Δεύτερον, μια ομάδα 30 φυσικών ομιλητών της Ελληνικής αξιοποιήθηκε ως ομάδα ελέγχου. Συλλέχθηκαν προφορικά δεδομένα μέσα από παιχνίδια ρόλων τα οποία αναπαριστούσαν τρία επίσημα επικοινωνιακά περιβάλλοντα με διαφορετικές κοινωνικές παραμέτρους. Επιπλέον, στους μαθητές της Ελληνικής χρησιμοποιήθηκε και ένα πρωτόκολλο προφορικού αναστοχασμού. Οι αναλύσεις εστίασαν στο είδος και τον αριθμό των στρατηγικών που χρησιμοποιήθηκαν από τις δύο ομάδες. Τα αποτελέσματα έδειξαν διαφορές τόσο στο είδος όσο και στον αριθμό των στρατηγικών μεταξύ των δύο ομάδων και επισήμαναν ως σημαντικούς παράγοντες για τον τρόπο πραγμάτωσης της ευχαριστίας το κοινωνικό περιβάλλον και την κατεύθυνση επιβολής και στις δύο ομάδες. Επιπλέον, η εξοικείωση με την περίσταση επικοινωνίας επηρέασε τις πραγματώσεις των μαθητών της Ελληνικής.

KEYWORDS:

Second language acquisition; pragmatics; interlanguage pragmatics; Greek; speech acts; thanking.

ΛΕΞΕΙΣ ΚΛΕΙΔΙΑ:

Κατάκτηση Δεύτερης Γλώσσας; Πραγματολογία; Πραγματολογία της Διαγλώσσας; ελληνικά; γλωσσικές πράξεις; ευχαριστία.

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

1. Introduction

Communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) is considered a fundamental purpose of language acquisition and teaching. When interacting, speakers need to employ a variety of linguistic means in a manner that is appropriate for each communicative situation (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008). In other words, they need to develop their pragmatic competence—an ability which is integral part of the communicative competence (Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980). Pragmatics and Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP)—the field of Applied Linguistics that explores how learners of second language (L2) develop their L2 pragmatic competence—have typically focused on the analysis of speech acts (Searle, 1969). Speech acts constitute "actions performed via utterances" (Yule, 1996, p. 47); the ability to successfully comprehend and produce them is a major component of the pragmatic competence. However, empirical evidence has shown that acquiring L2 pragmatics can be a challenging task for L2 learners and that the development of pragmatic competence does not always follow the development of the grammatical one (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). Moreover, it has been argued that native speakers (NS) and non-native-speakers (NNS)/learners of a language tend to present differences in the way they produce speech acts (Bella, 2014, 2016; Rose & Kasper, 2001)—and also that their speech acts differ in the amount of strategies used (Rose & Kasper, 2001; Ozdemir & Rezvani, 2010).

Different speech acts have been analyzed extensively during the last decades. Nevertheless, thanking has received less attention so far. Thanking is a communicative strategy frequently employed in everyday interaction in many cultures. Either because of its usually brief and simple structure or because of its responsive nature, it is usually regarded as a secondary and peripheral language component and is one of the most neglected parts of language research and teaching (Hinkel, 1994a, p. 2). However, it is an important component of language use and pragmatic competence and the way it is expressed is closely linked to interpersonal rapport and politeness.

The purpose of the current preliminary study is to try to fill this gap in the literature by further examining the possible differences in the expression of the speech act of thanking by NS and NNS of Greek—an under-explored target language. More specifically, it aims at investigating whether there are any differences in the type of the speech act and the amount of strategies that these two groups use in three different formal communicative situations. This study builds on previous research carried out by Gkouma (in press) and Andria et al. (in press) and it is part of the LETEGR2 project, a larger project focusing on the acquisition and the teaching of Greek as an L2.

The following section (Section 2) offers a review of the literature, with reference to pragmatic competence in L2 acquisition (Section 2.1). The speech act under analysis (thanking) is discussed in Section 2.2, while Section 2.3 presents the research question that guides the current study. Next, Section 3 explains the methodology and Section 4 examines the results of the analyses. The results are discussed in Section 5, while Section 6 contains some concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

2.1 Pragmatic competence in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

ILP research enables us to better understand the nature of pragmatic phenomena and it covers a wide variety of areas. The main body of research focuses on the production and comprehension of speech acts by L2 learners of all proficiency levels, from many different linguistic backgrounds (Coulmas, 1981; Díaz Pérez, 2005, García, 2004; Hinkel, 1994a; Jung, 1994; Schauer & Adolphs, 2006). Moreover, during the last decades there is growing interest on the developmental aspect of L2 learners' pragmatic competence (Bardovi Harlig, 2013; Bella, 2012a, 2014; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Flores Salgado, 2011; Schauer 2009, among others). Other studies investigate pragmatic awareness (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2016; McConachy, 2019; Pérez-Sabater & Montero-Fleta, 2014), attitudes on pragmatic components (De Pablos-Ortega, 2010; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2004; Kinginger & Farrell, 2004), and the interface of the development of grammar and lexicon with pragmatics (Bella, 2012b).

A nuclear point of interest in the to-date research in the field of ILP is the comparison of the pragmatic competence of NS and NNS. Empirical studies have shown that there are differences between the pragmatic systems of these two groups (Barron, 2003; Díaz-Pérez, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Flores Salgado, 2011; Göy et al., 2012; Schauer, 2009; Trosborg, 1995; Woodfield, 2012). Research also indicates that the L2 proficiency level seems to be an important factor for the pragmatic success or failure of the L2 learners' communicative attempts, although pragmatic competence does not always follow the development of the grammatical one.

2.2 The speech act under analysis: Thanking

In this study, we investigated the pragmatic competence through the production of the speech act of thanking in formal communicative situations. Thanking is a fundamental speech act with high social importance, as it constitutes a widely used language component in every-day communication, both formal and informal. Prototypically, it expresses gratitude and constitutes a reactive speech act. This means that it is always preceded by an action or utterance that calls for gratitude or acknowledgement (Coulmas, 1981; Haverkate, 1993). Thanking is frequently used in daily encounters and is highly formulated by and subject to cultural norms (Coulmas, 1981; Hinkel, 1994a). In many cultures, Greek included, it is

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

explicitly taught to children from an early age and is regarded as an important element of communicatively adequate and polite behavior. Even though it bears little information, it reinforces social relations (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993; Jung, 1994; Lakoff, 1973) and it reflects each individual's perception of cultural norms. It is also important to mention that usually thanking is reinforced with supportive moves, in order to underline the sincerity of the gratitude, the appreciation or the emotional engagement (Aijmer, 1996; Leech, 1983), and that social parameters affect its realization (Díaz Pérez, 2005).

Despite its importance to the success of communication, thanking is an under-explored speech act, in comparison to others (for example, requests or refusals), especially from the SLA point of view. There has been an increasing interest lately for this speech act (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 2008; De Pablos-Ortega, 2010, 2011, 2015; Demir & Takkak, 2016; Díaz Pérez, 2005; Kia & Salehi, 2013; Lanteigne & Crompton, 2011; Ozdemir & Rezvani, 2010; Schauer & Adolphs, 2006, among others), but more research is still necessary. Important cross-cultural differences related to this superficially simple and peripheral aspect of L2 are sometimes ignored or overlooked (Hinkel, 1994a, p. 2). The acquisition of thanking by L2 learners is usually regarded as easy to learn, since it is one of the first linguistic expressions that beginners are exposed to. However, expressing this speech act in a communicatively appropriate way seems to be a more challenging task for L2 learners (Schauer & Adolphs, 2006). This is, first, due to its expressive and reactive nature that imposes instant and proper utterance production and second, to its dependence on social parameters. Previous studies have shown that even high-proficient L2 learners encounter difficulties in the production of this speech act (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993; Hinkel, 1994b; Ozdemir & Rezvani, 2010).

Regarding the target language under analysis, Greek, research on thanking is very limited. Gkouma (in press) and Andria et al. (in press) have recently presented, within the framework of the LETEGR2 project, a first empirical approach on the acquisition of thanking by L2 learners of Greek. Gkouma (in press), in her qualitative study, has examined the way NS and NNS of Greek perform the speech act of thanking in a variety of communicative situations. She also presented a data-driven taxonomy for thanking in Greek. Findings have shown that NS of Greek either used multiple strategies to reinforce their expression of thanking in the majority of the contexts under examination or, in informal situations, usually opted for an indirect strategy to perform the speech act of thanking. As far as L2 learners of Greek are concerned, they showed progress from beginner to advanced levels. However, even the advanced learners lagged behind native speakers' performances. In the same line, Andria et al. (in press) adopted a quantitative approach in order to investigate thanking performance of NS and NNS on a series of different formal and informal contexts.

Building on the two above-mentioned studies (Andria et al., in press; Gkouma, in press), the current research aims to delve more into the above mentioned LETEGR2 database and further explore the expression of thanking after a request by NS and NNS of Greek in formal communicative situations. The focus on the analysis of formal communicative contexts was motivated by the fact that they are usually regarded as a communicative challenge both for NS and for NNS.

2.3 Research question

In light of the literature review presented above, the research questions that guide this study are the following:

RQ1:

Do native speakers and L2 learners of Greek differ in the type of strategies that they employ for the speech act of thanking in formal communicative situations?

RQ2:

Are there any differences in the number of strategies that native speakers and L2 learners of Greek use for the expression of the speech act of thanking in formal communicative situations?

Based on previous empirical findings (Bella, 2012a, 2014, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Gkouma, in press; Ozdemir & Resvani, 2010), it could be hypothesized that there will be differences between these two groups. In addition, differences are also expected among the various proficiency levels.

In the next section, we will present the method that was followed in order to answer these research question.

3. Method

3.1 Participants and context

Thirty-one (N=31) L2 learners of Greek participated in the study (4 male, 27 female). Their age varied from 17 to 48 years (M=24.27 years old, SD=7.2) and they were of different first-language (L1) backgrounds (See **Appendix A** for L2 learners' countries of origin). They were attending a five-week intensive summer course at a university language school in Athens, Greece. Prior to the beginning of the course, the participants had taken a placement test. The test was administered and evaluated by the teaching staff of the language school. Based on the results of this placement test, the participants were assigned to a specific proficiency level group. It should be noted that the classification per proficiency level follows the criteria described by the Common European framework of reference for languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). **Table 1** below presents participants' distribution per level:

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

proficiency level	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
N	5	7	6	6	7

Table 1. Participants distribution per proficiency level

In addition to the L2 learners' group, a group of native speakers of Greek (N=30) was recruited in order to obtain a native baseline for the speech act under analysis.

3.2 Instruments

For the data collection, three instruments have been used: a series of role plays, a retrospective verbal report and a questionnaire. The role plays have been designed specifically for the purposes of a broader research investigating the pragmatic competence of L2 learners of Greek. Drawing on this database, for the purpose of the current study a series of three role plays that concern formal communicative contexts was selected (see more information below). Role plays as an elicitation technique for studies in Pragmatics, and especially for studies focusing on speech acts, have been found to present several advantages (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993) the most important ones being that enable the researcher to control a series of contextual parameters and that they have interactive nature (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010, p. 47; Yuan, 2001, p. 284). Despite the simulating character of this elicitation technique, role plays have the dynamic of interaction that lacks in Discourse Completion Tests (DCT)—the most popular instrument in ILP. Their interactive nature is particularly important in the investigation of expressive and reactive speech acts, such as thanking, which have to be instant and spontaneous. It should be noted that in this study open role plays were used; participants were given a general scenario of a formal communicative situation (in which they had to request something) without predetermining the course and the outcome of the conversation, in order to examine if and how the speech act of thanking is performed in every situation.

Since data collection was part of a larger project on Pragmatics, participants were asked to play a role with another interlocutor (a researcher) in a total of nine (9) communicative situations. Six (6) of them were target situations, that is, they were designed to elicit the speech act of thanking and three (3) were distractors. As far as the six (6) target situations are concerned, they included formal and informal contexts. However, as it was mentioned above, in the current study we will focus our analysis only on three of those situations, namely those that concern formal contexts.

All three formal communicative situations under examination had the social parameters of distance and power in common, but differed in terms of the direction of the imposition and the social setting of interaction. More specifically, in the three role plays under examination the L2 learners interacted as "boss", "employee" and "university student" (see

Appendix B). In the case of "boss", the participant dominates over the researcher while in the case of "employee" the researcher dominates over the participant. Finally, in the case of "student" the researcher again dominates over the participant, but now the social setting is different; it is an academic context while the former two were taking place in a working context. In other words, superficially the situations of boss, employee and student have the same combination of social parameters. However, in the case of "boss" the social power is reversed, in contrast to employee and student. Furthermore, the roles of employee and student differ in the social setting (working versus academic context). **Table 2** presents the social variables under examination.

Scenario	Social setting	Imposition/ Power
boss	working context	speaker/participant
employee	working context	researcher/hearer
student	academic context	researcher/hearer

Table 2. Social parameters for every communicative situation under analysis

The reliability of the instrument was checked and it was found that it had high internal consistency, with a Cronbach α coefficient of .801.

The L2 learners were also asked to provide retrospective verbal report. This instrument was used in order to shed more light on and complement the oral data from the role plays, as it allowed us to obtain information on the learners' pragmatic and sociocultural awareness (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010, p. 53). Finally, a questionnaire was used to elicit the participants' biodata and background information.

3.3 Procedure & Analyses

3.3.1 Data collection

For the L2 learners, data collection took place during the first week of the intensive course in a quiet room of the language school. Before the data collection, the participants were asked a few ice-breaking questions. After that, a researcher explained the instructions for the role plays. The situations were presented to each participant with a different order. The scenario of each situation was presented in a colored card. Apart from the brief written instructions, a visual input (picture prompt) was also included in each card. The picture prompt was used in order to facilitate the understanding of each situation, especially for participants of initial levels whose reading skills in Greek were still limited (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008, p. 215). Once the series of role plays was over, the retrospective verbal report was carried out. The oral data were voice-recorded. It is important to mention that before the data collection all the participants had been informed about the study and they had given their

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

permission by signing a consent form. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the process. In addition, data were obtained by 30 native speakers of Greek as a baseline.

3.3.2 Analysis
3.3.2.1 Coding

After the data collection, the oral data were transcribed. Next, the participants' strategies were categorized using the categorization system of thanking in Greek suggested by Gkouma (in press). This categorization is, to our knowledge, the first one that attempts to present a classification of thanking strategies in Greek. Its creation was data-driven, but it also incorporates elements of previous categorizations in the field (Aijmer, 1996; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989; Haverkate, 1984). In this categorization, thanking performance is identified in six (6) different types:

1. Simple direct strategy of thanking (use of performative statement for gratitude in Greek ευχαριστώ "*thank you*")

2. Direct thanking strategy with external modification (use of supportive moves)

3. Direct thanking strategy with internal modification (use of internal sentence components)

4. Direct thanking strategy with combination of external modification and internal modification

5. Indirect thanking strategy (absence of performative statement which is substituted by a supportive move)

6. No thanking expression/Absence of thanking strategy

Table 3 below illustrates this classification and offers some indicative examples:

In order to answer the first research question, the percentage of each of the above-mentioned categories was counted for native and non-native speakers in each communicative situation under analysis.

For the second research question, the total number of strategies that was used by each participant in each situation was counted. The total number of strategies included the head acts, as well as all the internal and external modifications. The example (1) below illustrates the way strategies were counted and codified:

> **Example 1: Role play 4 ("Boss")**
>
> Το ήξερα ότι δεν θα με απογοητεύσετε! Ευχαριστώ πολύ.
>
> I knew that you wouldn't disappoint me (*external modification*)! Thanks (*head act*) a lot (*internal modification*).

The total amount of strategies in this example is three (3).

The information that was elicited by means of the retrospective verbal report was also transcribed and was used for the qualitative analysis of the data.

3.3.2.2 Statistical analyses

For the statistical analyses, descriptive statistics were computed, first, for the type of each act and, second, for the number of strategies that were used in each situation by the participants. Next, with regard to the number of strategies, a preliminary ANOVA was run in order to better understand the differences presented by NS and NNS in the production of thanking. For the statistical analyses, the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS 25) was used.

Direct thanking strategy (simple)	Direct thanking strategy with modification			Indirect thanking strategy	Absence of thanking strategy
	External modification/ supportive moves	Internal modification	Combination of external and internal modification		
Ευχαριστώ *Thanks* (performative statement)	Ευχαριστώ, να είστε καλά *Thanks, be well* (performative statement + wish)	Σε ευχαριστώ *Thank you* (performative statement + cajoler)	Σεε υχαριστώ πολύ, με έσωσες *Thank you very much, you saved me* (performative statement + cajoler + positive opinion)	Ωραία *Nice* (expressive phrase)	
	Είσαι η καλύτερη φίλη, ευχαριστώ *You are the best friend, thanks* (positive opinion + performative statement)	Ευχαριστώ πολύ *Thanks a lot* (performative statement + intensifying phrase)		Τι καλά *How nice* (Expressive phrase)	
				Εντάξει, θα προσπαθήσω κι εγώ για το καλύτερο *Ok, I will try my best* (agreement + promise)	

Table 3. Thanking categorization system in Greek adopted from Gkouma (in press)

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

4. Results

Our first research question asked whether there are any differences in the type of speech act that NS and L2 learners use for the expression of thanking. **Table 4** below offers the descriptive statistics for each role play. The L2 learners' results are presented per proficiency level.

Table 4 indicates that NS mainly use a combination of external and internal modifiers in all contexts and sparsely opt for indirect or only internally or externally modified thanking strategies. None of them uses a simple head act or avoids thanking. In the L2 learners' groups there is a greater variety of strategies. Beginners usually resort to simple direct strategy or end the role play without thanking. The majority of the thanking strategies of intermediate level students were only internally modified, while some of them were both internally and externally modified. Finally, high-proficient students' behavior was more similar to NS'; however, it appeared that there were still remarkable divergences.

Role play 1: Boss

	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	NS
SIMPLE DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	40%	14.3%				
EXTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	20%	28.6%				3.3%
INTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	20%	14.3%	16.7%		14.3%	23.3%
EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING			66.7%	83.3%	71.4%	66.6%
INDIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING		28.6%	16.7%	16.7%	14.3%	6.6%
ABSENCE OF THANKING STRATEGY						

Role play 2: Employee

	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	NS
SIMPLE DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	40%	42.9%				
EXTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING		14.3%	16.7%			
INTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	20%	28.6%	66.7%	83.3%	57.1%	3.3%
EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING			16.7%	16.7%	42.9%	83.3%
INDIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	20%					13.3%
ABSENCE OF THANKING STRATEGY	20%	14.3%				

Role play 3: Student

	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2	NS
SIMPLE DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	40%	14.3%		16.7%		
EXTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING						3.3%
INTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING		14.3%	83.3%	50%	28.6%	6.6%
EXTERNALLY AND INTERNALLY MODIFIED DIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING	40%	14.3%	16.7%	33.3%	71.4%	76.7%
INDIRECT STRATEGY OF THANKING		28.6%				13.3%
ABSENCE OF THANKING STRATEGY	20%	28.6%				

Table 4. Distribution of different types of speech acts for L2 learners (per proficiency group) and for native speakers (NS)

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Our second research question sought to examine whether there are any differences in the number of strategies that NS of Greek and L2 learners use for the speech act of thanking. **Table 5** shows the descriptive statistics for each role play.

Role play	Group Level	N	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*SD*
Boss	A2	5	0	3	1.4	1.14
	B1	7	0	4	1.85	1.21
	B2	6	1	4	2.83	.98
	C1	6	3	5	4.16	.75
	C2	7	0	6	3.42	1.81
	NS	30	2	8	4.4	1.54
Employee	A2	5	0	3	1.4	1.14
	B1	7	0	2	1.28	.75
	B2	6	2	2	2	.0
	C1	6	2	4	2.66	.81
	C2	7	2	6	3.14	1.46
	NS	30	1	8	4.7	1.58
Student	A2	5	0	5	1.8	1.92
	B1	7	0	3	1.14	1.06
	B2	6	2	3	2.5	.54
	C1	6	1	5	2.83	.147
	C2	7	3	5	3.71	.95
	NS	30	2	7	4.53	1.63

Table 5. Descriptive statistics (Min, Max, M and SD) for the number of strategies of the different proficiency levels and native speakers (NS) in the role plays

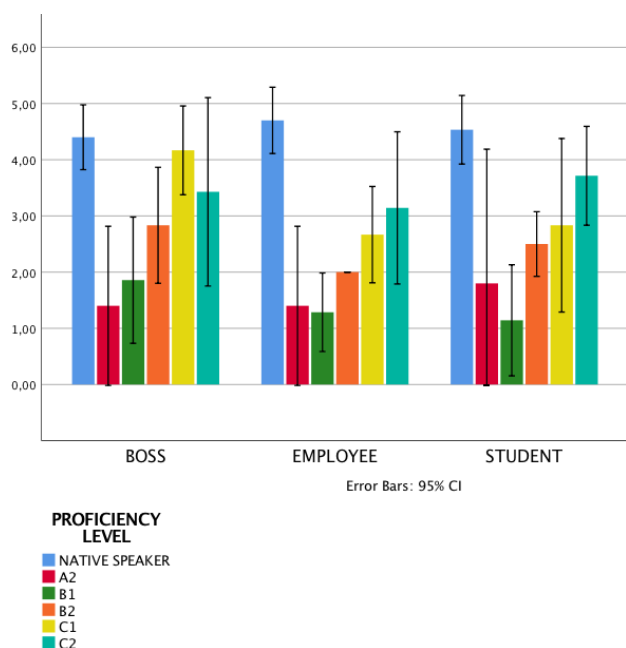Then, **Figure 1** presents the descriptives graphically.

Figure 1. Mean scores of strategies used in each role play for each L2 learner group and for native speakers (NS)

According to the descriptive statistics, NS present the highest number of strategies in all the three formal communicative situations. Regarding L2 learners, levels A2 and B1 behave in a quite similar way and show a relatively low amount of strategies (two or less in all cases). Moreover, there seems to be gradual increase in the amount of strategies that L2 learners use, with the larger amount being employed by the highest level in our sample (C2).

In order to better understand how significant the differences in the number of strategies employed by the NS and the different proficiency groups of L2 learners were, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each role play. **Table 6** presents, firstly, the results of the ANOVA and, secondly, the effect sizes that were calculated using eta squared.

Role play	Boss	Employee	University Student
ANOVA	$F_{(5, 55)}=6.987$, $p<.001$*	$F_{(5, 55)}=13.301$, $p<.001$*	$F_{(5, 55)}=8.871$, $p<.001$*
Eta squared	0.38	0.54	0.44

*Statistical significant differences at the $p<.05$ level.

Table 6. ANOVA results and effect sizes for the three role plays (NS and NNS)

The actual differences that were found in the mean scores of the above mentioned role plays were large, as it can be seen by the effect sizes.

Afterwards, post-hoc comparisons using post-hoc tests were carried out in order to explore whether the differences in the mean scores of native speakers and each proficiency group were significant. **Table 7** below summarizes the results of the post-hoc comparisons calculated using the Tukey HSD[1].

NS-NNS	Role play 1 (boss)	Role Play 2 (employee)	Role play 3 (student)
NS-A2	√	√	√
NS-B1	√	√	√
NS-B2		√	√
NS-C1		√	
NS-C2			

Table 7. Statistically significant differences in the different role plays (post-hoc Tukey HSD tests) between NS and NNS

Statistical differences in the amount of strategies appear to be significant between NS and beginner levels (A2 and B1) in all the role plays. More advanced levels (B2, C1) still present differences in certain communicative situations. The highest level in our sample (C2) does not present any differences with NS in the number of strategies.

In the next Section, the Discussion of these results, as well as the qualitative analysis of the oral data and of the retrospective verbal reports will be presented.

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

5. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to investigate the speech act of thanking by NS and NNS of Greek. More specifically, we focused our analysis on the type and the amount of strategies that these two groups used in formal communicative settings after the fulfilment of a request. Below, results are discussed, first, for NS of Greek (Section 5.1) and then for L2 learners (Section 5.2).

5.1 Native speakers of Greek

NS of Greek mainly preferred to use a combination of externally and internally modified direct strategy for the expression of thanking in the three formal communicative situations. The percentage of this use was higher for the case of "employee" (83%), as compared to that of "student" (76,6%) and "boss" (66,6%). Absence of any thanking strategy or cases of a simple direct strategy had not been observed in the NS data. This finding seems to imply that thanking in formal settings is very important for NS of Greek and that they need to reinforce it with further modifications apart from a simple "thanks".

In line with these findings, NS of Greek used a larger— compared to L2 learners—amount of strategies (mean score more than four (4)) for the expression of thanking. This result seems to also be related to the above-mentioned idea on the importance of reinforcing the expression of thanking with more elaborated utterances, especially in formal settings as the ones examined here. This might be in order for NS to underline the sincerity of gratitude; in other words, in order to avoid giving the sense of a mechanic and phatic answer. This corroborates the idea of previous studies on how the reinforcement of thanking enhances speakers' positive aspect of public self-image (the so-called *face* by Brown and Levinson (1987)), while at the same time renders their speech more honest and convincing (Aijmer, 1996; Jung, 1994; Leech, 1983).

Even though the number of the NS in our sample is limited and precludes making generalizations, it allows us to detect some preliminary tendencies about the way NS of Greek perform the speech act of thanking. **Example 2** below provides a typical case from the NS data. It comes from the role play 3 (student), where thanking occurs after the teacher agrees to extend the deadline of an assignment. The strategies appearing in this example are four (4):

Example 2

Αχ, τέλεια! Ευχαριστώ πάρα πολύ! Θα κάνω ό, τι καλύτερο μπορώ.

Oh, perfect! Thanks very much! I will do my best.

Example 2 seems to indicate that the participant, in order to prove his sincere gratitude to the teacher, reinforces his thanking strategy with internal and external components—

leading, thus, to the use of a series of strategies. This observation seems to be in line with Aijmer's (1996, p. 51) suggestion that elaborated thanking and length of the utterance itself is a factor contributing to the politeness of speech act. Therefore, elaborate thanking strategies in formal contexts seem to serve speakers' intention, on one hand, to correspond to the challenge of formality and, on the other hand, to verbally reciprocate the interlocutor's beneficial action.

Delving more into each role play, it could be argued that NS performed thanking differently in every situation. More specifically in the case of "boss", qualitative analysis seems to point that many participants opted for other types than the prevalent (combination of strategies). That is, 26,6% employed only internal or external modification and 6,6% employed only an indirect strategy. In concordance with this, the quantitative analysis indicated that in this role play NS employed less strategies than in the other two. Taking into account these two remarks, it could be argued that the sense of dominance over the interlocutor seems to minimize the need for elaboration and proof of the sincerity of gratitude. Thus, in the case of the formal setting with speakers imposing on the interlocutor, an important part of the NS in our sample seems to consider simpler and formulaic structures more adequate.

In the case of "student", some NS opted for an indirect strategy for thanking (13,3%). This could be explained by the sense of solidarity and closeness that characterizes students of the Greek community towards their professors (Koutsantoni, 2004, p.122). Finally, in the case of "employee" both the qualitative and the quantitative analysis indicate that NS used the most elaborate and intensified thanking strategies. Taking into account the social parameters that guide the three formal settings under analysis, it could be said that modification strategies of the speech act are also used as a declaration of respect towards hierarchy.

5.2 L2 Learners of Greek

L2 learners' expression of the speech act of thanking in terms of type and amount of strategies varied depending on their proficiency level (for examples of L2 learners' speech acts, see **Appendix C**). Beginner levels (A2 and B1) seemed to encounter difficulties in the completion of these role plays, and in case they did manage to complete it, most of the times tended to make use of a simple direct strategy. This tendency was also evident in the small amount of strategies that they employed (always one or two). This finding could be interpreted by the fact that participants in these levels either have not yet acquired the necessary pragmalinguistic knowledge or they lack the required grammatical competence. In fact, participants mentioned in their retrospective verbal reports that they considered formal communicative situations highly demanding for their proficiency level, because they did not have the necessary vocabulary or/and grammar to complete the task.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

The more advanced levels handled every communicative situation differently. Level B2 tended to use more elaborated utterances than the beginner levels. However, they also encountered difficulties which, in their verbal protocols, attributed to the formal nature of the communicative situations. The number of strategies also differed from those of the NS. Those differences appeared to be statistically significant in the case of the "employee" and the "student", but not in the case of the "boss".

Both B2 and C1 level learners employed a combination of internal and external modifications in high percentage in the case of "boss" (66,7% and 83,3% respectively), but not in the other two contexts. In the "employee" and "student" role plays, they mainly opted for internal modification, which is highly formulaic and constitutes a default solution. However, this option seems to imply distance and therefore, it led them to pragmatic failure. The amount of strategies they used in the role play of "boss" is in line with this. The number of strategies that both these levels employed in this particular role play increases impressively. Hence, it seems that for these levels the direction of imposition is an important factor for the performance of thanking. The sense of power and dominance on the interlocutor, characteristics of the role play of "boss", seemed to have made them more verbose and fluent when thanking.

The performance of C2 level learners was very close to that of NS, except for the case of "employee". Regarding the type of strategies, they resorted in high percentage (57.1%) to the internal modification, a very infrequent option for NS (3.3%). As far as the amount of strategies is concerned, the results from the three contexts are similar; however, the number of strategies in the case of the "employee" was found to be smaller than the equivalent in the other two role plays. The combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis indicates that, in this case, that is, in a working context where the hearer imposes on the speaker, C2 learners tried to elaborate their performance, but finally deviated from the NS pattern in our sample. It could be assumed that C2 level participants might not have been aware of the Greek community tendency to reinforce thanking by a combination of both external and internal modification. This performance, in combination with a lower number of strategies employed—as compared to the one of the NS—, seems to create the impression of distance, mechanical response and finally lack of sincerity in the expression of gratitude.

In the case of "boss", the C2 learners' verbosity could be possibly explained by the social power they had in this role play—as it was also found for the previous two levels. In the case of "student", this tendency to expansive talk—close to the native-like pattern—could be attributed to the learners' familiarity with this communicative situation. The participants of this group mentioned in their verbal protocols that they were familiar with formal and academic contexts—since all of them were academic students of Greek Philology in their countries—and they had already encountered similar situations in their real academic life, most probably also in Greek.

To sum up, the type and the number of strategies that was used by L2 learners in the formal contexts under analysis seemed to be related to their proficiency level in Greek—a finding which is consistent with the literature (Bella, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Kuriscak, 2010). However, discrepancies from the more native-like pragmatic pattern even at more advanced levels seem to suggest that pragmatic development is not always concomitant with grammatical competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999). L2 learners' performance of the speech act of thanking appeared to be related to how familiar they were with each communicative situation and also to the specific characteristics that this situation presented.

> **"L2 learners' performance of the speech act of thanking appeared to be related to how familiar they were with each communicative situation and also to the specific characteristics that this situation presented."**

6. Conclusions

The purpose of the current study was to explore the expression of the speech act of thanking in formal contexts by NS and NNS of Greek. Our first research question asked whether there were any differences in the type of strategies that these two groups employed for thanking. Results showed that the NS' expression tended to differ from that of L2 learners. The differences in the type of strategy were more obvious for the beginner levels, while the most advanced levels (C1, C2) tended to be somewhat closer to the native-like pattern.

Our second research question sought to examine whether there were any differences in the amount of strategies that NS and NNS employed for thanking. Similarly to the above question, the NS made use of a larger amount of strategies in order to reinforce thanking in formal contexts. Again, the beginner levels lagged behind the NS, and differences were still identified even at more advanced proficiency levels. Statistically significant differences, however, were mainly identified between NS and A2, B1 and B2 levels. More statistically significant differences between NS and NNS have been observed in role play 2 ("employee"). Differences that were observed among the three formal communicative situations seem to suggest that L2 learners' performance in such contexts seem to be influenced, firstly, by the social power and the direction of imposition; secondly, by participants' familiarity with such context.

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

The findings of the current study also highlight the importance of a pedagogical intervention for a better acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Schmidt, 1993). The majority of L2 learners in our sample reported that they had not received any explicit instruction on pragmatics in their countries and, as it was observed from the analysis of the data, they encountered difficulties with the speech act of thanking in formal contexts. Had the learners been instructed, they might had been more prepared and more familiarized with formal situations. The explicit sociopragmatic instruction and exposure to rich input could familiarize students with pragmalinguistic norms. These interventions are of high importance both in L2 textbooks and in teaching practices, especially in foreign language contexts where access to L2 input is limited (Alcón-Soler, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig & Vellenga, 2012; Celaya et al., 2019). They could help learners build their communicative competence and enable them to have a wide repertoire and consciously select the way they want to express themselves.

> **"The explicit sociopragmatic instruction and exposure to rich input could familiarize students with pragmalinguistic norms. These interventions are of high importance both in L2 textbooks and in teaching practices, especially in foreign language contexts where access to L2 input is limited"**

> **"[Pedagogical interventions] could help learners build their communicative competence and enable them to have a wide repertoire and consciously select the way they want to express themselves."**

Although we tried to systematically investigate our topic, our study has certain limitations, one being that it was a small-scale study with a limited number of participants—a fact that makes the generalizations of the findings hard. Further research with a larger sample is necessary in order to examine more profoundly the possible differences between NS and NNS. In addition, here thanking was explored through oral plays, but it would be fruitful to also explore this speech act with other instruments and methods (for instance, with DCTs or by using ethnographic methods). It would be also interesting for future studies to include longitudinal designs in order to investigate the development of pragmatic competence in time. This could enable us to gain more insights into the way L2 proficiency affects the L2 learners' pragmatic development throughout the different stages of L2 acquisition. To recap, this study attempted to contribute to the field of ILP by bringing to light new, insightful aspects from an under-explored target language and a relatively under-explored speech act. ■

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 This specific post hoc test is well-suited for our data since it can control for the experimentwise error and at the same time maintain sufficient statistical power. Moreover, Tukey HSD is highly recommended for our dataset since its basic assumption (homogeneity of variance) is met as it was tested using Levene's test and it was found non-statistically significant in all factors.

References

Aijmer, K. (1996). *Conversational routines in English: Convention and creativity.* Longman.

Alcón-Soler, E. (2008). Investigating pragmatic language learning in foreign language classrooms. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 46*(3), 173–195.
https://doi.org/10.1515/iral.2008.008

Alcón-Soler E., & Martínez-Flor A. (2008). *Investigating*

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

pragmatics in foreign language learning, teaching and testing. Multilingual Matters.

https://doi.org/10.21832/9781847690869

Andria, M., Gkouma, A., & Panagopoulos, P. (in press). Χρήση στρατηγικών στη γλωσσική πράξη της ευχαριστίας από φυσικούς και μη φυσικούς ομιλητές της Ελληνικής: Μία ποσοτική προσέγγιση. [Use of strategies in the speech act of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek: a quantitative approach]. In *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference of Greek Linguistics (ICGL14)*. University of Patras.

https://doi.org/10.12681/eadd/29853

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: A research agenda for acquisitional pragmatics. *Language Learning, 49,* 677-713.

https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00105

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2001). Empirical evidence of the need for instruction in pragmatics. In K. Rose & G. Kasper, (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 13-32). Cambridge University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139524797.005

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2013). Developing L2 Pragmatics. *Language Learning, 63*, 68-86.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2012.00738.x

Bardovi-Harlig, K., Rose, M., & Nickels, E. (2008). The influence of first language and level of development in the use of conventional expressions of thanking, apologizing, and refusing, In M. Bowles, R. Foot, S. Perpinan & R. Bhatt (Eds.), *Selected proceedings of the 2007 Second Language Research Forum* (pp. 113-130). Cascadilla Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/s0272263109990374

Bardovi-Harlig, K., & Vellenga, H. E. (2012). The effect of instruction on conventionalexpressions in L2 pragmatics. *System, 40*(1), 77-89.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2012.01.004

Barron, A. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics: Learning how to do things with words in a study abroad context.* John Benjamins.

https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.108

Bella, S. (2012a). Pragmatic development in a foreign language: A study of Greek FL requests. *Journal of Pragmatics, 44*, 1917-1947.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2012.08.014

Bella, S. (2012b). Pragmatic awareness in a second language

setting: The case of L2 learners of Greek. *Multilingua*, *31*,1-33.

https://doi.org/10.1515/mult.2012.001

Bella, S. (2014). Developing the ability to refuse: A cross-sectional study of Greek FL refusals. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *61*, 35-62.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.11.015

Bella, S. (2015) *Πραγματολογία [Pragmatics]*. Gutenberg.

Bella, S. (2016). Responding to Thanks: Divergence between native speakers and FL learners of Greek and the consequences for establishing rapport. *Glossologia, 24*, 61-73.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics: An introductory overview. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-Cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 1-34). Ablex.

https://doi.org/10.2307/415556

Bodman J., & Eisenstein, M. (1988). May God increase your bounty: The expression of gratitude in English by native and non-native speakers. *Cross Currents, 15*, 1-21.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). Politeness: *Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Canale, M. (1983). From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In J. Richards & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Language and communication* (pp. 2-29). Longman.

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*, 1-47.

https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/1.1.1

Celaya, M. L., Pinelli, L., & Barón, J. (2019). "I'm jealous but I'm very happy". Contratulating in a EFL context. In M.J. Gutierrez-Mangado, et al. (Eds.), *Cross-Linguistic Influence: From Empirical Evidence to Classroom Practice*. Springer.

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-22066-2_8

Cohen, A. D., & Olshtain, E. (1993). The production of speech acts by EFL learners. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*, 33–56.

https://doi.org/10.2307/3586950

Coulmas, F. (1981). "Poison to your soul": Thanks and apologies contrastively viewed. In F. Coulmas (Ed.),

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Conversational routine: Explorations in standardized communication situations and prepatterned speech (pp. 69-91). Mouton.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110809145.69

Council of Europe (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Leaning, teaching, assessment.* Cambridge University Press.

De Pablos-Ortega, C. (2010). Attitudes of English speakers towards thanking in Spanish. *Pragmatics, 20*(2), 201–222.

https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.20.2.02pab

De Pablos-Ortega, C. (2011). The pragmatics of thanking reflected in the textbooks for teaching Spanish as a foreign language. *Journal of Pragmatics, 43*(9), 2411–2433.

https://doi.org/10.1515/soprag-2015-0023

De Pablos-Ortega, C. (2015). Thank you for a lovely day! Contrastive thanking in textbooks for teaching English and Spanish as foreign languages. *Sociocultural Pragmatics, 3*(2), 150–173.

https://doi.org/10.1515/soprag-2015-0023

Demir, C., & Takkak, M. (2016). Contrastive pragmatics: Apologies & thanks in English and Italian. *International Journal of English Linguistics, 6*(1), 73-85.

https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v6n1p73

Díaz Pérez, F. J. (2005). The speech act of thanking in English. Differences between native and non-native speakers' behavior. *Revista de Filologia inglesa, 26*, 91-102.

Eisenstein, M., & Bodman J. (1993). Expressing gratitude in American English. In G. Casper, & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 64-81). Oxford University Press.

Félix-Brasdefer, C. (2007). Pragmatic development in the Spanish as a FL classroom: A cross-sectional study of learner requests. *Intercultural Pragmatics, 4*, 253-286.

Félix-Brasdefer, C. (2008). *Politeness in Mexico and the United States*. John Benjamins.

Félix-Brasdefer, C. (2010). Data collection methods in speech act performance: DCTs, role plays and verbal reports, In A. Martínez-Flor & E. Usó-Juan (Eds.) *Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues* (pp. 41-56). John Benjamins.

https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.26.03fel

Flores Salgado, E. (2011). *The Pragmatics of requests and apologies: Developmental patterns of Mexican students.* John Benjamins.

https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.212

Garcia, P. (2004). Pragmatic comprehension of high and low level language learners. *Teaching English as a second or foreign language, 8*, 1-10.

Gkouma, A. (in press). Η γλωσσική πράξη των ευχαριστιών από φυσικούς και μη φυσικούς ομιλητές-σπουδαστές της Ελληνικής ως Γ2. [The speech act of thanking by native speakers and non-native speakers- learners of Greek as an L2]. In *Proceedings of the 14th International Conference of Greek Linguistics (ICGL14)*. University of Patras.

Göy, E. Zeyrek, D., & Otcu, B. (2012). Developmental patterns in internal modification of requests: A quantitative study on Turkish learners of English. In M. Economidou-Kogetsidis & H. Woodfield (Eds.), *Interlanguage Request Modification* (pp. 51-86). John Benjamins.

https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.217.03goy

Haverkate, H. (1993). Acerca de los actos de habla expresivos y comisivos en español. In H. Haverkate, K. Hengeveld, & G. Mulder (Eds.), *Aproximaciones pragmalinguísticas al español* (pp. 149-180). Rodopi.

https://doi.org/10.35376/10324/16508

Haverkate, H. (1984). *Speech acts, speakers, and hearers: Reference and referential strategies in Spanish.* John Benjamins.

Hinkel, E. (1994a). Pragmatics of interaction: Expressing thanks in a second language. *Applied Language Learning, 5*(1), 73-91.

Hinkel, E. (1994b). Appropriateness of advice as L2 Solidarity strategy. In *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the teachers of English to speakers of other languages* (28th, Baltimore, MD, March 8-12, 1994) (pp. 1-29).

Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269-293). Penguin.

Jung, W. (1994). Speech acts of "Thank you" and responses to it on American English. In appropriateness of advice as L2 solidarity strategy. In *Proceedings of the annual meeting of the teachers of English to speakers of other languages* (16th Baltimore, MD, March 1994) (pp. 1-23).

Kasper, G., & Rose, K. (2001). Pragmatics and SLA. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 19*, 81-104.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190599190056

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. (2004) ¿Es universal la cortesía?.In D. Bravo & A. Briz (Eds.), *Pragmática sociocultural: Estudios sobre el discurso de cortesía en español* (pp. 39-54). Ariel.

https://doi.org/10.1075/sic.2.1.09ste

Kia, E., & Salehi, M. (2013). The effect of explicit and implicit instruction of English thanking and complimenting formulas on developing pragmatic competence of Iranian EFL upper-intermediate level learners. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research, 3*(8), 202-215.

Kinginger, C., & Farrell, K.(2004). Assessing development of meta-pragmatic awareness in study abroad. *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad, 10*, 19-42.
https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v10i1.131

Koutsantoni, D. (2005). Greek cultural characteristics and academic writing. *Journal of Modern Greek Studies, 23*(1), 97-138.
https://doi.org/10.1353/mgs.2005.0007

Kuriscak, L. (2010). The effect of individual-level variables on speech act performance. In A. Martínez-Flor & E. Usó-Juan (Eds.), Speech act performance: *Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues* (pp. 23-39). John Benjamins.
https://doi.org/10.1075/lllt.26.02kur

Lakoff, R. (1973). The logic of politeness, or minding your P's and Q's. In *Papers from the ninth regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society* (pp. 292-305). Chicago Linguistic Society.

Lanteigne, B., & Crompton, P. (2011). Analyzing the use of thanks to you: insights for language teaching and assessment in second and foreign language contexts. *Research in Language, 9*(2), 29-50.
https://doi.org/10.2478/v10015-011-0018-9

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman.

McConachy T. (2019). L2 pragmatics as 'intercultural pragmatics': Probing sociopragmatic aspects of pragmatic awareness. *Journal of Pragmatics, 151*, 167-176.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2019.02.014

McConachy, T., & Liddicoat, A. (2016). Meta-pragmatic awareness and intercultural competence: The role of reflection and interpretation in intercultural mediation. In F. Dervin & Z. Gross (Eds.), *Intercultural competence in education: Alternative approaches for different times* (pp. 13-30). Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58733-6_2

Ozdemir, C., & Rezvani, S. (2010). Interlanguage pragmatics in action: Use of expressions of gratitude. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 3*, 194-202.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.032

Pérez-Sabater, C., & Montero-Fleta, B. (2014). Pragmatic competence and social power awareness: The case of written and spoken discourse in non-native English environments. *International Journal of English Studies (IJES), 14,* 21-38.
https://doi.org/10.6018/j.191071

Rose, K., & Kasper, G. (2001). *Pragmatics in language teaching.* Cambridge University Press.

Schauer, G. (2009). *Interlanguage pragmatic development: The study abroad context.* Continuum.

Schauer, G., & Adolphs S. (2006). Expression of gratitude in corpus and DCT data: vocabulary, formulaic sequences, and pedagogy. *System, 34*, 119-134.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2005.09.003

Schmidt, R. (1993). Consciousness and foreign language learning. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.), *Interlanguage pragmatics* (pp. 21-42). Oxford University Press.
https://doi.org/10.1017/s0047404500018649

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts. An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.

Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints and apologies.* Mouton de Gruyter.
https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110885286

Usó-Juan, E., & Martínez-Flor, A. (2008). Teaching learners to appropriately mitigating requests. *Babel-Afial, 17,* 253-270.

Woodfield, H. (2012). "I think maybe I want to lend the notes from you": Development of request modification in graduate learners. In M. Economidou-Kogetsidis & H. Woodfield (Eds.), *Interlanguage request, modification* (pp. 9-49). John Benjamins.
https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.217.02woo

Yuan, Y. (2001). An inquiry into empirical pragmatics data-gathering methods: Written DCTs, oral DCTs, field notes and natural conversations. *Journal of Pragmatics, 33*(2), 271-292.
https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(00)00031-X

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.

Gkouma, A.; Andria, M. & Mikros, G.

Exploring Pragmatic Competence in Formal Communicative Contexts:
The case of thanking by native and non-native speakers of Greek

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

L2 learners' countries of origin

Participants' country of origin	N
Egypt	2
France	3
Germany	1
Italy	3
Mexico	1
Poland	1
Russia	4
Serbia	6
Spain	2
Turkey	1
Tunisia	1
Ukraine	2
USA	2
Not answered	2
Total	**31**

APPENDIX B

Role plays scenarios (target situations)

You are asked to participate in a role play with different situations. At first you will read every situation that is described in a card and afterwards you will take part in a role-play with me. Try to respond as naturally as possible, as you would if this was a natural situation in which you were involved.

1. Boss

You are director/ boss in a company. You talk to an employee. You want him/ her to work four hours more one of the next days.

2. Employee

It's been a short while since you have been hired in a company. You go to your manager and ask for a dayoff next week.

3. University student

You have an assignment to submit for a university course, but you don't manage to complete it on time. You go to your professor's office and ask for more time.

APPENDIX C

Examples of L2 learners' thanking speech acts

Example 1: B1 learner

```
E:     Εντάξει. Θα δώσω πιο πολύ χρόνο.
M:     Ευχαριστώ.


Researcher:  Ok, I will give you more time.
B1 Student:  Thanks.
```

Example 2: C1 learner

```
E:     Ε, ναι, εντάξει, αν είχες πρόβλημα,
       θα σου δώσω.
M:     Σας ευχαριστώ πάρα πολύ.


Researcher:  Yes, ok, if you had difficulty
             (to complete the assignment), I
             will give you (more time).
C1 student:  Thank you very much.
```

Example 3: C2 learner

```
E:     Περαστικά στην αδερφή σου. Εντάξει,
       αφού είναι το πρόβλημα υγείας
       εννοείται. Θα σου δώσω.

M:     Γίνεται;

E:     Ναι, ναι, θα σου δώσω λίγο χρόνο
       ακόμα.

M:     Μπορώ δηλαδή να την παραδώσω ας
       πούμε την Τετάρτη ή την Πέμπτη την
       επόμενη εβδομάδα;

E:     Μμμ, σε μια βδομάδα δηλαδή, μπορείς,
       ναι, κανένα πρόβλημα από μένα.

M:     Θα είναι αρκετό.

E:     Κανένα πρόβλημα.

M:     Ευχαριστώ πάρα πολύ.


Researcher:  I hope that your sister gets
             well soon. Ok, as faras it is a
             matter of health, I will give
             you (more time to complete the
             assignment).
C2 student:  Is it possible?
Researcher:  Yes, yes, I will give you a
             little more time.
C2 student:  So, can I hand you the
             assignment – for example – next
             Wednesday or Thursday?
Researcher:  Mmm, so, in a week's time. Yes,
             you can, I have no problem.
C2 student:  This will be enough.
Researcher:  No problem.
C2 student:  Thanks very much.
```