MAKING SUGGESTIONS WHILE COLLABORATING IN L1 ENGLISH: COMMON STRUCTURES AND STRATEGIES

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1. Introduction

Some speech acts are potentially face threatening, and different approaches to their performance can result in misunderstanding or offense. In the case of suggestions, speakers face the challenge of communicating an idea without expressing themselves in a way that is perceived as overbearing or inappropriate. Schmidt et al. (1996: 299) maintain that all suggestions are face threatening simply "because people do not, in general, want to be told what to do".

Previous research has documented specific phrases that are often used to preface suggestions in English (Martínez-Flor 2005). The data on which these taxonomies are based often come in part from discourse completion or role play tasks, and it is important to consider the degree to which the content of such taxonomies represents actual speech (Jiang 2006; Santos and Silva 2008). The present study, based on natural data, investigates the characteristics of L1 suggestions made during an L2 collaborative writing task, a common academic activity in many North American universities and an authentic communicative context in which speech act performance has not been extensively examined. The findings build on previous work by highlighting the most commonly used strategies from Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy and may be useful for learners of English as a second language who need assistance in making suggestions in an L1 English peer group.

2. Previous research

In comparison to the vast quantity of research conducted on speech acts, suggestions have not been investigated extensively (Schmidt et al. 1996; Pishghadam and Sharafadini 2011). According to Searle's (1979: 13) classificatory system, they fall into the category of "directives" which he defines as "attempts […] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something". The difference between directives such as commands, suggestions, or requests, is in the force of the attempt to influence the hearer (Schmitt and Richards 1985). Jiang (2006: 41) proposes an operational definition that consists of three components. A speaker "1) mentions an idea, possible plan or action for other people to consider; or 2) offers an opinion about what other people should do or how they should act in a particular situation; and 3) believes that the action indicated is in the best interest of the hearer, or is desirable for the hearer to do". It is important to add that suggestions can implicate the speaker and not just the hearer (Koike 1994, 1996); that is, the individual making a suggestion may be the one to act and/or benefit from action in a particular situation. In the present study, suggestions are proposed content that the speaker would like his or her classmates to evaluate for inclusion in their jointly drafted text.

In real-life scenarios, potentially face threatening speech acts like suggestions can carry high communicative stakes: "the speaker is actually intruding into the listener's world by expressing an idea about what the latter should do" (Koike 1994: 517). In workplace contexts, for instance, making suggestions inappropriately or offensively may affect the completion of necessary tasks and have negative consequences on professional relationships (Santos and Silva 2008). Consequently, according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, rational agents either avoid these face-threatening acts or seek to minimize their threat using certain strategies, one of which is redressive action that recognizes and addresses the hearer's wants.

Numerous variables affect the face threat involved in making suggestions. Sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender and cultural differences in politeness norms (Rintell 1981) as well as the role of power in a particular communicative context or setting (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990, 1993; Liu and Zhao 2007) must be considered.

Much previous research on suggestions has focused on cultural differences between native and non-native speakers of a given language. Indeed, cross-cultural contexts often highlight pragmatic variation, and there is evidence to indicate that some form of instruction, whether implicit or explicit, has a positive effect on L2 learners' pragmatic awareness and production (Martínez-Flor and Fukuya 2005; Fernández-

Guerra and Martínez-Flor 2006; Martínez-Flor and Alcón Soler 2007). The lack of parallelism between specific L1 and L2 linguistic structures can be particularly difficult to address, even for advanced learners (Koke 1994, 1996). Though the realization of L2 suggestions falls outside the scope of the present analysis, many of those studies highlight the characteristics of L1 English that language learners are striving to emulate. Those findings provide a point of comparison with the data collected on L1 English suggestions in the present analysis and are highlighted here.

Research points to mixed results in regard to the pragmatic realization of L1 English suggestions. One context that has been extensively studied is that of interactions between faculty and students during advising sessions. In their analysis of suggestions made by native and non-native English-speaking graduate students during academic advising sessions with their faculty advisors, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) reported that native speakers used status preserving strategies that enabled them to make suggestions effectively to a superior. They (1993) found that non-native English speakers, on the other hand, made more frequent use of aggravators and less frequent use of mitigators.

Other studies support this observation that native English speakers use strategies that soften suggestions. In her research on the expression of suggestions in L1 English tutor/tutee conversations, Thonus (1999) identified five linguistic forms used in the tutors' suggestions: indirect, interrogative, first person modals, second person modals, and the imperative, all of which could be realized with or without mitigators. The most common forms were mitigated second person modals (30% of suggestions), unmitigated second person modals (20%), and the unmitigated imperative (14%). All other linguistic forms constituted less than 10 percent of the data. Unsurprisingly, she found that tutors' behavior was linguistically dominant and concluded that "institutionally conferred status" (Thonus 1999: 244), not gender or language proficiency, was the driving influence behind it.

The status relationship between interlocutors is indeed a key factor in their use of suggestions. Several studies note a tendency toward indirectness when native English speakers address individuals in positions of higher status. For instance, as part of a contrastive study of the pragmatic development of L1 Japanese learners of English, Matsumura (2001) used a written questionnaire to elicit learners' preferences for expressing advice and compared them with those of native English speakers in Canada. She reported a consistent preference for hedged and indirect advice among the native English speakers when interacting with a person of higher status and a preference for direct advice in half of the scenarios with interlocutors of equal or lower status. Similarly, in teacher-student conferences, Liu and Zhao (2007) noted the more frequent use of the imperative by the English-speaking teachers than by the Japanese students.

Of particular relevance to the present study are findings related to peer interaction, that is, individuals of equal status. Though power dynamics come to play in any relationship, student-student interactions are not subject to the institutional status differential that characterizes teacher-student exchanges. It is not surprising that suggestions in such a context be offered collaboratively and directly. Jiang (2006) found that the most common structure used in the peer groups was "let's", followed by imperatives and the forms "you should" and "you need to". Li's (2010) findings for Australian high school students are similar. Collecting data through peer role play, he found that the native English speakers used a variety of syntactic structures. They made most frequent use of ability statements using the modals "can" and "could" followed by the suggestory formula "let's" and finally used inclination statements expressed with modals such as "will", "would", "may", "might" and the phrase "I'm going to". They opted for direct strategies when verbalizing 66.66% of their suggestions and made less extensive use of conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect strategies (608). Finally, Li (2010) reported that the native English speakers in his study made frequent use of redressive actions, employing them in approximately 61% of all suggestions.

An important consideration in studies of speech act realization is that of data collection methods and the ongoing debate over the advantages and disadvantages of natural versus elicited data (Beebe and Cummings 1996; MacSwan and McAlister 2010). Some research on suggestions has been based on data elicited through oral or written role plays, questionnaires, or discourse completion tasks (Rintell 1981; Banerjee and Carrell 1988; Koike 1994; Matsumura 2001; Martínez-Flor and Fukuya 2005; Martínez-Flor and Alcón Soler 2007; Li 2010; Pishghadam and Sharafadini 2011). Other investigations are based on natural or corpus data (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1993; Thonus 1999; Fernández Guerra and Martínez-Flor 2006; Jiang 2006). Elicited data facilitate the replication of previous studies and comparisons with existing information and give researchers a measure of control over particular sociolinguistic variables. Natural data often exhibit more variation but better represent real language use (Yuan 2001; Felix Brasdefer 2007; Bou Franch and Lorenzo-Dus 2008; Ewald 2012). Consequently, they enable researchers to contextualize speech act production in the more extended discourse that occurs in authentic conversations (Koester 2002). In short, the documentation of "striking differences" (Golato 2003) between elicited and natural data does not

necessarily invalidate either but rather highlights their appropriateness for addressing different research questions.

Drawing widely on previous literature, Martínez-Flor (2005) used data collected in natural spontaneous teacher-student communication (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1996), through personal intuition, observation, and questionnaires (Koike 1994, 1996) and other sources to develop a taxonomy of suggestions for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. She outlines a pedagogical process for integrating the taxonomy into the curriculum to expose students to the variety of linguistic resources available for making suggestions in English and to foster their L2 pragmatic development.

3. Purpose

The present study examines a set of naturally occurring L1 English suggestions during a collaborative writing task in a university classroom. Its purpose is twofold. First, it seeks to expand on Li's (2010) work by applying the same categories of analysis to naturally collected data. Second, it applies the taxonomy developed by Martínez-Flor (2005) to a specific communicative context. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do native speakers of American English make suggestions in their L1 when working on a collaborative writing task? Specifically, following Li (2010), what (a) syntactic structures, (b) pragmatic strategies, and (c) redressive actions, if any, do they use?
2. How do participants' suggestion strategies compare to those highlighted in Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy?

4. Participants and Data Collection

Participants in the present study were 18 university students (11 females, 7 males) in a second year Spanish language course. Though the product students were asked to prepare was written in Spanish, all participants used their native language, English, when collaborating. That collaboration or planning phase is the focus of this analysis.

This study is based on natural data; that is, rather than ask participants to make suggestions in response to prepared scenarios, their use of suggestions was evaluated while they completed an in-class collaborative writing task. Their

current unit of study was health and medical problems and they were asked to write a skit about someone who suffered an accident and was taken to the emergency room. The data were collected during a regular class session in two different sections of an intermediate Spanish course. Triads 1 and 2 were in the same class section, and Triads 3-6 were in a second section of the course taught by the same instructor. The time that students spent drafting their texts ranged from 12 minutes, 2 seconds to 23 minutes, 54 seconds. Participants' L1 conversations were recorded while they prepared their written texts. Most suggestions were related to the content of the text or about how to express that content in Spanish.

It is important not to confuse the nature of the students' assignment with the type of data collected; that is, the fact that these participants were preparing a skit does not mean that the data were elicited. The participants were completing an in-class assignment that required them to write a text, a skit, collaboratively and in the process they made suggestions to each to other. The assignment was not an oral role play or discourse completion task in which participants were asked to imagine themselves in certain situations and role play making suggestions to other characters. Suggestions surfaced naturally in the process of working on their assignment.

5. Data Analysis

The audio recordings were transcribed, and all suggestions were identified. Following Li (2010), the suggestions were coded in terms of (a) syntactic structure (b) pragmatic strategies and (c) use of redressive actions, each of which I address briefly below.

The three syntactic categories identified by Li (2010), imperative, indicative (declarative) and indicative (interrogative), are used in the present analysis. For example, imperative suggestions are expressed as commands ("<u>Write</u> the whole thing . . ."). Indicative (declarative) structures include suggestions conveyed as an obligation ("I <u>have to</u> say something to fight back"), inclination ("<u>We'll</u> write it in"), ability ("You <u>can</u> yell it out"), etc. Suggestions verbalized as questions fall into the indicative (interrogative) category ("<u>Should</u> I just like talk about my normal allergies?"). These suggestions were expressed in one clause and did not include the actual words that participants would write in their text. However, in other cases these same syntactic categories encompassed suggestions that were verbalized in an embedded clause in which participants proposed specific phrasing for their idea. Consider the following examples:

(1) Imperative: "Just say I like 'I hit it on a chair on the beach.'"

Indicative (declarative): "You could say 'I carried you.'"

Indicative (interrogative): "Do you want me to say 'I will prescribe?'"

In the process of coding suggestions as imperative, indicative (declarative) or indicative (interrogative), Li (2010) noted the challenge of categorizing elliptical suggestions in which a key word or phrase is missing, particularly the challenge of distinguishing declaratives from imperatives. Consider Li's (2010: 602) model of using the co-text to make that determination:

(2) A: Are we going to take him to South Head?

B: I suppose not.

A: Err . Where then? I 'm not the genius.

B: Wait Brook. The Taronga Zoo, of course. That way we could go to the Opera House and spend the rest of the day in the zoo.

Li explains that the suggestion to go to Taronga Zoo can be coded as a declarative, not an imperative, by looking at the question to which Speaker B is responding. One can infer that B is saying "we are going to take him to the Taronga Zoo".

Given the nature of the collaborative task in the present study, many suggestions were offered as part of elliptical constructions but there was no preceding co-text to provide the type of analysis that Li models. Participants verbalized many phrases that could be written into the text as is; that is, participants offered potential skit content directly, often as if they were drafting aloud. For instance, using the voice of the character in her skit, one participant stated. "I need to go to the hospital". She was not responding to something that a previous speaker had said. She did not present this idea as a command, "Write that I need to go to the hospital" nor as a declarative, "We can say that I need to go to the hospital", nor as an interrogative, "Should I say that I need to go to the hospital". Consequently, a fourth category was added to accommodate these very frequent suggestions, and they were coded as indicative (elliptical).

These four syntactic categories, imperative, indicative (declarative), indicative (interrogative) and indicative (elliptical), encompass a variety of suggestory strategies that were originally identified by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and are applied by Li (2010). The following chart summarizes the structures used and provides a representative example of each type. The suggestory strategies noted in the right column are based on the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). The triad in which each example occurred is indicated in parentheses.

Structure & Example	Suggestory Strategy
Imperative	
a. "Put a problem with the stomach" (T3)	Mood derivable
Indicative (declarative)	
b. "It's venda" (T2)	Pure statement
c. "We have to add the fact that" (T3)	Obligation
d. "The doctor should say it first" (T3)	Obligation
e. "We need to do something serious…" (T6)	Obligation
f. "I want to say 'you can take aspirin'" (T4)	Inclination
g. "The friend of the patient will say" (T3)	Inclination
h. "I'm going to say, 'ella es loca'" (T6)	Inclination
i. "I think it might be 'le gusta'" (T6)	Inclination
j. "You can yell it out" (T5)	Ability
k. "Let's ask her" (T4)	Suggestory formula
l. "You could be like 'gracias'" (T1)	Ability
m. "I would be like 'cálmate'" (T5)	Inclination
Indicative (interrogative)	
n. "Is it 'tobillo?'" (T2)	Suggestory formula
o. "Should I just like talk about my normal allergies"? (T6)	Suggestory formula
p. "You want to do twist like ankle"? (T2)	Suggestory formula
q. "What about a seashell"? (T3)	Suggestory formula
r. "Would it be 'tomas'"? (T4)	Suggestory formula
s. "Why don't we just say 'and I fell'"? (T2)	Query prep
t. "Can I be the friend"?(T4)	Query prep
u. "How do you say 'a game'"? (T3)	Hint
Indicative (elliptical)	
v. "I just got bit by a shark" (T5)	Hint

TABLE 1. Syntactic Structures and Suggestory Strategies

In addressing pragmatic strategies, I followed Li (2010) and analyzed them in terms of directness and perspective. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) established three categories of directness: direct, conventionally direct, and non-conventionally indirect. Li (2010: 604) explained that direct suggestions communicate the illocutionary force grammatically, conventionally indirect suggestions draw on

"linguistic conventions established in the 'societal' context", and non-conventionally indirect suggestions "require the addressee to compute the illocutionary force from the interaction of the locution with is context, especially the co-text or 'social' context". Consider the following examples from the present data:

(3) Direct: "You could be like 'gracias'" (T1).

Conventionally indirect: "What about a seashell?" (T3).

Non-conventionally indirect: "How do you say 'a game'"? (T3).

In the third example, the speaker has a specific idea for script content but does not know how to express it (the word "game") in Spanish. The utterance is non-conventionally indirect because it is only understood as a suggestion in this locutionary context; that is, in a framework other than one of collaborative writing the utterance would not be a suggestion but only a request for help with unknown vocabulary.

The following table shows the relationship between those categories of directness and the syntactic structures presented in Table 2.

Syntactic Structures	Directness
a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, l, m,	Direct
k, n, o, p, q, r, s, t	Conventionally Indirect
u, v	Non-conventionally indirect

TABLE 2. Syntactic Structures and Directness

Additionally, Li (2010) adapted and expanded Blum-Kulka's (1989) perspective scheme, highlighting 5 pragmatic perspectives, "point[s] of view from which a suggestion is realized" (Li 2010: 603). Suggestions can be made from the perspective of the speaker, hearer, speaker and hearer or an implicit, unspecified agent. A fifth category, "other", consists of references to third parties. In the present study it refers to suggestions about what one of the fictional characters in the skit would say. Examples from the present data are highlighted in Table 3.

Perspective/Agent	Example
Speaker	"I want to ask her". (T4)
Hearer	"You can yell it out". (T5)
Speaker and Hearer	"We need to do something serious". (T6)
Implicit	"What about a seashell"? (T3)
Other	"The patient is going to say 'gracias'". (T4)

TABLE 3. Perspective

The third component of the analysis was the use of redressive actions. All suggestions were coded as either bald on record or accompanied by a redressive action that mitigated the force of the potential imposition. Internal redressive actions are "linguistic elements within the suggestion utterance proper which can mitigate the intrusive force of making the suggestion" (Li 2010: 604). External actions accomplish the same purpose but fall outside the suggestion utterance. Table 4 contains a complete list of the redressive actions coded in the present study. Also included are brief descriptions and examples of each.

Redressive Action	Description	Example
Internal		
Subjectivizer	Element that conveys the subjective nature of the suggestion	"I think it's 'venda'" .(T2)
Appealer	Element that appeals to a listener's goodwill	"He says all this, ok"? (T5)
Past tense form	Use of a past tense verb to minimize the assertion	"I was just going to say 'de'". (T4)
Downtoner	Element that minimizes the assertion and its effect on the listener	"Just write it first maybe". (T2)
External		
Grounder	Explanation, justification or reasoning used to support a suggestion	"You could say your toe hurts cuz you did hit your toe". (T6)
External politeness marker	Element that elicits the listener's cooperation	"You'll quote Shakespeare and stuff like that. How do you like that"? (T1)
Downgrading commitment	Element that speakers use to minimize their commitment to a suggestion	"You can be the patient. I'll be the friend. I don't care". (T3)

TABLE 4. Redressive Actions

Finally, the results of the present study will be compared to the suggestion strategies highlighted by Martínez-Flor (2005). Her taxonomy is presented in Table 5.

TYPE	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
DIRECT	Performative verb	I suggest that you . . . I advise you to . . . I recommend that you . . .
	Noun of suggestion	My suggestion would be . . .
	Imperative	Try using . . .
	Negative imperative	Don't try to . . .
CONVENTIONALIZED FORMS	Specific formulae (interrogative forms)	Why don't you . . . How about . . .? What about . . .? Have you thought about . . .?
	Possibility/ probability	You can . . . You could . . . You may . . . You might . . .
	Should	You should
	Need	You need to . . .
	Conditional	If I were you, I would . . .
INDIRECT	Impersonal	One thing (that you can do) would be . . . Here's one possibility . . . There are a number of options that you . . . It would be helpful if you. . . It might be better to . . . A good idea would be . . . It would be nice if . . .
	Hints	I've heard that . . .

TABLE 5. Martínez-Flor's (2005, 175) Taxonomy

6. Results and Discussion

The results for each component of the analysis will be presented. First, I will highlight the syntactic structures used by participants to make suggestions. Then, I will analyze two pragmatic features, directness and perspective. Third, I will present data on the frequency with which participants used redressive actions, as well as the particular actions they chose. Finally, I will compare the suggestion strategies used by participants with those highlighted in Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy.

6.1 Syntactic Structures

Participants used a variety of syntactic structures when making suggestions. Table 6 indicates the frequency with which each structure was used as well as how many of the 18 participants used it.

Structure & Example	Suggestory Strategy	Number of Participants Using the Structure N= 18	Frequency of Structure
Imperative			**59 (9%)**
a. "Put a problem with the stomach" (T3)	Mood derivable	14	59
Indicative (declarative)			**271 (41%)**
b. "It's 'venda'". (T2)	Pure statement	9	16
c. "We have to add the fact that . . ." (T3)	Obligation	8	17
d. "The doctor should say it first" (T3)	Obligation	5	14
e. "We need to do something serious…" (T6)	Obligation	3	3
f. "I want to say 'you can take aspirin…'" (T4)	Inclination	3	5
g. "The friend of the patient will say . . ." (T3)	Inclination	13	50
h. "I'm going to say, 'ella es loca'" (T6)	Inclination	12	50
i. "I think it might be 'le gusta'" (T6)	Inclination	2	2
j. "You can yell it out" (T5)	Ability	12	39
k. "Let's write this down" (T4)	Suggestory formula	4	12
l. "You could be like 'gracias'" (T1)	Ability	16	51
m. "I would be like 'cálmate'" (T5)	Inclination	9	12
Indicative (interrogative)			**79 (12%)**
n. "Is it 'tobillo'"? (T2)	Suggestory formula	5	11
o. "Should I just like talk about my normal allergies"? (T6)	Suggestory formula	9	15
p. "You want to do twist like ankle"? (T2)	Suggestory formula	6	12
q. "What about a seashell"? (T3)	Suggestory formula	2	3

r. "Would it be 'tomas'"? (T4)	Suggestory formula	7	16
s. "Why don't we just say 'and I fell'"? (T2)	Query prep	3	3
t. "Can I be the friend"? (T4)	Query prep	2	3
u. "How do you say 'a game'"? (T3)	Hint	8	16
Indicative (elliptical)			**247 (38%)**
v. "I just got bit by a shark" (T5)	Hint	18	247
TOTAL			**656 (100%)**

TABLE 6. Results for Syntactic Structures

Declarative statements were the most common syntactic type used by students to make suggestions, representing 41% of the data. Interrogatives constituted 12% of the participants' suggestions and imperatives 9%. The remaining suggestions (38%) were made using an elliptical construction; that is, participants offered their ideas for the content of the role play script directly, without prefacing them with phrases such as "let's say" or "you could write". These suggestions sounded as if students were drafting or rehearsing aloud. Consider the following examples:

(4) Student A: "They drowned, I need to be resuscitated".

Student B: "It's really bad. We got stung by like a sea of jellyfish". (T4)

In other instances, participants offered content suggestions, as if they were drafting aloud, followed by a similarly direct translation of that suggestion.

(5) Student A: "I am beautiful".

Student B: "Yo soy bonita" [I am pretty]. (T5)

Some of these suggestions were focused on resolving a grammatical or lexical challenge, and participants verbalized suggested resolutions:

(6) Student B: "dedo duele, duelo yeah, e duele, me duele, is it"? [finger hurts, I hurt yeah, and it hurts, it hurts me, is it?]

Student C: "en los dedo? Or, mis dedos? Or no, I hurt mis dedos" [on the [sic] finger? Or, my fingers? Or no, I hurt my fingers]

Student B: "me duele mis dedos" [my fingers hurts (sic) me] (T6)

These direct suggestions constituted smaller scale attempts at drafting. Rather than offer phrases or complete sentences, participants wrestled over individual morphemes (duele v. duelo) and words (los v. mis). Such oral drafting reflects the nature of the communicative context and task. Because the focus of the task was a written product, participants concentrated on content, not their articulation of the

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speech act of suggesting. The syntactic structures highlighted in Table 1 were broken down into several suggestory strategies used by Li (2010) but originally identified by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Because they are context dependent and require interpretation by the hearers, the indicative structures classified "elliptical" are included in the hint category. The frequency with which each strategy was used is noted in Table 7.

Suggestory Strategy	Frequency
Mood derivable	59 (9%)
Pure statement	16 (2%)
Obligation	34 (5%)
Inclination	119 (18%)
Ability	90 (14%)
Suggestory formula	69 (11%)
Query preparatory	6 (1%)
Hint	263 (40%)
	656 (100%)

TABLE 7. Frequency of Suggestory Strategies

I will briefly comment on the most frequently used suggestory strategies, beginning with hints (40%), 38% of which constitute ellipticals. Once again, their frequency may have been affected by the collaborative nature of the task, the expectation that participants contribute, the understanding that they were drafting a written document, and the limited time frame within which they worked. These suggestions were classified as hints because they are context dependent; that is, fellow participants interpreted a comment like "I need to go to the hospital. I'm bleeding like crazy" (T5) as suggested content for the written text and not a real request to take their peer to the emergency room.

The second most frequent strategy was Inclination (18%). This strategy includes the use of structures such as "want to", "will", "going to", "might", and "would" in declarative statements. Though less direct than the imperative, this strategy encompasses modals that some hearers may perceive as impolite. For instance, consider the use of "going to" by Triad 4 in the following suggestion:

(7) Student A: "I'm going to say 'ella [she] was swimming in the ocean when she felt a pain in, or she felt a pain,' end of sentence, and you're going to be like 'my back and leg hurt' or whatever".

Student C: "Yeah, <u>I'm going</u> to say my back and legs sting and my skin is red". (T4)

Though A may sound bossy, C did not seem to interpret her suggestion that way and used the same structure, "going to", in her response. The use of "will" has similar connotations and implies forwardness. Consider the following suggestion:

(8) "Alright, and then the friend of the patient <u>will</u> say 'no fue' [it wasn't] it wasn't my, it wasn't my fault". (T3)

Within the Inclination category, "going to" and "will" were the most frequently used expressions and appeared more often in the data than the more deferential "might" and "would". Though in a social setting, a hearer may object to being told what will happen or what one is going to say, in the context of this academic assignment such assertiveness was not met with resistance.

The third most common strategy was Ability (14%), for which participants introduced suggestions with "can" and "could":

(9) Student A: "You <u>can</u> say this to a nurse". (T5)

Student B: "Maybe [he] <u>could</u> jump in cuz [he] hasn't said anything". (T1)

These statements are more deferential than expressions such as "will" and "going to". Their relative infrequency in the data (14%) affirms the previously mentioned prevalence of direct approaches to making suggestions.

Finally, the Imperative (mood derivable) was the fourth most frequently used suggestory strategy and constituted 9% of the data. In these cases participants used commands to make suggestions. Consider the following examples:

(10) "You be the patient". (T2)

"Just <u>say</u> I like 'I hit it on a chair on the beach'". (T3)

"You <u>say</u> 'muy mal, Doctor'". (T1)

With the exception of one group, interactions among participants were amicable. There were no indications that the use of imperative forms was interpreted negatively or as an inappropriate way to express a suggestion. Interestingly, Triad 3, who used the greatest number of imperative suggestions, did exhibit interpersonal tension, but other factors including personality seemed to play a role in the triad's dysfunction, and there is no data to indicate a correlation between the imperative and group conflict.

6.2 Pragmatic Strategies

The syntactic structures identified in the previous section can also be used as measures of directness. The suggestions categorized as "elliptical" correspond

most closely to the definition of non-conventionally indirect strategies as their communicative value is rooted in the context. In fact, outside the setting of a collaboratively constructed, written role play task, these suggestions would make little sense. The levels of directness with their corresponding frequency are presented in Table 8.

Syntactic Structures	Level of Directness	Frequency
a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, l, m,	Direct (Mood derivable, Pure statement, Obligation, Inclination, Ability)	318 (48.5%)
k, n, o, p, q, r, s, t	Conventionally indirect (Query preparatory, Suggestory Formula)	75 (11.5%)
u, v	Non-conventionally indirect (Hint, including "Elliptical")	263 (40%)
	TOTAL	656 (100%)

TABLE 8. Frequency of Specific Levels of Directness

The data indicate that participants used direct strategies for the majority (48.5%) of the suggestions they made. Also common were non-conventionally indirect strategies. Dividing that category into its two components, one notes that the majority of cases are those of elliptical suggestions (247 of 263 or 94%) classified as hints.

In addition to the level of directness, a second pragmatic strategy is that of perspective. Participants' perspective when making a suggestion is their indication of agency: in short, who is the agent that will perform the proposed action? For example, the agent may be the speaker (I): "I'll be the doctor" (T5). The agent can also be the hearer (you): "You could say that before you say…" (T6). The perspectives of speakers and hearers can be combined (we): "We could say like 'how silly'" (T2). Fourth, the implicit perspective does not include reference to any agent: "How about a seashell?" (T3). The fifth possible perspective is that of "other" which refers to a third party: "The patient (participant who will read the patient's lines) is going to say 'gracias'" (T4). These five perspectives all refer to assigning each other words and actions during the writing process.

The perspective highlighted in the suggestions categorized as elliptical is challenging to identify for several reasons. First, the elliptical suggestions are often uttered within the fictional world of the written skit. For example, "We'll stitch you up and you'll be fine" (T6) are the words of one fictional character, the doctor, to another, the patient. Unlike the "Other" category, as noted earlier, in which the participant playing the role of the patient really will carry out the action and say

"gracias", the actor playing the doctor is not going to do any stitching. Second, some suggestions categorized as Other constitute ideas about how to translate an idea that has been expressed in English into Spanish: "muestra?" [show] (T4). Because this suggestion is made in the context of the patient showing the doctor her injuries, one could infer that it adopts the hearer perspective by addressing "you", but once again, such agency exists within the fictional world of the role play rather than the real world in which the collaborative drafting occurs. Third, all elliptical suggestions are addressed to the triad, but it is impossible to determine what agent is intended: "you" singular (one particular group member), "you" plural (two group members) or "we" (all group members including the speaker) or even "I" (the speaker). Consequently, all cases of elliptical suggestions have been excluded from this part of the analysis.

An embedded pattern also surfaced by which participants made suggestions like "We should have the doctor say that first" (T3) or "I'll have you say like drink water" (T1). In these 12 cases, the definition of perspective determined the classification; the perspective was identified according to the agent who would do the action, not make the suggestion; that is, in the first example the perspective was "other" (the doctor) and in the second, it was "hearer" (you). The data on perspective is summarized in Table 9.

Agents	Present Study
Speaker ("I")	121 (30%)
Hearer ("you")	132 (32%)
Speaker and hearers ("we")	60 (15%)
Other	34 (8%)
Implicit	63 (15%)
*TOTAL	410 (100%)

*The total excludes 246 suggestions made as rehearsals.
TABLE 9. Frequency of Specific Perspectives

The speaker (30%) and hearer (32%) perspectives constitute a large portion of the data. Interestingly, both of these perspectives could be perceived as impolite. The speaker perspective may seem self-centered, and the use of the hearer perspective may appear bossy. Nevertheless, neither receives any kind of negative peer response from fellow participants.

6.3 Redressive Actions

The third area of analysis is participants' use of redressive actions. As indicated in Table 10, a relatively low percentage of suggestions (22%) was made using

redressive actions. The majority (78%) was made bald on record with no attempt to mitigate the force of the speech act.

Number of Suggestions	Suggestions made with Redressive Action	Suggestions made Bald on Record
TOTAL: 656	143 (22%)	513 (78%)

TABLE 10. Frequency of Redressive Actions

Included in the bald on record suggestions are the many cases of elliptical suggestions that were not phrased using modals or questions. It is also important to note that participants sometimes used more than one redressive action in the process of making suggestions. For that reason, the total number of redressive actions (Table 11) is higher than the number of suggestions made with redressive actions (Table 10). Consider the example below:

(11) I guess just write it first maybe? (T2)

This speaker frames the suggestion as her personal idea or opinion with the phrase "I guess" (subjectivizer). She includes the word "just" to minimize the assertion (downtoner) and downplays her commitment to the suggestion with the word "maybe" (downgrading commitment). A complete list of redressive actions and their frequency of use are identified in Table 11.

Redressive Action	Frequency
Internal	
Subjectivizer	14 (20%)
Appealer	1 (1.5%)
Past Tense Forms	1 (1.5%)
Downtoners	53 (77%)
Sub-Total	**69 (100%)**
External	
Grounders	32 (33%)
External Politeness Markers	1 (1%)
Downgrading Commitments	63 (66%)
Sub-Total	**96 (100%)**
Total	**165 (100%**

TABLE 11. Frequency of Specific Redressive Actions

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The most common internal redressive actions were downtoners, and the most frequently used external redressive actions were downgrading commitments and grounders. In the present study, participants had limited time to prepare their written texts. They did not take much time to explain or justify their suggestions (grounders) but in brief terms were able to communicate a certain detachment from them as well as uncertainty about their linguistic accuracy (downgrading commitments). Consider the following two examples:

(12) Student A: "Do you want to do like a sprained ankle <u>or something</u>"? (T2)

Student B: "It would be 'se gusta', <u>right</u>"? (T6)

In example A, the speaker suggests a sprained ankle as a possible injury for the script but adds "or something" to communicate that she is open to other ideas. In example B, the speaker suggests a translation for "she likes" but is not confident of its grammaticality and ends with the tag question, "right"?

As in the case of syntactic structures, perspective, and directness, the collaborative nature of the task may also explain participants' limited use of redressive actions. The success of the group, not just the hearer, depended on participants' ability to offer original and accurate suggestions quickly.

6.4 Comparison with Taxonomy

Finally, the suggestions produced by participants in the present study were compared with those presented in Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy. The three types of suggestions she identifies (direct, conventionalized forms, and indirect) account for 269 (39%) of the 656 suggestions in the present study. The most frequently used category, conventionalized forms, represents 200 (30%) of the suggestions. Within this category participants used modals of probability/possibility (can/could, may/might) in 92 (14%) of the suggestions and interrogatives in 79 (12%) of them. They used "should" in 14 (2%), the conditional (would) in 12 (2%), and "need" in 3 (.5%) suggestions. The category of direct strategies accounted for 59 (9%) suggestions, all of which were imperatives. Participants did not make suggestions using performative verbs, nouns of suggestion or negative imperatives nor did they use any of the strategies categorized as indirect (impersonal strategies and hints).

These findings affirm the applicability of 6 of the 11 strategies highlighted by Martínez-Flor (2005) in this communicative setting. The taxonomy includes more formulaic strategies such as "I advise you to" or "It would be nice if" that these participants did not use. Conversely, the taxonomy does not accommodate several other conventionalized forms such as "have to", "need to", "want to", etc. that were frequently used in the present study nor did it address the large number (247

or 38%) of elliptical suggestions that surfaced. Additional research is needed to confirm whether the elliptical strategy is used in other contexts.

To summarize, participants in the present study used a range of syntactic strategies to make suggestions. They favored declarative indicative strategies, particularly inclination statements, but made most frequent use of the elliptical structure, that is, unprefaced suggestions for text content made as if participants were drafting aloud. The pragmatic analysis revealed that participants preferred a direct approach. Also very common, however, were non-conventionally indirect strategies, a category that encompasses hints and thereby accounts for the many suggestions voiced as elliptical statements. In terms of perspective, participants most often framed non-rehearsal suggestions in terms of hearer agency or speaker agency. Participants offered the vast majority of suggestions (78%) without redressive actions. Finally, slightly less than half of the suggestions (39%) reflected the strategies highlighted in Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy.

7. Conclusions

There is little difference between the findings of the present study and those of previous research in regard to the use of syntactic strategies, with the exception of elliptical statements. These statements, framed as if participants were drafting aloud, may not be used in other contexts, but their prominence in the present study provides insight into a specific type of task, written collaboration, which is common in academic circles and in some workplace environments as well. These findings may be of value, particularly to non-native speakers of English who, in a scholastic or professional setting, must contribute to the creation of a written document, whether it be an essay, policy statement, brochure, or script.

The present study has several weaknesses. First, in contrast with Li (2010), this study does not include a statistical analysis that would provide more information about the reliability and validity of the results. Second, though the number of suggestions in the data is high, the study would benefit from a larger participant pool. Third, the present study follows Li (2010) in focusing on syntactic structures, directness, perspective, and redressive actions, and ideally, it would have been possible to compare the results of the two studies. Multiple variables, however, were not controlled, and there were differences in the nationality, age, and grouping of participants. Finally, the specific context of this study does not provide generalizable conclusions about the applicability of Martínez-Flor's (2005) taxonomy as a whole and only indicates those strategies that are most relevant in the present context of a collaborative writing task.

This study, however, does point to the importance of experimenting with different data collection settings in speech act studies. Future research in uninvestigated contexts may reveal strategies for making suggestions that have not surfaced, or are not as frequently used, in other settings. Such research also serves to validate and hone existing taxonomies, thereby providing invaluable resources to language learners.

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