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CAN INFORMAL LEARNING OF ENGLISH FOSTER PRAGMATIC AWARENESS AND PERFORMANCE? Evidence from a short-term longitudinal study at an Italian university

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Abstract - This paper explores whether metapragmatic knowledge and pragmatic skills may be incidentally acquired through informal exposure to English, especially English online multimodal resources. A brief overview is first offered regarding the state of the art on Informal Second Language Learning (ISLL): its goals, findings, knowledge gaps and future perspectives. Next, considerations are made about the relevance of ISLL to the development of pragmatic skills. Next, a report is provided of a small-scale short-term longitudinal analysis conducted at a medium-sized university in Southern Italy of the receptive and productive EFL pragmatic skills of 14 students with high engagement with English media input. The focus is on the ability to produce, and to recognize the appropriateness of, the initiating speech act of offering and the speech act of responding to complaints. The findings mostly show fluctuating, rather than stable or evolving patterns, both in the students' level of awareness of the sociopragmatic adequacy of phone-texted speech acts, as well as their ability to produce sociopragmatically adequate voice or texted phone speech acts. The study is part of an inter-university project ("The Informalisation of English Language Learning Through the Media: Language input, learning outcomes and sociolinguistic attitudes from an Italian perspective") aimed at understanding how young Italians learn and use English in real-life communication practices outside educational contexts.

Keywords: offers; responses to complaints; informal language learning; English; Italian university students.

1. Introduction

Although also noticed in previous decades (e.g. Ellis 1982; Krashen 1976; Palmer 1917), it is recently that informal second language learning (ISLL) has attracted much attention (Dressman and Sadler 2019; Amengual-Pizarro and Alonso Alonso 2024; Pavesi and Ghia 2020; Pavesi and Bianchi 2024). The phenomenon has become widespread and variegated (Pavesi and Ghia 2020, p. 45), given the current easy access to online resources, affordable means of communication across geographic barriers, and inexpensive forms of travel (Dressman 2020, pp. 1, 3; Pavesi and Ghia 2020, p. 28). Indeed, nowadays, ISLL may take place thanks to "digital and live opportunities" (Dressmann 2020, p. 4) like social networks, digital platforms and audiovisual products (Lai and Gu 2011), interactions in forums and online communities (Fini and Cicognini 2009), and fansubbing and videogaming (Cintas and Sánchez 2006).

Whether exposure to and engagement with a second language (SL) leads to learning may depend on language-external variables (e.g. the learner's frequency, duration and type of engagement with the SL; the resources she uses; her proficiency level in, attitude toward, and motivation for using the SL; her alertness to and reflection on communicative practices; her desire and ability to reproduce the SL; see the studies in Pavesi and Bianchi 2024), but also on the language level where learning could occur:

phonetic-phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, discursive-pragmatic. Indeed, in one domain (e.g. phonetic), repeated, attentive exposure to relevant input may be sufficient, while in another (e.g. discursive), repeated, active participation in communication, accompanied by self-monitoring and feedback, may be required.

In this paper, I consider whether ISLL may lead to incidental pragmatic learning, that is, the honing of interactional skills, specifically the activation-development of the ability to rate the phraseological accuracy and strategic appropriateness of initiating and responding speech acts, and also the ability to produce similarly adequate speech acts in speech or writing.

In the rest of the paper, I provide a definition of ISLL (Section 2), review part of the literature on ISLL (Section 3), specify the focus of the study (Section 4), describe its method (Section 5), and present, discuss and draw conclusions from the findings (Sections 6, 7 and 8), respectively.

2. The scope of ISLL

In general, informal learning is unplanned – possibly unconscious or unintentional – learning which emerges from daily life experiences, away from formal settings (Schugurensky 2000). Prototypically, therefore, ISLL refers to non-teacher-led, self-driven and incidental learning of a SL (see Dressman 2020, p. 4; Pavesi and Ghia 2020, p. 40). *Non-teacher-led* means that learning takes place outside institutionalised contexts, and without an instructor's guidance.[1] *Self-driven*, or *self-directed* (Benson 2011; Godwin-Jones 2011; Lai 2017) means that the individual is responsible for what she chooses to do or not do when using the SL, driven by a desire to learn (to do) something. *Incidental* means that activating or enhancing communication skills is a by-product, not a goal, of the activity an individual is engaged in (Schugurensky 2000; Sockett 2014, p. 5; Sok 2014).[2] Within the broad concept of ISLL, fine-grained distinctions can be made,[3] an issue addressed in Pavesi and Ghia (2020, pp. 38-40) and in Amengual-Pizarro and Alonso Alonso (2024, ch. 1).

ISLL differs not only from formal learning, which is structured, classroom-based education that leads to official qualifications and is institutionally recognized, but also from non-formal learning. This is learning that takes place outside traditional institutions (e.g. community programs) and does not usually result in formal certification, but which may include planned, structured and monitored (i.e. not incidental) self-instruction.[4]

[1] Nation (2023, p. vii) calls this *learning in the wild* (or *extra-mural* learning) and also *extra-curricular learning*.

[2] If learning is incidental, then *informal second language acquisition* (e.g. Kuppens 2010) might be a more suitable term than *ISLL*, denoting "the untutored and naturalistic development of an L2 (Pavesi and Ghia 2020, p. 38). However, the distinction between acquisition and learning of languages is blurred, considering the many types of exposure to and engagement with other languages possible today (Dressman 2020, p. 3). Similary, Kusyk *et al.* (2025) use the terms interchangeably, explaining that they denote a dynamic, non-linear developmental process.

[3] For instance, Reinders and Benson (2017) list *out-of-class learning, extra-curricular learning, out-of-school and distance learning, self-directed or naturalistic learning, autonomous learning, independent learning* and *self-instruction.* Kusyk *et al.* (2025) also include *fully autonomous self-instructed learning*, *out-of-school exposure*, *unintentional learning*, *language learning in the wild* and *beyond the classroom*.

[4] Nation (2023, p. vii) calls this *self-directed learning*.

3. Research on ISLL

Recently, reviews, volumes and special issues have appeared, reporting on the major trends in ISLL from complementary perspectives (Dressman and Sadler 2019; Peters and Muñoz 2020; Reynolds and Teng 2021). For instance, Guo and Lee (2023) investigated in 103 studies the factors associated with informal digital learning of English, focusing on individual learner traits (e.g. age, motivation, personality). Lee's (2022) examination of 76 studies on language learning beyond the classroom identified questionnaires as the dominant research tool, often supplemented by interviews and observations. Reynolds (2023) reviewed studies focusing on learning of vocabulary resulting from activities that learners engage in outside formally organised language instruction, taking into consideration the effects of the input provided, the use of technology, and intentional vocabulary learning. Soyoof *et al*.'s (2023) review of 30 studies on ISLL identified three key research foci: linguistic development, digital literacies and agency, and cultural or affective dimensions. Zhang *et al*.'s (2021) analysis of 33 studies showed that the most common extramural English activities were listening to music and playing digital games. They observed that these activities positively influence language development and motivation, but also that additional factors play a role such as the level of engagement, interactivity, linguistic complexity, and learner characteristics like gender.

Similarly, Kusyk *et al*.'s (2025) review of 206 studies outlined the main trends in ISLL research: the exploration of SL development, informal language practices, and learner differences; the prominent use of quantitative methods; the analysis of mostly receptive activities among young adults; a focus on vocabulary, grammar, fluency and accuracy; researchers' selective examination of individual difference variables, that is, frequency of use, motivation, attitudes, and activity diversity; and the report of positive associations between informal language use and L2 development. Also, Amengual-Pizarro and Alonso Alonso (2024) reported that the conditions and factors that favour ISLL include exposure, interaction and active usage, on one hand, and learner variables, such as motivation, investment and affective filter, on the other, indicating that most individuals are involved in receptive activities, but with variation patterns across gender, age and proficiency-level groups.

Overall, the above publications underlined that ISLL is an important complement to formal instruction, which deserves to be explored with varied methodological approaches (e.g. with longitudinal, observational and experimental designs; by examining the role played by peers), across diverse contexts (i.e. across languages and cultures, age groups), and by considering productive-interactional skills and the varied underlying learning processes (implicit, explicit, or incidental) that drive ISLL.

From a complementary perspective, large-scale explorations into ISLL examined the diverse contextual facets of the phenomenon.

Pavesi and Ghia (2020) surveyed 305 graduate students' patterns of non-institutional contact with L2 English across various modalities (i.e. online media, music, written interaction, and face-to-face communication), and especially their access to English-language telecinematic input (e.g. films and TV series), also exploring the motivations behind their preferences. The authors reported that participants engaged in receptive activities more often than in interactive exchanges, and that they were motivated to access English audiovisuals out of language interest and for entertainment value. They also pointed out the typically informal and colloquial nature of the English input accessed, and observed that sustained engagement with English input was more common among higher- than lower-proficiency students. The findings also revealed that participants

perceived benefits of informal input mostly in the areas of vocabulary and listening, and much less in reading, interaction, or grammar.

By applying complementary research methods to varied components and manifestations of ISLL, Pavesi and Bianchi (2024) explored the magnitude, variety and the acquisitional and sociolinguistic impact of engagement with English outside institutional settings among students at four Italian universities.[5] The findings regarding the learners included the following: the reasons for accessing English-language audiovisuals were both intrinsic and extrinsic (Ghia, Mariotti, Manca); the frequency and the length of online activities varied in relation to students' self-assessed level of English, their attitude towards the language and their socio-cultural background (Leone, Paone); engagement patterns and motivations varied as social and family relationships, and learning experiences also varied (Leone, Paone); participants viewed ISLL as relevant to vocabulary knowledge, listening and pronunciation skills, often engaging in reading posts and comments on social media (Manca); and the longitudinal tracing of four students' storytelling skills revealed a complex interplay with the frequency, intensity and type of exposure to informal English input, but also individual factors, such as learners' identity and beliefs (De Riso).

De Riso (2025) explored the informal learning of English at university, analysing sources of input, research methodologies, and case studies within an Italian context, and highlighting the importance of informal settings and media. The large-scale investigation showed that students predominantly accessed audiovisual content; and that they viewed informal learning as useful for vocabulary enrichment and listening comprehension. progress. Overall, the results pointed to increasing diversity in students' exposure to English, with a positive impact on both their linguistic competence and language-related identity, but also underlined the importance of personal factors and the type of input received in the variability in individual language development.

Another meta-analytic study (Webb *et al*. 2023) examined the effectiveness of vocabulary learning gains deriving from meaning-focused input. The analysis of 24 studies revealed that incidental vocabulary learning increased on immediate and delayed tests; that gains were similar for reading and listening; that various variables positively affected vocabulary gains (e.g. higher language proficiency, the use narrative texts and materials designed for SL learners, and the distribution of learning over multiple sessions), but also that the gains coming from incidental learning were lower than those of intentional learning.

The above studies show that out-of-school engagement with English has become pervasive and diversified, that it is viewed as helpful in honing one's language skills, but also that extensive informal contact with English does not necessarily lead to learning, due to the impact of social and contextual factors. On one hand, access to multimodal input resembling natural communication, and the possibility to interact with individuals in other languages may favour the adoption of typical communicative practices (Bley-Vroman 2002; Bybee 2008; Kusyk 2020; Sockett 2014). On the other, the prevailing practice of engaging in receptive activities, and the limited feedback received on one's language use might not necessarily lead to noticing and internalization of language patterns. The question may be posed as to whether frequent exposure to target language may give rise to

[5] This is the inter-university PRIN project "The Informalisation of English Language Learning Through the Media: Language input, learning outcomes and sociolinguistic attitudes from an Italian perspective" (P.I. Maria Pavesi).

incidental pragmatic learning, "in which pragmatic features […] are learned incidentally from naturalistic input and output opportunities" (Taguchi and Roever 2017, p. 191).

The study by Lyrigkou (2023) addressed precisely that issue, by investigating the use of discourse markers (DMs) in the speech of Greek adolescent learners of English over a 5-month period. Using a mixed-method approach, the author aimed to reveal whether different ISLL activities influence the frequency and breadth of DM use. Several findings emerged: students using a higher number of DMs were also those who employed a wider range of DMs; overall higher engagement in ISLL activities did not effect DM use; engaging in leisure-oriented speaking/interacting activities was a predictor of higher DM range; and leisure-oriented TV/film watching with no subtitles/captions positively affected DM frequency; also, limited DM users reported noticing isolated words and expressions, and intentionally learning/using DMs; instead, considerable/moderate DM users reported paying attention to the way speakers generally expressed themselves; productively using the language encountered in ISLL, and perceiving their DM learning as incidental. The author concluded that both noticing and productively processing practices lead to more nuanced and frequent DM use, a form of learning defined as incidental explicit, since it takes place without intention, but encompasses a conscious process.

Other studies have explored incidental pragmatic learning, but in the classroom (e.g. Nikula 2008; Taguchi 2011). One in particular (Del and Nuzzo 2021) examined incidental pragmatic learning in the context of a telecollaboration programme which involved learners of English and American learners of Italian. The study was carried out over a semester on three intermediate-to-advanced learners of English with a focus on the speech acts of criticising and suggesting expressed while providing feedback on their partners' written assignments. The findings revealed that, in their comments on their partners' errors, the three learners progressed in their use of pragmatic strategies relevant to the head acts and the supportive moves, but not in the distribution of internal modifiers and supportive moves.

The studies by Lyrigkou (2023) and Del Bono and Nuzzo (2021) show that exposure to and participation in meaningful productive activities make it possible to notice and/or appropriate target language communicative practices, although not to the same degree for all participants involved.

4. Focus of the study

Research has shown that teaching pragmatic skills is more effective than exposure to the target language (e.g. Bouton 1994; Félix-Brasdefer 2006; Jeon and Kaya 2006), especially if an explicit didactic approach is chosen, namely the provision of metapragmatic rules (Alcón-Soler 2005; Cutrone 2013; Farrokhi and Atashian 2012; Ghobadi and Fahim 2009; Glaser 2016; Gu 2011; Takahashi 2010; Takimoto 2006).[6] On the other hand, Lyrigkou (2023) has shown that pragmatic learning may take place as result of high exposure to and engagement in ISLL involving active, conscious processing of input.

This study explores if extensive experience in ISLL may favour the development of (meta)pragmatic competence relevant to speech acts over time. It focuses on speech acts likely to be represented in multimedia input, in spoken form in films and television series, and in written form on websites and social media platforms: offers, which support the

[6] Occasionally, the implicit and the explicit method are equally successful; e.g. Martínez-Flor and Alcón-Soler 2007).

interlocutor's positive face, and responses to complaints, which may threaten either one's own or the interlocutor's positive face. More specifically, it assesses the ability to recognise speech acts and their strategies in others' discourse, the ability to recognise the role-relationship between interactants involved in a speech act exchange, and the ability to produce effective and appropriate speech acts in speech or writing.

5. Method

5.1. Data collection instruments

The data collection comprised three online pragmatic questionnaires, pre- and post-tests for assessing participants' general level of English, and a log tool designed to record the participants' frequency of exposure to various types of English-language media.

5.1.1. The pragmatic tests

The pragmatic questionnaires, administered through *Google Forms*, served to assess the participants' ability to understand, interpret, and produce appropriate language in social contexts over a six-month period. Except for their conversation transcripts, they were written in Italian so as not to create an extra layer of interpretive difficulty to the respondents. They underwent three revisions after receiving three rounds of feedback from the head researcher of the PRIN research unit I was a member of.[7] Each comprised four sections, combining comprehension and production tasks.

The first two sections gauged receptive-interpretive pragmatic skills relevant to offers and responses to complaints. Each section included: a) a scenario of an everyday situation involving two people, which set the context for their following exchange, in Italian; b) the transcript of their dialogue, namely an open role-play elicited from native speakers, in English;[8] c) multiple-choice questions, in Italian, focusing on the participants' goals, strategies and perceived communicative adequacy; more specifically, these questions targeted: the main speech act performed by the offerer or complainee; the nature of the component moves (strategies) used by both interactants; the appropriateness and effectiveness of the moves; and the nature of the interactants' role-relationship, which could be symmetrical or hierarchical, close or distant; d) open-ended questions, in Italian, about the formulation of the moves, and the motivation for their perceived appropriateness and effectiveness, which required to make reference to specific lines or quotes from the transcripts. The questions were adapted from Ishihara (2010). Examples of the above components a), b), c) and d) are provided below, extracted from Questionnaire 1:

1) Scenario:
   Rebecca è una studentessa-lavoratrice. Fa la cassiera in un cinema al fine settimana. Riceve una telefonata dalla sua amica Mariana, che ha un bambino di 4 mesi. Ecco cosa si dicono:[9]

2) Dialogue:

[7] The three questionnaires are available from the author upon request.

[8] The role-plays were not conducted specifically for this study; rather, they were collected years earlier from US university students in exchange for a small payment.

[9] Translation: Rebecca is a working student. She works as a cashier in a cinema on weekends. She receives a phone call from her friend Mariana, who has a 4-month-old baby. Here is what they say to each other.

01. REBECCA: Hello?
02. MARIANA: Hi Rebecca, it's Mariana.
03. REBECCA: Hi, how are you?
04. MARIANA: I'm fine, yeah, I've got some really good news.
05. REBECCA: Yeah?
06. MARIANA: Um, I've got a job interview next week… it's a…it's just at the shop down at the road but…you know that would be perfect because then I could just work there part time, hope…hopefully anyway…
07. REBECCA: That's great!
08. MARIANA: Yeah! I dunno, I'm a bit nervous about it, but er…yeah.
09. REBECCA: Um, do you…want me to babysit your…son, while you go for your interview?
10. MARIANA: But…oh, well…t-that would be amazing, yeah because obviously otherwise I'll have to find somebody else to do it…
11. REBECCA: Yeah, that's…I'm free and it'll work out.
12. MARIANA: Yeah, ok so…well so the job interview is Monday…
13. REBECCA: Ok
14. MARIANA: at 11 o'clock…
15. REBECCA: Ok
16. MARIANA: So maybe, could you come over about half past ten, something like that?
17. REBECCA: Yeah. That, that's…that works.
18. MARIANA: Oh brilliant, no that's perfect, I don't think I'll be away for more than an hour, so…you could stay for lunch afterwards if you like, yeah.
19. REBECCA: Ok.
20. MARIANA: Cool, thank you so much!
21. REBECCA: No problem.
22. MARIANA: All right, I'll see you, see you Monday, then.
23. REBECCA: Yeah.
24. MARIANA: Brilliant. Thank you.

3) Multiple-choice questions:

- Secondo te, quale tra le seguenti azioni-intenzioni è quella principale che ha in mente di svolgere Rebecca? Fare-esprimere … un complimento, un ringraziamento, un'offerta, un invito, un suggerimento, un consiglio, una raccomandazione, una richiesta, una scusa, una lamentela, Altro. Se hai scelto "Altro" specificalo.
- In che turno del dialogo Rebecca esprime in modo chiaro, per la prima o unica volta, l'azione-intenzione che hai individuato?[10]

[10] Translation: •In your opinion, which of the following action–intentions is the main one Rebecca has in mind to perform? To make/express … a compliment, an expression of thanks, an offer, an invitation, a suggestion, a piece of advice, a recommendation, a request, an apology, a complaint, Other. If you chose "Other," specify it. •In which turn of the dialogue does Rebecca clearly express, for the first or only time, the action–intention you identified?

4) Open-ended questions:

- Con quali parole precisamente [Mariana indica il motivo della sua reazione]? L'intero turno, Una parte del turno. Se hai scelto "Una parte del turno", specificala.
- Ti sembrano appropriati i saluti, gli appellativi, i convenevoli dell'apertura (turni 1-4) e della chiusura (turni 20-24) del dialogo? Sì, No, In parte. Se hai risposto "No" o "In parte", cosa te lo fa pensare?[11]

The third and fourth sections of the questionnaires were designed to assess productive pragmatic abilities. The third included three Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) for eliciting offers, and the fourth included three DCTs for eliciting responses to complaints, each comprising a hypothetical phone text message. From each set, each participant had to select and respond to one DCT, imagining to be its intended recipient. Their responses could be in the form of a recorded voice message or a written message to be sent via *WhatsApp* to a phone number.

Both sections comprised multiple-choice questions inviting participants to evaluate their message's tone, purpose and clarity, to indicate how satisfied they were with their response, and to specify their relationship with the recipient. A final, open-ended question invited participants to explain why they chose to send either a written or spoken message in response to the prompt. Here are a sample prompt and sample questions from Questionnaire 1:

5) Prompt

- Un(a) tuo/a amico/a non italiano/a, ma temporaneamente in Italia, ti scrive sul telefono: "Guess what. I've got the flu. Lying in bed, feeling miserable. My nose is clogged up. Even swallowing hurts." Vuoi accertarti se puoi fare qualcosa per lui/lei come la spesa, cucinargli/le qualcosa, andare a prendere delle medicine in farmacia.[12]

6) Questions

- Come descriveresti il rapporto c'è tra te e la persona a cui lasci il messaggio vocale? Paritario, simmetrico; Gerarchico, asimmetrico: il tuo interlocutore ha uno status/ruolo superiore; Gerarchico, asimmetrico: tu hai ha uno status/ruolo superiore.
- Su una scala da 1 (per niente) a 10 (del tutto) quanto sei soddisfatto del tuo messaggio?
- Motiva la tua auto-valutazione.[13]

The questionnaires were administered online, approximately two months apart from each other, under the remote supervision of a research assistant. The participants, individually or in small groups, arranged a convenient time to meet with the research assistant on *Microsoft Teams*. Shortly before entering the virtual meeting room, they received an email

[11] Translation: •With which exact words [does Mariana indicate the reason for her reaction]? The entire turn/A part of the turn. If you chose "A part of the turn," specify it. •Do the greetings, forms of address, and polite expressions in the opening (turns 1-4) and closing (turns 20-24) of the dialogue seem appropriate to you? Yes/No/Partly. If you answered "No" or "Partly," what makes you think so?

[12] Translation of the Italian parts: A non-Italian friend of yours, temporarily in Italy, writes to you on the phone: […] You want to check if you can do something for him/her, such as doing the grocery shopping, cooking something, or going to the pharmacy to get some medicine.

[13] Translation: •How would you describe the relationship between you and the person to whom you are leaving the voicemail? Equal, symmetrical; Hierarchical, asymmetrical: your interlocutor has a higher status/role; Hierarchical, asymmetrical: you have a higher status/role. •On a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (completely), how satisfied are you with your message? •Explain the reasons for your self-assessment.

message containing a *pdf* file containing the scenarios and dialogue transcripts they had to answer questions about, and a link to the questionnaire itself. The email also invited participants to print the *pdf* file for improved readability.

5.1.2. Answer sheets and assessment grids

To examine the data relevant to the first and second sections of each questionnaire, which were about receptive pragmatic skills, I prepared answer sheets against which to compare the participants' answers. Instead, to examine the data collected in the third and fourth sections of each questionnaire, I prepared a grid relevant to offers (based on Gesuato 2015; 2021), and one relevant to responses to complaints (based on Edmondson and House 1981; Eslami-Rasekh 2004; Laforest 2009; Ogden 2010), which listed the possible strategies (i.e. framing moves and illocution-specific moves) making up these speech acts. I tested initial versions of the grids on a subset of the data (i.e. five offers and five responses to complaints), and slightly adapted them to better fit the written and asynchronous nature of the texts to be examined.[14]

The assessment grid for offers comprised five macro-strategies, each including sub-strategies.

Opening the interaction is the initial communication-framing strategy, which may comprise an-addressee appropriate *Alerter* like a greeting, address term, attention-getter (*Hi family!*; *Hey uncle John*) and/or a brief *Small talk* remark on a safe topic (*It sounds like you had a great day*).[15] *Closing the interaction* is the final move, which may involve referring to one's own or the interlocutor's *Next steps* (*I'm going to the store*; *Let me know*) and/or performing one's *Leave-taking* (*See you later!*; *See you tomorrow*).

Raising the issue consists in *Introducing the topic* the offer will be relevant to, by mentioning or inquiring about it (*The documentary on AI sounds interesting*). It may also involve signalling a relevant *Pre-condition* for the offer such as a need to be met, a goal to pursue, or the absence of obstacles (*I could do all that you need*; *but fortunately we are friends and I really like training*; *anyway, I'm free today*).

Addressing the issue includes expressing the *Head act* (*I would like to invite you to come with me tomorrow morning for doing a mindful execution in the woods*.; *how about i catch up with you and we try a new cake recipe?*) and/or engaging in an immediate (partial) *Provision of a good/service* (*I think you can fix your posture by doing just two exercises: 1. Pull ups* […] *Rows* […]).

Negotiating with incentives refers to providing reasons that increase the likelihood the offer will be accepted, and the exchange will be successfully closed. These reasons include: stating the *Goodness of the offered item* (*they are all very easy to make*); signalling the *Feasibility of the intended provision* (*I'm alone at home*; *I have some easy recipes that will worth*); assuring that there are *No constraints* on providing the offer (*Last semester I had good grades in English*); assuring that *No negative consequences* will result (*it will not disappoint your parents*); highlighting likely *Positive consequences* of accepting (*so as soon as you come back you can eat*); pointing out *Shared interests and goals* with the addressee (*You know that i'm really into pastry and stuff like that*); illustrating *Contextual terms or details* of the offered service (*and tomorrow I'll come to your house to taste the final result*; *Moreover, I could be on video-call with you, while you make it.*); and/or making an *Additional or alternative offer* (*and if you too sick to get out of the bed, I could even cook something for you*).

[14] The grids are available from the author upon request.

[15] These and the following examples come from my dataset. Original mistakes are preserved, as are the occasional emoticons and emojis.

Harmony-building positive facework can take various forms: *Reassuring* (*Don't be afraid*), expressing a *Good wish* (*Hope your work will be amazing*), expressing *Gratitude* (*It could be a good way to thank you*), paying a *Compliment* (*you look like a very interesting person :)*), expressing playful *Laughter* (*Ahaha*), expressing *Sympathy or understanding* (*I'm sorry for you*), or expressing playful *Banter or irony* (*we are optimistic today uh?*).

The residual category *Other* comprises strategies that do not fit any of the above categories, namely expressing *Surprise* (*Oh no!*), *Giving advice or making a suggestion* (*Not let the flu to take your happiness away*) and expressing an *Evaluation* (*but I don't think it is nice to buy a cake*).

The assessment grid for complaint responses includes nine macro-strategies. Some overlap with the those used for offers, though their sub-strategies do not always coincide.

Opening the interaction may be realised through an addressee-appropriate *Alerter* and/or a brief amount of *Small talk* on a safe topic. *Closing the interaction* includes mentioning the *Next steps*, performing *Leave-taking* and/or *Signing off*.

Harmony-building positive facework includes these sub-strategies: *Reassuring*, expressing a *Good wish*, expressing *Gratitude*, paying a *Compliment*, expressing *Sympathy or understanding*, signalling *Shared views* (*Also, I think that using "availability" is not quite right either*), and *Maintaining a good* (long-term) *relationship or showing conviviality* (*I hope we would be still friends in the future*; *By the way, you are free the Saint Patrick's day? I want to offer you a beer for the trouble that Lino causes to you*).

Ratifying the issue consists in acknowledging the damage caused as such. It can be achieved by: *Confirming the issue* by explicitly naming the problem (*the kitchen and the counter was messed up*); expressing the *Emotional impact* deriving from the issue (*I'm really astonished knowing the behaviour of my dog*); *Claiming ignorance* or expressing *Lack of intent* (*I didn't even noticed it*) or providing *Clarifying details* (*because my agenda was full and i struggled to balance all the planned work*).

Addressing the issue includes: performing the *Head act* by expressing regret or apologising (*I'm so sorry about that*), *Justifying the other's perspective* (*You are totally right we should avoid this kinda thing*), or *Repeating the apology* (*I say you sorry again…*).

Motivation concerns justifying one's behaviour to the addressee. Its sub-strategies are: offering *Extenuating circumstances* (*It genuinely was a slip*), mentioning *Problems* encountered (*I think the alarm clock didn't work this morning*), reporting a *Failed attempt at prevention* of the damage (*I double-checked all the details when I made the booking and received a confirmation from the hotel*), or expressing a *Negative consequence* suffered (*so I wake up very late*).

Assuming responsibility involves acknowledging one's role in causing the damage by admitting self-deficiency, failure to act or improper conduct (*It's my fault*; *I was very tired too and didn't have much time*).

Negotiating by balancing debts and credits can occur through: *Offering a remedy or compensation* (*I promise I will do everything necessary to fix it up*), *Promising better conduct* in the future (*I'll make sure that it stays in the garden and put it on leash when I leave the house*) or suggesting *an Exchange of views* (*We can meet tomorrow to discuss about that if you want*).

5.1.3. Data tabulation and analysis

All responses from the three questionnaires were downloaded into *Excel* files (two per questionnaire; total: six files). For each questionnaire, one file contained the data from the first and second sections, and the other contained the data from the third and fourth

sections. Each file contained two worksheets: one for offers and one for responses to complaints.

The answers to the multiple-choice and open-ended questions in the first and second sections of the questionnaire (receptive skills sections), were organised so that each row showed all the answers from a single participant, while every column showed all participants' responses to the same question. The answers were checked against the pre-prepared answer sheets. Each correct answer was replaced with the value 1, allowing totals to be computed both by row and by column. However, for each participant, correct answers were not aggregated into an overall score. Rather, for each speech act, they were subdivided into: identification of the illocution (1 item); identification of the functions performed by speakers across turns (17-32 items); and interpretation of overall communicative effectiveness and appropriateness (7-10 items).

The answers to the multiple-choice questions in the third and fourth sections (about participants' understanding of the situational variables characterising the scenarios) were organised by using the same row-by-participant and column-by-item structure.

On the other hand, the speech acts produced via *WhatsApp* as audio messages were first transcribed and saved as *Word* files, and those produced as text messages directly saved as *Word* files. All production data were then imported into *Excel*, one file per questionnaire, each containing a worksheet for offers and one for responses to complaints. In each worksheet, every row showed the participant's ID number, the eliciting scenario, and, in subsequent columns, the participant's answers to the scenario interpretation questions (3 items per scenario), and columns corresponding to all the macro- and sub-strategies outlined in Section 5.1.2.

For each participant, I inserted a 1 into the cells corresponding to correct answers to the multiple-choice questions. Similarly, when a speech act instantiated one of the sub-strategies listed in Section 5.1.2, I entered a 1 in the relevant column, indicating the presence of that micro-strategy. With this system, totals were calculated both across rows (as relevant to a participant) and down columns (as relevant to an item).

5.1.4 The general English test

The *Oxford Placement Test* was chosen to externally assess the participants' English proficiency immediately before and after the study. This is an adaptive online test that measures students' knowledge of grammatical form and vocabulary alongside their general listening ability. It was administered in its mixed UK-US format.

5.1.5 The log tool

An online *Google Form* helped the participants keep track of their media engagement activities. The form asked them to specify for how long, in number of hours, they had engaged in the following practices in English during the previous week:

1) Watching movies, TV series, and other programs (talk shows, stand-up comedy, etc.)
2) Watching videos on *YouTube*
3) Playing video games (online/offline)
4) Listening to podcasts, radio, audiobooks
5) Watching posts and videos on social networks (*Instagram*, *TikTok*, *Telegram*, etc.)
6) Reading forums, blogs, or doing research on the web (*Reddit*, *Twitch*, *Wikipedia*, recipes, travel, etc.)
7) Listening to music

8) Reading narrative texts (novels, comics, manga, etc.)
9) Writing emails, fan fiction, social media posts, etc.
10) Speaking/conversing orally (online or in person)
11) Attending English lessons at university, private school, or with a private tutor
12) Doing homework for English lessons at university, private school, or with a private tutor.

In their answers, participants selected a value from 0 to 10. A response of 0 meant 'Not at all'; 1 indicated 'One hour or less'; 2 meant 'Between 1 to 2 hours', and so on, up to 10, which indicated '10 hours or more'.

5.2. Participants

The participants were selected from those that were involved in the inter-university project mentioned in Section 3. Of the 979 students that completed a questionnaire on their ISLL habits and took an accompanying lexical test, about 100 stated that they were willing to participate in further activities related to the project. Within this group, those that had declared both that they were native speakers of Italian and that they had a high level of both active and passive engagement with the media received an email inviting them to participate in the study reported here. Only 14 took part in it, completing all the required activities. They included 9 women and 5 men, within the age range of 19-27 (average age: 20.3), who were attending an undergraduate (11) or graduate (3) degree course. These comprised: Audiovisual production systems (1), Biology (1), Computing (1), Economics (3), Foreign languages (3), Performing arts (1), Political science (1) and Psychology (2). Their self-declared English proficiency levels were: intermediate (1), intermediate-advanced (7), and advanced (5).

6. Findings

6.1. Receptive skills

The participants' receptive skills were tested in four domains: identification of the illocution, identification of micro-functions across turns, interpretation of the speakers' communicative effectiveness and appropriateness, and understanding of the situational variables characterising the scenarios.

6.1.1. Identification of the illocution

To assess participants' receptive pragmatic skills, I analysed their ability to identify illocutionary acts in dialogue transcripts of offering exchanges (Table 1) and responding-to-complaints exchanges (Table 2), whether by selecting the correct multiple-choice answer or by providing a conceptually equivalent personally worded response. Most participants (9 out of 14) correctly identified illocutions in all offering exchanges, while only one did so for the responding-to-complaints exchanges. Most errors occurred with regard to the responding-to-complaints transcript used in the second data collection session. A close examination of it revealed that it lacked an explicit head act expressing regret or an apology, although it included congruent supportive moves. In particular, the macro-strategy *Negotiating by balancing debts and credits*, realised through the sub-

strategy of *Offering a remedy or compensation*, was often mistakenly re-interpreted as a requestive illocution.

Student ID	Correct identification of offering illocution						Total
	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		Questionnaire 3		
	Ready-made answer	Personally worded answer	Ready-made answer	Personally worded answer	Ready-made answer	Personally worded answer	
A	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
B	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
C	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
D	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
E	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
F	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
G	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
H	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
I	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
J	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
K	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
L	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
M	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
N	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	11	2	11	1	10	1	36/42 (85.7%)

Table 1
Correct identifications of offering illocutions.

Student ID	Correct identification of response to complaint illocution						Total
	Questionnaire 1		Questionnaire 2		Questionnaire 3		
	Ready-made answer	Personally worded answer	Ready-made answer	Personally worded answer	Ready-made answer	Personally worded answer	
A	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
B	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
C	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
D	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
E	1	0	0	0	0	1	2
F	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
G	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
H	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
I	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
J	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
K	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
L	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
M	1	0	1	0	1	0	3
N	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Total	12	0	1	0	11	2	26/42 (61.9%)

Table 2
Correct identifications of responding-to-complaints illocutions.

6.1.2. Identification of micro-functions across turns

Many questionnaire items were designed to assess whether the participants recognised the presence and wording of the framing moves and the supportive moves in specific dialogue turns. On average, correct answers were provided about half of the time, with slightly higher rates for the offering exchanges (Table 3) than for the responding-to-complaints exchanges (Table 4). For the offering exchanges, the rate of correct answers ranged from 22.3% to 50.7%, and for half of the participants from 41.7% to 50.7%. For responding-to-

complaint exchanges, correct answers ranged from 21.8% to 70.1%, with nine participants scoring between 44.8% to 51.7%.

Student ID	Offering illocution			Total (67 items)
	Questionnaire 1 (18 items)	Questionnaire 2 (32 items)	Questionnaire 3 (17 items)	
A	10 (55.5%)	14 (43.7%)	7 (41.1%)	31 (46.2%)
B	12 (66.6%)	7 (21.8%)	3 (17.6%)	22 (32.8%)
C	14 (77.7%)	10 (31.2%)	10 (58.8%)	34 (50.7%)
D	11 (61.1%)	9 (28.1%)	8 (47.0%)	28 (41.7%)
E	9 (50.0%)	9 (28.1%)	6 (35.2%)	24 (35.8%)
F	9 (50.0%)	9 (28.1%)	6 (35.2%)	24 (35.8%)
G	13 (72.2%)	10 (31.2%)	7 (41.1%)	30 (44.7%)
H	8 (44.4%)	10 (31.2%)	6 (35.2%)	24 (35.8%)
I	15 (83.3%)	9 (28.1%)	6 (35.2%)	30 (44.7%)
J	10 (55.5%)	13 (40.6%)	6 (35.2%)	29 (43.2%)
K	8 (44.4%)	9 (28.1%)	6 (35.2%)	23 (34.3%)
L	7 (38.8%)	8 (25.0%)	0 (0.0%)	15 (22.3%)
M	13 (72.2%)	12 (37.5%)	7 (41.1%)	32 (47.7%)
N	8 (44.4%)	12 (37.5%)	2 (11.7%)	22 (32.8%)
Total	147/252 (58.3%)	141/448 (31.4%)	80/238 (33.6%)	526/938 (56.0%)

Table 3
Correct identification (of the phrasing) of framing and supportive moves in dialogue turns of offering exchanges.

Student ID	Responding-to-complaints illocution			Total (87 items)
	Questionnaire 1 (39 items)	Questionnaire 2 (21 items)	Questionnaire 3 (27 items)	
A	20 (51.2%)	9 (42.8%)	12 (44.4%)	41 (47.1%)
B	18 (46.1%)	9 (42.8%)	14 (51.8%)	41 (47.1%)
C	27 (69.2%)	14 (66.6%)	20 (74.0%)	61 (70.1%)
D	20 (51.2%)	7 (33.3%)	19 (70.0%)	45 (51.7%)
E	19 (48.7%)	7 (33.3%)	13 (48.1%)	39 (44.8%)
F	18 (46.1%)	9 (42.8%)	16 (39.2%)	43 (49.4%)
G	16 (41.0%)	6 (28.5%)	17 (62.9%)	39 (44.8%)
H	18 (46.1%)	13 (61.9%)	22 (81.4%)	53 (60.9%)
I	20 (51.2%)	12 (57.1%)	14 (51.8%)	46 (52.8%)
J	21 (53.8%)	8 (30.0%)	14 (51.8%)	43 (49.4%)
K	5 (12.8%)	7 (33.3%)	7 (25.9%)	19 (21.8%)
L	13 (33.3%)	7 (33.3%)	11 (40.7%)	31 (36.6%)
M	20 (51.2%)	7 (33.3%)	15 (55.5%)	42 (46.2%)
N	21 (53.8%)	7 (33.3%)	14 (51.8%)	42 (46.2%)
TOTALE	256/546 (46.8%)	122/294 (41.4%)	208/378 (55.0%)	586/1,218 (48.1%)

Table 4
Correct identification (of the phrasing) of framing and supportive moves in dialogue turns of responding-to complaints exchanges.

For the offering exchanges, the participants provided the highest number of correct answers in the first questionnaire, while nine participants registered the lowest score in the second questionnaire. This suggests that the second and third dialogue transcripts were more challenging than the first. Both represented asymmetrical role-relationships (in Questionnaire 2, the offer came from a subordinate, and in Questionnaire 3, from a superior), which the participants might have been less familiar with. Also, Questionnaire 2 contained a much higher number of items, potentially contributing to respondent fatigue. For the responding-to-complaints illocution, most participants obtained their lowest scores in the second questionnaire, the one lacking an explicit head act.

6.1.3. Interpretation of the speakers' overall communicative effectiveness and appropriateness

Another indicator of the participants' receptive pragmatic skills was their assessment of the dialogue characters' communicative adequacy. The rates of correct responses are reported in Tables 5 and 6.

Student ID	Offering illocution			Total (21 items)
	Questionnaire 1 (7 items)	Questionnaire 2 (7 items)	Questionnaire 3 (7 items)	
A	3 (42.8%)	6 (85.7%)	6 (85.7%)	15 (71.4%)
B	1 (14.2%)	2 (28.5%)	2 (28.5%)	5 (23.8%)
C	4 (57.1%)	6 (85.7%)	6 (85.7%)	16 (76.1%)
D	6 (85.7%)	2 (28.5%)	4 (57.1%)	12 (57.1%)
E	5 (71.4%)	3 (42.8%)	4 (57.1%)	12 (57.1%)
F	4 (57.1%)	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.5%)	11 (52.3%)
G	1 (14.2%)	5 (71.4%)	3 (42.8%)	9 (42.8%)
H	5 (71.4%)	6 (85.7%)	7 (100%)	18 (85.7%)
I	1 (14.2%)	3 (42.8%)	4 (57.1%)	8 (38.0%)
J	1 (14.2%)	3 (42.8%)	4 (57.1%)	8 (38.0%)
K	1 (14.2%)	5 (71.4%)	4 (57.1%)	10 (47.6%)
L	4 (57.1%)	4 (57.1%)	4 (57.1%)	12 (57.1%)
M	2 (28.5%)	3 (42.8%)	2 (28.5%)	7 (33.3%)
N	2 (28.5%)	4 (57.1%)	4 (57.1%)	10 (47.6%)
TOTAL	40/98 (40.8%)	57/98 (58.1%)	56/98 (57.1%)	153/294 (52.0%)

Table 5
Correct assessment of the dialogue characters' communicative adequacy in offering exchanges.

Student ID	Responding-to-complaints illocution			Total (26 items)
	Questionnaire 1 (8 items)	Questionnaire 2 (8 items)	Questionnaire 3 (10 items)	
A	3 (37.5%)	6 (75.0%)	7 (70.0%)	16 (61.5%)
B	5 (62.5%)	4 (50.0%)	4 (40.0%)	13 (50.0%)
C	4 (50.0%)	8 (100%)	7 (70.0%)	19 (73.0%)
D	4 (50.0%)	3 (37.5%)	6 (60.0%)	13 (50.0%)
E	2 (25.0%)	3 (37.5%)	7 (70.0%)	12 (46.1%)
F	4 (50.0%)	4 (50.0%)	7 (70.0%)	15 (57.6%)
G	5 (62.5%)	4 (50.0%)	8 (80.0%)	17 (65.3%)
H	5 (62.5%)	6 (75.0%)	7 (70.0%)	18 (69.2%)
I	5 (62.5%)	3 (50.0%)	7 (70.0%)	15 (57.6%)
J	3 (37.5%)	4 (50.0%)	5 (50.0%)	12 (46.1%)
K	4 (50.0%)	3 (37.5%)	4 (40.0%)	11 (42.3%)
L	7 (87.5%)	5 (62.5%)	6 (60.0%)	18 (69.2%)
M	2 (25.0%)	5 (62.5%)	6 (60.0%)	13 (50.0%)
N	6 (75.0%)	4 (50.0%)	5 (50.0%)	15 (57.6%)
Total	59/112 (52.6%)	62/112 (55.3%)	86/140 (61.4%)	207/364 (56.8%)

Table 6
Correct assessment of the dialogue characters' communicative adequacy in responding-to-complaints exchanges.

On average, correct answers slightly exceeded 50% for both the offering exchanges (Table 5) and the responding-to-complaints exchanges (Table 6). In the former case, eight participants recorded their lowest scores in the first questionnaire. In the latter case, six participants achieved their highest scores in the third questionnaire.

6.1.4. Understanding of the situational variables of the scenarios

In the third and fourth sections of the questionnaires, the participants were not only asked to produce offers and responses to complaints, but also to show their understanding of the situational variables relevant to the scenarios (i.e. the degree of (a)symmetry between interlocutors, their level of familiarity, and the face-sustaining value of the intended illocution). Tables 7 and 8 present the rates of correct responses.

Student ID	Offering illocution			Total (9 items)
	Questionnaire 1 (3 items)	Questionnaire 2 (3 items)	Questionnaire 3 (3 items)	
A	2	2	2	6 (66.6%)
B	3	3	2	8 (88.8%)
C	3	2	1	6 (66.6%)
D	3	2	2	7 (77.7%)
E	3	2	2	7 (77.7%)
F	2	1	1	4 (44.4%)
G	1	1	2	4 (44.4%)
H	3	1	2	5 (55.5%)
I	2	2	2	6 (66.6%)
J	3	2	1	6 (66.6%)
K	2	2	2	6 (66.6%)
L	2	2	2	6 (66.6%)
M	3	2	2	7 (77.7%)
N	2	2	1	5 (55.5%)
Total	34/42 (80.9%)	26/42 (61.9%)	24/42 (57.1%)	84/126 (66.6%)

Table 7
Correct assessment of contextual variables relevant to the chosen scenarios for offering exchanges.

	Responding-to-complaints illocution			
Student ID	Questionnaire 1 (3 items)	Questionnaire 2 (3 items)	Questionnaire 3 (3 items)	Total (9 items)
A	1	2	1	4 (44.4%)
B	1	1	2	4 (44.4%)
C	2	2	2	6 (66.6%)
D	2	3	2	7 (77.7%)
E	2	3	3	8 (88.8%)
F	3	3	1	7 (77.7%)
G	1	3	1	5 (55.5%)
H	1	3	3	7 (77.7%)
I	1	2	3	6 (66.6%)
J	1	2	2	5 (55.5%)
K	3	2	1	6 (66.6%)
L	3	1	2	6 (66.6%)
M	2	2	2	6 (66.6%)
N	0	3	2	5 (55.5%)
TOTAL	23/42 (54.7%)	32/42 (76.1%)	27/42 (64.2%)	92/126 (73.0%)

Table 8
Correct assessment of contextual variables relevant to the chosen scenarios for responding-to-complaints exchanges.

For both the offering and the responses-to-complaints scenarios, most participants (12 out of 14) answered correctly more than half of the time. However, in both cases, only four participants achieved correct-answer rates above 70%.

6.1.5. Global patterns across participants

Table 9 summarises the findings reported in Tables 1 to 8. It shows the number and percentage of correct answers provided by the participants for each receptive task, as well as overall. Three participants (A, K and L) received global scores below 60%, four participants (H, I, M and N) scored above 70%, and only one participant (C) achieved a very high score. Only two participants scored above 60% in at least five tasks. The scores ranging from 60.6% to 76.2% exhibited the greatest dispersion, applying to nine participants. The hierarchy of the participants' overall scores, in decreasing order, is C > H > N > D > I > M > G > F + J > E > B > L > A > K.

Since the participants' performance in the receptive tasks was measured in three phases, several temporal trends could, theoretically, be observed, including: stable (the

same score across the three phases); ascending (an initial score followed by a higher score and then an even higher one); descending (an initial score followed by a lower one and then an even lower one); ascending-descending (an initial score followed by a higher one and then by a lower one); descending-ascending (an initial score followed by a lower score and then by a higher one); and other trends.

Student ID	Correct answers in receptive tasks								Total (160 items)
	Table 1 (3 items)	Table 2 (3 items)	Table 3 (67 items)	Table 4 (87 items)	Table 5 (21 items)	Table 6 (26 items)	Table 7 (9 items)	Table (8 items)	
A	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.6%)	31 (46.2%)	41 (47.1%)	15 (71.4%)	16 (61.5%)	6 (66.6%)	4 (44.4%)	86 (53.7%)
B	2 (66.6%)	2 (66.6%)	22 (32.8%)	41 (47.1%)	5 (23.8%)	13 (50.0%)	8 (88.8%)	4 (44.4%)	97 (60.6%)
C	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	34 (50.7%)	61 (70.1%)	16 (76.1%)	19 (73.0%)	6 (66.6%)	6 (66.6%)	147 (91.8%)
D	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	28 (41.7%)	45 (51.7%)	12 (57.1%)	13 (50.0%)	7 (77.7%)	7 (77.7%)	117 (73.1%)
E	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	24 (35.8%)	39 (44.8%)	12 (57.1%)	12 (46.1%)	7 (77.7%)	8 (88.8%)	107 (66.8%)
F	3 (100%)	1 (33.3%)	24 (35.8%)	43 (49.4%)	11 (52.3%)	15 (57.6%)	4 (44.4%)	7 (77.7%)	108 (67.5%)
G	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	30 (44.7%)	39 (44.8%)	9 (42.8%)	17 (65.3%)	4 (44.4%)	5 (55.5%)	109 (68.1%)
H	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	24 (35.8%)	53 (60.9%)	18 (85.7%)	18 (69.2%)	5 (55.5%)	7 (77.7%)	130 (81.2%)
I	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	30 (44.7%)	46 (52.8%)	8 (38.0%)	15 (57.6%)	6 (66.6%)	6 (66.6%)	116 (72.5%)
J	3 (100%)	2 (66.6%)	29 (43.2%)	43 (49.4%)	8 (38.0%)	12 (46.1%)	6 (66.6%)	5 (55.5%)	108 (67.5%)
K	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	23 (34.3%)	19 (21.8%)	10 (47.6%)	11 (42.3%)	6 (66.6%)	6 (66.6%)	78 (48.7%)
L	2 (66.6%)	1 (33.3%)	15 (22.3%)	31 (36.6%)	12 (57.1%)	18 (69.2%)	6 (66.6%)	6 (66.6%)	91 (56.8%)
M	3 (100%)	3 (100%)	32 (47.7%)	42 (46.2%)	7 (33.3%)	13 (50.0%)	7 (77.7%)	6 (66.6%)	113 (70.6%)
N	1 (33.3%)	2 (66.6%)	22 (32.8%)	42 (46.2%)	10 (47.6%)	15 (57.6%)	5 (55.5%)	5 (55.5%)	122 (76.2%)

Table 9
Correct answers in receptive pragmatic tasks across participants.
(Note: The figures in the even-numbered columns are relevant to the offering illocution; those in the odd-numbered column to the responding-to-complaints illocution.)

To code such chronological patterns, I use the labels *Start*, *Level*, *Down* and *Up*, combined in sequences of three to record trajectories, that is, relative scores. *Start* always appears first, and marks the score for a given perceptive task in Questionnaire 1, without indicating whether it was high, low or mid-level. The second label indicates whether the score for the same perceptive task in Questionnaire 2 was the same (*Level*), higher (*Up*) or lower (*Down*) than in Questionnaire 1. The third label indicates whether the score in Questionnaire 3 was the same (*Level*), higher (*Up*) or lower (*Down*) than the one in Questionnaire 2. For example, *Start-Down-Up* indicates that the second score was lower than the first, and that the third was higher than the second; *Start-Up-Up* indicates that each subsequent score increased; and *Start-Level-Down* indicates that the second score was the same as the first, and the third was lower than the second, and consequently lower than the first. These three-label sequences capture trajectories of change, without representing actual measurements.

Table 10 shows the chronological score patterns observed across the three questionnaires for all participants, separated by task type as reported in Tables 1 to 8. Overall, the participants exhibited fluctuating trends, with only three (D, E and G) displaying the *Start-Down-Up* pattern in at least half of their tasks.

Student ID	Table 1	Table 2	Table 3	Table 4	Table 5	Table 6	Table 7	Table 8
A	SDL	SDU	SDD	SDU	SUL	SUD	SLL	SUD
B	SLD	SDU	SDD	SDU	SUL	SDD	SLD	SLU
C	SLL	SDU	SDU	SDU	SUL	SUD	SDD	SLL
D	SLL	SDU	SDU	SDU	SDU	SDU	SDL	SUD
E	SLL	SDU	SDU	SDU	SDU	SUU	SDL	SUL
F	SLL	SDU	SDU	SDD	SUD	SLU	SDL	SLD
G	SLL	SDU	SDU	SDU	SUD	SDU	SLU	SUD
H	SLL	SDU	SDU	SUU	SUU	SUD	SDU	SUL
I	SLL	SDU	SDU	SUD	SUU	SDU	SLL	SUU
J	SLL	SDU	SDU	SDU	SUU	SUL	SDD	SUL
K	SUL	SLU	SDU	SUD	SUD	SDU	SLL	SDD
L	SDU	SDL	SDD	SLU	SLL	SDD	SLL	SDU
M	SLL	SLL	SDU	SDU	SUD	SUD	SDL	SLL
N	SLD	SDU	SDD	SDU	SUL	SDL	SLD	SUD

Table 10
Chronological trends in receptive tasks.
(Note: *S* stands for 'Start', *L* for 'Level', *D* for 'Down' and *U* for 'Up')

6.2. Productive skills

The participants' productive skills were assessed in two domains: managing the relationship with the addressee (i.e. using framing and facework strategies), and achieving one's communicative goal (i.e. producing an offer or a non-antagonising response to a complaint).

6.2.1. Offering strategies

Table 11 (see Annexes) reports the frequency values, dispersion values, and temporal trends in the use of strategies employed to manage the interaction with the addressee in the text messages expressing offers. The *Opening the interaction* and *Closing the interaction* strategies display similar overall frequencies (34 and 32 occurrences, respectively). *Harmony-building positive facework* strategies are more prevalent, with 45 instances in total.

Within each macro-strategy, a contrast emerges between concentration and dispersion. For *Opening the interaction*, the predominant sub-strategy is *Alerter* (31 occurrences), indicating participants' preference for a minimal, formulaic opening. In the *Closing the interaction* strategy, however, the frequencies of *Next steps* and *Leave-taking* are more evenly distributed (15 vs. 17 occurrences, respectively). Within *Harmony-building positive facework*, only *Reassuring* (18 occurrences) and *expressing Sympathy or understanding* (14 occurrences) show notable frequency, while all remaining sub-strategies appear only sporadically.

Only three sub-strategies display consistent presence across the three questionnaires: *Alerter* (showing a slight upward trend over time), *Leave-taking*, and *Next steps*. Within the *Harmony-building positive facework* macro-strategy, *Reassuring* shows a mild increase, especially in the third questionnaire, while expressing *Sympathy or understanding* fluctuates, and generally remains infrequent. The remaining sub-strategies occur only sporadically. Additionally, four developmental patterns emerge across the questionnaires: i) an increasing pattern among participants A, B, D and K, with A and B showing the strongest upward trajectory; ii) a declining pattern, which typifies C and, especially, N, who ceases to use any strategies in the third questionnaire; iii) a stable pattern, with minimal variation, defining J and L; and iv) a fluctuating pattern, the most common, observed in E, F, G, H, I and M.

Based on the above findings, the participants can be divided into three groups: high users of *Opening the interaction*, *Closing the interaction* and *Harmony-building positive*

facework strategies (A, B, C, H, I, K, L), with totals between 10 and 13; low users (J, M, N), with totals between 3 and 5; and intermediate users (D, E, F, G).

Table 12 (see Annexes) shows the frequency of the strategies used to realise offering illocution across the three questionnaires. The most common choice was *Addressing the issue*, that is, expressing an explicit head act. *Introducing the issue* was slightly less common, while *Negotiating by offering incentives* was an infrequent choice, and *Other* strategies were marginal. Therefore, the participants mainly favoured direct strategies.

Within *Introducing the issue*, the participants showed a slight preference for *Pre-conditions* over *Introducing the topic*. Within *Addressing the issue*, the dominant sub-strategy was the *Head act* of offering a service. When participants engaged in the *Negotiating with incentives* strategy, they tended to rely on the *Contextual terms or details* and *Feasibility of the intended provision* sub-strategies. In the *Other* category, *Giving advice or making a suggestion* was the most frequent choice.

There were no clear overall trends in the data due to many individual differences in strategy use. Only two participants (A and F) used their strategies in a consistent way. A small group (D, G, H, K) showed a gradual decrease over time. Most participants (B, C, E, G, J, L, M, N) showed ups and downs, and none showed a steady increase.

6.2.2. Responding-to-complaints strategies

Table 13 (see Annexes) shows the frequency with which the participants used strategies for managing the relationship with their addressees. It also shows the dispersion values and the temporal trends in their strategy use. The dominant macro-strategy is *Opening the interaction* (29 occurrences), mostly realised through the *Alerter* sub-strategy. The second most frequent strategy is *Closing the interaction* (18 occurrences), expressed through the *Leave-taking* (10 occurrences) and *Next steps* (7 occurrences) sub-strategies. The *Harmony-building positive facework* macro-strategy is used sparingly (17 occurrences), and its most frequent sub-strategy is *Reassuring* (8 occurrences).

Only one consistent pattern stands out: the *Opening the interaction* macro-strategy appears across the questionnaires, especially thanks to the *Alerter* sub-strategy. The other strategies are used moderately or even sporadically, with fluctuations over time.

Considering their use of strategies, the participants can be divided into two groups: higher-frequency users of 6 to 9 strategies (i.e. C, E, G, H, J, M), and lower-frequency users of 2 to 5 strategies (i.e. A, B, D, F, I, K, L, N). When examining their strategy use over time, they can be divided into four main groups: gradual increasers (i.e. G, I, K, M, and N), who expanded their repertoires over time; temporary decliners (i.e. B and H), who dropped off at first at first, before returning to earlier levels; stable users (i.e. D, L and F), showing a slight increase at the end); and unstable users (i.e. A, C, E, H and J), whose totals rise and fall without forming any clear pattern.

Overall, among the interpersonal strategies, *Alerter* dominates at the beginning of the DCT responses; *Leave-taking* appears less frequently at their end, but remains stable in the datasets; and Harmony-building positive facework is present, but not consistently. The participants thus relied on basic interpersonal moves.

Table 14 (see Annexes) reports that, when responding to complaints, the participants mostly relied on three macro-strategies: *Addressing the issue* (the most common one), *Negotiating by balancing debts and credits*, and *Ratifying the issue*. In contrast, *Motivation* and *Assuming responsibility* appeared only occasionally.

Within each macro-strategy, one sub-strategy accounts for most uses: for *Ratifying the issue*, it is *Confirming the damage*; for *Addressing the issue*, it is *Expressing*

regret/Apologising; for *Motivation*, it is *Expressing extenuating circumstances*; for *Assuming responsibility*, it is *Self-blame*, and for *Negotiating by balancing debts and credits*, it is *Offering a remedy or compensation*.

Two global temporal patterns emerged from the data: the use of *Head act*, *Repeating the apology*, and *Offering a remedy or compensation* declined from the first to the third questionnaire. By contrast, *Confirming the issue* remained stable.

A comparison of the participants' overall totals shows that only a few (A, D, F, L) were consistently high-frequency users of strategies across the questionnaires. Most participants (B, C, E, G, H, I, J, K, M, N) used strategies at a moderate or low levels. Four temporal patterns characterised the participants' use of strategies: gradual or abrupt ascending patterns involved C, K, and N. Descending patterns characterised participants A, B, D, E, F, I, and L, with D, F and L showing steady declines. A stable pattern was identified in participant G. Fluctuating patterns were observed in participants H, J and M.

6.3. Participants' placement tests and logs

Table 15 and Figure 1 show the results of the *Oxford Placement Tests* administered to the participants, one the day before the first questionnaire, and the other, the day after the third questionnaire. Most participants displayed a descending pattern of proficiency over time, while two showed an increasing pattern (i.e. H and K), and one a stable pattern (i.e. J).

Student ID	Test score 1	CEF level 1	Test score 2	CEF level 2	Pattern
A	86	C1	74	B2	Descending
B	68	B2	63	B2	Descending
C	96	C1	89	C1	Descending
D	97	C1	85	C1	Descending
E	103	C2	101	C2	Descending
F	102	C2	87	C1	Descending
G	84	C1	76	B2	Descending
H	57	B1	62	B2	Ascending
I	114	C2	104	C2	Descending
J	99	C1	99	C1	Stable
K	28	A2	61	B2	Ascending
L	95	C1	79	B2	Descending
M	107	C2	98	C1	Descending
N	100	C2	89	C1	Descending

Table 15
Score of pre- and post-questionnaire *Oxford Placement Tests*.

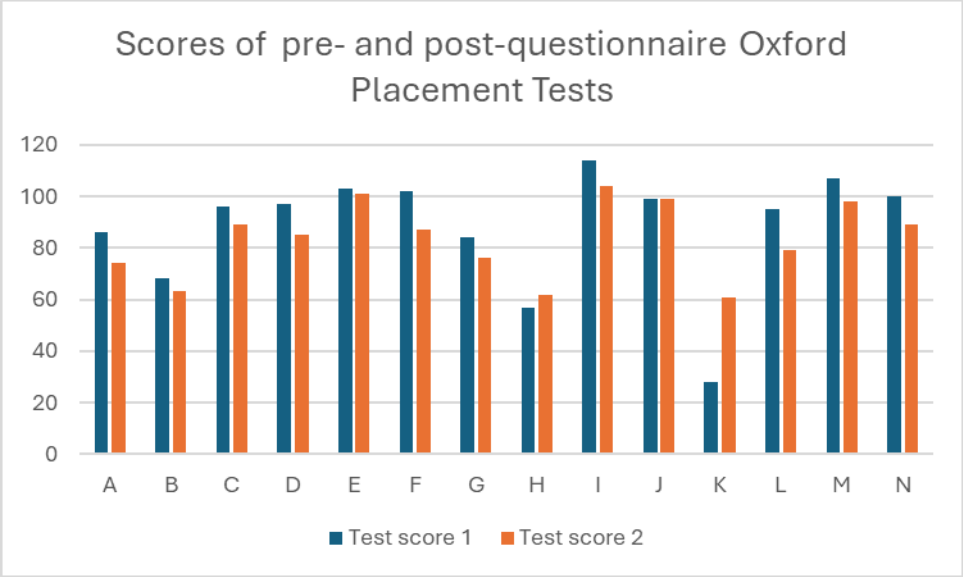

Figure 1
Score of pre- and post-questionnaire *Oxford Placement Tests*.

Tables 16 and 17 summarise the data recorded by the participants over a six-month period of their English engagement activities, as outlined in Section 5.1.5.

Table 16 shows, for each participant, the total and the average number of hours spent on each activity, and the lowest and the highest number of hours recorded for it.

Participants E, F, G, H, I and J recorded high levels of engagement across a range of activities, with English representing a kind of immersive environment for them. Their activities included engaging with music, films, television and social media (G, H), oral conversation, lessons and homework (G), and exposure to audiovisual content, reading fiction and participating in forums (E, F and J). Participants A, C, D and K also invested considerable time in English, with a preference for receptive, entertainment-oriented activities (e.g. watching films, TV and videos; listening to music; and occasionally browsing social networks). Participants L, M and N recorded a moderate level of engagement with English, balanced across diverse activities, including films, *YouTube*, music, social networks and some reading. Finally, participant B, a minimalist user, engaged with *YouTube*, music, and social networks at low levels, and displayed a more casual, intermittent contact with English.

Overall, engagement with music and social media platforms were the most popular activities for the participants.

Table 17 lists, for each participant, the number of logs kept, and the total and the average number of hours per week devoted to English activities over a 6-month period. It also provides, for each participant, the ranking of those activities in a hierarchy. The data indicate that certain activities cluster together in similar hierarchical positions. Entertainment-oriented activities, especially exposure to audiovisual media, recur at the top of most hierarchies, namely Listening to music, Watching *YouTube* videos, Watching films/TV, and Watching posts/videos on social networks. More interactive or text-focused activities (Conversing orally, Reading forums/blogs, Playing videogames, and Reading fiction) usually cluster together, too, but occupy the middle positions as supplementary practices. In contrast, the school-based, formal learning activities (i.e. Attending English lessons and Doing English homework) are marginal practices, mostly ranking at the bottom of the hierarchies. Therefore, the main sequencing pattern of engagement proceeds

from entertainment-oriented listening and viewing, through interactive and reading activities, to formal instructional activities.

Student ID	Activity											
	F&TV	YT	Games	Audio	Social	Web	Music	Read.	Writ.	Speak.	Classes	Homework
A-Sum	41	74	0	1	64	14	93	2	0	29	9	14
A-Avr	1.5	2.8	0.0	0.0	2.4	0.5	3.5	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.3	0.5
A-Rng	0-5	0-8	0-0	0-1	1-5	0-3	2-8	0-1	0-0	0-10	0-9	0-9
B-Sum	2	27	3	0	24	1	25	8	0	7	0	0
B-Avr	0.0	1	0.1	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.0
B-Rng	0-1	1-1	0-1	0-0	0-1	0-1	0-1	0-2	0-0	0-1	0-0	0-0
C-Sum	135	39	187	0	40	84	209	0	8	4	2	0
C-Avr	5.1	1.5	7.1	0.0	1.5	3.2	8.0	0.0	0.3	0-1	0.0	0.0
C-Rng	0-10	0-5	1-10	0-0	0-8	0-10	4-10	0-0	0.5	0-4	0-2	0-0
D-Sum	124	31	0	0	73	0	99	10	5	24	0	0
D-Avr	5.1	1.2	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0	4.1	0.4	0.2	1.0	0.0	0.0
D-Rng	2-9	0-6	0-0	0-0	2-5	0-0	2-7	0-10	0-1	0-2	0-0	0-0
E-Sum	186	209	0	30	157	44	105	56	7	123	0	0
E-Avr	7.4	8.3	0.0	1.2	6.2	1.7	4.2	2.2	0.2	4.9	0.0	0.0
E-Rng	2-10	4-10	0-0	0-6	2-10	0-10	1-10	0.10	0-2	1-10	0-0	0-0
F-Sum	111	63	29	22	181	33	163	114	1	12	0	1
F-Avr	4.2	2.4	1.1	0.8	6.9	1.2	6.2	4.3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0
F-Rng	2-4	0-7	0-5	0-4	4-8	0-4	3-8	3-8	0-1	0-3	0-0	0-1
G-Sum	67	6	1	36	163	117	217	73	65	166	153	160
G-Avr	2.9	0.2	0.0	1.5	7.0	5.0	9.4	3.1	2.8	7.2	6.6	6.9
G-Rng	0-10	0-3	0-1	0-10	0-10	0-10	2-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10	0-10
H-Sum	90	104	117	15	270	240	204	8	11	0	0	0
H-Avr	3.3	3.8	4.3	0.5	10	8.8	7.5	0.2	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
H-Rng	0-10	1-7	0-10	0.2	10-10	3-10	0-10	0-4	0-4	0-0	0-0	0-0
I-Sum	242	132	0	75	144	40	253	56	2	0	42	34
I-Avr	9.3	5.0	0.0	2.8	5.5	1.5	9.7	2.1	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.3
I-Rng	6-10	2-8	0-0	0-7	2-9	0-6	6-10	0-7	0-1	0-0	0-4	0-6
J-Sum	136	185	48	32	48	62	192	10	2	7	2	2
J-Avr	5.9	8.0	2.0	1.3	2.0	2.6	8.3	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0
J-Rng	3-10	6-9	0-10	0-3	1-5	1-5	7-10	0-2	0-1	0-2	0-2	0-1
K-Sum	49	6	22	32	47	24	77	15	10	17	2	0
K-Avr	5.4	0.6	2.4	3.5	5.2	2.6	8.5	1.6	1.1	1.8	0.2	0.0
K-Rng	4-9	0-2	0-6	1-8	4.8	0-4	6-10	0-3	0-2	0-5	0-2	0-0
L-Sum	81	39	31	10	107	5	118	17	10	40	2	3
L-Avr	3.3	1.6	1.2	0.4	4.4	0.2	4.9	0.7	0.4	1.6	0.0	0.1
L-Rng	1-6	0-5	0-4	0-2	2-6	0-2	2-7	0-3	0-4	0-4	0-1	0-2
M-Sum	108	75	0	29	77	11	40	77	1	23	0	0
M-Avr	4.4	3.2	0.0	1.2	3.3	0.4	1.7	3.3	0.0	1	0.0	0.0
M-Rng	1-10	1-6	0-0	0-3	2-6	0-5	0-6	0-8	0-1	0-6	0-0	0-0
N-Sum	51	11	0	0	82	17	94	16	17	44	0	0
N-Avr	2.3	0.5	0.0	0.0	3.7	0.7	4.2	0.7	0.7	2	0.0	0.0
N-Rng	1-8	0-3	0-0	0-0	1-6	0-2	0-10	0-8	0-4	0-10	0-0	0-0

Table 16

Total, average and range of number of hours devoted to English for distinct activities.

(Notes: I) Average values 0.0 appearing underlined are actually higher than 0.0, although this would emerge only if the hundredths were included. II) List and glosses of abbreviations: *F&TV* = Watching films, TV; *YT* = Watching *Youtube* videos; *Games* = Playing videogames; *Audio* = Listening to podcast, radio, audiobooks; *Social* = Watching posts, videos on social networks; *Web* = Reading forums, blogs or searching the Web; *Music* = Listening to music; *Read.* = Reading fiction; *Writ.* = Writing emails, fan fiction, posts on social networks; *Speak.* = Conversing orally online or face to face; *Classes* = Attending English lessons; *Homework* = Doing English language homework; *Avr* = Average; *Rng* = Range. III) Capital letters A to N identify the study participants.)

Student ID	Logs	Total hours	Average hours	Ranking of activities
A	26	341	13.1	Music > YT > Social > F&TV > Speaking > Web + Homework > Classes > Audio > Reading > Games + Writing
B	27	97	3.5	YT > Music > Social > Reading > Speaking > Games > F&TV > Web > Audio + Music + Classes + Homework
C	26	708	27.2	Music > Games > F&TV > Web > Social > YT > Writing > Speaking > Classes > Audio + Reading + Homework
D	24	366	15.2	F&TV > Music > Social > YT > Speaking > Reading > Writing > Games + Web + Audio + Classes + Homework
E	25	917	36.6	YT > F&TV > Social > Speaking > Music > Reading > Web > Audio > Writing > Games > Classes > Homework
F	26	730	28.0	Social > Music > Reading > F&TV > YT > Web > Games > Audio > Speaking > Writing + Homework > Classes
G	23	1,224	53.2	Music > Speaking > Social > Homework > Classes > Web > Reading > F&TV > Writing > Audio > YT > Games
H	27	1,059	39.2	Social > Web > Music > Games > YT > F&TV > Audio > Writing > Reading > Speaking + Classes + Homework
I	26	1,020	39.2	Music > F&TV > Social > YT > Audio > Reading > Classes > Web > Homework > Writing > Games > Speaking
J	23	726	31.5	Music > YT > F&TV > Web > Games + Web > Audio > Reading > Speaking > Writing + Classes + Homework
K	9	301	33.4	Music > F&TV > Social > Audio > Web > Games > Speaking > Reading > Writing > YT > Classes > Homework
L	24	463	19.2	Music > Social > F&TV > Speaking > YT > Games > Reading > Audio + Writing > Web > Homework > Classes
M	23	436	18.9	F&TV > Social + Reading > YT > Music > Audio > Speaking > Web + Writing > Games + Classes + Homework
N	22	332	15.0	Music > Social > F&TV > Speaking > Web + Writing > Reading +YT > Games > Audio > Classes > Homework

Table 17

Total, average and range of number of hours devoted to English activities.

(Notes: I) List and glosses of abbreviations: *F&TV* = Watching films, TV; *YT* = Watching *YouTube* videos; *Games* = Playing videogames; *Audio* = Listening to podcast, radio, audiobooks; *Social* = Watching posts, videos on social networks; *Web* = Reading forums, blogs or searching the Web; *Music* = Listening to music; *Reading* = Reading fiction; *Writing* = Writing emails, fan fiction, posts on social networks; *Speaking* = Conversing orally online or face to face; *Classes* = Attending English lessons; *Homework* = Doing English language homework.)

The participants can be divided into two groups according to the structure of their hierarchies. Participants C, G, I, J, K, L and N privileged audiovisual leisure activities, especially Listening to music and Watching films/TV. The other participants, except for B, favoured social or interactive uses of English involving *YouTube*, social media and oral conversation over receptive experience of music or films. Additionally, both groups relegated formal learning activities to the bottom of their hierarchies.

7. Discussion

The findings make it possible to reflect on the intensity, frequency and variety of English engagement habits, on one hand, and the manifestation of the participants' receptive and productive pragmatic skills as emerging from the tests administered, on the other.

A comparison of Tables 1 and 2 against Tables 16 and 17 does not reveal an obvious correspondence between participants' profiles of English engagement activities and their pragmatic performance levels. In particular, in the case of offers, many participants achieved near-maximum scores regardless of their engagement profile: high and moderate users achieved the 3/3 score, and the minimal user B scored 2/3. In the case of responses to complaints, most participants clustered at scores 1–2/3. In sum, higher engagement was not associated with greater accuracy in the identification of illocutions.

Similarly, no consistent relationship could be identified between intensity of English use and the ability to identify communicative micro-functions (see Tables 16 and 17 against Tables 3 and 4). Regarding offers, for example, C, who was a regular user, had the highest score, while some high users like F, H and I did not score as highly. As for responses to complaints, some moderate users also matched or exceeded the performance of some high users.

Along the same lines, no systematic association could be noticed between the participants' engagement levels recorded (see Tables 16 and 17) and the degree to which the participants correctly assessed communicative adequacy (see Tables 5 and 6). For example, in the case of offers, not all high users performed well (e.g. E and J), and in the case of responses to complaints, those who received high scores were spread across a range of English-engagement categories (C, G, H and N).

Again, no obvious correspondence was observable when comparing the participants' English engagement levels with the rate of their accurate responses (see Tables 7 and 8). For offers, many participants clustered around the 6-7/9 scores; yet, some intense users had much lower scores (e.g. F and G at 4/9), while the minimal user B scored 8/9. In responses to complaints, the overall group performance was high, cutting across English user types.

The total values reported in Table 9 show that the participants' English engagement categories were mixed, with intense users not consistently achieving the highest totals. For example, the three highest scorers, namely C, H and N, were, respectively, a considerable user, a high user, and a moderate user.

Finally, the temporal patterns regarding receptive skills outlined in Table 10, when compared against the English engagement records displayed in Tables 16 and 17, show considerable variation. In particular, no steady increase could be linked to a specific English user type. In parallel, the findings relevant to the participants' productive skills (see Tables 11 and 13), when compared against the engagement patterns reported in Tables 16 and 17, show that most participants demonstrated some interpersonal awareness in both offers and responses to complaints, but also that the participants with a wider use of interpersonal strategies were represented across English engagement types.

The patterns in Table 12 are varied: some participants show stable use of strategies (e.g. A and F) and others show declines (e.g. D, G, H and K). Notably, no participant showed an increase in strategy use, something that, in principle, could have indicated growing communicative appropriateness. Finally, high total scores were not concentrated among the high users; rather, the participants with richer strategy repertoires were those who intensely engaged in English-related activities.

In Table 14, temporal trends also vary, but upward trajectories do not align with any specific English user type. More importantly, although some participants (A, D, F and

L) displayed broader repertoires in responding to complaints, they were not concentrated among those with high levels of English engagement.

A comparison of the results regarding offers (Tables 1, 3, 5, 7, 11 and 12) and responses to complaints (Tables 2, 4, 6, 8, 13 and 14) gives a mixed picture of the relative difficulty of the tasks the participants carried out. In the identification of illocutions (see Tables 1 and 2), offers appeared to be slightly easier for participants to interpret than responses to complaints. Yet, in the identification of micro-functions (Tables 4 and 5), the assessment of communicative adequacy (Tables 6 and 7), and the interpretation of contextual variables (Tables 7 and 8) participants performed better with responses to complaints. Thus, except for the task of illocution recognition, responses to complaints generally proved easier for participants than offers.

The findings about offers reported in Tables 1, 3, 5, 7, 11 and 13 show no consistent upward developmental pattern; rather, fluctuations dominate. Even participants with partially rising trends (D, E and G) represent mixed English-engagement categories, indicating that rising patterns were not linked to high engagement levels.

The findings about responses to complaints (Tables 2, 4, 6, 8, 12 and 14) reveal that some participants displayed ascending patterns, but not consistently across tasks. For instance, participants H, E and I showed a *Start-Up-Up* trend in Table 4, and participant I showed a *Start-Up-Up* trend in Table 8; in the productive domain, only participants C, K and N exhibited upward patterns. Crucially, these individuals were not concentrated among the most highly engaged users. Therefore, upward trends cannot be considered characteristic of the most engaged group.

According to the pre- and post- *Oxford Placement Tests*, only two participants improved, namely H, a high engager, and K, a considerable engager, while J remained stable, and the others declined. Since their logs showed varying levels of engagement rather than sustained increases in engagement over time, no consistent relationship between their test outcomes and their test results and their engagement levels.

8. Conclusion

The literature on foreign language pragmatics reports that exposure is not enough for learners to develop pragmatic skills, and that (inductive and) explicit methods of instruction are the most effective (see Section 4). The findings of this study on receptive and productive knowledge of use from a short-term longitudinal perspective appear to offer indirect support for the above arguments: the participants with high levels of English engagement did not demonstrate higher pragmatic performance or developmental growth; in fact, many participants showed stable or fluctuating patterns. This is in line with De Riso's (2025) findings about her participants' developmental trajectories in fluency, accuracy and complexity, ranging from progress to fluctuation to stagnation. Therefore, the study highlights *potentially* positive, but actually uneven, uncertain links between informal language use and L2 development (see Kusyk *et al*. 2025). This may have resulted from limited exposure to relevant input (i.e. instances of offering exchanges and responding-to-complaints exchanges), insufficient attention to such input, restricted opportunities for productive language processing (Lyrigkou 2023) and/or individual differences. It is also important to acknowledge the logistical constraints of the study, particularly the small sample size and the short, infrequent data-collection period, both of which limit the strength of any conclusions drawn.

Considering the present findings and the literature in this domain, the following observations can be made. Media-based ISLL practices provide access to authentic uses of

the language in a non-threatening space promoting (re)creation and (re)sharing of content (Solmaz and Reinhardt 2024, pp. 49-51). However, they do not necessarily lead to the understanding and learning of language (Amengual-Pizarro and Alonso Alonso 2024, p. 194) without active engagement in observation, social interaction (Herron and Tomasello 1992, p. 709), and the discovery of linguistic patterns (Bardovi-Harlig 1996, p. 32): these are noticed when attention is drawn to the forms, meanings and context of language use (Schmidt 1993, p. 35), a process that could be facilitated by a teacher's guidance on what typifies language use (see Glaser 2016 about the inductive-explicit approach to the teaching of L2 pragmatics). This suggests that formal language learning contexts could successfully guide learners to explore patterns in language use by implementing instruction that leverages social media, thus taking advantage of learners' self-driven engagement in social media practices (see Solmaz and Reinhardt 2024; Blattner and Fiori 2009; Jin 2018).

This study suffers from limitations in its design and implementation. Regarding its design, the small number of participants makes it difficult to distinguish developmental patterns from individual variation. Future work would benefit from a larger population sample, among whom to conduct statistical analyses. Also, the longitudinal timeframe was short, although in line with Lyrigkou (2023), so that long-term developmental trends could not be traced. It would have been helpful to extend the study to a period of at least one year. Additionally, the focus of the assessment was on offers and responses to complaints, which allowed for detailed analysis, but broader coverage of other high-frequency speech acts such as requests, refusals and apologies would have provided a more accurate picture of learners' communicative competence.

Furthermore, some methodological choices were not ideal. For instance, participants' pragmatic competence in English and Italian prior to the study was not known. Without a baseline to be used for comparative purposes, it was not possible to measure the extent of learning or assess the role played by L1 transfer. This would have required administering pre-test batteries in English and Italian. Moreover, individual learner variables (e.g. motivation, affective factors, gender, and prior international experience) were not considered. Since they are known to shape pragmatic development, they should be examined in future analyses. Another limitation concerns the instruments used. The DCTs were not piloted with native speakers or expert raters, which would have strengthened the reliability of the elicited data. In addition, the study relied on a single method of data collection. If it had been supplemented with follow-up interviews, it would have helped clarify how participants interpreted the scenarios, what strategies they intended to use, and how they perceived their own performance.

Finally, two assumptions underlying the study call for reconsideration. First, I assumed that, given their high frequency of occurrence in daily life, offers and responses to complaints would be part of the input the participants were exposed to and would use in their ISLL activities. However, this cannot be taken for granted. Second, in evaluating productive skills, the study equated a higher frequency and greater variety of strategies with better performance. This is reasonable only as a first approximation, since pragmatic appropriateness and effectiveness are also conveyed through lexico-phraseological choices. Incorporating a description of language input and ratings of quality would give a more balanced assessment.

Considering the above-mentioned limitations, direction for future research emerge. First, the range of tasks used to assess English users' pragmatic competence could be expanded. DCTs are practical for eliciting comparable data across participants, but supplementing them with role-plays, naturally occurring interactions, and computer-mediated interactions would allow researchers to examine how learners dynamically adapt

strategies to more realistic and varied contexts. Measurement techniques could be refined. Besides counting strategies, future studies could assess how appropriate or effective learners' choices are, for example by recruiting trained raters and employing clearly defined rubrics. This approach would give a more informative picture of participants' performance. Finally, future research could take into consideration learner variables like motivation, attitude, personal background, and daily ISLL practices. Examining how these factors interact with learners' engagement behaviours could explain why some individuals progress while others stagnate or experience setbacks. Taken together, these lines of inquiry would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how informal English use supports pragmatic development and the conditions under which it does so most effectively.

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Annexes

Student ID + Q	Strategies												Total
	Opening		Positive facework							Closing		Other	
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	
A-Q1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
A-Q2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
A-Q3	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	6
	SUU		SDU							SUL		SLL	SUU
B-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
B-Q2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
B-Q3	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
	SLU		SUL							SLU		SLL	SUU
C-Q1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	4
C-Q2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
C-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	SUD		SDU							SDL		SLL	SDL
D-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
D-Q2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
D-Q3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
	SLU		SUL							SLL		SDL	SLU
E-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
E-Q2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
E-Q3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
	SUD		SUD							SLU		SLL	SUD
F-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
F-Q2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
F-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	SUL		SLD							SUL		SDL	SUD
G-Q1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
G-Q2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
G-Q3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
	SUU		SUD							SLL		SLL	SUD
H-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	5
H-Q2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
H-Q3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
	SLU		SLD							SDU		SDL	SDU
I-Q1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
I-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	4
I-Q3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	4
	SLL		SLU							SUD		SLL	SUL
J-Q1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
J-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
J-Q3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLU		SDL							SLL		SLL	SDU
K-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
K-Q2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
K-Q3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
	SUU		SUD							SLL		SDL	SUL
L-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
L-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
L-Q3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
	SLU		SDU							SUD		SLL	SLU
M-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
M-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3

M-Q3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SUU		SLD							SUD		SLL	SUD
N-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
N-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
N-Q3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	SUD		SDL							SUD		SLL	SUD
Total	31	3	18	6	2	1	1	14	1	15	17	4	109

Table 11
Frequency of interpersonal moves in offers with their chronological trends.
(Notes: I) Capital letters in the first column identify students. II) *Q* = Questionnaire. III) The small letters *a* and *b* stand for sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Opening the interaction*: *a* = Register-appropriate alerter, greeting and/or address term; *b* = Small talk of appropriate length. The small letters *c* to *i* stand for the sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Harmony-building positive facework*: *c* = Reassuring; *d* = Good wish; *e* = Gratitude; *f* = Compliment; *g* = Playful laughter; *h* = Sympathy, understanding; *i* = Playful banter, irony. The small letters *j* and *k* stand for sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Closing the interaction*: *j* = Next steps; *k* = Leave-taking. The small letter *l* is the sub-strategy of the macro-strategy *Other*: *l* = Surprise. IV) In the three-letter abbreviations below the figures for each participant indicate temporal trends: *S* = Start, i.e. Initial score in Q1; *D* = Down, i.e. Score lower than the previous one; *U* = Up, i.e. Score higher than the previous one; *L* = Level, i.e. Score equal to the previous one.)

Student ID + Q	Strategies														
	Introducing issue		Addressing issue		Negotiating with incentives								Other		Total
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	
A-Q1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	4
A-Q2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
A-Q3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
	SLL		SLL		SLL								SLL		SLL
B-Q1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
B-Q2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
B-Q3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4
	SDU		SLL		SLU								SLU		SDU
C-Q1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
C-Q2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
C-Q3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SUD		SUD		SLD								SLL		SUD
D-Q1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	7
D-Q2	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4
D-Q3	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
	SDU		SLL		SDD								SDL		SDL
E-Q1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	5
E-Q2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
E-Q3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4
	SLL		SLL		SDU								SLL		SDU
F-Q1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
F-Q2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
F-Q3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
	SDL		SLL		SLU								SUD		SLL
G-Q1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	4
G-Q2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
G-Q3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
	SLU		SLL		SDD								SLL		SDL
H-Q1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4
H-Q2	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	4
H-Q3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2

	SLD		SLD		SUL								SLD		SLD
I-Q1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	7
I-Q2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
I-Q3	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
	SLL		SLU		SDU								SDL		SDU
J-Q1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
J-Q2	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
J-Q3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
	SUD		SLL		SDD								SLU		SUD
K-Q1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
K-Q2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
K-Q3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	SDL		SLD		SLL								SLL		SDD
L-Q1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
L-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
L-Q3	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6
	SDU		SDU		SDU								SUL		SDU
M-Q1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
M-Q2	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	6
M-Q3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
	SDU		SLL		SUD								SLL		SUD
N-Q1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
N-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N-Q3	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
	SDL		SDU		SLU								SLL		SDU
Total	13	15	34	6	6	12	8	3	6	5	21	3	14	1	147

Table 12

Frequency of illocution-specific moves in offers.

(Notes: I) Capital letters in the first column identify students. II) *Q* stands for 'Questionnaire'. III) The small letters *a* and *b* stand for sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Introducing the issue*: *a* = mentioning the topic; *b* = mentioning a pre-condition. The small letters *c* and *d* stand for the sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Addressing the issue*: *c* = Offering service (head act); *d* = (Partly) providing the service. The small letters *e* to *l* stand for sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Negotiating with incentives*: *e* = Goodness of offered service; *f* = Feasibility of provision; *g* = Lack of obstacles/constraints; *h* = No negative consequences; *i* = Positive effects; *j* = Matching of interests/goals; *k* = Contextual terms or details; *l* = Additional offer. The small letters *m* and *n* stand for the sub-strategies of the macro-strategy *Other*: *m* = Advice/Suggestion; *n* = Evaluation. IV) In the 3-letter abbreviations below the figures for each participants, *S* stands for 'Start, i.e. Initial score' in Q1; *D* stands for 'Down, i.e. Score lower than the previous one'; *U* stands for 'Up, i.e. Score higher than the previous one'; *L* stands for 'Level, i.e. Score equal to the previous one.)

Student ID + Q	Strategies													Total
	Opening		Facework							Closing			Other	
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	
A-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
A-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
A-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLU		SLL							SLL			SLL	
B-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
B-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
	SDU		SLL							SDU			SLL	
C-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
C-Q2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
C-Q3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLL		SLL							SDL			SLL	
D-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2

D-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
D-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLL		SLU							SLD			SLL	
E-Q1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
E-Q2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
E-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
	SUD		SLD							SLU			SLL	
F-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
F-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
F-Q3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLL		SLU							SLL			SLL	
G-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
G-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
G-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	3
	SLU		SUL							SUL			SLL	
H-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	4
H-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
H-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	4
	SLL		SLL							SDU			SLU	
I-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
I-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
I-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLL		SLU							SLL			SLL	
J-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
J-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	SDU		SDU										SLL	
K-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
K-Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
K-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
	SLU		SLU							SLD			SLL	
L-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
L-Q2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
L-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
	SUD		SDL							SLU			SLL	
M-Q1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
M-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2
M-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
	SUL		SLU							SUL			SLU	
N-Q1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
N-Q2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
N-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SLL		SLU							SLL			SLL	
Total	29	1	1	1	2	2	3	8	5	7	10	1	2	72

Table 13

Frequency of interpersonal moves in responses to complaints.

(Notes: I) Capital letters in the first column identify students. II) *Q* = Questionnaire. III) The small letters *a* and *b* stand for sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Opening the interaction*: *a* = register-appropriate Alerter, greeting and/or address term; *b* = Small talk of appropriate length. The small letters *c* to *i* stand for the sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Harmony-building positive facework*: *c* = Shared views; *d* = Good wish; *e* = Gratitude; *f* = Compliment, praise; *g* = Sympathy, understanding; *h* = Reassuring; *i* = Maintaining solidarity, conviviality. The small letters *j*, *k* and l stand for sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Closing the interaction*: *j* = Next steps; *k* = Leave-taking; *l* = Signature. The small letter *m* indicates the sub-strategy of the macro-strategy *Other*: *l* = Surprise. IV) In the three-letter abbreviations below the figures for each participant indicate temporal trends: *S* = Start, i.e. Initial score in Q1; *D* = Down, i.e. Score lower than the previous one; *U* = Up, i.e. Score higher than the previous one; *L* = Level, i.e. Score equal to the previous one.)

Student ID + Q	Strategies															Total
	Ratifying issue				Addressing issue			Motivation				Assuming respon-sibility	Negotiating with debt-credit balance			
	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	
A-Q1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	8
A-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	6
A-Q3	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	6
	SUL				SLL			SDL				SLL	SLD			SDL
B-Q1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	6
B-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
B-Q3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
	SLD				SUL			SLD				SLL	SDL			SLD
C-Q3	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
C-Q2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
C-Q3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	SDU				SLL			SLL				SUD	SLD			SDL
D-Q1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	8
D-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
D-Q3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4
	SUL				SLD			SDL				SLU	SDL			SDD
E-Q1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	7
E-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	6
E-Q3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
	SDL				SDD			SUD				SLU	SDD			SDD
F-Q1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	8
F-Q2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	7
F-Q3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	SDU				SDD			SUD				SLL	SLD			SDD
G-Q1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
G-Q2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
G-Q3	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
	SLU				SLL			SLD				SLL	SLL			SLL
H-Q1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4
H-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	5
H-Q3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
	SUD				SLD			SLL				SUL	SDL			SUD
I-Q1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5
I-Q2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	5
I-Q3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	SDU				SLD			SLL				SUD	SLD			SLD
J-Q1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
J-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	7
J-Q3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
	SUD				SLL			SUD				SUD	SLL			SUD
K-Q1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
K-Q2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
K-Q3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
	SUD				SLL			SLL				SLD	SUL			SUL
L-Q1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	6
L-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	7
L-Q3	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
	SLL				SLL			SUD				SDL	SLL			SUD
M-Q1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	7
M-Q2	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
M-Q3	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
	SDD				SUU			SLL				SDL	SLL			SDL
N-Q1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
N-Q2	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	6
N-Q3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
	OUL				SLL			SUD				SLL	SLL			SUD

Total	32	2	5	19	38	1	15	12	7	6	2	12	33	13	2	199

Table 14
Frequency of illocution-specific moves in responses to complaints.
(Notes: I) Capital letters in the first column identify students. II) *Q* = Questionnaire. III) The small letters *a* to *c* identify sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Ratifying the issue*: *a* = Confirmation of the damage caused; *b* = Emotional impact; *c* = Claiming ignorance or lack of intent; *d* = Clarifying contextual details. The small letters *e* to *g* identify the sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Addressing the issue*: *e* = Expressing regret, apologising; *f* = Justifying the other's perspective; *g* = Repeated apology. The small letters *h* to *k* identify sub-strategies relevant to the macro-strategy *Motivation*: *h* = Extenuating circumstances; *i* = Problems; *j* = Failed prevention; *k* = Negative consequences. The small letter *l* indicates the sub-strategy Self-blame of the macro-strategy *Assuming responsibility*: *l* = Surprise. The small letter *m*, *n* and *o* indicate the sub-strategies of the macro-strategy *Negotiating by balancing debts and credits*: *m* = Offering a remedy or compensation; *n* = Promise of future better conduct; *o* = Opening to an exchange of views. IV) In the three-letter abbreviations below the figures for each participant indicate temporal trends: *S* = Start, i.e. Initial score in Q1; *D* = Down, i.e. Score lower than the previous one; *U* = Up, i.e. Score higher than the previous one; *L* = Level, i.e. Score equal to the previous one.)