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Linguistic Insights

Studies in Language and Communication

Wei Ren

L2 Pragmatic Development in Study Abroad Contexts

Peter Lang

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Pragmatic competence plays a key role in intercultural communication, particularly for students studying in a target community. This book investigates the effect of study abroad on second language learners' productive and receptive pragmatic competences, as well as their cognitive processes during speech act production. It employs a variety of research instruments, both quantitative and qualitative, to explore learners' pragmatic development over one year. The inclusion of a control group is a methodological strength of the longitudinal study, many such studies often not including a control group. In addition, the study longitudinally examines learners' cognitive processes during study abroad with innovative and insightful analyses. The book makes an important contribution to second language pragmatics with regard to developmental changes in both speech act production and perception during such processes.

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L2 Pragmatic Development in Study Abroad Contexts

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AH	At home
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Research Project
CVR	Concurrent verbal report
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
EFL	English as a foreign language
ESL	English as a second language
IELTS	International English language testing system
IL	Interlanguage
ILP	Interlanguage pragmatics
L1	First language
L2	Second language
LOR	Length of residence
MCQ	Multiple-choice questionnaire
MET	Multimedia Elicitation Task
P	Power
+P	Unequal power
-P	Equal power
RVR	Retrospective verbal report
SA	Study abroad
SD	Standard Deviation
SLA	Second language acquisition
TEM8	Test for English majors, Band 8
TL	Target language
TOEFL	Test of English as a foreign language

1 Introduction

Pragmatics, defined by Crystal as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication" (Crystal, 1997: 301), has become an important field in linguistics since the publication of two seminal works: Leech's (1983) *Principle of Pragmatics* and Levinson's (1983) *Pragmatics*. It is the study of "speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions" (LoCastro, 2003: 15), which mainly deals with areas such as deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and conversational structure (Bardovi-Harlig, 2005; Levinson, 1983).

In second language acquisition (SLA), pragmatics is on a par with phonology, morphology and syntax in that inquiry focuses on learners' knowledge, use and acquisition of second language (L2) pragmatics (Kasper & Rose, 1999). Analogous to other areas of SLA, the study of L2 pragmatics, also referred to as interlanguage pragmatics (hereafter ILP), is another subfield of SLA, focusing mainly on the investigation of speech acts (Kasper & Dahl, 1991), which are minimal units of discourse representing how things are done through words (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1979), and to a lesser extent, conversational structure and conversational implicature (Alcón Soler & Martinez Flor, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig, 2005).

Pragmatic competence, defined as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context" (J. Thomas, 1983: 92), is a critical component of the process of acquiring an L2. It consists of both productive and receptive competences, such as "knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular language's linguistic resources" (Barron, 2003: 10). In addition to linguistic aspects of a language (i.e. phonology, vocabulary and syntax), learners must also develop their pragmatic competence if they are to communicate effectively. Therefore, studies on L2 pragmatics are integral in pragmatics and SLA research.

Study abroad, in which learners study the L2 in the target culture, is widely perceived as an ideal context in which to develop language competence because living in the L2 culture appears to provide the most direct access possible to large amounts of input and interaction with native speakers. There are multiple manners in which learners can complete a study abroad experience that include a variety of goals. Some learners may participate in short-term stays, whereas many others engage in 'year-abroad' programs or even choose to further their studies in another country. The present study focuses on study abroad learners who choose to pursue their master's degrees in an institution of higher learning in the target community.

The study is situated in the field of L2 pragmatics. I will therefore briefly introduce the current situation in L2 pragmatics research before I describe the rationale and research questions in the present study.

1.1 Current situation in L2 pragmatics

Second language (L2) pragmatics research to date has focused more on learners' pragmatic *use*, rather than learners' pragmatic *development*, although recent studies (e.g., Barron, 2003; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Ren, 2013; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi, 2012; Woodfield, 2012a) are beginning to restore the balance, following Kasper and Schmidt's (1996) seminal paper. That is, although a body of research has established how learners *use* an L2 (e.g., Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010; Gass & Houck, 1999; Woodfield, 2008; to name a few), less is known about how learners' L2 pragmatic competence is *acquired*. This leads to a rather peripheral position of L2 pragmatics research in the field of SLA. To understand the acquisition of L2 pragmatics, more studies on how learners acquire L2 pragmatics and how their L2 pragmatic competence develops are needed (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2013).

Although one of the most promising means of examining pragmatic development is through research involving longitudinal studies, only a few studies (e.g., Barron, 2003; Ren, 2013; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi, 2012; Woodfield, 2012a) have traced the development of learners' L2 pragmatic competence employing longitudinal data. Most acquisitional L2 pragmatics studies have investigated the development of learners' L2 pragmatic competence cross-sectionally, focusing on either the effect of L2 proficiency (e.g., Chang, 2009, 2010; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Göy, Zeyrek, & Otcu, 2012; Hill, 1997; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Otcu & Zeyrek, 2008; Rose, 2000, 2009; Trosborg, 1987, 1995) or the length of residence (LOR) in the L2 community (e.g., Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; Cheng, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004; Han, 2005; T. Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). The limited number of longitudinal studies in L2 pragmatics literature reveals an important area of research yet to be undertaken, not only in quantity but particularly as regards investigating a wider range of speech acts. In particular, with the exception of Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993, 1996), Barron (2003) and Ren (2012, 2013), no longitudinal research in L2 pragmatics focusing on refusals has to my knowledge been carried out.

Despite the consensus in L2 pragmatics literature that pragmatic competence involves both productive and receptive competence, few studies in L2 pragmatics research have investigated the two aspects of the same participants (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2009; Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011; Schauer, 2009; Taguchi, 2012; for exceptions). Because most previous studies have operationalized pragmatic competence as one or the other, studies that have incorporated both constructs in instruments are still scarce. Most L2 pragmatics research focuses on learners' productive pragmatic competence (e.g., Alcón Soler & Martinez Flor, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005b; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Boxer & Cohen, 2004; Gass & Neu, 1996; Putz & Aertselaer, 2008; Rose & Kasper, 2001), while only some studies investigate learners' receptive pragmatic competence (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bouton, 1994; Garcia, 2004; Koike, 1996; Taguchi, 2008a, 2011). More studies focusing on both aspects of pragmatic competence are warranted to better understand the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2010).

Methodologically, most studies in L2 pragmatics employ a quantitative approach (e.g., Barron, 2003; Han, 2005; Matsumura, 2001, 2003; Taguchi, 2008a, 2009, 2011), which provides "systematic, rigorous, and tightly controlled" analysis and produces "reliable and replicable data that is generalizable to other contexts" (Dörnyei, 2007: 34). On the other hand, studies employing a qualitative approach (e.g., Schmidt, 1983; Woodfield, 2010, 2012b) provide data to uncover reasons for particular patterns or the dynamic processes underlying a situation or phenomenon, which promotes "a more subjective, culture-bound, and emancipatory approach to studying individual behaviors and social phenomena" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003: ix). There is, therefore, a general call in applied linguistics to combine quantitative and qualitative research methods (Dewaele, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007; Lazaraton, 2005).

In addition, to date, the vast majority of L2 pragmatics studies are those which include learners with a European language or Japanese as their first language (L1). Yet little L2 pragmatics research has longitudinally explored Chinese English learners' L2 pragmatic development. More longitudinal L2 pragmatics research focusing on Chinese English learners are needed, which will definitely contribute to the limited empirical data currently available in the area of L2 Pragmatics research in that it expands the pool of the L1 investigated.

1.2 This study

To address the gaps discussed in Section 1.1, the present study aims to contribute to the present L2 pragmatics literature in a number of aspects. First, to respond to the call of employing a combination of different research methodologies (Dewaele, 2005; Dörnyei, 2007; Lazaraton, 2005; Rees & Klapper, 2008), the research bases its discussion on a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods. It also aims to enrich the empirical findings in the field of L2 pragmatics research by investigating the development of Chinese English learners' pragmatic competence, not only the use. Thirdly, the study intends to address the lack of much needed longitudinal studies of refusals by tracking the development of pragmatic competence of the same groups of learners over time. In addition, it attempts to explore both productive and receptive pragmatic competences of the same group of learners, to shed light on their pragmatic development. Finally, it contributes to the field of L2 pragmatics research by providing description and insight into longitudinal study of Chinese learners of English, expanding the range of first languages investigated in the current L2 pragmatics studies.

The study investigates longitudinally into the impact of study abroad on the pragmatic development of adult Chinese learners of English in a Study Abroad (hereafter SA) context in which they attend higher educational institutions in an English-speaking country. In order to examine whether learners' L2 pragmatic development, if any, is affected by the study abroad context alone, a contrast group – Chinese learners of English in an At Home (henceforth AH) context in which they attend higher educational institutions in their native country where English is a major or a language medium for instruction is included for comparison. Though critical to the acquisition process of any language learner, developing L2 pragmatic competence is of particular importance for the SA group, as the experience of living and studying in the L2 community offers unlimited opportunities for interaction in the target language (TL). Communicative trouble can lead them to recognize that linguistic and/or pragmatic problems exist, switch their attention from communication only to linguistic forms and/or cultural perspectives, identify the problems, and notice the needed items in input or different cultural perspectives during communication (e.g., Long, 1996).

The study examines the trajectories of 20 Chinese SA students' L2 pragmatic development over the period of one academic year, in comparison to that of the Chinese AH students. The investigation focuses both on productive pragmatic competence and receptive pragmatic competence, namely, on the development of the Chinese students' pragmatic production of refusals in English and the development of their pragmatic perception in evaluating the appropriateness of speech acts in social interaction. Moreover, the study also examines the effect of study abroad on the development of the Chinese SA students' cognitive processes involved in their refusal production. It is designed to answer the following specific research questions:

Research question 1: To what extent does study abroad influence the development of Chinese learners' L2 pragmatic production in their English refusals?

Research question 2: To what extent does study abroad influence the development of Chinese learners' L2 pragmatic perception in their judgment of appropriateness of utterances in a range of speech act situations?

Research question 3: To what extent does study abroad influence the Chinese SA learners' cognitive processes involved in their L2 English refusal production?

In the following, I will present the theoretical framework guiding this study in Chapter 2, in which a theoretical background of pragmatics is provided, followed by brief reviews of speech act theory, existing models of communicative competence and pragmatic competence, L2 pragmatics and the acquisitional theories in L2 pragmatics. Subsequent to this, Chapter 3 reviews the relevant empirical literature, starting with studies focusing on productive pragmatic competence, followed by studies of receptive pragmatic competence and studies investigating learners' cognitive processes. In Chapter 4, the methodology of the study is addressed, including participants, instrumentation, data collection procedure, ethical issues and data analysis. Chapter 5 to 7 document the results of the study, focusing on responses to the three research questions respectively. Chapter 5 presents the results of the investigation into the two groups of participants' development of L2 refusal production, in terms of frequency of opt-out, range and overall frequency of pragmatic strategies employed in their refusals. Employment of individual pragmatic strategies is also analyzed in this chapter. Chapter 6 examines the results of the investigation into the development of learners' pragmatic perception, starting with the two groups' appropriateness ratings, followed by the SA group's noticing of pragmatic infelicities. Chapter 7 explores the SA students' cognitive processes involved in their refusal production through analyzing their retrospective verbal reports. Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the findings from the previous three chapters and a general discussion of how the study responds to the research questions. The chapter then considers the implications of the study, explores the limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future research.

2 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of study abroad on the development of L2 learners' pragmatic competence. Thus, in this chapter, the theoretical framework related to L2 pragmatic competence is reviewed. The chapter will begin by providing a background of pragmatics in Section 2.1, followed by brief reviews of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975, 1976) in Section 2.2. Then it will present existing models of communicative competence and pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980) in Section 2.3. Section 2.4 introduces L2 pragmatics and Section 2.5 reviews the theoretical basis of L2 pragmatics. Section 2.6 discusses issues about native speaker norms in L2 pragmatics research.

2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of the use of language in communication, particularly the relationship between utterances and the contexts in which they are performed (Leech, 1983; Stalnaker, 1972). The first definition of pragmatics is attributable to the philosopher Morris (1938) who was concerned to outline the general shape of semiotics. Within semiotics, Morris distinguished three distinct branches of inquiry: syntactics (the study of the formal relations among signs), semantics (the study of the relations between signs and the objects to which the signs refer) and pragmatics (the study of the relations between signs and the people who use them). Crystal (1997: 301) offers a more elaborate and much cited definition of pragmatics as "the study of language from the point of view of users, especially the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects the use of language has on other participants in the act of communication". This definition emphasizes the importance of actual language use and the social conventions governing it in pragmatics research. In addition, it highlights that pragmatics research should include both the speaker's and the hearer's perspectives.

Thomas (1995) points out that there have been broadly two approaches to pragmatics: one that takes a social view and stresses speaker meaning and the other that takes a cognitive view and emphasizes utterance interpretation. Reviewing the relative strengths and weaknesses of these two viewpoints, Thomas defines pragmatics as "meaning in interaction" (J. Thomas, 1995: 22). Making meaning, according to Thomas, is "a dynamic process, involving the negotiating of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance" (J. Thomas, 1995: 22). Thomas' definition is thus in line with Crystal's (1997), underscoring the notion that pragmatics is "not only concerned with the actions of producing (speaking, writing) participant but also with the effect of such actions on their recipients" (Kasper & Rose, 2002: 4). It is the study of "speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions" (LoCastro, 2003: 15).

Different aspects of pragmatics have been distinguished. The well-accepted classification is a distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983; J. Thomas, 1983). Pragmalinguistics accounts for "the more linguistic end of pragmatics" (Leech, 1983: 11). It addresses the relationship between linguistic forms and their functions, involving "resources for conveying communicative acts and interpersonal meanings" (Dewaele, 2007: 165). Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, is "the sociological interface of pragmatics" (Leech, 1983: 10). It addresses the relationship between linguistic actions and social constraints, concerned with "the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action" (Kasper & Rose, 2001: 3).

In summary, pragmatics studies the relationship between language uses and the context in which they are performed. It not only concerns utterance production but also utterance interpretation. Pragmatics can be divided into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. As a field, pragmatics has been largely based on speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1975, 1976), which is reviewed in the next section.

2.2 Speech acts

The field of pragmatics was triggered by speech act theory, which was proposed by Austin (1962) and elaborated by Searle (1969, 1975, 1976). Austin (1962) proposes the idea that people use language not just to say things, but to do things. "The uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action" (Austin, 1962: 5). For Austin, in producing an utterance, a speaker produces three acts: locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary. The locutionary force, defined as "the utterance of certain noises [the phonetic act], the utterance of certain words in a certain construction [the phatic act], and the utterance of them with certain 'meaning' in the philosophical sense of that word, i.e., with a certain sense and with a certain reference [the rhetic act]" (Austin, 1962: 94), is the literal meaning of an utterance. The illocutionary force, defined as "asking or answering a question, giving some information or an assurance or a meaning" (Austin, 1962: 98), is the force or intention behind the words, e.g., to refuse. The perlocutionary force, defined as "saying something will often, or even normally, produce certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of an utterance, or of the speaker, or of other persons" (Austin, 1962: 101), is the effect of the illocution on the hearer, e.g. to make the hearer know that the speaker will not do something.

Searle's (1969, 1975, 1979) work on felicity conditions, speech act classification and indirect speech acts has a significant influence on the development of speech act theory. Searle (1969) elaborates and revises Austin's concept of illocutionary force and the concept of felicity conditions. He proposes that if a speech act is to be performed, certain felicity conditions must be met, which describe the structures of all the illocutionary force types, including propositional content, preparatory condition, sincerity condition, and essential condition (Searle, 1969: 66–67). The propositional content refers to the fact that an illocutionary force indicating device is used which facilitates in identifying the particular speech act in question. The preparatory conditions refer to what the speaker is implying when he makes a speech act. The sincerity condition expresses the psychological state of the speaker. The essential condition refers to the fact that the context and the utterance make the intention of the speaker transparent.

Searle (1975, 1979) develops the distinction between direct and indirect speech acts. While in direct speech acts, "the speaker says what he means", in indirect speech acts, the speaker "means something more than what he says" (Searle, Kiefer, & Bierwisch, 1980: viii). In other words, direct speech acts display appropriate illocutionary force indicators, whereas indirect speech acts are performed in utterances which do not contain indicators of the intended illocutionary force so that the hearer has to infer such force (Sbisa, 2009), with a procedure drawing on the notion of conversational implicature (Grice, 1975) on the basis of the felicity conditions of the illocutionary act and of shared knowledge about the context. For example, student X says to student Y "Let's go to the movies tonight" while student Y says "I have to study for an exam" (Searle, 1975: 61). Student Y is performing the speech act of refusal, even though the utterance itself seems completely irrelevant to what student X says.

Building on Austin's classification of speech acts, Searle (1976, 1979) proposes five different categories of illocutionary acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations. Representatives are illocutionary acts whose point is to "commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something's being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition" (Searle, 1976: 10), such as assertions. Directives are illocutionary acts which are "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (Searle, 1976: 11), such as requests. Commissives are those illocutionary acts "whose point is to commit the speaker to some future course of action" (Searle, 1976: 11), such as promises. Expressives are illocutionary acts whose point is to "express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content" (Searle, 1976: 12), such as apologies and compliments. Declarations are acts whose point is to bring about "the correspondence between the propositional content and reality" (Searle, 1976: 13), such as declarations and nominations.

Based on Searle's classifications, the present study will discuss the speech act of refusal in the following subsections.

2.2.1 The speech act of refusal

A refusal is generally defined as a speech act by which a speaker "denies to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor" (X. Chen, Ye, & Zhang, 1995: 121), which functions as a response to another speech act (e.g., to a request, an invitation, a suggestion, or an offer), rather than as a speech act initiated by the speaker. It represents one type of dispreferred speech acts (Eslami, 2010; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b, 2008c; Pomerantz, 1984). Refusals belong to the category of commissives (Bella, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b; Roever, 2005), because they commit the speaker to performing an action, or more accurately, not to performing an action. The basic conditions necessary for the felicitous performance of the speech act of refusal are set out in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Felicity conditions for refusals.

Refusals	
Propositional content	Future act A of S.
Preparatory condition	(1) S is able to do A. (2) It is not obvious to H that S will do A.
Sincerity condition	S intends to do A.
Essential condition	Counts as an attempt by S to get H know S intends to do A.

Notes: S – Speaker; H – Hearer.

Based on whether the sincerity condition of refusals is obtained, refusals can be divided into two types: ritual refusals and substantive refusals. The contrast between ritual refusals and substantive refusals lies in the sincerity condition for refusals, i.e., "S intends to do A". In contrast to substantive refusals, this condition is not satisfied in ritual refusals since the speaker merely pretends to refuse in the interest of the norms of politeness. In other words, the sincerity condition is not fulfilled in the ritual refusal. Although not present in all cultures (Barron, 2003), ritual refusals play an important role in Chinese culture (X. Chen et al., 1995), usually taking place in response to an invitation (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994) or an offer (Zhu, Li, & Qian, 2000). In the present study, ritual refusals are not to be investigated. That is, the present study focuses on substantive refusals only.

2.2.2 Classification system for refusals

Being face-threatening and complex in nature, a refusal is known as a "sticking point" in cross-cultural communication, and demands a very high level of pragmatic competence for successful performance (T. Takahashi & Beebe, 1987). In order not to offend the interlocutor and to achieve a satisfying outcome, a speaker needs to pay attention to situational factors such as social status, social distance and imposition of the speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and employ "face-saving maneuvers to accommodate the noncompliance nature of the act" (Gass & Houck, 1999: 2).

In this study, a pragmatic strategy refers to a linguistic form (e.g., a word, a phrase, or a sentence) "which a speaker selects on a particular occasion, and which is recognized by an interlocutor in order to convey pragmatic intent" (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b: 72). The pragmatic strategies that carry the force of a refusal in the given context are referred to as refusal strategies, whereas pragmatic strategies employed in order to mitigate or aggravate the illocutionary force of refusals are referred to as modifiers. Depending on the initiating speech act (i.e., the request, invitation, suggestion or offer) and the situational factors (Barron, 2003; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; X. Chen et al., 1995; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b), refusals usually consist of refusal strategies varying in content, order and frequency and may involve a great deal of modifiers. A refusal strategy can be either direct or indirect. A direct refusal is often expressed with precision and clarity (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b: 43), for example, "No"; "I can't", while in an indirect refusal the degree of inference needed in order to understand the speaker's pragmatic intent increases, for instance, in Searle's (1975: 61) example in Section 2.2, Student Y indirectly refuses the suggestion of Student X "Let's go to the movies tonight" by saying "I have to study for an exam".

In the pragmatics literature, modifiers may take the form of external or internal modifications (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). External modifications do not affect the utterance used for realizing a speech act (head act), but rather the context in which the head act occurs (Bella, 2011: 1720). External modifications may precede or follow the head act, thus modifying the illocutionary force of the head act indirectly. Internal modifications, on the other hand, are elements within a speech act (head act), the presence of which is not essential for identifying the illocutionary force of the head act, but serves to mitigate or emphasize its potential effects (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

External modification, in the literature of refusal studies, is generally referred to as adjuncts to refusals (e.g., Beebe et al., 1990; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008b), which modify the refusal but do not carry the force of refusing themselves. Internal modification of refusals, however, has rarely been discussed, with the exception of five studies (Barron, 2003; Bella, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2004, 2008b; Ren, 2013). It would be beneficial for the pragmatics literature to analyze how speakers employ these modifications (both external and internal) to different speech acts to have a comprehensive view of their pragmatic competence. The present study aims to bridge the gap in the refusal studies, by analyzing both external and internal modifications of refusals. For ease of comparison, external modifications in the present study are referred to as adjuncts to refusals as well, following the literature of refusal studies.

In summary, this section reviews speech act theory and the nature and the classification system of refusals. Speech act theory was first introduced by Austin (1962) and revised and developed by Searle (1969, 1975, 1976). Austin highlighted the fact that speakers not only say things, but also do things through the words. Searle (1975, 1979) distinguished direct speech acts and indirect speech acts, highlighting the fact that it was possible to perform a speech act without invoking the explicit illocutionary force. In addition, Searle elaborated the concept of felicity conditions (1969) and the taxonomy of speech acts (1976, 1979). Refusals, the speech act chosen to investigate the L2 learners' productive pragmatic competence, were analyzed under Searle's classification and the analytic framework was discussed.